

BOOK OF GALATIANS

"The Cry of Luther"

Scripture Reading: GALATIANS 2:15-21

-) **SLIDES 1-6.** Bible Jeopardy!
-) **SLIDES 7-9.** Read today's Scripture text.
-) **SLIDE 10.** We continue in our expository study of the Book of GALATIANS. This is message #15. I have titled today's message "*The Cry of Luther.*"
-) **SLIDE 11.** Last week I said I wanted to look at this text in relation to 1) how critical it was at that time (we covered that last week), 2) how critical it was in 1517 the start of the Protestant Reformation, 3) how critical it is today. Today we will spend time with #2.
-) It's important that Christians know how Christianity got to where it is today. We cannot and should not erase history. Instead, we learn from it. So, today's message will be more historical than theological. Although the theology contained in this message is the most important doctrine contained in the Bible.
-) **SLIDE 12.** The controversy in GALATIANS 2:15-21 is the issue over salvation by works. The apostle Paul has made it very clear to Peter, to the Galatians, and to us that a person is not and cannot be saved by earning it, by working towards it, or by contributing to it in any way. I spoke about that at length last week.
-) **SLIDE 13.** As we move on in time from the first century and beyond, the early church knew that the gospel clearly states that we are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. Works were never part of the salvation equation. And for centuries this gospel was kept pure and correct.

-) But mankind always has to elevate himself in some way. Over those dark centuries, that period of time we call the middle ages, the gospel became a mixture of faith in the work of Jesus Christ, plus what man must contribute. It became the Galatian controversy all over again.
-) To have salvation, I must do this, and I must not do that. And if I perform these tasks well enough, just perhaps I will tip the scales in the “good” direction, God will be pleased with me and I will earn His forgiveness. That is what the established religion of the time (Roman Catholicism) became and taught.
-) All that began to change in 1517 with a man named Martin Luther and the birth of the Protestant Reformation.
-) **SLIDE 14.** Martin Luther was born on November 10, 1483 and died on February 18, 1546, at the age of 62. He was a professor of theology, a composer, a Catholic priest, and a Catholic monk.
-) **SLIDE 15.** Martin Luther wanted to find the truth to the answer to this question: “*What must I do to be right with God?*” Until he could find that answer, he knew he would never truly be free, and he would forever be in bondage to his own sinful failures.
-) But you see what is in this question. What must I do? Works.
-) Just before and immediately after entering the Augustinian monastery, Martin Luther was a confused monk. He was a tormented failure. He lived in constant spiritual pain. He was depressed. He was so depressed, so overwrought with guilt, that he lived with constant anxiety and fear.
-) While in the monastery he found the road to salvation was very hard. Luther was taught, like all monks, that salvation is by grace, but you have to earn that grace. In other words, you have to reach a certain point of worthiness. You have to accumulate a certain amount of merit, and if you are worthy enough, God will give you grace.

-) So, in order to become worthy, Luther went to the very extremes. He gave himself over to every conceivable and inconceivable severe discipline. He renounced all self-will. He was told that if his food was meager that was a way to the worthiness that God desired; and so, with the rest of the monks they ate basically a meager bread and water kind of diet.
-) **SLIDE 16.** He walked 800 miles to Rome to ascend the Scala Sancta, the holy steps (28 marble steps). Sinners could gain merit if they crawled up those steps and kneeled at every step, bowed down, kissed the step, and progressed all the way to the top.
-) Martin Luther climbed the steps on his knees in 1510. As he did so, he repeated the Lord's Prayer on each step. It was said, by doing this work one could "*redeem a soul from purgatory.*" But when Luther arrived at the top, he could not suppress his doubt and said, "*Who knows whether this is true?*"
-) **SLIDE 17.** In his effort to earn his salvation, Martin Luther said this: "*I tortured myself with praying, fasting, keeping vigils, and freezing. The cold was enough to kill me. I inflicted such pain as I would never inflict again.*"
-) **SLIDE 18.** Luther would open his Bible and read about a man named Job who asked this question in JOB 9:2: "*But how can a person be in the right with God?*" That was the pleading cry of the psalmists, and the prophets, and Job, and Martin Luther.
-) How could Luther escape guilt? How could Luther escape death? How could Luther escape eternal punishment? How could Luther receive eternal life and heaven? How could Luther be right with God? Luther could never find those answers in the religious system he was a part of.
-) Let me sum up what was going on in the life of Martin Luther at this time.

-) Martin Luther, this Augustinian monk, was doing everything his religion (Catholicism) was telling him to do (works), and he could not find God, or in any way feel like he was right with God. His efforts to gain merit were only acts of total frustration.
-) Since Martin Luther was a theologian, he was also a teacher. One day he was tasked to do an expository study of the Book of ROMANS. That's when Luther had his "*tower experience*."
-) It was in the preparation of this study that the convicting power of the Holy Spirit fell upon him.
-) We do not know exactly what chapter and verse he may have been reading when the light came on. But Luther knew that it was the Law that he was constantly breaking. And he knew there was nothing in any of his good works that brought forgiveness of those transgressions.
-) So, where does this hopeless and helpless feeling lead a person? To Christ. Christ can do what every human being is unable to do. And that is to forgive us and make us right with God. And we accept, by faith, His work on the cross.
-) **SLIDE 19**. He also found freedom in GALATIANS 2:16.
-) The word justify means to be made right. Wasn't that the question Luther had been asking? "*What must I do to be right with God?*" And what is the answer from the Word of God? We may be justified by faith in Christ. By faith in Christ. By faith alone in Christ. Not by works. Not by any works! By faith alone in Christ. The simplicity of the gospel.
-) When you start mixing faith in Christ with your good works to achieve salvation, you have a false gospel. And a false gospel cannot and will not save anyone.
-) Luther realized that the path of salvation he was taught by his religion was a false gospel and a false path. Martin Luther read the truth from the Word of God and his soul was set free.

-) In the 1500s, a Catholic priest and monk named Martin Luther, who was following his religion to the letter, a man who so desperately wanted to tip the scales in the “good” direction with all his works and merits and pilgrimages and fasts and self-denials so God would be pleased with him, a man who just wanted to be right with God, found the truth right here in the Word of God, and that truth set him free.
-) His story is my story. And maybe his story is your story too. I know that I am now right with God because I have been saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone and not by anything I can contribute. I have been set free!
-) What about you? If you believe for one second that there is something you must do to contribute to your salvation, then you are believing a false gospel and the Bible says such people are anathema. My friends, please don’t go there.
-) I want you to have the peace and joy that I have. A peace and joy that can be found only in believing the true gospel message—the one that says Jesus Christ did it all—and all you have to do is trust Him and Him alone for your salvation.
-) **SLIDE 20.** “*What must I do to be right with God?*” That was the cry of Martin Luther. He found that truth. Because of his searching and conviction, many, many others after him have found that truth too. And one of those people is me. And I pray that every soul in this sanctuary has found that same truth too.
-) The Galatian controversy. Salvation requires works. It’s back and it’s alive and well in 1517. Next week we will be looking at the specific Biblical issues surrounding Martin Luther and the Protestant Reformation in 1517 and the Catholic Church’s response to these protesters.
-) The truth isn’t always easy, but it does matter. And it will set you free!

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