

His Word—My Life

Repeating Courses for Adult Bible Study

Galatians

You're Free Now

by

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Galatians

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· Lesson One ·

Galatians 1:1-10

There's a Letter in the Mail from the Apostle Paul

- Meet the characters
- Understand the setting
- Identify the crisis

Worship

Read Psalm 1

A: Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked

B: or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers.

A: But his delight is in the law of the LORD,

B: and on his law he meditates day and night.

A: He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season

B: and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.

A: Not so the wicked!

B: They are like chaff that the wind blows away.

A: Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,

B: nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.

A: For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous,

B: but the way of the wicked will perish.

Prayer: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, we are about to open your book and read one of your inspired letters. Open our eyes and ears to understand your Word. Open our hearts to believe your Word. Open our lips to speak your Word. Amen.

Introduction

Imagine that your family had been brought to America on a slave ship. Here, your days were planned for you. You were driven hard. Your value was based entirely on how much work you could do. If you became hurt or weak, you could be beaten or sold.

Then came an opportunity for your family to escape the slave life. But one of your brothers, after tasting freedom, was last seen heading back to be a slave again. What is wrong with this picture?

Studying God's Word

Meet the characters

Read Galatians 1:1,2

1. Name the different characters mentioned in these two verses.
2. The word *apostle* means “a sent one.” See Mark 3:13-15 and consider the following:
 - How a person became an apostle
 - The work Jesus assigned to his apostles
3. Once, an apostle needed to be replaced. You can read about this in Acts 1:21,22. On what basis was a replacement picked? What was this man's job description as one of the apostles?
4. How does Paul's work fit this job description? See the very first line of Galatians 1.

His Word in My Life

On those Sundays we celebrate the Lord's Supper, it is common to speak the ancient words of the Nicene Creed. Toward the end of it we state, “We believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church.” How would you explain to a child what it means that your church is “apostolic”?

Understand the setting

Read Galatians 1:3-5

1. What are Paul's first words to the Christians of Galatia?
2. If someone spoke to you as Paul spoke to the Galatians, what might you assume to be his attitude toward you?
 - ___ He is an adversary.
 - ___ He is indifferent.
 - ___ He is being businesslike.
 - ___ He is acting in your best interests.
 - ___ other (explain)

3. Paul makes two statements about Jesus in verse 4.

What act did Jesus carry out?

What was the result of Jesus' act?

4. Jesus always submitted to God his Father's will (verse 4). We often think that making someone submit to us is not a kind way of acting. Verse 5, however, says that God deserves glory, not shame, for this arrangement. Why?

His Word in My Life

“Substitution” is a familiar idea. In a ball game, a coach substitutes another child for yours. If you call in sick for work, your boss substitutes another employee for you.

In Galatians 1:4, the Holy Spirit speaks about someone who substituted himself for us.

What sorts of things can we learn about ourselves by observing the person chosen as our substitute?

Identify the crisis

Read Galatians 1:6-10

1. Paul comes straight to the point. He uses a very strong verb in verse 6 to describe the Galatian Christians' behavior. Pick out that word.
2. A different gospel is really _____ at all. (verse 7) Why?
3. In verse 7 the book's cast of characters grows. Identify the new characters.
4. How urgent is the crisis in Galatia? To answer, fill in the blanks using the words *the reader*, or *Paul* to complete the thought.

It's urgent—see how decisively _____ acted!

It's urgent—see how clearly _____ taught!

It's urgent—see how endangered _____ has become!

5. Pick out the contrasts found in verse 10.

- _____ of _____ as opposed to _____ of _____.
- _____ _____ as opposed to _____ _____.

How do these contrasts display Paul's love for God? for the Galatian Christians?

His Word in My Life

Our politically correct ears can't believe what Christ's apostle says in verses 8 and 9. But Christians have been praying for the Lord God to destroy Satan's perverse lies for as long as there has been a church. (See Psalm 3:5-8.) How have Satan's lies influenced the church today? Can our prayers imitate Paul's? Explain.

Summary

In today's study we are introduced to the characters, the setting, and the crisis of this portion of Scripture. Recall the question we asked in the introduction: "What is wrong with this picture?" There, a free man was seen heading back to a life of slavery. In what way were the Galatian Christians doing the same thing? Why was the apostle Paul alarmed by their attitude?

Life with God

- Memorize Galatians 1:8. Blessings are in store for you! Maybe it's been years since you memorized something. Maybe you have had trouble in the past. The following suggestions may help you:

Highlight the passage in your Bible with a yellow marker.

Read the passage out loud to hear yourself say it.

Break it into smaller pieces.

Write it on paper (this involves your eye and hand).

Put the paper where you'll see it during the day.

- During the rest of the week, read one chapter of Galatians per day. This reading is a very important part of this Bible study course.

Galatians

You're Free Now

· Lesson Two ·

Galatians 1:11-24

Paul Defends His Apostleship

- Paul's life before his conversion
- The circumstances surrounding Paul's conversion
- Paul visited Jerusalem three years after his conversion
- Paul's stay in Syria and Cilicia

Worship

Read Psalm 147:1-3,19,20

A: Praise the LORD. How good it is to sing praises to our God,

B: How pleasant and fitting to praise him!

A: The LORD builds up Jerusalem;

B: He gathers the exiles of Israel.

A: He heals the brokenhearted

B: And binds up their wounds.

A: He has revealed his word to Jacob,

B: His laws and decrees to Israel.

A: He has done this for no other nation;

B: They do not know his laws. Praise the LORD.

Prayer: Father, we realize that if you had chosen to remain hidden and to be a mystery to us, you could have done so. Then we could only guess at your intentions toward us. But you have broken the silence! Through your Word speak to our hearts now as we read your holy thoughts. Amen.

Introduction

Did you ever make up a story as a child? Why did you do that? Did you enjoy creating a fantasy world? Did you make up a story to avoid punishment? Was it to get something you desired?

Some people have asked whether the Bible might be fiction. Many in Galatia thought that Paul was making up stories just to influence the Galatians. Today we hear Paul defend his ministry and his message.

Studying God's Word

Paul's life before his conversion

Read Galatians 1:11-14

1. *Gospel* means “good news.” Look back at verses 1 to 10. In what words has Paul already announced good news to his audience?
2. Paul makes it very clear that he received his gospel directly from Christ. He rules out other possibilities. His gospel was—
 - NOT _____
 - NOT _____
 - NOT _____
3. Agree or disagree: Before Paul became a Christian himself, he had little contact with Christians (verse 13). He was only concerned with becoming a more zealous Jew (verse 14).

His Word in My Life

The apostle calls his audience “brothers” (verse 11).

You have a message to share with someone, and you're quite sure it will be painful for them to hear it. How will it make a difference if you call them by name?

The circumstances surrounding Paul's conversion

Read Galatians 1:15-17

1. How did God interrupt the course of Paul's life? (verse 15)
2. How did Paul respond to God's intervention? (verses 16,17)
3. Paul was told to preach Christ among the Gentiles (verse 16). Can you guess why a ministry to Gentiles would (a) raise questions and (b) cast a shadow over the reliability of Paul's message?

4. Compare verse 16 with verses 1 and 12. What point does Paul make in all these verses? Why do you think he makes this point so often? How does this help us understand the main reason Paul relates two whole chapters of his life's history?

His Word in My Life

Learning historical names and places can be boring. But when they are from Bible history, it's different. Look at a map in the back of your Bible. Find Jerusalem and Damascus. Your history as a Christian is tied up with these places. How so?

Paul visited Jerusalem three years after his conversion**Read Galatians 1:18-20**

1. Whom did Paul finally meet in Jerusalem? Why was the number of days so important to Paul's argument? Why was the limited number of contacts Paul had in Jerusalem so important to his argument?
2. Whether Paul was a true apostle was very important; the truth of the gospel hung in the balance. From what Paul says in these verses, which of the following reports were evidently circulating among the Galatians?
 - "Paul is trustworthy and reliable."
 - "Paul learned his message from the original apostles of Christ, so he is not really a personal witness of the risen Christ."
 - "Paul's right to tell us what's right or wrong is in question. Who can we believe?"

His Word in My Life

Learning the truths of the Christian faith is a process all Christians go through. It's true that faith is a gift from God, and the Holy Spirit brings us to faith in a moment. At the same time, it's true that God works on an ongoing basis through what we call the "means (conveyors) of grace," God's Word and sacraments.

Many Christians, over a period of months or years of directed study, move through the process of confirming their faith and becoming equipped for the work God wants them to do in his church. What's your story?

Paul's stay in Syria and Cilicia

Read Galatians 1:21-24

1. Judea (verse 22) is the southern portion of Israel. Jerusalem was located there. What was the extent of the Judean congregations' awareness of Paul? Had they—

___ Seen him?

___ Heard of him?

___ Heard him preach?

2. Paul once more underlines the fact that he was unknown to the Jews in Jerusalem. Outline Paul's description of himself in verses 23 and 24.

• He once p_____.

• He now p_____.

• The Christians now p_____.

His Word in My Life

The chapter ends by telling us of Paul's reputation. God's gift of reputation, "a good name," is so important that in one of the Ten Commandments, God builds a protective fence around it. Opportunities are gained or lost because of a reputation. How was that true in Paul's case? In your case, as a Christian serving the Lord?

Summary

In today's study Paul defends his apostleship. He clearly says that he was called to this work directly by the risen Jesus. Why should we be grateful that God chose to give us his Word through specially called and equipped apostles?

Life with God

- Hold on to God's Word. Memorize Galatians 1:11.

Here are some memorization helps:

Highlight the passage in your Bible with a yellow marker.

Read the passage out loud to hear yourself say it.

Break it into smaller pieces.

Write it on paper (this involves your eye and hand).

Put the paper where you'll see it during the day.

There is blessing in store for the one who keeps God's Word on his mind.

- During the rest of the week, read one chapter of Galatians per day according to the following schedule. This is a very important part of our larger study course.

Day 1: Galatians 1

Day 2: Galatians 2

Day 3: Galatians 1

Day 4: Galatians 2

Day 5: Galatians 1

Day 6: Galatians 2

Galatians

You're Free Now

· Lesson Three ·

Galatians 2:1-21

The Other Apostles Accepted Paul

- Paul's gospel message was accepted by the Jerusalem Council
- Peter and Paul agreed on a division of labor
- Peter accepted Paul's admonition

Worship

Read Psalm 133

A: How good and pleasant it is

B: When brothers live together in unity!

A: It is like precious oil poured on the head, running down on the beard,

B: Running down on Aaron's beard, down upon the collar of his robes.

A: It is as if the dew of Hermon were falling on Mount Zion.

B: For there the LORD bestows his blessing, even life forevermore.

Prayer: Father, we live in a world where people are divided by distrust. Especially in the church of God, Satan works without rest to weaken our faith and stain our attitudes. Disunity cripples our productivity and casts a shadow over our Christian witness. Reverse this discouraging plague brought on by the sin of our first parents in Eden. For where you give the gift of forgiveness, there is unity with you and there is unity with our brothers and sisters in Christ. Amen.

Introduction

Not being accepted is a sad situation. No one listens to what that person has to say. It is especially tragic if the message is one that could save lives.

How did this scenario fit Paul, at least among some of the people at Galatia?

Studying God's Word

Paul's gospel message was accepted by the Jerusalem Council

Read Galatians 2:1-5

1. Trace the events mentioned in these verses by noting which of the following statements is not true:
 After the visit mentioned in 1:18, Paul never returned to Jerusalem.
 Paul had been preaching the gospel of a risen Christ to non-Jews.
 Titus was a non-Jew.
 Circumcision was an Old Testament law.
 Paul traveled by himself on this trip to Jerusalem.
2. The Jewish Christian churches were demanding something of the Gentile Christians. Are you able to identify what it was? (verse 3)
3. “[A dispute] arose because some *false brothers* had *infiltrated* our ranks to *spy* on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus and to *make us slaves*” (verse 4). Look at the words Paul chooses! How does his choice of words tell us how serious he perceives the problem to be?

His Word in My Life

Let's say God helps you through a terrific struggle of conscience. You listen to the Word, you pray, and you rely on the counsel of fellow Christians. Later, your position is shown to be the scriptural one. What special temptation will come? Why is it so important to be a humble “winner”?

Peter and Paul agreed on a division of labor

Read Galatians 2:6-10

1. About whom do you think Paul is talking in verse 6?
2. If there was a difference in Paul's ministry that distinguished it from that of the other apostles, what was it? (verses 7,8)

3. “Fellowship” in the context of verse 9 means—
- Working together for the truth
 - A financial award or grant
 - Part of a medical doctor’s training

His Word in My Life

Paul speaks of those who seemed to be important (verse 6). Are some people in the Christian church more important than others? Why or why not?

Peter accepted Paul’s admonition**Read Galatians 2:11-21**

1. In your own words, tell what happened in Antioch. How did Peter give a poor witness?

2. For which of these reasons (verse 14) does Paul actually challenge and admonish Peter?
 - You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile.
 - You force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs.

3. In verses 15-17 “justify” means—
 - to proclaim “Guilty as charged!” as a judge does in a courtroom
 - to proclaim “Not guilty!” as a judge does in a courtroom

4. If righteousness could be gained through the law, why would it logically follow that Christ died for nothing?

5. How was Peter setting aside the grace of Christ by the way he acted?

His Word in My Life

In Antioch Peter said one thing but did another. What do we call that kind of action? What motivated that attitude in Peter’s heart? Does this ever happen today?

Summary

In this chapter Paul is still defending his apostleship. He recalls three episodes in which he was received by the other apostles. He was not taught by them—in fact, on one occasion he had to rebuke one of them—rather, he received his message directly from Christ. This silenced those who were suggesting that Paul was somehow inferior to the other apostles. His words and work are from God.

The situation today is not quite the same as in the days of the apostles. How can we know today if a messenger is from God?

Life with God

- Hold on to God's Word. Memorize Galatians 2:16.
- During the rest of the week, read one chapter of Galatians per day according to the following schedule. It would be hard to overstate how important this is to your study of Galatians, and how God will bless you through your attention to his Holy Word.

Day 1: Galatians 1

Day 2: Galatians 2

Day 3: Galatians 3

Day 4: Galatians 1

Day 5: Galatians 2

Day 6: Galatians 3

Galatians

You're Free Now

· Lesson Four ·

Galatians 3:1-18

Not by Works, but by Faith Alone

- The Galatians' own experience
- Abraham's experience
- The difference between law and gospel
- The promise to Abraham preceded the law to Moses

Worship

Read Psalm 32:1-7

A: Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven,

B: Whose sins are covered.

A: Blessed is the man whose sin the LORD does not count against him

B: And in whose spirit is no deceit.

A: When I kept silent,

B: My bones wasted away through my groaning all day long.

A: For day and night your hand was heavy upon me;

B: My strength was sapped as in the heat of summer.

A: Then I acknowledged my sin to you

B: And did not cover up my iniquity.

A: I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD"—

B: And you forgave the guilt of my sin.

Prayer: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, we are about to get a look inside your eternal courtroom. It is with a good deal of fear that we come before you, for you know all our thoughts and actions. Enable us to admit our guilt. Open our eyes now to see your Son, our only defense. Open our ears now to hear and believe your verdict of "Not guilty!" Amen.

Introduction

To be at someone's mercy means needing something from a person, but having no claim to it, no leverage to force that person to hand it over. By way of contrast, to have someone at your mercy means that a person has an obligation to do something for you. The phrase "to be at someone's mercy" means you cannot pay what you owe and the only hope you have is that he will be merciful and let you off the hook.

Why do some sinners not consider themselves at God's mercy? Why do you consider yourself to be at God's mercy?

Studying God's Word

The Galatians' own experience

Read Galatians 3:1-5

1. How many question marks are there in 3:1-5? Why does Paul come at the Galatians with so many questions? Hint: See Galatians 1:6,7.
2. In the second half of verse 1, Paul summarizes what he preached when he was with the Galatians. In your own words, write down the heart of his message.
3. Is Paul's message primarily—
 - a) a call to behave a certain way, or
 - b) a call to believe a certain thing?

His Word in My Life

Paul asks, "After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?" (verse 3). What is the attraction of a strenuous, behavior-based relationship to God such as—

- the life of a monk or a nun
- Mormonism
- life in the Amish community
- a steady diet of Christian self-help books

Abraham's experience

Read Galatians 3:6-9

1. Under what circumstances did God credit Abraham as if he were a righteous man (See Genesis 15:1-6)?
2. The Jewish people had always been fiercely proud of being the “Children of Abraham” and the “People of God.” What startling statement does Paul (himself a Jew) make in verse 7?
3. In verse 8 Paul dares to include _____ among the people of God! Why could he do this?

His Word in My Life

Jews and Gentiles alike make up the new Israel, the New Testament people of God. Even though Christ's church is diverse in ethnic background, it is still united. Why?

The difference between law and gospel

Read Galatians 3:10-14

1. How many Old Testament Scripture quotations are found in verses 10 to 14? (Here's a place where your Bible's footnotes really come in handy).
2. Look again at verse 10. In it, a mighty truth is stated negatively: “Cursed is the man who *does not* _____.”
Now, for study purposes, let's state that same truth positively: “Blessed is the man who *does* continue _____ written in the Book of the Law.”
Reflect on the 3 underlined demands God makes of us in this verse.
3. Still thinking about verse 10, discuss the meaning of *cursed*. Matthew 25:41 will help.

4. Agree or disagree: God's curse on me, a sinner, did not simply vanish. Rather, it fell upon someone else.

His Word in My Life

We all know that God's Word is for sinners. But which Word (law or gospel) is meant for which person? Should I share God's commandments with someone? Or should I share the good news of Christ's work for us? Think of those questions as you diagnose this situation:

Patricia was unfaithful to her husband Greg. She later told Greg about it. During marriage counseling, their pastor asked Patricia if she wanted to rebuild her marriage. She said "Yes . . . but I am not ready to break off my relationship with this other man."

The promise to Abraham preceded the law to Moses**Read Galatians 3:15-18**

Which message—the law or the promise—is actually the older, original covenant between the holy God and sinful humans? By how many years is it older? (verse 17)

His Word in My Life

In the laws that govern our society, timing is a respected idea. For us, "You were here first" counts when it comes to things like . . .

Why is it comforting that the promise covenant of God came before his law covenant?

Summary

God is absolutely determined that we learn that we are at his mercy. Paul explains "justification"—how we, sinners, become accepted before God. Because salvation cannot come by what we do, we have no claim or leverage on God. We walk out of God's courtroom and into the street, justified by God's mercy. Justification comes from God, through faith in the promises God has made based on the work of his Son.

Life with God

- Hold on to God's Word. Memorize Galatians 3:13.
- During the rest of your week, read one selection per day as follows:

Day 1: Psalm 51

Day 2: Luke 18:9-14

Day 3: Romans 3:20-30

Day 4: Matthew 5:17-20

Day 5: Luke 7:36-50

Day 6: Galatians 3

- Prayer thoughts for after you've finished your reading:

Thank God for damning his own Son so he wouldn't have to damn you.

Rejoice that through faith you are a member of God's people, Israel.

Galatians

You're Free Now

· Lesson Five ·

Galatians 3:19–4:20

Christians Are Free from the Law

- Description: the law
- Parable: the heir as a minor
- Example: the Galatians' own conversion

Worship

Read Psalm 130

A: Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD. O Lord, hear my voice.

B: Let your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy.

A: If you, O LORD, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand?

B: But with you there is forgiveness; therefore you are feared.

A: I wait for the LORD, my soul waits,

B: And in his word I put my hope.

A: My soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the morning,

B: More than watchmen wait for the morning.

A: O Israel, put your hope in the LORD, for with the LORD is unfailing love

B: and with him is full redemption.

A: He himself will redeem Israel

B: From all their sins.

Prayer: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, we are about to open your Holy Word. In our human darkness, we are confused about many areas of life. Worst of all, we find ourselves doubting that you love us. Pity us. Through your promise of life, assure us that you forgive us and accept us. With you, Lord, is unfailing love; by you, Lord, the full ransom price has been paid. Amen.

Introduction

After the fall of the Iron Curtain, reports came over from eastern Europe about state-run orphanages there. Some of these orphanages were filled to overflowing with abandoned, sick, frightened, or crippled children. Stories chronicling the adoption of some of these children were widely publicized.

Can you imagine how the lives of these children changed? Once not sons or daughters, but now sons and daughters. Once living in no family, but now members of a family. Now an identity; now an inheritance!

What did the orphans have to do in order to receive these new lives? What does a human being have to do in order receive a new life from God?

Studying God's Word

Description: the law

Read Galatians 3:19-29

- Paul points out four weaknesses of the law. Can you find them in verses 19 and 20?
 - It was not God's primary message; rather, it was _____ .
 - It was added not because it could give righteousness, but because of _____ .
 - It was meant only for a limited time, only until _____ .
 - It required a _____ because it was a two-way agreement.

What is the great value of the law? (verses 21-25)

- Verses 26 to 28 are a lovely statement of the Christian's personal relationship with God. What comforting picture of Baptism is included in this description?

His Word in My Life

Can you think of a relative who suffered, yet carried the burden with dignity? Or can you think of an acquaintance who worked hard and lived decently? This type of person certainly seems to deserve God's approval . . . at least, more than many.

Then comes the jarring little word in verse 22, "but." What is the law saying to us—even to the best of us?

Parable: the heir as a minor

Read Galatians 4:1-11

1. The author introduced the idea of “heir” in 3:29. Next comes a little parable about an heir who is still in his childhood years.

The heir is a—

___ slave

___ son

The heir, when he is still a minor child, is treated like a—

___ slave

___ son

2. In 3:24 Paul made the point that the law was put in charge to lead us *until Christ came*. What happened then? (verse 4)
3. God forgave us through his Son. Then he gave us the Holy Spirit. What does the Holy Spirit enable us to do? (verse 6)
4. Something alarming is happening in Galatia to the sons whom God has made heirs. What is it? (verse 9)

His Word in My Life

All of us have some experience with “the pursuit of happiness.” But reflect again on verses 4 and 5. We have received the full rights of sons.

If we are sons of God, what more is there to possess? How does this influence our pursuit of happiness in this life?

Example: the Galatians’ own conversion

Read Galatians 4:12-20

1. When Paul came into Galatia, he received a _____ welcome. Even though he was ill, these men, women, and children did not treat him with _____ or _____. But now it seems that the Galatians are treating Paul like an _____.

2. What does Paul hope to gain by reminding the Galatians of how they had received him?
3. “Those people” (verse 17) are not identified by name. By now, however, we know their characteristic teaching, their “other gospel” (1:8,9). They are often called Judaizers because they were attempting to get the people to return to the Jewish laws.

What does Paul say is motivating these Judaizers? (verses 17,18)

His Word in My Life

Zealous people are often held in high regard. Often it makes little difference whether their zeal is based on the truth or not. Can you give an example of this from the religious world? Does your example bear any resemblance to the Judaizers in Galatia?

Summary

Don't I have to keep the Commandments to be accepted before God? No. An orphan is adopted because the new parents pitied her, not because she did anything to earn being adopted.

When the question is How does a sinner become justified before God?, we must answer that Christians are truly free from the law. The Commandments simply do not speak in that courtroom.

Through a description of the law, a parable of a minor child, and a reminder of the Galatian's former love for the gospel, Paul explains the relation of the law to the new life God gives us.

Life with God

- Hold on to God's Word. Memorize Galatians 3:26.
- During the rest of your week, read one section of Scripture per day as follows.

Day 1: Genesis 16:1-6 and 17:1-17

Day 2: Romans 1

Day 3: Romans 2,3

Day 4: Romans 4

Day 5: Romans 5

Day 6: Romans 6

Galatians

You're Free Now

· Lesson Six ·

Galatians 4:21–5:12

Justified People, Keep Your Freedom

- An allegory of slavery and freedom
- Stand firm in your Christian freedom
-

Worship

Read Psalm 51:13-15,17-19

A: Then I will teach transgressors your ways,

B: And sinners will turn back to you.

A: Save me from bloodguilt, O God, the God who saves me,

B: And my tongue will sing of your righteousness.

A: O Lord, open my lips,

B: And my mouth will declare your praise.

A: The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit;

B: A broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

A: In your good pleasure make Zion prosper;

B: Build up the walls of Jerusalem.

A: Then there will be righteous sacrifices, whole burnt offerings to delight you;

B: Then bulls will be offered on your altar.

Prayer: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, thank you for leading us into the portions of Galatians we've studied so far. We're grateful to learn that you have justified us. Please help us apply your verdict of "Not Guilty!" to ourselves throughout this day. We love you because you first loved us. Amen.

Introduction

Did you meet anyone today who was unhappy? Many people say what makes them unhappy is a situation they can't control or circumstances they don't have any hope of changing.

Have you ever noticed that when people are unhappy, their gloom seems to bleed through into relationships with the people around them? What would it be like to live free of such gloom? How would it affect our relationships?

Studying God's Word

Allegory: Ishmael and Isaac

Read Galatians 4:21-31

1. An allegory is a symbolic representation based on real historical facts or figures. These historical facts and figures teach us a lesson or principle or explain a relationship. Read Genesis 16:1-4,15,16 and Genesis 17:15-19 and discuss sources of conflict and tension in this story.

The characters are two sons of Abraham, _____ and _____, and the boys' mothers, _____ and _____.

2. One son, Ishmael, was born in the ordinary way. What did his mother symbolize? (Galatians 4:24,25)
3. The other son, Isaac, was born in a miraculous way, as a result of God's promise. What did his miraculous birth symbolize? (verses 26-28)
4. In verses 29-31 Paul applies the allegory to his readers and to us. Why do the spiritual descendants of Ishmael persecute the spiritual descendants of Isaac?
5. Isaac's descendants may have to suffer during this life. What, however, will be the final result of the spiritual battle between the two kinds of children—those whose spiritual life is formed by their own will and works and those whose spiritual birth happens because of God's grace and promise?

His Word in My Life

A comforting label is given to you and every believer in Christ in verse 28. When could you build up or comfort a fellow Christian with this truth?

Stand firm in your Christian freedom**Read Galatians 5:1-12**

1. Christ set us free (verse 1). From what are Christians free?
2. Reread verses 2-4. Why can't there be a compromise here? Can't someone be called a Christian based on his or her behavior record?
3. What does Paul mean by "obeying the truth"? (verse 7)
4. Think about the picture Paul uses in verse 9. The following words all describe yeast in a lump of dough. Which does Paul warn against?
 powerful
 quiet
 active
 small
 unseen
5. What is the easiest way to keep from being persecuted for your faith? (verse 11)

His Word in My Life

To what false teachings are you most vulnerable? What false teaching or group of people makes you think that your Christian faith is not complete?

Summary

By God's grace we have been set free from sin, death, and the devil. Our faith is not a faith produced by human thought and decision. That kind of faith revels in work-righteousness. Ours is a faith founded on Christ and built up by grace.

Even though our kind of faith leads to persecution, it is the only kind that gives us freedom and membership in God's kingdom.

Life with God

- Hold on to God's Word. Memorize Galatians 5:1.
- Read one chapter of the gospel according to Mark each day this week.

Day 1: chapter 1

Day 2: chapter 2

Day 3: chapter 3

Day 4: chapter 4

Day 5: chapter 5

Day 6: chapter 6

Galatians

You're Free Now

· Lesson Seven ·

Galatians 5:13–6:5

Justified People, You Are Free to Serve the Lord

- Walk in the Spirit, not in the flesh
- Be considerate of the weak and erring

Worship

Read Psalm 119:169-176

A: May my cry come before you, O LORD;

B: Give me understanding according to your word.

A: May my supplication come before you;

B: Deliver me according to your promise.

A: May my lips overflow with praise,

B: For you teach me your decrees.

A: May my tongue sing of your word,

B: For all your commands are righteous.

A: May your hand be ready to help me,

B: For I have chosen your precepts.

A: I long for your salvation, O LORD,

B: And your law is my delight.

A: Let me live that I may praise you,

B: And may your laws sustain me.

A: I have strayed like a lost sheep.

B: Seek your servant, for I have not forgotten your commands.

Prayer: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, thank you for those Christians who have gone before us, who have shared with us your good news. Remind us today that we exist here on earth—in families and in other relationships—to fulfill your purposes. May we use the freedom you have given us to serve others. Amen.

Introduction

The teacher asked the class, “If you could *see* freedom, what would it look like?” Someone said, “A man snoozing in a recliner.” Someone else volunteered, “A woman on a deserted beach doing nothing more than soaking up the rays.”

Contrast those pictures with what you know of General George Washington at Valley Forge on a certain winter night. His 13 little colonies were weak, but they were independent. They were threatened from the outside and inside. Their enemy expected word of their surrender at any hour. If you could see freedom, would it look like this?

Studying God’s Word

Walk in the spirit, not in the flesh

Read Galatians 5:13-23

1. “You, my brothers, were called to be free” (verse 13). Christian freedom has two sides:
 - Christians are free from _____ .
 - Christians are free to _____ .

Look again at Galatians 5:7. How does faith express itself?

2. There are two opposing attitudes regarding how to use Christian freedom. Pick out the words in verse 13 that describe these two opposing attitudes. Give an example of each.
3. What are the acts of the sinful nature? (verse 19) What is the fruit of the Spirit? (verse 22)
4. In verse 15 what sin seemed to be showing itself in the Galatian congregation? Where would you find that in the “catalog of sins” in verses 19-21?
5. We are forgiven of all our sins and receive God’s kingdom solely through God’s grace. Yet those who live according to the flesh will not inherit the kingdom of God. How can both of these facts be true? (verse 21)

6. A conflict is mentioned in verse 17. Who or what is engaged in the battle described there?

His Word in My Life

Choose any one of the acts of the sinful nature listed in verses 19-21. In real life how is doing this act the very opposite of serving one another in love (verse 13)?

Be considerate of the weak and erring**Read Galatians 5:24–6:5**

1. Galatians teaches two biblical truths: justification (my holy standing) and sanctification (my holy life).

What does Galatians 3:6 teach about justification?

What does Galatians 5:24 teach about sanctification?

2. What is the difference between being “caught” in a sin (6:1) and “living” in a sin (5:21)?
3. Christians are to rebuke and encourage fellow Christians who are caught in sins. When Christians do this, however, they must watch their own hearts. Explain how Christians might be tempted—
- into the same sin.
 - into looking down on the sinner.
 - into self-righteousness.

4. What does it mean to carry someone’s burden? Think of a burden your neighbor has that you could carry.

5. By what standard does God want me to judge my accomplishments?

___ By what other people around me are doing

___ By what God has called me and empowered me to do

His Word in My Life

Conceit. Satan loves to make God's people conceited. What harm can he cause by this trick?
(5:26)

Summary

What does freedom look like? We don't have to guess, we know. In Christ we are free from sin. In Christ we have a new nature that freely serves God and our neighbor.

Paul has warned us against the old self. To follow our old sinful nature means to revert into unbelief and eternal captivity in hell. But if we live according to our new spiritual nature, the one created by the gospel, we will live in eternal freedom in heaven.

One can see the freedom God's people enjoy, for it is on display in their lives.

Life with God

- Hold on to God's Word. Memorize Galatians 6:10.
- You have begun reading the gospel according to Mark. Continue reading a chapter each day as follows:

Day 1: chapter 7

Day 2: chapter 8

Day 3: chapter 9

Day 4: chapter 10

Day 5: chapter 11

Day 6: chapter 12

Galatians

You're Free Now

· Lesson Eight ·

Galatians 6:6-18

Closing Words

- Support messengers of the gospel
- Sow to please the Spirit, not the flesh
- Paul's conclusion
- Trust me!

Worship

Read Psalm 2:7-12

A: I will proclaim the decree of the LORD:

B: He said to me, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father.

A: Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance,

B: The ends of the earth your possession.

A: You will rule them with an iron scepter;

B: You will dash them to pieces like pottery."

A: Therefore, you kings, be wise;

B: Be warned, you rulers of the earth.

A: Serve the LORD with fear and rejoice with trembling.

B: Kiss the Son, lest he be angry and you be destroyed in your way,

A: For his wrath can flare up in a moment.

B: Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

Prayer: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, there is something inside each of us that rages at the idea that we are at your mercy. Our sinful natures demand to hang on to some shred of spiritual independence. Impress on us that your family has one King, not many. Impress on us that membership in your family must be on the basis of mercy, or it will not be at all. Be our refuge. Move us to love your gospel, to support it, and to carry it from our own homes to the ends of the earth. Amen.

Introduction

What kind of material do you put at the very end of a letter? What is your mood as you finish a letter, especially one in which you have had to say some strong things?

Today we listen as the Holy Spirit inspires one of his apostles to finish a most important letter.

Studying God's Word

Support messengers of the gospel

Read Galatians 6:6

1. A characteristic of the Christian faith is that it is passed from one person to the next. Through whom did the Holy Spirit teach the word of freedom to you? What role have pastors and teachers played in your life?
2. Agree or disagree: Verse 6 is a suggestion, not a commandment.

His Word in My Life

If a congregation is not sharing all good things with the instructor, what message does this send—

- to the instructor?
- to those instructed?
- to the Spirit, whose work this is?

Sow to please the Spirit, not the flesh

Read Galatians 6:7-10

1. A person claims to have faith, attends church regularly, and even is active in his church. Yet that person secretly values the pleasure gained from pornography more than the blessings the Lord has given in the gospel. Why is “mocking God” a good way of describing what this person is doing?
2. The world may be fooled by the behavior of a hypocrite, but God cannot be fooled. When will this truth become clear? (verse 8)

3. The following attitudes may make us weary of doing good (verse 9). Suggest how each might be overcome.
 - The activity doesn't seem to make my life any better.
 - I keep sowing, but there doesn't seem to be much of a harvest.
 - I hoped life would be easier, but now I'm being persecuted.

4. The Galatians were loading themselves down with self-chosen laws. Paul says, "If you want to carry a burden—if you really want to follow a law—let your burden be _____" (verse 10).

His Word in My Life

Agree or disagree: Freedom in Christ does not release me from responsibility; rather, it heightens my responsibility.

Paul's conclusion**Read Galatians 6:11-16**

1. "Those who want to make a good impression outwardly" (verse 12) refers to the teachers who have moved in on Paul's Galatian congregations. (We first heard of them in 1:7.) What was their motive for making a good outward impression?

2. Agree or disagree: If a teacher can show numerical results, that puts an end to all questions about his skill and effectiveness.

3. For the Judaizers, a physical body marked with the sign, or badge, of circumcision signaled "a convert!" (verse 13). Read Matthew 23:15. What did Jesus say about such converts to the Judaizer's type of religion?

4. In verse 14 Paul talks about his boasting. Compare this statement to Jeremiah 9:23,24 and 1Corinthians 1:26-31. When is it improper to boast? When can it be a godly thing to boast? (verse 14)

5. Contrast being circumcised with being a new creation. Why does the former mean nothing and the latter mean everything?

6. Who is the “Israel of God”? (verse 16) Why do you think Paul uses this term to refer to the church? (See Romans 2:28,29; Galatians 3:7; Romans 9:6-8.)

His Word in My Life

How can you boast in the cross of Christ—

- in the Sunday morning liturgy?
- in your choice of topics for Bible study?
- in the kind of topics you discuss with your non-Lutheran neighbor?

Trust me!**Read Galatians 6:17,18**

1. Paul has spoken enough about the self-serving motives of his opponents. In a brief and chaste way, he reminds the Galatians of some obvious proof that his love for Jesus and for them is genuine. To what does he appeal? (See Acts 14:19, 2 Corinthians 11:22-29, Acts 16:22-24.)

2. Pastor Paul has used some rough and emotional language in this letter. (Remember 3:1?) Now he ends the letter with the peaceful tones of *grace*, as opposed to the hard sound of *commandments*. Each of the following definitions of *grace* contains a biblical insight about grace. Which definition do you like the best?
 - God’s undeserved love for sinners
 - **G**od’s **R**iches **A**t **C**hrist’s **E**xpense
 - Exactly the opposite of what you have coming
 - Free and faithful love
 - Pity on God’s part as opposed to pride on man’s part

His Word in My Life

Evaluate: “Everyone who wants to be a Christian will experience persecution. As the light of one’s faith shines on the attitudes, actions, and false ideas of others, there will be a price to pay.” After discussion, see 2 Timothy 3:10-13.

Summary

Can you remember how we began our study eight lessons ago? We thought of a person who returned to slavery after having tasted freedom. How could such a thing ever happen?

Paul closes his letter with a summary of everything he has spoken about. First, he encourages us to live as those who have God’s forgiveness and the Holy Spirit dwelling in us. Second, he tells us never to boast about what we have accomplished, but about what Christ has accomplished for us. The grace of God in Christ, not the works of the law, are what saves us.

Life with God

- Memorize Galatians 6:14,15
- During the rest of the week read one chapter of Scripture per day. Suggestions:

Day 1: Mark 13

Day 2: Mark 14

Day 3: Mark 15

Day 4: Mark 16

Day 5: Ephesians 1

Day 6: Ephesians 2

May God the Holy Spirit help you to continue your new habit! Live like free men and women!