



ORCHARD ROAD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Bible Study

NOVEMBER 2012

GALATIANS: FAITHFULLY OR LAWFULLY YOURS?

The Galatian churches were in a fix – how should they ‘sign off’ their salvation appeal to God – faithfully yours or lawfully yours? For the apostle Paul by divine appointment, faith in Jesus Christ is the full Gospel that liberates his fellow Jews from work-salvation, and includes the Gentiles in this faith of Abrahamic origin. However, the ‘Judaizers’ (2:14) opposed Paul’s gospel and attempted to ‘arm-twist’ the Jewish and Gentile Christians into keeping the Mosaic Law with all its rites and rituals beyond faith in Christ. Their arguments were compelling on two grounds – Was Paul a true Jew, faithful to his ancestral heritage? And, if the law is not a requirement, how could they live in a manner consistent with the moral standard demanded by their holy God?

For Paul, God had already spoken on this issue. The Gospel alone is sufficient for the salvation of both the Jews and Gentiles who believe. (3:1 – 4:31). Believers are freed to serve in the Spirit and in love (5:1 – 6:10). There is no ground for boasting at all (6:11-18). Is the jury still out on this issue for you? How will you sign off your salvation appeal to God? How will you live in obedience – faithfully or lawfully?

SERMON DATE **4 NOV 2012**

THE REDEEMING GOSPEL
GALATIANS 4

SERMON DATE **11 NOV 2012**

THE LIBERATING GOSPEL
GALATIANS 5

SERMON DATE **18 NOV 2012**

THE RESTORATIVE GOSPEL
GALATIANS 6:1-10

SERMON DATE **25 NOV 2012**

THE PROCLAIMED GOSPEL
GALATIANS 6:11-18

SERMON DATE **4 NOV 2012**

THE REDEEMING GOSPEL

GALATIANS 4

GENERAL SURVEY

Topic:

Key Verse:

Main Person/s:

Key Ideas and Questions:

INTRODUCTION

Paul ended Galatians 3 with the assertion that Christians are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise. He explained to the Galatian Christians concerning their new identity as God's sons, begged them not to forsake their freedom in Christ (vv12-20), and sought to convince them from an allegory (vv21-31). Like a spiritual father, he battled for their loyalty to the Gospel that has redeemed believers from the slavery of seeking unsuccessfully a salvation by works of the Law (vv8-10). Do we value the freedom that God has secured for us in Christ? Or, are we quickly drifting behind the bars of the Law?

FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. Freed to be a son (4:1-11)

In Christ, Abraham's spiritual descendants are children of God according to his promise. Paul goes on to clarify their identity in relation to the Mosaic Law and to Christ's gospel.

a. What did God send his Son to do at his appointed time? (vv4-5)

b. The identity and status of Abraham's spiritual descendants as children of God has not changed as a result of Jesus' work. Discuss this statement with careful reading of verses 1-3 and verses 6-7.

c. Paul was deeply concerned about certain dangers that threatened the children of God. What are those dangers? Why are they dangerous?

Self-examine: What values and beliefs had shaped you before you became a Christian? Are they compatible with the Christian identity? How much of them are still influencing your attitude and behaviour? What Christian values and beliefs can replace them?

2. Formed to be like Christ (4:12-20)

In reading these verses, we cannot help feeling that Paul yearned for a loving fellowship that he once had with the Galatian Christians, but now was waning.

a. Why was their fellowship with Paul failing given that he was so instrumental in their coming to Christ? (vv16-17)

b. Was Paul labouring for his own popularity with the Galatian Christians, or was there a greater motivation? (vv19-20)

Evaluate and discuss: Paul's goal for his apostolic ministry is consistently seen elsewhere, e.g. Colossians 2:6-7; cf. Ephesians 4:13. What are we looking to achieve when we serve one another as children of God? Are we merely building a Christian ministry or building a life-in-Christ? What is the difference? Discuss.

3. Are you bound or free? (4:21-31)
 - a. Paul's allegory in verses 21-31 centres on the contrast between the son of Sarah and the son of Hagar (cf. Genesis 16 & 17). According to Genesis 17:18-19, what is the big difference between Isaac and Ishmael?
 - b. In what way is this big difference significant to their respective descendants?
 - c. For those who stubbornly chose to ignore Paul's appeal because they feared persecution and disapproval, what risk were they taking? Was it worth it? (v30)

Reflect and act: In Christ, I am freed to... Before knowing Christ, I was bound by... How would you complete each of these sentences? How would you describe the difference before and after you are in Christ? Take a moment to thank God and commit to share this freedom in Christ with at least one person this week.

DISCIPLESHIP POINTERS

Christians are redeemed to live the abundant life because—

- We are freed from sin's power, punishment and eventually its presence.
- We are adopted as sons and daughters of God by his promise; therefore the Holy Spirit enables us to relate to God as our Father;
- Children of God live according to the Spirit, not according to the flesh. As his beloved, we obey God with joyful hearts because it is a privilege; we do not obey God only to appease him for fear of his punishment.
- Therefore, let us make every effort to progress towards maturity in faith and service befitting our calling from the bondage of sin to the freedom of everlasting life.

FAMILY/GROUP MOMENTS

- Share your conversion story with someone this week. What were you like before and after you became a child of God? What are you still struggling with from your old self? How is God helping you overcome those struggles? What assurance do you have as you struggle?
- Pray for one another that God will help you persevere in growing as his child.

SERMON DATE **11 NOV 2012**

THE LIBERATING GOSPEL

GALATIANS 5

GENERAL SURVEY

Topic:

Key Verse:

Main Person/s:

Key Ideas and Questions:

INTRODUCTION

The theme of freedom in Christ continues as Paul goes on to argue against the value and practice of circumcision. Grace has rendered circumcision futile. Under grace, believers are freed from the practice of circumcision and the legalism of the Mosaic Law. However, it is not a freedom to then sin (cf. Rom 6), but a freedom to love and serve others by the power of the Holy Spirit. The fruit of the Spirit is an enduring and endearing mark of a liberated believer. Having been redeemed and liberated, let us live by the Spirit!

FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

Christians are freed to love, bear fruit and crucify their carnal passions.

1. Incisive love (5:1-15)
 - a. In the context of the passage, what did slavery refer to? (v2; 2:3,4; 3:10)
 - b. What were the two options open to the Galatians? What consequences were attached to each option? (vv2-4)
 - c. For those who were justified by faith:
 - i. What was to be their attitude? How should their faith be demonstrated? (v6)
 - ii. What obstacles might they expect to face? (vv7-9, 11)
 - d. Complete this sentence: Galatians were freed to _____ one another in _____ and love their _____. (vv12-15)

Response: What does this mean to me this week? How will I exercise my freedom so that I can demonstrate love in a practical manner?

2. Freed to be fruitful (5:16-26)
 - a. What are the two competing forces described in verse 17?

- b. In your own words, describe the nature and character of those who live under the influence of these respective forces:
 - i. vv19-21
 - ii. vv22-23
- c. What was Paul's appeal to the Galatians? See vv16, 18 & 25b.

Response: What does this mean for me this week? you are struggling in one or more of the areas above, will you speak about it with your group members or other Christians, and seek their prayers? How might Ephesians 6:10-18 help you in your struggle/s?

DISCIPLESHIP POINTERS

Christians demonstrate freedom in Jesus by their love, and in bearing the fruit of the Spirit.

A Christian deliberately cuts ties with his former spiritual perspective, so he may instead demonstrate Christian love (vv1-15). The awaiting for the hope of righteousness is neither a passive nor accidental endeavour, but rather an intentional and costly exercise of obedience by loving one's neighbour as one's self.

A Christian will demonstrate fruitfulness through the Spirit, culminating in self-control (vv16-26). There is no longer an option to dabble in the alternative, but instead he should constantly follow the Spirit's leading and show it by spiritual self-control.

FAMILY/GROUP MOMENTS

From the lesson, there is no longer an option for a family or group member to be unloving or remaining in sin. Encourage members to share about their struggles (from the list provided in verses 19-21), and express how they are dealing with it.

SERMON DATE **18 NOV 2012**

THE RESTORATIVE GOSPEL

GALATIANS 6:1-10

GENERAL SURVEY

Topic:

Key Verse:

Main Person/s:

Key Ideas and Questions:

INTRODUCTION

Having been redeemed and liberated by the Gospel does not mean that believers are freed from the presence of sin. When a believer sins, the Gospel remains powerful over his life through accountability within the Christian community. The Gospel functions to restore those who have sinned. Therefore, believers are to admonish one another in humility and with a hope of restoring the fallen. In this way, true fellowship in the family of believers is strengthened. Is anyone caught in sin? Let us serve him towards repentance and restoration in the Gospel.

FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. Practise Christianity (6:1-5)

Gal 6:1-10	What should Christian do?	How or Why?	What does it mean to me?	How can I apply it?
Verse 1	(see also 1 Co 2:15-16)			
Verse 2	(See also 1 Co 9:21)			
Verse 3	(See also Ro 12:3)			
Verse 4	(See also 1 Co 11:28, 31-32)			
Verse 5		(See also 2 Co 5:10)		
Verse 6	(See also 1 Co 9:11)			
Verse 7		(See also Job 13:9-10)		
Verse 8		(See also Job 4:7-9)		
Verse 9		(See also 1 Co 15:58)		
Verse 10				

2. See others humbly (6:1-2)

'Your response to another's fall reveals your own walk, whether it is spiritual or not. Pride will make it impossible for you to help the fallen, but humility will bring blessing to you and to them' (Wiersbe, 1991). How do you respond to another brother who falls into sin? What if he has fallen into some extra-marital sexual offences like some prominent figures in Singapore recently? Why?

See yourself honestly (6:3-5)

'Do you use somebody's fall to make yourself look better? Or do you know yourself, accept yourself, and seek to please God alone?' (Wiersbe, 1991) What are your responses to these questions?

4. See your leaders appreciatively (6:6-10)

'When you give to others whose ministry blesses you, you are sowing seed that will bear fruit. When you use your resources for sinful purposes, you sow to the flesh and will reap a sad harvest.' (Wiersbe, 1991) What are you sowing each day of your life?

DISCIPLESHIP POINTERS

Restoring those weigh down by sins

'On the face of Gal. 6:1-5, there is a formal contradiction between 6:2, 'Carry each other's burdens,' and 6:5, 'for each one should carry his own load.' One could guess at a pastoral resolution. Christians should be concerned to help others; at the same time, they should not invert this concern and so depend on the help of others that they become nothing but freeloaders. In other words, 6:2 makes abundant sense when it is understood to forbid isolationism and to mandate compassion. 6:5 makes abundant sense when it is understood to forbid sponging and to mandate personal responsibility.'

But the context of the paragraph in which both sayings are embedded enables us to go a little farther. The passage begins by exhorting Christians to restore, gently, a brother or sister who is caught in a sin (6:1). More specifically, Paul says that 'you who are spiritual' ought to undertake this task. In light of the preceding verses in Gal 5, those who are 'spiritual' are Christians who manifestly 'keep in step with the Spirit' (5:25) and thus produce the fruit of the Spirit. This responsibility is laid on all Christians, but obviously some Christians are a little farther along in their fruit-bearing than others. So Christians, who produce the fruit of the Spirit, as mandated of all Christians, should take primary responsibility for gently restoring a believer caught in a sin.

This should be a gentle restoration, not least because thoughtful Christians will recognise how they too may be tempted by this or some other evil (6:1). By helping one another in this way – with encouragement, prayer, moral support, companionship, accountability, whatever – we thereby 'carry each other's burdens' (6:2). This, of course, is equivalent to fulfilling the law of Christ, who not only taught that the greatest commandments are to love God and to love your neighbour as yourself, but gave us his 'new commandment' – to love one another as Jesus himself loved them (John 13:34-35).

In such a regime, self-promotion is ugly, futile, and self-deceiving (6:3). Pride goes before a fall. It spoils the quiet self-examination that is ruthlessly and patiently honest (6:4). Community-destroying, soul-deceiving pride is displayed down. Honest self-evaluation engenders a godly thankfulness and a legitimate pride that never puts another person down, for 'each one should carry his own load' (6:5) - (Carson, 1999)

SERMON DATE **25 NOV 2012**

THE PROCLAIMED GOSPEL

GALATIANS 6:11-18

GENERAL SURVEY

Topic:

Key Verse:

Main Person/s:

Key Ideas and Questions:

INTRODUCTION

The concluding words of Paul were as vigorous as his opening ones. He remained very personal in his appeal to the Galatian Christians (v11). He warned them again not to succumb to a 'different' gospel (vv12&13). He appealed for their loyalty to Christ and his Cross, rather than the approval of men so as to avoid persecution. He set himself up as an example of Christ-devotion (v14) for nothing valued more to him than his new identity in Christ (v15). Are you and I willing to bear the marks of Jesus in our lives even in the face of opposition? If so, go and proclaim the Gospel today!

FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. As we conclude this series on Galatians – let us first look back at some of what Paul had been saying in this book:
 - a. What problem did the Galatians Christians have? (1:6-7; 2:11-16)
 - b. A big part of their problem was to do with justification. So how are sinners justified before God? (3:11-14; 5:1-6)
 - c. Since sinners are justified before God, how are they to live? (5:16, 22-23; 6:1-3)
2. What is the motive of the circumcision group? (6:12) What is the problem with their position? (6:13; 3:10)
3. There are many things that we can boast about (e.g. the circumcised wanted to boast about their circumcision.) There was only one thing that Paul wanted to boast about. What was it? (6:14)
 - a. '...through which the world has been crucified to me and I to the world' (6:14b). Explain what Paul is saying here?
 - b. Is being circumcised or not really important? If not – what is important? (6:14-15)

DISCIPLESHIP POINTERS

The basic gospel message is: We are justified by faith through the death of Jesus on the cross. Through His death – our sins are forgiven and there is nothing we can do to save ourselves.

Many people have problems with this Gospel message:

- a. It is too easy - 'God must require us to do something'
- b. God's standard is too high - 'What do you mean? My good deed is of no value to God?'
- c. God is not just – 'How can God condemn me – I am basically a good man'

So they add to it – just like the circumcision group that Paul was dealing with in this letter – we are still doing the same today: 'Christ death on the cross is important for salvation but you must also do... to be saved'. So we have extra requirements for salvation that some groups preach:

- water baptism – done in a certain way (e.g. immersion) or by certain people;
- Holy Spirit baptism – which requires speaking in tongues, etc.;
- dress in certain ways (e.g. no jeans);
- You must do... (e.g. give your tithe) or not do.... (e.g. smoke).

Many of these requirements are not wrong – water baptism is a command of Jesus – but they are not required for salvation (neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything – Gal 6: 15). Many of these Gospel-plus requirements are what we should be doing because we are saved, not because we need to do them to be saved.

While our actions do not save us – they do show if we are saved. For as James tells us: 'faith without deeds is dead' (James 2:26). Our faith should lead to right deeds and behaviour: 'do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature' (Gal 5: 13), but instead 'Love your neighbour as yourself' (Gal 5: 14, Lev 19: 18, Mt. 22: 39, Mk 12: 31)

So let us do good because we are saved by faith in Christ and not because our action will lead to our salvation.