



SERIES: August / September Series “HE IS ENOUGH”

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Scripture: Colossians 3:6-7

TITLE: Legalism or Obedience?

Is obedience the same as legalism? I have heard a lot of churches and even Christian ministries ask this question. They ask it in different ways. They wrestle with it in different ministry areas. It's not uncommon to hear, “We need to hold people accountable. The Bible is clear about right behavior. But we don't want to be legalists. We want to show people grace.” And then the round-and-round continues.

But I don't think this is a complicated issue at all. It's not so much a battle of legalism vs. obedience. It's really a battle of the flesh and the Spirit. Let's continue our study of the book of Colossians. We try to settle this debate. Here's what Paul says in Colossians 3:6-7.

“Because of these sins, the anger of God is coming. You used to do these things when your life was still part of this world.”

The Apostle Paul, in verse 5, told us to put to death or kill sin in our lives. He pointed out some common areas of sin, including sexual immorality, lust, evil thoughts, and greed. And that's when he says, “God's anger is coming because of these sins.” We like God, who is gracious and merciful. We like the genie God, but we dislike the wrathful God who dislikes sin and evil.

But what's funny is we dislike injustice around us but hope for extra mercy and grace for ourselves when we win. But here's the fact: God hates sin. He sent Christ to die for it. He has to deal with it. He did deal with it on the cross.

And when we're saved, the old life is gone. The new life is ours. We are no longer citizens of earth. We are citizens of heaven. Therefore we are called to reveal Christ with our lips and with our lives.

You see, the debate shouldn't be “is it legalism or obedience.” Legalism says we can save ourselves with our actions. That is a lie. Obedience is the loving response to a gracious Savior. So how do we win this battle against our sin? Lean into the Spirit. Paul said this in Galatians 5:16, “So I say, let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. Then you won't be doing what your sinful nature craves.”

So let the Spirit carry you through the temptation. Don't do it in your own strength. You will fail.

So here's my challenge for you today: Ask for the Spirit for the conviction to do what's right and the power to do it. Many of us try to live independently, and that leads to failure and

disappointment. Jesus sent a helper – the Holy Spirit. He’s inside each one of us today. So let’s call on Him for help and let Him guide our steps.