

The Performance Treadmill

Grace vs. Legalism in Sanctification

An Important Distinction:

- Doctrinal legalism: making works a ground or instrument of justification.
- Practical legalism: making works a means of establishing or maintaining God's favor. This is a performance based, transactional, external, rule-centered approach to sanctification.

1. What is the problem?

a. There are some confusing texts:

i. Romans 8:12-13

ii. Philippians 2:12-13

iii. Hebrews 12:14

iv. 2 Peter 1:5-10

b. There are some confusing concepts:

i. The Law – its goodness and usefulness (Romans 7:12; 1 Timothy 1:8).

ii. A believer's judgment and rewards (1 Corinthians 3:12-15).

2. Why do we have the problem?

a. Legalism is an inheritance from the garden (Genesis 3:7).

b. Legalism is a fruit of pride (1 Corinthians 4:6; James 4:10-11).

c. Legalism is self-serving (Matthew 6:1, 5).

d. Legalism is self-assuring (Luke 18:11-12).

3. What are the results of the problem?

a. Spiritual pride (Romans 12:3; 1 Corinthians 8:1-3).

b. Spiritual fatigue (Matthew 24:1-4; Psalm 131).

c. Spiritual destruction (Galatians 3:1-4).

What is the solution to the problem?

- d. Understand your union with Christ in your sanctification (Romans 6:1-14).
- e. Understand the promise of the Spirit in your sanctification (Romans 8:12-14).
- f. Understand the already but not yet reality (1 Corinthians 1:2; 6:11; Col. 3:9-10).
- g. Understand the concept of spiritual rest (Psalm 131; Matthew 11:28-30).

Preparing to Continue:

The truth that sanctification is not accomplished by a performance system does not mean the change process is passive. God has determined that His people will grow, and He has appointed the means through which He ordinarily grows them. These means are God-ordained, Christ-enabled, and Spirit-powered.