

(Through the Bible) Galatians 1-2

by Chuck Smith

Chuck Smith's sermon on Galatians emphasizes the importance of grace over legalism in the Christian faith.

Duration: 1:20:45

Scripture: Matthew 20:26-28, Acts 20:24, Galatians 1:8-10, Galatians 1:13-16, Galatians 2:16, Galatians 2:21

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "Servanthood"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker recounts the story of Peter's encounter with Cornelius, a Roman centurion. Cornelius had a vision in which an angel instructed him to send for Peter to learn about the way of God. Peter, despite his initial hesitation due to Jewish customs, went with Cornelius' messengers to his house in Caesarea. There, Peter shared the gospel with Cornelius and his friends, and to his surprise, the Holy Spirit fell upon them, indicating that Gentiles could also receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The speaker emphasizes the importance of a loving relationship with God through Jesus, rather than a legalistic approach to following rules. He also highlights the need for humility and servanthood in the church, as taught by Jesus.

Transcript

Galatia was not a city. It was a territory. It encompassed an area that is now in Turkey.

There were several churches founded by Paul in Galatia. And following Paul's evangelistic efforts through the area and the founding of many churches, there were men who came in and they began to pervert the gospel that Paul had taught, the gospel of grace. And they began to preach another gospel which is not a gospel.

Because the word gospel means good news. And if you tell me that God will forgive me all of my sins and account me righteous if I will simply believe in Jesus Christ, that's good news. But if you tell me that I must then follow certain rules and regulations and be obedient to the law and keep the law of God in order to be righteous, that's not good news because no one's been able to do that.

And so, Paul is writing to the Galatians to correct this teaching that had followed his ministry in their midst. And to free them again from that bondage of the law that men were seeking to put them under. We in the Gentile church today have so much to be thankful for because of this man, Paul the Apostle.

Had it not been for his strong, stubborn stand on salvation through grace, Christianity could have reverted to just another Jewish sect. But Paul made his stand in front of all of them and against all of them really, insisting on this gospel of grace. Salvation through faith and through the grace of God.

And so, Galatians is a very strong treatise against any form of legality. Any attempt to become righteous by our works or more righteous through our obedience to the law. And it is really setting forth in a very powerful way, the gospel of grace and justification by faith.

It was this epistle to the Galatians that brought on the Protestant revolution, yes, reformation, which was a revolution from the corrupted practices of the church of that day. Martin Luther was much like Paul the Apostle in that he was one of those fellows who went all out in his religious practices. He was one of the most monkish of all of the monks and had gone to Rome and in order to appease God was climbing the steps on his knees, one step at a time, offering the prayers and all at each step.

And as he was going up these steps, the Spirit of God spoke to his heart out of Paul's letter to the Galatians, Martin, the just shall live by faith. And that burned in his heart and thus was born the Protestant reformation. This glorious epistle that has set men free and has brought men into a vital relationship with God through faith.

This epistle that opens the door to all men so that I may come freely unto God because I come to God and I learn to come to God through this epistle on the basis of God's love and God's grace, not on the basis of my merit, my works, my efforts. Now, these false teachers that came in, one of the first things they always sought to do was to discredit Paul. This is a typical ploy of false teachers.

If you have been studying and learning under a minister, a man of God, they'll come in and their first thing is to try to discredit the one that you have been studying under or the one that you were converted under. Now, it seems that these false teachers never really seek to evangelize, but they're always trying to go into those who believe and change their beliefs. So Paul, first of all, reaffirms his apostleship and he says, though, that it is not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised him from the dead.

It is interesting how that even today people are asking the same questions that the Pharisees asked John the Baptist while he was baptizing down at the Jordan River. They said, who gave you the authority to do this? From whence comes your authority? When Jesus cleansed the temple, they asked him the same question. Who gave you the authority to do this? People, it seems, are always looking for the basis of your authority.

And many times today people come up, especially the Mormons, and they'll say, who gave you the authority to baptize? Because they teach that they are the only ones who have the right to give authority to anyone to baptize. They are the only true church because they are the only church which still has twelve apostles governing the church. And their twelve apostles are the only ones who can ordain or grant authority unto men to exercise spiritual ministries.

And so their trip is always an authority trip. Who gave you the authority? And so the question of reading of Paul, well, who gave Paul the authority to be an apostle? Who laid hands on Paul? And of course, we have also within the church today what they call the apostolic succession of the laying on of hands. As far as authority goes in the high church, they ordain the men for the ministry, and the bishop lays his hand upon the candidate as he ordains him.

And this bishop had hands laid on him by another bishop who had hands laid on him by another bishop who had hands laid on him by another bishop who had hands laid on him ad nauseam back to Peter. So that you have the apostolic laying on of hands. So as the bishop lays his hand upon my head and consecrates me to the ministry, I in my mind perceive this hand as it goes back to Peter.

You know, you see this sort of quick frame kind of a thing all the way back to Peter. And Peter is laying his hand on me and ordaining me for the ministry, the apostolic succession of the laying on of hands. And unless you have the bishop who had a bishop, who had a bishop, who had a bishop, then you're not really ordained.

Paul said, hey, I wasn't ordained by man. I'm an apostle, but not of men, neither by man. I didn't look to man for my authority.

I wasn't called by man. I wasn't ordained by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised him from the dead. So Paul's authority goes back one greater than Peter, to Jesus Christ and to God the Father.

Now, it is my feeling that the ordination of man is totally worthless. I'm not interested in being ordained by man. I believe that there is only one who can really ordain a man to the ministry, and that is Jesus Christ.

I believe that men at best can only ratify. Someone laying their hands on me isn't going to qualify me for the ministry. And unfortunately, in the history of the church, hands have been laid upon scoundrels, and they've been proclaimed by this action as ministers of Jesus Christ.

But they were not and never have been. They're charlatans, they're scoundrels, though they have the papers to show that they're ordained to the ministry. It isn't what man says about me that I'm concerned with.

It's what God says about me. And so Paul, an apostle, not of men nor by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised him from the dead. And all of the brethren which are with me unto the churches of Galatia.

So, Paul is joining those companions of his in his writing to the church. Now, Paul quite often in the opening salutations of his epistles has some personal words to say, but he really doesn't have much to say to the Galatians except the typical Pauline greeting of grace be to you and peace from God the Father and from our Lord Jesus Christ. The Greek word grace is a word that in its base meaning is beauty, charm.

It has come to mean unmerited favor. And that is its theological kind of a definition. But there is always a beauty attached with grace.

And it was the typical Greek greeting, charis, peace, the typical Jewish greeting, shalom, joined together always by Paul in his epistles. Grace be to you and peace from God the Father and from our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world according to the will of God and our Father, to whom be glory forever and ever, amen. The opening salutation of Paul.

Now in speaking of Jesus Christ, he declares that he gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world. This world is governed by Satan. Jesus called Satan the prince of this world.

And referring to him, said, the prince of this world is coming and has nothing in me. When Satan tempted Christ by showing to him the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them and promised to give them to Jesus if he had just bowed down to Satan, Satan bragged, they are mine and I can give them to whomever I will. Jesus did not dispute that.

And because Satan is the God of this world, because it is under his control, being given to him by man, it is a present evil world, but the purpose of Jesus Christ is to deliver you, his children, from this present evil world. That is God's will to deliver you from it. Now that deliverance is really twofold.

When I believe in Jesus Christ, I am delivered from the hold that the world has on me. One of these days, Jesus is going to deliver me out of the world. Right now he's delivering me in the world.

I have been delivered while I am here, but one day he's going to take me out of here and I will be delivered then fully from the present evil world. But now I am delivered while I am still here. It doesn't have a hold on me any longer.

Now Paul immediately gets right into the issues. I marvel, I'm shocked that you are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel. They were called into the grace of Christ.

They were taught salvation through faith. That it is not something you can earn. It is not something you deserve.

It is not something you can purchase. It is something that you can only receive as a free gift of God on the basis, not of your works, not of your efforts, not of your merit, but on the basis of your simple trust in Jesus Christ, the gospel of the grace of Christ. Unto another gospel, which is not another, that is, it isn't a gospel.

It isn't good news. There are those that would trouble you and would pervert the gospel of Christ. There are still those today who are perverting the good news of Jesus Christ.

By again placing man under certain legal obligations or legal restraints, imposing upon man their rules, their regulations, their standards for holiness. That is not a gospel. If you give me a list of rules that I must abide by in order to be spiritual, that is not a gospel.

I lived for years in a legalistic relationship with God, trying to follow the rules, trying to follow the regulations, signing the pledge. Annually, we had a pledge signing. As we committed ourselves to these rules, I will not do this and that and the other thing.

And I had a legal relationship with God that I had all kinds of problems with, because though I had signed the pledge, many times I did not keep the pledge that I had signed. And so I felt doubly guilty. Then I came into the knowledge of the grace of God through Jesus Christ.

And rather than a legal relationship with God, I developed a loving relationship with God. And I've been happy ever since. How I love this relationship, I have always said, you then do anything you want, huh? Well, yes, I do.

But I just don't want to do a lot of things anymore, you see. I really live a more strict life now in this loving relationship with God than I did with the legal relationship with God. You see, there's something perverse about me and about rules.

I don't like rules. And if I walk by a sign that says, don't touch, I'll touch it. Don't walk on the grass, I'll step on it.

I just don't like rules. And there's something within me that sort of rebels against rules. I like this loving relationship I have with God.

And I don't walk on the grass and I don't touch. Not because I can't, I don't want to. If it doesn't please the Father, I don't want to do it.

And so, this loving relationship is so far superior to the legal relationship with God. And so, this gospel that they were proclaiming and that they were trying to put the people into a legal relationship with God, Paul said, is not really another gospel. It's a perversion of the gospel.

And though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. That's pretty strong language. Let him be anathema.

If any man would preach another gospel, even if an angel of heaven would come and preach another gospel, even if Moroni would come and say, you've got to wear a certain kind of underwear in order to be righteous. And you must go through the temple rites. And you must continue to be a faithful Mormon if you are to be saved.

You see, that's adding to the salvation through the grace of God offered to us through Jesus Christ. It's putting the burden back on you. So, I asked a young man one day who came up to me, and I'm sure that he had been in a Sunday school class of mine years ago.

And he came up to me and said, Chuck, I'm no longer a Christian, now I'm a Mormon. Now I'm sure that he wasn't schooled enough in the Mormon techniques at that point that he would say something like that. Because now they seek to identify themselves as Christians.

But he said, I'm a Mormon. I said, oh, what a shame. And he said, what do you mean? I said, I mean just what you said.

I think it would be a shame if a person ceased being a Christian and started being a Mormon. I said, but as a Mormon, tell me, Jerry, what do you, what is the base for your hope of eternal life? And he said, my faith in Jesus Christ and continued membership in the Mormon church. I said, well, as far as I'm concerned, you went one step too far.

If the basis of your hope for eternal life is your faith in Jesus Christ, I can shake hands with you and say, great, Jerry, continue. But the moment you add anything to that, then it's another gospel. And even if an angel of heaven has declared another gospel that would add something more than your faith in Jesus Christ as your hope for eternal life, then it is not a gospel.

So let them be accursed. For do I now persuade men or God? Do I seek to please men? If I pleased men, I would not be the servant of Christ. Paul said, I'm not really seeking to win the popularity contest among men.

I'm seeking to please God. And I could give up this fight. I could give in to the legalism.

But if I did, I would not be a servant of God. Thank God Paul stuck by his guns. Boy, our church today would be something vastly different.

If Paul had not stuck by his guns. But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. Because I did not receive it from man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.

So this gospel of grace is a revelation of Jesus Christ unto Paul. Now, I am certain that God chose Paul and ordained Paul, even as he said from his mother's womb, that he should be the carrier of this gospel of grace because he was perfectly fitted by God for this task. You see, if you do not follow something to its end, then you always think, well, my failure was not following it to its end.

Had I followed it to the nth degree, then I would have found the satisfaction. And so I look at myself and I say, the failure lies in me. I didn't follow it completely enough.

It is an interesting observation that I have made concerning those who are Buddhist. When a person tells me, well, I'm a Buddhist, I usually ask them, well, have you achieved then the perfection and that complete peace in Buddhism? And they will always respond by saying, I am working towards it. Never have I found one who has claimed to achieve it.

They're always working towards it. It's always this carrot out here at the end of the stick. I'm still working.

I hope, you know, if I keep trying, if I work a little harder, I might achieve. I might attain. I might find the peace and satisfaction.

I'm working towards it. Paul the Apostle had followed the law of God circumspectly. He had followed it down all the way.

He writes concerning himself that as far as the righteousness which is of the law is concerned, I was blameless. And so Paul speaks of his zeal above his own peers. His zeal for the law, his zeal for God according to the law and all was above those around him.

And yet, Paul found himself zealously following the law, still empty and frustrated. And he did not find the fulfillment. And that is why when he came to the glorious knowledge of Jesus Christ, he was so transformed because he had followed the law all the way as far as you could and didn't find the peace.

Now, Peter could not really be the emissary of grace because Peter had not really followed the law that circumspectly, you see. And so Peter would think, well, if I'd only followed the law, I might have achieved, I might have attained, you know. And so Paul was specially prepared of God to receive this gospel of grace and it came to Paul by direct revelation of Jesus Christ.

He did not learn this in the church in Jerusalem or from the Apostles or those brethren there. Taught to him by direct revelation of Jesus Christ. For you have heard of my conversation in times past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God and wasted it.

And I profited in the Jews' religion above many of my equals in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers. Hey, I was at the top of the class. I went all the way.

I went all out for the law and for Judaism. Above my equals, more exceedingly zealous. But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me by His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood.

When Paul met Christ on the road to Damascus, and there had that complete 180 degree turn from persecuting Jesus to following Jesus. Such a revolution, total revolution. Paul did not then look up the Christian brothers to learn all about it.

But he went out into the desert and spent several years out in the deserts of Saudi Arabia, just waiting upon God and receiving the revelation directly from Jesus of the gospel according to grace. So this is not Paul's gospel. This is the gospel of Jesus Christ delivered to Paul, who in turn has delivered it to us.

This is the truth of Christ. The salvation that is offered now unto you through your faith in Him. I did not confer with flesh and blood.

I did not go up to Jerusalem to them which were the apostles before me, but I went into Arabia and then I returned to Damascus. I didn't even return to Jerusalem. Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem.

So he didn't get back to Jerusalem until about six and a half, seven years after his conversion. He had gone from Jerusalem to Damascus to imprison the Christians, those that called upon God. He was met by Christ on the road, so that when he got to Damascus, he was a changed man.

He ministered to the Christians that were there, but realized that he needed to know more and went out into the deserts of Arabia and waited upon Jesus, where he received the glorious revelation for three and a half years, returned then to Damascus, stayed there and now taught them for three years. And then finally came to Jerusalem to see Peter and stayed with him for 15 days. But of the other apostles, he didn't see any of them except James, the brother of the Lord.

This is the James who authored the epistle of James. This is the James who became one of the leaders in the early church. This is not James, the brother of John, the fisherman.

He was beheaded before Paul got there. This is James, the brother of Jesus Christ, mentioned in Mark's gospel. And Paul here identifies him.

Now the things which I write unto you. Behold, before God I lie not. Afterwards, I came to the regions of Syria and Cilicia.

So Paul went from Damascus seven years after his conversion and then went on back to Tarshish, where he was born. And he went back to making tents. I was unknown by faith under the churches of Judea, which were in Christ.

But they only heard that the one who had persecuted us in times past is now preaching the faith and they glorify God in me. So Paul did not really have any close contact with the church in Jerusalem. In fact, the church in Jerusalem was a little fearful of Paul.

They didn't know but what he was a KGB agent. And thus they were really reluctant to receive Paul into fellowship. So Paul is emphasizing the fact that his gospel is not something that was passed on to him by the apostles or by any man.

It was something that came to him through the direct revelation of Jesus Christ. Then, fourteen years later, I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas and I took Titus with me also. So Paul no doubt had been ministering in Syria and Cilicia, the area around Tarshish, his home city, his hometown.

And there had been Gentiles that he had brought to the faith of Jesus Christ, Titus being one of them. Now, Barnabas, one of the brethren in the church there in Jerusalem, decided to go to Tarshish because there was a work of God being accomplished in Antioch. And there were a lot of Gentiles being saved and having heard of Paul, he decided to go get Paul to help in the church in Antioch.

And so he went to Tarshish, searched out Paul, and invited Paul to come back and to become a minister there at Antioch. And he brought Paul to Jerusalem in order to sort of mend things with the apostles, to show them the truth of Paul's faith. And he said, I went up by revelation and communicated unto them that gospel which I was preaching among the Gentiles.

But I communicated it to them privately, those that were reputation, lest by any means I should run or had run in vain. In other words, he didn't really proclaim it openly to the church in Jerusalem because the church in Jerusalem was made up of a lot of former Pharisees and a lot of Jews who were still following the traditions of the law and who were still very observant in many aspects to the law. Jews who believed still that you could not be a Christian if you were a Gentile.

Jews that still held to the fact that the only way you could be saved was by believing in Jesus Christ and then keeping the law of Moses. And being circumcised. That was the basic mindset of the church in Jerusalem.

And so Paul communicated in private to the apostles the gospel that he had been preaching, this gospel of grace. But Titus, who was with me being a Greek, was not compelled to be circumcised. They tried to encourage it and all, but Paul withstood it.

For their teaching was, hey, you've got to be circumcised in order to be saved. And so Titus was not compelled, as Paul withstood them, that because of false brethren, unawares, who were brought in, who came in privately to spy out our liberty, which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage. To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for a minute, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.

So Paul was standing up for you Gentiles. Paul was standing up for the gospel that has been proclaimed to you. That you don't have to become a Jew.

That you don't have to keep the law of Moses. All you have to do is believe in Jesus Christ and you shall be saved. Put your trust in Him and God will do His work in your life and transform you by the power of the Spirit.

And what you can't do for yourself, God will do for you. That salvation is God's gift through your faith in Jesus. And so Paul had this conflict, but he would not give in.

He would not surrender to the pressures of the apostles there in Jerusalem. Not for a moment. But of these who seemed to be somewhat.

I like this. Paul's a tough cookie. It's interesting to me how that so quickly we can lose sight of the teaching of Jesus.

Jesus said, if any man would be chief among you, let him become the servant of all. And Jesus taught His disciples that the true ministry was one of servanthood. He took the towel.

He washed their feet, taking the place of a servant among them. And He said, now do you see what I've done? Go and do likewise. Happy are you.

If you do these things, that is, if you'll take the place of a servant. If I, being your Lord, have served you, then you ought to serve one another. But always in the church, it seems that we develop some kind of a hierarchy.

We develop this little circle of leadership. Where we begin to stand in awe of men. Oh, you know, look.

And it is so easy to become a prey to this. And think, oh, I am something, you know. I am somebody.

And you begin then to insulate yourself from people. And you soon lose contact with people. And you soon lose contact with reality.

There is one servant of God that I highly admire. I think he's been used of God perhaps in a greater measure than almost any man living today. And when I met him, I was totally taken back by the simple, beautiful attitude of this man.

And that's Billy Graham. He is the most unassuming person. All God has used him.

You know, and people say, oh, Billy Graham, you know. And I was that way. I was, oh, Billy Graham, you know.

And Billy Graham, you know. And I was just, you know, just so in awe of him. And then he started talking with me.

And I became just totally wiped out with the beautiful openness and touchability of this man. One of our fellows, who is a flight attendant for Western Airlines, had Billy on his plane the other day. And so he said to him, when you're through with your duties, why don't you come back and sit and talk? And so he sat down and was talking with Billy for about an hour on the plane.

And Billy says, well, give me your phone number. Next time I'm out in California, I'll give you a call. Maybe we can get together.

With a flight attendant on Western Airlines. But that's the kind of a man he is. It's beautiful.

No wonder God has used that man so mightily. No wonder God has been able to continue to use him through the years. Because he has caught what it is to be a servant of God.

And not really placed himself in this position of grandiose superiority over others. Now, here was this little group in Jerusalem. They had set themselves up.

And they're establishing themselves. And Paul says of them, But of those who seem to be somewhat, whatever they were, it makes no matter to me. For God doesn't accept any man's persons.

Years ago, when I was disenchanted with the particular denomination in which I was serving, I started looking around to other denominations. I was hoping to find the perfect denomination. I was going to corrupt it by joining it.

And so, I went before the bishops and before the presbyters and before the leaders of other denominations because the thing that I didn't like in the denominationalism was the establishment of this

spiritual hierarchy which created a political back scratching kind of a mode. You know, getting up the line and getting in the positions of power. And then, you know, there you sit in your chair, your pompous attitude and the whole thing.

And I didn't see that in true Christianity. And I was looking for more of a fellowship where, hey, you know, we all put our pants on one leg at a time. You know, no different from each other really.

And so, I went before many of these august bodies of leaders. You know, adjust their glasses and they sit there in their chairs and they, you know, scowl at you and give you the whole... You know, they try to intimidate you. And that's the whole game.

Intimidation. They tried to intimidate Paul. Intimidate him into having Titus circumcised and, you know, and having Paul back down.

But of these who seem to be somewhat whatsoever they are, it doesn't matter to me. For God accepts no man's person. God doesn't stand in awe of these men.

God is not intimidated by them. But the nations are as dust in the balances in His eyes, how much less man. Now, that's an interesting little scripture.

The nations are as dust in the balances. Many times a merchant, of course, the balances were, you know, you buy your goods, you buy them by the weights. And so, they had the shekel weights that they would place on the balances.

They had the balance scales. But a merchant would try to show you how honest he really was. So, he would blow the dust off of the scales before he would put your merchandise on it in order that you're not buying his dust.

And it was a symbolic action to just show you, hey, I'm the most honest guy around, you know. And so, this dust in the balances is a picturesque thing. People could see the merchant blowing the dust off the balance before he put your merchandise on it so you'd know that you were getting a fair deal.

The nations are like dust in the balances. God can blow them away. How much less is man.

And so, God doesn't accept a man's person. God isn't intimidated by man. For they who seem to be somewhat in conference, you know, those who were taking the authority and speaking the words of power and all, they added nothing to me.

I wasn't moved by them. But contrary-wise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me and the gospel of the circumcision was committed unto Peter, for he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles. And when James, Cephas, and John, or Peter and John, who seemed to be the pillars, oh, Paul, I love you, man, who seemed to be the pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me, I'm Barnabas, the right hands of fellowship that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcision.

And this is great. This is a real problem that existed in the early church, and this is how it was resolved. Recognizing that we each have our ministries, but they are different.

God has called you to the circumcision, great, go for it, Peter. God has called me to the Gentiles, great, I'll go for it. We're dealing with different kinds of people who need a different emphasis and message.

I do see the validity of denominations, or at least the variety of churches. I do see the validity of the liturgical churches, who are ministering to people who can relate to God best in a liturgical setting. I can see the purpose of emotional churches, the Pentecostal churches, for people who have to relate to God in an emotional, hyped sense.

And I really rejoice that God is so gracious in reaching man at his different levels. And so God has reached me at my level. God has reached you at your level.

And he seeks to reach every man at whatever level that man is. If a man's made up on an emotional base and a high-pitched thing, God meets him on that level because God loves him. If a man is made up a very sedate, you know, solemn kind of a way, God meets that man at his level.

So that we shouldn't put down the liturgical churches, nor should we put down the Pentecostal churches. But we should recognize that God is using each to meet men at both ends of the spectrum, and also those who are in between in the spectrum, because God loves all men and God is no respecter of man's persons. He'll meet each of us at our level.

The only problem comes is when we say we have the only level or we have the best level. You know, ours is superior to theirs. God loves us more because we relate to God in a better way.

No, it's the best way for me to relate to God. But there is, for some people, they could not relate to God as I relate to God. And it's interesting, there are some that say, hey, you're too emotional, and there are others that say you're not emotional enough.

So somewhere I figure I'm relating to God in the middle of the road. Because if they hit you from both sides, you know, you got to be in the middle. Hit you from just one side, you're on the end then, you know.

But when they get you from both sides, you're in the middle. So Paul agreed to disagree. God's called you, Peter, John, James, God's called you guys to the Jews, great.

God has called me to the Gentiles. You can develop your legal relationships with God, we will develop our loving relationships with God through grace. Now, Paul puts in his little barb here.

Only they would that we would remember the poor. In other words, they ask us for help. Now, we're going to minister to the Jews, but we're needing help.

So don't forget the poor, which Paul said, we've always been forward in doing that is in helping the poor. Paul, you remember many times took up offerings from the churches to give to the church in Jerusalem to help them in their poverty. So it's sort of interesting.

But when Peter was come to Antioch, that is the place where Paul, that was Paul's really home church in a sense. That's where Paul, the base from which Paul went, the base to which Paul returned. That was his home church.

When Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face because he was at fault. For before certain of the brothers came from James, he was eating with the Gentiles. But when they came down, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those which were of the circumcision.

And the other Jews dissemble likewise with him in so much that even Barnabas was carried away with their dissimulation. But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I

said to Peter in front of them all, if you being a Jew were living after the manner of the Gentiles and not as do the Jews, why are you compelling the Gentiles to live as the Jews? So Peter showed a vacillation here. And of course, Peter was sort of famous for vacillation.

He had come down to Antioch and he was eating with the Gentiles. Now the churches in those days had what they called the agape feast. It was sort of what we would call today a potluck.

And usually once a week, they'd all get together for this agape feast. Everyone bringing a dish and then just sharing it all together and eating together. And then they would finish it with communion service.

And it was called the love feast, the agape feast in the early church. And it served a great purpose because many times the poor people, this was the only decent meal they got all week. Many of the Christians were slaves, undernourished.

And this was the only decent meal they had. So everybody's sharing all of their food, all sitting together and eating together. And so Peter came down and he just sat with them and ate with them.

But that's a no-no to a good Jew. For in eating together, you were becoming one with them. And thus they were becoming one with the Gentiles.

And from a Judaistic standpoint, from an Orthodox standpoint, that was bad. But Peter, seeing the love of Christ, realizing, hey, they're just brothers in the Lord, he just sat down with Gentiles and ate. Now, you remember earlier when Peter had his revelation on the housetop of Simon there in Joppa.

Joppa. And this sheet was let down and all kinds of unclean animals on it. The Lord said, Peter, rise, come and eat.

He said, oh, not me, Lord, I've never eaten anything unclean. Jesus said, don't call that unclean, which I have cleansed. It happened three times.

And then the Lord said, behold, at the gate there are some men who have come. Go with them. Don't ask any questions.

And so Peter went down to the gate and here were three men from Caesarea. And they said, our master Cornelius, a Roman centurion, had a vision. And in the vision, the angel told him to send us down here and to find you and to bring you back up that you might explain to us the way of God in truth.

And so Peter went with them and he came to the house of Cornelius in Caesarea. Cornelius opened the door and said, oh, praise the Lord, Peter, come on in. And Peter said, oh, you know, it's not lawful for me to enter your house, the house of a Gentile.

But he said, God told me don't call that unclean, which he's cleansed. So I'll come on in, you know. He said, now, what do you want to know? And so Cornelius said, well, I was praying the other day in the afternoon about three o'clock and this angel stood here and told me to just call you and that you would tell us what we needed to know.

So it's the balls in your court. What do we need to know? And so Peter started sharing with these Gentiles and a group had gathered there at Cornelius's house, a group of his friends. They'd come to hear what Peter had to say.

And as Peter was talking to them, the Holy Spirit fell upon them and Peter was shocked. Now, these people are Gentiles. They're receiving gifts of the Holy Spirit.

What's going on here? And he says, now, notice, fellas, I didn't do anything. You know, when we get back to Jerusalem, you witness for me, I didn't do it. You know, and he didn't want to take the responsibility.

And so he had the Jewish witnesses go back to Jerusalem and explain how that he wasn't really responsible. It's something that God did because he didn't want to get in trouble, went into the house of the Gentiles to begin with. Well, Peter, the Lord was beginning to break down some of these barriers.

He came to Antioch, saw the beautiful fellowship, the love feast, joined in. But then certain brothers came down from Jerusalem, friends of James, and Peter knew that if they saw him eating with the Gentiles, he'd get reported on. Peter was eating with Gentiles.

Oh, no, you know, what's happening now? And so Peter pulled away and the next love feast, he sat along with a little group of Jews, division in the body and the other Jews who had been eating that the church had been sort of unified, just one in Christ and experienced that glorious oneness. But now this division, Peter is a part of it. And because it was Peter, other Jews seeing Peter dissembled, they also dissembled.

And even Barnabas, who had been with Paul preaching to the Gentiles, he even got swayed by this and he also changed tables. And that is when Paul stepped in and he rebuked Peter to the face in front of all of them. Said, that's not right.

You came down and you began to live as a Gentile being a Jew. And now you're trying to compel the Gentiles to live like Jews. And he rebuked him to the face.

Now he goes on to say, we who are Jews by nature and not sinners of the Gentiles. Now, that is, we don't eat pork. We don't eat rabbit.

We don't, you know, eat those foods that the law said were wrong or were sinful to eat. And we are not the sinners of the Gentiles. Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ.

Even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ and not by the works of the law or by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. So Paul said, even we who have kept the law can only be justified through faith. By the works of the law, no one can be justified.

Your obedience to the law of God would not save you. Let us say that you could keep the law of God, written and traditional, oral. It would not save you.

This is one of the problems of the Jewish people today. This is exactly what they are trusting in for their salvation, their own imperfect works of the law. Yom Kippur is no longer a day of sacrifice for sins.

It is a day of reflection for the Jew as he reflects upon his good works, seeking to be justified by his works before God. But Paul said, by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. Justification comes through faith in Jesus Christ.

But if while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves are also found to be sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? Oh, God forbid. For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. So, Paul is talking here about his new found faith and revelation that his justification being

accepted by God was based upon his faith in Jesus Christ.

And so, he despaired of the works of the law, seeking now that righteousness which is of faith through Christ, no longer following the traditions of the law, eating, if he so desired, a ham sandwich. And he goes on to say, if I try to build again a relationship through the law, that which I destroyed when I came to the knowledge of Jesus Christ, then I would become a transgressor. For through the law, for I through the law am dead to the law that I might live unto God.

In other words, the law condemned me to death. And that's all the law has done for anybody. It condemns them to death because no one has kept the law.

And the Bible says, if you keep the whole law and yet you violate in one point, you're guilty of all. Again, the Bible says, cursed is the man who continueth not in the whole law to do all of the things that are written therein. So, if you're trying to be justified by the law and you've missed in one point at one time, any time in your life, you're under the curse of the law, which is death.

So, Paul said, the law killed me and I'm dead to the law. But I am alive unto God. For I am crucified with Christ.

Nevertheless, I live, but yet it is not I. I'm living now a new life. My old life was predicated upon the works of the law. My old life was self-centered.

My old life was filled with strife, envy, jealousy, factious spirit, no longer I. What a glorious day when our life is no longer I, no longer centered around self, but now a new center and that is Jesus Christ for my life. No longer I upon the throne, but now Jesus Christ enthroned in my heart. No longer seeking to please me, now seeking to please Jesus Christ.

The life that I now live, I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me. And so, I'm not the old man that I was. That man died.

He was crucified with Christ. I have a new life, a new center for life. The old self-centered Chuck died, crucified with Christ.

And now, the God-centered Chuck lives. Lives by the faith of Jesus Christ who loved me and gave Himself for me that I might have this new Christ-centered life. That I might have this new relationship with God.

That I might have spiritual life. Paul said, I do not frustrate the grace of God, for if righteousness could come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain. You remember when Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane the night before the crucifixion.

Jesus knelt and prayed, Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me. What's He talking about? If what is possible? If the redemption of man, if salvation for man is possible by any other means, by any other agency, by any other action, let this cup pass from me. If it's possible that man could be redeemed by the law, then Jesus would not have died.

God would have established the requirements and maybe one or two might have gotten in somewhere along the line if they had died soon enough. The cross of Jesus Christ declares to all men for all time that there is only one way by which man can be redeemed and hope to see the Kingdom of God. For had God been able to accomplish man's salvation through any other series of works, through the establishing of

certain rules and requirements and regulations and all, had God been able to redeem man by any other way, I am certain He would have answered the prayer of Jesus.

Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me. Nevertheless, not what I will, Thy will be done. And the fact that Jesus went ahead and suffered at the hands of man and was crucified by man is the declaration of God to all of us that there is not a possibility for salvation through works, through the works of the law, through the efforts of man.

And as Paul said, I am not frustrating the grace of God because if righteousness could come by the law, then Christ died in vain. His death was not necessary. But righteousness cannot come to you by the law.

Righteousness cannot come to you by keeping rules and regulations. I cannot give to you a standard for righteousness and say, now, if you do this and do this and do this and do this, you will be righteous. Unfortunately, many churches have endeavored to do this.

They have their standards of holiness. And they tell the women what kind of apparel is righteous and what kind is unrighteous. They tell what kind of jewelry you can wear and what kind you can't wear.

They tell you how you can fix your hair, the righteous way and the unrighteous way. Interesting they don't say too much about men who dress extremely flashy as a general rule within their groupings. But they really have a lot to say to the women.

Of course, the men cannot wear gold. And they are trying and they really believe that they are being more righteous. They look upon me and they say, oh, look at that.

You see that? He has a gold watch on. Oh, and a gold ring. Oh, my shameful.

That man's, you know, how can he be a minister? How can he claim to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ? Where's a gold ring? Terrible. And they stand in judgment of me because I wear a gold ring. Now, if I take this ring off and I suddenly become righteous because I've taken my ring off and my watch off.

Now I'm standing up here. I'm very righteous. You ladies can become righteous by just washing your face.

I mean, you know, according to their standards. If you wear makeup, that's unrighteous. No makeup, that's righteous.

And so they set out these standards. And thus, I say, hey, hey, I don't wear my gold ring anymore. I don't wear my gold watch.

And I had the dentist pull out my gold teeth. And I'm very righteous now. No, no, that doesn't make me any more righteous, nor does the wearing of it make me any less righteous.

Righteousness is not a thing of wearing gold or not wearing gold, of eating meat or not eating meat, of eating ham or not eating ham. Righteousness is something that God has imputed to my account through grace because of my faith in Jesus Christ. And God looks at me and he sees me in Christ and he sees me in the righteousness of Christ.

And because he sees me only in Christ and that is my standing before God, it is, I stand before God in Christ Jesus. So he really looks not at me, but he looks at Christ Jesus and he says, home, that Chuck is a righteous man. I say, thanks, Jesus.

I appreciate that. I love your grace. Oh Lord, for it is through the grace of God that I have been accounted righteous before God.

Now, had I been able to be accounted righteous, and I was trying, believe me. And I was very self-righteous. I was very self-righteous because I had never been to a show in all of my life.

I had never been to a, well, I did go to one dance and that was terrible. I lived in guilt for years after that thing. Oh, what a terrible, the problem was I enjoyed it and that was, oh, that was terrible.

I was really guilty, but I never smoked. I had never taken a drink. And so I felt very, very righteous except for that one dance.

No, I've still never smoked. I've still never drunk, but that doesn't make me righteous. And I don't look upon that.

I don't, I'm not really smug and self-righteous over that in where I was, well, I've never smoked. So what? That's not what makes me righteous. God accounts me righteous because I believe in Jesus Christ.

And that is the basis of my standing before God. That's what Paul came to. He had tried the righteous acts.

He had tried the righteousness by the law. He had followed it as far as anybody could follow it. But when he came to the glorious knowledge of Jesus Christ, he gladly turned to the new righteousness which is of Christ through faith.

And so, he now defends the Gentile believers in the face of all of the pressure from that leadership in Jerusalem and tells them, stand fast in the liberty wherein Christ has set you free. Don't let men entangle you again in the bondage of a legal relationship with God. Just enjoy your loving relationship with Him.

God loves me. That's what counts. God has forgiven my sins because of my faith in Jesus Christ.

That's what counts. God accounts me righteous tonight because of my faith in Jesus Christ. Not because of what I do or don't do, but because of my faith in Jesus Christ, God has accounted me righteous.

The righteousness whereby I stand before God is complete. I can't add anything to it. And my endeavor to add anything to it only takes away from it because it then has me looking back at myself instead of looking at Jesus.

And anytime I look at myself, I get in trouble. When I keep my eyes on Jesus, I do all right. Keep your eyes on Him.

Enjoy the grace of God and that righteous standing that God has given to you through faith. Father, we thank you tonight for this glorious gospel that we have received, the gospel of the grace of Jesus Christ. Thank you, Father, for revealing this to Paul and for Paul's steadfast faithfulness in passing it on to us that we, Lord of the Gentiles, might have this loving relationship with you, having been forgiven all of our sins, having been accounted righteous through our faith in Jesus.

Bless us now. Help us now. In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen.

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