

Galatians 2:15-21 - February 12, 2023

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[0:00] We welcome you to the media ministry of Bethel Community Church, knowing Jesus, making Jesus known. Morning.

Super Bowl Sunday. I've been told though the game starts at 530, so looks like I got plenty of time. Two announcements are that next week we'll have a visit from Bill Howell, Smiling Bill as I call him, and then the week after that we'll have the Agnews and Noah Agnew will be sharing with us.

So that's going to be exciting. Morning. So many years ago, there was a man who, when he and his wife got married, they made a little pledge to each other, and they said that they would attend every Super Bowl game for the rest of their lives.

And after 43 years, the woman passed away, but the man, he continued the tradition of attending the Super Bowl. And so when he went, there was a man in his same row, and he said, there's an empty seat next to you.

You know, why is that? It's the Super Bowl. And the man replied, well, it was my wife's seat, but she passed away. To which the other man replied, well, why didn't you invite someone else?

[1:31] Don't you have any other family or friends? I mean, it's the Super Bowl. He said, I did, but nobody would come with me. And the man said, wow, that's tough.

Your wife dies, and it's the Super Bowl, and nobody would come with you. He said, what did they have to do better? And the man said, well, her funeral was today.

Last year, a guy invited his girlfriend to the Super Bowl.

She knew nothing about football, but she agreed to go anyway. They had great seats, right behind their team's bench. And after the game, he said to her, how did you like it?

She said, oh, I really liked it, especially the tight pants and all those muscles. But I couldn't understand why these guys were killing each other over 25 cents. And he said, what do you mean?

[2:38] She goes, well, they flipped a coin, and one team got it. And then for the rest of the game, they all kept screaming, get the quarterback, get that quarterback. It's only 25 cents.

All right, all right. Our passage this morning is a serious one, so we had to have a little fun.

So let's look at Galatians chapter 2. We'll be reading from verse 15 to the end. Galatians 2, 15 to 21.

We who are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we too have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law, no one will be justified.

If while we seek to be justified in Christ, it becomes evident that we ourselves are sinners, does that mean that Christ promotes sin? Absolutely not. If I rebuild what I destroyed, I prove that I'm a lawbreaker.

[3:56] For through the law, I died to the law so that I might live for God. I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.

The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing.

Let's pray. Father God, these next few minutes, as we look into your word of truth, I pray, Lord, that you would just speak through me the words that we all need to hear, and Lord, that we would understand and we would appreciate the clarity, the simplicity of the message of salvation, and

what a great thing it is, the greatest thing in the whole world, to know that we have eternal security in the loving arms of our Heavenly Father.

Amen. So I had an outline, and I forgot to copy it and pass it out, so you'll just have to listen. Sorry. So the simple outline of chapter 2 goes like this.

We're freed by grace. And three pictures of that in chapter 2 would be this. Right behavior with wrong behavior.

[5:21] Right behavior with wrong belief. These guys were keeping the law, but for the wrong reason. And then chapter 2, verses 11 through 14 would be right belief with wrong behavior.

Right behavior. Right behavior. Right behavior. And the passage that we're looking at today is right belief with right behavior. It's faith alone. Through faith in Christ, we're accepted before God.

And through faith in Christ, we're alive to God. So really, we're freed through faith. And as we begin this morning, I'd like us to keep in mind a few things.

One is that we have the whole completed Word of God. We have everything God wants us to know right here. But they did not.

They had the Old Testament and maybe a few letters at this point. Secondly, that the Bible has progressive revelation. Progressive revelation.

[6:19] What does that mean? Well, it means that sometimes progressive revelation means that it adds to existing knowledge. Sometimes it changes it, and sometimes it negates it or replaces it.

Progressive revelation is not a movement from error to truth. It's a movement from truth to more truth, from lesser truth to greater truth, from provisional to permanent, from inadequate to perfect.

And so probably a better word for that would be cumulative revelation. Somebody's watching. I stole that word from a guy who knows more than me. The Old Testament is Jesus foreseen.

The Gospels would be Jesus coming in the flesh. The epistles would be Jesus explained. And the revelation is Jesus expected. So one great eternal purpose with Jesus as its beginning, middle, and end.

Truth and more truth. Hebrews chapter 1 verse 1 tells us, God revealed himself at many times and in various ways in the past.

[7:31] So Adam received a little bit of God's truth. So did Noah. Abraham got a little more. God spoke to him more fully. He revealed himself even more in the Old Testament through Moses.

So progressive revelation is a movement from truth to more truth and ultimately to full truth, which we have. Some things were for their time only, later to be set aside.

This would be an example in the case of the restrictive food laws in Deuteronomy. You can't eat this and you can't eat this and you can't eat this. Right? God showed Peter in Acts chapter 10. The sheet comes down and he says, hey, it's okay to eat all this stuff.

Right? So this was repealed by Jesus in Mark chapter 7 verse 19. And the same thing happened with many of the laws that were designed to regulate the life of the people of God.

In the Old Testament. But a radical change took place. When the earthly kingdom of God's people was replaced by the heavenly kingdom of Lord Jesus Christ.

[8:37] In John 18.36, Jesus says, My kingdom is not of this world. We have to keep in mind that these new Christians, they were learning. How do we do Christianity?

Well, it took a while for some of them to learn. Many have called this a transitional period from the old covenant to the new. From law to grace.

But for some of the Jewish believers that were still in Jerusalem, it took a while for them to understand it. Now for the Gentile converts, they heard the gospel, the good news that Jesus Christ died in their place, paid for their sins.

And many believed and they were saved. And they didn't come in with all that baggage. And so it was probably a lot easier for them. And so the errors Paul is writing to address were being caused by these Jews who had come down from Jerusalem.

That's why Paul wrote this letter. They're called Judaizers. Who are these Judaizers? Well, they're Jews who wanted to add to the clear gospel of salvation by faith alone and Christ alone.

[9:42] Paul says two times in a row in Galatians 1, 8 and 9 that if anyone, even if an angel comes down from heaven and preaches to you a gospel different than my gospel, they should be eternally condemned.

That means thrown into the lake of fire forever. This is the non-negotiable truth. You know, last week, Teddy said there's some things that are not worth dying over, you know?

Do we sit in straight rows? Do we have pews or chairs? Do we have women and men pray together or not? You know, do we meet on Sundays? I don't know. I went to a church in Chicago. The believers met on Wednesday night so they could use Sunday for outreach.

Okay. I'm not going to die for that one, right? Pre-tribulation versus mid-tribulation versus post-tribulation. I have my opinions, but I'm not dying for that one.

Guys, listen. This is the one worth dying for. This is it. This is the message, the clear gospel. This is it. There's nothing more important. Our salvation rests on what we believe.

[10:48] So the Judaizers, well, they're those Christians who came from Jerusalem and they wish to compel the Gentile converts to follow the law of Moses. That's what they're doing.

The law ended at the cross. The law ended at the cross. Done. You want some verses?

Listen to Romans chapter 10 and verse 4. Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes. Period.

Period. In a long time ago, many of you weren't even alive. Mary Ellen was around and David was around and some of my older friends.

But before many of you were born, back in 1979, some good friends were sharing the truth of the scriptures with me.

[11:48] And I had grown up religious, but I didn't know the Lord in a personal way and I hadn't had my sins forgiven. I thought I was working to be a better person sometimes. And I was fortunate enough that I had some good close friends who never gave up on me and they kept sharing the word of God with me.

Eventually, I bought a Bible and I read. And on March 10, 1979, at 1030 in the morning, in the bathroom at Schmidt Chevrolet, I looked in the mirror and said, God, I give up.

I can't save myself. There's nothing I can do. I realized that I'm going to hell and I don't want to do that. And I know that Jesus paid for everything I could ever do.

And I believe that. And from that moment, the Bible says I was saved. I was born again. I was brought into the family of God. Well, shortly thereafter, I began thinking about this one friend of mine.

His name's Keith. Keith and I had grown up together. We'd been buddies since first grade, all the way through 10th grade. And then I went to a different school. I was asked to go to a different school.

[12:50] And they asked nicely at first to my mom and dad, would you consider educating your son elsewhere? And then they insisted. So I kind of lost track of Keith.

But during high school, senior year, my friend Keith became a Jesus freak. That's what all my friends told me. Keith is a Jesus freak now, man. He just runs around telling everybody about God. So when I got saved, I thought, man, I got to look this guy up.

He's probably a believer. And we could have fellowship. And so my old buddy Keith and I, we got together. And he said, man, I have a Bible study on Thursday nights. You'll know where it is.

My mom and dad let me use their living room. It's at their old house. And so I went. And three or four times in, and Keith was teaching the Bible study. And one time I heard him say this, well, if you believe and be baptized, then you can be saved.

And I thought about that and didn't interrupt the Bible study or anything. But afterwards, I said, so did you say that a person has to be baptized in order to be saved? He said, yeah, right.

[13:54] Look what it says in Acts 2.38. And we had a little conversation about that. And I explained that those people were saved. And then they were baptized. But it wasn't part of salvation. Well, yes, it is. Faith entails a certain amount of obedience.

And that's what his church had taught him. And that's what Keith believed. And over the next year, Keith and I had many conversations about that. I brought him to several of our Bible studies where some of the older guys in my church who knew the word better than I did at the time shared with him from the word of God over and over about, look, it's faith alone and Christ alone.

It has nothing to do with works or baptism or anything you could possibly do. Well, sad to say, my friend Keith never got it.

And because of that, we could never be in a Bible study together. We could never work together. We could never evangelize our old friends together. To this day, I can't.

Because we have two different Gospels. You see, faith alone and Christ alone, that's the real Gospel. But believe and be baptized and obey is not the Gospel.

[15:02] And so we don't study together and we don't pray together and we don't reach out together because we have two different Gospels.

And how serious is it? Well, Paul says if you preach another Gospel, you're cursed forever. So that's sad. And so whether it's circumcision in the case of our passage here, whether it's baptism, whether it's discipleship or anything else, mixing grace with works is a different Gospel.

Those of us who were privileged enough to do that study with Lucas Kitchen, he actually separated for us discipleship and salvation, right? Salvation is a one-time act of God in time.

Now, you may not be like me where you actually know the date and time. A lot of people just know they're saved. I think Kevin says he was six years old. So you might not know the exact date.

But it's a one-time thing where sanctification is a lifelong process. But they're not to be mixed.

They're not to be mixed. So the apostles had to deal with this.

[16:10] Was Paul preaching a different Gospel than Peter? No, he wasn't. In Acts chapter 15. Acts chapter 15.

And I'm going to have to read most of this. I apologize. It says this, starting in verse 1. Certain people came down from Judea to Antioch, and they were teaching the believers, unless you're circumcised according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved.

This brought Paul and Barnabas into sharp dispute and debate with them. So Paul and Barnabas were appointed, along with some other believers, to go up to Jerusalem and see the apostles and elders about this question.

The church sent them on their way as they traveled through Phoenicia and Samaria. They told how the Gentiles had been converted. This news made all the believers very glad. When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and the elders, to whom they reported everything God had done through them.

Then some of the believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and said, The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to keep the law of Moses. The apostles and elders met to consider this question.

[17:24] And after much discussion, Peter got up and addressed them.

Brothers, you know that some time ago, God made a choice among you that the Gentiles would hear from my lips the message of the gospel and believe.

That would have been Acts chapter 10, where Peter goes and visits Cornelius, and Cornelius and his family get saved. God, who knows the heart, shows that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, listen, just as he did to us.

Same gospel, same gospel, just as he did to us. He did not discriminate between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith. Now then, why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of the Gentiles a yoke that neither we nor our ancestors were able to bear?

The yoke is the law. No, we believe that it's through grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved just as they are.

Peter and Paul had the same gospel. The whole assembly became silent as they listened to Barnabas and Paul tell about the signs and warnings that God had done among the Gentiles through them.

[18:33] When they finished, James spoke up. Brothers, he said, listen to me. Simon has described to us how God first intervened to choose a people for his name from the Gentiles.

The words of the prophets are in agreement with this, as it is written. So I'm going to skip the as it is written part and I'm going to go down to verse 19 if you're following. It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God.

Instead, we should write to them telling them to abstain from food polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from the need of strangled animals, and from blood. That's it.

It's the end of the law. These guys didn't realize it, but it ended at the cross. It's done. It's finished. It's put away. So we know from verse 16 in our passage that no person is justified by the law.

They never were. These guys had it wrong. And Paul was trying to correct them. And Peter tried to correct them. And James tried to correct them. And I think eventually many of them got it.

[19:44] So two questions for us today. What is the purpose of the law? What is the purpose of the law? Romans 3.20 says this, For by the works of the law, no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes the knowledge of sin.

Romans 7.7. What should we say then? That the law is sin? By no means. Yet, if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin.

For I would not have known what it is to covet, if the law did not say, you shall not covet. James 2.10. Whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point is guilty of the whole thing.

Well, so the way I always describe it when I'm talking to a person who is on this side of the cross and not the good side of the cross, that the law is like a chain.

So you didn't murder, okay. You didn't do this. You didn't, you know, steal your neighbor's wife. But wait, you lied. Well, that breaks the chain. You broke the law.

[20:54] The whole thing's broken. You're guilty of the whole thing. We can never approach God. God is perfect. We have to be perfect. Nobody kept the law. The law was never for that. That's what the, so the purpose of the law was to show people, us, that we can't measure up.

So I brought a little illustration for you. I borrowed this from my good friend, Kevin Fitz. He says, the law is like a mirror. Ooh. Yeah. Who's that old guy?

All right. So the law is like a mirror. I look into the mirror and I see that there's dirt on my face. I don't take the mirror and try to scrub the dirt off my face, just like I don't take the law and try to get rid of the sin.

It doesn't work. I see the law. I see the sin. I need the sin paid for, and I can't pay for it.

So the purpose of the law is to show me that I don't measure up to God. It's to show me I'm separated from God. I'm not going to step on the person who's doing chapter 3, but the purpose of the law for the Jews will be discussed and dealt with hopefully a little down the road in chapter 3.

[22:10] What is the purpose of the law then in the life of a believer? Can I say nothing? Is that okay? Is that okay?

Romans 3.28. For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from the works of the law. Romans 6.14. For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

Colossians 2.13 and 14 tells us, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the written code, that's the law, with its regulations that was against us and that stood opposed to us.

He took it away, nailing it to the cross. The cross was the end of the law. The law was a dispensation, a period of time, meant to reign in God's people, if you will, meant to show them that the only way they could be saved was by trusting in the one that was to come, the Messiah that was to come.

Right? But once he came and once he died and he was buried and he rose again the third day, that's it. And so the only thing it does for people today is, if you're not saved, it shows you that you don't measure up.

[23:26] Once you're in the family of God with the Holy Spirit. What the law could never do was pay for sin. And what we can never do is pay for sin.

But God sent Jesus. He stepped down out of heaven. He took off his glory. He was born in a body. He lived a perfect life that he never needed to die for his sin and that qualified him to die for mine. One of the things that Jesus cried out from the cross, he said, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani. What does that mean? It means, God, why have you forsaken me? The reason that God turned his back on his

son is because my sin was on him.

The sin of the world was placed on Jesus when he was on that cross. And he died and he rose again. The Bible says in Romans 6.23, the wages of sin is death.

Now, either you can pay for your own sin and I can pay for my own sin, or we got to let somebody else pay for it. And that's the beauty of the gospel. Jesus paid for my sin, so I don't have to.

[24:32] I don't have to. The gift of God is eternal life. It's a free gift. And so he offers eternal life to those who believe.

Not believe and. There is no and. It's not believe and be circumcised. It's not believe and be baptized. It's not believe and go to church. It's not give your heart to God.

It's not come forward. It's not stand up. It's not pray a prayer. It's nothing else. It's faith alone in Christ alone. That's it. It's simple.

It's profound. And sometimes it's hard for people. I don't know why. As the musicians come up, I tell you a little story.

Now, my poor wife has heard all my stories, and some of you have known me for a long time. You've heard most of my stories. Denise likes to say, the sad truth of my husband's stories is they're all true.

[25:32] This is a new one. You guys have never heard this. So this past year, Denise and I went to Key West to visit our kids.

And there's a place called Mallory Square. It's huge. And if you walk through Mallory Square any time of the day, it's this big, open, flat, paved area, and there's nobody there.

But if you go to Mallory Square, about an hour before sunset, it starts filling up. And what happens there every day is something called the sunset celebration, okay, where these performers, like street performers, they set up their little area, they put a rope around it, and then they perform their little tricks, and then they ask for donations.

And it's fascinating. The one guy had a unicycle, and he climbs all the way to the top of this little one-wheeled thing, and he's 15 feet off the ground, and he's riding, and he's juggling, and he's like, hey, this is pretty good.

Okay, leave \$5 in the thing. And there's performers like that, and it's fascinating. They juggle fire. One guy's 75 years old. He walks across a tightrope. I mean, it's pretty cool stuff.

[26:42] And this time, I saw something that I never saw before. I saw an old guy. Well, he was about my age, so he was old. And I saw this older guy, and he had this easel set up, and he had a paint board on it, and he was drawing little blocks.

And I said, Denise, this guy's going to do an open-air message. I was so excited. So for those of you that don't know, there's a group called Open-Air Campaigners, and they preach as they paint the message.

It's really cool. We did a lot of it back in the day. And so I waited for a time when this guy was done setting up his message, and I went over and talked to him, and I said, hey, man, are you with Open-Air Campaigners?

He said, well, no, but that's where I learned the technique. He said, I'm not very good at painting. And I said, yeah, I can do the preaching part better than the painting part, too. But he... So I met him, and I talked to him for a while before his message and after, and he had a real clear gospel. That was exciting. And he goes by the name of Gospel Bill. And he's been going down there, he said, for 36 years. I never saw him because he only goes on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday.

[27:41] And I guess we just were there on a different day. But Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, he comes down there, and he preaches the gospel. And so we tried to help him gather a crowd.

Of course, nobody wants to hear the gospel much, especially on Key West. But we know the word goes out, and it doesn't return void. And one of the exciting things, as I watched his message, he began to paint the message on there, and he got down to this question.

You know, you always have to have a question to draw people in. And he said, is Jesus narrow-minded? Is Jesus narrow-minded? I thought, well, it's an interesting question. Let's see where he goes with this.

And of course, he talked about sin and separation. And then he said, well, Jesus said this. I'm the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

Guys, there's only one way. There's only one gospel. There's only one truth. Peter preached it. Paul preached it. And it's the same that we should preach. There's only one message. It's faith alone and Christ alone.

[28:46] If you don't get that, stay after. We'd love to talk with you. Let's pray. Lord, we are thankful people.

Those of us who have been redeemed, those of us who have been bought with a price that we couldn't afford. We can't pay for our sin. We never could, no matter how long we live or how much we do.

You sent your son to pay that price that we could never, never pay. And we're free from that sin. We're free from the law. And we're free to serve you.

What a great thing that is. Amen. Code of Clan Thank you.