

WCCC 2015 Dana Congdon 1

Serving God's Purpose in the Galatians

Praise the Lord that we can gather together for these days. And I trust that all who gather here desire to be servants serving the purpose of God in this generation. We'd like to begin this evening with some considerations from the book of Galatians.

Galatians 1: 6 – 17,

I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!

For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ. For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ. For you have heard of my former manner of life in Judaism, how I used to persecute the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it; and I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my countrymen, being more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions. But when God, who had set me apart even from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, was pleased to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went away to Arabia, and returned once more to Damascus.

2: 19 – 20,

For through the Law I died to the Law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me. I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly.

4: 19 – 20,

My children, with whom I am again in labor until Christ is formed in you – but I could wish to be present with you now and to change my tone, for I am perplexed about you.

Acts 13: 36a,

For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep.

Serving the purpose of God in our generation is the desire of our hearts. And the first necessity of any servant of God is that he watches and prays. God's purpose is coming near to the end and fulfillment. So may all of us who are attending this week be watching and praying.

Let us pray.

Our father, we thank You so much that this world is not just chaos but it has a purpose to it too.

According to Your purpose, this creation has a purpose in glory. Would You open the heavens as we gather together these days and fill our hearts with the purpose in Christ. Speak Lord, Your servants are listening. In Jesus' precious name, we pray. Amen.

David served the purpose of God in his generation

We have this statement that David served the purpose of God in his generation. We know there were kings before and after him but not all served God's purpose. But we know David was special as a servant of Jehovah. Even when he was still a teenager, when Samuel anointed him to be king, he already knew in his heart that Jehovah was the God who ruled over his people, Israel. Since he knew God was Jehovah,

he defeated Goliath by faith. Now we remember that as soon as he became king, he knew that God's chosen city was Jerusalem. And as soon as the city was taken for God, David searched for the ark because he knew that God's presence needed to be in God's city. And then when the ark came into the city, David knew God wanted a house. So he was not just a king; he was serving God's heart the whole time. He knew what God was after.

Today there is need for such servants – those who understand the time we live in and who serve His purpose. But many are serving without this knowledge. They are going places that they have not been sent. Or they are like a courier traveling but without a message. And so it is necessary for us to understand what God is doing these days. Otherwise we may be serving the Lord in some smaller capacity but not according to His purpose.

This time various brothers will be sharing from different epistles – from the Epistles of Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians. In all of these wonderful epistles, we see the purpose of God laid out before us in Christ Jesus. I have been asked to share according to this burden from the Book of Galatians.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ

Here we see Paul fighting in defense of the gospel of Jesus Christ. And in the short letter, the word 'gospel' is used fourteen times. And you can tell from the opening verses that we read how Paul was fighting for this gospel. We know Paul in his first journey went through the church of Galatia and laid the foundation of Jesus Christ in the church. But now as he was serving elsewhere, he heard reports of trouble in the church of Galatia. In chapter 1: 6, he said *'I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel'*. In 3: 1 he called them foolish; *'You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified?'* And in 4:20, we read that Paul said, *'I am perplexed about you'*.

Now I would like to share two things in my two different times of sharing. These are foundational matters that will enable us to serve the Lord. Tonight I want to share on the revelation of Christ living in

me. If one does not understand what Paul is talking about in the basic gospel that Christ lives in me, one cannot serve God. And then the next time I share, I want to share on the ministry of travail as Christ is formed among God's children.

The important three points concerning Gospel

So for tonight, let us begin to look into why Paul was so upset. As you read the Book of Galatians, you see that the gospel as Paul declared it is wrapped around three points in a triangle. First he talked about grace; then he talked about faith and then he talked about the Holy Spirit.

Let us look at grace. Galatians 1:6, *'I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ for a different gospel'*. Now we know grace is a very popular word among Christians. I ask for a vote of how many of you would like to have more grace and many of you would raise your hands. Maybe 'Amazing Grace' is one of your favorite hymns. But the word grace is thrown around today and its meaning is in question. Why was Paul upset about that? It was because the very character of God is revealed through the grace in Christ Jesus. What is God like? Grace. That is the testimony. When Jesus Christ came to earth, He was full of grace and truth. Now if we define grace in a wrong way, people have a wrong impression of who God is. Because of these Judaists, grace was being twisted.

And then there is another part of this gospel: faith – the free gift of God. In 3:11 it says, *'Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for the righteous man shall live by faith'*. The gospel involves faith, the free gift of faith. We are not saved by works, but by faith we live. And then for Paul the evidence of our new life is the Holy Spirit within us. In 3:2, it says *'this is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?'* Now all the Galatian Christians had received the Holy Spirit. They were born again. They were being led by the Spirit. Many of them had received gifts of the Holy Spirit. And all of these are evidences that you have been born again and Christ is in your life. You do not need to work for the Holy Spirit; we receive the

Holy Spirit by faith. So Paul asked them why they were so foolish. God has given you this faith and the Holy Spirit, so why were you trying to serve out of your own flesh?

The Gospel was undermined

The Judaists had come along and undermined the gospel. Now these Judaists were Christians who believed in Jesus and were also Jews. They were telling the Galatian Christians they also needed to be circumcised even though they were Christians who believed in Christ and were saved. And they also needed to observe seasons and feasts according to the Jewish traditions. Now Paul was upset about that. It was undermining the gospel. Notice 4:21 says *'Tell me, you who want to be under law.'* Now the Judaists also wanted to bring the Gentiles under the law. But we remembered what Paul said in the Book of Romans. I am no longer under the law, I am under grace. Galatians 2:19 says, *'For through the Law I died to the Law, so that I might live to God'*. How can our Christian life flourish? Does our Christian life flourish under grace or under law? This is what is at issue here. Now Paul is so clear about this. And it is amazing today that so many Christians are under the law. We know there are some Christians who said you are not a Christian unless you are baptized in water. Or that you are not going to heaven unless you take the sacraments. My wife has an aunt who came to visit us one time. She told us she could not fly to see us until Monday. When we asked her why, she said she has not been to church for a while and she was afraid if she did not take the sacrament on Sunday that she might not go to heaven if she was in a plane crash. There are people who live under this kind of law. There are Christians who are legalist. I remember one of the deacons in the church that I was in kicked his sixteen year old son out of the house. I asked the deacon why he kicked his son out of the house. He said it was because he smoked. I said you kicked him out because he smoked? He said do you not know you cannot be a Christian if you smoke. Somehow he has gotten into his heart that was part of the gospel. Brother Pong and I recently went to Israel and there we heard some tragic stories. Thank God that there are some Christians who believe in Jesus as the Messiah. But many of these messianic groups are building walls around them. For one to be a Christian one has to wear the prayer shawl when he prays.

One must keep the feast. One must pray in Hebrew. And so we met some Americans who are learning Hebrew so they can be Christians. But anything that erodes the free grace of God in Christ Jesus prevents us from serving the purpose of God.

Then Paul also said 'let us talk about faith'. They received the Spirit by faith. They lived by faith. But now the Judaists came in and said, 'no it is not faith but works that you need'. And so it is no longer the righteous shall live by faith but the righteous shall live by work.

The third point of the triangle is the Holy Spirit. Thank God we received the Holy Spirit. He leads us into all truth. He gives us the power to sanctify our life. Once again the Judaists were taking away these resources of the Holy Spirit. They were encouraging the Christians to do outward work of righteousness by the strength of their own flesh.

Now do you see why Paul was so upset? The gospel was at stake. If the saints were not founded on the gospel like a rock, the wind would come and blow their foundation down. And it is a little deeper than that because the gospel is not some doctrine or some creed. The gospel is a person. As Paul talked about this, he talked about the grace of Christ and the gospel of Christ and the reason he was so upset. And this is also a problem among us even today.

The Gospel is Jesus Christ

What is the gospel that Paul received? Did he fall down under the light on the road to Damascus and hear some doctrine? No he met a person. It was not that he was just saved, he met the Savior. What he could not believe for the rest of his life was that when God shone down from heaven, He revealed Himself in Jesus Christ. Look how wonderfully Paul put it in 1: 15 – 16a; *'But when God, who had set me apart even from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, was pleased to reveal His Son in me'*.

How wonderful it is when God breaks into our life.

How many of you remember the three points in the triangle? They are grace, faith and the Holy Spirit.

Now forget all that. It is only doctrine if Christ is not seen in the center of those things. How do you see grace? I see it in Jesus Christ. How do you understand and connect with Him by faith? We see Him.

And how do we come into an experience of the Holy Spirit? It is through Jesus Christ. He is the one who came to baptize us into the Holy Spirit. So the gospel is Jesus Christ. And not just about Jesus Christ. Have you seen Jesus Christ revealed in you? That was how Paul described the moment that changed his life. The Son of God was revealed in me. And why is it so important to us who are servants, serving the purpose of God? It is because we have a choice of the source of our service. Paul saw service as Christ living through him. The Judaizers said you can serve by law, you can serve by flesh. But serving God's purpose involves Christ living in us. And all of us need a revelation of Christ living in us.

Christ living in us

As we go on to talk about Paul's defense of the gospel, he continued to explain about Christ living in us as His basis in serving God's purpose. Now we know as in other letters by Paul, that when Paul used the word gospel he means so much more than just how we got saved. Grace is not just saving grace. By His grace He brings us through salvation and into glory. This is grace in the gospel that entails the whole counsel of God. Now if we have had a revelation of Christ living in us, this then is the basis for serving the purpose of God in this generation.

But for the service to be practically worked out, a further revelation of Christ living in me must be seen. And what is that? It is Christ crucified living in me. Now this brings us to the most familiar verse in Galatians 2:20 where Paul shared his own testimony as to how much he wanted to serve God; how he tried and tried but he could not until he died to the law and then he could live for God. 'I am crucified with Christ'. This is the second part of the gospel.

The Gospel of the Cross

Thank God we do not have a cross-less gospel. If we just have a grace gospel, we just get saved and then we have to use our own resources. But because the gospel involves Christ crucified living in me, now I no longer live. Yet I do live as the Son of God lives in me. This is a revelation of Christ living in you. But now we must see that we have been crucified with Christ. He was trying to bring the Galatians back

to the basic foundation that they have been crucified with Christ. So here in chapter 2:20 he shared his heart regarding service and life.

And the second point is in 3:1. Paul said, 'You foolish Galatians'. Why were they foolish? They thought they could serve God by their own strength, by keeping circumcision and by keeping outward laws. Now who has stolen your heart from the freedom of the gospel of grace? But notice 3:1 *'You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified'*? Paul shared his own testimony that he had been crucified and now he was living on resurrection ground. Brothers and sisters, when I was with you, I painted this portrait before you. Not just that Christ has died on Calvary, was buried and raised again in three days, but that you and I in Him were crucified, buried and raised again in three days. Now Paul was implying that I have painted this picture before you time and time again.

When I was fifteen years old, I went to a gospel meeting. Now I did not get saved till I was 20 years old. But at fifteen years old, a friend of mine had asked me to go to her church. And this preacher of the gospel was drawing with chalk the whole time he was preaching; a wonderful chalk drawing of a beautiful garden. Have you ever seen something like this? And when the brother got through sharing the gospel, he turned on the back light. It was a special light that brought out the purple color and when he shown that light, the cross came right out of the picture. The only way to the gate of life is by the cross, the cross that came out as if magic from the page. I do not know whether you have seen such a gospel presentation.

Take up his cross and follow Me

Paul said when I was with you I painted that picture time and time again. The cross of Christ is the gospel for you in your personal life. Now we can speak the words 'I am crucified with Christ'. But for the servant of God, it is a real experience. How does it begin? It begins when the servant of God who loves the Lord hears the gospel said 'If any man will come after me, let him take up his cross and follow me; and whoever saves his life will lose it and whoever will lose his life for my sake will save it'. When

a newly saved Christian heard these words, he said, 'Lord I deny myself. I take up the cross and follow you'. Now of course they do this by their own strength. They think they have picked up the cross and walked. Because now they are Christians and they lose a few friends; they think now they are making sacrifices. But the cross becomes more and more difficult. 'If you love your family more than me, you cannot be my disciple. If you love money more than me, you cannot be my disciple'. And the more we hear our Lord commanding us to follow, the harder it is to deny ourselves. You know many people have a lot invested in their self-life, whether it is success or friends or family life. We want to hold on to those things. The more the Lord said 'come follow me and deny yourself', the more we sense self-preservation rising inside us.

This is why the Galatians could receive this teaching from the Judaizers. They wanted very much to be good Christians. But they realized they were sinners. Then some came along and said they could be better Christians if they would circumcise and observe these feasts. And they said 'now the Lord will be happy'. But you see rather than coming to the end of themselves and denying themselves, they were actually building up their own righteousness. We would rather do anything but die. And the more we make promises the more we fail. Frustration and defeat enter into our life.

Now someone is working behind the scene and is bringing us to the end of ourselves. And you know who it is? Maybe it is not who you think. It is the law. Now Paul said in Galatians that the law is the tutor that brings us to Christ. When we first came to Christ when we were saved, the law convicts us of our sins. But thank God, when we are saved, all our sins are forgiven. But Paul said, even though after I became a Christian, I found that there was a law working inside me. The law told me to do this or to do that. So for a Jew, it is so hard to die to the law. Do not do this, do not do that. Now you think the Gentiles are free. But Gentiles have a conscience that tells them not to do this, not to do that. The law is a good tutor. If you have been in the school of Christ, if you have studied the law, you come to the conclusion that there is nothing good in you.

Before we were Christians the problem is our sins. Now that we are Christians the problem is our sin. In English, the sin is always spelled as sIn, the 'I' always in the middle. The servant is frustrated because

the self-life is always in control. We cannot serve the purpose of God living out of our own life. God's grace brings us to the end of ourselves. Have you been done away with? Have you seen how strong your self really is?

Die with Christ

You see Paul in Romans 7 how he was troubled by how strong he was, trying to serve God with the 'I, I, I'. In Romans 7, there are twenty-seven times of the word 'I'. Look at Galatians 5:24; we want to live by what this verse says but we cannot. Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh together with the passion and the desire. As soon as we hear it, we decide to crucify ourselves. You try to crucify yourself but you just cannot do it. I heard a brother said one time, I thought I have been crucified with Christ but then I found out I only fainted. You cannot crucify yourself. This verse 5:24 belongs to someone who understand Galatians 2:20. We are servants trying to serve God, but if we are serving God by our own natural strength, in the end, we will do damage to God's testimony.

So how can the 'self' be ruled out so we can serve Christ? Let us listen to Paul's testimony. First there is the death side of the testimony. 'I have been crucified with Christ'. You know how definite that is.

Sometimes I counseled people with different problems. And on certain occasions I asked them a question. Are you crucified with Christ? And what do you think is the most popular answer? 'I am trying to be crucified with Christ'. As soon as you hear that you know they do not understand the gospel of the crucified Christ. 'I have been crucified with Christ'. You see what Paul is saying. In Romans 6:6a, it says '*Knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Christ*'. Now you read the word knowing. This 'knowing' is not in the mind. This 'knowing' is the revelation of the heart. This is something that we read and believe. It is something that we see. We see that we are crucified in union with Christ. As Paul said Christ was crucified for our sins. Christ was buried for three days. Then Christ was raised up again in the newness of life. And this is exactly what happened to us. By the grace of God we have been united with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection.

Now Paul said when you see the fact, you can begin to live by the fact. It is a revelation that changes your life. In Ephesians 4:22 – 24, there is that passage about putting off the old man and putting on the new man. Ephesians verse 4:22 said we put off the old man and 4:24 said we put on the new man. What does verse 23 said? *'And that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind'*. What does it mean by being renewed in the spirit of the mind? How is our mind renewed? We see it. I am dead. I am dead in Christ. I do not have to fight. I am done. I have been crucified with Christ. That is the dead side.

Live with Christ

Now we come to the resurrection side. You can put on the new self, which is created in the likeness of God. Are you ready with the good news? Ephesians verse 4:20 says *'Nevertheless I live; yet not I'*. So was Paul dead or alive? That is the mystery of the Christians. I cannot explain that to you but you can know it. *'Nevertheless I live'*. Of course Paul was living. *'Yet not I but Christ lives in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me'*. This is resurrection life. It is a new way forward. There is a way for servants who want to serve God in this generation. Our life opens up in the service of God. Now this is just the beginning. But you need that revelation in the beginning.

Live by the Holy Spirit

And there Paul went on to tell us many wonderful things. Now we realize we need to live by another law – the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. And the Spirit of God begins to sanctify and work in us. With the help of the Holy Spirit, we modify the deeds of the flesh. Paul said they who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh. Now the old man is dead. But the flesh still needs to be dealt with. The Lord tells you to do something and your flesh rebels. We are supposed to walk by the Holy Spirit and not fulfill the lust of the flesh. You know our flesh gives us a tough time. But thank God, Christ crucified dwells in us. You acknowledge Him and He will bring your flesh to death. The gospel does not say the servant has an easy life. A servant must deny himself. You know often the Lord will ask you to sacrifice

your life for the sake of somebody else's. You can have great progress and happiness in your own personal life. But the Lord will ask you to lay it down and to serve someone else. The servants of God have to go places that are not fun. They are asked to sacrifice a lot of things that are perfectly fine for most people. To be a servant of the Lord and serve God's purpose is to go the way of the cross. But the good news is if you ever walk with Christ and serve Him, you know of His abounding grace towards you. The world will give you many outward services if you live by their law. But the servants of God get treasure in heaven and great consolation on this earth walking with this gracious and wonderful Lord Jesus.

Boast the Cross of Jesus Christ only

At the end of the epistle after Paul fought with the Galatians for the gospel, he said in verse 6:14 – 15: *'But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For neither is circumcision anything nor uncircumcision, but a new creation'*. Dear servant of God, is this our boast? Can we boast in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ? Just hear the beauty of Paul's testimony. The old man has been done in. Its flesh has been neutralized by the Spirit. He in himself has been rendered useless. All of those worldly and carnal ambitions that drive so many men and women have no place in his life anymore. He has been crucified to the world. The world has been crucified to him. These outward deeds, circumcision or uncircumcision were nothing. A new creation is what Paul wanted to see among the saints.

My friends, if you come to the crossroads of Galatians 2:20, have you seen it? This is something you see by revelation. It is not a matter of feeling. A lot of people said I do not feel crucified. I do not know anybody who does. It is not a question of feeling crucified. It is a question of knowing you are crucified and reckoning yourself dead to sin but alive to God. We live by faith not feeling. And this new life living in us is the power necessary to serve God's purpose in this generation. Not your life, but His life in you. Are you not glad that our gospel is not a cross-less gospel? The gospel that Paul was defending got teeth in it and it will change a person's life. This gospel is worth fighting for. And if you will serve the

Lord, you should publicly portray Christ crucified before brothers and sisters until they see it. This is amazing grace. We will finish by looking at 1 Corinthians 1:30 *'But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption.'* Is this not wonderful? Christ is everything to us. He did not exhaust the list with these four things we talked about. Christ has been made life to us. God is pleased to reveal His Son in you. God is pleased to send Christ crucified to dwell in your life so that you may no longer live, but He lives through you. What a wonderful gospel.

Prayer

Our father, we thank You for Jesus Christ. We are just at the border of all that He is to us. But we can see that He is the only way through as servants of Your purpose. Lay hold of our heart, Lord Jesus. Make this revelation a reality to us. Teach us how to live out this revelation. Reveal yourself among us. For this we pray in Jesus precious name. Amen.