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Galatians

Chapter 5 - Christ Sets Free

Christ is Your Only Hope (vs.2-6)

Galatians 5:2-6: Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you. And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law. You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace. For we through the Spirit, by faith, are waiting for the hope of righteousness. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love.

Well, just yet another passage emphasizing the fact that it's not by any deeds of righteousness which we have done; that we couldn't work our way to heaven, no matter how good we might be. I've often had people ask me, "Why does the Old Testament go through all these rules and regulations?" Have you ever read Leviticus, all the different kinds of sacrifices that you could possibly give? I mean, you're measuring out certain things to very stringent details, and you have to ask yourself, "Why is he doing this?" And the answer is pretty clear according to Romans 3 that He's doing this to show you that you can't do it. If in fact, God were to in some way be cavalier about your sins and say, "You know, it really doesn't matter," you would be flippant about it and you would not see the depth of it; the intensity of what you have to do and what He means by righteous. Think about it, if God says that you should be caring with somebody else, it's one thing to use that general phrase in and it just cover it in a blanket way to everybody, and say, "Ok, I have to be caring according to my definition of caring." But if in fact He got very specific about exactly what caring looked like, I'm pretty sure that none of you, including myself, would in

any way come close to matching what it meant to be caring. The very details that God is concerned about us actually caring for somebody would go far beyond what we would settle for in our own minds. So, the Law goes into great detail about things, about sins, about things that you should be doing, and the more detailed you go in and the more you realize, "I'm not anywhere close to that." And that's the purpose of the Law. The purpose of the Law is to reveal that you can't do it, and it's to reveal just how sinful you are because we have a tendency to convey that, "I think I'm pretty good. I'm doing pretty well." And we in some ways rationalize and sometimes try to justify the deeds that we do. I mean, it's like the young man that came up to Christ and he goes, "What do I have to do to have eternal life?" And Jesus goes, "Do the commandments." He goes, "Which ones?" And that's the way we think because, "Obviously He's not asking us to do everything." Oh yeah, He's asked you to do everything. The fundamental point that Paul is getting to is if in fact you want to go the way of the Law, you're going to have to do absolutely everything. James will emphasize this as well, that if you've sinned at just one point, then you've

messed up the whole Law; you've become guilty in the whole law. In many respects, if you think about it, it is very relieving to understand that God was not expecting us to adhere to the Law in the sense of our own perfection. He does want us to be perfect as like Him, but how do you do that?

So, as we continue through the Gospels as well as the epistles, we begin to realize that Scripture is revealing to us the way that it was always meant to be because Christ came, that you might see that there is a way besides the Law.

Paul writes this, if you look with me in Romans 3,

(Romans 3:10) “as it is written,

“THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE;

(Romans 3:11) THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS,

THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD;

(Romans 3:12) ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS;

THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD,

THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE.””

(Romans 3:19) “Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed...”

What's the purpose of the Law? It closes your mouth. Right. “I think I'm pretty good.” Read the Law. “Ok, I'm not.” It's like Job when he stands before God. I mean, Job felt that he was pretty good up to a point. Then, when he comes before God, he goes, “OK, I close my mouth. I have nothing to say.” When you see just how righteous God is, there is nothing to say except “Have mercy on me.” It's about the only thing you can say.

(Romans 3:20) “because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.”

What's the purpose of the Law? To show you that you're sinful.

As Paul will say in Romans 7, “The Law showed me that I was utterly sinful.” So, it just gets in more detail. That's what the Law does.

(Romans 3:21) “But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested...”

And then he begins to proclaim the gospel, which we embrace; our faith in Jesus Christ, who became the propitiation, our atoning victim for our sins. He has actually become righteousness for us, and we have now embraced Him. Therefore, we've become righteous. A very interesting point.

As you come to Galatians 5, what we're talking about is that freedom that is found in Christ, and what we're also dealing with is religion. Religion is probably the biggest enemy of God. I've had people say, “Well, I don't like religion.” And I go, “Well, God doesn't either because man's religion only oppresses, and it really only draws people away from God.” It is very demanding in what it does, and it's very condescending and very critical and it will actually put heavy loads on you that you're not able to bear. That's basically a quote out of Matthew 23. Scripture is telling us that Christ is angry over religion. It would be the religious leaders that He would say “woe” to; it would not be the woman that was caught in

adultery. So, all the way through Scripture, you begin to realize that religion has played a role in actually suppressing the truth. Matthew 6 in Chapter 23 show and display the superiority that people perceive religion will give them, and that's, I guess, one of the reasons why people as Chapter 6 says in Matthew, they do all their deeds to be seen by men. That's why they do what they do, but man, what he does is he develops programs, he builds institutions, he imposes requirements, and when he does that, he creates what Scripture will call self-made religion. If you look with me, you'll see it in Colossians as well.

In Colossians 2, Paul is dealing with the very same thing in some respects that he's dealing with in Galatians 5.

(Colossians 2:16) “Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day—”

Those are kind of religious things. Once again, you go, “I read some of that in the Old Testament.” Yeah, and so God is telling you what? “You can't do this.” I mean, have you noticed that you're not holy in those days? Have you

noticed that there are some problems? It was all there to reveal the heart of man. It was obvious that man is very superficial in his worship, in his regiment; it becomes all just mechanical to him.

So, if you look with me in Colossians 2,

(Colossians 2:17) “things which are a mere shadow...”

Well, what he's saying is the Old Testament, that is to say, the things that God was giving you were just a mere shadow which was pointing you to the real. They're pictures. They're billboards in the Old Testament. You look at a billboard and you see a beautiful hotel. You don't climb on a billboard and say, “What a wonderful hotel.” You realize that the billboard is pointing to the hotel that you're going to go to, and that's what the Law was there for. It was to point to something far greater than what the Law was.

“Things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ.

(Colossians 2:18) Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of

the angels, taking his stand on visions he has seen,
inflated without cause by his fleshly mind,

(Colossians 2:19) and not holding fast to the head, from
whom the entire body, being supplied and held together
by the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth which is
from God.

(Colossians 2:20) If you have died with Christ to the
elementary principles of the world, why, as if you were
living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees,
such as,

(Colossians 2:21) “Do not handle, do not taste, do not
touch!”

(Colossians 2:22) (which all refer to things destined to
perish with use)—in accordance with the commandments
and teachings of men?

(Colossians 2:23) These are matters which have, to be
sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and
self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, but are
of no value against fleshly indulgence.”

What he's talking about is that self-made religion really is a misdirected zeal. Man gets focused on the worship. Now, I don't want to be misread in this because some of you are going to walk away and say, "Pastor Gary says I don't have to worship God." What I'm saying is that you can love the worship but not love God. You can love the whole package that comes with worship and before long you're thinking of the pomp and the circumstance; before long it's all about the robes, it's about the way you dress, it's about the way you look. You've fallen in love with the worship; you've fallen out of love from God. The word that he uses in that particular text is actually a compound word, "self-made religion." The first word that he uses is "*ethelo*," which basically is a reference to your desire. So, it's talking about self-made religion is a desire to, what? Well, the second part of the word, "*thrēskia*" is dealing with a sense of ceremony. In other words, "I desire" or "I love ceremony." And it's strange that people actually do love ceremony. Now, I'm not one of them. I don't like the whole, you know, thing, but there are people that love it. If you think about it, the ceremony itself can actually become a love of somebody's life. In other words, they

love more the ceremony than they love God. You think about the very basic relationship with God in the garden, and Adam was walking around in the cool of the day with God; that Abraham was able to talk with God by the tree that he was sitting under. The personal relationship; Scripture actually says that Abraham was a “friend of God.” I don't see a whole lot of complication, and once again, pomp and circumstance in those particular situations. Man bundles it up and he makes not only an institution out of it, but he begins to throw requirements in it. People begin to get weighed down with it. We use the phrase asceticism, which makes reference to the fact that man will create this kind of abstaining from worldly pleasures and tag it as “loving God.” But some people like the sense of, “I'm more holy than you” by virtue of abstaining from the pleasures of the world. People oftentimes ask me about fasting, you know, “Should we fast?” And I go, “Well, go ahead, if you want to.” But I don't really see a great emphasis of fasting. Once again, you go into Matthew 6, he says the Pharisees fast to be seen by men. So, they look bedraggled when they say, “Oh, I'm fasting.” You can look pretty poorly, especially if

you had been fasting a couple of days. For some people, maybe one day would make us look pretty bedraggled. Anyway, there is this sense of, “Wow. Poor you.” Or “How wonderful you are, how magnificent you are.” And it draws attention. Scripture says that if you fast, you should look good; you should look your best so that people wouldn't even recognize that you were fasting because who are you fasting for? In other words, if you're going without something for a particular purpose, and that is to focus on something important in your life. I mean, there are times when I have felt grieved or bereaved over somebody's death or something that they've gone through, and somebody may have asked me, “Did you eat today?” And I said, “No, I just don't feel like eating.” There are times where you just literally don't feel like eating because your feelings and your concerns for something, but you'll never really find a text that says you should fast. Don't you think that's pretty interesting? You'll often hear of great groups of people fasting for particular reasons, and I would say, “Why are you telling people? You're not supposed to tell people that you're fasting.” If in fact you do, good. You know that's between you and the Lord, and

it probably couldn't hurt for a lot of us. The point is, why are you doing it? What is it that's motivating you?

Scripture continually reveals, "You don't do this because you love Me."

One of the points that is made in the Book of Isaiah is God comes before the children of Israel, and He says, "You come to Me, and you say you're fasting." He goes, "Is this a fast that I desired?" He said, "You want to know the fast that I desire? The fast is start doing good to the poor people, help the weak. This is what I desire, but you like to be proclaiming your wonderful righteousness by virtue of the fact that you're depriving yourself of something." In a way, it's kind of a kind of a voluntary self-denial; that's what asceticism is. So, that's what we're seeing in this kind of play that Paul is having to deal with. He's dealing with religion that sees themselves as superior, strict self-bodily control, and how bizarre it is that we somehow kind of mix that with a sense of holiness.

There is a passage that we're all very familiar with in 1 Corinthians 13, and if you just look at the list, as he begins to talk about love. This is the love chapter we oftentimes

make reference to, in 1 Corinthians 13. If you look at the beginning of this, you're almost dealing with religion in verses 1-3, and probably emphatically, I could state that.

(1 Corinthians 13:1) “If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels...”

Well, when you're talking about speaking with “the tongues,” you're talking about eloquent speech, but if you look at the next phrase,

“... but do not have love...”

So, what's missing? The ingredient that's missing is “love.”

“... I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.”

In other words, “I've just become religion.”

Keep your finger in 1 Corinthians 13 because we're going to be coming back, but if you if you back up into 1 Corinthians 2, I want you to read what Paul says here in verse 1,

“And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God.”

(1 Corinthians 2:2) For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.”

“Superiority of speech.” That's exactly what 1 Corinthians 13 is talking about, “If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels...” I mean, some people are extremely impressive when they speak. I don't happen to be one of them, but I know that there are some that are very impressive with the way that they can say things, but it doesn't matter. That's just show.

If you look in 1 Corinthians 13:2,

“If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries...”

Here's somebody that knows a lot of stuff. I mean, “all this wonderful knowledge,” superior knowledge. Isn't that religion too? Don't people bank on their superior knowledge? “But I don't have love. I mean, even if I had the confidence to move mountains; we're talking about tremendous confidence here, but if I didn't have love, what would it matter? Why did I even move the mountain?”

(1 Corinthians 13:3) “And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor...”

Now we're getting into asceticism, if you think about it, because we're not only dealing with the giving up of things that we have, but now the willingness to deliver my body to be burned. People look at other religions and they go, “Well, those people are willing to die for that.” Yeah, I know, but what's motivating them? See, what separates our faith from all other faiths, if you want to call theirs “faith,” is that we are motivated by the love of God and a love for God. Theirs is motivated by hate and fear. There are all kinds of other things that can motivate you to sacrifice yourself and what you're dealing with is that somebody, through their overt acts of selflessness, is trying to convey that they're a righteous person, but Scripture says, “You couldn't be further from the truth.”

As you go with me to Galatians 5, this is what Paul is speaking of, specifically that there are those that not only have these standards that they've raised above everybody else that are somewhat masochistic and perhaps even

sadistic in nature towards other people, but it is a kind of self-mutilation that they push. I oftentimes thought about the whole thing with the Jews and of all the things that they could have told the Gentiles that “you need to do in order to be righteous.” For instance, maybe the Jews could have sat down with some Gentiles and go, “Ok, in order to be righteous, what you what you need to do is maybe memorize a Deuteronomy 6, where it talks about your love for God. I would think that would be a good thing, or maybe even spend some time understanding the sacrifices that we that we place.” Of all the things that Judaism does, they focused on circumcision. Now, why do you think they did that? Yeah, to make people miserable. That's religions' job; to suppress people, to make them miserable, and to hold them on standards that they were unwilling to bear themselves in many respects.

(Galatians 5:2) “Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you.”

His point is, “If you jump through their hoops and you do what they tell you to do, you follow in line with their

sadistic approach to this faith, then why did Christ die?” He mentions this in a way in Galatians 2:21, it reads this way,

“I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly.”

Why did Christ even come if we're going to jump through the hoops of man and align with the Law to try to find our righteousness through the Law? Which it's obvious as he's already stated, “Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident...” (Galatians 3:11) That's a given. So, why are we jumping through the hoops? Why are we going to the Law?

(Galatians 5:3) “And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law.”

If you're going to follow one Law, then you're going to have to keep everything that is being done.

(Galatians 5:4) “You have been severed from Christ...”

Now, that's a pretty dramatic phrase. Let me breakdown the word fundamentally. *“Katargeō”* is the word that he

uses in the Greek that really is conveying a sense of being deprived from something, being severed from Christ. What are you being deprived from? Here's the emphasis of the word, you're being deprived of some force or some influence. Now, the question is what force and what influence am I being deprived of in Christ? The answer is His Spirit. Once you start going in the realm of the Law, you start going in the realm of "have tos," force, fear, all that kind of stuff, which is clearly not Spirit. You start walking away from the relationship and you go into the realm of the legality. That's what you do, but you literally sever yourself from the power of God. If you've ever done things, and I'm sure all of us have, because you have to, you understand what that feels like, and you also know what it feels like when somebody pushes you to do something, and then you have to, or that you're afraid if you don't do it; you know what that feels like, but all of that is literally saying that it takes the Spirit out of you. You have no sense of will or desire anymore and the Spirit of Christ that we're severed from is really the heart of Christ that we see earlier in Galatians.

(Galatians 4:6) “Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!””

The Spirit of Christ that we're severed from, is the power of Christ. Which the power of Christ is the love for His Father; that everything He does is because He loves His Father. That's the Spirit of Christ that dwells within us. We have the Spirit of Christ. Once we start going into that whole mechanical thing, we push aside that power and we go, “I'm going to embrace something else.”

So, it reads this way,

(Galatians 5:4) “You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.”

Wow, that almost sounds like you can lose your salvation. We know according to Romans, that the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. So, he's not dealing with that. We know that he's dealing with a sense of the favor

of God. You begin to fall out of the favor of God. How do you know that the favor of God is upon you?

James talks about this, if you look with me in James 4. It's so great to have so many epistles that you can turn to that can not only affirm but clarify in some respects.

(James 4:6) “But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, “GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.””

Now that one verse, what he's actually telling you is that you can have more favor of God upon you, and you can have less favor of God upon you. How? Well, if I'm proud and arrogant, if I think it's me, if I think it's my works, if I come to God and I go, “You know what? I think I got this. I can be good enough for You. I know I'm going to really impress You. Wait till you see what I do. By the way, what Your Son did on the cross, makes no difference to me; it has no value to me.” And that very second, you are falling from His favor because you have turned your back on the power of His Son, on the love of His Son, on His love for you. You said to Him, “Your love for me has no real meaning.” He goes, “Careful, you’re stepping out of My

favor. You're falling away from My grace.” So, the Scripture is making a clear reminder. Now, who does He give greater grace to? The humble. “God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble,” and who are the humble? “Not by any works of righteousness, which I have done, but because of Your mercy, You died for me, and I receive Your goodness, not mine and I proclaim that.” It is that which draws us to God, because once again it's us admitting the truth that we need a Savior. It's us admitting the truth that only He is righteous.

(Galatians 5:4) “You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.”

(Galatians 5:5) For we through the Spirit, by faith, are waiting for the hope of righteousness.”

The emphasis of that particular verse is “righteousness.” Where does righteousness come from? His point is that it comes by the spirit of faith, and specifically that Spirit gives us a sense of confident expectation (hope), that righteousness is ours.

There are some interesting verses that deal with righteousness that comes to us through Christ. Clearly, one of the greatest is found in Hebrews where it makes mention of the fact that we've actually become inheritors of righteousness. I think if someone were to ask me, "How did you get so righteous?" I'd have to say, "I inherited it." Because I had nothing to do with my own righteousness. All of my righteousness is like filthy rags. But when I became born again, I became inheritor of what is called "righteousness."

Paul will even write in 2 Timothy 4 that all who have loved the appearing of Christ will be given a crown of righteousness. I look forward to that. God is saying, "You're declared righteous because you trusted in Me; not because of anything that you've done. If you'll believe that, you'll inherit it. If you won't receive it, then you're not a child of Mine." It is in believing what He's done for us.

So, the way that he ends this, and I love the way that verse 6 ends,

(Galatians 5:6) “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything...”

It doesn't matter your physical appearance, your background, your affiliations. It doesn't matter what you've done, but look at the last phrase here,

“... but faith working through love.”

A statement that Paul makes earlier in Galatians 2:20 is, “The life that I live now, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loves me and who delivered Himself for me.” What is he saying? He's saying that “The reasons why I do what I do is because somebody loved Me, and I would willingly give my life for Him.”

Peter will touch upon this, and if you turn with me to 1 Peter, you'll see just how many of these things parallel as you begin to see the love of God throughout the pages of the Gospels, of the Epistles, as Christ is seen and His love for us is seen. In 1 Peter 2, we're reminded of the fact that Christ died for us. It's not because He sinned, we did. He did it for us. The way that He died was such an honorable way. I mean, He could have been kicking and screaming the whole way, “I didn't do anything, I didn't do

anything,” but while being reviled He didn't revile and return.

The passage says,

(1 Peter 2:22) “WHO COMMITTED NO SIN, NOR WAS ANY DECEIT FOUND IN HIS MOUTH;

(1 Peter 2:23) and while being reviled, He did not revile in return...”

(1 Peter 2:24) “and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness...”

Where does righteousness come from? If I could put it this way, what is it that energizes me to live righteously? Well, 1 Peter 2:24 is telling us that it was by His love for me on the cross.

“...for by His wounds you were healed.”

As you begin to read through 1 Peter, and of course, Peter was there during that whole scene of Christ dying on the cross, you realize that Peter realized, “This is not only something I want to do” as 1 John 2:29 will say, those

who practice righteousness are born of Him; “This is not only something that I'll practice doing,” but if you look in 1 Peter 3, “this is something that I'll be willing to suffer for doing.” See, that's a whole different ball game when you think about it. That pursuing righteousness, that is to say, doing that which is pleasing to God, pursuing those kinds of things. It used to be kind of a legal thing in our minds, in our hearts, but when we came face to face before the love of Christ, we're now moved to make it a practice of, “I want to be like Him.”

(1 Peter 3:13) “Who is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good?”

(1 Peter 3:14) “But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed...”

“You mean, I’m actually willing to suffer for doing right?” I mean, it's no longer that I have to do right because somebody is saying if I don't, I'm going to get in trouble; it's now, I'm not only going to do right, but I'm also going to suffer for doing right. I'm willing to go that far. I'm willing to die for the righteousness of Christ.

If you back up into 1 Peter 3:8, it actually kind of describes what righteousness looks like,

“To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit;

(1 Peter 3:9) not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing.

(1 Peter 3:10) For,

“THE ONE WHO DESIRES LIFE, TO LOVE AND SEE GOOD DAYS,

MUST KEEP HIS TONGUE FROM EVIL...”

“So, I’ve got to stop talking bad about people?” No, “I want to stop talking bad about people.”

“... HIS LIPS FROM SPEAKING DECEIT.

(1 Peter 3:11) “HE MUST TURN AWAY FROM EVIL AND DO GOOD;

HE MUST SEEK PEACE AND PURSUE IT.

(1 Peter 3:12) “FOR THE EYES OF THE LORD ARE TOWARD THE RIGHTEOUS,

AND HIS EARS ATTEND TO THEIR PRAYER...”

How could I have this heart? Here again, the explanation is in the pages. The reason I have the heart is because of what Christ has done for me. I see His love for me, and I can't deny what He has done for me. We are literally inspired by and through the love of Christ, and that's why Paul says what he says. He says it is faith working through love. Why do you believe? What is it that motivated you to put all of your trust in God? What is it that caused you to commit all your ways to Him? "Lean not unto your own understanding," why would you do that? You walk away and you go, "Because the love of Christ, because of what He's done for me. I see what He's done for me. I see that not one good thing is He going to withhold from me. He loves me." "And that's the reason you obey Him?" "That's not the only reason I obey Him. I'll die for Him." So, we're no longer motivated under the stringency of religion, which is very oppressive, but as Paul says in Galatians 5:1, it was for freedom that Christ came. That's what set us free, and we begin to experience the righteousness of Christ.

You see it through the pages of Romans. Here again, if I could just show you a few passages in Romans 2, and if we could just close through chapter 10. In Romans 2, he ends this particular chapter this way, and it would be kind of seen as a summary text for the first few verses of Galatians 5,

(Romans 2:28) “For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly...”

Matthew 6:33 says, “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness,” not yours, “and all these things shall be added unto you.”

The question is, what does His righteousness look like? The answer is it looks like Christ. What Scripture is saying is seek what God says is important. “Oh, I've got to do this. I've got to be impressive. I've got to look very holy.” I'm going to say something that once again, I'm going to get people that I'm sure will disagree with me, but I don't think necessarily you should sit around and just be praying all the time. I mean, I think you should be talking to God all the time, but to look like a holy monk, with your legs crossed and somehow meditating before God; I

think you should be walking with Him and talking with Him in every area of your life, that it should be something real. I mean, Christ did go up to the mountain and pray with His Father, but most of His time was with others. He says, “My Father's always with Me because I always do the things that are pleasing to Him.” And it is in walking in a way that you just really love somebody that you feel very comfortable with them all the time, and you feel like you could talk to them about everything. I mean, isn't that a better way to go than going on a bell tower and do this and you go through all the motions of looking really holy, but you're really kind of maybe falling asleep while you're up there? What God is talking about is that genuine heart of love. We sing the song, “He walks with me and talks with Me.” That's a wonderful picture.

If you look here in Romans 2,

(Romans 2:28) “For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly...”

Once again, that's man's righteousness. Man's righteousness is kind of an outward show.

“... nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh.”

(Romans 2:29) But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.”

You see the same thing in Romans 3:21 as we just read now,

“But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,

(Romans 3:22) even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction;

(Romans 3:23) for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

There's none righteous, no, not one.

As he goes into chapter 4, he talks about Abraham and how he was the father of faith, and that he believed, and it was counted unto him as righteous. Paul quotes that in Galatians as well.

(Romans 5:3) “And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance;

(Romans 5:4) and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope;

(Romans 5:5) and hope does not disappoint...”

Because something happened when I received Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. What is it?

“... because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.”

I have not only a sense that God loves me when I came to the cross, but I can feel His presence that affirms in my heart that He loves me. For God so loved me that He gave His Son, that I wouldn't perish.

If you look with me in Romans 5:17, it reads this way,

“For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness...”

Did you underline that? Is righteousness something you earn? It wouldn't be a gift.

“... the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.”

(Romans 5:19) “For as through the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous.”

If you look in Romans 6:17, what does it read?

“But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed.”

In other words, you now are doing the right thing, but you're doing it from the heart. I mean, God's never been pleased with you just acting like you're holy or acting like you even want to do it. There's no relationship that could ever be built on something like that.

If you look in Romans 10, Paul's concern for the Jews was that they couldn't comprehend the righteousness of God.

(Romans 10:2) “For I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge.

(Romans 10:3) For not knowing about God’s righteousness and seeking to establish their own...

Long prayers on the walls, whatever, but that's not the righteousness of God. The righteousness of God is so holy, so perfect that you could never say enough prayers. You could never be holy enough. Now, what is it that pleases God? That you would admit that and receive the one gift that He gives you, of everlasting life; His love for you.

“For not knowing about God’s righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God.

(Romans 10:4) For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.”

Another way of putting that is, He's the finished work of righteousness to all who will put their trust in Him.

2 Corinthians 5:21 puts it this way,

“He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God...”

So, you're not only kind of righteous, you're the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus. How powerful is that?

Paul will write this in Philippians 3:9,

“... not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God...”

Now, the reason why this is such an important passage is this. We've bought into the whole thing of a kind of masochistic faith. We bought into the whole thing that “If I do something horrible,” and quite frankly, you should feel bad about it. I'm not trying to say you shouldn't feel bad if you did something terrible or did something wrong because Scripture says that you should weep and howl over your sin, but what ends up happening is that instead of accepting the grace of God and His love for us, which He clearly has stated that He has given. (1 John 1:9) “If

you confess your sins, He is faithful and just to,” what? Now, your forgiveness is not based on anything that you do.

So, here's the point, you've got to stop beating yourself up. We know you've done something wrong. I don't know that it's a surprise to you. It's a surprise to me that it would be a surprise to you because we were born, “in sin my mother conceived me.” Scripture says.

Our thought is, “How could I be so terrible?” Because you're sinful. That's who you are. I don't want you to look at in a cavalier way, but the faith that we have is, “but I've been forgiven in Christ; that my righteousness has nothing to do with it.” And what I see so much of is that people began to play the martyr. They begin beating themselves up. They begin wallowing in their guilt and regret, and go, “Oh man, you have no idea what I did. I don't know how I'm going to ever...” You're not. You're not going to change anything that you did. You couldn't in any way pay the price for everything you've done. You don't live long enough to do that. That's why you'd have to die eternally in order to pay for your price, but how

wonderful it is to know that Christ has forgiven us and there is therefore now no condemnation in Christ Jesus. I am convinced that the enemy wants us walking around in guilt and wallowing around in our shame so that we don't ever do anything for Him. "You don't know how terrible I am. How could I ever do anything good for God?" Well, that's the \$64,000 question, "How could I ever do anything good for God?" It would be impossible for me to do that, and yet, we have this treasure in earthen vessels; this wonderful grace that God has given us that we didn't earn. I've inherited it and there's just no way I could have earned that inheritance, but I inherited it; because I'm born again, I have a new life, and I have a freedom in Christ.

This very day, if you'll come before God and just simply confess your sins, He will be faithful to forgive you and you'll literally be cleansed. We're talking about like it never happened, from all unrighteousness. Think about that, and it's all because of Him. You know what this will do? This won't make you think, "Well, now I can get away with sin. I'll keep on sinning." That won't make you think

that way. It'll make you think, "I am so grateful for what He's done for me. I long to be like Him." And it will be literally the motivation. Faith always works through love, always.

Closing Prayer:

Father, we come before You today and we ask You to change our hearts. Lord, we think mechanically. We think according to rules and regulations. It's our nature. It seems strange, but we somehow take some kind of pleasure and pain for our own sins, though we could never pay to the degree that we should. Nevertheless, we find some kind of satisfaction in beating ourselves up, but how binding that is to our hearts and how binding it is to our ministry. I mean, we feel so unworthy, and we are, but You've saved us, and You've made us Your child. You tell us in Your word we're now a child of the King, and there's not one thing, not one sin that can be held against us as we claim Your righteousness for ours.

With your heads bowed and your eyes closed, God wants to set you free from religious burdens. He wants you to

live in a sense of “I've been forgiven.” He wants you to live in that state of joy, and He wants you to have zeal because you love Him, not because you're afraid.