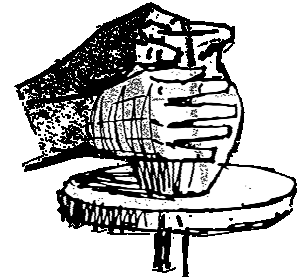


His Workmanship: Westside

"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works."

—Ephesians 2:10



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Isaiah 64:8

Pulling the Weeds of Legalism, Colossians 2:16-23, by Brian Bill

"History," Martin Luther said, "is like a drunk man on a horse. No sooner does he fall off on the left side, does he mount again and fall off on the right." The same can be said about Christians. Some have variously accepted two "different gospels," Gal 1:6-7, which are but perversions of the real gospel of Christ. Some follow the gospel of legalism. They attempt to earn salvation by human works. Others, often in reaction to legalism, accept the gospel of license (or libertinism). They live the way they want and avoid the Lordship of Christ, including obedience. They try to justify carnality by pulling the "grace card," the "I'm free in Christ card," and the "don't judge me card." For the libertine, grace becomes license to live in the flesh and salve his conscience. Both attitudes are incompatible with the life of Christ. What complicates the situation further is that the legalist doesn't know that she is a legalist and tends to view all non-legalists as libertines, and the libertine doesn't know that he is a libertine and tends to view all non-libertines as legalists. Today we will try to pull some of the weeds of legalism.

Old laws. Almost every state in our nation still has laws on the books that surprise us. For instance, in Florida, a woman may be fined for falling asleep

under a hair dryer. In Indiana, citizens are not allowed to attend a movie or ride in a public streetcar within four hours after eating garlic. In Illinois, in Eureka, a man with a moustache may not kiss a woman; in Moline, ice-skating at the Riverside Pond during June and August is strictly prohibited; in Normal, it's against the law to make a face at a dog. Once, in an effort to help the sale of butter, margarine was considered illegal in Wisconsin, especially when smuggled in by the "flat-landers" of Illinois. In Wisconsin it's also against the law to serve apple pie in public restaurants unless there is cheese on top of it. In Nicholas County, WV, no member of the clergy there is allowed to tell jokes or humorous stories from the pulpit.

We may laugh or groan at these out-of-date laws, because many seem absurd and ridiculous. But if we were to list all the rules, expectations, and laws that are on the books (or unwritten) in many churches today, we'd likely stop laughing pretty quickly.

As disciples, we're called to demonstrate our commitment to Christ on a daily basis by going deeper with Him. Our knowing should lead to growing. But this growth can be stunted, or even choked to death, by the weeds of legalism. Legalism can be defined as a

strict adherence to the law. Specifically, regarding faith, a legalist is one who believes that performance is the way to gain favor with God. Legalism is a man-made attempt to gain salvation or prove our spirituality by outward conformity to a list of religious "do's" and "don'ts."

Let's look at some **general observations about legalism.**

1. We tend to think others are legalistic, but that we're not.

The truth is that we're all legalistic by nature. We tend to judge others by our own standards of what is acceptable and what isn't. In fact, we think our sins smell better than other people's. We have little tolerance for people who sin differently from us.

2. Legalism is highly contagious. While it's usually less conscious and systematized in our minds than it was among the Pharisees, legalism can spread like a bad virus through an entire congregation. That's why Jesus reserved some of his harshest criticism for legalistic list-makers: "Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written: 'These people honor Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me. They worship Me in vain; their teachings are mere human rules.' You have let go of the commands of God and hold on to human traditions," Mk 7:6-8.

3. Legalism can take a vibrant faith and make it dull and lifeless. It can evaporate enthusiasm, jettison joy, and stifle

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"For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this pre-

spirituality. Instead of finding freedom through Christ, many believers become burdened by the church.

4. Legalism produces large quantities of self-righteousness, judgment, and condemnation. It majors in guilt and misguided sacrifice, urging its followers to evaluate their relationship with God on the basis of standards and scores; it expects others to do the same. It uses checklists. Superficial spirituality short-circuits the work of grace.

5. Legalism makes us narrow and divisive. The legalist insists that everyone live up to the standard he has adopted. In other words, "everyone needs to be like me." When we think this way, we miss the delight of diversity in the church.

6. Legalism makes it impossible for people to see Jesus. There is nothing that pushes a seeker away faster than a list of rules and regulations. We inadvertently portray Jesus as a drill sergeant instead of the Savior.

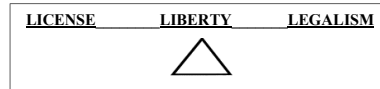
Most of us fall into legalism without trying. For example, in an assembly, a man leading prayer said he was going to kneel and graciously invited the church to do the same, if they wanted. Now, imagine that as one woman knelt, she did so with very good motives. She wanted to focus on Christ and intercede for the needs of others. But then she took a peek and noticed that only about half of the people were on their knees. A seed of judgment began to germinate as she wondered why others weren't doing what she was doing. Then, because she found kneeling to be so helpful, she began kneeling during her own prayer time and during family devotions at home. When she assembled with the church and noticed that no one else knelt during prayer, she felt angry but also strangely smug because at least she was doing what everyone else should be doing. Notice how subtle and sneaky legalism is? Its

weeds are under the surface in each of our lives. Kneeling to pray is a good thing, but it can easily become the standard by which we judge other people's spirituality. In short, if we're not careful, we'll default to a performance-based discipleship.

That's exactly what was starting to happen in the church at Colossae. (Romans, Galatians, and Hebrews also warn against legalism.) We must be taught over and over that everything is by grace. We're saved by grace, and we grow by grace. Paul argued that if we want to pull the weeds of legalism, we must focus on two truths: Remember our legal standing, Col 2:9-15, and Resist the lures of legalism, Col 2:16-23.

1.

Re-



member Our Legal Standing. The best defense against a performance-based faith is to remember our legal standing before God. If we understand God's divine decree as a result of what Jesus has done on our behalf, we will receive grace and live with the freedom that is ours in Christ. Jesus said, "So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed," Jn 8:36. At our conversion, God issues four decrees, seen in Col 2:9-15: A. We are complete, Col 2:9-10. "You are complete in Him, Who is the head of all principality and power." The phrase, "in Him" shows us that Jesus is the center of God's saving work. When we put our faith in Christ, we are included in what He has done. All the fullness of deity lives in Him. "For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily," 2:10. If you want to know what God is like, then look at Jesus. The phrase, "lives in bodily form," means to "dwell permanently." Jesus is not just a way to God; He is the only way, because He is God Himself.

Listen carefully. Not only does all the fullness of God dwell in Christ, but also all believers are filled with (are complete in) the fullness of Christ. One translation says: "And you are in Him, having been completely filled full with the present result that you are in a state of fullness." If you have trusted Christ for forgiveness of sins and been baptized into Him, then there is nothing lacking in your relationship with God. There's not some extra blessing or another experience you need to have. You have everything you need in Christ; you do not need more than what you already have! Understand and appropriate what you've already been given.

B. We are alive, vs. 11-13. "In Him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, having been buried with Him in baptism and raised with Him through your faith in the power of God, Who raised Him from the dead. When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ." Here Paul revealed parallels between circumcision and our new life with Christ. God initiated circumcision as a sign of His covenant with His people Israel in order to set them apart and identify them as true followers. (Baptism is the sign of His covenant today, setting us apart and identifying us with Christ.) One of the problems at Colossae was that some legalists were demanding that Christians submit to circumcision and obey the Old Testament law. In the churches of Galatia, the false teachers had insisted that circumcision was necessary for salvation. In the church at Colossae, the false teachers suggested that obedience to Old Testament regulations would help them become more spiritual. Though circumcision was a physical procedure, it had holy spiritual

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Psalm 133:1

God makes my heart clean in 2015 “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.” —Ps 51:10

Weeds of Legalism, from p. 2
significance. The trouble was that Old Covenant followers insisted on the physical act without emphasizing a change of heart. It had become a religious ritual. That’s why Jeremiah 4:4 stated that believers were to circumcise themselves, circumcise their hearts. Physical acts are never meant to be a substitute for faith. Instead, a spiritual change on the inside, accomplished only through the redemptive work of Christ, is what God demands.

When we put our faith in Christ, He spiritually circumcises, or cuts away, our sinful hearts and makes them tender in order to show that we belong to Him. Just as the physical act of circumcision brought a child under God’s covenant with Abraham (and then with Israel), baptism brings us into God’s covenant by Christ. “For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink,” 1 Cor 12:13. When we are buried with Christ, we die to the old identity (self); and when we come up, we become raised with Christ and our identity, our life, is in Him. The Greek words are very expressive—we are co-buried, co-raised, and co-made alive with Christ. We died with Him, we are raised with Him, and we have life because of Him. Baptism vividly portrays the death and burial of the believer’s sinful way of life.

Next week we will continue to see our legal standing—forgiven and victorious in Christ—and we will also examine how to resist the lures of legalism.

Discipleship Here At Home

War on Chick-Fil-A, from p. 4

- Former StemExpress employee Holly O’Donnell told the Center for Medical Progress that it did not appear all women whose children’s fetal tissue was used gave consent: “If there was a higher gestation, and the technicians needed it, there were times when they would just take what they wanted. And these mothers don’t know. And there’s no way they would know.”
- In the second undercover video released by the Center for Medical Progress, Dr. Mary Gatter, president of the Medical Directors’ Council for Planned Parenthood, joked that “I want a Lamborghini” when discussing prices for fetal tissue.

Liberals, for all their talk about tolerance, have long shown they have no interest in coexistence with Chick-fil-A. In 2012, mayors of major cities across the country denounced Chick-fil-A. “Chick-fil-A’s values are not Chicago values,” said Chicago’s mayor Rahm Emanuel. San Francisco Mayor Edwin Lee tweeted, “Closest #ChickFilA to San Francisco is 40 miles away & I strongly recommend that they not try to come any closer.” Then-Washington, D.C., Mayor Vincent Gray wrote, “Given my long standing strong support for LGBT rights and marriage equality, I would not support #hatechicken.”

Just try to imagine what the reaction would be if, say, a Texas town tried to ban Starbucks or Ben and Jerry’s. Liberals are free to boycott Chick-fil-A, just as conservatives can boycott companies who support organizations who donate to groups advocating stances they find immoral or wrong. But it’s another matter entirely to bring in the government to ban Chick-fil-A entirely. It should be consumers, not government officials, who decide which businesses thrive and which don’t.

Denver doesn’t need to be like the Liberal bastions of Chicago, San Francisco, or DC. It’s time to try a little tolerance here.

PRAY FOR healing, protection, help

- Tracy Corray**—broken bone in foot; cast 2 wks, then boot 3 wks
- Judy Sartin**—hairline fracture in left foot; ortho shoe
- Jonathan Hadders**—fractured rib, acute pain
- Judy Strand**—broken arm, post-surgery pain
- Sheryle McNeill**—pinched nerve
- Ernesto Gonzalez’s father Fidencio**—stage IV lymphoma, begins chemo tomorrow
- Linda Szymanski’s mother**, age 88—fall, broke ankle, rehab post surgery
- Letha Fink’s brother Kenneth Morrison** of GA—liver disease, recent diagnosis of neuro-muscular disease
- Charos’ neighbor Evelyn Velasquez**—cancer
- Danny Dodd**, formerly of Westside—home after full brain radiation in Denver; improving; 275 Country Meadow Rd, Ignacio, CO 81137
- Kaylee Chavez**—age 10, cancer; has rallied so well from her PE that she has returned home (temp housing in Memphis until treatments finish in Nov)
- Bill Dennis**—home recovery following rehab
- Sandra Perry**—diabetes complications; back on oxygen; port to be inserted soon for dialysis
- Larry Campbell’s FL partner Terry Hargadine’s wife Michelle**—cancerous lymph nodes removed, latest scan shows improvement; picc line inserted for chemo
- Kayla Knighten, Christine Adams’s daughter**, needs our prayers; **Judy Strand** requests prayer for her son **Joe**; pray **Ed’s son Rodney Schulz** and **Sheryle’s daughter Tiffany** receive the gospel; pray **Pat** and **Jeff’s son Mike** and grandson **Drew** return to God.
- Sylvia Chapman, Brett’s grandmother**—third stage pancreatic cancer; Brett’s grandmother **Sue**, and Aunt **Bonnie Doss**—cancer returned
- Brittany Tope’s mother**—breast cancer, improving; grandmother—on dialysis
- CHRONIC CONDITIONS**
Logan Corray; Addison Tope; Christian Harrod; Rocco Jr.; Pat Wilkes—asthma
Autumn Hadders—epilepsy; celiac disease
Kirk Johnson—MS
Menards—**Lloyd** diabetes, Alzheimers;
Virginia, blindness from macular degeneration
Cheryl Reames—fibromyalgia; diverticulitis
Judy Sartin—rotator cuff injury; spinal stenosis
Judy and Mike Strand—hepatitis trtment
Lynda Szymanski—COPD, lung weakness
Welcome Please welcome **Delmar Hice**, Pat Campbell’s father, who will be living with the Campbells and working as part of this church.
Travel **Mina Gonzalez** will travel with her mother to Japan 8/31-9/14. The **Wilkeses** are driving to NC and SC to visit family 9/3-24.
Monica and Brandon Thompson and Larry Campbell go to IL Wed; **Larry** will go on to FL for work till 9/11; **Thompsons** return Mon 9/7.
Moving Today is the **Lucases’** last Sunday with us; they are moving back to Brazil Wed.



Exposing current trends

culture wars

Hypocrisy of Denver's War on Chick-Fil-A, by Katrina Trinko

City council members in Denver last week weighed whether Chick-fil-A would be allowed to open in the Denver International Airport and postponed a decision until September 8.

Denver council member Paul Lopez "called opposition to the chain at DIA 'really, truly a moral issue,'" according to the Denver Post, while Robin Kniech, the council's first openly gay member, was alarmed about Chick-fil-A's "corporate profits used to fund and fuel discrimination."

"Ten of the 13 [Denver city council] members attended Tuesday's meeting, and none rose to defend Chick-fil-A, although some didn't weigh in," reported the Post. Chick-fil-A's crime? Well, back in 2012—when 48 percent of Americans opposed gay marriage, according to Gallup—Chick-fil-A CEO Dan Cathy spoke out about his opposition to gay marriage, setting off a firestorm. The fact that the CEO of a company so committed to Biblical values that it's not even open on Sundays opposed gay marriage was somehow shocking.

Chick-fil-A restaurants typically generate more in six days a week, DIA says, than most fast-food concessions that are open all seven. Neil Maxfield, the senior vice president of concession, noted that a 2013 survey of airport users "identified Chick-fil-A as being the second-most sought-after quick service brand at the airport, second to Chipotle," which didn't apply for the space.

If the Denver City Council is concerned about the morality of the businesses at the airport, they should take a closer look at two current occupants: Starbucks and Ben and Jerry's. According to 2nd Vote, Starbucks Foundation has donated to Planned Parenthood, while Starbucks has been "listed as a company that matches employees' gifts to Planned Parenthood." Ben and Jerry's parent company, Unilever, has donated to Planned Parenthood. Neither Starbucks nor Ben and Jerry's responded to media's request for comment in July when asked about their support for Planned Parenthood. Maybe that's because even the best PR whizzes are hard-pressed to explain why a corporation would donate to a company whose executives have been caught on camera cavalierly discussing the sale of fetal body parts. (Planned Parenthood has denied the organization profits from selling fetal body parts or tissue, and has said the organization follows all laws.) Some of the videos' high-lights suggest that Planned Parenthood, which performs around a third of abortions in the United States, hardly represents American values:

- In the first video, Dr. Deborah Nucatola, senior director of medical services at Planned Parenthood, made statements suggesting Planned Parenthood may perform partial-birth abortions, despite those procedures being illegal.

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Jim Reingrover (303) 973-5102

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<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Westside-Church-of-Christ/276475819148309>

Assembly Schedule

Sunday

Bible classes	9:00 am
Morning assembly	10:00 am
Afternoon assembly	1:30 pm

Wednesday

Bible classes	7:30 pm
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Sunday morning

- **adult Bible class**, "The Gospel According to John," Jonathan Hadders

- **Sermon**, "Liberty in Christ (part 2)," Jim Reingrover

Sunday afternoon, Questions Answered: "If God Created Everything, Why Did He Create Satan?" Larry Campbell

Feeding on His Word Reading

Everyone is invited to an open Bible reading of Hosea and Amos Friday evening, 9/4, 7 pm, at the Hadderses' house, starting with supper. See **Joel Walker** for schedule.