



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Galatians 5:1-12

"Freedom in Christ vs. Falling From Grace"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] We're turning for our Scripture reading to Galatians chapter 5 verse 1 through verse 12. And the apostle is entering, in chapter 5, into the last section of his letter on justification by grace through faith. And here he is going to begin to stress the issues of the life of justification by grace through faith.

In the first verse of the fifth chapter, and I'm going to read this slightly differently from that which is found in the Authorized Version because the text at this point is slightly different from the text that those who translated the Authorized Version used. Probably the apostle wrote these words, the doctrine is essentially the same,

"For freedom Christ has set us free, stand therefore and be not entangled again in a yolk of bondage. Behold I, Paul, say unto you that if you be circumcised Christ shall profit you nothing, for I testify again to every man that is circumcised that he is debtor to do the whole law. Christ has become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law ye are fallen from grace."

Now, just in case I should forget to say something about that clause, "Whosoever of you are justified by the law," that verb in the original text is a present tense. It is a

connotative present. That is it is a present tense which expresses, in the light of the context, an attempt to do something. And as most of the commentators have pointed out, that verse should be rendered this way, "Christ has become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are trying to be justified by the law." Of course, no one can be justified by the law so we should not be confused here and think that the apostle is saying that a person is justified by the law. But many people have tried to be justified by the law and that is what he's speaking about. He says of them,

"Ye are fall from grace, for we through the spirit wait for hope of righteousness by faith. For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but faith the worketh through love. Ye did run well, who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth? This persuasion cometh not of Him that calleth you. A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump."

I have confidence in you through the Lord." That's very interesting because one would certainly think that the apostle was living with and looking at life through rose colored glasses if he should say of the Galatians, "I have confidence in you," because of all of the fickle groups of humanity seen the word of God, the Galatians are probably the most fickle. But notice the prepositional phrase,

"I have confidence in you through the Lord (That's where his confidence really lies) that you will be non otherwise minded for but he that troubleth you shall bear his judgment, whosoever he be. And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution?"

The reason for that is very simply. If a man preaches circumcision he is preaching that we are saved by something that we can do, and the natural man loves to think that he can be saved by something that he does. And so he would not persecute a man who

preaches salvation by works because that pleases the self-righteousness of man's nature. But Paul is being persecuted and therefore it's evident he doesn't preach salvation through what we do, or circumcision. "And I brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? Then is the offense of the cross ceased. I would, they were even cut off who trouble you," a very very strong expression in which the apostle says in effect, it's almost undignified to say what the apostle says. But it is as if he said, the words really mean this, "I would they were even castrated who trouble you." That's the apostle's feeling toward false doctrine. May the Lord bless this reading of his word. Let's bow together in that moment of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we turn with thanksgiving and praise to Thee to render to Thee the worship that is due unto Thy marvelous and wonderful name. We thank Thee and praise Thee for a Father in heaven who has loved us and has given his only begotten son that we might be saved. We are grateful for the plan of redemption, and we thank Thee for the marvelous wisdom and mercy manifested in it. We thank Thee for the marvelous way in which the name of God has been revealed in mercy, in grace, in love, in wisdom, and in judgment. We thank Thee for all of the things that have to do with the nature and attributes of our great God. We desire, Lord to know Thee and to worship Thee as Thou truly art.

We pray that our time together in the ministry of the word, in reflection upon it, in the Sunday school classes the follow, and especially around the Lord's table may be the means of growth and grace for all of us. May at the end of this day we have a deeper and a more personal conception of all that Thou art.

We pray that this week, this first day of the week, may be days in which Thy name is lifted up, and exalted, and glorified in a most practical way and all of the activities of it. We commit the week to Thee. We thank Thee for this, the first day, a lovely day that Thou hast given to us.

And Father, we thank Thee for the privilege of prayer. We thank Thee for the privilege of a part in what Thou are doing. We thank Thee that the predestinating purpose of God includes all of the means whereby those in shall be accomplished, prayer, witnessing, the reading of the Scriptures, the fellowship and counsel, and exhortation, and conviction that comes from our friends. We thank Thee and praise Thee for all that Thou hast revealed in Holy Scripture.

And Father, we pray for the whole Church of Jesus Christ and simply Believers Chapel. We pray that Thy hand may be upon the body which Thou hast brought in to existence for spiritual good. We ask that if it should please Thee through the preaching of the word of God in the meeting of the saints today many may come to know him whom to know is life eternal. And may each of us who are members of the Church of Jesus Christ, through faith given by our God in him, may that church be strengthened and edified. We ask especially for the Chapel, too. For its ministry, its outreach, its elders, and deacons, and members, and friends, and visitors who are here with us today, Lord may there be spiritual blessing experienced by all of us that will not only rejoice us but glorify Thy name.

We pray for our country and for our President. And we especially remember those who are suffering and in difficulty and trials. And some who are bereaving, we pray Lord for all of them and we ask that Thou wilt minister to them in a most marvelous way. Guide and direct our elders and our deacons. And particularly we pray for the elders that Thou wilt give them wisdom, and strength, and council that comes from Thee. May Thy hand, Lord, be upon them for our spiritual good as they exercise oversight over us.

We commit the ministry of the word to Thee and the singing of the hymns of this day to Thee. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

[Message] Our subject for today in the continuation of the exposition of Galatians is, "Freedom in Christ versus Falling from Grace". John Stott in his commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians has said, "Freedom is a word on everybody's lips today." There are many different forms of it and many different people advocating it and canvassing it. There is the African Nationalist who has gained uhuru for his country, freedom from colonial rule. There is the economist who believes in free trade, the lifting of tariffs. There is the capitalist who dislikes central controls because they hinder free enterprise. And the communist who claims to set the proletariat free from capitalist exploitation. There are the famous for freedoms first enunciated by President Roosevelt in 1941 when he spoke of freedom of speech everywhere, freedom of worship everywhere, freedom from want everywhere, and from freedom from fear everywhere.

We, of course, in thinking about the epistle to the Galatians are naturally interested in spiritual freedom or biblical freedom. What is biblical freedom? Well, if we had only the Epistle to the Galatians before us we would probably say that biblical freedom has to do with the freedom that we possess from the Law of Moses. The apostle has been speaking especially of that. That involves a freedom from guilt of sin but primarily he has been saying that through the atoning work of the Lord Jesus Christ we are free from the law.

Now, Paul does not mean that we are free from the law as a means of salvation. In my opinion, I don't think that the apostle ever believed as a Christian that it was possible for anyone to be justified by the law. It was, however, a rule of life for the Israelites. And therefore, since the apostle in the fourth chapter says, "A change has taken place," he must be speaking about the law as a rule of life. Freedom from the law then is freedom from a false understanding of the law as a means of salvation, for many Jews had unfortunately twisted the law and made it a means of salvation.

But it is also freedom from the law as a rule of life under which Israel had lived throughout the Old Testament age. I hasten to say, however, that when the apostle says

that we are not under law as a rule of life he does not mean therefore that we are free to sin. There are some who cannot seem to keep these things separate. They seem to feel that if we are not under the law as a rule of life we are therefore free to sin. "God forbid," the apostle would say to that. The moral law of the Ten Commandments, a part of the Law of Moses, still represents a fundamental revelation of the holiness of the God of the Bible and it remains, therefore, a test of the righteousness which the Christian man should exhibit in his life. Remember the words that the apostle writes in Romans chapter 8. He says,

"What the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit."

In other words the apostle understood, I think, that a Christian man was not under law he was rather under the spirit and his obligation and his privilege was to walk according to the spirit according to his dictates led by the Holy Spirit. But when he walked by the Holy Spirit according to his dictates he saw fulfilled in his life, by the Holy Spirit, the righteousness of the Law of Moses.

Now, it seems to me that is what the apostle teaches throughout his epistles and he teaches that, I believe, in Galatians chapter 5 and chapter 6. Now, this passage is also the one that we have read characterized by the fact that it contains one of the very difficult texts of the New Testament. Now, I don't think this text is really all that difficult but unfortunately it has been made difficult by those who have not sufficiently looked at the context of it. I refer, of course, to the expression, "Ye are fallen from grace." There are large groups of Christians who affirm as one of their fundamental postulates that a person having believed in the Lord Jesus Christ may fall from grace, to

use their expressions. What they mean, however, by that is that a person may fall from salvation. And so they teach that it is possible for a person to enter into Christian life and then lose that Christian life after they have come into the possession of it. They call that falling from grace.

And then there is another large body of Christians who affirm with equal conviction that once a person has entered into the experience of justification through Jesus Christ they cannot fall from grace. And so they affirm, "We cannot fall from grace." They mean by that, they cannot fall from salvation.

Now you know enough, I'm sure, of Believers Chapel to know that it is the conviction of all of us who teach here that when a person has come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and truly possesses eternal life, that he cannot lose that eternal life. Does not our Lord Jesus say in John chapter 10 and verse 28 and 29, "And I give unto them eternal life and they shall never perish." Did you notice the word never? Well, it's not even as strong as the original Greek expression. "They shall by no means ever perish neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father who gave them to me is greater than all and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." So we have affirmed that once we have possessed salvation we cannot lose that salvation. We believe in the perseverance of the saints because of the preserving work of our savior who works in the hearts of those who have believed, and therefore, they persevere in their faith.

But what about this expression, "Ye are fallen from grace"? Well, it's a difficult expression. Methodists, Baptists, Lutherans, and Presbyterians, have debated it for many many generations. In the message the follows I shall seek to explain it so that we can leave with our minds clear about what it means to fall from grace. And I want to say right now that I do believe that a Christian may fall from grace. But notice, the word is grace. A Christian cannot fall from salvation.

Now, let's look at our text. We come to the fifth chapter then to that section of the epistle in which the apostle is exhorting his beloved believers in Asia Minor

to allow the salvation that God has brought to them and wrought in them to issue in the ethical life of righteousness and true holiness. He will introduce them in this section to a new leader who will take the place of the law. For that would be the natural question that someone might have, "Paul, you have told us we are justified by grace through faith, and now you have told us that we are not under law. Under whom then are we? Or under what are we? We surely must have some kind of moral guide." And the apostle answers the question positively by saying, "It's true. We are not under law as a code. We are rather under the author of the law. We are under the Holy Spirit through whom the Law of Moses came to Moses." And I think that if some of the controversies that have arisen had been in the mind of the apostle he would have said, "You must not think because I say that we are not under law that we are therefore under a lower standard. We are actually under a higher standard. There can be no higher standard of life than a standard of life according to the Holy Spirit. He is our guide. And consequently, we are under a higher standard of life when we live according to the Holy Spirit.

Well, he begins by saying,

"For freedom Christ has set us free. He did his work not that we should come under bondage to a Law of Moses and like Peter have the feeling that that which our Fathers were under we cannot bear. But he has for freedom set us free. Be not entangled again, then, the with the yolk of bondage."

The figure of speech that he uses is the figure of an ox that has a yolk and is born down by that heavy yolk. And then when the yolk is taken off the ox is free to stand in the freedom of the lifting of the burden. "And so it is steadfast, therefore, in the liberty that Christ has made us free. Stand up. Be free." That's his exhortation. It reminds us of those words of Peter at the so called Council of Jerusalem where in Acts chapter 15 and verse 1 some Judaisers had come down from Judea and taught the brethren, "Except ye

be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved." And in the solution of the question that arose, Peter in his message in Jerusalem says, "Now, therefore, why put God to test? To put a yolk upon the neck of the disciples which neither our Fathers nor we were able to bear. But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved even as they."

Well, Paul's not through warning the Galatians about the dangers of circumcision. The catastrophic effects of adherence to the doctrine of salvation through circumcision were something that really were a burden upon the apostle's heart. So he, in verse 2 through 4, speaks strongly again against justification by anything other than the saving work of Christ. Listen to his words again, "Behold I, Paul, say unto you that if ye be circumcised Christ shall profit you nothing." That is the first of the serious results of confusing salvation with the right of circumcision. He goes on to say, "For a testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ has become of no effect unto you." That's the second of the results of the confusion of circumcision with salvation by faith. "Whosoever of you are trying to be justified by law, ye have fallen from grace," third of the results.

In other words if a person thinks that we are justified by the grace of God in what Christ did plus some religious activity such as circumcision, baptism, whatever the church ordinance might be or any other type of thing, he has confused grace and law. And this is a very serious matter for the apostle and is so serious that he says, "If it is true that you mingle circumcision or doing something with what Christ has done, Christ becomes of no effect unto you. Furthermore," he says, "Christ shall profit you nothing." And thirdly he says, "If you've made a profession of faith and you are in danger of falling into legalism, you fall from the grace method of salvation." So you can see it's a serious thing. You cannot have it both ways, Mr. Stott has said, "It's impossible to receive Christ thereby acknowledging that you cannot save yourself, that's why you received Christ, and then receive circumcision thereby claiming that you can because when you are circumcised

you're saying, 'This is necessary for salvation and I can do it.' But when you turn to Christ and receive him you're saying, 'I cannot be saved. I need somebody else.'" So by receiving Christ you're confessing your impotence to be saved, but by doing something you're confessing the fact that you have the power to do something. It is confusion. It is contradiction. You cannot have both. You cannot have grace and works as means of salvation. Let me say it plainly. We've said it hundreds of times, "Salvation comes only through that which Jesus Christ has done." That can only be received as a free gift. If we add anything to it, culture, education, good works, the ordinance of the church, any of these things, we confuse grace and law. We are acting contrary to the message of the apostle and he calls down anathema from heaven upon any other Gospel than the Gospel of free grace.

Well then, can we sum it up something like this and say theoretically, there are only three ways to be saved? A person can be saved by God or he can be saved by man, that is by himself, or he can be saved by some combination of God and man. Well now the second method, salvation by man, cannot be true because the Bible says we are sinners and we need salvation ourselves. So if we are sinners we cannot save ourselves. Well, what about some combination of God and man, God doing his part and we doing ours? Well, if that really were true, how much does God do and how much are we to do? You search the Scriptures through from Genesis through Revelation and you do not find any delineation of what we do and what God does toward salvation. We could never have any assurance of salvation.

Suppose we said, "Well, God does about eighty percent and I do about twenty percent." But suppose it happened to be that God did only seventy percent and you were supposed to do thirty percent and you did only twenty. You see, there is no way for you to have any assurance of salvation. Furthermore, the Bible says he will not give his glory to anyone else. But in that case, when we all got to heaven we would say, "We're very grateful to God, he did eighty percent of salvation but the other twenty

percent is my work. And I want you to know I'm very proud of what I've done."

[Laughter] "But there is not going to be any one in heaven who boasts except," the apostle says, "in the Lord."

Now, most of us spend too much time before the tube and so we are exposed to all kinds of advertisements by the media and those who seek to sell us their products. I know for myself, I go into a kind of blue funk [Laughter] when the string of eight commercials begins. And I really could not usually tell you more than one or two of those that have flashed before me because I usually use that time to meditate on something else. But one has come through. It is the message of Geritol. [Laughter] Now, if I have Geritol I'm assured that I will have health and there's nothing greater than health. And furthermore, I'll have a happy wife, [Laughter] a happy husband if the case might be, a happy family, happy children. In fact, everything hinges upon Geritol. [Laughter]

Now, let's suppose for the sake of illustration that I'm just a simple mind, well, we don't have to assume that we can take that by faith. [Laughter] So I'm a simple minded person and I have bought my bottle of Geritol but not having perfect faith in it I have mixed with it a little bit of a concoction that my great grandmother used to use. And it does me some good and I write a letter of testimonial to the Geritol company and I say to them, "I want to give you a testimonial that you might be able to use. I was feeling very bad. I had iron poor blood [Laughter] and I bought a bottle of Geritol, as you have suggested, and mixed with a little something of that which my great grandmother has given us as a home remedy. And I want you to know that I have been tremendously helped by it. And I want you to know also you're free to use my testimonial."

Well of course, the Geritol cannot use a testimonial like that because no one could tell from that what really did me good. Was it Geritol or was it, as is probably more likely, my great grandmother's remedy which had been handed down in my family for generations. You see it's like that in salvation. If salvation is part of God and part of

man, how can we know truly that we are saved? And how can we know how much each is to do? Therefore salvation must be of, by the third method, of God.

People often think of the law as a kind of bundle of separate strands, incidentally. That you can break one little precept of the law but you keep all of the rest, and therefore you are pretty well keeping the law except for that little strand that you have broken. But the apostle will tell us in the third verse that if we seek to be justified by the legal method, we must remember that law is like a pane of glass. If break it anywhere it's broken. It is a unit. So he says and verse 3, "For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is debtor to do the whole law." So once you start out on the legal methods you are bound to do the whole thing.

Now, that is a very important text because it illustrates something that is quite important and it is this, we have no reason and no right to separate the Law of Moses into its component elements. When God gave the Law of Moses to Moses he gave the whole law to Moses and to the children of Israel. Now, of course, when analyzing it we may say that the Law of Moses is composed of the moral law of the Ten Commandments. It is composed is composed of the civil law which regulated the day to day life of the Israelites. And it is also composed of the ceremonial law which was designed to train Israel in the work of Christ who was to come. But Israel was under the whole law. And when a person seeks to gain justification by circumcision, Paul says, which was part of the Mosaic Law, he commits himself theoretically to keeping the whole of the law. He is debtor to do the whole thing.

Now, that means essentially this, if you were to say, "We are under the Ten Commandments as a code just as Israel was, but we are not under the rest." The apostle would rise up and say, "Oh, no. We cannot separate the parts the Law of Moses." "If a man breaks on of the commandments he breaks them all," James said. And here Paul says, "If you are seeking to put yourself under the law regarding circumcision you are debtor to the whole Law of Moses." Do you not see, my legalistic friend, that if you seek

to put yourself under part of the Mosaic Law you commit yourself to the whole of the law? You might not realize that. They did not realize that, but that is what you do for the law cannot be separated in its component parts.

Now he says in the fourth verse, "Christ has become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are trying to be justified by the law ye are fallen from grace." Now, the apostle does not think that the Galatians have fallen yet. In the second verse when he said, "I, Paul, say unto you that if you be circumcised," he uses the present tense and we would render it something like this, "Behold I, Paul, say unto you that if you are in the process of receiving circumcision." Then in the third verse, "I testify again to every man who is receiving circumcision," that is they are in the process of moving from free grace into entanglement with the law. And again in verse 4, "Christ has become of no effect unto you, whosoever you are being justified," or trying to be justified. He sees the Galatians as in process of changing but they have not yet taken the fatal step. That's why he is arguing so strongly here. He does not want them to take that fatal step. But he says, "If you do, you fall from grace."

Well, now let's seek to analyze that clause. "Ye are fallen from grace." I want you to notice that first of all the apostle does not say that they fall from salvation. That is very important. Unfortunately, people have confused the term grace with salvation. And so they've said, "We believe you can fall from grace equals salvation." And they have said, "We are not able to fall from grace equals salvation." But Paul doesn't say that. He says, "If you seek to be justified through law, you have fallen from grace."

Now, what is this grace? Well, turn back to chapter 1 and verse 6 in you New Testaments. The apostle, in the opening of the epistle, tells us, "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from Him that called you into grace of Christ unto another Gospel." Now, you can see from this that the grace of Christ is the sphere in which the Galatians were called. It has to do with the principle of salvation. It is not the same as salvation. It is the principle of salvation. It is a method of salvation.

Turn to chapter 2 verse 21, the apostle says, "I do not make void the grace of God, for if righteousness comes by the law then Christ is dead in vain." Again, the grace of God is the means or instrumentality better principle by which righteousness comes to us. So grace is a term for the principle of salvation, a method of salvation. It is not a reference to moral conduct that the apostle makes here. It is rather a reference to a method of coming to Christ. So he says, "If you're trying to be justified by what you do by the law, you are seeking to come to Christ by a different method. You're seeking to come to Christ on the basis of works." In that case, you fall from grace equal the method of salvation or the grace principle in salvation. He says nothing about falling from salvation. You fall from the grace method of salvation.

Let me bring it down to a simple illustration, which would be perhaps familiar to many of you in the audience. After the message this morning someone came to me with a precise illustration in her own experience at the present time. I've had many. There are people who believe that you are saved through water baptism, but you are not saved though you have believed in Christ, until you are baptized in water, something that you are able to do. Well, let us suppose that in the preaching of the gospel someone in Believers Chapel should come to faith in Christ, and they should go out with the sense of assurance that the Holy Spirit brought that they had the forgiveness of sin, stood justified before God. They began to spread this message among their friends and relatives, but then sooner or later someone came across their path who said, "Wait a minute. Wait a minute," usually a religious person, "you have believed in Christ, that's very good. But you haven't been baptized in water yet have you?" "No, I've gone to one of the altars and it's just we're to be baptized in two weeks from now." "Well then, I'm sorry to tell you but you're not saved yet." "Well, what do you mean?" "Well, does not the Apostle Peter say when he spoke on the Day of Pentecost, "Let each of you repent and be baptized for the remission of sins and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." And the new Christian, not understanding yet the doctrines of the word of God nor even how to read the

Bible too well, begins to have doubts. And, as a result of this, over a period of time he's so confused that the baptism is postponed. And talking with this friend that does not understand the grace of God, this person is soon on the verge of being baptized in order to be saved.

Now, in the apostle's language that person would be in danger of falling from grace. If they were truly saved you cannot fall from salvation, but you can fall from grace, from the grace method of salvation. And he would be very anxious that that person did not enter the waters of baptism with the conviction that by being baptized in water they would be saved through that experience. He would say, if you do that you commit yourself to a legalistic method of salvation and then, to make it very general, you have to live a perfect life in order to be saved, past, present and future. You're a debtor to do all of God's law.

Well, that's a very serious matter. So the apostle here when he was, "If you try to be justified by the law you have fallen from grace." He does mean fallen from salvation. He means fallen from the grace method of salvation. You have fallen into legalism. So how can we fall from grace? Why, my dear Christian friend, we fall from grace when we fall into law. That's the only way in which we can fall from grace, when we fall into law, when we fall into legalism. Well, what happens when a person does sin? Well, do you know that then a person sins he does not fall from grace, he falls into grace. He falls into the grace of a loving God who institutes in his family his system of discipline by which he restores us to fellowship with himself. Let me illustrate that.

There is a beautiful little anecdote in the life of one of Britain's most famous artists which illustrates the point. His name was Sir Edward Barnes Jones. In his later years, when he had grandchildren, he went to see his daughter and they were having tea in their home. His little granddaughter Angela was there, and she was doing a few things that displeased mother. And finally, she did something that caused mother to tell Angela to go stand in the corner and look at the wall. And the doting grandfather was quite

impressed by the quite dignity of the child and her evident sorrow over what she had done. And so after the tea was concluded and he had gone home, he determined to do something. The next morning he arrived at the house with his box of paints of brushes and he went over to the corner, chastisement corner, where the little girl had stood and there he painted a beautiful mural. There was some beautiful birds that were flying and a little kitten was playing with the tail of its mother. And the corner of the house in which the child had stood became the most beautiful place in that room. Every true child of God who has ever fallen into sin understands that there is marvelous grace in the chastisement that the Lord inflicts upon us. When we fall into sin we fall into the grace of a loving Father.

Now, let me illustrate it further. Let's take Moses. Let's speak to him, "Moses, you feel into sin. Didn't you?" "Yes, I did." "Did you fall from grace?" "Oh, no. I didn't fall from grace. I fell into grace. Oh, the grace of God. I played the fool. I grew fat with pride. I unleashed my angry passions and I killed a man, and I got put in a corner and my corner was forty years in the desert, in the wilderness. But God came and painted pictures on my wall. I met him in the desert and on the wall he painted for me the burning bush. I stood by the burning bush and I heard the voice of the God of holiness tell me to pull out my shoes from off my feet. I did and I learned the holiness of the name of Yahweh. I heard him say to me, 'I am who I am.' And then in his wonderful grace, he gave me ultimately in my hands the Ten Commandments of the Law of Moses to give to the children of Israel. My mortal stained hands were the means by which there was conveyed to them the moral law, one of which was, 'Thou shalt not murder.'

And then David, "David, you fell into sin. Did you fall from grace?" "Oh no, I didn't fall from grace. I fell into grace. Oh, the grace of God. I played the fool. I idled at home in the day when kings should go forth to battle. I looked upon a beautiful woman. I lusted after her. I took her to myself. I committed adultery. And on top of that I committed murder in order to try to hide my deed of adultery. I got put in the

corner. And if you read my Psalm 32 you will see how I felt. Oh, the bones of my body were as if they were broken. All of the moisture left my mouth and for a year I was under deep conviction. But finally, there were green pastures, and still water, and a table spread with royal daisies. And God taught me to sing some of the sweetest of my songs. I learned what it means when a man says, 'Blessed are they whose iniquities and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.' Fall from grace? I fell into the grace of a loving God who chastises to bring his children back."

Christians, when they fall into sin, do not fall from salvation of course. They do not even fall from grace in the since of a relationship to a loving Father. They fall into the grace of a loving God who chastises us. Isn't it wonderful to have a Father who chastises? Who cares enough to chastise? We can, however, fall from grace at the intellectual doctrinal since and we do that by falling into law. That's what Paul means. It's very simple.

Isn't it strange that denominations and great groups of people should fight over an expression which doesn't even mean what they have thought it meant. Those who say, "We can fall from grace," means they can fall from salvation. But the text doesn't mean that. Those who say they cannot fall from grace are also inaccurate because one can, although one cannot fall from salvation having believed in Christ.

Well, I'll just refer now briefly to some of the other things the apostle says. Our time is about up and I wanted to convince Mr. Blankly that it is possible for me to finish on time one time at least. [Laughter] "For we feel the spirit wait,' wait you see is a word of faith not work, "We feel the spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith for in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh through love." By the way the faith that justifies is the faith that works. We are justified by a faith that works. But we are justified by faith, not by works. But our faith is a faith that works because the love of God is poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit and we are motivated to please him. "Ye did run well. Who did hinder you that

you should not obey the truth?" Who cut in on you so that you're now going the wrong way? "This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you." I'll say only a word or two about this last statement.

"A little leaven leaveneth the lump." Now the apostle by citing this statement and this is the second time that he does it in his writings, indicates to us just how seriously he feels about a little bit of leaven, a little bit of false doctrine that has to do with the Gospel of Christ. He says, "A little leaven leavens the whole lump." In other words, a little error if it is not stopped by divine discipline through the elders becomes a permeating error that touches the whole of the congregation. He does not, incidentally, say that "A little lump will lump the leaven," for a little bit of good doctrine introduced in the midst of a lot of false doctrine does not transform false doctrine. It always works the other way. And the apostle says, "A little leaven will leaven the lump." He was not a man who was doctrinally indifferent. He thought it was of the greatest importance to have right doctrine. And so finally he concludes, "I would that they were even castrated who trouble you." That's the capstone of the apostle's feeling concerning those who sought to confuse the saints of God with legalism.

Freedom, one of the great words of human life and experience and there is no doubt why it's on everybody's lips to this day. But its greatest usefulness is in expressing the freedom of a Christian man who has believed in the Lord Jesus Christ and delivered by grace from the bondage of legal systems and now rests in the free grace of God unfettered by the Law of Moses, guided and directed by the Holy Spirit in union with Christ living to please him.

If you are here today and you have never believed in Christ we invite you to turn to him who has offered an atoning sacrifice for sinners, and we are all sinners. And if God, by the Holy Spirit, has brought conviction to you we invite you to come to him. Receive as a free gift salvation. You don't work for it. Receive as a free gift and receive a transformed spirit the forgiveness of sins, new life, union with Christ, motivated by love

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for him who gave so much that we might be saved. May God help you to come. Let's stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Father, we are so grateful to Thee for these words that the apostle has given us. Oh God, deliver us from falling from the grace method into legalism. And now may grace, mercy, and peace go with us. For Jesus' sake. Amen.