

LSB Galatians 2:11 - 21

18 For if I rebuild what I have once destroyed, I prove myself to be a transgressor. 19 For through the Law I died to the Law, so that I might live to God. 20 I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. And the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me. 21 I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly.”

We've been studying this great first threat to the gospel, very early on in the church age. And we've said the gospel can be rendered ineffective in two ways.

If you add man's works to God's grace, grace no longer is grace and the gospel is lost. You end up with a works salvation no different from every other religion on earth where men are trying to be good enough to appease God. Work their way back to God.

Not only that, but God is clear that all of our righteousness is filthy rags to Him. Unacceptable filth is all we can generate on our own. Jesus tells everyone this; 20 *“For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.”* Matt. 5:20

Righteousness by works done by the most religious men in Israel, fell short. They are unacceptable to be in God's presence. Man's best effort at a righteousness described by God through Moses is nothing but garments soaked in sewage.

That was the situation in the Galatian churches. Men came teaching that you must be converted to judaism first. Be circumcised and follow all of Moses laws and then Christ can save you. A false gospel of self righteousness that Jesus rejected when He was on earth.

The idea is hard to kill because men love a righteousness generated by doing religious stuff. It is motivated by pride. I can do this. I can deprive myself and torture myself and do enough weird stuff that God will be pleased with me. Pride in religiosity. Human pride is hard to kill.

It's the old pride that Satan got thrown out of heaven with. I will be like the most high God. That's what works religions do. They affront God by the pride of people saying I can do this. I can be like the most High. I can dig deep and generate this righteousness. Human pride. Religious works.

The other way to render the gospel null and void is to remove so much it's incomplete. Modern evangelicalism has lowered the bar so that there's no sin, no problem, no reason for Jesus to have died, no nothing but some feel good Jesus who accepts everyone just as they are. No change needed or taught. Just as deadly. Satan will roll with either one, tailor made for everyone on the wide road to destruction.

Satan doesn't care which wide plan you're on. He just wants you somewhere on the wide highway to hell. The gospel is in fact a narrow way. Faith alone, in Christ alone, by grace alone, according to a single Bible alone, for the glory of God alone.

One Man, one book, one faith, one way. Paul is fighting against judaizers who have come to Galatia with a message that Paul's way through faith alone in Christ alone, isn't enough. You need some religious rituals. You need some ceremonies. You need to go back to Moses law. You need to be like the scribes and pharisees that Jesus already rejected.

Now Paul's argument here is both logical and progressive. And I use that term progressive cautiously because these days progressive means regressive. But in this case, there is a logical real progression. Let's try to follow along with some of the most lofty and erudite words ever uttered.

18 For if I rebuild what I have once destroyed, I prove myself to be a transgressor.

Paul says if you rebuild Moses law as a way to be righteous, all the law can do is accomplish it's original intent. The law is a mirror that shows me the actual depth of my brokenness and sin. The pharisees and scribes asked Jesus;

36 "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" 37 And He said to him, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' 38 This is the great and foremost commandment. 39 And the second is like it, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' 40 On these two commandments hang the whole Law and the Prophets."

The law of God is; for the entirety of the length of the breath's God providentially grants me, from the beginning of life to the end, there should never be a one second lapse of my loving God with every fiber of my being.

And if that wasn't enough, I am ordered to love the idiot that just passed me and then slowed down slower than the speed I had set in my cruise control and I have to step on my brakes in order to not run into him. I have to love him too. He's my neighbor.

Well, I'm honest enough to admit that the law has performed it's function perfectly. My heart seethes to run that guy off the road into a ditch and never look back. And my heart forgets God most of the time and works to please itself. Continually.

I love the law and I am thankful for God's law because it did it's job and has shown me that I am a hopeless bankrupt. The law has pressed me into a corner where I realize, my only hope is to cry out for mercy. To cry out for forgiveness because, my heart is vile. Full of murders and selfishness to honor and please one person. Me.

So Paul's answer to people who want to gain salvation by following Moses

law is completely logical. Congratulations. You're condemned.

Nothing wrong with God's law. It works every time. You rebuild it, congratulations, it kills you. That's all it can do.

You rebuild a Model A Ford, congratulations. You can go down the road at 45 miles per hour in everybody's way. Good for you. It still does what a Model A does. 45 miles per hour with a bit of unarguable style.

Rebuild the law and it will do what it does. Kill you. Prove in finality that you are a transgressor. Why then would the hebrew Psalmists say over and over, *Oh how I love your law?*

Because they understood the law was not an end in itself. The law showed us the perfections of our God and revealed to us the brokenness of ourselves in comparison. And that causes us to cry out to a God of mercy and forgiveness. We love the law because it drives us as bankrupts to a merciful and forgiving God who loves us.

19 For through the Law I died to the Law, so that I might live to God.

This immediately strikes us as a tongue twister. A riddle. It seems illogical and confusing. What does Paul mean here.

Paul will write this to Timothy; *8 But we know that the Law is good, **if** one uses it lawfully,*

Nothing wrong with God's law. But it has one job to do. Show you you're a hopeless bankrupt and kill you. That's all it can do. That's a lawful use of the law.

The problem Paul is combatting is that the judaizers were telling these christians that they need to embrace Moses law as a source for righteousness and salvation. That's an unlawful use of the law. It cannot accomplish righteousness OR salvation. All it can do is show you the black

heart you inherited from your father Adam.

8 But we know that the Law is good, if one uses it lawfully, in other words, correctly. Using the law to generate righteousness and salvation is an improper use of the law. It has no power to do anything but show you your sin in a mirror.

Vs. 19 in an economy of words shows us the lawful use of the law. The correct use of God's law. *19 For through the Law I died to the Law, so that I might live to God.*

I used the law for it's lawful end, to die, it killed me and I'm dead to it, so that I could live?? That's cryptic Paul. Can you clarify! Please! That sounds illogical and impossible. If the law killed **you**, how are you alive to God. Something's missing in that equation.

20 I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me.

The answer involves a mystery that the world neither experiences or understands. Christians have a mystical union with Christ and God. When we received Christ, by faith, for forgiveness of our sins, we were at that moment indwelt by God's Holy Spirit.

We are quickened, regenerated from death to life by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us. And that quickening from death to life by the Spirit begins a union, of my spirit, with Christ that never ends.

Over and over Paul will define this union by simply stating of believers the term, In Christ. In Christ, in Christ, this or that reality. The difference between dead in sin me and alive in Christ me is this mystical union of life that God revived in my dead spirit with the communion of His Holy Spirit, in me. And I am in Him.

This is the union Jesus speaks of as He prays His high priestly prayer to the

Father in John 17 before the crucifixion.

20 "I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; 21 that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me. 22 The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; 23 I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me. 24 Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. 25 "O righteous Father, although the world has not known You, yet I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me; 26 and I have made Your name known to them, and will make it known, so that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them."

The mystical union. God and Christ and His chosen believers all united together in a union. We in Him. He in God. God in us. We are IN Christ if His Holy Spirit lives in us and has regenerated us from death to life.

Now, Paul is going to take that same idea and show how the law did it's job to kill us, and yet, we are alive, apart from the law. That reality is true in our union with Christ.

We'll picture this like little kids, if you will indulge me to try to understand the inscrutable. OK, big word time. Inscrutable. Inscrutable means something above our limited intelligence as humans to figure out or understand. God is beyond our understanding. He gave us a level of intelligence, far inferior to His. We can understand some of Him that He has chosen to reveal to us. But our finite brains cannot unravel all that is God.

Paul here dives into the inscrutable depths of God and Christ, and since we can't fully understand, we'll approach this like children to get what little we

can get.

20 I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me.

Let's pretend that God could change me into a single molecule and put me inside Christ. I'm in Christ. Dead me is inside Christ. The law did it's job and killed me. Condemned to death. And dead me is inside Christ and payment for all of my sin and lawbreaking is death. On a cross.

In Christ I go to that cross, I die on that cross, payment is made for sin, but in Christ, I rise with Him from the dead and come out the other side of the grave, fully alive, but the sin problem is paid for.

What happened at the cross is surely more than that in God's inscrutableness, but not less than that. The law declared me dead. I got inside Christ, went to the cross with Him, in Him, paid the debt in full, in Him, and then rose again In Him, alive and freed from the condemnation of the law. That debt is paid. Once for all. And I'm alive, in the resurrected Christ. Listen to Paul explain in a little more depth in Romans 6;

3 Or do you not know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? 4 Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. 5 For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, 6 knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin;

Don't stumble over that word baptized. Physical immersion is a picture of us being completely immersed and inside, Christ just like someone is surrounded and inside water by baptism by immersion.

Miss Pam was born the same year as Disneyland in California. At

disneyland there were submarines you could get into. You're standing in line as a little kid and people are getting into this submarine through a port, and then the door is sealed up and blub blub blub blub, bubbles come up and the submarine disappears into some murky green water and you don't see it any more.

That's a poor picture for us. We are in Christ. Immersed into Christ. And just like that little submarine we are immersed into the murky depths of death and get back out again somewhere else. Only in Christ. Without Christ no one comes back from the murky waters of death. In Him, we do.

Those of us who are christians are immersed into Christ. Immersed into His death. In Him we go with Him to the cross. Then, immersed in Him we burst out of the grave with Him. We leave our sins at that cross. Paid for. We are immersed into His righteousness. Thus Paul can say;

If you want to regress to playing around with law, have at it, it will do it's job and you'll be dead. That's all it can do is sentence you to death.

If you want to come out the other side of death and be alive, in God, with God, with the righteousness of Christ given to you, forget about the law and immerse yourself in Christ. Go in the grave in Christ. Go to the cross, in Christ. Be crucified with Christ, in Christ. And then rise up from the grave, IN Christ, leave the sin at the cross, enjoy redemption, in Christ.

Walk with the resurrected Christ in newness of life. That's Paul's answer to judaizers who want to try to use Moses law to achieve righteousness before God. If you embrace Moses law, all you've embraced is death. Good for you. You're successfully sentenced to death. That's all it can do for you.

20 I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me.

Regeneration leaves the old me at the cross and In Christ, because of that union with Him, in Him, by His indwelling Holy Spirit, it's a different me

who bursts out of that grave, in Christ, in His resurrection. Paul defines it as *it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me*

I struggle with people who say they are Christians but have no outward exhibit of the indwelling Christ. If you're a Christian how is it that you have no hunger for growth. No hunger to know Christ better. To know Him more. To drink in His word. To hunger for more of Christ with an insatiable appetite for first the milk of the word and later on solid meat.

To be a Christian with no inward or outward change is to be something different from what Paul defines here in this verse. *it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me . . .* that's a changed person. A different person, in Christ. The old me is gone. Dead. We left him in the grave along with the sin that was paid for at the cross.

it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me Whoever this new me is, it's a me united with the Christ living in me. I'm jumping the gun, but in the next chapter Paul will say; *For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.* We leave the old filthy garments in the grave, at the cross, and we put on perfection. We clothe ourselves with Jesus! gal.3:27

And the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.

You all know me. Pam especially knows me. Very well. I have moments of victory where this new person shines. But I have lots of moments where the old person is still present.

I wish I was an apostle Paul. But I fear I'm not. But whoever I am, with the victories and the defeats, I live by faith. Jesus paid for my sins, past, present, and oh you'd better bet, future.

And what I can claim in co-fellowship with the apostle Paul is the rest of the verse. I *also* live by faith in the same Son of God who gave Himself up for me *also*, and who loves me **also**.

There is more to that verse than simply forgiveness over failure. Paul shows us that on this side of the resurrection we no longer need be slaves to our old sinful selves. There is victory available, by faith. The rest of the Romans 6 passage illuminates the victory available to us who are alive in Christ on this side of the cross.

7 for he who has died has been justified from sin. 8 Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, 9 knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. 10 For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all, but the life that He lives, He lives to God. 11 Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Paul's argument is conclusive. With the law of Moses, you've got a single possibility. Death. That's all it can do for you. Kill you. No life comes from the law of Moses. Just death.

But in Christ, I take the condemnation of the law to its logical conclusion, death, even death by crucifixion. That debt is paid. But in Christ I rise up out of the grave, with Him, dwelling in me, and a new me, a regenerated born again me, is alive with Christ. Sin can no longer condemn me to death. That debt is paid. I'm alive with Christ on this side of the grave.

I walk by faith with Christ in communion with Him through His indwelling Holy Spirit. Paul explains it to the the Corinthians this way;

*17 Therefore if anyone is **in Christ**, he is a new creation; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.*

The judaizers come claiming they are offering a newer *better-than-Paul's* gospel, but it's a gospel that stalls out and quits at death. All the law of Moses can do is kill you. Every man, with or without Moses law, is dead the same way. All have sinned. Sin only kills. The wages of sin are the same with the law and without the law. Spiritual death. Separation from

God who owns you and created you.

21 I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly.”

The judaizers had done exactly that. Set grace aside. Attain salvation by embracing jewdaism and Moses and the full law, with Christ in there somewhere as a masthead. He does nothing in their plan but we need to keep Him hanging around on a crucifix for old time sake.

That's how Satan rolls. Invent a new religion, or in this case, re-instate an existing false works righteousness religion, but keep some identification with Jesus.

The mormons have a Jesus. But ask them and they'll be the first to tell you, it's not the Jesus of the Bible. A different Jesus. The catholics have an emaciated Jesus, but it's Mary that's got the goods. Over 90% of evangelicals have a romanticized idea of a Jesus but they couldn't tell you who He is or what He did. Something about a good example for us to follow? Right? Love everybody. That's what Jesus did. He was very inclusive.

Satan's got a million good plans to keep you on the wide road to destruction. He invents tailor made to fit plans for different needs. As long as the Jesus plan you choose stops short of the regeneration of *Christ in you, the hope of glory*.

The judaizers who came to Galatia had set aside grace and embraced a works righteousness immediately similar to the false religious system of the scribes and pharisee's.

Jesus was a great man, an incredible prophet, but if you want to get to heaven, you have to embrace Moses and get to work keeping the law. Grace is therefore, set aside.

Paul has the final word, and a whole lot more in the chapters that follow; *21 I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly.*”

If you can redeem yourself through acts of righteousness and law keeping, then Christ didn't need to die on a cross in your place. If it was possible to achieve righteousness on our own, then that's what God would require.

It never was and it still is not. I highly recommend to you to get into the old testament and read the Law of Moses. Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy.

But read it honestly as if looking into a mirror that shows you how utterly sinful you actually are. The more we understand the depths of God's law and see realistically the depths of our depravity, the more magnificent Christ becomes, who lived a sinless life, and then gave that righteousness freely to us after He took our sins upon Himself.

Ray Comfort has a ministry of presenting the gospel that's unique these days. Because he briefly begins at the moral law of God. You shall not steal. Have you stolen? You shall not lie. Have you ever lied? You shall not commit adultery. Lust is adultery. Have you ever lusted after some person not your spouse? You shall not covet. Have you ever wished that shiny new pickup in your neighbors driveway, was in your driveway?

He actually uses the law, lawfully. Not to save someone. But to condemn his listeners and drive them to repentance and a Saviour. The Lord Jesus Christ.

The law has a purpose. It condemns you to a deserved death and is powerless to save. It shows you Christ in a mirror and if you compare your heart honestly to God's picture of perfection, there can only be a single conclusion. I am a hopeless bankrupt sinner. Corruption dwells in my innermost parts.

Bad news opens up the door to good news. You ARE condemned. But there's someone who loves you, and died in your place, on a cross, who paid the debt you were helpless to do anything about.

Trying to achieve salvation by being good enough, keeping the laws of Moses, working your way to God by doing good works is generated by the same pride exhibited when Satan said I will be like the most high God. It's a religion of self pride. Religious achievement.

God condemns that. But for bankrupts who understand they are spiritually destitute, who cry out to Him for forgiveness, Christ will come and live inside your heart and you will enjoy a glorious union with the living Christ, a communion of your spirit with His Holy Spirit who indwells you. Sin is left at the cross. All of it.

The old you is left at that cross. A new, regenerated, Holy Spirit indwelt you is raised up from that grave in newness of life. That's really good news!