

Legalism and the Gospel of Grace

Teacher: Pastor Paul LeBoutillier
Life Bible Ministry

When you begin to read through the Gospel accounts, and I'm sure this has happened to probably all of you: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, you don't have to go very far before you run into the fact that Jesus tangled quite often with the religious leaders of His day, the legalists, the elite legalists of His day. The Pharisees, the scribes who were the teachers of the law, and then of course the Sadducees. And this was just a, it's a common theme. And then the apostle Paul also struggled with people who had a legalistic bent during his ministry as well.

And, it's interesting, but it's still an issue. Legalism is still an ongoing problem and there are people who just seem to have a natural gravitational pull toward legalism. And so it continues to be an issue as it relates to our Christian faith. And I think that there are a lot of believers who know that legalism is contrary to the Gospel of grace and they can pick out a legalist when they hear that person talking or having a conversation with someone like that.

But I do believe that a lot of Christians struggle to know how to respond to legalism when they run into it or how to answer it, necessarily. And they just, they know that it's wrong, but they're like, I don't really know, at least this is what I hear.

So I want to begin by defining legalism a little bit for you here this morning, at least in the context of salvation. For our definition, legalism is defined as the keeping of specific rules or commandments to either be saved or stay saved. You with me, keeping rules, keeping commandments to either be saved or to stay saved. And of course, a legalistic person initially assumes that there are works that they must perform and that's just their mindset.

In fact, we've had people who have come into the church in the years past and they just have a legalistic bent. And so they'll come up after a service and say, just tell me what I need to do because to them it's all about doing. And I'm sure that there are many of you who have family members or friends or loved ones, maybe even coworkers, maybe even you yourself at one time came out of a legalistic sort of an environment or whatever. But there's always an assumption in the legalistic mind, and that is, I've got to do something. I've got to do, I have

to perform something in order to be in God's good grace or even be saved or whatever.

And I need to make this point too, legalism is not merely the existence of rules in someone's life. You can't look at somebody who has rules and necessarily refer to them as a legalist. You got to know the apostle Paul was not legalist. Well he was at the beginning. I mean he was a Pharisee, but then he encountered the Gospel of grace and the Lord brought him out of that. But even then, after that, the apostle Paul gives us many rules for Christian living. You read through your Bible and you're going to see that.

Paul gave lots of rules, but they weren't rules to be saved and they weren't rules to keep you saved, they were rules to keep you out of trouble. They were rules to encourage you and your Christian witness and so on and so on and so on. That's the difference. Okay. Just because somebody might say, here's a rule for life, doesn't necessarily make them a legalist. So you need to know that.

Anyway, I'm going to have you open up your Bible if I could please to Matthew chapter 19. And while you're turning there, I'm going to remind you about the legalistic mindset because when a person has a legalistic mindset it is often consuming, all-consuming to them. And because it literally consumes their way of thinking, they often stop listening when the truth is being spoken. Have any of you ever related to that? Have you ever maybe tried to speak to someone who was caught up in legalism and it seemed like everything you said just fell on deaf ears?

Well, Jesus once ran into a guy that was so entrenched in legalism that he could no longer hear the Word of the Lord. And it's found here in Matthew chapter 19. Skip down to verse 16. We're going to read this whole story, although I'm going to stop from time to time and talk a little bit.

But it begins in 16 by saying, *“And behold, a man came up to him, saying, ‘Teacher, what good deed (your Bible may say, ‘good thing.’ That's all one Greek word and whether good thing or good deed, it's the same. He said) must I do to have eternal life?’”* (ESV)

Now I want you to pause there for just a moment because this simple question that this young man asks Jesus tells you really everything you need to know about this guy as it relates to salvation. And you got to know that Jesus knew exactly what He was up against because this young man in this simple initial question laid out all his cards. He told Jesus a lot about himself in that simple question.

And the first thing he told us and Jesus is that he believes, first of all, in eternal life. Well, that's not a bad thing. That's good. He believes in eternal life. But secondly, we know from his question that he believes that eternal life is something that is earned, right? Thirdly, we can plainly see by his question that he believed that a person earns eternal life by performing good deeds or good things, whatever. And then lastly, we see that he believes himself to be capable of performing enough good deeds to earn his way to heaven otherwise, he wouldn't be asking, right? I mean, why ask Jesus the question if you don't believe that it's possible for you to do enough good to actually earn your way to heaven.

And so, this is a man who just he fully believes that he can be good enough. I can be, I can do this. I can be good enough to please God, and by that goodness gain entrance into heaven. And as I said, Jesus knows who He's dealing with of course. He's got this guy all figured out.

Let's see how He responds. Verse 17. *“And he said to him, “Why do you ask me about what is good?”* Or your Bible may say, *“why do you call me good?”* because he did say good Master, or good Lord. It's an alternate rendering. But the next statement is really the one I want you to hear where Jesus says, *“There is only one who is good.”*

Now, if that isn't underlined in your Bible, I don't know if you underlined in your Bible. But if you do, that is one statement that should be underlined in your Bible: *“There is only one who is good.”* And it isn't you. And that's really what Jesus is saying to this young man. There's only one who's good, and of course He's referring to God. There's only one who's good, right?

And with this simple response that Jesus is giving to this young man He's answering all of his questions. He's already answered all of his questions. What do I need to do? What good deed do I need to do to have eternal life? And he says, well, why are you asking Me about what's good? There's only One who's good.

And if the young man had been listening, which by the way, legalists rarely do. But if he had been listening, he would've heard what Jesus said, that there's only one who is good, which again means he's not. And Jesus is saying by this, He's rendering this man's initial question ridiculous because He's essentially telling him, why are you asking Me about good deeds and being good and all this other stuff because you'd have to be good in order to be able to do that kind of good, and you're not, you're not good. But again, this young man wasn't listening and I don't know if that, being a young man, probably added to it other than the fact

of being a legalist. But since this man was convinced that he could be good enough Jesus had to go on to show him how out of touch he really was.

I don't know if the Lord's ever done this in your life. He's done it in my life a few times. Where I've just, I had an assumption in my mind and the Lord had to show me just how wrong my assumption was. And of course, this man's assumption is he can be good enough, he can do enough good things in order to go to heaven. And so Jesus has to show him how out of touch he is as it relates to this.

In the middle of verse 17, Jesus begins to engage him on his legalistic path, this man's path. And so in the middle of verse 17, He says, *“If you would enter life, keep the commandments.”* Now, keep in mind, Jesus is engaging this man for one reason, and that is to show him that he can't keep the commandments perfectly, okay? That's the whole reason He's carrying on. He's already answered the guy's question, but the guy wasn't listening, and so now He has to go on and deal with him or speak to him on the level that this man wants to talk. He wants to talk legalism and so Jesus is like, okay, let's talk legalism. So, you want to be saved by doing, all right, well, here's the deal, *“keep the commandments”* right?

And the man goes, verse 18, he goes, *““which ones?” And Jesus said, “You shall not murder, You shall not commit adultery,...”* By the way, Jesus is being very gracious here to this young man to begin to even mention some of the Commandments, because when the young man said which ones, He could have said all of them, but He's being very gracious.

And so He begins to lay them out. And *“You shall not murder, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, ¹⁹ Honor your father and mother, (and then here's the clincher and this is why Jesus, He knew what He was doing here. He says) and, You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”*

Now check out the young man's response. *“²⁰ The young man said to him, (oh, you got to just, you hear it in his voice) “All these I have kept.”* Down south they would've said to him, oh bless your heart. Which translated means you idiot, right? But he says, *“All these I have kept. What do I still lack?”*

Oh, and by the way, this is the conundrum when it comes to legalism. The legalist tries and tries and tries his or her best to please God by doing, but they never know for sure if they've done enough. They're never sure. They can never be confident that they've ever done enough. And so this is, you hear it in this

guy. He goes, well, I've kept all those, which of course isn't even true. But then he goes on to say, "*What do I... lack?*" Because the legalist knows inherently that he lacks. He's trying, but he knows, and he's never ever assured that he's done enough, and it's just it really is sad. So he says all these I've kept again proving how out of touch he is with reality because God had shown the people of Israel in no uncertain terms that they could not perfectly keep the law. You know how He did that, right?

He gave them the law and then He gave them a sacrificial system for when they messed up, which should have communicated to the Jews that here's the law, but you're not going to be able to keep it perfectly because I'm going to create for you this system whereby you're going to come to Me for forgiveness when you sin because you're going to sin, you're going to mess up.

God bent over backwards to express to these people how holy He is. If you've ever read through the Book of Leviticus, which can be hard, but it's all about God's holiness. And so, He has communicated this to these people over the centuries and yet they came away with the idea somehow I can do this. And not only can I do this, I can do this enough. I can do it perfectly to be acceptable to God and so forth. And yet, even though, and that's what this guy says. All these I've kept.

Now, do you remember the last commandment Jesus cited for this guy? So He gave him just a bunch of commandments and then the last one was, "*You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*" All right? And of course, the young man claimed that he had kept that commandment too. And so here is where Jesus lays out a challenge to show this young man, no, you haven't, son. No you haven't.

And Jesus, verse 21 in your Bible, look with me there. "*Jesus said to him, "If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me."* (and) ²² *When the young man heard this he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.*" All right, stop there.

What is Jesus doing here? He's putting a challenge in front of this young man to give him a very practical and visible expression of what it means to love your neighbor as yourself. That's what He's doing because this man said he kept it: "*You... (must) love your neighbor as yourself.*" Oh, yeah I've done all those. I'm good to go. I've kept all those, and it's like Jesus is saying, son, let me show you. Here's the challenge. Take everything you've got, all your wealth, sell it off, give the money to the poor, and then come follow Me.

And the young man's response really reveals the truth of what's really going on in His life. He did not perfectly keep the commandments nor could he, and he was made aware of it. And instead of confessing it which would've been the best response for him to have to say, Lord, you're right. I don't keep the commandments, so talk to me now about how I can be saved. But he didn't do that. It just says he went away sorrowful. And we hope that this young man maybe came to his senses later on and realized how fruitless a legalistic approach to heaven was. But, the disappointment was just so much, he just had to walk away.

Now, please understand, this young man was not alone in his beliefs concerning the Mosaic law as it relates to salvation and that sort of thing. The idea that he conveyed to Jesus was common. It was commonly kept and held by the Jews, many of the Jews, during that time, even though God had communicated to the Jews in the Scriptures that their best righteousness, it wasn't possible.

Let me show you on the screen a passage from Isaiah 64, if we could take a look at that. This is the Lord speaking through Isaiah says:

Isaiah 64:6a (ESV)

We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment.

We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment.

And as I'm sure you people know from studying through the Old Testament, there were actually several things under the Mosaic law that could render you unclean; ceremonially unclean, and so forth. And blood, of course, was one of them, if you had an issue of blood or bleeding or whatever. And when a woman was experiencing, her monthly cycle, she would be considered unclean. And the reason I bring that up is because in this passage from Isaiah, when He speaks of a polluted garment, that's what he's referring to. It's a woman's menstrual cloth.

And what the Lord is saying through Isaiah is that the best you can do as it relates to righteous acts, are still unclean, are still completely and totally unclean. And this is something the Lord had been communicating to the people of Israel, and yet they came away thinking that through their own righteousness, they could obtain salvation.

There's a question that is recorded in the Book of Job that becomes the question of the hour. Up on the screen here, it says, this is it.

Job 25:4 (ESV)

How then can man be in the right before God? How can he who is born of woman be pure?

How then can man be in the right before God? (or as the New King James says, how then can man be righteous before God? It goes on to say) How can he who is born of woman be pure?

It's a rhetorical question, but it's a question that frankly, every person truly needs to grapple with. So how do we do this anyway? How can I have a right standing before God if it's impossible to accomplish through the keeping of the law, well then how is it possible? And so that's the question. And even though the Bible makes it clear that perfection is out of reach for all human beings, there are some people who continue to believe that somehow based on their performance, they're going to be acceptable to God. I just got to do, and if I fail, I'll have to just do more and work harder and that sort of thing. And again, this is what I call that gravitational pull that some personalities just have toward a legalistic mindset.

And although again, like I said to you, although I think a lot of Christians understand that legalism isn't a workable option for them, if they meet someone who is steeped in legalism, they struggle to know how to be able to speak to that person concerning their law keeping and that sort of thing. Because, there are some people that are so tenderhearted toward this idea of pleasing God, when they see even a word, the word Commandment or Commandments, even in the New Testament, they immediately default to the 10 Commandments.

And let me show you on the screen from John chapter 14. Here's a passage that Jesus said. He said,

John 14:15 (ESV)

“If you love me, you will keep my commandments.”

“If you love me, you will keep my commandments.”

You'd be shocked to know, well, maybe you wouldn't, how many born again believers read that verse and they default back to the Old Testament 10 Commandments. And they believe what Jesus is saying is, if you love me, you'll keep the 10 Commandments. And it is a very, very common sort of a thing. And there are a lot of churches that teach that getting saved is a wonderful thing. Sure, glad you accepted Jesus as your Savior, but now that you have, you got to

live a holy life. You have to walk a holy life. You have to live by the commandments to keep yourself saved and so forth. And it happens all the time.

But what legalists and many sincere Christians often forget is that we're not under the Mosaic covenant. Christians are not under the Mosaic covenant. We're under the new covenant. It's a covenant that Jesus inaugurated during the Last Supper and the words are actually recounted to us by the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians. Up on the screen, let me show you. Says this:

1 Corinthians 11:24-25 (ESV)

...and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

...and when he had given thanks, (of course) he broke... (the bread), and (He) said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the (oh look at this) new covenant in my blood. (and then He said) Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

Did you see what Jesus said there? "...*this is the new covenant...*" It's not the old covenant, it's the new covenant. We Christians are not under the Mosaic covenant, that was made between God and Israel, not God, and the church. We're under a new covenant. And the Bible actually gives us some interesting insights into this new covenant. And you'd say, well, sure it does pastor Paul, just read through the New Testament. Oh no.

In the Old Testament, you can read about the characteristics of the new covenant, and it's in the Book of Jeremiah. Let me show you. Here's the first one from Jeremiah. This is chapter 31, beginning at verse 31. The Lord says:

Jeremiah 31:31-34 (ESV)

“Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”

“Behold, the days are coming, declares the (YAHWEH) LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, (and I want you to take very special attention to this next phrase) not like the covenant that I made with their fathers (what covenant is He talking about? He goes on to say) on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD.”

So in this first section here of Jeremiah, you can see what the Lord is doing. He's declaring that a new covenant is coming right? And He makes this very defining statement as it relates to this new covenant. It won't be like the old one. Guys, did you hear that? It won't be like the old one. It's not going to be like the Mosaic covenant. And yet there are Christians, many sincere believers who are trying to cram elements of the Mosaic covenant into the new covenant. And some of them keep the Sabbath and some of them do this and some of them keep the feasts and the food laws and oh, mercy. It's just this situation where people just get caught up in these things.

You got to keep the Sabbath. God said, keep the Sabbath. And yet they forget that in the Old Testament, God said, this is a covenant between Israel and Me. And so God says here in this first section, it's not going to be like the old covenant.

Alright, let's keep reading in Jeremiah:

Jeremiah 31:31-34 (ESV)

“Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”

“For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”

Now we're looking at the characteristic of the new covenant and it's beautiful. And remember, guys, this is about 550 years before the birth of Christ that this prophecy is given, all right. And there are 3 things that I want to bring out from this passage and we'll put these up as a bulleted list.

Jeremiah 31:31-34 (ESV)

- I will put my law within them and...write it on their hearts
- They shall all know me
- I will forgive their iniquity and...remember their sin no more

He says, first of all, I'm going to put my law within them and write it on their hearts. He said, they shall all know me and I will forgive their iniquity and not even remember their sins.

This is good stuff. This is why the Gospel is the Gospel, because you know what Gospel means, right? It's good news. The Gospel is good news. Well, let's talk about these. First of all under the new covenant, God said that he would write His law on our hearts. And this is the point where the legalist completely misses the implications of the New Testament because they're running after

rules that are written on tablets of stone, right? And it's this external law that is to you and me, it's like, wait a minute. You're running after this law that's inscribed in tablets of stone, and I'm telling you that under the new covenant, the law giver now lives in our hearts. And He's communicating His will and His purpose and His heart to us on a personal, intimate level, you see, rather than an external legalistic, carved in stone level, it's personal. So we don't have this external list of rules.

Is God still speaking to us about holiness? Oh, yes. Through His Holy Spirit, living within each and every one of you who've put your faith in Jesus Christ, He's still speaking. Don't go back and live by the old, that's an inferior communication. I mean, think about it. If you had a letter from someone that communicated something that they wanted you to know, or if you had that person living with you, which would be the superior form of communication? Obviously it's the person living with you. Well, the Holy Spirit now lives within you, and that's superior to an external law.

I'm not putting down the law. The law is perfect and it's holy, but what you have inside of you is better because it's the Law Giver who lives and communicates to you on a personal level, and He can say things that the law couldn't cover. We have 10 Commandments that were given on tablets of stone. Well, 10 is a finite number. What if the Lord wants to communicate something related to what you're going through in your life on some level of holiness, but it's not encompassed in the 10 Commandments or something. Oh, that's no big deal. He can communicate to you any way He wants cause he's living within you now. He can talk to you, He can speak to you about personal issues.

So we have this inner moral mechanism now that is so much superior to rules etched in stone. By the way, guys, this is what the author of Hebrews is communicating in his letter because he was writing to Jews who were under such severe persecution that they were beginning now to go back under the law in order to ease the persecution that they were receiving. And so he began to speak to them about how much superior is the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the Law Giver who now lives within us.

And by the way, this is all why the apostle Paul wrote what he did to the Galatians in chapter 5. Let me show you on the screen. This is a great passage. He said:

Galatians 5:18 (ESV)

...if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

...if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

Okay. You with me? If you're led by the Spirit, the inner Law Giver voice, who's now within you, you're not under an external etched in stone law because you have something far superior, right? Living within you.

Remember the second thing Jeremiah prophesied, if we put the list, back up on there.

Jeremiah 31:31-34 (ESV)

- I will put my law within them and...write it on their hearts
- They shall all know me
- I will forgive their iniquity and...remember their sin no more

He said that they shall all know me. And you have to be careful here because this is not an intellectual knowing, this is an experiential knowing. All right, so this isn't something you learn by going to school or sitting down and reading a book.

This—what God is saying here is that under the new covenant, believers are going to experience Him in a personal way. And this of course speaks to the indwelling presence of the Spirit and other sorts of things whereby he says they're going to know Me intimately. And He said, you're no longer going to have to have somebody teach related to knowing intimately, because they're all going to have that knowledge, that intimate knowledge.

Today we often, you'll hear Christians say, they'll ask someone, do you have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ? Well, that's all part of that intimate knowing. That's not a bad thing to say even though you might not find it in the Bible, it's not a bad thing because it's part of the intimate knowing that is ours through the new covenant.

And then thirdly, under the new covenant, God makes the promise that He says, I will forgive their iniquity and remember their sins no more. And of course, that just speaks of the cross and what Jesus accomplished on the cross as it says in Isaiah 53 here on the screen.

Isaiah 53:6 (ESV)

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned — every one — to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned — every one — to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

And because of that, He forgives our iniquity. But the legalist, he continues to think he has to perform to earn God's forgiveness. I got to do and if I fail, I've got to do better. And it's so sad because the work is already done. Guys, Jesus already did the work. Let me show you a critical statement that Jesus made. It's recorded in Matthew chapter 5. It says:

Matthew 5:17 (ESV)

“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.”

“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; ...”

By the way, the legalist loves to stop right there. They just quote the first part and they go, see, Jesus said it right there, right? And they'll say, you didn't come to abolish the law so we have to continue to keep the Sabbath, and keep the food laws, and do this, and do that, and so forth. But they don't ever quote the rest of what Jesus said. He went on to say *“I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.”*

And the Greek word that is used here, or translated to say, fulfill in the English means to make full, to complete, and to accomplish. Jesus is saying, I haven't come to abolish the law, I've come to accomplish it, I've come to fulfill it. Which is a wonderful thing. And that's why the apostle Paul wrote what he did in Colossians chapter 2 when he said:

Colossians 2:16-17 (ESV)

...let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.

...let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, (that's the food laws) or with regard to a festival (that's the keeping of the Jewish feasts) or a new moon or a Sabbath. (that's Sabbath keeping. He mentions these are all things part of the Mosaic covenant. And then he goes on to say this) These (this is important guys) are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.

That's what Paul is saying here to the Colossians is exactly what Jesus said when He said, I haven't come to abolish the law, I've come to complete it. So

you see, the substance of the law is now found in Me. In Me, right? Jesus. And this is what we learn from this passage, and this is very important. There's such a thing as a shadow and a substance. You with me?

There's such a thing as a shadow which points to something, and then there's such a thing as a substance, which is the thing. And you need to remember this when you're talking to a legalist. The error of the legalist is the exaltation of the shadow over and above the substance. Okay. Let me say that one more time. The error of the legalist is the exaltation of the shadow over and above the substance.

I heard the announcement this morning about your upcoming water baptism time too. And this is something even people with a legalistic mindset, they'll even stumble over that. And I'm sure you've, maybe some of you have come out of a church that taught Baptismal Regeneration, which is the belief that you must be baptized in water to be saved, in order to be saved. And if you're not baptized in water, you're not saved. Right? Well, what is that? That's the exaltation of the shadow over the substance.

Water baptism is a pointer. It points to the work that Jesus did on the cross. How are we saved? By the work that Jesus did on the cross? That's the substance, right? So we don't exalt the shadow of anything because a shadow is just a pointer. We always look to the substance, and guys, I'll make it easy for you. The substance is always Jesus. He is the focal point. I mean, it's all about Jesus. It's all about Jesus.

So let me close here by just reminding you of a few Scriptures, and I'm going to run through these rather quickly, that are going to speak to this issue concerning the law and grace and that sort of thing. First, Romans chapter 3, verse 20. Whoops. I think there should be another one before that. Is there not? If we go back. No? Did I? Maybe I left one out. Alright, let's do this one.

Romans 3:21-22 (NIV84)

But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.

But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through... ” Works. Oh wait a minute, it doesn't say that does it? The legalist thinks it does. No, this passage says that the righteousness comes from through

from God “*through faith in Jesus Christ to all who (work hard, no, no, no, to all who) believe.*”

To all who believe. You want to be righteous before God? Put your faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross. Period. Right? Come on guys. Say amen. Amen. Thank you very much. And then Romans 3:31. I hope I got all these on here. This is an important passage.

Romans 3:31 (ESV)

Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law.

Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, (look at this) we uphold the law. (by faith)

So you see this is this passage here, Romans 3:31, again should be marked in your Bible. The legalist doesn't understand this. They will look at you and they'll say, you are violating the law. And what they don't understand because they're not listening, is that through faith, in the person of Jesus Christ who completed the law, who fulfilled it, we actually uphold.

See this is the very same accusation that the apostle Paul got when he went around teaching grace and the Gospel of grace. The legalists would come behind him and they would say, well, here's the deal. And they would contradict everything Paul said. They'll say, he's violating the law. And so Paul had to write to these believers reminding them, no, we're not violating the law. We're actually upholding the law by faith. Right. Romans 8:3 and 4:

Romans 8:3-4 (ESV)

For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

Who lives in us, amen? Yeah. So I know that we're going to end with a worship song, so I'm going to let the worship team come up while I'm just closing out

here. Hopefully what we've done here this morning has brought maybe a little bit of clarity as it relates to this whole issue of how the legalist thinks and how you can perhaps even respond. But I want you to be careful not to make the mistake of thinking that now you're going to be able to convince every legalist you run into. Because as I said at the very beginning, most legalists aren't listening.

Listen, Jesus was perfect and He couldn't convince that young man, even though He showed him. You say you keep the law. Well, let me give you a challenge to prove that you don't and he walked away sad. And when you're talking to legalists, some of them might either walk away sad, mad, or indifferent to the things that you say.

So if you have a legalist in your life, somebody who is a law clinger, pray for them and start there. Pray that God would soften their hearts. Pray that God would really minister grace to their hearts because they need to begin to open their hearts to the Gospel of grace before they're even going to hear what you're saying. They're not even going to hear you until the Spirit begins to widen their scope of understanding and bring them to a place of understanding. But, once they do, once, once somebody gets ahold of grace, it sets them free. And that's what Jesus said, didn't He? You will know the truth and the truth's going to set you free. (John 8:32) And the truth is that God loves you, and He saved you, and has forgiven you through Jesus Christ, our Savior.

And one of the biggest questions I get from Christians—born again Christians, they want to talk about how they're going to stand before God one day. And I keep hearing from people, they'll say, am I going to answer for my sins when I stand before God? And I say the same thing to everyone that says that. I say, what do you think Jesus did for you on the cross? And what did He say after He was finished doing what He did for you on the cross? He said, "*It is finished!*" right? "*It is finished!*" (John 19:30) Do you know that means paid in full. Literally that's a that's a Greek word that we have found in archeological digs that is stamped on receipts from the marketplace, paid in full. Well, if he paid it in full, what's left for you to pay? The answer is nothing, and that's what the Bible tells us, that He is able to keep you blameless until the day of our Lord Jesus Christ, amen? (1 Thessalonians 5:23) Let's stand together and we'll pray.

Father, we thank You so much for Your Word and we thank You for the Gospel of grace, the Gospel that sets us free in the knowledge that Jesus paid it all. It's done. And now by faith we stand in Christ acceptable to God. We thank You. We worship You. We praise You in the authority that is ours given through Jesus Christ our Lord, and all God's people said together, amen.