

Riverview Baptist Church
Sunday School Teaching Plan
November 1, 2015
Galatians 2:15-21
“Christ in Me!”

Memory Verse:

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

The Big Idea:

Crucified with Christ/Christ alive in me!

Sermon Scripture: The sermon will be the seventh in a series of expository sermons on Galatians. Galatians 2:15-21 will be studied in Sunday School today.

Sunday School Scripture: Galatians 2:15-21

Sunday School Title: *“Christ in Me”*

ESS: *The solution to hypocrisy and broken fellowship within the church is faith in Jesus Christ expressed as “being crucified” with him and Him living in you!*

Preparation:

Read through this passage at least twice, slowly. Read from two different Bible translations. (1 Corinthians 6:9-20 is a secondary passage that elaborates on the radical idea that our freedom in Christ means we belong to Christ. In other words we are free from sin, not free for sin!)

¹⁵ “We who are Jews by birth and not sinful Gentiles ¹⁶ know that a person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no one will be justified.

¹⁷ “But if, in seeking to be justified in Christ, we Jews find ourselves also among the sinners, doesn’t that mean that Christ promotes sin? Absolutely not! ¹⁸ If I rebuild what I destroyed, then I really would be a lawbreaker.

¹⁹ “For through the law I died to the law so that I might live for God. ²⁰ I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. ²¹ I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!”

Presentation:

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall
All the king's horses and all the King's men
Couldn't put Humpty Dumpty together again

Read more: [Children - Humpty Dumpty Lyrics | MetroLyrics](#)

Emphasize the impossibility of “putting broken relationships back together again” after the damage of hypocritical actions like those of Peter and Barnabas in last week’s lesson.

How can the church overcome broken fellowship due to hypocrisy? How can you overcome broken relationships from the damage of hypocrisy?

Today we will learn that the healing the damage of hypocrisy and establishing unity within the church requires a return to a faith in Jesus Christ that is expressed as “being crucified” with him and “him living” in us!

Most likely, the Galatian Gentile Christians maintained a “faith” in Jesus of some kind. They had not stopped believing in Jesus. The temptation they were presented with was not an outright rejection of Jesus. Rather, they were encouraged to reinterpret the gospel as belief in Jesus expressed as accepting and obeying the Jewish ceremonial Laws. Remember that this was not the gospel Paul had preached to them! It was not the gospel given to Paul by Jesus. It was not the gospel rejoiced over by the Judean churches. It was not the gospel that Peter and the Jerusalem leaders had approved and endorsed! But now, some had infiltrated the Galatians church to twist the gospel into something that is a “non-gospel” according to Paul. This influenced Peter to betray his true fellowship and freedom in Jesus at Antioch by abandoning eating with the Gentile Christians. Peter’s example led Barnabas into the same sin of hypocrisy.

Let’s examine how Paul sought to put the fellowship of the church back together. Let’s avoid the Humpty Dumpty attitude that things are so broken that they cannot be repaired. God can do the impossible. God can repair broken fellowship!

What difference is Paul drawing between Jews and sinful Gentiles in verse 15?

Peter and other Jews felt the privilege of having the Law of Moses meant that they were not sinful in the same way as those outside of the Law. But this feeling of superiority did not mean that they felt themselves to have no need of salvation or to have been justified before God through the Law. They knew that they were not perfect. The term “sinful Gentiles” simply means that the Gentiles were not in any way following the Law of Moses before they came to know of Jesus. They were in the category of “sinner” because of being without the Law. We will see in later lessons that the Jews were no less sinful and in no better position with the Law, if they didn’t believe in Jesus for their salvation. So the term “sinful Gentiles” is not a separate class of people but should be understood as them being outside of the Law of Moses.

Even Jews cannot be justified through the Law: verse 16

Verse 15 highlighted that the sinful Gentile couldn’t be saved through the Law because they do not even have the Law! This verse declares that the Law of Moses was not the means of justification even for those that have it, the Jews!

Why is the Law unable to justify? Discuss the inability to perfectly keep the Law.

When Paul uses the plural, “we”, he is drawing all the Jews into his claim. He is saying that Peter, Barnabas, his unnamed enemies who have been perverting the gospel, are all included.

What is it that “we” know? We know that no one is justified by works of the Law! All of those who have hypocritically advocated a turn toward Jewish Law after becoming a Christian as the way of discipleship already know that the Law doesn’t justify a man!! Let that sink in. They are advocating that Gentiles come into a system of religion that couldn’t justify those who had lived within it! That is like putting a flat tire on a new car!

What is justification?

It means to “to declare, pronounce, one to be just, righteous, or such as he ought to be.” So no person will be declared by God to be what he ought to be, to be just, based on works of the Law!

Read Psalm 143:2 This Psalm is paraphrases by Paul!

Paul clearly lays out two paths, or options for justification?

- Works of the Law: No person can be justified!
- Faith in Christ: Any person can be justified! Paul and all the Jewish Christians have known and believed this!!!

Discuss some examples of ways that people think they are justified by their works!

Discuss why it is hard for people to accept that anyone can be justified by faith in Jesus Christ!

Only those who believe in Christ can be justified by faith in Christ: Captain Obvious? While this is an obvious statement, think for a moment. It isn't just enough to say that there is a way to be justified with God by faith in Christ. The real question is have we been justified by God through faith in Christ! The way is open, but have we traveled the path? Paul himself has!

Paul declares that "we know" that no man can be saved by works of the Law. So then, obviously he hasn't taught or believed that he would be justified in this manner. After all why would Paul offer, or believe in a false hope for justification after knowing it to be false. The answer is simple. He would not and he did not. He never would let anyone else do that either without stern warning. Paul is offering to others the same hope he himself believes!! Paul is no hypocrite! His belief and life are the same!! He is acting on what he know to be true!

The relationship of the Jewish believers with the Gentile believers is not a reason to question their purity and sincerity as some had been doing to Peter. Rather, their fellowship is a sign of the power of the gospel to save the Jew and Gentile alike! The gospel puts Jews and Gentiles together in justification not together in sin, unless one continues to hold to the Law of Moses and its categories. In verses 17-18 Paul says that the only real lawbreaking is being done by those who go back and try to rebuild a justification by works of the Law. But by fellowshipping with Gentile Christians, he and other Jewish Christians are living in the new justification through faith in Jesus! Don't go backwards!

Verse 21, teaches that to go back is to "set aside the grace of God". Grace is the favor of God to the undeserving! Why would a person who has received unearned favor from God want to go away? Only a person deceived and hardened to the truth of their new and better state would even do so. Or perhaps a person who has never truly known of the grace of God to begin with.

Verse 19 taught that a truly justified Jew has allowed the Law to teach them to die to the Law! The Law brought them to the point of death so that Jesus could give them life!

The centerpiece of this teaching is found in verse 20!

I have been crucified with Christ! Obviously this happens by faith. But when we think of having faith in Jesus, we should really be thinking about joining ourselves to the crucifixion of Jesus by faith. We reckon ourselves as crucified with him! He died for our sins after all. We are trusting in what he did on the cross for us! So we see the cross as our cross and Christ there for us, in our place. This happens as we believe in Him!

I no longer live: Of course we are alive so this is not a literal statement. However, it is a statement of spiritual fact. It is a reality for those who believe that they do not live anymore spiritually the way they did before they had faith. By faith we are crucified so we are dead to that old un-crucified life! 2 Corinthians 5:17, *"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!"*

But Christ lives in me: Galatians 3:14, will teach even more about how this is true spiritually. But for now we need to understand that the Christian is not alive in their old un-crucified life as a Gentile or a Law keeping Jew. Both types of Christians have died in faith to be alive in a new way! Christ lives in both! There are not two categories of "Christ in us" Christians. There is just one kind of Christian, the kind who are alive in Christ by faith!

The life I now live in the body: The justification that happened in our lives by faith and changed our spiritual reality has an impact upon our physical bodies. We cannot keep our faith only on the inside. Many people try and claim that they have faith and do not need “works” because works don’t save. And in fact, they are using one biblical truth to contradict another. The faith that justifies a man, makes their body the temple of the Holy Spirit! Christ in them works out of them!

I live by faith in the Son of God! Everything we do now in our bodies should be an expression of our faith in Jesus. He lives here and wants to express Himself.

Loved me and gave himself for me! Every expression of Jesus in your life is an expression of love and self-sacrifice! Christian don’t work for God in order to be justified. Christians work for God because we are justified. The justified Christian simply lets Jesus continue His work through their bodies. We should be thrilled to consider that every work of Christ in us is a work of Christ through us for others. There is no room for being selfish, silent, secluded with our lives. Let Jesus lead you to be self-sacrificing as He works out of His earthly home office, YOUR BODY!!!!

Read 1 Corinthians 6:9-20 with the class and discuss this passage as a supplement to this verse! How does this teaching change the attitude of many American Christians? Has Jesus loved and gave himself for us so that you can have what you want out of life? Or has he loved you and given himself for you so that HE can live in you for the WORLD?

Take time now and discuss the ways in which this passage changes the way we think about using our time, talents, and treasure. Are there any insignificant decisions in life? Are there areas of your life where Jesus isn’t present or concerned?

Apply:

- How will this lesson change the way you use your time, talent, and treasure?
- Pray specifically this week each day a prayer welcoming Jesus to work in you and through you to show his love to others!
- Pray and ask God to show you any relationships that need to be repaired in your life!
- Believe in Jesus as your crucified Lord and Savior! He now lives in resurrection power so that you can experience the power of the resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings

The following notes are taken from Blueletter Bible by David Guzik.

http://www.blbclassic.org/commentaries/comm_view.cfm?AuthorID=2&contentID=20170&commInfo=31&topic=Galatians&ar=Gal_1_9

1. (14b) Paul exposes Peter's hypocrisy in appearing to live under the law.

"If you, being a Jew, live in the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews?"

- a. **If you, being a Jew, live in the manner of the Gentiles and not as the Jews:** Paul first reminded Peter that *he himself did not live under strict obedience to the Law of Moses*. "Peter, you eat bacon and ham and lobster. You don't keep a kosher diet. Yet now, before these visitors, these *certain men ... from James*, now you act as if you keep these laws all the time."
 - i. Imagine the scene! They had all been having a good time, until Paul spoils the party. He probably wasn't shouting, but he did speak with firmness in his voice. And as he tells everyone that Peter doesn't live under the Law of Moses, the *certain men ... from James* look amazed. Their jaws drop! "What? Peter, the most prominent of all the apostles, *Peter* doesn't live under the Law of Moses? *Peter* eats bacon and lobster? *Peter* eats with Gentiles?" As for Peter, his face gets red, his heart beats faster, and he just feels sick to his stomach. Everyone else just feels awkward and wishes the whole problem would go away.
 - ii. How was Paul? Nervous? Bold? Shaking? It's impossible to know until we get to heaven, but Paul did not necessarily have a commanding physical presence. Others said of Paul - and it was probably at least partially true - *his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible* (2 Corinthians 10:10). However Paul acted, *his words were memorable*, because he recalls them exactly here!
- b. Lightfoot on **being a Jew**: "Here it is very emphatic; 'If you, *born and bred* a Jew, discard Jewish customs, how unreasonable to impose them on Gentiles.'"
- c. **Why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews?** Perhaps Peter and the others might say, "We're not *making* them live as Jews." But of course they were; because their message was, "Unless you **live as Jews**, you aren't saved!"

2. (15-16) Paul reminds Peter that they are justified before God by the work of Jesus, not by their keeping of the law.

"We *who are* Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified."

- a. **We who are Jews by nature ... knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ:** "Peter, we all grew up as observant Jews. Yet we know very well that we were not considered right before God - **justified** - by **the works of the law** that we did. We know that we, even though we grew up as observant Jews, are considered right before God **by faith in Jesus Christ**."
 - i. **Not justified by the works of the law:** This is Paul's first use of the great word *dikaioo* (justified, declared righteous) in his letter to the Galatians. "It is a legal concept; the person who is 'justified' is the one who gets the verdict in a court of law. Used in a religious sense it means the getting of a favorable verdict before God on judgment day." (Morris)
 - b. **Even we have believed in Christ Jesus:** Paul knew that even a strictly observant Jew such as he was could never be considered right before God by what they did under the Law of Moses. Instead, he, and Peter, and every single Christian must **have believed in Christ Jesus**.
 - i. "'Faith in Jesus Christ', then, is not intellectual conviction only, but personal commitment. The expression in the middle of [verse 16](#) is (literally) 'we have believed *into* (*eis*) Christ Jesus.' It is an act of committal, not just assenting to the fact that Jesus lived and died, but running to Him for refuge and calling on Him for mercy." (Stott)

- ii. "It would be hard to find a more forceful statement of the doctrine of justification than this. It is insisted upon by the two leading apostles ('we know'), confirmed from their own experience ('we have believed'), and endorsed by the sacred Scriptures of the Old Testament ('by works of the law shall no one be justified'). With this threefold guarantee we should accept the biblical doctrine of justification and not let our natural self-righteousness keep us from faith in Christ." (Stott)
- iii. "In order to have faith you must paint a true portrait of Christ. The scholastics caricature Christ into a judge and tormentor. But Christ is no law giver. He is the Life-giver. He is the Forgiver of sins. You must believe that Christ might have atoned for the sins of the world with one single drop of His blood. Instead, He shed His blood abundantly in order than He might give abundant satisfaction for our sins." (Luther)
- c. The emphasis is plain: **That we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law.** "Peter, *we were not justified by being under the Law of Moses, but by faith in Jesus.*" By refusing fellowship with Gentile Christians, Peter said in his actions that we are - *in part* ? considered right before God **by the works of the law.** Paul couldn't stand for this, because it wasn't the truth.
- d. **For by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified:** Here, Paul emphasizes the point in the strongest way possible. **No flesh** - not Gentile, not Jewish, not anyone - will be considered right before God **by the works of the law.**
 - i. Lightfoot on **for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified:** "The words are therefore to be regarded as a free citation of [Psalm 143:2](#)." (*For in Your sight no one living in righteous*).
 - ii. "The scholastics explain the way of salvation in this manner. When a person happens to perform a good deed, God accepts it and as a reward for the good deed God pours charity into that person. They call it 'charity infused.' This charity is supposed to remain in the heart. They get wild when they are told that this quality of the heart cannot justify a person." (Luther)
 - iii. Since this is true, it's plain to see how foolish and wrong it was for Peter to separate from these Gentile Christians because they had not put themselves under the Law of Moses. Because **by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified**, then what difference does it make if a Gentile is circumcised according to the Law of Moses? What difference does it make if a Gentile keeps a kosher table? All that matters is their **faith in Christ**, because that is how we are made right before God.

3. (17-18) Paul answers the main objection against the truth that we are made right before God by faith in Jesus and not by works of the law.

"But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, *is* Christ therefore a minister of sin? Certainly not! For if I build again those things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor."

- a. **But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is Christ therefore a minister of sin?** Now, Paul deals with an objection that the *certain men from James* would raise. It's important to remember that Paul made this statement publicly, with the concerned parties right in front of him. On one side of the room are the *certain men from James*, who believed that God would not accept the Gentiles unless they put themselves under the law of Moses. Peter is sitting with these men, and so is Barnabas, who is Paul's best friend. In fact, *all* the Christians of Jewish background are sitting with these Christians from Jerusalem who don't believe that the Gentiles in the church at Antioch are really saved at all. In a real-life setting like this, Paul can't just speak his mind without answering the objections - spoken or unspoken - of those who disagree with him.
 - i. As the men from Jerusalem saw it, the idea that we are made right before God by faith in Jesus *alone* wasn't "real" enough. After all, Christians still struggled with sin. How could they have the "accepted by God" issue settled if they still battled sin? In their thinking, this made **Christ ... a minister of sin**, because Jesus' work of making them right with God apparently didn't make them right enough!
 - ii. "If God justifies bad people, what is the point of being good? Can't we do as we like and live as we please?" (Stott)

- b. **Certainly not!** Paul's answer is brilliant. First, *yes*, **we seek to be justified by Christ**, and not by Jesus *plus* our own works. Second, *yes*, **we ourselves also are found sinners**, that is, we acknowledge that we still sin even though we stand **justified by Christ**. But *no*, this **certainly does not** make Jesus the author or approver of sin in our life. He is not a **minister of sin**.
- i. "To give a short definition of a Christian: A Christian is not somebody who has no sin, but somebody against whom God no longer chalks sin, because of his faith in Christ. This doctrine brings comfort to consciences in serious trouble." (Luther)
- c. Why? **For if I build again those things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor**. Paul's answer is subtle, but brilliant. If he were to **build again** a way to God through keeping the Law of Moses, then he would **make himself a transgressor**. Essentially, Paul says "There is *more sin* in trying to find acceptance before God by our law-keeping than there is sin in everyday life as a Christian."
- i. These *certain men from James* thought they had to hang on to the Law - for themselves and for Gentiles - so there wouldn't be so much sin. What Paul shows is that by putting themselves under the law again, they are sinning worse than ever!
 - ii. How is it a sin to **build again** a way to God through the Law of Moses? In many ways, but perhaps the greatest is that it looks at Jesus, hanging on the cross, taking the punishment we deserved, bearing the wrath of God for us, and says to Him, "That's all very nice, but it isn't enough. Your work on the cross won't be good enough before God until I'm circumcised and eat kosher." What an insult to the Son of God!
 - iii. Of course, this is the great tragedy of legalism. In trying to be *more* right with God, they end up being *less* right with God. This was exactly the situation of the Pharisees that opposed Jesus so much during His years of earthly ministry. Paul knew this thinking well, having been a Pharisee himself ([Acts 23:6](#)).

4. (19-20) Paul describes his permanently changed relationship to the law.

"For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God. 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."

- a. **For I through the law died to the law:** Paul makes a bold statement, saying that he has **died to the law**. If he is dead to the law, then it is impossible for the law to be the way he stands accepted by God.
 - i. Notice that it isn't the **law** that is dead. The law reflects, in its context, the holy heart and character of God. There was nothing wrong with the law. It isn't the **law** that **died**, but Paul **died to the law**.
 - ii. How did Paul die to the law? **I through the law died to the law**. The law itself "killed" Paul. It showed him that he never could live up to the law, and fulfill its holy standard. For a long time before Paul knew Jesus, he thought God would accept him because of his law-keeping. But he came to the point where he really understood the law - understanding it in the way Jesus explained it in the Sermon on the Mount ([Matthew 5-7](#)) - and Paul realized that the law made him *guilty* before God, not *justified* before God. This sense of guilt before God "killed" Paul, and made him see that keeping the law wasn't the answer.
 - iii. "*To die to the law* is to renounce it and to be freed from its dominion, so that we have no confidence in it and it does not hold us captive under the yoke of slavery." (Calvin)
 - iv. The problem with the *certain men with James* was that they were not thinking and living as if they were dead to the law. For them, they were still alive under the law, and they believed keeping the law would make them accepted by God. Not only were they living under the law, but they wanted the Gentiles to live under the law also!
- b. **I through the law died to the law that I might live to God:** When Paul **died to the law**, then he could **live to God**. As long as he still tried to justify himself before God, by all his law-keeping, he was dead. But when he **died to the law**, then he could **live to God**.

- i. "When a person is a Christian he is above law and sin. When the Law accuses him, and sin wants to drive the wits out of him, a Christians looks to Christ. A Christian is free. He has no master except Christ. A Christian is greater than the whole world." (Luther)
 - ii. "We are not to think that the Law is wiped out. It stays. It continues to operate in the wicked. But a Christian is dead to the Law. For example, Christ by His resurrection became free from the grave, and yet the grave remains. Peter was delivered from prison, yet the prison remains. The Law is abolished as far as I am concerned, when it is has driven me into the arms of Christ. Yet the Law continues to exist and to function. But it no longer exists for me." (Luther)
 - iii. "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.'" (Luther)
- c. **I have been crucified with Christ:** Again, Paul anticipates a question from those who disagree with him. "Paul, when did you die to the law? You like pretty alive to me!" Paul is happy to answer, "**I have been crucified with Christ.** You want to know when I died to the law? I died to the law when Jesus died on the cross. He died in my place on the cross, so it is like it was me up on the cross. He died, and I died to the law when He died."
- d. **It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me:** Since we died with Christ on the cross, we have a different life. Our old life, lived under the law, is dead. Now we are alive to Jesus Christ, and *Jesus is alive in us (but Christ lives in me)*.
- i. Paul realized that on the cross, a "great exchange" occurred. He gave Jesus his old, try-to-be-right-before-God-by-the-law life, and it was crucified on the cross. Then Jesus gave Paul His life to life - Christ came to live in him. So Paul's life isn't his own anymore, it belongs to Jesus Christ! Paul doesn't own his own life (that life died); he is simply "managing" the new life Jesus gave him.
 - ii. The life Jesus lives in us is glorious. "Christ is no sheriff. He is 'the Lamb of God, which takes away the sins of the world.'" (John 1:29)" (Luther)
- e. **And the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith:** Paul can only "manage" the new life Jesus gave him **by faith**. You can't live the new life Jesus gives on the foundation of law-keeping. You can only live it **by faith**.
- i. When Paul says **I now live in the flesh**, he doesn't mean that he lives a chronically sinful life. "By the term 'flesh' Paul does not understand manifest vices. Such sins he usually calls by their proper names, as adultery, fornication, etc. By 'flesh' Paul understands what Jesus meant in the third chapter of John, 'That which is born of the flesh is flesh'. (John 3:6) 'Flesh' here means the whole nature of man, inclusive of reason and instincts. 'This flesh,' says Paul, 'is not justified by the works of the law.'" (Luther)
 - ii. The point of this verse isn't the **flesh**, it is **faith**. "Faith is not simply a topic about which Paul preached from time to time. Nor is it a virtue which he practised occasionally. It is central in all that he does." (Morris)
 - iii. "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 death are mine, because he is joined to me, and I to him.'" (Luther)
- f. **In the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me:** The **faith** Paul lives by is not faith in himself, faith in the law, or faith in what he can earn or deserve before God. It is **faith in the Son of God, Jesus Christ - who loved me and gave Himself for me!**
- i. Before, Paul's relationship with God was founded on what he could do for God - his faith was in himself. Now, the foundation is what Jesus Christ has done for him - his faith is in Jesus. And Paul

found a marvelous person to put his faith in! It is a person who **loved** him. It is a person who demonstrated that love when He **gave Himself for** Paul.

- ii. What confidence Paul can have in giving his life to, and living His life for, someone who loves him that much! When we realize the great love God *has shown* for us, it makes everything in the Christian life easier.
- g. **Who loved me:** Paul can confidently give himself to Jesus because of the love Jesus has demonstrated in the *past*. "It is true that he loves us now, but Paul also wrote truly, 'Who *loved* me.' The verb is in the past tense. Jesus loved me upon the cross; loved me in the manger of Bethlehem; loved me or ever the earth was. There never was a time when Jesus did not love his people." (Spurgeon)
 - i. **Loved ... gave Himself:** The *past tense* is important. William Newell, in his commentary on Romans, speaks to the importance of the past tense in the word **loved**. "It is this past tense gospel the devil hates ... Let a preacher be continually saying, 'God loves you, Christ loves you,' and he and his congregation will by and by be losing sight of both their sinnerhood and of the substitutionary atonement of the cross, where the love of God and of Christ was *once for all* and *supremely* set forth."
 - ii. "Did the Law ever love me? Did the Law ever sacrifice itself for me? Did the Law ever die for me? On the contrary, it accuses me, it frightens me, it drives me crazy. Somebody else saved me from the Law, from sin and death unto eternal life. That Somebody is the Son of God, to whom be praise and glory forever." (Luther)
- h. **Gave Himself for me:** "*For me* is very emphatic. It is not enough to regard Christ as having died for the salvation of the world; each man must claim the effect and possession of this grace for himself personally." (Calvin)
 - i. "'Loved *me*, gave Himself for *me*.' He appropriates to himself, as Chrysostom observes, the love which belongs equally to the whole world. For Christ is indeed the personal friend of each man individually; and is as much to him, as if He had died for him alone." (Lightfoot)
 - ii. "If any man might have said, 'The Son of God, whom I have loved, and to whom I have given myself,' it would have been the apostle ... but here he thinks not of himself, or of what he had been led to do for the Lord, but only of what the Lord had done for him." (Spurgeon)
 - iii. "Take these blessed words of the apostle, and put them in your mouth, and let them lie there as wafers made with honey, till they melt into your very soul: 'Who loved me, and gave himself for me.'" (Spurgeon)

5. (21) Paul shows why the issue of law-righteousness is so important.

"I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness *comes* through the law, then Christ died in vain."

- a. **I do not set aside the grace of God:** Paul concludes his public confrontation with Peter with strength. For these Jewish Christians from Jerusalem to require for themselves or anyone else to live under the law of Moses to be right with God is to **set aside the grace of God** - the very thing Paul does **not** do.
 - i. "To nullify grace would be to put one's trust, not in salvation as God's free gift, but in one's own efforts. To do this is to reject grace altogether, and relying on one's puny effort means that one nullifies that grace." (Morris)
 - ii. "They think it noble to try to win their way to God and to heaven. But it is not noble; it is dreadfully ignoble. For, in effect, it is to deny both the nature of God and the mission of Christ. It is to refuse to let God be gracious." (Stott)
 - iii. "We despise the grace of God when we observe the Law for the purpose of being justified." (Luther)

- b. This is because **if righteous comes through the law**, then Jesus **died in vain**, because you can be righteous before God by law-keeping, and you don't need the work of Jesus to make you righteous.
- i. In Jesus' prayer in the garden ([Matthew 26:39-42](#)), He asked that if there be any other way to accomplish what stood before Him at the cross, He asked to be spared the cross. But Jesus was not spared the cross, because there is no other way to accomplish what He did.
 - ii. This is also the great problem with seeing the **grace of God** as something that *helps* us get to heaven, as if we put forth the best we can, and then grace supplies the rest. Never! Grace doesn't *help*, it does it *all*. *All* of our righteousness comes from the work of Jesus for us.
 - iii. "Our opponents turn everything topsy-turvy. They make Christ over into a murderer, and Moses into a savior. Is not this horrible blasphemy?" (Luther)
 - iv. "What awful presumption to imagine that there is any work good enough to pacify God, when to pacify God required the invaluable price of the death and blood of His own and only Son?" (Luther)
 - v. "If my salvation was so difficult to accomplish that it necessitated the death of Christ, then all my works, all the righteousness of the Law, are good for nothing. How can I buy for a penny what cost a million dollars?" (Luther)
 - vi. "Those who intend to obtain righteousness by their own efforts do not say in so many words: 'I am God; I am Christ.' But it amounts to that. They usurp the divinity and office of Christ. The effect is the same as if they said, 'I am Christ; I am a Savior. I save myself and others.'" (Luther)
- c. How did this confrontation end up? We don't know the immediate effect, other than to say that Paul obviously made a bold stand for the truth. Yet we know that over time, Peter came to his senses and took Paul's words to heart. We know this from [Acts 15:6-11](#), where Peter, *in Jerusalem*, before *James and Paul and Barnabas* and the other apostles, proclaimed that Gentiles *did not* have to come under the Law of Moses to be saved.
- i. We know that Peter was already in agreement by how Paul states the case in [Galatians 2:15-17](#): *We ... even we have believed ... we might be justified by faith ... we seek to be justified by Christ*. Paul is calling Peter's attention to something that Peter *believes* but isn't *acting* according to. You may *believe* that Jesus saves you, and you don't save yourself; but are you *acting* and *thinking* that you save yourself?
- d. We can trust that God used this awkward encounter in Antioch for *everyone's* good.
- It was good for Paul, because he stayed true and proclaimed the gospel.
 - It was good for Peter, because he was corrected, and as a result became more firm in the truth than before.
 - It was good for Barnabas, because he came to the correct belief on this matter.
 - It was good for the men who came from James and started the whole mess, because a line was drawn at the true gospel, and they had to decide.
 - It was good for the Jewish believers in Antioch, because they had the truth spelled out clearly before them.
 - It was good for the Gentile believers in Antioch, because their faith and liberty in Jesus was strengthened.
 - It was good for us because the truth still lives today!
- e. All this good came, but only because Paul was willing to do something *totally right*, but *uncomfortable*. Peter was willing to do that too, when he admitted he was wrong. Peter and Paul were willing to sacrifice their comfort zone for what was right; are we?