

GALATIANS: IDENTIFYING AND OVERCOMING LEGALISM
Part II: Overcoming Charges Of "Cheapness of Belief and Action" By Legalists
(Galatians 1:10-2:21)

- A. Since legalism is man's way of either trying to obey God's true regulations in the power of the sin nature, or the desire to apply man-made rules as God's commands, legalism as a way of thought and life delights in discipline and works. As such, legalism detests grace, viewing it as laziness and compromise.
- B. A consistent charge by legalism against those who follow grace is the charge of "easy believism," or a "cheap believism gospel" or "laziness" in service.
- C. Paul faced this same charge, and how he handled it exemplifies for us how we are to respond as well:
- I. **Overcoming Charges Of "Cheapness of Belief and Action" By Legalists, Gal. 1:10-2:21.**
 - II. When Paul taught justification by faith without physical circumcision, legalistic Judaizers apparently thought that he was afraid of offending Gentiles by impressing them to be circumcised. In effect, they challenged Paul with the charge of an "easy believism" gospel, Gal. 1:10, Bib. Know. Com., N.T., p. 591.
 - III. Paul's burden in Galatians 1:10-2:21 is to refute the charge that he was afraid of offending others by his Gospel, but that he had received this Gospel from God and sought to please God **instead of** men. Here is how he accomplishes this task:
 1. Step One - Paul replied that his pronouncing strong "Anathemas" against a faith-plus-circumcision gospel was certainly not a man-pleasing stand! If anything, it turned some away, Ga. 1:8-9 with 1:10!
 2. Step Two - Paul showed that his stand against circumcision for justification was not a compromise so much as a change in his theology from his former commitment to circumcision, Gal. 1:11-14.
 - a. Paul had once totally turned off the Church by persecuting it for not adhering to Judaism, 1:11-13.
 - b. In fact, Paul exceeded the commitment in favor of Judaism against Christianity so that he surpassed all other Jews in his stand, Gal. 1:14!
 - c. Paul was not compromising the gospel to please men -- he had rejected circumcision as a means of justification due to a momentous event in his experience -- the event of conversion! (Acts 9:1-20)
 3. Step Three - Paul then revealed that he was totally committed to his gospel of justification by faith alone before he had any significant theological input from the other apostles, Gal. 1:15-24.
 4. Step Four - When Paul did meet the apostles due to the need to check his gospel, he was received as an equal with his gospel being confirmed by Peter, James and John, Gal. 2:1-10.
 5. Step Five - Paul even **publicly corrected Peter and Barnabas** on their erroneous misrepresentations of the Gospel of faith, Gal. 2:11-21! Paul was not seeking to please men in his faith-only gospel!

Lesson: If confronted by the charge that we promote a "lazy gospel" or "lazy Christian life" that "doesn't do much," we can respond as Paul did by recalling how we have come to our present convictions to examine if there is evidence that God has led us to these beliefs and actions! If NOT, we must repent! If so, we conclude that the charges are false and legalistic, and we keep going with what we believe and practice as servants of Christ, Gal. 1:10!

Application: (1) Test to see if there has been a cost for standing for the criticized belief or action! If so, this cost is not caused by laziness, but indicates suffering for righteousness! (2) Test to see if we used to adhere to legalistic beliefs and actions on the subject and from which the Lord has led us to turn away; if so, judge the charges of laziness or compromise to be legalistic! (3) Test to see if God has personally led us to these convictions totally apart from influences by others! If so, the charges are legalistic! (4) Test to see if our belief changes were confirmed by other reputable Christians! If so, the charges are legalistic! (5) Test to see if God has already used us to correct notable believers for errors of a legalistic nature in the areas criticized! If so, the charges are legalistic, and we must serve God in liberty and not heed the bondage of men, Gal. 1:10 with 5:1!