

Galatians 2:11-21

I went to the Calvary Chapel Pastors' Conference this past week and was reminded of the importance of God's grace in the early life of the Calvary Chapel movement of which we are a part. Pastor Chuck Smith was a clean-cut kid that grew up in a conservative Christian home. He was a typical seminary graduate who had been a pastor in traditional denominational churches for almost 20 years before anything out of the ordinary began to happen. Then in the late 60s and early 70s, all kinds of hippies, surfer kids, drug dealers and gang members started coming to Calvary Chapel. At one point they installed new carpet at the church and a few people complained that all the kids coming in with bare feet were going to ruin it. Chuck's response was that maybe they better remove the carpet so it wouldn't be a problem. God was doing a work and Chuck knew it would be wrong to put any obstacles in the way of these kids who were coming to learn about Jesus. Nobody had to measure up to any special standard before they were welcome at the church. Nobody had to conform outwardly in order to be transformed by God's Spirit inwardly.

One of the most troubled kids to show up at that time was Mike MacIntosh. His mind was totally destroyed by excessive use of psychedelic drugs. God literally restored Mike's sanity and led him to start Horizon Christian Fellowship in San Diego. Bill and Vi Goodrich, Jeff and Judy Seward, Paul and Jennica Velazquez and myself are all products of that ministry. None of us had to live up to any special standard before we started coming to church at Horizon. There were no hurdles to jump over or hoops to jump through. God simply continued His work of grace and transformed our lives as a result of our coming to know Jesus and our continuing relationship with him. Nobody had to conform outwardly in order to be transformed by God's Spirit inwardly.

This issue of grace has been an important element in the church since the days of the Apostle Paul. Today we'll read of an incident that happened in Antioch where Paul was serving. We'll want to learn from it if we're going to be able to show the same kind of grace toward others that God has already shown us. God's grace didn't begin with Calvary Chapel. It was an important topic that needed to be worked through from the earliest days of the church. Grace is also important as the means by which we continue our Christian growth

God's work in us begins with a work of grace. That work continues as we grow in God's grace.

Introduction:

- I. Peter's Error 2:11-13
- II. Paul's Correction 2:14-16
- III. What Grace Means and Doesn't Mean 2:17-21

- I. Peter's Error 2:11-13

- A. Peter knew better. He was the first apostle to preach to a group of Gentiles and see many come to faith in Christ. See **Acts 11:1-18**

- B. So why separate from the Gentiles now?

1. Peer pressure Read vv.12-13 again.
2. Lack of a conscious determination to stand firm in the grace of God.
3. **Application:** Who are we when we are around various other people?
 - a) Do our Christian convictions stay the same?
 - b) Can we be swayed into behavior that we know is wrong when others around us are involved in that behavior?
 - (1) This can be behavior we might associate with the world: drinking, drugs, or whatever. In that case we might have to find some new friends rather than try to resist those outward pressures.
 - (2) In Peter's case it was more of a racial and/or religious prejudice – a voluntary segregation from those people that his Jewish peers looked down on and wanted to avoid. This is a bit touchier because Peter's "friends" in this case were all Christians. Peter didn't need new friends, rather he and his friends needed to quit looking down on other Christians. They were forgetting that they were all equally saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.
 - c) There are plenty of people who believe in the grace of God, but neglect to practice it when the opportunity arises to show that grace to others. Peter could have been the one to correct these Jewish brothers. Instead he, Barnabas and the other Jews in Antioch found themselves corrected by Paul.

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II. Paul's Correction

2:14-16

A. 2:14 **Why do you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?**

1. Peter may have felt at the time that he was not compelling them to do anything. It's important, however to see it from the side of the Gentiles in Antioch. They would have felt excluded by the Jews, and therefore, since this was the early days of the church, they would have felt compelled to conform to the outward tenets of Judaism.
2. This would be something other than faith leading to acceptance before God.

B. 2:16 There are plenty of churches that might teach the grace of God, yet someone walking in for the first time might feel pressured to conform to outward forms or practices.

C. How did the story end? After the writing of this letter, the Judaizers kept right on applying the pressure. They repeatedly did so in Antioch, perhaps seeing it as Paul's home base and the source of Gentile Christianity. Eventually, the leaders had to get together and have a

meeting in Jerusalem on this subject. When they did, Peter was among the most vocal in making sure that the Gentiles were accepted as is. Their faith was enough.

Acts 15:6-12 NKJV ⁶Now the apostles and elders came together to consider this matter. ⁷And when there had been much dispute, Peter rose up and said to them: "Men and brethren, you know that a good while ago God chose among us, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. ⁸So God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to us, ⁹and made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. ¹⁰Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? ¹¹But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they."

¹²Then all the multitude kept silent and listened to Barnabas and Paul declaring how many miracles and wonders God had worked through them among the Gentiles.

D. It is important not to make too big a deal out of this issue between Peter and Paul. We can see that they were essentially in agreement. Peter just goofed up in a weak moment. Paul's point is not to highlight that there is disagreement between them. Rather, since the Judaizers in Galatia were trying to drive a wedge between Paul and the Jerusalem church, saying he was supposed to be under Jerusalem and was out of line, he felt the need to show that first, he was not under them and second there was actually unity in their common outlook on the Law pertaining to Gentiles. By grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

E. Who is the Lord calling you to extend grace to at this time? Two lines of thought:

1. People who simply need the love of Christ. Who has the Lord put in your life that needs to see God's unconditional love? Consider the fact that you might be the one to show it to them.

2. Who has the Lord put in your life, perhaps here in the church, who is clearly different enough from you that it might be a stretch to spend time with them? Make it a point to do so.

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III. What Grace Means and Doesn't Mean 2:17-21

A. Whenever you play up the importance of God's grace, meaning that we are made right with God through faith in Christ alone, there is going to be misunderstanding. Paul, therefore, gives a corrective answer before anyone really asks the question. He just sees it coming.

1. 2:17 **Is Christ therefore a minister of sin? Certainly not.**

a) In other words, if we really believe that it's faith first, then we find that here we are in Christ, saved, redeemed and justified – while we are still sinners. But that doesn't mean that Christ approves of our sin. Paul will explain further.

B. 2:18 If I build up a new system of works-based righteousness, I'm sunk, because I'm going to be constantly falling short of it. If I have to live up to a standard in order to merit God's favor toward me, then I will never experience God's favor. I will waver between pride and condemnation.

C. 2:19 The law was Paul's teacher and it led him to Christ. At that point Paul says he "died to the law that he might live to God. The law taught him that he needed more than a standard to live by, he needed a change of heart that would help him to live up to that standard.

D. 2:20-21 These verses are the summary of all we have learned here.

1. God's grace did more than our works could ever do.

a) Forgiveness is by grace through faith

b) Regeneration or new life in Christ is by God's grace through faith.

c) A righteous standing before God is by God's grace through faith.

2. If we want to set up a law, then we are setting aside the cross. If our works are what gets us right with God, then the death of Christ becomes nothing more than a nice example – an example that we will never be able to live up to.

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Closing Illustration:

When Krystiana and I went to California this past week that trip was really very quick and effortless on our part. We simply needed to submit to the airplane, pilot and crew and in a matter of hours we landed thousands of miles away.

Grace = an airplane that takes you places fast once you let it do what it is supposed to do.

Law or Works = a Flintstones car, that is powered by feet. There are places you will simply never be able to go through human effort. There are wonderful works of God's grace that you will never be able to see. We simply don't have the power or ability to do for ourselves what God wants to do for us if we simply submit our hearts to him.

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2 Peter 3:18 NKJV but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.