

Our Mission:

To share Christ with the world
and grow disciples for Jesus



Loving God and Loving Neighbor as Ourselves

Background:

Here we get to see Paul make his argument for the inclusion of the Gentiles because it is simply a matter of faith. He acknowledges that this has put him in opposition to the leaders of the church, but we are justified by faith in God's action through Christ Jesus and not because of our keeping of the law or traditions of humanity. For Paul, the law is death or judgment, but the Gospel is life and freedom.

Theology Connection:

What Paul is saying in this passage is at the heart of the Lutheran Reformation. Righteousness is not gained through the law but by faith in God's grace. The law is work's righteousness, an attempt to prove my worth. Grace, however, is founded in Christ's righteousness, and because Christ considers us to be worthy of offering his life, we have life abundantly.

Application:

Paul writes that it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. In a practical sense, what does this mean? Do we look at the world through the eyes of Christ? Do we hear criticism through the ears of Christ? Do we attempt to touch the hearts of others as Christ has touched ours? Does faith make a real-world difference for us?

The Text: Galatians 1: 13-17, 2: 11-21

1 ¹³For you have heard of my previous way of life in Judaism, how intensely I persecuted the church of God and tried to destroy it.

¹⁴I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers.

¹⁵But when God, who set me apart from my mother's womb and called me by his grace, was pleased ¹⁶to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles, my immediate response was not to consult any human being. ¹⁷I did not go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before I was, but I went into Arabia. Later I returned to Damascus.

2 ¹¹When Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. ¹²For before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group. ¹³He other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray.

¹⁴When I saw that they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in front of them all, "You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile and not like a Jew. How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs?"

¹⁵"We who are Jews by birth and not sinful Gentiles ¹⁶know that a person is not justified by the works of 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 the works of the law, because by the works of the law no one will be justified.

¹⁷"But if, in seeking to be justified in Christ, we Jews find ourselves also among the sinners, doesn't that mean that Christ promotes sin? Absolutely not! ¹⁸If I rebuild what I destroyed, then I really would be a lawbreaker.

¹⁹"For through the law I died to the law so that I might live for God.

²⁰I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

²¹I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!"

ADULT

Are there traditions in your family that continue simply because they are a tradition? Do you find yourself questioning these traditions, but fearful that someone might be offended if you were to actually bring it up? When you look at your daily routines, what are the events that are life-giving? How do they reflect the nature of God?

YOUTH

Please read Galatians 1:13-17 and 2:11-21

As you can see from this text there are politics in the church, and it can be ugly as well. Thank goodness, Paul had not washed his hands of the church politics, where would we be today? Paul teaches us it's vital that we stand for the principles of our faith, even when others don't understand.

Reflect on a time where you stood firm in your principles when others didn't agree or is there a time where you wish you would have stood firm but didn't.

Let us pray:

Dear God, please give us the strength to stand tall in our faith and the courage to share our beliefs with others.
Amen!

CHILDREN'S

Two men went up to the temple to pray. One was a Pharisee and one was a tax collector. Pharisees were teachers of the Scriptures and they knew a lot about God's word. But when this Pharisee prayed, he only thought about how good he was. He stood up and prayed, "God, I thank You that I'm not bad like other people. And I'm glad that I'm not bad like robbers and cheaters. I'm glad I'm not bad like that tax collector over there." He continued, "Lord, I'm so good. I give lots of money and pray a lot."

What do you think God thought about the Pharisee's prayer? The Pharisee wasn't humble, he had too much pride in himself. Jesus said the Pharisee wasn't right with God. Then the tax collector prayed. Sometimes tax collectors cheated people. It was good that he wanted to pray to God! He stood off at a distance and prayed, "God, You are so good. I'm sorry that I've done wrong, please help me to do better." What do you think God thought about the tax collector's prayer? The tax collector was humble when he prayed. He didn't think about how good he was. He thought about how good God was! Jesus said the tax collector could be happy because he was right with God!

1. What did you learn from this story?
2. What is your favorite part of the story?

Pray:

Dear God,
Please help us to focus on You, and You only! Amen.