

## 1. We've been looking at the idea of legalism in our study of Galatians

A. I think it would be helpful to review what legalism is

## 2. Legalism defined – two things to watch out for

A. Trying to earn our salvation by anything but faith in Christ alone

1). It can be in the way we approach the Bible

- a). Churches are filled with the merely religious – no relationship with Christ  
But mechanically – through their own will power trying to keep the Scriptures
- b). They think they are earning God's acceptance – earning heaven

2). It can also be through a false system of man-made rules that become a standard of spirituality

- a). It is man deciding what spirituality looks like – even though can't find it in Bible
  - 1a). Then measuring the salvation or spirituality of others by that
- b). I'm saved because I don't watch TV – I don't waste my time on Sports  
I don't go to movies – don't wear make-up or pants (Ladies)  
I don't listen to Contemporary Christian music – only hymns  
"I don't dance and I don't chew and I don't go with girls who do!"

**Point:** It can be trying to obey the Scriptures to earn God's love

Or using a set of rules or traditions that are extra-Biblical to determine spirituality

B. What legalism is NOT! Expecting obedience from those who ARE saved to clear Biblical commands

1). Trying to keep the commands before you are saved to earn salvation = legalism

Keeping the clear commands in Scripture after you are saved = Just Christianity

a). That obedience is grace driven – new nature God gave you – new desires – new power

**Paul Karleen explaining legalism:** The attempt to please God by *erecting rules where the Bible does not give them*, and then making them binding on oneself and others. It is not a matter of following those things that are commanded, or that have clear biblical principles associated with them, but of raising decisions on so-called *doubtful things* to the level of commands.

## 3. Why I am fighting legalism so hard? It is a joy stealer

A. The legalist always become so petty – little things that don't matter become huge deals

B. Great example of the pettiness, and joylessness of legalists – Pool of Bethesda (John 5)

1). Jesus heals a man who had been an invalid for 38 years

2). The regular people rejoiced while the legalistic Pharisees fumed

- a). Instead of being glad he was given back his life – wouldn't have to beg any longer
- b). All they could see was one of their stupid little extra-biblical rules had been broken  
"Hey buddy! It's illegal to carry your mat on the Sabbath!"
  - 1a). Obviously it wasn't because God had healed him and told him  
"Take up your mat and walk"

3). But that's the legalist isn't it? The one with the lemon face always judging everybody else

- a). They have their little idea of what spirituality looks like – it looks just like them  
And everybody else that doesn't act like them is either carnal or not saved!

C. But when we understand grace – how gracious God's been to us

- 1). We start being gracious to others – they don't have to be like me  
They have freedom before God to be them

**Objection:** All this talk about legalism – I don't even know if I know anybody who is legalistic

A. Au Contraire! You do know legalist – they are probably sitting all around you – might be you!

- 1). Ligonier ministries – took a survey of believers "Self-proclaimed Evangelicals"

**One question:** By the good that I do, I partly contribute to earning my place in heaven.

- a). 36% of self-proclaimed evangelicals agreed with that – 4 out of 10 are legalistic
- a). Believing the same lie the false teachers in Galatia were promoting

**Objection:** Yeah, 4 out of 10 but not me! Mind if we check that?

#### 4. The good day bad day test (Jerry bridges)

##### The Good Day

- A. Wake up early – do your devotions – they were warm, intimate
  - 1). So you move into your day with God on your mind – everything goes great
  - 2). You're filled with joy and you sense the presence of God in your life
- B. Unexpectedly you have chance to share the Gospel with somebody who is searching
  - 1). So you take the opportunity – depending upon God to help you

##### The Bad Day

- A. Alarm rings – you hit the snooze button a number of times – wake up late = No devotions
  - 1). Have just enough time to wolf down quick breakfast and it's off to work
  - 2). Day seems to go from bad to worse – you're irritable – don't sense God's presence
- B. Unexpectedly you have another opportunity to share the Gospel

**Question:** On the second day would you have as much confidence in God's help as the first?

- A. Most would probably say "No" – but is that Biblical? No! Why?
  - 1). You say "No" because your basing God's willingness to help on what you do! Your performance

But God's willingness to help doesn't depend on our perfection but on Christ's!

**Point:** Gospel truth frees us up to step into that opportunity

Not only on the good day but more importantly ALSO on those bad days

- A. I can still go to God to receive the help I need – I can still anticipate His blessings – His love

**Transition:** Let's carry this thinking over to everything that happens in our life

Into those times I really need God's peace – comfort – help – on those really bad days

#### 5. How the Gospel helps me on the bad days

- A. That day I hear bad news from doctor – hear rumors about layoffs at work
  - 1). Any of those numerous times we really need the assurance that God will help me
- B. If I'm legalistic – focused on me and my performance
 

There is a good chance I'll have no confidence – "I don't deserve it"

  - 1). All our failures – inconsistencies flood into our mind – why would God help me?
- C. Grace frees us from that – understanding of the Gospel delivers me
  - 1). Instead of focusing on me I focus on Christ – I focus on truth
    - a). God looks at me and sees me clothed in the robes of His righteousness – His perfection
    - b). Therefor I can anticipate God helping me – sustaining me – providing for me
  - 2). This allows me to enjoy God – anticipate His help on those bad days as well as the good

**Transition:** After the longest introduction in the history of Christian teaching – let's dig into our study

- A. I wanted to show why this study is important – legalism is a huge problem in the church today
- B. So last week we saw Abraham a man who lived by faith – who relied on God's work not his own
 

This week Paul tells us about another kind of man – who relies on the works of the law – their own work
- C. For all who base their assurance on what they do – this section is so important

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**Ga 3:10–14 (ESV)** For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, "Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them." <sup>(11)</sup> Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for "The righteous shall live by faith." <sup>(12)</sup> But the law is not of faith, rather "The one who does them shall live by them." <sup>(13)</sup> Christ

redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree”—<sup>(14)</sup> so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.

## I. THE PROBLEM OF APPROACHING GOD THROUGH OUR OWN WORKS

**Ga 3:10 (ESV)** For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, “Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them.”

### 1. Works of the law = any system that relates to God through our performance

- A. Whether it’s keeping the 10 commandments  
Or some list of do’s and don’ts formulated through the traditions or opinions of man

**Point:** It is trying to merit the approval and love of God through how well we do in keeping these

### 2. Look at the warning for those who tried to be saved in this way

- A. This would be all who are merely religious – whether that is in a Christian setting, Islam, Buddhist
  - 1). Whether that be the JW at your door or the Mormon trying to earn godhood

**Transition:** What a difference from Abraham’s example – living by faith brought great blessing

- A. Look at what approaching God by our own works brings into a life

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**Ga 3:10 (ESV)** For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse...

- A. Curse = not some voodoo thing – the **condemnation** the law exerts upon the person breaking the law
  - 1). This results in an eternal rejection by God for that condemned sinner – wrath instead of blessing
- B. Remember the law is the standard God uses to determine if a person gets into heaven or not

**Ro 3:19 (ESV)** Now we know that **whatever the law says** it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, **and the whole world may be held accountable to God.**

- 1). For any man or woman to get into heaven they must keep the law – the **WHOLE** law

**Ga 3:10 (ESV)** For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, “Cursed be everyone **who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them.**”

- a). You can’t pick and choose – I like this command – that one not so much
- b). You must keep all 600+ laws in the books of Moses perfectly
  - 1a). One failure and you’re a lawbreaker – and no lawbreakers get into heaven

**Objection:** I can’t do that! Right either can I

**Ro 3:23 (ESV)** for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

**Ga 3:11 (ESV)** Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law...

**Question:** Then why did God establish the law?

Why did He make something I can’t keep the standard of salvation? Now listen

- A. He didn’t establish the law for you to be saved by it!
  - 1). He established the law to be a servant of grace – watch how this works - brilliant
- B. The law is the standard to get into heaven – perfect obedience
  - 1). But the law is a servant of grace to show you that you have not met that standard
    - a). The law was never meant to make you feel right with God  
It was established to show you how wrong with God you are! How guilty
    - b). It’s designed to kill any hope in you of earning salvation through your own merit
  - 2). You take an honest look at the law – and you realize how guilty you are! You’re in trouble!
    - a). **And THAT drives you to grace** – to Christ – the only solution for your horrifying plight

**Ga 3:14 (ESV)** so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.

- 3). By faith you trust in Him – and God applies His perfect obedience to you!

**Remember (Just trying to weave all this together for you): Ro 5:19 (ESV)** For as by the one man's disobedience (Adam's) the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience (Christ's) the many will be made righteous.

- a). You trust in Christ and you are made righteous = *as if you never broke the law*

**Point:** So if you're going to try and be saved through being good enough – nice enough – religious enough

- A. All you've done is brought this curse of condemnation upon you

- 1). Because you're relying on a system that demands perfection and you're not perfect

- B. You're only hope is to give up any hope of being good enough and trust that Christ was

- 1). Do that and God will transfer His perfect obedience to the law into your account

- C. *Good news of the Gospel! To get into heaven you must keep the law perfectly – In Christ you have!*

**Transition:** So you can't be saved through your own works – impossible

But there is another form of legalism

- A. Paul is talking to those were saved by faith but drifted into legalism – so many do that

- 1). How does this work for them?

### 3. The saint who drifts into legalism (through incorrect teaching etc.)

- A. You will not experience the curse *legally* – you're not going to be condemned to hell

- 1). But you will still experience the curse *subjectively*

- 2). And that law is going to do to you what it always does – condemn you NOT comfort you

- a). It is going to keep showing you how far short you fall – point out every inconsistency

- b). It will steal your joy – rob you of any anticipation of God's blessing in your life

- B. Any time you base your acceptance or blessings from by God on what you do = You're Done

- 1). You're going to have too many of those bad days to have any kind of consistent joy

- a). You're going to have too many inconsistencies to have any kind of consistent peace

**Question:** What does the Bible tell us to do when we need help?

**Heb 4:16 (ESV)** Let us then with confidence draw near to the *throne of grace*, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

- A. Did you notice what kind of throne it is?

- 1). It is a throne of grace – we run in confidently because we know we are accepted there

- a). And we know we are accepted because God views us through Christ's perfect obedience

- b). Therefore God has nothing against us – the law has nothing against us

- B. Therefore on those bad days I have access to God and can expect help

**Transition:** Now Paul reminds them (and us) of the only way out of this legalistic – joy stealing predicament

**Ga 3:11 (ESV)** Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law (Why? Because we've seen we can't keep it), for *"The righteous shall live by faith."*

### 1. If I can't be saved or maintain my salvation by my own works

- A. What is the only other option? If it can't be by my works – it has to be by faith in His work!

- 1). If it can't be by my keeping the law – it must be by another's keeping it for me

- B. I must trust that He has done what I couldn't do – He has done for me what the Father requires

- 1). And I must trust that God the Father accepts what He has done on my behalf

**Thought:** So I have to choose how I'll approach God – law or faith – they are opposite

**Ga 3:12 (ESV)** *But the law is not of faith*, rather "The one who does them shall live by them."

- A. There is no faith in the law – it is all dependent on what I do – not who I trust

- 1). It all focuses on me – my performance determines if I can approach God or not

- B. But if I choose law - I put myself under this bondage to keep all the law perfectly  
“If you want to keep the law then live by the law – do the law – all the law”

- 1). And I bring myself under this curse of condemnation

**Transition:** So the unbeliever is in trouble – guilty of breaking God’s law – God must judge them

- A. The believer is in a state of misery because the law continues to do what it is designed to do
  - 1). Their legalism has given the law the power to do what it was designed to do – condemn them
- B. But God has an incredible solution for this problem
  - 1). *He removed the power of the law by allowing it to exert its power on Christ instead of us*

## II. REDEEMED FROM THE CURSE

**Ga 3:13 (ESV)** Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law...

### 1. Redeemed – a word out of the slave market

- A. It was used to speak of buying a slave’s freedom

**Question:** What were we enslaved to in this verse? *The curse of the law*

- A. It was looming over us - dominating us – condemning us – constantly pointing out we fall short
  - 1). It was stealing our confidence – making it hard to run to God freely - boldly
- B. BUT Jesus graciously, mercilessly freed us – rescued us

**Transition:** How did He free us from that curse – that condemnation hanging over our head?

### 2. He became a curse for us

**Ga 3:13 (ESV)** Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—*for it is written, (Dt. 21:23) “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree”*—

- A. When a criminal was executed under the Mosaic law – usually by stoning
  - 1). Afterwards they’d take body and hang it on a tree as a symbol of God’s rejection
    - a). And a visual reminder of the seriousness of sin
- B. The NT writers use this same picture and relate it to Christ

**Peter: Ac 5:30 (ESV)** The God of our fathers raised Jesus, *whom you killed by hanging him on a tree.*

**Point:** He went to the cross and bore the wrath we deserved for breaking God’s law

- A. Let’s go over substitution again – so important – I want to screw this down tightly into your thinking
  - 1). God treated Jesus as if He had lived my life and sinned my sin – He bore the wrath I deserved
    - a). He took the curse of condemnation that was hanging over me
  - 2). Then God turns around and treats me as if I had lived His life and never sinned once
    - a). I get the blessings He earned – acceptance with God – heaven
- B. He did all this too free us from the condemnation of the law

**Speaking of the law: Col 2:14 (NIV)** having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross.

- 1). In a sense the law was against us – a standard I couldn’t keep – but would be judged by
  - a). It was meant to drive me to Christ to believe in Him – to embrace grace
- 2). So for everyone who believes – God nails that law up on that cross with Christ
  - a). *Symbolic – it’s condemnation over you died with the death of Christ*
    - 1a). God sees you in Christ – His perfect obedience given to you  
That law now has nothing against you – it’s curse is broken at the cross
  - b). Now I can run to Him – now I can rest in His finished work!

**Transition:** Paul finishes up this passage with a reminder – this is going to take faith

### III. ACCEPTING THIS TRUTH BY FAITH

**Ga 3:13–14 (ESV)** Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree”—<sup>(14)</sup> so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.

#### 1. The blessing of Abraham = Justification (saw that last week)

- A. Justification = God declares you to be righteous in Christ – no longer guilty
  - 1). The record of guilt is wiped clean – the demands of the law have been satisfied
    - a). Why because you obeyed all the law? No! Because Christ did!

**Thought:** You have to see what happened to you in salvation = much more than just being forgiven

- A. Much more than just having our record of sins wiped clean
  - 1). We also become perfect in God’s sight – and we stay perfect in God’s sight for all of eternity
    - Because it is based on Christ and not us – imputed righteousness

**Point:** This change of status from guilty to righteous comes when we believe

#### 2. This blessing comes through faith

**But enjoying this amazing truth will also take faith**

- A. We are all more legalistic than we know – it is our default state –
  - 1). There are no free lunches - you get what you earn – it’s the way all of life is
    - But this truth of grace is so contrary isn’t it – flips that on its head*
    - a). We get what Christ earned through His flawless life
    - b). We don’t get what we deserve – Christ gets what we deserve
- B. But you’re going to have to believe all this is true by faith – especially on those bad day
  - 1). You are going to have to apply it every day to keep legalism at bay
    - a). I am accepted in Christ because of His work and not my own

**Transition:** Then notice what it says – when we believe

### We Received the Promised Holy Spirit

#### 1. The Father accepts all who put their faith in the Son

- A. And all who are accepted are given the gift of the Holy Spirit
 

**Ro 8:9 (ESV)** You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. *Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.*

#### 2. Why does God give us the Spirit? A lot of reasons – I’ll point out two

**First: To Empower Us to Live Out This New Wonderful Life**

- A. He enables us to understand these great doctrines that bring so much power
  - 1). Martin Luther – so bound up in legalism – Spirit illuminates truth of the gospel
    - a). That the righteousness God required to get into heaven
      - Was a gift that God would give to all who believe
    - b). When I understood that I walked out of the pain of legalism
      - Into the paradise of grace – loved and accepted by my Father

**Transition:** I’m praying that happens to some of you as we look through Galatians

- 1). But this next one is what I want you to see
- B. He gives us the Spirit as a gift of love – to comfort us – show us how accepted we are
 

**Eph 1:13–14 (ESV)** In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, <sup>(14)</sup> who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

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**TURN: Eph 1:13-14 (NIV)** ... you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, (14) *who is a deposit* guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession...

- 1). God put the Spirit in you as a deposit to guarantee something – what?
  - a). Your inheritance – to make sure you know that you'll make it to be with Him in glory  
I promise I will keep you – I will not stop loving you – I will take you to be with me  
**Jn 10:28–29 (ESV)** I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. <sup>(29)</sup> My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.
  - 1a). The Spirit in us is a guarantee that promise is for us

**Transition:** Deposit is the word I want you to see

- 2). Deposit is a beautiful word – *Arabon* – one use means *engagement ring*
    - a). The Holy Spirit is God's engagement ring to you
    - b). What does an engagement ring mean? It is a guarantee to the bride  
You are mine – I am yours – I am giving you this as a pledge of my love
      - 1a). I am giving you this as a guarantee that wedding will take place!  
I won't let you down! My love for you can be trusted
  - 3). So believers in Christ – do you see how much you are loved? How secure you really are?
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## CONCLUSION

### 1. Once again we see the glories of the gospel of grace

- A. How it not only gets us into the faith but sustains us – lifts us – enable us after we are saved
- B. Here is the answer for those bad days – I can run to God – I can anticipate help
  - 1). Not because I've been perfect – I haven't been – but Christ was!
  - 2). Understanding this doctrine is the only reason I can truly apply this scripture  
**Heb 4:16 (ESV)** Let us then with confidence draw near to the *throne of grace*, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.