

THE REDEMPTION OF THE CROSS (BY CHRISTIAN CHEN)

Romans 7:4—Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, so that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God.

My responsibility is to speak on “The Cross and the Law.” The Scripture we have just read is: “...you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ.” Here it says “you.” Verse 6 says, “But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound.” So we know that to die to the Law means to be delivered or released from the Law. Verse 4 says “you”; verse 6 says “we.”

In Galatians 2:19 Paul says, “For through the Law I died to the Law, so that I might live to God.” How did he die? Verse 20: “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me.” This time Paul did not say “you” and he did not say “we.” He says, “I. I died to the Law through the Law.” When he says “we,” some are Jews and some are Gentiles. It can also mean some are Jews and some are Greeks.

Paul says, “I have died to the Law.” We know that his life could not be separated from the Law. Paul was born under the Law. When he spoke of the Law, he was very proud, and his face shone. He says that he was born of the Jews; one who was born under the Law. After he was saved, when he mentions it in Philippians, he reminisces of how he was born under the Law. We feel as if the Law was born in him and it grew in his flesh. He could not be separated from the Law because he could not stand the thought of being separated from the Law. According to Paul, if he died to the Law, it meant he was delivered from the Law. The Gentiles were not under the Law, so even if they were released from the Law, it would not have any significance to them. But to Paul, one that was so proud of being born under the Law, it was impossible for him to be separated from the Law. It would be a complete loss to him without the Law, as if to disengage from the Law would be to disengage from life. Therefore, for Paul, the Law was all and the Law was supreme.

Now Paul tells us, “I died to the Law.” In other words, he was delivered from the Law. This is something we cannot fathom. If Paul were to disregard the Law, it means he disregarded history, and if he disregarded his past, he disregarded his own self. But he tells us that one day he died to the Law. We, who are saved, also have died to the Law. We all have been delivered from the Law. Not only should we be delivered from sin, we also should be delivered from the Law. Paul tells us that sin shall not be master over us for we are no longer under law but under grace.

We are no longer under law but under grace. It does not mean there is no law, that there is lawlessness. If we are under grace, sin can still possibly reign over us and control us. Sin can be the master over us. But when we are put under grace, the result is that sin shall not reign over us. If sin shall not reign over us, then we are free from the power of sin. If we can be delivered from sin, it is because the Lord has put us under grace. But if we are under the Law, it would help us to see that to be under grace we need deliverance from the Law. So we see that the basis of deliverance from sin is deliverance from the Law. Paul shows us that if we want to be delivered from the power of sin, we need deliverance from the Law. As we have mentioned before, for Paul to end his tie with the

Law was something that he could never fathom. So we want to use Paul's life to see how he was born under the Law, how he came to know the Law, and then how God not only saved him but also delivered him and freed him. This is Paul's story.

When speaking of the cross, we see there are two facets in the Scriptures. On one hand, there is the salvation of the cross; this is objective. That is what the Lord accomplished two thousand years ago. Today, the Holy Spirit dwells in us. He wants to communicate all that the Lord has done on the cross for us. This is referring to the fellowship of the cross. When we say we take up our cross, we are speaking of the fellowship of the cross. When we speak of the cross and the Law, on one hand we need to see the objective side. On the other hand we need to see the subjective side. Objective is what we see; subjective is what we experience.

PAUL WAS BORN UNDER THE LAW

We will focus our attention on the salvation of the cross. What did the Lord Jesus accomplish on the cross for us? How can we be delivered from the Law? How did Paul die to the Law? Paul could not do it, having been born under the Law. He grew up under the Law. He could not be separated from the Law. Remember, for Paul to be under grace and be delivered from the Law was not Paul's own doing; it is the work of the cross that was accomplished two thousand years ago. We know the relationship between a father and a son is the closest. That relationship is one of life; it cannot be separated. How can you separate their relationship? We know that sometimes a father and son have difficulties. The difficulties may be so severe that the father would post in the newspapers that from now on he has disowned his son. To disown your son, you can post in a newspaper; you can mouth it. However, that relationship is inseparable. As long as the father and the son are alive, their relationship remains. It is only when the father or the son dies, or both die, that the relationship can truly be terminated.

Paul was proud of being under the Law, yet he could say, "I have died to the Law; I have been delivered from the Law. I have now married grace, and I have married Christ." This was very true in Paul's life. It is also true in us. There is no mistake; it is a fact. But how is this fact accomplished? It is based on what the Lord Jesus did on the cross two thousand years ago. So our eyes need to be opened to see the objective side of the cross. As we go through Paul's life, let us see how it happened, and how it happened in our lives.

Many of us are Gentiles, and we have nothing to do with the Lord's covenant. But don't forget that Paul and we have all died to the Law. We say that the Jews have a very close relationship with the Law. Gentiles are probably not as close. What does God's word say? We and Paul have all died to the Law. In other words, the cross has dealt with the Law. For this reason we need to review Paul's entire life.

In the life of Paul, we see how heavy the weight of the Law was on him and how great the Law was in his eyes. Paul had certain sensitive nerves. You cannot touch them. If we touch them, he will jump. These nerves are not just in him but also in all the Jews. Some things you can touch, but you cannot touch the Law and the temple. If you touch either one of these two, they will jump. Jewish people are very much connected with God's word and the temple, as if it is the same life shared between the word and the temple. You cannot separate them. As soon as they are born, they have a relationship with the

Law and with the temple. What is Judaism? There are two big pillars in Judaism; one is God's word, that is the Law, and the other is the temple.

Paul said, "We are not under law but under grace." But before Paul was saved, he thought that the proudest moment of his life was being born under the Law. So if you listen to him, you can hear his past. It is a glorious past. When he speaks of his past, his eyes shine, his face shines because it is his glorious past. Nobody wants to say goodbye to a glorious past. This is Paul. In the life of Paul, these are the two greatest points, and you cannot touch them. So let us see how he reminisces about his past.

Circumcision

In Philippians, when he spoke of himself, he says, "I was circumcised on the eighth day, of the nation of Israel" (Philippians 3:5a). He immediately spoke of his being circumcised, and circumcision has to do with the Law. How do you know he was chosen by God? He has a mark on him, the mark of the Law. On the eighth day, he had that mark. No matter where Paul went that mark went with him. You could recognize it; it could not be mistaken.

I remember a brother who had a little mole on his forehead. His eyebrows were very thick and almost touching. He also had a mustache. (This is only funny to Chinese people.) If you look on his face, the Chinese character for the number six appears. No matter where he goes, there is the number six. That is his mark. Likewise, no matter where Paul went, there is that mark. It is a proud sign. That mark was his circumcision on the eighth day.

Of the Tribe of Benjamin

"I am of the nation of Israel. I am of the tribe of Benjamin." Jacob had twelve sons. Only Benjamin was born in Canaan in the Promised Land. Of all the people of Israel, Paul was different because he was from the tribe of Benjamin. All the other tribes were born outside the Promised Land. Only Paul was from the tribe of Benjamin; he was the Hebrew of Hebrews.

The Pharisee

"As to the Law, I am a Pharisee." Listen to the tone of his voice. It is a very proud tone—"As to the Law, I am a Pharisee." Who are the Pharisees? According to the Jews, if there are only two people who can go up to heaven and have eternal life, one would be a scribe and the other would be a Pharisee. Who are the scribes? The scribes were the Bible scholars who interpreted the Old Testament: What does it mean to keep the Sabbath? During the Sabbath, you cannot do any work. What constitutes work? Who could define what it says in the Bible? That was the job of the scribes; they interpreted the Bible.

What did the Pharisees do? The Pharisees set aside everything to do only one thing. They were devoted to keeping the Law of God, which speaks of the Pentateuch of Moses. However, they not only kept the Law; they also kept the scribes' interpretations of the Law in addition to the Law. For example, on the Sabbath day, you cannot lift water because water has weight. So how much water is too weighty? Who is to define that? If you read from Genesis to Malachi, you will not be able to find a definition concerning it. So the scribes defined what constitutes work. Work is when the volume of water is

enough to wet your eyebrows. Who keeps the Law? Who keeps the interpretations of the Law? Who binds themselves by the Law? They are the Pharisees. Paul says, “As to the Law, I am a Pharisee”. Not only did he listen to God’s word, but also to the interpretations of the scribes as well. That is the meaning of Pharisee

Blameless as to the Law

Then he says, “As to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless” (Philippians 3:6). This is a very important statement. Paul did not lie. “As to the righteousness which is in the Law, I have been found blameless.” Can you find anybody who is this close to the Law? The only thing he does is to keep the Law; that is his life. That is what he did daily. As a result of keeping the Law, he says, “As to the righteousness which is in the Law, I have been found blameless.” Why did he persecute the church? It is because of his zeal for the Law. He wanted to protect the Law. He wanted to exalt the Law. He wanted everybody to think that the Law was the most important thing. So to protect the Law and to keep the Law, he felt that he had to persecute the church.

All Things Loss

As he spoke these words, he also interpreted his own words. “But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ” (v. 7). The words he spoke earlier were before his salvation, and those things were gain to him. He was circumcised on the eighth day (that is a gain), from the tribe of Benjamin (that is a gain), Hebrew of Hebrews (that is a gain), as to the Law a Pharisee (that is a gain), a persecutor of the church (that is a gain), being blameless (that is a gain). All these have to do with the Law. After he was saved by grace, he said, “Those things that were gain to me”—the things that made me feel most proud, the things that I could not let go of, the things that were connected to the Law, now, “those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ.”

FELLOWSHIP OF THE CROSS

We know that Paul’s past is now as loss to him. For the sake of Christ, he counted them as loss. “More than that, I count all things to be loss...” At first, those things which were gain he counted as loss, but now he counts all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus. “For whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ” (v. 8). Then he goes back to the Law. “And may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from *the* Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death” (vs. 9-10).

Here Paul speaks of the fellowship of the cross. In these Scriptures, you can see that before he was saved, he was really proud of the Law. He felt that if he gained the Law, he would gain the world. Now he has been saved by grace. He says, “That I may know Christ, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death.” You see how Paul has changed? If we were to understand Paul’s knowledge of the Law and his experience of the Law before and after his salvation

we would see that before he was saved, the Law was him and he was the Law; he was inseparable with the Law. After he was saved, (To the Jews, it is something unfathomable.) one day Paul said, "I have died to the Law; I have been delivered from the Law." Wasn't Paul a fellow Jew when he made these statements? If he was not saved, did he not actually touch their most sensitive nerves? Therefore, Paul's testimony is very important because his change was a marvelous change; he turned around one hundred and eighty degrees. Previously, he was facing the Law, now he has his back to the Law.

DELIVERED FROM THE LAW

Is the Law wrong? No. From the very beginning to the end and from before he was saved to after he was saved, the Law had not changed; not even one iota or stroke shall pass away from the Law. Paul said that the Law is holy; the Law is good. The Law is not wrong. Then who is wrong? It must be somebody else who is wrong. Paul never thought he was wrong; yet one day he saw that he was wrong. Therefore, the right Law can deal only with the right person. Can any person be found right under the Law? Paul tells us that only those who are under grace are right, then sin shall not be the master over us. Under the Law, your purpose is not to sin, but you become a slave to sin. That was the experience of Paul before he was saved. After he was saved, it was different. He said, "We are not under law but under grace." It is not lawlessness. What is the result? The result is that we are no longer slaves to sin. What is the meaning of this? If we are to be delivered from sin, we have to be delivered from the Law first. That is Paul's experience.

How did Paul know? How did Paul learn the lesson? The light on the road to Damascus appeared for a moment. Many scholars tell us what Paul saw on the road to Damascus may be what he saw for his entire life. Even though he saw it, his life needed to be matured. The Holy Spirit needed to give him the word. Gradually, he was increased with the word. Thank the Lord, when he matured, he then used those abundant words to explain the light he saw.

Paul did not grow up instantaneously. Paul was a babe in Christ and then he went through a growing process. Through the growing process, from infancy to adolescent and adolescent to adulthood, the Law became clearer and clearer to him. At first, he only saw the righteousness of the Law. Because he kept the Law, therefore he was justified by the Law. That has to do with his salvation. At the time of his salvation, he noticed that the reason he was saved, the reason he could come before God, the reason he had a position in God had nothing to do with the righteousness of the Law. It was justification by faith. "We have been saved by grace through faith." All is grace. We are under grace; therefore we are saved. No matter what you do, it cannot bring salvation to you. Nobody did more than Paul. On the road to Damascus, he saw that the reason he could stand before God, the reason he had a position was not because of what he did; it was because Jesus Christ redeemed him on the cross.

Brothers and sisters, today man just has to believe. In regard to the Law, we know that we have been saved. But the Law has to do with more than just salvation. As Paul grew up, he saw that we have a right position before God. According to that position, we can come before God; therefore, naturally we bear fruit. This fruit is the fruit of sanctification. As we continue to grow, there is not only sanctification by faith, but justification by faith, and then glorification by faith. Naturally, it became clearer and clearer to Paul as he matured with time.

How did Paul grow? How did the light become brighter? Again, I say that light appeared for just a moment; there was no increase or decrease. But the word of God was taking effect in him, and as he grew, the more his life matured, the more the word of God appeared.

We have said that Paul was born under the Law. He was acquainted with the Scriptures since childhood. A child that was under the Law would often play a game, and I think Paul also might have played this game. The game is to find a verse or a phrase from a verse in the Bible, especially in the Pentateuch, in the Old Testament. Then you could call this verse your own verse. Paul could call this verse his personal verse; it is Paul's. How does a child know that a verse is his? He had to look for it. The first letter of the verse and the last letter of the verse should match the first letter of his name and the last letter of his name. (Probably few of you know Hebrew here; so, I am going to change Paul a little bit.) Assume Paul is not a Jew but an Englishman and he only reads the King James Version. One day he looked into the King James Bible, and he found a verse, Proverbs 16:18: "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall." The word *pride* begins with the letter "p." The word *fall* ends with the letter l. Because Paul is an Englishman, he spells his name P-A-U-L. Now Paul has found his personal verse. From the time of childhood, as they were under the Law and under the teaching of their mother, they would play this game along with Scripture reading, until they reached the age of twelve. At age thirteen, they entered into adulthood. At age twelve, they were held accountable to the Law, but prior to that they were not accountable to the Law. At the beginning of age twelve, they became sons of the Law. In other words, from then on they had grown-up, and all their actions were accountable to the Law.

ZEALOUS FOR THE LAW

Paul grew up at Tarsus in Asia Minor. Probably around the age of twelve or thirteen, he went to Jerusalem and most likely stayed there. The Bible tells us that he was not only a son of the Law; he was educated under Gamaliel and strictly taught according to the law of the fathers. Gamaliel was a celebrated rabbi at that time and he was a prominent scholar. Paul was taught under him, being zealous for God.

Paul not only read the Scriptures, he was not only a son of the Law, but he determined that he was going to live his entire life for the Law, to keep it as well as to teach it. He wanted the others to be the same as him, so he had to study the Law precisely. Therefore, he was strictly taught under Gamaliel. It was like a student attending today's university. The student attends the university for four years, and must read many books. Paul only read one book. His years of study were to understand the word of God. A rabbi is similar to an assistant professor in the university today. So he kept the Law and also wanted to teach the Law. He hoped everyone would be as zealous as he. Therefore, he spent many years in studying one book.

How did they study the Law under Gamaliel in a normal rabbinical school? The Old Testament is so thick, but this is their method. When you study, you have to read the Old Testament through different levels and through different angles. There are four different angles or four levels. After you reached the fourth level, you have graduated. After you finished the fourth level, it would be as if you had gone to paradise because each level has its specific name. Level one has a name; level two has a name; level three has a name, and so forth. If you take the first letter of each Hebrew character of all four names

and combine them, you have another word. It is the Hebrew word *paradise*, that is to say, if you read the Scriptures according to these four levels, you will then enter into paradise. That is Paul. Paul did not want to merely understand God's word; he also wanted to enter paradise.

Did he make his living by teaching the Law? Did he get paid for his teaching? Every rabbi must know certainly that God's Law and God's word were freely given. Therefore, no one has gotten rich by teaching the word. Each person had to have his own vocation. So Paul was a tent-maker; he made his living by making tents. How did he survive when he was in Corinth and Ephesus? We know that he was making tents. Many people went to Ephesus, especially during the feasts. There was no hotel, so they had to stay in tents. That is why Paul's business was very good. He did not earn his living by teaching the Law because he was truly devoted to God. He was faithful to His word. He did not preach the word of God because he wanted to become rich. He testified that he worked with both of his hands for his livelihood. God's Law is God's Law, and God's word is God's word. And Paul is Paul. This is how Paul grew under the Law.

In Romans 2:17-20, there is a statement in which he speaks of himself. "But if you bear the name 'Jew' and rely upon the Law and boast in God, and know His will and approve the things that are essential, being instructed out of the Law, and are confident that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, a corrector of the foolish, a teacher of the immature, having in the Law the embodiment of knowledge and of the truth."

REDEEMED FROM THE CURSE OF THE LAW

This is Paul. When he wrote that, he thought of himself. He thought of the time before his salvation and how he was the blind leading the blind and both were falling into the pit. Truly he was a rabbi. He was a true master. He was a guide to the blind and a light to them in darkness, and he was zealous for the Law.

Galatians specifically tells us, "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree." It is written in the Law in Deuteronomy 21:22. Paul never doubted God's word or His Law. The word of God is infallible. He read, "Cursed is every one who hangs on the tree." He knew that the Lord Jesus was hung on a tree. The Lord Jesus called Himself the Son of God, and that He was the Christ. According to the Law, according to Deuteronomy, it says, "Cursed is *everyone* who hangs on a tree." If the Lord Jesus was the Christ how can He be the Messiah? If you believe the Law then you cannot believe Jesus. If you accept the Law, you cannot accept the cross. What is a cross? A cross means to be hung on a tree. How do you explain that according to the Law, according to Deuteronomy? It means curse. How could the Messiah be cursed? According to this logic, Jesus could not be the Son of God. But now, the Lord Jesus has entered into the glory and His followers are still on earth. Therefore, he felt the need to eradicate all His followers. If you have them, you do not have us. If you have the cross, then you do not have the Law. If there is Law, there is no cross. Those two cannot co-exist. Is Deuteronomy wrong? Is the Law wrong? But the Law cannot be wrong. The fact is that the Lord Jesus was hung on a tree.

In order to protect the Law, to applaud the Law so that the Law would not suffer damage, Paul persecuted the church. He was zealous for the Law. He was under the Law, found blameless, having a righteousness derived from the Law. Did anybody see as far as

he saw? He could see that the biggest threat to the Law was these followers of Jesus. If they are not wrong, then we are wrong. If the Law is not wrong, the cross is wrong. For this reason, he had to persecute the church. He wanted to destroy the church. Therefore, he went to Damascus to seize the Christians.

When he was on the way to Damascus, our Lord met him. A light from heaven flashed around him. (Once caught, no escape.) This is the biggest turning point of Paul's life. Why didn't the Lord let the light flash around him when he was in Jerusalem? Why did He let Paul walk such a long way? That week was a very lonely week. From Jerusalem to Damascus, and from the gate of Damascus to Damascus, perhaps took him a week. It was a most lonely week because he was a Pharisee. Traditionally, Pharisees do not deal with the common people. But that week, the Holy Spirit moved in him. Just like in Genesis, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving in him. God said, "Let there be light, and there was light." When he was almost at Damascus, the light of the gospel shone on him. When he was talking with our Lord, He said to him, "It is hard for you to kick against the goads." What does it mean? When a farmer tilled the ground and the ox would go its own way, the farmer would prick it with the goads. The ox is stubborn and would kick back. It would get hurt and suffer. On the road to Damascus, before Paul arrived at Damascus, our Lord was that farmer. He was pricking at the conscience of Paul. That is why Paul surrendered. Even before that the Holy Spirit had already done a wonderful work.

STEPHEN'S TESTIMONY

How did the Holy Spirit prick his conscience? God used the testimony of Stephen who was a martyr. Paul may have debated with him before, probably in the synagogue. Now he tells us that the face of a martyr is the face of an angel. At that time, Luke was not there. Who told Luke that Stephen's face was like the face of an angel? It must have been Paul who saw the angel-like face. Here is the problem. If these people are to be eradicated, their face should look like the face of the devil. How did they have an angelic face? If they are right, that means Paul is wrong.

In Acts 7, there is a section of Stephen's sermon. It is a very long message in the Bible. He began his message with Abraham and went through the entire Old Testament history to Solomon. Stephen spoke item after item. Paul was educated under Gamaliel, so he was very familiar with the Old Testament. That day, the same Old Testament seemed completely different to him but he did not know why. At that time, everybody covered their ears and Paul also did not want to hear. If he did not want to hear, then how did he hear? Furthermore, who was the one that recorded the message and gave it to Luke? The Holy Spirit's goad was already pricking at him. Stephen's face was an angelic face. Why was the Bible that he read different from the one read under Gamaliel? It is the same Bible. The Old Testament is not only history but now there is the interpretation of the Holy Spirit.

Paul also knew history. Why could Paul not interpret it that way? In Stephen's life there was something Paul did not have even though he was a Bible scholar. He was an expert in the Bible. He was a total expert in the Law. Now he saw someone interpreting the Old Testament and it is completely different. Stephen spoke of the Law and how the Law was given through Moses. He spoke all the way to Solomon and about the temple he built. Again, there are two pillars in Judaism, the Law and the temple. After Stephen

spoke, before his martyrdom, what was the emphasis of his message? What was the result? Later on you will be amazed that it affected Paul rather deeply.

When Stephen was making reference to Solomon building a house for God, he said, “However, the Most High does not dwell in houses made by human hands.” He touched the nerves of the Jews. Then he said, “You men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are always resisting the Holy Spirit; you are doing just as your fathers did. Which one of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? They killed those who had previously announced the coming of the Righteous One, whose betrayers and murderers you have now become” (Acts 7:51-52). Please note how Stephen ends his message. At that point they could not listen anymore because it totally pricked at their nerves.

Lastly, he said, “You who received the law as ordained by angels, and yet did not keep it” (v. 55). Which part of the Law did Paul and these Jews not keep? How did he say it? “You have betrayed and murdered the Righteous One;” that is the story of the cross. “You said you keep the Law, but you nailed Him to the cross.” They ended up committing one sin, and it is *the* sin of sins. It is the greatest sin. If you did not commit any other sin, but you committed this sin, you have broken the Law. What is *the* sin of sins? They took the Son of God, the salvation that God had prepared for men, and crucified Him. They said, “Crucify Him; crucify Him.”

Paul was also delighted. He said that all the followers of the Lord must be eradicated. Destroy the cross and the Law is protected. However, Stephen reminded them: “You, who are the keepers of the Law, you think you are blameless as to the righteousness which is in the Law, as if you are sinless, but you committed a great sin, the sin of sins.” This is Stephen’s message. A person can be under the Law, yet end up sinning all the more. Paul’s sin was manifested. He could now see what he could not see before. Among all those sins, he never thought the greatest sin was to crucify the Lord on the cross.

Did those who were zealous for the Law accomplish the Law? They were very proud—“We have kept the whole Law.” The words of Stephen weighed heavily in Paul. The Holy Spirit’s goad kept pricking at Paul’s conscience.

Acts 7:55: “But being full of the Holy Spirit, he gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.” He saw the heavens opened. When a rabbi reads Ezekiel, he sees the heavens opened up. The heavens were opened for Ezekiel, but he only saw the *likeness* of the glory of God. Stephen saw the glory of God and the Son of Man standing at His right hand. If Paul heard this correctly, that Stephen saw the heavens opened, he saw the glory of God, and the Son of Man was standing to welcome him, then Paul must say, “If he is right, then I am wrong. Either I am right or he is.” Only one who is well pleasing to God can see God’s glory. Ezekiel saw only the likeness of the glory of God; now someone gets to see the glory of God. So the goad continuously pricked at Paul. Finally, all the people covered their ears and stoned Stephen to death.

All these people covered their ears. They did not want to hear. There was one person who listened and heard, even though he did not want to hear. Paul heard. Through what he heard and saw, the Holy Spirit used the goad to prick him, but he kept kicking back. He wanted to kick it. If he did not kick it, then the Law would fall and he would be done. The Law cannot be wrong, and he cannot be wrong. Therefore, he did not obey but opposed them all the more. From that day on, the church suffered a great persecution. Saul was ravaging the church, like a bear entering into a vineyard to destroy it. How is he

likened to a bear? He was cultured; he was a professor; he was a scholar. How could he shed the blood of the saints? The Law cannot be separated. He wanted to protect the Law, so he had to suppress that voice. The only way to suppress the voice of his conscience was to shed the blood of saints. That is the story of Paul persecuting the church.

On the road to Damascus, our Lord did not let him go. The Lord knew this person who was absolute to the Law. The Lord knew that eventually he would be absolute to grace. We do not know grace because often we do not know law. Here we have Paul who was zealous for the Law. Paul is Paul because of his relationship with the Law. But on the road to Damascus, he met the Lord. Paul was born again, and he was saved. He said that God was well pleased to reveal His Son in him. This is the story of Damascus. When he saw the Son of God, he came to know Christ. Now he was saved from within; he had eternal life. However, his mind was still full of the Law.

THE HOLY SPIRIT DEALS WITH PAUL

The Bible tells us that he did not consult with anyone. He did not go up to Jerusalem; he went to Arabia. Galatians speaks of Mount Sinai in Arabia. What does it mean? It tells us that Paul probably went through the Sinai wilderness arriving at Mount Sinai. God's word is God's word, but now it is not the same. Before he was saved, he had God's word, but nobody knew how to interpret it even though many rabbis tried. Only the Holy Spirit can interpret God's word. Now that he is saved, the Holy Spirit abides in him. It is the same Bible, but now the Holy Spirit speaks again the spoken word. It is the same Law, and the Law is holy; the Law is righteous. Now the Holy Spirit interprets it again.

When he reached the wilderness of Arabia, he had his entire Bible with him. How do we know? In his epistles, he made reference to each Old Testament verse verbatim. At the time there were no chapter divisions and no stand-alone verses in the Bible. Also, there were no punctuation marks, as if it were lumped together. It was written on scrolls. There was no computer when Paul quoted the Old Testament. Today you can turn on a computer and look it up even if you do not have the chapter or verse. Paul not only studied the Bible; he also memorized it. When the Holy Spirit communed with him, when the Holy Spirit moved in him, when the Holy Spirit shone on him, he saw what he had never seen before. The Old Testament did not change—not one letter or stroke shall pass away. God's word was not wrong, but the person who read the word was wrong. The Law was not wrong, but the one who kept the Law was wrong. You see how thorough was the work of the Holy Spirit? He did not deal with what Paul did. The Holy Spirit dealt with the person. It is the same Bible, the same Old Testament, but now the person is not the same. He has the Holy Spirit in him, so he can see what he never saw before.

Didn't Paul say, "Cursed are those who hung on a tree"? Is that true? That is not wrong. It clearly says: "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree." But He is also the Savior; He is the Messiah; He is the Christ. How do you explain that? It was the Holy Spirit who explained it to him. In the book of Galatians, it tells us that Paul had a discovery. He discovered that the one who needed to be hung was himself and that the one who was to be cursed was himself. "I should have been hung on the tree because that which is hung on a tree is cursed." It is because Jesus is my Savior that He did the redemptive work. What did He redeem me from? He redeemed me from the curse of the Law. Now you see the gospel of the cross. It is the same Bible. God's word is the same. Indeed, cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree. Our Lord was crucified on the cross for

you and for me, so that we can be delivered from the curse of the Law. He committed the sin of sins because he crucified the Son of God and was under the curse of the Law. He did not commit any other sin, just that one, and he fell under the curse of the Law.

PENTECOST

What is the good news? Thank the Lord! He said, “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us.” If he were in the Sinai wilderness, he would have been facing Mount Sinai. Whether he was actually on Mount Sinai is not important. But later, when he wrote Galatians, we see that Mount Sinai represents the Law. Maybe when he was in the wilderness of Sinai, as the Holy Spirit spoke the words of the Old Testament once again to him, there is one thing that amazed him. According to the traditional teaching of the rabbis, the first Pentecost that ever took place was when the people of Israel were at the foot of Mount Sinai in the wilderness. What is the meaning of Pentecost for the Jews? The most important event was the giving of the Law; then a covenant was made with God. The people of Israel are people of Israel because they cannot be separated from Mount Sinai. What is Pentecost? Pentecost for the Jews is the giving of the Law; therefore they can be the sons of the Law. They are different from all others in the world. That is the beginning of their history. This is the meaning of Pentecost.

After Paul was saved, the Holy Spirit abode in him. God opened his eyes, and he could see clearly. According to the book of Acts, on the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit was poured out on them, and they were all baptized into one body. In relation to the redemptive work, Pentecost is very important to the Christians because the Holy Spirit came on the day of Pentecost. The salvation that was accomplished by the Lord Jesus can come upon us because of the coming of the Holy Spirit. Now, the objective work of the cross can be experienced in the life of Paul.

Fifteen hundred years had gone by from the first Pentecost to the Pentecost when the Lord Jesus was crucified. One was the giving of the Law and the other was the giving of the Holy Spirit. The Law speaks of God’s demand. The Holy Spirit speaks of God’s supply. God did not do away with His demand. He did not cease from demanding it. But who can meet His demand? That is what happened on Pentecost. That is what happened with the Holy Spirit.

Galatians, on the one hand speaks of the cross, and on the other hand it speaks of the Holy Spirit. Galatians 5:18: “But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law.” He told us that if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law. Moreover, he said that we who are justified by faith might receive the blessing of Abraham. You did not know what that blessing was, but now you do. We are justified by faith and not justified by the Law. What is Abraham’s blessing? Paul said it is the Holy Spirit. We are the descendants of Abraham, and this is the story of Pentecost. Since it is the Holy Spirit, it shows us that if we are led by the Spirit, we are no longer under the Law. The Holy Spirit represents God’s demand, but it also represents His supply—that is grace. For this reason, Paul now sees: “For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law, but under grace.”

THE REASON FOR THE LAW

How do you explain those fifteen hundred years? Thank the Lord! Paul said in Galatians 3:19a, "Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions." The reason for the Law was because of transgressions. "...until the seed would come to whom the promise had been made"; that is, until Christ comes. Christ is the goal; the Law is the process. That is why it says in Romans 10, "Christ is the end of the law."

What is the Law? The Law reveals you and your incapability. How do we know that people could not keep the Law in those fifteen hundred years? God is not looking for ordinary men to keep it. All the people in the world could not make it happen. God is looking for experts. If the experts failed, then nobody else could do it. In fifteen hundred years, God found a group of experts; they were the Jews. They kept the Sabbath every Saturday. God wanted to use them to keep the Law. Throughout the fifteen hundred years of history, especially someone like Paul, the more they kept the Law, the more they saw they could not keep it.

Jews are very smart, especially the children. They cannot watch television if they are to keep the Sabbath on Saturday because if they press the on button, that is work. How did they get around it? Before sunset on Friday, they turned on the television. The problem was that they could not turn it off. In the same way, Jews do not eat pork, so how could they sometimes sell pork to the other places? Pigs are unclean. How can they raise pigs? They would defile the land. They said that their pigs never stepped on the holy land because they actually raised them on some planks of wood.

Brothers and sisters, nobody keeps the Law like the Jews. We feel shameful. God found in history the best experts, such as Paul. What was the result? "For the good that I wish, I do not do; but I practice the very evil that I do not wish." This statement did not come out of you or me. It was from the expert of experts, the expert of the Law. This is the expert teacher of the Law. It shows us that for fifteen hundred years God was waiting for men to reach their end before He could begin to work. After fifteen hundred years, men have failed. Since even the experts failed, we might as well give up trying.

What does mankind need? Mankind needs a Savior. Men need a Savior. For this reason, Jesus was born under the Law in order that we may be saved from the Law. That is the glorious salvation. In fact, the Law leads us to the Lord. Those fifteen hundred years are like the parentheses in history. Those fifteen hundred years tell us that no one can keep the Law. What do we need? We need the Lord to be crucified, to be raised from the dead, to be ascended on high and then pour out the Holy Spirit. They were given the Law; now grace has been given.

There is a very precious statement. I cannot think of any other phrase as well put as the way Saint Augustine put it. He said, "God gave the Law so that men can seek grace, but God gave grace to us so that we can fulfill the Law." Not one iota or a stroke of the Law shall pass away because the Law is good. The Law is right; we are wrong. Who can save us who are wrong? It is the work of the cross. From the first Pentecost until the Pentecost when the Lord Jesus was crucified, God wanted to put us under grace because Christ is the end of the Law.

There are two meanings given to the word *end* in the original text. One means "goal," and the other means "terminated." It has both meanings here. Now Paul sees. God had encircled him under law then led him to Christ. This is the work of the cross. Why did Jesus have to be crucified? Through fifteen hundred years, He allowed the ones that could keep the Law best, the ones with a strong will to keep the Law. However, if they

failed, nobody would have any hope. If the experts failed, everyone would fail. Thank the Lord, we have hope. Jesus is the hope of all mankind. He died for us on the cross and was raised from the dead. He ascended to heaven and the Holy Spirit came. The Holy Spirit demands and He also provides. Therefore, we are not under law because we are under the supply of the Holy Spirit. If it is the supply of the Holy Spirit, that is grace. We are not under law but under grace, as if there is no law. We are no longer slaves to sin. The concern of one who is under the Law is whether he has sinned. He becomes a slave to sin. Thank the Lord, the cross put us under grace and it is the cross that has dealt with the Law.

Let's pray:

Lord, for these words we want to give You thanks. Lord, speak to the depth of our heart. If You are willing, please use these words. Open our eyes, especially the eyes of the young ones among us. From day one, may we not only be delivered from sin but also from the Law. Listen to our prayer, in Jesus' precious name. Amen.