

Bibles???

The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority

Good morning,

This morning, we are going to start off with an illustration.

I have always been a fan of endurance races and it is fascinating what people will do.

So let's suppose an eccentric billionaire offers \$100 million to any person who can swim from San Diego, California to Honolulu, Hawaii.

We are talking about swimming here, not sailing, jet skiing or rowing. Swimming – it doesn't matter what stroke they use.

The rules are simple:

1) once in the water you cannot get out until you reach Waikiki beach in Honolulu,

2) you cannot stop or have anyone assist you in any way shape or form,

3) you cannot use any equipment (like flippers or wet suits or floatation devices) to help you. It's just you and your swimming trunks.

If you make it to Honolulu, you will earn \$100 million. If you don't make it, following all the rules, you get nothing.

When the appointed day arrives, 1,000 people show up.

The alarm sounds & the swimmers hit the water.

Before the 1-mile marker some have already turned back.

Several more drop out before the 5-mile marker. At the 25-mile marker only 150 swimmers are left. At the 50-mile mark only 10 are left.

At the 75-mile mark 2 swimmers are in still in the water.

Then after several more miles only one swimmer is left — this person is a World Record holding distance swimmer. However, she has never done a race like this before.

Finally, she gives up after swimming over 100 miles...

A very remarkable feat.

However, this means that she was **only 2,500 miles** from reaching the target of Honolulu.

When she is finally pulled into the billionaire's yacht, she tells him that she deserves the money because she got closer than anyone else.

But he refuses.

She then claims that he should at least give her a portion of the money then for going the farthest.

He again refuses, citing the clear rules of the contest.

It was all or nothing.

According to the rules - she was no different than the people who dropped out before the first mile marker.

You see, the contest wasn't who could make it the closest to Honolulu, but who could go the entire distance following all the rules.

You may be thinking that this is an absurd illustration – no one can swim from San Diego to Honolulu under those conditions.

I totally agree with you.

That is the point.

Church, because of sin, the distance between God and man is infinity times greater than the distance between San Diego and Honolulu.

And by God's amazing grace – He closed that gap for us.

However, there are many people out there today in churches that are being told – you can close that gap yourself - if you only follow the rules.

If you live a good life

If you do certain works

If you tithe

And the problem with this is that we turn salvation into a challenge of who can get the closest – just like the swimmer.

And this is what was being taught to the churches in Galatia.

When I started my ministry down here – one of the questions I would ask individuals – some of them who were believers “Why should God let you into heaven?”

And the one of the most frequent answers I would always get is, because I am a good person.

Wrong answer - as the bible never tells us that the way to heaven is by being a good person right???

When I would explain this to the individuals, there response was always – well I never killed anyone – again, comparing themselves to others that had failed.

The correct answer to that question is:

I'm here not because I deserve to be here, but because Jesus paid the penalty for my sins, and gave me His own righteousness.

I'm not here on my own goodness, but because Jesus has given me His goodness.

The correct answer contains no merit on my part concerning any laws or rules that I attempted to adhere to.

This morning Paul is going to continue to make his case around this one central question.

Are we justified by what we do or are we justified by what God has done?

Let's pray...

[Gal 3:10-18 NKJV] 10 For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, "Cursed [is] everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them." 11 But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God [is] evident, for "the just shall live by faith." 12 Yet the law is not of faith, but "the man who does them shall live by them." 13 Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, "Cursed [is] everyone who hangs on a tree"), 14 that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

Once again, the problem in the churches in the Galatia region was that these Judaizers were preaching a gospel that these gentile Christians – in order to be truly saved, they would have to convert to Judaism first and begin to adhere to their list of do's and don'ts. Most notably, they had to be circumcised.

So, Paul begins his defense of the gospel here in verse 10,

[Gal 3:10-14 NKJV] 10a For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse;

Churches in Galatia – you want to forsake God's grace and follow the law???

I am here to tell you that if you go back to trying to be justified by the law – all you are doing is bringing a curse upon you.

1. In Leviticus 26 God pronounces a curse on the nation of Israel if they happen to break His laws and go after other gods.

I am going to summarize a few of them.

- a. He will bring upon them terror, wasting diseases and fever that will destroy their eyes and drain away their lives.
- b. They will plant their seed in vain for their enemies will eat the fruit.
- c. They will be slain by their enemies.
- d. They will flee when no one is pursuing them.
- e. They will be so hungry that they will resort to eating their own children.
- f. Their land will be laid waste and their cities will be destroyed.
- g. They will be scattered among the heathen.
- h. **and the ultimate curse of the law was death.**

Why is Paul bringing up the curse???

for it is written,

Paul is basing his entire defense of the gospel on Scripture, and not because he has some crazy idea about God.

Now, watch how many of the next few verses are simply Paul quoting Old Testament Scripture.

"Cursed [is] everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them."

Paul is quoting here from Deuteronomy 27:26

I had you underline the words all and do.

Because if the churches in Galatia or any of us were going to return to following the law as a means to justify ourselves – they must realize that for God to approve you on the basis of the law, you first have to do it. Not simply know it, not simply love it, not simply teach it, not simply want it, you must do it.

All of it!!!!

Not just the ones that they liked or those that agreed with their lifestyle.

One doesn't get to pick and choose what part of the law they were going to adhere to.

Well, I like bacon – so I am going to ignore the laws that dealt with consuming unclean animals.

And the scriptures point out that failing to adhere to one little bitty one is the same as failing on anyone of the big ones. Therefore pronouncing a curse.

Turn with me to the book of James 2

[Jas 2:10 NKJV] 10 For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one [point], he is guilty of all.

Here is a newsflash – each one of us has failed already.

Each one of us would therefore be under the curse.

But here is the good news church, God never intended the law to be the way we find our approval before Him.

He knew we could never keep the law, and so God instituted the system of atoning sacrifice along with the law. And the entire sacrificial system looked forward to what Jesus would accomplish on the cross for us.

11 But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God [is] evident, for "the just shall live by faith."

Paul is saying, no man is declared completely free of sin by keeping the law, at least not when God is the one doing the inspecting.

Any person can give the perception that they live righteous lives.

They can fool their loved ones, their neighbors and all of here at church.

However, they cannot fool God.

Those that seek justification through the law will fail because justification by the law was never the standard of God.

It was always faith.

And then I had you make a note of the last portion of the verse that reads - **"the just shall live by faith."**

Paul is quoting from the book of Habakkuk 2:4. One of the minor prophets in the Old Testament.

A verse that is so important that it is quoted three separate times in the New Testament.

i. In Romans 1:17, when Paul quoted this same passage from Habakkuk 2:4, the emphasis was on faith: "The just shall live by faith."

ii. In Hebrews 10:38, when the writer to the Hebrews quoted this same passage from Habakkuk 2:4, the emphasis was on live: “The just shall live by faith.”

iii. Here in Galatians 3:11, when Paul quoted this passage from Habakkuk 2:4, the emphasis is on just: “The just shall live by faith.”

If you are found to be just – approved – before God, you have done it by a life of faith. If your life is all about living under the law, then God does not find you approved.

When you study Martin Luther, you read that he beat his body, that he crawled on his knees and fasted in order to get close to God. But nothing worked.

And then one day he read this verse – and then it dawned on him, he understood that the Christian experience is not “do,do,do” --- the true Christian experience is “it’s DONE”

Jesus did it all.

Church, we need to get rid of the burden of trying to be spiritual. Get rid of the notion that since we did morning devotions for two weeks straight or showed up to church six Sundays in a row – that somehow God owes us a blessing.

It doesn't work that way.

We are justified by faith alone.

12 Yet the law is not of faith, but "the man who does them shall live by them."

In the first portion of verse 12, Paul is making the point that the law and faith are mutually exclusive.

Meaning that both of these cannot exist together or be true at the same time.

So no one can say, what if I try my best to adhere the law – I undergo circumcision, I follow the dietary laws and some of the

over 600 other laws and it gets me closer to God and then I simply rely on faith to cover the remaining gap.

That way God will see my good works and everything I did for Him and then He will credit to me as righteous. After all, I did try and that is the main thing.

And Paul's response would be no way – because the path to approval through the law is not of faith.

The law is all about doing when faith is all about believing.

And Paul makes it very clear with the second half of verse 12 by quoting Leviticus 18:5.

You see, when Paul quotes, the man who does them shall live by them, what he is saying is “if you want to live by the law, you must do it. Not try to do it, not intend to do it, and not even want to do it.”

It is the exact opposite of the verse that Paul quoted from the book of Habakkuk – the just shall live by faith.

You go back to living by the law, you're going to fail because there is no way you are going to meet God standards and when you fail, you will be cursed.

That is the bad news that Paul wraps up in these three verses.

But this is where Paul begins to remind the churches of Galatia of the good news.

13 Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law,

The Greek word that is used here for redeemed – is a word that doesn't simply mean to rescue.

Yes, we were rescued from the curse but there is more to it.

The word that is used here implies that a price had to be paid in order for us to be rescued.

The idea is that we were sold into slavery to the curse of the law (which is death).

And there we are up on the auction block, waiting to be sold.

When up walks Jesus, and He pays the price of our slavery, and then turns around and sets us free.

What was the price???

having become a curse for us

Turn with me to Isaiah 53

[Isa 53:6 NKJV] 6 All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

This explains how Jesus paid the price to rescue us.

Jesus became cursed on our behalf; He stood in our place and took the curse we deserved.

Can you imagine a death row inmate who was condemned to be executed was suddenly replaced by the very judge himself so that

the judge could die on behalf of the death row inmate and the inmate gets to be released with a complete pardon and a promise of no shred of paperwork that indicates him as a previous convict?

Not a chance right.

But that is exactly what had happened to all the believers of Jesus Christ.

We were that death row inmate.

What Jesus did is so incredible, so wonderful, how could we think that through our own efforts we could add anything to His work on our behalf???

(for it is written, **once again Paul is referencing scripture - "Cursed [is] everyone who hangs on a tree"**),

That portion that I just had you underline – Paul is quoting Deuteronomy 21:23

In the Old Testament, there are a few times when it mentions individuals who were hung on a tree – when we went through the book of Joshua we saw that Joshua hung the King of Ai to a tree in chapter 8 and then Joshua hangs the five Amorite Kings in chapter 10 – and both of those instances I pointed out that they were a shadow as they pointed to the death of Jesus Christ upon a tree. I find it interesting that the preferred method of execution of the Jews was stoning – the adulterous woman – they were about to stone her, Stephen was stoned after his amazing sermon, the religious rulers wanted to stone Jesus for the things He said. But Jesus death did not come by stoning but by the crucifixion. The Romans didn't invent death by crucifixion – they simply perfected it and the purpose of the crucifixion was to humiliate, to disgrace and expose to shame the individual that was being executed.

And that is what Jesus did on the cross as He bore our sins.

Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree.

It should have been you.

It should have been me.

But He who knew no sin was made sin for us that we might be forgiven.

Consequently, we're saved.

We're forgiven.

Always remember, only Jesus can say the words, Because I hung on a tree, you are forgiven.

14 that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

We just looked at how Jesus Christ bore our sins to redeem us from the curse.

But the amazing thing is that He we also receive a blessing from it.

The blessing of Abraham –

And we talked about this last week as we discussed verses 8-9 on this chapter.

That as God gave Abraham the promise that through him his descendants would be like the stars in the sky – that Abraham, knowing his limitations as he was 99 years old and knowing that his wife was approaching 90 – he still believed God and God counted Abraham as righteous.

The blessing of being justified by faith before God instead of works.

The phrase in Christ Jesus is important. The blessing doesn't come because they are Gentiles, any more than the blessing of being right with God comes to Jewish people because they are Jews.

It comes to all, Jew and Gentile alike, who are identified in Christ Jesus and not by their own attempts to justify themselves.

Jesus paid the price so we could receive the Promise of the Spirit- all the power and blessings of the Holy Ghost- not by our works, but by faith in what He accomplished on Calvary.

Amen.

Let's pray...

To Receive Christ do the following:

Admit, "I am a sinner."

Confess and be willing to turn from your sin.

Believe, by faith that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross.

Receive, through prayer, Jesus Christ into your heart and receive eternal life.

Dear Lord Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died on the cross for my sins. Please forgive me for my sins and cleanse me by Your blood. I accept You by faith as my personal Lord and Savior. Give me a thirst for Your Word and Help me to follow You all of my days. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.



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