

Galatians 5: 3-5; “Waiting for the Hope of Righteousness”, Message # 32 in the series – “Christ has Set us Free”, A Bible Study conducted on October 29th, 2014, by Pastor Paul Rendall at his home.

There are many people today who call themselves Christians who believe that they are being saved by their good works. They see themselves as basically good people. They go to church, they take the sacraments; sometimes they pray. They do not however, like to think of themselves as sinners needing a Savior. Or they may have a few things in their character and their behavior which they think that they may need to work on, but all in all, they try hard to be a good person, and they go to church, because they want other people to understand that they are trying to do the right thing, and they want to help other people in a humanistic sense. This is what they believe it means to be a Christian. The only problem with this kind of approach to being a Christian is that they are trying to please God according to their own thoughts of how God should accept them, and not according to how He has revealed Himself in the Bible. Here in these verses which we are looking at tonight, we find the Apostle telling the people in the Galatian churches that if they are trusting in anything or anyone besides Jesus Christ in order to be saved from their sins and justified in the sight of God, that they are fallen from grace. This evening we want to open up this subject by asking 3 questions: 1st – What does it mean to attempt to be justified by law? And 2nd – What does it mean to wait for the hope of righteousness? I hope that this will help each of see just how much our salvation and peace of mind in living the Christian life, depends on our trusting in Christ alone for our salvation.

1st – What does it mean to attempt to be justified by law?

We see here that if any person is attempting to be justified by law, they have fallen from grace. What does this phrase “fallen from grace”, mean? Well it means that they had fallen from the word of truth in the gospel, that salvation is a free gift. Romans 3: 23 – “For the wages of sin is death, but the *free* gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (NAS) In that day, we see from Paul’s letter, that a person would be fallen from grace when they pursued their salvation by means of their attempting to keep the ceremonial law of circumcision, and the moral law of the Ten Commandments. In our day, it is when a person thinks that they will be saved by going to church, by being baptized, by taking the Lord’s Supper, and by trying to be a good and moral person, by being religious. But you and I should understand that grace and law are two opposing principles when it comes to being justified and saved from our sins. Listen to Charles Spurgeon: “If you begin to be saved by the law, you must go through with it.” “You cannot take the principle of law and the principle of grace, and blend those two together.” “They are like oil and water, they will never mix.” “If salvation be of works, it is not of grace, and if it be of grace, it is not of works.” “You cannot go upon the two contrary principles of merit and of favor.”

You see, the Galatians thought that it was by their being circumcised and their doing good works, they would find favor with God. Yes, Jesus may have been a prophet, the Judaizers told them, but even when they had believed in Him, that would not nullify their having to keep the law of Moses, both ceremonial and moral. The Judaizing teachers insisted that they would only be saved if they agreed to faithfully observe the law of Moses; only then would God be pleased with them; only then God would accept them. This seemed to many of the Galatians to be a truth which built upon what Abraham the father of faith did; what he was commanded by God to do. Look with me over at Genesis 17, verses 10-13. “This is My covenant which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: Every male child among you shall be circumcised; and you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you.” “He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised,

every male child in your generations, he who is born in your house or bought with money must be circumcised, and My covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant.” No doubt there were some Jews who thought that this covenant of circumcision, was, from these verses to continue on forever because of the words, “an everlasting covenant”. But this covenant, this bloody covenant, was only to continue for all the generations of Jews until Christ came, and fulfilled it, by His laying down His life, and His shedding His blood for the forgiveness of sins. When that took place, then the whole law of Old Testament times would thereby be fulfilled; and all of its ceremonies would be fulfilled, realized and set aside because of Christ’s finished work.

This is what the Apostle Paul studiously and faithfully preached. Let us understand that we are only saved on the basis of Christ’s having kept the law on our behalf, and it is His righteousness, and His good work which is imputed to us. It is only this good work of Christ, Paul says, which forms the basis of our being accepted by God, in Him, and thus God imputes Christ’s righteousness to our legal standing and to everything good that we will attempt to do in living the Christian life. Without our continually trusting in Christ’s finished work, we become estranged from Christ Himself. Why did Jesus have to die for sinful me? It was because God knew that I would never be adequate in myself to obey God’s law perfectly, and it was because I could never suffer sufficiently to atone for all of my sins. Look over at 2nd Corinthians Chapter 5, verses 17-21. “Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is anew creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.” “Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.” “Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us; we implore you on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God.” “For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” There is not a word here of keeping the law to earn merit; the merit was all purchased by Christ’s righteousness and His sacrificial death. The whole ministry of reconciliation was procured by Christ’s finished work in His life and His death. He knew no sin in order that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

What was the problem with the Galatian churches? It was that they were believing the teaching of the Judaizers that came to them and taught them a false gospel. It was that they were teaching them to trust in themselves; their own ceremonial and moral righteousness; that they were going to be made righteous by the works of the law. This was causing some of them to be estranged from Christ. Legalists will persecute those who are trusting in Christ alone for their salvation. Turn with me over to John Chapter 9, and we will look at verses 24-41. “So they again called the man who was blind, and said to him, ‘Give God the glory!’” “We know that this Man is a sinner.” “He answered and said, ‘Whether He is a sinner or not I do not know.’” “One thing I know: that though I was blind, now I see.” “Then they said to him again, ‘What did He do to you?’” “How did He open your eyes?” “He answered them, I told you already, and you did not listen.” “Why do you want to hear it again?” “Do you want to become His disciples?” “then they reviled him and said, ‘You are His disciple, but we are Moses’ disciples.” “We know that God spoke to Moses; as for this fellow, we do not know where He is from.” “The man answered and said to them, ‘Why this is a marvelous thing, that you do not know where he is from; yet He has opened my eyes?’” “Now we know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does His will, He hears him.” “Since the world began it has been unheard of that anyone opened the eyes of one who was born blind.” “If this Man were not from God, He could do nothing.” “They answered and said to him, ‘You were completely born in sins, and are you teaching us?’” “And they cast him out.”

“Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when He had found him, He said to him, ‘Do you believe in the Son of God?’” “He answered and said, ‘Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in

Him?” “And Jesus said to him, ‘You have both seen Him and it is He who is talking with you.’” “Then he said, ‘Lord I believe!’” “And he worshiped Him.” “And Jesus said, ‘For judgment I have come into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may be made blind.’” “Then some of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these words, and said to Him, ‘Are we blind also?’” “Jesus said to them, ‘If you were blind you would have no sin; but now you say, ‘We see.’” “Therefore your sin remains.” Now this is a good illustration of these verses that we are studying in Galatians, because we can see clearly how the blind man was saved. It was by faith in Christ alone; no works of his. And we can also see how people can be estranged, or severed from Christ. It is by their trying to be justified by their own righteousness, by the works of the law, and by their own understanding of the Scriptures apart from Christ’s Holy Spirit. This was characteristic of the Pharisees. They said that they saw, but in Christ’s judgment, and His is the final judgment in all matters, they were blind. They did not want Jesus to tell them that they were spiritually blind, for they had followed all the matters of importance related to God’s law; so they thought. But they had not believed in Christ, and therefore had not what was essential to spiritually see. The blind man realized he could not see, but he knew that he had a Savior who had opened his eyes, both physically and spiritually. The person who is fallen from grace is the person who refuses to believe in Christ; they do not really see their need of Him. They think that they have all the wisdom and strength that they need to serve God acceptably. But in this they are deceived.

Let’s ask our 2nd Question - What does it mean to wait for the hope of righteousness? (verse 5 of Galatians 6)

“For we through the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.” To wait for the hope of righteousness is something which only the Christian can do. The person believing in Jesus is eagerly waiting for the completion of the salvation which God has begun in him. He has received justifying righteousness through faith in His Savior Jesus Christ. And now by the Spirit’s power and working he holds fast His confession of his need of Christ’s sanctifying grace until that time when he will see His Lord face to face. Christ’s sanctifying grace imparted to the believer’s heart leads to holiness and to service of the God who has given him so much. Turn with me over to 1st Thessalonians 1: 8–10 “For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place.” “Your faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything.” “For they themselves declare concerning you, what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom he raised from dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.” While you wait, dear Christian, for Christ to come and complete the work of redemption, you learn to serve Him if you are walking in the Spirit. You turn away from idols, you repent of all of your sins, and you eagerly await the return of Christ when you shall be made perfect in righteousness. That time for your spirit is the day of your death. At the time of the Christian’s death, his spirit is made perfect. (Hebrews 12: 23) At the time of Christ’s coming, the day of the resurrection, the whole person is made perfect in righteousness. (1st Thessalonians 4: 13-18)

Turn over to Romans Chapter 8 verses 22-25. “For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.” “Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.” “For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees?” “But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance.” This appears to me to be a parallel passage to the one that we are studying tonight, in this sense. We are eagerly waiting for the hope of righteousness by persevering in all the good truth and grace that we have been given. We know that one day that we will be made perfect in righteousness, and all indwelling, remaining corruption within us

shall be taken away. Not only do we groan, as Christians, but the whole creation groans awaiting that great day. We may indeed groan, but we have faith in Christ. We know all that these good things of righteousness will find their consummation on that great day when Christ returns. But we will persevere in righteousness. We will pray and work to be more holy as the days go by.

Let's close by looking over at Hebrews Chapter 10, verses 19-25. "Therefore brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, and having a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water." "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful." "And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another and so much the more as you see the Day approaching." You can see here what the Christian's responsibility is while he has life and breath. It is to persevere in good works and in loving the brethren while they are waiting to be taken to glory to be with Christ. They have been given this New and Living Way of approaching God, by faith in Jesus Christ. This way of approaching God was paved by Christ's loving sufferings on behalf of every one of God's elect people. We will, by His grace then, hold fast our confession of Him, and our need of His grace; not only for our initial salvation, but also for our sanctification and eventual glorification. He will complete the work of grace that He has begun. He who promised is faithful. Therefore, let us consider what we should be doing in the meantime; stirring one another up to love and good deeds. We will speak more of this in the next message.