

Title

by Gary Wilkerson

The sermon explores the struggle between grace and performance in the Christian faith, urging believers to find true freedom in Christ.

Duration: 45:33

Scripture: Romans 7:4

Topics: "Christian Life", "Freedom in Christ", "Grace vs. Law"

Description

Gary Wilkerson emphasizes the importance of understanding grace over law in the Christian life, sharing personal stories of struggle and redemption, particularly focusing on his son Elliot's journey from addiction to freedom in Christ. He illustrates how many believers become trapped in a cycle of performance and striving, feeling inadequate and burdened by the law, rather than embracing the freedom that comes from knowing Jesus. Wilkerson encourages the congregation to let go of the 'and then' mentality of trying harder and instead rest in the finished work of Christ, which brings true transformation and joy. He concludes with a call to embrace the grace of God, which empowers believers to live victoriously without the weight of guilt and shame.

Transcript

Thank you for that kind welcome, and thank you Patrick and Rosa, appreciate those guys, don't you love them so much? They are amazing, an amazing couple, just thrilled with them. That introduction, gosh it made me feel really old, like I thought he was saying stuff like, you know, and he fought in the Civil War, and he's a good friend of George Washington, and invented electricity, all kinds of great stuff I did in my past, and it's a blast to be with you.

I do live in Colorado Springs, I'm a pastor there, Colorado's a great place, I grew up in New York, and then moved to Colorado, and it's a really different world, anybody ever been to, out west, Colorado, anybody, a couple of you, some of you guys were out there when they did the Cross and the Switchblade play for us at our church in Colorado Springs, a real different world, it's a world of four wheel drive Jeeps with the big, super big wheels on them, I actually saw one in Manhattan today, and it was hardly fitting down the street, it just was, just looked like a school bus, I mean it was this big, it doesn't look that big when it's in Colorado out in the open, you know, snowboards everywhere, every weekend, it's hard to pastor because like, you know, half of anybody that's under 40

years old is up snowboarding or skiing in the mountains, and then in the summertime, it's long distance bike riding, or downhill bike riding, all kinds of fun stuff, it's an outdoor world, we love living there, it's weird to pastor there, it's the land of, it's one of two states now that has legalized, and please don't say amen to this, it's one of the two states that have legalized marijuana, thank you for not, some of you haven't said amen all night, you really wanted to right there, but it is, so it's kind of a liberal state where, you know, people come to, people come to my church stoned, I mean that's pretty, that's unusual, and so we've been there since, you mentioned since 2009, it's a great place, there was a young girl who sort of come to our church when we first started there,

and she was kind of living a wild life, just going a bit crazy, and was living with this guy, and she got pregnant, and had a baby, and then he bolted on her, and just left her alone, and so she started just partying, and trying to get some kind of joy out of life, and I'll never forget the day she came out of her seat, when we we do at our church this thing called an invitation to receive Christ, and people walk forward and say I want to pray, and ask God to change my life, and so she did that, her name was Bri, Brianna, and she came, and gave her life to Jesus, and she had a little boy at this time, maybe two years old, one year old little boy, and he came up to the altar with her, holding her hand, it was really cute, and I got to pray for them to receive Christ, and I got to baptize

her, and to see her grow in Christ, and come out of things that were just causing her a lot of pain, and sorrow, and looking for life in all the wrong places, and she met Jesus, now that kind of pushed the story forward a little bit, my 20 something year old son, she caught his attention, he caught her attention, they kind of hooked up as they say, and got to know each other in a healthy way, in a healthy manner, and started falling in love, and so I only got to see her receive Jesus, and her son as well, but then I got to baptize her, but then I got to marry her to my son about a year ago, so that was cool, almost two years ago now, and yeah, so she already had a baby, so I was an instant grandfather, that was cool, I mean he's four now, and he's fun, I asked him on Easter, last Sunday

was Easter right, anybody go to church on Easter, anybody here, Easter is a great time to go to church, if you never go to church all year, go on Easter, it's fun, it helps encourage, once a year we pastors feel like we're doing a good job, because a lot of people come to church on Easter Sunday, and that's, we treasure that day, so thank you for your attendance on Easter Sunday, and so I asked my grandson, I said Deontay, do you know, his name is Deontay Adonis, isn't that a cool name, Deontay Adonis, do you know what Easter means, he goes absolutely grandpa, it's when Jesus gives me superpower to shoot chocolate covered eggs out at the bad guys, toot, toot, toot, I thought awesome, you know, I'm not gonna change that, just go for it, that's good enough, as long as it's Jesus gives you

power, somewhere Jesus in Easter somewhere, I'm happy, you know, that's good, go for it kid, and I have three other kids, my family's like, you ever hear that comedian, he says, I have three wonderful kids, and then I got another, have you ever heard that, you're just getting that, yes, I have four kids, it's kind of, they're all wonderful, I have a wonderful, wonderful group of kids, my youngest, she's with me and my wife here in New York City this weekend visiting from Colorado, and she has been, I got a text from her today, she's been S-H, and the text said O-O-O-O-O-P-I-N-G, she was shopping, not just and a sweatshirt that says welcome to Vail, you know, so that's, so it's real different here to, she gets dresses and shoes and stuff like that, and she is 19, but getting married soon,

she got engaged to our worship leader at our church, so I'm a proud papa, she's making me watch this movie called Father of the Bride, anybody ever seen that movie with Steve Martin, Father of the Bride,

she's making me watch that and say, dad, don't do what he did in this movie, complain about the cost of the cake, and you know, things like that, and don't cry, and I do, I'm crying all the time, I downloaded the soundtrack to Father of the Bride, and it just so happens that the girl in that movie, Father of the Bride, her name is Annie, my daughter's name is Annie, and the last song on the soundtrack is Annie's Gone, and I did, just reading the title, I was like kind of tearing up a little bit, I thought, dare I listen, and I listened to the song, I was so melodious and sad, and I called

my daughter, I said, come home, I miss you, she was out on a date, so just leave Ryan, come home, be with your daddy, it's like, I don't want, Annie's gone, Annie's gone, and I went to see the place where she's getting married, she's getting married outdoors in a garden, and the guy who owns the property, this place called the Secret Garden, he said, now your daughter will come through that door right there, and down this walkway, I just wanted to come through the doorway, I wanted to stay, stay there, because I'm a pastor, she asked me to marry her, and I said, there's no way in the world, I am already married, no, she asked me to do the wedding for her, and I said, I just can't, I will just be, I'll just be, I'll need Kleenex the whole time, I won't be able to say, you know, even, I

won't be able to say any of it, so I passed on that, my good friend, Pastor Neil Rhodes, some of you might remember Pastor Neil Rhodes, you remember him?

Pastor Neil's gonna do the wedding, and I'm gonna just watch, and I'm gonna do the part, her father and I, you know what that one is, right? No, her mother and I, that's, I'm gonna get wrong already, and her mother and I, that's the part where you give away the bride, so let's pray, and ask God to help us hear the word of the Lord, it's great to be with you, from Colorado, it's always good to be back in New York City, always great to be back in Times Square Church, in the heart of New York City, you guys are doing a wonderful job of being a witness, and a testimony to the goodness of God, and his love, and I'm so grateful to get the chance, I'm so thankful that Pastor Patrick asked me to share with you tonight, and I've already kind of taken up 10 minutes of my 30, so I better hurry up, so Father God, just speak to our hearts, and give us wisdom to hear your word, help us to see what you want to say to us, and set us free tonight, I'm really asking you that God, I honestly just desire that one thing, that young adults in this auditorium tonight would just break free from the pain, and the sorrow, and the suffering, and the striving, and the sense of inadequacy, and the sense of rejection, and the sense of failure, and find out who they are in Christ, that they're free, that they're alive, that they're victorious, that they're overcomers, that they can reign with Christ, even now we thank you in Jesus name, amen.

Somebody showed me a video clip last week of a movie I never got to see, it was called, I think the title of that, I'm not sure if I'm getting this right, was Dude Who Stole My Car, there's an Ashton Kutcher movie, or Dude Where's My Car, Ashton Kutcher who was married to Demi Moore for a while there, a little bit of an age difference, right, and so Ashton Kutcher is in this video clip, I didn't see the movie, but I saw this video clip, he pulls up with two or three of his friends in his car, he pulls up to a drive-in window, and there's that little box there that says, you know, what's your order please, and so he goes, I'd like, I don't remember what he was ordering, tacos or burgers, let's just say it's tacos, let's say it's burgers, three burgers please, and she goes, and the person,

anybody ever hear this, and then, yeah, and then, and then, so he goes, turns to the guys and goes, yeah, throw in some fries, and then, okay, some burgers, some fries, and oh yeah, how about a couple milkshakes, and then, no and then, and then, how about burger fries, milkshake, and a few onion rings, and then, and Ashton Kutcher about this time is getting angry, like, no and then, and then, no and then,

and then, no and then, and he reaches out, and he takes the thing where the mic is, we're asking the order, and he just rips it out, no and then, no and then, no and then, that's church, that is totally church, you come every Sunday, and the pastor says to you, and then, you read your Bible more, did you read your Bible this week, good, and then, you pray more, and then, you witness

more, and then, you fast, fast, I don't eat food, what kind of crazy religion is this, and then, and then, and then, and then, what starts off as a message of grace, Jesus loves you, he died for your sins, you're free, you're forgiven, you're called into a life of joy and victory, becomes a life of and thens, do more, try harder, accomplish more, overcome rejection by performacism, performing more to get somebody to love you, get God to accept you more by the more you do, the more you'll be loved, the more you'll be accepted, it starts off easy, just love Jesus, and then, before long, they have you trying to do more stuff, it was like when I was a kid, I saw this TV show where they had a guy came on and had all these poles sticking up on the stage, about 12 or 15 poles, some of you may

have seen this before, and he put a plate on one of the poles and he started spinning it, and it was real casual and cool, and the plate, because of its momentum, kind of like the Harlem Globetrotters hanging up the basketball on the finger, because the plate had the momentum, it could stir, be turned and balance itself, and it was easy, he was, he was cool, calm, collected, telling jokes, and then he put a second one on the second pole, and then a third one, and then a fourth one, and then a fifth one, now, by this, by the time he gets to the fifth one, he looks back, and what's happening in the first one, it's starting to, kind of like that wobbly thing, right, and so he runs back over this side, and gets that one spinning, and he's still kind of telling a few little jokes, but he's

starting to get a little, you know, his breath's getting a lot, and then, then he gets like five or six going on this row, and by the time he's done, he's got like 15 of these plates, and by the time he's spinning this one, the one way down on that end is just about to fall off, and he like just darts for it, and lunges at it, gets it to to spin, and then they start falling off, and he grabs them as they're falling, one, two, three, four, five, and then 15 down the line, he grabs all 15 of them, and they're, you know, stacked this high, and he goes, and then he drops all the plates, you know, just for fun, you know, that's awesome to see, but it's difficult to live, and oftentimes what happens, instead of following Jesus, and loving Jesus, and enjoying Jesus, and being freed up by Jesus,

being forgiven by Jesus, we take these plates that are performance plates, and say, it's easy, I just got saved, and they just said, just come to church, oh, that's simple, I can just come to church, or I can come to the gate on Friday night, I just spin this one plate, but don't forget to pray, I can do that, I can read my Bible, and I pray, and I just have three things to do, go to church, read my Bible, and pray, well, don't forget to tithe, give some money to the church, read my Bible, pray, study, tithe, read my Bible, study more, fast, go on the retreat, sing in the youth choir, do this, go in that place, and do this thing, and come to the conference, and before long, we're just like, man, what happened to Jesus?

We're running around like crazy, we're exhausted, and we're, we're, we're, we're worn out, we're beat up, and, and we're not really even, after having done all that, we're still in the same problems, we're still facing the exact same difficulties we faced when we started this whole process, we're spinning plates, but, but we feel like we're never doing enough, we're never good enough, we never accomplish enough, we never perform at a high enough standard to make ourselves satisfied, you know, you live in a world today where, where you're under this pain, under this pressure to perform, to make sure that everybody approves of you, and accepts you, for some, maybe a father left when you were young, and abandoned you, and when

you see him occasionally, maybe you have a lunch together

occasionally, and you go, you go to raise pizza, and you're trying to, hey dad, I did this, and I accomplished that, and, and maybe you're afraid your mom's, she's so busy all the time, working two jobs, you're, you're concerned like, man, does she even know I'm here, and so maybe if I get good grades, and maybe the teacher will approve me, or maybe I'll get that scholarship, and, and maybe a church, they'll, I'll fit into the youth group if I act religious, and so we're putting on all these stuff, but we're exhausted, and worn out, and it just seems like week after week, there's more stuff to do, but we're never doing it well enough, and never doing enough, and never doing it what we do do, we don't do, I said do do, sorry, that's, that's, I'd say that I have a grandson, that's why, the

stuff that we do, we end up, we're not doing it enough, and we want to try harder, and try to accomplish more, but we are worn out, and then we look at our life, and say it's, it's not acceptable even to God, this Christian faith is meant to be freeing me from sin, but it doesn't seem to be working, because I'm still stuck in a habitual pattern of sin, I still practice the same sins, I don't know how many times I've come to the altar, I don't know how many times I've cried out to God, I, when I was a kid, a teenager in the church, I grew up here in New York, I went to, it was called the altar, some of you may not be familiar with that, but Sunday nights, particularly at church, the pastor would give this sermon about, and he would always preach against sin, sin is terrible, and you're a

sinner, and I'd go, yeah, you got me, I'm not, and so like, you know, 10, 12 years old, I'm coming every Sunday night, oh God, I'm sorry, I sinned again, and he would preach on things like, you know, like anger, I, yeah, I'm angry at the pastor, because he's always yelling at me, so I need to come to the altar to ask forgiveness for that, I don't like that guy, and then he'd preach on, on, on fear, and I'm like, yeah, I'm afraid I have to go to church the rest of my life, I'm going to come to the altar, again, for that one, I remember one time he preached on adultery, I was like 10 years old, I didn't even know what adultery was, but I thought I probably did that one too, so I came, came out of my chair, God forgive me for whatever that thing is he's talking about tonight, and for some of

you that don't know what that is, you can ask pastor Patrick after the service tonight, so, so I, you know, I just saw, I saw Christianity as being a, like this list of rules that you're not supposed to do, these are a bunch of things you're not supposed to do, this list of rules and regulations, and, and if you can cease from doing these things, then God will feel good about you, and accept you, and you can be finally at peace, and you can find joy, but it seemed to me that sin seemed superior to salvation, they talked about the power of God, but it seemed to me like, man, if you, we should sing about, you know, all hail king sin, because it's more powerful than, than Jesus to me, you know, like majesty, worship, you know, it's like sin had the power, because it, it performed its work in

my life a lot stronger to me, it seemed like then, than God was even doing, I don't know if I'm relating to anybody here, some of you are thinking, like, why did Patrick have this guy preach, he's a miserable, total failure, he's, but, but we wrestle with that, my own son, my, my, my third oldest son, his name's Elliot, he, he wrestled with that when he's like 12, 13 years old, he says, dad, it's like, you know, I do these things wrong, I go to school, and man, there's a lot of anger that gets raised up in my heart, I just get, I get so mad, I get in fights at school, 12, 13 year old kid at school, just dad, I get in fights, and there's this, there's rage, I don't know where it comes from, and I keep asking Jesus to forgive me, and I, time and time again, I ask him to forgive me, and set

me, you know, help me be free from this rage in my heart, I hate when I get so, you know, just so enraged by just this littlest thing, somebody will knock my books over in the hallway, and I just start pounding them in the face, dad, I don't know what to do, and, and he's, and I remember him asking me, he said, dad, it's like, how come I pray, and, and I don't feel forgiven, and, and how come I pray, and I keep doing the same thing, it doesn't seem like God's answering my prayer, and because of that, he hardened his heart towards the Lord, and even though I believe he grew up in a good home, and we had a good relationship as father and son, but just to kind of cover that sense of failure, and that God's not with him, and that maybe God answers other people's prayers, but he doesn't seem

to favor me, is what Elliot said, because he's not helping me overcome my habits, and my hang-ups, and my addictions, and my sin, so he started smoking pot to try to make him feel kind of good about himself, and the first time he smoked pot, later on, he told me, this was years later, I didn't even know he's smoking pot, when he was 13 years old, and he said, dad, man, I felt so good when I got high, it was like the pain was gone, all this condemnation, all this sense of, I'm a failure, and I'm no good, and people don't like me, and people don't accept me, he has, he said, when I got high, man, I became the life of the party, people loved me, it was, it was fun to be high, and he went from smoking pot to getting drunk a lot, and going to parties, to, and somebody gave him some pills, and

he took some, some oxycontin one day, oxycodone, and he took that, and then he got, man, that really, that really made me feel good, all my pain was gone, all this sense of, of, I'm letting everybody down was gone, and then that wasn't enough, and he started smoking crack, and he started smoking, called black tar heroin, he started to smoke heroin, then he started shooting heroin into his veins, can you believe that?

I'm broken-hearted, here's a dad who's just going, I cannot believe my little boy, man, my little boy is, he's getting out there, man, this is dangerous, he's shooting, and I remember taking him to the hospital, and his arm was swollen like twice the size, because of an infection, and the doctor told me, man, you're just, you're just weeks and months away from either, oh, you know, an overdose or death, man, you're, you're killing yourself, and I just, could you imagine hearing that as a father, and, and particularly a father, as some of you may know a little bit, a little bit about my background, my father used to be one of the pastors here, but he also started a ministry called Teen Challenge, which was for drug addicts, and so this Teen Challenge drug program had opened like 1,500

centers all around the world, and so here's my sort of background, is like helping others get set free from drugs and addiction, and my own son's, my own son is on drugs now, getting to the place where he lost his job, got kicked out of school, we finally had to kick him out of our home, I had the hardest day of my life, ask him to leave my home, and he was in tears, and I was just a blubbering mess, I was, I was just, but he had been stealing from us, and he'd been using things at our house to, to sell, to, so that he could continue his drug addiction, and so we had to ask him to leave, and then he, he lived with a friend for a while, and things got worse, and he ended up becoming homeless, he was living on the streets, and it's the hardest days of my life, him calling me, you know,

three in the morning, say, dad, it's, it's 15 degrees outside here in Colorado, it's, it's, it's snowing, you know, it's like a foot of snow out here, I need help, I need help, and just, oh, God, I need you to do something in his life, all of that began, to some degree or another, because he felt like God had let him down, he'd felt like he had not done enough for God, or, or what he had done for God, he performed these things for God, and God owed him, he was supposed to be, you know, I asked God to help me, but God didn't seem to help me, and so he started asking this question at a young age, maybe Jesus isn't really

that good, or maybe he isn't really that strong, or maybe he's not that God of victory they talk about in church, and maybe he's not the one who really sets me free, or

maybe he doesn't love me, he loves other people, because he sets them free, they ask God to help them get free from drugs, and they get set free from drugs, and I'm still on drugs, even though I've, I've, with tears so many times asked God to help me overcome this addiction, you see, when sin seems to rule over us, it, it seems to dominate at us, we often make a wrong choice, my son made a wrong choice, he, he went the way of the one prodigal son who went off to live in, in what in the church we call the world, out there in the life of sin, but other sons, other children choose a different way, some of you in this room may have not chosen that way, to try to get through life, you may have chosen the way of, in that same story of the young brother who went out, became a prodigal, he had an

older brother who stayed home, but he was always trying to do the right thing, always trying to live the right way, always trying to get his father's approval, acceptance, and he never felt loved by his father, and so this is the person who goes to church, who is somewhat of a quasi-religious person, but sees sin still ruling in their life, like dominating in their life, like again, like I said earlier, it seems that sin is superior to the power of the Savior, and when sin seems to do that, the older brother in that story, if you've heard that story, right, of the prodigal son, there was an older brother who stayed at home, but he, his heart was not right, that, that older brother sometimes has this, this attitude of, I've got the right diagnosis, I know that there's something wrong,

that, that, that I'm meant to live a holy life, that I'm meant to be free from sin, that I'm meant to be victorious in my life, that God intends me to live a life of joy and life and overcoming powers of darkness and overcoming addictions and patterns of, of negative things in my life, I know I'm meant for that, and so it's the right prognosis, is that sin seems to be controlling me, sin seems to be out of control in my life, it's, it seems to be winning the battle in my life, no matter how many times I pray or come to the front of the church and ask somebody to pray for me or I go to the youth group meeting or I go to a youth retreat and I feel better, I go to a conference and I feel better, but then that same old pattern comes back and back and back, and that's, we, we diagnose it

correctly, saying that's sin, but with the remedy, sometimes we go to the wrong remedy, listen carefully, if you've not listened to anything I've said tonight, listen to this part, the, the, the prognosis or the diagnosis is that we're having a battle with sin, and sin oftentimes seems to have dominion and win over us, but the problem, more than that, the problem with the, why we're stuck in that, here's the, here's the cure now, the, the, the, the problem is that we have this habitual pattern of sin and the, but we die, we, we have the right prognosis, but we have the wrong remedy, and so what we try to do tonight, this may not make sense at first, but I want to try to explain it as clearly as I can, when you're, when you're having a habit of sin, when you feel like you're defeated, when

you feel like you're exhausted trying to live up to some kind of righteous standard and you're not making, you're not clearing the hurdles, so to speak, that, that's, you understand the problem, but what we do wrongly is oftentimes apply what the Bible calls the law or works or self-righteousness to our sin nature, to our, to our sense of failure, I don't know if that makes any sense, let me try to explain it one more time here to you, so we understand, man, something's wrong, so I'm gonna try harder to make it right, I'm gonna be more religious, I'm going to spin more plates, I'm gonna add another, and then to, to, to please God, to make him accept me, to make him feel right about me, to make him love me enough to help me overcome my sin, and so the problem is, is our, is we understand

we're sinners, but the wrong way to approach that sin is, is called the law, it's called works, it's called self-righteousness, it's trying, it's trying to make yourself better, it's, it's trying to pull yourself up by your own spiritual bootstraps and say, God, just, you know, I'm sorry, that was the last time I'll ever do that, I promise you, and I've promised God a billion times, you know, I'll never do that, when I was like 14 in church, one of the altar calls I came to I'll never look upon a woman with lust in my eyes ever again, I go to school on Monday, I go like, I'm never gonna look at a woman, a girl walks by in a really pretty dress, nice legs, I'll never look at a pretty girl again, I'll never look, I'll never look at, I'll never, oh man, it's just Monday morning, I didn't

even make it till Wednesday, you know, or Friday, and, and in the church that I grew up in is, if you sinned, you'd lose your salvation, have to get saved again, and I'm thinking, dude, it's Monday, and I, and, and, and, and I could die, or, or Jesus come back, and I gotta wait till Sunday to get saved again, that's, and I always figured, like, man, you know, if you live under that kind of theology, let me suggest, if you're gonna sin, do it late Saturday night, okay, that way you only have, like, a short time to, before you can get saved again, but I don't believe that, I don't believe you get saved, and unsaved, and saved, and unsaved, because I'm about to tell you what I believe is that that's under a school of thought that says, I, I can pick myself up, I can do better, I can try

harder, I can work at this, and that's why a lot of Christians don't like being a Christian, that's why a lot of Christians, when their pastor says to you, bring an unsaved loved one to, to, to church with you on Sunday, it's like, man, you know, so I don't even like being saved, like, you know, I don't wanna, I don't wanna drag my friends into this, you know, just because you're, like, so unhappy, because this thing's not working, and, and you keep trying, you keep coming, I thank God you're, you know, you're not giving up, but, but we're trying to, to affix to the problem the wrong remedy, the wrong, the wrong prescription, if you will, to, to that life problem, see, we're, we're applying the law, try harder, do more, work at it more, redouble your efforts, get the checklist off, and

make sure you're checking all the boxes of things you're supposed to do, put on the scales, here's your scale, like, this week my scales are good, I did, it's weighing heavier towards my righteous deeds, I'm doing a lot of good stuff, I prayed a lot this week, I read my Bible a lot this week, and I've sinned very little, so this week I'm acceptable to God, but then next week something happens, and the scales tip in the wrong direction, and dang, you're all messed up again, you feel like, where is God, all right, I'm going to close with a few scriptures, and, and this is the part where I'm applying the word of the Lord, because it's the truth that'll set you free, right, that's just not a marquee out in front of a church here in Times Square, it's the reality of life, it's truth that sets

us free, and so in the Book of Romans is the best book, if you want to read, if you want to start studying a book that can help you understand what I'm talking about tonight more in depth, I would recommend the Book of Romans to you, I hope I'm not going contrary to what the, the, the church teaches here, but I want to encourage you to find a translation of the Bible, it's really easy for you to understand, King James Version is a great translation, but it's really hard to understand, particularly in the Book of Romans, it's like thee and thou, and thee and do, and it's like, who knows what it's saying sometimes, and so get a translation that you can understand, and read the Book of Romans, and you're going to find the key to liberty, the key to overcoming a Christian life that's full of

miserableness, and striving, and earning, and, and feeling like, I don't know if there's real life, or joy, I don't know if God accepts me, and loves me, and forgives me, and you'll find that in the Book of Romans that

has this great power, so I want to read from Romans Chapter 7, and in Verse 4 through 6, I believe, Romans Chapter 7, Verses 4 through 6, and it says here, so my dear brothers and sisters, that's you and me, right, this is the point, I like when something gets down to the point, okay, and I'm getting to the point of this message here, you died to the power of the law when you died with Christ, that's strange, in other words, you died to, and then, and then, do more, try harder, work at it more, but you're a failure, but you got to keep trying, and God won't be pleased with

you until you double up on your efforts, and, and keep coming to the altar, and keep crying, and keep praying, and keep promising, Paul says you died to that, that's called the law, everything I've just said to you is the law, you died to that law, now I don't mean repentance, or godly sorrow, but I mean to that sense of I'm a failure, I'm no good, God doesn't accept me, and if I keep trying harder to be a good Christian, I'll be a miserable Christian, but I'll be a good one, then that's called the law, and, and Paul says you died to that, it's dead, it's no longer there, now something that is dead, you don't like to hang around it, right, most of you do not sleep in mortuaries, right, and if so, Pastor Patrick, if you could talk to them after the service tonight, you know, get out of

that, unless your family owns it, and that's just where they happen to let you sleep at night, that's, that's, why am I talking about that, you died to the power of the law, when, when, when you died with Christ, and now you are knighted with the one who is raised from the dead, see, here's the solution, we're dead to that kind of law, and then plate-spinning lifestyle, that's just, Jesus said, that stuff's dead, it's, it doesn't produce life in you, you don't feel joy, you don't, and there's no victory in that, and so Jesus raised us from the dead, as a result, we can produce a harvest of good deeds for God, so how can you do good things, like read your Bible, and pray, and witness to your friends, and enjoy doing it, and doing it because you want to do it, not because you have to do it

to try to earn God's favor, or blessing in your life, to know that you're already blessed, you already have his favor, he already loves you, he's already your good father, he's already a God who is out to, to, to win your heart completely, is a God of affection for you, and as a result of knowing that, that you're not trying to earn his blessing, but you already got his blessing, he already is in favor of you, he already likes you, he already thinks you're amazing, and because of that, now he can produce a harvest of good things, good things come out of a heart that know it's loved, it's not a heart that says, I'm not loved, and I'm going to try hard to get God to love me, and get everybody else in the world to love me, by trying all these things of superhuman effort, that are almost

impossible, and then instead you say, God, good deeds come as a result of what you've done for me, not what I do for you, but what you've done for me, religion is based on three different, three different words, every world religion is, is either one of these two, it is, and even philosophy as well, is either, you should, you should try harder, you should do more, you should get good karma, you should work at this, or religion and philosophy is, the second word is, you can, come on, you can do better, you can live a great life, you can do it, just look in the mirror, and say how beautiful you are to yourself, and you'll get it, you know, you'll like yourself, and, and it's world philosophy, it's psychology, it's, it's, it's therapy, that it's not necessarily a bad thing, but it's, but,

but a lot of people live under this, this kind of dark cloud of, you should, you should try harder, and others live under this kind of light and fluffy thing, I can do anything, but then you still feel like you're failing, and the thing that sets Jesus apart from every world religion, and every school of philosophy, is that it's not he, you should, and it's not that you can, because both of those things start off with the wrong word, the wrong

premise, they both start off with the word, you, and when you are trying to be in control of your life, you fail, so the difference between religion and Jesus, is that all religion says, you can, or you should, and Jesus says, he did, isn't that different, he did for you what you can't do for yourself, and verse 5 says, when we were controlled by

our old nature, that's the, the trouble my, my son Elliot had, he was controlled by his old nature, sinful desires were at work within us, and the law aroused these evil desires, that produced a harvest of sinful deeds, resulting in death, isn't, that is totally strange, but it's totally true, it's when you're trying to fight sin, I'm not going to lust, I'm not going to lust, I'm not going to lust, it immediately starts stirring up lust, because you're using the word lust, I'm not going to look at beautiful women, I'm not going to smoke pot anymore, you know, there's just thinking about the power of thinking about those things, that you're not supposed to be doing, without the power of Jesus Christ, just thinking about not doing those things makes you want to do them, like, like if I go,

if I'm trying to stop eating so much, I'm not going to eat ice cream, I'm not going to eat chocolate chip ice cream, I'm not going to make Ben and Jerry's chocolate chip ice cream, I'm not going to make Ben and Jerry's chocolate chip ice cream, it's on 51st street, I'm not going to go there today after, and right now I'm thinking, man, I know where I'm going right after the service is over, man, I'm going to Ben and Jerry's, and so just thinking about it, that's what Paul's saying here, is it's, it's your, when you're controlled by law, trying in your own strength to overcome sin, it's just going to make you sin even more, has anybody ever experienced that?

And even church doesn't help if it's just churchianity, or if it's just Christendom, if it's just religion, it says your evil desires arouse, it produces a harvest of sinful deeds resulting in death, but now, here's the good news, and I'll stop with this, but now we have been released from the law, for we die to it and are no longer captive to its power, now we can serve God, not in the old way of obeying the letter of the law, but in the new way of living in the spirit, there's two ways to live your life, one is under the law, trying harder in yourself, and the new living way, Jesus says, I set a whole new way up for you, and that's just for you to simply enjoy the power of God that's at work in your life, to relax, to be released from the law, you cannot, under the law, be released from

sin, you will sin more, trying harder in yourself, now you might be here, now saying, that's really strange what you're talking about, Gary, because now it sounds like you're saying, I can just go out and sin, no, when you're released from the law, you won't want to sin, and when you do, it'll be greatly diminished, you'll find a joy, a victory, a freedom in you that says, I want to live a life to God, now we can serve God, not in the old way of keep trying, or making double promises, or saying, that's the last time I'll ever do that, I'll never do that again, I promise you God, I'm going to make me better, I'm going to work harder at this, we're no longer living that old way of trying to obey these rules and regulations of the law, now we're trying to obey God, simply because he put his

living spirit within us, and that spirit cries out, yeah, yeah, I want to do what God wants me to do, and I saw that in my son Elliot's life, after several years of addiction, and several months of homelessness, he got to a place where where the law brings you, the law, the works bring you, we're trying in your own effort to get free, brings you to a place of what's called the end of yourself, the end of yourself is, I can't do this, and my son finally called me one day and said, dad, I can't do this anymore, I'm not going to try, I'm not going to promise you I'm free, I'm not going to promise you, you just let me come home, I won't steal from you again, I'm not going to promise you, I'm going to start going to church, I'm not going to promise you, I'm

going to stop doing drugs, I don't

know how to stop doing drugs, I'm totally helpless, totally hopeless, what am I going to do, dad, and all of a sudden I realized, man, that's the light, that's God's Holy Spirit, getting to a place of the end of himself, where he realized there's like all the trying to be a better kid, trying to make people love him, trying to be acceptable in the party scene, just had no life in it, no power in it, and now he's getting to a place where he's at the end of himself, and all of a sudden now, that's where Jesus comes in and says, when you're done trying to make it work for yourself, when you're at the place of hopelessness, when you don't feel like any longer you have the strength to break free from those addictions and those patterns of sin, that's when I come in and give you my full power,

and in that instant, at that night, I'll never forget that phone call, my son just gave his heart back to Jesus Christ, that was about eight months ago, he's been clean and sober for the last eight months, he's serving Jesus, he's loving God, he's like a whole new man, I don't even hardly recognize him, I go to talk to him, I go like, whose son are you, because all I remember is like, dude, what's up, you know, that's like you, that's like the most words I've ever gotten out of you, like your whole teenage years, that's not dad, got any money, and it's like now, now you're like telling me about your vision, and your desires, and your passions, and what God's put in your heart, it's like a whole, huh, like the Bible says, a whole new creation, old things, whether it be the sin pattern, or

even the religious pattern of trying to overcome the sin, all that stuff's dead, all that garbage is gone, and now in his place is the power of God, serving God in a new and living way, as a result of what he's done for you, not you should, not you can, he did it for you, that's why it's called, it is finished, that's what Jesus said on the cross, it's done, it's the victory's been won, it is finished, and so is this sermon, so worship team, if you guys would come back, and thank you guys, I want to pray for you, I want to pray for you, stand with me if you would please, stand with me if you would, a lot of times when you, how many of you been around church a little bit of your life, raise your hand if you've been around church a number of times, okay some of you don't know about church

life, a lot of times what they, I grew up in church, what they do in church, or at big crusades, when they have like evangelistic things for people to meet Jesus, what they do is they say, have you ever been in church before, they say every head bowed, and every eye closed, have you ever been around that before, it's like, and if you want to receive Jesus now, just real quietly slip up your hand, we'll ask all the angels in heaven to close their eyes, we'll ask Jesus to close his eyes, we'll let the father keep his eyes open, because he's in charge of salvation, so let's make sure he, we want to make sure he sees you at least, but everybody else, you know, we'll have this the secret ballot, you'll become a secret Christian, and I found that to be bogus, you know, because like you're in a

church, right, and if you can't receive Jesus, or give your life back to Christ in a church where everybody wants you to do this, man, it's going to be tough in high school, or in college, or in your job, and so I kind of do altar calls, and an offering to meet Jesus in a little bit different way, I said every head up, and every eye totally wide open, and if everybody in this building is staring directly at you, and you're the only one who's saying like, I need to either give my life to Jesus, or come back to Jesus, or I need to say, man, I've been living under this set of rules and regulations, and I'm exhausted, and I'm tired, I don't feel like God even loves me, if that's you, would you, with every head up, and every eye looking at you, would you get out of your seat, no music playing

right yet, I just want to do this without any mood music, or anything, just get out of your seat, and say, that's me, I need to Jesus, or I need to come back to Jesus, or I need to get rid of this law kind of keeping stuff in my life, yeah, thank God, there's a few others, come on right now, come on down, yeah, it's cool, good to see you guys coming, thank you, yeah, anyone else, come on down, meet Jesus, come back to Jesus, or you're, you're kind of like me, a good Christian kid, who just didn't really like serving Jesus too much, he was, he was kind of hard to, he was hard to follow, and I, and I kept trying harder and harder, and just got, it was all, anybody here that's like, you know, you think of Jesus and church as like, and then, and then, and then, and you want to say, I got to

turn that plate upside down, instead of trying to just keep my life spinning, I want to turn it down, and use a plate, you know what plate's supposed to be used for, right, you eat off of it, and Jesus said he wants to feed you, and nourish you, and to build you up, and if you need to turn that plate around, come up front here, let me pray for you, all right, let's pray together, Father, I thank you, you can still come, even as I'm praying, Father, I thank you now, for these who have come forward, you guys can start playing, if you'd like to, thank you Jesus, for these who have come forward now, we just, we begin to tell you, we love you, we need you, and I'm asking you to do three things here tonight, Jesus, for people who don't know you, just, just introduce yourself to them right now,

tell, tell them right now, just, I am Jesus, I'm your savior, I'm the lover of your soul, I died for your sins, that you might come to know me, and if you'll just trust in me right now, all you have to say is, yeah, yeah, I do, and then he will, he, he, he will do it for you, others, you kind of maybe backslidden, some of you might be like my son, just right now, in that place of the prodigal, you're out there, running around, you know, in a world of drugs and addiction, you could be headed for homelessness, you could be headed, if you want to be set free from an addiction, would you come and join these who have come forward, we believe there's a power of God to set free from addictions, and from habits and patterns of sin, if you're having a struggle with an addiction, it could be, it

could be drugs, it could be alcohol, it could be pornography, it could be sexuality, that is, that is, that is not in a way that God meant it to be an honorable usage of it, and, and, and it could be, it could be food, it could be addicted to self, you want to become fame, fortune, there's your life, it could be all those kinds of things, you want Jesus to set you free, just come on up here, father, I pray for those who, who need to come to Jesus, secondly, I pray for those who, who, who want to come back to Jesus, and be set free from addictions, and set free from things in their heart that, that just have been a habit to them, and they've been trying, and trying, and trying, and they might even be exhausted from trying, just got like, like, God, I give up, how many times, but Lord,

that's the place you want them to be, you want them to give up, and say, I can't do this myself, because that's at the end of ourselves, is the beginning of the grace of Jesus Christ, so grace, be ignited tonight, pour out your grace, pour out your spirit, thirdly, I pray for those who have been living under the law, works, they're Christian, maybe they're Christian kids, maybe even grew up in a Christian home, but they don't really like you very much, Jesus, you're, you're somebody that we know we're supposed to be nice to, we're supposed to obey, but, but we just don't really like being in your company, in your presence, and so change our heart, God, make us a people that really enjoy you, because you're good, because you're full of love, because you're delightful, and God, free us from

the law that says we have to do all these things to earn your favor, we do them as a result of what you've done for us, how many of you know that, you understand that tonight, Jesus has first loved you, and now

he gives you a delight to serve, and to love him, do you have a song we could sing together, you guys sing this song with us, and I just, just bless you, bless you in the name of Jesus, be blessed that you're going out, and you're coming in, be blessed with grace, be blessed with power to overcome sin, be blessed with something that's stronger than yourself, it's called the grace of Jesus Christ, the mercy of Jesus Christ, be blessed with freedom to, to not try in your own strength to make your life work, be blessed to not try to overcome your habits, and hang up, and hurts, and

addictions by your own energies, and your own promises, be blessed in Jesus by saying there's a savior stronger than sin, there's a savior stronger than myself, there's a savior stronger than the powers of darkness, and I can serve him with newness of life, and life in the spirit, you believe that, so put your hands together and thank him, that he's doing that for you right now, he's doing that for you right now, amen, let's sing the song together, thank you Jesus, thank you Lord, you said you shall know the truth, and the truth will make us free, thank you for freedom Lord, freedom Lord, freedom to enjoy the God of our salvation, freedom to love you Lord, freedom to trust you Lord, freedom to know that you will finish the good work you've began in us, the faithful is he who calls us, who

will do it Lord, but we just thank you Lord, thank you for what you did at the cross, it is finished, it is finished Lord, it is finished, we are secure in your hands, we are, you said we are engraved on the palm of your, no one can pluck us out Lord, your father's hands, God thank you Lord, thank you for loving us, thank you for speaking so tenderly to us tonight, we honor you, we bless you, and we just thank you, thank you for what you're going to do in the days ahead Lord, the best is yet to come, hallelujah, come on give him praise tonight, he always saves the best wine for last folks, the joy of the Lord will be your strength, amen, thank God, thank God, don't give up, trust him, trust him, he's carrying you, he's going to continue to carry you, he's going to teach you more and more

every day, what this walk, what this journey is all about, he loves you, and he delights in you, do you know that?

The Bible says you and I are the apple of his eye, he delights in you, you know, he delights in you, and so he wants you to learn to delight in him and to know that he's got you, he's got you, he knows the battles, the struggles, the questions, but he's going to teach you, he's responding for the first time tonight, the front of this church, you've never come up here before, you raise your hand, it's okay, anybody? God bless you, welcome, welcome, anyone else? Praise God.

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