

Week 10 Galatians 1-5

Theme: The traps of the Galatians.

Conversation Starter

What action option did you choose to do after our discussion last week? What went well? What did not go well?

What questions do you have from the reading this week?

Weekly Review/Intro

This week, we read almost the entire book of Galatians. This book was a letter written by Paul to the church in the Galatia region (Acts 14). In this letter, Paul covers the Gospel and salvation. He also takes the time to rebuke the churches. We will get to that later on. First, we are going to dive into Galatians 2 and 3. In these chapters, Paul covers some very heavy topics related to the law and salvation.

When Paul is writing about “the law” what is he referring to?

Why is “the law” such a big deal to the Jews?

The law is the set of rules passed down from God to Moses. They can be found through Exodus, Deuteronomy, and Leviticus. The law consisted of over 600 different rules ranging from what the Jews could eat to handling dead bodies. These were God’s rules for how His people were supposed to act and do.

How do you think you would do trying to follow over 600 laws in your life? Do you think you could do it?

Following the law was not an easy task, and not following different laws came with different penalties. The big question that tends to come to mind is “Why did God give the law?”

Read Galatians 3:19-26

According to these verses, why was the law given?

Paul’s writing can be difficult to decipher at times. The summary is that the law was given for two big reasons.

- 1) The law was a stop gap until Jesus came (v. 19)
- 2) The law was meant to show us that we sin (v. 19)

Have you ever heard the term “stop gap”? What does that mean?

A “stop gap” is a temporary fix for a long-term problem. For example, you could fill the radiator of your car with water until you get it to a mechanic for repairs, you could duct tape a leaky pipe until a plumber gets there, or you could hang up a picture to cover an unsightly hole in the wall. All of these things provide temporary relief for a long-term problem, but a stop gap does not fix the problem.

Reread verse 19. What was the problem the law was addressing? (our sin)

Reread verse 21. Why wasn’t the law a long-term solution? (righteousness cannot come from the law)

The law was given by God as a way to address our sin with the intent to send Jesus. According to verse 21 and 22, we were given the law as a way for Jesus to come and bring us salvation through faith rather than works.

Why do you think God made salvation based on faith rather than based on works?
(Ephesians 2:8-9 has the answer)

Application

The Bible is clearly stating in Galatians that salvation comes through faith in Christ. However, the Galatians were falling into two traps that many believers still find themselves in today.

Read Galatians 4:8-10

What trap were the Galatians falling into?

The first trap the Galatians were falling into was that they were returning to their old way of living. (v. 9).

What does it mean for someone to turn back to their old way of living?

Why can that be dangerous for a believer?

Turning back to our old way of living means that we do things like we did prior to knowing God. Paul says that in the past, “you were enslaved to things that by nature are not gods.”

In what ways were we slaves before knowing Christ?

What things enslave mankind?

Have you ever felt like you were enslaved to something other than God? Were you aware of your slavery? Looking back on your life, how do you feel about being enslaved to something?

Before Christ, we can be enslaved to many different things. A lot of times we like to jump to the “big” things like drugs or sex, but sometimes our enslavement can be our own desires. We can be enslaved to our job, family, or money. We can be enslaved to anything that takes priority over God.

Jesus taught about this as well in Luke 16:13. Jesus said, “No servant can serve two masters, since either he will hate one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.”

When we become a believer, does that automatically mean we are never going to be enslaved again? Are we always free from that temptation?

In Galatians 4:9, Paul is questioning whether the Galatians want to be enslaved all over again. He is afraid that they will fall back into the old pattern of life and serve their old “masters.”

Do you see this happening in the church today? Do believers ever turn back to their old way of life after placing their faith in Jesus?

Have you ever fallen into this trap? What did you do to get out of it?

The first trap we see is the trap of returning to our old way of life.

Read Galatians 3:1-6

What trap were the Galatians falling into?

The second trap the Galatians were falling into was returning to the idea of salvation through works. (v. 3) As we already discussed, salvation comes through faith in Christ alone, but the Galatians were having a hard time with that.

Why do you think it would be hard for the Galatians to transition from the law to salvation in Christ alone?

The Jews had been following the law for generations prior to Jesus coming into the world. The law set them apart from everyone around them, but now they were having to learn a new way of doing things.

Have you ever had to change the way you have been doing something for a long time? How did you feel about changing?

This transition had to be challenging for some Jews because the law was what they knew. However, it does not change the fact that salvation is not done by works.

Have you ever seen believers who act as if salvation is through works rather than through faith in Christ? What were they doing that showed they were still working for salvation?

We as believers can fall into this trap. We are free in Christ, but we still live as if we are under the law. We have the temptation to become legalistic about our faith. We make sure that we do things, which could be great things for the Kingdom, but, if we are motivated by wanting to earn our salvation, we are missing the mark. God makes it clear in the book of James that our faith should drive us to act. However, if we are acting to earn salvation, we are not understanding the ideas of grace and faith.

What religious acts do you do out of legalistic duty?

What can you do to make your actions based on faith rather than on duty?

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Reflection

During this week, you are being charged with answering these questions about yourself and your walk with God. Hopefully these will force you to pray and consider what God wants you to do in your life.

- 1) Do you have faith in Jesus Christ? Are you free in him?
- 2) What things of the world are enslaving you? What do you need to do to get help with this problem?
- 3) What acts are you doing out of religious duty?
- 4) How can you live in the freedom that comes from Christ rather than in the duty of religion?

Action

Choose one of the following actions to do as part of your walk this week.

- 1) Go to a fellow believer that seems to have lost their way. Encourage them in their faith.
- 2) Go to a trusted believer and confess what is enslaving you. Pray together on how to make a change. Seek professional help if needed.
- 3) Go to a trusted believer and confess how you have fallen into the “salvation by works” trap. Pray together on how to make a change.