

Is It In You? (Part 5)  
**“Legalism Kills Love”**  
 Pastor Glenn Barteau  
 February 8, 2009  
 Philippians 3:8-12

*Phil 3:12 Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.*

We are going to look at what Paul says leading up to this verse this week and next week we'll see what he says following it. It is an emotional passage. Paul talks about crying over the Philippians, and the tone of chapter 3 tells us that Paul is mad.

**Memory verse:** - Phil 1:9

*“So this is my prayer: that your love will flourish and that you will not only love much but well.”*

*Phil 3:2-3 Watch out for those dogs, those men who do evil, those mutilators of the flesh. For it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh*

Who is he mad at? He's mad at the Religious legalist. The legalists are pushing people onto a religious treadmill. And Paul doesn't want to have any part of it because he's been there and done that.

*Phil 3:4-6 Though I myself have reasons for such confidence. If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more; circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; ... as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless.*

Religious legalism kills love. And love... love God, love others is the heart of Christ's message and His kingdom.

## 1. Legalism warps our self-perspective

*Matt 7:1-2 "Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."*

Jesus is not talking about how God will judge us someday. God isn't determining his method of judgment based on us... God will judge or not judge based entirely on Himself. Rather, Christ is describing reality. He's describing what we can end up doing to ourselves... if we become religiously legalistic. If you do well on that treadmill... then you can't help but feel a little self-righteous... You can't hold back the pride. Because you are responsible for being a very holy person...you look into your "Billy Graham Mirror" at night and think – "oo la, la". If you fail on that treadmill...take a miss-step and get kicked off.

Did you see the U-Tube video of the two girls who decided to run together on a treadmill, and the treadmill was backed up against a wall. So the girl in back fell and it ran her into the wall, where she bounced off and back onto the treadmill, and the other girl freaked out and couldn't find the off switch.

The one girl looked like she was on the spin cycle of a washing machine. Some would say - that's a picture of my spiritual journey. You're dominated by shame and guilt. You look into your "Billy Graham Mirror" and think. – God

must be so disappointed with me. He could never like me or love me. The truth is (in either case) you don't know how to love yourself. Legalism kills love.

*Matt 7:3-4 "Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? 4How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye?"*

Which of my 5 senses is most inhibited by having a 2 x 4 in my eye? Sight... perspective.

## 2. Legalism warps our perspective of others

We mentally put people on that religious treadmill and that's never a good thing... because invariably...it always put us in the place of being Judge. As Christians this is not our job or calling... unless you are actually a judge, then you should because it's how you make a living... but not because it's your Christian duty. We get sucked into the traps of legalism - We think it's a way to protect ourselves from an immoral society - We think it's necessary to protect our reputation...and unfortunately we use judgment as a method for trying to help grow someone spiritually. Judgment is a never an effective method of producing spiritual life-change or protecting our reputation.

*Matt 7:6 "Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and then turn and tear you to pieces Again, Jesus as a brilliant teacher is describing the way life is."*

Have you been driving down the road and maybe you were going less than the speed limit (I know some of you really haven't experienced this) and a car comes up behind you traveling faster. And you are progressively passing the car next to you... and you think in a minute I'll be past the car to my right, I'll move over and let this car behind me go by. I'm sure this has never happened to you... but the car behind you is feeling that you are not going fast enough. And when they climb up on your bumper they are sending you a little message. They are judging you... you are going too slow, you don't belong in the left lane... or any lane. How many of you felt a positive warm hearted feeling? Did it create a longing in you to speed up and get out of the way...? I bet you had a feeling...you felt like slowing down... way down.

I understand the struggle here. It feels like the world is going downhill all round us. And it feels like we must stand up for our morality...but we can never take the path of legalism. It's hard because... "It seems good or noble to oppose immorality through calling it out and opposing it. But if it comes from a spirit of legalism it never ends up in a good place because if we do this with other Christians... we may get change... or compliance, but they don't grow in living by the Spirit.

*Phil 3:3 For it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh."*

We might get good behavior, but we're teaching them to put confidence in the flesh. If we do this with people outside the church... we end up trying to make the secular spiritual ...we end up asking people without a relationship with Christ to live as if they have one. It can never be a sincere thing; it will feel fake or abusive.

We will never change the world by judging and condemning them as legalist. The Bible says we advance the kingdom of God through love.

When I was in college studying to be a pastor the SBC went into a big tizzy against Disneyland... because they were not living up to the right morals. But guess what, Disneyland is not a church, it's not God's community... it's a secular theme park. Why would we expect them to do anything different...?

The SBC's solution was to call for a worldwide boycott of Disney. How do you think Disney felt? Picture a board of directors – “Well guy's can you feel the love, can you feel how they care about us, how they want us to be all we can be?” No! They felt attacked; they felt like we were deliberately trying to hurt their ability to make a profit... because we were.... That's why they felt that. Disney snapped back and said “We'll do anything we want!”

Starting in verse 7 Paul contrasts legalism with a different approach to life. This is the life he is pressing on to take hold of.

**Memory verse:** Phil 3:12

*Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.*

### **Press on in Humility**

*Phil 3:7 But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ.*

This is such a humble attitude...

*Phil 3:8 What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ*

Rubbish... all my good works are rubbish compared to the righteousness I have in Christ. ~ This is the opposite of a legalist mindset.

A few years ago I played golf. I'm not much of a golfer... I'm more of a surfer. Jack and Roger are the golfers. For me golf is a little too laid back. You just don't have the equivalent of sharks, or crushing waves that could slam you into cliffs...but for this particular game we paired up and one of the guys we were with was a really, really good player. And we played I think it was called a scramble. My partner and I would both tee off and then we would play off the best shot.

First, it didn't matter how bad my shots were because he was constantly hitting these great shots. We were tearing it up. But I wasn't walking around bragging, I'm so bad, we are tearing you up... because even though I was on the winning team... it really didn't have a lot to do me.

Second, as the game went on the Club Pro was giving me pointers...he was improving my game. Things like “Don't hold the golf club like a baseball bat.” My game was getting better and better. At one point we even used one of the balls I hit... because it was one of the first times I didn't send it torpedoing into the desert...but again, it was because of his insight and instruction. For this particular game I won... I think it was the first time ever. It was

So here's the application. It is to value people as beautiful creatures of God. Aside from any moral failures they might have. We can still love people and set health boundaries. We can love and appreciate a world of people

around us without compromising our values, and without holding them in contempt. Pressing on in Grace is means we...love others without asking if they merit it.