

**An Invitation and Calling:
Learning to Live in the Grace of Christ
September 16 – November 11 2012**

**“Evidences of Christ-filled Grace in the New Community”
Study Helps: Week Three of Nine
Galatians 2:1-21, Sept 30 2012**

Focus for Week Three

In order to learn to “live in the grace of Christ” (Galatians 1:6), one needs to grasp that they cannot enter this life by their own acts of obedience to any law (whether their own conscience, Old Testament law, or cultural forms of right behaviour). One can only enter into this grace of Christ by accepting his invitation into his grace, offered through his death on the cross.

Once one enters grace, one then must learn to live in the freedoms of this grace. Living freely in the grace of Christ impacts all one’s relationships: with God, with others, with oneself. Yet, such living is difficult; it is too easy, even for those of us who stand in the grace of Christ, to revert to behaviours that look more like the slavery from which Christ came to set us free. In Galatians 2, Paul identifies some of the freedoms that come from living in the grace of Christ while at the same time points out some of the essential practices that all communities in Christ must learn to apply to ensure that this gospel of Christ is not perverted.

Summary of “Time of Reflection” and Message

1. Time of Reflection

- As we learn to “live in the grace of Christ” (Galatians 1:6), **our relationships begin to reflect freedom** from behaviors that hold people in bondage.
- In **our relationship with God**, we find ourselves no longer looking to God from a slave’s perspective, unsure if we are doing enough to earn God’s favour or to appease God’s anger in order to gain access to God. Rather, we find growing freedom in knowing Jesus has brought us into God’s eternal, never-ending, forgiving love.
- In **our relationships with others**, we discover we are less and less enslaved by historic hatreds, cultural divisions, and standards of behaviour that give us the hypocritical illusion that one person is better than another. Rather, our relationships are filled with the freedom of relating to others with the same mercy and grace, forgiveness and compassion that Jesus has shown us.
- In **our relationships with ourselves**, we are no longer slaves to pleasing others, wondering what people think of us. Rather, we are free to pursue lives that reflect the grace of Christ.
- **Paul summarizes these freedoms** in the words of Galatians 2:20. He writes, “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”(Galatians 2:20, NIV 2011).

- For those who have not yet accepted the invitation of God to “live in the grace of Christ,” it is important to know that the first step is to accept God’s invitation and come to Jesus. **Only Jesus brings us into God’s grace.** Only after we receive this invitation can we begin to live in the grace of Christ as our life calling.

2. Summary of Message

- **It is very difficult to live in the freedom of the grace of Christ**
 - a. Those to whom Paul writes had experienced this grace of Christ but were finding themselves having difficulty “living in this grace of Christ” (Galatians 1:1:7-8)
 - b. Paul understood this difficulty from his previous life. He had been devoted to the strictest practices of the Jewish religion (1:14), even to the point of persecuting Christians (1:13). Now that Jesus had brought him into the freedom of his grace, he understood the difference between slavery to the law and freedom in Christ. (1:15-16).
 - c. Every person who has received Jesus and been brought into the grace of Christ as well as every Christian community experiences this difficulty; it is too easy for individuals and communities to add some form of legalism or requirements to the freedom of Christ’s grace.
- In Galatians 2, **Paul identifies four essential practices that can protect the freedom of the grace of Christ in our lives and communities.**
 - a. **Practice One: Actively preserve the gospel of Christ (2:1-5)**
 - 1) In meeting with those “esteemed” as leaders of the church in Jerusalem, Paul wanted to be sure that all were preaching and living this gospel of grace (2:2), especially since some were perverting it (2:4-5). He was satisfied that they shared the same gospel, especially by the way they didn’t require Titus, a Gentile Christian, to adhere to Jewish tradition (2:3)..
 - 2) In our own lives, in our relationships and as a church, this constant “testing” is important; in our teaching and modeling, are we preserving this gospel of “living in the grace of Christ?”
 - b. **Practice Two: Recognize and welcome those to whom this grace of Christ is given (2:6-10)**
 - 1) Paul and those with him were welcomed based on “the grace given me” (2:7-9); there was no distinction made based on ethnic background or position (2:6).
 - 2) Welcoming and receiving those that Christ has accepted and called into his grace and gospel ministry is essential and sometimes very costly.
 - c. **Practice Three: Correct hypocrisy (2:11-16)**
 - 1) Peter’s actions did not reflect his beliefs; Paul rebukes him publically affirming repeatedly (2:15-16) that one is made acceptable to God through Jesus (i.e. justified by faith in Christ) NOT by one’s attempts at right actions.

- 2) As individuals and a Christian community, learning this essential practice requires that we have people in our lives that speak truth to us, point out hypocrisy in us; these are people with whom we can hopefully also repent in prayer. As we are changed by Christ, so we can begin, carefully, to help others also grow in this freedom.

d. Practice Four: Apply daily, living “Christ in me” (2:19-21)

- 1) Paul’s approach to such living involves four freedoms, which we too can live.
- 2) Freedom One: Live Dead to the Law – Whatever our standard of righteousness (e.g. conscience, moral code, cultural norms, Old Testament laws), Jesus raised the bar to perfection such that all see their inability to perfectly love God or their neighbour as God’s holiness requires. We then realize that approaching God in his holiness is only possible through Jesus.
- 3) Freedom Two: Live Identified with Christ – Not only do we accept that Jesus died for our sins, but we see ourselves as crucified with Christ and alive in Christ.
- 4) Freedom Three: Live by Faith in Jesus – We live daily knowing that we are loved by God through Christ and knowing that Christ died for our sins.
- 5) Freedom Four – Live Never Setting Aside Grace – No matter what others might say, we live in grace daily, applying this grace to all our relationships: with God, others, and ourselves.

For Further Study

1. Read Galatians 2 with the notes from the “Time of Reflection” and “Summary of Message” in mind. What stands out to you? What additional observations can you make?
2. Compare and contrast Galatians 2:1-10 and Acts 11:19-30 with the knowledge that these passages likely point to the same events. How do the two passages enrich each other?
3. Read Galatians 2:11 – 18 again and try to picture the events described. Why do you think Paul treated this matter with such seriousness?
4. Read Galatians 2:19-21 with the sermon notes in mind. What do you find difficult to understand from Paul’s statement? Consider memorizing these verses and begin praying that Jesus reveals the truth of these words to you.
5. Consider those in your life that speak truth to you and point out hypocrisy in you. Are these also people with whom you can repent in prayer? If you don’t have such people in your life, consider asking God in prayer to provide them.
6. Take Away Question: When I look at my relationships, do they reflect the grace of Christ?