



Knox Presbyterian Church

20 Quebec Street
Guelph, ON N1H 2T4
Telephone: (519) 821-0141
Fax: (519) 821-8307

E-mail: office@knoxguelph.ca
Website: www.knoxguelph.ca

Rev. Johan Olivier
Minister

Anne Eaton
Pastoral Assistant

Chris Fischer
Director of Music Ministries

Wilma Welsh
Mission Coordinator

Jessie Bush
Session Clerk

STEPHEN MINISTRY



Rev. Dr. Arnold Bethune
Nancy Dickieson
Kathie Stirling
Stephen Leaders

*"Christ caring for People
through People"*

September 5, 2010

Galatians 2: (selected verses) (The Message)

"Paul says: "We are not set right with God by rule-keeping but only through personal faith in Jesus Christ. How do we know? We tried it—and we had the best system of rules the world has ever seen! ... Convinced that no human being can please God by self-improvement, we believe in Jesus as the Messiah so that we might be set right before God by trusting in the Messiah, not by trying to be good. Have some of you noticed that we are not yet perfect? (No great surprise, right?) What actually took place is this: I tried keeping rules and working my head off to please God and it didn't work. So I quit being a "law man" so that I could be God's man. Christ's life showed me how, and enabled me to do it. I identified myself completely with him. My ego is no longer central and I am no longer driven to impress God. Christ lives in me. The life you see me living is not "mine," but it is lived by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

Having just finished a series of letters focusing on The Beatitudes I think it is important to remind ourselves that as Paul says above: ***"We know very well that we are not set right with God by rule-keeping but only through personal faith in Jesus Christ"***. These teachings of Jesus, (Beatitudes) were *not* a new set of rules to be followed, (i.e. to replace the 10 Commandments) but rather a description of real circumstances as they exist through faith. Paul expresses that we are in a changed relationship with God through Christ. The conditions listed in the beatitudes (i.e. poor in spirit, mourning, meek, hungering and thirsting for righteousness, merciful, pure in heart peacemakers, and/or persecuted) are to be seen as circumstances to be accepted by the faithful. Jesus is well aware, and God can bring blessing when we remain faithful. We are called to trust that these are not the end of hope but rather tools to bring us even closer to God, (i.e. to bring blessing). Life without Christ would make us miserable indeed but as Paul says ***"Christ lives in me. The life you see me living is not "mine," but it is lived by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."***

Paul may be imprisoned, but this too is accepted as God at work providing him opportunities for witness and faith. There is an important difference between doing the work God calls us to do, and doing work we think would please God. Too often we make the decision as to what we should be doing, or what new mission our congregation should undertake. We need to learn how to listen for what God wants us to do. Too often we think we know best. Yes, even churches can get caught in this trap. It begins with our honest desire to do the right thing, to help others, to grow our congregations, to witness to others, etc. We often need to learn patience and to learn how to discern what God's will and work is. Even Jesus said, ***"I do the will of the One who sent me, finishing the work he started. (John 4:34) "I can't do a solitary thing on my own: I listen, and then I decide. You can trust my decision because I'm not out to get my own way but only to carry out orders. If I were simply speaking on my own account, it would be an empty, self-serving witness. (John 5:30)***

But how can we sure? ... How can we know the difference between what we think would be the right thing to do and what God's will truly is for us. Space limits me from a full discussion of this in this letter, so for now I'll just say that it involves relationship, prayer, scripture and circumstances. I'll explore each of these aspects in upcoming letters. For now may I simply close with this note. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you grow and learn God's will before you begin your work. It's a good place to start.

Amen.

(Rev.) John McGurrin