



Galatians

Jan. 6

Galatians 1:1-5 (MSG) *I, Paul, and my companions in faith here, send greetings to the Galatian churches. My authority for writing to you does not come from any popular vote of the people, nor does it come through the appointment of some human higher-up. It comes directly from Jesus the Messiah and God the Father, who raised him from the dead. I'm God-commissioned. So I greet you with the great words, grace and peace! We know the meaning of those words because Jesus Christ rescued us from this evil world we're in by offering himself as a sacrifice for our sins. God's plan is that we all experience that rescue. Glory to God forever! Oh, yes!*

Where does Paul's authority come from in writing the Galatians church? Where does it not come from? What about you- where do you derive your 'authority' and confidence in life?

What is God's plan for all people? How much does he want this to happen?

Glory to God forever for making his grace and peace available to us. Make sure you give glory and praise to God on a level that is worthy of the sacrifice he made to rescue us from this world and eternity separated from him.

Jan. 7

Galatians 1:6-9 (MSG) *I can't believe your fickleness—how easily you have turned traitor to him who called you by the grace of Christ by embracing a variant message! It is not a minor variation, you know; it is completely other, an alien message, a no-message, a lie about God. Those who are provoking this agitation among you are turning the Message of Christ on its head. Let me be blunt: If one of us—even if an angel from heaven!—were to preach something other than what we preached originally, let him be cursed. I said it once; I'll say it again: If anyone, regardless of reputation or credentials, preaches something other than what you received originally, let him be cursed.*

Why does Paul call the Galatians a fickle people?

The lie that these agitators were bringing was that people had to be circumcised in order to truly be saved. This was an addition to Christ's message...a complete lie about God. They made it up because they were concerned that the corrupt Gentiles who were so into sexual sin and idolatry wouldn't quit their sin unless they became Jews through circumcision and

then received Jesus.

Do people try to redefine Christ's message today? Can you think of any example? Why would people be tempted to create their own variation of the message of Christ?

So it's just as wrong to add your personal "rules" to Christ's message of salvation as it is to take something away. This is why it is so important to know God's Word...so you can know the whole truth of Christ's message instead of listening to someone's version of Christianity. Don't base your faith on anything but God's word. Live in alignment to His Word. Nothing more and nothing less. His word is truth.

Jan. 8

Galatians 1:10-12 (MSG) Do you think I speak this strongly in order to manipulate crowds? Or curry favor with God? Or get popular applause? If my goal was popularity, I wouldn't bother being Christ's slave. Know this—I am most emphatic here, friends—this great Message I delivered to you is not mere human optimism. I didn't receive it through the traditions, and I wasn't taught it in some school. I got it straight from God, received the Message directly from Jesus Christ.

Why is Paul so passionate about the message of Christ?

From his statements in this passage, what accusations were being made about Paul's ministry motives? What's your motive in serving Christ?

Paul says the message he preaches isn't mere human optimism or something he was taught in school. He got the message delivered to him directly from Jesus on the road to Damascus (see Acts 9). **Do you think that Paul's personal experience with Jesus is what made him so passionate about the message?** He wasn't just preaching something he learned from his parents or in Sunday School, he was preaching something he got directly from God for himself.

Is your faith built on your parents' religion or church background alone or have you searched the Scripture (the message) to experience God for yourself? It's easy to be wishy-washy about your faith if it is mere human wisdom or someone's opinion. But when you experience God for yourself and you know the Scripture in a deeper way than just a verse out of context here and a verse on a t-shirt there, you will become emphatic about the message. There will be no compromise on truth because it isn't mine to manipulate. It's God's truth and it cannot be improved upon. I don't have to defend it or be embarrassed by it. It's truth I've not only learned, but experience first-hand in Jesus Christ.

Have you had a personal experience with God that causes you to know He is real and that his message is truth (not just man's religious crutch)? If not, ask God to show himself to you in a personal way so you can know him and live with a strong conviction that he is God and His message is truth. Read the Bible for yourself and ask God to speak to you through His Word.

Jan. 9

Galatians 1:13-16 (MSG) *I'm sure that you've heard the story of my earlier life when I lived in the Jewish way. In those days I went all out in persecuting God's church. I was systematically destroying it. I was so enthusiastic about the traditions of my ancestors that I advanced head and shoulders above my peers in my career. Even then God had designs on me. Why, when I was still in my mother's womb he chose and called me out of sheer generosity! Now he has intervened and revealed his Son to me so that I might joyfully tell non-Jews about him.*

Before Paul met Christ what did he believe and what did he do because of that belief?

What are some of the characteristics of leadership that God had designed Paul with even though he was using them for his own advancement?

What two things does Paul say God did with him before he was even born? Has he done that for you too?

Paul was designed and called by God to tell the non-Jews about His son Jesus, but Paul was using those God-given gifts to promote himself and even work against the things of God. **What two things does Paul say God had to do to get his attention?**

After Paul encountered God, his response was to use his gifts and abilities to joyfully tell people about Jesus. **Who are you using your gifts and abilities for? What did God call and design you to do for Him?**

Jan. 10

Galatians 1:16-20 (MSG) *Immediately after my calling—without consulting anyone around me and without going up to Jerusalem to confer with those who were apostles long before I was—I got away to Arabia. Later I returned to Damascus, but it was three years before I went up to Jerusalem to compare stories with Peter. I was there only fifteen days—but what days they were! Except for our Master's brother James, I saw no other apostles. (I'm telling you the absolute truth in this.)*

How long did it take for Paul to be equipped and prepared for his ministry assignment after he was called?

How are you being prepared for what God has called you to do? How serious are you about your preparation?

Do you think those were wasted years for Paul?

The Holy Spirit taught him as he studied the Scripture. He wasn't looking to make a name for himself or trying to promote himself by networking with the Apostles, he just wanted to know Jesus and serve him. When it was time, he made his way to Jerusalem to compare what he had gotten from Christ with what Peter and James had seen and heard as well. Paul is continuing here to establish that he has the authority of an apostle (someone sent out on Christ's mission to spread his gospel message) because he too had received the message from Jesus Christ himself.

How about you? Do you have confidence in your personal experience in Christ? Have you committed yourself to preparation by spending time with Jesus on a daily basis? If not, decide to do that from now on. You won't become a disciple of Jesus by accident or without effort. But every ounce of effort spent growing in your relationship with Jesus will be worth it!

Jan. 11

Galatians 1:21-24 (MSG) *Then I began my ministry in the regions of Syria and Cilicia. After all that time and activity I was still unknown by face among the Christian churches in Judea. There was only this report: "That man who once persecuted us is now preaching the very message he used to try to destroy." Their response was to recognize and worship God because of me!*

What was the report that people gave concerning Paul's life? What is their response to this report?

People all over the region knew Paul's history and reputation of arresting and killing Christians and they were all scared of him. But news of his salvation and repentance spread like wildfire. When Christians found out about Paul's transformed life, it was a testimony of God's life-changing power.

What report do people give about your life?

What response do people have about the way you live?

Does your life cause people to want to worship God?

Jan. 12

Galatians 2:1-5 (MSG) *Fourteen years after that first visit, Barnabas and I went up to Jerusalem and took Titus with us. I went to clarify with them what had been revealed to me. At that time I placed before them exactly what I was preaching to the non-Jews. I did this in private with the leaders, those held in esteem by the church, so that our concern would not become a controversial public issue, marred by ethnic tensions, exposing my years of work to denigration and endangering my present ministry. Significantly, Titus, non-Jewish though he was, was not required to be circumcised. While we were in conference we were infiltrated by spies pretending to be Christians, who slipped in to find out just how free true Christians are. Their ulterior motive was to reduce us to their brand of servitude. We didn't give them the time of day. We were determined to preserve the truth of the Message for you.*

Who did Paul bring with him to Jerusalem? What advantages is it to have a ministry team verses going solo?

Why was Paul going to Jerusalem?

Paul was reaching out to non-Jews (Gentiles), which was a novel idea at the time. Before Christ the only people considered as true worshippers of God were Jews and those who had

converted to Judaism. The only way to become a Jew was to be circumcised. Paul was preaching that you didn't have to be circumcised and become a Jew before becoming a Christian. In Christ there is no Jew or Gentile, but only those who accept Jesus by grace through faith. This was new territory for the church leaders at the time. They were trying to figure out what the Spirit was leading them to do. So Paul came to Jerusalem to share with the church leaders what had been revealed to him and settle down rumors that he was teaching a false doctrine.

Why did Paul try to handle the issue in private? How did he handle the church power brokers who tried to sway the vote? What was their ulterior motive?

What was the result of their meeting?

When you have questions about your faith and your church, do you try to handle it with the right people in private like Paul did?

Have you ever been upset because you felt other Christians weren't living at the same level of Christianity as you?

How can you be an encourager, not judgmental, of other believers who may hold different opinions than you?

Jan. 13

Galatians 2:6-10 (MSG) As for those who were considered important in the church, their reputation doesn't concern me. God isn't impressed with mere appearances, and neither am I. And of course these leaders were able to add nothing to the message I had been preaching. It was soon evident that God had entrusted me with the same message to the non-Jews as Peter had been preaching to the Jews. Recognizing that my calling had been given by God, James, Peter, and John—the pillars of the church—shook hands with me and Barnabas, assigning us to a ministry to the non-Jews, while they continued to be responsible for reaching out to the Jews. The only additional thing they asked was that we remember the poor, and I was already eager to do that.

Paul says that God isn't impressed by what? What do you think he meant by that? What do you think God is pleased with in people? What qualities should impress us about people and what shouldn't?

What two things did the apostles recognize about Paul that caused them to confirm him in his ministry?

What ministry assignment did God give to Paul that was different than Peter, James, and John? What three things should always be true about a ministry no matter where they are ministering or who they are trying to reach?

God has given all of us a calling and a purpose. He's placed us all in a position to reach who need to hear the gospel. The home you live in, the place you work and the friends you have are all opportunities you have to share God's love. Ask God to empower you to take advantage of every opportunity this week to share the message of hope with someone in your circle of influence.

Jan. 14

Galatians 2:11-13 (MSG) *Later, when Peter came to Antioch, I had a face-to-face confrontation with him because he was clearly out of line. Here's the situation. Earlier, before certain persons had come from James, Peter regularly ate with the non-Jews. But when that conservative group came from Jerusalem, he cautiously pulled back and put as much distance as he could manage between himself and his non-Jewish friends. That's how fearful he was of the conservative Jewish clique that's been pushing the old system of circumcision. Unfortunately, the rest of the Jews in the Antioch church joined in that hypocrisy so that even Barnabas was swept along in the charade.*

What did Paul confront Peter about face-to-face?

Why did Peter do what he did?

Is there anyone you want to impress so bad that you are willing to change the way you talk or act, even if it's not the way God wants you to act?

How big of an impact did Peter's actions have on other believers?

Why do you think the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write about his face-to-face confrontation with Peter in a letter to the whole church?

Paul calls this whole thing that Peter and the others did toward the non-Jew believers a charade filled with hypocrisy. What do you think he meant by that?

Do you ever get caught up in acting a way that is 'fake?' Who are you trying to impress? Why? What does that reveal to you about your character? Do you need to repent?

Jan. 15

Galatians 2:14-16 (MSG) *But when I saw that they were not maintaining a steady, straight course according to the Message, I spoke up to Peter in front of them all: "If you, a Jew, live like a non-Jew when you're not being observed by the watchdogs from Jerusalem, what right do you have to require non-Jews to conform to Jewish customs just to make a favorable impression on your old Jerusalem cronies?" We Jews know that we have no advantage of birth over "non-Jewish sinners." We know very well that we are not set right with God by rule-keeping but only through personal faith in Jesus Christ. How do we know? We tried it—and we had the best system of rules the world has ever seen! Convinced that no human being can please God by self-improvement, we believed in Jesus as the Messiah so that we might be set right before God by trusting in the Messiah, not by trying to be good.*

What sets us right with God? What doesn't?

We can't please God in our own goodness. We must trust in Jesus Christ as our savior. People don't have to do certain things before they come to salvation. He isn't impressed with our self-righteous acts.

What two things concerning Jesus as Messiah does Paul say we must do to please God? What do these words mean in relationship to Jesus?

This can be confusing sometimes. Are we to do good works or not? **What is Paul saying here about good works?** Compare his words here to what he says to the Ephesian church in Ephesians 2:8-10.

Jan. 16

Galatians 2:17-21 (MSG) *Have some of you noticed that we are not yet perfect? (No great surprise, right?) And are you ready to make the accusation that since people like me, who go through Christ in order to get things right with God, aren't perfectly virtuous, Christ must therefore be an accessory to sin? The accusation is frivolous. If I was "trying to be good," I would be rebuilding the same old barn that I tore down. I would be acting as a charlatan. What actually took place is this: I tried keeping rules and working my head off to please God, and it didn't work. So I quit being a "law man" so that I could be God's man. Christ's life showed me how, and enabled me to do it. I identified myself completely with him. Indeed, I have been crucified with Christ. My ego is no longer central. It is no longer important that I appear righteous before you or have your good opinion, and I am no longer driven to impress God. Christ lives in me. The life you see me living is not "mine," but it is lived by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I am not going to go back on that. Is it not clear to you that to go back to that old rule-keeping, peer-pleasing religion would be an abandonment of everything personal and free in my relationship with God? I refuse to do that, to repudiate God's grace. If a living relationship with God could come by rule-keeping, then Christ died unnecessarily.*

If you can get to God in your own righteousness and rule-keeping then who gets the glory for that? You or God?

What two things does Paul say he did to try to please God in his own abilities before finding Christ but didn't work?

Who showed Paul how to live and enabled him to do it?

His identity used to be in how good he was and how hard he worked and now what is it in?

What did he do with his flesh?

What isn't central to him anymore? What three things does he no longer do because Christ is central?

His life is not his own it belongs to Jesus and now he has freedom to live without fear and trying to promote himself because he trusts in Jesus who loves him and gave himself for him. **Do you have this kind of freedom in Christ?**

Jan. 17

Galatians 3:1-4 (MSG) *You crazy Galatians! Did someone put a hex on you? Have you taken*

leave of your senses? Something crazy has happened, for it's obvious that you no longer have the crucified Jesus in clear focus in your lives. His sacrifice on the cross was certainly set before you clearly enough. Let me put this question to you: How did your new life begin? Was it by working your heads off to please God? Or was it by responding to God's Message to you? Are you going to continue this craziness? For only crazy people would think they could complete by their own efforts what was begun by God. If you weren't smart enough or strong enough to begin it, how do you suppose you could perfect it? Did you go through this whole painful learning process for nothing? It is not yet a total loss, but it certainly will be if you keep this up!

Why does Paul call the Galatians crazy? What have they lost sight of?

How did your Christian life begin: by your strength and wisdom or by receiving God's incredible grace?

Then tell me how you think you're going to grow in God by your own strength and willpower?

So what's the answer? How does spiritual growth take place? Then isn't it crazy to think I could have great spiritual results in my life by human will alone?

We must spend time with God...his grace is what we need to grow and change. No other way.

Jan. 18

Galatians 3:5, 6 (MSG) Answer this question: Does the God who lavishly provides you with his own presence, his Holy Spirit, working things in your lives you could never do for yourselves, does he do these things because of your strenuous moral striving or because you trust him to do them in you? Don't these things happen among you just as they happened with Abraham? He believed God, and that act of belief was turned into a life that was right with God.

The Holy Spirit is at work in your life to do things in you that you could not do for yourself. **How does this happen?**

What does it mean to trust God to do His work in you instead of striving for it?

What areas of your life are you struggling to trust God? Is there a sin habit you can't overcome? Quit striving and worrying and give it to God. Spend time with him and allow his Spirit work things in you that you'd never be able to do for yourself.

Jan. 19

Galatians 3:7-10 (MSG) Is it not obvious to you that persons who put their trust in Christ (not persons who put their trust in the law!) are like Abraham: children of faith? It was all laid out beforehand in Scripture that God would set things right with non-Jews by faith. Scripture anticipated this in the promise to Abraham: "All nations will be blessed in you." So those now who live by faith are blessed along with Abraham, who lived by faith—this is no new doctrine! And that means that anyone who tries to live by his own effort, independent of God, is doomed to failure. Scripture backs this up: "Utterly cursed is every person who fails to carry out every detail written in the Book of the law."

According to Paul, who are blessed along with Abraham?

What's the result of living by your own effort, independent of God?

Be careful that you don't try to live for God with an attitude that is independent of God. You are doomed to fail if your goal is to be perfect in all you do. But you will be blessed if your goal is to follow close to Jesus and submit to his every desire. The first goal is all about you. The second is all about Christ. Your righteous 'perfection' only comes when you are seeking after him not perfection itself.

Jan. 20

Galatians 3:11, 12 (MSG) *The obvious impossibility of carrying out such a moral program should make it plain that no one can sustain a relationship with God that way. The person who lives in right relationship with God does it by embracing what God arranges for him. Doing things for God is the opposite of entering into what God does for you. Habakkuk had it right: "The person who believes God, is set right by God—and that's the real life." Rule-keeping does not naturally evolve into living by faith, but only perpetuates itself in more and more rule-keeping, a fact observed in Scripture: "The one who does these things [rule-keeping] continues to live by them."*

Doing things for God is opposite of what?

According to Habakkuk what is the real life?

Rule-keeping is trying to live the Christian life in your own striving and determination. It doesn't work. The only way to experience real life in Christ is by submitting your will to Him and spending time with him on a regular basis. In other words, quit trying to live FOR God without God.

Jan. 21

Galatians 3:13, 14 (MSG) *Christ redeemed us from that self-defeating, cursed life by absorbing it completely into himself. Do you remember the Scripture that says, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree"? That is what happened when Jesus was nailed to the cross: He became a curse, and at the same time dissolved the curse. And now, because of that, the air is cleared and we can see that Abraham's blessing is present and available for non-Jews, too. We are all able to receive God's life, his Spirit, in and with us by believing—just the way Abraham received it.*

Why does Paul describe the life without Christ as self defeating and cursed?

What two things happened when Jesus was nailed on the cross?

Christ's death and resurrection has cleared the air and made a way for everyone to be free of the curse. Now you are able to receive God's life by doing what?

What two places does Paul remind us that the Spirit is in relationship with believers?

Rejoice today that you are free from the self-defeated, cursed life and that the Spirit of God is in and with you. You are alive in Him.

Jan. 22

Galatians 3:15-20 (MSG) *Friends, let me give you an example from everyday affairs of the free life I am talking about. Once a person's will has been ratified, no one else can annul it or add to it. Now, the promises were made to Abraham and to his descendant. You will observe that Scripture, in the careful language of a legal document, does not say "to descendants," referring to everybody in general, but "to your descendant" (the noun, note, is singular), referring to Christ. This is the way I interpret this: A will, earlier ratified by God, is not annulled by an addendum attached 430 years later, thereby negating the promise of the will. No, this addendum, with its instructions and regulations, has nothing to do with the promised inheritance in the will. What is the point, then, of the law, the attached addendum? It was a thoughtful addition to the original covenant promises made to Abraham. The purpose of the law was to keep a sinful people in the way of salvation until Christ (the descendant) came, inheriting the promises and distributing them to us. Obviously this law was not a firsthand encounter with God. It was arranged by angelic messengers through a middleman, Moses. But if there is a middleman as there was at Sinai, then the people are not dealing directly with God, are they? But the original promise is the direct blessing of God, received by faith.*

What was the point of the law?

Do we need a middleman to go to God?

Turn to God today and receive the blessing of direct relationship with him through Christ. How awesome is the promise of God that we can talk with him and be connected to him directly. We are his children who he loves and with whom he wants to have close relationship.

Jan. 23

Galatians 3:21, 22 (MSG) *If such is the case, is the law, then, an anti-promise, a negation of God's will for us? Not at all. Its purpose was to make obvious to everyone that we are, in ourselves, out of right relationship with God, and therefore to show us the futility of devising some religious system for getting by our own efforts what we can only get by waiting in faith for God to complete his promise. For if any kind of rule-keeping had power to create life in us, we would certainly have gotten it by this time.*

What was the purpose of the law?

What does the law show us?

Can we create life inside of us by living according to some code or moral standard?

So being a good person doesn't bring about the abundant life God wants us to have?

Trying to be 'good' without God is exhausting and frustrating work because it is impossible to do so with perfection. So our good living doesn't bring about the good life we thought it would bring...the good life comes from a personal relationship with Jesus Christ...living in

submission to His will and knowing that he is with you and for you. That will bring you peace that surpasses understanding and joy unspeakable and full of glory.

God wants you to live 'good' lives cause sin will injure you and bring about painful consequences, but being good doesn't create life in you...only a relationship with Jesus, who is Life himself, can do that.

Jan. 24

Galatians 3:23-27 (MSG) Until the time when we were mature enough to respond freely in faith to the living God, we were carefully surrounded and protected by the Mosaic law. The law was like those Greek tutors, with which you are familiar, who escort children to school and protect them from danger or distraction, making sure the children will really get to the place they set out for. But now you have arrived at your destination: By faith in Christ you are in direct relationship with God. Your baptism in Christ was not just washing you up for a fresh start. It also involved dressing you in an adult faith wardrobe—Christ's life, the fulfillment of God's original promise.

What does Paul compare the law to?

What were the Greek tutors assigned to do? How does that compare to how the law protects us from danger and distraction before salvation through faith?

Your salvation, or baptism in Christ, was done for what two reasons?

Check out Genesis 1:27 and see that God's original purpose was for us to live in His image, dressed in an adult faith wardrobe. Sin stripped us naked of Gods original glory on our lives...and now we have been given the opportunity to be covered in Him.

God spoke: "Let us make human beings in our image, make them reflecting our nature So they can be responsible for the fish in the sea, the birds in the air, the cattle, And, yes, Earth itself, and every animal that moves on the face of Earth." God created human beings; he created them godlike, Reflecting God's nature. He created them male and female. God blessed them: "Prosper! Reproduce! Fill Earth! Take charge." - Genesis 1:26-27 (MSG)

Jan. 25

Galatians 3:28, 29 (MSG) In Christ's family there can be no division into Jew and non-Jew, slave and free, male and female. Among us you are all equal. That is, we are all in a common relationship with Jesus Christ. Also, since you are Christ's family, then you are Abraham's famous "descendant," heirs according to the covenant promises.

Are there second class citizens in Christ's family?

There are no second-class citizens in Christ's family. We all have direct relationship with Jesus Christ. It says we are heirs according to the covenant promise found in Genesis 12:

I'll make you a great nation and bless you. I'll make you famous; you'll be a blessing. I'll bless those who bless you; those who curse you I'll curse. All the families of the Earth will be blessed through you." - Genesis 12:2, 3 (MSG)

The whole earth has been blessed through the covenant promise that God made with Abraham. God promised He would send his son Jesus, Abraham's descendent, to save all mankind and the whole earth, not just Jews would benefit from this gift of salvation.

Jan. 26

Galatians 4:1-7 (MSG) *Let me show you the implications of this. As long as the heir is a minor, he has no advantage over the slave. Though legally he owns the entire inheritance, he is subject to tutors and administrators until whatever date the father has set for emancipation. That is the way it is with us: When we were minors, we were just like slaves ordered around by simple instructions (the tutors and administrators of this world), with no say in the conduct of our own lives. But when the time arrived that was set by God the Father, God sent his Son, born among us of a woman, born under the conditions of the law so that he might redeem those of us who have been kidnapped by the law. Thus we have been set free to experience our rightful heritage. You can tell for sure that you are now fully adopted as his own children because God sent the Spirit of his Son into our lives crying out, "Papa! Father!" Doesn't that privilege of intimate conversation with God make it plain that you are not a slave, but a child? And if you are a child, you're also an heir, with complete access to the inheritance.*

You can know that you are fully adopted as God's own children because why?

How awesome is it that we can call God "daddy"? Stop right now and love your heavenly, perfect Dad. Talk to him like you are having an intimate conversation.

What part of your spiritual inheritance do you need to lay claim to in Christ?

- Your freedom in him
- Forgiveness
- Wisdom
- Strength
- Peace
- Joy
- Direction

Just tell your loving father what you need.

Jan. 27

Galatians 4:8-11 (MSG) *Earlier, before you knew God personally, you were enslaved to so-called gods that had nothing of the divine about them. But now that you know the real God—or rather since God knows you—how can you possibly subject yourselves again to those paper tigers? For that is exactly what you do when you are intimidated into scrupulously observing all the traditions, taboos, and superstitions associated with special days and seasons and years. I am afraid that all my hard work among you has gone up in a puff of smoke!*

Now that we know the one and only God of the universe as 'dad,' how can we continue to enslave ourselves to the idols of this world that have no power at all? To what idols

of this world do you have a tendency to subject yourself? Entertainment, popularity, money, fame, another person, etc. (Anything you put before God is an idol.)

By what do you think the Galatian believers were intimidated that made them participate in idol worship again?

Are you acting in any way that is not in alignment with the will and heart of God for you? Are you afraid of what people think of you if you don't do what they do or act a certain way? Does anyone or anything have influence on your life that rivals your devotion to God?

Like the Psalmist, ask God to search your heart and show you if any of these 'paper tigers' have a hold on you.

Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting! - Psalm 139:23, 24 (ESV)

Jan. 28

Galatians 4:12, 13 (MSG) *My dear friends, what I would really like you to do is try to put yourselves in my shoes to the same extent that I, when I was with you, put myself in yours. You were very sensitive and kind then. You did not come down on me personally. You were well aware that the reason I ended up preaching to you was that I was physically broken, and so, prevented from continuing my journey, I was forced to stop with you. That is how I came to preach to you.*

How did Paul end up preaching to the Galatians?

Was Galatia in his original plan? Was it in God's plan?

What are you going through right now that seems to be a problem, failure or hindrance that might be something God is using to shape you or guide you to where he wants you?

Are you actively submitting and seeking His will in this season or are you still focused on God helping you accomplish your plans?

Jan. 29

Galatians 4:14-16 (MSG) *And don't you remember that even though taking in a sick guest was most troublesome for you, you chose to treat me as well as you would have treated an angel of God—as well as you would have treated Jesus himself if he had visited you? What has happened to the satisfaction you felt at that time? There were some of you then who, if possible, would have given your very eyes to me—that is how deeply you cared! And now have I suddenly become your enemy simply by telling you the truth? I can't believe it.*

How did the Galatians treat Paul when he came to them sick?

How would you treat Jesus if he came to your house?

Why did they change the way they were treating Paul?

Why would they think of Paul as their enemy?

Has God ever spoken truth to you that you didn't like?

Is God your enemy because he says things to you that you don't like or don't want to do? Who's right, you or God?

What truths are God speaking to you about your life that you don't like right now?

In what ways have you treated God as an enemy when he speaks truth to you that you don't like?

We all have a choice to make in life...to seek out our own way or submit to God's way. We get to choose to receive or reject truth. A lot of it comes down to our perspective about God. Do we serve God as long as he gives us what we want? Is he the guest in our home or the God of our home? Is he the ultimate "sugar daddy" we can go to whenever we need something? Who's in charge, you or God? Who's version of truth is really true- yours or God's? Of course we know the answer. God not only speaks the truth...he IS truth. And we must submit to whatever he says, knowing that anything we do or think that is contrary to God's word and will is destructive to our best interest. When God speaks truth to us that makes us uncomfortable it doesn't make him mean or unkind. He always speaks to us for our good. It is not in our best interest to reject truth or God when his will gets in the way of ours. He isn't our enemy or the blocker of our dreams. He is our loving Heavenly Father who knows what's best for us and is leading us toward our eternal reward. What will you do with truth today?

Jan. 30

Galatians 4:17 (MSG) Those heretical teachers go to great lengths to flatter you, but their motives are rotten. They want to shut you out of the free world of God's grace so that you will always depend on them for approval and direction, making them feel important.

What do the heretical teachers go to great lengths to do?

How does Paul describe their motives?

What are they wanting to do in relationship to the Galatian believers?

These controlling false teachers want the Galatians to be dependent on them for approval and direction. It makes them feel important. They wrongfully want to take the place of God in the people's lives.

We should always seek approval and direction from God...not from people. God can speak through people, but that doesn't mean we should be dependent on them to hear from God for us. This is something I've dealt with in my life. I have had some great counselors who have helped me tremendously, but if I talk to them about my issues more than I talk to God about my issues, I'm putting them in a place only God should have. Your self-worth, emotional health and direction should never be put in the hands of others. It can only come from God alone.

Have you placed your emotional health in the hands of others?

There is great freedom in God's grace for you. He has everything you need. Open up your heart to him. Tell him everything in your heart and ask Him for his direction and approval. That way your confidence won't be in others but in Him.

Jan. 31

Galatians 4:18-20 (MSG) *It is a good thing to be ardent in doing good, but not just when I am in your presence. Can't you continue the same concern for both my person and my message when I am away from you that you had when I was with you? Do you know how I feel right now, and will feel until Christ's life becomes visible in your lives? Like a mother in the pain of childbirth. Oh, I keep wishing that I was with you. Then I wouldn't be reduced to this blunt, letter-writing language out of sheer frustration.*

When were the Galatians faithful to do good and when were they not?

What kind of character do you have when no one is around to see your decisions?

How does Paul compare the way he feels about his desire to see the Galatians grow in their Christian life?

When you are praying for people to grow in the way they live for Jesus it isn't always easy. Sometimes it can even be painful, like a mom who is doing all she can to birth a child. There's a lot of hope and desire but it's mixed with pain. **Who are you laboring for?**

Feb. 1

Galatians 4:21-31 (MSG) *Tell me now, you who have become so enamored with the law: Have you paid close attention to that law? Abraham, remember, had two sons: one by the slave woman and one by the free woman. The son of the slave woman was born by human connivance; the son of the free woman was born by God's promise. This illustrates the very thing we are dealing with now. The two births represent two ways of being in relationship with God. One is from Mount Sinai in Arabia. It corresponds with what is now going on in Jerusalem—a slave life, producing slaves as offspring. This is the way of Hagar. In contrast to that, there is an invisible Jerusalem, a free Jerusalem, and she is our mother—this is the way of Sarah. Remember what Isaiah wrote: Rejoice, barren woman who bears no children, shout and cry out, woman who has no birth pangs, Because the children of the barren woman now surpass the children of the chosen woman. Isn't it clear, friends, that you, like Isaac, are children of promise? In the days of Hagar and Sarah, the child who came from faithless connivance (Ishmael) harassed the child who came—empowered by the Spirit—from the faithful promise (Isaac). Isn't it clear that the harassment you are now experiencing from the Jerusalem heretics follows that old pattern? There is a Scripture that tells us what to do: "Expel the slave mother with her son, for the slave son will not inherit with the free son." Isn't that conclusive? We are not children of the slave woman, but of the free woman.*

Paul is very clever and wise with this illustration. He says if you are so enamored by the law, why don't you learn from it. Abraham had two sons and they represent two ways of having

relationship with God. Ishmael is the son of the slave and Isaac is the son of Sarah.

How was the slave child conceived differently than the son of the free woman?

Those who live by faith in Jesus receiving his grace for salvation and life are children of promise. The ones who try to earn their place in God and look down on others who aren't like them are children of the slave. The slave offspring harass the children of freedom. Paul says that the Jerusalem heretics are children of the slave harassing them because of their freedom. He says that the Galatians should expel those heretics just like Hagar and Ishmael.

What things are in your life that you know is attacking your relationship with God? Isn't it time to expel it out of your life?

Feb. 2

Galatians 5:1-3 (MSG) Christ has set us free to live a free life. So take your stand! Never again let anyone put a harness of slavery on you. I am emphatic about this. The moment any one of you submits to circumcision or any other rule-keeping system, at that same moment Christ's hard-won gift of freedom is squandered. I repeat my warning: The person who accepts the ways of circumcision trades all the advantages of the free life in Christ for the obligations of the slave life of the law.

Why did Christ set you free?

When is Christ's hard-won gift of freedom squandered?

Is it bad if you're circumcised? No, the point here isn't the physical cutting of skin. It's about the heretical men from Jerusalem that are telling the Galatian believers that they had to become Jews and obey Jewish law before they could accept salvation in Christ. Paul says, if you do that then you are giving up the freedom that Christ came and died to give to you. The Jews are called by God to live according to the law. He has given them grace to do so. We as Gentiles are not bound by the Jewish law and are saved by grace through faith. That's not to say that Jews don't have to be saved the same way, it's just that as Jewish believers they would continue to observe the Jewish law out of joy. It isn't something non-Jews are commanded to do, so if the Galatian believers converted to Judaism they would be forfeiting the incredible freedom God had given them.

In what ways do you try to earn Gods love?

In what ways do you try to live for God without getting the strength and power you need from God to do it?

Is there anyone in your life trying to pull or influence you away from the things God has planned for you?

Christ died on the cross to set you free so you could live in his freedom, not so you would go back into bondage. Seek him today. Confess and repent of your sin. Don't focus on changing your sinful ways. Focus on spending time with the one who can give you the strength to change. He is the master of freedom.

Feb. 3

Galatians 5:4-6 (MSG) *I suspect you would never intend this, but this is what happens. When you attempt to live by your own religious plans and projects, you are cut off from Christ, you fall out of grace. Meanwhile we expectantly wait for a satisfying relationship with the Spirit. For in Christ, neither our most conscientious religion nor disregard of religion amounts to anything. What matters is something far more interior: faith expressed in love.*

When you attempt to live your own religious plans what two things happens?

Having religion or not having religion doesn't amount to anything. The only thing that matters is inside you. **What is it?**

Paul is saying that our motive for living in obedience to Christ has to be something more than the rule-keeping that makes us feel good about ourselves...even proud of ourselves...better than others. That kind of motive cuts you off from Christ and causes you to get as close as you can to breaking the rules while technically you keep them. This is a motive of fear. You don't want to get in trouble or incur the consequences of sin. But like Paul says in the passage, this kind of thinking doesn't bring about a satisfying relationship with the Spirit because you don't rely on him or spend time with him. You try to do what is 'right' for God without God. This won't work and isn't God's plan at all. What really matters is the motive inside of you. That you would have faith and live out your faith because you love Christ and your love for him motivates you to get as close as you can to him, which causes the sin in this world to not be as appealing. And this will result in a very satisfying relationship with Christ.

What is the focus (motive) of your life: to live 'right' or love Jesus?

This choice will make all the difference in how you live and how satisfying your relationship with Christ will be.

Feb. 4

Galatians 5:7-10 (MSG) *You were running superbly! Who cut in on you, deflecting you from the true course of obedience? This detour doesn't come from the One who called you into the race in the first place. And please don't toss this off as insignificant. It only takes a minute amount of yeast, you know, to permeate an entire loaf of bread. Deep down, the Master has given me confidence that you will not defect. But the one who is upsetting you, whoever he is, will bear the divine judgment.*

What two metaphors does Paul use to describe how the one who is bringing false teaching is affecting the Galatian believers?

What happens to a person who gets off course in a race?

What is Paul saying when he says it only takes a little yeast to permeate the whole loaf? He's saying that if you buy into the false teaching of these heretics from Jerusalem, even if it's in this one area of circumcision, it will eventually affect your whole relationship with God. It will cause you to think that your whole relationship with God is about doing things to earn God's love instead of recognizing he already loves you and wants you to live life in close

communion with you.

Is there any area of your life that God is dealing with you about? A detour in your thinking that is taking you away from true obedience? Is there even a little yeast you need to get rid of before it permeates your whole life? Please do not think it insignificant. Confess and repent, which means tell God you're wrong and turn away from the sin that is getting you off track.

Feb. 5

Galatians 5:11, 12 (MSG) *As for the rumor that I continue to preach the ways of circumcision (as I did in those pre-Damascus Road days), that is absurd. Why would I still be persecuted, then? If I were preaching that old message, no one would be offended if I mentioned the Cross now and then—it would be so watered-down it wouldn't matter one way or the other. Why don't these agitators, obsessive as they are about circumcision, go all the way and castrate themselves!*

What was the rumor about Paul? Was it true?

Paul says these agitators are mad because God has made a way for non-Jews to come to Christ without having to become a Jewish convert. That's the message of the cross...salvation that has been paid in full by the substitute sacrifice of Christ. Jesus died in your place taking your punishment. You are saved by grace through faith, not by obeying the Jewish laws.

How thankful are you today that Jesus died on the cross for you? He wants to have a personal relationship with us. Who are we that he would even care? Or are you still caught up with your dreams and pursuits in life that it waters down the power of the love expressed by the work of the cross.

Stop and soak in the massive overwhelming love of Christ for you. That's how you live in the freedom God wants you to live in...not thinking every day of all the things you can or can't do, but by having your full undivided attention on the one you love and want to please more than anything. That's when you live in true freedom.

Feb. 6

Galatians 5:13-15 (MSG) *It is absolutely clear that God has called you to a free life. Just make sure that you don't use this freedom as an excuse to do whatever you want to do and destroy your freedom. Rather, use your freedom to serve one another in love; that's how freedom grows. For everything we know about God's Word is summed up in a single sentence: Love others as you love yourself. That's an act of true freedom. If you bite and ravage each other, watch out—in no time at all you will be annihilating each other, and where will your precious freedom be then?*

What has God clearly called you to?

What warning does Paul give concerning using your freedom as an excuse?

How does freedom grow?

What does true freedom in action look like according to a summary of the whole Bible?

If we tear each other down what will eventually happen?

Paul says that we have freedom in Christ, but we aren't to use that freedom to please ourselves. We are to be grateful for the freedom we have... that came at the price of Christ's life on the cross...which he gave for us freely. In the same way God calls us to give up our lives to love and serve each other out of our free will.

Does your freedom make you more selfish or selfless? Examine your heart. If you think freedom means 'I can do whatever I want' then you haven't discovered the freedom Christ has called you to. His freedom causes you to be so overwhelmingly grateful that you say, 'I can do anything HE wants...cause that's all I want.'

Feb. 7

Galatians 5:16-18 (MSG) *My counsel is this: Live freely, animated and motivated by God's Spirit. Then you won't feed the compulsions of selfishness. For there is a root of sinful self-interest in us that is at odds with a free spirit, just as the free spirit is incompatible with selfishness. These two ways of life are antithetical, so that you cannot live at times one way and at times another way according to how you feel on any given day. Why don't you choose to be led by the Spirit and so escape the erratic compulsions of a law-dominated existence?*

What is Paul's counsel to all believers?

If we are motivated by the Spirit of God then we won't feed what?

What is it inside of us that is at odds with the Spirit of freedom?

What word does Paul use to describe the root of selfishness in us?

We have a selfishness in us that causes us to live erratic lives according to how we are feeling. We are slaves to how we feel. If we are feeling good then we act one way and if we aren't feeling good we act another. This is no way to live. Christ offers us a freedom that brings our lives into a more stable and confident living. When we root ourselves in him we will have his grace flowing all through our lives causing us to have the strength and faith to face any and all things. Every time you 'feel' upset or out of control it is a reminder that you need to spend time with God. You need to cast your cares on him. This is the difference between pressing your way through life trying to prove yourself and knowing that the only strength that will consistently give you true freedom and life is in time with Christ.

When will you realize that all you are wanting deep in your soul, that longing for peace, joy, and security, is only found in Him? Spend time with God not because you are supposed to, but because you realize that is where your freedom comes from.

Feb. 8

Galatians 5:19-21 (MSG) *It is obvious what kind of life develops out of trying to get your own way all the time: repetitive, loveless, cheap sex; a stinking accumulation of mental and emotional garbage; frenzied and joyless grabs for happiness; trinket gods; magic-show religion; paranoid loneliness; cutthroat competition; all-consuming-yet-never-satisfied wants; a brutal temper; an impotence to love or be loved; divided homes and divided lives; small-minded and lopsided pursuits; the vicious habit of depersonalizing everyone into a rival; uncontrolled and uncontrollable addictions; ugly parodies of community. I could go on. This isn't the first time I have warned you, you know. If you use your freedom this way, you will not inherit God's kingdom.*

Paul makes a descriptive list of what life is like when you live according to your feelings...always trying to get your own way and not submitting to Gods way.

Have you observed the things in this list in you or in others who have lived according to their own ways?

Which of the things in the list is good?

Do you believe that Paul knows what he saying here under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit?

Then why does Paul have to keep warning the Galatians about this?

And why do we struggle with hearing this warning?

We don't want to have to submit our way to anyone. We want to do our own thing and go our own way, but our way leads to destruction every time. So, God is warning us again and again and again, "Don't go that way. Listen to me. Follow me. My way is the way of life."

What does Paul say is the end result of using your freedom this way?

Feb. 9

Galatians 5:22, 23 (MSG) *But what happens when we live God's way? He brings gifts into our lives, much the same way that fruit appears in an orchard—things like affection for others, exuberance about life, serenity. We develop a willingness to stick with things, a sense of compassion in the heart, and a conviction that a basic holiness permeates things and people. We find ourselves involved in loyal commitments, not needing to force our way in life, able to marshal and direct our energies wisely.*

What happens when you live Gods way?

Paul compares the gifts God gives us to what?

How is fruit produced?

This passage reminds us that when we live Gods way we are connected to His Spirit, which produces God-like fruit in us. The fruit or result of living in submission to God is a description

of what everyone really wants in life. When we say we want to be rich and successful, what we really want is the serenity and exuberance for life we think they will bring. Paul is reminding the Galatians that the things of this world will not bring them what they are hoping they will bring. What they are longing for in their hearts is only found in living in connection with the Spirit.

What do you want in life? Where are you going to get it? Are you sure you are looking in the right places to find what you are looking for?

The life described in these verses is only found in submitting your life to His rule and reign...nowhere else.

Feb. 10

Galatians 5:23, 24 (MSG) *Legalism is helpless in bringing this about; it only gets in the way. Among those who belong to Christ, everything connected with getting our own way and mindlessly responding to what everyone else calls necessities is killed off for good—crucified.*

Those who are in Christ have done what with the thoughts of getting their own way and mindlessly responding to what seems to be necessary according to everyone else in the world?

Feb. 11

Galatians 5:25, 26 (MSG) *Since this is the kind of life we have chosen, the life of the Spirit, let us make sure that we do not just hold it as an idea in our heads or a sentiment in our hearts, but work out its implications in every detail of our lives. That means we will not compare ourselves with each other as if one of us were better and another worse. We have far more interesting things to do with our lives. Each of us is an original.*

If we have chosen to live by the Spirit then we should do what?

If we seek to live out the Spirit empowered life then we shouldn't compare ourselves to how other people live...we should compare our lives to what God has called us to be in him. Stop comparing yourself to others...it will either puff you up or depress you...either way it is a false read on success. Successful living is the life lived out in step with the Spirit of God. Becoming the best you that God made you to be.

Feb. 12

Galatians 6:1-3 (MSG) *Live creatively, friends. If someone falls into sin, forgivingly restore him, saving your critical comments for yourself. You might be needing forgiveness before the day's out. Stoop down and reach out to those who are oppressed. Share their burdens, and so complete Christ's law. If you think you are too good for that, you are badly deceived.*

What two things are we to do for someone who falls into sin?

What three things are we to do with those who are oppressed and so complete Christ's law?

Read what Jesus said in John 13:34,35 to find out what Christ's law is?

Let me give you a new command: Love one another. In the same way I loved you, you love one another. This is how everyone will recognize that you are my disciples—when they see the love you have for each other. - John 13:34, 35 (MSG)

Paul is reminding the Galatians that the stakes are sky high. We are talking heaven and hell for eternity. Stop and pray for someone that God is putting on your heart who you know is far from God or struggling in sin, knowing that their eternity hangs in the balance. This is what it means to share their burden. In doing so you are loving them like Christ's loves them. If you have a chance reach out to them today, do it.

Feb. 13

Galatians 6:4, 5 (MSG) Make a careful exploration of who you are and the work you have been given, and then sink yourself into that. Don't be impressed with yourself. Don't compare yourself with others. Each of you must take responsibility for doing the creative best you can with your own life.

What two things are we to carefully explore and then sink ourselves into?

What two things did Paul tell us to not do in these verses?

What are we to take responsibility for?

Focus your attention on your own life and calling. Don't get distracted with comparing yourself to others. That is a waist of time. God doesn't judge you In accordance with how other people are living out their calling. He judges you according to how you are living out yours.

What are you doing with the gifts God has given you? Using them to serve yourself or him?

Ask God to speak to you concerning anything he wants to do in or through your life?

Here's a verse that's been troubling my heart that fits with this thought of answering to God:

Rescue those being led away to death; hold back those staggering toward slaughter. If you say, "But we knew nothing about this," does not he who weighs the heart perceive it? Does not he who guards your life know it? Will he not repay everyone according to what they have done? - Proverbs 24:11, 12 (NIV)

I don't want to live my life distracted by trying to look good or being better than others. I want to give my life to rescuing souls headed to hell. I don't want to make excuses or act like I didn't know people were headed to hell. I want to love people enough to share Jesus with them. That doesn't mean act weird or be rude. It means pray for people, be a friend to them, be ready to share Christ with them as the Spirit prompts you.

Who is God wanting you to pray for and reach out to?

Feb. 14

Galatians 6:6-8 (MSG) *Be very sure now, you who have been trained to a self-sufficient maturity, that you enter into a generous common life with those who have trained you, sharing all the good things that you have and experience. Don't be misled: No one makes a fool of God. What a person plants, he will harvest. The person who plants selfishness, ignoring the needs of others—ignoring God!—harvests a crop of weeds. All he'll have to show for his life is weeds! But the one who plants in response to God, letting God's Spirit do the growth work in him, harvests a crop of real life, eternal life.*

When you grow to maturity you are to be generous with what? To who especially?

What are we not to be misled about?

What will happen when you plant selfishness?

What will happen when you plant in response to God, letting the Spirit do the growth work in you?

What are you planting in your life and future?

What are you reaping?

You can't break this spiritual law. If you sow to the flesh you will reap destruction...so don't be surprised when your world starts crashing in on you. Don't say, "I don't understand why all this is happening to me, it isn't fair". You are reaping what you've sown.

If you sow to the spirit you will reap a harvest of peace. The spirit of God will work with you to help you grow through everything you face. No pain or difficulty will be wasted. God will turn everything around for your good when you love him and live according to his will.

Feb. 15

Galatians 6:6, 10 (MSG) *So let's not allow ourselves to get fatigued doing good. At the right time we will harvest a good crop if we don't give up, or quit. Right now, therefore, every time we get the chance, let us work for the benefit of all, starting with the people closest to us in the community of faith.*

What are we not to allow ourselves to do?

What will happen at the right time if we don't give up?

When should we work for the benefit of all not just ourselves?

Where should we start with this serving and loving?

Paul reminds us to not get tired in doing what is good. We can get discouraged sometimes cause people don't respond like we want them to. So he says, don't quit loving them...if you will be faithful it will pay off. Just keep your heart loving like Jesus loves. Jesus always did what he did in obedience to the father and for the benefit of others. He never sought his own way.

Look for an opportunity today to do something for someone that shows God's love to them. If you don't know where to start, start with your family, church, and people you know. Do this in response to God's amazing love for you.

Feb. 16

Galatians 6:11-13 (MSG) *Now, in these last sentences, I want to emphasize in the bold scrawls of my personal handwriting the immense importance of what I have written to you. These people who are attempting to force the ways of circumcision on you have only one motive: They want an easy way to look good before others, lacking the courage to live by a faith that shares Christ's suffering and death. All their talk about the law is gas. They themselves don't keep the law! And they are highly selective in the laws they do observe. They only want you to be circumcised so they can boast of their success in recruiting you to their side. That is contemptible!*

The people attempting to sway the Galatians, forcing the way of circumcision on them have what motive?

What does Paul's kind of faith include?

What part of the law do these false teachers keep?

What about you? To what kind of faith do you ascribe? Does your faith include suffering and dying to your will or is it all about living for God the way you want to live for him?

If you are highly selective about which of God's commands you keep, then you don't understand his lordship. If he is Lord of your life then the whole of your life is in full submission to his will. You don't think of yourself as a good servant because you obey him the way you want. If he's lord you obey him the way he wants you to.

Surrender to his lordship again today. He is God and we are his servants...we serve at his pleasure.

Feb. 17

Galatians 6:14-16 (MSG) *For my part, I am going to boast about nothing but the Cross of our Master, Jesus Christ. Because of that Cross, I have been crucified in relation to the world, set free from the stifling atmosphere of pleasing others and fitting into the little patterns that they dictate. Can't you see the central issue in all this? It is not what you and I do—submit to circumcision, reject circumcision. It is what God is doing, and he is creating something totally*

new, a free life! All who walk by this standard are the true Israel of God—his chosen people. Peace and mercy on them!

What is Paul going to boast in?

Paul says he's been crucified in relation to the world. What two ways has that set him free?

What does he say is not the central issue in all of Christian life? What is the central issue?

The central issue of all Christian living is following after Jesus...submitting to his rule and reign in our lives. He will lead us in all spiritual growth and development. He not only will lead us in what we should and should not do, he will give us the peace and grace to do it. This is the free life of those who are truly his...we lovingly submit and surrender our lives to the pursuit of pleasing him and in doing so he changes us day by day by the power of the cross. It's not about circumcision of the body, it's about the circumcision of the heart. We must cut away anything that is not submitted to his will. That is the new life God wants to create in all of us.

Check your heart. **Is there anything you need to get rid of or surrender to God?**

Feb. 18

Galatians 6:17, 18 (MSG) Quite frankly, I don't want to be bothered anymore by these disputes. I have far more important things to do—the serious living of this faith. I bear in my body scars from my service to Jesus. May what our Master Jesus Christ gives freely be deeply and personally yours, my friends. Oh, yes!

Paul has answered clearly the disputes of the agitators from Jerusalem who say you have to become a converted Jew before you can receive Christ. **After making his case he says what frankly?**

What was the more important thing he said he must do?

The living of his faith was so serious to Paul that he had the scars to prove it....scars he received because he wouldn't stop preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. Then he goes on to challenge us, saying our relationship with Jesus should be that personal and deep. We should be willing to suffer for Christ if need be...we shouldn't serve him as long as it's convenient and comfortable. We should be seriously focused in serving Jesus as our Master no matter the cost, not allowing anything or anyone to distract us from our focus. This is the freedom that we have in serving Jesus...all we care about is serving and honoring Him...AMEN!

How serious are you about following Jesus? How deep and personal is your relationship with him? Does your love for Him equal his commitment and sacrifice for you?