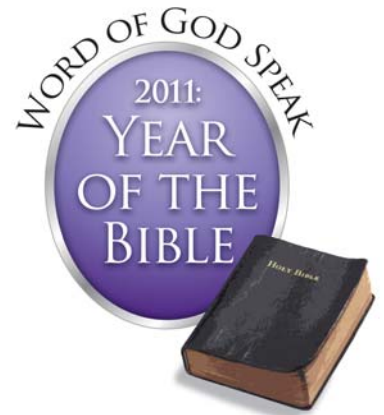


## Week 39: 2 Corinthians 10 – Galatians 4 Study Guide for the week of September 26 – October 2, 2011



### Personal reflection / journaling exercise

This week, spend time with Galatians. As you read through Galatians, notice the strong language that Paul uses? (see 1:6,8,9; 3:1; 4:9; 5:2,12) Paul uses this strong language because what is at stake here is of the highest importance, i.e., the central Christian teaching that we are saved by grace alone through faith alone. The book of Galatians is Paul's most impassioned teaching on this central Christian belief. Paul is teaching against those who were teaching a "Gospel Plus ..." – the idea one must follow Jewish religious rituals in addition to what the Gospel teaches (e.g., believers must be circumcised). Where have you encountered situations of "Gospel Plus ..."? Reflect on Galatians 2:16. Being justified here means to be declared "not guilty" before God and therefore saved by grace. What does it mean to you that you are saved by grace alone and that you are declared "not guilty" (justified) by faith alone in Jesus? What does it mean to you to be free from having to prove yourself righteous before God? Where in your own thinking are you tempted to add some condition or behavior to what it takes to be justified? Reflect on Galatians 2:20a in the context what is taught in Galatians. How do you experience having your schemes to justify yourself being crucified with Christ? What new or deeper understandings of the central belief that we are saved by grace through faith alone did you gain from reading Galatians?

**Discussion starters** *If you are leading a small group, you may not have time for all of these questions. Pick the ones that will work best for your group.*

1. Ice Breaker Question: When did the central teaching of Christianity, that we are saved by faith in what Jesus did (grace) and not by what we do, finally become clear to you?
2. Was there something that jumped out at you, surprised you, encouraged you, or disturbed you from the readings this last week (or two)? Why?
3. 2 Corinthians 10:5 This is a powerful verse! Talk through it and explain what it is teaching. Do you think it would be possible for you to *take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ*? Would you like to be able to do this? What would that be like for you if you could? What would be a first step in making that happen?
4. 2 Corinthians 12:7-10 How does Paul explain the purpose of his "thorn in the flesh"? What do you think this torment might have been? What is a suffering, loss, or disappointment that you experienced that God used to bring His meaning or purpose into your life? What was the meaning or purpose that you gain.
5. Galatians 2:15-21 Here is again one of Paul's summary statements teaching what the gospel is. Reading through this one carefully, what new insight do you gain into the gospel?
6. Galatians 3:15-25 In these verses, Paul teaches that the promise was given to Abraham before the law was given to Moses. Paul uses this historical truth to point to the promise of salvation we receive through faith in Jesus. How is it good news to you that the promise of God comes before the law?
7. Galatians 3:22 Where do you see examples that the "whole world is a prisoner of sin"? Where do you see this in your own life?
8. Galatians 3:28 The three categories listed here represented the three major distinctions that Jews of the time had for dividing up people. A Jewish male thought himself privileged and would thank God that he was not a gentile (Greek), a slave, or a woman. Throughout history, Christians have been in the forefront of movements to break down barriers of prejudice and establish justice. What barriers of prejudice has the gospel of Jesus Christ broken down? What are some negative examples from history where Christians have gone against Galatians 3:28 and created or sustained barriers? Where is a place in society today

where Christians need to work to tear down barriers? What does this verse teach you about the way you treat others?

### **Bible verse to memorize: Galatians 2:20a**

#### **Caring Time**

It is important to make time in your group to care for each other. Sometimes that happens during the discussion and sometimes it is best to end your time together praying for each other. You are invited to do some “theological reflection” in your prayers this week. Building off of Galatians 2:15-20, answer this question for yourself:

**Where do I continue to feel enslaved because in my thinking am I still trying to justify myself before God or others?**

After everyone has shared go into a time of prayer having each person pray for themselves in regards to their answer to the question.

Also encourage people in the group to get together outside of the group time to foster deeper friendships with each other. Remember that being in a small group is primarily about sharing life together. It has been said that the most important time in small groups is the time people connect outside of the meeting time.