

# Love of God Transforms 3

## *Freedom to Love*

(preached 7/3/22)

Please turn to *Galatians 2:1*.

### LAST WEEK:

- The Love of God transforms us from our old selves to the new Christ self.
- God's love never affirms anything He calls sin.
- God loves me! PTL! Yet He hates my sin. He hates my self-serving attitude, my pride, and my lack of patience.
- The Lord does not require us to affirm something we know to be wrong, nor the people doing it.
- People who believe that affirmation = love will end up compromising on God's Word and are deceived.
- We can accept something we refuse to affirm—even Jesus said things like “the poor you will always have among you.”
- Jesus & the Apostles also predicted many evil things would take place as we draw closer to His Second Coming and again: as we see this taking place, we may very well have an “it is what it is” attitude.
- God's love transforms everything about us: our beliefs, lifestyles, and destiny.
- Moses was a murderer who fled Egypt to escape justice.
- Yet the Lord turned him into one of the greatest prophets ever, working miracles and receiving the Law.
- Paul hated Jesus with such passion that he not only openly blasphemed Him, but arrested and murdered His followers.
- Yet the Lord chose him to be one of the greatest Apostles of all and to write 2/3<sup>rd</sup> of the NT Bible.
- Neither Moses nor Paul continued in their former “unsaved” lifestyles—each was radically transformed by the love of God into holiness.

TODAY: so close to July 4<sup>th</sup> let me declare that God's love sets us FREE. Before you try and interpret what that means and how it applies, please listen to the rest of today's message first.

“WORKIN' MY WAY BACK TO YOU BABE.” There was a song played in the early 80's that I couldn't stand and it was titled: “I'm workin' my way back to you babe!” In said song, the male singer laments that he took his female lover for granted while they were together and then, due to his neglect, lost her. In typical “you don't know whatca got 'til its gone” fashion, his love for her is now rekindled and he's doing everything he can to get her back.

**That song makes me feel like I'm walking up a steep, muddy hill with a backpack loaded with bricks.**

**Please listen carefully and apply this to your life:**

- Anything you can work your way into, you can work your way out of.
- Anything we achieve through good work and effort can be lost with bad effort and neglect.

**Do we see our relationship with God this way?**

- That we worked our way into it somehow and that we have to maintain it by effort?
- That if we neglect said relationship it diminishes, and now we have to work our way back to good standing with Him?
- Does this ever make you feel tired in your heart and mind? To the point of just wanting to give up?

**What if Jesus set us free from these burdens?**

**What if the great work He did on the Cross and at His Resurrection made it so that we wouldn't have to work our way to Him, or to go or back to Him?**

TITUS IS GREEK. Let's begin our reading of *Galatians 2:1* and here is the backdrop: Paul is with his disciple Titus who is a Gentile—he's Greek—and therefore not raised under the Old Covenant. Growing up he wasn't taught about Yahweh, the One True God, not raised with the Bible, didn't know the commandments, nor the history of Israel.

**Galatians 2:1-5 (ESV)**

- <sup>1</sup> Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along with me.
- <sup>2</sup> I went up because of a revelation and set before them (though privately before those who seemed influential) the gospel that I proclaim among the Gentiles, in order to make sure I was not running or had not run in vain.
- <sup>3</sup> But even Titus, who was with me, was not forced to be circumcised, though he was a Greek.
- <sup>4</sup> Yet because of false brothers secretly brought in—who slipped in to spy out our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus, so that they might bring us into slavery—
- <sup>5</sup> to them we did not yield in submission even for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you.

CIRCUMCISED REPRESENTS COVENANT. Please remember that all Jewish boys are circumcised when they're 8 days old according to God's Law (and even preceding it). OC circumcision represented being in covenant with God and, not to get too graphic here, when a Gentile man would stand next to a Jewish man at the urinal and see that he had been circumcised, he would immediately know he was Jewish. The inverse is also true—to see an uncircumcised man was equated to being a Gentile and therefore not in covenant with God.

QUESTIONS. Why does this matter? Some would believe that the act of circumcision itself automatically meant you were in good standing with the Lord...and would that be true if the same person didn't believe in God? Conversely, what of a Gentile who believed and lived according to God's commands yet was uncircumcised...does that mean he's not Saved?

CONVERTS NEEDED TO BE CIRCUMCISED. A Gentile could convert to Judaism and, if he were male, one of the very first things required of him was circumcision. This isn't a matter to us here in the 2020's, but in the first century this was still a big deal. In the case of Galatians 2, Titus is a Gentile who converted to Jesus but Paul—although raised strictly Jewish—didn't require Titus to be circumcised.

***You might be wondering how all this relates to God's love setting us free and my answer is: in so many ways!***

LOVE & COVENANT. Everyone already has God's love...***but not everyone is in covenant with Him.*** To be in covenant with God is to have all sins forgiven, the Holy Spirit living inside you, and destined for resurrection and inheritance of God's Kingdom! How does one get Saved? Through repentance of sin and asking Father God for forgiveness through Christ. **Nothing else is required.**

EAGLE SCOUT. When I was a teenager I was in Boy scouts and there were 5 of us were working toward & close to getting Eagle Scout. When that journey started it seemed like it would be forever, like a hiking up a long and steep mountain with a backpack full of bricks. There were many rank accomplishments/milestones along the way. Even after you achieve Life—the rank just before Eagle—the work one must do to make that last hurdle is the biggest and most demanding of all.

COMPETITION! We had a passionate Scout Master who was really pushing us, and not only did the 5 of us want this, but we were competing to see who would be first. We had to work our tails off to meet the requirements. Even after completing the exhaustive work to earn the right merit badges, you still had to perform a service project, and appear before a council of upity ups and pass their interview. You could have done all the other requirements and if the council didn't think you were good enough, they could say "no" and that would be the end of it! They also had to approve of your service project. In my case, I did my SP and when I appeared before them they turned it down and said I had to do a different one. So I went back out, met their criteria, and resubmitted...they finally said yes.

PRESSURE/STRESS. Half of my pressure & stress was achieving all the goals, and the other half was to outcompete my fellow scouts who were going for the same thing. While Boy Scouts is supposed to be a "let's work together" thing, the truth is each one of us trying for Eagle were out for ourselves. Whoever got there first would be sure to lord this over the others!

# It's not like that with God.

- Righteousness is a rank far above Eagle Scout.
- Being in covenant with God has everlasting benefits for which Eagle Scout doesn't compare.
- Having the Holy Spirit living within is way more glorious than wearing the Scout uniform with the Eagle patch on it.
- We don't need to appear before a council to be approved.

Let's look at verses 4-5:

<sup>4</sup> Yet because of false brothers secretly brought in—who slipped in to spy out our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus, so that they might bring us into slavery—

<sup>5</sup> to them we did not yield in submission even for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you.

**FALSE BROTHERS.** What “freedom” is Paul talking about? Picture this: the “false brothers” in verse 4 were people who were likely raised under the old covenant that required people to work to get to God, maintain relationship with God, and work their way back to God when they backslid. Said false brothers had to be circumcised, obey God's commands, observe the feasts and holy days, make the animal sacrifices, abstain from certain foods, etc. The demands of the OC weren't hard, they were impossible.

**ORAL LAW.** Now add to that the Oral Law, the “additional” commands created by the Pharisees and Priests, and taught as though they came from God. Did you know that, to this day, Orthodox and Ultra-Orthodox Jews still consider the Oral Law as equal to the written (the Bible)? It's taught as the word of God as much as the Torah or the Prophets.

**SPYING ON PAUL & TITUS.** Back to Galatians, it was “brothers” like these—still under the performance of OC works—who came to spy out Paul and Titus and the freedom they had under Jesus. They tried to persuade them that they needed to observe God's Commands in order to get to God, stay with God, and work their way back should they sin. In verse 5 Paul says neither he nor Titus gave one inch because the TRUTH of the Gospel says Jesus did the work for us.

## **Romans 8:2-4 (ESV)**

<sup>2</sup> For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.

<sup>3</sup> For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh,

<sup>4</sup> in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

*Jesus fulfilled the Old Covenant* by 1) never committing a sin and 2) being the sacrificial Lamb of God Who shed His blood for the forgiveness of our sins, and 3) being the Royal High Priest of the heavens who plead with Father in our behalf for said forgiveness.

**THE LAW, and the WORKS OF THE LAW that GET US to GOD, WERE DONE BY JESUS.**

**You and I receiving forgiveness, right standing with God, the Holy Spirit, and Kingdom inheritance through His efforts is called Grace.**

*We don't deserve it.*

**WE DIDN'T GET SAVED BECAUSE GOD SAW SOMETHING GOOD IN US WORTH SAVING.**

*If that were true, we wouldn't need Jesus.* Self-worth is a worldly myth and it's time for the church to stop chasing that dragon. We're Saved because of the love of Christ, the righteousness of Christ, and the obedience of Christ. We're Saved because of the good in Him. We're Saved because He took all our not-goodness at the Cross, and gave us His goodness.

**Our worth is in Jesus and not the self. Our love is in Jesus and not the self.**

**When all our worth and love is in Him, then we'll walk in Grace. We'll be free.**

**Galatians 5:1-11 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

<sup>2</sup> Look: I, Paul, say to you that if you accept circumcision, Christ will be of no advantage to you.

<sup>3</sup> I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is obligated to keep the whole law.

<sup>4</sup> You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace.

<sup>5</sup> For through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness.

<sup>6</sup> For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.

<sup>7</sup> You were running well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth?

<sup>8</sup> This persuasion is not from him who calls you.

<sup>9</sup> A little leaven leavens the whole lump.

<sup>10</sup> I have confidence in the Lord that you will take no other view, and the one who is troubling you will bear the penalty, whoever he is.

<sup>11</sup> But if I, brothers, still preach circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been removed.

**Verse 1:** the yoke of slavery is to believe we must work to be in covenant with God. Jesus nullified the requirements of the OC because He met them on our behalf. We now enter into this marital-type relationship with God through faith in what Jesus did and His willingness to share everything with us.

**Verses 2-4:** those who believe they need to do good things and restrain from doing bad things in order to be in right standing with God, are actually severed and separated from God.

**ALREADY GOOD PEOPLE?** Most of the unbelievers I talk to already think they're good people who, for the most part, do good things and restrain themselves from doing bad things. When it comes to good they tell me how they serve and put others ahead of themselves. When it comes to bad they tell me how they've never killed anyone or robbed a bank. They falsely believe the combo of these things make them good people who will go to heaven.

- If our doing good things and restraining ourselves from bad things makes us righteous, Christ came here for nothing.
- His sinless life was useless, His work on the Cross empty, and His resurrection meaningless.
- There's no need for Him to return and establish His kingdom either.

***Nothing we did or do makes us righteous, only the love of God makes us righteous.***

- God's love has freed us from having to prove something that we can't.
- God's love has liberated from trying to earn His affection and inheritance.
- God's love has delivered us from us competing with each other to see who is doing better or will get there first.

**WHAT IF THE MODERN CHURCH WALKED IN GOD'S LOVE LIKE THIS?**

EPHESIANS. When writing to the Ephesians, I think Paul was in his most "mind in the heavens" place. In chapter 2 of his letter to them, he shares that both Jews and Gentiles can be in covenant with God and then says this:

### **Ephesians 3:10-12 (AMP)**

<sup>10</sup> [The purpose is] that through the church the complicated, many-sided wisdom of God in all its infinite variety *and* innumerable aspects might now be made known to the angelic rulers and authorities (principalities and powers) in the heavenly sphere.

<sup>11</sup> This is in accordance with the terms of the eternal *and* timeless purpose which He has realized *and* carried into effect in [the person of] Christ Jesus our Lord,

<sup>12</sup> In Whom, because of our faith in Him, we dare to have the boldness (courage and confidence) of free access (an unreserved approach to God with freedom and without fear).

Let me unpack this weird AMP version.

*Verses 10-11 shock me every time I read them*, even now, and I hope it does the same to you: **the deep wisdom of God is to be made know to angelic rulers ... through the church.**

ICE BUCKET! Go ahead and let that wash over you like the ice bucket challenge. *Angels, dwelling in the heavenly dimensions, are going to learn something about God through what Christ has done and is doing through the human Church.*

Verse 12 tells us what they're going to learn: **THAT GOD IS GIVING HUMANITY FREE ACCESS TO HIM JUST LIKE THE ANGELS HAVE.**

FAMOUS PEOPLE. PATRICK STEWART. Do you ever see politicians and celebrities—most people don't have free access to them. They tend to have an inner circle who do and that's it. I remember years ago watching Patrick Stewart perform all of Charles Dicken's "A Christmas Carol" on stage by memory and it was amazing. I was a big fan of his back then, watch Star Trek TNG all the time, and I went with a group of fans to the back entrance where he would be exiting. When he finally came out, he signed a couple play bills then his bodyguards quickly ushered him into a limo and drove off. You and I never have access to people like that.

ANGELS CLOSEST TO GOD. Think of angels as the beings closest to God, living where He is, with humanity being down here. In the OT we had occasional glimpses of God and even most of those were done through prophets who relayed messages and miracles to the people.

**In the NT everything changed: God came down from Heaven and lived among us!!!**

ANGELS WENT “WHOA!” To that, even the angels went “whoa!” Both the good ones and that bad ones. As I’ve told you before, from Genesis to the Ascension of Christ the human spirits of the dead did not ascend to heaven to be with God—they were sent to the underworld. After Jesus rose from the dead and then ascended to Heaven 40 days later, the righteous human spirits of the dead followed him there and now have access to God just like angels.

ANGELS STILL LEARNING. Remember that angels aren’t all knowing and can still learn things—**God is showing them His love for us by elevating us to heavenly status and giving all who would be Saved free access to Him.**

## **Now that is LOVE!**

### **Hebrews 10:17-22 (AMP)**

<sup>17</sup> He then goes on to say, And their sins and their lawbreaking I will remember no more.

<sup>18</sup> Now where there is absolute remission (forgiveness and cancellation of the penalty) of these [sins and lawbreaking], there is no longer any offering made to atone for sin.

<sup>19</sup> Therefore, brethren, since we have full freedom *and* confidence to enter into the [Holy of] Holies [by the power and virtue] in the blood of Jesus,

<sup>20</sup> By this fresh (new) and living way which He initiated *and* dedicated *and* opened for us through the separating curtain (veil of the Holy of Holies), that is, through His flesh,

<sup>21</sup> And since we have [such] a great *and* wonderful *and* noble Priest [Who rules] over the house of God,

<sup>22</sup> Let us all come forward *and* draw near with true (honest and sincere) hearts in unqualified assurance *and* absolute conviction engendered by faith (by that leaning of the entire human personality on God in absolute trust and confidence in His power, wisdom, and goodness), having our hearts sprinkled *and* purified from a guilty (evil) conscience and our bodies cleansed with pure water.

**Verses 17-18** start with Jesus’ shed blood forgiving us of our sins and insuring us that Father won’t use our sins as a witness against us at judgment. In other words, He doesn’t read our rap sheet.

**Verse 19:** we now have access to the Holy of Holies. Here on earth the HOH was the Temple and only the High Priest could go there. In God’s Heaven the HOH is His throne room and until the Ascension of Christ, only angels were there. Now we have “full freedom” not just to enter, but with complete confidence we’ll be received by Father!

**Verse 20:** the earthly temple had a thick curtain that hid the HOH. When Jesus came here as a man, that curtain was His body—His flesh. He had to go to the Cross if He wanted us to have access to Father! His flesh had to be pierced for us to walk in Father’s Love!



**If Him going to the Cross insured free access to God, then what can take it away?**

Nothing. What can separate you from the love of God through Jesus? Famine, trouble, war, death, angels, devils, other people, poverty, or peril? Jesus' body was the curtain and that curtain is no more! Nothing can separate you from His love, nothing and no one!

***Verse 22 INVITES us to draw near to Him!*** Not tentatively as if He might lay the smack down on either, but with completely freedom and confidence that He will open His arms!

ON FATHERS LAP! I love to hear Christians who've had near death experiences where they appear in the throne room and they all talk about how Father is this massive shining figure sitting on a throne. Many of them testify how He picks them up like little children and sets them on His lap! PRAISE GOD!!!!!!!!!!!!!! I want that and I want it now and forever!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!