



Sunday 18th July 2021

Galatians 2 v 11-21

Text: 'So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law.' Galatians 2 v 16 (part of)

This morning our passage from Galatians, starts with the early church in confusion and it has to be said that Paul (the author of this letter) has not helped the situation. That the early church in confusion is not surprising as it was trying to work out how to establish itself when the dominate religion was Judaism. Remember Jesus, God's only Son, was brought up a Jew, but through his death and resurrection he gave new life to all believers. Last week Sue reminded us of how Paul had his life changed by God. Today in this passage we have Paul admitting that he was wrong in his initial assessment of Cephas (Peter).

I wonder, have any of us ever been in a situation where people expect you to do one thing, but you do the opposite. Maybe there have been times when you have got alongside someone or group of people that many others wouldn't have gone to at all. Some people may have thought you were very silly doing this, but after a while they have changed their minds when they saw what you were able to achieve. I am reminded of Mother Teresa, she gave up everything she had to live and work amongst the poorest in the middle east.

Sometimes people judge others by their appearance, I have had this happen to me. Once I was asked to play the part of a tramp in a service. I arrived late at the service, after sitting on the church wall outside watching everyone going in. Then sat in the service and didn't take any part in the service until it was time to take my part in the play. Even after the service as we gathered for coffee, many people didn't know how to treat me and stayed away from me.

At Stanground, I feel that we are good at welcoming all people and treating them as equals regardless of their background or what they look like. Unfortunately, in the early church that Paul is writing to this was not the case. There is debate as to which group of churches this letter was written to, it could have been to those in North Central Asia, that Paul had visited on his 2nd missionary journey or possibly those in Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe, where Paul founded churches on his 1st missionary journey. Whichever group of churches the letter was written to, they were churches that Paul knew and helped to establish. Paul starts this section as I said, with a conflict, he has publicly said that Peter (Cephas) was wrong when helping to set up the church because he sat with and got along side, gentiles- i.e., those who were not Jews and not circumcised. Remember that at this time there was still the understanding that unless you were circumcised you couldn't be accepted into the Jewish faith, and many in the early church thought this applied to Christian as well. Paul goes on in verse 15 to basically say that those born as Jews were better than those who aren't (Gentiles). But he then says that it does not matter if you are born a



Jew or Gentile, God loves and accepts you just the same. In verses 19-22 Paul says that we all need to live by faith in God, putting all our trust in God. Yes, we all still need to obey the laws of the land, but we also need to listen to what God is telling us to do.

In my mind, it would appear that Peter had done the best thing he could to get to know the people of this early church, he went to them, listened, talked and ate with them. This to me, is the best way to get to know people, be among them. They can also get to know you; see how you behave and hopefully learn to trust you. Peter having done this, was able to share the message of God's love and help the early church to grow, even though these people were not Jews who had converted to the new way.

Today we are challenged to do the same, live by faith in God, remember the text that I choose from this passage 'So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law.' Galatians 2 v 16 (part of).

This means that we have to trust, that God will only put us in situations where he can use our gifts that come from him. We also need to remember that God does not look at the outside of people he looks at the inside to see how wonderful they are. This means that we should do our best to treat others with respect. In the Sermon on the Mount there is a section in Matthew chapter 7 verses 1-6 that reminds us not to judge others without first getting our lives straight and sin free with God, then in verse 12 we are all reminded 'So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets'.

Our challenge from this passage, is to live our life the way that God needs us to for his glory. To listen to God, we need to make time for him every day, to be quiet and listen to his still small voice. Having listened to it, we need to act on it. If we can do this, we can play our part in building God's Kingdom here in Stanground and wherever he places us.

I hope and pray that each one of us will continue to make time to listen to God every day and then act upon what he tells us. Let each one of us continue to accept everyone as an equal, treat them as we would like to be treated ourselves, as we help build God's Kingdom here on earth.

AMEN