February 13

Greetings, DGCC Family.

This week we will continue our walk through the books of the Bible and will look at the book of Galatians. This is the apostle Paul’s letter to the young church in the Roman province of Galatia, which was located in what is now central Turkey.

This is one of Paul’s earliest letters (probably his second) and was written in 49 AD, only about 15 years after the death of Christ. Its purpose is to counter the prevailing notion at the time that Jewish believers thought that the Gentiles (non-Jews) had to adhere to the Jewish Law in order to be saved. This letter is a call to follow “the pure Gospel,” that is, salvation through faith in Christ alone.

In the opening chapter, Paul states the following:

“I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the gospel I preached is not of human origin. I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ” (1:11-12).

Remember that the New Testament did not exist in Paul’s time. He did not have the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John. He did not have 2,000 years of theological study to rely on. The early church fathers such as Augustine and so on were not born yet. There were no seminaries for Christian education. When Paul wrote this, there were no written documents of any kind that declared the path of salvation as found in faith alone. Instead, this knowledge came from the resurrected Jesus Himself, who revealed the Gospel truth personally to Paul.

Speaking personally, I find this pretty amazing. Paul had absolutely nothing to rely on, but at the same time, he had everything: the personal message of the Savior Himself graciously revealed.

For us today, we have this same revelation as courageously recorded by Paul through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. So go ahead. Read these words that survive 2,000 years later and treasure them for the beautiful and holy gift they are.

IHS,

Pastor Lou
February 14

Happy Valentine’s Day!

Continuing with our brief study of the book of Galatians, we find that as is often typical of Paul, he did not hesitate to use strong language. Nor did he hesitate to stand up against the social standards and people of the day.

In the second chapter of his letter to the church at Galatia, he states as follows:

“As for those who were held in high esteem—whatever they were makes no difference to me; God does not judge by external appearances—they added nothing to my message” (2:6).

Paul is speaking here of the prominent Jewish leaders of the day who preached strongly, and incorrectly, that adherence to the Jewish Law was required for salvation in addition to faith in Christ. These leaders held much sway in their time and exercised great influence. However, Paul says that God cares not for such appearances. In saying this, Paul is reaching all the way back to when King David was anointed as king of Israel 1,000 years earlier. This is what God says to the Hebrew judge Samuel on that day:

“But the Lord said to Samuel, “Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart” (1 Samuel 16:7).

And so it is today. God cares not for the color of your skin, the style of your wardrobe, or your income tax bracket. He does, however, care deeply about the love in your heart and the praise in your soul. That is where His divine eyes, and His abiding grace, are cast.

IHS,

Pastor Lou
February 15

Grace and peace to you this day.

As we have said before, as a former Pharisee, the apostle Paul was an expert in the Scriptures, which again, for him was what we know as the Old Testament. He knew them backwards and forwards, could no doubt recite them at length from memory, and often used them as reference points as he sought to plant and develop churches in the name of Jesus.

For Paul, because Jesus had personally revealed Himself to him, Jesus was the fulfillment of the Old Testament Scriptures. That was true then and is true for us today as well, and that fulfillment of the Old Testament in Jesus is what gives rise to the New Testament. To that end, this is what Paul says to the church at Galatia in the third chapter of his letter:

“Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: ‘All nations will be blessed through you.’ So those who rely on faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith” (3:8-9).

This is a remarkable statement. Paul is stating two things. The first is this: The blessing God gave to Abraham two thousand years earlier foretells the coming of the Messiah. (This is the blessing, known as the Abrahamic Covenant, as found in the book of Genesis: “I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you” (12:2-3).

Second, Paul is saying that as Abraham lived by faith, not by the Law (or deeds), so must we. He reiterates that from the beginning of God’s plan of salvation, the only requirement was faith and faith alone in the Son of the Most High.

In modern times, so many people think all that “Old Testament stuff” is just a bunch of dusty old fairy tales. To the contrary. When it comes to our eternal destination, nothing, and I mean nothing, can be more real.

IHS,

Pastor Lou
February 16

Greetings DGCC Family.

As we conclude today our brief look at the book of Galatians, I come to one of my favorite passages in all of Scripture:

“So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (3:26-28).

From early childhood we tend to treat people through rank or class. On the schoolyard, we pick the best people first for the baseball game. (I usually got picked second or third. I could hit a ton, which was a good thing, because I’m pretty sure a tree sloth could outrun me to first base.) We get ranked academically, and then later in life, the best bonuses are awarded to the most productive employees.

Not so in Christ. As we have seen before, He cares nothing for the rankings of this world. Instead, the message of the Gospel and the plan of salvation is universal. All are equal at the foot of the cross. There is no price of admission, no ticket to show. No need to stand in line. The price has already been paid. All we have to do to enter heaven is this, and this alone: Believe.

IHS,
Pastor Lou

February 17

Happy Friday, everyone!

Here’s your musical devotional for the week. I’m in a southern gospel kind of mood today, so turn up the volume and enjoy!

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YU9BObi1GVw

IHS,
Pastor Lou