



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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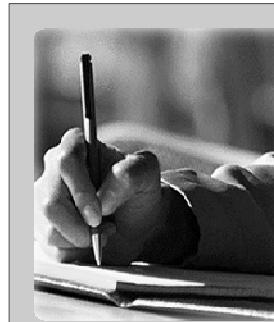
HG105 Pauls Letter To The Galatians

The One True God And False Gods

Galatians 4:1-11

Home Group Study Notes

26 April 2015 - Pauline Woolnough



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

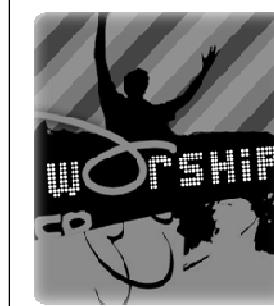
Don't forget to take your Bible to Home Group with you, along with any previous notes and other resources which might be helpful.



Welcome (10 mins)

Ice Breaker

Now that you are adults what are the sort of things do you miss about being a child?



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: Paul argues that by returning to the law the Galatians are acting like slaves again. Share what things you feel Christ has freed you from as a result of his Spirit living in you.

2: Why do you think the Galatians wanted to return to living under rules, regulations and laws? What sort of things do we do that suggest we also do this at times?

3: “*So you are no longer a slave, but God’s child.*” v7. What does your adoption mean to you and how do you value it?

Although we remember Christmas and Easter and Pentecost the Galatians wanted to remember all manner of Jewish festivals that pointed to a time when their messiah would come, well, breaking news, he had come so why were they so intent on keeping these festivals? What they were actually saying by this was that they weren't sure if God had done what he said he would. Paul reminded them again and again that he had and was beginning to lose patience and wonder if he was wasting his time and effort with them.

No turning back

If you are a son or daughter of God, then by God's grace, through faith in Christ you are no longer a slave. Paul asks the Galatians and he asks us “*Why would you ever want to go back to the slavery you once knew,*” because every day, like the Galatians we are tempted back into slavery by our human efforts as we try to please God by our good works or our religious observances and this threatens to chain us up once more. Crazy! What slave that had been freed would insist on returning to a life in chains but that's exactly what we do when we throw Gods gift back in his face and rely on our performance instead of God's provision. We are enslaved again when we sway on the one hand from believing that we are good enough to be accepted by God by what we do, and at other times believing that we are not good enough to be accepted. The first one is never true the second one is always true, we are not good enough, but Jesus is.

Known by the One True God

Paul ends this passage urging them to realise the freedom they have in being known by God. *9 But now that you know God—or rather are known by God.*” He doesn't just want them to be satisfied with knowing God, but to revel in the fact that God knows them. The one true God knows each and every one of them and us, God knows your name, where you live, everything about your past present and future, you are known and totally loved by God, he has set us free from the rule of other gods, ones that we believe define who we are, -nationality, family background, occupation, education money, power. They, in the end, say nothing about us at all, and by following them they lead us nowhere. Far better, though at times harder but liberating, to follow the God as revealed in Jesus and claim our identity and our inheritance as his children.

Emmanuel Text for 2015

“**Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.**”

Galatians 6:9

His plan was to redeem us and to make us his children, through Christ he fulfilled that purpose. His timing is a mystery but it is always right, always perfect, he will also respond to our prayers and needs “*when the time is right*” as we see what happens next.

We are now children of God

At Pentecost, precisely 50 days after the resurrection God again sent someone, this time God sent his Spirit, the Spirit of his Son. He came not with another set of laws but breathing life, giving freedom and the unbelievable and supreme gift of sonship/daughtership, his Spirit speaks to ours and tells us that we are no longer slaves but true children of God, **6** “*Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “Abba, Father.” 7 So you are no longer a slave, but God’s child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir.*” God sent the Son that we might have the status of being his children. He sent the Spirit that we might experience sonship as the Spirit cries out in us “*Abba Father.*” We can over sentimentalise this word, “*Abba*,” by translating it merely as “*daddy*,” the word is more associated with intimacy than infancy and links us to Jesus as he used this term in his own prayer life.

In Roman law, if an adult needed an heir it was normal to adopt a male as his son and not an infant as is the custom today but someone who had come of age. That adopted son was guaranteed all legal rights to the fathers property and wealth, even if he had previously been a slave. He was equal with others in the fathers family. Adopting a child involves investment on the part of the adult, commitment to care, protect, provide for and love the child to whom you are not biologically bound to, it is a free act of generosity and kindness and is wholly a matter of choice. God had a choice, he didn't need to do anything except maybe punish us as we deserved, instead he not only saved us, redeemed us, forgave and loved us he showed that love for us by adopting us as his children and gave us all the legal rights and privileges of an adult. God took us into his family and he made us his children, also his heirs with Jesus. God allows us to call him Father, and then offers access along with Jesus to his resources. Paul says in v 7, “*So you are no longer a slave, but God’s child.*” Paul is now speaking to us, he is pointing his finger at us and saying these words to us, “*you are no longer a slave but God’s child*” and until we have heard him speak that word directly to us, then the message has not gone home and we need to hear it again.

Worshipping false gods

Paul returns again to his theme of a people in captivity and accuses the Galatians of wanting to go back to “*those weak and miserable forces.*” They are not wanting to worship pagan gods, they want to become Jews, and go back to the Jewish law that had kept them in virtual slavery from Moses to the Messiah. He is not saying the law had been a bad thing, or that it was not given by God, he knows the Law had its purpose in fulfilling God’s promises to Abraham, it defined sin and made the problem of it painfully obvious but it was never intended to be permanent (3:19). What he is saying though, is that its time is up, it has had its day, it is time to move on and anyone wanting to go back is denying the freedom that Jesus died to give us and is treating the law as being above him and as being a god.

4: How comfortable are you with the term “*Abba?*” When have you experienced God as being your Abba and not merely as “God?”

5: How confident are you that God loves you? Do you often think about how close he is to you and how he knows everything about you? What difference does it make to you?

6: How can you begin acting more like God’s beloved son or daughter?



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



HG105 Pauls Letter To The Galatians **The One True God And False Gods**

Galatians 4:1-11

Home Group Sermon Notes

26 April 2015 - Pauline Woolnough

Introduction

In chapter 3 Paul established the superiority of grace over law and of receiving God's blessings through faith as opposed to the works of the Law. He now elaborates on this truth and introduces two topics his readers would be familiar with, slavery and an heir coming of age.

Slaves in Bondage

He begins with the illustration of a child who receives an inheritance, 4:1-3 *What I am saying is that as long as heirs are underage they are no different from slaves, although they own the whole estate. They are subject to guardians and trustees until the time set by their fathers.*" (Galatians 4:1-2).

Paul is referring to a Roman legal process where an heir was under the guardianship of appointed managers and could be up until the age of 25 when he could then enjoy the full privileges of his inheritance. The birthright of the underage child entitled them to everything, but until the child came of age they were unable to access their inheritance and make decisions about their fortune and their future. He develops this fact by likening the child's situation to that of a slave. Slaves had no freedom and could not make any decisions about their future just like the child before it reached the age of maturity. Trustees and guardians were appointed to look after them until that time and the heir was in the frustrating position of legally owning his father's inheritance but not being able to enjoy any of it.

Every Jew knew the story of the Exodus, it was key and at the heart of their identity but Paul wanted them now to fully understand that God had brought about a new Exodus, the first one was about setting the Jewish people free, the second Exodus was the final act of redemption accomplished in Christ and sets all people everywhere free. When the Jewish people were enslaved in Egypt God called Moses to lead them out into the promised land. They arrived at Mt Sinai 40 days after Passover and were given the law. This was to be their guide on how to live, it was seen as their inheritance and handed down through the generations. Paul says that it was the law that was now enslaving the people and that prior to Christ coming, the people were in bondage to it because they believed that it was through following and keeping the laws that they were saved. However, no matter how hard they tried, they failed. He likens the law to the slave masters in Egypt.

Previously in 3.24 Paul wrote about the Jewish people being under the guardianship of the Law of Moses, until Christ came now in 4.3 the are in "*slavery under the elemental forces of the world.*" He then switches focus to the Gentiles in v 8 when he talks about the pagan past of his non-Jewish audience where he says, "*Formerly, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those who by nature are not gods.*" The Gentiles didn't have the Law of Moses and before hearing the message of Christ, they had worshipped gods and goddesses like Zeus, Apollo, and Aphrodite. The concern he has is evident when in verse 9 he accuses them and says, "*But now that you know God—or rather are known by God—how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable forces of the world.*" What the Jewish and Gentile worshipper had in common was the fact that both were focused on human effort. Paul says that they can't profess to know and worship the one true God if they then live by depending on human effort to save them. What they are doing is no different than following a false god. He wants them to see that depending on human effort is, in reality, a return to being in chains, the law had become simply another guardian angel which only served to enslave them and separate Israel, preventing them from integrating with the rest of humanity. Paul is not putting the Law of Moses in the same category as the worship of false gods but he is saying there are similarities in the people's approach to them and the issue of human effort.

For 1500 years the law had been a means by which God educated and disciplined the Jewish people in preparation for them to receive Jesus Christ. Under the Old covenant the Jews were burdened by an enormous number of rites and observances which kept them in a state of subjection. It took away their freedom to make their own decisions and was like forever being a child living under the rule and guidance of guardians. The legalists among the Galatians wanted to preserve the law and old ways keeping the people in slavery and in bondage to them. The law had become the nations safety blanket, as long as they were following the laws they were safe, it was the law and following it that saved them, looked after them and protected them but with the coming of Jesus they were now free, it was no longer necessary to live as underage immature children under the guidance of a guardian. So when these legalistic Christians wanted to lead the Galatians back to the old ways and into keeping the law, they were actually leading them not only into spiritual bondage, but also into infancy and childish immaturity.

God set us free through Christ

For centuries people had been waiting for their Messiah to come and when the time was right God sent his son to die for our sins. Verses 4-7 "*But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship.*" In 2 verses Paul sums up who Jesus is and why he came. He is the Son of God, sent to earth to die for our sins, "*when the time was right.*" His birth was planned, it was no accident, he was born of a woman and the reason he came was to set us free from captivity so that God could adopt us as his children. If you are struggling with unanswered prayer take heart from this phrase... "*When the time was right.*" How often do we wait for God to respond to our prayers, question his timing, wonder if he is even listening? There is nothing about our lives that he is not interested in, or that concerns him and although at times it may be hard waiting and praying, we may be suffering physically as well as emotionally we must never doubt him or give up hope.