

Two Ways To Live

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[0 : 00] Run, John, run, the law demands, but neither gives us feet nor hands. Run, Mike, run, the law demands, but gives me neither feet nor hands.

Run, Joanne, run, the law demands, but gives you neither feet nor hands. Far better news the gospel brings.

It bids us fly and gives us wings. This past week, Jenny and I were in Chicago. We went and saw the musical Hamilton, which was phenomenal, and we stayed in a nice hotel, and of course when we checked in, we were given the key card, and so we went up into the room, kind of slid the key card, opened the door, and then that key card's work was done.

So I put it on the desk. We limit our understanding of the gospel of Jesus Christ to a key card that gets us into Christianity, and once we're into Christianity, we think the gospel key card is done, so we put it on the shelf.

And when we forget the cross of Jesus Christ, what happens is we become more aware of our actions, what we should or should not be doing. You know, we shouldn't be lusting, we shouldn't be swearing, we shouldn't be lying, we should be praying, we should be writing our Bibles, we should be giving generously, we should be going to church.

[1 : 48] And so when we lose sight of the cross, what we become more aware of is what we are or are not doing, and those things become what we determine how we're doing with God.

I'm good with God if I am doing this. I'm okay with God if I'm doing that. I'm not good with God if I'm doing this. So we can begin to measure our standing with God based on our own obedience or lack thereof.

What we fail to realize is that the gospel is not only the key that initiates our salvation, the gospel is the very thing of our salvation.

It completes our salvation. What God begins in us by gospel grace, God will complete in us by gospel grace.

In other words, this gospel, Christ crucified, it's the announcement that God's salvation salvation from beginning to end is all a work of God's grace.

[3 : 07] The book of Galatians is the apostle Paul writing to these young Christians in the first century, these Gentile Christians in southern Galatia, and he's really concerned about them.

If you'd open up your Bibles to Galatians, if you haven't already, let me just help you see the concern. In Galatians 5.1, Paul writes to these Christians, for freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. Christ, through the gospel, sets you free, brothers and sisters. Don't go back to the law.

Slavery. 4.21, Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not listen to the law? 4.9, But now that you've come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and worthless elementary principles of the world, which, whose slaves you want to be once more?

You want to go back to that? Way back in Galatians chapter 1, this thing that Paul is really concerned about, he uses different language in Galatians 1.6, I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel.

[4 : 30] Going back to the law. It's what Paul rebukes Peter for, what we saw the last couple weeks in 2.18, when he says to Peter, for if I rebuild what I tore down, I prove myself to be a transgressor.

You're just going back to the law. And in our passage today, Galatians chapter 3, verses 1 through 14, if you look at Galatians 3.3, are you so foolish, Galatian Christians?

Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh by obeying the law? What Paul is doing in the book of Galatians is he's trying to free these Christians

from this false understanding of a false gospel that says, hey, you can start by believing in Jesus, but you've got to finish what God starts by obeying the law.

And so what ends up happening is you've got, in the book of Galatians, two incompatible ways to live life. Option one is the gospel of self-dependence.

It's not really a gospel, but it's spun as gospel. It's spun as good news, but it's not good news.

Here's the thinking of the gospel of self-dependence.

[5 : 55] Hey, Jesus may have saved me, but I need to trust in myself to stay saved with God by obeying his law. And so what you're essentially saying is, my salvation depends upon my obedience.

That's a gospel of self-dependence, or it's also known as legalism, thinking that obeying the law will keep me right with God. Option two is the one true gospel, that by trusting, not in myself, but in Christ, trusting in not my works, but Christ's finished work by trusting in what Christ has already done.

I have been declared righteous forever in God's sight. All of my sin is forgiven. I am in righteous standing with God because of Christ's righteousness given to me.

And so now I don't obey in order to win God's favor, thoroughly convinced of God's favor through Christ. I want to obey him. So either you're going to live your life trusting in your own efforts to stay right with God, or trusting in Christ's finished work who has made you right with God.

The two are incompatible. And what the Galatians were being taught by false teachers way back in the first century was, no, no, no, you need to be circumcised, you need to eat kosher foods, you need to observe Jewish holidays, and then you will stay right with God.

[7 : 48] And Paul says, we'll have none of that. And so in 3.1, he says, oh, foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you?

One English translation says, oh, you stupid Galatians, who has cast this spell on you?

Who's telling you that what began by God's grace is now finished by the power of the flesh? He's like saying this, as if it's possible that any sinner can add to a salvation that is by grace alone, in Christ alone, by faith alone, from beginning to end.

Oh, foolish Galatians, who's bewitched you? And then he says, in that same verse, it was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified.

You know what he's talking about? He's talking about, in Acts 13 and 14, when he's on his first missionary journey, and he's cruising through southern Galatia, and he's hitting all these cities, and he's proclaiming Christ to the Galatians, what the Spirit of God was doing, is he's proclaiming Christ, and they're thinking, it's like Jesus is here being crucified, and we're seeing it for us.

[9 : 14] That's how impressive the Spirit's work was when they first were converted. And he's saying, I preach to you the true gospel, two words, Christ crucified, period.

And the way to respond to that is by faith alone. And so, what we have here is a rebuke.

Paul is saying to these Galatians, snap out of it. Snap out of this legalistic spell on you.

And for the rest of these verses, for verses 2 through 14, he gives us three gospel convincers. Three reasons why the gospel, Christ crucified, in all of its grace, keeps us from going back to legalism.

[10 : 16] So if I can sum up this passage in one sentence, it would be this. In light of the gospel of grace, don't go back to the law.

In light of the gospel of grace, don't go back to the law. So let's look at reason number one. It's in verses 2 through 5.

The first reason why we don't go back to live for the law, to try to finish what God has begun, we don't do that because we are God's new covenant people now.

Indwelt by the Spirit of God. Now if you look at verses 2 through 5, I don't see any new covenant phrase.

No new covenant. Verse 2, nope. 3, nope. 4, nope. 5, nope. Where is this new covenant business coming from? Well let me give you a little background.

[11 : 22] In the Old Testament, in Jeremiah 31 and Ezekiel 36, God began promising that he was going to establish a new covenant with a new people.

And in Jeremiah 31, we learn that this new covenant was going to be different from the old covenant that God had made with Israel on Mount Sinai after he delivered them from Egypt.

And in Ezekiel 36, we learn more about this new covenant, this new way God relates with a people. And the new way we learn in Ezekiel 36 is that God himself would put his spirit in this new people and radically transform their hearts of stone into hearts of flesh so that they would obey God's law. And so what you need to understand is the new covenant, the hallmark, is the pouring out of the Holy Spirit who radically changes sinners' hearts from hard and not wanting God to soft and now wanting to obey Him.

And so what we see going on here, you don't see new covenant language but you see spirit language. Let me ask you only this, did you receive the spirit by works of the law?

[12:51] Having begun by the spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? Does he who supplies the spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law or by hearing with faith? Paul is pointing to a new reality.

These Galatians, these Gentiles, they are God's new covenant people indwelt by the spirit. Now, here's what you need to understand. The new covenant of what Jeremiah and Ezekiel prophesied, it has come. The new covenant is here and it has come through Jesus ratified by his blood on the cross.

Do you remember when we do communion, hold up the cup and we say these words, this is the new covenant given in my blood. The new way with which God relates with his people through the blood of Jesus.

Jesus. So, this gospel, Christ crucified, is an announcement of the new covenant. And what we are learning about the spirit here is this, the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit who is completely, wonderfully a person, what he is seeking to do is the spirit of God is seeking to apply the finished work of Jesus, freedom to every single person who believes.

[14:25] And so, the spirit of God is applying the finished work of Jesus to anyone who believes in what Christ has done. It's a working of God's spirit among a new covenant people.

So, the spirit is seeking to empower us daily to live out the freedom accomplished by Christ's death. That's what it means to walk by the spirit, Galatians 5 and 6.

So, that's a little background of what's going on here. So, in verse 2, in verse 3, in verse 4, in verse 5, we have four rhetorical questions.

Do you know what a litmus test is? Remember, high school chemistry? Litmus paper, there would be a petri dish, some solution in it, you dip it in there, you pull it out, the litmus paper turns colors because there's some kind of chemical in there, and so you see what's in the dish, you find out what kind of chemicals in there.

These rhetorical questions are a litmus test for what's going on in the Galatians. So, let's just look at two questions, verse 2 and verse 5.

[15:49] Verse 2, we read, let me ask you only this, did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith, this new covenant work that God has begun in you, Galatians, is this new covenant work of the outpouring of the Spirit, did you earn that by your obedience to the law?

option 1, or did you receive that as a gift by the hearing of faith? We know the answer.

We received it by the hearing of faith. And so what Paul is pointing back to is, your very salvation began by nothing you did. It was all a work of God and outpouring of Spirit that you received by faith.

The Galatians were making a classic mistake. They were thinking, verse 3, that what began by the Spirit that they now are to complete by the works of their flesh by obeying the law.

Not so. In verse 5, Paul moves from talking about what happened at the beginning of their conversion to what is presently happening in their midst.

[17:07] present. He says, does he who supply the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law or by hearing with faith? It's all present tense. Does he who is supplying the Spirit to you now and working of miracles among you now do so because you are obeying his law or does he do so because you're just hearing it with faith?

We know the answer. We don't obey God in order for him to bless us. We receive his blessing.

So the present working of the Spirit in Galatians to which the Apostle Paul is talking about, he's saying this isn't some, you've heard it in the news, some quid pro quo. You scratch God's back, he scratches yours.

He scratches yours. The outpouring of the Spirit in our past to in our present is all by God's grace and it's all received by faith.

And so here's the Apostle Paul doing this litmus test in the Galatians. And he's pulling out this paper through these questions so that the Galatians can understand what their true colors are, who they're truly trusting.

[18 : 26] And Paul is trying to convince them, you are new covenant, new covenant people indwelt by the Spirit.

So what that means is, they don't go back to legalism because they've been made new by the Spirit and the Spirit is at work in them to begin all the way to completing them all the way through. another way to think about it is this.

In light of the nature of the new covenant, Jeremiah 31 and Ezekiel 36, we don't obey God in order to be given new hearts.

We've been given new hearts by the Spirit, in order to obey God. The first is legalism, the second is gospel. So here's what this means for us.

[19 : 35] I know many people in the room want to see an outpouring of God's Spirit in our midst. We want to experience the presence of the third person of the Trinity in greater and greater measure.

God's love. And so what we're learning here is that's not something we swap for. We don't obey God so that He would pour out His Spirit on us.

It doesn't work that way. Our experience of the Holy Spirit doesn't come as a result of our performance.

our experience of the Holy Spirit is solely a working of God's grace which we receive by faith. But it raises an interesting question.

Let's say that God we're asking God to pour out the Holy Spirit on us. How will we know that the Spirit is moving in our midst?

[20 : 47] Will people start prophesying? Speaking in tongues? Will there be healing? Perhaps. We'd welcome that. But the onus of this passage and of the New Testament is that when the Spirit of God is moving in the midst of His sons and daughters, the hallmark of the Spirit's activity is freedom.

When the Holy Spirit moves on us and applies the finished work of Christ to us in greater and greater measure and we are experiencing greater and greater measures of freedom to not be ruled by sin, to not be ruled by fear, but to be ruled by grace and to live our lives out of the freedom purchased for us by Christ, the Holy Spirit is seeking to do that in our midst so we don't need to go back to legalism.

So the first reason why we must not revert back to a legalism is that we are God's new covenant people indwelt by the Spirit.

Isn't that good news? Here is the second reason. The second reason is in verses 6 through 9. Now it is unfortunate in the ESV that verse 6 is at the end of a paragraph after verse 5 when verse 6 should actually begin beginning the paragraph before verse 7.

And so that question mark at the end of verse 6 should be following the word faith at the end of verse 5 because Paul is making a really important argument. I am going to help you to see that. But here is the second reason why.

[22 : 43] Brothers and sisters, Gentile brothers and sisters, the second reason why we don't go back to legalism is we are sons and daughters of Abraham.

And Abraham was no legalist. father Abraham. Maybe you have heard that familiar song, classic Sunday school hit. Father Abraham.

Sing with me. Father Abraham had many sons and many sons had father Abraham. I am one of them and so are you.

So let's all praise the Lord. Let me ask you this. How is it that Gentiles living in the 21st century can say we are somehow related to Abraham who lived thousands of years before us and we have no common DNA?

How are we related? Amen. In verse 6 we read this.

[23 : 56] Just as Abraham believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness. Here's what is being said in Genesis 15 6.

That's the quote. God promised that Abraham would give a descendant would come from despite his old age and God would populate the earth with his descendants as the stars and the heavens.

Abraham believed that promise and God credited that belief God credited it in his sight as righteousness.

At that moment Abraham was justified made right with God. Nothing he did. The law had not come yet.

He wasn't circumcised. He believed and God said you're right with me because you trust me. And so the argument goes like this.

[25 : 02] Just as Abraham was justified by faith verse 6 7 no believe it bank on it know then that it is those anyone of faith anyone who believes in the finished work of Christ know that it is those of faith who are the real sons of Abraham.

Do you know what's going on in Galatia? Here's these false teachers who are saying oh you want to be a son or daughter of Abraham? Oh you need to get circumcised. Oh you need to eat kosher. Oh really?

Oh you need to observe Jewish holidays. And Paul is saying no no no. a true son or daughter of Abraham is one who doesn't perform the law to be justified.

A true son or daughter of Abraham is justified by faith. Abraham was no legalist and we as his sons and daughters are no legalists either.

What has made us right with God is not what we do it's what Christ has done. And you know what?

[26 : 16] It gets better. Look at verse 8. And the scripture foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham saying in you shall all the nations be blessed.

Literally in you shall all the Gentiles be blessed. Is that in my Bible? Is that in your Bible? Do you know what that's saying?

The gospel that justifies people by faith has been God's plan all along. Way back in Genesis the scriptures were preaching the gospel to Abraham saying not by works but by faith in what God has done.

So what that means for us is that we are sons and daughters of Abraham not because we're obeying the law but because we've been justified by faith and that was God's plan all along.

Next week we're going to see the fireworks of how this blessing has come to us as Gentiles. But here's the intended effect.

[27 : 43] Because God has always intended Gentiles to be fully included into his new covenant people sons and daughters of Abraham and it's always by faith there's no distinction among God's people.

the issue isn't if you're a Jew or Gentile the issue is how you've responded to Christ crucified. Have you believed that?

Have you trusted in that? And so in this first century Galatia the issue was these Christian Jews were saying hey we're kind of first class Christians I mean we're Jews and Gentiles were being thought of as kind of a second class Christian and what was happening was in order for a Gentile to become a Christian they needed to become a Jew and what Paul is saying here is no no you got the whole sons and daughters of Abraham thing wrong.

According to my Bible Paul says what justified Abraham was his faith. So anybody who has faith in God will be justified by God and therefore the difference between Jew and Gentile if you're believers in Christ it's not a big difference because the issue is Jesus.

Now today in our congregation we're not having fights over who's Jewish who's Gentile and what does that mean for us.

[29 : 31] But we deal with other issues. We deal with other kinds of differences other distinctions that are made and they can fall along a very similar first class second class Christian kind of line.

Now I'm not going to go into all of the differences but here's one that you need to be aware of.

There can be a difference between churchy people and non-church people.

And churchy people are those people who've spent a lot of time going to church. They are the religious insiders. They've got I'm one of them churchy language churchy expectations kind of a churchy schedule that they live off of.

And so these churchy people which I would count myself one of what can happen is we can think that we got it down. And in order for someone to become a Christian they got to become churchy like us.

And so there's this other group of people people who have not spent most of their lives inside the church but outside of the church and all of a sudden when they're around churchy people they can feel like they're a religious outsider.

[30 : 58] And they can start drawing the false conclusion that in order for me to become a Christian I need to become churchy. But the gospel says none of that business because that is not what makes one a Christian or not.

What makes one a Christian is not if they're churchy or not it's how you have responded to Christ crucified. Of whether or not you have believed that alone for your salvation.

So the issue is not whether or not you've been growing up in the church or not the issue is if you're justified by faith or not of whether or not you're a son or daughter of Abraham.

So in verse 9 we have this summary statement. So then those who are of faith justified by faith they are blessed along with Abraham who also exercised faith.

And that word blessed is carrying with it Paul is connecting the blessing of God in Galatians with us being justified by God according to our faith.

[32 : 17] So what he's saying is here is we don't revert back to legalism because we're sons and daughters of Abraham and he wasn't a legalist.

He was justified by faith. We are the legit sons and daughters of Abraham. Members of God's new covenant people.

That's the second reason. Don't go back in light of the gospel of grace that has made you a son or daughter of Abraham. Don't go back. The third reason why we don't go back to legalism trying to finish what God has begun in us is third reasons found in verses 10 through 14.

It goes something like this. We don't go back because we who were under a curse, that curse has put on Christ and the blessing in Christ has been given to us.

Don't go back. Another way to say it is this. Legalism leads to being cursed and that curse was put on Christ's head so don't go back to legalism for which Christ was cursed.

[33 : 37] all throughout this passage Paul is appealing to multiple Old Testament passages. In this section in 10 through 14 there are multiple Old Testament passages that he appeals to.

So in verse 10 he says for all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse. Now those who rely on the works of the law are in contrast to verse 9 those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham.

So those who are relying on the law are the ones who are actually trusting in their obedience to make them right with God. And he says for all who rely on the works of the law are blessed.

Man that guy's blessed. You see how much he obeys? It says here for all who rely on the works of the law who are trusting in their own flesh to make them right with God they're not blessed they're under a curse.

And he appeals to Deuteronomy 27 26 for cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law and do them.

[34 : 50] Here's what he's saying. If you're trying to justify yourself by obeying any of the law you are obligated to keep all the commands of the law all the time all your life.

And did you know that there are actually 613 commandments in the Old Testament? So here's what this means. If you're trying to justify yourself by the law you've come to faith in Jesus and you're like okay Jesus started it well his blood spirit now I gotta work this out by my flesh I'm gonna obey God's law which means you gotta obey all 613 commandments all the time all your days.

So let's take a straw poll just show of hands. Who in this room has obeyed all 613 commandments of the Old Testament every day of their life all the days of their life up to this point hands please.

No? Okay let's narrow it down. Let's just go down to the Ten Commandments. Okay so who in this room has been able to obey all Ten Commandments all the days of their life in both attitude and action?

Raise your hand please. Oh no couldn't do it. Let's commandment the commandment that you shall have no other gods before you who in this room please raise your hand who in this room is able to say that they have no had no other gods before them all the days of their life up until this point.

[36 : 30] No one. No one. You have not obeyed God's law. And if you think you have you haven't obeyed the rest of God's law.

Here's Paul's point in bringing this up. Quoting Deuteronomy 27. If you're seeking to justify yourself in your flesh by obeying any of God's law you are obligated to obey all of God's law.

Which means this if you just break one of God's law you've broken the whole thing. That's why he says you're under a curse. Even if you're thinking you're obeying God in these three commands and failing to obey God in these other 610 commands you're under a curse.

Failure at any point in God's law brings us under failure of all of God's law which means we are condemned by God. That's in verse 312 he says but the law is not a faith rather the one who does them shall live by them all of them.

So what Paul is saying here is this don't you realize Galatians don't you realize Christ the King Church that by trying to justify yourself by obeying any command obligates you to all of the commands of God which no one can obey and are therefore under a curse it's not that you just can't obey it you're cursed for trying so here's the point we don't go back to legalism because it only leads to cursing in verse 11 here's this ray of light now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law for the righteous shall live by faith Paul's point is this even the law says no one can be justified by the law and he quotes Habakkuk 2 4 he says only the justified live by faith even the law says that so if we can't justify ourselves by the law and make us acceptable in

[39 : 01] God's sight how are we to live well he says we're to live by faith the righteous shall live by faith but what about all of the commands we've broken even if it's just one that's still over our heads what about that that's why 13 and 14 is such good news Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us for it is written curse it is everyone who's hanged on a tree if I can use Galatians 2 20 as kind of a riff I would say this we have been crucified with Christ it's no longer us who live but Christ lives in us in the life we now live in the flesh we live we don't go back to living for the law thinking that it can justify us there's no blessing in it there's only curse when you hear the word curse

I'm guessing you may be thinking your mind goes to like a 1960s bewitched with that witchy lady who kind of wiggles her nose and curses somebody and it's kind of cute biblical cursing is not cute and in Galatians and in our Bibles curse is the opposite of blessing and I've tried to convince you that Paul uses blessing along the same lines as what it means to be justified by faith so if to be blessed is to be justified by faith to be cursed is to be condemned by our works and here is what Christ has done he took our curse on himself he redeemed us he paid for us he delivered us through a payment from the curse by taking our curse on himself my favorite words in this section are two words the words for us

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us you know the irony of this is that Jesus lived a perfect life every thought every feeling every action was pleasing to God he honored God every day of his life all 613 Old Testament commandments he fulfilled fully every day he walked this earth so how is it that this perfect man can hang on a cross cursed because cursed is the one who hangs on a tree God's curse is on him it's because he did it for us knowing all Jews and Gentiles who would one day believe in him Jesus took on our curse at the cross he paid in full for all of our failures to obey all of

God's commands that resulted in the curse he took it God poured out his wrath for our curse on Christ's head but it doesn't end there because there's verse 14 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us 14 so that in Christ Jesus the blessing justification by faith that justifying blessing of Abraham might come to us Gentiles so that we might receive the promised spirit new covenant through faith Jesus removed the curse from us by taking it on his own head and we are brought into Christ because he is the offspring of Abraham through whom all the nations will be blessed and in Christ we experience the blessing of having his righteousness imputed to us that's good news we don't go back to legalism because our legalism led to a curse which

Jesus paid for in full we don't go back okay this morning we've looked at reasons why we don't go back to legalism the gospel of grace is wonderful and when you get it you don't go back to legalism you fight it it's because you're part of the new covenant community indwelt by the spirit you are united to Abraham in a shared faith a justifying faith and you don't go back because the curse for your disobedience has fallen on Christ so you don't go back which means this when you realize all that God and Christ has done for you you realize I don't need to obey in order to gain God's favor God has already shown me his favor through the cross of

[45 : 19] Jesus and therefore I obey I began by reading a little poem attributed to John Bunyan run John run the law demands but gives us neither feet nor hands much better news the gospel brings it bids us fly and gives us wings we don't go back to the misery of trying to win God's favor by

obeying the law we indwelt by the spirit walk by the spirit and now live out the freedom that is ours in Christ Jesus in light of the gospel of grace we don't go back to legalism let's pray God in heaven would you press this into our hearts would you help us to live out the freedom that Christ has purchased for us in the power of your spirit

God would you keep us by the gospel from going back to trying to live a life that you've delivered us from in Jesus name we pray amen I'm really I'm doing that