

## **July 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday 2015**

**Text: Galatians 1:11-24**

**Topic: Changed by Jesus!**

In the remainder of Chapter One (11-24), the Apostle Paul relates the fact that he did not receive the gospel he preached to the Galatians from any man. The gospel that he was commissioned to preach to the Gentiles came to him directly by revelation from Jesus Christ (v. 12).

In v. 16, Paul tell us that “it pleased God to reveal His Son” to Paul on the road to Damascus. Before Paul’s conversion he was “zealous” for the Jewish law. He showed this by his attempts to destroy the “church of God” (v. 13). What do you suppose happened to Paul that day on the Damascus road (see Acts 9:1-9). No one can really say. All we have is the Apostle’s letters and Luke’s account of Paul’s conversion and his subsequent missionary journeys.

But some things we can assume are obvious. That day when Paul was knocked to the ground by the bright light from heaven, the sufficiency of Christ was revealed to him. He knew from that day on that salvation comes from an act of the grace of God, in Christ. He also realized that the law, which only applied to Jews, was no longer applicable because the commission he was receiving was “to call people from among the Gentiles” (Romans 1:5). Paul also became aware through the revelation of Christ that day that Jesus was the Son of God and the image of God himself (Colossians 1:15) – the reflection of divine glory.

This is why the gospel, when properly proclaimed contains “the power of God for the salvation of everyone” (Romans 1:16).

**Lesson:** God has the power to break the heart of people.

**Prayer:** My God, let your kingdom be revealed in my life and that of my family.

## **July 6<sup>th</sup> Monday 2015**

**Text: Galatians 2:1-10**

**Topic: The First Church Council**

Paul does not want to leave out anything, especially as it relates to his contact with the Jerusalem Church and its leaders. We are told that Paul, Barnabas and Titus went to Jerusalem. While they were there Paul shared with the church leaders the gospel he had been proclaiming. Paul was looking for authorization for his law-free gospel from those heading up the Jerusalem Church. Their support was necessary so that Paul and Barnabas could continue their missionary efforts.

Another reason the three missionaries came to Jerusalem was to report on some false brothers (v. 4) who had come to Antioch telling the new Gentile believers they had to be circumcised and obey the law of Moses in order to be saved (see Acts 15:1-12). The gospel Paul and the others had been proclaiming was one of freedom and liberty in Christ. The “false brothers” were attempting to bring the new converts under the law, or as Paul says, “into bondage.” All these matters came to the attention of the Jerusalem leaders (James, Peter and John) and culminated in the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15:4-35).

Today, we have an annual meeting to discuss important matters in the church and decide on the general plan to be followed in the future (Majalisa). But these meetings, as important as they are, are only valuable if the details that are agreed upon

are put into action at the local level. The ministers and congregations working week in and week out are the ones who determine the direction of the church as a whole. What actions and steps is your church taking in order to see the gospel of Jesus Christ moving forward?

**Lesson:** As Christians, we should strive to see the gospel being preached. We should not support false preachers and prophets. And where ever we find ourselves we should make effort to preach.

**Prayer:** Dear Lord, help us as your Church, to move forward and accomplish those things that you are showing us this year. Bless our upcoming gathering of leaders and guide them with your steady hand. Amen

### **July 7<sup>th</sup> Tuesday 2015**

**Text: Galatians 2:11-14**

**Topic: Stand up for Jesus**

The incident we read about today concerned the matter of law and grace. We are learning that Paul's gospel could also be called the gospel of grace. Peter, coming to Antioch (where Paul and Barnabas were headquartered) was enjoying fellowship with both the Jews and Gentiles of this city. But when "certain men came from James" in Jerusalem, Peter's behavior changed dramatically.

We are told that Peter may have been intimidated by these Jews "who belonged to the circumcision group" (v. 12). He quit fellowshiping with Gentiles (non-Jews) and only ate meats approved by Jewish law. Peter, being a very influential member of the early church, had others following his example, even Paul's associate Barnabas.

For the sake of the gospel, Paul stood up to Peter and publically rebuked him for his behavior. Paul knew that both Peter and Barnabas knew better. So he reminded Peter of the foundational principle of the gospel – that righteousness before God cannot be earned by any works, but only by reliance on God through faith in Jesus Christ.

Many times in our churches, we are expected to behave according to certain standards. When we all gather in large groups this is expected and even necessary to maintain order and a degree of decorum. But we have to be careful and not mix rules of proper behavior with conditions of our salvation. Sometimes this can be a fine line. All who accept Jesus, his death and resurrection and the forgiveness of sins have been made righteous before God. Whenever anyone says there are other things besides faith in Jesus required for salvation, like the Apostle Paul, we should stand up and gently rebuke that person based on the foundational principle of the gospel.

**Lesson:** Let us stand for the truth where ever we find ourselves.

**Prayer:** Dear Jesus, thank you for the sweetest gift of all – salvation. Help me keep my eyes open to your wonderful offer to be a child of God. Whenever anyone questions this simple approach give me the boldness to stand up for you, Jesus. Amen

### **July 8<sup>th</sup> Wednesday 2015**

**Text: Galatians 2:15-21**

**Topic: Justified by Faith**

In chapter 2 verses 15-21, Paul introduces the general principle of this letter – men and women are justified (made right before God) not by observing the law but only

by faith (believing) in Jesus Christ. One of our problems as Christians is we want to make the gospel more complicated than it was ever intended to be. We think we must add something to it. It cannot be as simple as just believing in Jesus Christ and his sacrifice on the cross for the forgiveness of sins.

The entire letter to the Galatians was written to bring these new believers back to the heart of the gospel Paul preached to them – belief in Jesus, the Son of God. Paul himself was living a new life based on his belief in Jesus. In fact, he states that the old life he used to live has been put to death. Now, his new life is built on Christ living in him. There is nothing extra required of him. No law to follow, no requirements to meet – only submitting himself to the Lordship of Jesus Christ! When we feel the need to add something else to make our salvation complete, regardless of the good intentions we might have, Paul says that we are making Christ's death on the cross of no account!

Today, can we accept Christ's sacrificial death on our behalf as sufficient for everything related to our Christian walk? Or, do we feel any need to add man-made requirements in order to stand before a holy God? The answer is obvious.

**Lesson:** Salvation is by grace alone not through law.

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus we live this day justified by faith in you, thanking you for everything. Let me live in you as you live in me. Amen

**July 9<sup>th</sup> Thursday 2015**

**Text: Galatians 3:2**

**Topic: Not by Works**

Have you ever got into an argument or debate with someone whose logic was so strong that he soon convinced you toward his way of thinking? In Chapter 3, verse 2, Paul asks the Galatians a simple question that can have but one answer – the answer Paul wants them to realize. Because of the influence of Jewish preachers that came to Galatia (today southern Turkey) Paul's new converts had abandoned the gospel of Jesus Christ and were now trying to be acceptable before God by observing the Law of Moses. But Paul's question is trying to steer them back to the only message that has the power to save – belief in Jesus Christ crucified.

Paul knew all about the Jewish religion. Before his encounter with Christ on the Damascus road, Paul was one of the leading Rabbis in all Jerusalem (see Philippians 3:4-6). But after his eyes had been opened he saw the futility of trying to earn God's favor by human effort. By merely believing in Christ and the impact of his crucifixion Paul knew he was right with God and had received Christ's Spirit as a result. Paul is simply trying to remind his readers that the gospel he preached contained everything the Galatians needed for their new relationship with God.

When we look back at our own Christian walk, many of us can recall the day we gave our lives to Christ. We realize that that day we truly experienced something Spiritual. Our lives changed forever, and we knew would never be the same. Then, as our Christian life progressed and we became involved in our local church we were encouraged to "work for God." So, we rolled up our sleeves and got to work in various activities related to our church.

Over time it seemed that our human efforts began to overshadow the simple belief we started with. Left unchecked, our Christian life became more about what we could accomplish than what God in Christ could accomplish in us! Let's not be foolish or become bewitched by the many demands good intentioned people have on us, let us always remember we have been saved by grace through faith, not by works, so that no one can boast (Ephesians 2:8). Even today, the Apostle Paul is telling us to consider Abraham: "He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness" (Galatians 3:6, Genesis 15:6).

**Lesson:** Faith is all we need for our salvation.

**Prayer:** Forgive us Father in heaven. We have been relying on our own efforts way too much. Redirect our thinking Father to your Son who died for us that we might enjoy fellowship with you. Let us remember that the foundation of our faith is Christ in us, and not any works we may be doing for you. Amen

### **July 10th Friday 2015**

**Text: Galatians 3:8**

**Topic: The Gospel**

God's Plan from the Beginning (Galatians 3:8)

This verse has three points for us. 1) It tells us that God would bring salvation to the Gentiles. 2) It tells us how the Gentiles will be justified – By Faith. And 3) it tells us that the gospel was preached through God's words to Abraham. "God announced the gospel in advance to Abraham when he said, 'All nations will be blessed through you.'"

This message is just as much for us as it was for the Galatians. We are Gentiles and it has always been God's divine plan that Jesus would come and die for both Jews and Gentiles. The gift of salvation comes when we believe in Jesus Christ. We believe that Jesus came as a perfect sacrifice, that he took our sins on him and that he died in our place, that he was also raised from the dead and sits with the Father in heaven. Believing this Gospel statement takes faith and that is what Paul says in this verse. The Gentiles (you and I) will be justified (made right) by faith (being certain of what we do not see (Hebrews 11:1)). This good news was given to Abraham, long before Christ was born and long before our own birth. God told Abraham in the covenant he made, that all nations or people groups would be blessed through him. What was this blessing? In his commentary on Galatians, Martin Luther says the blessing is **the spreading of the message of Christ**. God foretold in the promise given to Abraham that every person and nation would have the opportunity to hear the good news about Jesus Christ.

We have been given the opportunity to believe, to have faith in the work Jesus did on the cross. What about you, have you taken the step of faith to believe?

**Lesson:** It is the will of God that all people be saved. Do not allow this opportunity to pass you by, be sure to receive Jesus whole heartedly.

**Prayer:** God we thank you that even at the time of Abraham, you proclaimed the gospel. Thank you that all people are given the chance to be blessed through believing in your Son, Jesus Christ. Thank you that I have been justified by faith. Amen

### **July 11<sup>th</sup> Saturday 2015**

**Text: Galatians 3:10-14**

**Topic: The Curse of Legalism**

One of the ways we can remember the theme of Paul's letter to the Galatians is simply to recall the first three letters G.A.L. which can stand for Going against Legalism. Legalism is something practiced by legalists. And legalists are people who refuse to accept the righteous status God has made available by belief in Jesus. They insist on thinking that they must earn their own righteousness by observing the law, or doing good works, or maintaining some standard of right behavior. We are confronted with these people every week. There are many in our churches. Paul says that these people, rather than achieving righteousness before God, are actually cursed.

Christian author Warren Wiersbe, writes in his book on 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians, "Some people have the false notion that the strong Christians are the ones who live by rules and regulations and who get offended when other exercise their freedom in Christ; but such is not the case. It is the weak Christians who must have the security of law and who are afraid to use their freedom in Christ. It is the weak Christians who criticize stronger believers and stumble over what they do." ["Be Wise", Warren W. Wiersbe. Chariot Victor Publishing, 1983, p 89]

Paul goes even further when he says that those "who rely on observing the law are under a curse" (5:10). Since no one (besides Jesus himself) can ever obey the law 100% of the time, Paul is telling his Galatian readers that righteousness before God is only possible by faith. For many of us this is very difficult to accept. There must be more required on our part. Paul's biblical answer is, "No."

**Lesson:** Law can hinder us from enjoying the liberty we have in Christ Jesus.

**Prayer:** Dear Lord, it is You who have set out the principles of faith, not us. Help us Jesus to see your death on the cross as our victory. Through your death, the way has been opened so that we might receive the blessings of God in our life today and for ever more. Amen