

Galatians Series Slide

In 1933, Nazi power was growing in Germany. Even pastors and churches were aligning their loyalty with Hitler. Of course, this would all lead to the brutal extermination of more than 6 million Jews- one of the modern era's most egregious atrocities.

As many sat by and did nothing, the Nazi takeover of the church in Germany accelerated. The churches began to exclude any non-Aryan pastors and wanted to remove the Old Testament from the Bible because it was "too Jewish".

There was a young man during that time that saw what was happening, and knew he had to do something. He saw that German pastors weren't prepared to obey Jesus in the face of suffering and death. They had no resources to draw from to stand up to the Nazis. He knew these pastors needed a stronger and deeper training. They needed to be prepared to resist the Nazis. Even when that meant jail, concentration camps, or death.

So in 1935, Dietrich Boenhoffer started Finkenwalde seminary. Finkenwalde was not merely a place to learn theology. rather- it was an intentionally formative community that lived together and practiced their faith in daily life. Their days centered on prayer, confession, and shared spiritual rhythms,.

The idea was to raise up resilient followers of Jesus, who would lead the German church to be loyal to Jesus despite the cost. That vision was tested as more than 2 dozen Finkenwalde students were arrested after the seminary was shut down by the Nazis.

When Boenhoeffer's friends read copies of his sermons and started to hear about the intensity of the training going on at Finkenwalde, people started asking questions. Was this too extreme? Is it really necessary? Would they lose credibility with German leadership because of it?

So one friend came up from Berlin to visit. In his words he was "suspicious of too much 'spiritualism'". Bonhoeffer took him on a rowing trip up the lake nearby. They parked their boat on the far shore of the lake, and climbed a hill to a clearing where they could see a huge field where German fighter planes were taking off and landing and military training was underway for the Nazis. They could see hundreds and hundreds of Nazi soldiers in formation. He told his friend- "That represents the Kingdom of Darkness. Those men are being shaped, and formed, trained for that darkness. For that evil." And to answer his friends questions on whether he was being too extreme or spiritual... he pointed back to Finkenwalde seminary and said "THIS has to be stronger than THAT"

Think of the picture. On one side of a lake- A ruthless, racist, hateful, violent dictator bent on taking over the world with violent hateful power- guns, armies, planes, and

tanks. On the other side, a man with with unflinching loyalty to Jesus and a handful of pastors committed to loving and following Jesus no matter the cost.

THIS must be stronger than THAT.

The weak more powerful than the strong.

Love more powerful than hate.

Today, the Third Reich is a shameful memory, Hitler is long dead. And though Finkenwalde seminary was shut down after only a few years— Boenhoeffers vision has echoed for decades in the church as people have been inspired to read his books, because of the selfless sacrifice he made- refusing to bow the knee to Hitler.

The weak overcame the powerful.
Indeed- THIS was stronger than THAT.

TITLE SLIDE- “This v. That: How the Gospel Shapes Humbly Resilient Disciples”- Galatians 2:11-21

Last week we started a short trek through Paul’s New Testament letter to the Galatian church- called- Galatians.

Paul wrote the letter to the Galatians because people were twisting Christianity into something it wasn’t. Even some of the churches best leaders were caving to the pressure of those in power.

In the section we’re in today, Paul is going to show us how to use the truth about the Cross and Resurrection of Jesus to become resilient- unbending- in the face of the difficulty and trial that come along with faithfully following Jesus when the darkness grows, and resistance is just... hard.

Galatians 2:11-21

11 But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face because he stood condemned. 12 For he regularly ate with the Gentiles before certain men came from James. However, when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, because he feared those from the circumcision party. 13 Then the rest of the Jews joined his hypocrisy, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. 14 But when I saw that they were deviating from the truth of the gospel, I told Cephas in front of everyone, “If you, who are a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you compel Gentiles to live like Jews? ”

15 We are Jews by birth and not “Gentile sinners,” 16 and yet because we know that a person is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ,

even we ourselves have believed in Christ Jesus. This was so that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no human being will be justified. 17 But if we ourselves are also found to be “sinners” while seeking to be justified by Christ, is Christ then a promoter of sin? Absolutely not! 18 If I rebuild those things that I tore down, I show myself to be a lawbreaker. 19 For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live for God. 20 I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. 21 I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died for nothing.

Transition: Just exactly how does THIS become stronger than THAT? Paul here gives us not only the theology- like Bonhoeffer & Finkenwalde seminary- he shows us the theology working itself out in a community.

So I've got 2 points today. The first one will be the WHAT. and SECOND will be the HOW.

1) Christians aren't good- they're graciously justified.

Here's what was going on in Galatia. The church is in its very early stages. At this point, it was mainly made of Jewish people. It had begun to click with a lot of the Jews that Jesus was the fulfillment of all the prophecies from their Scripture, so the church began as a kind of extension or fulfillment of Judaism.

But God never intended his family to be made up of only one race. So- as non-jews (or Gentiles) began to hear the message of Jesus death and Resurrection- and his promise to make the world new and the forgiveness of sins- they too were believing, being baptized and joining the family and the mission of the church.

But what was always before assumed- that you were a good Jew who had been keeping the law all along- and especially for the men- you had received the sign of circumcision- well- that was not really true of Gentiles. So there became a sort of awkward question “Well- do we or do we not require Gentile men to be circumcised in order to follow Jesus?” or more broadly- “Do these Gentiles need to keep all of our Jewish ceremonial laws FIRST- before they can be considered a part of God's people?”

Well, a group came to the Church at Galatia whose mission it was to enforce circumcision and a strict keeping of the law. They weren't against Jesus- in fact- they believed that Jesus died and resurrected. But they were insistent that keeping all of the ceremonial Jewish law and all its customs were necessary to be a Christian. So- you had a bunch of people that were influenced by this group- and adopted their viewpoint.

So Gentile men- before they could be accepted as a part of the church- had to be circumcised.

SO- Paul wrote Galatians to say, "NO! Absolutely not!" In fact- here's a little something that was recently discovered in some caves near Galatia- an ancient document that says it all.

PIC

The guy at the church in Galatia who was circumcised the day before Paul's letter arrived



This is the pic of the guy waiting at the edge of town as Paul walks in. “Seriously? You couldn’t of written the letter ONE DAY EARLIER?”

Imagine this dude with his friends who were in the circumcision line. He was the last one, just got it done and then somebody says “HOLD ON! SHUT THE OPERATION DOWN!” His buddies go out to celebrate while he’s laid up at the house for another week.

ANYWAY-

Watch what Paul’s argument is.

v 15-16

He says- “Jews come into the family of God the same way Gentiles do. By faith in Jesus Christ. By believing that Jesus died in our place for our sins, and that his resurrection shows that he is going to come back and make all creation right...as it should be. And since my sins are forgiven and I’m invited in because of what Jesus did...my inclusion in Jesus’ new creation is not dependent on the things I have done. Circumcision. Keeping all the Jewish laws. Its dependent solely on whether or not Jesus lived a perfect life FOR ME...and died the death I should have died for breaking God’s law.”

To become a Christian is not to become good.

When you become a Christian- Paul says here- you are justified. It doesn’t mean you suddenly stop being bad. It means you’re no longer viewed in the same way by God. It means your sins can no longer be held against you to condemn you before God. It means you’re righteous in God’s sight. That’s what it means to be justified.

With Jesus- you don’t produce your own goodness. You receive it from Jesus. Faith is credited to you as righteousness.

This is one of the things that sets Xianity apart from other world religions.

Every other religion says you are either a moral failure because you didn’t live up to the religions standards OR you are honored and loved by a god because you have.

v 17

But look what Paul says here. He says Xians are honored failures. Righteous sinners. Justified breakers of the law.

It seems impossible. Unfair?

That is what Grace is. Undeserved favor.

And that's what you have access to when you believe that Jesus switched places with you. He took all the shame and condemnation you deserve for your sin- and gave you all the honor he deserves for his perfect life. You didn't EARN it. God credited it to you.

That's why I say that Xians aren't good..they are graciously justified. JUstified- made right- not because you make up for all the bad things you do with good things until the bad is outweighed- no. You were justified by grace. Undeserved favor from God. And the Scripture says- your access to that is simply to believe that its true.

Here is Paul again in his letter to the Romans and the Ephesians. (SAME SLIDE)

Romans 4:5

But to the one who does not work, but believes on him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited for righteousness.

Ephesians 2:8-9

For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift — not from works, so that no one can boast.

Luther- simul justus et peccator- simultaneously just and a sinner.

Martin Luther had a latin phrase for this "Simul Justus et Peccator"- It means "Simultaneously justified and a sinner."

Now- Not only do I know the question you're probably asking. But so does Paul.

v17

This is the question that come to so many people's minds when you here about something of infinite value- like salvation and inclusion into God's eternal people in New Creation- and its free. Graciously given by God not according to anything I did.

The question is- won't that just promote sin? Won't people upon hearing that message just go on doing terrible things- and show their "get out of jail free card". If there is no fear of punishment- won't sinners who have been declared righteous just keep on sinning?

Pauls answer is ABSOLUTELY NOT. and that brings us to the HOW. The WHAT is Justification by Grace through faith in Jesus. Now- HOW does that good news- that GOSPEL work out in real life. Well-

2) Graciously justified people become humbly resilient the more they think about how they are graciously justified.

One of things that Dietrich Bonhoeffer taught often at Finkenwalde seminary was this phrase. "When Jesus calls a person, he bids him to come and die."

Now this seems strange doesn't it?

Because the problem that so many of us have is that we think when Jesus calls someone- with the kind of scandalous gracious justification that he uses- we are afraid that he calls them to come and sin more. GO AHEAD- keep being the same terrible person you always were- just now you don't have to worry about going to hell.

But that is not at all what the Scripture teaches.

v 19

Instead, when i place my faith in Jesus for my righteousness- it says I DIE to the law. It means as far as God's law is concerned- since Jesus died a shameful death of condemnation on my behalf- God's law see the demand it makes on my life as gone. Fulfilled. If I have to die for breaking the law- its done. Over with. But see- I'm not saved FROM something- as much as I'm saved TO SOMETHING.

SO THAT I might LIVE FOR GOD.

And this is not just God crossing his fingers hoping I will- this is the power of what the gospel does- as the Holy Spirit draws my attention over and over BACK to what Christ did for me and promises to do when he returns.

v 20-21

In fact, Bonhoeffer's phrase "When Jesus calls a man he bids him to come and die" comes from Galatians 2:20

I have been CRUCIFIED with Christ, I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live I live by faith in the son of God. WHO LOVED ME and GAVE HIMSELF FOR ME.

I don't SET ASIDE the grace of God- either by sinning more- or trying to prove myself to God with good works to earn his favor that he's already given me- because if i do either of those things- Christ died for nothing.

Think about this. If Jesus died to change me- to make me new- and I use it as a ticket to sin more- His death was pointless. Likewise- if Jesus died because nothing I did could ever live up God's purpose and expectations for my life- and then I keep trying to earn God's love after he has already- on the cross- proved his love for me- Again- I missed the point of Jesus' death.

So the question is what's left? Exactly HOW do I become the kind of resilient person like Bonhoeffer and those students from Finkenwalde? Or like Paul is calling the Galatians to be in standing up to the Circumcision Group?

HOW exactly does Jesus' gracious justification through his death and resurrection make me the kind of resilient disciple of Jesus that doesn't quit when it gets difficult?

Well- lets just look at the real life scenario that happened in this passage.

v 11-13

The Best Xians- Peter and Barnabas. Barnabas nicest most generous dude. Peter- literally had God in a vision tell him he was cool with the Gentiles being in his family. And yet- they cave in the face of these powerful and persuasive men.

But Paul doesn't come after their morality "You're Racist. That's wrong. Stop doing it."

v 14

Instead he tell them that they are "deviating from the truth of the gospel"- so he shares with them AGAIN- about the gracious justification they have received through Jesus.

In other words- he reminds them- you did nothing to earn God's love and forgiveness- and so we won't require others to do anything to earn it.

He points them back to meditate on the gospel.

So often, if you've been a Xian a long time, you can tend to believe that the gospel is just something for new converts. For people to think through when deciding whether or not to make Jesus Lord of their life.

But the gospel is not just the door to Xianiaty- its the ENTIRETY of XIANITY.

The gospel isn't ABC- its a to z.

Its not just the diving board- its the pool we swim in.

Its not the first step- the gospel is the whole staircase!

And it is by constant meditation and reflection on our gracious justification that we all become Bonhoeffers. That we all attend Finkenwalde.

ITs by thinking it through, and living in LINE with the gospel.

Back to 2)

See- when you lose sight of your gracious justification in Jesus- you tend one of 2 directions. Either you become a moralist. or a legalist.

Or you become anti-nominal. that just means against the law.

The morale

There are people over here who really get nervous about the gospel because it sounds too easy. People on *this* side get nervous about the gospel because it sounds too exclusive, too demanding, too moralistic. The moralists will always think the gospel is antinomian, and the antinomians will always think the gospel is legalistic. That's one of the ways you know you have the gospel, to some degree.

Legalist- "Xianity is too easy. Deathbed repentance?!?!?. You telling me it doesn't matter how you live your life...a serial killer can just BAM say a prayer and then go to heaven?" No way. I believe in obeying the law.

On the other hand is the person who says, "I believe in a God of love. I don't like the gospel because it sounds too demanding- he shouldn't want my life. If its free- its free. That means it costs me nothing. I believe God just accepts everybody. I believe in a God of love."

But what kind of love? If love doesn't cost you something- is it love? Do you really love God back if Jesus' death is just get-out-of-hell card?

On one hand- with the legalist- you end up joyless. Constantly trying to prove yourself to a God who said, "Wait a second- I proved my love for you so you wouldn't have to do this!"

That becomes a joyless, loveless person who never stops to think about the gospel.

ON the other hand, the person who says, "I think God just loves everybody- and there is no call to follow him, or obey him, or give your life."

Well- that person has no real love for God. Just sentimental superficial love that doesn't act. Therefore- there is no joy, and no resources to withstand difficulty and suffering. They will cave under the pressure of a Nazi or a Circumcision party.

But- if you have seen, and consistently dwell on the love of God in the cross of Jesus- you will have an incredibly unique approach to life and relationships.

To walk in line with the gospel is to remember you're both a sinner *and* righteous, that you're both a moral failure and absolutely loved.

Listen- in my life- I'm either thinking of myself as a sinner and forgetting how loved I am or I'm thinking of myself as accepted and forgetting what a sinner I am. But only as

you hold the two things together is there a kind of transformation- a spiritual resource that makes you resilient. It makes THIS stronger than THAT.

Meditating on the gospel allows you to be both HUMBLE and CONFIDENT at the same time.

Let me end by showing you 2 ways this happens.

Your SELF IMAGE IN SUFFERING- Humility & Boldness at once

If you suffer like a legalist- you say “I must be a bad person. I’ve failed in keeping the law somewhere.” Feel awful. guilty. terrible. Hate yourself.

If you suffer as an antinomian- you’ll curse God and die. THIS IS LOVE?!?!?!

But if you’re *simul justus et peccator* you’re absolutely unique. On the one hand, you would never get mad at God because you know you’re a sinner. You know we *all* deserve a terrible life.

But you also know you have been redeemed. Jesus Christ is the One who has paid for your sins, and therefore, whatever you’re suffering today cannot be God making you pay for sins.

So you look to Christ on the cross.

You know that in Jesus- Suffering produces something wonderful. Resurrection. Renewal. “I’m going to suffer. But through my suffering God will bring out good and redemption. He’ll do good things in my life and in the lives around me, just like through Jesus.”

Once you get rid of “I hate me” or “I hate God” you remember you are humbly a sinner and confidently and resiliently absolutely indestructible. Because even death cannot stop you. You are crucified with Christ. And the life you now live is his.

CONFRONTATION-

Aa a legalist- if someone wrongs you- you attack them. Because you look down on them for not doing right by you. No humility.

Or- Somebody hurts you and you just withdraw. You say nothing. You go off and lick your wounds- maybe hating the person secretly- or feeling like a victim.

Either way- somebody is destroyed. You or the other person.

But if you’ve been meditating on the gospel- the gracious justification you received from Jesus you can humbly and confidently say, “I’m absolutely a sinner, and I’m absolutely loved and righteous at the same time.” In other words- its totally possible that you really

did something to wrong another person that they might attack you for. At the same time, you know that your salvation is not proving yourself to the other person. Because in Jesus- you already have the approval of God. So what what that other person thinks of you. You can admit your sin- because you know you aren't condemned for it.

But the legalist is going to think- the slightest weakness and i'm sunk. If I sin a little bit, i've failed even my own standards- so how can I prove myself to God. So he withdraws in shame- or becomes incredibly defensive.

Listen- When somebody says, "If I lost all my fear of God condemning me I wouldn't have any incentive to live a good life," what that means is the only incentive you ever *had* to live a good life was fear. There's a new incentive that comes, but it only comes if you know you're a righteous sinner, you're a loved failure, and that is the dynamic of gratitude.

It is the love that we see in the gospel.

And its this love that will absolutely move you, if you dwell on it, meditate on it, think about day by day- and then respond to God in gratitude for it- it will change your relationships. Like the opposite of Peter influencing Baranabas- you'll operate like Bonhoeffer- as you give your life away in humble resilience- others will want to join Jesus in his mission.

THIS will be stronger than THAT.

Galatians 2:20

Baptism- Outward sign of being crucified with Christ- and raised to newness of life.