

**Galatians 2: 6-10; “St. Paul’s View of His Ministry”, Message # 8 in the series –
“Christ has Made Us Free”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall
on June 14th, 2020, in the Afternoon Worship service.**

The reason that Paul wrote this letter was because the churches in Galatia had been deceived into believing the lie that the gospel which he had preached to them was not sufficient to save them from their sins. They were told by false teachers that they needed to add the works of the law to the gospel of Christ in order to be saved. Paul had already declared to them in no uncertain words that if anyone preached any other gospel to them than the one that he had preached to them, they would come under the apostolic curse. In the remainder of the first chapter, he went on to tell them that the gospel was not something of man’s contrivance; it had come from God to all the apostles through “revelation of Jesus Christ”. (verse 12)

Even though Paul was not of the original twelve apostles, he had seen the risen Christ, and he had personally been taught the true gospel by Christ Himself. God had called him in a very dramatic way on the road to Damascus, by letting him see Christ and hear His voice speaking directly to him. In doing this, the Father revealed His Son in Paul that he might preach Him among the Gentiles. He showed Paul and us that it is Christ Himself who saves us. Now Paul builds upon this argument in verses 6-10 by talking about the other apostles, and himself in relation to them. He wants to show us, 1st, that there is no personal favoritism with God. And 2nd, he wants to show us that God does give distinguishing grace in regard to men’s ministries. These two things are not contrary to one another, as I shall show you.

1st of all – Let us understand that with God there is no personal favoritism.

Verse 6 says – “But from those who seemed to be something—whatever they were, it makes no difference to me; God shows personal favoritism to no man—for those who seemed to be something added nothing to me.” The “those who seemed to be something” that he is referring to here, are the apostles who came before him. Those who are specifically mentioned in verse 9 are Peter, James, and John. The James here, is not James the son of Zebedee and brother of John. Rather he is James the brother of our Lord, and many believe, the son of Alphaeus. In doing a little research on this I consulted with James Gardner’s Christian Encyclopedia, and he says under the title of James the Less, son of Alphaeus, “He is styled the Lord’s brother; thus Paul says, ‘But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord’s brother.’ (Galatians 1: 19) “The word brother was often applied to a near relation of any kind, and the general opinion is that he was the cousin our blessed Lord, being the son of Cleopas, or Alphaeus, and Mary, sister to the mother of our Lord.” “He was surnamed the Just, on account of the remarkable purity of his life.”

I think that this analysis is very helpful concerning James. And we are told here by Paul that these three men mentioned were very great in reputation, in the eyes of believers in the early Church. But even though this was so, Paul gives us a true view of how God looked at them, and we can also apply this to ourselves, and to other Christians, and to other people, in the way that we are to look at them. He says – God does not show personal favoritism to any man. If you will turn with me over to Job Chapter 34, verse 16-19, you will see exactly what this means. Verse 16 says – “If you have understanding, hear this; listen to the sound of my words: Should one who hates justice govern?” “Will you condemn Him who is most just?” “Is it fitting to say to a king, ‘You are worthless,’ and to nobles, ‘You are wicked’?” “Yet He (that is God) is not partial to princes, nor does He regard the rich more than the poor; for they are all the work of His hands.”

So we see here God’s strict sense of justice in relation to His dealings with both the poor and rich. To God, it does not matter if a man is rich; He will not regard the them more than the poor in justice; for, they are all the work of His hands. He has made them both, and He will not have regard for the prince with his riches more than the poor man in his poverty. God will always reward a man according to his works, in strict justice. Look also at Job 37, verses 23 and 24. “As

for the Almighty, we cannot find Him; He is excellent in power, in judgment and abundant justice; He does not oppress.” “Therefore men fear Him; He shows no partiality to any who are wise of heart.” Here we find that God is so far above us in the greatness of His Being that we cannot find Him, it says. He is excellent in the way that He uses His power. He is excellent in the judgments that He makes in relation to all of men’s conduct. He is abundant in justice which shows that He is well able to consider any situation or possible situation from all angles, and to see it entirely correctly, and to judge all men perfectly in every situation. Not one flaw in justice or judgment.

You can see this also in Romans Chapter 2, verses 1-11. “Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things.” “But we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against those who practice such things.” “And do you think this, O man, you who judge those practicing such things, and doing the same, that you will escape the judgment of God?” “Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?”

“But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to each one according to his deeds: eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness—indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek; but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.” “For there is no partiality with God.”

Here the apostle Paul shows us the terrible hypocrisy which is in some people. They look at other people, and they see their sins perfectly clearly. All the sins which are listed in chapter 1, verse 29-32, they believe, are deserving of death. Unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, envy, murder, strife, deceit, and evil-mindedness. They disapprove of whisperers, backbiters, and people who hate God. They believe that people who are violent, and proud, and boasters, and inventors of evil are worthy of judgment. They do not approve of people who are disobedient to parents, or those who are undiscerning people. They cannot stand the thought of untrustworthy people, or unloving people, or people who will not forgive others. And people who are unmerciful in their own judgments concerning other people; they know this to be wrong.

And yet, all of these sins, which are condemned by them, sometimes a person will self-righteously condemn in others, and yet they will actually commit and go on committing those sins themselves, not realizing their own hypocrisy. They are unwilling to look at their own inconsistency and hypocrisy straight in the face. This is inexcusable, and God will deal with all such people in strict justice, impartially. If they are self-seeking and do not obey the truth but obey unrighteousness, God will show His indignation and His wrath to all such, whether they are a Jew, or whether they are a Greek; a Gentile. But to those who work what is good, those people shall have glory and honor and peace. This is the impartiality of God. And we should carefully consider it.

But in regard to the apostles, those men who are our particular consideration in this study, we should understand that God never did have personal favorites among them. Christ Himself never expected Paul to submit to a course of instruction from the other apostles who had walked with the Lord Jesus when He engaged in His earthly ministry. And Peter was not the first Pope. Christ did not expect that Paul would have to sit under the ministry of any of these great apostles, or please any one of these great apostles; these men who were of great reputation. He knew that he did not need to envy their gifts, or their ministry, because they had walked with Jesus personally. He says, after he had met them and talked with them, that – “They added nothing to me.” So you see, Paul had been given everything that he had, in terms of salvation, and in terms of gifts for ministry, from Christ Himself. There was nothing that the other apostles could add to that.

In applying this to ourselves, I believe that it is reasonable to conclude, that God Himself is our main teacher in how to live the Christian life, not men. It is not as though our Lord will not employ many great and godly men to help us along in that instruction, but Christ Himself, by means of His Holy Spirit, is our first and primary teacher in every matter related to our making progress in righteousness and holiness, and in our learning how to glorify God. God does not have His favorites among Christian teachers today. Truth is truth, and we should submit to God and Christ first of all, to be taught and led by our God, and then we should have a teachable attitude in the context of our pastor in the local church.

Turn over with me over to 1st John chapter 2, verses 24-27. “Therefore let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning.” “If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father.” “And this is the promise that He has promised us—eternal life.” “These things I have written to you concerning those who try to deceive you.” “But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him.”

Now, when we read these things, we should understand that it is not as though, as ordinary believers, we should not submit to the authority of a pastor, or join a local church, so that we can receive regular instruction in the Word of God. We should do all of that; but we should always be looking beyond all of the means that God uses, to Christ Himself, to confirm what any man is attempting to teach us. We are certainly not men called to an itinerant apostolic ministry, but we do have a gift that has been given to us by Christ. And according to Biblical truth we are to use that gift in relation to both the local church of which we are a member, and also in relation to helping people in the world outside of the church, as well.

Your pastor or elders will be able to be able to foster and further that truth of the word of God in your life, as they see your submission to God and to Christ; to them and to the word of God. If they are discerning men, they will be able to recognize in you, over time, whether God is teaching you and guiding you into a particular personal ministry of serving Him, in relation to the local church, and help you in this regard. Think of Acts Chapter 17, verse 10. “Then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea.” “When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews.” “These were more fair-minded (more noble-minded, NAS) than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.

Now, notice the reason that these people were called, “noble-minded”. It was because they searched the Scriptures to see whether what the Apostle Paul had spoken to them lined up with what the Scriptures taught. They respected him, but they would be led to follow Christ by searching for themselves, and being led to the truth by the Holy Spirit of God. This is how the whole Christian life ought to be lived; not independent from the local church, or unwilling to listen to the pastor, but being willing to join the local church and regularly listen to the preaching and counsel of the pastor because the Spirit is leading you, and guiding you, into all the truth. This is a matter of submission to Biblically constituted authority, and to God Himself.

2nd – Paul wants to show us that God does give distinguishing grace in regard to men’s ministries.

Verse 7 says – “But on the contrary, when they saw that the gospel for the uncircumcised had been committed to me, as the gospel for the circumcised was to Peter (for He who worked effectively in Peter for the apostleship to the circumcised also worked effectively in me toward the Gentiles), and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.” “They desired only that we should remember the poor, the very thing which I also was eager to do.”

So I hope that you can see here, that it was God who committed a particular ministry to James, Cephas, and John. They were pillars in the Church as apostles. They had received the word by direct revelation from God, and they were the ones appointed by God to declare, to proclaim, and to uphold the Word of truth. Paul recognized that they were pillars, not because of anything that he or others saw in them personally. It was because of the grace that had been given to them by Christ. God had given them that grace to minister to the circumcision. They were not called specifically to preach or to minister to the Gentiles, as Paul was. It is true that Peter had opened the door of ministry to the Gentiles in Acts chapter 10, but it was actually Paul who was called to become the apostle to the Gentiles. The apostles mentioned here in verse 9, recognized the grace that had been given to Paul by Christ, and they extended to him the right hand of fellowship. They wanted God to bless his ministry.

Let me apply this in this holy way. How often in the greater Church of Jesus Christ, there has existed a spirit of jealousy in regard to a man's ministry and his success in that ministry. This ought not to be among brethren. God is well able to bless and prosper every pastor's ministry if He has called him to the work, and if they are willing to let Him lead, and to have all the glory for whatever might be accomplished, it is a very good thing. No Christian church member should ever envy the ministry of the pastor, or the ministry of some other person in the church, that they are a member of. Christ is well able to richly bless you, as well, with fruit; in whatever ministry, great or small, that He has called you to, and gifted you for.

Turn with me over to Romans 15: 14-21. "Now I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another." "Nevertheless, brethren, I have written more boldly to you on some points, as reminding you, because of the grace given to me by God., that I might be a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit." "Therefore I have reason to glory in Christ Jesus in the things which pertain to God." "For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ has not accomplished through me, in word and deed, to make the Gentiles obedient—in mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God, so that from Jerusalem and round about to Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ." "And so I have made it my aim to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build on another man's foundation, but as it is written: 'To whom He was not announced, they shall see; and those who have not heard shall understand.'"

What wonderful principles Paul operated by, in terms of his own ministry, and that of others, is evident from these words. He was confident that the brethren in Rome were filled with the Holy Spirit, and that they were able to admonish one another. He didn't confine the ministry of truth to himself, but he believed that they were able to admonish one another. Nevertheless, he did not see their ministry as being identical to his. Indeed, he told them that they should submit to his apostolic authority in his correction of them, where they needed it. He wanted his offering of them to be acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

There was no thought in Paul's mind of a church growth movement. Rather, he was praying for the Lord's blessing to be upon the church of Rome, and the churches of Galatia, that they might know fruit from their labors, and an increase in numbers, which the Lord would bring about at the proper time. This is why he could glory in God, and not try to compete in ministry with other ministers. It was because he knew that it was Christ alone who accomplished all these good things through him, in word and deed, as he was sensitive to the Spirit's leading, and walked in the truth. It was Christ's power that allowed him to labor so strenuously, not his own power. He did not want to build upon another man's ministry but to fully exercise his own ministry to the glory of God. He wanted other men's ministries to be blessed and to flourish. Oh, how this glorifies God, when we learn to think and live like Paul did. May the Lord be blessing us with his kind of wisdom.

