

Home Group Reading for October 16-21

Galatians 1:1-10

This letter is from Paul, an apostle. I was not appointed by any group of people or any human authority, but by Jesus Christ himself and by God the Father, who raised Jesus from the dead.

² All the brothers and sisters^[a] here join me in sending this letter to the churches of Galatia.

³ May God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ^[b] give you grace and peace. ⁴ Jesus gave his life for our sins, just as God our Father planned, in order to rescue us from this evil world in which we live. ⁵ All glory to God forever and ever! Amen.

⁶ I am shocked that you are turning away so soon from God, who called you to himself through the loving mercy of Christ.^[c] You are following a different way that pretends to be the Good News ⁷ but is not the Good News at all. You are being fooled by those who deliberately twist the truth concerning Christ.

⁸ Let God's curse fall on anyone, including us or even an angel from heaven, who preaches a different kind of Good News than the one we preached to you. ⁹ I say again what we have said before: If anyone preaches any other Good News than the one you welcomed, let that person be cursed.

¹⁰ Obviously, I'm not trying to win the approval of people, but of God. If pleasing people were my goal, I would not be Christ's servant.

Excerpts from Freedom from Religiosity and Judgmentalism: Studies in Galatians

"All the bounded churches that I have participated in have clearly taught that salvation is by grace and not by works. Yet many people in the churches lived as if their salvation, their acceptance by God, and inclusion within the people of God, depended on their staying on the right side of the boundary line." (pg 40)

"Boundedness is not limited to legalism... Instead of using rules about drinking and dancing, I used other things to draw lines to separate true Christians from mediocre Christians or to separate Christians from non-Christians, such as: a recognition of Jesus as Lord not just Savior, openness to gifts of the Spirit, a commitment to social justice and helping the poor, and, ironically, I self-righteously drew a line between myself and legalistic Christians." (pg 72)

"We are called to live in God's grace (1:6). This includes a radical challenge to turn away from line-drawing judgmentalism, shaming, racism, and prejudices of our culture and society. The agitators lived out a religious and ethnic sense of supremacy that shamed and excluded others. This is not the way of Jesus. Paul boldly challenged them. Having experienced the radical inclusiveness of God's grace, let us welcome and include people regardless of how others measure their status and worth." (pg. 73-74)

Questions

1. Where have you seen bounded group line-drawing tendencies in your life? In your church?
2. Reflect (aloud if you'd like) on how you have felt excluded, shamed, discriminated against, etc by church or society. Now imagine God proclaiming, "You're loved and accepted" and Paul offering a seat at the table in the name of Jesus with people from various categories and various status.

3. Do you see yourself in any of the traits the other missionaries/agitators exhibited? Describe a time when you felt a pull to team up with others to create lines of distinction between insiders and outsiders.
4. What did you think and feel when the phrase “Jesus did not come to start a religion” was shared on Sunday? More “uhh...” or more “yessss!”
5. Do you sense a call to more frequently tell others, Christians and non, of God’s gracious, anti-religious gospel? If so, how might you do so?