

1 Way



to Freedom

Bible Studies on Paul's letter to the Galatians

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Introduction

Freedom is a precious reality that is only really understood by those who know what it means to be enslaved. One man who understood his slavery to religious law keeping was a German Monk by the name of Martin Luther. It was this letter of Paul, written to the churches in Galatia that cause a revolution in his life and turned his world right side up. Martin Luther called Galatians “my own epistle, to which I have plighted my troth; my Katie von Bora” (Katie von Bora was in fact Luther’s wife)



Paul’s letter to the churches in Galatia may well be the very first letter he wrote as an apostle. Galatia itself was a Roman province that is now the area we know as modern Turkey. It was written to small groups of Christian converts whose lives where being thrown into turmoil by those who promoted a more Jewish form of the Christian faith.

This letter itself deals with three main questions.

Firstly, is the question of authority. How do we know who or what to believe or disbelieve?

Secondly, is the question of salvation. How do we get saved and stay saved as disciples of Christ?

Thirdly, is the question of Christian living. How do we go on living the Christian life as a Christian community that finds itself in the midst of a pagan culture?

It was in this letter that Martin Luther found one way to freedom as a disciple of Jesus Christ

Study 1: A clear and present danger

Galatians 1:1-10

Getting started

1. What do you think are the greatest threats to Biblical Christianity today?

Investigate Galatians 1:1-10

2. What point is Paul making regarding himself in the opening verse of this letter?

3. What do we learn of the gospel in Gal. 1:3-5?

4. How does someone turn their back on God? (Gal. 1:6-7)

5. How would you describe Paul's attitude towards those who preach a different gospel?

6. What evidence in the opening of this letter show that Paul is not interested in pleasing men?

Thinking it through

7. What might a “different gospel” look like in our context?

8. How can the desires to “please man” manifest itself in the ministry and service that you are involved in?

What is one thing that you have learnt from this part of Galatians?

Study 2: Defending the faith

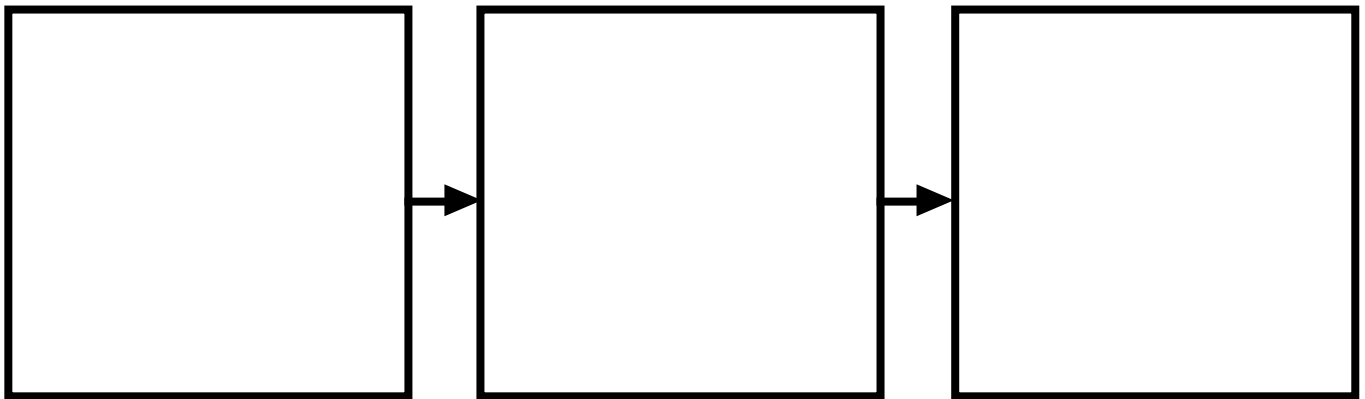
Galatians 1:11-2:10

Getting started

1. Is Christian freedom a freedom to do whatever you like? Why / Why not?

Investigate Galatians 1:11-2:10

2. Outline the change in Paul's life.



3. What is Paul so concerned about in vv. 18-24?

4. What sort of slavery were the false teachers trying to promote? (Gal. 2:3-4)

5. What was at stake with regards to the false brothers in Gal. 2:4-5?

6. What agreement was reached between Paul and the other apostles?
(Gal. 2:8-10)

Thinking it through

7. How might religion threaten our freedom in Christ today?

8. How can we guard the truth of the gospel at church, family, relationships?

What is one thing that you have learnt from this part of Galatians?

Study 3: Faith + Anything = Nothing

Galatians 2:11-21

Getting started

1. Why do people think that doing the religious thing gets us right with God?

Investigate Galatians 2:11-21

2. How does Paul describe Peter's behaviour in Antioch? Why? (see also Acts 10:27-29; 15:1-11)

3. How are Jews and Gentiles made right with God (i.e. justified before God)? (Gal. 2:15-16)

4. What issue is Paul trying to head off in Gal. 2:17?

5. How does Paul understand the direction of his life apart from God's law? (Gal. 2:20)

6. What does Paul think of Jesus' death if getting right with God was a matter of observing God's law? (Gal. 2:21)

Thinking it through

7. Would you be prepared to challenge a Christian leader if they were teaching or acting in ways opposed to the gospel? How would you do that?

8. What do you think it means to "live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself up for me"?

9. How would you try and explain the good news to someone who thought that their good works or their obedience to the 10 commandments will help them into heaven?

What is one thing that you have learnt from this part of Galatians?

Study 4: The Blessed Life

Galatians 3:1-18

Getting started

1. What do you think it means to be blessed by God?

Investigate Galatians 3:1-18

2. Paul asks a question in Gal. 3:2. What answer is he expecting?

3. Why does Paul regard the Galatian Christians as foolish?

4. What does it mean to be blessed by God? (Gal. 3:6-9)

5. How does someone stand cursed before God? (Gal. 3:10)

6. How did Christ redeem us from the curse of the law? (Gal. 3:13)

7. Why did Christ redeem us from the curse of the law? (Gal. 3:14)

8. How many years after God's promise to Abraham was the law given? Why does Paul think this is significant?

Thinking it through

9. How does Paul's understanding of the blessed life differ from those who promote the prosperity gospel?

10. Are there any areas of your life where religious legalism could infect your life?

11. What areas of your life do you find difficult to live by faith?

12. How does this passage help you to trust God and his promises?

What is one thing that you have learnt from this part of Galatians?

Study 5: Time to grow up

Galatians 3:19-4:11

Getting started

1. Why do parents and schools have rules for children?

Investigate Galatians 3:19-4:11

2. How does Paul describe the purpose of God's law?

v. 19

v. 24

3. Read Gal. 25-26. Who is Paul referring to when he says "we" in v. 25 and "you" in v. 26?

4. What is the significance of faith in Christ? (Gal. 3:26-29)

5. What sort of slavery is Paul talking about in Gal. 4:3?

6. How do we know that we have the Spirit of God in our hearts? (Gal. 4:6)

7. What evidence does Paul offer in support of the Galatian Christians returning back to the law? (Gal. 4:9-10)

Thinking it through

8. Why do you think the trappings of religion and the keeping the law appeals to many people?

9. If Christians are no longer 'under the law', what do the following passages tell us about the role of the Old Testament for Christians today?

1 Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God— 2 the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures Romans 1:1-2

4 For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. Romans 5:4

1 For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers, that our forefathers were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. 2 They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. 3 They all ate the same spiritual food 4 and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ. 5 Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered over the desert. 6 Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did. 7 Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as

it is written: “The people sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in pagan revelry.” 8 We should not commit sexual immorality, as some of them did—and in one day twenty-three thousand of them died. 9 We should not test the Lord, as some of them did—and were killed by snakes. 10 And do not grumble, as some of them did—and were killed by the destroying angel. 11 These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come. 12 So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don’t fall! 13 No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it. 1 Cor 10:1-13

16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. 2 Tim 3:16-17

10. How does being adopted as a child of God impact your life compared to those who still live in slavery

11. “The good news of Jesus is the death knell¹ of religion.” What do you think of this statement?

What is one thing that you have learnt from this part of Galatians?

¹ Death knell is the sound made by a bell rung slowly for a death or a funeral
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Study 6: Freedom From ...

Galatians 4:12-5:12

Getting started

1. What are some of the restrictions of freedom that the general community resents?

Investigate Galatians 4:12-5:12

2. How would you describe Paul's relationship with the Galatian Christians in Gal. 4:12-20?

3. Paul speaks about the children born to Abraham. Ishmael born to Hagar and Isaac born to Sarah. Each woman represents two covenants. What do we learn about these two covenants in Gal. 4:24-31

Hagar	Sarah

4. How does Paul view a life lived under the law? (Gal. 5:1)

5. How does someone fall away from grace? (Gal. 5:2-4)

6. How does Paul describe the work of these false teachers in the lives of the Christians in Galatia?

Thinking it through

7. What possible yokes of slavery are we tempted to adopt for ourselves or insist on in others that will threaten their spiritual freedom?

8. How do you think faith express itself through love?

9. How should we protect ourselves from false teaching here at St. Luke's?

What is one thing that you have learnt from this part of Galatians?

Study 7: Freedom For ...

Galatians 5:13-26

Getting started

1. What sort of behaviour is often excused with, “Oh well, they’re only human”? What is meant by this excuse?

Investigate Galatians 5:13-26

2. How should our freedom as Christians be exercised? (Gal. 5:13-14)

3. What does it mean for us to “live by the Spirit”? (Gal. 5:16)

4. Describe the conflict that Christians are involved in? (Gal. 5:17)

5. How would you describe “sinful nature” and fruit of the Spirit?

- “sinful nature”

- “fruit of the Spirit”

6. What happens to the person who lives by the sinful nature and not by the Spirit? (Gal. 5:21)

Thinking it through

7. If the law of God is summed up in loving your neighbour as yourself, what do you think the difference is between being someone who lives under the law and someone who has been freed from the law?

8. Should Christians expect to be able to conquer sin in their lives?

9. As you look at the fruit of the Spirit, which two qualities are you best at and which two qualities do you need to work hard at?

What is one thing that you have learnt from this part of Galatians?

Study 8: Freedom that makes a difference

Galatians 6:1-18

Getting started

1. What helps you to live a Christian life that is different from our fallen world?

Investigate Galatians 6:1-5

2. How should we deal with a Christian brother or sister caught in sin?

3. What is our motivation in dealing with a brother or sister caught in sin?

Thinking it through

4. How would you want to be treated by Christians if you were caught in sin?

5. When do you find it hard to bear another person's burdens?

6. How would a legalist deal with someone who falls into sin?

Investigate Galatians 6:6

7. What are we to share with our instructors in the word of God? What does it mean and is it optional?

Thinking it through

8. List three ways that you might be able to “share every good thing” with your teacher of God’s word?

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9. How might a legalist respond to the requirement to “share all things” with his or her instructor?

Investigate Galatians 6:7-10

10. Who is responsible for the sowing and reaping described in Gal. 6:7-8?

- Sowing
- Reaping

11. What does Paul teach us to do good in verses 9-10?

Thinking it through

12. Sowing is how you invest your time, energy resources and thinking. List some things that we should and shouldn't invest in.

Please the sinful nature	Please the Spirit

Investigate Galatians 6:12-18

13. What are the legalists concerned about and what is Paul concerned about?

The Legalists	Paul

14. How do verses 15-16 sum up the concerns of this letter?

Thinking it through

15. What have been some of the important lessons that you have learnt through these studies in Galatians?

Prayer Points

