

Galatians 2:10-21

1) What was at stake

So Paul went about preaching the gospel. But wherever he went the Judaisers followed him teaching the new Gentile converts that they must become Jews to be properly saved. They misled the new believers and also carried back to Jerusalem false reports about what he was doing and teaching. They were "false brethren" indeed (2, 4).

i) Not just an idea, a debate. Circ. = cutting off of the foreskin - pain, humiliation, an entrance into a life of slavery.

Remember, we are:

- law-breakers (ritual)
- Sabbath-breakers (Lord's Day a meeting day, not the Saturday Sabbath)
- we do not sacrifice ("without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins").

ii) Why did Paul allow Timothy to be circumcised when he would not give in over the issue of Titus being circumcised?

Acts 16:1-3

1 Then he came to Derbe and Lystra. And behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a certain Jewish woman who believed, but his father was Greek. 2 He was well spoken of by the brethren who were at Lystra and Iconium. 3 Paul wanted to have him go on with him. And he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in that region, for they all knew that his father was Greek.

More than anything else Paul worked for the furtherance of the gospel. His behaviour varied according to the effect it would have on the gospel finding a welcome in open minds.

Titus was a Greek (Gal 2:2,3), a Gentile, and so Paul was determined that he should not be circumcised as the Judaisers wanted. He did not need to worry that they would not receive the gospel, they had already heard and knew the gospel, they had simply rejected the offer of free grace.

In the situation with Timothy there was a big difference. Timothy was a Jew. His father was a gentile but his mother was a Jew. Paul (and Timothy) were eager that there would be no obstacle to faith for the Jews who had not yet heard the gospel. So Timothy was prepared to make the considerable sacrifice for the Kingdom's sake! His own personal rights were secondary. This would not be the only occasion that Paul and Timothy would set aside their own rights that others might benefit.

See Cor 8,9-13; 9,19-23; 10,23-33

Timothy was circumcised so that the Jews might be free. Titus was not circumcised for exactly the same reason, that the Galatians might be free.

iii) What are the characteristics of legalists in the modern church? We could say that it is often what one person feels they have heard God direct them to do (or not to do), which they then try to impose on others.

There are two sins in this:

- a) It is pride (only we could be right).
- b) It is faithless (thinking that God can not direct another Christian without us).

For you to consider; what is discipling if not "teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you." (Matt 28,19,20)?

2) What we must do and what God will do

Compare Gal 2:17-21 with Isaiah 40:28-31

Have you not known?
Have you not heard?
The everlasting God, the LORD,
The Creator of the ends of the earth,
Neither faints nor is weary.
His understanding is unsearchable.
He gives power to the weak,
And to *those who have* no might He increases strength.
Even the youths shall faint and be weary,
And the young men shall utterly fall,
But those who wait on the LORD
Shall renew *their* strength;
They shall mount up with wings like eagles,
They shall run and not be weary,
They shall walk and not faint.

ISAAH GIVES THE CONCEPT

God does not become weary (v28) and He gives strength to those in need (v29). How do we avail ourselves of this?

What we must do

(v31a) God gives His strength to those who wait for Him. The Hebrew term translated '*wait*' Means "to twist, to stretch." In it's noun form, it refers to a measuring line or a rope. Combine the two meanings and a picture comes to us of a sturdy rope made of many fragile fibres twisted around each other (It conveys action rather than the passage of time,) We must stop trying to be strong on our own, but wrap our trust around God - the source of POWER.

What God will do

He will give strength.

PAUL GIVES THE PRINCIPLES

The spiritual counterpart of Isaiah 40:28-31 is Galatians 2:17-21, The principle is the same though the context is different.

Paul is countering the Judaisers who were teaching that faith in Jesus alone was insufficient for salvation. They argued that to be justified (right in the sight of God) they needed to trust in Jesus and live by the Mosaic Law.

Paul teaches that their gospel of works;

a) contradicts the OT teaching that salvation is by faith alone (Gal 3:6-9; Rom 4:1-22; Heb 11)

- b) denies the relevance of Christ's death, Legalism is a blasphemy!**
- c) Ministers uncertainty regarding eternal security, How can we ever, in this life, be sure if we have been good enough?**

Paul ran the risk - as we do now - of being accused of encouraging immorality by our teaching. James Boice paraphrases their argument: "Your doctrine of justification by faith is dangerous, for by eliminating the law you also eliminate a man's sense of moral responsibility, If a person can be accounted righteous simply by believing that Christ died for him, why then bother to keep the law or, for that matter, why then should he bother to live by any standard of morality? There is no need to be good. The result of your doctrine is that Men will believe in Christ but thereafter do as they desire."

3) Paul responds to the Judaizers:

i) Justification before God

Paul makes it clear that the true gospel of grace does not lead to ungodliness (v17b) but brings about a new creation that is intent on serving God, not rebelling against Him (2 Cor 5:14-19). Christians do still sin but the cause is not Jesus or a faulty gospel but our own sinful nature (James 1 :13-17).

ii) Death to the Law

Believers who are determined to live by the Law prove they are sinners (v18) because they cannot keep all the Law's demands. So they are condemned by the very standard they think gives them life (see v19a; 3:10,21; Rom 3:19,20). It is the Law that shuts out any hope of earning salvation. By shutting out that hope, it points to a different possibility, FAITH.

iii) Life in Christ

New life is received when we die with Christ - when by faith we wrap ourselves around Him, trust in Him, so that we are reborn and live in that "born-again" state. We give ourselves to Christ, He gives Himself to us with all His power, so we can live as He desires us to live. If we are justified by faith and living that way day by day we cannot help but live transformed lives - lives that display an increasing commitment to Christian beliefs and practices.