

The Whole Christ

By Sinclair Ferguson

Lesson 6: Suspicious Symptoms

We have learned that all of us are legalists. Legalism is the great sin into which we fell. We do not think of God rightly because we _____ the law from His person. We also think that our merits win us back favor with God. We do not understand God nor salvation correctly-only the gospel of Jesus Christ corrects both errors.

“The danger of legalism is that it builds up again what Christ has torn down. It distorts and may actually destroy the gospel. It is inimical to the grace of God in Christ. It lies at the heart of many pastoral problems and is one of the most common spiritual sicknesses. Unfortunately it is an infectious disease, especially if a pastor or preacher has contracted it. So it is important to recognize some of its common symptoms.”

Ferguson gives us two of the common symptoms of this disease of legalism.

1. A _____ - _____ **Temper**-This refers to a person’s basic disposition. Do you think they are better than others? Do you think that you are always right? In your opinion, are the problems that you face in life the result of the faults and failures of others?

The Lord Jesus gave us a parable (Luke 18:9-14) to picture this self-righteous temper. In this parable you find two men. The first was a man who was very concerned with _____. A man who was not like other (common) men. This man went above and beyond the requirements of the law and was known for self-sacrifice. The other man in this story was known to be a great sinner. Not only was he known by others to be a great sinner, but he knows it himself.

The first man was very confident in his position with God because of his life. Whereas, the second man knew, that his only hope was that God would be _____ to him. The Lord, shockingly, tells His audience that it is the sinner who went home right with God.

This parable teaches us that God’s grace is not earned by our merits. Our devotion to God does not earn us more of His favor (grace). Our decisions for God do not earn us divine grace. Grace _____ be earned.

“In His teaching, grace is unexpected, and so its appearance takes us by surprise and evokes very basic reactions exposing our hearts...Bare law cannot accomplish this (exposing our hearts). It is the gospel’s emphasis that we are justified apart from the law, period-no qualifications, no ‘ifs’ and ‘buts’-that exposes the sickness.”

Another parable that Jesus gives to show how grace _____ legalism can be found in Matthew 20:1-16.

“Had the all-day laborers not seen the latecomers receive their wages, they would presumably have accepted their payment without comment. It is the Master’s exhibition of grace that evokes their ‘righteous’ indignation. Now we hear their murmuring spirit as they calculate what they have really deserved because of their works, in the light of what others have received in grace...Without the demonstration of grace the true nature of their hearts would not have been revealed.”

Applying this parable to our _____ Ferguson writes,

“This ‘legal temper’ has many faces. Sometimes it manifests itself in our service to God. Others are given positions in the church, and we are passed over. We are irked, not legalistic. But, to the contrary, what is irking us is the grace of God, which irritates us because deep down we still think that grace should always operate on the principle of merit, as a reward for, or at least a recognition of, our prior faithful service.”

“At the end of the day, it means my sense of personal identity and worth has become entwined with performance and its recognition rather than being rooted and grounded in Christ and His de-merited grace...It emerges from my soul as though God’s grace to others drew it out of me like a powerful magnet.”

2. **A Spirit of _____**-There is no joy in Christ but the only thing I ever see are my failures. I feel like I am too unworthy for grace.

Commenting on this Ferguson writes,

“The children of God hear the whispers of the Evil One: ‘Look, you have sinned. You have broken God’s law. You are under condemnation. You are not qualified to be a believer.’ Nor, surely, is there a gospel minister to whom he has not added the words, ‘...far less fit to be a pastor.’ He knows he cannot destroy the salvation of God’s people; but he is bent, indeed Hell-bent-as he was in Eden-on destroying our peace, liberty, and joy in God.”

Is there a cure? The only cure is the glorious _____ of Grace.

“It is grace in Christ. For God’s grace to us is Christ. Yes, it is the atonement; but not atonement as theory, or as an abstract reality, something that has an identity of its own outside of and apart from the Lord Jesus. For Christ Himself, clothed as He is in His gospel work, is the atonement.”

Chapter 2-The Law of Faith (the Covenant of Grace)

Nomista tries to justify his _____ spirit by saying that he does believe that God accepts his works by themselves as meritorious but because of the work of Christ, God now, for Christ’s sake, sees his works as having merit. Evangelista shows that this is simply the doctrine of Papists.

Evan. If you desire to be justified before God, you must either bring to Him a perfect righteousness of your own, and wholly renounce Christ; or else you must bring the perfect righteousness of Christ, and wholly renounce your own...Christ Jesus will either be a whole Savior, or no Savior; He will either save you alone, or not save you at all.”

Evan. For we shall not anywhere find the favor of God, true innocency, righteousness, satisfaction for sin, help, comfort, life, or salvation, anywhere but only in Jesus Christ; He is the sum and center of all divine and evangelical truths.”

Antinomista applauds Evangelista’s answer and claims that he is off the hook and that his opinion on the matter is the correct one. However, Evangelista questions whether he knows Christ at all. Antinomista responds by saying, “Why, sir, do you think it is possible for a man to have such _____ and _____ in Christ as I have had, and I thank the Lord still have, and not have truly believed in Christ?”

Evan. There is a form of godliness without the power of godliness (2 Timothy 3:5), so there is a form of faith, without the power of faith...peace and joy, yet that is no infallible sign that your faith is true; for a man may have great raptures, yea, he may have great joy, as if he were lifted up into the third heaven, and have a great and strong persuasion that his state is good, and yet be but a hypocrite for all that.

Both Nomista and Antinomista are in error. Our works do not go _____ with the works of Christ to bring about our justification-it must be wholly of Christ. However, trusting wholly on Christ for our justification does not then lead to a life where there is no desire for and pursuit of _____.