

BUILT 2 BLESS #8 Focused Living Ministry

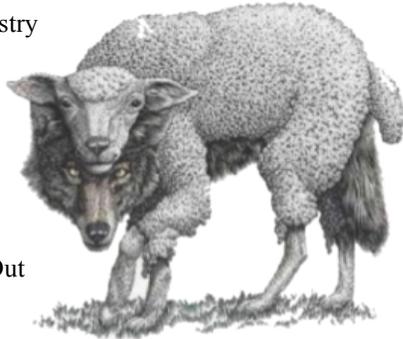
*"I (Jesus) am the Good **Shepherd** and the Good **Shepherd** puts the **sheep** before Himself, sacrificing Himself if necessary." (John 10:11-13)*

*"Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in **sheep's** clothing, but inwardly are ravenous **wolves**." (Matt 7:15)*

*"I (Apostle Paul) know that after my departure savage **wolves** will come in among you, not sparing the **flock**." (Acts 20:29)*

A pastor was leading a dynamic ministry full of young families new in Christ and growing stronger every day.

When he discovered that a large porn store was being built on the property adjacent to the church and across the street from the local high school, he prayerfully decided to sue leading to a very hostile court case. Out to embarrass and discredit the reputation of the young pastor, the defense attorney condescendingly asked, "If you are the pastor and shepherd of your flock, why are you here today wasting our time instead of out caring for your feeble lost little sheep like you're supposed to?" The pastor immediately replied, "Because today I'm fighting the wolves!"



FIGHTING RAVENOUS WOLVES (Col 2:8-23) Paul loved Jesus, the Good Shepherd, with all his heart and was committed to caring for His sheep. So, he wanted the Colossians to be aware of the ravenous wolves who would try to lead them away from the solid foundation of Christ. That's why he mentions the "**world**" (8), "**satan**" (15) and the "**flesh**" (23) as our major opposition.

(Col 2:8; II Cor 10:5; 11:3; Rom 12:1-2; Eph 4:17-24; Prov 23:7; 2 Peter 2:1-3; 3:17-18) Where do wolves like to attack God's men first? Why? How have you been enslaved (kidnapped, taken captive) by **wrong thinking** according to the world rather than according to God's truth?

(Col 2:9-10; 1:15-23; Rom 12:1-2) Where does Paul always point us when we become enslaved with wrong thinking? Why is our first move to be reminded of our **identity** in Christ? Why does Paul again challenge us to return to and build our lives on the secure foundation of Christ in order resist enemy attack?

(2:12-15, 19, 20; 3:1-4) How does Paul build us back on the solid foundation of Christ?

LEGALISM (2:11-17) Like Jesus (Luke 11:37-54), Paul warns us to beware of the ravenous 'wolf' of _____ (16-17, 20-23). Legalism is trying to earn God's favor (approval/ love), impress others or feel more spiritual through outward conformity to a list of rules. We open ourselves up to the temptation of legalism when we minimize faith in the finished work of Christ at the Cross (Gal 2:20), minimize the importance of our motives, and neglect the centrality/influence of the Holy Spirit in our daily living. A man caught in the teeth of legalism will often subtly serve to win the approval of others (John 5:44; 12:24) rather than simply serving to glorify God's in response to His grace (Gal 1:10) alone. Therefore, a legalist will do things **for** God in his own strength instead of doing things **with** God by faith in the power of the Holy Spirit. A man with a legalistic bent often forgets that there is nothing we can do to make God love us more and nothing we have done that would make Him love us less. "The essence of legalism is when faith in and love for Jesus is **not** the engine that drives our obedience." (John Piper) Where do you see legalism in your motives?

THE SUBTLE SIGNS OF LEGALISM

Living by unbelief and under the law-

- I live as though my actions will make God or others approve of me.
- I become preoccupied with my needs to the neglect of others.
- I become critical and judgmental. (Lk 18:9-14)
- I cut myself off from real fellowship and stay shallow.
- I develop a performance/productivity lifestyle for myself and others.
- I am usually dominated by fears and anxieties.
- I develop barriers to loving others.
- I find it hard, if not impossible, to forgive and certainly forget often 'keeping score'.
- I become distant to the love of Christ, which affects my relationship with family, friends, and my outreach shrinks away to nothing.
- I destroy my confidence in Christ's ability to bridge the gap between God's holiness and people's sinfulness. I'm afraid to become friends with non-Christians. I want to avoid them.
- I base my worth on the "success" of my efforts.
- I have trouble seeing when I am wrong.
- I become a rule keeper and am harsh when others disobey the rules.

Living by faith and under grace –

- I run to the Father because I know he loves me. I receive his delight in me (Zeph 3:17) and respond by delighting in him.
- I believe that my sins are forgiven, enabling me, through the Holy Spirit, to love and forgive others. I find I am able to begin to cultivate a lifestyle of forgiveness.
- I receive by faith my new position as a son/daughter, for whom there is no condemnation.
- I understand the power of the flesh, the damage it can do, and the powerlessness of the law to control it.
- I know that only through the Spirit's power can I love my neighbor.
- I can break down barriers to loving others.
- I experience peace and contentment as a dominate theme in my life.
- I can go to my heavenly Father in prayer with all my struggles, problems, and needs.
- My worth is determined by the gospel.
- I become preoccupied with Jesus, and have a desire to see his will and kingdom purposes accomplished.
- I experience an ever increasing desire, given by the Holy Spirit, to see God glorified in all I do, say, or think.

OBEYING GOD'S LAW IS NOT LEGALISM It's extremely important to understand that obeying God and keeping His commandments is **NOT** legalism. As a **TAG Team** discuss what the following verses teach about Jesus' desire for His men to keep the Father's commands?

Matt 5:17-21

Luke 6:46-49

James 2:17-21

John 14:15, 21, 23, 24, 31; 15:10

John 4:34; 5:30; 6:38

Remember, God did not give us His Law (10 Commandments) in Exodus 20 until **AFTER** He saved His people (Ex 14). Therefore, we do not keep the Law to be saved but in grateful response to His love, salvation and adoption into His forever family.

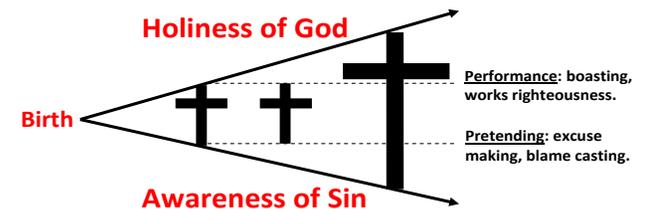


WATCH YOUR MOTIVES Just like any good father, the Lord loves it when we keep His commands because it glorifies Him and greatly helps us to grow to become the men, husbands, fathers, leaders and friends He has called us to be. When a father issues a wise and worthy command (“Look both ways before crossing. Fasten your seatbelt. Wait until marriage and do sex God’s way.”) to his child, obeying it deepens their love relationship and the child grows in maturity which in turn deepens their bond even more. Obedience is not for God’s benefit but ours as He is going to be Father God and Creator regardless. God’s commands are an expression of His character and endless love for us. Therefore, every act of disobedience is a rejection of His gracious rule in our lives and of His constant love. We need to understand that disobedience is sin and sin is not about behavior or breaking a set of rules. The core of sin is breaking a love relationship with the Father (Ps 51:4; 41:4; 2 Sam 12:13) which results in rejecting His commands which are for our benefit. When God is in His rightful place as Lord in my heart, then I will do what pleases Him but also do it for the right reasons. So what is the difference between keeping the Law and legalism? _____! To obey God for any other reason than in response to His love is moving toward legalism. To obey the Father so that you won’t get punished; so things will go well with you (superstition); to feel better about yourself (pride); to impress others. Think back over your last week. **What main motive(s) drove your obedience (or lack of) to the Lord** (Psalm 139:23-24; Matt 15:1-12)? Madruska Dolls

“For the love of Christ controls (compels) us...that He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf.” 2 Cor 5:14,15

“How blessed is the man who fears the Lord, who greatly delights in His commandments.” (Psalm 112:1)

“I delight to do Your will, O my God; Your Law is within my heart.” (Psalm 40:8)



TAG TEAM DISCUSSION How would you describe your love for, joy in or passion toward Jesus? Where might walking with Christ (Col 2:6-7) become a rote, mechanical form of law-keeping?