

THE PROPER CLIMATE

“Stop, you’re killing me!”

Which of the following scenes produced the statement above?

- A teenage boy won’t stop tickling his little sister.
- A middle-aged woman just scored 75 points against her Scrabble partner.
- A masked man is beating a defenseless elderly woman.

Does it matter? Absolutely! In the first two cases, the statement is meant to be teasing and playful. But the last scenario is life and death! We must know the *context* of the statement to know if we should laugh or call 911.

Likewise, before we can understand and apply Galatians 5:16-26, we must know its *context*. Too often, we misunderstand and misuse God’s Word because we attempt to interpret a verse or passage apart from the whole.

Where do we begin? Context of Galatians

The way God chooses to *apply* the truths found in His Word can vary with the individual and their circumstance. However the *meaning* of a biblical passage never changes. It will always mean what God originally intended for it to mean. Before we can make application to our lives we must have a good grasp of the original meaning by considering the larger *context*. (For more information on biblical context read “Context is King” at DoNotDepart.com.)

Galatians is a letter written to a specific people at a specific point in history for a specific purpose. Therefore, we need to know *who*, *when*, and *why* to understand the meaning.

Read Galatians 1:1-9 and gives as many facts as possible about the following:

Author of this letter -

Recipients of this letter -

Purpose of this letter -

Many of you are probably familiar with Paul’s background and dramatic conversion. If not, you can get a good overview by reading the personal account of his story in Acts 22:1-21. A couple of pertinent facts about Paul is 1) he was raised a zealous Jew thoroughly trained in the law and 2) when Christ saved him God called him to take the Gospel to the Gentiles.

The recipients of Paul’s letter – the churches in Galatia - were comprised of mostly *Gentile* Christians who had been saved out of paganism. They had received Christ and the Holy Spirit by faith and had never observed the Jewish Law.

Purpose of Galatians

Understanding why Paul wrote to the Galatians will help us understand the “Fruit of the Spirit” and how it’s produced in our lives. Paul was concerned about false teaching in the churches, a “different gospel” which he refers to in Galatians 1:6.

Jewish Christians, who still held to the Law of Moses, had infiltrated these Gentile believers and falsely taught that they must observe the Jewish law to be Christians. These “Judaizers” were concerned that faith without the discipline of the law would lead to immorality, but their teaching had only minimized God’s grace and created a warped form of “Christianity.”

Paul, recognizing the danger, wrote to remind the Galatians of the truth of the Gospel message and to protect them from this false teaching. The letter emphasizes God’s grace while upholding God’s call to righteousness by living a life following the Spirit.

Read Galatians 5:1-12. Based on the passage and what we learned above list all the negative consequences of trying to live by the law.

Read Galatians 5:13-15. In addition to the Judaizers’ legalism, what other problem within these Gentile churches did Paul address?

Apparently the Galatians were using their “freedom” as an excuse to follow their sinful desires and they were hurting their fellow believers in the process. Paul longed for the Galatians to experience the freedom and unity only found in Christ while living a holy life that pleased God. That is also our goal! But freedom cannot be found in observing the Law. And indulging our sinful nature will never produce the righteous life God desires. What is the answer?

Read Galatians 5:16-26, our focal passage for this study. How can we find both freedom and righteous in Christ? (Check one)

- Live however we want as long as it doesn’t hurt someone else.*
- Follow the law as closely as possible.*
- Live life submitted to the Holy Spirit, following His leading.*

Today we laid the foundation for our study. Next week we will dig into the meaning of “fruit of the Spirit.” In the meantime, let’s talk:

So far in your Christian life do you feel you have been influenced more by the “law,” your own nature, or by the Spirit? (We may not have the influence of the Mosaic Law, but the “do’s” and “don’ts” or religion are still prominent.)