

May 7, 2017

Saved by Grace Transformed by Spirit

"I am surprised that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—which is no gospel at all...even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned!"

"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life that I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me."
Galatians 1:6-9 and 2:20-21

In our study together over the past several months we have considered the most fundamental precepts of the gospel of Jesus Christ and God's intention through this gospel to transform us into his children. The good news we have in Jesus is that all of us, who have no hope because we are all sinners and thus condemned to death, can now hope to be made alive again because Jesus satisfied the requirement of the ***"law of sin and death"*** with his death on the cross.

In writing his letter to the churches of Galatia, the Apostle Paul was addressing a problem produced by the salvation of the first non-Jewish believers to this gospel. Some of the Jewish believers wanted to make it necessary for these new believers to become Jews before they could become Christians. The huge problem this created was simply that such an approach nullified the gospel in every way. Any requirement to keep a system of rules and regulations perfectly in an effort to earn salvation nullifies the gospel of Jesus Christ.

We might assume that this challenge to the most fundamental principle of grace is that it, of course, no longer exists. We would be wrong. All of us, no matter where we 'go to church' have been taught that keeping rules and regulations plays a major role in our salvation. Even if we have been correctly taught the gospel of Jesus Christ we have, very likely, also been taught that certain rules and regulations are still essential to salvation.

The simple gospel of Jesus Christ is built on this one fundamental principle, ***"...because by observing the law no one will be justified."*** (Galatians 2:16) We cannot be saved by keeping the rules, no matter how 'right' those rules are. Why not. Because the ***"law of sin and death"*** is absolute. One sin, any sin, is fatal under that law. So, if I would depend on keeping the rules and regulations perfectly in order to gain salvation I am lost.

You and I will only be saved by God's grace poured out on in us in the death of Jesus Christ on the cross. Does that mean there are no rules; no regulations. Of course it does not. Jesus would teach us, ***"Whoever has my commands and obeys them is is the one who loves me...If anyone loves me he will obey my teaching."*** (John 14:21-23) Obedience is essential, however, no amount of obedience will ever save me, because my obedience is never perfect; never complete.

So, we are saved by grace, and we obey Jesus' commandments because we love him for making that grace possible. We are saved by that grace. But, what if someone comes along with a new 'revelation' that teaches us that we can be saved by doing certain things in certain ways on certain days. Paul would make it clear that such a one is teaching lies, and will be ***"eternally condemned."***



SAVED BY GRACE

So, we are saved by grace which was poured out by God on us through the blood of Jesus Christ, spilled as he died on the cross. We are saved by this grace. The commandments? We seek to keep those because God has saved us and not so that God will save us and that makes all the difference. I do not deny myself, I do not take up my cross and put myself to death, in order to earn salvation. I obey Jesus' command to surrender because he has created grace to save me. I love others as he has loved me, because his grace has saved me. I love my neighbor as myself because Jesus' grace has saved me. I can never, ever earn salvation, but I can

and must choose obedience because Jesus' grace has saved me.

"I have been crucified with Christ..." because his grace has saved me not so that he will save me. Salvation comes from God, and God alone. Obedience comes from me, because of salvation and never to win salvation.