



For the week of August 21

Monday, August 22 — Galatians 4



Chapter Summary: Paul reminds the Galatians of their conversion and then expresses his fear that they may fall away. He recalls how he taught them the gospel in spite of a physical affliction and they received it joyfully. He then contrasts life under the Old Law with life under the New Covenant in Christ. He draws an analogy from the Old Testament story of Sarah and Hagar.

Devotional: What reasons do we often have for being passive about evangelism? Maybe we fear speaking up because we don't have all the answers we wish we did. Or we are afraid someone might get angry with us if we talk about our faith. Perhaps we justify missing worship service or Bible class because we don't feel 100%. Paul shows us a great example of dedication. He taught the gospel in spite of the fact that he himself was a relatively new Christian. He taught the gospel in spite of a physical problem that was likely something chronic. What beliefs would allow Paul to seek opportunities instead of make excuses? How can we do more to worship the Lord and share the gospel?

Questions for more thought/discussion:

- What clues does Paul give about his physical ailment in this chapter?
- Paul asks the Galatians if he has become their enemy just because he is telling them the truth. Why do some people not want to hear the truth? Why are friends obligated to try and tell it anyway?



Tuesday, August 23 — Galatians 5

Chapter Summary: Paul reminds them they are free in Christ but their liberty can be taken away if they return to the Law. He tells them to use their liberty to love their neighbors and to walk according to the Spirit in new life, not according to the works of the flesh in their old way of life. He tells them what fruit the Spirit will produce in their life.

Devotional: An open day on your calendar is a special treasure in our world. What do you do when you see you have a block of time that isn't already spoken for? How do you use "free time"? Paul says that in Christ we have been set free from the Old Law and instead we have liberty. But our liberty is for a purpose. I am to use my freedom to serve others and build them up. It is selfish of me to just spend all my freedom doing what I want to do.

As an example, Paul appeals to Christ. What drove Christ to leave heaven and come to earth? He had everything and gave it all up because He loved us. Our response is to walk in the Spirit and not in the flesh. Walking in the Spirit will produce the Fruit of the Spirit in our life. How can you look for the fruit in your life?

Questions for more thought/discussion:

- What is the motivation for the lifestyle change Paul talks about that Christians must have? How does it help to understand WHY we need to live godly?



Wednesday, August 24 — Galatians 6

Chapter Summary: When they love one another, they will bear one another's burdens and be generous with their money and their good deeds. Their only source of pride and glory will be the cross of Christ. Being in Christ makes all other distinguishing marks irrelevant. Paul concludes the letter with a blessing.

Devotional: Sometimes we talk about Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians. In our society today, we frequently split the population into groups along racial lines or political affiliation. Paul talks to Christians and says that all those means of looking at people are outdated now. The only question that matters is whether a person is in Christ or not. If you look at our friends, family, and community through that lens, what do you see?

Questions for more thought/discussion:

- Paul says that Christians have an obligation to bear one another's burdens (v.2) but also for each Christian to bear his own load (v.5). How do these two principles work together in the body of Christ?
- Discuss how Paul motivates the Galatians to give generously of their means and good deeds. How can we learn about our own giving by understanding this farming principle?



Thursday, August 25 — Ephesians 1

Chapter Summary: Paul's letter begins with a lengthy section of thanksgiving to God for all He has done in Christ Jesus. Paul is thankful for the faith of the Ephesian Christians and prays that God will bless them with spiritual wisdom and open eyes to see the great power of Christian hope and the greatness of the blessings that God has given to all those in Christ.

Devotional: It's so easy to get overwhelmed by stressful or painful circumstances. Pain demands that we focus on it and often times when our life is filled with problems, it seems that is all we can see. Suddenly, every day looks like trouble and even when blessings come we are wary that there is a hidden problem inside it. Our circumstances color everything else that happens. Paul prays for the church in Ephesus that their eyes may be opened. They weren't blind, but perhaps they were just squinting at their problems. He prays that they will have eyes that are open to the spiritual truth of God's exceedingly great power for believers. Take a moment and pray Paul's prayer in Eph. 1:17-21 for yourself and your family. Is there anyone else for whom you can pray like that, too?

Questions for more thought/discussion:

- Paul addresses this letter to the saints and the faithful in Ephesus (v.1). Who is he talking to? Is it two separate groups or two separate ways to refer to the same group? How can you support your answer?
- How does Paul describe the process of salvation in vs 13-14? How does this illustrate the way faith develops in someone coming to the Lord?



Friday, August 26 — Ephesians 2

Chapter Summary: Speaking of our salvation, Paul makes it clear that we are saved by the grace of God through faith. Our good works do not and cannot save us. It is the blood of Christ that brings us near to God. Christ is our peace and has torn down the wall of separation between us and God and between us and others. He is the cornerstone and all the other Scriptures help build the case for Jesus as the Son of God.

Devotional: If you are dying of an illness and you go to the doctor and he prescribes a medicine which saves your life, to whom do you direct your thankfulness? You would thank the doctor for the prescription. You might even thank the drug company for developing the cure. But you would not stand up and declare that you had saved yourself just by taking the medicine prescribed. In the same way Paul says we are saved BY grace - it is God who saves us. But we are saved by grace THROUGH faith. Just like you could not be cured if you refused to take the medicine, so we cannot be saved by grace unless our faith motivates us to act in obedience to God's commands. Our obedience does not earn our salvation, but it makes it possible for us to be saved by the grace of God. How can you give thanks to God for His amazing grace?

Questions for more thought/discussion:

- How are the apostles and prophets the foundation of our faith and Christ the cornerstone of it?

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