

New LIFE Fellowship – Worship Celebration – Bible Study – 03/01/2015

Circumcision and the Gospel: A 2nd Look at Romans 4:9-15

The Ministry/Church Fads that are Popular may not be based upon the Truth of God's Word in Christ Jesus our LORD and Savior.

What Paul the apostle faced in his day, we are facing similar kinds of things today.

Read Romans 4:9-15

My focus today is on what "Circumcision" meant in Paul's day and how it impacted and/or presented challenges for ministry ... and how that translates in today's "church" world.

He faced ministry challenges of false doctrines infiltrating churches he planted. Some of those churches, which were planted by him, were quickly infiltrated by this Radical Hebrew-Roots movement ...

If a Gentile person wanted to follow Jesus Christ as his/her Savior and LORD, they were told "you must be converted to be a Jew, first, then follow Jesus Christ..." For men, this included rite of "Circumcision".

The church council in Acts 15 answered this issue (please read Acts 15:1-29) Please spend some time reading Acts 15 and the book of Galatians. This will explain the kinds of challenges Paul the apostle faced in his day.

He faced them head-on and did not back down: This kind of stance caused him to lose popularity and he was even lied about, gossiped about by others because of his stand on God's Word, alone. Some churches, even those that he planted, such as the church in Corinth, were almost embarrassed to even know him (read 1st Corinthians and Galatians). **AMAZING Fickleness of folks, eh?**

Let's just hear Paul in his own words for a little bit here...

Galatians 1:6-10

(6) I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, (7) which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. (8) But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. (9) As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed. (10) **For do I now seek to persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still seek to please men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ. (compare with John 12:43 → For they loved praise from men (from other humans) more than praise from God.)**

Galatians 5:2-6,11:

Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing. (3) And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law. (4) You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace. (5) For we through the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. (6) For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love. ...

(11) And I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why do I still suffer persecution? Then the offense of the cross has ceased.

Galatians 1:10 ==> For do I now seek to persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still seek to please men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ.

Galatians 5:11 ==> if I still preach circumcision, why do I still suffer persecution? Then the **OFFENSE of the CROSS** has ceased.

Have we those same kinds of challenges, today?

Of course we do... The following are "sacred cows" ... remember what God thought about that "sacred calf" the Israelites sacrificed to... (**Exodus 32**)?

These all seek to undermine the Truth of God's Word, undermine the Authority of God and His Word, and seek to undermine the Offensiveness of the Cross of Christ in regards to SIN:

1. **Easy Believism** ... God loves you and wants a relationship with you... so just believe in Jesus ... repeat after me, "I believe in Jesus," No mention of SIN, no mention of breaking God's Laws, no mention of God's Wrath and/or Judgment ... just God loves you and has a wonderful plan for you life. We've seen 2 generations growing up in the church and what that kind of fruit that "gospel" has borne.
2. **Seeker Sensitive, Seeker Oriented** ... I am not sure how long I need to go on about that one... Willow Creek and Saddleback (Rick Warren), etc... I understand, we need to be sensitive to those whom God is working in... I don't want to put out the wick that is barely burning (Isaiah 42:3 --> "He (the future Messiah) will not break a bruised reed, and He will not put out a smoldering wick...")
But, what this has meant is the compromising of the Gospel, making sure we don't mention certain hard truths of God's Word, lest we "scare" sinners away.
3. **The Prosperity Gospel**, "name it, and claim it" ... you must give God the money, through this specific "Preacher" and you will get more than you put in, in some form ... unless you don't have enough faith, etc. And, you have to keep on giving or something bad might happen.
4. **The "Healing Gospel"** ... anytime I ask God for any kind of healing God is obligated to heal me, no matter what. And if I don't "receive" my healing from God, it is because I don't have enough faith and/or I haven't given enough money to that specific "faith healer", etc.
5. **The WORKS Gospel** ... you must Trust in Jesus for your Salvation... but in order to keep it, you must do certain religious, ritual works, and/or you must give a tithe or above, and/or you must be a member of a particular "brand" of church, and/or ... "fill in the blank" ...
The Roman Catholic Church is high up there in this... but there are many other so-called churches that do this kind of thing in various ways that might see OK on the surface, but undermine the very Grace of God (see Ephesians 2:8-9)

Time does not permit me to go on here (there are so many other perversion of the Gospel)... but in each and every case, some truth of God's Word is replaced, taken away, modified or something like this ... so that we, as fallen, sinful humans, can justify ourselves before God, based upon our own merits, even if it is just a little bit, partially ... kinda like **helping out God with it**, etc.

This is why Paul focusses so much on this in the New Testament (from Romans through 2 Timothy)

1. We "think" we have a "need" in our fallen, sinful, selfish, self-centered old nature, to justify ourselves, our behaviors, our attitudes, our decision and our actions.
2. It is easier for us, to hide behind religious rituals, or anything "religious" instead of facing our SIN upon Jesus Christ on the Cross when He was crucified. Facing this, **is offensive to us**, and we want to fight against it, as fallen sinners.

THE GOSPEL ==> it Offends us. Jesus Christ through His "messengers" ... their message about Jesus Christ offends us because it says that **we are sinners in need of a Savior**.

The Gospel declares that our feeble "religious" efforts, which are selfishly motivated, to "do good" and to "make up" for our sins → have and will always fail, we always fall short ...

Romans 3:23: for we have all sinned and fallen short of the Glory of God.

Paul is hitting Circumcision hard because it is just one more thing folks can Trust ... this includes their family's "heritage", their upbringing, their church membership history, etc. **Circumcision is symbolic of those kinds of things**

People may seek to use anything else to **REST IN** (to **TRUST IN**) to make them acceptable before the HOLY and Righteous God

→ **OR** just make themselves **"SPIRITUALLY COMFORTABLE"**

Even as **little children**, we learn very early how to "justify ourselves" and give "excuses" for our choices, behavior, and attitudes, etc. **This comes natural.**

Paul has revealed that we are sinners ... from Romans 1:18 through the end of Romans chapter 3.

Blatant Sinners, Gentile Moral Sinners, and even Devout Religious Jews are all sinners.

No person can be justified before God, even if they sought to obey the Laws of God for Israel that were given through Moses ... even if they sought to obey them completely from birth until death...

that would NEVER, EVER, EVER make them RIGHT and JUSTIFIED for the HOLY and RIGHTEOUS GOD (Romans 3:9,19-20)

So, the last things on the mind of the sinner who is still seeking to justify himself or herself before God on his/her own is...

1. "What about Abraham and David"? If God accepted them, won't he accept me, because of what they did? [answer: NO]
2. "Hey, I am Circumcised ... or my dad is circumcised (something a daughter might say, since she would never be circumcised)" ... so isn't that enough? [answer: NO]

Paul is fighting a FAD that was rampant in the church in the very early church ... it was leading folks away from the truth of Justification by Faith in Christ ... toward a "works salvation" in which sinners seek to earn their salvation by earning it by doing religious rituals and works, plus Trusting in Christ, as well.

Paul is preaching this to the very early, infant church of Rome.

Later on, about 400 years later ... that church at Rome became the beginnings of what we call the "Roman Catholic Church".

She, as the Roman Catholic Church, disobeyed these teachings of Jesus Christ and His apostles and the Roman Catholic Church started teaching that sinners could be justified before (saved by) God on the basis of Faith in Christ and based upon their own personal religious rituals and works within the church of Rome, etc.

They started to develop a "false gospel" that Paul was warning about here in the Book of Romans, in the Book of Galatians and in the Book of Hebrews.

Hear what the apostle Paul says in Galatians 1:8-9 - harsh words... but true (doesn't sound very loving, either...)

Galatians 1:8-9: (8) But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be ACCURSED. (9) As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be ACCURSED.

1 Corinthians 15:1-8 (the Gospel that the apostle Paul preached)

Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the GOSPEL which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, (2) by which also you are SAVED, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you - unless you believed in vain. (3) For I delivered to you FIRST of all [of highest priority] that which I also received: that Christ DIED for our SINS according to the Scriptures, (4) and that He was buried, and that He ROSE again the third day according to the Scriptures, (5) and that He was SEEN by Cephas [Peter], then by the twelve. (6) After that He was SEEN by over FIVE HUNDRED brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep [some have died]. (7) After that He was SEEN by James, then by all the apostles. (8) Then last of all He was SEEN by me [Paul] also, as by one born out of due time.

The TRUE Gospel (Good News / Good Report / Truthful Report) of Jesus Christ ==> CUTS through everything and enters into our hearts and Shines the LIGHT on our Sinfulness, our selfishness, our self-centeredness ... AND it EXPOSES us as sinners on the way to hell without any earthly hope. We have NO HOPE outside of Christ - NOT even Abraham, David or Circumcision can save us ... ONLY CHRIST can.

Paul nailed that last door shut, the last vestige of our trying to justify ourselves. All we are left with is CHRIST Himself ... Christ and what He did for us ... HE IS ENOUGH ... HE is the ONLY OPEN DOOR to God... He is THE WAY, THE TRUTH and the LIFE ... the ONLY way to God the Father (John 14:6)

It is not enough to know this in our head (to just acknowledge the Truth of this) ... we must, personally, and truthfully, and humbly TRUST in GOD and what He's Done for us in Christ JESUS, alone for our Eternal Salvation, for our Forever Forgiveness ...

If you have not done this today, please don't let another moment go by, you are not guaranteed another breath or heartbeat. . . .

Next week we will see to finish up the rest of Romans 4 - come prepared, prayed up, read up... read to Worship God and to study His Holy Word, the Bible.