

Galatians 5: 3-5; “To Wait for the Hope”, Message # 32 in the series – “Christ has Set us Free”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on November 13th, 2022, in the Morning Worship Service.

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. O 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 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 to be justified in the sight of God, that they are fallen from grace.

In relation to this truth I would like to ask 2 questions which I believe will help you to understand the doctrine of salvation better. When you are learning to wait for the hope of righteousness you will be making progress in holiness. In relating these things to you, I hope that it will help you to see just how much your salvation, and peace of mind in living the Christian life, depends on your trusting in Christ alone for your salvation.

1st of all – What does it mean when Paul says that some of these folks were trying to be justified by law? And 2nd – What does it mean to wait for the hope of righteousness? In explaining these things to you, I hope that this will help you to see just how much your salvation, and peace of mind in living the Christian life, depends on your trusting in Christ alone for your salvation.

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

Paul says in verses 3 and 4 – “And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law.” “You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.” So, we see here from Paul’s words 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 putting their whole faith and trust in the word of truth which is found in the gospel, that salvation is a free gift. Romans 6: 23 – “For the wages of sin is death, but the *free* gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (NAS)

The word “free” there is not in the original Greek, but the word gift is. The word is χάρισμα. Salvation is the gift of God. It is something that He freely bestows upon us apart from our works, either ceremonial or moral. Paul says that if you become circumcised Christ will profit you nothing. And if you did become circumcised, you would be a debtor to keep the whole law because, he says, you are estranged from Christ. You are estranged from Christ’s Person because you do not see that He is the fulfillment of the whole law, and here you are, still trying to keep it. You are trying to justify yourself by means of law keeping.

The reason that Baptism and the Lord’s Supper are ordinances which we observe is because they both speak to us of our identification with Christ. They speak to us of His having fulfilled the law, and our need of Christ in the ongoing sense that all of our spiritual strength to do what is right comes from Him. If you are trusting in the observance of the ceremony of the ordinance by itself, apart from Christ in any way, it is not a correct observance of the ordinance and you are fallen from grace. That is how we can apply it ourselves in this day.

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, and actually thinking that they were keeping, the ceremonial law of circumcision, and the moral law of the Ten Commandments. They thought

that they were in favor with God. Many Jews believed that God was pleased with them even when He was not because they were not really trusting in Christ. That is, either the Christ who was to come, or the Christ who had come. In our day, it may be the same thing for a Jewish person. But for Gentile professed Christian, it is when a person thinks that they will be saved by their going to church, by their being baptized, by their taking the Lord's Supper, and by their trying to be a good and moral person. In other words, by their being religious and trusting in themselves that they are righteous.

But I want you to understand that according to the Bible, according to Christ's teaching and the apostle's teaching, grace and law are two opposing principles. They are opposing principles when it comes to being your being justified in the sight of the Holy God, and they are opposing principles to your being able to really spiritually live the Christian life to the glory of God. The apostle Paul very clearly teaches this in Romans chapter 11, verses 1-7 – "I say then, has God cast His people?" "Certainly not!" "For I am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin." "God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew."

"Or do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel, saying, 'Lord, they have killed Your prophets and torn down Your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life?' "But what does the divine response say to him?" "I have reserved for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal." "Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace." "And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace." "But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work." "What then?" "Israel has not obtained what it seeks; but the elect have obtained it, and the rest were hardened."

So, I hope that you can see here that your receiving grace is related to God's choice in election. God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew. Even the prophet Elijah thought that he was alone left in Israel in his day, serving the Lord. But it was not so. There were 7,000 who had not bowed the knee to Baal. They showed by their works that they were true believers in God and His word. But they were not saved by that means. They were saved by grace through faith in God and His word, even as all sinners are today. The two principles of law and grace are like water and oil. They will never mix. The remnant were called by God in His saving of them, according to the election of grace. The election of grace is always unto a person's being saved through Christ, whether it is in Old Testament or New Testament times.

You see, the Galatians thought that it was by their being circumcised and their doing good works, that they would find favor with God. The Judaizers would tell them – Yes, Jesus may have been a prophet, but even when you have believed in Him, this still will not nullify your 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. And 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 was built upon what Abraham the father of their faith did. He did what he was commanded to do by God. And they thought that this was how he was saved, and so they would do this too. 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, as a sinful person, to obey God's law perfectly. And it was because I could never suffer sufficiently to atone for all of my sins, that Christ had to suffer in my place. 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 or favor with God. 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 in a false gospel.

It was that the Judaizers were teaching them to trust in themselves; in their own ceremonial and moral righteousness. They thought 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. Now, you should understand that Legalists, those who think that they are being saved by the works of the law, they 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 true Christian can do. If you are truly believing in Jesus you will learn by grace, according to God's promise, to be eagerly waiting for the completion of your salvation which God has begun in you. You have received justifying righteousness through your faith in your Savior Jesus Christ. And now you have been set free from sin. Now you want to pursue righteousness at every point in your life. So, you will go about this joyful task with the hope that you shall be more and more confirmed to Christ's blessed image.

Listen to verse 22 of Romans chapter 6, the verse just before that one I read you earlier that salvation is the gift of God. It says – “But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life.” You see, that is the hope of righteousness. Having been given the gift of the Holy Spirit's power and realizing now that Christ is working in your life, you will hold fast your confession of your need of Christ's sanctifying grace which will at every point help you to do what is right.

Christ in you is the hope of glory as Paul says in Colossians 1: 26 and 27 – “This mystery which has been hidden from ages and generations of people, but has now been revealed to His saints.” “To them (that is, to us, God's saints) He has willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which Christ in you, the hope of glory.” Since Christ is in you, you will exercise this good grace of hope. It is the hope that you will make real and significant progress in righteousness until that time when you will see your Lord face to face. This is what it means to wait for the hope of righteousness. It is your hoping that you will become as righteous and as holy as you can become, with the time that He will give you to perfect holiness in the fear of Him, and in the love of Him, your God.

Christ will make this hope a reality. For He is the hope of our completed righteousness, for He will most certainly complete it when you see Him face to face. While you are waiting for that Day, you will be learning to hope in Him continually and to praise Him yet more and more for His help to you. You will be learning to pursue righteousness and holiness with all your heart and all of your strength, so that you will make progress in these things and thus glorify Christ with your life. Christ will be sanctifying you all through your earthly pilgrimage, and then someday that great day will come, when He will call you to Himself. And then the Scripture will be fulfilled which says – “And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man.” That is our sure hope, my brethren. And we will eagerly wait for it – the hope of righteousness.