

Christ Reformation Church

Tillamook, Oregon

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Breathing the Fresh Air of Liberty in Jesus Christ

Galatians 5:1 For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

“Christ Lives in Me”

October 6, 2013

Sermon Text: Galatians 2:19-21

Scripture Reading: Romans 8:1-17

Introduction-

Question 1. What is your only comfort in life and death?

Answer: That I with body and soul, both in life and death, am not my own, but belong to my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ; who, with his

precious blood, has fully satisfied for all my sins, and delivered me from all the power of the devil; and so preserves me that without the will of my heavenly Father, not a hair can fall from my head; that all things must be subservient to my salvation, and therefore, by his Holy Spirit, He also assures me of eternal life, and makes me sincerely willing and ready, henceforth, to live to him. [Heidelberg Catechism]

Our text this morning in Galatians concerns these very issues of life and death:

Galatians 2:19-21 For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. (20) I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. (21) I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the

law, then Christ died for no purpose.

Question 60 of the Heidelberg Catechism (a document produced during the Reformation in Germany and named for the city in which it was written), asks:

How are you righteous before God?

I would suggest to you this morning that there is no more crucial question for every human being in this world than these 6 words –*How are you righteous before God?* And perhaps this very question is at the root of all of man’s religious and so-called moral endeavors. All human beings know that God exists, and that He is God and that we are creatures. We all know innately, as God has imprinted this knowledge in our conscience, that we owe God our thanksgiving and worship. And man knows that he suppresses that knowledge, and that he does not give Him that worship. Therefore, man knows that he is under sentence; that he is the object of God’s righteous and just wrath. Thus the question:

How are you righteous before God?

The answer to this question is heaven or hell. It is eternal life or eternal death. And for the Christian, it is joy and assurance and peace. Here is the

answer given in the Heidelberg Catechism:

Only by a true faith in Jesus Christ; so that, though my conscience accuse me, that I have grossly transgressed all the commandments of God, and kept none of them, and am still inclined to all evil; notwithstanding, God, without any merit of mine, but only of mere grace, grants and imputes to me, the perfect satisfaction, righteousness and holiness of Christ; even so, as if I never had nor committed any sin: yes, as if I had fully accomplished all that obedience which Christ has accomplished for me; inasmuch as I embrace such benefit with a believing heart.

Does that amaze you as you hear those words of the gospel read aloud to you? *As if you had fully accomplished all the obedience to God’s Law which Christ has accomplished.*

It goes on to ask, *Why do you say that you are righteous by faith alone?* And the answer it gives-

“Not because I please God by virtue of the worthiness of my faith, but because the satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness of Christ alone are my righteousness before God, and because

I can accept it and make it mine in no other way than by faith alone.”

The Galatian churches were being threatened by a false gospel that denied this. These “troublers” had come into the churches that Paul had established and insisted that salvation apart from circumcision (and thus, the keeping of the OT Law) was impossible. Both they and their message are pronounced accursed by God (anathema) by the Apostle.

“...the righteousness which can stand before the judgment of God must be absolutely perfect and wholly in conformity with the divine Law. But even our best works in this life are all imperfect and defiled with sin.”[HC]

Galatians 3:10 For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, "Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them."

This past week I was corresponding with a lady who is a genuine Christian and who has been through years and years of torment and abuse. As is the experience of so many of these victims, she shared what happened to her as a “judaizer” elder in her church phoned her after she had asked for help and rescue. He told her that if she did not return to her abuser and submit to

him, she would be the object of God’s hatred and she would end in hell. Fearing it was true, she did return and she and her children almost died as a result.

What was that elder saying to her? He was enslaving her to the same kind of false gospel that Paul is opposing here in Galatians: salvation by works. A righteousness created by our own doings. Which is, of course, no gospel at all.

Let’s move in now for a closer examination of what Paul writes here in our text for this morning. Listen to it once more:

Galatians 2:19-21 For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. (20) I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. (21) I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose.

In some ways, Galatians is a “little Romans,” isn’t it? *Through the law I died to the law...I have been crucified with Christ.* The same themes we find in Romans.

Through the Law I Died to the Law

Here, Paul declares the purpose of the Law. Death. If we are to live to God, then first we must “die to the law.” What does that mean? Listen to a parallel in Romans that makes it clearer:

Romans 3:19-23 Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. (20) For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, **since through the law comes knowledge of sin.** (21) But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it-- (22) the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: (23) for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

The Law of God, the 10 Commandments if you will, was never given for the purpose of justification. It was given:

- To silence any attempt of man to claim he is just

- To make everyone admit that they are accountable to God for their sin
- To make man aware of his sin
- To give, in shadow, an announcement of Christ and the gospel – a way that is by faith alone apart from works of the Law.

Here are some more statements concerning the purpose of the Law –

Romans 4:15 For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law there is no transgression.

Romans 5:20 Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more,

Romans 7:7-11 What then shall we say? 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 had not said, "You shall not covet." (8) But sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness. For apart from the law, sin lies dead. (9) I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin came alive and I died. (10) The very commandment that promised life proved to be death to

me. (11) For sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me.

See it then? No wonder Paul was so incensed at any suggestion that justification before God required not only faith in Christ, but circumcision (obedience to the Law).

Now, the Law is not evil as Paul makes very plain in Romans 7. Sin is what is evil. The Law simply brings it out of hiding and puts it right in front of our faces, then shows us our condemnation and drives us to despair of any self-effort of making ourselves right before God.

Where do you learn of your sin and its wretched consequences?

Answer: *From the Law of God.* [HC]

Every one of us must be brought to the end of ourselves. We must come to clearly understand and despair of the foolishness of trusting in our own supposed law-keeping to make us right with God, and this notion is exceedingly difficult to eradicate from our thinking. I would challenge all of us to seriously consider whether or not we have truly come to the point of announcing, “wretched man that I am!” as a result of God working the

realization of that wretchedness in us through His Law.

I mean, *have you genuinely ever come to the point in your life when you fully realized that you have no resident goodness in you at all? Do you fancy yourself really quite good and in yourself approved of by God? Do you pride yourself, fundamentally, in the fact that people surely look at you and say, “now there is a fine, honest, upstanding man or woman who is head and shoulders above the rest of humanity”?* If so, then your faith is not in Christ. And you are in serious trouble.

Before any human being can live to God, he must first die to the Law.

This is the proper use of the Law. It is a mirror to show us our sin, to show us that we are under God’s curse. To “die to the law” means for the Law to so work in us that all self-merit, all trust in our own law-keeping and supposed “good works” are useless and repugnant to God. These Judaizers then who were troubling the Galatians claimed to be experts on the Law, but they did not have the first clue about what its real purpose was.

1 Timothy 1:6-11 Certain persons, by swerving from these, have wandered away into vain discussion, (7) desiring to be

teachers of the law, without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make confident assertions. (8) Now we know that the law is good, if one uses it lawfully, (9) understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers, (10) the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine, (11) in accordance with the gospel of the glory of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted.

Listen to Martin Luther:

To be dead to the Law means to be free of the Law. What right, then, has the Law to accuse me, or to hold anything against me? When you see a person squirming in the clutches of the Law, say to him: "Brother, get things straight. You let the Law talk to your conscience. Make it talk to your flesh. Wake up, and believe in Jesus Christ, the Conqueror of Law and sin. Faith in Christ will lift you high above the Law into the heaven of grace. Though Law and sin remain, they no longer concern you, because you are dead to the Law and dead to sin." Blessed is the person

who knows how to use this truth in times of distress. He can talk. He can say: "Mr. Law, go ahead and accuse me as much as you like. I know I have committed many sins, and I continue to sin daily. But that does not bother me. You have got to shout louder, Mr. Law. I am deaf, you know. Talk as much as you like, I am dead to you. If you want to talk to me about my sins, go and talk to my flesh. Belabor that, but don't talk to my conscience. My conscience is a lady and a queen, and has nothing to do with the likes of you, because my conscience lives to Christ under another law, a new and better law, the law of grace."

We have two propositions:

To live unto the Law, is to die unto God.

To die unto the Law, is to live unto God.

These two propositions go against reason. No law-worker can ever understand them. But see to it that you understand them. The Law can never justify and save a sinner. The Law can only accuse, terrify, and kill him. Therefore to live unto the Law is to die unto God. Vice versa, to die unto the Law is to live unto God. If you want to live unto God, bury the Law, and find life through faith in Christ Jesus.

We have enough arguments right here to conclude that justification is by faith alone. How can the Law effect our justification, when Paul so plainly states that we must be dead to the Law if we want to live unto God? If we are dead to the Law and the Law is dead to us, how can it possibly contribute anything to our justification? There is nothing left for us but to be justified by faith alone.

This nineteenth verse is loaded with consolation. It fortifies a person against every danger. It allows you to argue like this: “I confess I have sinned.” “Then God will punish you.” “No, He will not do that.” “Why not? Does not the Law say so?” “I have nothing to do with the Law.” “How so?” “I have another law, the law of liberty.” “What do you mean—’liberty’?” “The liberty of Christ, for Christ has made me free from the Law that held me down. That Law is now in prison itself, held captive by grace and liberty.”

By faith in Christ a person may gain such sure and sound comfort, that he need not fear the devil, sin, death, or any evil. “Sir Devil,” he may say, “I am not afraid of you. I have a Friend whose name is Jesus Christ, in whom I believe. He has abolished the Law, condemned sin, vanquished death, and destroyed hell for me. He is bigger than you, Satan. He has licked you,

and holds you down. You cannot hurt me.” This is the faith that overcomes the devil. Paul manhandles the Law. He treats the Law as if it were a thief and a robber He treats the Law as contemptible to the conscience, in order that those who believe in Christ may take courage to defy the Law, and say: “Mr. Law, I am a sinner. What are you going to do about it?”

Luther, Martin (2012-12-17). Commentary on Galatians (Kindle Locations 959-985).

Not I, But Christ

Look once more now at verse 20. It is a most amazing and vital statement that every Christian must get hold of:

Galatians 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

What does this mean? The Christian has been crucified, buried, and resurrected with Christ. Thus, we are new creations. The person we were is gone. Further, a new principle has become the driving force of my life – Christ in me! Listen to it in these others verses:

Galatians 5:24 And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

Galatians 6:14-15 But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. (15) For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation.

Romans 8:9-11 You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. (10) But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. (11) If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

John 14:16-21 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, (17) even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in

you. (18) "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. (19) Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. (20) In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. (21) Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him."

Ephesians 3:14-19 For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, (15) from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, (16) that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, (17) so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith--that you, being rooted and grounded in love, (18) may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, (19) and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Now, there is mystery in this. I don't understand it completely. Christ is IN me. His Spirit resides in me. And He is actively LIVING in me. He has

become a new “law,” a new principle who defines who I now am. He actively lives and leads and teaches me. This new “law” is one of liberty and freedom, with no condemnation. He is so joined to me and me to Him that I increasingly desire what He desires. And this shows even further why the Law has no place in me any longer as far as defining my relationship to God. *Christ does not need the Law!*

Here is Luther once more:

Faith connects you so intimately with Christ, that He and you become as it were one person. As such you may boldly say: “I am now one with Christ. Therefore Christ’s righteousness, victory, and life are mine.” On the other hand, Christ may say: “I am that big sinner. His sins and his death are mine, because he is joined to me, and I to him.”

Paul does not deny the fact that he is living in the flesh. He performs the natural functions of the flesh. But he says that this is not his real life. His life in the flesh is not a life after the flesh. “I live by the faith of the Son of God,” he says. “My speech is no longer directed by the flesh, but by the Holy Ghost. My sight is no longer governed by the flesh, but by the Holy Ghost. My hearing is no longer determined by the flesh, but by the

Holy Ghost. I cannot teach, write, pray, or give thanks without the instrumentality of the flesh; yet these activities do not proceed from the flesh, but from God.” A Christian uses earthly means like any unbeliever. Outwardly they look alike. Nevertheless there is a great difference between them. I may live in the flesh, but I do not live after the flesh. I do my living now “by the faith of the Son of God.” Paul had the same voice, the same tongue, before and after his conversion. Before his conversion his tongue uttered blasphemies. But after his conversion his tongue spoke a spiritual, heavenly language. We may now understand how spiritual life originates. It enters the heart by faith. Christ reigns in the heart with His Holy Spirit, who sees, hears, speaks, works, suffers, and does all things in and through us over the protest and the resistance of the flesh.

Luther, Martin (2012-12-17). Commentary on Galatians (Kindle Locations 1016-1036). . Kindle Edition.

Understand? Christ does not need to obey the Law! He doesn’t need to create righteousness for Himself. Furthermore, to tell Christians that the Law is dead to them, and they to the Law as far as their relationship to God goes, will NOT promote sin! Because Christ is not going to say “Oh, I am

going to sin now because the Law doesn't apply to me."

Christ is not under the Law. He has no sin to be exposed by it. He does not need to be pointed to Himself (as the end of the Law). And those reasons apply to the Christian as well because we are inseparably joined to Christ. He is in us and living His life out through us.

Notice how Paul is always amazed at what motivated Christ to die for us: He loved us. Paul personalizes it, as we can. Christ love me and gave Himself for me. This is the freeing, yet binding factor that impels the Christian to obedience: our love for Christ and His love for us.

If Righteousness is Through the Law

Finally, look again at verse 21-

<p>Galatians 2:21 I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose.</p>
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What is Paul's point here, especially in regard to "nullifying" the grace of God? It seems he means this:

"Christ graciously loved me and gave Himself for me. I in no way deserved this. It was all of grace. Therefore I refuse to make that grace null and

void, as if Christ died for nothing. But that is exactly what everyone is saying if they return to the Law, insisting that righteousness comes through obedience to the Law. If the Law were the way God intended for sinners to seek righteousness with Him, then all that Christ did, including His death, was totally for nothing because His gospel declares that HE is our righteousness, not works of the Law.