

Text: Gal. 5:1-12

Title: "The defense of true justification"

Time: 7/7/2019 am

Place: NBBC

Introduction: Our national anthem remembers the Battle of Baltimore, which came under ferocious attack during the War of 1812, just after the fall of Washington. The heart of the conflict was the 25-hour bombardment British ships rained on Fort McHenry from the early hours of September 13 to the dawn of the 14th. It was then that Francis Scott Key saw that the flag still waved over the Fort, inspiring his now famous poem. Had the Union Jack gone up that pole, Americans would have been threatened with bondage to Britain again.

The fort of the true gospel of Jesus Christ is under constant attack from its enemy. Paul sees the threat to the Galatian local churches in these terms. He encourages believers to stand fast in the face of these attacks (v. 1).

The banner of a false gospel has gone up the pole of many a local church. Very literally, some of these banners bear the colors of the rainbow. One sign I saw above a church's rainbow flag said, "God is still speaking today." What they meant by that is that they had created a god who had changed the true God's gospel. The true gospel that is good news for sinners must be defended from attacks in our day.

Paul's defense of true justification focuses on two themes. First, Paul defends true justification by exalting Christ over religious works and rituals, and then second, he defends true justification by exposing falsehoods, not tolerating them.

## I. Christ saves, religious works do not (vv. 1-6).

Illustration: The last battle of the Revolutionary War was the surrender of Cornwallis at Yorktown in 1781. The War of Independence officially came to an end at the Treaty of Paris in 1783. On the heels of that treaty, the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars continued the tension between France and Great Britain, and it was the latter's desire to keep us from trading with France that caused the War of 1812. So it did not take long for our new birth of freedom to come under existential threat – only 29 years.

Application: You may remember that Galatians is likely the first New Testament book Paul wrote. He is writing to some churches that were likely only a few years old. Already, these churches are facing the existential threat of a false gospel, one that seeks to return these new believers back to a religion of salvation by works, specifically circumcision.

Paul has just explained how an episode in the biblical history of Israel illustrated the truth that the true gospel is liberating. We are not slaves that are saved because of our works, but free-born sons who are saved because of the gracious promise of our heavenly Father. In our passage, Paul gives us three reasons we should stand fast in the true gospel, that salvation is by Christ, not works.

### 1. Salvation by Christ, not works, is liberating (v. 1).

Illustration: In his book, *Slavery and Forced Migration in the Antebellum South*, Damian Pargas tells of a Kentucky slave named Andrew Jackson, who at times had to pull a plow like an ox. The story was about how he complained that he had to be yoked up with a female yoke-fellow while doing

so, so ladies were not exempt from this kind of treatment from their masters either.

Application: That is the picture Paul paints of what it is like to be seeking salvation through works religion. The word *entangled* just means *loaded up*, so the idea is that this yoke is a heavy yoke, and the work is never done. Slaves like Kentucky's Andrew Jackson had no recreational free time. Their lives were under the yoke of bondage. Salvation by religious works is the same kind of thing.

The true gospel proclaims that Jesus Christ did all the work that needed to be done. The demands of the law have been met by Him. This means that true religion is all of grace. It is the work of freemen who have the gift of salvation, not of slaves trying to earn salvation through their own merit. We serve the Lord because we want to, not because we have to in order to earn our salvation. This is liberating.

2. Salvation by Christ, not works, is justifying (vv. 2-5).

Application: *Justification* is that word that tells us that our legal problem is gone in Christ. Paul describes the sinner's legal problem - he is in debt to obey the whole law (v. 3).

How can this be done? It cannot without a Savior's profit and effect, which are summed up by the reality of grace (vv. 2, 4). Salvation is by grace because it is a free gift that we receive by faith.

Saving faith is described in verse 5: it is empowered by God's Spirit; it is waiting for a hope (biblical hope is a guaranteed thing); and it makes someone righteous - it justifies. Do you have this saving faith in the Savior?

### 3. Salvation by Christ, not works, is fruitful (v. 6).

Illustration: I did two kinds of work this past week. As you know, I am bi-vocational and so some of that work has involved making sure a plastic bottle is billed with the correct price for a plastic bottle company. Other of those works involved driving thousands of miles to attend a couple of weddings. What was the difference between those two categories of work I did last week? The difference is love.

Application: Paul teaches here that salvation by Christ is fruitful with a certain kind of work. It is not the work we have to do to stay employed or feed ourselves. It is not the work we have to do to earn something like salvation.

It is the work we do because of love. Because we no longer have to work in our own interest, we now have the joyous opportunity of working in the interest of others. How much of the work you did last week could be described as your faith in Christ working by love? In truth, even pricing plastic bottles can be that if it is done in the right way and for the right reasons.

Transition: So the true gospel of free grace by saving faith in Christ is under attack, and Paul encourages us to stand firm by remembering our freedom, our justification, and our opportunity for fruitfulness as those saved by Christ and not our religious works. Now Paul finishes his defense by returning fire on the enemy.

## II. Truth saves, lies do not (vv. 7-12).

Illustration: In our hymnals (#779) we have what is known as the official arrangement of our national anthem, which has 3 verses of Key's poem and was published in 1917. What is missing from this official version is a verse that is a

bit rougher on the enemy our country faced at that time. It goes like this:

“And where is that band who so vauntingly swore,  
That the havoc of war and the battle’s confusion  
A home and a Country should leave us no more?  
Their blood has wash’d out their foul footstep’s pollution.  
No refuge could save the hireling and slave  
From the terror of flight or the gloom of the grave,  
And the star-spangled banner in triumph doth wave  
O’er the land of the free and the home of the brave.”

Application: Key and other early Americans understood the horrors of war and what it takes to defeat an enemy the way few of us today do.

In a similar way, Paul understood the horror of false gospels in a way few of us Christians today do. He asks them, “Who hindered you from obeying the truth?” (v. 7). Truth saves; lies do not. “Where did that hindrance come from? (v. 8). It did not come from the one who called you (see 1:6, 15). “How much of a lie can hinder?” (v. 9). Just a little can do the trick. “What must we do about this?” (vv. 10-12). It may mean persecution, but we must not tolerate lies when it comes to the gospel. They must be cut off from our local church gospel ministry. Why? Truth saves; lies do not.

Conclusion: As Americans we are blessed with a political freedom that is not free. We need to be patriots who are willing to defend and protect those freedoms.

As Christians we share a freedom with the Galatian believers of first century Asia Minor, which is far more important. We can get pretty worked up about defending the Bill of Rights, but what about our defense of true justification? Are we willing to protect our hearts from the influence of false

gospels that ultimately hinder the spiritual well-being of our ministry? As Americans we uphold religious freedom; but as Christian believers, we must also stand fast in the liberty of true justification.

Yesterday I came to the church thinking that it was my family's turn to clean, but I had months mixed up and so came to the happy discover that the Hendersons had already cleaned the church.

I mention that because when I came to the back door of the church, I found two pamphlets folded up and stuck between the back doors. They were anonymous messages. (It is interesting how difficult it is today to have a person to person conversation about things. So many of our messages to one another today are anonymous ones. Social media has done much to depersonalize our interactions. We have become people without names.)

One pamphlet advocated the mistaken idea of soul-sleep. That idea teaches that there is no conscious existence after physical death until the resurrection. Many passages of Scripture militate against this error. Paul desired to depart and to be with Christ, and he taught that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. Jesus told the thief on the cross that he would be with Him that day in Paradise, and so he was.

The other pamphlet advocated sabbath-keeping, a topic we have been studying in Sunday School together. That pamphlet concluded this way, "Please keep God's seventh-day sabbath NOW, so that you can live with Him and worship Him in the New Earth forever and forever!"

Well, in Paul's day the advocates of a false gospel were saying "Be circumcised so that you can live forever and ever." Today it is sabbath-keeping and other religious rituals.

How must we respond? Very simply – Christ saves, religious works do not; and truth saves, lies do not. Though persecution may result, we must not tolerate false gospels of works salvation at New Boston Baptist Church.

“A man came – I think it was actually in Philadelphia – on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, ‘Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.’ That is the distinction – the sermon, and the ‘lightning and the thunder.’ To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters.”

– David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

*Preachers and Preaching*