

INTRODUCTION 引言

How would you feel if you spent a lot of effort but did not get the result you were hoping for? A lady named Sabine from Belgium had that experience. She was supposed to pick up a friend from a train station in Brussels. In the end, a 90-mile journey turned out to be 900 miles! Like most people do, Sabine entered the address to the GPS. She expected the device to guide her to the right place. For some reasons, Sabine ignored all the hints that she was going the wrong way. They include the time she spent, the distance she drove and the language change on the road-signs. She did not stop until she arrived in Croatia. By then she had wasted much time and gas. Sabine thought she could reach the destination when she came to the wrong place. Many people firmly believe that they will go to heaven. Unfortunately, they do not follow the right path God has set. Paul wrote a letter to some believers in Galatia because they had a similar confusion. The area is in the nowadays Turkey. A majority of believers there were Gentiles. Some Jewish Christians in Jerusalem insisted that Gentiles must become Jews first before they could become Christians. In particular, they had to go through circumcision and they must observe the Old Testament Law. In chapter 1 of the book, Paul strongly condemns that those who preached such a “different gospel” should be cursed. There is only one gospel that God saves us by grace through accepting Jesus. It makes no difference whether a person is a Jew or a Gentile. Today, we do not follow the Jewish Law. However, the idea of salvation by good works is deeply ingrained in our mind. We know that there is no free lunch. We must work hard to earn something valuable. Doing good works is similar to obeying the Law. People mistakenly think that they can earn salvation by their effort. However, Paul explains that good works do not qualify us for salvation, but salvation qualifies us to do good works.

EXPLANATION 解釋

1. Dead to the Law 向律法死 (v. 17-19)

Paul compares the attempt to earn salvation by good works versus to receive salvation through faith. He stresses that true believers are already dead to the law. In other words, they have been liberated from the restriction of the Law. God gave the Law to the Israelites through Moses. The Law defines God’s standard for right versus wrong. It also gives people instructions on how to worship God and how to maintain a fair society. God never told people that they could be saved by observing the Law. People in the Bible times had that huge misunderstanding. Some Jews still hold that idea even after they became Christians. It affects how they see their relationship with the Law and with the Lord. Paul had to correct them. Verse 17 needs some work to understand: **But if, in our endeavor to be justified in Christ, we too were found to be sinners, is Christ then a servant of sin? Certainly not!** In modern terms, “to be justified in Christ” means to be saved by believing Jesus. “Justified” is a legal word meaning not guilty in court. A defendant can be set free. When God saves us, He washes away all our sins – past, present and future. Therefore, Christians are sinless before God. But some people claim that if salvation is that easy and complete, it will encourage people to live an undisciplined life. Who will still follow God’s Law if they are told that they are now free? It is like few people will live a frugal life if they are

adopted by a billionaire. The new dad will take care of all the bills! Paul argues that if believers assume a life indulged in sins, then Jesus would be seen as promoting sin. That conclusion is absurd because Jesus will not tolerate sin. Paul gives a strong remark: “Certainly not!” In verse 19, Paul describes the transition people go through when they are saved: **For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God.** By dying to the Law, it means stopping any attempt to earn salvation by obeying those regulations. Believers are liberated from the bondage of the Law and now they have freedom to obey God. Law is restrictive. If a street-sign reads 40, then you break the law when you drive 1 MPH over the limit. Also, law is all about obligations. You will be punished if you misbehave. You will not be rewarded if you live as a noble citizen. The problem is that law can easily lead to pride. People feel that they are morally better than the criminals in jail. That is why a lot of people firmly believe that they will go to heaven because they are good people. But the question is, how good is good enough? Who sets the standard of good? You, the government or God? It is obvious that the Master of heaven determines the rules. No one can go to heaven because he/she wants to. God makes the decision. Nowadays, you need to apply a visa to go to certain countries. The local government will decide whether or not to grant you permission to enter. God is holy. He demands His children to be perfect. That requirement alone cancels out any possibility to gain salvation by good works. We can only be perfect when Jesus washes away our sins. After we are saved, we continue to rely on the Lord to live a righteous life. Salvation is not a transaction to get admission to heaven. Salvation is a transition to make us more like Jesus on a daily basis. Although we no longer need to abide by the Old Testament Law, we still follow the spirit of the Law. Jesus once said that the whole Law can be summarized by two mandates: to love God wholeheartedly and to love others like ourselves. We will be like obeying the Law if we keep those two guidelines in mind when making decisions. The Bible is an instruction manual for Christians. It tells us what God asks us to do and what we should not do. It convicts us when we sin against Him. It also humbles us because we realize that we can only live a sinless life by relying on the Lord.

2. Alive in the Lord 在主裡活 (v. 20-21)

Paul says that he was dead to the Law. After he became a believer, he was alive in the Lord. Paul’s old self no longer existed. Subsequently, he received a new life. Verse 20 describes the same radical change in every Christian: **I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.** Paul says he was crucified with Christ. When we received Jesus, it was as if we went to the cross with Him too. Our old self, namely, our sinful past died with the Lord. As a result, when Jesus rose from the dead we too obtained a new life. Paul says from then on he lived by faith in Jesus. Paul’s life had a revolutionary change. He was a Law expert before he knew Jesus. He thought persecuting Christians was a right thing. He testifies in Philippians 3:7 as he looks back: **But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ.** In the passage, he says all that he bragged about before was like trash now. He does not mean that all the Bible knowledge he had and the good works he did were useless. But those accomplishments could not make him a righteous person before God. Now Paul had a new perspective. He understood that everything the Old Testament says points to Jesus. He now relied on the grace of God in his ministries. Also, he did everything for God’s glory. We went through the same conversion when we became Christians. Stop sinning is just part of the goal. At the same time, we should start doing what God sees as righteous. It is like avoiding serious diseases

is passive. A better approach is to stay healthy through diet and exercise. The same principle applies to the spiritual realm of things. We regain true freedom in the Lord. It is not a freedom to do all that we want. But it is the freedom to do all that we should. In the past, we were bound by our sinful nature. We could not control ourselves from sinning. But in Christ, we have the freedom to walk away from sin. Jesus does not only remove the eternal penalty of sin on us. He also enables us to overcome the power of sin. Think of it like switching to a new phone. You pull the SIM card from your current phone and insert it into the new device. After the activation process, the SIM card will control the functions of the new phone. Similarly, Christ will take over our lives when He lives in us. The internal change will be demonstrated by external change. We will act godly when God is in us. That causes anxiety in some seeker friends. They think that becoming believers will take away a lot of fun. They cannot smoke, drink, gamble and use bad language. They see attending church like being locked up in a monastery. They believe the church is collecting membership fee when it comes to money offering. They have those misconceptions because they are still focusing on themselves. I hope believers will not have a similar mindset. In Christ, we are no longer bosses or customers. Rather, we are servants of the Lord. He is our Master. The church is not just a religious organization. It is our spiritual home. We call each other brothers and sisters because we are in the same family. It is a privilege to serve our Master and fellow members. Do you prefer to receive or to give? Is there grumbling or joy when you serve? Is there reluctance or willingness when people invite you to serve? Christians are saved by grace. If earning salvation is no longer the motivation, then what is the purpose of good works? The answer is love. Jesus loved us first by dying for us. We respond to His love by serving Him. We serve God by serving people. The more we realize that we are undeserved of God's love, the more eager we should devote to good works. We love God back not only with words, but also with actions.

CONCLUSION 結論

Good works do not qualify us for salvation, but salvation qualifies us to do good works. Good works can never save us. But a saved life makes good works meaningful. God delights to use our lives for His purposes. Some years ago I attended a Christian conference. I had an opportunity to share at a morning devotion. I encouraged brothers and sisters with Galatians 2:20. I said that it is common to ask people you meet for the first time a simple question: "What do you do for a living?" For Christians, the question is not only what we do for a living, but also what we live for doing. You earn a salary by working 40 or 50 hours a week. If that is your final goal, then you are no different from a non-believer. Your career is also God's calling for you. It is your profession. You use the time at work to profess to others than you are a Jesus' follower. Paul's statement should be our constant reminder: "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me."

INTRODUCTION 引言

如果你花了很多功夫卻沒有得到期望的結果，你會有什麼感覺？在比利時有一位名叫薩賓的女士就有這樣的經驗。她本來要去布魯塞爾的一個火車站接一個朋友。最終，90 英里的旅程變成了 900 英里！像大多數人一樣，薩賓將地址輸入了 GPS。她希望那個儀器能夠引導她到達目的地。不知什麼緣故，薩賓沒有注意所有告訴她走錯路的提示。其中包括她所花的時間、行車的距離和路標已經改了別國的語言。直到抵達克羅埃西亞她才停下來。那時她已經浪費了很多時間和汽油。薩賓以為自己可以到達終點，但結果她來錯了地方。許多人堅信自己將會上天堂。很可惜，他們沒有按照神設定的正確道路。保羅寫一封信給加拉太的信徒，因為他們也有類似的困惑。該地區位於現在的土耳其。那裡的大多數信徒是外邦人。耶路撒冷的一些猶太基督徒堅持外邦人必須先成為猶太人，然後才能成為基督徒。特別是，他們必須接受割禮，並且遵守舊約律法。在書的第一章中，保羅強烈責備那些宣揚這種「別的福音」的人應該受到咒詛。只有一個福音，那就是神透過我們接受耶穌賜予的救恩。無論是猶太人還是非猶太人，都沒有差別。今天，我們不用遵守猶太人的律法。然而，透過行善得救的觀念在我們心中根深柢固。我們知道天下沒有免費的午餐。我們必須努力才能獲得有價值的東西。行善與遵守律法相似。人們錯誤地以為自己可以透過努力而得救。然而，保羅解釋說，善行並不能讓我們有資格得救，但得救卻使我們有資格行善。

EXPLANATION 解釋

1. Dead to the Law 向律法死 (v. 17-19)

保羅比較靠行善賺取救恩與透過信心得救。他強調，真正的信徒是已經向律法死。也就是說，他們已經從律法的束縛中解放出來了。神透過摩西向以色列人頒布了律法。律法定義了神對善惡的標準。它也指導人們如何敬拜神以及如何維持社會公平。神從來沒有告訴人們可以靠遵守律法而得救。聖經時代的人們有很大的誤解。有些猶太人即使在成為基督教徒之後仍然持有這種想法。它影響他們如何看自己與律法和與主的關係。保羅必須糾正他們。第 17 節需要花點功夫才能理解：**我們若求在基督裡稱義，卻仍舊是罪人，難道基督是叫人犯罪的嗎？斷乎不是！**用現代的文字來說，「在基督裡稱義」就是透過相信耶穌而得救。「稱義」是一個法律用語，意思是在法庭上定為無罪。被告人因此可以被釋放。當神拯救我們時，祂洗淨了我們所有的罪：過去的、現在的和將來的罪。因此，基督徒在神面前是無罪的。但有些人想，如果救贖如此簡單和徹底，它就會鼓勵人們過著沒有紀律的生活。如果有

人告訴他們現在自由了，誰還會遵守神的律法呢？就像很少人被億萬富翁收養後還會過著節儉的生活。新的爸爸將負責所有的帳單！保羅認為，如果信徒沉溺在罪中，那麼耶穌就會被視為鼓勵人犯罪。這個結論是荒謬的，因為耶穌不能容忍罪。保羅堅決地說：「斷乎不是！」。在第 19 節中，保羅描述了人們得救時所經歷的轉變：**我因律法，就向律法死了，叫我可以向神活著**。向律法死是指停止藉著遵守那些規條而得救的嘗試。信徒從律法的束縛中解放出來，現在他們可以自由地順服神。法律是限制性的。如果路標上寫著 40，那麼如果你的速度超過每小時 1 英里時就是犯法了。此外，法律都是有關義務的。如果你行為不正，你便會受到懲罰。但是如果你做個良好公民，沒有人會獎勵你的。問題是，法律很容易使人驕傲。人們覺得自己在道德上比監獄裡的罪犯更高尚。因此，很多人也以為自己會上天堂，因為他們是好人。但問題是，多好才算夠好？誰制定了好的標準？你、政府還是神？顯然，是天堂的主人說的才算數。沒有人可以因為自己想去天堂就能進去。是神做決定。如今，你需要申請簽證才能前往某些國家。當地政府決定是否允許你入境。神是聖潔的。祂要求自己的兒女完美無瑕。單憑這個要求就否定了透過行善能得救的可能性。只有當耶穌洗淨我們的罪時，我們才能變得完全。我們得救之後，繼續靠主過公義的生活。救恩不是進入天堂的一宗交易。救恩乃是一個轉變，讓我們每天變得更像耶穌。雖然我們不再需要遵守舊約律法，但我們仍然遵循律法的精神。耶穌曾經說過，所有律法可以歸納為兩個命令：全心全意地愛神和愛人如己。如果我們在做決定時記住這兩個原則，就等於遵守律法了。聖經是基督徒生活的說明書。它告訴我們神要求我們做什麼以及我們不應該做什麼。當我們得罪神之時，聖經就會定我們的罪。它也讓我們變得謙卑，因為我們明白唯有倚靠主才能過無罪的生活。

2. Alive in the Lord 在主裡活 (v. 20-21)

保羅說，他已經向律法死了。他成為信徒之後，他是在主裡活。保羅的舊我已經不再存在。從此，他獲得新生命。第 20 節描述了每個基督徒身上發生同樣的變化：**我已經與基督同釘十字架，現在活著的不再是我，乃是基督在我裡面活著；並且我如今在肉身活著，是因信神的兒子而活；他是愛我，為我捨己**。保羅說他與基督同釘十字架。當我們接受耶穌的時候，我們也好像和祂一起上了十字架。我們的舊我，就是我們犯罪的過去已經與主一同死去。結果，當耶穌從死裡復活時，我們也得到新生命。保羅說從那時起他是因著相信耶穌而活。保羅的生命發生了革命性的變化。在認識耶穌之前他是一位律法專家。他認為迫害基督徒是一件正確的事。他在腓立比書 3:7 回顧過去時如此見證：**只是我先前以為與我有益的，我現在因基督都當作有損的**。在這段經文章中，他說他以前引以為傲的一切現在都像垃圾一樣。他並不是說他的聖經知識和所做的善行都是無用的。但這些成就並不能使他在神面前成為一個義人。現在保羅有了新的觀點。他明白舊約所說的一切都指向耶穌。現在，他在傳道工作中依靠神的恩典。此外，他所做的一切都是為了神的榮耀。當我

們成為基督徒時，我們也經歷了同樣的變化。停止犯罪只是部分的目標。同時，我們也應該開始做神看為公義的事。這就像避免嚴重的疾病是被動的。更正面的態度是透過飲食和運動保持健康。同樣的原則也適用於屬靈的事情。我們在主裡重獲真正的自由。這並不是我們可以為所欲為的自由，乃是我們做該做的事情的自由。過去，我們被自己的罪性所束縛，我們身不由己地去犯罪。但在基督裡，我們有自由遠離罪惡。耶穌不只免除了罪的永遠懲罰，祂也使我們勝過罪的能力。想像一下就像換新手機一樣。你從舊的手機中取出 SIM 卡並將其插入新的手機。啟動過程完成後，SIM 卡將控制新手機的功能。同樣地，當基督活在我們裡面時，祂就會接管我們的生命。內在的改變會表現於外在的改變。當神在我們心中時，我們就會有敬虔的表現。這讓一些福音朋友感到不安。他們以為成為信徒會失去很多樂趣。他們從此不能吸煙、喝酒、賭博和說不雅的言語。他們認為去教會就像被關在修道院一樣。他們認為教會奉獻就像征收會員費。他們之所以有這些誤解，是因為他們仍然專注在自己身上。我希望信徒不要有類似的心態。在基督裡，我們不再是老闆或顧客。我們乃是主的僕人，祂是我們的主人。教會不只是一個宗教組織，它是我們屬靈的家。我們稱呼對方為弟兄姐妹，因為我們是一家人。能為我們的主和其他成員服務是我們的榮幸。你喜歡接受還是給予？當你服事的時候，有埋怨還是喜樂？當人們邀請你服事時，是勉為其難還是心甘情願？基督徒因恩典而得救。如果得救不再是動機，那麼善行的目的又是什麼？答案是愛。耶穌愛我們，祂為我們而死。我們透過服事祂來回應祂的愛。我們透過服事人來服事神。我們越明白到我們不配得到神的愛，我們就越應該熱衷於行善。我們不只用言語，也用行動來回報神的愛。

CONCLUSION 結論

善行並不能讓我們有資格得救，但得救卻使我們有資格行善。善行無法拯救我們，但得救的生命使善行變得有意義。神樂意使用我們的生命來實現祂的目的。幾年前，我參加了一個基督徒會議。我有機會在一次早上的靈修中分享。我用加拉太書 2:20 鼓勵弟兄姐妹。我說，我們經常會問第一次見面的人一個簡單的問題：「你以什麼謀生？」對基督徒來說，問題不只是我們為了生活而做的事情，也是我們活著為了做什麼。你每週工作 40 或 50 小時賺取薪水。如果那是你的最終目標，那麼你與非信徒沒有什麼分別。你的事業也是神對你的呼召。那是你的職業，也你利用工作時間向別人宣告你是耶穌跟隨者的機會。保羅的話應該時刻提醒我們：「現在活著的不再是我，乃是基督在我裡面活著。」