2026_11_01_Galatians

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[0:00] All right, we're in the book of Galatians and this is a letter that Paul wrote to the Galatians. It's somewhat of a confrontational letter.

Some of his letters are more warm and friendly and positive and this is somewhat a negative letter. Not negative, only negative as far as he is being confrontational and trying to correct something that has gone on here at the church of Galatia.
These Galatians have had some people come in to their church there. These are Jewish Christians who have lived most of their lives under the law of Moses.
And they're leading these new Gentile Christians astray by telling them, well, if you want to actually be a really good Christian or to maybe go further in your Christian life, then you need to actually keep the law of Moses.
Because that's what we've always done as Jews. And they were teaching this to the Galatians. Specifically, the thing that Paul addresses primarily is they must become circumcised.
[1:10] That was a requirement of the Jews under their covenant of law that Moses delivered to them. And so Paul is addressing this.

And he's saying that those people that are teaching them that they have to become circumcised and keep the law, they're perverting the gospel of Christ. It is undermining the gospel of Jesus Christ.
He launches into a personal history. And he does that in order to establish his credibility and his authority as the apostle to the Gentiles. And that's because there's a lot of confusion in this time period, especially in the Acts era.
You've got Jews under the law of Moses. And then Jesus Christ comes, their Messiah. And one of the things that they're definitely expecting is a kingdom to come, to be established at their Davidic kingdom that they had, this great kingdom under David and then Solomon.
And then kind of things kind of went awry and their kingdoms were soured, corrupted, and then they were dispersed and conquered by the other nations of the world.
[2:18] But the prophets had spoke that God would do a work among the nation of Israel to restore their kingdom and a certain figure would come, the Messiah. And that is Jesus himself.

But there's some confusion because they had always been taught, well, here's this law of Moses, this is how you are a faithful believer. Now things have changed. Christ has come. He died on a cross.
And there's not a lot of clarity, it seems, among the apostles on exactly what that accomplished and how that might relate to the law. But Paul was given a lot of revelation regarding what Christ accomplished on that cross.
And so he tells the Galatians his history, he establishes his authority, he establishes how he eventually met with all these other apostles, these Jewish apostles, and they gave him the right hand of fellowship.
They recognized the legitimacy of his ministry and the ministry that he has among the Gentiles. And then they agreed that the original 12 apostles and all of their kind of group would go to the Jewish people and that he and his companions would go to the Gentiles with their ministry, kind of separate mission fields.
[3:35] Then Paul tells a story about when he had to confront Peter. Peter, he says, I confronted Peter to his face because he was to be blamed. He says he came up to visit our church, which is full of Gentiles, by the way, and he was eating with the Gentiles.

And then some men from James came. And James represents the group down in Jerusalem there. And then he changed his behavior.

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Instead of eating with the Gentiles like he did before, he decided he would step away because in his previous life, it was totally forbidden to eat with Gentiles.
The Gentiles were the pagans. They were the non-believers. They were not part of the family of God. But now there's this change and the Gentile people are being brought in to the household of faith.
But there's a difference. As these Gentiles are coming in, it's not through keeping the law and circumcision. For Jews, that was how you kind of gain entrance into the covenant of Moses.
[4:38] And even if you were a Gentile who wanted to be part of God's family back under the old covenant, the entrance, the way that you did that, was by becoming circumcised and circumcising your family, at least the men in your family.

But now something is different. Jesus Christ accomplished something on the cross. And that changed things. And Paul's here to clear up the confusion.
Let's go ahead and read this passage. Galatians chapter 2. We'll start with verse 17. But if while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is Christ therefore a minister of sin?
Certainly not. For if I build again those things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. For I through the law died to the law, that I might live to God.
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.
[5:47] I do not set aside the grace of God. For if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain. Now, I actually spent a lot of time, especially on verse 17 and 18 here, really trying to understand it because it's a very dense section or passage.

And it was really a challenge for me to really understand what Paul's getting at. And by the way, as you read commentaries, and that can be helpful, by the way, if you are reading through the Bible, if something's confusing, you can find a commentary.
A lot of them you can find online. Or with Bible software you might have on your phone or a computer. And there are different views as to what Paul means.
Sometimes you have a passage and basically everybody agrees on what it means. And then there are other passages that there's more various views. And that's the case with this one.
I don't think that the views are too different. But the first thing I want to point out is one of the things that people kind of quibble over is as Paul is telling this story about his confrontation with Peter, and we get to this particular passage.
[6:56] Is Paul still talking to Peter? Is he still telling this story about him, his confrontation with Peter? Or is Paul now back to talking to the Galatians in his address to them through this letter?

And people aren't too sure. I think that at least for this next verse here, the first one, verse 17, I think he still is talking to Peter. And we know that by the end of the chapter, he's finished with the story because chapter 3, verse 1, he says, Oh, foolish Galatians.
So he's addressing them very directly and particularly. But he says this. So he says, But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is Christ, therefore, a minister of sin?
Certainly not. Now, I think this is still his conversation with Peter because he's saying, he's using this phrase, we. And I think he's talking about you, Peter, and me. And I think he's even talking about them as Jews in particular.
He's saying, if we, if while we seek to be justified by Christ, now, I think we need to provide a distinction here. What is the alternative to being justified by Christ?
[8:15] Well, under the law, it was being justified by the law. We're seeking our righteousness by keeping the law. And so that's the distinction. That's the alternative that he's referring to.

Now, if we Jews, we recognize that Jesus did something on the cross. And we can seek to find our righteousness, our justification, by what he accomplished for us there.
And so, as we live our life, we're seeking that kind of a justification. But if, while we're doing that, we find ourselves, we are also found sinners.
Now, why does he say, we also are found sinners? Well, if you remember from last week, if you go back just a couple of verses, in verse 15, he had said that, we Jews, we're not sinners like the Gentiles.

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You know, back in the day, if you were a Jew, you were part of the family of God. You would try to be a faithful Jew. You were part of God's family. If you're not a Jew, or you didn't kind of become a proselyte, a convert to the Jewish family, then you were not part of God's people, and you were considered a sinner.
[9:28] And so, he said, if while we seek to be justified by Christ as Jews, and we also, as Jews, are found sinners, sinners, and why would they be found sinners?

Well, and this is where there's some debate. One view is that, well, it's because Peter was eating with the Gentiles, and that's not what Jews are supposed to do.
So, if while we're seeking to live a faithful Christian life in light of the cross, and there's no more distinction between Jew and Gentile, so we're eating with the Gentiles, and we find, you know, well, here we are, we're eating with Gentiles, and well, that's what sinners do.
That's breaking the law. Then he says, is therefore Christ a minister of sin? So, is, is it the case that if we're pursuing Christ, and Christ says, well, there's no more distinction between Jew and Gentile, and by the way, Peter, didn't Jesus give you a vision in which he told you to go to a Gentile's house?
The house of Cornelius? And so, you were just doing what Christ said. You were seeking after Christ, and now you're found in the seat of sinners. You're eating with the, quote, sinners.
[11:00] Does that make Christ a servant of sin? And then he says, certainly not. The King James Version uses the phrase, God forbid. And then he continues on, verse 18, for if I build again those things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor.

What's he talking about? If I build those things again which I destroyed. What is he talking about building up? Well, one of the things that Jesus accomplished on the cross was that he destroyed, deconstructed, if you will, a wall.
Paul refers to it in Ephesians. In fact, you can turn there if you'd like, but I'm just going to read this passage, Ephesians 2, verse 14, talking about Jesus and what he accomplished.
For he himself is our peace who has made both one. He's talking about Jew and Gentile. God has made them one people and has broken down the middle wall of separation.
That term, broken down is the exact same Greek word as destroyed. Paul's using the same word here when he's talking about this middle wall of separation and destroying the thing that he built that he's talking about to the Galatians.
[12:22] But, back to Ephesians. Ephesians 2, 14 and then verse 15, having abolished in his flesh the enmity, that is the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in himself one new man from the two, thus making peace.

And so one of the things that Christ accomplished through his death on the cross was this law that was the barrier that really, and it's a wall dividing Jew and Gentile.
If you keep the law, you're part of God's family. If you don't, then you're outside of God's family. God took that wall down and that wall was the law of Moses.
He took it down so that Gentiles could also become part of the family of God without keeping the law.
And so he said, if you, if I build again those things, if I build up that law that Christ intended to take down as a middle wall of separation, then what do I do?
[13:27] I make myself a transgressor. Well, in what way are you making yourself a transgressor? Well, it's because you're opposed to what God is doing. If you're building up the wall that God took down, you're on, you're making yourself an enemy of God.

Because God, Christ's work, the purpose of it was, one purpose anyway, was to unite Jew and Gentile under faith. And, but I think, but I think the other thing that he might be getting at here is that you're not just undermining that, that new body of Jew and Gentile, but when you rebuild that law, when you rebuild it up in your life, the wall that God took down, you're giving that law power again, that God intended to take that power away.
and it's the power of sin and death. The law had the power to declare you as either righteous or unrighteous based on whether you kept it or not.
And if you didn't keep the law, you would die spiritually. You would be separated from God. That's the power the law had. It has the power to determine whether you're righteous or not.
And if you keep the law, then you can be declared righteous by the law. But if you don't keep the law, then you'll be declared guilty, unrighteous, a sinner.

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[15:05] So as long as you can keep it, you're fine. But do people keep the law? Well, the sinners of the Gentiles don't. What about the Jews? Did they keep the law? No.

In fact, back in Acts chapter 15 at that Jerusalem council where they're talking about the law and whether the Gentiles need to keep it, Peter steps in and he says this, now therefore, he's talking to his Jewish brother, now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?
He says not even we could bear this. It was too much. It was useful. It had a purpose. We don't want to say that the law was evil or corrupt or anything like that. It actually had righteousness.
It was righteous, holy, and good, Paul calls it. It had principles of righteousness in it. But people can't keep the law or they don't.
They don't do it and so we need another solution besides the law. So if we resurrect that law, the only consequence that can possibly come is that we make ourselves transgressors again.
[16:20] We make ourselves sinners again because now we give power to that law that can declare us as sinners. So what's the solution?

Verse 19, Galatians 2, 19. He's saying something changed.
We as believers died. Well, it seems like I'm still alive, right? What about you? You pinch yourself. We're still here.
We're trusting in Christ. What does he mean that we died? He's talking about not our physical life, but he's talking about really our position or our status before God.
Before we came to Christ, before he died, and was raised again, before we came to him, whether Jew or Gentile, our status or position regarding the law was that we were alive to the law, and it had power over us.
[17:40] Before Christ, our status regarding the Lord, God himself, is that because we broke the law, we were dead. We were separated from God.

So, before Christ, we have two statuses regarding two different things. Towards the law, we're alive. Towards God, we're dead. But then, in Christ, when we come to the Lord, when we trust in him, our status changes in both sides.
When it comes to the law, our status is we're dead. It no longer has power over us because, well, we're dead. when it comes to God himself, we're no longer dead, but we are now live.
We're alive. He has made us alive unto him. Romans chapter 6 and 7 really detail a lot of this out regarding this positional change that has happened to us in the Christian life.
I'm just going to quote a few verses here. Romans 7, 4 says, We died to the law so it no longer has power over us so that we can be declared righteous.
[19:00] And the purpose is so that we can be married to somebody else. He uses the metaphor of a marriage or illustration, I should say, of a marriage. He talks about how when two people are married, a husband and wife, if the man can't marry another woman, right, unless his wife dies, and then it's legal, it's okay.

But if not, he's breaking the law, right? But if she passes away or he passes away, vice versa, then the other person can marry another. And he uses that illustration to say it's the same way with the law.
As long as you're married to the law, you can't be married to God. And now we could get divorced from the law or whatever, but that's not legal.
So what has to happen? You have to die. You have to die. And when you die, you die to the law. But then that opens up a whole new realm of possibility in which now you can be married to the Lord.
You can have this newfound relationship and life with the Lord himself. He says this in Romans 7, 9, I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died.
[20:25] Paul talks about, you know, he seems to be there was a time when he was not under the law and he was alive, but then the commandment came and then along with it, the thou shalt nots, and then he transgresses the thou shalt nots, and sin enters, and he is under death, and he is separated from God.

He was fine without the law, it seems, but then the law came. The law is holy and just and good. You know what, and when Israel was under it, it served an important purpose.
We'll read about this later, I think it's in Galatians chapter 4, but he talks about the purpose of the law for the Jewish people, it kind of kept them. He calls it like a schoolmaster. It preserved them.

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But ultimately the other important aspect was that it pointed them to the actual solution. It showed them their need, it made sin exceedingly sinful, it showed people in bright neon colors that you are a sinner.
Here is the standard of righteousness and you're not keeping it. So you need some kind of solution. But the law itself is not the solution. But there is a solution that is coming.
[21:42] So, when Christ has come and he provides that alternative solution, the law tends to now get in the way. Now it is counterproductive to our lives.

And it's not just the law itself. It's not as if a description of right and wrong is not helpful to us. That's helpful. But what does the law say?
The law says that he who does these things, you will have life. He who does these things, you will be righteous. That's the power that the law has to either threaten us with separation from God or to reward us.
Either way, that law or that power of the law was taken away. Verse 20, he continues on, but I have been crucified with Christ and 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 the faith of the Son of God or faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me. he says, I, he's talking about himself, have been crucified with Christ.
[22:55] So he says, this is the position I'm taking. I'm not sure if he's still talking to Peter or not, but I have been crucified with Christ. Well, what are you talking about? You weren't there on the cross, Paul.

Again, he's talking about from a position perspective. He is identified with Christ because when he trusted in Christ, now he is in Christ.
You'll see those, that kind of phrase all over the Pauline scriptures. Here in Galatians, you'll find it, especially in Ephesians. When we are in Christ, we are identified with him.
So because Christ died, we go back and you say, well, I'm identified with him, so I died with him as well. That's part of our Christian identity, our status, our position.
We have died with him. But is that it? Are we just dead? And that's it? Well, what happened after Jesus died? Anybody remember three days later or two days, however you like to count?
[23:59] He rose again. So in Romans 6, 4, Paul says this, therefore we were buried with him through baptism into Christ's death.

And by the way, some people think that's talking about water baptism. I don't think so. That just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.
Jesus died, we died with him, we died to the law, but then we rose again. Our identification is that we rose with him again, that we might live a new life unto God.
I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. This is my new life. Jesus Christ lives with me and in me because I'm trusting with him.
We have a new life that we live with God, not separated from him. The law made it so that we were always separated from God because we broke the law. We became sinners.
[25:02] The law condemned us, but now the law has no power to condemn us, and so we are free to live with God, in union with him, in a relationship with God that cannot be moved, regardless of how well we do at either keeping the law of Moses or just the law of our own conscience even.

This last verse here in Galatians, verse 21, he says this kind of to finish it up. I do not set aside the grace of God. The King James says, I do not frustrate the grace of God.
I don't set it aside. Because you could do that. You say, well, I tried grace. It didn't really work. I'm going to try the law again. Well, does the law work? How's that working out for you?
It does not work. I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness comes through the law, if you can gain in your righteousness, if you can become a better Christian by keeping the law, if you can increase your stature before God by keeping the law, then what Jesus did on the cross meant nothing.
It's not useful to us. Christ dying in vain.
[26:35] Did Christ die in vain? Was it fruitless? Was what he did mean nothing? And so circumcision, Sabbath keeping, following the dietary restrictions, trying to earn a standing before God, that's a way to set aside the grace of God.

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Those things are easier to recognize because well they're not religious rituals, they're not really moral in nature, but what about the moral law? I'm sure we can increase our standing before God right? By avoiding sexual immorality and cursing and drinking and drugs and well if we go to church every week and read our Bible every day and give lots of money to charity, that will increase our stature before God, right?
No. Those are good things that we ought to do. But we should not think that they can increase our righteousness, our standing before God.
You know, every believer, no matter where they are in their life, has the exact same standing before God. It doesn't matter if you're a drug addict that just got saved a few weeks ago and you're still trying to figure out how to live a Christian life and you're struggling.
you are 100% righteous before God. You're a teenager struggling with lust. You are 100% righteous in your standing before God.
[28:03] Maybe you're a faithful mother who has served her family in the Lord for 50 years. Your standing is the same as those others. you're a missionary who put your life on the line in some, you know, country where the gospel is forbidden.

Your righteous standing before God is the same as all those others. It does not matter how you're doing living the Christian life. If you are putting your trust and your faith in Jesus Christ, you stand before God considered completely righteous because we are in him.
And does Christ, does his righteousness change? Is Christ becoming more or less righteous than he was, you know, 2,000 years ago? Nope. And so, because we're in him, our righteousness does not change at all.
2 Corinthians 5.21, For he made him who knew no sin to be sin for us or a sacrifice for sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in him. Jesus died so that we can be declared as righteous.
And so, with these truths about our position, our status, everything changes about how you live life as a believer. It changes from how the Jews would live.
[29:25] And we cannot make the mistake in getting this wrong. And by the way, this is not just a technical, theological error about where righteousness comes from.

God just doesn't teach us about where our righteousness comes from so that we can get an A-plus on our theology test. This is practical outworkings in our daily life.
Knowing and understanding and walking in this truth is absolutely critical to our Christian life. And getting this wrong will fundamentally undermine your Christian life.
you cannot live the Christian life if you put yourself under the law. And this is why Paul is so animated in his rebuke and his correction of the Galatians. We are called to live a life of faith under grace.
God has given us a gift. We need to stand firm. In fact, that's language that Paul uses. Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free.
[30:29] He says later on in Galatians, we stand fast in our position. We hold on to it. You know, sometimes people are going to accuse us of things that we didn't do. Anybody ever been accused of something that you didn't actually do?

I think most of us have. But sometimes people accuse us of things we did do. And we could say, well, that's a good point.
Yeah, I really messed up over there. And Satan does that too, right? He accuses us. And many times, he's right. Yep, I did blow up at my kids.
Yep, I was very rude to my wife. Yes, I got drunk the other night. Those are all true things. But that does not change my standing before God.
And I will stand fast. I will stand fast in my position that God has given me. In Romans 6, verse 10, he says, Paul says, for the death that he died, talking about Jesus, he died to sin once for all.
[31:30] But the life that he lives, he lives to God. So, Jesus lives this life. He died, and then he lives, and he lives unto God, the Father. Likewise, you also, he says, reckon yourself to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

And this is the key to living a fruitful and productive and vibrant Christian life. To reckon yourself dead. You look in the mirror, you're very much alive, and you look a mess.
You're a mess. Your life is a disaster sometimes. You look in the mirror, that's what you see, is you see a mess. But you look in the mirror, and instead of seeing you, you see the glory of God in you,

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that God has accomplished in you because you put your faith and trust in him.
So you reckon yourself, you consider yourself, you account yourself dead indeed to sin because you're dead to the law, and it has no power to accuse you anymore, to condemn you, and alive unto God.
And why is that important? Because God's the one we need. We need him, not the law. The law can tell us that we're not doing a good job, but it can't help us to be transformed in our lives to be more like him.
[32:54] 2 Corinthians 3.18, Paul says this, but we all, with unveiled faces, he's talking about the veil of the law, the law kind of gets, no, he's talking about Moses coming down from the mountain with the Ten Commandments.

We all, under grace, with unveiled faces, we don't have that veil that Moses had. Beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord. The glory of the Lord is in us, even when we fail.
But when we perceive God in us, he says we are being transformed into the same image. We're being transformed to be like Christ from glory to glory just as by the Spirit of the Lord.
God can help us to be like him if we'll draw near to him. If we resurrect that law that condemns us, that's going to push us away from God.
But if we stand firmly in our righteousness, God, I just screwed up five minutes ago. I screwed up big time. But I need you. I need you right now.
[33:58] And I'm going to come to you because I need you to help me. I need you to work in me so that I can be transformed, so that I can be more like you. And I'm going to declare my righteousness right now because if I'm not righteous, I can't stand before you.

I have to run from you and hide like Adam and Eve did. But because you have made and declared me righteous, I can come to you and you can transform my life.
Do that for me right now, God. Work in me. That is how God wants us to live the Christian life. Let's close in a word of prayer.
Father, help us to live as you want us to live. It's so easy to frustrate, to ignore your grace. I mean, the law looks so appealing.
Hey, we can really do a good job at this if we just really try harder. We can keep that law and really impress you. You want us to just draw close to you, not try to impress you.
[35:05] Just build a relationship with you. Talk to you each and every day. Help us to do that each and every day, to love you, to learn about your love for us, and to walk in that.

And we pray, Lord, that you would transform us to be more like you as we walk with you every day. Amen.

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