

Galatians chapter 1

What was it that astonished Paul in verse 6? He certainly seems to be all worked up about it, but does he give any indication here what was “different” about the gospel [6-12]?

Paul was not among the group of disciples that traveled with Jesus and learned the good news of the Kingdom of God directly from Him during the three years of His ministry. What was the source of the gospel that Paul taught? did he just make it up? Why does it matter [11-24]?

Galatians chapter 3

Why does it matter that Christ was crucified in verse 1 [13-14]? What, for Paul, is a key indicator of God's blessing -- that which offers evidence that we stand in a just and righteous relationship with Him [2,14]?

The steps of Paul's argument in chapter 3:

1. Abraham received the promise outside (before) the law.
2. The law has no effect on the terms of the agreement made with Abraham.
3. The law served as a babysitter directing us toward an imperfect righteousness until Christ could offer us true righteousness by faith.
4. We Gentiles are the among the “All the nations will be blessed in you” promised to Abraham in response to his faith; furthermore, we are counted among the descendants of Abraham that God promised.

Are we, as descendants of Abraham, considered righteous? What is the basis of our righteousness?

Galatians chapter 5

Paul has spent most of the previous three chapters explaining why Gentile Christians are free from strict observance of Mosaic law; in his conclusion of that argument what does he say is truly important [6]?

Verses 13-14 proclaim our freedom from the law while pointing us to the object of our freedom: love. What does love demand from us[15-26]?

Next week: Ephesians chapters 3, 4, and 5.

See also: <<http://jdcard.com/love.html>>

What does love demand?

“If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but I do not **have** love” *I Corinthians 13:1* – Is love a thing that I can have, acquire, or hoard? If I don't have it where do I get it? Can I buy it, sell it, give it away? No, I “have” love in the same way that I have blue eyes or brown hair. It is a property that is intrinsic to my person. Yet Christ commands us to love (*John 15:9-13*), it is something that we **do** purposefully (an act of our will). It is both a part of who we are and what we do.

If I (claim to) love someone, what must I do for them, to them, with them, about them? What is required? (See *Micah 6:6-8* (and *Leviticus 19*) for an Old Testament hint.)

Look at these scripture passages to get an idea of the range of love that Christ commands:

- Love your enemy (*Matthew 5:43-45*)
- Fix up their problems when they're unable (*Luke 10:29-37*)
- Offer a cup of water to the thirsty, food for the hungry, companionship when they're lonely, clothing when needed, hospitality (*Matthew 25:31-46*)

Here are some questions we might consider as we think about how to be obedient to these love commands:

Must I seek out strangers to love?

Must I systematically plan an active campaign of love (what we might call “intentional love”) for each of the people that I already have some connection with? If so, how do I (or should I?) avoid the potential backlash of “don't make me one of your do-good projects!”?

Is it enough, or is it preferred, that love should be a spontaneous response, rather than an active plan, (what we might describe as “incidental”, or “organic”, love) as the Spirit reveals both others' needs and my own capacity (or His, with my willingness to follow His leading) to meet those needs?

Would intentional love necessarily lead to a Pharisaical focus on the mechanics or the processes, rather than the essential spirit of love? Would I tend to be “counting mustard seeds” trying to fulfill the letter of the law rather than actually meeting the real needs of people so they can see Christ?

From: <<http://jdcard.com/WhatDoesLoveDemand.html>>

For Further Reflection:

I John 4:7-21

I Corinthians 13

John 15:9-17