

GALATIANS 2

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Galatians chapter 2 as we continue our study through Paul's letter to the churches in Galatia.

In our study last week, we said that this letter was not to just one church. It was a letter that Paul wrote to the churches in the region of Galatia: Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, Derbe – places that Paul visited on his first missionary journey. (Acts 13:14-14:23)

In fact, these were places that Paul visited on all three of his missionary journeys and where he planted churches in these cities on his first missionary journey to be more exact!

And make no mistake about it, this is not a warm fuzzy letter. This is a letter that is a blistering attack against the gospel of works that the Judaizers were spreading and now the Galatians were receiving!

Paul did not teach them a salvation that was based upon the keeping of the Law, doing works, but a salvation that was based upon the Grace of God by faith in Jesus Christ that was revealed to Paul or taught to Paul by the Lord as he spent three years in the deserts of Arabia.

And please understand that this was not some new doctrine, for as we go through this letter Paul is going to show us that the Old Testament Scriptures speak of a salvation by grace through faith and not by the Law through works.

Now, because these Judaizers were coming in and mixing Law and Grace together, saying they had the authority, Paul shows the Galatians that his authority to speak forth the Gospel message came from God, who called him from his mother's womb and at the appointed time opened his eyes to Jesus!

And even today we see this problem in the church, the mixing of Law and Grace and they don't mix, they can't mix. They are opposing ideas.

The Law says this. Because I have done these things and not done those things, God owes me heaven. Just saying that should be clear that this is wrong, it is not what the Scriptures teach.

Grace says this. There is nothing that I have done to earn me heaven, but God has freely given me a place in heaven because of His grace or unmerited favor towards me!

And let me also say this. Yes, Jesus said that deception would play a role in the last days, and we see that.

But for me, I would have never thought that solid Christians would fall prey to false teaching, false doctrine. But they are being deceived in these last days!

Yes, these false teachers are good, like they were in Paul's day, but folks, when you look at what they are teaching, it is so easy to see how wrong they are!

Remember what Paul said in Galatians 1:6-9, **“I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.”**

And like Paul, I marvel as well as I see so many being deceived and it is not because they do not know the Scriptures, it is that they don't believe what the Scriptures are clearly saying.

Let me share this with you regarding grace and how important it is in our lives every day we are here. We are told,

. . . a friend once told me that all our problems in life stem from our failure to apply the gospel. This means we can't really move forward unless we learn more thoroughly the gospel's content and how to apply it to all of life.

Real change does not and cannot come independently of the gospel, which is the good news that even though we're more defective and lost than we ever imagined, we can be more accepted and loved than we ever dared hope, because Jesus Christ lived, died, and rose again for sinners like you and me. God intends this reality to mold and shape us at every point and in every way. It should define the way we think, feel, and live.

Martin Luther often employed the phrase *simul justus et peccator* to describe his condition as a Christian. It means "simultaneously justified and sinful." He understood that while he'd already been saved (through justification) from sin's penalty, he was in daily need of salvation from sin's power. And since the gospel is the "power of God for salvation" (Rom. 1:16), he knew that even for the most saintly of saints the gospel is wholly relevant and vitally necessary - day in and day out. This means that heralded preachers need the gospel just as much as hardened pagans.

In his book *The Gospel for Real Life*, Jerry Bridges picks up on this theme - that Christians need the gospel just as much as non-Christians - by explaining how the spiritual poverty in so much of our Christian experience is the result of inadequate understanding of the gospel's depths.

The answer isn't to try harder in the Christian life but to comprehend more fully and clearly Christ's incredible work on the cross, and then to live in a more vital awareness of that grace day by day.

The main problem in the Christian life, in other words, is not that we don't try hard enough to be good. It's that we haven't thought out the deep implications of the gospel and applied its powerful reality to all parts of our life.

- <http://bit.ly/2wN8PEn>

Make no mistake about it, this letter of grace is just as important to us today as it was to the churches in Galatia in Paul's day!

Now as we move into Galatians chapter 2, it flows from what Paul was saying at the end of chapter 1.

So let's just pick-up in Galatians chapter 1, starting in verse 18 to get the flow of what Paul will be showing us this evening.

We are told, **“Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and remained with him fifteen days. But I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother. (Now concerning the things which I write to you, indeed, before God, I do not lie.) Afterward I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. And I was unknown by face to the churches of Judea which were in Christ. But they were hearing only, ‘He who formerly persecuted us now preaches the faith which he once tried to destroy.’ And they glorified God in me.”** Galatians 1:18-24.

With that as our background, let's begin reading in verse 1 of Galatians chapter 2 and see what the Lord has for us this evening as we study through His Word.

GALATIANS 2**VERSES 1-2**

In our study last week we saw that Paul's first visit to Jerusalem was after his conversion experience and it is recorded for us in Acts 9:26-30 where we are told, "**And when Saul had come to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, and did not believe that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. And he declared to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus. So he was with them at Jerusalem, coming in and going out. And he spoke boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus and disputed against the Hellenists, but they attempted to kill him. When the brethren found out, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him out to Tarsus.**"

And we saw this in our study in Galatians 1:18-19, this first trip to Jerusalem for Paul after his conversion.

Now, some fourteen years later Paul again returns to Jerusalem, not because he wanted to go at this time, and he was not compelled by man to go, but the Lord directed him to go by His Spirit and Paul went. Whether this was fourteen years after his conversion, or after his first trip, we don't know for sure.

There is also some debate of where in the Scriptures this event took place, but I believe it is what we read in Acts chapter 15.

Remember that many Gentiles were coming to the faith and because of that there were some Jews who were saying that the Gentiles also needed to be circumcised and they need to keep the Law of Moses for their salvation. Yes, they were teaching you needed Jesus, but to the Grace that Jesus gives to us, you also needed to add the Law.

We see this played out for us in Acts 15:1-2, “**And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, ‘Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.’ Therefore, when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders, about this question.**”

And James, the leader in the church there in Jerusalem oversees this meeting, a very important one for it deals with salvation.

And I love what Peter tells them, “**So God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to us, and made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they.**” Acts 15:8-11.

Remember, the Lord allowed Peter, a Jew, to open the door to the Gentiles by going to the home of Cornelius the Centurion. Something the Jews would not do! And He and his family get saved!

And Peter says that we are one in Christ, there is no distinction between Jews and Gentiles.

And Peter tells them that in regard to the Law, we nor our fathers could keep the Law and now we are laying this heavy burden upon the Gentiles, foolishness!

And the key for me is that Peter tells them, “**... we shall be saved in the same manner as they.**” In other words, the Jews are saved just as the Gentiles are saved, by Grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone and not by the Law through works!

After Peter then Paul and Barnabas spoke sharing what mighty works God was doing in and through the Gentile believers.

And in hearing all of this, James, the leader in the church in Jerusalem sent a letter to the Gentile churches in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia telling them, basically, that Salvation is a gift of God, not of works!

What an important outcome that was because if James sided with the Judaizers, then true salvation would have been lost!

We also saw that Paul is traveling with Barnabas, a man who was well respected among Christians, especially in Jerusalem, (Acts 4:36-37, 11:22).

And Titus traveled with them, a Gentile convert who was a co-laborer with Paul in the work of God.

Now, here in Galatians 2:2, we see that Paul was concerned that this false gospel was spreading to the Christian leadership in Jerusalem by these Judaizers!

And thus, Paul spoke to them privately. He was concerned that they would come against him and the work he was doing, spreading the Gospel of Grace, and thus, his efforts would be in vain!

Of this Luther tells us, “The believing Jews, however, could not get it through their heads that circumcision was not necessary for salvation. They were encouraged in their wrong attitude by the false apostles. The result was that the people were up in arms against Paul and his doctrine.”

Yes, some were but not all, and as we shall see, the leadership believed in a salvation by grace through faith.

VERSES 3-5

As Paul spoke to the leadership there in Jerusalem, things went well, they received his words and the evidence is that they did not compel or force Titus, a believing Gentile to be circumcised.

Why didn't they force Titus to be circumcised? Because circumcision doesn't save, the Law doesn't save, only Jesus saves!

You see, the Judaizers snuck in, they spied out the liberty that Paul had in Christ, the things that Paul and his companions were doing, and they were going to use it against them!

But it didn't work! No door was opened for them to spread their lie's!

Now, the big question is, were these Judaizers saved?

There are those who will argue that these Judaizers were saved, but I don't believe that they were for Law and Grace don't mix.

In fact, that phrase “**false brethren**” or PSEUDADELPHOS, (psyoo-dad'-el'fos) in the Greek, means “*pretended associate*” and has been translated “*sham Christians*” (NEB) and “*pseudo-Christians*” (Phillips).

Think of the cults that are out there and what they believe for salvation and everyone that I can think of has a work-based salvation mentality because Christ is not enough, He is not sufficient, He is not God!

That is the logical conclusion of these false gospels and the Judaizers were no different and they are still around today!

We have seen it in this Hebrew Roots movement, that is growing amongst the Gentiles! It is a mixture of Law and Grace and again, if you add works to Grace then it is no longer Grace, but God owes you heaven! Not at all!

And they are very good at what they say, they are deceivers and they twist the Scriptures and make it sound so good, and it is not good, it is evil, it is destructive, it is dangerous! Let me show you what I mean. We are told,

Here, then, is a loose definition of the Hebrew Roots Movement. It is a very modern movement that insists that we must resurrect first-century Judaism (our Jewish Roots) and the milieu and lifestyle of first-century Jews and impose them on both Jewish and non-Jewish believers. This is not just an academic study to better understand Scripture and its setting but is rather a movement of restoration that claims that the church has moved off its Jewish foundation and must return to a more Jewish way of life to be authentic.

Although there is great benefit in studying the archaeology, geography, sociology, religion, and customs of the ancient biblical world, it does not follow that we must reinstitute and copy those times, replete with language, customs, and even dress.

It is obvious in much of the HRM that it's not just the study of the first century for interpretation, information, and illumination that carries the day but keeping the traditions and practices of the Jewish Talmud, which was completed long after Jesus in the years 400-500 (*The Encyclopedia of Jewish Religion*, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York, 1965, p. 374).

Actually, there are two Talmuds, namely the Babylonian Talmud and the Palestinian Talmud. The Talmuds vary in many of their customs, traditions, and practices.

Jewish believer Stephen Katz expresses his concerns when he says, "Much of the Jewish Roots Movement is actually based on later Jewish/rabbinic tradition. More importantly, the question of whether Gentiles need to add Jewish lifestyle and return to Jewish roots was settled by the Jerusalem Council described in Acts 15. The remarkable news of the Gospel is that, in Y'shua, Jews and Gentiles have direct access to God" ("The Jewish Roots Movement: Flowers and Thorns," March 1, 2001).

In practice, many promoters of the HRM draw their content more from Talmudic Judaism than from Old or New Testament Judaism. Acts 15 addresses head-on the relationship of Gentile believers to Judaism. The Apostle James told the Jewish believers that they should not disturb Gentile believers. In verse 19, James strongly commanded, "I judge that we [Jews] should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God." Then an official letter went out to the Gentiles reaffirming the decision: "Since we heard that some who went out from us have troubled you with words, unsettling your souls, saying, 'you must be circumcised and keep the law'—to whom we gave not such commandment" (v. 24). In other words, "Back off trying to make Gentiles into Jews!"

I think you can see the danger here! It goes against the Scriptures! And it is so crazy the deceptions that are going on today and, again, it doesn't matter what you show them in the Scriptures. Which should be a warning to anyone and everyone!

One website for this group, Messianic Torah Observant Israel is one of these sites that is so dangerous and yet, people will go to it and listen as if the words this man speaks is from God. It is not, it is from the Devil!

I know, harsh, but when this person says what he says he is not speaking for God and the only other person who he can be speaking for is the Devil! His site is filled with doctrines of demons!

What proof do I have of this? It is really very simple, and I really didn't even have to research it because the web site itself tells us there is a problem – Messianic Torah Observant Israel! What is wrong with that? The Jews were never Torah observant!

And if you are on a web site, it is always good to check what they believe about salvation and this one is very telling!

He teaches that for salvation you have to believe in Jesus, which is true. But what does he mean when he says that?

I don't have to guess what he means. He tells us that to believe in Jesus is to believe in the Torah for Jesus is the Torah! So you must believe and keep the Torah, the Law for salvation? Get off that web site, this man is not even saved, and you are listening to him? Crazy!

This is what Paul is coming against here in Galatians and he is hitting this hard because this is a salvation issue!

VERSE 6

Paul's point is simple, these leaders in Jerusalem that were highly respected did not teach Paul but the Lord Himself taught Paul.

Please understand that Paul is not putting down the leadership in Jerusalem, his Christian brothers in the Lord, but his point is that God does not respect one person over another, all are precious to Him and all are important, He died for all!

Isn't our Lord wonderful, you can be a nobody in the eyes of the world but in God's eyes you are very precious to Him. You can be a nobody and yet God will listen to you just as much as He will listen to some highly respected church leader!

Never forget that, God is not a respecter of persons!

VERSES 7-10

James, the half-brother of Jesus and the leader in the church in Jerusalem, Peter and John were looked upon as the pillars in the church, not because they sought that title, but the people looked upon them that way.

It was these men that saw the power of God working in and through Paul who then gave him and Barnabas their blessings to go forth with the Gospel message of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles.

Now please don't come to the conclusion that there are two different Gospels, one for the Jews and one for the Gentiles, not at all!

There are some teachers, like John Hagee who believe this. Gentiles are saved by grace and the Jews by the Law! Not so!

There is only one Gospel and these four men wrote at least 21 of the 27 New Testament books, and 22 if you believe Paul wrote Hebrews!

Paul said in Acts 20:24, **“But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.”**

And if the enemy wants people to go off course, then you attack the salvation issue because it is that important!

Now we do need to deal with this, although many don't like it. But it is what the Scriptures teach and not what man has to say and yet, there are many today who will listen to what man has to say rather than what God has already said!

The issue is this. Peter's focus was primarily but not exclusively to the Jews and Paul was to the Gentiles.

I know, some are blown away by that, but why? Because when you consider that the Roman Catholics believe the Pope is the succession of Peter, that means Peter's ministry must have been to the Gentiles, but it wasn't. His Ministry was primarily to the Jews!

Of this Calvin makes these comments: “But if Peter's apostleship pertained peculiarly to the Jews, let the Romanists ask by what right they derive from him their succession to the primacy. If the Pope of Rome claims the primacy because he is Peter's successor, he ought to exercise it over the Jews. Paul is here the bishop of Rome. Therefore, if the Pope would enter into the possession of his primacy, let him assemble Churches from the Jews.”

Interesting thought!

After hearing Paul and Barnabas, the leaders in Jerusalem, gave their blessings to Paul and Barnabas and wanted them to remember the poor.

They were probably speaking of the saints in Jerusalem who were in need, which Paul did do, hoping to break down those walls of division between Jews and Gentiles.

VERSES 11-13

This was a confrontation that Paul had with Peter and even though Peter was a leader in the church, he was not above reproach! He made a mistake and it needed to be dealt with!

You see, as Peter came to Paul's home church in Antioch, he joined in their potluck, shared in communion with these Gentile believers. They had a great time of food and fellowship!

That was until the Judaizers came in, supposedly saying they came with the blessings of James.

So as these influential, powerful men came in, Peter separated himself from the Gentiles, slowly but surely, because they did not keep the Law of Moses!

Now Peter knew better than that for in Acts 10:44-48 we see the conversion of Gentiles at the house of Cornelius, **“While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word. And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God. Then Peter answered, ‘Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?’ And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then they asked him to stay a few days.”**

Then in Acts chapter 11 Peter defends his actions before the believers in Jerusalem and the conclusion of the matter is found in Acts 11:18, **“When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, ‘Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life.’”**

And folks, think about this, Jesus ate with publicans, with sinners, with lepers!

Now please understand that Peter didn't embrace the false doctrine of the Judaizers, that wasn't the issue that upset Paul.

What upset him was Peter's hypocrisy and the Greek word was used of an actor on stage playing a part.

Why did Peter do this? Because Peter let the fear of man drive him instead of the fear of God guiding him and that is always a snare when you let the fear of man drive you!

And what I want you to see is that as wrong as Peter's actions were, they also caused a domino effect with Barnabas following Peter and then the rest of the Jewish believers followed also.

As leaders we have a heavy responsibility to lead people in a godly way and not lead them astray.

And when you think about it, they were hypocrites – they did not keep the Mosaic Law and yet they refused to eat with the Gentiles who obviously did not keep the Mosaic Law!

What bondage the Law has people in when Jesus wants us to live in the liberty He has given to us!

Thus, Paul rebukes Peter for his sin; his error, which flies in the face of the infallibility of the Pope, (which Peter was not the first Pope) and that kind of teaching, which the Scriptures don't support!

VERSES 14-16

This had nothing to do with where they sat but what they believed in regard to the Gospel of Jesus Christ – the truth!

You see, the Judaizers came in saying these Gentiles were not saved, they did not keep the Law of Moses, they were not circumcised, they did not eat kosher and-so-on.

And Paul says they did not speak the truth regarding the Gospel and by Peter's actions, he was agreeing with them, endorsing them even though I don't believe he did in his heart, but his actions did speak otherwise!

Think of what they said like this, "You can only be right with God if you put yourself under the demands of the Law of Moses. You must be circumcised. You must eat a kosher diet. You must observe the feasts and rituals. You must do nothing that would imply partnership with someone who is not under the Law of Moses. This is the only way to receive the salvation of Jesus."

That message made Paul say, "**I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel.**" Galatians 2:14.

Thus, Paul rebukes Peter in front of everyone so all could hear the truth of the Gospel and not be led astray with their lie's!

Paul's point is simple, he tells Peter that he doesn't keep the Law; he has that ham sandwich or whatever!

I'm sure you could have heard a pin drop at this point as Paul exposes Peter's hypocrisy! If Peter didn't keep the Law how in the world could he pressure the Gentiles to and not fellowship with them because they were not keeping the Law?

It was foolish and Paul exposes Peter's sin and how hypocritical he was being by his actions.

Now why didn't Paul take Peter aside and rebuke him privately?

Because his sin affected others and they needed to hear the rebuke and the truth of the matter.

There were some who were mad at me when I exposed the falseness of the Hebrew Roots Movement in front of the whole congregation. They said it should have been done privately.

Agree with me or not, this was no longer a private issue because those involved in it were spreading it to others and thus, the church needed to hear where we stand in regard to salvation, that it is by the Grace of God and not by the works of the Law!

And I truly did not call anyone out that night. One of the people involved in this false teaching called himself out. I just shared where we stand in regard to salvation and I guess I could have called the person out just as Paul did with Peter here! But I didn't!

Now Paul goes on to say that even Jews are not justified by the works of the Law but by faith in Christ.

In fact, Peter knew that for he said in Acts 15:6-11, before the church council in Jerusalem, **“Now the apostles and elders came together to consider this matter. And when there had been much dispute, Peter rose up and said to them: ‘Men and brethren, you know that a good while ago God chose among us, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. So God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to us, and made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they.’”**

And we did cover this already, but it is important. Once again look at Peter’s point here, that the Jews are saved the same as the Gentiles are saved, by Grace through Faith and not by the Law through Works!

In fact, Paul tells us that there is no way possible for our flesh to be justified by our works!

Thus, it makes no sense for a Gentile to be circumcised according to the Law of Moses, to keep the Law, to eat kosher – all we must do is believe in Jesus and we are justified before God or declared innocent before God!

That does not give us a license to sin, we don’t sin out of love for the Lord, we try to live a life that is pleasing to God out of love and that does not justify us, but it is evidence that we are saved!

And we don’t try to accomplish this by our power, our strength, but by the Holy Spirit working in us and through us to accomplish these things.

We are justified before God, not because what we have done, but because of what He has done.

Now, regarding justification, one writer tells us,

Martin Luther said that if the article of justification by faith is lost, all Christian doctrine is lost. In this last section of chapter 2 Paul was inspired to introduce this most essential doctrine in the epistle, a doctrine that he had preached and explained to the Galatians on many occasions.

He uses the verb form of justification (dikaiooe) four times in verses 16-17 and the noun form (dikaisune) once in verse 21, where it is rendered ‘righteousness.’

In the New Testament these and other forms of the same Greek term are variously translated by such English words as justify, justification, righteousness, just, righteous, and justified.

The basic term was originally used forensically of a judge’s declaring an accused person not guilty and right before the law.

It was the opposite of being declared guilty and condemned.

Throughout Scripture justification refers to God’s declaring a sinner to be guiltless on the basis of faith in Him. It is the free and gracious act by which God declares a sinner right with Himself – forgiving, pardoning, restoring, and accepting him on the basis of nothing but trust in the Person and work of His Son, Jesus Christ.”

- John MacArthur

And Warren Wiersbe sums it up for us like this,

In justification, God declares the believing sinner righteous.

Before the sinner trusts Christ, he stands **GUILTY** before God; but the moment he trusts Christ, he is declared **NOT GUILTY** and he can never be called **GUILTY** again!

Justification is not simply “forgiveness,” because a person could be forgiven and then go out and sin and become guilty. Once you have been “justified by faith” you can never be held guilty before God.

Justification is also different from “pardon,” because a pardoned criminal still has a record. When the sinner is justified by faith, his past sins are remembered against him no more, and God no longer puts his sins on record (see Ps. 32:1–2; Rom. 4:1–8).

- Warren Wiersbe

How wonderful that is. And I can now be assured of my salvation, not because I am so great, so good, but because God is so great, He is so good, that He saved a wretched sinner like me, like you and that can never be taken away!

It is as Peter said in I Peter 1:3-9, **“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith - the salvation of your souls.”**

Our inheritance, what Christ has done for us, will not be corrupted by us, it won't be defiled by us, it will never fade away, but we have a reservation in Heaven that is kept, not by our strength or power, but by the power of God and we believe that by faith!

And the end of our faith – ***THE SALVATION OF OUR SOULS!***

It is as Luther said, “To give a short definition of a Christian: A Christian is not somebody who has no sin, but somebody against whom God no longer chalks sin, because of his faith in Christ. This doctrine brings comfort to consciences in serious trouble.” How true that is and what a comfort that should be to each of us!

VERSES 17-18

Picture in your mind what is going on here.

The Judaizers along with Peter and the rest of the Jews are on one side and the Gentile believers are on the other side, and Paul wants them all to know the truth about salvation, even raising some questions these Judaizers might bring up!

What are those questions?

Some may say,

“If we are saved by faith, our sins are forgiven, how can we still struggle with sin? And if we do struggle with sin then Christ must be a minister of sin because He didn’t make us right enough if we are still struggling with sin!”

Paul’s response to that question is “**Certainly not!**” or “***Banish the thought!***” of course not!

We are justified by Christ and not by works and yes, we still struggle with sin but that does not mean Jesus is the author or the approver of sin in your life!

And Grace does not give us a license to sin. We don’t obey the Lord out of the Law but out of love and there is great freedom and peace in that!

And Paul concludes by saying, “***If you try to keep the Law you are going to find more sin, it is not going to justify you, only condemn you!***”

We are justified in Christ and by trying to keep the Law doesn’t make us righteous before God, only Jesus can do that!”

Paul goes on to say, “***By going back into legalism, you are building up what you tore down! This means that you sinned by tearing it down to begin with!***”

And please understand that Paul is arguing that grace and grace alone can save us; and if you try to add the Law to it, it doesn't make us more righteous it only condemns us because the Law can't save it can only condemn.

VERSES 19-20

Here is a good question? How did Paul die to the Law? He did say, "**I through the law died to the law.**"

The law itself "***killed***" Paul. It showed him that he never could live up to the Law and fulfill its holy standard.

Think of it like this.

If you were robbing a bank and got caught and in the process of your escape you are shot and killed, you are not going to stand trial for your crime, you're dead!

That is Paul's point here; he is dead to the Law and living for God.

The Law is not dead, the Law is good, the Law is perfect, but we are not and trying to live under it to be justified by it only keeps us in bondage to it.

We are dead to it; it has no power over us to convict us!

Calvin put it this way, "To die to the law is to renounce it and to be freed from its dominion, so that we have no confidence in it and it does not hold us captive under the yoke of slavery."

Again, listen to what Paul said in Galatians 2:20, "**I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.**"

You see, Christianity isn't rehabilitation or reformation. It isn't turning over a new leaf and trying to reinvent yourself. Not at all!

Christianity is death and resurrection and that is something no Law or determination could accomplish. Please understand this, ***IT IS A MIRACLE!***

That's why the Christian life is a supernatural life with supernatural power available to live it. It is a life that is lived by ***FAITH!***

Remember what Paul said in Romans 3:19-20, **"Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin."**

Thus, Paul died to the Law so he may live unto God!

Paul crucified the flesh life; he gave his life up so that the life of Christ would live in him and this is all a life of faith and not of works.

Luther put it this way, "Blessed is the person who knows how to use this truth in times of distress. He can talk. He can say: 'Mr. Law, go ahead and accuse me as much as you like. I know I have committed many sins, and I continue to sin daily. But that does not bother me. You have got to shout louder, Mr. Law. I am deaf, you know. Talk as much as you like, I am dead to you. If you want to talk to me about my sins, go and talk to my flesh. Belabor that, but don't talk to my conscience. My conscience is a lady and a queen, and has nothing to do with the likes of you, because my conscience lives to Christ under another law, a new and better law, the law of grace.'"

You see, God has done this for us, and we have the nerve to say to Him, ***"Thanks, but it is not enough. Now I have to work my way into heaven, I have to complete the work!"***

Paul will conclude this chapter dealing with this point, and it is a powerful point as he looks at the Law and Grace. May we learn from it. May we receive God's grace and not try to add to it works.

In fact, if you truly want to live by the Law, then you will die by the Law, as James 2:10 tells us, "**For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all.**"

VERSE 21

Listen to how The Amplified Bible puts this verse, it is powerful.

It says, "**[Therefore, I do not treat God's gracious gift as something of minor importance and defeat its very purpose]; I do not set aside and invalidate and frustrate and nullify the grace (unmerited favor) of God. For if justification (righteousness, acquittal from guilt) comes through [observing the ritual of] the Law, then Christ (the Messiah) died groundlessly and to no purpose and in vain. [His death was then wholly superfluous.]**"

It is as Morris tells us, "To nullify grace would be to put one's trust, not in salvation as God's free gift, but in one's own efforts. To do this is to reject grace altogether, and relying on one's puny effort means that one nullifies that grace." Absolutely!

You see, Paul is saying to Peter and the Judaizers, to all who are there and to us today, if you try to obtain salvation by the Law then you nullify or neutralize the grace of God, you are rejecting it!

Do you see how diametrically opposed Law and Grace are? They don't mix!

It is as Jesus said in the Garden of Gethsemane, before He went to the cross, **“Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to the disciples, ‘Sit here while I go and pray over there.’ And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and He began to be sorrowful and deeply distressed. Then He said to them, ‘My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch with Me.’ He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, ‘O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.’ Then He came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, ‘What! Could you not watch with Me one hour? Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.’ Again, a second time, He went away and prayed, saying, ‘O My Father, if this cup cannot pass away from Me unless I drink it, Your will be done.’ And He came and found them asleep again, for their eyes were heavy. So He left them, went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words. Then He came to His disciples and said to them, ‘Are you still sleeping and resting? Behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going. See, My betrayer is at hand.’”** Matthew 26:36-46.

You see, there is no other way and if there was, then the Father ignored the prayer of Jesus in the Garden, but of course we know that is not true.

To put this all into perspective, listen to these quotes from Luther:

“What awful presumption to imagine that there is any work good enough to pacify God, when to pacify God required the invaluable price of the death and blood of His own and only Son?”

“If my salvation was so difficult to accomplish that it necessitated the death of Christ, then all my works, all the righteousness of the Law, are good for nothing. How can I buy for a penny what cost a million dollars?”

“Those who intend to obtain righteousness by their own efforts do not say in so many words: ‘I am God; I am Christ.’ But it amounts to that. They usurp the divinity and office of Christ. The effect is the same as if they said, ‘I am Christ, I am Savior. I save myself and others.’”

That is pretty powerful, and it is exactly Paul’s point here, and this is from The Living Bible, **“I am not one of those who treats Christ’s death as meaningless. For if we could be saved by keeping Jewish laws, then there was no need for Christ to die.”**

That is the reality folks, does Grace save you through faith or the Law through Works? One saves and the other leads to death, spiritual death!

It is only by grace we are saved as Paul said in Ephesians 2:8-9, and this is from The Amplified Bible, **“For it is by free grace (God’s unmerited favor) that you are saved (delivered from judgment and made partakers of Christ’s salvation) through [your] faith. And this [salvation] is not of yourselves [of your own doing, it came not through your own striving], but it is the gift of God; Not because of works [not the fulfillment of the Law’s demands], lest any man should boast. [It is not the result of what anyone can possibly do, so no one can pride himself in it or take glory to himself.]”**

And let me say this. It is not always easy to confront false doctrine because to do so you must confront people.

But Paul was willing to do that because it was a matter of life and death.

As I close this evening let me leave you with these words to think about.

One writer put it like this, “The deepest heresy of all, which corrupts churches, leavens creeds with folly, and swells our human hearts with pride, is salvation by works. ‘I believe,’ writes John Ruskin, ‘that the root of every schism and heresy from which the Christian Church has suffered, has been the effort to earn salvation rather than to receive it; and that one reason why preaching is so ineffective is that it calls on men oftener to work for God than to behold God working for them.’” (Source Unknown)

It is as Paul said in Galatians 2:16, again from The Amplified Bible, **“Yet we know that a man is justified or reckoned righteous and in right standing with God not by works of the Law, but [only] through faith and [absolute] reliance on and adherence to and trust in Jesus Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed One). [Therefore] even we [ourselves] have believed on Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the Law [for we cannot be justified by any observance of the ritual of the Law given by Moses], because by keeping legal rituals and by works no human being can ever be justified (declared righteous and put in right standing with God). [Ps 143:2.]”**

AMEN to that!

You can believe it or reject it, but it doesn't change the truth of the matter. We are saved by Grace through Faith and not by the Law through works!

And because of that, we can have an assurance of our salvation. The work that Christ began in us, He will complete!

Praise God for *HIS AMAZING GRACE!*