Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Salvation by Faith Alone, Part 2
Scripture: Galatians 2:14-21
Code: 1656

Tonight, we are continuing our study in the book of Galatians. What a blessed time it is going to be as we come into that second chapter again. In Galatians 2, we are considering the portion of Scripture that goes from verses 11-21. We began two weeks ago with our first look at these verses and this is our second one. We're calling this little series within the book "Salvation by Faith Alone."

Now, our generation has been asking in it's own way the very same question that Bildad asked centuries ago, in Job 25:4. He said this: "How, then, can man be righteous before God?" It's a very important question. How, then, can man be righteous before God? One of the universal human hurts is guilt. Every man feels it, every man, in some way or another, tries to alleviate his guilt. He may salve it over with self-confidence and positive thinking, and he may endeavor to escape from it through drugs or drink or some other escape. But every man deals, in one way or another, with guilt. Primitive man, for example, endeavors to look for relief in religious rites. In attempting to pacify some god that he assumes exists, he somehow feels that he is thus atoning for his sin and gains a measure of relief from guilt. The cultured man is a little different. Maybe cultured man looks for his 'out' in psychoanalysis. But both ends of the pole, whether cultured or primitive, shout that something is wrong. They need love, they need acceptance, they need forgiveness. It's at that point that the good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ rings true to the heart of the aborigine and the heart of the university professor, and everybody in between. The voice of God comes and says, "There is love, there is acceptance, there is forgiveness for all who come to God through Jesus Christ."

Perhaps the key verses in the book of Galatians boil down to verse 16. "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ," and verse 20: "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I but Christ lives in me." This is really the message of Christianity, that a man can be just before God so that God will literally come and dwell within that man and live his life through him. This is the heart of Galatians, this is the heart of Paul's gospel, this is the heart of the New Testament, as well as the key to the particular rebuke of Paul against Peter as Peter attacked the doctrine of salvation by faith alone.

Now remember, as we said last time, the Apostle Paul was the apostle of grace. He was the great preacher of salvation by faith. It was he who said, "For by grace are you saved through faith, that not of yourselves, it is a gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast." It was he who laid down the tremendous doctrinal statement of grace that is defined so capably in Romans 3-4 and following.

Because Paul was the apostle of grace and because he was such a dominant figure and because he was so powerful, Satan knew that he must destroy his work. Satan knew that he had to do all he could to undermine the message of Paul, to destroy the efforts that Paul was vigilantly working on. Satan had some false teachers to try and do his work for him, and he sent them along. As we've seen throughout our study of Galatians, they dogged the steps of Paul and they were the Judaizers. They would come running along behind Paul and they would say, "No! You can't be saved through faith alone, you have to have works. You have to be circumcised, you have to keep the law, you have to obey the ceremonies, you've got to become a Jew first, then you can get into Christianity." They imposed upon the freedom of grace and faith a system of rules and ceremonies.

Paul had shed blood, and almost given up his life, in Galatia. He was stoned and left for dead in the dump outside of the city. It was at great peril and cost that he and Barnabas had founded those little churches in Lystra, Iconium, Derby and Antioch. Now he was gone, and he had heard about what happened. The Judaizers had come in and troubled the sheep, troubled the flock, stirred up problems in the church with their heresy. They had attacked Paul on three fronts. First, they denied his authority. They denied his authority and substituted theirs. Secondly, they denied his gospel of grace and substituted theirs of works. Thirdly, they denied his life of liberty and substituted their own life of legalism. So they hit him on his authority, his gospel, and his pattern of the Christian life. He writes Galatians to counteract those three things. Chapters 1-2 defend his authority, chapters 3-4 defend his grace salvation, chapters 5-6 defend his liberty living.

We're in the first section. We're in the section dealing with the defense of his authority, and we have seen three ways in which he defends his authority. First, he gives his apostolic credentials. He says, "What I got, I got directly from Jesus." Remember that? Galatians 1:10-24. Secondly, he says that,"I have not only apostolic credentials, but I have apostolic commendation." In 2:1-10, Paul shows that he went to Jerusalem and the leaders of the Jerusalem church commended him. So he defends his authority on the basis of his credentials and his commendation. Thirdly, he defends his authority because of his apostolic confidence. You say, "What do you mean by that?" I mean that when it came to a clash with Peter, who was considered number one among the apostles, Paul did not hesitate to take a position of authority over Peter. So he establishes his authority on the basis of his credentials, his commendation by the apostles, and his confidence in handling a heretical situation propagated by the leader of the twelve, Peter himself.

Now verses 11-21 are our consideration in the framework of his defense. We see the passage falling into two sections: verses 11-13 deal with Peter's deviation, verses 14-21, with Paul's doctrine. Peter's deviation comes in three sections, and we saw those last time, you'll remember. First of all, the clash came in verse 11.
"When Peter came to Antioch, I withstood him to the face because he was to be condemned." Paul sets himself against Peter's aggressive attack on grace. That was the clash. The cause for the clash

is in verse 12: "For before certain men came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles." He was doing fine. He was up there, and he wasn't hung up on dietary laws, he realized that the dietary laws of Leviticus 11 were gone, that the Lord had rubbed those out, that Jesus had Himself said in Mark 11, "It is not what goes into a man that defiles him, it's what comes out of him." Also, prior to his meeting with Cornelius, he had tried to take a nap on the roof of his house and found himself in a trance in which he saw a vision. Through this, God showed him there were no more ceremonial dietary laws. Everything was to be taken, "Rise, Peter, kill and eat." Peter said, "I can't, I can't touch that stuff. It's against the Jewish ceremony. It's established that I can't touch it, I've never eaten it in my life!" God says, "Don't you dare call 'unclean' what God has cleansed." So it's a new ballgame, a new world, a new day, Peter. So Peter understood that he could eat with Gentiles.

But watch: "But when they came from James," they came from the Jerusalem church, not under the authority of James, they just came from the church where James was sort of the leader, "He withdrew and separated himself, fearing them who were of the circumcision." That's another term for the Judaizers who wanted to impose a legal salvation on everybody, where you get saved by works. So when they arrived, all of a sudden he withdrew from the Gentiles and started acting like a legalist. The reason he withdrew? It says simply in verse 12 that "He feared them." In other words, he was holding his reputation. He didn't want to lose his reputation among the legalists. The implication of the verbs here in the Greek tense is that he gradually withdrew himself. He isolated himself with the Jews. The fear in Paul's mind was that there are now two churches, we've created a monster with all the Jews pulling out, and there will be a terrible fractioning of the church.

The consequence came in verse 13. "The other Jews dissembled in like manner with him." Peter was a leader, insomuch that Barnabas, who was co-pastor of the church at Antioch, also was carried away with their hypocrisy. Why do I call it hypocrisy? Because they knew better. They knew they were free to eat what they wanted to eat. They knew that. They played the part of a hypocrite to gain a reputation with the legalists. They didn't want to offend them. Well, the hypocrisy spread and it split the church. This is the church over which Paul had labored and labored, so had Barnabas and three other pastors indicated in Acts 13. This was the fountainhead of Gentile churches. Paul was really upset, and in verses 14-21, we find the reaction that we'll call Paul's doctrine. First he reacts, then he teaches. Look at verse 14.

"But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before 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?'"

Let's untangle that statement. What Paul is saying is this, and you need to get this or you'll miss the whole point of his argument. He's saying, "Peter, you shared the table with Gentiles, you had no hang-ups. You ate in their homes, you shared the Lord's Table as well as meals with them. There wasn't any problem. You ate, you lived like a Gentile. You no longer showed any inclinations to

Judaism, to legalism, to Judaizing, to the necessity of law for salvation or for the Christian life. Therefore, Peter, you approved of it. You agreed that it was right. You agreed that this was truth. As much as saying so, you have stated by your pattern that there is no more ceremonial, there is no more dietary separation, but we're one in grace. OK? That's what you said, Peter." That's what's implied in the statement, "If thou be a Jew and livest after the manner of Gentiles." In other words, "Peter, by the way you live, you approved of this. Now, how in the world can you reverse yourself and make everybody think that the only way to go is the way the Jews go? You were willing to live like a Gentile, now you want all Gentiles to live like Jews. How did you reverse so suddenly?"

I don't think Paul's motive was to lord it over Peter, I think Paul was fighting for the purity of the church, fighting for the truth of grace salvation and of liberty. Now, notice the verse and let's look at it in particular. "But when I saw that they walked not uprightly."

This is an interesting Greek word, a fascinating word. orthopodeo, from which we get 'orthopedics'. Orthosmeans 'straight' and podeohas to do with the foot. "You didn't walk with straight feet." In other words, here is the line of truth, and here's you. You didn't stay parallel to the truth. You didn't walk a straight course, an unwavering, sincere course of conduct according to truth. That's what he says, "You did not walk uprightly according to the truth of the Gospel, you started drifting off from the line of truth." Now the amazing thing about it is that Peter knew the truth, didn't he? Sure he did, he believed it. He played the part of a hypocrite in order to gain popularity with the legalistic section of the Jerusalem church.

Now Peter believed he could eat, he had no problem with that. So he pretends that he doesn't believe it. What a hypocrite! He pretends "Oh, you Judaizers are so right, I'm going to come and eat with Jews." Phony. You know better than that. He didn't deal honestly, played the hypocrite. What an indictment.

Look what Paul does, I like this. He said unto Peter "before them all." You say, "But you just don't do that! Before everybody?" That's what he did. Augustine said this: "It is not advantageous to correct in secret an error which occurred publicly." Augustine was right. Unless you deal with the public sin on a public basis, you haven't fairly dealt with it and you haven't let the people know that you deal with sin. That's important.

Let me show you an interesting verse that talks about that as a little footnote. I Timothy 5:1: "Rebuke not an elder," (we don't have apostles today, but we do have elders), "but exhort him as a father, the younger man, his brother." In other words, be careful how you talk about elders. You say, "What if they deserve it?" OK, go to verse 19. "Against an elder, receive not an accusation but before two or three witnesses." In other words, be sure that it's confirmed. Why? Because men who are in positions of spiritual leadership are targets for criticism, much of it unfounded, and should be substantiated before it becomes an issue. Notice verse 20. "When you do find out that it is true what

that elder is accused of, them that sinned rebuke before all that others also may fear." In other words, you don't try to hide the rebuke of a person in a position of leadership, you make it just as public as was the display of his sin, in order that people might know that you truly believe what you say you believe.

I talked to a young man today about the situation in the church that we believe is so important, and that is that if we do not discipline within the church, there is a credibility gap in our preaching. In other words, our elders are convinced that if we preach against sin and preach for holiness, godliness, and purity, and don't enact discipline when we see sin, then people are soon going to think that we really don't mean what we say. It's like telling your child all the time that you don't want him to do something but you never do anything about it when he does it. Pretty soon, he knows you're just woofing him when you say you don't want him to do it. There has to be credibility established on the basis of discipline.

In this case, Paul set down a tremendous pattern in the church that is "I don't care who you are, when you're out of line and your out of line activity is public, it's going to be rebuked publicly that others may know the church doesn't tolerate that." It's a great reminder, just like Ananias and Sapphira, they sinned and what happened? They didn't disappear secretly, they dropped dead in front of the whole church. You can imagine the reaction. I imagine that was a *revival*. Later on, it says in chapter 5 that "none dared join himself to them." In other words, you keep the tears out if you discipline. The rumor running around Jerusalem was "Don't join that outfit. One false move and it's over."

So Paul unmasks the hypocrisy of Peter. Nobody is beyond the discipline of the Body, understand that. Paul unmasks hypocrisy in one who is really a supremely important individual in the eyes of the people. Notice the word 'live'. "He said unto Peter, before them all, that thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles." The other word is frenzao, and that doesn't mean life like the word bios , or biological life, it has to do with all of the externals of life. He was externally living like a Gentile and now he was going to trade that in. It is simply talking about not so much moral issues as it is just externals. Peter was doing great with the externals of the change, he had transferred his patterns into what was the one, single identity of the church with no hangups, but now, he had turned his sails to pick up the sudden wind that had blown in from Jerusalem. He was violating that which he had already established in his own mind and the minds of other people. Paul shot right at his inconsistency. Everybody in Antioch knew Peter, everybody knew what he had done. Everybody knew that he was living like a Gentile and having a great time. Now, the whole thing was very confusing and Paul could see this, a serious, serious rift. So Paul flat-out shoots both barrels at him in verse 14.

This becomes a premise on which Paul bases a tremendous theological statement in 15-21 and really takes off. In this little passage from 15-21, which could be studied and studied and studied and perhaps never plumbed, it is very, very difficult to untangle what he's saying for the reason that he is

emotional, especially in the first part of Galatians. He's so emotionally involved that his grammar and his word choice is horrendous from a physical standpoint, although we know it was the Spirit's design all the way through. Humanly speaking, he was emotional at this point and that comes through.

In this little section from 15-21, we're introduced to some tremendous Pauline terms. For example, we run into the term pistis, or 'faith', which becomes such a dominating word in the vocabulary of Paul. Then we run into the word nomos, which translates 'law', another dominating word. But above and beyond those words, we run into another word, a word that becomes a cardinal word not only in Christianity, but in Paul's mind, heart and writing. That is the word 'justification'. I believe that no one understands Christianity who does not understand justification. You may not understand what that term means, but you have to understand the concept or you could never understand Christianity or be saved. The verb form of justification appears three times in verse 16, one time in 17, and the noun form appears in verse 21. So justification is at least five times in these verses stated.

This is very important, because here we have, then, a statement regarding justification. The great doctrine of justification by faith alone is introduced here. Notice, friends, that it is introduced in the context of his rebuke to Peter because it is the reason he rebukes Peter. He says, "Peter, I'm rebuking you because you're violating the cardinal doctrine of Christianity. By what you're doing, you're condoning legalism. You're condoning a faith /works system." He is saying, in effect, "Peter, listen. I'm not just asking you a question, I'm going to tell you why I'm posing this question to you." The why, of course, is based on the doctrine of justification. Martin Luther said, "If the article of justification be once lost, then all Christian doctrine is lost." So what is the doctrine of justification? It is the good news that sinful men and women can be brought into the acceptance of God, not because of their works, but simply through faith in Jesus Christ. That's the doctrine of justification. The word comes in many forms: dikios, dikaioo, dikaiosune, but it's the same thing. It's translated in the Bible justification, just, right, righteous, righteousness, justify, justified, all those terms translate the same word for the most part.

Let me give you a definition of it. It is a legal term, and stay with me because this is going to get somewhat theological, but it is a legal term. It comes from the law courts. To give you a definition, I should start with a contrast. The opposite of justification is condemnation. Does that help you understand it? The opposite of justification is condemnation. For example, to condemn is to declare someone guilty. To justify is to declare someone not guilty, innocent, righteous. In the Bible, justification refers to God's free and gracious act by which He puts a sinner right with Him, forgiving him, pardoning him and accepting him not on the basis of anything that sinner does but solely and only on the basis of the perfect work of Jesus Christ. That's justification.

This is the core, really, of the Scripture because this is the core of the human dilemma. The human dilemma is this: God is righteous and I am sinful. How do I get to Him? That's what Bildad said. "How, then, can man be righteous before God?" (Job 25:4) That was the pain that was eating at

him. How, then? How can a condemned sinner be declared righteous and accepted by the God of the universe? How? We know that it's by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and Peter had adulterated and prostituted that fact, and Paul was attacking back, and his attack was premised on the doctrine of justification.

Let me give you two thoughts on this. First of all, he makes the statement of justification in verses 15-16, he simply states what it is. Then, in verses 17-21, he defends it. This is powerful, clear, and potent. The words are a contrast in verses 15-16 between the Judaizers' doctrine of salvation by law/works and the apostles' doctrine of justification by faith. The argument is Jewish, and we have to think of it in that context. Look at verse 15 and we'll unscramble some things that are probably running around lose in your head.

"We who are Jews by nature, [not sinners or Gentiles] 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."

Now, in case you didn't get it, he said the same thing three times. Three times. Let's back up to the beginning. First word: we. Who's he talking about? Jewish Christians. Such is Paul, Peter and the other Jews at Antioch, Jewish Christians. "We, though Jews by nature..." So why is he making that point? Look, he's saying that "though we are Jews by nature...even we have believed in Jesus Christ." That's the point; he's saying this: "we are Jews by nature, we know the law as a way of life from the time we were born. We were circumcised the eighth day, that whole thing. We know what it is to live under the system of law. We know what it is to endeavor to gain approval, we know what it is to be restrained by certain forbidden things under the Mosaic economy, we know what it is to obey ceremonial ritual, we're not [verse 15] like the sinners of the Gentiles." There, the word 'sinners' (hamartaloi) is not so much a moral term as it is a legal one. The word 'sinners' is synonymous with 'Gentiles'. In the sense that the Gentile had no law, not that he's a moral sinner but that from a legal standpoint, the Gentile, not having law, therefore lived in violation of it, at least in the mind of a Jew. For example, if a Gentile didn't have all the ceremonial laws, he couldn't obey them, right? So in the Jew's mind, he was automatically a sinner, legally. It's not a moral thing, it's a legal thing.

So Paul's saying, "Look, we're Jews by nature, we're not even like Gentiles, we're not apart from law, we know the law. We live by the law. Gentiles are born without the law. They didn't have the Mosaic system, so legally, they're violators of it. We don't expect them to put confidence in the law, they never had the law. But we Jews, who all our lives had the law, found out that there's only one way to be saved and that is to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ." That's what he's saying. Look at the middle of verse 16. "Even we, who all our lives had the law, who know all about the law, unlike the Gentiles who don't even know. With all the law we've had, we find out that we believe in Jesus Christ that we might be justified by the faith of Christ and not by works of the law." He says, "We're legalistic

experts and we found out one thing through our law: it doesn't work. It doesn't bring you to God."

Remember what happened in the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15? Peter was the preacher there, defending grace. Oh, Peter. Peter, the apostle with the foot-shaped mouth. Acts 15:10. He says, "Now look, we don't want to put law on the Gentiles. Listen.

"Now, therefore, why put God to the test? To put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?"

Peter admits that the legal system never got anybody to God. Paul is setting up his argument. "We Jews, we've always had the law, always obeyed the law, always known what it does, unlike those Gentiles."

Verse 16. "Nevertheless, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law." The position of the Judaizers was that the only way to be saved was hard work. That's right, hard, work; you sweat it out and someday, maybe you'll find out whether you made it or not. You say, "Did the Jews believe that?" Yes, they did believe that. Remember the rabbi I read from a few weeks back who died crying because he didn't know whether God would accept him? He spent all his life trying to obey the law. The Judaizers say, "You've got to work at it. If you love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength" (and I don't know how you grunt and groan and conjure that up), "if you keep the commandments, if you're circumcised, if you accept Judaism, if you fast and pray and give your alms, if you do all those things, you'll make the grade. Then you'll be justified by the works of the law." Paul said they were doing this, Romans 10:3, he says, "Yes, they're going about seeking to establish their own righteousness." Paul says that it's a lie. A man is not made right with God by his own works, it can't be done, no way.

Jesus pointed that out in the Sermon on the Mount. They were all there sort of basking in their law-keeping and Jesus said, "Oh, that's real good; you haven't killed anybody, you haven't committed adultery. But I say to you, if you've ever lusted after a woman, you've committed adultery." Zap. "I say to you, if you ever hated anybody, you're a murderer." Now that shot down their little ivory tower mighty fast. He destroyed legalism as a way to God in the Sermon on the Mount. Murderous thoughts make us murderers, adulterous thoughts make us adulterers. It's astonishing that anybody could ever think that he could get to an absolutely holy and perfect God by his good deeds. I mean, you can't be that good!

So Paul admits with all the racial superiority of Judaism, with all the legal benefits of having the law, that the one thing the Jews have found out is that it doesn't work to get you saved. You say, "Well if it isn't by the works of the law, what is it?" Look at verse 16, it's by "the faith of Jesus Christ." On the cross, He died for all lawbreaking; He paid the penalty of death for us. All that is required for a man to be justified is to accept what Jesus did, to acknowledge his sin, his helplessness, to repent, to cast

himself at the feet of Jesus Christ who alone can save.

I should make this point: it's not just an intellectual conviction, but it has to be a personal commitment. Notice verse 16. "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed." The little preposition in the Greek is aseand it means 'into'. "We have believed into Jesus Christ." There is an act of commitment, of committal. Not just agreeing that Jesus lived and died for you and saying, "That's fine, I believe it all," but believing into Christ, committing yourself to Him.

Let me give you another little look at the same doctrine in Romans 3 for just a second, because I think it's important. Romans 3:20, and I'm going to pick out a few verses at random. Paul says the same thing, essentially, just to give you some Scripture to compare with it. Romans 3:19.

"We say that whatever things the law said, it said to them who were under the law in order that every mouth may be stopped and all the world would become guilty before God." The law is around to show you what a sinner you are. Verse 20. "Therefore, by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight." Nobody gets right with God by his good deeds. "For by the law is the knowledge of sin." The law is the thing that makes you a sinner. As I've said before, the law is like a mirror. The mirror can't help you, it only reveals you. You look in the mirror and it's sad, you can do all you want to change the position of the mirror and it won't help. The mirror isn't the problem, you are.

Verse 24. "Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." Verse 26. "The justifier of him who believes in Jesus." Verse 28. "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law." Verse 30. "Seeing it is one God who shall justify the circumcision by faith," that is Jews, "And the uncircumcision through faith," that is Gentiles. There is no other way. Romans 4:3. "For what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God and it was counted unto him as righteousness." Romans 5:1. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Verse 9. "Much more, then, being justified by His blood." This is Paul's theme, over and over again in that little section in Romans, that justification comes through faith in Jesus Christ.

You say, "What about James? What about where James says that 'a man is justified by works'?" James is talking about a totally different issue, looking at it from a totally different side. He is saying that, in the eyes of the world, a man's salvation is validated by his life. Right? That if you're really saved, there is going to be some way that the world is going to see that through the way you live. Verse 16 again. Three times Paul tells us that God's way is by faith in Jesus Christ, not the law. The first statement is general; it's just a general statement. "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ." That's general. The second one is personal, very personal. "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." The third statement is universal. "For by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." And that, friends, is a quote from Psalm 143:2. In the Greek, it is a very strong term referring to all flesh, all mankind, without exception. Now listen to this. You will never find a verse in the Bible anywhere that is as forceful a statement on the salvation doctrine as that one. That's it, that's the most forceful verse. Why? Because it's repetitious. Let me give you a look at it from the three sided angle.

First, Paul establishes it by insisting on it as an apostle. He insists on it as an apostle, "We know," he says, "That a man is not justified by the works of the law." Secondly, he confirms it by experience. One, he uses authority; two, he uses experience; three, he quotes Scripture. So the doctrine of justification is nailed down from the standpoint of apostolic authority, apostolic experience, and the Scripture itself. It is a tri-fold testimony, a three-fold guarantee that justification is by faith. Every time you see somebody coming along who says, "Well, yes you are saved by believing in Jesus Christ AND...", that's a lie right out of Hell. Whatever the 'and' is. You say, "But you didn't even hear what the 'and' was." I don't care what the 'and' was, there isn't any 'and.' Paul says, "Irrespective of special privileges as Jews, we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ because that's the only way to be saved." You say, "Well, that's quite a statement. Can he defend it?" Sure.

Let's look at his defense in verses 17-21 and this is potent, too. It's difficult to untangle this little bit, so keep your mind glued in. It won't take long, but we'll do the best we can to try and use words that will make it clear to you. Now Paul is still firing away at the inconsistency of Peter and Barnabas. By their behavior, they have implied that you have to be a legalist. They've also implied that Gentiles are second-rate Christians, if they're Christians at all. They've really acquiesced to the Judaizers, they really fell into their camp. Notice in verse 17 how Paul defends it. This verse could be interpreted in five or six ways, but I'll give you the one that I lean to.

"But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves are also found sinners, is therefore Christ a minster of sin? God forbid." Now watch this; again you see the word 'we' and it's important to interpret that properly. The word 'we' is the same as verse 15, it's the Jewish Christians. "If we Jewish Christians seek to be justified by Christ...", OK, we understand that. In other words, if we buy grace salvation, that's fine. "But we ourselves are also found sinners, is therefore Christ a minster of sin?" What does he mean by that? This: if the Judaizers, in demanding that we keep the law, and demanding that we can't really be saved apart from works, if they in demanding that draw us into that, then, in effect, what we did prior to that was sin. Right? In other words, while we enjoyed our liberty, we were sinning, if they're right. If the Judaizers are right, all the time we were eating together, fellowshipping together, enjoying our liberty, we were sinning, before they got here an straightened us out.

Then comes the crusher. "Is therefore Christ the minister of sin?" Why does he throw that in? Because who was it that taught them they were to be one? Christ Himself. Did Christ, then, lead us

into the sin of eating with Gentiles? "If the Judaizers are right, Jesus did that, and He's the minister of sin." Boy, that is a potent argument. "Jesus, who taught us so to live, promoted sin, and the Judaizers have not only straightened us out, they've straightened out Jesus too. Jesus has become hamartia diakonos, a minister of sin." What a blasphemous statement! I'm telling you, you can just see Peter flinching. "By your actions, Peter, you're condemning Jesus Christ Himself. You see, Jesus taught that it's not what enters a man that defiles him, it's what comes out of him. He taught that all things are clean. He taught that you could be saved by simply coming to Him. He taught all of that. When you obeyed Him, and ate with Gentiles, and accepted Gentiles, and accepted a free grace salvation, and accepted faith as the only way, that was fine! You were obeying Christ. But now, if you say the Judaizers are right, then Christ was wrong. If they say eating with Gentiles is sin, Christ made you sin, therefore He is a minister of sin." Gulp. In fact, Paul says, "But when Christ taught you grace, He made you a greater sinner than you were before." What's Paul's answer? "God forbid." Which, in the Greek, is like saying 'a thousand times no.' No! The strongest negative.

On the contrary, in verse 18, he makes it a personal pronoun, applying it to himself because he could be in the same situation. There is a bit of gentleness in this, he softens the blow by pulling himself into it. "For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a sinner, a transgressor." In other words, if, by what you're doing, you certainly aren't making Christ a minister of sin (He couldn't be that), what you're doing is declaring yourself a sinner. Your sin is the sin of hypocrisy and legalism. Instead of committing sin like the Judaizers say, they say you commit sin if you abandon the law for grace, what you've done is commit sin by abandoning grace for law. You're a transgressor by returning to the law which you once abandoned in Christ. As I said, he uses the word 'I' and softens it a little bit by including himself. Paul says, in effect, "I would prove myself a sinner if I forsook the law, established grace, accepted grace, then turned back to the law. I would prove myself a hypocrite and a sinner. But I can't do it! I can't do it. I can't go back." Why, Paul? "For one thing, it clashes with my deepest convictions."

Verse 19. "I'm dead to the law." Secondly, it cancels the cross. Verse 21. "Christ is dead in vain." Let's look at what this means. Verse 19. He says, "I could never do it. Peter, I couldn't do what you're doing." Why? "For I, through the law, am dead to the law that I might live unto God. I can't go back to the law. I've come to grace! I've come to God through faith, I can't go back to a system of legalism." Believe me, if ever there was a man who could have been saved by strict obedience to law, it would have been Paul. Philippians 3:4-6, boy, he was more zealous than all his contemporaries. His zeal went so far as to persecuting the church. But he couldn't be saved that way. In verse 19 he says, "Through the law, the only thing I got was death. The only thing the law did was kill me!" Notice the words 'I am dead.' That really should be translated 'I died.' It is a historic fact. You say, "Paul, you look alright. What do you mean you died?" "Well, I died." In what way did he die?

Verse 20. "I am crucified with Christ." Oh, man, what a powerful statement. Let me show you what he means by that by just giving you a comparative look at Romans 6, one of the most powerful passages in the Bible. You're getting some heavy theology tonight, but it's really basic. Romans 6:23. "For the wages of sin is death." Are you a sinner? You don't have to raise your hand. We know you are. That's a rhetorical question. Am I a sinner? Of course. Then if I'm a sinner, what am I going to have to do? Die. That's what it says. In fact, Romans 7:1 says, "Don't you know, brothers, how the law has dominion over man as long as he lives?" Once you die, does the law have any claim on you? No!

To illustrate it simply, if you commit a crime, let's say you kill six people. How many times can the law kill you? Once. If they put you in the gas chamber, and do whatever they do, whoosh comes the gas and you're done. When the gas dissipates, the guy comes in and unstraps you. At the moment you're unstrapped, if you rub your eyes and say, "Boy, it's good to be back!" and you walk out of there, the law can make no claim on you. All the law could do was kill you, it's the law's tough luck that you rose from the dead. The law lays no more claim on you; the claim of the law is finished. Now, as long as you live, the law has a claim on you. But when you die, the law's claim is canceled.

Beloved, when did you die? When did you die? "I am crucified with Christ. I died 2,000 years ago on the cross. I was there, spiritually. That's when, in Christ, the penalty was paid for my sin. The law has no dominion over me. It can't claim John MacArthur." That's what he's saying. That's what he says all through Romans 6. Look at verse 2, it's a tremendous statement. "How shall we that have died to sin live any longer in it?" In other words, if we died to sin, there's no sense in fooling around with it anymore. Go down to verse 11. He says, "Likewise, reckon yourselves to be dead to sin and alive unto God." You know, the beautiful thing is, but you know what? You also rose with Him, and that's the law's tough luck. It hasn't got a claim it can lay on you, because you paid the penalty in Christ. That's better than paying the penalty yourself, you know that? Because if you pay it yourself, it takes all eternity and it never gets paid.

Verse 14. "For sin shall not have dominion over you." Does that mean you never sin after you're saved? No, it just means the law can lay no ultimate claim to your life. Verse 18. "Being, then, made free from sin..." You say, "Wait a minute. What do you mean 'free from sin'?" I mean free from the consequence of sin, which is death. That's what Paul meant, free from sin's ultimate consequence. Verse 22. "Now being made free from sin." Why are we freed from sin? For the wages of sin is death, but beloved, 7:4 says, "You also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ." In other words, by His perfect sacrifice, you died. Oh, fantastic! Just fabulous.

We may never get back to Galatians. Look at 6:3. "Know ye not that as many as us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death?" You know, when you are placed in Christ at the moment of salvation, you died with Him. "As we were buried with Him by baptism into death," (and that's not water there, that's just the spiritual placing of you into Christ), "As Christ was raised

from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also walk in newness of life." So we died with Him, we rose with Him. Verse 5. "We have been united together in the likeness of His death, we'll be in the likeness of His resurrection. Our old man is crucified with Him and the body of sin destroyed." Sin can lay no claim on us. Verse 7. "He that is dead is freed from sin." Beloved, it does not mean that you are insensitive to sin. You are probably more sensitive to sin as a Christian than you ever were. It means that sin has no claim on you. That's exciting! Christ, in His death, provided that. What a fantastic thing.

Go back now to Galatians. So what's he saying? He's saying, "Look! What would I want to go back to the law for?" In Romans 7, remember what he said? "I died, that old marriage is over and I married a new partner. I'm not going back to the old one." Remember what he said in chapter 6? "I've yielded myself as a servant to God, I'm not about to go back and serve my old master, the law." Paul is saying here, "Man, I'm in grace. What would I want going back to the law? All the law did was cause me to die. I died, that deal's over with. I am crucified with Christ, I paid it's penalty, I live unto God." The verb is in the perfect tense here, what it literally speaks of is a past, completed action with present results. "I have been crucified with Christ, and the consequences are still going on." I love this, look at this: "Nevertheless, I live." Isn't it exciting that even though you died, there is still a you? That ego is still there, that 'I' has been transformed, but it's still you. You're not some ethereal, floating fog, you're not some spiritual entity, you're the same you you were. The only thing that has happened is a great theological transformation, and the practical part of it takes time as you grow.

Look at this. "And yet I live," he says. Fantastic. "Yet not I, but Christ lives in me." Beloved, can you get a grip on that? I mean, can you just get a grip on what that says? That Jesus Christ lives in this body? Staggering! Unbelievable! True. In fact, I Corinthians 6:17 says, "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit." Oh, what a blessed thought.

I entered into Christ, by faith, when I received Him as Savior. I died on the cross with Him, I rose in newness of life, and nothing has ever changed since. I live, yet, not I, but Christ living in me. Oh, fantastic. A new life. You know something? You don't have to work to get near God. You don't need to struggle to get near God. You know where God is? If you're a believer, He's inside. It's only a question of yielding to His presence. What a tremendous truth. Christ living in me. Colossians 1:27, I love this. "Christ in you, the hope of glory." What? Paul says, "Know you not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit?" I Corinthians 6:19, so many statements. Listen to Colossians 2:9, talking about Christ. "In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." Beloved, if all the fullness of the Godhead bodily dwelled in Jesus Christ, and Jesus dwells in you, then God, in His fullness, dwells in you. All because of the cross. So he says, "I live, yet not I. Christ lives in me. And the life which I now live in the flesh, I live because of the faith of the son of God who loved me, and gave Himself for me. You know where I got this life I live? I didn't earn it. You know where I got it? By faith." Right? That's what he's saying. "This life that I now live is Him living in me and I received it by faith in the one who loved me and gave Himself for me, and I just took the gift. That's all."

Oh, it's so sad that, all around the world, people are trying to earn their salvation, trying to do 49 spiritual gymnastics and sit-ups and push-ups and jumping jacks every day, trying to gain God's favor. How shall a man be righteous before God? Jesus Christ. The life I live, I live simply because I put my faith in Him. I didn't earn it, I accepted it as a gift. "Because of the cross, all this is so," Paul says.

Verse 21. "Therefore, I do not make void the grace of God." He says, "You may, Peter, you may, Barnabas; I will never set aside grace for law. Never. No." Why? "For if righteousness comes by the law, then Christ died needlessly." Can you imagine that? Remember what Jesus said to His disciples in Matthew 16? "I must die." Remember when He said later on, "I must needs to go Jerusalem. I have to go there." Remember in Matthew 16, He said He had to go and die and Peter said, "No! No, let it not be, let it not be," and Jesus said, "Get thee behind me, Satan." You mean that Jesus had all that desire to go and die and He was all wrong? My friend, if you can be saved by your works, Jesus died needlessly. Paul says, "I'll never go back to the law. If I do that, I admit that righteousness comes by the law, and if that's true, Christ died in vain."

I hope tonight, that you've somehow felt the power and potency of Paul's words. Let me give you this thought. The two pillars of the Christian faith are the grace of God and the death of Christ. Did you get that? For the grace of God was always there, but the death of Christ made it something we could receive. If anybody insists that he can earn his salvation by his own efforts, he undermines the very foundations of Christianity, he nullifies the cross. Martin Luther was a perfect example of discipline, perfect example of penance, perfect example of self-denial, and even of self-torture. He said this about himself: "If ever a man could be saved by monkery, that man was I." I mean, he did it all. Climbed the Scala Sancta on his knees, up and down the stairs, up and down the stairs, up and down the stairs, getting years off purgatory. Toiled in seeking merit, he worked, slaved, for his justification. Finally, God blasted through all the walls of legalism and said, "The just shall live by faith." All the walls came tumbling down. That's the message, and that's to you. Let's pray.

Thank you, Father, that we do not need to earn our salvation. We thank You that Paul rebuked his erring brothers, not on the basis of just a little behavior deviation, but on the basis of a violation that was so serious, it threatened to destroy the doctrine of justification by faith. God, help us to catch something of the fiery, flaming heart of Paul and his zealous protection of this doctrine. Father, if there is anyone in this place tonight who is counting on his own good works, his own good deeds, his own good thoughts about God to gain Your favor, shatter that confidence, God. Destroy that hope. Cause him to fall at the feet of Jesus Christ in penitence, acknowledging himself as a hopeless, helpless sinner completely at His mercy.

Father, may we realize that no one is ever justified, accepted in Your sight, on the basis of his own good deeds, but only through faith in Jesus Christ. May we have the same kind of zeal as Paul that,

whenever we see that doctrine violated, may we fight for it's purity. Thank you, Lord, for the free salvation that is ours. May there be some here tonight, Father, who take the gift, who quit struggling, and just believe, and accept it. In Jesus name, Amen.

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