

Death By Religion- part 2
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Key Scripture: Galatians 1: 6-10

Introduction:

In Galatians, Paul is being forced to address the biggest problem within all of us in our relationship to God; the problem of our “goodness.” It is the problem that Jesus had with the Pharisees, with the rich young ruler, with the elder brother, in the parable of the ‘good’ Samaritan, and with Peter who said, “Though all forsake you, I will not.”

There are two kinds of rebellion, or alienation, against God: one by being “bad”, and one by being “good.” This sounds extreme, even heretical, but as we saw last week, the people Jesus had the biggest problem with were the morally self-righteous; the Pharisees. This is the same kind of person Paul is addressing in the Book of Galatians: the Judaizers. Jesus’ entire ministry was about shattering our categories. He did not divide the world into moral “good guys” and immoral “bad guys”. He shows that everyone is dedicated to his or her own project of self-salvation.

The gospel is distinct from this view of being bad or good. It says, “Every one is wrong, everyone is loved, and everyone is called to recognize this and be changed.” The elder brother, the Pharisee, the Judaizer, is more blind and in a more spiritually desperate condition. Don’t try to figure out if you are an elder brother, a Pharisee, or a Judaizer, because you will always measure yourself as o.k. Let’s assume we are all of these things. For it is only as we open ourselves to this possibility that we will be able to root out the thing we’re calling “religion that kills.”

I. The Things of God Are Slippery In Me

- A. Gal.1: 6 - “I am astonished! I am shocked! I marvel! I can’t believe your fickleness!” (various versions) Paul is astonished at the Galatian believers turning away from the gospel so soon.
- B. Martin Luther- “ To fall in faith is an easy matter. Moreover, the matter of justification by faith alone is slippery, not slippery in itself, but slippery in me. I have good experience in this matter. I know how to wrestle in my hour of darkness. I know how often I lose sight of the peace that is mine through the gospel. There are these thick clouds in my life that block out God’s mercy and acceptance of me.”
- C. What are these clouds? They are our insecurities; our many failures; our depressions; our moods and feelings: our achievements: and our confidence, which sets us up to judge others.
- D. Luther- “I know in what a slippery place even such as I, who am well taught, do stand. Although I should have a sure footing in matters of faith.”

II. Our Other Problem

- A. We have enemies that are stronger than us. Our enemies are:
 - 1. *Our own flesh*, which is never satisfied, will always be at war with God because it will always want it’s own way.
 - 2. *The powerful pull of this world*, which always wants to give us something other than God to be the center of our lives, i.e. career, money, happiness.

3. *The Law*, which always says we should know better, and it is right but never does anything to help us out.
 4. *Sin*, which, after we've committed it, always shows us what a sucker we are, and we feel this shame and self-loathing.
 5. *The wrath of God and His judgment*, which all of us deserve.
 6. *The devil*, who never ceases to tempt us and accuse us.
 7. *The elder brothers of this world*, who make sure we know what is wrong with us and how we can fix it.
- B. A different gospel- Paul is saying; "It's not a minor variation, you know. It is completely 'other' than the gospel, an alien message, a no-message, a lie about God. These agitators are turning the gospel on its head. This great gospel that I delivered to you is not my mere optimism. It is not an uncertain hope. It is an absolute and certain reality."

III. The Gospel

- A. The message, the gospel, is this; because of Jesus Christ:
1. I am righteous before God.
 2. I am embraced by God wholeheartedly.
 3. I am one of God's favorites.
 4. God is always and in every way out to do me good.
 5. I cannot make myself anymore acceptable before God.
 6. I cannot make myself anymore forgiven of my sin.
 7. I cannot add to my goodness.
 8. I cannot add to my holiness.
 9. My lack of sins does not make me any better in God's eyes.
 10. My preponderance of sins doesn't make me any worse in God's sight.
 11. Why? Because of Jesus Christ. (1 Cor. 1: 27-31)
- C. But that's not all!
1. All the love the Father has for the Son, is the love the Father has for me.
 2. All the joy the Father has in the Son, is the joy the Father has in me.
 3. All the affection the Father has for the Son, is the affection the Father has for me.
 4. Everything and anything that you can conceive of that God the Father has for His Son, He has for me.
- D. There is still more! John 17:21- "That they may all be one."
1. This is what Jesus prays and what the Father wants. It is that we might be one with Jesus as He is one with the Father; that we have the same kind of relationship with them that they have with each other.
 2. We have to know that, "it's mine!" Jesus purchased it for me with His blood and then He gave it to me as a gift.
 3. It's not just something that *just* Jesus did for us. It's something that the Father did for us as well. It's a total conspiracy of goodness for us, and we bring nothing to the table.
- E. Ephesians 1- The Message, page 474 "The whole of your life; every high and low; every misdeed and good deed; every doubt and fear and confusion, it's all covered.

He's got your whole existence in His hands, before you were ever born." God has a design for our lives, and He wants us to get in on it.

1. Luther – "Do we then do nothing? Do we do nothing at all for the obtaining of righteousness? I answer, 'nothing at all.' For this is perfect righteousness, to do nothing, to hear nothing, to know nothing of the law, or of works, or merit, but to know and believe this only, that Christ has gone to the Father on our behalf."
2. There is nothing for us to do but receive, to enter in to all that Jesus Christ has done for us. Why is this so important? Because receiving it means we "get it", we understand that we cannot save ourselves in any way.
3. Galatians 2:5-6 - The Message, page 463 "Answer this question. Does the God who lavishly provides you with His own presence, His Holy Spirit, working things in your life you could never do for yourselves, does He do these things because of your strenuous moral striving, or because you trust Him to do them in you? As with Abraham, so with you. Abraham believed God could produce a son beyond Abraham's own ability to produce, and God said he was righteous." Do you believe that God is going to produce things in you beyond your ability to produce it? If so, then you are righteous as Abraham was counted righteous. The message of salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone. To God alone be the glory!

IV. Signs Of Slipping

A. These are signs that the gospel has slipped in you:

1. Do you lack joy? Have you lost joy in your salvation?
2. Are you angry at God for your circumstances?
3. Are you keeping record of how many times someone has hurt you?
4. Are you easily offended?
5. Are you trying your hardest to please God, but things aren't working your way?
6. Have you become bored in your faith?
7. Is your heart shriveling, hardening, and getting calloused?
8. Are you frustrated with people all the time?
9. Do you lack peace?
10. Do you dislike yourself and get down on yourself because you are always failing?

B. These are all forms of law keeping. This is where we land when the gospel has slipped in us. Are you living to get God to do more for you, or are you living in order to get more of God?

Discussion Questions:

What would you say if asked to summarize the gospel in two sentences?

Why do you think that the gospel is "slippery" in us?

Do you see signs of slipping away from the gospel in your own life? (see IV)

Is it hard for you to accept that you can do nothing to save yourself, even by being good? Why do you think that might be true?

