

Galatians #5 - There's Blessing for YOU!

- All right, if you've got your Bible, go to the book of Galatians, we're in Chapter 3, we're taking 13 sermons to walk through Galatians. We're about at the midway point. And this is one of the most important things that I think you're gonna learn in your entire life. I know that's an overstatement. I didn't say that at the nine, so apparently this sermon is gonna be better than the nine gap. Because here's the deal, here's the deal, your relationship with God, then determines and establishes all of your other relationships. So how you believe God treats you is what you believe the godly way is to treat others. Am I making sense? So if you don't have a proper understanding of your relationship with God, that is also going to infect and affect all of your other relationships, maybe with your spouse, your kids, your family, your friends, your neighbors, your co-workers, it will cause great pain relationally in your life. And so what I wanna do is I wanna establish sort of the heart of the fight in the book of Galatians. And it is between grace-based relationships and works-based relationships. And what I mean is this in a grace-based relationship, all of the love, the mercy, the blessing, the encouragement, the help, is at the starting line. You get all of that before you do anything or take a first step, and then it's there to help you for the whole journey. A works relationship says, if there's any love, if there's any approval, if there's any blessing, if there's any relationship, if there's any burden lifting, it's at the finish line, not the starting line, that you need to work really hard, that you need to do some things, that you need to produce some results, that you need to perform according to certain expectations. And at the end, there will be a judgment and you're not sure exactly what the verdict might be, there might be no blessing for you. Some of you grew up in works-based homes, some of you grew up in performance-oriented, punitive, fear-based, law-based environments. Some of you grew up in those environments, and it was very discouraging for you because it's almost as if, no matter what you do, if you get everything right, and you get one thing wrong, what are we talking about? That thing, that thing. Like, man, there's no encouragement. There's no acknowledgement of progress. It's perfection. And if at any point that I fall short in perfection, there's a performance review, there's punishment, there's consequence, there's judgment. there's criticism, there's fear, there's law, there's demand, there's expectation, it's overwhelming, it's exhausting, it's frustrating. And when we have those relationships, one of two things happens, one, we get very arrogant, "I'm doing better than they are." Lack of compassion and empathy for others. Or, "Forget it, I can't do this anymore. I can't even be in this relationship, it's exhausting, it's frustrating, it's discouraging. And I just can't make you happy, so I'm going to quit. I'm gonna quit trying to even pretend that this is going to work." Grace-based relationship. "You love me?" "Yeah." "What about if I fail?" "I still love you." "You approve of me?" "Yeah." "What if I disappoint you?" "Well, I still approve of you." "We have a relationship?" "Yeah." "What if I mess it up?" "Thankfully, we've got a relationship to fix it." You see the difference. These are the relationships we run to, these are the relationships we run from. These are the relationships that lift our burdens, these are the relationships that give our burdens. These are the relationships that pour life into us, these are the relationships that drain life out of us. Question, what kind of relationship does God want to have with you?

- [Congregant] Grace.

- Grace, not works. Grace, not works. And He wants that to be a healthy, life giving, joy filled, burden lifting, fresh air, clean water, whoa, I can see again. So that then all of your other relationships will be infused with the grace of God to bring that help and that health and that love and that joy into the lives of other people by the grace of God. Why do I tell you all of this? Because this is the heart of the fight in Galatians. And we're not people that are looking for a fight, but I'll tell you what, if you're gonna fight for something, fight for grace, fight for love, fight for relationship. And so what the Apostle Paul does, he pulls into a region called Galatia, and he preaches about Jesus. It's about what Jesus does, not about what you do, it's about His perfection, not your performance, and that you can trust in Jesus, and He will love and save you and bless you and encourage you and start with a relationship that transforms you. And the Church explodes, and it gets planted and things are going great, just like they are here. And then he leaves to go start another church, and then comes in some false teachers. And they say, You know what, we disagree with Paul. We believe that you guys need to have a works base relationship with God. We've actually brought a list of expectations in a manual, in a clipboard, and we have inspectors, and we're going to be judging your life. We want you to start judging each other. And we want you to start scoring yourself. And we want you to start scoring others. And we want you to keep an eye on other people and we're gonna keep an eye on you." And it changed every relationship in the entire Church. It changed every relationship within every family within the Church. And Paul shows up and he has a conflict for grace base relationship with God and others, not works base relationship with God and others. And so what we see is really a fight between, I'll call it a shepherd, some wolves and a sheep. Galatians 3:1 "O foolish, Galatians." This was read in church, by the way. Can you imagine that on Sunday? "Oh, we got a letter from Paul, Hey idiot." Huh? That's how JB Phillips, he actually was an old Bible translator. He translates it, "Oh, you dear idiots of Galatia, surely you can't be so idiotic." I wasn't so dumb, I'd be offended. I'm not sure what that big word means though. He's trying to get their attention. He's not just picking on them or name calling them, but he's like, "Hey, this is crazy. You're not making any sense. You need to wake up." "You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Christ Jesus was publicly portrayed as crucified." So Paul's the shepherd, and he shows up and he preaches the grace of God. He says, "I told you all about Jesus. Jesus lived a perfect life. Jesus paid the ultimate price. Jesus gives the eternal gift. The relationship with God is grace-based. I told you all about Jesus. You were all looking to Jesus, excited about Jesus, growing to be like Jesus. And then I leave and these wolves show up, and they're all about works and performance and duty and judgment. And now you guys, aren't looking at Jesus anymore, you're looking at yourself. And you're no longer excited about what He's done, you're disappointed by what you've not done." And what he's saying is, that ultimately the reason that this is so powerful is because it is demonic, that word for bewitched, it literally means a witch or a practitioner of the occult. or the dark magic arts casting a spell. Some of the Bible commentators I read. Well, Paul's probably not refer.... Yes, he is. Just as the Holy spirit is at work, so unholy spirits are at work. God creates Satan counterfeits. So God sends the Holy Spirit to the Church, and then Satan sends another spirit to the Church. A spirit of bondage, not freedom, a spirit of lies, not truth, a spirit of works and not

grace. You know that the spirit is demonic when it doesn't bring grace. And this spirit has come over the Church. And it says, if the people are in a bit of a phase state, their days, they're confused, it's almost like somebody is not themselves. Have you ever met somebody like that, you're like, "It's like you're in a coma. Like you're not thinking, acting right. There's something wrong with you. You're confused." It's a spirit of confusion. So there is the shepherd, there are the wolves, and he is appealing to the sheep, because the sheep are either going to follow the wolves or they're going to follow the shepherd. They're either going to follow a false spirit or they're gonna follow the Holy Spirit. They're either gonna walk in work. So they're gonna walk in grace, and this is gonna affect all of their relationships. There's so much that's at stake here. And so what happens is, when you're dealing with, I'll call them, works-based, religious people, judgmental people. When you're with those people, it feels like court is in session. And who's the judge? They're always the judge. And you're always on trial. You know that you're in a works-based, law-based relationship, when being in that person's presence makes you feel like a criminal before a judge. "Oh gosh, they're gonna ask questions, interrogate me. They're gonna find something off. And then they're going to hammer the gavel. And then they're going to hammer me." Some of you have those kinds of marriages, those are demonic. Some of you have those kinds of families, they're demonic. These people are Christian, but they've invited things in that are demonic. Now, let me say this, I am telling you this because I am guilty of this. When my wife, Grace and I were first married, we were happy, we were joyful, we were hanging out, we were college flat broke, we didn't have a lot of responsibilities. And then we graduated and then we started a ministry, and then I planted a church, and then she got pregnant, which was awesome. But at 26, as a brand new Christian, I am feeling overwhelmed with my responsibilities. I'm a senior pastor of a baby church, not getting an income, my wife just gave birth to our first child, and I don't know what I'm doing. I started feeling the burden for two reasons, number one, I took upon myself burdens that God didn't give me. There were things that I was doing for God that God didn't want me to be doing. So overwork, overextend, "I'm doing this for the Lord." And the Lord is... I don't know if you read the book, said, "It is finished. You should go take a nap and be like Jesus. Jesus took a nappy, be like Jesus, take a nap." And some of it as well was the things that God did give me to do, I wasn't doing them in the grace of God, I wasn't doing them in the power of the Holy Spirit. And so what I started to do, because I brought myself under a works relationship with God, God never had a works relationship with me. God always had a grace relationship with me, but I had a works relationship with Him, 'cause I can work. And then I turned around. And what do you think I did to my wife, Grace? I forced a works-based relationship on her. And then we had kids. So let me ask you this question. When my kids come along, do you think they get a grace-based or a works-based relationship with me? Grace. I'm all grace with the kids. Hey, fun, memories, ice cream, step all night, drink Mountain Dew at 3:00 a.m., jump on the bed. I love you, hey, we're all going to heaven. I'm grace-based with the kids. Somebody like, "What if your kids... My kids love the Lord and they're not rebellious, because they grew up in the grace of God, I believe by the power of the Holy Spirit. But my wife would look at my behavior with the kids and she'd be like, "You start by forgiving them. You start by loving them. You start by encouraging them. You start by blessing them." She said, "You don't treat me like that." Because I had a works-based relationship with her and a grace-based relation with them. And her observing this, she realized,

"He's capable of a grace-based relationship. I would like to get a lifetime supply of that." Now you would think that my wife would get a grace based relationship, because what's her name? Grace. So I'm giving works to Grace, that's what I'm doing. So if you're here and you're like, "I messed up." Well, you get to be in second place. I still get the grand prize. And what is happening here is, he wants the people to understand that God does not have any such thing as a works-based relationship with His people, it's all grace-based. And as you have a grace-based relationship with God, guess what kind of relationships you have with other people, grace-based. Well, I forgive you. Why? He forgave me? I love you. Why. He loves me. I'll just eat that financial loss. Why? Well, He's paid my debt. It's at the starting line, not the finish line. So what Paul does then, when you're dealing with religious people, it always feels like court is in session, and they are interrogating you. Paul reverses course, and then he starts a succession of questions, and he does not allow the gospel to be on trial. He allows the gospel to put these false teachers on trial. And he starts with God's presence. Galatians 3:2-3, "Let me ask you this, ask you only this. Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?" And what he does here is what a good marriage counselor will do. How many of you are married? Now I know you're all happy. But let's just think of maybe some people you know, that are struggling in their relationship. And this would be great advice to share with them. So when you get together with a couple that is struggling, all they wanna talk about is what they're frustrated with right now. And a good counselor will say, "Well, let's go back to the beginning of the relationship. What did you guys do early on?" "Oh, we prayed, we ate ice cream, we went for walks, we held hands." "What do you do now?" "We hot pockets and argue over Fox News. Maybe we go back to ice cream and prayer walks. Maybe we go back to that," 'cause that seemed to be a good start, but you've gotten off course. And what he does, he goes back, he's like, "All right, let's think about when you became a Christian." So let's all do this. If you're not a Christian, we want you to become a Christian today. If you are a Christian, the question is, what was it like when you first had that relationship with Jesus? You received the Holy Spirit, because the Holy Spirit, He is the mark of the true believer. And this is the big debate. How do we know who the real Christians are? Some people will say circumcision. That's their debate. In our day, people, "Baptism, you're not saved till you... The real Christians are the wet ones, Those are the real Christians." "No, no, no. The real Christians are those that speak in tongues." "No, no. The real Christians are those that are free in Christ to drink alcohol." "No, no, no. The real Christians don't drink alcohol. That was grape juice, you misread the Greek text." We just argue over all of this silliness, because what we're looking for is an external indication of salvation. And there is no external, there's only internal. 'Cause man looks at the out, God sees the heart. If you have the Holy Spirit, that is the mark of a true Christian. Now, the only way you can know if somebody has the Holy Spirit, you need to get to know them. It's relational. If it's just baptism or circumcision or speaking in tongues or joining the right church or having the right Bible translation or educating your kids in the right way or whatever your thing is, then we can know who the real Christians are. But the truth is, that's not how it works, because there are people that are of all different cultural choices that still have faith in Christ. So let me say this, you know that somebody has the Holy Spirit if you talk to them and you ask, "Okay, tell me about who Jesus." They're like, "I believe in the big man upstairs." "Okay, I'm a little worried now. "He has a

name?" "I'm not sure how big he is, but yeah." Oh Jesus, I love Him, Man, He changed my life." "Oh, okay, wow. That sounds like the Holy Spirit's involved there." "What has changed in your life since you met Jesus?" "Oh gosh, He's really working on me." "What do you think about the Bible?" "Man, I'm learning it. I'm trying to try to understand it. I find it fascinating." "What about prayer?" "Well, I started talking to God, and I'm trying to work on that." You know what those are, indications of, not works, but the Spirit's work. Because grace is what God does for you. It's what He does in you, it's what He does through you. That's grace. The Holy Spirit. What he says is, how did you get the Spirit? Did you do a bunch of things? And then God is like, "I didn't want to come down and be with those people, but they did all those things. Rock, paper, scissors, blessing, I got to come down." Is that how it works? How many of you God has blessed you and you didn't deserve it? That's how it works. And what He says is, you started with the Spirit. Are you gonna now say, "God, hey, thanks for getting me started, I got this now. Hey, God, you know what, I've studied my systematic theology, I don't need to pray anymore because now my theology answers all my questions. I don't need a relationship. God, I've got this all figured out. I've got my routine, I got my tradition, I got my regulation, I got my way of doing things. Thank you for getting me started training wheels off. Now I got this." That's not how this works. He says, you started in the Spirit, you'll be sustained by the Spirit, and you finish in the Spirit. It's by the power of God. It's by the power of God. I'll give you an analogy. There was a commentator that used this, and I think it's insightful. I'll extrapolate on it a little bit. Imagine you're on a plane, and you little anxiety before takeoff. But the plane gets up, you're back in your seat, everything's fine. No turbulence, captain comes on, we're not cruising altitude. Seatbelt signs are off, everything's okay. "Oh good, I'm gonna take a nap." You fall asleep for a while. You wake up, refreshed, everything's fine. You look over, on the other side of the row, there's let's say three seats, and there's just one guy in the middle seat, nobody in the side seats, and this guy is sweating. You see him, he's sweating profusely. And he's just exhausted, he's panting very hard, and he's doing this, he's doing this, he's doing this, he's doing this. And you look at him and he asks, "What are you doing?" "I'm helping." Number one, you're not helping. "Yes, I am. That's why we're in the air. Everybody help, everybody help, everybody help." No, number one, you're not helping. Number two, you got everybody else now really nervous and uncomfortable. And thirdly, you're killing yourself for no reason. When God saves you by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, He's got you. You know what, enjoy the flight. It's not the other passengers. Take a nap. Welcome to grace. He continues. He asks about God's purpose. Galatians 3:4, he asks about God's presence, purpose, power, and people. "Did you suffer so many things in vain, if indeed it was in vain?" What he says is this, there's two teams, grace and works. And grace and works are antithetical. You lived in a world of works, performance, do your best, do your duty, God likes good people. Be a good person. Then you met Jesus, you got saved by grace. "Oh, it's not what I do, It's what Jesus did. I just trust Him. And He does all the work, and I get all the benefits." He said, "And then what happened was, once you receive the grace of God, you got some conflict and some criticism from these works-based people. How many of you, when you became a Christian, there was immediately some opposition? You're like, "Oh, there's a headwind there." Your parents are like, "You've lost your mind. You're one of those born againers. Please tell me you're not one of those Jesus freaks." You get the resistance. But the grace of God sustains you. The grace of God sustains you. And the reason that it sustains you

so that you could remain in the grace of God and be a demonstration of the grace of God in the face of those who are not giving any grace. What Paul says is, "You love Jesus, other people didn't love Jesus when they didn't love you because you love Jesus, you still love Jesus. And now you're not so excited about loving Jesus. You've caved into the pressure." Let me tell you this, in your life, there's going to be somebody who leans on you. In your life, there's gonna be some issue that presses in on you. It can be a political issue, social issue, moral issue, gender issues, sexuality issue. There are these issues that roll along, and it's almost like we're standing on the beach and in comes this huge tsunami. You're like, "Man, everything's going out. Am I going to get taken out with the tide?" No, by the grace of God, through the power of the Holy Spirit, you can remain in that grace-based relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. Even if circumstances, culture, politics, family, and friends are trying to drag you out at sea, the grace of God can keep you on the beach. And what he's saying is, you started there and now you've changed teams. This is the same thing that Satan did in heaven. He was supposed to be on God's team and he made another team. This is the same thing that Judas Iscariot did with the disciples. He was supposed to be with Jesus, and then he opposed Jesus. You need to know when you cave into cultural pressure, when you worry too much about your reputation, when you live out of fear of man, rather than love of God, you can end up betraying the one who loves you the most. Now here's the good news, He'll forgive you and take you back. But that does cause some pain to the relationship in the meantime. Let me just say this way, you can have comfort or Christ, but sometimes you can't have both. And my encouragement would be pick Christ. And if He wants to bring comfort, I'll take it. But I will take Christ with or without comfort. And there's always a point in our life where we are tempted to choose comfort. And he saying, choose Christ. He continues talking about God's presence, purpose, power. Galatians 3:5, "Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law or hearing by faith?" What he says is this, that God shows up and does extraordinary things. How many of you have seen God do some great stuff? You've seen it, your life or the life of others. I sometimes meet Christians and they're like, "I've never seen God do a miracle." You're a Christian, that's a miracle. That's one. That's a miracle. Because the only way you become a Christian is by God doing something supernatural, unexplainable, miraculous, and by his power. I'll just tell you this, I've seen people healed, I've seen marriages restored, I have seen diseases lifted, I've seen God show up, show up. And it was never because we made Him. The difference between paganism and Christianity is, paganism doesn't think that God is good. So you need to do something, some sort of work, some sort of performance, something needs to be done to make God show up and bless you. Christianity says, you know what, that's just how God is. That's what God does. God just shows up, and He does awesome things. Not because they're awesome people, but because He's an awesome God. Amen. And he's saying, so God did all, He planted a church. You guys got saved, some of you got healed. Some of your relationships and marriages got reconciled. He's like, "None of that was by works, It was all by grace." It's all by grace. Some of you want God to do something, and you're trying to figure out how to make Him do it. If you can make Him do it, He's not God, you are. God is free. We can make requests of God, but we can't control God. And that's what religious works tries to do. It's people who are trying to control God and get Him to do what want Him to do. And God's like, "That's not how I work. I show up and I give grace to make you like my son. And I will give you what you need,

but I may not give you what you want." So then he continues, and it all culminates God's people. So God's presence, God's purpose, God's power, God's people. I'm gonna unpack this. This is really, really, really thick. And let me just start by trying to simplify it. He's gonna talk a lot about a guy named Abraham. How many of you have heard of Abraham? Abraham is a big deal. Muslims, Jews, Christians, lots of other people, religions, Abraham, one of the biggest towering figures in all of world history, big deal. And the Jewish people felt really proud that they were physical descendants of Abraham. How many of you have got somebody in your family that's awesome. he did your ancestry.com, he did your genealogy. You're like, "Oh, Abraham Lincoln was my great, great, great, great, great, great grandpa. I did my research. We were pirates. We were pirates. There's not a lot to be like, "Um, yeah, we did it. We stole liquor and rob people and killed them," Some of you, that's your family. But some of you and your family history, that's true story, by the way. The true story is that they had Abraham as their father, physically, biologically genealogically-speaking. And so they felt like we're good. Because God showed up to Abraham and said that God was going to bless him and bless the nations through him. Well, if our family gets the blessing, if our family gets the inheritance, we're set. How many of you have got a rich relative? So Abraham is gonna get God's blessing, and it's gonna also be passed on and passed down to his family. But the question is, who are truly the children of Abraham? Is it his biological or his spiritual children? That's the debate. So he goes, "Just as Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness." Righteousness is declared standing before God. He didn't obtain that through works, he obtained that through grace from God, faith in that God. So God shows up to Abraham and says, "Hi, I'm God, I'd like to change you, and bless you and bless the nations through you and bring Jesus through the nation of Israel that will come from you. And then that will be internal blessings to the nations forever." What did Abraham do? Nothing. He's like, "I trust you." That's fine. "I trust you. I trust you." He believed God. And it was credited to him as righteousness. "Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham." It's not those of works and performance and duty or even genealogy. It is of grace through faith in the son of God, Jesus Christ, the blessing to the nations from the family of Abraham. "And the scripture foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles." That's us, non-Jewish, folk. That's us. "Preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, 'In you shall all the nations be blessed.'" He's quoting Genesis. "So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith." What the false teachers were doing, they were using Abraham. And here's how they would have told the story of Abraham. "Abraham was a Jewish guy, and we know that he loved God, because what did he do to himself and all the males in his household? He circumcised himself and all the males in his household. And this was in accordance with the Mosaic Law. Therefore, if you want to have a relationship with God, you need to follow the precedent and pattern of Abraham. He is 1.0. You need to do something, get baptized, be circumcised in accordance with the law, and then your relationship with God begins." That's what they said. Here's the true story of Abraham, was Abraham, a Jew or Gentile? Gentile. Pagan, lost, crazy, family, Gentile. God revealed Himself to Abraham by grace, Abraham trusted Him by faith. He was circumcised as was his household. You probably don't know this, but it wasn't for a long time. It was 13 or 14 years later. How many of you became a Christian and got baptized 13 or 14 years later? This is like, he met God, and then he got circumcised 13 or 14 years later. Question, when did Abraham become one who was counted

righteous and accepted by God? When he had faith or when he had a human work of circumcision? Answer, faith. It wasn't that Abraham was a guy who was unbeliever, unsaved for 13, 14 years, and then there's something that he did to close the deal. God did it at the beginning by grace through faith. Now, this was in accordance with the Mosaic Law, first five books of the Old Testament. But the law of Moses was given four to 500 years after Abraham. Here's what I'm saying, some of you met Jesus and you didn't do anything, and you didn't even know the Bible. And it wasn't by your knowledge or your performance that you had a relationship with God, it was by the grace of God. I talked to somebody recently, they're new believer. I said, "What's happened?" They're like, "I don't know. "It's weird, man." I'm like, "I dunno." "I like Jesus a lot. And I'm thinking about Him and I'm talking to Him, and I bought a Bible and I'm reading it, I'm enjoying it." They're like, "I don't know what happened." I said, "You got saved and now you're discovering it. This is something God did in you and now you're experiencing it. There's new life in you. There's the Holy Spirit in you. There's a love for it. You're like, this is crazy. I didn't do anything. I didn't even know what the Bible said, I dunno. I met God and now I want to be like Jesus," that's our story, right? That's our story. And that's what he's saying, he says, "Don't look at Abraham as a guy who did the right things. Look at Abraham as a guy who received the grace of God." And that's the precedent in pattern for true salvation. And so here's a little chart, because I like to boil things down. There's a debate of, who are the children of Abraham? There's still a debate today. The Muslims and Arabs say that they're the children of Abraham. The Jewish people say that they're the children of Abraham, the Christian say that we're the children of Abraham, this is a big debate. And there was a debate in their day. There were three kinds of people there, culturally Jewish people that had faith in Jesus Christ. Those are the Christians. One of the examples is the author of Galatians, Paul, he's Jewish by culture with faith in Christ. There are culturally Jewish people without faith in Christ, those are non-Christians. These would be people who would say, "Well, I was born in a Christian family, I grew up in a Christian family, I was baptized as a baby." Great, but God has no grandkids, He only has kids. So you can't borrow your parents' faith or your grandparent's faith, you need to have your own. And these people, maybe some of them had believing parents and grandparents, but they were unbelieving, so they're non-Christians. And then there's people that are culturally Gentile with faith in Christ, and they're Christians. That's most of us. Amen. And so their point was, "Well, are you Jewish or not?" Today we would say, "Are you Republican or Democrat? Are you black or white? Are you rich or poor? Are you urban or rural? Are you really smart or pretty simple?" All of these divisions, all of these works-based, we're better than they are. We're better than they are. No, no, no. All of that goes away once you meet Jesus, and you look at all of humanity in two categories, they're with Jesus, they're not, that's it. Amen. And so if we're all with Jesus, we're all in the same family. Even if we don't have the same culture, even if we don't agree on all the secondary issues, we're the children of God, that's what he's saying. And then he gets deep in Old Testament theology. And what he's trying to do is say, the whole Bible, from beginning to end is about Jesus, not works, grace, not about what you do, what Jesus does, not about how awesome you are, how awesome He is. And he says, this message is not changed. It's grace and it's Jesus from beginning to end. So he's gonna quote some Old Testament verses, "For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse. For it is written, 'Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the books of the law

and do them." So first five books of the Old Testament, books of the law mentioned here, 613 commands. How many of you have a job description at work? But it doesn't have 613 sub points, right? How many of you you're like, "That's a lot." And if you don't do them all perfectly, you are cursed. That's the opposite of blessed. Oh my goodness. Here's how I see it, I was thinking about it this week. Sometimes religious works-based people, we compare ourselves to each other and we get a little proud. How many of you have been to the Grand Canyon? What if we all went to the Grand Canyon right now? Let's say this is the precipice of the Grand Canyon, and I said, "All you got to do is jump to the other side." Now some of you would trip and fall and just sort of, over the edge you go. Some of you would get a foot or two. Some of you are very athletic, you would go a long distance, but not far enough. And some of you that went further than others might be a little religious and be on your way down. "I went seven feet more than you, way better" Doesn't really matter, it ends poorly for all. Perfection, perfection. God is a perfect person, heaven is a perfect place. To get there, the entrance requirement is righteousness, which is either your perfection or trusting in Jesus perfection in your place. Let me say this, some of you have cursed relationships, because they're law-based, works-based. We tend to be, "I wanna love you. I want to help you." We tend to be way more aware of people who have law-based, works-based, cursed relationships with us, than we tend to be aware of how we do that to others. Here's what a cursed law-based, works-based relationship looks like. All I need is you to be perfect. Now, you can do 99 things right, but if you do one thing wrong, what are we talking about? We're talking about that. And unless you get it all right, then I can't approve of you, I can't accept you. I can't encourage you, I can't bless you, because you've not earned it. Some of you grew up in these homes. Like I got straight As and one A minus. And that's all we talked about at dinner. Some of you are like, "As, that would have been amazing." But how many of you... I know one kid, they brought their report card home to a law-based parent, 4.0, straight As. The parents said, "I'm sure it won't happen next semester. Even if you get it right, I'm sure you're gonna get it wrong." You know what that is, that's cursed, that's death. Law-based, works-based relationships are cursed, because God doesn't bless things that are contrary to Him. God doesn't bless relationships that are antithetical to His relationships. You're cursed. Some of you you're like, "I don't know why we're struggling so much in our marriage, maybe it's cursed. I don't know why we're struggling so much in our relationships, maybe it's cursed. Why does God hate me?" No, no, no, He loves you very much. He wants to have a grace-based relationship with you. And then He wants you to give grace to each other. But He can't pour out His blessing on something that is antithetical to His character. So God isn't cursing you, but you've put yourself in a cursed system, and God wants you to come into a grace-based relationship where there is blessing for you and blessing for others through you. Some of you, you're now thinking about your parenting, some of you, when your kids were growing up, you're like, I was so rule-based, so legalistic, I read those books about, how to do it God's way, and I did it just like that. Now my kids don't like me, and they don't like God." It's because you put them in a cursed household, in a cursed environment, not a grace-based, loving, healthy, life giving environment. See, as I'm teaching this series, I'm getting some painful feedback from our older saints. You know what you do, go to your kids and just apologize. Say, "Man, I was rule-based, not relationship-based, I was discouraging, not encouraging. I beat you down, I didn't build you up. I'm sorry, please forgive me. What I did is so bad, God had to die for

it. And I'm hoping that because God died for it, maybe we don't have to kill each other, and maybe we can all live in the grace of God and have a relationship." Does that make sense? This is deeply theological, but it's profoundly practical, because it's always relational. He goes on, "Now it is evident that who is justified before God by law. No one. Again, I'm better than they are. Don't compare yourself to them, compare yourself to Him. You're like, "Oh, okay. Well, yeah, I see some things." "For the righteous shall live by faith." He quotes Habakkuk Chapter 2:4. See, they're thinking that the Old Testament is about a relationship with God through law. And Paul is saying, "No, no, no, no. The Old Testament has always been about relationship with God through grace by faith." God didn't change His mind, and God doesn't do relationships differently, it's always been the same. So thousands of years, hundreds of years, rather before Jesus walks here, a guy named Habakkuk, Habakkuk 2:4, Paul quotes it here in a few times in Romans, "The righteous shall live by faith." Faith in who? The coming of Jesus. They were waiting for Jesus to come. We're waiting for Jesus to come again. They trusted that He was coming to die and rise for sin. And we trust that He's coming again to judge the living and the dead. We all live by faith. We all live by faith. Let me tell you this, you can trust Jesus. Your faith is only beneficial if the object of your faith is faithful. Here's what I can tell you, Jesus is faithful. Everyone who's ever been made righteous, justified in the sight of God, anyone who's had a relationship with God, it's always been because God is faithful, and their faith is in the God who is faithful. Now, I don't know about you. The longer I live with myself, I find that I'm not always faithful, that I have been flawed a bit. God, faithful. I can trust Jesus more than I can trust me. I'll tell you what, I get up every morning, I look in the mirror, and I have a meeting with the person who is my biggest problem for the day set before me. That guy right there, He is a situation. And what works is, works is trusting me to be faithful, grace is trusting Jesus to be faithful. You gotta trust somebody. Trust Jesus. He goes on, "But the law is not a faith, rather the one who does them shall live by them." What he's saying is, if you wanna try and have a law-based relationship with God, it's all the laws, not just a few of them, because here's the deal, we all like a few. We like a few, but we don't like them all. And what he says is, it's all or nothing. If you're gonna live by the law, just don't pick the things you like, pick all the things that God says are reflections of His holiness and His kingdom character. You say, "Well, I can't live under that." That's right, you can't. Now there's good news though. Here's where it gets into good news, "Christ," ah. Talk about Christ. We've gone from works to grace, grace-based relationship. That doesn't work, Christ. What did He do? He redeemed. You know what that is? That's a rescue. You see a firefighter going into a burning building, you see a soldier going into occupied territory, you see people fleeing a mass shooting and a police officer is running in, that's redeemed. I'm gonna get in harm's way, I'm gonna save lives. I'm gonna fix this mess. I'm gonna take down this problem, that's Jesus. Let me just see this, you need to be redeemed. We need to be redeemed. We need to be forgiven, we need to be adopted. We need to be changed. We need God. The whole world needs God. The world is the problem, not the solution. The world is not going to save anyone. The world isn't going to forgive anyone. The world isn't going to transform anyone. The world needs Jesus, and Christ redeemed us. That's great news. It's already done. It's not like we're biting our nails like, "I hope He wins. I hope He wins, I hope He wins." He already told us, here's how the movie ends. Oh, sleep good. It's going to be good in the end. He redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us. Quotes Deuteronomy 21:23.

"Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree." Where was Jesus Christ hung? A wooden cross. He was hung on a chop down tree. You may not know this, two unbelievable things happened at the cross of Jesus. Number one, Jesus took your place, number two, Jesus put you in His place. That's amazing. So did Jesus live a perfect life? He did. He's the only person who's ever lived a perfect life. Only person who ever will live a perfect life. And what He did, He went to the cross and He took your place to pay your penalty for your sin so that you would be blessed and not cursed forever. That's amazing. That's why they call it good news. Like this is really good news. In a world filled with bad news, I really appreciate goodness. Not only did Jesus take your place on the cross and endure the wrath of God, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Jesus not only took your place, He put you in His place. That's a grace-based relationship. So you know what that means, in Christ, you are righteous, in Christ, you are forgiven, in Christ, you are adopted, in Christ, you are loved, in Christ, you are secured. In the grace-based relationship with God, all the blessing is at the starting line, and it goes all the way through to the finish line. Some of you have tender conscience. Some of you say, "I know I met Jesus, but then I've lived a rebellious life or a foolish life or a prodigal life." Jesus died for all your sin, past, present, future. You and I see things in succession, God sees everything in completion. When Jesus went to the cross, it says in Colossians 2:13-15, that there was a record, a spiritual record of your sin, every sin you've ever committed, the sins you haven't even gotten to yet, the sins you'll commit next year, the failures you'll have, the thoughts you'll think, the words you'll speak, the deeds you'll do, all of that was totaled and tallied up, and it was nailed to the cross of Jesus. And the father looked down at the dying of His son. And in that moment, everything regarding you was paid for in full, and Jesus took your place and He put you in His place. So now you are positionally... Paul's gonna use this word a lot, I'm way off my notes. I think it's 216 times in the New Testament. Paul uses some derivative of this language of in Christ. Let me tell you this, if you're under law, you're cursed, if you're in Christ, you're blessed. You're blessed. You work from the relationship, not for the relationship, you work from the love, not for the love. You work from the approval, not for the approval. You and I, we tend to run to those people that give us grace. And we tend to run from those people who give us love. I want the children in this church to be raised in grace-based environments. I want the marriages in this church to be rooted in grace-based soil. I want our relationships to be grace-based. Because it's the kindness of God, Romans says, that leads us to repentance. If you know that somebody loves you, if you know somebody is committed to you, if you know somebody that will forgive you and is devoted to you and you will help you. When you're in trouble, where do you go? To them. And the grace of God will help you to become more like the son of God. Your relationship with God, it establishes the pattern and precedence for all your relationships. How many of you, don't be thinking about all the people that need to hear this sermon, it's me and you, just us. Just us girls, have a little conversation here. How many of you, you see God more as a law giver than a loving father? You see Him as giving a performance review rather than Jesus being your performance review. You worry if things are going bad, if God is punishing you and He's changed His mind about you, that's demonic. That's a bewitching spirit of confusion. God wants you to take a deep breath of fresh air, the grace of God that makes the soul strong. "So that in Christ." I forgot it was there. I was way off on my rabbit trail, but there it is. Thanks Lord, what a good book, look at that. "So that in Christ Jesus." The question is, are you in Christ Jesus? "The blessing of

Abraham might come the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith." The blessing of Abraham is Jesus. The blessing of Abraham is the forgiveness of sin. The blessing of Abraham is righteousness in the sight of God. The blessing of Abraham is a grace-based relationship with God. The blessing of Abraham is the presence of the Holy Spirit in your life, changing you at the deepest level of your being, making you more like Jesus. Not so the God would love you, but because He loves you. Not the God would accept you, because He has accepted you. Not because you have to, but because you want to, that's the Christian life. The blessing of Abraham. The thing everybody's fighting over belongs to those who trust in Abraham's God, His name is Christ Jesus. And He puts the Spirit in people to change them. So I want you to be filled with the Spirit, I want your eyes on Jesus. I summarize it with a little chart, works versus grace. Works is a ladder you climb to God. God's in heaven, we're on earth. "Oh boy, how do we get up there?" Works always says, there are wrongs that you can climb. This is where we get the higher levels of consciousness and get to the next level, and all of that. Religious people are incarnate, pay God back do whatever. Christian, religious people, speak in tongues tied, suffer, get baptized, whatever. There's a story in the Old Testament, that a ladder goes from heaven to earth, and it's God who comes down, not man who goes up. You know what is, that's a picture of a grace-based relationship. A works-based relationship is, I need to earn it. Grace based is, "I don't know, I was just there, and God came down to hang out with me. I don't know." "What did you do?" "Nothing." "Why did He come down?" "He's awesome." How many of you are shocked that God hangs out with you, 'cause you don't even like to hang out with. You're like, "I don't like hanging out with me. Why would God hang out with me?" That's how good God is. So Jesus is Emmanuel, God with us. He's the God who comes down the ladder to bring the love of God, to bring the presence of God, to bring the Spirit of God, to bring the grace of God. Works, those are demands to obey. Grace is promises to believe. Jesus loves you, Jesus forgives you. Jesus changes you. The Holy Spirit is making you more like Jesus. Those are promises to believe. Works is about what you do. Grace is about what Jesus did. Religious people are like, "We did this and we did that and they did this and they did that, and we're better than them." And Christians are like, "We all suck. Jesus is awesome. Yay Jesus." Some of you are like, "He shouldn't use that word." You're religious. There you go. So works compares the self to others, Grace compares the self to Jesus. You can look at people and be like, "I'm doing better than they are. I'm doing better than they are." And you look up at Jesus, you're like, "I'm not doing so good." So works causes pride or despair. Those curse law-based environments. Pride is, "I'm a good person, I did a good job. I did it. I obeyed the rules and I beat those who didn't." That was Paul before he met Jesus. Ultimately, it can also lead to despair. I tried, I can't do it. I gave it all I got, I don't have it. Some of you have been in cursed works-based relationships and you're just like, "Okay, look, I'm sorry. I can't do this. I just can't do it. I'm sorry, you're disappointed. I'm sorry, I failed you. I'm sorry, I let you down. I'm sorry, I blew it. I'm not perfect. And no matter how hard I try, I'm not going to be. So I'm gonna stop trying." And works is cursed and grace is blessed. I want you to be blessed. Anybody want to be blessed? If we get to pick between cursed and blessed. I know how this boat is gonna go. I think blessed is gonna win. Blessed is just, I can with Jesus. Cursed is not sticking with Jesus, it's really that simple. It's all about the relationship. So I'm gonna invite the band forward this time. We're gonna sing. I want you to enjoy the presence of God. I want this

place to be infused with the grace of God. And I want the people to be filled, you all, dear people, to be filled with the Spirit of God. And is the band is sort of helping to set the tone for responding... As I was praying for you this week, I just had a few different people I wanted to speak to. If this applies to you, receive it for you. Some of you are from Christian families, and that's awesome, but you need to receive Christ. These were Jewish people who were saying, our parents loved and served the Lord, that's awesome. You need to love and serve the Lord. The line into heaven is single file. If your grandma and grandpa or your mom and dad are in line, we you to be in line behind them. But you need to get in line by trusting in Christ. Number two, for you non-Christian religious folks, you're like, "I don't believe in Jesus or Christianity, but I'm a very spiritual person." I tell you that's not the Holy Spirit, that's a demon. "But I'm doing some things for God," that's demonic. That's a works-based relationship, and it always fails. It's a counterfeit that doesn't save anybody. You need Jesus, you need Jesus. Some of you are non-Christians and you're religious, you're like, "Yeah, all these religious people trying to please God, I don't try to please God. I just feel like God is looking for good people, not bad people, and I'm a good person." God isn't looking for good people, He's looking for perfect people, you're not perfect. Some are like, "So what is my hope?" Well, there was one who is perfect. So go with Him, and let Him be your perfection." Some of you are new Christians You're like, "I love Jesus. I'm excited. I'm trying to figure it out." Watch out for the religious people. "Did you do this, did you do that? Do you read this, do you read that?" And all of a sudden, you feel this burden of duty come upon you, where there used to be this blessing of delight. Be filled with the Spirit. Keep your eyes fixed on Jesus, the author and perfecter of your faith. Live by the grace of God. Enjoy the relationship with God. Be a recipient of God's grace. Be a means of God's grace and give some grace to somebody else. That's the Christian life. Some of you are prodigals, you have abused the grace of God, you're like, "God gave me grace, and man, I ran away and I rebelled, and I did horrible things." Can I ask you the question, is there grace for the rebellious prodigal?

- [Congregant] Yes.

- Yes. So good news for you, there's grace for you. And some of you will maybe be like, "I don't deserve it." That's why we call it grace. "It's not fair." Oh, I know, that's why it's awesome, it's better than fair. It's generous, and it's Jesus. Now let me say this as well, for some of you that are Christian folks, but you're religious. In addition to the Bible, you've got a lot of rules that you judge yourself by and you judge other people by. Some of you grew up in traditions that are holiness, and holiness means that somebody made a list. And on that list, there were things that holy people do and unholy people don't do. And the holy people judge the unholy people, which is very unholy. Just so you know, that's pride and that's a problem. And so they fight over what's on the list. "Well, the holy people are free drink." "No, the holy people don't drink." "Well, the holy people speak in tongues." "No, the holy people don't need to speak in tongues." "Well, the holy people get baptized." "The holy people don't get baptized." Let me just tell you this, if you're a religious person that was reared in a religious environment or brought up in a performance-based home and/or some sort of church or Christian tradition that was every day, do your job or suffer the consequences, God wants to free you of that. Because the way you got

into that works performance, religious base disposition, there was something painful, hard, broken, abuse, abandonment, betrayal, something in your life that you didn't welcome in the grace of God to heal you. So that part of you is still broken. And then when you deal with people, you're dealing with people, not from the grace, but from the brokenness. "It was very hard for me, so it needs to be hard for you. My kids need to suffer 'cause I suffered when I was your age." That's not grace. I want you to receive the grace of God. I don't want this grace-based relationship to be for you a new work, I want it to be a grace. I want you to say, "Jesus, there's something that may be broken. There's some suffering that has not healed. There is some abandonment or betrayal that has not been fully surrendered and sanctified. God, I invite the Holy Spirit to bring grace into that place, so that I can be healed and I can be strong, and I can be healthy. And then I can give that grace to other people who are hurting, so that they don't have to be religious, they can be redeemed." And then lastly, for some of you older saints, I love you. We're blessed to have some older people. As we get older, we can let our preferences become our prejudices. I was telling an older same, we were having a little conversation before church. Let's say that you only pick up one legalism a year, what happens after you've been a Christian for 50 years? You're a total legalist. "Well, I just like music this way, I like music this volume. I like church this way, I like the sermon this way. I like this. I like this, I like this. I like this, I like this." When you started, it was, I like Jesus. And then you started adding a whole bunch of things to Jesus. Go back to just liking Jesus. Because what happens, friends, is, this is why generations don't worship together. Older people pick up invisible legalisms, younger people show up and we impose our legalisms on them, we don't give grace to them. And as a result, they don't go to our church. It's why churches are filled with old people and not young people. Because if there's grace, young people show up. If there's law, religious older people show up to judge the younger people who didn't make it. So we need to choose our children and our grandchildren instead of our legalism. So I want you to worship, because God loves you. I want you to worship, because the Holy Spirit empowers you. I want you to worship, because there's grace for you. Lord Jesus, as we come to worship, Holy Spirit, please fill our presence. Please fill these people, bring to them the grace of God. God, the burdens that they have, could they transfer them to you? And would you carry them? For the brokenness that they have, would they bring it to you, and would you heal it? For the disappointment, God, that they are suffering, would they bring it to you and receive hope? Lord, we thank you that there is grace in Christ. So we ask for this grace in the name of Christ. Amen.