

The Joyful Journey

PART 17

The Glory of Christ: *Legalism, Lies & Loss*

Philippians 3:2-8

This Series:

Hedonism, Heaven & Hell
Legalism, Lies & Loss - Today
Grace, Glory & Great Gain
Pressing, Perfection & the Prize
Hope, Heaven & Healthy Living

Pauls Message - *Everything is all about the Glory of God's Grace in Christ*

The Philippian Context - *Judaisers & the NT Significance of Legalism - Jesus & Paul*

I. Legalism - A Definition:

Legalism is either the insistence or the insinuation that any human merit - in ourselves or others - whether social distinction, moral behavior, or personal sacrifice, *even slightly contributes* to getting, growing or keeping salvation in Jesus Christ or to gaining or maintaining - as Christians - the love, acceptance or approval of our Heavenly Father.

Defined by the Contrasts of this Text:

- *Flesh vs. Spirit*
- *Rejecting Christ vs. Rejoicing in Christ*
- *Exclusivity vs. Impartiality*
- *Law vs. Grace*
- *Me vs. Christ & My righteousness vs. His righteousness*

Legalism's effect *always* is to foster guilt, fear, and bondage in ourselves and/or others and - more tragically - to discredit the accomplishment and gift of Christ to deny the new covenant, new creation work of the Spirit and to slander the promise, provision and passionate affection of our Father.

Experientially,

if it focuses you on self & sin more than Christ & confidence,
if it makes you feel guilty & helpless more than glad & hopeful,
if it fosters worry & weariness more than life & liberty...
then you are afflicted by legalism (yours or someone else's) and God hates it.

II. Legalism Slanders God & Tells Devastating Lies:

Legalism:

- A. Lies about the Glory & Gift of Christ
- B. Lies about the Love, Grace & Joy of God
- C. Lies about the Goal of God's Law & Instruction
- D. Lies about the Path to Great Gain

Conclusion:

Next Sunday: Loss & Gain - *Paul's Great Exchange on the Road between Jerusalem & Damascus*

Philippians 3:1-11

1 Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. For me to write the same things to you is not tedious, but for you it is safe.

2 Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation! 3 For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh, 4 though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: 5 circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; 6 concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.

7 But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. 8 Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ

9 and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; 10 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, 11 if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

The Solid Rock

My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness;
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
But wholly lean on Jesus' name.

On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand,
All other ground is sinking sand.

Sam Storms

"There are people, professing Christian people, who are determined to bring you under their religious thumb. They are bent on making you a slave of their conscience. They have built a tidy religious box, without biblical justification, and strive to stuff you inside and make you conform to its dimensions. They are legalists, and their tools are guilt, fear, intimidation, and self-righteousness. They proclaim God's unconditional love for you, but insist on certain conditions before including you among the accepted, among the approved elite, among God's favored few.

I'm not talking about people who insist you obey certain laws or moral rules in order to be saved. Such people aren't legalists. They are lost! They are easily identified and rebuffed. I'm talking about Christian legalists whose goal is to enforce conformity among other Christians in accordance with their personal preferences. These are life-style legalists. They threaten to rob you of joy and to squeeze the intimacy out of your relationship with Jesus. They may even lead you to doubt your salvation. They heap condemnation and contempt on your head so that your life is controlled and energized by fear rather than freedom and joy and delight in God.

Rarely would these folk ever admit to any of this. They don't perceive or portray themselves as legalists. If they are reading this they are probably convinced I'm talking about someone else. They'd never introduce themselves: "Hi! My name is Bob/Betsy. I'm a legalist and my goal is to steal your joy and keep you in bondage to my religious prejudices. Would you like to go to lunch after church today and let me tell you all the things you're doing wrong?"

I suspect that some of you are either legalists or, more likely, the victims of legalism. You live in fear of doing something that another Christian considers unholy, even though the Bible is silent on the subject. You are terrified of incurring their disapproval, disdain, and ultimate rejection. Worse still, you fear God's rejection for violating religious traditions or cultural norms that have no basis in Scripture but are prized by the legalist. You have been duped into believing that the slightest misstep or mistake will bring down God's disapproval and disgust.

When you are around other Christians, whether in church or a home group or just hanging out, do you feel free? Does your spirit feel relaxed or oppressed? Do you sense their acceptance or condemnation? Do you feel judged, inadequate, inferior, guilty, immature, all because of your perceived failure to conform to what someone else regards as "holy"?

Jesus wants to set you free from such bondage! As Paul said, "you were called to freedom"!"