Galatians Sermon

Living by Law vs Living by the Spirit

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.

Setting:

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 1:6-9

Wow! Paul is pretty upset here!

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)

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

Gal 5:2-4 Paul’s definition of falling away here: Trying to be justified by law-keeping. This is a church attender!

They sought salvation by being good—by doing good things, by works. But this does not work. It is like living on a treadmill.

We are tempted to rely on outward works/religiousness rather than on the blood of Jesus to become righteous before God.

Gal 2:20-21 Paul: It is not about circumcision or uncircumcision. No, “I have been crucified with Christ?”

“I no longer live.” God took care of the problem. He replaced the body of death with the body of life in the Holy Spirit. The man who was working himself into a relationship with God is gone!

Then: We lived by being good. Now, we live by faith. Much better!

Sum it up so far: Gal 2:21

Gal 3:10-14

Q: Why are those who rely on religion (works of the law) rather than on God under a curse? I do not want to be 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, Romans 10:5). Q: Has anyone here lived by them? Would Paul’s opponents have claimed to have lived by them? (Gal 2: Paul reminded Peter that he did not keep the Law) 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 himself. (using Deut 21:23)

v. 14 He redeemed us. What a great word. Redeemed: 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 God told Hosea to buy back Gomer.

In this story, we are Gomer. We should feel very grateful.

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

Through faith, not through works. Amen!

Gal 4:21-31 An extended metaphor (v. 24)

Isaac: Freedom us

Ishmael: Slavery Jews who reject Jesus

Hagar: Physical Jerusalem, Mt. Sinai. Her children are slaves

Sarah: The New Jerusalem whose children are free.

v. 29 Jews (Ishmael) persecuted the Christians (Isaac)

vs. 30 Sarah sent Hagar away. God sent the Jews away from Jerusalem in AD 70.

Note how God literally manipulates history in order to teach us, as Christians, about our relationship with him. Amazing!

Outside of Christ we were under Law. We were slaves. Colossians 2:13-15 describes this state. The Law that stood opposed to us. But Christ nailed the law (the obligation) to the cross, so we are not under law.

We were Ishmael, now we are Isaac.

We were children of Hagar, now we are children of Sarah.

We were slaves, now we are free in Christ.

Gal 4:31 An important transitional verse. We are Isaac! We are the circumcision.

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

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.

Gal 5:1 Free from what? (not sin in this context) Freedom from Law. Free from the obligation to serve God. Free to serve God because you want to.

Slavery: I have to. (slavery to what?)

Freedom: I want to.

Free at last, free at last; Thank the Lord I am free at last.

Do not go back to “I have to.”

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?

5:5-6 The only thing that matters is faith, expressing itself in love. Really? Yes!

As opposed to faith expressing itself through \_\_\_\_\_\_(obedience, works)\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

We express our faith in Jesus by the things we do out of love.

Q: What are you doing out of love for Jesus?

In a couple of weeks I am going to Nigeria, Cameroon, Congo. Why? Because I want to.

Why do you pray…..

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. It is certainly not to indulge our sinful nature. What are you using your freedom for?

An announcement: You do not have to share your faith. In fact, if you don’t want to, maybe you shouldn’t. You do not have to leave your job which limits your ability to serve God. You do not have to go on a mission team or to study the Bible with \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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.

What is it like to be a voluntary slave.

This so much superior that living in obligation.

Willingly give it up!!! Why, because we want to.

In Christ we can do this, because of all the things we have.

There is so much more joy and fulfillment in Christ than outside of Christ.

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. (just mention this)

Gal 5:22-24 The fruit of (result 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?

Summary:

Your are free in Christ. Isn’t that awesome? There is AMAZING grace in that, but what you do with your freedom will determine the quality of your live in Christ. Let us use our freedom to make our lives a sacrifice, and let us listen to, live by and keep in step with the Spirit.