

PM Galatians 2:11-21

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Date: 20 December 2020

Preacher: Mr Thomson McKenzie

[0 : 0 0] Good evening and welcome to our worship this evening and a special welcome to any visitors who are with us today. A few intimations to begin. First evening service at 6 o'clock, well you know that, you are here. So Wednesday night at 7pm will be a prayer meeting and Bible study and that will be led by Jonathan Kenyon. As mentioned last week, we are thankful to our Lord for the great encouragement that two trusts have responded to the application for grants with offers totalling £10,000 towards the total estimates of £21,000 for the eradication of the dry rot. The Deacons Court meeting last week by Zoom felt that it would be appropriate also for the congregation to be given the opportunity to make donations towards the costs. So if anyone wishes, please put any gifts in the collection box in an envelope simply marked Fabric Fund.

The Kirk session as announced previously is looking to appoint additional elders. Completing voting forms should be placed in the box in the far side. Tonight is the last opportunity to post those votes. Next Lord's Day at 11am and 6pm will be led by Rev. Douglas Cranston. I think Douglas has been down with you a few times over the last few months.

Let's begin our worship and sing to God's praise in Psalm 100 from the Scottish Psalter. Psalm 100 verses 1-5. A psalm of rejoicing and praise to God.

Come, thanks... Amen. On earth to dwell Sing to the Lord his cheerful voice In circuit when his praise for death Come, hear me, forgive and rejoice Know that the Lord is God indeed When in love of the rainy day of stay We are his love, he don't us be

And for his sheep he don't us stay O enter then his kings with praise Approach with joy his courts unto Praise God and bless his name always Are you dissonant to do Arm by the Lord our God is true His mercy is forever true

[4 : 0 8] His truth that all thy spirit is true And shall promise to be an end of the Lord Let us pray Lord we thank you for the opportunity to meet together again this evening To come together to praise your name At present as we once more enter a time of tighter restrictions And gathering together Your church is still permitted to meet And to worship As we'd listen to the

Psalm We also pray for the day when we can sing aloud your praise And we can once again join in communal singing and worship and praise for you Wherever a few are gathered in your name Wherever a few are gathered in your name You are in our midst We thank you for the gift of your Holy Spirit Who is constantly with us That we sit with his presence That we may live a more righteous and faithful life That he keeps our hearts open to the direction and desires that you have for us We thank you for your Son Our Lord Jesus Christ Who the Spirit guides us towards We praise you our Father

You decided from the earliest of times that Your Son would come as our Redeemer That you would sacrifice your Holy and Perfect Son to pay the price for our sin For our sin That Christ would pay the price for our disobedience and rebellion And we pray Lord that in him we have redemption He paid the price that we could be free Free to come before you once more And give you the honour and praise Lord once again we pray for our governments At Westminster and Holyrood That they will be guided by you We pray Lord that there will be a freedom That there will be continued freedom to preach your word Without coming under attack by new legislation

As is possible in the hate speech bill Before the Scottish Parliament just now Lord for the Christians in that Parliament Give them the courage to stand forward for their views And to protect the right to preach your word And Lord this is not just an issue in Scotland It's an issue across our islands There are plans for such moves in Northern Ireland and in Westminster And of course many further afield Already know the great penalty they pay for preaching your word And proclaiming your name Lord we also pray that our governments will be guided by you in other areas Now obviously we think of Covid in these testful days

And we pray for all that have been afflicted by Covid For the families who have lost relatives For the people who have lost friends For the sick and for their sometimes long road to recovery For the lonely and vulnerable Many who will have been looking to perhaps have some support and fellowship over this Christmas period And suddenly find themselves in continuing isolation We pray for our front line workers For the doctors and nurses who man the hospitals and tend to the most ill But also for our back The back room staff Who we sometimes give lit service to But we never actually really see For the cleaners and the porters

[9 : 15] And Lord we pray for those within our congregation who are sick at present That they may be restored And be once again able to join us in worship And that as you go through their illness And their difficulties They will be assured of your promises And that you are a God Who fulfills his promises These things we ask through Christ our Lord and Saviour Amen Amen Amen Tonight's reading is from The Old Testament Genesis Chapter 15 Verses 1-6 And the New Testament Galatians Chapter 2 Verses 11-21 So Starting with The Old Testament Genesis Chapter 15 Verses 1-6 Genesis

Genesis 15 Verses 1-6 And after these things And after these things the word of the Lord came to Abraham in the vision Fear not Abraham Fear not Abraham I am your shield Your reward shall be very great But Abraham said O Lord God What will you give me For I continue childless And the heir of my house is Eliza of Damascus And Abraham said Behold you have given me no offspring And a member of my household will be my heir And behold the word of the Lord came to him This man shall not be your heir Your very own son shall be your heir And he brought him outside and said Look towards the heaven And number the stars if you are able to number them Then he said to him So shall your offspring be

And he believed the Lord And he counted it And he counted it to him as righteousness New Testament in Galatians chapter 2 Verses 11-21 Galatians chapter 2 Starting at verse 11-21 But when Cephas came to Antioch I opposed him to his face Because he stood condemned For before certain men came from James He was eating with the Gentiles But when they came he drew back And separated himself Fearing the circumcision party And the rest of the Jews acted

Hypocritically along with him So that even Barnabas was led astray By their hypocrisy But when I saw that their conduct Was not in step with the truth of the gospel I said to Cephas before them all If you though a Jew live like a Gentile And not like a Jew How can you force the Gentiles To live like Jews?

We ourselves are Jews by birth And not Gentile sinners Yet we know that a person is not justified By works of the law But through faith in Jesus Christ So we also have believed in Christ Jesus In order to be justified by faith in Christ And not by works of the law Because by works of the law Because by works of the law No one will be justified But if in our endeavour To be justified in Christ We too were found to be sinners Is Christ then a servant of sin?

[13 : 33] Certainly not But if I rebuild it What I tore down I'd prove myself to be a transgressor For through the law I died to the law So that I might live to God I have been crucified with Christ It is no longer I who live But Christ who lives in me And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God Who loved me And gave himself for me I do not nullify the grace of God For if righteousness were through the law Then Christ died for no purpose Thanks be to God For the reading of his holy word In his name the glory and praise Let's sing again Or listen again to The Psalms And this time Psalm 111 So Psalm 111

From the Scottish Psalter Praise to the Lord I will exow him I'll never be with thee apart Great are the hearts of God and Father By all who live And all who live Will take delight His deeds are glorious And majestic His righteousness Will jure always Because his words To be remembered And his love And his love And full of praise Good he provides for us Who fear him

His covenant forever stands His mighty works He shouts his people His covenant forever stands His covenant forever stands His mighty works His covenant forever stands His mighty works He shouts his people By living them the nations' lives And his holy works His holy works The nations' lives Faithful and just are Faithful and just are All his actions All his romance All his romance Are faithful too Faithful and just are All his actions All his romance are faithful too The world so called a right and true.

He sent redemption for his people. His covenant, the Israel of sin.

All I did find him throughout all ages. Holy and awesome is his day.

[16 : 58] Here all the Lord gives rise to his throne. All those who walk in a bright way.

Love in certain good understanding. To him belongs eternal praise.

Let us pray. Lord, as we have the privilege once more to study your word. We ask that my words and the thoughts of our minds and our hearts be acceptable to you.

We ask through Christ our Saviour. Amen. Tonight we're going to go back to the study of Galatians.

And just so I don't lose the place tonight, I've numbered my pages. So we're going to look at Galatians chapter 2 verses 11 to 21.

[18 : 12] And a question to start with is, whom are you dependent for your salvation? Who are you dependent for salvation?

So far in Galatians we have looked at Paul's defense of his status as an apostle. His message of God's free and sovereign grace through which he forgives our sins.

And solely through that faith alone in the sacrifice God made for our sins. He attacked the false gospel that was being preached in Galatia.

Claiming the true gospel stood on its own through God's grace. Not by any action of man. At the start of chapter 2 he recalls how he brought Titus, the uncircumcised Christian, to Jerusalem.

And how the council did not insist on the enforcement of the Jewish law. Now in tonight's reading we see Paul confronting Peter for his hypocrisy.

[19 : 23] And how we are justified by faith. Peter had been in Antioch for some time. He had been eating and living with the Gentiles.

Without any qualms. Until others arrived from Jerusalem. And not wishing to upset the new party of the getting on the wrong side of them.

He falls into his old ways. Peter and his fellow Jews, including Barnabas. The missionary partner of Titus. Draw back from dining with the Gentiles.

And Paul cries out, what hypocrisy. And think about it. Imagine working and dining with a friend. And then some others arrive. And you're shunned by your friend.

You're seen as unclean and unworthy. How would you feel? Paul challenges Peter that he had been happy to share the food with the Gentiles.

[20 : 31] He ate and lived as they did. Therefore, he had approved, in principle at least, that there is only one way for the Jew and the Gentile alike.

Any questions about how Peter can jump sides? Either Peter previously had been sinful and leading a sinful life.

Or he was being a hypocrite. You can imagine the tension within the congregation at Antioch. And these were the same issues that tormented the church in Galatia.

John Stott says that Paul's response was central to preserving both the truth of the gospel and the brotherhood of the church.

It was a standoff moment for the young church. What was to be the basis of the relationship between the Jewish and Gentile Christians?

[21 : 35] Was it to be based on law keeping? Or was it to be based on believing the gospel? Unfortunately, it's a 21st century problem as much as it was for Paul and the 1st century church.

If there is a God and I wish to get to know him, as I strive to keep his moral laws, have I also got to keep all his ceremonial laws?

For the 1st century Christians, they had to be circumcised, join established Jewish communities, study, fast and pray and give to the poor.

This was the Jewish view of things. And it was the view of the false teachers. To me, today it may look as though we have to fill a set of performance criteria.

Like, we've got to attend church, visit granny, give regularly to charities, live a good life. And have a list of negative behaviours to avoid.

[22 : 48] No smoking, drinking, no late party nights. If I do all this, will God be pleased and see me as righteous?

Will I earn salvation? In the Old Testament reading in Genesis, Abraham is justified by faith, by his belief that God will deliver his promise.

Not by any actions of his own. Is it as simple as declaring that your trust is in Christ? In verse 15 and 16, Paul starts to lay out clearly, it is by trusting Christ.

That is the truth of the gospel. Paul, in his statement that we are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners, raises a question of whether people were relying upon who they were and what they had done to be in right standing with God.

Peter's actions had a clear message about what counts, reliance on the law and its work to secure the favour of God.

[24 : 09] Rather than trusting in God's provision in Christ alone. And in Romans 2, 17-24, we see that the temptation for the Jews has always been to presume upon God's grace because they possess God's law.

And this attitude is not unique to the Jews of the first century. It's an expression of a wider human presumption.

How often when you've been speaking to people outside of the, of non-Christians, people outside of the church, have you heard them say, why wouldn't I be saved?

I'm a good person. I live a good life. I attend church. It's a general assumption of a fallen sinful humanity.

But Paul takes us to the heart of the gospel in verse 16. Yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law, but through faith in Jesus Christ.

[25 : 25] There are not two ways, one for the Jew and one for the Gentile. There is but one way, by Christ alone. No one is saved by the law.

Rather, all are condemned by the law. For the law shows we cannot meet the demands of the law. We all fall short. We cannot become righteous by the law, despite what the Pharisee in Luke 18 may think about his long, loud and boastful prayers over that of a repentant sinful tax collector who would not lift up his head to look to the heavens.

Luke records in chapter 18, verses 9 to 14. Jesus also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and treated others with contempt.

Two men went up into the temple to pray. One a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee standing by himself prayed thus, God, I thank you that I'm not like other men, extortioners, unjust adulterers, or even like this tax collector.

I fast twice a week. I give tithes of all that I get. But the tax collector standing far off would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast saying, God have mercy to me, a sinner.

[27 : 04] I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.

So we're not saved by our boastful prayers, by our long renditions of texts, but by faith.

To think a moment longer about our inability to save ourselves through the law, let's look at a comparison. Think of yourself in prison, and you're offered your freedom on the condition that you pay a heavy fine.

The promise is real. So long as you meet the payment, you will be freed. But, we don't have the finances.

We don't just fail to pay the heavy fine, but we also keep on committing the same crime. We keep repeatedly re-offending. What can we do about it?

[28 : 23] Nothing. We are in for life. So we sinners are facing eternal conviction and punishment. Luther told how even living an apparent blameless life as a monk, Luther told how even living an apparent blameless life as a monk, he felt an uneasy righteousness.

He hated the phrase righteousness of God, especially that righteousness who punish sinners. Through much sin, he came to an understanding that the righteousness of God was a passive righteousness by which our merciful God pardons sinners and justifies us by faith.

When I was writing the sermon and I was reading it back, I was thinking, what does that mean in sort of less theological terminology and speak?

Well, this righteousness is a righteousness that we receive from God. A person who is righteous, that is, he is in a right relationship with God.

When he simply receives the tributes of Christ's obedience and the forgiveness of sin through faith. This righteousness is passive and comes apart from the law.

[29 : 55] A human person is not righteous in God's eyes because of his choice of commitment, his good works are his piety, his emotions are intellect.

Instead, he is righteous because the Father chooses him from the foundations of the world. As we read in Ephesians 1 and declares him righteous in accounts of Jesus' atoning death and justifying resurrection.

Luther goes on to describe how this made him feel as though he had been born again. As though he had entered through open gates into paradise. So, us who are bound by a repeated offending have been given the money to buy our freedom.

Christ has made the payment for our release from the penalties of the law. The God of the gospel is not a harsh God as first seen by Luther.

He is a just God that demands payment for the sins which we committed. He is a merciful and gracious God who bestows righteousness on us sinners as a gift.

[31 : 16] He is a God who gave his only son to pay the price for our redemption. We are free not to go back to the offending not to go back to a life of sin but are free to serve him.

Paul now goes on to look at this change in verse 20 the new life. He says I have been crucified with Christ it is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.

The first change we see here is a change of identity. We are called to die to our old self and again we read the same message in Romans 6 6 to 11 we know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin for one who has died has been set free from sin now if we have died with Christ we believe we will also live with him we know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again death no longer has dominion over him for the death he died he died to sin once for all the life he lives he lives to God so you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ

Jesus this dying to our old self leaving our old life behind is not a selective choice it is a transformation of your life entering every area we are not giving up just an hour on a Sunday morning and if the weather is good the Sunday evening to give some praise to God it is a whole life we must examine and prioritise at times this will require painful difficult and sacrificial decisions it is no mistake that Paul states we are crucified in Christ crucifixion was an act of torture and execution so it is not demanding of us simple tick's box reviews but a deep overhaul of what is central to us a second change that can be seen is a change to a personality

Paul moves between saying it is no longer I who live and then saying the life I now live it is a life of contrasts and opposites opposites of what the world would expect we humble ourselves and God will lift us up we die to selfishness in order to live for Christ and to proclaim his message this is to the odds to a society that praises a self made man the third change is one of who is at the helm of your life it is a change of dependency it is a call to self surrender once more contrary to society's priorities we hear now of self sufficiency self love self advancement some of the best selling books now are about self help society drives forward the individual as a solution not unlike the first century teachers false teachers forcing the issue of adherence to the law and the efforts of man two thousand years forward and fallen man's heart has improved not neither has his success as we never cease to be shocked by man's depravity towards man

[35 : 47] Paul finishes tonight's text with a statement summarising his faith in the second part of verse 20 and 21 Paul challenges us that his efforts were responsible for his salvation what was the point of Christ's sacrifice and what does it say about our God we looked at God's promises this morning and his fulfilment of his promises in Genesis to redeem man he is a

God who keeps his promises if man could be saved by the law God would have had no need to plan for our salvation or provide his son to pay the penalty of sin Paul shows us that the root of salvation is faith in Christ alone and we see in the Acts and in his letters to the growing churches the commitment to that same message both in his conversion in Acts 9 and then defying to self and working tirelessly for God that's the example that Paul had set in his new life in Christ but what about us what shape is our devotion to Christ taking when people look at us do they see the old selfish self or do they see a life of service for Christ do we reflect his image to the world or does the world still see the same selfish self let's let's let's let's pray father we thank you that you are a

God who keeps your promises promises you're a God who has fulfilled his promises who has sent his son that we may be saved that our sins were paid by his blood Lord we pray that we take to heart that we cannot earn our salvation not through works not through prayers but only through acceptance of your son Jesus Christ as our saviour we give you thanks for the gift that you have gave us in your son and we give praise to his holy name this we ask and give thanks through

Christ your son our saviour amen the last piece of music to close our worship this evening is the power of the cross this coming week as we celebrate Christ's birth we also were looking forward to Easter Sunday and to the empty tomb so we can stand forgiven at the cross and ensure promise of our resurrection with Christ so final piece of music just to contemplate on as we finish our time together this evening power of the cross oh to see the dawn of the darkest day Christ on the road to Calvary we drive to the cross eyes behind him thank pas osmo I the on one

This the power of the cross, Christ we came, for us in the world, to the flame, for the wrath we stand forgiven at the cross.

[41 : 14] To see the pain written on your face, bearing the awesome weight of sin, every bitter thought and every evil deed, crowning your lost name well.

This the power of the cross, Christ we came, for us in the world, to the flame, for the wrath we stand forgiven at the cross.

This the power of the cross, Christ we came, for us in the world, to the flame, for the wrath we stand forgiven at the cross.

This the power of the cross, Christ we came, for us in the world, to the flame, for the wrath we stand forgiven at the cross. This the power of the cross, Christ we came, for us in the world, to the flame, for the wrath we stand forgiven at the cross. This the power of the cross, Christ we came, for us in the world, to the flame, for the wrath we stand forgiven at the cross.

This the power of the cross, Christ we came, for us in the world, to the flame, for the wrath we stand forgiven at the cross.

[43 : 12] This the power of the cross, Christ we came, for us in the world, to the flame, for the wrath we stand forgiven at the cross. This the power of the cross, Christ we came, for us in the world, to the flame, for the wrath we stand forgiven at the cross. This the power of the cross, Christ we came, for us in the world, to the power of the cross.

This the power of the cross drives me crazy.

For the cross is no longer for me. For the wrath we stand forgiven and the cross is the power of the cross.

For the cross is no longer for me. For the cross is no longer for me.

For the cross is no longer for me. May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

[44 : 58] Now and forevermore. Amen. Thanks for the opportunity to join with you once again in fellowship this evening. And look forward to seeing you in New Year's.

I hope you all have a good Christmas. And we'll see you in January. I hope. And well, um, play with us and I don't like this night.

We show you the Christmas night. Christmas night? Yeah. Um, I just...