

Self-Study Courses through Niceville Assembly of God

Distance learning and self-study are among the most dynamic and fastest-growing educational strategies in colleges and churches across America. Though different from traditional classroom study methodology, the goal is the same: to guide students through a systematic approach to spiritual formation.

This course has been carefully written and prepared so that you may experience intellectual and personal growth in the convenience of your home and at your own pace. Do not expect home study to be an easy shortcut to learning; it requires high motivation and self-discipline, since there are no prearranged class times. If you follow the process faithfully, however, your investment of valuable time will pay rich dividends in increased understanding and spiritual growth!

To assist students in grasping the concepts presented in self-study courses, a qualified Course Advisor is available to answer any questions you may have and to help guide you through the materials. Simply e-mail your questions or comments about course content to dguthmuller@nicevilleag.com. Your question(s) will receive prompt attention by your Course Advisor!

Suggestions for Studying

You cannot study the Bible as though it were just another book. Those who wrote it were inspired by the Holy Spirit, so you need the Holy Spirit to illuminate its truth to your heart and mind. With an open Bible, the Holy Spirit, a textbook, and a study guide, you're in the classroom of the Holy Spirit. As a student of the Holy Spirit, you'll achieve the goal of this course--anointed learning. Here are some study tips:

1. Set aside quiet and regular times for your study. Concentration is easier if you turn your mind to your studies at the same time each day.
2. Pray as you begin each study session. Ask the Lord to help you understand the material and make appropriate application to your life.
3. Look over the lesson objectives and the questions at the back of this workbook prior to reading each section.
4. Read through the lesson. Look up scripture references and take any notes that may be helpful. You may want to highlight pages or take notes in the margins as specific points make an impression on you.
5. Close the book and try to think through the main points. Think about what you've learned and seek ways to apply it in your personal life, in discussion with family and friends, in a Bible lesson, etc.
6. Answer the study questions in the back of the workbook. To get the most out of this study, be sure to use the manual properly. Don't simply turn to the section designated and search only for the answer, leaving the rest of the valuable material unread.
7. Take your time. No bell will ring to force you to move on to new material.
8. Make good use of reference tools, such as a study Bible, a comprehensive concordance, and a Bible dictionary. An up-to-date English dictionary will help you understand words that may be unfamiliar.
9. If you have access to the internet, you may want to use online resources such as <http://www.biblegateway.com/>, <http://www.bible.org/>, <http://www.e-sword.net/>.
10. Email any questions you may have concerning this course and its contents to dguthmuller@nicevilleag.com. Please indicate which course you are taking and the specific page number(s) which is/are in question.
11. When you have completed all study questions, you may check your answers against the answer key in the back of the workbook. Don't "cheat"! Remember, the only person you will be cheating is yourself!

Personal Goals and Progress

Learning Goal

From this course I hope to be able to:

Study Goal

I plan to schedule the following time(s) for study:

Monday:

Tuesday:

Wednesday:

Thursday:

Friday:

Saturday:

Sunday:

Hours per Week:

Progress

Date Course Started:

Date Course Completed:

Personal Commitment

I hereby submit myself to the Holy Spirit and commit myself to becoming the person God created me to be.

Signature

Date

Grace Part 2: Breaking Out of Legalism

Course Syllabus



Description

This is a hard hitting Bible study course on how to break free of the dogma of religion, the number one grace killer. More often than not, what is proclaimed as gospel is just another challenge to “do better.” Try harder! Be more committed! Love deeper! Stop sinning! Be good! Be happy! All of these commands come as bad news to people who are trapped by their own guilt-ridden, inadequate lives. Those people who have tried to do better failed. People who are already over-committed and trapped by sin are well aware they fall far short of good. The hurting masses of the world are seeking a cure for their ills and solution for their problems. And too often, the church has promised them everything but given them next to nothing in the name of the Gospel. Just more expectations to fulfill, more rules to keep, more activities to maintain, more work to do. The result has been a trail of discouraged and disillusionment. It’s caused a lot of people to reject the church entirely. And the tragedy is that this “do better” mentality and the lifestyle it spawns are light years removed from the kind of life Jesus demonstrated.

Objectives

This study is designed to provide an in-depth understanding of legalism and show those bound by guilt and condemnation how to get free. When Jesus began His ministry He set into motion a long-awaited freedom for those shackled by religious dogma.

Grace Part 2: Breaking Out of Legalism

(Niceville Assembly of God, Niceville, Florida)



(Boyce A. Teas)

Preface

This is Part 2 of a two-part study on the grace of God. Except otherwise noted, all Scripture is taken from the New International Version of the Bible (NIV).

Introduction

On December 18, 1865, approximately three years after the assassination of Abraham Lincoln, the 13th amendment to the constitution of the United States of America became Law and slavery was officially abolished. Newspapers across the country proclaimed that slavery was officially abolished. What a great day it was for the United States of America. Slaves were now free to decide their own fate. And yet, something happened that many would have never expected. The vast majority of slaves in the South went right on living as though nothing had happened. Though free, their lives were virtually unchanged throughout the Reconstruction Period. That is because most slaves chose to live as slaves. Shelby Foot said in his book, *The Civil War*, "Every slave could repeat with equal validity, what an Alabama slave had said in 1864 when asked what he thought about the Great Emancipator whose proclamation went into effect that year, 'I don't know nothing about Abraham Lincoln,' he replied, 'cep they say he sat us free. And I don't know nothing about that either.'" What a tragedy! A war had been fought, a president assassinated, thousands of lives lost, a law had been enacted to abolish slavery and yet people still lived as slaves. Let me tell you something more tragic. The Son of God left the splendor of glory to come to this planet to fulfill every single requirement under the Law to qualify as God's sacrificial Lamb so he could die on the cross and free humanity from earth's slave master, Satan. Yet, millions of believers in Christ choose to live under the bondage of legalism. That is why they are still bound with a sin habit.

Section 1 - Definition

Simply put, legalism is law. Law is works for salvation. Law doesn't have to be the Mosaic Law of the Old Testament. It can be any religious code of ethics whereby a person seeks to produce God's righteousness in order to justify himself/herself before God and gain His favor (e.g., what to eat, drink, wear, and where or where not to go, water baptism, etc.). Read Matthew 23:23-24, 28; Mark 7:6-9; Luke 12:4-12. The legalists of Jesus' day had rejected God's Word and replaced it with their own ideas and interpretations, adding all kinds of do's and don'ts. Obsessed with duty, external conduct and a constant focus only on their list of do's and don't, they promoted a religious system so demanding there was no room left for joy. Obedience to God became a matter of dreaded compulsion instead of a joyous overflow of God's love. Worship and serving God became both a duty and liability as they tried to balance the scales of justice in order to feel justified, vainly thinking that in doing this they were

achieving being. Here comes Christ's little band of followers who had not gone to Bible school confusing everyone by living in freedom. They even went out in the field on the Sabbath plucked some corn and ate without *ceremonially* washing their hands. There's nothing more distressing for a legalist than for someone to enjoy life.

Jesus said, "Unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:20). It wasn't so much what these legalists did that condemned them; it was their motivations (Matthew 23:23). A legalist may do the right action but never for the right motive. Because their motive for doing what they did was recognition (Matthew 23:5) the Pharisees were only concerned with the outward appearance (Matthew 23:5). The Lord called them hypocrites (Matthew 23:28-29). A hypocrite is a "mask-wearer," one whose inside doesn't match up with the outside. Report card religion never fooled Jesus. A person of grace is more concerned with what God thinks than what others think and serves God out of love and a heart of gratitude (John 14:15). Thus, his/her inside (motives; attitudes, intents of the heart, etc.) match up with the outside (actions; behavior).

Section 2 – Comparison between Legalism and Grace

The trademark of a legalist is, "God, I thank you that I am not like other men, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector" (Luke 18:11-12). He/she believes he/she has only a little sin while the very immoral person has a lot of sin (Luke 7:47). How much sin does it take to send someone to hell? Is there anyone on this planet who only needs a "little" forgiveness from God? Both Galatians 3:10 and James 2:10 tell us if we have broken a part of God's Law, we are guilty of breaking all of it. The person of grace knows "there is no one righteous, not even one" (Romans 3:10) and that "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). That is why he/she needs grace. The person of grace also knows God's righteousness (goodness) comes from Christ and Him alone (Philippians 3:9; Romans 1:17; 3:22-23; 4:2-5), and that salvation is a free gift that is received through faith in Him. Thus, no one can brag about how good they are (Ephesians 2:8-9). A legalist is a perfectionist who labels his or her scruples as being God's holiness and then tries to force them on to others. That is because the works orientated person approaches God's holiness from the outside hoping to change the inside. He/she thinks, "If I pray and read the Bible this much it will balance out this failure over here. If the person doesn't pray enough or read the Bible enough, he/she believes the scales of justice are tipped and he/she feels bad and sinful. What the legalist doesn't understand is holy living comes from a holy being - grace is an inside work. The person of grace understands Jesus balanced the scales of justice when He died on the cross (Romans 3:21-26), and that all blessings come free of charge from the grace of God. He/she does not try to earn what he/she already has, God's righteousness. Only from a position of *already having* obtained God's righteousness and approval can one's service be accepted by the Father (Romans 1:17; 3:22; 4:4-5, 8; Philippians 3:9). First Thessalonians 5:23 states, "May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." Only grace can do that because it affects all that we are.

Before “feeling blessed,” a legalist may look at his/her watch when praying to make sure the “time requirements” are met. A person of grace may testify and say, “I had sweet communion with the Lord as I lay in bed praying and meditating this morning.” The response of the legalist is, “Let’s get this right. You did your praying in bed without getting down on your knees?” What the works orientated person doesn’t understand is communion is a matter of the heart. Ps 51:17 says “the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.” That is why a person of grace is more concerned with the motives and intents of the heart than with actions (Colossians 3:23-24; Ephesians 6:6).

A legalist tries to overcome temptations and habits by a mixture of self-effort and weighing the consequences. He or she says, “I should not commit this sin because it will bring down God’s wrath, bring disgrace upon me, my family, and my ministry in the Church. What will people think of me should they find out.” But inwardly he or she wants to sin. Fear of being caught, or the absence of opportunity, does not keep people from sinning. Grace, on the other hand, works from the inside out! The person under grace won’t even have a desire to appease the flesh because he/she knows self-control is an internal work of the Holy Spirit. It is not something we can do on our own. When we, by the will of the flesh, determine to have self-control, self-control becomes a law of self-justification. Why would someone who has been set free from the bondage of sin want to go back into its grip? Some do because they are flesh centered, trying to force their outside to agree with the written Word of God out of fear rather than tapping into the inward desire of God. The Law was powerless to do what the Holy Spirit does through Jesus (Romans 8:3). Christ breaks the power and dominion of sin in the lives of those who repent and come to Him for eternal life (John 8:31-32, 36). Then, the Holy Spirit comes in and administers God’s grace to meet our every need in life.

A legalist gives money to the church for self-justification and out of duty and liability (demand of the law). A person of grace gives money to the Church out of love and appreciation for what Christ did for us on the cross. He/she understands believers in Christ have “already” been justified by faith (Romans 5:1; 5:9). One cannot be under liability and be free to give from the heart as a responsible giver. Giving is an issue of a Spirit-led heart (Galatians 5:6, 13, 16), relating to God based on faith (Romans 5:1-2) and God’s resources (2 Corinthians 9:8; Philippians 4:19), not from obligation. The person of grace believes everything belongs to God not just ten percent (1 Corinthians 6:20). His/her attitude is, “You mean I get to keep 90 percent of God’s money? You mean God will allow me to give to the Church as if it were unto Him?” It is both a privilege and an honor to give money to the Lord through the Church for the person of grace. That is why he or she receives joy out of giving (2 Corinthians 9:7).

The legalist fasts out of duty and self-justification (Luke 18:11-12). The person of grace fasts out of desire from a Spirit-led heart. Wigglesworth once said, “Fasting is a great joy when you are led by God to do it...I only fast when God specifically leads me to do it. And if it is not a joy, I immediately break it because I refuse to fast unless I find joy in it.” The person of grace knows whatever God calls us to do He will give both the desire

(Psalms 37:4) and ability to do it (Philippians 4:13). Thus, fasting is a joy for the person of grace.

According to the legalist if you are not reading their particular translation of the Bible you aren't reading the "true" Word of God. A person of grace isn't concerned with which translation people read; he/she is just glad people are reading the Bible. Many legalists insist the Old King James version of the Bible is the only true Word of God. They are blind to the fact the original manuscripts of the Bible were not written in English and that the Old King James Version is only a translation. It is not even the most accurate English translation in existence today! If you love reading the Old King James Version of the Bible that's fine, just don't accuse others of not being spiritual or "right with God" because they are reading a different translation. We need to stop fussing over which English translation is best and encourage people to read and follow the Bible. All versions (translations) of the Bible will give you enough of the truths that, if followed, will show you the way to Jesus. Second Corinthians 3:18 provides us with a summarized comparison between legalism and grace:

OLD COVENANT LAW

"The letter (law) kills" (v. 6)

"Ministration of death" (v. 7)

"Ministration of condemnation" (v. 9)

NEW COVENANT GRACE

"The Spirit gives life" (v. 6)

"Ministration of the Spirit" (life) (v. 7)

"Ministration of righteousness" (v. 9)

Read Matthew 11:28-30. These were common people who were *working hard* to please God. Jesus said, "Come unto me you who that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." Jesus was offering the people an easier approach to God, an approach that bypasses religion. It was an approach of faith without labor or works. The Greek word for "loaded down" or "burdened" (*phortizo*) relates to a beast of burden. In Jesus' day, a beast of burden was a mule or camel. The words "You who are weary and burdened" ["heavy laden" in OKJV] refers to an animal that is loaded down with an excessive amount of freight or merchandise. In the book of John, Jesus called people sheep and referred to himself as the Good Shepherd (10:4, 14). Think how strange it was for the Lord to see His sheep carrying a mule's pack. Bones of a sheep were not designed by the Creator to sustain that kind of overload. A sheep will eventually drop under a pack mule's load. Like sheep, Jesus saw people being loaded down like a pack mule with religious rules and regulations. They were continually working hard to please God only to have more restrictions added to their already heavy load by religious leaders. The only other place "loaded down" or "burdened" (*phortizo*) is found in the Bible is in Luke 11:46, where Jesus said, "And you experts in the Law, woe to you, because you load people down with burdens they can hardly carry, and you yourselves will not lift one finger to help them." The Jews had 613 Laws to contend with. They had rules from how to get out of bed to how far one could walk on the Sabbath (Saturday). They even had a rule that said if you broke one of these 613 rules you were guilty of breaking them all. Jesus tells these sincere hard working people who had been overloaded with religion and worry, that there was an alternative. They could come to Him and let Him give them rest. In Matthew 11:28, the Greek word translated *rest* is "anapauso." It has a two-fold meaning. The first meaning is, "I will rest you," or I will

give you a vacation.” This word is still used in Greece when referring to a vacation or holiday. Jesus is basically saying, “You who are loaded down with religion come to me and I will rest you from all your worries and anxiety over trying to please God through good works.” Cross reference Ephesians 2:14; Philippians 4:7; Colossians 3:15. The second meaning for the Greek (*anapauso*) translated “rest” in Matthew 11:28 is “to pause.” Today, we would use this phrase in relationship to pushing the pause button on a VCR or DVD player. When you push the pause button you freeze the picture and stop everything that is going on. Here is my paraphrase of Matthew 11:28: “You who are scurrying around with an overload of worry come to me and let me push your emotional pause button. I’ll go right into the picture of your life and start stripping away all that guilt and anxiety and give you rest.” Jesus said in verse 29, “Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.” The yoke for the believer is the Lordship of Christ. Yoke refers to submission, authority and control. The yoke can also be understood as the “ways” of Jesus. The Lord is offering us a better way to live than what religion offers. However, it is our responsibility to accept Christ and His grace. Jesus will not force His yoke or ways upon a person. Paul said, “Clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 13:14). The consequence of not doing that will result in being overloaded with religion and guilt. Religion appeals to our greatest weaknesses and fears. The gospel of grace turns our weaknesses into strengths, and turns our fears into faith.

When Jesus said in Matthew 11:29, “*Learn from me,*” He was talking about learning what He is like. What is Christ like? First, He said He was “*gentle and humble in heart.*” In other words, He was gentle towards others and humble in spirit or attitude. Jesus had the right to be the harshest on sinners. Yet, He was the most compassionate towards them. Read Philippians 2:1-8. What was the result of Jesus humbling Himself? He was exalted (Philippians 2:9-11). If we are wearing Christ’s yoke of lordship we too will be gentle and humble in spirit and attitude. Humility is important to God. Both Peter and James said that God “resists the proud and gives grace to the humble” (1 Peter 5:5 and James 4:6). The Greek word used for “resist” means “to oppose or stand in ones way.” If you are in some ministry and things aren’t going your way, you might want to check your attitude. It may be your way is being blocked by God. Many people idolize ministry. To do so is not only spiritual adultery, it is idol worship. There is a song that states, “If the Lord shuts the door I will kick open a window.” Brilliant! When God says “What He opens no one can shut, and what He shuts no one can open” (Revelation 3:7), goes for windows as well. When we take Jesus upon us we become humble in spirit and submissive, to both God and human authority.

The Lord concluded His discourse in Matthew 11 with, “For my yoke is easy and my burden is light” (v. 30). In other words, the light load of submission to Jesus is easy in comparison to the heavy burden of rules and regulations religious leaders had placed upon people. If you have accepted Christ as your personal Savior, God has deposited in you a jewel that you can easily carry around in your heart. That nugget is Christ Himself through the indwelling Holy Spirit who constantly says to you, all is well with your soul.

Section 3 – Struggle with Grace

Most of us have struggled with grace at one time or other. Those of the early Church were no exception. After preaching at the home of a Gentile by the name of Cornelius (Acts 10), Peter was called on the carpet by “the circumcised believers in Jerusalem” for associating with Gentiles (Acts 11:2). The manifestation of tongues which the Gentiles experienced when they believed in Jesus did much to get Peter off of the hook and help Church leaders accept Gentile believers (Acts 11:15-18). They understood the baptism of the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in other tongues (Acts 2:4) is a grace gift which *follows* salvation (Acts 10:44-46; 11:17; 19:2). While Peter’s experience did much to help the young Church accept Gentile believers, he did not have the impact as did a converted Pharisee by the name of Saul (his name was changed to Paul following his conversion - Acts 9). Following his conversion, Paul was appointed an apostle to the Gentiles and did much to help Church leaders understand the grace of God.

Read Galatians 1:1-17. Paul’s letter to the Galatians was the first of his known writings. The apostle starts off this vital letter declaring his authority to teach what he has been teaching (Galatians 1:1). He is writing to Christians who were moving away from the true understanding of the Christian faith (1:6) and “turning to a different gospel” (1:6), which, as Paul put it, “is really no gospel at all” (1:17). The controversy among the Galatians was whether salvation is by the blood of Jesus only or is it a mixture of Jesus’ blood and rules and regulations from the Jewish Law (Galatians 2:15-16)? Paul warns the congregation that if they rely on justification based on the Law for their relationship with God they will be destroying the very heart of the gospel - salvation by faith in Jesus alone (Galatians 2:16; 5:5). One of the interesting things about Galatians Chapter 1 is that the apostle makes a major effort to account for his whereabouts immediately following his conversion. He said, “I did not consult any man (1:16), nor did I go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before I was, but I went immediately into Arabia and later returned to Damascus” (1:17). It was not until three years after his conversion that Paul even met any of the disciples. He went to Jerusalem and stayed with Peter 15 days to become acquainted with him (1:18). Paul also met briefly with James while he was in Jerusalem (1:19). James was not only the Lord’s half earthly brother; he was the pastor of the Jerusalem Church, an extremely influential position.

Why did Paul go into so much detail about his whereabouts and contacts immediately following his conversion? *He wanted the Galatia believers to know that his understanding of justification by faith in Jesus alone (grace) was not given to him by one of the apostles, rather by the Lord Jesus.* Thus, they had better take his message of grace to heart. Paul starts most of his letters off by declaring that he was “an apostle--sent not from men nor by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father...” (1:1).

Read Galatians 2:1-10 and Acts 15:1-21. The picture painted for us in these passages is that some Pharisaic believers came from Jerusalem and began teaching that “Gentiles must be circumcised and required to obey the Law of Moses” (Acts 15:5). Paul faced them down and said you are not going to teach that garbage here (Acts 15:5). Church officials at Galatia encouraged Paul to go to Jerusalem, meet with the

apostles, and discuss the matter. He agreed and takes with him Barnabas and a converted Gentile (Greek) by the name of Titus, who by the way had not been circumcised. It is now 14 years after Paul's conversion (Galatians 2:1). Paul's intent was to slip into Jerusalem and talk with the apostles and Church elders without causing a commotion (Galatians 2:2). But when some Pharisaic believers found out Paul was there, and to their horror, had brought with him Titus, a converted Gentile who had not been circumcised (Galatians 2:4) they became furious to say the least, and tried to force Titus to be circumcised right then (Galatians 2:1-4). Listen to what Paul said to the Galatians concerning this incident: "We did not give in to them for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might remain with you" (Galatians 2:5). Paul was tolerant of and patient toward many things (1 Corinthians 13:4-7) but unyielding when it came to the "truth of the gospel," making it clear justification by faith in Christ alone must never be compromised for the sake of peace, unity or current opinion. Both the glory of Jesus Christ and the salvation of the lost were at stake. Listen to what Paul said about the Church council at Jerusalem: "As for those who seem to be important—whatever they were makes no difference to me; God does not judge by external appearance—those men added nothing to my message" (Galatians 2:6). Apparently, Paul and the apostles did not come to an agreement concerning justification by faith either.

Something similar to what Paul experienced with the Pharisaic believers occurred in the Assemblies of God Church in the early 1900's. Using Peter's words in Acts 2:38, there were a group of works-orientated pastors who insisted believers be baptized in Jesus name only in order to be saved. They also believed a person had to speak in tongues to be saved. Peter is doing neither in this passage. He is simply calling upon his *Jewish* audience to change their opinion of and attitude towards Christ and to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ as a public acknowledgment that they had accepted Him as Messiah and Lord. Like circumcision, baptism in and of itself is not a means of forgiveness of sins. Nor is it a means of salvation. Telling someone they have to do something to be saved is law. While it is not the Mosaic Law, it is law nevertheless.

There are believers today who substitute Christ and His grace with contemporary symbols, such as confessions, baptism in water, communion, church membership (especially in their church), not eating certain foods, and even speaking in tongues, etc. As wonderful as these things are, doing them does not save a person or make him or her righteous. Only faith in Jesus Christ can save (Ephesians 2:8-9). In Paul's day, the issue was circumcision. Paul said in Galatians 5:4, "You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace." Paul went on to say in Galatians 6:15, "Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a new creation." The same can be said of water baptism or any other ordinance of the church.

Read Galatians 2:11-13. While Peter did not embrace circumcision for the Gentiles, it is clear from verse 12, he was concerned over what the Pharisaic believers (*circumcision group*) thought of him associating with non-circumcised Gentile believers. Peter later refers to Paul as "our dear brother Paul" (2 Peter 3:15), indicating he recognized his

error and humbly accepted Paul's rebuke (Galatians 2:11). Peter no doubt recognized the Gospel Paul was preaching came from the Lord (cross-reference Acts 10:43), but like other Church leaders struggled with justification by faith (2 Peter 3:14-15).

Read 2 Corinthians 11:4-5. Whoever these so called "super-apostles" were they were teaching a "different gospel" than what Paul was teaching (2 Corinthians 11:5). Paul even accused some of these guys of being false apostles (2 Corinthians 11:1-15). Recall, Paul stated in Galatians 1:8, "But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned!" I do not think Paul was concerned about an angel coming down from heaven and preaching something contrary to what Jesus had given him. He knew some men who held high positions in the Church at Jerusalem were going around preaching something different than what he was preaching. What were they teaching that was so terrible? Was it that you can go to heaven being a murderer or some other gross sinner? No! They were teaching justification through works rather than justification by faith in Jesus. Where did the false doctrine of works for salvation come out of? Galatians 2:12, "...certain men came from James." This false doctrine was coming out of the Jerusalem Church that was headed up by James! Barnabas, Paul's associate, even got caught up into a works for salvation mentality that was being spread around at that time (Galatians 2:13). Why was it so hard for early Church leaders to understand the grace of God? Because it is hard to break out of something you have lived under all your life.

After Paul's martyrdom, Church leaders with a works-mentality were successful in leading Christians away from God's grace and back into a sin orientated religious system of works for salvation. If one sinned, he or she had to confess to a priest and do whatever works of penitence the priest required. The emphasis was not upon Christ's finished work on the cross but upon works as the penalty and justification for sin. Although it was not the Mosaic Law, it was law nevertheless. God began raising spiritual leaders up to lead the Church back into the grace of God. One of those was a lawyer who became a Catholic Monk by the name of Martin Luther. Luther became disillusioned over the corruption he saw in the city of Rome when he visited there in 1510. This prompted him to search the Bible for answers. In doing so, he came across Romans 1:17 where Paul, quoting from the book of Habakkuk, said, "The righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, 'the just shall live by faith.'" Although he went back into the Roman Catholic Church, his book *The Bondage of the Will* did much to lead the universal Church away from a sin orientated religious system of works for salvation and look to Jesus.

Here the Church is close to the return of Christ, and as a whole, drifting away from the grace of God and going back under the bondage of works for salvation. How I know this is, for the sake of global peace, many national religious leaders are asking believers to surrender some of their most cherished values and tightly held biblical doctrines for the sake of global peace. It's called interfaith cooperation. At the forefront of the debate is Jesus being the only way to God. Prominent religious leaders don't mind us saying that Jesus is the Son of God as long as we don't say He's the only way to God.

The concept that all religions are valid and are merely different pathways to God (interfaith) will eventually become the dominant view across the planet. Christians will be persecuted the same way they were during New Testament times. What caused Christians to be persecuted by Roman officials during New Testament times was not that they proclaimed Jesus as being the Son of God, but because of their non-compromising stand that Jesus was the *only way* to God (John 14:6; Acts 4:12; 1 Timothy 2:5). We evangelical Christians are not accepted today because we refuse to accept various religions, Mary, angels, saints, prophets, etc. as ways to God. While we should respect those who hold other religious beliefs we must stand on God's Word. Only God deserves to be worshiped (Revelation 19:10). Besides, believing that Jesus is the only way to God will make a difference where people spend eternity (John 14:6; Acts 4:12; Romans 10:9-13; 1 Timothy 2:5).

Another example of how far the Church has drifted away from Jesus is the preaching that is coming from America pulpits that if we pay tithes, pray and fast long enough, become a member of the church, etc., we can receive God's favor. This concept teaches only a few can receive God's blessings because only a few are worthy enough to receive them. Grace, on the other hand, centers on Christ and not on man's good works. It teaches it is Jesus who makes the blessings of God possible. Yes, we should pray, fast, pay tithes, witness, live holy, etc. (Romans 6:13), but not as a means of justification or to earn God's favor (Philippians 3:3-9). Romans 4:25, "He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification." *Justification* is a judicial term meaning to *declare one righteous*. The guilty sinner stands before the great tribunal of a holy God ready to be sentenced to death. Justification is the breathtaking announcement that the sinner is *not guilty* and his sentence of eternal death (eternal separation from God) has been *remitted*. The penalty for sin is death – physical and spiritual (Genesis 2:16-17; Romans 5:12-14; 6:23; Revelation 20:14-15). This penalty was removed by the death of Christ who took the punishment due us in His own body on the cross (Isaiah 53:5-6; 1 Peter 2:24). God's *divine favor* can only be acquired through faith in Jesus as presented by the apostle Paul.

Doesn't it seem strange that we get our understanding of the grace of God from Paul and not from one of the original apostles, especially Peter who preached the first salvation message to the Gentiles? Doesn't it also seem strange that Jesus took Paul into the desert of Arabia and taught him the gospel instead of sending him to one of the apostles? Why didn't the Lord send Paul to Jerusalem to learn about the gospel? More importantly, how could a *party of the Pharisees* who were demanding Gentiles become circumcised for justification purposes operate out of the Jerusalem Church (Acts 15:5)? After all, the Jerusalem church was headed up by James who must have had a personal encounter with the resurrected Savior. In addition, two of the elders in the Jerusalem Church were apostles John and Peter, who had credentials beyond dispute. Who is going to argue with Peter, the guy who walked on water and had 3,000 souls saved when he preached his first sermon on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:40); or, John, the one *who said* Jesus loved him most? Who is going to disagree with "reputed pillars" of the Church (Galatians 2:9) like James? Paul did! I submit the reason the Lord did not send Paul to Jerusalem to become indoctrinated by the apostles was because they,

along with other Church leaders, had been compromised by a Pharisaic group of believers from the Jerusalem Church who was going from church to church telling believers they needed to follow certain rituals of the Law given by Moses in order to be saved. So you should not be shocked because you have some legalism in you. The best of the best have fallen into it!

An often asked question is can a believer in Christ fall from grace? The answer is yes, but not by sinning. The way a believer can fall from grace and become alienated from Christ all over again is through legalism (Galatians 5:1-4). The number one grace killer is legalism (Galatians 5:1-12)! And, the best of the best have fallen into it (Galatians 2:1-21; Acts 15:1-21). Legalism is as much a work of the flesh as sexual immorality, drunkenness, or any other fleshly action, because it cancels out grace (Romans 11:6). Jesus not only came to provide us with eternal life, He came to set us free from the dogma of religion. You can put me in a bar and I would not be tempted to drink. You can put me in a room full of smokers and I would not be tempted to smoke. You can put me in a hotel room with a prostitute and I would not be tempted to commit some sexual sin. You can put me in a room where cocaine is being used and it would not affect me. But, put me around some legalists and I will be tempted to go back into works for self-justification. It is that addictive.

In closing this section of the study, consider this illustration: There was a group of friends who charted a two-engine plane to fly across country. After they had gotten airborne both engines burst into flames. The pilot rushed out of the cockpit and yells, "We're going to crash," and begins passing out parachutes. He opens the side door of the plane and begins lining people up to bail out. The first passenger steps up to the door and shouts, "Could I make a request?" The captain responds, "Sure, what is it?" "Could I get a pink parachute?" The pilot shakes his head in disbelief and states, "Isn't it enough I gave you a parachute?" The first passenger jumps. The second person steps to the door and states, "I'm wondering if there is any way you could ensure I won't get nauseated during the jump?" The captain replies, "No, but I can ensure you will have a parachute for the fall." The third person steps up and states, "I am afraid of heights, would you remove my fear?" "No," he replies, "but I'll give you a parachute." Another pleads for a different strategy, "Could you just let us crash with the plane. We might survive." The pilot smiles and says, "You don't know what you are asking" and gently shoves him out the door. Another passenger wants goggles, another wants boots, another wants to wait until the plane is closer to the ground, and so on. As the pilot helps passengers out one by one, he shouts, "You people don't understand, I've given you a parachute isn't that is enough?" The only parachute that will land us safely into heaven is Jesus Christ and Him alone. That gift is adequate. But are we content? No. We are restless, anxious, even demanding. God has thousands of appeals per second. Some are legitimate, others aren't. Like Paul, we, too, ask God to remove the pain or change His plans for our life. He usually answers with a gentle shove that leaves us airborne and suspended by His grace, because that is all that is needed to safely land us in heaven. (Taken from *In the Grip of Grace* by Max Lucado, pages 129-130.)

Section 4 – Seven “U” of Breaking Out of Legalism

Understanding legalism is not enough; a believer must want to be free. Here are seven steps for breaking free of the dogma of religion. We shall call these the seven “Us” of breaking free of legalism:

1. **Understand Christ has *already* set you free from law and sin.**

One must fully understand grace in order to be free of legalism. Galatians 5:1, “So Christ has made us free. Now make sure that you stay free and don’t get all tied up again in the chains of slavery to Jewish laws and ceremonies” (The Living Bible). There is no better book found in the Bible to explain the freedom Christ purchased for us on the cross than the book of Romans. There were five groups of religious people in the Church at Rome. First, there were the extreme legalists; Jews who held the position all believers in Christ should keep the Law, including Gentiles. The second group was made up of moderate legalists who believed they needed to religiously keep the Law but did not force it on others. The third group was the moderate libertines who believed they had to break the Law but did not require that of others. The fourth group was made up of extreme libertines. This group was made up of both radical believing Jews and Gentiles who felt every believer in Christ should purposely sin or break the Law so grace could increase and show they were free from the Law. Paul addresses this group in Romans Chapter 6, verses 1-2. The fifth group was made up of doubters who were torn between the other extremes. It was for this last group that Paul wrote Romans 14. The book of Romans is basically a comparison between Law (legalism) and grace. Being a Jew and former Pharisee, and knowing how these pharisaic believers think, Paul methodically shoots down each and every one their self-righteous crutches. He starts his gospel off by addressing the atheist. Because God has revealed Himself through His creative handiwork, the atheist stands condemned (Romans 1:19-20; cross-reference Psalms 19:1-6). Next, Paul confronts the moralist who passes judgment on others when they don’t measure up to their concept of holiness. Romans 2:1, “Some of you accuse others of doing wrong. But there is no excuse for what you do. When you judge others, you condemn yourself, because you are guilty of doing the very same things” (The *Promise Study Edition* of the Bible). It’s our job to hate sin, its God’s job to deal with the sinner. Besides, holiness is not based on some creed or man’s conceived ideas of what is right and wrong but right actions based on God’s Word motivated by love (Romans 14:15; cross-reference John 14:15; 1 John 5:3).

Paul deals with the problem of pedigree in Romans Chapter 3, Jews who were guilty of spiritual pride. The Jews felt they were better than the Gentiles because they were custodians (keepers) of the oracles of God (the Law). What they didn’t realize was because they failed to measure up to its demands they were condemned by the very Law they were bragging about. Today, it is Gentile Christians who feel they are better than the Jews because they have the message of Christ. According to Romans 11, like the Jews, Gentile believers have nothing to boast or brag about. Let’s say for illustration purposes the qualification for salvation was that a person had to jump up and touch the moon. There is no need to love your neighbor, pray, read the Bible, or follow

Jesus, just touch the moon by virtue of a jump and you'll be saved. We would never make it would we? Although a person may jump a few inches or feet higher than someone else, it's no reason to boast because no one gets very far compared to the required distance to be justified in the sight of God. That's Paul's point in Romans Chapter 3. We all stand condemned based on our fallen state (Romans 3:23). The only remedy for our sin problem is faith in the blood of Jesus.

In Romans Chapter 4, Paul turns his grace spotlight on to the most sacred badge the Jews wore, circumcision. Initially, circumcision symbolized submission to God and separation from self-sufficiency and the flesh. It also proclaimed there was no part of one's life too private or too personal for God. Rather than see circumcision as a sign of submission, the Jews saw it as a sign of superiority and self-justification. Paul points out in Romans 2:28-29, "True circumcision that makes a person a Jew is not on the outside of the body. A person is a Jew only if he is a Jew on the inside, because true circumcision is done in the heart by the Spirit, not by some written code." Paul seals the argument by asking, "Did God accept Abraham before or after he was circumcised?" (Romans 4:10). If God only accepted Abraham after he was circumcised then Abraham was accepted based on his merits and not according to his faith. Abraham was accepted by God in Genesis Chapter 15 but wasn't told to be circumcised until Genesis 17, some 14 years later! The Jews knew that. If Abraham was already accepted by God then why was he circumcised? Circumcision was an outward sign of what God had *already done* in Abraham's heart; to show Abraham was in covenant with God (Romans 4:11).

Circumcision was like a wedding ring to the Jews. A wedding ring is a symbol of something that has already occurred, namely marriage. But suppose a man is unfaithful to his wife. She reaches the breaking point and informs him she is going to leave. What do you think her response would be if he came back with, "How dare you feel that way? I'm wearing the ring you gave me on our wedding day. I've never removed it one minute! Sure I cheated on you, but I wore my wedding ring while I was doing it. Isn't that enough?" Of course the answer is no! The wedding ring means nothing apart from love. Although it represents love, it cannot replace love. This is Paul's argument in Romans Chapter 4. He is accusing the Jews of trusting the symbol of circumcision while neglecting what it represents, their love relationship with God. The same is occurring in the Christian Church today. There are those who substitute contemporary symbols, such as confessions, water baptism, communion, church membership, ministry, crucifixes, etc., as substitutes for Christ and the grace of God. None of these "works" can save a person any more than circumcision could save the Jews. Only faith in Jesus Christ can do that (John 3:16; Ephesians 2:8-9). Works for self-justification produces self-righteousness and gives the individual glory and not God. The reason we New Testament believers do good works is to show we have already been accepted by God based on the grace Jesus purchased for us on the cross. Jesus "wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us by nailing it to the cross" (Colossians 2:14). When Jesus died on the cross He delivered us from the rituals and demands of the Law, any law, which tries to condemn us.

It's easy to have a performance (works) mentality in the western culture we live in because we are taught to "earn" what we receive. In one of his sermons, Dr. Charles Stanley illustrated this point by telling about a time when he was attending Bible College. The professor started the class off one morning by distributing a two page test and stating, "I want you to read the entire test before starting." Brother Stanley said, "The groans in the classroom began to be audible as students began reading through the test. They were saying things like, 'the questions are too hard... how am I ever going to pass this... I should have studied more... I should have studied longer... I should have studied the right thing...'" Like many of the other students, Brother Stanley was very discouraged as he read through the test, until he came to the close of the second page and read these words: "*You have a choice. You can either complete the exam as given, or sign your name at the bottom and in so doing receive an "A" for the assignment.*" He said, "I looked at that statement again and again. My first reaction was to go back and take the test because it sounded too good to be true. It felt so good when it finally sunk in all I had to do to receive an "A" was to sign my name. It wasn't going to matter whether I knew the answers or not.

The next day Brother Stanley asked the professor to explain the purpose for the test. According to the professor, the different reactions to the test represent the different reactions to God's grace. First, some get their pen out and started answering questions instead of following the instructions and read through the test before starting. Then they get an anxiety attack as they sweat through the whole process until they get to the bottom of the second page and find they didn't have to take the test after all. They looked at each other, smile, and hand it in. This is the individual who starts out in the gospel trying to earn what he or she later discovers is freely offered through God's grace. A second group read through the test until they get to about the middle of the first page. Knowing they can't pass the test, get up, throw the test down on the professor's desk and walk out of the class room in disgust. You can hear them complain about how hard the test was and how unreasonable and unfair the professor is as they walked across the campus. This is the believer who has a shallow experience with God. He or she lives for God until he or she takes a good look at God's standard of holiness and says, "I can't measure up," throws up his or her hands and walks away. This individual eventually gives up trying to please God; because he or she never goes deep enough in faith to discover grace is actually God's ability in us.

Then, there were students who read completely through the test as instructed and experience joy to knowing all they have to do to receive an "A" is to sign their name. This depicts the individual who takes God at His Word and trusts Jesus to take all his/her sins away. Finally, there were those who read through the test but refused to sign their name and receive their "A" free of charge. One student said, "I want to take the test and *earn my grade.*" He took the test and received a "C" minus. The professor said, "It took a pretty sharp guy to get a grade like that." But he could have received an "A" by simply signing his name! This is the individual who refuses grace. He or she wants to earn their salvation. God's tests aren't like those of the professor. God doesn't grade on a curve. If you don't get a 100 when God examines you for holiness you flunk and go to a devil's hell. Paul tells us in Galatians 4:9 the issue is not that we

know God, but “rather are known by God.” You either get an “A” when God examines you or you flunk. Since God’s standard of holiness is so rigid no one can measure up to it on his or her own. The only way to pass God’s examination of holiness is through the merits of Jesus Christ. But people who are legalistic don’t want a free ride. They want to earn their salvation. God’s Word states you had better be perfect (James 2:10), which of course is impossible.

In Exodus, after hearing all the different commandments and ordinances; the people of Israel responded with, “All the words which the Lord has said we will do” (Exodus 24:3). They broke the first and most important commandment (Exodus 20:3) before leaving Sinai (Exodus 32). The Israelites never did measure up to the Law because no one could pass God’s test for holiness! Even Moses didn’t measure up to the Law. He was unable to enter the promise land because he struck the rock twice when he was told to speak to it (Numbers 20). Law is exacting and unmerciful. That is why grace and Law do not mix. They are opposite of one another. You either live under one or the other. Some seem to accept a compromise that says 50% of salvation is God’s sovereignty and 50% is man’s effort. It sounds good to the human ear and desirable to the old carnal nature, but it is a stench to God. In Romans 3:20, Paul provides us with a reason for God’s demands for holiness: “By the deeds of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight...” Justification is God’s work alone in Jesus Christ; living it is our part.

Read Colossians 2:14-15. Christ not only nailed the Law to His cross that condemned us and stood between us and God, His death also disarmed the powers and authorities that held us captive. Grasp the picture. In the spirit realm after His resurrection, Jesus walks up to Satan, who is holding the God’s Law in his hand and using it to accuse people with, snatches it from devil’s hand and walks over and nails it to His blood stained cross. Satan is left standing with nothing to use against God’s people. The only way Satan can legally accuse us of a sin ever again is if we choose to come out of grace and go back under the Law (Galatians 5:1-4). The Law is still in effect for anyone who wants to disobey God and try to justify themselves before God. The only problem with trying to do that is God only recognizes those who are living under grace, Jesus. Furthermore, if you use the Law for justification purposes to be made right with God and break one little part of it you are guilty of breaking all of it (James 2:10), thereby condemning yourself. That condemnation will bring down the wrath of God (Romans 1:18). The Law was not made for the righteous but sinners. That’s why those who use grace as an excuse to sin end up going back under Law and become condemned all over again (Galatians 5:24). Hebrews 8:13 tells us the First Covenant is set aside (made obsolete) because a new way of living has been implemented. If you have repented of your sins and accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior you are 100% free from any requirement of works or *Law to be justified* in the sight of God and are free to serve God out of love (Acts 13:39; Ephesians 2:8; John 1:14, 17; Galatians 5:4). Ephesians 4:27 states, “Do not give the devil a foothold.” One of the ways to do that is to listen to the devil when he tells you your righteousness is determined by what you do, and whether or not you are blessed of God is based on your performance. If you internalize that message you are giving place to the devil. What is the devil’s place? It is being the accuser of the brethren (Revelation 12:10). What does he use to accuse us with? The

Law! How foolish to listen to Satan's accusations when God won't listen to them. The reason God won't listen to them is because we are now under grace and not Law. The Law, any law, can no longer be used against a true follower of Jesus Christ because Christ is the end of the Law to those who will believe in Him (Romans 10:4). Thus, Satan lost his right to accuse us. One of the purposes of the Law was to "lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith. Now that faith has come we are not longer under the "supervision of the Law" (Galatians 3:14-15) or its condemnation (Romans 8:1).

Don't misunderstand what is being said here. We should live holy and do good works (Hebrews 12:14) but not *to justify ourselves before God*. God will only accept "good works" which flows out of a humble heart of love filled with His grace (Ephesians 2:8-9). God is 100% sovereign and man is 100% free to choose. You say, "But the Bible says in 1 John 3:22, "If we keep His commands we please Him and receive anything we ask." Yes, but the very next verse states, "And this is His command: to believe in the name of His Son, Jesus Christ." If you have made Jesus Lord and Savior, in God's eyes, you are an absolute observer of each and every command of the Law, completely righteous in every way. This is called *positional righteousness*. It is the continuing sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit that *progressively* brings the new believer *into conformity with actual righteousness*. Evidence of this growth (1 Peter 1:23; 2:2) are the fruits of the Spirit, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control (Galatians 5:22-23). The more cooperative the believer is with the sanctifying work of the Spirit in his/her heart, the more these characteristics of God will be manifested. Another function of the Holy Spirit is to energize the believer for service (Acts 1:4). This activity of the Spirit (promise of the Father) is not intended for sanctifying power primarily. It is spiritual equipment dispensed to believers to do combat with Satan and to share the good news about Jesus (gospel) with non-believers (Matthew 28:19; Acts 2:4). It is the righteousness of Christ which enables one to stand before a holy God justified (Romans 5:1).

2. Understand grace will change your performance but your performance will not change God's opinion of you.

One's performance didn't change God's opinion under the Law. That is because everyone was declared a sinner under the Law, not by what they did, but because they were born after Adam. At least this is what Paul said in Romans 5:12-14. It was Adam's sin which declared everyone a sinner. All the Law did was to show people they were sinners (Romans 4:15). If the 430 laws found in the Old Testament (Galatians 3:17) did not exist the Israelites would not have been guilty of any personal sins but they still would have been declared sinners and separated from God based on Adam's disobedience. Read Galatians 2:17-21. Paul's point in verse 17 is that just because you bring yourself back under the Law and fall under its condemnation does not mean Christ has anything to do with it. Just because you feel condemned when you do something wrong does not mean Jesus has anything to do with those feelings. Verse 18, "If I built what I destroyed, I prove that I am a Lawbreaker." Paul is talking about believers building back into their belief system the Old Testament Law. Paul is saying.

“If I build back into my life the Law I make myself a transgressor, not God!” Did he say that God sees us as a transgressor? No. We become a transgressor in our own eyes. That is what makes us feel like we need to resolve sin over and over again. It is not Christ doing it. It is us doing it to ourselves.

Although Paul persecuted the church before his conversion, being delivered from that was not what caused Paul to rejoice. Paul rejoiced, not because he was converted from being a murderer, but from self righteousness based on his obedience to the Law (Philippians 3:3-11). We have Americanized the gospel and made it a change from doing something wrong to doing something right. Even though a person cannot get any worse than persecuting Christians, Paul was not rejoicing that he gave up murder, but that he gave up the Law! Most people wrongly believe the reason we need to accept Christ is so we will stop doing things that keeps us out of heaven. Let's say for discussion purposes that without Jesus you could stop sinning. You still wouldn't be qualified for eternal life because it was not your disobedience which brought division between you and God, it was Adam's (Romans 5:17). Besides, if not sinning could have made a person right in God's sight Christ would not have had to die at all. Although our own personal sins were taken care of by the sacrifice of Jesus, He died primarily for the disobedience of one man, Adam. The Law imputed (credited) Adam's transgression to the entire human race. Thus, being a sinner under the Old Covenant (Law) was determined by what Adam did and not what a person did (Romans 5:17). How many of you believe that's unfair? Let me tell you something more unfair. It's unfair for Jesus to die in someone else's place in order to declare them righteous before God. Yet, that is precisely what our Lord did (Romans 5:18-19). If God could condemn everyone based on Adam's sin, then He can pass eternal life on to people based on what Christ did. Adam "was a pattern" for what Christ would do (Romans 5:14). Just as one man, Adam, passed sin and death on to the human race; one man, Christ, passed eternal life on for those who would believe in Him (Romans 5:18-19; 1 Corinthians 15:21-22). Just as God held Adam's sin against the human race and declared everyone guilty, He can now freely forgive and declare everyone innocent who believes in His Son and His death on the cross (Romans 5:17). Jesus' sacrifice not only takes care of Adam's sin, it also takes care of sins revealed by the Law. If you have accepted Christ Jesus as Lord and Savior, not one of God's commands can be used to condemn you for eternal punishment (Romans 8:1).

Jesus set into motion a long-awaited freedom which set free those bound by guilt and condemnation. Grasping this freedom not only liberates us from self-condemnation, it frees us from the rigid barren religion of others. One of the great benefits of believing in Jesus is that neither Adam's sin nor the Law which declared you a sinner any longer applies to you (Romans 10:4; Hebrews 8:13)! It is extremely important that you understand this. I know sin is sin, but your sin is not what caused the problem between you and God in the first place. It was Adam's transgression which was imputed (credited) to the human race before God ever gave the Law (Romans 5:12). All the Law did was to charge Adam's sin to our account (Romans 5:13-14), reveal God's righteousness and make our own personal sin known to us (Romans 7:7). It was an act of mercy on God's part to declare everyone guilty based on Adam's disobedience;

otherwise, He couldn't have justifiably imputed righteousness through the obedience of one Man, Jesus Christ.

Justification by faith assures believers that an offense or transgression for sin can never be an issue again for eternal punishment. Yet, what do many believers do when they make a mistake and sin? They build back again into their conscience the law of sin, feel condemned, and make themselves a transgressor all over again. What's worse, they think it's God who is doing it. Romans 5:1-2 and Romans 8:1 makes it clear God is not doing it; they are. Furthermore, the very things they restrict themselves from doing for the purpose of being made right with God is raging in their hearts as desires, of which they cannot deal with on their own. If by faith they would tap into the righteousness of Christ based on the grace of God, those unholy desires would disappear along with any feelings of condemnation (Romans 8:1-4). Although we must not overlook the need for change in certain areas of our life, salvation is nothing more than the divine exchange. The divine exchange is Jesus taking our place and dying on the cross as a sinner, and we, by faith, receive His righteousness (Romans 1:17; 3:22; Philippians 3:9). It is through Christ's righteousness that we are empowered by the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit to live righteous (Titus 3:3-8). That is the grace of God in a nut shell! While our minds on this earth may never fully comprehend the divine exchange that took place on Calvary, the fact remains everything we were Jesus suffered for on the cross and everything He was we became when we believed and accepted Him as Lord and Savior. Jesus replaced fearful bondage motivated by guilt with freedom to serve God from a Spirit-led heart motivated by love. When a restriction comes to the heart, not for self-justification, but out of love, we are now able to keep. But we must not try to "earn" our salvation in any way or we will come out of justification by faith (grace) and go back under the filthy self-righteousness (Isaiah 64:6) and become condemned all over again. Knowing about grace is not enough to fend off legalism. Until one experiences the divine exchange through justification by faith, he or she will never be victorious over sin.

3. Understand what is right and wrong for your life based on the whole Word of God and not by tradition.

Read 1 Corinthians 9:24-27; Galatians 3:1-5; 5:1-6; Colossians 2:16-23. Many in God's family are shackled and bound by the demands of legalists' who have appointed themselves judge and jury. It is understandable how easy this can happen. With the Mosaic Law came requirements, rules and regulations. With those exacting demands come expectations. Legalists' use those expectations to add their lists of do's and don'ts. These demands further intensified guilt and shame. For example, some modern-day law teachers use passages like Luke 12:5 to try and bring God's people back under the bondage of fear. To do so is taking Jesus' words out of context. This passage is the part in the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus says we must not be afraid of religious bullies or law teachers. If you are going to be afraid of someone, let it be God.

The grace of God not only frees you from the Law, any law, it frees you up from the legalistic expectations of others. You'll love them but you won't have to dance to every tune that you hear. I am not talking about independence; I'm talking about a freedom that grace gives. There was a time in my life when I had no freedom from the urges and impulses within me. I was at the mercy of my master, Satan. Sin was my lifestyle. Then one day I came into a saving knowledge of Christ and experienced first hand the power of His wonderful grace. For the first time in my life I felt real peace. Then, well meaning Christians began telling me I needed to do this and stop doing that, etc. Before I knew it, I was back into bondage. While it was a different kind of bondage, it was bondage nevertheless. I was a miserable Christian for many years. Then one day, I received a revelation of grace from the Word of God and realized that list of dos and don'ts were not my list of right and wrong, but the scruples of other well meaning saints. I still have a list of do's and don'ts but they belong to me not someone else. Determine if what you are doing or not doing is based on some else's conscience or yours and then live by the Holy Spirit's leading. You will still have a list of dos and don'ts but it will be your list and not someone else! Just make sure you base your right and wrong on the *whole Word of God*. Live by Acts 24:16.

4. Understand you have to remove the hypocrisy.

Let me say up front, no one is totally free of hypocrisy. Those who say they don't have any in them are either blind to their faults or they aren't man or woman of God enough to admit it. Be true to yourself. Facing truth about your self is the way of liberation (John 8:32). Question your true motives for doing things. When you make a mistake, admit it, repent and keep moving forward. Grace your failure. Even though you may feel embarrassed, if someone points out your hypocrisy and it's true - don't try to cover it up, agree with them. If it's a family member say, "You know what? You're right. I was a first-class hypocrite. What you pointed out is exactly right." Your spouse and children will not only respect you more, they will look up to you for being honest with them and yourself. By all means don't walk in fear. Fear of criticism prevents people from showing their true selves and growing in grace. "Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ" (Philippians 1:27-30).

5. Understand you cannot please everyone.

If you are one of those who need the approval of others to feel good about yourself. Stop! You are already accepted by the Lord. God is the only one you need to please. If you are following the whole Word of God and someone doesn't like what you are doing, they have a problem with God, not with you. Stand firm until God shows you something different (Galatians 5:1).

6. Understand you must express your liberty wisely.

Read 1 Corinthians 14:13-16. We must not become a stumbling block for weaker brothers and sisters in Christ. Because Paul said, "Everything is permissible" (1 Corinthians 10:23), there are those who justify their right to do whatever they want to do

regardless of how it affects others. Paul accepts such arguments in principle, but then negates the conclusion his opponents had drawn. See 1 Corinthians 10:27-33. Jude and Peter agree with Paul that God has no tolerance for willful abusers of His grace (Jude 4, Peter 2:4-22; 3:15, 16). Also compare Romans 14:13-20 with 1 Corinthians 10:27-33. Nothing that is not specifically designated as evil in Scripture is evil; but rather a matter of conscience; one's personal preference or taste. If you personally would not do what another is doing, let it be. And if you feel the freedom to do so you shouldn't flaunt it or mock those who disagree with you. It is not that you are trying to be deceitful. It is that you don't want to be a stumbling block to someone else. While we are ultimately accountable to God for our actions (Romans 14:12), we must not use our freedom to offend others. It is the conscience of weaker brother and sisters in Christ and not ours which we should be concerned with. If we go around bragging about the things other believers may not feel free to do because of their conscience and inner convictions, we could become a hindrance to a weaker brother or sister's spiritual growth. We must not do that if we can help it. We must not tear the work of God apart over some petty issue or personal conviction.

7. Understand God cannot be obligated.

Trying to earn our salvation is trying to obligate God - God will not be obligated to anyone! Quoting what God told Job (15:8), Paul says in Romans 11:35, "Who has ever given to God, that God should repay Him?" The answer is no one! There is no one who has done something so well that it put God in a position He has to bless. Could you imagine God saying to someone, "I don't want to bless you, but you have obligated me so I'll have no other choice but to do so?" If what we do obligates God then whose righteousness is that? It is our righteousness not Christ's. It is not for the glorification of Jesus Christ for someone to proclaim something he/she forced God to bless. While all of us are blessed, it's not because we have met any of the qualifications of our own merits. It's because God choose to bless us based on grace. Please don't believe God for what you deserve; because, like me, you deserve God's wrath (Romans 6:23). Mercy and grace is what we receive through Christ, but we don't deserve it.

Section 5 - Shipwrecked Faith

Read 1 Timothy 5:20. False teachers were going from church to church telling believers "unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved" (Acts 15:1). Several years before Paul wrote this letter, he warned the Ephesian elders false teachers from within the church would try to distort the true message of Christ (Acts 20:29-30). Now that it was happening, he exhorted Timothy to boldly confront these law-teachers. The "*meaningless talk*" referred to in verse 6 is the *teaching of the Law* (see verse 7). By instructing believers in Christ to go back under certain parts of the ceremonial part of the Law in order to be saved, false teachers were instructing them to put away "a good conscience towards God" (see verses 5, 6 and 19). The word conscience means "*co-science*" or two sciences joined together. The Law declared a person separated from God when he or she sinned. The individual's mind agreed with the Law or co-science. You have this same *co-science* under the

New Covenant except the knowledge about sin is different than that of the Old Covenant. The Law makes us sin conscience, causing us to dwell on what is wrong with us (Romans 5:20; 7:7). Grace makes us righteous conscience and then enables us to dwell on what is right with us. There is no sin taken into account for a believer in Jesus in respect to eternal punishment - Christ's death took away sin for those who follow Him (John 1:29). You are either going to have a conscience that is linked up with the Law that constantly tells you that you are a sinner or you are going to have a conscience that has been cleansed by the blood of Jesus that constantly tells you that you are the righteousness of God (Philippians 3:8-9).

Read 1 Timothy 1: 8-9. According to verse 9, what is the correct way to use the Law? *It is to declare someone guilty before God.* While the Law cannot make someone righteous it can make a person a sinner by pointing out his/her sin (verses 9-10; cross-reference Romans 4:15; 5:20). But the Law could not bring you any of the promises of God (Romans 4:13-14). Neither can preaching Law in relationship to the promises of God. *All of the promises of God are fulfilled in and through the Lord Jesus, not the Law* (2 Corinthians 1:20; Romans 4:14-15). Verse 7: "They want to be teachers of the Law, but they do not know what they are talking about or what they so confidently affirm." Law teachers were unaware that by affirming sin and man's unrighteousness they themselves were condemned by the very words they so dogmatically preached. That was what the Law did. One of the purposes of the Law was to show us that we were sinners and that no flesh could ever be justified in God's sight (Romans 4:15; 7:13; Galatians 3:24, 25). Statements such as, "our faith is expressed through obedience to the Law" is teaching Law, not grace. The Law was given to condemn the whole human race based on Adam's sin so everyone could be declared sinners (Romans 3:23). After everyone was put on the same level of condemnation God could then send His Son and redeem believers on the same level of His righteousness through faith. The only way to be reconciled to God and be saved is through the life of Jesus (Romans 4:9-11).

Read 1 Timothy 1:18-20. What is "fighting the good fight (verse 18)" (spiritual warfare) Paul spoke of in verse 18? Is it fighting demons, principalities and powers? Not according to verse 19: "holding on to faith and a good conscience and a good conscience." In other words, it is never letting condemnation creep in. Regardless of what you might be experiencing or what someone tries to tell you, never give up your saving faith in Jesus Christ! To do so will result in shipwreck faith. The only way to have inner peace is to truly believe you are justified solely by faith based on Christ's finished work on the cross and not by something you do or don't do. Acts 4:12 states, "Salvation is found in no one else..." That is why after presenting the Word of God, a minister can give an invitation and lives are instantly changed. What did Paul say in verse 19 cause the faith of some believers to be shipwrecked? Did he say it was because they committed some terrible sin? No. After telling us to hold "on to faith and a good conscience" (verse 19); Paul states, "Some have rejected these and so have shipwrecked their faith (verse 20)." In other words, they gave up their clear conscience towards God. Next, Paul names some folks who had done that. How many of you have held on to the belief your sins are forgiven once and for all and that you no longer have to confess another sin in order to be made right with God as long as you live? The

answer is probably none. What part of the gospel did you let go of? Did you let go of your faith in Jesus? No. Then what did you let go of? A clear conscience that is void of offense towards God! While we should quickly make any changes the Spirit calls for through our conscience (Galatians 5:16), we must not allow ourselves to feel condemned when we fall short of God's will (Hebrews 9:14; 1 John 3:20). A believer is not truly free to serve God if he or she feels like a sinner all the time. That is why maintaining a clear conscience is extremely important. If Jesus' mission was to die to produce a race of people who never sinned, He failed. But He didn't fail. The Lord did not die to make us robots; He died to make us righteous outside of the flesh and the Law (Romans 1:17; 3:22), and then purge our conscience from sin and condemnation.

Here are five reasons some believers carry unhealthy guilt:

First, they have a performance based mentality that says, "When you do good you get good; when you do bad you get bad." As children, when we cleaned our room we got to go out and play, etc. I am not saying that rewarding children for good behavior is wrong. But we must not apply a performance based mentality to God's plan of salvation. If we do, we will see a need to be punished when we make a mistake. That is Law, not grace.

Second, some people attach guilt to disappointment: "I wish I had not done that... If I could go back and change this or that..." You can't go back and change anything. Disappointment is caused by unfulfilled expectation most of the time. When we expect something and don't get it that expectation causes us to feel disappointed. Can I give you some good news? You can't disappoint God! You know why? Disappointment is the result of unfulfilled expectation. Since God knows all about us He has no unfulfilled expectation. Jesus said in John 2:25, "He did not need man's testimony about man, for he knew what was in a man." God knows us better than we know ourselves. What did Jesus tell Peter? "You are going to deny me three times before the rooster crows." Jesus did not look out at Peter in the court yard on that eventful night and say, "I am crushed by your denial of Me Peter!" You know why? Jesus knew all about it before it ever happened (Matthew 26:34). When we fall flat on our face God does not say, "What am I going to do now? Quickly, let's come up with plan B." Systematic theology teaches the foreknowledge of God is basically God knowing what is going to happen in the future before it happens. Predestination is where God controls the future. Although God does not control us and cause us to fail or sin, He knows the future so when we fail it does not take Him by surprise. It takes us by surprise. And when it does, it causes us to carry the guilt of yesterday far too long; unless of course we have a conscience void of offense towards God. Then it does not affect our spiritual walk.

Third, believing they are going to repeat the sin again is another reason some carry unhealthy guilt. The expectation of repeated sins sometimes wears them down until they give up and say, "I am never going to get over this issue in my life." Those who are caught up into this cycle of defeat need to realize obedience comes from faith through grace (Romans 1:5). Don't give up! Here is a prayer that might also help: "Dear Lord, so far today, I've done all right. I haven't gossiped, lost my temper, been greedy,

grumpy, nasty, selfish, or been over-indulgent. I'm really glad about that. But in a few minutes, God, I'm going to get out of bed, and from then on I'm probably going to need a lot more help. Thank you, in Jesus Name, Amen." (Author unknown) That fits all of us, doesn't it? In all probability most of us will sin one more time before we die? But that does not mean we have to sin every day (Romans 8:9-10). Nor does that mistake have to affect our relationship with God. It is what we do with our sin and how we view our relationship with God. The Lord not only died for the sins of the past, He died for the sins of the future. Being the supreme sacrifice, He covered them all. Jesus does not have to come back and die again for one more sin you may commit tomorrow. As already been pointed out, it was not our sins that caused a division between us and God in the first place. It was Adam's sin (Romans 5:12).

Fourth, some believers carry unhealthy guilt because people around them keep reminding them of their past. A husband once said to his wife, "Why do you keep talking about my past mistakes and sins when you say you have forgiven and forgotten them?" Her reply was, "I have forgotten and forgiven your past sins, but I just want you to remember that I have forgotten and forgiven them." Some people use a person's past mistakes as a means of punishing. They want the person to suffer over and over for what they have. Take Kevin Tunhell for example. Each week he was required to mail one dollar to a family he wanted to forget. They sued him for \$936, to be paid at a rate of *one dollar at a time*. It had to be mailed in each Friday. This was so he would never forget what happened. Tunhell was convicted in 1982 of manslaughter when he ran over an 18 year old girl while driving under the influence of alcohol. He was 17 at the time. His restitution did not end until the year 2000. Although he mailed the check to the family, he was required to make the check out to the victim to be deposited in a scholarship fund in her name. Tunhell also served a court sentence and spent seven years campaigning against drunk driving, six years more than his sentence required. But he kept forgetting to send the dollar in. The family took him to court four times for failure to comply. He spent thirty days in jail on one occasion. He insisted he wasn't defying the order, but rather was haunted by the girls' death and tormented by the reminders. He offered the family two boxes of checks covering the payments up to the year 2001, one year more than required. They refused to accept them. They weren't seeking after money but penance. The mother said, "We want to receive the check each week on time. He must understand we are going to pursue this until August of the year 2000. We will go back to court every month if we have to" (taken from *Drunken Driver Clips*, San Antonio Light, 31 March 1990"). Is 936 weekly payments enough; not for Tunhell to send, but for the family to demand? Is eighteen years' worth of restitution sufficient? How many payments are required to pay this debt? God doesn't work like that. The reason the unmerciful servant in Matthew 18 reacts so violently towards a fellow servant who owed him so little was because the man reminded him of the insurmountable debt he owed his master. Although the unmerciful servant had been forgiven of the debt, he never truly accepted forgiveness for himself. A person who has never experienced total forgiveness from God will most likely be unable to totally forgive others or themselves. If you came out of a bad marriage you probably have all kinds of reminders around you of the sins and hurts of the past. There is no longer any to reason do so if repentance has taken place.

Fifth, many people carry unhealthy guilt because they have surrendered to a guilt ridden conscious. Some have emotionally lived under guilt for so long they have become comfortable with it. That is hard to believe, but I've seen it in people. You can identify a person with a faulty conscious when they say, "I know God can forgive all sins, but..." Then they come up with one reason after another as to why they are sure God can't forgive them. There are also those who believe Jesus can forgive all sins except the one they have committed. Nonsense! See Hebrews 10:19-23.

It is seldom easy for a works orientated person to believe he or she is totally and eternally debt free of their sin debt. The story of the prodigal son is a good example of this. After wasting his inheritance on loose living, he decides to return home, not as a son but as a servant. But when the wayward son arrived back home he was fully restored in his father's house, not as a servant but as a son. His Dad says to the servants, "Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattest calf you can find and kill it. We are going to celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found" (Luke 15:22-24; my paraphrase). Dad is saying, "My son isn't going to be shoveling manure in the stables like a servant. Not this boy, he is still my son and he's going to be treated like one!" There were two people who had a problem with grace that day. Neither of them were the father. He's happy all day long going around telling everyone, "My boy's back... My boy's back..." The father represents God. Don't worry about God. Grace was His idea! One of the individuals who had a problem with free grace that day was the older brother. He's ticked off, big time. He is probably thinking, "Junior should be saddling up my horse right now like one of the hired hands. I have been faithful to Dad all these years and should be treated better than my wayward brother;" e.g., "I've gone to Church all my life; attend church; paid tithes, etc., while my brother squandered his inheritance and disgraced our father. He cannot get off that easy! I've worked hard and dutifully done good works yet when my sinful brother comes crawling out of the pig pen of life he receives a hero's welcome. It is not right! I am the sinless one, not my brother!" Legalists have a difficult time forgiving others because they want to justify the flesh through good works. Pride is a sin that is more deadly than any addiction (1 Corinthians 10:12). Bitterness sets in when grace is missing. Forgiveness flourishes where the grace of God is embraced.

The other person who had a difficult time with grace that day was the prodigal himself. What did the prodigal say to himself when he realized the seriousness of his situation and decided to go back home? "When I get back home, I am going to say, "Dad, I am not worthy to be called your son. Make me as one of your hired servants" (Luke 15:18-19). His conscience would not let him go back home and say, "I'm home!" The prodigal went back to his Dad's house to be a servant, not a son! The reason I know that is the first words out of his mouth when he meets up with Dad were, "Father I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son" (Luke 15:21). Notice, Dad freely accepted his son back without any mention of his past! When the prodigal saw his older brother frowning at him, he probably thought, "Oh, brother, if you only knew how I admire you. You've always shown diligence, discipline,

faithfulness. You never went out and sinned like I have. You have the “better” testimony! I will always have the memory of bringing shame on our family’s good name. I know I don’t deserve any of this. In fact, you should be honored in my place. How I wish I could have fellowship with you! That is the cry of a truly repentant and humble person!

One of the most successful tactics used against Christians by demons is to get believers to dwell on their failures so they will feel guilty all the time. There are three kinds of guilt: Legal, convicting, and emotional. Legal guilt comes from the curse Adam brought upon the human race when he sinned in the Garden (Romans 5:12). We automatically inherit this when we are born. John called this the “sin of the world” (John 1:29). One of God’s purposes for giving the Mosaic Law was to make people aware of their sin (Romans 7:7). However, when Jesus died on the cross, He took away the sin of the world (John 1:29; Romans 5:12-21), and then took us from underneath the Law that condemned us and put us under grace where we could be justified by faith.

The second kind of guilt is a convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit that leads to repentance. Although Jesus took care of the sin of the world when He died on the cross, a person still needs to repent of his or her personal sins. The basic meaning of repentance (Greek *metanoeo*) is “to turn around.” It is turning from our sinful ways and a turning to God through Christ (John 14:1, 6; Acts 8:22; 26; 26:18; 1 Peter 2:25). Although Jesus became Lord when He rose from the dead, He does not become our Lord until we repent and place our trust in Him to wash away all our sins. Both John the Baptist and Jesus told people to repent (Matthew 3:2; 4:17). Read 2 Corinthians 7:10. Here, Paul identifies two types of sorrow. “Worldly sorrow” is when the unrepentant person is only sorry for getting caught or for the consequences of their sin. They never truly turn to Christ for forgiveness. Worldly sorrow leads to eternal death (Matthew 13:42, 50; 25:30; Romans 6:23). Godly sorrow on the other hand, leads to eternal life. “Godly sorrow” is the inner conviction of the Holy Spirit for sin that leads to repentance (John 16:8). Godly sorrow leaves “no regret” because the moment we repent and trust in Jesus to take our sins away, all sins are forever forgiven and our conscience cleansed (Roman 8:1; 1 Timothy 1:17-19).

The third kind of guilt is emotional guilt. This is false guilt for Christians. Satan delights in heaping this kind of guilt upon believers. If the “godly sorrow” guilt caused by the Spirit’s conviction is not processed correctly in the unconscious mind, it goes into emotional guilt. Since emotional guilt is false guilt, it is poison to the Christian’s soul. A believer who has a guilt-ridden conscious (emotional guilt) is kept under the bondage of legalism. A legalist is simply someone who is trying to appease their guilt-ridden conscious over sins that no longer exist, or make up for failures of the past. There is a two-fold problem with this. First, everything we get from God is unmerited. Second, a person who is trying to satisfy a legalistic conscious is never satisfied. In his final letter to his spiritual son, Timothy, Paul writes, “Be strong in the grace we have in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 2:1). If you miss anything, don’t miss the grace of God.

Section 6 – Maintaining a Conscience Void of Offence towards God

The greatest preacher you will ever hear will not be some famous evangelist or pastor but the Holy Spirit through your very own conscience. Our conscience is constantly working to keep us in line with God's Word. In one of her sermons, TV evangelist, Joyce Meyers told a story about one time when she heard of a local grocery store that had a sale on chickens. The store had limited the sale to one chicken per family. Sister Meyers took her two daughters with her and had each of them pick up a chicken, check out at different registers and act like they didn't know each other. When Sister Meyers got in line she wasn't sure if she had given one of her daughters enough money for the tax. She thought, "Here I am born again, baptized in the Holy Spirit, having a Bible study in my home and standing in this grocery store with my heart pounding in fear my daughter might have to ask me for more money and the store owner is going to realize we are all together." After they had made it to the car with their chickens in hand, the Holy Spirit said to Sister Meyers, "Congratulations, Joyce, you just stole some chickens! Aren't you proud of yourself?" If you think Holy Spirit integrity is just for Church on Sunday, you had better think again.

Read 2 Corinthians 1:12. The conscience is the voice of the spirit-person; the center of all that goes on inside of us; deeper than a feeling. There is an approval or disapproval within our conscience over each thought, act, or attitude we display. This "knowing" or "uneasiness" tells us when something is not right. God also speaks through our conscience to announce our extraordinary worth to Him and to let us know we are forgiven, loved and accepted. We must never determine our self-worth based on performance or abilities, or lack of, but on our relationship with the Father, but based on saving faith in Jesus Christ. We have value because we were conceived and chosen in the mind of God before the world was created (Jeremiah 1:4-10; Psalms 139:14) to have redemption through Christ shed blood on the cross (Ephesians 1:7).

The moment a person repents and receives Jesus as Lord and Savior, his/her conscience is cleansed and made aware of being one of God's children (John 1:12). By dying on the cross, Jesus put an end to sin once and for all for those who believe in Him and then presents believers "holy and blameless" before God (Ephesians 1:4; Hebrews 10:8-10). After the believer is declared holy, he or she is then led and motivated by the Holy Spirit from the inside out. The Word of God no longer kills (condemns) as it did under the Law (2 Corinthians 3:6). It is not the Law of God (Word of God) that condemns or destroys; it's the demands of the Law *without the Spirit's life and power* (2 Corinthians 3:7, 9, Romans 3:29-31; Jeremiah 31:33). The Holy Spirit writes the Word of God, not on tablets of stone to show the flesh what to do, as at Sinai (Exodus 31:18), but on "tablets of human hearts" (our conscience) to show our spirit what to do (2 Corinthians 3:3). That is why it is a joy to serve God and do His will.

When a believer feels convicted over something it is the Holy Spirit speaking through his/her conscience to guide, not condemn. God's Spirit knows everything because He lives within believers in Christ. If we are truly born again we can go nowhere without God's Spirit! Try to watch some movie that is not decent and see if He is comfortable?

When He is uncomfortable you will be uncomfortable! Get dressed up in what the world says is fashionable but shows a lot more of your body parts than what should be showing and see if you feel comfortable. If you are honest with yourself down deep inside you will feel a little uneasy. That is the Holy Spirit speaking to your spirit through your conscience. Letting the Word of God be our true guide and listening to the inner voice of the Holy Spirit through our conscience will virtually eliminate strife and discord in marriages, in Churches, in homes, and in work places. If you want to keep peace you have to deal with the issues of your life (Psalms 34:14; 37:37) but you don't have to let the devil steal your joy in the process. Joy comes from a conscience that is without condemnation. Joy is not something God allows us to have just when we go to Church. It is a state of peace and a way of life. When you let God cut you loose from that legalistic Pharisaic straight jacket you were raised up under you will find out you can enjoy everything you are lead of the Spirit to do. God wants us to enjoy the eternal life His Son earned for us on Calvary. Unfortunately, some believers feel guilty for enjoying life (Jeremiah 29:11). That is because their faith has become shipwrecked by legalism. Understand something, God's Son is not going to die again for that one sin you may have committed or that unwholesome thought you may have had today. Jesus has made your conscience perfect (Hebrews 10:22). Believe it! That perfection is based on the imputed righteousness of Christ and not yours. Someone once said, "God doesn't call the qualified; He qualifies the called." How true! There are untold believers who have never known the peace and joy of God's righteousness through the blood of Jesus. They live in a prison of their own making. Even when they do something good it is never good enough. That is because they are trying to earn what God has already given as a free gift, peace of mind concerning eternity. Inner peace comes from knowing that regardless of your faults you are in right relationship with God and that there is absolutely nothing that stands between you and God.

Read Romans 8:28-39. The kind of peace expressed in this passage can only come from a cleansed conscience. How do you get to this point? By truly believing what the apostle Paul said in his gospel to the Romans (e.g. Romans 5:1) and by maintaining saving faith in Christ as Lord and Savior. There are believers who struggle with trying to be in right relationship with God when they are *already* there. A person cannot become more right than being saved. It is only after we know we are right with God that the Holy Spirit can work on our behavior and attitudes. There are those who feels condemned every time God tires to do that. Thus, they never grow up spiritually. If you don't believe you are justified through faith in Christ alone, and that God loves you unconditionally, you will misread the Spirit's conviction as being condemnation instead of what it is intended to be, a gentle nudge for correction. When God corrects us it is because He loves us. Discipline it is for our good and proves God loves us (Hebrews 12:6). Instead of becoming condemned when God corrects us, we need to get in agreement with His Word, repent and let Him know we are sorry for what we said or done and ask Him to help us not to repeat it again.

Turn to Hebrews Chapter 6. This chapter has been taught incorrectly as being the foundational doctrines of the New Covenant Church. It is not. The book of Hebrews is not an explanation of what to do in Church, but a comparison between the First

Covenant administered by earthly high priests and the Second (New) Covenant administered by God's High Priest, Jesus. The Old Testament is primarily a record of God's dealings with Israel on the basis of the covenant God presented through Moses at Mount Sinai, called the Law. The New Testament describes the new arrangement God made with humanity based on faith in His Son, Jesus (Exodus 24:1-8; Luke 22:14-20; 2 Corinthians 3:4-6). The book of Hebrews shows that Christ, God's High Priest, who administers the New Covenant, is superior in every way to the earthly high priests who administered the First (Old) Covenant. Hebrews also shows how the offerings and sacrifices that were required under the Old Covenant Law related to Christ and how much better off New Covenant believers have it over those who lived under the Law (based on the books of Leviticus and Deuteronomy). Jesus is the mediator of a new way of living (new covenant).

Hebrews 6:1-2: The writer is talking about the foundational doctrines of the Old Covenant Law and the earthly tabernacle, not what takes place under the New Covenant. Here is an example. The word "baptisms" in Hebrews 6:2 and the word "washings" in Hebrews 9:10 come from the same Greek word *baptismos*. Both passages are referring to the ceremonial washings of vessels and items used in the temple under the Law. The writer is not telling Christians in Hebrews 6:1-2 to leave their foundation of faith in Christ, or their baptism in water or the Baptism of the Holy Spirit behind. He is telling them the same thing he said in Hebrews 9:10, to leave the external ceremonial rules and regulations of the Law behind that did nothing to help the believer live holy or enabled him/her to have a clear conscience.

Hebrews 9:1-28 - Hebrews 10:1-4: While the modern day doctrine of acknowledging sin over and over in order to be re-cleansed has no New Testament foundation, but it does under the Old Testament. It is clear from these passages the different sin offerings could not clear the conscience of the Old Covenant worshiper, but the blood of Jesus does. While there are numerous differences between the First (Old) Covenant and the Second (New) Covenant, there is a marked difference in regards to confession and the sin offering required. Confession of a specific sin under the Law was done in connection with the giving of a specific sacrifice, both for the individual and for the nation (Leviticus 5:5-6; 16:1-22, 34; 17:19). Not only did people have to confess each time they sinned, they had to offer a particular sacrifice for each sin. These sacrifices, of course, pointed to Jesus, the Lamb of God (John 1:29) who would one day come to die for all of humanity's sins. If confession of sin is going to take place under the Old Covenant, another sacrifice has to be offered. Although there were a lot of sacrifices offered annually under the Law (Leviticus 5:5; Numbers 5:7; Psalm 32:5; Psalm 38:18) there was only one day out of the entire year in which sin was atoned for, of which the Israelites confessed their sin as a nation. It was called "Day of Atonement" (*Yom Kippur* or in Hebrew). The Day of Atonement is one of seven commanded festivals specified in the book of Leviticus (16:30-31; 23:26-32). On this particular day, the high priest brought a bull and two goats as special offerings on this day. The bull was sacrificed for the sins of the high priest and for the purging of the temple from any defilement. One goat was chosen to be sacrificed to purge the sins of all the people (Leviticus 16:7-8). The other goat was released in the desert (Leviticus 16:10, 22). It was called the

scapegoat (*Azazel* in the Hebrew). The high priest placed both hands on the goat's head and confessed over it all the iniquities and transgressions of the people and then had the goat led out into the desert to die. This was symbolic of Christ taking our sins away.

There were two reasons why the Israelites had to go through the whole process of confessing sin and offering animal sacrifices each year. First, the blood of animals could not take away sin; they only covered it (shoved it under the rug so to speak). Jesus' sacrifice of Himself on the cross "takes away sin" (John 1:29). The second reason the Jews had to repeat the process on the Day of Atonement was because the sacrifice the high priest had offered last year had run out and a new sacrifice required. The high priest had better be back in the Holies of Holies on the exact same day next year or the people would not have a blood covering. Without this blood covering they would be treated by God like their heathen neighbors. The strange thing about all this is the Israelites believed the blood of bulls and goats freed them from condemnation for a whole year; yet numerous New Testament believers don't believe the blood of Jesus, a perfect and eternal sacrifice, can free a person from a sin consciousness for one single moment! The Catholic folks have it a little better than us Pentecostals. They only visit God with their sins once a week. The Baptists also have it a little better. They are told to confess their sins every night before going to sleep because you don't want to die in your sleep with an un-confessed sin. We Pentecostal and Charismatic believers really have it down to an art. We do not wait until night fall or until Sunday we confess sins on the spot, because Jesus could come any moment and we wouldn't want to be left behind over one un-confessed sin. There is something wrong with a person's belief system that believes the blood of a goat freed a person from the consciousness of sin more than the blood of Jesus does. According to Paul, it was never our sin which caused the division between us and God in the first place (Romans 5:12-14). Then, why is it that after we are born again through faith in Jesus we become obsessed with confessing our faults and sins over and over again *to become right with God all over again*? I am not belittling the need to clear the conscience of wrong doing when a person comes to Christ or afterwards when he or she steps out of grace and sins. But it was Christ's resolution of Adam's sin that brought us into union with God in the first place. If the gospel is a continual revelation and confession of what is wrong with you, you would have to stay at the altar continually confessing some sin, because there is not a righteous bone in you fleshly body. You sure could not go for a drive and take a chance of looking at a billboard with a lustful picture on it, and while you are looking at the picture run your car over a cliff. I doubt the few seconds you might have before hitting the bottom would be enough time to confess all of the sins your human brain can come up with that you may have committed and have not verbalized since you accepted Jesus. Furthermore, before you hit the ground you had better find a goat to sacrifice to go along with your confession because that went along with the confessing of sins under the Old Covenant! If Jesus is Lord and Savior of your life, you have already been cleansed and made it right with God.

What would have to happen more than once to be re-cleansed by the blood of Jesus more than once? Jesus would have to die again. Again, the Lord is not going to come

back and die for one more sin you may commit. Hebrews 9:26 and Romans 6:10 tell us Jesus died for sin once and for all. According to Hebrews 10:3, those under the first covenant only had to become aware of a sin condition between them and God once a year. As a believer in Jesus, how often should you be aware of a *sin condition* between you and God? Never again! It is an absolute insult to the blood of Christ to believe that if you failed to remember a sin, or somehow failed to confess a sin, you are not going to heaven. That is pure Law! Yet, numerous believers are told by legalistic pastors that every time you sin you must be re-cleansed all over again. That teaches believers to have a sin consciousness based on bulls and goats. James said, "A double minded man is unstable in all his ways. Let not that man even think he shall receive anything of the Lord." You cannot confess sin like you are under the Old Covenant and have confidence before God. The constant repeated confession of sin is a stronghold of the devil and an insult to the shed blood of Jesus Christ (Hebrews 9:13-14; 10:35-39).

If you need to confess a sin to appease your guilt-ridden conscience, fine, but at least admit it is for that reason and not *to be justified* in God's eyes. Because, when you try to justify yourself through confession or any other *act* you take yourself from under Jesus and His grace and place yourself back under a law of works. If you are going to use the Law as your standard then you had better confess more than just the big sins that you feel guilty about. You had better confess each and every wrong word, thought, attitude, motive, and sins of omission, failure to pray and reading the Bible often enough, not going to Church often enough, for not attending all special prayer times, failure to witness when the opportunity offers itself, etc. And, since you are back under the Old Covenant you had better come up with an animal sacrifice for each and every one of those sins that went along with your confession according to the book of Leviticus. Of course you could simply trust Jesus to take all of your sins away, small as well as large, known as well as the unknown, past and future, and make a course correction and go on with your life of living for Jesus!

I know I am on a soap box with this theme, but it saddens me to see the modern-day Church fall under the spell of the guilt-ridden religion of legalism. Today, the only way a Church service can be conducted is if we point out your faults over again to get you to confess your sins and get forgiven by Jesus all over again. If God has done His part and we won't do our part who are we going to blame it on when we blow it? Don't blame it on the devil. He cannot make you do anything you don't want to do. Satan could not even make those under the Old Covenant sin. The three Hebrew youths is proof (Daniel 3:16-18). No one can make us sin. That choice is our and ours alone. Furthermore, the righteousness of God is acquired only one way – "through faith in Christ" (Philippians 3:9). Our righteousness is Christ Jesus himself (Philippians 1:20-21; Romans 8:10; 1 Corinthians 2:20; Ephesians 3:17; Colossians 3:4). Jesus resident within us is what makes us acceptable to God and what brings about inner peace to our soul.

Read Hebrews 9:6-13. While animal sacrifices could not save anyone they provided the Old Covenant believer with an opportunity to express faith in the living God by being obedient to His Word (Romans 4:1-15; Psalms 40:12). God only requires a person to

walk in the light he/she has received (Romans 1:18-25). Hebrews 9:14-15, "How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself unblemished to God, cleanse our conscience from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!" Please note that there is no mention of confession of sins in this passage. That is because this passage is referring to living under Jesus and not under Old Covenant Law. Also note that the blood of Jesus cleanses the believer's conscience. Verse 15 tells us that Jesus died to set us free from sins committed under the Law. What about sins committed *before* the Law was given? While people were terrible sinners back then they were condemned to death based on *Adam's sin, not their own*. See Romans 5:13, 19. You may be thinking, "If the sins of pre-law people were not taken into account why did God destroy everyone on the planet with the flood except Noah and his family?" It was out of mercy. An analysis of Genesis 6:1-13 reveals that the intermarrying between godly and ungodly people produced *mean-spirited children* who spread devastation over the planet resulting in a world-wide rebellion against God (Genesis 6:2). Nephilim in Genesis 6:4 means giants. The term in the original Hebrew text implies not so much the idea of great stature (size) but lack of respect for God and daring characters with no fear of God. The implication is that people were forced to believe a certain way or else. If God had not intervened when He did the godly bloodline of Seth (Genesis 4:25-26) would not have survived and there wouldn't have been a godly woman left on the planet to give birth to Jesus the Messiah when it came time for Him to be born. Pre-law believers were not guilty of breaking the Law because, up to this point, it had not been given (Romans 5:13). They were condemned as sinners based on Adam's sin (Romans 5:12, 19). Those who were born under the Law were twice judged; for Adam's sin and for their own personal sins based on the Law (Romans 5:20).

The reason there is no mention of sins under the New Covenant in Hebrews 9:15 is because Christ died for both Adam's disobedience which brought spiritual and physical death to the human race and sins committed under the Old Covenant Law. This is the picture we get when we put the following passages together: John 1:29; Hebrews 9:15; Romans 4:15; 5:13; 4:15: 10:4. The reason there is no condemnation awaiting those who belong to Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1) is because when He died on the cross, He answered for the believer's sins in respect to eternal punishment (John 3:16; Romans 4:8). However, sins committed by Christians will be used to determine their position in God's eternal kingdom (Revelation 21). The apostle Paul states in Romans 14:10-12, "We will all stand before God's judgment seat" and give an "accounting of himself to God." The word "we" makes it clear Paul was referring to Christians. Both Hebrews 9:27 and 1 Peter 4:17-18 tell us judgment follows death. While that principle applies to both believers and non-believers alike, believers and non-believers will not appear before the same judgment, nor will they be evaluated for the same purposes.

There are two final judgments described in Scripture: one is for the wicked dead and one for followers of Christ. True Christians will stand before the *Judgment Seat of Christ* (2 Corinthians 5:10) while non-believers will stand before the *Great White Throne Judgment* (Revelation 20:11-15). There are two primary differences between these two judgments. First, they occur 1,000 years apart. As there are two separate resurrections

(Revelation 20:4-5), there are two separate judgments. Second, while the evaluation of sins and works are taken into account at both judgments, the purpose is totally opposite. The person who stands before the Judgment Seat of Christ is “already” saved. There is no hope of eternal life for the person standing before the Great White Throne Judgment. Good works done outside of Christ by non-believers are not relevant because their names are not written down in the Lamb’s Book of Life (Revelation 20:15). The Great White Throne Judgment is nothing more than a judicial proceeding before final sentencing is passed, not a trial to determine if a person should go to heaven or the lake of fire. If they are there, they already stand condemned because they failed to accept Christ (John 3:18). One’s eternal destination is determined before death occurs (John 5:24; John 14:6; Acts 4:12; Hebrews 9:27)! Non-believers will receive their just reward by being eternally separated from God in the lake of fire (Revelation 20:11-15). The righteous (followers of Christ) are judged for eternal rewards, not eternal punishment. Read 1 Corinthians 3:10-15 and 2 Corinthians 5:1-10. Paul is not teaching a doctrine of purgatory or cleansing from mortal sins after a person dies in these passages. Nor, is he advocating works for salvation. To do so would be contrary to what he said in Ephesians 2:8-9. While the Christian’s sins are taken into account at the Judgment Seat of Christ, they are not evaluated in relationship to eternal punishment (John 5:24; Romans 8:1; 2 Corinthians 5:10). Again, Christ answered for His followers in respect to eternal punishment when He died on the cross.

Hebrews 10:1-23: Here, the writer compares the imperfect priesthood under the Law, appointed by man, with the perfect High Priest, Jesus, appointed by God under the First (new) Covenant. Because the high priest under the Law was imperfect, the sacrifices he offered for the people were imperfect. That is why animals were used. That is also why they had to be repeated year after year. Because Jesus is perfect, He administers a once and for all perfect sacrifice, His own body, totally satisfying God’s justice for the repentant sinner. What ever the *perfection* the writer is referring to in Hebrews 10:1-4 and Hebrews 10:14 animal sacrifices under the Law could not accomplish, but Jesus has. It is clear from Hebrews 9:9 and Hebrews 9:14 the perfection the Hebrew writer is referring to is a *clear conscience*. Animal sacrifices under the Law could never clear a person’s conscience to the point he/she was not aware of sin between him/her and God. “If it could, would they not have stopped being offered? For the worshipers would have been cleansed once for all, and would no longer have felt guilty for their sins” (Hebrews 10:2). But the blood sacrifice of Jesus does. How many of you have felt condemned when you said or did something wrong? That is what the writer of Hebrews tells us no one in Christ should ever have happen. A perfect or clear conscience (Hebrews 10:14) is a conscience void of offense towards God (Hebrews 10:2). It is where you are not aware of a *condition* called sin that separates you from God. The opposite of a clear conscience is a guilty or sin-laden conscience; one that is constantly being aware that sin has affected one’s relationship, and or, fellowship with God. You have to turn to the Old Covenant and look at the conditions of the Law to talk about confession of sin. Those numerous sacrifices were constant reminders of the condition of sin which existed between them and God.

Read Hebrews 10:4: What has the blood of Jesus done that the blood of bulls and goats could not do? Take *away* sin. These ceremonial sacrifices covered sin until the *eternal* sacrifice, Jesus, came along. Jesus completely takes away your sin, not covers it up. How long does the blood of Jesus take our sins away? Forever (Hebrews 10:1)! Is the reason we no longer have to talk to God about a sin condition again because we will never do anything wrong again? No! That was not the reason the Israelites under the Law re-visited God with their sin each year. The reason they re-visited God with their sin year after year was not because they had not done anything wrong throughout the year, but because the annual sacrifice their high priest had presented in the Most Holy Place had ran out! As Christians, when should we re-visit God about a *sin condition*? The answer is whenever the sacrifice God provided for us runs out. Jesus is that sacrifice. When will His sacrifice for our sins run out? Never! What did Jesus' shed blood do for you if you believe in Him? It took away your sin (Hebrews 10:4), cleansed your conscience of guilt and condemnation (Hebrews 10:2) and presented you holy before the Father *for all of eternity* (Hebrews 10:14). Just knowing that is not enough, you must accept it for yourself.

Read Hebrews 10:5-10: What was God's will and what did Jesus come to do (verse 7)? It was God's will for Jesus to come so the first covenant could be set aside and give us a new way of living (verse 9). Verse 10, "And by that will we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." Note the past tense, "*We have been made holy.*" It is something that has already been done! How did that occur according to Hebrews 10:9? "He [Jesus] sets aside the first to establish the second." If Christ had not come the second covenant could be set aside and we would still be living under the Law and in sin. God removed our sin by setting aside the first covenant that declared us sinners ("Where there is no Law there is no transgression" - Romans 4:15). This was God's intent from the very beginning.

Some may be thinking, "If God's requirement of righteousness has been completely met by Jesus, then why do we need the Old Testament?" There are three primary reasons we still need Genesis through Malachi. First, without the Old Testament we do not have a full understanding of the plan of God for lost humanity and the need for the Redeemer, Christ (Romans 3:22-28; 5:12-15, 20; Galatians 3:24; Hebrews 9:13). In John 5:39, Jesus said to a group of religious leaders, "You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me." Jesus was referring to the Old Testament, because the earliest New Testament book was not written until almost 50 years after Jesus died on the cross. The Scripture the Lord was referring to was the first five books of the Bible, the Prophets and the Psalms which made up the Hebrew Bible at that time (Luke 24:27, 44). Since Moses was the writer of the first five books of the Bible, they are called the Law of Moses. These books are also referred to by theologians as the Pentateuch, after the Greek *penta* (five) and *teuchos* (tool, vessel and book). The first five books of the Bible were written as an unbroken unit in content and historical sequence, with each succeeding book beginning where the former left off. Practically every important Old Testament concept is introduced somewhere in the Pentateuch. Prophets and Psalms were written by different authors. What did Jesus say Scripture

(Old Testament) revealed (John 5:39)? It reveals Him. That's the primary purpose of the Old Testament. The New Covenant shows the holiness of God in the glorious and righteous Person of Jesus Christ, God's Son. The second reason we need the Old Testament is it reveals the holiness of God in the righteous standard of the Law. These various ceremonies and sacrifices were designed to bring people to an understanding they were sinners; that there is no justification for the flesh; and raise the standard for obedience.

The third reason we need the Old Testament is to acquire a full understanding of what God says on a subject. Read 2 Timothy 3:15-16. Paul is speaking of the Old Testament in this passage. New Testament writings were non-existent when Timothy was a child (verse 15). If we are going to acquire a *full* understanding of what God has to say on a subject we must consider passages from both the Old Testament and New Testament. Although the ceremonial Laws found in the Old Testament are obsolete (Hebrews 8:13), the spiritual principles (laws) and precepts outlined therein are as valid today as the day they were written, providing guide posts for day-to-day holy living for God's people. That said, New Testament believers do not approach God's commandments and precepts the same way Old Testament believers did. The commandments of divine origin are carried over into the New Covenant, not as a requirement to be saved, but as a *way of life* (Matthew 23:23-27; Luke 11:42; John 8:31-32; 1 Peter 1:16). Anytime we place a requirement upon a person to be saved other than faith in Jesus (Ephesians 2:8-9) we are instructing that individual to go back under the works of the Law to be saved, teaching that Christ died for nothing (Galatians 2:21). We New Testament believers don't obey God's commandments to be saved or justified; we obey them because we have *already* been justified through faith in Jesus (Romans 5:1). We are led and empowered by God's Spirit to do so (Galatians 5:16).

Read Hebrews 10:11-14. The writer is referring to the conscience in verse 14 (cross-reference Hebrews 9:9-14). When a person accepts Jesus as Lord and Savior, his/her conscience is cleared of any and all wrong doing. No more sin consciousness! Can you imagine someone living without one guilty thought as though his/her mistakes never come between them and God again? There has never been a Christian-generation like this in my lifetime. Yet, that is how people of grace live according to the book of Hebrews. You say, "If we don't tell believers to confess their sins over and over, they are going to live like they want to." I hope I don't burst your self-righteous balloon but confessing sin is not going to keep someone from sinning. God does not take a believer's free will away. One of the reasons some believers have a sin problem is because they have been taught all they have to do is confess and everything is all right. As the result, confession has become a license to sin (justification for sinning). There is no respect for the sacrifice of Jesus in that concept. It's old Covenant Law! Read Hebrews 10:19-22. The reason we can approach the throne of God with confidence (Hebrews 4:16) is because we no longer go to Him as sinners but as a sons (John 1:12), who have been justified by faith (Romans 5:1) and declared holy (Ephesians 5:27; Philippians 3:9). It is also the reason the constant repetitive confessing of sin over and over to be re-cleansed by the blood of Jesus is an antichrist doctrine for the Christian (cross-reference 1 Peter 3:18-22). The sacrifice of Jesus is not supposed to

create a person who lives a perfect life; it is suppose to take away sin and give us a perfect conscience before God based on faith. Yet, most Christians cannot imagine what it would be like to have their conscience completely void of an offense between them and God. Nevertheless, that is what Hebrews writer says Christians should experience.

Section 7 – The Believer’s Confession

Numerous Christians wrongly believe the blood of Jesus has to be re-applied each time they sin. This is easy to understand since many pastors follow a doctrine that teaches the need for re-cleansing of sin after being born again. This concept is taken from 1 John 1:9. The problem is this is not what John is asking us to do in this passage. Since there are no greetings to a particular person, church or event, the book of 1 John was probably a circular letter that was hand carried to the various Churches in the province of Asia over which John had apostolic responsibility (Revelation 1:11). As you read through the book of 1 John you’ll discover the results of the false teaching of certain individuals who had left these congregations were still distorting the gospel as to how one might “*know*” he/she has eternal life (2:19). Doctrinally, their heresy denied that Jesus is the Christ (2:22; 5:1) or that Christ came in the flesh (4:2-3). The reason Bible teachers misunderstand 1 John 1:9 is because John does not give us the purpose and contextual understanding for his letter until *chapter 3*. So let’s begin there and then come back to chapter one.

1 John 3:1-3: Here John tells us how much the Father loves us, the fact we are the children of God and how we should live. If you want to find out what God thinks about you please do not look at your flesh. Instead, look at Jesus, who is a reflection of God in you (2 Corinthians 3:18).

1 John 3:4: It is clear from this passage John is dealing with *sins under the Law* in this letter. If you are under the Law you are still under the first covenant where you must answer for each and every sin. Those under the Law were required to confess each and every sin. Secondly, they had better come up with a sacrifice for each of those sins (Leviticus 16). Under grace, Christ answers for our past, present and future sins. Does that mean when we sin it is no longer wrong in God’s sight? No. Sin is just as wrong as it ever was. The difference is those who live under Christ are empowered not to sin, but should they do so it is not held against them for eternal punishment sake (Romans 5:12-19; 8:1-2; 10:4).

1 John 3:5: This is a direct contraction to what most people believes about 1 John 1:9. That is if we sin we become a sinner all over again and need to confess in order to be re-cleansed by the blood of Jesus. John is saying the same thing here in verse 5 that he said in John 1:29 and what the apostle Paul said in Galatians 2:17-18-21, and that is Christ’s primary purpose for coming to planet earth was to take away sin not cover it.

1 John 3:6: Note the words, “No one who lives in Him keeps on sinning.” Is John saying we will never sin again after believing in Christ? No! How many of you have

sinned once since you've been saved? All of us have. So, what is John saying? He's saying those are truly born again cannot make sin their *way of life*. God's life cannot exist in those who do so. We will look at this in more detail when we look at verse 9. Just keep in mind John has already told us in verse 4 that a person who is bound by a sin habit is living under the Law and not under the covenant of Jesus.

1 John 3:7-10: John is basically warning his readers not to be deceived about the *nature of salvation*. The real evidence of what is believed is manifested in attitudes and actions, not words alone (2:28-3:10). Jesus taught this same principle in Matthew 12:33-35; Paul taught it in Romans Chapter 6 and Galatians Chapter 5; and James taught it in 2:18. What was the devil's work (verse 8)? It was that one man's sin (Adam) would cause the whole human race to become sinners (Romans 5:12). Jesus destroyed that work when He died on the cross. What was God's work? It was that one man, Jesus, would deliver everyone from sin who believes in Him (Romans 5:18-19). Verse 9, "No one born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God." We have already determined from Paul's writing in Galatians chapter 3 that "God's seed" is Jesus. What John is basically telling us is that if Jesus lives in a person through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, that person will not be bound by a sin habit. John is *not* saying a person will never sin again after believing in Jesus; nor, is he saying we lose our salvation when we make a mistake and sin. Most, if not all, Christians have sinned at least once since they accepted Jesus? Does that mean we lose our salvation each time we step out of grace and sin? No. The verb "to sin" (Greek *hamartano*) in this passage is a present active infinitive, implying continued action. John is saying that if God *abides* in a person he/she will not make sin a way of life (cross-reference 1:5-7; 2:3-11, 15-17, 24-29; 3:6-24; 4-7-8, 20; Galatians 5:19-23). Words like "lives in Him" and "born of God" (verse 6) are equivalent expressions. John is talking about the same kind of abiding here he spoke of in his gospel. See John 15:1-4. What does the branch do to abide in the vine? It must remain attached to the vine. The branch exists based on the strength of the vine. Jesus is the Vine. John clearly believes anyone who maintains a sinful lifestyle "is of the devil" and "not a child of God." How can we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are according to verse 10? It is by one's lifestyle (spiritual fruit).

As one can see from Chapter 3, the *context* of the book of 1 John is to show us the *process of salvation*. John is doing the same thing in this letter he does in his gospel, tries to convince people Jesus is the Christ and that by believing in Him they can be saved (cross-reference John 20:31). It is clear John is dealing with the aftermath left behind by false teaching about how to be saved and the operation of eternal life in the believer. While certain people formerly associated with those to whom the letter was written had left the congregation, the results of their false teaching were still distorting the gospel as to how believers might "*know*" they have eternal life (2:19). Doctrinally, their heresy denied that Jesus is the Christ (2:22-23; 5:1) or ever came in the flesh (4:2-3). Now that we know that the context of John's letter is the process of salvation, let's go back and examine Chapter 1.

1 John 1:5-6: The phrase “we walk in the light” (verse 7) is to believe in Jesus according to John 12:46. “Truth” in verse 6 is synonymous to “light.” John 1:17, “For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.” As you can see, the opposite of being in the truth is being under the Law: What is synonymous with being in the truth then? It is being in the light. What is darkness? It is trying to achieve righteousness through good works. Cross-reference Isaiah 9:2. For several thousand years people sat in darkness as they tried to live up to the demands of the Law. They were in fact held prisoners by the Law (Galatians 3:23). The promise of Christ was hidden from them (Romans 16:25). Thank God, a new day has dawned and a Light has appeared. His name is Jesus. Also note the word “fellowship” in verse 6. There are those who say that nothing can interfere with our relationship with God but if we sin our fellowship is broken. My response is you never had a relationship with God in the first place if it can easily be broken when you do something wrong. Fellowship comes from relationship! There is no way a person can live perfect in an imperfect body. Based on the Law, if you have broken one little aspect of God’s Word, you are guilty of breaking all of the rules and regulations contained therein (James 2:10).

1 John 1:7-8, “But if we walk in the light, as He [God] is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, His Son, purifies us from all sin.” Many have been taught that living in the light is doing right and living in darkness is doing wrong? Although this is not what this passage means, let’s see how it sounds if we say it that way: “For, if we do right as He does right, we have fellowship one with another and the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin.” Question: If you are doing right as God is right, why do you need a Savior to purify or cleanse you from sin? Notice that John did not say Christ purifies from a sin but from “all sins.” According to John, how much sin are we cleansed from when we come into Christ? Is it little, half, a third? John is telling us that when we believe in the Light, Jesus, we are purified from “all sin,” not a sin or some of our sins. What does this complete cleansing through Christ’s blood do according to John? It gives us fellowship with God the Father and fellowship with one another. So John is talking about what happens to a person when he or she becomes a believer in Jesus Christ. It is critical you understand this context.

1 John 1:8, “If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.” Based on what he said in 3:9, John is not talking about sinning after we accept Christ but giving us the *process of coming to Jesus*. Here is basically what John is saying in verse 8: “The truth is not in you when you come to Christ seeking to be justified by Him and say to God, ‘I don’t have any sin in me.’” Self-righteous people don’t believe they have any sin and don’t need a Savior. They are deceived according to John. Paul said, “All have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). It is clear from 1 John 3:4 the sin John is dealing with is sins under the Law, and for good reason. “Where there is no Law there is no transgression” (Romans 4:15). Christ is the end of the Law for those who believe in Him (Romans 10:4). Romans 6:10, “The death He died, He died to sin once for all.” Romans 6:18, “You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.”

1 John 1:9: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." Take note of the words "all unrighteousness." When John talks about sins, he is talking about the *condition of sin* that exists *before* accepting Jesus as Savior. How much unrighteousness does John say we have to be cleansed of before coming to Christ? It is "all unrighteousness." So he cannot be talking about a Christian who slips and commits a single sin otherwise he would have dealt with a specific sin and not sins in general. If you are a Christians, how many times in your life have you been "all" unrighteous? It was only *before* you knew Christ. At what point were you cleansed from "all unrighteousness?" It was when you repented and accepted Jesus as your personal Savior. How many times does that take? Once! Can "one" sin make you "all" unrighteous in God's sight? I think not. Yes, we need to deal with "a" sin when it occurs. But that does not mean fellowship with God is broken. Our fellowship with God depends on our relationship with Jesus. Our relationship God remains in tact as long as we continue to remain in an attitude of repentance and remain in a state of saving faith in the Lord Jesus (1 Timothy 1:19). It does not make sense to be the righteousness of God in Christ, and then when we sin one time, say Jesus has to come back and cleanse us from "all" unrighteousness all over again. Not only does this concept not make sense, it is not within the overall context of what John is saying in this letter. If it was, it would be contracting what the apostle Paul taught in Romans chapter four, five and six.

1 John 1:10: "If we claim we have not sinned, we make Him out to be a liar and His word has no place in our lives." Again, John is talking about the experience of being born of God; coming out of darkness and the sins and transgressions of the Law and entering into the light of God's righteousness. If he isn't, then he is contradicting what he said in 1 John 3:6, 9. Like those who try to use what Paul had to say concerning grace as an excuse to sin (Romans 6:1), there are legalists who use what John said in this chapter to require Christians to confess a sin they may have made *as a means to be re-cleansed all over again*. That practice does not conform to the rest of the New Testament, not to mention it doesn't conform to what John said in 1 John 3:2-3? Even if it were that concept does not conform to the *rest* of the New Testament. No other apostle asks us to confess sins over and over to be re-cleansed by Christ's blood. Even the apostle Paul who wrote three fourths of the New Testament did not tell us to do this. Like the Lord, he talked about *repentance*, not confession (Matthew 4:17; 2 Corinthians 12:21). Why repentance and not confession? Because, one can confess over and over a sinful lifestyle and still not give it up. The sin habit can only disappear when true repentance takes place. Even under the *Old Covenant* repentance and saving faith was necessary to be accepted by God. The primary way of promoting sin consciousness in Christians is to teach them they need to be re-justified and re-cleansed all over again by the blood of Jesus each time they make a mistake. This practice has shipwrecked the faith of believers more than what demons do with temptations, because it takes away the person's confidence towards God. The reason it destroys confidence is because we cannot confess enough to cover all of our faults, especially if we use Jesus' standard for what sin is. According to Him, a person whose thinking is wrong is just as guilty as the one whose doing is wrong (Matthew 5:28).

1 John 2:1-3: What happens when we do sin? Our defense Attorney, Jesus, steps up and pleads our case and continually presents us guiltless before the Father, based on His eternal blood that is located on the eternal altar in heaven (Hebrews 9:12). Verse 3 states, "We know that we have come to know Him if we obey His commands." Again, John is saying proof that a person is a true believer in Christ is their lifestyle. There are those, however, who try to use this passage to require believers in Christ to obey certain parts of the Law as a required for salvation? If you are one of those read 1 John 3:23. What did John say was God's command in this passage? To believe in the name of God's Son, Jesus, and love one another. If you have truly believed in Jesus, you will love others. How did John say we are going to love one another? By knowing how much He loved us (1 John 4:19). How did God prove His love for us? He proved it by sending His Son to the cross to remove Adam's sin that was held against us and to take us from underneath the Law that condemned us and demanded our eternal death. God then lumped all of His commands into one; to believe on His Son, Jesus, so we could receive His righteousness by faith (Romans 3:22; 4:22; 6:8) so the Holy Spirit can set up living quarters within our inner most being. The result is rivers of living waters flowing in and through our inner most being (John 4:13-14; 7:37-39). Obedience to God and loving others will be as natural as brushing your teeth when that happens!

1 John 3:18-21: John is saying the same thing here Paul said in Galatians 2:17. When we feel condemned it is not God doing the condemning; it is us doing it to us. If we rebuild the justification by works system (Law) into our life, we become lawbreakers and become condemned all over again. It is deadly to mix Law with grace because it neutralizes the power of the gospel, voids out faith, and makes the promise of God's righteousness ineffective in our life. According to 1 John 3:18, how can we know someone who says they are a Christian is truly a believer in Christ? The person will display love towards others. Gifts of the Spirit are not proof of Christianity, but love is (1 Corinthians 13).

1 John 3:20-24: Isn't verse 21 what we are really afraid of; that our hearts might condemn us? You say, "Isn't it dangerous if our hearts never did condemn us?" Not according to verse 21. According to this passage it is "confidence before God" if our hearts never condemned us. What is the result of confidence towards God? Obeying God's commandments and receiving anything we ask (verse 22). How can we know that Jesus lives in us? "We know it by the Spirit He gave us" (verse 24). In other words, it is an internal witness of the Spirit of God and not by some mechanical method of appeasing a guilty conscience!

Legalists do not want us to believe we are justified by faith alone so we will turn to them and their religion of legalism for help to resolve feelings of guilt. They tell us if we will do this or that we will feel better. We did it and we felt better. What just happened? Like a drug addict we received a fix. That is all we received - e.g., "I did what the preacher told me to do and I feel so much better now." We testify of what "*we did*" and how that relieved us of the feelings of condemnation and guilt. We should not be surprised at the results, however. Thousands of years ago, the blood of bulls and goats accomplished the same thing, temporarily that is. So it should not be a shock to find that preachers

can lead you outside of the gospel of Christ to try to find relief for your *feelings* of guilt and separation from God? Once you become addicted to having someone tell you how to be free from guilt and condemnation through what *you do or don't do, and how well you do it*, you become a religious junkie from that day forward. Like those who lived under the Old Covenant, that fix will last for a while; but sooner or later you will fail again and start feeling guilty all over again and go back to some works orientated person to help you figure out what you have to do to get the guilt taken care of. Once again, the legalist's give you all kinds of religious answers about what you need to do to get straighten out so you can feel better; e.g., "If you will start operating in love you can be freed from guilt and bad feelings." No you won't. Only your faith in the shed blood of Jesus can free you.

I heard of a guy who had been mistreated by a national ministry. He decided he would learn to love them by writing out a check to that ministry. After he wrote out the check, he said, "I feel a lot better." He said after he dropped the check in the mail, "Suddenly joy became coming over me." They called that the "fruit of obedience" in some church circles. You say, "Isn't that precious." No! It is deadly! That kind of stuff is pure Law, not to mention the financial burden to have to send a check to everyone whom you have offended or who have offended you. I don't know about you but I would be broke. You cannot buy your way into the fruit of the Spirit. They come free of charge from only one source and one source only, God and His grace. A Christian does not have to make a decision to love. Love is who he/she is in Christ (1 John 4:7-8). You want to be able to forgive someone? Get in Jesus. You want to be delivered from sin? Get in Jesus. You want freedom from guilt and condemnation. Get in Jesus. It's all there. Paul starts off his introduction to the book of Romans by saying, "the man who finds life will find it through trusting God" (Romans 1:17; Living Bible). One thing for sure, we will not find it in religion. Religion places us on a works treadmill to resolve our feelings of separation between us and God. There is only one thing that should govern your heart and that is the blood sacrifice of Jesus and the unconditional love of God. You cannot go very wrong if you trust in and remain devoted to Jesus. Then if you fail, you will fail in the right direction.

You say, "If I am not supposed to confess my sins over and over in order to be re-cleansed by the blood of Jesus, then what am I to confess? According to the apostle Paul in Romans 10:9-10, you are to confess Jesus as Lord. That is the confession for New Covenant followers of Christ. Hebrews 10:23, "Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for He who promised is faithful." This passage is speaking of the Lordship of Jesus. Why are we told to hold unswervingly to the Lordship of Jesus? "For He who promised is faithful." Who is faithful? Christ is. A perfect conscience is not based on our faithfulness. It is based on Christ's faithfulness! This covenant is not about us. It is all about Jesus. If any group of people should experience peace it should be Christians. God's kingdom is not a physical kingdom. It is a kingdom of "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Romans 14:17). Yet, some of the most fearful and guilt-ridden people on the planet are those who attend, regularly, the house of God. Why is that? It is because they have rejected faith and a good conscience towards God.

Inner peace comes from knowing that you have been justified by faith (Romans 5:1-2) and that not one sin can ever be held against you again (Romans 4:8). God does not need for one of His children to verbalize their sin over and over in order to be re-cleansed all over again? For one thing, Jesus “has appeared once for all to do away with sin by the sacrifice of Himself” (Hebrews 9:26). Second, God reads our hearts and knows when we are sorry and truly repentant when we do sin. Third, when God looks at us He sees His Son’s righteousness (Philippians 3:9). Fourth, “we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus once for all” (Hebrews 10:10). Fifth, “Sin is not taken into account when there is no Law” (Romans 5:13). And, “Christ is the end of the Law so that there may be righteousness for everyone believes” (Romans 10:4). Are we to repent when we sin? Absolutely! If you want to confess something, confess that Jesus is still Lord (Romans 10:10) and don’t repeat the sin! If Jesus wasn’t Lord then we would need to confess sin over and over and over and give another sacrifice to satisfy the demands of the Law. Thank God we now have a new confession and new position (Ephesians 1:3-8; 2:1-10).

Section 8 –Crossing the Finish Line Strong

How many of you have started something but never finished it? Who hasn’t said, “I am going to give up a habit” only to end up going back to it. And, then there’s the bottle of essential vitamins and minerals, 32 ounces of pure health which I need to take every day. The only problem is I keep forgetting to take them. Who hasn’t bought the exercise machine and used it...for a week. Until we sold ours, its primary function was to collect dust. It’s one thing to start something and another to finish it. Don’t get nervous. “Don’t start something you can’t finish” is not the subject matter of this portion of our study. So relax. Just because a project is on the table doesn’t mean it can’t be returned to the shelf. Besides, some projects are wisely abandoned. My intent in this, the final section, of our study is not to convince you to finish everything you start but to encourage you to finish the race for eternal life.

Read Hebrews 12:1-3. In verse 1, the writer used the Greek word *agon* for race. It means *agony*! He is saying that the Christian’s race for eternal life is not a jog or sprint but a demanding, grueling, and sometimes agonizing, cross-country marathon. It takes a massive effort to finish strong. Surely you’ve observed there are those who have dropped out of the race for eternal life and are now sitting on the sideline? There was a time when they kept the pace, but they let weariness set in. They didn’t think the run would be that difficult. They may have become discouraged by a bump or push by a fellow runner, financial difficulty, physical illness, etc. Whatever the reason, they are not running anymore. They may still come to church but their hearts are not in the race. They retired before their time. Unless something changes, their best work will have been their first work. They will finish with a whimper, if they finish at all.

The example set for us to follow in the Bible is not one of the saints of old, or even an apostle, but the Lord Jesus. Consider the temptations of Jesus just prior to Him entering His earthly ministry. According to Luke, the Holy Spirit led Jesus into the

desert where He was tempted by the devil for forty days and nights (Luke 4:1-2). The wilderness temptations Jesus experienced during that time were not three isolated events scattered over a forty-day period but in succession and non-stop. At every turn, Satan was whispering in Jesus' ear trying to sow doubt, unbelief and distrust. Jesus did not give in to this constant bombardment one time.

Jesus was also persecuted and ridiculed by religious leaders throughout His ministry. How would you like someone yell words like these at you: "Hey, liar! Why don't you do something honest with your life" (John 7:12). "Here comes the foreigner. Why don't you go home where you belong?" (John 8:48). "Since when do they let children of the devil enter the race?" (John 8:48). The Lord's own family called Him a lunatic. His neighbors treated Him even worse. Some religious people tried to throw Jesus off a cliff when He returned to His hometown (Luke 4:29). Jesus was forced to carry His own cross through the streets of Jerusalem. And in His weakened condition from the beatings He collapsed under the heavy load. They stripped of His clothes, nailed Him to a cross and displayed Him as a common criminal in front of His mother, family and friends. While His blood slowly dripped from His body, religious leaders and elders mocked Him and called Him names. You say, but Jesus never did anything wrong. No, but we did. And since Jesus took our place on the cross He was treated like we deserved to be treated by both humanity and God (2 Corinthians 5:21). Although our Lord never cheated, He was seen as a cheat. Although he never stole heaven regarded Him as a thief. Although He never lied He was considered a liar. Although He never committed sexual perversion He was treated as a pervert. The point I am trying to make is though one wave of shame after another was dumped on our Lord, it never slowed Him down. By contrast to others, *Jesus' best work was His final work*. His strongest step was His last step. And it can be ours! The writer of Hebrews tells us that Jesus held on while wicked people were doing evil things to Him (12:3). In spite of rejection, ridicule, persecution, and in the face of death, our Lord held out until the very end. Thus, Christ has already mapped out our course. All we have to do is to place our feet in His foot prints and follow His example. What gave Christ the ability to endure all this and then die for ungrateful and sinful humanity (Romans 5:8)? Hebrews 12:2 tells us that one of the reasons Jesus ran His race so effectively was because He knew what awaited Him across the finish line (death). Christ never lost sight of the fact that after His life was over He would go back and sit next to His Father on an eternal throne and be honored for who He is. That is why He accepted the shame as if it were nothing (Philippians 2:6-11). Shame is the feeling of disgrace, embarrassment and humiliation. Like Jesus, we are tempted, ridiculed and shamed. But unlike Jesus, we lose heart, get angry and become discouraged. How can we keep running our race for life like Jesus? The same way the Lord did by focusing on the reward which awaits us on the other side of the finish line (death). But we don't have to wait until we get to heaven to enjoy our inheritance according to what Paul said in Ephesians 1:18. What Paul meant when he talked about "the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints" was our full inheritance is already a fact in God's view, having been made available to us at Calvary. Paul saw maintaining an intimate relationship with Christ a great prize to be sought after (cross-reference Philippians 3:8).

In 2 Timothy 4:6-8, Paul compares the Christian life to various athletic contests of his day. Of all the sporting events, the winner of the 26-mile marathon received the highest honors. Paul compares his loyalty to Christ to that event. He says in verse 7, "I've stayed on my feet and competed well in the great contest of life. I have finished the race" (e.g., "I have not been disqualified;" 1 Corinthians 9:24-25). Verse 8, "Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day--and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing." The Lord Jesus said to Smyrna, the suffering church, "Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer... Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life" (Revelation 2:10). The Lord said to the church in Philadelphia: "I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown" (Revelation 3:11). The Greek gives two words for crown: *diadema* (a crown for royalty, kings, etc.) and *stephananos* (victor's wreath). *Stephanos* is used here. In order to receive our crown of victory we must cross the finish line, however. We need to "fix our eyes on Jesus the author and finisher of our faith" (Hebrews 12:2).

When our heart becomes weary and discouraged, we need to wrap ourselves in the trailing robe of His majesty, the Lord Jesus and let Him carry us through to the end. When Paul mailed his first letter to Timothy, he might as well have boxed up a pair of knee-high rubber boots and sent them along in the package. Timid by temperament, Timothy had to wade into the swamp and wrestle a tag-team of alligators. He had to deal with false doctrines, endless controversies, petty power struggles, etc. Paul knew Timothy needed a glimpse of the King and His Kingdom. So he said to Timothy, "Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen" (1 Timothy 1:17). Paul was saying, "Ah, Timothy the enemy is so subtle. People can be inconsiderate. The world has become so corrupt. But look up. Can you see Him? Can you push all this stuff to one side for a minute and get a glimpse of Jesus? Can you forget about the sermon and the board meeting and that cranky elder and feast your eyes on the King?" A little later in the same letter it happened again. Paul is talking about money issues, church fights over self-serving prosperity doctrine, attitudes of greed, suspicion, and envy, and then senses that his young friend needed another glimpse of Jesus. So, under the inspiration of the Spirit, he writes 1 Timothy 6:12-16. Here is my paraphrase of verses 14-16: "Listen, the material things that trip and tangle so many of God's people will all shrivel like dried grass in the flames of His coming. He's the King! Ah, Timothy. Imagine an ocean of light, great towering waves of it thundering down on you. Light so bright it drives the sight from your eyes. I caught a glimpse of it on that Damascus highway and it knocked me to my face in the sand. Oh, the splendor, might and power of Jesus, Timothy. Praise Him!"

The prophet Jeremiah caught a glimpse King Jesus when he wrote, "No one is like you, O LORD; you are great, and your name is mighty in power. Who should not revere you, O King of the nations? This is your due. Among all the wise men of the nations and in all their kingdoms, there is no one like you" (Jeremiah 10:6-7). John, exiled on Patmos for refusing to worship an unworthy Roman emperor, looked up from his imprisonment and gave us this description of our Lord: "I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges

and makes war... On his robe and on his thigh He has this name written: King of Kings and Lord of Lords " (Revelation 19:11-16). Today the weak are overpowered by the strong; the innocent is preyed upon by the depraved; helpless unborn babies are savagely pulled out of their mother's wombs before they can draw their first breath, etc. The world groans under the weight of it all. It will not always be so. Someone is coming who is changing all that. Signs of His return are already on the horizon. The end time clouds are already gathering that the King is coming. This time He will not be humiliated or scorned. Jesus will set things in proper order on this planet when He returns. If you have made Jesus Savior and Lord of your life you are on the winning side. Furthermore, you have a destiny and an anointing to fulfill in life. Don't let the devil; legalists or hardships of life take it from you. Let God rescue you from empty religion. There are so many people who die sad and defeated. That's not God's way. Whatever you do, finish your life with saving faith in Jesus.

Conclusion

There is a bumper sticker that states, "Don't be found dead without Jesus." That is good advice. Jesus' death and resurrection changed everything. It is truly a humbling experience to receive what we don't deserve and can't earn. Yet that's the kind of gift God's grace is. If we are ever to possess it, we must receive it by faith. We cannot ever do enough to deserve it. A vital part of the repentance process is getting rid of that old mentality that still believes we can get something on the basis of our merit. Yes, we must give up a lot for Jesus...everything that stops the flow of God's grace in our lives. But that's not bad news! That's good news! God has given us a life that has His values built into it!

The number one killer of God's grace is not Satan? He can only use the weapons we place in his hands (Colossians 2:13-15). The number one killer of grace is legalism. The New Covenant is a new way from having to measure up to the letter of the Law in order to be justified before God. That way is faith in Christ Jesus. "Everyone who believes in Him will have eternal life" (John 3:15, NLT) seems too simple for some. They want a more complicated cure for their sin problem. Yet, that is all that is required to be saved and to remain saved. You want to be free from guilt, self condemnation, from the tyranny of the devil and sinful lifestyles? Totally trust Jesus and Him alone!

Questionnaire
GRACE PART 2: BREAKING OUT OF LEGALISM

In the pursuit of a course of this nature much Scripture must be *read*. It is recommended that you read the assigned Scripture before reading the explanatory material in the study course. Certainly the student hardly needs the exhortation to read *prayerfully*. The Bible is a class by itself, different from any other book ever written. That is because the Holy Spirit is its true author (2 Peter 1:21). It is also recommended that you read through an entire section at a time before answering the questions provided in the workbook. The value of reading with continuity is that we discern the central line of thought, the pivotal idea, which is so essential to the understanding of others related to it. Following each section, suggestive questions have been prepared to help you grasp the “meat” of the study. It is important that you completely read through each section before answering.

Section 1 – Definition of Legalism

1. Which is correct?
 - a. Legalism is Law
 - b. Legalism is work for salvation.
 - c. Legalism is a rule driven code of ethics (what to eat, drink, wear, and where or where not to go, etc.), whereby a person attempts to justify himself or herself before God, gain God’s favor.
 - d. Legalism is trying to balance the scales of God’s justice.
 - e. All of the above

2. What is a person doing when he/she does something to justify himself/herself before God in order to gain God’s favor?
 - a. Practicing grace
 - b. Trusting in Jesus
 - c. Practicing legalism
 - d. Proving Jesus is Lord.

Section 2 – Comparison between Legalism and Grace

1. The trademark of a legalist is, “God, I thank you that I am _____ other men, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector” (Luke 18:11-12).

2. the writer provides an in-depth comparison between legalism and grace. Can you identify with any of them? If so, which ones?

3. Which statement is correct?
- The works orientated person (legalist) is rule driven and serves God out of fear.
 - The person living by the grace of God is Spirit-led (Galatians 5:16) and serves God out of love.
 - We do not serve God in order to gain His favor or approval; we serve Him from a grateful heart because we *already* have it!
 - Only from a position of *already having* God's approval can one's service be accepted by the Father.
 - All of the above.

Section 2 – Struggle with Grace

1. What did the writer say the reason Paul went into so much detail about his whereabouts and contacts immediately following his conversion?

2. Paul knew some men who held high positions in the Church at Jerusalem were going around preaching something different than what he was preaching. What were they teaching that was so terrible? Was it that you can go to heaven being a murderer or some other gross sinner? No! What was it?

3. Where did this false doctrine of works for salvation come out of according to Galatians 2:12?

4. What reason does the writer give for the Lord not sending Paul to Jerusalem to become indoctrinated by the apostles?

5. Why did the writer say it was it so hard for early Church leaders to understand the grace of God?

Section 4 – Seven “U” of Breaking Out of Legalism

1. List two of the seven “Us” for breaking out of legalism. Explain why you believe these are important:

Section 5 - Shipwrecked Faith

1. What is the “meaningless talk” referred to in 1 Timothy 5:6?

- a. It is teaching grace.
- b. It is teaching law.
- c. It is what the apostles wrote.
- d. All of the above.

2. What were false teachers instructing believers in Christ to put away by instructing them to go back under certain parts of the Law in order to be saved? (See 1 Timothy 1: 5, 6 and 19)

- a. They were instructing them to totally trust in Christ.
- b. They were instructing them to go to another church.
- c. They were instructing them to believe what the apostle Paul had said.
- d. They were instructing them to put away a good conscience towards God

3. What is the correct way to use the Law according to 1 Timothy 1:9?

4. Read 1 Timothy 1:18-20. What is “fighting the good faith” (spiritual warfare) Paul spoke of in 1 Timothy 1:18? Is it fighting demons, principalities and powers? Not according to verse 19. What is it?

5. A person who has never experienced total forgiveness from God will most likely be unable to totally forgive themselves and others. ___True ___False

6. Why do some believers carry unhealthy guilt:
 - a. It is because they have a performance based mentality.
 - b. It is because they have attached guilt to disappointment.
 - c. It is because they believe they are going to repeat that sin again.
 - d. It is because they have surrendered to a guilt ridden conscious.
 - e. All of the above

Section 6 – Maintaining a Conscience Void of Offence towards God

1. The greatest preacher you will ever hear will be:
 - a. Your pastor
 - b. Your spouse
 - c. Some famous evangelist or pastor.
 - d. The Holy Spirit through your very own conscience.
2. What is the conscience?
3. Which statement is true?
 - a. The moment we repent and receive Jesus as Lord and Savior our conscience is cleansed and made aware that we are God's children (John 1:12).
 - b. By dying on the cross, Jesus put an end to sin once and for all for those who believe in Him, and then presents believers "holy and blameless" before God (Ephesians 1:4).
 - c. Now that the believer is declared holy, he or she is led and motivated by the Holy Spirit from the inside out.
 - d. All of the above.
4. What would have to happen more than once to be re-cleansed by the blood of Jesus more than once? See Hebrews 9:26 and Romans 6:10
5. Notice there is no mention of sins under the New Covenant in Hebrews 9:15. Why is that?
6. Read Hebrews 10:4: What has the blood of Jesus done that the blood of bulls and goats could not do?
7. What was God's will and what did Jesus come to do according to Hebrews 10:9? (See also John 1:29; Hebrews 9:15; Romans 4:15; 5:13; 4:15: 10:4)

8. According to Hebrews 10:10, what was one of Jesus' purposes for coming to this planet?

9. Read Hebrews 10:11-14. The writer is referring to the conscience in verse 14 (cross-reference Hebrews 9:9-14). When a person accepts Jesus as Lord and Savior, his/her conscience is cleared of any and all wrong doing. No more sin consciousness!

True False

Section 7 – The Believer's Confession

1. The context of the book of 1 John is the process of salvation. John is basically warning his readers not to be deceived about the *nature of salvation* (1 John 3:7-10).

True False

2. The real evidence of what is believed is manifested in _____ and _____, not words alone (1 John 2:28-3:10).

3. 1 John 1:8, "If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us." Based on what he said in 1 John 3:9, John is not talking about sinning after we accept Christ but giving us the *process of coming to Jesus*.

True False

4. What happens when we do sin according to 1 John 2:1-3?

5. If any group of people should experience joy it should be Christians, because God's kingdom is not a physical kingdom. It is a kingdom of "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Romans 14:17). Yet, some of the most fearful and guilt-ridden people on the planet are those who attend, regularly, the house of God. Why is that?

Section 8 – Crossing the Finish Line Strong

1. The example set for us to follow is not one of the saints, or even an apostle, but the _____.

2. Though one wave of shame after another was dumped on our Lord, it never slowed Him down. By contrast to others, *Jesus' best work was His final work*. His strongest step was His last step. And it can be ours! True False

3. One of the reasons Jesus ran His race so effectively was? (See Hebrews 12:2)
 - a. Because He knew what awaited Him across the finish line.
 - b. Because He never knew who He was until after He died on the cross.
 - c. Because He had 12 perfect apostles
 - d. Because His Mother was Mary.

4. How can we keep running our race like Jesus?



Answers Sheet
GRACE PART 2: BREAKING OUT OF LEGALISM

Section 1 – Definition of Legalism

1. e
2. c
3. e

Section 2 – Comparison between Legalism and Grace

1. “not like”
2. (Open ended answer)
3. e

Section 3 – Struggle with Grace

1. He wanted the Galatia believers to know that his understanding of justification by faith in Jesus alone (grace) was not given to him by one of the apostles, rather by the Lord Jesus. Thus, they had better take his message of grace to heart. Paul starts most of his letters off by declaring that he was “an apostle--sent not from men nor by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father...” (1:1).
2. They were teaching justification through works and not justification by faith in Jesus alone.
3. “Certain men came from James.”
4. It was because they, along with other Church leaders, had been compromised by a Pharisaic group of believers from the Jerusalem Church who was going from church to church telling believers they needed to follow rituals of the Law given by Moses in order to be saved.
5. Because it is hard to break out of something you have lived under all your life.

Section 4 – Seven “U” of Breaking Out of Legalism

Possible answers:

Understand Christ has *already* set you free from Law and sin. (The reason this is important is if you don’t truly believe you are free from the Law, you will be trying to earn something you can never earn, but already have, God’s righteousness.)

Understand grace will change your performance but your performance will not change God’s opinion of you. (God’s opinion of a Christian is based on our faith in Jesus and not on works. One of the great benefits of believing in Jesus is that

either Adam's sin or the Law which declared you a sinner is any longer applicable to you!)

Understand what is right and wrong for your life must be based on the whole

Word of God and not by tradition. (If we don't, we could be caught up in legalism and held in bondage by what someone else determines what is right and wrong and not on what God says.)

Understand you have to remove the hypocrisy. (We all have areas we need to work on. Not to do so keeps us in bondage. Facing truth about your self is the way of liberation).

Understand you cannot please everyone. (Trying to please everyone keeps us in bondage and from experiencing the peace Jesus purchased for us on the cross.)

Understand you must express your liberty wisely. (This is important because if we don't use our liberty in Christ wisely, we can end up hurting a weaker brother or sister in Christ.)

Understand God cannot be obligated. (This is important because if we are not careful we will to earn what can only be acquired through legalism what Christ purchased for us on the cross. We must be on guard of legalism, trying to justify ourselves before God through fleshly works. A person can never do anything to deserve, earn or pay God back for what He has done for us. But we can show God we appreciate what He has done for us by living in a way that brings honor and glory to His name ("walk worthy" - Colossians 1:10; Ephesians 4:1).

Section 5 - Shipwrecked Faith

1. b
2. d
3. It is to declare someone guilty before God.
4. It is maintaining a good conscience towards God, never letting condemnation creep in.
5. T
6. Possible answers: It is because they have a performance based mentality; disappointment in self; because they have surrendered to a guilt ridden conscious; they believe they are going to repeat that sin again; because people around them remind them of their past.

Section 6 – Maintaining a Conscience Void of Offence towards God

1. d
2. It is the voice of the spirit-person; the center of all that goes on inside of us; deeper than a feeling.
3. d
4. Jesus would have to die again. The Lord is not going to come back and die for one more sin you may commit. Hebrews 9:26 and Romans 6:10 tells us Jesus died for sin once and for all.
5. It is because Christ died for both Adam's disobedience which brought spiritual and physical death to the human race and sins committed under the Old Covenant Law, leaving Satan nothing to condemn us with.
6. Take away sin.

7. It was God's will for Jesus to come so the first covenant could be established and the second covenant set aside.
8. It was to set aside the First (Old) Covenant and establishing the Second (New) Covenant so He could make us holy through His blood and give us a new way of living. Hebrews 10:10, "And by that will we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."
9. T

Section 7 – The Believer's Confession

1. T
2. Attitudes and actions
3. T
4. Our defense Attorney, Jesus, steps up and pleads our case and continually presents us guiltless before the Father, based on His eternal blood that is located on the eternal altar in heaven (Hebrews 9:12).
5. It is because they have rejected faith and a good conscience towards God.

Section 8 – Crossing the Finish Line Strong

1. Lord Jesus
2. T
3. a
4. The same way the Lord did by focusing on the reward which awaits us on the other side of the finish line (death).