

**PAUL: THE SPIRITUAL ABOLITIONIST, PART II**  
**NOT MAN'S GOSPEL!, PART 29**

TEXT: GALATIANS 2:11-21

November 1, 2009

**INTRODUCTION/REVIEW:**

- I. PAUL CONFRONTS PETER'S CONTRADICTION OF THE TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL (2:11-13)
- II. PAUL CLARIFIES PETER'S CONTRADICTION OF THE TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL (2:14-21)
  - A. PAUL'S QUESTION, v. 14
  - B. PAUL'S THESIS, vv. 15-16
  - C. PAUL'S DEFENSE, vv. 17-21

Paul denounced works of the law so strongly his opponents (i.e., Judaizers) twisted his teaching to mean that works (obedience to the Law) have no place at all in the believer's life.

They charged that his gospel of grace encouraged men and women to disregard the law and continue in sin.

Therefore, in response to his critics, Paul offers 4 arguments in vv. 17-21 to show why a Christian who is justified is not given a license to sin but rather is motivated to live a life of grateful obedience.

1. CHRIST DOESN'T PROMOTE SIN, LEGALISM DOES. vv. 17-18
2. TO LIVE FOR GOD ONE MUST DIE TO THE LAW. v. 19

Contrary to the Judaizers, Paul argues that legalism doesn't enable a person to live for God it prevents it! Only justification by faith alone empowers a man to live for God. Building upon v. 19, Paul gives a third argument to the objection that justification by faith encourages people to live sinful lives.

**LESSON:**

3. THE LOVE OF CHRIST DISPLAYED IN HIS LIFE AND DEATH MOTIVATES THE BELIEVER TO LIVE FOR GOD. v. 20

In v. 20, Paul expands and throws further light on v. 19. He explains the way in which those who are dead to the law are compelled to live for God (cf. Calvin, *Galatians*, vol. 21, p. 74).

Paul is eager to show that his dying to the law had nothing to do with him. The fact that he died to the law and now lives for God is all because of what Christ has done for him (cf. Duncan, *Galatians*, p. 71).

Paul describes how a new power came to master his life and drive him to live for God (instead of driving him to transgress the law, vv. 17-18).

In v. 20, Paul has in view the believer's legal union with Christ (i.e., that Christ was appointed by God to be our substitute and representative in both His life and death).

This legal union is the basis upon which believers are righteous before God. Apart from this union, Christ's life and work are of no benefit to us. Francis Turretin notes, "...as long as Christ is outside of us and we are out of Christ, we can receive no fruit from another's righteousness," (*Justification*, p. 29). When we are united to Christ, God considers us as righteous as His Son, not because we are righteous in ourselves but because we are united to Christ. Paul argues that it is this legal union that motivates believers to live for God.

Before we look at v. 20 in further detail, it will be helpful to note how D.A. Carson clarifies a popular but misunderstood reading of this verse.

He points out how the misunderstanding revolves around the brief phrase, "Christ lives *in me*," (ἐν ἐμοί, emphasis mine).

In the context, Paul is writing about justification. But, often when v. 20 is read, the context of justification is forgotten and v. 20 is read in a transformative way (i.e., how Christ comes and takes up residence within the believer and changes him or her from within).

To be sure, there are many passages in the Bible that talk about how Christ, by the Holy Spirit, comes to live within us (e.g., John 14-16). But, this is not the case in Galatians 2:20 because it doesn't fit the context, which is justification. The precise meaning of this phrase depends on the context in which it is found.

So, I bring you back to the little phrase, "*in me*." What does Paul mean by the phrase, "*in me*"?

To get a better understanding, turn back to 1:23-24, which will help to shed light on 2:20.

Paul says that when the churches of Judea heard the report of Paul's radical conversion and subsequent gospel ministry, "they glorified God *because of me* (ἐν ἐμοί)," (emphasis

mine). The phrase translated, “*because of me*,” in 1:24 is the same phrase that Paul’s uses in Galatians 2:20.

In the context, it would not make sense to read 1:24 as, “They praised God in me.” Paul is not saying that the churches of Judea were “in Paul.” What Paul is saying is that the churches of Judea praised God “with reference/respect to me.” The cause for the church’s praise is “because of” or “with reference to” Paul’s radical conversion and newly established gospel ministry.

Thus, Carson notes that when this meaning, “in/with reference to” is seen in 2:20, this reading makes v. 20 consistent and clear with all that Paul has said thus far in the context, which is justification.

So, let’s return to v. 20 now and I think you will better understand Paul’s argument.

Paul begins, “*I have been crucified with Christ.*”

What does Paul mean? Obviously, he doesn’t mean that he was literally crucified with Jesus on the cross. What he is saying is that when Christ was crucified, He was crucified in/with reference to me.

Turn over to Galatians 3:13. Here Paul writes, “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us...”

Christ died on the cross in accordance with the law’s demand and became a curse for us. Because Jesus died and bore the law’s curse with reference to me, I am therefore dead with respect to the law’s curse.

Again, you will not see this in your English translations. But, in the Greek, Paul uses the perfect tense, which means that he was once in the past crucified with Christ and the effect of that crucifixion remains permanent (F.F. Bruce notes, “The perfect tense *συνεσταύρωμαι* emphasizes that participation in the crucified Christ has become the believer’s settled way of life,” Bruce, *Galatians*, p. 144).

In other words, because Christ was crucified in reference to me, I am now free forever from the curse and guilt of the law. The law can never again curse or condemn me.

How can this be?

I am free forever because Jesus bore the law’s curse on my behalf or with reference to me! The penalty of the law was carried out on Christ who is my substitute and representative. The law’s demand of death was satisfied in the death of Christ.

The result, Paul writes, of sharing in Christ’s crucifixion is, “...*I no longer live.*”

This is to say, the old “I,” who lived before the law, no longer lives. The strict Pharisee who lived in reference to the law and sought his justification by virtue of his obedience to the law, died with Christ and remains dead forever!

Paul is saying that “I” no longer trust in my own legal righteousness, but now gain all of my acceptance/standing with God from “*Christ who lives in/with reference to me.*”

Paul says to Peter that just as Christ’s death was in reference to him so His life is also in reference to him. Paul is speaking of the great exchange that occurs between Christ and the believer.

His death was with reference to me and His life is with reference to me. His death is my death. His life is my life. My sin has become His and His righteousness and life have become mine.

Jerry Bridges noting the importance of the believer’s legal union with Christ writes,

“...all that Christ did in His life and death is effective for us because we are legally united to Him. Therefore, we can accurately say that when Jesus lived a perfect life, we lived a perfect life. When He died on the cross to suffer the penalty of sin, we died on the cross. All that Jesus did, we did, because of our legal union with Him...

Just as the guilt of Adam’s sin was charged to us because he was our legal representative, so the sinless life and sin-bearing death of Christ was credited to us because He was the legal representative of all who trust in Him. It is crucial that we grasp this truth because it is the sole basis upon which Christ’s entire work in His life and death becomes effective for us. It is the sole basis upon which He becomes our substitute and upon which we become entitled to those undsearchable riches in Him,” (*The Gospel for Real Life*, pp. 38-39).

The fruit or result of this great exchange is a life lived for God, “...*the life I now live in the flesh (body) I live by faith in the Son of God...*”

Paul says, because Christ lived and died with reference to me, I am now motivated by this great love to live with reference to Him! To put it another way, the believer’s obedience is secured by God’s love in Christ.

F.F. Bruce writes, “The whole of Christian life is a response to the love exhibited in the death of the Son of God for men,” (Bruce, *Galatians*, p. 146).

Christ’s love exerts a powerful moral influence upon the believer. For Paul, the redeeming love of Christ compelled him to forsake self forever and to live for God, as he says in 2 Cor. 5:14, “For the love of Christ controls/compels us...”

Ralph Erskine writes,

“The believer hath sufficient encouragement to make him live unto God; he sees Christ hath satisfied divine justice, fulfilled all the righteousness of the law, that he hath done that which is...unperformable by us; and when, by faith, he beholds this, he is encouraged to serve God...If a man hath no faith at all of God’s goodness, no hope of his favour in Christ, where is his purity and holiness? Nay, it is he that hath this hope, that purifies himself, as he is pure. I know not what experience you have, sirs, but some of us know that, when our souls are most comforted and enlarged with the faith of God’s favour through Christ, and with the hope of his goodness, then we have most heart to the duties; and when, through unbelief, we have harsh thoughts of God as an angry judge, then we have no heart to duties and religious exercises: and I persuade myself this is the experience of the saints in all ages,” (“Law-Death, Gospel-Life,” pp. 52-53).

Paul is arguing that justification by faith relates to the believer’s daily life. Far from leading the believer to pursue a life of license, justification by faith motivates the believer to live for God.

Listen to Jerry Bridges’ personal testimony of how the Lord graciously brought him to an understanding of this gospel-love and how it motivates him to live,

“Gradually over time, and from a deep sense of need, I came to realize that the gospel is for believers, too....

I came to see that Paul's statement in Galatians 2:20, ‘The life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me,’ was made in the context of justification... Yet Paul was speaking in the present tense: ‘The life I now live ....’ Because of the context, I realized Paul was not speaking about his sanctification but about his justification. For Paul, then, justification (being declared righteous by God on the basis of the righteousness of Christ) was not only a past-tense experience but also a present-day reality.

Paul lived every day by faith in the shed blood and righteousness of Christ. Every day he looked to Christ alone for his acceptance with the Father. He believed, like Peter (see 1 Pet. 2:4-5), that even our best deeds -- our spiritual sacrifices -- are acceptable to God only through Jesus Christ. Perhaps no one apart from Jesus himself has ever been as committed a disciple both in life and ministry as the Apostle Paul. Yet he did not look to his own performance but to Christ's ‘performance’ as the sole basis of his acceptance with God.

So I learned that Christians need to hear the gospel all of their lives because it is the gospel that continues to remind us that our day-to-day acceptance with the Father is not based on what we do for God but upon what Christ did for us in his sinless life and sin-bearing death. I began to see that we stand before God today as righteous as we ever will be, even in heaven, because he has clothed us with the righteousness of his Son.

Therefore, I don't have to perform to be accepted by God. Now I am free to obey him and serve him because I am already accepted in Christ (see Rom. 8:1). My driving motivation now is not guilt but gratitude.

Yet even when we understand that our acceptance with God is based on Christ's work, we still naturally tend to drift back into a performance mindset.

Consequently, we must continually return to the gospel. To use an expression of the late Jack Miller, we must 'preach the gospel to ourselves every day.'"

("Gospel-Driven Sanctification," pp. 13-16).

Paul is reminding Peter that he had forgotten the gospel. "Peter you are behaving like your acceptance with God depends on your performance before God. But, I have learned that I must preach the gospel of justification by faith to myself everyday."

Paul reveals that until we learn and are convinced that we have died to sin's guilt and the law's curse and until we have come to understand Christ's love for us, we will not have any power to live for God.

Listen to Walter Marshall,

"You cannot truly live a holy life unless you are totally assured of your justification and reconciliation with God, totally apart from the works of the law. This is the only way you can truly obey the law!...The gospel says that when you are firmly assured of God's love for you, you will respond by living a holy life. If you do not understand God's love for you, you will fall into a sinful life!... You will never receive any spiritual life that can free you from this dominion of sin unless this guilt and curse of sin is removed from you. This, of course, is what happens when God justifies you- the guilt and curse of sin are removed from you (Galatians 3:13-14, Romans 6:14). You know that as long as you see yourself still under the curse and wrath of God, you can have nothing but despair. You will never be able to live to God in holiness," (*The Gospel Mystery of Sanctification*, p. 31).

Paul lived with a clear sense of God's love for Him in Christ. So often when Paul speaks of Christ and the cross, he erupts in spontaneous praise. This is what he does at the end of v. 20 as he reflects on the fact that Jesus died on the cross as his substitute for his sins.

No one understands the Christian life or justification rightly until he or she understands Christ in the way Paul speaks of him at the end of v. 20 (Son of God/love me/gave Himself for me).

Justifying faith defines Christ and embraces Him as, the Son of God who loves sinners and who gave Himself for sinners!

But, the legalist does not say: "Christ loved me and gave himself for me." The legalist turns Paul's thinking around and remodels the doctrine of justification by faith and says:

“I have loved Christ and done my duty. Therefore, Christ loves me and works for me/justifies me.”

This is the natural way of man’s thinking (i.e., if I serve God, he will save me, bless me, work for me). But the gospel way of thinking is, He loves me and justifies me so that I may live for Him.

With this phrase, “Paul,” Luther wrote, “completely abrogates and removes the righteousness of the Law and of works,” (Luther’s Works, vol. 26, pp. 172). Again, “These words, ‘the Son of God,’ ‘He loved me,’ and ‘He gave Himself for me,’ are sheer thunder and heavenly fire against the righteousness of the Law and the doctrine of works,” (ibid, p. 175).

It is Christ, not the sinner, who takes the initiative in justification. It is not that Christ loves us and works for us because of what we do (have a quiet time, practice fasting, observe prayer vigils, give an offering, etc...). No! Look what Paul says, “who loved me and gave Himself for me.”

This “me” is the “I” who died, the accursed, wretched legalist who was trying to earn righteousness by keeping the Law. Paul says while he was a miserable, self-absorbed, self-righteous, condemned sinner, the Son of God loved him and gave Himself for him (cf. Gal. 1:13-14!).

These spontaneous words of praise to the Son of God are the best argument against works of the law. They are the hottest fire to melt your sin and the strongest cord to bind your heart to obey God’s law!

#### **CONCLUSION:**

Far from being a way for a man to free himself from the requirements of God’s law, Paul reveals how justification by faith draws the believer to live moment by moment by faith in Christ.

As we reflect on how justification by faith motivates us to live for God, I want to end by addressing a question that most likely puzzles you.

*What about when I sin? How does God relate to me?*

Many Christians are crippled in their walk because they have never come to realize that their standing with God is not based on their actions or goodness. As a consequence, when they sin, they think God is displeased and angry with them because of their continual failure.

They begin to listen to the accusations of the enemy and believe that God and His law condemn them. This is nothing more than drifting back into unbelief and a performance

mindset (reliance upon one's goodness and self-righteousness for one's acceptance before God).

When we sin (and we will!), we must remember that the law can no longer accuse the Christian of being a law-breaker, of being condemned and under its curse. Why? It is because we have been crucified with Christ and are covered by His life! Thus, because of our justification, God no longer relates to us as a wrathful Judge but rather as a loving Father.

Listen carefully to Martyn Lloyd Jones as he discusses justification and how God relates to the Christian when he or she sins,

“...when the devil comes and says, ‘You have no standing, you are condemned, you are finished’, you must say, ‘No! my position did not depend upon what I was doing, or not doing; it is always dependant upon the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ.’ Turn to the devil and tell him, ‘My relationship to God is not a variable one. The case is not that I am a child of God, and then again not a child of God. That is not the basis of my standing, that is not the position. When God had mercy upon me, He made me His child, and I remain his child. A very sinful, and a very unworthy one, perhaps, but still his child!’

*And now, when I fall into sin, I have not sinned against the law, I have sinned against love. Like the prodigal, I will go back to my Father and I will tell Him, “Father, I am not worthy to be called your son.” But He will embrace me, and He will say, “Do not talk nonsense, you are My child,” and He will shower his love upon me! That is the meaning of putting on the breastplate of righteousness! Never allow the devil to get you into a state of condemnation. Never allow a particular sin to call into question your standing before God. That question has been settled,”* (*The Christian Soldier*, p. 255, emphasis mine).

Has the truth of justification by faith gripped you like it did Paul? Has the gospel-truth that when Jesus lived a perfect life, you lived a perfect life, sunk deeply into your soul? Has the gospel-truth that when Jesus died on the cross in accordance with the law, you also died on the cross in accordance with the law settled in your conscience?

Do you know and believe that when you are justified, God doesn't see your sin, guilt and lawbreaking but rather He sees you clothed in the perfect, sinless obedience of His Son?

Like Paul, we must let these gospel-truths grip our minds, quiet our consciences, rest in our hearts and silence our enemy!

The poverty of Evangelicalism is not due to a lack of books emphasizing practical, relevant principles and tips for the Christian life. The poverty is a result of an impoverished understanding of the gospel.

The key to living the Christian life is not to try harder but to know more fully the amazing love of Christ in His life and death and then to live in a vital awareness of this love day by day.

The amazing, startling truth of justification by faith is the only truth that will empower and drive your heart to obey and live for God!

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