

Galatians: Freedom In Christ

Week 8: Who are you following? (Gal 4:8 – 4:20)

Look Around

Have you ever received conflicting advice from various church members about how to do something? How did you go about determining which advice to follow?

There are many opinions about how to practice our faith, and there is no shortage of people who want to offer their suggestion for how to live a life faithful to God. While listening to the counsel of those who have gone before us is good, we must always use discernment to evaluate the motivations of those who suggest we do things their way.

Look at the Text – Key Concepts

- **Justified** – Justification is a declaration from God that you are innocent of sin. Instead, you are in right standing (righteous) before Him. God, the judge, grants you freedom instead of condemnation. Justification is God’s declaration about the status of the relationship between God and an individual, not any change within the individual. In other words, justification doesn’t make anyone holy; it simply declares us not guilty before God and, therefore, treated as holy.

- **Righteousness** – righteousness embodies the character, behavior, and status appropriate for the covenant relationship between God and humanity. God demonstrates righteousness by being faithful to his promises. Humanity expresses righteousness in and through loyal obedience to God’s commands.

- **The Law** – The Mosaic Law refers to the laws God gave Moses on Mount Sinai after releasing the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. They include the Ten Commandments, ordinances for living in society, and regulations for worship (requirements for priests, sacrifices, feasts, and the temple). The Bible gives at least four reasons God gave the Mosaic Law to His people: for their own good, to reveal Himself to them, to set them apart in order to reveal Himself to others, and to reveal humanity's need for a savior.
- **The Spirit** – God sent his spirit, the Holy Spirit, to transform the character of God's people and to empower them to carry out God's will and purpose.

Look at the Text – Context

In this section of the letter, Paul makes a passionate plea for the Galatian congregation to look at the motivations behind the rival teachers. Unlike Paul, who is genuinely concerned about their salvation, the rival teachers are only interested in their conformity to The Law. The Galatians have a choice to make, imitate Paul, whose message leads to salvation. Or imitate the rival teachers, whose message causes them to turn their backs on the freedom they have in Christ.

Look at the Text – Observation & Interpretation

Galatians 4:8 – 4:20

Observation

- What was the condition of the Galatians before they were known by God?

- How did the Galatians treat Paul when they met him? What seemed to be their attitude toward him?

- How would you describe Paul's feelings over hearing that Galatians are following the rival teachers?

- According to Paul, what is the goal of the rival teachers?

Interpretation

- Why does Paul believe that the Galatians should know better than to turn back to observing special days and months as the rival teachers suggest?

- Why does Paul say that he is in the 'pains of childbirth' again? What is being birthed?

- Why does Paul so upset about the Galatians are turning their backs on his teaching to follow the rival teachers? What is at stake?

- Paul asks the Galatians to imitate him? What is it about Paul that they should be imitating?

Look At God

- It's one thing to know God, but it is something else to be known by God. Paul highlights this truth in Galatians 4:9 when he says, "But now that you know God - or rather are known by God." What does it mean to you to be known by God?

- Being known, seen, and understood is a basic need for all humans. How does being known by God deepen your relationship with him?

Look At Me

- In this passage, Paul let the Galatians know that he was shocked and saddened by their choices. It can be difficult to look at ourselves when someone calls out behavior that is less than what God has for us. Have you ever been approached by a brother or sister in Christ with concerns about your choices or behavior? If so, how did you receive the comments?

- What responsibility do believers have to evaluate the motives of leaders before following them?

- Can you think of any spiritual leaders you want to imitate? What is it about this person that makes them a role model for you?

- How can you make sure your behavior is worthy of being imitated?