

## LEGALISM AND LEGALISTS – MAN-MADE LABELS IN THE LAST DAYS

*It is of interest to note that the word legalist does not appear in the writings of Ellen G. White and the word legalism appears only once. The one statement shows up twice on the EGW CDROM. Here is the statement.*

***All legalism**, all the sorrow and woe by which you may encompass yourself, will not give you one moment of relief. You cannot rightly estimate sin. You must accept God's estimate, and it is heavy indeed. If you bore the guilt of your sin, it would crush you; but the sinless One has taken your place, and, though, undeserving, he has borne your guilt. By accepting the provision God has made, you may stand free before God in the merit and virtue of your Substitute. You will then have a proper estimate of sin, and **the godly sorrow of true repentance** will take the place of hopeless discouragement and grief, for you will turn from sin with grief and abhorrence. {ST, April 9, 1894 par. 3}*

*So where is all this talk of legalism and legalists coming from ? It might possibly be that there are modern day Pharisees in our midst. What is a Pharisee you ask ? We will take a brief look at that. One thing for sure, the silence of the Bible and Spirit of prophecy concerning legalism and legalists is a fact. Could it be that the enemy of all mankind is using name calling to scare even remnant church members towards the embracing arms of the beast ?*

*The papacy is well adapted to meet the wants of all these. It is prepared for two classes of mankind, embracing nearly the whole world,--**those who would be saved by their merits, and those who would be saved in their sins**. Here is the secret of its power. {BEcho, February 1, 1887 par. 13}*

*It is without question and an indisputable fact that no human being can be saved by works but is it possible that we can we be saved without them ?*

*Our good works alone will not save any of us, but **we cannot be saved without good works**. {ST, April 20, 1876 par. 6}*

*While good works will not save even one soul, yet **it is impossible for even one soul to be saved without good works**.--Letter 44, 1893.*

*Today it is often suggested, sometimes insinuated or blatantly stated that those who try to obey God or advocate obedience to the commandments of God are Pharisees. Somehow the word Pharisee has, mistakenly and probably innocently in many cases, come to be associated with efforts to do right. Obviously this cannot come from a correct understanding of what a Pharisee is because God Himself and Jesus Christ are always doing right and in perfect harmony with all the commandments all the time. Since no human being can accurately read motives, who can properly judge someone's right doing ? Let us take a brief look at what the Bible and Spirit of prophecy tell us about the Pharisee.*

## THE TRUTH ABOUT THE PHARISEES WHO ARE THE PHARISEES TODAY ?

*One of the characteristics that made the Pharisees stand out and which is quite evident among most of us in the remnant church during this time of the investigative judgment is a lack of repentance. This is a dangerous condition and most painful to the heart of Christ.*

*When John was preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and **the Pharisees** and Sadducees came to his baptism, that fearless preacher of righteousness addressed them: "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? **Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance**." {ST, July 7, 1887 par. 1}*

In this age, just prior to the second coming of Christ in the clouds of heaven, such a work as that of John is to be done. God calls for men who will prepare a people to stand in the great day of the Lord. ***The message preceding the public ministry of Christ was, Repent, publicans and sinners; repent, Pharisees*** and Sadducees; "repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." As a people who believe in Christ's soon coming, we have a message to bear,—"Prepare to meet thy God" Amos 4:12 {GW 55.2}

The Pharisees felt that they had need of nothing to make them spiritually perfect. They were just in their own eyes, and ***felt no need of repentance***, and they condemned Christ in his work of seeking to save those who felt themselves lost and undone. {ST, January 29, 1894 par. 2}

***You, Pharisees, said Jesus***, regard yourselves as the favorites of heaven. ***You feel that you need no repentance***. Know, then, that if you have no need, my mission is not to you. I have come to seek and to save that which was lost; and these poor souls who feel their poverty and sinfulness, are the very ones whom I have come to rescue. {GCB, December 1, 1895 par. 14}

***The Redeemer*** of the world never spurned ***true repentance***, however great the guilt; but He hurls burning denunciations against Pharisees and hypocrites. There is more hope for the open sinner than for this class. {ST 144. 2}

Men have been overbearing and imperious in spirit, and their wrong course of action, their lack of principle, will cause them to be denounced by the Lord as surely as the Pharisees were denounced. The woes that fell on the Pharisees will as verily fall on all who are engaged in a like work, ***unless they repent***--Letter 134, 1902.

The Saviour sends messages to warn the sinner of danger ***and rouse his heart to repentance***, but they are too often received as idle tales. Many of those who profess godliness are as unsanctified by the Spirit of God today ***as were the Pharisees*** in the days of Jesus. {3SP 12.1}

### TRULY BEHOLDING THE LOVE OF CHRIST LEADS TO REPENTANCE

It was taught by the Jews that ***before the favor of God*** is extended to the sinner, ***he must first repent***. In their view, repentance is ***a work which men are to accomplish of themselves***, by which to earn the favor of heaven. And it was this thought that moved the Pharisees to exclaim in astonishment and anger, "This man receiveth sinners." According to their ideas he should permit to approach him those only who had repented of their sins. But Jesus teaches that salvation does not come through our seeking after God, but through God's seeking after us. Repentance is born in the heart by beholding the love of Christ, who gave his life to save the sinner. It is the goodness of God, manifested in Christ, that softens the heart. It is the virtue that goes forth from Jesus that inspires the purpose of the soul to turn away from sin. We do not repent in order that God may love us, but ***God reveals his love to us that we may repent***. {GCB, December 1, 1895}

**DID THE PHARISEES REALLY KEEP THE COMMANDMENTS OF GOD ?  
WERE THEY REALLY STRIVING FOR AND FOCUSING ON PERFECTION ?  
WHAT IS PHARISEEISM ?**

*The spirit of Pharisaism is the spirit of human nature*; and as the Saviour showed the contrast between His own spirit and methods and those of the rabbis, *His teaching is equally applicable to the people of all time.* {MB 79.2}

*Phariseeism permits of self-complacency*, and those who are self-righteous, appear to have a form of piety, but at heart they are corrupt. They may talk of their hope of heaven, when, in fact, *they have not taken the first step toward heaven.* {ST, August 13, 1894 par. 5}

*The first step toward heaven is conviction of sin, the second is repentance and obedience.* {RH, September 17, 1895 par. 4}

Not only did the scribes and *Pharisees violate the law of God* themselves, but they led men to accept their words, to practice their human inventions, and follow their precept and example. They taught for doctrines *the commandments of men.* They desired to define to the smallest details the requirements of the law, and this led them to accumulate a mass of human sayings. These maxims they taught to the people as principles of the law, and thus they confused the faith and corrupted the morals of those whom they led into idolatry by their perversion of truth. {RH, May 23, 1899 par. 3}

*The Pharisees placed their traditions on a level with the law of God*, and frequently made them take the place of the law. Jesus had declared that they made void the law of God by their traditions, external ceremonies, divers washings, fastings and long prayers, ostentatious alms-giving and rigorous seclusion from the Gentiles. These constituted the main features of their religion. In superstition and formality *they resembled the Roman Catholic church of the present time.* But among them were some of genuine piety who received the teachings of Christ. 3SP 44

The Pharisees especially were stirred by a power from beneath, and *they strove earnestly* to exalt their manufactured precepts, their traditions and man-made commandments, *above the law of God.* {RH, January 18, 1898 par. 10}

The Pharisees were *rigid adherents to tradition.* {DA 603.1}

Loving the honour of men, loving their own maxims and traditions, *the Pharisees made idols of their own little precepts, and lost sight of the doctrines of the Bible*, and the consequence was spiritual death. {BEcho, June 24, 1895 par. 2}

The Pharisees, tho professing to keep the commandments of God, *were exalting their own traditions above the law*, and requiring needless exactions from the people. Many in our day are doing as did the Pharisees, and, while laying claims to high piety and sanctification, they are following their own ideas, and *refusing to meet the condition upon which God has promised eternal life.* ST, April 2, 1896

**REPENTANCE IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A PHARISEE AND A HUMBLE SINNER**

When *the Pharisees* asked the disciples why their Master ate with publicans and sinners, Christ, overhearing the question, turned to His accusers, and, in the dignity of His mission, said: "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." In His life He has given us a representation of what *repentant sinners* may become. He was pure and undefiled. From His lips escaped no word that could leave a stain upon His character. *All through the Scriptures He has given us assurances that through His grace we may attain the same perfection of character that He attained.* {ST, June 10, 1903 par. 5}

*Heavenly Father, please lead us to repentance and forgive us for being a Pharisee, in Jesus name, Amen.*