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Week 29

James Robison & Betty Robison

Daniel Kolenda

“Blinding Legalism”

MALE ANNOUNCER: The following program is sponsored by Friends of Life Outreach International.

RANDY ROBISON: Hi, I'm Randy Robison, and we wanted to bring you this encore showing of this program recorded with my dad before he passed. We hope that it will bless you, and we know that his heart would be to bless you, so enjoy this program today.

DANIEL KOLENDA: The gospel is not just our way out of hell, it's not just so we can get to heaven, it's so that heaven can get into us and so that through us heaven can get into the world around us. That's the whole purpose that we're saved.

I mean, if God just wanted to create porcelain dolls that were perfect little creatures, he'd have just made us in heaven. Why'd he put us here in this world? There's obviously a purpose.

ANNOUNCER: Daniel Kolenda invites you to trade legalism for liberty, religion for relationship, and become furious for the gospel, next.

[music]

JAMES ROBISON: Well, you know, we have exciting members, and they bring back a lot of precious memories. Daniel Kolenda is our guest today.

He was with Reinhard Bonnke, many of you know who he was, but Christ for All Nations, he had one of the biggest ministries in the world, where millions of people would attend a crusade service. Millions would get saved in one service, and that was all over Africa and other countries, third world countries, and we met him there, and we met Daniel Kolenda, who's our guest today, and he actually took over the ministry when he was quite young and stayed with the Reinhard till Reinhard died 6 years ago.

But you gotta understand, this is a huge min-- We can start showing you pictures right now of just the millions of people that he's preaching to, and I spoke to some of those huge crowds. My mission associate, Peter Pretorius, he spoke a lot of, and Reinhard gave Peter

a big tent to hold crusades in and knew he-- Well, you know, Reinhard knows how much we help Peter and help missionaries everywhere, and Daniel knows, and Daniel's been here, and Daniel, it's good to have you back.

DANIEL: Thank you so much.

JAMES: It really is, and it's hard to believe that Reinhard's been gone 6 years. About how long did you leave the ministry, let's say, hands on?

DANIEL: Well, when Reinhard was still alive, it was ten-plus years, and then obviously since then.

JAMES: Which is another six.

DANIEL: Another six, yeah.

JAMES: Yeah, well, you are an amazing person, and then you asked to talk about this book, "Furious: A Modern Retelling of Paul's Fight for the Gospel." This is Galatians. What led you to take off on Galatians and with the title "Furious?"

DANIEL: Well, first of all, I did not plan to write a book on Galatians. It kinda blindsided me. I started a church a few years ago, and one of the things I've been doing in the church is preaching expositively through different books in the Bible. So I decided to preach on Galatians. So I'm going through verse by verse, Sunday after Sunday, and people were coming up to me after the service.

I mean, Christian people, people that I've known for many years, and they're telling me things like this is changing our lives. We didn't--we've never seen the gospel like this before. And it kind of hit me like a revelation that we think of, oftentimes Christians think of the gospel as something for heathens, and then once we get saved, it's kind of like we're done with that, now we move on to greater things. But Paul says that for us who are being saved, the gospel is the power of God. We need, as Christians--I suddenly realized we need the gospel. It's not something we had, it's something we get one time, it's something where we live.

So, I get to the end of the series, and I thought I'm gonna put my notes together for my congregation. And as I'm working on it, I just felt this sense of like frustration, and I kept thinking why do I feel this way? Because I love the content of the book of Galatians, but what I'm putting together wasn't satisfying. And then it struck me, you know, Galatians is such a passionate book. It's got so much drama.

JAMES: It starts passionate and ends passionately.

DANIEL: And the backstory and the layers throughout, and I thought this--I'm just not able to do it justice in a commentary. So I started thinking and praying, Lord, how do I communicate this in a way that does justice to the message of this book? And suddenly it

was like I saw it play out in front of my mind like a movie, like the scene of Paul, because we know that Paul didn't write his letters, he dictated them to a scribe.

So, I'm imagining Paul dictating this letter to a scribe, and the scribe is hearing the things that we're reading and having the kind of reactions that we have when he says things like, "O foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you?" you know? And then the scribe wants to understand why are you talking like this? And the conversation that Paul begins to have with him, he's able to tell him the backstory, tell him the story of how he came to Christ, how the gospel came to the Gentiles, how he had this confrontation with Peter and all of these interesting stories. And so I wrote it like that.

It really is--it reads like a novel. Like some people watch that movie, "The Chosen," you know, which dramatized the Gospels. This is like "The Chosen," but Paul is the main character and the stories of the Book of Acts are kind of the drama that unfolds there.

JAMES: Okay, well, take off on some of it. I wanna know what you saw that we need to see, because you made it--to me, you made it so very, very clear.

JAMES: Yeah, well, you know, one of the things that I like to say about Paul's writings in general, and I think Galatians is probably the best example of this, is the way that he writes, I call it theological lasagna. So what you've got is these layers of meaning. Of course, there's the top layer, which is what you read, and on the surface it makes sense, but then there's always another layer under it, and then there's a layer under that, and the more that you dig, the more that you find. Like, for example, that verse that I just quoted, "You foolish Galatians," Paul says, "who has bewitched you?" On the surface, it just sounds like an insult, it just sounds like he's mad. When you look closer, you realize he's saying a whole bunch of things at once. For example, when he says, "Who has bewitched you?" there's something very interesting about that word. That's the Greek word *baskaino*, which in the first century world, this word referred to a superstition that was very common in those days called the evil eye. And I don't know if you've heard of this. I mean, some places in the world, they still believe this, but it's this idea that a person could put a curse on you through their gaze just by looking at you. And in fact, if you had something wrong with your eyes, maybe you looked funny, maybe your eye was injured or something, they would say that you might have the curse of the evil eye on you, and if that person looks at you, you're gonna get the curse. What's interesting is that we know, and many scholars believe that Paul had some kind of a problem with his eyes.

And we know that even in the book of Galatians there's clues. Like, for example, in the last chapter of Galatians, Paul says, "Look at what large letters I use as I write to you in my own hand." Well, why is Paul using such big letters? Probably he had an eye problem. Or in Galatians chapter 4 he says that when he first came to the Galatians, he had some kind of an illness. And he said, "When you first saw me, you did not reject me." Now, what was it that they saw that would have caused them to want to reject him? And then the next verse he says, "You would have taken out your own eyes and given them to me if it were possible." So it's clear when you put these things together, you realize there's something

going on here. The people are looking at Paul, they see the issue with his eyes, and we know that the big drama taking place in Galatians is this battle Paul is having with these guys called the Judaizers. They were these guys that were trying to drag these Gentile believers back under the law of Moses and try to basically force them into being Jewish converts. That's who Paul is combating. And we know these Judaizers were trying to turn the Galatians against Paul. So when you put it together, you realize probably what's happening here is the Judaizers are saying things to the Galatians like this, "Look at that guy, that Paul guy that you're listening to.

Just look at him, he looks cursed. You can see the look in his eyes." And they say, "You know what? If you follow him, you're gonna come under that curse too." So, what Paul does is he flips the script back on the Judaizers. He says, "Foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes, Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified." In other words, he's saying, "I'm not the one that put a curse on you, it's those Judaizers, their false doctrine did it, and I'll tell you how I know it happened, because you lost your vision of the cross. You can't see Christ anymore. You don't see the gospel clearly anymore." And we learn something really important here about false doctrine in general, but about legalism in particular. Legalism doesn't just cause us to have the wrong theology or the wrong doctrine, it blinds us, it takes away our vision, not just the way that we look at God, but the way that we look at people. And so as you go through Galatians, you see all these problems that are happening in the Galatian church. They used to be generous, now they become stingy. They used to be full of love for one another and care and compassion, now they've become competitive, and they're fighting with each other--

JAMES: And just critical, mean-spirited.

DANIEL: Paul says that they're biting each other, devouring one another. That's the kind of thing that's happening.

So that legalism that's crept into their midst, it's not just a theological problem, it's affected the way that they live their lives and the fruit that comes out of their life.

JAMES: It destroys the fruit of grace, it destroys grace, and there was such a battle going on right there in that book, but it was amazing how you took it. Now, how's it been received?

DANIEL: Well, I've had both. I've had some people that, you know, have in response to the book said, yes, this is changing my life, and I've had people that wanted to beat me, you know? Because they see--they're seeing it much more from the legalistic side. In fact, I don't know if you're aware of this, but there's a really strong movement in the church world right now. Some people call it like Hebrew roots theology and Torahism and stuff like that, and a lot of believers are being dragged into this. The first real visceral encounter I had with it was there was a friend of mine who was starting to get into like some Jewish roots stuff and, you know, just going back into old customs, old traditions. It was all very harmless, but it was like a progression. And I pulled up to his house one day, and he comes out, and I hadn't seen him for a long time. He's wearing a black hat, a black robe, the sides of his

beard are curled, he's dressed like an Orthodox Jew. And I mean, what's so silly about that is orthodoxy didn't even exist in the time of Jesus or Paul.

That's a much later development. But yet this guy, this Christian, Gentile Christian, had come to believe that if he really wanted to be pleasing to God, he needed to dress like an Orthodox Jew, he needed to follow the feasts and the festivals and the law. And I realized that, you know, that's a very--you know, it's very easy to see that. That's a visceral example. But legalism creeps into our lives in much more subliminal ways. And in fact, what would Paul think if he sat in some of our churches today? I think he'd have some of the same issues with us that he had with the Galatians, because religion always has a way of creeping in. It's just like human nature. We always are tempted to go back.

It's the very first thing that happens in the Garden of Eden, by the way. After Adam and Eve fall, God comes looking for them in the garden. He says, "Adam, where are you?" And when God finds them, they're clothed with fig leaves. Now we know from scripture that fig leaves are a symbol of works. So I want you to think about this picture. He sees them dressed in fig leaves, he rejects the work of their hands, and what does he do? He gives them skins of animals. In other words, he clothes them with the ultimate sacrifice of an innocent substitute. There it is right there in the beginning. The first reaction of humans is to trend towards legalism, the work of the hands, and the reaction of God is to say that's not good enough, you need a substitute, you need a sacrifice, and that's the gospel.

JAMES: And I think so much you're showing in here all of the tension and all that's there in a very appropriate title, "Furious," because that's what we get, and we start building our own army, building our own denomination, supporting our own point of view, and not being family. I don't have any trouble loving people I don't agree with.

For the church to be captured by God, we're gonna love each other even though we disagree. Even though we may disagree seriously, we're gonna seek God even more seriously, and we're gonna seek to get his arms around the world and present the gospel of the kingdom to the world. Does that make sense?

DANIEL: That's it, that's the message right there. Well, you, you've actually captured so much of that in "Furious." I don't know if you saw it that way, but you have--this is an amazing book.

DANIEL: Thank you, thank you. I really feel like the Holy Spirit helped me.

I'm not saying it's inspired by like the scriptures, but the script--it is based on the scriptures. And you know, what you're saying, even with the conflict and stuff, you see that in Galatians. Maybe one of the most explicit places in the Bible where you have Paul, who wrote most of the New Testament, and Peter, who's like the chief of the apostles clashing in real time, very dramatic, but yet they're brothers, but they're dealing in truth.

JAMES: And Peter withstood the correction without coming unglued.

DANIEL: And it might have saved the church.

JAMES: It might have. But see, there it is. Look at that, there's where the friction did what? It made them both stronger. It made Paul stronger too. He needed strength.

He said, "I'm in a battle. These things don't go away. I can't explain it." And we don't know what all was going on, but it was the deceiver, and he wasn't letting him alone, so he's not gonna let any of us alone. He never shuts up, but we don't have to listen to him. We can listen to the Father.

We can refuse his lies, and we can recognize him in others without despising the person, but being concerned about the person the enemy has taken over and try to show them how the enemy's taken your mind, and this is not normal. This isn't normal behavior where you're going out and trying to organize a political party to go out and kill the other political party or go kill somebody you don't like or rage and tear up somebody's business. This is crazy, this is the enemy, this is the destroyer, the deceiver. Excuse me, but I'm excited about--and I'm gonna tell you, you got it in here, you got it in your life. Excuse me for preaching, but I'm just telling you, do you believe in what I'm saying about the gospel of the kingdom needing to take over the lives of the believers? And we've come together as the family of the perfect father and let him shape us, and even in our disagreement we love each other, and we get sharper instead of duller by clashing and starting our own army.

DANIEL: Absolutely, and this is really the, you know, again it goes back to what we were saying before. A lot of people think the gospel is just how I get out of hell free. It's like a get out of hell free card or something like this.

The gospel is not just our way out of hell, it's not just so we can get to heaven, it's so that heaven can get into us and so that through us heaven can get into the world around us. That's the whole purpose that we're saved.

I mean, if God just wanted to create porcelain dolls that were perfect little creatures, he'd have just made us in heaven. Why did he put us here in this world? There's obviously a purpose.

JAMES: I'm so glad I'm here, and I live in this challenged world with a great God and an awesome wife and a family and 34 grandchildren. Here's a fatherless kid, the product of a rape that didn't have a father ever or even a home.

God, you're so great, you're so great. Betty, you see your husband, and you watch God carrying me.

BETTY ROBISON: Absolutely.

JAMES: Is he thrilling you too?

BETTY: Oh, yes.

JAMES: Do you enjoy the journey?

BETTY: I think this can be the greatest season of our lives.

JAMES: Well, it is gonna be in every way. I think it can be the greatest season for the church.

Don't you believe the stage is set for the gospel of the kingdom to be taking all nations?

DANIEL: Oh, like never before. I mean, what we're seeing today, the harvest that's happening around the world, unprecedented.

JAMES: Absolutely amazing. What do you want everybody to hear from just the two of us together? Both of us are zealous, both of us are excited.

We've known one another's journey over the years. This book is a stick of dynamite. We're gonna send it to every one of you who will just help us in any way drill another 350 water wells.

There needs to be a million water wells, and that could happen if we had enough people who said I'll help you drill those wells, I'll help. Well, we're gonna send this to everybody that just helps. Do you think we got a chance of seeing the father's family begin to look like him?

DANIEL: I think that's the whole point. That's what all of this has always been moving towards, starting right in the beginning in the garden. You said it, what is God's dream?

He was after a family. That's what Adam and Eve were about.

That's what the children of Israel were about. That's what the gospel was about. This is all building towards one thing, that God's going to get that dream in his heart.

JAMES: And we keep thinking about the next kingdom when there'll be no challenge, nothing to overcome, no need for armor, no need to resist, no need to fight. Well, where are we gonna do all that?

In this kingdom, we fulfill the Father's kingdom will on his earth, his planet, in his kingdom, and we impact all the nations of the world with what? The gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all nations, then I'll come, the gospel of the kingdom, and I think not just in word but in demonstration. Can we shake on that?

DANIEL: I agree.

JAMES: I love you, Daniel.

DANIEL: I love you, too, thank you so much.

JAMES: Let's stay close.

DANIEL: Okay.

JAMES: We wanna ask all of you to help us drill water wells. We've helped drill thousands of water wells. We've inspired the drilling of thousands. We want to drill another 350. I pray God double that. The only way it doubles if somebody will give another well, 4800 or 1200 and pray for 3, or \$48 gives 10 people water the rest of their life, it is amazing. Father, help everybody watching to go get their bank card to use it like a check.

If they write a check, make it to Life, because they're giving life in Jesus's name. Would you go get that bank card, call that number, or go online? We have several gifts to give you, to share with you, and we have the beautiful bronze of the shepherd with the two sheep walking in his shadow, but there's one little sheep up here on his shoulders. The first time I saw that, I said that's me. I couldn't even walk in your shadow. Too weak, too defeated. You carried me, and I got so close to your mind and your heart.

We're gonna send this to any of you. Help us drill water wells by giving \$1200. Sure do love you. Please make that gift. Go get that card, use it like a check. You make a check, make it to Life. Thank you so much.

ISAK PRETORIUS: We've just watched this young girl come in here, come all the way down into this area here where there's water, this is highly-contaminated water, but it's the only water that's available here. She's literally come down and tried to get the cleanest of the contaminated water.

But the reality is the external danger of this child maybe falling in this water, drowning in this water, or any of the other external dangers that are here to this child don't even compare to the internal danger of the contamination of this water, the waterborne diseases that are in this water, that this child, her siblings, her family are forced to consume. I wish you could be here and actually experience what it is like to talk to these mothers, to hear from them as they explain how it's little children like this that are contracting waterborne diseases, that are ultimately dying. I've met the mothers, I've seen the contamination of this water, and I've seen the graves of those that we couldn't bring clean water to in time, and that's why I speak to you with urgency today, because I know what has to be done.

What has to be done is that we have to come back here, and we have to drill a well here, we have to put in fresh, clean water, we've got to provide clean water that will sustain their life, that will give them life. Do it for her, give that gift today, give the gift of life.

JAMES: Well, I'll tell you what, for 30 to 35 years we've been trying to get water to people that never had uncontaminated water. The people you were just looking at, I can't help but think most of them, the clothes they have on were sent to them because we showed them to you, and you began to try to help them with either food or now for water, and then some

of the clothes that are made are out of material and cloth that we gave them. And I can say, you know, this is an area that's not nearly as horrifically hidden as some of them are, but as far as the water and the death, that cycle is there, and only fresh, clean water and a well can change it, and it can change it instantly. And we're asking you to please help us right now. USAID had to leave Africa.

That has quadrupled the numbers of death immediately. And I'm thinking, God, we're trying to drill 350 wells, we need to be drilling a million wells. Well, that's what we need to do immediately, and you say, well, James, what would it take to do that? Somebody like you say I'll help drill a well or I'll drill a well. I've got--I've been blessed, I can give \$4800, or I can give \$1200 and pray 3 join me. Well, if you can do that, do it, but remember this, \$48 gives 10 people, 10 people water the rest of their life, because that's basically what these water wells do.

They last a lifetime, so you're changing millions of lives. Betty, we have saved millions of lives. When I say we, we found the need, we found the solution, we found that there's water accessible, because they drill boreholes that get contaminated and filthy, but there's water there under the ground that you can drill into and go deeper and encase it and give them a pump that a child can pump without any power. They don't have power. I'm praying today God will give us the greatest miracle response we've ever seen.

BETTY: I am, too, and I hope you'll be part of that miracle and with that response that you give. Give your love to the children, to the mothers that so desperately want their children to live. You know what that's like, if you have children, you want them to live their full life, not to be cut short or something that they didn't expect, and water is one thing, it's the main thing.

They have to have good water. We've been there, James, we've shown you the heartache of a mother losing a child, we've shown you the heartache of a baby dying in their arms.

It just breaks my heart. I never will get over that, but we've also shown you the possibilities of you helping us drill the water wells that make a life difference in these children and in these mothers' lives. So, please join with us, give as much as you can, give what God puts on your heart.

JAMES: Please go get your bank card and dial that number or go online and use that card. I mean, use it like a check.

If you write a check, make it to Life. Would you be the miracle that provides the greatest miracle these villages, these mothers, these children have ever seen? Please don't put it off, do it right now, and give the very best gift you can knowing you're giving the greatest gift, the gift of life.

ANNOUNCER: Every day, far too many lives are lost to waterborne disease, and tragically, children under the age of five are the most vulnerable. Through Mission Water for Life, you

can give desperate mothers hope and precious children a future by helping provide clean, life-giving water before it's too late. Our goal this year is to drill 350 water wells in areas where the need is greatest, but it won't be possible without you.

Today, your gift of \$24 will help provide clean water for 5 children. A gift of \$48 will help provide for 10, and \$144 will help provide life-giving water for 30 people for a lifetime. In thanks for your gift of any amount, we'll send you "Prayers for My Spiritual Health." This beautifully-crafted prayer book will meet you in the places where anxiety, grief, and spiritual weariness run deep, guiding you through prayers for inner peace, emotional healing, and intimacy with God.

With your gift of \$100 or more, you may request the "Your Life of Prayer" bundle. This collection includes "Prayers for My Spiritual Health," along with "Prayers for My Physical Health" and the "Life Prayer" journal, three companions to help strengthen your walk with Christ. Finally, please consider a gift of \$1200 to help provide water for 250 people, or a gift of \$4800 to help sponsor a complete well, and request our inspiring bronze sculpture, "The Good Shepherd." Please, call, write, or make your gift online today.

RANDY ROBISON: You know, so many people don't have a choice when it comes to water. The only water source that they have is the one nearest them, in this case a river. When you look at it, it doesn't look too bad. It's a little dirty, but you can see some of the areas where there's moss and animals and people bathing and swimming.

They tell us it's not so much what you can see in here that's dangerous, it's what you can't see. It's what goes into the stomachs and the systems of even the youngest of children, and it hits them the hardest. Fresh, clean drinking water, you can give that to them.

We need to come into this village and that village over there across the river. We need to come in with many water wells. I'm asking you to make that possible. You will be helping to save a life.

JAMES: I want you to get "Furious." I was telling Daniel he doesn't realize how great all he put in this book is. We've been talking about the gospel of the kingdom here just kind of privately.

The gospel of the kingdom, that's his will being done on his earth by his family that's been captured by his vision. He wants the gospel of the kingdom preached by his family in this kingdom to all nations, then he'll come. Don't miss it, okay?

Keep up with him, keep up with "Life Today." Stay tuned, I love you. Thanks for helping put God's arms around the overlooked.

[music]

RANDY: Thank you for joining us today. I know it blesses me to see the programs that my father wanted to bless you with, and I hope we're able to bring more of them to you here in the near future as we continue to honor him.

We'll see you again next time.

[music]

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