

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, November 15, 2017 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study

freedom
THE GRACE OF CHRIST IN GALATIANS

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF GALATIANS The Exchanged Life *Galatians 2:17-21*

The Apostle Paul's letter to the Galatians is direct, steady and very helpful. Determined to win back his believing friends from the strong grip of legalism, he declares his authority, defends his apostleship, and denounces all other alleged "gospels." He even mentions a confrontation he has with the Apostle Peter to illustrate the clout he carried. But in no way did this mean he ran his own life, which this section of the letter declares. Paul wrote what all Christians must often admit... it isn't us, it is Christ; it isn't the life of the flesh that counts, it is His life lived through us by faith. Let's call it "the exchanged life." This is the one that make our life worth living.

INSIGHTS FROM THE PROPHET ISAIAH (Isaiah 40:28-31)

"²⁸ Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, neither faints nor is weary. His understanding is unsearchable. ²⁹ He gives power to the weak, and to those who have no might He increases strength. ³⁰ Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall, ³¹ But those who wait on the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint."

Over 2,000 years ago Isiah, serving as God's spokesman to Judah, declared information about God which every man, woman, boy and girl should find encouraging. To understand Isaiah 40:28-31 is to be better prepared to understand Galatians 2:17-21. The context of Isaiah 40 is "the incomparable greatness of God." He is never weary... never runs out of energy... never sleeps. The prophet said there is hope for the believer when that awful sense of weariness overwhelms him, *"³¹ But those who wait on the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint."* The secret is in "waiting." The term means to "twist" or "stretch" something. The noun form refers to a measuring line or a rope. The word picture is that of a tiny thread of hemp which by

itself is weak. However, twisted around another strand, then around another... on and on... the original thread becomes a rope or line which is strong. Intertwining produces its strength.

APPLICATION: Isaiah isn't really engaged in "shop talk" here... talking about rope... he is talking about life. In other words, when you and I are threadbare... tired and weary... we have a source of power and strength outside of ourselves from which to draw. When we stretch and twist ourselves around ("wait upon") the Lord, our strength is renewed. We make an exchange... our weariness and weakness for His strength. What Isaiah talks about emotionally and physically, Paul talks about spiritually... exchanging one thing for another.

PRINCIPLES FROM PAUL ON THE EXCHANGED LIFE (Galatians 2:17-21) The battle that went on between Paul and his critics (the Judaizers) revolved around an important theological conflict... a very important theological question for the young, New Testament church, and that is how a person is saved. Jewish doctrine taught that justification with God would take place at the Last Judgement... that is, if one's good works exceeded those which were bad. Jews who had come to faith in Jesus Christ had to deal with this theological teaching immediately. Paul's presentation of justification was hard for them to accept because their traditional understanding was deeply rooted. The essence of the new converts' confusion can be summarized in this question: "If God justified bad people... sinful people, then what is the point of being good?" But contrast, Paul's message was basically this: "We don't wait until eternity to find out whether or not we're justified; we know at the moment of conversion. God declared us righteous before Himself as that time, in our own standing with Him." Let's close out the second chapter of Galatians by looking carefully at Paul's presentation

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!" ¹⁸ For if I build again those things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. ¹⁹ For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God. 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. ²¹ I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain." – Galatians 2:17-21

3 Principles from Paul on the Exchanged Life in Galatians 2:17-21:

- 1. Regarding justification before God (vv.15-17) –** *¹⁵ We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, 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. 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!"* We should settle on a definition for justification so that Paul's words have the greatest meaning.

3 Definition for Justification: "Being made right or set right with God"

- (1) An acronym type definition...** "Being made just as if I'd never sinned."
- (2) A dictionary definition...** "The action of showing something to be right."
- (3) A theological definition...** "At the moment of salvation, God sovereignly declares the sinner righteous from then on." - By way of application, this means that as the sinner

stands before God in faith (in the Son of God), that sinner is seen and declared righteous in his stand or position before God. From that moment on, right up to his death, the believer sinner is always right before God... acceptable to Him.

A word of caution here... take great care in understanding the words you've just heard. It is quite easy to hustle past them without grasping their significance. These words describe profound truth about our life in Christ. In light of the preceding comments, look at the text... especially in verse 16, *"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."*

Here is the implication from all of this... this necessitates a change in a believer's behavior and life-style, because from the moment of his or her conversion, his life is made different by God. Now you and I cannot live in the same way. Because we have been made righteous (rightly related to God) by God, any sin we commit is done so by choice. As a matter of fact, from conversion to death there is a constant battle between the new nature (result of justification) and the old one (inherited from birth) which knows nothing but sin. By choice, we must allow God to control our lives so that His righteousness becomes the trademark of our character. Our justification through Christ is not a matter to be taken lightly.

2. **Regarding death to the law (vv.18-19)** – *"¹⁸ For if I build again those things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. ¹⁹ For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God."* Today we don't really know what it is like to have lived day-in, day-out under the Mosaic Law. Legalism as we know it today (as a perversion of God's grace), cannot be fully compared to life before the cross. Paul, however, knew life on both sides of Calvary. Note his comment in v.19, *"¹⁹ For I through the law died to the law..."* The Law, with all of its demands, expected perfection both inwardly and outwardly. Those demands were too high and impossible to fulfill. If ever a man could have been saved by keeping the Law, that man would have possibly been Paul. He saw that if he was to be righteous, it had to happen some other way.

Dangers of Legalism: *Legalism: In its most basic sense legalism believes that we can earn or keep God's favor by what we do.*

- (1) **Legalism promotes unbiblical standards (self-authority)** – To elevate any other standard outside of the work of Jesus Christ is to promote an unbiblical standard... it is to make a law that is not binding. It may be what you do or do not eat or drink, what you do on Sundays, or it may be what you wear for clothes, what kind of music you listen to, or whether you have piercings or tattoos, wear a suit or don't on Sundays, or home school or not, or whatever. It is to take something that cannot be or keep your favor with God and make it binding on yourself and others. This is dangerous, but it is so prevalent.
- (2) **Legalism promotes performance (self-righteousness)** – Legalism says, "I do or do not do." The Gospel says, "I can't do, but Jesus did." There is a big difference. Legalism promotes the earning and keeping of God's pleasure based on what I do or do not do. When legalistic thinking is prevalent you are always trying to cut a deal with God or your conscience. You may feel guilty about what you have done instead of running to Christ

you run to Sinai, the Law, and look for something to do to make yourself feel better about yourself.

- (3) **Legalism promotes division** – Legalism is a system that thrives on “personal performance, personal supremacy, and sadly, the trampling of others. It relentlessly pushes others out of the way so that you may advance. Someone must always have the upper-hand, do it better than other, be more Holy, more Spiritual, more moral... etc. If we are saved and made right by what we do, that what I do must be better than what you do or I will not be as favored and as liked as you are... it always promotes division in this way. It cannot unify. It must by necessity divide.
- (4) **Legalism demotes Jesus (and His sufficient righteousness)** – This at its core, the real offense of legalism. To maintain that you can merit God’s favor by what you do and outside of the work of Christ is to say that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ was not necessary or was not sufficient. To cling to personal merit through doing things (however good or biblical they may seem) is to demote Jesus from his place of supremacy.
3. **Regarding Christ in our lives (vv.20-21)** – *“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. ²¹ I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain.”* When Paul penned these word... “I have been crucified with Christ...” he spoke of the precise moment of his own justification. Literally, his words were: “With Christ I have been crucified.” This is not a play on words. Essentially he said, “At the moment I was so unified with Christ... linked to Him... so much a part of Him, that His crucifixion became my crucifixion. My “old man” was slain a the cross with Him.” IN other words, an exchange occurred. The life Paul was living “in the flesh,” he lived by faith in the Son of God. Paul traded his life for Christ’s life in him. No other way could his life have been different... nor can ours.

Perhaps our interest in the exchanging lives can be highlighted by the following guidelines:

3 Important Truths Concerning the Exchanged Life:

- (1) **Our greatest need is acceptance of God**
- (2) **Our only hope is salvation through Christ**
- (3) **Our only power source is the Holy Spirit**

**It is never, never, never, in what we do or our own merit; it is always, always, always in what Christ has done... the finished work of Christ!*