

Preached on 12/4/22 at GBC - Ruston

"A Vital Gospel Issue, Pt.2"

Gal.2:15-19

As we continue to look at Paul's confrontation of Peter here in Galatia, we need to keep in mind that the grand object of this epistle is that our **JUSTIFICATION** is **COMPLETE IN CHRIST**, entirely independent of any obedience to the **LAW**. Paul states clearly that believers (**justified sinners**) must be firm and dogmatic that Christ's righteousness alone attains, maintains, and entitles sinners to all of salvation (**including the subjective work of the Holy Spirit**) before they take the first step in seeking to serve the Lord."

We had left off last time with the question Paul posed to Peter – “*But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before [them] all, **If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?** THAT STATEMENT PAUL MADE IS SO IMPORTANT, **“they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the Gospel”**. He said of PETER and these believing JEWS, that their separation from the believing Gentiles was not according to the proper **RULE OF JUDGMENT**. What is a **JUSTIFIED SINNER’S RULE OF JUDGEMENT?** **“the truth of the Gospel”**. Paul stated that **LAW** or **PRINCIPLE** clearly in **Rom.8:2**: “*For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.*” You can’t have it **BOTH WAYS** – You are either **UNDER LAW**, or you are **UNDER GRACE**! Paul asks these same Galatians later: “*Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, **DO YE NOT HEAR THE LAW?***”(Gal.4:21) Now back to Paul’s question to Peter and the believing Jews. The **ANSWER** to this question Paul posed to Peter is – **PETER COULD NOT AND SHOULD NOT DO SO!** Paul then makes an obvious statement that cannot be denied by Peter, the false brethren, or those “*Jews*” (**including Barnabas**), who had been carried away by this “*dissimulation*”. The word translated “*dissimulation*” means ‘**HYPOCRISY**’ – “*We [who are] Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles.*” By the **FIRST PART** of this statement – “*We JEWS by nature*” Paul meant **ALL THOSE** who are Abraham’s natural descendants, including himself, Peter, Barnabas, all the believing Jews in Antioch, and even the false brethren who were natural born Jews. All of them were Jews by birth, descending from Jewish parents, and **FROM THEIR BIRTH** raised in the Jewish religion, under the law of Moses, and required to observe it. Remember the rich, young ruler – “*And he said, All these have I kept from my youth up.*”(Lk.18:21) The **SECOND PART** of Paul’s statement – “*and not sinners of the Gentiles*” Paul meant every other person on the planet that were not of Jewish descent. The **JEWS** commonly considered a Gentile “*the wicked of the nations of the world*”. **Let me make this perfectly clear** – Paul wasn’t saying that the Jews were somehow better or less sinful than the Gentiles. The **JEWS** were sinners as well, both by nature and by practice, which Paul clearly proved in his epistle to the Romans – “*What then? are we better [than they]? No, in no wise: **for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin.** As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.”(Rom.3:9-12) When Paul said that they “*were not sinners of the Gentiles*”, he meant that they weren’t without the Law. Remember what Paul wrote concerning the Gentiles in **Eph.2** – “*Wherefore remember, that ye [being] in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called***

the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.”(Eph.2:11,12) I like what John Gill said concerning Paul’s description of both the Jews and the Gentiles: “So Paul may here design such who lived the most dissolute lives and conversations, to which the Jews are opposed, who had a written law, and were under a better regulation and discipline. The reason of this description, both in the positive and negative branch of it, is to observe, that since they, the apostles, and others, who were born Jews, and so under the law of Moses, and, **until Christ came, were under obligation to observe it**, but had now relinquished it, and wholly and alone believed in Christ for righteousness and life; then it was the **most unreasonable thing in the world**, by any means whatever, to lead the Gentiles, **WHO NEVER WERE UNDER THE LAW**, to an observance of it.”

In this next verse the Apostle drives the death nail into what Peter and these Jews implied by their **HYPOCRISY**– “**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.” The original word Paul began his reprove of Peter with translated “**knowing**” means ‘to perceive, discern, or **UNDERSTAND**’. It is a **VERB**, and being a verb it has tense, voice, and mood. It is in the **PERFECT TENSE**, which indicates an action that occurred in the past. It is in the **ACTIVE VOICE** which represents the subject as the one performing the action. It is in the **PARTICIPLE MOOD**, which means it either ends in ‘ing’ or ‘ed’. In the case of the way Paul used it, it ends in ‘ing’ – **UNDERSTANDING**, or **DISCERNING**, or **PERCEIVING**. So whatever Paul is about to bring forward, Peter, Paul, Barnabas, and the other believing Jews **KNEW**, **UNDERSTOOD** and **BELIEVED** it to be true. **What did they know; what did they understand; what did they believe?** First of all, “**that a man IS NOT JUSTIFIED** by the works of the law.” How did they know that? “**And we know** that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, [even] in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.”(I Jn.5:20) The Judaisers **DID NOT** know this, and they were going about to establish a righteousness of their own based on law obedience, and encouraging all who would listen to them to do the same – “**Except you be circumcised after the law of Moses, you cannot be saved.**” On the other hand, all those “**taught of God**” understand from the **LAW ITSELF** that it requires perfect, sinless obedience, accusing, holding guilty, and pronouncing condemnation and death on the **LEAST INFRACTION**. The word translated “**justified**” means ‘righteous or observing divine laws’. The phrase “**by the works of the law**” is speaking not only of obedience to the ceremonial law, but obedience to the moral law as well. So Paul makes it clear that **ALL OF THEM** knew, understood, and believed that **NO ONE** is declared righteous by law obedience. **Listen to Paul** – “**Be it known unto you therefore, men [and] brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.**”(Acts 13:38,39) That brings us to the **SECOND TRUTH THEY ALL KNEW**. Seeing sinners cannot be justified by the works of the law, Paul turns to the Gospel – “**but by the faith of Jesus Christ**”. By these words Paul shows us that Christ **ALONE** is the **SOLE, JUSTIFYING CAUSE** of His church before God. Christ as our Head, Surety, and Representative obeyed every precept of the law, and suffered the entire penalty of the transgressions of it by His obedience unto death. Paul sums this up for us in the next chapter when he states – “**Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed [is] every one that hangeth on a tree: That the blessing of Abraham**

might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.”(Gal.3:13,14) By these words Paul confirmed that we have redemption by Christ alone, just as he had previously confirmed that we are condemned by the law. Christ’s obedience and death, being set forth by God Himself for a propitiation, nothing can be more plain and satisfactory than that we have “*redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.*”(Eph.1:7) The way in which this obedience and blood-shedding of Christ becomes the cause of the justification of his people before God is by virtue of their union with him, and their interest in him. **Think about it this way:** Christ and his people in the eye of God’s righteous law, **are one**. What Christ did, it is as if they had done it. What Christ, suffered, it is as if they had suffered. **One commentator wrote these words on this verse:** “For, as in all, Christ acted as; their Surety, and being accepted of God, yea, appointed by God in this high character, when he had performed all his Suretyship-offices, and God declared himself well pleased with him, **both law and justice must discharge the original debtor**, having come upon the Surety, and the debt having been fully paid. **Both cannot pay, for, in that case, it would be doubly paid, which would be unjust**. And, therefore, the Apostle's conclusion is correct. Now, therefore, there can be no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.”

Notice the last part of **Vs.16** – “*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.*” Paul reminds Peter, Barnabas, and the believing Jews on what **BASIS** they are justified. Since they had been given an understanding that however great the advantages of being a Jew, still no man (**including the JEWS**) is justified by the law, but by the faith of Christ. Paul reminds Peter how they were set free. They had renounced all confidence in their own obedience and trusted for **JUSTIFICATION** exclusively in and by Christ’s obedience unto death, without any reliance on the works of the law, either **MORAL** or **CEREMONIAL**, because it is clear: “*for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.*”

Look at **Vs.17** – The goal or theme of this Galatian letter was to prove that our justification is complete in Christ, entirely independent of obedience to **ANY LAW**. Paul, Peter, Barnabas, and the believing Jews had sought justification and Christ, and they had obtained what they were seeking through Christ’s accomplished work of redemption, **NOT BY WORKS OF THE LAW**. Since they were **JUSTIFIED (DECLARED RIGHTEOUS)** based entirely on Christ’s righteousness **ALONE**, the Apostle Paul poses another question to them – “*But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, [is] therefore Christ the minister of sin?*” Let me read this verse to you in Young’s Literal Translation – “And if, seeking to be declared righteous in Christ, we ourselves also were found sinners, [is] then Christ a ministrant of sin?” **Here’s what Paul is asking Peter and the others** – If while we seek justification and righteousness by and in Christ, still feeling ourselves under the guilt of sin, so much so that it requires our going back to the **LAW** for deliverance, wouldn’t that make Christ the minister of sin? Does Christ’s doctrine leave us under the power of sin? If that’s true, it is evident that His obedience unto death hasn’t completely removed our guilt, nor has His resurrection given us what the Scriptures call in another place “*(the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ*”. Wouldn’t we therefore be compelled to look to some other place for a righteousness in which we can stand accepted before God? **How does Paul answer that question:** “**GOD FORBID**”, literally, **LET IT NOT BE!** **Remember** the Gospel message they had all believed, which they all were sent forth to preach – “*Be it known unto you therefore, men*

[and] brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.”(Acts 13:38,39) Peter and these others by their action IMPLIED sinners need something MORE THAN or IN ADDITION to Christ and His righteousness in order to be saved. In this particular case – CIRCUMCISION. In our day it is no different – ELABORATE.

Look at Vs.18 – “For if I build again the things which I destroyed”. The word translated “destroyed” means ‘to overthrow, throw down, or dissolve’. What had Paul and these other men OVERTHROWN or thrown down, or dissolved by their declaration of salvation full and free by the imputed righteousness of Christ alone? All the rites and ceremonies of the Law of Moses – “For Christ is the END of the Law for righteousness to everyone that believeth.” So if he goes about to reestablish those things which he had shown to be set aside by way of perfect fulfillment, Paul says of himself and all who have believed – “I make myself a transgressor.” **Think about it like this:** If the LAW has not been completely fulfilled by Christ’s obedience unto death, he was a transgressor because he lived by that truth and taught others to believe and live by the same doctrine. Likewise, it would be criminal on Paul’s part if the law has been perfectly fulfilled in and by Christ to enforce any aspect of the law on sinners as necessary for justification before God – **Gal.1:8,9**.

Look at Vs.19 and we’ll close. Here’s a literal translation – “For I through law DID DIE, that to God I may live.” **Listen to Robert Hawker’s words on this profound statement** – “If these words were not found in the Bible, and written by a man, under the immediate influence of the Holy Ghost, we should stand amazed at the Apostle’s account of himself. Dead to the law! What? was Paul lawless? Yes! indeed, if putting Christ in the place of the law be so. For, in fact, not only Paul, but every regenerated child of God is so, in respect to seeking principles of life, or justification from the law. Christ is the sole life of everyone who is regenerated. That soul cannot be living upon Christ, who makes any one law-work a part of justification. No man can be looking to Christ and the law together for life: if you are alive in Christ, like Paul, you are dead to the law. But so far is this from giving occasion to licentiousness, that the Holy Ghost declares it to be the only source of subduing sin. If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.”(Romans 8:13) Paul taught all God’s redeemed this all important truth concerning obedience and service to the true and living God – “Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to [her] husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of [her] husband. So then if, while [her] husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man. Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, [even] to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.”(Rom.7:1-4) Only those who stand before God robed in Christ’s perfect righteousness can and do serve Him acceptably. Maybe you’re thinking: You have no respect or regard for God’s holy law! That’s just not so! A fellow pastor made this statement concerning that assertion: “I have great love, respect, and regard for the law of God. I preach IT’S FUNERAL every Sunday!”

We’ll stop right there this morning!

