

For Such a Time as This

A Daily Devotional

Tuesday, July 9, 2024

From Galatians 2:

We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; yet 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.

The root of the cause of Paul to write to the Galatians, is a division in the minds of the faithful whether God's action in Jesus Christ is sufficient to provide salvation or if there is something that must be added to this work in order for it to be effective. In short, the old story of works versus faith was operative in the Galatian discussions.

Paul wrote the little paragraph above explaining how he had dealt with the same kind of issue in an earlier meeting with his fellow apostle Peter, who was 'hedging his bets' a bit on this very issue. Peter was momentarily convinced by others to withdraw his support from Gentile Christians because they had not fulfilled the law; they didn't seem to believe exactly as Peter did.

Such a discussion may seem very removed from us for what kind of attention to the law do we really demonstrate? This doesn't seem to be very relevant for us. But wait, hear what Charles B. Cousar says about that:

Contemporary 'works of the law' may be defined as attitudes or activities which function in such a way as to usurp the grace of God; dispositions, whether religious or not, which aim to accomplish what the death of Christ accomplished. Illustrative are those individuals who set out to carve their own niches in life and who feel that by their personal achievements they can effect a relationship with God and inner peace for themselves. They live with the illusion, conscious or not, that God is to be won over from an antagonistic position. ... In effect, salvation by works is an insidious form of idolatry. Its exponents refuse to acknowledge God as the true source of life, but instead turn themselves into gods, dispensers of salvation.

This is closer to our experience of the faith than we might first think. Certainly, we can see how we turn faith and grace into something that we do, something that we perform rather than what God has done in Christ. The solution of this great disruption in the peacefulness of the gospel, at least for Paul, will be to respond with gratitude and trust. Gratitude for God's action and trust in its effectiveness and God's goodness rather than our own.

Prayer for the Day: (From *the Valley of Vision*)

Eternal God, may all we do be done for the reconciling of the world and for the greater glory of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



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