

STUDYING GALATIANS

BIBLE STUDY OUTREACH @ 1984, 1993

LESSON 5
Galatians 2: 11 - 21

The Cross: The Power for success

What does it mean to you to be successful? It means different things to different people. To me it means to have inner strength to do what I know I have to do and what I know is right. To be able to succeed is to be able, in the end, to please God. This may not mean that I will earn a lot of money or have many things. It may not mean I am applauded by people or recognized for what I do. But if I can know at the end of my life that I have done the will of God, I will be happy and satisfied. I want to hear God say, "Well done, you are a good servant. You have done it right."

We know all too well that the attempts at achieving success, as the world classifies success, do not give any lasting satisfaction; it is all temporary. Purely physical and materialistic goals never bring a true sense of accomplishment. Interest in them goes quickly. On the other hand, if you do something God has given you to do, you will experience real success. When you think about your life and the true meaning and value of it, you will want to see that you have succeeded in God's eyes. If you have never thought about this or have never come to this conclusion, pray now that God will make this desire true and strong in your heart and life.

In verses 11 - 14 we see how two people, who were strong, failed in an area of their lives. It will encourage us to believe we can overcome our failures as we study how this happened. Both men, Peter and Barnabas, were great men, heroes of the faith, leaders of the church. They had vigor and enthusiasm and were productive Christians for many years after this infraction of conduct which is recorded against them in God's Word. It is here for us to take to heart and learn from it. We all can identify with one or the other of these men. Barnabas and Peter were devoted to Christ and to The ministry of taking the gospel to the unsaved Gentiles. That did not mean they could not get caught in the trap of wanting to please people. It often happens, because we are concerned with what people think and say. We do value people's opinions and very often yield to our peer group. At times this can be very destructive.

As Paul stood before the council in Jerusalem defending his ministry to the Gentiles, he reviewed an incident that had happened 14 years earlier when the work was new. He recounted how he had handled a situation when he had gone to Antioch to find his friend Peter guilty of letting some Jewish legalists influence him to withdraw from the company of the Gentiles, but when the delegation from Jerusalem arrived Peter had moved away from them. In doing this he had influenced the other Jewish Christians, Barnabas included. They had fallen into the trap of pleasing people and Paul said Peter was at fault. It was a shocking matter! We can see how Peter's action had a wide-spread effect. Barnabas was one of the most important leaders in the movement to convert the Gentiles. Even this godly man had been touched by Peter's example.

We must understand the significance of Peter's action in the light of his being a natural Jew. When the Judaizers appeared they brought a "platform of legalism" (Acts 15) which intimidated Peter. Before the Judaizers had arrived in Antioch there had been great freedom and interaction between the Jew and Gentile converts. They were all one in Christ. When legalism was brought to bear, it implied (from the rabbinic standpoint) the Gentiles were 'unclean' in themselves and 'contaminating' to the Jews. Peter's action also implied this. His actions did not go unnoticed. But this implication was not true. Paul immediately dealt with the matter to clear it up. He said that man's inability to keep the law ruled out salvation by the law. God had provided another way for man to be saved, salvation by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ's death for the forgiveness of our sins. But the Judaizers said the Gentile converts must be circumcised to prove their break with their pagan past. Paul countered this by saying justification was by

faith alone in Christ, without the law and that being justified in Christ meant union with Christ. Any works we try to add to this is sin! It is unbelief in the completeness of Christ's redemptive work; we cannot "add to" justification in Christ; if we try, we are sinning. Then Paul added, "That does not make Christ an agent of sin." This only points to transgression in our own lives. It is Christ's finished work at Calvary that has done it all. He completed God's plan of salvation.

Paul's dynamic ideal, which he set before the Christian Church, was "Christ lives in me!" He said he had been crucified with Christ, which meant he had died with Him on the cross and his life was then raised up with Christ and the old Paul no longer lived, but Christ lived in him; Christ controlled every aspect of his life. Here is success! To be controlled by Christ. To be dead to the old life and be subject to the resurrection power of the living Son of God within you. By that power all things are possible. We no longer need to be people-pleasers. We need not sin by being ashamed of being believers in Christ Jesus. We no longer need to set examples that lead others astray or give Jesus a bad name. We can set our goals before God and say, "Father, in the Name of Jesus Who lives in me, I will no longer be in bondage to my tongue. I will not let my anger destroy relationships with those I love. My life is no longer my own and I am living for You as Jesus works out His life through me."

What freedom Christ gives to those of us who are crucified with Him! We have a new nature and a new relationship with our Heavenly Father. We are one with His Son. Is this not the ultimate success for our lives? It is so and it comes from the power of the cross! We can stand before men and before God knowing we have power to overcome the things the world would draw us into. We can succeed because our knowledge of success is not that of the world, but of God. Yes, a God Who is merciful and full of grace toward us, a God Who provided for us even while we were yet in sin. We must look at God's mercy through the cross of Christ and receive His power.

Paul's message was simply, Christ! Christ crucified! He stood before the council and said that he was not one to treat Christ's death as meaningless. For if we could be saved by keeping Jewish laws, then there was no need for Christ to die. We see how great is God's gift to us and how meaningless the law was when it came to providing a successful answer to man's need for redemption. In the law, we are condemned, but by God's grace at Calvary we have been saved! Praise this God Whose compassion was so great it reached from heaven to earth and with His own blood washed away our sins. Give Him the glory He alone should have. He will enable you to succeed if you decrease and Christ increases within your heart.

Success;
A bigger place than this to fill,
For that I do not pray,
But to be big enough to fill
The place I have today!

Anonymous

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SCRIPTURE TO MEDITATE UPON:

“...we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not as pleasing men but God, who examines our hearts” 1 Thess. 2:4.

This scripture is a capsule of the notes. Study it carefully for it has major teachings we need to implant in our minds and hearts. These teachings are for each of us personally. They are: 1) You are approved of God. 2) You are entrusted with the gospel. 3) You are to speak. 4) You are not pleasing men but God. 5) God examines your heart.

Seek God for attitudes, desires and motives that center you in His will. Success is being in the center of God's will. Ask the Holy Spirit to teach you as you do your questions. Open your mind, examine your heart and be grateful for the learning process that gives you spiritual growth.

QUESTIONS:

1. What great truth impressed you most in either the notes or the scripture for this lesson?
2. From verse 11, tell what Paul did.
3.
 - a. Give the reason for Peter's withdrawal from the company of the Gentile converts.
 - b. Do you ever do anything that you know is a bad example because you are afraid of what your friends will think? Give the result of such action.
4.
 - a. What did the Judaizers insist the Gentiles must do?
 - b. What did the Judaizers think this would prove?
5.
 - a. Read verse 13 carefully. Use several translations if you have them. Who followed Peter's action?
 - b. According to Paul in Eph. 5:1, whom should we follow?
 - c. Can one do this without offending others? Why or why not?
 - d. If you have had this happen would you share what the results were?

- 6,
 - a. Tell what Luke 22:54 says about Peter.
 - b. What were Jesus' words, of great significance, to Peter in John 21:19?
 - c. Have you ever been conscious of the Lord's telling you to do this? Tell about it if you have.
7. Read 1 Peter 1:11b and tell the end results of being obedient to Jesus' words.
8. Peter was at fault, causing others to sin. What 2 things does James 5:16 tell us to do which have healing effects?
9. What did Paul mean when he said, "...I saw they were not action in line with the truth of the gospel..."?
10. What was the most important point Paul was making that came out as a question?
11.
 - a. What does Paul say about being right with God by obeying Jewish law? v.
 - b. How can you be right with God?
 - c. Give your thought on how important this is to you
12. Tell in your own words what Paul said about trying to justify oneself. vv. ____
13.
 - a. Paul said he was dead to the law. Read Rom. 7:4 and tell how we become dead to the law.
 - b. What are the end results?
 - c. For your own spiritual growth, read Rom. 6:3 - 5 and tell what is between Christ and every believer.
14.
 - a. Write in detail what Gal. 2:20 means to you.
 - b. Read Eph. 2:6 - 7 and relate them to Gal.2:20. Tell how one builds upon the other.
15. If the law were still in effect, what would it do to grace?
16. What does Romans 5:21 mean to you?