Galatians

Chapter 1

Vocabulary:

empowered: gave power to

admonishes: rebuke or warn

Pharisee: Jewish leader

Judaism: the Jewish faith

zealous: with passion and intensity

The apostle Paul wrote this letter to the churches in Galatia. As an apostle, he was sent by God to share God’s message. The same God who raised Jesus from the dead empowered Paul to preach the gospel. Paul reminds the Galatians and us that Jesus died for our sins so that we are free from this evil world. This is how God showed His love for us by allowing Jesus to pay for our sins.

Read Galatians 1: 1-5, 1John 4:10

A. There is no other Good News

Paul admonishes the churches of Galatia for turning away from the true gospel. God has chosen us to live in His grace. As Paul writes in Romans, God’s plan was to save us and make us right with Himself through Jesus. Instead, the Galatians were listening to a different gospel. The people of Galatia were Gentiles and didn’t follow the laws of the Jews. Some Jewish believers travelled to areas where there were Gentile believers. They told the Gentiles that they needed to be circumcised to be saved.

Paul said that if he or even an angel would come and preach something different than the true good news, God should curse them. When Paul preached, it was not for the approval of men or even God’s approval. Paul preached the good news because he was a servant of Christ.

Read Romans 8:30, Acts 15:1, Philippians 3:4-6, Galatians 1: 6-10

B. Paul called by God

Paul did not preach “man’s” gospel. Instead, Paul preached the gospel which Jesus Himself gave Paul. Before Paul became a believer, he was a Pharisee who was advancing in Judaism. Paul was very zealous in persecuting followers of Jesus. Paul was on his way to Damascus to arrest believers, but Jesus appeared to him in a bright light from heaven. Jesus told Paul that it was Jesus that Paul was really persecuting. God called Paul to preach about Jesus to the Gentiles.

After spending 3 years in Arabia and Damascus, Paul went to Jerusalem to visit Peter. Paul did not spend time with fellow believers. However, the believers heard that the man who once persecuted believers was now preaching the very gospel that he tried to destroy. Even though they didn’t see it for themselves, the believers still praised God for saving Paul.

Read Acts 8:3, Acts 9: 1-6, Galatians 1: 11-24

Questions

1. Who gave Paul the power to preach the gospel?

2. Why did Paul admonish the Galatian churches?

3. What was the “different gospel” that the Galatians were listening to?

4. Paul didn’t preach for man’s approval. Why did Paul preach?

5. How did Jesus bring the gospel to Paul?

6. What did the believers in Jerusalem think about Paul?

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Chapter 2

Vocabulary:

accompanied: to come with someone else

conform: to obey

task: job

harsh: ungentle or unpleasant

A. Paul is accepted by the Apostles

After 14 years, God lead Paul to return to Jerusalem. Both Barnabas and Titus accompanied him. The choice of these 2 men was important. Paul was going to visit the church leaders and Barnabas was well respected by the apostles.

In addition, Paul chose to take Titus. Titus was a Gentile believer whom Paul trusted. Paul spoke in private to the respected leaders and shared with them the gospel which he preached to the Gentiles.

The leaders accepted Titus as a believer and didn’t require that Titus should be circumcised. This was important because some men had joined the believers who wanted Gentiles to conform to all the Jewish laws. Paul refused to give into these men. God treats everyone the same. For believers, there are neither Jews nor Gentiles because we are all one in Christ Jesus.

The apostles understood that God had chosen Paul to preach to the Gentiles.

Just as God had chosen Peter to spread the gospel to the Jews, Paul’s task was to go to the Gentiles. James, Peter, and John agreed that Paul and Barnabas should continue their ministry to the Gentiles. All they asked was that Paul would continue to help the poor.

Acts 4: 36-37, Titus 1:4, Galatians 3:28, Galatians 2: 1-10

B. Paul opposes Peter

As all Christians know, sometimes we make bad choices and sin. This happened to Peter even though he was an apostle. Peter definitely knew that God wanted salvation for the Gentiles. In Acts, God showed Peter that no one is considered not pure or unclean. Peter went to the home of Cornelius who was Roman. Peter shared the gospel and baptized Cornelius and his family. Peter often spent time with Gentiles and enjoyed sharing meals with them. But when James sent some Jewish believers, Peter separated himself from the Gentile believers.

Paul rebuked Peter for what he did. Maybe this seems harsh, but it is in keeping with the scriptures. In Matthew 18, Jesus Himself says that if a brother or sister sins, you should confront them privately.

Yes, Peter was a Jew, but he was living his life as a believer. So why would he require Gentiles to live like Jews instead of believers? The purpose of the law was never to make us right with God. In fact, the law just makes us more aware of our sin. We are made right with God by putting our faith in Jesus Christ. It is the same for both Jews and Gentiles. Paul makes it clear that Jews also sin but it’s not because of Christ. If Paul returns again to relying on the law, then he is a sinner.

Matt 18:15, Acts 10: 28-32, Romans 3:20,22, Galatians 2:11-18

Paul declares that he is dead to the law because he was crucified with Christ.

This means our old sinful life is dead. It no longer controls us. Instead we live our life in and through Christ. Christ died for us and now through faith we can live through Him. If we return to living by the law, the Christ died for nothing.

Galatians 2: 19-21

Questions

1. Who did Paul take with him to Jerusalem?

2. Why was the choice of these two men important?

3. The leaders accepted Titus as a believer. Why was this important to Paul?

4. Why did Paul rebuke Peter?

5. What is the purpose of the law?

Galatians

Chapter 3

Vocabulary:

Righteous: to be right with God

Curse: opposite of blessing – bad things will happen

Based on: depends on something

Extend: reaches

Covenant: strong promise between 2 people

governed: ruled

A. Faith or Obeying the Law

Paul called the Galatians “foolish”. They were foolish because they forgot the gospel that was preached to them. Foolish people think that they are right but wise people listen to advice. Paul further reminded the Galatians that Christ was crucified. He died for our sins. Jesus Christ saves us completely when we come to Him in faith. The Galatians were confusing faith and obeying the law. Paul reminded them that the Holy Spirit was given to them because of their faith. The Galatians had faith because they believed the message of the gospel. They did not receive the Holy Spirit by obeying the law.

Read Proverbs 12:15, Hebrews 7:25, Romans 10:17, Galatians 3:1-5

Abraham believed God and his faith made him right with God. In fact, Abraham was made righteous or right with God before Abraham was circumcised. This is very important since the Jewish Christians wanted the Gentiles to be circumcised. All who come to God by faith in Christ are considered to be children of Abraham. God told Abraham that he would be the father of many nations.

We could never obey the law perfectly and anyone who doesn’t is under a curse. The law is not based on faith, it is based on a person’s ability. Because of Christ, we are no longer under the curse of the law. Now the blessing given to Abraham is extended to the Gentiles through Christ. God has given His Holy Spirit to all who have faith in Christ.

Read Genesis 15:6, Genesis 17:5, Romans 4: 9-10, Galatians 3: 6-14

B. The Law and the Promise

When a contract has been agreed to and signed, it becomes official and cannot be changed. It is the same with God. God made a covenant with Abraham. God’s covenant is forever, and He keeps His promises for all time to come. In Genesis, it says that “through your offspring” all nations will be blessed. The offspring referred to in this scripture is Christ. The ten commandments came after God’s covenant and promises to Abraham. Therefore, God’s promises do not depend on following the law.

Read Genesis 22: 18, Psalm 105: 8-11, Galatians 3:15-18

Why was the law given at all? It was designed to control us until Christ came. The purpose of the law is to make us aware of our sin. Is the law the opposite of God’s promise? No, the law simply shows that we are lost. Jesus came to fulfill the law. God’s promise comes though faith in Jesus.

Matt 5:17, Romans 3:20, Galatians 3: 19-22

C. Children of God

The law was put into place until faith in Christ made us right with God.

Now we are no longer governed by the law. Now, we are all God’s children by believing in Christ. This is God’s amazing love. We who have faith in Jesus Christ have put Him on. We wear Christ like clothing for everyone to see. In Christ, we are all the same. There is no difference based on nationality, male or female, boss or employee. We are one in Christ and will receive all of God’s promises.

Romans 10:4, 1John 3:1, Galatians 3: 23-29

Questions

1. Why does Paul call the Galatians foolish?

2. What were the Galatians confusing?

3. What made Abraham right with God?

4. Who is the offspring that the Genesis passage refers to?

5. Why was the law given?

6. What does it mean to “put Christ on”?

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Chapter 4

Vocabulary:

heir: someone who will get property or money when someone dies

inherit: receive property or money

under the influence: controlled by

adopt: non biological

rituals: a practice repeated over and over

A. Sons and heirs

Although children will be future heirs, as children they do not own property. In fact, children will be taken care of while they are young. When they are adults, they can inherit property. Before Christ, we were as children and were under the influence of the world.

But at just the right time, God sent Jesus to be born as a human baby. Jesus came to set us free from the authority of the law. Jesus’ death made us right with God and we have eternal life. Through Christ, we are adopted into God’s family. Because we are His children, the Holy Spirit lives in us. We can now call God our Father. Because we are God’s children, we will receive all that He has for us. Our inheritance can not be destroyed. It will never spoil or fade away.

Romans 8:17, Titus 3:7, Galatians 4: 1-7, 1Peter 1:4

B. Paul’s concern for the Galatians

Before we became God’s children, we were slaves to the gods of this world. But now we know God and God knows us. This was the same for the Galatians but now they were returning to those same gods. The Galatians started to become slaves to Jewish rituals. Paul pleads with the Galatians to become like him.

When Paul first came to preach to the Galatians, they welcomed him fully. Paul was having a physical problem, but they didn’t reject him. Instead, the Galatians treated Paul like an angel from God. But now the Galatians were treating Paul differently. Now they were treating him like an enemy.

The Jewish believers were trying to convince the Galatians to follow them. The Jewish believers wanted the Galatians to commit to them. While commitment is good, you should commit to what is good and true. Paul was so concerned about the Galatians that is caused him pain, like the pain of childbirth.

1 Corinthians 8:3, Galatians 4: 8-20

C. Hagar and Sarah

God promised that Abraham would have a son. But Abraham and Sarah got inpatient, so Abraham had a son with Sarah’s maid, Hagar. Abraham’s son by Hagar was not part of God’s covenant. Paul uses this story to illustrate the difference of freedom verses being slaves. In fact, they represent two different covenants. Hagar and her son demonstrate a covenant of slavery. But Sarah and her son show God’s new covenant of freedom from the law and sin.

We are children because of God’s promise just like Isaac Sarah’s son. Hagar’s son tried to harm Isaac. The same thing happened as the Jewish believers tried to change the Galatians. Sarah said to get rid of the slave and her son. Paul reminded the Galatians that they were the children of Sarah and are free.

Genesis 16: 2-4, Genesis 17: 19, Galatians 4: 21-31

Questions

1. When did God send Jesus?

2. How are we adopted into God’s family?

3. What happened before we were God’s children?

4. What was wrong with Paul and how did the Galatians respond to him?

5. Why did Abraham have a child with Hagar?

6. What do the sons of Hagar and Sarah represent?

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Chapter 5

Vocabulary:

matters: is important

what counts: is important

yeast: ingredient which causes bread to rise

yielding: to surrender or submit to something

vigilant: watchful

A. Christ sets us free

Christ sets us free from the power of sin. We should continue in the faith and not return to our former slavery to sin. Paul warns the Galatians against becoming circumcised. As Paul tells the Corinthians, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision matters. Obeying God’s commands are what counts. What are God’s commands? Love God with your heart, soul, mind, and strength. Love your neighbor as Christ loves you.

If the Galatians become circumcised and start following the law, then they will have to follow the law perfectly. Some Galatians were trying to obey the law to become right with God. This is not the gospel! When we try to obey the law on our own strength, we are not living in God’s grace. As mentioned before, neither circumcision not uncircumcision matters. As Paul says in Romans, true circumcision is the circumcision of the heart by the Holy Spirit.

1 Corinth. 7:19, John 15:12, Romans 2:29, Galatians 5:1-6

The Galatians had followed Christ faithfully. Now they were listening to false teachers. Jesus Himself tells us to be carefully of false prophets. They pretend to be mild like sheep but are really like hungry wolves. Paul tells the Galatians that “a little yeast” affects the whole loaf. This means even a few false teachers or ideas can affect the entire church. If circumcision was so important, why wasn’t Paul preaching it? If he preached that, the cross would no longer have its strength to save.

Matt 7:15, Galatians 5:7-12

B. Living by the Holy Spirit’s power

Jesus Christ has saved us so that we can be free. But this freedom should not be an excuse to sin. Instead of yielding to sin, we should actively love one another by serving others. In Leviticus, we read that we should love our neighbors as we love ourselves. In addition, this scripture says that we are not to get even or remember bad things that people have done to us.

2 Corinthians 3:17, 1 Peter 2:16, Leviticus 19:18, Galatians 5: 13-15

How can we love and serve others? How can we keep from sinning? Paul says to live in the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said that the Holy Spirit will teach us all things. He reminds us of all Jesus’ teachings. We need to listen to the Holy Spirit. We must be vigilant. Our former human nature and the Holy Spirit are opposed to each other. If we allow the Holy Spirit to lead us, we are no longer under sins control.

When our former nature controls us, it is evident in our behavior. We hate, fight, and are jealous. We are selfish and stir up trouble. We worship idols of all kinds. We have sinful behavior like sexual sins, getting drunk, being involved in wild parties, and impure acts.

John 14: 26, Galatians 5:16-21

But when the Holy Spirit controls us, our behavior changes. Paul uses the term “fruit” referring to what the Holy Spirit produces in our lives. As we allow the Holy Spirit to take over, we produce love, joy, and peace in our lives. We begin to love others as God commands us to. Because we believe and trust in Jesus, we are filled with His joy. God promises to give peace to those who dedicate themselves to God.

The Holy Spirit begins to change our behavior toward other people. We become patient, kind, good, and gentle. Through the Holy Spirit, we can learn to have self-control. When we belong to Christ, our sinful desires are nailed to the cross. Jesus died for these sins. Stay firm in the Holy Spirit. As we walk in love, we become humble. Patience keeps us from becoming angry easily. We should be content with what we have.

1 Peter 1:8, Galatians 5: 22-26

Questions

1. Paul says that neither circumcision nor uncircumcision matter. What does matter?

2. What are God’s commands?

3. What is true circumcision?

4. What does it mean that a little yeast affects the whole loaf?

5. Instead of yielding to sin, what should we do?

6. How can we love and serve others?

7. What is the fruit of the Spirit?

Galatians

Chapter 6

Vocabulary:

Restore: bring someone back to faith in God

Evaluate: to judge

Sows: to plant something in to ground

Reap: harvest

Outward appearance: how we look

Conform: to comply, to obey

A. Do good to everyone.

God calls us to love one another. Sometimes this means that we need to help a fellow believer who has fallen into sin. The book of James tells us that when we help restore a believer, we are saving them from death. But as we help someone else with their sin, we must be careful that we are not tempted to sin as well. By helping our fellow believers, we are obeying Christ’s command to love one another.

Paul continues this letter by saying that if anyone thinks that they are somebody special, then they are fooling themselves. Paul is referring to the Galatians’ pride of living by the law. We have been saved through faith in Christ. We are not saved by what we have done. Everyone should evaluate their own actions. Why do we serve? Why do we love? It should be out of our love for God, our Father. We shouldn’t compare ourselves with other people. God has given us different gifts and different ways to serve Him.

Read James 5:19-20, Philippians 3:7, Ephesians 2:8-9, Galatians 6: 1-6

God is in control. What a man sows, this will he reap. If a farmer plants seeds for corn, he will receive corn at the harvest. If you are friendly, you will have many friends. People who seek their own natural desires will harvest death. But those who seek to please the Holy Spirit will harvest eternal life. We shouldn’t get discouraged as we seek to love God and others. We should continue to serve our fellow believers.

Read Galatians 6: 7-10

B. Not circumcision but the New Creation

Paul ends his letter by making it personal. The Jewish Christians from Jerusalem were more concerned about outward appearance. In addition, by conforming to Jewish laws, Jewish Christians felt that they could avoid persecution. But Jesus said that those who are persecuted for the sake of the gospel will receive the kingdom of heaven.

These people wanted the Galatians to be circumcised and to follow the law. However, they couldn’t keep the law. Paul in his letter to the Romans says that everyone has sinned and fallen short of God’s glory. Only Jesus Christ’s sacrifice makes us right with God. The Jewish Christians just wanted to be able to boast about making the Galatians conform. But Paul reminds us that the only thing we can boast about is the gospel. Paul writes that the world is crucified to him and he is crucified to the world. This means that Paul considers himself to be dead to the world and the world is dead to him. Circumcision means nothing. What is more important is that we are now new creations in Christ. God’s peace and mercy will be on those who understand this.

Matthew 5:10, Romans 3:23, Galatians 6:11-18

Questions

1. What does God call us to do?

2. When we help someone else who sins, what should we be careful about?

3. Why do we serve? Why do we love?

4. What a man sows, this will he reap. What does this mean?

5. What were the Jewish Christians concerned about?

6. What should we boast about?