

Weekly Study of Sunday's Message.

July 16, 2023 "Galatians: The Call Back...to what is central"

I Intro.

We're fully into summer. Heat and all. Even though some of our regular activities are slowing down, we still have things you're going to want to participate in. By now you've seen the appeal to address some building and financial needs we're having to fix. We hope you are fed and ministered to by NCC, and that you can be an essential part of us moving forward. We have many ways you can plug into life at NCC. You can find all those through our website, app, and social media sites. Our app is the best way to livestream our services, but you can also livestream on FaceBook and YouTube. You can revisit past services, sign up for events and even give. We're encouraged by your presence when you gather with us. New and familiar faces join us every Sunday. If you join us online, we appreciate your presence. We are 100% committed to our virtual attenders. We are your church family, and if there is anything you need, prayer, or anything else, please let us know. This is our weekly devotional that gives you some specific things to work through from Sunday's message. Whether you were able to participate in this service or not, this devotion is free-standing. You can use it to help you dig deeper into your own spiritual walk. We hope you find this tool helpful on your spiritual journey.

II Recap.

This was the second week in our walk through Galatians. It's more than just a study of one of Paul's letters. It's a peek into a church that was struggling with the very same issues with culture that we are now. The church in Galatia was a fairly new church. It found itself right in the middle of a culture that the people found challenging. There was rampant pleasure seeking, a strong emphasis on a formal higher education, a multiplicity of gods and idols (not all the idols were statues, but just important non religious values people were pursuing). And the people of the church were drawn towards the values of the society to the detriment of the church. The church knew they needed to respond, and defaulted to some unhealthy older patterns. We should be able to relate to this. Our society feels unfriendly to the church. We're often uncomfortable in it, and feel like things are getting out of control. And we don't know exactly how to respond to it. I want you to deeply feel your own reaction to what you see happening in our society so we can understand this church better. Last week we talked about the people trying to address the issues in culture by reverting back to obedience to The Law. This week we talk about how practicing true grace unites us rather than divides us.

III Sunday.

Hitting chapter 2 of Galatians, we see more of Paul's personal struggles with both the church at Galatia, and also some other disciples who were emphasizing obedience to The Law over the work of grace. There will be some overlap with last week. But in this section of the letter Paul wanted to drive the point home about the danger of falling back into old practices. In this chapter, Paul addresses how The Law brings out the inconsistency and hypocrisy in our own lives in 'trying' to be good. And the truth is that we often use The Law as a weapon to create a line between who's in and who's out. So, let's take a slightly different angle on this topic.

How do you react when you're around people who have different beliefs or values than you do?

How do you experience, feel, those differences?

Why do you think being around people that are different than you feels the way it does?

Our primary passage is **Galatians 2:11-21**. The first ten verses of this chapter are Paul basically giving a little personal background and history of this running conflict with those who were critical of him. We didn't really talk about this passage much, but it does give some context. It wouldn't hurt to read it, and then read the primary teaching passage of verses 11-21.

What jumped out to you from this passage?

Paul talked specifically and personally about how an emphasis on The Law can bring out some inconsistency in our lives. How did you see that teaching?

What do you think was Paul's primary truth and why was it important for the church at Galatia in the way it taught others?

We walked through it a little bit at a time. We don't have the space here for all of that. But we'll just list some of the things we believe Paul was addressing and what it looks like in our daily life.

1. Paul pointed out how adherence to The Law made Peter's life inconsistent. Paul had to point out in the life of Peter, that a strict adherence to The Law made Peter only be good, follow The Law, when the people who enforced The Law were around. When they weren't Peter then felt comfortable to be himself. This is what The Law does. It does transform us, but just makes us try to be good.

When you look at what The Law demands from us, how do you handle that none of us can actually obey all of it?

2. Following The Law is actually a distraction off the true path. The problem with an emphasis on The Law is it feels right at the moment. The world is chaotic, messy. And if we could just make people aware of their behavior by showing them The Law, then they'll straighten up. Paul was saying, this 'feels' right, but it's actually a distraction from the real work of grace and the Holy Spirit.

How do you see a reliance on The Law as distracting us from the work of the Holy Spirit?

3. We can see in our own lives, The Law only points out our flaws but doesn't not grow us.

Paul was being honest here about his own life. He said he knew The Law better than anyone. No one knew The Law as well as he did, and he couldn't even obey it. Paul wanted Peter to see and admit this truth. The Law will point out our sins. It will show us where we veer away from God. But that's all The Law can do. It doesn't possess the power within itself to actually save us, or even keep us from doing wrong.

What do you do with the truth that we really don't know what the line is for being 'good enough'?

4. A relationship with God based on following The Law is actually in opposition to the work of grace. Bottom line at the end of this passage, Paul was saying an over emphasis on enforcing The Law keeps people from experiencing the grace and freedom found in Christ. We're not always comfortable with allowing grace to do its slow work of sanctification, (growing a well-formed maturity within us). But this is the relationship God wants with us. Not us just checking off the list of do's and don'ts.

How do you see an over emphasis on The Law being a detriment to the work of grace?

IV Challenge.

The challenge is simple. We tend to default to making people follow rules rather than let grace work.

How do we let the Holy Spirit work in our lives to trust the work of grace over rules?