

THE POWER OF FAITH GALATIANS 2:15-21

LESSON PREP

In his letter to the church in Galatia, Paul addresses the notion that people had to do certain things or behave a certain way to be a Christian. In essence, he confronts the idea of salvation by works. But Paul flips this idea on its head and teaches us this core principle:

God's delight in you is not based on your performance for him. Rather, it's based on Christ's performance on our behalf. God's grace on our lives and our faith in him is the only way we obtain salvation. Naturally, good works will flow out of this faith.

This week, we want students to walk away from this conversation understanding that God's delight in us is not based on our good deeds, but on Jesus' one good deed on the cross. We also want them to realize that while faith is all that is required of them to receive forgiveness, obedience and service to God are simply indications of faith gone public.

PRE LG TEXT MESSAGE QUESTIONS

Can you earn or keep your salvation by doing good works? Let's talk about it as a group tonight.

SCRIPTURE MEMORIZATION Galatians 2:19-20

10N1 FOLLOWUP

Walk through this passage with your students to make sure they grasp the issues of grace and works as well as applications for their life moving forward.

Introduction

- How many of you believed in Santa Claus as a kid? Did any of you ever stay up at night wondering if you had been good enough to get presents that year?
- Do you think people often view God and Santa in similar ways—if we behave, we get good gifts, but if we don't, we get bad gifts or no gifts at all? Explain your perspective.
- How is our perception of God based on ideas we have heard our whole lives?

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: Fortunately for us, God acts differently than Santa Claus supposedly acts. Today we are going to talk about how God's favor of us isn't dependent on what we do for him, but rather on what Jesus did for us.

1. Legalism runs contrary to God's design

- Legalism, simply put, is working within our own power to earn God's favor. How have you seen legalism in your spiritual journey?
- In verse 16, Paul seems to be speaking of the Law in a bad way, but why should we be thankful for the Law?
- What is the difference between legalism and being free to obey Christ?
- In what ways are you still trying to gain favor in God's eyes by your own power? Is your work motivated by love for Jesus? guilt? obligation? duty?

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: As I mentioned a moment ago, legalism means working within our own power to earn God's favor. Religion centers on earning God's approval, but true Christianity is built on relationship with God through Christ. The good news is this: You can never do anything to make God love you more than God already does.

2. Trying to earn God's favor through works denies the necessity of Christ's death

- According to verse 16, how is a person justified? Is there a way to become righteous apart from Christ? Explain.
- When you try to earn favor before God by behaving rightly, how is that canceling the grace of God? Can you do anything to earn the favor of God? Explain.
- Why do we often ignore our righteous standing before God? When we ignore this standing, what are we essentially saying to God?

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: What Paul is articulating in Galatians, particularly in 2:19-21, is that if we could in fact earn righteousness by simply obeying the Law, then Christ died for no reason. By trying to earn favor or right standing before God by only obeying the Law or doing good things, we are essentially saying to God that Jesus' death on the cross was unnecessary. But it was necessary—his sacrifice opens the door to forgiveness and right standing before God.

3. God frees us from good deeds, but God also frees us for good deeds

- Can we do anything to make God love us less, or more? How does this truth affect the way you view God and want to serve God?
- What actions flow from a relationship with God? How do actions that flow out of relationship look different than those that flow out of religious obligation?
- What is the connection between our faith in Christ and our desire to do good works?
- It's been said that obedience and good works are simply demonstrations of faith gone public. Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: When we think about our relationship with God, we are constantly reminded that it is never about doing enough. In fact, we can't do enough. What we can do though, is trust in Christ, who has done enough. As we begin to trust in him more, we begin to see the world as he sees it, with compassion and hope. Any hint of guilt-induced work is replaced with joyful and grace-saturated obedience. We follow the commands of Christ willingly—not because we feel guilty, but because we have been loved greatly. This is an important distinction we need to always remember.

Application

How can you make a shift from guilt-produced works to grace-induced obedience? How would your life look different this week if you made this significant shift?

