

NOTES FROM TIM GAMSTON'S SERMON – Sunday 6th April 2025 am

TITLE: Dying to live TEXT: Galatians 2 verse 15 – 3 verse 14

SERIES: Freedom in Christ -Pt 3 Scripture references from the ESV

Galatians 2:15 – 3:14 We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; ¹⁶ yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.

¹⁷ But if, in our endeavour to be justified in Christ, we too were found to be sinners, is Christ then a servant of sin? Certainly not! ¹⁸ For if I rebuild what I tore down, I prove myself to be a transgressor. ¹⁹ For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. ²⁰ 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. ²¹ I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose.

***3** O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified. ² Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? ³ Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? ⁴ Did you suffer so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain? ⁵ Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith— ⁶ just as Abraham “believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness”?*

⁷ Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham. ⁸ And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify^[c] the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, “In you shall all the nations be blessed.” ⁹ So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.

¹⁰ For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, “Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them.” ¹¹ Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for “The righteous shall live by faith.” ¹² But the law is not of faith, rather “The one who does them shall live by them.” ¹³ Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree”— ¹⁴ so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.

Two vitally important truths in the Bible are often confused.

- The truth of justification and the truth of sanctification

Justification is a word that was used in the law courts. When an accused person was declared not guilty by a judge, that person was also declared to be in the right. There are no degrees of justification – a person is either justified or they are guilty. The Bible

uses the word justification to tell us what God has done for those who are trusting in Christ.

Though we are guilty of sin, when we put our trust in Jesus

God declares us to be as righteous as Jesus and we are therefore accepted by him

Justification is purely an act of God's free and sovereign grace.

Sanctification is the process by which we are becoming more like Jesus. When God justifies us, he does not leave us to our sin, but begins the process of changing our lives to reflect what he declares us to be. We still continue to sin in thought, word and deed, but over time our lives are changed by the power of the Holy Spirit at work in us so that we become more and more like Jesus in our attitude, thoughts, speech and actions.

Sanctification happens as God works in us by his Spirit and as we seek after holiness, trusting Jesus' promises and making every effort to fight sin.

Sanctification is a process. We are not perfectly Christlike yet, but we are progressing towards it. Day by day, Christ is being formed in his people. Regardless of where we are in the process and whether we feel we are making good progress or have had a really bad week and made no progress at all, our standing before God has not changed.

When God has declared us righteous, then we remain justified.

No matter where we are in our sanctification, God sees us in Christ and declares us to be righteous

- What happens when we base our justification with God on our sanctification, confusing the two?

Many of us live as if our acceptance with God depends on how well we are doing as Christians.

- When we feel we have fallen below the standard we have set, we feel guilt which leads to shame, and we hide from God and his people
- When we see ourselves as acting above that standard, we will feel pride which leads to judgementalism, and we will look down on those who we think are not doing as well as us.

We need to be clear that we are justified before God by faith alone in Christ alone

This truth is expressed repeatedly throughout Galatians. Paul tells us that no one is justified by works of the law, but only by trusting in the work of Jesus Christ. (vv15-16 above). His own life exemplifies this:

- His heritage as a very proficient law keeping Jew was not sufficient to justify him before God
- He had come to see that we are justified only through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ
- Thus, he had placed his trust and confidence in Christ alone for his justification before a holy God, not on anything he had done

The Judaizers were accusing Paul of using the doctrine of justification by faith as a licence to sin against God. Because Paul and other Jewish Christians with him were eating with uncircumcised gentiles, who were not keeping the law of Moses, the Judaizers said they were becoming guilty sinners themselves and were not right with God.

This kind of accusation still happens today. We set rules for what Christians should do, wear, eat, sing

and so on. When people don't keep our rules, we treat them as sinners to be shunned, and treat those

who fellowship with them as sinners too. This is how cults develop.

Paul addresses this (v17) by telling them that although he may not be following their rules and expectations, he is not sinning against Christ and is certainly not saying that following Christ means he has permission to sin. He gives two very different profiles to make his point.

a) The unrighteous Christian (v18). The irony of legalism is that the real transgressor is **not** the one who lives in freedom from the law. The real transgressor is the one who lives under the law as the means of being justified before God. When Paul encountered Jesus, he put his trust in him fully for his justification before God (v16). To rebuild his life on the foundation of justification through works of the law would make him a transgressor (v18).

- If we seek to be right with God through keeping the law, we are trusting in what will not justify us (v16)

The only way we can be justified by keeping the law of God is if we have perfectly kept it from the day of our birth. None of us have done that. We are to put God first in everything, as the first of the 10 commandments tells us, and we have all broken that, which means we are guilty of breaking the whole of God's law (3:10).

The law highlights that we are sinners, but it cannot deal with the problem of our sin.

- If I believe that I can make myself right with God through keeping the law, then effectively, I am saying that there was no need for Jesus to come from heaven, live a perfect life of obedience on my behalf and die on the cross to pay for my sin.

We are no different to the religious leaders who mocked Jesus on the cross. By seeking our own righteousness through obedience to the law, we reject the only one who can justify us and make a mockery of Christ's death.

In seeking to make ourselves right with God through keeping the law, we rob Christ of his glory.

b) The righteous Christian (vv19-20) The gospels record Jesus' perfect life of obedience to God, his death on a cross as a man cursed by God and his resurrection three days later. These are historically verifiable events.

**If we have placed our trust in Jesus, then
what happened to Jesus 2000 years ago is also our story**

The Bible tells us that four things were nailed to the cross on the day Jesus was crucified.

- Jesus was nailed to the cross
- An inscription reading "Jesus King of the Jews" was nailed to the cross
- Our sins were nailed to the cross as Jesus bore them in his body
- **As those united to Jesus, we were nailed to the cross with Christ (v20)**

We had not even been born 2000 years ago, yet faith in Jesus unites us to him in such a way that when he died on the cross, we died with him. We died to both the demands of the law and the penalty of the law. Only perfect obedience to the law makes us righteous before God, and failure to achieve that requires eternal death.

- Jesus lived a life of perfect obedience but when he died, he died under the curse of our sin, fulfilling on our behalf both the demand of the law and the penalty of the law.

The law can no longer condemn us to eternal death because, by our union to Christ:

We have died the death that the law demands

We have a perfect righteousness to commend us to God.

Not only have we died, we have also been raised to a new life.

We have died to the law so that we might live to God

Living according to the law, as the Judaizers were saying, is not the way to live to God. Only those who have died in Christ to the law, and who have died to the law as the way to be justified, are able to live to God.

When we are united to Christ by faith, Christ comes to live in us by his Spirit (v20)

A Christian is a person who has the life of God in his soul

Faith in Christ is not just intellectual agreement to a set of doctrines. It unites us to Christ in an eternal union that not even death can break, and in such a way that everything he accomplished by his perfect life and death is true for us.

- The true transgressor is the one who forsakes Jesus as the way to be justified, either ignoring their sin and assuming God will not judge them for it or trying to get right with God through their own efforts.
- The truly righteous person is the one who dies to law keeping as a way to be right with God, and embraces only Jesus as the way to be justified.

Two responses are needed.

1) We need to make this personal (vv19-20). Paul could have seen this just as an intellectual argument, but unless it was personal to him, he would still have been a transgressor. However, he speaks of himself in these verses, not of generic believers, making it very personal. He leant his whole weight on Jesus as the only way to be right before God.

- What are you trusting in right now for your justification before God? The question is what you are trusting in today, not what you trusted in when you first believed. Can you say this, with Eliza Edmunds Hewitt?

My faith has found a resting place,
Not in device nor creed.
I trust the ever-living One;
His wounds for me shall plead.

I need no other argument,
I need no other plea,

It is enough that Jesus died,
And that he died for me.

2) We need to continually live in the freedom of what Christ has done. Preachers are often reminded that

they are preaching to the converted and asked why they keep going over the gospel. There are very good reasons for coming back to the gospel again and again.

The gospel is good news telling us what Jesus has done for each one of us.

Why would we not want to keep hearing it?

- It moves our soul to contemplate such good news or hear it preached
- It fills us with joy in Jesus and causes us to long for the day when we see him
- It leads us to hate our sin and be ever more determined to put it to death

It is so easy for us to default to works based righteousness, and therefore

We need to be continually reminded of the gospel of God's grace.

Unless we are continually reminded that our standing with God is based on Christ alone, then we default to legalism, as happened with the Galatians (3:1-3). When you fall into sin, is your response legalistic? Do you think:

- I must try harder tomorrow or put rules and boundaries in place so that it does not happen again. Perhaps you doubt that God has forgiven you unless you can prove yourself and make some kind of atonement for your sin.

When you fall into sin, the place to come is to the truth of the gospel.

- You are accepted by God, not by your merits, but by Christ's merits. You receive forgiveness from God, not by making atonement for yourself but by Christ's atonement.

The truth of the gospel remains the truth of the gospel,

whether you are a non-Christian, a new Christian or a seasoned Christian. There is nothing else to preach. This truth needs to underpin everything. It is the foundation for the way we face trials and suffering, for how we deal with our sin, how we think about other religions and how we relate to other people.

- When we consider those outside the church, and look upon them as wicked sinners for choosing worldly pleasures over the opportunity to come and worship

the living God, we must always remember that we would be those people if God had not got hold of us.

We know that sin is crouching at the door of our lives. We are in a battle, and we fight that battle by remembering all that Christ has done for us. He died on the cross to save us from our sin. Why would we want to opt for any worldly pleasure rather than gathering with God's people to worship our glorious God? That is the gospel changing us.

- When we consider those within the church, do we impose our own set rules on them, in terms of dress and behaviour for example, and then judge them when they fall below our standards? That person is also a justified believer in Christ, and Jesus loves them as much as he loves you.

When our brothers and sisters get things wrong and hurt us, we can remember that we have hurt Christ a thousand times more. Who are you to hold a grudge against a fellow believer over a tiny sin against you, when you have a massive pile of sin for which God has forgiven you? The gospel changes you.

The only reason any of us have any standing before God is because of Jesus Christ.

- What are you trusting in today? Are you thinking that God will be pleased with you because you have read your Bible, prayed, and gone to church? These are good things, but that is not why God will be pleased with you.

God is pleased with you because he sees you in Christ, his beloved Son with whom he is well pleased.

- Are you resting in that freedom or have you turned to something that leads you into works-based legalism?

Ask Jesus to show you how he meets you in that kind of legalism and sets you free.

You will be free because the truth always sets you free