

BRIEF PERSPECTIVE ON THE LETTER TO THE GALATIANS (2:15-21)

In his letter, one of the key issues Paul is trying to address is the false teaching infiltrating the Galatian Church that faith alone in God is not enough to bring salvation and that adherence to certain laws is also required. The majority of world religions are based on this teaching that we must do good works (keeping the law) to earn our way into heaven (or the religion's equivalent). The emphasis is on us - how good we are; how we can save ourselves on our own merit. It's a way of thinking that is easily fallen into.

The problem is that no matter how hard we try it's impossible to keep every single law.

This is why Jesus came and died for us. We can only be saved by trusting and accepting his sacrifice on the cross. If we try and do it any other way we fail.

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WARMING UP

1. What's the longest period of time you think you have gone without breaking any of the commands in the Bible?
2. As Christians we have had our sins atoned for by Jesus, this makes us holy - as holy as God is. Do you believe this statement? Is it true?

INTO THE PASSAGES

Read Galatians 2:15-21

3. In verse 15 Paul contrasts the Gentiles (non-Jewish people) with the Jews by labelling them as 'sinners'. What did he mean by this; are Jews not sinners too?
4. Can we be saved by following the law? What is the purpose of the law and what are its limitations? (See also Romans 7:7-17)
5. If we abandon the law (i.e. rules for right living) will that not lead us to sin (v17b)? What does it mean to die to the law?
6. Do we ever try to rebuild what we tore down (v18) i.e. return to living under the law? Why is this sinful?
7. What does it mean to "live by faith in the Son of God"? How do we do this practically?

MOVING FORWARD

In his sermon, Bert highlighted three things that "being dead with Christ" means for us. It means:

> **Trusting God**

- trusting Him with our whole lives (future, time, relationships, money) and trusting in His grace

> **Dying to our past**

- understanding that God's grace is big enough to forgive us for everything and continually confessing our sins to him; we can't break free from our sins by ourselves but God is big enough to help us do this

> **Being made right with God**

- understanding that we have been resurrected with Christ; that Jesus is alive in us and actively redeeming us to make us Holy and to bring His complete and holistic peace (Shalom).

It's easy to forget that we've been set free from the law and that our salvation and security is built on Jesus Christ. We can't make ourselves right with God - it's already been done for us by Jesus! We need to lift the focus off ourselves and back onto God.

LIFE TOGETHER

As you trust God more and more you will discern what love truly is.

What aspects of your life are you struggling to trust God with? What are you trying to keep control of (future plans, money, dreams, your identity, pride, relationships, your children...)?

Encourage each other and pray for each other as we learn to trust God with everything.

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Leaders Guides

These notes are primarily for the Into the Passage portion, and are to be used just as guidelines or commentary notes. Most of them are my own thoughts, so take that with a grain of salt. Let the Word of God lead you to truth, not these notes.

INTO THE PASSAGES

Read Galatians 2:15-21

3. In verse 15 Paul contrasts the Gentiles (non-Jewish people) with the Jews by labelling them as 'sinners'. What did he mean by this; are Jews not sinners too?

The Gentiles were without the law (God's rules) or knowledge of God therefore they were unable to live in a way that would please Him.

4. Can we be saved by following the law? What is the purpose of the law and what are its limitations? (See also Romans 7:7-17)

We cannot be saved by following the law (Paul wants to point this out to the Jews that they need God's grace as much as the gentiles). The law is good at showing us that we fall for short of God's perfect standard and that we need to be saved. However, it is unable to provide us with an avenue for salvation.

5. If we abandon the law (i.e. rules for right living) will that not lead us to sin (v17b)? What does it mean to die to the law?

Opposition to Paul were arguing that if Christians were no longer under law then they would just live as they pleased and this would lead to sin. However, Paul is explaining that dying to the law means Christians are free from meeting it's requirements and that it no longer becomes the method by which they try to find salvation. Instead, they trust in Jesus' work on the cross and are given the Holy Spirit who empowers them to live godly lives. The emphasis moves from themselves to God.

6. Do we ever try to rebuild what we tore down (v18) i.e. return to living under the law? Why is this sinful?

When they first believed the Galatian church understood that salvation was through faith in God, they were free from the law. Now they were going back to their previous way of living and trying to keep the law again. It's sinful because it's rejecting what God has done by trying to do it ourselves. The problem is that we often try and do the same thing.

7. What does it mean to "live by faith in the Son of God"? How do we do this practically?

We are still living in this body and we will still struggle with sin, but we have died to the requirements of the law and old desires and are renewed by Jesus who gives us a new heart to follow Him. Living by faith mean trusting in God.