

A. Legalism (works) can't save you!

The Church in Galatia got off to a good start! But, quickly began to turn to what Paul calls, "another gospel."

Galatians 1:6 (ESV) ⁶ I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—

What was this "other gospel"? It was trying to be justified through works of the LAW. HUMAN EFFORT!

Galatians 3:1–6 (ESV) ¹ O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified. ² Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith?

- 1) You know what Jesus did for you!
- 2) You began by the Spirit who! **Regenerated** you! **Justified** you! **Adopted** you! Is **sanctifying** you! **Empowered** you!

³ Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? ⁴ Did you suffer so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain? ⁵ Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith— ⁶ just as Abraham "believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness"?

- Paul's challenge: You started off RIGHT! Faith in Jesus! Trusting in the Spirit! THEN: You reverted to WORKS & SELF-EFFORT in the LAW to "finish the job."
- **Paul calls this ANOTHER GOSPEL.** This means it is a **FALSE GOSPEL.**

LEGALISM → A Common Deception for Christians today!

- **Before I was a Christian.** I sat in the chairs during worship and pinched my leg when I'd get emotional. I wanted to be a Christian – "God can't forgive me for what I have done."
- **After being a Christian.** I battled with thinking – "God will abandon me because I struggle with sin" or "God will reject me because I don't do my devotions every day."
- **My FEARS went straight to JUSTIFICATION. I thought I was justified by my ACTIONS, not Christ's ACTION.**

A phrase people use is LEGALISM. This is a commonly misunderstood phrase. People think that anything someone tells you to do is now legalism. WRONG.

Galatians 2:15–16 (ESV) ¹⁵ We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; ¹⁶ yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.

Legalism is another gospel! It is a FALSE GOSPEL that says:

- "Fix your life and THEN God will accept you."
- "Because you missed your devotions, God no longer loves you."
- "God will reject you because you are a dirty sinner."

- “You can’t know if you are saved until you stand at the judgment seat of Christ!”
- “Because you have anxiety, you must not be saved; Jesus has abandoned you.”

The TRUE Gospel says: “Saved by FAITH, and NOT by WORKS.”

- “Come as you are – But, He will not leave you as you were.” (1 Cor 6:11)
- “For God so LOVED the world that He GAVE His Son” (Jn 3:16)
- “He who began a work in you, will complete it!” (Phil 1:6)
- “The Spirit seals our Salvation & adopts us into God’s family.” (Eph 1:14; Rom 8:17)
- “While you were a SINNER, Christ died for YOU.” (Rom 5:8)

ORDER MATTERS: When we put WORKS first – we do them in the flesh = DEATH. When we put FAITH first and trust in the SPIRIT – we DO WORKS – but do them WITH and BY the Spirit = LIFE.

Do works matter? YES! We do them BECAUSE of God’s LOVE – not to EARN God’s LOVE.

Ephesians 2:8–10 (ESV) ⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result OF works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰ For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus FOR good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Works do not save us. NO! But we are saved FOR works! YES! (SANCTIFICATION)

REFLECT: Where are you at today? Did you begin with FAITH & the SPIRIT, but have switched to trusting in your own strength? Do you struggle with feeling that God has abandoned you? Or, that He will reject you because of your struggles, sin, anxiety, etc.?

- Jackie Pullinger – the addicts weren’t saved by the gift of tongues, nor from breaking addiction. They were saved through faith in Jesus. When they trusted in their OWN strength to break free? They were overcome with withdrawal and were STUCK. When they trusted in the Spirit? They broke FREE.

Galatians 5:1–6 (ESV) ¹ For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

You started with FAITH in Jesus and reliance on the Spirit – We need to STAY HERE

PRAY: Jesus, I am grateful for the sacrifice you paid on my behalf. I am saved by your works, not mine. Holy Spirit, I am grateful that You birthed me into Your family, brought me back to life, sealed my redemption, and that You are sanctifying me, so that I can become like Jesus. I could not save myself then, and I cannot save myself now. I put my trust in YOU and will follow Your leading as You complete the work that You began in my life.

WARNING: The opposite of LEGALISM is called CHEAP GRACE, which people use as a license to SIN. We must never treat GRACE as common. WORKS may not save us. But we are saved FOR WORKS. Christian FREEDOM is to be used to SERVE & LOVE others.

Galatians 5:13–21 (ESV) ¹³ For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. ¹⁴ For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

B. You cannot walk in the Spirit IF you are walking in the Flesh

Galatians 5:13–15 (ESV) ¹⁶ But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

QUESTION: How many people in here desire to PLEASE GOD & WALK IN THE SPIRIT? For this to happen, we have to TURN FROM SIN in our lives. When we hold onto SIN, we push out the SPIRIT.

Galatians 5:19-21 (ESV) Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, ²¹ envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

- **Sexual Immorality:** porneia (the root word for pornography) refers to any sexual acts outside the context of marriage between one man and one woman. For example, porn, adultery, sex before marriage, bestiality, homosexuality, lustful thoughts, and similar behaviours.
- **Impurity:** Includes sexual purity. But extends beyond this to include motives as well. Do we have pure motives at work? In our relationships? With the things we do? Are we trying to manipulate people for selfish gain?
- **Sensuality:** aselgeia (wantonness, shamelessness, excess). This sin involves living for pleasure and excess. Gluttony, hedonism (pursuit of pleasure > Christ), addiction to media, substances, etc.
- **Idolatry:** Anything we worship that becomes the object of our desire and affections. E.g. addictions, media, people, special relationships, to witchcraft and new age. Col 3:5 says “covetousness is idolatry.” Covetousness is an intense desire to possess wealth, relationships, possessions, or advantages that belong to someone else.
- **Sorcery:** pharmekia – (pharmaceuticals), psychedelic drugs, poison, witchcraft, all fall under this category. In ancient times, cults used drugs to alter their mind and open themselves up to other spirits. Today, people open themselves to demonic influences through drug use, new age practices, occult media, etc.
- **Enmity:** also known as hostilities, has the same origin as the word 'enemies.' It includes hatred, racism, anti-Semitism, hatred towards people from different political parties, and similar attitudes. ALL of this falls under enmity.
- **Strife:** someone who constantly causes fights and quarrels over everything. They create conflict. Opposite to the peace and unity we are called to work towards!
- **Jealousy:** zelos (zeal) God is zealous for us according to Scripture. This is not sinful! It reflects His LOVE for us! For people, it can easily lead to SIN when zeal goes too far, and joins with envy! Jealous of people's success, health, possessions.
 - i. F.F. Bruce says, “Another’s success may move a man to (zeal) in the sense of noble emulation, which is a good thing, or it may stir him to (zeal) in the sense of resentment that another has enjoyed success or distinction (thus far) denied to him, and that is a bad thing, a work of the flesh.” (we use JEALOUS as bad -> ZEALOUS as good)

- **Fits of anger:** the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God – though there is righteous anger – we are told not to let the sun go down on our anger. Angry outbursts or passive-aggressive anger, where we withhold love, BOTH fall under this category.
 - i. We are called to FORGIVE. And to LOVE others.
- **Rivalries:** eritheia (disputes, selfish ambition) **James 3:14** states, “selfish ambition and bitter jealousy are demonic” and then says where present, there will be every kind of “disorder and vile practice.” Opposite to “mutual submission out of reverence for Christ.”
- **Dissensions:** division among people. Someone who causes division among others. There are times to divide – the Bible makes that clear! But that is the extreme case. Scripture also warns to avoid divisive individuals.
- **Divisions:** haireisis (heresies) in **1 Cor 1**, where some say, "I am with Paul" and others, "I am with Apollos." Paul responds, “Is Christ divided?” There are times when division is appropriate, but unity in Christ should always be the priority, and following Christ is PRIMARY.
- **Envy:** feeling bothered by other people's success, such as their holidays, marriage, life, spouse, friends, or material possessions. Instead of genuinely celebrating their achievements, an envious spirit wishes them to be brought down a peg and for you to attain their success.
- **Drunkenness:** Excessive alcohol consumption that damages our reputation.
- **Carousing**, also known as revelry, is usually associated with drunkenness. It’s when we let go of our inhibitions and behave outrageously... As one writer said, “What happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas.”

C. Confessing Sin & Restoring Your Walk with the Spirit

PRACTICE: Grab your journal and cards. We will read through the acts of the flesh. If there are sins listed that you are currently struggling with, write them down.

My Story: Clean sheets & Sin!

Works of the FLESH: Pride, lying, theft, sexual immorality, lust, impurity, living for pleasure > Christ, idolatry, addiction, occult media & practices, hatred, racism, anti-Semitism, hating people of other political parties, strife, picking fights, jealousy, anger, withholding love, unforgiveness, being divisive, following people over Jesus, envy, being upset at others success, wanting relationships with people > Jesus, drunkenness, inappropriate joking or speech, OTHER

When we confess our sins, we are forgiven and cleansed, and our relationship with Jesus is restored! Then we can begin the next steps of walking in the Spirit.

Prayer of Confession: Heavenly Father, I confess what I wrote down as sin. I repent of these sins and any other works of my flesh. I desire to walk in step with Your Spirit and to do Your will. I ask that You would fill me anew with Your Holy Spirit. That You would restore to me the joy of my salvation, and empower me to live for You in every area of my life. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

STEP: Read Gal 5:22-26. Is there a step you can take this week to walk in Spirit?

CONSIDER: Share with someone else what you confessed today for further accountability and healing (Jms 5:16). If you have wronged someone else, ask them for forgiveness.