

## WELCOME 14<sup>th</sup> April 2024 – 3<sup>rd</sup> SUNDAY IN EASTER '24 B

Galatians 2:16-21

**Welcome!** It's great to be together again today! **Bible Study Qs** are there to equip you so God can lead you deeper into His word/work in your life, & so you can share that w/ someone else. We also use them for our **Zoom Bible Study Catch-ups** on Friday @ 1p.m.

**As we move into this week...** **Spirit** levels – plumb **lines** – **laser** surveying – GPS **beacons** – **lane** markings...each & every one useful for keeping things aligned, on the level, consistent over time & distance...safe...secure...in their proper place & relationship to other things...

And when things are **out** of alignment...not in proper place or relationship...don't conform to the standard...problems arise. We know our lives can get of kilter...out of alignment with what we know to be true, right, & good. We can start to make choices & decisions or act out of self-interest rather than the life of Christ dwelling in us. Pastor Tim Keller **says**, "Christian living is a *continual* realignment process of bringing *everything* in line with the truth of the gospel." 2 words continual/everything

"CONTINUAL" – day by day by day every day.

"EVERYTHING" – every thought – decision – dollar – hope – dream – aspiration – fear – anxiety...everything continually realigned w/ the truth of the gospel...That in Jesus Christ, God has come personally to this world to rescue/recreate all that is by Christ's death/resurrection...to make all things new...to realign our hearts w/ the Father.

Even the apostles needed realignment now & then...even they struggled to live by the grace of God alone that they had received through Christ's death & resurrection. They too needed to be drawn back to the GPS truth...

*My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*

Everything falls in line with that word or it falls in ruin.

You are either certain in Christ alone, or you are not certain at all.

We'll experience & share that certainty today...Let's pray...

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

*Lord Jesus, make our lives like yours...not for our glory or for the pride we so often deny, but for the sake of those who haven't met you yet...in service to those who feel cast off...in love to those who've convinced themselves they're unlovable. Make us holy as the Father is holy...not in moral perfection but in undivided devotion to making your saving grace known wherever you lead us.*

*Keep our eyes fixed on you & our hearts beating in time with yours so that as we move through our week those we meet meet you & are drawn deeply into your grace & salvation.*

*Keep us aware, Lord Jesus that the stakes are just that high...salvation & eternal life with you are the gifts we can offer in your name alone. Make us generous not stingy in declaring our trust & assurance grounded in your resurrection. Jesus through you we believe all things will be made new...in you we pray to believe that all things are possible also in us. Amen*

*Let's sing The Lord is By My Side & then we'll hear God's word from Paul to the church in Galatia & Wagga Wagga*

## **FAITH CHAT:**

1. Why do some people have the misunderstanding that Christianity is really all about following rules or doing more good than bad?
2. How would you lovingly correct that misunderstanding using an example from your own life?

### 3<sup>rd</sup> SUNDAY IN EASTER '24 B – LIVING EXCLUSIVELY...IN CHRIST

My nephew is an Electrical Engineer. He's been working on a project for a few years trying to "goof"/"trick" GPS systems into being wrong...to thinking they're somewhere they're not or not where they are. Imagine the military applications...Someone shoots one of those gazillion \$\$ missiles at you & you "goof" it to "return to sender." Or that drug boss flying his private jet into Cartagena, Colombia & you goof him into the side of a mountain. He said it's hard to do because there are so many orbital satellites & fixed beacons here on earth all relaying constant location data...you have a hard time tricking a GPS...There is so much good data the bad gets filtered out.

If only life were like that for the rest of us. I don't know about you but there are days I feel overwhelmed by "bad data" – scams – misinformation – distractions - distortions - nonsense pretending to be true. Folks outright lie & assure me they're not. It's not hard to live thinking I'm in line w/ what God wants of me...living according to the gospel only to be off plumb or way off course & out of step. What we just read from Galatians begins just like that. Paul & Peter have a very public disagreement about how Peter is behaving out-of-line around non-Jewish followers of Jesus. (2:1ff)

P/Ps relationship actually begins much earlier on rock solid terms. After Paul was claimed by Jesus & commissioned as an apostle from then on, he & Peter eventually meet & discover to their joy they agree on the gospel: **We** are accepted by God on the basis of Jesus & his finished work, & nothing else. We cannot add anything to the finished work of Christ crucified/risen/ruling. This is what they **both** preached & this was what they applied to everyone everywhere they went. There is only one gospel & it is for everyone w/o distinction. **BUT...THERE'S ALWAYS A BUT RIGHT?**

Later Peter visits the churches in Antioch...thriving cosmopolitan multicultural hub of trade & some Xns of Jewish background pushback on Peter because he's made a habit of eating w/ non-Jews...former pagans who have no intention of keeping old Jewish dietary laws. So these devout Jews-now-Xns are up in Peter's grillwork about his "other" friends. It seems they twisted Peter's arm hard enough & he backed away from full fellowship w/ the non-Jewish disciples. Paul gets hopping mad... *But when Peter came to Antioch, I had to oppose him to his face, for what he did was very wrong...When I saw they (Peter & the Jewish disciples) were not following the truth of the gospel message, I said to Peter in front of all the others, "Since you, a Jew by birth, have discarded the Jewish laws & are living like a Gentile, why are you now trying to make these Gentiles follow the Jewish traditions?" – Gal 2:11 & 14* Like we saw earlier: "Christian living is a continual realignment process of bringing everything in line with the truth of the gospel." **TIM KELLER**

Paul publicly "realigns" Peter & lays a clear unmistakable GPS beacon for us in the on-going work of Christ in our lives...In a world of competing "gospels" – of competing worldviews & lifestyles...some even sound or look great... There is only one gospel of Jesus Christ who by his death/resurrection/reign over all things either takes charge of ALL of our life...OR NONE of it. So the question becomes: How do we move from just believing the gospel to living it? How do we move from 'Yeah I believe that's true' to 'Jesus take the wheel'? Jesus you're in charge of all of me.

1<sup>st</sup>...let the Spirit etch into your heart: **We** know that a person is made right with God by faith in Jesus Christ, not by obeying the law. Every living one of us at some point wants to believe God owes us a favour...God I haven't killed anybody cheated on my wife fallen out drunk in the park stolen anything...you ought to just cut me some slack on this one. We all try to convince ourselves/God/boss/kids/wife we're not as bad as **X** We want God & the guy next door to look at us & think, "What a real hero!" **NB:** in Gal 1 Paul defends his apostolic authority saying, **I'm** not trying to win the approval of people, but of God. *If pleasing people were my goal, I would not be Christ's servant.* The only thing God desires of us/approves in us is faith/trusting that Christ is enough. (Heb 11:6, Jn 6:29) Here, Paul calls Peter out for trying to "win the approval of people," currying favour w/ hardline legalist Jewish Xns still stuck insisting on religious observance as either a *PREREQUISITE TO* or a *CONFIRMATION OF* faith...as if Christ alone isn't enough. We gotta get this...

The only hope we have, no matter who we are, is what Jesus Christ has done. Nobody stands b/4 God & is vindicated based on their own righteousness, goodness, blamelessness. Not Peter, not Paul, not Billy Graham, not Mother Teresa, not John Guilfoyle (certainly not him!). Nobody. We have to let the Spirit etch into our hearts a *person is made right w/ God by faith in Jesus Christ, not by obeying the law.*

**AND...**if we try to prove ourselves by some sort of religious moral requirement...if we think living up to some set standard just tickles God's fancy...we fall back into sin & set ourselves apart from Jesus. Why? How? Well...Christ crucified/risen/ruling obliterates every standard. **I** am a sinner if I rebuild the old system of law I already tore down. Jesus has done away w/ the law. It's a sin to bring it back as a measure of my goodness. Christ died to put an end to keeping score...getting points b/4 God/neighbor for our goodness. The cross tears up our score cards & if I start using words like "good Xn" I brand myself guilty again. On top of that...any standard I set will condemn me because I can't keep the ones I couldn't keep before. Peter Acts 15: **So** why are you now challenging God by burdening the Gentile believers with a yoke that neither we nor our ancestors were able to bear? We failed at the Law & we grew up w/ it. How could those who've never had it keep it?

**AND YET** it is precisely in our weakness that we find the majestic nuclear power of Christ in the gospel...*LIKE THIS*...Paul in all of his letters tells us there are basically 3 ways we can live in this world... **You** can simply live for your flesh...your sinful self. – Gordon MacDonald “The one principle of hell is, ‘I am my own.’” I said that Good Friday. It’s true. You can live in this world as if no one else matters a hang. If it’s good for me it’s good & you’re on your own. My highest goal is to maximize **ME**. My betterment. My enjoyment. My momentary pleasure. My success status notoriety...I am my greatest good. We all know folks who live that way.

OR...**You** can live in the abject fear of being wrong or left out & aim for the highest kind of “morality” this world offers. That could be some sort of religious morality... ecological morality... social justice morality... cultural morality...live into the religious “moral” expressions of a world that has turned its back on God & the gospel.

OR...you can live the gospel... *My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me & gave himself for me.*..Become so wrapped up in what Jesus has done for you that you surrender every waking moment to him so that he begins to live through you because he lives in you. You shape your life obediently & responsively around him not because you’re trying to impress God or show off for your spouse & friends but because Christ is living through you. Paul wrote to Xns in Rome.. *Since we have died to sin, how can we continue to live in it?...For we died & were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may walk in newness of life.* - **Rom 6:2 & 4** **You know Jesus has done for you what you could never do...so what are you going to do <sup>w</sup>/ this resurrected life he’s given you?... now we also may walk in newness of life.**

Paul says one of our greatest problems – one of the greatest threats to us is that we believe the gospel, but we live as if it wasn’t true/hasn’t happened. Great story in the paper last week about a lady in Gladstone...won powerball...\$20M...but *THOUGHT* she’d only won \$20K...she started planning new carpet & paint & wound up thinking trip around the world. Couple years back teacher in Canada same thing -Bought a ticket stuck it on his fridge then he & girlfriend went backpacking around Europe for 3 mos Got home & thought...lottery ticket. \$20K no \$20M...In the newspaper interview he said, “For the 2 wks of our trip we lived like paupers because we were running out of money. Who knew that all that time I was a millionaire?!” *My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me.* Why would I live like a pauper when the riches of heaven, the blessings of the Father’s love/grace, & the power of the Holy Spirit abide in me? Why would I live like approval or success or **ME**...is

more valuable than *Christ lives in me*? It is precisely in our weakness that we find the majestic nuclear power of Christ in the gospel. Because...

We know our lives can get of kilter...out of alignment <sup>w</sup>/ what we know to be true, right, & good. We can start to make choices & decisions or act out of self-interest rather than the life of Christ dwelling in us. Even the apostles struggled to live by the grace of God alone that they had received through Christ’s death & resurrection. They too needed to be drawn back to the GPS truth...

*My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*

God in Christ has the last word about me/you/the world & that word is the promise that our destiny is life – future love – destination abundant joy that lasts forever only because God raised Jesus Christ from the dead.

Everything falls in line with that word or it falls in ruin.  
You are either certain in Christ alone, or you are not certain at all.

**TAKE IT HOME** – Who in your circle of acquaintance lives either without certainty in Christ or is looking for some other kind of certainty in this world?

What would it mean to them for you to share what it means to be aligned to the Father through the death & resurrection of Christ?

Let’s pray with that in mind...

*Father, you call us your sons & daughters through your Son Jesus Christ.*

*Fill us with his life that we may be confident in sharing the good news not only in words but through our lives, that those around us may experience your love & life that are eternal & become woven into your abundant life that endures in joy in your presence in all circumstances...In Jesus’ Name...Amen*