

Legalism

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I. Introduction.

- A. Text: Gal 5:13-26.
- B. The matter of legality is one of the favorite weapons of the enemy.
- C. He uses it to destroy the work of Christians.
- D. The Galatians were a group of Christians who had a wonderful beginning until legalism had taken its toll in their lives.

II. Legalism can be false Christianity.

- A. We can denounce legalism in another's life and practice it in another form.
- B. How to recognize legalism. You must understand true Christianity to understand the false.
 - 1. True Christianity is to manifest frequently Christ-like behavior by dependence upon the Spirit motivated by a love and desire for the glory of God. The essential elements are:
 - a. Some kind of expected pattern of behavior. There is a difference between freedom from the law and freedom from the curse of the law.
 - b. Dependence upon a power outside of us—the Spirit dwelling within.
 - c. A motive that God be honored and glorified.
 - 2. Legality is making unwarranted or unfair demands based upon standards that are not prescribed in the Scripture. This involves...
 - a. Clothing style.
 - b. Length of hair.
 - c. Ritual observances.
 - d. Food and behavior restrictions.
 - 3. Legalism is making proper demands of those unaware of the power available to fulfill them.
 - a. It is wrong to make a demand of fulfilling commandments of people who do not know the power to fulfill them.
 - b. This is subtle legalism because it is a matter of inner reliance.

c. The flesh—the old life related to Adam—calls us to depend on our own efforts.

d. What we do must be done on the power that God provides.

4. Legalism has improper motives. It loves to be seen before men instead of God.

C. Legality is a mechanical and external behavior growing out of reliance upon self out of a desire to gain a reputation, display a skill or satisfy an urge for power.

1. It is religious performance.

2. It leads to death.

3. We are to examine others and ourselves.

4. We must listen to the appraisal of others.

III. The cure to legalism is to repent and believe.

Application questions:

1. What are the characteristics of legalism? Why does the speaker call it a “false Christianity?”

2. What is the result of legalism?

3. How has legalism manifest itself in your life? How can you make that right?
