

Even if you know you're going to win, and you're certain of it, you still keep reserves because you don't know exactly how that battle is going to go. If you start losing it, then you bring in your best at the most opportune moment. Now, he's got a letter there that should resolve everything, but in case some of those people stick their lower lip out and say, "I'm for the law," and there's some resistance when he gets there, he's going to roll out that letter, and that's going to end it right then and there. If he had mentioned the letter of the apostles in his letter, it's possible that some resistance to it might have already been created. Maybe someone might say he's bringing a forgery or something like that, so he held reserves. Now, if you can believe that Paul deliberately did not mention that letter, then you can be sure that everything I have told you here is absolutely accurate. And this is what I truly believe. That's for those of you who like to be scholarly.

Now, brothers and sisters, here's what I want to tell you. Paul of Tarsus did go to Jerusalem, the mother church. He went there, and he had his gospel verified, the gospel that you are hearing proclaimed right here. He had it verified. Peter admitted he was wrong and that Paul was right, even though he was a junior apostle. Now that clears up the stories, and that gets us almost through Galatians 2. This passage is where the book really begins for the Gentiles. Paul is telling you, Galatians, what he said to Peter. The only problem is that we don't know exactly where he ended this and then started commenting on it. Let's make it the very smallest possible part. We're on verse 14, chapter 2, and perhaps he said to Peter, if you, being a Jew, live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews. He's telling Peter something that Peter has obviously stated somewhere else. This is an unquestioned statement. There is no question, Peter, you live like Gentiles. You don't live like the Jews. How could you turn around and compel the Gentiles to live like Jews when you know that you and I cannot live up to the law? Now, we'll stop right there and assume that that's where it ended, though I am not at all sure that's where his comment to Peter ended. And let's look at the rest of chapter 2, verse 16.

A man is not justified by the works of...what? Actually, that's not what it says. It does not say "the law". Does your book capitalize it the way mine does? Alright, saints, I think we're missing something here. Nevertheless, knowing that a man is not justified by works of law. You see, I want to say it again: it was not the law of Moses that Simon Peter walked across the room and sat down with those people. Saints, he sat down with those folks because he was breaking a tradition. And it was Paul who came to him and said, "You cannot live up to the traditions of men, and neither can I." Now, if that's true, and it is, it was not the Ten Commandments. It was law. What law? Law. Just plain old law. If we say *the* law, we're talking about the Ten Commandments and maybe the Pentateuch, as well as some things in Numbers, Deuteronomy, and Leviticus, but we're talking about law. There's nothing in those books about not eating with an uncircumcised heathen because you would be unclean. That was manmade. That's "law." We are looking at something far, far greater than the Ten Commandments here. We're looking at any and all standards and conduct of ethical persuasion. We're looking at the Buddhist law and its tradition. We're looking at the Muslim law and tradition. I want to say it again, brothers and sisters, this book was written to believers. It was not written to persuade lost people to get saved by grace. It was written to men

and women who were Christians to not depend on law, to merit a good standing with the Lord Jesus Christ. I really hope that you can be set free from all law. Now, saint, I am not trying to set you free, nor was Paul trying to set you free to the flesh. He is setting you free from all law. All law. All laws. All laws.

Now, if you just had a nose that could smell "all law" ...we would fight an uphill battle. You and I together fight an uphill battle against all law or laws. It is our nature, our old nature, to follow any kind of law. Saints, if you want, if you really want a following, start preaching impossible standards and get people to feel condemned, and that if they will stop doing this, that and the other, they will no longer feel condemned because they'll feel good because they're pleasing God. Then, when they start doing these things, it's not enough. More law; more law. And the Jewish traditions never ended; they just kept getting bigger and bigger and bigger and more finite and more finite. And the heel of that woman's shoe. Then, for the brothers, it will be the heel of their shoe or the buckle on their belt. As we will see, it will take a human being, flesh and blood, to tell us what is and is not pleasing to God. I'm going to repeat myself. You cannot gain from God what you've already got. You've got His pleasure. To try to get what you've already got from God is an insult to you, to Him, is salvation, the work of His Son.

I want to recommend something: that you be free from all law, whether it be Jewish, Buddhist, Shinto, Confucian, or Christian. I'm going to say it again. You have got to start there. You don't start by seeking to please God. Right after I got saved, I got a gospel that said, "Please God." Did you not? How do you live a good Christian life? This, this, this, this, this, and this. And the implications and the statement were there. This will please God.

Paul makes a statement; will you hear this? He makes these two statements. They're concerning Paul's past. They're concerning your past. Paul said in the past tense, "I persecuted the church. I laid waste to the believers." He caused the death of Stephen. That's Paul's past. Through whose eyes? Through whose eyes? His own eyes. Now listen to Paul's past...through someone else's eyes. Christ loved me and gave Himself for me. Same past, two different people looking at it. Who's looking at it the second time? The Lord. I loved you and gave Myself for you.

I was talking about this a minute ago; you can't get what you already got. You can't gain it and merit it. Before he was saved, how did God feel about Paul of Tarsus? While he was helping put Stephen to death, how did God feel about Paul Tarsus? Say it. He loved him. And what'd He do? Died for him on the cross. Well, he did that for Peter, but he doesn't like you that much, Job. Not you. He doesn't like you that much. He likes Paul that much because Paul's going to work really hard. Past: I'm a sinner, or past: Jesus loved me and gave Himself for me.

Now, before you were converted, there was absolutely no question that you did nothing to gain His favor. Is that correct? He was in love with you and died for you. Then you got saved, and He said, "I'm not going to love you anymore now that you're My son. I loved you when you were an old sinner out there doing terrible things. I'm not going to love you anymore unless you read your Bible, pray, go to church, tithe, witness, be submissive, kind, gentle, and loving. Help me here..."

some more. Forgive. Oh, yeah, but some of the outward stuff, especially. Visitation. Wear gray suits. Don't dress like this or that. Consult the elders, and no makeup, and then I will love you. My dear friend, if that is the God you have, tomorrow he'll be demanding something else. It never ends. Please listen to me: it never ends. Your conscience will even find more things to get under bondage so that you might please Him, because you'll never feel worthy. Won't you give that up and just let Him love you and give Himself for you?

Alright, here we go. Nevertheless, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of any law, but through faith in Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we may be justified by faith in Him, and not by works of law. Since by works of law shall no mortal man, no flesh be justified. Let me reread that. We are Christians by nature, not sinners from among the world. Nonetheless, knowing that a man is not justified and cannot gain merit from the Lord by living the Christian life, but by faith in Christ Jesus. But we have believed in Him, that we may live the Christian life by faith in Christ, and not by living out the standards of the Christian life. For by doing the things demanded of a Christian, by men, shall nobody be justified.

Brothers and sisters, forgive me, but for what the law was in that day, so the traditions of the so-called Christian standard today is to you. That is the law under which you live. Gene, are you saying don't pray? Are you saying don't read your Bible? Are you saying don't go to meetings? Are you saying don't live a moral life? *I'm saying that they will not gain one bit of favor in the eyes of God. They will in no way alter your relationship to your Lord.* But you were told to begin there, were you not? I am saying to you tonight, saints, begin with freedom, and whatever you pick up beyond freedom, never pick up anything that takes away your freedom. Never, anything. But if, while seeking to be justified in Christ, we ourselves have been found sinners, is Christ then a minister of sin? May it never be. I am justified in Christ. The fact is, I am also a sinner. That does not make Christ one who dispenses sin. That is not the way you look at things, Paul says. "But if I rebuild the law, if I rebuild law, then I have gone back and made myself a transgressor of law."

Very, very difficult for me to explain this to Christians because it sounds so strange to your ears, but if you put yourself under obligation, dear brother and sister, to a Christian standard, a certain code of ethics, if you put yourself under it, you have stepped out from under grace, and you are now obligated to live up to whatever it is you adopted. You have now said, "Lord, by this I will be a Christian." The Lord says, "Fine, then be a Christian by that." If you're not going to walk in grace, be a Christian by that, and it will not take long for you to discover that you're back where you were before you were saved. You are an outrageous sinner, and sin will compound itself in your life.

I am going to say it again. Those dear brothers and sisters who wore those funny clothes took all that time thinking about adultery trying to keep from doing it but that's all they thought about and in so doing they cut themselves off from the indwelling Spirit of God and thereby took themselves from the only hope the only engine of the Christian faith there is, and were left to perform on their own physical will power, and that won't last very long. You'll be back facing the fact that you are

a sinner who cannot perform. Do you understand? Alright. Praise the Lord. There's hope here, saints. We're coming up to the next verse.

For through the law...through law, I died to law, that I might live to God. Praise the Lord. Mercy. What has happened in verse 19? Through law, I died to the law. Paul had a wonderful experience that most of the Pharisees did not have. He was driven to death by his own standard of conduct. The rest of them kept bluffing. He was driven to death. There came a moment when he saw the futility of what he was doing, and God used law as an instrument to do a very spiritual thing. God used law to put Paul to death. Now, do you understand what happens to you on that glorious day when you give up law? You say, "Lord, I can't stand this any longer. I have been dead for three days, and I stink. Lord, I am so miserable. I can't do this." You might as well do that the day you get saved and get over with saints, because one day you're going to have to do it or lose any and all joy with the Lord. At this point, the Lord will show you what is already true. A fixed established point, and that is: you're dead to law.

When did you die to law? When did you die to all law? Please tell me. I'm sorry. Do you know when you died to law? Now, when Christ died, you died to law, but you didn't know that. So, the law had to come show you that. You will not be convinced of it until you are driven to despair about your own nature. Then you come to a point where you say, "Law, I can't do this anymore," and you make the great discovery of the next verse, which is where we're headed: *that you are already dead*. Law puts you to death, and Christ puts you to death. Actually, law brought you up to the cross. You, in desperation, came to be dragged by law, and Christ put you out of your misery and put Law out of its misery, too. Now I'm going to stop here a minute before I come to the next verse. I want to try to put that in perspective.

Two thousand years ago, I died to law, all law. But in November of 1962, after having been an evangelist and having preached as much a portion of Christian law as any man has, I discovered that I could no longer pretend; I could not live up to the very things I preached. I had Romans 6,7 and 8 out, and I was in my backyard, and I found out that I was dead to the Christian life. Forgive me, but that's exactly how it came to me. Not to the law. I'm not a Jew. I'm a Gentile, that I was dead to the Christian life. Now, I'd already been dead to the Christian life for 2000 years; all law, all standards of ethical conduct, all rules, and all regulations. I had always been free, but I did not know it. But I can tell you, brothers and sisters, I got totally free that weekend, and it's been growing ever since, the reality of it, and this is what I want to tell you. Do you know what my testimony of freedom is? I really want you to know.

Brad, where are you? What's your testimony? I remember the week you just went around about that far off the ground. What were you giving up, brother? Or what were you finally discovering? You were euphoric...You were thrown out of your house because you were so legalistic that no one could live with you. I remember that. You are one of the most legalistic brothers I ever met in my life. You know, you had more legalism toward us than toward yourself. Have you ever noticed? You never noticed. J, did you ever notice? Oh, you did notice. Okay. Alright. We all do that.

My day of freedom came one Sunday morning, right after that, when I announced to my dear wife that I was not going to go to church, and I felt like I was about to commit the unpardonable sin. I held on to my freedom in Christ with absolutely everything I had. I wasn't going back to that thing ever again if I could possibly keep from it. My dear wife, who stuck with me through thin, thinner, and thinnest, did not know what to think. She asked me a few questions. She was a little disturbed. My daughter, Linda, began to cry. Cindy, our younger daughter, did not know what was going on, but she started crying. I did not give in, but I want you to know, it was one of the most difficult moments of my life. I had denied my children the privilege and the necessity of Sunday school. It was 11:00 a.m., and we were not in church. I had never known of a Christian in my life, especially a minister, who had ever done that anytime, anywhere. I had no place to pin that. As far as I was concerned, to my knowledge, I was the first human being ever to do that.

The next Sunday rolled around, and I took my wife and my two children out to Tyler Lake, and we went out into the woods, and I read them some Bible. I didn't know what to do, saints. Boy, God was so good to me, taking me from that point and showing me everything that's been shown since then. I mean, that's all I had was my freedom. That's all I had. When we went out, I read some scripture to them. I said a little prayer, and I took two little branches...I hope you've read it, and I hadn't at that time...Hines's Feet on High Places. She had the little pouch where she kept her memoirs. Well, I didn't know any of that at all, but I took two little branches, and I tied them together in the shape of a cross, and I put them there in the ground where we were as an everlasting memento that I was dead, and I was free, and I was going to find out what that meant as a believer in Christ. I wasn't stepping down; I was stepping up. And yes, it is true that I'm a little wild. Yes, brothers and sisters, it is true I am a little strange, but I have been free since the cross of Christ. But I've been living in the experience of that freedom since that week in Tyler, Texas, and nobody has ever or ever will take that freedom from me. You shall not put me back in bondage to anything. Christ alone is my allegiance.

Now listen to the next verse. I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. And the life which I now live in the flesh...in this body...I live...hear me, by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and delivered Himself up for me. Now, I hope I can do this. There is something titanic here. When Paul sat down to write this letter, he wouldn't give an inch for nothing. He is determined to show you that you can't gain merit from the Lord, and there is no human instrumentality in your walk with Christ. None. That if there is human instrumentality, you have dethroned the Lord and you have enthroned man, his will, and his works.

Listen to the way he wrote it. The translator does not translate it this way, but there is no question about the way it was written in the original. And the life I now live, I live by the faith *of the Son of God*. The life I now live, I live by the faith *of the Son of God*. The life I now live, I live by the faith *of the Son of God*. The "of" is there. The faith is "of Him." It is not you. You do not live by your faith *in* the Lord Jesus Christ. You live *by the faith of Jesus Christ*. On the day you were converted, He initiated, He originated, He created, He authored the faith by which you were converted, and it is by His faith, in you, His faith that is living inside of you, His present faith in

you, by which you will survive as a believer. It will not be by the standards of men, but it was initiated and lives in you from Him.

Now, what is the faith of Jesus Christ? The faith of the Lord Jesus Christ is: I saw you before I created the universe. I saw you with My eyes. I marked you out in Me. You were in Me before I created. I have gone to the ends of time and to the threshold of the ends of eternity and I have found you there in the great multitude that is singing worthy is the Lamb, worthy is the Lamb and I have seen you here and I have seen you there and My faith is that you made it, and it is My faith, the Son of God, my faith, that causes you to live.

I want to go through that verse again and again and again and again. I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live. If I am dead, I have been crucified with Christ. Christ lives where? Hey, say it. Just say one word. "In" Say it again. "In" Say it again. In your outward external conduct? No. Where does He live? "IN" You Pharisees are like a tomb. You outwardly look great, but inside, you have dead men's bones. You who are redeemed, you outwardly may or may not look great, but inwardly, you have what? Christ. Not dead men's bones. He is in you, and the life which is being lived on this earth right now is being lived by Christ's own eternal ability to move inside and outside of time and inside and outside of eternity and to know all things and to see all things. He has faith in you, or He would never have loved you, died for you, redeemed you, saved you, and brought you forth on this earth to be His. You live by the faith of Christ that reaches from eternity to eternity. It is by that faith you live. Now stand up and boast if you can in your conduct, in your morality, in your prayer, in your anything. You and I don't even have the privilege of initiating the faith by which we are saved, and this is not the last time Paul will say this.

You know, saints, in my entire ministry, I have never preached believing and having faith. Never once. Haven't now. Never will. I've always thought that was the most ridiculous waste of time. Oh, brothers, we've got to believe. No, we don't. We already believe. We're going to find out that belief...by the way, did you know the words 'believe' and 'faith' are the same word in Greek? We use, I'm sorry that we can't say, I *faith* in Jesus Christ. I faith in Jesus Christ; that Christ faith in me... His faith. You already believe. Saints, don't ever get burdened down with believing. Where do you think you got your nickname? You are, say it, a believer. That's what you do. You are a believer, but it's Him who is believing...in you. And He did that a long, long, long time ago.

Now, we're going to come back here tomorrow morning, and we're going to come back to this verse, and we're going to find all the things that are in it. But right now, I want you to know that the life you live in Christ, you live by His faith. Do you ever get disgusted with yourself as a Christian? Do you ever really get disgusted with yourself as a Christian? Say yes. Well, so do I, but I shouldn't. It only proves that I'm putting my faith in my walk with the Lord, and that's pretty pitiful faith. I have no hope or faith in Gene Edwards being able to make it as a Christian. I've given up any thought of trying to maintain my Christian walk with the Lord by external things. I do read my Bible. I don't pray very much, very little, but I fellowship with the Lord. I'll take that over praying anytime. You go ahead and pray. I'll have fun.

I'm not going to be forced into any Christian standard of what he thinks I ought to do. My hope is built on Jesus Christ. Sometimes, I really don't feel too highly about Gene Edwards. I get a little discouraged about Gene Edwards, and I don't get guilty. Doggone it, I will not allow myself the privilege of feeling guilty. It's a luxury I cannot afford. Sometimes I get a little discouraged about Gene Edwards as a Christian, but Lord, I remember eventually that I do not live by Gene Edwards' faith in Gene Edwards, and I don't live by Gene Edwards' faith in Jesus Christ. I live by Christ's faith in me, and there's a world of difference. Dear child of God, there's a world of difference. In one, there is weakness, and in one, there is triumph. Do you not understand? He would not have saved you. You would be among the heathen, the unbeliever, the unredeemed. He would not have saved you, but what His "eternal God faith" was placed in you. It is, in fact, His own faith and His own work and His own self and His own life. It's Jesus Christ believing that He can live in you, and not only believing it, but knowing it, because He has seen the beginning from the end.

You live your life and walk by His faith. Not by works, not by law, not by standards, and not even by your faith, but here, it is all of Christ and none of me. It is all of Christ and none of you. Would you go back to your room tonight, would you? Sit down on that sofa there in the middle room, or pull up that nice big thick comfortable chair, stick your feet up on your bed, and talk to the Lord, would you? And don't say anything to Him about how pitiful you are. If you want to get some sin out of your life, fine, get it out of your life, but I'd like to ask you to sit there and tell Jesus Christ just how much confidence He's got in you. That will please Him. If you want to gain merit in your Lord, tell Him how much faith He's got in you.

Lord, You went and got me and crucified me, put me inside of You and took me on in death, and I'm dead. Somebody is breathing in this room. It is Christ. It is Christ. It is Christ, and I know it's Christ because Christ says it's Christ. You have established it by an omnipotent faith. I live only in that, Christ my Lord, You live in me. You live in me because of Your total and absolute assurance, Your fate in Your own work on the cross in eternity past. You're living in me in Your final glorification. You, Lord, know, and I live by Your faith. Would you talk to Him that way? It would really do your soul good to take your mouth and to declare to Him what He has done for you and how He feels toward you. The verse ends: *who loved me and gave Himself up for me*. Praise His name. Do you know who Christ is? Jesus Christ is somebody big enough to give somebody like me assurance. That's who He is. I assure you, if He can do that in me, you've got it made. You cannot go home. You cannot go home. I won't let you; I'm going to put you under law here. You cannot leave this meeting tonight without spending some time before you sleep, sitting down to talk to the Lord. And don't come dragging in like some pitiful sinner. Walk in there, where you are, and tell Him who He is and what He's done and what He's doing.

We are getting all this from the perspective of how it happened. Simon Peter walked into a room, a banquet hall in Antioch. Lots of people are eating. The Jews have moved over to a table; they will not touch the uncircumcised, unclean Gentiles. Other Jews in the room, probably Jews who have lived there in the church in Antioch for years. Maybe some of them started it, for it was started by Jews; they moved over there. Peter walks in, and this old weakness of his, being a man

pleaser, he walks over and sits down with them. Barnabas, in utter confusion, perhaps trying to keep harmony, not realizing what's at stake here, walks over and sits down there, too. Now, one of those men is this fictitious... not a fictitious character, but a fictitious name... Blastinius. He's very happy with what's going on. Now then, we have talked about what the Jews are thinking about. They're thinking about dirt. Peter is thinking about getting along and about the pressure he's feeling, and he sits down. I want to drive this point home to you again. You cannot really live under the law and, very well, walk in a broadening spiritual life. It'll just stop. The law, any kind of law, does that to the Christian experience, and it will eventually end your Christian walk with the Lord in an ongoing way, and it will eventually end your church in the reality of Christ.

The Gentiles are in confusion, and Paul of Tarsus walks in. It's a very dramatic moment. Paul doesn't have a very good reputation among Christians. Did you know that, as much as we love him, we all have a rather low opinion of the brother? I cannot help but feel that most of us in feeling that what he did, even though it was right, he did it because he is a bombastic intense human being, and what he did was actually rude and he created a crisis right there in that room of the greatest magnitude; actually brought into existence the possibility of total disunity in the Christian church of the first century. He has created a major crisis here, saints. There's no question about it. The Christian church could split right down the middle. He has done something ill-mannered and discourteous to a guest. He is totally right, but is he wrong in what he did or how he did it?

You're going to be surprised at my own feelings about this, but I guess I'm always going to wonder about Paul doing that. He's always been made the hero of this. I don't want you to get the impression that I know. I don't know, but I'll tell you this: he felt very strongly that what he was doing was correct. And perhaps it was. But I want to say this to you and to all the preachers who've ever lived or ever will live. If you're going to hold to a really strong conviction that would cause you to do such a daring thing, I hope you will confine it to one thing and one thing only, and that is the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, redemption by grace alone as over against grace and works. Will you not do it, please, on whether the Bible is inspired? Please don't waste your time on people who don't believe it is inspired. Why do you want to fuss about that? Please don't do it over whether you are a premillennialist or an amillennialist. Please don't do it over dress, modes, methods, manners, theology. If you're going to do it, do it in the only place in the New Testament that you're given the right to do it, and that's over against salvation by works as over against salvation by grace.

Now, I've said this before, and I know it's going to shock you. We have a tendency, whenever we find a Bible character doing something he ought to do, to get very self-righteous. Have you ever watched the story of Peter sinking in the water, for instance, and Peter stepped out there so boldly, and then he took his eyes off the Lord, and Peter sank from unbelief. Shoot man. Look what he did. He walked on water. He didn't put him down. I have never felt comfortable about putting a Bible character down because of some weakness he had at a certain moment. Man, they look better than me at any given moment of any day of their life. Peter denied the Lord only once; how many times have you and I denied the Lord in ways? I don't have anything against Peter for anything

going on here. I really don't. Now, I'm going to make a surprising statement. Saints, the hero in this story is Simon Peter. There absolutely is no question about it. That brother was as wrong as he could be when he walked over to that table and sat down, but saints, something of Christ emerged in that man. He did not defend his actions. He did not dig in with pride. Simon Peter, we will find in a moment, came to his senses later, and he saved the unity of the church.

I have nothing against Simon Peter for what he did. I am grateful for what Paul did, but I want to take heroism out of anybody's life here. I want to look at it the way it happened. Paul of Tarsus does an incredible thing. Today, you and I look at him as a great man of God, but on that day, he was the most junior of any church planter or worker in the Christian faith, almost totally unknown. The only thing they knew about him was the orphans in the church, the scars on his back, the widows, and the grave of Stephen. For this unknown to come and do what he did to Peter was an outrageous thing. He was in every way an underling. He had never known the Lord Jesus. He was not one of the 12, and yet here he is claiming to be a sent one. He is definitely a disciple of Barnabas.

These people don't know this man yet. They've never read the book of Galatians. It's never been written, and they don't know the story of what he did in the planting of your church and the other three gentile churches—just trying to put it in perspective a little bit. Nonetheless, Paul of Tarsus does go over and rebuke Peter, a very terrifying thing for anyone to do. I heard a dear gentleman, a Chinese Christian, say, "We hear the word 'rebuke' a lot: rebuking this man, rebuking this, and rebuking that." He said, "I want you to know that in my youth and even in my later ministry, I have on occasion rebuked someone." And he said, "I have never rebuked anyone in my life, but I have totally and utterly lost their friendship and their fellowship, and they have left because of my rebuke of them 100%." I'm trying to pull some teeth here. Can you understand? I wouldn't want you to fashion your life after this incident. It is Peter who's being embarrassed. It is Peter who is being shamed. It is Peter who is being called a hypocrite, and God loves him. He was every one of those things. He had a way of bouncing back and admitting he was wrong that we ought to really be grateful for. I think that's one of the reasons the Lord Jesus Christ chose him. He would have been one of those people who said, "Lord, I will not go out and plow the field," and then would go out and plow it, after he thought about it for a while. I'd rather work with a Christian like that than the one who's going to do everything and never does anything.

Now then, I'm going to come back to this passage in just a moment because it's what Paul said to Peter, but I want to finish the story. When Blastinius came to your church, he told this story of this junior worker rebuking the greatest Christian. He also told you that Paul had never been to Jerusalem, never sat under the apostles, and had no one's approval. Jerusalem, the Mother church. Just a minute. I want you to say that to me: The Mother church. Would you say that to me? The Mother church. This is a big issue. Now, when Paul hears this, he really gets irritated, and this is why he has all these things written in the book of Galatians. He answers, and he's telling them what happened. And here is his story. After Peter is rebuked, Paul says to them, "All, we've got a problem. It's a major crisis. It came from Jerusalem; to Jerusalem it's going." The Lord spoke to

him and said, "Get down to Jerusalem." At this point, Paul is trying to explain his relationship to the city of Jerusalem. He has been a Christian for at least 14 years. Why has he never been seen by the church in Jerusalem? I mentioned it the other night. Paul, Peter, Blastinius, everybody loads up. Paul takes Titus, and they all go down to Jerusalem, I suppose, together. They send a message ahead of time, and they say, "James, John, Thomas, all of you fellas. We're coming. We have a big problem. Get the big guns together. Get the important men together. We've got to face an issue here. You came up and disturbed us. We've got an issue to settle. It's got to be settled." Are the Antioch Christians supposed to be circumcised?

When Paul of Tarsus walks into that town, a question might well be asked. Why has he never come to this city? And you know he was in Jerusalem persecuting the church. You know that he was converted in Damascus. You know that he later came back to Jerusalem. But because his life was in danger, he spent 15 days with Simon Peter, the two of them alone and hiding in a house together. Praise the Lord for that. That's 15 really good days...in the city of Jerusalem. On his way out the door under the cloak of darkness, he meets the brother of the Lord Jesus Christ. That's the only two people he ever met in that city who are Christians. Nobody else knows him by face. He wants very much to meet the church in Jerusalem. They've never seen his face. He goes back to Arabia. Then he moves to his hometown, Tarsus. Barnabas comes to get him. They go to Antioch. The church is built, and then after the church is built, they go out and preach the gospel to four churches way up in the land of the Gauls. They come home. They have this crisis. In the meantime, on one occasion, Paul did go to Jerusalem with donkeys, packing grain, but on that occasion, the Apostle James had just been beheaded, and all the apostles were in hiding. Again, Paul sees no one. He leaves the grain there and comes back home.

Okay, finally, he's coming to the city of Jerusalem, and he's going to meet the church, and he's going to meet the brothers who are the apostles, and they're all going to have some time to look this man straight in the face. Okay, let's go to Jerusalem with him, shall we? It's very important that you get this because it's in here. He's free to wander the city. Let me tell you what he does. It's not in the Bible, but if I know anything about human nature, he takes Titus out to the place where the Lord rose from the grave and to the place where the Lord was crucified, and he shows him those things he knows. He also has to pass the synagogue where he debated Stephen. He's facing his past for the first time. He has to go to the place where Stephen was stoned to death and remember that it was he who caused his death. Then he speaks to the church and gives his testimony. This must have been very hard.

The grace of God has abounded in his life for 14 years, but it's like yesterday as far as these people are concerned. These folks look at him. They still don't know who this man is. He gets up and shares his testimony. He cries. They cry. After the meeting, someone approaches, embraces him, and says, "Paul, you need to forgive me because I've hated you." Saints, I hate it when someone walks up to me and says, "You've got to forgive me. I haven't liked you." Have you ever had this experience? I've had it many, many times. Probably more than anyone else in this room. It's just

that's what happens from being up in public. It's really hard. You don't know what's going on. You don't know what you did wrong.

Another brother comes up, drops his coat, turns around, shows him his back, and says, These are my scars for Christ. It was because of you that I got them. Thank God for the grace of God. Walks off. Maybe a sister comes up and says, "I was widowed during the persecution that you brought on the church." That must be very hard. Somebody else comes up and says, "I was one of those who picked Stephen up." You remember? You remember? And wept and moaned and groaned and took him out and buried him. I'm glad to know he didn't die in vain.

Well, those things are hard, saints. I have a notion about the poor person who came up and showed him his beaten back. Paul might have taken off his outer garment, turned around, and said, "I also bear the scars of the Lord Jesus Christ, too." I don't know if that happened. I know those were hard days for him, but the church did get to see him face-to-face. You Galatians need to know what Blastinius did not tell you. He was not afraid to be scrutinized by other believers. He was prepared to submit his gospel to the best of them. He was not hiding anything. As hard as it was, he went back to Jerusalem for the sake of the unity of the church, and he went back there unafraid of a gospel of grace. So don't pay a whole lot of attention to Blastinius's story. He left a lot out.

Now comes the most important Christian gathering in church history. No question about it. And boy, what a meeting. Wouldn't you have liked to have been there? 12 apostles. Barnabas, Paul, Titus, Silas were there, Justus was there, and probably a lot of other big folks. Who knows? Maybe Mary was there. Very possible. We are shaping up for a first-class war because sitting right in the middle of all these people is one of the most stubborn, obstinate, legalistic, unbending, unyielding fanatics of the first century. Do you know who I'm talking about? Say it. James. I thought I'd catch you. James, the brother of Jesus, and I want you to get the power of his influence, brothers. What is the power of the influence of this man? It's in his face. It's in his face. He looks just like his half-brother. It's just downright eerie. He looks like his half-brother, and he has enormous influence. He had grown up from his earliest recollection. He remembered every day of Jesus Christ's life. Wow. And he looks like him. And he is a Christian. And he is, if you forgive me, a religious fanatic. He's the hill we've got to climb. He's the hill we've got to climb. Yes, Blastinius is in there, and he is really depending on James because he said he had come from James. There are some others there likewise.

Now I don't know what Paul meant when he said they came to spy out our liberty. It may be that some were not invited to the meeting, and they were peeping through the door or window, or the keyhole, or listening up against the door, trying to find out what was going on, or sneaking in when no one was looking. Or maybe it has been conjectured that they were trying to catch Titus without his clothes on to see if he was circumcised or uncircumcised. Spying out Titus's liberty in Christ. I happen to think that's probably what that means. It makes more sense to me that way than anything else. Paul could be extremely sarcastic. I think there's a strong possibility that's what was going on, but this room is full and as tense as it can be. And the weight of evidence really falls on

Barnabas and Paul. They stand up. Barnabas gives his testimony; everything that happened to him since the apostles sent him to Antioch. It goes on for hours, maybe a day. The next day, Paul speaks, and he tells them about his conversion. He tells them of his time in Antioch. He talks about seeing the Lord in another realm, and then recounts the story of that incredible trip to Galatia.

Have you had a chance to read any of volume two? Have you read the part yet? How did they cross the river? You did. What'd you think about that, Alex? That's good. Alright. Anybody else? You do. Do you know what I'm talking about? These were the kind of stories they told the apostles. Shipwrecks almost freeze to death. Nakedness, peril from thieves, peril from robbers, perils from the Jews, perils from false brethren. The apostles who have lived in Judea and suffered for the Lord nonetheless do not have stories like this to tell, and they realize that they're sitting there listening to two of the most courageous, bold men living who have laid their necks on the line again and again to spread the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. And they are impressed.

Then Paul enunciates his gospel to them. What he preaches, what he has said. They ask him questions. He gives penetrating answers, some of which they have never considered. And sometimes an apostle will shake his head like this. Some of the others will go like this. Incredible. His answers are of a man who knows, and their own spirits witness that this man is clear on his gospel, and it causes them, for the first time, to really consider issues they have never faced. He begins reminding them about Abraham and how Abraham was justified, and he brings out scriptures from what we call the Old Testament of the promise of the Gentiles. They have to sit there and shake their heads.

He reminds them of what happened to Peter when Peter saw a vision, and they all shake their heads, including Peter. Finally, it's over with. Paul sits down. Man, this must be the most tense moment that brother ever lived. He sits down and goes...I know he sat down by Barnabas, and I know Barnabas put his arm around him as if to say, Paul, win or lose, you did your best. We did our best. Then Simon Peter gets up and as best and as clear as I can understand, the first thing he quotes is something that he and Paul must have said to one another during those 15 days that Paul hid in his home way back when Paul first got saved when they both admitted they could not live by the law, and which Paul repeated to him in Antioch when he had his finger under his nose, saying, "Peter, you're a hypocrite." He reminded him, "Peter, you and I know." He says to him...you can read it there, "You and I know we cannot obey the law. We've never been able to fulfill the law." Why then would we who cannot fulfill the law try to put these Gentiles under the law? And Simon Peter stands up and repeats what must have been said when they first met. What Paul repeated to Peter in Antioch, Peter now seems to repeat to all the apostles, and he says to them, "Brothers, you know that none of us ever successfully obeyed the law. Praise the Lord." Amen.

Would God that some Baptist preachers, some deacons, and some elders would get up and admit that they have never successfully lived the Christian life, that they have never been able to do all the things they preached to you to do. Do you really believe that we pray as much as we tell you

ought to pray? Hey, do you think that we read our Bible as much as we tell you ought to read your Bible? Do you think that we are as faithful in obeying the scriptures as we tell you ought to be in obedience to the scripture? Do you think that we witness as much as we give the impression that we witness in order to get you to witness so that you can win more people to the Lord? So that we can have more people in church, so that when the hat is passed, they'll put more money in it, so that we'll get a bigger building, a bigger congregation, a bigger salary, a bigger house, and a bigger car? Do you think we're as morally good as we pretend that we are?

We are gentile sinners, just like you, and we wear suits and ties wherever we go to intimidate you, and we practice speaking in a baritone voice. Brethren, we Pharisees called preachers do not live the Christian life any more successfully than you do, but we don't hesitate to put you under bondage to the Christian life. We need to all get together and say, "I never could pull this off. I was a flop at being a Christian." I'm doing everything I'm supposed to do. And as surely as a Jew is not supposed to sit with and eat with an uncircumcised Gentile, that is a human tradition. So much of what we demand from you is not scripture but human tradition. I've heard enough sermons on prayer. Let me just say I've heard enough sermons on prayer. Period. But then I go to pray with the people who preach sermons.

Dear child of God, I would quit praying if I were you, if I cannot pray any better than what the typical Christian and the typical preacher can pray. I find nothing of spiritual content in most of it, and yet you will be told again and again to pray by men who, I have the deepest impression, have not the foggiest idea in this world how to sit down and fellowship person to person with the Lord Jesus Christ. The prayer is some kind of...I don't know if it's a ritual or what they call it...But I can tell you this: it's dead. I really mean this. I wish we who happen to be ordained ministers, and I am one, and I really do...what Paul did with his Pharisee... I am a preacher. He said I am a Pharisee of Pharisees, but deep down in my heart...

You have had so much law put on you, saints. I have listened to people preach, and you would think...Southern Baptists are the only ones who would appreciate this. You remember when you went to Sunday school, and there were seven little squares there? I have heard sermons preached on that to the point you would believe you could not possibly be a good Christian if you could not check all seven of those things. Can anybody remember what they were? You had to study your Bible. You had to go to church and Sunday school. You had to bring one with you, and memorize a Bible verse, and what? You had to put money in the little envelope that you were checking. And what's another one? And you had to be on a visitation. Okay. Well, that's about it. Man, alive. That's bondage.

Audience: And that was at six years old. **Gene:** That's right. You know, I never thought about that. We were getting that by the time we were three. **Audience:** It took 15 minutes of God's time to get all that done. **Gene:** Is that right? 15 minutes. Oh, that's right. The secretary had to record all that. Then, at the end of the day, we were graded. What was the grade for this week? We got a grade. Never got over 50 or 60%. 65%. You don't even know what we're talking about, do you?

That will rank with any law ever invented by any Jew at any time in all the history of Judaism. Oh yes, it will, and it's that damaging. That is bondage. Do you really think God cares? I mean, I want you to really consider that. That was manmade, brother, and yet it was preached as though it were the all-important thing. And "forsake not the gathering of yourselves together, as is the manner of some." - that has piled more believers than I think any other verse in the New Testament.

Boy, listen. If I could have a chance to not forsake the kind of gatherings first-century Christians had, I wouldn't forsake them, but to ask me to not forsake the kind of gatherings that Christians have in the 20th century is to ask me to do one of the worst things on earth I can conceive of doing. I don't mind telling you all, I can't stand going to church. First of all, the term is a contradiction in itself. I can't go *to* church; church is a people, and that isn't church. Bless your little hearts. I'm going to do it again.

The pulpit existed long before the Christian faith; it was called an ambo. The choir comes to us by way of the chants of the Greek choirs in the pagan temples. The pastor is a concept invented by Martin Luther. The service itself was invented by John Calvin in the city of Geneva. The pews came into existence soon after the Reformation. The church building was invented by Constantine in 323. The Sunday school was invented by Dwight L. Moody in about 1860. The stained-glass window was invented by Abbot Suger in the year 1200 AD. The sermon that is preached is actually a concept brought into the Christian faith by a guy named John Chrysostom in about the year 400 AD, when he brought Greek territory into the Christian faith. The sermon is basically not preaching, but the sermon as you and I know it basically came from Greek pagan oratory, and that's everything that you see on Sunday morning. The reason it is on Sunday morning at 11:00 a.m. is that Martin Luther got drunk every Saturday night and couldn't stand to get up at 6:00 a.m. So, he made it 11 a.m. so he could get sober enough to preach. And all of those are historical, undeniable, and immovable facts. Now, why do you wish something like that off on me? I feel so good. I think that's the first time I've ever done that, and I really feel good about that. It's taken me 25 years to find every one of them. I mean, I have looked and looked and looked, and it has taken years to dig these things out. I've been so lucky to find some in some of the most unbelievable places. And those are the facts. Those are historical facts.

I'm trying to tell you...I'm coming back to my story now. Simon Peter got honest with the Lord and said, "We could not live the Christian life, the Jewish religion." And Paul breathes a sigh of relief. Barnabas breathes a sigh of relief, but if everybody in that room but one (James) had voted yay and one had voted nay, one particular one, the nays would have won. Now everybody's looking at him, and they're waiting. He stands up. They tell us that he had calluses on his knees from having prayed. I really don't want to even think about running around with people like that. I mean that. Why do I want to get down on my knees and pray till I have calluses on my knees? I want to fellowship with the Lord. I really want to fellowship with the Lord. I don't have to do that on my knees. Not till I get calluses. I'm not against getting down on your knees. But saints, my land, He's in me. He's in me. James, God love him, changed the course of history, but I want to say one more thing about Peter before I say something about James. Simon Peter swung that meeting. Blessed

be our God for what happened in that meeting. There were men there who knew a crucified and risen Lord. Give them all their credit, would you? I want us to take a moment and look at them. Peter, ignorant, unlearned, explosive, unstable, opinionated, and domineering, came out of his slip with the Jews, and he's got his spirit functioning. He knows who he is. He knows where he came from. He knows what's going on right now.

John: quiet, subjective, introspective, and explosive. Paul: intellectual, scholarly, stubborn, and obstinate. Barnabas: gracious, loving, forgiving, and comforting to a fault. He's there for harmony, you know, peace at any price. I mean, that's just his nature. I'm talking about their basic nature here, the way they came out of their mother's womb. And James is a religious fanatic. Think about it, saints. There's really no reason in the world why we're here today living under grace when you look at that. I mean, it's a miracle. Every one of those men had taken time to be in the face of God, and they had their spirits on straight. One by one, they showed the world: it is not I that live, but Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ gained that gathering and that meeting. Amen. Praise the Lord for every one of those brothers. Let us give them their dues and humbly thank God for what happened.

Then James stands up, and he jumps right past all possible points, and he says, "Brothers, I believe these people have risked their necks for the gospel of Christ. I believe we ought to send them home with a letter to Antioch, basically an apology, saying that the Gentiles do not have to be circumcised, and the only thing that we should ask is that they not drink blood and that they take care of the poor. And Paul says to James as James sits down, "Brother James, we won't drink blood, and we'll remember the poor." They all agree, draw up a document, and, according to historical facts, this is as best as is known. Did you know that that letter is historically known to have existed until about the year 300 AD? That's a fact. That's not magic, and that's not rumor; that's a fact. That letter was kept and then disappeared, and we don't know where it is, and I assume it was destroyed. That letter was kept for years and years, several centuries. They drew up that thing, and they signed it. Every one of them signed it, rolled it up, wrapped it in something moist, put it in a sheepskin, put it in a cylinder, and gave it to Paul and Barnabas, saying, "Take it home with you and read it to the church in Antioch."

Now, just before that happened, Blastinius left Jerusalem and headed up to your church, to your fellowship. Are you following me? I hope you're keeping all this together. He didn't know that the letter had been written. He comes up and starts getting you folks circumcised. He doesn't know that Paul and Barnabas got a cannon, big enough to blow a hole in anything he's ever said. Paul and Barnabas return home and find that the churches in Galatia have gone over to the Judaizers or have been greatly influenced by them. And the reason nobody can understand when the book of Galatians was written, until I explain it to you right now, is that everybody says it could not have been written at this time because Paul makes no reference to that letter.

He's just got home to Antioch. He finds out the churches have been perverted. He writes the Galatian letter. Why doesn't he tell them what happened in Jerusalem? Why doesn't he tell them? He's got a letter with all their signatures on it.