

“Christ Lives in Me”

(Sola #2)

Galatians 2: 15- 21 (NIRV)

¹⁵ We are Jews by birth. We are not sinful Gentiles. ¹⁶ Here is what we know. No one is made right with God by obeying the law. It is by believing in Jesus Christ. So, we too have put our faith in Christ Jesus. This is so we can be made right with God by believing in Christ. We are not made right by obeying the law. That’s because no one can be made right with God by obeying the law.

¹⁷ We are seeking to be made right with God through Christ. As we do, what if we find that we who are Jews are also sinners? Does that mean that Christ causes us to sin? Certainly not! ¹⁸ Suppose I build again what I had destroyed. Then I would really be breaking the law.

¹⁹ By the law, I died as far as the law is concerned. I died so that I might live for God. ²⁰ I have been crucified with Christ. I don’t live any longer, but Christ lives in me. Now I live my life in my body by faith in the Son of God. He loved me and gave himself for me. ²¹ I do not get rid of the grace of God. What if a person could become right with God by obeying the law? Then Christ died for nothing!



Reflection on the Word:

1. What is the significance of Paul’s statement “we are Jews by birth”? Why does Paul go on to say, “we are not sinful Gentiles”? How are these statements related?
2. Is Paul correct in saying, “we are not made right with God by obeying the law”? Why does he go from this statement to a question in verse 21?
3. What point is Paul trying to make with this statement, “what if we find that we who are Jews are also sinners”?
4. How has the crucifixion influence the way in which Paul chooses to live?

Family Time or Small Group (Better Together) Discussion:

1. Have you ever thought that you were better than someone else? Why did you think so? Do you still think so?
2. (After a tough question like number #1 you need an easy one.) How did Jesus save humanity?
3. Truthful answer needed- how are you seeking to be made right with God through Christ?
4. Is Christ living (in you, through you, in spite of you, or in some combination)?
5. How can I pray for you?

The Sermon:

Where does God live?

Have you ever wondered about God's address?

Or what God's home might look like?

A mountain. A temple. A cathedral with flying buttresses made from magnificent and impregnable stone. A country church with worn pews and today's hymn numbers posted on the wall. A golf course where mulligans are always in play and the putts always find their way to the hole. A beach where the waves roll gently onto the shore and the sounds calm the heart.

Ever since the beginning of time, humans have wondered ... and created spaces for God and their gods. Yes- you heard me correctly. I did say God and gods ... this division is important in our scripture passage this morning.

In the time in which Paul was writing this letter to the Galatians, the Jews were "monotheistic" meaning that they worshipped one God and one God only. (They still are.) The Jewish faith is built upon the faith that Abram (*later Abraham*) placed in the one God. The faith that he passed onto his son Isaac and Isaac passed onto his son Jacob. Thus, you often see in the Old Testament references that the Hebrews had faith in the *God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*. One God and one God only. Later after the Exodus from Egypt, God specifically commands the people to monotheism. The very first commandment makes this crystal clear. "You shall have no other gods before me." ([Exodus 20: 3 KJV](#))

Now in the Gentile (or non- Jewish) world, the practice of polytheism was the norm. There was practically a god for and over everything. Roman gods. Grecian gods. Persian gods, Egyptian gods, and on and on we could go. All promising something and very much at odds with Judaism.

There's the historical context for our passage. A divided world between Jew and Gentile. A world in which God has called a Jew by the name of Paul to extend the Gospel ... which I hope you remember from last week what Gospel means ... **the Good News of God's salvation** ... finger snaps or props to you if you remembered correctly.

While we might be finger snapping here and handing out props, I can tell you this ... Paul wasn't getting too many of these from the Jewish followers of Jesus in Galatia. I know that sounds strange. You would expect followers of Jesus to behave differently wouldn't you, but you see, sometimes we, even the followers of Jesus, don't deal well with our differences.

We can push them under the surface.

Maybe even try to disguise them.

But often they are just right there ... and we allow them to stay there.

We allow these differences to make a home in us.

And if the saying is true ... *home is where the heart is* ... then we indeed need a Savior. We need Jesus. Our hearts are not right when “difference” lives and makes itself at home in us. We could try to repair and fix our “differences” by means of a law ... or dare I say it ... *mandate* ... (That sure is complicated these days.) No, we need a Savior. We need Jesus and ...

Jesus alone.

He is the one and only. *Who, though he was God, did not demand and cling to his rights as God, but laid aside his mighty power and glory, taking the disguise of a slave and becoming a **human being**. And he humbled himself even further, going so far as actually to die a criminal's death on a cross.*
(Philippians 2: 6- 8, The Living Bible)

He prayed in the garden of Gethsemane before his arrest and crucifixion, “*Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.*” (Luke 22: 42 NIV) And as they mocked him on the cross ... and soldiers cast lots for his clothing he prayed “*Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.*” (Luke 23: 34 NIV) And as he gave up his spirit ... his work forever done on the cross, he said, “*It is finished.*” (John 19:30 NIV)

And with these words, he closed the gap of “difference” being at home in the human heart. Through his death “difference” may no longer take up residence in the heart of a follower of Jesus. There is no room for it. No room at all.

Paul says it this way- “*I have been crucified with Christ. I don't live any longer, but Christ lives in me.*”

Such strange words can only be understood in the historical and theological context of the times of difference in which Paul was writing to the followers of Jesus in Galatia. How could Paul “overlook” the challenges presented by the Gentiles who were converting to Christ? How could he welcome them and embrace them? How can Paul ask us ... Jews from birth ... to put away such animosity and disdain and to welcome ... to form community with and to be under the same roof with those who know not the law and were not born under the law.

Paul's answer, “*I have been crucified with Christ. I don't live any longer, but Christ lives in me.*” And if I have been then so might you be ... be crucified with Christ.

We need a Savior. And the Good News is ... we have One. We have Jesus and he is all we need.

And he asks of us this- let his address be your life and his home be in you.

Crucify the negative difference makers in your life and fill their empty rooms with power of Jesus' grace. Let sin have no more control over you ... your mind, your body, and your soul. Don't give sin one more moment of life ... over you or in you. Say goodbye to it and crucify it. Let it go.

For Jesus has made a way.

In Jesus Christ alone, we have our salvation.

You have been crucified with Christ. You and your old ways don't live any longer. Thanks be to God forevermore because Christ lives in you. His home is your heart. And he alone is all that you need.

Amen.

Thought for the Week Ahead:

“Joy is the quiet gladness of heart as one contemplates
the goodness of God's saving grace in Christ Jesus.”
— John Calvin