

“Christian Liberty”

Galatians 2:11-21 - Lesson #5 Part 2

Dr. Bruce Bickel

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Bruce: Good morning, men.

Men: Good morning.

Bruce: Good to be with you today. Don, do you want to set the stage for us, please?

(Music.)

Holy, holy, holy art Thou, Lord God of hosts! Father, we pray that You would open our eyes, that we might behold You more clearly for Jesus' sake. Amen. And Amen.

We're continuing our study in the book of Galatians. Turn with me to chapter 2, please, looking at verses 11-21—the conversation that the apostle Paul had with the apostle Peter, picking up at verse 11 from Galatians chapter 2. This is the word of the Lord.

Men: Thanks be to God.

Bruce: *"But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. Before certain men came from James, he was eating with the Gentiles. But when he came, he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party. And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy.*

"But when I saw that their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, 'If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force the Gentiles to live like Jews? We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners. Yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law, but through faith in Jesus Christ. So we also have believed in Jesus Christ in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by the works of the law no one will be justified.

"But if in our endeavor to be justified in Christ we too were found to be sinners, is Christ a servant of sin? Certainly not! For if I rebuild what I tore down, I prove myself to be a transgressor. For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life that I live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. I do not nullify the grace of God, for if justification were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose." May God be pleased to help us understand this marvelous passage on justification by faith alone.

We talked about this last week. The important thing is the conversation that the apostle Paul had with the apostle Peter. Now there are a couple of different reasons why this occurred. You can take a look at Acts chapter 11. It might have been that Peter had some misunderstanding and did not completely understand the doctrines of grace. That might have been one of the options. You can look at Acts chapter 15. It might have been because he was influenced by the Judaizers who came down with James from Judea, members of the circumcision party. And he began to feel some peer pressure.

We really don't know for sure why Peter did what he did. But the thing that he did was this. Initially he was giving credence and acceptance to the Gentile believers—the non-Jewish believers—by having dinner with them, a love feast as you would call it in

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Biblical terms. And all of a sudden, when these men from Judea came down—men of the circumcision party, these Judaizers—he separated from them. And it caused some confusion. The confusion was that Peter was saying one thing and living out something differently.

And so Paul has a conversation with him. And we don't know if it was a conversation of illumination or a conversation of preservation. We don't know that. But the important thing is this. What was the content of what Paul was talking to Peter about? That's what we're looking at. That really has some wonderful doctrinal implications. So take a look at your notes on the doctrines that we talk about. And the word *doctrine* means "standard." That's why doctrine is so important.

First of all, let's go to 2 Timothy 3:16 to show the importance of what we call doctrine. 2 Timothy 3:16. *"All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work."*

Four things. The word *teaching* means "standard." It's the word *doctrine*. So the very first thing that we need to understand is that when you read the Scripture, you might come across something that is brand new. That would be a doctrine. It is a standard of the Christian faith.

The next thing is *reproof*. Reproof reveals an error. So the very first thing the Scripture will do is that it will reveal a standard. Secondly, it might reveal an error, a reproof.

Third, it reveals *correction*. In other words, there is the standard—the doctrine. There is the error. And now there is the correction of the error in the doctrine that you have.

And the last thing is this: *training in righteousness*. So one of four things is going to happen when you and I read the Scripture. It's going to reveal a standard that we never knew. It might reveal an error that we never knew we had. It's going to reveal steps to correct that, and then steps to train us in righteousness so we don't make the same mistake again.

That's why it's so important to understand why Peter is listening to what Paul has to say, and why Paul deals with certain doctrinal issues that are standards that we need to take a look at.

And then notice and take a look at what they are. The first one we talked about last week was *the unity of the church*. We are part of the universal church, the worldwide church, not just the local church but the worldwide church. Anyone who comes to saving faith by the grace of God is a member of the family of God, and therefore we are one magnificent worldwide family.

When you take a look at the Lord's Prayer, what are the first words?

Participant: Our Father.

Bruce: Our. What does that mean?

Participant: All of us.

Bruce: It's not just mine; it's all of us. This is a universal prayer for all the family of God. It is our prayer. He is *"our Father who art in heaven,"* not my Father who art in heaven. There's a personal side to it. He is certainly my Father. But the other implication is this. That word *our* means that He is somebody else's Father.

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Applicationally, it means this. You and I have no right to make any prayer request to God that would damage the body of Christ because of the words *'our Father.'* We are part of the universal body of Christ. We need to understand that.

Second, we talked last week about *justification by faith*. We see that in chapter 2, verses 15-16 of our text in Galatians. Remember this. Justification is an act of God whereby he declares the believing sinner to be righteous in Christ. This is a declaration. It's a way that God looks at you differently. He looks at you radically differently than He did before.

Justification is an instantaneous and immediate act. It's a one-time act. Sanctification is longer. It takes time. Justification is a statement that God makes about you. It's basically saying this. You're no longer guilty.

Now there's a difference between justification and pardon. There's a difference between justification and forgiveness. A criminal can be pardoned, but he still has a record. When God justifies the sinner, he does not have the record anymore. He eliminates the record. It is gone. It's almost, as somebody said, that justification is just as if I had never sinned. Just as if I had never—in other words, you're no longer guilty.

Now men, do you understand the implications of that in your lives?

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: When I realize that I'm not guilty in God's eyes? I'm not guilty! Yes, I'm pardoned. But also, I'm not guilty. He doesn't view me as guilty anymore. He has made a declaration about me. He says this. You are now righteous in Christ. You get credit for the imputation of the righteousness of Christ. You get credit for His sinless perfection and perfect obedience. Do you understand that? That's the word *imputation*. You get credit for it. It is now on your account. When God looks at you personally, He looks at you differently, because He views you as not guilty. He views you as wrapped in the robes of righteousness, and He sees you as sinlessly perfect and perfectly obedient.

Now that does not mean that you and I live sinlessly perfect lives. That's not what I'm saying. Remember, it's righteousness in Christ, not our righteousness. It's His righteousness. It's what we call alien righteousness, a righteousness outside of ourselves.

The third thing we saw was that *it is implanted in us by the Holy Spirit*. Now you and I can make choices that are different than we did before.

So the second thing that Paul talks to Peter about is this. Not only are you a member of the whole body of Christ, the worldwide body of Christ, but understand what justification is. It is a one-time, immediate declaration where God declares the believing sinner to be righteous in Christ. You get credit for the sinless perfection and perfect obedience of Christ.

Now I've asked this question about once a year. Do you have to be perfect to get to heaven?

Men: Yes.

Bruce: Absolutely, you do. Can you do that?

Men: No.

Bruce: No! What do you need?

Participant: Help!

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Participant: Christ.

Bruce: You need help! (*Laughter.*) You need something to happen to you. You need to be justified by faith alone. You need to get credit for the sinless perfection and perfect obedience of Christ. You have to be absolutely perfect in heaven. That's what God gives us. He gives us credit for something that is not ours. Do you understand that? It is an alien righteousness. The righteousness that God now views us with is His righteousness, not our righteousness. And so the second thing that Paul talked to Peter about was the issue of justification by faith alone.

And then the third thing he talks about, where we'll pick it up today in your notes, if you'll notice, is *the freedom from the law*. Look at verses 17 and 18.

Now at the Jerusalem conference, which we talked about several weeks ago, Peter had said that he compared the law to a burdensome yoke. You'll see that in Acts 15 verse 10 and Galatians 5:1.

Transcriber's Note: Acts 15:10. *"Now, therefore, why are you putting God to the test by placing a yoke on the neck of the disciples that neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear?"*

Galatians 5:1. *"For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery."*

Bruce: Even Peter said that the law is like a burdensome yoke. Now what he's talking about is the law as a means of salvation. In other words, if you do these things, then you will be saved and have a saving relationship to God through the Son. He's talking about keeping the law as a means of earning your salvation. That's what Peter is referring to. And that's what Paul is talking about with Peter. Do you understand justification by faith alone, because there is freedom from the law? Paul says that you and I did not find our salvation in the law, but our faith in Christ is what saved us. He told Peter that. "Peter, you and I did not come to saving faith by keeping the law. We came to saving faith because of the Person and work of Christ."

And so he tells Peter that to go back to Moses—keeping the law—is to deny everything Christ has done in you, and to deny everything that Christ is doing through you. To go back to the law as a means of earning your salvation is negating everything that God has done in you, and all the things He is doing through you, because you've gone back to the times of Moses, and you're keeping the law as a means of salvation.

So the third thing is this. There is freedom from the law. There is justification by faith. And we're part of the body of Christ. Those are three doctrines that Peter is talking about and listening when Paul describes his conversation.

The fourth one is this: *the content of the gospel*. Look at Galatians chapter 2, verses 19 and 20.

If a person can be justified by the law, by works, why did Christ have to die? If somebody can earn his salvation by his works, why did Christ have to die? The death, Burial and resurrection of Christ are the key truths of the gospel of Christ, the Biblical gospel. Remember, the gospel contains six things—the holiness of God, the sinfulness of man, the Person and work of Christ, and repentance and faith. Central to all those themes is the death, Burial and resurrection of Christ. Those are the key truths of the gospel.

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Now notice. We are saved by faith because he died for us. We live by faith in Christ. That means He lives in us. We are identified with Christ. He died and we died with him.

Look at Romans chapter 6, please. Would somebody please read the first eleven verses? Romans chapter 6, verses 1-11. Would somebody read that? This is an important series of verses to help us understand this whole conversation that Peter is having with Paul.

Participant: "What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? *By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? We were buried therefore with Him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with Him in a death like His, we shall certainly be united with Him in a resurrection like His. We know that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For the one who has died has been set free from sin.*

"Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with Him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again. Death no longer has dominion over Him. For the death He died He died to sin once for all, but the life He lives He lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin, and alive to God in Christ Jesus."

Bruce: Now men, when you understand that passage, especially verse 4. Go back to verse 4 of chapter 6 of Romans. *"We were therefore buried with Him by baptism"*—this means identification—*"in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life."*

When you're justified by faith alone, men, your life changes, because you are now identified with the life, death, burial and resurrection of Christ and you now walk in newness of life. You and I can now have a brand new life that is radically different from what we used to live, because no longer do you have to earn your merit in God's eyes. In other words, we have a culture that says, "If I do the right thing, then God is going to do the right thing."

What Paul is telling Peter is this. "Peter, you've got to understand that it's about grace." Righteousness comes because God is pleased to declare us righteous by justification by faith alone, not by works. It's justification by faith. I believe that because I'm identified with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection, and I'm now resurrected into a newness of life. I can live life differently than I used to. I don't have to live the way that I used to. I'm free from that. I'm free from earning my approval with God, because God has already approved of me because of the sacrifice of Christ, because I'm identified with that. And so the key here is that the righteous live by faith alone, not by works of the law.

So Paul reminds Peter of these things. Thus we live by His resurrection power. We do not need the help of the law anymore to earn our way into salvation, because Christ has paid that for us and accomplished it.

So we have the unity of the body of Christ,. Freedom from the law, justification by faith alone, the content of the gospel, and the last one would be *the grace of God*. Look at

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verse 21 of chapter 2 of Galatians. Paul is telling Peter, "Peter, to go back to the law as a means of earning your salvation sets aside the grace of God." To go back to the law, keeping the law as a means of earning your salvation, sets aside the grace of God. It does away with the grace of God.

Look at Galatians 2:21. "*If righteousness came by the law,*"—law keeping as a means of earning salvation—then Christ died in vain. Paul is telling Peter, "Peter, if you set aside the grace of God, then Christ has died in vain."

Paul is telling Peter, "Peter, if you set aside the grace of God, then Christ has died in vain." Keeping the law as a means of salvation says this. The law says, "Do." Grace says, "Done." Grace says that it's done for you.

Now let me give you the five doctrines of grace. There are five doctrines of grace. And this is the whole thing that Paul's conversation with Peter is centered around. We are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, revealed in the Scripture alone, for the glory of God alone. Those are known as the five *solas*, the five “*alones*”.

Let me give them to you again. These are the doctrines of grace. By grace alone, through Christ alone, by faith alone, revealed in the Scripture alone, for the glory of God alone. That's essentially the conversation that Paul is having with Peter. And those are what we understand as the doctrines of grace, the five *solas*, the five “*alones*”. And when you go back and say that I've got to earn my way into salvation, you're setting aside the beautiful doctrines of grace.

Remember, we need to understand grace in terms of three things. *Justices* getting what you deserve. The Old Testament and the New Testament say the same thing. "*The wages of sin is death.*" And the Old Testament says it this way. "*The soul that sins shall die.*" Do you ever sin? Why are you alive? Because the next word is *mercy*. Mercy is not getting all that you deserve. Justice is getting what you deserve. Mercy is not getting all that you deserve.

Do you realize that everybody experiences God's mercy? You see, they just don't know it yet. Mercy is not getting all that you deserve. And *grace* is getting what you don't deserve. Yes, please?

Participant: Could you go over those five *solas* again?

Bruce: If I'm not too tongue-tied. (*Laughter.*) By grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, revealed in the Scripture alone, for the glory of God alone. Those are the five *solas*. *Sola* is the Latin word meaning *alone*. By grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, revealed in the Scripture alone. In other words, you don't need extra sources; the Scripture is sufficient in itself, and for the glory of God alone. Those are the five *solas*. Those are what we would call the doctrines of grace.

And men, when you go back to the law to earn your salvation, you throw this stuff out the window. And you're on your own! And you've got to be absolutely perfect! Can you be perfect?

Participant: No.

Bruce: No, you can't be! You see, God doesn't justify good people. He justifies sinful people. And why is it that most people are not justified? It's because they don't recognize their sin. They don't recognize that they are sinners. They don't want to do that, because

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the world says that you are the captain of your own ship. You run your own life. It's all up to you.

Grace comes along and says, 'no.' It's not about you. It's about Me. It's about grace alone through faith alone, by Christ alone, revealed in the Scripture alone, for the glory of God alone. Yes, Sig?

Sig: In one of the books from our lending library, I read where the author was making a distinction that we should know believers by their works. And he went back to the phrase, and I think it was in either Galatians or Romans. And the distinction he was making is that we, among believers, would know other believers by their works, but God knows us by faith. Would you agree with that?

Participant: By our faith?

Sig: By our faith. In other words—

Bruce: Faith is a gift. In other words, it's not my faith. Faith is a gift. God recognizes us by faith because He gave us what? He gave us the faith. As long as you understand that faith is a gift and not something that I've earned and I've achieved, and that it's something I've received, I would agree with that. But if you think that it's something that I can earn and that I can do to please God, then no, I do not agree.

Sig: I know. I think the distinction he was trying to make is that we recognize each other by what we do. But God doesn't count us one of His because of what we do.

Bruce: There's no merit in what we do.

Sig: Right.

Bruce: It's all done for His glory. That's the important thing. It's done for His glory. And there's no merit in that because the merit has already been achieved and received by what? Justification by faith alone. That's where you get your merit. The merit does not come because of what I do. Merit is not something that I achieve. Merit is something that I receive through the Person and work of Christ. That's because faith is a gift.

It's all about grace, men. It's all about grace, men. That's the whole conversation that Peter is having with Paul. It's all about grace. Yes, Jim?

Jim: This week there was a lot in the news about Mohammed Ali, that he was such a neat guy. But in the interviews with his wife, she was saying that the reason he was doing so much—handing out literature and so forth—was that he was trying to ensure that he was going to go to heaven.

Bruce: Is that right?

Jim: He was doing all these good works so that he could go to heaven.

Bruce: Years ago, I had an opportunity to teach a course at the Sorbonne in Paris, managing a nonprofit organization. I was asked by the Department of Education to go teach a course at the Sorbonne. And I got to talking about this, and I asked one of the questions. I started off my class with this question. Why do you think people in America give so much money away to charity? At that point, I gave some worldwide statistics. Eighty-five per cent of all giving occurs in America. Why is it that people in America are so gracious in giving their money away?

Well, the first answer from a young girl was this. "To earn your way to Paradise."

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I said, "That's a very good answer. What are the things that you have to do? Can you name them?" This started a different conversation. And so I wrote on the board. "What do you have to do to earn your way to Paradise?"

Well, somebody wrote this, and somebody said this. Somebody said that. Somebody said this. So they listed about four or five things.

I said, "Is that all? Are you sure that's all? What if there's a fifth one? What if there's a sixth one? What if there's a seventh one. What if there's a hundred of them? What happens to you?"

And she said, "I'd never make it."

I said, "Can I describe something else to you? Let me tell you about grace. Let me tell you what grace is." And I went through that.

Now that young woman came back to Pittsburgh. She was assigned here for six months to work for a corporation in downtown Pittsburgh. She started coming to my church. I invited her to my church when she came back to Pittsburgh. She started coming to the Sunday school class that I was teaching on the attributes of God. And God was pleased to grant her saving faith during that six months of time here.

And it all started back with that course in the Sorbonne, when she asked this. She was the one who talked about earning your way to Paradise. And I said, "Tell me what you have to do." And she realized that she had never asked or considered that question.

You see, that's exactly what Paul is telling Peter. "Peter, don't go back to feeling that you have to earn it." Law keeping means that you have to earn it. What if you don't do it right? Then you're lost. You see, grace is this: getting what you don't deserve. God justifies us.

The only people that God justifies are sinners—people who recognize what? Have mercy upon me, the sinner. That's the one that Jesus said went away justified. Yes, Ted?

Ted: I believe the answer to that question—which is the sixth, seventh or eighth requirement?—the unregenerate response is often "That's okay, because God will overlook it and give me a pass." I mean, I think I've just been recently struck by a number of encounters where the thought is that God is love, and He loves everyone, and it's going to work out. Why do we have to worry about it? I mean, the idea of a holy God is almost totally distant in many people's thinking. I think that's the big stumbling block.

Bruce: Yes. Good point, Ted. Yes, sir?

Participant: I think that when you're asking what you have to do to get to heaven, you're asking, "What is the standard that I need to prepare myself to get to heaven?" It's the standard of Jesus Christ.

Bruce: Absolutely right. That's the importance of justification. You live by faith. You're justified by faith alone, not by works. Yes, Jared?

Jared: Just going by what you were saying earlier, when you say that God gives us our faith, does He give certain people more faith? I mean, like I notice that I see people in my life, and like wow! I would not have a faith as strong as yours if I had to deal with what you're dealing with.

Bruce: Well, Scripture says yes. God, for reasons only known to Himself, for His glory, does give some people more faith than others. But saving amount is the same

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amount. It is the faith of living out that saving faith. There is one saving faith that is equal for everybody. That's grace. It may be that somebody may express that saving faith more outwardly, more visibly, because of the faith that they have. That's different from saving faith. Saving faith is all the same. It may be expressed in our works. It may be different because of the faith that we have. God may give you an extraordinary amount of faith because of the situation you find yourself in. His grace will be sufficient for all things. That may increase your faith. We need to make a distinction. Saving faith is all the same. But when it is expressed, faith may be different.

Well men, we have no record about Peter's response to this. Scripture doesn't say how Peter responded to Paul's conversation. But I would call our attention to this. I think Peter understood this, because when we read 1 Peter, which we studied last year, Peter's theme is basically the true grace of God in the book of 1 Peter.

When Peter wrote his epistle, he wrote about what? The grace of God. So it's obvious that he understood the conversation that Paul was having with him. And you can read the book of 1 Peter and grace is mentioned in all of those chapters in the book of 1 Peter. So it's obvious that God got his attention. And when God got his attention, he understood what grace was. And so we can see that in the book of 1 Peter.

Well men, it comes to a time when we just give you a lot of doctrine, a lot of theology, which is critical for us, because of doctrine, reproof, correction and training in righteousness. Those are the four things that God is going to do when we study the Scripture, maybe one of those four things as you're reading the Scripture. The real issue is this. What am I going to do, personally, about what I've just learned? What am I going to do about what I just learned? You never want to ask yourself the question, "What does this mean to me?", because it makes no difference what it means to you or what it means to me. The only One it means anything to is God Himself, who is the Author of these words. The better question for us is this. What am I going to do about the truth, the standard that I just learned?

Because, remember this. Learning does not stop at knowledge. Learning should lead to living. What we learned today should lead us to living today. And living today should lead us to loving today. Learning should not stop at knowledge. It has got to go on to living. And the way you make that transition is this. What am I going to do about what I just learned about justification by faith alone? What am I going to do personally about the five *solas*? What am I going to do about that?

Let me pose for you several questions that I would ask you to consider, to help you understand and make application of this. The first one would be this. *Am I personally saved by the grace of God?* Am I saved by the grace of God? Do I know my salvation is secure because of God's grace, or is there still something that I feel I have to do? Do you think it is something you must do? Or do you realize that it is something that is done? Am I truly saved by the grace of God? You see, that's one of the questions you have to ask yourself from this conversation that Paul had with Peter.

Am I trusting my morality? Am I trusting my good works? Am I trusting my good religion, my church attendance, my activity, my good works? Am I trusting those things? Or am I really understanding that I am saved by the grace of God? He gave me something

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that I didn't deserve. Can you honestly say that, men? That's the question you have to ask from this conversation in Galatians chapter 2. Do I really understand that I'm saved by grace alone?

Look at Ephesians chapter 2, verses 8-10.

Transcriber's Note: Ephesians 2:8-10. *"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."*

Bruce: If you're trusting in morality, trusting in your good works, trusting in your good religion, then you're not a Christian, because a Christian is saved by—

Participant: Grace.

Bruce: Grace. Not by the things that I do. Yes, Ted?

Ted: But also, might you throw in there, am I saved by my choice? Or am I saved by my feelings of being close to God, and now I have this warm, wonderful relationship. And so I'm justified, I have that security because I feel it.

Bruce: Exactly.

Ted: Or because I made the right choice? This is a dividing line. I mean, most of us get the fact that we're not saved by our works. But often, some of us believe that we're saved by our choice.

Bruce: Who is it that saves you?

Participant: God.

Bruce: God did by the Person and work of Christ. That's a fact! Hopefully, you have feelings with it. But the feelings don't save you. The fact that Christ paid for your sins saves you. And when you trust that, that's grace. God gives you the ability to trust that.

Sometimes, men, your assurance of salvation includes three things—Scripture promises, the Holy Spirit working with your spirit, and increased righteousness. I see a difference in my life! There's a newness of life that I didn't have before! Something happened to me! My conduct is different. My choices are different than they used to be. That's the newness of life that you have. That's the result of being saved by grace. That's the first question you have to ask. Yes, Dan?

Dan: So as men, we're so used to the fact of working and earning something. And we take great pride in that. I totally get that it's not my works that save me. But if I'm truly saved, the result of that should be good works.

Bruce: Absolutely. No question about that. That's evidence. That's the increased righteousness that I was talking about.

Here are the three things that confirm your salvation. *The Biblical promises*. Repent, believe, and you'll be saved. Have you repented? Do you believe? Then the Scripture says that you are saved. That's a Biblical promise.

Secondly, *The Holy Spirit works in your spirit*. I know because I know. Sometimes the world may be falling apart. But you've got this faith that God gives you because of His grace and you say this. I know because I know. There's no feeling involved. But I know it, because the Holy Spirit has worked in my spirit to convince me that I've been justified

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by faith alone. God regenerated me and gave me newness of life. I just know it. I can't explain why. I just know it. And that's a function of faith. Yes, Jay?

Jay: What you just said is in Romans 8:16. *"The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God."*

Bruce: Yes, exactly. You just know because you know! But you can only know because you know if you're saved by grace. You cannot know that you know if you're saved by works, because you're always going to question. Did I get the right number? Is there one more thing I need to do?

Men, the first question you have to ask yourself is this question. Am I saved by grace? The second thing would be this. *Am I mixing law and grace?* Law means that I must do something to please God. Why is it that God is pleased with you? It's because of Christ!

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: He is pleased with you because of Christ. That's justification. You see, when you mix the law with it, it says that I've got to do something to please God. Men, you are justified by faith alone. And when you are, God is pleased with you. You now begin to express that with an attitude of gratitude and you live your life differently. It's an expression of gratitude.

Gratitude is the greatest panacea for griping, complaining and blaming. The way you get rid of griping, complaining and blaming is to be grateful. Do I realize that God has found pleasure in me because of Christ? That doesn't change! Yes, I might blow it. But I can repent of my sins and He'll be gracious to forgive me and cleanse me from all unrighteousness. Because I've been justified, God says, "You're not guilty. Bruce, you're not guilty anymore! All the times you blow it, you're not guilty!"

Men, if you understand that, you're free from all these labor intensive things that we try to do to mix law and grace. So be careful not to mix law and grace.

Law means that I must do something to please God. Grace means that God was pleased to do something for me. That's what grace does. God was pleased to do something for me.

Look at Romans chapter 11, verse 6.

Transcriber's Note: Romans 11:6. *"But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works. Otherwise, grace would no longer be grace."*

Bruce: The third question I would suggest that we would ask to make application is this. *Am I rejoicing in my justification by faith alone?* The righteousness of Christ has been credited to my account. Do I rejoice in that?

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: He deals with us as if we had never sinned at all. Can you rejoice in that? We should never fear judgment, because our sins have already been judged at the cross. Romans chapter 8 verse 1. *"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."* Do you realize, men, that yes, you deserve condemnation. But He doesn't look at you that way, because you're justified by faith alone because of the Person and work of Christ.

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#4. I would suggest this. *Am I walking in the freedom of grace?* It is no longer freedom to do, but freedom *not* to do! You have the freedom not to do those things anymore. You can make that choice because of the imparted righteousness of Christ in you by the Holy Spirit. You can now make different choices than you used to. It's not freedom to do, but it's the freedom not to have to do those things anymore, because you're living under the resurrection power of grace. That's the newness of life that we just read about.

We obey God because of love, not because of law. Obedience is a love response to God for His mercy. It's a love response. Jesus said in John 14 that *"if you love Me, you will obey my commandments."* If you love Christ, you're going to obey Him. You now have the ability to do that because of the righteousness of Christ that has been imparted to you and implanted in you by the Holy Spirit.

Number five I would offer for your consideration as we close is this. *Am I defending the Biblical gospel?* Am I defending the Biblical gospel, the one we talked about today—the holiness of God, the sinfulness of man, the Person and work of Christ, repentance and faith? Galatians 1:10 tells us that we do not seek to please men. When you're sharing your faith in Christ, who are you trying to please? Do you want to please God or do you want to please man? And therefore you adjust it to make sure that you come across nicely and that they think well of you. That's the danger of every preacher and teacher. That's a danger, because you want to be accepted and thought well of.

Notice this. Do we proclaim the Biblical gospel, and not the gospel with what I would call religious pluses—meaning that we add things on to it? We proclaim the Biblical gospel. Now you've got to be baptized a certain way. Do we teach baptismal regeneration? You see, there are a lot of pluses that we add on to this. And oftentimes, we add these pluses of the good things that we try to do at church because we think that we're going to add them on and get merit for it, when Christ has already given us all the merit that we need. Do we live in the freedom of grace?

And lastly, I would say this. *Am I living according to the truths of the Biblical gospel?* The best defense is to live out the truth. Our best defense, men, in a world that's after us, is to live out the truth. The best verbal declaration will be negated by my life's contradiction. The best verbal declaration is going to be negated by the contradictory conduct of my life. Am I living out the Biblical gospel?

Men, you've been justified by faith! There are no more things that you need to do. Works salvation says that you must do. Salvation by grace says, "Done." What did Christ say at the cross? "It is finished." It was accomplished for you!

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: You and I now just accept that by faith. Now that changes our lives radically. Remember this. Justification by faith is essentially this—just as if I never sinned. Men, we're no longer guilty. Ponder that. And live by grace. Not only are we saved by grace, we're maintained by grace.

Let's pray. Lord! You've given us a great deal to think about and ponder. We pray, Lord, that we'd ask ourselves the question. What am I going to do about what I've just learned? It will take a lifetime for us to apply all these things. But that's what grace does.

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Grace gives us the power to apply the truths that You give us because of the work of the Holy Spirit.

And so Father, I entrust these men to You over the next several months in my absence. I pray that You would draw them all closer to Yourself, and above all, Lord, that You'd be pleased to open their eyes, that they might behold You more clearly for Christ's sake. And all the Brave Men said, "Amen!"