

By Faith Alone

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: 05 October 2018

Preacher: Walt Alexander

[0 : 00] You can turn with me to Galatians 2, Galatians chapter 2.! It's a privilege to open God's Word again today and to open God's Word again today and to open God's Word again today.

And to open this incredible chapter is quite a privilege as well. I'm going to begin reading in verse 11 so you can look there with me.

Let's hear. But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face because he stood condemned.

For before certain men came from James, he was eating with the Gentiles. But when they came, he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party.

And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. But when I saw that their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force the Gentiles to live like Jews?

[1 : 34] Verse 15. Verse 15. We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners. Yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ.

So we also have believed in Christ Jesus in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law. Because by works of the law, no one will be justified.

But if in our endeavor to be justified in Christ, we too are found to be sinners, is Christ then a servant of sin? Certainly not. For if I rebuild what I tore down, I prove myself to be a transgressor. For through the law, I died to the law so that I might live to God. But I have been crucified with Christ.

It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. In the life I live, I now live in the flesh. I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.

[2 : 48] I do not nullify the grace of God. For if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose.

This is the word of God. May God bless the preaching and the hearing of his word. Our family recently started watching reruns of the Annie Griffiths show.

One episode we watched centered around the church picnic and dance. Now, as a new girl in town, Fred Walker's daughter, Miss Ellie, is the new town pharmacist and thus is new to the town of Mayberry.

And so Andy goes into a store one day and finds out she's not going to the picnic and dance. Andy's shocked. Why in the world would she not go to the dance? Do you not like picnics and dance?

As Andy would say. So Andy decides to do the good neighborly kindness of asking her to go with him. When he asks, she said, I'd be happy to go with you, Andy.

[3 : 59] But as the day goes on, Andy becomes convinced something else was going on. Andy, the widower, begins to relive the day.

Now, how come when I walked into the store, she immediately came out of the back and was so happy to see me? How come she immediately began to talk to me when I saw her?

How come Fred, her father, casually told me that she was not going to the dance? Oh, my. When we hadn't even been talking about it, how come she so quickly agreed to go with me to the dance when I'd barely even gotten the question out of my mouth?

He says, my goodness, I've been hooked like a starving catfish. And what's more, he continues, she's not hooked me into a town dance or a county dance or a city dance.

She's hooked me into a church dance. She wants me to get comfortable being there. There could be no other goal she has but matrimony. He continues, nothing worse than a pretty conniving

female.

[5 : 05] Things get worse. Opie walks in with an ice cream cone, but it's not just any ice cream cone. You better believe it. It's a free cone from Miss Ellie's store.

And he concludes, that ice cream ain't no gift. It's a down payment on a husband. Any female that would bait a trap with a man's own son is a desperate, determined hunter.

There ain't no way to outfox a hunter but to put her on the scent of other game. So that's what Andy does. He goes around town and he decides, I'm going to outfox Miss Ellie if it's the last thing I do. I'm going to test her. I'm going to find out what she's really after to see if she's just this desperate, determined hunter. So he goes to Pete Johnson. He says, my Pete, Miss Ellie was right.

Pete, your eyelashes are so long and beautiful as you flap them right in front of me. He went to Franklin Pomeroy and said, I see exactly what Miss Ellie meant.

[6 : 06] You have the cutest little nose. I tell you what, I can't get enough of it. He goes and finds Charlie Beasley and says, your bronze skin and those big muscles, that must be what Miss Ellie's drawn to.

Within no time, Andy's plan worked. All the men rushed into the store and were showing themselves off, flapping those eyelashes and oinking that nose and flexing those muscles, ready to woo her away.

In the end, though, Andy's plan failed. Miss Ellie figured it out. Her intentions weren't after marriage after all, and they ended up going to the dance.

But my point is, this morning, much like Andy's testing of Miss Ellie, this passage wants to test us. It wants to test our hearts.

It wants to see if we've been hoodwinked. It wants to see if the sin of other game has led us away from Christ. This passage confronts legalism within each of our hearts.

[7 : 13] Are there any ways we've added to grace? Are there any times we've been driven about by all we must do for God?

Any low-grade guilt for not measuring up? Any fear of what others are thinking? This passage is a gift because this passage draws us to see the legalists within.

And calls us, in a word, to live boldly free by faith. That's where we're going. Live boldly free by faith.

So I'll unpack this in three points. First point is Paul's mistake. Paul's mistake. Now, if you remember the context of the first ten verses of chapter 2, Paul's been defending his gospel, and he's received it through Revelation.

That's what he says in Galatians 1. And it was later accepted and approved by the apostles. Remember, he received the right hand of fellowship. That's what we talked about. But he continues here and tells the Galatians about this confrontation with Peter and moves to the crux of his letter and his concern for the Galatians.

[8 : 33] And so verse 11 through 14 unfold Peter's mistake in this confrontation. Paul confronted Peter because he had stopped eating with the Gentiles.

Right? We see that right in verse 12. Now, to a first century person, the surprise would not have been that he stopped eating with them.

The surprise would have been that he started eating with them in the first place. Jews kept laws of cleanness and could not draw near to God if they were unclean or had been associating with folks unclean.

But Peter was different. We remember some of his story from Acts, right? Peter knew Jesus' teaching. He was with Jesus. He knew about how these laws had passed away, that the separation between Jew and Gentile was gone.

And later in Acts, Peter sees a vision that changes him. In Acts 10, he sees a large sheet of unclean meats and animals. And the Lord said, kill and eat.

[9 : 38] Don't call unclean what I call clean. And just like that, bacon is rescued from obscurity. For us to consume.

Yeah. But far more important than bacon, the sheet was to symbolize this dramatic transition in the gospel work on earth. The gospel was now extending into the Gentiles.

Even a Gentile Roman commander believes right after that. A Roman centurion believes and trusts in the gospel. So this changes Peter's life. Now, obviously, he begins eating unclean meat.

But far more than that, he preaches the gospel to Gentiles. The very gospel that Paul preached as well. And he takes it to the nations.

But in Antioch, when certain Judaizers came along, Peter drew back and separated himself again. [10:44] So Paul, in verse 11, says, I opposed him to his face because he stood condemned. Now, condemned?

That seems a little strong to me. Surely it wasn't kind. It wasn't loving. It was even hypocritical. But condemnation? I don't know.

But Paul continues. Look in verse 14. The core of his concern is articulated here. When I saw that there, that's Peter and the rest of the Jews there acting hypocritically, their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel.

Here's Paul's concern. Not in step with the truth of the gospel. Not straightly. That's what it literally means. Straightly walking in the truth of the gospel.

Now, as a Jew, not eating unclean meat and remaining clean was not definitively wrong. You could confess Christ, be a Jew, and still hold on to those laws, and it not be definitively wrong.

[11:50] But for Peter, it was wrong. He was reverting back to believing that he must be ceremonially clean to be acceptable to God. And he was leading and teaching others to separate themselves, to draw back from the Gentiles, to separate themselves, and be clean to themselves.

He was out of line with the gospel. It's what Paul's saying. He was not walking straightly with the gospel. And so Paul confronts him.

Paul opposes him, not because he's being unkind, not because he's being unloving, not even because he's being hypocritical. Paul opposes him to his face because legalism has crept into his heart and has led him away from the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Now, let's pause here for a moment. This is Peter. This is the apostle, the Pentecost preacher, the scripture writer, the witness of the sufferings of Christ, and he blew it.

And it's recorded right here in scripture for all of history to see and to meditate on in their Bible reading plans.

[13:05] But this is a powerful point. The word of God does not tell the story of flawless people with perfect faith, nor does it even erase their flaws.

The flaws of the men and women of God are all throughout scripture. The word of God includes them to tell a story of a great God working in and through flawed men.

Isn't that encouraging? This was recently born home to my wife and I two months ago. We had the privilege of going to Rome and traveling Italy.

And obviously we traveled and saw so many of the sites in Rome. Perhaps unequal to at least any site in Rome was the Sistine Chapel.

Now, you've heard of this chapel. You've seen pictures of this chapel. This chapel is an old chapel from the beginning of the 1500s, dominated by Michelangelo's artwork.

[14:09] Now, I had seen a lot of that artwork. I'd seen pictures of a lot of that artwork. But to stand in that room and look at that artwork was an experience in and of itself. It felt like a pilgrimage experience.

And this truth was kind of born home to me as I scanned the ceiling. So now you remember the ceiling, right? You remember God creating Adam and kind of reaching down, sort of a point, almost a finger touch creation work.

Well, that's in the center of the ceiling. And down on this side is the creation of light and darkness. And then it's the creation of the heavens, of the sun and the moon and the stars and all these things. And then it's the separation of land and water. Then it's the creation of man right there in the center, the creation of Adam.

Right after that, it's Adam, a woman being created out of Adam right there. And then it's the creation of Noah, the calling of Noah.

[15:12] Then it's the great flood. So it's all these great works of what God did in those first six chapters of our Bible, these incredible foundational things.

And then it concludes in a rather surprising way. It makes me wonder how well Michelangelo knew his Bible. But it concludes, not with the calling of Abraham, which would have been great, right? It concludes with Noah's drunkenness and filth being discovered by his son. That's just the way the Word of God is.

It doesn't give us a whitewashed version. It gives us humanity and all its flaws. And there, hanging in the Sistine Chapel, not another great triumph, but a great failure, ending the sealing almost to signal man's dying need for a Savior.

So here, too, the Apostle Paul missteps. And it's recorded here so that God might alert us to legalism. But how did legalism get to Peter?

[16:27] Look at verse 12. It says, He was eating with the Gentiles, but when they came, he drew back, fearing the circumcision party. Now, legalism is a belief, right?

But it's not often how it begins. And so it begins here, in the fear of man. It leads to hypocrisy and compromise and leads to forcing Gentiles to live like Jews.

Tim Keller says, Legalism is looking to something besides Jesus Christ in order to be acceptable and clean before God. So obviously, it's a belief, like Peter was living from a belief system, and yet it's so much more.

Listen to this next quote by Martin Luther. He says, Legalism is so deeply rooted in man's reason, and all humankind so wrapped in it, that they can hardly get out.

Yea, I myself have now preached the gospel nearly twenty years, and have been exercised in the same daily, by reading and writing, so that I may well seem to be rid of this wicked opinion, yet notwithstanding.

[17:44] I now and then feel this old filth cleave to my heart, whereby it cometh to pass, that I would willingly have so to do with God, that I would bring something with myself, because of which he should give me his grace.

I love the way this articulated, that old filth that cleaves to the heart. It would lead me to believe that I need to bring something with myself in order to be a recipient of his grace.

And so legalism is obviously a belief, but it's so much more. It's a web of fears and anxieties. It's a nagging fear of disapproval and an aching doubt of God's affection and love.

It's a joy killer and a peace disturber, and it always leads us away from Christ into some performance. Sinclair Ferguson says, it is a primary, if not the ultimate, pastoral problem.

And so Paul is incensed. He's focused on legalism because he wants the followers of Christ to live boldly, free by faith. So let's look at Paul's response.

[19:03] Second point, Paul's response. Pretty simple. Paul responds to Peter in the following verses. If you look back in verse 14, you see those question marks, right?

These question marks are at least the statement of what he said to Peter. And we believe the rest of the chapter unpacks the rest of what he says, kind of summarizes what he said to Peter.

And so verse 15 and 16 are hugely important. They're one long, repeating sentence that are vitally important for understanding the Christian life.

First thing they say is that no one is more acceptable to God because of who they are. No one is more acceptable to God but for who they are.

Look at the way he begins in verse 15. We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners. You see that? We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners.

[20:05] So he's drawing this distinction. Now, he doesn't mean that as a Jew he's not a sinner.

Okay? He's not saying, I'm not a sinner because I was born a Jew. What he means is that as a Jew he was privileged to learn the scriptures, to know the law, to be raised up in the things of God, to be trained in these things.

But Gentiles were not. Citizens of Rome were not. So he's not like those Gentiles who do not know God or know what pleases God.

He's not a Gentile sinner in that way. Does that make sense? I mean, the distinction is very close to what we would say about a church kid, like a Brady-type kid who is raised, and he did a great job, didn't he?

And a kid raised in the church, kind of raised in these things. They have a privileged position, right? From birth, they hear about these things.

But someone in an unbelieving household doesn't have that same position. So he's making that distinction, right? We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentiles, sinners, yet.

[21:14] Look at that. Yet. Just a small little word, but it swings so many great realities. Yet, we know. So knowing all that we know, that there is this distinction, there's this privilege, this influence, this distinction that's different.

Yet, we know that a person is not justified by works of the law. Now, what he's saying is very, very important right here. Even though there is this difference between the way they're raised, even though there is this difference between what they know in their humanity, between Jew and Gentile and the way they live their life, this difference makes no difference.

It makes no difference in being accepted by God. This is huge. What he's saying is this is an end to all exceptionalism.

All exceptions are done. Now, God has created a world with endless diversity and differences. Different races, different ethnicities, different social and wealth status, different talents, gifts, body types, opportunities, all these things. All these differences make the world a beautiful and wonderful and diverse place, but none of these differences ultimately matter to God.

[22 : 35] God has no preference for a certain skin color. God has no special love for the well-to-do and well-connected. God has no specific regard for the successful or power or popular.

There's no exceptionalism in God's eyes. You get that? God is not a legalist. God has no regard for the things that we're just thrown into every day.

There's no exceptions to this statement. It doesn't matter who your dad was. It doesn't matter who your mom was. It doesn't matter what your bank account reads or what it does not read.

There's no one who stands out before the holy God. Verses like these. I mean, we could just hang out here all day.

One thing they do, they remind us that racism is not a secondary issue for the church. We cannot faithfully proclaim the gospel and not renounce all forms of racism.

[23 : 48] No one is exceptional because of who they are. But he continues, no one is more acceptable to God because of what they've done. No one is more acceptable because of what they've done.

Notice the change. Look down there with me again. We know that a person is not justified by works of the law and faith in Jesus Christ. So we also have believed in order to be justified.

So we know that a person, a general person is not justified apart from works of the law where he continues and gets strikingly personal.

We know that no one is exceptional because of who they are. So we have believed. Even though we were Jews, even though we were raised in this way, because of what we know about that, that no one is exceptional.

So we have believed in Jesus Christ in order to be justified by Christ and not by works of the law.

[24 : 48] So not only who we are doesn't matter, but what we do doesn't matter. What we do in the body doesn't matter. Salvation is not by works of the law.

Now, all our prayers, all our Bible reading, all our obedience, all our giving, all our serving, all our successes do not matter one iota in being acceptable to God.

Now, this is so counterintuitive. It's so counter. Everything that we're raised in and everything that we naturally believe because of that legalism that's just down into man's reason so far he can barely detect it.

And this is not the world we live in, is it? The world says if you do well in school, you get good grades. Study up, boy. We do well at work.

I was talking like I'm talking to my son, not to any boy out here. If we do well at work, you know, we get a promotion, right? You got to put in your time and then, you know, work hard and then you'll be found out or something like that.

[25 : 53] If we do well at sports, we play varsity or maybe we get a scholarship or something like that. If we're grounded and mature into middle age and we settle down with a good spouse and have 3.14 good little kids and so on and so on.

This is the way we're raised, right? Good people get good things, right? That's the culture's mantra, right? Inevitably, we assume this must be the way God works. He's a good God.

He's not cruel. He's a good God looking for good people who do good things to welcome him into his good heaven. So if we just accumulate enough good things, it'll be all right. That's what we believe.

That is the core belief in which we're raised as a son of Adam. But this verse says good people don't go to heaven. Good people don't get in.

Salvation's not through anything we do, whether good or bad. 17th century pastor John Bunyan captured this so well in his book, *The Pilgrim's Progress*.

[27 : 00] You know, it's a fictional story about Christian, about a Christian, traveling through the world to heaven. Yes, Christian is walking along the way and walking along the wall of salvation.

Two men come tumbling over. They are formalism and hypocrisy. And so Christian says, what are you guys doing? Why didn't you enter through the gate back there, right?

Don't you know that anyone who climbs in any other way is a thief and a robber? Well, they say it's inconvenient. It's too far to get around and go back there.

Besides, all that matters is that we're in the way. All that matters is that we're on the way. We're on the right path. You came in one way. We came in another. All that matters is that we're in now, right?

And, hey, we'll do the right things. So they say. We'll walk carefully down the path. Hey, we're formalism after all. We walk through and check all the boxes and do all that's asked of us.

[28 : 07] We're hypocrisy. Everybody sees the right things we do. And so we'll obey the rules, right? But Christian says, you will not be saved by keeping the law and ordinances.

You cannot be saved because you did not come in through the gate. The rules don't matter. That's what he's saying.

You must go back. You must go back to the gate. You must go back to the gate because all your law keeping is irrelevant if you do not come through the gate.

The gate is for everyone, for the broken, but also for the good people who think they don't need it. Go back to the gate, he says. So then Paul says one final thing.

Faith alone makes someone acceptable to God. Now, if you look down again in these verses, and specifically in 16, you see this amping it up.

[29 : 12] It was general. A person is not justified. And then it was general. We believe so that we might be justified very personally. So general, personal, and then universal because by works of the law, no one will be justified.

You know, these three ways of saying it and stating it negatively are trying to chase away all our exceptions. If you say something negatively, you hear it in a different way than if you say it positively.

And so what Paul is trying to do is chase away all our exceptions. He's trying to drive away all our reliance on our way of life or our works and to unveil the only acceptable way to come to God. Faith. Faith. Faith. Faith alone makes us acceptable to God because faith alone leads us to be justified by faith alone in Christ.

Four times in this verse is that incredible word, justification. Justification. Justification refers to God declaring sinners righteous before him and acceptable to him in Christ by faith alone.

[30 : 24] It's that unspeakable truth that if we trust in Christ, God declares us righteous and views us as righteous, no longer views us as these guilty sinners and treats us as if we had never sinned.

He never repays. He never vindicates. He never chases us down to give us what we deserve. No, no. He treats us as he treats Christ.

All that is Christ is ours. And nothing we do today or ever can alter it. And I love the way the Westminster Confessions of Faith said it.

And I can't remember the exact verbiage, but it doesn't matter the strength of your faith or the character of your faith. It only matters that your faith is attached to Christ.

That's all that matters. But the point here is it must be faith alone. Nothing can be added.

[31 : 23] Nothing can be contributed. There's no additives, no supplements, no additions. We have to ask ourselves, is our faith still alone?

Is our view of our condition so hopeless, so desperate, and so helpless that we collapse wholly on faith?

Is it? Is it? Or is our condition just that we have a few dings? A few chips and the armor?

A few scratches? Or are we totaled? Is our car totaled?

Is our car totaled? In 1546, Martin Luther traveled to the city of his birth, Eiselden, Germany. His wife didn't want him to travel because he's getting old.

[32 : 36] And he preached several times there and then became ill. Within a few weeks, he died. He concluded his last note very appropriately.

We are beggars. This is true. We are beggars. I wonder what your closing.

I wonder what our closing words would be. This passage asks us, are we a beggar? Now, we may say, I'm not a slave to no man.

You know, I'm not a beggar of any man. I'm not a beggar of any person. I'm not going to be a beggar. If you're not a beggar, you don't understand.

I say that with all compassion and brokenheartedness. If you're not a beggar, you don't understand that you're guilty. If you're not a beggar, you don't understand that you're captive to that sin and guilt that holds you down.

[33 : 47] If you're not a beggar, you're not aware that you're in prison in this present evil age. And this present evil age is flying towards a certain end, towards eternal death and damnation.

If you're not a beggar, you don't understand how desperate your state is, that all your efforts and all your works do absolutely nothing before the throne of God above.

And it's not because God is cruel. It's because he is holy and his justice demands that his law be satisfied completely. So if you're not a beggar, you don't understand that on that last day, if you're not in Christ, you're damned.

We have to be beggars. Oh, if you're there and feel the impressing of the Holy Spirit, I want to call you to Christ.

This is the day of salvation. God has been kind and he's forbear with you for a long time.

[35 : 05] And he's held back that last day so that today you might hear the gospel and that as a beggar, you might come and run and hide in Christ.

We are beggars and we cannot have faith. We're beggars, but we cannot live boldly, free. Third point, how to truly live.

Now, immediately, Paul anticipates an objection to what he wrote. If we're not acceptable to God because of who we are or what we've done, then won't everyone just do whatever they want?

That's what the rule followers always say. I mean, what are we going to do? We need some way to obey him. We need some rules. Come on.

Let's get some rules in here. We need to do something or this is going to spin out of control. But Paul says there's a better way forward through Christ. There's a better way forward through Christ.

[36 : 13] So he says the way forward can't be through the law. Now, I think we've sufficiently hammered that nail, but in verse 19 he says, you know, for through the law I died to the law.

Now, what he's referring to there is not his literal death or anything like that. He's referring to his death in Christ. What he means is all the demands of the law against us were satisfied. All the accusations of the law against us were silenced.

All the condemnation of the law against us were exhausted in Christ. So all our guilt is atoned for. And so we're through with the law in that sense. Now, we don't want to go back to the law. Try to make ourselves acceptable.

That's what he's saying. So we live by faith. He continues in verse 19b. Through the law I died to the law so that I might live to God.

I've been crucified with Christ. It's no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me in the life. I live in the flesh. I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.

[37 : 11] Now, union with Christ is that unspeakable truth that Christ, in Christ, all our sins have been forgiven because they were accounted to him. He was crushed for them and he satisfied God's wrath for them through his substitutionary death and credited to us his perfect righteousness.

Right? But right here it's saying something more personal and more powerful. He's not just saying I was crucified with Christ. He does say that and that's wonderful and glorious.

But when he's talking about how to truly live, he says something more personal and powerful. He says, I no longer live. Christ lives in me.

The life I live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God. I live by faith in Christ. John 15 talks about it in this way. I am the vine. You're the branch.

It's an organic metaphor. Separated from the vine, the branch gradually dies.

[38 : 15] But connected to the vine, the branch lives and bears fruit. So he's saying in a similar way.

He's speaking about our day-to-day, moment-by-moment union with Christ, such that separated from me, you die. You don't bear fruit. You don't enjoy that new resurrection power to imbue you with life and to transform you.

Outside of me, you're captive to sin and death and the law and Satan. But in me, you're sustained and strengthened and given new life.

We often think about union with Christ as dealing with only out there into the world realities. But this presses them into right now, right here and now. Now I am living in you.

Even as you are living in me, Christ is our life. He's not just the guarantee of something we'll enjoy later, but the very source and substance of our life now.

[39 : 20] Now, this is a bit mind-boggling. Like, how do we do that? How do we live as if Christ is living through us? And we know we don't go back to the law in that sense.

Do we just do like that freaky guy in Rogue One who says, I'm with the force, the force is with me. I'm with the force, the force is with me. I'm with the force, the force is with me. You know, I'm with the Christ, Christ is with me. I'm with the Christ, Christ is with me. I don't think that's what we're after.

We're not kind of summoning some internal force or some force outside of us to come and sweep us away. I think we should understand that we're so united to Christ now that the line between where He's working and where we're working is often indistinguishable.

That when I'm prompted to pray, I want to believe that Christ is working in me to make me more holy and acceptable to Him, more pleasing to Him.

If I'm pressed to show love, if I see some person in need of love, I want to step out and trust that Christ is working through me, that He's pressing me.

[40 : 35] If I'm prompted to serve, I want to believe that there's more going on than just meeting a need, but Christ is supplying grace to me so that He might supply grace to others so that they might be served.

Sam Storm says about spiritual gifts, he says, that's just God going public among His people. And so encouragement, encouraging others or serving others has very little to do with us.

It's about what Christ wants to do among His people. And so when I'm prompted to serve, I want to believe that Christ is pressing me. I want to believe that the talents and opportunities and the gifts He's given me are not for me, but to press into other people and to serve them.

Moment by moment, we live like this. This is the true freedom of the new covenant. No longer captive by sin's power, the law's threats, or Satan's accusation.

Moment by moment, we draw on Christ. First, we press on freely and boldly, one step at a time, from one degree of glory to another, and then to another, and to another, until the full day dawns.

[41 : 47] That's where we're headed. Isn't that glorious news? He who called us will keep us, because He who called us is faithful. My guess is, not everyone feels boldly free in Christ.

Perhaps you feel like sin is winning out. Perhaps you feel like the pain and pressures of this world are swallowing you up. Maybe the frenetic activity that is our calendar is pushing us and driving us and swallowing us.

But praise God, the one who loved you and gave Himself for you is with us to strengthen you. In a few moments, we're going to return to sing and have time for prayer.

All the pastors will be down here. We're going to return to sing and sing and sing and sing and sing and sing. If you would like prayer for anything, we'd love to invite you down.

If you feel trapped in that web of legalism, those nagging fears that God isn't totally for you, He doesn't completely love you, we'd love you to come down.

[43 : 03] If you desire to be filled with the Spirit and with that sense of God's favor over you in Christ, we'd love to invite you down. If you desire prayer for any other reason, we'd love to pray for you so that we might live in line with the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Let us pray. Father in heaven, we thank you for these few minutes. We thank you for the opportunity to hear your word. Lord, we thank you for this passage and these truths. Now, Lord, we humble ourselves.

We run from all the bad things we've done, all the guilt and shame that still plagues us. We run from them to Christ. Lord, we also run from all the good things we've done.

But we don't want to rely on those things. So we run to Christ. We want to be found in Him, not having the righteousness of our own that comes through the law, but the righteousness that comes through faith.

Lord, we pray that you'd come by your Spirit and minister in ways that only you can do. Cause these truths to have their intended effect. In Christ's name, for His glory.

[44 : 22] Amen. Amen.