

Devotions for the Week of July 21, 2019

You've Got Mail:

A Journey Through A Few of Paul's Letters

FOCUSED – A Letter To The Church In Galatia

North East United Methodist Church

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Sunday, July 21, 2019

Read Galatians, chap. 1.

Paul had preached to the people in Galatia on his first missionary journey (Acts 13:14–14:23). Shortly after Paul left Galatia a group of Jewish believers arrived and insisted that the Gentile Christians submit to Jewish law, the law of Moses. They declared that the Gentile Christians needed to be circumcised and follow Jewish laws and customs to be saved. Paul wrote the letter to the Galatians to reiterate that we are saved from the penalty of our sins by accepting Jesus Christ's payment on our behalf, on the cross, and nothing else. Any other teaching is a twisting of the truth. We are made right in the sight of God by putting our trust in what God has already done through Christ and we become the people of God through faith.

In verse 4, Paul tells the Galatians, "*Christ died for our sins, just as God our Father planned, in order to rescue us from this evil world in which we live.*" It was God's plan to bring us into relationship with Him, to save us from destruction and give us eternal life, forgiveness of sin, and adoption into God's family. The Life Application Bible asks a very poignant question about this verse: "*Does your life reflect your gratitude for being rescued?*"

Beginning in verse 6, Paul makes it clear that there is only one gospel, one truth. He warns the Galatians to not listen to anyone that preaches “*a different gospel*” for it is a perversion. There were zealous Jewish Christians in Galatia who wanted Gentile Christians to practice the Jewish faith; because of this they were called Judaizers. The Judaizers believed in Christ, but they denied that Jesus’ work on the cross was sufficient for salvation. Paul is clear that our salvation is not based on anything we can do but is based completely on God’s mercy and grace, on Christ’s sacrifice and act of love, taking on our sins, dying for our sake.

Chapter 1 ends with Paul arguing why the Galatians should listen to him and not the Judaizers. He lists his credentials and the fact that his revelation was received directly from Christ & confirmed by the Apostles.

Give God thanks for having rescued you? If you have been trying to earn God’s love, your salvation, ask God to come into your heart and accept that His gift of salvation is not based on anything you can do. Recognize that Christianity is based on the DONE plan. Christ has done for us what we could not do for ourselves. We work not to earn God’s love but to show gratitude for what God has done for us through Christ.

Monday, July 22, 2019

Read Galatians, chap. 2.

In chapter 2, Paul explains how he conferred with the church, the Apostles, about the message he preached. He did this because of a “*revelation*” from God (verse 2). The essence of Paul’s message to both Jews and Gentiles was that God’s salvation is offered to all people regardless of race, sex,

nationality, wealth, social standing, educational level, or anything else (see Romans 10:8-13). Paul writes in verse 6, *“God shows personal favoritism to no man.”*

Paul explains that he had to even confront Peter on this issue when Peter separated himself from the Gentile Christians in Antioch when the Judaizers were present; Paul challenged Peter in that in staying away from the Gentiles, he was sending the message that he agreed with the Judaizers that Christ was not sufficient for salvation. Paul writes, *“a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ...for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.”*

The Life Application Bible states,

“If observing the Jewish laws cannot justify us, why should we still obey the Ten Commandments and other Old Testament laws? We know that Paul was not saying the law is bad, because in another letter he wrote, ‘the law is holy’ (Romans 7:12). Instead, he is saying that the law can never make us acceptable to God. The law still has an important role to play in the life of a Christian. The law (1) guards us from sin by giving us standards for behavior; (2) convicts us of sin, leaving us the opportunity to ask for God’s forgiveness; (3) drives us to trust in the sufficiency of Christ, because we can never keep the Ten Commandments perfectly. The law cannot possibly save us. But after we have become Christians, it can guide us to live as God requires.”

In verse 20, Paul writes, “*I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.*” We are crucified with Christ in that God sees us as having died with Christ, our sins dying with him so we are no longer condemned (Colossians 2:13-15); we die to our old life and become one with Christ. We accept the relationship (Romans 6:5-11). We are reconciled to God (2 Corinthians 5:19) and in our daily lives we have Christ’s strength and the power of the resurrection to help us fight sin (Ephesians 1:19-20) We are no longer alone for Christ lives in us.

Have you been “*crucified with Christ*”? Does Christ live in you? Are you living each day in faith? Are you attempting to observe the Ten Commandments and the teachings of Christ, allowing God’s Word to guide your actions and speech, to help you make decisions? Take time to reflect on these questions and on God’s Word.

Tuesday, July 23, 2019

Read Galatians, chap. 3.

In chapter 3, Paul continues his argument, calling on the Galatians to stay focused on the truth, on the true Gospel. Paul points out that even Abraham was not saved by keeping the law but by his faith; “*just as Abraham ‘believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness’*” (Genesis 15:6).

Paul again explains the purpose of the law. The law helps people understand their need for God. “*Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by*

faith.” Once we come to Christ, and put our trust in Him as our Savior and Lord, we are “*all sons of God through faith in Jesus Christ;*” we are all “*heirs according to the promise*” made to Abraham generations before.

Paul wants the Galatians and us to understand the Biblical truth that “*the righteous will live by faith.*” Faith is not only the key to salvation and becoming “*heirs according to the promise,*” but our key to living each day. Are you trusting God right now to meet a need in your life? Are you trusting God in faith to reach a friend or family member, to bring healing to a loved one, to do a new work in your life? Or are you living by a long list of do’s and don’ts, the law, expecting that if you work hard enough you can meet the needs around you and in your own life by yourself?

Wednesday, July 24, 2019

Read Galatians, chap. 4.

Paul reiterates that when we put our faith in Christ we “*are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.*” Under Roman law, an adopted child was guaranteed all legal rights to his father’s property, even if he was formerly a slave; he was not a second-class son. When we put our faith in Christ we are adopted into God’s family and are able to call God, “*Abba, Father*”.

Paul, throughout his letters, attacks the distortions that arose around Christianity. They included:

1. Judaized Christianity—Christians are Jews, who have recognized Jesus as their promised Savior. Therefore, any Gentile desiring to become a Christian must first become a Jew.

2. Legalized Christianity—Christians are those who live by a long list of “do’s” and “don’ts”. God’s favor is earned by good behavior.
3. Lawless Christianity—Christians live above the law. They need no guidelines. God’s Word is not as important as our personal sense of God’s guidance.

Paul preached a True Christianity—Christians are those who believe inwardly and outwardly that Jesus’ death has allowed God to offer them forgiveness and eternal life as a gift. They have accepted that gift through faith and are seeking to live a life of obedient gratitude for what God has done for them.

-taken from Life Application Bible,
“Three Distortions of Christianity”

Is your identity in what you do and how well you perform? Or is your identity in Christ, accepting that you are a child of God through faith? Take time to sit with God and rest in your “*Father’s*” arms. Don’t do, just be still and know God. Focus on the relationship and out of that relationship “*serve one another in love.*”

Thursday, July 25, 2019

Read Galatians, chap. 5.

In chapter 5, Paul distinguishes between the freedom to sin and the freedom to serve. As Christians we should no longer be slaves to sin, to “*works of the flesh*” like hatred, selfish ambition, dissensions, envy, and drunkenness. As Christians we are free to do right and through the Holy Spirit to be loving, kind, good, faithful, gentle and self-controlled. Paul calls on us to “*walk in*

the Spirit,” crucifying “*the flesh with its passions and desires.*” To love and serve one another.

When you read the two lists in today’s passage, which resembles your life right now? Is your heart at peace, or are your relationships filled with discord? It shouldn’t be difficult to answer the question, but facing the truth may be hard. If you aren’t seeing the fruits of the Spirit showing up regularly in your actions and speech, then ask God to replace arrogance and envy with humility and love. Confess where you have lost your way and ask God to get you back on track, filling you with the fruits of the Spirit and helping you “*walk in the Spirit*” each day.

Friday, July 26, 2019

Read Galatians, chap. 6.

Paul calls us to “*bear one another’s burdens*” and to not compare ourselves to others but “*let each examine his own work.*” He reminds the Galatians that every action has a reaction, “*for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.*” And Paul encourages the believers, “*And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.*” We must stay focused on Jesus Christ...not anything else. “*But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.*” Each day, we must focus ourselves on Christ, remind ourselves that our salvation is a gift, that Christ died for us. And then in gratitude focus on how we are living our faith, the good we are doing.

Are you weary in doing good? Do you feel like you keep getting beaten down? Are you comparing yourself and how you live your faith to others and how you perceive them living their faith? Examine yourself. Are you trusting in Christ and His

Holy Spirit for the strength to “*bear one another’s burdens*,” to serve others? Are you going to God in prayer asking for strength to continue to serve Him, to not give up? What seeds is your life, with the help of the Holy Spirit, sowing?

Saturday, July 27, 2019

Read through Paul’s letter to the church in Galatia in one sitting. I am sure when the church in Galatia received it, they wanted it read aloud in full, not in part.

Hear Paul’s heart in his letter. Imagine being a church member in Galatia hearing Paul’s words. Open your hearts to the truth about Christ voiced in Paul’s letter.

Just take time today to sit with God, to reflect on Christ, to invite the Holy Spirit to work in your life. Pray. Be Still and Know God.

Don’t forget to invite someone to church tomorrow!



