

GAL 12



(GAL 2:15-21)

PRAY

Well for several weeks (now) we have been discussing the VERSES I just READ in GALATIANS...

AND in that TIME we have discovered TWO very important things:

1. They are not an argument against those attempting to “earn their salvation”.

Martin Luther believed THAT and it has become the popular way to understand what Paul is getting at when he says “by the works of the law” or “if I rebuild what I tore down” or “through the law I died to the law”.

All of those phrases (we are told quite often) refer to a person WHOSE religion is works-based.

BUT as we have seen, nothing could be further from the BIBLICAL TRUTH!

“works of law” refer (instead) to the OC clean laws...those things a person needed to DO to enter into that COVENANT (and a right standing w/GOD)...things like “circumcision”—which Paul mentions several times throughout this letter as support that THIS is INDEED what he means by “works of the law” (e.g. 5:2, 6:12-15 – “flesh” w/3:3).

Which means THAT people trying to earn their salvation (who in this case most specifically refers to Peter and the circumcision party) is NOT even on the radar of these verses (no Jew was ever stupid enough to even think that! Even the Pharisees didn’t have this problem—they were hypocrites not works-based---and they too didn’t believe in works-based salvation: Mat 23; Luk 5:21).

This THEREFORE (also) means that what Paul is speaking about when he speaks about “works of the law” justifying no-one, or the remarks about “rebuilding what I tore down” or “through the law I died to the law” ARE ALL referring to something ELSE---and what that something ELSE is---IS (as we have seen for several weeks) the TRUTH that though being justified (or in a right standing or cleansed state before GOD) no longer requires the OC CLEAN laws (i.e. the “works of the law”) as it did under the OC, (but rather faith in Christ), if that right standing and justification is to be maintained (i.e. if a person is to truly “live for God” receive the blessings of salvation) it STILL requires full and faithful obedience to GOD (just as it did under the OC. Which means life under the NC (though free from the “works of the law”) is NOT ANTINOMIANISM (the heresy which teaches God’s law and obedience to Him is no longer necessary to salvation). Though it DOES NOT earn ones justification or salvation (and it never has—OLD or NEW Covenant), it nonetheless has always been the way in which individuals in covenant relationship with GOD must maintain that relationship (and hence their right standing and justification).

And this PETER and the GALATIANS were confused about...

Confused in how we can be considered those in compliance with God's law yet removing a portion of it (i.e. the clean laws which were replaced by faith in Christ) —AND—how all of that did not communicate a message of easy-believism—(i.e.ANTINOMIANISM)...

AND so THAT is the message of the VERSES---AND—the second important thing we learned about them...

2. These verses are essentially the beginning of a large plea (to both Peter as well as the GALATIANS) for good, sound biblical discernment AS IT RELATES to what the TRUE GOSPEL requires.

Which means that what we find in them is a continuation of the LARGER THEME of the BOOK—a theme I have titled **GOSPEL BOMBS**...

A theme which has at its CORE —a series of truths regarding GETTING THE GOSPEL RIGHT...

And that (then) leads us to this NINTH truth (within that series)...

9. Getting the gospel right requires saying “no” to hypocrisy and antinomianism, and “yes” to faithful obedience and God's grace in Christ alone.

And these (then) are the issues (where Peter and the GALATIANS were missing it)—NOT because they were embracing some form of “works-based salvation” but BECAUSE they were unclear in the FOUR AREAS addressed in this TRUTH (this iow) is what Paul's statements regarding “works of law, rebuilding what I tore down and through the law I died to the law” are all in reference to—THEY all exist as the vehicles to communicate this TRUTH...

Getting the gospel right requires saying “no” to hypocrisy and antinomianism, and “yes” to faithful obedience and God's grace in Christ alone.

And (as most of you know) I have taken extensive time to discuss and explain all that Paul says in these verses is directed at these very things...(all EXCEPT for this last piece—the piece related to God's grace in Christ alone)...

AND so that is what I want to discuss this morning...this final sub-pt within the MAIN PT...and another KEY PIECE to getting the GOSPEL RIGHT and that is...

9.4. Saying “yes” to God's grace in Christ alone.

(21)

9.4.1. As discussed in previous weeks, ALL of Paul's statements in this section of verses (verses 15-17) are essentially individual arguments meant to MOVE the GALATIANS away from the idea THAT they still needed to observe the OLD CLEAN laws (as a means to getting in and staying in covenant w/GOD...as THE means to be justified or clean or in a right standing w/GOD)...Arguments which PAUL had originally used with Peter and the circumcision party when he confronted them at his home church in Antioch...Arguments which HAD ALSO convinced (at least Peter) that PAUL was right (faith in Jesus was all THAT was NOW needed in order to be JUSTIFIED/CLEAN and to enter into that covenant relationship).

AND this last argument MAY be the most convincing of all...SINCE what PAUL pokes AT to make HIS POINT is the VERY HEART of the GOSPEL---THE GRACE of GOD.

9.4.2. **“I do not nullify the grace of God”** =I do not reject (or set aside) what God has done in sending Christ to be OUR JUSTIFICATION (or way to be “clean” before Him)---that is the “grace of GOD” he is speaking about (God sending Christ to die on the cross as our payment for sin—as what WILL give to us a clean and right and forgiven standing before GOD).

It is the UNMERITED FAVOR of having GOD provide a way of justification (and ultimately salvation) to people WHO DON'T deserve such things (even in the LEAST BIT)...

People like all of us...people WHOSE reason for being in this predicament in the FIRST PLACE (the need of justification/right standing with GOD...forgiveness from sin...) IS entirely BECAUSE of what WE have done in living REBELLIOUS lives against GOD...people who would rather be GOD than let GOD be GOD!

To those kinds of people (which includes every person on the planet) GOD extended His incredible and amazing GRACE (unmerited favor) in sending HIS SON to PAY for their SINS (and make possible the offer of SALVATION) to such as ourselves.

THAT'S AGAIN the GRACE that PAUL is speaking about (here)---GOD'S provision to MAKE US CLEAN (truly clean---FORGIVEN!) through faith in His SON (people who were in Paul's own words from Eph 2:12—“without hope and without God”).

PAUL says, “I don't set that aside (or as so many today, I don't treat it as “INSUFFICIENT”).

AND THAT is EXACTLY what many DO TODAY without even REALIZING it (and I believe the same could be said about Peter and the gang as well---BUT we will get to that in moment)...

For just a brief moment, allow me to deal WITH HOW such denial takes place today...

We currently live in a world where it is NOT uncommon for churches (or Christians) who desire to be obedient to all that Christ has commanded to hear words like, “Where's the grace?” or “That person/church does not understand God's grace—or lacks grace---or is not grace-centered/filled.”

Yet (what they are referring to) when they speak of grace is NOT (what we just discussed)...

IOW: They are not accusing people/churches of denying God's offer of justification and salvation through His Son (that's not at all what they mean when they say such things!)...

Rather (what they mean) is that those people/churches are NOT giving people a break (or willing to cut the corners a little bit—or wink at what is clearly sin in their lives...

For them “grace” is just what PAUL says it is NOT in Romans 6 (a license for sin---a freedom to live how you want as long as you have “faith”)...

AND by holding to such a position in relation to GRACE what they are saying is that “grace” as the Bible understands it...grace as God's gracious offer in Christ (an offer which also BTW requires dying to self and sin—as we discussed in detail last week)---THAT kind of grace is NOT good enough—it is insufficient--they NEED MORE.

BUT the Scripture KNOWS of nothing more! Consider: (Act 11:23; 13:43; 14:1-3, 26; 15:7-11; Rom 3:23-25; 5:1-2).

FOR those (then) refusing to define “grace” as it defined in NT---(For them) in order for it to truly be “grace”---- (at least “grace” they can be happy about and find amazing—it has to offer them Christ and His justification) without such obligations...IT HAS TO MEAN that I can continue to sin without penalty...That I can have forgiveness and salvation with NO strings attached—no obligation to obedience—

That word (“grace”) must mean I can DO whatever I want (including still be the boss of my life) and (as long as I believe in Jesus) I will go to heaven---OTHERWISE---(in their book) --that’s NOT GRACE (and definitely NOT something they are going to be thankful to GOD for)...

WHICH MEANS (then) they ARE INDEED DENYING GOD’S version...

They have set it aside for their OWN...

BY their DEFINITION of GRACE they have nullified HIS (as insufficient)...

And though it is of a completely different nature --- (ONE I would say) which is NOT as serious and as much of a slap in the face (to God) as the version we see today... it was (nonetheless) what Peter (and the circumcision party) were GUILTY of as well –denying or setting aside God’s grace in Christ (for their own version)...

AND THIS they were doing by trying to re-instate the OC CLEAN laws...

---BY such attempts, they were essentially MAKING GOD’S gracious GIFT of HIS SON (as the means to our justification) NULL and VOID....

9.4.3. And that because of something we have discussed several times throughout this STUDY—and that is the FACT that GOD’S LAW is a closed system.

IF you have NOT understood those discussions in the PAST, then NOW is the time to listen UP –since (here) it is absolutely VITAL to getting what PAUL is saying...

What God has commanded today is NO different then what was commanded before...though it may look different—the principle remains the SAME---and ALL prior principles remain intact...AND that because God’s LAW is a CLOSED SYSTEM—meaning WHAT God gave UNDER the OC (when such LAWS were formalized, codified and memorialized) is NEVER to be ADDED to –or SUBTRACTED FROM (it is a closed system).

9.4.3.1. This is why after it was communicated and written down with Moses and that first generation that came out of Egypt to become His covenant people, God says this very thing to the subsequent generations that followed (Deu 4:2; Jos 1:7; Pro 30:5-6).

9.4.3.2. This is why (also) Jesus in the NT says what He does about the LAW (Mat 5:18; Luk 16:16-17).

9.4.3.3. Example of another closed system (to help in understanding what it is) = marriage under the NC (cannot add or take away)—otherwise no longer a marriage according to what Jesus says in Mat 19-“one man, one woman”. This is why if a Mormon polygamist were to get saved, he would need to repent of the massive adultery he had been committing with all these other women who were not recognized by God as his additional wives—since again marriage is a closed system—you cannot take away (a husband or wife)—and you can’t ADD once you have

both—and still have a marriage as ESTABLISHED by JESUS under the NC—you can replace (a spouse for another) but you cannot add or subtract—otherwise it is no longer a true and biblical marriage.

SO a closed SYSTEM—which means the only way ANYTHING can be “added” is IF something of “like kind” is “removed”—which further means what you have is NOT truly adding or subtracting—BUT replacement (one for the other)—otherwise—your attempt to “add” is a violation of that closed system—and therefore MUST be REJECTED—WHICH is EXACTLY PAUL’S POINT (here).

“YOU can’t call for the preservation of OC CLEAN LAWS without at the same time making null and void CHRIST (“God’s grace”) as our NEW CLEAN LAW—since something has to GO—if something “new” is to come in.”

9.4.4. AND there are TWO REASONS PAUL says he’s not willing to DO THAT (to “nullify the grace of God”—meaning again God’s NC clean law of CHRIST) ---which is (once more) WHAT LEAVING the OC CLEAN LAWS on the books effectively DOES:

9.4.4.1. Because the OC CLEAN LAWS can’t actually deliver true JUSTIFICATION/RIGHTEOUSNESS.

“for if righteousness were through the law...”

What is inferred by this conditional statement (based especially on what follows – “then Christ died for nothing”) IS THAT “the Law” (meaning again the OC clean laws) COULD NOT ultimately put someone into a justified STATE w/God—they COULD NOT gain “righteousness” in the sense that their sins were truly paid for. The justified/righteous/clean state achieved by the OC clean laws was ONE of “pass-over” VERSUS “payment” (Rom 3:25)—essentially token SYMBOLS which were accepted by God for a time—UNTIL true payment JUSTIFICATION and RIGHTEOUSNESS could be secured through Christ (Heb 9:10).

Paul reinforces this TRUTH in (3:21).

To continue (then) to embrace those LAWS meant to NOT ONLY BE rejecting the “grace of GOD” in Christ (which brought TRUE PAYMENT JUSTIFICATION)—but existing in a state that was NOT truly justified—AND—no longer accepted by GOD!

So this is the FIRST REASON Paul is not willing to GO in that DIRECTION (sticking w/the OC CLEAN LAWS)...b/c they don’t ultimately work...

And secondly (and finally)...

9.4.4.2. Because (if that isn’t true...if they are truly effective for securing true PAYMENT JUSTIFICATION—or “righteousness” before GOD), **“then Christ died for nothing”**.

IOW: What was the point in sending Christ to such a CRUEL and TORTEOUS DEATH? If killing animals, cutting off foreskins, eating kosher foods, observing Sabbaths and staying away from Gentiles is all that is needed to GET the JOB DONE (to GAIN true PAYMENT JUSTIFICATION before GOD)—then what JESUS did in going to CROSS and then FACING His FATHER’S AWFUL wrath was “nice—BUT NOT NECESSARY”. It was instead A COMPLETE WASTE of TIME (He “died for nothing”)!

That (also) is the logical conclusion that MUST be DRAWN from the THINKING of PETER and the circumcision PARTY---this is where their THEOLOGY LEADS (if one is consistent with it)—And that is what PAUL is DOING (here)---he is drawing it out to its consistent and logical END.

*Which BTW establishes for us a very important principle as it relates to proper doctrinal discernment: one of the ways you determine whether or not something is sound—or true biblically—is by determining what logical conclusions are consistent with that particular teaching. Where IOW it leads—if such a doctrine were true (e.g. all babies go to heaven: then abortion is the most effective form of evangelism).

THE POINT NOT TO MISS (here) in Our TEXT (and by what Paul says in this last verse): GETTING THE GOSPEL RIGHT requires (also) making sure that we are emphatically saying “YES!” to the grace of God in Christ alone---meaning THAT HE is the ONLY ONE we are looking to AS the MEANS to GAINING a RIGHTEOUS and JUSTIFIED state before GOD.

And if you think that is contradictory with some of what was SAID previously ---THEN understand you have completely MISUNDESTOOD what I said BEFORE...

Just because the BIBLE teaches that we MUST be faithfully obedient to JESUS if we want to receive God’s salvation doesn’t mean the BIBLE teaches we EARN our salvation—nor our righteousness ...NOTHING could be further FROM the TRUTH!

It is ONLY God’s gracious gift of Jesus Christ (the fully God-Son of God) and His work on the cross that CAN make us RIGHTEOUS before GOD---and we GAIN that simply by FAITH (not by any thing we do), BUT once we have GAINED that status or state with GOD, we are now under obligation (Rom 8) to MAINTAIN (not earn) that STATUS or STATE (or relationship w/GOD) through a life characterized by faithful obedience—through a life characterized by full submission to CHRIST (and everything He tells us to DO)—to a life which has been “crucified” and NOW lives (only for Him and His will).

THAT is the GOSPEL (Beloved)---the GOSPEL we need to GET RIGHT (for the sake of our own lives—but also—the lives of those around us)---A GOSPEL which includes BOTH saying “yes” to faithful obedience as well as the grace of God in Christ alone---BOTH are NECESSARY...

MAY we be those SHARING BOTH as part of the message we preach to others.

Let’s PRAY

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