

Saved by faith, living by faith

Galatians reading plan

May 29 - Galatians 1:1-10

1. Paul spends a lot of time in this chapter talking about 'the Gospel' but he doesn't clearly define it. If we put verses 1:3-4 and verse 2:16 together, we get a working definition: *The Gospel is the good news announcement that we are not made right with God by keeping rules but by faith in Jesus Christ who gave Himself for our sins.* If a friend asked, how would you define 'the Gospel'?
2. The Galatian church seems to have wandered from this conception of the Gospel; why do Christians sometimes do this? Is it 'too free'? Is this grace 'too amazing'? What other 'gospels' attract peoples' attention nowadays?

May 31 - Galatians 1:11-24

1. In verse 13, Paul alludes to one of the skeletons in his closet. He says 'I persecuted the church of God and tried to destroy it.' (If you want to see that persecution in action, read Acts 9:1-2 & 26:9-11). If God is willing to forgive and rehabilitate someone like Paul, what does that say about His willingness to forgive and work through you?
2. Verse 15 shows us that God is playing the long game. He is working on a much longer timeline than we usually do. Where have you seen that truth played out in your own life? What does that say when things aren't happening on the timeline you'd like?

June 2 - Galatians 2:1-10

1. At verse 6, Paul reports on his meeting with some of the pillars of the early church. He says "As for those who seemed to be important--whatever they were makes no difference to me; God does not judge by external appearance." How can we cultivate that kind of attitude?
2. In this passage, Paul demonstrates the importance of accountability. He went to the apostles to ensure that his message was accurate and faithful to the message of Jesus. Who do you have in your life that can call you on things if you're misinterpreting or misapplying Scripture?

June 5 - Galatians 2:11-16

1. Last week we talked about the importance of accountability; now we have the flip side: holding another person accountable. What do you think of how Paul handled the situation?

Would you have handled it differently? What do you do when you see another believer acting hypocritically? (You might want to flip ahead to Galatians 6:1 for this one).

2. Paul says that the other apostles were guilty of 1. acting hypocritically and 2. acting 'out of step with the truth of the Gospel.' Is there a difference? What can we do to avoid them both?

June 7 - Galatians 2:17-21

1. Today's reading is a short one, which is good, because this reading is a tricky one. I'd encourage you to read it slowly, a few times over, in different translations if you can. You might even want to write it out by hand or read it out loud. I find that that helps me to understand by catching every word.

2. One of the earliest critiques of Christianity was that if salvation is by faith and not by what we do, Christians could conceivably sin because their actions didn't matter as long as they believed. How does Paul shut that argument down here?

3. What does it mean to 'live by faith in the Son of God who lives in me'?

4. Here's how Martin Luther said to read this verse: "Read the words "me" and "for me" with great emphasis. Print this "me" with capital letters in your heart, and do not ever doubt that you belong to the number of those who are meant by this "me." Christ did not only love Peter and Paul. The same love He felt for them He feels for us" (*Commentary on Galatians*, Galatians 2:20 'for me').

June 9 - Galatians 3:1-14

1. 'Saved by faith, living by works' is the nonsensical slogan that the Galatian church seems to be living by. They were saved by believing but then they seem to have fallen back into works-oriented living (ie., depending on themselves and not depending on God). Why do you think they did this? Why do we so easily do the same thing?

2. How does Abraham's experience encourage you in your walk of faith?

June 12 - Galatians 3:15-29

1. What do you think of Paul's argument in verse 17? How does Abraham's experience centuries before the Law was established make the case that God's intention was always 'justification by faith'?

2. What then was the purpose of the Law? Does that change how we approach it today?

June 14 - Galatians 4:1-10

1. Why is it important that God's Son was 'born of a woman' and 'born under law'?
2. What do you think Paul means in verse 9 when he says 'Now that you know God – or rather are known by God'? What are the implications of that wording change?

June 16 - Galatians 4:11-20

1. Verse 16 raises an unfortunate aspect of human nature. We don't like to hear hard truths. We'd much rather hear good news and be told that we're doing everything right. Sometimes though we need people to tell us the hard news and to challenge us when we're headed the wrong way. How do we stay open to that kind of feedback?
2. Imagine how difficult it must have been for the apostles to give leadership to far off churches in a world without the internet. ('How I wish I could be with you and change my tone!' v. 20). What are some ways that you can use this 'newfangled' technology to bless others? And what are some things you can do face-to-face to encourage others in Christ?

June 19 - Galatians 4:21-31

1. I kind of wish that Paul had framed this differently. The main point is verse 23: "But the son of the slave was born according to the flesh, while the son of the free woman was born through promise." (i.e., the one was born through independent human effort and the other was born by relying on God).

From there, Paul connects these two approaches (by faith vs. by human effort) to Sarah and Hagar. That made a lot of sense in his culture but feels uncomfortable in ours. Hagar had no agency in this situation so it's unfortunate that she gets labelled 'the slave woman' and 'the old covenant.' As you read this, keep verse 23 firmly in mind, the lesson that Abraham had to learn: you can try to get things done in your own power, depending on your own ingenuity (and end up hurting a lot of people and going nowhere) or you can truly rely on God to keep His promises and see His perfect will accomplished.

2. What are the implications of Paul's connection between salvation by works/Law-following and slavery?

June 21 - Galatians 5:1-12

1. "The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love" (5:6). How can you apply this today?
2. What does Paul mean when he talks about 'the offense of the cross' (5:11)?

June 23 - Galatians 5:13-26

1. What does Paul say we should do with our Christian freedom? Why do we still need to be told that?
2. What does it mean to 'live by the Spirit'? Does living by the Spirit have more to do with who you are or what you do, your character or your actions?

June 26 - Galatians 6:1-11

1. In verse 2, Paul says 'Carry each other's burdens.' In verse 5, he says that 'each one should carry his own load.' Which is it Paul? How do these statements fit together?
2. What does verse 10 mean: "10 Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers." What are the implications for charitable giving and other forms of generosity?

June 28 - Galatians 6:12-18

1. What does Paul mean when he says that 'what counts is a new creation' (6:10)? What does it mean that you as a believer are a new creation?
2. What are your final thoughts on the book of Galatians? What have you learned? What have you applied? What can you share with others?