

Galatians

Week 8

Your assignment:

1. Read Galatians once a week (6 chapters).
2. Take the notes each week and review them as you read.
3. Be open to God completely shifting your relationship with Him.
4. Text any questions to 440.557.2822.

Galatians 2:16

16Yet we know that a person is made right with God by faith in Jesus Christ, not by obeying the law. And we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we might be made right with God because of our faith in Christ, not because we have obeyed the law. For no one will ever be made right with God by obeying the law.”

Galatians 5:4-5

4For if you are trying to make yourselves right with God by keeping the law, you have been cut off from Christ! You have fallen away from God’s grace. 5But we who live by the Spirit eagerly wait to receive by faith the righteousness God has promised to us.

Most of us meet religion before we meet Jesus. We learned how to be religious before we learned how to be a Christian. We learned about the rules before we learned about love.

Charles Spurgeon described this in a sermon when he said, “Beloved, the legalist [in us] is a great deal older than the Christian. If I were a legalist today, I should be some fifteen or sixteen years older than I am as a Christian; for we are all born legalists.”

And really, all of Galatians addresses that problem. If we had to sum up the whole book of Galatians in one sentence we could say this: The message of Christianity is not “do” it’s “done.” The Gospel is not about “earning” it’s about “receiving.”

Preaching the true message of salvation through faith alone is incredibly dangerous because it is so easily misunderstood, but if you don’t have people who don’t in some way misunderstand and believe that Jesus love and grace is so great that they are free to take advantage of it, then you’re probably not talking about grace enough.

So today I want to try and talk about the “yea but.” And to do that we have to make sure we understand a very important word in the Christian faith. The word is *righteousness*.

It showed up in our verses today several times.

It’s not a word we use in our everyday vocabulary really, but for a Christian, it is possibly the most important word you need to understand, and we’ll see why in these verses today.

There are all kinds of technical definitions for righteousness, but let me give you 2.

Righteousness = to be free from guilt or sin.

Righteousness is being right with God.

What does that mean, to be right with God?

When we become a Christian, by placing our faith in Jesus, we are counted as righteous. We know that we're not free from guilt or sin, as a matter of fact, you will sin many times before this day is over, but in God's eyes, you are counted as righteous, which means in God's eyes you are not guilty of sin. How is that possible? Because Jesus paid the penalty for every one of your sins.

Galatians 3:13

But Christ has rescued us from the curse pronounced by the law. When he was hung on the cross, he took upon himself the curse for our wrongdoing.

God does not let you off the hook for your sin because he's nice or because he is loving. God does not hold your sin against you because Jesus has already paid the penalty for your sin.

So God has never lowered his standards. Never. Ever. He wasn't mean in the Old Testament but nice in the New Testament. From the time he created all the moral laws in the Old Testament until now he still has the same expectation that you and I would live a holy life free from sin, and the only way we can have a relationship with God and ultimately spend forever with him is to be sinless. God will not let anyone off the hook for sin. Every sin has to be accounted for. (Isaiah 64:6)

But that's why we make such a big deal about Jesus, because we know that we will never be able to be good enough for God. We will never be able to live a good enough life to be right with God. But Jesus did. Jesus came as a human being and for 33 years lived a righteous life. He was without fault or sin. He's the only person who can ever make that claim. Because he wasn't born as a sinner like you and me. His father was God not a human. So get this: Jesus, the only perfect human being to ever live was punished like a sinner. He got what you and I deserve. And now if we believe it, we get credit for the perfect life that he lived instead of the sinful life we live.

Galatians 2:16

16 Yet we know that a person is made right with God by faith in Jesus Christ, not by obeying the law. And we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we might be made right with God because of our faith in Christ, not because we have obeyed the law. For no one will ever be made right with God by obeying the law."

But we have to stop right here and ask an important question... if Jesus makes me righteous, how come I don't feel righteous. I feel like a sinner when I sin. I feel guilty. I feel ashamed. I feel embarrassed.

The hardest part of being a Christian is truly believing how God feels about you instead of how you feel about yourself.

The truth is God sees you as perfect because you get credit for Jesus' life. But as long as you and I live on this earth we are not perfect. So in one sense we are counted as righteous and in another sense we are trying to grow in righteousness. Does that make sense?

What you're really asking is, I know God counts me as sinless, but I would actually like to *sin less*. How can I do that?

And this is really the crux of the Christian life. There is a way that Christians are supposed to live. There is a way of life that God has given us to live. The point of Galatians is not that Christians shouldn't obey the Bible, the point of Galatians is that your salvation does not depend on your behavior.

The difference is, once you truly believe that you are loved and accepted by God because your faith is in Jesus and not in yourself, you're free to fail. Get that. Christians are free to fail. What does that mean?

- It means you lost your cool today and went off on that guy. There's a reason why you did that and God wants to help you with it, but it didn't change the way he loves you, sees you, and saves you.
- It means you called your ex and slept with them because you were lonely. There's a reason why you did that and God wants to help you with it, but it didn't change the way he loves you, sees you, and saves you.
- It means you thought you had moved past the grudge but all those emotions came back today and you're holding on to a lot of anger and bitterness. There's a reason why you did that and God wants to help you with it, but it didn't change the way he loves you, sees you, and saves you.

So how do live like that? How can we see ourselves the way God sees us. Galatians 5:5 tells us...

Galatians 5:4-5

4For if you are trying to make yourselves right with God by keeping the law, you have been cut off from Christ! You have fallen away from God's grace. 5But we who live by the Spirit eagerly wait to receive by faith the righteousness God has promised to us.

Martin Luther describing these verses described it this way,

"The heart of man finds it difficult to believe that so great a treasure as the Holy Ghost is gotten by the mere hearing of Faith. The hearer likes to reason like this: forgiveness of sins, deliverance from Death, the gift of the Holy Ghost, everlasting life are grand things. If you want to obtain these priceless benefits, you must engage and correspondingly great efforts. And the devil says, "Amen.""

So what do we do with this???

Today and tomorrow and every day that we wake up we have to remind ourself that we are the righteousness of God. 2 Corinthians says it like this...

2 Corinthians 5:21

For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ.

The New King James says it like this...

2 Corinthians 5:21 NKJV

For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Someone who truly believes they are the righteousness of God will begin to act more righteous. Not through more effort but through faith. Here's what I mean...

- As you get ready to roll that joint... tell yourself "I am the righteousness of God."
- As you get ready to take off your clothes and get in their bed... tell yourself, "I am the righteousness of God."
- Lose your cool
- Watch Porn
- Skip work again

The only way to really change is to begin to see yourself the way God sees you... righteous!