

Guest Preacher - Mr Joe Macphee

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[0 : 00] Seeking the Lord's blessing then, let's turn again to the portion of Scripture that we read. Paul's letter to the Galatians, chapter 2, and reading again at verse 19.

For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

And we'll look, as the Lord enables us, at these two verses. And in particular, looking at the end of verse 19. So that I might live to God.

The question is presented to us, what is it to live unto God? Well, I suppose the answer to the question is this.

[1 : 15] To live the way that God wants us to live. To live the way that God wants us to live according to the gospel.

According to the true gospel that has been revealed to us. And certainly not the way that these Galatians were now living.

This is a hard-hitting letter to the Galatians. A hard-hitting letter. He says in chapter 1 at verse 6, I marvel that you are turning away so soon from him.

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ. And are turning to a different gospel.

They weren't living according to the true gospel. They were living according to a different gospel. And he goes on to talk about the troublemakers who were, at verse 7 of chapter 1, But there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.

[2 : 35] One of the versions of the Bible talks about not distorting, but perverting. Perverting the gospel. These were troublemakers, perverting the truth of the gospel.

In chapter 2 and at verse 4, there is quite a remarkable statement. Yet because of false brothers. False brothers or false brethren secretly brought in. It's remarkable that the trouble that afflicted them was, in a sense, from within.

People who called themselves brothers. Who, in a sense, were named as Christians, but did not know the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ in their own lives, in their own hearts.

And they were calling them back to the law. To secure favor with God. That to get merit with God.

[3 : 44] That to get effectively to heaven. That they had to do something. They had to do something themselves. They weren't just to believe in the gospel.

They were to try to add to it in some way. To secure favor with God. And Paul sets before them, in no uncertain terms, a defense of the gospel of grace.

And watch how he begins this letter. Chapter 1, verse 1. Paul, an apostle. Not from men, nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead, and all the brothers who are with me.

He sets before them his credentials for preaching the gospel. Those very credentials are this, that he received the gospel from Christ himself.

Not from man or from men, but from Christ. This is the gospel of Jesus Christ, he says.

[4 : 55] He goes on. Grace to you and peace from God, our Father and the Lord, Jesus Christ. And he goes on to say, This is all according to the divine will.

Who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father. My credentials are from Christ, from the triune God, and from the divine will.

And then he launches, in no uncertain terms, as you know, these words which should, in a sense, send a shiver down our spine.

But even if we are an angel from heaven should preach you a gospel, contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone is preaching to you a gospel, contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.

And he goes on, as you know, in the third chapter, in the first verse, O foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you?

[6 : 20] Or as we have it here, yes, who has bewitched you? Having started, did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish, having begun by the Spirit?

Are you now being perfected by the flesh? It's very important for us to understand the Jewish mind, of course, and the centrality of the law of the Torah in Israel's self-consciousness. These were the chosen people of God. And the law was given to them to show them how to live within the covenant.

And there is a sense in which these covenant works and these regulations, which they were born and bred with, prescribed by the law.

And it's almost as if any good Jew would follow them and take them for granted in a sense. But Paul was preaching to them the gospel of Jesus Christ.

[7 : 34] He was preaching to them, as he tells us in chapter 3 and verse 23. Now before faith came, we 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. The law had served its purpose in the outworking of God's plan of salvation.

It was part of it. And it would be very wrong for us to think of law just as law. There was law and grace.

Law and grace. But the law had served its purpose. And that purpose was to lead Israel to Christ from this point forward.

And he goes on in chapter 4. And he says to them in chapter 4 and verses 8 to 9, Formerly, when you did not know God, you were enslaved to those that by nature are not gods.

[8 : 46] 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?

He's saying to them, he's saying to them that to cling to the law and not to the revelation of the gospel and to see why the law was given in the first place is nothing less than idolatry.

Nothing less than idolatry. The question for us, of course, is, of course, how can we live unto God in our day and generation?

And perhaps another question follows this. Are we guilty of trying to add to Christ and to try to have a salvation by works and not by faith?

Are we trying to secure? Are we falling back at times into the practice of thinking and doing in order to gain merit with God?

[10 : 08] I pray not. I pray not. So the question for us then is how can we live unto God? Three things must be true.

There must be death. Secondly, there must be life. And thirdly, there must be living by faith.

So we'll look at those three headings. Death. Death. He uses the images of death and life time and time again in this letter.

There are many similarities between Galatians and Romans, in particular Romans 6 and 7. And you can read these things for yourselves, perhaps later.

And you can see those similarities set out before us. The gospel, of course, is a matter of life and death. And we say that, don't we?

[11 : 13] Well, that thing or that other thing is a matter of life and death. As if to emphasize the importance of the matter. The gospel almost turns that around and says to you, the way to life is through death.

There must be death. And the way to eternal life and to freedom in Christ is through death. And in dealing with the Galatians, we get a window into Paul's own heart.

Into his own heart. Chapter 1 and verse 13, he tells us a little bit about his own testimony. For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it.

And he goes on to tell us what the marks of a true Christian are. He does that, of course, in other places in the Scriptures, particularly in the letter to the Philippians.

He says to the Philippians, according to the law, I was a Pharisee, according to the righteousness that was in the law, blameless.

[12 : 32] But no. But no. And he praises God that there was a but no, that there was in his experience an encounter with Christ on that Damascus road.

There must be a death. And verse 20 gives us a view of that death.

I have been crucified. I have been crucified. This is the foundation of his experience and has to be the foundation of every true Christian.

I have been crucified with Christ. When did this death happen? Well, this death happened over 2,000 years ago on the cross of Calvary when Christ died.

I have been crucified with Christ. What is Paul talking about? He's talking about the outworking of God's plan of salvation.

[13 : 55] He's talking about the outworking of the covenant of grace and union with Christ. And if you're a Christian, you should know something of this union with Christ.

A union which has no beginning. no beginning. It is in God and with God in the councils of eternity. It is according to the divine will. What happened at Calvary? Christ died. Why did he die?

He died because he loved me and he gave himself for me an offering and a sacrifice. An offering and a sacrifice.

chapter 1 verse 4 who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age.

[14 : 58] To deliver us from our sins. He died for our sins in our room and in our place according to the divine will.

Why did he have to die? For that very reason. That he was our substitute and our sin bearer.

That he bore our own sins as Peter says in his own body to the tree. That he who knew no sin was made sin.

He was made sin for you and for me. And because he was made sin the law of God confronted him and said to him you must die.

The soul that sinneth the law said will die. You must die. The divine justice of God demanded it.

[16 : 03] Demanded it. Chapter 3 and verse 13 Christ redeemed us 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. And what is the curse? Well part of it is this at least anyway.

Bondage. Bondage to sin and to Satan. and he became our substitute so that he could absorb into himself the covenant curse incurred by our sins.

The curse incurred by our sins. He bore it fully and holy. The wages of sin is death.

Death. There are these marvelous verses in Paul's letter to the Colossians where he talks specifically about this about the handwriting of ordinances that was against us.

[17 : 23] A record of our debt. A record of our debt. because we are sinners and we sin because we're sinners and we are building up a record of debt to God that God will demand of us on the day of judgment unless our sins have been forgiven in Christ.

And there are these marvelous verses in Colossians 2 and 13 and 14 and you who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh God made alive together with him God made alive together with him with Christ having forgiven us all our trespasses by cancelling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands this he set aside nailing it to the cross he disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame by triumphing over them in him all our guilt all the guilt for all our sins past present and future and that's a marvelous momentous thought if you're a Christian and it should be a marvelous momentous thought if you're not a Christian and need forgiveness and you know that you need something well here is the salvation that is in Christ it's complete and full all your guilt all that record nailed to the cross all the demands of your conscience nailed to the cross when your conscience accuses you nailed to the cross when Satan accuses you nailed to the cross redeemed and of course as you know redemption from something to something from the kingdom of darkness and from the God of this world who held us in bondage redeemed from there to the kingdom of his own dear son to Christ a perfect atonement a full and perfect obedience to the law of God he met all its demands all its demands and in him all its demands of you are met all the laws demands of you are met in Christ who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect there's a remarkable verse in

Isaiah 42 21 the Lord is well pleased for his righteousness sake he will magnify the law and make it honorable what does that text mean well at least it means this the law demanded man's obedience and because man could not give obedience the law condemned man that's you and me and the

whole world the law condemned under it condemned and we are all condemned there's a remarkable verse in John's gospel and in John chapter 3 and we often forget in a sense these verses we can stop at verse 16 of course which you know well but verse 17 for God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world but in order that the world might be saved through him whoever believes in him is not condemned but whoever does not believe is condemned already because he has not believed in the name of the only son of God the law demanded obedience and who could give that obedience well here is a man the God man the God man the law received obedience from the

God man he made the law honorable honorable and that obedience that Christ gave that the God man gave is now imputed to his people so that they no longer have to keep the law for righteousness no rather they love the law because it is the mind and the heart of God it's a revelation of his mind of his heart of his will Romans 10 2 to 4 Christ is the end of the law for righteousness for those that believe the end of the law for righteousness for those that believe there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus there is no separation nothing can separate us from the love of

[23 : 14] Christ these remarkable verses at the end of Romans 8 for I am sure that neither death nor life nor angels nor rulers nor things present nor things to come nor powers nor height nor depth nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord this same Christ that Paul is presenting to the Galatians this is the one who died why did he die because he loved me and nothing can separate me from that love four things were nailed to the cross Christ the accusation that was written above the cross the law you were nailed to it really and truly nailed to the cross the law carrying out its death penalty against us four things

Christ himself the accusation or the superscription our debt to the law and you in Christ so what became of him is true of us we died to the penalty and the demands on the curse of the law through the law in Christ one commentator talks about the law in this way and it's quite a good way of understanding this because sometimes we need to think about these things to fully understand them so it's a conversation between the law of God and the sinner so the law speaks and says man have you obeyed my commands and the sinner says well no I have transgressed them in thought and word and deed and the law says oh well then have you paid the penalty that

I have pronounced upon those who have disobeyed the law have you died in the sense that I have said the soul that sins shall die and the sinner responds and he says yes I have died I died there on the cross outside the walls of Jerusalem for Jesus died there as my representative and substitute I died there as far as the penalty of the law is concerned and the law responds you say Christ is your representative and substitute then I have indeed no further claim or penalty against you the curse which I pronounced against your sin has indeed been fulfilled my threatenings are very great but I have nothing to say against those for whom

Christ died and isn't that a wonder the law has nothing to say to condemn you there's a verse in chapter 4 and verse 4 but when the fullness of time had come God sent forth his son born of woman born under the law to redeem those that were under the law it's a marvelous picture to think of our saviour reaching down reaching down down down into the very depths of our condemnation and our death to take us from there from the prison to set us free it's a marvelous marvelous picture how glad we should be

I have been crucified with Christ who was put to death on Calvary well the old man was put to death Romans 6 6 reminds us of that very fact we know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin who was put to death the unregenerate person dead in trespasses and sin sin and that reality had to become for us part of our experience in time in time it had to be part of your experience as it became part of the apostles experience on the road to

[29 : 42] Damascus when Christ came to him Saul Saul why are you persecuting me who are you Lord I am Jesus I am Jesus this reality is revealed in our subjective experience who met Saul of Tarsus on that road to Damascus the resurrection Lord met him the living Christ the living Christ met him and he goes on as you know in Romans 7 to talk about his experience before and under the law and the gospel and at that moment of our regeneration when

Christ comes into our hearts and we are born again we are united to Christ united to Christ in our subjective experience that union with Christ union with Christ which has no beginning in the covenant of redemption and the covenant of grace comes to be part of our subjective experience

union with Christ the central truth as John Murray the great theologian put it the central truth of the whole doctrine of salvation we are united to a resurrection Lord to a living Lord there must be life and there is life in the second place there must be death there must be life and there is life in union with

Christ and coming to know Christ as our own personal saviour united to a resurrection Lord victorious Lord living and exalted saviour when I was preparing this the words of an old hymn came to me thine be the glory risen conquering son endless is the victory thou or death hast won these are marvellous words remarkable words and Christian brother and sister when Christ saves you and when Christ saved you everything changes everything changes you are a new creation in Christ in chapter 6 and verse 15 he says to them for neither circumcision counts for anything nor uncircumcision but a new creation a new creation and it's not

I who live but Christ who lives in me I have been crucified with Christ it is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me Christ who lives in me Christ in me a permanent indwelling not a visitor but a permanent resident through the Holy Spirit the life giving spirit there's a remarkable text in first Corinthians 6 17 but he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him but he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him union with Christ and all that it means in Christ we get everything he has to offer especially his righteousness imputed to us justification by faith alone and he sets that out for them he sets it out for them chapter 2 and verse 16 knowing this you know this he says to them yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ so we also have believed in Christ Jesus in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law because by works of the law no one will be justified no one will be justified no one will be accepted no one can stand before the bar of God and God's holy law except the one to whom Christ has imputed his righteousness for he who knew no sin was made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in him imputation and counter imputation Romans chapter 7 and verse 4 where Paul is speaking in a sense about his own experience but he's talking about a relationship he says he says in verse 2 for example for a married woman is bound by law to her husband while he lives but if her husband dies she is released from the law of marriage accordingly she will be called an adulteress if she lives with another man while her husband is alive but if her husband dies she is free from that law and if she marries another if she marries another man she is not an adulteress if she marries another and if you are married to another even to [36 : 27] Christ not to Adam not to the bond of the covenant of works with Adam but that bond dissolved and disappears by virtue of the greater union with Christ in the covenant of grace a union with the last Adam this is the true gospel he says to them it's a blood-bought righteousness it's a blood-bought freedom it's a blood-bought forgiveness don't be so foolish Galatians don't be so foolish to go back to the law to the law thirdly there must be living by faith the life and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the son of God who loved me and gave himself for me the life that

I now live in the flesh the life that I now live in this world not the flesh as in sinful flesh but this fallen broken world amongst the shadows amongst the enmity and the great enemy of our souls sin has been dealt with the power of sin has been dealt with the presence of sin remains with us the presence of sin remains in us Paul of course when he speaks of this speaks of oh wretched man that I am how could he say that well he could say it because he knew that the presence of sin resides in him even though it's power and it's condemning power and its bondage is broken broken we are to live that life of faith in this world and we are to live in this world with that great enemy within looking to

Christ living by faith living by faith dying to self living to God living amongst all the afflictions and the tests and the trials all the pandemics and all the epidemics I must live by faith in the son of God who loved me and gave himself for me I must live looking to him looking to that cross and he says in chapter 6 at verse 14 does he not God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of Jesus Christ 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 the world becomes a place and world and world ought to be things that have lost their sense of pleasure and the things that take away our minds and our hearts where this world loses its savour and its pleasure that you once knew but it becomes very sour very sour by which the world has been crucified to me and I to the world and you will find out too that the world doesn't want you either

Christian and they wonder why you're not following them why aren't you following them as you once followed them well because you're following a greater and better saviour saviour of your soul the life

that I now live I live by faith in the son of God who loved me and gave himself for me Gresham Machen who wrote many books and if you managed to get anything by Machen I would highly recommend it but he says this in his book what is faith the Lord Jesus came into this world not primarily to say something not even to be something but to do something to give life through death and resurrection Machen quotes very interestingly a children's hymn and he the verse of the hymn is this oh dearly dearly has he loved and we must love him too and trust in his redeeming blood and try his works to do and Machen makes the point about the order the order and trust in his redeeming blood first and try his works to do that is the order of faith and as Machen said in another place what is faith faith consists not in doing something but receiving something I've often wondered when you read portions of scripture and you read of course that faith hope and love and the greatest of these is love and of course that's true because the Bible says it faith but you see with Bartimaeus and you see that woman who was a woman of repute when Christ saved them he said to them your faith has saved you he doesn't say to them your love has saved you he says to them your faith has saved you and faith of course is the primary grace and why does he say that well for that very reason that faith consists not in doing something but receiving receiving something the life that I now live by faith

[43 : 13] I live by faith in the son of God who loved me and gave himself for me in writing to the Ephesians he says this by grace you are saved through faith and that not of yourselves it is the gift of God not of works lest any man should boast and in this very letter he writes to the Galatians he says to them in the next chapter chapter 3 the just at verse 11 the just shall live by faith now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law for the righteous shall live by faith and the focus of that text is not on the practical day to day living but on life the life that I now live I live by faith in the son of

God who gave himself for me the focus of the text is on life and he goes on in chapter 5 and verse 6 and he says this in this remarkable text for in Christ Jesus neither circumcision or uncircumcision counts for anything but only faith working through love faith working through love the love of Christ the Christ who loved me and gave himself for me that's how I am to live by looking to him that love that will not let me go oh love that will not let me go I rest my weary soul in thee I give thee back the life I owe that in thine ocean depths its flow may richer fuller be and note also this in conclusion and the life I now live in the flesh

I live by faith in the son of God who loved me and gave himself for me it's a personal relationship a personal relationship one commentator asked this question in relation to this particular narrative and it's as if he's asking Paul a question and he says to Paul who is Christ Paul and Paul surely would say this oh well he is the one who loved me and gave himself for me and if another question was to be asked well who are you Paul that Paul would answer in this way well

I am someone who was loved by Christ and for whom he gave himself love now the question of course is to you who are you how would you answer these two questions who is Christ can you say that he is the one who loved me and gave himself for me and if the question was to be asked of you who are you would you say that someone who was loved by Christ and for whom Christ gave himself oh may that love of Christ burn in our hearts and may we go from this place with that assurance of that personal relationship and union that we have with him who loved me and gave himself for me amen and may the

Lord bless that meditation on his word and may all the glory be his let's sing in conclusion then in the last psalm we had psalm 71 from the Scottish Psalter and verse 16 verses 16 to 19 psalm 71 and I will constantly go on in strength of God the Lord and thine own righteousness even thine alone I will record and there you have justification by faith alone again being presented to us by the psalmist for even from my youth O God by thee I have been taught and hitherto I have declared the wonders thou hast wrought and now Lord leave me not when I old and grey headed grow till to this age thy strength and power to all to come

[48 : 37] I show and thy most perfect righteousness O Lord is very high who has so great things done O God who is like unto thee to God's praise and I will constantly go on this strength of God the Lord and thy own righteousness in life alone I will record for even long my youth

O Lord by thee I have been taught and hither too I have declared the wonders of us taught and now Lord leave me not when I hold and behead it grow till to this age thy strength and power do all to come I show and thy most perfect righteousness

O Lord is very high who has so good things done O God who is our blood to thee A word of prayer in conclusion O gracious God part us now with thy blessing on this the Lord's day the day that signifies to us the life that is in Christ Jesus a life through death O and help us as we go on our wilderness journey to die to sin to live to righteousness part us now with thy blessing we pray and go before us each one of us as we begin a new week
O how thankful we are that the week begins with the Lord's day and may every day for us be the Lord's day help us to put the Lord before us first and foremost go before us we pray in everything we do and say and cleanse from sin in Christ's name we ask all these things Amen we come with to please what you thank we