Calling the church to follow the example of our Lord Jesus Christ, ***both*** by dealingggrace and Truth

Sample Lesson

graciously with one another ***and*** by standing boldly for the truths of God’s Word.

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**Lesson Number: 1**

**Theme: The “Battle” Between “Liberty” and “Legalism” Defined**

**Introduction:** The terms “legalism” and “liberty” are frequently used when discussing issues of personal holiness, separation from worldly practices, enjoying our freedom in Christ and having a heart that does not condemn us. These are very important Bible doctrines and we need to study them thoroughly.

Unfortunately, the term “Christian liberty” means many different things to different folks. In general, most Christians recognize that we have tremendous freedom now that we are born again. This wonderful truth is taught many places in the Bible and we revel in the breadth of it!

* **Joh 8:36 If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.**
* **Rom 8:2 For the law of the Spirit of life in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.**

We need to zealously protect, defend, and enjoy our true liberty in Christ! There will always be those who try to steal our joy and to bring us back to the bondage of serving the law! This was a huge problem in Paul’s day with the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem, and he wrote about it as a warning to the Christians at Galatia.

* **Gal 2:4-5 And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_: (5) To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.**

However, in this age, the bounds of our Christian liberty have been stretched to include, accept and excuse nearly any wicked and vile behavior, even in direct contradiction to the clear commands of God. This is not true liberty, but license! Lessons 2-4 will explore the major Bible passages on Christian liberty in the New Testament. Much of that material is taken from Dr. Sam Horn and his lessons on the Doctrine of Biblical Holiness presented at Northland Baptist Bible College in 2006.

Likewise, not every one agrees on what really constitutes “legalism!” In general, “legalism” refers to having an unusual focus or emphasis on “laws.” We examine who the “legalists” were in the Bible, what they taught and what they practiced that was so condemned by Jesus Christ. Today, unfortunately, many baby, carnal, backslidden or worldly Christians use the term “legalist” in an unscriptural way to “label” anyone who is calling the church back to a sense of holiness. In modern church usage, there is a growing disdain for any kind of “rules” or regulations placed on anyone. One sage offered this definition: “According to the ‘enlightened’ Christian of the twenty-first century, a ‘legalist’ is ***anyone*** who has one more standard of personal holiness than I do!” What a sad commentary! How different from the Christianity of an earlier era when consecrated believers rejoiced and celebrated when young Christians grew in their faith and convictions of holiness. Nowadays, “salty” Christians are often subjected to ridicule and disdain.

**14And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.** **15John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me.****16And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.****17For the law was given by Moses, *but* grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.****18No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared *him*. John 1:14-17**

Entering the “heart” of this lesson series, it is important for us to remember that we live in a very worldly age, just as the Bible prophesied:

* **But evil men and seducers shall wax \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.** (2Timothy 3:13)

It is certainly beneficial for us to have a good understanding of prophecy and the spirit of error that is so pervasive here at the end of this age. The sincere preacher, church, and individual Christian must bear in mind the stern warning about the last days issued by the Apostle Paul to his preacher boy Timothy:

* **2Ti 4:3-4 For the time will come when they will not \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; (4) And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.**

It is also essential for us to understand the wickedness of the human heart, the pervasiveness of sin, and our own natural tendency toward worldly practices and rebellion against God. Paul states this clearly in his epistle to Rome:

* **Rom 8:6-8 For to be carnally minded is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. (7) Because the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. (8) So then they that are in the flesh cannot please \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.**

Indeed, most of us living near the end of this church age have a somewhat blurred perspective of what really constitutes holiness because we have so seldom seen it portrayed! Only by humility and the fear of the Lord will we depart from evil and learn how to best please our Saviour. As we tremble at His Word, may God enable us to worship and serve Him in the “beauty of holiness” that He so richly deserves.

* **Pro 16:6 By mercy and truth iniquity is purged: and by the fear of the LORD men depart from \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.**
* **Isa 66:2 For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ spirit, and trembleth at my word.**
* **Psa 96:9 O worship the LORD in the beauty of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_: fear before him, all the earth.**

1. **The Example in the Gospels of Jesus Pleasing the Heavenly Father** 
   1. Our theme verses for this lesson series is taken from John chapter 1. Let us remember that Jesus is out example.
      1. **Joh 1:14-17 And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. (15) John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me. (16) And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace. (17) For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Christ.**
   2. In our attempt to be “balanced” in our approach to this subject, let us dedicate ourselves to being “extreme” to the extent that we ***first*** want to please the Lord, not ourselves or any other man! As we seek to follow Jesus by being, “full of grace and truth” let us remember His words:
      1. **Joh 8:29 And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ those things that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ him.**
   3. We cannot really follow the footsteps and example of Jesus without this great truth - we must please our Heavenly Father by doing the things He told us to do! Regardless of who understands us, likes us, follows us or opposes us, we must remember that the world has always hated those who stood for true righteousness.
      1. **Joh 15:18-20 If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ it hated you. (19) If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. (20) Remember the word that I said unto you, The \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.**

1. **The Admonition of Peter to Be Willing to Suffer for Christ**
   1. As we mentioned in the introduction to these lessons, following Jesus will mean some suffering, and we should be prepared for it. Though we are misunderstood and falsely accused, we must trust our Heavenly Father to reward us. Notice especially verse 22, where we learn that following the footsteps of Jesus means zealously guarding our walk and our words! We should strive to be Christ-like in our responses.
      1. **1Pe 2:21-23 For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ his steps: (22) Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: (23) Who, when he was reviled, reviled \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously:**
2. **The Admonition to the Hebrews to Follow Christ by Bearing His Reproach**
   1. Paul (I think) wrote to the Hebrew Christians about how Jesus, in fulfillment of the Old Testament types, offered a better sacrifice than the Jewish priests when He offered Himself for a sin offering as a Lamb without spot or blemish. When the OT sin offering was made, it was taken outside of the camp of Israel and burned. This typified how Jesus was “holy and separate from sinners” and how he was rejected by the Jews. As followers of Jesus, we are to understand that we too, will be rejected by the majority and we should be willing to suffer ridicule and reproach. This is just part of following Jesus.
      1. **Heb 13:8-14 Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever. (9) Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein. (10) We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle. (11) For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp. (12) Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. (13) Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ his \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. (14) For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come.**
         1. Note especially in verse 14 that this world is not our final home! Praise God!
3. **Who Really Were the “Legalists” in the Bible and What Did They Teach?**
   1. Paul’s entire letter to the Galatians is an expose on this theme, and we explore it more fully in lesson #2 of this series. (We are merely encapsulating the topic here at the conclusion of this lesson.) Though the word, “legalist” never appears in Scripture, it is a descriptive term that portrays a certain group of Jewish people (also referred to as “Judaizers”). Who were they?
      1. They were adherents of the Jewish religion and they were LOST men.
      2. They taught a different gospel message! They insisted that in order for a New Testament believer to be justified in the sight of God, his faith in Christ must be supported by keeping certain provisions of the Jewish law. (Circumcision, observing the Sabbath, keeping feast days, etc)
      3. Paul admonished the believers to reject this error (and those who taught it) and to hold fast to their liberty in Christ.
   2. Dr. C.I. Schofield’s notes are very helpful for this explanation. In his introduction to Galatians he says:
      1. “The theme of Galatians is the vindication of the Gospel of the grace of God from any admixture of law-conditions, which qualify or destroy its character of pure grace. The Galatian error had two forms, both of which are refuted. The first is the teaching that obedience to the law is mingled with faith as the ground of the sinners justification; the second, that the justified believer is made perfect by keeping the law. Paul meets the first form of the error by a demonstration that justification is through the Abrahamic covenant, (Gen 15:18), and that the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after the confirmation of that covenant, and the true purpose of which was condemnation, not justification, cannot disannul a salvation which rests upon the earlier covenant. Paul meets the second and more subtle form by vindicating the office of the Holy Spirit as Sanctifier.”
   3. Then in his comments on Galatians 1:10-2:14
      1. (1) The Galatians know Paul, that he is no seeker after popularity. (Gal\_1:10). (2) He puts his known character back of the assertion that his Gospel of grace was a revelation from God. (Gal\_1:11); (Gal\_1:12). (3) As for the Judaizers, Paul had been a foremost Jew, and had forsaken Judaism for something better. (Gal\_1:13-14). (4) He had preached grace years before he saw any of the other apostles. (Gal\_1:15-24). (5) When he did meet the other apostles they had nothing to add to his revelations. (Gal\_2:1-6). (6) The other apostles fully recognized Paul's apostleship. (Gal\_2:7-10). (7) If the legalizers pleaded Peter's authority, the answer was that he himself had claimed none when rebuked. (Gal\_2:11-14).
   4. It is obvious from the information above that the term “legalist” cannot properly be applied to any saved Christian.
      1. The “legalists” were lost men, trying to bring the believers back into bondage to the laws of the Old Testament for justification and salvation. They were followers of the Jewish religion, not true believers in Christ. Paul loved the new Christians that were in Galatia and he warned them to reject this heresy in the strongest terms!
      2. **Gal 1:6-8 I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: (7) Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ the gospel of Christ. (8) But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.**