September 28/29, 2013

Study Questions
The Foolishness of Legalism
Free Indeed: A Study in the Epistle of Galatians
Galatians 3:1-14

Opening Discussion

1. Take some time to share your own personal journeys of faith. What led you to the reality that salvation is by grace through faith? What brought you to the point of realization that works of the flesh (Law) could not make you righteous before God?

2. Why do we have a tendency to go back to what didn't work before salvation (Law) to accomplish righteousness after salvation? (We may be tempted to say we don't struggle with this tendency, but the reality is the N.T. letters would indicate this is a huge problem in the church. Either we are vastly superior to the N.T. church or we are unaware of how legalistic we are).

Bible Study

1. Compare the tone of Paul's letter from 1:11 to 3:1. The further into his argument Paul gets, the more serious his tone becomes. Why is this?

   What is at stake here?

   Does Paul think that legalism is a minor problem in the church? Do we take legalism as seriously as Paul?

2. Rewrite 3:1 in your own words. What is Paul really saying?

3. What conclusion did we have to come to regarding our own ability to merit righteousness before God to experience salvation?

   Is that what is meant when Paul said, "I am crucified with Christ" (2:20)?

   What did we die to?

4. According to 3:1-3 why does Paul call the Galatians "foolish"?

   What does Paul mean when he says we believe we began by the Spirit but are now being perfected by the flesh?

   Give some practical examples. Why do we do this?

5. In 3:5 Paul wrote in present tense terms. What is the basis by which God is working in you today?

   Is this because of the works you have done or because of His grace through faith?

6. In 3:6-14 Paul appeals to O.T. Scriptures to again affirm his case of salvation by grace through faith. How was Abraham "saved" and what allows us to enter into his blessings?

   Who is more connected to Abraham today—an unbelieving Jew or a Gentile Christian?

7. Compare 3:10 with James 2:8-13. What does this say to those who believe all we have to do is love one another (the royal law) and we will be saved?

   In what ways do you see the legalists pick and choose which "laws" to abide by?

   Are there certain sins we tend to judge others by, while ignoring the sin in our own hearts?

   Compare Jesus' words in Matthew 7:1-5.

8. Did Jesus die on the cross because keeping the Law was hard or because keeping the Law was hopeless?

   Why did He become the curse for us?

   What is the result?

9. Go back to 3:1-3. Based on what you've learned in Galatians 3:6-14, how irrational is it to go back to Law having been saved by grace?

Application

1. Settle the matter in your own heart at this point in our study. Do you believe absolutely that only Christ could do what the Law could not do to save us? In other words, we die to the belief that our works of the flesh can make us righteous before God.

2. Paul says it is illogical (idiotic) to believe that works of the flesh can bring us to perfection after salvation, when they couldn't do that for us before salvation. In other words, we died to that belief. If this is true, are you willing to seriously address the legalism in your own life? If not, then Paul says you are foolish.

3. Take time to prepare your heart now for what God may want to say to you in the weeks ahead from Galatians.

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