

Why There Was Never Plan B

(and why you don't need it anyway)

Sunday 7th January 2024

GALATIANS 2:17-21

 I want you to see today that God has no plan B and why you don't need it. Let us start in verse 17 of chapter 2,

But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, *is* Christ therefore a minister of sin? Certainly not!

Paul's birth placed him deeply into the Jewish faith, its culture, and of course a life that would be defined by the laws given to Moses. To find justification in Christ alone, he would have to abandon a lifetime of efforts and success based on that famous law and his meticulous obedience to every jot and tittle.

To say, as a sinner, "I am justified through Christ alone" (considered perfect in the eyes of God) does not mean Jesus approves of my sin. Certainly not! (said  Paul). **You have been placed deeply in this culture, and this culture says the same thing** – "Ah! You say Jesus saved you, but you sin. Well I guess Jesus is okay with your sin...right?! Certainly not says Paul.

 Paul moves on in verse 18,

For if I build again those things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor.

if I go about trying to rebuild the very thing I have taken down (and proved powerless to save) then to rebuild it would be a sin because to rebuild the law would be to say Christ's death and resurrection is in vain

 And here's why he couldn't rebuild (plan A) even if he wanted to,

For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God.

➤ Two things Paul is saying here: (1), you cannot keep rules to get to a life for God, and (2) you have to die to the idea of keeping rules if you want to live for God.

He hasn't just walked away from the law and kept the old 'plan A' on a shelf, just in case. He DIED to the law. Because the law had no power save? You might well wonder why rules cannot save us. Because a rule relies on something that

➤ does not exist naturally in anyone in this room – the perfect ability to keep it. As he says in Romans 8:3,

For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin...

➤ The law points you to someone else who HAD the power to save – to Christ alone. **The law was never plan A. It was never given by God to say 'try this' and if it doesn't work out I've got plan B (Jesus Christ). There was never a plan B.** Jesus Christ, crucified for our sins, was always THE Plan. The ONLY Plan.

➤ So let us finish with Paul and then see what this means for us today,

I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

So now Paul says it plainly. Me, myself, the old me, has been crucified with Christ. So what you see today is not me living, but Christ living in me. And how does this happen Paul? It happens only by faith in the Son of God.

➤ Paul finishes,

I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain.

▶ Never, ever, put grace on the sidelines, because grace is THE Plan and there is no plan B. Grace is not some second-rate effort by God to drag you into heaven. God's grace is the only means by which you can be saved – through the underserved and unearned gift of salvation in Jesus Christ alone.

Faith will fail you if it based on anything other than the finished work of Christ alone on the cross. That means dying to self is not the best option, it is the only option.

Consider the simplest of commands ever given in Acts 16:31 to the Philippian jailer and his family – 'So they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved',

▶ Everything – the whole law – is fulfilled in Him and points to Him, so you only need to believe on Him. You do not need to understand everything ever said in the Bible to come to Him. Remember Harriet's testimony how she thought she had to read the whole Bible before she could come to Christ before she could be baptised. And then God opened her eyes to see the truth!

You get into your car and start the engine and I bet not one person in this room can fully explain everything that happens under the bonnet of the car. In the same way you do not have to know it all or understand how it all works before you come to Christ. You can come today.

Why do you feel like you must have a complete faith before you come to Jesus? That's like resurrecting plan B all over again. Let's remind ourselves again of

▶ Paul's words in Romans chapter 10, to verse 14,

How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?

▶ There is not a single mention of faith coming about by understanding, or doing, or obeying.

You have heard of faith. I have declared Jesus to you and shown you from the Scriptures how He is God's plan A for your life. Now, will you believe?

To you who call yourself believers, do not set aside God's grace.

So, how do we make sure we do not put grace to one side and slip right back into a doing-to-get mindset? If my life and its outcomes are a result of my effort to earn my salvation or somehow improve my standing with God then why did Jesus die? (It was pointless).

➤ Are you in need of the acceptance of men? Do you need your friends' approval? Do you need to be liked to wake up happy?

➤ Another way to keep grace at the centre is this. If Christ really died for you then live as a fully forgiven person. If you are forgiven of everything through can you forgive the next offender that comes your way.

➤ Another way to remember grace. I think one of the biggest problems with New Years resolutions is they rely on you waking up with the same sense of determination day after day after day. And you are not good at that are you?

Jesus on the other hand commands us to concern ourselves with today. 'Do not worry about tomorrow' and 'today is the day of salvation' and 'call on Him while He is near'.

➤ To keep grace front and centre, do not put off to tomorrow what you should take care of today. Don't put off that prayer. Don't put off that phone call. Don't put off that conversation. Don't put off saying, "Yes!" to God's calling on your life. Don't put off calling for that appointment. Don't put off that conversation with your spouse.

➤ Today you can come to Him and trust Him.

Today you can humble yourself and let me know you have believed and now you desire to obey and follow Jesus in baptism.

Today you can submit yourself to God's calling and give yourself to His service.

Keep grace front and middle because has a greater power to transform you than any other date on the calendar, any persuasion from a friend, any law from God. Grace, literally, can change anyone and anything.