

Galatians 2: 18 – 3: 5

Lesson Five

Grace verses Works

The Word of Reconciliation

In our previous study, we noted that Paul shared two incidents to the Galatians.

The first incident, which took place in Jerusalem, served to point out to them the difference between the false concept of salvation by works and the Gospel message of salvation by grace.

The second of these two incidents, in Antioch, emphasized that spirituality, like salvation, is also a product of faith, ***not of works, lest any man should boast (Ephesians 2: 9).***

No one is ever saved or justified by works of the law because the Law is nothing more than a mirror to reflect a person's own unrighteousness and to convince him of his need to receive God's gift of salvation.

It is impossible for one to work to become righteous, we are declared righteous by God.

With this thought in mind, let us continue our study in the second chapter of the letter.

Crucified with Christ

Galatians 2: 18-21 For if I rebuild what I tore down, I prove myself to be a transgressor.

19 For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God.

20 I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

21 I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose.

Now let us break this down a verse at a time.

18 For if I rebuild what I tore down, I prove myself to be a transgressor.

When Paul speaks of building again things which he destroyed, he is referring to going back to the Law to seek justification.

He says this because he knows that since Jesus has already fulfilled the Law on his behalf, the Law will never be valid for him again.

To go back and try to resurrect it is to make himself a transgressor.

God never makes any person a transgressor.

People do that to themselves.

They do that by choosing the dead Law over a living Lord.

That is self-deception.

It is bad enough for a person to allow someone else to deceive you, it's even worse to deceive yourself.

19 For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God.

The Law was not designed to give life, it was designed to kill.

A drastic way of attempting to convey the truth of this matter is to say that attempting to achieve salvation by the Law is a form of committing spiritual suicide.

Not a pretty picture, but it is not supposed to be.

Look at ***II Corinthians 3: 6 who has made us sufficient to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.***

So, the Law kills.

No one knew the truth of that statement better than Paul.

Until his conversion on the road to Damascus, he had been a Pharisee, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, ***touching the righteousness which is in the Law, blameless (Philippians 3: 6).***

So, he knew what he was talking about when he said the Law kills.

However, that's a good thing to know.

Once a person realizes that they are dead, there is hope that they will turn to the Lord Who alone can give them life.

That is the one purpose of the Law: to kill so that God can resurrect to eternal life.

Paul recognized this truth!

20 I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

The King James Version of the bible had this verse translated in a way that didn't convey the truth.

However, the English Standard Version has it worded better for us.

The KJV used these words, ***I am crucified with Christ***, instead of, ***I have been crucified with Christ***.

The Greek verb tense is important because this a past work which has already been completed, *in Christ*.

The sooner we learn this truth the sooner we will find ourselves set free from the sins of this life that so easily besets us!

Like Christ, we were crucified once and for all the moment we identified with His crucifixion and were born again of the Spirit of God.

We died on the cross with our Lord.

We were buried with Him in death.

We were resurrected with Him to new life.

We ascended with Him and now we are seated with Him in heavenly places, (Ephesians 2: 5-6).

Aren't we glad that Jesus is not still on the cross?

Neither are you and me.

Our old man was nailed to the cross.



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He, the old man, is dead, and new life has been given to us.

Look at ***II Corinthians 5: 17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.***

Now at ***Romans 8: 2 For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.***

At LifeSpring Bible Church, we have spent a great deal of time talking about the need to make certain that we are sheep, under the care of the great Shepard, and not goats that are judged unworthy to enter heaven at the final judgement.

Jesus Himself spent a great deal of His life on earth, teaching us what that kind of life looks like.

However, the moment we began to treat visiting those in prison, feeding the hungry and helping the poor and the homeless like it is a box to check to make certain we are going to heaven, is the moment we have moved from trust in the grace, favor and mercy of God, as well as faith in the finished work Christ, to working to earn our salvation.

I can't help but believe that when we accept Paul's teaching on the grace of God the way that we should, it will set us free from the ways of this world as well as thinking that we can earn our way to heaven.

I like to think that grace is God's way of reaching out to us, and faith is our way of reaching out to God.

But God reached out first, and we reached out second.

21 I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose.

What Paul is saying here is that, ***I do not nullify the grace of God by my self-efforts to attain righteousness because if righteousness could be gained by works of the Law, then Christ died for nothing.***

Works of Law or Hearing of Faith?

Galatians 3: 1-5



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1 O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified.

2 Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by 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?

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

5 Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith

Now, once again, let's break this down verse by verse.

1 O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified.

I wanted to share this particular passage of scripture with you from the Amplified Version of the bible; ***O you foolish and thoughtless and superficial Galatians, who has bewitched you [that you would act like this], to whom—right before your very eyes—Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified [in the gospel message]?***

Paul is saying that, “if you are saved by grace, then why are you now attempting to be sanctified by works?”

If you began your new life by being born of the Spirit, why are you now trying to live that new life by your own efforts?

Are you so foolish that you don't realize that you remain spiritual the same way that you remain saved, by faith in Jesus Christ?

The problem with the Galatians was that they had eye trouble.

They had moved their eyes away from the truth and embraced a lie.

They ultimately substituted the Law of sin and death for the Gospel of grace and life.

2 Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith?

Did you receive the Spirit of God by keeping the Jewish Law, or by simply receiving Him by faith in Jesus Christ?

He was asking these people if they were born again of the Spirit by their own efforts, or whether their redemption was a gift from God received by faith alone.

The answer, of course, is the latter.

As foolish as they were, the Galatians knew it was by grace that they were saved, through faith.

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

So, now Paul wants to know this, “If you were saved by grace, then why are you now trying to be sanctified by works?”

Are you so foolish as to think that you don’t realize that you remain spiritual the same way that you become spiritual, by faith in Jesus Christ?”

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

What Paul is asking the Galatians is simply this.

“Have you suffered all these trials and tribulations for nothing?”

Tribulation came to you for your faith, and your faith carried you through, not the Law.

After coming through so many successful battles, are you now going to turn to the Law?

It was your faith that made you a target for the Evil One and gave you victory over him.

Now, some Christians don’t understand the connection between faith and persecution.

Either they think that having faith exempts them from trials and tribulation, or else they go to the opposite extreme and think that the trials and tribulations are sent by God to test their faith.

Neither of these two views are accurate.

Christians are not exempt from persecution, but that persecution does not come from God.

The truth is, Jesus said that in this world, we would have tribulation.

We will be persecuted for the Word's sake.

The persecution is sent to us by Satan to destroy our faith.

However, tribulation always ends in victory for those who are faithful.

5 Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith

Paul was speaking of himself in this verse.

He is modestly pointing out that the one who worked miracles in their midst did so by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit that was within him, and not by works of the Law.

The Law cannot work miracles any more than it can give the New Birth.

That's why I am determined that as long as I am a pastor, I am going to preach the Word of God from cover to cover.

Other ministers may do as they will, but I am going to proclaim the message of faith, because I know that it is in the hearing of faith that miracles come forth.

The Word of God never changes, Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today and forever.