

THE STORY HOUSTON: **inspiring non-religious Houstonians** to follow Jesus

CHASING HOPE: how ordinary people make extraordinary disciples

PART 2: THE LEGALIST | 2.2.20 | thestoryhouston.church |
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INTRO TO CHASING HOPE

These days, we typically think of Christians as people who go to church a couple Sundays a month, but there was a time when being a Christian meant something more radical. The first Christians left behind their ordinary lives to follow Jesus; these men and women surrendered their status quo for the movement he started, even though it meant they had to struggle, suffer, and even die for what they believed.

What do the lives of Jesus' first disciples teach us about authentic Christianity? What inspiration can we glean from those women and men who gave it all to follow him? Each week we'll take an up-close, between-the-lines look at some of the everyday people who chose to follow Jesus, and we'll find ourselves in each story.

INTRO TO LEGALISM

What is legalism, and why is it such a problem for Christians?

INTRO TO PAUL (A.K.A. SAUL)

Who was Paul, and how would you describe his personality?

How was Paul's life before Jesus shaped by legalism?

What happened to Paul's legalistic tendencies after he chose to follow Jesus?

THE VIRTUOUS ROOT OF LEGALISM

Like most sins, legalism is actually rooted in a good idea. In Matthew 23, Jesus recognized the virtuous root of the Pharisees' teachings when he told his followers they must do everything the Pharisees say. What is the virtuous ideal that lies at the core of legalism?

God took Paul's vice (legalism) that was rooted in virtue (loyalty) and redeemed it to reflect His will (love). How have you seen God doing the same thing in your life?

BIBLE PASSAGES FROM TODAY'S MESSAGE

ACTS 22:3-5 "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city. I studied under Gamaliel and was thoroughly trained in the law of our ancestors. I was just as zealous for God as any of you are today. **I persecuted the followers of this Way to their death, arresting both men and women and throwing them into prison**, as the high priest and all the Council can themselves testify. I even obtained letters from them to their associates in Damascus, and went there to bring these people as prisoners to Jerusalem to be punished."

PHILIPPIANS 3:4-6 If anyone thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, the tribe of Benjamin, **a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee**; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless.

ACTS 7:54-8:1 When the members of the Sanhedrin heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him. But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. "Look," he said, "I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."

At this they covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him, dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. Meanwhile, the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul.

While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Then he fell on his knees and cried out, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he fell asleep. **And Saul approved of their killing him.**

COLOSSIANS 2:16-23 Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ. **Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you.** Such a person also goes into great detail about what they have seen; they are puffed up with idle notions by their unspiritual mind. They have lost connection with the head, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow.

Since you died with Christ to the elemental spiritual forces of this world, **why, as though you still belonged to the world, do you submit to its rules:** "Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!"? These rules, which have to do with things that are all destined to perish with use, are based on merely human commands and teachings. Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.

MATTHEW 23:1-4 Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples: "The teachers of the law and **the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. So you must be careful to do everything they tell you.** But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach. They tie up heavy, cumbersome loads and put them on other people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them.