



The Voice of Truth



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You're A Legalist!

By Jimmy Pettigrew

I have often been branded as a legalist. I have often heard my brethren being called by such an expression. Why are we recognized by some by this term? What do they mean when they call us by such a name? What precisely does it mean when they taint you as being legalistic?

They ridicule and condemn us because we stand for truth, that in the matters of faith we have a "Thus saith the Lord" for the things we do and practice. "Jimmy, you are just too concerned about obedience; you're what we call a Bible thumper; you're just determined to keep God's commandments; you're just a Pharisee!" How presumptuous for some to denounce one who exhibits loyalty and faithfulness to God's words, as if we are doing a bad thing!

Look at the Pharisees: yes, they were guilty of hypocrisy (**Matthew 23:1ff**); yes, they pretended to be righteous, "*but inwardly are full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness*" (**Matthew 23:27**). Yes, their righteousness was only an outward appearance of righteousness (**Matthew 23:28**); yes, they went about to establish "*their own righteousness*" (**Romans 10:3**) by authorizing and observing man-made traditions. Yes, they gave attention to some Biblical truths but also neglected others of greater importance (**Matthew 23:23-24**). But, I do want you to notice that the Pharisees were not condemned because they were too zealous about strict obedience to God's will. They were condemned because "*they say, and do not*" (**Matthew 23:2**).

People need to wake up! God has always been pleased with the person who maintains absolute loyalty to the specifics of His commands (**John 14:15; 15:14; Hebrews 5:9**). Shame on a person who calls one a legalist,

fundamentalist, a Bible thumper or a Pharisee for the purpose of denouncing him because he exhibits loyalty, faithfulness, and obedience to God's word. "*To obey is better than sacrifice*" (**1 Samuel 15:22**). Samuel made it clear that no amount of sacrifice can take the place of obedience to God's Word. Nothing is acceptable to God unless it is done according to His will (**Leviticus 10:1ff**).

If man is to be victorious in living life acceptably before God His Creator, then He must have a proper regard for God's authority. That which God expects of man and that upon which salvation is conditioned may be summed up in one word: **OBEDIENCE (Hebrews 5:8-9)**. And that salvation is available to such as obey Him, "*but he that obeyeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him*" (**John 3:36**). Obedience to the will of God is expected if we are to enter the kingdom of heaven (**Matthew 7:21-23**). Obedience to the will of God is required if we are to abide for ever (**1 John 2:17**). Obedience is required of all, and if we refuse then we have no right to call Jesus our Lord (**Luke 6:46**). "*For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother*" (**Mark 3:35**).

Everything we read in scripture compels us toward grateful submissions and obedience to His will. Many who have this attitude toward rigid obedience are actually demonstrating they are weak and unfaithful to God; calling one a legalist, fundamentalist, Pharisee or Bible thumper is just a cover up to give good reason for their departure from the faith and their own weakness in the faith. The religious thinking is "we want a faith without restraints or responsibilities" - no "Thou shalt nots," no laws or commandments to keep - just love and grace and free-

dom. These false teachers freely label emphasis on keeping the commands of God as "legalism." Truly, one is a legalist if a claim is made that obeying God's commands obligates God and, therefore, a person deserves salvation. Never have I heard any such teaching among us, nor have I known of any member boasting of obeying God. To the contrary! *"So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded of you, say, we are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do"* (Luke 17:10). Jehovah has always required His children to carefully obey His commandments without addition, subtraction or substitution (Deuteronomy 4:2; Leviticus 10:1-2; Galatians 1:6-9; 2 John. 9-11; Revelation 22:18-19). We must do things exactly right to be pleasing to God, *"Whatsoever is commanded by the God of heaven, let it be done exactly for the house of the God of heaven"* (Ezra 7:23).

So, if you are calling me a legalist, fundamentalist, a Bible thumper or Pharisee because I show evidence of loyalty, faithfulness and obedience to God's word, **THANK YOU** for the comments! The disobedient will perish (Romans 6:16-18; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9). *"The wicked plotteth against the just, and gnasheth upon him with his teeth. The Lord will laugh at him; for he seeth that his day is coming"* (Psa 37:12-13). Only those who obey Jesus as Lord are saved by the Savior (Hebrews 5:8-9). *"(This is) the end of the matter; all hath been heard: fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole (duty) of man"* (Eccl. 12:13). ♦

"Sheep Of God's Pasture"

By Jarrod Jacobs

As one reads the Bible, it becomes clear that God is called the shepherd, and His people are called His sheep. Some make sarcastic remarks in reference to this, calling folks "sheeple" or implying that being a sheep in God's pasture is demeaning in some way. Nothing could be further from the truth.

When we read the Bible, we see that the

illustration of shepherd to sheep describes a relationship of love, care, protection, supplying needs, sacrifice, and the like. This is evident when we read **Psalm 23** and learn all the things the Lord does as our shepherd. Not only in **Psalm 23**, but also in **John 10**, we read about Christ's contrast of the true shepherd and the hireling (**Jn. 10:1-18**). How thankful we ought to be for the love, care, nourishment, protection, sacrifice, and blessings God has afforded those of us who are His sheep!

In this article, I wish for us to look at things from a little different angle. Instead of a study about the Shepherd and what He does for us, let us look at His sheep. Let us ask what kind of sheep we are. Are we acting in a way that would please the Shepherd? Since we are to be the sheep of His pasture (**Ps. 79:13**), what kind of sheep are we?

Listening Sheep?

Jesus said that His sheep listen to Him and in fact listen for their name, because He knows them by name (**Jn. 10:3**). In fact, these sheep are listening so intently, and are so tuned to the Shepherd's voice that if someone else tries to call for them, they run away from that person (**Jn. 10:5**). Are we like this? Do we listen for our Master's voice as we read and study the word of God daily (**I Tim. 4:16; II Tim. 2:2**)? Are we listening for the Shepherd's voice as we hear the words read and preached during worship?

Could it be that we are listening to other "voices" instead of the voice of the Shepherd (**Jn. 10**)? Other voices are ultimately calling us into sin and destruction because they are leading us away from the Good Shepherd (**Jn. 10:11**), the Chief Shepherd (**I Pet. 5:4**) who loves us so much that He died so that we might be saved (**Matt. 20:28**)! Are we listening to the devil, who tells us that God's ways are "unreasonable", or are "not realistic" in our current environment? Do we not realize that such "voices" are calling us away from Christ, and are leading us to destruction? Do we even care?

Hebrews 3:15 says, “Today if ye will **hear his voice**, harden not your hearts” In connection with this, Jesus said, “*the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers*” (**Jn. 10:3-5**).

What if someone speaks falsehoods to us (**II Pet. 2:1-3**)? Do we run away from false doctrine, or do we draw near, wanting to hear what is said, like the Athenians did (**Acts 17:21**)? Sadly, some “sheep” are looking for the “new”, the “different”, and the “popular” to soothe their itching ears (**II Tim. 4:3-4**). “New”, “popular”, “and “different” are not words which describe the old Jerusalem gospel! It is the same truth that has been in existence for 2000 years! It is this same truth which will save, or set us free from sin (**Rom. 1:16; Jn. 8:32**). Friend, for what are we listening? Are we the listening sheep that bring glory and honor to the Chief Shepherd?

Wandering Sheep?

Jesus lamented when He saw people wandering like sheep without a shepherd (**Matt. 9:36; Mk. 6:34**). This was the way many people were then, and how many people are today. They go through life as if they have no “chart or compass” and then wonder why their lives are in such a mess. Could this be said of you? Be honest! (**Jer. 10:23**)

In thinking about wandering sheep, I remember that Jesus spoke a parable about a shepherd who had to leave his 99 sheep to go after one who had wandered away (**Lk. 15:1-7**). Yes, the shepherd was happy when he found his sheep, and the point was made that in like manner there is rejoicing in Heaven when one sinner repents of his sin and returns to the “fold” (**Lk. 15:5-6**). Yet, have we considered the fact that the shepherd would not have had to spend his time and effort searching if the sheep hadn’t wandered off in the first place? I am not questioning the Lord, and there ought to be rejoic-

ing on earth just as there is rejoicing in Heaven when a lost one returns. Yet, let us remember that the worry, work, energy, and effort used on that lost one could have been used in other ways if the sheep would have just stayed where he belonged and had not wandered off!

Could it be that as we read these lines, we can see ourselves as that wandering sheep in the parable of **Luke 15**? I would like to think that the events described in **Luke 15** produced a sadder, but wiser sheep, who then knew not to wander off anymore. What about us? Let these thoughts be a “wake-up” call to the wandering sheep today. Please repent and come back to God before it is too late. Have we wandered off due to our ignorance? If so, then listen to the voice of Christ, calling you through the gospel to return to Him (**II Thess. 2:14**). Listen to friends and loved ones who are calling you back to the “fold” (**Gal. 6:1; Jas. 5:19-20**). Open your eyes and recognize what your sin has done to you and to those near you (**Rom. 6:23; Ecc. 9:18**). You are wandering further from the light, and further into darkness. There is nothing to be gained by this, and everything to lose! (**Matt. 7:13-14**)

Following Sheep?

Go back to **Psalm 23** and see the illustration of the sheep and shepherd. When we are sheep in the Lord’s pasture and are following Him, we “*shall not want*”, i.e., shall not lack (**Ps. 23:1**). We shall be nourished well (**Ps. 23:2**). Too, we will be well-protected with the Lord’s rod and staff. Even when going through the saddest and lowliest of valleys, we are protected, loved, and cared for by our Shepherd (**Ps. 23:4**)! This is what He gladly does for us.

John 10:4 speaks of the sheep of the Lord who follow Him and know His voice. This thought is repeated in verses **14** and **27** as well. Those who follow know Christ, the Shepherd. Thus, we ask the question, “Do you know Christ?” If you say you know Him, but are not following Him, you are a liar. This is the sentiment of **I John 1:6**, as well as

John 10.

To follow Christ means we are active in this work on a daily basis. It is not a “hit-and-miss” type of lifestyle, but a steady, ongoing, way of life (**I Cor. 15:58**). It fills our days with concern over pleasing the God of Heaven and bringing precious souls to Him (**Mk. 16:15; II Tim. 2:2; Eph. 6:4**).

The sheep who follow the Good Shepherd are those who follow Christ “*through the valley of the shadow of death.*” You know, it is easy to follow Christ to “*green pastures*” and “*beside the still waters.*” Yet, where are we when the sun goes down and the winds blow? Where are we when people curse us for following Christ (**I Pet. 4:4**)? Where are we when “*evil men and seducers... wax worse and worse*” and we are the subjects of their evil words and deeds (**II Tim. 3:13**)? Where are we when hard times come in marriages, or in other family relationships? Where are we when our friends act hateful toward us? Do we give up and quit? The Hebrew writer said that those Jewish Christians were “*not of them who draw back unto perdi-*

tion; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul” (**Heb. 10:39**). Could he say the same thing about us if he wrote this letter today? Are we truly the “following sheep” that we ought to be?

Conclusion

In simple terms, it comes down to a matter of trust. Who do we trust? The point Jesus was making in **John 10**, and the point David was making in **Psalms 23** was that His sheep trust Him implicitly. They hear His voice, and no other. They trust Him and no other. They follow Him and no other. Could Christ say that about us, right now? If not, then it is time we corrected this attitude while we still have the chance to do so (**II Cor. 6:2**). So long as we are not trusting the Lord, Satan has a door through which he can “call”, beg, coax, cajole, and tempt us to turning from the Good Shepherd and following him instead (**I Jn. 2:15-17; I Pet. 5:8**). Friend, are we going to hear His voice and obey? Who do we trust?

Credit: www.southside-churchofchrist.com ♦

***A faith that will not take us to worship will not
Take us to heaven!***

What Must I Do To Be Saved?

Hear and Learn - Rom. 10:17 m. 10:9-10 ; 1 Pet. 3:21 ; John 6:45; 17:3

Believe - Heb. 11:6; John 6:29; 8:24

Repent - Luke 13:3; Acts 3:19; 17:30

Confess the Lord - Matt. 10:32-33; Romans 10:9-10; 1 Pet. 3:21

Be Baptized - Mark 16:16; Acts 22:16; Gal. 3:26-27

Continue in the Apostles' Teaching - Acts 2:42; 2 Tim. 3:14-17

About the Hillcrest church of Christ

Evangelist: Jimmy Pettigrew

How to Contact Us

Telephone: (920)499-5677
E-mail: hillcrestcofc@live.com

**Our Address**

1621 Hillcrest Drive
Green Bay, WI 54313

**Schedule of Assembly**

Bible Study: Sunday, 9:00am
Worship Service: Sunday, 10:00am
Bible Study: Wednesday, 7:00pm*

*A song service is held on the last Wednesday of every month

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