

Galatians

April 2, 2023

Welcome to the Beamsville Church of Christ Online Ministry. This week's message is titled Galatians and the Scripture Reading is Galatians 2:11-13. Thank you to Paul, Ronda, Dave, and Don for being part of the video.

Welcome, Announcements, Prayer

Welcome. Glad to see everyone this morning. [...] today. [...] couple announcements as we get underway. Hey, a thing I know! This is this this this is where I make an income Insight Biblical Counseling. Formerly Elisha House in Welland is holding their sweet and savoury social on the 14th of April in Thorold. More information. Prayer requests for Great Lakes students away for March break. Coming back this weekend, classes starting tomorrow. Prayer for safe travels. Debby's mother Jean passed away this week. Prayers with their family. Let us start with a prayer. Dear Lord, thank you for all you've given us and all you've blessed us with. We thank you for this moment and this time. Help us to worship you with heart, soul and mind and body. Help us to be open to your word. Open to your moving. Open to your spirit. Lord, you bless us so much every day you bless us even more. With life abundant through your son. Help us to live like a people who have been blessed in Jesus name. Amen.

Communion

Good morning. I'd like to talk about leprosy. Leprosy is a disease that, first off, it affects the nerve endings in your fingers and your toes. And then that numbness will go further. You end up with open sores. You lose your fingernails, you lose your toenails eventually. And often people end up losing parts of their limbs because they have no feeling in them. And so therefore they have accidents. And eventually it affects your internal organs and you end up with fever and you end up with diarrhea and and then eventually you die. And while you have leprosy, you are considered an outcast because people were afraid, especially in Bible times, that they could get that leprosy from you. And so you were an outcast in society, people you weren't allowed to touch, people. People weren't allowed to touch you. You had to yell unclean, unclean. Leviticus 14 tells you what you can do if you're cured from leprosy, if you're cured from leprosy, well, then you bring a lamb without blemish to the priest and that lamb is killed and the blood of the lamb is put on to your right earlobe, your right fingertip, and your right big toe. And so that was what happened. But that never happened because no one was ever cured of leprosy.

So Leviticus 14 was kind of a mute chapter in that it was never used. And so the people had a belief, they had a saying, they would say, when the Messiah comes, the Messiah will be able to cure leprosy. And so they waited for the Messiah to come. So we're going to start reading in Matthew Chapter eight and Jesus had just come down from the mountain where he was doing the Sermon on the Mount, and a large crowd followed him and the leper came up to him and bowed down before him, saying, Lord, if you are willing, you are able to make me clean. And that's his way of saying, I know you're the Messiah, because he says, if you are willing, you are able to make me clean. Jesus reached out his hand and touched him, saying, I am willing be cleansed. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed. That was totally a no no. You don't touch a leper. But he said, I'm willing immediately leprosy was cleansed. And

Jesus said to him, See that you tell no one about this, but go show yourself to the priest for inspection and present an offering that Moses commanded in the testimony to them.

So. So that's what happened. He did that. But let's think about this leprosy. I think the leprosy can be compared with sin. Sin will start out this big and it'll often get bigger and bigger and bigger until it eventually each to stop. And anybody who's ever had an addiction knows that. And also, it's true for not just addictions, but for everything, so that leprosy can be compared to sin. And then Jesus touched the man. Jesus touches us by dying on the cross. That was Him touching us. And and this in the old Testament, they were told that they had to sacrifice a lamb. Jesus is our lamb. He was sacrifice for us, for our sins. And I think securing of the leprosy is very symbolic of what Jesus does for us on the cross. Now, when he was sent, when the man was sent to the priest and he was said to go to the priest, when that happened, that would that would mean that the priests and the Pharisees would know that the Messiah has come, that this is the Messiah and they had to make a decision at that point. If they chose to follow that Messiah, it meant they would have to give up their status, they would have to give up their income, they would have to give up their identity. And when we choose to follow Christ, I think there's people in this room who've had to do exactly the same thing. There's things that you have had to give up that were very precious, like maybe your identity, maybe your family rejected you or whatever. And we have to make a choice in our lives as to are we going to follow Christ or are we going to give Christ our sins? Christ touched them. Christ touched us with His death. Are we going to accept that? Are we going to say no? And what we're celebrating today is that Christ was willing to take our leprosy to the cross and and that we can accept that and we can be full of his spirit and full of his bread and his blood.

Let's pray. Thank you, God, so much for taking our sins to the cross and for sacrificing Jesus for us. And thank you that that you can take our sins and that you can take them upon yourself. Just as Jesus touched the man and took his leprosy upon himself or. Or touched him and cured him, that you can touch us and cure us and him. We pray that that we will will be your people and that we will be your ambassadors and that we will be be the kind of people that that you would want us to be and that we will glorify you. And as a as a symbol of our gratitude for what you've done for us in Jesus name, amen.

Scripture Reading

Galatians 2:11-13

The reading this morning is taken from Galatians chapter two verses 11 through 13. When Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face because he stood condemned for before certain men came from James. He used to eat with the Gentiles, but when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision party. The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy so that by their hypocrisy, even Barnabas was led astray.

Sermon

Good morning, everyone. I am glad you are with us today. Hope that you'll bear with me. With my voice. Someone must have been praying. Please let this be a short sermon today. And you've got. You've probably got it. Well, I'd like to take a look at the book of Galatians today. If you want to have a Bible and turn to it, I'll be looking at a variety of scriptures. The book of Galatians was actually, believe

it or not, the first New Testament book that was written wasn't Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, but it was the book of Galatians. And what's interesting to me is that there were times when the church seemed to be on the edge of extinction. I think that's happened throughout the ages. But when we were writing this book of Galatians, it becomes a brand new church. But it goes this way. How in the world do you get two opposing cultures to come together as one? When we disagree with each other about just about everything, about what kind of food we can eat, about freedom, all of those things. If we don't get this right, there will no there'll be no New Testament. There will be no new Testament church. So we've got to get this right.

So the Book of Galatians is the first New Testament book that was written. And you have two opposing cultures trying to come together as one. On one side, people say, We can eat whatever we want. Where many of the Jews were saying, Oh, we can't, we can't. What we were told all of our life, this is what we can eat and this is what we can eat. So how does the church begin and be successful when it seemed like it was doomed to begin with? So I just want to spend some time looking at this wonderful book from the province of Galatia, this brand new church and what Paul is going to say to all of us. So if you can in your imagination, try to put yourselves in the shoes of how is all of this going to work? Okay. So Paul writes the Book of Galatians, and he begins by saying, what is primary in the New Testament? He says Paul, an apostle, sent not from man nor by man, but Jesus Christ and God, the Father who raised Christ from the dead. Then He says, Grace and peace to you from God, our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins, to rescue us from this present evil age. And then he begins by saying, because there are so many religions of that day. He begins by saying, I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel, which is really no gospel at all. And the Gospel of Jesus Christ is a very simple gospel to understand. It is the life, the death, the burial, and the resurrection of Christ Jesus. And how that affects us and how we can live in our society today. And so he says in verse eight. But even if we listen or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preach to you, let that person be eternally condemned. That's very strong language, as we've already said. And so now I say it again. If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than the one you accepted, let that person be condemned. Am I now trying to win the approval of people or God? I'm trying to or even trying to please people.

So it begins by saying in verse 11, Paul speaking about defending himself Before I preach the message, Paul's going to say, I want you to know this background. I was called by God in verse 11. I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the Gospel I preached is not something that anyone made up. I did not receive it from any person, nor was I taught it. Rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ. Now you remember the story before Paul was Paul, his name was Saul, and he believed that Jesus was not to be listened to, that Jesus should be crucified because He was a false Christ. And then when Paul learns the message and God reveals to Him that Christ is Lord of all and Savior of all, he was broken and repented and came to the Lord. And without Him really saying it and yet saying it is, I'm going to spend the rest of my life loving this wonderful Jesus Christ and sharing the message that all sins can be forgiven in Christ. I'm going to do it day and night for as long as I can. I don't care how many times they throw me in jail. I don't care how many times they beat me. I'm going to continually believe that Christ is the savior of all mankind. And it's true today, for he says in verse 13, for you have heard of my previous way of life in Judaism, how intensely I persecuted the Church of God and tried to destroy it. I was advancing in Judaism by many Jews of my age and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my father. So in other words, there were set times for prayer. There were certain food that you could eat.

There were certain foods you couldn't eat. This is when the sacrifice takes place in this. And then the Gentiles would come along and say, I'm not interested in any of that. I'm interested in Christ. I'm not interested in all those Old Testament things. And so you have two cultures that are somewhat opposed to one another. And so how are we going to deal with all of this? And then God speaks to the heart of Paul. And I think God has spoken to the heart of each one of us.

We've made a decision to become a follower of Christ. But was that decision made just by you? Was it God bringing you to a certain time, in a certain place? And you received this? Oh, yeah. He is Christ. He is the Savior. He is the one who creates all things. He knew me before we were born. He knows us. He planned from the beginning that not only to God create Adam and Eve. He knew what he was going to create. You and I. Isn't that amazing? And so you have this book, this church at Galatia, where you have two cultures that are really not agreeing with one another to try to figure out how to come together as one. And you have people who are even against it, who become Christians. That's Paul for verse 13 for you have heard of my previous way of life in Judaism, how intensely I persecute the Church of God and tried to destroy it. I was advancing in Jews, Judaism by many Jews of my own age and was extreme, really zealous for the traditions of my fathers. But when God who set me apart from birth and He sets all of us from birth and called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his son in me so that I may preach to the Gentiles. If you had ever asked Saul before he became Paul, do you believe in this? Jesus Christ. Absolutely not. If you had a conversation with Jesus, what would it be? He'd say, Not very pleasant. Now, because Paul becomes a Christian, his life changes forever. He said, I didn't consult any person, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to see who were apostles before I was. But I went immediately into Arabia and returned to the master. What did he do in Arabia? We don't know, but I think I know. I think he just spent his time praying and thanking God and reworking the Bible. So he categorized Old Testament. New Paul comes along. That said, everything that was written in the Old Testament was to bring us to Christ. Paul's life completely changed. And when you have a huge life change, it's not instantaneous. How do you how do you reprogram everything that you thought?

How do you change your life constantly and continually? And how many of us have quit thinking that, you know, we've kind of know enough about the Bible. We don't really have to pay much attention to it. We know a lot about Jesus. We really don't have to. No, no, no. How is your relationship with Jesus? There's a difference. We can have information about Jesus. We can talk to Jesus by a quick prayer. But how is your relationship with Jesus? He knows everything about us. There isn't a moment in our day where he's not with us. And I think communicating with God is so very, very special, knowing that he walks with us every single day. So how then do you get an apostle who wasn't an apostle to become apostle where the original apostles are trusting this guy? What do you do with this? Well, here's what he says in Chapter two. 14 years later, I went up again to Jerusalem. This time with Barnabas, I brought somebody along with me. And even in verse two, he says, I went in response to a revelation and set before me. Then the gospel I preach among the Gentiles. But I did this privately to those who seem to be the leaders for fear that I was running ahead of my race in vain, yet not even Titus, who was with me, was compelled to follow the Old Testament circumcisions and loss and so forth. And then Peter impetuous. Peter comes along in verse 11 of chapter two, and he says, When Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face. Strong language. He was clearly in the wrong before certain men came from James. He used to eat with the Gentiles, but when they arrived, they drew back. So what Paul is trying to suggest is if this gospel is going to work, it has never anything to do with food or rights or rituals.

It has to do with faith in believe in Jesus Christ. And it was difficult because they were taught all of their lives how to live, what to think, how to do. Christ comes along and sets them free, and it's difficult to accept that freedom when all of your life you've been shackled by the law. How do you change? And it wasn't easy. Paul writes, More than any other writer in the New Testament about God's forgiveness, love and grace. But it was difficult for him before he could really get it. And then once he got it, he never stopped sharing it. So he talks about following the law, the Old Testament law, which he did. But notice what he says, you foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you before your very eyes. Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. I would like to learn just one thing from you. Did you receive the Holy Spirit of God by observing the law, by following all those commands? Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Holy Spirit, you are now trying to attain your goal by your own effort. Have you suffered so much for nothing? If it really was for nothing. Does God give you His Holy Spirit and do miracles among you because you're observing the law? No. So Paul lays it out. He's just opening up his bearing himself to all the people. Would you, if you were commissioned by God, put all these things out here so that everybody could see? So he says, all who rely on observing the law is under a curse. That must have been difficult for him to write because everything was important to him under the law. All who rely on observing the law, the commandments, the rituals and so forth and cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the book of the law. And Paul says, No, that's done away with. Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse to us. Cursed is everyone who's hung on the tree. We took the curse of Jesus's curse. His curse was crucifixion for us. For us. And now we want to bicker about what foods to eat, what ritual to keep this and that. It was on the edge, remembering this was the first New Testament church. How is it going to. How is it going to be if this church fails?

If these Gentile and Jew Christians can't come together as one? How in. The world. Is the church going to exist? 2000 years later, we're still here. We're still here. And we're not going anywhere until God calls us home. This wonderful book of Galatians, which seems like there's struggles all the way throughout. But you know and I know the struggles that we've all had in our faith. Here's what Jesus said. You diligently study the scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. But these scriptures testify about me. And yet you refuse to come to me for life. They'd rather rely on the law that no one can fulfill in. Jesus comes along and says, I am your fulfillment. I just believe. And so He talks about this dialog between each other in the arguments between one another. He says this If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out, or you will be destroyed by one another. Live such good lives. Live such good lives that we don't have to worry about these things, that we have the Holy Spirit of God living in us. And here's what the Spirit gives us, the fruit of the Spirit. And we know this is love and joy and peace and patience and kindness and goodness and faithfulness and gentleness and self-control. There is no law when it comes to that. Just allow the love of Christ. So he says, Do not be deceived. God cannot be mocked. A person reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please sinful nature. From that nature will reap destruction. But the one who sows to please the spirit from the spirit will reap eternal life. Let us not become weary in well doing.

So. This brief look, this brief book of Galatians is the first New Testament book that is written, and it's a welcome for all of us. So my encouragement would be for us this week. If you have time just to grade this book like you've never read it before. There's a couple of scriptures in here that just seem to gravitate talks about the fruit of the Spirit, talks about love, joy and peace and patience and kindness and goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Sometimes it's good to look at these virtues

beginning with love. Who do you love? Who loves you, Joy? When was the last time you felt great joy? Go back and think about those times of joy. All this is from God, love, joy, peace. Are you a person that just wants to stir things up all the time? Or do we just ask for this loving peace of Jesus? Love, joy, peace, patience, patience. Can you be patient with others? But can you be patient for yourself? Be patient knowing that God is with us every step, Lovejoy. Peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness and self-control. Yeah, right. If we don't get this book of Galatians right, the church may not exist. But the church does exist because we're doing our best to keep it right. Amen.

Closing Prayer

Thank you, Don. Thank you, Rhonda. Thank you. Adam and Heather, as we close today, I thought I would read from Ephesians three. The first half is a prayer on our behalf. I have modified to be inclusive, plural. So from your to we, from you to we, us. US. I know English [laughter] because it applies to me just as much as anybody else. But the second half is also a praise. But there is implicit agreement. If we agree with the offering of praise to God the second half, if we believe God can do all things, then whatever challenges or opportunities we may be facing, we also can face with God's help. So it's both a praise and a call to action on our behalf.

So go with this blessing. I pray that it is his glorious riches. He may strengthen us with power through his spirit and our inner beings, so that Christ may dwell in our hearts through faith. And I pray that we, being rooted and established in love may have power together with all of the Lord's holy people to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is love of Christ, and to know that this love that surpasses knowledge that we may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Now to Him, who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be the glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

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