

What is in view

As we turn back to Galatians, we are going to begin by dipping into some of the big ideas that are rooted in this letter. And, the first big idea we want to focus on is *having our faith firmly anchored in Jesus Himself*. We come to life by "faith in Jesus," and we grow by keeping our focus—and our faith—tied to Him!

What is helpful to note

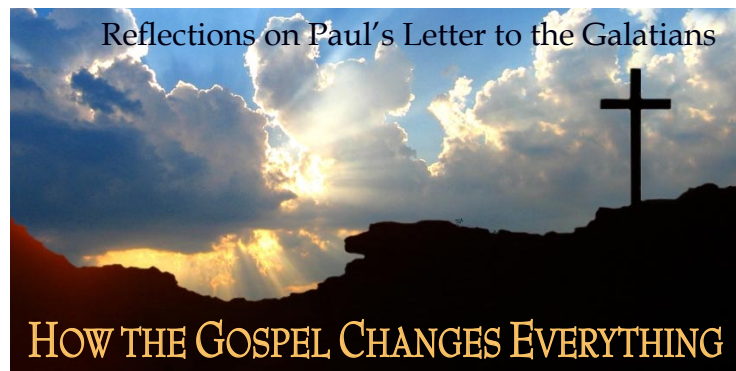
We are returning to a section of Galatians that we have already discussed in earlier weeks (and previous messages). However, we are coming back to this particular passage to make sure we anchor to this idea that we are to live by *continually looking to Jesus in faith*.

The false teachers that were troubling the Galatians believers were seeking to entice them away from a simple faith in Jesus by calling their attention to rules. But this false teaching wasn't simply "bad news" (as opposed to the "good news" of the Gospel); it really undermined the essence of the Gospel because it turned the eyes of faith from Jesus Himself to other things. (Notice the language of "personal desertion" found in Galatians 1:6-9 and 3:1.)

In Galatians 3:19-4:7, Paul lays out his understanding of what is at the heart of the Gospel of grace and how it focuses on Jesus Himself and what He did. As you read through the passage, notice the "faith" language.

By the way, Paul's language had one basic word for "faith" that English translations render with a variety of English words; faith and believe—and all its forms—all come from the same root.

"In addition to knowledge of the facts of the Gospel and approval of those facts, I must decide to depend on Jesus. I move from being an interested observer of the facts of salvation and the teachings of the Bible to being someone who enters into a new relationship with Jesus Christ as a living person."
Wayne Grudem



Faith: Firm persuasion, a conviction based upon hearing. The main elements in faith in relation to God are (1) a firm conviction, producing a full acknowledgment of God's revelation of truth; (2) a personal surrender to Him; and (3) conduct inspired by such surrender.[†]

In other words, faith's "composite parts" include allowing God's truth to lead us to depend on Him ushering into a living out of that dependence.

As you explore and discuss Galatians 3:19-4:7, keep this idea of faith in mind; it is more than merely assenting to facts about Jesus. The basic thrust of the idea is to truly rest on, rely on, depend on Jesus to do something! And, any teaching that draws us away from that whole-hearted dependence is spiritual trouble. (As Paul so eloquently but forcefully put it in Galatians 1:6-9.)

Paul's understanding of faith is implicit in this passage; it is woven throughout what he is saying. As you are discussing it, you may have to bring to the surface the importance both of keeping our eyes on Jesus and our ongoing dependence upon Him. Help your people grasp the idea that faith is so much more than affirming something about Jesus, but is really about ongoing dependence upon Him. (Take note of the quote from Wayne Grudem's *Systematic Theology* on the first page of these notes; the same quote appears on the discussion question handout.)

How can you help your people see this simple although essential idea of ongoing faith in Jesus? Talk with them about what they are *believing Jesus for*.

Even those who don't really know Jesus can and do say "I believe in Jesus." What they mean is that they acknowledge His existence and affirm certain basic facts about Him. But, biblically, faith is so much more than that. It really is about moving through the truths about Him (that the Scriptures reveal) to a place of real and personal dependence on Him to act in our lives and do what He has said He would do.

This discussion could be rich soil out of which some fruitful time of prayer could come. Make sure you create some "space" in your meeting time for your people to really lean into the idea of *believing in Jesus*.

"The man said that he believed what his church believed. There are a great many in that same state of mind. They believe what the church believes, but they do not know what that is. But all the churches in the world can't save a soul. The only faith that will ever save a soul is to have faith in Christ Jesus."
D. L. Moody

[†] W. E. Vine, *Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Old Tappan, NJ: Revell, 1966).

Questions for Reflection and for Group Discussion

Thinking . . .

Sometimes, when you listen to something someone is saying, you can “trust” in different ways. Perhaps you trust what he or she says; or maybe you really trust him or her. What is the difference?

How could someone tell if you really trusted him or her (as opposed to simply affirming that he or she “told the truth”)?

Reflecting . . .

As we think back over some of the big ideas in Galatians, let’s focus on “faith” (or, to use a synonym, “trust” or “belief”). Read through Galatians 3:19-4:7, noting how and why Paul mentions the idea of faith.

What does he indicate is included in “believing” or “having faith” in Jesus?

How does that differ from simply “affirming truths” about Jesus? Why would it be important to notice that difference?

What does Paul intimate happens in the life of one who *does* come to really put faith in or believe in Jesus?

Responding . . .

What are you trusting Jesus to do for you? What are you “believing in Him *for*”? (As opposed to “believing Him” as if it were simply about Him being “truthful.”)

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Reflections on Paul’s Letter to the Galatians



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