

DEEP SIX STUDY

February 7th, 2021

Jesus in the Letters – “Galatians”

MESSAGE HIGHLIGHTS (You can view the full message on Facebook or at live.capecodchurch.com/live)

Opening: Letters are precious to us, especially in this time when so few are written. One of the things we love about them is how they give clear insights into a time and place long past. The Bible’s letters are no different, and 21 of the 27 New Testament “books” are actually letters to churches and individuals. Those letters tell how the Story of Jesus became the Way of Jesus – and teach us much today, as well.

1. Old Habits Die Hard (Galatians 1:1 NIV, 1:6-10 NIV, 3:10-14 NIV, 5:24 NIV)

- Galatians was the first known letter written by Paul to one of the churches he planted – and is actually the earliest writing in the New Testament. It addresses a big question that had arisen in the (diverse) churches in Galatia: namely, who were Jesus’ followers called to be?
- Paul was responding to two specific issues: a faction had arisen that was challenging Paul’s status as an apostle of Jesus, and that same faction was teaching that it was necessary for Gentile believers to become Jews (i.e., follow Jewish laws) in order to truly follow Jesus.
- Paul’s response was clear and a bit angry, boiling down to this: “God is creating a new family, the family of Christ. Entrance into that family has *nothing* to do with what you do; it has *everything* to do with what Jesus has already done for you.”

2. Who and How?

- Looking back 2000 years at the issues of the Galatian church is interesting, but what does it have to do with us today? It turns out that the question of who we are and how we’re called to live as followers of Jesus is still a pretty big issue – and following rules (“doing”) is *still* not the answer.
- Galatians offers us two ways that those of us who believe in the Story of Jesus can live out the Way of Jesus as we walk forward with him in our lives. Following Jesus gives us:
 - a. **An Identity That Sets Us Free** (Galatians 3:26-29 NIV)
 - When we trust Jesus as Savior, we get a brand-new identity. Our old “prime” identity is no longer pertinent; our new identity in Christ is now the most important thing about us – both in how we’re called to act as well as how we should be treated by fellow believers.
 - Our job as the Church – individually and collectively – is not to reflect the culture and all its divisions; it’s to reflect the love of Jesus *into* the culture; that’s our identity and mission.
 - b. **Freedom to Live By a New Code** (Galatians 5:1 NIV, 5:13-16 NIV)
 - Our identity in Christ frees us from following rules (laws) to please God. But that doesn’t mean we’re free to do whatever we want – it means we’re free to love and serve others.
 - The “leash of love” – put in us by the Holy Spirit – “pulls us back” from doing things that aren’t loving and aren’t good for us. The “leash of love” is our guide – IF we’ll listen to it.

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURE

These passages may provide additional insights related to the subject of this week's message. Verses from NLT unless otherwise noted.

Ezekiel 11:19-20; Matthew 7:12; Romans 2:28-29; 1 Corinthians 12:12-13; 1 Peter 2:15-16

Video of the Week: [Galatians](#) by the Bible Project

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. Why do you think so much of the New Testament (21 out of 27 “books”) came to us in the form of letters?
2. What did Paul mean when he said (1:10) that “If pleasing people were my goal, I would not be Christ’s servant”? Shouldn’t we, as Christians, try to make people happy (i.e., “please them”)?
3. Read Galatians 5:2-4 NIV again. Paul states here that not only does “following rules” have no value in God’s sight, it actually makes the Christ’s death on the cross “*of no value*” to us. How can that be??
4. Why is making our identity in Christ our *prime identity* (i.e., the most important and defining about us) so critical for us as believers as we seek to follow the Way of Jesus?
5. How do you react to the statement that “The job of the church isn’t to reflect the culture, it’s to reflect Jesus”? Don’t we, as a diverse church body, want to *look like* (reflect) the diverse culture around us as we seek to attract people to Jesus?
6. In what areas of your life do you find yourself trying to live by a “checklist” of rules to please God? How would those parts of your life be transformed if you were guided instead by the “leash of love”?