

Galatians 2:15-21

I. Background Paul's confrontation with Peter (v. 11-14)

1. Peter's actions were not consistent with the gospel that he and Paul had come to believe

2. Two main points to this passage

a. **We are justified through faith in Christ**

b. **Faith in Christ = total surrender to what he's done for us**

II. We are justified through faith in Jesus alone (v. 15 -16)

A. What does "justified" mean?

1. Court of law = to be declared not guilty (opposite of condemn)

Common language = being made right, accepted

2. How is a person justified/"made right" with you?

When they mistreat you what do you want to hear or see in them?

3. How is a person made right with God? What does he need to see or hear?

God is holy and we are sinful—this creates a fundamental relational problem

B. Two fundamental ways of trying to be made right with God

1. Observing the law

a. = following the OT commandments—circumcision, food laws, etc

b. Analogy: the law as a railroad vs. the law as a ladder

1. Israel took God's laws and turned them into a ladder, thinking that by keeping the laws they could earn their relationship with him and make themselves acceptable to him by their actions

2. What about us today? What do we do to try to make ourselves acceptable to God (tithe, go to church, compare ourselves with others, etc)

2. Putting our faith in Jesus Christ

Trusting that God has taken care of the relational problem by sending his Son to die and pay the penalty for our sins (rather than trying to take care of the problem ourselves)

C. Paul's argument with Peter

1. v. 14: Even though we are good Jews who have always kept the law and not Gentile "sinners" never kept the law (uncircumcised, eat pig, etc), we have come to know that it's only trusting in Christ's sacrifice that makes us acceptable to God.

2. v. 15: So, we've stopped relying on our observance of the law and have staked our lives on what Christ has done for us.

III. Faith in Christ = total surrender (v. 17-21)

A. Paul addresses a common objection: "doesn't faith in Christ encourage sin?" (v. 17)

1. Either he means: when we put our faith in Jesus, we can now eat with Gentiles, but that makes us look like “sinners” to Jews. But that doesn’t mean Christ is encouraging sin
 2. Or he means: when we put our faith in Jesus and stop trying to climb the ladder of legalism, we acknowledge that we are in fact sinners, but that doesn’t mean Christ is encouraging our sin (the fact is, we were sinners even when we were trying to climb the ladder)
- B. To go back to the law would actually be the ultimate transgression (v. 18)
Paul had “destroyed/torn down” the ladder approach to the law. To “rebuild” that after putting his faith in Christ would be to go against God’s plan.
- C. “Dying” to the ladder approach to the law actually leads to “living for God” (v. 19)
1. The irony is when Paul tried so hard to earn favor with God that actually kept him from living for God (he was focused on himself)
Analogy: in school we can work so hard for the grade that we actually don’t learn the subject as well
 2. “through the law”
The law itself was encouraging him to die to trying to climb its ladder
 - a. The law shows him he could never fully keep it (Psalm 143:2)
 - 2) The law points him to one would come and die on behalf of our sins (Isaiah 52)
- D. Paul was “crucified” with Christ so that “Christ lives in him” (v. 20)
1. Crucified with Christ
= died to the law in v. 19
 - a. Paul: When Paul encountered the cross that old self that tried to earn God’s favor was crucified—he realized he could never have been good enough(see Phil 3:4-11)
 - b. Us: the cross spells the end of all our own righteousness; it shows us the extent of our sin because it shows us what was necessary to save us.
Romans 3: there is no boasting at the foot of the cross
Faith = a total surrender/dying of ourselves, our own righteousness, our own attempts to be good enough
 2. “I no longer live, Christ lives in me”
Once the ego/pride has been crucified there is room in our hearts for Christ to enter and rule there

Conclusion

What needs to “die” in you in order for you to “live for God?”

Discussion Questions

1. Opening questions: What struck you most about the sermon/the passage? What surprised you? What confused you? What did you disagree with?
2. On Sunday we discussed how we can turn the law into a ladder that we try to climb to make ourselves acceptable to God. What are the things in your own life you're tempted to point to as things that make you more acceptable to God? (e.g. church involvement, comparing yourself to other people less "righteous" than you, bible study, etc).
3. Sunday's sermon had two main points: 1) We are made right with God through faith in Christ and 2) the kind of faith that makes us right is nothing less than total surrender. Discuss what "total surrender" means specifically within the context of verses 19-20.
4. On Sunday we discussed how trying to observe the law can prevent you from living for God in much the same way that trying to get good grades can prevent you from actually learning the subject. How has "living for the grade" in life kept you from actually entering into a deeper relationship with God?
5. Is the law still relevant in the Christian life? Why or why not, and if so, in what ways?