

Catford Lectures 2010-2011

Part 8

Speaker	Catford Lectures Conference; Michael Hardt; M. Best; Geoff Hawes; Andrew Poots; Simon Attwood; C. Bell; Michael Vogelsang; Nick Fleet; Graham Warnes
Place	Catford
Date	01.11.2010
Duration	01:01:13
Online version	https://www.audioteaching.org/en/sermons/ccl004/catford-lectures-2010-2011

Note: This text is a computer generated transcript of the sermon. In some cases it may contain errors.

[00:00:00] Good afternoon.

Okay, let's start with hymn number 10.

Let's not make it a dirge, because it's not a dirge hymn.

So whoever's got the gift of starting hymns, if they'd like to start it for us, number 10, grace is the sweetest sound that ever reached our ears. When conscience charged and justice frowned, it was grace removed our fears. Number 10.

Grace is the sweetest sound that ever reached our ears.

[00:01:01] When conscience charged and justice frowned, it was grace removed our fears.

This we owe to the slave, today's light and liberty.

It takes its terror from the grave, from death its victory.

Grace is the vine of wealth, laid open to the poor.

[00:02:04] Grace is the sovereign spring of health, if thy forever hold.

All grace then let us sing, and joyful wondrously.

When grace hath brought shall glory bring, and we shall reign with him.

When shall we see his face, with all the saints above.

[00:03:08] And sing forever of his grace, forever of his love.

Amen. One of the aims of the Catford lectures, I believe, is to teach fundamental Bible truths. And I'd like to try to do so this afternoon by essentially taking one of the books of the Bible, and going through it and summarizing.

[00:04:04] See why it was written, and try to draw out some themes. I want us to get a feel for the book as a whole, the overall picture it gives, how it fits together. I appreciate that, of course, many here are familiar with it, and are very conversant with the lessons it teaches. But I would like us all to be reminded of its importance and implications. Now, of course, there's much that will have to be omitted because of time.

And I accept that you may judge that I've emphasized some thoughts over others.

I should have done it differently. But what I present to you comes after prayerful consideration. Now, before we come to the book, I'd like to spend a little time on the background.

[00:05:06] This is a book that was written in a great hurry. Really, we could say the author was desperate.

He'd had a great shock.

And he was desperate to do something about the situation. And that meant writing a letter.

This is one of the New Testament letters, almost certainly the first one written. It comes from Paul's pen.

Now, it seems that Paul had serious eye problems.

He usually dictated his letters to a secretary. But here he has no one. And so he writes it himself.

And he actually remarks on that in this particular letter. And it's Paul's letter to the Galatians that I refer to.

[00:06:05] There's one thing I want us to particularly think about as we look at the book. And that is God's grace.

Now, oddly enough, the word grace doesn't appear very often in the book. But the theme flows through it.

Everything Paul writes about in this letter links somehow to grace. I want to review the book, summarize it, and try and see sort of flow of thought. Now, I want to spend a bit of time on the background, as it's important to our understanding of what Paul writes in this letter as a whole.

Galatia was a Roman province in the middle of what is now Turkey. Ankara, the capital of Turkey, is located in Galatia.

And Paul visited southern Galatia on his first missionary journey. [00:07:03] Pisidian, Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe are all in Galatia.

We also read that he passed through Galatia on his second missionary journey as he traveled west. And he also traveled through Galatia on his third journey, establishing the disciples. In Acts 14, we read of Paul's first visit to these cities.

In Iconium, his preaching had such an effect that the city seems to have been in uproar, with many threatening to stone him and a great number of Jews and Greeks believing. Paul and Barnabas fled to Lystra, where they healed a lame man and were fated as gods, until with great difficulty they managed to put a stop to it. But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, turned the people against them, and they stoned Paul. [00:08:08] They thought they killed him.

The scriptures tell us that the disciples, those I assume who had just been saved through the preaching of Paul and Barnabas, showed great courage. They took their place with him and stood round what they might well themselves thought was his dead body. And Paul gets up and goes back into the city. These courageous disciples are some of those that Paul is writing to in this letter. Paul and Barnabas then go on to Derbe where many are saved, and then they return to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, strengthening disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith.

So these Galatian believers, the very ones he's writing to in this letter, had heard Paul, they'd welcomed him, they'd accepted the message.

[00:09:07] In fact, they were so delighted with Paul coming to give them the good news of Jesus and were, it seems, so concerned about his eye problems that they would, if they could, have torn out their own eyes to give to him. Now that sounds a bit extreme, but Paul writes it, and I'm sure that it's literally true. If they could have done, and it would have helped Paul, they'd have given him their own eyes. That's how much they appreciated Paul and what he taught them of the Lord Jesus.

But things changed.

Some men came from Judea with a worrying story.

Paul hadn't told them everything.

Yes, Christianity is wonderful, I'm sure they said, but Paul has it a bit wrong. [00:10:03] What he's presented is too simple.

He's watered down the message.

Those who know the true gospel are the apostles, the twelve who were with Jesus all the time, specially chosen by him, saw his miracles, heard his teaching, they're the ones. And who is this Paul? He wasn't in Palestine at the time when Jesus was there. In fact, the first we know of him is that he's trying to kill Christians. And then he suddenly changes his mind and starts preaching Jesus. But can we trust what he's preaching?

And where did they maintain Paul had gone wrong? Paul had said that all could be acceptable to God. Any could be saved by simply trusting in Jesus.

He taught them that Jesus' death on the cross was all that was necessary for salvation. There was nothing for them to do except accept it by faith.

[00:11:04] It was purely grace on God's part, grace, unmerited favor.

God gives blessings that are completely deserved just because he chooses to. That's what Paul had told them. What they maintained that he had failed to tell them was that actually they couldn't be saved unless they kept the law of Moses as well.

Keeping the law was necessary for salvation. So that's what they were told. And the Galatians believed this.

The whole issue of salvation of the Gentiles had caused much problems and debate already. Could Gentiles be saved? If they could, was it necessary for them to essentially become Jews in order to be saved? [00:12:02] Did they have to go through the rite of circumcision? For Jews, these were difficult issues. They knew from their scriptures that there would be blessing for the Gentiles, but they struggled to understand how this could be. Gentiles were not God's chosen people. Outside of the circle of blessing, they're unclean.

When we go through Acts, we see that Philip was a pioneer in taking the gospel to the Gentiles. In Acts 8, we read of him bringing the good news to the Samaritans, proclaiming Christ in the cities of Samaria. The Samaritans were descended from Gentiles planted there some 700 years earlier by the Assyrians, and over the years come mixed with the Israelites. Many Samaritans believed, and the apostles sent Peter and John to check it all out. [00:13:01] Meanwhile, Philip leads a Gentile, the treasurer of the Ethiopian queen to Christ, and baptizes him. A little later, Peter has to be clearly shown that Gentiles could be acceptable to God as Gentiles.

God told him in a, I suppose you'd say, a triple vision, that he should not consider anything that God had cleansed as unclean.

At that very moment, messengers came from a Roman centurion, Cornelius, an unclean Gentile, saying that Cornelius had had a vision of angels telling him to go where Peter was staying and fetch him. And to give extra confirmation that God was speaking to him through all this, the Holy Spirit specifically told Peter to go with the men.

[00:14:06] Peter had needed a lot of convincing, but he went with Cornelius, and when the Holy Spirit fell on Cornelius and those with him, this made it completely clear that God accepts Gentiles. And the scriptures say that the Jewish believers who'd gone with Peter were astonished that the Holy Spirit should have been poured out even on Gentiles. And when Peter got back to Jerusalem, he became the object of criticism. You went to the house of uncircumcised men and ate with them, was the accusation. Peter explained to them his great reluctance and how God had had to convince him, and the results of Gentile acceptance of the gospel.

And the criticsers heard what Peter had to say and accepted it. [00:15:03] It says, offering praise to God that Gentiles could have repentance unto life.

A very positive way to react to correction.

Persecution of believers in Judea forced many to flee. Some went to Antioch, a city in what is now southern Turkey, and witnessed the Gentiles, and many were saved.

And when they heard of this in Jerusalem, they sent a godly and reliable man to see what was what. A man full of the Holy Spirit and faith, we're told. That was Barnabas. And when he saw for himself how God was acting among the Gentiles, he was glad, it says, and encouraged them to remain true to the Lord. And I'm sure he must have reported back to those at Jerusalem. [00:16:05] Well, we might have thought that the issue of Gentile believers had been sorted out after all this, but not for some. An element of the church in Judea continued to hold that obedience to the law was necessary for salvation.

And Acts chapter 15 describes a meeting of Paul and Barnabas with the apostles and leaders in the church to settle the issue. And the agreement to the meeting was that not only was law keeping unnecessary for salvation, but it should not be imposed on Gentiles as a rule of life for those who are saved.

But there are still some determined to persist in this pernicious error. And these teachers arrived in Galatia with their criticisms of Paul and the gospel he preached, and the Galatians were taken in. [00:17:05] Paul had said they could be saved through faith in Christ who died for their sins. You cannot be saved unless you keep God's law as well, they said.

What a terrible insult this is, isn't it, to our God. How demeaning to Christ to suggest that his work is not complete.

How pleasing to our egos to think that we can do a bit towards our salvation.

Now, of course, we all know that this is clearly demonstrated, not only in this letter, but throughout the New Testament, that this teaching is wrong. But it's extraordinary how similar teachings are prevalent in major parts of Christendom today. Let's look at the book. Paul's letter to the Galatians. [00:18:03] After brief introductory words, he gets the main point. Verse six, chapter one, verse six. I marvel that you are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel.

Which is not another, but there will be some that trouble you and would pervert the gospel of Christ. I marvel, I'm astonished, he writes.

And what the teachers have presented was another gospel. It was another because it wasn't what they'd learned from Paul.

And yet it was not another. It was not another gospel. It wasn't good news.

The word gospel, of course, means good news. [00:19:01] It wasn't good news. In fact, it would be terrible news if it were true. The worst news imaginable.

And what does Paul write about those preaching this appalling message? I don't think Paul could find any, any stronger words to show his abhorrence of the teaching. Verse eight.

But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so I say now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than what you've received, let him be accursed. Let him be accursed.

Or let him be eternally condemned. Is that serious?

[00:20:04] I don't, for time's sake, intend to dwell on the first two chapters. But briefly, the false teachers had questioned the source of Paul's teaching.

Who is Paul? He wasn't in Palestine when Jesus was on earth. He didn't see his miracles and hear his teaching. He wasn't one of the twelve. Where did he get all this about Gentiles being acceptable to God as Gentiles? So how does Paul answer? Verse eleven.

But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.

No, it's true that I didn't get what I teach from man. He didn't even get it from the apostles. In fact, he got it by direct revelation from God.

[00:21:05] So does that mean it went against what the apostles taught?

No, Paul notes. In fact, he did check it out. He says that after three years, he went to Jerusalem and stayed a fortnight with Peter and met James too. Verse eighteen. I'll read that verse. Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter and abode with him fifteen days. But other of the apostles saw I none save James, the Lord's brother.

And then sometime later, in fact, after fourteen years, he and Barnabas came to Jerusalem and met with those who seemed to be leaders, Paul writes.

And this is what we have at the beginning of chapter two. I take it here that he refers to the meeting we mentioned described in Acts 15. [00:22:04] The leaders confirmed the message that was preached. Verse six. Chapter two, verse six. But of these who seem to be somewhat, whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me. God accepteth no man's person. For they who seem to be somewhat in conference added nothing to me. But contrary wise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter.

For he wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision. The same was mighty in me to all the Gentiles. And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship.

And Paul and Barnabas took Titus, a Greek, with them. [00:23:05] Note that's in verse three. But Titus was not compelled to be circumcised. He wasn't forced to submit to Jewish rights. That's proving the point in practice.

And Paul also mentions an incident at Antioch where even the apostle Peter had to be publicly corrected.

When Peter arrived at Antioch, he ate with Gentiles, so going against Jewish customs. But when Jews came from Jerusalem, he withdrew and would only eat with the Jews. So Paul tells the Galatians about Peter's inconsistency and what he had told him in reproof. So in these first two chapters, Paul essentially defends himself and his teaching from accusations of an incomplete and man-made gospel. [00:24:10] And he closes the section by making a fundamental point. Verse 21.

Second part. If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.

If what these teachers said were true, then Christ died for nothing.

If we get right with God through teaching the law, through keeping the law, then Christ's death has no point.

Paul then brings them back to the issue. Is being right with God simply through faith in Christ or is something more required? Observance of Jewish law. So Paul asks them a comprehensive set of questions and answers them.

[00:25:08] These are the issues he raises. First of all, how did they receive the Holy Spirit? Secondly, how did Abraham become right with God?

Thirdly, by what channel would salvation come to the Gentiles? Fourthly, what does scripture say about those who try to keep the law? And fifthly, what does scripture say about how not just Abraham, but people in general can be acceptable to God? Now there's a very comprehensive set of questions. First asked about their experience. How did they receive the Holy Spirit? The other four ask about what God had said in the scriptures. How Abraham became right with God? [00:26:02] By what channel salvation would come to Gentiles?

What the scripture says about those who try to keep the law? And what the scriptures say about how people in general can be acceptable to God? So verse 2 of chapter 3.

He writes, this only would I learn of you. Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law or by the hearing of faith? How did they receive the Holy Spirit? By believing what God taught them or by observing the law? Receiving God's Spirit was a demonstration that God accepted them. How did they get this experience? Well, the answer's clear from verse 3. Are you so foolish having begun in the Spirit? Are you now made perfect in the flesh?

Receiving the Spirit was associated with the beginning of their Christian experience [00:27:02] when they came to Christ by faith.

So his next question is, what do the scriptures say about the father of the Jews, Abraham?

Here's a man whose faith and practice would uphold the teaching of these Jews, surely. How did he get right with God? Verse 6, it says, even as Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness.

Abraham himself got right with God through faith. This is not speculation. The scriptures specifically say so. Abraham believed God and it was credited him for righteousness. You can't get much clearer than that. Not obedience to any law, but believing God.

And following on from this, he notes that it's those who believe who are like Abraham. [00:28:07] Verse 7, know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.

The Jews like to make so much of Abraham and that they were descended from him. But actually those who had his characteristics, those who are really children of Abraham, were actually those who accepted God in faith.

So my third question was, by what channel would salvation come to the Gentiles? Verse 8, and the scripture foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham saying, in thee shall all nations be blessed. [00:29:01] So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.

Salvation for the Gentiles was actually announced to Abraham himself, announced in fact as coming through him.

And this was of course many years before the law was given to Moses.

So not only was Abraham the man on whom they relied so much, himself accepted by God because of his faith, but also that blessing for the Gentiles would come through him. My fourth question was, what do the scriptures say about those who try to keep the law? Verse 10, for as many as under the works of the law are under the curse, [00:30:03] for it's written, cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. They're under a curse. The scripture is clear. Cursed is everyone who doesn't continue to do everything. Unless they did everything, as in the law, they're under a curse.

And Paul doesn't take this point further as it's not necessary. Only a small reflection would have told him that they couldn't do everything in the law. And fifthly, what does the scripture say about how people can be acceptable to God? Verse 11, but that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, [00:31:02] it is evident for the just shall live by faith.

This is a quote from Habakkuk in the Old Testament. The just will live by faith. The scripture is telling us that being acceptable to God is not by keeping the law. As the law is not based on faith, it's simply rules. Do the rules and you'll live, but no one could. The just, those right with God, will live by faith. And Paul then brings these points together in Christ. Verse 13, Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us. For it's written, cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree, that the blessings of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. [00:32:03] The curse of the law is dealt with in Christ.

Cursed is everyone who's hung on a tree. He became a curse for us. The blessing given to Abraham for us Gentiles is fulfilled in Christ. And by faith in Christ, we receive the promise of the Holy Spirit.

At this point, Paul anticipates an objection to his arguments.

Yes, God made promises to Abraham and promised blessing to the Gentiles. But surely these promises were superseded by the law. The law came later, much later. Therefore, Gentiles should be required to keep the law. So how does Paul answer this? In verse 8, Paul had quoted God's promise to Abraham that all nations will be blessed through him. But now he expands on this.

[00:33:03] If we look back to where this promise was made to Abraham in Genesis, it says the promise is, says to him, and to your seed, singular.

And Paul tells us here what this means. All blessings come through Christ. Verse 16.

Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made.

He saith not unto seeds as of many, but as of one. And to thy seed, which is Christ.

Does the law replace God's promise to Abraham? Verse 17.

And this I say, that the covenant which was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was 430 years after, cannot disannul.

[00:34:01] That it should make the promise of none effect.

Now God's promises are not put aside. They remain.

The giving of the law doesn't change anything as far as God's promises is concerned. God promised and so he will fulfill his promises.

Specifically the blessing, the inheritance, can't depend on the law because God promised it. In contrast, the law has a conditional element. Do it and you will live.

And so this leads on to a further question. Why then did God give the law? What was the purpose of the law? If the law wasn't given to provide a means for blessing, why did God give the Israelites the law?

Verse 19.

Wherefore then serveth the law?

[00:35:02] It was added because of transgressions till the seed should come to whom the promise was made.

And then down to verse 24.

Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ that we might be justified by faith.

God gave it to point to Christ. It points us to Christ because it reminds us that we're sinners. No one who tried to live under the law could avoid that conclusion. We therefore need a saviour and that's where Christ comes in. So the law does perform a most valuable function. It points to Christ.

In verses 24 and 25 here, the law is described as a schoolmaster or a child trainer.

[00:36:03] This was a person, often a slave in fact, who trained and disciplined a child until he was old enough to take on his responsibilities. And Paul is presenting the law as this child trainer.

At this point, Paul really seems to have completed his argument about salvation by faith alone. He's reminded of them of their experience of receiving the Holy Spirit. He's pointed out what the scriptures say about how Abraham got right with God. He's pointed out the general Old Testament principle that the just shall live by faith. And he's noted that Gentiles will be blessed through Abraham's seed.

And he brings these together in Christ. Finally, he answers the question regarding the purpose of the law to lead us to Christ. [00:37:02] It all focuses on the Lord Jesus Christ.

And then in verse 25, the main issue that Paul is addressing seems to change.

There's no longer argument about how we get right with God. There's no longer issues of whether Jews and Gentiles are different before God. Now it's about who we are and how we live.

Now I'm very aware, as we note, some practical issues that I fail.

And that exhortations apply to myself as much as, probably more than, to others.

So who are we? Let's look at verse 26. For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptised into Christ have put on Christ. [00:38:04] There is neither Jew nor Greek. There's neither bond nor free. There's neither male nor female. For ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise.

We're all children of God.

This privilege is so utterly astonishing. God brings us into his family. And the differences and distinctions that pull us apart, Jew and Gentile, male and female, slave and free, these no longer exist. And God's unconditional promises to Abraham are ours through Christ. We're considered as Abraham's real seed. And it goes on. We're sons.

And this leads to truth that we're also heirs. Of course, being sons and heirs is a most wonderful subject in and of itself. [00:39:03] We don't have time to dwell on it apart from reminding ourselves that these privileges are undeserved. Purely through God's grace.

So having proved, as we noted, that justification is by faith alone and not by works of the law, and having presented these astonishing privileges of sonship and being heirs that God gives to those who come through Christ in faith, Paul returns in chapter 4 to the Galatians themselves.

Given all this, how can the Galatians be regressing to try to be trying to keep the law?

He calls it slavery. And that's what it was. The one trying to keep the law was never free from the law's demands. [00:40:03] It was always there insisting on what he did. And in chapter 4, verses 8 to 20, he wonders about them. He's perplexed about their behavior. He reminds them of the wonderful welcome that they gave to him. And he compares himself to those who are trying to lead them astray. And then he brings out another picture from scripture. Now, when we read the accounts of Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar in Genesis, it's striking how Sarah and Abraham show a lack of faith in God's promise of a son. Yes, it was very difficult for them.

God had kept Sarah from having children, and she was now 75 years old. Abraham was even older. He was 85. And humanly speaking, a natural son to be the fulfillment of God's promise seemed well-nigh impossible.

[00:41:12] Their faith wavered, and they agreed on an alternative solution. They tried to get an heir through the slave girl, Hagar. But although faithless behavior is exhibited on their part, God is there. And he uses this actually to provide a wonderful picture for the Galatians and for us through what

happened. Let's read these verses. Chapter 4, verse 21. Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do you not hear the law?

For it is written that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a free woman. But he who was born of the bondwoman was born after the flesh. But he of the free woman was by promise, which things are an allegory. [00:42:01] For these are the two covenants, the one from the Mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Hagar. For this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem, which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem, which is above, is free, which is the mother of us all. For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren, that bearest not. Break forth and cry, thou that travailest not. For the desolate hath many more children than she which hath them husband. Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. But as then, he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now. Nevertheless, what saith the Scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman will not be heir with the son of the free woman. [00:43:01] So then, brethren, we're not children of the bondwoman, but of the free. So, Paul presents a contrast between the slave woman, Hagar, and the free woman, Sarah, and between their children, Ishmael and Isaac. Isaac being, of course, the child that God promised, who was born 14 years after Ishmael. Hagar is a picture of the old covenant confirmed at Mount Sinai, the covenant of law, and her son, Ishmael, pictures those under the law. Isaac was a child of promise, promised to Abraham and Sarah. In fact, provided miraculously. We who trust in Jesus are, like Isaac, the children of promise. And then an instant occurs, slightly later, that's brought out here, where Ishmael is mocking young Isaac, persecuting, as it says here. And Hagar and Ishmael are sent away. [00:44:03] They're not in the family circle. Ishmael, although he's older than Isaac, will not inherit, providing a picture showing that the children of the slave system, the law, will not share in the inheritance. That's just for the children of the free woman. We who are sons of God, who believe in Jesus. So, where are we so far?

In the early chapters, Paul defends the gospel of salvation by faith alone, and shows how it fitted with what the scriptures taught. That faith alone, and not the keeping of the law, was the way of salvation. He explains the purpose of the law, then he leads on to the truth that God has brought those with faith into close relationship with himself, as his sons, in fact. And he wonders how it could possibly be that these Galatian believers could abandon all this, and submit themselves to the slavery of the law system, with its demanding regulations. [00:45:10] Chapter 5, verse 1.

Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again in the yoke of bondage. Don't be burdened again by a yoke of bondage, a yoke of slavery, he writes. Now the question becomes, how should we live our lives? Well, Paul essentially writes, if you're trying to use the law either for justification, getting right with God, or as our standard for living, you're in trouble. Because you're obligated to obey the whole law, something that's impossible. And if it isn't the law that should drive our conduct, what is it? We get an idea from verse 6 of chapter 5, the end of the verse. Faith which worketh by love.

[00:46:07] And then Paul anticipates the next question. So if we're not under the law, if we don't have to keep the law as our standard for living, if we're not beholden to it, we can do what we like, can't we? Certainly not.

Paul writes very strongly against this thought in several of his letters. Verse 13 here.

For brethren, ye have been called unto liberty, only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by

love serve one another. Do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh, the sinful nature. Freedom, yes. License, no.

Do not choose to gratify the flesh and its selfish desires. The flesh, the odd nature, is very much part of us as sinful humans. [00:47:03] Instead, it exalts us to serve one another by love. Verse 14.

For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. And strange as it may seem, after all that Paul writes about those who insist on keeping the law, serving one another in love fits in beautifully with what the law says. Because a good summary of what the law demands, he's saying, is to love your neighbour as yourself. No selfishness there.

Verse 6 said again, faith which worketh by love. When we consider our conduct as based on regulation and try to keep it as law, it's impossible and that brings condemnation for us. When we approach it as forgiven people, yes, sadly, we'll still fail. [00:48:03] Some of us more badly than others. But there is the spirit and the power given to us and forgiveness for when we do fail. Verse 16.

This I say then, walk in the spirit and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. Walk in the spirit.

Paul has already reminded the Galatians that trying to keep the law did not give them the Holy Spirit, but faith in Christ did. And the spirit is the new power within. The only way we can keep the flesh in subjection is to be under the control of the spirit. And Paul then presents contrasts between the flesh and the spirit.

To start with, they have contrasting desires. In fact, there's a conflict between the two. And then we have in verses 19 to 21, the works of the flesh. [00:49:04] I won't bother to read those.

But it's contrasted with the fruit of the spirit. Verse 22.

But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. Against such there is no law.

What the sinful nature produces contrasted with what the spirit produces. And we notice it is the fruit of the spirit. Not a lot of separate, unconnected fruits, but an integrated whole. One fruit.

And we see in verse 24 here.

And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. In Colossians chapter 3, we're told to mortify our members which are here on earth. [00:50:01] And there Paul presents a shorter but similar list as we have here, describing the works of the flesh. As we all know, the flesh, our sinful nature, remains with us. And vigilance to the flesh and its desires and works is essential. Mortify, it says.

Chapter 6 sees this new life in the spirit shown out in practice. The Lord's work for us is purely grace on his part. We do nothing.

It's based on God's unmerited favour to each of us individually. And we've been reminded that although we're not under the law system, this cannot be made an excuse for license. In fact, we have a higher standard than the law. Christ himself, and we're responsible to him for what we do. And we

have a new power within us, God's spirit. [00:51:01] We'll just very quickly look at these practical issues that Paul brings out here at the beginning of chapter 6. Notice how we have behind them a combination of grace and personal responsibility. If one was caught in a sin, the law was clear. There were clearly defined punishments.

But the position taken by grace is restoration.

Verse 1.

Brethren, if a man is overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. How self-righteous we can be, can't we? In condemning another who sinned. Well, that's not the way of grace. And there's the vital reminder that, but for God's grace, that's me. [00:52:01] Grace expects us to carry one another's burdens.

Verse 2.

Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. That's what grace would do, to help, support, encourage one another. And in verse 5, each should carry his own burden. That's what grace would do. Grace would not unnecessarily load one's burden onto another. Verse 3.

For if a man thinks himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself. But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. God's grace has made us what we are. Our skills, qualities, everything that we have come from him, given to us through his grace alone. The moment that we begin to think of ourselves as something, we deny this.

The legalistic Jews felt they had merit because of who they were and what they felt they could achieve. [00:53:07] In the law system, merit depends on one's own effort. But under grace, it's different. We are given it all. Verse 7.

Be not deceived.

God is not mocked. Whatever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption. But he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not. These verses point out that although we are in grace, given the Spirit, we still have the flesh. And we have the choice. [00:54:01] Are we to please the flesh or the Spirit? The choice is ours. And there will be consequences from our choices. And perhaps in summary of these verses on practical behavior here, as governed by grace, we have verse 10. And as we therefore have opportunity, let's do good unto all men, especially unto those who are of the household of faith. Paul tells us to do good to all, especially to other believers. At the end of chapter 2, and I didn't refer to this verse, Paul mentions his being crucified with Christ and that he himself no longer lives. It's Christ who lives in him. That's verse 20 of chapter 2.

At the end of chapter 5, we noted briefly that they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. [00:55:05] And now he brings the cross in again. Verse 14.

But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is

crucified unto me, and I unto the world. The world has been crucified to him and he to the world. This stark, sharp, appalling imagery here.

Christ was crucified by a world that hated and rejected him. A terrible, painful, humiliating death.

And Paul sees himself there with him. Not, of course, sharing in the work of redemption. That can only be Christ's work. But hated and rejected by the world, sharing in a sense, is humiliation and rejection. The world and its system doesn't want Christ, nor does it want those who want to be true to him. [00:56:13] The cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. But the effect, Paul notes, is that the world has been crucified to him and he to the world.

And Paul uses this stark picture to indicate the relationship he has to the world system. Crucified to me and I to it.

And we are a new creation, he writes. Verse 15.

Let's behave consistently with this. I want to finish by expressing just some general thoughts on this. No one can keep the law. Do this and you will live, it says. But none did and none can.

We need real favour from God if we're going to be acceptable to him in any way. [00:57:02] Favour we don't deserve. God's grace. And that's what he gives us. It's, I think it's astonishing to think of the grace of the holy God in accepting us.

Poor lost sinners with no hope in this world, who've deliberately rebelled against the one who made us and to whom we're responsible. And think of God. God is absolutely holy. There's no way he can tolerate sin in any form. And yet he accepts us. And think of the price the Lord Jesus paid. The holy and just one made sin.

Made sin for us. Now that's amazing love, isn't it? Amazing grace. And then wonderful as salvation is to undeserving sinners, his grace takes it to another level. [00:58:01] He makes us his children. We're sons of God. And we've seen how his grace should characterise our dealings with others. We fail in many ways. But the outworking of the fruit of the spirit in relating to others is grace. Grace should characterise our relationships. I think many problems among Christians will be lessened if we were to remember the grace that God has shown to us and show it ourselves in our relationships. At the same time, our relationship to the world system is one of death and we are responsible to live in the light of this. I'd like to finish with a hymn which I can't actually remember ever having sung before.

[00:59:03] I probably have, but I don't remember having done so. It's 479. 479. Verse 2 says, Grace we sing, God's grace through Jesus, grace the spring of peace to man, grace that from each sorrow frees us, grace too high for thought to scan, grace the theme of God's own love, grace the theme or themes above. 479. Verse 2.

Grace of the 600, sweetest music to the ear, grace abounds where sin abounded, it is the word that soothes our fear.

[01:00:05] Grace, the sweetest that we know, grace to sin and sin below.

Grace we sing, God's grace through Jesus, grace the spring of peace to man, grace that from each

sorrow frees us, grace too high for thought to scan, grace the theme of God's own love, grace the theme or themes above.