

Is it “Legalism” to Keep the Law?

1. What is the Biblical definition of legalism?

The term is not used directly in the scriptures, but the definition is two-fold:

(1) Legalism is using works, not faith, in order to be saved. Salvation is ONLY by faith.

- **Ephesians 2:4-10**→ “grace”-charis (*chare'-is* G5485)- Greek equivalent to chen (H2580)—**Genesis 6:8**
 - **Luke 7:50**→Read v.48-50. Notice he says your “faith” has saved you, not your works.
- **John 3:36**→First believe—pisteuo (pist-yoo'-o G4100)- saving faith, more than just head knowledge (**James 2:19**); second believe—apeitheo (ap-eye-theh'-o)- disobey
- **John 6:29, 40**→Read v.26-40. The LORD is teaching the people (like he taught the rich, young ruler) to put their focus on Heavenly things rather than earthly things.
 - **Acts 4:12**→Read v.8-12. There is ONE way of salvation.
 - **Acts 13:39**→Read v.38-39. It's clear: Works save no one.
- **Acts 15:1-11**→Salvation was never by works, it has always been by faith. V.10-is the discussion about keeping the Law or salvation?
- **Romans 10:1-13**→You are not made righteous by your own merit, you are made righteous by the LORD and your faith in Him.

(2) Legalism is binding other works onto a person that are NOT required by the LORD. In other words, the LORD's commandments are put aside in order to keep man-made commandments.

- **Acts 10:9-15; 28**→ “common”: koinos (G2839)-rabbinically unclean; “unclean”: akathartos (G169)- unclean according to the LORD
- **Matthew 23:1-4**→Notice the LORD says they teach the law, but they also bind burdens (not God's commandments) onto the people—**1 John 5:3; Matthew 11:29-30**→**Mark 2:23-28**
- **Mark 7:1-13**→v.9- “All too well”: kalos (G2573)-excellently and commendable (said with irony and sarcasm); “reject”: atheteo (G114)-to do away with something laid down, prescribed, established

2. Why do we keep the Law?

(1) We love the LORD.

- **1 Corinthians 13:1-8**→What is love according to the Bible?
- **Matthew 22:34-40**→The Law can be summed up in these two commandments, one of which is to love the LORD with all your heart, soul, and mind.
 - **Deuteronomy 6:4-5**→Begin at v.1.
 - **Deuteronomy 7:9**→Read v.9-11. “Love” and “keep” are participles, or continuing action.
- **Deuteronomy 10:12**→Read v. 12-22. Circumcision of the heart means that you *want* to serve the LORD out of love, not obligation.
- **Deuteronomy 11:13**→ Read v.13-17. This is a stern warning that we should be listening to today.
 - **Deuteronomy 13:3**→ Read v.1-5. These words are especially important this day and age.
 - **Deuteronomy 30:6; 15-20**→Again, the LORD wants you to serve Him because you love him, not because you have to.
 - **Judges 5:31**→**Daniel 12:3**

- **Nehemiah 1:5**→The beginning of this prayer of repentance is almost word for word to **Deuteronomy 7:9**.
 - **Psalm 31:23 and Psalm 97:10**→What characterizes a saint? **Revelation 12:17; 14:12**
 - **Psalm 119:132**→The LORD is merciful to those who love His name. What’s the context?
 - **Psalm 145:20**→Read v.17-21.
 - **Isaiah 56:6**→Who does the LORD bring to His holy mountain?
 - **Daniel 9:4**→Just like with **Deuteronomy 7:9** and **Nehemiah 1:5**, “love” and “keep” are participles.
 - **1 John 5:1-5**→ Listen to the words of this particular commentator: “Instead of the burdensome requirement to keep hundreds of little rules and regulations, Jesus simply says to us, ‘Love Me and love my people, and you will walk in obedience.’” How??? Thankfully God shows us through His Law how we can love and serve Him. We don’t have to wander around trying to figure out what to do.
- (2) We are judged by our works and they show our genuine faith.
- **1 Corinthians 3:11-15**→The works you determine your reward.
 - **Revelation 22:12-15**→Notice the work that those in v.14 are being blessed for his keeping His commandments.
 - **James 1:22-25**→v.22—“doer”: poietes (*poy-ay-tays’* G4163)-TGL—One who obeys or fulfills the law; v.25—“looks”: parakupto (*pah-rah-keep’-toh* G3879)-To stoop and look into, to look carefully into, inspect curiously, of one who would become acquainted with something.
 - **James 2:8-13**→v.8—“fulfill”: teleo (G5055)-perform or execute
 - **James 2:14-26**→You must have faith working together with works in order to show that your faith is real.

(3) The Law teaches us what sin is.

- **1 John 3:4**→This is biblical definition of sin.
- **Romans 3:20**→Read v.19-31. Notice what our faith does to the Law.
- **Romans 4:15**→Trying to keep the Law without faith will make one fall short every time.
- **Romans 7:7-12**→The Law is holy because it shows us what sin is. Without it, we have no idea what sin even is.

Conclusion

Colossians 2:8-23→This section is titled in my Bible “Not Legalism, But Christ”. Don’t let anyone convince you that you are being legalistic because you keep Torah. Scripture never supports the doctrine of Antinomianism.

If something as radical as the LORD abolishing the Law was going to happen, there would be countless prophecies telling of this event. The only scripture that speaks of the Law being “changed” deals with the false messiah—**Daniel 7:25**.