

BOOK OF GALATIANS

“*Alone*”

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 #16. I have titled today’s message “*Alone*.”
-) The controversy we see in our Scripture text today concerns the works that are necessary to contribute to one’s salvation. Peter and the Jews from Jerusalem demanded circumcision for salvation. But Paul makes it clear. You cannot contribute, in any way, to the work Christ has already done.
-) Last week I introduced you to Martin Luther, a Catholic priest and monk who struggled with the salvation-by-works gospel that was being taught by his church (which is and always has been a false gospel). He found the true gospel while reading the Books of ROMANS, GALATIANS, and EPHESIANS. Luther had been set free from his bondage of sin.
-) Let’s move forward to the year 1517. Martin Luther, a Catholic monk and priest, never had any intentions of starting a new religion. He only wanted to reform the existing one. He only wanted to bring reform to the Catholic faith and to Catholic teaching which had strayed from Biblical truth.
-) **SLIDE 11**. On October 31st, 1517, Martin Luther posted his 95 Theses on the door at Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany. This thesis consisted of 95 issues taught by the Catholic Church that were contradictory to the Scriptures.

-) At the top of this list was the issue of indulgences—a process by which a person could buy time off in purgatory and thus have quicker access to heaven. Did you know that indulgences are still alive and well in the Catholic Church today? One way for a Catholic to gain indulgences is by following Pope Frances on Twitter.
-) But the more important Biblical issue was that of salvation. A salvation which is not earned or gained by contributing works. Luther concluded that salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, and not by any contributing works. Luther also saw the OT practice of the “*Tradition of the Elders*” sadly repeating itself in the traditions of the Catholic Church.
-) So to summarize why Luther wrote his 95 Thesis was this: Luther concluded that the Bible alone contained everything we need for salvation and holy living and it was all to the glory of God and not to the glory of man.
-) As a result of this Protestant Reformation, we have been given five sola statements. Sola Gratia, Sola Fide, Sola Christus, Soli Deo Gloria and Sola Scriptura. Here’s a little Latin lesson.
-) **SLIDE 12.** Sola means alone. Sola Gratia – by grace alone. Sola Fide – through faith alone. Sola Christus – in Christ alone. Sola Deo Gloria – glory to God alone. Sola Scriptura – by the Scriptures alone. So, let’s put those together.
-) We are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone to the glory of God alone and how do we know this? Sola Scriptura – the Scriptures alone give us all we need for salvation and not some man-made set of rules and traditions.
-) Within a few weeks, Martin Luther’s theses had spread throughout Germany becoming widely known. Between 1519-1520, Martin Luther continued his crusading attack on the Church, developing his thoughts and printing pamphlets on what constituted “*true Christianity.*”

-) The significance of these written challenges caused the church to eventually respond. On June 15, 1520, almost three years later, Pope Leo X issued a formal rebuttal to Luther's Ninety-Five Theses.
-) The pope and the established Catholic Church had some real issues with Luther's "*alone*" theology that he was propagating. The church, at that time, had three major objections to Luther's "*sola*" statements.
-) I want to cover those three objections this morning. And they overlap to some degree. Keep in mind, the Catholic Church was convinced that a person must contribute works to their faith in Christ to attain salvation. That was their theology then, and it remains their theology today (next week).
-) **SLIDE 13.** A salvation by faith alone means there is a strong possibility of **ANTINOMIANISM**. What is antinomianism?
-) **SLIDE 14.** We talked about this several weeks ago. Antinomianism comes from two Greek words, "*anti*" meaning against and "*nomos*" meaning law. Antinomianism means "*against the law.*" Antinomianism is the belief that there are no moral laws God expects Christians to obey.
-) The Catholic Church said that if a person is saved by grace alone through faith alone, and there are no works in the contribution of that salvation, then that person could lead a rampant lifestyle of sin. Good point.
-) **SLIDE 15.** Paul addresses antinomianism in ROMANS 3:7-8. Read. Explain. You cannot continue in habitual sin believing it is OK to do so all the while JUSTIFYING your sinful actions because you say you have liberty in Christ. There must be genuine remorse and confession over our sin.
-) Antinomianism still occurs today. And it was a legitimate argument proposed by the Catholic Church. And now we know that Paul addressed this issue in ROMANS 3.

-) But the issue of antinomianism hinged on their second issue about the “*solas*” proposed by Luther.
-) **SLIDE 16.** JAMES 2:24 clearly teaches that a person is justified by **WORKS** along with faith. Anytime there is a Biblical issue with differing sides, there must be what is called a “*proof text*” for your side of the argument. What was their proof text?
-) **SLIDE 17.** The Catholic Church had and still has JAMES 2:21-24 and the example of Abraham. Read. And their argument was that works contribute to one’s salvation.
-) But what are the first 3 rules of proper Scripture interpretation? Context. Context. Context. And there’s a fourth. Scripture interprets Scripture. Let’s not take one verse and take it out of context. We must look at the entire context of what James is telling us and that is found in JAMES 2:14-26.
-) So, what is JAMES 2:14-26 telling us? These verses are telling us about saving faith. Explain saving faith/mustard-seed faith.
-) Does a person truly have the kind of faith that saves them? Is a person genuinely converted? What James is telling us in v14-26 is if they are, they will exhibit fruit of that conversion.
-) **SLIDE 18.** Just as Abraham did when he was prepared to sacrifice Isaac on the mountain. Explain.
-) The parable of the sower in MATT 13. Do you have saving faith or not? A test of our faith will show if we do or not.
-) **SLIDE 19.** The Catholic will say that works **CONTRIBUTE** to one’s salvation. The Protestant will say that works is the **PROOF** of one’s salvation. Luther would always say that we are saved by faith alone, but never by a faith that is alone.
-) The Catholic Church was arguing that without works, one could slip into antinomianism which is faith without works because now they can behave any way they want. But remember, in their eyes their works contributed to their salvation.

-) The Protestant will agree that antinomianism is wrong. You cannot say you're saved and behave anyway you want. But for one truly saved, their works proves their faith, it is not a condition to earn it. The antinomian shows no proof of their professed faith.
-) I cannot stress the importance of this difference. It is the difference between a false gospel and a true gospel. It is the difference of one being saved or one not being saved.
-) And if I'm wrong about any of this, then the Protestant religious system is wrong. John MacArthur, RC Sproul, David Jeremiah, Charles Stanley, Jack Graham, and many other preachers today are wrong. Martin Luther was wrong.
-) And worst of all, the apostle Paul was wrong in what he writes in this Book of GALATIANS. And I'm willing to take that risk that Paul is right.
-) **SLIDE 20.** The third and final issue the Catholic Church had with Luther's "*sola*" statements. God would never **IMPUTE** the righteousness of Christ to a person unless they earned that grace through their works.
-) **SLIDE 21.** What does that mean to impute? To impute means to credit or ascribe (something) to a person or a cause. In the Biblical sense our sins have been imputed to Christ (He bore our sins on the cross) and in return Christ's righteousness has been imputed to us.
-) **SLIDE 22.** There are many Scripture verses that attest to this. But one verse explains it rather well. Explain.
-) The Catholic Church stood firm in their stand that God would never impute the righteousness of Christ to a person unless they earned that grace through their works. God would never do such a thing based solely on one's faith and faith alone in Christ.

-) By that time, the criticisms of Martin Luther had already been widely distributed and found a receptive audience. With the help of the newly invented printing presses, the Reformation movement gained in strength and popularity.
-) From that time forward, the Catholic Church would never maintain the same unchallenged authority in Europe again. Luther's challenge to the authority of the church led to new religious thinking and a desire to break away from the old established church, creating a Christianity which returned to the purity of the Bible and diminishing the role of the Pope and priests.
-) **SLIDE 23.** In 1520, Martin Luther was excommunicated for refusing to recant 41 sentences from his writings. He said this: *"Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Scriptures or by clear reason (for I do not trust either in the pope or in councils alone, since it is well known that they have often erred and contradicted themselves), I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted, and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and will not recant anything since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience. May God help me." Amen.*
-) **SLIDE 24.** The "Sola" statements. The foundation of reformed theology.
-) GALATIANS 2:15-21 is Paul rebuking Peter for demanding to add circumcision as a requirement for salvation. In 1517 Martin Luther had to rebuke the Catholic Church for the same reason. Only this time it wasn't circumcision but other works of merit.
-) What about today? Next week we will look at the impact of the salvation-by-works gospel today and if that is still the doctrine of the Catholic Church or any church. And, as a former Catholic, I'll even throw in a personal testimony.