

Handout: Galatians 3:1-14, Tough Love

Meaning is not only conveyed by what we say, but also by how we say it. This week we are going to explore Paul's heart as he pleads with the Galatians to cling to Christ. We are going to not merely think about the propositional truth contained in this passage, but also feel the passion that Paul has for who we are in Christ and see how that motivates him to risk his relationship with the Galatian Christians.

As we look at both the truths and the passion that Paul puts forth, we want to be challenged to understand what love looks like from a Biblical perspective. So, hold onto your seat, this is going to be a fun ride!

- How many songs can you name with the word fool in them? (Hint: Here are links to some lists)

I - Love and Foolishness (or What's Love Got to Do with it?)

¹ O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified. ² Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? ³ Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? ⁴ Did you suffer so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain? ⁵ 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—⁶ just as Abraham “believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness”?

⁷ Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham. ⁸ 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.” ⁹ So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith. (Galatians 3:1-9, ESV)

Key Terms:

Bewitched

There are two Greek words in the New Testament that can be translated “bewitched.” One is used in Acts 8:9 and it refers to the work of Simon Magus. It means “to be out of one's mind,” “to astonish,” “to overwhelm with wonder.” The other word (used in Galatians 3:1), means “to fascinate by false representation.”

Law / Works of the Law

In the New Testament, the term “law” is used to refer to the code that God gave to Moses on Mount Sinai and, at times, to the entire Pentateuch (The first five books of the Bible.) Paul uses the term “Works of the Law” to refer to the actions that individuals undertake to try and live up to the law.

Spirit

The word Spirit in this passage refers to the Holy Spirit. While it may be easy to think of spirit as a ghost, a soul, or ethos, here it specifically refers to the third person of the Trinity.

Gentile

In the Old Testament the world was divided between the people of God (Jews) and everyone else (Gentiles). The New Testament uses these terms to help show the magnitude of the work of reconciliation that Jesus did by abolishing this divide.

Questions for Discussion:

Look back over the first nine verses of Galatians 3, paying close attention to the tone that Paul uses. How does Paul display tough love toward these believers in these verses?

There are times that we might use a similar tone when giving correction or might need to receive correction from others using a similar tone. Take a moment to think back on your experiences and describe a time either when you displayed tough love toward another person or when you were the recipient of tough love. (Bonus points for using the terms “mom” or “dad” in your answer.)

The tough love that Paul displays in this passage looks very similar to selfishness. How do the words of this passage help us to understand that this is motivated out of love and not self?

- If it were motivated out of self, how might the words change with the tone staying the same?

Take a moment to look at 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 (included below.) How are these two passages similar and how are they different when looked at through the lens of love?

- How can our understanding of love be enhanced by looking at them together?

⁴ Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant ⁵ or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; ⁶ it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. ⁷ Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

⁸ Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. (1 Corinthians 13:4-8, ESV)

II - The Righteous Shall Live by Faith (or You Gotta Have Faith (faith, faith))

¹⁰ For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, “Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them.” ¹¹ Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for “The righteous shall live by faith.” ¹² But the law is not of faith, rather “The one who does them shall live by them.” ¹³ Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree”—¹⁴ so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith. (Galatians 3:10-14, ESV)

Key Terms:

Justified

To be justified means found to be made right. It is to be brought in line with what is right and good (Think about choosing alignment in a document that you are typing. If you left justify the text, it all lines up on the left.). If we are justified, we are made to line up (legally) with God’s demands.

Righteous

The idea of being righteous or righteousness is closely tied to the idea of being justified. To be justified is to be made right or put in a state of righteousness. Righteousness is the result of being justified. It is a right standing with God.

Cursed

When something or someone is cursed, it is doomed to destruction. It will not amount to good but will suffer evil. Something could be cursed in a temporal sense but the implications in this passage are eternal (damned to hell and separated from God).

Questions for Discussion:

How can you live out of faith in Jesus and not attempt to try and earn God’s favor through your actions?

In what ways do verses 10-14 ground (provide a basis for) the tough love that Paul shows in verses one through nine?

How do the words “all,” “everyone,” and “no one” inform Paul’s sense of urgency?

Wrap Up

How can you allow the truth of what Jesus has done for you to inform and empower your love for others?

- In what ways can you allow it to embolden you to risk temporal relationships in pursuit of eternal ones?

What is our community application of this passage?