

Sunday, January 29, 2023—Galatians 2:17-19 Dead to The Law But Alive Unto God

Galatians 2:17

- **But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid.**
- **But if**—note the contrast. This verse needs to be understood within the context of verses 15 and 16. Paul just got done saying in verse 16 that one's works cannot save them. Consequently, the only way left for one to be saved is by Christ.
- What is the first thing you must admit if you want to be justified by Christ? That you are a sinner, and your works are worth nothing when it comes to your eternal salvation.
- So, because you must admit you are a sinner to be justified, does that mean that Christ is the originator of sin? God forbid! Absolutely not!
- Notice again the use of the word "we" in verse 17. Remember that Paul is including himself with Israel in this statement. Therefore, Paul is saying that for a Jew to be justified, he must recognize that he is no better than a Gentile.

Galatians 2:18

- **For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor.**
- What Peter had done in withdrawing his fellowship from the Gentiles was in effect to rebuild the middle wall of partition that Paul had worked so hard to tear down.
- Ephesians 2:14—we know that through the message and preaching of Paul, Christ had already broken down the middle wall of partition.
- Paul says here that if he goes back to building a wall of Law keeping and differences between Jews and Gentiles, he himself is a transgressor.
- Galatians 1:8-9—remember Paul's strong words to anyone who was preaching another gospel.
- If Paul were building this wall back up, he would have been condemned by the words from his own mouth.

Galatians 2:19

- **For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.**
- This is an interesting verse. This is one of those short one-sentence verses that is extremely profound.

- I feel the best way to attack this verse is by unpacking each idea by looking at the relevant passages and then summarizing them at the end.
- Consider the following points.
 - Romans 3:19-20—all the Law can do is manifest sin.
 - I Timothy 1:6-10—the purpose of the Law is to manifest sin. When we believe the gospel, the purpose of the Law is over. It has caused us to realize our own sin and reach out in faith to a Redeemer who paid the price for us.
 - Ephesians 2:1-4—the natural man is officially declared “dead in trespasses and sins”. All the natural man knows how to do is sin. We can try and turn from our sin all we want, but we cannot turn from that which we are dead in.
 - Romans 7:7-9—the Law can only kill the believer.
 - Ephesians 2:6-6—when a person gets saved, their inner man is made alive while their body remains dead and subject to the curse of sin.
 - Colossians 2:11—the believer’s soul and spirit are cut loose from his flesh so that he can be joined with Christ (Romans 7:4, I Corinthians 6:17).
 - Romans 6:1-11—believers still carry around a corpse that was already crucified and put to death based upon the cross work of Jesus Christ.
- Paul’s argument here is that, through the Law, he was led to recognize that he was no longer under the Law. “The righteousness that is of the Law depended upon a perfect keeping of the Law. Since no one is able to perfectly keep the Law, it became a revealer of sin rather than a giver of life.” (Campbell, 62)
- Romans 7:10—the command that was supposed to bring life actually led to death.
- Romans 3:20—in other words, through the Law, Paul was faced with the fact that he was a sinner which ultimately made him see his need for Christ.
- Romans 8:2—“thus we see that through the Law, Paul gained the knowledge of sin, which in turn caused him to find life in Christ apart from the Law, which freed him to live unto God.” (Campbell, 62-63)
- Pastor C.R. Stam offers the following illustration of the truth of this verse in his *Commentary on Galatians*.

- “. . . There was a man who has robbed and killed another man, and the police are looking for him. While they are cruising about, stopping at homes to ask questions, a call comes through to them about a serious accident elsewhere. There at the crash scene they find their criminal. He is dead, killed in the crash. Now what can the law do? Arrest him? Take him away to jail? Try him in court. No. It is over. He is dead. The whole thing has been taken out of their hands.

Paul gives us the concept as just one of the reasons we are under grace and not under the law of Moses. Through grace they should do better than if they were under the law; but they are not under the law. The law has no more jurisdiction because they are dead to it.” (Stam, 134-135)

- Do you see how the book of Galatians is correcting the doctrinal errors the Galatians had entered into based upon the teachings of Romans?

Works Cited

Campbell, Ernest R. *Galatians*. Silverton, OR: Canyonview Press, 1981.

Stam, Cornelius R. *Commentary on Galatians*. Germantown, WI: Berean Bible Society, 1998.