

Standing or Falling

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 30 April 2023

[0 : 00] When we begin our worship, we're going to sing. We're going to sing to God's praise in Psalm 61. This is in the Scottish Psalter, page 293.

Psalm 61, page 293. We're going to sing from verse 1 to verse 5. The tune is Belmont. O God, give ear unto my cry, and to my prayer attend.

From the utmost corner of the land, my cry to thee I'll send. We'll sing from verse 1 to 5 to God's praise. We stand to sing. O God, give ear unto my cry, Unto my prayer attend.

From the utmost corner of the land, my cry to thee I'll send.

What time my heart is overwhelmed, And in perplexity, to thou me lead unto the rock, That higher is than I, For thou hast for my refuge been, A shelter by thy power,

[2 : 18] And war depends against my foes, Thou hast been a strong tower, Within thy tabernacle I Forever will abide, Forever will abide, And undercovers all thy wings, With confidence he hide, For thou hast for my body to the rest that I did make.

For thou hast given me the Aaron's name, For thou hast given me the Aaron's name, For thou hast given me the Aaron's name, Thou hast given me the heritage of those thy name that fear.

Let's bow our heads in a word of prayer. Let us pray. Our Father in heaven, as we come together to worship you this day, we do thank you for these words that we've sung.

They remind us from the outset of our worship that as we come to offer praise and worship to you, that you have given ear unto our cry, that you will attend to our prayer.

And we thank you that as we come today to pray for so much that goes on around us, that we know that you are God and that you are the one who is able to help.

[4 : 39] And that from the youngest to the oldest here, no matter what experiences we may have just now, you encourage us to come to you in prayer. There is nothing insignificant to you.

There's nothing that's not important to you. For we as your people are precious to you and important to you. So you love to hear us as we come. You love to hear our very prayers, not with any fancy words or anything like that, but just to come offering the words that come to our lips.

And so we thank you, Lord, that you are with us, that you are able to help, that you are a God who is good to us in so many ways. You give us food and warmth on a daily basis.

You give us the friendships and families that we enjoy. You give us this time to come to worship you and a time to be with your people and to join in with your people in worship.

And we ask that in all that we do today, in the church and also in the creche and the tweenies, that you will be with us, Lord, that we will hear what you have to say to us, that we will rejoice in your goodness, Lord, that we will be thankful for all that you are and all that you have done.

[5 : 50] We know it's a holiday weekend, and we do pray for any who are away. Remember them, Lord, and watch over them. Remember the schools, Lord, at this time too of holiday, and especially those who are with exams at this time.

Lord, we pray that you will bless them and help them throughout these days to know that you are with them, that they can commit their exams to you in prayer as well. So we ask, Lord, that you will bless all our young people and all our families and friends together.

Be with us throughout this day, and as we go on in this week ahead, Lord, may you watch over us and protect us. Pardon us for all our sin, as we ask it all in Jesus' name and for his sake.

Amen. It's good to see young folks out today. A wee minute ago, I was asking everyone to stand to sing.

And did anybody think, oh, it's too dangerous to stand up? Did anybody feel unsafe standing up? I hope not, because we're able to stand here on the floor that's firm, that's secure.

[6 : 59] But there's other places we might think, oh, it might be quite dangerous to stand up. It might be quite hard to stand up there. I'm sure in the schools in the coming weeks ahead, as you come up to the summer holidays, there'll be sports day.

You'll have sports day usually at some point, and you'll run races. And you run races, you're on a field or a track, and you feel safe enough to run that race.

Well, this morning in our service, we're looking at one of Paul's letters in the New Testament. He wrote to a church in Galatia. And he wrote to the people there, telling them about where it was safe and secure to stand.

But also he wrote to them about the dangers that there were, and maybe standing in places where they're liable to fall. And what he was meaning there was, we're secure in one place, and somewhere else is dangerous for us.

So can anybody think of anywhere that might be dangerous or difficult to stand? Say you were to run a race. Could you run it on a bouncy castle?

[8 : 08] Would that be safe? Would you feel it's secure, especially if there's a few of you trying to run? You start trying to run on a bouncy castle, and what happens? You fall over.

Everybody just crashes into each other. What about if you are on the ferry, and it's a very rough day, and the ferry's going from side to side, and you think it'd be safe to run there?

Oh, because you start getting thrown around as well. You're liable to fall over. There's other places, too, that it'll be difficult to run. Imagine if your races at the sports day were over the Barber's Moor, across the bogs there.

Would it be easy to run there? No. You're liable to fall over. Or if the ground's very icy or something like that, or slippery with seaweed, you're going to fall over.

So there's a number of places that we can think are dangerous for us, that we can't run, we can't even stand, because it's so wobbly or boggy or bouncy.

[9 : 13] All of these kinds of things. And that's what Paul is saying to the Galatians. He's describing our lives as either trying to run away from God, away from Jesus, apart from Him, or to run with Him.

And one is being secure, being able to stand, and one is just finding it so difficult to stand, we keep falling over and crashing all the time.

So which is which? Well, Paul says, the only way to stand firm, to stand secure, is to trust in Jesus. That's the only way to be secure, and not to fall over.

Because when we try and do things by ourselves, when we try and go our own way, when we run away from God, all we're doing is either running into a bog, or somewhere that's slippery, or somewhere we're just going to fall over, it's not going to end well.

So we want to be able to stand somewhere secure. And the only place we can do that is with Jesus, by putting our trust in Him.

[10 : 21] Then we are secure. And that's what we're going to be looking at as we go through our service today. We're going to be thinking about how we stand secure, or if we're falling over.

So may God bless His Word to us throughout this day. We're going to say the Lord's Prayer together now. So we'll say the Lord's Prayer. Amen. But we sing again to God's praise, this time in Psalm 92a.

It's in the Sing Psalms version, page 122. Psalm 92a. We're going to sing from verse 7 all the way down to the end of the psalm, verse 15, not verse 11, as it is on the notice sheet.

Psalm 92a, verse 7 to 15, the tune is Tracathro. Although the wicked spring like grass, the foolish do not see. That all who flourish in their sin will die eternally.

But Lord, you are forevermore exalted very high. All evildoers will be crushed. Your foes will surely die. We'll sing from verse 7 to verse 15 to God's praise.

[11 : 59] Amen. Christ, if you will army from there, In their sin will die eternally.

But, Lord, you are forevermore exalted, very high.

All evildoers will be crushed, your foes will surely die.

You made me strong as any ox, with all anointed me.

I've seen my enemies' defeat, and I have heard them flee.

[13 : 52] Like palms and cedars flourishing, the righteous all will be.

And planted in the eyes of God will grow upon me.

So in old age they still bear fruit.

They will stay fresh and strong. They will proclaim the Lord is just.

Thy rock who does no wrong. Amen. Well, we turn together now.

[15:14] We're going to read in Paul's letter to the Galatians. We take up our reading in chapter 4 at verse 28. And then we read on into chapter 5.

Down to verse 15. So we're taking up our reading in chapter 4. Paul here is using an example from the Old Testament as he's explaining to the church at Galatia.

The difference there is through the grace that they have through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. And those who are trying to lead these people astray and to live a life that's all about the law.

And having to keep the law in all its entirety. And he's explaining the difference in this way of Abraham having two sons. One through Sarah, who was his wife.

And one through Hagar, who was a slave for him. And the difference was that God had promised him a son through Sarah. But Abraham took things into his own hands.

[16:20] He felt God couldn't do it. So he was going to do it himself. And he had a son with Hagar. But God showed that he was faithful and gave him a son with Sarah as well.

So there's this difference of being free and being slaves. This is the way Paul is describing it to the church at Galatia. And he's saying, One way, by trusting in God, you are free.

But by trying to do things yourself, you are slaves. And so as we take up our reading at verse 28, that's the theme of which Paul is speaking of here.

Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise. But just as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, so also it is now.

But what does the Scripture say? Cast out the slave woman and her son. For the son of the slain woman shall not inherit with the son of the free woman. So, brothers, we are not children of the slave, but of the free woman.

[17:27] For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to the yoke of slavery. Look, I, Paul, say to you that if you accept circumcision, Christ will be of no advantage to you.

I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is bound to keep the whole law. You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law.

You have fallen away from grace. For through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness. For in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.

You are running well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth? This persuasion is not from him who calls you. A little leaven leavens the whole lump.

I have confidence in the Lord that you will take no other view than mine, and the one who is troubling you will bear the penalty, whoever he is. But if I, brothers, still preach circumcision, why am I still being persecuted?

[18:46] In that case, the offense of the cross has been removed. I wish those who unsettle you would emasculate themselves. For you were called to freedom, brothers.

Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word. You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another. And so on. And may God bless that reading from his word.

We'll again join our hearts together in prayer. Our Father, in heaven, as we continue to praise your name, we thank you for your word.

We thank you for the truth that it is. And in a world that is so often being led astray, down different paths, away from the solid ground of your truth, we thank you that you call us, you call your people to return to you, to return to your word, to return to the freedom that it offers through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

[20:02] For we see the world in which we live, a people running free, as it were, in their own eyes, and yet still in the bondage and slavery of sin.

And perhaps many of us even here know that bondage even today, where we are trying to appease you and to please you through our own works and through our own ways.

But your word reminds us that there is nothing that we can do that will bring us to know that freedom in and of ourselves. But we thank you that all the provision that we need has been made for us by your giving of your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

And we thank you that for freedom Christ has set us free, and that this is where we are to stand firm. We thank you that we have that rock that is secure, that rock that is our refuge, that is our

strength, and for every circumstances and for every need of this world, that he is there for us. He is there for us as we delight in different things. He is there for us through all the difficulties of our life. But we thank you that through faith in him, we know one who stays closer than any brother, as your word says.

[21 : 21] We thank you that he is always with us and always for us. And so help us today and day after day not to get swept away by the things of this world, not to get led astray and to feel that there are things that we need to do to add to our salvation, but that we would always have our eyes firmly fixed on the one who has fulfilled all the law and all the promises of your word, the one who is your Son, Jesus Christ.

Help us to look to him, and in him to know the joy of salvation, in him to know the freedom that he gives, the forgiveness of our sins, and the grace and the strength to go on.

So may you bless your word to us and remember us as a people. Remember us, Lord, as a congregation, as a community here. We give you thanks, O Lord, for all the good things that you give us.

We give you thanks for our fellowship in Christ. We give you thanks for your word and the freedom that we have to gather together. We thank you for every opportunity that is set before us to be around your word.

And even as we think of this coming week, in many ways it can seem a full and a busy week to us, but help us to delight and rejoice in being your servants, in being your people, in offering up our service and our praise to you, not just today, but throughout all the days of the week.

[22 : 55] So that whatever we are doing, be it in church or at home, in the workplace, in school or college, wherever we are, that we would do all as to the Lord and that we will delight in doing your will.

So bless all that is ahead of us in this week. We think of the Zoom prayer meeting on Tuesday morning with Muriel. We thank you for her, for her time at home over these last number of months and for her going away again to serve you there.

We pray your protection and your blessing on her and all who are with her and all the work that she does for your glory in that place. We ask, O Lord, that you will bless and be with her and that our prayers for her will be heard day by day and week by week.

We thank you too for the work of the Slavic Gospel Association, again, an organization who does so much in very difficult and different circumstances to what we have here.

but we thank you for their faithful ministry over many years and for all who serve them as an organization, for all who will be speaking throughout our communities in these coming days.

[24 : 02] In our own meeting on Wednesday evening, may we be encouraged in it and may we be blessed by it. We thank you too, Lord, for opportunities to learn more about your truth and about your gospel.

And we pray for the Prodigal Son course starting on Tuesday evening. We thank you for Roddy and Calla and for all the work that they have done over many years of leading these courses.

And pray your hand to be upon them and upon all who meet on these evenings together that will be enriched by you and blessed by you. Encourage us, if we have a desire, Lord, to go along.

Encourage us to pray for those who we may ask to come along as well. Maybe neighbors or friends or work colleagues. People who we feel a great burden for, Lord.

So often we can be afraid to ask. But give us, Lord, courage. Give us a heart for them just to invite them along and to see your goodness in all that is done for you in these things.

[25 : 04] Remember our land as well at this time, Lord. We do pray for your blessing on us. We think of the coronation to take place this week and we pray for our king.

We pray, Lord, that you will bless him and be with him and his family too. Lord, we ask that they would be given your grace, that they would be given your love over them as a people, that they would know it, that you would melt their hearts to it, that they would see the history of our land, a nation that's been blessed by you, and that they would go forward, Lord, seeking your goodness over us as a people, that they would seek to rule according to your truth and to your ways.

We pray that for our governments too. when we have experienced so much over these last number of years and so much disarray in our land, so much confusion, so much hurt, so much pain and grief in so many different ways.

We do pray, Lord, that we will look to you, that you will help us to turn once again towards you, that we will call upon your name, that we would seek your goodness over us as a people.

We pray for our world as well, Lord, and the many troubles around us. We pray, Lord, that you will bless the word that goes out today to all ends of the earth in the prayers of your people.

[26 : 34] We again thank you that you are the one who is able to hear and to answer all of our prayers. Continue to remember us then and all our families and our loved ones.

Again, we commit students to you at this time who are sitting exams in school, in college, in university, our own young people here in our congregation. Lord, we pray for them that you will encourage them and strengthen them, thankful for all that is done for them, all the guidance that is given to them and help towards them.

We pray, Lord, that you will bless them and teachers and all our schools around us. Remember Scott as he is sitting exams just now as well and all the other students in the seminary in Edinburgh. Lord, we ask your strength towards them, your blessing with them and your peace over them. So Lord, continue with us now. Bless us, we pray, and pardon all our sin as we ask it all in Jesus' precious name.

Amen. Amen. We're going to sing again to God's praise. This time Psalm 123 in the Scottish Psalter.

[27 : 41] Psalm 123, page 417 of the psalm books. We can sing the whole of this psalm, the tune as martyrs. O thou that dwellest in the heavens, I lift mine eyes to thee.

Behold, a servant's eyes do look, their master's hand to see. We'll sing the whole of this psalm to God's praise. O thou that dwellest in the heavens, I lift mine eyes to thee.

Behold, a servant's eyes do look, their master's hand to see.

As handmaid's eyes, her mistress's hand, so do our eyes attend upon the Lord our God until to us he mercy send.

O Lord, be gracious to us, and to us gracious be, because replenished with contempt, exceedingly are we.

[29 : 58] Our soul is filled with scorn of those that are there is a bite, and with the insolent contempt of those that dwell in pride.

We can turn back together to our reading in Galatians chapter 5. We're going to look at verse 1 to verse 6 in particular together.

As we were thinking about earlier, the theme this morning is standing and falling, and we see that in these verses. In verse 1, it says, Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to the yoke of slavery.

Stand firm, Paul says there. But then it says in verse 4, You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law. You have fallen away from grace.

So you have standing firm, therefore, in faith, or being severed from Christ, seeking to be justified by the law, falling from grace.

[31 : 35] That's what we mentioned to the children earlier on, how there's places where we are safe and firm and secure to stand, and other places where we will find it difficult to stand.

It's very hard to stand. And eventually, we are going to be in danger of falling over in these places. And that's what Paul is making clear to us here.

There is a place of security and a place of falling away. So where are you today? Where are you when it comes to your security?

Are you standing in a place that's firm, a place that's secure, or in a place where you're liable to fall away? And especially, as it says here, to fall away from grace.

When you look at Paul's letter to the Galatians, it's like many of his letters, it's divided up into different sections. And the first two chapters, Paul is writing about his own authority and being able to proclaim the gospel.

[32 : 41] He has been to Galatia, which we know as Turkey today, and established many churches there before. And they have come to faith in the Lord Jesus.

They've come to believe and find security in the Lord Jesus, but now they are being led astray. You just have to turn back to chapter 3, the very opening words of chapter 3.

It says, O foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you? Who has led you away from the truth? Who has added to this burden that you are feeling already and leading you away from the grace that there is in the Lord Jesus Christ?

So he's writing to them in chapters 1 and 2, outlining the authority that he has as a servant of the Lord Jesus, and especially that he is there to proclaim salvation in Christ.

Then in chapter 3 and 4, he kind of outlines the problem, but in a way giving them a lesson, teaching much of it from the Old Testament to see how they have been led astray, how they have begun to fall away by looking to a teaching that is not about faith in Christ, but that is more about a false gospel of salvation by works.

[34 : 01] So that's what he has then in chapter 3 and chapter 4. Then in chapter 5 and 6, as he often does, he applies it to their lives. He teaches them now how this is going to affect their day-to-day lives and their future, and maybe more importantly, their eternity, their eternal salvation.

So he's preaching with authority, he's preaching truth, and he's applying it to their lives. And he begins with this wonderful statement as it comes to applying it to their lives as to what they have in Christ in verse 1.

For freedom, Christ has set us free. For freedom, Christ has set us free. But what does this mean? God wants us to be free, and in Christ we can be free, but what is this freedom?

What does freedom mean to you today? To many people, freedom can mean a number of different things. It can be to be free from debt.

It can be to be free from illness. Freedom has come into our day-to-day lives, and we talk so often about freedom of speech, or freedom from what society throws our way.

[35 : 25] People want to be free from all kinds of authority. You see people displaying signs in America saying, not my president. You see, in their own nation already, even before the coronation, people are putting up signs, not my king.

But what we are seeing when it comes to truth and the word of God is another sign that says, not my king, but it's a very different king. We're not going to have Jesus as king over me.

So they're looking, many people, for freedom in all kinds of ways. But at the heart of freedom, as we so often think about it, there's a desire just to do our own thing, to do whatever we want, whatever we feel is right.

We want to be free to do whatever we want. But is that through freedom? We don't want any man or any religion to tell us what we should or shouldn't do.

Well, often in the Bible, you see it saying, there's nothing new in the world. And in the Bible, we see again and again people wanting this kind of freedom.

[36 : 43] Freedom just to do as they please. And from time to time, you see the Lord leaving the people to do what was right in their own eyes, to give them this freedom that they are asking for.

But what does it lead to? It leads to disaster. They want to be free, but in this freedom that they desire, there is no freedom at all.

Instead, we are bound and in bondage and slavery in so many different ways. And ultimately, as we see here when it speaks of falling away from grace, it's about falling away from the freedom and the salvation that is on offer in Christ.

And so the question for ourselves is, are we free in Christ? Are you free in this sense not just to do your own thing, but to be free in Christ, which is to live for Him?

And there's three ways I want to look at this together today. I want to see, first of all, what it is standing in Christ. Then we see falling from Christ and then looking to Christ.

[38 : 01] So there's standing in Christ, falling from Christ, and looking to Christ. The first thing we see here is standing in Christ.

when Paul says that it's for freedom that Christ has set us free, we immediately begin to think, well, if He is setting us free, what is it from?

Or where is it from? Where are we being set free? Or what are we being set free from? And you realize it's not a freedom of our own choosing.

It is for freedom Christ has set us free. It was something we couldn't do ourselves. It was something we couldn't change ourselves.

But what was it? For freedom Christ has set us free. What it's saying here is that we were slaves. We were the ones who were slaves.

[39 : 04] But Jesus came to set us free. What do you think to yourself, but how am I a slave? I don't feel like I'm a slave.

I don't feel I'm imprisoned. I feel I am free to do what I want. But if you read through the Gospels, if you read through the Word of God, we realize that we are blind to what we are slaves to until we

know the grace and the love of Christ.

And there are many ways we can look to see that we are actually slaves. we are bound, as it were, we are in chains to many things in this world without even realizing it.

There are three things I could say that we are slaves to. We are slaves to sin. We are all born in sin and we suffer the consequence of sin in this world.

We are under the condemnation of sin in this world. but we don't realize it so often. We don't see ourselves in a bad sense as bad people.

[40 : 16] We feel that we are maybe good people and we are trying to do the right thing but we are actually slaves to sin. And so Jesus had to come to set us free in that sense.

But you see, I don't feel a sinner maybe. I don't feel a great weight of sin in my life. Well, there was a young man, a young teenage man who had been listening to a preacher preach about sin and the great burden that sin is.

But the youth, the teenage boy, was very dismissive about it all. And after the ceremony, he went to the preacher and said, you speak about unsaved people carrying about a weight of sin.

But he said, I feel nothing. So how heavy is sin? Is it 10 kilos? Is it 80 kilos? How heavy is sin? Because I don't feel this burden. Well, the preacher replied to this teenage boy and he said, well, look at it this way. If I was to say to you that I was going to lay a weight of 400 kilos on top of a corpse, someone who's dead, would they feel that weight on them?

[41 : 37] The teenager replied, of course not. That person's dead. They're not going to feel that weight. And the preacher said, exactly. And that's how you are and everyone else who feels that there's no weight of sin on them.

You are dead in the sense that you cannot feel that weight. You think there's no weight of sin on you when there actually is. But you need to realize that this is a dangerous place to be.

If you feel no load of sin, if you feel indifferent to the whole idea of sin or to the burden that it is, then you too are dead.

And that's the danger that we are all into. We feel maybe we're not slaves, we're not bound in this way, but we are all slaves to sin. And so Jesus had to come to set us free from that.

We could say of the cross as Jesus died that in my place condemned he stood. He bore the burden of our sin there.

[42 : 48] We are also slaves to death because the wages of sin is death. We all know the reality of that in our lives, but we can maybe push it away.

We can dismiss it for a time. We can try and find freedom in life, but we can never find a freedom from death. It is with us all the time.

And so the only way to be free from the burden of death is to be firm in Christ. For freedom, Christ has set us free. Stand firm therefore.

Stand firm in him. We are also slaves to the devil. We are slaves to Satan.

He has a hold on us through sin and doubt and temptation. All of these things that so often he pulls us back with, that he's trying to take us away from standing firm in Christ.

[43 : 48] And he's shaking our faith. He's shaking the foundation of our faith and making us doubt and fear and be anxious. But Paul is saying, no, stand firm in your faith.

And the devil will be there to say, just like he's saying here to the people, what have you done for your salvation? You're not good enough. Look at the things that you have done that are wrong or the things that you should have done that you didn't.

And he shakes us. But Paul is saying, no, stand firm in Christ. Jesus came with a purpose.

It says in Hebrews 2, verse 14 of Jesus, so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death, that is, the devil, and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.

He came to set us free. So he says, stand firm in Christ so that what he has done for us and through faith in him and the grace that he has shown us, we can stand firm in him.

[45 : 01] We must not slip into thinking that it's about what we do and our obedience that wins the day or by keeping the law that we can be saved. That's not what it is at all.

We are to rejoice that Christ has come to set us free. But then he gives secondly a warning here.

And that's the warning that when we try to do things by ourselves that ultimately we'll fall away from grace.

We fall away from grace. If we continue under this being slaves to the law, he says in verse 4, you are severed, separated from Christ.

You would be justified by the law. You have fallen away from grace. So again Paul here is reflecting on the teaching that they have received from the false teachers, preaching that unless you're circumcised and unless you keep the law, and in this he's saying all the law, you have to keep every part of it, then you are not going to be able to stand.

But Paul is saying, no, this is not right. This is foolishness. This is foolishness, and he shows it in three ways.

[46 : 27] Look at what he says about trusting in anything other than the finished work of Christ. In verse 2 he says, look, I say to you, if you accept circumcision, Christ will be of no advantage to you.

If you go down this route of saying, well, we need circumcision, or we need every aspect of the law before we can be saved, well, then Christ is nothing for you.

He's of no advantage. And this is foolishness. This is like coming to Christ and saying, look at what I've done, it's meaningless.

if you go or try to go to a football match or to a concert that's sold out, there's no tickets available, they've all gone, but you go there and you've got all the money in the world, but you don't have a ticket, you're still not going to get in.

It's only those who have a ticket who will get in. And those who have got a ticket may have got it, maybe by buying it, maybe by a gift, but they have the ticket.

[47 : 39] But the one with all the money but no ticket doesn't get in. And that's what Paul is trying to illustrate here. You can have everything in the world, you can try to do it all by yourself, but without faith you're not going to get in.

And even with the ticket you maybe have done so much that's wrong in your life, you may have come through so many experiences in your life, but through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, he's given you this ticket, you come in, you get in.

So anything that we do apart from Christ is of no advantage to you. It's not going to get you in. It is only faith. Then in verse 4, he expands on this, he says at the start of verse 4, you are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law, separated from him.

If you're not trusting in him alone, he's saying severed, I knew you not, is what Jesus says. We're apart from him, and therefore we're falling.

We're falling away from our salvation. And that's what he further says in verse 4, you have fallen away from grace.

[49 : 05] The very thing that you need for your salvation, you have fallen away from. This is a phrase that we often hear maybe in society. We hear people talking about a fall from grace.

It's interesting how many phrases in the Bible we see used commonly in everyday life. This is one of them, a fall from grace. We hear it about people who maybe a scandal has come into their lives. They've maybe been in positions of power or authority or wealth, but they have this fall from grace as it's called, and they end up in disgrace. They end up losing that position of authority or sometimes they even lose their freedom.

They end up in prison. It's seen as a fall from grace. And we see these things and we think, you know, how serious these are.

But what about ourselves? What about our fall from grace? It's not maybe a scandal that makes the front page headlines, but it's even more serious because it's with Christ.

[50 : 17] And a fall from grace with Christ is the most serious thing of all. We lose all the benefits that are ours in Christ. we lose our freedom.

We lose our salvation. And so it's foolish. It is foolish to think that we can live this life by ourselves and do it all ourselves because it is only through Christ that we are free.

Otherwise, we are falling away. now, what was at the heart of their falling away? It's what's so often at the heart of our own falling away as well.

It's a fear of man and the expectations that are put on us from man and trying to please man instead of trying to please God.

You can see here their fear was what others thought. If they were being told you need circumcision, you need all the law, they were afraid of what man was saying to them.

[51 : 30] And so they sought to please them instead of pleasing God. And so often that's the case for ourselves. We're doing things to please others and not to please God.

A man called William Garnall. He once said, we fear men so much because we fear God so little. We need to refocus.

We need to look at these things again and see who am I trying to please? And what am I trying to do? That's what Paul is saying to the Galatians. You're trying to please those around you by doing everything that they're asking of you.

You're trying to do everything that they ask of you. But it's impossible. As he says at the end of verse 3, you are bound to keep the whole law, everything, and you just cannot do it. And in this, you are severed from Christ. You will be justified by the law. You have fallen from grace. And it is grace we need.

[52 : 37] So, our focus is in the wrong place. grace. So, finally, we see Paul is saying, look to the right place. Look to Christ.

What do we do when we know we are wrong? What do we do when we are heading the wrong way? We need to turn and look to Christ.

To look to him by faith to know this grace. for through the Spirit by faith we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness.

For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.

It is looking to Christ and following him. Our works are nothing without faith.

[53 : 38] We are not saved by our works but we are saved to works. And so all the time we are trusting in ourselves and our own works of salvation we are slaves.

There is no joy in it because it's impossible. But when we look to Christ and when we follow him there we find the way prepared.

and the way that is free. The way we are free to enjoy him. Look at it this way. I was watching a program this week about people who go to clear minefields.

Anyway there's been a conflict in the past. So often there's mines left behind and they're so dangerous. People who don't know that they're adults or children they find themselves in a place that's so dangerous and they don't even realize it.

And so they send people in to clear these places. Now they don't send people in there by themselves to go in with their own hands trying to find their way around.

[54 : 51] It's far too dangerous. And yet as Paul is saying here that's almost the way we try and find our way through life. Trying to do it all ourselves.

We're going to end up falling away. So what they do in the minefields is they have this machine. It's like a tank with a bulldozer blade on the front.

And it goes through these fields and the blade on the front you can see it going through just very slowly. Almost every few seconds you see an explosion under this shield at the front.

It's detonating all the mines. It's clearing the way for them. Everyone is safe behind it and the way is cleared. And that's what we have in Christ.

That's what we have in him. The one who has gone ahead of us. The one who has prepared the way for us.

[55 : 54] The one who has set us free. So we know when we are following Christ we are on the right way and we can stand firm.

Imagine yourself walking through a minefield. Where would you want to be? Going it alone? Going your own way?

Finding your own way? Feeling I'm safe enough doing this only to fall away when you least expect it. Or to be following Christ.

The one who has prepared the way. Knowing you are secure in him. It makes no sense, does it, to walk through the minefield yourself.

So why then in life would you seek to please God on your own terms, with your own freedom, with your own works of salvation trying to please him when it's impossible.

[57 : 00] What Paul is saying is forget about that. You will fall. You will fall from grace. But he's saying the way is there for you.

Follow Christ. Trust him. Stand firm therefore. And do not again go back to the yoke of slavery.

There you are slaves and there's no joy. But in Christ you are free. Stand firm in him and rejoice.

Let us pray. Our Father in heaven, we thank you for the one who has prepared the way for us, the one who has conquered sin and death and the devil, and the one who is able to set us free from the

yoke of slavery as your word says.

Help us, Lord, to look to him, to find our freedom, our salvation through his grace towards us, that we might be enabled to stand firm in him.

[58 : 08] We ask it in his precious name. Amen. Amen. We're going to conclude by singing to God's praise in Psalm 33.

This is the Scottish Psalter version. Psalm 33, page 246, and the last three stanzas, verse 18 to the end.

Behold, on those that do in fear, the Lord doth set his eye, even those who on his mercy do with confidence rely. The tune is Kilmarnock and we'll stand to sing these verses to God's praise.

Amen. Behold, on those that do him fear, the Lord doth set his eye, in those who on his mercy do with confidence rely.

From death to flee their soul in death, I've gone to them to yield, our soul doth wait upon the Lord, he is our help and shield.

[59 : 55] Sif in his holy name we trust, our heart shall joy shall be.

Lord, let thy mercy be on us, as we do hope in thee.

after the benediction, I'll go to the door to my left. We'll close the benediction. Now may grace, mercy, and peace from God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, rest upon and abide with us all, now and forevermore.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[61 : 06] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Happen.