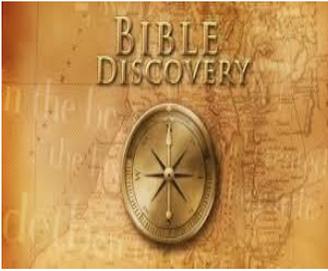


August 30, 2015

Galatians 3:1-8

The Great Foundation of Faith



In this series entitled Gospel 101, we've been walking together as the Church through a series of messages designed to explain the biblical Gospel we preach and believe here at MBBC. Today, as we take a look at the great foundation of faith undergirding what we believe, I want to ask if any of you still watch "the news". No longer contained to an hour segment, it's found 24/7 on multiple channels. Unfortunately most of it's bad news. Maybe that *is* the good news – that the bad news is still sufficiently rare it makes the news programs. Whether local violence, upheaval throughout the world, natural catastrophies, epidemic outbreaks, missing kids, labour disputes, or political turmoil not much is encouraging. Or perhaps you've purposely tuned the news out. Maybe the question you're left asking is, "Is our society more wicked than any other in history?" While it may appear that way. It's not necessarily true. As I've suggested, mass media now lets us read or hear about news in our homes, on the go – anywhere almost immediately and continually with all the gruesome details.

If we go to the front of the Bible to Genesis, we read in Noah's day *"the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually"* [Genesis 6:5].

Further we read that in Noah's day *"the earth was corrupt in God's sight, and the earth was filled with violence. And God saw the earth, and behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth"* [6:11-12]. So bad had things become that God sent His judgment removing every living creature except for just eight people and selected animals. So if things got so bad just a few generations after Adam & Eve that God wiped out almost the entire planet, and now centuries later things seem to be just as bad, what's wrong? Why haven't we learned?

You don't have to be a rocket scientist to conclude something's wrong with us and this planet. Something's not functioning right. The answer according to Scripture is something is in our genes - into our blood stream - as well as the planet leaving everything corrupted. That something is sin. What can we do about it? The real bad news is that there's nothing we can do to overcome our nature to sin - there's nothing any of us can do to

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overcome the destructive, selfish, negative, downward spiralling direction this world is going. So should we just give up, sit down and kiss the world good bye? Absolutely not! Though there's nothing we can do, the good news is God so loved this world that from the moment Adam and Eve initially were tempted sinning against Him, God's continuously poured out His grace on us. Just like that first couple who deserved death for their sin we too deserve nothing less. When God gave the garden for Adam to take care of, He had only one command – only one! *"You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die."*

[Genesis 2:17] That was the established rule; therefore it would have been totally fair for God to destroy them when they did exactly what He told them not to do. But He didn't do that. As parents we get a glimpse of that when raising our children. Though they deserve a punishment for disobedience, we could never disown them – we love them too much. In a similar way, God didn't give His first children what they deserved - because of God's great love for Adam and Eve. And it was because of God's great love for the patriarchs of old, it was because of the great love of God for us that God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive in Christ. It's therefore by grace we're saved, through faith – a faith not even of ourselves – it's the gift of God!

[Ephesians 2:4-8]

The great foundation of faith is built on God's amazing grace!

Sinners, dead in our trespasses, enslaved by what binds us, dead because of choices which leave us outside of any relationship with Jesus, dead yet living – alive only to this world's order, pursuing passions of the flesh, condemned under the wrath of God but through the compassion, grace and mercy of the only Living God who gave us His One and Only Son, whoever accepts faith in Him, though sinners, we are saved by grace!

Never was this realized more than in the life of a young monk during the 1500's who by his own admission "hated God". Even while studying Paul's epistle to the Romans, he couldn't get past the first part of Romans 1:17: *"For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last..."* One simple, biblical truth changed his life - igniting the Protestant Reformation. It was realization God's righteousness rather than something to be envied and denied, could become the sinner's righteousness - and the acceptance that that happens through faith alone. That monk, Martin Luther, found the truth in the same verse he had stumbled over – that verse at Romans 1:17 also declared, *"just as it is written: 'The righteous will live by faith'."*

This is the same truth the writer of Hebrews provides when he lists patriarchs, heroes and patrons of the Old Testament in what today we refer to as the "faith chapter" – Hebrews 11. Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Joseph, Moses' parents who placed him in the river, Moses himself, the people who passed through the Red Sea on dry land, the people who marched around Jericho's walls watching as God brought those walls down, the prostitute Rahab who trusted God even against danger to herself, plus Gideon, Barak, Samuel, Jephthah, David, Samuel and the prophets. The Hebrews writer reminds us *"These were all commended (not for mighty or heroic deeds, but) for their faith"*. [Hebrews 11:39] None of them were perfect, all of them fell short of God's glory yet through their faith they were accepted by God. Each humbly sought God's righteousness because they completely understood they were guilty.

Our guilt can either cause us to run away from God – to insist we're not wrong, we haven't sinned, we don't need a Saviour, "We're Okay!" Or we can fall on our spiritual knees, confess we're sinners, unworthy of our Heavenly Father's great bountiful and amazing love and cry out for mercy.

Here in Galatians 3, the Apostle Paul singles out Abraham as our example. None of what Abraham received was through his good works, none through his being better than anyone else, none through anything He gave to God, but his righteousness was put on his account (accredited to him) by God because Abraham believed God! That was it. The great foundation of faith comes to that – we must believe God. So that is why Paul wrote, *"Those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith."* [vs. 9]

Neither is this righteousness available through our good works; it's not received through observance of any law. This righteousness is only available through faith in One person – Jesus Christ – and specifically Christ crucified. No human effort is sufficient. As with Abraham, as with Moses, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and others who not only talked about this gift, but experienced it themselves, we too must experience the miracles of God's Spirit within us and express faith because *"we believe what we have heard."* But let me warn you, just believing in Jesus doesn't mean I just acknowledge He exists. The Bible says the demons know that – and tremble. Rather, if we would truly believe we must do so trusting in Jesus such that we stake our life on Him; to truly believe is to be willing to build our world around Him; to truly believe is to give up our whole life to receive His life – forever! Everyone who truly believes in Jesus, placing their complete trust in Him receives the righteousness of God. Everyone! Jesus Himself said, *"... whoever comes to me I will never cast out"* [John 6:37 ESV]. You may say to yourself today you don't deserve His gift of righteousness. You're absolutely correct, for not one of us does.



Whether we look to Romans 3:24, "...being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus"; examine Ephesians 2:8 "for it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God..."; or turn over to Titus 3:5 "He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy"; along with many other scriptures, we find that salvation, justification, redemption, rebirth is all God's free gift to unworthy, sin-stained people like you and me, given through His rich and everlasting mercy though we don't deserve it. On that foundation is the great foundation of our faith!

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This is why the Apostle Paul can write at Romans 8, "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death" [Romans 8:1-2]. I've met a lot of Christians who don't seem to understand this great truth. Certainly many who by their life are not living in the freedom and subsequent joy Christ has given them. Sometimes, in our struggle with sin we feel as though we live under a load of guilt, unable to have any confidence in life, in bondage to the false perception that God's against us, setting us up for failure, or is angry with our performance. At such times, you, as Jesus said to Peter, must say, "Get behind me Satan!" for if you're in Christ, nothing is further from the truth. If you've surrendered to Jesus, if you're alive in Christ, then when God looks at you, He sees only the purity, the righteousness of His Own Son. The truth that undergirds God's gift of justification frees us from all condemnation.

The Holy Spirit – God's Spirit - rests within you today if you're a child of God, redeemed in Christ. Redemption has been given to you and the fire of God burns within you without any human effort available to provide for you in any way – today and every day while you walk on this earth while you await your reunion with Jesus in glory. This too is foundational to faith. The only way we're justified is "...through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus". [Romans 3:24] "Redemption" is a word with its origin in the release of prisoners of war on payment of a price, known as a "ransom". In time, it was extended to include freeing slaves from the slave market, again by the payment of a price. For us, the price's been paid, the penalty's been addressed at Calvary and we've been set free through the gift in Jesus.

How then can you be counted in Christ?

How then today, can you be counted among those who have the hope of eternal life in Christ? How can you stand upon the great foundation of faith, knowing that you know that you know that you know? How can you be made right with God? If you're foolish such as some of the Galatians to whom Paul wrote long ago, you can take your chances being bewitched by adherents to the law, suffering for nothing, **or** you can believe what you have heard. You can take your stand confessing with your mouth and believing in your heart that Jesus Christ is Lord, receive Jesus today as the only One who is righteous and place your faith – a faith given to you from your Heavenly Father through His merciful grace – a faith in Jesus as your Lord and Saviour.

If our Lord God is pricking your heart to stand upon the great foundation of faith and accept deliverance from sin through the precious gift of salvation found only in Jesus Christ, you can do that right where you are. Just pray, asking that God would forgive you for your sins and agree to let Him have complete control of your life moving forward. The past will fade away and you'll be so glad you've accepted Jesus as your Saviour. Give us a call or drop us an email. We'd love to hear from you.

*Blessings,
Pastor Dave*