SERIES: We Are Free December 2022-January 2023
SPEAKER: NAT CRAWFORD
Monday, December 19, 2022
Scripture: Galatians 2:9-10
TITLE: The Stamp of Approval

I remember the first meeting at Back to the Bible. It was January 6, 2020. We had the whole team in our studio to make introductions and cast vision for the new year. Each person was very friendly and ready for the new year. But even with the friendliness, there was a bit of reservation.

"Who's the new guy? What's his story? What will he do for us?" But over the series of a few months through a few battles, key members welcomed me into the inner circle. I had their approval and respect.

Paul knew what it was like to be the guy who was looked at with skepticism and questions. But he, too, experienced that moment of true approval and brotherhood.

When was that? What happened? Let's continue our study of Galatians for the answers. This is what Paul writes in Galatians 2:9-10.

> And when James and Cephas and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given to me, they gave the right hand of fellowship to Barnabas and me, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. Only, they asked us to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do.

So the pillars of the church, Peter, James, and John, were not the first popes. They were not the head of the church in the sense some people think, but they were the ones who supported and built the church. He says these men recognized the true Gospel that I've been preaching and that I received from Jesus Christ just like them. And what did they do? They added nothing to it, but then they gave Barnabas and me the “right hand of fellowship”: the stamp of approval.

I don't think this is that hard to understand, but in the near East, to grab hands or to grab the forearm of someone was a sign not just of friendship and acceptance but it was also of fellowship and partnership. This was, in essence, saying we are on the same page, we are on the same team, and we are brothers and partners till the very end.

And then they said for Paul and Barnabas to remember the poor. This was not so much theological but rather practical. We know on one hand that in 2 Thessalonians 3, Paul said that if anyone does not work, neither let him eat. And yet, on the other hand, we know in passages like this we as Christians are to meet the needs of fellow believers in Christ when they cannot do it on their own. Whether it's orphans or widows. Single moms or those with special needs. Paul was eager to do it, and so should we be eager to help those in need in the body of Christ.

Friend, I don't know what background you come from. I don't know what you've experienced in life. But if you are God's child, your past is erased, and you are welcomed into a fellowship and a partnership. You truly are accepted not because of what you've done but because of what Christ has done on your behalf. You may have been rejected by a parent, a sibling, an old friend, or someone else, but God says you are my masterpiece.

Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ that he was God in the flesh. Believe that he died, was buried, and rose again. Turn from your sin and turn to Jesus Christ as your only hope. Believe this and let the power of Christ save your soul and change your life.

For the rest of us, we know that the power of Salvation is the Gospel. Romans 1 tells us that, and because of that power, we should not be ashamed. We know, according to 1 Corinthians 3, that God does the saving. And as a divine privilege, Jesus said, while going, to make disciples.

You have the power because of what Christ has done and because of the message He gave you. You do not need to be afraid or ashamed. Who will you reach?