

‘Let it go and trust Jesus.’ (6)

We’re living in times where everyone has an opinion about something. Facebook and twitter are filled with these so-called celebrities who have an opinion on something. Mums are being lured into buying food from **Iceland** simply because they want us to believe that **Peter Andre** actually does his weekly shop there. Young boys are being lured into buying **Lynx** deodorant spray because they actually believe it will give them the ‘**Lynx effect**’ and woman will find them irresistible. Young girls are being lured into buying **L’Oréal** beauty products because they actually believe the product will help them look like **Cheryl Cole**.

**A woman rushes to see her doctor, looking very much worried and all strung out. She rattles off, ‘Doctor, take a look at me. When I woke up this morning, I looked at myself in the mirror and saw my hair all wiry and frazzled up, my skin was all wrinkled and pasty, my eyes were blood-shot and bulging out, and I had this corpse-like look on my face! What’s wrong with me, Doctor?’ The doctor looks her over for a couple of minutes, then calmly says, ‘Well, I can tell you one thing, there ain’t nothing wrong with your eyesight.’**

The truth is loved ones, we’ve become a nation which is obsessed with someone else’s opinion. And what we’re going to see today is that, even in the religious world many people have their opinion, especially in terms of what a person needs to do to be right with God. Paul says in **Galatians 2:15+16** “**We who are Jews by birth and not sinful Gentiles 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.**”

Now remember from our last sermon that Paul begun this address as a message to Peter, but he goes on to explain what he means to the Jews in general. In **Galatians 1+2** Paul started by using historical events and the encounters he had with these Judaizing teachers.

And the reason he started with those is because of what he’s about to say next. What’s he going to say is actually the theme for the rest of the letter, he says it in **Galatians 2:16**, ‘**justification comes through faith not by works**’. That word ‘**justified**’ is the Greek word, ‘**dikaioo**’ and it means to render or regard as just or innocent. In other words, when we allow God to do the justifying, it’s ‘**just as if**’ we’ve never sinned.

And Paul, as well as all the faithful Jews who believed in Jesus, realised that salvation couldn’t be acquired through perfect works of law or meritorious attempts to atone for sin. It was Paul himself to declared to the Jews in **Acts 13:38** “**Therefore, my friends, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you.**” In other words, there isn’t a person who has lived or a person is who alive today who can work or do anything to pay off their debt to God. Paul says over in **Romans 3:10** “**There is no one righteous, not even one.**”

And please don’t make the mistake of thinking that this is just a New Testament idea. God has always maintained that nobody can ever do enough to pay off their sin debt. **Psalm 14:1-3** “**The fool says in his heart, “There is no God.” They are corrupt, their deeds are vile; there is no one who does good. The LORD looks down from heaven on all mankind to see if there are any who understand, any who seek God. All have turned away, all have become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one.**”

In other words, until Jesus came on the scene the Jews and the Gentiles knew that they couldn’t really be right with God by works of law. Paul said it quite clearly in **Romans 3:20** “**Therefore no one will be declared righteous in God’s sight by the works of the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin.**”

It’s such a shame that some Christians lock themselves into a religious system of human opinion and religious traditions. A religious system which brags about how good they are and what great things they have done or are doing. Let me ask you, **what can you do to demand salvation from God? What can you do which would mean God is indebted to you?**

That’s why legalism is so popular, this idea of contributing towards our salvation and that’s why many Christians struggle with the concept of grace. Jesus plus some extra rules and regulations and doing good deeds makes us feel as if we’re contributing towards our salvation. But being right with God doesn’t work that way loved ones, because no one can keep any law perfectly in order to justify themselves before God, and so demand salvation.

Paul said in **Ephesians 2:8+9** “**For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast**”.

And so how do we get right with God? Well, Paul tells us, **doesn't he?** He says a person is justified by having **'faith in Jesus Christ'**. Now the original text is important here, because it actually says, **'faith of Christ'**. Which means the emphasis isn't on our faith, but on the faith of Jesus in going to the cross.

You see, our being right with God has got nothing to do with anything we have done or can do, it's all about what Jesus has done and continues to do today. **Hebrews 5:8+9** **"Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him."** Loved ones **can't we get this?** If any Christians feel they need to add to the faith and obedience of Jesus. Then what they are actually saying is that Jesus didn't do enough for us at Calvary.

Many years ago, there was a man in England who put his Rolls-Royce on a boat and went across to the continent to go on a holiday. While he was driving around Europe, something happened to the motor of his car. He called the Rolls-Royce people back in England and asked, **'I'm having trouble with my car, what do you suggest I do?'** Well, the Rolls-Royce people flew a mechanic over. The mechanic repaired the car and flew back to England and left the man to continue his holiday. As you can imagine, the fellow was wondering, **'How much is this going to cost me?'** So, when he got back to England, he wrote the people a letter and asked how much he owed them. He received a letter from the office that read, **'Dear Sir, there is no record anywhere in our files that anything ever went wrong with a Rolls-Royce.'**

Now loved ones that is justification. **Did Christ finish His work or not? Are Christians trying to finish the work which Christ failed to finish?** Christ is no half Saviour, loved ones. If we're trying to achieve what Christ failed to do, then that means when Jesus said in **John 19:30, 'it is finished'**, what Jesus actually meant was it wasn't quite finished and we know that's not true.

It was because of the justification that came as a result of the faith of Jesus, Paul says that he, as well as all other Jews who were children of Abraham by faith, believed in Jesus. In other words, they realised that law brings condemnation, not commendation. Because when anyone violates any kind of law, condemnation is always the result.

The law can't save you, keeping any law can't save you. And that's because the law was never given as a means of salvation, it was given that we might recognise our condemnation. On the other hand, grace brings commendation and it's under grace a person is commended for good by God.

Now who do you think will work the hardest for the Lord, a person under condemnation or a person under commendation? **1 Corinthians 15:10** **"But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me."** Grace doesn't say you don't have to work, grace motives us to work harder for the Lord, not because we have to but because we want to. There is a difference between a law that says, **'You broke the law and must be punished,'** and grace that says, **'I have saved you, therefore do good'**. Legalism brings frustration but grace brings peace and joy.

Now remember some Bibles say, **'the law'** which would lead us to think Paul is talking about the Law of Moses. But the word **'the'** isn't in the original text which tells us Paul is talking about any law, any form of religious law keeping can't make us right with God. Now we can only imagine what's going through the minds of those Galatians who are reading this letter. But we don't have to imagine too hard because Paul is anticipating what some of the arguments against justification by faith will be.

**Galatians 2:17+18** **"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! If I rebuild what I destroyed, then I really would be a lawbreaker."** **Don't you just love it when Paul thinks ahead like this?** He does it all the through the **Book of Romans** and he's doing it again here in **Galatians**.

If you're going to argue with an atheist, you have to know how an atheist thinks. If you're going to argue with any other religious group, you have to know how they think. And so, because Paul anticipates a legalistic argument, he's thinking about what the legalists would think. And their argument is basically saying, if we're made right with God simply by having faith in Christ and God's grace, then we can simply carry on sinning. In other words, they wanted to abuse the grace of God.

Jude says in Jude 4, “For certain individuals whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord”.

Paul is going to say later in Galatians 5:13 “You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love.” And if you want a real definition of faith from Paul, He says back in Galatians 5:6 “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.”

Loved ones just because we are justified by faith and grace, doesn't mean we can live our lives in any way we want too. Christians aren't under law as a meritorious code of conduct, we're under law as a direction of life. Obedience to law isn't based on merit to obtain salvation but obedience is based on the fact that salvation has already been obtained through faith in God's grace. In other words, Christians, don't work **for** their salvation, they work **because** of their salvation.

Paul says, ‘If I rebuild what I destroyed, then I really would be a lawbreaker.’ Which basically means if he goes back to a system of law keeping, he would be found to be a transgressor of the new covenant of Christ. He says he would become a transgressor of the law of grace and faith if he went back to that system of religion. He becomes a transgressor simply because he would be giving up on up God's forgiving grace in his life.

Galatians 5:4 “You who are trying to be justified by the law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace”. Paul says there is absolutely no way he would return to trying to be right with God through law keeping.

And so, Paul continues with his argument against those who are teaching that Christians accept Jesus but still need to observe the Old Testament laws. Galatians 2:19-21 “For through the law I died to the law so that I might live for God. 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. I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!”

Now again please keep in mind that the word, ‘the’ used here, isn't in the original text. Paul is taking about any law in general and he says that he died to law in the sense that he recognised that law couldn't bring justification before God. And I like mentioned earlier, any law which requires any kind of meritorious justification only brings condemnation not life.

And the reason for that is simple, we've all sinned and sin condemns and brings death as Romans 3:23 and Romans 6:23 tell us. And so, we all have to die to law to be right with God, in order for us to ‘live for God’. Paul is essentially saying that law brings death, for all have sinned but Jesus brought life, for He revealed the grace of God.

Now let me ask you, when was Paul crucified with Christ? When did Christ take up residence in Paul? It was at his baptism, at his baptism he received the forgiveness of his sins and he made a commitment to God that he would live for Christ and not for himself.

Romans 6:3-6 “Don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin—because anyone who has died has been set free from sin”.

Now remember Paul isn't arguing about the importance of baptism here, he's arguing about how a Christian can live without sin in their lives because of what takes place at our baptism. And so, when a Christian experiences God's grace at their baptism and throughout their Christian life, their life changes because change is a natural response to grace.

When Paul changes from discussions concerning God's grace in the Book of Romans, he moves into a life response to grace in Romans 12. In Romans 11:30-32 Paul argues that since we have obtained mercy through God's grace, he starts Romans 12:1 by reminding us that we should present our bodies a living sacrifice.

And look at what he says next in **Romans 12:2** “Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will”.

When we recognise we’re living in God’s grace, His grace should motivate us to allow God to renew our minds. It’s at our baptism Paul says that our whole personal being and life changes by being consumed in the will of Jesus. And so, the will and mission of Jesus becomes the life of the Christian who shares in Jesus’ will and mission. In other words, a correct understanding of grace, promotes Christian living.

You see, God’s grace and His offer of salvation can be taken to two extremes. One extreme says, ‘I trust in Jesus but I also have to trust in my own merit for my salvation’. The other extreme says, ‘Jesus did it all, so I can just live however I want because I’m saved anyway’. Paul says, ‘I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.’

Grace and salvation is obtained through the love of God who sent His Son to die in our place. **Romans 5:8** “But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us”. That sounds so simple, doesn’t it? So, simple that some Christians feel the need to add to it. Oh, we can’t sing any choruses during worship, just to keep us safe! We have to have an Old Testament and the New Testament Scripture reading, just to keep us safe! We can’t raise our hands in the air during worship, just to keep us safe!

Safe from what loved ones? Do we honestly think we’ll lose our salvation if we don’t get things done exactly how God wants them done? Now obviously we can’t just worship God any old way we like, the Bible gives us clear instructions on how to do that. But God sent His Son to die for us and our part is simply to accept that and try and live a transformed life which pleases God. God isn’t looking for perfection, He’s looking for faithfulness which shows itself in our Christian lives. Paul is saying that the grace of God did away with the necessity of being justified by perfect law-keeping.

And he reminds us again, ‘if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!’ Paul says if anyone wants to go backwards and try and be right with God through law keeping then Jesus died for nothing. Yes, Paul worked, but not for his salvation, God’s grace didn’t cancel works of obedience to God’s will. Paul worked because he was motivated by the love and appreciation of what God done for him.

**2 Corinthians 4:13-15** “It is written: “I believed; therefore, I have spoken.” Since we have that same spirit of faith, we also believe and therefore speak, because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you to himself. All this is for your benefit, so that the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God.” You see under grace, Christians work because of what they have, that is, their salvation. But if a Christian wants to live under law, then that Christian is constantly working in order to receive it.

So, let me ask you just before we finish, do you see yourself as a good person, doing good deeds trying to earn your salvation? Or do you see yourself as a good person, doing good deeds because you’re motivated by the love of God and you appreciate the salvation He’s promised you?

One of my wife’s favourite films is **Disney’s Frozen** and the most famous soundtrack from that film was a song sung by **Idina Menzel** and it’s called, ‘let it go’. And if you’re here today and you’re trying to earn your salvation, then let it go. Let it go and swallow your pride because you’re trying to achieve something which is beyond human achievement.

God knew we couldn’t achieve salvation on our own merit, that’s why He sent His Son to die for mankind in the first place. So, let it go, quit trying to work for your salvation and simply accept what Jesus did and put your faith in the salvation of Jesus.