

Galatians: Freedom In Christ

Week 4: A Gospel for Everyone (Gal 2:11 – 21)

Look Around

Name some of the activities your church regularly practices. Do you ever feel obligated to participate in these activities? Why or why not?

Through the centuries our faith has been passed down through specific traditions and practices. Through them we learn about God, and we grow in our connection to God. However, our traditions and practices were never meant to be a set of rules or regulations that prove our salvation or acceptance by God. If we become insistent on maintaining specific traditions and practices as proof of righteousness, we run the risk of leaving out the people God wants to include. The truth of the gospel message of Jesus Christ provides freedom for all people who accept Christ. We dull the magnitude of God's grace through Christ when we rely on our behavior to gain approval from God and people.

Look at the Text – Key Concepts

- **Justified** – Justification is a declaration from God that you are innocent of sin. Instead, you are in right standing (righteous) before Him. God, the judge, grants you freedom instead of condemnation. Justification is God's declaration about the status of the relationship between God and an individual, not any change within the individual. In other words, justification doesn't make anyone holy; it simply declares us not guilty before God and, therefore, treated as holy.
- **Righteousness** – righteousness embodies the character, behavior, and status appropriate for the covenant relationship between God and humanity. God demonstrates

righteousness by being faithful to his promises. Humanity expresses righteousness in and through loyal obedience to God's commands.

- **The Law** – The Mosaic Law refers to the laws God gave Moses on Mount Sinai after releasing the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. They include the Ten Commandments, ordinances for living in society, and regulations for worship (requirements for priests, sacrifices, feasts, and the temple). The Bible gives at least four reasons God gave the Mosaic Law to His people: for their own good, to reveal Himself to them, to set them apart in order to reveal Himself to others, and to reveal humanity's need for a savior.

Look at the Text – Context

In our last lesson, Paul successfully declared his independence from the church leaders and authorities in Jerusalem as he continued to argue that there is no separation between Jew and Gentile in the eyes of God. Both are equally justified by the work of Christ without observance of The Law.

In Galatians 2:11 – 21, Paul begins to address the Cephas's behavior towards Gentiles. Cephas is more commonly known as the apostle Simon Peter (John 1:42). Peter was one of the first 12 disciples called by Jesus. Peter was also a Jewish-Christian. Though Peter was a Jewish-Christian, he was fully aware that keeping The Law was unnecessary. Acts 10:9 – 48 tells the story of Jesus revealing this key element of the gospel message to Peter in a vision. Take some time to read to read Acts 10:9 – 48 before moving forward with this lesson. After reading the passage, write a paragraph to summarize what Jesus reveals to Peter.

Look at the Text – Observation & Interpretation

Galatians 2:11 – 14

Observation

- What did Cephas (Peter) do at Antioch that caused Paul to challenge him?
- What seems to motivate Cephas' behavior?
- How does Cephas' behavior influence other Jews?

Interpretation

- Why does Paul feel Cephas he was “not acting in line with the truth of the gospel”?

Galatians 2:15 – 21

Observation

- What is Paul's primary message to Jewish-Christians in Galatians 2:15-16?
- What causes Jews to "find themselves also among sinners" (2:17 NIV)?

- In verse 18, Paul says, "If I rebuild what I destroyed, then I really would be a lawbreaker." What is being rebuilt?

Interpretation

- What does it mean to be justified by the works of the law?
- Why does Paul say that rebuilding the law (by continuing to observe the law) is actually breaking the law?
- Why does Paul equate observing the law with setting "aside the grace of God"?
- Why does Paul declare "Christ died for nothing!" if righteousness is gained through the law?

Look At God

- Imagine yourself being crucified with Christ and raising again with Christ living on the inside of you. What images, thoughts, or feelings come to mind?
- How does it feel to know Christ died on the cross so that you could carry God Spirit inside of you?

- How does knowing Christ lives on the inside of you help you put down "works of the law" (a set of rules) so you can "live by faith"?

Look At Me

- Describe how "doing the works of the law" differs from "living by faith"?
- Have you ever experienced church practices that made you or someone you know feel as though they didn't belong or that they don't measure up? How did the experience affect you or the person you know?
- Do you notice yourself doing any church activity as a way to seek acceptance by God or a church community? What drives you to this behavior?
- How do these activities affect your identity and your relationship with God?
- How can we be sure that our faith practices (style of worship, methods of service, etc.) become practices that help us experience God and do the will of God versus becoming a set of rules to follow?