

## "If the Foundations are destroyed, What Can the Righteous Do?" - Psa 11:3

When I played baseball growing up, and we had a bad game, it was inevitable that our coach would tell us at the beginning of the very next practice that we had to go back to the basics ... the foundations of baseball - throwing, catching, hitting. The same holds true spiritually. The Hebrew writer had some meatier topics to address with them, but was not able. They needed milk. They needed to go back to the basics. They needed foundational doctrines. Read **Hebrews 5:12-6:2** and see for yourself.

I believe we are in a very comparable situation today. The foundations are being destroyed. Many have lost sight of the basics - grace, faith, obedience. We need "to lay again the foundation repentance from dead works and faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead and of eternal judgment" (**Heb. 6:1-2**). That is not only what the righteous CAN do, it is what the righteous MUST do!

Unfortunately, it would appear that some have strayed so far in their thinking that the foundations are indeed destroyed to them and they have built "new" foundations. When we can't even interpret Scripture by the same standard, we will never reach agreement, let alone walk together (**Amos 3:3**) - even on the foundational doctrines. The righteous can do nothing in such

By Jonathan Perz

cases. When we, as God's people, reject the foundational precepts and teachings of the apostle's doctrine ... the knowledge the Holy Spirit has revealed to us ... we will invariably be destroyed for a lack of knowledge (**Hos. 4:6**)!

Thus, with such doctrinal chaos prevailing, let us be careful to test EVERY doctrine in the light of God's word and hold fast to only those things we know to be true (**1 Thess. 5:21**). Let us ALL examine our faith and be sure we are indeed grounded in the basics (**2 Cor. 13:5**). Let us be sure our faith is "built on the foundations of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the Chief Cornerstone..." (**Eph. 2:20**) and avoid being "tossed to and fro and carried about with every winds of doctrine" (**Eph. 4:14**).

Brethren, not to sound alarmist, but the alarm must be sounded. There are some gale force "winds of doctrine" are blowing. It is time to batten down the hatches and sure up our spiritual houses! As Paul wrote, "Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all" (**1 Thess. 5:14**).



# The Auburn Beacon



Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. (**Matthew 5:16**)

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## Legalism

By Ethan R. Longhenry



### Thoughts to Ponder

Find a hundred men who fear nothing but sin, and desire nothing but God, and they will shake the world. Such alone will overthrow the kingdom of Satan and build up the kingdom of God on earth.

It is very common to hear the slur of "legalist" or "legalism" being hurled at those who would defend the truth. It is natural to hear such things when insistence is placed on what the Scriptures actually say.

Yet many will wear the term as a type of badge of honour. Many attempts have been made to justify "legalism" and a "legalistic" attitude in religious matters. There is no doubt that these attempts are well-intentioned, yet by commending "legalism" we may find ourselves justifying an attitude that Jesus has firmly condemned.

Normally legalism is defended by an appeal to its definition-- "strict, literal adherence to the law or to a particular code, as of religion or morality; a legal word, expression, or rule." as the American Heritage dictionary defines the term. The idea of holding firmly and strictly to the law of God as revealed in Scripture is then commended.

Let none be deceived: it is important for us to have authority for the things we say and do. All things should be done by Christ's authority (**Colossians 3:17**). If a practice comes with no Biblical authority, we should not participate in it (**cf. Romans 14:23**). Yet there is much more to the definition of "legalism" than just attempting to do what God says.

expansive definition of "legalism" is, evidenced in the Random House Dictionary's entry for the word:

"Strict adherence, or the principle of strict adherence, to law or prescription, esp. to the letter rather than the spirit; the doctrine that salvation is gained through good works. The judging of conduct in terms of adherence to precise laws."

As Christians we should be diligent to do the best we can to be properly understood. If we speak with someone who has a good understanding of the full meaning of "legalism," and we declare that we believe "legalism" to be a good idea, why should we be surprised if they believe that we think that we are saved by good works? The Scriptures are clear-- we cannot be saved by works (**cf. Romans 3:21, Ephesians 2:8-9**). We are saved through obedient faith (**Romans 1:17, 6:2-21, 1 Peter 1:22, James 2:14-26**). Therefore, on a theological level, we cannot be "legalists" and be pleasing to God.

Concern should be given over more than just the theological definition of the term. Consider the constant emphasis: "strict adherence." "Adherence to precise laws." In the eyes of many, this is not a bad thing-- we should strive to adhere to God's standards. Yet again, however, we have a challenge. While it is abso-

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We should first note what the more

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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)	David Hartsell (Holly and Brad's Father)	Jeffery Miller (Friend of Walker Davis)
Emma Hettinger (William Herd's Mother)	Neal May (Manna Jones' Mother)	Roger Whatley (Daphne Whatley's son)	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)	Judy Nichol's (Suzanne's Mother)	Owen Mauldin (Seth and Summer Mauldin's Son)

### August Birthdays

- 2 – Emma Miller
- 4 – Bess Godwin
- 5 – Andrew Cagle
- 7 – David Golden
- 7 – Anna Leigh Peek
- 9 – Elliot Weldon
- 9 – Troy Swenson
- 10 – Sarah Tam
- 11 – Walker Davis
- 12 – Jon Coleman
- 14 – Elizabeth Wiggs
- 14 – Kalee Reid
- 20 – Caleb Law
- 22 – David Crawford
- 23 – Emily S. Jones
- 24 – Sophie Hall
- 25 – Emily Jones
- 27 – Chip Freeman
- 27 – Stephen Ambrose
- 28 – Larry Rouse
- 28 – Cole Johnson

### News and Notes

- ☒ - Our next Gospel Meeting will begin next Sunday Aug 26-30 with Lonnie Oldag. Please invite others!
- ☒ - Our first college devotional and singing will be next Sunday Night at "Gold Hill!"
- ☒ - Those who have expressed a desire to identify with the church should meet briefly with the Elders after any service.
- ☒ - Let us remember Greg Lanier, Toni Herd and Caleb Law in our prayers as they are undergoing tests.
- ☒ - Let us remember out expectant mothers in our prayers, Karen Padgett, Emily S. Jones and Nichole Pender.
- ☒ - We have been greatly blessed with a large number of students and others who will be with us! We want to get to know each of you.

### Elders

Walker Davis  
(334) 703-0050  
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

### E-Mail:

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Evangelist and Editor

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lutely true that we should strive to adhere to God's standards, there is more to "strict adherence" than simply "striving to do God's will." "Strict adherence" has a negative, as well as positive, dimension.

This is best illustrated by the Biblical examples of the legalists: the scribes, the lawyers, and the Pharisees. These are the ones whom Jesus condemned for their intransigence and immorality (cf. **Matthew 23:1-39**). Let us notice what it was that they did. We must first make clear that Jesus followed the Law and God's purposes and yet was not a legalist. In **Matthew 5:17-18** He declares that He came to fulfill the Law; in **Matthew 23:23**, He does not condemn the Pharisees and scribes for following the minutiae of the Law, the tithing of various spices. Jesus' quarrel is not with doing what God says in the way God says to do it. Yet notice what He says about these scribes and Pharisees in **Matthew 5:20**:

"For I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven."

What was the problem with the "righteousness" of the scribes and Pharisees? It was based in their legalism-- strict adherence, to be sure, but strict adherence often with the intention of doing the least that was necessary or justifying current conduct. It is a carnal desire-- missing the purposes and character of God in search for the minutiae that would justify them. This same spirit can be discerned in the lawyer questioning Jesus in **Luke 10:25-29**. There is no better example of true legalism in action. The lawyer tests Jesus by seeing what He will say is necessary for salvation. Jesus gets the lawyer to make the appropriate answer-- the exhortations to love God and neighbour. And then the legalism comes in-- the lawyer wants to justify himself, to establish the "strict adherence" that will make everything easier, asking who his neighbour is, and hoping to hear that it is his fellow Jew to whom he already acts as he should. Jesus answers him with the parable of the good Samaritan, and the lawyer is duly shamed (**Luke 10:30-37**).

It may seem ironic, but it is certainly the case: our righteousness must exceed the righteousness of a legalist if we desire to be saved. The reason for this has nothing to do with the desire to follow God's purposes. The reason is that the true legalist sees everything in terms of law and has missed the exam-

ple of Christ who was the fulfilment of the Law of Moses and the embodiment of God's expectations for believers today (cf. **Matthew 5:17-18, Romans 8:29, 1 Corinthians 11:1, 1 John 2:3-6**). When law is the focus, conformity to the image of the Son, understanding the will of God and accomplishing it in a form of "second nature" is not. Instead, legalism is all about the bare minimum and doing whatever is possible. "If I can I should" is axiomatic for the legalist! Many examples could be brought forth to establish the principle. The legalist declares that he is only required to assemble with the saints on the first day of the week in the main assembly to partake of the Lord's Supper (**Acts 20:7**); he will not be there for any other opportunity when the saints come together. The legalist will very narrowly define how he has "prospered" and his giving will reflect that (**1 Corinthians 16:1-3, 2 Corinthians 8-9**). After all, it is about the letter of what is written. If the letter of what is written allows us to get away with something, all the merrier!

There is reason for confidence that most of those who would defend the use of the terms "legalism" or "legalist" would be uncomfortable with the examples illustrated above-- and that is because such people are not really legalists. While they seek Biblical authority for all they say and do, they understand that we should not use God's revelation to find ways to justify conduct that is clearly contrary to the purposes of God as revealed through Jesus the Incarnate Word or the Scriptures, God's revealed Word. We must understand that the Scriptures are a guide to life, that they equip us for every good work (**2 Timothy 3:16-17**), but that there is more to righteousness than slavish holding to the letter of the law (cf. **2 Corinthians 3:4-6**). We must also honour God's intentions-- and that will often require us to go "the extra mile" in our service!

It is tragically lamentable that so many in the religious world have used statements regarding the "spirit" over the "letter" of the law, and the idea of "grace" above "law" to justify immoral conduct and a loosening of the guidelines that God has given through His Scriptures. Such represent blatant abuses of what God has said. Such conduct, however, does not justify imbalance on the other side. We are not saved through slavish, strict adherence to the letter of the law; no one can be (cf. **Romans 3:20**). Nor can we say that our conduct does not matter, or that we can freely neglect parts of what God has revealed-- may it never be (**Romans 6:1-23, Colossians 3:17**). Let us not be guilty of either legalism or laxity-- let us serve God in Christ, reflecting the image of the Son.



# The War Against Lust

By Paul Earnhart

"Whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery" (Matthew 5:28). These are radical words and even kingdom citizens must struggle not to resist. Their severe probing of the heart brings pain as the Son of God touches the raw nerves of our moral diseases. Jesus, having dealt with the problem of hate and malice, now addresses the problem of lust. The Pharisees had certainly treated the issue of adultery, but only superficially. Their concern was to avoid a capital offense (**Leviticus 20:10; Deuteronomy 22:22**). One can almost hear the way they said, "You shall not commit adultery" (**Exodus 20:14**). Jesus, in contrast, tracks the sin of adultery to its lair (**Matthew 15:19**). As the hatred of the heart is murder, so is the unbridled lust of the heart adultery.

This principle was not an obscure part of the Mosaic covenant. The tenth commandment pointedly said, "You shall not covet your neighbor's wife" (**Exodus 20:17**). Paul, while still a stranger to the gospel, and a Pharisee, had been severely penetrated by this command (**Romans 7:7**). Even Job, a man who apparently lived before the law, understood this ethical truth. "I have made a covenant with my eyes," he said, "Why then should I look upon a young woman?" (**Job 31:1**).

Though some extended application might be made from this passage to the raw and unprincipled carnal desire which some single person might harbor for someone similarly unattached, Jesus' use of the word "adultery" makes clear that His present concern is with that illicit desire which violates the very spirit of the marriage covenant (**2 Corinthians 11:2-3**). The Lord's concern in this whole section is with our duty to love others. No married person can do justice to his mate while given over to unrestrained desire for another. Though yet a matter of the mind it is called what it is -- sin.

The Lord is not dealing here with the mere momentary passing of desire through the mind; otherwise there would be no distinction between temptation and sin. (We should not be aghast at the suggestion that the lust of the flesh might have made its approach to the mind of our Savior while He remained sinless,

**Hebrews 4:15.**) The words, "looks at a woman to lust for her," help us to understand the exact nature of the transgression. This is not a fleeting thought but the gathering up of one's mind for the purpose of lusting. The Greek text describes a person who directs his thoughts or turns his mind to a thing; in this case, lusting after a woman (or a man). Obviously, we do not look at everything we see. The eye takes in a vast panorama and it is left for the mind to focus the attention. David's sin was not in seeing the unclothed Bathsheba but in looking upon her, setting his mind and ultimately his unbridled lust upon her (**2 Samuel 11:2-5**). David wanted the opportunity to possess Bathsheba, and found it. His violation of **Exodus 20:17** would have been no less had that opportunity never presented itself.

Although the English word "lust" accurately connotes the sensual overtones of the Greek verb (epithumeo), it may lack the attendant thought of possession which is inherent in it (Guelich, The Sermon on the Mount, p. 194). The sin being described by Jesus is the calculated cultivation of the desire to possess one to whom you have no right. If this sin is to be escaped, the very first approach of such thoughts must be decisively rejected, before they can take possession of the mind and will. In the language of an old proverb: "You cannot keep the birds from flying over your head but you can keep them from building a nest in your hair." If we find difficulty in distinguishing between the temptation and the sin in this case it is far wiser to err on the side of caution than on the side of recklessness.

The war of the kingdom citizen with lust in these times is destined to be severe and hard-fought. We are not going to easily escape the miasma of lasciviousness, fornication and adultery that has descended on this generation. Let no disciple be smug (**1 Corinthians 10:12**). There are no societal restraints to lean on. Our strength and defense must reside wholly in our own deep and unshakable resolve to keep ourselves pure for the Lord's sake. In the final analysis that is where the issue of our faithfulness in the kingdom has always been decided. "Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life" (**Proverbs**

