



***The Tragedy of Spiritual Desertion***

*Date: 09/17/2017*

## Pray Together

**Use the first few minutes of your time together to lead your group in a focused prayer time.**

- **Praise:** Spend time praising God for who He is.
- **Repent:** Take a few moments to silently confess any sin that is lingering in your heart.
- **Ask:** Verbalize your needs and the needs of others to God.
- **Yield:** Surrender your will to God.

## Read Together

Imagine that God chose to send you to a group of individuals to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ. After much prayer, you journey to the area in which they live and begin telling them your story of redemption. You share with them the hope of Jesus and the power that Christ brings to one's life. You explain to them the beautiful and freeing Doctrine of Grace that not only saves the believer, but empowers them to live an abundant life of liberty, joy, and peace. In your teaching, you contrast the bondage that comes from living under the law of legalism with the liberty that is born from the grace and power of the Gospel. They believe. They accept salvation through faith alone in Jesus Christ. They experience freedom from rules and regulations.

Then imagine that after leaving these new brothers and sisters in Christ, a group of false teachers arrive and begin to distort and damage the truth you so boldly professed. These teachers pervert the truth and attempt to add to the Doctrine of Grace. Their distortions stir up dissension, confusion and frustration, leaving the believers in a tragic state whereby they begin turning away from the Gospel.

The Book of Galatians is Paul's plea to the region of Galatia to remember that which they had been taught and in whom they had once firmly believed—a Gospel not of works, laws, and restrictions, but rather a true Gospel, attained by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. The Book of Galatians is a strong warning to forsake legalism and embrace liberty. It is a reminder to the believers in Galatia and to Christians today that above all, one must seek to know and understand truth. Furthermore, we must exercise wisdom and discernment when encountering anyone or anything that would proclaim to love God but fail to exalt and glorify His Son Jesus as the only way to salvation.

## Discuss Together

**Use these questions to engage in an informative and impactful discussion.**

- Read Galatians 1:6-9. Paul's language is strong in these verses as he questions believers in Galatia. What is his accusation?
- In your own words share what you understand to be the Gospel of Jesus Christ. What was this "different gospel" mentioned at the end of verse 6?
- In verse 7 Paul says, "but there are some who trouble with you and want to distort the Gospel of Christ." Who is Paul speaking of?
- What were these false teachers doing to distort the Gospel? (See Acts 15:1-21) Discuss ways that Christians today distort the Gospel.



- In the Old Testament God gave the Law to Moses on Mount Sinai. (See Exodus 20-31) These were God's instructions on daily living, purification and the sacrificial system for the Jewish people. In the Book of Galatians, Paul was preaching to the Gentiles, yet false teachers were attempting to burden them with laws that were never actually meant for them. In Galatians 1:6, Paul states that he is "astonished" that the believers in Galatia are so quick to desert the grace of Jesus in order to follow after the Law. Explain what it meant for the Galatian believers to live under grace. Explain what it meant to live under the Mosaic Law.
- Discuss the following verses that contrast grace and works:
  - Acts 15:1
  - Romans 7:6-7
  - Romans 8:1-4
  - Romans 11:6
  - Galatians 2:14-19
  - Galatians 3:23-24
  - Ephesians 2:8-10
  - John 1:17
  - James 2:20
- When a person attempts to "add-on" regulations to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, he or she causes it to become man-centered rather than God-centered. Discuss ways that believers pervert the Gospel today by attempting to add to grace.
- In his commentary on Galatians, G. Walter Hansen states the following:

"Preoccupation with racial identity, religious observance, and ceremonial rituals was robbing them [the Galatians] of their experience of God's grace expressed in Christ. The irony and tragedy of the situation was that in their pious pursuit of spiritual perfection, they were actually turning away from God. The Galatian tragedy is a warning for us that not every quest for spirituality is in reality a quest for God."

In what ways might you be seeking "spiritual perfection" but in reality, find yourself turning away from God and His grace in the process?

- Read Galatians 4:8-9. As believers in Jesus Christ the Galatians were fully known by God and had the ability to know and understand God and discern truth, yet when confronted with false teachings they were easily led astray. This is true of believers today as well. Through the directing of the Holy Spirit, you have been given spiritual eyes and ears that can discern between true teaching and false teaching. You have the ability to resist the pull of the world and not be led astray. How are you doing in this area? Discuss ways that Christians can resist false teaching and train their spiritual eyes and ears to discern truth.

## How I must obey Christ...

- Examine yourself. As a result of this study, identify a specific area in which you need to obey Christ this week.
- How do you specifically need to obey Christ in this area this week?
- How can Jesus redeem this area? How has He proven that in Scripture?
- Who will keep you accountable to this commitment this week?

## Pray Together

Read Galatians 4:8-9 together. Pray and ask God to empower you through His grace to refrain from the enslavement that comes from looking to the "gods" of this world and instead live as one who fully knows God and is known by Him.

