

# Another Round Of Religion And Legalism

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[ 0 : 00 ] I love music and I have always wanted to be able to play in the band.! Tom mocks me because he knows I can't play a lick of any instrument.

It tells us of the story of where this particular phrase that perhaps you might be familiar with comes from.

Back in imperial China several hundred years ago, the emperor had this incredible orchestra, an imperial orchestra that was several hundred people that made up this orchestra.

And they would play at all the state affairs. If you got to be in this orchestra, you were paid well and lots of benefits and extras that came along with the gig.

And it was just a high honor to be a part of this imperial orchestra. Well, there was a man who knew somebody. And because he knew somebody, he was able to get into the orchestra and be a member of the orchestra in the flute section.

[ 1 : 27 ] Even though he did not play the flute or could not play the flute. But with time and practice, you'd think time and practice, maybe you'd learn to play the flute.

But no, he learned how to fake it. And so the band would be playing and the orchestra would be playing and he would be there with his flute and he would be doing his thing.

And he just got along just fine and got the nice pay, the extra benefits that would come with that position, the prestige of it and all of that.

Well, there was always someone who thought, hmm, I wonder. And that person was the emperor himself. And so he scheduled the orchestra, each individual member of the orchestra, over a number of weeks period of time.

Each member was to appear before the emperor by themselves with their instrument and play a solo. And this man was terrified.

[ 2 : 35 ] Because he knew he would be found out. And if he was found out, he would bring shame to himself, shame to his family. He would lose his job. And more than likely, he would be imprisoned or even lose his life.

Because of this game that he was playing, this ruse that he was perpetrating. And so the day of his scheduled solo before the emperor came and he was like, oh, I can't.

I'm sick today. I'm going to have to miss my appointment. And they dispatched a doctor who went to his home and found out, no, you're just fine.

You're going to keep your appointment. And when the time for his appointment finally arrived, he didn't show up. And they found him dead of suicide in his home.

He was so afraid to, here's the phrase, face the music. The origins of that phrase.

[ 3 : 41 ] Well, today we're going to see Jesus at basically a dinner party. He's invited to dinner and there's a number of Pharisees and other religious leaders that are there at this dinner party who end up being impostors.

People who are good at making it look good. They look the part. They play the part. They know how to do religion.

But is it genuine? Is it real? And that's where Jesus exposes them for what they really are in our text today.

This is a fun text. Word of caution for us. It's a fun text in the sense that we like to, especially in contemporary circles, we like to bad mouth religion.

I'm first to raise my hand because I would, if you know me for any length of time, you know that I say and believe that religion is a dirty word. I despise religion.

[ 4 : 48 ] I come out of religion. It's something that I have a negative reaction to it whenever I see it.

But I have to be careful, and I think all of us have to be careful. The same thing with legalism. Today, that's what we're confronting. Religion and legalism, they are two sides of the same coin. They are both poison when it comes to our relationship with the Lord. And so it's important for us to examine this.

But it's important for us not just to look at those that we would say are religious and condemn them. Rather, today, what I want us to do is to take the Word of God, open it up, and to use it as a mirror and to expose our own religious tendencies, our own legalisms that we have, because we can be just as guilty as that religious person that we think of when we hear those terms of religion or legalism.

So bear with me as we make our way through the text here. So here's where it begins in Luke 11, 37. While Jesus was speaking, a Pharisee asked him to dine with him, so he went in and reclined at the table.

[ 6 : 19 ] And so, again, just as a reminder here, Jesus is invited, and he goes into the home of this Pharisee. He's not the only guest. There's a number of Pharisees, other religious leaders that are there.

And he's the dinner guest. He's the guest of honor. And really, you have to understand their motive when they invite Jesus to one of these events. They're having Jesus for dinner.

They're going to roast him. They're going to question him. They're going to find out what he's all about because they want to expose him as a fraud. And so this is the intentions by what they're doing.

Jesus is not naive. He knows what they're thinking. He knows what this is all about. And he goes in, and just, it's incredible what he does.

But he reclined at table. So, again, the table's really low to the ground. Think coffee table. You're sitting on the floor, maybe with some cushions around. You have the main people at the table.

[ 7 : 18 ] These would be the honored guests or the people who had some sort of position or status or authority. And then other people that might be gathered around who might also be eating as well but might not have a place at the table.

And then there might even be people outside where maybe there's food, maybe there's not. Not sure how that worked out. But here is Jesus invited to come to this dinner and he sits at the table.

And it starts right from jump. This is incredible. The Pharisee who invited him was astonished, Luke's favorite word, was astonished to see that he did not first wash before dinner.

And it's like, Jesus, I mean, don't you wash your hands before? I mean, doesn't your mother tell you to wash your hands before dinner? And we think hygiene.

We think, you know, we're out in the world, we're shaking hands or we're working or whatever it is. And you don't just come and sit down and take the grilled cheese off the plate and start eating away. But Jesus doesn't wash his hands.

[ 8 : 32 ] So what are we talking about here? We're talking about a ceremonial thing. We're talking about something that's not found in the Old Testament law. This procedure was something that was added to it by the religious leaders, the priests or the Pharisees.

Down through the years, every city, every synagogue would have perhaps a little variation of this custom. But they would all do it. The priests and the Pharisees, they would all do it.

And what they would do, perhaps one of the most well-known ways that they would do this, is they would have a designated time and place where they would go and they would get a little cup of water, just a little dab of water, and they would take that and they would, over their hand, pour it over the tops of their fingers and down their hand.

And then they would take their other hand with their fist and they would do this. It was all a part of that. You had to do it in a certain way. And then they'd take another, a little bit of water and do it on the other hand and again with the fist.

And then, when that was done, they would take, they would do round two. Round two was they would take it and pour the water from the palm of their hand, let it run down their fingers, and again they would take their fist and scrub it.

[ 9 : 51 ] and then again the other one. And it had to be a certain order. It had to be done in a certain way. And it was just to make them ceremonially clean.

Not, not, had nothing to do with hygiene. Had nothing to do with dirt. It had nothing to do with germs. They didn't understand that, that part of life at that point.

For them it was just to make it so that they were religiously in a place where they could eat the food that God had given them. Well, Jesus didn't play that game.

And again, it wasn't that he was breaking any law. He was breaking an add-on. He was, he was defying what people were trying to do to add to the law.

So he didn't wash and this Pharisee was astonished by that. Just, whoa, how come he doesn't do like all the other guys at the table were doing it?

[ 10 : 51 ] They all did it, but not Jesus. And the Lord said to him, because he, he saw his, his surprise on his face or he knew what he was thinking.

Now you Pharisees, he said, you cleanse the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness.

So he's taking a cup and I brought one with me from home. He's taking a cup and the picture of this, of a cup that's clean on the outside.

Appearances, right? This looks like a clean cup to you, right? Now take a look at it. Tell me what you see. This is, this is, this is fun.

No, she's not. This, this is a little leftover mac and cheese and sloppy joes.

[ 11 : 51 ] I threw some cream in there, microwave and let it sit out for a few days. But it's a clean cup from, that's, that's got smell to it.

It didn't earlier, didn't yesterday. but, but that's what Jesus is saying of, of these Pharisees, of these religious leaders.

Outside, they look good. Outside, they look clean. Outside, they look religious. But on the inside, the part that matters, they're full of greed and wickedness.

And, and he's like, do you see the hypocrisy? Jesus is pointing out, by the way, what a dinner guest. What a guy to have over for dinner. I mean, you think you're going to pull one over on him and, and right out of jump, he's pulling one over on you and saying really, really mean, awful things about you at your own dinner.

You fools. I mean, what would you do? Your dinner guest goes this route. Did not he who made also the outside make the inside?

[ 13 : 06 ] But give as alms those things that are within. In other words, let your generosity for those in need flow from what is on the inside. It's not this fake stuff that you do on the outside so that everyone can see it.

Do it so that it's from the heart, from the inside of you. And behold, everything is clean for you. If you are clean on the inside, that's what God sees.

Your character, your motive, your attitudes. God sees what's on the inside. The purity of your heart. The morality, the ethic that you live by.

That's what God sees. You can pull the blinders over on some other people in your world. You can put on the robes and have it all the right tassels and do all the things that make you look religious and sound religious.

But if on the inside it's not genuine, you're not pulling one over on God. You just can't. You can't do that. You, it's impossible to do that.

[ 14 : 17 ] But woe to you Pharisees. He's, he's just loving these guys. He's just telling them all kinds of nice things. Just flattering them. Not.

For you tithe mint and every herb, but you neglect justice and the love of God. Now, understand, they're following the letter of the law.

That, that's what Jesus is pointing out here. So, he's talking about their, their little herb gardens. Do any of you have a little herb garden? Anything like that? Okay. Any of you, any of you grow, um, mint?

Any of you grow mint? Yeah? Some of you grow mint? I'm, I'm wondering what rue is. Anybody, does anybody grow rue? I don't even know what it is.

I looked it up in the original. I, I look, dictionary, I got nothing. I have no idea what this is. This is some unknown herb of some sort that they would grow. And, and can you imagine the, the idea of a tithe here is a tenth.

[ 15 : 23 ] It's the Old Testament law talking about a tenth of what God gives you. You give that back to God. And so, so they're meticulously, they've got their little herb garden and you can, I just imagine them having this little, tiny little pair of scissors, right?

And, and, or maybe it's just some little knife. I don't know. And they're, they're like measuring their mint plant and their mint plant is like yay big. And they're like, well, what's 10% of that? They cut that off and stick it aside and then they have a rue plant, whatever that is. And they're, and then they have a, every herb herb. So you're sitting there going through your herb garden and you're snipping off little parts and here's my, here's my little chunk of cinnamon that you're going to get.

And here, meticulously making sure that a tithe of everything they have, they give back to God. And by the way, this, this is the, the verse when people talk about how the New Testament, I've heard people talk about this, the New Testament, did you know the New Testament teaches that you're supposed to tithe?

Did you know that? It actually doesn't, but this is the verse that they use to teach it because here in the Gospels, Jesus says, these you ought to have done without neglecting the others.

[16:44] Let me ask you a question. Was Jesus living, this might be a tough one if you've never heard language quite like this before? Was Jesus living in this time when he was teaching this in an Old Testament economy or a New Testament economy?

This is still an Old Testament economy. This is still an Old Testament law set up because he hadn't gone to the cross yet. And so yes, a tithe was, was still the, the mandate.

But in the New Testament, there, there is a New Testament mandate that's a little different when it comes to giving and generosity and so forth. And it's just that. It's be generous.

Give out of an overflowing heart. Give as someone who gives cheerfully, who, who, who, who not, not begrudgingly or out of guilt, out of a sense of guilt.

You ever watch some of these preachers? They, they know how to twist the arm and, and get it behind your back and write that check. Add another zero there, please. And, and it's like, wait a minute.

[17:45] We're living in, in a New Testament economy, which means that we need to be generous. Now, you might say that giving ought to be something even more than a tithe because, in a sense, Jesus raised the ante on all of these, all of these Old Testament laws.

In other words, if you, if you hate someone or you're angry with someone, now you're guilty of murder. So it's not just the physical act, but it's what's going on. So he raises the bar on the way that we live, but ultimately it's between you and God.

You, you decide in your relationship with the Lord, not based on what someone else outside of you tells you to do. But again, the, the model for the New Testament is to, is to be generous.

we have seen that work here in, in our local church. Years ago, I'm going to say maybe 20 years ago, we decided to not take up an offering any longer.

And, and we put these little boxes by the back doors there and people give as they feel led to support the ministry of the church and God has taken care of us.

[18:57] God has provided for us all these years. And so we just trust God in that area. And I don't very often talk about money. It's not, not something that I'm fond of doing.

I don't like considering myself as a fundraiser in chief. I'm a pastor, not, not that. And so when the scriptures talk about it and teach about it, that's when we talk about it, teach about it, and we'll teach you not something that's a carryover from the Old Testament, but teach it as it's taught in the New Testament.

So, he's saying, listen, you're, you're focusing on this little 10% thing of this herb garden you got going on and there's some bigger things.

You've got greed and wickedness and you've got, you don't care about justice, right and wrong, true right and wrong. You don't care about loving God, not, not really.

You're just going through the motions to impress people. That's what you are about. He goes on, verse 43, woe to you Pharisees for you love the best seats in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplace.

[20:16] The best seats in the synagogues, by the way, we're not down front here. Some of you like, avoid this like the plague, right? I've got, I've got a few people here.

These are my favorite people in the world right here that are right up. I'm kidding. I'm joking. But the best seats in the synagogues, these were the best seats. They were right up here on the, and they were sitting down and they were watching from up here so they can look good.

I got to have on my Sunday best and I'm going to look good and, and, and I'm going to just, ooh, look at all, that guy's a fake and this guy, this girl over here, she's a fraud and, and they're just passing judgment and, and they're just, again, that's not what it's, what it's about. They, they love, apparently, to go to the Walmart and have people see him at the Walmart. Oh, you, you, Mr. Pharisee, sir, you are so, maybe you could bless me. Maybe you could, oh, they just, they just love that. And Jesus calls them out on it and he says, woe to you for you are like unmarked graves and people walk over them without knowing it. [ 21 : 33 ] Now, again, this, this harkens back to an Old Testament regulation, Old Testament law in terms of burial. When someone was buried, their graves had, there had to be some sort of marker on the grave to show where they were buried.

They, they probably weren't burying them as deep as what people are buried today. And so it was perhaps a matter of health, certainly a matter of respect, but it was considered if you walked on someone's grave, you were considered ceremonially unclean for a week. And you, you, you had to make sure that you went through the motions to be ceremonially clean once again to go into the temple and to, to do your religious duties. and so it became imperative what they would do in, in those world where people were buried. Normally, they would put them in a cave and close them up, but if not that, if you couldn't afford that, then you were just buried in the ground in a shallow grave. And what they would do after every winter season, every year in the spring, they would go through and they would clean off the marker and then paint it a white color so that people could recognize this is a grave, don't go near it, don't walk over it because if you do, you're unclean and you got to go through all of that stuff to, to get back again.

And what's he saying about these people then? That they're unclean. Every time people come into contact with you, it's making them unclean too.

[ 23 : 12 ] I mean, it's, it's worse than him just saying, you're unclean, it's, anyone who's coming into contact with you is becoming unclean because of how wicked and, and how, how diseased you are on the inside.

Even though you look religious, even though you sound religious, you're just playing this game and it's, people are having to pay the price as a result of that. So, on your notes, here we go again. It seems like, I don't know, 26 years I've been here and it seems like I'm preaching about legalism and religion all the time. And I think it's because we need to hear it. I think the reason why the scriptures bring up this kind of stuff, this mindset that we struggle with is because we need to hear it. We need to know over and over again that we can get into our own ruts.

We might not think that we're religious. We might not think that we're legalistic, especially if we look at other people and compare ourselves. But, believe me, we can get just as religious and just as legalistic as the best of them.

[ 24 : 25 ] So, let's, let's dig into this a little bit then on your notes. First of all, religion leaves us externally clean but internally unchanged.

The outside, we look good. The inside, are we? Are we really different? Have we really changed? Has God done a work in our life? So, for the religious person, the focus then becomes on external appearances rather than on what's on the inside, our internal attitudes on the inside. That's what matters. We go to church. I go to church. I spend time reading my Bible. I spend time in prayer. I give money to the church. I help people out. I'm doing all of these things that may contribute to my relationship with the Lord but not necessarily.

[ 25 : 40 ] Those are just activities that we participate in that make us be different from people who don't do those things but are they contributing to my own relationship, my own dealings with the Lord.

That's, that's the reason. By the way, the reason we go to church, the reason we attend church is so that every Sunday we can get our calendar out and we can check the box and say, I went to church that Sunday because that's what we're supposed to do.

Right? No. That's, that's religion. That's religion. The reason we go to church, the reason we attend church is because we need, we need to be taught the word of God.

We need to worship the Lord together in a setting like this. We need the fellowship, the accountability that comes from meeting together on a regular basis. That's why we do it. We, we're not doing it to check a box. It's the same thing with our Bible reading. We don't read a Bible every day so that we can check it off and say, okay, I did my duty, I did my duty, I did my duty. [ 26 : 50 ] We don't pray certain prayers every day so that we can say, oh, I did my thing, I did my thing, I didn't know. It's all about those things can contribute to and need to contribute to my growing relationship with the Lord.

If you want to have a relationship with someone, there are certain things that you do to, to do that. But you could be married for 25 years to, to someone and not have much of a relationship even though there are things that you do together.

Right? Is that true? That's what the statistics say, easy for me to say. It's, it's, it's what happens when you have a couple that is not in love anymore but, but they share a roof and they share some responsibilities together but not much else.

And so, what is it that we're doing when we participate in these quote unquote religious activities? it's meant, it's designed to, God intended for these things to contribute to help us to grow in our relationship with the Lord.

The religious want to be recognized for what they do not for what's on the inside. Remember the, the story we'll see this where Jesus and, and the disciples are observing from a distance and they see these, these Pharisees and religious leaders going by the contribution box and blowing their trumpets and making sure everybody sees how much money that they're putting into the, the treasury.

[ 28 : 29 ] And again, why are you doing this? Jesus taught about this in the Sermon on the Mount about why when you pray in public are you, are you doing it to be seen by men? Instead, no, go into your own little private room to pray.

Don't, don't know when you're giving don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. It's the idea of, you're not publicizing it. You're not doing it so that people can see what you're doing or how generous you are or that sort of thing.

So that's important. But for the religious person, that's what matters. They learn to over time value public commendation more than personal character.

To be recognized. they want people to notice. That's what it's about.

Be careful of that. Are you concerned that the people in your life notice that you're religious? Does that matter to you?

[ 29 : 43 ] I was bummed. This is years ago now. My ex-brother-in-law, Jewish, Jewish young man, I looked for opportunities to share the gospel with him on a number of occasions and had the opportunity.

He was at one point curious enough to ask me, tell me what it is that you really believe. And I was like, okay, I can do that. But one day, different day, we were driving down the road together, probably to go pick up something at the store when our families were gathered together.

And he said to me, now, Rich, I know you're a pious man. I didn't hear the rest of the statement. I just got stuck on that one.

Because that hurt me. And some people might say, well, wait a minute, if he's saying that you're pious, isn't that a good thing? Not from my perspective.

That pious to me meant religious. And so that was that, I don't know if he intended it that way or if he was not kind of understanding what, maybe there was a better word to use and he wouldn't have known what word would be a better word to use, so he used the word pious.

[ 31 : 12 ] I don't know, how many of you are using the word pious in regular conversation?

Probably not very often, but he did with me that day, and I was kind of like, oh, well, I don't want to be known for that.

Especially in light of what Jesus is teaching here. I don't want to be known for this. You know, and I don't know if that's really what he believed or not, but even to this day, this is like 30 years later, here I am struggling with what he told me 30 years ago by saying that word pious.

It stuck with me that hard. I don't want to be known as a religious person. It's why I hesitate when I'm out in public to let people know what I do for a living. I don't want to tell them that I'm a pastor because I want them to be normal around me.

Right? If I go play golf with someone and I meet up with someone that they don't know who I am or what I do for a living, I don't offer it. You know, if it comes up in conversation, yes, I'm a Christian. You know, that kind of thing. But then as soon as they find out, you know, somewhere like, you know, halfway, two-thirds of the way through the round, they'll say, well, what do you do for a living, Rich? I'm a pastor.

[ 32 : 28 ] I just lost them. I just lost them. The wall goes up, their language changes, it's really kind of a frustrating thing.

And that's what religion does. All of a sudden, I've got to be religious now because I'm in the presence of a religious person.

Did they feel like I was religious before they found out I was a pastor? No, they didn't think that.

They just thought I wasn't hopefully a nice guy. I'll take that. But that, you know, that's it.

So, again, what do we want to be known for? I do want to be known for personal character. I want to be known as a man of integrity, a man of patience, a man who loves, those are good things to be known for, right?

Not for my religiosity. Don't want to be known to that. Here's another one. Sometimes they are quick to teach others to do things that they refuse to do, refuse to practice themselves.

[ 33 : 34 ] I've got a lot of experience with religion and legalism in my past.

I don't know why God chose to bless me that way. But I grew up in a very religious denomination. Everything was about rote and memory and just ritual, going through the motions.

And then early on in my walk with the Lord, I got involved with a church that the church itself wasn't very legalistic, but they were fellowshipping with other churches that were.

And so I had some interesting experiences in that way. I remember the one worship service that I went to. It was actually a revival service.

You guys ever been to a revival service? You know where they schedule revival? You really can't do that, by the way. You can't schedule a revival. It happens when God just supernaturally steps in and people start getting saved.

[ 34 : 46 ] But anyway, I went to this meeting and the preacher was just, it was one of those King James only. Some of you don't have any experience with what I'm about to tell you.

God bless you that you don't, you ought to be grateful you don't have any experience with some of this stuff. But as a King James only saying and the guy is raising his Bible and pounding it on the pulpit and everyone's in suits and ties and dresses and just, he's just hooting and hollering and running around and then he's saying brilliant things like the problem with America today is, I mean we can probably fill that blank with a lot of different things, right?

The problem with America today, pastors, wives who wear pants. I just sat back and was just in awe of the brilliance.

wondering why am I here? Oh my goodness.

And, oh, anyway, I won't tell you more about that. But, but they would charge you to do things that they weren't unwilling to do themselves.

[ 36 : 15 ] They would talk a lot about going door to door or they would talk a lot about praying a certain amount. every day or reading their Bibles a certain amount.

And then what you end up finding out about them is that they had some secret sin that they've been carrying for years. This is what legalism and religion breeds.

It breeds this kind of outward veneer of religiosity, but the inside, there's some wickedness that's going on there. people and so be careful when you see that.

That story is not uncommon, unfortunately. Preachers, and we've seen it, right? We've seen it because we have the internet now and every time a preacher falls it seems like we're able to see the news about it.

But preachers who get up in front of a group of people and are preaching about how people ought to live and what they ought to do and then sure enough there's some secret sin going on on the inside that's terrible.

[ 37 : 23 ] And this is what religion and legalism breeds. Last one under the heading of religion. I have these under the heading of religion and legalism but they're intertwined.

They kind of meet all together here. Religion forgets that there's a huge difference between our personal preferences and biblical mandates. Let's talk about this for a little bit.

Back in the day this is years ago maybe over 20 years ago we put a billboard up coming out of Ludington towards Scottville that had a pair of jeans on it and the phrase that said church clothes. And back then it was a big deal. There were a lot of church people who we weren't you know we're not necessarily going after church people but there were a lot of church people who were like oh no I could never do that.

I could never wear jeans in church. No that would be disrespectful to wear jeans in church. That's oh that's just can't shudder to think.

[ 38 : 33 ] how have times changed since then. Everybody's wearing jeans to church and all of that kind of stuff.

But now here's the twisted part of that. I remember we put that billboard up and I wasn't yet wearing jeans to church and I thought hmm if we tell people that jeans are church clothes and they come to church and the pastor's not wearing jeans isn't that a little mixed messaging.

So I started wearing jeans to church. I remember Sherry and I we have this memory of sitting down in the back maybe in the foyer after everybody's gone and we're just sitting there both of us in our jeans and we're like can you believe we're in church?

We just finished church and we're wearing jeans? I got a closet full of old suits. They're out of style now but I still keep them for sentimental reasons.

And that's just how it is and it changes. Now here's again here's the dangerous part of that is that we can come to church in a pair of shorts and a t-shirt.

[ 39 : 55 ] Right? Probably not today because it's a little chilly but you know back in July. We can come to church and a pair of shorts and a t-shirt maybe flip flops and we're thinking this is how I mean this is cool this is church this I love my Christianity this way it's just wonderful and you come in and you sit down and across the aisle from you there is someone in a suit and tie.

What's going on between the guy in the suit and tie and the guy in the t-shirt and shorts? What are they thinking about each other in that setting?

Let me ask you a question. Is there anything wrong with coming to church in shorts and a t-shirt? I'd say absolutely not. God cares about what's on the inside not the outside.

Modesty is key but that's important. Is there anything wrong with coming to church in a suit and tie?

I hope that you feel if you want to wear a suit and tie if you want to wear a nice dress that you are absolutely welcome and encouraged great if you dress up like that to come to that's awesome that this guy's here too it's wonderful but here's the problem Romans 14 spells this out see if I can take a look at this Romans 14 chapter 2 now this is a different issue but it works for any issue like that okay in Romans 14 it's one person believes he may eat anything if it's crawling on the ground let's kill it and eat it put it on the barbecue it'll be good barbecue sauce will cure a lot of things right while the weak person only eats vegetables now you might look at this and think well he's talking about vegetarians it's probably not talking about vegetarians there it's talking about meat offered to idols big issue in 1st Corinthians chapter 8 and chapter 10 chapter 14 he brings up this subject again as well people didn't want to eat meat that had been previously offered in a pagan temple to a pagan idol and so if they were someplace eating and they weren't sure where the meat came from rather than to question the host and cause some uncomfortableness

I'm just going to eat the vegetables tonight I'm not going to eat the meat because I don't want to if it had been offered to an idol and that was by the way the best place in town to get the best cut of meat was at the local temple because they had a butcher shop associated with the temple where you're offering the best of your animals in sacrifice to your pagan god and so after your sacrifice then you'd go down to the butcher shop and get your steak for dinner that night but it had been offered to idols and so people I don't want to eat meat that's been offered to a pagan god so if I'm a guest I'm just going to eat the so that's what we're talking about here not somebody who's like what we think of today as a vegetarian this is what they're talking about now if you want to read more about that go to 1 Corinthians 8 and 10 and you'll see a lengthy conversation about that whole subject how you ought to treat that subject but Paul is just saying here we've got this issue we've got let's just say we've got someone who thinks coming to church in shorts and a t-shirt is just fine this one over here says no

[ 43 : 35 ] I want to come in a suit and tie so let's say that that's the issue here let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats for God has welcomed him let's again put our two guys in the in the context here let not the one who wears shorts and t-shirts despise the guy wearing the suit because don't you know that's

what happens we see it happen today I think I'm better than because I've been set free I don't have to wear no stinking suit I can just dress however I want and God will accept me as I am praise the Lord is that true absolutely but that doesn't make my relationship with God any better than any different than the man who's wearing the suit so I shouldn't hate that

I shouldn't be hating on that guy because he's wearing a suit or thinking worse of him because he's dressing up or she's dressing up or whatever it is same thing the guy who's wearing the suit what's the tendency for that person that tendency is I'm going to look at that guy wearing shorts and shirts and pass judgment on him because he's not dressed appropriately for church don't you know and so this is the struggle with legalism and religion is this idea that we can start passing judgment and start hating on people based on the choices that they the personal preference suit and tie next week or not who's going to do that for me do

I have any takers maybe it'll be me maybe I'll be looking all 1980s like wearing my suit wouldn't that be fun all right so the text goes on and listen you can do you can pick any subject like this subject of alcohol subject of movies entertainment use of a phone all kinds of different things and remember I cut my teeth in ministry in some places where like man you know you wearing wire rimmed glasses you just of the devil because John Lennon wore wire rimmed glasses don't you know this is the stuff that Christians come up with back in the day that we look back on and we laugh at what were we thinking so one of the lawyers before he's talking to Pharisees he's at the home of a Pharisee who's invited him to dinner and he's just ripped on him so now a lawyer this is not a lawyer in the sense of what we think of a lawyer but a lawyer in the sense of an expert in the

Old Testament law you want an opinion you want a statement about what the law says on this given and I think Jesus would say yep I did and he said well just in case you missed it let me include you too woe to you Pharisees now woe to you lawyers also for you load people with burdens hard to bear and you yourselves do not touch the burdens with one of your fingers you're telling people how to live but inside you're full of greed and you're holding back expectations on the people who are listening to your teaching but you're not willing to follow through with yourself it's hypocrisy to a T woe to you for you build the tombs of the prophets whom your fathers killed the old testament is just rife with history of how the

Israelites just one prophet after another that God would send them and they didn't like the prophet's message which was repent get rid of these false gods and we don't like you anymore so they killed them all and well we're the descendants of those people and we think those prophets are meaningful and so we're going to build some monuments to them and tombs and make sure that they're properly cared for because we care while at the same time they're taking the head off of John the Baptist and wanting to put Jesus to death the greatest of all the prophets right so you are witnesses and consent to the deeds of your fathers for they killed them and you built their tombs do you see the hypocrisy of that therefore the wisdom of God said and now he's not quoting from any Old Testament wisdom passage he's actually personifying wisdom giving it human traits the wisdom of

[ 49 : 23 ] God said I will send them prophets and apostles some of whom they will kill and persecute so that the blood of all the prophets said from the foundation of the world may be charged against this generation this generation that was about to put Jesus to death he's saying all of it all this Old Testament history of putting the prophets to death from the blood of Abel you guys remember Abel you got all the way page four in your Bibles Genesis chapter four Abel who gets back of the head with a rock from his brother because his worship was accepted and Cain's was not so Cain killed him right he's like the first prophet put to death all the way to Zechariah now this is not the

Zechariah that the book of the minor prophets is named for that he wrote that book that prophecy this is a prophet in the Old Testament at the end of Judah's history in Jerusalem just before they're conquered and going into Babylonian captivity he's the last prophet killed in the Old Testament all of these prophets from Abel all the way down to Zechariah who they killed right there in the temple between the altar and the sanctuary right there in the temple they stoned him the king commanded arranged for him to be stoned to death right there in the temple nice guys these people yes I tell you it will be required their blood will be required of this generation you will be held accountable for those deaths so woe to you lawyers for you have taken away the key of knowledge you didn't even enter yourselves and you hindered those who were entering not only don't you get it not only are you at fault because your blood will be on account you are the ones who put these prophets to

death you are accountable for all of this and not only that all these people who are looking to you who are saying we trust you as our teachers as our leaders and you're leading them astray you're just full blown hypocrites in front of them and pointing them in the wrong direction you're blind guides you're false teachers you are guilty whoa whoa so here again one more time problem with problem with legalism and here's here's some problems with legalism the first one here is legalism thinks yes

I'm a Christian so we're up now into 2025 we're sitting here at Crossroads Church and this is the problem with legalism that I would say I struggle with my guess is you do as well okay because it's so easy for us to fall back into whenever our relationship with the Lord gets stagnant we begin to fall back into a legalistic mindset that says I'm still doing the right stuff I'm not going to the bars I'm not you know smoking cigarettes and I'm not you know drinking alcohol and I'm not dating the girls that do right you know that famous saying right I'm not doing all this stuff and I'm going to church and I'm I'm doing a list of rules that I'm obeying therefore I'm good

I'm okay with God now here's the caution this looks good on the outside again much like religion this looks good on the outside problem that can happen is that you can get people you can get guys in church into church leadership positions deacons pastors elders who got this going on because from everybody what they can see on the outside they look good it sounds good it's like yeah this this is a godly man because of all the things that he's being obedient to but on the inside what's there what's there and that for us is a key thing that we're shepherding that we're guarding over with the people in our leadership it's it's it's it's it's does what they appear to be on the outside is what on the inside and that there's a whole section of this 1st timothy chapter 3 titus chapter 1 1st peter chapter 5 these are passages that teach us the kind of character the kind of what's going on on the inside of a of a man that would qualify him for a position of leadership in the local church that's what matters that's hard to measure isn't it and so we have some very frank conversations over these kinds of things but this is one of the traps of legalism and we can fall prey to it here's another part of this that's related they can they admire people who can't challenge how they think or live who can't who can't challenge

I'll speak of myself okay who can't challenge me the way that I think or the way that I live who can't who's in a position that they can't challenge me they can't hold me accountable someone who shares your faults I got one better than that someone who's dead right can someone who's dead someone from the past challenge me the way that I think we like that and and and how this carries carries through is comments that people will say about how they used to like church back in the day I remember when I was growing up that this is how it used to be anybody guilty of saying something along those kind of lines anybody come on I'm not the only one I do this I do it too often

[ 56 : 44 ] I I going to challenge myself and maybe in the process you'll get challenged too it's what we do when we get older we like to reminisce about the days gone by about the good old days about how it used to be oh if you kids only knew how rough we had it my first job or how I went to school or how the teachers treated me or how the preacher can't defend himself and it's like ah now we need to hold in high honor those who lived well those who taught us well absolutely but let me ask you a question and this is what convicts me all the time that I spend talking about how it used to be how good it was the things that

I had to go through and oh it's not like that anymore oh we used to go play outside when the street lights turned on that's when we knew to come home how does that make people feel they missed out on all the best stuff nothing good that's left for them it's all gone we used it all up nothing good left for them it's all just in the past oh how I wish we could be like 1965 again and again I get it I get that we like to reminisce I get that we get nostalgic and there's nothing wrong with that I would just caution us especially for us that maybe have a little gray going on or a little years behind us that we be mindful of the next generation that's coming up that we're not just we're not going to give them any hope anymore there's no hope left because we used it all up because everything was so good when

I was a kid and everything was so be careful with that be careful when it comes to reminiscing about how church used to be and those kinds of things God is wanting us to press forward forgetting those things which are behind and pressing forward to the goal that's how we ought to live I be looking for the future because as a believer you got a future if you're that age right your future is pretty stinking wonderful I don't care how good your past was your future is better than your past so keep that in mind no matter how difficult our times may be in the years ahead of us here we have a

future I gotta I gotta get moving legalism and slaves Jesus came to set us free rules form an outer shell but on the inside it's just dead there's no substance there with legalism but rich are you saying that we shouldn't have standards no you gotta have standards for what you can do or not do absolutely but they're yours not anybody else's okay now there are biblical mandates like I'm not gonna go kill my neighbor because I don't like the way he mows his lawn there's something in the Bible that says I can't do that right but if my neighbor's kid gets a haircut that I don't like shut my mouth I don't have to say anything about it right it's not not my not my thing or how they dress or how anybody I gotta go last two verses as he went away from there I can imagine it was a wonderful greeting when he left right see you soon can't wait as he went away from there the scribes and the Pharisees began to press him hard and to provoke him to speak about many things lying in wait for him to catch him in something that he might say that they might kill him doesn't say that but it's that's their intent the idea here is that legalism would rather control

God than be controlled by God what a place to be what a place to be oh my goodness yeah I can make God do what I want him to do so for the religious the legalist whenever they're exposed to convicting truth they tend not to repent but to resist what me no it's your fault you did it you're the problem and I'm going to leave you with a couple questions and then we got to go real quick ask yourselves these questions as you're leaving over over lunch would people say that I'm more religious or more loving guess which one you want to be do you want to be known for being religious nah do

[ 62 : 42 ] I want to be known for being loving yeah there you go that's the target number two would people say that I'm more concerned about rules or am I more concerned about relationships read the gospel according to God's law I'm guilty I should have death but because he loves me what he do he sent his son to die on the cross and rose again from the dead that we might be saved I'm glad I get mercy I'm glad I don't get justice mercy is better than justice and that's true for us how we carry out our relationships as well Lord thank you for your grace and your goodness in our lives I pray

Lord that that we would recognize in our own lives our own struggles with religion with legalism because we too can struggle with it we can get caught up into thinking that man the way that I do Christianity is the bomb and that's just the way it's supposed to be but Lord convict me when I start to think that help me to see that there are many ways that we can live out this Christian life and different perspectives that people have people make different choices about disputable matters and we need to be okay with that Lord we do need to come together on things that are biblical mandates on things that are clearly stated in the word of God that we can know that we can say thus saith the Lord and have that as a rock solid foundation we believe that but

Lord there's so much about life that is left up to us and we want to in our own relationship with you figure that out and live in a way that honors you and respects and demonstrates love to the people that are around us the people that are in our circle of influence the people that we are given charge over with our families and workplaces!

Lord may we be known as people who love love you primarily and then love one another Lord may that may that may those things be the mark of our lives and may we not be known for religiousness or our rules help us to see the hypocrisy of those things to recognize it in our own selves not to be concerned with what's going on in other people's worlds but what's going on in my world in my heart what am I struggling with and be willing to repent and to trust you and to move forward Lord we love you and we praise you and we ask it now in Jesus name Amen