

Through the Bible - Galatians

by Zac Poonen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of freedom from the law and living under the power of the Holy Spirit, rather than trying to please men through rules and regulations.

Duration: 56:37

Topics: "Freedom In Christ", "Law And Grace"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the desire for Christ to be formed in believers, likening it to the birth of a beautiful baby. The importance of freedom in Christ is highlighted, cautioning against being brought back into bondage by religious rules and regulations. The speaker challenges listeners to examine their own work before criticizing others, emphasizing the need to sow to the Spirit and live according to God's standards. The difference between the law and grace is explained, with the law serving as a tutor to lead people to Christ and the realization that no one can reach God's standard on their own. The sermon concludes with the reminder to seek to please God rather than men.

Transcript

I thought when this earthquake took place this morning, there was an earthquake at the crucifixion of Christ, there was an earthquake, the resurrection, and that marked the beginning of a new age in the world and a new day. And if it can be like that for us, a day of resurrection, of the old finished and the new beginning, that will be really wonderful. So let's turn to Galatians and chapter 1, freedom from the law.

This is the subject of Galatians. He speaks about another gospel in those who preach a gospel contrary to the one which we have preached, verse 8. So another gospel is a gospel which keeps Christians bound to the law, to try to be saved by rules and regulations. And man has a great tendency to become a legalistic Christian than a Christian who lives under the Holy Spirit.

It's a terrific tendency and particularly Christian leaders and preachers can feel that if we preach grace too much, people will just live loose lives and begin to live as they like and live in sin. So they begin by introducing a little bit of law, some rules, some regulations to control people so that they don't become loose. But that is not God's way because it brings people into bondage.

It never brings people into freedom. It's very important for us to understand the difference between law and grace. And I just like to say a few words on that before we go into Galatians, which is basically dealing with that.

He's always dealing with being free from the law, right from chapter one, right on to chapter six. See, the law could keep a person clean externally. It's like the Ten Commandments were like tying ten chains to a pig.

And if you take a pig through dirty, filthy areas after it's been scrubbed clean, if you keep these ten chains on it, it'll remain clean. Because every time it goes to this side, you pull, it goes to this side, you pull. And you can take it right through the filthiest area and you can keep that pig clean.

And the pig can boast when it came out after a two-mile walk through a filthy area, I'm clean. But it was clean because of all these chains. And if you can be kept clean only by rules and regulations, you're still under the law.

And you'll only be clean externally. You see, that pig is clean externally. Inside, it's still the same filthy old pig.

But if you send a cat through that two-mile walk, it doesn't need any chain. It just avoids everything dirty and comes out clean without chains. This is the difference between law and grace.

Grace gives us a certain nature. And that's what makes the difference. So God's desire is not to keep us under chains.

One of the contrasts brought out in regulations is the difference between children and sons. We'll come to that in a moment. Now, in the first few verses, he's talking about how these people have gone away from that gospel which he had preached.

And he relates it to seeking to please men. You know, we could also say that those who live under law are in some sense seeking to please men. And those who live under grace fully are seeking to please God.

Because after that initial section where he speaks about being under the law, he finally ends up in verse 10 by saying, am I seeking to please men or God? That's the essential issue. Are you seeking to please men or God? In verse 4, he says, Christ gave himself for our sins that he might deliver us from this present evil world and its opinions and its approval and its rules and its regulations. Deliver us out so that we might live according to the will of God.

So Jesus died not only to forgive our sins, not only that our old man might be crucified with him, not only that Satan might be defeated on the cross, not only that we might no longer live for ourselves but for him, but also, here's one more reason, he died that we might never be part of this world system. Have you understood that? The people who become legalistic are usually people who want to live in this world system as Christians. Throughout my life, I have seen legalistic Christians love money and are worldly, very worldly, not on the outside.

They may dress simply, but their mindset is worldly. People who come really under grace become free. So Jesus died in order to deliver us from this world system.

Every religion in the world has got rules and regulations. No religion in the world preaches free forgiveness without your doing anything. Every religion teaches you got to do this, all that, then only God will accept you.

And whenever Christianity moves in that direction, you can be pretty sure it's false. So it's related to, as I said in verse 10, seeking to please men or seeking to please God. Why? Because a righteousness of the law is external.

And we usually want an external righteousness to impress people that we are very holy. But the righteousness which comes through grace and from God is primarily inward. And if I'm only seeking to please men, I will not care about my inside.

Jesus spoke about to the Pharisees, you people clean the outside of the cup and the inside is dirty. This is how it is for those who are legalistic. Their outside is clean, but inside is dirty.

So that's related to pleasing men or pleasing God. So what Paul is saying is, if you really want to be free from legalistic Christianity under the law, you must deal with the root of it. And the root of it is, deep down, you need to decide once for all in your life, do you want to please men or do you want to please God? And here it says in Galatians 1:10, and I believe this is a very, very important verse for anyone who seeks to serve the Lord.

If I try to please men, I cannot be a servant of Christ. It's absolute. The measure in which you try to please somebody in your church, your relatives, your colleagues who believe in a certain way, you can never, never serve the Lord.

Do you know the number of people today in the world who think that they can serve the Lord, even though they are trying to please men? I believe you should examine the decisions you take, the things you do, and ask yourself, am I doing this to please men or to please God? You know, so many questions people have in the Christian life. Can I watch this television program? That may be just to please myself, not to please God. Can I wear ornaments? Well, I never have a question about that.

I say, you ask yourself, are you doing it to please men or to please God? And the answer becomes very simple to you. And we don't have to judge one another. In everything in life, am I going here and doing this to please some man? To impress some man? Am I doing this type of service, so-called service for the Lord, to please God or to satisfy myself and satisfy other people? When it says please men, it includes myself.

I'm also a man. We are human beings. We have an alternative.

Either we seek to please ourselves and other men, or we seek to please God. There are only two alternatives. And if you decide once for all in your life, I'm only going to please God.

Wherever I see I'm trying to please myself, I'm going to deny myself. Wherever I see I'm seeking to please other men, I'm going to deny it. You'll find, gradually, you become free from this legalistic Christianity.

And your life becomes full of the joy of the Lord. And you begin to serve under grace and the power of the Holy Spirit. And you become more concerned about your inner life than your outer life.

Now Paul is, first of all, defending his ministry here. He says this gospel. Remember, Paul is writing at a time when the New Testament was not written.

A lot of the books in the New Testament were written after Paul died. So when Paul wrote this, there was no New Testament available in different places. And even after the New Testament was written, there

were just a few copies available.

So Paul is writing to people. Very often you find Paul has to defend his apostleship. To the Corinthians, he defended it.

And here also he defends his apostleship. Why? It's exactly like we would defend the Bible as the word of God when we are trying to speak to someone who doesn't believe in the Bible. We would try to explain to him why we believe the Bible is God's word.

Otherwise he'd say, why do you accept it? In the same way, in those days, the apostles had to defend their apostleship so that people would take what they say as the word of God. We don't need to do that today as servants of God. We don't have to defend ourselves because we are not giving our word.

Today we quote the scripture, but Paul did not quote the scripture when he said that we are justified by faith. There was no Old Testament verse. That clearly said that if we trusted in Christ we'd be justified or that the law is being abolished.

And so he was laying down scripture and therefore he needed to defend his apostleship and that's why God confirmed his apostleship with many signs and wonders and miracles in a way that in a sense is not needed today. Except perhaps in some remote area where the gospel is going for the first time. So we must keep that in mind and that's the reason why we don't see so many miracles today in our midst as Paul and Peter saw in their time.

They were establishing the word of God and God had to confirm that, that this is my word. Now we deal with a word that's already been laid down and established. And here we see, if I seek to please men I cannot be the servant of Christ.

And then he goes on to say that the gospel he preached he did not receive from man, verse 12, but by a direct revelation from Jesus Christ. And he gives his history how he was very zealous once upon a time for the law. He says I'm not preaching against the law because I was once upon a time promoting it myself.

But when God revealed his son in me I did not consult with flesh and blood. Verse 16 and 17, when God revealed his son in me, I went to Arabia, verse 17, and three years later, verse 18, I went to Jerusalem. First of all, he started out very zealous, verse 14, more than his contemporaries, more than all the people of his time.

He was advancing, it says in verse 14, in Judaism. He was advancing in promoting the law and in the ancestral traditions. But when Christ was revealed to him on the Damascus road, you know what he did next? We don't read of that in the Acts of the Apostles, but he says he went off to Arabia for three years.

Why did he go to Arabia for three years? Because perhaps he had spent three years in the Bible school in Gamaliel, under Gamaliel in Jerusalem, and he had acquired all those wrong concepts of the Judaistic religion, of how salvation would come under the law, you know the way the Jews taught it. And he had acquired all that tremendous amount of knowledge, which is not going to help him to preach the grace of God. So he needed to go alone in Arabia to get all that chaff, which was in his head, out of his head, so that he could get the wheat, so that he could get what God was saying in the new covenant.

Now Gamaliel, as far as we know, was a God-fearing man. We read in Acts chapter 5. But he did not have revelation of the Holy Spirit, and so he could not lead people in his Bible school to the revelation of the

Holy Spirit. All he had was intellectual knowledge of the Jewish system.

And Paul had to go alone before God, and spend years before God, to understand. And that's where he got all this revelation on the basis of which he wrote scripture. See, Paul had a unique calling, and he needed to be clear that God was really saying this.

But this word, reveal, you know we've looked at it often. It comes often in the New Testament. Revelation.

You never see that in the Old Testament, because they didn't have the Holy Spirit. In the Old Testament it was meditation. Meditation.

In the New Testament, the word is revelation. Now if you meditate, and you don't get revelation, you've missed what God is trying to show to you. When Peter could recognize Christ as the Son of God, Jesus said to him, blessed are you, because you got revelation.

Here Paul says the same thing. Verse 16. He got revelation.

And that's very, very important for all of us when we study the scriptures, that the Holy Spirit reveals this truth to our hearts. It's not enough that we believe it and understand it. There are a lot of people who believe it and understand it.

The devil believes it and understands it. It doesn't change his life. And we can believe and understand and memorize scripture, and it won't change our lives.

How do you know when scripture has become revelation to you? When it changes your life. When it changes your ambitions. When it changes your attitude to money.

When it changes your attitude to your enemies. When it changes your attitude to sin. Then you know scripture is not just knowledge, but revelation.

But if it hasn't changed your attitude to sin, and to the world, and to money, then all your knowledge of scripture is useless. You know, you can be a very immoral person and be a first class teacher of chemistry. And you can be a very immoral person and a first class teacher of the Bible.

Why not? It's a book, like a chemistry book. If you've got intelligence and you study it and study all the references and books connected with the Bible, just like people study books connected with chemistry. You can get a doctorate in chemistry or a doctorate in the Bible.

It's just the same. It's a question of intelligence. But, and your personal life, the chemistry teachers and the Bible teachers can both be immoral.

Both may live for money and ambition and everything else. Neither of them has got revelation. Not the Bible teacher and not the chemistry teacher.

Revelation is something that changes our life. And that is what we need from God if we are to serve Him. Now we go to chapter 2. In chapter 2, we read about how Paul defends this gospel even before Peter.

Now, I want you to see something here which Paul did, which is a very healthy attitude that all of us should have. Now I've spoken of the importance of revelation. Now it's possible some people, and you see that also happening today, that you know Christianity is full of people who have gone to extremes.

There are some people who are totally intellectual. They don't believe in the revelation of the Holy Spirit. We can say they are dead, spiritually.

Then there are others who believe in revelation and have taken it to such an extreme that they don't care what anybody else believes on these things and just go off on an extreme. And they are the extremists and cultists today. And they begin to speak about special revelation which is not even in the Bible.

So these are the two extremes very often we find in Christianity today. An intellectualism without the power of the Holy Spirit and a fanatical extreme where other spirits take over. Because there are other spirits in the world.

So here we see a healthy corrective to that. That when Paul went alone and got alone in Arabia and he began to preach that, it says verse 1, after 14 years he went to Jerusalem and it was because of a revelation that I went up. So he first went to Arabia and got revelation on the things of God.

And then God said, He gave him another revelation that you should go to Jerusalem and submit this gospel which you are preaching in private to those who were of reputation there, that means to the godly leaders there, to find out whether what he was teaching was right or wrong, or whether he was going off on a tangent, as we would say. Whether he had been running emptily. He said, Brother Peter, Brother James and Brother John.

James is not the apostle. This is the brother of Jesus. These three are mentioned in verse 9. These were the three pillars of the church in Jerusalem.

He went to the three godly leaders of that church and said, Brothers, this is what I'm preaching. Please, what do you think about it? What is your opinion? About this revelation I have. Whenever you get some new revelation, I would encourage you, dear young brothers and sisters, go to some older godly brother or brothers and check up with them, whether your revelation is scriptural, because you may not know, there may be other aspects of scripture that you have not considered, and it's a safety for you.

It's a safety for younger people to go to older people and confirm the revelation they got from God. And that's what I meant here of a healthy balance, a corrective to false teaching. And then it says, not even Titus, who was with me, who was a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised.

But it says here, there were false brethren who came to spy out our liberty and try to bring us into bondage again. Verse 4, chapter 2. But we did not yield in subjection to them for even an hour. But from those who were of high reputation, verse 6, what they are makes no difference to me.

God shows no partiality. But those who were of reputation contributed nothing more. They recognized, first of all, that what Paul was preaching was right.

You see, the great issue those days was, do you have to be circumcised in order to be saved? Now today, there are many things like that which people have added, saying, you can't be a part of our church, you can't break bread with us unless you are baptized, or unless you take off your ornaments, or unless you wear white clothes, or unless you get rid of your television set from your house. It's the same old story. It's gone on for centuries.

Always something more to be added to simple repentance and faith. Throughout the years, churches, church leaders have added their rules and regulations. And do you know what is the end result? Look at

the condition of those churches today.

Are they spiritual? Far from it. Now, these may be godly standards. I'm not saying that, I mean, a person may have a conviction in his heart that I should do these things.

All I'm saying is, these are not the essentials for salvation. That's what I'm saying. When God accepts a man, he doesn't see whether the person's wearing white clothes or whether he's got rid of his television.

He sees whether he's repented and believes in Christ. He doesn't even see whether he's baptized. He doesn't see whether he speaks in tongues.

These are not the things God sees. That is the issue in Galatians. Are you adding something else as necessary in your church before you accept a brother in fellowship? Theoretically, you may say, well, it's true.

It's only repentance and faith that are required. But in spite of saying that, you may find church leaders, when it comes to actually welcoming a person to fellowship, they say they've got to add something else. But they have no scriptural backing for it.

It's a tradition of the elders. And do you think the traditions of the elders are found only in the mainline denominations? There are just as many traditions of the elders in the extreme other wing of the church, of separated churches. As many traditions of the elders.

It's both sides. You find traditions of the elders and you ask them, where does it say that in scripture? They'll quote some verse out of context and tell you that's where it says. So you find this is very relevant to our time.

And Paul was a man who fought for the freedom of the gospel. And a true servant of God will fight for the freedom of the gospel. And that's where that verse we started read at the beginning comes into play.

Galatians 1.10. Are you seeking to please men? Are you in a system where the top leaders believe something which you believe is a tradition of the elders? And you know the word of God calls you to freedom. But these elders are bringing a whole lot of people in that church into bondage to some rules and regulations. How many people are there who have the courage like Paul to confront that elder and say you're wrong? Paul did it.

It says here in verse 11. Peter came to Antioch. I opposed him to his face.

Now remember, Peter was the man who recognized we read in verse nine that God had given a ministry to Paul, Peter, James and John. There's something wonderful you see about them that this junior brother much younger than Peter, James and John was coming up with an anointed ministry. And Peter, James and John had the grace to recognize that that man had an anointed ministry.

It's very rare that you find older people today who have the grace from God to recognize an anointing on a younger brother. But if you're a godly person, you'll recognize when God's anointing is on a person much younger than you. And yet this younger brother, Paul, confronts the older senior top leader of the church, Peter, and says, Brother Peter, you're wrong.

This is like some junior worker confronting the top man of the denomination today, saying you're wrong, brother. That's not right. How many people are there like that, like Paul? Why are they not like that?

Because they seek to please men.

Most Christian workers are diplomatic. Most Christians are diplomatic. They think that is gentleness and humility.

When it comes to the truth of the gospel, there's no question of gentleness or humility. Truth is not my property. It's God's, and I have to defend it.

If it's your property, don't defend it. Let anybody take it away. But what do Christians do? They fight tooth and nail for their own property.

If somebody encroaches on your property, what will you do? Will you sit quietly? No, you'll fight for it. You'll take him to court, perhaps. But when God's property, truth, is being stolen, so many Christians are just quiet.

That shows that right from the beginning of their life, they are lovers of themselves. They don't love God, they love their own property. They don't love the truth.

But Paul loved the truth. If somebody was just taking Paul's shirt or coat, he'd say, okay, take it. But when somebody tried to rob people of the truth of God, he fought.

And I believe that's how a godly man should be. You take my property, I'm not going to fight with you. But if you touch God's property, the gospel and the truth, I'm going to stand up for you, and I don't care what you think of me.

You can call me hard, you can call me what you like, but I'm going to stand up for God. A man of God must be like that. He cares more for God's truth than for his own property.

And I want to encourage all of you, if you can value God's truth at least as much as you value your own property, you'd have progressed quite a lot. But even after years and years of preaching this, I find that there are very few people who are willing to take a stand like that. They are all pleasers of men.

And therefore God cannot make them the prophets He wants them to be. You see, you can never be a prophet of God if you're trying to please men. That's impossible, and God will test you in different circumstances.

God was testing Paul here. Is he going to please men? Is he going to please people? Is he going to please even Peter? Just because Peter is a senior person, Peter is doing something wrong. Because it says here in verse 12, he used to eat with the Gentiles, and then when certain people from James came, he got afraid and he withdrew.

And Paul stood up to Peter. And so why is that? It says, even Barnabas, verse 13, was carried away by their hypocrisy. Even Barnabas, who was senior to Paul, he was a gentle, gracious type of person.

Oh brother, Peter is a senior person, let's just keep quiet, let's leave him and not disturb him. He's a godly man. Paul said, nothing doing.

It's not a question of whether he's more godly than me. I'm not comparing myself with him. This is contrary to the gospel we are preaching.

What do you mean that you can't eat with the Gentiles? What's wrong with that? Why should we be afraid of somebody who has come from brother James? They're going to report to brother James that Peter was eating with the Gentiles? Are you ever scared like that? When some brother, senior leader from your church, sees you doing something which you feel free to do, but your church does not permit you to do, and you're afraid that he will report it? This is exactly the situation. And Peter got scared. Even Peter got scared.

So he didn't eat with them anymore. And Paul said, what are you doing? He was not going to be like Barnabas and just keep quiet. And it's because we had men like Paul in the first century that we have the gospel today.

It's because we had men through the centuries who stood for the truth of the gospel and did not seek to please men that we have the gospel and freedom today. Otherwise, we wouldn't have had it. Thank God for such men.

Verse 20. Here's the secret of Paul's life. Why he could stand up like that.

Here's the reason why many people today cannot stand up like that. I have been crucified with Christ. He says, this Paul, this gentle, mild person who is only interested in his own property, is dead.

There's another person living here now. Christ lives in me. Now, many Christians who have understood the way of the cross, and I want to give you a warning here.

If you have understood the importance of the way of the cross, here is a warning for all of you. Most Christians that I have met who have understood the way of the cross emphasize the negative aspect of it. Death, death, death, death.

I have to die. I have to die. I have to die.

But that's only one side of it. The most important thing is the other side. But I live, and it's no longer I, but Christ lives in me.

It's not I dying that must be emphasized as much as Christ living. The resurrection more than the death. In other words, it's not that I just die here, but Christ must live and manifest his life through me.

This is the most important thing. So, that's a wonderful verse that we need to think about. In chapter 3, he speaks about the basis of the gift of the Holy Spirit is not works, but faith.

He says, did you receive the Spirit, verse 2, by the works of the law? Was it a result of doing so much of work that you received the Holy Spirit? Some people think today God will give them the Holy Spirit if they fast, if they do this, if they do that, if they do the other thing. No. Did you get forgiveness of sins because you fasted and you prayed and you did so many good works? No.

Do you know forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit are given on exactly the same basis? By grace, without works. And he asked these Galatians, how did you receive the Holy Spirit? Was it by works? No. It was by faith.

And do you think that if you started your life by faith, now you're going to perfect in the Spirit, you're going to perfect it by the flesh? Is it going to be by human effort that you're going to become perfect? No. It's got to be the same work of the Holy Spirit that brought salvation into your life that's going to make you holy. It's

not laws and rules and regulations that will make you holy.

If you've understood that, you've understood the message of Galatians. You did not receive the Spirit by the works of the law. Perfection does not come by the works of the flesh.

It's by the work of the Holy Spirit. In other words, it's more by your submitting and opening yourself up to the Holy Spirit and listening to the voice of the Spirit whenever He convicts you to set things right and not do this and not do that. That's how you are kept holy.

It's not by a lot of fasting and praying. That's a mistake. I've seen a lot of people who fast and pray who also quarrel and fight and lust.

All their fasting and praying hasn't helped them, which is the clearest proof that you don't become holy with all that. You have to allow the Holy Spirit to work in you. Verse 5. What about the miracles that God does in you? Are miracles done because you've done a lot of works? No, it's by faith.

When God does a wonderful supernatural thing for you, it's not because you deserved it or you did so many good works. It's purely on the basis of faith. And then he goes on to speak about Abraham.

How Abraham was justified by faith. Verse 6. And not only justified, he was made a blessing to the nations. All the nations, verse 8, will be blessed in you.

And now, he says, this blessing is for us. Jesus, verse 13, when he hung on a cross, became a curse for us to remove all the curse of the law away from us. You see, there's a curse in the law.

The curse of the law is, if you don't live according to this, you're cursed. And all of us have not lived according to the law. And you read Deuteronomy 28, there's a whole lot of curses there for those who don't live according to the law.

For example, madness, blindness, and all types of things. And here it says, Christ has taken that curse when he died on the cross. Here is the verse that tells us that some wrong thing that my ancestor did, that curse cannot come down to me because that curse was broken at the cross.

And when I accepted Christ, it was broken. I don't have to do anything now. If I've been placed in Christ, that curse is gone automatically.

I don't have to live in any fear. There is no curse on anyone now if he is in Christ because Christ has become a curse for him. And now, the opposite of that, the blessing of Abraham, verse 14, can come upon us.

And that is that we receive the promise of the Holy Spirit through faith. So what is the blessing of Abraham? We saw that in verse 8. All the nations will be blessed through you. All the families of the earth will be blessed through you.

And that is why we read in verse 14, God has given us the promise of the Holy Spirit through faith. So the purpose of the Holy Spirit coming into your life and mine is that every person you meet, you should bless. All the families of the earth will be blessed through you.

This is the blessing of Abraham. Do you know the mark of a spirit-filled person? Here it is. He is a blessing to everybody he meets.

He goes into a home and he blesses that home. There are some people who go into a home and bring confusion into that home. You see these cult leaders, these cultists.

There are cults operating all over the world today. Wherever they go, there is confusion. They bring division and all types of things.

But a godly person brings a blessing. Initially, one person in that home may be converted and there may be a little bit of a disturbance, like Jesus said. But gradually, the blessing comes to the whole home and more and more people are converted in that home.

This is the blessing of Abraham. Everybody we meet, we are to be a blessing to with words and goodness. That's our calling.

In the rest of chapter 3, he speaks about again the difference between the law and grace and how the promise was given to Abraham before the law which came more than 400 years later. In chapter 3, towards the end, he says, verse 24, the law was like a tutor to lead us to Christ. The law served a purpose.

It showed us that no matter how holy you are, you can never rise up to God's standard. It's far too high. Pass marks are 100%.

You can't reach it, no matter how much you try. In fact, most of us get about 10% and 100% is pass marks. So the law, you try, you try, you try.

1500 years, Israelites tried. They didn't succeed. So the law says, okay, you know, you can't make it.

And once you realize you can't make it, like those disciples were fishing, fishing, fishing and couldn't make it. Finally, they came to Christ who filled their boat with fish. So when I come to Christ, what happens? This 100% requirement is first of all put upon me.

I'm given grace marks. That is justification. Justification is like grace marks.

I got 0, but the teacher gives me 100 grace marks and I get 100%. And the other fellow who says, no, I don't want grace marks, he lives with 10%, even though he got more than me. I got 0, he got 10.

But because I accepted the grace marks from the teacher, I got 100 now. This fellow is too proud to accept the grace marks, he lives with 10. So I get promoted and he fails.

This is the gospel. This is justification. To be humble enough to say, I got 0, but I'm glad to receive these grace marks from you and I get 100.

So then I reach God's standard. The righteousness of Christ is put to my account. I'm imputed.

But God doesn't leave me there. Gradually, He works in me so that my quality, my educational ability improves so that from 0, I grow up to 10, 20, 30. I'm pressing on towards this 100% actually in my own life.

The righteousness that is imputed to me is then imparted to me. Slowly, it becomes part of my nature through the Holy Spirit. That is only through the Holy Spirit.

It's not by any amount of your fasting or praying or gritting your teeth or keeping the law. That's essentially the message of Galatians. And he says, it doesn't make a difference who you are.

You're all sons of God. Nobody is better than another. In Christ, there is no Jew, there is no slave or free man, male or female.

Three groups mentioned. You know, there are many Jewish men who used to have this habit when they got up in the morning. They would say, Lord, I thank you that I'm not a Gentile, I'm not a slave, and I'm not a woman.

They were so proud. I thank you that I'm not a Gentile, I'm not a slave, I'm not a woman. And so those are the three things.

Paul knew that. People boast about that. So those are the three things he takes here and says, it doesn't make a difference whether you're a Gentile or a Jew.

It doesn't make a difference whether you're a slave or a free man. And it doesn't make a difference whether you're a man or a woman. In Christ, you're just the same.

We've got to accept the basic equality of all people once we have come to Christ. If you look down upon another person of another community, you haven't understood this freedom in Christ. You're back under law again.

The law divides people into communities, and that's another way to find out whether you're under law. If you think that your community and those who speak your language are spiritual, and people of another community are not so spiritual, and you cannot fellowship with them, something is wrong with you. You're under law again.

In Christ, there's no difference. You know you're broken free from the law when you can look at every brother in Christ, irrespective of his language, community, education, background, and say, he's my brother, he's my sister, and I can have fellowship with him. No matter what background he comes from, he's just the same to me.

Because in Christ, all differences are eliminated. In chapter 4, he points out how there is a difference between being a child and a son. You see, children, under the law, God treated us like children.

And he says there's no difference between a child, verse 1, and a slave, because he can't really own anything. But under the system in that first century, when a child came to a certain age, I don't know whether it was 12 or something like that, they were placed as sons. They were said, okay, from now onwards, you're not a child, you're an heir.

And that's called here in verse 5, the adoption. Whenever you read the word adoption in the New Testament, remember, it's not referring to the type of adoption we have today where you adopt a baby that's not really born in your family and adopt that as your own child. No, here the adoption, the correct word is placement.

You're placing him as a son. It's your own child, but now he's come to the age where he's a son. And Paul says, this is something of the difference between law and grace.

In law, you were treated like a child. In grace, you're treated like a son. That's why under the law, God had to tell you every little thing.

If a lizard falls into your pot, what should you do? If you find a bird along with its little ones, what you should take and what you should leave behind? And so many laws in the Old Testament about lepers, about uncleanness in houses, so many things like that. But in grace, you don't find so many detailed rules, you find only principles. And that's how we do with children also.

Small children, we have to tell them to get up at such and such a time, brush their teeth, pack your books, go to school, come back, now sit down, do your homework. And we have to hold their hand, now look left, look right when you cross the road. You've got to tell every little thing to a child.

But when the child becomes an adult, you don't have to tell him to brush his teeth in the morning, you don't have to tell him to pack his books. He knows how to do all that on his own. But you would give him principles for life.

And that's another difference between law and grace. That's why in the New Testament, you don't find detailed rules, but principles. And when Christians take those principles and again make them into detailed rules, they have become Pharisees.

And you find them in every denomination in Christianity. I have seen Pharisees in every single denomination, in every single group, including my own. Everyone.

The tendency towards Phariseeism is in every group, because what is proclaimed as a principle, people take that principle and make it into rules and regulations and bring people back under the law. They treat them again like children when God wants to treat them like adults. If God treats a brother like an adult, brother, you better treat him like an adult too.

Don't treat him like a baby. That's the important principle here. Galatians 4.13 tells us that the Apostle Paul preached in Galatia for the first time because he was sick.

We saw that in Acts chapter 16. He didn't plan to be in Galatia, but he was sick. And he says, because I was sick, I stayed there and I preached the gospel to you.

So you see, sickness, even though brought by the devil, accomplished a tremendous purpose. It established a church in Galatia. If Paul was not sick, he would have traveled on.

But we read in Acts 16, he was forbidden by the Holy Spirit to travel because he became sick and he had to stay in Galatia. And the result was a lot of people came to visit him and gradually preach the gospel to them. And there was a church there.

So like the old saying goes, disappointments are his appointments. So when you face a disappointment in your life, remember that is his appointment for you. A sickness, a delay, a missed train, a missed bus.

God can do amazing things. And then further, we read in verse 19. You see, Paul is like a mother here.

He says, I long, I'm in labor, like a mother is in labor to produce a child. Paul says, I'm in labor spiritually. He's talking about prayer.

That's a labor. Until Christ is formed in you. He was saying, you know, I don't know whether you've seen pictures of babies inside the mother's womb when they are in the stage of an embryo or a fetus.

They look more like tadpoles or lizards, not like human beings. Some with a big head and a small little thing that looks like a tail. Actually, it's the body.

And they don't look like human beings at all. But you wait nine months and when that baby comes out, it's so beautiful. And Paul says, you Christians are like that.

You're like this. You don't look like Christ at all. The seed is there.

You're looking like a little lizard right now. Such a big head, so much out of proportion, so many things in your life. And I'm praying and I'm longing and I'm in labor that Christ will be formed in you, that you'll come out as a beautiful baby, perfectly proportioned, exactly like Jesus.

That is the burden of any true servant of God for other people. We move on to chapter five. There are many other things there.

You will understand it if you understand the basic overall picture of Galatians. It was for freedom, verse one, that Christ set us free. Jesus has come to set us free.

Don't let anybody bring you into bondage again. Don't follow the silly rules and regulations of your denomination. You come to freedom.

But he says, don't use your freedom, verse 13, to commit sin. Some people take this freedom and say, yeah, I'm free. And they end up worse than being under the law, being under the flesh.

So here he speaks about being under the flesh, being under the law and being under the spirit. And if you get away from being under the spirit, then you better be under the law. Otherwise, you'll go even lower and come under the flesh and live in sin.

And that's why he says in verse 16, I say walk by the spirit, which is over here, up here, and then you will not descend to the level of the flesh. And if you walk by the spirit, verse 18, then you're not under the law. We can say these are three levels of life.

One is led by the spirit. Below that is led by the law. And below that is led by the flesh.

Now, if you say, I am not led by the law because Jesus has abolished the law. Good. But you better be led by the spirit then.

Otherwise, when you throw away the law, you will descend to the level of the flesh. That's what happens. You see, something like this.

Here is the ground floor. The lower floor. On top of that is the second story and third story.

Let's call it first story, second story, third story. And if the second story floor is being broken up, that's the law. If you climb up to the third story before that, you're okay.

But if you stay on the second story and say, well, the floor is being broken up, but I'm free from this. What will happen? When the floor is broken up, you'll descend to the first story. That's the law.

That's the flesh. So here is the top level spirit. Below that is the law and below that is the flesh.

And if you break away the law and you haven't come to life in the spirit above, you'll descend to the level of the flesh. This is exactly what has happened to multitudes of believers. They've read in the scripture, we are not under law.

We are free. But they have not come to life in the spirit. And the result is they are living according to the flesh.

And that is why you see Christian leaders today doing a hundred times worse things than people who lived under the law. How is that? This is top is grace, then law, then the flesh. How is it that people say we are under grace, but they're living like people under the flesh because they have thrown away the law.

So what it says is if you are led by the spirit, then you're not under law. Don't ever throw away the law without first determining that you're going to let the Holy Spirit guide you. Otherwise your life will be worse than every godly man in the Old Testament.

Every single godly man in the Old Testament will be a million times better than you if you throw away the law. The law is excellent. The law is excellent for those who don't want to be led by the Holy Spirit.

The message in Galatians is not throw away the law. The message is throw it away when you come to life in the spirit. That's where God wants you to live.

But if you don't want to live in that third story, you want to then at least live in the second story. Otherwise you'll descend down to the ground of living in the flesh. And then he describes what life in the flesh is like in verse 19 to 21.

And you find a lot of this among believers. Impurity, idolatry, the worship of money and people, enmity, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger. You think these are only found among unbelievers? Disputes, dissensions, factions, jealousy, envying, so many things.

How is it believers practice all these things? Because they've thrown away the law without coming into life in the spirit. So after saying in the beginning of Galatians, listen, we're not under the law, we are free. He goes on to say, but don't use this freedom as an occasion for the flesh.

Learn to live in the spirit. And he says, if you don't, you'll descend to this level and you won't inherit God's kingdom. Verse 21.

But on the other hand, if you move up higher to life in the spirit and you're led by the spirit, what will happen in your life is described in verse 22 to 24. This is what will come forth from your life. Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such things, there is no law. You've moved up to the third story.

Now you don't need the second story. Let them demolish the second story. You're quite safe in the third story.

The pillars support you. The floor of the second story has been demolished and you'll never sink down because you're living life in the spirit on a higher level. So if we live by the spirit, as you say, let's also walk by the spirit.

In chapter six, first of all, he says, if you see a brother has fallen away from the standard of life that I'm describing, don't just criticize him. If you're a spiritual man, go and help him. You can also fall like he did.

And the only brother who can help another brother who has fallen is one who recognizes that he himself can also fall. You can never help a brother, listen to this, according to Galatians 6.1, unless when you go to counsel him, you recognize, Lord, I am capable of exactly the same sin that this fellow fell into. Only such a brother can help another brother.

But if you say, well, I'm not, it's not possible for me to fall like this fellow, you're never able to help him. You'll be hard. You won't have that gentleness that's spoken of here.

The spirit of gentleness spoken in verse one. This is a burden that brother is carrying. Bear it.

That's how you fulfill the law of Christ. Verse three, if anyone thinks he's somebody great, not like these fellows down there, he's actually a nobody. He'll be useless in God's service.

When you see a brother fall, don't think you're a somebody and he's a nobody. You are just like him. God's grace kept you from falling.

That's all. Don't forget that. And he says, don't boast about yourself.

Just examine your own work. See what God has accomplished in your life. Like the Bible says in 1 Corinthians 11, we must examine our life.

It says here we must accomplish our work. What has God done through you? Don't criticize other people's work when you have not done anything like that yourself. You know, I today find Christendom full of people who are criticizing others who've never done anything like that themselves.

They find this fault, this fault, this fault, this fault, and this fault in that person. Okay, agreed. But have you done even 1% of what that brother has done to reach people for the Lord? No.

Then brother, please keep your big mouth shut. What have you done for the Lord? Nothing. Then don't criticize another man who is doing something for the Lord.

That's a very important principle. Examine your own work first. Verse 7 and 8. What a man sows, he will reap.

The way you live on earth, if you live according to the flesh, you'll die. If you sow to the spirit, you'll reap eternal life. One last verse.

Verse 14. Again about the cross. He speaks about the cross thrice in this.

1 in 2.20, I am crucified with Christ. 5.24, those who are Christ crucify the flesh with his affections and lusts. And 6.14, the world is crucified.

Self, the flesh, and the world. Three things in these three verses are all crucified. I've died.

I've no more interest in the world. I live on the higher plane of life in the spirit where the world is dead to me. So he says there's a close link between life in the spirit and the way of the cross.

That's what we need to recognize. Freedom from the law comes through life in the spirit closely linked with choosing the way of the cross. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, apply these truths to our lives, we pray, that we can live not by rules and regulations, but by the freedom of the Holy Spirit, we ask in Jesus' name.

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