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Chapter 3 – No Understanding with Man

Unable to Grasp the Obvious (vs.1-9)

The Obvious Dichotomy of Faith and Works (vs. 1-5)

Galatians 3:1-9: You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified? This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? Did you suffer so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain? So then, does He who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? Even so Abraham BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS. Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham. The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, “ALL THE NATIONS WILL BE BLESSED IN YOU.” So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer.

The beginning of this chapter doesn't seem to start off well. Oh, “foolish Galatians.” And yet, that's a good description of man, really. Once again, because we have an uncanny ability to miss the obvious. That God so loved us is an obvious thing; that God created everything is an obvious thing. All the things that are out there that are truth are obvious, and yet we have a way of suppressing it. We were talking about that earlier in the first service. Truth is not opaque. It's not vague, it's not hidden. It's not nebulous, it's not darkened, it's not hidden in obscurity. The truth is light. As Scripture says, “Let your light so shine. I am the Light of the world.” Everything about Jesus, even the fact that you can go almost any place in the world and see people with crosses around their necks is telling you that somebody heard something that conveys about the message of the cross. Yet we deny the reality of it, we deny more specifically what it meant. Man suppresses that.

As we come into this, the foolishness of our mind, one of the statements that he makes throughout the book, if you look in Galatians 2:5,

“But we did not yield in subjection to them...”

He's talking about those that had really marred, and somehow undermined the truth.

"... for even an hour, so that the truth of the gospel would remain with you."

If you drop on down to verse 14,

"But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel..."

Once again, what we're dealing with is something that is clearly obvious about God's love for us. The love of God is what we received. It's what brought us to our knees; that's what brought us to accept His love. "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the power to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name." What drew me to the cross? It was His love; the love of God. So, why would I think at any point, at any time, that it's by virtue of my works, or by virtue of the law, by something I have to do? Why would I walk in that way? You know how you get up some days and you go, "OK, now I got to go to church." Ok. Why are you thinking that way? That's not the Spirit of God. That's not how you were saved. The way you were saved was, "I want to come to Him because of all that He's done for me." And as the grace of God inspires us, the love of God controls us, and it brings us to that point.

He starts off, "Oh, foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you?" And you've somehow been mesmerized by going back to works and effort; you've allowed this to come in and infiltrate your thought process. You're not thinking right. Truth is translucent, obvious, clear, apparent, and self-evident.

So, as we come into this passage, he's going to first of all begin to reveal to them that there has to be a clear separation between the love of God by faith and receiving that by faith, and the works of the Law.

So, he's going to start off, as we look at this particular passage, and when we look at part two, we begin to see what I would call, a clear dichotomy. Now, the reason why I would use this word is because "dichotomy" is stressing that there's a clear difference and separation between the two. So, he's going to be separating Law and works because somehow, they get blended. We come to Christ, we get saved, "It's all Him. It's all Him. It's all Him." And then somewhere along the line we go, "It's all of us. It's all of us. It's all of us." And he goes, "I don't even know how you got on that road. It's a whole different road." So, he's wanting to make clear within the passage in verse 2 in particular, that this is dichotomous, in its thinking.

(Galatians 3:2) "This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?"

Now, what he's doing within the passage is he's making a clear separation between the two. The law is works oriented. It's fueled by performance. It's fueled by rivalry. If you think about it,

it's very competitive. "Is that guy better than me? They're not going to be better than me." So, we're always working for positions and stuff like that. Well, that's fundamentally the Law, and selfish ambition easily goes into that mix. That's the works of the Law, because it's "What I can accomplish." It's "me" oriented. So, if you look at the Law, "It's something I have to do." If you look at faith, "It's something I want to." If you look at the law, "It's all of me." If you look at faith, "It's all of God." They're clearly two separate things within the passage.

He says, "How do you think you got the Spirit? How do you think you received the Spirit? Was it something that you do?" Ok, let's just think about this. So, you take the 10 Commandments, and you start memorizing them. You memorize the 10 Commandments, and you go, "Ok, I got them memorized." Ok. Then we turn to you and say, "Ok, start doing them." They work hard at doing it, and hopefully you're a lot better than the guy next to you because you want to show that you're really in. So, you start working at it, and maybe the details of the Law, maybe you have to memorize more Scriptures. You would want to make sure you never miss a service, and you want to make sure that you pray at least three times a day, as the Pharisees would go. They went into the realm of even fasting certain times every week. It doesn't hurt to sort of stack the odds in your favor, especially if it's works oriented. You find yourself waking up every day, not happy, but almost dreading, "Now I've got to do this again, and now I've got to do this again." The monasteries really weren't joyful places. The thought is, "I'm going to whip myself into this way of thinking." In Colossians, Paul deals with that kind of mindset in which he goes, "You can't. You're not going to change the heart by doing the external because by the works of the Law, no flesh will be justified." The very fact that we're trying to do it in the flesh, "*sarx*" is the word that is used for "flesh;" it really describes something that is transient and something that is frail. So, the flesh is both transient and frail. That means that it can't continue to do something and it's not strong enough to do something. Yet, we seem to think that we can have the Spirit of God, which is eternal, by virtue of the physical things that we do. Scripture is saying that's not how you received it. In fact, to be more specific, how you received Him, the Spirit of God, is by surrendering and believing; by hearing the word of faith. Actually, the way it's written is, "by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?" Hearing is you responding to the message; hearing is you heading and being drawn to something by virtue of it touching your heart. It's getting your attention. What are you drawn to? Well, obviously the gospel. The good news is that God loves you; that He died for you; that your sins are forgiven, and you're saying, "And I didn't do anything." It's simply by the hearing and the receiving of that message. Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. I do think it's important that Scripture seems to make the distinction that faith doesn't come by seeing, but hearing seems to be more connective to the heart; because you can hear the inflection of a voice. So, when Jesus will say in John 10, "My sheep hear My voice," what He's talking about is they recognize the inflection of the voice. There is that connection we have. As Hebrews would so much more aptly put it,

"Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your heart." I mean, you could literally hear the words of the Gospel 1,001 times and it does not touch your heart, but on a particular day, in a particular moment, the Spirit of God touches your heart, and you go, "I come. I come. That's the message I've been waiting to hear." And He opened your eyes, but your heart hears it for the first time. So, he's making a clear division, a clear difference, a clear separation from the works of the flesh, from me. I mean, you and I can't work ourselves into a state of righteousness, into a state of loving God.

This is one of the problems with the lethargy of man in which he thinks he can memorize certain phrases, repeat them over and over again; or he thinks he does certain things and by virtue of doing those things, it draws them closer to God. I've oftentimes had people ask me the question, "How do I get close to God?" And I think their initial thought is "What stuff do I have to do?" It's like the rich young ruler that comes up to Jesus, "What do I have to do to have eternal life?" And Jesus goes, "Wow, are you perfect? Can you do everything in the Law?" "I think I've done a pretty good job on that one." "Yeah? Sell your stuff and let's see." "I can't do that." "So, you don't love your brother like yourself, do you?" But the concept is that not only do we think that we can do that, but then we lie to ourselves when we fail to do that. So, instead of saying, "You know what, I just can't really do that." What we say is, "I think I was pretty close." And then we tell God, and we go, "Close enough, right?" Job kind of thought that until he got into the presence of God, and he goes, "OK, I shouldn't have been talking on that one." You come to the realization that it isn't going to happen. Paul is wanting to make that clear distinction at the very beginning of this, and as he says in Philippians 3:3,

"... put no confidence in the flesh."

None. I actually can tell the difference when I, as a believer, start walking back in the flesh and this is really the context of this. I mean, these are believers that he's writing to. "Foolish Galatians, you started in the Spirit. Do you think you're going to finish this out in the flesh?" I mean, you start off, and you're going, "Thank You God for all the things You do." And you find yourself having great energy for the Lord. Then before long, everything becomes laborious. "Now, I have to do something again." And it's God going, "Ok. You went back in the flesh, didn't you? You stopped loving Me." You stopped being thankful; you stopped doing it in the Spirit of God because when you have the Spirit of Christ moving, you are, as Ephesians would say, being filled with the spirit of God. Then you realize that this is the heart of Christ. I want to do everything that my Father wants me to do. It's just the desire of my heart. I have to keep bringing myself back. If in fact you ever get to the point where you find yourself in that laborious state of regulation and legalism, then you just stop, and you go, "Ok, why am I doing this?" And I personally believe it's a good time to just stop. Don't do anything. Just get your heart right with God. Come back to the place in which you came when you first received Him. "I

love you. You love Me.” And the Spirit of God begins to move in our hearts. So, he starts off by making a clear dichotomy within the passage, and then he makes a clear deduction out of this.

If you look within the passage, he says this in verse 3,

“Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?”

In other words, “being perfected” would be, “Are you going to finish this thing out by...”

The way that Paul will put it to Timothy is, “I have finished the course.” How do you think Paul could finish the course? How could you come to the end of your life, and you go, “I’ve done everything God wanted me to do.” Wouldn’t that be an amazing statement? Now, I can tell you how I was saved. I came to the Lord and said, “It’s all You. You saved me by Your grace, by Your power; by Your love, I’ve been redeemed. I’ve been forgiven of all of my sins, and I confess those sins to You. In fact, God, I can’t do anything right.” And He goes, “Good. Now, just stay there.” Because if I ever get to the point where I go, “I got this from here.” Then I’m not in the Spirit, but if I say, “To You be the glory, everything is for You. Anything I do is You; that it’s good is coming from You.” Then, wow. Think about it, He who began a good work in you will complete it. Think about that. I want to finish these days well, but I can’t do that. If I get in my head, “I’m going to do it.” By sheer resolve or by the works of the flesh, it’s not going to happen. I’m going to get frustrated. I’m going to get angry at people. I don’t know if you know this or not, but when you minister to people, they’re very uncooperative; oftentimes very unthankful. If you do your job well in in the flesh, you’ll get very angry, but if you’re doing the Spirit, it’s all for Him. However their heart receives, God will deal with that. That’s Him, but that I pleased Him, that I could say before Him, “I finished the course.”

At that particular juncture where Paul writes that, he couldn’t say, “You know, I think everybody’s happy with me.” Because he’s getting ready to get his head chopped off in 2 Timothy 4. So, it’s not that he made everybody happy, and many of the Jewish leaders are against him. Of course, Christ was crucified by the world, but he could say this, “I finished. It is finished.” The question is how do you finish? The answer is pretty clear. There’s a clear deduction within the passage, the flesh has not the power to finish; the flesh has not the desire to finish. You have to come back to getting your heart right with the Spirit of God; it has to be the Spirit of God changing you. Once again, sometimes you just have to take a break, stop everything and go, “You know, I want Your love to move me.” There’s a verse that you might want to underline in Galatians 5. Of course, if it was up to me, I’d underline every book.

(Galatians 5:6) “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love.”

That's a great phrase, isn't it? See, that's what makes it so different. It's not flesh, working through works, it's faith, working through love. As that begins to work, you begin to realize that you and I are perfected. We're complete. We're accomplished. We finished the course by the power of the Spirit of God within me. That somehow, I can't tell you how it happens, but He finishes the work through me, for me by virtue of me coming back and saying, "It's all You."

There's a great passage in Hebrews 3:6 where it says, "If you hold fast your confidence firm till the end." Who can hold fast that confidence firm until the end, unless it be the Spirit of God that won't let you deny Him? It's only the Spirit of God that will do this. So, as he goes on in the book of Hebrews, it's a great book because one of the great emphases of it is you have need of endurance, and what keeps somebody going? "I know what keeps me going. I'm just going to buckle down. I'm going to make another New Year's resolution, and this is going to keep me going." It's not going to keep you going. It's going to keep you failing and you'll do a really good job at that.

As Hebrews 4:11 will say, there's a diligent obedience that he makes reference to and a drawing near to the throne of God with confidence. That's what begins to move and motivate us.

When you go into the Hebrews 10, let me just mention a few of these, that we begin to maintain a sincere heart in the Spirit of God. Don't you see one of the big problems of religion is the lack of sincerity? That's why "hypocrite" is used oftentimes with people in religion. It's because there was this excitement, there was this joy. What happened?

He'll make mention of this, if you look with me in Galatians 4, to the Galatians.

(Galatians 4:15) "Where then is that sense of blessing you had? ..."

"There was a time when I came, you would have plucked your eyes out for me." Now, the reason he says that is when he was there, he had eye problems. He's fundamentally saying, "You were willing to take out your own eyes and give them to me." Well, who could make somebody feel that way? Well, I know. You sit down at the Law, "You should give your eyes for people." That doesn't do it, but if the love of Christ controls me, I might be willing to sacrifice, but it would have to be the love of God that did that. I mean, what would cause somebody to give up house and home? The Law could never get you to do that, and that's just what he's saying. "You foolish Galatians, you began a certain way. You understand what the power of God is. How do you think you're going to finish?"

So, Hebrews talks about the size of your heart. In fact, one of the statements that it makes in Chapter 10 is "without wavering." What could cause you to have a sincere heart without wavering? Not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together. Why do you think he throws that in Chapter 10? Because it's by the power of God that I have to be with the body of Christ.

No, no. Is there a law that says I have to be in church? No, there's no law, but wild horses couldn't drag me away. I want to be there. So, the point of the matter is that there's a power in us that is sustaining and maintains this drive, this encouragement. In fact, in Hebrews 10, it says, "And did you notice you didn't desire to sin?" What could make me not desire to sin? I mean, sin is so gratifying. It has a gratification, right? So, there is this willing spirit even to suffer, and he makes mention of that in in in Hebrews 10 as well.

Paul is stating the same thing in Galatians 4. "You were willing to do this. What happened?" He's drawing them back. He's bringing them back to that sense of the clear dichotomy that existed and now the clear deduction from that, you shouldn't be walking in these things. You have to remain in this place. It goes into the clear delineation of this.

If you look with me in Galatians 3:4,

"Did you suffer so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain?"

When we read this in English, somehow something doesn't really jump off the page for us the way that it should. Would you just take a moment and star at least, if not underline, the word "suffer," because really the word "suffer" is inferred in the word, there's no doubt about it; but in in a way, it's misunderstood. The word "suffer" really has more to do with a feeling and a heart than anything else. So, the word "*paschō*" that he used in the text means to feel extremely deeply about something. What that then oftentimes is translated is that it moves us to the to a point of suffering. Have you ever been concerned about something to such a degree you just couldn't think about anything else? Somebody says to you, "Look, just have a good time." And you can't because you're so consumed with this emotional concern or feeling. So, the fundamental point of this is that Paul is saying, "There was a time that you were so into what Christ has done for you."

How do we know he's talking about that? Because if you back up, Galatians 3:1,

"You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified?"

His point is, "You saw in a very visible way." He's not saying you were there, he's saying you saw in a visible way that love of Christ, as if you were there; as if He was dying for you. That's true when we receive Christ. We connect on that moment and that's what draws us to the cross. "He did that for me. He saved me. I nailed Him to that cross." And there is this sense of deep feeling and deep emotion that moves us. His point is, "Wasn't that what moved you to do the things that you did? It wasn't the memorization. It wasn't the regulations. It was the heart, and you were pulled into this by your feelings, by your emotions, by the Spirit of God saying, 'This means something to us, doesn't it?'" And that's fundamentally the verse. "This meant

something to you, didn't it? Was it in vain? Was it for nothing?" More specifically, "Did you think nothing of this?" That's an interesting verse, isn't it? "Do you remember the feeling that you had? What caused you to give your life? Did this mean nothing to you?" I could just see the Lord asking me that, "Did My death mean nothing to you?" Especially in days where I go, "Do I have to?" And Christ would come to me, "Did it mean nothing to you that I did this for you?" "Oh, I don't feel like being kind to my neighbor." That one always gets me. I won't go into the details of my neighbor. "Did you suffer so many things in vain?"

Watch the next verse because it will connect the text.

(Galatians 3:5) "So then, does He who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you..."

Now, once again, it's important for you to understand works. "*Energeō*" is the word where we get our word "energize," "energy." "Does He energize miracles?" The word "miracles" is the word "*dynamis*," which is "works of power." What empowered you to do what you did? We're not talking about you pulling a rabbit out of the hat. We're talking about the miracle of your changed life. As Titus 3 would say, "You once hated, and were hateful, but when the kindness of God appeared in His love for you, you were changed." What is it that did that? Once again, it was the Spirit of God. It was your love for Him. It was that passion that brought you to a place of even suffering that death with Him in the sense of the pain that you felt over what He had done for you. If you've ever gone to the edge of a cliff, and you look over, and somebody talks to you about somebody falling and splatting, it's like your body feels it too; that's "*paschō*."

"Does He who provides you with the Spirit and energize you with great power among you, do it by the works of the Law, or was it when you heard, and you believed?" What was it that caused you to do the things you did? There's a number of great examples of this and let me just show you a few of them in Scripture.

If you look with me in 2 Corinthians 7. If you remember, in this particular setting, there were those that had clearly done wrong and had been corrected by the church. Of course, the thought is "The worst thing that could happen is somebody correct me; somebody say that I'm wrong." That's the way man thinks, and God says, "That's the best thing that could happen to you because "Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but deceitful are the kisses of an enemy." (Proverbs 27:6) I thank God that He disciplined me, as the psalmist would say in Psalm 119; had He not, I would have gone astray. So, we become very grateful for the things because we know that the correction is not the end, but the very beginning of new life for us; that God is pointing us in the direction in which we need to go and need to be. So, in this particular setting, in 2 Corinthians 7, Paul writes this,

(2 Corinthians 7:9) "I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to the point of repentance; for you were made sorrowful according to the will of God, so that you might not suffer loss in anything through us."

That's a different way of thinking about it, isn't it?

(2 Corinthians 7:10) "For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation..."

Once again, had I not gone through this, I never would have seen it this way. The Israelites were taken into captivity, and one of the great Psalms that comes out of the captivity is they're crying for home. The point of the Psalms is that you now are homesick. When you were there, you didn't want to be there, but now we took into captivity, the one place you want to be on the earth is back in Jerusalem. Remember the Psalms where they say, "They're asking us to sing songs, but how can we sing songs about Jerusalem? If we start singing them, we'll burst into tears. We can't do that. But the day is coming when we're going home." There are things that happen in our life that set us back on track, cause us to appreciate the things that we need to appreciate and love the things that we need to love. This sorrow that came into your life produced a repentance without regret, leading salvation, not like the sorrow of the world.

(2 Corinthians 7:11) "For behold what earnestness this very thing, this godly sorrow, has produced in you: what vindication of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what avenging of wrong! In everything you demonstrated yourselves to be innocent in the matter."

What is he talking about? What he's talking about is, once you realize the forgiveness of God, it energized you. This is why Scripture says, "If you confess your sins, He is faithful and just to forgive your sins." Now you go, "Ok, He just says He forgives me." No, no. He forgives you and empowers you as if you were not guilty anymore. It's like he takes the guilt away. Remember the song we used to sing? *"Roll away. Roll away. Roll away all the burdens of my heart roll away."* It's that sense of complete freedom.

Once again, in Galatians 5, it was for freedom that Christ came to set us free. The world is saying, "Don't confess your sins to God. It belittles you." God says, "If you confess your sins, it will free you." See, that's why the world doesn't want us to do that. So, the great freedom that comes to such a degree that it causes a greater zeal. "Oh, no, I've got to confess my sins again today?" Every day you confess your sins is another weight off your shoulders. Every single day. Don't look at it as "I'm admitting I'm wrong. What a terrible thing that is." We already know you're wrong. What you want to be is free, and that's what repentance does every single day. You do that and "Thank you God for taking this way and showing me a different way and correcting me and getting me on the path." Because God is producing a sorrow that's not

regretful, but a sorrow that produces great and wonderful things. So, Paul gives that interesting picture that is given in the passage.

Then there's a passage in 1 Thessalonians. As Paul will start off in this letter,

(1 Thessalonians 1:2) "We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers;

(1 Thessalonians 1:3) constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor...." (of the Law?)

It's not labor of the Law, is it? That never would work, any more than it works in a family. If you do stuff in the family because you have to, it's never going to be a family. I don't care if you want to call it a family, it's not going to be one, but if the labor is in love and there's a steadfastness of confident expectation, that's what hope is. The confident expectation that God's going to bring good out of this.

"... our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father,

(1 Thessalonians 1:4) knowing, brethren beloved by God, His choice of you;

(1 Thessalonians 1:5) for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit..."

Where does the power come? The Holy Spirit that comes upon you. He empowers you.

Now, watch what happens,

"... and with full conviction..."

That's one thing law can't do. I mean, you can read a bunch of directions about something, but that doesn't mean you have a conviction that that's the right way to do it, especially me. You know, they send me stuff in the mail that I ordered, but you put it together, and Connie says, "Why don't you read the directions?" I go, "I don't read directions." Sometimes it'd be better if I read the directions. There are times I read the directions, and it didn't come out too well either, and I go, "See?" Anyway, the point is that the directions or the rules or the regulations doesn't give me confidence. There has to be a confidence in my spirit. There has to be that change in my heart. So, the point is, look, the Holy Spirit with full conviction came upon you.

"... just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you..."

In other words, "There was a genuineness among us."

(1 Thessalonians 1:6) "You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy..."

Now, who has joy in much tribulation? But something must have happened, beyond somebody saying, "You can't act that way, you can't do that." Something had to happen. I have found that the law can keep me from doing something, but it can't make me happy about doing it. In all of this, "you became an example." (1 Thessalonians 1:7)

He goes on to say in 1 Thessalonians 2:13,

"For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe."

(1 Thessalonians 2:14) For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea, for you also endured the same sufferings at the hands of your own countrymen, even as they did from the Jews,

(1 Thessalonians 2:15) who both killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out. They are not pleasing to God, but hostile to all men."

For most people, somebody gets dragged off, and then they get crucified on the cross, you go, "Ok, I'm going to distance myself a little bit." But they didn't. Why? What would make them that steadfast? It would have to be the Spirit of God that maintained the integrity of that message, and you see the same thing in the book of Philippians as well.

If you go into the book of Hebrews, as we were talking about the endurance that is mentioned within that particular book, one of the points that I want you to see is basically parallel to Galatians 4, where he says, "You would have plucked your eyes out for me, at one time."

(Hebrews 10:32) "But remember the former days, when, after being enlightened..."

That's a great way of putting it, isn't it? That is that stirring of your heart, "Pray that the eyes of your heart be enlightened."

"... you endured a great conflict of sufferings,

(Hebrews 10:33) partly by being made a public spectacle through reproaches and tribulations, and partly by becoming sharers with those who were so treated."

Identifying with those who were so treated. When you read the letter that Paul writes to Timothy, he goes, "Timothy, I'm in prison again. Don't be ashamed of me." There would be a tendency to avoid, especially when they start saying, "And who else is with this guy?"

(Hebrews 10:34) "For you showed sympathy to the prisoners and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property..."

"We're going to take it." "Good. I was getting too attached to it anyway."

“... knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one.”

You can't fabricate that in the flesh. You can't make yourself feel that way in the flesh. This has to be the power of the Spirit of God in you. That's what it has to be. Paul is making clear within this particular passage is, the truth of the gospel has literally changed everything. As we go on in this, he's not only going to show the clear dichotomy, the clear deduction that comes out of that dichotomy, but he's going to show the clear determination of God throughout all of eternity. That this is not a new message, and he's going to take us all the way back to Abraham, before the Law. He's going to demonstrate that this is the way it always has been. God has always been wanting your faith. It's always been faith that saved you, not your works. When you think about the fact that God called the children of Israel out of Egypt, this is a rhetorical question, do you know how or why He did that? Most of us think because the Israelites cried. That's not what it says. It says, because God made a promise to Abraham. That's pretty interesting, isn't it? Man would think even in his ability, because when the Israelites first cried, they weren't really crying to God, they were crying and complained. We don't even know how to cry to God, really, but it was because of God desiring to save us; because of His love for Abraham. Even when you go back to Abraham, you see his weakness; whether it's the weakness of Abraham, when the famine hits and then he goes, “Ok, so circumstances are now going to lead me.” And he steps out of faith, and he begins to work in the realm of “Now, I've got to manipulate this thing.” And goes into the realm of Egypt. “Well, Egypt is the best place to go because they have the Nile. So, it's the best place to go in the famine.” So, he goes down to Egypt and he's trying to work it out, right? In his desire to work it out, he comes to the Pharaoh. Pharaoh is attracted to his wife, so he can't say it's his wife because Pharaoh would just kill him to get her. That's what he's thinking anyway. So, he thinks, “I've got to protect myself.” Oh, so Abraham, you and your flesh have to protect yourself? Yeah. So, what does he do? By virtue of him working it out in his flesh, he makes things worse, and he lies. Now, he not only doesn't have Pharaoh on his side, in his mind, he obviously doesn't have God on his side because he's lying. I don't think his wife is too happy with him either, but his thought is “Somehow, we're going to salvage this thing.” And God reveals himself to the Pharaoh, and the Pharaoh goes, “You lied to me.” And God uses the Pharaoh to correct Abraham. Well, you'd think that Abraham learns his lesson, but he does the same thing later on with Abimelech, another king. Abimelech is the title, “Father King.” It's almost the exact same thing, “She's not my wife. She's really my sister.” And there the lie goes. I've oftentimes thought about that passage, and the reason why I'm bringing it in is for this very purpose, God reveals to Abimelech, I love the phrase, “You're a dead man.” I've seen shows like that. But God goes, “You're a dead man.” And he goes, “Wait, wait, wait, wait. I didn't know. Abraham lied to me.” You know what God said? I love this text. God says, “I know. I saw the integrity of your heart.” He says this to a foreign king who wasn't a believer. “I saw the integrity of your heart.” Now listen to the rest of the phrase,

“So, I would not let you sin against Me.” You don't think your heart matters? God sees what you want. Do I have the power to do it? No, but God sees the heart, and that's how he's going to judge us.

Closing Prayer:

Father, we come before You today, and it's our desire to get right with You. Lord, we realize that in my flesh by going through things, making lists, maybe resolves, I can't do this. But I remember a prayer when I came to You, and it went something like, “Forgive me. I receive You. I love You. I'm so sorry what I did. You've paid it all. You've done it all. Only by Your power can I be made right, can I do right.” You tell us in Your word that You want us to live that way too. We somehow forget. We get ourselves back in the equation, and we try to make things happen just like Abraham. We struggle, but You see our hearts, and how thankful we are that You make it happen in our lives. You reveal these things to us, and You bring us back to our knees, and it's like we start anew. But what's even more amazing to me, Father, is that You not only give me a new start every single day, but You help me finish the course; with as many side-turns that I've made, You somehow, in the power of Your Spirit, You finish the course for me. Father, we come in the simplicity of our hearts, and we come in the brokenness of this moment and say, Lord, if You don't change me, I won't change. If You don't do it, I have no power. Unless You do the work, I labor in vain in building the house. It's vain for me to rise up early; to stay up late. You give to Your beloved, even in their sleep. I believe this. Bring us back to that moment.

With your heads bowed and your eyes closed, I'm just going to ask you to pray in the quietness of this moment. Just you and God, but I'm asking you to get back to the simplicity of your faith. It's by the hearing, it's by the moving of the heart that things change. It's the Spirit of God that is moving that old heart of yours and is bringing you to a place of surrender once again. Be there. Stay there. Never leave. You will finish the course. He'll make sure of that. Pray in this time of quiet.

Father, take our life and let it be consecrated Lord to Thee. We give You all that we have, and realizing that we lose nothing by doing that, but gain everything. There is no loss to give up that which we cannot keep; to gain that which we cannot lose. We give You thanks for Your power in Jesus' name. Amen.