

***LIBERATING GRACE** **Galatians 3:3**

Introduction:

I want to begin with a little self-evaluation quiz this morning.

- Do** you feel **guilty** when you relax?
- Do** you **often feel dissatisfied** or discontent with yourself or your situation in life?
- Do** you have a **tendency** to see **what's wrong** in life rather than what's right?
- Do** you ever find yourself using these phrases regularly, "**I have to... I must... I ought to...** "?
- Do** you ever feel **frustrated** or angry with God because you feel that He expects too much of you?
- Does** your relationship to God seem more like a burden rather than a blessing?

If you answered yes to some of those **questions**, you may be **suffering** from **perfectionism**.

Perfectionism is trying to prove my **worth** by being **perfect**.

It is a counterfeit spiritual maturity. It's not the **real** deal. **Perfectionism may** be the **number one** hang up of dedicated believers.

When you first become a Christian and receive the grace of God, all your **sins are forgiven**. You are **given eternal life** in heaven. **You don't do** anything to **earn** any of it. **It's** all a free gift. **Of course**, you have **great joy** when all this happens.

Now there is nothing more contagious than a Christian filled with **joy** and **Satan knows** that so he **wants to rob you of your joy**. **One of the ways** he does that is by **piling up a load** of

legalistic perfectionism on the back of the believer to **burden him down** so that he **loses** his **joy**. **There is nothing** more **repulsive** to people than a **sour saint**.

Somewhere along your **spiritual journey** you may have begun to try to **earn God's approval** through **legalistic perfectionism**. **Many Christians** go down this **path and lose their joy**.

There is an entire book of the Bible written to **combat** this great enemy of grace -- the book of **Galatians**.

***Galatians 3:3** How foolish can you be? After starting your Christian lives in the Spirit, why are you now trying to become perfect by your own human effort? NLT

Today I want us to see that God's grace is more than enough to **liberate us from legalistic perfectionism**. When we begin to understand **how to relax** in God's grace daily, we will find a new level of **joy** in our life.

TS First, I want us to see some of the **destructive effects of perfectionism**.

***(1.) Perfectionism inhibits my initiative**.

Have you ever had **something** you **wanted to do for God** but you were **afraid to try**? **One possible reason is perfectionism**. **You're waiting** for the **perfect circumstance**, and the **perfect timing**. **You** are waiting till you are a **perfect Christian**.

You set your standards so high, that you will never meet them. **As a result**, your **perfectionism** causes **procrastination and paralysis**. **You are afraid to do anything** because you are **afraid it won't be good enough** for God. **You are afraid** to have a Bible study in your home. **You are afraid to talk to**

someone about Christ. **You are afraid** to be a **leader** in your church. **Afraid of** messing it up. **Afraid you won't** be **good enough**.

***Ecclesiastes 11:4** If you wait for **perfect conditions**, you will never get anything done. TLB

***(2.) Perfectionism damages my relationships.**

Do you enjoy being around somebody **who's always correcting you? Nobody** likes that. It's **frustrating and it's irritating**.

***The Bible says, Proverbs 17:9** *Love forgets mistakes; nagging about them parts the best of friends.* TLB.

***(3.) Perfectionism destroys my happiness.**

***Ecclesiastes 7:16** Do not be overrighteous, neither be overwise — why destroy yourself? NIV

That verse doesn't sound like it should be in the Bible, does it? The writer of Ecclesiastes is not **talking about genuine righteousness** or **real wisdom**. **He's talking about perfectionism**. He's talking about legalistic self-righteousness and trying to know everything. He says, that will **destroy** you.

In your mind, you have this picture of your ideal self. There is always a gap between the **ideal and the real**, between what you **want to be**, and **what you are**. **So the ideal is always nagging** the real you.

Thoughts like this run through your head all the time, "I'm too skinny ... I'm too fat ... I'm too tall... I'm too short... I'm too uncoordinated ... I'm too dumb ... I'm not good enough... I'm

never going to change ... **I can't do** anything right." On and on it goes.

Does nagging work? No. Nagging only makes you **defensive**. **When you're a perfectionist, your worse nag lives under your own skin.**

Perfectionism is learned behavior. You may have learned it growing up. **The good news** is, since you learned it, you can **unlearn it.**

There's only one antidote to perfectionism. **It is experiencing the grace** of God and **learning to trust** His grace **every day**. **You could call** it learning to **relax in God's grace.**

Let's look at an acrostic using the word **R.E.L.A.X.** that will help us to **daily trust** in the **grace of God.**

***1. REALIZE NOBODY'S PERFECT.**

That's obvious, but sometimes we act **as if** we could achieve perfection if we **just worked a little harder. Nothing is perfect except God and his Word.**

Let me give you a good verse to put on your refrigerator and memorize if you are a perfectionist. **If you are married** to a perfectionist, you have my permission to put it on your refrigerator.

***Psalms 119:96 Nothing is perfect except your words. TLB**

Does that mean God isn't interested in me **growing** and becoming more like Christ? **Of course not. Does** that mean I **don't have to resist** the **devil** when it comes to **sin? Of course not.**

God expects you to **allow** the Holy Spirit to **change** you from the inside out and give you **victory** over sin **more and more**. **When God says, "I receive you by grace** through faith **not by your good works,"** that does not mean you can just **keep on being a jerk or living an immoral life.**

It just means that God isn't waiting for you to change before he loves you or receives you as his Child. You can rest in that **relationship,** it's **not changed** by your **performance.**

TS So realize nobody's perfect.

***2. ENJOY GOD'S UNCONDITIONAL LOVE.**

***Look at 1 John 3:1** See how very much our Father loves us, for he calls us his **children,** and that is what we are! NLT

Underline the word "children". **When you become** a believer and a **follower** of Christ, you're **not just a servant of God. You** are his **child. He is your Father** and he has **adopted** you into his royal family.

A servant is accepted and appreciated on the basis of what he does. **A child is accepted and appreciated on the basis of who he is. We need to revel** in the **relationship** we have with our heavenly Father.

A servant starts the day **anxious** and worried **whether his work** will please his master. **A child rests in the secure love** and acceptance of his family.

A servant does ministry because he must. **He doesn't** do it because he enjoys it. He does it **because it's his job. A child of**

a loving parent will come in time to **share the heart** and **passion** of their parent.

ILL A good example of that is **Billy Graham** and his **son Franklin**. **Why is Franklin leading** the evangelistic organization now? **Was he forced** to do it? **No, he leads** it because he **shares** the same **passion of his father** for reaching people for Christ.

That is the way it is with a true **child of God**. **He shares a common passion** with his heavenly Father. **He enjoys ministering and serving** because he **believes in the mission**. **He wants to see every person** on the **planet saved**. **He wants to see them set free** from **destructive behavior**. **He wants them** to be in **heaven** with him just like his heavenly Father.

You are not just a child of God, you are a **friend of God**.

In John 15:15 Jesus said to his followers, "I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you **friends**, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. NIV

Jesus is your friend and he has **brought** you **into his business** and **His business is saving the world**.

Have you ever had a friend that you shared a common interest with? Maybe it was fishing or cooking or tennis. **Doing it together** was so much more fun.

ILL. Bev and I enjoy taking long walks on the beach or in the woods and see what we can discover like shells, animals, plants, birds, and creepy crawlers. **Everything is more enjoyable** when you do it with a friend that **shares your passion**. **Even work** is more enjoyable.

When you begin to see yourself as a child of God and to see God as **your friend**, you will **enjoy life and ministry** so much more.

***3. LET GOD HANDLE THINGS**

That's very important because **the root of perfectionism is the desire to control**. **You think** that **if you** can just **control things**, everything will be perfect.

If I can control my **spouse**, then we'll have a perfect marriage. **If I can control** my kids, they'll **never get in trouble** and always **be safe**. **If I can** control my **career**, **life will** be perfect. **If I can control** the **people** around me, **my world** will be perfect.

But the truth is, most of life is beyond our control. You can't control it. Attempting to do so is playing God. God is God and you aren't. **So we must trust God with all the uncontrollable things in life**.

***In 1 Peter 5:7** we are told to, *Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. NIV*

ILL Those of you who are fishermen know what it means to cast. **When you cast** a line with a Spincast Reel, you press the button on the reel and hold it and you **begin your cast** and at just the right **point you release the button and you cast your line and your lure**. **It lands in just the right place on the water**. **What happens** if you **don't release** the button, there's **no casting**.

The essence of casting is letting go. To overcome perfectionism, you have to **learn to trust God's grace** enough to **let go**.

Real praying is casting all your *anxiety and concerns on God* **and letting it all go. You and I are only responsible** to do what God tells us to do. We leave all the "what ifs" in God's hands.

***4. ACT IN FAITH, NOT FEAR**

Remember how you got into God's family in the first place.

***In Ephesians 2:8** it says *"For it is by grace you have been saved through faith."*

That is the only way anyone is saved. It's **by grace. If you don't get saved** by grace, **you're not saved. No one is good** enough to go to heaven **on his or her own merits. You begin the Christian life by grace.**

The way you start the Christian life is the way you continue the Christian life. It is all by grace, through trust in God.

***Colossians 2:6** ...just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, NIV

A lot of people seem to **believe** that they were forgiven by grace **but** to have **God's approval they have to earn** that **on their own** by **good works**, human effort, and religious acts.

They make up a long list of **rules** they must keep to gain God's approval and to earn God's love. Many of their rules are not even in the Bible. **I know some people that are afraid not** to pray before they eat. **They worry** that God will **punish them.**

Is praying before you eat a **good habit?** Of course it is. It's a great way to develop a grateful heart. But when you pray, **do it** because **you're thankful**, not because **you're fearful.**

Some people are afraid to do certain activities on Sunday.

Did you know that there are no rules in the Bible **concerning Sunday? It is referred to as the first day** of the week in the Bible. **All the commands** concerning the **Sabbath** (which is Saturday) in the Old Testament were not transferred over to Sunday.

So does that mean that I do not need to be in **worship** on Sunday, **of course not**. The **Bible commands** us to join together with our church whenever it assembles together. **We are to come together to encourage** fellow believers to **live** for Christ. **So come to church** because you want to **worship God not** because you are **afraid**.

***5. EXCHANGE MY PERFECTIONISM FOR GOD'S PEACE**

Perfectionism destroys peace. You can have one or the other but you can't have both.

This is the offer Jesus Christ makes. It's an offer you really can't afford to refuse.

***Matthew 11:28** Then Jesus said, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light." NLT

Are you tired of trying to do **religious good deeds** and **rituals** to gain **God's love and approval? Are you tired** of trying to be **perfect?**

Then come to Jesus and let him take that burden off of you and **receive his rest** by faith. **Learn from Jesus** that you are **loved**

and accepted by the grace of God every day of your Christian life.

God knows that there is no way you and I are going to live a perfect life. He knows that's impossible. So He offers us grace. **That's why God sent Jesus** to live a **perfect life** in our place. **By grace through** faith we are given **His perfection by God.**

The choice is yours, you can either try to **be perfect** on **your own** or you can **accept the perfection** of Christ.

I invite you to receive God's offer today through Christ.
Christian living is based on grace, not guilt.

We are all going to fail a lot in life.

The Bible says "*All have sinned and fallen short.*" But you don't have to worry about that if you've **received God's grace.**

In fact, there's only one failure you ever need to **worry about.** **It's the** failure of **not receiving** God's grace.

***Hebrews 12:15** See to it that no one misses the grace of God
NIV

I invite you to receive God's grace right now.

Prayer:

Pray a prayer like this in your mind: "**Dear God, I need Your grace. I realize I'm not perfect.** I trust in Jesus who lived a perfect life for me and died for my sins.

I ask You to help me put my trust in Your grace to enable me to live a life that is pleasing to You. I am tired of trying to do it on my own. Help me learn that you love me even when I fail to please you. Help me to relax in your grace and love.