

# Why Legalists Hate Jesus

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**John 7:19-24**

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I don't know about you, but as a Christian, it's hard for me to believe that anybody hates Jesus, but they do. It's easy to find people who love Jesus, the revolutionary, or Jesus, the newborn, or Jesus the prophet, a Jesus that's safe and fits what they already think is right and good and true. That Jesus is fine with people, no problem, he's loved. But give them a taste of the real Jesus, expose them to what he actually said, expose them to what he did and what that says about them, oh, look out. What you will get is dismissal or disgust or maybe even rage at the real Jesus.

This is just what we've been seeing as people react to Jesus in the Gospel of John. He isn't who they want Him to be. He doesn't meet their expectations. He doesn't fit into the box that they have created for him, so the result is hatred. And in the culture Jesus found himself in, the person that hated Jesus was the legalist. The whole Jewish religion at the time was a legalistic system.

Now, the word legalist and legalism are thrown around a lot today. Everyone knows it's bad, even though many people don't even know what it means, so it's a term that's often used to slander. It's often used to describe feelings people have when they're told to do something they don't want to do, like that just feels legalistic.

So we preached half a dozen sermons on legalism when we went through Galatians, and here's what legalism is as taught in the Bible. Legalism is not caring about obedience. It's not telling other people, even other Christians, that they're in sin and they need to return to what the Bible tells them to do. So what is legalism then? If that's what it's not, what is it? Legalism is obeying biblical rules to be saved or it's obeying biblical rules to stay saved. It's obedience to earn your salvation or it's obedience to keep your salvation. If you don't obey, you won't be saved. If you don't obey, you will lose your salvation.

So from that question, can a true Christian be a legalist? The answer is no, right? True Christians are done with trying to save themselves through their obedience. Their goal is not self-salvation through self-righteousness, ultimately for the purpose of self-glorification, the legalist is paying their own ticket to heaven by their good works so that when they get to heaven, heaven is not a gift of God's grace. Heaven is what they are due for what they achieved with their good works. The legalist is not trusting in Jesus to save them. He's trusting in his own effort, because their trust is in their good works to be saved or to stay saved.

This is a fundamental issue in Christianity, right? Who or what are you trusting in to save you from God's wrath for your sins when you stand before him? Is it you and your good works? Or is it Jesus? That's legalism, and that is everywhere. Isn't every religion on the planet legalistic, giving people a list of dos and don'ts to earn their salvation or to earn some kind of positive

afterlife? So why do so many people hate Jesus? Because they're legalists. When who he is and what he did as Savior of the world confronts the legalist, they see him for what he is. They see him as a rival to their merit. They see him as an attack on their supposed goodness. And because of that, they hate him.

Now, in our text today, we're going to look at some reasons why legalists hate Jesus. And you might be wondering, "Why is that important? Why do we need to know why legalists hate Jesus?" Well, you can't understand why Jesus died. You can't understand what happened in his life without knowing this fact, that legalists hate Jesus. You also can't understand why there's so much animosity for Jesus and why there's so much animosity for Christians without knowing why Jesus is hated by legalists. And this is important for you to know because it'll help you understand how to effectively share the truth with the legalists that you know and love.

As we jump into our text today, Jesus is teaching in the temple during the Feast of Booths. This is late September, early October, and the Jews who are the arch-legalists, the religious authorities, the enemies of Jesus, they are seeking to discredit him as an imposter. He's not an approved teacher. He didn't study in one of our approved schools, under one of our approved rabbis, so he's discredited. We can't listen to him.

Jesus said something better than all that, though. Verse 16, "My teaching is not mine," just like their teaching isn't theirs. They just parrot what other people say. Jesus says, "My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me."

Translation, his words, every single word that ever came out of his mouth was straight from the mind of God himself. But the Jews rejected that, because in verses 17 and 18, they don't want God's will. They are rebels against God, truly. But what they do want is God's glory because ultimately, they are God's rivals. Even though they obey God, even though they tell other people to obey God, even though they're in Jerusalem for a feast to worship God, the truth about them is that they are rebels and rivals because at their core they're legalists.

And Jesus, with courage, gets out his shovel and starts digging into their hearts in verse 19, when he says to them, "Has not Moses given you the law? Yet, none of you keeps the law. Why do you seek to kill me?" So God gave his law through Moses. Moses is the human instrument that God's law came to God's people through. They honor Moses as the greatest prophet, but that honor did not translate into obedience. Verse 19 says what? "None of you keeps the law." But in their minds, that's all they ever did was keep the law. But Jesus shows them that that's a lie because they neglected a weightier matter of the law like, I don't know, don't murder your neighbor. That's God's top 10, number six. But here they are, looking at a man that they want to murder while flattering themselves with being all about God and his law.

The blindness of the legalist to his own hypocrisy is as tragic as it is stunning. Sure, they thought he was a false prophet and deserved to die. But verse 24, that is a superficial judgment that they should have investigated further, but they refused and give themselves a pass for seeking to break God's law egregiously by wanting to murder Jesus while giving no one else a pass when

they break God's law, showing that they don't really care about God's law. What do they care about? The power that their position gives them over people. That's what they care about.

This is why verses 17 and 18, they are blinded to the truth when Jesus taught. Jesus is undressing them spiritually, laying the truth bare about them in verse 19. But as he's doing that, notice verse 20, the crowd comes to the defense of their leaders. The crowd answered, "You have a demon who is seeking to kill you." The crowds are the people there for the feast, and they don't have a clue that what? These leaders do want to kill him, so there's irony here. They go, nobody wants to kill you, when the people that want to kill them are the leaders that they are defending.

And Jesus did know this, right? John 2:24 says, he knows their plans because he knows their hearts. And I want you to notice instead of running away, he heroically gives them the truth, and the crowd jumps in and ridicules him for it. With these words, they're either saying that he's actually possessed by a demon, or this is a saying that means that he's insane. Either way, I want you to notice that the gap between the crowd and the religious leaders is being closed as more and more they are beginning to see Jesus the way that their leaders saw Jesus. He's delusional, he's paranoid. he's in league with Satan. He's insane. Six months after these events, what? The leaders will want it, and the crowd will scream what? "Crucify Him." Their positions will be the same.

Can you imagine being one of the crowd who said this about Jesus when they stood before him at their death, that level of disrespect, the complete lack of truth? Why did these legalistic religious leaders want to kill Jesus? Why is it that they hated him so much? One of the reasons is, **point #1), Jesus Establishes Legalists as Guilty**. They hate him because **he establishes them as guilty**. Through what Jesus says, he makes it obvious that legalists are actually guilty, guilty of breaking God's rules, guilty of sin and rebellion. And because of that, they hate him.

But facts are facts. Verse 19, "None of you keeps the law." This is true for the Jewish leaders attacking Jesus, and it's true for every single legalist. Like these Jews, the legalist seeks to achieve his own salvation by his obedience to God's law, but that's impossible. Psalm 143:2 puts it this way, "No man living is righteous before God." No man living does what is right in God's eyes. Nobody. Ecclesiastes 7:20 says, "There is not a righteous man on earth who continually does good and who never sins." 1 John 1:8 puts it this way. "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves. And the result is we are guilty before God."

But the legalist disagrees. Guilty before God, standing under his wrath, no way, not the legalist. Other people like those murders and terrors, yeah, sure, but not them. They're okay. After all, there's good in them. There's a spark of divinity in them. There was a spot somewhere in there, not sure where it is, but it's somewhere in there. It's not affected by sin. That's the part that God looks at. What do people say? God knows my heart. God knows my heart. Yeah. See, he knows I'm okay.

He does know. He does know their hearts. Jeremiah 17:9 says, "Our hearts are deceitful and desperately wicked." He knows that about our hearts. Romans 7:18 says, "Nothing good dwells

in us." He knows that. The legalist does not want to hear it. The legalist does not want to hear that they are not a good person. The legalist does not want to hear that they are a guilty person. They do all of those good works. Why? To push back the guilty feelings that they have. But they feel guilty. Why? Because they are guilty, guilty of not only breaking God's laws, but guilty of violating the Creator and owner of their souls. But instead of embracing that and asking God for mercy and forgiveness, they turn around and hate him for it. They hate when his Word condemns them, "Even them is guilty before God."

And trying to explain this to non-Christians, I've seen this hatred firsthand. Have you? I've seen everything from laughter at this fact, disdain, ridicule. You're not perfect either. Well, yeah, you're right. I'm not saying I am. There's even been a handful of people that wanted to beat me up for saying this to them. And I'm not saying it in a mean way, I'm saying it very kind.

I remember one guy, he had his Gideon Bible there, and I said, open it to the back. And he opened it to the back, and point number one, God loves you. Yes, God loves, blah, blah, blah. Point number two, you're a sinner. Are you a sinner? No, I've never. No, no, I'm good, and I said, well, I bet you just lied, and so, you've got one sin. I'm trying to be nice and funny, a little bit about it, and he got right here. I'm going to kill you. I'm going to beat you up. Legalists hate Jesus because Jesus establishes them as guilty. But in reality, all non-Christians are legalists. Why? Because if your hope isn't in Jesus, where is it? Right here. It's in you.

So if we're going to learn from this, if we're going to learn from what Jesus does here in verse 19, we need to be able to do what Jesus did here and establish people as sinners, guilty criminals before a holy God. But how do we do that? Well, instead of reinventing the wheel, I would just encourage you to do what Jesus does here, take people to God's rules.

To make it even easier, take them to the Ten Commandments, Exodus 20. Start with the first one. I learned this from the evangelist, Ray Comfort when I would talk to non-Christians on the streets in Santa Monica with people from Ray's team. And this is what we would do, take them to the first one. "You shall have no other gods before me." And I would ask people, "Has there ever been anyone or anything that has been more important to you than God?"

Take them to the third one. "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain." And then ask them, "Have you ever used the word God or Jesus or Christ in a disrespectful way, like I don't know, maybe to emphasize a cuss word?" Take them to the eighth one. "You shall not steal." And ask, "Have you ever stolen anything, even something that people really wouldn't even care about?" Take them to the ninth one. "You shall not bear false witness." And ask them, "Have you ever told a lie, even a white lie that hurt nobody?"

You notice how Jesus does that here. You notice that by doing that, that you're not standing there above them like, you are a sinner, you know you're a sinner, yes you are. You're wicked, evil. But you're not doing that. What are you doing? Just taking them to God's law, comparing their lives to God's law, and you're helping them to realize that they're guilty before that law, without you saying anything about that. Then you can say something like, that's just four laws, and God

has 613 in the Old Testament. Think you probably broke a few more? Probably a few hundred, maybe a few thousand times each, like the rest of us?"

You see, many people are going to laugh at you, push against that, make excuses, and all of that. But once they say, yes, that's when you tell them about Jesus, the one who was punished for their sins and will forgive all of their sins if they come to him.

That's not what these religious leaders did. They rejected Jesus because they hated Jesus. In verse 21, Jesus ignores the crowd. It's really cool, and I think that's a picture of what God is doing all day, every day, ignoring the constant blasphemy that is happening towards him until judgment day, at least. Here, he ignores the crowd and goes right after the leaders, their hypocrisy and inconsistency. Verse 21, "Jesus answered them, 'I did one work, and you all marvel at it.'"

Stop right there. Even though it was months earlier, these leaders are still shocked at one work, one miracle that Jesus did in Jerusalem, in chapter 5, healing a paralyzed man. Now, John 2:23, John 4:45 says Jesus did many miracles in Jerusalem. But Jesus here highlights this one miracle, because this is the one that instigated the religious leaders' desire to have him killed. So if you don't remember, John chapter 5, Jesus healed a man who'd been paralyzed for 38 years. He heals him completely, heals him instantaneously, heals him publicly for all to see, and he heals him without the man even asking for it or believing that Jesus could do it. In fact, the man didn't even know who Jesus was. Jesus healed him anyway.

All of that happened though on the Sabbath, which is Friday at sundown to Saturday at sundown. That is the Sabbath day. And John 5:18 says, "The Jews were seeking all the more to kill Jesus because he was breaking the Sabbath." Working on the Sabbath was punishable by death, and Jesus had to die because he had the audacity of doing the work of healing a man on the Sabbath.

And these leaders have not forgotten about it. He slipped through their fingers. They're still angry about it. They still want Jesus dead for it. So Jesus says, verse 22, "Moses gave you circumcision, not that it's from Moses but from the fathers." Stop there. Before I dig into the text, I want you to notice something. Jesus assumes that Moses and the fathers, which is Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, he assumes that those four men are what? Are real, are actual historical figures, not religious fairytales. He says, "Circumcision is commanded in the law of Moses." It is. Leviticus 12:3 says, "On the eighth day after male child is born, the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised." This, however, doesn't originate with Moses. That's what the parentheses says. It goes back 700 years to Abraham, Genesis 17. "It is a sign of the everlasting covenant that God made with the Jewish people."

But what happens if the Jewish boy is born on Friday, so that eight days later is what? Saturday. It's the Sabbath. What do you do? Have the little boy circumcised on the seventh day? Circumcised on the ninth day? Or do you make the person performing the circumcision do his job and work on the Sabbath? Well, let's see. Verse 22 again, "Moses gave you circumcision, and you circumcise a man on the Sabbath."

They had two commands in conflict, and they decided that the command to circumcise a newborn male on the eighth day took precedence over the command to not work on the Sabbath. And we're like, "What's the point of that?" Verse 23, Jesus explains. "If on the Sabbath a man receives circumcision so that the law of Moses may not be broken, are you angry with me because on the Sabbath I made a man's whole body well?"

So he argues like the rabbis did, from the lesser to the greater and says, If it's okay to ignore the Sabbath for circumcision, which you do all the time, it's also okay to ignore the Sabbath for something greater than circumcision, namely what? Loving your neighbor by healing him on the Sabbath of 38 years of paralysis. That's better. If it's okay to ignore the Sabbath for one part of the body, it's okay for me to do this work of making his, look at the words in verse 23, "his whole body well on the Sabbath." Jesus healing that poor man didn't break the law that they were angry. Notice verse 23, "You are angry with me." They're still angry, after months later. It could be as much as a year later. They're still angry. But He actually fulfilled the law. Galatians 5:14 makes it clear. "The whole law is fulfilled in one word." Do you know what that word is? "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

Being angry with Jesus and wanting to kill him for healing the paralyzed man on the Sabbath, they not only showed how much they misunderstood and distorted God's Word, but how much they were actually opposed to the clear and obvious meaning and intention of God's Word. Jesus gives the clear meaning of the Sabbath, Mark 2:27, when he says the Sabbath was made for man. It was made to bless, not to burden. "It was made for man, not man for the Sabbath." It was right for him to love his paralyzed neighbor by doing this work of healing on the Sabbath.

The Fourth Commandment, where the Sabbath was never meant to keep people from loving their neighbors, He's saying. Jesus brilliantly exegetes the Old Testament, and he dismantles the reason they're angry at him, showing that they are actually in sin, not him. And they hate him for it, because *point #2), Jesus Exhibits Them as Hypocrites. Jesus makes it clear that legalists are hypocrites.* He puts it on display because that's what legalists are. "You want to kill me for breaking the Sabbath by healing a paralyzed man when you break it all the time to circumcise a baby boy? Seriously?" This is what he's saying. Maybe not with the word seriously, but that's what He's saying.

And they did that because they're hypocrites. They didn't even consistently follow the Sabbath rule that they are mad at Jesus for allegedly breaking. Hypocrisy is the legalist's blind spot. He doesn't even know he's a hypocrite until it's pointed out, at which time hatred arises in his heart if he doesn't own it. We'll see this next weekend, because after this interaction, verse 32, these leaders go get the police and they send them to Jesus and say, go arrest that man. They want him dead now. They've had enough of him.

One of the last things Jesus does in the last week of his life is that he calls these religious leaders out for their hypocrisy in Matthew 23. He says in verse 3, "They preach, but do not practice what they preach." Verse four, "They burden people with rules, rule after rule after rule," that what?

"That they don't follow." Verse 5, "They do all their good deeds to be seen." They are so godly and so good, and they do all that good stuff so that other people praise them.

Verse 23, "They were meticulous about what they gave and how much they gave to the ministry of the temple." And Jesus says, "You should have done that." But he said, "You also should have done what is right and shown mercy and been trustworthy." And then, the classic description of the hypocrite, verse 25, "Your outside is so godly, so clean, so put together, but your insides are drenched with greed, selfishness, full of hypocrisy and lawlessness."

And there were words of Romans 2. "Speaking, they rail against stealing while stealing. They speak against adultery while committing it. They take pride in having a Bible, and they dishonor God by breaking what it says." This hypocrisy marks the legalist. Why? Think about it. The legalist knows. "I can just go to confession." So, he cheats and steals and lies and carouses all week long, shows up at church all the time, hair perfect, clothes perfect. But the people at work or at school would be shocked to know that he even darkened the door of a church because of how he lives his life at work and school.

They honor God with their lips, but their hearts are far from him. And if they're honest, they know that, how they live their lives when nobody's watching. His language is hypocritical. His desires are hypocritical. His activity towards people that know him best is hypocritical. But he can sing the loudest, he can serve the happiest, he can be the most joyful. Oh, praise the Lord. But at home, he's a holy terror. Get behind the right causes, pray and tell people what God wants with the best of them, but isn't broken over his hypocrisy, doesn't even acknowledge it. In fact, if it's brought up, it's defended, justified, excused, blame shifted. I only do that because of you. And when it's called out and exposed like is happening in our text, they don't own it and repent and cry out for mercy. Those legalists do what these legalists did. Their hatred deepens and becomes even more vicious and murderous.

By the way, this was me in junior high and high school, dressed up for church, knowing everything I need to say, everything I need to do to not be found out while at school, spoke and lived like the devil. And this Jon at school did not look anything like this Jon at church. And this Jon at church looked nothing like this Jon over here. And these people didn't know that Jon, and these people didn't know that Jon, total hypocritical life.

Now, I know we will often ignore people's hypocrisy, not only because we feel like we're hypocrites, but because we fear the hatred that'll come out of the hypocrite, right? Jesus showed a courage here that loved these hypocrites, even when they wanted to kill him. He made their hypocrisy obvious to all, knowing it would further solidify their hatred for him. And while that is what happened for most of them, as you read the book of Acts, for some of them, they got saved.

Listen. If you point this out to the hypocrite, it doesn't mean that you're better than they are, although that's probably what they'll say, right? Ooh, you think you're better than me? It doesn't mean you're perfect. You're not. But in reality, the fact that you're not perfect doesn't make you a hypocrite. Why? The Christian knows that they are a sinner, right? That's step one to even

entering this whole thing, right? We own it. We are sinners in need of a savior. We have broken God's law tens of thousands of times, and if it weren't for God's grace, we deserve the hell that we would go to.

The hypocrite is hiding their sin under a mask of perfection. I know exposing religious hypocrisy in the legalists that we know and love will be like warfare, because that's what Jesus faced here. But like Jesus, for the good of their eternal souls, their hypocrisy must be exhibited. It must be shown. It must be called out. It must be confronted. It is the setting of their spiritual broken leg. It hurts, but it's needed. It's the pain of the shot that injects the truth into their lives. It's the discomfort of the light being shined into the dark and secret, hidden depths of their souls. You can do it with subtlety, you can do it with boldness, but however you do it, when their hypocrisy is clear, love them by showing it to them.

So Jesus does here. And they had made themselves judges over Jesus, which you just think of the irony of that is just thick. And so, he calls this out, verse 24, "Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment." See, their assessment of Jesus was based, verse 24, on appearances, which means that it was rash and superficial at best. But based on what we know about Jesus previously in the book of John, we know that their judgment of Jesus is actually blasphemous.

And not only that, they didn't do what the Old Testament says, which is investigate and make sure the charges being brought against the person are true. Even have what? Two or three witnesses to confirm the charges against them, especially before condemning somebody to death. But that's not what they did. They didn't need to do that. They already knew the outcome they wanted, and they were going to do anything they could to get that outcome.

But if they judged with right judgment, they would learn that he is who he says He is. He's the Son of God. They would be judging based on what is right and true without bias or favoritism or partiality. If they did that, they would see that Jesus only appeared to break the Sabbath, but the reality is he fulfilled the Sabbath, again by loving His paralyzed neighbor, by healing him after 38 years of pain.

Do you know what they would also find out, though? That they were the ones breaking the law of Moses by hating and wanting to kill their neighbor, namely him. The hatred of these legalists for Jesus comes from the fact that, *point #3), Jesus Exposes Legalists as Judgmental. Jesus Exposes Them as Judgmental*, coming conclusions with the worst possible interpretation about somebody. No mercy, no attempt to understand, no choosing to trust, no believing the best, that is the legalist. They don't take the log out of their own eye before pointing out this speck in other people's eyes. And so, because that log is still there, it blinds them to their own hypocrisy. They go around giving mental Yelp reviews to everyone they come across, and as they do, it is, grace for me and law for you. It's understanding, It's mercy for me, it's judgment for you.

These people can come across as valiant for the truth, but it is often hiding a judgmental spirit. Paul calls this out, Romans chapter 2, when he says, "You have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another, you condemn yourself, because you the



judge practice the very same things." And for the legalists, they go, ouch. You are judging people for the same sins that you commit. It may not be the same outward action, but it is the same heart motivation. And when you do that, you not only condemn them, but by your condemnation of them, you actually condemn yourself, too.

Paul goes on, verse 2, "We know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who practice such thing. We know that. Do you suppose, O man, you who judge those who practice such things and yet do them yourself, do you suppose that you will escape the judgment of God?" And you know what the legalist says? I sure will. They could never face God's judgment. After all, they're on God's side. "It's me and God against all those sinners out there.? Not you guys. I'm sorry.

They're blind to the fact that nobody is right with God until they turn that judgmental finger where? Right? It's like, no, I can't. Until they put it right here back on themselves and admit what? That they are the sinners in danger of God's judgment, that they're no better than anybody else because the true standard of comparison is what? It's God, and he is holy and sinless and perfect and we're all in trouble before him.

You have to admit that that is true not about others, but about you before you could ever begin the first step of killing the legalist within and being saved. The legalist looks out at the world and just thinks that they're better. They judge the people around them as less than them, not up to their standard. When the truth is, they do the very things they look down on others for, only they give them a pass. They give themselves a pass while they judge those sinners. Grace for me, law for you.

They want God to get those people for their sins, when if it wasn't for God's grace, what? He would get them for their sin. They act like God's judgment should only fall on, those sinners, not what? Not on them. In the face of their judgmentalism, the legalist needs a heavy dose, and somebody yesterday said, reality. True, but they need a heavy dose of the reality of God's grace. This became clear to me when I was in seminary. So, I went to a school called The Master's Seminary. If you're not familiar with that seminary, it's connected, the president of that seminary at the time was John MacArthur, if you're not familiar with him, president of The Master's Seminary.

And he was often a guest on a show called Larry King Live, which doesn't exist anymore, but 20 years ago it was one of the most popular news shows in the world. And he was a frequent guest on this show, and we found out one day that he was going to be on that evening with a homosexual activist named Chad Allen. And so, the student body was excited. Oh, it's going to be so good. He's not going to be like those weak pastors that go on that show and pull up and don't preach the truth. He's going to preach, and it's going to be clear and he's going to make it obvious to this homosexual activist that he's a sinner and all of that."

And then, we watched the show. And he was gracious and sweet and kind and gentle. It was truly beautiful. I think about it 20 years later, and I think that he knew that there was some

disappointment in the student body, because the next day when I got to school, when I got to seminary, there was like, what was that? There was confusion. Why did he pull his punches? Why wasn't he more clear? Blah, blah, blah. And it just happened to be that that day was chapel. And it just happened to be that day, he was speaking at chapel. And he got up on into the pulpit and he excoriated, just tore into the student body. And the summary of his message was, how could I be anything other than kind and gracious and merciful towards Chad Allen? Because if it wasn't for God's grace, that would be me.

The legalist never thinks that. Those thoughts never cross the mind of the legalist. You know why? The legalist looks down on mercy. The legalist resents grace because they don't think they need it. Mercy is soft. Grace is for weaklings. And yet, the fact that the legalist is still breathing is what? Evidence of God's grace, just like the grace we see in Jesus not incinerating these religious leaders.

So, if you've made it this far, even though this message is quite convicting, if this text is exposing you as a legalist, please just know this. Every person is a legalist, which means every Christian is a recovering legalist. Church is AA for legalists.

But this kind of thing happens a lot with people who left cults and false religions. They go cage stage and become very judgmental towards the group that they left. It's like they don't realize that the only reason they see what they see, the only reason they're not still in that false religious group, is because God has been gracious to them. That is the ultimate only reason. They didn't come to these conclusions on their own. God opened their eyes to the truth, and that the only difference between them and the people still there is grace. They've been shown more.

This also happens with Christians where truth is highly valued. Let's be totally honest about this. The Bible church world, the more Reformed world is particularly susceptible to this kind of judgmentalism. This is our reputation with other Christian groups: mean, judgmental, talk a lot about grace, but don't show it to a lot of people. And the words that are ringing in my ears as I even say that are Jesus' words to His disciples as pride is taking over their hearts. And he looks at them and says, not so among you. It can't be that way among you. You know what it is that cures legalism? What is it that deals the death blow to the legalist within each of our souls? It's being humbled by God's grace to you. It's one thing to read about God's grace in a theology book. It's another thing to remember what you were before you were saved.

It's another thing entirely to remember that God, in his mercy, saved a rebellious rival like you. And it's important to remember that your sin after your salvation is still very real. And that reality should soften you, it should soften you towards people. It should help you be understanding towards people when they sin against you, and when they sin in general. It doesn't excuse the sin, but you understand it because you see it in your own soul.

But if that's not happening the more that you grow as a Christian, it's because that inner legalist is getting too much control on your thoughts about yourself and your thoughts about others. So, our continued sin after our salvation should not only remind us that we still need a Savior after we're

saved. But it should drive us back to him again and again and again in repentance and humility and trust in the grace of a merciful God.

No one struts into this Christian thing, right? We all come in on our knees, in humility. Luke 18:13, "God, be merciful to me, the sinner." And to the legalists, like the legalists in our text, "Hear me, please." Jesus offers pardon for all of your guilt.

He offers mercy to hypocrites. He offers grace for the judgmental. Though you may have hated him and hated this book about him, he will welcome you with open arms if you come to him.

Let's pray. Jesus, what has been impacting me the most as I go through the book of John is how gracious you are towards people that want to murder you. You stand in the middle of all of them, surrounded. It says in Psalm 22, "surrounded by dogs and people that want to tear you apart." And you graciously and courageously give them the truth. That's not only an example for us, but it is a picture of your infinite grace towards sinners. And it is that grace that will drive us to follow your example. But what it does is it softens the heart of legalists. And so, I pray that that would be the effect of our time together, that nobody would respond like the men in this text without hearing about your mercy and grace, pardon for sinners, rebels, rivals, would cause people to come to you, the Savior of their souls. Please do this as a result of our time together for your wonderful name. Amen.