

DID CHRIST DIE IN VAIN?

GALATIANS 2:20-21 • TV-033B

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Galatians 2:20-21

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

Today’s message is on the subject: **“DID CHRIST DIE IN VAIN?”**

Now, if you’ll take your Bibles and turn to **Galatians chapter 2, verses 20 and 21**; we’ll use that for our text.

Now, there isn’t a stronger statement to be found anywhere in God’s Word on salvation by grace than this verse of Scripture, this statement, which Paul made to Peter in **Galatians 2:21**. Now listen to what he said; *“I do not frustrate the grace of God. If righteousness comes by the law then Christ died in vain.”* Now that’s powerful isn’t it? That’s a strong statement; *“If righteousness comes by the law Christ died in vain.”*

Now in the church at Antioch there were Jews and Gentiles. Christ our Lord had been to the earth, died on the cross, buried and rose again, ascended back to glory. Because He had accomplished the work of redemption.

Our Lord had fulfilled the ceremonial law. He’d fulfilled the moral law, and He’d fulfilled the ceremonial law. He fulfilled the law of circumcision, and the law of meats and drinks. He had

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fulfilled the law's special days. He had fulfilled the law of peace and sacrifices and He had fulfilled the atonement.

And He had granted repentance and faith; the Scripture says, to the Gentiles as well as to the Jews. And the Jews and the Gentiles were one. God broke down that middle wall of perdition between them and made them one in Christ.

"So in Christ there's neither Jew nor Greek, circumcised nor uncircumcised, male or female, bond or free." In Christ we're one.

And these people were in the church at Antioch. But certain Jewish leaders came down to Antioch from Jerusalem. The Scripture says there in **Galatians 2**; they came from James, who was the pastor of Jerusalem.

And these men who came down, some of these Jewish leaders were still in bondage to this ceremonial law. They were still in bondage to the meats and drinks, to the special days, to the Sabbaths, to the Holy Days, to the feasts. They were still in bondage to these Jewish ceremonial laws about meats and drinks and so-forth.

And they held to the fact that if Gentiles could be saved they had to become Jews. They had to be circumcised and eat certain meats and abstain from other meats and keep certain Holy Days and certain Feast Days. These men held to these ceremonial laws. Their pride wouldn't let them turn loose of these ceremonial laws.

Now, when they came down from Jerusalem, Peter; that's who I'm talking about, the apostle Peter, the man to whom Christ said, "Thou art a little stone. On this rock I'll build my church," Peter is the man who said; *"We believe that thou art the Christ the Son of the living God,"* (the man who preached at Pentecost) we're talking about him, the man who was put in prison for his faith, that strong, gallant, man of God, the apostle Peter.

Now before these men came down to Antioch he was fellowshiping with the Gentiles. Everything was going fine. He was fellowshiping with them. He was eating with them. He was taking part in worshipping with them.

But when these men came down who were still in bondage to this ceremonial law; Paul said, "Peter withdrew from the Gentiles fearing those men who came from Jerusalem of the circumcision." He withdrew from the Gentiles. He separated himself from them.

And many other people were drawn away with his dissimulation. He caused a rift in the church, a split between the Jews and the Gentiles. And even Barnabas, the side-kick of the apostle Paul, went with Peter.

And that's when Paul said in **Galatians 2** there, back a few verses: "I withstood Peter to the face because he was to be blamed." And this is what Paul said to him, he said; "Peter; a man is not justified by the works of the law, whether it be a moral law, or a judicial law, or a ceremonial

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law. A man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ. And Peter, I do not frustrate, I do not despise, I do not make void the grace of God. If salvation, righteousness, comes by the works of the law, your Saviour died in vain, Jesus Christ died in vain.”

What a powerful sermon. Do you see how strong this is? Do you see how powerful it is? Do you see how it strikes at the very foundation? Peter was undercutting the very foundation of what we believe.

He was taking away all of our hope and this is what Paul is saying; he is saying: “Peter; I do not reject the grace of God. I do not make void the grace of God. I do not frustrate the grace of God.”

What grace is he talking about? He’s talking about the grace of God that redeems sinners. He’s looking back yonder to that eternal sovereign grace wherein our Lord said; *“I’ll be merciful to whom I will be merciful. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious.”*

God has been gracious to sinners from before the foundation of this world; *“Whom He foreknew He predestinated. Whom He predestinated He called. Whom He called He justified. Whom He justified He glorified. What shall we say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?”*

If God is for us in redemption, if God is for us in substitution, if God is for us in salvation, if God is for us in eternal mercies and grace, *“Who can be against us? Who can lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth.”*

That’s the grace he’s talking about. I don’t despise that grace. I don’t frustrate that grace. I don’t make void that grace through my works and merit and righteousness.

What grace is he talking about? He’s talking about that incarnate grace. He wrote about it in **2 Corinthians 8-9**. *“You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ how that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor that you through His poverty might be rich.”*

He laid aside the glory of His possessions, the glory of His Father’s love. He laid aside the glory of eternal heaven and came down here to this earth. He became poor, born in a manger.

He worked in a carpenter’s shop, lived in a little old village called Nazareth. He walked this earth, went to the cross, and emptied Himself. He died even the death of the cross and was laid in a tomb. He became poor.

Do you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ? That’s the grace we’re talking about. We’re talking about His redeeming grace. Listen to Paul in **Ephesians 1:7**; *“In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sin, according to the riches of His grace, of His great redeeming grace, forgiving grace.”*

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I don't despise that grace. I don't make void that grace. What grace are we talking about? We're talking about His revealing grace; Paul said, "God who separated me, from my mother's womb and called me by His grace. I was injurious. I was a persecutor. I was a blasphemer. But God stopped me on my road to Damascus. God stopped me on my road to hell and revealed His Son in me."

Paul was a religious man before he met Christ, before he was called by grace. Paul was a man who kept the ceremonial law, circumcision, meats and drinks, Sabbaths, Holy Days. All of these things he kept. Like that rich young ruler who said, "*I kept these from my youth up. What lack I yet?*"

Paul said: "*I don't despise the grace of God. I am what I am by the grace of God, by the grace of God.*" If we're in His family, redeemed by His love, saved by His Son; if we have any knowledge, any faith, any hope, any love, it's by His grace.

"Peter; I don't despise the grace of God. I don't frustrate the grace of God. I don't make void the grace of God. I don't cover it up so you can't see it. I don't fix the grace of God so a man will be confused whether he's saved by the grace of God or by his own works. I don't confuse it."

Now listen to this; "*If righteousness comes by the law;*" I don't despise the grace of God, if righteousness comes by the law, if that justifying righteousness whereby a man is declared acceptable to God, if that comes by the law; if that sanctifying righteousness, whereby a man is made, "*holy, unproveable, unblameable, in the sight of God,*" if that heavenly righteousness by which a man is declared fit for glory, if that righteousness comes by works, if it comes by our deeds, if it comes by our church membership, if it comes by our morality, if it comes by our Baptists.

If that's the way a man gets that justifying, sanctifying, heavenly righteousness, if that's the way it comes, "*Christ died in vain.*"

And boy, that's what Paul said. And that's the message to us today. That's the message to me as a preacher and you as a deacon, a Sunday school teacher, an elder, a member of the church, and a professing Christian.

If you're saved by your works, if you're justified in the sight of a holy God by what you do by your morality, your good deeds, your charity, your church membership, your preaching, teaching, and tithing, and keeping the Sabbath Days; if that's the way you are justified "*Jesus Christ died in vain.*"

If He died to bring in a righteousness that can be secured by my works, "*He died in vain.*" If He died on the cross to redeem a people who might have been redeemed by their own goodness, "*He died in vain.*"

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If He died on a cross to satisfy the justice of God which might have been satisfied by our merit and by our good works, "*He died in vain.*" If salvation is by law, if it's by works, if it's by church membership, if it's by walking an aisle, if it's by being baptized, if it's by even having faith, if that's the way a man's saved, by what he does for God, then Jesus Christ died in vain.

There was no reason for Him to come to this earth. We could have got along without Him. There was no reason for Him to be tempted and tried and tested, go through the turmoil of living 33 ½ years on this terrible, corrupt, depraved and wicked world. There's no reason for that.

He could have sent somebody else. What did He do that for? There was no reason for Him to go to the cross and bear the nails in His hands and in His feet and a crown of thorns in His brow and a whip on His back and the jeering and mocking and laughter of the crowd. And the awful wrath of a Holy God; there was no reason for that; if we can be justified by our works; if we can be saved by our goodness and our morality. There's no reason for Him to die. He died in vain, He died in vain.

Now Spurgeon called this salvation by works a criminal doctrine. "It's a crime," he said. It's a crime first of all against a holy God. It makes light of His righteousness and His justice and His holiness and His wisdom.

It says, God you're foolish to send your Son, to subject your Son, to the awful wrath of Calvary when you could have done it some other way. God you're foolish. That's a crime.

And then it's a crime against Jesus Christ. Its saying, "Lord; you shed your blood in vain. We didn't need you. We don't need you now." Why it's a crime against Jesus Christ. It heaps all matter of indignities upon His holy person and upon His work to say that salvation's by any other means than His death.

And I'll tell you this, the great crime too, right along with being a crime against the Father and the Son; those who preach salvation by works are committing a crime against their hearers because they're giving their hearers a false refuge.

Our Lord said; "*You compass sea and land to make one proselyte for your religion.*" And isn't that what men do today? They're going out here trying to convince men to be Baptists or Methodists or Presbyterians or something else and making proselytes to our religion.

And after you've made him a proselyte of your religion, your creed; "*he's two-fold more the child of hell than you are.*" That's what Christ said. Those are harsh words aren't they? That's what He said.

And when we go out and try to win converts by their works and by their deeds and by their own efforts to enter the kingdom of God we're giving them a false refuge and they're going to die trusting in that false refuge.

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I'll tell you this, there are several reasons why we must continually insist on salvation by grace. This is the reason Paul said this; the reason he withstood Peter to the face is because Peter was hacking at the roots of the tree of life.

He was digging at the foundation of that holy temple of our Lord Jesus Christ when he was undercutting the grace of God and making it appear that acceptance with God is by deeds and works and ceremony and not by grace.

First of all; the reason we must continually insist upon salvation by grace is because salvation by works is so persistent, it's so persistent.

Now, in his heart; don't you know Peter knew better than that? Don't you know the apostle Peter; look at his own failures, look at him there sitting. He certainly couldn't be saved by his works, by his faithfulness, by his loyalty, by his good deeds.

Look at him sitting there by the fire warming his hands and those people come up and say, "Why; you are one of the apostles and he curses and swears." He says, "I don't even know that fellow. I don't even know Him." Doesn't look like he could be saved by that kind of work does it?

And then look at him up on the top of that roof there that day and the Lord sent a sheet down full of unclean animals and said; "*Peter; rise, kill, and eat.*" And he rebuked the Lord. He said, "Why not so Lord. I won't do it. I've never eaten anything that's common or unclean." God said, "*Peter; don't you call anything common or unclean that I've cleaned.*" Peter was an impulsive, reckless, sometimes an impudent individual.

Well he knew he couldn't be saved by his works. He knew that. And yet, no matter how much he knew it, no matter how often we rehearse and preach and go over salvation by grace; well, I'll tell you; this old flesh, it's so proud, it's so arrogant, it's so haughty and it's so boastful. It just wants to have some part in the redemption of our souls. It's so persistent.

And I'll tell you this, once salvation by works gets a foothold and makes great advances; you have to keep putting it down. You have to keep crying; "*By the grace of God I am what I am. For by grace are you saved through faith and that not of yourselves; it's the gift of God, it's the gift of God.*"

I'll tell you something else about salvation by works; it seems so useful and practical; now listen; if we preach law and works and morality for salvation it'll encourage men to live moral lives. That is what Peter was saying by his action.

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If you'll preach the law and tell people that if they'll keep it then God will honor them and God will bless them, well it'll encourage people to live moral lives. It'll encourage them to be virtuous. It'll encourage them to be honest.

Now, if you go out here and preach salvation is a gift and salvation is by grace, and salvation is not what you do for God but what He does for you and salvation is totally and completely in the work of Jesus Christ; "Well preacher, it'll make people careless."

Now doesn't that sound practical? Doesn't that sound reasonable? Doesn't that sound useful? And listen; if you go out here and preach rewards, if you tell a fellow if he'll preach for 40 years God will give him a crown with a lot of jewels in it when he goes to heaven.

If you tell people if they'll win souls and God will give them some jewels and crowns and yo-yo's in heaven and God will reward them. Now you see; if you tell people God will reward them, if they tithe God will reward them, if they go to church every Sunday God will reward them, if they're faithful God will reward them; now isn't that practical?

That appeals to the flesh. And you can get people to do more for reward than you can for love, huh? You can get people to do more for reward than for love.

Not a saved man. Paul said, "*The love of Christ, constraineth me.*" When I've done everything God commanded me to do I am still an unprofitable servant. We preach because we love Him. We give because we love Him.

Somebody said; "Lord, if you'll heal little Suzie and make her well I'll go to church every Sunday." Well, you better go whether Suzie lives or dies. Isn't that right? You mean you're driving a bargain with God almighty?

Oh me; salvation by works is so practical isn't it? But it's deadly. It's as deadly as a coiled serpent.

I'll tell you something else; salvation by works is natural to fallen men. Salvation by works is the essence of all false religion. You'll take any false religion in this world; I don't want to call names of religion, but any cult, any sect, any false religion and the very foundation of it; that which every one of them has in common is this: "A man serves God and he merits heaven."

He goes to heaven by serving God, by doing good. Good works gets you to heaven. That's the essence of all false religion!

The idol worshipper; he torchers his body in order to gain heaven. The loyal religionist; he follows his duties so he'll go to heaven. The moralist restrains his passions so he'll go to heaven, so he won't go to hell. The legalist does his good deeds, why? Well he wants to go to heaven.

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Now my friends; there's only two religions in this world. You can call all the different names but there's just two religions, those who believe that we're saved by what we do, by works, and those who believe that we're saved by what God did.

Salvation, some say, is what I do for God. The Bible says salvation is what God does; for it's the gift of God, it's by the grace of God, and it all heads up, every false religion heads up one doctrine, salvation by works.

And all true religion, true faith and true dependence on Christ Jesus heads up in one doctrine, *"By the grace of God I am what I am."*

In the next place; salvation by works arises out of ignorance. It thrives on ignorance. Do you know what our Lord said to those people who came to Him with this question? They said, "A woman had one, two, three, four, five, six, or seven, husbands. They all died one right after the other."

Now, they said; "Who is going to be her husband in the resurrection?" Now listen to the Lord, He said; *"You do err;"* (you are in error); that's what He said. There are two reasons you are in error, *"Not knowing the Scriptures and not knowing the power of God."*

Men are in error not knowing the Scriptures. Oh they memorize a few verses, *"Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, or the Lord is my shepherd,"* or **John 3:16**: *"For God so loved the world He gave His only begotten Son."*

That makes them experts on the Bible. That makes them an authority on God's Word. They memorize two or three verses of Scripture. But Christ said; *"The reason you are in error is because you don't know the Scriptures. All Scripture's given by inspiration of God,"* not just three verses.

All Scripture's profitable for doctrine, for correction, for reproof, for rebuke, for instruction in the way of life, that the man of God may be mature, full-grown in Christ Jesus.

And men believe and preach and trust in salvation by works because they are ignorant of God's Word. God's Word says; *"It's not by works of righteousness which we've done but by His mercy He hath saved us."*

Men do not know what the Scripture says about the fall. What does the Bible say about the fall of man? *"As in Adam all die. By one man's disobedience we were all made sinners. By one man's disobedience judgment and condemnation came upon all men."* That's what the Scripture says.

"Out of the heart proceeds evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, and blasphemy; these are the things that defile a man, not what he takes with his hands or eats with his mouth. That's not what defiles him. It's what comes out of his heart."

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Men are ignorant of the Scriptural holiness of God's law. *"To offend in one point is to be guilty of the whole law."* James says; "If you show partiality you commit sin." Did you know that? You don't have to shoot a fellow to be a sinner. Just show partiality between any person. Just prefer one person above another and you're being partial. *"You're a respecter of persons."*

You're a sinner. We sin by thought and by imagination. We sin in dreams. We sin in thought, we sin in attitude, and we sin in motive. Men are ignorant of, *"how God can be just and justify the ungodly."*

Old Job asked that, he said; *"How can man be just with God? How can he be clean that's born of a woman? Look at the heavens; they are not clean in God's sight. The moon that shineth not; how much more abominable is man, filthy, that drinks iniquity like the water?"*

Men are ignorant of the new birth, what it is to be born again. They're as ignorant as Nicodemus was; he said, "Well how can these things be?" Christ talked to him about the new birth and he said; "Now Lord, do I enter my mother's womb and be born again?"

Isn't that something? And our Lord said; "Are you a master in Israel and you don't know these things? You're a master, you're a Bible scholar, you're a teacher of the Scriptures and you don't know anything about the new birth?" Ignorance!

And salvation by works is based on ignorance and it feeds on pride. Salvation by works makes light of sin and robs God of His glory. If you'll go back to **verse 20**; here's the essence of salvation by grace. Look at **verse 20**. Let's just look at it briefly.

First of all, I'm crucified with Christ. This is the grace of God. This is the way we're saved. There not literally, only two men were crucified with Christ, literally, those two thieves. But I'm crucified with Christ. He was my representative, *"bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh."*

And I lived in Him and I obeyed the law in Him and went to the cross in Him. And I died in Him and I was buried. When He was buried I was buried. When He arose again I arose. I'm seated with Him on the right hand of God, being one with Him.

The two are one by God's decree and God's covenant. We are one. And what He did is reckoned and is what I did. I'm crucified with Christ. *"Nevertheless, I live, yet not I but Christ liveth in me."*

Paul said; "I'm not the same fellow I was. I'm not Saul the persecutor, Saul the blasphemer. I'm not Saul the Pharisee; I'm Paul the believer. I'm a new person." And it's not I; it's Christ that liveth in me.

Paul said, "And if you see any love in me, it's not I, it's Christ. If you see any grace in me; it's not I, it's Christ. If you see any joy in me it's not I, it's Christ that liveth in me. And the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God. I live by faith in the Son of God. I

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look to Him for everything, my pardon, my righteousness, my wisdom, my every need. And He loved me.”

Paul said; “I’m not going to brag about loving Him but I’m going to brag about Him loving me. My love for Him is so frail, so small, but I do know this: His love for me is everlasting. His love for me is free. His love for me is personal. He loved me and He gave himself for me.”

And that’s grace, that’s grace:

**“Love sent my Saviour to die in my stead
Why should He love me so?
Meek with the Calvary’s cross He was lead
Why should He love me so?”**

**Nails pierced His hands and His feet for my sin
Why should He love me so?
He suffered, oh so much, my salvation to win
Why should He love me so?”**

**Oh how He agonized there in my place
Why should He love me so?
Nothing, nothing, withholding my sin to efface
Why should He love me so?”**

I don’t reject the grace of God. If righteousness comes by works Christ died in vain!