

## **Week 46 – Kingdom Liberty**

**November 16-17**

**Galatians 2: 11-21**

### **Summary & Goal**

The Apostle Paul founded the churches in the southern region of Galatia. He established churches in Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe. Paul wrote this letter to counter Judaizers and their false teachers who were compromising the message of the gospel. They spread dangerous teaching that required Gentile converts to submit to the Mosaic Law before they could their earn right standing with God. Paul wrote Galatians to defend the doctrine of justification by faith. In this session, we will look at how the Gospel requires authenticity, demands a response, and results in lives being changed.

### **Main Passage**

Galatians 2:11-21

### **Session Outline:**

- 1.* The Gospel demands us to be authentic. (Galatians 2:11-14)
- 2.* The Gospel requires a response. (Galatians 2:16)
- 3.* The Gospel produces life-changing results. (Galatians 2:20)

### **Session in a Sentence:**

The Gospel must not be tainted by our religious background and ideologies; when we encounter the Gospel, it challenges us to drop hypocrisy, to recognize our standing before God, and changes our lives.

### **Kingdom Connection:**

The Kingdom of God is built upon the proclamation of the uncompromised Gospel. When people encounter the message of Jesus and His sacrifice for our sins they are challenged to live with authenticity. We are called to accept the truth of the Gospel at our salvation as well as in our everyday lives. Each day the Kingdom of God overcomes the Kingdom of Darkness as we respond to Jesus in faith. In turn, our lives are radically changed!

## **Introduction:**

Tucked away in Butte, Montana there is a large lake that stretches over a mile long and a half-mile wide. It is deeper than you would expect with plunging depths at nearly 1800 feet. Year after year thousands of geese fly over this lake as they migrate. In 1995, a flock of over 300 geese landed in the lake for refreshment during their flight. Shortly after, just a few miles away from the lake they found 342 geese dead. Similarly in 2016 several thousand geese sought refuge in this lake to avoid a snowstorm. Shortly after the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service reported over 3,000 geese dead.

What mysteriously killed these geese? What they perceived to be a place of rest and solace, on the surface, was poisonous. The “lake” that they saw was an old mining pit that had been shut down for years. These geese were killed by their exposure to sulfuric acid and other heavy metals. Autopsies were done on the birds and found that their insides had been burned from high concentrations of copper, and arsenic. <sup>1</sup>

It is a sad story, but should not be unfamiliar to us. Often we dive into spaces that look appealing that ultimately cause our harm. Many things that this world offers promise relaxation, refreshment, and peace. On the surface, they appear to be a source of refreshment and tranquil refuge. In reality, they prove to be poisonous; killing us from the inside out.

## **Context:**

The book of Galatians is a powerful book that encourages us to find our refuge in one place alone: The Gospel. In Galatians, Paul explains that salvation is by grace alone, in faith alone, from Christ alone.

Paul does not just write this because it is true. He writes Galatians because he does not want us to be poisoned by the ideology that anything other than Jesus can bring us true, lasting satisfaction. Believers are not saved *by* works but are saved *for* works.

The Book of Galatians is believed to be the Apostle Paul’s first Epistle. He writes this letter to correct the Church helping them to lean into the important truth that we have everything we need in God through faith in Jesus only. If we place our trust in anything else in this world to give us lasting fulfillment and peace we will be drinking from a poisoned well.

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<sup>1</sup> Dunlap, Susan, “Metals, Acid in Berkeley Pit Killed Geese, report confirmed,” [https://mtstandard.com/news/local/metals-acid-in-berkeley-pit-water-killed-geese-report-confirms/article\\_0d30c9c3-ae67-56cf-9314-bb1685a1a42d.html](https://mtstandard.com/news/local/metals-acid-in-berkeley-pit-water-killed-geese-report-confirms/article_0d30c9c3-ae67-56cf-9314-bb1685a1a42d.html)

The conflict that occurs in the book of Galatians is between the Gentile Christians and the Jewish Christians, also known as the Judaizers. The Judaizers were trying to convince the Galatian churches that they needed faith in Jesus and adherence to the Law in order to be declared righteous by God.

1. **The Gospel demands for us to be authentic.**

**Galatians 2:11-14** *Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed; 12 for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision. 13 And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy. 14 But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before them all, "If you, being a Jew, live in the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews? (Chronological Bible, November 13<sup>th</sup>, p.1450).*

The Apostle Paul writes to the church at Galatia recounting an altercation that he had with the Apostle Peter. It was a classic "cafeteria lunch table" type controversy. It was as if Peter would sit with the Gentile Christians and act like them. But when his other friends, the Jewish Christians, would enter the cafeteria he would get up from the lunch table and begin to act like his Jewish Christian friends.

This incredibly frustrated Paul! When recounting the conversation with Peter, Paul says that he *withstood him to his face*. Paul did not pull any punches. He did not try to hide how he felt about Peter's Cafeteria antics. This is further explained in the picture we get from the original language as the Apostle Paul, uses the word *ANTHISTEMI*. The word literally means, *to oppose strongly*. Paul hated Peter's duplicity because the Gospel demands us to be real and authentic.

Paul did not just call Peter out... he called him a hypocrite because Peter feared those who were of the circumcision. Peter feared men more than he feared God which led him to act like a hypocrite. In the first century the Greek word for hypocrite, "(5273) **hypokrités**" was used to describe an actor's mask. Off the stage he was himself, but when he stepped on the platform to be seen by the audience, he would put on a mask that displayed the character he was trying to portray. When we fear people more than we fear the Lord we tend to perform and act a certain way. The Gospel demands us to be people who are genuine. The Gospel demands duplicity to die and for us to live out of our identity in Christ.

The word for hypocrisy reaches further back than the theatrical masks. Those in the medical world know who Hippocrates is. He is one of the most influential men in medical history. Those who now practice medicine swear in by the Hippocratic Oath. Hippocrates is famous for practicing medicine in the ancient world under what is now known as the tree of Hippocrates in Kos, Greece. The tree is massive! Its branches reach wide, and it is breathtaking. But here is the strange thing: the tree is hollow. All around the tree there is scaffolding used to uphold its branches. On the outside we see the structure of the tree but on the inside, there is no substance. The tree appears healthy, but underneath the surface there is nothing.

The Apostle Paul is telling us, that those who are hypocritical may have an outward appearance of godliness but inwardly they have hollow faith. They have the structural appearance of healthy, but they lack the substance. Paul opposed Peter's hypocrisy because the Gospel opposes hypocrisy and promotes authenticity. The Gospel calls us to recognize our sin and to actualize the power of the Holy Spirit to flee from our sin.

Peter presented himself as an adopted Gentile to one group and as a Law-keeping Jew to another group. If we are honest, we are all guilty of hypocrisy. We present ourselves one way at church but can act another way at work. We can post images of our daily quiet time on Facebook and Instagram, but behind closed doors we view things in private that would make us squirm if they were presented in public. We sing loud praises to God in Sunday Worship, but as soon as we get in our car after Church, we can find ourselves singing the songs of the world. We read marriage books about treating our spouse well and ignore them when they are around. We believe Jesus loves the whole world, but we refuse to love those who are different than us.

The Gospel calls for hypocrisy to stop in our lives in order for duplicity to die.

## **2. The Gospel requires a response.**

*Galatians 2:16 knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified. (Chronological Bible, November 13<sup>th</sup>, p.1450).*

Paul's argument throughout the book of Galatians can be summarized by this one verse. He tells us repeatedly we are not justified by works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. Remember, there were false teachers infiltrating the church in Galatia espousing the view that they were in right standing with God, by believing in Jesus and

keeping the Law. One of the main issues that these Judaizers were contending for is that the Gentile believers needed to trust in Jesus **AND** they needed to become circumcised like the Jewish men. Paul refutes this teaching explicitly!

The central word in this verse is the word – *justified*.

The word “justified” is an essential word for us to understand. It means to hold as guiltless and to accept as righteous.<sup>2</sup> God declares sinful man guiltless and credits him as righteous. It has been said that to be justified is to be viewed by God “Just-As-If-I-had” never sinned.<sup>3</sup>

Paul’s emphasis is that we are not declared righteous by keeping the Law. Our level of righteousness in God’s eyes is not upheld by our good works. Instead, our righteousness in God’s eyes is upheld by Jesus’ ultimate work; dying on the cross for us.

We must have a firm understanding that our standing with God will never improve by our upholding the law and it will never diminish when we fail to uphold the law. Paul writes, “for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.”

This is great news for us! We do not need to uphold the dietary restrictions that the Old Testament prescribes in order to be declared righteous. We will not be deemed unclean if we wear clothes with mixed fabrics (Leviticus 19:19) And just in case you have boiled a baby goat in its mother’s milk in the past month or so, you are safe (Exodus 23:19)!

The key that unlocks the door to right standing with God is faith in Christ. All of us will ultimately respond to Jesus in two ways. Either we will be rejecting Jesus and the righteousness that He offers us before God, or we will have faith in Christ and be declared righteous through Him. This does not apply exclusively to non-believers. Remember, this letter was to the Church. It is a reminder to believers and non-believers alike that we cannot earn good or right standing with God by being at every Bible Study and small group. We do not earn favor with God because we prayed today. We do not earn favor with God because we memorized three Bible verses this week. We do not even earn favor with God by listening to Christian radio.

We have been freed from the bondage of performance slavery. Jesus has liberated us from believing that religious practices and rites save us. As a Pharisee and member of the straight-edge religious elite of Judaism Paul knew what it was like to struggle with trying to earn God’s approval with his behavior. He found rest in the Gospel that the

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<sup>2</sup> Mounce Concise Greek-English Dictionary of the New Testament, edited by William D. Mounce.

<sup>3</sup> Wiersbe, Warren, *Be Free* Colorado Springs:David C. Cook, 1975.

only thing that makes us righteous is faith in God. Whether you are a son or daughter with good behavior or bad, nevertheless you are still a son or daughter of God.

The message of the Gospel requires a response. Either we choose to trust Jesus and stop buying into the lie that we must trust Jesus and keep the “Christian Law:” or we choose to continue being in bondage. We can rest in the oasis of faith – or die exhausted and overcome by the barren desert of performance.

### 3. **The Gospel produces life-changing results.**

**Galatians 2:20** *I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. (Chronological Bible, November 13<sup>th</sup>, p.1450).*

Paul experienced the life-changing power of the Gospel. He knew that when we are authentic with God, and when we respond to the Gospel in faith that we will experience eternal life both in the here and now and in the hereinafter. Not a life of riches, fame, comfort or ease but a life of freedom as we surrender to Christ.

Paul tells us in order to live we must first experience death.

He writes that he himself has been crucified with Christ. This has positional and practical realities. **Positionally**, when I place my faith in Jesus Christ for salvation I participate with Jesus in His crucifixion. His death becomes our death. Our sin on His shoulders. Because we are “in Christ” (Rom. 6:11; 8:1) we are counted dead with Him. **Practically**, we must crucify ourselves daily. Jesus told His disciples in Luke 9: 23, “*If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me.*” We must go to the cross daily to kill our sin and to believe Jesus! John Owen, the famous Puritan writer urges us to: “Be killing sin, or sin will be killing you.”

When we go to the cross our life disappears and Christ’s life in us starts to permeate our lives. “It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me,” Paul writes. We experience the power of a transformed life.

Paul reminds us that our lives are transformed not by performance anxiety but by the power of Jesus’ love toward us. Paul tells us that the Son of God loved us and gave Himself up for us. A transformed life is birthed out of the recognition that God loves us. This reality that Jesus loves me unconditionally should motivate me to live a life of faith every day. In the morning, when my feet hit the floor, I am uncertain about what I will face in the day. I do not know the phone calls that I will take, how my meetings will go, or how my health will fair that day. Yet, we can all rest assured that we can know with

certainty that we are loved by God. We can look back to His love displayed for us when He gave Himself for us. He loved us with a Cross.

**Resources:**

*Be Free-* Warren Wiersbe

*Notes on Galatians* – Dr. Thomas L. Constable

*Word Pictures of the New Testament* – A.T. Robertson

*Mounce's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* – William D. Mounce

*A Concise Dictionary of New Testament Greek* – Warren C. Trenchard

*Galatians For You* – Tim Keller