

1. There are thieves in the body of Christ today

- A. They are out to steal your freedom – and steal the joy from your relationship with God
 - 1). They want you to view your acceptance with God through what you do – your performance
Rather than through trusting in what Christ has done – His perfection
- B. These thieves are called legalists
 - 1). They tell you that even though your relationship with God started by faith in Christ
It is maintained by your own works – how perfectly you keep a set of rules
- C. It may be a set of extra biblical rules – Ask. “Where is that in the Bible?”
But these can also be good biblical standards – that you use legalistically
 - 1). Reading our Bible regularly – praying regularly – serving at church etc.
 - a). These are necessary for spiritual health – fail here and you become sick
 - 2). But the minute I make these a must to be accepted by God – it becomes legalism
 - a). I must read so many chapters of my Bible a day for God to love me
 - b). I must pray every day to anticipate God’s help
I’ve even heard - I must witness to so many people a week for God

Thought: How does this become legalism and how do I do these by grace

- A. Grace **DOESN’T** tell me I don’t have to read my Bible – pray – witness
Give financially to God – serve in His church – be zealous for good works
 - 1). Grace doesn’t say don’t do those things that keep you strong and alert
- B. Grace keeps these from becoming become legalistic where I base God’s acceptance of me on them
 - 1). If I miss a day in the word or prayer and feel God is upset with me...

Question: So I should be doing these things – but how do I make sure I’m doing them by grace?

- A. You must ask yourself regularly why am I doing these things?
 - 1). If it is to be accepted by God – That’s legalism
If it is because you’re accepted? That’s grace
- B. The great thing is we can change our attitude – why we do things
 - 1). We can stop ourselves – and say
Lord I’m not doing this to earn your love. I thank you that I am loved. I’m not doing this to earn your acceptance. I thank you that I am accepted. I do this because I want to learn about a God who loves me like you do. I want to draw near to a God who accepts me so unconditionally. I want to serve as an act of worship because you’ve been so merciful and kind.
 - a). That will breathe life into your Bible reading, prayer, service, giving
 - 1a). When you give that should be an act of worship – giving a portion back
 - 2). Giving is an interesting thing – we want to give – why because God needs our money?
No. Because we want to guard our heart from the idol of money – it’s power is so dangerous
And we know (Matt 6) Jesus said where our treasure is our heart will be also
I don’t want my treasure earth bound because that guarantees my heart will be worldly
 - a). But it’s easy to give legalistically – joylessly
 - b). What makes us a joyful giver like the Bible wants us to be
To make it an act of worship!
 - 3). It is the same with service – why do you serve?
 - a). Are you doing it as a Son or daughter NOT a slave
 - b). To serve to keep God loving you – keep Him from getting mad – that is service of a slave
 - 1a). There will be no joy in it – but you can change why you do it!

Point: So Paul says guard your freedom – don’t let legalism steal it from you

- A. Don't let legalism steal the joy of seeking and serving God
 - 1). Changing it from acts of worship to a cold duty to keep Him happy

2. The Galatians didn't guard their freedom

- A. They were doing all they were doing for the wrong reasons – to earn what God had already given them
- B. Result – they lived an impoverished spiritual experience – which should have been so rich

Ga 5:1–11 (ESV) For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. ⁽²⁾ Look: I, Paul, say to you that if you accept circumcision, Christ will be of no advantage to you. ⁽³⁾ I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is obligated to keep the whole law. ⁽⁴⁾ You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace. ⁽⁵⁾ For through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness. ⁽⁶⁾ For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love. ⁽⁷⁾ You were running well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth? ⁽⁸⁾ This persuasion is not from him who calls you. ⁽⁹⁾ A little leaven leavens the whole lump. ⁽¹⁰⁾ I have confidence in the Lord that you will take no other view, and the one who is troubling you will bear the penalty, whoever he is. ⁽¹¹⁾ But if I, brothers, still preach circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been removed.

1. Outline is very simple. Only going to look at v. 1

- A. What does it mean when we speak of our freedom in Christ
 - B. What are some of the things I am to stand firm in? Hold on to?
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I. WHAT FREEDOM IN CHRIST DELIVERS US FROM

Ga 5:1 (ESV) For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

First: Delivered from the Power of Guilt and Sin

1. Christ took our guilt and sin upon Himself at the cross as our substitute

- A. I want to spend some time looking at how great our forgiveness is – we need to know this

TURN: Is 43:25 (ESV) “I, I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins.

- A. God uses two absolute terms to assure us of the complete removal of our sinful record
 - 1). He *blots out our transgressions* and He *will not remember our sin*
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♦ He Blots Out Our Transgressions

- A. Speaks of absolutely removing those transgressions from our record
 Jerry Bridges: speaks of an event in the life of a Canadian friend that helps us here
 Because of a teenage prank, my friend was convicted of a felony, but received what is called in Canada a Queen's pardon. Years later, when he was routinely investigated for past criminal activity, the response came back, "We have no record of this person." *His record has not just been marked "pardoned," it has been completely removed from the file and destroyed. It's as if my friend had never been convicted. There is no permanent legal stain hanging over his head. There is no chance that the offense will ever arise to haunt him in the future.*
- B. This is what God has done with your record when you placed your trust in Christ
 - 1). Every sin has been completely removed from your record – as if you never sinned at all
Is 1:18 (ESV) “Come now, let us reason together, says the LORD: though your sins are like scarlet, *they shall be as white as snow*; though they are red like crimson, *they shall become like wool*.
 a). My rap sheet that was filled with a multitude of sins is now completely clean

Transition: God not only promises to blot out our sin – He also promises to remember them no more

♦ He Will Not Remember Our Sins

- A. This is different than forgetting something – we all do that – forget where car keys are...
 - 1). But God's mind isn't fallible like ours – He doesn't forget anything
- B. So how does a God who knows everything forget my sins?
 - 1). When He says I will not remember your sins – He means
I choose to never bring those sins into my mind to hold them against you
- C. Why is that important? Because something can be erased but still remembered
 - 1). Stand before Him – books opened – nothing there
Then we hear – “But I remember that you....”
 - 2). Here God says I will never do that – I promise those sins will never be used against you
- D. Notice it says for His own sake
Is 43:25 (ESV) “I, I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins.

Raymond C. Ortlund Jr: God locates his very identity in blotting out our sins and remembering them no more. Satan, the accuser, comes before God and says, “Look at that Christian down there. Why do you still love him? Don't you remember what he did to you last week, and again on Tuesday, and then again yesterday?” And God says, if you'll allow me to put it this way, “No, I don't remember. - Gabriel, where does that believer stand with us? Check the database.” Gabriel logs on, but the only information that comes up on the screen is the righteousness of Christ freely credited to that sinner, because that's how God honors himself as God. *“I blot out your transgressions, I splice your bad plays out of my game film, for my own sake.”* So God says back to Satan, “I'm not saying your facts are wrong, but you're not telling the *whole* story about that Christian. What matters most to me, *for my own sake*, is not that person's record but Christ's record for him.” That is grace. That is God.

2. The application: What this means!

- A. We don't walk with an angry God who is holding a grudge – getting more angry with each sin
 - 1). He has forgiven and He has forgotten – He sees you clothed in the righteousness of Christ
 - a). He has nothing against you – He holds nothing against you

Transition: So we are free from the guilt of sin and the fear it could produce

- A. Let's build on that – why it delivers us from fear

Delivered from the power of guilt and sin

Second: Delivered From the Wrath of God**1. God's wrath defined**

AW Pink: The wrath of God is His eternal detestation of all unrighteousness. It is the displeasure and indignation of divine equity against evil. *It is the holiness of God stirred into activity against sin.*

- A. It is the appropriate reaction of a holy God to that sin that comes into His creation
 - 1). IOW Wrath against sin is simply the result of God being holy
In the same way that indifference towards sin is the result of somebody being godless

Question 1: Why is God so angry at sin?

- A. Because sin – no matter how insignificant it may seem to us
Is essentially an assault on the infinite majesty and sovereign authority of God

Point: We never view sin correctly until we what it is in God's eyes

John Bunyan: Sin is the dare of God's justice, the rape of his mercy, the jeer of his patience, the slight of his power and the contempt of his love.

- Question:** What did it take to free us from His wrath? To free us from that defiance?
Who could hold back His hand that our sin demands He strike us with?

2. Jesus took the wrath of God we deserved at the cross

Let's build a case here to see what I mean

- A. The wrath of God is spoken of as "Drinking from the cup of His wrath"

Je 25:15 (ESV) Thus the LORD, the God of Israel, said to me: "Take from my hand this *cup of the wine of wrath*, and make all the nations to whom I send you drink it.

Every unbeliever's experience: Ps 75:8 (ESV) For in the hand of the LORD there is a *cup* with foaming wine, (that is that cup of wrath) well mixed, and he pours out from it, *and all the wicked of the earth shall drain it down to the dregs.*

- 1). On that day there will be no mercy – every last drop of wrath will be exercised upon them

- B. But remember what Jesus prayed in the garden before going to the cross

Mt 26:39 (ESV) And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it be possible, *let this cup pass from me*; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will."

- 1). That cup that Jesus drank at the cross was the wrath of God

- a). The wrath the wicked deserves – the wrath that I should have drunk – down to the dregs

Transition: Let's go back and look at that time when Jesus went to the cross for us

3. Details of the cross

- A. Scripture tells us as He hung on the cross darkness came over the land from noon until 3:00

- 1). During those awful 3 hours Jesus drank that cup of God's wrath in our place

- B. What was happening on that cross was an act of substitution

2 Co 5:21 (ESV) For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

- 1). Christ was made to be sin – God treated Him like He had sinned our sin – though sinless

- a). He transferred our sins into the account of Christ and judged Him for them

Isa 53:6 (NLT) All of us have strayed away like sheep. We have left God's paths to follow our own. *Yet the LORD laid on him the guilt and sins of us all.*

- b). God the Father unleashed His fury against my sin on His sinless Son

Is 53:5 (ESV) But he was pierced for *our (Bill's)* transgressions; he was crushed for *our (Bill's)* iniquities...

Question: How much of God's wrath did Jesus bear for me? All of it

1 Jn 4:10 (ESV) In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the *propitiation* for our sins.

- A. Favorite definition of propitiation = *exhausted*

- 1). He didn't just appease an angry God – calm Him down – but the anger is still there

- 2). He went to the cross and bore my wrath until that anger was exhausted – no anger left!

Point: This means when you trusted in Christ there is nothing more left in the cup

- A. Why? Because Jesus drank your cup of wrath until it was empty – not a drop left!

- B. When it was finally over Jesus cried out – *"It is finished"*

- 1). Was that a cry of relief? No! That was a cry of triumph!

The power of sin to cast us into hell was defeated

- C. Now you know why I say God is not angry with you

- 1). Why I say what would He be angry at if Jesus took that anger for every one of our sins

- 2). Jesus drank that cup of wrath that we deserved until it was empty – *nothing left*

- a). That is the good news of the Gospel

Transition: But there is a problem – *I don't always feel forgiven* – let's look at that

4. Not feeling forgiven can steal our freedom from guilt and fear

- A. We have two enemies that can keep us from resting in this security
 - 1). Our conscience is really good at condemning us – pointing out every inconsistency
 - 2). The devil (accuser of the brethren) reminds us of every failure
 - a). He wants to steal our joy in Christ in any way possible

Thought: The problem – we are so willing to believe these accusations– why?
Because our sinfulness is so very real to us – we are so aware of our failures

- A. So much of what the devil condemns me about is true – I do fall short still!
- B. Listen to the words of this very well-respected seminary professor
I write these words at the age of fifty-five. During the past ten or twelve years, I have often — and with greater seriousness than ever before — reflected upon the course of my life. Certain patterns of thought and attitude and conduct have come to light, some of them quite disturbing. I look back upon repeated failures in my efforts to subdue inner conflicts and fears, to combat immaturity and self-centeredness, to build genuine and enriching relationships with other people, to conquer besetting sins, and to grow in holiness and communion with God. I now see that every period of my life has been marked by struggle. But the persistence of the failures, together with a growing understanding of the past, has made the struggles of recent years exceptionally intense and painful.
 - 1). These are not the words of an uncommitted – half-hearted - believer
 - a). This is a man known for his humility, godliness and devotion to the Lord
 - 2). But falling short regularly can make it hard to accept Scriptural truths
That God has blotted out my sin and chooses not to remember it any longer

Question 1: But how can He not remember it? When I can't forget it!

- A. How can it be blotted out if I keep doing it?
Or as that seminary professor said: “I look back upon repeated failures in my efforts to subdue inner conflicts and fears, to combat immaturity and self-centeredness, ... to conquer besetting sins...”

Question 2: What is the answer to this? I need to know so I can rest in God and enjoy that relationship

- A. We must *choose* to live by TRUTH and not by what we feel
- B. We must *choose* to live by FAITH – trusting that Jesus bore our sin and God has blotted it out
 - 1). THAT is an *objective fact whether we feel like it or not*

Transition: Let's work this out practically – to see how we apply this

- A. How to apply truth to a condemning conscience – to a recent failure
 - 1). It's true we do still fail – *therefore I need to learn how to stand back up again*
 - 2). Some of this will be a repeat from an earlier study – but as Peter said – ministry of remembrance
 - a). Some weren't here – some haven't applied it yet

5. Preaching the Gospel to myself

Here we apply the things we've been learning in Galatians

We fail – the devil and our conscience start to accuse us – pointing out where we fell short

♦ Step 1: Humbly admit it – confessing it (agreeing with God)

- A. I own my sin – I don't deny it – there is nothing beneficial there
Prov 28:13 (NIV) He who conceals his sins does not prosper, *but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy.*
- B. I agree with God – “I admit that what I did was sinning against you. It was wrong”
 - 1). I take responsibility – I don't blame shift – confession is becoming brutally honest with God

Transition: But don't stop there – don't stay down – defeated – apply the truths we've been learning

♦ Step 2: By faith stand back up – applying the truths we've been learning

- A. Apply the truths of the Gospel
 “Father I have sinned. I admit that. I take responsibility. But thank you that you accept me on the basis of Christ’s perfection and not on the basis of my faulty performance. I thank you that Jesus has paid for my sins and completely exhausted your wrath against me, therefore that sin can’t even be found in your books right now. I thank you, that you have promised that it will never be remembered again. I thank you that my record in heaven is as white as snow and in Christ that will never change.”
- B. This begins to lift you back up – because you’re focusing on grace – the work of Christ
Milton Vincent - Gospel Primer: “The deeper I go into the gospel, the more I comprehend and confess aloud the depth of my sinfulness. A gruesome death like the one that Christ endured for me would only be required for one who is exceedingly sinful and unable to appease a holy God. Consequently, whenever I consider the necessity and manner of His death, along with the love and selflessness behind it, I am laid bare and utterly exposed for the sinner I am.
Such an awareness of my sinfulness does not drag me down, but actually serves to lift me up by magnifying my appreciation of God’s forgiving grace in my life. And the more I appreciate the magnitude of God’s forgiveness of my sins, the more I love Him and delight to show Him love through heart-felt expressions of worship.”
- 1). Rather than staying down in self-pity – self-condemnation – I stand back up
 - 2). Condemnation is turned into worship – God’s mercy is glorified – my heart is captured even more
- C. This keeps that failure from destroying us – making us feel like we can’t go to God
Balance: We don’t sin easily – we are to fight sin – contend with it - put it to death
- A. But when we lose that battle for personal holiness – we rest in the finished work of Christ
- 1). We confess it humbly – honestly – this stings
 But we don’t stay there – we get our eyes back on the work of Christ – to rest in that!
- B. This turns sorrow into worship – we rise to our feet again and get back in the battle
- 1). To many Christians fall – the devil knocks them down and keeps them down
 Takes them off the front line – when God is saying get up – apply the work of Christ
 - a). Quit looking back on a sin that is blotted out and not remembered in heaven
 - b). Time is too short to stay down in the fight – yet way to many are
- Transition:** First: Delivered from the power and guilt of sin
 Second: Delivered from the wrath of God

THIRD: Delivered from the tyranny of Satan and his demons

TURN: 1 Jn 4:4 (ESV) Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.

1. Delivered from his false accusations through the truth (seen this)

- A. You will need to preach the gospel that sets you free to yourself - do this constantly in your life
- 1). Hear bad news from doctor – rumors of layoffs at work – in financial straits – family crisis
 - 2). We go to God and the devil will point out ever failure why He won’t hear and help
 - a). At that point you must preach the gospel to yourself
 His help isn’t based on me and my performance – but on Christ’s
 Therefore Lord I come to you on the basis of what Christ has done!
 - b). You will need to do that a thousand times in your life

2. Delivered from his exaggerated threats in your life

- A. I think some Christians are so Satan focused – they live in fear of what he might do
- 1). Some won’t serve because they don’t want to stir him up
 - 2). If you’re napping spiritually – guess whose rocking the cradle
- B. Listen! He can’t do whatever he wants to do to you – learn that from Job 1

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- 1). He has to go and get permission from God to bother you in any way
When that is granted – it always comes with limits – this far and no further
 - 2). Since God has promised that everything that comes into our life will work for my good
 - a). Then whatever He allows the devil to do – will? End up working out for your good
 - 3). He is a little dog on a leash – absolutely controlled by God
 - C. Plus. You will never deal with the devil personally – He's not omnipresent – focuses on bigger targets
 - 1). We deal with his demons – read the gospel - see how they reacted when Jesus came on scene
 - a). Total panic! What are you going to do to us!
 - b). Jesus dwells in us – no contest!
 - 2). We need to be aware of his schemes but we need not be afraid!
 - a). Just stay close to Christ – keep Him in-between the devil and you
 - b). We are alert – we are watchful – but we are not terrified!

Transition: One more I'll just mention

Fourth: Delivered from the law

1. Delivered from any system that bases our acceptance with God on us

- A. Christianity tells me I am accepted because of the perfect – finished work of Christ

CONCLUSION

1. Four great things legalism steals the enjoyment from

- A. Resting in the fact that we are delivered from the power and guilt of sin
- B. Delivered from the wrath of God
- C. Delivered from the tyranny of the devil
- D. Delivered from the law