

Sermon Title: **Justified by Faith**

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Vessel: Russ LaFlamme

Scripture Reference: **Galatians 2:15-21**

Thesis: **Paul teaches the Galatians the true gospel message;**

Purpose: **We will learn that it is our faith that justifies us before God and not our works.**

Key Word: **"Justification & Faith"**

Key Points: #1 **The Reason Jesus Went to the Cross**

#2 **The Meaning of Being Crucified with Christ**

I) Introduction:

Scripture Reading is: **Galatians 2:15-21**

A) The Setting:

- 1) The Apostle Paul hated hypocrisy and was quick to call it out when he saw it and it didn't matter with whom it occurred.
- 2) In these days of political fervor in the race for our next President; I believe there is a lot of hypocrisy evident by all candidates.
- 3) **This is nothing new based on a story of one former President, Teddy Roosevelt from a November 12, 1992 article in Bits & Pieces, November 12, 1992, pp. 19-20.1**
  - (a) During one of his political campaigns, a delegation called on Theodore Roosevelt at his home in Oyster Bay, Long Island. The President met them with his coat off and his sleeves rolled up.
  - (b) "*Ah, gentlemen,*" he said, "*come down to the barn and we will talk while I do some work.*"
  - (c) At the barn, Roosevelt picked up a pitchfork and looked around for the hay. Then he called out, "*John, where's all the hay?*"
  - (d) "*Sorry, sir,*" John called down from the hayloft. "*I ain't had time to toss it back down again after you pitched it up while the Iowa folks were here.*"
- 4) **But perhaps a quote by Robert Redford sums it up best for all of us.<sup>2</sup>**
  - (a) As Robert Redford was walking one day through a hotel lobby;
  - (b) A woman saw him and followed him to the elevator. "*Are you the real Robert Redford?*" she asked him with great excitement.
  - (c) As the doors of the elevator closed, he replied, "**Only when I am alone!**"
- 5) **Isn't that really true for all of us, that the only time we are real in this life is when we are alone?**
  - (a) According to the Merriman-Webster Dictionary "Hypocrisy" is simply defined as:
  - (b) *The behavior of people who do things that they tell other people not to do: behavior that does not agree with what someone claims to believe or feel.*
- 6) **Paul has been called by Jesus to bring the Good News of the grace of God to those outside of the gentiles.**
  - (a) In other words, to those outside the Jewish faith, the Greeks, the Asians, and the Romans.
  - (b) The Apostle Peter went to Antioch to join Paul and encourage him in the work.
- 7) **Peter too had a vision from Christ where a sheet from Heaven came down containing all sort of things that were unclean or forbidden by the Jewish Law for the Jews to eat.**
  - (a) Jesus told Peter in **Acts 10:13-15** to kill and eat these unclean things; to which Peter replied, "**Surely Not. Lord.**"
  - (b) But God said, "**Do not call anything impure that God has made clean.**"
- 8) **When Peter first came to Antioch he ate at the table for the Gentiles eating these unclean things.**
  - (a) The problem occurred when James, the bother of our Lord arrived.
  - (b) All of a sudden, Peter would only eat at the kosher table which contained the only food acceptable to the Jews.

- (c) James was what we would call a legalist who maintained that Jews must continue to keep the Mosaic law.
- 9) **Peter, fearing James disapproval, would no longer be seen eating with the Gentiles or eating their food.**
- (a) Paul did not go behind Peter's back and talk about him; no, Paul called Peter out for this practice of hypocrisy publicly.
- (b) Peter's actions is causing others traveling with Paul to think they are doing something wrong.
- 10) **This brings us to the last half of the second Chapter of Paul's letter to the Galatian churches**
- (a) Where Peter is explaining the belief that what makes us justified to God is our faith in Jesus.
- (b) **So, with that as our setting for the events about to unfold let us turn in our Bibles this morning to Galatians 2:15-21.**

B) *Sermon Prayer*

C) (The Hook)

- 1) **Paul is using this illustration of Peter's hypocrisy to explain the problem that he is confronting with the churches of Galatia.**
- (a) The basis for the argument is how are we made acceptable to God.
- (b) Jews already understand that they are sinners.
- (c) They know this because to keep from being a sinner they must perfectly keep the law of Moses which God gave the people.
- 2) **According to the David Jeremiah Study Bible the law has two purposes;**
- (a) **First, it perpetually reminded people of God's standards and our inability to meet them**
- (i) . . . that is, our inability to make ourselves righteous before God.
- (ii) (this is just Bible speak for right before or with God.)
- (b) **Second, the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ,**
- (i) That we might be justified by faith. (3:24)
- (ii) **As a tutor, or teacher, the law revealed humanity's lack of righteousness**
- So that when Jesus Christ came as the one-and-for-all, perfect sacrifice . . . our Justifier by faith . . .
  - Israel and the world at large would be ready to embrace Him.
- 3) **A sinner is one who transgresses against divine law by committing an immoral act or acts.**
- (a) In other words the law makes aware of our inability to be right before a Holy God.
- (b) And therefore makes us aware that since we cannot save ourselves from the consequences of sin, which is eternal separation from God, that we are in need of one who will rescue us.
- (c) That person is none other than the Son of God, Jesus, one third of the Holy Trinity.
- 4) This is the point of what we are looking at this morning as we will learn that it is our faith that justifies us before God and not our works.

TS: **We begin by looking at . . .**

II) Body: (Key Points)

A) Key Point #1: **The Reason Jesus Went to the Cross**

- 1) **As I have already stated the law set the stage to help us understand the need for a Savior, one who would rescue us in our own inability to earn God's favor.**
- 2) **Let me illustrate:**<sup>3</sup> (SAVED FROM OUR RUBBLE OF SIN- COMMUNION MEDITATION)

- (a) The September 11, 2002 issue of TIME magazine carried a touching article about 31-year old Genelle Guzman.
  - (b) Genelle was the last of just four people caught in the debris of the Twin Towers to be found alive.
  - (c) **After the planes hit the World Trade Center,**
    - (i) Genelle was descending a stair case from the 64th floor of the North Tower.
    - (ii) Steel beams weakened to their breaking point.
    - (iii) Solid concrete was pulverized. But somehow her body found an air pocket.
  - (d) **Her right leg was pinned under heavy concrete pillars.**
    - (i) Her head was caught between stacks of wreckage.
    - (ii) But somehow she was still alive.
    - (iii) For twenty-seven hours Guzman lay trapped and seriously injured.
  - (e) **In recent months before the attacks Genelle had started attending the church called Brooklyn Tabernacle, and wanted to get her life turned around.**
    - (i) So while she was stuck in the rubble, she started to pray.
    - (ii) She'd trail off into sleep – wake up and pray some more.
  - (f) **Shortly after noon on Wednesday the 12th, she heard voices.**
    - (i) So she screamed as loud as she could, "***I'm here! HEY, I'M RIGHT HERE!***"
    - (ii) A rescue worker responded, "*Do you see the light?*" She did not.
    - (iii) She took a piece of concrete and banged it against a broken stairway overhead—probably the same structure that had saved her life.
    - (iv) The searchers found the noise.
  - (g) **Genelle wedged her hand through a crack in the wall, and felt someone grab it.**
    - (i) She heard a voice say, "*I've got you,*" and Genelle Guzman said, "***OH GOD, THANK YOU.***"
    - (ii) It took 20 long minutes, and then she was rescued.
  - (h) **In many ways, Genelle Guzman represents the plight of all people.**
    - (i) We are buried under an enormous mess of spiritual black marks – ways we have wronged our perfect God.
    - (ii) The Bible calls these things sin.
    - (iii) We have no hope of freeing ourselves.
    - (iv) We are truly stuck and in need of rescue.
  - (i) **But by admitting the need to be forgiven –**
    - (i) By reaching out and saying, "***God, help me! I can't get out of this unless you save me,***"
    - (ii) We can be confident that he hears and helps.
- 3) **This is what we remember at communion—**
- (a) That God reached down into the rubble and saved us by the death and resurrection of Jesus.
  - (b) **You see that is the difference between Christianity and every other religion.**
    - (i) Religion is about mankind's efforts to reach God.
    - (ii) Where Christianity is about God's effort to reach mankind.
  - (c) **Where we could only fail; God cannot.**
- 4) **Jesus went to the cross so that God could offer us the grace we need to find our way Home.**
- (a) Grace is unmerited favor; God's favor that we could not earn.
  - (b) Jesus came to earth to show us the way back to God.

TS: **This brings us to the rest of the story; So, what is . . .**

B) Key Point #2: **The Meaning of Being Crucified with Christ**

- 1) **Galatians, 2:20** said, **"I have been crucified with Christ; 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 for me."**
- 2) **People will say they want to live a crucified life; but just what does this mean?**
  - (a) Many people misunderstand what Paul is saying here.
  - (b) Paul is not saying he wants to be crucified;
  - (c) But that he has been crucified with Christ.
- 3) **Paul was likely in Jerusalem studying to be Pharisee at the time that Christ Was crucified.**
  - (a) He hated Jesus and what he perceived as an attack on Judaism.
  - (b) Paul set out to eradicate the followers of Jesus when the movement did not die with Jesus on the cross.
  - (c) And yet, his encounter with Jesus on the Road to Damascus changed his whole perspective.
- 4) **What changed was his world view.**
  - (a) Before his encounter with Jesus he was reaching to God by trying to keep the Levitical law.
  - (b) After his encounter with Jesus he spent about 3 years restudying the scriptures and saw that there was nothing he could do to change his status with God.
- 5) **He would always fall short of the glory of God and remain a sinner and with a Holy God one sin is the same as thousands.**
  - (a) The result is separation from God.
  - (b) But in an act of mercy God reached down to us through Jesus and made a substitution for what we deserved.
- 6) **Jesus hung on the cross for Paul and for you and for me and for everyone else.**
  - (a) We don't need to be crucified; our sins were crucified with Christ.
  - (b) We only need to accept the gift being offered to us.
- 7) **That is true with any gift.**
  - (a) When someone gives you a gift you have to reach out and receive it.
  - (b) You have to accept it or the gift is not yours.
- 8) **Jesus is offering this gift to all;**
  - (a) But not all are willing to receive it because it means having to admit their need for one to die in their place.
  - (b) Not everyone is willing to accept that they are in need of one to die for their sins.
- 9) **A.W. Tozer says that people who are crucified with Christ have three distinct marks:<sup>4</sup>**
  - (a) 1. They are facing only one direction,
  - (b) 2. They can never turn back, and
  - (c) 3. They no longer have plans of their own.
- 10) **J. Vernon McGee said that this is what Paul was saying that under the law he was tried, found guilty, was condemned, and in the person of his Substitution he was slain.**
  - (a) This took place at the moment that Christ was crucified for all of us.
  - (b) This is why Paul can say, **"Nevertheless I live."**
- 11) **How is this possible?**
  - (a) Because now Christ lives in him by His Holy Spirit.
  - (b) Jesus is alive today and at the right hand of the Father.
- 12) **The law executed us; it cannot give us life; but in Christ we live.**
  - (a) Rescued, restored to a right relationship with the Father and the Spirit is given as a deposit so that we know we belong to Jesus.
  - (b) If we could find salvation in the law; then Jesus died for nothing!

**TS: In wrapping this up let me share an illustration with you . . .**

### III) Conclusion (Life Application)

#### A) **Illustration, In Christ Alone**<sup>5</sup>

- 1) **Many years ago in New Orleans, and an attractive young 17 year old African girl, was being sold at a slave auction.**
  - (a) She had been taken from her parents and was very bitter over the whole experience.
  - (b) When she was turned over to the highest bidder and he came to take her, she said defiantly, "Well, what are you going to do with me?"
  - (c) Much to her surprise, her new owner said, "**I am going to give you your freedom.**"
  - (d) And saying this, he handed her the papers of emancipation.
- 2) **That is what God the Father has done for us.**
  - (a) Through Christ HE reconciled the world unto himself.
  - (b) It was all done through what Jesus did and not of anything we did, except for when we accepted Jesus as our Lord and received the gift of eternal life.
  - (c) It is impossible to earn this gift; only accept it.
  - (d) And the best part is that it is available to all who will acknowledge who Jesus is and what He did for them.
- 3) **Illustration: NO CONTEST**<sup>6</sup>
  - (a) **When we get to heaven, there will be no contest to see who was the most deserving of God's grace because no one deserves it.**
    - (i) There will only be one contest in heaven.
    - (ii) When we look back and see what we were before, when we see the pit from which he rescued us, when we recall how confused we were, when we remember how God reached out and hired us into His family, and how he held us in his hand, and when we see Jesus who loved us and gave himself for us, the only contest will be to see which of us will sing the loudest:
    - (iii) "**Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost but now am found, was blind but now I see.**"

#### B) **A common theme throughout Paul's epistle to the Galatians is "Liberty".**

- 1) **Liberty is defined as freedom from captivity or slavery.**
  - (a) In our sin we are on death row awaiting our execution.
  - (b) But in Jesus we have been released; freed that we might live our lives for him.
  - (c) We are justified before God by our Faith in Jesus and there is no other way.
- 2) You cannot earn it or be good enough; you must accept that you need Jesus who will rescue you.
- 3) **Have you found your freedom in Christ?**
  - (a) Freedom from the bondage of sins that weigh you down?
  - (b) If not, you can right here this morning.

### IV) Invitation: **Let Us Pray!**

### V) **Bibliography**

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.sermonsearch.com/sermon-illustrations/3295/teddy-roosevelt/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.sermonsearch.com/sermon-illustrations/3294/robert-redford/>

<sup>3</sup> Matthew Rogers. Citation: TIME Magazine, 9/11/02, p. 38.

<sup>4</sup> Illustration, Dan Cormie, Oct 2002, sermoncentral.com

<sup>5</sup> Kevin L. Jones, Illustration, In Christ Alone (Part III), Aug 2014, sermoncentral.com; originally from 1989 Ministers Manual, Ed. by James W. Cox (Harper & Row, 1989), p. 62.

<sup>6</sup> Brian Bill in "The Scandal of Grace" on www.sermoncentral.com