

Acts 15_pt2

by Bill Gallatin

Bill Gallatin's sermon emphasizes the importance of faith in Christ and the dangers of legalism in the church.

Duration: 1:10:17

Scripture: Jeremiah 31:3, Acts 15:19, Acts 15:28, 2 Timothy 4:5-6, 2 Timothy 4:18

Topics: "Expositional"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses Paul's last letter and his instructions to Timothy. Paul encourages Timothy to watch in all things, endure afflictions, and do the work of an evangelist. The speaker emphasizes the importance of sharing one's faith and inviting others to church. Paul also expresses his readiness to be offered and his anticipation of departing to glory. The speaker highlights the freedom and joy in serving Jesus Christ and the need to function under the calling that God has enabled us to serve Him. The sermon also touches on the decision made by the early church in Jerusalem regarding the Gentiles and the importance of not troubling them. The speaker emphasizes that despite human weaknesses and mistakes, God can still use us and work all things to the good. The sermon concludes with a reminder to feed the flock of God willingly and not to lord over God's heritage.

Transcript

You remember that Paul was being followed by what he termed as Judaizers. He had left, you remember, we looked at it last week, the Jews' religion. He was a Christian now.

He was free from the Jews' religion. And as he began to plant churches, it didn't take long that Satan would send legalists to put some excess baggage on simple faith in Christ for righteousness. You see it in the church today.

The modern-day Pharisees putting additions and burdens on people other than just simple faith in Christ. Codes and rules. Different groups who identify by their codes and their rules in the way they operate.

And binding people up. Not realizing the freedom that is in Christ. Jesus on the cross said, it is finished.

There's nothing more required for righteousness and acceptance by God than our simple faith in what Jesus Christ has accomplished for us on the cross. Now that was a difficult thing for the Jew to be freed from. As the church goes on, some 10, 20 years later, new converts coming out of Judaism struggled with it.

And so they gathered together in Jerusalem to settle the issue about circumcision. You remember, we looked at it last week, that Judaizers were coming along and saying, yes, we believe in Jesus also for salvation. He is the Messiah.

But you must submit to the Jewish right of circumcision or you cannot be saved. Today people are saying if you don't submit to baptism, you're not saved. You can't be saved.

Or some of it's so ridiculous if you don't wear a tie to church. Or if you don't have the gift of tongues or you're baptized in the Holy Spirit. Some of the ridiculous things that's put upon the church today.

And some poor Christians, you know, are caught in those things and try to operate under that heavy yoke, that additional baggage. It has nothing to do with salvation. And it's so serious, you see.

And then they come along and say now you start with traditions and then they make the traditions law. And that's what the Judaizers are doing. Well, let's maintain the Jewish traditions.

And then before you know it, you had all the commentaries, the Mishnah and the Gemara, and all the things that the Jews are all burdened with today. Trying to, you know, interpret the Word of God. And when Jesus came along, they had added so much to the Word of God that they accused Jesus of breaking the law simply by taking some grains of wheat in his hand on the Sabbath day because he was hungry.

And he had to teach them the correct meaning of the law. He healed a man on the Sabbath and they accused him of work, breaking the Sabbath. When the Sabbath is no longer an issue for a day of worship or rest.

It's every day is a day of rest. Now, we enter into a Sabbath rest because of the finished work of Jesus Christ meeting all the claims of the law with the law being buried on Saturday and then rising again on Sunday morning. He put it to death.

He disannulled it with his own life completing it. And now we're under the law and the liberty of Christ. And every day should be a Sabbath rest to the child of God that's filled with the Spirit.

No more strain. No more striving to be perfect or to be holy. It's the work of Christ inside of me.

It's the indwelling Holy Spirit. When Paul says in Philippians 2, 12, and 13 that we should work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, he's speaking of that I am walking in such a way in humility, I am poor in spirit, totally depending on the Lord. And then he goes to the very next verse and he says, For it is the Lord that worketh in you to will and do of his good pleasure.

Thank God the Lord works in us. He doesn't. He doesn't lay all kinds of rules and regulations and works upon us for righteousness or to make us a better Christian.

It's an important thing to apprehend that you are complete in Christ and your faith in Jesus Christ. Satan says, Well, you did this this way. You made this mistake.

That's right, but my faith is in Jesus Christ. He went to the cross. He died for my mistake this week.

He shed his blood and it covers it. I'm a new creature in Christ. I'm forgiven.

I'm justified. It was so serious with Paul, this misapprehension of grace, somebody who would add to grace. You remember he devoted the whole book of Galatians in a beautiful treatise to show the difference in the purpose of the law versus grace, that it was temporary, and by the works of the law, the keeping of the Sabbath, the holy days, the Mosaic law, the dietary laws, all the precepts, by keeping those things no man is made righteous.

Now, it's so serious. Paul was so angry about it. Under the anointing of the Holy Spirit, he said some very interesting things in Galatians 1 to people who profess to be prophets or ministers of God, and yet say you must abide by these extra things or you're not a real Christian.

This legalism. Turn to Galatians 1. I'd like to read it to you, let you see it. It's chapter 1, verses 8 and 9. Now, in 1 Corinthians 16, 22, you remember Paul said that the Lord Jesus Christ is coming, Maranatha, and he who doesn't believe in the coming of the Lord or believe in Jesus Christ, let him be anathema or accursed.

Maranatha, anathema. Now, notice the words here that Paul uses for those who say you must submit to some right. This is the terrible mistake that Roman Catholicism has foisted upon the church, all the sacraments and the rituals for righteousness and holiness and eternal salvation.

Paul says in verse 8, let's start with verse 6, because he was concerned about the Galatians moving away from simple faith in Christ for righteousness. He said, I marvel that you are so soon removed from him that called you unto the grace of Christ, unto another gospel, anything other than grace, salvation by grace, the gift of God, apart from any merit on myself or any person could earn. You are not saved because of any merit or any merit that God might see in you or me after I'm saved.

We're saved by grace. Any deserved honor is not grace. That means God owes me.

Oh, Bill was good in 1948. I owe him some salvation. Oh, it worked toward his salvation.

Oh, Bill did great. No, Bill never does great. God does great.

But there's some time in my life where sometimes God says, Oh, I owe them some favor. God will never be indebted to man. We will be eternally indebted to him.

It's only the mind of pride. It's only the human being that has not apprehended grace that thinks that God owes them something for their service. You remember the terrible tragedy of the older brother in the prodigal son story that Jesus told.

His sin was worse than the younger son who went out to spend his father's fortune and spent it on harlots and ended up in the pig pen. He stayed home and did all the right things. And then when the prodigal was brought back by the Spirit of God and his father rejoiced to see the prodigal return, that older son who stayed home and did everything right, his sin was so great he got self-righteous and indignant and angry because God was showing favor to that son that was lost and came back.

He says, What about me? I've been so faithful all these years. In his self-righteousness, he felt that he deserved more. You see, God can't give anybody something that they deserve other than damnation.

And grace stops that. That's what we deserve. If God gave all of us what we deserve every day, it would be damnation.

Because every one of us break his law every day without knowing it. And an archangel named Lucifer broke his law by a thought and it got him cast out of heaven. The archangel didn't commit a deed to get cast out of heaven, to become a devil.

In his innermost thoughts, he said, I will five times. His will versus the perfect will of God made him a devil. There's not a person here alive tonight because you've been perfect today.

It's grace. And God loves to give grace. God loves to give favor to show how deep and broad and wonderful his love is.

Paul said, Who's moved you away from that? To think that God would owe something and say, Oh, Bill, you've been so good. I owe you blessings. I owe you salvation.

A Christian who doesn't apprehend that will be a miserable Christian. They'll always wonder, Why is God blessing that other family and not us? I know they're doing worse things than me. Why is God showing favor to that person more than me? And they're always walking around angry about it, frustrated about it.

I do everything right. There's the prodigal's older brother, self-righteous, thinking they deserved God's blessing, going to earn. You see, he can't.

Grace can't be earned. It has to be given out of the depths of God's heart and love. And the thing is, he loves to give it.

So Paul said, This other gospel, it's really not good news, which is not another, but there be some that trouble you and would pervert the gospel of Christ. How? By adding one thing to redemption that you have to do. Believe in Jesus Christ and something else, not so.

Now notice what he says, because they're going around saying they had a vision from God or an angel appeared with this new revelation. Yes, you put your faith in Christ, but also there are sacraments. There's a ritual.

There's things you have to submit to. You have to go to confession. If you don't go to confession or mass or you don't get water baptized or you don't join our church.

You see, there's one church in God's eyes, the body of Christ. The church is made up of believers all over the world, the church universal. So Paul says, But though we are an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.

Let that false teacher have a curse of God upon his life, be separated from God eternally, anathema. That's how strong, and that's the Holy Spirit. To the man who apprehended grace.

But you see, God hates false teachers because of what it does to the child of God. And the eternal punishment on a false teacher is severe. Let him be anathema or cursed from God.

And so then to confirm it, as the Bible says, when God doubles something, he's confirming it, whether it be a dream or the mouth of two or more witnesses. And then in verse 9, Paul, on the anointing of the Holy Spirit, says it again. As we said before, he's emphatic.

So say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that you have received, let him be accursed. Anathema. Cut off.

When he ends Galatians in chapter 5, turn to that. Chapter 5. He's saying we should stand fast on our liberty. Some ritual after you've put your faith in Christ is not necessary for redemption ever.

No matter how they disguise, no matter how they doctor it. In verse 6 he says, chapter 5, For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by love. I show my faith in Jesus Christ by the love of Christ that comes through my life.

By the love that I have for my wife, my children, my Lord, by my personal actions. Not by the crowds that I draw, or the people that get knocked down, or healings. Or what I proclaim by faith.

The holiness and the decency and the love of Christ for my wife, my children, my brothers and sisters, and most importantly for Jesus Christ. And I prove it by my manner of life. Paul says you did run well.

Who did hinder you that you should not obey the truth? This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you. This isn't from Jesus Christ. These things you think you have to do besides believing in Jesus.

Submitting to some ritual, or some sacrament, or some dress code. A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. This false teaching, these things that are like leaven that these false teachers bring into the church and they begin to swell the ranks.

Spread out. I have confidence in you through the Lord that you will be none otherwise minded. But he that troubleth you shall bear his judgment, whosoever he be.

And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? Then is the offense of the cross ceased. You see, if he'd have submitted to these rituals from these false teachers and joined in with these heretics and adopted their precepts, he wouldn't have been persecuted. He was being attacked and persecuted because he was making a stand for pure faith in Christ.

And then he says something amazing. I would they were even cut off, which trouble you. Now that's an interesting thing.

Paul uses a play on words there, but he's still under the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Now they are in the region of Galatia, which is Turkey today. The area of the seven churches of the book of Revelation.

Now the principal pagan religion there was the worship of the virgin queen of heaven, Diana, Sibyl, Aphrodite, depending on the region of the Mediterranean of the culture. In this particular area, it was Sibyl. And the pagan priests to prove their love for the worship of Sibyl, the virgin queen of heaven in that area, would castrate themselves.

Make themselves eunuchs to be wed to the virgin. They would mutilate their bodies. And Paul uses the very word castration here.

He says, these false teachers, I wish they were castrated themselves. If they're going to go as far as circumcision, go all the way, castrate them. They wouldn't be able to reproduce their error.

That's how serious the scriptures treat false teachers. Or someone who would add works or legalism to grace. To make someone serve out of duty rather than love.

I've counseled marriages where there's no love. No one knows it, but they're together just out of duty, out of Christian duty. No real love in the relationship, in the home anymore.

You can see it by their body language. It's very easy to pick up on a family that doesn't have love anymore. Everything's being done out of duty.

Thinking that, well, that's the Christian witness. I'm going to stick this thing out. That's my duty as a Christian.

And there's no love, there's no joy. God doesn't want anybody serving Him out of duty. It's a love relationship.

It's an absolute freedom of choice and love. Jesus said, my yoke is easy and my burden is light. The whole gospel message is likened to a marriage relationship with Jesus, our wonderful heavenly bridegroom, and we, the bride.

And that's the way He wants to treat you, in love. Even in the Old Testament, God the Father being wed to Israel, His earthly bride. He says through Jeremiah, I've drawn thee with the cords of my love.

Nothing violent about it. So they're going to settle the issue. So they gather together in Jerusalem.

And that's where we pick up in Acts chapter 15, verse 19. They gather together. What is this now? These people are going around.

They say they believe in Jesus Christ, but they say you must submit to the Mosaic Law. Obey the Sabbath. You can't do anything on Saturday.

It's just as wrong to say you can't do anything on Sunday in the Christian church. They're not apprehending what rest is. The finished work of Christ.

That's the rest that the Bible speaks of, that the writer in Hebrews chapter 4 speaks of, that rest in Christ. The finished work on Calvary. That I don't have to do anything for my righteousness.

It's been imputed to me by God the Father through Jesus Christ. I put my faith in Jesus Christ. And I have righteousness given to me.

And God accepts me. So they gather together. Gentiles getting saved.

Not submitting to circumcision. Paul's going around saying you don't have to submit to those things. You're not under that legal system anymore.

And now here's the wonderful thing about the church. There's no such thing as a potentate or a hierarchy where you give an edict and you must obey. Again, here's the beauty of the body of Christ.

It's a body of believers, like a human body responding, knowing each position, each strength, each administration. Paul lays it out clearly in the book of Corinthians. And there's no pressure, no threats.

Jesus doesn't intimidate, manipulate, or threaten. We just respond to His love and function under the calling that He's enabled us to serve Him. It's wonderful.

Marvelous freedom and joy in serving Jesus Christ. And so they discuss the issues. And James stands up and he says, Now, that isn't some sort of an edict.

Literally, it's I have distinguished or we've come to the conclusion and our judgment is that we trouble not them which from among the Gentiles are attuned to God. Now, again, this is what they say. This is what we think we should do.

There's no law, though, that says you have to do this even to them. Again, there's that marvelous freedom when you exercise your faith in Jesus Christ. Now, if I, you know, rebel against the Lord as a child of God, He will chasten me.

But there's not some potentate of the church that says you must do this or there's some church authority going to get you. Turn to 1 Peter chapter 5. Look what Peter, and if he's the first pope, what an example. Look at how he says serving the Lord should be.

And I pray that here at Calvary Chapel every pastor and every elder treats everyone this way. I would pray that nobody has been mistreated in this church. Maybe as we've grown and made mistakes learning what it is to serve the Lord, but I pray to God that no one in this church has ever been manipulated or threatened or intimidated.

To perform or as though it's some duty. Look at verse 1. Peter says, The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder. He didn't say I'm some kind of a potentate and I'm the leader.

I'm an elder, just like the rest of you. And a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed. Yes, elders can see the glory of God if they follow Jesus.

Feed the flock of God. Not tell them what to do. Feed the flock of God.

No one would know better than Peter when he was recommissioned, you remember, years earlier. Some 30 years earlier, you remember, when Jesus asked him, And each time he said, Lord, thou knowest I love thee, he said, feed my sheep, feed my sheep, feed my sheep. Actually he said, feed my lambs.

Take care of the young people first. The priority is the young people, children, Sunday school, youth ministry. That's your next generation.

Then, feed my sheep, my sheep, then the adults. Not tell them what to do, how much money to give, how to sing, how to dress. Just feed them.

And if you feed them and they're healthy, they just respond automatically. A healthy person just functions automatically the things that God's programmed in their body. You don't have to tell your kidneys to work.

They tell you because they're healthy. In fact, you don't even notice them unless they're sick. A healthy body flows and functions so beautifully, you don't notice anything unless there's something wrong.

Just like a human body. You don't notice your lungs unless you're having difficulty breathing. It's amazing some churches put on such shows and spectacles and draw attention, individuals drawing attention to themselves because they're anointing.

You see, if your lungs or your kidneys or your pancreas or your heart did that, you'd be going to the doctor every five minutes. There's something wrong. I'm in pain, you know.

Strong attention. When you're healthy, everything's working. You don't even notice it.

A healthy body just functions in a beautiful way. When there's an organ or a member that's sick, it's always drawing attention to itself. Just like every organ of your body.

It signals and draws attention to itself. There's something wrong. You feed good feeding and there'll be spiritual health.

You read your Bibles from Genesis to Revelation, on a regular basis you will be a healthy Christian. And you'll just find what a delight it is to walk with the Lord. You will be spiritually healthy because you're feeding yourself on a regular basis.

Feeding your spirit. The perfect food, the manna. Genesis to Revelation on a regular basis.

Just like you feed your physical body. And people don't feed their physical bodies correctly, pretty soon start to see the effects of it. Certain portions of the body begin to break down.

The immune system, they're not getting the vitamins. The same thing spiritually. So feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, not because you have to, but willingly.

Not for money. You don't serve for money, but of a ready mind. Because you love to.

Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock. Not lording it over people. So when they gathered together in Jerusalem and made their decision, and agreed upon what they should tell the Gentiles and what they should do, it wasn't some kind of an edict, you do this or else.

This is what we think is best. And yet there's still that freedom for somebody, I don't care what you say, I'm going my own way. Well, that's their problem.

But that's the Christian that will always suffer, the one that goes their own way. You remember in 1 Corinthians chapter 16, I think it's the end of the chapter, where Paul was ministering in Corinth, and he says, I greatly desired, now here's the great apostle Paul, I greatly desired Apollos to come to me. But it wasn't his mind to do so at this time.

He will when he has convenient time. Amazing. And Paul didn't get an attitude.

Does he know who I am? I am the apostle Paul, and I told him I want to see him. He didn't feel like doing it. Paul didn't cop some kind of an attitude, or get huffy and like, you know, I'm your superior spiritually.

No, he just said, I greatly desired that he'd be here, but he just didn't feel like it at this time. He'll come when it's convenient for him. Praise the Lord.

There's that marvelous freedom and love in Christ, serving together. Then, it's interesting, in 2 Corinthians chapter 1, verse 24, Paul again is speaking about faith, and he makes a statement, not that we have dominion over your faith. Jesus Christ has dominion over your faith.

And he compels us with his love. Remember, he says in the Psalms 110, verse 3, he makes us willing in the day of his love, not by threatening or manipulating or intimidating. And so Paul said in 2 Corinthians chapter 1, verse 24, not that we have dominion over your faith.

We'd love to help you in your faith. We'll make suggestions. We'll share Scripture.

But you have the choice to either agree with us or not to. And we're not going to have an attitude toward you, Paul said. You remember Gideon.

What a leader he was and an example. After God used him for the revival and to free Israel from the Midianites. And the people were so impressed with his leadership, with what God did with them.

They said, we want you to rule over us. We'll just turn ourselves over to you. You rule over us.

And man, what an opportunity if he had an ego, if he was really into pride, I'm going to be something for God. I'm going to get my name into papers. And you know what he said? He said, I will not rule over you.

The Lord your God will rule over you. So they decide, well, this is what we think is best. Wherefore, my sentence is that we trouble not them which from among the Gentiles are turned to God.

Don't go laying some excess baggage on them. Get haircuts. Change the way you dress on Sunday.

You better give a certain amount of money. Or you better have this happen to you. No.

Especially circumcision. But that we write unto them that they abstain from pollutions of idols. Remember, the world was grossly idolatrous.

And many of the believers were coming out of idolatrous situations in their culture. Their parents were idolaters. And so to be very careful to abstain from anything that might look as though they're still associating with idolatry.

That it might not stumble anybody. Now, you remember, when they're talking about these things, they're aware that the Jews still have not been set free in the spirit from a lot of the mosaic institutions that they've been steeped in. It's very difficult to free somebody from some kind of a religious tradition.

I watch it every year. I watch people get caught up in religious things that are not even biblical, that the early church never even celebrated. And when you tell them that the root of it is pagan, they look at you like, what? How could you say that? It's just pagan and it's been Christianized.

But they grew up with that tradition. They grew up celebrating some of these things. So we write unto them that they abstain from pollutions of idols, from fornication.

Remember, that was very common. It was a very lewd society. Bisexuality, homosexuality.

One of the most dangerous places in the Mediterranean in Paul's day was the gymnasium. Because there were weightlifters and bodybuilders that loved to get the little boys in the gymnasiums. The Greek and Roman culture, there was so much homosexuality, so much sexuality.

So they had to abstain from fornication, from things strangled and from blood. The pagans drank the blood, just like the teenagers are doing and young people are doing in America today in the bars if you recall Sunday service, the things that are showing on television today. For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath day.

In other words, there are still many, many Jews that are just now getting saved and the Spirit of God hasn't enlightened them, like the older Christians, that those things are not necessary. You don't go running up and, you know, do not stumble them with your liberty. Paul devotes a whole chapter in 1 Corinthians 8, if

you want to make a note of it, that he has this marvelous liberty.

He said, but I will abstain the rest of my life from taking this liberty if it would cast a stumbling block in front of my brother and cause them to fall. Even though I have the liberty to do certain things, I'll never do it again the rest of my life if it would stumble a weak brother or offend them. It still struggles with it.

You remember in Romans 14, Paul devotes another chapter that the kingdom of God is not meat nor drink, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. Notice it says righteousness, peace, and joy doesn't just end there. It says in the Holy Ghost.

Do you have the Holy Ghost? It's imperative that if a person is a true believer, they're aware of the Holy Ghost. They're filled with the Holy Ghost, or they'll never experience the righteousness, peace, and joy. So make sure you're filled with the Holy Ghost.

Make sure you're aware of His movement, His person in your life. And believe me, you'll have that experience. Righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

Then pleased at the apostles and elders with the whole church to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas, namely Judas, surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren. So they're sending them from Jerusalem. Now they're going back down to the Gentile areas to Antioch, up in what would be in Syria or Lebanon today.

And they wrote letters by them after this manner. The apostles and elders and brethren send greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia. Now notice the first church council as they gathered together, they just signed it the apostles and elders and brethren.

Again, no potentate, not some pontificate. The apostle Peter or James the Great, or the right reverend Peter, or the most holy Peter. It's just the apostles and the elders.

We've gotten together and see rather than send it by word of mouth, they wrote it so it would be believable as they took the epistles with them. And so the apostles and the elders and brethren send greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia. For as much as we have heard that certain which went out from us have troubled you.

Paul touches on this some years later, a few years later in Acts chapter 20. He said that there will be men out of your own midst, they'll rise up out of your own midst, these wolves, and they'll cause disciples to follow after them. They'll make disciples after themselves.

Rather than point people to Jesus Christ, they'll try to get a following of people after their own personality, and they'll form a sect. And they'll begin to dominate and manipulate these people. And they'll almost make these false teachers their Jesus.

That's how you can tell someone's being deceived or starting to follow a man. They begin to quote the man, not Jesus. They know more about the man than they know Jesus Christ.

And they'll be reading the man's books more than their Bible. They're becoming a disciple after a man rather than Jesus Christ. Paul said that would take place, and they would rise up right out of the church, right out of your own midst, and draw disciples after themselves.

Remember, you don't follow a man, you follow Jesus Christ. There's no one more glorious, no greater than Jesus Christ. And you can never go wrong following him, reading his book.

Yes, other books are okay, but nothing's better than the Bible. That's the only thing that's going to change you from the inside. All the books do is confirm something the Bible's already said.

All the books are man's personal revelation, his own personal life to help edify the church in some way, but it's already been revealed in the Bible, or he wouldn't have written the book. You see, everything that pertains to life is in the Word of God. And the Word of God knows every culture.

When God designed to write the Bible, he knew every aspect of the human race that would be in existence, the IQ, whether it's this level, this level, what language all over the world, and he wrote it in such a way that every human being could understand it, because the Holy Spirit of God is the one who gives the understanding, whether it's King James or whatever. If you take the time to read it, the Holy Spirit of God will give you the understanding always and actually get you to a point where John says you'll need no man to teach you. You'll begin to teach others.

And so we've heard that certain which went out from among us have troubled you with words subverting your soul, saying you must be circumcised. Now notice this, and keep the law. That means Saturday.

You have to keep the Sabbath. That's the law. And remember, that was given to the Jew only, not to the Gentile ever.

It was never given to the Gentile race. And even that is set aside. That's part of the law.

And he says, subverting your soul, saying you must be circumcised, and keep the law, to whom we gave no such commandment. It seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul. Just a sidelight here.

Just look at the Seventh-day Adventists that are deceived, thinking they can only worship on Saturday, and anybody that worships on Sunday, they declare because of a false teacher, a woman who led them astray, says that they've received the mark of the beast, those who worship on Sunday. Or clearly, right in the Scriptures, Paul says, you don't have to keep the law. We gave no such commandment.

And the men they've chosen to send, men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. It's difficult for us to comprehend that in our country. But I know one thing, that when you're threatened, the Spirit of God is there, and you don't have to worry.

We have sent, therefore, Judas and Silas, who shall also tell you the same things by mouth. For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things, that you abstain from meats offered to idols. There's 1 Corinthians 8 again.

Paul gives a tremendous teaching on it. Remember, the pagans would offer up their animal sacrifices to their false gods. They'd be butchered on their altars.

Then the remaining meat would be taken down to the shambles, or the village meat market. The remainder of the sacrificial animal. And then it would be sold in the meat market.

And so Paul's saying, a lot of people were in trouble. Well, I went and got five pounds of hamburger and corn. Was this offered to Aphrodite today? Well, I don't know if I can eat it or not.

And so, you see, he says in 1 Corinthians 8 and Romans 14, it's not even an issue. It's nothing for the real born-again believer. Nothing but meat.

Because the idol's nothing. There's demons behind them deceiving the people, he teaches. But for the born-again Christian, it's just meat now.

But what about the person who's just coming out of a pagan situation, doesn't know what to do, and they see maybe the stronger brother with the faith, knowing it's nothing, go in and buy the meat. They think, well, I guess if Paul does it, I'll buy it too. But they're troubled with it, and they can't even enjoy it.

Their conscience is troubled. Paul said, you're stumbling your brother. You're hurting your brother with your meat.

He said, rather than do that, I won't even eat meat when I'm in Corinth or around that brother. I'll abstain rather than make it difficult for him. He ends that teaching in Romans 14.

He said, don't let your good be evil spoken of. You have the faith, but have it to thyself and before God. We're not to flaunt it in front of somebody else to make them feel inferior or to stumble them.

So abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, from things strangled, and from fornication, from which if you keep yourselves, you shall do well, fare ye well. So when they were dismissed, they came to Antioch, and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the epistle, the things that they decided that was best in Jerusalem. And notice, and when they had read, they rejoiced for the consolation.

They just agreed, hey, this is great. Fine. Man, I don't need to be circumcised.

Great. I don't like blood pudding anyhow. No problem.

I don't care about eating blood. I have a dear friend, Pastor Peter Will in Calvary Chapel of Hanover. Many of you have been here when Peter's visited us and shared.

The interesting thing about Peter, he's from Scotland. He was born in Scotland. His father was a missionary, a fine, godly man, godly family.

And because he was born in Scotland, he was obligated to serve in the British Armed Forces when he got to a certain age, just like we are here in the United States. So when he was 18 years old, he had to join the British Army, and he was stationed in Berlin when they had the Berlin Wall. He was in a tank unit.

And when he got over there, he met a German girl, Gabi, his present wife. He was backslidden, and she was a godly girl, and she convicted him and got him walking with the Lord again. But before they got married, he made many friendships with Germans, and he took a German friend of his back to Scotland to meet his parents, a Christian friend.

And they had been there for about 10 days in Scotland. And you've got to go to Germany. I've been going over there for about 10 years now to know the culture about Germans over there.

Peter was telling me that when they were out in the village, in his village, they were walking along, and his friend spoke to him and said, Do you have a meat market around here? It's just, you know, we've been here about 10 days. And Peter said, My gosh, we've been eating lamb and chicken, and I wonder why he

wanted a meat market. And Peter said, Sure, there's one right down the street.

So they walk into the meat market, he and his German friend, and the German walks up and asks for about 2 pounds of raw meat. And the butcher wraps it, and he walks out in the street, unwraps it, and he just starts eating it. He goes, Ah, I've missed this.

Because in their diet over there, they regularly eat raw, bloody meat in Germany. Now, I'm not saying everybody, but this particular German did. And if you've ever visited a German meat market, that's the biggest thing in the market.

Whole walls of every kind of meat. Something had ever lived. Some of it looks like it's still wiggling in there, and they don't cook it.

I mean, it's something. So it's in the culture. And the English do like blood pudding.

But they rejoice in the consolation. In other words, the Spirit of God gave wisdom. They were in agreement.

No, you know, dictatorial things. Just a response to the wisdom of the Holy Spirit in a healthy body of believers. And Judas and Silas being prophets, also themselves exhorted the brethren with many words of confirmation.

I like that, what true prophecy really is. Now, a lot of people think prophecy is thus saith the Lord, and then pronouncing some kind of judgment on the group. Threatening.

That's not so at all. Notice, when these were prophets and they exhorted, they encouraged. That's what exhortation means, to encourage into activity.

Now, Revelation chapter 19, verse 10, it tells us that the testimony of Jesus Christ is the Spirit of prophecy. That's how you can test prophecy. Now, you may hear someone stand up and say, Thus saith the Lord, and before you know it, your hair's standing on the back of your neck, and you're frightened, and there's this doom and gloom.

Some threatening thing. It says the Spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus Christ. First Corinthians chapter 14, verse 3, speaks of prophets that prophesy.

The gift of prophecy is to edify, to exhort, and to comfort. So, if the thus saith the Lord has not comforted you, exhorted you, or edified you, ignore it. The Word of God tells us what prophecy is.

It edifies, it exhorts, it comforts. It builds up, it encourages. And the word comfort in Greek, it gives consolation.

And that's what they were doing here, encouraging the brethren. And they confirmed, notice they confirmed them with exhortation. And after they had tarried their space, they were let go in peace from the brethren unto the apostles.

Notwithstanding, it pleased Silas to abide there still. Paul also in Barnabas continued in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord with many others also. So, probably teaching to the believers, house-to-house evening studies and then preaching to unbelievers.

Or you can preach to believers for encouragement, both. And some days after, Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord and see how they do it. Just see how the Bible's doing.

See how Calvary Chapel of Philly's doing. See how Calvary Chapel of Shortsville's doing. See what's happening over on the east side.

Let's go visit these guys and see how they're doing. Calvary Chapel, Honeoy. Or whatever.

Whatever they called themselves then. Paul just said, I just want to see how they're doing. And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark.

But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia and went not with them to the works. So earlier in the ministry, something happened, and young Mark separated from Paul. We don't know exactly what it was.

We remember in the Gospel of Mark, it's spoken of the young man who was almost arrested, and he was grabbed, and they ripped his clothes off. He ran away in the night naked. And most commentators think it was young Mark.

And more than likely, and again, most commentators believe that young Mark was still young, and it got kind of, you know, sticky in Pamphylia and pagan strongholds and satanic strongholds. And he just got overwhelmed with the work and couldn't continue. And he was frightened, got overloaded, and he left.

And Paul said, you know, he's too young in the Lord. I'm not going to use him again. Not now.

I couldn't depend on him, so I can't use him like I want to. Whatever it was, he left. And because of that separation earlier in the ministry, Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia and went not with them to the work.

So Paul's probably thinking, you know, he's too young yet. He doesn't know the battles. His prayer life hasn't developed yet.

And the Bible does warn us. You remember Paul wrote, Timothy said, lay hands on no man suddenly. Don't lay hands on someone so suddenly lest they be lifted up and come under the condemnation of the devil.

They're not ready for it yet. They may have the zeal. But like Paul says in Romans, a lot of us have zeal but not according to knowledge.

We haven't got the depth of the development yet. And we go charging in sometimes and we don't realize our weakness. And we can become very discouraged.

And that's probably what happened to young Mark. So Paul says, you know, we can't take him and we can't use him. Look what happened in Pamphylia.

And the contention was so sharp between them that they departed as sinners. Now, you remember Barnabas was related to Mark. So you can see Barnabas.

And remember, Barnabas, his name means consolation. He's always the peacemaker. And so he's related to Mark.

He's probably taking Mark's side. Now, Paul, you're just being a little too harsh here. And so he's sticking up for Mark.

He's trying to get Mark to go. And Paul doesn't want it. And the contention was so sharp between them from Pamphylia or between them that they departed asunder one from the other.

And so Barnabas took Mark and sailed into Cyprus. And Paul chose Silas and departed, being recommended by the brethren under the grace of God. So the rest of the brothers there, when they saw the contention, they thought, you know what, more than likely they perceived this is the Lord.

This is the only way God could separate them. Now, you say, was it the devil? Well, it doesn't say it was the devil. It was just the humanity of two believers that weren't perfected and were never perfected in this life.

Did the devil take advantage of it? No, not at all. In fact, it could very well be it was the Lord's design to divide them because now you have two strong, powerful men with the gospel going in opposite directions. You've got one going up into Turkey, one going out to the island of Cyprus in two different directions instead of staying together and going to one place.

I've discovered as I've walked with the Lord that when God subtracts, He multiplies. It's amazing how many people have left this church, sometimes just because they're upset. Something's happened, and it's usually my fault.

But it's amazing. They've been here long enough. They go somewhere else, and now God's using them.

And when they were here, they were doing nothing. Off they've gone, and now they're involved in a Sunday school somewhere or they're strengthening and encouraging some other church. It's amazing.

They're all over the area, we find out. And here this contention was so sharp. So here God's got them going in two different directions, two powerful men instead of all of them staying together.

And notice the brothers saw something there because they recommended them to the grace of God. Rather than intervene and try and work this thing out, you know, oh, no, you can't have this contention, can't have this division. Believe me, all division is not of the devil.

You would not exist if there was not division in God's creation. If there was not division, you wouldn't develop as a human being in the womb. And God uses division to have the body of Christ worldwide develop.

And no matter what Satan may try, and his name isn't mentioned here, all he's allowing is the personalities of two men not to get along at this particular time. God says, I can take care of that, because he works all things to the good to those that love him and are called according to his purposes. And the gates of hell will not prevail against the church.

And I can prove to you that God did take care of it. They commended him to the grace of God, and he went through Syria and Cilicia confirming the churches. So Paul goes the direction God wants him, Barnabas and Mark go the direction God wants them to go.

You say, wow, yeah, but they're what? They're just like Elijah. It says we are all men subject to like passions, whether it be temper, fear, overindulgence, mistakes, or human. And that doesn't stop God from using us and working all things to the good.

You say, well, how do you know he worked to the good? I can show you he worked to the good. Look, 14 years later, turn to Timothy. I think it's 2 Timothy, chapter 4. Now, maybe Satan tried to keep them enemies the rest of their life.

Maybe they did have hardened hearts and they weren't going to pray together. But that's not going to stop God from working, you see, just as he works in all of our lives, just as God will perfect that which concerneth you. And it could be maybe you're separated from somebody, you're divided, and the contention has been so sharp you've changed churches.

You don't even want to be around them. I know a lot of Christians that do that. They'll go so far as to change a church rather than go to the cross and go to that brother they have ought with and just soften the heart and pray.

God says, well, we'll just wait a few years. But there's always a little stone in the heart. When someone refuses to forgive and go to the cross and reconcile and then runs from the situation and maintains the hardness or the bitterness or the anger, no matter how much love is all around it and all the happiness and joy, there's always that one little spot, that area of their life that is hard.

And it seems like because of that, whenever you hear the person's name, something's going to go off in there and that hardness is going to react. And they'll always do it to you again the rest of your life. Whatever they did, however they failed you, whatever happened between the two of you, if it isn't dealt with, you see, and go to the cross, under the blood, absolute forgiveness and free from it, whether you see them again or not, Satan will continually the rest of your life have them do it to you again.

As soon as you hear their name, they've done it to you again. The whole thing flashes back what they did to you. And off it goes inside.

And you've got that little spot in your heart that the Spirit of God can't work in. It's so wonderful to forgive and to be free from that. Well, look what took place 14 years later.

This is Paul's last letter. He says in verse 5, Watch thou in all things, endure afflictions. Do the work of an evangelist.

There are people here that are always dragging people through the doors, bringing them to church, sharing their faith. It's amazing. It's wonderful.

He's writing that, you see, we're all to do that, not just Billy Graham. Share our faith and invite people to church. Do the work of an evangelist.

Make full proof of thy ministry. For I am now ready to be offered. And the time of my departure is at hand.

Look at how he talks about getting his head cut off. I'm departing. I'm taking a trip.

I'm departing to glory. Now, the amazing thing is, in another epistle he says, The Lord will deliver me from every evil work. It's amazing when it's time to go to be with the Lord and he knows it.

He doesn't see beheading as an evil work. The time of my departure is here. Because he knows, you see, Satan couldn't do it unless his ministry was finished down here.

Notice he's not praying for deliverance. Please get everybody praying. Put it on the prayer chain.

I'm about to be beheaded. Now, there's a man, you see, that had a relationship with Jesus Christ. And there was nothing in this world worth hanging around for.

In other words, he was so in love with Jesus, he could not stand being away from him. And when he knew it was finished down here, he didn't care how he left. I'm ready to be offered.

My time of my departure is at hand. You can know Jesus that way. We can all know Jesus that way.

The time of my departure is in. I have fought a good fight. Notice his Christian experience was a fight.

It wasn't just walking down some rose-petaled path with lots of money and Christian concerts and potlucks. I mean, it's amazing what we expect when we invite Jesus into our heart. We want Jesus just to make us happy until it's all over.

Maybe that's why we don't want to read the Bible, because we see things like this in there. I fought a good fight. I finished my course.

I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day, and not to me only, but unto all them also, that love is appearing. Aren't you looking forward for his appearing? When we see what's happening in the world today, as far as Bible prophecy, the mark of the beast, now they've got a chip they're developing that you send your daughter or your son away to college and put the chip under the skin and load it with money.

It's right there. The technology's there. That's what's next.

Visa. The banks have already got everything in place, so you don't have to send cash. The daughter or the son doesn't have to write a check, and you can tell how your son or daughter, they say, is spending the money in the university because there's a record of every transaction.

You see, there's money loaded in the chip that's embedded under the skin they're developing. I'm looking forward for his appearing, because the mark comes into being in the place in the middle of the tribulation, three and a half years after the rapture, and if they've got that technology now and they're about to implement it for those who want it, hey, how close are we? I'm looking forward for his appearing. I love, I will love his appearing.

His parousia, his appearance in the air, and he says, get up here, and the church meets the Lord in the air. Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me, for Demas has forsaken me, because he got a raise at Kodak. It's amazing how many Demases are in the church.

We laugh, but I see it all the time. I know people who are forsaking Christ because they're making money, forsaking the call on their life. Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and has departed into Thessalonica, got a raise, and got moved to Atlanta.

Six figures now. Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia. Now they hadn't forsaken him, their ministries had taken him to those places.

Only Luke is with me. Isn't it interesting? God leaves the doctor with him. God loves Paul so much, he has his own personal physician with him.

Take Mark and bring him with thee, for he is profitable to me for the ministry. You see, God has it all covered. They may have had differences, but God overwhelms in his love.

God's able. Maybe there's somebody right now that you've tried to reconcile with, and they've hardened their heart. You've done all you can.

You long to fellowship with them again, and they just will not forgive. They're hardened. They're immature.

They don't understand the love of Christ. God's able. Just keep praying for them.

You remember Job's friends? Remember Job was so ill and so sick, and his friends had gotten kind of cruel and judgmental, and the Lord rebuked his friends and said, Job is right. You've not been right like my servant Job and all this. You've been wrong in all your discernment and everything, all your counseling and your so-called ministry.

And he told Job to go pray for his friends. Now they had been attacking him. He said, You pray for them, and you will be healed.

Interesting. You got an enemy? Pray for them. Watch what God will do.

Jesus said, Love your enemies. Do good to those that persecute you and use you. Pray for them.

Watch what God will do. Shall we all stand? Well, we got through chapter 15, and we're finding out more and more about grace and pure faith in Christ. When God looks at you, He sees the perfect righteousness of His Son Jesus.

If you've truly, truly asked Him into your heart, if you've truly been converted and asked Jesus Christ to be your Lord and Savior, from that point forward, you're justified, forgiven. And all that you need for heaven now is just to keep saying, My faith is in Jesus Christ, the finished work of Christ. I know I failed Satan, but I'm cleansed in the blood of Jesus.

I'm born again of the Spirit. And I'm righteous because of Christ. And God, my Father, accepts me.

He'll always accept you. But you must put your faith, your trust in Jesus Christ. Heavenly Father, we thank You so much for the finished work of Christ.

And we thank You, dear Lord, that we have freedom in Christ to yield, to go as we desire, or not to be controlled by some human, but just to operate as a member of the body of Christ, motivated by the Spirit of God and the Spirit of love, which is in Jesus Christ. So, Lord, give us understanding. Continue to teach us, Lord, and challenge us with grace and faith, and true faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ.

And, Lord, we pray You would encourage and edify and comfort tonight everyone here. That's the true spirit of prophecy. And we pray, Father, we've been faithful to give the testimony of Jesus Christ tonight.

In His name we pray. Amen.

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