***The True Circumcision

Colossians 2:18-19

COL-429***

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Our subject is "The Error of Legalism," segment number 41 in this series, in Colossians 2:16-17.

We are dealing with a very important subject – the subject of substituting human doing for the power and production of God the Holy Spirit – the deception of legalism: that there are things we can do in a magical way to secure personal blessings, and the care of God, and our eternal well-being. This is a dangerous concept that came into Christianity right in the early days.

So, here we have the apostle Paul, writing a letter to people in the city of Colossians. And already there were people there, telling them that it was going through ritualistic procedures, such as was the way of the Mosaic Law, in order to be related to God for blessing and spiritual enlightenment.

While you are in the center of God's protective custody, a Christian who is filled with the spirit, and who is being led by the Word of doctrine, pertinent to the church, and by God the Holy Spirit, you are invulnerable in every respect. It is when we step out of that center of the inner circle of fellowship with God, our Heavenly Father, that the world system of Satan can bring us down. Therefore, it is no small thing to have a wrong approach to God. And legalism; human effort; human capacities; and, human self-determination are not the way. And you might think, "Well, of course. I wouldn't go for that." Yes, you will, in all kinds of subtle ways. The devil, remember, is the smartest, highest-IQ creature God ever created in the universe.

**Legalism**

Now, the Christians here at Colossae were being told by their false teachers, the legalists, to practice the Mosaic Law for their salvation, and for their holiness. This information was brought back to the apostle Paul, who had never visited this congregation. So, he sat down, and wrote this letter in order to inform them, and to teach them on the subject of legalism. And in Colossians 2:16, he actually commanded (it's a command) that the Colossians Christians ignore the legalists with their false doctrine of practicing the Mosaic Law way of life for God's blessing.

Colossians 2:16: "Therefore, let no one act as your judge in regard to food, or drink, or in respect to a festival, or a new moon, or a Sabbath day." All of that is right out of the Mosaic Law way of life. Christians live under a grace way of life. This is the church age. It is not the Mosaic Law age. This is the age in which God the Holy Spirit personally and permanently indwells every Christian from the point of his salvation.

Now, Satan is always perverting sound church-age doctrine. I don't know how many times I've sat in churches (charismatic, Pentecostal-type of churches), and one of the most desirable things that they have is to ask people to come down the aisle, or to raise their hand, if they want to receive the Holy Spirit. This is the "something more" that they say that God has for you. These people say, "Yeah, we're saved." But that is provided they behave themselves. They could lose that salvation. But now, if you want the Holy Spirit power, please raise your hand, and come down the aisle – up front here, so that we may pray so that you may receive the Holy Spirit.

Now, where did that all come from? Right out of the figment of the imagination of some religious leader, who wants to create a priesthood, where people are dependent upon him for their blessings to God, instead of being their own priests, dealing directly with God. This is the way that Satan takes away from you the richness of your Christian experience. It's a grace way of looking. And because we are endowed by God the Holy Spirit, we are able to obey the will of God, and we are able to follow the moral laws. The Christian is not under the Mosaic Law in any respect whatsoever. And any time that you try functioning under the Mosaic Law system, you're out of the will of God. That is strong language, and whole churches and whole denominations do it all the time.

In Philippians 3:2, we have been looking at that passage, where Paul also deals with this issue of legalism – of living by means of the Mosaic Law System. Here, Paul deals with these false teachers (Mosaic Law legalism). In very strong language, he warns the Philippian Christians how to view them. He calls them "scavenging dogs." He says that these legalists are "evil workers," and he tells them that they are practicing a circumcision, which is just physical mutilation without any spiritual significance. It's all by the numbers. It's all rote and routine. There is no personal devotion; no personal will; and, no personal conviction involved in it.

In religious systems such as in the Orient, there are prayer wheels. There are actual wheels. In China, I saw these Llama priests with their prayer wheels. If you have a prayer, you stick it in there, on one of the clips, and then the priest turns it. And every time the wheel goes around, you get a little more kick for your prayer. You pay so much, and you get so many rotations. Is that God's way? That's legalism – magical performance. And they are serious about it. But the sin nature always wants to come in and pervert what grace will do for you. So, Paul has nothing but strong language in condemning these legalists.

**The True Circumcision**

Then, in Philippians 3:3, Paul says, "We (we Christians) are the ones who are the true circumcision – not the Jews. The Jews today are still going through the ritual with their male children, but they're not the true circumcision. That's a useless medical procedure. But for us Christians in Christ, we are the true circumcision, because what has been removed from us is our enslavement to the sin nature within us. Got it? If you want to live like a dog; if you want to have busted marriages; if you want to go through a bunch of human beings that you're related to, and then cast aside; and, if you want to find yourself the pathetic creature of materialism, and walking through life dependence upon what other people think of you instead of what God thinks of you, you can go ahead and do it. But that is not the true circumcision. What has been removed from us is that enslavement to what the Bible calls the flesh (the sin nature within us).

**Three Characteristics of the True Circumcision**

Therefore, Paul says that there are three characteristics. And if you're a Christian who has the true circumcision, this is what you characterize you.

1. **We Worship by Means of the Holy Spirit of God**

First of all, you worship in the Spirit of God. You worship not by religious rituals; not by repetitive prayers; and, not by some priestly ministrations so that you can approach God. You worship by means of the Holy Spirit. One of the ways you worship God is that you pray, and Paul says, "Sometimes you're under a stress situation, and you don't know how to pray. You don't know how to enunciate (to verbalize) the problem." And the apostle Paul says, "That's OK. Just get yourself before God, and call upon Him to meet the need, and God the Holy Spirit will verbalize the prayer for you, to the Father, to bring the results that you need.

Now, this is power. This is worshiping God in reality. This is worshiping in a way that brings consequences now, and in eternity. And if you don't do it this way, then you go downhill spiritually, and you go down here downhill physically. Look at all the disease that people get themselves into, simply because they're living the devils way of doing things, and simply because they're above it all, and they are self-confident. And yet they talk about God. No, to worship God, the apostle John says, "God is a spirit. And they that worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and in truth." So, Christians who are the true circumcision have a spiritual relationship with God.

I received an advertisement in the newspaper this week. It told how you could have colored glass windows put into your place of worship. And I showed it to Mrs. Danish. I said, "This is what we should do. We should have a campaign where everybody contributes, and we get stained glass windows all over here. Years ago, that old sage of great infinite wisdom, Buddy Roach, got the idea, and brought it up at a church council meeting: "When we get a window broken, we should replace it with a colored glass, so that pretty soon, we would have all these stained glass windows all over here. We could even go and pop a bundle out once in a while just to be able to put a new one in." And he was serious. But then he was an artist. He was a nut. So, this was his idea. It would help us. He was doing it for aesthetic reasons. But why do churches do that? It's very expensive to put those things in. They do it so that you'll be more spiritual. Are you more spiritual? It was all external, you'll get a kick, but with God, it won't mean a thing.

So, the apostle says, "We worship in spirit. That's what true circumcision is.

1. **We Glory in Christ Jesus**

Secondly, he says, "We glory in Christ Jesus; that is, we exalt in the Lord Jesus Christ – the One Whom we have trusted for our salvation, and for our spiritual life." We are not counting on ourselves; our good intentions; or, our sincerity. Boy, that will kill you – our sincerity, or any of our self-doing. We're going to heaven because our confidence is in Christ, Who has opened the door through His death. So, that's a done deed. We are exalting in Him.

1. **We Put No Confidence in the Flesh**

Now, the third one, which we have not yet looked at, is that we put no confidence in the flesh. This is a third factor that characterizes a spiritual Christian. "No confidence" looks like this in the Greek, so that we get a lot of understanding of what's behind this English word: "peitho." This connotes "being persuaded." This connotes "to be dependent upon." We are not persuaded by the flesh. We are not dependent upon the flesh. And when he says, "We have no confidence (no persuasion), this word "no" in the Greek has various ways of saying it. This one is the strongest Greek term (the strongest negative): "ou." It means: "no, under any circumstance ever). In English, "no" is "no." But in the Greek, when they see that, that means that we put no confidence in the human self *ever*. You don't think: "As long as I have positive thinking, I'm going to make it." No, you won't. You have no confidence in the flesh.

This Greek word, "peitho," is in the tense in the Greek called "perfect," which means that at the point of your salvation, you decided: "I have no confidence in my good works to go to heaven." And then, that confidence continues. That's perfect tense. You can't express that so in the English, but in the Greek, it stands right out. It says: "I made the decision, and ever since then, my mind has been at rest." You have no idea what it is like for these people who are not sure they can keep their salvation – who, from time to time, they don't know how they stand with God. And when death comes, the agony is there: "Did I make it? Did I not make it?" Well, if you're depending upon yourself, there's no way of being sure. But God says, "You cannot contribute anything to salvation. You can only accept it as a gift." And that's why this is not only the perfect tense, but is also active voice. It says, "You kick in this opportunity of getting saved once-and-for-all by the fact that you say, "I believe. I accept Christ the Savior." And with your choice to trust in Christ, you have sealed the gift. It's yours (irrevocably yours – the gift of eternal life). That's the principle that is stated here.

**The Flesh**

What is it that we have absolutely no confidence in at any time, in contrast to anything else? It is called "the flesh." It's the Greek word "sarx." This word "sarx" (the flesh) is used in various ways in the New Testament. And here is one of those examples where you have to know enough about the structure of New Testament theology, and the particular passage (the context) to know which of these is being referred to. There are about ten different uses.

* 1. **The Living Material that Covers the Bone Structure**

For example, in 1 Corinthians 15:39, the word "flesh" is used to refer to the living material that covers the bone structure of a human being or an animal. 1 Corinthians 15:39 says, "All flesh (there it is) is not the same flesh, for there is one flesh of men; another flesh of beasts; another flesh of birds; and, another flesh of fish." Here it is obviously referring to what covers the bone structure. That's how normally we think about the flesh. We think about the structure of the body. This is also in 2 Corinthians 12:7; Galatians 6:13; and, Romans 2:28. And if you don't interpret it in all of those passages, as applying in this way, then you'll go astray.

* 1. **The Human Body as a Whole**

Secondly, this word "flesh" is also used to refer to the human body as a whole. In 2 Corinthians 10:3, there is an example of that. Paul says, "For though we walk in the flesh." What's he talking about? "Though we walk in a human body, we do not act according to the flesh." We do not *war* according to the flesh. We walk in a human body, but when we deal with fighting Satan and his evil, we don't do it like you do human combat. This is a spiritual warfare that we're in, and therefore, it takes different weapons and different tactics. So, here he's referring to flesh as the human body as a whole. Many passages in Scripture. You use this idea: Acts 2:31; Colossians 2:1; 1 Timothy 3:16; Galatians 4:13; Mark 10:6-8; Ephesians 6:12; and, Philippians 1:22. And it's important in every one of those passages to know that he's talking about the human body as a whole when he speaks of the flesh.

* 1. **A Human Being of Flesh and Blood (not a Spirit)**

Third, the word "flesh" is use of a human being of flesh and blood, in contrast with God, Who is Spirit, and other spirit beings, like angels. So, sometimes the word "flesh" is used to contrast the flesh bodies from spirit beings. In John 1:14, we read it in this way: "And the Word (that's a symbol for Jesus Christ) became flesh." What was He before? He was a Spirit being? He was part of the Godhead, the second member of the Trinity. And He now, Who was a spirit being, is contrasted with what He became here: a human-body being: "And the Word (Jesus Christ) became a human body (flesh), and dwelt among us. And we beheld His glory (the glory of His deity there – the glory as of the Only Begotten: the Only One like Him, from the Father full of grace and truth. You have this used of flesh also in Matthew 16:17.

* 1. **Humanity, as a Whole**

Then the Bible sometimes uses the word "flesh" for "humanity" (mankind, as a whole). Notice Matthew 24:22. Here, it's talking about the great tribulation – the second part of the seven years that is yet to come. It's called the great tribulation. It has kicked in in full force. Verse 21: "For then there shall be great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world, until now, nor ever shall." We go to Revelation, and we see all the horrendous plagues, especially when the vials of wrath of God (the bowls of wrath) are poured out. That takes place probably within the last six weeks (maybe eight weeks), near the end. As you read what comes out of those bowls, it is such a worldwide disaster. It isn't just a coal mine disaster, or some dam that breaks here that's a disaster. It is worldwide. Oceans turn to blood. Fresh water turns a blood. It is disease rampant everywhere, such as they had never run into before, mutating, and impossible to stop, so that the world is getting the final body blow from the Almighty, making Himself known for their sin.

So, the bowls, right near the end, is what he's talking about here. And in verse 22, he uses our word "flesh:" "And unless those days (the time of these final great judgments of God), are cut short, no flesh." It might be translated "life," thereto (connoting human bodies). There would be no human bodies that would be saved;" that is, alive: "But for the sake of the elect, those they shall be cut short." God is going to say His believing gentiles. The church has already gone to heaven. His believing Jews (holed-up in Patmos) – He's going to protect them, and keep them physically alive, so that they can go into the millennium, and start repopulating the Millennial Kingdom of Jesus Christ for the next 1,000 years. So, "flesh" is sometimes used for mankind as a whole.

* 1. **The Complete Person: Body; Soul; and, Spirit**

Another way it is used if for the complete person: spirit; soul; and, body. 2 Corinthians 7:5 refers to it in that way: "For even when we came into Macedonia, our flesh (our person) had no rest. But we were afflicted on every side: conflict, without; and, fears, within." Paul says, "We got to Macedonia. We had had great persecution along the line. When we came into Macedonia, this nice Greek province, we thought, "Oh, here we would have some relief; some peace; and, some relaxation for our person: our spirit; soul; and, body, Paul said, "But it was not to be. Satan came right at us from every direction. We were under the gun."

Another place where it is used in that respect is James 5:3.

* 1. **The Human Nature**

Then, in the sixth way, the word "flesh" refers to "the human nature," or "one's physical descent" – your heritage, or your background. Romans 1:3 says, "Concerning His Son (the Lord Jesus Christ), Who was born as a descendant of David, according to the flesh." The genetic line is called "your flesh." The line through which you are born genetically of your parents – that's called "the flesh." Jesus Christ was born through the line of King David, because He is the final king. Jesus is the final king of the Jews. This is also used this way in Romans 4:1; Romans 9:3; and, Romans 9:8.

* 1. **Life on Earth**

Number seven, and this is the one we're interested in, because this is the way "flesh" is being used here: "We have no confidence in the flesh," Paul says to the Philippians. This is the way Paul is using this word, and not in any of these other words. In Hebrews 5:7, it is used of life on earth, with its physical limitations: "In the days of His flesh (referring to the Lord Jesus Christ)." What is he talking about? The days of His life on earth. The word "flesh" is use of our lifespan: "In the days of His life span, He offered up both prayers and supplications, with loud crying, and tears to the One able to save Him from death. And He was heard because of His piety." The Lord Jesus Christ, in His humanity, had to call upon the Father for protection, sometimes, from the attacks that were being directed toward Him, even before the cross. So, it's used here of the physical limitations that are upon us.

This is also this way in 1 Corinthians 7:28; Philippians 1:24; and, 1 Peter 4:2.

* 1. **Hereditary**

Then the word "flesh" is used of the external and outward sign of life in heredity, religion, and morals. Here is your family background. 1 Corinthians 1:26: "For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh;" that is, people of authority from their heredity; from their family line; from their religion; or, in moral areas: "Consider your calling, Christians, that there were not many wise according to the flesh; not many mighty; and, not many noble. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise. And God has chosen the weak of the world to shame the things which are strong, and the base things of the world, and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, that He might nullify the things that are, and that no man should boast before God."

So, here is the flesh and its background. Some people think: "I'm something. You know, my family came over on the Mayflower, and I'm from Boston." Anybody whose family came over on the Mayflower (and on that leaky boat, the Mayflower) surely must be head-and-shoulders above the common lot of people. And that's the idea of the flesh. It's external – and outward side of the life: heredity; religion; moral; and, being superior.

* 1. **The Unregenerate State**

Then here's one way that most of us usually think about the flesh. It is referred to the unregenerate state. Romans 7:5 refers to people who are unsaved as being in their flesh: "For while we were in the flesh." That means while we were dead in sin: "The sinful passions which are aroused by the law were at work in the members of our body, to bear fruit for death." When we were unsaved people (and Paul is speaking to them as those who had the background as Jews), when the law told you not to do something, you gritted your teeth and said, "Yeah, I'm going to do that. That's my freedom. You don't tell me what to do:" "While we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law." The Law of God said, "This displeases Me. You will not do it." Then the sin nature rises up, and say, "Who do You think You are, God, telling me what to do?"

Romans 8:5 and Romans 8:8 also uses the word "flesh" in this way.

* 1. **The Sin Nature**

Now, the way we use it here in Philippians 3 is this last one. It is used of the sin nature with all of its capacities, which is the way we often think of flesh. Notice Romans 7:18: "For I know," Paul says, "that nothing good dwells in me (that is, in my flesh).” What's he referring to? His sin nature. And if you are an unsaved person (if you are an unbeliever), everything you do comes from that rotten core of the sin nature. So, you can have a cultured of life, but before God you stink. It is rottenness from the core of your being: "I know that nothing good (that is, divine good) dwells in me." Can you do good things as a human being? Some would say, "Oh yes. I can feed the poor. I have these humanitarian causes. I can be courteous, and gentle, and nice to people." You can do all kinds of things – that's human good: "For I know that there is no good of God. That's different. That's what counts: "There is nothing good that dwells in me (that is, in my flesh – the sin nature). For the wishing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not."

Paul says, "How many times I've determined: 'I'm going to do something good?' How many times have I determined: 'From now on, I'm going to be here, where I should be; I'm going to go here where I should go; and, I've going to do things the way I should do them?'" And what happens? It blows up in your face. Why? Because in your sin nature, there's no capacity to do it right. Only God the Holy Spirit brings you around to that.

So, why would anybody want to live under the Mosaic Law? Why would anybody want to listen to the legalists? Why would anybody want to go to church on Saturday? It's a loser's game. It's all the Law system, and Paul says: "The Law was a mirror to show you how rotten the sin nature is, and how helpless you are before it."

Now, here's the power system that you have as a Christian: Romans 7:25: "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord." So, on the one hand, I myself, with my mind in serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh, the law of sin." And look up in verse 24. Paul says, "O, wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death (the sin nature)?" Paul says, "I want to do what is right. And what do I do? I turn around, and do what's wrong. I want to think what I should think. But what do I do? I think what I shouldn't think. I want to go where I should go. What do I do? I go where I should not go. I don't want to say things that I shouldn't say, but I say them." So, he says, "O, wretched man that I am. Who's going to set me free from enslavement to this rotten core of the sin nature (the flesh)?"

Verse 25 then says that there is an answer: "Thanks be to God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." So, on the one hand, I myself, with my mind, am serving the Law of God. I want to do what's right. But on the other hand, with my flesh, I'm serving the law of sin.

Then he goes on, beginning in Romans 8:1, and he talks about freedom from evil through the power of the Spirit of God: "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." He says, "Through Christ, I can beat the sin nature."

Please notice that 2 Peter 2:18 also uses this word "flesh" in reference to the sin nature within us: "For speaking out arrogant words of vanity, they entice by fleshly desires." People tempt you to do what is evil, as a Christian: "Speaking with arrogant words (self-confidence and vanity), they entice by a fleshly desire, appeals to your sin nature, by sensuality" – those who barely escape from the ones who live in error. You've escaped from the error of being enslaved to the sin nature. And what does the world around you do? It wants to bring you right back in to enslavement to everything that God has released you from (from the sin nature). And what is that?

Well, drop over to 1 John 2:15. What is it that are I'm being pulled back into: "Do not love Satan's world system, nor the things in the world." Does that ring a bell? What's that thing that you love so much? What is that you're walking around with, and preserving, and is so precious to you? "If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

Notice verse 16. This is what the sin nature is trying to always suck you back into: "Everything that's in the world; the lusts of the flesh; the sin nature; the lusts of the eyes; greed for things; and, a boastful pride of life." The arrogance – "I can make it. God's not going to tell me what to do. None of that”, he says, “is from the Father. That's from the devil."

So, what is it? Do you want to live that life? Do you want to be captured by the lusts of your sin nature? You can. You might even have a little fun in the process. You might get a lot of disease, and a lot of crushed life, out of the lusts of the flesh. And the lusts of the eyes – focusing on things not for the Lord's glory, to be used for his honor, but just to grasp it. And the arrogance of life – walking around, not realizing that it is what Christ makes us that makes us significant before the Father. So, 1 John 2:16 tells us a lot.

Then we've already seen that Colossians 2:11 uses the word "flesh" for the sin nature: "And in Him you were also circumcised. But the circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ" – the control of the sin nature.

Then we have one more. Galatians 3:3 uses the word "flesh" in terms of the sin nature: "Are you so foolish, Galatians, having begun by the Spirit (by the Holy Spirit), are you now being perfected by the flesh?" These guys were going back a legalism. He says, "God, by His Spirit, saved you. Now are you going to become holy by your rinky-tink routines that you're going to do?

Galatians 6:8 says, "For the one who sows to his own flesh (his sin nature) shall, from the flesh, reap corruption. But the one who sows to the spiritual, from the spirit, reap eternal life blessing." And every day of our lives, you and I are walking through life, and I guarantee you we're planting the seeds in our sin nature (the flesh), and we're going to have the blessings of all that growing up in our lives: the lives of our family; and, the lives of the people we associate with. But if you are sowing (walking by means of) the Spirit, then it'll be a beautiful garden for your family; for your fellow believers; and, for all those around you. It is no small thing to walk under enslavement to the flesh.

Now, with that background, going back to Philippians 3:3, the last characteristic of the believer who has experienced circumcision at the point of his salvation: "We put no confidence in the flesh." It means "no confidence in all my human capacities; in all my sin nature capacities; and, all the externals. A person approaching God with his human good works (all self-effort) – no, we don't put any confidence in that. All that a person is, is apart from God the Holy Spirit working in Him – no, we don't put any confidence in what we are on our own. The basis of the operation of legalists is always these externals. It's always what comes from the sin nature capacity.

**The Legalist**

Notice: What is the legalist telling you to do? Follow rituals; avoid certain taboos; pursue human good works; humanitarianism; devote yourself to your intellectual arrogance; and, don't mind telling God what His Scriptures mean, whether He agrees or not. Remember, we're not talking about some low-down Deep Elam Street down-and outer, who's out there begging on the street. We're talking about all the nice people that Paul says, "Put confidence in the sin nature." He's talking about the finest person that is capable, on his own, because he was born well; he had good parents to guide him; he was well-educated (he had an education that had a moral frame of reference; because he was cultured (he knows how to say "please" and to say "thank you;" he knows how to hold doors open for the ladies; and, he knows how to not push ahead in line – all these culture things. And he knows how to appreciate a Sousa march when he hears it – the epitome of culture.

Then there is wealth – to have wealth: to do anything you want to do; to go any place you want to go; to act in any kind of determined way you want to, which can be a bestial way, if it's the sin nature; and, to have social graces – you can have the social graces; you can. When the Academy Awards are given, you have all that social graces out there in California in the auditorium. But these are people who have no grace with God. And without His grace, the externals are nothing. You can have noble ideals. You may have your ideals. You may be so deluded with nobility, that you're still think that socialism is going to work. Do you still think that it's a good thing for the government to use the power of the gun to remove the fruits of labors of those who are successful in life, and who have devoted themselves to their labors, and give it to people who feel they have a right to it?

Humanitarianism comes from the sin nature. There's the bottom line. The sin nature of the Christian is just as untrustworthy, and as spiritually incapable, and rotten as that of the unbeliever. We must never forget that we can fall from the grace way of living into the legalistic way of living, and of doing things on our own, right out of the sin nature, thinking that God will be pleased with us, and that, consequently, He will bless us. That is not the way of the Lord. That is not where reality lies.

Tonight, we're going to move down to Colossians 3:17, where Paul is going to explain why he is so heavy-handed toward the legalists, and so heavy-handed toward these who are going to produce something from their sin nature in order to be appealing to God, and he is going to show that what's behind verse 17 is enormous. I'm only going to be able to touch the high spots of it. But I think I can give you a sense of how the Old Testament was a reflecting mirror of what God was. But it was only the reflection. It was not the reality.

If you were in the military service, and had found yourself, in the course of events, sent far abroad, away from your wife, and while you were gone, she had had your picture there. There was your picture, where everybody could see it. She'd walk around, and take a look, and remember what you looked like. And then one day, you knock on the door. She opens the door, and you have come home safe and sound. You have been returned. And she says, "Oh, I'm so glad to see you." And she runs over, and picks up the picture, and starts hugging it, and kissing it, and holding it to her bosom. Is that nuts or what? You're going to deal with the picture when you have this handsome hulk standing in front of you?

That's what legalism is. He has the wonders of the grace reality in Christ Jesus, and the grace way of life (the grace power system). And these people are still hugging the Mosaic Law to their bosom. Well, verse 17 nails it down, and when we walk you through the background, you'll wonder how anybody could have ever been so foolish. But it's possible.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1995

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