

GOD'S CALL

Major themes in the Scriptures

The Holy Spirit (17)

Freedom in the Spirit: justified

Reference: GDC-S18-017-Mw-R00-P2

(Originally spoken on 1 June 2014, edited on 5 June 2014)

Web site: <http://www.ajourneyinlife.org> and <http://www.ajourneyinlife.com>

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The Lord willing, today we will consider the subject, “The Holy Spirit”, the seventeenth message, in seeking to appreciate major themes in the Scriptures. A short summary of today’s message:

God wants us to know true freedom in all its fullness. However, this is developed progressively in different areas. There are greater depths and higher levels of freedom in the Spirit that we can enter into in our experience of being justified before God.

We will seek the Lord to appreciate more of what this means.

We have seen that true freedom is the power to be what we should be and to do what we should do. This applies in the spiritual realm; it also applies in the physical realm.

In the absolute sense we know that only God has that absolute freedom, both in the realm of the spirit as well as in the realm of the physical.

God does want us to experience true freedom and the most important aspect of true freedom is in the realm of the spirit. It is within our heart.

So I will concentrate on this in our consideration at this point of time. How can we have true freedom in its fullness?

We know that if we want to have true freedom, we must develop to become like God. Why is that so?

In the realm of the spirit, God has absolute freedom because of His absolute moral perfection, His perfect righteousness, without any sin.

For us, we are not absolute in our being; we are not self-existent; we are created beings, and it is easy for us to sin. We therefore have to deal with the area of sin totally, in order to have full freedom in the spiritual realm, and this we may develop progressively.

What do you think is the most important freedom that you would want to have in the spirit, in the realm of the spirit? What kind of freedom do you want to have in your heart?

From what I can appreciate from the Scriptures and in life situations, there are two major aspects that affect us very, very deeply, and we want to be totally free.

This refers to two different kinds of condemnation: we need to be totally free from these two kinds of condemnation.

The first kind of condemnation is condemnation by God: because of our sins, His judgment will fall upon us; and that is a very frightening thing if we understand what it means.

There are many people who take these things very lightly. They do not realize how serious this problem is. Many think: "It is alright, I just live my life as I wish and I have not done anything very seriously wrong. If God is a righteous God, He will accept me." They may not recognize that in reality, their lives are very repulsive to God. Self-centredness, self-seeking, the fleshly ways are so very widespread in the human heart and so easily take hold of us, and yet we may not think seriously about it. We need to know freedom from this condemnation.

This would mean to be free from condemnation because of sin resulting in the judgment and punishment from God.

Can we be free from that such that we can be justified before God, we can be acceptable to Him, that God can welcome us into His presence? Is this possible? God being a gracious God, He has made provision so that this is possible. But we may not quite appreciate the depth and the significance of it and we do not properly benefit from it.

The second kind of condemnation is the condemnation within our own hearts. We know that our lives are not right, we continue to fail to live a righteous life. We know that in our hearts, we are not what we ought to be and there is a sense of condemnation within our hearts. We are in bondage; we are slaves to sin; we do not have the freedom to be what we ought to be. The apostle Paul described it as "wretched man" - "Oh wretched man that I am!" The life of bondage to sin: striving, seeking, to live as we should, and failing again and again. We find ourselves condemned.

God wants us to be free from this condemnation as well. By the power of the Spirit of God, we can be set free from the law of sin and of death. We can live a life of freedom in the realm of holiness and righteousness in accordance with God's will.

For today, I want to concentrate on this freedom in the area of being justified before God: freedom from the condemnation by God, His judgment upon us because of sin – God's wrath against unrighteousness.

In this area, it is very easy for us to mistake what is true justification.

There are some people who think: "Being justified, as the Scriptures say, it is by faith. Therefore, if I trust the Lord Jesus and I accept Him as my Saviour then I am justified before God. I can come into His presence; I am acceptable in the beloved."

This is true but only if we understand the qualifications.

Many people do not appreciate the qualifications. It is true if the Lord Jesus is truly our Saviour in the right sense, yes we will be justified before God. But for many people, this is not really true. They want to receive the Lord Jesus Christ to be their Saviour but they also want to continue with their old way of life. They want to go to heaven but they want to enjoy the world while on earth. This will not lead to justification.

The purpose of God justifying us through the Lord Jesus Christ is not such that we can continue in sin, but it has to be in a context where we have decided to give up sin. If this is not our commitment, if this is not the direction of our lives then the death of the Lord Jesus on the cross will not apply to us. We will not benefit from it.

Then there is the other group of people who are so concerned that they must be right before God that they cannot imagine how it can be that they can be justified just by believing in the Lord Jesus having died for them on the cross. They must do something in order to help themselves to be just before God. So they are constantly worried that they will not be justified before God and they seek to live a life where they can do many things, which God may approve, and be acceptable to Him.

This is not uncommon and it can happen very often without our being very conscious of it. There are many things that we do that can be motivated by the desire to be acceptable before God and we do not sufficiently recognize that it is by faith and by faith alone that we can be justified.

So let us have a look at the Scriptures to consider what this means, how it works in life.

Romans 3: 19-24

- 19 Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God;
- 20 because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law *comes* the knowledge of sin.
- 21 But now apart from the Law *the* righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,
- 22 even *the* righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction;
- 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,
- 24 being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus;

Here the apostle Paul tells us: "...by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight". If we want to be just before God, to be acceptable before God, to be justified in His sight then we cannot do it by the works of the law. No matter how we try, however hard we work at it, we will not be justified. The reason is given: for through the Law *comes* the knowledge of sin.

We do not have moral and spiritual life in ourselves. We can strive and we can strive for all our lives and we will fail, and fail again. There is no spiritual, moral life and power within us. If we want to do it on our own in the flesh, we want to be justified by our own efforts then the law will show to us again and again we have sinned: through the Law *comes* the knowledge of sin.

“But now apart from the Law *the* righteousness of God has been manifested”. That is to say, now, instead of our striving to keep the Law on our own so as to be justified, God’s righteousness comes through to us through the Lord Jesus Christ: *The* righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe.

So it seems to be something very simple: “all those who believe”, “faith in Jesus Christ”. If we exercise that faith, we will have the righteousness of God. And from that angle, we can say it is very simple.

It is pure, it is simple; it is wonderful. The more we ponder about it, the more we can marvel at it: how God has provided this for us.

“...for there is no distinction; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...” If we have never sinned, then we would not need forgiveness. But all of us have sinned and we all need forgiveness. And there is no way by which we can be righteous before God by whatever we may do on our own. The only way is through faith in Jesus Christ, so that we will be justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.

Our justification is a gift from God; it is an expression of His grace.

Very often, we thank God for His grace but it is not pure gratitude, it is not pure appreciation because we also want to claim some credit. We say, “Yes, I thank God for all He has done for me. He has provided the way of salvation but then, I did this, I did that. I deserve it.”

Somehow or other some of these elements creep in and we think because we have done this and that, then we have contributed towards God accepting us.

Once we start doing that, we will move in a direction of negating the power of the cross, and this is serious. We need to take it seriously. We can never contribute to justification by faith by means of all our efforts. That justification is only on the basis of the death of the Lord Jesus on the cross. Forgiveness of our sins comes through His suffering for us. We cannot be forgiven because now we try to do good things.

The tax collector who cried out to God, "God, be merciful to me the sinner!" the Lord Jesus said he went back justified, acceptable before God: because he recognized his sinfulness, he recognized his need of God's forgiveness. There was a humble and contrite spirit and so God forgave him.

The same principle applies to all of us. We may not be, in our understanding, as sinful as the tax collector but the principle underlying it is the same, and sometimes we can be even more sinful but we do not realize it.

There is so much of pride and self-confidence that can so easily grip our hearts and we may not properly acknowledge the grace of God.

Can we properly see that it is by the grace of God that we can be forgiven, justified? And being justified in that way is a very wonderful experience: to be free from condemnation, to know that we can enter into the presence of God having our sins forgiven.

Many of us may not think very much about it. We just come into God's presence in prayer and it seems so straightforward.

But to be able to enter into the presence of God, into the presence of His holiness and to worship Him and to listen to Him is a very wonderful thing! Will we truly find the life of freedom because we understand that we are fully justified through what the Lord Jesus has done on the cross?

Then let us turn to **Romans 2: 12 and 13**.

Romans 2: 12-13

12 For all who have sinned without the Law will also perish without the Law, and all who have sinned under the Law will be judged by the Law;

13 for *it is* not the hearers of the Law *who* are just before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified.

This passage may seem to contradict what we have just considered: the doers of the Law will be justified. But we saw that we cannot be justified by the works of the Law; then how can it be that the doers of the Law will be justified?

A verse such as this may give rise to the idea that some people have or maybe many people have: that they must do something, they must keep the Law then they can be justified before God. So they strive very hard to keep the Law and that is what happened to the apostle Paul before his conversion. He was, according to the Law, blameless. He had zeal for God, he did everything he thought was good and right according to the Law. But what was it all? He said, "It was the flesh". By the works of the Law no flesh could be justified: then why did the apostle Paul say, "...the doers of the Law will be justified"?

This brings to us another aspect, which is critical in our understanding of being justified by faith. Some people think that the apostle Paul meant being justified by faith simply means you just trust – just trust. Just trust that the Lord Jesus died for you, accept it as a gift, you will be saved. But that is not so: the doers of the Law will be justified.

So if we look at the whole context, it becomes clearer to us that both aspects are true.

We cannot be justified by the works of the Law because that is our own natural efforts. We can never be justified.

But neither can we be justified if we are disobedient to God, we want to go our own way and we want to believe in the Lord Jesus. Being doers of the Law means we listen to God, we submit to His ways, we follow His instructions, we want to live according to His will. This is the central aspect involved in being justified by being doers of the Law.

Here the apostle Paul is telling us how important it is for us to pay close heed to what God has said. Whatever God has declared, we must take care that we be doers of the word and not hearers only.

The Lord Jesus said, "It is no use if you just listen to all that I have said but you do not live by it": It is this commitment, this spirit of living by what God says by obeying Him, by trusting Him because He is right, He is good, that we will be justified.

But it does not mean that we are justified because we have kept the Law. We are justified by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ - in the context by our being doers of the Law, in the context of our being obedient to God, in the context of our trusting Him, following Him. Justification cannot be by our own doing.

Romans 8: 6-8

- 6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace,
- 7 because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able *to do so*,
- 8 and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

So this tells us if we want to be justified before God by the flesh, by our own abilities, by our own direction, by our own power, we cannot.

The mind set on the flesh (which can also be translated as 'the mind of the flesh') is hostile toward God.: we do not depend on God, we do not truly respect Him and love Him; we want our own way, we want to do things by our own ability.

And this can happen even to Christians who are serious in their faith. They may not realize it but the reality is like that. They may be doing many things according to their own ideas, according to their own thinking instead of listening to God and obeying Him.

The apostle Paul, he said, "I thought to myself I had to do many things hostile to Jesus of Nazareth..." And that was his own thinking, and he thought that was zeal for God, he was serving God, but he was persecuting the Lord Jesus and the Church.

"...it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able *to do so...*"
In the flesh we have no life, we have no power to live according to the will of God: ...those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

Galatians 3: 21-24

- 21 Is the Law then contrary to the promises of God? May it never be! For if a law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law.
- 22 But the Scripture has shut up everyone under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.
- 23 But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed.
- 24 Therefore the Law has become our tutor *to lead us* to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith.

Ultimately, justification is by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, but the Law has a place to lead us to Christ; it is our tutor. So in the Old Testament, the various things that they did pointed to what the Lord Jesus would do on the cross; they were a shadow of the substance to come.

They were not justified by the blood of bulls and goats; they could not be. They were justified by the blood of the Lamb of God. But in so doing, in offering the sacrifices according to God's instructions, they were doers of the Law: trusting in God's forgiveness, in God's own timing, in God's own way.

The blood of bulls and goats cannot bring about forgiveness but it is that faith in God which brought them to the cross, even though they might not have appreciated that reality. But in so looking to God, God enabled them to be justified on the basis of the cross. The Lord Jesus Christ is the Lamb of God slain: It is God's perfect plan for the salvation of mankind and it applies for all generations past, present and future.

Romans 5: 1-2

- 1 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,
- 2 through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God.

"...having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ..." This peace with God is foundational, is critical if we want to find true freedom. If we do not have peace with God, we can never find true freedom. There will always be the judgment of God, the condemnation of God on our lives.

We must enter into peace with God and the only way that we can do so is through our Lord Jesus Christ, by faith in what He has done in a spirit of true repentance.

"...through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand..." This is the beginning of a life of wonderful richness; it is an introduction: to have our sins forgiven is the first step into this life of richness that God wants to give to us. God's purpose is not just to forgive us our sins but also to bring us into a life of deep fellowship with Him - a life transformed by the power of God.

“...and we exult in hope of the glory of God.” We exult, we rejoice, we are very glad, we are very heartened and we look forward to the hope of the glory of God.

The glory of God will be manifested in us if we proceed properly in accordance with what He has provided for us. There is this hope that we have if we move in that direction.

But the problem is even though we may have come to God by faith, even though we may have found forgiveness, it is possible for us to turn back. It is possible for us to diminish the significance of that forgiveness and we may then try to add on to what the Lord Jesus has done for us.

Galatians 3: 1-3

- 1 You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed *as* crucified?
- 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?
- 3 Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?

The apostle Paul was very burdened for the Galatian Christians. He preached to them, he saw them turn to God by faith, in the Spirit.

It was genuine; it was real.

They experienced forgiveness, they knew the Holy Spirit at work in their lives, but now they were seeking to be perfected by the flesh.

Though they began by the Spirit, now they were seeking to be perfected by the flesh.

They were seeking to keep the works of the Law; they were seeking to do the things, which they thought would add on to what they already had, to make sure that they would be all right.

Galatians 5: 1-6

- 1 It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery.
- 2 Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you.
- 3 And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law.
- 4 You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.
- 5 For we through the Spirit, by faith, are waiting for the hope of righteousness.
- 6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love.

The words here are very strong and we should pay attention.

The apostle Paul was very concerned that he might have laboured in vain with regard to the Galatian Christians because they were seeking to be justified by law. It is likely they were influenced by what was referred to as the circumcision party, who believed that you must keep the Law of the Old Testament to be justified. Paul said to them, “if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you”.

The circumcision was meant for the nation of Israel. It was a covenant between God and the nation of Israel. It was not meant for the Gentiles. And all Gentiles have the freedom to come to God anywhere, in whatever form and context, as long as there is genuine repentance and true faith in the Lord Jesus. They must not receive circumcision on the basis and thought that by so doing they would be justified before God.

He said, “You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.” The difference between law and grace in this context is that law implied their own efforts: they were depending on their own abilities and efforts. Grace is God’s provision: God’s love, mercy and kindness toward us, He made the provision – forgiveness as a gift of grace.

By so seeking to be justified by law, we have nullified the grace of God, we have rejected that – fallen from grace.

“For we through the Spirit, by faith, are waiting for the hope of righteousness. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love.” Circumcision was an outward form meant to portray a spiritual principle. It was not the means of justification. In Christ Jesus, circumcision or uncircumcision did not mean anything; what was important was faith working through love.

It is a moral transformation that God is looking for and that is what we must concentrate on.

So then as we ponder about this, we can see that there are different levels of our appreciation of the freedom in our hearts in being justified before God.

We may, when we first come to God in repentance, find that freedom and peace and we are very happy because our sins are forgiven. But with the passage of time, we may no longer be so appreciative of what this means and increasingly we may begin to depend on ourselves and what we can do, to bolster our confidence that God will accept us.

This must never do. Our confidence in being acceptable before God is always on the basis of what the Lord Jesus has done on the cross. It is a genuine and true faith.

The Galatians enjoyed that freedom for a period of time, but then they entered into bondage because they thought they were moving to a higher level by doing the things of the Law in that context.

So as we ponder over this subject, we need to understand the Scriptures correctly and apply this issue properly. God wants us to understand the meaning of being justified by faith.

When we are justified by faith, we will not boast in our works because there is nothing to boast; it is all done for us. And we may not like it - we want to have something that we can boast about: "I have done this".

On the other hand, there are those who are lazy, who do not want to do anything, they just want to enjoy what God has given, so they do not work. They say, "It is by faith. I believe. I enjoy God's forgiveness; I enjoy my life as God has given to me. There is no need for me to work like so many Christians working so hard. I can just enjoy myself." And so it leads to the life of the flesh.

Both of these aspects will lead in the direction of the life of the flesh.

So it is good for us to listen to what the apostle James has to say on this subject.

The apostle James was very concerned about those who thought they had faith in the Lord Jesus Christ but in reality they did not have: We can say he was concerned about false faith.

It is important that we recognize this. Otherwise, we can get confused. The apostle James talked about faith but he was talking about false faith and true faith. And in many instances, people are living according to false faith and thinking that it is true faith.

What we considered earlier of being justified by faith has to do with true faith.

So he said, "What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him?"

This is an interesting question: "Can that faith save him?" He says he has faith but he has no works. So what does that mean? So the implication here is: that faith cannot save him. He may say he has faith but it is not true faith, so that faith cannot save him.

And then he goes on to explain, "If a brother or sister is suffering, is in need but all that you do is say, 'Go in peace, be warmed and be filled.' but you do nothing, is that of any use to the brother or sister?"

It does not help him; he will still be suffering, he will still be in difficulties. So that is of no value; it is useless. Just say, "Go in peace, be warmed", but he is not warm; "be filled", but he is hungry.

Of course that does not mean that we must go around feeding all who are hungry, giving clothes to everybody who is cold. That is not the meaning.

But it is the spirit behind it, the attitude: we say things but we do not mean it. We say, "be warmed, be filled" but we do not really care. There is not that genuine love which will be expressed in works when appropriate, when it is a wise thing to do.

But many people are not prepared to do what is required of that kind of faith when it is proper before God.

So he says, "faith, if it has no works, is dead, *being* by itself". If faith has no works, it is dead. It is not real faith. Real faith is alive; this faith is dead.

Then he goes on with another comparison, which is also interesting.

He said, "You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder". So here he is talking about faith. You say you believe that God is one: that means you have faith, you have faith in God.

But he says, "...the demons also believe, and shudder". So it is possible that your faith is like that of the belief of the demons. The demons also believe. They believe God, they believe that God is almighty; they believe that there will be a judgement. They recognize it, they believe. But that is not faith that will save them because in their recognition of the holiness of God, in their recognition of the fact that God will judge evil, they continue in evil, they continue to persist in the path of rebellion.

So it is also possible for us to say, "I believe that God is one." We can even say, "I believe that God is the Creator of all things, the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, that the Lord Jesus died on the cross to save all mankind." We can say all this and yet not be saved because it is not true faith.

So he says, "...faith without works is useless". There is no value in that kind of faith. As far as the moral and spiritual realm is concerned, you will not find true freedom with that kind of faith.

And so he then went on to give an example: Abraham, he was justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar. What does that mean? Abraham could have said, "Yes, Lord I will offer up Isaac" but he did nothing. If that were to happen, then that would not be true faith. It would just be profession; it would just be words. It is not true faith. When there was true faith in Abraham, he was prepared to obey God when he understood that that was what God required of him. He was prepared to walk with God, do what God asked of him to do. So he offered up Isaac on the altar.

So he says, "...faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected". So that is real faith: faith must be accompanied by appropriate works.

So then he goes on to say, "...a man is justified by works and not by faith alone". So then what does that mean? Does it mean we must be justified by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and by works that we do?

That is not the meaning. He is here talking about what kind of faith are we exercising towards the Lord Jesus Christ. We can exercise a dead faith or we can exercise a living faith.

And he ended up by saying, "For just as the body without *the* spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead." It is a very interesting verse and not so easy to understand.

Why did he say, "the body without *the* spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead"? So it seemed to be that faith corresponds with the body and works correspond with the spirit.

But from our understanding, it should be the other way round: works correspond with the body and faith corresponds with the spirit. Why did he then put it the other way?

As I ponder about it, the most meaningful solution I can find is that he is talking about the opposites.

That means: true faith will be in the spirit, it will result in works that correspond with the body. But false faith is like the body. It is just words, but there is no life and so there is no works: there is no spirit behind the words in terms of living it out.

We can say there is an outward form; there is an inner reality.

Faith without works is false faith, so this faith then is an outward form. You profess faith. You can even tell people you are a Christian, you can stand up, you can be baptized – all these outward forms of faith – but without works, without a true response to God, without true repentance, without commitment to follow the path of righteousness: faith without works. And that works is the inner reality: a humble and contrite spirit, a spirit that has repented and turned to God to walk with Him.

So this kind of faith – faith without works – is false faith.

This is the flesh: the flesh that appears spiritual, it appears right but it is not right. And this is going on all the time where many people are professing faith in many different things, but it is not real.

Many people say how much they love God but it is not real. When it comes to the true things that they need to do to accompany that faith, they are not prepared to do so.

So there are different degrees of the seriousness of this. So that is why I have brought to your attention the importance of progression: we keep on deepening, developing until it is pure.

Very often, it is not pure. We have some degree of faith but we still have a lot of flesh accompanying it.

The other kind: works without faith. What is works without faith? That refers to works that are the outward forms of things that we may do, but it is without faith in God, obedience to Him, following Him. So what is that?

Works without faith we can say is self-righteousness: we are not depending on God, we are doing things our own way and we can say we have achieved so much. It is self-righteousness.

So that again is the flesh. So the body without the spirit is dead because the body that has the outward form, but it does not have the spirit of the inner reality, is dead.

When the spirit departs from the body, it is just a shell. There is no spiritual life and meaning.

So that tells us that in many ways we can live our lives like that: It is just a shell. It appears good, it looks like the real thing but it is not.

We can see an artificial flower. It can look very beautiful but there is no life in it.

So it is very important for us to carefully consider what kind of faith are we exercising. If we want to be truly justified before God, we must make sure that our confidence is in the Lord Jesus Christ, not in ourselves – totally on Him, what He has done. No matter how much we develop, however far we advance in our lives, that will always be true. We are justified by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; we cannot add on to it.

On the other hand, let us be very careful not to assume that because we believe, we profess, we are associated with believers... we are therefore acceptable before God. If our hearts are not truly repentant, if we still want the world, we still want to go our own way, we still want recognition then we are in danger of moving in the direction of the flesh that can lead to condemnation.

So the important underlying principle in true freedom is always: We must live by faith in God. That is the only way by which we can live a life of meaning. It cannot be any other way because we are created moral beings. We are created, so we must depend on God. We do not have life in ourselves. It has to be by faith. We have to follow His instructions; we have to depend on His life and power.

Even if from the very beginning we never sinned, it can only be possible if we depend on God from the very beginning: We trust Him, we obey Him, we walk with Him all the way. If Adam and Eve from the very beginning had obeyed God with all their hearts then they need not have sinned.

But all of us have sinned because it is so easy when we live in this world, with all the temptations, with all the spiritual warfare that is going on, it is very easy for us to sin.

But let us not be discouraged. God knows all this, but because He wants the highest quality in our being, He allows us to go through all these difficulties.

They can be very unpleasant, very difficult, but there is much meaning that can arise from it if we respond well.

But if we choose to go our own way – we want to live by our own ideas, our own desires, our preferences, our natural ability, we do not depend on God – we can achieve much in this world, we can even be respected among Christians, but we will not be acceptable before God.

So let us take care. We are created moral beings, we have the moral power to choose but we do not have the spiritual life and moral quality in ourselves.

So we must exercise our moral choice fully in the right direction and a primary aspect of exercising the moral choice in the right direction is to come before God to seek His help, to trust Him, to listen to Him, to obey Him and to live out our lives in the framework of what God allows us and how He has created us.

These are aspects of great significance. If we learn that well then we will find the wonder of being justified before God.

It is a very wonderful experience to be able to come into God's presence knowing that He does not condemn us, that our sins are forgiven, we can approach Him, we can talk to Him because of the blood of the Lord Jesus shed on the cross for us.

On that basis, we have that freedom of access.

It is good for us to ponder over these issues and to consider how we can deepen in this area of freedom in the Spirit in the area of being justified before God.

If we want to live our lives well and fulfil God's call in our lives, we must first deal with the problem of sin: learning to be properly justified before God by faith, in full obedience to Him, and depend on Him always, seeking to walk in the Spirit to fulfil the perfect will of God.

If we learn to walk by faith then what is open to us is limitless in all its richness and glory. But if we do not then we will move in the direction of darkness increasingly.

The Lord willing, we will consider further, freedom in the area of condemnation: freedom from condemnation because of our continuing to fail in the path of righteousness.

Can we experience freedom in this area? God does want us to know the fullness of freedom in this area as well, but that is a difficult path to take.

God has made all provision for us and if we are prepared to follow Him, we can know that freedom, and that is a most wonderful freedom, that if we attain to that in a significant measure, our fellowship with God will be so deep and meaningful. It will be something that will bring great joy to us as well as to God.

So let us not take our faith lightly. The potential is very great – what God offers to us – but we have to respond well.

And in the context of God's will and purposes, we can work very hard, labour in a manner that is most meaningful and yet not in the flesh but in the Spirit by God's grace, by His enabling.

So then let us come before the Lord and ask Him to help us appreciate more deeply what He has provided for us and what it means to be truly grateful to Him for what He has done for us on the cross: the freedom that He offers us, how much we should treasure that!

Let us ask Him that His Spirit may teach us such that what we understand to be good and right may become realities in our hearts and our being.