

Not being myself under Law

Part 1

Speaker	Michael Johnson
Duration	00:50:05
Online version	https://www.audioteaching.org/en/sermons/mjo018/not-being-myself-under-law

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

[00:00:01] Would you like to turn, firstly, to the first epistle of Corinthians, chapter 6, 1 Corinthians 6. 1 Corinthians 6 and verse 9.

Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived, neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you, that ye are washed, that ye are sanctified, that ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. Chapter 9, verse 16.

For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of, for necessity is laid upon me, yea, woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel.

[00:01:13] For if I do this willingly, I have a reward, but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me. What is my reward then? Verily, that when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in the gospel.

For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain them all. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews.

To them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law. To them that are without law, as without law, being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ, that I might gain them that are without law.

[00:02:12] To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak.

I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.

And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you. Know ye not that they who run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize, so run that ye may obtain.

And the epistle to the Galatians chapter 2 and verse 19.

For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.

[00:03:01] I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live. Yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Chapter 3 verse 19.

Wherefore then serveth the law?

It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made. And it was ordained by angels in the hands of a mediator.

Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one.

Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid, for if there had been a law given which could have given life, righteousness should have been by the law. [00:04:01] But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith, which should afterward be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster, 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.

Chapter 4 verse 1.

Now I say that the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all. [00:05:01] But he is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father. Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world. But when the fullness of time was come, God sent forth his son, made of a woman, made under law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the spirit of his son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son.

And if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

Chapter 5 verse 1.

Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, and be not entangled again in the yoke of bondage.

[00:06:07] Verse 13.

For, brethren, ye have been called into liberty, only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even this, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye are not consumed one of another. Thus I say then, walk in the spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh. And these are contrary, the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be led of the spirit, ye are not under the law. Verse 22.

But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.

[00:07:11] Against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the spirit, let us also walk in the spirit.

And lastly, just two verses in the second chapter of the Colossians epistle. Colossians chapter 2.

Colossians chapter 2 and verse 18.

Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, [00:08:02] and not holding the head from whom all the body by joints and bands, having nourishment ministered and knit together, increases with the increase of God.

I don't know whether this is representative of everyone, but I hope we all read our Bibles regularly and give time to reading the scriptures.

But over the years, when somebody is referred to a scripture, and they say something like 1 Corinthians 2, I wonder what scripture they're referring to. But if they say 1 Corinthians 5, I say, oh yes, I know that. That's about adultery and the directions of God about keeping God's assembly holy.

[00:09:04] If somebody said something about 1 Corinthians 9 until the last couple of years, I would have been really at a loss. Probably the only thing I would have thought about was the expression, a dispensation of the gospel.

But recently, proofreading a booklet before it was going to the press, I noticed something that I'd never noticed before.

I don't want this to be taken out of context in any way whatsoever, because I'm committed to the fact that the authorised version has been and still is of universal blessing.

But that's not to say that there are parts of the authorised version where it presents difficulties.

[00:10:02] Most of you will probably know this, but I don't want you to turn to it. This is verse 7 of 1 John 5.

For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one. I mean, even a fairly simple believer knows that you don't need a record in heaven. There's no difficulty in heaven about who the Lord Jesus is and what he's done. Heaven's absolutely agreed. There's no controversy there at all. So not surprisingly, you may learn that there's no manuscript authority for that, and how or why it got in I do not know.

But there are one or two places where other things which ought to have gone in, and for some reason or other haven't, and that it is right, I think is fairly evident when I looked at the NIV, [00:11:01] I found even the NIV has this in.

And what I really want to say, and I'll outline it in a minute, is in connection with verses 20 and 21 of 1

Corinthians 9.

I'll read it, read them again, and I'll put in the edition.

It's in the NIV, it's in the revised version of 1891, it's in the Englishman's Greek New Testament, it's in the Nestle New Testament, it's in Kelly's English translation, it's in Darby's English translation, it's in Darby's French translation. In fact, I don't know a place other than the AV where it isn't, it's always there. I'll put the little edition in because most of what I want to say is in connection with it. Verse 20 of 1 Corinthians 9, And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews, to them that are under the law, as under the law, [00:12:03] and then I'll add these words, not being myself under law, that I might gain them that are under the law, to them that are without law, as without law, being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ, that I might gain them that are without law. Most of what I want to say tonight is in connection with the expression in verse 20, not being myself under law, and the parenthetical part of verse 21, being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ.

I don't know whether you've ever sort of noticed this, when I first came to Newcastle, on Heaton Road, we had, you'd better keep me right if I don't get it, I think it said the Leighton Methodist Church, [00:13:01] and then we had the Bainbridge Memorial Methodist Church, and then we had the Wesleyan Methodist Church.

I do a fair bit of reading, and one day I did read a bit about how they came to have different names, and it took me back, I couldn't have been a believer more than about four or five years ago, but it was 1957, and I was walking back from the big market with the late Anthony Docherty, and at the big market, it really was a bit of a rumpus in years gone by, before the preaching started, groups of people would be there, and there would be debates about scripture, and for a young believer, they were absolutely excellent at hearing people controverting what was said, and I can remember plainly one night, there was a great group, and there was a man there who was saying, [00:14:01] all the blessings of Christianity, they're all the same, and I heard somebody shout over to the late Norman Anderson, Norman, there's a man over here who says all the blessings are the same, and Norman, as he walked over, said, poor man, he doesn't know what he's missing. Well, after that particular evening, I was walking back along Jesmond Road with Anthony Docherty, and as we passed All Saints' Cemetery, he says, notice unity there, he says, they're all dead, but he says, in Christian companies, where you will always find young and old, carnal and spiritual, you'll always have controversy about what scripture says and what scripture means.

It may be that some of the things that I'll say today, this evening, might be a bit of a challenge to you. You may not think that some of the things are true. All I can ask is that you weigh them in the light of all the scriptures. [00:15:04] That we refer to.

If you, going back to this, the Methodist names, if you look back, and I just read in Wesley's journals, you found how some of the difficulties arose. Some people would say, the gospel is all of grace, Christianity is all of grace, and because Christianity is all of grace, you can continue in sin.

And so they pretty well pleased themselves. It was not surprising that other people, whose feet were more firmly fastened to scripture, said, that's not the way that the Christian thinks, that's not the way that the Christian approaches it. The Christian approaches it, as Romans 5 says, shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? And the Christian instructed mind says, God forbid. [00:16:04] So when people wouldn't stop doing these things, necessarily there was a division. I don't know which brought

around any of these that we've mentioned, but that was the kind of thing that brought them to be different, and I suppose over the years those differences attenuated. Certainly there was a time when Wesley began to sort of turn a bit, turn away a bit from matters like election and predestination, which are plainly taught in scripture, so they turned another way, and there was a group, was, and probably still is, mostly in Wales, who are what we would call Calvinistic Methodists. I don't know what they actually call their chapels, but I remember about a year ago when I was in Wales, [00:17:01] I passed one where it said, Zion Methodist Chapel, and I thought to myself, that's likely to be a Calvinist Methodist chapel.

Why do I refer to all this?

It comes about because of this matter of rightly dividing the word of truth, and in connection with that I want to look at this expression, not being myself under law, that is found in verse 20.

But just a couple of remarks before that. In 1 Corinthians 9, the early verses, there are two things which emerge, two important things which emerge, and they have consequences for us all. The first thing is that in Christianity, and it's backed up plainly by what is in the law, those who give themselves full time to the word of God, [00:18:05] whether it be preaching it or teaching it, have the right to expect that they are materially supported. And so the apostle brings forward some examples in life. And so in verse 7 he says, Who plants a vine and doesn't eat of the fruit thereof? And the same verse, Who feeds the flock and doesn't take of the milk of the flock?

And when you get down to verse 9, he introduces some of the Old Testament, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treads out the corn. When the ox trod out the corn, it was able to eat some of the corn.

The whole thrust of that is to say that those, and there is a conclusion in verse 14, Even so hath the Lord ordained that they who preach the gospel [00:19:04] should live of the gospel. That's the conclusion of it. That means it has a consequence for us.

And again, it's plainly taught in Scripture. I'm just going to refer to the verse, but it would do us all good to look at the verse and prayerfully consider it. If it is a God-given principle that those that teach and preach the word should expect to live of it, then there is an obligation on the Christian in that which God gives him materially to use it for the servants of God and their support. It is to our continuing shame that we had, so far as I know, the only truly gifted evangelist, and he went out in the work, and after several years, he had to give up because he could not support himself and his wife. It is to our shame that that happened. [00:20:04] 1 Corinthians 16 verse 2 is absolutely clear.

It's a direction, an apostolic direction, and Paul says there, Let each of you on the first day of the week lay up in store as God hath prospered him.

I'm not going to say any more about that verse other than to say that verse is saying three things very plainly. That regularly, in proportion to the money that we get, we are to lay it up to be available for the service of God. That's a very challenging thing, but it's a necessary and absolute consequence of the fact that God has ordained that they that preach the gospel should live of the gospel.

The second thing is the actual context in which these words are found, and I find them increasingly challenging when you read them. [00:21:02] One of the things that I've discovered in retirement, having more time to read, is that there are a huge number of sayings that we are familiar with in the

scriptures which have written themselves into our language, and I was totally unaware of them. I only discovered about a couple of weeks after I retired, nearly four years ago now, that the expression to make a man an offender for a word is a scriptural expression. There's a scriptural expression that we read here in verse 22.

I am made all things to all men, and the way in which that is used in the world is that's somebody who hasn't got any commitment to principle at all, but he changes them as the wind changes, and if it's beneficial then he adopts that aspect of the wind.

It's not like that at all. [00:22:01] The man who says, to those that were Jews he became as a Jew, and to those who were under the law he became as under the law, to those who were without the law he became as without the law, that wasn't a man who didn't have any fixed convictions, it was a man who had one conviction and one commitment, that was he lived for the glory of Christ, and he says, all these things I do if I might by any means save some. I wonder if that is how we live our lives. Are we where we are day by day, where we work and where we live and where we move? Do we live every day in the light of the possibility of drawing someone to Christ that they might be saved? For we move through a world increasingly where there's little idea firstly of the grace of God and secondly of the fact that God is intensely holy.

Now let's look at the expression in verse 20. [00:23:04] To them that are under the law, as under the law, not being myself under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law.

I don't know whether anybody has read the History of the Reformation by Mel Döving, but it's most excellent book to read, not just because you see the process of a work of God and never let us cease to give thanks for the fact that God in his grace touched and gave strength to Martin Luther to stand against the power of Rome and to say that justification was by faith. We should never cease to give thanks to God for that. But when that tide of grace began to roll, then immediately people began to come up with extremes and by nature we all tend to go to extremes. There were many people who really were not [00:24:02] properly converted at all, although they professed to be, and their only interest was to pillage Rome because of the appalling things that Rome had done and the way in which it had held people in bondage. All they were interested in was trying to sack Rome and all that was connected with it. On the other side, when there was a tendency to sweep everything away, there were some people and probably the most prominent was John Calvin who produced this kind of thing.

He said, grace is certainly the prominent thing in justification. By grace we are justified.

But how we live our lives, it's a matter of the law.

And I remember talking to somebody a few years ago, a sister who is now with the Lord, and she said that she'd listened to a very prominent evangelical preacher [00:25:05] and he had said words something like this. Justification is a matter of grace, but when it comes to living your life day by day, you go back to the law.

Well, I hope to show very simply and very plainly that that's not what the scriptures say and in fact if it were right, it would reduce a Christian's life day by day to little more than a Jew under the law.

And that's why I read to you the verses in Galatians.

Not being myself under law.

I read to you the verses in Galatians chapter 3 because in a most powerful way, by contrast, the apostle says, and it's as plain as a pike staff, [00:26:01] it cannot be missed, that the law was never intended to give life. And so in verse 19 of chapter 3 we read these words.

Wherefore then serveth the law?

It was added because of transgressions till the seed should come to whom the promise was made. It was given because of transgressions. If you go back to Romans 7 and I personally feel that is Paul speaking about his own personal experiences, he says words like these.

I had not known lust except the commandment said thou shalt not lust and when you read those verses, you read the experience of a man who is trying to do what is right but he doesn't have the power to do it. [00:27:01] In fact, he has within him a nature that stops him doing it. When he wants to stop doing wrong, then it's the other way round. He's no power to stop doing it. And the man who in the depths of a miserable experience says who shall deliver me from this body of death really had made a very important step forward. The law was never intended for Christianity.

And in fact in many places and we're going to see in a few moments, there's a very clear distinction between the law and grace drawn here. I have a friend who I was at work with for many years and I visit him periodically. And he's very strong on this matter of law. And recently after the Findotti conference, he asked for an outline of it and I gave an outline. And every time I pointed out a verse where it begins to draw distinctions, [00:28:03] just to give you an example, I said, John chapter 1 says the law came by Moses.

Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. He says, ah, but it doesn't say the law is put away. I said, oh no, it doesn't say that anywhere in Scripture. The issue is not is the law put away, but is the law dead or are you dead?

And Romans 7 is very clear that we are dead to the law by the body of Christ. So in Galatians 3, it says the law was given because of transgressions.

Now if you come down a little to verse 23, it says, before faith came, we were kept under the law.

And the we here, I think, is the apostle speaking as a Jew. Shut up unto the faith, which should afterward be revealed. [00:29:04] Wherefore, the law was our schoolmaster. Note that the words to bring us are no manuscript authority. They shouldn't be in there. So what he's saying is the law was our schoolmaster unto Christ until Christ came.

And in verse 25, consequent upon that, it says, after faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.

Now, in the first few verses of Galatians 4, it begins in a most powerful way, and it's impossible to miss the drift of it, to distinguish between the law and grace. And so it says in verse 4, verse 1, the heir, as long as he is a child, differs nothing from a bondman, a slave, [00:30:03] though he be lord of all. But he's under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father. That's his father, not God as father.

Verse 3, even so, when we, the Jews, were children, we were in bondage under the elements of the law.

Those that had that God-given direction for life in this world, they were in bondage.

Verse 4, you get these words, when the fullness of time came, God sent forth his son, come of a woman, come under law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive sonship. So what Paul is saying there, and is drawing a broad distinction, is between what was once obtaining, that was the law, like a schoolmaster, until Christ came. [00:31:01] The law doesn't bring men to Christ, the gospel brings men to Christ. There was a time when faith came. There was a time when the son came. God sent forth his son.

I'm sure if King Thompson were here tonight, he would say about verse 4, God sent forth his son, son of God, made of a woman, son of man, made under the law, son of David, be that as it may. He came to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive sonship.

The contrast here is between bondmen, slaves, who were under tutors and governors, or those who are sons, and even more than that, it's not just that God has brought us into new relationship. He's actually done what is not possible for any man to do, and I remember talking to a lady who had been adopted, [00:32:04] and when she was talking afterwards, I referred to this verse. Because ye are sons, God has sent forth the spirit of his son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.

The spirit of sonship, it's not just that God has brought us into new relationship and position, but he's given us the very spirit by which we can enjoy that relationship, live our lives in the power of it, and by it also respond to God. So what he's saying is this, if you continue under the law, you'll never be in a position any more than that of a slave. I don't know whether this is right, certainly my own experience has been this way, and from things that other people say to me, it seems to me that it isn't my personal experience only, that Christianity sometimes can be little more than a matter of failures and restoration. [00:33:05] That's not the way in which the scriptures hold out Christian living. When it says here about being sons and having the spirit of sonship, and actually using our lips to voice the very words that the Lord Jesus used when he was in the garden in the night of his betrayal, it seems to me it's holding out something more than just a matter of failure and restoration. Thank God when we fail, there's restoration, but it seems to me that the Christian life speaks much more than that kind of thing. So in verse 7 he goes on with the words, Therefore there are no more a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

If we had time, it would be excellent really to go to some verses in Romans 8, [00:34:04] and then to look at a parallel couple of verses in Ephesians 2, to see really what this matter of identification with Christ means.

You can look it up for yourself, but Romans 6, it's crucified, dead, and buried with him.

Ephesians 2, it's quickened, raised, and seated with him.

And it seems to me that when scripture draws this strong contrast here, it's touching on the things which are relevant to Christian living in this world. And it's connected firstly with relationship, and secondly with the indwelling of the spirit of God. I read to you the verses, I'm going to touch on them very briefly in chapter 5. Verse 1, Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ has set us free,

[00:35:03] and be not entangled again in the yoke of bondage.

The yoke of bondage again is the law. I was clearing out my books recently, having reached the position where I can't take anymore without getting rid of some. And when I was taking them out, I came across Uncle Tom's Cabin. I have very fond memories of that because a very fine Christian school mistress many years ago read it to us when I was about 7 or 8. And what I remember as plainly as I die is this matter of, my history is not very good, but I think in America you have the Mason-Dixon line. If you are north of the Mason-Dixon line, you are in the states where they did not accept slavery. If you are south of it, the states carried on with slavery. So if you were set free south of the Mason-Dixon line, [00:36:02] there was all that was the danger that you might be pulled back into slavery. If you got north of the Mason-Dixon line, there was a good chance you never would because the states did not practice slavery. I can't remember what the husband's name was, but I can remember graphically. And I found the place and read it again where Liza skips over the river, which was breaking up with the ice and she got the other side. And when she got the other side, she was where liberty was practiced. Now that's the setting of Romans 5 verse 1. We've been set free in liberty.

Don't be entangled again with the yoke of bondage. And verse 13, a very important verse.

You've been called unto liberty, only use not liberty as an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.

And without isolating them all, you get these marvelous statements. [00:37:05] Verse 18, If ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under law. We are slaves no longer. We are sons. We have the spirit of sonship.

We're able to live our lives in this world exactly as the Lord Jesus lived his. So Paul, when he was saying, he became all things to all men, and when he was dealing with those that were under the law, then he acted as if he were under the law, but he puts this caveat in. He says, not being myself under law.

Of course he wasn't. He was the person who taught in scriptures the reality of being associated with Christ, having new life, and being able to live for the pleasure of God and for the benefit of fellow believers in the light of the words that we've read. One last comment before passing from Galatians 5.

[00:38:03] Verse 17 is an important verse really.

For the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh. And these are contrary, the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. It's the last sentence of that verse which is worth looking at.

We ought to say that Christianity is always going to be a conflict. Romans 7 is a conflict.

Galatians 5 is a conflict.

Ephesians 6 is a conflict. Wherever you are in the state of growth of your soul, you're bound to experience conflict if you're treading the path of faith with commitment and endeavor. There's always

going to be a controversy between the flesh and the spirit. But the expression at the end of verse 17, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. [00:39:05] I mean, if that were as it should be translated, then we'd be in no different position than Romans 7. It would be perpetual defeat.

But it isn't like that at all because new life brings new desires and it would be terribly sad, wouldn't it, if we had desires that were according to God but we didn't have the ability to live them out. I'm looking at the new translation, but I think most other translations have something parallel to this, that verse 17 actually says, not that ye cannot do the things that ye would, but, and this is how it reads in the new translation, that ye should not do those things that ye desire. The flesh lusts against the spirit to stop you doing the things that a renewed nature enables you to do. [00:40:04] And every time we put a step forward in the path of faith, trying to put into practice what the scripture plainly speaks about, you can be assured that there is controversy. But, let's say this very plainly, that Galatians chapter 5 at least opens up the possibility of some victory.

And I'm committed to the fact that though God's dealings with every one of us are as different as everything else that God does, no two blades of grass the same, no leaf the same, so all our individual experiences with God are very much different. But we touch milestones, and the person who touches the milestones of Romans 7, where he says, who shall deliver me from this body of death, really has made an important step forward, [00:41:02] because he comes to the conclusion that there's nothing good in him. Whatever else there may be in you, there's nothing good in you. That's a great step forward, because from that point you begin to get your eyes off yourself. Now the second statement in 1 Corinthians 9, exactly as it appears in the words that we read.

Verse 21, To them that are without the law, as without the law, being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ. If I might read the new translation to you. Not as without law to God, but as legitimately subject to Christ.

I think one of the other testaments that I have reads it. Not lawless to God, but legitimately subject to Christ.

[00:42:06] One side, where people go to in extremes, is exactly this matter of the law. And without saying any more about it and leaving it at this, I would be very surprised here, in this meeting, if there were not many of us who live our lives like that. We set laws for ourselves, and when we don't keep them, we become disappointed. It's like that in meetings actually, and the tragedy is that none of these things are written down. I remember some years ago being in a meeting, and immediately after the bread and the wine were passed around, the collection box was passed around. It always seemed to me to be an intrusion, not for one moment wishing to undervalue the importance of that, [00:43:01] but it always seemed to me to be really out of keeping with that holy reason why we're there. So after several weeks, I said to a brother, why do we pass the collection box around immediately after the breaking of bread? Oh, he says, we've done that for 70 years. I said, well, I understand that, but why do we do it? So in going round, in the next few months, I found that quite a number had the same kind of feelings about it. I just left it after that, but when I went back there some time later, they had stopped doing it. I think in your local meeting, if you could think of it, and certainly it seems to me from my personal experience, most have rules about things that you do and things that you don't do. And if, like me, you're a visitor, you don't know what the rules are, [00:44:03] so you don't know what you're keeping and what you're breaking. The matter of law is very close to us, really very close to us. Paul says, those that are without the law, and then he says, not being myself, lawless to God.

And that was why I read to you those verses in 1 Corinthians 6.

They're very topical verses, really. And because they are as they are, I think everyone of us ought to face the fact that there's always the possibility that if we get away from the Lord and we become ensnared by Satan, we may finish up doing those kind of things. Wherever God gives us knowledge of himself, and it's very interesting that in 1 Corinthians 5, from partway through the chapter, right down to the end of chapter 6, I think on no less than seven occasions, the apostle says, [00:45:05] do ye not know, he expected that that instruction that they had been given by the apostle from God ought to have been translated in practice. I just read one of them, probably about the third one, in verse 9 of 1 Corinthians 6. It says, know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God. Be not deceived, neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetousness, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners shall inherit the kingdom of God. People who practice those kind of things are lawless to God. The apostle says, not being lawless to God, when dealing with those that were without the law, he wasn't a person who threw all overboard and adopted their practice, not a bit of it at all. [00:46:06] He says, I'm not lawless to God.

Now, if you read in history, in fact, if you read Devinian, the Reformation, you'll find that in that great wave of blessing that went forward, there were those who never really saved, affected by what was happening and carried along with the movement, descended to these kind of practices. And it would be very sad if we were to say of ourselves, we're beyond those kind of things. Scripture says very plainly, let him that think he standeth take heed lest he fall. Paul says, not lawless to God.

And then he uses these words, he says, but legitimately subject to Christ.

And that was why I read to you the words of Colossians chapter 2, [00:47:03] because it seems to me there's a thread between them. This matter of holding the head, I don't know whether this would be right, but it seems to me that in the context of Colossians 2, it's talking about mysticism. You know, where people come in and say, ah, well, God being so intensely holy, you need somebody who themselves are sanctified in between. And so you get the whole kind of mishmash we have in Christian profession, where you have various bishops and canons and deacons and priests and everything between. The apostle says, no, for the believer, it's a matter of holding the head, from whom all the body, by joints and bands having nourishment and knit together, and knit together, increases with the increase of God. What he's saying very, very plainly when he talks about holding the head, [00:48:04] firstly is this matter of dependence, dependence upon the Lord, and then secondly, very clearly, this matter of obedience. In fact, every time we read scripture, the thing that ought to be uppermost in our minds is that it helps us to be more faithful to God and more pleasing to him. And the only way in which we find out those things which are pleasing to God is by what is found in the scripture. I'm not just thinking about commandments, and plainly there are New Testament commandments, but also I'm thinking about what was demonstrated personally and perfectly by the Son of God when he was here. So I don't want to say any more than that.

It seems to me that this matter of going to extremes and losing the right balance [00:49:01] is always a danger and always a possibility for us.

But how deeply thankful we ought to be that we're not at a distance, we're brought nigh in Christ, we are reconciled to God, we're brought into the relationship of sons, and we're given the spirit of sonship by which we might enjoy that relationship and in the power of our enjoyment live our lives for

the pleasure of God. Whoever it was that wrote that second hymn that we sang, and I'm thinking particularly of the last verse, really hit the nail on the head when he spoke about producing in us here a transcript of God's beloved Son.

We're not without any definition of the life that is pleasing to God. It's very plain in the scripture, for it was that which was seen in his own beloved Son here.