



FOOTHILLS COMMUNITY CHURCH | LIFE NOTES

FREEDOM

SYNOPSIS OF SERIES

The entire purpose of this letter is to make a clear the difference between the gospel of Jesus Christ and false gospels. Galatians attacks two false ideas in particular, legalism and lawlessness. It dismantles the lies of these ideas and paints a true picture of salvation by grace through faith alone. Paul stands firmly in defense of the gospel.

CONTEXT OF GALATIANS

The letter was written by Paul sometime around AD 50. On Paul's first missionary journey, he planted churches in Pisidia Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe. These were Greek people – Paul's mission was to bring the good news of Jesus to the Gentiles. Many people in these areas heard the message of Jesus Christ from Paul and accepted it. The message that Paul preached was a message of God's grace. Specifically, Paul emphasized that a person is saved by his faith in Jesus, not by his works. As Paul opened the door for Gentiles to experience Jesus, there were some Jewish teachers who did not buy this "faith alone" message. They believed that Gentiles Christians, like Jewish Christians, needed to follow the traditional ceremonial customs from the Mosaic law. They taught that these Gentile believers had to observe all dietary laws and be circumcised in order to be fully accepted by God. Some of these Jewish teachers made their way into Galatia and were now teaching Paul's congregations that his message of "faith alone" was inadequate.

DIGGING DEEPER:

READ GALATIANS 3:1-5

You crazy Galatians! Did someone put a hex on you? Have you taken leave of your senses? Something crazy has happened, for it's obvious that you no longer have the crucified Jesus in clear focus in your lives. His sacrifice on the cross was certainly set before you clearly enough.²⁻⁴ Let me put this question to you: How did your new life begin? Was it by working your heads off to please God? Or was it by responding to God's Message to you? Are you going to continue this craziness? For only crazy people would think they could complete by their own efforts what was begun by God. If you weren't smart enough or strong enough to begin it, how do you suppose you could perfect it? Did you go through this whole painful learning process for nothing? It is not yet a total loss, but it certainly will be if you keep this up!⁵ Answer this question: Does the God who lavishly provides you with his own presence, his Holy Spirit, working things in your lives you could never do for yourselves, does he do these things because of your strenuous moral striving or because you trust him to do them in you?

Why is Paul so frustrated in this passage?

What are some examples of 'working your heads off to please God' in our context?

In what ways do you hop back on the treadmill to try and earn your position with God?

READ GALATIANS 3:6-12

Don't these things happen among you just as they happened with Abraham? He believed God, and that act of belief was turned into a life that was right with God.

⁷⁻⁸ Is it not obvious to you that persons who put their trust in Christ (not persons who put their trust in the law!) are like Abraham: children of faith? It was all laid out beforehand in Scripture that God would set things right with non-Jews by *faith*. Scripture anticipated this in the promise to Abraham: "All nations will be blessed in you."⁹⁻¹⁰ So those now who live by faith are blessed along with Abraham, who lived by faith—this is no new doctrine! And that means that anyone who tries to live by his own effort, independent of God, is doomed to failure. Scripture backs this up: "Utterly cursed is every person who fails to carry out every detail

written in the Book of the law.”¹¹⁻¹² The obvious impossibility of carrying out such a moral program should make it plain that no one can sustain a relationship with God that way. The person who lives in right relationship with God does it by embracing what God arranges for him. Doing things for God is the opposite of entering into what God does for you. Habakkuk had it right: “The person who believes God, is set right by God—and that’s the real life.” Rule-keeping does not naturally evolve into living by faith, but only perpetuates itself in more and more rule-keeping, a fact observed in Scripture: “The one who does these things [rule-keeping] continues to live by them.”

Why does Paul use the example of Abraham?

How is trying to follow the law perfectly a curse?

Why does faith bring about freedom in Christ?

READ GALATIANS 3:13-14

¹³⁻¹⁴ Christ redeemed us from that self-defeating, cursed life by absorbing it completely into himself. Do you remember the Scripture that says, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”? That is what happened when Jesus was nailed to the cross: He became a curse, and at the same time dissolved the curse. And now, because of that, the air is cleared and we can see that Abraham’s blessing is present and available for non-Jews, too. We are *all* able to receive God’s life, his Spirit, in and with us by believing—just the way Abraham received it.

MOVING FORWARD

What is the promise of verses 13-14?

How have you experienced the freedom of the ‘air being cleared’?

In what areas are you not living in the freedom you have in Christ?