



The Power of Our Conviction

Bible Study Lesson written

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Purpose: The purpose of the following lesson is for students to evaluate the power of our conviction in Christ. Our conviction is the belief and faith we have that Jesus is the Christ. While this may seem obvious to those who claim allegiance to the Christian faith, we must acknowledge that we face subtle attacks to our faith and if we do not “draw a line in the sand” about the things we believe, we could find ourselves off base and far from God’s standard. My hope is that by the end of this lesson you and I have a renewed fervor for our stance for what we profess in Christ.

By the End of This Lesson, students should understand the following:

1. The Glory of our conviction
2. The Freedom of our conviction
3. The Transformation of conviction

Key Scripture: Galatians 6: 14-15

The context of Galatians:

Galatians was written by the apostle Paul in response to a major issue that occurred among the believers in the church at Galatia. The letter to the Galatians was written to a group of churches located in modern day Central Turkey. The believers who made up the churches were Jewish converts and Gentiles (non-Jewish believers) who heard Paul’s teaching on Christ. When one reads Galatians, a clear theme

emerges regarding an error in belief that was promoted by the Jewish converts. They were teaching that to be saved one must follow the Jewish circumcision requirements and have faith in Christ. Termed Judaizers, they were adding to the gospel of Jesus. Remember, Jesus taught salvation through faith and nothing else. By the time Paul writes the portion of the letter for the current lesson, he is moving towards his concluding thoughts about the issue.

I. The Glory of Our Conviction

In verse 14, Paul begins a thought regarding why we should only give glory to what happened on the cross. This thought come from the fact that circumcision was a way for the Jews to identify, physically, that someone is following the over 600 Mosaic laws found in the first five books of the Bible (The Torah).

The overall thought brings to mind the problem which necessitated Jesus' crucifixion in the first place. The thought is mankind will not obey God's laws.

Our faith, and faith alone, saves us!

Readers should understand that the fallen state of mankind which was introduced when Adam sinned against God (Genesis 3) puts all of us in a position of guilt (Romans 3:23, 6:23) which can only be paid by one who has not sinned (Jesus the Christ).

Therefore, circumcision sounds great but its effect is 0, but the effect of the cross is complete. We can give glory to God due to what He did through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus.

This idea is extremely important because it eliminates the ability for anyone to pridefully approach others as if they have no sin guilt. No one can celebrate their behavior because even the best of us is completely unworthy of forgiveness. Paul's conclusion is that we cannot boast because our behavior is not what saved us in the first place. Our faith, and our faith alone, saves us. Our faith in what Jesus did on the cross deserves glory and not a following of a set of laws which were intended to show man what they could not do instead of becoming a checklist to compare oneself with others. Thus, Jesus' commentary in Matthew 23: 27, about behavior, makes sense. What one looks like and does on the outside is not necessarily the reality of who they are on the inside. Especially, when their behavior is intended to have others celebrating them as if they are special.



Question: How have you tried to be *good* for Jesus and forgotten that your *goodness* does not save you, rather it is a response to you being saved?

II. The Freedom of Our Conviction

Paul follows with a comment about the crucifixion of the world to him, and himself to the world. The idea is that crucifixion frees us from the world. Have you ever considered that by faith, you and I receive power through the Holy Spirit to resist the behaviors, thoughts, and attitudes of the world? In the context of the Galatian church, Paul would have specifically meant the worldly attitudes that were creeping up in the churches he founded in the region. Worldly behaviors of pride and self-promotion were evident. Anytime one group suggests that they are better or more Christian than others because they think they are *the chosen* or *the best Christian*, a problem will arise.

How does this happen in modern times? We see it in the belief that certain churches have a monopoly on holiness over others because of their style of worship. We see it in the belief that only certain styles of buildings are holy. We see it in dress codes, song choice, order of worship, and many other preferential issues that become points of argument rather than opportunities to bring people into the fold. The entrenched attitudes of the Judaizers had become a barrier to people's salvation and was unnecessarily additive to their growth in Christ. Paul makes his argument clear in Galatians 3: 1 when he asks the straightforward question *Who has bewitched you?*

The freedom of our conviction is this: I am no longer a prisoner of worldly ideas and behaviors. The danger of this conviction is when I do not seek to find God's replacement for the worldly ideas and behaviors I must give up. The replacement comes from studying God's word. In order to exist in the freedom we have been given, we must learn how to be free from the world. The big question we must answer is: Am I really studying God's word to learn what it means to be His? If the answer is no, then you are at risk of being recaptured by worldly behaviors.

III. The Transformation of Our Conviction

Verse 15 is very comforting. Paul wrote that outward signs of holiness (circumcision) mean nothing. This is comforting because people will change their expectations and ideas about what looks *holy* even if it does not match up with scripture. Man's ideas are often self-serving and used to denigrate some and promote others. Paul reminds us that we are not to find salvation in our look, clothing, or practices which add to the simple requirement of faith in Jesus. No one needs to tarry for the Holy Spirit to come upon them, have some miraculous epiphany, do anything extra special, speak in tongues, etc. Salvation is simply believing in the gospel message that we are all sinners in need of a savior and God sent Jesus as our savior. We receive salvation by faith in Jesus. **SIMPLE faith and nothing more saves us.** Outward signs or lack thereof mean nothing. However, becoming a new creation means everything! When we accept Christ, we are transformed instantly into a saved person. This means we are safe from the punishment of sin. We are also transformed over time (if we choose and learn) as we become disciples of Jesus.

Simple faith and nothing more saves us!

The new creation theme is seen in various passages, primarily in 2 Corinthians 5: 17 and the transformation idea is expressed in passages such as Romans 12: 2. Each of us is saved by faith in Jesus, but then we must choose to become a disciple (learner) of Jesus so that our behaviors line up with God's will and our minds think as God thinks. As mentioned before, if we are not learning more about Jesus we are living at risk for immature behaviors and ungodly thinking.

Question: What role does Bible study play in you becoming a new creation? If you are inconsistent about study, how does this affect your new creation growth?

Conclusion: This lesson was intended to get you and I thinking about the truth of our conviction. We must continue to remind ourselves that we are saved by faith. We do not need anything else added to be saved. Christ died, was buried, and was raised which was enough to save the world. Your faith in Him is more than enough to save you. If we can be convinced of this, you and I will be headed in the right direction.