



water from rock

Selah: Stop, Look, Listen – March 9, 2023

The Lord be with you.

Hey, could you just give it to me quick? I hear that a lot these days, people on the go want a quick answer, they want in 140 characters or less just... Spare me the details. Tell me quick what counts. What counts in being a Christian? Do you ever wonder about that? But what does count? And being a Christian. When you boil it all down, after all the sermons you've heard, all the books you've read, when you get down to its essence, what counts in being a Christian? Well, I can't answer that. Or should I say the Apostle Paul can answer that. That out of the 66 books in the Bible, the 1,188 chapters. It comes down to this, Paul says in Galatians 5:6, "For in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision nor un-circumcision counts for anything. The only thing that counts is faith working through love." Okay, we know what doesn't count circumcision and un-circumcision, the only thing that does count... Paul says, is faith working through love.

Now, let me set the background for this verse, as we see that some of the Jews in churches in Galatia who have become Christians, they are preaching circumcision and Jesus. They're telling people, you know, it's great that you believe in Jesus, but if you really wanna be saved, you also need to be circumcised. Well, Paul will have nothing of that. So here in this verse, Paul is tackling the false teaching, he's tackling the false gospel that circumcision or any other kind of works that it would help a person merit or earn salvation. This is flat out legalism, that says we make ourselves acceptable to God by keeping rules.

It amounts to salvation by works, that we are saved, that we make ourselves acceptable to God by things that we do, rather than by faith in what Jesus has done. You see, legalism is always saying, Do, Do, Do Do. The Gospel says, Done. The Gospel says that we need not fear the day of judgment because we have been put right with God, not by what we have done, not by our works, but by God's grace through faith. Believing the good news of Jesus and what Jesus has done. So here, Paul is saying that he really couldn't care less whether you're a circumcised or uncircumcised, because it doesn't matter, it's all useless in ever-earning salvation. For in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision nor un-circumcision counts for anything. In Christ Jesus, he says In Christ Jesus, that means that when we put faith in Jesus, God makes us new creatures in Christ, we are a new creation, we are joined to Christ, we are in union with Christ, so that circumcision and un-circumcision, it counts for nothing. The only thing that counts is faith working through love. I wish I could preach this in every church in America.



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The only thing that counts is faith, working through love. I often tell people that I am a Pharisee in recovery, and I say that because I know what it is to live in legalism, church legalism in which we try to win God's love, we try to win God's approval by what we do, and it's like running the hamster wheel. We never know if we've done enough. It's where we take the pure gospel of Jesus Christ and what He has done, and we make it into something we do, the gospel plus something. One day when we stand before Jesus to give account. The only thing that counts is faith, working through love, faith. That's trust in the good news of God's love for you and me. Faith and the good news that God has set us right with Him through Jesus Christ, and when we have this faith that God loves us and he loves us just as we are, you know that faith does something to us that changes us, it becomes faith working through love, it is faith. That is love inspiring. This faith is not just an intellectual faith, but a faith that reaches the heart, not of faith just in orthodoxy, write doctrine, but a faith in God's love that moves us. A faith, working through love. I remember the day when, after years of church legalism, I really began to believe that God did love me, that he loved me just as I am, and you know, I felt myself loving Him, loving Him, not just trying to keep the rules, not just trying to be good, but loving God.

What does the Book of 1 John say, but we love God because He first loved us. Have you let yourself being moved by the love of God for you? A love so great that God gave His only Son for you. A love so great that he wants to spend eternity with you. When my boys were growing up, I wanted them to be sure of my love for them, I never wanted them to have a reason to doubt my love. I didn't want them to ever worry about whether or not I love them, I know you parents can understand what I'm saying, Well, you know, God never want you to worry about His love, to ever doubt his love.

I find it easy today to be like the Galatians, to drift into adding to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, where we have our rules, we have our things to do that almost unconsciously, we add to being a Christian, it becomes Jesus plus something. As if Jesus isn't enough. And then Paul says the only thing that counts is faith working through love. You see the link that there is between the love of God, having faith in the love of God and you and me loving him, loving others. Out of the 66 books of the Bible, it comes down to this, that here is what counts for time and eternity. The only thing that counts is faith working through love.

Loving Father, we thank you for loving each one of us as if there were only one of us, thank you for proving your love for us, and then while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Help us by Your grace to live for the thing that really matters, the one thing that really counts, growing faith in your love, that would inspire and energize love in us. Amen.

I am Tim Smith, a fellow traveler. Thanks for listening, until next time.