

THE IMPROVED ADULT TEACHER QUARTERLY

Lesson
10

February 5, 2012

JUSTIFIED BY FAITH IN CHRIST

LESSON SCRIPTURE: GALATIANS 1:1–2:21

PRINT: GALATIANS 2:15-21

Key Verses: I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is 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. Galatians 2:19-20. (NRSV)

Galatians 2:15-21 (NRSV)

15 We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners;

16 yet we know that a person is justified not by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ. And we have come to believe in Christ Jesus, so that we might be justified by faith in Christ, and not by doing the works of the law, because no one will be justified by the works of the law.

17 But if, in our effort to be justified in Christ, we ourselves have been found to be sinners, is Christ then a servant of sin? Certainly not!

18 But if I build up again the very things that I once tore down, then I demonstrate that I am a transgressor.

19 For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ;

20 and it is no longer I who live, but it is 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 justification comes through the law, then Christ died for nothing.

Galatians 2:15-21 (KJV)

15 We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles,

16 Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

17 But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid.

18 For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor.

19 For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.

20 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

21 I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

January 30 - February 5

Monday – Isaiah 45:20-25 (Our Only Source of Righteousness)

Tuesday – Romans 3:21-26 (Righteousness through Faith)

Wednesday – Luke 18:9-14 (A Prayer for Mercy)

Thursday – Galatians 1:1-10 (Challenged by a Different Gospel)

Friday - Galatians 1:11-24 (Called through God's Grace)

Saturday – Galatians 2:6-10 (Sent to the Gentiles)

Sunday – Galatians 2:15-21 (Justified by Faith)

INTRODUCTION

God accomplishes much of His plan for us through His leaders. He uses His commands and His promises to communicate His will. When a believer is faithful to the words and commands of the Lord, he is fulfilling part of God's plan for eternal salvation.

Paul was a fearless leader. He spoke, he wrote, and he ministered as a servant of Christ commissioned to spread the good news of the Gospel to everyone whether they were Jews or non-Jews, regardless of the cost to his own safety and reputation.

In today's study, we will explore Paul's teaching concerning salvation by works of the law versus salvation by grace.

The Jews who could claim all the privileges of the chosen people had to learn that no one could be justified by obedience to the law but by faith in Jesus Christ. No amount of good works or good deeds can make any person right with God.

BIBLE STORY

Jews and Christians all lived together in Antioch, a large city in Syria. Paul worked with his partner in ministry, Barnabus, tutoring Gentile converts and building up a strong congregation. However, a problem arose after a blending of Jews and non-Jews in Antioch. The Jewish leaders felt that the missionary work of the church should have a more intentional focus on reaching Gentiles. They wanted to know whether the Gentiles would be required to observe Torah, and whether Jews should be separated from the non-Jews in their ritualistic cleansing. They were even concerned as to whether Jews and Gentiles should even eat with each other.

Special agents from Jerusalem were sent by James, patriarch of the church and brother of Jesus, to go forth and advocate for the requirements of the Gentiles to practice Torah, the main body of Jewish literature and scripture. They thought this would preserve unity of believers and enhance their purity. However, Paul came forward insisting that the Gentiles could not be made into Jews, that there was more to being righteous than maintaining purity laws. Paul was convinced that God was not about making Gentiles into Jews, nor making Jews into Gentiles, but rather God was all about making all persons "One in Christ".

While Paul's proclamation expanded the influence of Torah among non-Jewish converts, he did not require them to adopt Jewish practices. Paul believed that whether they are Jew or non-Jew, only those who responded to the Gospel through their faith would be fulfilling the law, and that no particular outward religious rituals could achieve what God's word and Spirit could accomplish. A right relationship with God did not require that Jewish culture norms be imposed on non-Jews. Paul spoke of salvation by faith rather than salvation by works.

LIFE APPLICATION

Paul risked his reputation, his ministry, and his safety to become an apostle who united people of different cultures in Jesus Christ. He had a successful mission because of his sensitivity to cultural and social differences. When we, whether by religion or ethnic group, refuse to listen to and respect each other, our intolerance can lead to tragic results.

Paul testified that a right relationship with God depends upon God's grace upon which one bases his confidence and reveals it in faithfulness of Jesus Christ. The benefits of grace are missed when we continue to seek justification by obeying special laws. Works, regardless of their merits, will never justify us before God, only faith in Jesus Christ will do this. So we must then do as Paul has recommended, die to the law in order that we may live for God. Because of divine guidance, Paul became a servant of God rather than an agent of Torah. As he died to his past, God raised him up to a new life by His power.

Just as God raised Jesus from the dead by the power of the Holy Spirit, God raised Paul from the death of the past by the power of Christ within him. Paul was unified with the Risen Savior as he experienced the love of the Son of God through Jesus' death. In other words, Christ was "all the world to him". And he would never deny that effectiveness. Paul declared that Jesus died in vain if we place our faith in anything other than Jesus Christ.

SUMMARY

As a church, we affirm that Jesus died for the forgiveness of our sins. His death and resurrection prove that His actions saved us from condemnation in this present age and in our final judgment. Only a faithful response to Him is necessary for us to be acceptable to Him. God will vindicate and liberate all of His faithful people.

As an act of faithfulness to God the Father, Jesus the Son gave His life. His life ministry and death made it possible for us to see and trust what God has made available to each of us. Though there are times and circumstances where we as human beings become unfaithful, let us never forget that God still remains faithful to us.

One's Christian experience is the result of faith, which is the gift of God. No obedience to any law or cultural and/or ritual requirements can improve our salvation in any way. Salvation comes not only confessing our sins but by professing that Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior. Then our faith must be shared with others. Sinners must see our faith as we witness to them. So as Paul considered himself crucified with Christ and Christ being alive in him, let us likewise live by faith in Jesus Christ and let Him be alive in us.

QUESTIONS

1. What does this passage tell us about God's redemption of humanity?
2. What does Paul mean by saying we are to die to the law in order to live for Christ?
3. What justifies us before God?

4. How is it possible to be "in Christ"?

CLOSING PRAYER

O Father, we thank You for men of faith like Paul whose witness for You made possible the growth and expansion of the church. Help us to have the same kind of faith in order to endure. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.