

Putting it all Together
Galatians 6: 7-18

Ephesians 2:1-10 Responsive Reading.
Galatians 4
Galatians 5

So I think today we will be finishing the book of Galatians. I have been giving it some thought about where to go from here and I thought that the book of James might be an interesting follow up. Often times people say that these 2 books contradict each other. Paul here talks about Justification by Faith alone, and James says I will show you my Faith by my works. While some may think that this is confusing and that these books are teaching something different they really aren't, and I thought that would be an interesting thing to study out.

So starting next week I think we will be looking at the book of James. I for one have really enjoyed this study in Galatians. An In depth study is something that I ever really done before, and in doing so it has really brought some things out for me that I have normally missed in a daily reading.

Everyone here knows that I am not a person who reads, I am not a person who enjoys reading, in fact I dread it. My mind wanders, I usually end up reading and not really knowing what I read and generally within an hour of reading something I couldn't tell you what it was about because my mind has wandered or I fell asleep. But that has not been the case while studying and preparing sermons these past few months and it has been a challenge to be motivated to do so, but on the other hand it has been a joy digging into scripture and learning more and more.

Galatians has really been a great study for me, and I hope that there has been some good things, and maybe some new things for you as well. The overall theme here, of liberty in Christ, freedom from the law, and the importance of the proper teaching of correct doctrine has struck home for me. To grasp a full orbbed understanding of how the gospel influences the life of the believer and that it is love that directs us and not adherence to some self imposed regulations and laws, it is a rather life changing revelation.

I remember growing up in a baptist church here in Holland. And even at a young age having questions about God and his sovereignty. I used to run around the house between the living room, kitchen and dining room in one big circle thinking that at the last second, if I changed direction and ran down the hall would God know I was going to do that, could I trick him with a last minute decision?. I don't remember how old I was exactly, probably around 10 or so but even then I was struggling with what I was taught about God's sovereignty, and man's will.

Fast forward a few years and I started attending here, and I remember Vic's first sermon in Ephesians 2. About being dead in our trespasses and sins, and while we were dead and children of wrath, God in his love and mercy made us alive. Not of ourselves, but a gift of God, not of our works, but of Faith.

Those who know this story know that I left that church that day not very happy, thinking that I had walked into some weird cult. I was back again as that 10 year old struggling with God's sovereignty and my will. I starting to question my faith, how do I know that when I said the sinners prayer that it actually took. I mean I prayed for God to enter my heart in Sunday school, again later during Vacation Bible School, and the last time was late at night after being awoken by a nightmare and laying there

thinking that if I were to die, right now I would be going to hell and I did NOT want that.

So throughout my life I always rested and referred back to that night that I accepted Jesus as my savior as proof, as assurance as benchmark that I always looked back on to convince myself that I was saved. When times of doubt, discouragement, or sin would come into my life I always remembered that night and would convince myself that everything is OK.

Then I heard that sermon in Ephesians 2, saying that nothing I could do could save me... exercising my own will could not save me, I can't even work up my own faith that is needed to believe, but rather it had to be given to me. Once I came to grasp this, and rest in God for my salvation instead of some act that I did in Sunday School, or VBS, or even that night I had that nightmare, it gave a peace and freedom unlike any that I had up to that point. I knew, that if God allowed me to enter heaven, or if he put me in hell there really wasn't anything I could do about it except by him. It ultimately was his will, his choice, to do with me as he pleased and not mine decision. After a few months of wrestling with this, going through a time doubting my salvation as soon as I gave it all to God I No longer had the doubt, that in the end when I meet my maker that somehow asking God into my heart didn't take. I No longer had the fear of what the future holds in my life because God and his Will, will not be changed and he is in control of my life. I believe that I was truly saved that night as a child, but buy being taught what I was about God, and how it was my decision that ultimately saved me caused me to live my teen years in doubt.

All of this is to say how important proper teaching and doctrine is. Paul says a little leaven will leaven the whole lump. In Galatians here I think he is talking about false doctrines having a corrupting effect on the life of the Christian. And I can attest to that myself, the differences of the Arminian doctrine of salvation and the Calvinistic doctrine are on complete opposites of the spectrum. And in my life, while I believe I truly was saved having the Arminian understanding of the gospel and of faith, and that it was I who decided to live for Christ, caused in those quiet moments, unsettling thoughts of doubt. But after having as Vic would call it... a second work of Grace, and coming to the understanding of God's sovereign will, his sovereign work, and his sovereign power over my life, not only in salvation but in everything it completely erased all my doubt and fear.

SO now Just as the proper understanding of God's sovereignty has had a great impact on my life, so it has been the same now understanding our liberty and freedom in Christ. Everything completely rests in Christ, our Salvation, our faith, and our lives. Praise God for his sovereign grace and love toward us. Our salvation, justification, and sanctification is not merit based....I don't do good so therefor I am good, I do good because God has made me good.

There are so many people who are trying to work out there salvation through their own decision and will. Living in doubt, and fear, just as I did. What Paul says here in Galatians really rings home to me for there was a good portion of my life that I could identify with these Christians in Galatia. Being taught certain doctrines and beliefs which really only brought in more confusion and fear. Trusting in my own ability to be a good person, to keep God's commandments and always worrying that I am not doing enough. But Paul says we are free from that, we have liberty from that slavery. We have liberty from that doubt, and fear, Because salvation, and righteousness and justification does not hinge on our own ability, or on our own will but rests solely upon God. There is not a much sweeter assurance or guarantee then the fact that God who created all things loves you, it is he who has called you, it is he who has adopted you so that you are now one of his children, and now that you are a child he protects and and keeps you as any good Father does their children.

That is why we can have confidence in our salvation, and is why Paul told the Galatians that He had confidence in them, that now hearing the truth that they would reject these false teachers. And just as importantly he tells them to Stand Fast in this liberty that Christ has given them through his work on the cross. He has put to death the law, he fulfilled it for us paying all its requirements so that we may be free from it, Do you not see brothers and sisters, if we go to the law for our sanctification we are not relying on the one who payed the penalty for us! Christ did not die to make salvation possible...he did not die so that we can now fulfill the law, he Died to make our salvation sure, and he died to fulfill the law for us! oh blessed savior...how can we look at your work on the cross and yet go back to the law, Christ has done it all, completed the work and yet we look past that and go back to the law. In the words of Paul, God forbid! Look to Christ, always keep your eyes upon your savior and do not for one moment look away, for it is only by him and through him that you have faith.

Let us look at what Paul says in verse 7, Do not be deceived, God is not mocked. For whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. Paul uses a farmer planting seeds as a metaphor to how we live our lives. Just as a farmer who sows corn is not going to harvest potatoes, and person who sows seeds to his own flesh and desires is not going to harvest holiness. Paul is once again as he has over and over in this book showing the Galatians the errors of the Judaizers teaching.

That is why I shared my testimony this morning, and I think not just me, but many have shared in the same experience. Even though I was not aware of it, what I was trying to do was sow seeds in the flesh. Just like how the Judaizers were relying on the law, and circumcision for their justification I was relying on the words I had said in a prayer. I was relying on what I had done and not relying on what God had done. IT was God who opened my heart to realize that if I was to die that night that I would spend all of eternity in hell. It was He who convicted me of my sin, and the words I spoke that night flowed out of a changed heart, the words themselves did not change my heart. After having been saved I still continued to sow seeds to the flesh, When I would witness to someone I did not do it out of love for that person and genuine concern for their soul, I did it out of duty, and a selfish motivation to add another jewel on the crown that I would receive one day, and bragging rights as to how many people I lead to Christ. I was encouraged by those around me to win souls, and was guilt ed into thinking that unless I button holed everyone I know into a confession that I was not doing my job, and there crept in doubt, that maybe since I wasn't winning enough people to Christ, that maybe Christ wasn't really working in me.

Really what I was doing was not much different then these Judaizers, I was really seeking to elevate myself, I was seeking to build up for myself some sort of higher reward in Heaven. I was sowing seeds in the flesh, and I was reaping pride, arrogance, and self worth. While I thought I was doing God's will, and on one level you could argue I was for I was witnessing to my friends, trying to pound them with guilt of their evil lives but really heart was wrong, and my motivations were wrong and I was seeking my own glory, and not my Fathers.

Paul says that those who sows to the flesh, will of them flesh reap corruption, and those who sows to the spirit will of the spirit reap everlasting life. Once again he is talking about the Judaizers and their focus and adherence to the Old Covenant Laws. They were sowing to the flesh, looking toward man's actions for justification and Paul says they who do so will reap corruption. This goes back to exactly what Paul was saying earlier the law was. Remember he said it is actually a curse, and those who live by it are cursed. If you focus on the law, traditions, and your own will, or your own decisions, or your own actions as your justification and sanctification then you will reap corruption. As I was saying earlier, if that is your focus it will create in you pride, and arrogance, doubt and fear.

But Reverse if your actions come from the spirit indwelling in you, producing fruit of that spirit you will reap the rewards. When your focus becomes Christ in all things, and you die to self, you will seek to live a life in the spirit. You no longer seek to justify yourself before God, you do things for God's glory not your own. You attend the gathering of believers at your church on Sunday, because you Love God, and you love his people, you don't attend because it makes you feel better, or because you have a responsibility to be in the nursery, or sing in the choir that evening...you go because you desire to be around those you love, and to learn more of and to worship God. You don't witness to your neighbor, or family member because you feel the need to set them straight, or out of a sense of duty or requirement, rather you do it because you love that person and are concerned for their soul. I hope you can see the contrast I am trying to make here between working in the flesh, and working out your life in the spirit. It is all about what motivates you, what is your purpose for doing so and what are you seeking to gain.

Paul continues on here and says, let us not grow weary while doing good for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. I will be the first to admit to struggling with this, Before I started preparing for this week I really did not want to do it. I didn't want to read, did I mention I hate reading? I didn't want to take the time to prepare this but I knew it had to be done. So I sat down and started reading and right here in this text that I was to study was exactly what I needed to hear. Do not grow weary, then it hit me again, as it always does..it is not about me, it is not about what I want but it is about God! He gives us each work to do, and it can be very tiresome and our selfishness and sin get in the way, but do not grow weary for in due time we shall reap the reward of our labor. Be it in this life, or the next.

After Paul tells us to not grow weary doing good, he says to continue to do good to all around us at every opportunity. We are to love our neighbors as ourselves, thus fulfilling the law of Christ, and here he says when we have opportunity let us do good to all. These 2 things are connected of course, one is the motive and the reason and the other is the out word work. It is the spirit working through us, in love to do good, to love our neighbors, to help people in times of need even when it isn't in our best interest. It is hard to put ourselves aside, and sacrifice for another. To take the time that we may not have to help a brother or sister, but that is exactly what God has called us to do...and has enabled us to do through the spirit. These are the things that we sow in the spirit. These are good works that God has given us to do.

And Paul says that we will reap from them. But instead of reaping for our own interest and merit as with sowing seeds to the flesh, we will reap toward God's glory and we should all rejoice in that. Paul said to Examine our own work, and we will have rejoicing in ourselves and not another. Don't seek your own merit, do not do good because it makes you look good, do good because God is working through to do so, rejoice that God is using you as a tool for the working out of his own will and glory. It is not about you, it is about God, and God alone.

Wrapping this up today we finish with Paul's closing statements. He says: As many as desire to make a good showing in the flesh, these would compel you to be circumcised, only that they may not suffer persecution for the cross of Christ. For not even those who are circumcised keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh. But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision, nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation.

Do not boast in your works like the Judaizers did, making a good showing in the flesh, elevating ourselves, making ourselves appear holier than those around us. Rather let us boast in the cross of our Savior as Paul does. Focus your heart and your mind upon Christ and if we do that, everything else will fall into place. We need to live out our Christian life to the Glory of God, and be ready to serve when God gives us opportunity, in whatever capacity he asks for everything we have is given to us. Remembering, that it is not what we do that justifies us, but rather what we do flows out of God's imputed justification in us.

I see no better way to close out today than to just quote Paul as he closes this letter, As many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God, Brethren, may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit! Amen.