



Lazybrook Baptist Church

GALATIANS: FREEDOM THROUGH CHRIST • FREEDOM FROM THE LAW •
GALATIANS 2:11-21 • 7/6/2020 - 7/12/2020

MAIN POINT

Life isn't found in keeping the law but in walking by faith. We are no longer bound to keep the Law to maintain our standing with Jesus.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

In which sport(s) do you think it is most difficult to score? Why? In which sport is it easiest to score? Why?

In what ways might we as human beings try to “score points” with God?

Why do people want to “score points” with God? What’s tempting about this approach? What’s wrong with this approach?

For those of us with a competitive spirit, games in which we can score more points than our opponents are exciting. We often consider games to be worthless unless a winner is declared. We also tend to think this way about God. Many people believe they can score points with God through seemingly righteous acts, but today we will see in Galatians 2 the futility of that hope. Only Jesus is able to satisfy the requirements of the law and we receive Him only through faith.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ GALATIANS 2:11-14.

What led Peter to refuse to eat with the Gentiles? How did these actions compromise the truth of the gospel as Paul states in verse 14?

What was at the core of Peter's sin? (Fear of Man and Nationalism)

What does God's Word say about fear of man in Proverbs 29:25? How does this prove true in Galatians 2? What are some ways in which you fear man above God?

What does it say about the the gospel when Christians remain divided by race, social status, economic status, political affiliation, stylistic preferences, etc...? What can we as a church do to break down some of these divisions that we often see in the world and show that the gospel brings unity?

Peter lived with freedom when he was with Gentiles, but when Jews came to town, he gave up his freedom to be seen in their eyes as a good Jew who followed the law. Legalism and the fear of people seek to control our behavior and force us to fit what into what is deemed "right." The gospel says that we are free to live a life fully devoted to Christ.

| HAVE ANOTHER VOLUNTEER READ GALATIANS 2:15-21.

What is the common need of both groups named in these verses? Who is the only person who can meet that need?

Why is it important to see ourselves on equal ground as those in need of salvation?

The word "justify" refers to God's creative act of grace by which He gives people who place faith in Christ a new, right standing with Him and a new way of life. In their new standing with God, they seek to reflect His character and to do His will.

How would you explain 'justification by faith' to someone who has never been to church before?

Why is it so significant that we view justification as a once-for-all declaration and not a process? How is the justification of a sinner different from having one's sins ignored or swept under the rug?

Luther referred to justification by faith as the doctrine on which the church stands or falls. Why does this doctrine affect everything about the church's life and witness?

The gospel is the good news that we are justified by faith in Jesus Christ and not by the works of the law. Our behavior is consistent with this gospel when it does not express prejudice toward others or insist that works lead to salvation. Paul contrasted faith and works. The apostle

pointed out that observing any ritual or law is incapable of producing justification or right standing before God.

What kind of change did Paul experience according to verses 17-21?

What was the law's purpose? How did it set the stage for the Messiah? How then should we view the law?

How would you explain the difference between being moral and being a Christian to someone who thinks being good makes them acceptable to God?

When Paul stated that he died to the law, he was acknowledging God's grace and asserting that humans can do nothing to merit salvation. It was through the law that Paul had come to this position. The law revealed the inadequacy of humanity's religious efforts and exposed the depth of human sinfulness.

What does it look like to "live to God?"

What was Paul's point in verse 21? How might our lives imply that Christ died for nothing?

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

How does the realization that Christ loved you and gave Himself for you change you? Is there an area in your life today that doesn't reflect that truth? On the flip side, in what areas have you been increasingly walking in line with the gospel over the last month?

Is it easier for you to believe that someone is a Christian when he or she is culturally, ethnically, socially, or racially "like you"? Why or why not?

Are there people in our church you have not been 'eating with' because they are not 'like you'? What self-righteousness lies beneath this attitude?

How can you help someone in your family better "live to God" this week?

PRAYER

Close your group time in prayer. Pray specifically for group members to apply the reality of God's love for them to the struggles in their lives. Pray that each person would continue to change in

order to look more and more like Jesus. Pray that they would reflect on and understand what it means to daily die to self.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [Relisten to Pastor Zach's sermon from Sunday, June 28.](#)
- [Click here to view a great book on fear of man, entitled When People Are Big and God Is Small by Ed Welch.](#)
- Great commentaries on Galatians:
 - [Exalting Christ in Galatians by David Platt and Tony Merida \(Note: Tony Merida was Pastor Zach's preaching professor at SEBTS\)](#)
 - [Galatians For You](#) by Timothy Keller
- [Click here to listen to 'Rescue' by North Wake Music featuring David McWhite.](#) (Note: This song was sung in our worship service on Sunday. Also, North Wake Church is where Pastor Zach and Melody attend while at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary (SEBTS)).

COMMENTARY

Galatians 6:11-21

2:11-13. Paul had set a good example of being true to the gospel in the situation involving Titus. In contrast verses 11-13 describe an occasion when Peter was untrue to the gospel and led others into hypocritical behavior. The situation occurred in Antioch, the third largest city in the Roman Empire during New Testament times and the capital of the Roman province of Syria. It was at Antioch that believers in Christ were first called Christians.

The issue revolved around Jews and Gentiles eating at the same table. Numerous rituals and guidelines related to mealtimes had arisen within Judaism. One of these guidelines restricted Jews from having table fellowship with Gentiles who lacked the seal of God's covenant—circumcision.

When Peter arrived in Antioch, he found Jewish and Gentile Christians eating together at mealtimes. Peter freely joined them in this practice, a behavior not surprising since in the situation with Cornelius, the Lord had revealed to Peter His equal acceptance of Gentiles who responded to Him in faith (Acts 11:1-18).

“When certain men came from James,” however, Peter changed his behavior and withdrew from fellowship with the Gentiles. Who were these men who came from James, the leader of the Jerusalem church? We should not assume that they were the same false brothers who earlier

were demanding that Titus be circumcised (Gal. 2:3-4). Apparently, the delegation had some loyalty to James and may even have carried letters of recommendation from him. When they saw Peter fellowshiping and eating with uncircumcised Gentile Christians, they were shocked. It is not clear whether their mere presence prompted Peter's change in behavior or if they spoke directly to him. In any case, Peter "began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles." The form of the verbs translated draw back and separate suggest that Peter gradually withdrew from fellowship meals with the Gentiles.

Peter's hypocritical behavior negatively influenced those around him. Other Jewish believers also began separating themselves from the Gentiles at mealtimes. Even Barnabas, a model of Christian encouragement, was led astray!

2:14. What motivated Peter's fear that resulted in his withdrawal from fellowship at meals with the Gentiles after certain men arrived from the church in Jerusalem? Perhaps he was concerned that eating with Gentiles would put his position as pillar of the Christian community in Jerusalem in jeopardy. Maybe he was concerned that he could not effectively witness to Jews if he did not strictly observe the law? Perhaps the delegation brought news from Jerusalem that influenced Peter in some way. Regardless of Peter's reason, he stood condemned because he was "not acting in line with the truth of the gospel." Peter was not walking a straight course. The apostle had begun wavering in his beliefs and he should have known better. The verb translated acting in line ("orthopodeo") literally means "to be straightfooted." Peter was acting with "hypocrisy" (2:13), not merely making an honest mistake. We have no evidence that Peter had changed his mind about salvation being available to the Gentiles, so his actions were inconsistent with his beliefs.

2:15. It is inconsistent and illogical for privileged Jews by birth, who rejected the keeping of their very own law as the way to salvation, to now burden the Gentiles with the keeping of that very same law. The phrase "Gentile sinners" was probably spoken in irony. Quite often, the Jews could not mention Gentiles without calling them "Gentile sinners." Yet, in Paul's eyes, the sinners were the Judaizers, not the Gentile Christian believers in his church.

2:16. Verse 16 is one of the most important verses in Galatians because in it Paul states the content of the gospel of grace. This is the first time Paul uses the word "justified" which means "to declare righteous." Justification is the act of God, whereby He declares the believing sinner righteous in Jesus Christ. Negatively, Paul says "a man is not justified by observing the law." Stated positively, justification is by faith in Christ Jesus. Negatively, Paul has rebuffed the false teachings of the Judaizers which Peter had supported by his behavior in Antioch. Positively, he has presented the true, grace path to righteousness.

2:17. The opponents to this message of grace argued that if people aren't under law then they will freely sin. They reasoned that people could believe in Christ but then live as they wanted and by their sinful actions make Christ a promoter of sin. Paul answers this accusation with an emphatic, "No!" Grace leads to freedom from sin's slavery to obey God, not license to disobey Him.

2:18. A person who rebuilds (that is, returns to) the law after believing in Christ will find himself a lawbreaker. No one except Jesus can keep the law perfectly. So to put one's relationship with God on a legalistic basis is to make oneself a lawbreaker.

2:19. In verses 19–20 Paul teaches about the transformation that occurs in believers. He is continuing to correct Peter for cowering to a legalistic system that is powerless to change lives. Paul uses the death and resurrection motif in each verse. First, Paul states "through the law" I died to the law. Paul may have meant by this that, when he tried to live up to the law, he saw that it was impossible. He saw that the penalty for failing to live up to the law was death. Seeing his clear condemnation according to the law drove him into the arms of grace, to rely on Jesus to save him.

Or he might have meant that, when he saw that the law was insufficient to save him, he turned his back on the law and made it no longer of any influence in his life.

Or he might have meant that the law demanded death for sin. Christ died because he took our death penalty upon Himself. By believing in Christ, His death pays for the death that the law required of us. Because I am united with Christ by faith, the law killed not only Him but all who are joined to Him by faith. Therefore, the believer has died to the law. Since we have died, the law must acquit us of further punishment. So through fulfilling the law by dying in Christ, we are now free from the law. Whatever Paul meant, the result is that he no longer is under the jurisdiction of the law. It is powerless over him.

2:20. Now Paul expands upon verse 19. He died to the law (v. 19) by being crucified with Christ. He lives for God (v. 19) because Christ lives in him. Believers are in union with Christ. We are united with Him in His death, burial, and resurrection. Thus, we died with Him to the law (see Rom. 6).

Again, we are uncertain as to what Paul meant by "I have been crucified with Christ." It certainly did not mean that he was physically crucified. Dead people don't write letters. In what sense was he crucified? He may have used the sentence as a figure of speech, referring to the effects of Christ's death which every believer experiences. It might be reworded, "I have been as good as crucified, since the results of Christ's crucifixion count for me." Or he may have referred to a

sense in which every believer is required to endure a similar experience of spiritual crucifixion to the desires of self. We put to death our own plans to follow Jesus. It might be reworded, "I have crucified my right to self-control in life, in the same way that Christ was crucified physically. He gave up his right to physical life; I gave up my right to self-life."

Or he may have referred to some sense in which the believer, because he is "in Christ" is seen by God as having actually died. He may have been referring to the union between the believer and Jesus, when the believer in Jesus experiences, spiritually, everything Jesus experienced.

Whatever Paul meant about having died in Christ, the point is that his death severed him from the requirements of the law. Therefore, for Peter and the Judaizers to go back to the law is to visit the graveyard. Paul goes on to say that he can live for God because Christ lives in him. Finally, Paul says that faith is the principle that unlocks the life of Christ in the believer. The more we exercise faith in Christ the more He is free to live through us.

2:21. Now Paul presents his conclusion. The false-teaching Judaizers were voiding the grace of God by adding the works-oriented law to the work of Christ. Therefore, Paul says "I do not set aside the grace of God" (as the legalists did), "for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!" If humans could be right with God by obeying the law, why would He send His Son to suffer and die on a cross? Paul concludes his correction of Peter by showing the utter absurdity of turning back to the law. The very reason Christ died on the cross to pay for sin was because the law could not remove sin or impart righteousness. Grace provides what the law was powerless to provide—righteousness.