

Wednesday Evening Bible Study

January 19, 2020

Series – The Life and Writings of the Apostle Paul

Paul's Epistle to the Galatians

Paul's Engaging for God's Grace

Text – Galatians 2:11 - 21

Introduction

The Letter to the Galatians is very important because it establishes clearly and concisely that salvation is through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ plus nothing:

Paul later affirmed this principle in his letter to the Ephesians:

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." (Ephesians 2:8-9)

Salvation is from the penalty of our sins, which ultimately leads to eternal death in Hell. Salvation also brings us through a personal relationship on this earth with the Lord Jesus Christ ultimately to an eternal destination of Heaven.

Settling the questions of where we go when we die, and how to get there, are really the most important questions that we can answer in this life; and they have to be answered in this life – you cannot wait until you die to find the answers to these questions.

Paul's letter to the churches of Galatia answers these questions.

The Letter to the Galatians demonstrates that the Christian is saved by the grace of God, and also teaches that the Christian life is lived by the grace of God:

"But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith." (Galatians 3:11)

We saw in chapter one that Paul introduced this letter to the believers in Galatia by giving them an extremely strong warning – don't mess with the gospel of grace! The strength of this warning was magnified even more due the fact that it was repeated twice:

"I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed." (Galatians 1:6-9)

In the remainder of chapter one Paul reminds the Galatians that his salvation and calling to be an apostle came directly from the Lord. Paul was not a product of the Church at Jerusalem. His authority came directly from Christ, but was recognized and commended by the Church at Antioch in Syria.

In the first half of chapter 2, Paul explained to the churches of Galatia that there was a meeting held in Jerusalem, known as the Jerusalem Council, where the leaders from Jerusalem, as well as leaders from Antioch, settled a problem that had arisen in many of the churches because of legalists that had come from the churches of Judaea. They were telling the church in Antioch, as well as the churches in Asia Minor, that the Gentiles that were getting saved needed to live according to the Law of Moses, and needed to be circumcised. They were adding to grace. Salvation is an act of God, not of man. It comes through faith in the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, and not through any work (action) of man. These Judaizers were stating that salvation was not just through faith, but also had to be accompanied by works. Paul stated that this was completely contrary to grace. Paul brought Timothy who was a Spirit-filled gentile with him to the meeting. Titus was clearly a saved man who had manifested many proofs in his life that he was filled with the Spirit of God. He was clearly a genuine Christian, and he had never been baptized. If these legalists were correct, then how could they explain the salvation of Titus? They couldn't.

The Council of Jerusalem, which included James and the Apostle Peter, agreed with Paul. They concluded that the Gentiles that were saved were justified through the grace of God.

In the latter part of chapter two, however, we will see that Paul has to yet again fight for grace.

I. **Contention Over Grace (vs. 11 – 15)**

It seems that in every generation there are problems that creep onto the church that will cause us to contend for the faith.

Jude said:

"Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." (Jude 1:3)

In Jude's letter, the fight was over lasciviousness, or unbridled lust. The heresy that he was fighting was the idea that saved people could do whatever they wanted to do, and

live in sin because they were saved. This was clearly wrong. Because we have forgiveness of sin does not give us the green light to sin willfully.

Here in Galatians, however, Paul is earnestly contending against legalism, and, notice from our text that this time his contention is with Peter and Barnabas.

Notice that he rebukes Peter “to the face”, and “before them all”. Paul is not trying to compete with Peter for power or authority, he is merely trying to emphasize the importance of grace.

Paul later wrote to Titus:

"Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear." (1 Timothy 5:20)

Peter was wrong. He was denying fellowship to a group of Gentile believers who God had declared to be Peter’s brothers in Christ. Peter was afraid of what the Jewish believers from Jerusalem would think if they saw him eating with these Gentiles.

Under the law, Peter was commanded to stay clear of Gentiles. Peter was leaving grace, and going back to the law in order to please these legalists from Jerusalem.

Note – there are times when the Bible commands us not to fellowship with believers who are willfully living in sin:

"I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world. But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat."
(1 Corinthians 5:9-11)

If a believer is clearly and willfully violating the moral principles of God, then that believer is to be avoided.

But that is not what Peter was doing. He was denying fellowship to people merely because they were Gentiles. If God saves someone, then he is your brother in Christ. These Gentiles were not doing anything wrong, they were simply not Jewish by birth. By not eating with them, Peter was declaring that he did not accept them. Peter knew better. He was clearly wrong.

And, what makes matters worse, he did it because of the fear of men:

"The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe." (Proverbs 29:25)

Peter was being a hypocrite. He was a Jew that could not keep the law himself, but now he is demanding that these Gentiles adhere to the law. He was causing others to sin as well: Barnabas was being influenced by Peter.

II. The Creed of Grace (v. 16)

"Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." (Galatians 2:16)

Verse 16 states very clearly the creed or principle of grace. Man is not justified by works, but only through faith in Christ. Justified means to be declared completely innocent. It is far better than just forgiveness. It removes the charges altogether.

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." (Ephesians 2:8-9)

"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:" (Romans 5:1)

"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;" (Titus 3:5)

Turn to Romans 4:1 - 12

Justification illustration - It seems that there was a man in England who put his Rolls-Royce on a boat and went across to the continent to go on a holiday. While he was driving around Europe, something happened to the motor of his car. He cabled the Rolls-Royce people back in England and asked, "I'm having trouble with my car; what do you suggest I do?" Well, the Rolls-Royce people flew a mechanic over! The mechanic repaired the car and flew back to England and left the man to continue his holiday. As you can imagine, the fellow was wondering, "How much is this going to cost me?" So when he got back to England, he wrote the people a letter and asked how much he owed them. He received a letter from the office that read: "Dear Sir: There is no record anywhere in our files that anything ever went wrong with a Rolls-Royce." That is justification.

God is a little like the parent that denies that his child is capable of doing anything wrong. "Not my child!"

The point is that the Gentile believers were just as saved; just as justified as the Jewish believers. They were just as much born into God's family as Peter and Barnabas.

III. The Conscience of Grace (vs. 17 – 21)

Paul is stating here that it was a violation of the doctrine of grace to try to back again to observing the law. If we are going to try to live according to the law again, then we are transgressing against grace, and frustrating it. Paul said that any attempts to go back to the law would be an attack against grace.

The law can only condemn men. It points out all of their faults. But God's grace declares "not guilty". The receiver of God's grace, not only has his past sins forgiven and forgotten; but he will also not have any future sins recorded against his record.

If salvation comes through works, then Christ has died for nothing!