

NT Reading Plan 2020

Living Hope Fellowship
Galatians 1-6

Intro

One of the largest heresies in NT times which persists to this day is Christ + something = salvation. Many deny Christ's work and Christ's work alone as sufficient to save. They teach that, while we believe in Jesus and what he did, there's still something you have to do in addition to that. The Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Roman Catholics are examples of this as well as mainline Seventh Day Adventists.

The Bible's teaching is radically different. Christ + Nothing = Salvation. Faith + Nothing = Salvation. Grace + Nothing = Salvation. If you're adding to that, you're trying to pursue salvation by works. Galatians is a book that stridently contends for these most essential truths of Christianity in light of heresy being taught in Galatia.

Gospel

The gospel is summarized in the letter's opening (1:3-5) and there is only one true gospel (1:7) which the Galatians are departing from (1:6).

1. What is the gospel and why is so important to define accurately? Are you putting your best faculties toward understanding, preserving, and promoting the biblical gospel?

Strong Words

Paul says that anyone who preaches any different gospel message, even if it comes from an angel or an apostle, should be accursed ("damned"). Then, as if he didn't already have your attention, he repeats himself to be crystal clear. Damned is about the strongest word Paul could pick to use. You get the feeling he's very serious as he writes this letter. In fact, his tone at times is the most scathing of all his letters.

2. Why would Paul use such strong language? Why is he so intense? What's at stake?

Biography

Paul gives us a lot of biographical notes about his early ministry we do not find anywhere else in the Bible. Paul spends a relatively large portion of this letter on this.

3. If the gospel is at stake, and it is, why spend so much time on this flashback? Why does Paul insist that he got his teaching by direct revelation and not from men, not even from the apostles in Jerusalem? (See 1:1, 10-24; 2:1-10).

4. What does this source of this revelation have to say about its authority and veracity?

Hypocrisy

5. Why did Paul oppose Peter who along with other Jews, caused even Barnabas to be led astray? What was the issue that Peter (an apostle whom Rome deems the first infallible Pope!) was waffling over?

6. Why is that issue a really **B I G** deal?

Law & Gospel

The **Law** was never able to save. Nobody was ever able to keep it. Salvation couldn't be attained by works but has always been by faith. If you could keep the law and get saved then Christ died for nothing at all. But the biblical **Gospel** has always taught that salvation (justification, see below) is by faith alone. (Note that the Law & Gospel are often contrasted with the theme of slavery vs freedom).

7. Do you start your Christian life by the Gospel (by the Spirit) and then add works to be perfected (3:1-6)?

8. To prove salvation is by faith from beginning to end & always has been even in OT times, who does Paul cite as an example of one who was saved by faith in the OT (3:6-8)?

9. What came first, the teaching that salvation is by faith alone or the Law (3:15-18)? Think chronologically because Paul is making an argument from the biblical timeline of history.

10. So then, why the law, why did God give us the Law if the promise of salvation by faith was already active (3:19 and following)?

11. Ironically, where did you read the verse "Abraham believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness"? Where do we read of the promised seed of Abraham who would be the blessing of the world or other covenant promises made to Abraham? Where do we read of the free woman and slave woman?

Justification

Paul drills down on the hill to die on: Justification! In the gospel, God declares sinners to be righteous based on the righteousness of Christ. You only get Christ's righteousness by faith in Christ, who he is and what he accomplished at the cross by dying in your place for your sins.

Circumcision & Other Laws

Aspects of the Law of Moses were being added to Christ as necessary for salvation. Christ + these Laws = salvation to these heretics. Among the additions were **circumcision** (go back and read 2:3. Knowing what the issues in Galatia are, it now makes more sense to us why Paul added that detail. Also see 5:2), **Food laws** (2:11 and following), and days & seasons like the Sabbath and Jewish feasts (4:10).

12. If you accept circumcision or any other part of the law, how much of the law do you need to keep (5:3)?

Power

13. Who has been given to us to empower our sanctification, walking in Christ's victorious life (See 3:2-14; 4:6, 29; 5:16-25; 6:8)?

The Cross

For those struggling with temptations to add anything to Christ's perfect and complete work of atonement, Paul consistently brought them back to what God had accomplished (past tense, final, completed) in Christ at the cross. It is finished! Thank Christ for the freedom he has brought through his finished work at Calvary!