



Lessons Three and Four

TEXT

Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along with me. I went up because of a revelation and set before them (though privately before those who seemed influential) the gospel that I proclaim among the Gentiles, in order to make sure I was not running or had not run in vain. But even Titus, who was with me, was not forced to be circumcised, though he was a Greek. Yet because of false brothers secretly brought in--who slipped in to spy out our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus, so that they might bring us into slavery-- to them we did not yield in submission even for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you. And from those who seemed to be influential (what they were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality)--those, I say, who seemed influential added nothing to me. On the contrary, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel to the circumcised (for he who worked through Peter for his apostolic ministry to the circumcised worked also through me for mine to the Gentiles), and when James and Cephas [Peter] and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given to me, they gave the right hand of fellowship to Barnabas and me, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. Only, they asked us to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do.

5 Word Summary of 2:1-10 (ESV): _____

But when Cephas [Peter] came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. For before certain men came from James, he was eating with the Gentiles; but when

they came he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party. And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. But when I saw that their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas [Peter] before them all, "If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force the Gentiles to live like Jews?"

5 Word Summary of 2:11-14 (ESV): _____

We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; 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.

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

5 Word Summary of 2:15-21(ESV): _____

REVIEW

The Reason For Paul's Autobiography

Remember that Paul is writing to the Galatians in order to counter what the false teachers (those who insisted that in order to be Christian, one must first follow the Law, and only then deal with

Christ—Judiazers) were saying. Their objection goes something like this: “*Listen this gospel Paul is preaching is the straight truth. He’s cutting some corners with it and you are going to get hurt in the process if you don’t wise up and pay more attention to us. The Law is essential. As a matter of fact, Paul isn’t even preaching the same gospel that Peter and the rest of the “real” apostles are preaching. It is a different gospel: Paul’s gospel.*”

Paul’s extended biography in 1:1-2:14 gives us his two responses to these sentiments:

- 1) First of all the gospel is from God, not from Paul. Paul didn’t invent it, he didn’t get it second hand, and he didn’t make it up. He is merely the divinely authorized messenger not the author or editor. (Chapter 1)
- 2) Secondly, what Paul had preached to the Galatians was in perfect harmony with the rest of the apostles. There is one, and only one, gospel. (Chapter 2)

Stott summarizes this neatly:

To prove that his gospel was independent of the other apostles, he stressed that he paid only one visit to Jerusalem in fourteen years, and that this lasted for only fifteen days. To prove that his gospel was yet identical with theirs, he now stresses that when he paid a proper visit to Jerusalem, his gospel was endorsed and approved by them.

Stott, *Message of Galatians*, p. 40

The Essence of the Argument

“Nobody (even those of us who had the best head start) ever got into a ‘right standing’ with God based on how well they obeyed his commands. The only way it’s possible is through faith in Jesus Christ. Period.”

- Paul, a Jew by birth

SUBTEXT

A Trip to The Capital

Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along with me. I went up because of a revelation and set before them (though privately before those who seemed influential) the gospel that I proclaim among the Gentiles, in order to make sure I was not running or had not run in vain. But even Titus, who was with me, was not forced to be circumcised, though he was a Greek. Yet because of false brothers secretly brought in--who slipped in to spy out our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus, so that they might bring us into slavery-- to them we did not yield in submission even for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you. And from those who seemed to be influential (what they were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality)--those, I say, who seemed influential added nothing to me. (Galatians 2:1-6)

Notice, how Paul describes this second consultation in Jerusalem:

- 1) Paul travels with Barnabas, the fruit of evangelism to the Jews, and Titus, who as a Greek, is the fruit of Paul’s evangelism to the Gentiles.

- 2) Paul lays out his teaching as *the gospel that I proclaim*, using a present tense. When this gospel is laid out before the apostles in Jerusalem, they
- make no changes to it whatsoever (v. 6) and
 - extend to Paul the right hand of fellowship (v. 9).

Stott gives us a good picture of the sense of this when he notes:

Significantly, Paul describes the gospel which he laid before the apostles as ‘the gospel which I preach’ (present tense). It is as if he wrote: ‘the gospel which I submitted to the other apostles is the gospel which I am still preaching. The gospel which I am preaching today was not altered by them. It is the same as I preached before I saw them. It is the gospel which I preached to you and which you received. I have added nothing, subtracted nothing, changed nothing. It is you Galatians who are deserting the gospel; it is not I.’ This, then, was the negative result. They ‘added nothing to me’.

Stott, Message of Galatians, p. 45

- 3) Timothy was not forced to be circumcised by the apostles in Jerusalem, even though evidently some Jewish Christians had snuck into the meeting and were advocating that he needed to be (v. 3-4). Paul vehemently opposes them *so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved* for the Galatian believers (v. 5).

Paul saw the issue plainly. It was not just a question of circumcision and uncircumcision, of Gentile and Jewish customs. It was a matter of fundamental importance regarding the truth of the gospel, namely, of Christian freedom versus bondage. The Christian has been set free from the law in the sense that his acceptance before God depends entirely upon God’s grace in the death of Jesus Christ received by faith. To introduce the works of the law and make our acceptance depend on our obedience to rules and regulations was to bring a free man into bondage again. Of this principle Titus was a test case. It is true that he was an uncircumcised Gentile, but he was a converted Christian. Having believed in Jesus, he had been accepted by God in Christ, and that, Paul said, was enough. Nothing further was necessary for his salvation, as the Council of Jerusalem was later to confirm (see Acts 15).

Stott, Message of Galatians, p. 43

A Trip to Antioch

But when Cephas [Peter] came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. For before certain men came from James, he was eating with the Gentiles; but when they came he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party. And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. But when I saw that their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, "If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force the Gentiles to live like Jews?"

(Galatians 2:11-14)

At a later time, Peter came from Jerusalem to Antioch to visit Paul and see his home base of ministry. While there, he was in the habit of sharing meals (and presumably communion as well) with the Gentiles who had become believers under Paul’s ministry: *he was eating with the Gentiles* is an imperfect tense indicating a regular state of affairs instead of just a one time or infrequent event.

This shouldn't be surprising since this takes place shortly after Act 10-11 where Peter had received a direct revelation from God stating that there was now no such thing as "clean and unclean" when it came to food, just as there was now no such thing as "clean (i.e. Jews) and unclean (i.e. everybody else, Gentiles)" when it came to people. Peter subsequently went to and entered house of the Gentile Cornelius (an "unclean" act for a Jew) and preached there. Cornelius and his whole household were converted and received the Holy Spirit just as the Jewish believers did.

The problem arose when some Jewish Christians claiming to have the support of the apostle James, arrived and refused to eat with the Gentile believers. Their "claim" to authority seems dubious at best since in Acts 15:24 their authority to speak on behalf of the other apostles is explicitly denied. However, when they arrived, Peter *drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party*. It is interesting to note that 20 some years after Peter had denied knowing Christ because he was being driven by his reputation, by what others thought about him, here he is again doing the same thing.

As a result of Peter's actions, *the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy*. This posed a major problem for Paul, as well as for the gospel: *But when I saw that their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel....* Again Paul refers to *the truth of the gospel* (cf. v. 5) which must not be compromised by humans because it is not a message that belongs to humans. Like the earlier test cast of Titus and circumcision, again there was a significant theological issue at stake—Is it necessary to perform certain religious works in order to be accepted by God, or Christ's work on our behalf sufficient without any additions? Luther comments on this gravity of the issue at hand:

Here he has no trifling matter in hand, but the chiefest article of all Christian doctrine. When you understand the utility and majesty of this doctrine, all other things seem worth nothing. What is Peter? What is Paul? What is an angel from heaven? What are all creatures together, compared to the article of justification, which Paul here saw in danger by the conduct of Peter. Wherefore he was obliged to put aside the dignity of Peter for the truth's sake.

Luther, *Commentary on Galatians*, p. 80

Paul's approach is simple and straight forward: *I said to Cephas before them all, 'If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force the Gentiles to live like Jews?'* Because the offense and the harm that were being done were public matters, so Paul's rebuke had to be public if the damage was to be undone. His argument is simple, "Peter, if you yourself have no problems eating Gentile food in Gentile houses, as you did with Cornelius and as you have been regularly doing with us, then how can you possibly expect Gentiles to start living like Jews?"

Also see "Knowing When to say 'When'" below.

The Core of Salvation: Justification By Faith

We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners, yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law ... (Galatians 2:15)

Although Paul sounds a little mean here (couldn't we just be "Gentiles" and not "Gentile sinners"?), in the Jewish mind there is no distinction between the words—those without the Law were lost, without hope of ever knowing the one, true living God. Paul is really setting up a "greater to the lesser" argument:

Greater Position		Lesser Position
<i>We ourselves are Jews by birth... yet we know that a person is ...justified... through faith in Jesus Christ</i>		<i>not Gentile sinners... a person is not justified by works of the law</i>
“If we who have had the Law given to us, who have had it passed down from generation to generation, have studied and learned it, have applied it with great vigor now believe that works of the Law will not save us, then...”	versus	“...how silly is it that you, people who had never even heard of the Law until recently, you who were without the possibility of following or obeying the Law because you were Gentiles, how silly is it for you to think that by obeying it you can somehow make yourself more “right” in God’s eyes.”

...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. (Galatians 2:16)

Of interest here is the verb (δικαιουται/δικαιοω dikaiō) “is...justified” which is a present passive. In this case the present indicates something which is always, continually true—it speaks to the fact that Paul means justified in a permanent, once for all manner. The passive means that the action of the verb is done to us, rather than that we do it; we receive the justification, we don’t do it. Hence what Paul is really saying is that, “a person never, ever has the status of ‘right before God’ conferred upon them by simply obeying God. Rather they have the status of being “right before God” conferred upon them.” A person cannot actively earn righteousness, they must passively receive it. As we shall see, the Law does have an important purpose in our salvation and our lives (remember the Law was God’s gift to the nation of Israel, they didn’t invent it), but it has never had the power to make us “right with God,” ... ***because by works of the law no one will be justified.***

The words translated at “justified, justification” and “righteous, righteousness” come from the common root of δικαί— (*dikai-*), which Paul uses to define the uniquely Christian way of salvation. The word is borrowed from the *legal world*. Moo offers the following insights: “As Paul uses it in these contexts, the verb “to justify” means not “to make righteous” (in an ethical sense) nor simply “to treat as righteous” (though one is not really righteous) but “to declare righteous.” No “legal fiction,” but legal reality of the utmost significance, “to be justified” means to be acquitted by God from all “charges” that could be brought against a

person because of his or her sins. This judicial verdict, for which one had to wait until the last judgment according to Jewish theology, is according to Paul rendered the moment a person believes (Moo, NICNT Romans, 227-228).”

The doctrine of justification (built on these passages with the addition of others) is well defined in Protestant theology

Q and A

Q33: *What is justification?*

A33: Justification is an act of God's free grace, wherein He pardoneth all our sins, and accepteth us as righteous in His sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone. (*Westminster Shorter Catechism*)

Definition

Justification is an instantaneous legal act of God in which he (1) thinks of our sins as forgiven and Christ's righteousness as belonging to us, and (2) declares us to be righteous in his sight (*Grudem, Systematic Theology, 723*).

Explanation

These two aspects can also be thought of in negative and positive terms.

Negatively we no longer bear the guilt and debt of our sins because they have been forgiven by virtue of Christ's work. However, this at best makes us only morally neutral.

Positively God also takes all of Christ's righteousness and "imputes" or credits it to us. This means that legally, we stand before God the Father, every bit as "right" and every bit as "law obeying" as Jesus himself does.

But if, in our endeavor to be justified in Christ, we too were found to be sinners, is Christ then a servant of sin? Certainly not! For if I rebuild what I tore down, I prove myself to be a transgressor. (Galatians 2:17-18)

Paul is now responding to the objection that he anticipates the false teachers would level at him—namely that “justification” means that people can do whatever they want with reference to God with no consequences.

Ronald Fung summarizes the objection of the false teachers this way:

- 1) To seek to be justified in Christ (as Paul advocates) is to abandon the Law.
- 2) To abandon the Law is to become a sinner (one not saved).

Therefore, Christ is an agent, or minister, of sin since he forces one to leave the law behind. The only solution (the false teachers would say) is then to abandon the idea of being justified by faith in Christ alone. Just look at Paul, he isn't perfectly obeying the Law as a result of his faith in Christ—it isn't helping him be right with God.

Summarized from Fung, *Commentary on Galatians*, p. 119

Paul's response is telling: Is Christ a servant of sin? God forbid!! (KJV) He is absolutely fuming at this accusation. The NEB translation is helpful here:

If now, in seeking to be justified in Christ, we ourselves no less than the Gentiles turn out to be sinners against the Law, does that mean that Christ is an abettor of sin? No, never!

No, if I start building up again a system which I have pulled down [namely being justified by “trying to be good”], then it is I that show myself as a transgressor of the Law.

When a person sets up the Law again as a way of being right before God (which is exactly what the false teachers were doing!), they are showing themselves to be transgressors. Why? Because as we see in the following verses the Law could never save anyone, it wasn't intended to. To make a claim that following the Law was the way to salvation was to transgress the very purpose of the Law all along: to show us our inability to save ourselves through obedience and our need for a savior, Jesus.

For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. 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 2:19-20)

Paul now goes on to explain that for someone who has placed their faith in Christ in order to be justified, it is impossible for them to truly “do whatever they want” in disobedience or obedience because of their union with Jesus.

To ***have died to the law*** means that we cease to have any relationship to Law with regard to our salvation or pleasing God—the Law has no further claim or control over us. This happens ***through the law*** in the sense that the Law has “beaten us.” We have shown that we cannot even for one day be in perfect obedience to the Law, and therefore deserve the punishment the Law prescribes—death. In Christ, we have in fact had that punishment visited upon us (***I have been crucified with Christ***). However that isn't the end of the story. Just as Christ has taken our death upon himself (thereby freeing us from any further punishment for sin), so he also gives to us his life, goodness and merit (***It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.***)

In the most real sense possible Paul is saying, “When God looks at me or you he sees us as someone he has rightly executed because we have rebelled and sinned against him. He doesn't do this because he actually poured out his wrath against us, but because he poured it out against Christ in our place. We really have been crucified with Christ. Not only that, when he looks at you or me now he doesn't see someone who merely has just been punished, he sees someone who is just as perfectly right, obedient and loved by him as the Son is. Again, he doesn't do this because we have actually been perfectly obedient, but because we are united with Jesus—Jesus' goodness stands in our place.”

Justification means exactly this and nothing less. Full condemnation for our sin has already been poured onto Christ and full acceptance by God has already been guaranteed by Christ.

I do not nullify the grace of God, for if justification were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose. (Galatians 2:21)

Paul finishes with the climax of his argument: It is not Paul who nullifies the grace of God (his opponents would have seen having the Law to follow in the first place evidence of God's “grace”), but those who oppose him. If it were possible to be “right with God” simply through obedience, then there is no reason why Christ should die.

TELL ME AGAIN—WHY DO I CARE ABOUT THIS?

Two Questions

When God looks at you, when he holds you in his gaze, what do you think that he thinks about you? (If you've already done this exercise before and know what the "right" answer is, try asking your self, "When God looks at you, when he holds you in his gaze, what does your own heart tell you that he thinks about you?")

What can you do to change this?

A Distinction With a Difference

These questions are designed to help us get at the heart of understanding the difference between “active righteousness” and “passive righteousness.” Your answer will tell you what you really think about how God has worked in your life.

We’ve been discussing the concepts all morning, but let me now bring them into sharper focus:

<i>Active (Earned) Righteousness</i>	<i>Passive (Received) Righteousness</i>
<p>Refers to our attempts, actions, to be right before God. We earn active righteousness.</p>	<p>Refers to Christ’s living, dying and rising in our place to make us right before God. We can only receive passive righteousness.</p>
<p>It refers to what <i>we</i> do (or do not do).</p>	<p>It refers exclusively on what <i>Jesus</i> has already done.</p>
<p>In the NT, it is often described as “righteousness of the Law,” “being justified by the Law,” or “works of the Law.”</p>	<p>In the NT, it is often described as “justified by faith in Christ,” “a righteousness that is revealed apart from the works of the law,” or “a righteousness that is credited to us through our faith in Christ.”</p>
<p>The NT is also clear that our active righteousness never could and never will be able to save us.</p>	<p>The NT is also clear that only passive righteousness will be able to save us because salvation comes only through faith in Christ.</p>

Imagine a record of your entire life including not only all you’ve done but also all you’ve said and thought and even your attitudes and motives. Imagine the same for Jesus Christ. Now imagine Jesus exchanges records with you. He bears the penalty for your “not right” record and gifts you with his “right record!” That’s the passive righteousness of justification. (Active righteousness [or self-righteousness] would be any way you attempt to build or hope in a record of your own.)

You may want to look at *Excerpt of Martin Luther’s Argument of the Epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians* which follows.

EXCERPT OF MARTIN LUTHER'S ARGUMENT OF THE EPISTLE OF ST. PAUL TO THE GALATIANS

*The excerpt was taken from the "old" Sonship manual, produced by World Harvest Mission.
It is a paraphrase in modern English done by Bill Slack.*

Christian righteousness is the greatest righteousness. God puts it on us without our lifting a finger. It's not political or ceremonial. It doesn't have to do with our obeying God's law. It has nothing to do with what we do or how hard we work, but it is given to us and we do nothing for it. It's "passive righteousness" because we don't have to work for it. With this "free righteousness" we don't do anything, we don't give anything to God, but we receive and allow someone else to do it. That's why we'll call it "passive righteousness."

This passive righteousness is a mystery that someone who doesn't know Jesus can't understand. As a matter of fact, Christians don't completely understand it and don't take advantage of it when they're tempted. So we have to constantly teach it over and over again to others and repeat it to ourselves, because if we don't understand it and have it in our hearts, we will be defeated by our enemy, and we'll be totally depressed. There is nothing that gives us peace like this "passive righteousness."

When we see the Law, we see our sin. The evil in our lives comes to mind, it tears us apart, and we groan and think, "How bad I have been. My life is full of hate and evil. Please, God, let me live and I will fix up what I have done wrong." Man is so evil that all he can see is what he should do to be righteous. He is so evil that he cannot see what Christ has done *for him* to be righteous.

So the afflicted and troubled conscience has no cure for desperation and death unless it takes hold of the forgiveness of sins by grace, offered free of charge in Jesus Christ, that is "Christian" or "passive" righteousness. When the person realizes this, he is at peace and can say "I am not going to work for my righteousness, even though I need to have it, and I need to be righteous."

Because even if I could work up to righteousness, still I could not trust it to make me right at the judgment of God. So I throw away all my works, my tries at obeying God's law, and firmly hold on to "passive righteousness," that is the righteousness of grace, mercy and the forgiveness of sins. In short, I trust only in the righteousness that Christ and the Holy Spirit give me! !

It is like this: the earth does not produce rain, nor is it able by its own power or work to get it. The earth simply receives it as a gift of God from above. It is the same with "passive" righteousness. It is given to us by God without our deserving it or working for it. So let's look at what the earth is able to do to get the rain each season so that it can be fruitful, and we will see how much we are able in our own strength and works to do to get heavenly and eternal righteousness. We see we will *never* be able to attain it unless God Himself, by the great gift of His Son, gives us Jesus' perfect record, and gives us Jesus' perfect righteousness.

So when I see a man that is bruised enough already, burdened by the Law, terrified with sin, and thirsting for relief, that is when in truth it is time to take the Law and "works" righteousness out of his sight and show him by the Gospel "passive" righteousness (Christian righteousness) which offers the promise of Christ without the Law, that Christ came for the hurting and for sinners. Then the man is raised up and has good hope, he is no longer under the Law but covered by grace.

So do we do nothing? Don't we do any work to obtain this righteousness? I

answer, nothing at all, for this is perfect righteousness, "to do nothing," but to know and believe only this, that Christ is gone to the Father and is not now seen. He sits at His Father's right hand not as a judge but making us before God wise, righteous, holy, and redeemed; briefly, that He is our high Priest pleading for us and reigning over us and in us by grace.

But if there is any fear or our conscience is bothered, it is a sign that our "passive" righteousness is "withdrawn" --that is, grace is hidden from us, and Christ is darkened --out of our sight. But when we truly see Christ, we have full and perfect joy in the Lord with peace of mind, and we certainly think: "Although I am a sinner by the Law and under condemnation of the Law, still I don't despair, still I don't die, because Christ lives, who is both my righteousness and my everlasting life." I am indeed a sinner in

this life of mine and in my own righteousness, as a child of Adam; where the Law accuses me, death controls me and eventually would destroy me. But I have another life, another righteousness above this life which is in Christ, the Son of God, who knows no sin or death but is eternal righteousness and eternal life.

The flesh is accused, tempted, weighed down with sorrow, bruised by the "works" righteousness of the Law; but the Spirit

reigns, rejoices and is saved by this "passive" and Christian righteousness.

Because of this St. Paul sets out diligently in this letter to teach us, to comfort us, and to keep us constantly aware of this Christian righteousness that is so great. For if the truth of our being justified by Christ alone is lost, then all Christian truths are lost. For there is no middle ground between "passive" and "works" righteousness. The person who wanders away from "passive" righteousness has no other choice but "works" righteousness; that is to say "If he does not depend on the work of Christ, he must depend on his own work."

"Wherefore I do admonish you, especially those who will become teachers and counselors, and each individual, that you practice this by study, by reading, by meditation of the Word, and by prayer, that when you are tempted you will be able to teach and comfort yourself and others, and bring them from the Law to grace, from "works" righteousness to "passive" righteousness and to conclude "from Moses to Christ." For when we are in trouble or our conscience bothers us, the devil likes to make us afraid by using the Law, and he tries to lay on us the guilt of sin, our wicked past, the wrath and judgment of God, and eternal death to drive us to desperation, make us slaves to him and pluck us from Christ. Furthermore, he wants to set against us the parts of the Gospel where Christ requires works from us and with plain words threatens damnation to us if we do not do them. Now, if we cannot see the differences between the two kinds of righteousness and we do not take hold of Christ by faith, sitting on the right hand of God (Heb. 7:25) who pleads our case, sinners that we are, to the Father, then we are under the Law, not under grace, and Christ is no more a Savior, but a Lawgiver; so that now there is no salvation, but a definite despair, and everlasting death, unless we repent.

Give no more heed to the Law than what it deserves, and say to yourself, "You, Law, would climb up into my conscience and rule me and reprove me of sin and would take away my joy that I have by faith in Christ and drive me to despair that I would be without hope and perish. This you try to do without authority, keep yourself within your bounds, and use your influence on my flesh, but do not touch my conscience.

When I have this righteousness reigning in my heart, I descent from heaven like rain making the earth fruitful, that is to say, I enter into a new kingdom and I do "good works" whenever and however I get the opportunity. To conclude, whoever is convicted that Christ is his only righteousness, does not only do his work cheerfully, gladly and well, but also, if necessary, submits to all kinds of burdens and dangers in this life with love because he knows this is God's will, and God is pleased by his obedience. This is what the letter to Galatians speaks of. Here Paul shows us this by addressing the presence of false teachers among Galatians who had covered up this "passive" righteousness. He sets himself against them and defends and commends his authority and office.

The Salvation Shell Game

Which of these statements is theologically accurate?

I have been saved. I am being saved. I will be saved.

All three are. We see the need for passive righteousness in past and future ones. We can't earn our way into heaven, and we won't be able to become perfect by simply trying really hard.

However, in this center stage, the stage we are living in right now, we really do try to relate God based on our active righteousness. Part of that is because in the "I am being saved" stage *we are involved*. However, our sinful tendency will be to respond from duty (what I do directly affects what God thinks about me) instead of from gratitude and love (God has already done everything needed so that I am right now as loved, accepted and cherished as I ever will be, and nothing that I do or fail to do changes that).

This is *exactly* where the Galatians were getting into trouble. Paul's rhetorical questions point out that in the category of "I have been saved" they understood passive righteousness. But in the category of "I am being saved," due to the influence of the false teachers, they were trying to relate to God based on their active righteousness. Hence Paul's stark question in 4:15, "Where has your joy gone?" Developing our relationship with God based on our active righteousness is just as disastrous as trying to begin our relationship or complete it based on our own (active) righteousness.

ACTION STEPS

Sons and Daughters

If you still have not completed the Orphans vs. Sons/Daughters sheet, spend some time doing that this week. Remember the purpose of the exercise was to identify specific areas in your life where you wanted to see God working. Examples:

"I need to be safe in my marriage. If I ever feel that I'm being criticized I get angry (or withdraw, or lash out etc.)" No. 9

"I see my relationship with God as a failure. The harder I try the worse I do. I hate my sin but I cannot make myself be better." No. 12

"I'm not happy. I don't have enough time and money to really live the way I'd like. I'm also a little angry with God because I see so many people who don't care about him who have plenty of both." No. 23

"I feel like my relationship with God is dry. I have a lot of duty but not a lot of joy in my spiritual relationship. People would cringe if they could see my true heart." No. 19

If you have not done so, be sure to record someplace for yourself the specifics of the prayer requests you handed in last week. Regularly be asking God to work here and show you where you are not living in light of Christ's passive "rightness."

“You Always Have to Be Right!”

Over the next week, whenever you catch yourself relating to others, to God or thinking about yourself, consciously bring to mind the fact that in God you are “completely right.” Christ himself has given you his very “rightness” eternally and regularly bringing this to mind is one of the ways that we can check to see if we are relating to God and others based on what Christ has done (passive righteousness) or based on our own ability to “be good Christians” (active righteousness).

Come prepared to discuss your experiences next week.

Seeing Ourselves in the Passage

For through the law I, _____, died to the law, so that I, _____,
might live to God. 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. I, _____, do not nullify the grace of God, for if justification
were through the law,
then Christ died for no purpose.

What struck you about doing this activity?

*If you lived your life in light of these truths, how do you think this would change the way you
relate to God and others?*

KNOWING WHEN TO SAY “WHEN”

As leaders, it is sometimes our duty to lovingly confront a brother or a sister. This episode between two “giants” of the church demonstrates that no one is above falling into error and that at times the only possible remedy is to speak the truth in love. It also gives us some helpful principles:

Is the gospel at stake due to the persons actions?

Notice that Paul’s chief concern is that the actions of Peter, the Jewish Christians from Jerusalem, and finally the Jews of Antioch were not in step with the truth of the gospel (v. 14). Paul is not confronting Peter over issues of personality or preference. The issue is not one of emphasis, style or nuance. Peter’s actions were contrary to the simple truth God’s work is sufficient for our salvation.

Whenever we find ourselves in a situation where we think we may need to speak hard words gently, we need really to be sure that it is the principle of the gospel and not the personality of the offender that is driving us. Is the gospel genuinely at stake in this person’s life (are they in danger of idolatry, legalism or acting like an orphan), or are they exercising freedom in an area of discretion?

Is there a danger to themselves in their actions?

Notice that Paul describes Peter as acting hypocritically in v. 13. The same word used by Paul to describe Peter’s actions (literally “play acting” in Greek; insincerity; hypocrisy) is also used by Jesus on several occasions to describe the Pharisees’, those most opposed to Christ’s ministry, attitudes and actions (cf. Matt. 23:28, Mk 12:15, Luke 12:1). Indeed, in I Peter 2:1, Peter himself urges his fellow believers to rid themselves of all hypocrisy. Peter could not fulfill his function as a leader in the church while embracing such hypocritical actions. His credibility would have been hurt beyond repair had Paul allowed the situation to go on unchecked.

Likewise, we must ask ourselves if a person’s actions or attitudes are damaging to themselves and their relationship with God. Is the issue under consideration one that will harm their ability to function intimately with God? Will it harm their “ministry” to others? If so, we like Paul must be ready to pursue a course of correction.

Is there danger to others in their actions?

Peter’s actions of succumbing to the demands of the party from Jerusalem so that he could maintain his own righteousness in their eyes had disastrous consequences for the other Antiochian Jews (even the stalwart Barnabas was led astray) as well as for the Antiochian Gentiles. Great harm was being done by Peter’s actions, which if not corrected could lead to a permanent break between Jewish and Gentile believers. Notice that he was not merely insisting that the Gentile Christians must obey the Law, but rather was indicating that Jewish Christians couldn’t even be in the same room or at the same meal with Gentile Christians.

When assessing a situation that we may have to take action in, we must also ask, what is at stake if I do nothing here? Who will suffer as a result of inaction on my part to try to lovingly restore this person? Is the circumstance likely to improve on its own, or cause deeper problems later? Are others being led astray by the example that is being set in this situation?

If the answers is “yes” to these questions then we need to be willing to risk confrontation.

Paul’s action in this situation was bold because the consequences were grave. It could not have been easy for Paul to publicly oppose Peter, one of Jesus’ “inner circle.” By implication the Jews from Jerusalem, the Jews from Antioch and even Paul’s colleague Barnabas were all being accused as well. It would have been far easier for Paul to simply retreat, and comfort the shunned Gentile believers. Instead, he does the most loving thing he can, he points out the falseness and inappropriateness of Peter’s actions. Because Peter’s actions and harm were public, so Paul’s confrontation had to be. At this point a private word wouldn’t have solved the matter. Nevertheless, Paul’s rebuke is honest and is done directly to Peter. Paul does not sneak around, orchestrate a whispering campaign under the guise of “pray for” Peter, or use innuendo or slander. Paul clearly lays out the issue directly before Peter.

While public confrontation is not a likely scenario for us as leaders, being honest and speaking directly to someone is still a necessity. They may not respond as well as Peter evidently did (it seems unlikely that Peter could have had any role at the upcoming Jerusalem Council in Acts 15 had he remained unrepentant). They may not be appreciative or hear our words the way we intend them. Nevertheless, like a shepherd looking for a lost sheep, it is our duty to speaking loving truth when the gospel is at stake and harm is being done to a fellow brother or sister and those close to them.