

PARADIGMS & PARADOXES

PART 2



1

INTRODUCTION

- In Part 1 of **Paradigms & Paradoxes**, I shared how deeply rooted **faulty presumptions** about the will and ways of **God** can hinder us greatly in our faith.
- So **important** is this that the Apostle Paul made it one of the priorities in his ministry.
- As he said,
 - *The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish **strongholds**.* (2 Cor. 10:4)
 - *We demolish **arguments** (ideas) and every **pretension** (claim) that sets itself up against the **knowledge of God**, and we take captive every **thought** to make it obedient to Christ.* (2 Cor. 10:5)

2

INTRODUCTION

- Why this is so important is because we live in a world where **truth** and/or its application is not always so **self-evident**.
- We are not only bombarded with **false assumptions** on how to serve God by **false teachers** and the **spirit that is in this world**, but we also have **passions** and **desires** inside us that war against our soul.
- Nevertheless, God has given us His **Holy Spirit** who can help us not only with **power** and **strength**, but discernment and direction—if we walk in God’s Word/Truth.
- Therefore, working with the right **paradigms** (ideas) is a must because as we walk in **God’s word**, we grow in our knowledge of God and gain the **“mind of Christ.”**

3

INTRODUCTION

- In last month’s sermon, I shared how **paradigms shifts** can remove **paradoxes (contradictions)** that confuse us on understanding **basic biblical truths**.
- For instance, I was taught as a new Christian that the **Book of Galatians** was about a church that was trying to merit God’s grace by following rules instead of accepting God’s grace by faith.
- This has always troubled me because the New Testament is full of **moral imperatives** and the Apostle Paul makes it quite clear in Galatians that the only thing that counts is **faith expressing itself through love**. (Galatians 5:6)
- So then, this was for me a **paradox**.

4

INTRODUCTION

- After doing a lot of research on this **paradox** I saw that many others had been working on this problem and found a **solution**.
- The solution was on how we interpret the phrase **“works of the law.”**
- According to the **New Perspective on Paul** the **“works of the law”** is not about **legalism**, but a reference to what Jews believe fulfilled the **Mosaic Law**, which included things such as circumcision, observance of special days, food laws, and Sabbaths.
- Therefore, **freedom** that Paul mentions in Galatians is not freedom from **moral obligations**, but freedom from **religious/ ceremonial obligations** connected directly or indirectly to the **Mosaic Law**.

5

INTRODUCTION

- Why this is so **very important** is because there are many who are **enemies** of the **cross of Christ**. [See Phil. 3:18]
- People who discount the importance of following **Christ’s commands** and use **grace** as a cover for compromise and a license for immorality are everywhere.
- They deliberately use **paradoxes** to create confusion and in fact build **strongholds** that keep people from **walking in the truth** and **growing in their knowledge of God**.
- So tonight, I want to continue my sermon on **Paradigms & Paradoxes** by helping us to understand **God’s Word** better so that we can gain the **“mind of Christ”** and walk in **victory**.

6

NOT BY WORKS

- In **Romans 9:12** and **Ephesians 2:9** there is a phrase that is used by a lot with Evangelicals.
- It is the phrase, **“not by works.”**
- During the Reformation this phrase was used quite extensively against the **Roman Catholic** doctrine of **election**, which was based upon the **ritual** of water baptism—even infants.
- However, not all **Reformers** interpreted this phrase correctly either.
- And today many **Protestants** have a **misguided assumptions** as to what it really teaches and how it is to be applied.

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ROMANS 9

- The context of **Romans 9** is very important for us to understand the phrase **“not by works.”**
- In fact, if you can understand Romans 9, you will have an important **key** to understanding the whole New Testament.
- The primary issue in Romans 9 is the Apostle Paul explaining
 - the **failure** of Israel, and
 - how a **people so zealous for God** could be so **blind** and not discern that Jesus was the Christ.

8

ROMANS 9

- Paul starts off this section by declaring upfront that he is in **great anguish** and **anxiety** for his people.
 - For I could **wish** that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my **own race**, (Rom 9:3)
 - the **people of Israel**. (Rom 9:4)
- But then in speaking about their **failure** he says this, . . .
 - It is not as though **God's word** had failed. (Rom 9:6)
 - For not all who are **descended from Israel** are Israel. (Rom 9:6)

9

ROMANS 9

- So then, the essence of Israel's failure was their **spiritual pedigree**.
 - In other words, it is not the **natural children** who are God's children, but it is the **children of the promise** who are regarded as **Abraham's offspring**. (Rom 9:8)
 - For this was how the **promise** was stated:
 - "At the **appointed time** I will return, and Sarah will have a son." (Rom 9:9)

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ROMANS 9

- Paul goes on to further explain this principle by using the birth of the twins, **Esau & Jacob**.
 - Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad – in order that God's **purpose in election** might stand: **not by works but by him who calls** – she was told, (Rom 9:11-12)
 - "The older will serve the younger." Just as it is written: **"Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated."** (Rom 9:13)

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ROMANS 9

- So then, the reason why God chose Jacob over Esau even before they were born was to show that **election** is His **sovereign choice**.
- What then shall we say? **Is God unjust? Not at all!** (Rom 9:14)
 - For he says to Moses, "I will have **mercy** on whom I have mercy, and I will have **compassion** on whom I have compassion." (Rom 9:15)
 - It does not, therefore, depend on **man's** desire or effort, but on **God's mercy**. (Rom 9:16)

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ELECTION

- Some of you may by now be thinking of what is referred to as **Predestination** or hard determinism.
- Where before **people** were even born, God chose who would go to heaven and who would go to hell.
- I personally don't believe this doctrine and instead believe that God makes His choice of **election** after we're born not before.
- He does this by examining (unaware to us at the time) the **attitude of our heart** when we interact with the Spirit of truth—the Holy Spirit, through our conscience.
- Do we mourn, grieve, and lament over our **poor spiritual state**, or do we justify ourselves, argue with the Holy Spirit, and harden our hearts.

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ELECTION

- I believe that those who take responsibility for their sin and judge themselves find **grace**.
- God gives them **grace—eyes that see and ears that hear**, so that when the **Gospel of Christ** is accurately preached they respond with **faith**.
 - *He [Jesus] replied, "The **knowledge** of the **secrets of the kingdom of heaven** has been given to you, but not to them."* (Matt 13:11)
 - *"Whoever **has** will be given more, and he will have an abundance.* (Matt 13:12a)
 - *Whoever **does not have**, even what he has will be taken from him."* (Matt 13:12b)

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ELECTION

- But those who **harden** their hearts and **ignore** the voice of the **Holy Spirit** become **darkened**.
 - *In them is fulfilled the prophecy of **Isaiah**:*
 - *"You will be ever **hearing** but never understanding; you will be ever **seeing** but never perceiving."* (Matt 13:14)
 - *For this people's **heart** has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes.* (Matthew 13:15a)
 - *Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and **turn**, and I would heal them.* (Matthew 13:15b)
 - *But **blessed** are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear.* (Matthew 13:16)

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THE VERDICT

- **Light** has come into the world, but men **loved darkness** instead of light because their deeds were evil. [...]
- But whoever lives by the truth comes into the **light**, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has **done** has been done through God." (John 3:19-21)
- Those who **listen to their conscience** will respond to the preaching of the Gospel as they already have **grace** (not by works) to **believe** the Good News of God's Salvation through Jesus Christ.
- However, those who **harden their hearts** because they don't want to change, won't receive the Gospel as they hate the **light** (truth).

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ELECTION

- So then, when we see the phrase in the New Testament, “**not by works,**” it is referring to **God’s sovereign choice in election.**
 - *It does not, therefore, depend on **man’s desire** or effort, but on **God’s mercy.** (Rom 9:16)*
- Again, I do not believe God **arbitrarily** selects people randomly, unless He is wanting to make a point in His plan of salvation.
- He makes **His judgment** based upon the **attitudes of people’s hearts**, when the Holy Spirit interacts with their conscience.
- Do they **humble themselves**, take responsibility for their poor choices, or do they ignore and harden their **hearts** towards the Spirit of truth?

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ROMANS 7

- The best example of an **elect person**, before they come to Christ is the man in Romans 7.
- In this illustration, Paul describes an **individual** who wants to do good, but for some reason can’t as he is still a **slave to sin.**
- *So I find this **law** (principle) at work:*
 - *When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my **inner being** I delight in God’s law; but I see another law at work in the **members of my body**, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a **prisoner of the law of sin** at work within my members. (Rom 7:21–23)*
 - *What a **wretched man** I am! **Who will rescue me from this body of death?** (Rom 7:24)*

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ROMANS 7

- **Thanks be to God – through Jesus Christ our Lord!** (Rom 7:25)
- *Therefore, there is now **no condemnation** for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the **law of the Spirit** of life set me free from the law of sin and death. (Rom 8:1–2)*
- [Nevertheless], we have an **obligation** – but it is not to the **sinful nature**, to live according to it. For if you live according to the **sinful nature**, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, because those who are led by the **Spirit of God** are sons of God. (Romans 8:12–14)
- In other words, once an **elect person** comes to faith in Christ, they become a **new creature in Christ** and are **set free from the power of sin**, so that they can carry out the good intentions they have in their hearts and become a **follower/disciple** of Jesus Christ.

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REDEMPTION IN CHRIST JESUS

- *For what the **law** [Torah] was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the **sinful nature**, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a **sin offering**. And so he condemned sin in sinful man, in order that the **righteous requirements of the law** might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit. (Rom 8:3–4)*
- In other words, Jesus paid the **ransom** for our sins, so that we could freely **pursue** the will of God.
- For those who hunger and thirst for righteousness this is “**good news**” as we no longer will need to mourn and grieve over our **poor spiritual state** because through Christ we are **more than conquerors.**

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CONCLUSION

- God has called us and saved us by His **grace**.
- He has **hand selected** us to be on His team and rule and reign with His Son, Jesus Christ, both now and into eternity.
- Not because of anything we have done, but because the **Holy Spirit** saw in us a **humble heart** and **contrite spirit**.
- Therefore, God by His **sovereign grace** gave us eyes that see and ears that hear, so that when the Gospel was preached we could respond with **faith** in Jesus Christ and **repentance** toward God.
- *When the **Gentiles** heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord; and all who were **appointed (called)** for eternal life **believed**.* (Acts 13:48)

21

CONCLUSION

- On the cross, **Jesus** paid for our sins ransoming us from **Satan's power**; giving us the **freedom** and **power** to follow Christ and do God's will.
- Now motivated by **faith** and empowered by the **Holy Spirit**, we can walk out Jesus' commands and see **God's faithfulness** to His promises and to our prayers.
- Since, we are **special** to God no good thing will he withhold from those who **love him** and are called to **His purposes**.
- AMEN

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