

Article: Confess Your Sins Boldly

One of the ways that both the ideologies of *Legalism* and *Lawlessness* war against the Christian can be seen in how they treat and interact with the issue of sin.

The Legalist typically conceals sin. Otherwise stated, the Legalist typically conceals sin by misusing the Law and by inflating their perceived abilities to fulfil the Law. Logically, from a Legalistic perspective, this strategy makes sense. Keep in mind that the main force of the Law is to reveal original sin and all of its fruits; however, the Legalist misuses the Law by defanging it. The Legalist makes the Law into something that he can fulfil by his own strength. Therefore, if the Law is misused and if mankind's abilities are inflated, then man can successfully manage, overcome, and be victorious over sin. For the Legalists, both success and positive progress are manifested in his ability to supposedly overcome sin thus resulting in him talking less and less about his struggles with sin. Alas, sin is concealed, not confessed.

The Libertine, on the other hand, typically celebrates sin. Otherwise stated, the Libertine typically celebrates sin by minimising the demands of the Law and by deflating the Holiness of God. Logically, this strategy also makes sense, from a Lawless perspective. If the Law does not make stern demands and if God is not that serious about righteousness, then mankind is o.k. and free to do what he or she so desires. For the Libertine, a prosperous life is marked by liberty from binding religious ethics and a joyous disposition of free, unrestricted living according to the desires of the heart. Alas, sin is celebrated, not confessed.

Did you notice that Legalism and Lawlessness are two sides of the same coin? Legalism misuses the Law, and Lawlessness minimises the Law. Legalism inflates mankind, and Lawlessness deflates God. Indeed, both of these errors end up in the same place: the denial of God's Law and the preservation of the sinful flesh (i.e., the old Adam). More specifically, Legalism conceals sin, whereas Lawlessness celebrates sin; neither of them, though, confesses sin. In other words, the Legalist and the Libertine are both the same; they both do not own their sin, and they both flee from contrition. Yes, Legalism and Lawlessness both flee from and abhor confession of sin, confession which is the visible sign of contrition. Truly, the sinful nature likes to hide in the shadows of Legalism and Lawlessness and does everything possible to keep from being exposed.

The Christian needs to be protected from both of these grievous errors, for both of these errors draw the Christian away from contrition, which then draws the Christian away from the cross of Christ. Otherwise stated, both of these errors attempt to deceive Christians into believing that they do not have a sin problem (1 John 1:8). Indeed, concealed sin (i.e., closed sin) and celebrated sin (i.e., open sin) avoid confession of sin, which then negates the need of Christ's cross.

Thankfully the message of the cross is constantly confronting both concealed and celebrated sins. Yes, the cross of Christ is at war with both Legalism and Lawlessness. For the legalists, the cross destroys the illusion that we can do something apart from God thus rendering God less than almighty. For the person bent on lawlessness, the cross says, 'look how awful all the lawlessness is that the holy Son of God must suffer so for the sin of mankind!'" What this means is that Lawlessness is not a way to overcome Legalism and Legalism is not a way to overcome Lawlessness. Rather than reactionary tactics, the Christian lives life in the shadow of Christ's cross; the Christian lives underneath God's Word of Law and Gospel. Life in the cross is one where God's Law leads mankind to the identification, comprehension, and confession of concealed and/or celebrated sin. Thus, the point of God's Law is to bring about contrition in the person and to open their eyes to their corruption so that they may be prepared to hear and receive the forgiveness of sins in Christ Jesus (i.e., the Law puts one in the grave; the Gospel puts one in Jesus' grave). Yes, the life of the Christian is daily confession of sin and daily reception of the absolving Gospel.

What does all of this actually look like? Practically speaking, confession of sins is obviously not the same as concealing sin. Furthermore, confession of sins should not be mistaken as if one is celebrating sin. Rather, confession of sins is a mark of the Holy Spirit working contrition through the Word of Law. Thus, spiritual health is not marked by one believing that everything is simply awesome, as is often the case with Lawlessness. Furthermore, spiritual growth is not marked by one talking less and less about sin because they are supposedly becoming less and less sinful, as is often the case with Legalism. Rather, spiritual health and spiritual growth are demonstrated by us moving away from the conviction that we are self-sufficient to the repeated experience of spiritual bankruptcy. We move on from delusions of our spiritual importance to a growing sense of our utter insignificance and the glory of God. We move on from delight in our own power to the painful recognition of our spiritual weakness. We are brought from our self-righteousness to the increasing consciousness that we are sinful.

Being a sinner though, should not result in complete and final despair. The reason why? The Lord does not despise spirits that are crushed, crippled and wrecked. Thankfully the Lord does not disapprove of collapsed, broken, and torn down hearts (Psalm 51:17). But rather, the Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit (Psalm 34:18). When we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive and cleanse us (1 John 1:9).

Beware of denying that you are a sinner or aspiring to such purity that you will not wish to be looked upon as a sinner, for Christ only dwells in sinners. Undeniably, God's Word of Gospel is that Jesus came for sinners, that there is forgiveness of sins in Christ. Therefore, confess your sins boldly, but believe and rejoice in Christ's forgiveness for sinners even more.