

FREE – Galatians, Part 1

John 6:66 From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.

It was when Jesus called for COMMITMENT that “many” of His disciples left Him – that is not a 21st century phenomenon, but a 1st century one! Starting out in a relationship with God is easy, but finishing right is hard. Many people are like the Galatians, who begin but then totally mess up.

Galatians 6:11 Ye see how large a letter I have written unto you with mine own hand.

Galatians is Paul’s earliest epistle – and he is UPSET. He is furious, not only with those who are trying to use strong-arm religious tactics, but also with the Christians for caving in to such blatant intimidation. Many of his later letters (especially when he was in prison) were dictated to someone else and he just signed them – but by the time he finishes writing this letter himself, his handwriting is just a big, mad scrawl!

The issue at hand is the JUDAIZERS, who have created their own “blend” of Christianity and are trying to get others to believe it in order to justify themselves. In their case, their equation of “Jesus PLUS _____” could be filled in with “the LAW of Moses.” But today, it could be just about anything else in the wide, wild world of “Christendom” ...

Mormonism – the Bible PLUS the teachings of Joseph Smith
Jehovah’s Witnesses – the Bible PLUS the teachings of Charles Russell
Christian Scientist – the Bible PLUS the teachings of Mary Baker Eddy
Catholicism – the Bible PLUS the teachings of the Catholic Church

ILLUSTRATION: EMAIL FROM “TRINITARIAN BELIEVER”

In each case, these sincere people are applying a FILTER when they read the Bible, and that makes their belief SINCERE, but SINCERELY WRONG. But, that “filter” could just as well be ...

Humanism – the Bible PLUS your ideas of political correctness
Materialism – the Bible PLUS your expectations of “blessings”
Legalism – the Bible PLUS your own attempts at good works
Liberalism – the Bible PLUS your own interpretation of God’s standards

In every case, these false religious ideas DIMINISH our sinfulness AND God’s commandments – REAL Christianity does the opposite! People get away from the gospel when they try to make it more acceptable and more comfortable for people!

By the way, a New Testament teaching is NOT an Old Testament tradition that should be dropped because “Jesus fulfilled the Law”! For example, it is not the preachers of “holiness standards” who are doing a “JESUS PLUS” – it is YOU, because you’ve decided that these Biblical commandments are not necessary! (Jesus PLUS your opinion!)

Paul recounts three meetings in the first two chapters of Galatians:

1:18-19 – after three years alone hearing from God, Paul went to Jerusalem to meet with Peter and James – and found out that the gospel that had been revealed to him was exactly the same as what they taught!

2:1-2 – Paul went to the Jerusalem counsel (Acts 15) to give a report of what God was doing among the Gentiles – and that counsel came up with the same conclusion, to NOT preach “Jesus plus the Law”

2:11 – Paul had a conflict with Peter because Peter was being a hypocrite, withdrawing himself from his Gentile friends when the Judaizers were around in order to impress them

Paul had no problem teaching that Christians should have a RADICAL lifestyle – because “Christian” was originally a pejorative used in disdain (“little Christ”). He knew that the greatest threat to the church was never from persecution WITHOUT, but from compromise WITHIN.

Romans 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

There are only two basic views on how humanity relates to God – by FAITH or by WORKS. The question is, which one is bridging the gap between you and God in your life?

Mark Driscoll: “One of the best arguments that we are saved by grace is the condition of the average Christian.” ?!?!? Not in my Bible!

1 Corinthians 11:1 Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.

Galatians 4:16 Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?

What FILTER have you applied in your relationship with God?

Galatians 2:20-21 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.