

Galatians 2:4-5
The Truth of the Gospel

⁴ 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— ⁵ to them we did not yield in submission even for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you.

When the risen Lord Jesus Christ met Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus, his world was completely turned upside down. He was still ferociously opposed to Jesus Christ and the Christian church. He wanted to wipe the existence, the memory of Jesus and his followers off the face of the earth.

But when Jesus appeared to him. Paul at first didn't know who he was, "Who are you, Lord?" he said. "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do."

In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, Paul realized he had been dead wrong and the one he had been persecuting was the promised Deliverer, the King, and the Messiah – he was the fulfillment of the promised Coming One predicted by the prophets.

Paul had been as devoted to the traditional Jewish religion as anybody could. He kept all the law given through Moses without fail. He was as perfect in keeping the laws of his nation as possible. He was righteous in the eyes of his peers and righteous in his own eyes.

But the problem was he was not righteous in God's eyes. When God looked at Paul he saw a man who was outwardly clean but inwardly corrupt. He was covetous and violent. What he lacked was a changed heart. What he lacked was faith in God; he had pride in himself. But though he was proud of his own law keeping he could not keep the Law of God. It was too high and holy and demanding, and Paul had too much spiritual deadness in his heart, there was no spiritual life given by the Holy Spirit. He had dressed himself in his own human righteousness, but he had not been clothed with the righteousness of Christ which is the only righteousness which makes a person right with God.

The Jews believed they could obtain righteousness by diligently keeping the Law of Moses – they were the chosen people, it is true, because they had received the Law. But they had not been given the inner power to keep the law – to fulfill it in all of its spiritual sense. So though they did not realize it, they were failures, failures in the eyes of God.

Their only hope of rescue was the sovereign grace of God that would come to them and rescue them from their prideful sins, show them their failure, and awaken to understand who Jesus is and what he did on Calvary's cross to die for their sins and pay the price of their guilt and failure. They would have to throw aside any dependence on law-keeping and depend solely on Jesus Christ to save them, cleanse them, and make them righteous in God's eyes.

This way of approaching God was radical for Jews like Paul. "You mean all my sacrifices in the temple, all my Sabbath keeping, all my avoiding contact with Gentiles, all my obeying the food laws, my circumcision on the 8th day of my birth – all of this useless to make me right with God?"

"Yes, Paul, that is what we are saying. The only way you can be righteous before God is to believe in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. You must repent of your self-righteousness and cling only to Jesus and his righteousness – given to you has a gift.

"And Jesus did this for you freely, not because you asked for it, but because it was his purpose for your life. The Lord told the disciple Ananias that Paul was "...a **chosen instrument** of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel" (9:15).

Here is the thing, friends. Paul was a persecutor, but God had another plan. He made Paul his chosen instrument. The same is true for you and me. We may have a plan for our lives – there's nothing wrong with that – we may have a plan for the direction we want to go, but God may have a greater plan, a greater scheme, a greater purpose.

All this is God's sovereign choice. God is all wise and all-knowing and what he decides is **his** purpose and plan and it will bring glory to his name and good to our lives.

Now what happened here is that Paul had been seized by a revelation of the truth of the gospel. How are men and women made right with God? It is not by law-keeping but by faith alone. "Jesus did it all; all to him I owe."

Now these Jews, these contemporaries of Paul, tenaciously clung to their traditional understanding of how to obtain righteousness before God – by keeping the Mosaic law. They could not conceive of being justified before God solely on the basis of his grace given to them through faith. It is hard to let go of things in your mind that are deeply ingrained.

Through much of his ministry Paul had to fight against these traditional beliefs and keep stressing, saying, "No, no, you cannot be made righteous before God by trying to keep the Law of Moses. It is impossible. What you must do is accept the fact that Jesus kept the Law of God perfectly, that he suffered the penalty, the curse for those who could not keep it, and because he suffered in the place of his guilty people, their sins are paid for and now they are fully accepted in God's eyes as righteous and justified and holy before him.

So here's the situation that Paul is talking about here in Gal. 2:4-5. Remember, he is writing to the Christians in a place called Galatia. This is in the present area of what we know as central Turkey. Paul had preached the gospel among them, he had preached Jesus Christ as the incarnate Son of God who came from heaven, died on the cross to pay for sins, and rose from the dead, so that all who place their faith in him can be forgiven their sins and receive eternal life.

Paul placed no other requirement or stipulation on these pagan people – that is people who did know the true God. They did not have to keep any Jewish law in order to come to know Jesus. And after coming to know Jesus they didn't have to do anything to qualify as being full Christians. They certainly did not go back to any of the law of Moses such as circumcision to be qualified as full Christians.

But the problem is that people had come from Jerusalem to Galatia, they had followed Paul coattails and were trying to upset and undermine the message of the gospel that Paul had preached to them.

We call these people “Judaizers” because they were insisting that to these new believers in Galatia were not full Christians unless they also kept the Law of Moses.

In Gal. 4:4 Paul calls them “false brothers.” He goes on to say in v. 4 that “they might bring us into “**slavery.**” What they wanted to do was to force these new believers who had been redeemed and saved by Jesus, who knew the joy of sins freely forgiven, who had the assurance of eternal life, who had entered into living fellowship with Jesus through the Holy Spirit – these new believers were free and happy in Christ – these Judaizers wanted to throw a rope around them and haul them into the belief that they were not fully justified and accepted by Jesus but instead they needed to add something to their faith – like getting circumcised or keep other aspects of the Law of Moses. They wanted to bring these Galatian Christians into a “law-keeping” religion rather than a “faith-believing” religion.

What does Paul say in verse 5? “...We did not yield in submission even for a moment, so that **the truth of the gospel** might be preserved for you.”

Paul knew what these false teachers were up to and he stopped them in their tracks. He tried to cut them off at the pass before they could spread their false teaching further.

Paul was protecting these young sheep from being carried off and brought into a religion of bondage. In a religion of where you weren't sure if you were fully accepted and loved by Jesus Christ. “Is there something else I need to do to be sure I'm saved?” No, you don't need to do anything else – you just need to believe in Jesus Christ. He is the one who has done all the work on Calvary's cross to save you. You cannot add anything to that. You, a mere human, can add nothing to Christ's great saving work on the cross. You just accept it, believe it, and be thankful.

Then you proceed to live out your Christian life by his grace, by the Holy Spirit working in you.

So what Paul is doing here is protecting the Gospel. He is protecting these new, young Christians, from being let astray by people who would want to undermine their pure faith in Christ.

So he does not yield for a moment to these false teachers.

Throughout Church history for the past 2,000 years people have not been able just to believe and accept the fact that it is Christ's saving work on the cross that is the cornerstone and foundation of our faith. You cannot add any type of Law-Keeping to that to try and make yourself righteous in God's eyes. You just have to accept what God in Christ has done.

You cannot add anything to that. Christ has done it all. You could read your Bible from Sunup to Sundown seven days a week for the next 10 years and it would not make you any more acceptable to Jesus. You have to embrace him and his work and that is all – nothing more.

Therefore, rest in him. Believe in him. And you will have eternal life. And nothing will be able to take it away from you. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved! Amen."

Prayer:

"Thank you, Lord Jesus, that you died on Calvary's cross to pay for our sins. Thank you that you paid the full price and we cannot add anything to that. Receive us and forgive us, and we'll give you all the glory, now and forever. Amen. "

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