

July 12th Sunday 2015

Text Galatians 3:10

Topic: Living a Christ Centered Life

So far in our study on the book of Galatians, the Apostle Paul has stressed the fact that salvation is obtained only by faith in Jesus Christ and his sacrificial death on the cross. The reason he wrote this letter was because the new believers in this region were being influenced by another teaching. Jews from Jerusalem had come to Galatia and told these people that in order to be saved and accepted by the church they had to become Jews. These “Judaizers,” as they were called, were telling Paul’s new converts that belief in Jesus was fine but circumcision and adherence to the laws of Moses were also required.

Paul was very disappointed in his new converts. How could they accept a way that was so contrary to what he had preached to them? Paul was definitely mad at his new charges in Galatia. He asks them straight out, “Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard?”

Paul clearly portrays salvation in Jesus Christ as the work of God. Rather than relying on human effort (like observing the law) the Christian life is built on dependence on God and his work in us. We receive the blessings of God in Christ when we realize they are acts of God toward His children. When we try to earn God’s favor by human effort not only do we miss out on those blessings designed for us, Paul says we fell under a curse! When our salvation and our Christian life depend totally on God, this may be one reason confession of sins seems to play a very limited part in Paul’s approach. Human actions have been replaced by something far more effective – faith!

Lesson: The work of God in our lives through Christ is what brings blessing to us not our human wisdom. We should put our trust in Jesus Christ.

Prayer: dear Father, blessed be Your name. Thank you for everything you provide for us. Help me center my life on Jesus Christ and take the focus off me. Let me begin today to live a life of gratitude for my relationship with you – Father, Son and Spirit. Amen

July 13th Monday 2015

Text: Galatians 3: 15-18

Topic: God’s Promise is Real

In chapter 3, verses 15-18, the Apostle Paul comes from yet another angle to try and convince his Galatian friends. He asks them to consider the divine promise that was given to Abraham long before the law came to Moses. In v. 16, he says, “the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed.” The “seed” here is Jesus Christ, a descendant of Abraham (Matthew 1:2; Luke 4:33d).

Paul uses the analogy of the permanence of a human will or testament. Once it is drawn up, it cannot be changed. However, human promises can be broken; even a person’s will can be amended. But God’s promises are not like human promises. God is faithful (1 Cor 10:18) and he cannot lie (Titus 1:2). Whenever we see a rainbow in the sky after it rains we are reminded that God promised never to destroy the earth again by a flood (Genesis 9:12-16).

Back in Genesis 12:2-3, God promised Abraham that He would make him into a great nation (Israel) and that through him all nations would be blessed. Now, through Abraham and his seed (Jesus Christ) all nations can claim this blessing by simple faith in Jesus Christ, God's son.

The Law of Moses would come 430 years after the promise made to Abraham. When we place our faith and trust in God, just like Abraham did, we are heirs of the promise of God. No law or extra requirements are necessary for this to happen. We serve a good God whose mercy endures forever (Psalm 136:1). If you have put your faith and trust in God through His son Jesus Christ, you are also filled with his Spirit and are counted righteous in God's eyes.

Lesson: God don't lie. His promises are true and His thoughts to us are good.

Prayer: Oh God, I acknowledge you as my God. Thank you for your great plan of salvation through your Son Jesus Christ. Jesus, thank you for your obedience to the Father by coming to earth in the form of a man and dying that I might enjoy eternal life in your name. Amen

July 14th Tuesday 2015

Text: Galatians 3:19

Topic: Why then the Law?

Paul has spent several chapters showing over and over that we are saved by faith alone. It is not by the good works we do and it is not by obeying all the laws. So now he asks the question we may all be asking, "What then was the purpose of the law?" If the law (10 Commandments) can't save us why did God give the laws to Moses? Paul says in v. 19, "It was added because of transgressions (or sin)." So the law was given because of the sins of man. Martin Luther in his commentary on the book of Galatians says, "The law is a mirror to show a person what he is like, a sinner who is guilty of death, and worthy of everlasting punishment." The law was added for a specific amount of time. V. 19 continues, "...until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come." The Law was put into place until Jesus came. For us this has already happened. Jesus, who is the promised Seed, came and gave his life to fulfill all the laws in us. Now is the time of Grace of favour. This tells us not to live anymore under the law but to live under the grace of Jesus Christ. The Law always points us to the saving power of Jesus (see also Galatians 3:24). With the Law alone we can become bitter toward God as we struggle and fail to keep his commandments. But through the Seed of Abraham, Jesus Christ brought another way and we can simply believe in his death and resurrection. We can live with gratitude for this new way of salvation.

Lesson: God fulfilled His promise of salvation through Christ, we can now enjoy freedom from law.

Prayer: Thank you God and Father for having grace and mercy on us and for sending your Son to fulfill all the requirements of the Law for us. In the name of Jesus, Amen.

July 15th Wednesday 2015

Text: Galatians 4:1-7

Topic: Time to Grow UP!

I loved growing up as a child. I didn't really have any worries and few responsibilities. But I was under the supervision of my parents, who closely controlled

my daily life. Most parents don't give their children complete freedom to do whatever they want. That would be foolish. Children need structure and guidance and training. Whether this is provided or not there will come a time when the child will have to make his/her own decisions and choose their own path. It's just the way of life.

Hopefully, during our childhood we learn something from our parents about raising children of our own when it is our turn. It is tough to let go and allow our children to go off on their own. But, amazingly, if they were brought up right, and know the difference between right and wrong, they turn out alright and become people who can be productive members of society.

In today's verses, Paul is using this type of an analogy. This analogy seems like it is meant for a rich kid growing up (but aren't we who believe God and have Jesus in our lives rich?). While the child is growing up he/she is watched and tutored by a guardian. The child's comings and goings are monitored and his education and social time is strictly controlled. Even though the child will someday receive a large inheritance he cannot touch it or enjoy it during this time. It will only be when the child reaches a certain age that the inheritance will be his. Then he will no longer be confined by constant supervision but will be free to do as he pleases.

The analogy that Paul is using applies to all mankind. Before Christ came humanity was living under the constraints of the law. "But when the time had fully come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive the full rights as sons" (4:4-5).

We are now full-grown sons of God, who have been given their freedom and the power to use it. We are no longer like slaves or servants but mature sons of God entitled to the inheritance that God has for us.

The law was forced upon man and mankind was imprisoned by its requirements. The law was never meant to save us, only faith in Jesus Christ and his sacrificial work on the cross can deliver us from this bondage. To understand this principle is crucial to our spiritual development. It is time to grow up and claim our inheritance of freedom as sons of God.

Lesson: If we do not grow in the Spirit we shall not be able to inherit God's promises.

Prayer: What an awesome plan you have for my life Great God and Saviour. I am no longer under the supervision of the law but free to be called Your Son as I claim my spiritual inheritance of eternal life through Jesus Christ. Amen.

July 16th Thursday 2015

Text: Galatians 4:4-5

Topic: When the time had fully come

So much is said in these two verses. 1) *When the time had fully come...* God's timing is always perfect, he had planned for Jesus' birth and death since before the beginning of time. Another version says "*in the fullness of time*" which Martin Luther says refers to the time of the law being fulfilled. This is Paul's theme throughout the book of Galatians – The time for the law is over and it is now the time of Christ. 2) *God sent His Son, born of a woman* This points to Jesus being fully divine (God sent..) and also fully human (born of a woman). 3) *born under law* During the time Jesus lived on earth, the law was still in effect so he was subject to the law. The law condemned him to

death on the cross. 4) *to redeem those under the law*, Jesus fulfilled all the law, he lived perfectly so that he compensated for (redeemed) those of us under the law. He paid for our sins. Jesus satisfied all the requirements of the law for us. The time of law is over, it is now the time of Grace. 5) *that we might receive the full rights as sons*. Why did Jesus come as a man, live a sinless life and die on the cross? He came so that we who believe have the right to be called sons and daughters of God. We are now children of God, no longer under the law. The penalty for our sins has been paid; we are REDEEMED!

Lesson: Jesus have paid the penalty of sin for humanity, let us take advantage of this privilege and become His children, worshiping Him with gratitude.

Prayer: God, I believe in Jesus and the work he did for me on the cross. Thank you for sending your Son at just the right time in history to do away with the law and to make me your son/daughter. Amen

July 17th Friday 2015

Text: Back Galatians 4:8-11

Topic: No Turning

Superstitious practices used to be a way of life for many people. There was a great respect for the pagan gods who were believed to control the harvest, the rains and even the birth of healthy children. But when Christ came he freed people from the bondage of those influences, which were not really gods at all.

Here, Paul is trying to convince his readers that by turning to Jewish rituals and practices, rather than relying solely on faith in Christ, it would be like they were turning back to the worship of pagan gods. Paul believed that taking part in Jewish legalistic practices and counting on them to ‘feel’ right with God was as demonic as worshipping idols of stone and wood. Paul told his Galatian converts that all these methods were “weak and miserable,” but he knew they were still powerful enough to enslave those under their control.

Apparently, Paul must have received word that his new converts were adopting the Jewish calendar (v.10). He heard they were observing special days, months, seasons and years! Taking this all in, it is scary to realize there are things that look harmless that can actually take our focus off Christ and his work of salvation on our behalf. The enemies of Christ work sometimes in very subtle ways.

It is like the story of cooking the frog: inexperienced people might boil the water first and then put the frog into the pot to cook. All the frog does is jump out of the hot water. Instead, to cook a frog, you put the frog into cooler water and place the pot over the fire. By the time the water starts getting hot the frog doesn’t notice the difference. When the water gets so hot it’s too late for the frog and he is already cooked.

The enemies of Christ work this same way. They introduce small changes that seem to have merit. But over time we become just like the frog – cooked!

Lesson: We should be vigilant against the schemes of the Devil, he presents things that are good looking to the eye as though they are harmless.

Prayer: God, let us stand firm, guarding our faith and not giving in to anything that takes our focus off Christ – Help us not to turn back. Amen

18th Saturday 2015

Text: Galatians 4:12-15

Topic: The Joy of Salvation

Psalm 51:12 *“Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.”* In Psalm 51, David pleads with God for forgiveness from the sins of adultery, murder, deception and most important, a blatant disrespect for God and His laws! One of the things David cherished most about his relationship with God was the “joy of your salvation” which was apparently missing while David was living in disobedience to God.

The Apostle Paul is still trying to convince his new converts about the message of grace through Jesus Christ that he preached to them that they were not abandoning for something else. He attempts to do this by reminding them of when he first came to them. Even though Paul says he was ill, they received him as if he was an angel or even Christ Jesus himself.

Now, he asks, “What has happened to all your joy?” Paul understood that believing right and focusing on Christ working in their lives would produce real joy.

Is your Christian life filled with the joy of Christ? Can you look back and remember a time when your joy was bubbling up from inside, and now it is obviously less? Often this happens when we desert our reliance on Christ to supply all our spiritual needs and begin to count on our own efforts to please the Lord. This is an easy trap to fall into. Like the Apostle Paul told his people, “Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law (our own efforts), or by believing what you heard? (Gal 3:2)

Lesson: Check your life, perhaps you don't have this joy so you can amend your relationship with God. This Joy comes only through Jesus Christ.

Prayer: Dear Jesus, forgive me for trusting in something else besides you and your amazing works of grace in my life. Restore to me the joy of my salvation and renew, O Lord, a right spirit within me. I know you are a faithful God and are just longing to hear these words from me. In Jesus' name, Amen.