

**“Both Jews and Gentiles are Justified by Faith Alone!”****Galatians 2:11-21 (vv. 15-16)****Rev. Alice Tamrie, Bible Teacher****I. Historical Background and Biblical Context****A. Historical Background**

In Galatians, Paul is the author and emphasizes something that is important to all believers, the grace of God! Note that many people, not all, tend to approach God through the Law, which simply means doing what is right and obeying the “rules” of Christianity. This is called legalism. Galatians teaches us that we approach God through grace which is simply God’s power at work in us, causing us to want to obey Him and enabling us to do so. Legalism teaches that we obey God out of obligation; grace teaches that we obey out of love. Legalism urges us to “act right” through works of the flesh, while grace enables us to “be right” by the power of the Holy Spirit. Throughout Galatians, a short letter, you will find encouragement to live and walk “in the Spirit.” Only as you invite the Holy Spirit to come into your life and ask Him to help you in every situation will you truly be able to live in a way that pleases God. Without the Holy Spirit’s help and enablement, all of us are left to live as best we can in our own strength. With his help, we can relax, stop striving, and enjoy life.

**B. Biblical Context**

In Galatians 1:10, Paul said if he wanted to be popular with people, he would not be a servant of Jesus Christ. Basically, Paul is saying that an excessive need for people’s approval can steal our destiny. We cannot always be God-pleasers and people-pleasers at the same time. If we put the word to work, have you ever thought God could nor or would not use you because of your past? No one was more likely to feel that way than the Apostle Paul, who tried to destroy the early church. However, Paul received God’s forgiveness and recognized that it was God who gave him his ministry and his authority (Gal. 1:1). **NO MATTER WHAT YOUR PAST MAY BE, GOD WANTS TO USE YOU TOO.**

When Paul was called by God, he did not check it out with “the big guys”. He knew what God did in his life on the road to Damascus and how it changed him forever (see Acts 9:3-9). He knew this on the inside of him, and that he would never go back to the life he once lived. And he knew that for the rest of his life he would preach the gospel and remain faithful to what he heard Jesus say to him. When you stay with God, and wait on Him, you will see growth in your life and receptivity to your message. Paul maintains that in order to have a genuine freedom of mind and spirit, we must live a life, not in bondage or license, but through the spirit and power of God.

## **II. The Lesson: “Both Jews and Gentiles are Justified by faith Alone!” (Galatians 2:11-21 (vv. 15-16))**

### **1. vv. 11-14.** Don't be a hypocrite!

Just as the gospel is one gospel, no matter to who preached, so also are the commissioning and enabling of those who preach it one. The reason is that the one who commissioned and empowered both Peter and Paul is God!

### **2. vv. 11.** Inconsistent Behavior

The opposition that we see in verse 11 demonstrates that Paul is dramatically supporting his claim that he has an authority equal to and independent of that of the other apostles. He affirms he is so firmly grounded in the gospel that he opposed even Peter, contradicting him publicly when Peter's conduct threatens to compromise that gospel. In essence Peter had eaten with Jews and Gentiles, then he changed and ate with the Jews only. This brought unwarranted pressure and caused a division or a legalistic standard, a schism. What did Paul do? Since the schism was public, Paul confronted Peter publicly, charging him with inconsistency and stating once again that the works of the law have no place in God's plan of salvation through the death of Christ. There is always going to be the reality of human inconsistency (even among the best people) and the fact that in Antioch (Acts 15) was confrontation. But this situation is different – There was a new (a) a new issue-foods rather than circumcision; (b) a new area of the

faith-Christian living rather than the basis of salvation; and (c) a new subject- Jewish liberty rather the liberty of Gentile Christians.

### **3. v. 12.** Peter in an Indefensible Situation

Here is the reason why Peter was in the wrong or stood condemned. It was not a case of an honest mistake. Peter had already received the vision about the sheet and being ordered of God to eat whatever was there. **The difficulty was that he gradually gave in to pressure exerted by the legalizers, even though he knew what was right. In other words, Peter played the hypocrite.** The same Peter who denied Jesus for fear of the circumcision party! When certain Jews came, he became fearful, withdrawing all fellowship with the Gentiles. They acted in hypocrisy which is called here walking not uprightly according to the gospel. Hypocritical: insincere; playing or acting a part (Mt. 23:28; Mk. 12:1; Lk. 12:1; 1 Tim 4:2; 1 Pet. 2:1). Here they acted what they really were not and practiced something that they really did not believe.

### **4. v. 13.** Unbecoming Conduct by a Leader has Consequences

Unfortunately, conduct such as Peter's is not inconsequential, neither in his day nor now. So, one is not surprised to read that other Jews, including Barnabas, were led away by his dissimulation. Look, if Peter was a lesser man, you could disregard his conduct. But this was Peter, the pillar apostle, the companion of the Lord during his earthly ministry! What Peter did moved others. It is obvious that that any Christian must give heed to his actions and the greater the position or responsibility, the more important those actions become!

### **5. v. 14.**

Paul has already shown that he opposed Peter to his face because he was wrong, but we are not to think that he did this because he loved exposing error or, even less, because he loved an argument or wanted to enhance his own prestige. Amen... because we must do it with gentleness. Our concern, like Paul's, should be for the truth of the gospel. It was not a matter of personalities: "What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul?" (1 Cor 3:5). It is not a matter of trivial forms or ceremonies. What is at stake is the

gospel itself. The good news is that men and women do not become accepted with God because of anything they have done or can do but solely on the basis of God's grace in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is not enough merely to understand and accept the gospel as Peter did, nor even to defend it, as he did at Jerusalem. A Christian must also practice the gospel consistently, allowing it to regulate all areas of our conduct. Actually, the point is that Peter did not live up to his convictions and therefore, needed to be straightened out by Paul.

**6. vv. 15-21.** Justification by faith alone.

This Doctrine is summarized in Gal. 2:15-3:12; Rom 3:21-5:11; Eph. 2:1-10 also.

(a) Verses 15-16:

Emphasis on all Jewish descendants must be justified by faith. All religious must have faith...is an ironic ring. If Jews have faith, so must we! Paul and Peter were Jews. Justified is in right standing with God, not on works, but faith in God's beloved Son, Christ Jesus. The divine standard is for everyone. In themselves, all persons fall short of this standard- "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Rom 3:23). But in all believers they are declared righteous who believe, which is placed in all by Christ. It is not ethical, but expresses if you would, the judicial action of God apart from human merit according to which the guilty are pardoned, acquitted, and then reinstated as God children and as fellow heirs with Jesus Christ. This experience does not come automatically to all. It's a union that takes place only through the channel of human faith. Faith is the means, not the source, of justification. Faith is trust. It begins with knowledge, so it is not blind. It builds on facts, so it is not speculation. It stakes its life on the outcome, so it is not impractical. Faith is trusting Christ and proving his promises. It is a personal commitment, not just assenting to the facts concerning Christ, but actually running to him for refuge and seeking mercy. It also a commitment to not rely rather on any system of attempting to please God by good deeds. (1) A man is any man, anyone. (2) It is particular and personal. (3) it is universal (all flesh/no one.. Psalm 143:2, Rom 3:20).

(b) Verse 17:

Here Paul notes the argument of opponents; and then he refutes. This we must be aware of the possibility that a Christian can (and that all Christians do sin; if there is sin, then man himself is responsible, Christ is not responsible for it. Absolutely not! God forbid! Christ is not an advocate or promoter of our sin. It is true we are accepted by God as righteous when we are not, but this takes place only because God has first joined us to Christ and this in its turn implies a real transformation. We are “in Christ”; consequently, we are a “New creation” (2 Cor. 5:17; Gal/ 6:15). Obviously, to return to the old way of life after such a change is inconceivable.

**7. v. 18.** The Legalizers Accuse Apostle Paul.

The legalizers had accused Paul of encouraging sin! Sin could be encouraged if having once come to God by faith in Jesus Christ the one coming would then return to law as a basis for the relationship. But Paul is thinking if one turns from the Savior (whom the law anticipated) to mere ordinances/decrees. (Heb. 6:4-6).

**8. v. 19.**

Here Paul includes himself and Peter and then he turns it to himself personally being “in Christ”. Look at Romans 7, the law cannot bring life, for no one has ever fulfilled it. Law brings death, for by it we are condemned, but it performs a good function...therefore law opens the way to discovering new life in God. When man dies to his own efforts to achieve salvation then he will receive the gift of salvation that God offers. We are free through the death and resurrection of Christ, so now we can from now on live to God.

**9. v. 20.** Paul Lifts the Name Christ.

Here the name of Christ is prominent. Jesus died; so did Paul. Jesus rose again; so did Paul. The resurrection life he is now living he is living through the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ within him! How, by participating in the benefits of Christ’s experiences. It’s like a mystical union of the believer with the Lord (Rom 6:4-8; Col 2:12-14; 20; 3:1-4). So, to be “in Christ” means we are so

united to Christ that all the experiences of Christ become the Christian's experiences. Death for sin was the believer's death; his resurrection was (in a sense) the believer's resurrection (revival/rebirth); his ascension was the believer's ascension! It is a sense of crucifixion. We died with Christ, that is, his "old man" died with Christ; arranged by God so that Christ, rather than the old Paul, might live in him. In another sense, Paul (we/you and I) are still living, but the life we are now living is "by faith." It is a different life from the life in which he was striving to be justified by law. In another sense, it is not Paul who is living at all, but rather Christ who lives in him. This life I now live in the body I live by faith (by adhering to, relying on, and completely trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me!

#### **10. v. 21. Paul Corrects His Critics.**

Now that Paul has answered his critics, he objects to their doctrines, showing if they were right, then Christ died in vain! The heart of Christianity lies in the grace of God and in the death of Jesus Christ. We cannot earn justification by work or by our efforts, we would nullify the grace of God, and making Christ's death superfluous, saying in effect, that Christ's work was unnecessary!! God forbid! To think you can earn your way of salvation is ungodly, not praiseworthy and noble, that is stinky thinking, ignorant. True nobility and humility is to accept what God offers. One must either receive God's offer of salvation or insult him.

### **III. Conclusion. Everyday life principles**

- We approach God through grace, not through the Law.
- Believers are to reject legalism and embrace God's grace in every area of life.
- Walk in the Spirit, not in the flesh.
- Be consistent; not inconsistent, Christ is not the minister of sin...God forbid!
- The death of Christ on the cross showed me that there was no salvation by the law. I was crucified with Him and I live with Him. It is not really my life. It is His life that I am a partaker of. The life I now live in the flesh is one of faith in Christ, who love me, and made it possible for me to live by faith/confidence/hope.