

**“Recalculating and Repurposing”**  
**Galatians 2:15-21; Psalm 143**  
**6/13/10**

On this vacation to Washington DC and Williamsburg we decided to take along Garmin, our GPS (Global Positioning Satellite). She ended up serving us very well. When the AAA directions got confusing, Garmin would direct us on the right turns and exits. On the way home we decided to take I-640 around Knoxville to avoid afternoon traffic and she recalculated the circle around the city. However whenever we stopped for a meal or bathroom break, Garmin would get upset with us. “RECALCULATING” and then give us new directions to our destination. We had fun expecting Garmin to get speak up saying, “Recalculating” that we took an alternate route or got off the designated route. “Oh boy, this is going to tear up Garmin....”

This letter is written to Jewish people who have become Christians. They have embraced the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This why Paul begins this section with the phrase, “We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners.” Gentile sinners mean non Jewish people who did not have the Law of Moses. The reason Paul is writing them is because they need recalculating. They have accepted Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord but they are still holding onto the lifestyle and traditions of Judaism. They are thinking and acting like they still need to follow the law to be accepted by God. Everyone needs to be justified to God which means set right, accepted, or approved. Judaism unsuccessfully attempted to gain God’s approval by following the law. The problem was they failed. No one can find their own way to God.

This is why God sent his son, Jesus Christ. Everyone is justified by Jesus Christ. In Paul’s words, “We know that a person is justified not by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ.” However they kept going down the wrong path. They were driving in the wrong direction. Paul is like Garmin the GPS – recalculating...you are going the wrong way or a way not designated.

He tells them we cannot build up again the very things that I once tore down. If justification comes from obeying the law then Jesus Christ died for nothing.

Do you ever need to be recalculated? Ever going in the wrong direction? There are times I think I am going in the right direction but I am not. The challenge we all face is adding something more to what God has already done in Jesus. Often we might think that we need to do something more to help with salvation. If I add my part, then I can be assured that God loves me. Grace is grace because we do not deserve it nor can we add to it.

It would be like you giving me a gift and I try to reimburse you for it. Maybe I try to take you out to lunch or do you a favor with the intention of balancing out the “debt-feeling.” The other part of this adding to what Jesus said was finished is breaking old habits. All of us have old habits and traditions. The Jewish people relied on law and following it to live out their faith in God. The challenge for them is letting go of the law as the way to God and no longer using it that way. They still use the law but in a different way. There are methods and habits we each

have developed over our life time that help us survive and feel better. Sometimes we rely on these old patterns of self affirmation and confidence, while following Jesus Christ. Recalculating!

We need nothing else to live as God's children.

Another part of this scripture is repurposing. Clothing. Twenty-one billion pounds of it. That's how much clothing Americans throw away each year. Shorts and skirts, tank tops and T-shirts, blue jeans and underwear — more than 10 million tons of textiles.

*Fortunately, not all of it ends up in the trash. About 2.5 billion pounds of clothing winds up in resale shops such as Savers, the largest private vintage emporium, with 210 outlets. Today, there's no more secondhand clothing; it's called "vintage." And sales are booming, up 35 percent in 2008.*

After recalculating and getting on the right road, we are repurposed or given a new purpose in life. This is what Paul means when he says, "I have died to the law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live (old patterns) by it is Christ who lives in me.

In verse 16 – 2 xs, justified by the faith in Jesus Christ can also be translated faith of Jesus Christ. The attention is taken off of our ability to have faith in Jesus (which is not always consistent) and placed on the faith of Jesus Christ. It is his faith, his obedience that saves us. I am crucified with Christ. This means that I am crucified and continue to be crucified. The work of Christ continues to shape the present and future.

Grant Woods story - The Art Institute of Chicago has Grant Wood's well-known painting *American Gothic*. It's the one with the farm couple standing in front of their gingerbread Victorian, he holding a pitchfork and she standing beside him, her lips pursed tight.

For this painting to happen, Wood had to "repurpose" his life.

Wood grew up in Anamosa, Iowa. Yet when this Iowa farm boy decided to become a painter, he imagined there was only one place for him to go: Paris. He joined the expatriate American art community there and rubbed shoulders with the likes of Ernest Hemingway and Gertrude Stein.

But one day in 1926, Wood woke up with a chilling thought. "Everything I've done up to now," he told his friend, historian William Shirer, "is wrong — and, my God, I'm halfway through my life!"

"You're only 35," Shirer pointed out.

"All those landscapes of mine of the French countryside and the familiar places in Paris. There's not a one that the French Impressionists didn't do a hundred times better! ... All these years wasted because I thought you couldn't get started as a painter unless you went to Paris and

studied and painted like a Frenchman. I used to go back to Iowa and think how ugly it all was. Nothing to paint. And all I could think of was getting back here so I could find something to paint — these pretty landscapes that I should have known — Cézanne and Renoir and Monet and the others had done once and for all.”

Shirer tells how he offered some lukewarm encouragement, along the lines of “Don’t worry, things will get better.”

But his friend plunges on:

“Listen, Bill. I think ... at last ... I’ve learned something. At least, about myself. I think you have to paint ... what you know. And despite the years in Europe — all I really know is home. Iowa. The farm at Anamosa. Milking cows. Cedar Rapids. The typical small town, all right. Everything commonplace. Your neighbors, the quiet streets, the clapboard homes, the drab clothes, the dried-up lives, the hypocritical talk, the silly boosters, the poverty of culture. Bill, I’m going home for good. And I’m going to paint those cows and barns and barnyards and cornfields and little red schoolhouses and all those pinched faces and the women in their aprons and the men in their overalls and the storefronts and the look of a field or a street in the heat of summer or when it’s 10 below and the snow is piled 6 feet high. I’m going to do it.”

And so he did. *American Gothic* is very possibly the most famous American painting of the 20th century. It’s one of the very few paintings that’s instantly recognizable the world over, to everyone from art critics to grocery clerks. That image of the farmer in his overalls with his pitchfork, and his wife in the apron with the cameo at her neck, is a little bit of scathing social commentary that’s been reproduced on posters and buttons and T-shirts and book covers. It’s become a beloved icon of our culture.

There was a time when Grant Wood considered the rolling hills and dairy farms of eastern Iowa a wasteland, a place of artistic exile. It was only when he learned to re-vision, to repurpose, to seek the contentment that could be found there that he discovered his own distinctive style as a painter.

We not only need to be constantly recalculated but also repurposed.