

Galatians– Embracing Grace and Truth

Facilitated by Sister Patricia Weaver

 **828 7580 6094** ▶ **Thursday March 5, 2026**

Women of Excellence

Bible Study 7pm

Memory Verse

Galatians 1:10 (ESV) For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ.

Introduction to Galatians

Slavery comes in many forms. Historically, slaves were men and women forced to serve their conquerors or captors. But there are other ways to become enslaved. Some men and women, trapped by destructive habits, struggle under the control of drugs or alcohol. Others, trapped in destructive relationships, struggle to live with an abusive spouse or parent. Still others, trapped in dead-end jobs or systems, struggle to free themselves from financial and emotional strangleholds. And all who do not live in Christ are slaves to sin. Yet all slaves share a common dream—to be free!

The message of Galatians is the message of the Christian's spiritual freedom, his deliverance by Christ from the bondage of sin and religious legalism. Its message is particularly relevant in our own day, as personal freedom has become the dominant emphasis of countless philosophies both within and without Christianity.

Galatians is a deeply personal letter written from the grieving heart of a godly man for his spiritual children, whose faith and living were being undermined by

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false teachers. His heart cry to the Galatian believers was, “It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore, keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery” **(Gal. 5:1)**.

Nothing bothered Paul more than seeing people return to bondage. That’s what he learned about his friends in Galatia: Men and women, who had found freedom in Christ, were being pressured and persuaded to return to the slavery of religious rules and regulations. Paul’s response was quick and strong—don’t desert Christ (1:6), don’t be foolish (3:1), don’t be cursed (3:10), don’t be a prisoner (3:23), and don’t be a slave (4:8); instead, be free (4:7), be free (4:31), be free (5:1), **BE FREE (5:13)**!

Paul’s letter to the Galatians is called the charter of Christian freedom. In it Paul proclaims the reality of believers’ liberty in Christ—freedom from the law and the power of sin, and freedom to serve the living Lord.

Are you trapped in sin? You can be a child of God through faith in Christ Jesus, an heir to the promise, and free (3:26–29). Are you trapped in legalism, trying to earn favor with God by doing good and being good? Don’t be burdened again by a yoke of slavery—stand firm and free in Christ (5:1). Are you unsure how to channel the energy from your newfound liberty? Use your freedom to serve others with love (5:13).

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THE AUTHOR

Paul, whose original name was Saul, was a native of Tarsus, a city in southeast Asia Minor not far from southern Galatia. He was raised in a strict Jewish family and was steeped in traditional Jewish legalism. The apostle spoke of legalism from firsthand experience, and he also spoke of grace from firsthand experience as well as from firsthand revelation. More than any other apostle he understood the bondage of the law and the freedom of grace.

The very first line of this letter names Paul as the author (1:1). He is also mentioned in 5:2, “I, Paul, tell you this ...” In addition to this internal evidence, Paul’s authorship of Galatians has been widely accepted by virtually all biblical scholars, including Bible critics. Galatians traditionally has been recognized as the standard for measuring other documents’ claims to Pauline authorship.

Paul’s intense desire to tell others about Christ led him to make three extensive missionary journeys. The first began in A.D. 46, when he and Barnabas were commissioned by the church at Antioch and sent to Cyprus, Pamphylia, and Galatia (Acts 13:4–14:2). At each town, they first would try to reach Jews with the gospel; then they would reach beyond the synagogue to the Gentiles, who responded in great numbers. During this time, they established several churches in Galatian cities, including Lystra, Derbe, Iconium, and Antioch of Pisidia.

Evidently, upon returning from the first missionary journey, Paul heard of the influence of certain Judaizers on the Galatian converts. Judaizers were Jewish Christians who believed strongly that converts to Christ must keep Jewish laws and follow Jewish rites and rituals, especially circumcision and dietary laws. In other words, they were teaching that Gentiles had to become “Jewish” in order to

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become Christian. Judaizers acknowledged Jesus as Messiah but still looked for salvation through the works of the law. These teachers were undermining Paul's authority and the message he preached. So, Paul wrote to vindicate his apostleship, to refute the Judaizers, and to build the Galatian believers in their faith.

Discussion Questions

- 1. What stood out to you in the Introduction?**
- 2. Who is the Author, and what stood out to you about him?**

THE MESSAGE

After a brief introduction (1:1–5), Paul addresses those who were accepting the Judaizers' perverted gospel (1:6–9). He summarizes the controversy, including his personal confrontation with Peter and other church leaders (1:10–2:16). He then demonstrates that salvation is by faith alone by alluding to his conversion (2:17–21), appealing to his readers' own experience of the gospel (3:1–5), and showing how the Old Testament teaches about grace (3:6–20). Next, he explains the purpose of God's laws and the relationship between law, God's promises, and Christ (3:21–4:31).

Having laid the foundation, Paul builds his case for Christian liberty. We are saved by faith, not by keeping Moses' law (5:1–12); our freedom means that we are free to love and serve one another, not to do wrong (5:13–26); and Christians

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should share each other's troubles and be kind to each other (6:1–10). In 6:11–18, Paul takes the pen into his own hand and shares his final thoughts.

The main themes in the book of Galatians include: *the Law, Faith, Freedom, Sinful Nature, and Holy Spirit.*

The Law (1:6–8; 2:15–21; 3:1–25; 5:2–6; 6:12–16). A group of teachers had traveled from Jerusalem to Galatia and were insisting that non-Jewish believers must obey Jewish laws and traditions. They taught that a person was saved by following the law of Moses (with emphasis on circumcision for males, the sign of the covenant), in addition to faith in Christ. In other words, Gentiles had to first become Jews in order to become Christians. Some Galatians had been convinced by these teachings, and many had become confused. Paul opposed the false teachers (Judaizers) by showing that the law is powerless to save anyone. Only God's grace through personal faith in Christ makes people right with God.

IMPORTANCE FOR TODAY. No one can be saved by keeping the Old Testament laws, even all the Ten Commandments. The law served as a guide to point out people's need to be forgiven, as a straightedge to show people how crooked they are. Even the most loving, generous, kind, and moral person falls short of God's standard. But Christ fulfilled all of the obligations of the law for us. We must turn to him, and him alone, to be saved. Don't be fooled by those who suggest that performance of certain works or religious rituals are necessary to obtain eternal life. Only Christ can make a person right with God!

Faith (2:15–21; 3:6–18, 23–29). If people cannot be saved by keeping the Jewish laws or by living good, moral lives, how can they be saved? Paul answered this question by reminding the Galatians of Abraham's faith and

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pointing them again to Christ. Salvation is a gift from God, made available to human beings through Christ's death on the cross. Individuals receive God's salvation by faith—trusting in Christ—not by anything else. Becoming a Christian is in no way based on a person's initiative, wise choice, or good character. A person can become right with God only by believing in Christ. This common faith in Christ unites all believers, everywhere—Jews, Gentiles, men, women, slaves, and those who are free; all are true descendants of Abraham and children of God.

IMPORTANCE FOR TODAY. A person's acceptance with God comes only by believing in Christ. We must never add to or twist this truth. We are saved by faith, not by the good that we do. And we must never exclude anyone because of sex, race, or social standing from the Good News of Christ. All can come through faith. What or whom are you trusting for salvation? Have you placed your whole trust and confidence in Christ? He alone can forgive you and bring you into a relationship with God.

Freedom (4:1–31; 5:1, 13–15). In answering the Judaizers, Paul emphasized the believers' freedom in Christ. Christians were neither under the authority of Jerusalem nor under the jurisdiction of Jewish laws and traditions. Faith in Christ brings true freedom from sin and from legalism—the futile attempt to be right with God by keeping the law. Paul also emphasized that the freedom in Christ must not be abused or flaunted. Believers' freedom must be used to serve one another in love and to submit to the Holy Spirit's control. So, we have this paradox: Believers are freed from sin in order to be slaves of Christ.

IMPORTANCE FOR TODAY. When a person trusts Christ as Savior, he or she becomes a new person, forgiven, empowered, free from the bondage of sin. Yet

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this freedom is a privilege, with responsibility. Christians are not free to disobey Christ or practice immorality; they are free to serve the risen Christ. Before trusting Christ, you were a slave to sin, but now you are forgiven and free from sin's power and penalty. Use your freedom to love and serve, not to do wrong.

Sinful Nature (5:13, 16–21; 6:7–8). The tendency of human beings to sin is inherited from Adam. This sinful nature continues to trouble believers and cooperates with the world and Satan to stifle their effectiveness. The sinful nature affects the body and also the mind.

IMPORTANCE FOR TODAY. Our sinful nature opposes the Spirit and becomes more active when we try to live by the Spirit, hindering our relationship with God. The sinful nature is not limited to sensual desires and often is more dangerous as pride or apathy. There is a constant battle between our sinful nature and the Holy Spirit in us. But we can overcome the flesh by recognizing its presence and yielding our lives to God's Spirit. Don't be surprised or discouraged by how easily you are influenced by the sinful nature. Then yield to the control of the Holy Spirit daily, moment by moment.

Holy Spirit (5:16–26; 6:1–10). People become children of God, regenerated, through the work of the Holy Spirit. He brings new life, and even the faith to believe in Christ is his gift. Then, after conversion, the Holy Spirit continues to live in believers, instructing, guiding, leading, and giving power. Paul told the Galatians that if they would submit to the Holy Spirit's direction, he would produce love, joy, peace, and many other wonderful changes in them.

IMPORTANCE FOR TODAY. When a Christian allows the Holy Spirit to work, the Spirit produces his fruit in him or her. Just as becoming a Christian was a work of

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God in us through faith, so too is living the Christian life and the process of spiritual growth. The secret is in submitting to his leadership, trusting him to guide us, and then, by faith, following his guidance. Do you live by the Spirit? Instead of submitting again to the desires of your sinful nature, daily submit to the Holy Spirit. He will produce heavenly by-products in your life, transforming you into the person God wants you to be.

Discussion Questions

- 1. What stood out to you about the message?**

- 2. How can you apply this lesson to your life?**

Closing Prayer