

“Divine Grace vs Human Achievement” Part 1

Christian Liberty

Galatians 5:1-6

Dr. Bruce Bickel

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Bruce: Good morning, men!

Men: Good morning!

Bruce: Great to be with all of you. Let me give you a report of what’s going on before we record all this. This is sometimes family business just between us.

I want you to know, men, how much I really appreciated your prayer support. One of the things that I discovered while I was laying on the flat of my back for seven weeks was two things.

Somebody asked me, “What’s the greatest thing you’ve learned? What did God teach you?” Well, the first thing I learned was this. It’s very easy to waste time.

Time is a valuable commodity, men. You never get it back. And we need to be wise in how we use our time. I spent seven weeks on my back looking at the ceiling. I couldn’t read. I couldn’t do much. And I just realized that I’m just sitting here wasting a lot of time. And it was so easy to waste time! And I learned a great lesson. You know, time is something that needs to be managed well. It’s a gift that we have. So don’t let it go by. Use your time wisely, as the Scripture says.

The second thing was that I began to realize the great significance in God’s providence in creating the entity known as the body of Christ, and how critical it is that we survive within the body of Christ. You know, you men demonstrated that to me in your prayer support, your notes, your encouragement, the things you said. Your phone calls, your text messages, all those things were a great encouragement. And I began to realize that I was not called to live in a vacuum. We’re called to live with the body of Christ. And how important that really is!

And so, men, I want to thank you for that. You had a great ministry in my life. So men, I really appreciate your ministry, and thank you very much. (*Applause.*) Don, do you want to set the tone for us, brother?

Don: Yes. (*Music.*)

Bruce: Gracious Lord, it’s a joy to be with my brothers. It’s a joy to be with the family. Father, You’ve called us to live as a unit, not as individuals. We pray, Lord, that in the time we have fellowship here today that You would teach us about the glories of Yourself, Your majesty, Your grace, as well as Your providential care. And to that end, Father, we pray that You’d open our eyes once again, that we might behold You more clearly for Christ’s sake. Amen and Amen.

Men: Amen.

Bruce: I invite you to open your Bibles, please, to Galatians chapter five, continuing our study. I want to thank Don and Sig and Ted and the other brothers who filled in for me during the last three months. They did a wonderful job, and the Lord was glorified by their presentations and their teaching. And we’re going to continue our study in the book of Galatians, picking it up at chapter five. We’ll be looking at the first six verses.

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“For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to the yoke of slavery. Look! I, Paul, say to you that if you accept circumcision, Christ will be of no advantage to you. I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is obligated to keep the whole law. You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law. You have fallen away from grace. But through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly await for the hope of righteousness. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.” This is the word of the Lord.

Men: Thanks be to God.

Bruce: Amen and Amen. Men, there are only two kinds of religions, the religion of human achievement and the religion of divine grace. Whatever you want to call them, given their names, there’s a litany of them out there. But when you boil it down, there are only two kinds—those that are trusting man’s works, and those that are trusting the divine grace of God. And Paul interrupts this tension in the book of Galatians by defining the wonderful doctrine of the divine grace of God in salvation. So he jumps right in the middle of this dilemma, as we see in the beginning of chapter five.

But for every person salvation boils down to one central question. Do I trust and magnify my own achievements? Or do I humbly bow before the majesty and sovereign mercy of God? Those are the two options, because these are the only two kinds of religions we have, men—those that are oriented to human achievement. And can you trust that? Or can you trust the divine grace of God?

Paul emphasizes the work of the Holy Spirit to make this life of faith possible. Look at chapter 5, verse 5. You see, the reason is that it is necessary for those who have been justified by faith to have an implanted life of faith by the Holy Spirit. So look at chapter 5 verse 5. You’ll notice the number of times he employs the Holy Spirit as the Source of the life of faith that we live in the divine life. Chapter 5 verse 5. *“For through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness.”* Look at verse 16. *“But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.”*

Look at verse 18. *“But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.”* And verse 25. *“If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.”*

You see, he’s saying this. If you have been justified by faith, then you need to have implanted within you the source of power that’s going to cause you to walk by faith. Walking by faith is not something that we naturally do. That is foreign to us. It’s not something that is natural.

The Holy Spirit is the means by which He gives us the desire to walk by faith. The power of the Holy spirit gives us the desire to want to do this. He makes us willing to be willing. And Paul is going to spend a lot of time talking about that, as we walk by faith.

One of the best ways to contrast different issues in life is by way of contrasting one against the other. And that’s what I’d like to do for a moment. You’ll see in your notes that I’d like to contrast the life of faith just by taking some selected verses from chapter five, which we will study in the ensuing weeks, and contrast that with the human achievement side. Basically, we’re going to take a look at the difference between liberty in Christ and legalism.

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First of all, notice this. Divine grace, which is liberty and freedom in Christ, means that I’ve been set free by Christ. I’m no longer in bondage by the law. Galatians 5:1-12. But I need something. I need Someone to control my life from within. And that Someone is the Holy Spirit. Galatians 5:13-26. Through the Spirit’s love I have a desire to love others, not to love myself. Galatians 6:1-10. I have a sudden desire, and that’s the desire that the Holy Spirit gives us. He gives us the willingness to be willing.

And then the life of liberty is so wonderful and so freeing that I want to live it to the glory of God. For He is the One making it possible. Galatians chapter 6, verses 11-18.

Now contrast that with the following, looking at legalism, looking at human achievement. If I obey these rules, I’ll become a more significant person. I’m a great admirer of this particular religious leader. So I’m now going to submit myself to his teaching. I believe I have the strength to obey and improve myself. I do what I am told and measure up to the standard set for me.

I’m making progress. I don’t do some of the things I used to do. Other people compliment me on my obedience and my discipline. I can see that I’m a better person than others in my fellowship. How wonderful to be so spiritual!

Participant: Oh! *(Laughter.)*

Bruce: If only others were like me! *(Laughter.)* God is certainly fortunate that I’m one of his! I have a desire to share this with others, so they can be just as I am.

Our group is growing and we have a fine reputation. Too bad other groups are not as good as we are. *(Laughter.)*

Now that’s just by way of contrast, men. There are only two options that you have. Are you going to bow down and trust your own human achievements? Or are you going to submit to the sovereign divine grace and mercy of God?

So what do we mean when Paul says in verse 1, “*For freedom Christ has set us free?*” What does he mean by freedom? He’s referring to freedom from the frustrating struggle to keep the law to gain God’s favor and His approval. It’s freedom from the frustrating struggle to keep the law as a means of salvation to gain God’s approval. It’s the freedom of knowing that you’re not accepted by the world and you are accepted by God. It’s the freedom of knowing that you’re accepted by God because of what Christ has done.

WHJD. Remember that from years ago? What would Jesus do? I have no idea what Jesus would do in anything. It’s presumptuous and prideful to think that I’d be able to answer that question. But the one thing I do know is this—WHJD? What has Jesus done? I know what Jesus has done. That’s why we made you that little wrist band, so you would have that and recognize that the whole thing is this. Do I really remember what Jesus has done? And what are the implications for me? Have you thought about it?

One of the things I did when I was lying on my back for seven weeks is that I said, “What are the implications?” Not “what does it mean to me?”—there’s a difference. But what are the implications for the Biblical truths? What is the implication of the Virgin Birth for my life? Why was there a need for a virgin birth? What is the implication for me personally of the Virgin Birth? Why is it that Christ had to live a sinlessly perfect life? What is the implication for my life today? What am I going to do about that thought about what Jesus has done? Why did Christ have to die? Did He really need to do that?

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What are the implications for my life personally? Not just what does it mean to me, but what am I going to do about the fact that Christ died for me? And why was He resurrected? Why did He need to go to the cross? What about the Ascension?

You see, when you ponder those things and look at that little WHJD band, everything about life is based upon this one fact—that I remember what Christ has done for me. And that’s the difference between legalism and divine grace. You’re not trusting in your own human achievement of keeping. You’re now able to do it because the Holy Spirit is now within you, implanted within you by the grace of God. And now you have a desire to want to do the things that God wants you to do.

So men, there are only two choices. Bow down to the sovereignty of God and His mercy and grace, or trust my own human achievements in thinking that I can.

To be free is not to be free and easy. The true believer is not free to please self, but now free to please God. Liberty is turned to license by self.

So what’s the danger of legalism, as Paul teaches us in these verses? Well the danger in Paul’s case with the Galatians, which you are familiar with, was their trusting in circumcision as a means of earning their salvation. And thereby they were reducing the divine grace of God to a legalistic human achievement oriented salvation. In other words, they were adding on top of their faith in Christ, presumably, circumcision because it was a Jewish rite of their tradition. If they accepted circumcision, trusting in it and thinking of it as necessary to earn their salvation, they would forfeit the benefits procured by Christ.

Now take a look at Romans chapter 11, verse 6. *“But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works. Otherwise, grace would no longer be grace.”* Romans 11:6.

Now Paul’s logic is very, very clear here. He’s saying this. It is impossible to accept Christ unless I acknowledge that I can’t save myself. One of the ways in which we understand my need to accept Christ is that I cannot save myself. Therefore I trust the Savior. And Paul’s logic is this. It is impossible to accept Christ, acknowledging that you can’t save yourself, and then to turn around and be circumcised, adding on to what Christ has done, acknowledging that you can save yourself. The two don’t mix. Grace and law don’t mix. Trusting the law as the means of salvation and trusting grace don’t mix. You can’t say that I can’t save myself and I’m going to trust Christ. And then you go and add something on top of that, some legalistic thing that you must do. And then you’re acknowledging that you can save yourself because you’ve just added something on to the Person and work of Christ. Do you see how illogical that is? That’s impossible. Paul says that the two don’t mix. Grace and legalism don’t mix.

No matter how you look at it, legalism is an insidious, dangerous enemy to the Biblical gospel. When you abandon grace for law, you always lose.

Now in this section, chapter 5, verses 1-12, Paul explains what the believer loses when he turns from God’s grace to manmade means of rules and regulations to earn your salvation. He describes what we lose. He describes the dangers of legalism as a means of salvation.

He uses the word *yoke* in verse 1. Now when the believers in Galatia trusted Christ, they lost the yoke of servitude to sin and put on the yoke of Christ. Would somebody read Matthew 11:28-30? When they trusted Christ, they removed this yoke of bondage to sin

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and put on the yoke of Christ .We need to understand what that means. Matthew 11:28-30.

Participant: *“Come to Me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me. For I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for Your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.”*

Bruce: Now the yoke of religion is hard. The yoke of Christ is easy. Notice. Christ’s yoke is easy and His burden is light.

Now the word *easy* in the Greek text means kind and gracious. Turn with me to the book of Jonah. I want to show you something here. Would somebody find Jonah chapter 1, and read the first couple of verses?

Participant: *“The word of the LORD came to Jonah, son of Amittai. ‘Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me.’*

“But Jonah ran away from the LORD and headed for Tarshish. He went down to Joppa, where he found a ship bound for that port. After paying the fare he went aboard and sailed for Tarshish to flee from the LORD.”

Bruce: That’s good. Thank you. I want to show you something, men. Disobedience is hard. The yoke of Christ is easy. It’s light. What is hard is being disobedient. Look at all the effort that Jonah had to go through to be disobedient. Take a look at this.

“Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, ‘Go, arise to Nineveh, the great city, and call out against it, for their evil has come up before me.’” (ESV)

That was his calling. It was to go and preach against it. Now look what he had to do to disobey! Look how hard it is!

“But Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.” First of all, he went down to Joppa. He found a ship going to Tarshish. He paid the fare. He went on board to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the LORD. Look how difficult it was! Look at all the work he had to go through! He had to get up. He had to go down to the dock. He had to find a ship. He had to pay the fare. He had to board the ship and he had to sail. He had to do six different things to be disobedient.

Now Paul’s contrast is this. Jesus says that His yoke is easy and His burden is light. Disobedience is hard! Sinning is hard because of the work that you have to go through to get to it.

And Paul is saying this: that the yoke of Christ is easy because of the work of the Holy Spirit who gives you the desire to do the things that you want to do. He gives us that desire. The yoke of Christ frees us to fulfill His will while the yoke of the law enslaves us.

The unsaved person wears a yoke of sin. Lamentations 1:14.

Transcriber’s Note: Lamentations 1:14, NKJV.

“The yoke of my transgressions was bound;

They were woven together by His hands,

And thrust upon my neck.

He made my strength fail;

The LORD delivered me into the hands of those I am not able to withstand.”

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The religious legalist wears the yoke of bondage. Galatians 5:1.

Transcriber’s Note: See first Scripture passage above.

Bruce: But the Christian who depends upon God’s grace wears the liberating yoke of Christ. That’s what Paul is teaching us in verse 1 of chapter 5. Yes, Don?

Don: Bruce, do you think it would be helpful? It would be helpful for me for you to explain what the yoke was in that culture, because I don’t think we can identify with that today, at least I can’t. What did Jesus mean by a yoke? What is a yoke?

Bruce: Well, you would have two animals, two oxen. And there would be a yoke around the two necks of the two animals. And they would be used to trample the grain, to plant the crops, to dig up the ground. And it was the yoke that kept things together. And they were restricted because they could only go in one direction. So the yoke was a form of restriction in maintaining these animals, and how they contained them. And so the symbol of the yoke is that it’s very restrictive. It’s a restrictive issue.

And Paul is saying this. With the yoke of sin you are restricted. And when you look at that legalism as a means of salvation you’re restricted, because there’s no freedom. The contrast is freedom versus yoke. Does anybody want to add something more to that? Bishop Rodgers, please?

Bishop Rodgers: The yoke that’s easy is the yoke that fits you rightly. The yoke that’s hard is one that rubs and causes sores.

Bruce: Right.

Bishop Rodgers: That’s why Christ’s yoke fits our nature, as we were created to serve Him.

Bruce: Amen.

Bishop Rodgers: We have the help of the Spirit.

Bruce: Thank you. Yes, please?

Participant: With the yoke, two oxen are here and the old ox is here, and he usually had a young one with him. And the pricks were hitting the young one because he wasn’t able to go where he needed to go. The old one, just followed the trap, because that was what he was used to doing his whole life.

Bruce: The issue here is the ease and comfort we have with the yoke of Christ versus the burden of a yoke of legalism. That’s the symbolism we have in this particular illustration.

So it’s Christ who makes us free from the bondage of the law. It’s freedom from the curse of the law by His dying on the cross in Galatians three. That’s what Don preached several weeks ago.

Now notice this. The believer in Christ is no longer under the law as a means of earning his salvation. He’s under grace. Romans 6:14.

Transcriber’s Note: Romans 6:14, NKJV. *“For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.”*

Bruce: Now this does not mean, men, that we’re outlaws and that we’re rebels. It simply means that we no longer need the external force of the law to keep us in God’s will, because now we have the indwelling leading of the Holy Spirit. It’s the external

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pressure of having to do versus the internal motivation of the Holy Spirit who gives you the desire. That’s the contrast.

Now notice how we see this in Romans chapter 8, verse 1. *“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ from the law of sin and death. For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.”*

You see, men, Christ died to set us free, not to make us slaves. To go back to the law as a means of earning your salvation, or adding something on to the doctrine of the grace of God is to become entangled in a maze of dos and don’ts. And you’ve abandoned your spiritual maturity and adulthood for something that one theologian says is another spiritual childhood.

The theme of Galatians chapter five is that Christianity is freedom. It’s not bondage. It’s not freedom to do evil. But it’s the freedom to do good, because the internal motivating divine power is from the Holy Spirit, not some external regulations and restraints of the law. The difference is this: the internal motivation of the Holy Spirit versus the external motivation of the law to keep things to do. One is external, one is internal.

And notice what he says. The next thing that we lose is this. You are not profited by Christ. Take a look at verse 2. Yes, please?

Participant: So if it is the Holy Spirit who gives us the desire to do what is good and do what is right, what is it saying before the Holy Spirit came upon us? Did people not have that desire then?

Bruce: Absolutely. That’s exactly what it means. They’re lost. All they can do is trust their own human achievement. That’s the contrast that Paul is saying. Without the internal motivation and desire of the Holy Spirit all you can do is trust yourself. So that’s absolutely right.

Participant: What does that say then about the prophets who were serving God at that time? I mean, to me it seems like they had that desire.

Bruce: Well some did, some didn’t. The true prophets did; the bad prophets didn’t. But your point is well taken. If you don’t have the Holy Spirit, you don’t have that power within you to want to do the desires of God. Yes, Ted?

Ted: There’s no question that in the Old Testament that the Holy Spirit did come upon and indwell people from time to time. But He was not their possession. He did not possess them and live in them permanently. They were, in a sense, not permanently new people, new creations.

Bruce: There were spotty evidences of the Holy Spirit, not the internal residence of the Holy Spirit as within us, in our spirits. That comes when we trust the Person and the work of Christ. Good.

Now notice what he says in verse 2. *“You are not profited by Christ.”* Now what does that mean? He sets forth what I would call a hypothetical situation by the use of the word

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if. He’s speaking to people who have not yet been circumcised, but were still following some of the Judaizers’ calendar. You’ll see that in Galatians chapter 4, verse 10.

Transcriber’s Note: Galatians 4:10, NKJV. *“You observe days and months and seasons and years.”*

Bruce: They were observing such things as days and months and times and years. That was part of the Judaizers’ calendar. That were following that very, very simply. And so the Judaizers came along and said, “If you’re doing these things, why don’t you just add circumcision on to it, because you need to have circumcision for your salvation?” And so Paul says that accepting circumcision as necessary for your salvation, you would forfeit the benefits of Christ and what he accomplished for you, rendering Christ’s death on the cross worthless to you.

Now that’s what that phrase means. That’s a serious statement. You’re not profited by Christ anymore. You cannot take the Person and work of Christ and add something to it. When you do that you lose the benefits of what Christ has profited for you by going to the cross.

God’s word teaches us very clearly that when we were unsaved we owed God a great debt that we could not repay.

Participant: Bruce?

Bruce: Yes, please?

Participant: He’s also making a very severe distinction between listening to these teachings. If you’re going to trust in Christ, trust in Him alone for your salvation, and nobody else. But if you’re going to go back and trust in your good works or some legal system to accomplish this, Christ is of no benefit to you. You’re on your own.

Bruce: That’s correct. You’re on your own. Remember the five *solas*? We’re saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, revealed in the Scripture alone, to the glory of God alone. When you don’t have that, guess who you’re alone with?

Participant: Yourself. *(Laughter.)*

Bruce: You’re alone with yourself. You’re on your own. You’re absolutely alone. It’s either the five *solas*, or the one *sola*. It’s either one or the other.

Jesus makes this very clear in the parable of the two debtors. Take a look at Luke chapter 7, verses 36-50.

Transcriber’s Note: Luke 7:36-50. *“One of the Pharisees asked Him to eat with him. And He went in to the Pharisee’s house and took His place at the table.*

“And behold, a woman of the city who was a sinner, when she learned that He was reclining at table in the Pharisee’s house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment. And standing behind Him at His feet, weeping, she began to wet His feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head, and kissed His feet and anointed them with the ointment.

“Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw this, he said to himself, ‘If this Man were a prophet, He would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching Him, for she is a sinner.’

“And Jesus answering said to him, ‘Simon, I have something to say to you.’

“And he answered, ‘Say it, teacher.’

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“A certain money lender had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. When they could not pay, he canceled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more?”

“Simon answered, ‘The one, I suppose, who canceled the larger debt.’

“And He said to him, ‘You have judged rightly.’

“Then turning toward the woman He said to Simon, ‘Do you see this woman? I entered your house. You gave Me no water for My feet. But she has wet My feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You gave Me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss My feet. You did not anoint my head with oil. But she has anointed My feet with ointment.

“Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little loves little.’ And He said to her, ‘Your sins are forgiven.’

“Then those who were at table with Him began to say among themselves, ‘Who is this who even forgives sins?’ And He said to the woman, ‘Your faith has saved you. Go in peace.’”

Bruce: Two men owed a debtor a certain amount of money. One owed him ten times as much as the other one. They could not pay it because the debt was so great. One was ten times as much as the other one. But the creditor graciously forgave them. And God in His grace, because of the work of Christ that Christ has done for us on the cross is able to forgive sinners regardless of the amount of the debt that we owe.

So when we trust Christ, men, rather than remaining debtors, as we were before we had saving faith, owing a debt that we cannot repay, we actually become spiritually rich.

Now let me give you some insights on what it means to become spiritually rich. The contrast is this. Prior to our salvation by divine grace, you and I owed a debt that we cannot repay. We cannot repay that. It is so immense. When God in His grace grants us saving faith and regenerates us, and through the power of the Holy Spirit gives us the desire to live for Him, all of a sudden you go from having a debt that you cannot repay to being spiritually rich in Christ.

Listen to these descriptions. We now share in the riches of God’s grace. Ephesians 1, verse 7.

Transcriber’s Note: Ephesians 1:7, NKJV. *“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.”*

Bruce: We see the riches of His glory. Ephesians 1 verse 18 and Philippians 4:19.

Transcriber’s Note: Ephesians 1:18. *“the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.”*

Philippians 4:19. *“And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”*

Bruce: We see the riches of His wisdom. Romans chapter 11, verse 33.

Transcriber’s Note: Romans 11:33. *“Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!”*

Bruce: We have the unsearchable riches of Christ. Ephesians 3 verse 8.

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Transcriber’s Note: Ephesians 3:8. *“To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.”*

Bruce: In Christ we have all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Colossians 2 verse 3.

Transcriber’s Note: Colossians 2:2-3. *“and attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”*

Bruce: And we are complete in Christ. Colossians 2 verse 10.

Transcriber’s Note: Colossians 2:10. *“And you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.”*

Bruce: Once a person is in Christ, he has all that he needs to live the kind of Christian life that God would want us to live, because He has given you the riches of His own self. You see, you go from being a debtor to now having the riches of Christ. And to revert back to a legalistic system is to go back to a debt that you cannot repay, and to lose the benefits of the riches that you have in the Person and work of Christ.

Participant: Bruce?

Bruce: Yes, please?

Participant: I want to go back to the gentleman’s question in the back in regard to the Old Testament prophets. The answer was a little confusing, at least it was confusing for me. And so in that I just wanted to mention that when we’re talking about the Holy Spirit, I was thinking of Ezekiel 36, where the Spirit will give us a heart of flesh. But in Romans—and I think this would be helpful—in Romans 4 it says this. It says, *“Therefore, know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, ‘In you all the nations shall be blessed.’”* And I just think that that’s an important part of even the Old Testament, with them seeing Christ. So I just want to say that.

Bruce: Well you know, the Old Testament saints were saved the same way the New Testament saints were saved—by the grace of God through the work of Christ. They anticipated the work of Christ. We go back and see what He has done. Both were saved by the work of Christ, either way you look at it. And we are now the true descendants of Abraham because we are part of the lineage of the heritage that God gave Abraham. We are part of that lineage because of our faith in Christ. It’s a key point for us to understand.

Well, do you understand the riches that you have in Christ? And Paul is saying this. Look. When you revert back to legalism, you lose all those riches. And you go back to the spirit of bondage, rather than rejoicing and living in the riches of God’s grace. So Paul says that the false doctrine of human achievement renders Christ’s death worthless to us. His death would be meaningless. And you would be ignoring the gracious work of Christ on the cross.

William Hendrickson, the great theologian, said, “A Christ supplemented is a Christ supplanted,” meaning this. If you add something to the Biblical gospel, you’re removing the gospel itself. You lose the value of the Person and work of Christ.

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The second thing he tells us that we lose is that we are required to keep the whole law. Look at chapter 5, verse 3. You’re required to keep the whole law.

Transcriber’s Note: Galatians 5:3. *“I testify again to every man that accepts circumcision that he is obligated to keep the whole law.”*

Bruce: You’re required to keep the whole law. If you want to live by the law, you’ve got to keep the whole law all the time, every moment. Look at the great commandment in Matthew chapter 22, verse 37.

“And Jesus said to him, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’” One word is used there three times, and that is the word *all*. The word *all* means this: without variance or exceptions, and all the time—without variance, without exception, and no deviation. That’s what the word *all* means.

Now that literally means this. Do you love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength every second of your life? Has there ever been a second when you haven’t done that? Then you’ve broken the law. That means this—every second of your life! No variance, no deviation, no wandering away from it!

Now go back and take a look at this. Can I do that every second of my life with all my heart? Have I done that every second of my life? With all my soul—with all my soul, every second, every moment? And with my mind? Is my mind always thinking about Christ every second? The first time I haven’t thought about Him, I’ve broken the commandment!

Now can you do that? Can you keep the whole law? Has anybody ever done that?

Participant: Yes.

Bruce: Who has done it?

Participant: Jesus.

Bruce: Christ! Trust Him and you get credit for keeping the law! Do you see how it works? I have to realize this—that I can’t save myself! But I’ve got to keep the law all the time! And there is One who has done that. The only Person who has ever lived according to that law is Christ. And when you put your faith in Him, you get the imputed righteousness of Christ. You get credit for His sinless perfection and perfect obedience.

But men, the requirement is this. You’ve got to Love Him with your heart, soul, mind and strength all the time, every second of your life. And if not, you’re lost, because the demand of the law says this. You’ve got to keep the law all the time. Not ninety per cent of the time, but all the time.

You’re driving down the streets of Pittsburgh, and you run a red light. The policeman pulls you over. He says, “Can I see your registration and your driver’s license?” And you give it to him.

He says, “Sir, you broke the law.”

And you say, “Now wait a minute! I haven’t stolen anything. I haven’t committed adultery. I haven’t murdered anybody. I don’t covet anything.”

He says, “But you have broken the law. You have to keep all of the law, not just the ones you want.” You see, when you revert back to legalism, you’ve got to keep the law all the time, every moment.

“Divine Grace vs Human Achievement” Part 1

Now can we do that? Absolutely not! The only Person who has ever done that in His work is Christ. And we trust Him.

Men, that’s why salvation by works is impossible. One has to keep all the law all the time, without variance, without exception, and without deviation, all the time. The only One who has done that, men, is Christ Himself. Trust Him, for He fulfills the law within you. We fulfill the law because of the Person and work of Christ.

Notice how James says this. James chapter 2, verse 10. *“For whoever keeps the whole law, but fails in one point, has become accountable to all of it.”* And Galatians 2:10. *“For all who rely upon works of the law are under a curse. For it is written, ‘Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law and do them.’”*

My friends, if you revert back to legalism as a way of salvation, not only do you lose your freedom in Christ. Not only are you not going to profit by the work of Christ on the cross. But you’re also going to have to keep the law all the time without variance, without deviation, every second of your life. You can’t break one law and expect to be saved by the law after that.

Remember Paul’s logic. If you’re going to trust Christ, recognizing that you cannot save yourself, and then you go out and add some personal discipline on top of that, you’re telling yourself that you can save yourself. And men, those two things don’t mix.

There are only two kinds of religion in this world, the religion and human achievement and the religion of divine grace. We’ll pick this up next week. Yes, Sig?

Sig: Isn’t it just as hard to keep the law as it would be to love the Lord our God with all of our heart and all of our mind and all of our strength?

Bruce: They’re both failures because if you can’t do it all the time without variance and deviation, you’ve broken the law. That’s why the only One who has done in His Person and work is Christ. And we trust Him. I trust Christ, recognizing that I can’t save myself. That’s the key here. You can’t save yourself.

That’s why the prayer of Luke 18 is so powerful. *“Lord, have mercy on me, the sinner.”*

Let’s pray. Father, you’ve made this very clear to us in Your word. I pray now, Lord, that Your Holy Spirit will sift through our unbelief, and help us understand the meaning of these words in our lives. What are the implications of what Christ has done for us? Let us just reflect on that for a moment, as we ponder the great mercy of God. Father, are there things in our lives that we add on to the gospel of Christ that convince me that I can save myself? Remove those things from us. Let us trust the purity of the Biblical gospel, for only Christ has done what He alone can do, to teach us that we cannot save ourselves. May it be so, Father, that we will abandon human achievement and fall at Your mercy and submit ourselves to divine grace for Jesus’ sake. And all the men said, “Amen.” *(Applause.)*