

If you have your Bibles, go ahead and grab them. Turn to Galatians, chapter 2. We're going to knock out this chapter today in our time. It won't take long. I know you probably think I'm joking, but it won't take our normal 50-55 minutes. So with that said, while you're turning there, I just want to say thank you for something. This past week kind of ends our first-quarter financial giving, so we took a look at everything, and really, God has blessed us so much here.

We were able to take close to \$80,000 (in fact, over \$80,000) and just kind of give it away, so there was some money that went to some church plants in the U.S. There was some money that went to the Middle East, some money that went into Asia, and some money that went to Africa. We were able to just take over \$80,000 and just kind of give it away and sow it into other kingdom initiatives because of your generosity.

So I wanted to start today, before we started digging around in Galatians, chapter 2, and thank you for that. Thank you that you loved the kingdom like that, and that you allow us to do that with your generosity. I wanted to say thank you for that, and we'll do that pretty much at the end of every quarter. We kind of look at it, see where we are, and then we go from there. This is quarter one. I wanted to let you know what we did with it. Again, thank you for your generosity. Okay, let's get to work. Galatians, chapter 2.

Now, what we've covered to this point is really kind of simple. We've said this is what the gospel of Jesus Christ is. This is what it means. The good news, the *euaggelion*, the gospel is that you and I have fallen short. We have worshipped things that aren't God. We have belittled and mocked God with either our lives, our mouths, or our minds, and God's response to that has been to make a way for us to be reconciled to God in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

The two-fold movement that occurs is we get Christ's righteousness, and He takes upon himself our rebellion and sinfulness. So when God then looks at us, he sees Christ and deems us as perfect and spotless and blameless. That's the gospel message, and we looked out of Galatians and said there are two real arguments against that gospel. The first argument is that it does away with the law and the law is holy and divine and you can't get rid of the law. That was argument number one.

Argument number two was that if you preach that, and if you just let the Bible be what the Bible is, then people will use that gospel as a license to sin. So what we've done over the last couple of weeks is we've just dismantled those arguments. We looked at argument number one and simply said yes, the law is holy and it is divine as long as the law is used as the law was meant to be used...as a diagnostic, not a cure.

The law lets us know something is wrong, but the law does not solve what it shows us is wrong in us. The law is holy and it is divine in that it is able to show us where we're sick and where we need help, but it cannot provide the help that ultimately Christ alone brings. That's how we kind of dismantled that argument. The other argument was that if you preach this gospel, people are going to use it as a license to sin. *Oh, you mean God is going to forgive me no matter what? Then I'll do whatever I want, and God will forgive me.*

What we said last week, and where we spent the bulk of our time last week is just basically saying that some people are going to make that argument, but if you are converted, if the Holy Spirit lives inside of you, you will not make that argument. For people to say, "I can do whatever I want, because Christ will forgive me," you're simply revealing that you're not saved, that you don't understand the gospel, and you're not regenerate. You're not born again. We did that work last week.

Paul already told us in chapter 1 that he's not going to relent, he's not going to compromise, he's not going to back off of this. He doesn't shift gears at all. He just, like a guy who won't let an argument go, continues to kind of pound on the same drum. Let's look at it. I find this whole back part of this text to just be spectacular. Let's look at verse 15. **"We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners..."** By the way, that's us, Gentile sinners. Okay? Look at 16. **"...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...listen...because, by works of the law, no one will be justified. Now I want to stop and just spend a little bit of time here, because he's saying something that's pretty profound, and for some of us, it'll be even more profound. He said, basically, that the Jews had a moral advantage over the Gentiles, that the Jews had the law. The Gentiles didn't have the law; the Jews had the law. The Jews had the prophets. The Gentiles didn't have the prophets. The Jews had the covenant. They had the promises. They had the sign. The Gentiles didn't have that.

If there was ever a moral advantage, it belonged to the Jews, but did you see Paul's argument? *Who cares?* That the law justifies no man, so because they had the law from the beginning, it made no difference. So let's just chat frankly. How was your home growing up? Were you loved? Were you supported? Were you encouraged? Were you prayed over? Did your folks point you to Jesus? Were you neglected, abandoned, abused? We have different stories here, different backgrounds here, and different sets of parents here who did things differently, but here's kind of Paul's point. When it comes to justification, when it comes to right standing before God, any moral advantages you received upon birth don't bring about your justification.

So he's saying, in essence, that if your daddy was a deacon and your mom gave birth to you on a Sunday morning straight out onto the altar, and you lived your whole life, and up until this point, you've been faithful in church, and you read your Bible regularly, and you've never been drunk, and you've never done drugs, and you were a virgin when you got married, and you ultimately have done everything along those lines... You only watch PG-and-under movies (but not Disney ones), and you've done it. You've nailed it.

Here's what the Bible just said: When it comes to justification, you are no better off than the man who has no idea who his father is, whose mom gave birth to him at three in the morning in a bar (and shot him out on the bar, knocking over a bottle of Jack), who has grown up in nothing but drunken debauchery and promiscuity, who cusses like a sailor (if you're a sailor, sorry), and has lived in every deplorable way imaginable. Paul just said to be moral is no advantage over the immoral. Both need a Savior. Neither one can justify himself. Neither one has the ability to save himself with that behavior.

Paul just flattened it out, and so here's what we have to do today. We have to get over ourselves, regardless of where we are. If you grew up in church, and you have been here your whole life, and you (I make fun of these, because people don't think they're real, but they're real) had the Sunday school medallions that showed you hadn't missed... That's not a joke. That exists. That happened. One-year pin, two-year pin, three-year pin, all right? You look like Patton. If you have a clean mouth and you've never... That doesn't make you better than or more justifiable than the man who has none of that.

Now when we're talking about these things today, we're talking strictly within the confines of justification, because here's what I can tell you: There are some advantages that are non-justifying to growing up in a home that you are cared for, encouraged, and pointed toward the Lord in. There are advantages there. They're just not advantages that equal salvation, right? So the best a parent can do (and this will help some of you with your swagger) is just kind of gather kindling around their kid and hope the Holy Spirit ignites it.

If a kid believes for any other reason, he believes what his parents believe. He doesn't believe for himself or herself. That's not what we want. We want the Holy Spirit of God to open up our kids' souls so they might own their faith. I don't want my kids to own my faith. I want *them* to have faith. I want *them* to have trust. I want *them* to have joy. I want *them* to have pleasure, and so we're going to do things a certain way, but that doesn't justify my kids.

My kids aren't justified because they were born into a pastor's home. That will not justify them. You are not justified because you've grown up in church. You are not justified because you memorized Scripture. You are not justified for any of those reasons. There is one who justifies. The law never will. That's Paul's point. He's hammering it flat. Now look where he goes next, because this is a brilliant argument. Look at 17 and 18.

"But if, in our endeavor to be justified in Christ, we too were 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."

Now here's all he's saying. In 2 Corinthians, chapter 3...I'm not going to go there, because it would take us probably 30 minutes to break apart 2 Corinthians 3...but in 2 Corinthians, chapter 3, Paul calls Moses, because he was a minister of what was written, a minister of sin.

What that meant is basically that when the law enters the scene, we know we're sinners. So if we could set, kind of, the stage, can you imagine what Israel thought when Moses came down the mountain and there were rules? Because there was no law before Moses walked down. Moses walks down with the Law and he says, "Don't worship other Gods." Now what's behind him? A golden calf they had fashioned and were worshipping. "Don't covet. Don't..."

Right there. You don't think there are massive gulps going on as he's reading through these things? But before there were the rules, there was no condemnation, because you hadn't broken the rules, right? Well, Moses comes, bringing the rules, and what do the rules do? The rules show that we fall short. The rules show that we can be condemned. The rules show that we are far from what God wants us to be. The rules reveal all of that. It's the diagnostic we've been talking about for the last couple of weeks.

Now here's Paul's argument. If Christ has come simply with more rules, then he has not come to bring life and righteousness, but rather has come to bring more sin, more condemnation, and more death, so Paul's argument here is Christ hasn't come to bring new rules! It's not why he's come! He hasn't come with a new bag. Instead, he's come, saying, "I am your righteousness. I'm taking God's wrath from you. I am freeing you from the effects of the fall. I am rescuing you from the clutches of sin and death." He's not coming and bringing accusation, he's coming and removing all accusation. He literally takes it.

He's saying, "I'm not building back up what I just ripped down!" He doesn't say, "I've come to fulfill the law, and now here's some more law. Since you couldn't keep it the first time, I've got some maybe weaker ones." The Law was as basic as it gets. "Hey, don't lie." Right? That's not complex. What Paul argues here is if you make Jesus a bringer of rules, you make him a minister of sin and condemnation and death, and is he that? "By no means," the text says. He has not come to rebuild what was torn down. That is not why he came.

The other thing I want you to see in this text that will be important as we wrap up today is the thing the law does that's different than what Christ does. The law creates space between you and God. Do you see how that works? When the law shows you you've fallen short, what happens? It shows you this great separation between the holiness of God and you. So the law will continually create space between you and God, and what Jesus does is he fills that space and becomes the great reconciler.

He reconciles you to God, and he fills that space so we're able to worship him, able to pursue him, able to make much of him, able to enjoy him, able to, without guilt or shame, have a deep and intimate relationship with the God of the universe, because no longer does the law accuse, but Christ grants life and righteousness to those who would believe and put their trust in him. Now look at this next line. **"For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God."** Let me try to help us here. He just said that *through* the law I died *to* the law, that I might live to God.

Let me try to explain how the law trumps the law. We have just governing principles in the Chandler house. We'll just call them, for the sake of illustration, law. We have four laws. Here's what they are. Two of them in particular just collide often, so here are our rules: Number one, have fun. That is a legitimate rule in our house. We will have fun. We will laugh. We will enjoy one another. There is a discipline involved if you

don't. You're going to have fun, and you're going to like it. All right, so we want to play, we want to think about that, and we want to have fun, and that's a law.

That's a rule, but here's another rule, and you'll see how they collide. The second rule was to be safe. So have fun, but be safe. Now do you see that those rules, at times, can come into contact with one another? Here's my question. If "Have fun" collides with "Be safe," which law wins? *Really?* Which law would win that? "Well, you know, you're having a good time running around with that knife and my pistol. Go ahead. Yep, that's one of the rules. Have you chambered around? Excellent." No! "Be safe" will always trump "Have fun."

So what's happening in this text is there is a greater law that trumps a lesser law, so in my home, "Be fun" is a law, but a greater law in my home is "Be safe," so that if something is fun but not safe, then the safety law overshadows the fun law. I don't know if you have a kid like this, but I have one kid in particular who, part of her brain, the part of her brain that lets her know that she can die somehow whispers to her that she can't. So we've almost drowned, and we've broken our collarbone, and we love to get on the roof, and we... Right? There's just nothing in her that goes, *I could die doing this*. It's almost like that part of her brain encourages her. *You're immortal. Go. Go, do. Right?*

And so, in this text, what Paul is saying is the greater law, the law of faith, has freed him from the Mosaic law with its ordinances and rules. There's a greater law that has set him free. Listen to this, because this is going to be important for us, that this greater law of faith has set him free to live to God. Now the implications of that little statement are massive, because here's what it's doing. He's completely restructuring our understanding of what it means to live for God. Think about that language. When people talk about living for God, what do they usually point to? They point to some sort of external moral action, don't they?

Now, remember what we've already covered, that moral advantages are of no advantage when it comes to justification. He just said that, really, all of that isn't what it means to live for God. So if you're like, "I'm not going to do this, and I'm going to do this, because I want to live for God," you completely have missed what it means to live for God. To live for God means to have faith in Christ and to make much of God because of Christ. That's pleasing to God. **"And without faith, it is impossible to please God."** A life lived unto God is a life lived in faith in Christ, so when you use language like, "I want to live for God, and so that means I have to do this, and I have to do this, and I have to do this," you're revealing you don't quite understand.

I'll get about as frank as I've probably ever been on the stage and get myself a meeting with the elders. You know, there's a text in Isaiah that's later quoted by the apostle Paul, and it says, **"...all our righteous acts are like filthy rags,"** right? Well, we've cleaned that up a bit. It literally translates, "All our righteous acts are like menstrual rags," and that's nasty. Are you uncomfortable? Because I am. So he says, "You take all of that, all of your Sunday school pins and your PG-watching movies, and all that stuff, and you lay that before God as an offering. It's filthy." The sacrifice that God is pleased with is a broken and contrite spirit, a faith in the Son of God.

He was set free from the law by a greater law, the law of faith, and that law of faith enabled him to live to God, live for God, have a life that really showed out the glory and magnificence of the God of the universe. All right, now how does this look practically? How does this look on the ground? Let's keep going. This is our coffee-cup verse out of the book of Galatians. Galatians 2, now let's pick it up in verse 20. **"I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."**

We'll stop again there. Here's how it looks. There's an unreal amount of freedom if you can really get this. If the Spirit would open up your heart for you to really dial in on this, there's a surreal amount of freedom. So he just said, "How does this work? How does the law of faith trump the Mosaic law and allow me to live unto God? Well, ultimately, in the heavenlies, I have been crucified with Christ, so it's no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me." Now this union with Christ becomes... What accusation could possibly befall you?

This means all of our sins, past, present, and future, are taken care of in the person and work of Christ, so that if there is accusation against you, "No way this man deserves heaven. This man deserves hell. He deserves damnation. He deserves sorrow. He deserves pain." Do you know the response from heaven? "Absolutely, he does. Absolutely, she does. See Jesus."

"Hey, they've stumbled and fallen again. They've turned their back again. They've fallen again. Are you going to continue to love them?"

"Oh, absolutely. See, Jesus has already paid for it. Every bit of that is paid for."

But then he goes on, and he says, "Not only is all of my sin taken care of in Christ because of this union, but now the life I live in the flesh." Now we have to be careful. When it says *flesh* here, it's not talking about sinful attributes. It's literally talking about our flesh. I'm dead in Christ, but I'm still standing in this body, right? You should know the answer to that. It's a pretty easy answer. I'm dead in Christ, but this body is still here, and so, although I am dead in Christ, the life I live in the flesh I now live with faith in who? The Son of God. Why? Because he loves me, and he gave himself up for me.

So here's the confidence that you and I should be able to walk in. We have our face like flint on Jesus Christ. We are unmovable, unshakeable, growing into him, following him, getting to know him, falling more and more in love with him, and regardless of stumble or stammer, it's been paid for. I'm going to blow it this week. Maybe you want a pastor who's holier than that. I'm going to blow it. Maybe that'll be verbal, maybe it'll just be a thought, maybe it'll just be a state of my heart, but I'm going to fall short, and here's what happens.

If I'm living under the law, that falling short could paralyze me and create space between God and me, severing the power of the Holy Spirit in me and the victory and joy I get to walk in in Christ, but if I understand that falling short has already been absorbed in the cross of Christ, and that what I have been given by God in Christ is Christ's righteousness, then doesn't that embolden me to just keep pursuing him, to get up, to repent, to be grieved that I have rebelled against such a holy lover of my soul and be set free to pursue him all the more?

See, I keep saying this over and over and over again... If you could get your eyes off you and get them on Jesus, everything would change, but the more you're like, "Oh, you know what I'd sure like to do? More of that, and I can't believe I did that again, and..." The more it's inward, the more it's all about you, the more paralyzed and weak you're going to be, but the more you fix your eyes on the Author and Perfecter of our faith, the more you can look above, where Christ is, the more you can meditate upon and think upon and really glory in who Christ is, the more free you'll be, and the more victory you'll walk in.

It's such a simple thing that so many people struggle with. Get over yourself! Celebrate Jesus! Don't celebrate you, and don't loathe you. Just focus on Jesus. Look at this last line, how he begins to close this out (or how he does close this out until he calls him stupid in 3:1, which I am giddy about.) Verse 21: "**I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose.**" Okay, how many of you were here during our little Christmas Advent season? How many of you were here for those sermons? Okay, that's good. In another service, there were, like, six. I was like, "Okay, this is going to be new to you."

So what we showed in that Advent series was there was this massive cosmic plan for Christ to come and redeem all things. You saw a whisper of it in Genesis 3. You saw it again in Genesis 12 and Genesis 15. We saw it in the line of kings. We saw it again in the Prophets. All the way up to the birth of Jesus Christ, we saw this promise that a messiah was coming and was going to accomplish what the law could not accomplish. So Paul is saying here that if you run back to the law, you nullify the grace of God. You make the death of Christ meaningless.

How does this play out in a day-to-day kind of a way? Years ago, when Kobe Bryant came onto the scene out of high school, he made his first all-star game, and that was one of the years that Magic Johnson had kind of made a comeback. (I don't know if you'll remember this stuff. It doesn't matter if you remember it.)

But Kobe had the ball in the all-star game, and Magic was guarding him (and I know my age now, because I know there are people in the room right now who are like, *Magic?* All right. *Kobe, I know, but who's the "Magic" guy?* *There was magic in there?* Okay. Google, all right?)

Now, Kobe has the ball. He's kind of on the wing, and he has help. Magic has him, so he has help, but do you remember what he did? He waved him out. He was like, *Get off me. I want him one-on-one. I don't need anybody's help. I've got him.* And then he drove to the basket, got swatted, and I worshipped. *All right, punk!* So that's when he was a punk. How he's a perennial all-star, but anyway... Here's what happens to us, and it happens on both sides. What you have offered to you is forgiveness and ever-increasing joy, the fullness of life now on into an eternity with the Creator of the universe, and like Kobe, you're going, *I don't need it! Scoot back! I've got this! I've got this!*

But you're doing it in two different places. Some of you are going, *I don't need Jesus. Man, I didn't miss Sunday in two years. I don't need Christ. I read my Bible every morning. I don't need Jesus. I've been to Africa on a short-term mission trip. I don't need Jesus. I've got a Christian T-shirt. I don't need Jesus. I've got stuff on my car.* And you nullify the grace of God, and you make Christ die for nothing. Why? Because you can earn your own righteousness, except you're out of step with the gospel, and that's not true.

Others of you are over here going, *I don't need Jesus. I can make myself happy. I don't need Jesus. I can find my own fullness of life. I don't need Jesus. I can find my own way.* And just to be fair, both of you are fools. For both of you, how's it working? Huh? How's it working for you? On this subject, I just feel like I could cuss. I want to cuss. I want those words for this.

This is what you have! This is what's on the table, and you want to trade this? This goes back to earlier when he's like, "I'm *astounded!* It blows my *mind* that you would make this trade! That instead of intimacy with the God of the universe, you would nullify that grace, nullify that intimacy, and go, 'You know what? Just let me learn about you. I don't want to know you. I just want to learn about you. I don't want a real intimate relationship with you. I don't want freedom. I like my chains!'"

How much further do you have to go over here, men? I mean, do you think you're going to stumble, in either place, onto a golden decade where it finally just clicks for you? "Church just hasn't really... I just feel like I'm lacking. I'm feeling like I'm missing something, feeling like I'm really not in sync with the Lord, but maybe if I try a little harder, do a little bit more..."

"What about a relationship with Jesus?"

"No, I've got this. I've got it."

You think you're going to hit your prime at 47 and it's all going to click? It's not. And you, over here, look. How much sex and licentiousness can you have and it not work for you to think that what you need is more of what you already have gotten that hadn't worked? See, that's a bit of psychosis there. Paul says, "I do not nullify the grace of God, because if righteousness were attained in any other way, Christ died for nothing." So how are you living? Are you waving him off? "*I've got this!*" How's that space? That's a great way to judge whether or not this is really sinking into your heart. How's that space?

If the law creates space and Christ fills space, where's that space? Are you able to worship, able to make much of him, have a relationship with him that you desire to grow deeper and more intimate, or is it this chasm that you don't know how to get through, don't know how to get across? It could just be that you're running into the diagnostic and not the cure. It could just be that you're nullifying the grace of God, and the opportunity you have today is to repent.

This might be the first time you've ever been in church where someone has told you, but maybe you need to repent of church. Maybe that's what you need to repent of. Maybe what you need to repent of today is you trying to justify yourself with religious things and not allowing yourself to be justified by the only thing that can actually justify you. So the offer is on the table for a former life to be made new to the image of

Christ, to be transformed by the glory of his grace, and my hope is that you will hear, your heart will be opened, and you'll respond. Let's pray.

Holy Spirit, help us. Some of us have just been deceived, and we have, with pure hearts, nullified your grace, whether through bad teaching or through iniquity in our hearts, God. We've brushed you off and decided that we can handle it on our own and we can overcome on our own, so we ask for forgiveness tonight. For those who have sinned against you and made light of the death of Christ by going about it a religious way, help us.

For those who have nullified your grace by going about it their own way, outside of the walls of religion, but rather, just in their own kind of hedonistic pursue-their-own-pleasure kind of way, who have been bankrupt in their lives and have been left wanting more, despite their experiences in the very things they continue to pursue... So help us tonight, Holy Spirit. Open up hearts. Bring about salvation and repentance in the hearts of your people and those who will be. It's for your beautiful name I pray, amen.

Love you guys.

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