

The Wednesday Word, September 4, 2019: You May be a Legalist If: (Part 1)

You may be a Legalist if.. you believe God loves you, but suspect that He doesn't like you.

If God was looking at you, right now, and you managed to take a snapshot of His face, what would it look like? As He considered you, would He be smiling? Or, would He have an irritated frown? Take a moment to reflect on your answer!

What do you believe the Almighty thinks of you? Your response will reveal whether or not you are behaving as a legalist. Legalists, you see, feel that God is continually scowling at them. Try as they may, they just can't shake off this idea of the disapproving diety. They haven't done enough, and they know it. They, in their own minds, have earned Heaven's well-deserved glower. That's why they are characterised by endless amounts of guilt and self-effort.

But, what about us, are we in that camp? Do we, at times, believe the theory that God loves us but, at the same time, because of our lack of performance, He doesn't like us very much?

We all know that loving someone and liking them are two different things. When we like someone, we enjoy their company and welcome their relationship. Does the Father appreciate our company and friendship? According to the legalist...NO! Only if we try very hard to please Him (the Lord). For the legalists, God's love is an unproven, non-impactful theory. He's like the man who knows the words of the song but doesn't know the melody.

In reality, legalism challenges and denies the gospel. It denies us access to the enjoyment of God's favour. The legalist part of us says, "I'm not good enough, and God isn't pleased with me." These voices continually pound in our hearts as they bring their own particular brand of bondage.

But, here's some good news: because of the Finished Work, the way to overcome this oppression is in and through the gospel. Instead of counting beads, as some religionists do, we can count up gospel benefits.

Here's the gospel truth. If you have been justified by grace through faith, it's because God really does love you. The shed blood of Christ really has removed every barricade to the Father's presence and approval. The only thing deeper than your sin is the depth of the Saviour's love for you.

We have an open heaven, not because of what we are doing but because of what He has done ... (see Ephesians 2:18; Ephesians 3:12; Hebrews 10:19; Romans 5:2; Hebrews 6:19-20).

By grace, you have been adopted into the family of God. Understand this, when God sees you, He smiles for He sees you in Jesus. Consider the following scripture, "For you are dead, and your life is hidden with Christ in God" (Colossians 3:3). That's a magnificent verse to memorise. It is a powerful weapon in the arsenal of Finished Work truth.

The cross declares that God's favour is on us. God both loves and likes us! May we make it

personal by telling ourselves this gospel truth and telling it often. The gospel will put legalism to the sword.

Rest in Him and enjoy Him. How easy is that?

There's a powerful scripture which tells of Jesus love and how He loves us? Accordingly, He loves us till the end (John 13:1).

In the middle of our spiritual conflict, He loves us to the end.

Amid our spiritual turmoil, He loves us to the end.

Amid all our spiritual shortcomings, He loves us to the end.

Amid our daily struggle with sin, He loves us to the end.

Amid our temptations, He loves us to the end.

Amid our rebellion of heart and self-will, He loves us to the end.

He knows all, and He still loves us. And that's why Jesus is called "Wonderful" Because that's who and what He is ... WONDERFUL! He loves us to the end.

No room for legalism here!

And that's the Gospel Truth!