

Topical Message
Why Go Back To A Dead Religion After Meeting Jesus?
Pastor Leitu

KAPONO: Join me and bow your heads in a word of prayer. Lord, first and foremost, Lord, thank You for everything that we have. We lift our praise and worship up to You this morning, Lord. I pray that it would help to calm us, Lord, and help us to direct our focus and attention on You. As we get into Your word, Lord, speak to us through Your word, Lord.

And Lord, we thank You for this church that You have made with the pastors that You have brought, that You have chosen to lead us here. Continue to use all of them for Your purpose, Lord. Give all of them courage, Lord. Be with Pastor Leitu this morning as he delivers Your word. Fill him with Your Holy Spirit, Lord. We thank You for this time together. We ask these things in Jesus, we pray. Amen.

PASTOR LEITU: Aloha.

[Congregation says, "Aloha!"]

You may be seated. I want to welcome you here in the sanctuary and you online. You know, we've met so many of you from around the world who have come and visited our fellowship here in Kaneohe, and you call Calvary Kaneohe your home church. And it's a blessing to have met you.

And Pastor JD is also blessed because he's met so many of you from all over, again, all over the world. Pastor JD is on a blessed vacation. Please pray for him, that him and his family would have a safe journey. And I pray that He would just also continue to heal his wife, Kellie.

We have two services on Sunday at 8:30 and 10:45. Our 8:30 service is our Prophecy Update. In our 10:45 service we're going through the New Testament. We have our midweek study on Thursday nights at 7:00 p.m. here in the sanctuary. We come together as a church for all-church prayer on the first Tuesday of every month, and again, here in the sanctuary at 7:00 p.m.

Last week we looked at and we studied justification by faith. We learned the word "justified" or "justification" can be defined as "just as if I have never sinned." Today we'll continue to look at that study in *Galatians Chapter 2:17-18*.

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I've titled today's message 'Why go back to that religion after meeting Jesus.' Before we start, let's bow our heads in prayer and ask God's blessing on His word.

Father, we come before You today to thank You for Your word. We thank You, Lord, that You teach us and guide us. Lord, give us eyes to see and ears to hear that which You desire to impart to us today. Lord, we love You so much. We never forget the cross and what You did for us by sending Your Son.

Jesus, we never forget the pain and the shame that You took for us as You were nailed to that cross. We never forget that we come before You today thanking You for Your Holy Spirit, who in believers who believe and trust in You, You've entered our lives, changed us, and made us more and more like You and less and less like our sinful selves. So we thank You, Lord, for all that You're doing in and through us, Lord. We love You, and we worship You, and we pray these things in Jesus' name, Amen.

So the church in Antioch is flourishing a city, and Antioch is a city in Galatia. It's present-day Turkey. It was composed of Jews and Gentile believers, but the majority of this church was Gentiles. Galatia was 136 miles north of Jerusalem. Today, that distance would take us about an hour and a half by plane.

In Paul's day, it would take four days by camel. Antioch was the third largest city in the Roman Empire after Rome and Alexandria in Egypt. All around there were magnets — I can't even speak English today.

All around there were magnificent temples and idols to false gods. There was a large population in this city, and the Gospel of Jesus Christ was being evangelized, and people were being saved. This church that Paul the Apostle had started and now pastoring is growing.

Again, the Judaizers were Jewish men who professed faith in Jesus, but they took issue with the simplicity of the Gospel. They believed that the Gospel should include strict adherence to the Mosaic Law.

Paul said, last week, **“Therefore by the works of the law no flesh would be justified.”**

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Your works that you're relying on cannot save you. Only by faith in Jesus Christ can you be saved. Throughout history, Jews and Gentiles always had issues with each other. Gentiles are the entire world's population who are not Jews.

They looked down — the Jews, they looked down on the Gentiles as sinners, not worthy of God's salvation. Gentiles only had contempt for and disrespect for the Jews because of their hypocrisy and other issues. Throughout history, there have been many wars between Israel and the Gentile nations.

We see that age-old problem continue as we watch our nightly news. Today, anti-Semitism, the persecution of Jews, is growing around the world. Nations today are putting pressure on the Jews. The Bible tells us that all nations will one day abandon Israel, as Zechariah the prophet told us. Even the US will one day relinquish its support of Israel. As Israel continues to battle her enemies all around, Israel will not be alone.

Zachariah tells us in *Chapter 14:3* that God will fight against the nations as He has done in the past. *Zachariah Chapter 2:8* tells us, “**...for he who touches you touches the apple of His eye.**” Israel is the apple of God's eye. So take caution in how you treat the Jewish people.

In *Ezekiel Chapter 38*, we see the prophecy of an alliance of nations that come against Israel. Again, as before, God will give Israel the victory. There's a remnant of people in the world who love the Jews. I am one of them and so is Pastor JD, an Arab. I love the Jews in Israel as a nation because through them the Bible, our scriptures came.

Moses wrote the first five books of our Bible. To the Jewish people, the Messiah, Jesus, was born. Jews and Gentiles who make up the entire world now have an opportunity to be saved. Paul declares that no matter your historical differences between Jews and Gentiles, one day Jesus will return, and the world will finally have peace.

Until then, all people of the nations have that opportunity for salvation. And that's only by believing in Jesus Christ as your Savior. And it's not by man's works or anything that he's achieved.

And we read that — we read that in last week's passage in *Galatians Chapter 1:16*.

“...knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ,

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even we have believed in Jesus Christ 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 flesh shall be justified.”

This week we're still in *Chapter 2 of Galatians*. Yes, we're moving slow, but there's so much here. There's so much for us to learn, so much for us to glean in in the *Book of Galatians*.

Again, the writer is Paul the Apostle, a former Pharisee. He was a high-ranking leader in the nation of Israel. He was a member of a religion called Judaism. In that day there was no such thing as separation of church and state. The country was run by the high priests, the priesthood, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Jewish legal council called the Sanhedrin.

Paul the Apostle was groomed as a youth to rise to power in Israel. His parents sent him to the best school and provided for him the best teacher, the best rabbi of the time, Gamaliel. Sitting under the teaching, Paul grew quickly as he was gifted by God with a bright and intelligent mind.

In school, he exceeded everyone in his class, and his knowledge of the Torah and the Oral Law, which was passed on by mouth from generation to generation, called the Mishna. You know, it astonishes me that God would prepare Paul through the religion of Judaism and then remove him from it.

But the Gospel was God's plan from the beginning. It was displayed for us in the *Book of Genesis*. Abram believed, and he was made righteous, and he was justified. That opened the door to heaven for not only himself, but for all mankind, Jews and Gentiles.

“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, [Isaiah says in Chapter 55:8-9] nor are your ways My ways,” says the Lord. “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than yours, and My thoughts than your thoughts.”

We sometimes try to figure God out, which can only be frustrating. I prayed that instead of trying to figure Him out, that we would align with Him and follow His plans for our lives. As I always share: God is omniscient. And He knows everything. He has a great and awesome plan for us if we simply not strive but submit to Him.

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Paul the Apostle fought Jesus tooth and nail and even imprisoned and murdered Christians himself. His conversion was a significant moment in his life, but it was also a significant moment in history.

Again, Paul the Apostle wrote one third of the New Testament. He finally saw the light, and he was humbled on the road to Damascus, Syria. He himself would be imprisoned and die a martyr's death for loving and following Jesus.

I imagine that before his salvation, Paul's study of the scriptures and the doctrines of Judaism only brought stress in his relationship with God. He had a zeal for God, but it was based on obedience and following the Mosaic Law.

I shared before that there were 613 laws in the Torah. There were just as many in the Mishnah, the Oral Law, and Paul knew them all. As a Pharisee, he would dedicate himself to meticulously following each minute detail of the law. Imagine the stress that he would go through when he fell short, and he sinned. And yes, Paul sinned.

His frustration would build as he lacked the ability to painstakingly follow each law. So condemnation continually battered his mind just as condemnation batters our minds. That sin was ever present in the chambers of his thoughts.

Remember, sin is not only what we do, but it's what we think. Pastor JD quipped this phrase he used to use a lot in the past, and it goes like this. "We got stinking thinking, and we need a check-up from the neck up." I think many of you remember that.

For Paul, there was some relief as he was able to take an animal and kill it as a sacrifice for his sins. But surely the memory of sins remained and so did condemnation. But then he met Jesus, and everything changed for Paul. He even uses his Roman name, Paul, instead of Saul, his Hebrew name.

He was justified by faith and belief in the Lord. Not only is he saved, but the condemnation of his sin is gone. It's gone because his sins have been forgiven and removed as far as from east is from the west. And God remembered them no more.

There's joy and peace in Paul's heart now. He has a stronger love for God than before. He always had a zeal for God as a Pharisee in Judaism, but now agape love is added to that

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relationship. He's now a follower of "The Way," what they called Jesus, what they called the Christians in that day.

He's always cared for his fellow Jews, but now he has a love for the Gentiles as well. The enemy, they're his new family now. His bond with his new-found family develops, and this bond is stronger than that of his biological family. His love is strengthened because of his appreciation for what God has done for him.

He illustrates his love through his New Testament writings. He stands up for his faith against the Judaizers. He stands up because he cares, and he cares because he loves. His love is also strengthened because God's Word is finally making sense to him. The pieces of the prophetic puzzle he studied in Judaism are starting to fit together.

He realizes that Jesus fulfilled all the prophecies that the prophets spoke and wrote about the Messiah, that He would be the Anointed One. The word "Messiah" comes from the Hebrew word "Mashiach." It means "anointed one" or "chosen one," in the Greek language, "Christ" or "Christos."

To anoint someone was to get someone ready, to set them apart by anointing them with oil for a special work. Israel was waiting for the Messiah to come and to defeat the Roman occupation. They pictured the Messiah as a conquering king that would be a warrior. They didn't realize that He would come to give His life as a sacrifice so that mankind could be saved.

I can imagine Paul being excited at realizing what Isaiah wrote. *Isaiah Chapter 53* is a prophetic word from God. of the crucifixion and death of Jesus Christ, the anointed One. Isaiah prophesied and wrote about 700 years before the Savior Jesus Christ was born. To give you a perspective concerning the time lapse of 700 years between the prophecy in Isaiah and Jesus' actual birth, the United States of America, is only 247 years old.

I want to encourage you to read *Isaiah 53* in its entirety, and here's a few verses from that chapter. From *verse 4*, **"Surely, He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows, yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement for our peace was**

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upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. All of us, like sheep, have strayed away. We have left God's path to follow our own.

Yet the Lord laid on Him the sins of us all. He was oppressed and treated harshly, yet He never said a word. He was led like a lamb to the slaughter. And as a sheep is silent before the shearers, He did not open His mouth.”

Let's pick it up in today's study, *Galatians Chapter 2:17-18*. **“But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is Christ therefore a minister of sin? Certainly not! For if I build again those things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor.”**

The New Living Translation renders it this way: **“But suppose we seek to be made right with God through faith in Christ and then we are found guilty because we have abandoned the law. Would that mean Christ has led us into sin? Absolutely not! Rather, I am a sinner if I rebuild the old system of law I already tore down.”**

Paul continues to address Peter and the church in Antioch. We remember the last couple of weeks Paul had rebuked Peter for his hypocrisy. The Jews had sweet fellowship with the Gentile believers, but then the Judaizers showed up.

As soon as the Judaizers entered Antioch church, Peter and the Jewish Christians, in their hypocrisy, separated from the Gentile believers. Hurt feelings from the Gentiles arose, and old rivalries and hatred for each other replaced the love that was growing in this church. The duplicity was too much for Paul, and he alone stood up. Peter was the leader of the apostles, and Paul directed God's rebuke to this man who spent three years with Jesus.

In our Scripture today, *Galatians Chapter 2:17*, Paul says that there were those who accused the new believers who were Jewish of abandoning the law of Moses, also that Jesus was leading these Christian converts into sin. Paul says, no, absolutely not. We have not abandoned the law by believing in Jesus. And no, Jesus has not led anyone into sin.

I'll give you a minute as you see this image of these Judaizers. Also, I needed water.

The Judaizers accused the Jewish believers in Jesus that they were abandoning the law of Moses received from God. The Judaizers were trying to shame and discredit their fellow

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Jews who converted from Judaism to Jesus. They humiliated their countrymen with guilt and condemnation.

For the Jewish believers, this was damaging. They grew up in Judaism and the Torah and its many laws, and that's all they knew. They converted because the Gospel brought freedom, the freedom to have a true love relationship with God, something that Judaism, with all its legalism and laws, could not provide.

Again, that's what religion does to mankind. (Stumbling over words) All world religions have as their foundation that which Paul denounced and condemned. By the works of the law, no flesh shall be justified.

Translation: You can't work your way into heaven because your sin issue still remains. All religions depend on guilt, shame, and sin to perpetuate a false narrative and teaching that can only be appeased by good works. Christianity stands alone in the world.

Our faith is completely different and opposite from all the world religions and their beliefs. Our faith is not a religion. It's a relationship with the true and living God and His Son Jesus Christ. Only in a relationship with the true and living God can this sin issue be rectified and satisfied.

The new believers, Jews and Gentiles, they didn't need all the aspects of Judaism and its laws. They were born-again and heaven was their destination. By faith in Jesus Christ and being born-again, the Holy Spirit came in and dwelt within them. God's Holy Spirit makes positive changes in our lives because we can't.

What happened to the Jewish converts also happened to the Gentiles. The Holy Spirit came and dwelt in and lived in them, leading, guiding, and changing their lives. For the Gentiles who placed their faith in Jesus, they had no law to begin with. It was God within them that brought this new attitude of love, something that no religion in the world could claim. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit is crucial to understand.

I want us to look at this today. Last week I shared about Nicodemus and his conversion after he met Jesus. We saw that in *John Chapter 3*. I want to revisit the discussion that Jesus had with Nicodemus. I want to point out in this discussion where Jesus describes the Holy Spirit as the wind. He's explaining to Nicodemus what it means to be born-again.

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I'll start in *verse 3 of John Chapter 3*. **"Jesus replied, I tell you the truth, unless you are born-again, you cannot see the Kingdom of God." "What do you mean?" exclaimed Nicodemus. "How can an old man go back into his mother's womb and be born again?"**

Jesus replied, "I assure you; no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit. Humans can produce human life, but the Holy Spirit gives birth to spiritual life. So don't be surprised when I say, 'You must be born again.'

The wind blows wherever it wants. Just as you can hear the wind but can't tell where it comes from or where it is going, so you can't explain how people are born of the Spirit."

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

That was me. I was a new creation. I felt that old me pass away. My life became new, and God has been making it better and better for these last 24 years! I've had many trials as a Christian, as many of you have, but God was with me in them, and He's delivered me from all of them. I've grown through those trials. I know that many of you who believe have grown through adversity as well.

2 Corinthians 1:21-22 confirms the indwelling of the Holy Spirit within believers. **"It is God who enables us, along with you to stand firm for Christ. He has commissioned us, and He has identified us as His own by placing the Holy Spirit in our hearts as the first installment that guarantees everything that He has promised us."**

Verse 22 says that God identified us as His own. The New King James Version says that God sealed us. He's put a seal on us and we're under new ownership. We now belong to God, much better than belonging to this world.

Verse 22 says it's the first installment of God's promised blessings. And we know that God never — God never breaks His promises to us.

Going back to our study in *verse 16 of Galatians Chapter 2*, there were those who accused Jesus of leading Christians into sin. Jesus despised sin. He saw much of it in mankind, but He also saw too much of it in so many of the religious leaders in Judaism, Israel's religion of that day.

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He saw their sin, and He openly rebuked them in front of their people. They were put to shame in front of the Israelites. They disrespected His Father's house, the Temple in Jerusalem. They made it a house of merchandise, and it was built for the purpose of prayer and worship of God. He rebuked Israel's religious leaders for making the temple a den of thieves instead of a house of prayer.

He loathed and detested sin, and He never committed it. He's God incarnate, God in human flesh. He knows the calling that His Father has placed on His life. Again, He knows the path for Him would lead directly to the cross. The Pharisees in Judaism accused our Lord of being sent by Satan.

We see that in *Matthew Chapter 12:24*. Beginning with *verse 24*. **“But when the Pharisees heard about the miracle, they said, “No wonder He can cast out demons. He gets His power from Satan, the prince of demons.” Jesus knew their thoughts and He replied, “Any kingdom divided by civil war is doomed. A town or family splintered by feuding will fall apart.**

And if Satan is casting out Satan, he is divided and fighting against himself. His own kingdom will not survive. And if I am empowered by Satan, what about your own exorcists? They cast out demons, too, so they will condemn you for what you have said. But if I am casting out demons by the Spirit of God, then the Kingdom of God has arrived among you.”

A demon-possessed man was blind, and he couldn't speak. And he was brought to Jesus. Jesus healed him. So this man could see and speak. The crowd, in amazement, asked could this be the Messiah. The Pharisees accuse Jesus of receiving His power from Satan.

First, I want to remind us that Satan uses his power not to heal, but to steal, to divide, to accuse, and to destroy. Jesus came to heal and save.

In *verse 27*, He says that if He's healing and casting out demons by God's Spirit, then God's kingdom has arrived. And it had arrived. But the majority of Jews were blind, and they could not see.

Jesus said whoever does what is right will be called great in His kingdom. *Matthew 5:19* says, **“Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches**

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men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”

Jesus knew all His life the purpose for His birth. He knew His sacrificial death on the cross would save many who believed. He knew that He was going to go and experience pain, yet He went anyway.

He understood that God, his Father, sent Him to be the sacrifice for us. And He knew that He was the only sacrifice because He was perfect that the Father would accept because He's the only one who ever lived that perfect life. Jesus because He loved his Father because He loved us, obeyed his Father so our sins that He hated could be removed.

Matthew 16:21 tells us, **“From then on Jesus began to tell his disciples plainly that it was necessary for him to go to Jerusalem, and that He would suffer many terrible things at the hands of the elders, the leading priests, and the teachers of law. He would be killed, but on the third day He would be raised from the dead.”**

So no, Jesus could never be accused, as some allege, of leading others into sin. He was readying and steadying Himself for what lay ahead of Him, the cross. By His stripes, Jews and Gentiles who believed would be healed and be forgiven.

And it was just as if they never sinned. Jesus never sinned, period. What He did was teach the truths of the Bible and He preach the Good News. Just before He was crucified, He replied to Pilate, the Roman governor in Israel at the time.

We see this in *John 18:37*. **“Jesus answered, “My Kingdom is not an earthly kingdom. If it were, my followers would fight to keep me from being handed over to the Jewish leaders. But my Kingdom is not of this world.”**

Pilate said, **“So you are a king?”** Jesus responded, **“You say I am a king. Actually, I was born and came into the world to testify to the truth. All who love the truth recognize that what I say is true.”**

And Pilate had Jesus flogged with a lead-tipped whip. The soldiers wove a crown of thorns and put it on His head, And they put a purple robe on Him. “Hail! King of the Jews!” they mocked, as they slapped Him across the face. ”

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Those who understood saw an amazing display of love on that Roman cross. Those who didn't continue to mock Him. Today in our world, the same thing happens. So many deny Jesus and so many continue to mock Him.

John Chapter 19:16-18 tells us. **“Then Pilate turned Jesus over to them to be crucified. So they took Jesus away. Carrying the cross by himself, He went to the place called Place of the Skull (in Hebrew, Golgotha). There they nailed Him to the cross. Two others were crucified with Him, one on either side, with Jesus between them.”**

It wasn't for sin that the Judaizers falsely accused Jesus because Jesus had never sinned. In *Exodus 12*, we see a picture or type of Jesus in the Passover sacrifice.

Exodus 12:13 tells us, **“But the blood on your doorposts will serve as a sign, marking the houses where you are staying. When I see the blood, I will pass over you. This plague of death will not touch you when I strike the land of Egypt.”**

in *Exodus Chapter 12*, God instructed the Israelites to sacrifice a lamb or a goat. It was to be a one-year-old male with no defects. It had to be perfect. The blood of the lamb was to be smeared on the sides and the top of the door frames. This is the picture of the cross before the cross was even invented.

They were to roast the lamb and eat it, burning all the leftovers. They were to eat the lamb with bitter salad greens, bread without yeast.

That night God would strike every first-born son and male animal in Egypt. The lamb in Exodus is a picture of Jesus. Those who, by faith, obeyed were saved. They had placed the blood on the top of the door frame and doorpost of that house.

The lamb had to be perfect, unblemished. The lamb without defect would be sacrificed. Then those who were in that protected house ate the lamb. And the lamb would be in them, just as Jesus, the perfect Lamb of God, is in us who believe by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

As I was studying and meditating on today's lesson and what Jesus did for me, I had mixed emotions. Like Paul, I'm not able to run from sin. And you believers out there, you know what I'm talking about because you're not able to run from sin. It's not so much what I do,

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but it's more what I think. Frustration for not reaching enough people with the Gospel who close to me.

But then I'm reminded that God says not to be anxious, but by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let my requests be known to Him. And the peace that passes all understanding will guard my heart because I'm in Christ Jesus, and He is in me. Jesus died for me, and I will never forget it.

Like you, I'm tired of this world. Honestly, I want to go home and be with our Lord. And like you, I'm praying for the rapture. If I die before it happens, I hope it's not too painful Like you, I will never forget what Jesus did for me, from His birth, to the cross, and then His resurrection. He's the first to be resurrected and is in heaven. We who believe will follow Him. Thank you, Jesus.

Let's pick it up in *verse 18* in our study. I'll also read *verse 16* again for context. **“But suppose we seek to be made right with God through faith in Christ and then we are found guilty because we have abandoned the law. Would that mean Christ has led us into sin? Absolutely not! Rather, I am a sinner if I rebuild the old system of law I already tore down.”**

Paul says it's a sin to turn away from the truth of the Gospel. Peter and many of the Jews who feared the Judaizers were pressured by them, pressured to go back to Judaism. By their calling out to Jesus and converting to Christianity, the Jewish believers tore down that old system of religion.

Now, they're a new creation in Christ with a new attitude. They have a love for God that was probably never there before. Again, Paul remembers what it was like as he was a Pharisee. He was a Jewish leader. He came from Judaism. Every moment of every day was tense for him, the anxiety of trying to keep the law of the Torah. Imagine the strain, the strain of maintaining a life of obedience to every law that you knew.

And Paul knew them all, as I shared earlier. Paul, like many of us, all of us, had a sinful nature to deal with, so I can imagine there were many animals sacrificed on his behalf. He's dejected because he's not able to run from sin. He's discouraged because he's not pleasing to God in his mind.

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But then he met Jesus. Paul was so appreciative of his salvation. All he wanted to do for the rest of his life was love and serve God. He starts by evangelizing and writing. The Judaizers tried to intimidate Paul, but his love for God was greater than his fear of man, so he was able to stand in the face of intense pressure.

Again, Peter had given into this persecution. So we understand Paul being upset and calling Peter out. Paul would say, **“Why, Peter, would you want to return to a religion that cannot save you and is dead? Are you forcing the Gentiles to live as Jews and follow the traditions and customs of the Jewish people?”** Peter is ashamed as Paul points out his sin to him.

Jesus himself spoke against these Judaizers.

In *Matthew Chapter 3*, starting in *verse 1*, **“Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples, “The teachers of religious law and the Pharisees are the official interpreters of the law of Moses. So practice and obey whatever they tell you, but don’t follow their example.**

For they don’t practice what they teach. They crush people with unbearable religious demands and never lift a finger to ease the burden.

Everything they do is for show. On their arms they wear extra wide prayer boxes with Scripture verses inside, and they wear robes with extra-long tassels.

And they loved to sit at the head of the table at banquets and in the seats of honor in the synagogues. They love to receive respectful greetings as they walk in the marketplaces, and to be called ‘Rabbi.’”

Although Peter had a momentary lapse of judgment, Peter knew the power of the Holy Spirit. He was able to heal the lame by the power of the Spirit that Jesus gave him. He knew of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit as well. We read about it in the Upper Room in the Book of Acts where tongues of fire came upon the apostles.

Peter also witnessed the salvation of Cornelius. Cornelius was a Gentile, a Roman soldier who loved God. God choreographed and arranged the meeting between these two. God revealed to Peter through a sheet with various animals in it.

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In this message God was telling Peter he can eat foods that were unclean for the Jews, foods that the Gentiles ate. God was preparing Peter's mind to prepare what God's heart has always wanted to do to save the Gentile people. His heart for Gentiles' salvation was on His mind from the beginning.

Abram was a Gentile before he, by faith, believed in what God had promised. So Peter's eyes were open to what God wanted to do. Cornelius' family being saved was a turning point for him. His convictions and belief in Gentile salvation was strong, so much so that he agreed with Paul regarding the Gospel. You know Paul and Peter, they battled the Judaizers at the Jerusalem Council.

We saw that in *Acts Chapter 15*. The fear of man led Peter down a difficult road, one I'm sure that he had regret for. Peter experienced the beauty, a simplicity, the grace and truth and the freedom of the Gospel. Yet he erred in mistakenly trying to rebuild that old system of law that he once had torn down.

This was a painful lesson for Peter. He would write much in his writings, in 1 and 2 Peter. He even acknowledged Paul as a brother in Christ. He writes and defends Paul and his ministry. He writes that some don't understand Paul, but what he thought was the truth.

We see that in *2 Peter Chapter 3*, starting with *verse 15*. **“And remember, our Lord’s patience gives people time to be saved. This is what our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you with the wisdom God gave him— [Again, this is Peter writing] speaking of these things in all of his letters. Some of his comments are hard to understand, and those who are ignorant and unstable have twisted his letters to mean something quite different, just as they do with other parts of Scripture. And this will result in their destruction.”**

You know, it takes a strong man of faith to admit when he's wrong. And Peter admitted he was wrong. Peter calls Paul beloved: acknowledged the wisdom that God had blessed him with. He even admits that what the Judaizers were doing, twisting the Scriptures and Paul's teachings from God to support their own false doctrines. There's too much false doctrine in this world today. Amen. Cherish and study the word of God, the Bible, and you will never be led astray.

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Finally, I want to share what the writer of Hebrews wrote. “It's a terrible thing. *[In Chapter 10, excuse me, verse 31] ...a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Think back on those early days when you first learned about Christ.*

Remember how you remained faithful even though it meant terrible suffering. Sometimes you were exposed to public ridicule and even beaten, and sometimes you helped others who were suffering the same things.

You suffered along with those who were thrown into jail, and when all you owned was taken from you, you accepted it *(with joy.)* You knew there were better things waiting for you that will last forever. So do not throw away this confident trust in the Lord.

Remember the great reward it brings you!”

Patient endurance is what you need now so that you will continue to do God's will. Then you will receive all that He has promised.

“For in just a little while, the Coming One will come and not delay. And My righteous ones will live by faith. But I will take no pleasure in anyone who turns away.”

But we are not like those who turn away from God to their own destruction. We are the faithful ones, whose souls will be saved.”

We who are in the sanctuary and you online, who have called on Jesus to be saved, you are rapture-ready and heaven-bound. But for you who've not called out to Jesus to be saved yet, I pray that you don't wait. Just say to the Lord, “Jesus, I need you.”

He will hear you. He will hear your heart, your sincere heart. He will send the Holy Spirit to come and dwell in you. You'll will be saved, and heaven will be your final destination. Let us stand and let us pray. Kaponono.

Father, I come before your throne to thank you today, Lord. Thank you today for your heart, Your heart of love, For our mercy and grace for us, Lord, who continually fall so short. But Lord, we understand. We understand that You gave Your son to die on a Roman cross so that by our faith and by believing in the way that You chose to save us, Heaven will be our eternal destination.

Topical Message
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So I come before You to just thank You, Lord. Forgive me for my stumbling and mumbling this morning, Lord. I come before You to thank You, Lord, that Your Holy Spirit would speak to the hearts, to those who are listening. So I give You praise and glory and honor, Lord. And I thank You, Lord, for Your great love, Your mercy, kindness.

Jesus, we never forget. And we know that You could never lead anyone into sin because You came to heal and to save. And we thank You and we pray this in Your name, Jesus. Amen.