

Topical Message
Just As If I'd Never Sinned
Pastor Leitu

KAPONO: Would you bow your heads in a word of prayer? Father, thank You so much, Lord. Thank You that in our time of need that You are right there with us. Would we focus on You, Lord? Would we seek You?

We thank You for this time in Your word, and we thank You for our pastors and leadership here at Calvary Kaneohe. Lord, You have blessed this place, this church, Your church with servants, Lord, who obey, seek You, Your guidance, Lord.

So speak to us in Your word this morning. Would You calm our hearts of anxieties, any stress, anything that is taking our eyes off of You, Lord? And would You pull us and hold us close to You? We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

PASTOR LEITU: Aloha.

[Congregation says, "Aloha."]

PASTOR LEITU: You may be seated. I want to welcome all of you here in the sanctuary and you online. To all of you moms today, Happy Mother's Day. Happy Mother's Day.

[Congregation says, "Happy Mother's Day."]

[Applause]

For you moms, despite the rain, I hope that you have a blessed day today. I also pray that all your prayers for your family are answered. God bless you moms. I want to welcome you to our second Sunday Service.

Pastor JD, as you know, is still on vacation, a well-deserved vacation. Knowing Pastor JD, he's still working. He's doing fine, but the month of May was a good time for him to get away and spend time with his family. Please pray for the Lord's hedge of protection over his family and that the Lord would continue to heal Kellie, his wife.

We have two services on Sundays at 8:30 and 10:45. Our 8:30 service is the Prophecy Update when Pastor JD comes back, and in our 10:45 service, we're going to the New Testament.

Again, when Pastor JD returns, he'll be teaching in the Book of Revelation, an exciting book. We have our midweek study on Thursdays at 7:00 p.m. here at the sanctuary. And on Thursday nights, we're going through the Book of Daniel. Exciting times, exciting teaching: you should come.

We come together for all-church prayer on the first Tuesday of every month here in the sanctuary at 7:00 p.m. Last week we're in the Book of *Galatians, Chapter 2*. We made it all the way to *verse 14*. Today will be in *verse 15* and *16*. And I titled today's message 'Just As If I've Never Sinned.' I want to

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pray for you moms here today and you online. I also want to pray and ask God's blessings on our word.

Father in Heaven, we come before You today. Thank You Lord for the moms that You placed in our lives, Lord. Lord, You knew we were born, we'd be born through them before we were even formed. And You had great plans for us.

We have surrendered our lives to You. We thank You for the obedience of our moms, Lord, that they took good care of us and for our moms who shared the Word. Thank You for them, for what a blessing it has been, Lord.

I also want to pray and ask God's blessings on His word today. Lord, teach us, lead us, and guide us into all Your truth, Lord. I pray, Lord, for Pastor JD and his wife, Kellie, and their family, that You put a hedge of protection over them and watch over them and bless and keep them, Lord. Lord, we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ was preached in the Gentile province of Galatia, and Jews and Gentiles were being saved. They became brothers for the first time in history as they never associated with each other. Jews and Gentiles are converting to Christianity. Age-old enemies are becoming Christians, and they're now brothers and sisters in Christ as God is changing their hearts and He's changing their lives as well.

Paul, the apostle's, conversion came five years after Jesus was crucified. Surely, he heard of Jesus. Maybe even saw him as he was a Pharisee. Paul was part of a leadership in Judaism who wanted to kill Jesus, our Savior.

The Bible tells us in *2 Corinthians 5:17*, **“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.”**

An amazing conversion, and Paul is now a new believer with a new heart. We know God had this plan for him before he was even born. A church in Antioch is growing, and the Apostle Paul is being blessed as he leads this church by the power of the Holy Spirit, not in his own strength, but in the power of God's Holy Spirit.

14 years later, he wrote this letter to the Galatians in Galatia. We're blessed by his writings as we learn crucial Christian doctrine. The Gospel declares that faith in Jesus Christ is sufficient for salvation, for someone to be saved and be able to make it to heaven. Many in Galatia — many in Galatia, Jews and Gentiles, believed, and there was a peace in their hearts because they learned that they would be promised heaven by the Father.

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Satan is unhappy with these blessings in the church. Seemingly religious men, the Judaizers, try to stir up trouble. These men profess faith in Jesus, but their behavior conflicts with the truths of the Gospel message that Jesus taught. These Judaizers opposed the Gospel because of its simplicity. They wanted Christianity to include elements of Judaism.

Two major elements were following the Law of Moses and circumcision. They also despised Paul because in their mind he had abandoned their religion. They're powerful Jewish men who won't let go of Judaism, and who won't let go of legalism.

They arrive with their pomp and their appearance of godliness, but their intentions were malicious. Their presence brings fear among the Christian Church in Antioch. Peter, Barnabas, the Jews in the Antioch Church are intimidated by these men, but Paul stands against them.

Last week we left off in *verse 15* as Paul rebukes Peter for his duplicity. This was a critical event and a crucial time in the course of a young Christian church.

The Gospel message was being maligned. Strong rebuke was needed, and Paul the Apostle stood up. He decided a decisive meeting to settle the Gospel truths was held in Jerusalem, we heard last week, and it was to resolve this disagreement between Paul and the Judaizers. Paul and Barnabas traveled from Antioch to Jerusalem to settle this matter.

We saw it in the *Book of Acts, Chapter 15*. Our map shows the distance between Antioch and Jerusalem, which is about 300 miles. Travel was slow in that time, but the issue needed to be resolved. We also looked at the legalism that the Judaizers brought. The religion of Judaism was inundated with that mindset.

Last week, we defined legalism, that it was a set of laws and rules that man made up that God never intended for man to follow. The problem with legalism is that it's an outward show, an appearance of godliness, but there was no inward change of heart. The Judaizers were fitting examples of legalism.

Paul, the Apostle, stands alone as he confronts this hypocrisy. I can see the pressure that Paul was under as all eyes are on him in this Antioch church, eyes of men who want to destroy the Gospel, eyes of brothers who are cowering in the face of adversity. Even though it was hard, he spoke the truth to Peter and all those in the church were present.

Joshua Chapter 24, verse 15 tells us, **“And if it seems evil to you to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on**

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the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

I could imagine Paul saying, "Listen, choose this day whom you will follow" to this Antioch church. Will you follow these false teachers, these Judaizers, or are you going to follow the Lord?

God has already revealed these truths to you, he would say. You felt the inner change as the Holy Spirit came in. So now choose and decide today whom you will follow and whom you will obey.

As for me and this church, we will serve and follow Jesus. I can speak for Pastor JD as I know he would say, "As for me and this church, we will serve and follow Jesus. Amen.

[Congregation says, "Amen."]

God revealed the truth of the Gospel to Paul. He will not cower because of his love for the Lord. He will never cower because he knows the truth of the Gospel. Knowing these truths that come from God, he will not buckle.

Because of his love and care for people Paul stands and fights. He doesn't want these new believers to be led down the wrong path with false doctrines. He wants men and women to repent and to turn to Jesus and be saved.

2 Peter Chapter 3:9 tells us **"The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but as longsuffering towards us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance."**

The word "repent" is a good word in Scripture. It means to turn and to change direction. For those who are running from God, it means to stop running from Him and to turn and start running toward Him. The result of repentance and turning to God with all your heart is always a blessed life.

In our passages, God's heart is that mankind will repent and not perish, that they would turn from their sin and hatred of others and call out to Jesus. We know there will be never — we know that there will never be world peace until Jesus returns. Because of our relationship with the Lord, we as Christians can have this peace even in our times of turmoil.

Again, last week we ended in *Galatians Chapter 2:14* with Paul, the Apostle, reprimanding Peter. We read in *Galatians Chapter 2:14*, **"I said to Peter in front of all the others, "Since you, a Jew by birth, have discarded the Jewish laws and are living like a Gentile, why are you now trying to make these Gentiles follow the Jewish traditions?"**

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Today, in our study of *Galatians Chapter 2:15-16*, Paul continues with his chastisement of Peter and the Jews concerning their unfaithfulness. He says to Peter in *verse 15*, **“We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles...”**

Paul reveals and describes the mindset of the Jews and Gentiles at that time. Paul said — Paul says the obvious to Peter in that we are all Jews by birth. But then he says, **“...that we are not sinners like the Gentiles...”**

You know, the Jews have always looked down at Gentiles. And we know that Gentiles is anyone else in the world who is not Jewish. That's you and us. Paul is saying that we Jews have always thought that we were better than the Gentiles.

The Gentiles have always done anything they've wanted. They have no law, so they live and sin as they pleased. They eat unclean foods that we Jews never touch. They follow after gods, and they practice idolatry.

But the Bible always teaches us truth. The truth is that Jews were just as bad, just as bad as the Gentiles. Paul, speaking to his Jewish brethren, addressed this in the Book of Romans.

We see it in *Romans Chapter 2:1-5*. **“You may think you can condemn such people, but you are just as bad, and you have no excuse! When you say they are wicked and should be punished, you are condemning yourself, for you who judge others do these very same things. And we know that God, in his justice, will punish anyone who does such things.**

[Verse 3] **Since you judge others for doing these things, why do you think you can avoid God's judgment when you do the same things? Don't you see how wonderfully kind, tolerant, and patient God is with you? Does this mean nothing to you? Can't you see that his kindness is intended to turn you *[Or repent]* from your sin?**

But because you are stubborn and refuse to turn from your sin, you are storing up terrible punishment for yourself. For a day of anger is coming when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.”

You know, as we study the Old Testament on Thursday nights, we see this to be true that Jews were just as bad or even worse in their behavior than the Gentiles.

The prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel, as well as the minor prophets, they all warned Israel. They all warned the Jews. Being stiff necked, stubborn, and disobedient. God led them into captivity because of their sin. Assyrians conquered the northern tribes of Israel, and Babylon conquered Judah.

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Rebellion and sin against God can seem pleasurable for a moment, but in the end, the result is devastating. But obedience can bring a peace and blessing with God that is everlasting.

We see it in a Book of Ephesians as Paul encourages the Gentile believers. *Ephesians Chapter 2:11-18*, **“Don’t forget that you Gentiles used to be outsiders. You were called “uncircumcised heathens” by the Jews, who were proud of their circumcision, even though it affected only their bodies and not their hearts.”**

To the Gentiles, salvation was a monumental blessing. They were ecstatic because they were being saved. They experienced a change in their hearts as the Holy Spirit had come in. Most of us here are Gentiles, and like many of you who are born-again, everything changed for us that moment we said yes to Jesus.

For the Gentiles in Antioch, they had a new attitude, and they were saved. They were always ridiculed by the Jews, but now they're equals. The Gentiles knew of the special relationship that Israel had with God. But they always saw the hypocrisies of the Jews in how they practiced and how they lived their lives. They saw the deceit in their actions and their behavior.

Circumcision was a sign of the covenant that God made with Abram. Even Jewish — every Jewish male child and man in Israel was circumcised. *Genesis Chapter 17:10-11*, tells us, **“This is the covenant that you and your descendants must keep: Each male among you must be circumcised. You must cut off the flesh of your foreskin as the sign of the covenant between Me and you.”**

This is a covenant between God and Abram and his descendants after him. Circumcision was a cutting away of a man's foreskin. It was a covenant that every Jew would perform on the 8th day of his birth. It was done when a baby was strong enough and that when blood clotting was at its best.

This covenant was a sign that Jews were dedicating and committing their lives to the Lord, That they were believing God's promises and following God with all their hearts. Abraham's descendants, the Jews, were to be God's ambassadors to the world. The sign of circumcision was to show a special relationship that God had with His people.

But the Jews behaved just as badly as the Gentiles. They would represent God by the manner of their living, but circumcision did not affect a change in many of the Jews.

With their newfound religion, their newfound faith, the Gentiles did not need to be circumcised. All they needed was to believe in Jesus and the promises He taught. But the Judaizers came in and insisted that the Gentiles become as Jews and be circumcised. That's why Paul was so adamant in his rebuke of Peter.

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As Christians were to be good examples of the Lord Jesus Christ. But as Christians, sadly, we too fall short. Because of mankind's constant failures, God chose one man, one man through his descendants would bring God's word, the Bible, into the world.

You know, I think of the Bible as God's love letter to us. We know it's His instruction book to us. There's an acronym for the word "Bible." And it goes like this: B-I-B-L-E: Basic Instructions Before Leaving Earth.

Through this one man, salvation not only came to himself because of his faith, but through his bloodline, Jesus would be born. The world would have an opportunity to receive salvation. That man was Abram, whose name God would change to Abraham. He would be the father of the Jewish nation, but he also would be the father of all those who are justified by faith.

We're going to study that word "justified" later on today in this study. So keep it in your hip pocket. Justified.

You know, I love the Jewish people and Israel as a nation, but too many Jews, like too many in America, have turned away from God Again, circumcision, for the Jews, was a sign that they had a true love relationship with the Lord. It was a sign of the covenant God made with Abram. What was a covenant that God made with Abram?

The Abrahamic covenant we read in *Genesis Chapter 12:1-4*, **“The Lord had said to Abram, “Leave your native country, your relatives, and your father’s family, and go to the land that I will show you. I will make you into a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and you will be a blessing to others. I will bless those who bless you and curse those who treat you with contempt. All the families on earth will be blessed through you.”**

Abram, in a remarkable, remarkable display of obedience, left the Ur of the Chaldees, which is in present-day Iraq. He embarked on a northwest journey to Haran. He traveled a distance of about 650 miles on the first leg. Taking a step of faith, he leaves his homeland for a place he's never seen, never been to.

I pray that if God calls us to step out in faith that we would obey Him. There's always blessings in a journey of any calling that God has in our lives.

I'm reminded of the mission's trip to Nepal that Wally and Mara headed up here in the church. Those who returned were glowing because they saw God's hand at work. Those returning shared the many miracles that God had revealed to them in Nepal.

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Abraham then left Haran and started heading south to Canaan, present-day Israel. This was the land of promise that God was leading Abraham to. The distance was about 700 miles. He traveled by camel and took with him his family, his livestock, and his belongings. It was a long journey, but God was guiding Abraham's every step.

The covenant continued in *Chapter 15* as God promised to multiply Abraham's descendants. Abram murmured to God; he said, in *Genesis Chapter 15:3-6*, **“You have given me no descendants of my own, so one of my servants will be my heir.”** Then the Lord said to him, **“No, your servant will not be your heir, for you will have a son your own; he will be your heir.”**

Then the Lord took Abram outside and said to him, “Look up into the sky and count the stars if you can. That’s how many descendants you will have!” And Abram believed the Lord, and the Lord counted him as righteous because of his faith.”

Abram, by faith believed God, the Lord counted him righteous. This is a pivotal moment in Abram's life, as he is now justified. It's a turning point, a moment that redefined Abram's relationship with God, With his faith acknowledged, God blessed Abraham. We also read that God not only promised Abraham a son but a large amount of land.

Genesis 15:7-8 tells us, **“Then the Lord told him, “I am the Lord who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land as your possession.”** But Abram replied, **“O Sovereign Lord, how can I be sure that I will actually possess it?”**

In this covenant, God had also promised Abram a large amount of land. Abram then asked how can I know this will happen? And how can I know this will come to pass? God told him to get certain animals to sacrifice so He could confirm and ratify this covenant. The animals were cut in half, and each half was spread apart and laid on the ground.

In the middle of the covenant process, God puts Abram to sleep. *Genesis 15:12* tells us, **“Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell on Abram. And behold, horror and great darkness fell upon him.**

[Skipping to verse 16] **“And it came to pass, when the sun went down and it was dark, that behold, there appeared a smoking oven and a burning torch that passed between those pieces.”**

As Abram is sleeping, he is given a vision of this smoking oven, A burning torch that pass between the animal parts that were laid out on the ground. This is a significant and important passage to understand, a smoking oven and a burning torch.

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In *verse 16* are pictures and types of Jesus Christ. The fire pot or smoking oven is a picture of Jesus as our judge. The torch is a type or picture of Jesus being the light of the world.

Again, the smoking oven and the torch passed between animals laid out on the ground. The animals are burned, and they're barbecued. But the covenant is ratified. Abram's asleep, but he sees this vision. It was God who passed through the animals and the sacrifices.

So what does all this mean? This is crucial for us to understand. This is a one-sided covenant that God made with Abraham, who put him to sleep. God alone and not Abram ratified this covenant. Again, only God passed through the animal sacrifices. Abram's only part was to bring the animals to sacrifice.

It's important and noteworthy to know God alone made the covenant and promised to Abram that would bless him. God loved Abraham and had great plans for his life. Because he was sleeping, Abram did not and could not make a promise. He did not and could not make a covenant with God.

Why would God not involve Abram in this covenant? God knows mankind's sinful heart. He knows our sinful nature. He knows of our inability to keep one promise. We can't even keep ten commandments. God would never have a man make a covenant or a promise to Himself. God knows that man won't be able to keep such a promise, nor will he want to.

Like all of us, Abram could never keep a promise to God. So God purposely put him to sleep. Only God made the promise that day. We as Christians know that God never breaks His promises to us. He might delay sometimes, but He never breaks His promises to us.

By putting Abraham into a deep sleep, God's message to mankind was that salvation for man will be done His way. Salvation would be by His grace and by His grace alone, apart from works. Mankind shall have no part in salvation. Man cannot save himself.

Again, mankind can only be saved God's way through His grace and grace alone. You can't earn your salvation. It's a gift from God. The gift He offers came at a great cost to Himself, the life of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Ephesians Chapter 2:8-9, we all know this verse. **“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.”**

So we continue now in *verse 16* of our study in Galatians. We'll also read *verse 15* again just for context. **“We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus,**

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that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law [No man] no flesh shall be justified."

The NIV version translates to this way. **"We who are Jews by birth and not sinful Gentiles know that a person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law because by the works of the law no one will be justified."**

Paul now beautifully connects these two verses in *Chapter 15 and 16*. I could see Paul boldly speaking God's truth to this church. Yes, as Jews we know the true and living God. Yes, we have the law that none of us ever keep. Yes, we Jews have been circumcised. And yes, you Gentiles are sinners, and you live as you please. Yes, you Gentiles, you follow after false gods.

Then I could imagine Paul looking at Peter and all who were in this church saying but Peter, all you Jews and Gentiles, listening carefully. I want you Gentiles who belong to this church, if you hear me, to listen carefully.

Yes, we all have set prejudices and beliefs about each other. We Jews think we're better than the Gentiles. You Gentiles look at Jews as hypocrites because you know the true and living God. We Jews are supposed to be good examples and God's representatives, but our sin is just as bad as yours.

And Paul will make a crucial and critical statement to both groups. He's also speaking to the church. He's also speaking to us today. Paul, the Apostle says it doesn't matter if you're a Jew or a Gentile. We all get saved the same way. We all get saved the same way. There's only one way: Through faith in Jesus only.

So you Jews shouldn't look down and judge your Gentile brothers who have accepted Jesus. And you Gentiles can rest because God always had you on His heart because He loves you too. The Judaizers are present, and they're not happy.

Paul, by the Holy Spirit is bold, and he proclaims the truth. In *verse 16*, we see the word **"justified."** Many read over this word but don't understand what it means. It's an important word, and we should understand it. It looks like a big word, but its definition is very simple. Most define it as being declared righteous.

In simple terms, it means it's "just as if I'd never sinned." It's just as if I'd never sinned. It also could be praised, as the New Living Translation says, a person is made right with God.

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And we know the answer is faith. Christians all have heard the phrase "justification by faith." Rephrasing justification by faith, can read like this: By faith in Jesus Christ, my sins are forgiven, forgiven to the degree that it is just as I have never before sinned.

Prior to putting our faith in Jesus, we're weighed down by our sin and our shame. Some of us are beaten down because of our wayward lifestyles. Sadly, too many remain in that condition.

Gladly, there are those who decide that they want a change in their life. Someone comes along and shares the Gospel. Or maybe they went to church. And that person calls out to Jesus and is born-again by God's Holy Spirit.

Again, that moment, right at that moment, justification occurs, and you're justified. It's just as if you've never sinned. Justified happens when you're born-again.

Jesus spoke to Nicodemus, a powerful religious leader. He was a Pharisee and a teacher of religion and Judaism. He watched and he heard, and he realized that Jesus was somebody special. He saw that in Jesus. He was someone that was sent from heaven.

Nicodemus was a religious leader in Israel. But despite all his power and all his wealth and all his prestige, he's searching for answers. This man taught the Torah, Judaism's bible. He supposed to have all the answers about God.

But Jesus rebuked him for being a teacher in Judaism, and he didn't understand the phrase "being born-again." I believe that Nicodemus wanted to ask Jesus, was I good enough? And had I done enough in my life to warrant and to make heaven?

He's practicing teaching Judaism all of his life. He worked and served tirelessly in God's temple, but still there may have been an emptiness in his heart.

I saw many in religious cults. There was no joy in the legalism that was rampant. I know what that's like, as in my search for God, I attended a Mormon church for a year about 30 years ago. I'm grateful that God removed me. A few years later, I found Jesus.

Up to that point in his service to God, Nicodemus was trusting in his works and his knowledge of the scriptures. He was trusting in his obedience to the Mosaic Law. He looked to his circumcision as a sign that he was right with God.

So Nicodemus comes to Jesus. He sees that Jesus is no ordinary man. The Bible says he came to Jesus by night. He came under the darkness to avoid the scrutiny, to avoid the persecution because his fellow priests hated Jesus.

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Jesus proclaimed that he was the Son of God. So the Jewish leadership took issue with him. They protested and said He was committing blasphemy. Jesus is God's son and who is himself God. Jesus is God's son, who is himself God.

The truth is Jesus was also disrupting the priests financially. He overturned the tables of the hypocrites who made money in the Father's house, the temple, a place that was supposed to be reserved for the worship of God and only for that purpose.

Jesus is omniscient, which means He knows everything. He reads your mind. He knows every thought every one of us in this room have and even you online. So He knows what Nicodemus wants. And so He quickly gets to the point.

In John *Chapter 3:3*, he says, **“Jesus replied, “I tell you the truth, unless you are born again, you cannot see the kingdom of heaven.”**

Jesus tells Nicodemus that you need this rebirth. Without it, you won't make it to heaven. Nicodemus eventually came to faith. This birth happens when you put your faith in Jesus for salvation. When you are born-again, you're justified. It's just as if you've never sinned. God removes our sin, opening the door for His mercy, opening the door to His grace and His forgiveness. God then removes our sin as far as the east is from the west.

Psalms 103:11 tells us, **“For His unfailing love toward those who fear Him is as great as the height of the heavens above the earth. He has removed our sins as far from us as the east is from the west.”**

King David is the writer of this beautiful psalm. *Verse 11* of this psalm reads of those who fear God and are saved. They're saved because their sins have been removed and they're justified.

The word "fear" in *verse 11* has dual meaning. To an unbeliever, the word "fear" can be a fear of that coming day of judgment that we all know is coming and also that separation from God.

The Bible says that sin separates us from God. This separation in the Bible is called death. That's why there's death in the world. That's why all of us will one day die. We all will die because we all have sinned. Unbelievers fear spending an eternity in a place called hell. Yet they put it off. They put off the Gospel, most likely because they love their sin, their sinful lifestyle.

One of the greatest Christian minds in history was a 17th century thinker named Blaise Pascal. Referring to the spiritual condition of mankind, he famously said, “There is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of each man which cannot be satisfied by any created thing [*But only God*] but only by God the Creator, [*God*] made know through Jesus Christ.”

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And we can search throughout this whole world and try to fill this empty void in our lives. You will never find the answer. You'll never fill that void until you surrender to Jesus.

I found the answers to life when I called out to Jesus 24 years ago. I shared last week that I was an alcoholic 24 years ago. I've been alcohol-free for 24 years now. I served for about 16 years as the worship leader here at Calvary Kaneohe. 24 years ago, I didn't know how to play a guitar. I still pinch myself as I remember where I came from and where God has me now, an assistant pastor here in this amazing church. I'm grateful and I'm thankful. And I'm in awe.

For a believer in Jesus who was accepted God's gift, fear is a good word. Fearing the Lord means our love and admiration and worship of Him. We understand the Gospel's truths, and what Jesus did for us on the cross, and our hearts are overwhelmed.

We know He's always good. You know He's always compassionate and kind. He went through our trials in our lives. We know that He's working all things for the good to those who love Him. We're not afraid of what the future holds because we know who holds our future. We know that our eternal destiny is in heaven. We are justified because of our faith and fear of Jesus Christ.

As David writes in *Psalms 103:12*, our sins are removed as far as the east is from the west. The POSB says this regarding *verse 12*. The POSB, excuse me, is a commentary that I use. It says, note that the Lord does not remove our sins as far as the north is from the south but as far as the east is from the west.

Why is this significant? Because the north and the south eventually meet. You can travel north only so far to the North Pole of the earth, and then you begin traveling south.

A person traveling east, however, can travel indefinitely. He could circle the earth again and again, all the while heading east.

Just as the east and the west never meet, we who are forgiven by God's grace will never again meet with our sins. We'll never again meet with our sins. What amazing grace from our amazing God! Not only does He remove our sin, but He remembers them no more.

Hebrews Chapter 8:12 tells us, **“For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.”**

Again, God not only removes a believer's sins, but He will never remember them. How encouraging that is for us who are truly justified. Many of us have carried that weight of sin for too long.

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We recall the day of our salvation where we were led in a prayer. And we called out to Jesus on our own. It was a glorious day. That burden was gone, and our hearts were changed. And He changed our attitude. He changed our eternal destination as well.

Coming back to our study in *Galatians Chapter 2*, let's continue to break down *verse 16*. Paul tells us in *verse 16* that if we're counting on our obeying the law of Moses to be saved, you're deceived. Also, if you're relying on the works of the law, you're being misled.

So why can't the law of Moses, which God gave to him, save us? And what is the purpose of the law? One of the purposes of the law was to make us aware of our sins. It was to show of mankind our condition and our need for help.

The Old Testament provided a temporary way to cover sin. It was through the sacrificing of animals at the tabernacle in the desert, which was done later at the Temple in Jerusalem.

But the blood of animals could never remove our sin. It was only a temporary covering until Jesus would come and remove our sin by His blood. No one who has ever lived has kept all the laws that Moses brought down from Mount Sinai. We have all broken at least one of the Ten Commandments.

Romans Chapter 3:9-20. **“Well then, should we conclude that we Jews are better than others? No, not at all, for we have already shown that all people, whether Jews or Gentiles are under the same power of sin. As the Scriptures say, “No one is righteous— not even one. No one is truly wise; no one is seeking God. All have turned away; all have become useless. No one does good, not a single one.”**

[Skipping to verse 19] **“Obviously, the law applies to those to whom it was given, for its purpose is to keep people from having excuses, and to show that the entire world is guilty before God. For no one can ever be made right with God by doing what the law commands. The law simply shows us how sinful we are.”**

Paul loved his country and his homeland, Israel, and he loved the Jewish brothers and sisters. His heart was broken because so many Jews had rejected Jesus. Again, He knows the Torah, the Mishnah, Talmud, and all of the scriptures in Judaism.

He's one of the brightest minds. And God called him to write one third of the New Testament Bible. Yes, he knew all those books, but more importantly, he came to know the author, Jesus Christ. He was knocked off his high pedestal by the Lord himself. He spent a lot of time with Him in the desert in Arabia.

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He learned the truths of the Gospel from God. His love for the Lord was immense and continually growing. Again, he had a love for Israel and his fellow Jews.

We see that in the *Book of Romans, Chapter 9. Verses 2-4* reads, **“My heart is filled with bitter sorrow and unending grief for my people, my Jewish brothers and sisters. I would be willing to be forever cursed—cut off from Christ!— if that would save them. They are the people of Israel, chosen to be God’s adopted children. God revealed His glory to them. He made covenants with them and gave them His law. [He gave them His law] He gave them the privilege of worshipping Him and receiving His wonderful promises.”**

Paul, his love was so great for his brethren that he was willing to be cut off from Jesus for them, yet his fellow countrymen, the Judaizers, they want to destroy him and the Gospel that he's preaching.

In *verse 4*, he said that God chose the Jews and gave them the law. Again, the Jewish people have always been special to God.

Looking again to *Genesis Chapter 15:6*, **“And Abram believed the Lord, and the Lord counted him as righteous because of his faith.”**

It's by faith in Jesus and the finished work on the cross. The world can't understand this. There's always a need to have to do something for our salvation. Every religion in the world is based on this principle: Works.

I have to earn salvation by my merits and achievements. I have to achieve to get something from a higher power. I can get to Nirvana or be reincarnated because of all that I have done. By my good works, we can curry favor with the many idols and false gods of the world. The more we do, the more we earn.

Sadly, this is the way that the world thinks. As we learned today, that's not how God chose to save us. Please know that God loves you, and He has a great plan for your life. Don't strive. Let the Holy Spirit lead and guide your life.

Looking back at *verse 16* in today's study, Paul says that by the works of the law, no one will be justified. Your works and your dependence on the law cannot and will not save you. Your circumcision cannot save you. Don't count on your daily devotions to save you.

Don't count on your serving in church. Don't count on your missions to Nepal to save you. Sorry, Wally and Maura. Don't count on your tithes to save you. Don't count on your leading worship at church to save you, Kapono. Our worship leader: He's rapture ready and he's heaven bound.

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Don't count on your teaching of the Bible, a Bible study to save you. And don't count on your superb oratory skills and your teaching. Don't count on your years of service, and don't count on your title as a pastor to save you.

As Paul wrote, for no one will be made right with God by obeying the law. You know, if you've never called on Jesus, here and online, then you still have an issue, a sin issue to deal with. If that's the case, heaven will not be your home.

I need to speak the truth. Hell isn't comfortable to speak about, but it's a real place, and it must be avoided. You can have that assurance that you'll make it to heaven when you pass from this life. Simply call out to Jesus to save you. He knows your heart.

In ending, I want to read from the *Book of Titus, Chapter 3*. **“Once we too were foolish and disobedient, We were misled and became slaves to many lusts and pleasures. Our lives were full of evil and envy, and we hated each other. But when God our Savior revealed His kindness and love, He saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy.**

He washed away our sins, giving us a new birth [And a new Spirit] a new life through the Holy Spirit. He generously poured out the Spirit upon us through Jesus Christ our Savior. Because of His grace He declared us righteous gave us confidence that we will inherit eternal life.”

Again, He gave us confidence that we will make it to heaven. Amen.

[Congregation says, "Amen."]

Let's stand and let's pray. Kapono?

Father in heaven, I come before You to thank You, Lord, for Your word, for Your teaching today. Lord, my prayer is always, Lord, that those who don't know You may be here in this place, and for You online, I pray that You would come to that place in your heart because God has given us, in *Romans Chapter 2*, He's given us a conscience to know Him. So we have no excuse for not knowing our true and living God.

I come before you to pray that you accept Him as our Lord. Again, Lord, I pray for the mothers today that they'd have a blessed day. Thank You for blessing us with them. Continue to lead and guide them.

And if there's a mother or even a father, children out there who don't know You, I pray that they would surrender their hearts to You today and not wait. I pray for traveling mercies for us here today as it is raining. I pray that You would keep us safe. I pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

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