



“The Politics of Faith”

Galatians 5

— Small Group Plan —

*God made him who had no sin to be sin for us,
so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

— 2 Corinthians 5:21 —

Our communion service each Sunday re-sets and re-establishes the cross of Jesus in our hearts and minds. This cross is where Jesus took our place and gave us his place. It is our weekly admission that his work and not ours makes us holy in the sight of God. To see it any other way is to deny cross of Jesus and to play politics with our faith.

OPEN IT / INTRODUCE IT ...

- How does political compromise work?
- Why is compromise a good approach in our relationship with each other?
- Why is compromise never a good approach in our relationship with God?

LOOK AT IT / STUDY IT ...

“DON’T LOSE FREEDOM”

Galatians 5:1

¹ *It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.*

- What does Christian freedom look and feel like?
- What does religious slavery look and feel like?
- What symptoms would you notice in the life of a believer who is living under the weight of a performance-based religion?
- What spiritual advice would you give them?

“DON’T LOSE GRACE”

Galatians 5:2-6

² Mark my words! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all. ³ Again I declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole law. ⁴ You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace. ⁵ But by faith we eagerly await through the Spirit the righteousness for which we hope. ⁶ For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.

- According to Paul what places grace in danger (v. 4)?
- What does it look like when a believer is “trying to be justified by law” (v. 4)?
- Why does Paul say, “The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love” (v. 6)? What does he mean?

“DON’T LOSE DIRECTION”

Galatians 5:7-12

⁷ You were running a good race. Who cut in on you and kept you from obeying the truth? ⁸ That kind of persuasion does not come from the one who calls you. ⁹ “A little yeast works through the whole batch of dough.” ¹⁰ I am confident in the Lord that you will take no other view. The one who is throwing you into confusion will pay the penalty, whoever he may be. ¹¹ Brothers, if I am still preaching circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been abolished. ¹² As for those agitators, I wish they would go the whole way and emasculate themselves!

- How are “the truth” (v. 7) and “the cross” (v. 11) connected here?
- How do you read Paul’s tone in this section (vs. 7-12)? Why does he feel so strong about what he is saying?
- What is at stake? What is in danger of being lost (v. 11)?
- What would Paul say is the major source of “confusion” (v. 10)?

“DON’T LOSE RELATIONSHIPS”

Galatians 5:13-15

¹³ You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love. ¹⁴ The entire law is summed up in a single command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” ¹⁵ If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.

- What does (v. 13) say to those who think freedom means they can do anything they want to do?
- What should lead and guide our spiritual freedom? How does this work?
- Even though we have been set free from spiritual “slavery” (v. 1), how and why do we voluntarily put ourselves in a position to “serve” (v. 13)?
- What is the difference between “slavery” and “service”?
- What does Paul say are the right and wrong ways to use our freedom?

USE IT / APPLY IT ...

- Since our own achievements are not the way to God (vs. 5-6), what is?
- How can we tell if we are following the way of grace or performance?
- How can a grateful response to God’s grace bring more growth and change to a believer’s life than a self-effort or performance-motivated faith?
- Close in prayer, thanking God for “freedom” (v. 1) “grace” (v. 4) “hope” (v. 5) “the Spirit” (v. 5) “the truth” (v. 7) “the cross” (v. 11) and “one another” (v. 13).