



Looking Inwards (15 mins)
Caring For Each Other

*Reflecting on your life at the moment, is there anything you would like to share with other members of your home group which you feel is appropriate (this is an **opportunity to share**, not something you have to do, however: 'It's the sharing that enables the caring!')* for:

- Thanksgiving?
- Prayer?
- Encouragement?
- Support in any way?



Looking Outwards (15 mins)
Concern For Others

*Is there anything concerning someone in your: family; circle of friends; neighbours; or church, which you would like to share (please be careful not to pass on anything that is **confidential** or which you think the person/people concerned would not wish to be shared) for:*

- Thanksgiving?
- Prayer?
- Encouragement?
- Support in any way?

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HG104: Pauls Letter To The Galatians
Under The Law And In Christ

Galatians 3:15-29

Home Group Study Notes

23 November 2014 - Revd Hugh Dibbens



PLEASE COMPLETE AS MUCH AS YOU CAN
ON THIS WORKSHEET IN PREPARATION
BEFORE THE MEETING!

Don't forget to take your Bible to Home Group with you, along with any previous notes and other resources which might be helpful.



Welcome (10 mins)
Ice Breaker

Christmas will soon be upon us. Share with your Home Group your frustrations with the commercialisation of the season and what you are hoping to do to put 'Christ back into Christmas' in your personal and/or family celebrations!



Looking Upwards (10 mins)
Worship

In your time of worship, you may want to sing Songs of Praise; listen to a Worship CD, as well as using Meditations; Bible Readings; Prayers ...



Looking Upwards (40 mins) *Bible Study*

Read the text for this study, and any references given, then answer the following questions. You may find it helpful to listen to the sermon and/or read through the sermon notes as you do so. Discuss some, or all, your answers with your Home Group and, remember, these questions are only a guide to start your discussions.

1: Do you agree that contemporary British culture is excessively individualistic and that this is to the detriment of our humanness? Do you see any signs of an alternative counter-cultural stream arising in your church or community? What might you do to encourage and strengthen this?

2: If you know that you have woken up to the bigger picture of God's amazing grace towards you, share how that happened. Who or what are your personal '*paidagogoi*'? How do you value them?

3: Are there cultures around us, both within and outside the church, which work to blind us to God's Promises? How, in practice, can we live our lives based on the Promises of God?

Paul reinforces this aspect of his teaching by reference to Abraham's seed (i.e. descendants). In Gal 3:16 he strongly states that the reference to 'seed' is a reference to Jesus Christ. Then in v 29 he makes the point that if any of us are incorporated into Christ, then we too are Abraham's seed.

The main teaching is that if we are united with Christ by His amazing Grace then we together are anointed ones; we together have the spiritual authority of the Son of man; and we together have a servant ministry, subject to the Father and changing the world!

Conclusion

If Paul had been asked by a stranger: 'Who are you?' he might have replied I am a Jew, a freeman of the Roman Empire and a gentleman rabbi from Tarsus. Or if the slave girl of Acts 16 was asked the same question, she might have replied I am a Gentile, a slave and a girl from Philippi. But they would all know that these were very superficial answers. There was something so much deeper about who they really were, something which bound them together eternally. Our true identity and the meaning of our lives are tied into our relationships of belonging first to Jesus and then to all other believers. We together are those anointed by God's Spirit; we have been given spiritual authority and have a servant ministry which is changing the world.

Emmanuel Text for 2014

*"As we know Jesus better,
His divine power gives us everything
we need for living a godly life."*

2 Peter 1:3

We ourselves may well be grateful for *paidagogoi* in our own experience who have convicted us of our need and prepared us for meeting with Christ, and whose examples we now cherish even though they may not have been Christians. Of course, for the majority of the Jewish people, the Law of Moses has not sadly, achieved this goal. We all find it so hard to truly listen to what God may be saying to us. I wonder if the Spirit of God also seeks to use other religious traditions to point adherents forward to the greater revelation of Christ. Are there more *paidagogoi* in the world than we realise?

‘C’ = ‘Commit to Christ and His Community (Galatians 3:26-29)

In the introduction, I mentioned that this scripture has a profoundly corporate understanding. In fact Paul would probably have problems understanding our individualistic culture. The phrase *‘in Christ Jesus’* is repeated twice - verses 26, and 28. It is a favourite of St Paul’s throughout his letters. It literally means ‘incorporated into Christ Jesus’. This carries the double meaning of being ‘united with the ascended Lord Jesus by faith’, and being ‘united with all fellow believers in one fellowship of faith’. This double meaning is basic to Biblical thought and certainly was part of both Jesus’ and Paul’s thinking. Let’s look at three important titles for Jesus.

First, *‘Messiah’* (Hebrew) or *‘Christ’* (Greek) which means ‘anointed one(s)’ is used to speak of Jesus Himself, and also of the community that followed Him anointed by the Holy Spirit. Jesus avoided the title because of the political overtones it had in His time. But when Paul used the term *‘in Christ’* he intended it to carry both meanings.

Second, *‘Son of Man’* is a title favoured by Jesus of himself, but it had corporate overtones too. In Daniel 7 v 13, 14 the title is used of a Messianic individual, but later in the same chapter the Son of Man turns out to be the *‘holy people of the Most High’* v 18, 21, 22, 25, 27. The essential meaning of the title seems to connect with spiritual authority. So Jesus uses the title in saying – *‘the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins’* Mark 2 v 10. And *‘the Son of man is Lord of the Sabbath’* – Mark 2 v 28. etc.

Third, Jesus and His Community are called *‘the Servant’*. Jesus meditated deeply on the ‘servant’ in Isaiah chapters 40 – 55. We are most familiar with Chapter 53 which so poignantly describes Jesus’ rejection and passion. There are other sections of these chapters too which reflect Jesus’ particular ministry. But the word *‘servant’* occurs 21 times in these chapters and in 13 of those, the plain meaning is the nation of Israel. Only in 8 can it be said to an individual. So there is oscillation between individual and corporate understanding.

4: As part of the greater Messianic Community of Jesus Christ, what does ‘shared anointing’, ‘shared authority’, and ‘shared servant-hood’ look like in our day to day lives?

5: In the last 60 years, there have been many debates between different denominations of the Christian Church about doctrine and church order, with a view to achieving better understanding and possible visible unity. How does the different level of truth in v 28 help us approach ecumenical debate and cooperation?

6: In Galatians 3:28 three ways we identify people and thereby divide people: by race, by social class and by gender. To what extent are these categories used offensively in Billerica today? Are there any other categories that you have noticed that can be used to discredit fellow citizens or show the superiority of one group over another? e.g. young and old? How have you found that being *‘in Christ Jesus’* has helped you overcome these prejudices?



Is there anything you most want to put into practice as a result of this study?



HG104: Pauls Letter To The Galatians *Under The Law And In Christ*

Galatians 3:15-29

Home Group Sermon Notes

23 November 2014 - Revd Hugh Dibbens

Introduction

We live in an extremely individualistic culture. The origins of this phenomenon are complex but it is promoted by intense marketing which is largely aimed at the individual. So advertising in all its forms, T.V. programmes, many computer games, education, and millions of products are all aimed at catching the attention of the individual, thereby reinforcing our awareness of our personal needs and wants and undermining our sense of belonging to one another. Volkswagen claims that they can produce a million variations on some of the models of their cars in order to personalise them to customer tastes.

The Bible teaches that each individual person is made in the image of God Himself, and is therefore of supreme value, but the Bible also teaches that the basic meaning of our lives is found in relationships. It is in our belonging to God and to one another that we find our true humanity. So to undermine or destroy that belonging, makes us less human. Jesus came to bring us abundant life. He died and rose again so that we might be fully alive. Such life is only fully realised in relationship with others. As Christians, we swim against the current of today's culture. In the background of Galatians 3:15-29 is the profound assumption that we are called to belong to Christian community, based on God's Grace and Promises. We are grateful for the Law of God and commit ourselves fully to Christ and one another. Let's follow Paul's thinking as the ABC of Christian Community.

'A' = Accept God's Grace (Galatians 3:15-20)

St Paul was proud of his origins, his education, his profession as a rabbi and all the things that made him a distinguished representative of the Jewish people of his time. See Philippians 3:4-6. He was also a Pharisee and would have been very diligent at keeping the Law. The Mosaic Law was Paul's primary source of inspiration. Moses himself, perhaps the greatest leader of all time, was Paul's hero. The great story of the Exodus and the Law given on Sinai was a story and way of life to die for.

But then Paul met Jesus on the Damascus Road. He fell to the ground blinded by a greater revelation than he could have imagined. He then took time out to try to understand what had happened to him Gal 1:18. He went back to the first 5 books of the Bible and there he found the stories about Abram. And he made a great discovery. Yes, the Law of Moses was documented but there was another over-arching Covenant which included Moses – Abram's!

It wasn't that he didn't know about Abram. But he had failed to see the significance of the Abrahamic Covenant. It had never been annulled! It even embraced Moses and it spoke directly about Jesus! He had looked at these Scriptures and studied them without seeing the truth of them. Now his eyes were being opened! Although we may have been reading the Scriptures, coming to church and listening to sermons for years, it is still possible to miss the teaching about the Grace of God. We may think that the Christian faith is mainly about Christian values and living an honest and generous life. But the real thing starts when, like St Paul, we wake up to the Grace of God in Christ.

'B' = Believe the Promises of God and be grateful for the Law of God (Galatians 3:21-22)

Paul had believed that his relationship with God depended on his obedience of the Law and the good works that followed. Now he understands that God made promises to Abram unconditionally and the only response required of Abram was that of faith. Simply believe the Promises! In Gal 3:16-22 there are 7 references to God's Promises!

But then Paul had to face the dilemma that the bilateral Covenant of Moses made God's favour dependent on obedience. Did that mean that the Mosaic Covenant contradicted the Covenant of Grace and was redundant? v 21. What then was the point of the Mosaic Covenant? His solution is to describe the Law of Moses as '*paidagogos*' (Greek) v24. Sometimes this is translated as 'schoolmaster', but that does not catch the meaning well.

The *paidagogos* was a senior, well trusted slave whose task was to be a guardian of the children and heirs of the property. One of their main responsibilities was to watch over the children's behaviour, point out their moral errors and to take them to school where they could learn the truth. So it wasn't the *paidagogos* job to do the teaching, maybe they were not particularly knowledgeable anyway, but they knew about right and wrong and they knew where to take the children so that they could learn. Here Paul found an image to help him understand the importance and function of the Law.