

CWA- Epistle Lesson – Nov 2, 2014 - Lutheran Reformation - Kieth Bernard Kuschel

Faith Evangelical Lutheran Church - 377 E Lincoln Trail Blvd– Radcliff, KY 40160

### Galatians 5:1-6

(1) It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery. {2} Mark my words! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all. {3} Again I declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole law. {4} You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace. {5} But by faith we eagerly await through the Spirit the righteousness for which we hope. {6} For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.

Explain Luther Rose

Reformation is about Freedom

I. Freedom from Law (grace)

A. Text

1. Struggle: Jesus plus OT Law
2. Circumcision = whole OT Law
3. Law is opposite of grace/ Christ of no value

B. Luther

1. Jesus plus laws of the church
2. Jesus plus lifestyle of monk
3. Indulgences replaced Jesus for people
4. Justification is God's action

C. Us

1. Law as a mirror is good
2. Law as guideline is good
3. Jesus frees us from guilt & punishment of sin
4. Status with God not based on Law

II. Freedom from Fear (faith)

A. Text

1. Struggle: How do I feel confident
2. Add more laws
3. Eagerly awaiting comes from faith

## B. Luther

1. Luther was afraid of God
2. Luther tried to produce more righteousness
3. Confidence only attained because of Jesus

## C. Us

1. Fear not removed by godliness
2. Fear not removed by feelings
3. Fear removed by Jesus (faith)

## III. Freedom from Ignorance (Scripture)

### A. Text

1. People challenged Paul's teaching
2. Reinforced what humans think anyway
3. Solution = Paul's words

### B Luther

1. Teachings of Jesus buried
2. Ignorance of middle ages/lack of bible
3. Solution - Luther - professor of Bible

### C. Us

1. Xty is being challenged everywhere
2. No excuse for ignorance
3. We have the Bible; need to know it

Freedom - Reformation better than political

IA1 The congregations in the province of Galatia were struggling. The question that was behind their struggle was the question with which we all struggle. "How can I be right with God?" Can anybody give me the big word for the concept of how to be right with God? It is used in the verses before us today. Justification. Paul had taught these congregations that a person can only be right with God because of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. These congregations had believed that, but now they were questioning where the Old Testament law fits in. Are we right with God because of Jesus only? Or, are we right with God because of Jesus and because we have been circumcised?

2 Paul answers that question in verse 3: Again I declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole law. Paul wants us to understand that this is an all or nothing situation. You can't just pick one piece of the Old Testament law and say that helps make you right with God. If you insist that Old Testament law helps make you right with God, then you must attempt to keep it all.

3 But that is not the worst consequence. Paul wrote: I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all. {4} You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace. Being declared right with God by grace is the opposite of being declared

right with God on the basis of law. If I insist that I want God to declare me right with Him on the basis of my keeping of the Old Testament Law, I can't expect that I am going to be declared right with God because God loves me even though I don't deserve it. One excludes the other.

B1 Martin Luther struggled with the question, "How can I be right with God?" He was taught by his church that he could be right with God because of Jesus and if he would follow the laws of the church. If he confessed his sins to the priest and did penance, then he could be right with God. If he attended mass, so that he could receive the forgiveness of sins made available when the priest re-sacrificed Jesus in an unbloody manner, then he could be right with God. If through Baptism he became a member of the church which could trace a connection directly back to Jesus and His apostles, then he could be right with God.

2 "How can I be right with God?" He was taught that if he adopted a lifestyle dedicated to God, he could be right with God. If he didn't have a job to support himself, but instead separated himself from the regular world, then he could be right with God. If he not only talked to God when needed, but had a regular schedule of prayer and worship six times a day, then he could be right with God. If he didn't marry, and didn't wear normal clothing, and didn't eat regular food, then he could be right with God.

3 "How can I be right with God?" Luther's congregation was taught that they needed to do all the penance that they had been assigned in order to be right with God. Penance is the action assigned by the priest to the penitent sinner. Action intended to prove that a person was thankful for the forgiveness given by the priest because of the death of Jesus. Luther's congregation was taught that they could buy indulgences. These were assurances from the Pope that the penance people were doing in purgatory would be canceled. That became a huge issue when people told their pastor Martin Luther that they no longer needed Jesus' forgiveness because they had purchased something that made them right with God.

4 Luther challenged the indulgence issue. He did so for the same reason that Paul challenged circumcision in the verses before us today. I, Luther, tell you that if you buy indulgences to earn forgiveness, Christ will be of no value to you at all. {4} You who are trying to be justified by purchasing indulgences have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace. Being declared right with God by grace is the opposite of being declared right with God on the basis of buying something. If I insist that I want God to declare me right with Him on the basis of my buying indulgences, I can't expect that I am going to be declared right with God because God loves me even though I don't deserve it. One excludes the other.

C1 The Law of God is a wonderful blessing. It is a mirror. It shows us our sins. We need a Savior. Without the Law we wouldn't know that.

2 The Law is also a guideline. When we ask, "Lord, how can we say thank you to You for all You have done for us," His answer is, "Use my Law to guide your

lives.”

3 Jesus, however, frees us from the Law. Paul wrote:(1) It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery. Jesus died on the cross to wash away our sins. That frees us from guilt. That also frees us from the punishment of death and hell that we deserve because of our sins.

4 We are right with God because of Jesus. That frees us from the Law as the basis for being right with God. The Lutheran Reformation is about freedom from Law. It is about Justification by grace alone.

IIA1 The Christians in the congregations in Galatia were real human beings, just like us. They weren't perfect. Their trust in the Lord wasn't perfect. Sometimes doubts would arise. Often they didn't feel absolutely confident about their status with God. “How do I get to feel absolutely confident that I am right with God?” Another question to struggle with.

2 If they caved into the “Jesus plus circumcision” idea on how to be right with God, there could be only one answer to this next question. The answer would be, “Do more.” Look at the Pharisees of Jesus' time. They didn't feel absolutely certain that they were right with God on the basis of keeping **God's** Old Testament Laws, so they added many more laws of their own. None of that works. Do you know why? God demands that we be perfect. The only way our conscience would stop bugging us is if we would be perfect. Since we can't be perfect, there is no way on the basis of doing things that we could ever be absolutely confident that we are right with God.

3 That is why Paul wrote: {5} But by faith we eagerly await through the Spirit the righteousness for which we hope. {6} For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love. Only when the Holy Spirit has led us to trust that Jesus lived in our place to cover us with His holiness are we going to eagerly wait for the righteousness that we are absolutely confident will be ours forever because of Jesus. That confidence will in turn lead us to live our lives to benefit others and to the glory of God.

B1 Martin Luther was afraid of God. That was an honest, proper reaction to the Law of God. He knew he was a sinner. He knew that he deserved to be punished by God. He knew that he could never stand before God and insist that he was right with God on the basis of what he did. Doing confession, penance and mass didn't help. Doing the special life style of a monk didn't help. He was still afraid of God.

2 How could he get rid of his fear of God? Do more. Do confession more than once a day. Add your own penance to what the priest assigned you. Become a priest a conduct the mass. Be a leader in the church. Be in charge of other monks. Take

pilgrimages. Beat yourself. Don't eat properly. Make up stuff to try to make God feel sorry for you so He wouldn't be angry with you.

3 Luther was afraid of God until he learned that God gives humans the righteousness of Jesus. Once Luther realized that when God looked at him, covered with Jesus righteousness, God was no longer angry with him, he wasn't afraid of God anymore. Then Luther could eagerly wait for the righteousness that would be his forever because of Jesus.

C1 "How do I get to feel absolutely confident that I am right with God?" Let's be honest first. Since nothing about us is perfect, we are never going to feel completely like that. Since we are sinners, we are never going to feel like that on the basis of our godliness. Although the Lord does point us to our godliness as evidence of our relationship with Him, it can never be the basis of our relationship with Him. We can't be perfect as God demands.

2 "How do I get to feel absolutely confident that I am right with God?" We also can't base our confidence on how we feel. Some days we feel pretty good about our relationship with God. Some days we don't. Sometimes I get scared when somebody says, "I am going to heaven because I believe." What if tomorrow is a bad day. What if tomorrow you have doubts?

3 "How do I get to feel absolutely confident that I am right with God?" {5}  
But by faith we eagerly await through the Spirit the righteousness for which we hope. God the Holy Spirit reminds me that I am right with God because Jesus' holiness covers me. God the Holy Spirit reminds me that that I will be right with God forever because Jesus' holiness covers me. The Lutheran Reformation is about freedom from fear. It is about Justification by faith alone.

IIIA1 Why were the Christians in the congregations in Galatia struggling over these questions? Hadn't Paul taught them that they were right with God because Jesus died to wash away their sins, lived and never sinned to give them His holiness and rose from the dead so that they would live forever? Yes, he had taught them those things. But people had challenged what Paul had taught. Especially for those who had lived their whole lives keeping Old Testament Law, the challenge that the Old Testament Law was necessary for salvation in addition to Jesus was especially difficult.

2 But it was very difficult for everybody. Why? Because all human beings on our own think that way anyway. How can you get to be right with God? What is the normal answer of the non-Christians in the human race? The answer is: do what is right. That is our conscience talking. So, when somebody comes into our lives and reinforces that concept that we must do what is right and then we will be acceptable to God, it's easy to agree.

3 What does Paul say about that? “Mark my words.” Your relationship with God is based on Jesus. You are forgiven because Jesus’ blood washes away your sins. You are holy in God’s sight because Jesus’ holiness covers you. You will live forever because Jesus rose from the dead.

B1 Why did Martin Luther think he had to do things to be right with God? Why was he afraid of God? Not because the teachings about Jesus had been challenged as in Galatia, but because the teachings about Jesus had been buried. The emphasis on doing confession buried why you were doing it. The emphasis on doing penance buried why you were doing it. The emphasis on doing mass buried why you were doing it. The emphasis on doing Baptism buried why you were doing it.

2 Why did people in Martin Luther’s day think they had to do things to be right with God? Why were they afraid of God? Not because the teachings about Jesus had been challenged as in Galatia, but because the teachings about Jesus were not available. There were few Bibles. They were written in Greek, Hebrew and Latin. Only the educated could read them. This was the middle ages. Nobody was educated but the rich. Nobody could read the Bible even if they had been written in people’s own languages.

3 Then Martin Luther was called to be a professor of the Bible at the University of Wittenberg. Universities were being established. The ignorance of the middle ages was going to be overcome. Luther and others came to trust in Jesus’ life, death and resurrection as the Holy Spirit used the Bible to work faith in their hearts.

C1 The teachings of Christianity are being challenged all the time everywhere today. Inside the Christian church leading theologians are denying even the basics of Christianity. Homegrown American religions like Mormonism and Jehovah’s Witnesses are directly contradicting the teachings of Christianity while claiming to be presenting the truth of the Bible. Islam is confronting Christianity throughout the world and using the military force of nations to crush any opposition.

2 We don’t have any excuse to be ignorant about Bible teachings. We can read. We can study. We have Bible classes. We have worship experiences where we listen to and study the Bible. Our church does not bury the teachings about Jesus.

3 We have the Bible. We need to use it. So that challenges about the teachings of Jesus don’t overwhelm us, and so that our own human ideas don’t take over in us. The Lutheran reformation is about freedom from ignorance. It is about through Scripture alone.

Freedom granted to us in the United States is wonderful. But freedom given to us by God and restored through the Lutheran Reformation is much better. Freedom from law, from fear and from ignorance. Thank you, Lord, for Martin Luther.