

It is time to Wake up.
Galatians 4:8-20

2nd Timothy 4:1-5

1st John 4:1-6

Today is going to be a little different, Instead of working through verse by verse like we have, I want to look at the issue that was at hand in Galatians and how it really isn't much different then what we have today. Paul is warning the church against false teachers, and today we seemed to have filled the churches with false teachers. Or at the very least, the teachers are more concerned about possibly offending someone instead of preaching what scripture says. Christians are under a constant assault and they are not even capable of defending what they believe. That is the issue I want to look at today.

If we are to listen to the general idea toward religion today, we hear the argument that religion is a type of slavery. Why would we want to bind ourselves to an arbitrary list of rules and a lifestyle to appease some sort of imagined deity. We live in a time were man's will rules supreme. I think maybe more so in this country then others, for the freedom we espouse and brag about here has become intrinsic into our thought patterns.

We see it more and more in our society, where what a person thinks, or feels themselves is above all else. We see it in the blatant disrespect for authority. You don't have to look to hard to find news article after news article showing this very thing. Disrespect of parents, disrespect of teachers, disrespect of the law enforcement agency, disrespect for government authorities. The old saying, your not my mother doesn't even apply anymore because children don't even listen to their own mothers.

We have become a nation of people who are more concerned about ourselves, then anyone else. We are more concerned about our own personal agenda and how to get what we want then any sense of broader good for our families, our neighborhoods, our towns, Our society is in a dark place, and it seems to be getting darker by the day. We are becoming more violent, more corrupt, and morally bankrupt. We have lost the idea of a common good, and it has now become all about individual good.

So here we are now, with this mindset that has become so focused on ourselves, it is even effecting how the church operates. Churches are struggling to stay relevant in this society that is falling apart, they try to create programs, using marketing tactics, have special themed services to draw people in. And yet, the church in America is bleeding, we are loosing our teenagers who are finding church to be empty, we are loosing our adults as they hop from one church to the next hungry for something but finding nothing new no matter were they go.

I read an article this week that talked about a survey done among Americans in, and compared those answers to evangelical Christians. It was a survey of 3000 people. To quote the article it said, When American's talk about theology, it sounds about as competent as a country singer rapping.

Out of the 3000 people surveyed, 7 out of 10 affirmed the doctrine of the trinity, and 6 in 10 believed that Jesus is both God, and man. Which is a really good start! Except more then half of them agreed with the statement that Jesus was God's first created being, which was a heresy condemned in 325AD, yet over half believe it.

It keeps going, 70% surveyed said they believe that there is only one true God, but 64% of that said they believed that God accepts worship from all religions, even religions that believe in many Gods.

2/3 agreed that everyone sins a little, but most people are by nature good. That is not what Jeremiah says, he says The heart is I deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it. 74% said that little sins do not warrant Gods wrath and judgment. But as we have been studying in Galatians, no one is righteous..no one is able to keep God's law..and if you fail in one, you fail in all and are cursed.

If you think the news is going to get better...you are wrong. The survey went on to say, that a full 60% that was questioned said they agreed to the statement that eventually everyone goes to heaven! But then, in a contradiction they 50% also believe that only those who believe in Jesus will be saved. So trying to explain this contradiction the article says either a monkey took these tests, or they all believe that eventually everyone will believe in Jesus. I think this is very telling of the sad state of affairs in the American churches today, and the abysmal teaching that people are receiving, they are not even able to stand on basic orthodox truths of the faith they claim.

This survey was 3000 random people of different religions, races, etc. So they narrowed it down, and conducted a smaller survey of 586 evangelicals who claim the bible is the highest authority, Even they said that Jesus was the first being that God created, and 56% said that the holy spirit is a divine force and not a personal being. they went on to say that the holy spirit, the 3rd person of the trinity is not equal with God the Father or with Jesus.

They even said the same thing that the other survey participants said. 2/3 of this group said that heaven is a place that eventually all people will reunite with their loved ones. And lastly, almost half said that worshiping alone or with family is a valid replacement for attending a church. What a sad and sorry state we are in, and this must stop.

For Our society is waging a war against religion right now, and the American church is not fit to fight it. Society is telling us that going to church is a waste of time, living a moral life is boring, and requiring anyone to live up to our moral standards is bigoted and hateful. For we are all individuals, who have our own rights and freedoms to be, and do what ever we want, even to the point of changing our gender if we so desire.

So how does this relate to Galatians 4. Well I think one way right off, is that our society sees Christianity as a type of slavery. The very things that we do, going to church, living a godly life, preaching the word they see us doing it all as a type of forced requirement of our faith. When reality is, as we saw earlier in this chapter and in the end of chapter 3 that we do these things not because we must, but because we desire to. We do not strive to live a godly life because doing so will make us holy, we strive to live a godly life for we are children of God, and it is part of who we are.

It is an interesting difference in perspective. The world looks at us, and laughs at how we enslave ourselves and deny ourselves to what they deem to be pleasures. Yet the bible says, that we are set free and are no longer under a yoke of bondage, or slavery. The world sees Christianity as an archaic system creating mindless followers who are bound by tradition. And that maybe true in many churches, which is why I said the American church as a whole is not prepared to fight the war that is now upon us

Paul was concerned for the Galatians for something very similar. They had tasted the free grace of God ,and now they were throwing it all away for traditions, rules, and regulations. He says in verse 8 and 9
But then, indeed, when you did not know God, you served those which by nature are not gods. But now

after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage

These Galatians were lost in pagan religions, and traditions. Serving things of nature that are not gods. But now God was revealed to them and here they are, turning away again from the free grace of God to regulations, and traditions observing days, months, seasons and years as the Jews did.

Continuing on in verse 11 he says, I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain. Paul is very concerned for them, he is afraid that maybe, just maybe their faith was not real in the first place. I think it would be fair to say that he is probably a little surprised and perplexed to see the Christians fall away so quickly to something so empty.

This is a lot of the problem we see today in churches across this country. It would seem that they have left their first love. God sent his son, who died, in our place so that we may become children of promise, heirs with Christ, who is first of many brethren. God, should be our first love, and our driving force in all that we do both individually and corporately. The problem we have seen over the years is the preaching of the gospel is becoming less and less and Christianity has boiled down to just a belief that God does exist and we should follow these traditions and rules because that is what makes us a christian.

When our focus is no longer on the work of Christ on the cross, but rather becomes trying to figure out ways that we can entice people to join or stay we end up filling our pews with Judaizers. Who much like the church in Galatia ends up bringing with them strife, and division. The Judaizers in Galatia had the effect of splitting the church between those who were following Paul's teaching, and those who where listen to them and becoming Jews. Remember, these were false teachers to which Paul had no kind words for, in fact he said that these false teachers should be damned to hell.

So now preachers find themselves in difficult positions in the churches today. I believe many of them do not preach, or teach as they should because they know that if they did they would end up preaching themselves out of a job. The churches who are full of Judaizers do not want to hear the gospel, they are not seeking to learn more of God, but rather to be filled with an emotional, spiritual high. They want to feel good about themselves, and to be reassured that they are doing the right thing. When in reality what they need to hear is the gospel of Christ! The survey I quoted earlier proves this to be true. Even those identifying as evangelical Christians were spouting heretical beliefs.

The gospel offends, it scares people away. 2 Corinthians 2:15 says. For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. To the one we are the aroma of death leading to death, and to the other the aroma of life leading to life, and who is sufficient for these things? There is a reason that if you take just a few moments to look at the mega churches across this country you will find very little gospel preaching, in fact you will see very little preaching from the bible at all.

Today, we as Christians are fighting a 2 front war. We are fighting against the false teachers and Judaizers from the inside, and from the skeptics and atheists on the outside. Not much has changed really from Paul's day to today. There always seems to be someone, or something that comes along and seeks to undermine the gospel of Christ, to water it down, to change it, to make it more appealing.

Paul here gives us a little insight into this very thing. Continuing on, verse 12 he says, Brethren, I urge you to become like me, for I became like you. You have not injured me at all. You know that because of the physical infirmity I preached the gospel to you at the first. And my trial which was in my flesh you did not despise or reject, but you received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus. What then was the blessing you enjoyed? For I bear you witness that, if possible, you would have plucked out your own eyes and given them to me. Have I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth?

When Paul first came to Galatia they received him with open arms, as he says even as Christ Jesus. The gospel he preached was a great blessing to them. Having received the free grace of God, being released from the bondage of their pagan religions had brought them so much joy and they were so great full they would do anything they could for Paul. And now, we see later through the corruption of the false Judaizer teachers they turned against Paul.

How many times have we seen this very same thing today. People in the church become offended by the pastors preaching and seek to have him removed. They go around, slandering, enticing others to join their cause all in secret, behind closed doors until they get enough support and muscle the pastor out. This is a sad state our churches are in today, and this is why I said earlier that Christians today are not able to fight the battle that is before us.

We have spent far too much time, and effort making ourselves appealing to Judaizers. People with an appearance of religion but inside there is not much more than their own selfish desire. The gospel has been watered down, or left off completely. Churches in an attempt to stay relevant bow down to society's demands, we start changing the standards. No longer is sin being called sin, we are allowing open rebellion against God's created order to be accepted as normal, in fact even applauded in some circles. We have given Christianity over to man's will, we spent so long trying to appeal to it that we have now become slaves to it.

Just as Paul was pleading with the Galatians, as he says in verse 19. My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you. We should be doing the same in our churches today. Paul likened it to child birth, something that is painful, hard work, and messy yet in the end delivers something marvelous. It is a very suited metaphor for this work, it is painful to watch those that we love live in rebellion against God. It is hard work to be patient and loving with them at times. To share the gospel with them despite how they mock or scorn you. And it can be quite messy, for relationships have been lost over the gospel of Christ. Families split, friendships ended, but when a new child of God is born through all the pain, hard work and messiness it is a glorious, blessed thing.

We should not be afraid to labor such both in our individual lives, and here in the church. This birth, is the only thing that can save the sorry state the churches and Christianity at large are in today. What we need is the gospel taught true, and right. We should be laboring as Paul, to bring together the true children of Abraham, the promised heirs, and speak out against all false teaching. It is only then armed with the gospel that we will be able to wage the war that is knocking at our gates.

And with that I close today with a challenge for all who may listen to this. For pastors, and teachers. Heed scripture, be in the word, teach the word, point the lost to Christ who is their only hope. That survey should be a sobering thing, Cast aside the politics, the marketing strategies and do not worry about being attractive to the world. Preach Christ, teach and prepare your people for ministering to people within their own lives, do not let those sitting under your teaching believe in heresy because you are not teaching them. Do not let the people sitting under your teaching become one of the statistics of

this recent survey. Yes, it may get messy, it may be painful, and yes there may be people offended, people might leave the church. But is that not what we are called to do? To teach, and to preach the gospel?

And I also extend this challenge to those sitting in the church. Ask yourself these questions, is there more entertainment during my Sunday morning worship than biblical teaching? Does the pastor preach from the bible? If the Sunday morning is more focused on music, and entertainment, and if your pastor barely even makes a reference to scripture during his message then you need to seek to attend somewhere else. It is time that we do not allow such mediocrity in the faith, Stand for truth, Stand on the word, and stand with Christ, It is only then can there be true growth, and revival in the church.