

**Word Of Encouragement
The Gospel According To Galatians
Part III**

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Please note the use of the ESV text of Scripture.

ARE YOU A CHRISTIAN TODAY LIVING AS A SLAVE?

Are you enslaved to your sins, seeking ease and comfort, and life without problems? Are you seeking to be honored, and respected for your position, or your accomplishments? Do you want others to like you too much? Are you kidding yourself into thinking that you're more righteous than you really are before God and man? If you said "Yes" even to one of these questions, you are living as a slave instead of child of the living God.

Don't kid yourself- -ask yourself honestly before God:

"Am I living my life as a slave to sin and flesh?"

"Am I living my life as one who must constantly strive to be well liked and appreciated by others?"

***"Am I living my life so that God might accept me as his own child?"
In other words, are you living to attain a right standing before God and man that is in addition to the right standing one has in Christ alone by faith?"***

The Apostle Paul writes the Gospel According to the Galatians because he wants Christians to find their ultimate right standing before God and man in Christ alone. In Christ, we are to live as sons, children who are greatly loved by our God and Father! Yet, we so easily exchange the sweet and glorious gospel of salvation by faith alone in Christ alone, for "another gospel" that is Christ plus something we add. When we add these things to the gospel of Jesus Christ, even if in reality we be truly sons of God in Christ, we end up living as slaves before God and man.

Are you living today as a slave? Are you slaving to make yourself look or feel righteous before God and man (while rotting away on the inside)? Or, as a true

son and heir of God in Christ, are you constantly and soberly turning to the right standing you have before God and man in Christ alone? By God's grace, if we could just continually believe this wonderful truth, we might live freely, not caring what others might think about us one way or another, not being enslaved to our sins as if it still has dominion over us, nor seeking a righteous standing before God that is fixed and focused on what we do, or do not do.

If we were truly to understand and really grasp this glorious and amazing gospel of grace, we might be freed to grow mature in Christ, living our lives as beloved children, and serving God with all that is in us!

In the last few issues of 'Word of Encouragement' we have been considering the true and only gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. We have looked at the gospel that the Apostle Paul proclaimed that taught that we are saved by believing upon Jesus Christ alone apart from any works of our own. We have learned that the gospel is good news because it is all of God's grace given to us in Jesus Christ, who gave himself up for our sins, and delivered us from this present evil age according to the will of God the Father (Gal. 1:3-4).

"Quickly Deserting God to Become Slaves"

Yet the Churches of Galatia were quickly turning from the true and only gospel. How easily they had forgotten the grace of God found in Christ's righteousness alone received by faith! The Churches of Galatia were deserting God who had called them for "another gospel" which was not truly a gospel because there was not good news about.

The Judaizers were threatening the Churches of Galatia with a false gospel. A so-called gospel that was not truly a gospel at all (Gal. 1:6-8) and they were teaching that a person is saved by Christ plus the works of the Mosaic Law. These Judaizers were "trouble-makers" who were distorting the gospel of Christ (Gal. 1:7; cf. 2 Peter 3:15-16). Paul calls them "false brothers" who secretly slipped in like a serpent into the gospel-focused congregation to turn their eyes away from the truth to a lie (Gal. 2:4)! Paul goes on to say under the inspiration of the Spirit of God that the Judaizers' slippery, serpentine goal was to bring the congregation into slavery.

Galatians 2:4 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...

The Judaizers wanted to turn the Churches of Galatia's attention away from their hope as sons or children of the living God in Christ to enslave them to a false gospel. The Apostle Paul wanted the Galatian Churches to know that their only hope is in Christ's righteousness alone. They were to be found 'in him' as sons and heirs of God, not as slaves in bondage to sin, flesh, and the devil.

Let me illustrate what was at stake here (with a poor analogy that eventually breaks down, as do all imperfect analogies, but that I hope illustrates this truth). Imagine if I were to deposit one billion dollars into your Wachovia or Chevy Chase checking account today (fat chance, sorry!). You were rich in reality and had one billion dollars to spend as you would like. It was all a gift to you from me. In fact, you had not deserved it, because you had lived to sin against me daily for as long as I knew you, yet I wanted to give you one billion dollars to make you an heir to a fortune.

Then someone comes along and said I was lying to you. They claim that you do not have a billion dollars at your disposal until you start working hard for that one billion dollars. You must work as a slave and live perfectly if you are going to inherit the one billion dollars. Sure says the liar, the one billion dollars is available to you, but you are not an heir, you are merely a worker –and that may not guarantee that you get the inheritance.

So, you slave away day by day with hopes that you might inherit that one billion dollars. Now, all you would have to do is believe that the one billion dollars that I deposited in your account was there, and you could access it, but if you did not access it as you needed it, it would be as if it was not there for you, although it would be there in reality.

You live like a poor slave, while in reality you are rich beyond your dreams!

The Apostle Paul is saying something similar to the Galatian Churches then, as well as to us today. He is saying your right standing before God and man, your adoption as children, and your inheritance of the world as heirs of God in Christ as sons is yours by faith alone (and it is as hard to believe this sometimes as the one billion dollars that I supposedly deposited in your account)! Yet you are being told that you must work for this right standing before God, and you must work hard as a slave to become sons of God in Christ and heirs. You do not believe what has already been done for you in Jesus Christ, and thus you are not accessing what is already yours in Christ alone.

You live as if you are a poor slave, while in reality you are rich beyond your dreams!

This is how many Christians live out their entire Christian lives.

Jesus “Plus Something Else...” Equals Right Standing before God and Man

We must remember that our right standing before God and man is in Christ alone apart from any works of our own. What is this right standing before God and man? It is that we have been united to Jesus Christ by faith alone, and that all of his righteousness is ours. We are righteous before God and man, or in right standing, because we stand clothed in the righteousness and works-righteousness of Jesus Christ, not our own. Hear how the great Martin Luther put

this so eloquently (and this shows that all Christians throughout history have been constantly struggling to keep their eyes on the works-righteousness of Jesus Christ alone, rather than their own):

"[The righteousness of Christ] is heavenly and passive (it is not of our own doing), which we have not of ourselves, but receive it from heaven; which we do not work or labor for, but apprehend it by faith....Do we not work at all for the obtaining of this righteousness? I answer: nothing at all! For the nature of this righteousness is, to do nothing, to hear nothing, to know nothing whatsoever of the law or of works, but to know and to believe this only, that Christ is gone to the Father and is not now seen; that he sits in heaven at the right hand of his Father, not as a judge, but has been made for us wisdom, righteousness, holiness, and redemption by God. He is our High-Priest interceding, mediating, praying for us, and reigning over us, and in us by his grace." –Commentary on Galatians, pg. 105.

Even though these are wonderful and glorious truths, we in the modern church still are tempted to substitute this grace of God in Christ with a gospel of our own making, which is no gospel at all! How do we so easily slip into a "gospel" that proclaims Jesus plus something else, that is a "gospel" of Jesus plus works?

JESUS + _____ = Righteousness before God and Man

We have considered in previous studies the fact that we do not cooperate with God in our salvation. We are dead in trespasses and sins and must be made alive by God and given faith because it is all of God's grace to us in Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:1-10). Our faith is a gift of God, it is in no way a work that is added to what Christ has already done, but faith is empty hands outstretched because of God's grace to us, receiving all that Christ is, and all that he has done for us - apart from nothing we have added. John Calvin in his 'Institutes of the Christian' religion wrote on the importance of faith as a gift of God that constantly depends on God's objective revelation in Scripture no matter what comes into our lives:

"Faith rests upon God's word...this then, is the true knowledge of Christ, if we receive him as he is offered by the Father: **namely, clothed with his gospel**...the Apostle Paul yokes faith to teaching, as an inseparable companion, with these words: 'You did not so learn Christ if indeed you were taught what is the truth in Christ' (Eph. 4:20-21)...We must remember that there is a permanent relationship between faith and the Word. He could not separate one from the other any more than we could separate the rays of the sun from which they come...the same word is the basis whereby faith is supported and sustained; if it turns away from the word, it falls."

Yet we do easily turn our faith to our own works rather than God's Word, and often daily fall into the trap of believing our right standing before God and man is found in other places, and thus we become as if we were slaves, although we are

in reality sons. We are daily tempted to put our faith in Christ plus something else. Have you ever made statements like the following (in your thinking or to others)?

“You have not surrendered yourself enough to God!”

JESUS + Your Surrender = Righteousness before God and Man

“Your devotion to Jesus is lacking and therefore you need to try harder.”

JESUS + Your Devotion = Righteousness before God and Man

“Jesus loves you, now in order to be saved, love him back- - and keep loving him to ‘stay saved’.”

JESUS + Your Love = Righteousness before God and Man

“Just be a good person and love God to the best of your ability.”

JESUS + Your Goodness and Efforts = Righteousness before God and Man

These are comments we can very easily make if we have not fully grasped the gospel in the Person and Work of Jesus Christ alone! We can seek our righteous standing before God based on what we have done for him, rather than what he has done for us in Christ. Now don't get me wrong or misunderstand me, if one is truly a believer in Christ, they are positionally “in Christ” never to lose that position. In fact, as the Apostle Paul says in Romans 8:31-39: “NOTHING” can separate us from the love of God in Christ because of Christ as Mediator who ever intercedes for his own!

Yet even though our position in Christ is a reality, Christians can still live as if they were slaves, enslaved to working hard for a right standing before God and man that is additional, or in addition to what Christ has already done in his perfect work for them.

We can think to ourselves, or say to others: “You have not surrendered yourself enough to God” and what you are judging at that moment is how righteous (or unrighteous) you are before God and man based on Jesus Christ plus what you have done, or are doing for him. You're basing your right standing before God and man on your weak and imperfect judgment of your own pitiful surrender and you have looked away from Christ.

“Mirror, Mirror on the wall, who's the fairest of them all?”

The last time you looked in the mirror, what or who did you see? How we see ourselves ultimately, that is how we judge our ultimate significance, and how we think of our own identity, is a way of getting at how we add to the righteousness of God in Christ.

In the way we label ourselves, in the way we judge ourselves and what we do, or do not do, can tell us how we are particularly exchanging the glory of God and his righteousness given to us by faith, with the righteous standing before God and man based on our own puny and feeble efforts.

Paul confronts the Galatian Christians because they have so quickly turned away from the truth of the gospel and deserted Him who called them in his grace (Gal. 1:6-10). This causes the Apostle Paul to marvel, to be astonished by how quickly they had turned from the gospel or “good news”. But what about Christians today, particularly those who call themselves ‘Reformed’? We are not perhaps adding to the work of Jesus Christ by demanding that others keep the Mosaic Law (I hope not anyway, but perhaps you are!).

But how do we “quickly turn away” from Him who called us in the grace of Christ as Reformed Christians? Not necessarily obvious, but in more subtle ways.

The question to ask yourself is: “How am I tempted daily to exchange the right standing or righteousness of God in Christ positionally before God and man for a “righteousness” or “works” of my own making?”

If we could just learn this, by God’s grace, we might truly mean it when we say “Amazing grace!” Because we will realize how amazing it truly is!!

“Another Gospel”: Peace, Position, and Pride

Let’s try to remember the three ways in which we are tempted daily to add to our right standing before God in Christ with three ‘P’s’: **“Peace, Position, and Pride”** (Peace instead of suffering at all costs, position before men rather than before God, pride in thinking of ourselves higher than we ought). These three ‘P’s’ overlap in our daily struggles against sin, so it is not as if we will have one without the other. Identifying them however, helps us to be sober and watchful as they threaten our growing in grace.

1. **Peacefulness/Ease** – By that I mean when you are **pursuing ease and comfort as an ultimate goal.**

In other words this is when you find yourself trying to create **a life without suffering** which is a set-up. It sets you up for worldliness (eating anything you like, watching or reading anything you want, spending your time anyway you

like, and avoiding things like conflict) and basically this deadens you to reality, and it lulls you to sleep.

We have peace with God through the gospel and we know that we are called to share in the sufferings of Christ and to deny ourselves and take up our cross daily. We experience peace by praying and by doing what is right in God's sight even when it hurts. **The gospel offers us the strength and grace to do so.** Jesus died so that we would be holy, he did not die so that we would necessarily be happy (although I would argue that true happiness ****JOY**** is found in holiness).

The Apostle Paul's gospel was to be found in Christ with a righteousness that is given to us apart from the Law, and to fellowship in his sufferings, so the "gospel of peace and ease" is a false gospel that is Jesus plus something else, that may cause us to be "surprised" when God allows conflict into our lives to conform us to the likeness of his Son, as we learn by faith to trust in him alone for help! Paul wrote this, and we should be reminded of the false gospel of Jesus plus ease or comfort:

^{ESV} **Philippians 3:7-12:** But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸ Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. **For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ**⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith- ¹⁰ **that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,**¹¹ that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. ¹² Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.

If we don't understand that carrying our cross IS the gospel, then our faith and growth in Jesus may be seriously challenged when God brings conflict into our lives to change our hearts and to make us utterly dependent upon him. If we seek our right standing before God and man, then we might even think that God doesn't love us as much as the other Christian who is not presently going through any conflict or suffering. We must remember that God gives us what we truly need, according to his great wisdom and knowledge, rather than merely giving us what we want.

JESUS + Peace/Ease/Comfort = Righteousness before God and Man

2. **Position /Reputation – You want to be liked by others and approved by others which is a serious bondage** because people will not always like you or approve of you if you are seeking to be holy and faithful to God.

Also, **if you are seeking to impress others you may find that the outside of you looks good but the inside is rotting away.**

Seeking to make a name for yourself you look to your works, what you are able to accomplish, and to whether people notice you or not and reward you or not and you can be quite up and down with it all. But we are not to rejoice in these things but rather that our names are written in heaven! The gospel brings this home to our hearts. Think about the last time you were angry when you were disrespected or not recognized as you thought you should be. This is when we are seeking a right standing before God and man in our position or reputation.

How do you label or identify yourself ultimately when you think of yourself autobiographically, or tell others about yourself? “I am a father of two children;” “I am a mother of seven children;” “I am an elder or pastor;” “I am a successful businessman;” “I am a professor;” “I am smart;” “I am stupid and dumb;” “I am single;” “I am childless;” “I am rich/I am poor;” “I am healthy;” “I have a good body/I am attractive;” “I am an A student/I am a C student.”

Note carefully that all of these identities can be good things in and of themselves, but when they become idolatrous and we want them too much, and they begin to be the ultimate way we define ourselves, identify ourselves, or seek our significance, they have become “another gospel” which is not good news at all!

The list of our ultimate identities could go on and on, but we must remember that our ultimate righteousness, or right standing before God is united to Jesus Christ by faith and seated with him in the heavenly places. We are “in Christ” as the Apostle Paul wants us to know, and nothing in heaven and on the earth, nor under the earth can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus (including our best or worst righteous efforts!). Our hope is in Christ alone, that is why Paul can say confidently if God is for us, who can be against us! (Romans 8:31-39).

You see when you place your ultimate identity or significance in something other than Christ it is in an attempt at making yourself righteous before God and man, and when you fail, you think you have lost your righteous standing. For example if your hope is in having a large family (if this is how you are going to be perceived as righteous before God and man), if God grants that you have trouble having a family, you will become downcast, discourage, even angry with God. You need Jesus plus a large family to have right standing or righteousness before God and man.

If you think of yourself as person of good reputation, deserving of honor and respect, when you do not get these things, you will work hard to attain a

righteous standing before God and man with Jesus plus something else. It is really subtle how this can happen to us all!

When we seek our right standing before God and man or our righteousness ultimately in something temporal rather than Christ, we have a shifty, unstable “other gospel” which is no good news at all. For every one of the labels above outside of Christ, there are negative as well as positive aspects that change and cause us to be hindered in our faith because our hope is in Jesus plus something else.

For instance, say your ultimate identity is a “successful businessman”. There is nothing wrong with that, but what if, God in his sovereignty were to cause you to be unsuccessful and you failed in your business? Would you still be in right standing before God and man? What if you have a good figure and are attractive? That is a gift of God, but if your ultimate significance and identity is in this you could be devastated in your faith if (God forbid!) you lost the ability to exercise, lost a limb, or were terribly disfigured. We would have to believe it was God’s will and sovereignty to bring this conflict into your life, but would you shift incessantly in your faith, or would your ultimate identity and significance be in Christ?

What if you say you are a “good kid” or “good girl” or “good person”? What if you truly were to understand the depth of God’s Law, it’s perfect requirements before him, and were humbled to the dust over a sin that you couldn’t believe you had committed in word, thought and deed? Would it devastate you to know that you weren’t so righteous and good after all? Or, would your ultimate identity and significance be in Christ? What have you believed in for your right standing before God and man **plus Jesus Christ?** Be honest with yourself- -the Apostle Paul was honest with himself:

The Apostle Paul also had placed his hope in God’s grace plus his righteous position and reputation before God and man. In Philippians 3, he wrote:

Philippians 3:4b-8: If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: ⁵ circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; ⁶ as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness, under the law blameless. ⁷ But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸ Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.

The Apostle Paul wants us to understand that our right standing before God and man is not found in our position or reputation, but in Christ alone- -we want to be found “in him” daily! The temptation of position, reputation, identity and status has to do with what we boast in apart from Christ. We must strive

to fight against the false gospels that try to challenge our right and firm standing before God in man in Christ alone.

JESUS + Position, Reputation, Identity, Significance = Righteousness before God and Man

3. **Pride: Lies/Dishonesty** – The truth of the third ‘P’ is that **Sinners saved by grace still have trouble being honest with themselves and with God about their sin, the depths of it, their weakness, their constant need of grace.**

We are all very needy, and do not like to admit it to God, or each other.

***Do you say: “Lord, have mercy on me a sinner...”
Or Do you say: “Thank you God I am not like that sinner...”***

In lying to ourselves, we see less of the sin problem that is really in us, and this makes us more prone to sin, and for Christ to seem like such a small Savior, one we rarely need, or cry out to. We lie because people in general are afraid of God – of being naked and ashamed before Him – not realizing that it is the humble and contrite one with whom He dwells!

Pastor Vincent Tauriello said powerfully concerning why we lie to ourselves and God: “Many people have a hard time with certain parts of God’s word but they don’t like to admit it. Rather they deny their innate resistance and natural aversion to God and His law and thereby live in rebellion to God without really acknowledging it. The fact is that the truth about God and us hurts but it is equally true that the gospel alone heals!”

This is not to say that we don’t want to be “good” and obedient. It is just to say that as we mature, we become more aware of our sins, and the depth of our sin problem through the Law. Our only hope is to cry out: “Lord, have mercy on me a sinner!” and depend on God’s righteousness given to us in Jesus Christ alone. The Law of God is our friendly guide in Christ (Richard Gaffin) to instruct us in God’s will, but it constantly shows how far short we fall of the glory of God. Even though we keep the Law by God’s grace in Christ, the more we understand the Law of God and how we break it in word, thought, and deed, the more we should grow dependent upon God’s righteousness in Christ alone and not in how we are doing, whether good or bad.

JESUS + Righteousness of our own that is unrealistic before God’s Law = Righteousness before God and Man

Martin Luther in his Commentary on the Galatians summarized the humility that is wrought by the Law of God in the Christian life: “How then can these

two contradictory assertions stand together: “I am a sinner, and most worthy of God’s wrath and indignation; and yet the Father loves me?” Here my only hope before God is Christ the Mediator. The Father, says Christ the Mediator, does not therefore love you because you are worthy of love, but because you have loved me, and have believed that I came from him. Thus a Christian abides in pure humility, feeling sin in him effectually, and confessing himself to be worthy of wrath, the judgment of God, and everlasting death for the same, that he may be humbled in this life, and yet notwithstanding he continues still in a pure and holy pride, in which he turns unto Christ, and through Christ he is lifted up against this feeling of God’s wrath and judgment, and believes that not only the remnants of his sin are not imputed unto him, but that also he is loved of the Father, not for his own sake, but for Christ’s sake, whom the Father loves.” –Commentary, pg. 133.

In other words, as maturing Christians, we do not want to seek false confidence before God’s Law, nor hypocrisy (or mask-wearing) before the world, but we want to have an accurate perception of ourselves through humility. The Apostle Paul wrote in his Epistle to the Romans:

Romans 12:3 For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.

You can tell whether you lie to yourself by asking yourself honestly: “Do I think more highly of myself than I ought?” “Do I think that I am a mature Christian who is no longer needy?” “Do I think that my sin problem is not as great as the next guy?” “Do I think that I am better than others?” Do you make statements like: “Well, I could never do such a thing!” or “I cannot believe they sinned in that way!” If you ask yourself these questions in certain ways or make these kind of comments, you may have more in common with the Pharisee in Jesus’ story: “Lord, I thank you I am not a sinner like...” (Luke 18:10ff).

If you are thinking of yourself in the realistic and blinding light of God’s word, then you will think of yourself soberly before God and man, and find your righteousness only in Christ. If you are truly a mature Christian, you will be realizing that your only hope is in Christ’s righteousness.

If you think of yourself better than others, you are not a mature Christian, but one in need of repentance and turning again to Christ and his righteousness alone.

If on Thursday you’re a good person because of all of the good things you have done for God, you are adding to the work of Christ alone. If on Friday you’re a bad person because of all the sins you committed in word, thought and deed, you are adding to the work of Christ alone. You see, whether

you're judging yourself as righteous or unrighteous and condemned, you are looking to yourself and not Christ alone for your righteousness. You will experience "highs and lows" in your growth in grace because your right standing fluctuates based on what you do, or do not do!

"In Christ" Our Only Comfort both in Life and Death

Our fixed position and place is in Christ, seated with him by faith in the heavenly places. Our life is hidden with Christ in God, and we walk by faith and not by sight (Eph. 2:6-8; Col. 3:1-4; 2 Cor. 4:16-18). Even the best works we produce because we are united to Jesus Christ by faith are because God is working in us, and we have been created in Christ Jesus to do good works which God prepared beforehand for us to walk in (Phil. 2:13; Eph. 2:10; cf. Phil. 1:6). Remember the first question from the classic Heidelberg Catechism:

"What is thy only comfort in life and death?"

Then it answers for all Christians to remember: "That I, with body and soul, both in life and death, am not my own, but belong to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ, who, with his precious blood, hath fully satisfied for all my sins, and delivered me from all the power of the devil; and so preserves me, that without the will of my heavenly Father, not a hair can fall from my head; yea, that all things must be subservient to my salvation; and therefore, by his Holy Spirit, he also assures me of eternal life, and makes me sincerely willing and ready henceforth to live unto him."

If your right standing before God and man seems to fluctuate on a daily basis, it is simply because you are believing in Christ plus something else- -and we need to be daily reminded of this reality. Even though our right standing seems to fluctuate, it in no way changes our righteous standing before God and man in Christ alone, but it can cause our lives to be less than filled with God's joy, and our adding to Christ's gospel can hinder our spiritual growth and maturity. More seriously, if we are in Christ, we want to live as children of the living God and not as slaves! (Gal. 4:1-6). As Dr. Sinclair Ferguson wrote in his excellent book on Christian spirituality:

"This, then, is the foundation of sanctification [becoming Christ-like] in Reformed theology. It is rooted, not in humanity and their achievement of holiness or sanctification, but in what God has done in Christ, and for us in union with him.

Rather than view Christians first and foremost in the microcosmic context of their own progress, the Reformed doctrine first of all sets them in the macrocosm of God's activity in redemptive history. It is seeing oneself in this context that enables the individual Christian to grow in true holiness." -

Dr. Sinclair Ferguson, 'Christian Spirituality: Five Views of Sanctification', Ed. Donald Alexander, Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1988.

Is your ultimate identity and position in union with Jesus Christ by faith? Is your ultimate significance and worth found in your union with Christ? Are you reflecting daily, moment by moment, on your right standing before God and man because you are in union with Jesus Christ?

Think about how you might exchange the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ alone with Jesus Christ plus something of your own on a daily basis. Prayerfully recognize your daily dependence upon God's grace alone and the righteousness that is found in Christ alone that is outside of you no matter how you feel or do not feel, no matter the circumstance that comes into your life, no matter how low God might humble you, and no matter how much you see your sins revealed in the light of the Law, look to Christ alone who is your righteousness, redemption, and sanctification- -and do not boast in yourself or in a righteousness of your own making- - rather boast in the LORD!! (1 Cor. 1:30-31).

Meditate on the words of Robert Robinson (1758) in his classic hymn 'Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing'. Through the Gospel According to Galatians may you be daily in debt to grace, grace, and grace alone:

***O to grace how great a debtor
daily I'm constrained to be!
Let thy goodness, like a fetter,
bind my wandering heart to thee.
Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it,
prone to leave the God I love;
here's my heart, O take and seal it,
seal it for thy courts above.***

Note: A great deal of the content of this study I owe to the Christian influences of Martin Luther, Robert Lucas, D. Clair Davis, David Rowe, Vincent Tauriello, and Tim Keller (and many more that I will never be able to remember).

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