



DAILY FAITH PRACTICES

Sunday, June 12-18 (C) – Galatians 2:15-21

Focus: *Christ Lives in Me*

word of life

“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 it is Christ who lives in me.” (Galatians 2:19-20 NRSV)

Read Galatians 2:15-21

Paul begins his letter to the Galatians with a lengthy introduction of his credentials. (See chapter 1.) It is important for Paul to establish himself before he launches into a rebuttal against his contemporary preachers, such as Peter. By the time Paul wrote his letter to the Galatians, the early church had already resolved that the gospel message was intended for both Jews and Gentiles. Some of the Jewish Christian leaders even ate with Gentiles—a sure and radical sign of a new community. The early church’s mission plan included Peter preaching to Jewish Christians while Paul had the blessing of the early church leaders to reach out to the Gentiles.

Some conservative Jewish Christians must have objected to the expanded mission to include Gentiles. Leaders such as Cephas (Peter) pulled back, separating themselves from the Gentiles (See Galatians 2:11-14) In Galatians, we hear only one side of the argument—Paul’s view! He is outraged at these developments and believes the gospel message is being compromised. The church has no room for a hierarchy with Christians who were born Jewish having a higher place than Gentiles.

1. *What would it have been like in the early church to deal with controversy?*

Paul argues for a community of believers bound irrevocably in Christ and through faith—not by birth. He speaks from an insider’s perspective, as a Jewish Christian to other Jewish Christians. “We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; yet we know that a person is justified not by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ.” (Galatians 2:15 NRSV)

Paul willingly gives up his credentials including his birth as a Jew and his in-depth training as a Pharisee. They mean nothing. The only thing that matters is faith in Christ. No matter how well someone knows and practices the law (as well as teachings of the Old Testament), it means nothing without faith in Christ. It is not about our works and our grasp of the law handed down from Moses through the generations. Paul radically and dramatically opens up the Christian community to all who believe in Christ.

2. *What might the church have become without someone like Paul emphasizing the inclusive nature of the gospel message?*
3. *Why did Paul invest his energy trying to convince the Jewish Christians to expand their outreach? In other words, why did Paul not just go off and create a church independent from the Jewish Christians?*

Though appreciative of his roots in the law, Paul believed he was “crucified with Christ” and that made all the difference. His life was no longer his own. “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 it is Christ who lives in me.” (Galatians 2:19-20 NRSV)

4. *What does Paul mean when he says Christ now lives in him?*
5. *How might Christ live differently in a Jewish Christian compared to a Gentile Christian?*

Word among us

For years, the church was concerned about their aging membership. Church leaders were perplexed how to reach out to young families and children. Then one day a family with five young children showed up for worship. They had recently moved to the community and lived one block from the church. All went well on that first Sunday. The congregation was thrilled when they returned to worship during the next weeks.

But as the children became more comfortable in the church setting, they loosened up on their “perfect church behavior.” The oldest child always seemed to time her bathroom trip with the beginning of the sermon, shutting the door loudly as she left the sanctuary. Every week the middle child raced from worship to the cookie table for some punch and cookies. He regularly spilled as much punch on the carpet as he drank. Some in the congregation began to wonder if children were really needed in the church.

1. *What would you like to say to this congregation? And to the children?*
2. *How might rules in a church become a hindrance to faith?*

Jesus was born a Jew and brought a new reality into being. He died on the cross for all people—Jewish and Gentile, young and old, male and female. Although Jesus did not provide the early church with a comprehensive guidebook on doctrine and policy, the early church leaned on the Holy Spirit for direction.

Jewish Christians had centuries of habits and rituals to sort through as they moved in the new reality of an inclusive Christian community. Paul, Peter, and the leaders in the early church had intense discussions about how to follow Christ—because it mattered. Silence was not an option. In actuality, old habits and perceptions have always been difficult to change.

3. *What are important issues facing the church today?*
4. *On what issues do you feel compelled to use your voice to bring change?*
5. *How do you rely on the Holy Spirit to guide your words and actions?*

faith practice in daily life

Live among God’s faithful people

Paul uses personal “I-language” to conclude his argument that both Jew and Gentile are saved. He writes as a Jewish Christian, “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 it is Christ who lives in me.” (Galatians 2:19-20 NRSV) This is a more mystical side of Paul, but Paul still remains Paul, one who strives to live among God’s faithful people. “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.” (Galatians 2:20 NRSV) If this is not true, “...then Christ died for nothing.” (Galatians 2:21 NRSV)

6. *How does Christ live in you?*
7. *How might you live this week to reflect Christ died for something?*

Prayer

Holy Spirit, open us to give Christ room to live within us. Amen.

last word

Daily Faith Practices

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Watch for signs of Christ living within you.