

(Galatians) Ch1:1-Ch2:21

by Zac Poonen

Paul emphasizes the importance of being a true servant of Christ, seeking God's opinion rather than human approval, and preaching the true gospel of the kingdom.

Duration: 1:22:58

Scripture: Acts 9:3-6, Acts 9:20-22, Acts 22:14-15, Galatians 1:15-16, Galatians 2:1, Galatians 3:2

Topics: "Legalism", "Gospel Truth"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of changing our way of thinking to align with God's perspective. He specifically addresses the Galatian Christians who were straying from the true gospel. The speaker highlights two key truths in Galatians 1:19 - dying to the law and living to God. He explains that these two aspects must be understood together for a complete understanding of the gospel. The sermon also mentions the snare of legalism and references Peter's experience. Overall, the sermon emphasizes the transformative power of the gospel and the need to align our lives with God's will.

Transcript

We look today at Galatians, Chapter 1, Paul's episode to the Galatians, Chapter 1, reading from verse 1. Paul, an apostle, not sent from men, nor through the agency of man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead. And all the brethren who are with me to the churches of Galatia, grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us out of this present evil age according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be the glory for evermore. Amen.

Commencing this week, we shall be looking at Paul's letter to the Galatians and considering what the Holy Spirit has to say to us through this letter. We read that the church is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, and the apostle's doctrine is given to us particularly in the letters of Paul, Peter, John, and the others. And here we read Paul describing himself as an apostle.

Now, Paul was not one who sought for honor or for any esteem from men because of any gift he had or any particular title that he wanted to apply to himself. And when he refers to himself as an apostle, he is not saying it so that people will stand in awe and reverence of him, like some bishop or an archbishop puts a title in front of their name. No, the purpose of his referring to himself as an apostle is so that they would accept what he says as the word of God, because in those days the New Testament had not been compiled, the scriptures were still being written, the New Testament scriptures, and so there was a

necessity for that which was apostolic, which came with the authority of God and the Lord Jesus, to be identified.

And this is the only reason why Paul calls himself an apostle. Otherwise he preferred to be known as a servant, one who considered himself, as we read in Ephesians 3.8, less than the least of all the saints. But here he says, Paul, an apostle, not sent from men nor through the agency of man.

The word apostle means a sent one, but he says, I have not been sent by any man, it is not any council in Jerusalem that appointed me an apostle, and for that matter no person can take an honor of being an apostle or a prophet or even a pastor or a teacher or an No one can take any of those functions to himself, except he is given that gift by God. And so he says, not sent by men nor through the agency of man, and there is something very important we learn here, that there is no function in the church that we can fulfill merely because some human agency, some board of deacons or elders or a committee appoints us and gives us a particular title that is worthless in the kingdom of God. Paul was sent through Jesus Christ and God the Father.

He says in 1 Timothy 1.12 that it was Christ Jesus who put him into the ministry. That is the only putting into the ministry an anointing that has any value whatsoever. Paul an apostle sent through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised him from the dead.

He refers to God as the one who raised Jesus from the dead, and this is something that the apostles constantly referred to, the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. They call themselves the witnesses of his resurrection. So often in Christendom today there is a lot of emphasis on the fact that Jesus died on Calvary's cross for our sins, and this is true.

But the apostles never thought of that by itself. They thought of the death of Christ along with his resurrection, and apart from that resurrection, his death on Calvary is in vain. And so they call themselves not witnesses of Calvary's crucifixion, but witnesses of his resurrection.

And this is our calling, too, to be a witness of the resurrection. And so Paul refers to that, too, in verse 1. And all the brethren who are with me, Paul identifies himself with the others who were his co-workers, to the churches of Galatia. Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is a common greeting with which he greeted the churches, that they would have grace, a word peculiar to the new covenant. The law came by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. This is not a word that people could experience or understand fully under the old covenant, but it's a glorious word under the new covenant, and Paul, having experienced something of the glory of it, often spoke about it.

Grace and peace, this also is something that is fully experienced only under the new covenant. Peace inwardly in our hearts, with God and with men. And so these two words peculiarly emphasize the character of the age in which we live, the new covenant age, since the day of Pentecost.

Grace and peace from God our Father. The fact that God is our Father is also a peculiar new testament, new covenant privilege, and the Lord Jesus Christ. And Paul was gripped by these truths as he wrote this to the Galatians.

To the Lord Jesus and the Lord Jesus Christ, verse four, who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us out of this present evil age according to the will of our God and Father. Now we read there that

Jesus gave Himself for our sins, that is, to free us from our sins. But not only that, we are also told in verse four that He gave Himself that He might deliver us out of this present evil age, or this world order of things.

The devil is called the prince of this world, the ruler of this age. Jesus Himself acknowledged that. As Adam, who had been given authority over the earth, sold himself to the devil by disobedience to God, the world which was under the dominion of Adam in the beginning got transferred through Adam selling it by his disobedience to the devil.

And the devil is the ruler of this age, he has got power. And therefore salvation is not just having our sins forgiven, but more than that, being delivered out of this present world system. And that, we read in verse four, is according to the will of our God and Father.

God is interested, this is His will. Many people seek to know the will of God. There are certain things which are specifically mentioned in Scripture as being the will of God.

For example, we are told in 1 Thessalonians 4, verse 3, that the will of God is our scientification. We are told in 1 Thessalonians 5, 18 that the will of God is that we might give thanks in everything. And here we are told that the will of God is that we might be delivered, set free from this present world order of things.

In other words, our outlook and our sense of values must be completely different from that of the people around us. So if we say that we are Christians, it is not just that Jesus has died for our sins and our sins are forgiven, but that our whole way of thinking has been changed. This is God's will for us, that our mind has been renewed, like it says in Romans 12, verse 2, so that it is no longer conformed to this world's way of thinking.

And that is the purpose with which Jesus died, that He gave Himself for our sins that He might deliver us out of this present evil age. That is why Jesus told His apostles, You are not of the world even as I am not of the world. Though you live in the world physically, you don't belong to it.

You're like a fish out of water. You're struggling for survival in a world which is completely contrary to the kingdom of heaven. And this is something that we need to be increasingly gripped by in these days in which we live.

For the world has come into the Christian church, and so many Christians who are correct in their doctrines are still worldly in their outlook. And therefore they are, in a sense, heretics because they are compromising their position. Jesus has come to deliver us out of this present evil age.

Here's something that we need to be gripped by, seriously gripped by, that my whole way of thinking is to change so that I look at things from God's point of view, I look at people from God's point of view, and my whole way of thinking has become heavenly because Jesus has saved me out of this present evil system. We turn now to Galatians, chapter 1, and verse 6. Now in this verse Paul begins to speak to the Galatian Christians, particularly to all these churches in Galatia to which he is writing, particularly concerning the things that were bothering him, the way in which the Galatian Christians were going astray from the true gospel that he had presented to them. Paul had spent some time in Galatia and established these churches, and now they were drifting away from that gospel that he had preached.

And so he says in verse 6, I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting him who called you by the grace of Christ for a different gospel, which is really not another, only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even though we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a

gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed.

For am I now seeking the favor of men or of God, or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ. Now in those verses we have an introduction, as it were, to the burden that Paul was carrying and the burden that Paul really has in this whole letter. And if we are to understand clearly what exactly he is speaking about when he refers to a different gospel, we need to see what he is speaking of in the whole letter.

It's possible for us to take a few verses here and there and misunderstand what he is talking about. For example, many have understood that another gospel is a gospel that requires us to obey God's commandments. Now that is the true gospel.

The true gospel is one which saves us by grace and brings us through being strengthened by grace in our heart to keep God's commandments. And many people have misunderstood what it means to be free from the law, as though it meant that we can now live as we like, that we don't have to bother about keeping God's commandments. And this becomes another gospel all by itself, and yet it is possible for us to misunderstand this letter to the Galatians as though it was referring to that.

But that's not what it's referring to at all. We are not saved by our righteousness, for all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags. That which is produced through human self-effort is like Ishmael, unacceptable to God.

But when we come under grace, it doesn't mean that we produce nothing. No, but like Abraham, we produce now Isaac, a son. There is a difference.

It's not Ishmael versus nothing, but Ishmael versus Isaac. It's not that we don't have any works, but we do have works, but works produced by the Holy Spirit, works produced for the glory of God in the Spirit, not works that are produced by our flesh. That is the difference between the law and the gospel.

And we are not saved by our own righteousness, but we are saved in order that, like it says in Romans 8, 4, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled inside of us now, and then it is manifested forth in our life. That's just as an introduction, so that as we go into this letter, we clearly understand what Paul means when he's speaking about the law and the gospel. The Galatians were being led astray into another gospel, and as we read the letter, we see it really revolved around keeping the external ordinances of the Mosaic law, for example, being circumcised, and observing particular days and months and special seasons, and thinking that one could please God by these external observances.

It's just like many people today who go to the breaking of bread or the Lord's table regularly and think that God is pleased merely because they keep that ritual. There are churches that consider the Lord's table as to be the most central thing, not the Lord Himself, but the Lord's table. It becomes a form of idolatry no better than Hinduism, when the Lord's table and not the Lord Himself is the center of our gathering.

That is a form of going back under a ceremonial law. These things have their place. There are people who consider baptism as a means of salvation, an external act.

These are all other gospels, and to all such, the message of Galatians has a word. He says, I'm amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him. You see, man has an inward tendency to go for the external rather

than for the inward, because the external is easy to keep.

It's easy to get baptized in water. It's easy to keep the ritual of the Lord's table. But inward purity and inward love and humility, that's what God demands, and that's what the Pharisees did not have, and that's what many Christians today do not seek for.

They concentrate on the external ritual of attending a meeting. The external ritual of having a half an hour quiet time in the morning. The external ritual of having a breaking of bread service every Sunday morning.

The external ritual of water baptism, and think that these are the things that please God. Those things have no value if the inward reality is absent. Then they go in for another gospel.

He says, which is really not another, because the true gospel is the gospel of the grace of Christ. You were called, it says in verse 6, by the grace of Christ, and grace is something that helps us to be free from sin. We are told that clearly in Romans 6, 14, that when you come under grace, the mark of those who are under grace is not that they keep the Lord's table, not that they read their Bible every morning, but that they are free from sin's power.

In addition, they do keep the Lord's table and read the Scriptures, but that's not the main mark. It's not any external activity that's the mark of a man who has come under grace, but the fact that sin has no more dominion over him. He's got victory in his thought life now.

He's got victory in his speech. And so you were called, he says, by this grace of Christ, but you have left that and gotten to another gospel which just concentrates on external activity and external rituals, which is really not another gospel, but only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ, to make the gospel, as it were, an easy thing, to make the narrow gate much broader than Jesus made it so that many people can pile in. But, Paul says, even though we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which you have preached to you, let him be accursed.

The gospel that Paul preached was the gospel of the grace of God, a gospel that proclaimed that sin cannot have dominion over us. Romans 6.14. And it's relation to that gospel that he says in Romans 1.14-16, I'm not ashamed of that gospel. It is the power of God, he says, a power of God that can free me from this present evil age.

Galatians 1.4. Now, if, he says, we come to you and now say another gospel which says it's not important to have victory over sin, the main thing is to keep these rituals, then he says, let's be accursed. We are accursed, and if an angel from heaven comes and tells you that, he is accursed, too. As we have said before, verse 9, so I say again, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you receive, let him be accursed.

There is only one gospel, and that gospel is the gospel of the kingdom, and the kingdom of God, Romans 14.17, is righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. The gospel, the good news is that now we can live a life of righteousness, now we can live in peace, freed from anxiety and strife, now we can live in joy, free from grumbling and complaining. That is the gospel.

If anyone preaches another gospel, he says, let him be accursed. And you see the multitudes of people today preaching another gospel. It's not the gospel of the kingdom of God, it's not the gospel of the grace of God that brings victory, it's a gospel that merely says your sins are forgiven and then you live with certain external rituals.

And the reason why people do that is in order to please men. When we want to please men and tickle their ears, then we say things that are smooth and that will satisfy them, and usually people want to receive money for their preaching, and so they are interested in doing things like that. But Paul says, Am I now seeking the favor of men or of God? Verse 10.

For am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a born servant of Christ. Here is a test by which we can find out whether we are servants of Christ or not. If in our heart there is the slightest desire to please any human being, any religious leader, anyone around us, then we cannot be servants of Christ.

It is impossible. May God help us to seek His honor alone. We turn now to Galatians 1.10. For am I now seeking the favor of men or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a born servant of Christ.

For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which is preached by me is not according to man. Verse 10 is a very important verse for anyone who seeks to serve the Lord in any way. It is important for every Christian, but particularly for those who are called to minister in the church.

When we minister in the church, there is a great temptation that faces every one of us who minister to seek to say things that will please people, that will impress them. And we can become diplomatic and try to avoid hurting people. And when we move into that realm, then we are not servants of Christ.

We are diplomats. And we are in the wrong field. We shouldn't be in the church.

We should be in politics or somewhere there. And that is the, I would say, almost number one problem in the Christian ministry today. The number two problem would be money.

But the number one problem would be this desire to please men, to seek the honor of men. Now Jesus never did anything, never said anything to please any human being. Paul followed in the footsteps of Jesus, and he never sought to please anybody.

He only sought to please God. He was concerned, intensely concerned about God's opinion about him, and he was not in the least concerned about what people thought about him. Therefore, he could be a true bondservant of Christ.

Now this is our calling too. Paul said, follow me as I follow Christ. And in this area particularly, if I seek the honor of men, if I seek to please any man among those to whom I minister, if I am concerned about some man's opinion about the report of my work, people write prayer letters and reports to impress men concerning the work that they do.

And when a thought enters into my heart as to what people think of my prayer letter or the report that I have written of my work, in that moment I cease to be a servant of Christ and I become a servant of men. And the tragedy is, the vast majority of Christian workers are servants of men. And therefore they cannot be true servants of Christ and they cannot proclaim the true gospel, because their work is wood, hay and straw.

That which is done to please men or that which is done with an eye on the opinion of men or the approval of some man is wood, hay and straw, even if it appears impressive statistics-wise. We cannot be. It doesn't say that you can be a second-class servant of Christ.

It just says that you cannot be a servant of Christ at all. Then you serve yourselves or you serve some man or some organization, but not Christ. Paul goes on to say, But I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man.

He says, It's not some man who thought up this gospel that I preach. He says, I didn't even receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ. Now, Paul received revelation on the gospel as God opened his heart to understand it.

He did not receive it from the mouth of Jesus when Jesus was on earth, but after Jesus ascended into heaven. And he took Paul aside into the wilderness and spoke to him. And Paul's heart opened to receive this gospel which he had opposed for so long in the beginning.

And so he says, I didn't receive it from man, neither was I taught it. He didn't sit with the apostles to hear this gospel, but he got it directly by revelation from Jesus Christ. And that's why he wrote it down with authority.

Now today, we don't need that direct revelation, for we have the word of God. But there is a sense in which this word, which has been written down in the New Testament, needs again to be revealed to our hearts by the Holy Spirit. We need to pray this prayer of David in Psalm 119.

Lord, open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law. Paul prayed for the Ephesian Christians in Ephesians 1.18. He said, I pray that the eyes of your understanding may be enlightened. And he prayed in verse 17 of Ephesians 1 that they might have revelation.

He didn't say, you must study Ephesians, this letter I'm writing to you, carefully, and analyze it and study the root meaning of the Greek words, like people try and study Ephesians today. No, he said, I pray that you'll have revelation. And that's what we need.

We don't need to know Greek to understand the letters of Paul, but we need the revelation of the Holy Spirit. For it is the language of the Spirit we need to understand, not the Greek language. And there are many who understand the Greek language who are blind when it comes to revelation.

The Holy Spirit gives us revelation. And there's a sense in which we need to get that revelation in our spirit of the word of God. And Paul says here that he received it by a revelation of Jesus Christ.

And he says, you have heard of my former manner of life in Judaism, how I used to persecute the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it. And I was advancing in Judaism. He was not a Christian to begin with.

He was one who was fervent for the law of Moses. And for Judaism, beyond many of my contemporaries among my countrymen, being more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions. So he says, what I received here is something completely contrary to what I'd always believed in my life.

But, Paul says, when he who had set me apart, God had set him apart even from his mother's womb. This is a tremendous truth that although we may have come to know Christ very late in life, God chose us in Christ before the foundations of the world, we are told in Ephesians 1. And he sets us apart even before we are born, when we are in our mother's womb, for a particular ministry that he has designed especially for us. You are a unique person if you are one called by God through Jesus Christ.

And you have a particular ministry in the body of Christ that's designed by God especially for you. And therefore you can frustrate that ministry that God's purposed for you, if you try to imitate someone else or feel jealous of somebody else's ministry, when you should be concentrating on finding out what God's called you to do. It's just like the different parts of our body have different ministries.

Paul was called and set apart from his mother's womb to be an apostle. God called him through his grace. And in course of time, when Paul grew up, God allowed Paul to go through all that education at the feet of Gamaliel.

And finally, at the right time, in the fullness of time, God has a timetable for our conversion. He revealed his son in Paul's heart. This is more than just his physically seeing Jesus on the Damascus road, but in his heart Paul got a revelation.

It says, he revealed his son in me. And this is the revelation we also need. In our hearts to see Jesus as our Lord, as our Savior, as the one who can free us from sin, as the one who came in our flesh and in whose footsteps we can actually follow by the power of the Spirit.

The reason why Christ was revealed in Paul was so that Paul might preach him among the Gentiles. This was his particular calling. And when Paul says, I saw this calling, I did not consult with flesh and blood.

He didn't have to ask any human being about their opinion about God's call. Nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me. But he didn't rush away to preach.

No, he didn't. He went away to Arabia and returned once more to Damascus. And three years later he went up to Jerusalem.

He spent quite a long time in Arabia. We don't know how long. Some time, perhaps some years.

And there God taught him this gospel of the grace of God. He took away from his mind the chaff which he had learned at the feet of Gamaliel from the Bible school and gave him revelation. And this is how Paul understood the gospel.

And this is how we need to understand it too. To go before God and ask His Holy Spirit to reveal the gospel of the grace of God to us as well. We turn now to Galatians 1. And verse 15.

But when He who had set me apart even from my mother's womb and called me through His grace was pleased to reveal His Son in me that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood. Nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me. But I went away to Arabia and returned once more to Damascus.

Then three years later I went up to Jerusalem to become acquainted with Cephas and stayed with him fifteen days. But I did not see any other of the apostles except James the Lord's brother. Now Paul is trying to explain how he received this gospel through revelation.

Not through study, but through revelation. And he says he went off to Arabia and asked God to open his eyes to see this and to see how it fitted in with the Old Testament revelation that came through Moses. And there God opened His eyes by the Holy Spirit as He waited on God over a long period of time of many months out there in the desert in Arabia.

He received revelation just like Moses received revelation in Arabia concerning the Old Covenant. Paul received it too. And then he proclaimed the gospel.

And three years later he went to Jerusalem to meet Peter and to be acquainted with him. And he met James the Lord's brother. And he says, What I am writing to you, I assure you before God that I am not lying.

And then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia, verse 21, and I was still unknown by sight to the churches of Judea which were in Christ. But only they kept hearing, verse 23, He who once persecuted us is now preaching the faith which he once tried to destroy. And they were glorifying God because of me.

And here Paul explains what is so fundamental even to us. As we said in an earlier study that it is not necessary for us to receive a direct revelation from God concerning the gospel apart from the scriptures, the New Testament. For there is no revelation that we can receive today which is outside of the compass of the teaching of the New Testament.

But what we do need revelation on is on what is written in the New Testament itself. It is possible for us to read the New Testament and yet not understand the gospel of the grace of God if we do not receive the revelation of the Holy Spirit. And this is where we need the help of God.

For the word of God has been written in such a way that we cannot understand it merely by intellectual study. If we could have understood the word of God by intellectual study, then the words of Jesus in Matthew 11.25 would be quite meaningless. Jesus said in Matthew 11.25, I thank you, Father, that you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and you have given revelation, there is that word again, you have given revelation on these things to babes, to little children, to those who are not so educated, not so intelligent.

Now when you think of this, is it possible to write a book on any subject in the world which only children or the simple-minded can understand but the clever people cannot understand? It is impossible to write on any subject in the world in such a way that the intelligent people cannot understand it and only the simple people can understand it. And yet Jesus said that the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of God, were written and spoken in such a way that the wise and the intelligent could not understand it. In other words, human wisdom cannot grasp it.

It is not that God is against the intelligent, but if we depend on our intelligence, we cannot understand it. In other words, we need the revelation of the Holy Spirit. When Peter said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God, to Jesus, Jesus said, Blessed are you, Simon, son of Jonas, if I were to paraphrase Jesus' words, Jesus said this, for your human intelligence has not explained this to you, flesh and blood has not revealed this to you.

No man could explain this to you, but my Father in heaven has given you revelation. It is the same word again. We need revelation.

On this, Jesus said, I will build a church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. When we build our faith on a merely intellectual knowledge of Jesus, it does not bring salvation from the power of sin in our life, and we cannot build a church either. If we are to come to a life of freedom and deliverance from sin and build a true church, we need the revelation of the Holy Spirit on the word of God.

This is what the Bible scholars of Jesus' day lacked. They studied the Old Testament, they knew it, but they could not understand, because their eyes were blinded by the devil. There was a veil over their eyes, as we read in 2 Corinthians 3, and so they could not see that Moses and all the prophets spoke about Jesus of Nazareth.

When the person about whom the entire Old Testament spoke about came into their midst, they could not recognize him. In fact, they even thought that Jesus was the prince of devils. That is how blind we can be without the revelation of the Holy Spirit.

What did those Bible scholars of Jesus' day do? They went to their Bible schools and got their degrees and studied for years and knew the scriptures thoroughly, the true scriptures. But apart from revelation, they were so blind that they went in the opposite direction. And that can happen again.

It is happening again all over Christendom today. People study the scriptures in Bible schools today, and without the revelation of the Holy Spirit, they go completely in the opposite direction to the way Jesus and the apostles went. But Paul said, he received this by revelation, and therefore he went forth to preach.

He was proclaiming the faith, verse 23. We read in verse 23, he preached and proclaimed the faith, but it was because he had received revelation on it from God, and he had experienced it in his life. The Bible school that Paul sat in for many years as a young man, headed by Professor Gamaliel in Jerusalem, led him astray.

But then we read that he spent some years in Arabia, Galatians 1, 17 and 18, so that he could have the experience that the apostles had when they walked with Jesus for three years when he was on earth. Paul had that experience in Arabia, to sit at the feet of Jesus, like Mary, to do that one thing needful that Jesus said was needful in Luke 10, 42, and to hear Jesus speaking to him directly. This is what we also need, dear friends.

If you don't have that, if God doesn't speak to you through His word, by the revelation of the Holy Spirit, apart from intellectual grasping of the scriptures, there is nothing we can proclaim except our human cleverness. He preached the faith which he once tried to destroy. What a tremendous work of the grace of God that was in Paul, that the faith which he once opposed, he now proclaims.

It's not that he increased in knowledge, but that he got revelation. And this is what happens when we get revelation on the gospel of the grace of God. Consider, for example, many who oppose the doctrine that we can have victory over sin and actually follow in the footsteps of Jesus because Jesus came in our flesh and was tempted as we are and overcame sin.

For years I opposed this, but by revelation I came to see that it was true. And then it transformed my own life and it brought victory over sin in my own life. And so it has been with many, the same history that the apostle Paul had.

That which they once tried to destroy, now they proclaim. And this is what difference comes through revelation. And this is what we need to see and this is what the Galatian Christians needed to see too.

Paul was trying to explain to them, he says, it's no use my trying to argue this out with you because it's not something that can be understood by human cleverness. You need revelation. When he wrote to the Ephesians, he said to them in Ephesians 1, 17 and 18, he says, it's no use my trying to explain this to you, you need revelation.

When he wrote to the Corinthians, who were very clever people, he told them in 1 Corinthians chapter 2, the whole chapter is dealing with this subject, he says, you need revelation. And that's the message we need to proclaim to Christians also today. We cannot understand this unless we humble ourselves, dethrone our intellect and go before God and cry out for wisdom and ask Him for the revelation of the Holy Spirit.

And He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. We turn now to Galatians and chapter 2. Then after an interval of 14 years, I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas taking Titus along also. And it was because of a revelation that I went up and I submitted to them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles.

But I did so in private to those who were of reputation for fear that I might be running or had run in vain. But not even Titus who was with me, though he was a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised. But it was because of the false brethren who had sneaked in to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus in order to bring us into bondage.

But we did not yield in subjection to them for even an hour so that the truth of the gospel might remain with you. We need to see something of the tremendous battle that the apostle Paul waged for the sake of the truth of the gospel. And that is a good example for us to follow in our day.

And there is so much of compromise, so much of diplomacy among Christian preachers, and so much of preaching from the pulpit what is merely entertainment. The sad thing is that in the Christian pulpit today we have many entertainers, many diplomats, many eloquent orators, but very, very few prophets and apostles. That is the tragedy.

Paul was an apostle and a prophet. And that is the calling of those who would minister his word to be prophetic in their proclamation of the gospel. Fearless, not seeking the honor of any man, not wanting any material gain or salary or profit of any sort.

And we see something of that battle which Paul waged here in Galatians 2. Now, in Galatians chapter 1, as we were looking through the latter half of that chapter, we saw the importance of our receiving revelation by the Holy Spirit, of Jesus Christ opening the eyes of our heart and giving us the spirit of wisdom and revelation as we read in Ephesians 1, 17 and 18. But this does not mean that we are going to be independent of other members in the body. There are two extremes that we can go to in many matters in Scripture.

They are like two cliffs on either side of the narrow way. And sometimes we can back away from one cliff so much that we can fall over the cliff on the other side. And one extreme that we can go to is where we blindly submit to what people say and receive no personal revelation from Jesus or from God Himself.

This is how it was in the Old Covenant. People said to Moses, You listen to God and just tell us what God has told you. And that is how so many people live today as well.

They do not come into the New Covenant. They just listen to some preacher and ask some other man to find out God's will for them. They never seek to find it themselves.

So they never come into the New Covenant. For the New Covenant promises, All shall know Me, says the Lord, Hebrews 8, verse 11, from the least to the greatest. And so we need to know God ourselves.

We need to get the spirit of revelation ourselves. God has promised to reveal the things that are hidden from the wise and the intelligent to those who love Him. We read in 1 Corinthians 2. But at the same time, so that we do not wander off on some private understanding of our own which is completely contrary to the true revelation of the Spirit, God has given us a check in other members of the body, in other godly men whom He has given us in the church.

So there is a balance. The revelation of the Spirit that we need directly, but counterchecked with the experience and revelation that other godly men, not people who have just gone through a Bible school and got a degree, but men of God who have sat under the feet of Jesus and listened and learned from Him through years of experience. And so Paul, though he had revelation directly from God, much more than any of us have had, yet he went to the other apostles to confirm that revelation.

And that is a hell. We turn now to Galatians 2. Then, after an interval of fourteen years, I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along also. And it was because of a revelation that I went up, and I submitted to them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles.

But I did so in private to those who were of reputation for fear that I might be running or had run in vain. But not even Titus, who was with me, though he was a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised. But it was because of the false brethren who had sneaked in to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus in order to bring us into bondage, but we did not yield in subjection to them for even an hour, so that the truth of the gospel might remain with you.

We need to see something of the tremendous battle that the apostle Paul waged for the sake of the truth of the gospel. And that is a good example for us to follow in our day. And there is so much of compromise, so much of diplomacy among Christian preachers, and so much of preaching from the pulpit what is merely entertainment.

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People said to Moses, you listen to God and just tell us what God has told you, and that's how so many people live today as well. They don't come into the new covenant. They just listen to some preacher and ask some other man to find out God's will for them.

They never seek to find it themselves. So they never come into the new covenant, for the new covenant promises, All shall know Me, says the Lord, Hebrews 8, verse 11, from the least to the greatest. And so we need to know God ourselves.

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So there is a balance. The revelation of the Spirit that we need directly, but counterchecked with the experience and revelation that other godly men, not people who have just gone through a Bible school and got a degree, but men of God who have sat under the feet of Jesus and listened and learned from Him through years of experience. And so Paul, though he had revelation directly from God, much more than any of us have had, yet he went to the other apostles to confirm that revelation.

And that's a healthy example for us to follow. And that's what we read of in verse 1 and 2 of Galatians chapter 2. After an interval of 14 years, I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas and taking Titus, who was a Greek who had not been circumcised, who had not conformed to the Mosaic law of circumcision. And he says he went up by revelation.

God spoke to him that he was to go. God speaks to us and reveals the Scriptures to us. And God also speaks to us to go and confirm that with others of His servants, so that we get a confirmation, so that also we can work together in cooperation.

And he says, I submitted to these other apostles the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles. Now here we see Paul's humility, that he was willing to be a member in the body and not just be a law unto himself, like so many people are today who submit to nobody. Paul submitted this gospel.

But I did so in private to those who were of reputation, that means those who had a responsibility and who were recognized as leaders in the church for fear that I might be running or had run in vain. He wanted to confirm this gospel. But, he says, they did not ask Titus to be circumcised.

They did not say you must keep these external rituals. And in those days there were false brethren, just like there are today. And he speaks about them in verse 4, these false brethren who sneaked in to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ in order to bring us into bondage.

False brethren are those who are always seeking to bring us into bondage to external rituals. When you see a brother who is more interested in finding out whether you break bread every Sunday than in whether you love one another, there you have the beginnings of a false brother who is more interested in the external ritual than in the inward reality. That's just one example.

When you have someone who comes to find out from you whether you have a quiet time of reading the Bible every morning, rather than finding out whether you obey that word, there you have a false brother who wants to bring you into bondage. All these external things can bring you into bondage. We do read the scriptures, and it's a very good habit to read the scriptures every morning.

But that's not as important as obedience to His commandments. If you love me, you'll keep my commandments, Jesus said. He didn't say, if you love me, you'll read the Bible every morning.

This is where the external ritual has been substituted for that which is more important. And that's where so many Christians have gone astray. Do you obey the word of God? Do you love your enemies? Do you bless those who curse you? That's more important than, did you read your Bible for half an hour this morning? Do you love money? Are you freed from the love of money? That's more important than, did you read the Bible? Did you pray for half an hour? Do you love your brothers and sisters in the church fervently? That's more important than, did you break bread last Sunday morning? These ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone, Jesus told the Pharisees.

And so it is, these false brethren who try to bring people into bondage by teaching them external rituals instead of that inward reality which brings liberty and which gives meaning to the external things. There's something that we need to take heed to even in our day. False brethren who bring in another gospel of merely external rituals, who sneaked in to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus in order to bring us into bondage.

And here we see something of the battle that Paul fought. But we did not yield in subjection to them for even an hour. No.

Paul fought a battle. He says, I would not submit to these false brethren. Yes, we are to submit to the true apostles.

He did that in verse 2. But to the false brethren who seek to bring us into bondage, no, not for an hour. So that the truth of the gospel might remain with you. And here is where we have to wage a battle, not only with demons, but with false brethren who are more interested in the external rituals and therefore keep people from the truth of the gospel.

What is the truth of the gospel? The truth of the gospel is that Jesus can save us from sin. Not only forgive us our past sins, but also save us from the dominion of sin. But that truth can be taken away from us by those who seek to emphasize the external rituals.

Yes, do you go to the meetings regularly? The important thing is, are you free from sin? Then going to the meeting has value. When you go to the meeting, do you exhort one another to be free from sin? That is the important thing. So may God help us to wage the same battle, to stand firmly for the truth which has been once for all committed to the saints.

Amen. We turn again to Galatians 2. Last week we were considering the battle that Paul fought with false brethren in order to preserve the gospel in its purity. And this is a battle that the true prophets of God have had to fight throughout the twenty centuries of the Christian church.

A continuous battle with false brethren who seek to bring people into bondage by emphasizing external rituals at the cost of inward reality. In those days it was circumcision, in these days it may be something else. But always, when the emphasis is on the external, then we know that we are on dangerous ground.

We believe in the externals. But if the inward reality is missing, then the ones who emphasize the externals are Pharisees. One of the clearest mocks of the Pharisees was that they had the externals right, but their inward life was corrupt.

That's what Jesus said. You make the outside of the cup clean, but the inside is dirty. You tithe your mint and anise and cumin, and all these seeds in your kitchen garden, you gather them up and take ten percent of it and give it to God.

But much more important things like loving others and being merciful and compassionate to poor widows who can't pay your house rent. You're not doing that. What's the use of your going through these external rituals and fasting and praying and being circumcised? They are worthless without the other.

It doesn't mean that they didn't have to be circumcised or didn't have to tithe. He said these ought ye to have done, but not to leave the other undone. So it's not that we don't believe in the external things, but that they have no value apart from the inward reality.

And false brethren are those who think and who concentrate on the externals. By the externals we mean going to meetings and reading the Bible and the external act of prayer meetings and breaking of bread and baptism and all these external things. On witnessing and evangelism and all this.

This is all external. It's all very good. It's all commanded by God.

And all things that we need to keep, just like circumcision was commanded by God and tithing was commanded by God. But there was a time in the Old Testament where God said through Isaiah, I'm fed up of your Sabbaths and all your rituals because the inward reality is missing. That's what he would say even today through the prophets to the church.

And he who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit is saying to the church. I'm fed up of all your breaking of bread meetings and your prayer meetings and your baptism. You're still sinning in your thought life.

You don't love one another fervently. What's the use of these external rituals? And that's where we need to take up the battle for the truth of the gospel. That the gospel brings a change inwardly.

Not just makes us conform to certain external rituals. Paul said we did not yield subjection to them. Galatians 2.5, to these false brethren, even for an hour.

And it was a tremendous battle. It was a battle that finally made Paul the enemy of all these Jewish leaders. They accused him and finally got him locked up in prison.

That's the price we may have to pay. Some were killed because they stood for the truth of the gospel. But we must be willing to lay down our life if necessary for the sake of preserving the truth of the gospel.

We read further in verse 6, Galatians 2, but from those who were of high reputation. By that he means those who were esteemed in the church. Then he says, in parenthesis, in brackets, what they were makes no difference to me because God shows no partiality.

He says I'm not particularly concerned by the fact that they had an esteem because God shows no partiality. However, since they were respected in the church, he submitted his gospel to them and these who were of reputation in the church contributed nothing to the gospel that Paul was proclaiming. They confirmed it.

They said, that's right. That's what we preach too. On the contrary, Paul says in verse 7, seeing that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised just as Peter with the gospel to the circumcised.

They recognized, we read in verse 9, the grace that had been given to me. God calls us to different ministries and God called Paul particularly to proclaim this gospel to the non-Jews including the Jews, but especially to the non-Jews. And Peter had been called to proclaim the gospel particularly to the Jewish community.

He says in verse 8 that the same God who effectually worked for Peter in his apostleship to the Jews effectually worked for me also to the non-Jews. It's the same God, different ministries, different spheres of ministry and they had the grace, those apostles, to recognize that these two men had been called and equipped by God through their past experience and training for specific ministries in different areas. There was no competition there and there was no question of conflict.

Absolutely none. It was just that they worked in different spheres but the gospel they both proclaimed was exactly the same. And it says here that these apostles recognized, verse 9, the grace that had been given to me.

And then he refers to the three pillars in the church, James, not the apostle, but the elder brother, the physical elder brother of Jesus who was converted after the resurrection of Jesus as far as we know in 1 Corinthians 15, who finally became one of the elders of the church in Jerusalem and the spokesman of the early church and Peter and John, James and Peter and John who were reputed to be pillars, the chief elders of the church in Jerusalem. Peter and John the apostles and James also an apostle but not one of the first twelve gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship that we might go to the non-Jews and they to the Jews. They gave Paul and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship.

They said, you're called to a different ministry, we're called to a different ministry, let's fellowship together. But the gospel both proclaimed was exactly the same. And the only thing that James, Peter and John emphasized was we must remember the poor.

Which Paul says, I was also very eager to do. For after all the good news of the gospel is something that saves us from sin and brings us into a fervent love for the brotherhood. And that fervent love will certainly make us consider the poor in the church.

And to do good to all men, especially to those who are in the household of faith. And so in this whole passage we see Paul seeking confirmation from those who were the leaders in the church, not yielding even one part of the truth of the gospel, so that he might keep the gospel pure so that people might come into liberty. And willing to fight with the false brethren if need be.

We are called to peace, but when it comes to keeping the truth of the gospel we have to wage a tremendous warfare against many religious leaders who would seek to keep others in bondage. And we read further in verse 11, when Cephas, that's Peter, came to Antioch, I opposed him. Yes.

Paul even had to oppose Peter at one point when Peter compromised to his face because he stood condemned. Paul did not respect the face of any man because he says prior to the coming of certain men from James and Jerusalem, Peter used to eat with the non-Jews. But when those people came he began to withdraw and stopped eating with the non-Jews because he was fearing the Jewish circumcision party in the church.

And Paul said, that is compromising. Why do you seek to fear men? If you fear men, you cannot be the servant of Christ. And the rest of the Jews joined him in his hypocrisy and he said even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy and wanted to avoid eating with the non-Jews.

And he says, when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, he rebuked Peter in the presence of everybody. He says, if you being a Jew live like the non-Jews and not like the Jews, how is it that you compel the non-Jews to live like the Jews? And there we see how eager Paul was

to take up this battle to preserve the truth of the gospel, even if it meant that someone whom he esteemed very highly, like Peter, compromised he would stand against him. There is a great need, dear friends, in these days for men like Paul, men of the caliber of Paul, who do not fear the face of any man, who do not seek the honor of any man, and even if there is someone whom they esteem, if they see him compromising, they will oppose him to preserve the truth of the gospel, and to preserve the gospel in all its purity.

And this is the great need. Paul was a man who did not seek to please men, not even Peter, his good friend. There is a great need for men like that even today.

We turn again to Galatians and chapter 2. We have been seeing in this chapter something of the battle that Paul waged, not only against false brethren, but even against such a close co-worker and apostle like Peter. Just so that the truth of the gospel might remain in the church. And that is what we read in Galatians 2.5. So that the truth of the gospel might remain with you.

And for the sake of the truth of the gospel we are called even today to wage a warfare. And here we saw last week how when Paul saw Peter compromising, he rebuked him publicly. That is an amazing thing.

That he was not afraid to rebuke an apostle like Peter publicly. There was a necessity for that. Because others were also being carried away.

And there was no place to rebuke Peter privately because others were being carried away by Peter's double action and double life. He feared what the circumcision party in the church would think of him. And so stopped eating with the non-Jews.

Even though Peter had received a revelation directly from God which we read of in Acts 10 that the Jews and the non-Jews were all the same to God. That God loved them all equally. That the gospel was for all of them.

And Paul went to the house of Cornelius and yet we find the fear of man, it says in Proverbs 29, brings a snare. And Peter was caught in that snare. This is something we need to bear in mind too, dear friends.

The fear of man brings a snare. If I am seeking to please any man, if I am seeking to think what will so and so think of me if I do this, then I shall end up as a compromiser and a diplomat. And that's what Paul said, I refuse to please men, I want to please God.

I want all of my life to be the same. I don't want to live in one way before one set of people, another way before another set of people. I want all of my life to be the same so that wherever people see me, they see me exactly the same.

There is to be no double life in us. Everywhere, all of our life must be exactly the same. And so when Paul saw that Peter was not being straightforward as he says in verse 14, again this phrase, the truth of the gospel, verse 14, which we saw also in verse 5, the truth of the gospel.

That's the thing that Paul contended for, the truth of the gospel. And the word truth doesn't just mean truth in terms of certain accurate doctrines, but reality. The word truth means reality.

That means there's no unreality in my life. My private life is the same as my public life. My life with the Jews is the same as with the non-Jews.

And I'm not ashamed of any part of my life. It must be exactly the same. My public life, my private life, my pulpit life, my home life, all exactly the same.

Then I stand for the truth of the gospel. And when he says that they were not straightforward, they were not walking straight, they were walking crookedly. Now Jesus has come to make the crooked part straight.

And there's crookedness in our flesh. Paul fought for that straightforwardness in our life. And he said to Cephas in the presence of all, verse 14 of Galatians 2, if you being a Jew live like the non-Jews, not like the Jews, in other words, you ate like them a few days ago, how is it now that you are compelling these non-Jews to behave like the Jews? Now all of a sudden you're becoming different.

We are Jews by nature, and we think we're not sinners like the Gentiles. That's what the Jews thought. We're not sinners.

We're the people of God. But, Paul says in verse 16, we know that a man is not justified by the works of the law. Now Paul, we are told in Philippians in chapter 3, was blameless concerning the external requirements of the law.

Philippians in chapter 3 and verse 6, as to the righteousness which is in the law found blameless. Yet, he was still not a child of God. He had not been declared righteous by God, even though the external requirements of the law he had kept.

That's something that we need to take seriously. Paul had not stolen, not committed adultery, and all these external requirements of the Ten Commandments, and being circumcised, the ceremonial law, he had kept all that. And yet, he was not justified.

He had not been declared righteous by God. So, Paul knew from his own experience that keeping all the works of the law, all the requirements of the law, I still cannot be justified because God looks at the heart. Man looks on the outward appearance.

And when God looked at his heart, he says in Romans 7, he saw his great need, he saw lust in his heart, even though externally, he had kept the law. And so it is with us too. We can go through certain external requirements, not going to the cinemas, not drinking, not smoking, not gambling, going to the meetings regularly, reading the Bible, but then God looks at the heart.

And these external things, which is often what many people testify to concerning their conversion, are only like keeping the works of the law. The law could clean up a man's life on the outside, but it couldn't help him on the inside. And God who looks at the heart could not declare a man righteous.

And so, Paul says in Galatians 2.16, a man is not justified by the works of the law, but through faith in Christ Jesus. When a person sees that this is not good enough for God, all his good deeds are like filthy rags in God's eyes, because they come from a corrupt heart, from a corrupt motive. Then he sees that there's only one way of being justified, and that is to cast himself on the mercy of God in the Lord Jesus, and to have the righteousness of Christ imputed to his account.

And by faith in Jesus Christ, he is justified, because he believes that there is no hope for him apart from the Lord Jesus. This is the beginning of our salvation. And that's what Paul is speaking of here.

Not by the works of the law, but through faith in Christ Jesus. Even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we may be justified by faith in Christ, not by the works of the law. And he emphasizes again, since by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

It is impossible apart from Christ to be declared righteous before God. No man apart from Christ can ever stand before God and say he is righteous. Impossible by his own effort apart from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Impossible. That's the plain meaning of Galatians 2.16. And that's why we are cast upon the Lord, and we need to trust in him and receive his righteousness. Then he goes on to say in verse 17, if while seeking to be justified in Christ we ourselves have also been found sinners, is Christ then a minister of sin? May it never be.

No. Now here is a contrast. Now you see people can believe this truth that we are not justified by the works of the law and therefore they can misunderstand it, like many truths are misunderstood and say therefore we don't have to bother about obedience.

Yeah, we shall always be sinners, we shall always be defeated by sin, but we are justified by Christ. This is the gospel some preach. That is another deception.

That is falling over the cliff, the opposite side. Like we said in an earlier study, there are two cliffs on either side of the narrow way and some people can back away from one cliff and fall over the cliff the other side. Some people can fall over the cliff one side and think that by their good works they can stand justified before God.

That is impossible. Galatians 2.16. But some people can back away from that so far to the other extreme and say well it's got nothing to do with anything we do. We just simply believe.

And we live in sin. Defeated by sin. That is falling over the cliff the other side.

That's verse 17. If while we are seeking to be justified in Christ, we ourselves are found still sinners, still living in sin, still defeated by sin in our life, is Christ then a minister of sin? Does it mean now that this man who does not even have the righteousness of the old covenant people is now accepted by God? Whereas that old covenant person who at least had external righteousness is not accepted by God. Does that mean that now Jesus Christ is leading people to live in sin? It sounds like that.

And the gospel that some people preach is like that. That is a false gospel that leads people to give up the law but then to live in sin. No, that is a deception.

May it never be, he says in verse 17. For if I rebuild that which I once destroyed, I prove myself to be a transgressor. No, that is because they have not understood what it means to be free from the law.

For faith brings works, as we read in James 2. It's not apart from works. So may God help us to see these two extremes which we can fall off from and walk in the narrow way in the middle. We turn again to Galatians chapter 2 and verse 16 and 17.

When we looked at these verses last week, we saw these two verses as two extremes of error that people can go to in proclaiming the gospel. Like two cliffs on either side of the narrow way over which people fall over. And the narrow way lies in between.

One extreme is in verse 16 where people think that they can be accepted by God and declared righteous before Him by conforming to certain external righteousnesses which are prescribed in the law. God who sees the heart still declares them unrighteous. Therefore we need to be justified by faith in Christ and have the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, put to our account.

Then we are declared righteous before God. When we come with nothing in our hands, like we sing in that song, nothing in my hands I bring simply to thy cross I cling. With nothing, nothing to commend ourselves to God except this, that Jesus died for me and has risen from the dead.

And I put myself in Him by faith. But if a man tries to do this without a genuine repentance from sin in his life for the first word of the gospel message is repent, not believe but repent. Repent and then believe.

But if a man tries to believe without repentance then he's got a perverted gospel. Then he's tried to believe in Christ and to be justified without giving up his sin. For repentance means to turn from sin.

Then we read of people who fall over the other extreme, fall over the cliff the other side, we read of in verse 17, who seek to be justified in Christ but who are still living in sin. That seems to indicate that Christ is a minister of sin. And so we find the terrible condition today of so many Christians so-called Christians whose lives are much worse than the lives of the Old Testament people, much worse than the lives of God-fearing Jews who still imagine that God has accepted them but He's rejected those God-fearing Jews.

This is a deception. Salvation is not by keeping the law of Moses but neither is it by just believing in Jesus without turning from sin. These are the two extremes that we need to keep clear of.

Then he speaks in verse 18, if I rebuild what I once destroyed, I prove myself to be a transgressor. If I again try to build up, now he's going back to what he spoke of in verse 16 of this law which he's once given up, he says that's not the way of salvation. Now again he says I come to Christ but then again I want to go back to this old way of just living by the external rituals of the law and just think of the external aspect of keeping the law.

Then I'm building what I have once destroyed. No, in Christ I've destroyed it, I've finished with it, this external way of life. That was for the Old Covenant.

In the New Covenant grace comes to deliver us from sin on the inside so that we are free from within. Then he says I prove myself to be a transgressor. Then I'm trying to bring people back under the law and that's what many people do, many preachers do.

They tell a person they never tell people about repentance, many preachers, they just tell them to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and those unrepentant sinners who want to go to heaven, there are many, many unrepentant sinners who would like to go to heaven. Almost everyone. Who would not like to go to heaven? The only problem is that they have to give up their sins which many people don't want to give up.

And so there is another gospel which is being proclaimed by many preachers today. Believe on Jesus who died on the cross for your sins. You don't have to turn from your sins, you don't have to give up your old way of life.

Your old man does not have to die as it were and be put off, but you can still accept Christ. This is a deception. It's another gospel.

It's making Christ a minister of sin. And then they realize that if they continue to live with a bad external life, that will be a bad testimony, so they give them a certain law to protect their external life. That now you must not do certain bad things on the outside.

You must start reading the Bible and going to meetings. And they have put them under a certain law. They haven't brought them into the gospel of the grace of God which cleans up their life from the inside.

And therefore, they are in a sense bringing these Christians back under law. Now you must come for the breaking of bread and you must read the Bible and things like this. And they rebuild another law.

Then they are transgressors and they keep the people in bondage. No, the true gospel is something that brings liberty within the heart. It frees a man from the grip of sin in his inner life.

And therefore his external life is pure because his inner life is pure. But if we just clean up a man's external life and leave his inner life in the same condition, then we are preaching a false gospel. And then Paul explains in verse 19.

Through the law, he says, I died to the law. As far as the law is concerned, I have died. Not that I might now live for myself or to please myself.

That is one extreme. There are two things that we need to see in verse 19. The negative side is I died to the law.

And that's all that many people understand. But that negative side must be balanced up by the positive statement that I might live to God in verse 19. And so there are two things mentioned in verse 19, one negative and one positive.

And if we want the whole truth of the gospel, of what is accomplished through the gospel, we need to take these two truths together. I died to the law. Negative.

So that I might live to God. Positive. When you put them together, like the positive and negative parts ends in electricity, then the light burns.

When the circuit is complete. Without these positive and negative ends being joined together, the circuit is not complete. And then there is no light.

It's only darkness. And so it is. We cannot live to God if we have not first died with Christ.

And if we have died, it is not that we might live to ourselves or to please ourselves or do our own will, but to live to God. And we are told very clearly in 2 Corinthians 5 the reason why Jesus died. 2 Corinthians 5.15 Many people know that Jesus died for all that their sins might be forgiven.

But here we read in 2 Corinthians 5.15 about another reason why he died for all, which many Christians are ignorant of. Here it says, Jesus Christ died for all so that their sins might be forgiven. True, but something more.

Beyond that. So that they who live should no longer live for themselves, but for him who died and rose again on their behalf. The forgiveness of sins is just the negative aspect of the cross.

Again, the positive and the negative. The negative, that our past might be blotted out. The positive, that we might now live for him who died and rose again for us.

And that's what Paul is speaking of in Galatians 2. Verse 19. I have died to the law that I might live to God. And in verse 20 we see the same thing again.

The negative. I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live.

That's the negative. I have died. Then the positive.

But, somebody is living in me. Christ now lives in me. And the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and delivered himself up for me.

Then verse 20 again. The same two aspects. The negative and the positive.

I, this old man, has been crucified with Christ. The old Paul no longer lives. Then who is living now? Christ lives in me.

And it is only when we understand that, that we understand what it is to be freed from the law. It's no use being freed from the law if Christ has not come to live in us. Jesus spoke about a man who had an evil spirit.

And the evil spirit was driven out, but he left the heart empty. And so seven worse evil spirits came and possessed it. And that's the condition of many Christians.

They are freed from the law, but they are in a worse condition now than they were before. Like Peter said in 2 Peter 2, The dog has turned back to his own vomit, and it was better for him not to have known the way of righteousness than to have known it and turned away from it. No, we are not to keep our heart empty.

We die to one and then we live to the other. Otherwise we nullify the grace of God, verse 21. If we just take the negative aspect, we nullify the grace of God.

For if righteousness comes through the Lord, then Christ died needlessly. Here is a mystery which many do not understand, because they do not seek after godliness. They only seek after heaven.

But Jesus has come not to take us to heaven, but to free us from our sins. And the gospel of the grace of God is not for those who want to go to heaven, but those who are fed up of their sins and who want to be free from sin's power in their life.

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