

7. Learning to Live by Faith

In our last several topics, we have seen that the Lord called Paul and Barnabas to take the Gospel of grace to the Gentiles. As people repented of their sin and placed their faith in the death and resurrection of Christ, the Lord set them free from the bondage of sin. Paul spent much time teaching these new Christians what it meant to be free from the law. Today, we will see that Paul wrote to help these new Christians learn to live by faith. That is something that is also important in our lives. We also need to help our physical and spiritual children learn to live by faith.

The Jews had been given the law by God. The Gentiles did not have the law. As a result, the Gentiles did not have the law to cause them to realize that they were sinners. Galatians 2:15-16 says, “We *who are* Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.” The Jews who had become Christians realized that the law had nothing to do with their salvation. It had only shown them that they were sinners.

However, the false teachers were telling the Gentiles that they had to keep the law in order to be saved and were bringing great confusion to the new Gentile Christians. That was why Paul explained to the Galatians that the Jews who had become Christians had been saved by faith in Christ Jesus. God had forgiven their sin and declared them righteous at the moment that they placed their faith in Christ. Since the Gentiles did not have the background of the Old Testament, these false teachers were trying to force the new Gentile Christians to believe that they had to follow the Jewish law in order to be saved. Paul wanted to make it clear that both Jews and Gentiles are saved by faith and not by the law.

This is important to help our physical and spiritual children understand because we want to help them understand that they are saved by faith and that they are also to live by faith. Ephesians 2:8-10 says, “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” We need to help our children understand that they are saved by faith plus nothing. When Christ saved us by faith He made us a new creation. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, “Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.” We are now in Christ Jesus and that is what makes it possible for us to do good works as we depend on His strength instead of our own works.

This is an important thing to help our children understand because there are still many false teachers who teach that people are saved by their own works. This is why Paul said in the last part of Galatians 2:16, “that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.” The works of the law have never saved any person. Throughout the Old Testament, people were saved by faith in the promises of God and not by their own works. That is why Hebrews 11:6 says, “But without faith *it is* impossible to please *Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and *that* He is a rewarder of those

who diligently seek Him.” All Old Testament believers were saved by faith.

We need to help our children understand the importance of recognizing that salvation is totally by faith. Galatians 2:17 says, “But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, *is* Christ therefore a minister of sin? Certainly not!” Paul taught that we are justified (declared righteous in the sight of God) by faith. Since we are declared righteous by God, we are now saints instead of sinners. (That does not always mean that we act like saints.) However, if we are not saints then we are saying that Christ is a minister of sin. Christ said in John 17:23, “I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.” We want to help our children understand that we are saints in the sight of God because we are in Christ.

Before he put his faith in Christ, Paul had tried to be righteous in the sight of God by keeping the law. That is why he understood these false teachers so well. He had been one of them before Christ met him on the road to Damascus and he placed his faith in Christ. In Galatians 2:18-19, Paul went on to say, “For if I build again those things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God.” Paul had been a leading teacher of Judaism. He had even persecuted the Christians. However, Paul says, in these verses, that when he placed his faith in Christ, he died to the law. The law no longer had any power over him. Instead, he was now able to live to God because he was dead to the law.

It is very important to help our physical and spiritual children understand that when they placed their faith in Christ, they also died to the law. The law no longer has any power over them. Instead, they are to learn to live to God. Galatians 3:24-25 says, “Therefore the law was our tutor *to bring us* to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.” We want to help our children understand that the law had completed its purpose when it showed them they were sinners, so that they were led to place their faith in Christ. Once we come to Christ by faith we are no longer under the law.

Since we are no longer under the law, God has given us a new way to live. This new way makes it possible for us to live to please God. Galatians 2:20 says, “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.” Here, we see that just as we were saved by faith, we are now to learn to live by faith. When Christ was on the cross, our sins were placed on Him. When He died, He paid the penalty for our sin. As a result, when we placed our faith in Christ, we were crucified with Him because the penalty for our sin was paid.

Romans 6:5-7 says, “For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be *in the likeness* of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin.” When we placed our faith in Christ, we were set free from the law of sin and death. Romans 8:2-4 says, “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God *did* by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of

sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.” Christ fulfilled the requirement of the law and we are now able to walk according to the Spirit.

That is why it is so important to help our children learn to live by faith. We want to help our children fully understand that because we are crucified with Christ, we can now live our new life by faith. We can live that new life by faith because of the fact that Christ loved us and gave Himself for us. He gave us the faith to believe and He now gives us the faith to walk the Christian life by faith.

Paul wanted to make it clear to the new Christians that those teachers who said that Christians had to keep the Jewish law and be circumcised were false teachers. In fact, Paul said in Galatians 2:21, “I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness *comes* through the law, then Christ died in vain.” Paul said that if we could either be saved by the law or live by the law that the death of Christ would mean nothing because it would not provide salvation or spiritual growth. This is important to help our physical and spiritual children understand so that they can quickly learn to begin to live by faith soon after they place their faith in Christ. Many people who have been Christians for years are still struggling in their spiritual growth because they are trying to grow by the law instead of learning to live by faith.

The key for this new life is given in Galatians 2:20 in the phrase where we read that Paul said “Christ lives in me”. We want to help our children fully understand what it means when it says that Christ lives in them. That means that we do not need to live in our own strength. Instead, as we yield to Christ moment by moment, John 15:5 says, “I am the vine, you *are* the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.” Here, we see that this new life in Christ means we will bear much fruit as we learn to live by faith, instead of trying to live the Christian life in our own strength. Philippians 4:13 says, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” The Lord is able to do whatever He chooses through our lives as we learn to live by faith and yield to Christ moment by moment.

An example of this is given in Acts 4:13 where we read, “Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.” We want to help our children understand that effective ministry is not based on education or training. Effective ministry is based on walking with Jesus by faith. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your physical and spiritual children how to walk with Christ by faith by your own example.