

# Galatians– Embracing Grace and Truth

*Facilitated by Sister Patricia Weaver*

 **828 7580 6094** ▶ **Thursday May 7, 2026**

**Women of Excellence**

**Bible Study 7pm**

## **Memory Verse**

**Galatians 2:-21 (NLT)** I do not treat the grace of God as meaningless. For if keeping the law could make us right with God, then there was no need for Christ to die.

## **POINT 3 – PAUL’S DEFENSE**

### **Galatians 2:17–21 (NLT)**

<sup>17</sup> But suppose we seek to be made right with God through faith in Christ and then we are found guilty because we have abandoned the law. Would that mean Christ has led us into sin? Absolutely not! <sup>18</sup> Rather, I am a sinner if I rebuild the old system of law I already tore down. <sup>19</sup> For when I tried to keep the law, it condemned me. So, I died to the law—I stopped trying to meet all its requirements—so that I might live for God. <sup>20</sup> My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So, I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. <sup>21</sup> I do not treat the grace of God as meaningless. For if keeping the law could make us right with God, then there was no need for Christ to die.

### **Galatians 2:17–21 (NASB95)**

- 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!
- 18** “For if I rebuild what I have *once* destroyed, I prove myself to be a transgressor.
- 19** “For through the Law I died to the Law, so that I might live to God.

## Galatians– Embracing Grace and Truth

*Facilitated by Sister Patricia Weaver*

20 “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.

21 “I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness *comes* through the Law, then Christ died needlessly.”

By their behavior, Peter and the other Jewish Christians at Antioch had given approval to the Judaizers’ idea that it was necessary for a Gentile to keep the Jewish rituals before he could become a Christian. Paul’s defense of justification by faith in verses 17–21 continues his contradiction of this Judaist legalism to which Peter and the others had succumbed.

It is crucial to understand that, as in the previous two verses, **we** refer to Jewish Christians. **But if, while seeking to be justified in Christ, we ourselves**, as Jewish Christians, **have also been found sinners**, Paul asks rhetorically, **is Christ then a minister of sin?**

His first point was to show that, if the Judaizers were correct in their doctrine that believers are saved in part by keeping the ceremonial law of Moses and continue to be bound by that law to maintain their salvation, then, even before the Judaizers arrived in Antioch, Peter, Barnabas, and all the other Jewish believers, including Paul, had fallen back into the category of **sinners** by having freely eaten and fellowshiped with Gentile Christians.

Paul’s second point was even more devastating. “If you became **sinners** because of fellowshiping with your Gentile brothers,” he implies, “then **Christ** Himself became **a minister of sin**, did he not?” How? Jesus had clearly taught that no food can spiritually contaminate a person, because food cannot affect the heart (Mark 7:19). Through the vision of the unclean animals and the dramatic

## **Galatians– Embracing Grace and Truth** *Facilitated by Sister Patricia Weaver*

conversion and anointing of Cornelius, the Lord had given Peter direct evidence that Gentile believers are in every way equal to Jewish believers (Acts 10). On many other occasions and in many other ways Jesus had taught that all those who belong to Him are one with Him and therefore one with each other. Shortly before His arrest, trial, and crucifixion, Jesus earnestly and repeatedly prayed to His Father that those who believed in Him “**may all be one; even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in Us ... that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them and Thou in Me, that they may be perfected in unity**” **(John 17:21–23)**.

But if the Judaizers were right, Paul pointed out, Jesus was wrong; if they taught the truth, He had taught falsehood and was thereby **a minister of sin!** Such an accusation must have shaken Peter to his bones. To be called a hypocrite stung enough, but to be called a sinner was unthinkable, and to be accused of making Jesus **a minister of sin** was shocking and repulsive. Yet the logic of Paul’s argument was inescapable. By his actions, Peter had in effect condemned Jesus Christ. He therefore had to forsake his Judaistic sympathies or continue to make His Lord a liar.

To his own question Paul immediately responded, **May it never be!** It must have been painful to Paul to suggest even hypothetically that Christ could participate in, much less promote, sin. But the drastic danger of Judaistic legalism demanded such drastic logic. He knew of no other way to bring Peter and the others to their senses.

By using the term, *we* in the previous verses, Paul had graciously identified himself with the compromisers to a certain extent. Now he even more graciously and lovingly softens the blow to his friends by using himself as a hypothetical

## **Galatians– Embracing Grace and Truth**

*Facilitated by Sister Patricia Weaver*

example. **For if I rebuild what I have once destroyed**, he said, **I prove myself to be a transgressor**. In other words, if anyone, including **myself**, tries to **rebuild** a system of legalism after he has **once destroyed** it by believing and preaching the gospel of God’s powerful grace and man’s sinful helplessness, he proves *himself*, not Christ, to be **a transgressor**. He proves himself to be a hypocrite and a sinner by abandoning grace for law.

### **Discussion Questions: Galatians 2:17–18 (NASB95)**

- 1. What does Paul mean by “seeking to be justified in Christ?”**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 2. Why would returning to law-keeping after receiving justification constitute a transgression?**

### **PAUL’S DEFENSE CONTINUED**

“I could never do such a thing,” Paul asserts, **“for through the Law I died to the Law, that I might live to God**. The idea of legalism clashes with God’s clearest truth and my own deepest convictions. Now that I have accepted grace and **died to the Law**, I could never go back to its system of rituals and ordinances.

## **Galatians– Embracing Grace and Truth** *Facilitated by Sister Patricia Weaver*

Otherwise, I could not **live to God.**” The law is not the believer’s master; God is. It is not his relation to the law that saves him, but his relation to God.

Legalism’s most destructive effect is that it cancels the effect of the cross. **I have been crucified with Christ**, Paul testifies, **and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me.** To go back under the law would be to cancel one’s union with Christ’s sacrifice on the cross and therefore to go back under sin.

**I died to the Law**, Paul explains, because I was **crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live.** The old man, the old self, is dead, crucified with Christ, and the new man lives (cf. Col. 3:9–10). Now **I ... live to God**, because **Christ lives in me** (cf. Rom. 8:9). The life I *received* by faith **I now also live by faith.** The Greek verb behind **live** is in the perfect tense, indicating a past completed action that has continuing results. When a believer trusts in Christ for salvation he spiritually participates with the Lord in His crucifixion and in His victory over sin and death.

That is why, the apostle continues, **the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God.** *The true Christian life is not so much a believer’s living for Christ as Christ’s living through the believer.* Because in Christ “all the fulness of Deity dwells in bodily form” (**Col. 2:9**), the fulness of God also dwells in every believer, as “partakers of the divine nature” (**2 Pet. 1:4**).

I do not have such a divine life and the magnanimous privilege of being indwelt with the living, powerful Son of God because of anything I have done or merited, but only because He **loved me, and delivered Himself up for me.**

The surpassing motive, therefore, for all spiritual devotion and obedience is gratitude to the sovereign, gracious Lord. The statement **who loved me** refers to

## **Galatians– Embracing Grace and Truth**

*Facilitated by Sister Patricia Weaver*

the motive behind God’s saving grace. The New Testament is replete with teaching on this great truth (see, e.g., John 3:16; Rom. 5:8; Eph. 2:5). The gift of love was not taken from Christ, but **He delivered Himself up for me**, says the apostle. This is reminiscent of our Lord’s words in **John 10:17–18**, “I lay down my life that I may take it again. No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down of My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again.”

All of this saving work is the gift of God’s sovereign grace. Consequently, Paul concludes, **I do not nullify the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly**. In effect he was saying to Peter, “By withdrawing from fellowship with your Gentile brothers you take your stand with the Judaizers and against Christ. You **nullify the grace of God** by denying the need for Christ’s death, just as you did when you rebuked the Lord for declaring it was necessary for Him to suffer, be killed, and raised on the third day (see Matt. 16:21–22).

The two pillars of the gospel are the **grace of God** and the death of **Christ**, and those are the two pillars that, by its very nature, legalism destroys. The person who insists that he can earn salvation by his own efforts undermines the very foundation of Christianity and nullifies the precious death of Christ on his behalf.

### **Discussion Questions: Vs. 19 – 21**

- 1. What does it mean practically to “die to the law” while remaining physically alive?**

