

G R A C E

REFORMED BAPTIST CHURCH

SOLI ♦ DEO ♦ GLORIA

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

Sermon Notes

The Arrest, Trials, and Crucifixion of Jesus Christ

Jesus before Pilate

John 19:6-16

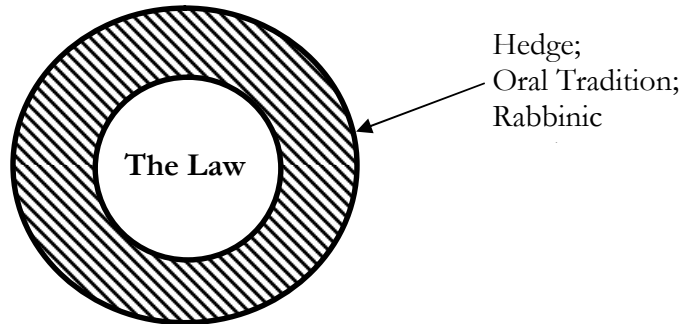
September 17, 2006

- I. Defining Legalism
- II. Recognizing the Roots of Legalism
- III. Identifying the Results of Legalism

I. Defining Legalism

Legalism is defined here as the creation of laws in addition to those in Scripture, and the adherence to those [created] laws [and the insistence that others do the same] with the same degree of conviction as the Laws of God. In short, it is the elevation of man's laws to the level of God's laws – regardless of how 'good' our intentions are.

Recall: the Pharisees created and adhered to a Rabbinical [extra-biblical] tradition that was, basically, a 'hedge' around the Law. The rationale was simple: if the Law of God command something, then the Pharisees would add to that Law, forming a 'hedge', so that if one kept the hedge, in theory, they would not even come close to infringing upon the Law.



- Example of the Law vs. the Rabbinical Tradition
 - Law: Remember the Sabbath and Keep it Holy.
 - Rabbinical Tradition: Is it lawful to eat an egg layed on the Sabbath?

The terrible danger in legalism is this: the Law of God is a DIRECT reflection of God's character and nature. Therefore, when we add to or take away from God's Law, **we make ourselves out to be God!**

II. Recognizing the Roots of Legalism

A. A lack of confidence in the **SUFFICIENCY** of Scripture [NOTICE: This is different from the AUTHORITY of Scripture].

- ❑ It is important to understand that the Pharisees believed that the Bible was God's word – holy, blameless, etc. Jesus even states, in John 5:39, "You [the Pharisees] search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life."
- ❑ The Pharisees viewed the Scripture even mystically, believing that the actual *words* could save them.
- ❑ Therefore, for the Pharisees, they believed that the Scriptures were authoritative; HOWEVER, they also believed that the Scriptures were NOT ENOUGH!
- ❑ In other words, it was not the AUTHORITY of Scripture that the Pharisees had a problem with, but the SUFFICIENCY of God's Word!
- ❑ So much did they deny the sufficiency of Scripture that they created their own law to supplement the Scriptures.
- ❑ In Gospel of John, Jesus, and the Evangelist, distinguish between God's Word and the Pharisaical Scriptures – which *contained* the Word of God.
- ❑ Notice examples of this in the Fourth Gospel:

John 8:17: "Even in **your law** it has been written that the testimony of two men is true."

John 10:34: "Jesus answered them, 'Has it not been written in **your Law**, 'I SAID, YOU ARE GODS?'"

John 18:31: "So Pilate said to them, 'Take Him yourselves, and judge Him according to **your law**.' The Jews said to him, 'We are not permitted to put anyone to death,'"

- ❑ Finally, here in John 19:7, as Jesus is before Pilate, the Jews state:

John 19:7: "The Jews answered him, '**We have a law**, and by that law He ought to die because He made Himself out to be the Son of God.'"

- ❑ It is likely that John includes this because he is, once again, drawing a distinction between God's Law and the Pharisees' law ['your Law'... 'we have a law'].

- ❑ The Scripture that demands the death penalty for blasphemy is **Leviticus 24:16**: “Moreover, the one who blasphemes the name of the LORD shall surely be put to death; all the congregation shall certainly stone him. The alien as well as the native, when he blasphemes the Name, shall be put to death.”
- ❑ Notice, however, that the Jews state: that He ought to die “because He made Himself out to be the Son of God.”
 - First of all, it is important to note that Jesus did not *make Himself out to be* the Son of God – He was the Son of God; rather, He ‘emptied Himself’ taking the form of man and becoming a servant.
 - But, secondly, Leviticus 24:16 does not say anything about someone claiming to be the Son of God. What has happened is that Jesus has transgressed the man-made law of the Jews and because of this, they have condemned Him as a heretic. Then, the Jews apply Leviticus 24:16 to Jesus as a heretic, demanding that He be executed.
 - Lastly, however, notice that the Jews, once again, refuse to follow Leviticus 24:16, as they are **required** to execute the blasphemer by **stoning** him; **NOT** handing him over to the Roman authorities to be crucified!
 - Once again, they prove themselves to be the blasphemers of God and His Word.

“In our day, it is the sufficiency of Scripture that is under attack in many Conservative Evangelical churches. We proclaim that it is the gospel which is sufficient to lead a person to a saving knowledge of Christ, but then by our actions, we declare that the scriptures alone are not sufficient to draw people to God. So we create programs that accomplish that; everything from sports ministries to Super Bowl Parties.

To those who are Christians we say that the Scriptures are sufficient for guiding and directing our lives, but rather than studying the Scriptures doctrinally and allowing them to convict and change us, we come up with clever programs...”

Pastor Bob Travers, Providence Baptist Church, St. Louis, MO

- ❑ It is not that programs, in and of themselves, are bad. However, **God has ordained only one way by which He draws men to Himself – the proclamation of the Gospel.**
- ❑ May we never think that ‘we have a better way.’

B. An unwillingness to set aside our pre-conceived, pre-formed ideas about who God truly is

- ❑ This second point flows directly from the first.
- ❑ Even when we say that the Bible is the authoritative Word of God [but do not truly believe it is sufficient], we attempt to force our views about God upon the Scriptures.

- ❑ We say things like, “My God would never...” or “The God is know...” Yet, when challenged about the “God we know” we cannot support it with Scripture.
- ❑ This often is the case when people say, “God is love”; therefore _____.
- ❑ Of course we embrace that God is love, then we go and define love independent of the Scriptures. This is was the exact method that the Jews used to condemn Jesus of blasphemy, using Leviticus 24:16! If we say the God is love [and, indeed, He is!], let us define love the WAY THE BIBLE DEFINES IT!
- ❑ Furthermore, God is love, but the Scriptures declare that He also possesses many other attributes as well.
- ❑ Once again, this was the basis of the Pharisees’ condemnation of Jesus Christ – He did not fit their pre-conceived notion of who the Messiah was to be [in accordance with *their* law]; therefore, they condemned Him as a heretic.

C. Pride – essentially making ourselves out to be god

- ❑ As with every sin, a denial, in word or action, of the sufficiency of God’s Word finds its ultimate root in Pride.
- ❑ In the final analysis, we believe that we have a better way than God...or at least can improve upon it.
 - ❖ This entire discussion concerning the sufficiency of Scripture centers on the doctrine that the Reformers so clearly articulated: *Sola Scriptura*: “the authority of **Scripture alone**.”
 - ❖ On the website, *Catholics Apologetics International*, Roman Catholic apologist Robert A. Sungenis posted an interchange he had with a man:

R. Sungenis: The only doctrine wounding the soul so far [in our discussion] is the unscriptural idea that scripture is the sole authority...you are teaching heresy, and leading souls astray.

Dean: I have shown you, but you cannot see it.

- ❖ We may gasp at the words of Sungenis; however, by our actions many Christians affirm exactly what he says – the Scriptures are not our final authority [but, of course, we must demand that they are our final authority].
- ❖ Because of this, there are several results of this lack of conviction in *Sola Scriptura* [leading to legalism], revealed through the Jews in the trials of Jesus, and seen in the church today.

III. Identifying the Results of Legalism

A. Spiritual Blindness

- One of the first results of Legalism is blindness to the things of God which are **clearly revealed in Scripture**.
 - How many times has this been the case in our own lives?
 - Often, we try to force certain presuppositions upon the Scriptures and miss certain truths. But, then, when we allow the Scriptures to speak for themselves and affirm their absolute sufficiency, we see things that we never knew were there before.
- This type of spiritual blindness was one of the main characteristics of the Jewish leaders.
 - Jesus did not fit the description of the Messiah that the Jews embraced from *their Law*; therefore, they were blind to the fact that He fulfilled the Law of God!
 - Verse 8 says that after Pilate heard that Jesus ‘made Himself out to be the Son of God,’ **he was even more afraid.**
 - The reason for this is that, as a Roman, Pilate was no doubt high superstitious.
 - It was quite common in the Roman world to believe in ‘divine men,’ who had certain ‘divine powers’ – a sort of demi-god.
 - Therefore, it would make sense that if Jesus was, in fact, one of these ‘divine men,’ a ‘son of God’ as it were, Pilate should have a certain level of fear, as he had just had Jesus scourged.
 - However, it is quite interesting that, although for the wrong reason, Pilate, a pagan Gentile feared Jesus – the Sovereign Judge – more than the Jews – who were blind to Jesus’ true identity!
 - Then, in Verse 9, Pilate asks Jesus [once again inside the Praetorium]: ‘Where are You from?’ to which Jesus remained silent.
 - Once again, the Jews should have known Jesus’ origin – in truth He had no origin, for He is the eternal God in human flesh.

John 8:23: “And He was saying to them, ‘You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world.’”

- What John also reveals here is how Jesus is, even now, in His trial, fulfilling the Old Testament. The fact that Jesus remains silent here is perfectly fulfilling **Isaiah 53:7**: “He was oppressed and He was afflicted; Yet He did not open His mouth...”

- But, again, the Jews are blind to this truth.
 - Next, in Verses 10-11, Pilate becomes angry with Christ's apparent disrespect, 'reminding' Christ that he [Pilate] has the authority to crucify Him or release Him.
 - Yet, Christ replies to Pilate with a profound truth: Pilate's authority is not inherent to himself. It is only that which has been given to Him 'from above.' The very One who stands 'condemned' before Pilate, and the One whom Pilate will sentence to crucifixion, is the One who has given Pilate the authority to do such a thing.
 - Jesus' point is clear: **ALL THAT IS OCCURRING IS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PERFECT, SOVEREIGN PLAN OF ALMIGHTY GOD.** No one is outside of this Sovereignty.
 - However, because of their refusal to submit to the authority of God, as revealed in His Word, the Pharisees are blind to this truth. They believe, in a sense, they are the sovereign ones.
 - This is, most likely, why Jesus says that 'he who delivered Me to you has the greater sin.'
 - This is likely a reference to Caiaphas, the high priest that year.
 - Caiaphas, and the other Jewish leaders **should know better**, because they claim to be 'people of the book.'
 - Yet, because the Scriptures were not sufficient for them, they missed the Christ.
 - Finally, John tells us that, even though Jesus, in a sense, 'confronted' Pilate, Pilate saw no guilt in Him and sought to have Him released; although, the Jews wanted Him crucified.
- The most dramatic example of the Jews' blindness is found in Verse 14: "Now it was the day of preparation for the Passover..."
 - In other words, as Jesus is being tried by Pilate, the priests in the Temple are preparing for the sacrifice of the Passover lambs...and as Jesus dies on the cross, the Passover lambs are being slaughtered.
 - In other words, Jesus is the perfect fulfillment of the Old Testament Passover lamb!
 - Yet, the Pharisees were blind to this truth. In fact, as John 18:28, the Jews would not enter the Praetorium – the Governor's residence – so that they would not be defiled and prevented from eating the Passover meal. Yet, they had no problem demanding the crucifixion of the true Passover Lamb!

B. Elevating men to an unscriptural status

- As Pilate makes efforts to release Christ, the Jews, in Verse 12, resort to appealing to Caesar!
 - “If you release this Man, you are no friend of Caesar; everyone who makes himself out to be king opposes Caesar.”
 - In this one statement, the Jews have:
 - Aligned themselves with Caesars, presenting themselves as ‘friends of Caesar.’
 - NOTE: by the time of Vespasian (A.D. 69-71), ‘friend of Caesar’ was basically an official title.
 - Threatened Pilate with the fear of Caesar, not the fear of God.
 - Certainly, it is rather clear that the Jews feared Caesar more than they feared God.
- In this passage (Verse 16), the Jews finally say, “We have no king but Caesar!”
 - This harkens back to 1 Samuel 8 when Israel demanded an earthly king, even though God said that He was their only king.
- Like the Jews, when we do not fully embrace the Sufficiency of God’s Word, we inevitably elevate men to an unbiblical level.
- In nearly every cult or perversion of Christianity, one of the common themes is that the people are following a man more than the Word.
- Tragically, such is the case in so many ‘Conservative,’ ‘Evangelical’ churches today – we have elevated the Pastor or leader to celebrity status. This is most certainly the direct result of a deficient view of the sufficiency of Scripture!
- When challenged, we appeal, not to the Scriptures, but man, for too often we do not rely on the Word, but on another man’s interpretation of it.

C. Apathy towards the *truly* holy things of God.

- So consumed were the Jews with their *own Scriptures*, that they denied Jesus as the Christ, and they displayed pure apathy towards the truly holy things of God.
- John tells us, in Verse 13, that after the Jews’ cry, Pilate, ‘brought Jesus out, and sat down on the judgment seat at a place called The Pavement, but in Hebrew, Gabbatha.’

- It appears that Pilate brought Jesus, the eternal Judge, out in front of his residence, ‘where traffic would have been heavy,’ and judged the Judge.
 - Yet, this did not offend the Jews in the least, for their hearts were far from Christ.
 - Furthermore, it is Pilate who, ironically, sits on the **Bema** [βῆμα], the judgment seat, and passes judgment upon the Christ. But this, too, does not offend the Jews.
 - As C.K. Barrett writes, ‘We may suppose then that John meant that Pilate did in fact sit on the *Bema*, but that for those with eyes to see behind this human scene appeared the Son of Man, to whom all judgment has been committed (5:22) [by the Father], seated upon His throne.’”
- Also, for the Jewish authorities, the Temple was holy, not Christ who was its fulfillment.
 - Yet, because, for too many of us, the Scriptures are not fully sufficient, we, like the Pharisees, are not offended by the things that offend a holy God.
 - We are more offended when we do not like, for instance, the music style, than we are when the Scriptures are not taught and proclaimed.
 - We are not offended when a ‘worship’ service resembles a standup comedy routine or a Broadway production. Yet, if a certain program is taken away, we become deeply offended.
 - Why is this? It is because we have created *another* law...Another law that says, ‘If it does not conform to what I want and like, then it is offensive.’ Rather, we should conform our desires to the Law of God.

D. Distortion, intentional ignorance, or even the denial of Scripture [for the sake of a personal agenda]

- Yet, another symptom of the denial of the Sufficiency of Scripture is the distortion, intentional ignorance, or even the denial of Scripture for the sake of our personal agendas.
- The Jewish leaders were willing to conduct an unjust, illegal hearing in order to condemn Jesus of blasphemy. They went to any and all means in order to accomplish their desired ends.
- They even paid homage to Caesar himself!
- Yet, so many Christians today will do the same thing. Even though there are **clear commandments** in Scripture commanding certain things, we ignore them because, more often than not, what we are doing ‘works.’
- Christians will ignore certain portions of Scripture and defend such ignorance, saying, ‘well, the issue at hand is not an essential of the Christian faith.’

- ❑ We will do this, and then push our own agenda even if it conflicts with the Word of God.
- ❑ When called to task on such a position, these individuals often accuse the one approaching them as ‘legalistic’ and ‘judgmental.’
- ❑ One thing is clear; however, with respect to God’s ordained means of salvation being the preaching of the Gospel: in churches that resort to ‘programs’ and ‘methods’ for drawing in the lost, the role of teaching God’s Word virtually disappears!

E. Blasphemy – the creation of a false god or idol

- ❑ John concludes this section by recording the words of the Jews, who said, “Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him !...We have no king but Caesar!”
 - The pride of the Jews finally drove them to shout a most blasphemous statement themselves, for in the Scriptures ONLY GOD IS KING (Judges 8:23; 1 Samuel 8:7).
 - Yet, this is most certainly the final result of the rejection of the Sufficiency of God’s Word.

❖ **Deuteronomy 4:2** states, “You shall not add to the word which I am commanding you, nor take away from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you.”

❖ **Deuteronomy 12:32** states, “Whatever I command you, you shall be careful to do; you shall not add to nor take away from it.”

❖ Even in one of our Confessions of Faith (2nd London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689):

“The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down or necessarily contained in the Holy Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelation of the Spirit, or traditions of men.”