**BIBLE QUESTIONS: SESSION 25**

**Questions: *Define legalism as taught by some churches. Once saved are we free of the law and what was the purpose of the law? What are some of these legalistic teachings?***

1. ***Define legalism as taught by some churches.***
   1. Broadly speaking, legalism is an emphasis on law and words. Legalism various meanings and usages, some helpful and others subversive. It is never used in the bible, and, as far as I know, it didn’t come into our Confessional Lutheran Lexicon until the 19th and 20th century. In the church, it is virtually always used in a negative sense. (Calling someone a “legalist” is never meant as a compliment.)
      1. Biblical criticism of legalism or use of the Law. (These are Biblically Condemned doctrines).
         1. Using the Letter of the Law at the expense of the Spirit. E.g., Refusing to heal or help someone on the Sabbath.
         2. Teaching one is justified by works of the law, apart from or in addition to faith.
         3. Teaching that the laws of the Old Covenant still apply to believers in Christ, (e.g., circumcision and abstaining from certain meats, etc.)
         4. Teaching that man made traditions and laws can nullify or amend the commands of God.
      2. Unbiblical criticism of Legalism (These are contemporary theological criticisms nowhere to be found in the bible, and are actually countered by it.)
         1. Too strict an adherence to God’s commands. However the bible says
            1. “Anyone who relaxes the least of these my commandments…(Matt. 5:19)
            2. “The Lord’s commands are not burdensome. (1 John 5:3)
         2. Regarding sin as a violation of a command, rather than a failure of love. However, Jesus says
            1. If you love me you will keep my commands. (John 14:15)
         3. Putting Doctrine above people. However, the bible says
            1. For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ. (Galatians 1:10)
         4. Making Doctrine an idol. However, the bible says
            1. ***The Word*** was God…and dwelt among us. (John 1:1,14).
2. ***Once saved are we free of the law?*** Yes and no.
   1. Yes, we are free from ***the condemnation of*** the law insofar as Christ has paid for our sins, and we receive that forgiveness through repentance and faith.
   2. No, insofar as we are still sinners, ***we rely upon the law to show us our sin and to give us guidance*** in knowing God’s will for holy living.
3. ***What is the purpose of the law.***
   1. The final purpose of the law is to show us our sins, and our need for a savior in Jesus Christ.
   2. There are three recognized purposes or “uses” of the law identified by confessional Lutheranism, and taught in the bible.
      1. The first use: the curb. The law’s purpose is to incentivize good behavior and punish bad behavior.
      2. The Second (theological) use: the mirror. The law’s purpose is to show us our sin by telling us that God requires perfect obedience and we don’t measure up.
         1. Romans 3:20, through the law comes knowledge of sin.
         2. Romans 7:7, What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. For I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, “You shall not covet.”
      3. The third use of the law: the rule or guide. The law’s purpose is to give a fixed rule to guide believers, who still have to fight against their sinful nature, how to do what is right and turn away from evil and temptation.
         1. But that is not the way you learned Christ!— [**21**](http://biblehub.com/ephesians/4-21.htm)assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, [**22**](http://biblehub.com/ephesians/4-22.htm)to put off your old self,[***f***](https://biblehub.com/esv/ephesians/4.htm#footnotes) which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, [**23**](http://biblehub.com/ephesians/4-23.htm)and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, [**24**](http://biblehub.com/ephesians/4-24.htm)and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

[**25**](http://biblehub.com/ephesians/4-25.htm)Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. [**26**](http://biblehub.com/ephesians/4-26.htm)Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, [**27**](http://biblehub.com/ephesians/4-27.htm)and give no opportunity to the devil. [**28**](http://biblehub.com/ephesians/4-28.htm)Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. [**29**](http://biblehub.com/ephesians/4-29.htm)Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.[**30**](http://biblehub.com/ephesians/4-30.htm)And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. [**31**](http://biblehub.com/ephesians/4-31.htm)Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. [**32**](http://biblehub.com/ephesians/4-32.htm)Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. (Eph 4:20-32)