

# Love or Legalism?

When we insist men must adhere strictly to the commandments of God, is it love or legalism?

Men say it is legalism. They say, "We should obey a Savior, not a system." Or, "Give me the man, not a plan." Their idea is that to admit the existence of a law by which man must live in order to be right with God, is legalism.

God, however, calls this love. The Spirit said, "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome" (1 John 5:3). Jesus said, "If you love Me, keep My commandments" (John 14:15). Keeping the commandments of God is an expression of

By Steven F. Deaton love, not legalism. To insist others do the same is love for God and man, not legalism in a system or plan.

The Holy Spirit was sent to reveal all truth (John 16:13). Why would anyone think the truth was revealed so men could be cavalier toward it? It was revealed so men could obey it and be set free (John 8:32). Paul wrote, "But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered" (Romans 6:17). This does not destroy a relationship with the Savior, for it is His system--the gospel (Hebrews 5:9).



<b>Sunday 5:15</b> Kid's Class at the Building	<b>Tuesday 7:00 PM</b> "Contending for the Faith" Class Taught by Larry Rouse	<b>Thursday 7:00 PM</b> Truth Seekers Class on Campus Evidences for the Resurrection
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Sick			
Richard Wood (Melanie Smith's Uncle)	Eli Williams (Friend of Sarah Norman)	Frank Hand (Laura Humphrey's dad)	Sandlyn Fultz (Davis Fultz's Sister)
Gloria Detmer and Carol Dickerson (Toni Herd's Sisters)	Don Lanier (Father of Greg Lanier)	Johnny Welsh (Debbi Coleman's Cousin)	Jeffery Miller (Friend of Walker Davis)
Virginia Crawford (Hunter's Sister-In-Law)	Neal May (Manna Jones' Mother)	Easton Alexander (Phillip Box's cousin's baby)	Andrew Hagewood (Friend of Sarah Norman)
Gaylord Huffman (Jennifer Daniel's Grandfather)	Quinton Addison (April Jerkins Grandfather)	Betty Bradford	Arline Harkrider (Nichole Pender's Grandmother)
Gerald White (Christopher, Anna and Wesley's Father)	Dave Brown (Friend of the Lanier's)	Dale Herd (William Herd's brother)	Carl Alexander (Hannah Alexander's Uncle)
Marty and Aubrey Meeks, Russell Dickerson (Toni Herd's Nephews)	Melissa Walker (Chuck Hahn's Cousin)	Roger Whatley (Daphene Whatley's son)	Marion Vanhal (Paula Davis' Uncle)

- May Birthdays**
- 1 - Barrett Gilbert
  - 2 - Emily Anne Rouse
  - 3 - Paula Davis
  - 10 - Ian Norman
  - 11 - Caleb George
  - 11 - Scott Perkins
  - 12 - Daphene Whatley
  - 13 - Jana Hall
  - 13 - Anna Grace Long
  - 15 - Bryce Daniels
  - 15 - Kerri Pender
  - 16 - Shawna Harris
  - 19 - Madison Seals
  - 24 - Andy Roberts
  - 25 - Chuck Hahn
  - 26 - Fallon Hartsell
  - 28 - Candy Long
  - 29 - Rebekah Buchanon

**News and Notes**

- Our VBS will be on June 18-21. Be sure to have the registration forms for children attending to be turned in by May 18.
- Let us remember David Hartsell and his family in our prayers. He has returned home but still has a long way to go.
- Let us remember our expectant mothers in our prayers, Candy Long and Terria Burton.
- We have printed VBS postcards in the foyer for you to use to invite others!
- Remember Greg Lanier's father, Don Lanier, in prayers as he continues to receive chemo treatments.
- Brother Rouse will start a class for all who are interested in "Contending for the Faith" starting Tuesday at 7 PM at the bld.



## Someone Cares

By W. Frank Walton



**Thoughts to Ponder**  
Love makes a subtle man out of a crude one; it gives eloquence to the mute; it gives courage to the cowardly, and makes the idle quick and sharp.

David expressed a modern cry long ago : "No one is concerned for me...no one cares for my soul" (Psa 142:4). We are sharing this with you because we're interested in you!

Our world seems cold and uncaring. Our depersonalized society has crowded cities filled with strangers. Families are fractured or uprooted. Our fast-paced age has everyone going separate ways. Many feel alone. This is driven home by the sad story of Judith Bucknell. At 38, she was an attractive, successful executive secretary in Miami. She was tragically stabbed to death a few years ago. The police found a diary. *The Miami Herald* ran a feature on her lonely plight: "Judith Bucknell has failed to connect...many lovers, much love offered, none returned." Here's a diary excerpt: "What about me!...Who is going to love Judy Bucknell? I feel so old. Unloved. Unwanted. Abandoned. Used up. I want to cry and sleep forever....I'm alone and I want to share something with somebody."

So, who cares? We do!

**1. Who is Interested in Helping?** In this heartless world, most seem to look out for #1. Selfish unconcern, strife, envy, gossip and betrayal in human relationships are, according to the Bible, all symptoms of man's sinful corruption and alienation from God (Rom 1:28-32; 3:19-28).

I care enough about you to invite you to become a fellow seeker with us of the truth of Christ that guides to the eternal home of the soul. Get in touch with the part of you that will live somewhere forever? Someone has said, "Get ready for eternity — there's no stopping it!"

But there is hope! Someone really cares about you. We're simple New Testament Christians, endeavoring to be caring followers of Jesus Christ. We have come to know God's loving care that has changed our lives. "We love because He first loved us" (1 Jn 4:19). God gave the best and dearest He had, His Son Jesus, to save us from our sins (Jn 3:16). Jesus' death on the cross is the greatest demonstration of love the world has ever known (Rom 5:6-8). The just died for the unjust (1 Pet 3:18). Love is the greatest power in the world. Nails did not hold Jesus to the cross...love did. We marvel at the gospel of the second chance.

Everyone with God has eternal significance. With Christ, there are no unimpor-

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**Elders**  
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Larry Rouse  
(334) 734-2133

**SCHEDULE OF SERVICES**  
**Sunday**  
Bible Class .....9:30 AM  
Worship .....10:20 AM  
Evening Worship ..... 6:00 PM  
**Wednesday**  
Bible Classes.....7:00 PM  
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tant people, no insignificant lives. God plays no favorites. "God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him" (**Acts 10:34-35**). You are unique to God and He cares about you as much as anyone else who has ever lived!

Jesus, when He walked among men, was known as "a friend of tax collectors and sinners" (**Matt 11:19**). He had "compassion" and cared about everyone, even the down and out (**Matt 9:36**). He cared enough to get involved and to point people back to God.

**2. We Care About Your Problems.** All of us have problems — some big, some small, but all very real and discouraging. Do you sometimes feel stressed out? Do you feel you cannot change?

Jesus taught us to "love your neighbor as yourself" (**Mk 12:31**). No man is an island. We are trying to be caring people who honestly love others as Christ first loved us. The dog-eat-dog, back-stabbing ways of the world bring pain and problems, like when others walk all over you up the ladder of carnal success.

We've found the solution to our problems. Jesus offers a gracious invitation: "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (**Matt 11:28-29**). We've found refreshing rest from sin and life's daily grind in following Jesus.

In Christ, we become part of a loving, caring family. "Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart" (**1 Pet 1:22**). The Lord wants His people, the church, to be a warm, nurturing, understanding community of loving believers. "Bear one another's burdens, and thus fulfill the law of Christ" (**Gal 6:2**). We all have problems and faults to overcome, so we should care enough to help.

**3. We Care About Sharing God's Word.** Isn't it strange that so many who say they believe in God but overlook His answers to our problems in the Bible? "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death" (**Prov 14:12**). God made us. He knows how we work best. We believe the Bible holds the answer to all life's important questions: Who am I? What is my purpose? What happens when I die? "Let us hear the conclusion of the

whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man's all. For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil" (**Ecc 12:13-14**).

"Back to the Bible" is the answer to our religious questions. Only the New Testament of Christ is our rule of faith and practice (**1 Pet 4:11**). Jesus said, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (**Jn 8:31-32**). We're just Christians, and seek to "glorify God in that name" (**1 Pet 4:16**). As idealistic truth-seekers, we wear no human sectarian names. This is what the original Christians were, loyal only to Christ and His Word (**Acts 11:20-26**).

The same pure gospel seed planted in your heart and obeyed in faith will make you the same thing today (**Lk 8:11,15**). We make up a local church of the Lord, without any human denominational ties. We are striving to restore the original pattern of Christ's church in work and worship (**Acts 2:42-47**).

We care about you and want to help you know the transforming truth of Christ's living Word.

**4. We're Interested In Your Eternal Destiny.** Each of us has a soul destined to live somewhere forever. In the end, Jesus predicts, "An hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment" (**Jn 5:28-29**).

I care enough about you to ask, "Where will you spend eternity?" Jesus asks, "What shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his soul?" (**Mk 8:36**).

In visiting our assembly, we hope you find a friendly welcome. Many have been burned by hypocritical religion. Others have been "turned-off" by money-grubbing churches. Yet, Paul states our sincere care for your spiritual welfare: "I do not seek what is yours, but you" (**2 Cor 12:14**).

I care enough about you to invite you to become a fellow seeker with us of the truth of Christ that guides to the eternal home of the soul. Get in touch with the part of you that will live somewhere forever? Someone has said, "Get ready for eternity — there's no stopping it!"

Are you looking for answers in life? Please contact us and/or worship with us. Search God's Word with us. We believe you will not be disappointed but will find the truth you really need.



# The Spirit of the Law

By Dale Smelser

As noted in a recent class discussion, Christians dedicated to living by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God (**Mt. 4:4**), are derided for trying to keep the letter of the law, when their efforts rather should be expended on keeping the spirit of the law, whatever that is. On the face of it, that is patently ridiculous: God gives us commands to obey in ordering our lives and service and then says, "You don't really have to obey them, just keep the spirit or tenor of them!"

Given that the words "spirit," "law," and "letter" are found in the New Testament, if the above construct criticizing devoted obedience is not valid, there must be a disconnect between how those words are used in scripture and how some apply them. To begin with, they are wrongly assembled. There is no where in the entire original text where you will find the expressions, "Spirit of the law," or "Letter of the Law," (though regarding the latter, "of the law" does appear in italics as an interpolation in one verse in the NASV). But, nowhere does God's word propose keeping the spirit of the law. You read right. Read the sentenced again.

Here is what the Bible says: "...God...made us...ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life" (**2 Cor. 3:4**); "We have been discharged from the law, having died to that wherein we were held; so that we serve in newness of the spirit, and not in oldness of the letter" (**Romans 7:6**); and of God's "spiritual Jew" under the new covenant, "He is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, not in the letter" (**Rom. 2:28-29**).

So what is meant by letter and spirit? In the first text, new covenant and letter are contrasted. In explanation, spirit and letter are contrasted, thus spirit is equated with the new covenant. The letter is represented by that engraved on stones, thus the law of Moses (**2 Cor. 3:6-7**). The term spirit referring to the new covenant, requires a new condition of covenant participation. Thus the second passage (**Rom. 7:6**),

says we have been discharged from mere law, the "letter," and serve in newness of spirit. What this new requirement is we shall see momentarily.

If "the letter" refers to the law of Moses as well as any system of mere law, which leaves us in condemnation, what is the contrast? For if "the spirit" references the new covenant, seeing that there are laws therein, and it is written as well as was the old covenant, what is the difference? That becomes clear in our third text (**Rom 2:28-29**). Under the first covenant, the letter, one was a Jew who was born in and of Israel. The law, the letter, decreed all Israel to be associates of the covenant. Thus King Saul was of Israel and a covenant object though spiritually flawed. The lad Samuel was a subject of the covenant, and "ministered before the Lord" with Eli even before he knew the Lord (**1 Sam. 3:1, 7**). By being of Israel they had covenant status by decree, by letter. But now we must know the Lord to participate in the new covenant (**Heb. 8:11**). Now it is our heart that is to be circumcised. I am to be a child of God in my heart, in the spirit. Thus one's relation to God is not because he is a Jew, established by letter, or law of the old covenant, but individually each must be a child of God in his spirit. He must take God's laws into his mind, and have them written on his heart (**Heb. 8:10**). New covenant relation depends upon the nature of his individual spirit, not upon a decree or letter covering all in an outward physical relationship, a difference in old Israel and new Israel, the church. Or as Robert Turner once put it, one does not belong to Christ because he attends the services of a certain church, but he attends such because he belongs to Christ. To mitigate obeying God's law fails to see that his laws are so important I must take them into myself, into my very heart, mind, and spirit.

As a closing implication, under the new order there is no decree, or letter, that by birth makes one part of a covenant. For even those who had such status may have wished to break its laws. But with God's law in one's spirit his greatest desire is to keep it. He is a child of God in spirit.

