

FALSE SECURITY & LEGALISM

Tonight I want to talk about finding the balance between the *twin errors* of legalism and false security tonight. We commonly refer to *false security* as “Eternal Security” because that’s the term that is most commonly used by OSAS (ie: once-saved-always-saved) advocates to ensure people that God loves them too much to ever let them be lost, once they have become one of his children.

But *false security* goes much *deeper* than just an Evangelical doctrine which is taught from the vast majority of today’s pulpits. False security is also *an attitude* of the heart or the mind that we can get caught up in, irrespective of our position regarding the theology that’s taught in the churches. I personally know of quite a few people who, though they have rejected *the doctrine* of Eternal Security, nevertheless, walk every day in *the attitude* of false security.

Both legalism and false security are extremes which miss the truth presented by the New Testament. Though many preachers and Bible teachers are loath to admit it, it is very difficult to find the *correct balance* between these two extremes. Those who are predisposed to one or the other can very quickly point people to passages which support their view. But they often have no explanation for passages which contradict their pet verses.

To further complicate matters, many people who have been thoroughly indoctrinated in one of these extremes, when they realize it is not correct, almost always tend to gravitate to the opposing extreme. They almost never find the proper balance between the two. Those who have been caught up in legalism, when they discover it is wrong, many times end up embracing a carnal, worldly lifestyles. Those who have been caught up in the current Evangelical teaching of being “saved by grace”—which is nothing more than Antinomianism—often end up getting involved in some kind of religious legalism.

Note: Antinomianism is a Greek term which comes from two Greek words; "anti"(against) and "nomos" (law). It is the teaching that "grace" makes Christians free from Law. In other words, we can break God's Law and never be forced to pay the penalty because those who are free from the Law are also free from the consequences of disobeying that Law.

This tension between legalism and false security (ie: antinomianism) has been around for a very long time. It’s not a new development. The Early Church was *plagued* by both legalism and antinomianism. In fact, much of the book of Romans—indeed much of Paul's writings in gene—were devoted to combating the dual errors of Jewish legalism and Gentile antinomianism—both of which flourish when we are ignorant of the purposes and the proper relationship between the Old and New Covenants. Jewish believers were caught up in legalism, so Paul kept reminding them that they were not justified "by works" (ie: obeying the Law), but by faith in the atonement (Rom. 3:20,24). Gentile believers were never under the Law, so they did not understand the arguments Paul used to persuade his fellow Jews. Therefore, they drew erroneous conclusions from his statements against trying to be justified by works. After correcting the Jews, he had to turn around and correct the Gentiles and remind them that genuine faith is *more* than mere mental assent to truth. It’s more

than “believing”. True faith produces a *change* in behavior (Gal. 5:16-26). He had to warn them not to assume that being under grace provides an excuse to continue in sin (Rom. 6:1,15).

Much the same thing happened to Martin Luther during the Reformation. Luther was caught up in a “works-righteousness” salvation. The works were not Jewish works—that is, keeping the Law of Moses. Rather, they were works that came from pagan religions, which had been incorporated into the Roman catholic organization. It was the legalism of the State (Catholic) Church, which taught that salvation came through the participation in the Mass, the performance of rituals, sacraments, penances, confession to priests, indulgences purchased with money, etc. When the Spirit of God finally broke through to Luther, he came to true faith and began battling the legalism that had held the entire civilized world in its grip for a over a thousand years

His message became centered on justification by faith *alone*, as opposed to justification by mental assent to the truth and participation in the rituals of Roman Catholicism. However, when he said salvation was by faith alone, he did not mean that *obedience to God* and *righteous living* were no longer necessary. What he meant was that salvation was through faith, apart from the performance of the Romish sacraments. The same thing happened to him that happened to Paul. Certain people drew from his statements, erroneous conclusions and started teaching that if we are saved "by grace" we are no longer under any obligation to *obey* God or His laws. So this tension between legalism and false security has been around for a long time. Many great men of God with brilliant minds have had to grapple with it and try to teach God’s people how to find the balance between these two extremes.

I am a very lucky person. I was never part of any Church group or denomination, so when I came to the Lord, I was able to come without a lot of the baggage so many people have to deal with when they come out of the system. Since I was never involved in *legalism*, I have no tendency to teach legalism. By the same token, since I was never caught up in legalism, I have no tendency to over-react *against* it either. Again, I was never caught up in the “greasy grace” error. As a result, I don’t believe I have a tendency to teach that kind of message, or over-react against it as a result of being delivered from it. So when I talk about the need to obey God, or the danger of Christians missing the kingdom, I’m not coming from a place of indoctrination into religious legalism.

It’s been mentioned that those of us who have come out of the system are all walking down the same path, but we are at different paces on that path. So we must be careful when judging what others are doing and how they are living. This is true. God does not expect us to attain perfection over night. The Scripture says He know our “frame” that we are but dust. He is very merciful and longsuffering. But if this is the only truth we focus on, we will end up in false security. Please notice how Paul describes the other side of that coin.

*Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that **they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.***

Galatians 5:19-21

*And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour. But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks. For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words: for **because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.***

Ephesians 5:2-6

*Know ye not that **the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God**? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, **shall inherit the kingdom of God.***

I. Corinthians 6:9-10

Anybody in this room think the apostle Paul was preaching *legalism* in these passages? Do you think he is giving us a list of “thou shalt nots”? The lists are not all-inclusive, but they sure sound like lists to me. When he said: “...those who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God”—does everyone in this room really believe he meant what he said? When he said those who do “*the works of the flesh*” will not inherit the kingdom, do we really believe him? I’ll tell you quite frankly, there are very few Christian today who believe what he said here because they are walking under the influence of false security. They might not believe the *doctrine* of Eternal Security, but they walk under *the influence* of false security because they do not believe God would ever shut them out of the kingdom over so small a thing like, for instance, “envy”—which is one of the things on the Galatian list.

Anyone in this room really believe they could end up in Hell if they have a problem with envy and they don’t eventually get victory over it? If there are any, there will only be a very few.

How about covetousness? Do you have any idea how many *millions* of Christians have a problem with covetousness? If they continue to practice covetousness, if they never get delivered from it, will they inherit the kingdom anyway?

Any of you in this room have a problem with it covetousness? If you do, do you really believe God will prevent you from entering the kingdom if you don’t eventually get delivered from it?

How about foolish talking? How many Christians do you suppose indulge in foolish talking every day of their lives? If they never get delivered from it, do you think they will inherit the kingdom anyway?

What about things that are *not* on any of these lists, but which we could all agree by the Spirit is a work of “the flesh”? Will god send us to Hell for these things if we continue in them. I think for a lot of people, the answer would be *No*.

You see, even though Paul was not a legalist, and even though never preached legalism, he also knew the deceiving power of false security. After all, this was the *original* lie that man fell for in the garden of Eden. This one lie destroyed the entire race. It was the lie that Israel fell for, and which caused the destruction of that entire nation. Paul had to deal with this lie everywhere he went, during his own ministry. He knew very well the power of this lie. So he warned people, not only of the dire consequences of walking in sin, but of walking after “the flesh”. That’s why he said in Romans 8:12-13: “*Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live*’.

Most Christians do not believe what Paul said there! In fact, they are incapable of believing him because they live in a continual state of false security. In Galatians 6:7-8, he said: “*Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting*”. How many Christians do you suppose believe what Paul said? Very few, I promise you.

Paul didn’t make these kinds of hard statements because he was preaching legalism, or because he was an unmerciful man, or because he viewed God as legalistic and unmerciful. He said these things because he *loved* God’s people, and he knew first hand how easy it is for God’s people to totally deceive themselves and walk around in a false sense of security—and as a result, totally miss the kingdom of God!

The reason we can’t say the kinds of things Paul did is because we are still under the influence of false security ourselves! We may not believe *the doctrine* of Eternal Security, but we are still under the influence of *the attitude* of false security. And if *you* don’t really believe God would cast *you* away for something so insignificant as indulging in envy, or engaging in foolish talking, then you will never be able to warn others who are indulging in these same things, that God may cast them away.

When someone is in bondage to something—whether it’s a sin or a weight—the *last thing* they need to hear is: “Oh, don’t worry brother. God sees your heart and He knows you want to get free. None of us are perfect. We all have our own besetting sins to deal with. God’s not going to cast us away because of them and He’s not going to cast you away either. He will deliver you from that thing when you are ready to let it go. Until then, just believe God is faithful and don’t get into legalism by trying to do it yourself”.

No! What that person needs is to hear is: “*Brother, there’s power in the blood of Jesus to overcome that thing. God loves you and He wants to free you from it. But you yourself must really want to get free. And if you don’t really want to get free, then you better get desperate before God and beg Him to give you the desire to get free because even though He loves you, His Word says that those who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God!”*

That was the approach of the apostle Paul, and that should be our approach. On the one hand, we must encourage people to walk in the *new man*, in the new life they were given when they were born again. We need to let them know that if they will walk in that life, they *will* begin to get the victory over these weights and sins.

The writer of Hebrews said we are to “lay aside” these things. He wouldn’t have told us to lay them aside if we didn’t have the power to do so. If we can’t lay them aside, it’s either because we don’t want to lay them down, or because we are *spiritually bound* by them and

we need deliverance. If it's a case where we don't really want to lay them down, then we better get desperate before God and ask Him to give us the desire to lay them down! The *reason* so few people ever get desperate about the weights and the sins the so easily beset them is precisely because they are walking in false security. They really don't think God would ever cast them away as a result of *not* getting the victory over them.

We must serve God out of love, not legalism and fear. But the fact is, there are times when our love for ourselves, or our love for these weights and sins is greater than our love for God. This is when we need the FEAR of God in our lives. This is when it must be clearly emphasized that: "...those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God". If it is not, we will continue in our sin and under that weight until we die, and there is a good chance we will miss the kingdom of God.

The number of people who are walking in false security right now is incredible. Let's not end up among their ranks.

Getting *light on ourselves* is a daily process.

Two kinds of Christians:

- ~ Those who want to *get* as much as they can *from* God
- ~ Those who want to *give* as much as they can *to* God.

We only have one life. It's foolish not to give *all* of it to God, to be used for His purposes.