

Introduction – 5 Minutes

1) Greeting & Welcome

- a) Dismissal of Children to Transformation Station (PowerPoint Slide)
 - i) "As the children make their way to *Transformation Station* in the back, grab your Bible and turn with me to Galatians 4. If you don't have a Bible, please use one that we've provided and turn to page_." (*Pause - b/c it's really loud when kids leave*)
- b) Words of Gratitude and introduction
 - i)

2) Context of the Scripture

- a) "Jesus + Nothing":
 - i) "Jesus + Nothing". From the moment that the Apostle Paul began writing to the Christians in Galatia, he continuously hammers on that central premise of the gospel. And, over the past 7 Sundays, Tanner and Jon have done a wonderful job of making certain that we stayed focused on Paul's overarching intent.
 - ii) So before we dig into this morning's Scripture reading, I think that it would be wise to briefly review where we have been so we can better understand where Paul is going to take us for the rest of this epistle.
- b) "No Other Gospel" – Galatians 1:1-10
 - i) From the very beginning, Paul makes it clear that there is "no other gospel" than "Jesus + Nothing".
 - ii) Paul is an Apostle, an appointed messenger with authority, of the good news of God's rescue mission through Jesus Christ.
 - iii) We cannot miss that he was consumed with an indestructible passion for the purity of this good news and that he had a strong reaction to anyone, or anything, that might attempt to distort it – with or without intention – and thereby create "another gospel".
- c) "God's Gospel" - Galatians 1:11-24
 - i) For the true gospel is "God's Gospel". It was not a creation borne from Paul's mind or general wisdom. God is the One who reveals it to those who receive it. It is powerful to save and to change those who receive it. The Galatians, like Paul, had received this "good news" and had themselves been transformed – putting off the old and taking on the new.
- d) "Gospel Unity" - Galatians 2:1-10
 - i) Paul reminded them that there was now a new reality for them as a people. From many different people, a new unity had been brought about – this "Gospel Unity" placed them in new relationship to each other locally as well as other believers from across the known world. What were once barriers to genuine community were now leveled. God's people, His family, would no longer be separated by broken relationships.
- e) "Christ for Us; Christ in Us" - Galatians 2:11-21
 - i) Standing in a metaphorical courtroom, each one of them had been declared "Justified!" - made right with God, because of what Christ had done for them at the cross. Through faith, not personal effort, each Galatian believer had recognized that Jesus' perfect life and His sacrificial death was entirely sufficient to satisfy the just requirements of a Holy Father God. As Paul wrote, "Christ loved *me* and gave himself for *me*"? (Galatians 2:20)

- ii) Even more wonderful was the new reality that for the believer, not only was Christ for us, but he was now in us! Imagine that! Each believer is united with Christ!
 - iii) This union should naturally result in a new desire to live in step with God's gospel in all areas of our lives. Each believer is to die to himself and live by faith in Christ.
 - iv) As Paul logically reminded the Galatians, "*I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*" (Gal 2:20 ESV)
 - v) Paul was adamant that the Galatians were to promote the grace of God and boast only in the cross of Christ and guard against any approach to Christianity that would add to or dilute from the centrality of God's grace in their lives. The gospel starts with God, is sustained by His character, and ends with God. No person can add a thing to it; for the gospel is "Jesus + Nothing".
- f) "By Faith, from beginning to end among the nations" - Galatians 3:1-9
- i) For it is by faith alone that a Christian initially receives the Spirit of the Living God and lives each day by that same Spirit.
 - ii) Paul reminded the Galatians that salvation has always been by faith alone – for even Father Abraham had found favor with God, not with his efforts but by his faith in God. And God's favor upon Abraham had been extended even to the nations of the world through His covenant with Abraham.
- g) "The Curse of the Curse Through the Cross of Christ" - Galatians 3:10-14
- i) That blessing would not be through the Law - for the Law came after this Covenant. Rather, the Law would reveal the true state of the hearts of men. And, in fact, failure to keep this Law would necessarily result in a curse, not a blessing.
 - ii) So Paul exhorted the Galatians to resist those who would elevate the Law beyond its true purpose. Rather, they were to flee to the cross where Jesus ended the curse by becoming a curse for each one of them. For God has gone to great lengths to redeem believers to Himself and stands ready to show Himself as the God of Promise – the God of Blessing - to those who would receive Him.
- h) "The God of Promise" - Galatians 3:15-29
- i) The Galatians were to understand that God the Father has always had a heart to make His promises. He has the power to accomplish His promises. And, He has the faithfulness to keep His promises.
 - ii) God's promise of salvation was not for a moment or for a season but for eternity. "*I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ*" (Phi 1:6 ESV) wrote the Apostle Paul to the church at Phillipi.
 - iii) God's promises should encourage them – even in times of difficulty... even in times of doubt... or even in times of suffering. The Galatians were to cling to the promises of God through faith in Christ – to "put on Christ" – to live in union with Him.
- i) "Adoption: The Highest Privilege of the Gospel" - Galatians 4:1-7
- i) After all, they had been afforded the highest privilege of the gospel – for, in His mercy, and at just the right time, God sent Jesus to become a Suffering Servant so that they might be adopted as His children in fulfillment of all of His promises.
 - ii) And as children, they were now rightful heirs with Christ. His Spirit was deposited in them. They were free to experience Him in intimacy, access, assurance, and confidence. Whatever is His is theirs. Nothing else is required to gain His favor – they are His beloved

3) The Main Point & Prayer:

- a) And it is here that we pick up Paul's writing this morning where he makes a crucial point.
 - i) This "Gospel Faith" is the foundation for "Gospel Ministry" while every other alternative – pagan or religious - just leads to worldly ministry.
 - ii) And so before we dive into the Scriptures, would you bow your heads and repeat a simple prayer after me?
 - (1) Spirit of the Living God
 - (2) Open My Heart
 - (3) Change My Life
 - (4) Amen

MAIN BODY: (x Minutes):

PART 1: Gospel Faith vs. Worldly Religion – Galatians 4:8-11 (x minutes)

Point:

As such, we are to hold onto gospel faith while refusing the slavery of any alternative form of faith – pagan or religious.

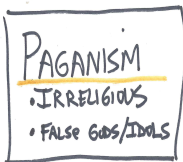
1) Scripture Reading:

- b) Let's turn to first part of this morning's Scripture reading - Galatian's 4:8-11 (Pew Bible, pXX)

⁸ Formerly, when you did not know God, you were enslaved to those that by nature are not gods. ⁹ But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and worthless elementary principles of the world, whose slaves you want to be once more? ¹⁰ You observe days and months and seasons and years! ¹¹ I am afraid I may have labored over you in vain.

[Galatians 4:8-11]

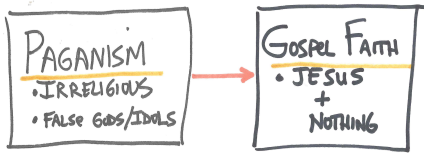
2) The Former Condition



- a) "Formerly, when you did not know God, you were enslaved to those that by nature are not gods." (Gal 4:8)
- b) Paul says that there was a time in the past that these Galatian Christians were in bondage... slavery... something held them captive... the situation could best be described as bleak. As Gentiles holding faith in pagan idols and false gods, they were barbaric and irreligious in the minds of any right thinking Israelite worshipping the One True God, Yahweh.
- c) These so-called gods were not true gods but they did exercise power over people. There were spiritual, or demonic powers, that could work through the elements of fire, water, air, and earth that had to be

worshipped and appeased. And so farmers might sacrifice to a weather-god or lovers to the god of physical beauty. Idol worship, temple sacrifice, and sexual immorality were regular features of this pagan lifestyle. And fear, not love, was the underlying emotion typifying the approach of the pagan believer to the worshipped created being.

3) The Present Condition



- a) Paul goes on to say, *“But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God...”* (Gal 4:9a).
- b) Thankfully, we know that on the cross, Jesus Christ unmasked these “sham gods” as part of a created order that was actually passing away.
- c) And Paul reminded the Galatians believers that it was through this sacrifice that they had “come to know God” – the One True God worthy of real praise and honor and love.
- d) There had been a reversal or turning around in the lives of these believers for they had turned away from their affections for false gods and *“have come to know God”*.
- e) Actually, Paul appears to somewhat clarify himself here. It was not the Galatians who *“have come to know God”*. *“Rather”*, he says that they have come *“to be known by God”*. For God the Father is the one who initiates salvation. He is the one who sought them. He is the one who precipitated the relationship between God and man. We need to always remember that the gospel, the good news, begins with and is sustained by God Himself. Our knowing God is conditioned upon his prior knowledge of us. For we are like blinded rats in a labyrinth; aimlessly checking this latch or that door to supposedly “find God”.
- f) We need to remember what the Apostle John taught, *“We love because he first loved us.”* (1Jo 4:19 ESV)
- g) “To know God” was not to fearfully approach a selfish gratuitous deity like Zeus who was actively worshipped in the temple found in the city of Iconium or the Phrygian Moon God, “Men”, worshipped in the strategic city of Psidian Antioch. Rather... “to know God” was to experience
 - i) a mind-body-spirit encounter with the Father of All Creation,
 - ii) a daily encounter dominated by the loving holy Spirit of Adoption,
 - iii) through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus -
 - iv) JESUS AND NOTHING ELSE.
- h) This was the present condition of the Galatians whom the Apostle Paul has served and loved.

4) The Surprisingly Dangerous Condition

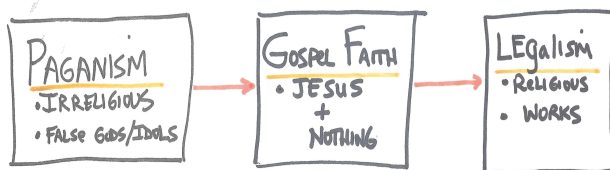


- a) Paul goes on to write, *“How can you turn back again to the weak and worthless elementary principles of the world, whose slaves you want to be once more?”* (Gal 4:9b)
- b) Like a good father protecting his children, the Apostle Paul was vigilantly watching for danger. And, there was a real danger lurking about... one so threatening that it had caused Paul to question whether or not his labors in the midst of the Galatians had been “in vain” – the Galatians were in danger of

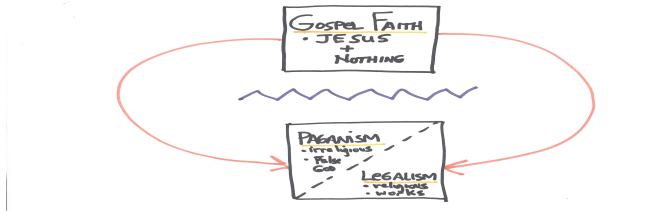
retreating. Having been freed from bondage through Christ on the cross, they appeared willing to return to slavery.

- c) Several weeks ago, Tanner shared a courtroom story as a picture of unmerited favor or grace. He asked us to imagine a scenario where the notorious Whitey Bulger received a just sentence from the judge as a result of years of heinous crimes - up to and including murder. He asked us to imagine the surprise to be found if, at the sentencing hearing after conviction, someone stood up and declared that they would accept the deserved punishment on behalf of Whitey Bulger. Do any of you here remember that story? Imagine the scandal! Imagine the surprise! And yet, that is exactly what Jesus Christ does on behalf of those who would believe in his substitutionary death at Calvary.
- d) You know what? In retelling that story, I think I have a thought that might be even more surprising. What if in 6 months or a year or even a decade later, Whitey Bulger returned to court and presented himself before that very same sentencing judge and declared that he wanted to return to his shackles; That his preferred future included incarceration, a loss of freedom, and a renewed commitment to serving the constraints of the state.
- e) I'm guessing that the reaction of the presiding judge would probably be the same reaction that we would have. Like a parent exasperated with a wayward teenager, we might burst out shouting something like:
 - i) "Are you out of your mind?" OR "What are you thinking?"
 - ii) We might even want to give them a little "bop" on the head just to "shake some sense into them".
- f) And that is how the Apostle Paul understandably reacts when he writes, "*How can you turn back again to the weak and worthless elementary principles of the world, whose slaves you want to be once more?*"
- g) Sitting here today, you might say to yourself, "Oh, I could never consider a return to bondage" **Really?**
- h) I bet you that is what many of the Hebrews thought to themselves as Moses lead them out of Egypt during the Exodus. The details of that story are the stories of real people, much like you and I.
 - i) Real people had suffered the tyranny of pain and death in the land of Egypt.
 - ii) Real people had called out to God for mercy and deliverance.
 - iii) Real people had experienced Yahweh's mighty hand in taking them out of shackles.
 - iv) Real people had witnessed His presence with them as a cloud by day and fire by night.
 - v) Real people had heard the Word of God brought down from Mount Sinai.
 - vi) And, it was real people that allowed dissatisfaction, and complaining, and disaffection to bring them to a point where they openly pined for a turning back to Egypt. They failed to accurately remember the place where they had experienced hard daily slave labor under the hands of cruel taskmasters.
 - vii) Amazing? Yup. Preposterous? Maybe. Dangerous? Certainly. Possible? Definitely.
 - viii) Sometimes, in our discomfort or confusion, we forget that we "leave Egypt, not to the desert, but on our way to the Promised Land...". And yet, we are surprised whenever the temptation to return to bondage enters a person's life... a return to "*weak and worthless elementary principles of the world*" as Paul puts it – principalities or people or places that have no real power. Those things are like poisonous snakes that had their heads cut off but still have bodies writhing in the final throes of death. They have no true life – just death rattles.

5) The Shockingly Dangerous Condition



- a) Paul goes on to say, “You observe days and months and seasons and years! ¹¹ I am afraid I may have labored over you in vain.” (Gal 4:10b-11)
- b) The Apostle Paul does not chastise the Galatians because they are punctual and faithful in remembering the calendar. No, his concern about their observations of “days and months and seasons and years” is that they have begun to listen to those who would attempt to unnecessarily add to the gospel of “Jesus + Nothing”.
- c) As we have heard in prior sermons, there were those engaging the Galatians who were trying to add something to the pure gospel of Jesus Christ. With a form of religious legalism, they promoted a salvation by works-righteousness. Attempts to satisfy God’s holiness came through personal religious effort that was shaped by the rhythms of the Old Testament calendar. Devotion and satisfaction of the Law, not the Giver of Life, was its dominant lifestyle.



- d) And it’s here that Paul makes a conclusion that is shocking to the ears of any Jewish listener. For he indicates that this type of devotion to the Mosaic Law is actually reverting to paganism! Gentiles, once devoted to false gods, will experience the same hopelessness found before their conversion to Christ in any attraction to legalistic Judaism as an addition to the gospel! And why would this be so?
- e) Any attempt to “enhance” the Christian faith, to improve upon the gospel of “Jesus + Nothing”, is to doubt in Jesus Christ alone as sufficient for salvation. Doubts, in any form, about this core belief spring up from the same root – “SLAVERY”. Whether that slavery is to pagan idols and false gods or slavery to the Mosaic Law. Both are powerless to save.
- f) **And slavery is slavery... regardless of which cruel Master holds the whip.**
- g) The distance between paganism-and-the-gospel or legalism-and-the-gospel is the same.
 - i) Longnecker quote: “Whatever leads one away from sole reliance on Christ, whether based on good intentions or depraved desires, is sub-Christian and therefore to be condemned.” (Longenecker, Commentary on Galatians, p181)

6) Transitional Thoughts.

- a) Paul had found these Galatians lost in their pagan idol worship.
- b) He rejoiced as they had responded to the proclaiming of the good news of Jesus Christ becoming his brothers and sisters-in-Christ – adopted into the family of God.
- c) And he was alarmed at the prospect that they might be tempted to return to their lost condition through the doors of a religious, but equally powerless, “acceptance through performance”.

PART 2: Gospel Ministry vs Worldly Ministry (xx minutes)

1) Scripture Reading: Galatians 4:12-22

- a) With that as our backdrop, let’s turn our attention to the rest of this morning’s Scripture reading - Galatians 4:12-20 (Pew Bible, pXX)

¹² Brothers, I entreat you, become as I am, for I also have become as you are. You did me no wrong. ¹³ You

know it was because of a bodily ailment that I preached the gospel to you at first, ¹⁴ and though my condition was a trial to you, you did not scorn or despise me, but received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus. ¹⁵ What then has become of your blessedness? For I testify to you that, if possible, you would have gouged out your eyes and given them to me. ¹⁶ Have I then become your enemy by telling you the truth? ¹⁷ They make much of you, but for no good purpose. They want to shut you out, that you may make much of them. ¹⁸ It is always good to be made much of for a good purpose, and not only when I am present with you, ¹⁹ my little children, for whom I am again in the anguish of childbirth until Christ is formed in you! ²⁰ I wish I could be present with you now and change my tone, for I am perplexed about you.

[Galatians 4:8-20]

2) Paul's Personal Appeal.

- a) Sometimes, we can think of Paul as merely a scholar with massive intellectual powers – all head and no heart. But in this section of his letter to the Galatians, there can be no mistake. Paul is not only Paul the Apostle, theologian, or defender of the faith. Here, he is Paul the pastor. The one who planted a church amongst people that he deeply loved. One who valued the relationship and desired it to flourish. He had labored faithfully and cared profoundly.
- b) In this portion of his letter, if we read carefully, we can discern several important gospel characteristics vital to conducting true “Jesus + Nothing” gospel ministry. I think if we consider them relative to the church in Galatia we should be able to learn something for our own times – as individuals and as the gathered followers of Jesus known as *Redemption Hill*.
- c) Let's get started, shall we?

3) Gospel Ministry Described.

- a) Be Culturally Flexible
 - i) Scripture:
 - (1) “*for I also have become as you are*” (Gal 4:12b)
 - ii) Principle:
 - (1) The Greek here is really quite cumbersome. Translated literally, it could read, “For I like you...”. In other words, Paul's identification with who these Galatians are was so strong that it felt like they were one and the same.
 - (2) Although he was Jewish by birth, he had become like the Gentiles – free from slavery under the Mosaic Law.
 - (3) In addition, from the beginning of his mission to them, he did not keep his distance or stand on his dignity. Rather, he became like them as he entered into the cultural norms and customs of the Galatians without violating the essence of the gospel.
 - (4) Paul became culturally flexible for a ministry that is energized by the gospel is flexible and adaptable with everything apart from the gospel.
 - (5) To truly live among people in order to reach them for the gospel can often mean to adopt their ways and love them as you eat with them, play with them, talk & walk with them - to get to know their world and live in it appreciatively even though it may not be your world.
 - (6) Paul states it like this in 1 Corinthians 9:10-11, “*To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews... To those outside the law I became as one outside the law... that I might win those outside the law. To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some.* (1Co 9:20-22 ESV)

(7) Often times, we must become one with those we hope to reach motivated by Christian compassion before we are able to help them become one with us through Christian conviction and experience. In this way, we can answer questions and problems, address hopes and fears and sensitivities, and adapt our life, speech, and message to them – all without changing the gospel itself, of course!

iii) Opposite:

(1) Like the false teachers that Paul confronted too often, we take our cultural preferences and attempt to place them on top of the gospel message. The mindset of a legalist is generally inflexible and obsessed with the secondary details of life - often forcing issues extraneous to the gospel onto the lives of converts.

iv) Example - Individual:

(1) Recently, I read a book titled, *“Misreading Scripture through Western Eyes”* where the authors pointed out at least 9 significant ways that white male Christians raised in the Western Hemisphere can be trapped by their worldview from properly reading Scripture and engaging cultures different from their own. As I understood their points, I realized how easy it is to assume that your style, your preference, your culture is the “correct” one and therefore attempt to bring others into it – mistakenly thinking that you are introducing them to true Christianity.

(2) No. The gospel is “Jesus + Nothing”. That is the message that we take into culture. As believers, we should be mindful to enter other cultures, meet people where they are, and love them as God loves them.

v) Example – Redemption Hill Church:

(1) That is why, as a church, Redemption Hill places such a priority on not only inviting people to come to church on Sunday but also a priority on missional living. We intentionally keep our calendar light so all of us have the discretionary time to be where people are. It’s also why we created culturally-sensitive connecting events. We do SoccerNights because our culture likes Soccer. We do the Easter Egg Hunt because our culture is in synch with that activity. It’s why we volunteer at the Boys & Girls Club or teach English-as-a-2nd-Language at Medford Housing Authority. At the end of the day, we desire to become students of the needs and culture of Greater Medford so we can do a better job of sharing the gospel and loving its people with greater understanding.

b) Demonstrate Transparency

i) Scripture:

(1) Paul challenges the Galatians, *“become as I am”* (Gal 4:12a)

ii) Principle:

(1) So often, our words alone are not sufficient to help others see the truth of the gospel. As we live life, we need to demonstrate transparency in the way we go about living daily. Opening our hearts and inviting others to see HOW we live under the lordship of Jesus Christ can often be a most persuasive argument for the truth of the gospel.

(2) Now, we don’t have to be perfect but we do need to allow others to see how we handle disappointment as Christians or how we conduct our relationships as Christians or how we act in the various situations of our lives as Christians. People need to see whether our confession of Christ is real and whether or not the gospel we proclaim actually impacts the way we live day-to-day.

iii) Opposite:

(1) Naturally, we should be on guard against arrogance. Paul certainly pointed out the prideful motivation behind his adversaries in Galatia.

iv) Example – Individual:

(1) But in our lives, we should not hesitate to encourage others to “Follow Me as I Follow Christ”. Prayerfully, our invitation to others is rooted in the freedom, joy, and salvation found in Christ

alone. By allowing others to share in our lives, we should not be afraid to invite them into that same freedom, joy, and salvation.

v) Example - RHC:

- (1) As such, our church embraces the concept of discipleship – relationships where a curious or newer follower of Christ can receive one-to-one time with an experienced follower of Christ. Opportunities for encouragement, accountability, and growth in Christ flow as two people share life together in a commitment to follow Jesus more intentionally.
- (2) I love a simple tool designed by our leadership team for a “Personal Discipleship Strategy”. (?Show Sample). We desire to develop healthy people who are growing to maturity in Christ. We desire to help others to know what it means to be a disciple of Christ; to prioritize the rhythms of grace through dependent spiritual discipline; to make disciples who make disciples in Greater Boston and among the nations.
 - (a) As we speak, I meet regularly with two young men to talk about the “Rhythms of Discipline”.
 - (i) With one, we are exploring the “Rhythm of Prayer”;
 - (ii) with another – the “Rhythm of Community”.
 - (iii) In both instances, our lives are exposed and we are growing together.
- (3) If today, you desire that type of experience, speak with any member of the leadership team today and we’ll get you hooked up. You’ll be glad that you allowed transparency to be demonstrated.

c) Embrace Opportunities in Hardship

i) Scripture:

- (1) Paul goes on to write, “*You know it was because of a bodily ailment that I preached the gospel to you at first, ¹⁴ and though my condition was a trial to you, you did not scorn or despise me, but received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus.*” (Gal 4:13-14)

ii) Principle:

- (1) In speaking to the Galatians, Paul embraced opportunities in hardship. For him, problems became possibilities. Whether his bodily ailment caused him to detour through Galatia or caused him unanticipated delays in his planned schedule, nevertheless he seized the moment. He chose to see it as in step with the movement of God himself. His condition was pretty bad – enough to warrant the possibility of their scorn or despising. But Paul persevered. While he certainly prayed for the removal of his suffering in life, he likewise remained assured that any suffering experienced could be used by God to bring about good. In this case, the good of the Galatians who benefited greatly from Paul’s time with them.

iii) Opposite:

- (1) In contrast, there are always those that point to the presence of difficulty or suffering as a sign of God’s displeasure with you.
- (2) Do you remember how Jesus responded to His disciples when they spotted a man blind from birth, “Rabbi, who sinned: this man or his parents, causing him to be born blind?”
- (3) I like how “The Message” paraphrases Jesus’ response: “*You’re asking the wrong question. You’re looking for someone to blame. There is no such cause-effect here. Look instead for what God can do. We need to be energetically at work for the One who sent me here, working while the sun shines.*” (John 9:1-2 The Message).

iv) Example – Individual:

- (1) We, like the disciples that Jesus addressed, must resist the temptation to see every difficult circumstance as slight from God’s hand upon us. Instead, let us remember that ministry doesn’t always happen according to human plans.
- (2) And here, I’m preaching to myself for I am a “planner” by God’s design and my temperament. I not only think about today but often my mind ventures out a year, or two, even a decade. Yet in all my time of planning, I have never designed into my plan one ounce of suffering or

discouragement or detour. Still, I can testify of numerous occasions where a suffering experience has resulted in new godly opportunities for myself as well as for others who were in God's agenda.

v) Example - RHC:

- (1) As a church, we recognize what Paul told the Romans "*in all things God works for the good of those who love him.*" (Romans 8:28). Those things can be pleasant or can be painful. As a church in our very name, we proclaim a Suffering Savior who died a cruel death. It was upon a hill in Jerusalem that redemption was achieved. We proclaim a crucified Lord who lived a crucified life. How can we, His followers, be exempt from suffering? We can not. Let move in the assurance that this broken world is temporary and that we are moving towards a day when suffering will be replaced by unending joy. May it be with gladness and courage that we, as His followers, experience the pain of this life as we proclaim the goodness of the gospel to whomever God places in our path.
- (2) Let us not simply tolerate hardship. As the church of Jesus Christ, let us embrace it when it inevitably comes.

d) Serve with Truth and Love

i) Scripture:

- (1) "¹⁵ *What then has become of your blessedness? For I testify to you that, if possible, you would have gouged out your eyes and given them to me.* ¹⁶ *Have I then become your enemy by telling you the truth?*" (Gal 4:15-16)

ii) Principle:

- (1) It is clear that when the Galatians had first encountered Paul, they experienced his profound love for them. He addresses them as "brothers"; later as "my little children" – both terms of affection. He had sacrificed for them and they had been blessed. Their response to his love was so profound that he says that they were willing to "gouge out (their) eyes and give them" to him. What was precious to them was available for Paul's benefit, such was the strength of the bond between them. We might say today, "I'd give you my right arm". Such love for Paul was a good indication that they had truly received the Spirit of God.
- (2) But Paul's love for them was no mere sentimentality. He was an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ. And he recognized that gospel ministry serves with both truth and love. And he asks a rhetorical question, "*Have I then become your enemy by telling you the truth?*"...
- (3) As he has been fulfilling his responsibility to tell them the truth about the tension between gospel faith and works-salvation, their friendship with him has cooled.
- (4) He does not accuse them of being enemies but he does use strong language – perhaps to shock them into soberly assessing the danger that they are now facing. Perhaps, he can bring them to their senses and set things right.

iii) Opposite:

- (1) This stands in stark contrast to the false teachers. Paul says these false teachers are flattering the Galatians so that Galatians, in turn, may flatter them and build them up in esteem, worth, and praise. Paul, however, loves the Galatians enough to speak the truth to them; the false teachers speak a false gospel and have no true love for them.

iv) Example – Individual:

- (1) As individual believers, we need to ask God's Holy Spirit to fill us daily so that the encounters we have with the people in our lives are encounters of discernment. We must love deeply, and practically, and sacrificially. And we must be willing to risk the loss of returned affection when it is appropriate to speak clear biblical truth into the life of a friend.

v) Example - RHC:

- (1) One of the aspects of life at Redemption Hill that first attracted Teresa and I was the profound balance that we discovered in the leadership team. We observed the genuine caring and sacrifice

of so many who had left what was familiar to come here and love New Englanders. We have experienced firsthand that kindness. We have discovered it to be genuine.

- (2) We are equally blessed that in the context of that sacrificial love there has been a willingness to speak tough truths. Most weeks, we study our way through the Scriptures expositively, verse-by-verse, whether in the pulpit or in our Community Groups. If there is a biblical truth that is being read, then we can expect that our leaders will speak that truth. It might be a difficult word. It might sting a little as the Spirit of the Living God penetrates our hearts. But I appreciate their willingness to humbly proclaim core biblical truth. In today's society, it's counter-cultural. Yet it is desperately needed.
- (3) On a side note: I also appreciate that they do not desire to have a congregation that are emotionally needy on them. I'm blessed that they consistently direct us to God as our sufficiency. While there may be a season where each of us is strongly dependent or connected to some leader during our infant days as believers, they are committed to "cutting the umbilical cord" and releasing each believer to a mature, growing life in Christ – dependent on the one who actually gives life and freedom.

e) Glory in Christ

i) Scripture:

- (1) Paul goes on to write about the false teachers some more, *"¹⁷ They make much of you, but for no good purpose. They want to shut you out, that you may make much of them. ¹⁸ It is always good to be made much of for a good purpose, and not only when I am present with you, ¹⁹ my little children, for whom I am again in the anguish of childbirth until Christ is formed in you!"* (Gal 4:17-19)

ii) Principle:

- (1) Paul wants partners who glorify Christ. True gospel ministry should reflect true gospel faith – "Jesus + Nothing". It is the gospel that brings people to Christ-dependence. It is the gospel that shapes people into Christ-likeness. It is the gospel that provokes people to Christ-praise.
- (2) To illustrate this, Paul mixes his metaphors. Paul, a man, pictures himself pregnant and in labor; about to give birth. But the reality of the coming birth will be evident when Christ takes shape in them – the Galatians. Paul's labor is also God's labor. It is God who is the one who has power to bring from conception to birth, from beginning to completion. The suffering of birth pangs is a common biblical picture pointing towards the time when the whole world will rightly see the majesty and the glory of the Lord.

iii) Opposite:

- (1) In contrast, the false teachers want followers who glorify themselves. Their aim in teaching is to attract others to themselves that they might be lifted up in adoration of their effort and work.

iv) Example - Individual:

- (1) This can be a common temptation for each of us whenever we seek to serve the needs of others. It is tempting to leave the realm of honest self-assessment and enter the world of selfish ambition. The dividing line between these two polar opposites can be so thin. We would be wise to be vigilant to this temptation.

v) Example - RHC:

- (1) One of the ways that we can resist this temptation is to place ourselves regularly in the company of like-minded believers for the routine worship of Jesus. Whether we are in our Community Groups or Ministry Teams or Corporate Worship, like this morning, we must keep our focus on the Author and Finisher of our faith – Jesus Christ the Lord.
- (2) Paul exhorted the believers in Ephesus like this: *"¹⁵ Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, ¹⁶ making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. ¹⁷ Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. ¹⁸ And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, ¹⁹ addressing one another in psalms and hymns*

and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart,²⁰ giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,²¹ submitting to one another out of reverence (for who?) for Christ. (Eph 5:1 ESV)

- (3) Here at Redemption Hill, if you have noticed, whenever we come to read Scripture corporately we intentionally and routinely select Scripture that places the focus on Christ. The music that we select so often elevates the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. While we recognize that there are times when our experiences relating to God can be captured in music, most often we choose to focus on who He is. Then the truth of who He is can cascade through our lives. He is exalted. We glory in Christ.

Concluding Thoughts (xx Minutes):

1) Final Exhortation:

- a) Well... we've covered a lot of ground this morning, haven't we?
- b) Today, if you confess Jesus as Lord, then I urge you to hold firm in this present life to gospel faith "Jesus + Nothing"
 - i) Let us remember our former life before Christ and be thankful for His free gift of salvation.
 - ii) Let us refuse to return to any form of obedience to any cruel TaskMaster – false gods, self, sin, legalism – anything other than Christ and Christ alone.
- c) If you are sitting there and you really can't remember a life "before Christ" and a life "in Christ", then perhaps today will be marked as a new day in your life.
 - i) I urge you to admit your own sin before a Holy but Merciful Father.
 - ii) Believe in your heart that Jesus' willing sacrifice on the cross was sufficient for your debt.
 - iii) And confess with your tongue that today, November 11 2013, Jesus is your Merciful Master.
 - iv) If you are willing to do that this morning, I love for you to join with me after the service and pray.
- d) And for all us gathered as the church known as RHC, let us move out in real Gospel Ministry.
 - i) Let's be culturally flexible as guided by the Spirit of the Living God while never distorting the gospel message.
 - ii) Let's demonstrate transparency with our friends, neighbors, and co-workers as we invite them to "follow us as we follow Jesus"
 - iii) Let's embrace opportunities in hardship – even though they can be difficult - resisting the temptation to see every adversity as a rejection or disfavor.
 - iv) Let's serve balancing truth and love in ways that compel others towards God the Father.
 - v) Let's glory in Christ while refusing the temptation to think that ministry and service is all about us.
- e) Paul feared that he had "labored in vain". Let it never be said in our lives or in the life of Redemption Hill Church that this was so....

2) Final Words: READ THIS DIRECTLY – (Closing Scripture citation – Psalm 40:1-6, 11, 16-17 ESV)

I waited patiently for the LORD; he inclined to me and heard my cry.² He drew me up from the pit of destruction, out of the miry bog, and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure.³ He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God. Many will see and fear, and put their trust in the LORD.⁴ Blessed is the man who makes the LORD his trust, who does not turn to the proud, to those who go astray after a lie!⁵ You have multiplied, O LORD my God, your wondrous deeds and your thoughts toward us; none can compare with you! I will proclaim and tell of them, yet they are more than can be told.⁶ In sacrifice and

offering you have not delighted, but you have given me an open ear. Burnt offering and sin offering you have not required.

¹¹ As for you, O LORD, you will not restrain your mercy from me; your steadfast love and your faithfulness will ever preserve me!

¹⁶ [But] May all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you; may those who love your salvation say continually, "Great is the LORD!" ¹⁷ As for me, I am poor and needy, but the Lord takes thought for me. You are my help and my deliverer; do not delay, O my God! (Psa 40:1-6; 11; 16-17 ESV)

[Psalm 40:1-6, 11, 16-17 ESV]

- a) Let us pray.... Father....
- b) Final Song – “Inside Out”