



BE FREE

A STUDY IN GALATIANS



BE FREE

DEVOTIONAL

WEEK 1

Paul believed Jesus was the promised Messiah, and because of that, everything had changed. The issue (or problem) that prompted Paul to write Galatians is the same issue that prompted the Jerusalem council recorded in Acts 15—do the new believers in Jesus the Messiah, who are not Jewish, need to observe the Law of Moses (the Torah) from the Old Testament in order to be saved? What is the relationship between God’s chosen people of Israel and these new believers of Jesus who have never heard of Moses or God’s law? This is important to Paul. Galatians is intense, bold, and forceful.

Who were these Jews and Gentiles Paul was writing to?

A Jew was an ethnic descendant of Abraham. Jewishness is a peoplehood. New Jewish believers in Christ had followed the Torah all of their lives. Torah is the teaching central to Jewish life and includes religious obligations like circumcision, sabbath keeping, kosher food laws, and festivals like the Passover. Some Jewish Christ followers travelled to Galatia and were teaching the new Gentile believers in Christ to also follow these rules. Jesus was a Jew who observed Torah. All the Apostles were Jewish, including Paul. In contrast to that, a Gentile is simply everyone else in the world who is not Jewish (sometimes referred to as Greeks). A Gentile was ignorant of God’s instructions and was seen by the Jews as trapped in idolatry and sinful behavior. This was a true assessment! Without God’s law, we don’t even know we are enslaved to sin and worshipping false idols and bound to the principalities and powers behind them.

Jesus bought us freedom from our enslavement to sin and death, and defeated the fallen principalities and powers through his death and resurrection. Paul wants these new followers of Jesus to live in God’s grace. He does not want them to exchange their freedom for a different kind of bondage—enslavement to the requirements of the Old Testament law. Keep in mind, what Paul called bondage, others were calling *a standard of holiness given to us by God and required for salvation* (see Acts 15:1 & 5). Hopefully, you can see the dilemma. Up until this time, these Jewish believers would have been right—being part of God’s promised people required Torah observance. Now, because of Jesus, everything had changed. What Paul was contending for was new, radical, unheard of, and completely different. The good news of Jesus had radically redefined everything.

If possible, read the entire book of Galatians in one sitting. It will take 15-25 minutes. What themes do you see? (summarize each chapter with a sentence)

Chapter 1: _____

Chapter 2: _____

Chapter 3: _____

Chapter 4: _____

Chapter 5: _____

Chapter 6: _____

Read Acts 15.

What is the disagreement being discussed? What is Paul's position? What is the conclusion of the Jerusalem Council?

"Gospel" means good news. In your words, what is the good news of Jesus?

Bonus question: Read Acts 13-14.

What was the outcome of Paul's missionary journey in Galatia? What were the challenges? Successes? Any miracles? Any opposition?
