

Galatians #20

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[0 : 00] Well, as they would say in Ireland, the top of the morning to you. And I want to begin this St. Patrick's Day prayer with the offering of a little prayer that could be composed only by a good Irish Catholic priest.

And it goes something like this. O Lord, may those who love us, love us. And may you turn the heart of those who don't love us, to love us. And if you won't turn their heart to love us, would you please turn their ankle so we will know them by their limp?

Pretty good prayer, if you ask me. And we are still dealing with Galatians chapter 6. And if you would look at your scripture sheet or your Bible, whatever translation you have, we are working on these last few verses.

And so far we have arrived at verse 11 of Romans chapter 6. I mean, sorry, Galatians chapter 6, where the apostle says, you see, as he addresses the Galatian audience, you see how large a letter I have written unto you with mine own hand.

And we are not really sure exactly how to interpret that. Goodspeed renders it. See what large letters I make when I write to you with my own hand.

[1 : 27] Knox translates it. Here is some bold lettering for you written in my own hand. And the New English Bible says, you see these large letters? I am now writing to you in my own hand.

I think it is probably reasonable to assume that the letters he is talking about are the individual letters that make up words, rather than the letter itself.

Because Galatians, so far as lengthy letters is concerned, Galatians is really not all that long. He has written two epistles to the Corinthians, both of which were longer. So he is probably talking about individual letters.

And for some, it enabled them to draw the conclusion that this is actually linked to Paul's thorn in the flesh.

Now, we don't know that for sure, but that is their speculation. And the idea is that Paul's thorn in the flesh, with their understanding, has to do with an eye affliction.

[2 : 31] That he had some kind of difficulty with his eyes that he could not see normally. And of course, this was long before the day of reading glasses. And the only way that he could see is if the letters were written very large.

So when he himself wrote, he wrote a lot larger letter physically than an amanuensis would. An amanuensis was simply like a stenographer.

And they were common fare in Paul's day because the average person living in this culture was not able to read or write. But they employed an amanuensis or a copyist, someone who was trained, sometimes they were called scribes, who could read and write in a given language.

And whoever was writing the letter would actually dictate it to the amanuensis. And they in turn would write. We know that Paul wrote some of his letters that way because he even identifies the one who is writing.

But in this case, one would almost get the impression that Paul is saying to the amanuensis, after he writes verse 10, here, let me have that pen if you would.

[3 : 46] And then he starts writing in his own hand with very large letters at the end of the epistle, so as to give it a kind of personal identification. Paul is taking pen in hand personally and is going to finish off the letter with that.

That's probably as good an explanation as any can provide. Although, I'm not sure that it's justified in tying that to the thorn in the flesh.

That could be a possibility. It could also be that Paul had some kind of an eye affliction. In addition to the thorn in the flesh, that was something else entirely different.

We just don't know. So, the way it is now, the jury is still out. All we can do is speculate. And then in verse 12, Paul says, As many as desire to make a fair show in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised, only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ.

Now, that's quite a statement to make. And he is talking about the ambition and the desire of the flesh for recognition, for accomplishment, for making a contribution.

[5 : 08] This is something that abides with us constantly. And we've given a great deal of time and attention to the subject in that the flesh has nothing to do with your physical body.

It's not flesh as in tissue of blood and bones. It is the flesh in regard to our old fallen Adamic nature, the self-ego.

And we pointed out to you that probably the greatest single consequence of our fallenness in Adam is our self-centeredness. We are all in our old Adamic nature, very self-centered, very egocentric.

It's part of the human condition. If you recognize that, then you're in a position to combat it and fight against it. If you don't recognize that you are your own worst enemy, then you are set up.

You are setting yourself up for a fall. If there's anything that man wants, it's recognition, satisfaction from accomplishment, credit.

[6 : 19] He wants credit for something done. And particularly if he can clean himself up, make himself presentable to God. And this is typical humanity. This is the way people think.

And this is why the vast majority of people find the whole concept of the grace of God and salvation purely through grace a foreign concept.

Because in our fallenness, we are committed to operating on the basis of performance. Do good, good results.

Do bad, bad results. Grace comes in and says, completely apart from your works or your effort, you are justified by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ apart from any of your efforts, apart from any of your works.

And that is a foreign concept to the flesh. The flesh fights against that. Because once you embrace grace, then you don't get any credit. Jesus Christ gets all the credit.

[7 : 23] You get tremendous benefits, but you don't get any credit. And what Paul is using here is the idea of circumcision and those who compel others to be circumcised.

Well, let's read the text again. As many as desire to make a fair show in the flesh. What's that mean? It means those who are committed to making self-human effort look good.

That's what he's talking about here. And 20th century New Testament renders. Let's read a couple of these others. Those who wish to appear to advantage in regard to outward observances are the very people who are trying to compel you to be circumcised.

And they do it only to avoid being persecuted for the cross of Jesus. And then Berkeley renders it. Those who want to make a pleasing appearance in worldly fashion are the very ones who would force circumcision on you for the simple reason so that they may escape persecution on account of the cross of Christ.

Those teachers of you, Ken Taylor renders it, those teachers of yours who are trying to force you to be circumcised are doing it for just one reason.

[8 : 46] So that they can be popular and avoid the persecution they would get if they admitted that the cross of Christ alone can save. So you see, circumcision, the demand for it, is nothing more than human effort and human works.

And it is done to impress people. It is done to satisfy the demands of the legalists. This was a very, very big issue because the Jew, particularly, was locked into the concept of circumcision being a necessity.

And fellas, it was a necessity at one time for one group of people. And that's Abraham and his seed. It was given to Abraham that on the eighth day, the male Jewish baby boy had to be circumcised or he was not admitted to the covenant of Israel.

And that was as standard and as acceptable and as necessary and demanded as could possibly be under the Mosaic law. But what Paul is now saying as he is addressing Gentiles, as was dealt with in the subject of the council in Acts chapter 15, the council at Jerusalem.

And remember the finding of that? They had a knock-down, drag-out argument over whether these non-Jews who embraced this Jewish Messiah, Jesus, whether they also had to be circumcised.

[10 : 23] And Paul took a very strong defensive position against that, saying, no, absolutely not.

You cannot subject Gentiles to the law of Moses. In the first place, it was never given to the Gentiles. Never. It was given to the children of Israel. And it is not right.

It is contrary to grace to demand that they be circumcised. So it is not grace plus circumcision. It is grace plus nothing. Dana.

Did Paul get this? Did he think of this on his own? Or did he get a revelation from God? This idea of not circumcision? Well, I think that it was probably included in the revelations that he got.

He got an abundance of revelations. And this is what he relates to the Corinthians. And I'm sure that this was just one of it. But the important thing to remember is Paul said, Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

[11 : 32] And that was a bombshell kind of statement. But the thing that is really confusing and really difficult for a lot of Gentiles, even for a lot of Christians today, is to come to grips with the reality that the Gentiles, and the Gentile is 99 and 9 tenths of the world's population, because everybody who is not a Jew is a Gentile.

And the Gentiles were never, ever, under the law of Moses. And Paul makes this very clear in Romans 2.

And I'm resisting the temptation to go back there. But it's in Romans 2. And Paul says, for the Gentiles, which have not the law, have the law of God written on their hearts.

And what this means is Paul is making a distinction between two sources of the law. He is saying, first of all, there is the law of Moses.

And by the way, even the Jew, if you want to think in terms of Abraham being the first Jew, and I think that's probably a reasonable assumption, Abraham was the first Hebrew.

[13 : 01] And out of him, of course, came Isaac, and then Jacob, and then the twelve sons, and so on. So Abraham is the father of the Jewish nation. He's also the father of the Arab nations. But keep in mind, if you will, that Abraham is found way back in Genesis.

Genesis. As far back as Genesis chapter 11. And the law of Moses did not exist then. There was no law of Moses given.

There was no law of Sinai. There was no Ten Commandments until Moses came down from the mount and gave them the tables of the law and God gave the instructions for Israel to Moses.

That's Exodus chapter 20. That's 430 years after Abraham. So there was no Ten Commandments.

There was no law of Moses until Moses arrived on the scene and God committed the law through him. Up until that time, there was the only law, same one that we have today, and that is the law of God that is written on the human heart.

[14 : 14] Every human being has that law. And incorporated with what is on our heart is this thing called a conscience.

And the knowledge that there is a God. The knowledge of God is ingrained in every human heart. It makes no difference how loudly the atheists scream that there is no God.

God has placed it in the atheist heart that there is and He is in existence. And part of our humanity is a volition, a will that was given us and incorporated with that will is a knowledge of right and wrong.

And while this varies in a lot of situations with a lot of different cultures, man has ingrained into his very being the essential knowledge and understanding that to harm your fellow man is wrong.

To steal from your fellow man is wrong. To take the life of your fellow man is wrong. And this is something that God built into us and it was understood before the law of Moses was ever given.

[15 : 34] In fact, as far back is Genesis 9-6, we've got a principle given regarding capital punishment wherein the Lord says and be mindful now this dates the law of Moses by at least 500 years.

Predates it. That whoso sheds man's blood by man shall his blood be shed. That's all the way back in Genesis 9. So, that knowledge is innate.

It is ingrained within us. This is the law that the Gentiles have. And this is the law upon which we are considered accountable as the Jew was under the law of Moses.

So, we've got these two different laws here. And they are very much in vogue. And Paul says in verse 13 here, For neither they themselves, that is the Jew, who are circumcised, and keep in mind, every time Paul talks about the circumcised or the circumcision, that's merely another name for the Jew.

And when he talks about the uncircumcised, that's merely another name for the Gentile. Joe? Can we go back to 12 just for a minute? What's the persecution they are talking about that they are trying to avoid?

[16 : 55] Why will they be persecuted by other Jews? Yes. They don't believe? They would be persecuted by Jews who would be regarding the absolute circumcision was necessary.

Oh, yeah. Those were the ones that... And if you were not circumcised, then you were a subject of ridicule, of exclusion, of persecution, and so on.

And that was the price that you paid. But what Paul is delivering, the message that he is delivering is, listen, this whole concept of circumcision now, it's gone.

It's gone. It was part of the Mosaic Law and that's gone. So, we are now under another law and that is the law of liberty in Christ Jesus that sets us free from the law of sin and death.

This is Romans chapter 8. And it is a hard sell. And the reason it is a hard sell is because the Jew never considered the law of Moses ever to be a temporary thing.

[18 : 13] Considered it to be permanent. The law of Moses, the law of God is as eternal as is the God who gave it. So, the idea of doing away with circumcision and actually and this would be a really bitter pill to swallow but what Paul is saying and the logical outcome of this is, listen, this would really be a bombshell.

This would bring stones raining down on Paul's head if he were to say this. But it's true. Actually, even as a seed of Abraham, you don't have to be circumcised anymore.

Now, to the average Jew, it would be unthinkable partly because tradition and culture often are more forceful driving engines than is doctrine.

And people get steeped in emotion, steeped in tradition and culture because, and this is very important, fellas, I want you to pick up on this.

They get steeped in culture and in tradition because there is an emotional attachment to it, not merely an intellectual attachment.

[19 : 36] And let me tell you, the emotional attachment almost always wins out over the intellectual because emotions are driven by feeling and feelings are a lot more powerful than intellect.

Shouldn't be that way, but it is. We can feel better than we can think. And that's where we put a lot of our conviction is that our feelings rather than our intellect.

Scott and then Dan. Yeah? Does the same thing follow through with the water baptism? People think absolutely same principle exactly the same principle.

And I think it's even more problem today. They don't necessarily talk about circumcision. There's a lot of churches always. Oh yeah, absolutely. Absolutely. Despite the fact, you know, despite the fact that Paul says there is one Lord, one faith, one baptism.

Well, what baptism is that? for most people, for most people, it's water and the means in which it is administered.

[20 : 50] Baptism for some is sprinkling. Baptism for others is pouring. Baptism for others is immersion one time backwards. Baptism for others is immersion three times forward.

And virtually none of those will accept the other's baptism as a valid baptism. and the apostle Paul comes along and says there's one Lord, one faith, one baptism.

There is a baptism which regenerates. And that is the spirit baptism. Because it is with the spirit of God upon the believing heart that comes in to the believer and regenerates, renews.

renews you on the inside. And the word baptized literally means identification, to be identified with. And when you believe on Jesus Christ, you are identified with him.

You are baptized into the body of Jesus Christ. That's a spiritual body. Christ is the spiritual head.

[22 : 03] We are members of that spiritual body. and it is not something you enter into with water. It is a spiritual cleansing. And I know there are some, and God bless them because I'm sure they mean well.

I don't have any question about their motive or their sincerity. And they believe that water baptism has taken the place of circumcision.

circumcision. And I know there are a lot of, even whole denominations teach this. And I know that's true among many Presbyterians. They believe that circumcision was required in the Old Testament, but in the New Testament, circumcision has been replaced with water baptism.

Now, how in the world they make a connection between those two completely escapes me. to me is a lot more logical, and I think a lot more consistent biblically to say that physical circumcision in the Old Testament, which was demanded just of the Jew, has been replaced with spiritual circumcision, of which Paul spoke in Colossians chapter 2.

And he calls it the circumcision made without hands. Do you see the contrast there? The physical circumcision in the Old Testament for the Jews was a circumcision that was made with hands.

[23 : 36] Whose hands? It was the hands of the Jewish man that circumcised the baby boy, eight days old. That's the hands. But what about the spiritual circumcision in the New Testament?

It's made without hands. That means it's not physical at all. It is a spiritual circumcision. And in both cases, whether physical or spiritual, it has to do with that which is dedicated to God.

So, when Paul talks about the subject of circumcision, he makes it very clear when he says, writing to the Corinthians, and fellas, I don't know how preachers just read over these verses and kind of ignore them.

When Paul said, Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel. Now, usually, the way that is taken, the way I took it, the way I took it for years after I became a Christian and when I was preaching, the way I took it was, that's true that God never sent Paul to baptize, but to preach the gospel, because the preaching of the gospel is that which is a lot more important.

That's what gets people saved, and the baptism is just something that you do to show that you have been saved.

[25 : 09] It's a public demonstration of what has taken place inwardly. And that satisfied me for a long time until somebody raised a very embarrassing question.

And the question was this. Well, when Paul said, Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel, could the twelve apostles whom Jesus sent out in Matthew 10, would they be able to say that?

Would Matthew and Thomas and Philip, would they have been able to say, Jesus is not sending us to baptize, he's sending us to preach the gospel?

No. They couldn't say that. Why? Because Christ made it obvious, very plain, that baptism, water baptism, the same kind of baptism with which John baptized, was part of the message that he sent the twelve to proclaim.

Go into all the world, and everybody is familiar with Matthew 28, 19, and 20, go into all the world, preach the gospel, teaching them, baptizing them in the name of the Father and Holy Spirit, and teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.

[26 : 32] This is a really strictly Jewish kind of command, and baptism was part of it. So, the twelve apostles could not say, Christ didn't send us to baptize just to preach.

No, no, no, no. He sent them to preach the kingdom of heaven is at hand, believe, and be baptized for the remission of sins.

That was part of the message. And if they left it out, they were negligent. But what then does Paul mean when he says, Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel.

And Paul was not preaching the gospel of the kingdom like the twelve was. Paul was preaching his message specifically to the Gentiles, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.

No circumcision, no water baptism, just justification by faith plus nothing. baptism. And fellas, the idea of, you see, our position is, even as physical circumcision in the Old Testament is replaced by spiritual circumcision in the New, in the same way, physical water baptism in the Gospels is replaced in the epistles with spirit baptism.

[28 : 07] For by one spirit are we all baptized into one body. What's that body? That's the body of Christ, the spiritual body of Christ.

And if you are in Christ, you are a member of that spiritual body, and Christ is the head. But it is a spiritual body, and it is spiritual baptism.

You see, when Paul talks about this in Romans 6, that as many as were baptized into Christ were baptized into his death.

H2O cannot accomplish that. It is the same baptism in Romans 6 as it is in 1 Corinthians 12, 13, for by one spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jew or Gentile, bond or free, male or female.

There is a plane of equality there. And it is a change that has taken place that if you read it carefully, it is undeniable.

[29 : 17] Something different is happening here. And the difference is between what the twelve apostles were preaching, who were commissioned to go just to Israel.

Jesus said in Matthew 10, don't go to the Gentiles. Don't go to the Gentiles. Confine your ministry to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

And as you go, proclaim the gospel of the kingdom is at hand, and so on, and so on, and teach them to, this is the same message that John the Baptist preached, same message that Jesus preached, same message he gave the twelve.

But this is not the message that Paul is preaching. And fellas, this is one of the reasons that Paul got into such big trouble with his fellow Jews.

Because he wasn't towing the party line, which of course included circumcision, the baptism of John, and all the rest.

[30 : 18] He wasn't preaching that. And it got him in all kinds of trouble. In fact, it got him persecuted. and this is exactly what he's talking about here in this sixth chapter, that if you are not willing to walk the party line, you're going to pay a price for it.

You're going to be isolated. You're going to be marginalized. You may even be persecuted. You're going to have all kinds of vicious rumors spread about you and all the rest of it. And there is a price to pay.

And Paul paid it. Bob. Sounds a little bit like the first Donald Trump. Sounds like what? Donald Trump. The first Donald Trump. Well, I wouldn't equate the Apostle Paul with Donald Trump.

But I will say this. I would go so far as to say that Paul was his own man and he insisted he insisted on being loyal to Christ and proclaiming his message no matter what the cost.

And that does take a special kind of fortitude. And this is exactly what he's talking about here. Look at verse 14. But God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[31 : 49] By whom the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world. And another place Paul says, woe is me if I preach not the gospel of Christ.

And I determine to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. Don't? When Paul went to Jerusalem and the world accepted what he was preaching, how would they feel they're still preaching the other?

Yeah. Yeah. But they accepted what he was doing. They accepted what he was doing because in Galatians 2, it's been a long time since we've been there, but Galatians 2 makes it very clear that there are two different messages going to two different people.

and the twelve reaffirmed their calling to preach to the circumcised, that is, Jews, Israel, and that Paul had an equally legitimate ministry, but it was to the uncircumcised.

And they recognized the legitimacy of Paul's message, and they gave him their blessing. And there's an agreement here, you preach to this crowd, we'll preach to this crowd.

[33 : 11] And that's exactly what happened. But, you know, as you recall from reading the Gospels or reading Paul's epistles and reading the book of Acts, Paul also went to the Gentiles, I mean to the Jews.

He entered the synagogue every time he went to a new city, and there he proclaimed Christ as the Messiah. And he did that very shortly after he was saved. When he was still in Damascus, he went to the synagogue in Damascus and proclaimed Christ there as the Messiah.

And this is really involved, guys, but it's so important. What we're talking about here is a critical transition has taken place that is often overlooked, ignored altogether.

Yes, Joe? I think that had a lot to do with it.

Peter was kind of like a trailblazer, really. I mean, when he went to Cornelius, this first Gentile, he didn't want to go. He didn't want to go just because the guy was a Gentile.

[34 : 29] And then he didn't know how to handle it. When God made it obvious that he was doing for Gentiles what he had done for Jews, it was a bombshell, to be sure.

The Paul Trump comparison, his cause was the truth. I'm not sure that Trump's cause is the truth. Well, that may be the most glaring difference.

Okay, guys, well, thank you. Thank you for your kind attention. Enjoy your breakfast.