

If you have your Bibles, go ahead and grab them. If you don't have a Bible with you, there should be a hardback black one somewhere around you. If you don't own one, that's our gift to you. We're going to finish the book of Galatians today. We're going to do that in a roundabout way, so if you have your Bibles, let's go to Genesis, chapter 1. Just trust me. Just trust me, all right? I know some of you are like, *Wait a minute. You started six chapters of Galatians in February, and now you want to finish Galatians in Genesis 1?* Yes. I do. It'll put together. I promise you.

In John, chapter 10, verse 10, Jesus says the thief comes to kill, to steal, and to destroy, but he (Jesus) has come that we have we might have life, and have it to the full. Now I'll tell you why that's such an important verse. Whether you understand the motivations of your heart or not, really, what's driving your actions and what's driving your life and how you fill your day actually comes back to what you believe is actually going to bring about the most fullness of life possible for you. If you think what you need for fullness of life is a certain type of relationship, you're going to pursue that type of relationship.

If you think what's going to bring about the fullness of life for you is some kind of success in business or success in some other venture, then you're going to put a lot of energy and effort into that, because really, what's motivating your heart is this understanding that, *For me to have a full, satisfying, rich life, this piece is necessary.* So you're actively pursuing that piece, whatever that piece is. That might be, like I said, relationships. That might be some sort of success in your business or in your career.

Goodness' sake; it's Dallas. We don't have mountains or oceans to play in, and so we've kind of made ourselves a sport, so maybe it's a certain physical look you want to have. You want to be chiseled and bronzed, right? You want to have a certain look. Then if you can get the attention of others by how you look, then maybe that's why... On and on I could go, but really, what's driving all of that is the desire for a fullness of life that feels, in this moment, like we don't have it yet, so we're out busily trying to find it.

Now what the book of Galatians has done is kind of deconstructed two different places we try to find fullness, but don't find it, because Christ says, **"I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."** As always, I want to try to be really honest with you. I think you can be married, have a good marriage, have a happy marriage, and not know love or submit your life to Jesus Christ. I absolutely believe it's possible. I do believe, however, the fullness of what marriage was designed to be will only be experienced by those who have submitted their lives fully to Jesus Christ.

Can you enjoy sex and not be a Christian? Sex is a gift from God. Can you enjoy sex and not be a Christian? I'm going to change my sermon. Go to Song of Songs. Yes! You can, but you're not going to enjoy the fullness of what it was meant to be. You're not going to get to the Hebrew word *dode*, a mingling of souls, without Jesus. Do I think you can raise morally apt kids who behave most of the time without Jesus? Yes. Will you ever see their heart transformed to delight in obedience? I don't think so.

When Jesus says, "I have come that you might have life, and have it to the full," he's unpacking this reality that the key to the fullness of life is Christ himself. Now what Galatians is going to deconstruct is kind of taking that key and trying to jam it into the wrong door. It's going to attack the two false ideas about fullness that have Jesus' name on them. Galatians is going to deconstruct legalism, the idea that, *I can control God's affection for me by my behavior, that I will earn his approval by what I do*. It's an outside-in type of religion that says, *I ultimately control God. I control God's emotions. I control God's plans, and I control God's delight by how I behave*.

The writer of Galatians went at that thing like a piñata on Cinco de Mayo, all right? I mean he just blew that idea up. The other error is really the error of license, or *God ultimately does not know what's best for me. I know what's best for me. When it comes to whatever area you want to kind of lay out there, I know better than God. Forget what the Bible says. I mean, how outdated and old-school is that book? Surely that's not hip with where we are today. Surely, we have progressed since then. I'll make my own way. I'll set my own rules, and I'll live my own way*.

These seem like polar opposites, don't they? Legalism and license. A hyper-religion that tries to earn the favor of God, and someone who says, *Screw it all. I do what I want*. They seem like they're at odds, but the heart behind both of them is identical. Both fail to trust God at his Word. The legalists do not believe God will forgive them and love them based on Christ alone, so they'll attach percentages to it.

I'm a Baptist. I'll give him 90 percent. It's 90 percent covered, and then I'm going to help him with the other 10 percent, so let me put on my shoulders some of this salvation. Surely, there's some penance involved. Surely, there are some things I have to give him. Surely, there are some things I have to do to make this cool. That's a failure to trust in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ as sufficient for our salvation. We try to help God. That's a failure to trust.

Now the person who walks in license... *I'll do whatever I want. I'm smarter than God*. You're not going to verbalize it that way; you're just going to live that way. They have the same issue: trust. *I don't believe God at his Word. I do not believe, when all is said and done, he is after my joy and after the fullness of life*. So what you have to do if you're over here in this license camp right here, and you're believing that, is have to

then believe God intends to glorify himself by making his people miserable, and from taking from them any shot at joy. That's what you must believe about God. You must believe the commands of God in Scripture are about robbing you of joy and robbing you of life, and if it's fun, he's not letting you have it.

That in no way brings glory to God, in the same way it never brings glory to a marriage relationship for one of the spouses to go, *I guess. Sheesh. It's the best I could do.* Did anybody dream of that type of relationship when they were growing up? *You know what? I'd like to get in a covenant relationship I can't get out of, and then long for the day of death. When I was a little girl, I used to just imagine getting in that white dress, marrying some lazy schmuck, and being stuck there until God released me into sweet death.*

Really? Or, a man going, *You know, I'd just like someone to live in that and just complain about everything I do. I would like to just have all my weaknesses pointed out on a daily basis, as consistently as possible, right up until I sweetly embrace God's day of death for me.* If you're single here, you are not going, *That's what I want! That's what I signed up for!* Nobody wants to go see that movie..

But what are we drawn to? We're drawn to sacrificial love, a love that says, "Regardless of circumstances, I'm in a delighted love. I delight in you." We're drawn to that. We want that. We want to be delighted in and...hear me...we want to delight in others. That's *in us*. In the same way a man who says, "I delight in my wife," makes other young men go, *I want to find a woman who I can delight in*, a people who delight in God actually help other people see God is delightful.

God is not bringing glory to his name by us going, *We better do it, or he'll blow us up. He has that old cancer thing. We better behave.* That's not what God is doing, but if...now follow me, because I have a point... If you're walking in license, you believe God's intent in glorifying himself is by taking from you joy and fullness of life. Both the legalist and the one walking in license struggle with trusting God at his Word. Now this shouldn't surprise us, because this has been our story from the beginning.

Go to Genesis, chapter 1. We'll pick it up in verse 28. This is the creation narrative, starting in 28. **"And God blessed them. And God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.' And God said, 'Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food.'"**

Now I can stop there, because this is a sweet gig. You have man and woman in the garden of Eden, and the commands of God...follow me here...are, **"Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over...the earth."** I'll take that job! "So let me get this straight. You've given me a naked woman, and what you want me to do is have a lot of babies, fill this earth, and I have dominion? I kind of

rule over everything as your viceroy? Sure! I don't really get paid anything, except the whole earth is mine as your viceroy? Okay!" Sweet gig.

Not only that! There are some little pieces in here that are imperative. We don't have a ton of time on this. Literally, in one of our services, I spent 24 minutes here, and that's not wise when it's not your central text. Later on in this passage, it would say the man and woman were naked and unashamed, and that's a great verse. Not because of the physical nudity that's actually there, but actually because of the fact that before sin enters the world, there's nothing to hide from. There's no such thing as shame. A simple line, that they were naked and unashamed, is a profoundly spectacular text, because no one in this room would say they're there today.

I have tried to prove this to you historically, and I'll do it again today. If you were to give me... If we had the thoughts of your mind, just from this week... I don't need a month from you. I don't need a year from you. I don't need sketchy you 10 years ago. If you could give me the thoughts of your mind this week, and we were to condense it into themes and show that on the screen, would you want to hang out in here and watch it with us? Would you want your spouse to check that out? Would you want your kids to get a 3-D version of that? Don't worry; we don't have that technology yet. We are close.

No, you wouldn't. You wouldn't. Neither would I, but here in the beginning, they are naked. Everything is known. Nothing is covered, and they're unashamed. Now God's going to begin to build some structure around this in Genesis 2, starting in verse 15. **"The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it."** Just FYI, work is not a part of the fall. There was work before the fall. Verse 16. **"And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, 'You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.'"**

Now that's still not heavy-handed. "No hurt, no loss, no shame, no loneliness, no despair, no disease... Fill the earth; subdue it. You have dominion over everything. Don't eat of the fruit of that tree." That's not heavy-handed. That's ridiculous. "How do you expect me to keep up with all your...?" Right? It's, "Don't eat the fruit off of this one. All of *this* is yours. Don't eat off of this one." I've had people ask me, "Why would the Lord even put the tree in the garden?"

This is conjecture. The Scripture doesn't explicitly say this, but let me tell you why I think it's there. I think the tree is in the garden and a simple rule is given to teach man the delight of humbling themselves before the Lord and walking in obedience. What could possibly be taken from Adam and Eve by, "Don't eat the fruit off of this tree, but all the other fruit on all the other trees is yours"? This whole beautiful picture is about to go off the rails.

Let's look at it. Genesis 3, starting in verse 1. **"Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, 'Did God actually say, "You shall not eat of any tree in the garden"?' And the woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, "You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it...""**

Now did God say anything about touching it? He didn't! She just added a rule. She just added one. My children have never done that. "Just add a rule to what Dad said." **"You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die."** Listen to verse 4. **"But the serpent said to the woman, 'You will not surely die.'" Translation: "It's no big deal."** Verse 5. **"For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."**

Do you hear the lie? What's the lie? The lie is, ultimately, "God is withholding from you a joy he doesn't want you to have. God is withholding from you an experience that's going to be the fulfillment of that longing in you, and he's actually robbing you from something you're entitled to." Is that not the lie those walking in license believe? *God is not ultimately after my joy. He's not ultimately after my fullness of life, so I have to take matters into my own hands.*

Let's see how our girl, Eve, responds to this. I think you know. Verse 6. **"So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate..."** Men, this next line is for you. **"...and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate."** Men, look right at me. The Bible, from here on out, will attribute the fallenness of mankind and the universe back to this act of passivity on this man's part.

The Bible does not blame Eve for the fall. It blames Adam, because God had given to Adam care over Eve, for his wife, to love her. This boy who can shave is standing there while his wife is being lied to, while destruction is being laid out on all that is dear, and he does nothing. The sin of man, to this day, is predominately, in the spiritual arena, his passivity, his refusal to engage his wife, and his family, and the church of Jesus Christ like he has been commanded to.

Now don't swing that into chest beating, "Do what I say. You better behave. I got this," because that's just as sinful. If you want to know the line, it's found in Ephesians 5. Love your wife like Christ loved the church in that he loved her and gave himself up for her. How are you an un-passive, godly man? You lay down your life. You faithfully and patiently serve your wife day in and day out and allow your unmovable love for her serve as instruction. That was for free. It's not even the topic.

Watch what happens then. Verse 7. **"Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked."** So there it is, shame, for the first time ever. They've always been naked! They've always been naked, but they haven't had anything to hide. Now sin has entered into the cosmos, and what did they realize first? *We're naked. We have stuff to hide. We have to hide some things.* Watch them respond. Verse 7. **"Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked."** Shame has entered the fray. **"And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths."**

Let's keep reading. Verse 8. **"And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden."** Isn't this legalism? "Okay, we've fallen short. We don't measure up. We don't know what God is going to do. We surely got the, 'You're going to die if you eat it.' We've eaten it, so let's hid our shame with fig leaves, and then let's hide from the Lord."

I'm going to say this. I got cornered last night for saying it; I'll say it again. I'm just confident enough to say it again, and you can try to corner me, and I think I'll win the argument. There are few places where it's as easy to hide from God as it is in church. Do you know why? Put on the fig leaves and hide. What do I mean by, "Put on the fig leaves"? Learn the language and the actions of the church, and then just blend in and hide, all the while having nothing to do with God.

Here, come to service. Pick up on some of our language. Learn which song... *Is this...?* Yeah, that's the one. You raise your hand on this one. This is where you raise your hands. Some of you are coming at it more traditional. You're going to be down here for a while, a few years down here. That'll be huge, coming from this. Ultimately, you're going to need to learn to say, "It's okay to not be okay. Just don't stay there." You're going to have to learn that. We say that a lot around here. Learn to point people toward recovery and home group, whether or not you've ever been or not. Learn to regurgitate some of the things we continually say.

Learn the word *gospel*. Start attaching it to everything. Then have nothing to do with God. *Fig leaves* and *hiding*. What the book of Galatians has completely deconstructed is the idea that fig leaves or the lie will ever bring about freedom and the fullness of life. In fact, he says they are both slavery. To try to earn the favor of God or to hide from God while you fix things is slavery, and believing you are smarter than God for the fullness of your life is slavery.

Really, our only hope is found in the saving work of Jesus Christ, his life, death, and resurrection for us. Our history is one of mistrust. Our mistrust works itself out in one of two directions, and then that takes us back to Galatians. Galatians, chapter 6. We're going to pick it up in verse 11. I just want to let you get there. I want you to see this. It's really important, so I'll just wait for you to get there. If you're not sure how to

navigate, open it up right to the middle, and you're not going to be close. You're going to be like in Psalms. You're going to have to take a hard right then, and go to the back. Okay?

Galatians 6, starting in verse 11. **"See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand."** At this point, a scribe is not writing this letter. Paul has taken the pen. If I could modernize it, he has increased the font size. He has clicked Bold, clicked Underline, clicked Italics, and is now at like 18-point font, pounding away. "You need to hear this!" We know from the rest of the book that our souls are on the line, because there is a possibility of deceit, and deceit is so devastating, because deceit would be a place where we believe we are right when we are wrong. To believe you are right about eternal matters and be wrong is a scary, scary thing.

So look at what he's writing with his giant handwriting. **"It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh who would force you to be circumcised, and only in order that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ."** Again, if you're a guest with us, and maybe don't have a church background, seeing circumcision there might be a bit disconcerting, so let me try to catch you up. In the Old Testament, God marked his covenant people with the mark of circumcision so there was an external, physical indicator of their cleanliness and purity before the Lord.

When Jesus Christ comes, salvation is made, not by religious rules and orders, but by grace and mercy poured out by the Holy Spirit onto those who would believe. But this group of Judaizers came and said, "Yes, but... It is the cross of Christ, but on top of the cross of Christ, you still have to be obedient to the Jewish observances, namely, circumcision." Paul says that's absurd. That's back over here. That's legalism. That's outside-in, not inside-out. Therefore, it's not the gospel.

So he just said here that the men who are trying to convince people to be circumcised in order to be Christians, in order to do these things, are doing it to not be persecuted for the cross. Let me try to explain that. The cross of Jesus Christ is offensive to our sensibilities. Here's why. If you give me a list of do's or don'ts, that's kind of a sport! I control my own destiny, and I control my own fate, so if all I have to do to be loved by God is maybe get up early and read my Bible, and maybe memorize a couple of verses, and maybe only cuss in my head, and quit fighting, and quit drinking, and quit sleeping around...

If I have a list of what I'm supposed to do versus what I'm not supposed to do, then ultimately salvation belongs to me. I manage it. I run it. It's on me, and I get to compare myself to you, and I get to boast in me. I get to boast in me because I'm better than you. I'm more disciplined than you. I've unlocked the key way beyond you. He's saying these men want to have you circumcised because when you preach the cross, you get persecuted, because the cross says you don't do anything.

You are saved by God, through God. He owns it all, so you have nothing to boast in. You get to boast in nothing. You have no grounds on which to boast in anything. But not so with the Judaizers. They're in this for themselves, and they don't want to offend you by telling you, "You can't, and God can, and maybe you ought to let him." So instead, they'll give you a couple of little hoops to jump through. You'll feel better about you. You'll begin to boast in you, and they'll get to nail your scalp to the wall and say, "Ha, ha!"

I think this next one is profound. **"For even those who are circumcised do not themselves keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh."** If you'll remember, he's now referring back to what he has already taught in the book, and that is you have two choices. You, in here today, have two choices. You can be under the law, or you can be under grace, but here's what you have to know. If you're under the law, you're under *all* of the law, and if you're under grace, you're under *all* of grace, and so your two choices are to keep the law perfectly and completely or be judged by the law, or be under grace and find your righteousness in something outside of you, namely, Jesus Christ.

He's saying these men, who are such sticklers about the law, are not being obedient to the fullness of law themselves. The law would judge them as imperfect. The law would judge them as needing someone to stand in the gap. The law would judge them as being sinners, and yet they're trying to get you to submit to a law they have found impossible to submit to themselves. Now watch where he goes. Verse 14. **"But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ..."** We now have grounds for boasting.

Up until this point, you have nothing to boast in in your flesh, and now he has turned it over to the cross of Christ and he says, "God forbid I boast in anything but..." Now we have grounds for boasting. What's the ground for boasting? "...Jesus." That's our ground for boasting. Now I want to let you see grace applied, because I think it might just, if the Spirit is willing, blow your mind. Keep your spot here, and then flip over to Romans, chapter 3. That's going to be back to your left.

Again, I just feel like you have to see these words. **"But now the righteousness of God has been manifested [made visible] apart from the law..."** Now when we think about visible glory of God, we almost always talk in terms of the law. *If I behave in such a way, and I respond in such a way, I actually make much of God by my response to those things.* But he just said, actually, the manifestation of the glory of God, the holiness of God, is not seen via the law; although, if you look at this next part...

"...although the Law and Prophets bear witness to it..." The law and prophets point to the manifestation, the visible picture of God's glory, but they are not in and of themselves a manifestation of the glory of God. Then he answers what that means in verse 22. **"...the righteousness of God..."** The glory of God is found, **"...through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction..."** If you have a church

background, you know verse 23. **"...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified [made right before God] by his grace [unmerited favor] as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus..."**

Now I want to read this backward so you can understand why boasting has been taken from you and given only to Christ and his cross. A gift has been given to you, and that gift is unmerited favor. That unmerited favor reveals the glory of God in saving you despite you. You have a gift you didn't earn, a favor that was not merited by your behavior, and by God saving you despite you, God is glorified. Now let's watch grace be applied.

Verse 25. Let's read verse 24 again so it flows. **"...and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus."**

I'll make a bet with you. Let's see what I have. I think I have a 20 on me. Nope, I have nothing on me. I am guessing at no point in this week did you roll out the word *propitiation*. I'm guessing at work, you didn't go, "Don, propitiate it." It's a strange word for us, but I want to explain what's happening in this text, because God has a massive problem in the Old Testament...a massive problem. I'll just pick one. There are a lot of them. David.

God calls David, "a man after my own heart." He delights in David, blesses David, and gives David authority and power. He's like, "David is my boy here! I'm going to set up his throne and let it rule forever. I will be a descendant through this Davidic line. This is a man after my own heart." Now what's the problem with that? David slept with another man's wife and then had that man murdered. So this is the problem. How is God just if David, a murdering adulterer, is a man after his own heart?

By the way, I believe that trumps almost any of your junk, just to point that out freely. If you're like, *I stink*, I don't think you stink this bad. *Well, I have adultery*. But you don't have murder! It's a significant jump, isn't it? Adultery, murder...? It's significant. Both are devastating, but David is guilty of both, and God...what? He loved him, and he loved God! So how is David considered a man after God's own heart when he is this frail and this weak, and honestly, a guy we would not hire at The Village? "Thanks for your psalms, brother; you can't work here."

How is that possible? Well, you just read about it in Romans 3. God is just and the justifier of sinners in and through...who? Jesus Christ. Maybe this will help you. When Jesus Christ died on the cross, all of your sins

were future sins. You had yet to rebel. You had yet to sin at all against God Almighty, and yet, on the cross of Christ, Jesus is absorbing all of God's wrath toward *your* sin in particular, despite the fact you haven't committed any of them yet. You were extended future grace.

In the same way, David is the recipient of that grace so when Jesus Christ comes and dies on the cross, he is not only justifying, making right, you and me, but also making right David, Abraham, Moses... You can check out the list in Hebrews 11, and check out the list in other parts of the New Testament. Christ's saving work was an eternal work, not just done for a particular time, but for all of time for those who would serve, know, and love him.

So watch grace be applied. God is looking at David, well aware of his days, and saying, "This is a man after my own heart." *Well, isn't he a murderer? Isn't he an adulterer?* I would take you to Romans 8. **"Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies."**

"Yes, he is a murderer. Yes, he is an adulterer. That's deplorable to me. See the cross of Jesus Christ for my wrath."

"Well, didn't he often act unwisely? Didn't you even say you wouldn't let him build the temple because there was too much blood on his hands? He had killed too many men in battle. Too many skirmishes... He had too much blood on his hands to build your temple."

"Yeah. I absolutely said that, but again, who will bring a charge against my elect? I justify. See the cross of Jesus Christ." That same grace afforded to David is available to those of us who will trust and believe in Jesus.

Look right at me. I don't care how you walked in here. You are not beyond the forgiving reach of God Almighty. I'm not saying you're not a train wreck, man. You might be a train wreck with dead bodies behind you, but what I'm saying is you have not sinned so badly that grace isn't available to you. I think what the Bible is saying softly, I'll say more ferociously. You're just going to have to finally get over yourself. You're just going to have to get over the, *I'm the one guy who sinned so bad...* No, you're really not. In fact, you're not even on the team, bro. I used to say JV. The more I read...you didn't even get invited to play. There's way more nastiness in here than there is in you, and there's nastiness here.

Since this is how God saves, since this is what God has done in Jesus Christ, look at verse 27 with me.

"Then what becomes of our boasting? It is..." What? Look at verse 27. **"Then what becomes of our boasting? It is..."** What? **"...excluded."** You have nothing to boast in! If you being made right before God, being saved, is a gift of unmerited favor that reveals the glory of God in saving you despite you, what do

you possibly have to boast in? You have nothing to boast in but him. That puts us in a really sweet place with one another. It means I get to be for you. You get to be for me. We get to celebrate one another because we're not competing. I have nothing to point to, nothing to boast in, but Jesus Christ.

I think one of the places I've seen this historically and I'm wrestling with the Lord and praying with now is in regard to my children. Lauren and I are trying to be wise stewards of the three souls God has given us, so we talk a lot about Jesus. They get to watch us interact with people about Jesus. We've had people sit at our dinner table, and they've seen Mom and me talk to them about Jesus. They've gone to the hospital to visit people in the hospital with Daddy. They've come to funerals and got to watch funerals. We're trying not to hide anything from them. This is just our life. This is what we do. We're dragging them in as deep as we can. We have a lot of little Bible studies with them.

Our house is a lot of fun. We play a lot. We laugh a lot. We goof around a lot. There's everything from dance parties to fashion shows that happen at the Chandler crib, and so we have a lot of fun. In fact, I get to very frequently ask my two older ones, when they complain about being told no, "How often does Daddy say no? Okay, not often, so if I'm saying no here, then there's a reason I'm saying no." In that environment, here's what I know. If God saves my children and they delight in him, he might have used that wisdom, but he saved them. I didn't.

I know people who have selflessly loved their children and pointed them toward Jesus and environments that were healthy and fun and not heavy-handed, and their children want nothing to do with Jesus Christ. Most of your staff here at The Village were saved out of very dark, thug-like situations. There is military school, a lot of drug and alcohol abuse, and a lot of violence in the background of a lot of the guys on staff. Our folks weren't gathering us around and pointing us toward Jesus or having little Bible studies as a family. We weren't singing worship music in the car. That's not the environment we grew up in, and yet God, in his glory, said, "I'll snatch you up anyway. I'll make you mine anyway."

Now hear me. I have a responsibility, as a husband and father, to lead my home well, but I can't save my kids. I can't save them, so if they love him and follow him, my boast is in the cross. The fact that God has worked here...my boast is in the cross. I have a good marriage; my boast is in the cross. My health is restored; my boast is in the cross. I have nothing to point to but that he has been good and that he does good, and not because he owes me anything. My boast is in the cross alone.

The Bible just continues to harp on this. We could go to 1 Corinthians 1:29. We could go to Ephesians 2, which is kind of the Everest of this idea. You have been saved by grace through faith, and the faith to believe in that grace was given to you by God, not by man, so you'd have nothing to boast in. This text in

Galatians actually reads a little bit harder in the New King James Version. It says, **"...God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ..."**

Now back to Galatians. We're in verse 14. **"But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world."** Now this takes us, again, back to identity. This is Galatians 2:20: **"I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."** This is identity.

In Jesus Christ, I have been set free from needing you to validate me, from needing you to give me a purpose, and from needing you to approve. I am completely set free, and therefore do not expect my wife to be something other than what she is. I don't need her to fill me. I have my filling. I don't need my children to be a perfect reflection of our parenting skills. I don't need you to validate me here. I'll be judged for what I'm doing here. I'm well aware of the weight of that. See, when your identity is in Christ, you've really kind of been set free, and that's Paul's point here. I've been crucified to the world, and the world to me. I belong to Jesus. I'm content there, safe there, warm there, and happy there.

Let's keep going. Verse 15. **"For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a..."** What? **"...but a new creation."** Go ahead and circle, **"...but a new creation..."** in your Bibles, or underline it, highlight it, asterisk it, or ignore me altogether if you don't write in your Bible. We did a whole week on this, but it's important to press on it again. He just said neither uncircumcision or circumcision counts for anything, and so again, neither legalism nor license counts for anything, so when it comes to you standing before God, when it comes to justification, when it comes to right standing with God, how you came in here today is of no consequence.

So if you've come in here off of a bender... I mean, you've come in here and your marriage is a jacked-up train wreck, and you reek of alcohol, and you're financially just about ready to get thrown out of your house, and that would be your life in there... Or if you came in here and you have grown up in church, and you are a good kid, and you've always obeyed... The Bible is saying you get both of those in front of Jesus Christ and he calls them both filthy rags.

It's not, "Oh, this license is really a problem." He's like, "Why are you wearing fig leaves? Why are you wearing fig leaves and trying to hide from me?" He says neither one of these count, but what does count is a new creation, so this is the promise. The promise that's made available to us in Jesus Christ is new life, new birth. Former life, new life. We covered that, right? A new creation.

Last week was a big week. I actually celebrated my spiritual birthday, and then, a few days later, my physical birthday. On my spiritual birthday, I started looking over some of my journals from when I first got saved, and just started laughing at myself. I don't know. I was just a moron, but I thought I was awesome. Back then, I'd have been like, *No, I'm sharp. I kind of get this.* Then I'm just like, *You fool*, which kind of has me believing in another 10-15 years from now, I'll be looking at my journals today and going, *Oh, if only there was a flux capacitor.*

In the end, here's what got me. If I could have listed, in order, *Here are the 50 things I'd like to do when I grow up*, do you know where pastoring would have fallen? Maybe 117,000. Christ was nowhere on my radar in regard to owning my life and having my heart. I was skeptical, snarky, and a bit attacking to those kids who were wearing the Lord's Gym tee shirt and the WWJD bracelet. I was just a bit aggressive, a bit snarky. He was nowhere on my radar, and then out of nowhere, Jesus is just like, "Oh yeah? Here's your Lord's Gym tee shirt." He just saved me! I mean he literally just said, "You know what? I'm giving you new affection," and he gave me new affections!

So again, if we're going to be honest, I'm 18 at the time. Women, partying, laughing, sports. That's the spectrum of my affections. This is what I want. Women, partying... I'd like to be more athletic than I am. My time, my energy, my scheming, and my abilities. They were all on that. *This is what I'm after. This is what I want. If I get these things, then life is going to make sense. I'm going to live the fullness of life in this season, in this time. This is the best an 18- to 23-year-old can hope for.* Jesus said, "Well, how about these?" He just completely gave me new affections.

I'm not trying to over-romanticize it. I was still really jacked up for a long time, but he gave me new affections. I loved God all of a sudden. I loved God. I wanted to know what the Bible said. My parents are a part of this church. I started hanging up Bible verses all over the house, all right? I mean I had Bible verses over my light, where you turned it on, Bible verses on my mirror, and Bible verses on my Datsun Maxima. You heard me right. It was yellow, and my Dad had primed the side of it for some reason. I think probably to cost me women, partying, and success in sports.

In the middle of all that, I have this whole new heart! I'm falling short, but I'm hungry. I began to understand what God meant about David when he says, "This is a man after my own heart, so despite his shortcomings, despite his failings, I've lavished the gospel upon him and he is pursuing me as incompetently as he does, but he is pursuing." Again, regardless of how you've come in, what justifies a man before God is glad submission to Jesus Christ, and being made a new creation. The old has passed away. The new has come. New affections replace old affections. New desires replace old desires.

It takes a while for it to all flesh out, but that's what happens, and that's what pleases God. Don't lose the chain. God gave to you those new affections. What pleases God is not that you mustered new affections, because that's over here on the wrong door, but rather that God gave to you new affections pleases the heart of God.

Now let's finish up this book. **"And as for all who walk by this rule..."** What rule? Grace over law.

"...peace [mutual harmony] and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God." Now I have loved playing around with this word, *mercy*, in the Greek this week, and I'll tell you why. It's because it has some pieces in it that literally mean to change the subject. Not only, if we're under grace, do we have peace or mutual harmony with God because our sins have been atoned for, but on top of that, then you have a God who is changing the subject. You have a God who... "Please forgive me. I've done this, I've done this, and I've done this."

"Look what I've done." He changes the subject, and that's frickin' awesome. He just wants to change the subject, man. "Yeah, I know. The whole cross thing...? I was handling that. Let's look at the cross and quit looking at that." For those who will walk in grace, you get peace and mercy. Verse 17. **"From now on let no one cause me trouble, for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus."** Paul was beaten severely, consistently, because of his selflessness and his... "We're going to talk about the cross. We're going to boast in the cross. We're going to look at the cross, and nothing else." Again, that takes from people their pseudo-authority over their lives, and there were many who took great offense to it.

Now verse 18 is the prayer you had to know this book was going to end on. **"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers. Amen."** I'll tell you why I like this prayer, because Paul knows what we know. He's being empowered by the Holy Spirit to write this. He knows what we know, and here's what we know. There are moments, maybe in a setting like this, where the gospel is just kind of laid out here, and my heart really catches wind of it. I really begin to see and believe God has not only forgiven me, but he delights in me, he's going to empower me, he loves me, and he has joy in me, and I begin to feel that, and my heart actually begins to churn up something.

But then it doesn't take long for that to wane and for me to begin to doubt in one of these two directions. I begin to mistrust in one of these two directions. It doesn't take me long, in an environment like this, where the gospel is laid clearly out, and we begin to worship him in song, for my heart to rejoice. Then I go get in my car, and before I get home, I'm falling back into those trains of mistrust. *Let me try to take over here. I'm falling short. Let me kind of fix that for you. Or, Is this really going to lead to my joy? Because it feels like this will lead to my joy.*

Man, I don't know how long the Lord is going to give me on earth. I know I'm redeemed, but... I don't know how you feel about this. I want all I can get of him now. If there's more, a deeper, and richer, and more beautiful life now, I want that now! *Yeah, okay, heaven. I'm in. Let's go rule and reign with God forever as a coheir of Christ. Yes, please! No more pain, no more weakness, no more sorrow... I have a funeral tomorrow. Quit doing funerals? Yes! I'm in!*

But if there's more right now, then I don't want to be wearing fig leaves. I don't want to be wearing fig leaves, I don't want to be hiding, and I don't want to be doubting and fighting against a God leading me to the fullness of possible joy. But the gospel must be relentlessly preached to ourselves if we're not going to drift into one of these two errors. We must constantly remind ourselves of the gospel. We must constantly remind ourselves of God's delight, God's forgiveness, and God's law being good like honey on our lips.

Maybe I'll just close like this. Some of you are here today wearing fig leaves and hiding. That's not freedom, and you definitely haven't fooled God. What's offered to you is for you to be clothed in righteousness. That's the attire of the child of God. Be clothed in righteousness. Only Jesus can give you those clothes. All you can put together yourself is some fig leaves.

Then there are some of you who, right today, have come in this place, and your whole life, this past week, has been you saying, *God does not know what's best for me, so how I work things out sexually, how I work things out with my time, how I work things out with my spouse, how I work things out with school, how I work things out wherever... I know what I'm doing more than God knows what he's doing in regard to leading me to the fullness of life.*

It just so happened that the Holy Spirit drew you into this place today to confront you over your fig leaves or over your believing in lies. Isn't your presence here even now a picture of God's mercy, just like Genesis 1, when he walked through the garden in the cool of the day and he began to call out for Adam? I think the question still echoes: "Who told you you were naked? Did you eat the fruit from the tree?" What we know in Christ is if our answer is, "I have; forgive me," then we get clothed in righteousness and then we get set on the path to the fullness of life and joy in Jesus Christ.

So we're going to respond to God's grace to us in inviting us into this place today in several different ways. We'll sing songs of worship to God in all three of our campuses, and two of our campuses will actually participate in Communion, and then near the end, there will be men and women up front who are willing to pray with you, talk with you, help you understand, or maybe make sense of maybe something I said that confused you. It has been my prayer all week that the Lord would draw your hearts, save, and redeem you, and that you might leave here as a new creation, no longer wearing fig leaves and believing lies. Let's pray.

Holy Spirit, do what only you could do. I pray that you would open up our hearts and minds to love you and follow you. I pray for salvation today. I pray that for some who have been really believing the lie that you're not for them... Maybe that's predicated upon something that happened in history, or just a desire of their heart right now that has gone unfulfilled. I pray that they would repent of that and put their trust in you. I pray for my poor brothers and sisters who have been playing the game of church wearing fig leaves and hiding while all the while intimacy and a walk with you are made available in Jesus. I pray that you would stir our hearts up to worship. It's for your beautiful name, amen.

I love you guys.

© 2012 The Village Church