

**Series 'Community' - No. 1. The New Family of Jesus**

The Old Testament records God selecting Israel as a people/nation with whom he would have a special relationship. He provided for them, gave rules for living well and instructed them to witness the love he freely gave so that all nations would be blessed. Israel focused on keeping the rules but tried to keep God to themselves, failing to bless all nations as God intended. In Old Testament passages familiar to most, God through Isaiah says, 'Forget the

former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing!' (Isaiah 43:18-19) And through Jeremiah God talks of washing clean, giving a new heart, and putting his Spirit within each individual member of his people [for his people, one could say his family]. (Ezekiel 36:25-27) The question for Israel then, and for all people now, is what do we need to do to join God's family and receive the Spirit of God?

**Read Galatians 3:1-14**

The answer to my question, in one sense, is we don't need to 'do' anything. *Can you explain this? What does Paul say? Pause to consider the enormity of this gift of God.* In another sense, we have a difficult lifelong task to do. *Explain?* With the two Old Testament passages referred to above in mind (there are more OT passages with similar messages), *what connections can you make to the two responses in which our first question was answered?*

Paul is clear in our reading that it is faith in God, and believing that the salvation won by Jesus for all on the cross, opens entry into God's family. *It is possible to understand that Paul is condemning the continued following of the 'Law'. Is this what he means?* It would seem that the overzealous concentration on the Law by Israel had produced a roadblock to God's plan 'to bless all nations' through them. *Do you recall Fabian talking about 'keeping the main thing the main thing'? What is the main thing here?* Time to look again, as per last week, at Matthew 23:37-39.

I wonder if, like me, there are times when it is difficult to accept 'Jesus paid it all on the cross'. Acceptance, of course, is one of the foundational truths of the faith we profess, and our assurance that God has made possible the joining into the new family of Jesus.

**Read Matthew 12:46-50**

In this passage Jesus is obviously not rejecting his earthly family in favour of his disciples. *How do you think the family reacted when they were informed what Jesus had said? If you were in the same scenario, how would you react?*

*Do you believe there is tension between God commanding us to put him first above everything, and our natural desire and need to put our family first?*

**Prayer:** Lord, we pray that we may live a life worthy of what you have freely done for us. Amen.