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GALATIANS

FOR FREEDOM CHRIST HAS SET US FREE

Writings compiled from Sunday2Monday.blog by Starla Smith



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THE FLYOVER

Let's begin by taking a flyover of some themes and important facts about the book of Galatians.

The central theme of Galatians is "How is a person saved and justified? By works of the law, or by faith?" This letter was written by Paul out of deep passion for those he wrote to and the frustration he felt.

There are 3 themes we want to be aware of as we read through the book of Galatians:

1. SLAVERY VS. FREEDOM

Galatians 5:1, 4:6-9

Jewish men, he called them Judaizers. The primary struggle was that they were telling the Gentiles that they had to come under the law of Moses - they said the Gentiles had to become circumcised like a Jews and follow the Jewish laws in order to be right with God in order to be justified. In this letter Paul is defending the faith, primarily the belief that we are justified by faith and not works.

2. THROUGH JESUS CHRIST

Galatians 1:1,1:11-12

Paul had founded these churches in Galatia and now others had come behind him, questioning his authority, and putting the Gentile Christians into what Paul called a yoke of slavery. We will find him dealing with issues of authority and truth in this book.

3. CONFLICT

Galatians 2:4, 2:11-14

Not only is Paul talking about false believers that had been perverting the gospel of Christ and turning it into something else that Paul called "another gospel." Paul also confronted Peter - who was an apostle of Jesus Christ. This is the same Peter that when he was with Jesus and the high priest sent men to take Jesus, Peter was bold and ready to fight - he even cutting off the ear of a servant. (John 18:10) but when they took Jesus and Peter was in the courtyard watching - a girl said, "you are one of them, you were with Him?" - and he denied Christ 3 times. We can see then that Peter struggled with how to stand in what He believes when those around him are in opposition or believe something else. Something we often deal with in our day.

We will pick up on something within this conflict theme. Something a little more practical for us - People Pleasing. A people pleaser: someone who cares a lot about whether or not other people like them, and always wants other people's approval of their actions.

What can we glean from Paul about people pleasing: A people pleaser is not compatible with being a servant of Christ. (Galatians 1:10)

The number 1 ingredient to pleasing people is fear. Fear of what another person or group will think. A people pleaser will - compromise. Compromise means to mitigate or do what you can to lessen the exposure to risk or hazard. (Galatians 2:11)

As you read this study - you will see Paul's boldness. You can sense that Paul has never been a people pleasing kind of person. We will see his boldness in how he talks. (Galatians 3:1-3) We often struggle with being ok with those who stand strong while everyone tries to change

their thinking or even their method of talking to easy our discomfort. Notice what kinds of things he takes this kind of boldness with: Ask yourself: What is the context? What is he talking about?

Hint: He is talking about our beliefs about how we are justified. (Galatians 3:11) He shows great concern for them - that they are in dangerous territory with their faith. (Galatians 4:9)

He encourages them to stand true to the faith that he first brought to them regardless of those who come to oppose him. He tells them if they accept what they say and walk according to what they say, they will be severed from Christ. He makes it clear that these rules and laws do not justify us, only faith that works by love. (Galatians 5:2-6) So then, we can see that pleasing people is a work of fear, but faith is a work of love.

Even those who came to them to tell them they have to add these other things like circumcision to their faith were people pleasers. They didn't want to be persecuted by the Jews. So, they preached Jesus + the Law = A false gospel! (Galatians 6:12)

Let's dig into this rich book...

Reading: Galatians 1:1-10

Supplemental Verse: Acts 15:28-29

Paul had heard about how the Galatian church was falling away. (This is not one church, Galatia isn't a city, it is a region. So this letter is to the churches in the region of Galatia.) He had heard that they had deserted what he had taught them. He called it, "turning to a different gospel." This was a big deal. Paul even says in Galatians 1:9 As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed. That word accursed means let God's judgment reign down on me. This is strong language because of what is at stake, namely the work of Christ and the destiny of souls.

The main issue we find Paul dealing with is a group of Jews who were saying, "You cannot be saved unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses." This was a "Faith in Christ + Works of the Law" twist of the gospel that Paul talks about later in Galatians. This "other gospel" was a form of legalism which teaches that justification (being right with God) depends on our own personal efforts and belief in Jesus. When we believe this kind of "gospel" it not only denies that the cross of Christ is enough to save us, but it also lets the enemy of the gospel of grace right into our living arena to thwart the work of God in us.

Paul had previously brought this situation up to a council in Jerusalem in Acts. We will unpack that council meeting a little more in the following devos. The conclusion of the council was that the Gentiles did not have to be circumcised according to Moses custom. The sufficiency of Christ's cross would stand. It is by faith alone we are saved. The council

did give a charge though - not that Gentiles were to be saved by faith plus anything but rather because of the customs that they once held as Gentiles, they were charged to abstain from things that they most likely had participated in before believing in Christ concerning idol temple worship. I see this charge as a way to help protect them from falling away.

Acts 15:28-29 For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay on you no greater burden than these requirements: that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from what has been strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell.

On a practical note, for us: Customs are things that are traditional and widely accepted ways of behaving or doing something that is specific to a particular society, place, or time. Also, they are things that one does habitually.

We all have customs. These are often things that we have done since we were little kids, like family customs and traditions that we have grown up with. They also could be things that are habitual to just you. While the scripture is clear that having customs, or not having customs, do not save us. We know that some customs and habits don't actually serve us well or help us draw closer to Christ. Some families are good a sweeping things under the rug resulting in bitterness and grudges being unresolved. Some are good at keeping in mind the elephant in the room but they yell about everything and often hurt eachother with their words.

Journal Writing: Are there any customs, traditions, or habits that you have? Evaluate if they're Biblical or helpful to your walk with God.

Reading: Galatians 1:11-24

Supplemental Verses: Acts 7:54-60, Acts 8:1-3, Acts 9:1-19

Paul talks about what his former life was like. He said that he "persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it." He even mentions how he was "advancing in Judaism beyond many of his peers" and that he was "extremely zealous." I can image that keeping the law, and trying to become righteous through it, was a full-time job for Paul. So intense was it that anyone who opposed Judaism, this "truth" that he formerly knew, had him throwing people in prison or giving approval for them to be killed. Paul understood what these Galatians were getting themselves into believing in a "false gospel" let alone this one of Christ plus works.

Before Christ encountered Paul, he was named Saul - in Acts 8:1-3 Paul was right there for the stoning of Stephen in Acts 7:54-60. The people laid their garments at the feet of Saul, who was a part of the opposition party against Stephen. After this, Saul was encountered by Jesus on the Damascus Road. (You can read about that encounter in Acts 9:1-19) Imagine the whirlwind and soul turbulence that this encounter would have caused for him. Everything he knew was shaken by this encounter. Paul tells us in Galatians 1:15 But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by his grace, 16 was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with anyone; 17 nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia, and returned again to Damascus. After his conversion, Paul goes away into Arabia. I imagine he would need time to process and think about what had happened, what Stephen had said, what Jesus revealed to him, and to sort out what this means for

him now because of the Revelation of Jesus Christ as the Messiah.

This encounter was so powerful that Paul comes back from Arabia as a rock-solid man of faith, who would later write most of the New Testament under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. He is a man who does not bow to peer pressure, most likely, because of what he had witnessed and done as the persecutor of the faith. Paul goes from believing he is right in his faith as a Jew to believing in Jesus Christ to make him righteous. Paul asserts his authority with the Galatians, as one who did not receive the truth from any man, but rather as one who it was given to directly from Christ, Himself.

Journal Writing: Reflect on your own faith story? How are you different than before you met Christ? What has changed in your life and in your thinking after you believed in Jesus?

Reading: Galatians 2:1-10

Supplemental Verses: Acts 15:2-6

Paul said after 14 years he went to Jerusalem to speak privately to those who "seemed to be influential" about what God has been doing among the Gentiles. But there also were these "false brothers" that Paul had gone to bat with. They stood against him. These men were bringing a false teaching that was a spiritual slavery to the people.

Galatians 2:4 Yet because of false brothers secretly brought in—who slipped in to spy out our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus, so that they might bring us into slavery— 5 to them we did not yield in submission even for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you.

To Paul, this was huge, because it concerns a major doctrine of the faith, namely that we are saved by faith alone! What they were teaching certainly was not the gospel of Jesus Christ. What caught my eye as I read and studied, Paul didn't just waltz into Jerusalem (read the supplemental verses) and accuse the other apostles (those of reputation) of teaching this. He didn't brazenly oppose them before the masses. He was not prideful. Paul was careful to bring the matter of what God was doing among the Gentiles to the other Apostle and men of reputation. (Galatians 2:2) Those who believed that Gentile's ought to be circumcised opposed him there but instead of railing, Paul seems to be more concerned for his reputation among the Gentile people and was careful not to do or say anything that would put that work among the Gentiles in jeopardy. Yet, he stood his ground. Letting the work speak for itself. There at this council, these "influential people" heard this dispute, and they apparently had a debate to sort this mess out. Paul came to Jerusalem to meet with the other apostles. He was not so

arrogant to run off into ministry without them or to call them out publicly, or to put them on blast about this matter. When he came to them in Jerusalem he used caution, discretion, and tact so as not to overly offend but also not to compromise the truth. And he and Barnabas received the right hand of fellowship. Imagine that, the persecutor of the church that they all had heard about, was now a rock solid believer in Jesus Christ. Only God can do that!

It can almost seem that Paul is being rude toward them when he says, "that they seemed to be influential" but he is pointing out that "God shows no partiality" even though they each have their own area of influence - none of them had their influence on him. He didn't learn the truth of the gospel from them. It was Christ, Himself who called him to be an apostle. Yet, he worked within the confines of church order and for the sake of unity to bring the matter before them with honor.

Journal Writing: How do you handle situations where someone is speaking or teaching in a way that is against what is in the scriptures? Are you prone to just move on and ignore it or are you prone to call it out? How can we be careful in our reactions not to cause harm to the gospel by the way we handle situations where we see wrong doctrine or hypocrisy, either by ignoring or confronting?

DOCTRINE IS USELESS IF
IT IS NOT ACCOMPANIED
BY A HOLY LIFE. IT IS
WORSE THAN USELESS; IT
DOES POSITIVE HARM.
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IMAGE OF CHRIST' MUST
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HABITS, AND
CHARACTER, AND
DOINGS.

IC RYLE

Reading: Galatians 2:11-21

Supplemental Verses: Acts 15:7-11

Now, here we find Paul openly opposing Cephas (*Peter*) to his face in front of the Jews who came with James, and the Gentiles with him, at Antioch. He had previously had a debate while in Jerusalem in private at a council meeting where Peter had stood up and declared this truth:

Acts 15:7 And after there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, "Brothers, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. 8 And God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, by giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us, 9 and he made no distinction between us and them, having cleansed their hearts by faith. 10 Now, therefore, why are you putting God to the test by placing a yoke on the neck of the disciples that neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? 11 But we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will."

Now Peter was at Antioch and among Gentile believers. Some Jews came through and Peter distanced himself from the Gentiles, fearing what they would think. Peter, an Apostle with great influence, now stood in open opposition to the truth that Gentiles are righteous in Christ by faith alone - just as Jews are. By separating himself from the Gentiles, he openly declared them to be unclean, just as the custom of the Jews kept, concerning the Gentiles. He was guilty of people pleasing, hypocrisy, and Paul called him on it openly. Hypocrisy is the word *hupokrisis*, meaning "one who playacts or acts insincerely."

In Galatians 2:16 Paul calls Gentile's "sinners" because they

were people who did not live according to the law. They were lawless. He points out that the Law is powerless to save, even powerless to save the Jew, who knew the law. We all are justified by faith in Christ. Galatians 2:16 yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.

I wonder if Paul reflected on his own life of trying to become righteous according to the law. I wonder if he would have said, "The harder I tried to keep the law the more evil, self-righteous, and vindictive I became." He persecuted the church of Christ because he thought he was right and considered himself righteous through keeping the law. Yet, his actions were far from who GOD was and what the gospel of Jesus Christ is about. He makes the case clear that in order to be justified it must be by faith in Jesus Christ alone. That is the gospel!

Fun fact: In this section, Galatians 2:15-21 is somewhat of a summary of the whole book of Galatians. Check it out.

Journal Writing: Worry about what people think can cause us to become hypocritical people pleasers who are guilty of acting one way but behaving another. Have you ever found yourself behaving differently than normal when certain "influencial people" are around? How can you become aware of when you are starting to people please? What kinds of situations cause you to worry about what others will think?

Reading: Galatians 3:1-14

Supplemental Verse: 1 Corinthians 15:1-4

Even though Paul uses some strong language toward the Galatians at the beginning of this chapter, it is almost as if he is trying to snap them out of whatever spell they are under. He calls them foolish - and he used the ancient Greek word anoetos, which had the idea of "someone who can think but fails to use their power of perception." Paul calls them to look to what he taught about Jesus Christ crucified, it is the antidote to bewitching! Paul had clearly taught them about Jesus. The part I found most interesting was that Paul didn't just throw up some Old Testament verses at them or use their modern day philosophies. Instead he said, "Let me ask you only this" and he proceeded to ask them questions about their experience with Christ.

Galatians 3:2-6 Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? 3 Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? 4 Did you suffer so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain? 5 Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith— 6 just as Abraham "believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness"? A true experience with Christ will always bear out that it was by grace, through faith, that we have been saved.

Paul uses the example of Abraham who believed God well before the law was given. True heirs of Christ live by the same faith that Abraham had. Galatians 3:8 And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "In you shall all the nations be blessed."

Paul points out that the law does not justify us. It is a curse, (vs.13) dooming us to work for our salvation by keeping the law which is impossible to keep. But righteousness is by faith. Galatians 3:11 Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for "The righteous shall live by faith.

One of the most powerful things to keep us tethered to the truth about Jesus, His death, what his resurrection has meant and how we are saved by faith alone, is our personal experience. Paul makes it clear that faith in Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit are completely seperate from the law. Trying to find your own perfection is foolish when God has provided it for you, for free.

It is important to remember from where we came. A little of my story: I didn't even know what the Law was when Jesus encountered me in 1997. His Spirit moved on my behalf to help me see and understand that God was wooing and calling me. It was not on my part or anything that I was doing. I was a total mess but yet Christ loved me and called my name. I receive the Spirit by the hearing of faith. I was sitting in my living room with a little booklet that had been sent to my home in the mail. When I read these verses -Romans 10: 8-10 But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); 9 because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. These words cause a light flash in my spirit and soul, and I spoke out loud, "Is it really that easy?" and I heard God speak for the first time. He said, "Yes, it is." And that day I believed! I devoured the scriptures, following the Spirit as I read, and putting into practice what I was learning. It wasn't until a year later when

I started attending a little church that "I felt like I was supposed to do all these things" to keep my salvation. I feared that if I messed up and didn't do everything perfectly, I would lose my salvation. But the scripture straightened me out. It is clear. Salvation is through faith alone in Christ, plus nothing else.

Our personal testimonies are powerful. Paul often spoke of his testimony and encouraged others to remember the gospel! I Corinthians 15:1-4 "Now I make known to you, brothers and sisters, the gospel which I preached to you, which you also received, in which you also stand, 2 by which you also are saved, if you hold firmly to the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. 3 For I handed down to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures."

Journal Writing: In what ways have you tried to "work" for your salvation?

Reading: Galatians 3:15-29 Supplemental Verses: Duet. 33:2, Acts 7:53, Gen. 22:18, 2 Cor. 5:17, Eph 4:1-16

In this section of scripture Paul is appealing to them, as brothers. Sometimes, brothers and sisters in Christ believe wrong doctrine. Paul is careful not to imply that he is trying to write them off, they are all one body after all. Instead, He encourages them to think logically. Paul packs this section with deep teaching about the Law vs. Faith. He talks about covenants, the Law, righteousness, Faith, and what Christ's life means to us because of this promise that is by and through Faith. Paul, first, makes a direct connection between the promise given to Abraham and Jesus Christ.

Gal 3:16-18 16 Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, "And to offsprings," referring to many, but referring to one, "And to your offspring," who is Christ. 17 This is what I mean: the law, which came 430 years afterward, does not annul a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to make the promise void. 18 For if the inheritance comes by the law, it no longer comes by promise; but God gave it to Abraham by a promise.

Jesus is the "Offspring" that Paul speaks of. So why did God also give the Law if the promised offspring would come? He tells us that The Law was added basically to make it plain that man is a sinner and is in need of a Savior.

Gal 3:19 Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions, until the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made, and it was put in place through angels by an intermediary.

Paul points out some important points in V. 19 about the law:

- it came because of transgressions: God gave the law to reveal sin.
- it was ordained through angels: The Law is inferior to The Promise because it came through angels. (Duet. 33:2, Acts 7:53)
- and by the hand of a mediator. (Moses)
- until the Offspring (Christ) should come. (Gen 22:18) To me, this speaks to the fact that men's hearts are dark, and we don't even know it. We had to learn somehow! Right? Logic remember! Some think that the law and the gospel are not compatible with one another. I have heard the argument that now that we have the Gospel of Faith, we don't need The Law, but Paul points out that the Law isn't contrary (in opposition) to The Promise of faith, but rather the Law demands righteousness to be fulfilled. The Law itself cannot provide the power to perform righteousness
 - The Law held all accountable to it. (v24) showing us our sin and unrighteousness. It is like a magnifying glass, proving, we are sinners.

but Jesus did! And yet, The Law does have a purpose:

 The Law proved that we all stand condemned under it, but by faith in Christ we are made free and no longer need to be watched over like a guardian. (v25) The Law acts like a strict teacher whose job it is to keep us in line. The Law is a means to understanding our deepest need we need God which came through Christ and Holy Spirit.

Many in this world disagree with the Law of God. Humans don't like being held accountable for what they say and do. But we still can't seem to get away from that fact that we try to make up our own "rules and laws." We must live by something. So, we make up our own creeds to live by and

try to be the best that we can be, adding just one more 1,2,3, step plan and certainly we will attain some perfection or gain some attention or affection for our good deeds. We don't need more rules to live by, we need Christ. Being made right with God by faith means we become more than just free, we become sons and daughters in Christ (V.26) and that is not done by our words or deeds. It is by faith alone. So, Jesus came to fulfill the Law.

Paul gives us an understanding of how everything changes when we believe by faith. In other places this change is called becoming a new creation. (2 Cor. 5:17)

- We become clothed in Christ. (V23)
- We are no longer defined by our station (job, position, economic status) or gender. (V28)
- We are made part of God's family, heirs in fact. (V29) We are those who receive the blessing of the Kingdom.

This change overhauls the human way of doing life. In Christ, a new community and unity come into play. We no longer get to "pick our team" and choose all the best players like a game in the school yard and leave the least liked players on the sidelines. In Christ, we ARE ALL on the team. Because of this faith - we all can come to God. Think of all of the bickering humans do. This is my team, my beliefs, my truth, no longer needs to be considered. They are simply minor things. This is exactly what Paul is getting at. Paul spoke extensively about the importance of unity in the body saying, "maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." You can read about that call to unity in Eph 4:1-16. These made-up rules and regulations are just like belief in Christ plus something else- it's not and they are not the gospel. So, living in such a way that we put labels on people as accepted and not accepted, deciding who we want in the body of Christ, is not the Love of God. These labels can be

racial, cultural, social, even political. Just like Paul is teaching them to be sure to make Christ first priority in your life. So also, people you may consider as "other" are His and if we are His, then we are Heirs! Together, we are brothers and sisters in Christ. That means something! We are considered - all one! More on that next time.

Journal Question: We all have stuff that we think we should be standing up for, standing out in, and stepping out to do. These things often are good things we think are really important but not if they cause us to separate from our brothers and sisters in Christ. There have been many instances and temptations for division in the last few years. What have you learned through it all?

Reading: Galatians 4:1-20 Supplemental Verses: Colossians 2:20, Colossians 2:8, Ephesians 4:13-16

Paul further unpacks what it means to be an heir of Christ. He uses a picture of a child (or a minor), who is not old enough yet, to receive the inheritance. During this time the child is no different than a slave, meaning he does not have the same privileges as an heir until the age required by the father. He has guardians to teach him to mature until that time. This is much like saying a young boy will not become the master of the house until he reaches the age of 25, until them he must learn the ways of the master.

Galatians 4:1-5 I mean that the heir, as long as he is a child, is no different from a slave, though he is the owner of everything, 2 but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by his father. 3 In the same way we also, when we were children, were enslaved to the elementary principles of the world. 4 But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.

This is the means of maturing - it was learning the ABC's of the ways of God, that learning came by the Law. Just as when we are kids, and we had to pass classes in school to move to the next grade. This is a part of learning and growing that is necessary for our maturing. At the time of graduation then the child is considered mature enough or to be the heir of the father. This process of learning was to have an effect on us, and we were required to perform well to earn the right to be accepted. Now, Paul is saying, at just the right time Jesus came to redeem us who had been under the law, so that we might receive adoption rather than live

that way. (Colossians 2:20) All of us were living all our lives enslaved to elementary principals. Galatians 4:8-11 Formerly, when you did not know God, you were enslaved to those that by nature are not gods. 9 But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and worthless elementary principles of the world, whose slaves you want to be once more? 10 You observe days and months and seasons and years! 11 I am afraid I may have labored over you in vain.

Paul is calling them to go beyond these "elementary principals" and receive the relationship Jesus brings by faith. False teaching keeps us bound to these "elementary principals." (Colossians 2:8) Paul says, "how can you turn back?... have I labored over you in vain?"

It is an interesting thought that this implies, that living by the law and trying to earn attention, affection, and right standing is a mark of immaturity. True maturity in Christ is dependent on the love of the Father for his Son, a love that does not change. God made it possible for us through faith in Christ to experience a new level of maturity called the Love of God. This love makes us heirs. The adopted ones.

Galatians 4:19 my little children, for whom I am again in the anguish of childbirth until Christ is formed in you!

Paul desired for them to have Christ formed within them. That word "form" is the word morphoo; it is a word that signifies "an internal reality that refers to a change in character that is evidenced by becoming like Christ." Paul spoke of this reality in Ephesians - you can read that in

Eph. 4:13-16. As you read through these verses in Galatians 4:12-20 you can hear the tone shift in Paul's writing. He speaks to them using the term "little children." His concern and love for them is evident. These Galatians were so grateful to have the gospel but now they were in danger of falling away. Had they now made him their enemy, whom they once loved. He is calling out that these Judaizers act like they care about them, as he does, but they will only succeed in enslaving them. Legalism does that. It makes us slaves and divides us among ourselves.

Trying to live up to the Law and becoming one who takes it upon yourself to make sure that others are following all the rules only succeeds in pitting "this group" of believers against "that group" of believers. Paul is emphatic that in Christ, it is clear that righteousness is by faith alone in Christ. We are all made as One. Paul says in Galatians 4: 16 Have I then become your enemy by telling you the truth?

Journal Questions: In what ways have you been trying to earn attention, affection, and right standing? How does this keep you from loving your brothers and sisters? Envy, jealousy, comparison maybe?

FOR WHERE JEALOUSY AND SELFISH AMBITION EXIST, THERE WILL BE DISORDER AND EVERY VILE PRACTICE.





James 3:16

Reading: Galatians 4:21-31 Supplemental Verses: Genesis 16, Genesis 21:1-21, Romans 9:6-8

In this section Paul breaks down what he has been talking about. In our flyover of Galatians, at the start of this study, we talked about major themes in Galatians. One of those themes was SLAVERY VS. FREEDOM. This is what Paul is illustrating here in this passage. He tells us that we can interpret a story from history about Sarah and Hagar (Genesis 16, Genesis 21:1-21) as an allegory.

An allegory is a story that can be interpreted to reveal a hidden meaning. In this case, Paul says the story of Sarah and Hagar may be interpreted as an allegory. He gives the hidden meaning that these two women represented two covenants. Hagar represents the 1st Covenant, called the Law. Sarah represents the 2nd Covenant, called Grace. More on that next week.

So, what's with this story: Sarah (called at the time Sarai) was the wife of Abraham (called at the time Abram), but she was not able to conceive and, in her impatience, and frustration she told Abraham to take her servant Hagar to bed with him. Genesis 16:2 And Sarai said to Abram, "Behold now, the Lord has prevented me from bearing children. Go in to my servant; it may be that I shall obtain children by her." And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai. Isn't that just like what we humans would do, in our impatience end up trying to figure out a way to make something happen? But human efforts don't solve problems, let alone divine ones. Hagar had a son by Abraham named Ishmael. He was the first born, the one that was to be the heir. Right? No. Eventually

Sarah conceived and bore a son. His name was Isaac. He was the true heir of promise. The one the Lord promised, not the one these two conspired to create.

In this allegory, Paul says in Galatians 4:25 Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia; she corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. What happened at Mount Sinai? This is where God gave Moses the Law.

Paul is still unraveling the mess these Judaizers created in the hearts and minds of the Galatian believers. It can feel a bit like he keeps repeating himself and he is! This issue of "the foundation" of where our faith lies has such great importance for our salvation. I love how the writer, Rebecca Faires from She Reads Truth, puts it: Salvation does not come to us by the works of the law, even the law of Moses, which was literally given by God at Sinai. The pursuit of salvation by works of the law is not sufficient. The end result, as it was for Ishmael and Hagar, is to be driven out. Why? Because the only means of attaining the inheritance promised to Abraham, of true fellowship with God, is by faith. To rely on deceit, or only on the law, is to reject true salvation and freedom, which comes only by faith in Christ. We are the true sons and daughters of God! Just like Isaac was the true heir of promise. Isaac came by believing God would give Abraham and Sarah a son. It was faith not their own efforts.

Underneath all that Paul is unpacking is also a thread of truth about identity. While Isaac and Ishmael had little choice in the matter about, to whom they were born to and what their lives, would represent. One thing is certain, that God has a plan for those who put their trust in Him. Isaac was the son of promise and God watched after Hagar when she cried out and the voice of the boy was heard by God he sent an angel to them. (Genesis 21:17) Our identity is not

based on what we can or cannot do. Our identity is steadfast and sure, when our foundation of faith, is in Christ. We are sons and daughters of God. (Romans 9:6-8) Understanding this deeply, as Paul is desiring that the Galatians do, changes our lives. We are set free from the constant exhaustion of trying to work for our salvation. We are free to believe and receive this gift from God.

Journal Writing: In what ways are you still caught in the slavery of trying to work for your salvation?

Reading: Galatians 5:1-15 Supplemental Verses: Acts 15:10, Romans 9:30-33

In this section, Paul starts off with what some would call the liberating theme of the gospel:

Galatians 5:1 For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

Here again, we see the theme of slavery vs. freedom. Notice that Paul clearly calls the Law a yoke of slavery, and over and over again he is making it clear, if you live by the law you will die by it. (Acts 15:10) There is no salvation through the law. Period. Living by the Law, then it seems, is the ultimate form of falling from grace. You have fallen from grace into legalism. Accepting our own efforts to be enough to gain us heaven, goodness, righteousness, and relationship with God is to sever ourselves from Christ. But faith is altogether different.

Galatians 5:5-6 For through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness. 6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.

By the Spirit we wait for the hope of righteousness, we don't try and work for it. We wait, and He works. This is part of the mystery of our faith. How does waiting produce a work? Through the Spirit as we yield. What does that look like practically? We stop to ask God to help us, not pushing our way through life, but asking Him to lead us. The energy flow of waiting is different. It feels

like peace and patience rather than pushing and hustling. This faith flow works through love. Ultimately it comes down to what we believe! What we believe determines our lives, and can be determined by, our lives. Either love is at work through faith or legalism is at work through effort. (Romans 9:30-33) We can't have both. They don't mix well together and when they do it's dangerous.

Paul gives one more final confrontation about this: Galatians 5:7-9 You were running well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth? 8 This persuasion is not from him who calls you. 9 A little leaven leavens the whole lump. Again, he's pointing out to them that they ought to pay attention, or mark those who desire to call them away from the grace of God, that has been given to them through faith in Jesus Christ. This call to return or to come to the Law is not from God. A little legalistic law in your mix will eventually bend you completely to it. That is what a yoke of slavery is meant to do, subdue and enslave you. At one point, Paul is so over this mixture of law with grace, this deception, and twisting of the truth that he says to these deceivers: Since you think so highly of circumcision why don't you just go ahead and emasculate yourself. Basically, "go castrate yourself!" Harsh but this shows the weight of the importance of what Paul is speaking to the Galatians. Salvation is by and through faith in Christ Jesus alone. We don't need anything else.

But we who are in Christ have been called to Liberty! Galatians 5:13 For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

We have a call to liberty and a responsibility to use that liberty to love and serve rather than as an opportunity for the flesh. What does that mean? David Guzik says it like this, "We can choose to use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh. That option – that danger – is open to us. We can take the glorious freedom Jesus has given us, spin it, and use it as a way to please ourselves at the expense of others. Because the context focuses on the way we treat one another, Paul has in mind using our freedom in a way that tramples on the toes of others." But this liberty that God gives through Christ is a freedom in the Spirit that brings God's will to earth through us. It builds up rather than tears down. Both legalism and walking by flesh will have you biting and devouring one another. Galatians 5:15 But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another. We will find out more about that in the next section.

Journal Writing: What opportunities of the flesh are unique to you? What are you tempted to use your freedom to do rather than through love serving others?

Reading: Galatians 5:16-26

Supplemental Verses: Romans 8: 3-8, Romans 6:1-14 Paul left off in the last section talking about how we have a freedom but not to use that freedom as an opportunity for the flesh. What is the flesh? It is an enemy to the Spiritfilled believer. It is carnal, meaning not spiritual. Its focus and inclination are on and toward the tendencies of fallen humankind. Paul says in Galatians 5:16-17 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. 17 For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. So, we can see that flesh has desires and these desires are against the Spirit, and also are opposed to, the Spirit. These two (Flesh and Spirit) are at war with one another. This is a battle that plays out in your everyday life where the Spirit is restraining these fleshly tendencies and desires that we (human fallen flesh) desire to do. We need the Spirit's power to overcome by faith, not by keeping the Law. Try harder. Work harder. Control yourself. Does not work.

The flesh also has works. It has a way of being and behaving. Galatians 5:19-21 Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, 20 idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, 21 envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. That is quite the laundry list of behaviors and ways of being. In another book, Paul gives us a key in Romans 8:3-8 to overcoming this flesh monster. (don't skip reading those verses) The only way to overcome the flesh is to live in the Spirit. Sometimes I think that we want heaven easy and its privileges without struggle. But the scripture is clear, we are

in a war and war means battle. But it's a battle by faith. We are in Christ and have all that we need to overcome but it does not come without struggle. We must contend for it. So, while Paul gives a list of works of what this flesh is capable of, he also gives a list of what the Spirit gives when we yield. Galatians 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. Did you catch that little phrase, "against such things there is no law." What does that mean? It means you are free to do as much of this as you want. Love and all of its expressions are free. This is a picture of what Christ looks like and why the Law could not come against him. The Pharisees often said to Jesus, "why do you do this? and why do you do that?" and he would answer, "if someone is hungry should I not feed them, if they need healing, should I not make them whole?" What was He saying? He was saying - there is no law against love!

Remember Paul saying in the last section, "if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another." He is talking about the flesh. It is never satisfied. It consumes everything. It wants total domination. Paul says in Galatians 5:24 And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. The crucified life is not something that is talked about much these days. Nevertheless, there it is in scripture. (You can also read about that here: Romans 6:1-14) The crucified life means that we identify with the life, death, and resurrection of Christ in such a way that we now present our bodies to God as instruments for righteousness. We no longer yield to the flesh - we yield to the Spirit. This becomes a daily, hourly, minute by minute practice.

Journal Writing: How does this war manifest itself in your life? What "fleshly monsters" do you contend with? What are you prone to?

THE SPIRIT-FILLED
LIFE IS NOT A
SPECIAL, DELUXE
EDITION OF
CHRISTIANITY. IT IS
PART AND PARCEL
OF THE TOTAL
PLAN OF GOD
FOR HIS PEOPLE.

AW Tozer

Reading: Galatians 6:1-10 Supplemental Verses: Romans 2:6, Luke 6:37-38

Paul now turns to some practical application to help the Galatians as they are being restored to the truth that faith in Christ is the only way of salvation. After he had expressed what the difference between flesh and spirit looks like and reminding them that the only way to not do the deeds of the flesh is to walk in the spirit. Now, he turns to how we live with each other.

The Law had some harsh repercussions for transgressors. Those who broke the Law could expect to be in trouble. But the Law of Grace and the Spirit don't work that way. While there may be some consequence because actions have consequences - the way people are to treat one another changes.

Galatians 6:1-2 Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. 2 Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

This is how we are to handle those who mess up: Restore them with a spirit of gentleness.

Paul uses a word for restore that means "setting a broken bone." We are to have this spirit of gentleness while we are keeping watch on ourselves. Why? Because it is super easy to be tempted to transgress by bringing a spirit of harshness instead. Both the one who did wrong and the one who is holding accountable must be careful. Remember what Paul said in the end of the last section, "Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another." Conceit or pride will cause us to focus on how good we are doing when

others mess up, we may even lash out in anger. We may in our frustration end up provoking each other to sin against each other. Or on the other end, we might even envy that others seem to be getting off easy while you have to deal with your sin. The slop is slippery and quick to sin. It's easy to point fingers and there is always the temptation to glory in what we do. But when we bear each other's burdens, when we find ways to help each other through our struggles, we fulfill the law of Christ. We are to love like He loves. It's different, it's unlike this world, its grace.

Paul also warns them in Galatians 6:7 Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. 8 For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. 9 And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. We live in a world that is built on principals. One of those principals is, "You will reap what you sow." Paul is warning us what you plant, take care of the seed you use, because it will grow. It might spring up tomorrow or it may take some time, even years. But what you use (the seeds of flesh or spirit) will bring a harvest. Again, he is giving us the keys to the future here, in as much control over what we can have control over, in our own self. If we are yielding to the flesh, will reap corruption and even destruction. Or if we are yielding to the Spirit, we will reap righteousness and eternal life. It's our choice what we choice to use as the fuel for our souls. It's our choice what seed we sow. But beware, it's not just that we ought to pay attention to what we use to plant seed in our lives and the lives of others but also there is a promise of a blessed. A harvest as well. God promises to multiply what we sow and in due season we will reap. God has given us the opportunity to have vision and choose what we will have and not have in our lives. We can't control

outcomes but we certainly can choose what we use and add into this life.

Journal Writing: Take a quick inventory of the last few weeks. What kind of seed have you been sowing? Are your words sweet? Has your spirit been kind? Or have you found yourself hard and harsh lately? Take time to repent and ask God to redirect your steps, words, and attitudes by His Spirit.

Reading: Galatians 6:11-18
Welcome, you have made it to the last study in Galatians.
Good Job!

Supplemental Verses: Romans 6:1-14,

In this last section, Paul gives his final words to the Galatians. In the flyover of this book, we pointed out that even the Judaizers who came to the Galatians to tell them they have to add these other things like circumcision to their faith, were people pleasers. They themselves didn't want to be persecuted by the Jews. So, they preached Jesus + the Law. - A false gospel! Look at this:

Galatians 6:12-13 It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh who would force you to be circumcised, and only in order that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. 13 For even those who are circumcised do not themselves keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh.

This is an interesting thing that Paul is pointing out here. He is exposing to the Galatians how the Judaizers are trying to hold them to a standard that they themselves can't even hold. Not only that but they are boasting about how they convinced them to keep the law as if it were a badge of honor, of which there actually is no honor in it. Plus, they are using this as a way to not be persecuted. It's an understandable reaction based in fear but it's ultimately wrong and against the truth.

Paul points out that there is only one thing that has a merit of boasting and that is to boast in the cross of Christ. We as humans - in our flesh - will find something to glory in. We glory in our looks, our finances, our status, or seeming power that we have. But these are not ours to glory in, in fact, they are evidence of all blessing and gifts are from God Himself. Paul is expressing where glory ultimately lies. It lies with the cross of Christ and not in a good show of the flesh. This term "glory in the cross" is a strange saying, since the cross was such a brutal and humiliating way to die. He is not talking about the wood it is made of or even the way Christ had died but rather what that cross and death stood for. He says in Galatians 6:14 But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. He is expressing the way in which we came to be saved. Jesus Christ, crucified, was the means of our justification before God. His death now gives me the power to crucify my own flesh and die to sin. The world, the flesh, its desires, and passions no longer have any power over us as we yield to the Spirit, and we glory in that cross. Paul spoke of this more extensively in Romans 6:1-14.

Christ made it possible through simple faith to come to salvation and newness of life. This simple faith is the rule to walk by for our salvation. It's not by works or by the Law. It's by faith! Now, that is something we can rejoice and glory in! Amen.

Journal Writing: What do you glory in? Be honest. We all do it. What do we pride ourselves in or brag about? How do we rejoice, is it in Christ or in ourselves or in our abilities?

AUTHOR'S NOTES

The gospel strengthens our faith and has the power to produce obedience in us which brings our God glory. The obedience of faith is a work that the Holy Spirit does in us as we submit ourselves as a living sacrifice. This gift of the gospel isn't just so that we can become comfortable, saved, Christians. It is a gift to the world that we are called to share.

Thank you for reading and studying along with me. - Starla

The man or woman who is wholly or joyously surrendered to Christ can't make a wrong choice - any choice will be the right one.

~A.W. TOZER~

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