

Romans: The Crown Jewel of Salvation

24 - Avoiding Legalism by Loving Christ

Romans 7:1-6

Grace Fellowship Church / Pastor Brad Bigney / Feb. 23, 2014

Things you can do to keep from getting sucked into the trap of legalism.

I. You Better Stay Focused on Your New Love for Christ

Romans 7:4 “Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another, even to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God.”

Your spiritual birth was the start of a new relationship not just a list of legal code and regulations.

The religious leaders in Christ’s day were guilty of the same thing. They were so focused on rules that they missed the relationship that Christ offered them.

Matthew 15:8-9 “These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.”

Rules can't change us, but a growing relationship with Jesus Christ can!

A. When You Trusted in Christ You Died to the Law

“...you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ...”

2 Corinthians 3

Galatians 2:19-20 “For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God. For I am crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me.”

The law couldn’t save you when you were a lost sinner on your way to hell, and the law can’t make you holy NOW or empower you to live the Christian life. It’s powerless to do either of those things.

We get confused and we turn from Christ back to the law as a means of pursuing holiness and growing in the Christian life. We’re not the first people to be guilty of this – it’s human nature!

Galatians 3:1-3 *The Message* “You crazy Galatians! Did someone put a hex on you? Have you taken leave of your senses? Something crazy has happened, for it’s obvious that you no longer have the crucified Jesus in clear focus in your lives. His sacrifice on the cross was certainly set before you clearly enough. Let me put this question to you: How did your new life begin? Was it by working your heads off to please God? Or was it by responding to God’s Message to you? Are you going to continue this craziness? For only crazy people would think they could complete by their own efforts what was begun by God. If you weren’t smart enough or strong enough to begin it, how do you suppose you could perfect it?”

You’re saved by grace, and you live the Christian life empowered by grace.

I Corinthians 15:10 “But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.”

Jesus is the very source of all grace and truth.

John 1:16-17 “And of His fullness we have all received grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.”

When you trusted in Christ you died to the law, not just to have a funeral but so that you could have a wedding!

B. When You Died to the Law You Got Married to Christ!

v. 4 “That you may be married to another, even to Him who was raised from the dead...”

You weren't freed from the law to just float around with no relationship at all. You're freed from the law AND united with Christ. Christ is your new 'husband.'

Ephesians 3:16-19 “That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height – to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.”

It's a love relationship now that empowers us not just some dead list of regulations.

Christ is calling us to follow Him, love Him, and know Him... and it'll cost you everything. He asks for your life! Whereas rule keeping and list checking can just be added to the fringes of your life to whatever extent you're comfortable. You decide. You make the adjustments. And that's a lot safer than falling in love and committing yourself to one person.

Legalism is seeking to achieve forgiveness from God and acceptance by God through obedience to God. In other words, a legalist is anyone who behaves as if they can earn Gods approval and forgiveness through personal performance. "

The Cross Centered Life, C. J. Mahaney, p. 24 & 25

We should pursue holiness and discipline ourselves for godliness. But the heart attitude and motivation for why we're doing it is KEY!

If you divorce the spiritual disciplines from the grace of Christ and the love of Christ they degenerate into a cold and wooden list of works of the flesh to try to please God.

Before you know it, what started off as a means of grace quickly narrows back into the dark and dreary tunnel of legalism all over again. Turn back to that first love for Christ.

Legalism is man-centered; godly discipline is God-centered.

The Christian life is based on a RELATIONSHIP not REGULATIONS. It's a LOVE not a LIST.

We don't need more regulations! We need more authentic, joyful confidence in Christ! And the power of Christ alive in us will promote more holiness than the thundering and threatening of the law ever could – or anyone else's list could ever accomplish among us.

We're done with the law. We're married to Christ now. You're a new bride... and your husband loves you more than you'll ever know.

- Are you still trying live under the law?
- Are you still trying to please God with your performance?

Turn back to Christ! Stay focused on your love relationship with Jesus Christ.