

Faith Walk! - Sermon Discussion

Date : 6 July 2025

Sermon Title : One in Christ

Speaker : Rev Eddie Ho

Text : Galatians 2

INTRODUCTION

Galatians is one of Paul's 13 letters in the New Testament, some written to individuals like Timothy and Titus and others to churches in cities like Corinth (1 and 2 Corinthians) or Ephesus (Ephesians). Unlike letters to these churches, Galatians addresses the churches in the entire region of Galatia – the main region Paul went to on his first missionary journey from his home church in Antioch. He was sent to reach out to both Jews and Gentiles there. Paul's modus operandi was to start preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ from the synagogues there. His message was so earth-shattering that news of it spread across the cities, and many pagans also came to listen to the Good News he proclaimed in the synagogue and sometimes in the marketplaces, resulting in them putting their faith in Jesus. Some however, did not, and in fact opposed it quite violently.

In the 2 years of his mission to the region of Galatia, many came to faith in Christ – both Jews and pagans. These former pagans, called Gentile Christians, started to join the believing Jews to form some kind of 'life' groups which met outside the synagogues due to unbelieving Jews that opposed Paul who would not allow Gentiles to be in synagogues. (Acts 13 and 14) In these groups or churches that Paul planted in Galatia, Jewish and Gentile Christians were equal. They mingled together, did life together and had communion together. They had no problem eating together at the same table regardless of their race, social standing, occupation and gender.

However, someone from Jerusalem came to visit to see how these churches were doing. When they saw Jews and Gentiles mingling and eating together at the same table, they opposed it saying it was against the law. This greatly upset Paul, resulting in him writing this angry letter to the Galatians using some explicit language as seen in Galatians 2:4, where he calls this person or persons "false brothers". Therefore, we need to read the focus for today – Gal 2:16, in light of Paul's holy anger; anger with tears welling up in his eyes because things did not go the way God has designed it to be.

Why did Jews from Jerusalem come to tell the Galatians that it was not right for Jewish and Gentile Christians to eat together at the same table?

Why was this a rule of the day? While there is no commandment in the Old Testament that specifically forbids Jews from mingling or eating with Gentiles, the Hebrew Bible or Old Testament did say the following:

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- Jews are not to worship idols or other gods
- Jews are to worship only the One true God
- Jews are forbidden to intermarry with people who worship other gods
- Their males are to be circumcised
- Jews are to keep to a kosher diet

Since their return from exile to Babylon till Paul's time, in that 500 years, some rabbis interpreted these prohibitions as literally not to socialize or associate themselves with the pagans. Therefore, they set up rules regulating their social interactions saying it was unlawful for Jews to eat with pagans.

Can a Gentile become a Jew?

A Gentile could mingle with and even marry a Jew if the Gentile becomes a Jew. This could happen if a Gentile is willing to be circumcised, change his lifestyle by eating only kosher food, following the religious laws and observing all the worship festivals of the Jews. It is not by DNA that one becomes a Jew, it is by following a certain set of rules in the worship of the One true God that makes one a Jew – by who they worship, and how they worship. In the Bible, being a Jew is not a racial thing but a religious thing. The Almighty God does not see us according to our skin colour but sees something else when He looks at us. This letter to the Galatians tells us what God sees when He looks at us.

Paul says that a Gentile Christian need not be circumcised to be identified as God's people. Jews and Gentiles can eat together because of Jesus Christ as explained in the following verse:

Galatians 2:16 (ESV) – *“We know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.”*

Dissecting this verse,

1. We know that a person is not justified...

What does being ‘justified’ mean? It means having a good reason or being proved to be right. The original word is “dikaioo” (δικαίω) in greek – which means; to render/show/regard as righteous or innocent. This can happen despite one breaking the law, when a good reason given enables one to be declared innocent, or of “being right”, with no penalty being imposed. But what is one justified by?

2. ...by works of the law ...

What does “works of the law” mean? It is by just doing what the law requires in the Old Testament; to be circumcised, eat only kosher food and following the Jewish worship of God. For Paul, both Jews and Gentiles are not justified by the works of the law but by the works of the Lord Jesus. This is because merely following the letter of the law is not the

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way one can be justified; the letter of the law kills, but the Spirit of the law gives life (2 Corinthians 3:5-6), for all have sinned, and there is a penalty. Therefore, we know that a person cannot be declared innocent by the law, because no man can follow the law 100%.

3. ... but through faith in Jesus Christ

By Jesus' death, He paid the price of the penalty for us – our sins are forgiven and we no longer have to pay the penalty of our sin; therefore, we are justified through our faith in Jesus.

This is the Gospel message of Jesus Christ that Paul has been preaching in his missions to the Galatians – Jesus has already fulfilled the requirement of the law, Gentile Christians no longer need to be circumcised or follow the kosher diet and all the other requirements. Gentile and Jewish Christians can be together, all Christians are equal, there is no division because the blood of Christ covers all.

How are we justified?

Through faith in Jesus Christ by:

- Believing Jesus is the Son of God
- Trusting what He tells us
- Following Him
- Obeying Him

When we believe in Jesus and follow Him, it is like putting on a jacket, being clothed with Christ (Galatians 3:27) Much like how a person without the proper attire would not be allowed into a posh restaurant as he is underdressed, but can be allowed entry when someone offers to lend him a jacket, helping him to fulfill the required dress code. The jacket covers his shabbiness and now he looks polished and elegant. Similarly, when we put Christ on, in Biblical language, we put on His righteousness and our sin is covered. What God sees when He looks at us is not our iniquities, our sins, offenses or shortcomings; He sees Jesus.

It does not mean we continue to sin because the condition to put on Christ is to repent of our sin and depend on Him to change us and work on our shortcomings. Another Biblical language to describe this is we become the body of Christ – Jesus is the Head and we are the Body. And when God looks at us, He sees the face of Jesus and we the Body of Christ. And this is what is meant by 'in Christ' in the New Testament. God still sees us individually but He also sees the imputed righteousness of Christ Jesus which is credited to those who put their faith in Christ. Our identity is in Christ as long as we keep and build our relationship with Jesus, believing in Him, obeying Him, trusting him, following Him, God sees us as the Body of Christ and thus it is very important for us to be in Christ, and to be together as a church as the Body of Christ, through faith in Christ. This is why Jews and Gentiles can eat together with no division.

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Paul was also angry with Peter/Cephas (vv.11-13)

Paul called out Peter (Cephas) for his hypocrisy – this was holy anger that Paul had, because Peter segregating from the Gentiles was not aligned with God’s desire for all mankind to be saved (Jews and Gentiles). (2 Tim 2:4) God appointed Abraham not just to be the father of a race genetically. Abraham is called the father of the faithful (Gal 3, Romans) starting from Israel leading to Jesus and through Jesus the redemption of all mankind, Jews and Gentiles.

Paul’s message to the Galatians is that we are not defined by our race, social status, sex/gender, occupation, or anything other than who we place our faith in and worship. We are one in Christ. (Gal 3:28) God shows no impartiality and when He sees us, He sees Jesus! Let us put our faith in Jesus Christ, because He has paid the penalty of sin on our behalf. We were all once pagans, trying to justify ourselves and our hidden little sins. In the words of Micah 6:8 – “He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.”

CONCLUSION

Regardless of the severity of our sin or struggles, when God looks at us, He sees Jesus if we cling on to Jesus. Let us put on Christ as a church to be the Body of Christ – to model Christ to our young, represent Him to the hurting and shine as the Body of Christ to others; transforming lives and changing the world.

A. Review Sermon Application

Purpose: Reflect on how you have been embodying God’s truth.

- 1a. How successful have you been in fulfilling what you/your group had committed to do for the last FaithWalk!?
- 1b. What were some challenges you faced and what would you like to celebrate?
- 2a. Do you see segregation amongst believers in God’s church today? Share.
- 2b. (i) Answer truthfully – What have you observed as some things that cause segregation in our church (FMC)?
(ii) How different are you from those “false brothers” that Paul was upset with in Galatia if you are not willing to mingle with all believers including those who are very different from you?

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B. Relate Sermon Content

Purpose: Relate with the Truth and Resolve for Transformation.

3. We are justified through faith in Jesus Christ by believing Jesus is the Son of God, trusting what He tells us, following Him and obeying Him.
 - a.
 - (i) Does knowing the above make you feel confident or concerned about your being justified?
 - (ii) Share if you are concerned and seek your group members' help on how you can become confident that you are justified through faith in Jesus Christ.
 - b. Before hearing this sermon, what are some '*works of the law*' that you may have been striving to fulfill in your life, thinking that they were necessary for you to gain justification?

4. Appoint someone to read Galatians 2:16 slowly.

If you truly believe in the Gospel message of Jesus Christ that Paul has been preaching in his missions to the Galatians that, "*we are justified through faith in Jesus Christ. Jesus has already fulfilled the requirement of the law, so all Christians are equal, and there is no division because the blood of Christ covers all*", what is one thing you will do differently from now on:

 - a. In your family?
 - b. In your Life Group?
 - c. In our church?
 - d. In the community?

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C. Testimonies, Prayers and Action

Purpose: Give glory to God, seek Him and embody His Word.

5. Share with the group about a time when despite your shortcomings, but because you were justified in Christ, when you repented and depended on Jesus to change you, He worked on your shortcomings to transform you.

OR

Give thanks to Jesus that when we put Christ on, we put on His righteousness and our sin is covered. What God sees when He looks at us is not our iniquities, our sins, offenses or shortcomings but He sees Jesus.

6. Seek the Spirit's revelation on how our church can overcome the segregation mentioned in Question 2b(i) above and commit to work on overcoming it as a Life Group. Pray also for the week ahead – that we may individually seek to be in Christ reflecting Him to all who look at us, and our church may seek to be One in Christ, to be the Body of Christ and model Christ to our young, represent Him to the hurting and shine as the Body of Christ to others; transforming lives and changing the world.

Suggested activity:

As a Life Group, make plans to connect and interact with another Life Group from our church which is different from yours (e.g. in age, social status, education level, gender etc) to foster unity, understanding and love between groups.

Optional items:

Suggested worship songs:

1. Praise – Elevation
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=raFnjGVkHe8&list=RDraFnjGVkHe8&start_radio=1
2. Unity Hymn - Mike Donehey
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eLRTHgGOShQ&list=RDeLRTHgGOShQ&start_radio=1
3. Resting Place - Awaken Generation
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q8yqMn3gRgo&list=RDQ8yqMn3gRgo&start_radio=1

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