

## Monday, December 31st

Read Galatians 3:26-29

*<sup>26</sup> So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, <sup>27</sup> for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. <sup>28</sup> There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. <sup>29</sup> If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.*

The best guess is that Paul's letter to the churches in Galatia was probably written in 48 AD, which would be just 18 years after the public ministry of Jesus. The readers of Paul's letter lived in communities with stark distinctions between people—such as Jews and Greeks, men and women, slaves and free. Paul says Christ's work (and not the law) destroyed all of the old partitions between different types of people. God's redeeming grace was available on equal terms to all people.

How does this teaching reach back to the creation order statement that all humanity bears the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27)?

How does Paul's letter echo the words of an angel to terrified shepherds in Luke 2:10-11?

## Tuesday, January 1st

Read Galatians 4:4-7

*<sup>4</sup> But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, <sup>5</sup> to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship. <sup>6</sup> Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." <sup>7</sup> So you are no longer a slave, but God's child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir.*

We know from the context and tone of Paul's letter to the churches in Galatia that he was exasperated that these new Jewish believers had accepted Christ, but were slipping back into observances of the law. Some had come to believe that all God's promises and gifts were for Jews alone. Gentiles could not be admitted, and were excluded. Because these churches believed circumcision and other observances of the law were the only path to Christ, Paul re-told the Gospel story, pointing out that Jesus was born of a Jewish woman under the law, and redeemed people that were under the law.

Tuesday continued...

Paul's letter is hard to understand in places because sentences begin, but don't seem to end. We can imagine him pacing and dictating rather loudly to his secretary who struggles to record the rush of words.

Can you hear his fiery and exasperated tone of voice in his letter? Continue reading. Does that tone begin to soften in Galatians 4:19-20?

*<sup>19</sup> My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you, <sup>20</sup> how I wish I could be with you now and change my tone, because I am perplexed about you!*

## Wednesday, January 2nd

Read Galatians 5:5

*<sup>5</sup> It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.*

Paul is speaking to Jewish believers in the churches in Galatia. Tragically, they had accepted false teachings that narrowed God's free grace, and proclaimed: "A Gentile that wishes to follow Christ must first become a Jew!" They even stopped eating with Gentiles, because under the law, Gentiles were unclean. Paul used a pretty strong word—slavery—to describe their return to the burden of following the law. Ironically, the Galatian churches had exchanged Christian freedom for bondage.

For Paul, it was not what a person could do *for* God (following the law), but what God had done for that person. Can something be earned when it is free?

What are modern examples of things people think they must do to earn God's redeeming grace and favor?

## Thursday, January 3rd

Read Galatians 5:13-14

*<sup>13</sup> You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. <sup>14</sup> For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”*

In the Gospels, Jesus names the Great Commandment (Matthew 22:35-40; Mark 12:28-34). In his Galatians letter, Paul reiterates Jesus’ teaching and the Leviticus 19:18 command to “love your neighbor as yourself.” However, Paul, explains that because of the Gospel, this ethical command is no longer law. It is motivated by a life of freedom animated by Christ. In fact, for a Christian, this foundational ethical command is no longer understood legally—it is not imposed or enforced by an external authority. Later in Galatians 6:2, Paul says that when we carry each other’s burdens we fulfill (here he coins a phrase) “the law of Christ.”

How do we “walk by the Spirit” in order to do this? (See Galatians 5:16-26)

## Friday, January 4th

Read Galatians 5:16-26

*<sup>16</sup> So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. <sup>17</sup> For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. <sup>18</sup> But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.*

*<sup>19</sup> The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; <sup>20</sup> idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions <sup>21</sup> and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.*

*<sup>22</sup> But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup> gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. <sup>24</sup> Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. <sup>25</sup> Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. <sup>26</sup> Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.*

Verses 22 and 23 describe the hallmarks of Christian character. Describe a recent example of a fruit of the Spirit that you experienced in the midst of a difficult time.

# EXTRA ORDINARY LIVING IN ORDINARY TIMES

DEVO | December 29/30