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Join the Party
Galatians 3: 1-9
sunday November 16th, Steve Karadimas

Hey everybody, how's it going? who here has wasted sometime this week on the internet? I'm right there with you, I waste a lot of time on the internet, I wasted some time on the internet this week looking for quotes about the internet, and here's a few I'm going to share with you.

[2]

[a]

"Google can bring you back 100,000 answers. A librarian can bring you back the right one."
— Neil Gaiman

[b]

"The Internet is so big, so powerful and pointless that for some people it is a complete substitute for life."
— Andrew Brown

[c]

"We've all heard that a million monkeys banging on a million typewriters will eventually reproduce the entire works of Shakespeare. Now, thanks to the Internet, we know this is not true."
— Robert Wilensky

this is all very true, once as I was going through the internet without any specific goal in mind I discovered the flat earth society web page, and this is a real thing.

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I went on to their website and this is their main statement on the earth:

The flat earth society holds "that the earth is a flat disk centred at the North Pole and bounded along its 'southern' edge by a wall of ice, with the sun, moon, planets, and stars only a few hundred miles above the surface of the earth."

They believe this way because there are certain obviously metaphorical passages in the bible that refer to the corners of the earth and if it has corners it can't be round. well...people never cease to amaze me. This is what they believe the earth looks like...

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by the way the white around the edges is the giant ice wall keeping all the water in...and the funny thing is is that their whole reason to believe this is because the bible talks about the corners of the earth and this picture doesn't even have corners...

here's the thing, not that I need to prove to you that the earth is round because hopefully we're all on the same page here. Every scientist, pilot, astronaut and everybody who has ever been to antarctica would have to be in on this round earth conspiracy theory. So I'm gonna choose to believe that every one of those people aren't lying to me. and on top of that there are pictures taken from space of the earth, here is one taken by apollo 17,

[5]

and low and behold it's round...who knew.it's so clear there's a picture right there it's obvious right in front of your eyes and yet some people still don't believe it.

This insanity of not believing something that's right in front of your eyes didn't start with the flat earth society it goes back to the Galatians.We've been going through the book of Galatians and we're starting with chapter 3 today with possibly my favourite passage of the whole book, this is what it says.

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Galatians 3: 1-9

O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified. Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by[a] the flesh? Did you suffer so many things in vain if indeed it was in vain? Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith just as Abraham “believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness”?

Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, “In you shall all the nations be blessed.” So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.”

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The meaning of Christ's death was so obvious, in fact, in the NLT it says that ***“the meaning of Jesus Christ's death was made as clear to you as if you had seen a picture of his death on the cross.”*** it is so obvious, it is as obvious as the fact that the earth is round and they didn't get it. Paul is so confused at how oblivious they are that he asks if they had been cursed if some witch had come in and cast a spell on them so that they lost their common sense, because he can't believe how ridiculous this is. They know the truth, they know that they are saved by grace through faith. but they have added to this and diluted it. the truth was so clear to them and they disregarded it.

Imagine having a conversation with someone from the flat earth society, you could talk about how Pilots who fly internationally would have to know that the earth is round because if they fly in a straight line they'll get back to where they started. The person from the flat earth society would say that it's a conspiracy, you could show them pictures of the earth from space showing that it's round and they would tell you that it's faked. after a while in this conversation you would have to ask like what's going on is somebody controlling your brain to say these things, it would be near impossible to believe that someone doesn't understand something that is so obvious.

Paul is equally confused when speaking with the Galatians. It was made very clear to them that Jesus death freed them from sin and from the law and now they're not believing that, he's shocked. So Paul now thinking that these people are spiritually stupid asks them this question “ Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith?”

this is an easy question. So if you don't steal, don't lie, and you honor your parents do you receive love, joy peace, do you receive the Holy Spirit...No, of course not. Following the rules isn't the key to living a life full of the Spirit. So we know that following the rules isn't the way to receive the Spirit or the fruits of the Spirit. So Paul only gives us two options so the second one must be right, we receive the Spirit by hearing with faith.

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Now let me explain what this is. There are three types of hearing that I know of, two of which are not what is happening hear. I believe that the first level of hearing can only be accomplished by the male gender and this is the zoned out hearing which is what we have here on our slide. there are times in life where my brain is so empty and void of intelligible thought that I'm barely conscious and Sarah will ask me to do the dishes and my instincts will tell me that there was a noise but I have no idea what was said and I'll continue doing nothing. If someone explains the gospel to you and that is how you hear it, you will not receive the Spirit, right? I think we can understand that.

There is a second kind of hearing where you are conscious enough to actually comprehend the words Steve go do the dishes and I go do the dishes because that's what I am supposed to do, I don't want to

do them, I don't care about what I am doing I just do it out of obligation because my wife told me to. Unfortunately that's not it either. That's actually the main point that Paul is speaking against, it's not just a bunch of rules that you have to follow. If you hear the gospel, and you put into your brain that you now have to follow the rules so that the bad things don't happen, you haven't really heard the message. You missed something.

There's a third kind of hearing that we don't do nearly enough. and this is that rare time that I'm actually being the good husband that I should be and my wife asks me to do the dishes and out of love for my wife I do the dishes to show her that I love her, and I do the dishes with joy. That is what hearing with faith is. we hear the news and have faith that God loves us and wants what's best for us so we obey, but we obey out of love and not obligation.

but the Galatians started off so well and got off track so quickly and it's sad, it's sad because I see this happen way too much. Paul says this is what happened ***"Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? Did you suffer so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain?"*** this would be like me starting off doing the dishes out of love for my wife and then adding a bunch of stuff to that and making a checklist of which areas of the kitchen needed to be clean and when they needed to be clean and robotically doing it. And caring more about finishing my checklist than loving my wife I would have missed the point.

And the Galatians missed the point. Do you ever miss the point? I know I do...

You know you've missed the point when you're following rules instead of Jesus.

You've missed the point when you're following rules instead of following Jesus.

I have some quotes from a Christian University in the states, and these are some rules in their current student handbook.

[9]

Male students must obtain the dean's approval to date a female day student or non-student. [page 25]
The school reserves the right from forbidding any student from getting a job and working in the community. [page 26]

Students cannot attend sporting events or paid events on Sunday. [page 27]

Any music which, in whole or in part, derives from the following broadly defined genres or their sub-genres: Rock, Pop, Country, Jazz, Electronic/ Techno, Rap/Hip Hop or the fusion of any of these genres is banned even if it is Christian. [page 29]

Students may only view "G" rated movies in private. [page 29]

Tattoos are forbidden. [page 34]

Only two matching ear piercings are acceptable. [page 34]

Men working out are only allowed to wear sleeveless athletic shirts if they are exercising inside.

Sideburns cannot be lower than the opening of the ear. [page 37]

Male students must shave their faces every morning if they are under 25 years old.

it's no coincidence that after I turned 26 I started growing a crappy beard...This is the definition of not getting it. The sad thing is that the people who wrote this know Jesus they've seen him, they have seen how he lived and how he acted. They've heard and believed that Jesus died for them so that they can have eternal life. They know that it is for freedom that they have been set free from the law and they have been welcomed into relationship with Christ.

They know that, that's the gospel and they added all of this stuff to it, they diluted it and in doing so they ruined it. It breaks my heart because they're trying so hard but they've missed the point.

here's the thing it's easy for most of us to look at the examples I gave and say that we're not legalistic, we're not like the judaizers and we don't add law onto the gospel. now I'm not a rules kinda guy, when I

first heard we were going through Galatians I was like perfect, Paul getting mad at a bunch of legalists, he's not talking about me, I got this one covered. here's the thing, I make my own rules that I need to follow so that I think I will be loved more by God. and I think a lot of us do. One of the things I say to myself is that the more hours I put into my work that means I will be a better Pastor and a better Christian.

no, as soon as I link any rule, or any law or any behaviour to my faith, and I say I need to do this to be a better Christian I miss the point. Whenever you say you need to do something to be a better Christian you missed the point and you're just like the people who wrote that student handbook and we're just like the judaizers that Paul is talking to right here. it's us! I know Jeff says this a lot but don't be thinking that someone else needs to hear this message today, think that you need to hear this message today, Paul is talking to us here when he calls us all foolish, that's us!

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Today he might start this letter with Oh foolish people of Campbell River Baptist church who has bewitched you? Have you allowed rules and legalism to take precedence over the Holy Spirit? I know I have. here's something to think about, often I get the opportunity as a Pastor to ask how people are doing spiritually. and when I ask that I'd say at least three quarters of the time I hear the response of something along the lines of well, I'm not in my bible as much as I'm supposed to be and I'm missing some of my scheduled daily devotions or something along those lines. Sometimes I will hear something like Oh it's really good I've been going to three different youth groups and I'm reading the bible a lot. none of those are answers.

I'm asking how you're doing spiritually not how you're doing legalistically. are you growing in the fruits of the Spirit, are you loving? joyful? peaceful? patient? kind? Good? faithful? gentle? and do you have self control? that is the actual question, because how much time you've spent in the bible does not directly compare to how your faith is. While we know that God speaks to us through the bible and God uses our time in scripture to grow our faith. But one hour in the bible does not always equate to a better relationship with God. The Holy Spirit is what it's about and when you have a relationship with God and you want to get to know God better the Holy Spirit will reveal in you something in you that you need to work on.

One thing that the Spirit is revealing in me is that I need more patience, I struggle when I have to wait, or when I have to explain things repeatedly. God is revealing some of the roots of this cause and I am becoming more patient the more time I spend with God talking about this. The other way to go about this is to make rules. I could say I have to choose the longest line in every situation, I have to always drive under the speed limit even when I'm rushed, I could go on and on and follow all the rules and then I could say that I'm patient. But if my heart doesn't change I would just be following a bunch of rules and in my mind and in my heart I would still be just as impatient. You see the difference there. You can be filled with the Holy Spirit or you can follow the rules. One will change you from the inside out. and one will just change the outside and not affect your heart at all.

the example that gets brought up to us I think is a great example, it's a little confusing but I'm glad Paul gives us this example here which is Abraham, this is what it says in Galatians 3:5-9

[11]

Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith just as Abraham "believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness"?

Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "In you shall all the nations be blessed." So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.

So thank goodness it's not just the Jews, us gentiles get to share in this blessing through faith! And Abraham is our example of someone who didn't just follow the rules but believed God, and had faith, this is our goal. So what is it about Abraham? I mean Abraham had some screw ups, he didn't do what he was supposed to. Let's have a look at how Abraham did with Religion and following the rules:

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Abraham's religious test:

Question 1. *Is it a good idea to lie to the Egyptians and say that your wife is your sister so they sleep with her and in return you get a free camel? yes*

Question 2. *If your wife says to sleep with your maidservant is it a good idea? yes*

question 3. *should you try to pawn your wife off as your sister a second time because you have some crazy fear that people are going to kill you because your wife is pretty? yes*

no Abraham, those are the wrong answers! that's not what you're supposed to do! why is this guy the example? he's clearly a train-wreck. well the big thing is Abraham allowed what he knew to change his heart. that is the key: allowing what you know to change your heart.

First off Abraham left everything at age 75 to follow God: **Genesis 12:1-4**

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Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." So Abram went, as the Lord had told him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.

Later showing even more faith he was willing to sacrifice his only son to God when God provided a ram for the offering. That is Faith that changes how you live. now that's different from the law because at some point you won't follow the law, it will become too hard. some of you are very good at following rules. the Pharisees were so good at following the rules, they can not eat certain foods and only take a certain amount of steps on certain days but if it's just rules your following there will come a time where you won't follow the rule.

Abraham was put to the test and was told to sacrifice his **son!** and if all Abraham's faith was about was following the rules, he would have said "screw it, I'm not following this rule" You can make all the rules you want to be a good Christian but for each of you there will be a rule that you just don't want to follow. and if your faith is about the rules and you screw up one time, you have failed and you deserve death.

Romans 6:23 says ***For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*** That's what our sin does, so if we screw up in following the rules, we deserve death.

But Abraham has an obvious example that it's not about rules for him, he has faith that God is good, and that God loves him and will do what is best for him so out of love he obeys and God proves to him that he is good by providing a ram for the sacrifice. Now throughout Abraham's life he screws up, he doubts, he questions God and everything, but that's ok because his faith isn't centred by how good he does, his faith is centred on how good God is, and that even when he does screw up God shows grace and forgiveness.

The passage closes with this ***“So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham.”*** This is what I want for all of you. I really do. It makes me sad when I see people caught up in religion. it infuriates me that Satan has twisted something good and uses it to enslave us so we don't see the freedom that Christ brings. This faith is being confident in what Christ has done so that we know we don't need to put works on top of this.

I'm gonna end with a little story, because I titled this sermon join the party and you guys might be thinking where's the party, well the party is here at the end because even though Paul was clearly upset with the Galatians he says you can be blessed like Abraham through a faith that will change your life.

So here's my story

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Probably 3 and a half years ago Sarah's birthday was coming up and I had no idea what to get her. I knew she wanted a party and I knew she wanted all of her friends together to all hang out, and I had that organized but I wanted to get her something. I felt like I had to buy her something. So I went to the store the day before just looking for something, anything to get her. I ended up buying just some really cheap looking board game and a poster or something. So I wrapped that up and we were having the party and she was having a good time and I gave her this gift and she was like, wow awesome I can see that you didn't put any thought into this and it actually would have been better if we just had the party and I didn't give her anything.

the same goes for our relationship with Christ if we just last minute decide to go hand out food to the homeless and we do that out of obligation or we just follow rules because we have to, that is a cheap gift to God that he doesn't want from us. He wants us to be part of the party to be in a relationship with him and through that he'll change our life. You don't need to be frantically running around following all the rules you can to impress God, that is a cheap gift to him anyways. He just wants you to join the party, be in relationship with him. talk to him, spend time with him, get to know him better. when you do that you will be filled with the Spirit which is unlike anything that legalism can ever give you. And then guess what the Spirit will put a burden on your heart to feed the homeless and love your neighbour, but that starts with a relationship with God. So join the party!

Close in prayer



Galatians: Learning to Live in the Freedom of Christ
Join the Party
Galatians 3:1-9
Week of November 16th, 2014

Objective of this study: To understand the difference between following rules and following Jesus, and to move even more towards following Jesus.

Worship (5 – 10 minutes)

1. Spend five minutes in silent prayer asking God to prepare your heart for how he wants to speak to you.
2. After the five minutes of silence have someone interrupt the silence and read **Psalm 105:1-4** meditatively to the group. Then pause for about a minute and let it sink in.
3. Sing a song or two of praise and thanksgiving to God.

Welcome (5 – 10 minutes)

Have you ever gotten in trouble by not hearing something properly?

Word (20 - 30 minutes)

1. What stood out from the sermon?
2. Read Galatians 3:1-9 and Genesis 12:1-4.
3. Verse 1: What is Paul's tone to the Galatians? Why?
4. Verse 2: What is 'hearing with faith'?

To help you with this, let's review Steve's 3 types of hearing:

1. 'Male-gender-specific-zoner hearing' (lol!! :D). Can you think of any examples of this?
2. 'Conscious enough to hear but you miss the point.'

Sermon quote: "If you hear the gospel, and you put into your brain that you now have to follow the rules so that the bad things don't happen, you haven't really heard the message. You missed something."

3. 'Hearing with faith.'

How would you describe this? What does hearing with faith lead to? Think about Abraham.

5. What is it about Jesus that we NEED to not miss? See Galatians 3:1,8-9 and Colossians 1:26-27 (read this in several versions, including the NLT.)
6. Review Genesis 12:1-4.

What was God's promise to Abraham? Was this given before or after the Law was given to the Jews via Moses?

7. How did Abraham's faith in God's promise affect his life? That is, what did he do because of believing God's promise? (Genesis 12:1-4.)

Work (30 - 40 minutes)

1. Like Abraham, we can hear and believe God's promise to us, and base our life on it. We have been "welcomed into relationship with Christ." Sermon quote: "You've missed the point when you're following rules instead of following Jesus." What is the difference between following rules, and following Jesus?
2. As Steve said on Sunday, it's easy to think 'He's not talking about me, I've got this one covered.' And yet we all need to consider Paul's question in verse 3: "Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?" Stop and think, what are some ways you allow rules and legalism to take precedence over the Holy Spirit?
3. Abraham's faith in God's promise changed his life. Likewise, God wants us to "be in relationship with him and through that he'll change our life." He "wants you to join the party, be in relationship with him. Talk to him, spend time with him, get to know him better. When you do that you will be filled with the Spirit which is unlike anything that legalism can ever give you. So join the party!" How has this been true in your life with Jesus?

PRAYER TIME/HOMEWORK

1. Spend time worship God for his amazing grace through Jesus.
2. Read Galatians again this week at least once more in one sitting.
3. Meditate on verses that God uses to speak powerfully to you, perhaps **Colossians 1:26-27**, passages from Galatians, or others verses used in the sermon.
4. Journal about what God is showing you.