

# The Magna Carta of Christian Freedom

by David Legge

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*The Magna Carta of Christian Freedom, the book of Galatians, proves that we have the right to be free in Jesus Christ through faith, not through law or performance.*

**Duration:** 1:01:27

**Scripture:** Galatians 3:1-14, Galatians 3:26-29, Galatians 4:21-28, Galatians 6:14

**Topics:** "Christian Freedom", "Life In Spirit"

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## Description

This sermon delves into the book of Galatians, focusing on the theme of Life in the Spirit. It emphasizes the contrast between living by the law, which brings a curse, demands perfection, and does not justify, and living by faith in Christ, which brings freedom, joy, and sonship. The message highlights the need to cast out legalism, embrace grace through faith, and live a life empowered by the Spirit, rooted in the cross of Christ.

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## Transcript

Well, good evening to you all again. It's good to be back with you in Arran Hall and enjoying fellowship with you once more and looking forward to tonight and the next two weeks with you in the Bible class. I want you to turn with me again to the book of Galatians.

We've taken the title Life in the Spirit. We very much want to root it and grind it in this epistle of Whilst we've only got four weeks, we're trying to do our best in doing justice to this great epistle, six chapters in total, and we want to look tonight at chapter three and four. And God willing, for the next two weeks, we'll look at chapter five and six.

So we're going to take a bit more time on those. But we begin reading at verse one, please, of Galatians 3. O foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you that ye should not obey the truth before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? This only would I learn of you, received ye the Spirit by the works of the law or by the hearing of faith. Are you so foolish, having begun in the Spirit? Are you now made perfect by the flesh? Have you suffered so many things in vain? If it be yet in vain, he therefore that ministers to you the Spirit and works miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law or by the hearing of faith.

Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness, know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the scripture, for saying that God would

justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.

For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse, for it is written, Cursed is everyone that continues, not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident, for the just shall live by faith. And the law is not of faith, but the man that does them shall live in them.

Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us, for it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree, that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. Brethren, I speak after the manner of men, though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man does annul it, or adds thereto. Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made.

He said not unto seeds as of many, but as of one, unto thy seed, which is Christ. This I say that the covenant that was confirmed of God in Christ, the law, which was 430 years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more a promise, but God gave it to Abraham by promise.

Wherefore then serves the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made. And it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one.

Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid. For if there had been a law given, which could have given life, fairly righteousness should have been by the law. But the scripture has concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.

But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith, which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore, the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith has come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster, for ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you be Christ's, then you're Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise.

Now I say that the heir as long as he is a child differs nothing from a servant, though he be Lord of all, but is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father. Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage unto the elements of the world. But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his son, made of a woman, made under the law to redeem them that were under law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

And because ye are sons, God has sent forth the spirit of his son into your hearts, crying, Abba, father. Wherefore, you're no more a servant but a son. And if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

I be it then, when you knew not God, you did service unto them, which by nature are no gods. But now, after that you have known God, or rather are known of God, I turn you again to the weakened, beggarly elements, whereunto you desire again to be in bondage. You observe days and months and times and years.

I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon your labor and being. Brethren, I beseech you, be as I am, for I am as you are. You have not injured me at all.

You know how through infirmity of the flesh I preach the gospel unto you at first. And my temptation or my testing, my trial, which was in my flesh, you despised not, nor rejected, but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus. Where is then the blessedness you spoke of? For I bear you record that if it had been possible, you would have plucked out your own eyes and have given them to me.

Am I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth? They zealously affect you, but not well. Yea, they would exclude you that you might affect them. But it is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing, and not only when I am present with you.

My little children, of whom I travel in birth again until Christ be formed in you, I desire to be present with you now. And to change my voice, for I stand in doubt of you. Tell me, you that desire to be under the law, do you not hear the law? For it is written that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid and the other by a free woman.

But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh, but he of the free woman was by promise, which things are an allegory. For these are the two covenants, the one from the Mount Sinai, which gendered to bondage, which is Agar or Hagar. For this, Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia and answers to Jerusalem, which now is and is in bondage with her children.

But Jerusalem, which is above, is free, which is the mother of us all. For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren, that bearest not, break forth and cry, thou that travellest not. For the desolate hath many more children than she which hath a husband.

Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. But it is then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the spirit. Even so it is now.

Nevertheless, what saith the scriptures, cast out the bondwoman and her son. For the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the free woman. So then, brethren, we are not the children of the bondwoman, but of the free.

Now, if you were not here last week, I would encourage you to get the recording perhaps to fill in the gaps. But we spoke about the Judaizers who had infiltrated the churches, plural, most likely of Galatia. And they convinced many in the church that the gospel did not set aside Jewish ceremonies.

And therefore, Gentile Christians must be circumcised and practice many of the rites and rituals of Judaism if they were to come into the promise that had been given to Abraham the patriarch. So in other words, what they were teaching was another gospel. And that gospel was Christ and circumcision, Christ and Jewish ceremony and ritual.

It was Christ and human legalistic requirements. And so really what they were saying was what Christ had begun, Moses must complete. Christ's work was not enough.

And the works of Moses, that is the law, had to be added to the work of Christ. And just to remind you, chapter 2 and verse 4, Paul says, This matter arose because some of us brothers had infiltrated our ranks to spy on the freedom that we had in Christ and to make us slaves. And so they were heaping upon these Galatian Christians more rules and laws than Paul had stipulated when he preached the gospel of free

grace received by faith in Christ alone.

And Paul was at great pains in chapter 1 especially to implore upon them that this teaching undermined the very essence of the gospel of grace. And what he did, we saw last week, though we didn't look at it in great detail in chapters 1 and chapter 2, Paul speaks personally of how he himself had the Damascus Road experience and he was an arch legalist, a Pharisee himself, and yet how Christ in his grace came to him and delivered him of all that. And he points out in chapter 1 and chapter 2 how our standing is by grace through faith plus nothing.

By grace through faith in Christ plus nothing. And he says very explicitly that our faith is rooted and grounded in the work of the cross plus nothing. Look at verse 21 of chapter 2 again.

I do not restate the grace of God for if righteousness comes by the law then Christ is dead and being. What a verse to share with someone who has the problem of self-righteousness or is particularly religious and thinks they're good enough to earn heaven. If we could earn heaven by whatever rule or law, even if it's the laws of God, plainly Christ died and being.

And God wasted the precious blood of his own son because a penal substitutionary sacrifice was not necessary if we could achieve salvation ourselves. And so the central issue for Paul in chapter 1 and chapter 2 we saw was the basis of our acceptance with God by grace through faith in Christ plus nothing. But we also learned last week that not only did this affect the gospel that the Galatians preached, but this very clear message also affected the level at which they tried, and the imperative word is tried, to live their Christian lives.

Because not only had they started to preach a message of salvation at a performance-based level, what you can do to add to the work of Christ, but they were also imbibing a message of sanctification at a performance-based level. They were living by law. And we apply this by saying that many people would agree with Paul, particularly in evangelicalism, that salvation cannot be achieved by performance.

But where the mental and spiritual block comes for them is that they have embraced a message that tells us that sanctification can be achieved at the level of performance. And Paul comes to them with the same message. And we must remember the Galatians were born again.

These were Christians that Paul was writing to. And he says the same is the case regarding your sanctification. Equally, the message you have believed is not Christ's hand for your sanctification.

It's not Christ plus law. It's not Christ plus your own performance. It's not Christ plus legalistic requirements.

And he says this very graphically in verses 1 through 3 of chapter 3. O foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you? It's as if someone has cast a spell on you, that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ has benevolently set forth, crucified among you. This only would I learn of you. Did you receive the Spirit by the works of law or by the hearing of faith? Are you so foolish, having begun in the Spirit? Are you now made perfect by the flesh? So Paul's message is very clear.

The message of the gospel that brings salvation is Christ. And it's a gift, a free gift by grace. And we receive it from God by the hand of faith.

And there's nothing else involved. No works or no merits of our own. But sanctification, Paul is at pains to get across, is exactly the same.

It is by grace through faith, not of works of the law. And I challenged you last week and I challenge you again tonight. How are you living your Christian life? Are you trying to do what God has commanded? Trying being, again, the operative word.

Are you trying? Are you perhaps trying to do what others expect of you, or the standard that they have ordained for you? Or are you living what is clearly New Testament Christianity, which is a personal faith-based relationship with God the Father through abiding in his Son by faith, Jesus Christ, and walking in loving obedience to the Word of God through the person and the power of the Holy Spirit? And I said that while some may think this is splitting hairs, Paul didn't think so. This was such a serious issue that Paul actually accused these Judaizers of preaching a different gospel, whether of salvation or sanctification. And it was the difference between doing and being.

Now look with me again at verse 20. We didn't really spend much time on this. But Paul said, verse 20, I am crucified with Christ.

Nevertheless, I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me. And the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. That is how you live the Christian life.

I thank God through the recommendation of some Christians in my youth. I read a little book by Roy Hessian called *The Calvary Road*. And there's one statement in that little book that really sums up the whole issue of sanctification for me, and all that the New Testament teaches on it, and indeed what verse 20 of chapter 2 is saying.

Roy Hessian says this, the only life that pleases God is the life of his Son. You think about that. The only life that pleases God is the life of his Son.

And that is why our flesh, who we are in self, must die. Now it has died if we are saved, because we are crucified with Christ. Past, eras, tense, it's a done deal.

It has already happened. But yet we can still breathe life into the flesh, and try and live the Christian life through the flesh, try and do good deeds by the flesh, and we are focusing on doing rather than being. Allowing Christ to be in and through us.

And what Paul is saying in Galatians, and what the Holy Spirit says throughout the whole New Testament is, that the Christian life can never be achieved by law. It can only be lived through the Spirit. The crucified life, the crucified life is the starting point of all sanctification.

And if it is not, your sanctification might well be of the flesh. Now we also saw last week that if we think that we must perform to gain acceptance with God, equally we will require others to perform to gain acceptance with us. Now I'm not going to spend time on that tonight, because we will deal with that next week in chapter 5 following, where Paul deals with the practical aspects to this teaching of grace.

But this week we want to look at chapter 3 and 4, where he speaks of the doctrinal argument behind the exhortations that he brings in the book. And we're going to see tonight why Galatians has been called by some the Magna Carta of spiritual freedom for the whole world and for all time. It is a document that proves that we have the right to be free in Jesus Christ.

Now let us see how Paul argues this. We start at chapter 3 in verses 1 to 9. And in these nine verses, Paul shows us that salvation and sanctification are a work of the Holy Spirit, to be received by faith, not to be achieved by works. Now he argues this in three points.

First of all, he speaks presently, verse 5, of miracles that are among God's people in Galatia. He therefore that ministers to you the Spirit and works miracles among you, does he do it by the works of the law or by the hearing of faith? And what a wonderful thing it would be to be in a fellowship where God was performing miracles. And that was happening in Galatia in the early church.

Paul was saying presently the work of God among you now, is the Spirit doing miracles through the works of the law or is he doing it through his own inherent power? That was an obvious answer. The Spirit is doing these miracles. But he moves on from the present to the previous, the past.

And he says in verse 6, even as Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness. And previously he argues to them that Abraham believed, Abraham exercised faith and it was credited as righteousness to Abraham. Abraham was not justified by acts, works, laws, but by faith.

In other words, Abraham depended upon faith for righteousness and God credited righteousness to Abraham's account because of his act of faith alone. So presently he argues that the works of the Spirit among the Galatians are by the Spirit, not wrought by law. Previously he argues that Abraham believed and it was accredited to him as righteousness.

And then prophetically he argues in verse 7 to 9 that the children of Abraham are all who believe in God through Christ, whether they be Jew or Gentile. Read the verses again. Know you therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.

And the scripture foreseeing that God would justify heathen Gentiles through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham saying, in these shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham. Now of course you know that the physical descendants of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob are the Jewish people.

But the spiritual descendants of Abraham are not necessarily the Jewish people, but people who believe in God through Jesus Christ. People of faith, whether they be Jew or Gentile. But those who are certainly not the descendants of Abraham spiritually are those who live by works.

I want you to understand what this did to the Judaizers' mindset. This shattered their false confidence in their physical ancestry. They thought because they were Jews, they were safe.

They were children of Abraham, but they were only physical children of Abraham, lest they believed they would not be spiritual children of Abraham. And you remember the Lord Jesus had this battle in His ministry, but before Him, His forerunner John the Baptist cited this great obstacle in the way of the Jews. And He called them a generation of vipers, a brood of vipers.

And He said, do not presume to say to yourselves, we have Abraham as our father, for I tell you God is able from these stones to raise up children from Abraham. Your physical ancestry doesn't mean anything unless you have faith alone in God. The Lord Jesus followed on, of course.

And the religious Pharisees and scribes cast dispersions on the Lord Jesus' parentage, inferring that He was illegitimate. And they said, we are not of sexual immorality. We are not of fornication.

And the Lord Jesus responded in John 8 and said, you are of your father, the devil, and your will is to do his lusts. You will fulfill his desires. They prided themselves on having Abraham as their father, but the Lord was speaking to them as legalistic men who were trying to live right in the flesh and said, no, your father is not Abraham, it's the devil.

In John chapter 6, some came to the Lord Jesus and with their Jewish legalistic mindset asked the question, what must we do that we might be doing the works of God? And Jesus said, this is the work of God that you believe in him whom God has sent. Faith. And the Lord Jesus at the beginning of his ministry challenged this conception.

Greg Morris in one of his writings offers four warning signs of traditionalism. And traditionalism is a fruit of legalism as we'll see perhaps next week. But the first sign of traditionalism, which is a fruit of legalism, Greg Morris cites is this, one, we begin to worship our history.

We lose our effectiveness when our memories are greater than our dream. Let me repeat that. We begin to worship our history and we lose our effectiveness when our memories are greater than our dreams.

And Paul had to come to the Jews and say, no, the promise that was given to Abraham was not given to Abraham and his seeds. Look at verse 16. It was given to Abraham and his seed.

Singular. And in verse 15 to 20, we'll not look at it in detail, but Paul uses a human illustration and he says, it's just like a man-made covenant that states the beneficiary of the inheritance in the covenant. Well, Abraham received such a covenant from God, a promise, and it was signed made to Abraham and his seed, his offspring, singular, not plural.

Now, do you know what that means? Paul tells us in verse 17. The seed that the promise was given to as well as Abraham was Christ. His seed was Christ.

Therefore, if you want to enter into the full spiritual blessings of the promises that was given to Abraham and his covenant, you must be in Christ and you must claim it in Christ by faith, not by the works in Moses. You see it? Verse 17, I say that the covenant that was confirmed before God in Christ, the law, which was 430 years after cannot disannul that which should make the promise of none effect. For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more a promise, but God made it to Abraham by promise.

So God gave the promise to Abraham before Moses was on the scene. And when Moses got the law, it did not disannul the covenant with Abraham, which was entered into by faith in Christ, who was the seed it was promised to. Therefore, Paul moves on.

And in verse 10 to 14 of chapter 3, he argues on this basis that the righteous, the just, shall live by their faith and not by their works. He says in verse 11 quite plainly, the just shall live by faith. No man is justified by the law in the sight of God.

It is evident. Now here's the reason why the just can only live by faith and not law. Let me give you a number of reasons.

Well, Paul gives them to us here. Verse 10, the law, the works of the law and living by them brings a curse. First part of verse 10, for as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse.

I don't know whether you've ever operated on the premise of legalism or ever been in a legalistic system, but there comes a curse with it. A curse essentially that robs us of our joy. And we'll see this later on in chapter 4 in verse 15.

I like the translation that goes like this. What has happened to all your joy? And we saw last week how our joy will be sapped from us and legalism brings shame and guilt in the arsenal of the legalists. They use shame and guilt to get their way and to impose laws.

And perhaps this is one of the greatest dangers of any legalistic gospel or any legalistic sanctification. It turns people away from the grace of God as it truly is and from the joyful freedom that Christ intends in his gospel. We saw that in the gospels when the Lord Jesus encountered the Pharisees.

And we saw last week that the strongest denunciations were against the Pharisees. In Matthew 23 in verse 13 he says, But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut the kingdom of heaven in people's faces, for you neither enter yourselves nor allow those who would enter to go in. That is the curse of legalism.

It essentially dangles the spiritual carrot in front of people's faces and they cannot achieve it because the carrot keeps moving. The standard is too high. And this is what the Pharisees were doing and we'll see in more detail how they did it next week.

But they were effectively shutting the door in the face of those who needed to enter the kingdom. Christian legalists do the same. They block God's people from the way of freedom by making the Christian life a cumbersome journey of religious performance.

And the Lord Jesus cited this against the Pharisees in Matthew 23 in verse 4. He said, They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to move them with their finger. And I think the inference is their little finger. So they're prescribing rules and regulations that even they themselves know they can't live up to.

And they rob everything that is meant to be spiritual life of joy and satisfaction. Legalism brings a curse. It is like the proverbial hamster's wheel.

And the hamster goes round and round and round and round. And when he has a thought to get off, he gets off and he's puffed. What does he do? He gets back on again and keeps going round and round and round.

And each time he gets off, he's as empty as he's ever been. Paul says the righteous must live by their faith because living by the works of the law brings a curse. But here's a second reason why we must live by faith and not law.

Law demands perfection. Verse 10, the second half, shows why this is the case. For it is written, Cursed is everyone that continues not in all things, all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.

And verse 12 as well, And the law is not of faith, but the man that does them shall live in them. The implication is that he needs to live by all these laws in perfection if it's going to be a success. Now, if traditionalism is a fruit of legalism, equally perfectionism is a fruit of legalism.

Someone has said, and I think it's right, Jesus was perfect, but he was never a perfectionist. What does that mean? Well, you might be retorting in your mind, well, did the Lord Jesus not say you therefore must be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect? Yes, he did. But if you think of that statement as the Lord inviting broken sinners to pull their socks up and step up to the mark and live like God when they can't, you've got it completely wrong.

When the Lord Jesus said, you must be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect. And when he said that your righteousness must exceed the righteous acts of the Pharisees, he was showing that such a standard is unattainable without the gospel of death to ourselves through crucifixion with Christ and life in the Spirit. The life of Christ living through us, the only life that can and will please God.

Now, if you're living under law, it is likely that you will be a perfectionist, or it's likely that those who are enforcing law upon you will be perfectionists. Richard Walters described perfectionists like this. He said, people who must think and act without a flaw, punishing themselves when they don't meet this unattainable goal.

They are a people who leave behind a material of frustration. They remember the past with regret, don't enjoy the present as much as they might, and usually dread the future. It's very likely that their perfectionism makes those around them miserable as well.

Paul says the righteous must live by faith because living by law brings a curse. It demands perfectionism, which is not possible. Thirdly, and perhaps most pertinently, it doesn't justify.

The reason why it doesn't justify is if I can take you out of Galatians for a moment into Romans chapter 8. The reason why the law does not justify is because it is weak through the flesh. Turn with me to Romans 8, please. Romans 8 verse 1, Paul again says, there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.

Note, who walk not after the flesh, and his implication is that walking by law, whether it's the laws of Moses or your own little Mount Sinai that you've come down with your list of rules and regulations, there's no condemnation for people who don't live by such laws but who walk after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life, no death or curse there, in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. Now, I don't have time to prove this to you, but you will find that the law of sin and death here, Paul is not speaking about a law that works in our members that he has spoken of in previous chapters.

He is actually referring here to the holy law of God as the law of sin and death. That's strong language. And here's the reason why he calls it the law of sin and death, verse 3, for what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin condemned sin in the flesh.

The reason why the law cannot justify us to save us and cannot justify us to sanctify us is because it's weak in the flesh. In other words, it tells us what to do and what not to do, but it doesn't give us the power to do it. It only shows us that we can't do it.

And it shows us that we've fallen short of the mark. You might say, well, why is that? Well, here Paul tells us in if you go back to chapter 3, the reason why is that the law was never intended to justify. God never gave it for that intention at the beginning.

In chapter 3 and verse 21 is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid. For if there had been a law given, which could have given life, righteousness should have been by the law. But God never gave a law that could bring life.

He only gave a law that could bring death. And that was why it was given to show us that we could never achieve the righteous standards of God in the flesh and by our works. And if you ever needed a reason why we should not live by law, it is this.

It doesn't justify because it's weak through the flesh. It was never given for that intention in the first place, but ultimately this is the reason why Christ died to redeem us from the law. Chapter 3, verse 13 and 14.

Christ has redeemed us, brought us back from the bondage and curse of the law, being made a curse for us. For it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree, that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. And you can read verse 26 to 29, which state the same.

Now, Paul has argued in verse 1 to 9, that salvation and sanctification are a work of the Spirit received by faith, not achieved by the works of the law. Presently, miracles were being performed in the Galatians midst, and it was by the Spirit, not by law. Previously, Abraham had believed, and it was accredited to him as righteousness, not by works, but by faith.

Prophetically, those who believe, the promise is to the seed, that is Christ, and those who are in him who believe. The righteous, verse 10 to 14, shall live by their faith, not works, because works brings a curse. Works demands perfection.

Works doesn't justify weak through the flesh. It was never intended for that reason, and Christ has died to redeem us from the law. Now, come to chapter 4. We need to understand a bit more the purpose that the law was given for.

Now, in chapter 3, verse 24, there's that famous verse that tells us that the law was given to us as a schoolmaster or a tutor to bring us to Christ. And he expands in chapter 4, in verse 1 to 3, by saying that the law is like a guardian that was getting us ready, managing us for our inheritance. It was wanting to show us that we were not up to the mark.

The purpose was to show us how in bondage to sin we were. And in verse 8 following, he spells it out even more, chapter 4, he says, how be it then, when you knew not God, you did service unto them which by nature are not gods, but now after that you have known God, in other words, known as grace by faith, and are known of God, how turn you again to the weak and burglarly elements, whereunto you desire again to be in bondage. In other words, the law has done its job, Galatians, its job was to inflame sin in you.

That's what the law does. Do you realize that? It inflames sin in you. It brings sin to the surface to show you what it is.

That's why if you live by laws, you will be constantly frustrated and you will be miserable, because all you will see is your inherent sinfulness. That's why Paul says, why on earth do you want to return to that? To return to the law is to return to the weak and worthless elementary principles of the world. To return to the law, Paul says, is to become slaves again to sin, when what you should be are sons and daughters of God.

And he cites how they were enslaved in verse 10 of chapter 4. He says you observe days, holy days and holy months and times and years. You're enslaved to a whole load of religious rules and regulations. And what is the effect of all this? Verse 15, a wonderful verse, better translated, what has happened to all your joy? It's very sad when you read verse 15 and 16, because Paul says that when he was with them, this might infer that he had bad eyesight, I don't know, but he said they were such a loving and a gracious people that they would have plucked out their own eyes and have given them to Paul.

But now all of a sudden he has become their enemy because he is telling them the truth. Let me tell you something, that's what legalism will do to you. It'll rob you of your joy and it'll take away your love.

Here's a lesson, if ever you need to learn one, it's this, you become like the God you worship. That's a big one. If you believe in Allah, you'll cut people's hands off and heads off if they offend the law of Allah.

Make sure you don't have a Christianized Allah. In verse 4 to 7 of chapter 4, Paul is at pains to bring to their attention that they were slaves, past tense. Look at it, verse 4, when the fullness of time was come, God sent forth a son made of a woman made under the law to redeem them that are under the law that we might receive the adoption of sons.

Because you're sons, God has sent forth the spirit of his Son into your hearts crying, Abba, Father, wherefore you're no more servants of a son and of a son than an heir of God through Christ. Now, I want you to get this tonight. You're not a slave to law.

You're a son or a daughter of God and God's word says that you have a spirit of God's Son himself in you, inside you, crying out, Abba, Father. When was the last time you heard that or you felt that inside? Let me put it in another way. When was the last time you were in touch with the father-child relationship that you have with God as your father? Or conversely, are you living your life, your Christian life, like a slave? This is important.

It comes to the very heart of what Paul is arguing here. Let me bring you back to Luke chapter 15, where last week we looked a little bit at the prodigal son. And quickly, if you turn to Luke chapter 15, you will see the grave difference there is between being a slave and a son.

You remember the prodigal's been in the far country and he's wasted his inheritance and riotous living and he's come to his senses and now he's beginning to return and he's thinking out beforehand what he's going to say to his father who's been offended by him. And he says in verse 19, verse 18, I will arise and go to my father and will say unto him, Father, I've sinned against heaven and before thee, and I'm no more worthy to be called thy son. Now, see that? He felt, I am no more worthy to be called your son.

Make me as one of your hard servants. Now, do you understand what he's saying here? He felt because he had sinned, like you have sinned, and because he'd let God down, like you've let God down, that God wouldn't have him as a son anymore. And he could only expect to be like a hard servant.

Now, listen, if that's you tonight, you need to get your eyes off yourself and your eyes off the prodigal and get your eyes on the father. I want you to do it. See the father as he is.

Now, I want you to see him before the prodigal made the mess up. The prodigal comes to him and says, give me your inheritance. And I've told you here before that that was tantamount to saying to this old man, I wish you were dead so as I could get my hands on your money.

And what did that father do? Was he like a legalistic father that some of us may have had that would have pummeled him into submission? No, he didn't. He gave him it and he let him go. Some of you could think about that, but I want you to see how the father spotted the son first.

Have you ever seen this? Verse 20. Look at what it says. Still a long way off.

He saw the son returning. Now that infers, I believe that this old man was waiting on the rooftop, perhaps daily, perhaps for years. And he was squinting day on day at the horizon, looking for the son coming back.

That's the father. It's the Lord Jesus telling the story. And he wants you to see the father.

And when he sees the little speck silhouette of that young boy, what does he do? He races out of the house, shouting instructions for a feast to his servants. This parable is a picture, you know. And the Lord, I think, pictures this father hurriedly stumbling toward the boy, maybe tripping over a skirt to get to the boy who he longed to embrace.

Now I want you to see this because this is wonderful. Verse 21. He starts dictating the spiel that he had rehearsed in private, what he would say.

Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and I'm no more worthy to be called your son. But the father said unto his son, or to the servants, bring forth the best robe and put it on him and put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet. Now see this.

The father stifles the speech of repentance halfway through. He couldn't even say what he intended to say. Make me like one of your hard servants.

The father didn't even give him time to get it out until he was ordering the servants to kill the fatted calf and bring a new robe and a ring for the boy's finger. Now that is the heart of the father. And I want to ask you tonight, is that your understanding of your God? Because if it's not, you're way off the mark.

Or let me ask you this. Do you call him Abba? Or do you know him as Abba? This is the picture. This is an Aramaic word.

The picture is of a little Jewish boy running with his arms wide open to greet daddy after his day's work. And he's crying with excitement, Abba, Abba, Abba. It is the picture of the childlike awe and affection that a toddler has for his daddy.

And we are meant to experience that intimacy, that affection toward our Father in heaven. I know the reaction. I know some of you are saying in your heads and your heart, oh, that's too familiar.

You're being too familiar with God. That's irreverent. Now let me tell you, if that's your reaction, can I say you've never known it? You've never known it.

John White calls that kind of thinking a carnal sort of dignity that must go and a humble heart and trust be added. When you know him as Abba, your faith will be simpler and clearer and your prayers will be more reverent. And yet at the same time as being reverent, they will be intimate and they will be informed.

Now don't misquote me and say that David Legge is saying we should call God daddy. I'm not saying that. But what I'm saying is the intimacy we ought to have is the same as a child with his daddy.

There's a picture I saw recently in the press. I don't know whether you saw it as well. It's on the screen just now.

A photograph of Barack Obama in the Oval Office and his youngest daughter, Sasha, has crept in unawares to her father. And the press article had that photograph and right beside it, it had another photograph because that most recent photograph was reminiscent of a famous image that some of you here might remember in 1963 of another president, John F. Kennedy, at the desk of the Oval Office during the Cuban Missile Crisis. And many of the dignitaries assembled in the Oval Office of the White House to discuss this crisis, what was happening, what their response should be to it, what should go out to the public about it.

This photograph was taken during those discussions. But it reveals that while these leaders were in serious discussion, little John Jr. was playing under the president's feet. Now all the VIPs had to show their credentials and prove them as they entered the White House that day and as they entered the Oval Office.

But the president's son hadn't. And if you had have asked the question, why did he not need to? It was simply because of who he was. He was.

Do you know who you are? It was a hymn, and I know I'll get shot down for saying it, but I hear it. And it goes like this, I'm only a sinner saved by grace. You are not only a sinner saved by grace.

You are a child of a king. You are a son or a daughter of God. But many don't know it, and many don't know who their father is.

And you know what legalism does? It turns our father as God into a despot. Or a harsh legislator. And yes, we are to have fear of God.

But do you know what fear actually means? It literally means, in a New Testament sense, faith. It means an all-reverential awe of God. But it doesn't mean that we're to be trembling in our boots.

But let me say this, and this comes very near raw flesh, for some not only have legalists given us a warped view of God as our father, but often our earthly fathers have done quite a good job of this themselves. Do you know this is what happens? That because of our childhood experience of our parental fathers, we often superimpose upon the personality of God the father, some of those negative characteristics. A father who was absent.

A father who was too busy for you. And it's hard for some Christians to understand that that is far from the case with their heavenly father. A father who's distant or disinterested or insensitive or uncaring.

A father who is stern and demanding, a taskmaster. Maybe a father who's just lousy, fair, passive and cold. Or a father who is competitive in nature and he's never satisfied with what you do.

Or maybe he's impatient or angry. He's maybe mean, cruel or even abusive. Or you have a father, and we've all been this father, we've been fathers, who tries to take all the fun out of life.

Who is controlling or who is manipulative or is condemning or unforgiving or nitpicking. And Jesus and Paul want us to know that our Abba in heaven is not like that. Now I know some of you might have a problem with this.

Philip said to the Lord, look we've heard enough, just show us the father and that'll do. Jesus said, have I been so long with you, Philip? And you don't realize that whoever has seen me has seen the father. Now you listen to this.

Do you want to know who God the father is like? Look at Jesus. Remember you're here and you're saying, I want to enjoy such an intimate relationship with the father like that. Is that you? Is that what you're saying? I want to enjoy such an intimacy with Abba father.

Listen, now listen. You have it. You have it.

It was bought for you at Calvary, but you will never enjoy it if you insist in living by laws like a slave. You must live by grace through faith as a son of God and a daughter of God. In the United States civil war over the issue of slavery, Charles Sumners on November the 5th, 1864 drew the battle lines between the two warring sides.

And he declared this, I quote, where slavery is there, liberty cannot be. And where liberty is there, slavery cannot be. And that is the message of Galatians.

Where slavery is there, liberty cannot be. And where liberty is there, slavery cannot be. That's the message of the Bible.

Now, what is the remedy to this Galatian controversy? Well, it's found in chapter four. If you look at it, we're almost finished. Chapter four, verse 21 to 28.

And I want to read it in the English standard version because it's clear. And what Paul does is he uses an allegory, an illustration of Hagar and Sirach. Verse 21 of Galatians 4. Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do not listen, but you do not listen to the law.

For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by a slave woman and one by a free woman. But the son of the slave was born according to the flesh, Ishmael. While the son of the free woman, Isaac, was born through promise.

Now, this may be interpreted allegorically. These women are two covenants. One is Mount Sinai bearing children for slavery.

She is Hagar. Now, Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia. She corresponds to the present Jerusalem.

For she is in slavery with her children. But Jerusalem above is free. And she is our mother.

For it is written, verse 28, now you brothers like Isaac are children of promise. What is the remedy to this problem? The remedy is very simply verse 30 and 31. Cast out the bond woman.

That's Hagar, the law, a picture of. And cast out her son, Ishmael, a son of the flesh, of the works of the flesh. Cast her out and live by the promise.

That's God's will. Now, there's a warning in verse 29 that if you live like this, you'll be persecuted. Ishmael always persecutes Isaac.

And the carnal legalists will always persecute the children of promise. But listen carefully. Paul is very clear.

Cast out the bond woman and her son. And let me tell you this. We need to be as ruthless with this issue in our lives as the Lord Jesus Christ was with the Pharisees.

Because that was exactly the same issue he was dealing with. Charles Swindell has a great book I could recommend to any of you called *The Grace Awakening*. And I adapted one of the stories in it for our benefit in our country here.

And listen to it as I close tonight. He says this. Suppose you began a family holiday in a new car.

And you filled it with petrol. And you put the family in it. And you took off.

And the car operated beautifully. And the engine purred. And you zipped along 65, maybe 70 miles an hour down the motorway.

However, the further you got down the way, it wasn't long before you needed to fill up with petrol again. And you noticed that some people along the way, very strangely, were pushing their cars. They'd wave at you as you go by.

And you would wave back at them and keep on driving. And finally, you came by a lay-by to rest. And while you were stopped to relax a little, somebody who had been pushing his car comes into the same lay-by and asks, hi, how are you doing? And you reply, fine.

And the car pusher asks, where are you going? You reply, well, we're taking a trip up north. We're going to get up to the coast and enjoy the seaside and the fresh air. And then he asks you, well, why are you driving? We're all pushing.

Yes, we notice that. But we don't understand why, you remark back to him. Oh, if you push your car, the air stays clean.

Makes a lot of sense, you know, to push your car. We used to rely on petrol a lot, but no longer. Now that we really understand what it's all about, we are pushers.

We are not drivers, was his explanation. And so you let your car run out of petrol. And all the family gets out and you begin to push this beautiful, lovely, comfortable new car to your holiday destination and back.

Now, this is what Swindle says. That's what Paul is writing about in Galatians 3, 2 to 3. In essence, he is saying, you are telling me that you who began on a full tank of the Holy Spirit are now pushing your way through life? You're telling me that that's an advantageous message? Paul says, I'm telling you it's a denigrating message. It's a degenerating message.

That means that Christ, the miracle working one, now he lays back and watches you as you so-called pull off a spiritual life that you never had before. Who are you kidding, Paul says. Cars were made to drive, not to push.

Cars were made to drive, not to push. Some will say, oh, there's not something for me to do. Of course, there's something for you to do.

But it's not what you do that will sanctify you. Galatians 6 and verse 14, God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world was crucified unto me and I, unto the world. That is the message.

You must come as a Christian. Here is how to be sanctified. You must come as a Christian to the cross as you did as an unsaved person.

And you must admit that in the flesh, this Christian life is impossible to live. It must be lived in the Spirit. And you must allow yourself to be broken before Calvary and come with your empty cup and allow God to cleanse it and allow God to fill it and allow God to live His life through you.

That's it. Nothing more and nothing less. It all starts and it all ends at the cross.

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