The Foolishness of Legalism

A Study of the Epistle of Galatians
Galatians 3:1-14
Pastor Bryan Clark

Okay, let's imagine this morning that you are a business consultant. You can decide what business you're expert in, but somebody is running a business and he or she is going bankrupt. So that person comes to you, and you look at the business model and the practices and you say, "Oh, this is just a disaster!" And you roll up your sleeves and you restructure and you figure everything out, and you get this person on a better track. And over the next few months and years the business turns around and actually becomes quite profitable. And so you take a certain amount of satisfaction in that. But a couple years later you hear that the business went bankrupt, and you're confused by that. So you go back to the person and you ask, "What happened?" and the answer is that, "After the business turned around and we became profitable, I thought we could go back to the original business model and it would work now." What would you think? You would probably say, "Man, that was really….!" Mmm-hmm; you fill in the blank.

That's exactly where Paul is at in Galatians chapter 3. If you have a Bible, turn with us to Galatians, Chapter 3. The Galatians were lost in their sin; Paul shows up with the message of salvation by grace through faith; they experience radical life change. They are released from the bondage of their sin; they experience new life in Christ, and everything is going well until the legalists show up. And the legalists now are seeking to draw them back into bondage, and that's where we pick up the story. Chapter 3, verse 1:

> **You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified?** (*NASB, Galatians 3:1)

The word **foolish** there is a very strong word. When you read through the Gospels, once in awhile Jesus, in a parable, would refer to the fools, or the foolish. It was a rather mild term, and a completely different Greek word. This is a much stronger word, and most commentators would agree that the contemporary English word would be the word *stupid*. In order to kind of get the conversation, you have to realize how strong that is. He is saying to these Galatians, "You have become stupid!" The basic idea of the word is that you have full mental capacity to understand and reason this out, and yet you choose not to. As a matter of fact, he sarcastically says, "The only explanation for why you would be thinking this is that I think somebody cast a spell on you. The only possible explanation for why you would be thinking so unreasonably is you must be under somebody's spell." That's what he says. And then he reminds them that Jesus **was publically portrayed as crucified**. Contemporary language would be, "I put it on a poster; I put it on a billboard. I graphically explained to you, 'This is the basis of your salvation.'" And he's saying, "You all knew that." So what's happening? Verse 2:

> **This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?**

Now, I love the way verse 2 opens. Basically, what Paul is saying is, "Please don't send me a long wordy e-mail. Just answer me this: *Did you receive the Spirit on the basis of your religious works or on the basis of faith?"* Now he's probably referring to kind of a Galatian Pentecost. Galatians

was very early on in the Church's story, and we know that after what happened at Pentecost, it happened again in various places as the gospel went out to the Gentiles. As a matter of fact, when you go back and read Acts chapter 15, and the discussion about whether or not Gentiles could be Christians without being circumcised, and whether they were at the same level as the Jewish believers, part of the argument comes from Jews who went to these Gentile areas and actually saw that the Gentiles had kind of a Gentile Pentecost—that they believed, and then the Spirit came and they spoke in tongues, and there were miracles and, basically, what they say is they clearly have the same Jesus, the same conversion. They're equal to us because they had the same experience that we had. So it would be fair to assume that's what Paul is referring to. There was a moment in time where there was this miraculous conversion, and there were miracles and there was the evidence of the Spirit. And he's asking them the question: "How did that happen? Did it happen on the basis of a bunch of religious activity or did it happen on the basis of faith?" The Jewish legalists were saying you have to be circumcised, and Paul is saying, "Wait a minute. Were you circumcised when you experienced this miraculous moment?" And the obvious answer is *not*—they're still not circumcised. It couldn't have been from some religious activity. Clearly they understood that it was on the basis of faith. Verse 3:

> **Are you so foolish** *(so stupid)***? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected** *(or completed)* **by the flesh?**

So they are now Christians, but having come to Jesus on the basis of salvation by grace through faith, they are drifting back into a religion of works. And the question is, "If it didn't work *before* salvation, what would make you think it's going to work *after* salvation? Why would you go back to that?" So the real question is, "How did your faith start? How did the story of Jesus start in you? Did it begin on the basis of the Spirit, or did it begin on the basis of the flesh? Was it by faith or was it by works?" So that's the real question. However it started is how it's going to be completed. Now, the word **perfected** is the same word that is often translated *completed*, which is actually the word that is in our Mission Statement: To glorify God by seeking to present every person complete (there's the word) in Christ. So it would be fair to say, "If we don't "get" what this text is talking about, we have no chance of accomplishing our Mission Statement." How are people completed? How are people perfected? In other words, what is the ultimate process of discipleship? Verse 4:

> **Did you suffer so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain?**

The word **suffer** is a Greek word that can also be translated *experience*, which I think is the better translation. He just talked about their experience, and he's going to talk about their experience again. So basically he is saying, "You know what you experienced. Was that all a waste? Was that all for nothing? Have you learned nothing from what happened when you believed by faith?" Verse 5:

> **So then, does He who provides you with the Spirit** *(that, of course, would be God)* **and works miracles among you, do it by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?**

In other words, did God send you the Spirit? Did God work miracles among you because of a bunch of religious activity, because of a bunch of good works you are doing or was it by faith? Of course the answer is obvious to them: It was by faith. So, if that's how it started, isn't that how it will be completed? Why do you drift back to works? It would be fair to assume that the legalists, the Judaizers, were referring to a couple of things. One, in order to be a son of Abraham, you had to be circumcised in order to enter into the promise of Abraham. So they're saying to the Gentiles,

"You have to be circumcised." Number two, "You still have to follow at least parts of the Law." So Paul basically says, "Okay, let's talk about this. Let's talk Abraham." Verse 6:

> **Even so Abraham BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS.**

Genesis 15:6, is a real important verse that identifies Abraham's moment of salvation. It's the exact same argument that Paul makes in Romans chapter 4, that Abraham **believed,** and on that basis it was credited to him as **righteousness**. In other words, he was justified. He was declared righteous in the presence of God. Now there is absolutely no way that Abraham was declared righteous on the basis of circumcision. Circumcision wouldn't come into the picture until fourteen years later. And there's no way it was on the basis of the Law. The Law of Moses didn't even come for another hundred years. The only option on the table is **Abraham believed,** and that was the basis of his salvation. Verse 7:

> **Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham.**

A very interesting statement. So you can imagine the Judaizers saying, "In order to be a son of Abraham and enter into the promise, you have to be circumcised," and Paul is saying, "Whoa, wait a minute. Actually, an uncircumcised Gentile who believes by faith is a son of Abraham more than a circumcised Jew who doesn't believe by faith." It's the exact argument Paul makes in Romans chapter 2—that actually uncircumcised Gentiles who believe by faith are more sons of Abraham than Jewish circumcised unbelievers. Verse 8:

> **The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "ALL THE NATIONS WILL BE BLESSED IN YOU."**

In verse 8, the **Scripture** is, in a sense, personified, and we get the clear indication that the Scripture represents the Word of God. Now we talked about this the very first week. We're going to believe that the Book of Galatians is the very God-breathed Word. That is being affirmed in chapter 3, verse 8—that the Scripture, God knowing that in order to fulfill the promise made to Abraham—what was the promise? That through Abraham, **all of the nations of the world would be blessed**—that God looked down the corridors of time and said, "These Galatians, as Gentiles, will believe and, on the basis of that belief, they become sons of Abraham and enter into the promise. It would be equally true to say God looked down through the corridor of time and knew there would be a group of Gentiles in Lincoln, Nebraska, that would believe and, on the basis of your belief, you become a son of Abraham; you become a child of Abraham; you enter into the promise—in other words—salvation. So God has always had in mind that those who believe would enter into the promise. It's always been on the basis of faith, never on the basis of works. Verse 9:

> **So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer.**

So let's talk Law, verse 10:

> **For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, "CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO DOES NOT ABIDE BY ALL THINGS WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF THE LAW, TO PERFORM THEM."**

Basically, if your operating system is that, on the basis of your good works, on the basis of your religious performance, that is going to be your means of righteousness, your way of making yourself acceptable to God, then you are under a curse. You are condemned by God because the only way to be saved under the Law is to keep the Law perfectly—every moment of every day for your entire life. People have a tendency to just cherry-pick a handful of things out of the Law. So let's just believe salvation by grace through faith *plus*—let's throw in a circumcision; let's throw in a Sabbath; let's throw in a dietary law; let's throw in the Ten Commandments—and as long as you do those things. But what Paul is saying, "You can't cherry-pick the Law. If you're going to merit righteousness under the Law, it's everything, and if you fail in one slightest detail ever in your life, then you are under a curse, and you are condemned." That's what he is saying.

> **Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident;** (Vs. 11a)

Based on what I've just said, if you ever, at any moment, at any time in your life fail to keep the Law perfectly, you are condemned. He follows that with a statement that it is right out of the "Duh" file. Nobody is that good. It is evident; it's obvious. Nobody lives at that level.

> **Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, "THE RIGHTEOUS MAN SHALL LIVE BY FAITH."** (Vs. 11)

There's the reminder from the Old Testament that it's always been **by faith**. There has never been a moment in time when it was by works, where people merited righteousness with God. It's always been by faith. That's always been the only option on the table. Verse 12:

> **However, the Law is not of faith; on the contrary, "HE WHO PRACTICES THEM SHALL LIVE BY THEM."**

That's a very important verse. It is saying that grace and Law are not compatible systems—never have been, never will be. You can't say, "I believe in salvation by grace through faith *plus* anything." You can't add any work. Those are two systems that aren't compatible. Either it is belief by faith—all grace—or it's a salvation by works, but it can't be both. There's no way to mix the two. What he says is, "Therefore, if it's on the basis of Law, then that is the standard by which you will be judged. If you think, on the basis of your works you have merited favor with God, then that's the system by which you will be judged, and you will be condemned, because nobody is good enough. So, what's the solution? Verse 13:

> **Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law,** *(how did He do that)* **having become a curse for us—for it is written, "CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO HANGS ON A TREE" —**

When there was no hope, God stepped in, and Jesus became a curse for us. He became sin for us. He took our sin, our curse, upon Himself. In so doing, He redeemed us. He purchased us back from bondage, from the condemnation, from the curse of the Law—in order to set us free. Jesus died for our sins, chapter 1. Verse 14:

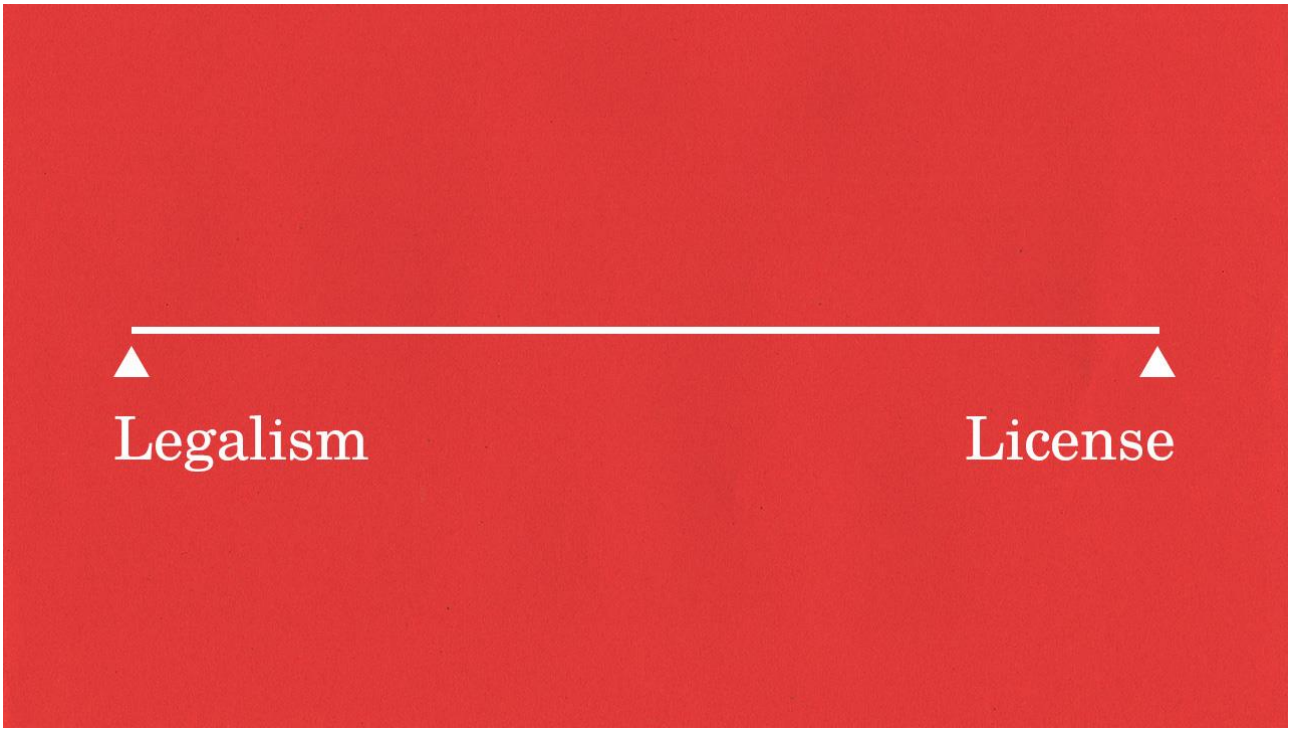
> **—in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.**

What did Jesus do? Jesus took our curse. The quote is an Old Testament passage that reminds us that in the Old Testament, when people committed a capital offense, they were typically stoned to death. But once they were dead, their bodies were pinned to a tree or to a pole, and it was basically to remind people of the curse of sin, the consequence of sin. So when Jesus became our curse—when He became sin for us—He was pinned to a tree. Now it's important to understand, Jesus was not cursed because He was put on a cross. Jesus was cursed because He took our sin—because He became our curse. It's very important to remember that the ultimate suffering of the cross was not physical. The physical suffering was horrific, but that is slight compared to the suffering of a Holy God becoming sin, a Holy God becoming the curse for us. That was the real torture of the cross. I believe when Jesus, in the Garden of Gethsemane, looked into the bowl of God's wrath, that's what He was seeing, that He would become sin for us and He would take God's wrath upon Himself. And that's when He asked, "Father, is there any other way to do this?" And the fact that He went to the cross is the answer: There is no other way. He became our curse. He became our sin in order to pay the price to purchase us—a way out that He now offers freely as a gift of His grace, to be received by faith. Now, that's the reality of grace—that every single person has equal opportunity to God's gift of salvation. It doesn't matter if you're rich or poor. It doesn't matter if you're powerful or homeless. It doesn't matter if you're black or white. It doesn't matter what you've done. It doesn't matter what's been done to you. None of it matters. God freely offers salvation as a gift of His grace to be received by faith. Any other way of salvation would have those that get in and those that don't, but because it's a gift of His grace, everybody has equal access to receive by faith.

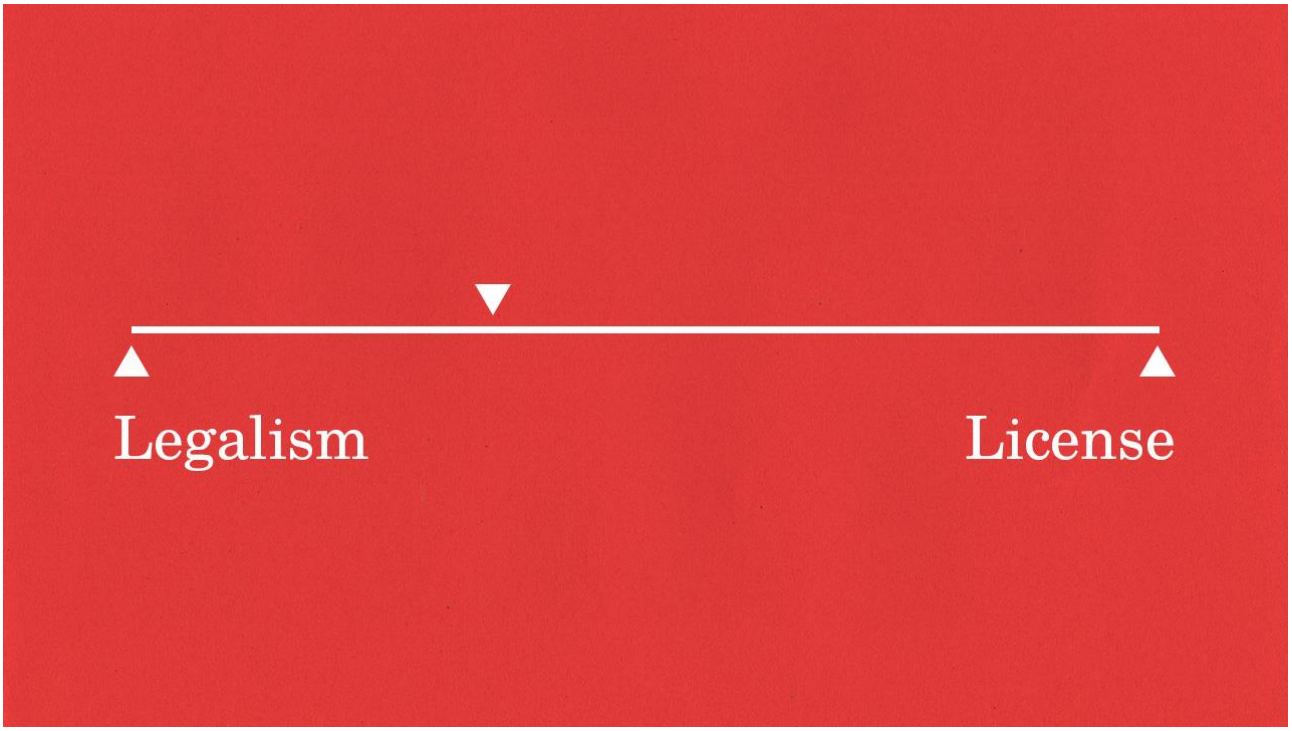
Now some of you are thinking, "What about the people somewhere in South America, deep in a tribe, who have never heard?" Well, first of all, you don't know that that's true. You're making an assumption there. How do you know that's true? How do you know that God doesn't have some way to get His message to every single person that has ever drawn breath on the planet? If God so loved everyone that He gave up His own Son to die for them, don't you think God might have some way to get the message to everyone, so they equally have a chance? You don't know that they haven't heard. How do you know that? But the second thing is: *you've* heard...*you've* heard! You cannot stand before God and say, "I didn't know. Nobody told me. It wasn't fair." Somebody *did* tell you. You *do* know, and you have equal chance, no matter who you are, to receive this magnificent gift of salvation by faith.

I want to do something a little bit different to close my message. I want to show you a series of diagrams. I am actually quite a gifted artist, and you're going to be abundantly impressed *(laughter).* I want to kind of pull Galatians together. We're going to take a couple of weeks off from Galatians and do *Time* and *Talent*, and we'll come back to it. So let me see if I can clarify some things through these diagrams. Now, they are color-coded. Red means: Stop—stop thinking this; it's wrong. Green means: Right—go for it. Okay? Very clever, really *(laughter).*

All right, first one: I would say much of my life I grew up believing that the tension is between *license* and *legalism*. Notice the slide is red. Stop thinking this!

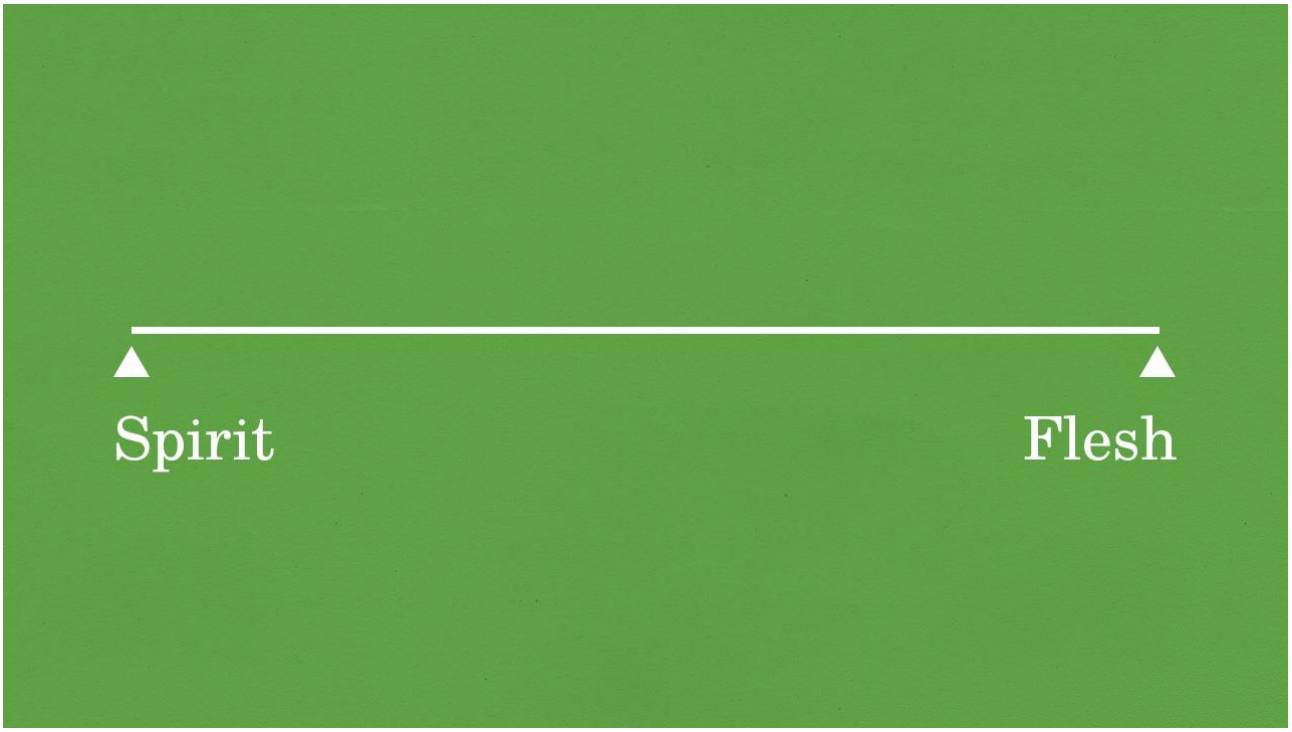


If you believe this is the tension—next slide—then basically the essence of discipleship of the Christian life is to try to find the balance between license and legalism.



Usually the reasoning goes like this: If you have to error out of balance one way or the other, at least error to the side of legalism, because license is so dangerous. And that's how legalism is justified in a lot of churches. The problem is, as we have learned in Galatians, that legalism is actually very destructive to your soul. If you believe this diagram, you will never embrace a healthy, rigorous theology of grace, because if you think this is true, you're always going to think if we talk too much about grace, it will produce license. People will flee to the license end and do as they please but, as we talked about last week, if you think that, you're actually making Christ a promoter of sin.

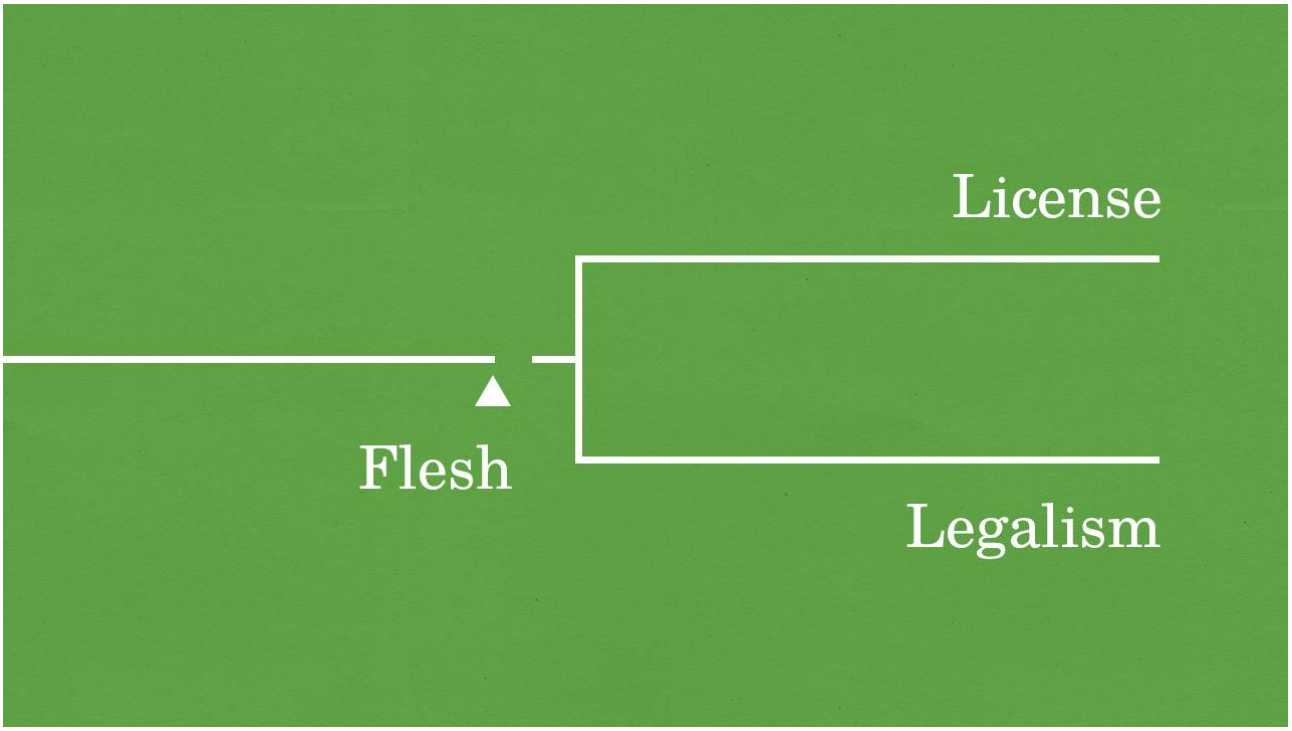
Next diagram: I have said over the years that I *used* to think that the tension was between *license* and *legalism*, and that it was our study of Galatians eleven years ago where the light bulb came on for me. Now I was reminded that that is indeed true when I went back and was re-reading the transcripts from eleven years ago. And sure enough, in the very first message, in the introduction, I say, "There is a tension between legalism and license." I actually state what I now would say is totally false because, at that moment, I was still buying into that diagram. It was Galatians chapter 3—the chapter we just studied—where the light bulb went on, and I realized that's *not* the tension. The tension is between the *Spirit* and the *flesh*.



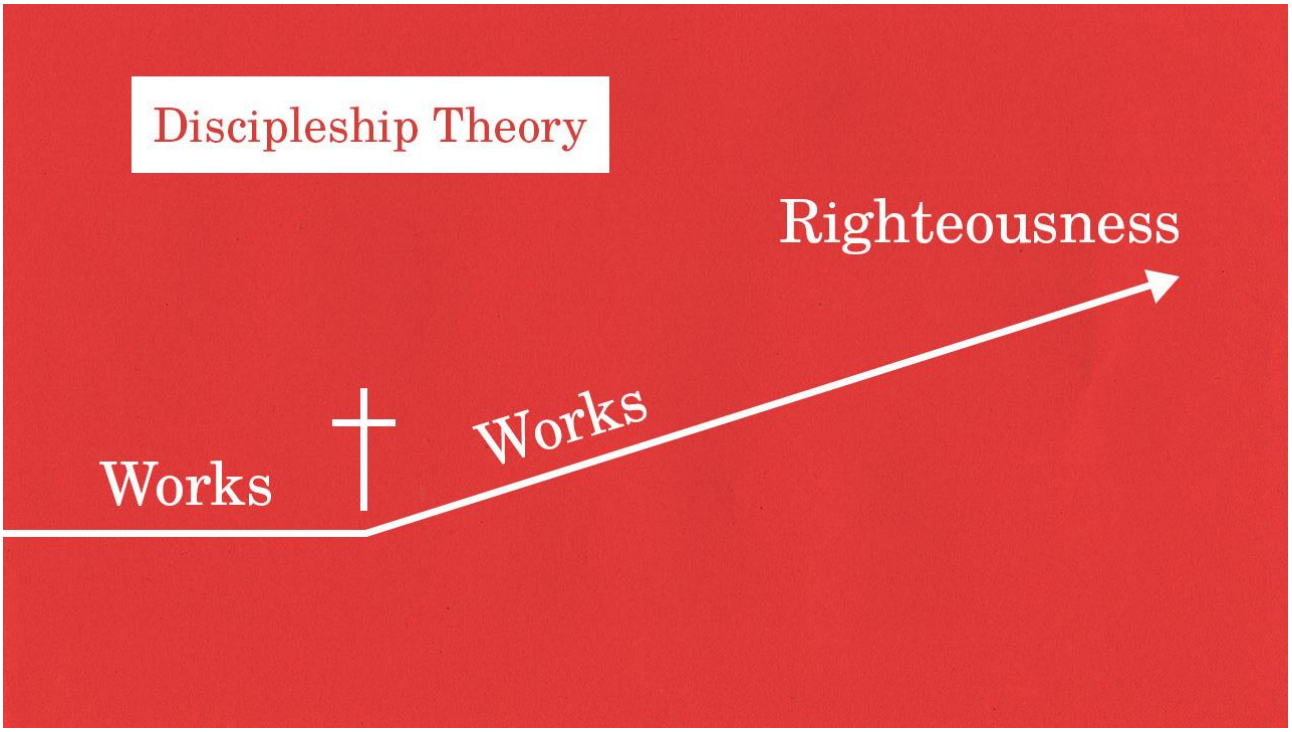
We just read it: *Did this start on the basis of the Spirit or the flesh?* To understand life in the Spirit, grace is the invitation to enter into the life of the Spirit. Grace is the basis, by faith, where we enter into the life of the Spirit and the power of the Spirit, and live the life that God has called us to. Therefore, it's impossible to over-emphasize grace, because that would be like saying, "You're *too* filled with the Spirit." It's just not possible. Grace is simply the entrance into that life. How can that ever be bad?

At the other end of the scale—next slide—I realize that the text is saying that legalism is actually an expression of the *flesh*. We just saw that, that the flesh manifests itself in legalism, in religious works, in religious activity. That's what he's saying—"Why are you going back to that?" which he

identifies as the flesh. So there are two expressions of the flesh: one is legalism; one is license, "I'll just do as I please because I'm my own god." I am acting out of my flesh. You would never do that filled with the Spirit. We've probably all known people that seem to swing back and forth between legalism and license...and legalism and license...and that may seem like a very big swing, but it's actually not. It's not much of a swing at all, because you're stuck at the flesh end, and you're just making these little swings between two different expressions of the flesh.

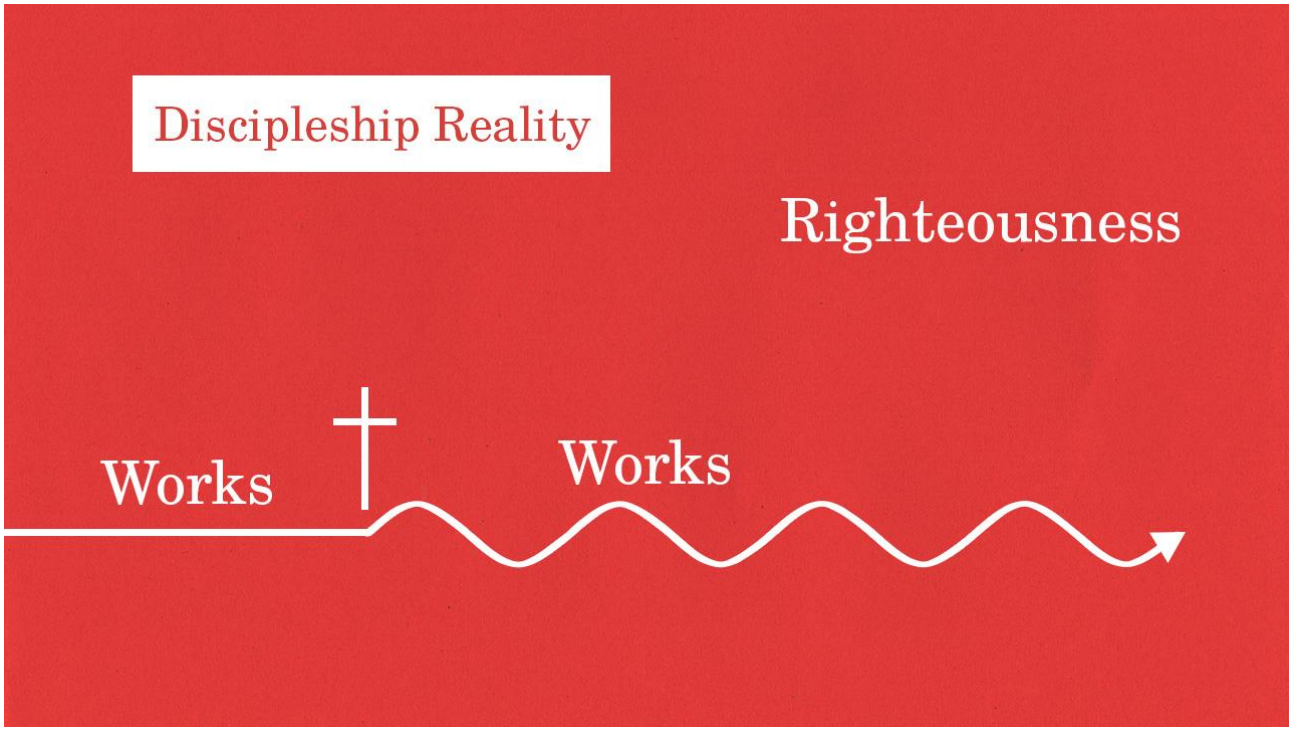


Next slide. Again, this one is red—naughty, stop! *(laughter)* There is a belief that before Christ, I did works, but my works didn't make me righteous before God. So I came to a moment in time where it was salvation by grace through faith. I came to the cross but, in my theology, I see that as nothing more than a ticket to heaven. And now that I have a ticket to heaven, it's my obligation to make myself righteous. I am now obligated to try harder; I am obligated to do better; I am obligated to follow the rules; I am obligated to do what I am told and, in doing that, I make myself more righteous.



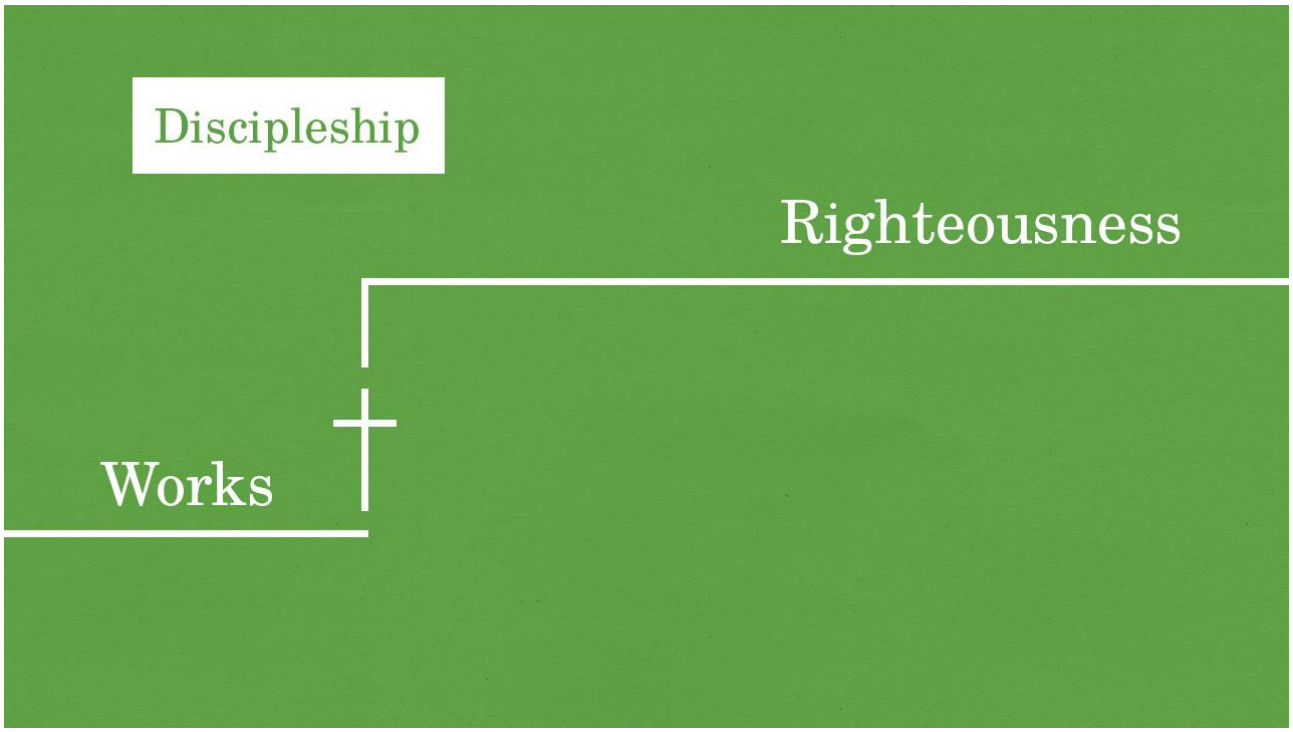
That is the very definition of legalism. Legalism is *not* rules, convictions, guidelines, disciplines—we all have those. Legalism is in believing, by following those and by doing those, I am making myself more righteous, more anything in the eyes of God. That's the essence of what legalism is. When you buy into that, then you start thinking that on the basis of certain activities, I make myself more righteous than somebody else, and then you start to have this two-and three-tiered system where these are the super-Christians, and moderate-Christians, and the bad-Christians because they're at different levels of behavior of making themselves righteous. This is the theory.

The reality—next slide—is it ends up like this. You come in realizing your works can't make you righteous, so you come to the cross. But after the cross, you have your ticket to heaven, you go back to thinking, "Somehow I have to try harder and make myself righteous." But rather than doing that, it's just a life of struggle—it's ups and downs; it's good days and bad days; it's failure; it's shame; it's struggle. I can't get victory and, rather than achieving the righteousness that you long for, you basically just stay stuck. It didn't work before—it's not going to work afterward.



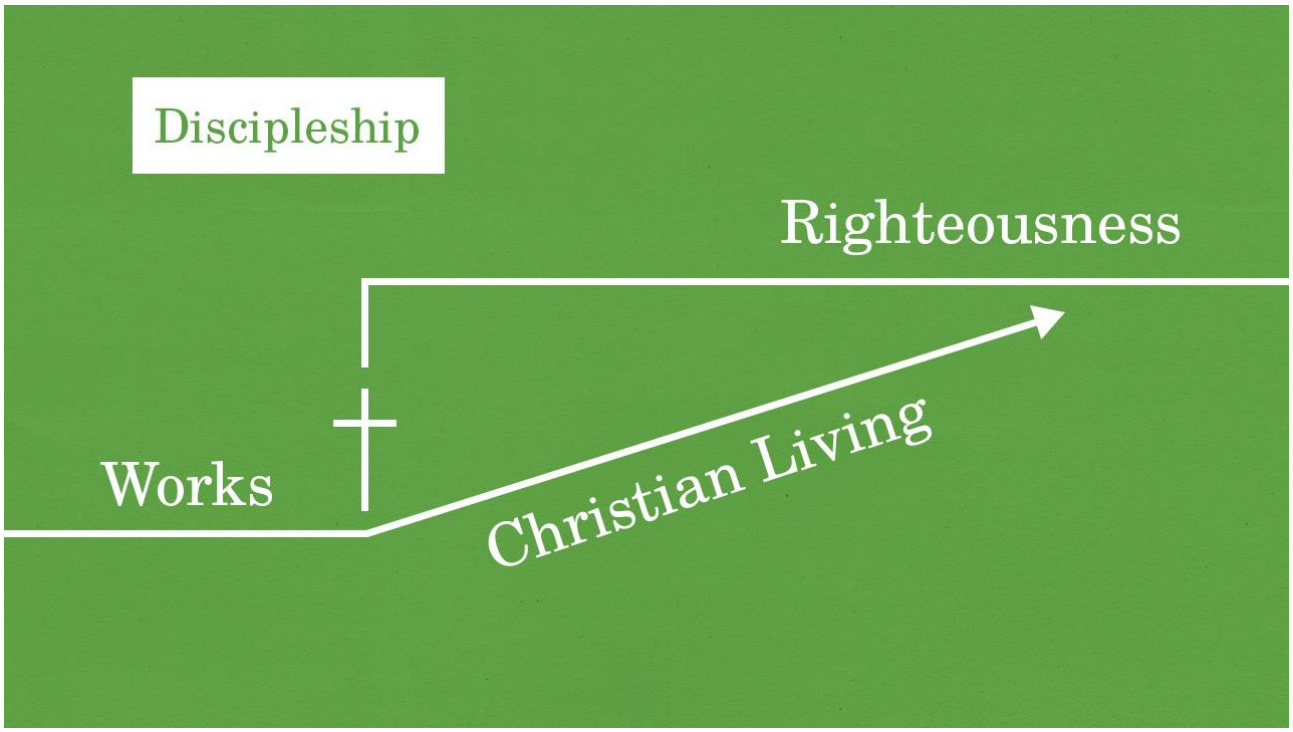
I would suggest to you, this is the very definition of the *dark room*. Think about it: If you think, "Now that I have my ticket to heaven, it's my job to make myself righteous," and yet day after day after day you fail, you struggle, then it becomes about shame; it becomes about guilt. It becomes about despair; it becomes about disappointment. I have to beat myself up because I blew it again, and I'm not achieving the goal. I'm struggling! A lot of people walk away from the faith because they just can't take it, because they're not making themselves righteous.

Next slide. The truth is this—Green, go for it! You come to Christ in a realization that I can't make myself righteous. It's salvation by grace through faith. Both Galatians and Romans would tell us that at that moment I am justified. I am declared legally righteous in the presence of God. I am clothed with the righteousness of Jesus, and because His righteousness will never diminish, my righteousness will never diminish. It will never change. It will never be *less than* that. I am righteous in the presence of God. I am accepted; I am loved; I am delighted in. And nothing I do one way or the other will ever change that, because it's not based on performance. It's based on grace. It is based on the finished work of Jesus on the cross.

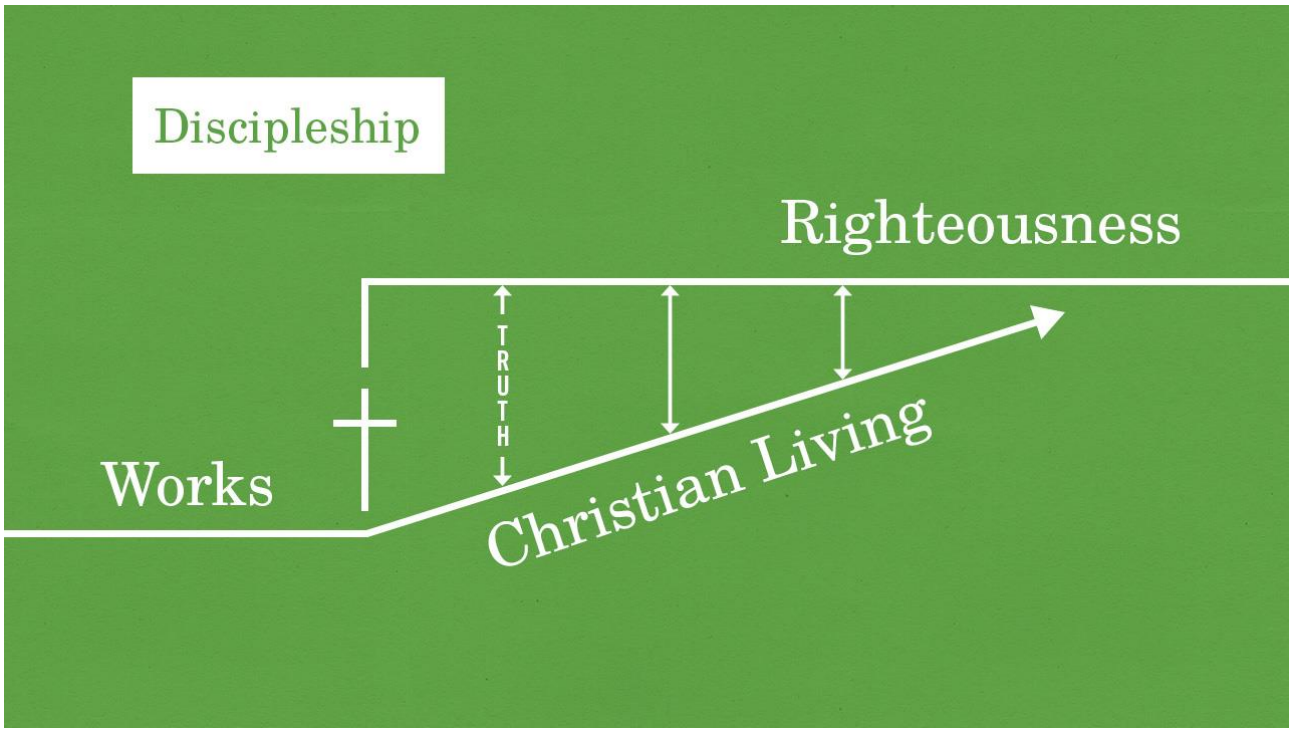


So then, what is the essence of discipleship? What is the essence of Christian living?

Next slide. Basically it's a lifetime of trying to close the gap between what's true and what's always true in Christ—in how I'm living my life—and there is this separation between what's true and how I'm living.



So what begins to close that gap? Last slide is *the truth*. The essence of discipleship is not a bunch of religious activity. It's not a bunch of obligations. It's not a bunch of doing this and that. The essence of discipleship is learning what's true, and believing what's true. And the more I understand it, and the more I believe it, then the more it begins to close the gap between what's always true of me and how I am living my life.



I would say that is the picture of the *light room*—that on my good days, but also on my worst days, grace is the invitation into the "light". And I understand in the light that even though I blew it today and I made a mess of things, in Christ nothing has changed. I am still just as loved, just as accepted, just as righteous, and so I enter the *light* and I remember that's true.

Now some would say, "Okay, well what about confession?" Fine, what about confession? The word confession means *to agree with God*. Do you think we are more likely to agree with God about our sin in the *dark room* or in the *light room*? If you are in the *dark room*, and you just keep struggling with shame and guilt and failure over and over again, what happens in the *dark room* is you start to rationalize. You start to make excuses; you start to blame others; you start to point fingers. And you start to just wallow in that and stay in the darkness time and time and time again. It isn't until you come into the light, and the *Light of Jesus* shines on that sin that you say, "God, I agree with You that was sin. It was wrong; it was a bad choice." And in the light I understand that, and I agree with God.

Now some of you would say, "Okay, what about repentance?" Fine, let's talk about repentance. The word repentance means a change of mind. If you are stuck in the *dark room* and doing the same behavior over and over and over again, you are not repenting. You may be sorry; you may be guilty; you may be shame-filled, but you're not repenting. Repenting means a *change of mind*. Where are you going to change your mind—in the *dark room*, hiding from God, or in the light? When you, on the basis of God's grace, come into the light, and the light shines on your sin—I change my mind. I realize, "God, how foolish I was for thinking that was going to make me happy;

that was going to deliver the goods; that was going to satisfy my need. Now that I'm back in the light I remember it's You that I long for; it's You that meets my needs; it's You that satisfies my soul; it's You that makes me happy; it's You that gives me joy." I change my mind. I'm not going to keep doing that because I realize that's not the answer. You don't change your mind in the darkness; you change your mind in the light, with your eyes fixed on Jesus.

When you understand the realities of grace, you understand that even on your worst day—when you're stinking up the joint—grace is so scandalous that when you enter into the *light room*, you enter into the presence of God. You run and you jump into the lap of Jesus, and you remember, "I'm still righteous! I'm still accepted. I'm still celebrated. I'm still loved. I'm still significant. I still matter. What's true of me will always be true of me, because it's never been based on my performance; it's always been based on Christ." And there I realize again the truth, and I realize who I am in Christ, and I realize, "This is what I want. This is what I long for. This is what satisfies my soul. This is now my passion for righteousness. This is Christ in me. This is the power of His Spirit in me. Now I have a passion for righteousness. I'm not doing the right thing because it's the rule. I'm not doing the right thing because somebody's watching. I'm not doing the right thing because I have to. It's because I believe with all my heart this is the way to life. This is the way to joy. This is the way to peace. This is the way to happiness. This is what my soul has been longing for, and I'm passionate about it. And now, with the power of the Spirit, this is the way I want to live!"

This is the way out and, if you don't have a healthy, rigorous theology of grace, you don't understand. Your access to the *light room* defined life again. On your worst, stinkiest day, grace is so scandalous that you still run through the door and jump into the lap of Jesus, and if you listen...if you listen...what you hear is the sweet, sweet music of grace, and you know that the heart of Jesus is He just wants to dance with you again!

> *Our Father, we're thankful that this is true. God, it's so hard for us to wrap our minds around this. It seems to make sense to us that we should be sentenced to the Dark Room, full of shame and guilt and struggle and despair. Lord, help us to remember that we confess our sin, but that we're not obligated to pay for our sin, that that was done by Jesus on the cross. We just agree with You, and we repent and we find our life in You again, and that our access is on the basis of grace. Lord, help us to understand this to such a degree that we would believe it, and we would believe it so passionately that we would actually live like it. In Jesus' Name, Amen.*

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Study Questions
The Foolishness of Legalism
Free Indeed: A Study in the Epistle of Galatians
Galatians 3:1-14

Opening Discussion

1. Take some time to share your own personal journeys of faith. What led you to the reality that salvation is by grace through faith? What brought you to the point of realization that works of the flesh (Law) could not make you righteous before God?

2. Why do we have a tendency to go back to what didn't work before salvation (Law) to accomplish righteousness after salvation? (We may be tempted to say we don't struggle with this tendency, but the reality is the N.T. letters would indicate this is a huge problem in the church. Either we are vastly superior to the N.T. church or we are unaware of how legalistic we are).

Bible Study

1. Compare the tone of Paul's letter from 1:11 to 3:1. The further into his argument Paul gets, the more serious his tone becomes. Why is this?

   What is at stake here?

   Does Paul think that legalism is a minor problem in the church? Do we take legalism as seriously as Paul?

2. Rewrite 3:1 in your own words. What is Paul really saying?

3. What conclusion did we have to come to regarding our own ability to merit righteousness before God to experience salvation?

   Is that what is meant when Paul said, "I am crucified with Christ" (2:20)?

   What did we die to?

4. According to 3:1-3 why does Paul call the Galatians "foolish"?

   What does Paul mean when he says we believe we began by the Spirit but are now being perfected by the flesh?

   Give some practical examples. Why do we do this?

5. In 3:5 Paul wrote in present tense terms. What is the basis by which God is working in you today?

Is this because of the works you have done or because of His grace through faith?

6. In 3:6-14 Paul appeals to O.T. Scriptures to again affirm his case of salvation by grace through faith. How was Abraham "saved" and what allows us to enter into his blessings?

   Who is more connected to Abraham today—an unbelieving Jew or a Gentile Christian?

7. Compare 3:10 with James 2:8-13. What does this say to those who believe all we have to do is love one another (the royal law) and we will be saved?

   In what ways do you see the legalists pick and choose which "laws" to abide by?

   Are there certain sins we tend to judge others by, while ignoring the sin in our own hearts?

   Compare Jesus' words in Matthew 7:1-5.

8. Did Jesus die on the cross because keeping the Law was hard or because keeping the Law was hopeless?

   Why did He become the curse for us?

   What is the result?

9. Go back to 3:1-3. Based on what you've learned in Galatians 3:6-14, how irrational is it to go back to Law having been saved by grace?

Application

1. Settle the matter in your own heart at this point in our study. Do you believe absolutely that only Christ could do what the Law could not do to save us? In other words, we die to the belief that our works of the flesh can make us righteous before God.

2. Paul says it is illogical (idiotic) to believe that works of the flesh can bring us to perfection after salvation, when they couldn't do that for us before salvation. In other words, we died to that belief. If this is true, are you willing to seriously address the legalism in your own life? If not, then Paul says you are foolish.

3. Take time to prepare your heart now for what God may want to say to you in the weeks ahead from Galatians.

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