

Riverview Baptist Church
Sunday School Teaching Plan
December 6, 2015
Galatians 4:12-31
“Shaped for Christ in Freedom”

Memory Verse:

The Big Idea:

Sermon Scripture: The sermon will be the 11th in a series of expository sermons on Galatians.

Sunday School Scripture: Galatians 4:12-31

ESS: God will form his free children in to the image of Jesus! He does this as we live in spiritual freedom and accept the truthful ministry.

Preparation:

Read through this passage at least twice, slowly. Read from two different Bible translations.

¹²I plead with you, brothers and sisters, become like me, for I became like you. You did me no wrong. ¹³As you know, it was because of an illness that I first preached the gospel to you, ¹⁴and even though my illness was a trial to you, you did not treat me with contempt or scorn. Instead, you welcomed me as if I were an angel of God, as if I were Christ Jesus himself. ¹⁵Where, then, is your blessing of me now? I can testify that, if you could have done so, you would have torn out your eyes and given them to me. ¹⁶Have I now become your enemy by telling you the truth?

¹⁷Those people are zealous to win you over, but for no good. What they want is to alienate you from us, so that you may have zeal for them. ¹⁸It is fine to be zealous, provided the purpose is good, and to be so always, not just when I am with you. ¹⁹My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you, ²⁰how I wish I could be with you now and change my tone, because I am perplexed about you!

²¹Tell me, you who want to be under the law, are you not aware of what the law says? ²²For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and the other by the free woman. ²³His son by the slave woman was born according to the flesh, but his son by the free woman was born as the result of a divine promise.

²⁴These things are being taken figuratively: The women represent two covenants. One covenant is from Mount Sinai and bears children who are to be slaves: This is Hagar. ²⁵Now Hagar stands for Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present city of Jerusalem, because she is in slavery with her children. ²⁶But the Jerusalem that is above is free, and she is our mother. ²⁷For it is written:

“Be glad, barren woman, you who never bore a child; shout for joy and cry aloud, you who were never in labor; because more are the children of the desolate woman than of her who has a husband.”

²⁸ Now you, brothers and sisters, like Isaac, are children of promise. ²⁹ At that time the son born according to the flesh persecuted the son born by the power of the Spirit. It is the same now. ³⁰ But what does Scripture say? “Get rid of the slave woman and her son, for the slave woman’s son will never share in the inheritance with the free woman’s son.” ³¹ Therefore, brothers and sisters, we are not children of the slave woman, but of the free woman.

Presentation:

There are two main sections within our text today. They are Verses 11-21, and Verses 22-31.

In verses 11-21 Paul again uses his personal relationship with the Galatians as the basis for turning them away from error and back to the gospel of salvation by faith in Jesus. In verses 22-31 Paul develops an additional metaphor for understanding the new relationship of the children of God. He uses the two mothers of Abraham’s sons as a word picture to describe the fact that children of God by faith in Jesus are the heirs of freedom and not slavery. This same thought had been introduced in the first part of chapter 4.

Section One, verses 11-21, A Labor of Love

In this section Paul lays out his personal pain and agony over the problems within the Galatian Christians. The primary picture of this section is that of a woman in labor in verse 19. Paul uses this image to describe the pain, and work of his own ministry to the Galatians. Considered one way, the primary pain of childbirth ends with the birth of the child. But parents experience that in many other real ways, the agony and work of parenthood isn’t at all complete at that point it really is just beginning. “Until Christ is formed in you” is the duration of the agony of the Christian ministry. Just as a parent isn’t satisfied with the development of their children at any point in time short of maturity and responsibility, so one Christian who births another Christian should truly be concerned with their spiritual development.

Paul uses himself as an example! Become like me because I became like you! Verse 12

Why are we uncomfortable asking people to match our own commitment to God and to one another as a tool in helping others in discipleship?

It may be due to our own lack of commitment to God, or our lack of concern for the other person (we know we haven’t sacrificed anything for them), or perhaps we think it would be receive as arrogant.

Let Paul’s experience help you! Paul wasn’t warmly received at all times either. But he was able to meet there resistance to his message through the spiritual confidence that the objections we just listed were not true of him. He knew that he wasn’t boasting in himself. HE preached the power of Jesus, not of Paul! He also knew that those he disciple could not honestly question his commitment to them. In verses 13-15 we learn that Paul had experienced great love and compassion from the Galatians at some previous time. He had been forced to stay there it seems due to an illness. They had received him and his ministry in spite of the uncomfortable nature of Paul’s condition during this sickness. Paul’s ministry among them had not been with wise words, and persuasive demonstrations of his personality. He had ministered among them as a sick man. They were sure of his motive and his sacrifice for them. He was confident in their love for him as well.

What are ways that someone has demonstrated their love for you in Christian ministry? Does this make it easier or harder to listen to them regarding spiritual things? What can this passage of Scripture teach us about the importance of ministry within a Sunday School class?

Even though we have a great relationship with people due to their previous ministry to us, it is always hard to hear an inconvenient truth about ourselves!

How should we respond when someone shares something with us that challenges a conviction we hold or an action we are living out?

Hopefully we will take our time to respond. First, consider the fact that the person does indeed love you. Second, remind yourself that God works through others to help us grow and be reminded of errors of thought and behavior. Third, examine the actual statement to see if it is true: What does the Bible say about it? How am I behaving or believing in light of the Bible?

It is important to note that we are not guilty or wrong thinking just because someone says we are. But we are also not innocent just because we have been comfortable in our thoughts and behaviors up until that moment. So, we must examine the issue according to God's word not just man's opinion. However, we are wise to not dismiss godly and loving Christian brothers and sisters when they bring something to our attention!!!!

Do not make someone an enemy just because they tell you the truth! Verse 16 Unfortunately, Paul experienced a very changed and damaged relationship with the Galatians over his stand. They no longer treated him as an angel of God. This does not mean that Paul expected royal treatment, but that they had given him a warm reception and now no longer did!

Is there someone that has ministered to you by telling you the truth and you have "labeled" them in your mind as an enemy? Ask God to help you change your mind about them today!

What is the role of zeal/enthusiasm/eagerness in the ministry? Verses 17-18

Many Christians are led astray because of a misunderstanding about zeal and enthusiasm. We all want to be right! We all want to be on the winning side of life. The idea of "bandwagon" sport fans is that some people will even change loyalties so that they have a place to focus their zeal that is joyous and positive. Some people always back the perceived winner no matter what. In spiritual things, this is dangerous. It leads us to pursue the path of least resistance. To always associate outward signs of success as God's blessing and favor. But Paul knew that the Galatian Christians would suffer more for standing with the truth than for following the Judaizers. But the Judaizers were very passionate, and persuasive because their numbers were growing, they were part of something very old, very established and recognized, and they sincerely believed what they taught.

According to Paul, zeal is great, but only if it zeal for a "good" thing. God wants Christians to have zeal for himself and for one another, especially in this text for Paul himself as a true teacher. Be wary of anyone who want to use their influence to turn you away from the church as a whole, or to pull you away from learning Biblical truth! The connection of zeal to the truth is the only way to avoid cultish behavior and following men instead of God.

What is the object of your life's zeal and enthusiasm today? Is this a worthy object of enthusiasm? Is it truthful? Does it connect you to a greater degree to God and His church?

Paul has a zeal to see Christ formed in others! Verses 19-20

We know this was his zeal because he was willing to pay a physical, financial, emotional and spiritual price to see it accomplished. Just as having physical children requires zeal and is costly, it is costly to minister to others with the goal of helping them be formed in Christ!

Have you ever considered that you should be zealous for the spiritual formation of other people? This is more than desiring the salvation of another person. Do you desire to see people become more like Christ?

What could you do to begin to help this occur? What spiritual gifts has God given you to help others in this endeavor?

Section Two, verses 22-31, Born free to live free

In this section we get an Old Testament reminder of why the Judaizers should not be so eager and zealous for using the Law as a tool to develop Christ likeness. Consider making a T chart to illustrate the differences in these two approaches to Christ being formed in us.

It will be helpful in this section to give a brief summary of Genesis chapters 16 and 21 regarding the promise to Abraham and Sarah. They tried to fulfill this promise by Sarah offering Hagar as the source of a son. This son was Ishmael. He was Abraham's son. But he was not the heir of the promise God made to Abraham. He was provided for and protected by God, but God didn't accept man's plan as His own plan. God would save the people, all people, but He would do it through His power and plan.

Abraham had two Sons with two women. They are used here as types, or figures representing the two conditions of mankind.

Sarah

- v. 22 Free Woman - Isaac
- v. 23 Born of Divine Promise
- v. 24 Figure of the Abrahamic Covenant
- v. 26 Heavenly Jerusalem Above
- v. 27 Rejoice that God gave children through Sarah!
- v.28 Children of Promise by faith in Jesus
- v. 30 Free Child
- All Christian whether Jew or Gentile: Faith in Jesus Christ

Hagar

- v. 22 Slave Woman – Ishmael
- v. 23 Born of flesh, Man's substitute plan
- v. 24 Figure of Mosaic Covenant
- v. 25 Earthly Mountain and City of Jerusalem
- v. 27 Disadvantaged in the plan of God
- v. 29 Children of the curse of slavery
- v. 30 Slave Child
- All non-Christians: No faith in Jesus Christ, depending upon religion and human effort
- Jews, Judaizers, are truly children of the slave woman.

Highlights!

- This is a figurative application of historical people. There was a historical and literal meaning to these people in the Old Testament. This usage here does not negate those meanings.
- The revolutionary nature of what Paul says should be acknowledged. He has already stated in chapter 3 that there is neither Jew nor Greek. He now says that believers in Jesus are the true recipients of the Abrahamic promise and that unbelievers including unbelieving Jews are slave children of Hagar. There is no more offensive thing that Paul could have said to the Jews and Judaizers than this.
- Also note the comments about a Jerusalem that is above versus the earthly Jerusalem. Paul associates the earthly Jerusalem with works righteousness, and spiritual slavery.
- These are spiritual categories not physical realities. Physically a person cannot go from being of one descent to another. You are one or the other forever. But through faith in Christ you can move from being a slave to being free. You can change sides of the chart!!!!
- This differentiation is made to remind that Christ will not be formed in slave children only free Children. As free children we will not return to slavery to be shaped into free children. Don't go to Jerusalem, Law, earthly means for spiritual formation! Depend upon God to shape you through His spiritual methods! Live free children, live free!

Apply:

- Ask God to show you the true condition of your life through His truth, the Bible, and the ministry of true brothers and sisters in Christ.
- Ask God to give you zeal for truly good things, like helping others become like Jesus!
- Ask God to keep you focused on living freely for Jesus and to avoid the mindset of a slave.

For additional study helps go to this link at blueletterbible.org.

http://www.blbclassic.org/commentaries/comm_view.cfm?AuthorID=2&contentID=20173&commInfo=31&topic=Galatians&ar=Gal_4_1