

Wed PM - 5/2/2012

"Grace or Legalism" - James 4:6

Read James 4:1-7

LEGALISM IS A RELIGIOUS SYSTEM THAT TEACHES THAT A PERSON CAN DO SOMETHING TO EARN OR MERIT SALVATION OR BLESSING FROM GOD.

1. Grace depends solely on the character of God and entirely excludes human ability, merit and achievement.
2. Legalism however, *depends* on human ability, merit and achievement.
3. Grace and legalism have opposite emphases.
4. Grace emphasizes what God does in the soul of man, free of charge. The production and blessing in the Christian's life are byproducts of what God has provided without cost to us, but with tremendous cost to Him. It is the greatest gift, with its accompanying salvation (John 3:16) that has ever be given to mankind.
5. Legalism excludes the right mental attitude, and instead emphasizes overt activity directed toward trying to impress God and other individuals.
6. Legalism hinders many people from accepting the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior (Gal 2:21 – The apostle Paul declares that he has no intention of thus frustrating God's Grace).
7. Legalism neutralizes the believer in the Christian life. God's perfect plan must exclude imperfect plans of mankind; this protects the perfect nature and integrity of the Plan of God.
8. Grace is the antithesis of human arrogance; an awareness of the meaning Grace is a giant step for the believer toward true humility, and thus mitigating his or her own arrogance. Don't depend on yourself for salvation, and don't depend on yourself to live the Christian life; on your diligent laboring; if you do, you're not going to make it.

There is pride in 4 areas:

- There is the rejection of eternal security of the Grace of God, and of the sufficiency of God's Grace alone to save.
- Falling apart under suffering, adversity and pressure is actually arrogance in thinking the adversity is greater than God's ability to handle it.
- False spirituality through legalism and religion, thinking that our works are impressive to God, and earn us blessings.
- Emotional believers depend on their feelings and emotions as more real to them

Religion is any system wherein man by his own efforts tries to earn the approval of God.

Legalism is any system that teaches people that their own efforts earn salvation or blessing from God.

The greatest distortion of Grace of all is RELIGIOUS LEGALISM. Most religion is in fact legalistic.

Ephesians 4:14 warns us of "every wind of doctrine, slight of men, by which they await in cunning craftiness to deceive". Satan tries to disrupt the Plan of God and blind people's minds to Grace principles.

Distinguishing Religious Legalism from Christianity:

- Religion is any system in which man by his own efforts tries to earn God's approval.
- Legalism is a religious system that teaches that a person can do something to earn or merit salvation or blessing from God.
- The books of James and Galatians teach of us of God's Grace principles.
- Viewing the moral code of Romans 14:21 may impress upon you to abstain from alcohol to keep from causing your brother to stumble – this would be strict and legal conformity, but it would *not be* legalism, because your motivation is centered on the Will and Plan of God. Legalism is defined in the Oxford dictionary as adherence to the Law, instead of adherence to the Gospel, the doctrine of justification by works.
- If it is by Grace it's NOT of works; if it is of works, it's NOT of Grace. Romans 4:4-5 says *"(4) Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due. (5) But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness"*
- Isaiah 64:6 - Our works – for salvation or for blessing in the spiritual life – are actually *offensive* to God.