Galatians Bible Study

Living by Law vs Living by the Spirit

Note: This outline is intended for use in a multi-week group Bible study setting.

Interesting facts about Galatians.

1. Unlike Ephesus, Colossae, Philippi, Corinth, Galatia is not a city but a region of what is now Turkey. In fact, it is not clear what churches were in Galatia at the time. Paul traveled there (Acts 16:6) but we know of no church he started there.

2. Galatia is in the highlands of central Turkey. Its capital was Ancyra, now Ankara, the capital of Turkey.

3. The Gauls were a Celtic people (like the Irish and Galicia in Spain). Other Gauls settled into what is now France. Rome called France Gaul. (*omnia Galia es divise en tres partes*, cisalpine, transalpine and helitican Gaul)

Theme verse in Galatians Gal 5:1 (or Galatians 5:6)

The first potentially fatal crisis has come upon the churches in Galatia. Judaizers have been insisting that Gentiles be circumcised and are even beginning to push a whole range of First Covenant laws and Jewish customs on Gentile converts (for example Gal 4:10,11), insisting that salvation depends on such outward works. (Gal 5:2-4 and 6:12-13 for example).

These evangelists have been going around to churches planted by Paul, Timothy and Epaphroditus, trying to turn people away from Paul’s law-free grace-centered gospel. In this dispute, everything is at stake as far as Paul is concerned.

Galatians 1:1-2 Why does Paul lead off with such a note of authority (Romans 1:1 Paul a servant, Phil 1:1 Paul and Timothy, servants, Colossians 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God)?

Galatians 1:6-9

Q: How would you describe Paul’s frame of mind here?

Q: Why is he so upset and is he coming across so strongly?

Q: Is there any equivalent elsewhere?

Q: What did Jesus get angry about? (those who do not forgive others Matt 18:32-35, those whose religion leads people away from God Matt 23;15)

Q: What did Paul get angry about? (Those who would replace grace with law-keeping see also Gal 3:1, Gal 5:12)

Q: What do YOU get righteously angry about?

Q: According to this passage, what is at stake and why?

Q: What would be your definition of “falling away?”

Gal 5:2-4 What is Paul’s definition here? This is a church attender who has fallen away.

Q: What does “trying to be justified by the law” mean? Why can’t we be justified by the law?”

Q: How could we be tempted to rely on outward works rather than on the blood of Jesus to become righteous before God?

Gal 1:11-2:2 Just read it and explain that Paul is trying to establish his credentials as an apostle with unquestioned authority in this case.

Gal 2:3-5 Paul refused to have Titus circumcised.

Yet, in Acts 16:1-4.

Q: Why, in one case, did Paul have Timothy circumcised, but in another refused to have Titus circumcised?

Q: How does this apply to us, practically, with regard to our freedom in Christ?

There is a wide amount of grey area in Christianity, but if someone INSISTS that something is required that is not, it might be time to insist that it is not.

Gal 2:6-10 Paul completes his resume as an inspired and authoritative apostle. (skip this?)

Gal 2:11-16 Q: What was his confrontation with Peter about? Why was he so insistent?

Q: What does “justified” mean in v. 16?

Q: What are “works of the law” in v. 16?

Q: How, then, are we justified?

Gal 2:17-18 Q: What does Paul mean here? (He means that if I go back to trying to be justified by worksof the Law, then I am under the curse of the law again)

Gal 2:19 Q: What does this mean?

Gal 2:20 What does it mean to be “crucified with Christ?”

When are we crucifed with Christ (Romans 6:

Q: What does he mean “I no longer live.”

Q: So, how do we “live”, then? V. 20

Sum it up so far: Gal 2:21

Carlos did Gal 3:1-9

Gal 3:10-14

Q: Why are those who rely on religion rather than on God under a curse?

a. Because “the righteous will live by faith.” (v. 11) Q: As opposed to what? Ans: as opposed to living by the law.

b. Because the alternative is “The person who does these things will live by them.” (v. 12) (Leviticus 18:5). Q: Has anyone here lived by them? Would Paul’s opponents have claimed to have lived by them? So, why are they imposing these legalistic practices? (Because that is what the flesh wants to do)

v. 13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of living by works by being cursed (using Deut 21:23)

Q: What does redeemed mean? Purchased back.

Dictionary: 1. compensate for the faults or bad aspects of (something). 2. Gain or regain possession of (something) in exchange for payment.

"Billy redeemed his drums from the pawnbrokers"

This reminds me of Hosea 3:1-5

Q: Who are you in this story? How does this make you feel (hopefully)

Gal 3:15-25 An extended metaphor. Some Jews had replaced the promise given to Abraham with the Law. “The law does not replace the promise.

So….. Why the Law?

v. 21 The Law does not replace the promise. It makes our need for the promise more obvious. (Romans 7:7 and 7:13). It is a “guardian” (v. 24) Q: Who needs a guardian? A child or otherwise incompetent person.

It pushes us toward Christ and toward the promise.

Gal 3:26-29 But….. IN CHRIST You are all sons (or daughters) of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

Q: As opposed to through what?

Q: Is this the same as being the Son of God?

Q: When did we become a son of God?

Q: What is his point in v. 28-29? The main point is neither Jew nor Greek.

Q: Do you feel equal?

Q: What a minute, isn’t the husband the head of the wife, etc….?

Gal 4:1 “As long as the heir is a child”

Q: What is this about? In this case, the “child” is a Jew without Christ.

He owns the whole estate. The Jews had a highly favored position, but they were still slaves.

Q: Why were they slaves? John 8:31-41

Gal 4:2 Who are the “guardians and trustees” in this case? They are the Law and the Bible and the prophets and the sacrifices.

Gal 4:3 This applies to us Gentiles as well, although we did not own the estate!

Gal 4:4-7

Q: Are those “born under law” the Jews, the Gentiles or both. (note, normally, with the Law of Moses, the scriptures usually have *the* law)

v. 6-7 When you were baptized into Christ (Gal 3:26) you became a son/daughter. You can say daddy.

Q: What thoughts and feelings does this bring to mind?

v. 8-11 But…. Some of the Galatians have forgotten who (or whose) they are?

The main issue may be circumcision, but apparently the Judaizers are also reintroducing requiring Passover, Day of Atonement, Booths, Sabbaths, etc.

Q: Is it wrong to celebrate special days?

Q: What about Easter, Palm Sunday, Lent,…?

v. 11 What is at stake, apparently?

4:12-20 Paul makes an emotional appeal for them to repent.

Q: What does “I became like you” mean? (Parallel verse 1 Cor 9:19-23)

Q: In what sense does he want them to become like him? (the Galatians are treating him very coldly)

Q: Why might we find ourselves not wanting to hang out with spiritual people (like some of the Galatians with Paul)?

Gal 4:21-31 This is clearly an extended metaphor (v. 24)

So, who is Isaac and who is Ishmael? (Isaac is us and Ishmael is Jews who reject Jesus)

Isaac: Freedom

Ishmael: Slavery

Q: What is the point to the Galatians? (that they are trying to be Ishmael).

v. 24-31 Who is Hagar here, and who is Sarah here?

Describe the historical type/antitype of v. 29 Jews (Ishmael) persecuted the Christians (Isaac)

Describe the historical type/antitype of vs. 30 God sent the Jews away from Jerusalem in AD 70.

Not how God literally manipulates history in order to teach us, as Christians, about our relationship with him. Amazing!

Gal 4:31 An important transitional verse. We are Isaac! We are the circumcision. Phil 3:2-3 (Romans 2:28-29, Coll 2:11-15 maybe).

Gal 5:1 A very odd statement: The reason we were set free was so that we could be free.

Q: Why is Paul making this rather odd statement?

Because the Judaizers are using their freedom to make slaves of people 5:1b “do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

Q: The key question: Free from what? (not sin—at least not in this context). Freedom for the Law. We have moved from have to to want to.

In America, freedom is practically a religion. Q: What is so good about freedom?

Q: Why do you pray? Why do you share your faith? Why do you give to the needs of the church? Why do you avoid sin? Is it out of freedom of slavery?

5:2-6. Here Paul gets down to “brass tacks.”

Q: Is it really true that “the only thing that matters is faith expressing itself through love.”

As opposed to faith expressing itself through \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Q: Love of whom and by whom?

We have the privilege of expressing our faith in God, not merely through works or obedience, but through these things motivated by love.

Gal 5:7-12 Paul is really getting emotional here. Q: Why?

Gal 5:13-15. The proper use of Christian freedom.

Q: What is an improper use of Christian freedom? Sin and selfishness.

Q: What is a proper use of Christian freedom? Serving others.

Consider the irony: Paul says that we are no longer slaves (Gal 4:21-31). He tells us that, instead we are truly free in Christ (Gal 5:1), yet what does he tell us to do with our freedom? To become slaves. Voluntary slaves.

Q: What is it like to be a voluntary slave?

Q: Why is this so much superior that living in obligation?

Gal 5:16-18 Living by the Spirit versus living by the flesh. (note, this is discussed later in the treatment of Gal 5:25-26)

Q: In the context of Galatians, what does the flesh desire? (to love according to law, rule, obligation, things of this world)

What, then, does the Spirit desire? (to live in freedom and to show faith in love)

Gal 5:19-21 The acts of the flesh.

Gal 5:22-24 The fruit of the Spirit. Q: What is his point in saying that “there is no law against any of these things” There is irony here.

Gal 5:25-26. Q: What do you think it means to “keep in step with the Spirit”?

Actually, here is an outline:

1. Gal 5:16 Walk by the Spirit.

2. Gal 5:18 led by the Spirit.

3. Gal 5:25 live by the Spirit.

4. Gal 5:25 keep in step with the Spirit.

Being \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ by the spirit versus being \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ by what?

Q: What is his point in this rather pointed emphasis on the Holy Spirt?

Perhaps the key is 5:18 (you are not under the law) and v. 16 (you will not gratify the desires of the flesh}.

His point seems to be that listening to the Holy Spirit is far more likely to lead to personal righteousness than living by law/slavery to rules/obligation.

Here is a hard question for us rationalistic CoC’ers: How do we walk, get led, live and keep in step with the Spirit?

Gal 6. As is Paul’s pattern, now that he has finished his theological discussion, he is passing on to practical application of this theology.

Gal 6:1-6 It is not merely a matter of each individual being led by the Spirit. We need to help one another stay on the path of righteousness.

If you see someone stumbling, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently.

Q: What does “living by the Spirit” have to do with us restoring the one who is doing poorly in Christ?

Q: V. 1 … but what should we be careful about? (being infected with bad attitudes, with divisiveness, with hanging out with the wrong characters….)

v. 2 Carry each other’s burdens vs v. 5 Each one should carry his own load.

“burden” = baros burden, weight, “that far outweighs them all.”

“load” = phortion burden, load, cargo (like a backpack)

Q: What is going on there?

Q: How should we put this into practice?

v. 6. What do you think you should do about Gal 6:6 ☺

Gal 6:7-10 Just in case someone would accuse Paul of simply emphasizing grace and belittling the importance of works in the Christian life:

Time to get real!!! Works may not save you, but if you want fruit in your life, you need to sow to the Spirit.

“A man sows what he reaps.” This is a truism. It is not deep theology, but rather simple human wisdom. Duuuhhhhhh.

v. Have you ever become weary in doing good? Can you share?

Q: What is Paul’s advice?

Q: How long will we have to wait for this fruit to come? (ex: Noah preached 100 years)

What is the key to continuing to do good and not giving up? Faith!

Gal 6:10 Q: Why “especially to those who belong to the family of believers?” How should this work?

Gal 6:11-18 Paul’s final greeting (he is no longer using a scribe)

He is recapitulating. Do not listen to the Judaizers/the circumcision group. They are hypocrites—like the Pharisees in Matthew 23:24 “You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel.”

v. 13-14 Their treasure is on earth. Mine (and hopefully yours) is in heaven.

v. 15 the only thing that matters is the new creation. Wait a minute. I thought he said earlier that the only thing that matters is faith, expressing itself in love. What is going on here?

v. 16 They are not being persecuted. I have the “marks of Jesus.” Q: What were those marks?