

Faith Alone

Galatians 2:15-21

Introduction

- After the death of William Tyndale, God began to stir in the hearts of those in power.
 - Even though King Henry was partly responsible for the execution of William Tyndale, he approved an English translation of the Bible.
 - While the Spirit of God was moving throughout all of Europe through the Reformation, he was doing the same in France through men like John Calvin and monarchs like Queen Marguerite of Navarre (1492-1548).
 - The reformation was birthed in Germany, but it spread like a wildfire through Europe, France, and Switzerland.
- One of the other men who attended the White Horse Inn bible study was a guy by the name of Hugh Latimer.
 - Not much is known about how he became a Christian... but he joined the ranks of Luther and Tyndale as a protestant who believed that salvation was by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.
 - He began mentioning the need for the translation of the Bible in English in his sermons while serving as the university preacher and chaplain at Clare College, when it was still illegal to print the Bible into English.
- King Henry VIII grew friendly of the reformation, but it was his son Edward VI who grew to believe many of the tenets of the protestant reformation under the preaching of Latimer, Nicholas Ridley, and John Knox, and the tutelage of Thomas Cranmer (who is the author of *Book of Common Prayer*).
 - When Henry VIII died in 1547, Edward VI was only 10 years old; he was coronated that same year as king over Europe.
 - In a letter to Thomas Cranmer, Edward wrote, “I believe that I must desire and practice godliness above all things, since St. Paul has said, ‘Godliness is profitable to all things.’”¹

¹ Diana Kleyn, Joel Beeke; *Reformation Heroes* (2009).

- Before he died, King Edward had the English Bible circulated and printed throughout Europe; it is said that thirty-six editions of the Bible were printed and sold during his reign.
- King Edward VI only reigned six years, for in 1552, he contracted measles and smallpox. On July 6, 1553, Edward died when he was only sixteen.
- Edward's sister, Mary, did not share the same passion that her brother did for the Bible and the tenets of the reformation, for she was vehemently opposed to the protestant reformation and dedicated her reign as queen to cleanse all of Europe of the reformers and restore it to the Roman Catholic Church, which earned her the nick name: "Bloody Mary."
 - She insisted that the best way to deal with the heresy of the reformers was to burn as many "heretics" as possible; it is estimated that nearly 300 protestants were burned to death under her orders.
 - Together with his friends Nicholas Ridley and Thomas Cranmer, the three men who met at Cambridge and studied the bible together at the White Horse Inn were arrested for suspicion of heresy.
 - Because the men believed that salvation was by faith in Christ alone apart from any merit of their own, they were found guilty of heresy and sentenced to death.
- The reason why these men were sentenced to death was not because of who they were, but because of who and what they represented.
- It is an insult to the pride of every human who is still dead in their sins that we are helpless when it comes to state of our soul and our spiritual deadness.
- I am sure you have heard the poem, titled Invictus, by William Ernest Henley. Consider what he wrote in that little poem:

Out of the night that covers me,
 Black as the pit from pole to pole,
 I thank whatever gods may be
 For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance
 I have not winced nor cried aloud.
 Under the bludgeoning of chance
 My head is bloody, but unbowed.

Beyond this place of wrath and tears
 Looms but the Horror of the shade,
 And yet the menace of the years
 Finds and shall find me unafraid.

It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate,
I am the captain of my soul.

- What we learn from the Bible and through an honest assessment of our lives is that we are not the master of our fate, nor are we the captain of our own soul.

By Faith I am Made Righteous Through Jesus (vv. 15-18)

- The reason why the Apostle Paul wrote the epistle to the Galatians was because...
- I know that the wording in the Bible can sometimes be confusing, so let me explain *three things* about verses 15-18.
 - **First**, when Paul states in verse 15 that, “**We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners...**” He is making the statement that many of the Galatian Christians were Jewish by heritage who grew up hearing about Adam and Eve, Noah and the flood, Abraham, King David; they heard the Psalms and prophetic books of the Old Testament read by their local Rabbi.
 - But many of the Gentiles never heard of the Old Testament... When you get to verse 16, Paul lets his religiously raised readers know that regardless of their upbringing, both they and the Gentiles could never be “**justified by works of the law...**” no matter how hard they tried.
 - **The second thing** that I want to help you understand is regarding a certain word, and that word is: “**justified.**” To be justified is to be legally declared righteous even though you are guilty of sinning (unrighteous).
 - **The third thing** that I want you to understand is that biblical “**faith**” is not just belief or loyalty, it is much more than that. Faith, as it is defined by the Bible, is: “**The assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen**” (Heb. 11:1).
 - To believe in Jesus is to have the confidence and deep trust that Jesus’ perfectly lived life, death for your sins, and his victory over death through his resurrection is more than enough for your justification.
 - It is an unflinching dependence that Jesus lived the life you could never live, died the death that you deserved, and rose again on the third day so that the kind of righteousness you need legally before God can be yours in Jesus.

By Faith I am Reconciled to God (vv. 19-21)

- Jesus did not die and rise again so that you can continue sinning. He died so that you could be reconciled to God as a new creation.
- This is why the Bible states: **“If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come”** (2 Cor. 5:17). Think about what that means for a moment.
 - One of my favorite stories that reminds me so much of myself and my relationship with God is the story of the angry and rebellious daughter who ran away from home.
 - For years her mother searched for her leaving pictures of her daughter everywhere she went that read: ***“It doesn’t matter what you have become, it doesn’t matter what you’ve done, I still love you! Come home.”***
- When Martin Luther, William Tyndale, women like Queen Marguerite of Navarre, and Hugh Latimer read these scriptures in search for a relationship with a God that they had never truly met, and when their eyes fell upon verse 16, it was as if they heard God say: ***“It doesn’t matter what you have become, it doesn’t matter what you’ve done, I still love you! Come home.”***
- How about you? Can you hear Jesus as the only captain of your soul, who you can trust and whispers to your heart and your soul: ***“It doesn’t matter what you have become, it doesn’t matter what you’ve done, I still love you! Come home.”***
- In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus said, **“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light”** (Matt. 11:28-30).
 - When Jesus said this, he was speaking to the religious legalism of the day that said you had to do religious things to get to earn the love of God.
 - A yoke was a wooden frame that joined two animals together for the purpose of pulling heavy loads.
 - Unlike the crushing burden of legalism, Jesus’ yoke was one of fellowship that a person could enter into by faith.
 - To take on Jesus’ yoke is to identify with him, to trust him, and to follow him not as the co-pilot of our souls, but the captain of our soul and the master of our lives.
- William Henley wrote his famous *Invictus* poem in 1875; throughout his life, Henley suffered the amputation of his left leg due to Tuberculosis of the bone and countless other health issues during his short life of 54 years.

- A young lady by the name of Dorothy Day, who was enamored with Henley and his humanistic worldview, wrote a response to Henley's *Invictus* after she heard the Gospel of Jesus Christ and became a Christian:

Out of the light that dazzles me,
 Bright as the sun from pole to pole
 I thank the God I know to be
 For Christ is the conqueror of my soul

Since His the sway of circumstance
 I would not wince nor cry aloud
 Under the rule which men call chance
 My head with joy is humbly bowed

Beyond this place of sin and tears
 That life with Him! And His the aid,
 Despite the menace of the years,
 Keep, and shall keep me, unafraid

I have no fear, though strait the gate,
 He cleared my punishment from the scroll
 Christ is the master of my fate
 Christ is the master of my soul.

- To come to Christ, means to surrender whatever illusion you may have about your ability to remedy your own sin problem on your own.
- The only way to come to him is through faith alone that Jesus is everything and all that you need to have your sins forgiven and to be reconciled to a God your sins have alienated you from.
- This is what the apostle Paul meant when he wrote: **“I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me”** (v. 20). Salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

Conclusion

- Hugh Latimer, Nicholas Ridley, and Thomas Cranmer all were a part of the White Horse Inn bible study earlier in their lives (the Oxford Martyrs).
- Latimer and Ridley were sentenced to death immediately by the stake where they were to be burned.
- On October 16, 1555, Cranmer watched his two friends as they were led out to die.
 - Latimer wore a plain and simple gown.

- Ridley dressed in a black gown trimmed with fur and velvet not because he was proud or wanted to show off on his way to die, Ridley was from an ancient house of knights, and he dressed for what he considered his final victory.
- When questioned if either of the men would recant, Ridley answered: “So long as the breath is in my body, I will never deny my Lord Christ and his known truth.”
 - Ridley took off his garments to give them away, leaving him with only a plain undergarment.
 - As the blacksmith chained the men to the stake, again Ridley said: “Good fellow, knock it hard, for the flesh will have its way.” He did not want the intense pain to make him flee the stake.
 - When the executioners light the fire that began by the feet of Ridley, Latimer turned to his friend and said: “Be of good comfort, Dr. Ridley, and play the man. We shall this day light such a candle by God’s grace in England, as I trust never shall be put out.”
- A friend of the three men by the name of John Fox (and author of *Fox’s Book of Martyrs*), wrote of Latimer and Ridley’s death:

Latimer died quickly, but Ridley’s fire waned. His lower parts burned through, but the flames barely hurt his upper body. In agony he moaned, “I cannot burn... Lord, have mercy on me.” At last, flames ignited the gunpowder sack hung around his neck, and his life passed from Earth to Heaven.

Thomas Cranmer, deposed Archbishop, his own heart and mind wavering, his every sinew fearing the fire, watched his friends die from his cell in London Tower.²

- My dear brothers and sisters, God may not call you to become a martyr, but he is calling all of us to be the light of Cheyenne.
- The greatest need of our city is to hear and know that the forgiveness of our sins is by the grace of God alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. What kind of light will you be? Amen.

² John Fox, *Foxe: Voices of the Martyrs* (China: Codra Enterprises, Inc.; 2007), p. 132.