

one family of faith | sermon series

a series of eight talks based on galatians

Have you thought about teaching Galatians to your church lately? PHIL CAMPBELL provides some interesting illustrations and talk outlines that he used when teaching Galatians to his church ...

Talk 1 - Sharp Words (Acts 11-15)

1.1 Worth an argument?

It's an awful thing, isn't it, when Christians can't get on? You've seen it. Sometimes very public. Sometimes over big issues. Sometimes over small. Sometimes, I want to suggest over the next few weeks, over things that look small. But underneath, they're much bigger than they look. Here are some small things. One friend of mine, he's a minister, just started in a new parish in Sydney. And because he didn't pray the Lord's Prayer in the service, a member of the congregation stormed up to him and said she was going to leave. Resign her membership.

Or Marion, speaking at the Women's Retreat weekend - her husband Stephen is the minister of the Anglican church in Bangkok. Which has a 150 year tradition of being a sort of a British colonial outpost in Thailand. Lighting the candles, using the Anglican prayer book. Marion was saying there was terrible trouble a few weeks ago when Stephen read one of the prayers from the prayer book that wasn't meant to be said during Lent. We Christians get upset over all sorts of things, don't we? And you hear of churches that split over the colour of the carpet, the style of the music, the robes for the choir, where the furniture goes.

So how do you know, how can you decide whether something's worth fighting for or not? Whether an issue's worth an argument - or it isn't? It's sort of strange, these days - because even though we Christians will argue about all sorts of trivial stuff, when it comes to theology, when it comes to matters of deciding what's true and what's central, so many Christians say nothing matters. Everyone's equally right. We'll fight over colours of carpet. But not over matters of creed. As we look at

Galatians over the next few weeks maybe we can learn to draw some lines. Issues worth digging in for. And issues that aren't. Issues worth taking a stand on. And issues to let go.

1.2 Behind the scenes...

- a) Overcoming an "us-and-them" mentality
- b) A turning point (Acts 11:20)
- c) From Antioch to Galatia
 - speaking to the Jews (Acts 13:15, 38)
 - the law that can't save you
 - rejected by Jews, so preaching to Gentiles

1.3 The Sharp Dispute

What do you have to do to be saved? (Acts 15:2,5) No distinction, no burden

1.4 An Issue That's Still Worth Fighting For

Now friends, tell me if they're right or not. You're a gentile. Let's skip the circumcision because we're too polite. But the obey the Law of Moses bit. Right or wrong? It's not something alien they're talking about. In a nutshell, it's the Old Testament. Which the Jews have had all along. And now they're simply saying, if the Gentiles want to join in, they've got to do what we do. Keep the Sabbath. Obey the commandments. Be holy like we are. Which sounds absolutely reasonable, doesn't it?

So what does the meeting in Jerusalem (Acts 15:6) decide? The apostles and elders met to consider this question. After much discussion - it's a hard one - Peter got up and addressed them. Brothers, he says, "you know that some time ago God made a choice among

you that the Gentiles might hear from my lips the message of the gospel and believe. God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. He made no distinction between us and them ... for he purified their hearts by faith. Now then... why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of the disciples a yoke that neither we nor our fathers have been able to bear.” You ever done that? Created a Christianity that’s a burden. That you’re quite prepared to lay on other people ... and criticise them over and measure them against ... when you’re not even living by the same standards yourself? That’s what they want to do. And they’ve missed the point. Which Peter’s about to spell out (v 11). He says “No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we’re saved... just as they are.” He says we Jews are saved by grace. Just like the Galatians are. Just like one day the Australians will be.

Don’t go laying the law on them. Tell them about Jesus. Preach grace to them. Is that what happened? Is that the message you’ve heard? Sometimes you’ve got to wonder.

As we take our first look at Galatians next week, we’re going to see, it’s a problem that wouldn’t go away. Paul preached grace to them ... now there are people who want to add something more. Grace is not enough. Here are the rules. Has that happened to you?

Let me say, this is one battle worth fighting. Because it’s right at the heart of what being a Christian is all about. Paul stood his ground. And we’re going to see that again in the next few weeks as we look at his letter. But from here in Acts it’s clear, isn’t it. Here are the Galatians, gentiles like us; they’ve heard that Jesus died for their sins ... and they’ve put their faith in him. And now someone wants to demand more than that, to load them with laws and rules, to load them with the Old Testament regulations of the Israelites. To do that is to miss the point. In fact to put up any barrier ... is to miss the point. And

it’s a point worth fighting for - Jesus plus nothing. God counts us clean and gives us his Spirit when we come to faith in Jesus. So whatever you do... Don’t go putting up walls. Adding rules. Making a fuss about things that aren’t the issue. If you want to get fussed about anything, get steamed about what Paul and Barnabas did. That there would be people who want to add rules - to the gospel of Jesus. People who want to add extra requirements ... to simple faith. To load on a burden they don’t even carry themselves. And put it onto someone else. That’s something worth sharply disputing. And standing your ground on.

Talk 2 - A Message Made in Heaven (Gal 1:1 - 2:10)

If you’ve been following the career of Dick Smith, you’ll know that there’s something very wrong with the jar of Vegemite I’m holding. It looks okay. And if you’re a Vegemite eating sort of person it tastes okay. But something is not what it seems.

Dick Smith is on a campaign to get us all buying Ozemite. Along with a bunch of other new products he’s come up with. Because they’re both made by, and owned by, Australians. I mean, there’s Vegemite, an Australian icon, up there with Bondi surf lifesavers and XXXX beer; and it’s not even Australian owned. Dick Smith says, if it’s not Aussie made and Aussie owned, don’t buy it.

Which is exactly the point the Apostle Paul wants to make about his message, his gospel. In the face of the issues we saw last week, in the face of a team of false teachers who are working their way around Galatia, Paul wants to say don’t buy it unless you check where it comes from.

2.1 Disturbing Messages

2.2 Straight From the Source (v 1, 11-12, 13-16)

2.3 Messing with the message from God

2.4 Let’s pretend

- an angel through the ceiling
- Paul at the door

2.5 The Jerusalem seal of approval

Let me ask, if these false brothers wanted to have a look at us Presbyterians, check out our freedom, I wonder if they’d find any? Christians in general. But the important thing Paul wants to say is, we went up to Jerusalem, we worked it through with the guys who were important, like James and Peter and John - and they absolutely agreed (Gal 2:6) As for those who seemed to be important at head office, he says, those men added nothing to his message. On the contrary, they saw it was my job ... to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles. And keep telling them exactly what I’d been telling them. Plus nothing.

And friends, if there’s anything you take away from our series on Galatians over these next few weeks, make it that. Jesus Christ - plus nothing. You’ve trusted in him, you’ve been rescued through his death for you; live with him as your Lord - plus nothing. No circumcision. No rituals. No Jewish laws. No food rules. No special extra blessings. No new revelations. No angel messages. You name it ... they didn’t add it. And we shouldn’t either. Which means you need to be very, very suspicious of anyone who comes along and offers the next new thing. Which seem to arrive at about the same speed as Christian bookshop catalogues. Or major church conferences. It’s all here already. And what we need to be doing is putting our minds to understanding the gospel that was preached in the first place. And sticking to it like glue.

Because when it comes to the Gospel, adding is subtracting. Like a few weeks back on the news, petrol stations were in strife because they were adding other stuff to petrol - paint thinner. See,

getting a little bit of something extra in your petrol, it's really getting a little bit less, isn't it? And for Paul, anything that tries to add to Jesus, just subtracts. And says his death on the cross wasn't enough. That his rescue wasn't quite complete. That you've got to do something yourself ... or you're not properly saved. That you've got to take on the rules even the good rules that the Jews had. The laws of Moses.

It's not popular, is it, being careful. Being careful of the gospel. Watching out for additives. Thinking critically. But Paul says, do it. because the real gospel is made in heaven. Not by men. Which in the end is why real Christianity doesn't look like other religions at all. Because it isn't about what you have to do... It's about what's already been done... at the cross.

And if there's someone who wants to take away the freedom that comes from that, if there's someone who wants to bind you up with rules, to question whether you're saved, to lay something extra on your conscience, Paul says, stand your ground. Even in the face of opposition. And persecution.

Benjamin Franklin said, "Those that give up essential liberty for the sake of temporary safety - deserve neither liberty nor safety". Paul says, I didn't give into them for a minute (Gal 2:5). And this needs to be our position as well. Some false brothers had infiltrated our ranks to spy on the Freedom we have in Christ Jesus and make us slaves. We did not give into them for a moment ... so that the truth of the gospel might remain with you.

Talk 3 - Dead Right (Gal 2:11-21)

3.1 Dead To The Law

A friend of ours was always be telling us stories about his brother in law. This brother in law, he was always getting in trouble. And Barry was telling us, his brother in law got back to his car one day just as the parking policeman was writing him a ticket. And when he wouldn't stop writing the ticket, Barry's brother-in-law punched him. And so he was arrested. And the case went to court. He was fined. Something around two thousand dollars. And a couple of days later, before he's paid the fine, he drops dead from a heart attack. Now you need to know, he wasn't the sort of guy who'd leave behind many mourners. Especially not our friend Barry; but Barry did the right thing and flew to New Zealand to help his sister make arrangements. And one of the arrangements he had to make was to sort out the fine. Because it hadn't been paid. And now Barry's brother-in-law was dead. So Barry took the paper work, and he went in to the courthouse. And he says to the clerk behind the desk, "I've got my brother-in-law's penalty notice here. And I want to tell you, he won't be paying." Well, says the clerk, there are two options. He can pay up. Or he can serve time in jail instead. "He'll take the time in jail, thanks," says Barry, "where do you want us to put him, he's dead" Now of course, that puts a different complexion on things, doesn't it? Because if you're dead, there's nothing the law can do to you. When you're dead, no further penalty applies. When you're dead, you're free from the rule of law. And so instead of putting the dead brother in law in jail, the legal clerk just took the paperwork. And stamped "deceased" on it. And that was that. Which is kind of like the logic of what Paul's saying here in Galatians 2. That the hold of the Old Testament law, the rules, the requirements, the penalties that Israel had to live by ... their hold over him as Jew has gone. Because he's dead. Crucified. With Christ.

-so the law is dead to me

3.2 Three Consequences

Stop being divided by the law... and be united by Christ instead.

Stop trying to be justified by the law... and be justified by Christ instead

Stop trying to live by the law. And live by Christ instead

3.3 Consequences For Us

I wonder how well we've grasped this stuff. Three things Peter had wrong. Because he hadn't realised he was dead to the law, he was still trying to somehow live by it. Let it tell him who was decent and who wasn't. Do we do that? There were certain sorts of sinners Peter just didn't want to be seen with. Do we do that?

I read about a girl; a prostitute. Drug addict. Nowhere to turn. Her counsellor said to her, "Have you ever thought of going to a church for help?" The counsellor said later, "I'll never forget the look of pure shock on her face." "To a church?" she said. "Why would I ever go to a church?" She said, "I'm already feeling terrible about myself. They'd just make me feel worse!" Do we do that? Paul says the way to be counted righteous isn't hanging round with the right people and avoiding the wrong ones. It isn't about counting up other people's sins and throwing them back in their faces. It isn't even keeping the right rules. It isn't even being passionate about being holy. At every point, it's by holding on to Christ. Being united by Christ. Being counted right because we've died with Christ. And now living the life we're living, not by law - but by faith ... in Christ. Peter wasn't doing that. And he was leading other people astray. So Paul opposed him to his face, because he had it so clearly wrong. Maybe you've had it wrong as well. Time to think it through. Stamp "deceased" on all the baggage. And start living for Christ instead.

Talk 4—continued next page

Talk 4 - Deadly Deceptions (Gal 3:1-14)

4.1 You know you've been conned when...

I've got to confess, I don't often see those shows like *Today Tonight* or *A Current Affair*. Tracy Curro, Mike Munro, same old stories over and over again. And especially the stories about people who have been swindled. Ripped off by some clever con artist. There's one every week. Saw an ad for an upcoming episode the other day. A woman in tears, talking about the con where it looks like some guy pretends to be in contact with people who've died. And just from the preview, I don't know if they showed this on Friday or it's coming up on Monday, but it looks like the guy reads the funeral notices, then tracks down the phone number of the widow. And then out of the blue rings her up, and says he has a message from beyond the grave. "Was your husband's name Brian? He says he passed over the week before last. There's a message for you..." For a price. And people are sucked in. Or the other suckers recently who've been sending \$45 to a world famous clairvoyant at the Gold Coast. Who it turns out doesn't actually exist. It's a post office box. And a couple of people clear the mailbox and send you back fake information. Which I guess doesn't make that much difference, seeing as even if the guy in the ads did exist, the information would still be fake anyway. But there are thousands of people, sucked in. At \$45 a time.

Now when you see those stories - if you're anything like me - I reckon for most of us there are two things that go through your mind. The first is to feel sorry for them. Because they're so naive. Innocent victims. But the second thought - at least for me is... "How stupid can you be? How could you let yourself be conned like that? Couldn't you see that this was a rip off?"

Imagine thinking that you can get rich quick by signing over your life savings to someone you don't even know. Or thinking some clairvoyant can tell you some hidden secret about your future.

It is bad enough to see those things on TV but it is even worse when you see it happen to someone you know - someone close to you, or a member of your family. That feeling - the feeling of watching while someone you care for is being ripped off - is exactly the feeling Paul has as he's watching what's happening in Galatia.

4.2 You Foolish Galatians! (v 1, 3)

4.3 The Galatian's Experience (v 2-5)

- faith, not law

4.4 The Example of Abraham (v 6-9)

- faith, not law

4.5 Don't Be Fooled By Half The Truth

The law that brought curse...

- redemption has come

- the promised Spirit is here

4.6 Have you been conned?

Laws can change what you do. But they can't change who you are. Which is something only the Spirit can do. And the prophets were pointing forward to it for hundreds of years. The day the Spirit would come. Bring change on the inside. And Paul says, the day has come. The promised Spirit. Here at last.

So don't be conned. Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law? Of course you didn't. You received the Spirit by believing what you heard ... about the crucified Christ. The law doesn't bring the Spirit. The law can only bring curse. God's punishment. Now again... this is what the scriptures are saying. And it's clear, isn't it, we need to understand there's a progression ... from the Old Testament and Israel... to the Galatians. And us. And that the things that were said to Israel, we make a great mistake if we taken them on board and apply them to us... before we see they were pointing to Jesus. And how many generations of

Christians haven't understood that? And lived under the fear that somehow they mightn't be quite good enough ... to be accepted by God. That somehow they mightn't be quite righteous enough ... to make the grade. Or even worse... convinced they were ... and so could look down their noses at everyone else. Who didn't quite make the grade. People like that, Paul's got a word for them, hasn't he? And the word is fool. That you'd fall for the greatest con-job of all time; and trade the freedom and joy of the gospel, for a treadmill going nowhere. Trying and trying. Never quite getting there.

Let me give you a couple of quick tests to see if you've been conned. The first thing you'll find is you'll want to say "But ...". You'll say that's all very well what Paul's saying, but ... but you've got to get the balance. But you've got to keep parts of the law. But that's not what I heard when I was a kid. And I want to say on our way through Galatians, try to hear what Paul's saying. Before you say "But ...".

Here's another one. You'll be measuring yourself by a set of rules. That you'll be wanting to put on other people as well. And you'll never be quite sure you're going to make the grade with God. And it will irritate you when other people have a quiet sort of confidence. That you don't have.

Test number 3. You might find there's a harshness about your view of the Christian life. And that instead of being soft of heart, you'll find when you look inside there's something cold and hard and legalistic and critical.

It's a terrible thing to be taken advantage of, isn't it. Led astray. Make sure you're not. By working hard at thinking this stuff through. Because it's the very heart of the gospel. And above all else, keep your eyes on the centre... Paul says, "before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified". And only fools look anywhere else.

Talk 5 - The Brady Bunch (Gal 3:15-29)

5.1 Blended families

If you've ever seen the *Brady Bunch* on TV, where Mike Brady and his three sons marries Carol and her three daughters, and they live happily ever after, you'll know it's just fiction. Because real life is never quite that easy, is it. I mean, they have their ups and downs in the TV show, Marsha doesn't know what to wear to the formal, that sort of thing. But you get the overwhelming impression if you watch it, that blending a family like that is easy. And fun. But real life's not like that. I was talking to my mate Darrell a while back who's the Dad of a blended family. Two families broken by divorce. And now remarriage; taking on the challenge of being dad to three new children. At the same time as being dad to three boys of his own. And Darrell said to me, it's tough. He said, "I've figured out that blending a family takes at least three or four years." He's been at it for three years already. And he can just see the light at the end of the tunnel. Because it's hard work... bringing together two families with two histories, with two sets of expectations; two families that had their own ways of doing things, their own family traditions, their own family rules. In the TV version, Mike Brady just says, "You don't do that anymore. You're a Brady now." And the kids say, "Gee, you're right." And that's that. But in real life it's much harder.

Now have you noticed that's the key issue Paul's dealing with here in Galatians. Because it's all about blending two very different families into one family in Christ. Christians from the Israel family ... who have called God their father as long as they can remember, all the way back to Abraham. And Christians from the Gentile family ... who all their lives Jews have been taught to call unclean. Because they didn't have God's Old Testament law. They're ring ins. Without any of Israel's laws and rules. Who have heard about Jesus, who have

trusted in Jesus; without any of the background of being Jewish. And we saw last time, Paul's saying to these Christians in Galatia, whatever you do, whatever the pressure, don't be sucked back to the Old Testament law. He says, being part of the family is all about trusting Jesus ... not about living by the law.

5.2 So what's the deal?

- Can't set aside or add to the promise

5.3 The Promise and The Law

- a promise of one family
- law for part of the family

5.4 So why the law?

- because of transgression
- to supervise until Jesus

5.5 The Brady Bunch

- all one in Christ Jesus
- one-ness for us

Now friends, we've dug some tough ground this morning. But if nothing else made any sense to you, just stick with those last two verses. Because they sum it all up. And we maybe need to be reminded of what he's saying. Bringing together a blended family is never easy. But if you belong to Christ, that's what you're part of. One family. That mustn't be divided. Over petty squabbles. You might be a Jew. You might be a Greek. Which means, before, you'd never even touch one another. But all that's changed. You're one. You might be a slave. You might be free. Opposite ends of the social spectrum. But all that's changed. Because in Christ, you're one. Male, female, rich, poor, Mitchelton, Keperra, 8 am, 9:30 am; seats sideways, seats longways; Paul says remember this... You're one family. And you're not defined by law anymore. You're defined by your trust in Jesus.

Bringing together any sort of blended family is tough going. No matter what the Brady Bunch tells you. Especially a church family. At Presbytery the other night, we heard from a white South African pastor; talking about his church back home. He was asked if it was a mixed race church. He said, the Apartheid days are over. Finished ten years ago. And he said, we'd love to have a blende church. But out of their seven hundred members, all but two of them ... are white. It's hard to overcome all the history of being separate.

I wonder if there are some ways we're up against the same sort of pressures? A bit more subtle maybe? But it's easy for division to grow, isn't it. And there are some things we need to work at. As our church grows. Because there are people who might say, well, these new people in the 9:30 service, some of them aren't even Presbyterians. Don't want them. Or these young people who want things different. Don't want them. Or even just the fact that things change, there are new people you don't know... and you just feel too tired to be bothered knowing them. Let alone bringing them into the family.

Even in small ways, and I'm going to say this at our later service too, you need to take advantage of opportunities to grow as a family. Like morning tea between services. Say hello to people you don't know. Be a family builder. Someone said, well, the 9:30 people don't ever say hello to the 8 o'clock people. Well, you be first. Be a family builder. Because God's plan was always to bring together one family of blessing. A *Brady Bunch* family made up of all kinds of people. Not under law. But under Jesus. Sometimes people like you. Sometimes very different. But all of us one... in Christ Jesus who we serve. Let's make sure we live it.

Talk 6 - Slaves and Sons (Gal 4)

6.1 Shokio Yokoi - Maintaining the Rage...and Missing the End of an Era

In January 1972, a Japanese soldier was found hiding in the jungle on the island of Guam. 28 years after the end of the war. His name was Sho-ichi Yokoi, and he'd been living in a cave since the end of World War II. He was drafted into the Japanese army in 1941, became a Sergeant, and was stationed in Guam. Which was over-run by the Americans in 1944. He escaped into the jungle, and survived by eating nuts, berries, frogs, snails and rats. And for 28 years he hid there, not knowing the war was over. In fact, even when they told him, he wouldn't believe it. Until he was taken back to Japan.

When they brought him back to Japan, there was a huge crowd of reporters and TV cameras trying to get an interview with this old soldier who'd thought the war was still going for the last 28 years. And all he said was this: "It is with much embarrassment that I return".

Too right you'd be embarrassed. I mean, back in New South Wales where they have daylight saving, we forgot to change our clocks; turned up to church just as everyone leaving. That was bad enough. But Sho-ichi Yokoi got the time wrong by 28 years. Missed the end of an era ... and the start of a whole new one. Too right you'd be embarrassed.

Our passage in Galatians 4 is about a very similar embarrassing situation. About not noticing when it's the change of an era. About keeping on living an old way... when there's a whole new way. A better way. It's about people who want to keep on living like slaves ... when they've been set free. About people who want to keep living like children ... when they've grown up. People who still want to be under Old Testament law ... when there's a whole new covenant to live under and enjoy.

6.2 Slaves and Sons

6.3 How to Keep Living Like a Slave

- holy days, holy foods, holy rules
- Christianity is not a religion

6.4 Why Law-keeping Christians Can't Stand Free Ones

- a story from a church near here
- a story from Genesis 21

6.5 What's At Stake

- losing love
- losing joy

6.6 A Perplexed Apostle

How perplexing; how confounding; how incredible; that there are people who'd rather live like slaves under law... than like children who want to please their dad. Who'd rather celebrate a ritual... than live the day by day reality of celebrating freedom. Who'd rather observe a special day as a slave... than realise every day's a special day when you're a son. And yet it's not just a theoretical problem back then, is it? It's alive and well. At which point you can only say what Paul says in verse 19. He's brought them to birth once already when he preached the gospel to them in the first place. Now it's like he's doing it all over again ... as they're turning back the clock. And he says, "My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you... how I wish I could be with you now and change my tone, because I'm perplexed about you". Have a good think... what tone he'd use... how he'd feel... as he looked around us... here today. Sons? Or slaves? Understanding that things changed with the coming of Jesus? Or missing the point? Living under law? Or celebrating freedom? How is it with you?

Talk 7 - Free to be Fruitful (Gal 5)

7.1 Kidnapped

Forget about those 21 tourists who have been kidnapped in the Philippines. I reckon someone has kidnapped the Holy Spirit. Because there's the idea around that you only really get to meet the Holy Spirit in a certain type of church. And not in others. There's even a church that advertises... HOLY SPIRIT PRESENT HERE EVERY SUNDAY. As if the Holy Spirit might not be at the church round the corner. Especially, I guess if you asked them, especially if it's a Presbyterian Church.

And maybe there's a bit of a feeling with some of us, that because these days the Holy Spirit has been kidnapped, because there's the idea that the Holy Spirit is only there when there are people speaking in tongues or being miraculously healed or being slain in the Spirit and falling over, or laughing in the Spirit ... then we more cautious Christians don't talk about the Holy Spirit at all.

And I've been accused of that. You Presbyterians ... you have a two person trinity. No Holy Spirit. Because they say we don't have the healings and the slayings and the laughings on tap on a Sunday morning. Well, I want to ask you this morning, do you really believe in the Holy Spirit? And particularly... when you get rid of all the smoke and mirrors that some churches are so good at, when you clear all the rubbish... have you appreciated that God has given us the Holy Spirit... to make us holy people?

I mean, it's no accident, is it ... there's a pretty good hint in the name ... Holy spirit. And yet so many of the churches that say their focus is on the Holy Spirit, you see claims of healings and prosperity, people literally falling over by what they say is the power of the Spirit. And yet there's not so much interest in being holy by the power of the Spirit. Which says to me, there's something very wrong.

My friend Ted was pastor of a church like that. He was kind of competitive.

Kind of condescending. Kind of felt sorry for me, because I was the pastor of a conservative church that didn't have the Spirit. Whereas they did. And he'd often tell me about the dozens of people who he'd brought to the Lord that week. About the great healing last Sunday night. About the people he was seeing set free from evil spirits as they worshipped by speaking in tongues. And he'd tell me this stuff because he wanted me to know that he and the Spirit were mates. Partners - in a way that a Presbyterian couldn't even begin to understand.

Chris came to see me one day and there was a change of tone. And he said, "You've probably heard some rumours about me," he said as he looked me in the eye, "They're not true. I'm not having an affair at all. Let people know it's all lies." Two weeks later Chris left town. With the woman the rumours said he'd been having an affair with. Leaving his wife and kids. A tragedy. But it left me wanting to ask the question, if it's really true you've been such good mates with the Holy Spirit ... Where's the holiness? Where's the holy life? Because as we're going to see this morning, first and foremost, that's what the Holy Spirit is about. And as we've been grappling with what Paul's been saying about no longer living under law, as people have been asking the obvious question, well if we're not under the law, how are we meant to live... Paul has a simple answer. We live... by the Holy Spirit. Who changes us from the inside. In a way laws never could. And never can.

I heard someone say it about cricket a couple of weeks ago. In the middle of the betting scandal. They were saying, we'll bring in tougher rules. And somebody said on TV, the problem goes way deeper than that. You've got to deal with the problem on the inside. And it's true, isn't it? And so Paul here in Galatians 5, he's been saying to the Jewish Christians, "Don't impose the law on these newcomer non-Jews. Because the law could never bring righteousness. Only condemnation."

He says, "Don't be confused. What you need to become righteous, what you need to be holy... it isn't the law. It's what they've already been given. The Holy Spirit."

7.2 Not by Law But by The Spirit

- change from the inside is possible
- the law does not produce righteousness (v 4)
- but the Spirit does (v 5)

7.3 Free – for what?

- don't turn back to the law, but don't use your freedom for sin
- free to serve in love (v 13)

7.4 The War Within

- fruit of the sinful nature (v 19)
- fruit of the Spirit (v 22)

7.5 Serving God From the Inside-Out

- how is it with you?

Now can I ask you to think for a minute, is that how it is with you? Not that you're suddenly perfect when you become a Christian. But that there's fruit growing. That maybe brings a tension with the way you were. Because now your hearts greatest desire is to walk by the Spirit. And not just be at the beck and call of your built in sinfulness.

Paul says, it's a fact. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. And so since we live by the Spirit, he says, let's keep in step with the Spirit. And not give into the urges of conceit. Provoking. Envy. Which it seems like were pulling the Galatian church apart. Nothing more comical, is there, that a marching band ... with someone out of step. When they had that big fiasco about the Olympic marching bands, they showed a local band on TV they reckoned could do the job. And you had to laugh - it was so awful. Not

just out of tune. But half of them out of step, running into each other. Paul says, it's a fact - you're in the band. You've decided you're going to live by the Spirit. But that means every step ... every decision ... make sure you keep in step with the Spirit. And not your sinful desires that have got no place in the Kingdom of God.

So if you're someone caught up in sexual immorality - and it may be that some of you are - you need to get back into step. If you're caught in a spiral of drinking too much maybe - you need to get back into step. And you say, but I can't. Paul says, but you can. With the help of the Holy Spirit. Specialist in making people holy. Maybe you're consumed by envy. It's not fair, is it... that someone else gets to enjoy so much and you don't. That someone else gets so much attention. And you don't. Paul says that's the sinful human nature talking. Selfish ambition. Kill it. Or the innocent sort of stuff, just sharing a complaint with someone, just passing on to someone else something you heard about someone not happy with something. The seeds of dissension. The seeds of discord. Paul says, walk away from it... and keep in step with the Spirit instead. Which produces patience. Kindness. Gentleness. Self control.

Friends, no matter what you might have heard from your friends who go to other kinds of churches, if that's the way you're heading, if you're step by step walking with the Spirit, then you're living the Christian life. I was talking to someone last week, she said she used to go to a church, and they said to her, because she wasn't babbling in tongues she didn't have the Holy Spirit. Well, don't listen. The question is, how's your love? How's your joy? How's your peace and patience? How's your kindness? And your goodness? How's your faithfulness? And gentleness? How's your self control?

Talk 8 - Living by the Law of Love (Gal 6)

8.1 What difference does it make?

In all my eleven and a bit years as a preacher, I have to say these last few weeks working through Galatians has created more comments, more questions, more discussion - than anything I've preached through before. Some of it positive. Some negative. Some genuine questions, as we've worked together at understanding what I think is a very live letter ... raising live issues. That are just as real now as the day the ink was still wet on the parchment.

And so there have been people who have said to me, if we're not living under the Old Testament law, how do we know how to live? How do we bring up our kids ... if it's not to obey the Ten Commandments? And keep God's perfect law. It seems to me we've seen Paul saying, "Those days are over because we live for Jesus now and not under Jewish law. We live by the Spirit now." And so the Christian life is the live of changed hearts rather than laws written on stone. And so there have been other people who have said to me, Galatians has been liberating. It's been like a breath of fresh air. Someone said, it's taken me right back to the basics ... of what I heard when I first became a Christian fifty years ago. Or someone else who said, "Why haven't I been told this stuff before?"

The question this morning, though, is this: What difference does it make in practice? What difference is it going to make if you're a person who's been living under law ... and now you're living under freedom. If you're a person who's finding out what it means to move from a life full of religious rules and regulations and prohibitions - to something entirely different. Or if you're a person who's been hurt by those things. Because you can be, can't you.

Funny, think about it. The definition that says the Christian life, the religious life, is the life lived under law. In the end, can be very harsh. What people

like to call judgemental. And maybe in your heart of hearts you'd admit that sort of life can become conceited as well. Self satisfied that more or less in an outward way, you're doing what's required. And sticking to the rules. And if you're a person like that, when you come face to face with a person not like that, then the sparks fly. As you do a pretty darn good job of telling them where they're wrong. Of looking down your nose. Or of just subtly shunning the ones who don't quite match up... to the level of excellence you're setting them. The law centred life, the rule centre life; it can so easily keep all the rules.... and yet be conceited. Be judgemental. Looking for the sins of others as a chance to offer criticism. Looking at the obedience of yourself ... as a chance to gain esteem. Which is the exact opposite of what Paul calls in Galatians 6, the spiritual life. Being spiritual. Showing the fruit we saw last time... of love, and joy and peace and patience and kindness and goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control.

8.2 Two models of Christian living (v1-11)

- keeping the rules
- be proud of yourself
- be critical of others
- being truly "spiritual"
- sin kills, so correct... gently
- lighten the load
- do good whenever you can!
- share with your word-teacher

8.3 The Ground We've Covered (v11-18)

- circumcision? Who cares?
- what counts is a new creation

Well, get to verse 11 and we've just about made it. Paul's signing off, the scribe's done the writing and now Paul takes the pen and signs off. See what large letters I use as I write to you with my own hand. And let me make my point just a few more times before I go.

He says, "I've been telling you about people who say trusting Jesus isn't enough. I've been telling you about people who say you need to take on Jewish ways before you can be a Christian. Be circumcised. Obey the law. The time honoured way to be initiated as a Jew." He says, "I've also just finished telling you that it's what the Spirit does on the inside that's what counts." It's like a competition between the inward and the outward. They want to boast about what they do, boast about their rituals, make a good impression. That's what law keeping looks like. But he says, "You Gentiles, you there in Queensland, don't listen to people who want to lump law on you again. because that's not the stuff that counts. And they don't keep the standards they set anyway."

Not even those who are circumcised obey the law (v 13-14)... so why are they telling you to? They just want you to be circumcised that they may boast about your flesh. May I never boast. God forbid. Except in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ... through which the world has been crucified to me... and I to the world. Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything. Whether you're a Jew or a Greek or whatever else... what counts... is a new creation. New on the inside. By the Spirit of God.

He says, "Take notice. Don't cause me trouble. Because I've got the scars to prove I'm a soldier of the cross. Take notice and don't let this stuff go." And he says, "Peace ... and mercy ... to all who follow this rule. Because then you're the true Israel of God.

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