

Going Deeper - Weekly Sermon Discussion Guide (Rooted In The Word : Galatians) (October 17, 2021)



For by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified. Gal 2:16

In the letter to Galatia Paul deals with the matter of faith and works. Namely, he addresses the question of whether we, as disciples of Jesus must both commit ourselves to following the life and teachings of Jesus and also abide by certain rules and regulations, or whether disciples of Jesus are justified before God solely based on the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. On this Paul is clear; we need not and indeed cannot add rules and regulations on top of our commitment to Jesus as Lord and savior. To do so would be to render the death and resurrection of Jesus meaningless (2:21), to suggest that the Spirit of God is supplied from the works of the law rather than to and through a changed heart (3:5) and to end in a cursed state anyway (3:10). No, Paul is clear. We greatly risk corrupting the essence of the gospel of Jesus if we add anything more to the admonition to follow him, and not turn back.

This conclusion though does lead some to fairly ask whether this then means a Christian can once “believe” in Jesus and then do whatever they like. While a fair question, it does betray the transactional nature of what many of us have come to understand a relationship with Jesus to mean. That is, yes, if a relationship with Jesus mostly involves a mental and emotional acquiescence to the concept of that for which he lived and died such that we might avoid going to hell when we die, then we could perform that transaction, obtain our pass to heaven, and live the rest of our life in whatever way may please us (and probably also appeases the Christians around us). If however to believe in Jesus instead means to commit to being a student and follower of his life and teachings, and to daily orient our heart and lives in such a way that we are obviously striving to mimic him more fully (Luke 9:23), then clearly we would not simply do whatever we like with our lives, we would do whatever we thought Jesus would like. To put it another way, because we first become a friend of Jesus (and through him a friend of God), we do not work for justification, but rather from justification. It is with our eyes wide open to this truth that we then lead our lives, and from this perspective it is not difficult to see that we, as Christians will not do whatever we may, and not because we can’t but because we truly desire to do otherwise.

So, Consider:

1. What are some things you may have been adding to the gospel?
2. In your own words, what is the risk in doing this?
3. If Christians are already going to heaven, what motivates their daily lives?

Take Action:

This week, spend a little time each morning prayerfully considering how you orient yourself each day to being a student of Jesus. Notice and note that on which you end up centering.

May the Lord bless you and keep you!

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