



THE SIMPLE GOSPEL

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## **GALATIANS: Am I Saved By Faith Or Works?**

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### Galatians 2:11-21

[The gospel or good news of Jesus Christ, while incredible, is not incredibly complicated. Even though the implications are far reaching, the good news itself is actually quite simple. Often believed to be best for those starting their journey with Christ, the gospel informs and shapes everything in the Christian life, from brand new believer to seasoned disciple. The gospel is how we are transformed and how we play a role in the transformation of those around us. Join us for a nine week study walking verse by verse through Paul's letter to the church in Galatia. Go to [doxa-church.com](http://doxa-church.com) to learn more about Doxa, find service times, or support the making of disciples in the everyday stuff of life.

Good morning church. Today we'll be reading out of Galatians chapter 2 verses 11 through 21.

"But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. For before certain men came from James, he was eating with the Gentiles; but when they came he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party. And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. But when I saw that their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all,

'If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force the Gentiles to live like Jews?' We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; 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. But if, in our endeavor to be justified in Christ, we too were found to be sinners, is Christ then a servant of sin? Certainly not! For if I rebuild what I tore down, I prove myself to be a transgressor. For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose."

This is the word of the Lord. You may be seated.

Well, good morning everybody. Good to see you all. We're a little more awake than the last group. Hey happy Memorial Day. I know a lot of our friends are traveling and doing their thing today. A lot of your family are, some of you are in town from that. So welcome. It's awesome. My name's Eddie if you're new. I'm the lead pastor here. We mostly go through books of the Bible and today we're continuing a series in the book of Galatians. And so if you have a Bible, you can turn to Galatians chapter 2. What Emma just read, verse 11. If you don't have a Bible, that's okay. We've got some on the, we've got the scriptures on the screen. We also, by the way, always keep some Bibles out there in the lobby. So if you ever want a Bible, you can take that. It's our gift to you. Okay? My voice might go out a little bit today. Maybe it goes out most weeks. I tend to scream around my children mostly for good reasons I swear. Playing monopoly until like nine o'clock at night yesterday. Definitely got me. I'm rekindling the passing down the the anger and hostility that that game causes to my children. So it's been great. Let me pray for me, pray for me first and foremost, and then we'll pray, we'll pray for our series and for our time together today.

Well, Lord Jesus, thank you for another opportunity to gather. You know what, coming across a topic like legalism, about worrying about whether or not our works or what contributes to our salvation, this topic is such a defender more so than so many others. I've just sensed that from our people. I've sensed that from myself. So I pray that we could gently let the shield down a little bit and let the Holy Spirit penetrate. I pray, Lord God, that you would overwhelm us with your love in this passage. And as we understand what grace means, would we be overwhelmed and floored by what you, just exactly what you offered us in the blood of Jesus. For my friends here that don't know you, they're just visiting Lord God, I pray that you're kind

to them. I pray that their hearts and minds can just relax and be receptive to whatever you know might be said here. Whatever you might say. Lord, pray for a hedge protection around the stage as we communicate, again, another hostile, a hostile act of war against our, our spirits that long to stay in control and not cede control to you. And so I pray that the white throne of Jesus yield in this room. Would the Holy Spirit seal this place, this entire building from top to bottom. Would he rest in here so that we might communicate what you have for all of us here today. In Jesus name. Amen. Alright, well, again, like I mentioned, we are making some progress in our series on the book of Galatians. And we find ourselves in week three out of nine talking about what we call, been calling over the last weeks, the simple gospel. Now Paul, the author of this letter, he has been hammering home this same idea, this big idea, and will continue to do so for the next several weeks. And now his major point is about this idea of grace. Grace, the simple gospel is about grace. There is nothing that I can say or do in my life in order to be in better standing with God. This is grace, right? And we are saved by God out of this sheer sovereignty that he bestows on us in this grace. He does the work, he makes the decision, and I obey God as a response to the wonderful gift that he has given me. Now, in case you haven't been with us, you might want to know sort of what the, this simple gospel is. Let me break it down for you in a nutshell. Here's the gospel. That you and I are sinners, that God creates this beautiful world and we've rebelled against God in that sin. We fail God, we fail other people, we fail ourselves, and we, as a result, we separate ourselves willingly from God. And by the way, the penalty for that separation and sin is death and hardship, the same death and hardship that we all experience here as human beings on earth. But Jesus, God, he wasn't rather content with this. And so he sends his son to die on our behalf. And if we believe in this resurrection after he dies, and we can be saved from the consequences of our sin, that's the simple gospel in its nutshell. It's really common now to go to church and never to hear the gospel. It's sad. The gospel is the reason we have a church in the first place. This is the gospel. And this is why we love the book of Galatians because every week we are hearing the same good news. This topic though, of how we are saved around this idea of our, of the gospel of our salvation. It sparks debate. It sparks a little debate in our souls, especially for those of us here that call ourselves Christians. Listen, I know not everyone here is a Christian. That's totally fine. I think there's gonna be plenty of benefit for everybody here, but this, this debate in our souls of how we are saved, it really just, it rears its head in the lives of those who are Christians. Now, on one hand, we love this idea that God gives us eternal life later and peace and joy now. We love that, through grace. It's amazing because every other area of our lives requires something of us. We have to be worthy, right? You know what I'm saying? You have to be worthy in order to sort of earn your salary at work. You have to be worthy as a parent so you don't raise your

kids crazy. You have to be worthy as a student to earn your grades. And sometimes you even have to be worthy as a spouse to maintain your marriage. That's what it feels like. With God, we have nothing to earn. We have nothing to earn. We just get to receive His goodness. That's amazing news. That's one hand. But on the other hand, we kind of do feel like, part of us feels like, well, we should bring something to the table, right? We should bring something to the table. I mean, God's law is important. It's important to follow. And if we assume God's grace, then we might sort of live however we want. And we know that's not a good thing. I mean, when we live however we want, things go bad. And of course we know that's wrong. So we must make sure that I, I must make sure that I and other people, we do what's necessary in order to be saved. We must hold up our end of the bargain, right?

So these two hands sort of lead to two options here. I'm saved by sheer faith. Nothing I do matters and he'll love me no matter what to the end. Or I'm saved by grace for sure. But my work, I mean, it matters, right? It matters. I must hold up my end of the deal, right? Now, this leads to the age old question in our hearts, because both of these feel right and wrong at the same time, don't they? That's meant to feel that way. Like what is going on here, so it leads to the age old question. How exactly then am I saved by God? Are we saved by faith or by works? Is it the things I do or the things I believe that help me receive my salvation? Following our pattern here then there are two big categories we end up falling into as a result of this question that sort of is a fork in the road. We can become legalistic, maybe more of a familiar word, and we can become licentious. Now, I'll explain that in a second. Legalism is this idea that our works are mostly what makes us right with God, right? So we, we hold ourselves and others up to that same standard. Now, licentiousness has nothing to do with like head lice, although that does seem like to be like the natural assumption.

Licentiousness means that we take license. It means that we presume upon God's grace because of course we're saved no matter what. Now, you and I, we err towards one of these categories, right? Some of you know what I'm talking about. You're leaning in one direction, but here's the tricky part. We oftentimes oscillate between the two depending on the subject. So you might feel like a legalist in some areas and probably give yourself a little license in the others, right? We're going back and forth, and that's what makes this tricky. So today we are going to explore each of these two categories and how might we unexpectedly be in one of them, or maybe expectedly be in one of them, right? The beauty of these two big solutions, or sorry, these two big problems rather, is that both of these categories, legalism and licentiousness, they actually, they have the same solution. They have the same solution. And we're gonna unpack that. So you might ask the question, am I saved by faith or by works?

This is what Galatians 2 addresses. The answer is that that is the wrong question. The right question is, how do faith and my works interact with one another in my salvation? The answer is in the solution to this legalistic and this licentious problem.

Okay? So let's unpack each half of this issue and we'll find the solution together.

Let's start in verse 11, it'll be on the screen too, like I mentioned.

"But when Ciphas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face." Ciphas is by the way, the apostle Peter, "because he stood condemned. For before certain men came from James, he was eating with the Gentiles; but when they came he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party." Sounds like a fun party. "And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. But when I saw that their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, 'If you, though a Jew live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force the Gentiles to live like Jews?'"

All right. Now this is a monumental, this is a monumental thing in the faith, monumental thing in Christianity. You have the two big heavyweights, aside from Jesus, sort of coming together to have this conversation. You've got Paul to the Gentiles and Peter, and they're gonna butt heads here. And so now we're back in the story we've been talking about the last couple weeks, and Paul mentions how he stumbles upon Peter in Antioch. Now remember, Antioch is one of the most diverse cities in the region. This is how the church gets its name, Christians, because it's so diverse, culturally, ethnically diverse. And so here we have Peter in the midst of this, essentially eating with Jews only and not Gentiles. And so Paul finds him doing this and he's, I'm gonna, I'm gonna stand up to this guy, opposes him to his face. Why? Again, because a group of men showed up from the circumcision party. Last week we called them the earn Your Salvation Crew, okay? These are people that believe they can add work to the gospel. And he opposes, and so Peter, he was afraid of them. And Peter tends to oscillate between reckless boldness and irrational fear. Like that seems to be his, his big pattern. And so he's following that pattern here. You see, Paul knows that the gospel has made cultural preferences, even Jewish cultural preferences, irrelevant to being righteous before God. You wanna do them? That's fine. It's not what saves you. Peter, though, he starts following the Jewish law of fear and he separates himself from the Gentiles. And as a result, a lot of people follow his lead, even including Barnabas, his confidant, his man he's been traveling with. So Peter creates ethnic and cultural division with his actions. This is not, this is something, this is a big idea and this is something we're gonna address in greater detail next week. So stay tuned for that. But for now, we need to know that Peter knew better. He knew better. You know, we get into these debates of conversations around this stuff where it's like, well, Peter, you know, he was a Jew. He did practice

ceremonial Jewish law for a long time and you know, it's, it's likely that he was still trying to get grips around it. I understand. And we start making sort of all these like random excuses for why he's doing this. It's just not true with Peter, okay? It's just not true with Peter. In Acts chapter 10, we know Peter gets a vision from God around this subject. Maybe you've heard of this, this idea. He gets a vision from God around this subject. And while he was hungry, one day, Peter gets this this sort of view of all of these Jewish, ceremonial, unclean animals coming down on a sheet from heaven. And a voice from heaven says to him, "Rise Peter, kill and eat." And Peter says, "No, Lord, I can't, I can't eat of any of these ceremonially unclean animals by Jewish law standard. I can't do that. I will never do that, Lord." And then the voice says to him, "What God has made clean, do not call impure."

And this is a big idea for Peter. Like remember he was a Jew his entire life. He's trying to understand like, wait a second, now of a sudden these animals aren't, are fine to eat. Now after this, Peter goes on preaching the gospel all over the region and even to the unclean gentiles. Now it's not just animals that were unclean, and are now clean, it was people too because God's people was Israel, the ethnic line of Abraham. And now all of a sudden the doors have been blown off and everyone's been included, most of us included in that. Now, all of a sudden, those of us who couldn't be a part of God's family are totally, absolutely welcomed to be a part of God's family. In fact, it was always his plan. So Peter saw this and he saw people who weren't following Jewish laws, who weren't Jewish being saved and welcomed into God's family. So afraid or not, Peter understood the implications of what he was doing eating separate from the Gentiles and what this would do because he had seen it work before, this is a really big deal. So Paul gets in his face and look at the results of Peter's actions. The earn your salvation crew, the circumcision party, right? They were validated for adding the work back into the gospel. Like you've gotta do these things. They were validated because Peter's doing it, right? Barnabas is doing it, everyone's doing it. And other people, hypocritically believe the same thing. They jumped on the train, they said, oh well this must be how we do it. And so now you got the gentile sitting in the corner segregated from the Jews cuz they're not following God the right way. They all became legalists. Why? Because, and here's our first understand, our first thing is that an incorrect understanding of how we're saved makes us legalists. Quite simple. Now I've said it three weeks in a row and I'm gonna say it the next six but I'll continue to say it here. Legalists believe following God's rules and principles are the way that they are saved by God. Now in Paul's context, the legalist essentially said something like this, oh, you have faith in Jesus. That's great. He's the messiah, he's the one true messiah. That's awesome. Oh, but it sounds like Paul, he only gave you a part of the story. What you need to do is to actually plug into the family of God.

And the way you do that is by practicing the ceremonial Jewish laws and customs and getting circumcised. Once you do that, you're in. This is gonna be awesome, right? Welcome. All of a sudden that's legalism. Do you wanna know a secret about these particular legalists? Like a secret, like shh quiet. You wanna know? Here it is. Many of them didn't know they were legalists. There's another secret you wanna know it? Most of them actually believed what they were doing was the right thing to do, which means it's entirely possible that you could be a legalist and deny the gospel and think you're doing the right thing. Go figure.

So my guess is that sparks a little bit of curiosity in you. I hope it does. A little bit of curiosity in you. So in this next section, I want you to ask the really bold question to your own self. And this is gonna be hard because there is going to be a war going on in you, especially if you fall on this side of the line. There's gonna be a war going on, it's gonna be working to defend you at all costs. But I want you to ask the question, am I a legalist? Am I a legalist? Okay, here are five ways to know if you are a legalist. Number one, you hold open-handed issues in a closed hand. The Bible teaches that there, the Bible has open-handed issues and close handed issues. Okay? Close handed issues are things that we must agree on in order to believe the Bible. This is Jesus' death, burial and resurrection. He's born of a virgin. He was lived a perfect life. He is God, he is man, he is the second member of the Trinity. That the Bible is the inherent word of God. God has a great design for humanity, male and female, for marriage and for sex. These are all some of the things that we hold in a close handed issue cuz they're stated so clearly in the scripture that we must believe them. There are things in an open-handed issue and an open that are open-handed issues. These are things that we still are trying to unpack. God doesn't state clearly in the scriptures what exactly we should do. He doesn't take a firm stance on. And so we, we take a stance understanding that there's probably other ways to do some things, right? So this would be like the type of church you attend. Is it formal or informal? What you wear at a church, how much you should pray. How, which way you should baptize your kids. Some people sprinkle their kids and some people dunk their kids. Right? Now our church has stances on all of these things, but they're open-handed issues. They are issues that we understand the Bible doesn't speak plainly and clearly on and there are close handed things that we must hold fast to in order to be Christians if we are Christians, okay? Now, when you begin to call balls and strikes where the Bible doesn't, you become a legalist. If you start saying that an open-handed issue is a close hand, if you start saying that this specific way to do something is the way it's supposed to be done or else, now all of a sudden you're calling balls and strikes and you're calling people out and God's got no opinion on that, right? You're missing

what God is saying. Be very careful what you're calling closed handed. It better be clear from the scriptures. Okay?

Next, how do you know if you're legalist? You just can't let the sin of other people go. Now if you're paying a ton of attention to the lives of other people, especially when you're not asked to be in fellowship with them, you might be a legalist. And you're, all of a sudden you get in this spot where you're comparing and contrasting their lives with yours and their doctrines with yours. If you start in, if you start getting into that space, your eye is on the wrong thing. Now, I'm not saying it's wrong to speak truth to someone that you know loves Jesus. We're not, that's not what I'm saying I'm saying is when you're always and only speaking truths to them about what they need to be doing, you might be venturing into legalism. Okay? And by the way, if you are not in an accountability relationship with them and they have rejected the things that you've brought to them before and their pastors and leaders and counselors and spouse or whoever's working alongside them, they might not want to talk to you cuz maybe they just don't like you. Like not everyone wants your opinion on everything, okay? And that it's hard for sometimes legalists to understand Legalists like myself, by the way, I should mention. This is a very difficult thing because we can't let the sins of other people go. Cause legalists really want accountability. In fact, they love accountability. Accountability is like their favorite word. But the question is, accountable to whom? Accountable to you? Because last time I checked, none of us are God. None of us are God. They are accountable to Jesus. And unless you are in direct accountable relationship with them that they've asked for or that you're a spiritual leader in their lives, those concerns are for their spiritual advisors and for their god. Jesus already died for their sin. And often legalists want to enact a double jeopardy. They want them to pay for their sin again to them after Jesus has already died for them. Okay?

How else to know you're for your legalist? Well, you've been traumatized in your past. Hear me out on this one. Legalism can often be the result of past trauma. Okay? We, we may have been hurt by someone and now we sort of create defense mechanisms in order to protect ourselves. And we sort of coat them in the shell of of the law and of Christianity. For example, if you had an abusive alcoholic parent and now you can't stand the smell of alcohol because of what happened? And so you don't drink and you know that other people, you fear other people drinking too much and you starting to monitor their amount that they're drinking and then all of a sudden you can't be around people that are drinking because oh my gosh. Now I'm not saying if you're an alcoholic, you have an issue. That's not what we're talking about here. We're talking about us judging other people by what they're doing. Another



example, you have church hurt from like maybe a fundamentalist church, a church that's really strict. Now, anytime you see a person wearing a suit, it gives you PTSD and you hear Calvinism, you hear the word Calvinist or the five points of something or other and you just, oh my gosh, you can't comprehend the idea of anyone going to a church like that because who, what sort of person would believe like that? Because now anyone who resembles the church that hurt you in appearance or in method or in word are probably wrong and hurtful too. Friends, legalism might be the result of a traumatic past experience that you're either rebelling against or you're upholding. Either way, godliness is not judging others for things they have or haven't done based on the things that you've been through. That is unprocessed shame. It's toxic and you need to give that to Jesus, not judge other people with it.

Number four, how to know if I'm legalist, you feel like you're not doing enough. You feel like you're not doing enough. Contrary to proper belief, this is actually a legalistic tendency of ours, for my fellow legalists, right? This is because legalism will always create a feeling of pride, I'm doing awesome, or despair, I'm doing a bad job. Feelings of failure come when you feel like you just aren't doing a good enough job at the standard you believe God keeps. More than likely though it's the standard that you set. And by the way, if you do feel like you're always crushing it as a Christian then perhaps you don't understand the gospel like you think. And if your spouse hasn't told you already, you're not perfect. And in fact, you always being right bothers probably a lot of people, but they know they can't tell you about it. So let me be the bad news, bearer of bad news here. Your insistence that you're perfect is annoying. Stop. It's annoying. Okay? We know you're not perfect, okay? We understand that because the story of the gospel is not that you might fail out of your perfection, it's that you will fail. You will fail and you will fail at believing the gospel fully all of the time. Like that's part of it. That's why Jesus came to die. He came to die because it's not, it was not just unlikely you were gonna meet the standard as that was impossible. We're gonna talk about this quote from Jonathan Edwards that like you can no more uphold the law perfectly than a spiderweb could stop a falling rock. Like you had no shot at this thing. None. That's why Jesus came to die. So when you feel like you're not doing enough, the answer is probably, well maybe you're not and maybe you are failing. But that doesn't mean you need to change a bunch of stuff in order to get right with God. It means that you need the gospel. And the gospel is that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. You're going to be broken. Legalism is the attempt to hold ourselves to a higher standard than God does. And oftentimes when we do that, feelings of despair are the result. Okay?

Last thing. A lot of legalists in the room, I can feel the tension. I like it. I like it. Shaking up the apple cart, right? Here's the last one. You've isolated the law from the law giver. Because some of us are in here right now, again, that lawyer is rearing their head and they're going listen, but, but we gotta preach the truths of the scripture. You don't understand. We've gotta live them rightly. Obviously there's grace, but we've gotta live these truths, rightly. Yes, of course we're supposed to do that, but the Bible has a context it's in and sometimes we get really good at preaching the truths from the Bible and forget to preach the gospel. You see, it's totally possible you can preach biblical ethics and not the gospel. In fact, if you're just preaching biblical ethics, you're not preaching the gospel. Thou shalt not steal. Is that the gospel? No. In fact, hate to break it to you, you probably might steal. That's the gospel that while you were still sinners, Christ died for you. Now he's gonna redeem you and reconcile you and all of a sudden he's gonna give this doctor of regeneration to go in your spirit and hopefully you will no longer steal. That's the goal. But you are counted as righteous. You're not perfect yet, not tell glory. The gospel is that you're broken and that we're working towards perfection and glory. We are not there. There's this damaging idea that happens where people start going, listen, I don't sin anymore. I've gotten to the point where I don't sin. I don't have a problem with that. Yes you do! Your sins pride and being blind because you don't see that you're arrogant because you do sin. Cause that's what the Bible teaches. And maybe you just need to read the scripture a little bit better. The thing you tell everyone else to do really well, okay? You've isolated the law from the law giver. Legalists loved, isolate the law from the God who gives the law. They're not so much seeking to obey God as they are trying to essentially obey rules that are devoid of any relationship with him altogether. And if you knew the God deeply that you say you believe, you would know that being legalistic is not how God wants you to engage him. Listen, I'll just, I'll say it. Legalism is not just a Catholic problem. People like, oh well Catholics are so legalistic. No legalisms a human problem. It's a human problem. We are all this way. Listen, Peter loved the gospel, he loved it and he still violated it. After Pentecost, after 3000 people got saved, after he saw people of all tribes tongues, all the speaking different, culturally Jewishly different people from around the region speaking in their dialects, fire rushing winds, they saw it all. Still denies the gospel. You are susceptible too. We are all susceptible man. One of the most outstanding things about the book of Galatians is just how unwilling legalism is to die in our hearts. Because even right now I can feel myself going, well hold on, hold on a second. And you are all doing, we're all there. You know what I'm saying? Like we're feeling this legalism does not want to die. That's what makes it so insidious because other, we can just see other sins. Lust. Okay, that's probably not a good thing. You know, coveting my neighbor's wife, same thing. Probably not a good idea. Stealing, ah, not a good gossip. Slander. We can see

how those are bad. But legalisms all about convincing you're doing fine. Yeah, maybe I think I do need to keep working a little bit more. It's a lawyer in your head, that's what's happening. Okay? Half the room is really happy right now cuz they're going get 'em, get 'em preacher like I've been saying this for years, that's why I haven't been to church. These people, right?

Let's continue on the other side of the story, okay? We all have something to learn here today. Verse 15.

"We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; 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."

Wait a second, I missed that. Who will be justified by works of the law? No one. Now I'm just reading that okay Take it up with the messenger, okay? I'm just reading it. It says, by works of the law no one will be justified. Now Paul here is clearly saying that. Then the question becomes, well what does this idea of justification mean? What does justified mean? Justified means to be essentially counted as righteous. You're counted as righteous before God. It means that Jesus work on the cross legally counts you as righteous and good before the Father. Again, you are not automatically perfect in and of yourself. No, no, no, no. You'll be perfected in glory when Jesus comes back. But for now you are counted as righteous before the blood of Jesus, which means we still have a sanctification to work out. We still got some work to do. Okay? Now this is a big deal. I hope that this idea of justification, you being counted as righteous before God, I hope that this is, conjures up a great deal of hope in you because it does in me. It's such a big idea that no matter where I'm at, like if I'm as bad as I could be or as good as I could be, God loves me just as much and I'm, as long as I'm repentant and working towards this goodness in faith in him, if I can do that, then all of a sudden I'm loved by him in immeasurable ways. That's justification. He counts us as righteous and praise God for his work, right? But there is a sense that because I'm counted as righteous before God, then I can sort of do whatever I want, you know, you know what I'm saying? Like, well cuz God died for me and I've got freedom in Christ and what God sets free is free indeed, right? Should be fine. God will always count me as righteous. Which leads me to the second thing, a misunderstanding of how we are saved makes us licentious. Okay? You may not be legalist, but you may find yourselves taking a little license. So I have four ways to know if you're are licentious.

Here's the first one. You hold closed handed issues in an open hand. Remember all of our big core beliefs of the Bible, those big ones, Jesus, death, burial, resurrection, his perfection, all these things, all those things could easily sort of, I don't know, be pushed to the side because I mean, hey man, we're all free in Christ. Like God died for love. Like love is love. What's most important is that we love other people. Like he said that the most important commandment is to love God and love neighbors. As long as I do that, none of this like mumbo jumbo matters. This, you know, like who's to say? I mean, do we really lose anything if the cross isn't real? I mean, who knows? And we can accidentally, I hope, we get to this point on an accident where as long as we sort of say Jesus, then anything goes right. We might love the principle of love from the gospel and then all of a sudden we love it so much that we sort of take the gospel and set it here and uphold the chief standard of love and peace and all these wonderful things that come alongside it. So all of a sudden the gospel becomes a launching point for you discovering who you really want to be with these principles that you've taken and not a landing point for you to find yourself and who you are in Jesus. Love is the biggest one. And I know I'm sort of picking on it, but as Tim Keller once said, the gospel is news that creates a life of love, but the life of love is not itself the gospel. Those are two different things, right? Licentious people love, love, they love God's gifts more than anything. While Legalists oftentimes will love the law and not the law giver. Licentious people love, they love gifts without the gift giver. And so they take God's wonderful gifts like love and and community and we make those chief and we discard the gospel as unnecessary. The closed handed issues of Jesus death, burial, and resurrection, they are paramount. Paul is not talking about that. We are united and free in who? In Christ. We've gotta hold in Christ as chief. They're the foundation. And if you remove the foundation, then the first tornado that comes, it's gonna hit you and blow your roof off. And we're seeing that all over the, all over the place today and culture. People are trying to understand and figure out who they are apart from, apart from the world and apart from God. And it's collapsing in on itself. You hold close handed issues in an open hand.

Next reason you're willing to let go of sin but you're willing to do it rather quickly. Now it's good to let go of sin, right? Jesus unburdens us from the slavery of sin. This is a good thing, but, but if the wages of sin is death, then it should probably be taken pretty seriously. Is death a serious thing? Yeah. Your sin leads to death. We should take sin seriously as a result. Your sin is so serious that God gave his only son for it. And so that's a big deal. Yes, there is grace of course. Praise God for this grace. Grace is amazing. We should presume, we should love this grace, right? We want grace, but Jesus had to be tortured and killed for that grace. That's quite the cost. If you do not understand that cost then you may not understand just what Jesus' death

meant for you. You might be missing it. Friends, this is not an easy pill to swallow, but I just gotta say, your sin is what killed Jesus. Jesus is not here because your sin, my sin, we killed him. He had to die for it. That's a big deal. The thing that we might so easily dismiss, Jesus was murdered for. He's not chuckling or like laughing or sort of going, ha ha ha I'm free in Christ. Who cares what it really means? Or sort of questioning whether or not it's really even sin in the first place. He's not doing any of those things. He bled and died for it. He is not making light of that, like we often do. And by the way, when we hurt other people and we hurt God, we are quick to move on because we may not actually recognize the great damage we've caused. Listen man, just forgive me, it's sin. I mean you said you forgive me, right? It should be fine. What's worse is you might not even actually realize or even really believe the penalty of sin is as harsh as as we might think. It is harsh. Plus by the way, if we excuse the sins of other people too quickly, which we often some do in this camp, we may not recognize their need for repentance in their own sin and then their souls become endangered because they don't realize cuz no one's telling them that what they did is the why Jesus died. Repentance is so important. The fastest way to find yourself an enemy of God is a lack of repentance. In fact, it might be the only thing that can keep you out. Once there's repentance, then we can let go of the sin. Okay, next one. You see yourself as too far gone. Now this is where we say, I've already sinned. I've already lost my purity or I've already lost my morality or my godliness. Like why even try? Why even try? This is where we move from this idea from shame to shamelessness. Now shame could be a good thing. It could actually keep you from bad things. Now there's toxic shame, which is shame you shouldn't wear. But shamelessness is never a good thing. This is where we just act and behave however we want because oh well we're so far gone, who cares? I might as well do it more. And some of you know exactly what I'm talking about. Or in this idea where you feel like you're too far gone. You feel like there is nothing you can do to come back from what you said or did. Like I am damaged goods. It is over. Man, this is so sad for you. If you, if this is where you're at, you fail to believe the gospel itself. You're failing to believe the gospel itself. It says, while we were still sinners, Christ died for us and gave himself up for the, for the ungodly. We're the ungodly. He didn't come for the sick or he didn't come from the healthy but the sick. That's okay. If you're in this spot, you think the gospel's not big enough for you. Let me tell you something, the gospel's big enough for any sin you hold, far bigger. It's big enough for all sin, past, present and future. You are not too far gone for Jesus. If you think that way, you've thought too small and you could accidentally become a legalist in that way. Be careful.

And here's the fourth way you might know if you're licentious. Sometimes you just want to sin. The human heart is wicked above all else. Who can understand it. Sometimes people just want the pleasures of the world. And if this is you, you might even decide you're gonna use legalism as an excuse to avoid obedience. A lot of people are like, you know what, I'm not really into legalism. I've got freedom in Christ. I'm not about that church life. I'm not about that rules life. And what they really mean is they want to sin without guilt and shame. Sin isn't freedom, friends, it's slavery. Just read this. Sin holds you captive and what you've done is Jesus has unlocked your shackles from the bottom and he's freed you and opened the gate and you sit there enslaving yourself to unquenchable hunger in your sin. Jesus died for your freedom and yet you've left the door swing open and you stay in the cage. People love the pleasures of the world and they love to marinate in them on their way towards eternal separation from God like a hot tub on its way to sheol. Few moments of pleasure exchange for an eternity of suffering. Not a fair trade, but that's what sin does. Many of you know exactly what I'm talking about. You know exactly what I'm talking about. You're in this spot where you're trying to make, not to think too deeply about the things you know God might have an opinion on. And you just want to sin. You just want to stay there. You just want to enslave yourself to that which is ultimately going to destroy you.

The gospel has two equal and opposite enemies. We heard 'em both. Legalism and licentiousness, both by the way, they miss the gospel by a mile, by an absolute mile. Tertullian, an early church father, he said this, "Just as Jesus was crucified between two thieves, so the gospel is ever crucified between these two errors." You and I, we crucified the gospel over and over again in our legalism and in our licentiousness. We offer it up as a living sacrifice to make ourselves chief. Luckily for us though both of these categories, again, they have the same solution. Verse 19.

"For through the law I died to the law so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." Whoa. That's refreshing. God's work in us produces something that changes us from the inside out. It makes us long for him. It makes us long to obey him. You see, when you're a legalist, it's just you in there doing all the work. It's you managing, building up for yourself a kingdom to make yourself king or queen. Right? That's what you're doing, when you're legalist. When you're licentious, you must reject all legalism to remain true to who you are inside. It's about, it's about preserving of the self, legalism and licentiousness. But the gospel says, well, that you, says here that you're gone. You're gone. It's no longer you who live in there but Christ who lives. That's different.

That means being Christ-like is the answer to your legalism and your licentiousness. Because he is neither. In order to, in order to rate ourselves of legalism and ness, we need to learn what it means to be holy.

Let me just say we do not have a concept of holiness in 2023 in the American church almost. It's almost gone completely. It's almost gone completely. For the legalist, holiness is another way of saying, oh well I have holiness. Just be like me, duh. Like I follow all the rules, follow me as I follow Christ. Come on, let's go. But that's not holiness, that's not set apartness, that's actually religious fundamentalism and it hurts people because you're not a very good example sometimes. Sometimes you are, but not always. And if holiness means that to live, to have Christ live in you and become Christlike, legalism pulls you out of holiness faster than anything because it lifts you up as the highest authority, not Jesus. Verse 21 says, I do not nullify the grace of God for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose. Oh, so if it's about how well you follow God, then well, Christ died for no reason. When you're a legalist, you remove power from the gospel because you're saying, well I actually got it covered, Jesus, thanks for the start. I got, I got it from here. That's legalism. And if you believe that you've stolen power from the cross. Cross doesn't have power in your life cuz you figured it out. Okay? Verse 21, that's what it says, that's what it says. For the licentious, well, geez, you often mistake every truism, every rule, every guideline, every piece of suggestion, every law for legalism. And let me tell you something, not everything is legalistic. The reason you think everything is legalism is because you have no concept of what it means to be holy. We've come out of the last 30 or 40 years of an overcorrection in the church. So baby boomers started like megachurch movements in the seventies, eighties and nineties. And they are, they sort of get to the spot where the greatest generation, their parents who came outta World War II were all very fundamental, right? Very fundamental church. And so as a result they decided to go the opposite way. And so instead of like holiness and you must do and you ought to, it became about like, we started calling our churches centers and other things so people would be more, started building Applebees in the lobby and all these like weird things that have happened to make church more palatable. And then all of a sudden these sort of these ideas of all you need is not religion. What you need is a relationship with Jesus. And all of that stuff comes in and then the ask Jesus into your heart. You don't have to worry about any of that stuff. Just ask the Lord into your heart and you'll be saved. All these things. Now, those aren't untrue statements by the way. They're not. The problem is that those truisms give us little to no concept of what it means to live holy lives. Almost none. And you know what's really fascinating if you look at sort of the dynamics of culture and generations is that Gen Z Christians, the youngest generation, is actually going

back to ancient things. It's kind of fascinating to see. They aren't following their millennial and Gen X and boomer parents. They're actually doing a different thing. They're going back. They long for order and aesthetic practices to communicate that they're for real in their relationship with God. And while many of us have presumed upon God's grace, a lot of them, they have a hunger. They hunger for a relationship with Jesus that communicates, that they mean business cuz they've tasted his love. That's holiness. Now to many of us, holiness is just a curse word. It conjures up legalistic and angry and people judging us and ruling, again, utilizing your trauma as an excuse, conjures up all these things. But holiness is actually what God has always called his people to. The story of the Old Testament is that he tells Israel to be holy and set apart from the nations. He wants them to be in relationship in order to be in right standing with him in order to, to be able to hear from him, they needed to remain holy and set apart from practices and lifestyles that took away from their relationship with him. That's holiness. As one pastor once said, things aren't bad because they're forbidden. They're forbidden because they're bad and they block our path to God. Do you wanna be in right standing with God? Do you wanna hear from him?

I do. I long for this more. If we want to do that, then we have to remove that which distracts and derails, and so that way we can pursue God with precision. And that's what holiness is about. It's not about rule keeping, it's about cutting the fat so you can hear from the Lord. That's what holiness is. That's a good thing. And then, and only then can I not use the law like a weapon, as a legalist or run from the law like a licentious person. But then I could delight in the law like the psalmist, the law becomes an ally and a wondrous thing to meditate on Psalm 1:2 says,

"But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night." All of a sudden the law is this wonderful guideline because, because all of a sudden one, Jesus fulfills it. But then it paves my road to perfect and wonderful connection with him. Psalm 1:19 says,

"I long for your salvation, O Lord, and your law is my delight."

When I obey the law in holiness, I get more of Jesus. This is holiness, that I am his and he is mine. That I live by the power of Christ. And his love powers me towards obedience. This is the synchrony we all long for in our legalism and our licentiousness. We just all want Jesus. And he's given us the way. Our holiness must be uncovered though individually and corporately. You need to uncover it by you diving into the scriptures in your study, recommitting to a life of prayer and



communion and fasting and meditating on his word. Then and only then can he be your delight.

And to my non-Christian friends as we end. You too, my friend. You're a legalist too. You might be licentious, but you're probably a legalist alongside. The way I know this is because I was one of you until I was 19. But also more than that, I think we also all attempt to earn our way to a better life through our moral framework that we live on. We all determine it. It comes from the self, maybe not from God, but it comes from the self. This is what I should be. This is what I'm allowed to say. This is what I'm allowed to do. If other people violate that, then they are apostates. And if other people do violate that we judge 'em and then we break fellowship with them. Sounds very religious to me. And when you fail yourself and you're in despair because you violated your own law or the culture's law, your anxiety and your depression will come for you and it'll come after you've failed to live by the standard you've set or it'll come after the feeling that you know deep down. But the standard you've set isn't rooted in anything real. You need the God that Christians keep forgetting. He's a God of grace. He's a God that makes us clean. He's a God that paves a way to him, and he's a way that leads, gives us a path to live a life of flourishing and not one of desperation and not one of legalism and not one of license. Let's pray.

Father God, thank you for an opportunity to share the word with my friends. It's a word that's clearly, I hope, I pray it's working on my heart and I pray it's working on their hearts. I think all of us, deep down, we're all here because we're longing for something more. And some of us know that we're just longing for you more. We have a deep need to be reconnected with you. And these human attempts to try to do so in our legalism and our license, it just, it pulls us away and oftentimes we don't even know we're doing it. And so, Lord, thank you for being kind to all of us that we would be remember, that we would remember we need more. We need more of you and the way to do that is to pursue you in holiness and obedience and not in legalism and not in just this idea of love apart from the cross, which is there is such a thing anyway. I pray for my friends as they come to the table here that many will take communion and remember you and remember that they don't have to earn you. They've given you a, you've given them a way. And then for the other people, they don't have to avoid the steps you've given them to love you more, they can embrace them. We say these things in Jesus' name, who shed his blood for us. Amen.