

Grace to You :: esp Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time

The Dangers of a Distorted Gospel

Scripture: Galatians 5:1–6

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In particularly this morning, as we come to Galatians chapter 5, and I want to read to you the first six verses, and that will be the text that we'll be talking about this morning. Galatians chapter 5, starting at verse 1: "It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery.

"Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you. And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole law. You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace. For we through the Spirit, by faith, are waiting for the hope of righteousness. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love."

Now we all understand the message of this wonderful polemical book. It is a polemical book in the sense that it's a defense of the truth against the assaults of error. The apostle Paul had gone into the region of Galatia and he had preached the gospel; and the gospel is that salvation comes by faith alone apart from works. No sinner can contribute anything to his or her salvation, it's a work of God. All the sinner does is reach out an empty hand to receive a gift by faith. The gospel of grace, the gospel of faith was the true gospel, and Paul said any other gospel is to be damned, cursed. Only the gospel of salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ.

So Paul had gone to Galatia, planted churches in a number of cities, and churches were flourishing. They had heard the gospel, believed the gospel. They had been justified; that's a forensic work by God. More than that, of course, in addition to that, they had been regenerated, they had been converted, they had been transformed. They had a new nature, and the Holy Spirit took up residence in their heart.

So they had experienced the fullness of salvation personally. They were moving in the power of the Holy Spirit; they had seen the power of God in their own lives. Everything was going down the right path, until some Jews came from Jerusalem. And these Jews have been called Judaizers in the New Testament, because they want Gentiles to be Judaized, to turn them into Jews under the notion that you can't just go from being a Gentile to being a child of God.

Since they believed that the Jews are the people of God, since they are the chosen people of God, before you could ever become part of the kingdom of God you had to become a Jew. You couldn't become a Jew obviously genetically, but you could become one kind of officially-ceremonially. They called this a proselyte. There were certain rites that would happen, and you would enter into

Judaism. And only in that way could you then enter into the kingdom of God and salvation in Jesus Christ.

So they were coming to these churches not only in Galatia, but all over the apostolic preaching world. They were telling people that believing in Christ, faith alone was not sufficient for salvation. They had to come through the entry, which was Judaism, and that required that they acknowledge the role of circumcision and the keeping of the Mosaic rituals and ceremonies and ordinances; not the internal moral law, but the external laws that identified Israel as a nation apart from the other nations.

So they were preaching essentially salvation by faith and works, and saying that unless you acknowledge these works and do these things, you cannot enter the kingdom of God, you cannot be justified, forgiven, saved, and enter into His eternal kingdom. This is an all out attack on the gospel of grace and faith. And Paul addresses this entire epistle to that simple point: salvation is by faith alone apart from works.

In the opening two chapters he gave a personal set of proofs, personal evidences from his own life. You could call it a historical argument from his own personal experience. He had been saved marvelously, transformed from a persecutor of the church to a lover of the one he persecuted. His own testimony is proof that salvation is by faith. He lived his whole life in the works system of Judaism; and only when he turned from that to faith was he justified and transformed. So first two chapters are a personal testimony.

The next two chapters, chapters 3 and 4, are a biblical testimony, and he defends justification by faith by going back to the Old Testament. The first is a kind of personal argument, experiential argument from his own life, the second is a doctrinal or theological argument from passages in the Word of God – and we've just gone through that in chapters 3 and 4. Now he comes to chapters 5 and 6, and this is the end of this wonderful letter; but it's a tremendously important section.

What he shows here is that justification is true as proven by the experience of believers. You could call it a moral argument. There is a moral transformation. There is a transformation in desires, drives, longings. There's a transformation on the inside that gives people all new desires, all new longings, and a new love.

So he shows here the evidence of justification by faith in the actual transformed lives of believers. First, it was his own testimony, then it was the testimony of the Old Testament Scripture, and now the testimony of the believers themselves. They should not even be listening to anyone who says, "Your salvation has not happened. You have to back up or take this turn, and go through circumcision and Jewish ceremonies." They shouldn't have even been listening because they had already experienced the power of God, the Spirit of God in them – plenty of evidence for the transformation. So in this section, because some of them were being led astray in spite of their experience, Paul looks to that experience and particularly the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

If you look at chapter 5, just run along to verse 5, he starts to talk, "We through the Spirit." That's his first mention of the Spirit here. Down to verse 16: "Walk by the Spirit." To verse 17, it talks about the flesh setting its desire against the Spirit, the Spirit against the flesh. Verse 18 talks about being led by the Spirit. Verse 22 talks about the fruit of the Spirit. Verse 25: "Live by the Spirit; walk by the

Spirit.”

We could say this is the Spirit’s chapter. And the reason he addresses this is because this is the evidence of a justified soul: the work of the Spirit. And that he referred to back in chapter 3, verse 3 when he said, “Having begun in the Spirit, do you think you’re now perfected by the flesh?” If you go back, essentially you’re turning your back on the Spirit and pursuing the flesh. This then becomes a very practical, practical set of proofs for the doctrine of justification by faith. It is evidenced by the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of believers.

Now verse 1 begins with a very strong statement: “It was for freedom that Christ set us free;” – the implication is He set us free to stay free, He set us free to remain free – “therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery.” “You just got out of one slavery as a Gentile, you got out of the slavery to sin and the law and death and Satan; don’t go back again to a yoke of slavery. Keep standing firm in your freedom.”

Now just a footnote at this point, and I want to address it because I think it’s so very important. We’ve talked about, in previous weeks, this antinomian idea. This is a view of the Christian life. It says, “You don’t have to pay any attention to the law of God. Now that you’re a saved person all your sins are forgiven. So what you do is already cared for and covered. And by the way, Christ lived a sinless life that has been basically attributed to your account. It has been imputed to you. Christ’s perfect life has been credited to you as if you lived it. You’re forgiven of all your sins, and His life is now in place of your life. So don’t worry about what you do. We’re free, we’re under grace. You don’t need to live under some kind of burden of duty and responsibility and obedience.”

This is a very, very popular idea, particularly in the superficial kind of Christianity that we have today, where people want Jesus in their life to give them what they want, but they don’t want to change their life. It’s great to be able to say, “Hey, take Jesus, and He’ll apply His life to yours. Don’t worry about what you do, and He’ll forgive all your sins.” That antinomianism is far from what Scripture teaches.

And here’s a good illustration of it. The first statement: “It was for freedom that Christ set us free;” – and what follows immediately is a command – “therefore” – in a very strong command – “keep standing firm; do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery.” Immediately after saying “for freedom Christ set us free” he gives them a strong command.

No believer is out from under the commands that are laid out for us in the Word of God. Yes, for freedom Christ has set us free; but that does not mean we have no obligation to God to honor Him and obey His moral and spiritual commands. Our former life as Gentiles was under the slavery of sin; and we might not have known it, but under the slavery of the law of God. Even though we didn’t know the law of God as pagans that Galatians could say it was God’s law, God’s moral law was in action, and it would be based on that law that we would all be damned. And along came the gospel, and Jesus Christ was our liberator; and Jesus Christ in an act of emancipation set us free from our bondage to sin and the law and death. And now we are free. Paul says, “You need to remain free.”

What kind of freedom is it? Well, it’s freedom from the burden of sin, freedom from relentless guilt, freedom from an accusing conscience, freedom from the tyranny of our transgressions, freedom from the terrible pressure and frustration of trying to be something other than you can be, freedom from – in a word – “sin’s dominance.” “You’ve been set free, set free. And now don’t go back into some kind

of bondage.”

Now I want to say just a few more things, so I’m going to digress for a minute. I am deeply concerned about the popularity of these antinomian ideas that you can be a Christian and live any way you want to live. I see it all the time, so do you, in the media. The notion that, “Now that I’m a Christian all my sins are forgiven, and Jesus is on my side. He loves me unconditionally. He lived a perfect life for me, it’s credited to my account, so it doesn’t really matter what I do.” Nothing could be further from the truth, absolutely nothing could be further from the truth.

I want you to turn in your Bible for just a moment to Titus chapter 2, Titus chapter 2. We’ll get some significant help from this portion of Scripture. We find in verse 11 this statement: “For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men.” We understand that. The grace of God appears in the person of Christ, and He dies and rises again, and provides salvation. “The grace of God as appeared, bringing salvation.”

But notice the next verse, verse 12, “instructing us.” Now the antecedent to that and the subject that is acting on that verb is the same grace of God. The grace of God, one, has appeared bringing salvation to all men. The grace of God, two, is “instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires, and to live sensibly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking and appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds. These things speak and exhort and reprove with all authority. Let no one disregard you.” Now I just want to capture the essence of this.

“The grace of God has appeared bringing salvation.” Yes, salvation by grace. But at that point, grace doesn’t disappear, it takes over. And we see in verse 12 “the grace of God instructs us to deny ungodliness.”

When people are under the law, the law is external, the law is instructing them externally from outside of them to conform to something they have not the ability to do. Along comes grace and saves them, and now the grace of God begins to instruct them, because the grace of God in the form of the Holy Spirit has moved inside of them and begins to instruct them to do what? Deny ungodliness, worldly desires. Those are the negatives.

The positives, “to live sensibly, righteously, godly.” All of this because, verse 14, “God redeemed us to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.” And verse 15 says, “Don’t let anyone get around this truth. Don’t let anyone disregard this great truth.” Grace has become our instructor.

Now I want to have you look at that word “instructing” for a moment, because it appears a little bit benign in this text. It is the Greek verb *paideuō, paideuō*. And I only mention that because of its other uses. It means “to instruct,” yes, but in a far bigger sense that word would indicate. It includes “to reprimand,” it includes “to discipline,” and it even includes “to punish.” This verb is used twice by Luke in the gospel of Luke to mean “punish.” Paul uses it also, 2 Corinthians 6:9, in the sense of “punishment.” The grace of God is a full orb ed instructor, training us, disciplining us, reprimanding us, and punishing us. It is used in 2 Timothy 2:25 and translated “correcting us.”

If you think that because you're under grace you're free to do whatever you want, you have no idea how far off you are. The instruction came from an external law, now it comes from an internal spirit. In fact, look over at the twelfth chapter of Hebrews for just a moment and you will be familiar with this, verse 5: "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor faint when you're reproofed by Him." So it's discipline with reproof. Verse 6: "Those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives." It's discipline with scourging; that's a kind of form of punishment.

In verse 8, the word "discipline" appears again. In verse 9, the word "discipline" appears again. And we are reminded that all fathers discipline their sons; and if you're not disciplined, you're not a legitimate son. Verse 10 says, "We are disciplined for a short time, but disciplined for our good, so that we may share His holiness," disciplined for the purpose of holiness.

Verse 11 admits, "All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness." It's discipline for holiness, it's discipline for righteousness. Here's the interesting thing: it's exactly the same verb *paideuō*. It's the grace of God that instructs us, that is the same grace that sets us free in Galatians. All right, back to Galatians 5.

There is no excuse for anyone to come up with the idea that now that you're a Christian you're not responsible for anything; you're free to do whatever you want, free to sin. Not at all. For the first time you're free to do the right thing, and you're empowered to do the right thing, and you're taught to do the right thing. So freedom is not just deliverance from the oppression of legalism or the law or sin, it is the endowment of the power and presence of the Holy Spirit so that you can do the right thing. And since you have been transformed you desire to do the right thing.

If somebody comes along and says to you, you know, "I'm free to do whatever I want," if they say, "Well, I'm a Christian, but I'm not under law, I'm not under any obligation, I'm not going to live my life by law and duty and responsibility, I'm free," if they tell you that, you have every right to question their Christianity, because sanctification is not an option, it is a work of God. Just as much as He elected us, justified us, and will glorify us, He is sanctifying us. And all of that sanctifying instruction and discipline and correction and punishment is going on internally by the Holy Spirit. Freedom then is now an enabling to walk in the Spirit, to live in the Spirit, to see the fruit of the Spirit produced, to live with joy and gratitude, doing the will of God from the heart. Not a freedom to sin, it's a freedom to do what is right. So I just want to make clear that point again in this text. Now let's go back to verse 1.

It was for freedom that Christ set us free. He did it, He set us free, not on our merits, not on our accomplishments or our works, He did it. How did He do it? Back in chapter 3, verse 13, "He was made a curse for us." He did it by taking our place and receiving the divine curse that we deserved. By becoming a curse, He set us free. The price was that high.

Christ had to become a curse to set us free. "Please, don't go back into what He died to deliver you from. For freedom, Christ set us free." It is ridiculous to imagine that you walked out of the prison, the Lord having opened the gate only to make a right turn and go back into another one. "Do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery. He set you free."

And John 8:36 says, “Whom the Son sets free, he shall be free indeed.” He’s really free, no longer under the penalty of the law, no longer under the full tyranny of the law, and one day free from even the presence of sin. The Galatians are already sons, not slaves. They’re already free. They don’t need to go back into bondage.

Gentiles going back to Mosaic law they never even knew about, because they needed to work some part of their salvation on their own? In swinging back to the externals of the law of Moses they would be nullifying the work of God. “Therefore keep standing firm. Do not be entangled, *enechō*, or oppressed by a yoke of slavery. Don’t go back.”

Now there was a lot of effort going on. Turn to Acts 15 for just a moment – I’ll remind you of it. A lot of effort going on by Jews who claim to be Christians who are going around to Gentile congregations and telling them they had to become Jews first, they had to become proselytes. They had to affirm circumcision and the keeping of all the restrictions and rituals of the Mosaic law that God gave to Israel. And it got to such a point that there was a council meeting in Jerusalem among the leaders of the church.

And in Acts 15:1 here’s the beginning: “Some men came down from Judea and began teaching the brethren, ‘Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.’” Down in verse 5, “They were of the sect of the Pharisees, and they stood up in that meeting in Jerusalem and said, ‘It’s necessary to circumcise them and direct them to observe the law of Moses.’”

And then down in verse 10, the question is asked, “Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? But we believe that we are saved through grace, the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also are.” It’s grace, it’s faith. “Why are you putting this yoke of slavery on their necks?” They had been saved out of paganism, they didn’t need external Judaism to qualify for justification.

Now I want you to notice something carefully. I want you to notice the pronoun as it appears here. You’ll see the word “you” a couple of times in verse 2. You’ll see it again in verse 4 a couple of times. This is very important. Paul is talking to someone, “you,” someone is a group that he’s not a part of, because in verse 5, he begins, “For we.” It’s very important that you see that distinction.

Here’s what’s happening. There are people in this Gentile congregation who on the surface have become a part of, have come to understand the gospel, have to some degree accepted the truthfulness of it, but they are in danger of coming to the brink of salvation and turning away, and heading in the direction of law. Some of them had already made some moves.

Back in chapter 4 and verse 10, Paul says to them, “You observe days and months and seasons and years. Some of you are already caught up in the Mosaic feasts and the Mosaic sabbaths. You’re going that direction,” and this is a warning passage, severe warning passage. In verses 1 to 6 he warns them about the danger of false doctrine. In verses 7 to 12 he warns them about the danger of false teachers. So for this morning let’s just look at the false doctrine.

The false doctrine said you have to be circumcised or you can’t be saved. It’s a small thing; just acknowledge a minor surgical operation. This will open the door to the kingdom of God for you. And

then follow the Mosaic prescriptions. Faith is not enough. Mosaic ritual, circumcision has righteous merit.

So Paul says this: "If you do this, you who are contemplating it, if you do this, here are the results. Number one," – verse 2 – "Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you." That is a stunning statement. That's why it says, "Behold," because it's shocking. "Behold" is an exclamation.

"I, Paul, I an apostle, and more than that a circumcised Jew, proud of my heritage, proud of my Judaism, living my entire life under the Mosaic restrictions. I, Paul, this Jewish patriot, I'm telling you, if you receive circumcision, Christ is of no benefit to you."

This is the dilemma: it's Christ or works, it's all Christ or no Christ, it's all faith or no salvation. "If you get yourselves circumcised" – and this indicates that they hadn't yet gone this far – "if you do this, if you've come to the brink of salvation by faith and you turn and go the way of law, Christ is of no benefit. You've canceled Christ." This is a severe danger. This is a shocking statement.

Somebody might say, "Well, I believe in Christ, but I also think works are a part of it." You've just canceled Christ. Christ is no benefit to you.

There is no hybrid salvation. If you accept circumcision, thinking it necessary for your salvation, you just forfeited Christ. Romans 11:6, "If it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, or grace is no more grace." It's either grace or works – all of Christ or none of Christ.

You say, "But there's so many people who profess Christ, claim Christ, acknowledge Christ, and think their works contribute to their salvation." They have no connection to Christ. He is meaningless to them no matter what they say.

Faith and works cannot go together. This is basic to the doctrine of salvation. It is impossible to say, "I want to receive Christ, thereby acknowledging that I cannot do anything to save myself," and then go do something that I think helps to save myself. You have to choose. If you add anything to Christ you lose Christ.

I know we like to say, "Well, you know, there's lots of people and lots of forms of Christianity; and they go to church, and they believe in Christ, and they believe in God, and all of this. And isn't it just a minor deal that they're trusting in their works, their infant baptism, their adult baptism, or their adherence to rituals, and sometimes their moral conduct?" No. If you are depending on anything other than Christ, you have no benefit from Christ. If you submit to circumcision, you have canceled Christ. Christ is everything. Christ is all in all.

Now many Jews were disqualified for this very reason. They actually came to believe some things about Christ. We read about them in Romans 9. Israel pursuing a law of righteousness did not arrive at that law. Why? Because they didn't pursue it by faith, but though it were by works. So they stumbled over the stumbling stone. Many Jews had some affirmation of Christ, but it was Christ plus their religion, Christ plus their circumcision, their Mosaic obedience, and they rendered Christ useless.

Second effect, verse 3: “And I testify again,” – me, the circumcised lifelong Pharisee until my conversion, I lived in all of this – “I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, if you do that you have placed yourself under obligation to keep the whole law. I testify again, *marturomai*, “I affirm.” Literally could be translated, “I protest further, every one of you who lets himself be circumcised, you have just placed yourself under the law. If you’re going to be saved by law, then you’re responsible to keep all of it.”

What does it say? Back in Galatians chapter 3, verse 10, “As many as are of the works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who doesn’t abide by all things written in the book of the law, to perform them.’” And James 2:10, “Whoever shall keep the whole law and offend in one point is guilty of all.” So if you’re going back under the law you have to keep the law perfectly, and you’ve already been disqualified because you’ve lived as long as you have without doing that, and you’ll continue to live that way. False doctrine renders Christ profitless, and puts you under the bondage to the whole legal system.

Then this shocking statement in verse 4: “You have been severed from Christ.” That is just amazing. You say, “Well, can’t you believe in some in your baptism, in your works, and the things that you do, the rituals that you go to, and your morality, and also believe in Christ?” No, no. If you’re counting on any of that for your salvation you are severed from Christ. That is a violent word, a violent word. You are cut off from Him.

This is the message really repeated many times in the book of Hebrews. Look at Hebrews chapter 6. This is an illustration. There are people apparently in the Galatian churches who said they believed and they’d come to be a part of the church, but they hadn’t come all the way to Christ. And so they’re standing on the brink and they’re being seduced by these Judaizers to go the way of works, and they’re very much like those in Hebrews 6, verse 4, who were enlightened, who tasted the heavenly gift, tasted the reality of salvation, and they got a smattering of the experience of salvation and the work of the Spirit.

These are people in a congregation that had been ministered to by the apostles. They’d seen apostolic power, probably apostolic miracles. They tasted the good word, they sampled the divine revelation. They saw the powers of the age to come, miracle powers; and then have fallen away.

“It’s impossible to be renewed again to repentance, seeing they again crucified to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame.” If you’ve come all the way – understanding Christ, understanding the gospel of grace and faith, and you turn and go back to works, you are severed from Christ in a really fatal way, because you knew the truth; and when you knew it in its fullness, you turned your back and walked away. You’re severed from Christ.

Listen to what it says again, a warning in Hebrews 10: “My righteous one shall live by faith; and if he shrinks back, My soul has no pleasure in him.” If he goes back to works. “But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul.”

When you get to the brink of considering whether you’re going to believe and receive Christ by faith or go the way of works, understand this: turn your back on Christ and you’re severed from Him. He is speaking of interested but unconverted folks. That’s why he calls them “you.” There’s no middle ground here: it’s all of Christ or none of Christ, all of Him, none of us.

But that's not all. There's another effect. If you go the way of hybrid religion, Christ has no benefit to you. You are a debtor to the whole law. You are fallen from grace. You are severed from Christ. You have literally fallen from grace, you've fallen out of the category of grace. You stood on the platform, you looked at salvation by grace, you turned your back, you went the other way; you've fallen from grace. And those are the words essentially used in Hebrews 6.

If you try to invent any hybrid gospel, Christ profits you nothing, you're a debtor to the whole law, you're severed from Christ, you're fallen from grace. And a final, verse 5, you're excluded from righteousness. The very thing you seek will never be yours.

Verse 5, notice the change in pronouns: "For we, we." Now he's speaking to believers, including himself. "For we through the Spirit, by faith, are waiting for the hope of righteousness." We have to wait for the hope of righteousness, because it's a gift from God, we, literally as to ourselves. It is through the Spirit, by faith, that we eagerly await the hoped for righteousness. We're not trying to earn it, we're waiting for it. And in our sanctification the Lord gives it to us as a grace gift. And one day in our glorification He'll give it to us perfectly.

"We through the Spirit, by faith, are waiting." I love the fact that he used the verb "waiting." This is something God has to do for us and in us, and is doing it by His Holy Spirit. If you follow the path of any works, you have lost the very thing you hoped for: righteousness. It comes only by waiting, in faith, on the work of the Holy Spirit.

Conclusion, verse 6: "In Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love." That's all that matters. The whole law is fulfilled by faith and love, believing God, loving God. It's all gone internal; it's all gone inside. It's faith working through love. Our hearts are literally drawn to God in trust; that's what faith is. We live trusting God, and we live loving God, and as a result, loving those around us as well.

It's a working faith. It's a living faith. It's a growing faith. It's an increasing faith. It's a growing love. It's an increasing love. It's a multiplying love, as we wait and the Spirit in grace does His work in us.

I can't think of any passage in the New Testament which is more terrifying to people who are in some form of hybrid Christianity than this. If you think your works are part of your salvation, Christ profits you nothing, you're in debt to the whole law to keep it perfectly. You are severed from Christ; you are fallen from grace; you are excluded forever from righteousness.

I read about an artist who wanted to assemble his life masterpiece, and he worked on it for years and years, and it was some kind of combination of natural elements, stones and things. And he brought them into his studio, and he kept building and building, and adding and adding and adding, until it reached the point where it was finished; and then he realized it was too big to get out of the room. And I thought about the fact that's essentially what happens to people who try to earn their way to heaven; everything they've built isn't going to get out of the room. Spend all your life trying to work your way to heaven, and that's the one place you'll never be. Christians wait in faith and love, walk in the Spirit, and let Him do the work.

Father, again this morning we've been so blessed to worship You and to enjoy the fellowship with

one another. Your Word is a force, powerful force. This particular section from the apostle is an earthquake. It's a hurricane; it's a tornado. It's upsetting; it shakes things; it's disturbing. It uproots, tears down.

But that is the intention in a day when so many so called Christians want to make anybody and any religion feel good, especially people who are in some aberrant form of Christianity. They're tolerating this hybrid notion that salvation is a matter of faith plus works, or they save us from that accursed false gospel. May there be no one who walks out of this room this morning believing that, having rendered Christ of no benefit, whatever they believe about Him, having placed themselves under the full bondage of the law, severed from Christ, fallen from grace, never to achieve the hoped for righteousness that only He produces. What a sad, tragic reality.

We all come with empty hands to receive the gift of salvation. And why? So that You will forever and ever and ever receive all the glory. None of us can boast. None of us can boast. You have done it all. By grace You've even given us the faith to believe, to reach out and take the gift.

Lord, may Your power and Your truth move on hearts here. I know we have people who come here a lot, and who probably believe the facts concerning Christ, but have never confessed their spiritual bankruptcy and brokenness, utter incompetence to provide anything of merit to add to their salvation. But they have not fully embraced You and You alone. May this be the day that they turn from any hope no matter how frail in themselves, and cast themselves on Your mercy. Show Your mighty power in setting free some folks even this morning through faith and faith alone. We are so grateful that the message is clear. May we be faithful as well to proclaim it, we pray in our Savior's name. Amen.

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