



my grandma time

...doing simple things together!

Week 48, Day 1 --- Galatians 4-6

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Week 48, Day 3 --- 1 Thessalonians 1-5 - 2 Thessalonians 1-3

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Week 48, Day 1 --- Galatians 4-6

What is Paul's greatest fear expressed in this letter to the Galatians? If God is only lawgiver and judge, then what is described in the Bible is a religion. A religion is a group of things to do to please a superior being or achieve some eternal goal. Following Jesus is not a religion. It is a relationship that is designed to bring us freedom and blessing so that we can spread freedom and blessing to others.

Paul describes two directions in chapter 5. These sentences are very close to each other in the text, but describe totally different directions

Galatians 5:4 - You who are trying to be justified by the law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.

Galatians 5:6b - The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.

The first direction is the direction of the slave. We try to be made right by keeping the law and we continually fail. We view God as master and we get farther and farther away from Him. The second direction is the direction of the son. We view God as Father and because we trust Him we desire to share His love for us in acts of love toward others. The slave is led by his body and the son is led by the Spirit.

Paul contrasts the two at the end of chapter 5. I would encourage you to memorize Galatians 5:22, 23. How much is your life an expression of these things? The more you see these things in your life the more you know the Spirit is at work in you.

Week 48, Day 2 --- Acts 17:1-18:18

Paul is now in Greece and as he travels from town to town he talks to everyone he can about the resurrection of Jesus. He always starts by finding the local synagogue, the place that the Jews worship, and speaking there. He is almost always thrown out of the synagogue. Sometimes this happens quickly, and sometimes it takes weeks, but it almost always happens. Once he is thrown out of the synagogue Paul find other places where people gather and begins speaking directly to the Gentiles.

The Jews who reject Jesus generally reject Him because the message of grace means freedom from the law and it is keeping the law that makes the Jews special in their own eyes. The Gentiles who reject Jesus generally reject Him because a relationship with Jesus means leaving behind a lifestyle of lust and

greed. At this time it was not popular to become a follower of Jesus. Christians were persecuted and the persecution gets worse as the years go by. Why do you think people decided to follow Jesus anyway?

Week 48, Day 3 --- 1 Thessalonians 1-5 - 2 Thessalonians 1-3

Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 (NIV)

There is an urgency in Paul's letter to the church in Thessalonica unlike some of his other letters. He had started the church on his way from Philippi to Athens. Paul developed deep relationships quickly, especially with those who eagerly responded to the good news he was preaching. He considered each new church he started to be like his children and he worried about them.

At this time believers were being persecuted. They may not have been being killed, but they were being kept from buying and selling. In some cases they were being arrested and kept in prison. They were certainly being ridiculed. Unfortunately, their response was to begin to argue with each other. Someone began a rumor that Jesus had already returned and they had missed Him. If that was the case, then why continue to believe. Their hope was in eternal life and if they had missed that then there was no reason to continue following Jesus. Paul wants them to know that Jesus had not yet returned so that they would continue to hope.

Paul makes this very clear in his second letter. Apparently, this false teaching about Jesus' return is causing many to lose hope and give up. Do not lose hope. Do not give up. God keeps His promises and Jesus is going to return to take us home to be with Him forever.

Week 48, Day 4 --- Acts 18:19-19:41

Today's passage provides background on the times and places behind the letters that Paul wrote that make up most of the New Testament. Ephesus was on the sea coast in what is now Turkey. It was a large commercial city and many people traveled through it. Some people as they traveled through heard the gospel and became followers of Jesus. They took their belief with them when they returned to their home towns. The early opposition to Christianity was Judaism, but as Christianity became more popular Christianity experienced opposition from the pagan religions as well. Eventually, Christianity would become so popular that it would experience political opposition and that is when the greatest persecution began. Paul stayed at Ephesus for a long time and it is generally agreed that he wrote several of his letters while he was there.

Week 48, Day 5 --- 1 Corinthians 1-4

The city of Corinth was an evil city. It was known for widespread sexual immorality. In spite of that the good news of Jesus' death and resurrection was well received and a large growing church began after Paul's visit there. This church quickly developed problems. Several teachers had come through Corinth and each had impacted the church. Unfortunately, people in their pride were seeking a way to be superior and they tried to do this by aligning themselves with one of the teachers. Some even saw through this and aligned themselves with Jesus, but Paul doesn't commend them for this as their attitude seems to be as bad as everyone else's is.

Apparently Paul had received a letter from the church that was filled with information about what was going on and included a series of questions. These first few chapters are Paul's answer to the situation and in the next chapters he will begin answering their questions.

God's desire is that we be unified as His children. The only way this can happen is when we are filled with and guided by the Holy Spirit.

Week 48, Day 6 --- 1 Corinthians 5-8

In this section Paul deals with two very practical matters that are troubling the church in Corinth, sex and food. It is hard to imagine that there would be society where it would be easier to have sex outside of marriage. In Corinth, as in Ephesus, all a person had to do was to go to the local temple. Women, married and single, would go there to have sex with whoever came as they served their goddess as temple prostitutes. Men would go to have sex with those prostitutes and there were both male and female prostitutes. It was incredibly easy to have sex. The concept of being faithful to a husband or wife for a lifetime was a new concept.

In chapter 5 Paul is concerned that the standards of the community are seeping into the church. Everyone sins, so Paul isn't talking about breaking up the church. The issue is that this man who is having sex with his step mother is boasting about it and the community within the church is acting like this is okay. If something isn't done the community will be destroyed.

In chapter 6 Paul explains the significance of sexual sin. Sex is good. In fact, from God's perspective sex is very good. He created it and designed it to be an incredibly pleasurable and meaningful part of the marriage relationship. Through sex a couple becomes one body. The problem comes when I use sex for my own personal pleasure and have no commitment to the person I'm having sex with. The word this is translated sexual immorality is the same root word that is defined as pornography. The basic idea of sexual immorality is that I am using another person for my pleasure. This can happen in marriage, but is the basis for almost all sexual relationships outside of marriage.

In chapter 7 Paul talks about marriage. It seems that the church was confused. They knew they were having struggles with how to deal with sex. It would seem that some people were over-reacting and saying that all sex was bad. Paul wants them to understand that sex is good. He also wants them to understand that sex is not a necessity. There have been many people through history who have given themselves completely to God and remained single for their entire lives. However, recent events within the church have made it very clear that not everyone should be single. In my opinion, the recent sexual abuse scandals are the result of misapplying this passage of scripture and forcing singleness on men who want to serve God, but who do not have the gift of sexual abstinence.

Finally, in chapter 8 Paul talks about food. The Jews made a big deal about food and had rules for everything. They would rarely leave their home to eat because they couldn't be certain about how the food was prepared. They certainly wouldn't consider eating food that had been sacrificed to an idol. In Corinth the temples were both brothels and restaurants or butcher shops. People brought animals to the temple and they were slaughtered and butchered there. If you wanted fresh meat for dinner this was the most likely place you would go to buy it. Unfortunately, for someone who had just become a follower of Christ after having served an idol for all his life this meat had special meaning. Eating this meat was an act of worship to the idol. Paul is saying that the person who feels this way shouldn't eat

this meat. Beyond that he is saying that any believer should give up meat if it will get in the way of someone else's relationship with God.

Week 48, Day 7 --- 1 Corinthians 9-11

Paul continues talking about how to decide what to eat. He describes a principle that really applies to all our choices in life. Every choice I make ought to be made with the salvation of those around me in mind. How I talk, what I eat, what I watch, and where I go all impact what others think about Jesus. It is probably better to say that people are watching how I do all of these things more than what I am doing. The test case that Paul presents is interesting and gets repeated over and over in our own time. A believer is going to dinner. The host believes that meat sacrificed to an idol is significant and believes that a follower of Jesus should not eat it. He makes certain that the believer knows that the meat was sacrificed to an idol. He is testing to see if the believer will violate the rules – not God's rules, but the world's understanding of God's rules. The believer should become a vegetarian for the evening.

In the middle of this section there is a great verse to memorize:

1 Corinthians 10:3 -- No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.

We will be tempted, but God is protecting us and providing for us. There is always a way out. There is always a choice.

A central part of the gatherings of early Christians was what we now call Communion or the Lord's Supper. They called it the love feast. It was the time they shared bread and wine together and remembered Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. Unfortunately, what Jesus had designed to be very simple had become a huge meal and people were either acting selfishly and taking more than their share of food, or they were getting drunk. Neither of these behaviors are appropriate when the focus is supposed to be on Jesus and what He did for us. Paul gives the church some very practical instruction to guide their observance of the Lord's Supper.