

Let's Worship God

27th May - 1st June 2024
Galatians



Galatians

Monday - Galatians 2:11-14 - Conflict Between Apostles

In these verses we have a conflict that we don't expect. We find two leading Apostles, Peter and Paul, disagree with each other! Now there have always been people in churches who don't like public debate - who would say, why do we have to have these disputes out in the open? Surely it looks bad to have Christians publicly disagreeing with each other. And there's often a good heart behind comments like that. We do need to be aware that the non-Christians around us hear of disputes within the church. But the Biblical principle is that while private sins can be dealt with privately, public sins must be rebuked publicly. The very fact that the world DOES know about what's going on in the church, means that they'll know if we just turn a blind eye to the sin of those who're members. Not dealing with public sin publicly not only fails to follow the Biblical example, but it leaves it open for the world to say - 'the church doesn't take sin seriously, so it must not be that big of a deal'. It also encourages others to follow their example as we see in v13 here. Even Barnabas was led astray. But what has Peter been doing that's so serious that it deserves and requires a public rebuke from the Apostle Paul? We see the answer in v12. Before certain men came from James, Peter was eating with the Gentiles. What a picture of the gospel breaking down barriers! That is, until v12, when some men come from James. Basically these are men who Peter knows aren't going to like the fact that he's eating with Gentiles. So does he try and persuade them? Does he stick to his guns? No. He draws back, separates himself from the Gentiles and stops eating with them. Why? Because, he's scared of them. It's not that Peter has had a crisis of conscience. It's the fear of man. Peter's problem isn't one of belief, but one of living it out. Look at Paul's verdict in v14: 'Their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel'.

It's one thing to know the truth of the gospel and to know how we should live in light of what Jesus has done for us. It's another thing to actually put that into practice. The big question for those of us who regularly hear the gospel preached isn't so much 'do you know it'? But 'are you living it out'? Especially in those situations where you know that people aren't going to like it.

Questions

1. How should public sins be dealt with?
2. Why did Peter stop eating with Gentiles?

Prayer Points

1. Pray that God would enable us to live out the Gospel in our lives.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And 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. Galatians 2:20

Praise: Psalm 56 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

Galatians

Tuesday - Galatians 2:14-16 - Justification

By his actions, Peter is forcing the Gentiles to live like Jews. That is, if sincere Gentile Christians see what Peter is doing, they'll think that to be a proper Christian they can't eat pork, they need to be circumcised and so on. It's sending out the message that in order to be acceptable to God, you must believe in Jesus but also do these outward things. That's why Paul goes immediately in v. 16 to say 'a person is not justified by works of the law, but through faith in Jesus Christ'.

Peter's actions strike at the root of how we can get right with God. So in vs 15 and 16 that's the topic Paul addresses. What is it that makes us acceptable in God's sight? In v16 he introduces a word, which he uses 3 times. It's the word 'justified'. What does it mean? Well the word 'justify' is the language of the law court. It describes the judge's declaration as to whether we are innocent or guilty. And notice that it's just a declaration by the judge. A judge can't MAKE anybody innocent or guilty - they just declare what someone already is. To condemn someone is to say that they're guilty. To justify them is to say that they're innocent. For God to justify a sinner is to declare that they're righteous. So how could God possibly do that? Only if we now actually ARE innocent in his sight because of what Jesus has done. So for God to justify a sinner is to declare that someone is not guilty, because Jesus has paid their debt, and his perfect law-keeping has been counted as theirs. If you're a believer in Jesus Christ that means you've been justified. It doesn't mean that you haven't sinned in the past or won't sin in the future. But it means that when God looks at you, he sees the perfect righteousness of his own son.

In v15 Paul says that he and those like him are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners - but they still know that a person isn't justified by keeping these laws. This is a powerful argument coming from Paul. He was a Hebrew of Hebrews. As to the law, he was blameless - at least outwardly. But he says that that isn't enough to get him into Heaven. So if converted Jews like Paul weren't trusting in their Jewishness to get to Heaven, then it would be futile for Gentiles to become Jews in order to try and get to Heaven.

Questions

1. What does justified mean?
2. How can God declare us justified?

Prayer Points

1. Give thanks for the work that Christ has done to save us.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And 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. Galatians 2:20

Praise: Psalm 57 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

Galatians

Wednesday - Galatians 2:15-16 - No Works Can Justify

In v16, Paul makes three different statements about justification. Firstly, there's a general statement. We know that a person - any person - is not justified by works of the law, but through faith in Jesus Christ. But then he makes it personal. 'So we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law.' And this is a step we all must take as well. We must move from the general to the personal. The second statement reminds us that justification doesn't just happen. It's not an automatic process. In order for any of us to be justified, we must BELIEVE in Jesus. Not just believe that Jesus exists - even the demons believe that - but put all our trust for salvation in him. And then there's a universal statement about justification. 'Because by works of the law no-one will be justified'. There are always some people who think they're the exception. That the normal rules don't apply to them. And there are some who think that way when it comes to getting right with God. They think: 'Yes maybe others will be accepted by God through trusting in Jesus, but I'm just going to live a respectable life and hope that's enough'. But this final statement about justification makes it clear that there will be no exceptions. By the works of the law, no flesh, no human being, will be justified.

Paul's argument is: If God has accepted them, how dare we impose a condition upon them which he does not impose? If God has accepted them, how can we reject them? If He receives them to his fellowship, shall we deny them ours?

It's clear that Peter listened to the rebuke. When the Apostles and elders get together shortly afterwards at the Council in Jerusalem in Acts 15, Peter stands up and tells the circumcision party that requiring the Gentiles to keep Jewish customs was a yoke they couldn't bear. So from this story of Peter we can take warning - but we can also take hope. We will all sin, and fail and hurt other Christians and let our Saviour down. But that doesn't have to be the end of the story. Yes Peter fell, but he got up again, and by God's grace so can we.

Questions

1. What is Paul's argument?
2. Why can we take hope from Peter?

Prayer Points

1. Give thanks for God's grace in dealing with our sin.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And 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. Galatians 2:20

Praise: Psalm 58 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

Galatians

Thursday - Galatians 2:17-19 - Salvation By Works Promotes Sin

As Paul writes his letter to the Galatians, arguing for salvation by faith and not by works, he knows that his opponents are going to object. And one particular objection they'll raise is this: 'If you tell people that they don't have to keep the law to earn salvation then they'll just live whatever way they like'. And so he anticipates that objection here in v17. And what's more, this sort of teaching surely would make Christ a servant of sin. Because who has Paul been arguing all along that he got his gospel message from? Jesus! So if Paul's gospel message leads to people leading sinful lives, and he got his message from Jesus, then Jesus would be a minister or servant of sin.

So how does Paul answer this objection? First, he turns the objection on his head by arguing that it's actually salvation by works that promotes sin. Here in v18, Paul says that there's something that he has torn down that he can't rebuild. So what's he talking about? He's torn down the law as a means of justification. It's not that he tore down the law in and of itself. Paul says elsewhere that the law is holy and righteous and good.

Here's an illustration that John Piper uses. He says that God originally gave the law as a railway track to guide his peoples' obedience. The engine was God's grace, by the power of the Spirit. The law sets out what following Jesus looks like. But what many of the Jews had done, and what many people still do today, is to take the railway track, lift it up on its end, lean it against the door of heaven, and turn it into a ladder to climb. And that, says Piper, is the essence of legalism. Making the law into a long list of steps which we use to demonstrate that we deserve to make it into Heaven.

Many people today think that legalism is being concerned about God's law. If you don't join in with something they're doing because the Bible says it's wrong, they say: 'don't be so legalistic!' But actually legalism doesn't describe a concern to keep God's law. It describes an effort to get right with God through what we do.

So why in v18 would Paul prove to be a transgressor or sinner if he rebuilt what he tore down? Because he would be rebuilding the law as a ladder to get into Heaven.

Questions

1. Why is it sinful to think you can earn your way to heaven?
2. What is legalism?

Prayer Points

1. Pray that we would understand we can't earn our salvation.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And 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. Galatians 2:20

Praise: Psalm 59 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

Galatians

Friday - Galatians 2:17-20 - Dying to the Law

In v19 Paul says: 'through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God'. Dying to the law doesn't mean that he can live a life of sin. It means that he can live to God. And how is living to God defined? By God's law!

So what does it mean to die to the law? It means to die to it as a way of getting right with God. It means that as Christians we're free from the law's hold on us. We're free from the law's accusing sentence on us. The law demands perfect obedience. But none of us have obeyed it perfectly. And that's a problem. Living with the law as our master means that we can expect nothing but death and destruction - because there's no mercy in the law. But as Christians we're dead to the merciless demands of the law. And we're also dead to the curse of the law. The law also holds out a curse for disobedience. We have failed to keep the law so we should be cursed. But instead, that curse has fallen on Jesus. So we're dead to the curse of the law.

As long as we're alive to the law as a way of getting to Heaven, it will stop us coming to God. We'll either see its demands as impossible, and give up on ever coming to God. Or we'll convince ourselves that we're able to keep the law, and we won't come to Jesus, because we'll think we don't need him.

It's actually salvation by grace that leads to holy living. There's a sense in v20 here that Paul has written his own obituary. If you were to say to Paul: 'Paul, if you're saved by grace and not works, why don't you just go out and live a life of sin?' He'd say: 'That's not who I am any more. The old me, that wanted to live a life of sin, is dead.' Paul lived with a profound sense that Jesus had died personally for him. He talks in v20 about 'the Son of God who loved me! and gave himself for me!

And so when you're tempted to sin today, say to yourself: 'I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me'. Because you've been crucified with Christ, you're no longer under the law's condemnation. The penalty for your sins has been paid. But then remember that the old you is dead. Yes at times you'll still be tempted to live the way that old man or woman lived. But you don't have to. They're dead. You've been crucified with Christ.

Questions

1. What does Paul mean that he's died to the law?
2. What does it mean to be crucified with Christ?

Prayer Points

1. Give thanks that your old self is dead.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And 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. Galatians 2:20

Praise: Psalm 60 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

Galatians

Saturday - Galatians 2:20-21 - Salvation By Grace Leads To Holy Living

God works in our lives so that we can say: 'It is no longer I who live'. The world no longer revolves around me. The old me which was dominated by thoughts of my own ease and pleasure is dead. It's a radically different way of looking at the world.

So why do so many who call themselves Christians not live as if their old self has died? Why is there no evidence of Christ living in them? The answer is, that they've never been converted. A Christian isn't a person who believes the teachings of the Bible. Satan believes the teachings of the Bible. A Christian is someone who has died with Christ, whose stiff neck has been broken, whose stony heart has been crushed, whose pride has been slain - and has Jesus reigning in their place. To truly believe in Jesus isn't just to believe that he was crucified. It's to believe that you were crucified with him. Have you died to your old way of looking at the world?

I'm sure we've all seen films where it looks like the bad guy has been killed. He's lying there, apparently lifeless, but as soon as people turn their backs he springs up and attacks them. And our old selves can be like that. Trying to rise up and go back to their old tricks. But we're not to let them! Is Christianity for you just attending church and reading your Bible? Or is it a battle? Constantly dying to your old way of thinking? Yes, you're a sinner. But Jesus came for sinners. Yes, up till now your life may have been centred on you. But Jesus came so that our old selves could be crucified with him.

Don't fool yourself that the good life you're living compared to those around you will be enough. Paul says in v21: 'if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose'. The doctrine of salvation by works, of justification by living a good life, dishonours Jesus. It dishonours him because it says that there was no point in him coming. It says that Jesus was wasting his time. That he came and lived and suffered and died for no purpose.

What a rallying call we have to wake up to every morning! Not - 'I must obey today to earn God's favour'. But the words of v20: 'I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And 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'.

Questions

1. What does it mean to truly believe in Jesus?
2. What does salvation by works dishonour Jesus?

Prayer Points

1. Pray for the preaching and hearing of God's Word tomorrow.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And 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. Galatians 2:20

Praise: Psalm 61 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

The goal of Let's Worship God is to encourage and help you in your worship of God each day.

**God tells us that
Ezra read from
the book of the Law
day after day
and that
the people of God
were filled with joy!**

Let's Worship God is produced
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If you have any queries please contact - rpchurchscotland@gmail.com