

God forbid

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- [0 : 00] But far be it from me to boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me and I to the world.
- This is not a letter that you would turn to normally if you are seeking comfort or encouragement.
- In that event, it would be appropriate, I think, to read John's Gospel or to turn to Isaiah's prophecy or maybe Paul's great eighth chapter to the Romans.
- Because this letter is different. It has a different purpose. And Paul has to take up his pen, not in a spirit of encouragement, but in order to dispute vehemently with the Galatians.
- The letter is significant, written in the first century, but applicable in the 21st and indeed in any century.
- [1 : 22] Because it answers the basic questions that arise in the human heart. There are three main issues dealt with in this letter.
- And these are the question of authority. And that's always relevant. There's the question of peace with God.
- How can I be right with God? And there's no greater question than that. And there's the question of how should I live out my life?
- Now get the answer wrong. Particularly to the middle question. And it's fatal. Your doom is sealed.
- And your destiny is dark indeed. How can I be right with God? Paul had to write to the Galatians.
- [2 : 26] Young churches. New believers. Planted by himself and by Barnabas. But then something happened. False teachers came along.
- Paul's converts were thrown into confusion. Because these false teachers from the Jerusalem church.
- When they heard the news of Paul's converts. They immediately set off. And made their way to Galatia. To the churches there.
- To the new churches recently planted. And they came with questions. Questions like these. This man Paul. Who does he think he is?
- By what authority does he speak? He says he's an apostle. Really? Was he one of the twelve? Was he not the enemy of Christ?
- [3 : 29] How come? He's an apostle. So the question of authority is a vital. It's a vitally important question. So that when the false teachers come around our doors.
- And we entertain them. Albeit on the doorstep. We ought to ask them. By whose authority do you speak?
- Who sent you? Who sent you? So Paul. When he takes up his pen. He answers that question. And that's the first question.

And then these false teachers. said to the new converts. Ah but. You haven't been circumcised. You haven't submitted to the law of Moses.

So therefore you're not authentic believers. And that immediately raised. A doubt in their minds. Not that.

[4 : 34] Not that long before. They exhibited. The characteristics of new converts everywhere. And what are these? When someone is born of God's spirit.

Born from above. Becomes a new person. They are filled with joy. The joy of the Lord. We were singing about joy.

In that first psalm tonight. And there's nothing quite like Christian joy. It's infectious. The love of God evokes.

The love of God for sinners. And when you personalize that. For me. Or for you. Ought to evoke joy. The joy of pardon sin. Forgiveness.

Being right with God. Because deep set in the human heart. Is the knowledge that. All is not well. With us. And our maker.

[5 : 36] No matter how we may. Pissed over the cracks. Or deny that. The reality is. That when conscience speaks. Conscience.

Albeit fallen conscience. Conscience is the voice of God. And deep set within us. Having been made in his image. We are reminded.

We are reminded. That all is not well. And that God has a controversy with us. And one day. We will have to meet him. At the bar of judgment.

At the bar of judgment. So all is not well. They were filled with joy. And whenever you hear of. Believers being added.

To the church of Christ. Surely that fills us. It ought to. With joy. There is joy in heaven. After all. Over one sinner.

[6 : 30] Who repents. And there ought to be joy. In the church of Christ. On earth. When they hear of. One's coming. To faith in Jesus. There is no greater joy.

Didn't John. In his. In his third. I think it's his third letter. Say. I have. There is. I have great joy. In that my children. Are following the Lord.

He was speaking about. His spiritual children. They are following the Lord. And you could apply that. To natural parents as well. What greater joy. Than to see.

Those whom God has given to you. Following the Lord. But that joy. Was quickly turned. Into sorrow. When Paul preached.

And when he preached the gospel. People were riveted. And the center of Paul's preaching. Was always Christ. There is no greater subject.

[7 : 27] In this world. Than preaching the gospel of Christ. It was at the center. Of all his preaching. All his sermons. And when he preached.

It was as if. The Galatians could see. Christ. On a great. Big billboard. Advertising board. It was clear to them.

That this man was pointing. Not to himself. But to his master. And so they were born again. But the enemy came in. And that's all was the tactic.

Of the enemy. Once you experience. Christian joy. Be alert. Be aware. It will not be long.

Before the enemy is active. And he is out to spoil. And to destroy. If it were possible. So Paul says.

[8 : 26] As he begins his letter. These first three words. Paul and apostle. These words are highly significant. Some think that this letter. Was the first New Testament letter.

To be written. And if so. These were the first three words. Paul. An apostle. What's an apostle? Are there apostles today?

What's the difference between a believer. And a saint. And an apostle. And a disciple. Well every believer.

Is a saint. One set apart. And every saint is a believer. Every disciple. Is a pupil. A follower of Jesus.

Every rabbi. Had their followers. Had their disciples. Jesus was a rabbi. And he had his disciples. Those who followed him. But there's a crucial difference. Between the disciples.

[9 : 26] The disciples of the rabbis. And the disciples of Jesus. The disciples of the rabbi. Had one aim. One motive. To excel their teacher.

To be better than he was. That was their aim. That's what they sought to attain. To know the teachings.

Of the rabbi. Better than the rabbi himself. Not so. With the disciples of Jesus. They want to be like. Their rabbi.

They want to be like. Their master. And that's great. That's God's great design. For them. And that's what he asks us to be. Imitators. Of the master.

Father. And so Paul writes. Paul the apostle. And the apostle. Is one. Divinely called. Commissioned.

[10 : 25] And sent. With this added qualification. That. He had. To see. The savior. With his physical eyes.

And the disciples. From Jesus called. The apostles. From Jesus called. They were with him. And they saw him. One of course. Fell away. And was replaced. But this man. Paul.

Who describes himself. As one born. Out of due time. When confronted. By the risen Christ. On the road. To Damascus. He saw him.

And he fell down. At his feet. Lord. What will you have me to do? And so. Paul. Legitimately. Calls himself. An apostle. And he expects.

His hearers. To listen. To what he writes. To what he says. Because of. Who he is. The apostle. Of Christ.

[11 : 23] And later on. At least early on. In this chapter. He says. God. Who separated me. From my mother's womb. Called me.

By his grace. To be. An apostle. And he was given. The message. Of the gospel. Now what is the gospel?

Well the gospel. Is news. It is. News. Concerning. Something. That has already happened. Something. That has taken place.

It's good news. And because. It has taken place already. Nothing. Can be added to it. Where did Paul get this gospel? Was it the product.

Of his own. Fertile mind. His own brain. Was it something. That he received. Second hand. And was therefore stale. How did he receive. The gospel.

[12 : 22] Well he tells us. In this letter. When Christ. Confronted him. On that Damascus road. He didn't catch. The first camel.

And go down. To Jerusalem. To the pillars. Peter. James. And John. And to ask them. About the gospel. He went aside. He went apart.

And he received. His gospel. Direct from heaven. We know that. For three years. The disciples. Well. The Jesus. For the three years.

And the apostles. This man. Was no different. He was taught. One to one. By the risen Christ. Christ. The gospel. That Paul preached.

Was not. Ninety percent. What Christ does. And ten percent. What. I must do. That's not good news.

[13 : 18] If I had a gift here. And I asked someone. Who was disabled. Unable to walk.

To come. And to receive the gift. That I have for them. They couldn't. The impotent man. The layman. Who lay 40 years.

At the gate of the temple. Beautiful. He couldn't move. When you go along. The streets. Of one of our large towns. Cities like Edinburgh. Or Glasgow. And you see a beggar there.

And you have put your hand. In your pocket. And you take out a coin. And you say. There you are. How does he receive it? He simply. Stretches out his hand. And he receives it.

And that's what we do. With the gospel. It's got nothing. Whatever to do. With our own attainment. Or our achievement. Or our effort. It's all of grace.

[14 : 17] And that's one of the glorious words. That the apostle uses. It's the gospel of grace. It's the good news. That came from the heart of God.

Paul had a high view of God. Paul's God was not weak. Or meek. Or impotent.

Paul's God was majestic. And sovereign. All powerful. He had a high view of Christ.

Christ for Paul was no ordinary man. He was the son of God. In the flesh. He had a high view of the Holy Spirit. The third person of the Trinity.

Who takes this word. And who applies it. To our hearts. And to our consciences. With power. With convicting power. Paul's view of the church.

[15 : 15] Was not just a small group of people. Here and there. Paul's view of the church. was as the people of God.

Chosen from all eternity. Predestined. To be conformed to the image of a son. Called in time through the preaching of the gospel.

justified. Adopted. Sanctified. And ultimately glorified. These are big words.

But why shouldn't we get to know them? After all. Today in school. Today in school. Children. They come across technical terms.

That were unknown some years ago. Ask them what's meant by megabytes. Or gigabytes. And they'll tell you. So why shouldn't we know. The definition of justification.

[16 : 16] And adoption. And sanctification. These great theological terms. So Paul confronts. These Galatians. And he says to them. I'm amazed.

I'm really taken aback. That you're deserting. The one who called you. You're deserting. My father. And your father. You're turning away. From the one who called you.

You're a deserter. How can that be? You're listening to a gospel. That's not a gospel. And with these false teachers. And every heretical teacher as well.

What he brings is this. It's Christ plus. Christ plus your own efforts. And the men who come round our doorstep. Their gospel.

So called gospel. Is no different. It's what you do. And as long as you get the balance right. As long as the scales are tipped. In your favor.

[17 : 11] That you've done enough. So to speak. Then you'll get there. Oh not so. Says Paul. That's blasphemous. What an insult.

To the Lord Jesus Christ. And so. Paul writes this letter. And he must come quickly. To the last chapter. To the last part of his letter. That's the background.

These people are thrown into confusion. Who are they to believe? Paul. Or. The Jerusalem teachers. And he comes to the last part of his letter.

And he says to them. Brothers. Brethren. If anyone is caught. In any transgression. If anyone. Slips.

What should you do? Gossip. Far from it. He said. Remember.

[18 : 08] In another place. Remember. Though. If you think you stand. If you think you stand. Take heed. Be careful. Lest you fall.

And here he's saying. To the. To the Galatians. If you know someone. In the fellowship. Who's gone astray. Restore him. Restore him. And the term that he uses.

Is a medical term. It's a term that was used for setting a broken bone. And here is someone. Who's out of joint. With the rest of the fellowship.

And is the duty of those who are spiritual people. Those who are following. Who are in step with the spirit. And there's a great challenge. Are we in step with the spirit?

The believer is indwelt. By the holy spirit. That's what happens at conversion. But we can easily offend the spirit.

[19 : 10] And he can withdraw himself. Not that we stop being believers. But we lose the comfort. And the joy. And the peace of the Lord. Are we in step with the spirit?

Well those who are in step with the spirit. Were to come alongside this person. Who had fallen. And they were to welcome him back. They were to restore him. There were many stories told.

I think I recall reading this one. In the old book. The Men of Lewis. Years and years ago. On the Friday of the question. And someone likened a believer. To be a person who had.

Over his head. A sack. That was open at the front. And open at the back. And whenever he heard something good. About his brother or sister.

He would put it in the sack at the front. To remind himself. Of the good things. And whenever he heard something bad. He put it behind him. And we ought to be like that.

[20 : 14] Brothers. You and sisters. You who are spiritual. Restore such a one. To your fellowship. And learn to bear their burdens. We are to be burden bearers.

He seems to contradict himself. A few verses further down. When he says. Everyone must bear his own burden. But it's a different word. Every one of us. We have our own personality. To contend with.

Our own genetic makeup. And we carry that with us. Conversion doesn't change that. And we. We must carry that. But there are burdens.

There are burdens of sorrow. And burdens of care. That weighs down. And a good fellowship. A good fellowship. Will support that.

And come alongside the person who is struggling. I hope we are. That kind of fellowship here. And. Then he comes on to.

[21 : 12] Talking about. Sewing. To the spirit. Or sewing to the flesh. How are we living? And he likens it. To use an agricultural illustration.

He likens it. To sewing. Whatever is sown in the springtime. If you sow wheat. Or corn. Or barley. Then you would expect. In the autumn time.

To reap. Wheat. Or corn. Or barley. Not something different. Whatever we sow. However we. As we live out our lives. Sow at the end. We will expect a harvest.

Is it going to be a bountiful. Bumper harvest. Or not. Now it's a long time. Between. There's four months. Between. Springtime. And harvest. It's a long time. And it's so easy.

To become disappointed. Or despondent. Keep on praying. Don't give up. If there's someone. Close to you.

[22 : 10] In your home. Or in your family. And you've been praying for them. Keep on. The harvest will come. And then he comes. To this great verse. These Jerusalem.

Teachers. They were boasting. They were boasting. The number of circumcisions. The number of people. Who had. Who had turned. To Judaism. And this really. Was what caught.

The ire of the apostle. He saw straight away. That if these. Jerusalem teachers. Won the day. There would be. Two churches. There would be. A Jewish component.

And a Gentile component. He saw that. Danger immediately. There's to be. One church. Father. I will. That there be one. One church.

And it's not the law. He argues. And he. If I time. The. He argues. That the law. Is something. That's past. The ceremonial law. No longer exists.

[23 : 09] Christ fulfilled. The law. Every law. In all its points. It was there. While the church. Was in. In its infancy. In the old testament. But now.

The church. Has come of age. So therefore. They're free. No longer. Are they to submit. To the rigors. And the demands.

Of the ceremonial law. They were boasting. The Jewish. Teachers. They were boasting. How they kept the law. But no one. Keeps the law. Totally. Offend. In one point. Said Jesus.

And you offend. You've broken the law. But Paul's boasting. Was different. He was boasting. In the Lord. Jesus Christ.

Three brief points. Who is the person. On the cross. The person. On the cross. The power. Of the cross.

[24 : 06] And the purpose. Of the cross. Who is there. Why is he there. And what did he achieve. Who is there.

Who is he. In yonder stall. At his feet. The shepherds fall. Tis the Lord. The king of glory. Tis the Lord. O wondrous story.

He came from heaven. And sought her. To be his only bride. And with his blood. He bought her. And for her life. He died. Mary's.

Boy child. Mary's. First born son. There was never a son. Like this one. Lovely. As a baby. Lovely. As an infant. Lovely. As a child. Always obedient. The perfect child. The perfect.

[25 : 07] Teenager. No one ever spoke. The way that this man spoke. Lovely to look at. Lovely to listen to.

Lovely to see what he did. Never passed by anyone who was in need. Always responded. To suppliants. To those who cried for help.

He was homeless. He became a refugee. He spent nights in prayer.

No one could accuse him. Of any fault. The son of God. Adored by angels. Worshipped by the archangels.

Beloved by the father. And by the spirit. On the cross. Who is there? The next logical question.

[26 : 04] Must be. Why is he there? Why is the one who is innocent. On the cross? Who put him there? Well the Roman soldiers did.

At the behest of his enemies. At the behest of Jesus' enemies. The Jews. The Pharisees. Away with him. Away with him. Crucify him. This man is not fit to live.

They said. But behind that. There was another. God so loved the world. That he gave.

He gave his one and only son. And Peter. When he preached. On that memorable day. At Pentecost. He preached. He preached.

In such a way. That the spirit. Convicted. His audience. That they were the ones. Who had put him. For their sins.

[27 : 05] He was nailed. To the tree. But then Peter says this. By the foreknowledge. And determinate. Counsel of God. God put him there.

God. Now that immediately. Raises. A serious. Moral problem. Doesn't it? It's wrong.

To punish. An innocent person. Maybe those who are older. Can recall. An unfortunate. Incident. In school. Perhaps. When they were. When they were.

On the receiving end. Of corporal punishment. Not because. You had done something wrong. You were innocent. But for. But for whatever reason.

You were on the receiving end. Maybe you were made a spectacle. In front of the whole class. So that nobody else. Would offend.

[28 : 01] Now that's wrong. That's morally wrong. To punish someone. Who is innocent. That's what happened here. Jesus Christ is innocent.

No one could. Convict him of sin. And yet he's on the cross. How does his father. How does his heavenly father.

Answer this charge. The charge of immorality. Against the atonement. How do you answer that charge?

Like this. Jesus Christ. Is the head. Of the church. And the members. Of his mystical body.

The believers. Make up. And constitute his body. The head. And the body. Are one. And he. As head.

[29 : 00] Of the church. Was suffering. In their place. This is substitution. He. He. Was condemned.

In my place. So that. He took. My sins. Upon himself. In Luther's words. He was.

At that moment. When he was on the cross. He was the greatest sinner. Who ever lived. He was on the cross.

A moral problem. The solution lies in this. That he was there. On behalf of his people. They were guilty. He assumed. And took their guilt.

What's the outcome of that? Justice. That they are justified. They stand. Before.

[30 : 00] The court of heaven. Not guilty. To be. Justification. Is a legal term. It belongs to the law courts. And.

We're all up on a charge. We're all guilty. When we go to the high court. And we stand there. And the judge listens to the verdict.

It listens to the evidence. He can pronounce. One of two verdicts. Either guilty. Or not guilty. We'll leave the Scottish law part of it.

Not proven out for the moment. We're either guilty. Or not guilty. If we're guilty. Then we're condemned. And we're sentenced. If we're proved.

Not guilty. Then we're set free. And we're free to go. Therefore we're justified. So justification. Is the opposite.

[30 : 57] Of condemnation. But there's more to it than that. When the heavenly judge. Justifies.

The ungodly. Who believe in Jesus. He does something else as well. And he adopts them.

It's as if he says. You're free to go. But wait a minute. Come with me. Come to my home. And enjoy everything that is in my home.

You're now my daughter. You're now my son. You're mine. Imagine. Imagine. The sensation. How sensational it would be.

If tomorrow. In the high court in Edinburgh. The judge came off the bench. And he said to this person. Who had been acquitted. Come with me.

[32 : 00] You know my son. You know my daughter. All that's mine. I give to you. Imagine. Well that's what happens. That's what happens.

In the courts of heaven. When a person is justified. Ah but. You'll say. I'm not sure. What if my sins.

Will come up on the last day. These things that I'm ashamed of. What if they come up. Before me. Well if they will.

This is what will happen. Immediately. Another will rush in. And say stop. They're not his son. His sins. Or her sins.

They're mine. That's what Jesus. Did on the cross. He took. Our guilt. Suffered. Our punishment.

[32 : 55] And set us free. No wonder. Paul's. Anger. Was aroused. How dare. These Jerusalem teachers. Add anything. To what Christ has already done.

But there's even more. What has he achieved. He has pacified. God's anger. He's. Propitiated God.

He's turned God's anger away. Sins are covered. He has. Defeated. Defeated. Satan. He has.

Accomplished. Gloriously. All that he set out to do. And more than that. He has united. Jew. And Gentile.

He has broken down. That middle wall. Of partition. That existed. In the temple. No Gentile. Was allowed. Into the inner court. Of the temple.

[33 : 52] That was reserved. For Jews only. But when Jesus died. And the veil. Of the temple. Was torn in two. Top to bottom. Nothing. Was there now.

To hinder the Gentiles. From coming. And Jesus. In his death. Has. Guaranteed. That there is. One church. The church. Of the first born.

The church. Of the Lord. Jesus Christ. Are you a member of it? How do you become a member of it? By holding out your hand.

And by. By receiving what he has given. What he has promised. Nothing more. Than that. As Spurgeon said in his own way. The gospel.

He said. Is as simple as. A. B. C. But the problem is. People are D. E. F. And we need to have our ears.

[34 : 54] Unstopped. Now it's clear to me. That you're interested in the gospel. If you weren't. You wouldn't be here. And I make bold to say that.

So I assume. That you're interested in the gospel. You love listening to this word. Being preached. Do you come out to the midweek meetings? Why not?

You'll hear the same gospel. And you know that you'll be welcomed. Really welcomed. With open arms. Your minister will.

Your session will. Your brothers and sisters will. They will welcome you. And the next logical step. Is one of obedience. To associate yourself.

With the Lord's people. By professing faith. Or you say. That's too simple. Surely. Surely. Surely I've got to do something. You know where that thought comes from.

[35 : 57] Christ has done it all. And this is the argument that I have. With the men who come round. And knock on my door. As I do on yours. And I say to them. I listen to you lads.

For five minutes. Tell me how you're going to get to heaven. And then I expect you. To do me that courtesy. And listen to me for five minutes. And at the end of the day.

We are poles apart. For this reason. They are pinning. All their hopes. On heaven. On what they do. The more doors they knock at. The more they're obedient.

To mother church. The better it will be with them. And I say to them. But what if you're not. Knocked on enough doors. What if at the end of the day. I said.

I pin my hopes. Not on who I am. Or anything I've done. I pin my hopes. Entirely. On what someone else has done.

[36 : 53] For me. And if he hasn't done enough. Then I'm sunk. I'm lost. That's what makes the Christian gospel unique.

Every other world faith. Has this basis. You must do something. Yourself. The Christian faith alone says.

Christ has done it all. Hold out your hand. And receive by faith. Faith. And that. Faith is God's gift. It's all of grace.

From beginning to end. And indeed. It has no end. That's the glory of it. We shall never reach. The terminus.

There will be. All of eternity. To explore the depth. Of who this person is. And what he did.

[37 : 51] Angels were astonished. At seeing him in the manger. More astonished. Seeing him at Gethsemane. And it baffled them.

To see their great master. On the cross. But he arose. On the third day. He reversed death. And because of that.

His people too. Will rise. On coming day. Who wouldn't be a believer? Who wouldn't? Make sure that you come to him. Right now.

Let's pray. Lord we give thanks. For the gospel of grace. That which. Arose in your own heart.

Indeed it was always there. Your desire. To have a church. For yourself. A people. Who would praise your name. With whom you would have.

[38 : 47] That relationship. And. And. Worship. Receiving worship from them. And blessing them. As undeserving people. May our boast.

Be in the Lord Jesus Christ. Who he is. And what he has done. We ask your blessing over us. As we come to the end. Of yet another service.

And if it be. That we are here tonight. And stubbornly resistant. To the promptings of the Holy Spirit. And refusing to bow the knee.

We pray that you would overcome. By the power of the Spirit. Our resistance. And make us. Willing. That is your work. To make a willing people.

In the day of your power. Bless us one and all. As we go our separate ways. Continue to bless the gospel here. Remember your servant. Anoint him with the Spirit.

[39 : 41] Constantly. Help us to bear. Your servants daily. To a throne of grace. Because. They are the. Objects. Of satanic attack.

Enable us to bear their burdens. As far as that is possible. Accept your thanks. And go with us now. To pardon our sin. For Jesus sake. Amen.