

*“Christian Liberty, Legalism and the Glory of Christ  
in the Local Assembly”*

*1 Corinthians 10:23-11:1*

*Celebrating the Centrality of Christ in the Local Assembly*

By way of review let us reconsider our thoughts from last week.

In verses 31 through 11:1 Paul will summarize his primary ideas:

- (1) The glory of God - The pattern to do all to God’s glory (v. 31 [Do everything to the glory of God]),
- (2) The good of man - The pattern to maintain proper relations to all men (vv. 32, 33 [Give no offense]), and
- (3) The godly example - The pattern to follow the apostolic example (11:1 [Be followers of Paul]).

How we go about fulfilling these three guiding principles is stated with five actions.

- (1) Permissible over expedient (v. 23a)
- (2) Edification over gratification (v. 23b)
- (3) Others over self (v. 24)
- (4) Liberty over legalism (vv. 25-27)
- (5) Condescension over condemnation (vv. 28-30)

This morning I wish to address the issue of legalism.

**Defining Legalism**

What is legalism? *Legalism is not what you do; it is why you do it that makes you a legalist.* Legalism is not only with reference to our initial justification but also in our ongoing sanctification and glorification. Paul is clear in Galatians 3:1-6. This is also clear in Colossians 2:20-3:5.

Thus legalism is not what you do but why you do it. I would like to make nine statements concerning a legalistic mindset. The question I have for us is where are we in all of this?

1. Legalism believes man’s obedience *cooperates with* grace instead of believing it is a *consequence of* grace.
2. Legalism believes the saved individual is now capable, with the Holy Spirit’s enablement, to work in such a way as to merit divine favor.
3. Legalism views the New Testament imperative as a moral obligation.

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There is a difference between legalism and obedience.

- Legalism keeps the law in order to gain favor.
- Obedience keeps the law because it has favor.
- Adherence to the Law/commands in legalism is a work of the flesh.
- Adherence to the Law/commands under grace is a fruit of the Spirit.

As a New Testament believer I am not lawless, but I am no longer under the Law (Rom. 6:14, 15).

4. Legalism believes man's obedience makes God a debtor to him for good.
5. Legalism fears disobedience because of divine retribution.
6. Legalism believes what it merits by grace must now be maintained by works.

The next three tie in strongly with our text in 1 Corinthians 10:29, 30.

7. Legalism believes its judgment of others is infallible.
8. Legalism places demands on others for conformity to their rules.
9. Legalism judges others based on their appearance.