

Sermon Reflections

Rest from Legalism (Matthew 12:1-21)

Summary: Come to Jesus and find rest from legalism's tyranny over your soul.

Rest and Hope in Christ

1. Jesus Clears Us from Legalism's Guilt (vv. 1-8)

- Legalism is an attempt to relate to God by keeping a certain list of dos and don'ts; it's a merit-based relationship with God—the more you sacrifice, the more God is likely to accept you. What is the difference between obeying God's commands (both explicit commands and principles) and straying into legalism?
- Legalism shows up in false religion, as seen in Jesus' day and in our own. Name some specific ways you have been relating to God wrongly based on what you have been doing.
- Verse 6 gives us a way that Old Testament (OT) teachings can be applied to us today — they point to Christ. Why does the coming of Christ change how Christians interpret and apply the OT? What are specific examples where we apply the OT in ways differently than people who lived prior to Christ's First Coming (both Jews and Gentiles)? Are there incorrect ways to apply the OT to Christians?
- Verse 7 says our harshness/judgmentalism means we have missed what God's commands are all about. List other behaviors that indicate we have missed the point of God's commands.

2. Jesus Frees Us from Legalism's Hard Heart (vv. 9-14)

- In verses 12–13 Jesus argues from the lesser to the greater when the legalistic Pharisees showed more care for sheep than for humans made in the image of God. What are some ways you cleverly disobey God while obeying man made rules?
- Also, do you ever see a time when it is ok to disobey an explicit Bible rule in order to align with the Bible's principles? Is it ever possible for Bible rules and/or principles to conflict with one another? How do you deal with such situations?

3. Jesus Saves Us from Legalism's Despair (vv. 15-21)

- Acts 15:10 says that the *Law of Moses* was a burden that we were never intended to bear. If this is so, what was the Law of Moses supposed to do for the people of Israel? Is there any aspect of the Bible's commands/principles that you find burdensome, and, if so, is this a burden that you are intended to bear? At the end of Matthew chapter 11, Jesus offered to bear our burdens. Was this at the time of our salvation or is this an ongoing offer of which we must or should avail ourselves? In either case, are there any benefits for us now in our Christian walk? How do you know when you should give something up for Jesus to bear, and when you should continue to struggle with it? What role does the Holy Spirit play in helping you with the difficulties of the Christian life?