Galatians Bible Study

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. (*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 special days, months, seasons and years), insisting that salvation depends on such outward works. (Gal 5:2-4 justified by law 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.

Today, we will not talk much about living by the Spirit. We will primarily talk about NOT living by the Law. The opposite of Law today will be faith, but later in Galatians he insists that the opposite of living by Law is living by the Holy Spirit.

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 in Paul? (Maybe: Romans 6:1 which is responding to an error in the opposite direction! Or 1 Cor 11:17-22 which is a response to unloving division in the church 1 Cor 3:1-4)

Q: What did Jesus get angry about? (those who do not forgive others Matt 18:32-35, leaders 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 “you foolish Galatians”, Gal 5:12)

Q: What do YOU get righteously angry about? (Hopefully it is something that God gets angry about, not related to selfishness, pride, greed, etc.)

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?” Because “Those who do these things will live by them.” (Lev 18:5, Romans 10:5)

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?

Paul had Timothy circumcised, but 1. No one was insisting he do—this was not a doctrinal dispute. And

2. Paul felt that in circumcising Timothy, he would be more effective in his evangelism.

Why did Paul refuse to circumcise Titus? Because others were insisting he do so on religious/Christian grounds. This Paul would never do.

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.

My suggestion: Do this to, like Paul, defend someone else’s freedom in Christ, not yours!!!

It is wrong for you to drink \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ It is sinful for you to have your kids read Harry Potter. It is unchristian for you to go to a casino.

More appropriately in context. You cannot work on Sunday as a Christian.

Legalistic dating advice.

1 Cor 10:29-11:1 Being judged by another person’s conscience. The most important concept is 1 Cor 10:33 I am seeking the good of the many.

But: If someone is insisting that something is required for salvation that is not, then, like Paul, you may need to stand up against that.

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?

v. 11 Peter’s salvation was at stake!!! This was a massive crisis!!!

v. 12 the “circumcision group.” These were the Judaizers who insisted that circumcision, and others aspects of the Law of Moses were required to be saved. Those who eat with the unclean cannot eat with us!

Peter took and in-between position. Jewish Christians can live this way, as long as they do not force it on Gentile Christians.

There is no middle ground here!!! The legalists will always have their way.

We cannot let legalists split the church!!!

v. 14 Paul to Peter: Even you do not follow the law!!!! (Gal 6:13 “Not even those who are circumcised keep the law.”)

v. 15 If anyone should know that salvation is not by law, it should be a Jew!!!

That is why we came to Christ, so that we could be justified by faith!!!

Q: What does “justified” mean. (Greek: *dikios*) To be justified means to be aligned with. To be declared “not guilty”.

It means to be made righteous (even though you are not). It is to be “just as if I’d“ never sinned.

v. 16 No one will be justified by the works of the law.

Q: What are “works of the law” They are acts done so that we can be saved.

Judaizers: being circumcised, observing Day of Atonement, Sabbath.

This could be sharing our faith, going on a mission team, giving to the poor, not going to certain movies, not dancing, not doing drugs, not getting a tattoo.

v. 16 Q: How, then, are we justified? By faith! By believing God’s promises.

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

Gal 2:19 Through the law I died to the law so that I might live for God. What does this mean?

Paul means that what I learned about sin from the law and about the law in Christ taught me to die to it, not to be governed by it.

Romans 5:20-21 The law was brought in so that trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more…

Romans 7:13 …through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful.

[Heb 10:3 The sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins.]

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

When are we crucifed with Christ (Romans 6:1-7)

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

Q: So, how do we “live”, then? V. 20 by faith.

Q: Are you living by faith or by works?

Sum it up so far: Gal 2:21 I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!

This is why the teaching of the Judaizers is damnable doctrine!!!

Gal 3:1-9 Life through the Holy Spirit.

Let us remember the theme of Galatians: Living by Law or living by the Spirit.

The thing that living by the Law is being contrasted with is not grace, so much (although that is in view). It is being contrasted with living by the Holy Spirit.

Notice Gal 3:1, and then Gal 3:2

v. 1 Jesus was crucified!!!

v. 2 receiving the Holy Spirit. How are they connected?

We received the Holy Spirit, not by observing Law, but by believing in the crucifixion (the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus)

The work that saves us is the work of Christ on the cross!

Q: Why is receiving the Holy Spirit the opposite of living by Law? Because the Holy Spirit is a deposit, guaranteeing our inheritance (Eph 1:14)

Share the story about the singles in San Diego when I told them that if you are in Christ you are forgiven. Totally!!! You do not come in and out of the grace of God when you sin.

This is the means of our salvation. Romans 6:1-4 and Gal 3:26-27.

v. After beginning with the (Holy) Spirit, are you now trying to finish by means of the flesh?

Q: Can that happen to us? Can we slip into works Christianity?

Gal 3:6 How are we saved? “Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness.”

Here he is quoting Genesis 15:5-6.

This is also quoted in Romans 4:3, 22. Let’s read Romans 4:18-25 This is the basis of our salvation!!!! We are free of the treadmill of Law!!!

Q: What did Abraham believe? He believed God’s promises. In fact, (v. 20) “he did not waver in unbelief regarding the promise.”

What do you need to work on? Overcoming x sin? Reading the Bible more? Your character?

No!!! What you need to work on is believing God’s promises!!! This is the well-spring of the Christian life.

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)

Q: Are you relying on the flesh/works of the law.

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

Living by Law/works is truly a curse!!!

1. It is not possible.

2. It steals the joy of doing things out of love rather than obligation.

Christ redeemed us from the Law Q: Are you living by Law or by the Holy Spirit?

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? You are Gomer! How does this make you feel?

Gal 3:15-25 An extended metaphor. Some Jews had replaced the promise given to Abraham with the Law. 3:17 But “The law does not set aside the covenant or the promise” (with Abraham that the righteous will live by faith).

v. 19 So the question naturally arises….. 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).

v. 23 It was a “guardian” (a custodia, a tutor) (v. 24) Q: Who needs a guardian? A child or otherwise incompetent person.

It pushes us toward Christ and toward the promise.

v. 19 until the Seed (Christ), to whom the promise to Abraham referred, came.

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? (as opposed to through law-keeping)

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.

The law no matter makes a difference. Jew and Gentile are in the same boat.

Q: Wait 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!

v. 3 We were enslaved under the *stoicheia*—ABCs (we get stoichiometry in chemistry from this. ABCs, names) (also in Gal 4:9 miserable “forces” are stoicheia—basics, ABCs, the law)

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,…? No. It is wrong to rely on them for righteousness, as the Judaizers were teaching.

v. 11 What is at stake, apparently? Everything! Remember Gal 5:2-4 “You who are trying to be justified by the law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.”

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) Receive me with warmth, with love, with tears.

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

v. 17 These people have zeal, but it is not for you. They want you to have zeal for them. I want you to have zeal for God.

Lesson #3

Review: The problem. The church is in the midst of its first “existential crisis.” In other words, the first crisis which could literally destroy the church that Jesus died for.

Judaizers are trying to infiltrate the church and pull them away from Paul’s influence.

Remember what Paul said in Gal 1:9 If anyone is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let them be under God’s curse!

Wow!

Their salvation is at stake. What is the issue? They were being taught that they had to observe certain Jewish practices, especially circumcision, to be saved—to be a Christian.

The theme: Living by Law vs Living by the Holy Spirit.

In the first three chapters, we saw that it could also be described as Living by Law vs Living by Faith.

For example: Gal 3:1-6 v. 2 Did you receive the Holy Spirit by the works of the Law or by believing what you heard? Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness

And Gal 3:10-12 The problem of the Judaizers: “All who rely on the works of the law are under a curse. The Law says (v. 12) “The person who does these things will live by them.” (Lev. 18:5), but “the righteous will live by faith.

Why would anyone chose to live by the Law? This is what the flesh wants to do. We want to save ourselves. We want to justify ourselves. This is all human-created religions.

Q: What does all this mean for us? Why do you do what you do? Why do you go to church? Why do you not drink, or not look at pornography? Why do you share your faith or give to the poor? Why do you follow the “rules” of Christianity?

Is it so that you can be saved? Then you are under a curse!!! (possibly under a curse, as in will not be saved at all, or under the curse of the treadmill of works and guilt)

Gal 4:21-31 Paul does something really smart. He uses a VERY Jewish thing to illustrate his point about the Judaizers.

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: Gospel, New Testament, Freedom, promise, faith

Ishmael: Slavery, Law, Old Testament, works salvation, obligation

Q: Which son was born as the result of faith and as fulfillment of a promise?

Application: Which covenant does this represent? The New Covenant!

How much faith was required to produce a Jewish baby? (born according to the flesh) None!!!

No! We are Isaac! We are the true Israel!

The shocking truth: Jews outside Christ are Ishmael!

Jewish Christian: Which system do you want to be under?

Gentile Christian: How do you view your relationship with God and your Christian “obligations?”

v. 24 This is all an extended metaphor/allegory

v. 25-31 Shifts from Ishmael/Isaac to Hagar/Sarah Who is Hagar here, and who is Sarah here?

Ishmael/Hagar Mt Sinai/Moses, physical Jerusalem slavery, children are slaves (Jesus:John 8:34 Everyone who sins is a slave to sin.”)

Isaac/Sarah The Jerusalem above. Free. She is our mother!!!

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. We Christians (whether Jew or Gentile) are children of the free woman

Romans 2:28-29 A person is not a Jew who is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly… not by the written code.

Romans 9:6-7 Not all Israel is Israel. We are the true Israel. Phil 3:3 “For it is we who are the circumcision, we who serve God by his Spirit, who boast in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh. Q: Do you put confidence in the flesh?

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. Now it is 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?

5:2-4. Here Paul gets down to “brass tacks.”

We can lose our salvation over this issue!!!

What is the basis in your heart, for your salvation? Is it by law-keeping.

DO NOT accuse Paul of encouraging people to break the law, but…

5:5 Through the Spirit (capitalized) we eagerly await by faith the righteousness for which we hope.

Remember, that in Christ we are righteous, but this righteousness is already but not yet. (2 Cor 5:21 “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”

5:6 Q: Is it really true that “the only thing that matters is faith expressing itself through love.” (yes, if we are in Christ through baptism and have the Holy Spirit)

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.

What have you done lately that you did simply because you love God?

If you are doing things out of obligation, repent and change your perspective.

Galatians: Living by Law vs Living by the Holy Spirit Lesson #4

Let’s review

The church is in its first “existential crisis.”

Gal 1:8 If anyone is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let them be eternally condemned!

Gal 3:1-3 You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law or by believing what you heard? Are you so foolish? After beginning by means of the Spirit, are you now trying to finish by means of the flesh?

The “flesh” desires salvation be by our own effort and by being religious?

Gal 3:10-11 For all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse, as it is written: “Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.”… The righteous will live by faith.

Paul illustrated this using Isaac/Ishmael and Sarah/Hagar. His conclusion:

Gal 4:31 Therefore, brothers and sisters, we are not children of the slave woman, but of the free woman.

Conclusion: Gal 5:1 It is for freedom that Christ has set us free [from slavery to obligation/law]

Therefore, Gal 5:6 “The only thing that matters is faith, expressing itself through love”

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

v. 11 can be confusing. In that case (if I were to be preaching circumcision as the Judaizers are doing) the cross would not even have been necessary!!!

If we are saved by circumcision (ie by Law), then no sacrifice for sins would have been needed.

Notice v. 12 Paul is deeply and bitingly sarcastic here! Whew!

The rest of Galatians: Having established we are saved by faith, not by Law and having established that we are free from obligation in Christ, what, then, ought we to do with our freedom?

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).

The solution to the flesh is not to try harder to stop sinning

The solution is to live by the Holy Spirit. It is to do the things the Spirit tells us to do and to not do the things the Holy Spirit tells us not to do.

Q: In the context of Galatians, what does the flesh desire? (to live 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)

Two things:  
v. 16 walk by the Spirit

v. 18 be led by the Spirit These are the opposite of the “flesh”

What does that mean? I am not exactly sure. It means listen to the voice of God. Listen to that still, calm voice (Elijah) of God in you.

You are watching a suggestive movie: Is the Holy Spirit leading me to do this?

You are serving the veterans, the Unicorn Gardens, Serving at the Hope Dance Academy, putting together baskets for our Turkey basket event. Am I walking by the Holy Spirit?

You are living a lie—holding back confessing a sin that you committed. Am I being led by the Holy Spirit?

You suddenly think that you should call sister X to check up on her. Am I being led by the Holy Spirit?

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.

Again, the solution to these acts of the flesh is not to try harder and to create as many rules as possible as a hedge to prevent sin (which we have been prone to do as a fellowship) The hedges are not necessarily bad, but they are not the key. The key is to keep growing in the fruit of the Spirit.

You are struggling with impurity? Grow in self-control.

You are holding on to resentments? Let the Holy Spirit produce more forebearance.

You are having fits of rage? Increase in the spiritual fruit of gentleness

v. 24 If we belong to Christ Rhetirical Q: Do you? Then the flesh is crucified. How? When we live by the Holy Spirit.

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. 5:16 (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.

6:9 Have you ever become weary in doing good?

6:9 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?

In Islam it is not allowed to “do good” to non-Muslims unless all needs among Muslims are met (which will never happen!)

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

**1 Corinthians Bible Group Outline**

Background: Corinth was a city of commerce—a trade city on the narrow isthmus between Greece proper and the Peloponnesian Peninsula. It was as Roman, not a Greek city. The city (and the church to some extent) had a reputation for sinfulness. It was “sin city” like Las Vegas.

The church in Corinth had a LOT of problems:

a. Wordliness tied to its pagan roots.

b. A lot of (unhealthy?) interest in the miraculous gifts

Q: What would this tend to produce in a church?

1 Cor 1:1-9 An unusually long intro to a letter

Q: Why so long an introduction?

Q: What do you see here that foreshadows what will be discussed in the letter?

1 Cor 1:10-17 A very emotional passage

v. 10 Could we as a church or as a Bible group become like them?

On the positive side, could we be “perfectly united in mind and thought?”

Q: What would this look like?

Q: How might we achieve this?

v. 11-12 Describe the situation in modern terms. (cliques based on spheres or persons of influence)

Q: What kind of cliques could we have? (the “intellectual” like Apollos, the evangelistic like Paul, those into benevolence, the legalistic/Jewish like)

Q: How do you think this situation developed?

v. 13-17 Paul’s response: He roundly rebukes them!

1 Cor 1:18-19 What is Paul’s solution to the problem of division?

Focus on the cross.

Q: Why is this a solution to the problem of lining up with people? All are equal at the foot of the cross.

Q: Why is the cross “foolishness” to the world? Does the world see the cross to be powerful?

(aside: Apparently, some of the Corinthians were into power politics in the church otherwise, some were into miracles (Jews) and others were into intellectual stuff (Greeks))

1 Cor 1:20-25 Q: Why did God choose “foolish” things in order to save us?

Q: Why can’t the “wise” believe the gospel?

Q: Are you “wise” (ie do you ask the gospel to appeal to your sense of what is reasonable in human terms)

Q: Why do Jews demand sings? (it appeals to their sense or to their desire for things to be exciting. They want a great show)

Q: How could we be like this?

Q: Why do “Greeks demand wisdom? (appeals to their intellectual pride)

Q: How could we be like this?

v. 23 Q: Why is the cross a “stumbling block to the Jews.”?

v. 24-25 Q: What is the foolishness of God? Is it really foolish?

Q: What is the weakness of God? Is it really weakness?

1 Cor 1:26-31. Did we have spiritual pride when we were young Christians (probably not)? So, how does this happen to us?

1 Cor 2:1-5 Q: Why did Paul avoid using eloquence when he preached? (surely he knew how to be eloquent) Q: How did he demonstrate the Spirit’s power when he preached? (by talking about what God had done—by using testimonies?)

1 Cor 2:6-16 Apparently, Paul was not above deep teaching/preaching, but how was his deep teaching different from that the Greek philosophers would teach?

Q: Why was it a mystery? Why were the “rulers of this age” unable to discern it?

Q: Why did God keep it a mystery? Is he trying to hide the truth from us?

v. 9-11 So, how are these truths obtained?

Q: Can you think of a time when the Spirit revealed something to you? What was this like?

1 Cor 3:1-4 Q: Who are these infants and worldly people he is talking about? (Christians in Corinth!). Q: Why does he feel that they are mere infants?

Q: Are you guilty of any jealousy and quarreling? What about gossip? What about lining up behind certain leaders in the church?

1 Cor 3:5-9 Apparently, what had these worldly Christians forgotten?

Surely, this could never happen to us! Q: What might it look like in our case?

Q: Do you really, honestly, see yourself as merely a servant, and a tool in God’s hands?

The result: No cliques, God’s church will work as intended, and we will become mature.

1 Cor 3:10-15 Q: Which is more important in building a physical building—the foundation layer or the tower builder? (In one sense, the foundation-builder is more important, as it sets the pattern, but in another both are equal, as the point is to create a building and there is no building without both!)

Q: What does it mean to you, practically, that Jesus is the foundation?

Illustration: The three little pigs.

v. 12-15 Apparently, although there is one Church (capital C), there are different churches (small c) Q: What is the difference between the churches?

This applies to us individually as well.

There is one Christian life, but there are different Christian lives.

Q: What is a Christian life like which is made of wood, hay and straw (as opposed to one built of gold and silver)?

v. 15 Q: What is the ultimate fate of both?

Q: (a rhetorical one) Which would you prefer?

Q: Where was Corinth headed at this time? Why?

1 Cor 3:16-17 Q: Is Paul talking about the church in Corinth, or the Christians individually in Corinth?

Q: In what sense are we God’s temple? What does that mean to you?

Q: If you were in charge of the Taj Mahal or the White House or… How would you feel about that responsibility?

His point: As a church there in Corinth, to some extent you live or die, rise or fall together. If you think you can separate yourself from what is going on, you are wrong.

1 Cor 3:18-23 Paul returns to the wisdom/foolishness theme again. Q: Why does he return to this theme at this point?

v. 18 Q: What is Paul’s advice for how we can become (truly) wise?

Q: How do we do this?

v. 20-22 Conclusion: Stop boasting! Stop looking down on others.

1 Cor 4:1-13 There is a lot here, but what is the overall thrust of this passage we should bear in mind?

4:2 Q: What are some of the things God has trusted you with? What are you doing with these things? Are you being “faithful” with these things?

Paul’s point: It is God who has entrusted me with my ministry, not you guys. I am accountable to God, not to you, so I will not be intimidated by whether I win your approval.

Q: Do you get worried about whether others approve of you? Q: Why, in principle, is this a bad thing to do?

Another point: Paul, apparently, is open to the possibility that, although sincere, he might be wrong on some point. But what is his attitude about this kind of thing?

v. 6-7 Apparently, some of the Corinthians were basing their self-confidence on their (spiritual) accomplishments. Isn’t this only natural? Q: Why is this highly problematic?

v. 8-13. Some of the leaders in Corinth were “rich.” Q: In what sense were they rich?

Paul, on the other hand was extremely “poor.” Q: In what sense was he poor?

Q: Why would anyone want to be like Paul and follow his example?

Q: Are you willing to be considered “scum of the earth” and “garbage”? Perhaps even to some relatively worldly Christians?

Clearly, Paul is using hyperbole here to make a point. He is trying to shock them into their senses.

1 Cor 4:14-21 Paul finishes this section before going on to the next subject. He ends with a very emotional appeal. Q: What does he appeal to? How is he able to appeal to this? Q: Application? (we should lay a foundation of deep love and affection which may come in handy when people are doing really badly spiritually)

1 Cor 5:1-13 Read the whole section.

Q: What has been going on in Corinth? Are you shocked? Could this happen in one of our modern churches?

Q: Why are they “proud”? (they are proud of their tolerance and liberal, non-judgmental spirit)

Q: Why does Paul advise what can only be seen as a “harsh” form of discipline?

(because a little leaven works through the whole loaf)

Point: Paul tells us that it is not our place to judge those who have not made the commitment of a disciple, but as a family, if we have agreed to the terms of agreement in our family then we have a right and even a duty to enforce what we have formally agreed to.

1 Cor 6:1-8 Q: How do you think it came down to this?

Q: What is the concept being taught here? (that we should a “spun” version of the church to the world? Not!)

Q: Which is Paul more concerned with—that the church would look bad to outsiders, or that the church has reached this point?

1 Cor 6:9-11 Q: The point here? You were made new. Do not bring the world into the church!

Q: How might the world creep into the church in our case?

1 Cor 6:12-20 “Everything is permissible to me.”

Q: What is going on here? (Paul is sarcastically quoting some of the Corinthians)

They were proud of their “liberal” attitude toward sin.

Q: How did Paul (does God) feel about their liberal attitude toward sin in the church?

The key verse is 6:18 Stay away from grey areas.

1 Cor 7:1-7 “For the matters you wrote about.” Q: What, apparently, were these matters? (whether or not a Christian ought to pursue becoming married)

My opinion: On the one hand, there were some who were proud of their liberal attitude, but on the other hand, there were some who were proud of how “spiritual” they were because they were not getting married or having sex with their wives if married.

1 Cor 7:8-39 As we read this passage, ask yourself what Paul general attitude is toward marriage. Is he negative about marriage?

The details of the doctrine (not our main lesson as we are singles here)

1. Marriage is holy and sex between marriage partners is from God.

2. If a Christian has a non-Christian spouse and he/she pursues divorce, you may accept this and you are free to remarry, but only a fellow Christian (v. 39).

3. The Christian spouse must not pursue divorce, except for marital unfaithfulness of a non-Christian spouse.

4. In a bad situation, separation is acceptable, but not divorce.

Q: What principles do you find in this long passage which can apply to all believers, not just the married?

1. As a rule, stay in the place/situation you were when you were saved.

2. Staying single is OK, and sometimes preferred.

3. Those who struggle with lust should probably be married.

4. The present situation (in this case great persecution) might affect the advice.

1 Cor 8. Paul talks to the “weak” and the “strong” On the one hand… On the other hand…

1 Cor 8:1-3 Q: What is the most important principle in dealing with disputable matters (movies, facebook, alcohol, casinos, voting, jobs)? Love/unity!!

1 Cor 8:4-6 Q: What is Paul’s definition of the “weak?” (those who do not know

and who have a sensitive conscience)

Q: What is Paul’s advice to the “weak”? (to learn and to not judge.)

1 Cor 8:7-13 Q: What is Paul’s definition of the “strong?” (those who understand the truth about the question)

Q: What is Paul’s advice to the “strong.” (do not use your knowledge in a way that would hurt the weak)

Q: Applications?

1 Cor 9:1-23 The Christian bill of rights.

1 Cor 9:1-12 Q: What were some of the rights Paul had with regard to the Corinthians? (respect, obedience as apostle, pay for work, etc.)

Q: What are some of our “rights” in the church?

1 Cor 9:13-23 What did Paul do with these rights? Why?

v. 32 Q: What was the result of him giving up his rights?

Q: What are some rights we have that we should consider willingly giving up for the sake of others and of the gospel?

1 Cor 9:24-27 Q: How does this relate to using or giving up our rights as Christians?

1 Cor 10:1-13 Application from Israel’s history. Paul to the Corinthians: Let us reason together here. Q: How does this relate to our use of our rights (which is still the subject in this section?

Our salvation may be at stake.

We will be tempted to bring worldly attitudes into the church, but there is no excuse.

1 Cor 10:14-32 A very important part of 1 Corinthians. We are returning to the same basic question as 1 Cor 8:1-13, which proves this is the context of the whole section. Q: What should I do with my rights as a believer if I am part of Jesus’ church?

Q: For them it was meat sacrificed to idols. What would it be for us?

(consuming alcohol, posting a visit to a casino on facebook, kinds of clothes to wear, movies to watch, political activities to take part in….)

Opening question for this particular Bible Study: If the church is a body, then what part of the body are you?

1 Cor 10:31-32 A summary of this entire section! The key is love and unity, not your opinion or your freedom in Christ.

1 Cor 11:1-2 Be imitators. Q: What is Paul asking them to imitate, and why is he asking them to imitate him? How can we accept this advice of Paul?

Bottom line, we need living examples of Christ. Are you willing to go the extra mile in order, not only to do what is right, but to serve as an example to the younger and weaker believer?

1 Cor 11:3-16 One of the hardest and potentially most confusing passages in the Bible. Context: “Now” a hint that he is moving on to another question, so the context has to do with the next subject, which is the proper use of our gifts as Christians and the problem of “spiritual pride.” Apparently, there was a problem of female Christians trying to run things in the church and of people being puffed up about having certain gifts. Both of these have to do with spiritual pride.

Q: In the context here, is he talking about what goes on in church? (No, this is probably about marriage and prayer)

My opinion: Corinth has an unusually large proportion of “sharp” and “strong” women, and these women have been giving in to temptation to not submit to their husbands. This has leaked into the church as well.

Q: What is his point to these sisters? You need to accept the role in which God has put you.

v. 3 Who is greater/better/more important God or Christ?

What Christ and man?

What about man and woman? So, it is not about greatness or importance, but about humility and accepting your role.

Q: Is the hair the issue, or is this an outer symbol of the principle Paul is raising? The hair is the symbol, in the context of 1st century Greek culture, of the spiritual principle.

1 Cor 11:17-34 Probably, this particular situation is not our problem, so we have to ask how to apply it to ourselves (and remember the context)

Q: How would you describe the problem in Corinth?

Q: What would be the solution?

v. 19 At first glance, this passage seems to contradict everything he has been saying about division, such as 1 Cor 1:10. Q: What, then, is his point in 11:19?

(that the situation can become so bad that, in extreme situations, division may be the only way to preserve a pure Jesus-like church)

This passage is not principally about the doctrine of the Lord’s Supper, but

Q: What can we learn about the Lord’s Supper in this passage, as far as its purpose for us?

v. 27 Is this passage teaching that if you are doing poorly spiritually, that you should not take the Lord’s supper? [No!!! He is talking about those who take it unworthily (an adverb) not about those who are unworthy (adjective) taking it]

v. 28 But we should evaluate ourselves. Q: With regard to what? (Whether we are, as an individual or as a church, celebrating the Lord’s Supper in a worthy manner)

v. 33 So when you come together, come to serve others, not yourself.

Q: application for us in our worship meetings?

1 Cor 12:1-26 A really famous and practical passage. The underlying question is about use of miraculous gifts, but this is not the application in this chapter.

1 Cor 12:4-13 (skipping v. 1-3 for now, as we will get back to miraculous gifts later) Q: What is Paul’s main point here?

(note: he is talking about miraculous gifts, but we can apply this to non-miraculous gifts)

Q: What gifts do we tend to honor the most if we are struggling with worldliness as the Corinthians were?

Q: Why is it so bad to honor one gift above another (esp. v. 11)

Q: What is the point of 12:12-13?

1 Cor 12:14-30

Q: Why do you need me, and why do I need you?

Q: Should we treat everyone in the church equally? (v. 22-25)

Answer: No. We should do the exact opposite of what the world would do!

v. 25 So, how do we avoid division, then, in this context?

Q: According to the metaphor used here, what will happen to you if you cut yourself off from the body?

1 Cor 12:31-13:13

1 Cor 12:31. Q: What are these “greater gifts?”

Q: What is the most excellent way?

Might Paul be exaggerating/using hyperbole here? (yes!) Why is he doing so?

Q: Based on 1 Cor 13:1-3, what do you think was going on in Corinth?

Q: Have you ever been like this, or how do you see that you might be susceptible to this kind of thinking?

v. 4-7 (go through these qualities one at a time, explaining them and asking for examples)

Q: What will these “greater gifts” look like? Can you share about someone who is a good example in these areas?

v. 8-13 Paul is subtly calling something childish. What is he calling “childish”? (the tendency to look at outward rather than inward qualities and the tendency to be attracted to showy, flashy gifts, rather than the more important but less flashy gifts of love)

Q: Why is love greater, even, than faith and hope? (perhaps because in heaven neither faith nor hope will be needed? Other comments?)

1 Cor 14:1-25 This is kind of like a private conversation between Paul and the Corinthian church, which we are privy to. Before reading this passage, because we do not have speaking in tongues and prophecy in our churches, most of what he is talking about is not relevant to us. Here is the question to ask while we read:

Q: What is it in the issue here that might have application to us? What is the principle behind the specifics? Does a key little phrase stick out to you?

According to Paul, why is prophecy “better” than tongues (v. 12 seems to be key)

Also, note, v. 20 relates back to 1 Cor 13:8-13.

Q: How might we apply this principle? (It’s not about you but about “us” and about God)

1 Cor 14:26-40 Orderly worship. Q: What does it seem that worship in Corinth was like? (much more spontaneous than we are used to). Is there any hint here about the role women were taking in the service that might explain his comment?

Perhaps we, as a Christian group, do not have to worry so much about overly spontaneous worship. In fact, perhaps the opposite.

1 Cor 15:1-11 I thought that love was the most important thing! Apparently, Paul is switched topics, as he is discussing a new most important thing. 1 Tim 4:16, John 4:24 Of the two “wings of an airplane”, which has Paul switched over to? (Paul has switched from life and spirit to doctrine and truth. The next section is about false doctrine)

Q: Given this, what is the most important thing in our belief system acc. to 15:1-11?

v. 9-11 Because he is about to speak on doctrinal/theological matters, Paul is reminding them that he speaks with authority on these matters! Q: Who is the “them” in 1 Cor 15:10? (the other apostles or perhaps certain influential leaders in the Achaian churches or in Corinth).

1 Cor 15:12-28 Q: What false teaching has made the rounds in Corinth? (v. 12)

My guess (for what it is worth) is that this belief was held by a small minority and Paul is chiefly using this as an opportunity to preach on the resurrection to inspire the church, so let us be inspired as well!

Q: Do you agree with 1 Cor 15:17-19 to be literally true, or is Paul exaggerating to make a point?

1 Cor 15:29-34 Q: What other false teaching seems to have been held by at least a small group? Does anyone actually teach this bizarre thing today? (yes!!)

v. 33-34 “Dudes. Seriously??? Let’s get real here. Stop listening to this obvious foolishness! (to paraphrase) Q: Why can we listen to this if we are weak and not being careful?

1 Cor 15:36-58 A seriously encouraging and inspiring passage. Let us be encouraged. v. 35-36 Some are all caught up in debates about the specific details of what happens when we die. Paul says to us, “Hey, let’s look at the big picture here and not get caught up in the trees without seeing the forest.” It will be awesome.

v. 45 Who is this “last Adam”? Why is Paul calling Jesus the last Adam? What analogy is he finding here? (that our physical nature is after Adam but our spiritual nature and spiritual body is like Jesus).

1 John 4:17 In this world we are like him. This will be even more true after the resurrection.

Q: How do you feel about the encouragement in v. 50-58? Q: What are you inspired to do in light of this fact?

1 Cor 15:58 Therefore… Therefore means “in view of what I just said.”

Q: What had he just said? (victory over death through the resurrection of Jesus)

Q: Do you believe this? Are you sure? WHY do you believe this?

Note: He does not say “stand firm” No, he says, “Therefore, stand firm.”

Q: Stand firm, do not be moved from what??

Q: Stand firm, do not be moved by what??

Q: Have you given yourself fully to the work of the Lord?

If not, why not?

Q: What do you fear, really?

Parallel passage: Romans 12:1-2

1 Cor 15 In view of what? Romans 12 In view of what?

This is what we all want, and it is Paul’s prayer that we have it. Paul had it.

1 Cor 16:1-24 The letter is pretty much done. This section is a little like the announcements at the end of church and we are a visitor. But…

1 Cor 16:1-4 This is the only place in the Bible which instructs that collection be made every Sunday.

Q: Why does he instruct them to put aside money every week, rather than a one-time contribution? Q: Do we need to do this?

Q: What does “in keeping with his income” mean? Is this required of us as well?

1 Cor 16:5-12 Not much there for us. This applies to a situation in Corinth.

1 Cor 16:13-14 repeats 15:58

1 Cor 16:15-18 Q: Who should we submit ourselves to and recognize in the church?