

08.21.11 / Galatians 2:20-21 and 4:3-7

PLEASE NOTE:

This week's guide is a little different from our typical format. We are trying some new approaches as we make the shift to match the schedules of the Durham and Raleigh East campuses in our weekly study of Scripture. The guide for this week will be closely linked with the actual sermon that was preached on this passage, and while there is no application section, per se, the application, instructional, and prayer components are tied together in the Sermon Notes below.

Sermon Notes

The quality of something depends on a person's ability to do that thing. The greater the ability, the greater the outcome. Because of Jesus' all-surpassing greatness and authority, He changes our past, redefines our present, and dictates our future. He has the ability to do that perfectly. This is all because of WHO HE IS.

Jesus, who is God, is . . .

- Powerful and effective in His words (John 1)
- Healer (gospels)
- Preeminent (Colossians 1)
- Authority over all / King of kings / Lord of lords (Revelation 19)
- Radiant (1 Timothy)
- Supreme in wisdom (Isaiah)
- Supreme in his providence / provision (Luke)
- Compassionate and Merciful (Hebrews)
- Humble (Philippians)
- Slow to anger / Patient with us (Peter)
- Lifegiver (Ezekiel)
- and MORE . . .

It's helpful to examine our self-ascribed identity. In doing this, we will see the limits of our ability to do anything good apart from Christ. We will also see more clearly our sin from which Jesus has saved us and from which He has ultimately given us freedom. When we see it, we should confess it and know that God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). When considering our self-ascribed identities, we should ask ourselves what defines us, what most often gives meaning and purpose to our lives. This will help us see what our hearts love, because we will ultimately become more and more like that which we love, and knowing what we sometimes love more than we love God again frees us up to repent ongoing in a healthy, hearty way, falling more and more in love with our Savior, becoming more and more like Him in the flesh as He changes us, even the desires of our hearts, to become more like Him. Here is a helpful list of questions worth asking ourselves or having others ask us that can help us see what we truly love and why:

- What defines you?
- What most often gives meaning and purpose to your life?
- Where do you spend most of your time online?
- Why do you spend the time there?
- What do you think that "thing" is going to do for you?

- What are you reading?
- Why are you reading it?
- What are your political views?
- What do you value that leads to these views?
- Who are your friends?
- Why are they your friends?
- What do you spend money on?
- What makes your heart happy?
- What makes you most worried?
- Why do you feel you have to be understood?
- What are you convinced will bring you safety / security?
- What gives you hope?

We would be wise to remember that if we are at the center of our desires, they will enslave us, because we will ultimately be serving ourselves, not God. This is the nature of the sin of humanity, our self-serving narcissism. What is God's response to this self-centeredness? He pursues us in the face of our outright rebellion. He loves us first so that we will be changed. He restores us. He prepares a place for us to be with Him forever. He brings us home. He does these good things because HE ALONE IS GOOD.

God's work of defeating sin is finished, and this is truly the most amazing news, for though we were once defined by narcissism and self-centered desire, we no longer bow to the whims of our evil desires. No, instead, we bow to Christ alone, who has given us a completely new identity in Christ alone. Galatians 2:20 says this:

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.

Because of who Jesus is, His work done on our behalf is perfect and complete. Because of that perfect and complete work, we are new creations in Christ, alive by His power, and holy in His sight. Praise God.

Pray to God that we would live according to our true identities in Christ.

Pray that the Father would draw people to Himself through the truth of His Word.

Pray for conversions of the doubters and seekers who are among us.

Sources

- Prayer
- Tyler Jones