***Beware the Legalists - PH65-01  
  
Advanced Bible Doctrine - Philippians 3:1-2***

We are studying Philippians 3:1-3, and this is the second segment on the subject of beware of the legalists. It is self-evident that all of us are born into this world totally ignorant of spiritual things. There is nothing so sad as a person who grows to maturity and has never been instructed in the Word of God, and who thinks that he knows something about God and what God thinks in spiritual matters. The truth of the matter is that we are all 100% ignorant when we come into this world. However, as we mature mentally, we do pick up some divine viewpoint information from creation. The Bible tells us this. And we pick up a little from people. However, most of what we pick up from other people is human viewpoint misinformation about spiritual things. These things are constantly being drummed at us by the world system in which we live. Its educational system; its entertainment system; and, its advertising systems are all drumming human viewpoint constantly at us. After a while, we hear it so much that we begin to think that this is the truth and this is what God thinks.

But we are, as a matter of fact, at the same time, confronted with a lot of conflicting ideas and conflicting notions, especially if we begin attending church someplace where the Word of God is taught. Then we get into an awful lot of trouble, because our human viewpoint is constantly being challenged in a particular church service where expository preaching is taking place. So we often feel frustrated in knowing which preacher to believe and which preacher to follow. So we have to make a decision. That decision, again, usually follows a human viewpoint pattern.

So we say, "Well, the preacher whom I will listen to is the one who has the nicest personality," or "I will listen to the preacher who speaks to the largest congregation and has a very big fat reputation. Obviously, he must know what God thinks." Or we will decide on how successful he has been in building a church structure and organization. Obviously, he must be the one who represents what God thinks. Or we'll decided on the basis of the opinions of other people.

The only way we can decide this, of course, is on the basis of whether a preacher is operating on the HICEE technique: Hermeneutics; Isagogics; Categories; Exegesis; and, Etymology. These factors are what the preacher must use in his own preparation of the Word if the flock is to understand it. Now, if he's not doing that (and it's very easy to spot whether he is or not), then you know he's operating on challenge and inspiration; sweetness and light; and, a warm glow that he is exuding to the congregation. That's the preacher you should say, "Goodbye" to. That's hard to do because, almost inevitably, that preacher is functioning in a huge building; with a huge congregation; with a huge offering; and, a huge program. But if you do not, you will end up missing the very thing you're looking for–God's divine viewpoint.

So it is hard to know whom we shall listen to. What preacher do we follow? Whose teaching do we subject ourselves to? The world today is full of very subtle errors, all of which Satan uses for the destruction of a Christian's spiritual life. However, the most dangerous errors are those which are most widely held by other people, and mostly those which are tolerated by other Christians and tolerated by ministers who should know better, and do know better. Those are the errors that are the toughest for us to reject.

**Legalism**

One of these most widely held spiritual poisons is the things that we call legalism. Legalism is an ugly, gruesome skull. It is a death's head, and it is something that the Word of God constantly warns us against. Yet, Christians and church organizations are shot through today with legalism from one end to the other. You can hardly walk into a church service anywhere and sit for a little while, and you become aware that the place is dripping with legalism. If you know anything about the Word of God at all, your heart goes out to the people who sit there, because you know that one of the things that is so horrendous about legalism is that it is the great robber of eternal rewards at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Few things will rob you of God's eternal rewards for you like legalism will.

So in Philippians 3, we have seen that the apostle Paul begins here at the middle of the book with an extremely severe attack on legalism and its promoters, the Judaizers. In Philippians 3:1, Paul has indicated that he is taking up a concluding topic in his letter, and he points out to them that this is a subject which he has taught them and warned them against before. What he is dealing with is the concept of taking the Mosaic Law system into Christianity. In other words, he's dealing with a dispensational problem. Paul says, "Now I have taught you the doctrine of dispensations. I have shown you the issues that are involved in understanding God's order through the ages, and what God is doing in different ages. The critical application of that dispensational truth comes right now to where you're living today, relative to the subject of legalism. If you are mixed up, or you do not esteem the doctrine of the dispensations, then the death's head of legalism will be able to get a hold on you.

Sometimes people say, "Well, what's the difference about whether people believe in the doctrine of dispensations or not?" The vast majority of Christians and churches and preachers reject the concept of dispensations. Are we going to say that they are wrong, and that they are missing God's blessing? Yes, we're going to say that, because the Word of God says that. So the apostle here is dealing with the dispensational problem of taking the Mosaic Law system into Christianity. If you do not believe; if you do not understand; and, if you do not practice the doctrine of dispensations, that's exactly what you will do. There will be no difference between Israel and the church. There'll be no difference between the law way of life and the grace way of life. The two will be mixed up. You will be selective in what you take from the law, of course. You won't be taking all of that stuff over. But what you think you'd like to take, you'll take over. The result will be that Satan will have the great victory, which has been his over the centuries, of enabling a Christian to be denied eternal rewards because he leads him into legalism via the law system.

So Paul begins in Chapter 3, and says, "I'm going to talk to you about something that I've talked to you about before. I don't find this irksome to me. I will not shrink from this. It is the duty of a pastor-teacher to repeat instruction. The review of Bible doctrine, he says, is a safety factor for you Philippian Christians, because it will preserve you from being tripped up by false doctrine, and in this case, particularly, the false doctrine of legalism. This is destructive to your inner happiness. You people in Philippi enjoy inner happiness. This is the theme of this letter. Legalism is destructive to inner happiness. So it's a vicious thing. So what Paul says is that all that leads to legalism is bad.

**Dogs**

Then in order to show you just how bad it is, and how strongly he feels against it, he gives a threefold description of legalism. First of all, he says that legalism is to be compared to dogs. Dogs here refer to those vicious scavenger animals, not the cuddly puppies. It is a term of contempt and loathing with both the Jews and the gentiles of the New Testament world. Obviously we use the term dog the same way today. It for us, too is an insult–a term of contempt. As you know, some of the strongest curse words are associated with dogs. That was the very thing that the apostle Paul is conveying here. He came right that very close, in effect, to using what was a curse word when he called the legalists dogs. You can expand it in the way that it is used today, and come just about pretty close to what is indicated here. The Judaizers taught that Christians must obey the Mosaic code of laws in order to secure God's blessings. Yet, to obey the Mosaic code of laws; that is, to live under the Mosaic code of laws, is the very way to miss God's blessing. It is the very way to ensure that you will not have God's blessing upon you.

Legalism for the apostle Paul was a hated, despicable thing. He was a little fed up, and you can almost feel it here in this passage, because this church meant a lot to him. This was one of those beautiful churches of the New Testament. It wasn't like Corinth and the Galatians churches. But every place that Paul went, no sooner than he got out of town, then these Judaizers came in after him. They took these Christians and said, "That's wonderful what Paul taught you. We're going to give you a little more expanded instruction. We're preachers, too."

This is like we have today. Anytime somebody says "I'm a preacher," everybody who doesn't know anything says, "Oh, then you must talk for God." If there's one thing most preachers don't talk for, it's for God. But people listen to preachers, and so they listened to these legalizers. Pretty soon, these gentiles were taking their male children and circumcising them; they were taking the holidays and the holy days of the Old Testament law and they were observing them; they were entering into all of the ritual that was the Mosaic way of life; and, they were completely led away from the freedoms and the liberties of grace. The Judaizers led the Christians away from occupation with Christ to occupation with themselves and with their human good works. So when Paul said the term "legalism" and called the legalists "dogs," he was using just about the strongest analogy that he could to express his contempt, and to express how useless and no good they were.

**The Doctrine of Dogs**

So let's look at the biblical doctrine of dogs: I think after we review what the Bible says about dogs, you'll get a little better feeling yet as to what a severe thing this was when Paul said, "Legalists (Judaizers) are the dogs of society."

1. "Dog was a term of contempt and loathing with both Jews and gentiles. The Jews looked upon a dog with disgust. The gentiles held them with contempt. And in both groups, dogs were looked down upon in an extreme way.
2. The dog was an unclean animal according to Levitical law. So such terms as "dog;" "dead dog;" or, "a dog's head" were terms of reproach or self-humiliation (1 Samuel 24:14, 2 Samuel 3:8, 2 Samuel 9:8, 2 Kings 8:13). Goliath, when he saw little David coming out after him with his stones and his staff in his hand, said, "Who do you think I am, kid? Am I some dog you're coming out after?" Even Goliath felt, just by the way David was approaching him (without armor and sword), that David was expressing contempt for him. And when Goliath put that contempt into words, he did it by comparing him to a dog. He felt that David was saying, "This is just a dog out here, and I'm going to take a stick after him, and I'm going to beat it."
3. In Bible times, troops of hungry, half-wild dogs roamed the fields and streets, feeding on dead bodies and refuse (1 Kings 14:11, 1 King 16:4, 1 Kings 21:19-23). These wild animals would roam the streets, and they would eat anything dead, whether it was an animal or even a human being. Dogs are cannibalistic, in case you didn't know. Dogs will eat other dead dogs, or dead human beings. So in the New Testament world, it was a common sight to see these scavenger dogs eating on garbage. Of course, that's nothing new to us. How often have we seen the overturned garbage? And you say, "Well, the dogs have been out to the garbage again." That's a natural point of rallying for the dog. If he found a dead human being, he'd eat that.
4. To be devoured by dogs was a great humiliation (1 Kings 21:19-23, 2 Kings 9:10-36). When Jezebel and her husband Ahab, the king of Israel, decided to take the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, God passed judgment upon both of them. He said, "For you, Ahab, the dogs are going to lick up your blood." That was a terrifically humiliating thing. You couldn't have had a greater insult than to be the king of Israel and be told that dogs are going to have a blood feast on your blood. As you know, after Jehu ordered Jezebel thrown from the balcony, he whipped up his chariot, and ran across her with the horses and the wheels of the chariot. Then he went in for lunch because it was lunchtime. While he's sitting eating, he says, "You know, that no good woman was a witch, but she was the queen. She is royalty." So he said to a servant, "Go out and bury her instead of leaving her in the street the way I left her."

When they got out there, all they found was her head; her hands; and, her feet, and the dogs were licking their chops, having had a beautiful meal on Jezebel. I'll tell you that she was a tasty dish from start to finish. As someone has said, it's rather interesting that the dogs wouldn't eat the skull that devised that contemptible scheme to destroy that innocent man Naboth; they wouldn't eat the hands that wrote the note that set up the conspiracy that brought about Naboth's death; and, they wouldn't eat the feet that so gaily ran into Ahab's bedroom, where he was in bed with his face turned toward the wall, pouting, to announce to him that she had worked it all out, and he could have the vineyard next door for his summer palace after all, and they could move in anytime. She had taken care of the matter. It was a humiliating thing to be eaten by dogs.

1. Fierce and cruel enemies in the Bible are called "dogs" (Psalm 22:16-20, Jeremiah 15:3). Dogs were looked upon as vicious creatures, and as a threat. When you met a dog in the New Testament world and the Old Testament times, it was something that was viewed as a threat. Consequently, fierce enemies (cruel enemies) were called dogs, because a dog can be a very vicious thing. Of course, they're used in the military service in that way. The Canine Corps is a deliberate training of a certain type of dog to be a deadly, vicious creature. So for that reason, it is a very apropos comparison in Scripture that a fierce and cruel enemy is described as "a dog."
2. Jews used the term "dog" to describe gentiles whom they viewed as impure and profane (Matthew 15:26). This was a common term among the Jews. Jews viewed themselves as extremely superior spiritually because they did possess the Old Testament law. Anytime they met a gentile or referred to a gentile, they would view him and refer to him as "a dog." It was a term of extreme contempt.
3. Judaizers are called "dogs" here in Philippians 3:2, the passage that we're studying. The apostle Paul is taking this term "dog" as it was used and understood in the time in which he lived. (That's the isagogics that we're giving you of the background of the time.) Therefore, when he thought about Judaizers, and he wanted to think of a term of extreme contempt and disgust that would convey to the Philippian Christian just how bad these legalist were, he used the term that was in common usage, which was "dogs," for contempt.
4. Those who are shut out of heaven are called "dogs" because of their vileness in Revelation 22:15. Even unbelievers are viewed in Scripture as dripping with the vileness of their sins. So they are again an apt figure of the dog–the dirty, contemptible dog.
5. The price of a dog and of a harlot were placed in the same category. Jews were forbidden to bring either into the house of God in fulfillment of a vow (Deuteronomy 23:18). Whether it was a harlot or a dog, the price was the same thing.
6. The epitome of contempt was expressed by rating one unfit to associate with dogs. You have a beautiful expression of this in Job 30:1. Job is in the midst of his suffering, and in the agonies of what he is experiencing under the testing of Satan at God's direction. The younger people are holding him in derision. Here's Job, who has walked with the Lord. He has, obviously, been a man who knew some divine viewpoint, and a man that has accomplished something in life. Now he's going through some hard times. He's under fire, but he's a soldier within the angelic conflict. He's being shot at. He is indeed under extreme attack and under extreme conditions.

The young people come along, and they look at him, and they're making fun of him. The younger generation is deriding him. So Job, in Job 30:1 says, "But now they that are younger than I hold me in derision, whose fathers I would have disdained to have set with the dogs of my flock." That was a cutting remark. He says, "These kids make fun of me, but I wouldn't have put their fathers out with my dogs out with my sheep. My sheep dogs are higher than their fathers. Again, this is a play upon the word "dog" and one's parentage. It's done in the same way today. So the epitome of contempt was to rate one unfit to associate with dogs.

1. Dogs, like swine, represent those who are negative to Bible doctrine (Matthew 7:6). A person who is negative to doctrine is called a "dog." It is compared also to swine who prefer wallow and filth, and therefore cannot appreciate the pearls of Bible doctrine, and, therefore, should not have that given to them.
2. Dogs represent spiritual reversionism. This is told us in 2 Peter 2:22, where we read, "But it has happened unto them, according to the true proverb, 'The dog is turned to his own vomit again, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.'" This is a symbolic expression of returning (of backsliding), or going back to your old ways. This is spiritual reversionism. This is what happens to the Christian who is not moving forward up the scale toward spiritual maturity, but starts sliding backwards because he fails to keep taking doctrine into his soul. So the experience of reversionism is compared to a dog. It represents that.
3. Dogs are viewed as representing those who are destructive (Jeremiah 15:3). There is a quality in the human being which is destructive. That's why, when you see an abandoned building that has windows in it, you see the windows busted out. It is the dog quality in the old sin nature that makes people want to take a rock and start destroying windows in an abandoned building, or any other kind of destruction.
4. "Dog" is used to describe assassins in Psalm 59:6-14. The mafia and their assassinating technique are labeled by God as a pack of dogs. That is as contemptible as God, in His wisdom, can speak of human beings.
5. A dog represents the gentile unbelievers present at the crucifixion of Christ. Psalm 22:16 and Psalm 22:20 describe the fact that Jesus Christ observes that he is surrounded by dogs; that is, these unbelieving gentiles–contemptible; filthy; low; and, base.
6. Finally, the term "dog" is used to express personal humility and unworthiness (Matthew 15:25-27). A person could use this of himself if he wanted to express his own sense of humility and his own sense of unworthiness.

So the description of the Judaizers as dogs is very fitting. Here are the comparisons: The dogs fed on garbage and on dead bodies, just as the Judaizers feed on legalism and the souls of the victims who follow them. Also, dogs are a fitting analogy because a dog cannot be cleaner than his own nature. So as we've seen, the Scriptures tell us, and experience has demonstrated, the dogs will eat their own vomit, just as the Judaizers eat theirs. They can't rise above the regurgitation of their legalism.

Dogs viciously attack those who oppose them, and that's what the Judaizers do. If you want to see a sweet, smiling Christian face turned to a vicious, snarling, snapping dog, you just get yourself with one of these mouthful-of-teeth smile legalistic brothers, and you counter him on his legalism. You'll gradually see his face change; his tensing up; and, the cloud gathering. You will see the face of a snarling dog replace the sweetness and light that was there a moment before. Dogs attack viciously those who oppose them. Judaizers do the same thing. Dogs also destroy what is good, just as the Judaizers destroy the grace way of life, which is the greatest thing God has ever given us. How do you think such a biblical comparison makes all the legalists in the pulpit and the pews look today?

Now, don't ever forget this passage. Whenever you come up against legalism, and whenever you come up against somebody who rejects the doctrine of dispensations, and consequently, falls into the practice of violating the principles of grace, just remember that the apostle Paul, led by the Spirit of God, called them "dogs" when they followed such a course. Just remember what the Scriptures mean by the term "dog." So in this way, the point of all this is that Paul discredited the Judaizers imposition of the whole concept of legalism upon the believers.

**Evil Workers**

Let's get back to Philippians 3, and look at the second thing that he calls them. First, he says, "Beware of dogs." Secondly, "Beware of evil workers." Again, just as before, the word "beware" is really the word "blepo." "Blepo" is the Greek word for "to see." It specifically means here "to look out for." It connotes the idea of "discerning." It is used as a warning. It is present tense, which means that you and I are constantly to be on our guard against legalists. It is active, which means that you have to do this for yourself. Every Christian has to be his own guard. Constant vigilance against legalists is the price of Christian spiritual freedom. And it is imperative. It is a command of God that you preserve yourself from the dog legalist.

Here he calls them "evil workers." The word "evil" is the Greek word "kakos" which means evil in character. It is the opposite of another Greek word "kalos" which is good in character. These two words are opposite from one another: evil in character; and, good in character. There is another word for evil "poneros" which means evil in the influence or the effect that the person or the thing has. But here we have the character of the legalists described, and his character is evil in God's sight. He is evil in his nature, and that's why he promotes legalism. He is an evil worker. The word is "ergates." "Ergates" is used here of religious leaders working to promote legalism. It is a word that indicates energy. And, of course, you can see how we get the English word "energy" from "ergates."

In other words, legalists are hustlers. The Judaizers are not lazy people, but they are the most energetic for their cause in the local church. These evil workers will readily put themselves out to no end in order to pervert the grace of God among Christians. Paul, before salvation, as you know, was an outstanding legalist. He was extremely devoted to the law system. Yet, he was a very evil man when he was doing it. So "evil workers" describes people who, by character, are evil, but who are the kind of people who have extreme energy for their cause. Legalists, therefore, within a congregation will often appear to be the most dedicated; the most actively serving people; the sweetest; and, the nicest. But God says, "You're evil by character because you're a legalist.

**Circumcision**

Then he gives us a third "beware." Again, it's the word "blepo." Again, "blepo" means "watch out" or "look out for." This time, look out for what? He says this time, "Beware of the concision." The word "concision" in the Greek is "katatome." "Katatome" comes from two Greek words. "Kata" is a preposition meaning "down," and "tome" comes from the verb "temno" which means "to cut." So it means "to cut down" or "to cut off," and thus comes to mean "to mutilate." So the word "concision" would better be translated as "to mutilate." This connotes a mutilation of the body. What is Paul referring to here?

Well, one of the things that the legalist did to the Christians at Philippi and everywhere else was to walk in and tell them, "If you are going to be a Christian under God's blessing, the first thing you must do is take all of your males and perform the religious act of circumcision. This was the removal of the foreskin around the male sex organ. If you don't, you will not have God's blessing. That was immediately to be done–no ands; no ifs; and, no buts.

Of course, under the Old Testament system, that was true. Any male who was not circumcised was out of the covenant. He was out of God's blessing. He was out of the national promises. So therefore, it was a very critical factor. There were times in Jewish history when this was neglected, such as in the wilderness. So as soon as they got into the Promised Land, finally, one of the first things that Joshua did was to say, "OK, let's get it straightened out again. We're getting back to this sign, which God has given Abraham, which is the mark of our distinctive relationship to the living God."

So Paul is taking this religious act, but he is being sarcastic. Let me show you something that you don't see too clearly from the English, but it is very clear in the Greek. The Greek language has a way of using a writing technique (a literary technique) called a "paronomasia." A "paronomasia" is set up here in the Greek language. A "paronomasia" means that you take two words that are similar in sound, but different in meaning, and you place them right close to one another, and it gets across, in a very distinctive, punchy way, a point.

For example, we would say, "The ham what am." Here you have two words, "ham" and "am," both of which sound like one another, but they mean totally different things. This is a "paronomasia." Here's what happens in the Greek: Paul comes along and he takes this word "katatome" (concision). In the very next verse, in verse 3, he uses the true word for circumcision. They sound the same, but they mean totally different things. One means a mutilation. The other means a religious ceremony which is acceptable and honored by God. One is simply the old sin nature. The other is God Himself. So legalism practices concision (or mutilation). Paul is being extremely (almost bitterly) sarcastic. We would call them "butchers."

So he says, "On the one hand, we have you butchers who are mutilating the flesh and telling Christians to do that. If God no longer calls for circumcision as a ceremonial rite of significance, then your practicing it is simply butchering the flesh. It is absolutely meaningless." That's his point. He makes that point by comparing butchering to a true religious act when it was expressed in the time that it was in operation.

So grace has a circumcision, as we shall see. There is a circumcision in the era of grace–a very specific and distinctive circumcision that we'll get to in the next session. But here Paul is making this comparison. You see the paronomasia a little bit in English: "concision" over against "circumcision." It's very distinctively evident in the Greek.

So Paul is discrediting the Judaizers' imposition of circumcision upon gentile Christians. He says, "It is not necessary, and it is downright wrong to do for religious reasons." It is not wrong to do for other reasons (for medical and for health reasons), but it is wrong for religious reasons. So he refers to this act contemptuously as mere physical mutilation. What they are doing is cutting off a part of the human flesh without getting to the point that this represented in God's eyes the cutting off of the old sin nature within the soul. Paul is saying that that was the point that these mutilators; these butchers; these legalizers; and, these dog butchers had missed. Romans 2:28 sets it forth. He says, "For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly. Neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew, a real Jew, who is one inwardly. Circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God."

So even in the Old Testament, circumcision, as a religious right was not meaningful in itself as an act, but in what it symbolized. It symbolized cutting off the old sin nature, which resides in the soul, from control and expression in the life. So the gentile Christian who accepts the legalism of circumcision is simply mutilating his soul, and he is not helping himself to reach God. The legalists are, in effect, mutilating the grace of God, and they're robbing Christians of grace in their lives. Externalism in spiritual realities is legalism. Anytime you think that you have to do something external in order to gain God's favor, that's legalism.

So therefore, if you feel that what you must do is go through a certain ritual in order to gain favor with God, that's legalism. God says that's a mutilation of grace. It's a butchering of the grace of God. If you must sprinkle holy water, it's a butchering of the grace of God. If you must cross yourself, it's a butchering of the grace of God. If you must be sure to give your tithe in order to gain God's favor, it's a butchering of the grace of God. If you must walk an aisle in order to be saved, it's a butchering of the grace of God. Paul says, "You're nothing but a butcher when you do that." Remember that he's not talking about the run-of-the-mill church member. He's talking about the professionals in the ministry. He's talking about the people who are in the pulpit.

**Legalism**

Now, we have tossed around the word "legalism" in this session, but just to be sure, I'm going to make sure that you understand what legalism is. What is legalism? Give me a definition. I have taught this subject before, and I'll not apologize for doing it again, following Paul's pattern. I have observed that several times in the past this has terminated the association of certain people who attended this church, when they discovered what legalism really was. That is because legalism is not what a lot of people think it is. If you have the wrong idea of legalism relative to your conduct, you're going to find yourself boxed-in before we're through with this. You may find yourself ready to either go positive or, if you want to go negative, to fly the coop here.

**Law and Grace**

First of all, let's match up law and grace very briefly:

1. Law and grace are two antithetical concepts. We have this taught in Romans 6:14. Law is over here, and grace is over here. They are poles apart. There is no relationship between the two. Do you have that straight? There is no mixture. There is no relating between law and grace. These in Scripture are two opposite systems.
2. Romans 11:6 tells us that they represent opposite ways of life. That's what the law is. It's a way of life. It's a way of living and doing certain things. Grace is a way of life. It's a way of doing and living in a certain way.
3. Law is connected with Moses and with human works, while grace is associated with Jesus Christ and with faith. John 1:17 tells us that law came by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. Law is connected with human works. Grace is connected with faith in Christ.
4. Law and grace represent works of human good to please God. That's very important. Titus 3:6 tells us that the law system represented works of human good to please God. But Titus 3:7 tells us that grace represents divine good to please God. These are two kinds of righteousnesses. Law says you get it by something you do. Grace says you do it by something God gives you.
5. The law lifestyle found expression in Judaism, while the grace lifestyle finds expression in Christianity. Law was associated with Judaism. Grace is associated with Christianity.
6. The law achieved personal godliness through keeping its rules. You had to keep those rules with the spirit of the meaning of those rules, but you did have to keep the rules. If you lived under the law system, you did have to bring a sacrifice when you sinned. That was how you practiced 1 John 1:9. That's how you made your confession. You brought your sacrifice. You did have to go to Jerusalem, to the temple, to worship periodically at certain holy days. You did have to circumcise your male child on the eighth day. You did have to perform various religious ceremonies. You did have to follow all these rules and regulations if you were going to be under God's blessing.

Now, just performing these in a ritualistic way in themselves was meaningless. A lot of Jews fell into that mistake. But the representation of these things, when entered into in a spiritual sense, brought blessing because you performed them. The two went together, but you did have to do them. So law achieved personal godliness through keeping its rules, while grace provides godliness through faith (Romans 10:5-6). Grace gives us the godliness. It is not something that comes to us as a result of what we do. You are not godly, in other words, because you do certain things or you don't do certain things.

1. A believer today can attain godliness only through grace–never through law. You can never become a godly person through keeping certain rules and regulations, which is not to say that certain rules and regulations should not be kept. We're going to get to that next week. So you're going to have to hold off for the full picture, because I know as sure as anything that there are always people somewhere who mistake legalism for the presence of rules. That's the point that disturbs some people that used to attend church here. When they discovered that grace meant rules, they just took off and left. That was the end of the line for them because they were the ones who said, "I'm just as free as a bird," and they were doing all kinds of things that birds do that they shouldn't do too. That's the kind of birds they were. Well, a believe today can only attain godliness through grace, and that's because he takes in doctrine. By the intake of doctrine, God's grace has provided you with a capacity to be a godly man or woman.
2. There is grace in the Old Testament era, and there are laws in the New Testament era. Therefore, we are not antinomian, which means "no laws." We are not spiritual anarchists in the age of grace. We are not saying that there are not certain things that you as a Christian must do, and certain things which you as a Christian must not do. The Jew had 613 specific rules to live by. Are you aware of the fact that you and I, as Christians in the New Testament, also have hundreds of rules to live by, and you better know them? Now, that is part of the instruction of Bible doctrine–getting across to Christians the hundreds of rules (the laws; the commandments; or, whatever you want to call them), that God has specified for the Christian.

**The Holy Spirit**

Judaism did not have any supernatural means (no power from God) to perform those 613 rules. That's why the Bible says in Romans 8:3 that the law of Judaism was weak–because of the old sin nature of the flesh. A man cannot keep these 613 rules. However, in the New Testament, God gives us hundreds of rules, including repeating those that he gave the Jews. We are able to obey them. That's the marvel of grace. You're able to do what a Jew could not do. You're able to obey the rules where he could not obey the rules. Why? Because God has permanently indwelt you with God the Holy Spirit, who, therefore, is your constant companion and the power to enable you to keep the rules.

Now, if you shove Him aside, then you will not keep the rules. God the Holy Spirit is always a gentle person. Of the personalities of the Trinity, God the Holy Spirit is the one who reflects the greatest gentleness. The Lord Jesus Christ was a very tough personality with His opponents and His enemies. But God the Holy Spirit is a gentle person. You will find that He is a wooing type of person. He will come, and He will gently woo you. He will appeal to you. He will bring to your mind some truth, right about the time you're ready to act in some old sin nature way. He will caution you and lead you. But you can elbow Him out of the way, and He will step back and let you rush headlong and hurt yourself. Then when you're ready to confess and come back, He'll take you back again, and He'll gently start leading you again.

The Holy Spirit does not lead by shoving. So don't look for that. Look only for a gentle leading. Therefore, you must be a sensitive person. You can't strong arm Him, for you will only push Him out of the way, and He'll stand and wait until you're ready to come back. He'll never leave you. He's always indwelling you, but He is there to enable you to keep the hundreds of rules that God has for Christians to keep, as He never provided any power for the Jew to keep his 613 rules. So we have a supernatural power for grace commandments. Judaism demanded obedience of the laws through fear. Christianity appeals for obedience to its laws through love.

Just so you understand, let's button this down. The Bible does hold that there is a rulebook in the New Testament for the Christian. There is a code of regulations. Notice that it's called by different titles. James 1:25 calls it the perfect law of liberty. That's referring to the New Testament code of laws. James 2:8 calls it the royal law. That's referring to rules for Christians. Galatians 6:2 calls it the law of Christ. He even uses the word "law." It's referring to the regulations (the rules) of the New Testament. Romans 8:2 calls it the law of the spirit of life. This is the code of Christian laws. It's not the absence of laws.

That's what bugs a lot of people who've been living high, wide, and handsome without obeying what God has said, "This you will do, and "This you will not do, Christian." They think that God only told Jews that this they will do, and this they will not do. That is not so. You will never have God's blessing upon your life until you learn the New Testament code of laws, and start being positive toward them. That is what Bible doctrine HICEE exposition is all about–giving you the rules. Our problem is to learn it. Then we can do something about obeying it, and then God can do what He wants to do in blessing us.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1973

[**Back to the Advanced Bible Doctrine (Philippians) index**](http://www.christiandataresources.com/philippiansdanish.htm)

[**Back to the Bible Questions index**](http://www.christiandataresources.com/allarticles.htm)