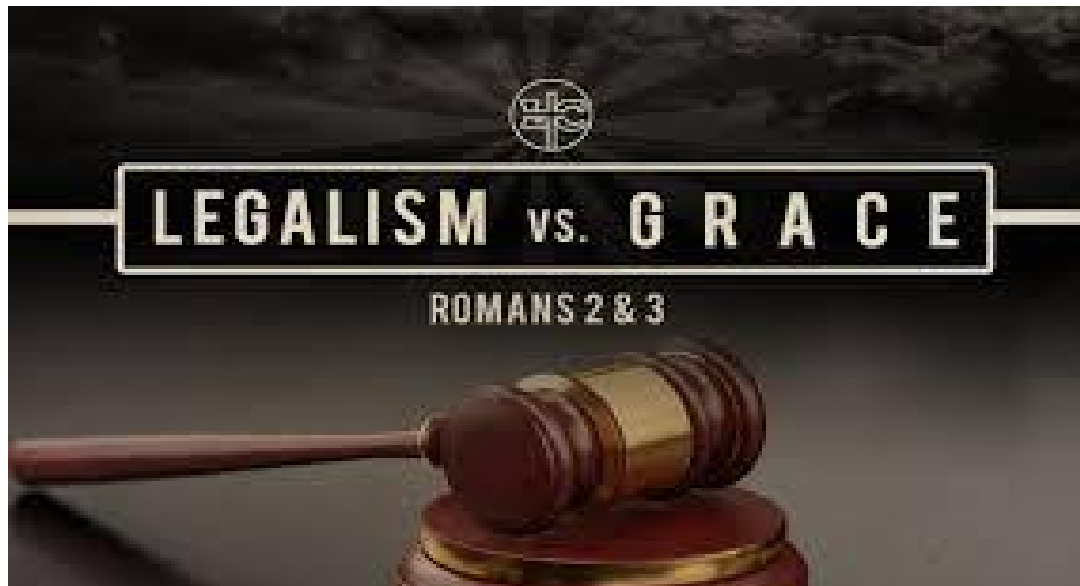


FROM LEGALISM TO GRACE-THE PROGRESSIVE PATH



Dictionary defines legalism (plural legalisms) as a philosophy of focusing on the text of written law to the exclusion of the intent of law, elevating strict adherence to law over justice, mercy, grace and common sense.

(religion) A doctrine of salvation by strictly adhering to the requirements of divine law.

The covenant which they operate was a performance based covenant. If you do these then I will bless you and if you don't do them then you are cursed. Our Lord was born under the law Gal 4:4, He grew up going into the temple, was circumcised according to the Abrahamic covenant, dedicated on the eighth day according to the law of Moses Luke 2:21-24. He paid the temple money with Peter. He Himself quoted so much from the laws, prophets and psalms and He defeated the devil during His temptation using the writing of Moses Luke 4.

As we move from the Gospel through the Acts, we shall see the progressive way the Lord led us from legalism unto His grace.

Mat 19:16-17 KJV 16 And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? 17 And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.

This account is found also in Mar 10:17-31; Luke 18:18-39

He was a young rich ruler that came to inquire from the Lord Jesus what good thing he must do in order to be saved or to enter into eternal life. Why will the man ask such a question? It was

because the man could be a pharisee or a believing jew who believes that doing good will earn one eternal life.

The Lord told him to go and keep the commandments. Why did the Lord refer him to the law? Does keeping the law save anyone?

The jew believes that keeping the whole laws will grant a place of eternal rest. However, this young man knew that something was missing and in order for him to have rest and peace he decided to ask if there is any other thing that he needed to do for him to be saved.

When the Lord told him that he should go and keep the commandments. He asked the Lord which of them and the Lord listed them. The young ruler told the Lord that he has been keeping the law since he was young.

This could not have been true because according to Deut 6:25, it is required that one must be perfect and what that perfection means was that he must have kept the whole law wholeheartedly. In Deut 28:1 the blessings were tied to keeping the whole law. James 2; 10 says that if you keep the whole law and offend or break one, just one then you have broken all.

In order to prove to the young man that he has not kept the whole law as he said and that keeping the law will not grant anyone eternal life because it is impossible to keep all of them. No one has ever kept them except the Lord Jesus Himself. The Lord though commended him asked to do one more thing if really he wants to be perfect and that is he should go and sell all that he has. give them to the poor and then come to follow him. The Bible says that the young rich ruler was sad, he didn't come back to the Lord.

Rom 2:13 KJV (For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified.

This character and his action points to the fact that he had not kept even the first commandment not to talk of the whole. If he loves the Lord God as he claims to do and has love towards his neighbour he would have agreed to give those things away. But his attachment to the mundane things of life prove otherwise. Those things have become "gods" to him and yet the book of the law says that you will not serve or have any other God besides me. It is not keeping the letters of the law but the intent and the spirit of the law. The law points to the Lord Jesus.

Act 2:37 KJV Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?

The jews from all over Jerusalem that came for the feast of the Pentecost were the ones that asked this question after listening to the message of peter. Peter had through the power of the Holy Ghost and drawing from the scripture of Psalms 22, 110 and Joel preached unto them. They were convicted. I believe that is by the power of the Holy Ghost because the Lord Jesus

had said when He comes , He will convict the world of sin Jn 16:8. These people were pricked in the heart that they asked the question what they must do.

The word “do” is coming again because an average jew believes that he must do something to be able to earn the favour of God and to receive acceptance of Him. Their covenant was based on the performance and it sank deep into their life. What will they do now because they have known that they had rejected the Lord and Messiah who was the hope of Israel. They had humiliated him by killing Him who had come to save them. What can they do to undo the evil they had done?

Peter told them to repent.

Act 2:38 KJV Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

If you study the response of Peter, he did not refer them to the doings of the law or commandments but rather asked them to change their mind and their view of the Lord Jesus and receive Him as the Messiah that He was. There is a progressive movement from the law dominance to grace.

When Paul encountered the Lord on the way to Damascus, he asked the same question about what he must do.

Act 9:6 KJV And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what will thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.

Paul up to this time had been doing his own thing, persecuting the church and hindering the gospel because he was zealous for the jewish religion Phi 3:6. Now he met the Lord of that religion he was persecuting and he asked the question. However, the Lord told him to go to the city and he would be told what he must do in order to be what he was called to do in life.

When he eventually got to Annanias, what did he tell him that he must do? Is Paul to keep the whole law or what?

Act 9:17 KJV And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.

Paul was to receive his sight, filled with the Holy Ghost and be baptised. Another right step in the right direction as we progressively moved from the law to legalism to the grace of the Lord Jesus.

There were many things that the Lord wanted to share with the disciples and I believed that the concept of grace was among them but they couldn't bear them. They have the Holy Spirit.

Joh 16:12 KJV I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.

1Co 2:14 KJV But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

Paul received the privilege of being the pioneer instrument of preaching the grace of the Lord Jesus. This is what has been concealed from the foundation of the world and now revealed to the Apostle. All that the Lord wanted to say to the Apostles who were His disciples and they were not able to receive because they didn't have the Holy Spirit is now revealed to and received by Paul.

Col 1:26-27 KJV 26 Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: 27 To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:

However this question of what one must do in order to be saved still came up in the prison while Paul and Silas were there.

Act 16:30-32 KJV 30 And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? 31 And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. 32 And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house.

When the jailer saw the supernatural miracle that took place he fell down on his knees to the people he was to be in charge of and called them "Sirs". He asked what he must do in order to be saved. The jailer was talking to the propagandist of grace. What was Paul's answer to him? He said he should believe on the Lord Jesus and he would be saved. PERIOD. He was not asked to keep the whole law or offer sacrifice for anything. He was not asked to perform penance or do any special thing in order to be saved but just to believe.

The Lord gave requirement to be saved while he was on the earth before His departure:

Mar 16:16 KJV He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

John 3:18 KJV He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

John 5:24 KJV Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.

John 6:40 KJV And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.

Joh 6:47 KJV Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.

Act 20:21 KJV Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

The question has been answered and we don;t need to ask such today. We must believe in the Lord Jesus for us to be saved.

Rom 1:16 KJV For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

This is how we receive salvation:

Rom 10:9-11 KJV 9 That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. 10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. 11 For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.

It is not by doing but by believing. Many have put their trust in certain activities in today's church or religious activities which are not bad in themselves but they are not means of salvation. Some think receiving sacrament, paying tithe, giving alms to the poor and doing many benevolent acts will make them enter into eternal life. Nothing can be farther from truth than this. Those acts should be done based on faith in the Lord Jesus and not to make us receive acceptance with God. They will fail us.

Rom 3:20 KJV Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

To some other people they have the notion of receiving justification in doctrines of the church like baptism or circumcision. Paul argued this with the Jews in Galatia who were trying to go back into Judaism and law.

Gal 5:2-4 KJV 2 Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. 3 For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to

do the whole law. 4 Christ has become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye have fallen from grace.

People fall from grace not because they committed sin but because they are trying to be justified by the law.

Rom 4:25 KJV Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.

Today we do the work of the law because of the faith we have in the Lord and not as means of procuring favour from Him. nobody can be justified by the deeds of the law. It becomes self righteous acts when we trust in our goodness rather than putting our faith in a saviour.

Eph 2:8 KJV For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:

Have you received Jesus as your Lord and saviour or you are still trusting in your own goodness and religious duties? It is only faith in the Lord Jesus that saves. Receive Him today.

This is my conclusion:

Rom 3:28 KJV Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.