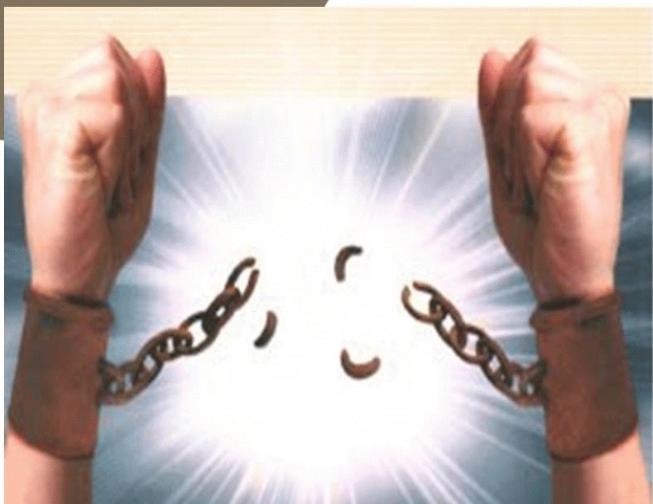


Written by Scott Barker



ALIVE IN CHRIST

A Daily Devotional Study Guide

The Letter to the
GALATIANS

WEEK 3

Day 1

Study: Galatians 2:1-4

Reading: Acts 15

Memory: James 4:16

When I pastored in Wisconsin, we had a group of about 15-20 visitors show up to one of our services. They acted very spiritual in the service, requesting certain songs, saying “Amen” very loud and doing other things that appeared to be very spiritual. After the service they stuck around, talking to as many of the church members as possible, but something was not exactly right. I had been warned about this group from other pastors in the area who informed me that their main purpose was to infiltrate the church and attempt to pull people away from churches and become part of their group.

Today, we are going to see how Satan tries to use the “Trojan Horse method” to tear down Christians. We need to be on guard for Satan’s attacks from inside the church as well as from the outside.

What Does the Bible Say?

Paul told the Galatians that he didn’t return to Jerusalem for an extended stay until fourteen years after his first visit with Peter and James. Paul didn’t mention anything to the Galatians about how he made a short visit sometime in that fourteen years to Jerusalem with Barnabas to take money that was given to help those who were hurting in the Jerusalem church. Paul wasn’t lying when he told the people it had been fourteen years, because his stay, when he dropped off the money, was a quick stop in which he didn’t spend time with the disciples. The stay that he was referring to was when he visited Jerusalem to solve the issue about the Gentiles keeping the Law (Acts 15). Paul’s point that he continued from chapter one was to let the people know that his authority came from God and not from the apostles (vs 1).

Paul also told the Galatians that the only reason he went to Jerusalem for the council was because he was sent by the church in Antioch and God had confirmed the church’s decision in Paul’s heart. When Paul

arrived in Jerusalem, he privately spoke to some of the apostles to make sure that they were in agreement before he spoke in public. The apostles had been under the teaching of Jesus and Paul had been under the teaching of God, and when they met together, they found out that their teaching agreed. Paul was referring to the specific teaching about the Gentiles' responsibility to the Law. Paul was so confident that he was right about the way the Gentiles should keep the Law that he decided not to make Titus get circumcised before he approached the council (vs 2-3).

Paul explained that the reason he had to deal with the whole issue of Gentiles and the Law was because the Judaizers had planted people in the church to cause trouble. The words "false brethren" have also been translated "sham-Christians." These people joined the church for the specific purpose of tearing it apart. The Gentiles were at liberty to be Christians without having to obey the Law that was given to the Jews (vs 4).

How Does this Apply to Me?

What is your view of the Devil? Do you view him as a person who walks around with horns and a pitchfork? If Satan was that obvious, there would be much less sin and problems in the church. Satan wants to sneak in and take you away from God. This plan of his can be seen in the way that the false teachers acted in Antioch. They joined the church and pretended that they were true believers, but the whole time they wanted to destroy the church from the inside out. That is why it is important to understand that just because a person goes to your church, doesn't mean that they are a good example to follow. This is why it is so important for you to spend time in God's Word so that you can know it for yourself. When you know what you believe and why you believe it, you will not be easily persuaded into following a belief that goes against the Word of God. .

Suggestions for Prayer

- * *Thank God for giving you the ability to know Him through His Word.*
- * *Ask God to help you understand the Bible.*
- * *Praise God because He has great power and knowledge.*

Thought for the day

Day 2

Study: Galatians 2:5-10

Reading: James 2:1-13, Acts 10:34-43

Memory: James 4:16

In general, I enjoy being part of the facebook community. I love keeping tabs on college friends, past and current church members and students I have taught and coached throughout the years. However, there are many things about facebook I don't like. One of these is the opinions that people throw out about how the referees performed during a sporting event. I don't mind seeing these comments if the person making them is not a fan of either team because those comments tend to be fair. On the other hand, when a fan of a particular team is constantly posting complaints about "impartial" referees during or after a game, that does bother me. There are times where I will watch the exact same game and come away with a completely opposite view. I have realized that it is very, very difficult not to be partial about the refereeing when the team that is playing is the team I cheer for. I was a referee for many years myself and I know how hard I work to call a fair game and make the correct call according to the rule book.

Today, we are going to see that God shows no partiality. Sometimes we might think that He loves others more than He loves us, but the Bible makes it clear that God doesn't play favorites.

What Does the Bible Say?

When Paul went to Jerusalem he was so convinced by God that he was right about the Gentiles and the law that he did not give in for one minute to the Judaizers in Antioch or Jerusalem. He knew the leaders in Jerusalem would agree with him (vs 5). Paul told the Galatians that those who were "of high reputation" didn't teach him anything new. They just agreed with what he had already been teaching. Paul was referring to the apostles and church leaders when he talked about those who were "of high reputation." In parentheses, Paul said this about the leaders, "what they were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality." By this phrase, Paul was stating the fact that he didn't care what position they

had in the church because all men are equal before God. Paul wasn't concerned about impressing the apostles and he certainly wasn't going to let them change his mind (though they didn't) after God had revealed the truth to him (vs 6).

Paul told the Galatians that Peter was on an equal plain with himself, because they were both called by God. Peter had been called to preach to the Jews at the same time that Paul had been called to preach to the Gentiles. Paul let them know that the Jews in Jerusalem extended the hand of fellowship to them and accepted Paul and Barnabas as fellow ministers for Christ. The only area the church leaders encouraged Paul in was to remember the poor. Paul stated that he was already eager to help the poor even before Peter and James told him to do so (vs 6-10).

How Does this Apply to Me?

Do you do things to try to please those who can help you in life? It is easy to think that you are higher or lower than other people in God's eyes. Paul reminded us that God doesn't show partiality when He looks at people. It is wrong for you to think that God looks at you more favorably than He looks at others. It is also wrong to think that God loves others more than He loves you. Before God, all men are sinners and can do nothing good. Isaiah 64:6 says, "all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." We are all on the same level before God because we are just sinners who are saved by God's undeserved grace. Because of this, we need to view all people on the same plane. It shouldn't matter if they are rich or poor or if they are popular or nerdy. You need to love all people because that is the way that God loves you.

Suggestions for Prayer

- * Thank God for loving you in spite of who you are.
- * Ask God to help you love others like He does.
- * Praise God because He doesn't show partiality.

Thought for the day

Day 3

Study: Galatians 2:1-3

Reading: Acts 15:1-11

Memory: James 4:16

How long had it been between Paul's visits to Jerusalem (vs 1)?

What argument, that started in chapter one, was Paul making?

Why did Paul go up to Jerusalem at this time (vs 2)?

****Though we can't be 100% sure, it appears that this was written when Paul went and met with the Jerusalem counsel in Acts 15. Paul stated that God revealed to him that he should go up to Jerusalem to confirm his missions with the elders.*

Who did Paul meet with privately while in Jerusalem (vs 2)? Why?

What does this reveal about the character of Paul?

****Paul wanted to be accountable before the church leaders (which would have included many of the apostles). He wanted to make sure he was delivering the correct message. They did not have the whole Scripture like we do and the closest source Paul had to the Bible was the apostles who had been disciplined directly by Jesus.*

What did they not force Titus to do (vs 3)?

****This is very significant because circumcision was one of the main issues causing problems in the Galatian churches. The Jews wanted to force the gentiles to be circumcised and had declared that in order for the gentiles to be true children of God, they must be circumcised.*

Acts 15:1-11

What message were men from Judea attempting to spread (vs 1)?

How did Paul and Barnabas feel about this teaching (vs 2)?

Why did they choose to travel to Jerusalem (vs 2b)?

What did they tell other believers about while they traveled through Phoenicia and Samaria (vs 3)? What was the response?

****After their first missionary journey, Paul and Barnabas traveled back to Antioch in Syria. To travel to Jerusalem, they went through Phoenicia and Samaria which were regions that were located between Antioch and Jerusalem. These regions would have been filled with a mixture of Jewish and gentile believers..*

How were they received in Jerusalem (vs 4-5)?

Why did a small group of believers not like Paul's teaching (vs 5)?

What did they do to work through this issue (vs 6)?

Who took the lead in this matter after much discussion had taken place (vs 7)? What was his first point (vs 7)?

What had God done for the gentiles (vs 8-9)?

What did Peter say was happening by forcing the gentiles to be circumcised (vs 10)? What was his point?

****Attempting to fully keep the law could not be done. Jesus had set them free from the religious weight that had burdened them. The Jews had not been able to carry this weight, yet they were trying to make the gentiles carry the weight of the law.*

How does salvation come (vs 11)?

Practical Application

What can you learn about God from this passage?

How can you apply this to your everyday life?

Day 4

Study: Galatians 2:4-6

Reading: Acts 15:12-21

Memory: James 4:16

What were "false brothers" attempting to do (vs 4)?

What do you think Paul means when contrasting freedom in Christ with slavery (vs 4)?

Why did Paul choose not to give into their ideas or teaching (vs 5)?

Who was Paul referring to at the beginning of verse 6?

****Some of the lead apostles in Jerusalem (like Peter, James and John) were looked to for better clarification of what God desired from the Gentiles. They had lived with Jesus for around three years and were the closest thing the church had to the "New Testament".*

Why does Paul say that it doesn't matter who the leading personalities were (vs 6)?

Do you think "leader worship" can exist today in Christianity?

Where do you think the balance is between respecting Christian leaders and worshipping Christian leaders?

What was the end result of this meeting (vs 6b)?

Acts 15:12-21

What was the reaction of the counsel of believers after Peter declared that the Gentiles could be saved by faith without having to follow Jewish customs (vs 12a)?

What gave proof to help back up what Peter had said (vs 12b)?

What was James referring to in verse 14?

****In Acts 10 God told Peter that Jews no longer had to follow the dietary laws. Right after this, God sent Peter to a gentile named Cornelius who was converted.*

What else did James use as a proof to what he was saying (vs 15)?

What did the Old Testament have to say about the conversion of the gentiles (vs 16-18)?

****James quoted Amos 9:11-12*

What did James conclude (vs 19)?

Why would keeping the law have been difficult for the Gentiles?

Can you think of any ways that religions today can attempt to put extra burdens on new converts like the Judaizers attempted to do? Explain.

What parts of the Old Testament law did James suggest the gentiles should be encouraged to follow (vs 20)?

****It does not appear that all of these were sin in and of themselves (though fornication was clearly something that Jesus prohibited). It appears that James mentioned these things because it would be difficult for Jews to fellowship with the gentiles who did these things because they seemed so contrary to the Old Testament law. By avoiding these things, the Gentiles would not be offending the Jews and causing Jewish believers to stumble into sin.*

What was the reasoning James used (vs 21)?

Practical Application

What can you learn about God from this passage?

How can you apply this to your everyday life?

Day 5

Study: Galatians 2:7-8

Reading: I Corinthians 12:4-31

Memory: James 4:16

What did the apostles realize about the call of God on the life of Paul (vs 7)?

Were Peter and Paul called to do the same thing (vs 7)?

What was verse 8 describing about the work of the Holy Spirit?

Why do you think it is important to understand that believers are not all called to the same responsibilities?

****All believers have a responsibility to obey the Word of God. For instance, every believer is to be truthful and not to speak lies. Every believer should have a desire to share their faith with others. Yet, not every believer has been given the same gifts, abilities and calling in life.*

What do you think your calling is in life?

****In my experience as pastor, I have found that many believers don't know what their calling is. They go to church, occasionally read their Bible and attempt to be a witness for Christ, but they have never sought out what it is that God wants them to accomplish in this life.*

1 Corinthians 12:4-31

What do verses 4-6 say about God's calling on the lives of His children?

Why is it important to realize that the same God enables differently?

Why does God do this (vs 7)?

****Verses 8-10 lists some the spiritual gifts that are given by God. There*

are other lists in the New Testament given as well. I don't believe these are meant to be exhaustive lists, but to make the point that we are all gifted uniquely.

Who is responsible for the gifts that are given (vs 11)?

What is the church compared to (vs 12)? How?

How does Paul illustrate the responsibilities of individuals (vs 14-17)?

Who does the calling and gifting (vs 18)? Why is this important to remember?

What is the point in verses 19-20?

Why is the human body such a great illustration of how God has designed a church (vs 21-24)?

What is one of the main reasons Paul is writing about this (vs 25-26)?

Why is it important to remember that the body is made up of different individuals with a unique calling, gifts and abilities (vs 27)?

****It is easy to think of the task God has called you to as less or more important. Every believer is needed for the body to work together for the glory of God.*

Why do you think Paul declared that we should desire the higher or better gifts (vs 31)?

****The end of verse 31 reveals that Paul was using this as a rebuke. The Corinthians fought over who was greater, but the better way was found in I Corinthians 13 which emphasized love.*

Practical Application

What can you learn about God from this passage?

How can you apply this to your everyday life?

Day 6

Study: Galatians 2:9-10

Reading: Acts 15:22-35, I Corinthians 4:1-7, 1 John 3:16-18, Romans 15:25-27

Memory: James 4:16

What did Peter, James and John do for Paul (vs 9)?

Why was this significant?

What instruction did they leave with Paul in regards to his ministry to the Gentiles (vs 10)?

How did Paul receive this instruction (vs 10)?

Acts 15:22-35

What did the counsel of church leaders do after discussing the matter of Gentile believers coming to Christ (vs 22-23)?

What was one of the reasons they wrote this letter (vs 24)?

What instructions did they send to the new believers (28-29)?

How was the letter received (vs 31)?

1 Corinthians 4:1-7

How did Paul want to be viewed (vs 1)?

What did he realize was his requirement as a steward (vs 2)?

What do you think this meant?

What was Paul not concerned about (vs 3)?

Why do you think that Paul didn't even judge himself (vs 3-4)?

Who are you accountable to (vs 5)?

****It is easy to compare yourself with other people as you live out your calling. When you do this, it often will cause you to not carry out your calling or cause you to be discontent.*

What happens when you think your calling is more important (vs 6)?

What is verse 7 emphasizing?

1 John 3:16-18

****The apostles reminded Paul to remember the poor (Gal 2:10). In the Old Testament law, there are several passages that deal with the importance of taking care of the poor and needy. This desire of God was seen in the teaching of Jesus and many spots in the New Testament.*

How is real love displayed (vs 16)?

What question did John ask in verse 17?

How are we to love others (vs 18)?

How is it easy to talk about love, but not actually show it?

Romans 15:25-27

Why was Paul going to Jerusalem (vs 25)?

What had Paul collected (vs 26)?

What did Paul mean when he said the people of Macedonia and Achaia owed the people of Jerusalem (vs 27)?

****The believers in Jerusalem had sent out missionaries.*

Practical Application

What can you learn about God from this passage?

How can you apply this to your everyday life?

Memory Verses

Bible Memory

James 4:1 What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? 2 You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. 3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. 4 You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. 5 Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, "He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us"? 6 But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." 7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

8 Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. 9 Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. 10 Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you. 11 Do not speak evil against one another, brothers. The one who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks evil against the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. 12 There is only one lawgiver and judge, he who is able to save and to destroy. But who are you to judge your neighbor? 13 Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit"— 14 yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. 15 Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that." 16 Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers.

