



MONDAY 16 OCTOBER 2017

SERIES: IDEAS THAT CHANGED THE WORLD

Read: Galatians 5:1-6

Plug In...

Paul's words are strong. He makes clear that if a person tries to be acceptable before God by getting circumcised, then they abandon the full grace made open to them in Christ.

Simply put, rely on the law, then you seriously must show you've obeyed all the law. Or, recognise the deficit and flee to Christ knowing, in Christ, God has provided perfect righteousness apart from law (*cf.* [Romans 3:21-26](#)).

Chew It Over...

Today we still meet confusion over circumcision. While not required of the New Testament people of God, only Old Testament people of God, we often think the Old Testament was teaching the Old Testament believer is saved by circumcision. It may seem that way, given the manner in which Paul speaks here. [Romans 4:11](#) helps us understand Paul's overall teaching. He explains that Abraham had faith, while uncircumcised, and was given a 'sign of his righteousness by faith'. This is similar to how baptism functions for us. We become a Christian prior to baptism, we understand that we are saved by faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We then engage in a role-play sign that vividly displays to us, to the church community, to the public, that we believe and know we are saved by faith in Jesus Christ – in the water we play out that we've died and risen again because Jesus had done that for us.

Think about how you might want to unpack the statement: “I must be baptised”. What words in that statement, given the teaching of Galatians, would you want to have defined?

Prayer Suggestion

Direct your joy to God in knowing that the only thing that counts is the full pardon and imputation of Jesus to you, through which we receive the Spirit working in love.



TUESDAY 17 OCTOBER 2017

SERIES: IDEAS THAT CHANGED THE WORLD

Read: Galatians 5:1-12

Plug In...

Paul seems miffed that the Galatians deviated from the gospel. Paul pins the drift on not having Christ at the centre. Failure to see the fullness of Christ.

Chew It Over...

The Reformers, when speaking of the “five solas”, saw that connecting them all, making them coherent, stood the centrality of Christ: *Solus Christus*.

[Reminder of the five solas (Latin for ‘alone’): *faith alone, grace alone, Christ alone, Scripture alone, to the glory of God alone.*]

John Calvin taught about the centrality of Christ:

For how comes it that we are carried about with so many strange doctrines but because the excellence of Christ is not perceived by us? For Christ alone makes all other things suddenly vanish. Hence there is nothing that Satan so much endeavours to accomplish as to bring on mists with the view of obscuring Christ, because he knows, that be this means the way is opened up for every kind of falsehood. This, therefore, is the only means of retaining as well as restoring pure doctrine – to place Christ before the view such as he is with all his blessings, that his excellence by be truly perceived.

So true this is, observe how much Christian talk – even our own – can drop talking about Christ. It is easy to talk about God, use euphemisms for the Spirit (e.g. ‘empowered’, ‘directed’), but not talk about Jesus.

We were recently challenged at The Lakes to mention the name of Jesus in the week ahead.

Prayer Suggestion

Pray that the Lordship of Christ will cause you to confess His name publicly.



WEDNESDAY 18 OCTOBER 2017

SERIES: IDEAS THAT CHANGED THE WORLD

Read: Galatians 5:13-15

Plug In...

Christians are set free. This means they are given the Spirit. It means that in their life there is success by the Spirit in putting to death sin and expressing the fruit of love to others.

Paul says all the commandments of the Mosaic Law are actually summed up in the commandment to love (*cf.* [Romans 13:9](#)).

Chew It Over...

Sometimes Paul is explained as saying that love is so central that you are not really obeying any of the individual commandments unless you love.

The implication from Galatians is in the other direction. The one trapped in sin cannot love for love comes from God's Spirit. Sure, the laws promote love, just like they promote holiness and righteousness. But Paul has shown that without the Spirit humans are trapped in their human nature so cannot love, be holy, nor achieve righteousness.

Now, through Christ, the Spirit has been poured into us and so we will love others. Really, Paul is saying, the one with the Spirit will truly love and the one who truly loves will have no need of these commandments.

Prayer Suggestion

Thank God for Christ's work on our behalf. Thank God for the presence and on-going work of the Spirit in our lives. Ask to be acutely aware of whom you can love today.



THURSDAY 19 OCTOBER 2017

SERIES: IDEAS THAT CHANGED THE WORLD

Read: Galatians 5:16-21

Plug In...

The Christian is to *walk by the Spirit* (v.16). It is important, for the human nature with which we are first born, will not inherit the kingdom of God (v.21). Paul catalogues what someone stuck in their sinful human nature will be engaged in. The one that walks by the Spirit will actually be exhibiting a new nature, a Christ-like nature, provided by God, from His grace, received only through faith.

Chew It Over...

How do you walk by the Spirit? Walking by the Spirit is synonymous with walking by faith. We don't try to walk by the Spirit in order to get God's Spirit, we actually are enabled to walk in a godly way made possible by the Spirit.

With all that Paul has said, we may think that Paul is saying that salvation is by faith, but living your day-to-day holiness is up to your efforts. Actually, walking by the Spirit is by faith too. Official Catholic teaching at the time of the Reformation taught: Christ does work on the cross, then gives you grace. This grace causes you to work, and so you then bring your contribution to a godly life to the table. At the end of the day, Christ's work and your work together, God will look upon and declare you sanctified.

Paul's thinking is: God 100% atones for our sin; God 100% gives Christ's righteousness to our account; God 100% delivers the Spirit to our lives; God 100% engages us to desire different things. When we find ourselves desiring, willing, and choosing to do good things, that is still 100% God by His Spirit doing this.

John Piper has suggested that the great problem in contemporary Christian living is not learning the right things to do, but *how* to do the right things.

Prayer Suggestion

Praise God for giving birth in our lives a whole new array of desires, longings, hopes, and actions of love towards other. Ask for more and more change, faster and faster churn.

John Piper suggests the prayer: *Let us acknowledge from our heart that we are unable to please God without the Spirit's constant enablement. Let us pray for that enablement.*



FRIDAY 20 OCTOBER 2017

SERIES: IDEAS THAT CHANGED THE WORLD

Read: Galatians 5:22-26

Plug In...

Paul's phrase "the fruit of the Spirit" likely draws on Isaiah. The Book of Isaiah connects the pouring out of the end-time Spirit with fertile fruit. Isaiah often explains the fruit not just as physical/material abundance, but as godly attributes and characteristics within God's people (e.g. [Isaiah 11:1-5](#); [44:3-4](#); [61:1](#)). It is likely that Paul had Isaiah [32:15-18](#) and [57:15-16](#) in his mind as he formed the phrase "fruit of the Spirit". Both those passages say the Spirit will be poured out from on high, it will produce peace, joy, and patience. This fits Isaiah big theme of God's new creation on the horizon (chapters 40-66). There, God restores Israel and they receive the Spirit which produces righteousness.

Paul throughout Galatians says the promised Spirit has been poured out on Christian believers (e.g. Chapter 4 shows we are children of the promise, ones born by the power of the Spirit – [Galatians 4:28, 31](#)).

Those belonging to Christ, belong to the new creation ([Galatians 6:14-16](#)), receive the Spirit which produces: love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Chew It Over...

The Puritan work by John Owen, "Discourse on the Holy Spirit", essentially sums up this message from Galatians: there is not one drop of holiness in your life that doesn't flow directly from Jesus communicated by the Holy Spirit.

He says:

"The growth of trees and plants takes place so slowly that it is not easily seen. Daily we notice little change. But, in course of time, we see that a great change has taken place. So it is with grace. Sanctification is a progressive, lifelong work (Proverbs 4:18). It is an amazing work of God's grace and it is a work to be prayed for (Romans 8:27)."

Prayer Suggestion

Entrust yourself to Jesus and ask for His Spirit to enable these fruits of the Spirit to blossom in you.



WEEKEND 21-22 OCTOBER 2017

SERIES: IDEAS THAT CHANGED THE WORLD

Reflecting on: *Bible Alone*

Chew It Over...

The implications of Galatians 5 flow from Paul's understanding of Scripture which he has utilised throughout his argument of Galatians 4. Its longest and Old Testament quote is Galatians 4:27 which is the climax of his argument that we are children born of the Spirit of promise. He quotes with the opening words, "It is written".

This weekend at The Lakes we reflect on the Bible Alone – a key doctrine that the Reformers articulated.

With all the references to Martin Luther, John Calvin, William Tyndale, Thomas Cranmer it would be easy to think such people are being glorified, even worse that somehow what they said is 'authoritative' for the church. Not so, what is being said about these personalities and most of their teaching, is that there was a moment in history when leaders went back to the Bible only to determine what is truth from God. They let go of any other reference point to establish a final authority (e.g. the Pope, mysticism, monarchy). They were looking solely at the Bible and used their influence to tell others "it is written". Many risked their lives to make the Bible accessible in languages of the common people such was their belief that the Bible is the only voice of God.

The Reformers' mantra was *sola scriptura* which means 'Scripture alone'. They believed that a Christian should always be *reforming* according to God's Word.

Charles Spurgeon reflects on the Reformers understanding like this:

It is blessed to eat into the very soul of the Bible until, at last, you come to talk in scriptural language, and your spirit is flavoured with the words of the Lord, so that your bloodlines is 'Bib-line' and the very essence of the Bible flows from you.

Spurgeon is capturing what Martin Luther saw: *"The Word comes first, and with the Word the Spirit breathes upon my heart so I believe."*

John 14:26 – But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.