

**Galatians 2:15-21**  
Gospel Faith  
*Jonathan M. Romig*

\*Jonathan preached this sermon at Immanuel Church on 6/21/15.

## Introduction:

1. This past week in S.C., a man walked into a Wednesday night Bible study and prayer meeting at Mother Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal church.
2. An hour later he shot 9 people, martyring 6 women and 3 men—the oldest 87 and the youngest 26.
3. He killed the Assistant Pastor, Sharonda Singleton and the Senior Pastor, Clementa Pinckney.
4. Clementa attended Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary (M.Div, 08) and worked for human rights.
5. The church's website: *Jesus died a passionate death for us, so our love for Him should be as passionate.*
6. This young man hated them for their skin, "you rape our women and you're taking over our country."
7. He killed them because he thought he was fundamentally better than them, both in works and nature.
8. At its core this is the same message of racism and works-righteousness Paul is countering in Galatians.
9. Paul rebukes Peter for thinking he as a Jew is better than the Gentiles (v. 11-14).
10. The gospel tells us that before God we're all equally broken and need Christ.
11. The gospel tells us that we can't do anything to make ourselves better than others.
12. The gospel trades works for faith, death for life, me for him (read Gal 2:15-21).

(The gospel doesn't say I'm better in nature or in the things I do.)

## I. The gospel trades **works for faith**. (v. 15-16)

### A. The gospel trades pride for trust (v. 15)

- a. When Paul says "Jews by birth" he's saying they're of a different nature, origin, or category.
- b. When we look at each other, it's easy to see our differences, which is why we need God's view.
- c. In God's eyes, He's God and we're humans, which erases our social, financial, and race pride.
- d. One type of **ant** isn't better in comparison to a little boy with a sneakers (field, fire, carpenter).
- e. The gospel says we can either trust in ourselves or in God.

### B. The Bible gives us the solution for racism—the gospel.

- a. Jesus knows what it's liked to be murdered because of hatred.
- b. But even as he was being murdered he prayed, "Father, forgive them..." (Lk 22:34)
- c. The good news is that Jesus rose again from the grave—he literally beat racism.
- d. He offers forgiveness and grace for any who harbor hate in their hearts.

(The gospel trades racial pride for trust in the God who made all races.)

### C. Through the gospel we trust in Christ's works (v. 16)

- a. Paul writes "no man is declared righteous from the works of the law." (justification)
- b. The law is the Old Testament system of belief God gave Moses at Mount Sinai.
- c. The law was never meant to save people, but to point towards our need for a savior.
- d. NIV says we are "justified by faith in Christ" vs. "justified by the faithfulness of Christ" (NET)
- e. We are declared righteous because Jesus obeyed the law for us as our substitute.
- f. We can only be declared righteous if we put our faith in Jesus, not in our own nature or works.

(The gospel trades works for faith.)

## II. The gospel trades works for faith, **death for life**. (v. 17-19)

- A. Objection: If Christ loves sinners, he must love sin. (v. 17)
- a. In v. 17, Paul guesses the Galatians' counter to the gospel and then answers it in v. 18-19.
  - b. Paul is saying, "If Jesus lower's his standard for people, isn't Jesus joining in sin?"
  - c. Paul practically shouts "may it never be!" (optative mood/obtainable wish/expresses abhorrence)
  - d. My answer is that Jesus died because God didn't lower his standard.

(So how does Paul respond to this charge?)

- B. Answer #1: No! If I love my good works, I love sin. (v. 18)
- a. In v. 18 Paul says that if we return to works-based righteousness, we, not Jesus, return to sin.
  - b. Good works can't produce righteousness—all they can produce is 1) pride and 2) sin fascination.
  - c. I think Paul is also telling the Jews here that Jesus has introduced a new way (not really new).
  - d. They are living in the old house of religion and Jesus dwells in the gospel house.

(The objection in v. 17 is, if Christ loves sinners, he must love sin.)

- C. Answer #2: No! My good works show me my need for Christ (v. 19)
- a. Paul is saying that all performance-based law did for him was to help him give up on himself.
  - b. I hope that God brings you to a point where you realize that you can't do it anymore.
  - c. God brings us to these points to help us die to me and cling to Christ.
  - d. The gospel trades death for life.

- D. Timothy Keller writes in *Galatians For You* (page 61):

*The law itself showed me that I could never make myself acceptable through it. So I stopped "living to it". I died to it as my savior. Though I obeyed God before, it was simply to get something from Him; it was for my own sake. Now I obey Him simply to please Him. I now live for Him.*

(The gospel trades works for faith, death for life.)

### III. The gospel trades works for faith, death for life, **me for Him**. (v. 20-21)

- A. The gospel trades me for Him. (v. 20-21)
- a. Paul is so excited to say "I have been crucified with Christ" it's actually in v. 19 in the Greek.
  - b. Crucified is in the perfect tense, which means what happened in the past effects me today.
  - c. In other words, Paul is saying that we have already died with Jesus, and that matters now.
  - d. He supports this throughout the rest of the verse as he says he is living today, right now, in Jesus.

My translation: *But I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who am living but Christ is living in me! But now the life which I am living in the flesh, I am living by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me!*

- e. Notice that this verse doesn't tell us "you need to be living for Christ."
- f. Galatians 2:20 is not a command of how we should act but a description of our present state.
- g. If Jesus is my substitute, then even his obedience and perfect faith is counted as mine.

- h. I'll read it again, and this time think of it as a reminder of everything you already have in Jesus.

*But I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who am living but Christ is living in me!  
But now the life which I am living in the flesh, I am living by faith in the Son of God who loved me  
and gave himself for me!*

- B. Imagine for a moment that you were born in prison.
  - a. You grew up locked away, abused, never knowing freedom, and loving your prison home.
  - b. And then one day the judge comes and sets you free because his son purchased your freedom.
  - c. But the judge doesn't just let you go homeless as a poor beggar unadjusted to this new freedom.
  - d. He takes you home, says "you are my child", and gives you all the wealth of his kingdom.
  - e. The gospel trades works for faith, death for life, me for Him.

(I listened to a sermon by Bryan Chapell on Gal 2:20 this week, in which he made these two points.)<sup>1</sup>

- C. Application #1: The gospel trades my failures for his successes.
  - a. My neighbor's moving revealed some racism in my heart.
  - b. I don't want just anyone to move in next door, even though I just moved in a year ago.
  - c. The gospel not only changes my heart but gives me a record that's racism-free.
  - d. I experienced my first mid-life crisis January when I turned 27.
  - e. We don't have to look with regret at what we haven't accomplished because Christ did it all.
- D. Application #2: The gospel trades my success for his successes.
  - a. I can't revel in any of my victories because I don't want them on my record anyways.
  - b. My successes are just God's blessing and they are nothing in comparison to the cross.

(The gospel trades works for faith, death for life, me for Him.)

#### Conclusion:

1. This week a man used a message of racism, hate, and "I'm better than you" to kill 9 people.
2. Another person died this week who believed and lived a radically different message.
3. Elisabeth Elliott died on Monday morning at the age of 88 years old.<sup>2</sup>
4. In 1956, the Auca (awqa) indians in Ecuador speared her husband, Jim, and four other missionary men.
5. If she believed in a message of works, she would have left, but she believed in the gospel.
6. So for the next three years she worked with that tribe and they came to know Jesus.
7. Some of her husband's murderers came to know Jesus because of Elisabeth Elliott.
8. Elisabeth Elliott spent the rest of her life living by faith for Jesus.
9. The gospel trades works for faith, death for life, me for Him.

Benediction: 1 Thessalonians 5:23 "May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." (NIV)

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<sup>1</sup> "Rewired by the Gospel" by Dr. Bryan Chapell: <http://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?SID=11508856291>

<sup>2</sup> Read John Piper's Tribute: <http://www.desiringgod.org/articles/peaches-in-paradise>