
Commentary from Daniel Bush & Noel Due

[Bush, D., & Due, N. (2015). *Live in Liberty: The Spiritual Message of Galatians*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.]

The Judaizers' so-called gospel springs from the flesh, which, like the ad, "loves being in control." **The drive to legalism and moralism both arise from the desire to control God and other people, to work out the "secret" to get them to do what we want.** On the one hand, it's about insecurity born of an edgy conscience marred by shame; the flesh loves any way of making you feel like you're more holy or more acceptable to God, others, or yourself. On the other hand, it's about monitoring the lives of others; **control means nothing if you can't get others to dance to your tune,** thereby serving your desires! [Bush, D., & Due, N. (2015). *Live in Liberty: The Spiritual Message of Galatians* (p. 188). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.]

But the only thing the flesh loves more than controlling others is having a marionette God who's moved by the strings of piety or passion. **The flesh abhors the Spirit, who's as free as the breeze and outside the control of religiosity.** "And so it is with everyone born of the Spirit," John goes on to say (John 3:8). This is why if you are a child of the promise you'll be persecuted; your freedom is hated. Just ask Paul—he had been both the persecutor and persecuted! [Ibid. (pp. 188–189).]

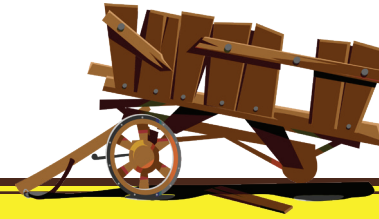
The problem with legalism is not only that it denies the all-sufficiency of Christ; it also becomes a force to break love and fellowship, rather than making us more holy like it promises. Law and piety have been used to cover all manner of sins and shameful secrets; we're hypercritical of the very thing of which we're most (covertly) guilty. Then **we make a "Things that Must Be Done" list, topped by what we're good at. It's a two-for-**

one deal: a handy ruler with which to measure the shortcomings of others, and a scale already calibrated to our own success. [Ibid. (p.189).]

The issue is power. Both idolatry and sorcery attempt to garner blessing through our works, replacing trust in God with self-reliance. To what end? Namely, to call down ourselves the blessings we crave—it's faith gone astray. Martin Luther put it this way: What does it mean to have a god? or, what is God? Answer: A god means that from which we are to expect all good and to which we are to take refuge in all distress, so that to have a God is nothing else than to trust and believe Him from the whole heart; as I have often said that the confidence and faith of the heart alone make both God and an idol. If your faith and trust be right, then is your god also true; and, on the other hand, if your trust be false and wrong, then you have not the true God; for these two belong together faith and God. That now, I say, upon which you set your heart and put your trust is properly your god. [Ibid. (pp. 190–191).]

Ancient philosophers and rabbis were making lots of lists like Paul's, long before Paul came on the scene. The reason? Like many today, they imagined it was possible to get beyond wrong behavior by education and effort: "If you just understand what sin is, and what the problems are, you can fix it." We hear such tidy lists and think, **"Great! By reading those lists and being prodded a few times, I'll know what not to do! That gives me more power to not do them!" The Judaizers were pushing that cart, but its wheels were broken. They still are.**

Why doesn't education and effort release us and



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set our hearts free? **Because redoubling our efforts returns us to the flesh, moving back toward our selves rather than toward faith!**

Paul's having none of it. He's saying, "The problem isn't education because **the flesh can't be instructed to behave, except for outward conformity.** It has to be destroyed. It's opposed to the Spirit, not merely misinformed. We're born of the flesh and remain in the flesh until we're born of the Spirit. Only then can things change." In Paul's theology, being justified, sanctified, and glorified are inseparable from being in Christ. Grace transforms, not willpower. [Ibid. (p. 192).]

THE WAY OF THE SPIRIT: Children of God aren't born of blood and the will of man, but of God. That's grace (John 1:12–13). **The "yes" of grace is also a "no" to all human strength and definitions of power. Growing in the fruit of the Spirit is relinquishing control—the mark of the flesh—to walk by faith, trusting God—the mark of the Spirit.** [Ibid. (pp.).]

Here's the central difference between the list of fleshly works and the description of the Spirit's fruit: **One is a list of deeds (i.e., works, arising from actions that we will); the other is a description of fruit (i.e., a harvest arising from what the Spirit does).** It's not the flesh trying to be spiritual, but the Spirit reproducing his life in us. [Ibid. (pp. 193–194).]

Do you ever wonder how this simple fisherman could become a fisher of men? It's not because he

polished up on his studies and got fired up with enthusiasm. **It's because, falling at Jesus' knees, he essentially said, "In my very being I'm wrong, and I can't fix it. Have mercy, Lord!"** It's at this point that Peter is connected to the vine, moving with the Spirit of God. Only then could the Spirit's fruit grow on the branch that Peter became. Grace had weakened him so that he could bear the weight of being one of the foundation stones of the church. When he drew strength from himself, he was too brittle to be useful. [Ibid. (p. 193).]

Although Paul's description falls into three sections, they're all one "fruit" of the Spirit's gracious presence. Old Testament professor Samuel Hooke put it this way: A vine does not produce grapes by Act of Parliament; they are the fruit of the vine's own life; **so the conduct which conforms to the standard of the kingdom is not produced by any command, not even God's, but it is the fruit of the divine nature which God gives as a result of what he has done in and by Christ.** [Ibid. (p. 194).]

Before we address the fruit, a warning: Don't read what follows as a checklist. It will drive you to either pride or despair and would overlook the fruits' real purpose. **Rather, they're descriptions of the inevitable outcome of life in the Spirit.** As you walk by the Spirit you won't carry out the desires of the flesh (Gal 5:16). Why? Because the Spirit changes your taste buds! You'll increasingly long for his fruit and disdain your fleshly works. The Spirit awakens you to the vintage wine of the Father's cellar. [Ibid. (p. 194).]