

Believers Adrift

(Chuck Swindoll)

As we come to the conclusion of Paul's letter to the Galatians, let's step back and consider how we can apply the main truth of the book as a whole. Galatians has confronted us with profound doctrines while challenging us with practical applications. In fact, we dare not conclude the letter without considering how to apply its truths to the Christian life. As we think about the book as a whole, let me suggest a few practical principles to apply.

First, no one is immune to the temptation of drifting. If it could happen to people in the first century who lived under the direct teaching of spiritual leaders like Paul and Barnabas, it can certainly happen to us today. Perhaps you're drifting away from the purity of the gospel of grace. Or maybe you're being bullied by legalists and in danger of being carried away by the undercurrents of their manipulative message. The letter of Galatians can serve as a prevailing wind to guide you back into the safe harbor of grace—and as an anchor to keep you in those calm waters. Keep this sobering fact in mind: "If it happened to them, it can happen to me." Read Galatians as if Paul were addressing you personally, challenging you with either a rebuke or a warning.

Second, some things are worth fighting for. The great news of salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone is one of those foundation stones of the Christian faith—right up there with the deity and humanity of Christ, the Virgin Birth, the Trinity, and the rest of those doctrines on which the whole Christian church stands or falls. Like Paul, we need to uphold the true gospel, refuting objections and refusing to compromise. Our failure to do this in our own day has allowed for a watered-down gospel that has accommodated and spawned numerous "varieties" of Christianity. The fact stands: A "different" gospel is not the gospel (1:6-7). It is heresy. Your family members, neighbors, co-workers, and friends may buy into a teaching at odds with the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith. Or they may be spinning their wheels in a religion of good works meant to win or to keep God's favor. Firmly resist the temptation to fudge on the faith. Refuse to change your clear understanding of grace simply to get along or to keep the peace.

Third, we all began at the same place, which puts us all on the same level. We all start out as rebels against God. Through faith in His Son, we become fellow heirs of salvation and inherit the infinite blessings of Christ. In Christ, ethnic, social, and gender distinctions have no bearing on one's standing before God (3:28). It doesn't matter if you were born in a Christian family, have lived a moral life, or have sought to help others in need. If you have never set aside your own attempts to win God's favor or earn His love, do it now. For unbelievers, Galatians makes God's plan of salvation clear. For believers, Galatians reminds us that we have no reason to boast about our own salvation or to take credit for our spiritual growth. As we disembark from this voyage through Galatians, plant your feet firmly on the solid ground of grace. Once and for all set self-help aside and embrace the truth that grace—not law—is both the way to life and the way of life.

