

## “LEGALISM” OR OBEDIENCE --- WHICH?

“Now to insist on obedience to these commands is legalism. Against it of late, not a little has been said, and nothing wisely. The term legalism I do not like. It is an offensive term with a bad sense, as popularly used, and should not be employed. Obedience to the commands of Christ is its exact equivalent, and should always be used in its stead. But few men, however, could be found bold enough to speak against obeying the commandments of Christ. The result here would be too glaring. None could fail to see it, and few would hesitate to pronounce it infidelity. A more insidious method is adopted. Legalism is the thing inveighed against. But the act amounts to the same. Legalism and obedience to Christ's commands are the same. Hence to speak against that is to speak against this. Nor have I any more respect for the man who masks the law of Christ, and then speaks against it, than I have for him who insults it directly.” --- Moses E. Lard, 1890, via Search for the Ancient Order, and Gospel Digest.

To be legal is to obey all the rules, regulations, and laws of the land. Should we approach an intersection and observe a stop sign, when we stop we are “**legal**” – we obeyed the law. Should we take this same approach to the law of God, when we obey the laws of God, we are declared to be “legal.” We have complied with the Law of God.

As one can see in the above paragraph, “**LEGALISM**” was a problem in the late 1800's. There were those who did not want to make a *direct charge* against those who felt they needed to obey the commandments of the Lord. Who in their right mind would tell people they did not need to obey God? So, they created a term – “**LEGALISM**.” The term “legalism” is not found in the New Testament, to fit the charge they are making. This term has a special meaning, according to their use. When one makes a dedicated effort to be obedient to all of God's commands, there are those who brand him, or them, as being a “legalist!” These folks are the same as the people of Israel were long ago: Isa. 5:20, “*Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter.*” Those who call people that conform to God's Word “legalist” are just as confused as the folks in Isa. 5:20.

According to those who oppose being obedient to the commands of the Lord, “Legalism” is supposed to be something bad. The “legalist” is one that has horns, has a pitch-fork, has a sinister look, and is devoid of any good. When then, a person is called “**a legalist,**” according to them, he or **they are bad?**

Can you believe one who feels he must obey the commands of the Lord being dubbed a “**legalist?**” According to these liberal people, that is bad. The Bible teaches we are to obey the commandments of the Lord. “*Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that **doeth the will** of my Father who is in heaven,*” Matt. 7:21.

When one advocates obedience to all the commandments of the Lord, we know that is what the Bible teaches. When someone comes along and calls this man a “legalist,” they are saying the same thing, but mean something different. When some-one refers to one who is obedient to the law of Christ as a “**legalist,**” this is a sign that he who calls another a “legalist” is opposed to Christ, is a false teacher, and knows not the teaching of the Bible.

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