

Stand Firm! It's Christ alone to the end or all is lost!

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Date: 11 September 2005

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[0 : 00] Well, do turn with me, if you would, to Galatians chapter 5. The title tonight is very obvious, Stand Firm. It's a few months since we left Galatians at the end of chapter 4, so we do need to remind ourselves what's going on.

And what's going on in Galatia is a right royal battle. It's a heated battle between Paul and his defense of the one true gospel of grace alone in Christ, from start to finish in the Christian life, and what he calls the false brothers in chapter 2, verse 4.

In other words, those who are within the Christian church, but who he says are nevertheless destroying the gospel. And in the middle of this battle are the Galatian believers.

And they're being pulled to and fro. Paul says they're in the brink of disaster. If they submit to these false teachers, he says they're in real danger, chapter 5, verse 4, of being severed from Christ, of falling away from grace.

Real danger. But not all is lost, as verse 10 makes clear. I've confidence that you'll take no other view than mine, he says. He still has confidence that they will listen to and regain the clarity of the true gospel.

[1 : 21] Now, we've seen how in chapter 2, Paul defends his own apostolic authority, his own ministry, and how he goes on to explain the implications of the true gospel for the Christian church, for the Jew and the Gentile.

And also, as we're going to see in chapters 5 and 6, particularly, the implications of the gospel for the Christian believer, and our life now by faith through the Holy Spirit.

Remember, that's the crux of the issue in Galatians. It's not so much a disagreement over the doctrine of justification by faith alone. They're all agreed on that.

Just look back to chapter 2, verse 15. Verse 15 and 16 is clear here. Paul and Peter and the false teachers, everybody is clear that it's not by works of the law, but by faith that we're justified in Christ.

So what is at issue is the implications of that. What justification by faith means. That's the problem. And the problem is seen in chapter 2, verse 14.

[2 : 30] Paul says, Peter is walking out of step with the truth of the gospel. Now, as Paul says, gospel truth has implications for our lives. That's what Johnny was reminding us this morning in Jude.

And if that truth isn't lived out, if it's not applied, if it's not evident in the church's life and in the believer's life, their walk with God, then the heart of the gospel is so undermined as to be totally destroyed.

That's what happens if we don't walk in the truth. And that's the issue. And that's why it's a very important warning for believers and for the church today too. All through history.

That's been the story of God's people, hasn't it? We see it in the Old Testament all the way. Here's a people chosen by God, given perfect doctrine, direct from the mouth of God.

Not just from theologians and preachers. But still, again and again, their conduct is so out of step with the truth of God, that instead of God being praised among the nations for their sake, he's blasphemed among the nations.

[3 : 35] They've destroyed the gospel. That's the story of the Christian church, isn't it? Do you remember Gandhi? I have great reverence and awe for your leader, your saviour, Jesus Christ, but not for your church.

That's why I can't be a Christian. So Paul is arguing forcefully for the full implications of the great gospel doctrine of justification by faith. And he's doing it in two ways.

So I read, do you remember we spent three weeks on these verses 15 to 21 of chapter 2. First of all, he's saying, everybody's agreed on the doctrine of justification.

That's all right as far as beginning the Christian life is concerned. But, verses 17 to 21 show the disagreement. There are two issues in Galatia.

First of all, the missionaries from Jerusalem or wherever were saying, yes, Paul's right. That's all right for beginning the Christian life. But for full experience of being part of God's chosen people, well, you've got to join with the children of Abraham, the Jews.

[4 : 41] You've got to become Jewish like us to have the full blessing. That's what they were saying. And only then can you share at the same table as us, the top table. Only then can you have full status.

Paul's wrong, you see. Paul makes Jewish believers sin because he's telling you to all eat together and that's against the law. Paul even makes Christ a servant of sin, he says in verse 17 of chapter 2 because he's implicating Christ in this.

Paul says, no, no, no. The gospel of justification by faith alone demands, by its very definition, that all believers are united.

We're all one in Christ Jesus. It demands a certain ecclesiology, a certain understanding of the church. It demands that we're all one only by Christ and what he's done for us, not by adding anything else.

That's why in verse 16 of chapter 2 he says that the real law-breaking is to build up again what Christ has destroyed, the barrier that separated Jews and Gentiles.

[5 : 48] So the first important implication for this doctrine of justification by faith is for the church. There is one church and only one, by faith in Christ alone.

And we saw that that's what Paul expands in his argument in chapter 3 and 4 of the epistle. He tells us that the whole story of the Bible from the beginning to end has always been heading this way from Moses and Abraham and all of the prophets been heading to a climax in Jesus Christ and one united people from all nations in Jesus Christ.

We're all one in Christ Jesus he says at the end of chapter 3. Yes, there was a time when there was a special earthly, unique people of Israel according to the flesh hedged in by the law.

Yes, that was part of God's plan. Part of his way of reaching this great destination. But now look at chapter 4 verse 4 the fullness of the time has come he says.

Christ has come in history. And so also verse 6 the spirit of Christ has come in your experience. The promised blessing to Abraham has come upon all people Jew and Gentile.

[6 : 59] And so he ends at the end of chapter 4 concluding this you are all children of the promise you are all heirs of the free woman. Justification and the church that's its true story says Paul.

It's by grace alone and justification unites every believer Jew and Gentile red and yellow black and white as children of promise as one in Christ Jesus according to God's plan and purpose from the very beginning.

That's his story. But more than that justification has implications for every individual believer because every individual believer he says to us is united to Christ.

That was another beef of Paul's opponents in Galatia. They were saying this. Look, it's not only that Paul promotes sin by causing Jews to eat with Gentiles and so break the law.

It's worse than that. Paul's gospel surely must promote sin in all kinds of other ways. It must promote immoral behavior, sinful behavior.

[8 : 06] It's antinomian. It's against the law. If Paul says we can get rid of Moses and his law if that's a thing of the past how on earth are you ever going to restrain sinful behavior?

It'll be a free-for-all. That's what they were saying. We've seen what happens when you don't have law. Just look at the terrible lawlessness we've seen in New Orleans after the terrible hurricanes, the looting, the murder and so on.

That's what happens if you don't have law, Paul. And no doubt they could point to the behavior in the Galatian church. Chapter 5 seems to suggest there was all kinds of things going on that shouldn't have been and immorality sexually and all kinds of things.

And it says to the people you don't need more freedom. You need less freedom. Look at you. You need the law of Moses to contain you, to control you, to curb your passions.

So listen to us. If you want to have real victory over the sin in your life, if you want to clean up the church, you need what we've got to offer. If you want to have real fellowship with God in Christ and

true holiness, you need to add to Paul's gospel what we can give you.

[9 : 16] Of course we preach Christ just like Paul. We've got everything he's got. That's what they said. But what he doesn't see, you see, is that Christ came to bring all of you Gentiles into the fold of Israel.

And what that means is Christ came to draw you back, to bring you within the orbit of the blessings of Moses and Abraham and the law. And Christ has done that as you believed in him.

At least he's begun to do that. But now he wants to lead you on. He wants to lead you back to Moses and his religion so that you can have a full experience like we have and full power to live the life of faith.

And Paul says, no, no, never. That's to totally misunderstand the freedom of the gospel. Not a freedom to sin. It's a freedom for holiness.

It frees you from the bondage to this present evil age. That's what your root problem is. We're bound up in a world of sin and the gospel rescues you from that. It unites you to Jesus Christ himself in the new creation.

[10 : 28] the home of righteousness. That's the only hope for holiness now or ever. He, Jesus Christ alone is the only righteous one, the only truly holy one.

And it's only his life, his holy life living in you and through you by his spirit that gives anyone any hope of holiness. And that's what it means to receive the gospel of Christ.

That's what the true gospel affects in us. It rescues us out of the present evil age and brings us into the age of holiness, the new creation. You can't have justification without that rescue, that union with the Lord Jesus Christ.

That's what justification means. It's everyone who believes is in that situation. That's what chapter 2 verse 20 means. Paul says the old you is dead.

It's Christ now who lives in you. You see, justification by grace alone implies a new life in Christ, a holy life.

[11 : 35] You can't have the one without the other. It's absolutely impossible in Galatians, it's impossible anywhere in the New Testament to separate these two things, to separate Christ's work on the cross for our sins, that's our justification, and Christ's work in our heart by his spirit for our holiness.

That's what the Bible calls our sanctification, our becoming holy. And the one implies the other. I can't stress that too much, it's absolutely vital. That's what Paul means in the very third verse of the letter in chapter 1 verse 3.

He gave himself for our sins, that's the cross, to deliver us from this present evil age, that's the new life. Chapter 2 verse 20, I have been crucified with Christ, I have died to the law, and it's Christ who now lives in me.

The old is gone, the new has come. But how does he live in us? Well the answer is of course by his Holy Spirit. And that's the critical message of these verses, chapter 2 verses 19 and 20, and that's now what is going to be expanded and explained in chapter 5 and chapter 6.

If chapters 3 and 4 were justification and the church, the true story of what justification means for the church now, then chapters 5 and chapter 6 are the story of justification and the Christian life, what the justifying work of Christ means for the individual life of faith now as we live it out in the Spirit.

[13 : 10] And that is the power of the righteousness of Christ living in us. it's his perfect new creation humanity for us and in us.

One for us in the cross and put into us by his Spirit. That's the huge privilege that we have, Paul says, as living as the inheritors of the new creation which has begun now with the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

What is his is ours by his Holy Spirit in us? It's his life in us. Look again at chapter 4, verse 4.

Such an important little section. When the fullness of the time had come, God sent his Son so that, and this is his work on the cross, we might receive the adoption of sons.

But how do we receive that? Verse 6. Because you are a son, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father. So, verse 7 is true, you are no longer a slave, but a son.

[14 : 15] And if a son, then an heir, through God. So, you see, there's a no longer about our Christian lives that we must recognize. And that is what the false teachers would not recognize.

For the Christian church, there is a no longer. It's no longer the age of preparation, of separation of Jew and Gentile, of guardianship and jailers.

It's no longer for erstwhile Gentiles, the age of being slaves to pagan irreligion. But also, for those who were previously Jews, it's no longer an age of slavery to the age of Torah, to the age of Moses, to the age of law, to the religion of earthly Israel.

No, no longer. Because now, you're all one people in Jesus Christ. The fullness of the time has come. The age of preparation has given way to fulfillment.

And for the individual believer, there's also a no longer. You're no longer in slavery to the life of the old age, to the present evil age, which is now passing away.

[15 : 21] No longer. We're not slaves any longer to the flesh, says Paul in chapter 5. That's the things and the ways of this world.

Not even to the very best of the things and ways of this world. even the privileged religion that Israel had up until the coming of Christ, the very pinnacle of that age.

No, says Paul, that's no longer because now we're all sons. We're adopted into God's heavenly family, not just his earthly one. His spirit is in our heart and so we can be intimate with him in the heavens.

There's a new creation in Christ. We've been reborn by the spirit. We've been reborn for a new world, not just this world. We're sons, we're free men born of the free women.

And that's all by faith in the promise of the gospel of Jesus Christ. We're born according to the spirit. We're citizens of the Jerusalem above, not of the earth, the Jerusalem. And that's why we're free.

[16 : 28] Now that's the true gospel, says Paul, that's the implications of it. Christ has come in the fullness of the time to fulfill everything that was promised to Abraham and Moses and all the prophets, so that the blessing might come to the Gentiles and so that all God's people, Jew and Gentile, together in Christ, might receive the blessing of adoption, the presence of the Holy Spirit.

And therefore, all who do receive the Spirit by faith in the gospel of Christ and that alone, are united as one church in Christ. And they're united as one with Christ in a new birth.

They're adopted as sons and heirs for a new creation. It's like what Paul says in 2 Corinthians chapter 5, verse 17, if anyone is in Christ, behold, new creation.

The old is gone, the new has come. And it's true, says Paul, it's for this freedom that Christ has set us free. He's delivered us from the present evil age.

He's brought us into the age of the new creation. That is where you are. And that is what you have in Christ. And it's quite a staggering thing that he's saying.

[17 : 43] And that's what makes chapter 5, verse 1, so baffling, isn't it? That's why it's such a surprise. Just look at it. Why on earth, in the face of such a glorious message, why on earth would anybody want to go back into slavery?

Why would anybody want to go back under a yoke that's a burden, a burden that you've been freed from so wonderfully? Why would Paul even have to issue this command, stand firm?

Why would he have to say to them, you must defend what is yours, you mustn't lose it, you mustn't go back. Why? I mean, do you have to tell a slave who's been freed, don't go back into slavery?

Do you have to tell a prisoner who's been released from years of imprisonment, perhaps after a wrong conviction, do you have to say to him, oh, you must stay free, you really oughtn't to go back to prison?

It's preposterous, isn't it? Why would anybody be attracted to submit again to a yoke of slavery once they've tasted the fresh air of the freedom of the gospel of Christ?

[18 : 53] Surely that's a critical question. But alas, it's a question that very few of the scholars that I've been consulting seem to give me any help with.

Most of them don't even ask it. But surely unless we can answer that question we're never going to get anywhere. We're never going to understand the danger the Galatians were in, nor are we going to understand the continuing dangers and temptations that we face still today in the Christian life.

So what is the answer? Well, that's our question tonight. The only thing we're really looking at tonight, but it is so supremely important to unlock the rest of these chapters that we really need to spend time on it.

Why would you have to tell people to defend their freedom? Well, it must be, mustn't it? Because there's a great attractiveness of slavery.

There must be something attractive to lure people back from the freedom of the new creation into the bondage of this present evil age. It must be, mustn't it? Otherwise it just wouldn't make any sense.

[20 : 04] Of course, it is true, isn't it, that we do sometimes see this in life. We do sometimes see a prisoner who's so institutionalized that freedom brings about such a struggle that it's so hard for them to make that adjustment to freedom and the responsibilities to life on the outside that they just can't cope, that they want to give up.

They never really make it to the time when they can fully appreciate the life of freedom and so suddenly the safety, the routine, the camaraderie of being inside becomes so attractive and they actually want to re-offend so as to go back to prison.

It's extraordinary, it sounds bizarre but that sometimes is what happens, isn't it? Because, because, the day the prison gates open to them is just the beginning of a long walk to true freedom, just the beginning of a walk to a truly restored citizenship.

Do you remember the story of the Exodus? I'm sure you do. Israel is taken out of Egypt, Moses leads the people out of the house of bondage in Egypt and they're free at last, free from Pharaoh, free from their cruel taskmasters in Egypt and God is with them in power, he overcomes their enemies, he leads them through the Red Sea, he feeds them with manna from heaven, he goes before them as a cloud and as a fire, he promises them a land flowing with milk and honey, a paradise for the people of God to live in and inherit and inhabit and a place where God himself will live with them.

Do you remember the story? Remember in Exodus chapter 15 after the great redemption from the Red Sea, they sing the glory of God's great promise to them. The Lord has been our salvation, they sing.

[22 : 03] You have led in steadfast love the people who you've redeemed. You will bring your people to plant them on your mountain. The Lord will reign forever and ever. That's what they sang.

Do you remember the promises that they received at Sinai? God says, you've seen everything that I've done redeeming you out of Egypt and now if you obey me you will be my treasured possession above all the peoples.

Do you remember then he gives them the commandments directing how they're to live in his presence. Then he gives them all the regulations for the tabernacle about how he's going to live right in the midst of them. He gives them all of that despite their sin with the golden calf and all the rest of it.

And then at last, this is Numbers chapter 11, they're told to leave Sinai and go and possess the promised land that God has set before them. The presence of God in the ark of the covenant goes in front of them to lead the way.

And what happens? What happens straight away? What Numbers 11 tells us? The people just complained. What did they say? It's astonishing.

[23 : 12] This is what they said. How wonderful it used to be back in Egypt. What was so great about being back in Egypt, they said? Well, we got free fish there. We got cucumbers and garlic and onions there.

We don't have that now. Egypt, the furnace of affliction as it was called. The house of bondage. But oh, we got free fish suppers and garlic in Egypt.

And so in Numbers chapter 14, what do they do? They say, let's choose a leader and go back to Egypt for the free fish suppers and the cucumber and the garlic. Can you believe it?

That's what they said. They're on the brink of the promised land. They've experienced so much of the power and the redemption and the salvation of God. They've got the promise of God before them of a delight and a paradise.

And they say, let's go back to Egypt because we're like fish suppers and cucumber. And Joshua stands up to remember and says, don't be crazy. Don't do it. I've seen this land.

[24 : 16] It flows with milk and honey. It's a good and a beautiful land and the Lord will give it into our hand. Only don't disobey him. Don't rebel against the Lord.

Did they listen to Joshua? They picked up stones to stone him in Moses. And if Moses hadn't stepped in and interceded for the people, God would have utterly destroyed them completely. In fact, God did spare their lives, but they spent the rest of those lives for forty years wandering in the desert and never saw the promised land. All because they were lured back by the supposed

attractions of slavery and bondage to reject God's wonderful promise of his future.

Why? Because they weren't content to wait for what God had promised. There was a journey to the promised land.

There were battles to be fought on the way for the promised land. And faced with the struggles of the way of God and the way of faith and trust in God alone to do it his way, they thought it was better to go back to bondage.

[25 : 28] Well, at least a few of their earthly appetites would be satisfied now. Without having to wait for a future, without having to wait for something, however wonderful it would be, that God was asking them to do his way and in his time.

Now, why this great digression back into Israel's history? Well, just because it illustrates for us so clearly the issue at the very heart of Galatians and the issue so often at the very heart of the Christian church ever since.

Why do people go back and want to submit again to a life of bondage? Because, although the new age has dawned in Christ's coming, and although we do already possess its blessings in Christ through the Holy Spirit, although we are a redeemed people, we're no longer slaves, we're sons, nevertheless, nevertheless, there is still a future.

There is still and not yet about our salvation. The promised land is ours in Christ, but we don't yet have it in the body.

We don't yet have it in full possession. There's a journey to the promised land for us too. There's battles to be fought on the way because we're living with the spirit of the new creation in Christ within us.

[26 : 56] It's no longer I who lives, it's Christ. And yes, that life is still being lived out in this body, in our bodies which are sinful, in a world which is still a world of sin, which is still part of this present evil age.

So in other words, as well as being a no longer, we're no longer slaves, and a now, we are sons, there's also a not yet in the Christian experience.

So I'll learn that one little word in chapter 4 verse 7. Just look at it. You're no longer a slave, but a son. And if a son, then an heir.

So much hinges on that little word, heir. What's an heir? An heir is one who has it all, not through what he's done, but simply by virtue of his birth, by virtue of privilege.

But he hasn't yet got full possession of it, has he? He's still waiting to inherit his full future. Say again in chapter 4 verse 30, the sons of the slave woman shall never inherit.

[28 : 12] You see, only a true son, only a free son, whether by birth or by adoption, only a free son can inherit. There's no other way, but even he must wait for his inheritance.

He can't work for it, he's got to wait for it. And that waiting entails inevitable tension, inevitable frustration, inevitable struggle.

I often think about poor Prince Charles. I've said this already, here he is, he's a crown prince for decades and decades. He lives with many privileges, doesn't he? Just by virtue of his birth, he's heir to the throne.

But the poor chap is rather frustrated. He's not yet the king. And he has to live as a king in principle, but he has to live in a world of lesser princes.

And friends, that is exactly what Paul is saying to us in Galatians chapters 5 and 6. That is exactly the position of the Christian believer. We are now living not as slaves, but as sons, but that means we are heirs of the new creation.

[29 : 22] And so it's inevitably going to involve frustration and struggle for us right up until the day when we finally receive at last everything that's promised in its fullness.

And unless we see that, and unless we recognize that and have our eyes firmly fixed on the glory and the joy of what is promised and what is still future, and what is secured already by Christ, by him alone, then we also are going to be tempted to turn back to a yoke of slavery, to deluding ourselves into thinking that somehow or other we can satisfy that longing that we all crave for now, in this present evil age.

It all falls down to this, you see. Is your joy and your fulfillment and your satisfaction perfection and your righteousness and acceptance with God and your glory, is that something to be found in the new creation?

Or is it something that you in fact think you can possess here in the present, in this evil age? And Paul's message is that the true gospel is emphatically the former. His gospel rescues us from this evil age for the new creation. We have it now but only by faith in Christ.

[30 : 49] Because only Christ has entered the new creation. We can only have the life and power of the new creation now in our life by union with Christ, by the Spirit, by faith.

But for the full possession of it, for possession in body, we have to wait. It's clear as a well there in verse 5 of chapter 5. Just look at it. For in Christ Jesus, sorry, for through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness.

It's still in the future. You see, that's the heart of the gospel. It's there again in verse 25. Now, he says, we walk by the Spirit as we battle in the flesh.

It's there in chapter 6, verse 8. It's the future. If we sow to the Spirit now, so we shall reap eternal life. When? In the future. If we don't give up.

If we don't give up, that is, on the gospel of faith alone, in Christ alone, by which we are promised that we shall all inherit as adopted sons.

[31 : 56] But not, says Paul, if we do give up on that gospel of Christ alone. Not if we do submit again to slavery of the flesh. He says, that reaps only corruption. That reaps only loss.

Not if we do think we can possess what is only for the future now, and seek it our own way. That's the route back to Egypt. That's the route away from the promised land.

That's the route to hopelessness and loss. And that's what the opponents of Paul were preaching when they preached circumcision. It's not an issue of Paul preaching salvation by grace alone and not obedience to the law against the Judaizers preaching salvation by works or moral self-effort.

That's not the contrast he's making. Obedience is not the issue. Paul is very clear in verse 7 of chapter 5. Obedience is the issue. It's what it's obedience to, truth or error.

Is it obedience to the true gospel, which promises fulfillment only in the world to come, in the new creation? Or is it obedience to a false gospel, which says, yes, you begin with Christ by faith, but then you add our advanced religion, you add our beliefs, our practices, and yet you can have full satisfaction now.

[33 : 15] You can have full fellowship now with God. You can be in, you can have what you need to have. Is it obedience to a true gospel, which says, right from the very start of history, this gospel has been about a cosmic redemption?

It's been about a heavenly Jerusalem. It's been about eternal satisfaction and joy, all of which we have now by faith, but only by faith, because it's still future.

Or is it obedience to a false gospel, which is really earthbound, which is focused on an earthly Jerusalem, which you must be part of here in this world, if you really want to have full acceptance, if you really want to have the full experience, if you really want to belong?

Do you see, it's ultimately just the same old issue that's been there facing God's people right from the very beginning. It's the first commandment that we taught the children this morning. Will you serve the Lord your God and him alone?

Or will you try to serve the Lord your God while adding on the idols of this world? Will you add Baal to the worship of the one true God, to try and give you some satisfaction now of the kind of things that with the Lord, well, he just keeps you waiting for?

[34 : 35] Let's add Baal. But of course you can't serve the Lord in Baal, can you? You can't add anything of the flesh, of this life, of this evil age, to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Otherwise, says Paul, you sever yourself totally from Christ. Christ will be of no value to you at all, not just a little value, none. Why?

Because you will have turned the heavenly gospel into an earth-bound religion just like all the others. That's why accepting circumcision for Gentile Galatians is described in verse 1 as going back again to slavery.

Do you notice that? They'd never been Jews, they'd never been circumcised, they'd never before submitted to the Mosaic law, but to go back now that Christ had come and add anything from the old age, however good it had been in the old age, was like going back to slavery.

In fact, it was going back to idolatry, it's parallel to what we saw in chapter 4, verse 9. How can you turn back again to the weak and worthless elements of this world?

[35 : 46] You see, of this world, you're turning your back on the new creation, you're going back to a world that's perishing, back to a world that you've been delivered from.

And you can't do it, you can't be in two worlds, it's one or the other. And next week we're going to focus more on this passage, on the marks of the true and false faith and the true and false teachers, but just in closing tonight, just see how serious this issue is.

And while Paul virtually swears at his opponents in verse 12, do you see that? He curses them. Friends, the history of the Christian church has been full of those who would add something or other to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Some ministry of the flesh, some thing of this world, added to Christ to give you the full salvation that we all long for.

Claiming it's necessary for a full Christian experience, offering it as the answer to all your struggles, as the answer to your lack of assurance, as the answer to your sense of incompleteness, as the answer to what you long for.

[36 : 58] You can have it now, they say, if you come to us. And then you'll be totally free now. You won't have to wait. All of these things are offering you a true home now on earth.

A mother, an earthly Jerusalem that will give you fullness right now. that's the language of the Church of Rome. Come under the umbrella of the Mother Church.

The Mother Church. Not a heavenly Jerusalem, but an earthly Jerusalem in Rome. And then you'll really be a Christian in full communion with the faith.

You find it in many of the pure sects that have grown up in the Church over the years. Oh, you must come within our orbit, in our fellowship. We're the only ones who possess the unadulterated gospel of Jesus.

You must do it our way and have our baptism, have our version of the Bible, have our whatever it is. And then you'll really be getting what you want. It's the truth about every cult that has begun its life within the mainstream of the Christian faith, but has drifted away because it's added to Christ, the Book of Mormon, or whatever it might be.

[38 : 13] And when you add to Christ, before you know it, you've lost Christ altogether. And all that matters is the addition. Unless you've got that, you're not really in.

We've seen it often in some of the charismatic movements that have drifted out of the mainstream. Ah, you can only have the fullness of the Spirit, the fullness of Christian experience, if you come and have our hands laid on you, and do this and that.

Friends, I'm telling you, full salvation and full experience of salvation is not yet.

Even for the Apostle Paul, with all his gifts, he said, we ourselves eagerly await for the hope of righteousness. He says it's going to be a struggle right to the end, and it must be a struggle right to the end, because we're still in this age which is perishing.

But it's a glorious struggle, nonetheless. And Paul says to us, you've got everything you need, by faith, through the Holy Spirit. You've got everything you need in Christ.

[39 : 24] Nothing else matters. Nothing can be added. But faith, his faith, working through you by love. That is all you need.

And that's the only way. So I want to say to you tonight, don't listen to any other gospel, ever. Nothing can be added to the promise that you have in Jesus Christ, through the Holy Spirit, by faith. Nothing in earthbound religion or experience or practice can ever save you, can only ruin you, take you away from what you have in Christ.

So stand firm for freedom, the glorious freedom of a new creation, the freedom of the heavenly Jerusalem, the freedom that is in Christ alone by faith.

For freedom, Christ has set you free. free. So stand firm, therefore, and do not ever submit again to a yoke of slavery.

[40 : 37] It's Christ alone, right to the very end. Or everything is lost, says Paul. So don't let's ever forget that.

Let's pray. Lord Jesus Christ, our appetites and our desires for the things of this world are so strong.

Their promise is so alluring. Their sights dazzle us. And so often we're tempted to turn back from a glorious and wonderful and certain future with you.

But all their promises fail. And they lead only to corruption. So help us, we pray, to fix our eyes upon you through the Spirit by faith to eagerly await the hope of righteousness.

And to know that in Christ Jesus, nothing of this world counts for anything. But only your new creation. And the life and the love of that new creation at work in us now by faith.

[41 : 51] So keep us looking forward and keep us trusting in you, we pray. For we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, we sing to end a hymn that reminds us that it's grace, grace and more grace from the beginning through the middle and right to the very end.

A great hymn by John Newton, amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost and now I'm found, was blind, but now I see.
But look at the last verses. Verse 4, The Lord has promised good to me. His word my hope secures. My shield and great reward is he as long as life endures.
right to the end. Number 771.