

B: The Cross and the Believer

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Preacher: Rupert Hunt-Taylor

[0 : 00] But we're going to turn to our Bibles now, and Rupert is, once again, going to be leading us through the letter to the Galatians. And we're going to read twice this morning, in Galatians chapter 3 and 4.

If you have one of our church visitor Bibles, it's page 973. If not, you'll find it midway through the New Testament, before the book of Ephesians, and after the two letters of Paul to the Corinthians. A couple of weeks ago, we were looking at the first two chapters. We're having really an overview, a refresher of this book, which we studied some time ago. And I'm going to read just now from chapter 3, verse 1, through to the middle of chapter 4.

Then we'll sing, and then we'll return and read then through to the end of chapter 4. We're trying to get the sweep of Paul's argument. It's a difficult argument, sometimes in the detail.

But I hope as we read it through together, you will very clearly get the main message of what Paul is saying. And he begins chapter 3, verse 1, very sharply.

[1 : 09] Let me ask you only this.

Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun with the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?

Did you suffer or did you experience so many things in vain, if indeed it was in vain? Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law or by hearing with faith?

Just as Abraham had faith in God and it was counted to him as righteousness. Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham.

And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, In you shall all the nations be blessed.

[2 : 16] So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith. For all who rely on, or all who are of the works of the law, are under a curse.

For it is written, Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all the things written in the book of the law and do them. And it is evident that no one is justified before God by or in the law.

For the righteous shall live by faith. That's what the Old Testament says. But the law is not of faith. Rather, the one who does them shall live by them.

Christ redeemed us, meaning the Jews, from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us. For it is written, Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree.

So that in Christ Jesus, the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles. So that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith. To give a human example, brothers, even with a man-made covenant, no one annuls it or adds to it once it's been ratified.

[3 : 29] Rather, the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It doesn't say, and to offsprings, referring to many, but referring to one, and to your offspring, which is Christ.

This is what I mean. The law, which came in 430 years afterwards, there's not a null, a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to make the promise void.

For if the inheritance comes by the law, it no longer comes by promise. But God gave it to Abraham by a promise. Now, why then, the law?

It was added because of transgressions, until the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made.

And it was put in place through angels by an intermediary. Now, an intermediary implies more than one, but God is one. Is the law then contrary to the promises of God?

[4 : 31] Certainly not. For if a law had been given that could give life, then righteousness would indeed be by the law. But the scripture imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith

in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

Now, before faith came, or the faith in Christ came, we, Jews, I think, were held captive under the law.

Imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. So then the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith.

But now that faith has come, we're no longer under a guardian. For in Christ Jesus, you are all. That's Jews and Gentiles.

You are all sons of God through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There's neither Jew nor Greek.

[5 : 36] There's neither slave nor free. There's neither male and female. For you all are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring.

Heirs according to promise. I mean that the heir, as long as he's a child, is no different from a slave. Though he's the owner of everything.

But he is under guardians and managers until the date set by his father. In the same way, also, we, when we were children, were enslaved to the elementary principles of the world.

But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law. So that we all might receive adoption as sons.

And because you are sons, God has sent the spirit of his son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father. So you are no longer a slave, but a son.

[6 : 45] And if a son, then an heir through God. Formerly, when you did not know God, you, you Gentiles he's meaning, were enslaved to that which by nature are not gods.

But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and worthless elementary principles of the world, whose slaves you want to be once more?

You observe days and months and seasons and years. I'm afraid I may have labored over you in vain. Brother, says Paul, I entreat you.

Become as I am. For I also have become as you are. You did me no wrong. You know, it was because of a bodily ailment that I preached the gospel to you at first.

And though my condition was a trial to you, you did not scorn or despise me, but received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus. What then has become of the blessing or the joy you felt?

[7 : 58] For I testify to you that if possible, you would have gouged out your eye and given them to me. Have I then become your enemy by telling you the truth? They, that's the opponents, the teachers who are teaching against Paul, they make much of you, but for no good purpose.

They want to shut you out, but you make much of them. It's always good to be made much of for a good purpose. And not only when I'm present with you, my little children, for whom I am again in anguish of childbirth until Christ is formed in you.

I wish I could be present with you now and change my tone, for I'm perplexed about you. Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not listen to the law?

For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by a slave woman and one by a free woman. But the son of the slave was born according to the flesh, while the son of the free woman was born through promise.

Now this may be interpreted allegorically. These women are two covenants. One is from Mount Sinai bearing children for slavery.

[9 : 18] She's Hagar. Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia. She corresponds to the present Jerusalem. For she is in slavery with her children.

But the Jerusalem above is free. And she is our mother. For it is written, Rejoice, O barren one who does not bear.

Break forth and cry aloud, you who are not in labor. For the children of the desolate one will be more than those of one who has a husband. Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise. But just as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who is born according to the spirit, so also it is now.

But what does the scripture say? Cast out the slave woman and her son. For the son of the slave woman shall not inherit with the son of the free woman.

[10 : 20] So, brothers, we are not children of the slave, but of the free woman. For freedom Christ has set us free.

Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. Amen.

May God bless us. This is his word. Well, friends, turn back with me to Galatians chapter 3 and 4, that big chunk of this letter.

Page 973. And let's ask for the Lord's help. Father God, we thank you for our time together now. We pray that you would give us, your children, open eyes and open ears and sharp minds and receptive hearts. In Jesus' name.

[11:26] Amen. Well, last week I received what looked like a very exciting piece of correspondence. An email from a kindly Nigerian nun offering me a small fortune.

She told me that a godly English couple had been killed in a plane crash and had left their entire estate in her hands.

And so in her quest to find somebody who would use the money well, divine revelation had led her to me. All I had to do was send her my bank account details.

Now, there are some scams you would have to be incredibly foolish to fall for. No pain, weight loss. Or the chance to get rich quick. Or an unsolicited email from a Nigerian nun, apparently. Those things should raise alarm bells, shouldn't they? And what they usually have in common is praying on people who are desperate enough or insecure enough to be led astray.

[12:36] Well, Paul's foolish young Galatian converts have been sold a pup, haven't they? Having come to know the Lord's grace through Paul's ministry, they've been led astray by some Jewish Christian troublemakers.

And their scam is the idea that although Paul's gospel is okay for beginners, to really get on in the Christian life, you need the added safeguards and customs of Jewish law.

Of course, everyone agrees that grace gets you through the door. But according to the troublemakers, verse 3, it's not really much help in the battle of the Christian life.

And so this precious young church made one in Christ begins to splinter into cliques. There's the mere Christian clique.

There's the spiritual keen Christians. There's the real ethnically Jewish Christians. Well, although chapters 3 and 4 have some very tricky verses, thankfully, Paul's message is pretty simple.

[13:50] Don't buy that for one minute. They might promise you more of these people, but in the end, they'll rob you of everything. And the thing which should have made that plain as day to the Galatians, verse 1, was that Jesus Christ had been publicly portrayed to them by Paul as crucified.

Done. It's that event, the crucifixion of the Son of God, which makes all the difference to the life of the believer.

The fact that that event had now taken place in history ought to reassure these young Christians that they don't need whatever anyone else claims to be offering them.

So although these chapters are often used to make all sorts of rather difficult and contested arguments about the relationship between God's law and God's gospel, that's not actually why they're here in our Bibles.

The contrast isn't between two methods of salvation. There's only ever been grace. Everyone's agreed on that. It's between two ages.

[15:03] B.C. and A.D. The temporary and the eternal. The age of childhood. And the age of the grown-up son who inherits everything.

Paul is writing to people who, just like us, live in the great age of fulfillment. The age the whole Old Testament looked forward to.

Like us, the Galatians were coming to terms with life after the cross. And yet still waiting. 3, verse 3. Waiting for the perfection of their bodies.

That hadn't yet happened, had it? So was the answer to the struggle of the Christian life to go back to Moses, to law and to custom? Or had the coming in history of the Lord Jesus fundamentally altered things?

Chapters 3 and 4 tell us that the cross is key not just to the start of the Christian life, but the whole life of the believer. This is the B in our Galatian alphabet.

[16:11] The cross and the believer. And if we feel like we're getting stuck in the muddy details, the key is to remember why Paul's writing. Right the way through, he's reassuring the Galatian Christians that what they are already in Christ is the real thing.

Just follow that with me through the section. Look down to chapter 3, verse 7. The real sons of Abraham are people just like you, of faith.

3, verse 26. You are sons of God. The real thing. Sons of Abraham and sons of God. 3, verse 29. You are the true heirs of Abraham's gospel.

Chapter 4, verse 6. You're God's sons. Marked by the spirit of his son. What better hallmark of authenticity could you want?

Chapter 4, verse 9. You are known by God as you are. 4, verse 28. You really are children of promise. Just like Isaac.

[17 : 29] Now, like the Galatians, we're going to need that confidence next week. Because when we come to look at Paul's answer to the Christian life, the Christian struggle. Life in the spirit of Christ.

Well, if you're anything like me, you probably begin to wonder whether he's at work in you at all. So, Paul says, yes. If you've believed in Christ crucified, you really are part of the family.

A son. So, that's where we're heading. An argument which shows how the climax of scripture, the cross of Christ, should persuade these Christians that they don't need to rely on anything more.

Paul's message seems to build in three stages. And in each one, the cross faces us with a set of choices. Choices the Jewish Christian troublemakers had got so tragically wrong.

Firstly, chapter 3, verse 1 to 14. The cross divides all the world into blessed or cursed. 3, verse 1 to 14.

[18 : 40] Blessed or cursed. Now, what piece of news could possibly be more significant for a human being to hear? How is it that a creature receives the blessing of his creator?

You can understand, can't you, how a young Gentile convert might well be bewitched or hoodwinked when the Jewish Christians come knocking. What if I'm a lesser Christian than these guys who seem so steeped in their Bibles?

But verse 2 introduces a new word to this letter, which will be key from now on. The Spirit. Christ was portrayed as crucified and the Galatians received the Spirit.

The two things are tightly bound together right the way through the letter. And there's surely no greater sign of God's blessing than the Spirit of God himself.

So to prove to the Galatians that they are full members of the one ancient people of blessing, Paul asks a rhetorical question in verse 3. How is it that you received God's blessing in the first place?

[19 : 54] By hearing the gospel of Christ crucified and believing? Or by works of the Lord? Did you have to enter through the door of Judaism?

And of course the answer to that was obvious. They just had to look at their own miraculous conversions. At their own experience of God's grace. What they'd suffered together as Christians. But just to be clear, Paul answers his own question at the end of the section. Verse 14. We receive this promised Spirit by faith.

And in between the question and the answer, Paul shows how foolish it is, verse 3, having begun by the Spirit, by faith alone, to then fall for the trick of relying on our own flesh to keep up that blessing.

And this is Paul's coup de grace. He takes the Jewish Christians back to their Old Testaments with text after text to show who really understands Abraham's faith.

[21 : 02] So then who is blessed? Well, it's everyone down the ages who has trusted in the coming promise of God. Abraham, Moses, those in Habakkuk's day quoted at the end of verse 12, who lived by faith in the deliverance to come.

They are the sons of Abraham, the ones who, like Abraham, trusted that God would one day do what he promised to do. And here comes the shock for the Judaizers.

Right from the beginning, verse 8, people just like these Galatian Gentiles were set aside to belong to Abraham's family.

They're not some afterthought tagged on by Paul. In fact, without them, verse 14, the whole plan of blessing can't go ahead. So who is cursed?

That's the word which dominates verses 10 to 13. And it's anyone in Moses' day, in Paul's day, in our day, who pays lip service to God's promise, but twists his law into a way of trying to earn something for themselves.

[22 : 26] Those who rely on the law, verse 10, or literally who are of the law rather than of faith in the promise, like Abraham. It's never been the way of blessing, even though some in the church have always tried.

But you see, the law itself just won't allow people to divorce it from God's promise. So built right into the law itself is a mechanism which prevents it from being abused.

And that is the covenant curse. The very law which told God's people how to live also condemned them daily, constantly.

Then, just as now, even sincere, faithful believers could never live perfect lives. We know that, don't we? Which is why the law itself was so full of provision to deal with the sin of faithful believers.

To keep reminding the people of promise that their hope was by faith. But what happens if you try to go it alone? If you divorce God's law from that faith?

[23 : 47] Well, then you're on your own, aren't you? To face its curse. It's sacrifices are no good to you then. It's a trite illustration. But think of those brilliant gadgets you see in the spy films which detonate the moment they get into the wrong pair of hands.

The law works a little bit like that, doesn't it? The second you abuse it and divorce it from relationship and covenant love, then it blows up in your hands.

It's curse-killed you. You can go through the motions. Sacrifice the goats. Turn up to church the next time you're roted on. But if your hope, your basis, what you are, is not of faith in God's promised provision for your sin, then it counts for nothing at all.

Because the law on its own was never an of faith sort of thing, verse 12. Never the way or the time in which God's promise would come.

Rather, the law was the way the people of promise were to live while they waited. It was about doing, about living distinct lives in the land of Israel with thankful hearts.

[25 : 03] the cross. The cross divides all the world into those who trust God's provision and those who go it alone, blessed or cursed.

So how wonderful, verse 13, that the one way of blessing promised from eternity has now finally come in Christ.

That the curse has actually been paid once and for all for the people of faith. That the blessing of ancient Abraham has now come to the Gentiles of Galatia and Glasgow.

Christ has died, verse 14, so Jew and Gentile alike can receive the spirit of Christ through faith.

It's the climax of the whole story of scripture. The cross of Christ and the spirit of Christ are where the whole story has been heading. If you have those, then surely you have absolutely all that's on offer in this life for the Christian.

[26 : 12] There's nothing to add, is there? No extra rules or customs, no new trick or experience to boost the Christian life. If someone offers you more, then Paul says, smell a rat.

Add it to the list of things that just don't ring true, like miracle cures for boldness or emails from Nigerian nuns. it's either blessing or curse of faith or of works of religion.

And the way of blessing has always been to carry on just as we started by faith. Secondly, from chapter 3, verse 15, right the way through to chapter 4, verse 11, that event, the crucifixion of Christ and the pouring out of his spirit onto Jew and Gentile believer divides all the world forevermore into either son or slave.

Son or slave, 315 to 411. And again, Paul's message must have been the most wonderful news imaginable unimaginable to these poor, agonizing Galatians.

But it's also a shocking blow to the Judaizers. They would see themselves, wouldn't they, as God's sons on earth. That was Israel's great privilege.

[27 : 44] Israel is my firstborn son, says God. But the divide here isn't between Jew and Gentile. In Paul's argument, it's between the Israel of old, the Jewish nation, and the full people of God living this side of the cross.

The Israel of old are the ones in slavery. And the sons include these Galatian Gentiles who they're troubling so much. Now, Paul will make that argument, firstly, by giving us some clarity about the Mosaic law.

From verse 15, he spells out how the law worked. First, what it didn't do, then what it did do. And finally, in verse 21 and 2, he sums it all up again.

And then after making that theological point about the law, he applies it to Christians living this side of the cross for the rest of the section. And it's a story of before and after, a whole raft of contrasts between the Jewish way of life and the full life in the spirit of Christ.

So firstly, the Mosaic law itself, what was it and what wasn't it? Well, we've seen already, haven't we, that it wasn't an alternative means of righteousness for the Jew.

[29 : 11] A whole load of extra conditions bolted onto the gospel. And Paul illustrates that now with a human example. If I were to buy a car, for example, as I did last year, but then one of the dodgy salesmen demanded a whole load of extra cash before handing over the keys.

Well, they would be adding to or annulling the deal we'd already struck. Well, of course, in Henry's Skoda, where I went, that would never happen. We all know they're a highly reputable company. But what they can do is continue developing the relationship that they've already built with me. I could come to a deal with them, for example, to service my car, to keep it on the road.

But you see, the object of the two deals is totally different. They operate on different levels. One builds on the other. Well, the object of God's covenant with Abraham was, verse 18, inheritance. His offspring would inherit the blessing of life and relationship and the promised spirit. So clearly, 430 years later, God didn't alter his terms and conditions to something he'd already promised.

[30 : 30] That wasn't the object of the law. That's why verse 21, the two things aren't in any way contradictory. In fact, law and gospel are just about the only things in this section Paul explicitly isn't contrasting.

So what was the law all about? Well, verse 19 says it was needed because of sin. Because the promised one, the Lord Jesus, had not yet come, something had to be done to deal with the sin of God's people.

So, verse 22, the scripture imprisoned everyone without distinction under sin so that those who believe would be kept safe until the promise came.

Now, how does that work? How did the law help deal with sin? Well, I think by showing Israel clearly what sin is and by providing a means to atone for it until Christ came.

So it kept them like prisoners, condemned daily, and yet gratefully dependent on what God had promised them by faith.

[31 : 49] Verse 24 gives us another metaphor. Instead of a prison guard, it's a guardian, a trusted family slave who would supervise the children and keep them out of trouble.

Like children, Israel were hedged in with every do and every don't spelt out in plain language. That's just what I do with my child.

The law supervised the nation of Israel, keeping them just safe enough from all the pagan mess around them until Christ was revealed. So you see, as a binding Jewish way of life, the law was only ever a temporary thing, keeping the car on the road because the promise wasn't yet here. It didn't invalidate the promise of grace, rather the law incubated the people of grace through their rebellious childhood. There's the principle, now time to apply it.

now, says Paul, the childhood is over. The date set by our father has come, verse 2. Israel has come of age.

[33 : 09] Faith has come and faith is a person, the Lord Jesus Christ. In him, that age of separation from the nations, of constant sacrifice, of ceremonial rules to teach you like little children, right from wrong.

None of that makes sense now. In fact, it's quite the opposite. You're freed for mission, to gather the Gentiles and the outsiders to Abraham's gospel.

There's no Jew or Greek now, verse 28. No keen Christians and lax Christians. There's Christ in us. So there can't be favorites, can there?

It helps to notice here that Paul is anything but old-fashioned. It's not that he's forgotten to mention daughters, by the way. But our adoption isn't about who we are.

It's about who we're joined to. Ladies, you might be our sisters, but you're God's sons. We're united to the firstborn, to the favorite son.

[34 : 25] Isn't that breathtaking? Circumcised or not, mature Christian or not, whether we've got it all sussed or not, that's what we've become.

The Father has adopted us right alongside him and given us his spirit. He's given us the full rights of a grown-up son.

So you see, in history, the crucifixion marked the divide between an age of childish enslavement to a legal code and the freedom of a mature son to honor his father's will more than honoring his rules. And now that that's happened, the cross must divide the true sons from those still enslaved to the basic things of this world. Once upon a time, verse 3, Israel herself was enslaved by the good law to the power of sin.

Once upon a time, verse 8, the Galatian Gentiles too were enslaved to their idolatrous gods. The worthless principles of this world, just the same language, religion, the people of the faith, the people of the religion, the people of the faith, the door on that old age has closed.

[36 : 00] To go back now to a form of Christless, legalistic religion would be to retreat into slavery. It's the cross of Christ, an adoption into his family through his spirit that matters.

Those who cling to it are free. Those who cling to sub-Christian, law-bound lives are enslaved.

Which is why thirdly and finally, the cross faces every Christian with a choice.

Cast out the troublemakers or be shut out yourself. That's the fairly plain message of 412 down to 5 verse 1.

Cast out or be shut out. This is Paul's brave heart moment. Don't let them take your freedom. Verse 17, the Jewish Christian troublemakers want to shut you out of what you have in Christ and make you dependent on themselves.

And the only way to stop them, verse 30, is to cast out anyone who undermines what you are in Jesus. It's unambiguous, isn't it?

[37 : 25] Well, we've got to move quickly. It's a story of two masters, two ministries and two mothers. The two masters we met in chapter 3, it's either the promised Christ or the enslaving principles of this world, be that legalism or bare-faith paganism.

And now chapter 4 lets us in on the two ministries which serve those two masters. Then as the chapter close, those ministries produce children for two mothers, promise or slavery.

And all the way through, like a dog with a bone, remember Paul's purpose, to reassure the Galatian Christians of what they are in Christ. You belong to the right master.

You received the right ministry. You are true sons of mother promise. God's so be what you are. Stand firm.

Firstly, the two ministries, it's either Paul's or the troublemakers. And just notice the fruit and the motivation of each ministry, that's more than enough to spot the fraud.

[38 : 45] What was the fruit of Paul's ministry among the Galatians? Well, yes, it's been costly. The end of the chapter tells us that's how it's always been.

But the overwhelming feeling was one of release, freedom from the enslavement of their pagan masters, a liberation so radical, verse 15, they would have gouged out their eyes for Paul if he'd asked them to.

So they showed their love for him through nursing him back to health, verse 13, no doubt from the toll his ministry had taken on him. That's Paul's fruit, a loving, liberated church.

What of his motivation? You get a glimpse of that now, don't you? He's once again in the anguish of childbirth for his frustrating children, verse 19, until Christ is formed in them.

He's motivated by the loving, self-giving concern of a parent, isn't he? That's what you want in a minister. Well, what are the troublemakers?

[40 : 00] The fruit of their ministry is insecurity and doubt and the church dependent on themselves. They want to shut you out, verse 19, that you make much of them.

by instilling doubt in the sufficiency of Christ, by creating an inner circle of keen religious Christians, they've produced an immature, dependent church.

The religious trick that gets you into the inner circle is always going to appeal to the insecure young Christian, isn't it? And their motivation?

Well, they're driven by the very insecurity they engender in others, the need to feel needed. Their rules, their teaching, all their churchy customs, their ways of making others dependent on themselves.

themselves. So, verse 17, they flatter the church in order to be flattered back. It's salvation by ministry, isn't it?

[41 : 13] Christ being formed in others isn't enough for them because Christ isn't yet truly formed in them. If he was, they would be secure enough, wouldn't they, not to need these Galatians constantly looking up to them.

So, in verse 21, for the benefit of these insecure young Christians tempted back to a sub-Christian legalistic life, Paul illustrates his point with one last devastating look at the Old Testament.

It's the two mothers, Sarah, Abraham's wife, the mother long-promised a covenant child, and Hagar, with whom Abraham tried to bring about what he longed for by himself.

And what a shock this is for the Jewish Christians. Hagar, the Egyptian, the Gentile, is Jerusalem.

Hagar represents Jewishness, the old Mount Sinai way of life. To go back is to convert to paganism.

[42 : 24] But Sarah's true children have always been of promise. The free, eternal Jerusalem above.

Don't miss how shocking that is. Christ rejecting Jews are now good as pagans, and the Galatian Gentiles are now true Jews.

They understand where it's always been going. Hence this lovely quote from Isaiah 54. It comes from the passage immediately after the work of the suffering servant, as if in response to the cross, barren old Sarah, who laughed at the thought of having one child, is still laughing.

But this time, it's as if she's laughing with joy at every Gentile convert adopted into her family, the children of the desolate one will be more than those of the one who has a husband.

And more indeed they are as earthly Jerusalem withers into history, and pagans around the world come to Christ. So now, says Paul, verse 21, do you finally get it?

[43 : 46] You brothers are children of promise, just like Isaac. People will always try to deny you that. They did in Isaac's day, but be what you are.

Not sons of the slave woman, but sons of the free in Christ. So think like a son. When you're toying up whether to turn up at the prayer meeting on a Wednesday night, are you thinking like a son or like a slave?

I'll tell you how I think. It's shameful. I think, well, if I don't turn up, how will that look? After all, I'm supposed to be a teacher, a pastor.

What will people think? Well, friends, that is the attitude of a slave. Not because it's untrue, but because I'm being motivated by the fear of looking like a less spiritual Christian.

It's flagrant disbelief of what Paul's been saying, isn't it? So how would a son think? Surely he'd think, yes, I'm tired.

[45 : 03] Yes, it's been a long week. But what a privilege to come to my father, who knows me, and through the spirit of his son, with my brothers and sisters in him, to thank God for his work among us.

You see, a son doesn't worry about looking the part, because a son knows in Christ that he is the part. That is gospel freedom.

So don't tolerate an attitude of super-spiritual belittling piety. when we find that sort of graceless superiority, we have to cast it out.

Willie often gives us a really helpful test for that attitude, doesn't he? It's the could someone turn to me test. Could one of you struggling and ashamed turn to me and trust me to treat you like a brother, like a son of God in Christ?

Christ, when a Christian is at their most insecure, struggling with something they can barely bring themselves to speak about, do we shut them out and look superior just to be made much of ourselves?

[46 : 30] Friends, I've not experienced that often in this church, and I really do thank God for it. it's a sign that sonship is winning over slavery.

But where we find it, in ourselves, in each other, in the teachers we look for, we must be ruthless, cast it out, or in the end we'll be shut out.

For freedom, Christ has set us free. He redeemed us from the curse we deserve, so that even us unpromising Glaswegian Gentiles could be made full blooded sons in his spirit.

Stand firm, therefore, and never submit again to a yoke of slavery. Let's pray. Father God, we thank you that in the Lord Jesus the curse we deserve has been paid.

And thank you that you're not just a God of mercy who spares us what we deserve, but a God of grace who makes us sons and loves us like the son who does deserve your love.

[47 : 53] Help us, Lord, to live like your sons, to use our freedom in love, to serve each other, and display Christ crucified till he comes again.

For Jesus' sake. Amen. Amen. Amen. Thank you.