

The Gospel's Defense: Daily Life

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[0 : 00] Galatians chapter 2, beginning in verse 17. But if while seeking to be justified in Christ, we ourselves have also been found sinners, is Christ then a minister of sin?

May it never be. For if I rebuild what I once destroyed, I 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, and 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 up for me.

And I do not nullify the grace of God. For if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died needlessly. Let's pray.

Father, thank you for your word, and it is our prayer right now, Lord, that as we seek to explain what these verses say based upon what you have inspired by your spirit, Lord, that you would convict us of truth.

[1 : 14] You would encourage us with your power and your strength. And you would help us to love you more dearly. And we pray all this in Christ's name.

And all God's people said, if you didn't hear it, I heard it. And all God's people, I'm telling you, COVID voice.

Ever since, you know, last year, it's just been there. You get it, though. So one of the things that's true is that we tend to struggle to live by what we believe.

I said Thursday morning to the group that was here that we often have a theology of the mind and a theology of the heart, which what I mean by that is we often say things that we believe, and we truly do believe them, but they have never really truly made their way to our heart.

It's things that we want to believe, but in practice, when suffering and difficulties begin to press in on us, many times, those very things are things that go out the window.

[2 : 21] You can see that in the lives of people. I'll give you one example in kind of a completely different realm. An atheist who believes in evolution and that time and chance work together to bring and make the complex system of the human body from a single-celled organism struggles to live by their worldview of time and chance because they never expect that perhaps one of their children will be born with night vision instead of regular eyes.

They always expect regular eyes. Why is that? Since their worldview is random and chance. We, as Christians, often struggle to live by what we believe.

Peter is a great example, he says, or we expect that he believes justification by faith alone, yet he's acting as though he doesn't believe that by ignoring and not being with the Gentiles for a meal.

We struggle to believe and to live out what we believe. And this passage, what's happening in verse 17 through 21 is Paul is still giving an answer to Peter's hypocrisy and he's trying to show and demonstrate how do you live out what you believe.

If you believe specifically justification by faith alone, how can you live in such a way as to demonstrate that that's what you really believe? Now, this has been a difficult passage this week for me, and so I'm hoping that I've got this clear as mud for you this morning.

[4 : 06] And so as we start into this, I hope that you will be praying for me. There are three things that we need to do, three things we need to do if we're going to live as though we believe justification by faith alone.

The first thing is that we need to never go back to the law. We need to never go back to the law. I get this from verse 17 and 18.

What's happening in verse 17 is Paul is basically playing the part of the Judaizers, the people who are having the problem, and he's putting words out that they would be the ones to speak.

In other words, they would be the ones to say, well, since you think that you're justified by Christ, by faith alone, and you also still have sin, then does that mean that you're making Christ a promoter of sin?

It's kind of very similar to what sometimes we will encounter with people who when we say, you know, listen, no matter what sin you've done, no matter what sin you've committed, if you will repent of your sin and turn to Christ and believe, you will be covered with his righteousness, and you will be saved from evermore, and people will come to us and say, oh, so you believe that just anybody can just pray, get forgiveness, and they can just keep doing what they want to do.

[5 : 30] It's sort of what these Judaizers are saying to Paul. Are you making Christ a promoter of sin? Because you remember, last week I hung my jacket up there, and I said, this is the righteousness of Christ.

It covers us, but we're not changed yet. We've had a legal declaration made about us, but we're not fully changed yet. So we are at the same time both sinners and saints.

We are covered with his righteousness, yet we still struggle with our own sin. But that does not make Christ a promoter of sin. Now, why?

Why is that? Verse 18 is our answer. Verse 18 sounds a little strange, right? I don't know about you, but I was reading this going like, I've got to call Randy and find out what this means.

For if I rebuild what I once destroyed, I prove myself to be a transgressor. Now, what Paul is doing is that the Judaizers think a certain thing, they're saying certain things, and Paul is getting behind their assumptions, right?

[6 : 41] Their assumption, and let me give you the bottom line, and then I'll illustrate it. The bottom line is that they are assuming, by saying to these Gentiles, you need to be circumcised to really be a Christian, they're assuming that not only that law, but all the law that we are capable of keeping it.

That's their assumption. They believe that mankind, without God's help, is able to obey the law in a suitable fashion for God.

And so Paul is saying, listen, you can't go back under the law. And the reason you can't go back under the law is because we are nothing but lawbreakers.

So here's the illustration he uses. He uses this word, if I rebuild what I once destroyed, that rebuild and destroyed idea. Here's the illustration. The illustration is this, that in Ephesians chapter 2, verse 14, we hear that Christ, by his death, has removed or broken down the barrier of the dividing wall.

And what that is, is that the temple had this court called the court of Gentiles, right? This is where Jesus drove out the money changers from. The court of the Gentiles, Gentiles could come worship Yahweh.

[7 : 58] They could come be a part of what was going on, but they couldn't come past this particular wall. On this wall was a placard that had a warning for Gentiles to stay out on pain of death, right?

So they can't pass across this. So in Jesus' death, that division between Jew and Gentile dropped. And now the two have become one new man.

And that's what the church is. The church are both Jews and Gentiles saved because of Christ, right? So what Paul is saying is that Peter, who lived by that truth in Acts chapter 10 and went and ate with Cornelius, a Gentile, now what has been destroyed, he is rebuilding.

He's putting back up a dividing wall because he's not eating with the Gentiles. He's saying, no, no, no, no. We're all going back under law. In other words, if you rebuild what was once destroyed, you prove yourself to be a transgressor because the purpose of the law is to show us our sin because we can't keep it.

The reason we don't want to go back under law is because we can't keep the law. We're nothing but transgressors.

[9 : 21] So we should not go back to the law. We cannot go back to the old covenant or any other kind of law in order to try to earn our way to God. We have to stay away from the law in that sense.

And part of the reason also that we need to stay away from that is because of the justification we get from God. You remember I told you that we have a trillion debt of sin and forgiveness is bringing us back to zero.

But in order for us to be with God, we have to have a trillion credit of righteousness that none of us can earn. Only by faith in Christ, then that is credited to our account, so we have that.

Well, here is the truth about this, and this is why it's so bad to think about going back to some sort of law in order to live out the Christian life because when you get that 100 trillion credit of righteousness from Christ, you get that right at the moment that you believe, you will never throughout your life get one red cent more or one red cent less.

There's not anything that you can do to get a little bit more of Jesus' righteousness, and there's not something you can do that will take away some of Jesus' righteousness. You see, once you get on the scale and you get here to this, there's no longer a continuum at which you can gain more or lose more.

[10 : 54] Once you are righteous, you are as righteous as you will ever be. You are as righteous as any other Christian. So in other words, someone who's been a Christian for like all of their lives, they're in their 80s, and they've loved the Lord, and they are covered in the righteousness of Christ, are just as righteous as someone who came to faith today because we're covered in the righteousness of Christ.

And it is because of that that we cannot go back under the law in order to try to get from God what He freely gives by faith. So, what does it mean we need to do in light of that?

Three things. Number one, act out of gratitude. Act out of gratitude. Now, you and I both know that God has commanded us as Christians to do things.

We can't get away from there are laws we're supposed to obey, right? I mean, it's quite clear when you look at Ephesians chapter 6 when he says, children, obey your parents. He's pulling right from the Ten Commandments and going, you should obey this.

But we never obey so that we receive more from God. We always obey because we already have everything we need.

[12 : 17] We obey out of gratitude. Out of gratitude. You see, the problem is is that our culture the American culture and specifically is built upon a concept of trade and barter.

It's built upon a concept of getting and gaining and trading but you can't barter with God. We come to Him and He saves us and we're completely saved but we must obey but we obey out of gratitude.

We obey out of gratitude. The second thing that you need to do is you need to believe God's love for you. If He has covered you with the righteousness of Christ and He's credited that to your account then you need to understand that you are accepted and you are loved and you are liked and you are enjoyed by God Almighty because He has declared you righteous.

He gets to live with you forever and longs for that. You are loved by your Heavenly Father. You are loved by your Heavenly Father.

You are loved by your Heavenly Father. And if we're not going to go back under law and we're going to live in this righteousness and live like we believe it then you have got to believe that He loves you.

[13 : 34] And that has to shape how you think. It has to shape how you feel. It has to shape how you treat others. And third and finally I would say this that in light of the fact that we're not going to go back under law we also need to confess our sin because we do have sin and we do we do break God's law even as saints.

And the good news is that He is He is faithful and just to forgive us of our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

You see if you've been covered with the righteousness of Christ and yet you sin when you go to Him to ask for forgiveness it's not as though you've tarnished that righteousness and it's a little bit less and now you've got to do some sort of works of you know goodness or merit in order to make up for what you just did bad.

No you go to Him and you confess and He says I have already paid for that. He's got forgiveness waiting to just dole it out upon us because Christ has already paid the price in full.

Christians we should never go back under the law. the second thing that we need to do is we need to always use the law properly.

[15 : 13] I hope that sounds at least somewhat contradictory to what I just said. I was going for that. I was going for a little contrariness there. let me start by saying that the Bible does not look at the law as a bad thing.

Paul does not think the law is bad. He thinks the use of the law can be bad. So let me show you a couple of verses.

Romans chapter 7 verse 12 this is Paul saying so then the law is holy and the commandment is holy and righteous and good. 1 Timothy 1 8 we know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully.

Lawfully. So how we use the law makes all the difference in the world. If we try to use the law to earn and merit or win something from God then then we are in trouble.

We can use it as though we don't have enough of God. We can use the law and say I just don't have enough of him so we get into law things trying to get a little bit more of God but you have all that you're going to get.

[16 : 35] And I don't mean that in some sort of narrow way. I mean something in a broad expansive sort of way. You can also use the law as God intended because one leads you to hopelessness using it for merit.

The other is your only hope. So how does Paul use the law? Verse 19 he tells us he says for through the law I died to the law so that I might live to God. Notice he says that it's Paul who dies and not the law that dies.

It's not the law that died. It's the law that killed Paul. The law killed Paul. Paul was seeking to law and Paul. That's really going to be hard for a second.

Paul tried to earn his way he tried to earn his merit by the law of God. But what the law did to him is that it killed him to the law.

It killed him from trying to earn his way because it showed him himself. It showed him his sin. It helped him see that he was a transgressor.

[17 : 41] That he was wrong. It showed him how he consistently was failing to be what God wanted him to be. And it did it for a purpose. And the purpose was so that you might live to God.

This is the Christian life. The law shows you your sin so that you might die to the law so that you might live to God. In other words, the law shows you when you see, you shall not murder.

When you see, you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind. God, you see your own depravity, your own weakness, your own sin, so that you say, I'm going to stop trying to do this on my own, die to the law, and I'm going to God.

If looking at the law doesn't drive you to Christ, then you're looking at the law the wrong way. The purpose of the law is so that we might live to God.

we live to nothing else but to God. So Christians, the law shows us our sin, it convicts us of our sin, so that we might stop living for ourselves and start living for God.

[18 : 51] In other words, without a conviction that we are sinners, how do we go to Christ? So here's what we need to do then.

How do we live this out so that we're living what we believe? We need to use the law in four ways. Number one, we need to use the law in evangelism. When we share the gospel with other people, we need for them to see that they need the gospel.

So we use the law to prick the conscience. We use the law to show them that they have broken God's law. We use the law to show them that they are rightly under the wrath of God.

And then we bring them the glorious news of the gospel, what Christ has done for sinners like them. We need to use the law in evangelism.

Second, we need to use the law in our parenting, parenting or grandparenting. Our kids disobey God.

[19 : 53] They do. They break the rules. And the unfortunate thing is that normally our behavior towards our kids is that we take a personal affront to their breaking of the rules.

We begin to take it personally. But if we're to give the law properly to our kids so that we can give the gospel to them, we have to stop thinking that their breaking of our rule is about us.

It's not about us. It's about God. He is the one who said, children, obey your parents. And if they disobey us, then they are in violation of God's law.

And if we sit there and make it about us, we can never get to the gospel. But if we help pin it back up to God, that you have broken God's law, then we can bring them the glorious message of freedom that's in Christ.

We need to use the law in marriage. Too often, perhaps maybe we'll treat our spouse badly, we'll give some sort of personal attack because we're upset, we're angry.

[21 : 06] Husband and wife, one of them will say some sort of stray comment that they shouldn't and instead of recognizing that this comment comes out of a sinful heart and is a violation of God's law, we consider it a personal attack.

And rather than recognizing that our spouse has broken God's law, we think they've broken our law. And so we say to ourselves, the only hope that they have is that they need to appease me because we get angry.

You know that anger is a problem and we'll get to that here in a little bit, but when we give the silent treatment, the cold shoulder, we give the wicked stares, those are all acts of murder against our spouse.

James chapter 1 verse 19 and 20 says, this you know, my beloved brethren, but everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger, for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.

You will never produce any kind of goodness in your spouse by getting angry with them. You can nag all you want to, you can belittle, you can hold against them some sort of thing that they have done, but you will never produce godliness in your spouse by being angry with them.

[22 : 49] not one bit. So we use the law, we recognize our spouse's behavior that's sin, so that we can bring to them the glorious message of freedom that's in the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Honey, I know, I know that you struggle with that sin, and that's exactly why Christ died. Fourth, we need to use the law in our daily devotions.

Every time you read the Bible, it's an opportunity to take and see a command that God gives or an example of righteousness or unrighteousness that's there. I think about Genesis chapter 20.

In Genesis chapter 20, Abraham lies to Abimelech about Sarah, saying that Sarah is his wife. And it should remind us how many times we ourselves have told lies to get out of difficult situations.

And as we see that lie, and we think about our own lie in that moment of daily devotion, and we hear the law getting after us in that, it ought to help us run to the cross and thank God for what Jesus has done in dying for our sins.

[24 : 07] As justified people who believe in justification by faith alone, we must use the law properly. As a matter of fact, if I were to talk to those who are not Christians, I would say to them today this, have you ever told a lie?

Now, if I were to ask you to raise your hands, everybody in here could raise their hands, and if we could see who's going to watch this through some sort of live stream, can you imagine that, I mean, everybody in the world raises their hands.

Have you ever told a lie? Have you ever stolen something? Well, yeah. I think I told you, I used to steal the little Brock's caramels out of the little dispenser in the middle of the grocery store.

That wasn't mine. I absolutely stole that. And so the question is this, if God judges us by the Ten Commandments on the day of judgment, if you have lied and therefore are a liar, and you have stolen and therefore are a thief, or you have looked upon someone with lust and therefore are an adulterer, or if you've been angry against someone and therefore you are a murderer, my question to you is this, if he judges you by the Ten Commandments, will you be guilty or innocent?

Guilty. Every one of us. And the question is, does that concern you? Because you see, if it doesn't concern you, if you're not bothered by that, then the good news of the gospel is lost upon you.

[25 : 39] But if you find yourself thinking about judgment one day and thinking to yourself, if I stand before God, I mean, what is it going to be the case? I mean, I just really don't know where I stand with him. I just, you know, I do have a lot of sin, and sometimes I wonder and sometimes I worry, what's going to happen to me on that day of judgment?

Then I have good news for you. Christ came into this world and took the punishment for our sin so that we could be set free. And today, you can have him right where you sit.

You can just cry out to him and say, Lord, save me. Forgive me for my sin. So we need to never go back under the law, use the law properly, and third and finally, we need to live by faith.

Particularly verse 20, just sort of break this down a little bit. Verse 20 gives us this first half of the verse that kind of summarizes, it can be summarized this way.

We don't belong to ourselves. We don't belong to ourselves. He says, I've been crucified with Christ. I've been crucified with Christ. We were crucified with.

[26 : 42] It means we died when he died. We were united with him in his death. If you're not united with him in his death, then you have no hope. And this death, this being united, somehow we lose something about ourselves in this, but we're not losing our personality.

We're not losing our physical life. We're not losing the connections and relationships we have with the people in this world, but we are losing the idea that we're the king or we're the queen or we're the boss or we're the master of our own lives.

We're losing our sin and our punishment. If I've been crucified with Christ and I don't belong to myself, I belong to him. And this is the foundation of our relationship with God.

We must identify with Christ upon the cross. It's not about do you have faith? It's not about are you spiritual? It's not about are you religious? It's about Jesus.

What will you do with Jesus? Paul goes on to say, it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. Christ is the power. Christ is the energy.

[27 : 48] Christ is the direction. Christ is the purpose, the aim, the presence in my life. And so part of living by faith is believing the truth that I do not belong to myself.

I am not mine to control. He goes on in verse 20. He says, but Christ lives in me in the life which I now live in the flesh.

See, we continue to live this life. We continue to do things. We continue to engage in the world. We continue to work and love and joy, create, to relate, to develop community, to care for others.

This is the life we now live. We continue to live, but now I live by faith in the Son of God. What does it mean? What does it mean to have faith in the Son of God?

We talked about this last week, right? We defined faith. Do you remember what I said? Faith is the conviction of the truth of the gospel and a commitment to the Christ of the gospel.

[28 : 59] To live a life of faith means to hold on to the truth that Christ, no matter what, is all in all, no matter what I'm tempted to believe.

Or let me say it this way. The faith that was used to save us, the faith in which we were convicted of the truth of the gospel and we were committed to the Christ of the gospel is the same faith that we live in today.

We don't have faith for salvation and now get a different kind of faith to all of a sudden live. It's the same thing. We live and continue to maintain believing, trusting, and hoping in Him.

Living as justified people, not going back under the law, not misusing the law, knowing that we have everything that we need, we are trusting in the truth, we are convicted of the truth and committed to the Christ of the gospel.

Now, I'm going to give an illustration. I don't know that it's going to work. It may not help you. And this is an illustration and it's one of those illustrations that sometimes I'm going to, you know, I'll use one and somebody comes up to me and starts talking to me about the illustration and they miss the point of why I use the illustration.

[30 : 18] You ever had that happen? You know, I used the illustration back a few weeks ago here and I talked about how, you know, I got so angry when I ate ice cream and I had somebody come talk to me about like some flavor of ice cream or something.

You miss the point if you, you know what I'm saying? You kind of missing the point. Actually, I don't think it was somebody here that did that when I've used that illustration before. so this is going to be one of these iffy kind of things.

But what I'm doing is I want to illustrate all three of these things being done wrongly. I'm going to illustrate how somebody's going back to the law and how they're not using the law properly and how they're not really living by faith.

They're not really believing the things that we say we believe. And it grieves me so because it's extremely spiritual and there's, sometimes I feel like I'm the lone ranger out here looking at this from this way.

So I'm just going to say this and if you think I'm wrong, by all means, you're more than welcome to come correct me. That's fine. I don't know everything and I'm not the smartest guy in the world.

[31 : 22] I'm just the second. I'm just kidding. I'm just kidding. So I was looking at the world and I was looking at what Peter had done and I was thinking to myself, is there something today that might help us sort of grasp what it is we've got to be careful about?

And I was really, there are some pastors who will tell their congregation at certain times of the year that every Christian ought, ought.

Now that's a very important word here. It's not like I say you can or you might like to or you'd be good to.

An ought is a binding of the conscience. An ought is the kind of thing that if you don't do it, it's sin. Right? So some pastors tell their congregations that every Christian ought to fast.

Ought to fast. I listened to a few that did massive number of sermons on this. And the idea is that if you don't fast, you're sinning, but you need to fast because here are the things you're going to get out of it.

[32 : 47] Like, are you having trouble with your sin? You got some sort of sin that's just got you locked in and you want to have a breakthrough on that sin or you're maybe having trouble in your marriage and so things are not where they should be and you want to have a breakthrough on your marriage or maybe you're having trouble with suffering and you don't like this suffering so you want to have a breakthrough on this suffering or maybe there's some sort of growth point in your life that you're just not getting past and you want to get past this growth point so you want to break through it.

If you're going to do that, then every Christian must or ought to fast in order to break through to new levels of holiness, new levels of relationship success, new levels of overcoming suffering, new levels of faithfulness, new levels of success in your life.

But the problem is this. fasting is an old covenant practice. I mean, yes, it's mentioned and talked about in the New Testament.

The last place is Acts chapter 13. Not one single epistle tells the church to fast. That's important. because pastors are telling Christians that an old covenant practice is necessary for you to be able to deal with your sin.

And I'm saying, no, Christ has already dealt with your sin. You don't have to fast in order to kind of get over some sin. You go to the cross and see, it's forgiven. You see what I'm saying?

[34 : 15] And they're telling couples, no, you need to fast so you can have a breakthrough in your marriage. You're not getting along. I'm saying, no, no, you don't need a fast for that. You need to repent of your sin. You need to do what the word says.

You need to depend upon the Holy Spirit to empower you to do that. I'm quite agitated about this. This is such a damning thing. And so many people are buying into it.

And so many people are believing and I say to you, if you do that, if you say you must, then you are not being straightforward my friend, you, if you were justified by God, and all of that was credited to your account, then if you have sin, then simply confess and repent.

if your marriage seems to be in trouble, then you need the law and the gospel and the spirit. And if you're suffering, if you're suffering, the Bible tells us all kinds of things about suffering.

And some suffering never ends. Paul had a thorn in the flesh and God says, no, I'm not taking it away. Do you realize that whatever suffering you're in, God may say, no, I'm not ever taking that suffering away from you.

[35 : 38] You don't need to keep praying about ending the suffering. You need to pray about, Lord, help me get through it. And you know what? He's already ready to do that. Christians, we believe that we're justified by faith alone, so how can we maintain and hold on to being the kind of people who live by faith?

Two things. Number one, you need to maintain conviction, that conviction of the truth of the gospel, you need to maintain that by the word of God. By the word of God.

Romans chapter 10 tells us that faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God. You must have the word of God in your life. Read it, listen to it, listen to preaching, listen to Bible studies, however you got to do it, get it into your life.

Your faith will never grow apart from being in the word. You can pray all you want to, you can listen to music and you can meditate and you can do all kinds of things, but your faith will not grow if you're not in the word, period.

Number two, maintain a commitment to destroying idols. Remember the two things about faith are, one is it's a conviction of the truth of the gospel.

[37 : 00] So how do we maintain that conviction in the word of God? The second is maintaining a commitment to the Christ of the gospel. So what I'm saying, in order to do that, you have to destroy idols. And what I mean by that is that Christ is the only one who can have first place in your heart, the only one who can sit on the throne of your heart, the only one who can drive your life, guide your decisions, he is to be your all.

But as Christians, we still have problems where we have idols that take over our hearts, things that drive us, things that guide our decision-making and our behavior.

And if you want to know how do I recognize an idol in my life, go to James chapter four and recognize that what he's saying there is that anger, anger, anger is a symptom of idolatry.

Yeah, it's not fun today, just stepping all over the toes. If you get angry, if you get angry, then that is a symptom and sign that there's an idol in the heart.

And an idol, anything that seeks to drive your decisions, your behavior, your values, it's usurping the place of Christ. And so faith is a commitment to Christ.

[38 : 28] Destroying the idols helps you maintain your commitment to Christ. So let us not nullify the grace of God by trying to merit our own righteousness because Christ did not die needlessly.

Let's pray.