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## FAITH AND WORKS

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### Part 4 of Galatians

Pastor Mark Driscoll | Galatians 3:1-14 | June 02, 2002

There's – if you guys have got a seat, why don't you raise a hand if there's a seat next to you, just so Kyle can know where they're at. One here. One here. One there. One there and one there. So, there's four, and there's like 20 people downstairs.

Which leads me to my next point: we need a big building. And guess what? We got a big building. So, we will be keeping you guys updated. You have bought a building. We will keep this building. The church that used to meet here, Christ Bible Church, gifted us this building to use for worship, and when they gave us this building, we were intensely grateful. We did not anticipate that things would go quite as well as they have.

This week we might see 700 to 800 people go through this building for worship, which is tremendous, but obviously, we are full, jam-packed and can't do any more services. And the one legal parking place just isn't getting it done.

So, what we are going to do, we are going to keep this building for classes and for meetings and for offices. We will continue to use this building, but we're having to move the worship service itself out of this building just because of the tremendous growth that we have had. Let's say, for example, today we have – I don't know – let's say we have 700 to 800 people here. A year and a half ago when we started our first service in this building, we had 40 in that first core group, and we've grown that much in 18 months.

So, we will go to our summer schedule here on Father's Day, June 16 because a lot of you are SPU students and such – good luck with finals – but you guys, a lot of you will be gone for the summer, and then a lot of people will be back in the fall. So, we'll go to 9:00, 11:00 and 5:00 here during the summers.

Here's where we're at with the building: The building itself is 2 miles south of here near Fremont. It's on 14th and Leary Way. It's a great space. It's the old Doc Freeman, just kitty-cornered from one of the new Office Depot or Office Max or something like that down there. The building itself is 40,000 square feet, which is about six times the size of this building. It will seat over 1,000. It will park over 500. It has air conditioning. And yes, men, it has more than one toilet. So, it will be great. We can't wait to get there. The guys only have one; you ladies have got two. So, we love you, and we gave you the best seat in the house. (Laughter)

The building itself we're purchasing for \$4 million, and everything is moving along quite well. Permitting process is underway. Change of use, zoning permits seem to be on the short track. We are in the middle of a 60-day contingency period that ends on June 15. And so, on June 15, we'll have to give the down payment for the building, which is \$200,000.00 plus \$30,000.00 in attorneys and broker's fees. So, we need \$230,000.00 dollars by June 15; in the next week and a half.

Up in the right hand corner of your notes, in the grey-box section, I'll update you as to where we are. So far we have basically \$220,000.00 of the \$230,000.00 already pledged, which is good news. We're almost there which is, to me, very encouraging.

So, what we're asking is that for those of you whom have made pledges to get those in, in the next week. Either send us the check at the office, put it in the offering box in the back, the plate as it goes by or online. For those of you who have not given yet, there's pledge forms in the back or, as I said, you can give in one of those other various ways.

We need to cover an additional \$8,000.00 towards the building this week, and if everybody comes through on their pledges, then we're there. So, I mean, you should be encouraged. We've got \$222,000.00 pledged, and we need \$8,000.00 more in the next week and a half, which is entirely doable. That's not a big deal for a church of this size; a thousand people a week. So, do what you can. We sure appreciate it.

After that, then, we will go into a second fundraising phase. We will start construction in early July, and that will be about \$620,000.00 to \$650,000.00 in build-out for some new bathrooms, some painting, some signage, some carpet, building the stage, a few minor adjustments to the building. It's actually in really good shape for our particular use.

The big issue of classroom space, heating, air conditioning, electrical, sprinkler systems, those kinds of issues were all done five years ago in an \$850,000.00 remodel that we won't have to pay for because that was already taken care of, which is really good. And so, we'll need to raise that money by September 15. We've already got about \$45,000.00 pledged towards that half of the project

And what we're gonna do, as well, is next week we're gonna do a reverse offering. We are going to collect the offering, then we're gonna give you the money back. Okay? And you've got to find a way – within 60 days – to take that money and transition it in some sort of investment, whatever that

might be. We'll give you some suggestions next week. And then we'll have a big service where we'll recollect all the money, we talk about all the ways that you guys invested it, and we'll see how much we have towards the build-out.

Some friends of ours over at Antioch Bible Church did this, and they turned \$16,000.00 into \$320,000.00. So, that's what you're gonna do next week. Praise the Lord. So, we'll see you next week. You've got to find a way to do it that is legal, though. I don't want you like hawking dime bags to kids at elementary schools for the building fund. (Laughter) Okay? So you've got to find something creative but legal.

Here's where we're at with this as well. We're not going to do the traditional building campaign. You'll notice there's no barometer on the wall, for example. And the sermon series, we're not preaching on, "Part 27 on Why God Loves Architecture." What we're just gonna do is we're gonna keep talking about Jesus every week and preaching the Gospel, and then, if you can help and God leads your heart to, go ahead and do that. We'd love to have you stand with us for those of you whom this is your church. I think it's a great step, and it's encouraging for me too.

This building itself is right off the Leary exit of the Ballard Bridge. And on the main street of Leary and the corresponding street behind it 100,000 cars a day drive by that location. Can you even imagine what we could do with 1,000 seats and 100,000 cars a day? We can do something; certainly do something. So, we're pretty excited, and we'll continue to be.

Our daughter churches will be unaffected. Pray for a daughter church up in Mount Vernon, Kirkland, one in Portland, another one going up in Portland and another one going up in West Seattle. We'll get more information to you about that church in West Seattle coming up. It's a great, great, great opportunity. They have been gifted a \$3-million brick building on the hill, on the main drag of 35th in West Seattle. And the former director up at Western Washington University is gonna be the pastor there. So, those churches will keep going.

The service down at the South End will keep going. The service at the Paradox will keep going. And this building will just house us, and we'll see if we can grow again in the fall. So, thank you for coming, and I think that's about all I've got.

Then the next weekend, we'll do the reverse offering. On the 16th we will do the change of service time, since a lot of you will be gone for the summer, we'll go to the 9:00 and the 11:00 a.m.

Grab a Bible. There's one on the end of your row if you don't have one. Somebody can pass you one. We're gonna be today in the Book of Galatians: Paul's tirade against legalism and things added on top of the finished work of Jesus Christ. I'll pray, and we will get busy.

Lord God, we love you, and we thank you for the love that you have given to us, so that we could love you back. We thank you, Lord Jesus, for what you have accomplished on the Cross for us. We thank you for sending the Holy Spirit to author the Scriptures and also to live in us and convict us of sin and lead us and guide us and reveal you to us.

Lord God, it's our prayer today that we would rest in the finished work of Jesus and not our own works and that we would follow the Holy Spirit and not our own legalisms, traditions and culture. We ask this in Christ's good name. Amen.

The issue we're dealing with today is a very, very practical one. Throughout the course of history it has been commonly held by all cultures and peoples that in addition to human life on this planet there is also God, that there is spiritual existence apart from us. There is also a commonly held recognition that there is distance or separation or misunderstanding between us and God. And so, there has been a series of speculations given as to how we bridge this gap or reconcile ourselves to God or be seen as pleasing in his sight or connected to him or whatever language you want to use.

And all of those philosophies and religious understandings can be summed up, really, in only two basic views of life between human beings and God. One is faith, and the other is works. This is a very important theological issue and I want to make sure that we're abundantly clear on it as a church because it is absolutely vital to how we perceive God and life. A faith-based and a works-based understanding of our relationship with God are completely antithetical and should not be comingled in any degree.

Works is basically stating that, indeed, there is distance between us and God. And what we must do is something to bridge that gap, to cross that distance, to make ourselves close to God or acceptable to God or pleasing to God or reconciled to God, and that might be tradition or it might be culture or it might be morality or it might be any other thing other than what Jesus has done.

And all of those share in common this assumption: We are in a condition of need, but we also can remedy our condition of need by ourselves. We can cleanse ourselves. We can fix ourselves. We can heal ourselves. Today, it comes under the guise of self-esteem, self-discovery, self-actualization, self-help, self-improvement. That the "self" is not only the source of the problem, that it is also the source of the resolution and cure. That is absolutely antithetical to the teaching of the Scriptures.

The teaching of the Scriptures is not that we should have faith in ourselves and our ability to fix ourselves and to make ourselves pleasing to God. That is works. Instead, we should trust not in our works but the works of Jesus, and we should not have faith in ourselves. We should have faith in Him, and we should not rest and sleep well because of our goodness, but because of His goodness, and not because of the things that we have done, but solely because of the things that He has done. That is the biblical teaching of faith.

And so, back at Galatians 2:4 says that, "The righteous live by faith." To be righteous is to live by faith, not by law, tradition, culture, legalism or any other form of moral movement. This is the issue that, for me, is tremendously important. I was raised, and believed in God. I've always believed in God. I never was an atheist. But that is insufficient. James 2:19 tells us that even demons believe in God, and they shudder. So, believing in God is not sufficient. It has to be more than that.

And my misunderstanding was this: I thought that as long as you believed in God and you were a good person, then God would love you and you would go to Heaven. That's what I thought. And if you would have asked me, you know, when I was up until the age of 18 or 19, "Are you a Christian?" I would've said, "Yes, and a Christian is someone who believes in God and is a good person." And that's what I thought. Until a drunken frat guy shattered my world with one decent question, and God uses anything. He used a drunken frat guy, who was like a seventh year sophomore to absolutely upset my theological worldview.

I did not drink because I made a list of rules to declare myself self-righteous. So, I said, "Why, I'm gonna be a good person." I made this little list of things that I thought a good person should be. I won't lie. I won't steal. I won't cheat. I won't drink. I won't smoke. I won't, you know, beat anyone up who doesn't deserve it. I won't – I had this list of things that I would do and not do, and I would declare myself "good." That is the essence of works and self-righteousness. That was basically my worldview. "I make my rules, and I live up to them. I'm a great guy."

So, I had these rules, and one of my rules was I won't drink because then God will look down and say, "Well, I'm going to pick Mark for my team because he's such a great guy." After all, I was.

So, what happened was I was at a frat party in college, which is not the typical place that God shows up in powerful, illuminating, theological acumen. But this drunken frat guy came up, and he said, "Here. Drink a beer." And I said, "No, I don't drink." He said, "Why?" I said, "I'm a good person." (Laughter)

And he said, "Well, why do you want to be a good person?" I said, "Because I believe in God, and I'm a good person." He said, "Well, Jesus drank," which is about the only part of the Bible he really knew. That and, "Thou shalt not judge." He put those two verses together, and he'd come up with alcoholism. But anyway. (Laughter)

I said, "No, I'm a good person." He said, "So, how do you know you're gonna go to Heaven?" I said, "I know I'm gonna go to Heaven because I'm a good person." And he asked this question that shattered my world. He was basically mocking me, trying to get me to drink. And he said, "Well, how good do you have to be to go to Heaven?" I thought, "I don't know. That's a good question. I don't know." And he said, "Do you have to be good all the time? And if you're not good some days, does that cancel your bad days, and who makes the rules, and how do you know what's good and bad?" He was just sort of in a drunken stupor rambling, but it was a really good question, I felt, particularly considering his condition.

I said, "I don't know," and I started thinking about that. How good do I have to be? How moral do I have to be, and who determines the morality? Do my good days cancel my bad days, and did my sins cancel my obedience? And I started getting really muddy about where I was at. Up until this point I thought, "I'm a good guy. I'm a great guy." And then I realized, "Well, maybe I'm not good enough."

And so, what I decided was, "I'll read the Bible to get all the rules, and then I'll do them to make sure that I'm a good guy." Okay. Now my wife, she was my girlfriend at the time. Moral of the story is if a woman gives you a Bible, give her a ring. She gave me this Bible as a graduation present from high school, and I started reading the Bible.

I started reading the New Testament, and the first time through I hated it. It made no sense at all. It sounded like everyone was bad, and I kept looking for the good people to figure out what they were doing. And even the people that I thought were good at the end of it ended up killing God, and I didn't think that necessarily proved that they were good people.

So, I kept reading and reading, and I got through the whole New Testament and I couldn't find any good people. And I couldn't find any way to declare myself good, which really troubled me.

That's the essence of what Paul is getting into today. How good is good enough for God? How do you know if you're good enough for God? How do you come into relationship with God? Do you trust your ability to be pleasing in His sight? Or do you trust what He's done for you in Jesus?

The church he's writing to is a church that he had planted. Paul, in Acts 13, he, and Barnabas had been sent out by the Holy Spirit to go plant this church. They preached the gospel in this region that is present day, probably somewhere around Turkey. What happens is the church gets started. Things are going well. They love, and trust Jesus. The Holy Spirit is doing His wonderful ministry among them. Paul moves on to plant a church.

False teachers come in, they start taking the simple message of trusting in Jesus and adding to it other things, which, in fact, end up negating the message of Jesus altogether. And it's a very polemic, very terse letter that he writes, and he is arguing against these false teachers, "Who have infiltrated the ranks," he says, "as false brothers to spy on their freedom in Christ." And so, he begins with a series of six questions, and then he moves into three examples. We'll hit the six questions first.

Chapter 3, Verse 1: the Book of Galatians. "You foolish Galatians!" – it's not a compliment – "Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified." Paul says, "Who's tricked you? Who's duped you? What's happened here? I showed up. I told you all about Jesus, and what he did for you? And now that I've left, you have walked away from Jesus and gotten into other things other than Jesus. Who's tricked you? It's almost like they put you in a demonic trance. It's like you're spellbound by this new teaching.

"All of a sudden, you're not excited about Jesus anymore; you're excited about these teachers. You're not excited about what Jesus did on the Cross; you're excited about what you can do to remedy your own condition. You're not trusting in Christ anymore; you're trusting in yourself. You've walked away from simple faith. Who's tricked you? Who's tricked you?"

Is it possible for someone to start off under good teaching, love Jesus, trust Him and then over time get into all kinds of weird nonsense that they add in

addition to Jesus and the Bible and start making up their own rules, their own morality, their own traditions, their own culture, their own demands, their own understanding? Does that happen?

Happens all the time. And what those people always do is they say, "Well, the world is filled with good guys and bad guys. Good guys get white hats; bad guys get black hats. Who gets the white hat?"

We do. And then we run around putting black hats on everyone else. We're the hero; they're the villain. You read the Bible, who's the hero? Jesus. Who's the villain? Everybody else. Okay. That's the story of the Bible. All villains; one hero. False teachers teach, no, there's heroes and villains, and we're heroes, and everyone else is villains.

Paul is saying, "Who's tricked you into this foolish thinking? Who's gotten you captivated by this false teaching? What is going on in this church?" He goes on. Second question: "Did you receive the spirit by observing the law or believing what you heard?" He's arguing from their own Christian experience.

Sometimes people will come and they'll say, "Well in addition to just trusting in Jesus, you need this experience. You have to be baptized. You have to speak in tongues. You have to," whatever it is. And he's asking, "Well, you were Christian before you got the Holy Spirit. No. You were a Christian when you got the Holy Spirit. In fact, you were a Christian before these guys ever showed up, and you had the Holy Spirit before they even taught you this foolish doctrine." Right?

"You were a Christian before that church told you had to be baptized to be a Christian. You had the Holy Spirit. You were a Christian with the Holy Spirit before that church told you that you have to do this, that or the other thing to be a Christian." He says, "Look at your own experience. You loved Jesus, trusted Him and were filled with the Holy Spirit, which is the evidence of salvation. The incontrovertible evidence of salvation is the presence of the Holy Spirit in a believer's life."

And he asks this question, "Do you get the Holy Spirit because you've cleaned yourself up? You've made yourself a pure vessel. You've dealt with your sin. You've disciplined yourself. You've righted your situation before God and you say, 'God, here I am. I have it all together now. Come to me. I'm ready.' Or did you start dirty and sinful and foul and unacceptable before God? And the Spirit of God came to you in that condition and He transformed you, cleaned you up, forgave you, transformed you, loved you, gifted you, empowered you."

Does this not happen, friends, when we start off pretty unholy before God, pretty dirty, and pretty unacceptable. God comes in, forgives us, the Holy Spirit transforms us, and all of a sudden we start to take credit for it. Happens all the time. "God healed me because I prayed. God answered my prayer because I had faith. God provided for me because I read my Bible every day."

Paul says, "Does God do those things because you're obeying his laws? Or does he do those things because he loves you and by his Holy Spirit, then you'll be able to obey his laws?" It's cause and effect.

Does obedience bring God's blessing or does God's kindness bring obedience? What did Jesus say? "If you love me, you'll," what? "Obey me." Loving relationship with God produces obedience. Obedience never produces loving relationship. They've got it backward. They think that they're in relationship with God because they were obedient. No, they're obedient because God has loved them, and sent his Son and his Spirit.

They have it backwards, and they're taking credit. "See, things are going well, because the Holy Spirit has come. The Holy Spirit has come because we have prepared ourselves and made ourselves ready." No. No. He says, "It's by believing what you heard. You heard about Jesus. You trusted him, and then the Holy Spirit was poured out in your heart. Not by doing anything, simply by trusting in the finished work of Jesus."

Next question, Verse 3: "Are you so foolish?" That's a good question. You ever had a friend who got off – maybe you – got off on some weird religious tangent, way down some rabbit trail? Far, far away from Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection on the Cross, and the whole case is laid out, "Here's my case."

You just look at that person and say, "What are you? Nuts?" They'll say, "No." What's your response? "What's your theological –" "You're nuts. You've lost your mind. You've taken a blow to the head. You're an idiot. That's crazy." That's Paul arguing. That's his rhetorical device, "You're nuts." Sometimes that's a perfectly good response.

You don't see the humor in that? I think that's hilarious. (Laughter) It's like your Italian aunt, you know, just like sitting in the big, overstuffed chair, "You're outta your mind." It's true though, right? It's just dumb.

Now, everyone thinks that their little thing that they're adding to Jesus is really exciting, really innovative, really new, really avant-garde, really creative, "You've gotta listen to this. Jesus plus this brand new thing that I've pulled out of my ear, listen to this." And what should your response be? "You're nuts." "No, come on, come on, come on." "No. You're just crazy. You've lost your mind. Jesus is all you need. Now in addition to Jesus, you've added this long list of other things. You have lost your mind."

Another question. He says, "After beginning with the spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?" The Christian life begins with the Holy Spirit. It is empowered by the Holy Spirit, and it ends with the ministry of the Holy Spirit. It is about God's power through God's people to God's glory and to our joy, and that's what it's about.

And he says, you know, "You started with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit came, convicted you of sin, opened your blind eyes, gave you a new heart, gave you faith, gave you love for God and fellow human beings. The Holy Spirit came; he illuminated the Scriptures. He revealed Jesus." He said, "You

were doing great following the Holy Spirit and his work. And then, all of a sudden you got to the point where you were a little cocky and you thought, 'Well, I don't need the Holy Spirit anymore. We'll put together this manual How to Live Your Life. We'll follow this teacher. Or, we'll go according to these traditions. Or, we'll write down this morality.'

And he said, "You begin with the Holy Spirit. Things were going fine. Why do you think you can do better than the Holy Spirit?" It's a good question. Holy Spirit is the omnipresent, everywhere, omniscient, all-knowing, eternal, without-beginning-or-end, God. You got to have a pretty high self-esteem to think you can outperform him. You've got a major problem.

I remember this as a new Christian. A buddy of mine sat me down. He said, "Well now that you're a Christian," he said, "You're gonna have a whole life, all kinds of questions and issues are gonna come up." And he said, "You need this book. You need this manual. It answers all your questions." I said, "Does it answer why I need this stupid book? Because that's my first question."

I said, "Because it doesn't look like the Bible." I said, "I don't need to be prepared for every single thing that happens in the world. I need to love Jesus. I need to have the Holy Spirit involved in my life, to illuminate the Scriptures, convict me of sin, lead me and guide me. I don't need to plan exactly what might happen in the next 50 years. What I need to do is love Jesus, and follow the leading of the Holy Spirit. That's what I need because I live by faith not by sight."

And see, this happens. We think, "Well my life, I'm finally gaining some momentum. I'm maturing. Things are going well. I've been a Christian for a while. I now need to take matters in my own hands. I'm big enough to drive." Paul is saying, "You nuts? You crazy?"

You want to know the 20-year plan for my life? I'm gonna be married to my wife. I'm gonna love Jesus. I'm gonna do whatever the Holy Spirit leads. That's my plan. You think that'll work? It's worked so far. It's worked great. That's how I got – I got a great wife. I got a great family. We got a great church God has blessed. Things are going well. Why in the world would we leave that? "Well it's worked but now it's serious. We're starting to go somewhere. Time for us to drive. Can't just trust the Holy Spirit."

"Well, how do you think you got here?" Paul says. "Every good thing that's happened in your life, all the things that you've learned, all the sins that you've overcome, all the things that you've been forgiven of, all the kindness you've experienced; how do you think that happened? That wasn't you? That was the Holy Spirit. Why would you walk away from the Holy Spirit and now follow traditions or teaching or morality from men? Things that were devised up in somebody's head that don't come from the Bible, and don't come from Jesus and don't come from the Holy Spirit. How would you do that? You've got to be nuts. You start with the Holy Spirit, and then you are going to over take his work and improve upon it by human effort. It's just foolish."

Verse 4, "Have you suffered so much for nothing—if it really was for nothing?" These legalistic people that were trying to add morality on top of Jesus for salvation had been persecuting this church for a long time, undermining them, undercutting them, probably gossiping, creating division. And he says, you know, "You have resisted these people for a long time. Rightly so, they're dangerous and they're wrong. Why would you give in now? Now they feel vindicated."

And we've had people in this church come to Christ out of Wicca, out of Jehovah's Witnesses, out of Mormonism, out of Baha'i, out of Buddhism, out of Hinduism, out of Islam, out of all kinds of things. And among some people, their family completely disowns them. Says, "Well, we're not gonna love you. We're not gonna have you over for the holidays. We're not gonna pay for your college any more. We're not gonna come visit our grandkids." They cut them off altogether. It's terrible.

It would be as if those people say, "Well I love you and I love Jesus. But if I have to choose between you and Jesus, I'm gonna keep loving Jesus and praying for you." And all of a sudden, one day they flip and they say, "Okay, well, I'll love you instead. Drop Jesus."

Paul says, "You suffered for so long. Was that all in vain? You just give in? You're sort of weak. You don't like conflict. You buckle under a season of pressure." Do people with their own agendas, their own morality, their own traditions, their own "isms," their own movements in addition to Jesus, do they tend to be very authoritative, make strong demands and create division that sort of wears you down and push you back and try to get you to just walk away from loving Jesus? Of course they do. And this church buckled to the pressure, "Well, they must be right; they're loud. They must be right; they're persistent." Those aren't indicative of truthfulness.

Do they love Jesus and talk about him a lot? Or do they love themselves and brag about themselves frequently? Do white hat/black hat, good guy/bad guy. We're a good guy, you're a bad guy; always preaching an anti-theology against someone rather than a pro-theology about Jesus. It's a good question.

Last question, Verse 5, "Does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you because you observe the law or because you believe what you heard?" Why does God heal people? Why does he answer prayer? Why does he save people? Why does he give people a loving spouse? Why does he give people children who are a joy? Why does he give people jobs? Why does he give people health? Why does he show up in wonderful, mysterious and miraculous and supernatural ways?

Is it because we're great people? Or is it because we have a great God? It's because we have a great God. But see, there's this tendency, this works-based tendency in us all to say, "God blessed me because I'm great or at least pretty good or better than that guy."

Paul says, "Why does God do wonderful things in your midst? Is it because you were all holy and righteous and good? Or is it simply because you heard about Jesus and you trusted him? Faith. You believed him."

Every good thing that has ever happened among, in, through, for or in spite of God's people is because God is good, and we can't take credit for any of it. Am I better than anyone? No. We've all, what? Sinned, fallen short of God's glory. Every single one of us. We can't be self-righteous and say, "Well, I'm better than them; therefore, God blessed me because God wants to be nice to the good guys, and I'm one of the good guys." No. It's God's glory. We just say, "God is a good, powerful, loving, miracle-working God." That's why things get done.

That's why Paul and Jeremiah say, "If I'm gonna boast, I'm gonna boast about," what? God. I'll boast about God. How good God is. I'm not gonna boast about myself.

These are good questions. He's pressing the issue. "Are you nuts? Do you think that the Holy Spirit only comes to the people who have pulled it together first? Do you think that God only works miracles and wonders among good people who have earned it? Are you nuts?"

One of the best arguments that we are saved by grace is simply the condition of the average Christian. People say, "Oh, they're no better than we are. They're all hypocrites." Yes. The only difference is? God loves us. That's it. Not that we're lovely. But God loves us and His love makes us more lovely. But we don't start off very lovely. We start off, in fact, pretty unlovely, but God loves us. And His efficacious, transforming, powerful love through His Holy Spirit that He has poured out on our hearts, according to Romans 5, just changes us. God's kindness leads us to repentance.

Is it easy, though, after you've been a Christian for a while? You say, "Well I don't do that anymore, and I don't do that anymore, and I don't do that anymore." To get a little arrogant and say, "Well, I'm good now. I can run my life. I can make my rules. I can govern myself. I can drive. The Holy Spirit is my copilot. And of course, God blesses me. I mean, I'm so much better than those guys."

He uses three examples, then, to tease this out biblically. First is Abraham. This is a good one. Verse 6. Don't you guys love Galatians? It's just the naked, simple Gospel, every week. Who's Jesus? What has he done? Do you trust him? I just love that about Galatians.

Verse 6: "Consider Abraham." Okay. Genesis 15:16 he quotes, "'He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.' Understand, then, that those who believe are children of Abraham. The scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith and announce the gospel in advance to Abraham" – he then quotes Genesis 12:3, 18:8, and 22:18 – "'All nations will be blessed through you.' So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith."

Okay. Here's what they did. These legalistic, self-righteous people come in to the church and they say, "You guys need to be just like Abraham." Abraham was what race? Jew. "You need to be a Jew if you really want to be in right relationship with God." What did Abraham do to himself, even though he was an old man with a bad case of the shakes? He circumcised himself. "You need men to be circumcised. And he obeyed the Old Testament laws. You need to be like Abraham. You need to be a circumcised Jew who obeys the Old Testament laws of Moses." Next week, we'll get into the law and gospel. We'll get into civil, ceremonial and moral law. This week, let's just take a look at the moral aspect of the Old Testament law.

Moses looked at the legal, moral demands of the Old Testament from God that are holy, righteous and good and he kept them. He was a good guy. Abraham kept the laws of Moses. He was a Jew, and he was circumcised. Therefore, if you want to be a true Christian, you need Jesus plus circumcision, Jewish tradition and culture and to obey all the moral laws if you really want to be a Christian. Sounds pretty good, doesn't it? I mean, is circumcision in the Bible? Is being a Jew in the Bible? Is the Old Testament law in the Bible? Is Abraham in the Bible? They're all in there. This sounds like a biblical argument, doesn't it?

And if you're lazy with your Bible, if you don't study much, if you don't be like the Bereans and test everything by the Scriptures and reject that which is evil and hold fast to that which is good, you could easily be confused by this and say, "Well, yeah. We should be like Abraham. He's the father of all who believe. He's the father of many nations. The Gentiles, us, would be blessed through him. Yeah. I mean, I guess we should be just like Abraham." Should we be like Abraham? Yes. Yes, in fact, we should. Let's just deconstruct the argument.

Did Abraham start off, was Abraham saved because he was a Jew? Abraham wasn't a Jew, was he? He was Abraham, the underemployed clerk at the 7-11. He was just some guy. Abraham was just a guy. He was an old man with a barren, old wife. That's not an impressive resume. Okay? "I'm an old man. This is my old wife. We don't have any children." Wow. A lot of people can do that. Okay. You can be old. That's attainable, right?

Did he start off as a Jew? He started off as just a guy, Abram. God changed his name to Abraham, and through him the nation of Israel was born. So he didn't start off as a Jew. So do we need to start off as a Jew? No. Okay.

Circumcision is an interesting one. This was an issue in this church because all the Gentile guys were like, "Circumcision? We vote no." (Laughter) This isn't the issue of circumcision. Abraham believed the promises of God and faith, and then he was circumcised how long after? About 14 years. So, was Abraham saved because of circumcision or because of faith, trusting the promises of God? It was faith. He was saved because he trusted the promises of God.

Now, what was circumcision 14 years later? A showing of his faith. It was a demonstration of his faith. It was a symbol or a sign of his faith. That symbol or sign doesn't save you, just like in our day. You get baptized; that is supposed to show that you're dead, buried in Christ and raised in newness of life. But baptism doesn't save you. What does? Jesus and trusting him; faith. So the sign is nothing unless it is accompanied by faith.

And Paul is saying, "You know what? Abraham didn't have circumcision and then faith. He had faith and then the sign. So, be like Abraham." Have what? Faith. Trust the promises of God as he did.

Did Abraham obey the moral laws of the Old Testament given by Moses? Did they exist yet? Had Moses even been born? How long was it between Abraham and Moses' writing of the law? About 500 years. That's a good argument. He kept all of Moses' laws that didn't come for 500 years.

(Laughter)

Okay? His faith preceded the law. His faith preceded circumcision and his faith preceded the nation of Israel. So, the law isn't bad, and the nation of Israel isn't bad, and circumcision isn't bad. But what really is the starting place are not those things. It's faith in the promises of God. So, we should be like Abraham, shouldn't we, friends? We should what? We should trust the promises of God. That's how Abraham was saved. That's what it says in Hebrews 11:17, "By faith Abraham." By faith, not by circumcision. Not by culture. Not by morality. By faith. Good argument, Paul. What's your next one? The law. The Old Testament law.

Verse 10, "All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the law.'" – Deuteronomy 27:26 – "Clearly, no one is justified before God by the law, because, 'The righteous will live by faith.'" – that's back at 2:4; Paul quotes that a lot – "The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, 'The man who does these things will live by them.'" – Leviticus 18:5.

Here's his case, God's moral law – we'll just deal with the moral law for now because it's sufficient for our case – the moral law in the Old Testament is the demands of God. Good, holy, righteous people should do these things. What are some aspects of the moral law in the Old Testament? Don't kill anybody. Don't steal anything. Don't covet your neighbor's wife, possession or goods. Children, honor your father and mother. Are those good rules? Those are really great.

Is there anything wrong with them? The rules are great. There's nothing wrong with them whatsoever. That's where Psalm 119 was told, "Delight yourself in the laws of God. They're perfect. They're a lamp under your feet and a light unto your path." They're perfectly good. Do we keep them? No, we don't. So, if the law is good and we don't keep the law, where's the problem? It's with us. Now, some of us, they like to modify the law. We like to change it.

Paul's argument is this: God is perfect and to be acceptable in His sight, we need to stand before Him with what kind of resume? Perfect. It's easy. If you want to be a friend of God, you just need to be perfect. Okay. Not just perfect in all of your actions, also in your motives, your thoughts, your intentions. Not just in what you do, also in what you fail to do that counts as well.

Jesus takes it so far as to say, "Not only should you not commit adultery, gentlemen, but you should not," what? Turn around to look at more than a woman's personality as she passes you by because that's a violation of the law. If you covet in your heart but you don't steal anything; if you commit lust in your heart, but you don't touch anyone; if you have greed in your heart, but you don't steal anything, are you still a lawbreaker and sinful in violating God's holy, righteous, good commands? Yes.

Let's say, for example, you haven't even done anything wrong but you failed to do something that you were supposed to do. Is that a violation by omission? Yes.

James 2:10 says, "If you violate even the least bit of God's law, how much have you disobeyed and violated?" All of it. It's a seamless garment. You pull one string, it all comes undone. Jesus tells us in Matthew 5:48 that, "We should be," what? "Perfect," as what? "The Heavenly Father is perfect."

You say, "Well, I'm better than that guy." That's not your standard. Your standard is not the knucklehead who's one rung down on the food chain. Your standard is God. And you compare yourself to God. And you say, "I need to be perfect, not just perfect according to my own standards, but perfect as God is perfect: thought, word, deed, intention, motive. Everything." And not just once; continually, ongoing, every day without fail.

Imagine showing up to work and your boss says, "Here's your job description. Perfect as God is perfect. If and when you fail, you will be fired because we don't see good and bad. We only see perfect and imperfect around here." Some of you have that boss. (Laughter) You say, "I can't do that." And the boss says, "Well, here's all the company rules. Do you think those are good rules?" You say, "Yeah, those are all good rules." And the boss says, "Then keep them or you're fired. And I can see your heart, and I could see your conscience, and I could see your motives; they're all hooked up. I got a screen in my office. I can read your mind. So, don't screw with me." Would that be a good day at work? You'd definitely be off early. Okay. (Laughter)

That's what he says. Right? Cursed. Cursed are you. "No one," – Verse 11 – "will be justified before God by the law." You're never going to make it. He says as well, "The man who does these things" – habitually, ongoing, and continuous – "will live by them."

Romans 3:20 says that what? "All of," what? "Sin and fall short." We're not close. You and I may be able to find somebody and say, "I'm pretty good compared to that guy. I'm pretty good compared to that gal." But when we look at God, we realize, "I'm not perfect as my Heavenly Father is perfect."

See, what this leaves us with, the more you study God's word, the more you study God's law, the more you're convinced that there is something deeply flawed within you. Because you see good, and you can't do it. And you see bad, and you don't want to, and you keep doing that, Paul says in Romans, "There's something just wrong with you."

You'll see this even as a parent with a child. You'll tell a kid, "Don't hit your brother." What do they do? Hit their brother, and you say, "Was I not clear?" "No, you were clear." "Did you not see that it was good not to whack your brother?" "Yeah, I saw it was good." "Why didn't you obey the law? The law is good, and the communication was clear. What's the problem?" The problem is always the human heart; it's deceitful and wicked and beyond understanding, Jeremiah tells us. The problem is us. The whole point of the law is to show us how deeply flawed we are.

And what these people are teaching is, "The law is good and if you want to be acceptable to God, all you need to do is do what the law says." Sounds good, right? That's the essence of all legalism. The essence of all legalism is: make rules. Keep them. God's happy. What's the problem in the equation? We don't keep the rules. Even those of us who don't know the Scripture because of our conscience, we have certain rules that we live by, and we're hypocrites to our own rules.

I had this in college. I was arguing with a guy who was an atheist. We used to do some public debates and stuff. And he said, "Well, I don't believe you need laws or rules or morality. There should just be one rule that guides and has nothing to do with God. You should treat others the way you want to be treated." I said, "Actually, you idiot, that's in the Book. You ripped that off," right? (Laughter)

The next week, his girlfriend came in to my office with a black eye. I said, "Did he punch you in the eye?" She said, "Yeah, he was drinking. He got mad and punched me in the eye." So, I went up to the guy and I said, "Hey, I thought you were supposed to love others as they love you. Do I get to punch you in the eye now?" He said, "No, that would be assault." I said, "Well, you did it to your girlfriend. You got drunk and punched her in the eye. You're the great hypocrite. You're the guy who had one rule: treat other people the way you want to treat them, a rule you ripped off, and it took you a week to break it publicly and send her into my office with a black eye," this was in college. I said, "You're a hypocrite." He says, "Well, all Christians are hypocrites." I said, "Yeah, at least we're honest, though. You're in denial, man." (Laughter)

We are hypocrites. We read the Bible and say, "I know it's good. I don't do it." At least we're honest. Rules. Laws. Morality. Expectations. Demands are not bad. We are. We are. And we can't stand before God with our resume and say, "See? I'm perfect as you're perfect. You and me, peers. Let me in. I'll help. Is there a throne somewhere that I could sit on?"

See now, you see this issue. God: holy and good. We: sinful. Right. We are separated from God. There's something deeply flawed within us. At this point, do you recognize that something has to be done if we are to have any hope whatsoever? Something's got to be done.

The question is, is it something we do or is it something that God does? Is it us moving toward God, or is it God coming to us? This is what separates Christianity from every other religion, philosophy, tradition and "ism." Everyone else, "But we need enlightenment. We need morality. We need a movement. We need discipline. We need law. We need rules. We need punishment. We need something." And the Bible says, "We need God." We need God. We have gotten ourselves in this mess and we cannot get ourselves out. It's like the alcoholic drinking to get sober. The way you got in is not the way you get out.

And God has come to us. That's the whole story of Jesus. Eternal God has come to us as a man in ultimate humility. We didn't even see him because he was so humble. He wasn't arrogant, and self-righteous, and pretentious, and proud like us. He was meek and he was humble, and we didn't even recognize him because he looked nothing like the rest of us.

It says in Philippians 2:6-7 that, "He did not even consider equality with God something for himself to grasp. But he emptied himself, taking on the posture of a servant." Scandalous. Nothing like us.

Paul asks us six rhetorical questions. He points out the flaws in their thinking about Mosaic Law and trying to be legalistic. He talks about the inability of just knowing what is good and trying to do it as being sufficient for holiness. And then he tells us about Jesus. You see what he does? He tells us how desperately we need Jesus, so that when we hear about him it is like cool water on a hot day. It is refreshing and it's satisfying.

Verse 13, here's the issue: "Christ," – well, who does this? – "Christ redeemed us." You know those are some of my favorite words in the whole Bible. "Christ redeemed," whom, Mars Hill?

Response: Us.

Us. Man. Thank you, God. Christ redeemed us. It says in Colossians 2:13-15 that when Christ was crucified, my sins were hung on Christ and he was punished in my place. He redeemed us.

Some of you have been told; it's very popular to say that this teaching of redemption means that we belong to someone like a slave and that God came, and paid a price, and bought us back. It's not what it means biblically. We didn't belong to Satan, and God didn't show up and pay some debt to Satan and buy us back. And the concept of redemption – it's in your notes – it always refers back in Scripture to this concept of Exodus where the people were in slavery and God redeemed. He delivered them from bondage, slavery and death to this terrible, brutalizing false god, so that they could live in freedom and joy to worship God.

Now when God walked into Egypt to deliver His people from the hands of Pharaoh, did He cut a deal? Did He pay anything off? Did He barter? No. Right. Just the right hand of fellowship, and then take the kids out into the wilderness. That's all it was. God never brokers a deal with Satan. God never pays anyone back. To Him, through Him and for Him are all things. He owes no one anything.

God in Christ has redeemed us. He has showed up. He has crushed Satan. He has killed our sin. He has conquered death. He has redeemed us and delivered us. And He has taken us out of slavery into freedom, so that we might be children and worshippers of God.

Christ has redeemed us as a people for Himself, as He did the nation of Israel in the Book of Exodus. He has redeemed us. How did he do this? He redeemed us from the curse of the law. We are cursed because we are under the demands of the holy and righteous God and we have fallen far, far short. And He has redeemed us from this curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, as it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree," quotes Deuteronomy.

Someone who had sinned. Someone who was forsaken of God. Someone who was despised of God, enemy of God, rejected by God as evidence that they were rejected, despised, and forsaken would be hung on a tree. Their corrupting, corroded, dead body as a stench, as an object lesson for all who would see it. That person is cursed of God and there they hang to show us all what happens to those who try to merit salvation by their own works. And try to pretend that they are peers with God, holy, acceptable in His sight. Their sins find them out. The wage for sin is death and then we publicly parade and humiliate them as evidence to us all that that is what we are: dead and cursed, apart from Christ.

It would be as if we took and hung nails outside of this church and we put dead bodies on each hook to show that the wage for sin is death and that people are cursed and forsaken enemies of God without hope apart from Christ.

How did God redeem us? By becoming that. That's where we get our concept of substitution. It is very important that you understand this.

Theologically, there is a movement underway that is denying the substitutionary work of Christ. It is very popular. And what it says is: "Jesus didn't die in our place. Jesus died as our example. Jesus was nothing but yet another guy showing us how to be humble in the face adversity and suffer with great dignity."

Jesus is a great example for us and He is much, much, much more than that. He is a substitute in our place. He is God in human flesh with my sins placed upon him, punishing God in my place, the Father pouring out his wrath upon the Son for me.

It's where it says in Isaiah, "It was the Lord's will to crush him, to cause him to suffer." 2 Corinthians 5:21, "God made him who knew no sin to become sin so that in him, I might become the righteousness of God."

Some of you don't like the Cross because you don't like death, and you don't like pain, you don't like suffering. But the wage for sin is death, and Jesus Christ was my substitute. And when he went to the Cross, the punishment that I deserved was placed on Him. He was punished in my place. He was forsaken by the Father. That was his word, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" The Father turned his back on the Son as the Father should turn His back on me. The Father punished the Son as He should punish me. And the Father killed the Son as He should kill me.

But I am not forsaken. I will not taste death. And I will not be punished. Why? Because Jesus Christ was in my place. He redeemed me from the curse of the law by becoming cursed on His tree, the Roman cross. For who? For me and for all of God's children.

When Jesus died 2,000 years ago, did he die for my sins past, present, and future? Sins that I committed last year. Sins that I'll commit today. Sins that I have planned but I've been so busy, I haven't even gotten to them yet. Did Jesus die for those sins? Yes. And when He was on the Cross, his final word was what? "It is," what?

"Finished!" It's completed. It's done. It's over! That's why Paul is arguing so strenuously against this false teaching. What they're saying is, "Yes, Jesus died but it's not finished. There's something now you must do. Whatever it is. There's something you must do now to be holy and pleasing to God. When Jesus said, 'It is finished,' that was hyperbole. That was not fact. It's not finished. Now you have to do something. You have to be moral. You have to join our culture. You have to join our movement. You have to follow our traditions. You need to obey our manual. You need to live by our conscience. You need to stop trusting in Christ and the Holy Spirit. You need to get serious. You need to esteem yourself. You need to actualize yourself. You need to discover yourself. You need to find out who you are, and you must do something in addition to the work of Christ to make yourself holy and good before God. You must do your part."

Paul says, "No. Just Jesus. Trust him. It's finished. It's all finished." You now know why we call the gospel "Good News"? There is nothing left to be done other than trusting Jesus, which is a gift of God anyway.

It's beautiful. Isn't it?

One of the reasons I know this is of God is because we would have never created this. We would've never created any understanding of God that elevates God and diminishes us. Every false teaching elevates us and diminishes God. And Paul says, "No. God, then us."

You say, "Well, what about me?" "You're not lovely; you're loved. You're not forgivable; you're forgiven. You're not righteous, but you're given the righteousness of Christ." It's not about us. It's only about Jesus. And these people began with the simple teaching, and they wandered from it, and they got off into confusion, and Paul is screaming in this letter, "Do not forsake your first love. Stay in Christ. Don't commingle his finished work with your own efforts."

I was flying on the plane to Colorado this last week for a week of silence and solitude and prayer up in the mountains; 10,000 feet up in the Aspen trees. It was beautiful. I was flying in. Kid on the plane. He's doing this (visual). You know what he thinks? He thinks he's making the plane fly because he looks out the window and the plane is flying and he's doing this. Cause and effect, "I must be causing the plane to fly."

Mom looks at the boy and says, "What are you doing?" He says, "I'm flying." He's very frantic because he's afraid if he stops, we'll all perish and he's trying to help us all. God bless his intentions. (Laughter) "See. It's working. We're flying." That's the theology of works, friends. "Of course, my life's going good. I'm doing this." "Of course, God saves me. I'm doing this. This makes all the difference. This changes everything." Paul says, "Are you crazy? You nuts?"

Is it not hard, though, for each of us to imagine that when you sin today – or maybe on the way here, you were mean to somebody you were driving with or you screamed at your kids or, you know, you were unpleasant to your spouse or you yelled at the person who cut you off in traffic. Or perhaps the sins you'll commit today when you go or in the future when you do something – catastrophe – and you just do something terrible, and you feel guilt-

ridden. Will there be something within you to say, "You know, I need to make this right. I need to fix this. I need to forgive myself. I need to, I need to, I need to, I need to."

Is it not hard for you and I in the present or in the future to look back and say, "No. That was placed on the Cross of Christ, punished in my place, died, buried, rose from my sin. It is finished." Is that hard for us? It's hard for us to imagine that things we haven't even done yet were taken care of far in advance. But it's true. It is all finished. Christ redeemed us by becoming cursed for us on the cross. Past, present, and future sins.

And for some of you, you say, "I know God saved me by grace and by faith and by Christ alone, but I've kept sinning and he died to save me. But now I clean myself up by my own strength, my own merit, my own morality, rules, traditions." No. It's all Christ. He explains this in Verse 14. We'll close here.

Verse 14, "He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles," – that's you and me; us non-Jews – "through Christ Jesus" – blessings come through Christ – "so that by," what? Faith; trust Jesus not yourself – "by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit."

We must trust Jesus Christ and his finished work on the Cross. And Jesus gives us the Holy Spirit to convict us of sin, to illuminate Scriptures, to lead us and guide us, to intercede in prayer. All we need is the Spirit of God that comes from Jesus Christ so that we can continue to abide in Him, lovingly trust Him and what He has done in our behalf.

Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is, what? Freedom. We are redeemed so that – this will be the message later in Galatians – we can be free. Free to what? Free to be forgiven of our sins. Free to be cleansed from our unrighteousness. Free of being delivered from our delusions of our own goodness. Free to worship God.

That was the whole point of the deliverance in Exodus was to redeem them, deliver them so that they could be free to worship God. And where there is the truth of the gospel of Christ and the presence of the Holy Spirit, there is freedom; there is life; there is joy that spills over into worship. The Christian life should be marked by freedom, and joy, and hope, and life, and peace because Jesus has completed our salvation on the cross and the Holy Spirit is accomplishing it practically in our lives every single day.

So, when we get together for church, this is what we do, friends. We look at our sins and we say, "I'm sinful. Jesus was perfect. I deserve to die, but I won't because Jesus did. I deserve to be forsaken, but I won't because Jesus was. I was an enemy of God, but Jesus has made me a friend."

And we celebrate that when Christ died, it was finished. And we bring our sins in confession and repentance saying, "Lord Jesus, here are the things that I've done and failed to do. Here is who I am and who I have failed to be. Please forgive me. Thank you that those were placed on you on the Cross and that you died for them, and that you will forgive me, and I just need to trust you and not myself."

This is how we come into relation with God. This is how we maintain relationship with God. Repentance is the essence of the Christian faith. Like taking out the trash, it needs to get done all the time. So, we will call you to confess your sins. Bring them to Jesus. He'll forgive you and cleanse you from all of your unrighteousness.

We take communion, which is remembering Jesus' body and blood, shed for our sins. Jesus said, "This bread is my body, which is broken for you. This cup is my blood, which is shed for you. When you eat and drink of it," what? "Remember me." Church, do we forget? Do we sin and forget Jesus? "What am I gonna do?" No, what has Jesus done?

We take communion to remember Jesus' body and blood shed for our sins. We collect our offering, which is part of our worship. If you are not a Christian, don't give. But I do have my drunken frat boy questions for you. Why do you keep sinning? How good do you need to be? Do you think you will get there if you haven't made it yet? Are you nuts?

If you're a visitor and you're a Christian, you're welcome to take communion with us. There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism. You're part of the Christian family, great to have you. Thanks for visiting.

If you're a non-Christian or a visitor, don't give when the offering plate comes by. That is not your obligation. You are our guest. It's good to have you.

For the rest, that is part of our act of worship. As free people, we get to worship God by His grace. And then we'll sing because we have been redeemed to be free that by the Holy Spirit we might participate in the loving of the Son and the glorying of the Father, glorifying of the Father by the power of the Holy Spirit. We get to worship.

If at the end of all of this, you are still discouraged and depressed? You've missed the whole point. You say, "But I'm bad." But Jesus. "But I've – " Jesus. "But – " Jesus.

Lord Jesus, we do thank you so much. You've loved us. You have saved us. You have bought us and healed us, and you have done all of these great things just out of your compassion and mercy.

Lord God, we confess. We're not holy. We're not righteous. We're not good apart from you. But you impute your holiness, your righteousness and your goodness to us as a gift through Jesus' death, burial and resurrection. And we accept it. We're glad for it.

We thank you, Lord God, that we are saved, holy and blameless, and perfect and cleansed in your sight because of Jesus' work on our behalf.

Lord Jesus, we love you. We thank you for your finished work on the cross. And Holy Spirit, we thank you that you dwell in the children of God and that you lead and guide and heal and teach and convict and do all that is needed to conform us into the image of the Son.

Lord God, may we never forget you. May we never stray from this place of just simple faith, adding on to what you have done with our own agendas and traditions and moralities and -isms. May we be free. Free to worship. Free to live. Free to be dead to sin and alive to Christ. Amen.