

FREEDOM — IN THE — IN-BETWEEN

Introduction:

Chapter one introduces the main theme of Galatians, the second half of chapter one and all of chapter two serve as illustrations to that main point. Here, in chapter three, Paul begins to expand on the central theme: that we are not only saved by the gospel, we also grow through the gospel and live by the gospel. Paul in chapter three, and we in small group this week, will compare the law and faith.

This Week's Main Point:

Faith in Christ saves. Law observance cannot.

J. B. Phillips began his modern translation of Galatians three with, "Dear idiots." As you open your group, take a minute and acknowledge that the very mistake that Paul is confronting in the Galatians is a mistake that we are all prone to make ourselves: to try to begin, maintain, and grow our relationship with God through our own effort. We begin as Christians by faith. Why would we attempt to continue by works? It does take effort to grow as a disciple of Jesus. We get up early to read the Bible. We strain our brains to memorize scripture. We carve out time to pray and fellowship with other believers, and on and on. But these are all responses to our fellowship with the Holy Spirit, whom we receive by faith in Jesus.

In Galatians three Paul is not engaging as much with the false teaching of the Judaizers (that one enters into the Christian family by observing the law / circumcision from chapter one) but with the way that actual Christians (who began by faith in Christ, like the Galatians) are prone to misunderstand what it looks like to grow as a believer - through faith in the good news of the gospel and fellowship with the Spirit. Paul points out that the Spirit worked powerfully among the Galatians to show Christ as crucified and resurrected. The same power that moved them to faith will also move them through their lives of faith.

In this chapter, Paul will answer the question of if a Christian becomes spiritually mature through obeying the law or living by grace. He does this in three general ways: logically (1-5), historically (6-18), and theologically (19-29). We must trust in, and live by, God's promise, not our performance.

Sermon Response Question:

1) What "good deed" are you really good at? How do you build your identity on your ability to do this "good deed" on a regular basis?

2) Are you tempted to try to earn God's favor by your good actions?

Bible Study Questions: (Read Galatians 3:1-29)

3) Paul ask a number of rhetorical questions to the Galatians in verses 1-9. What are they and what do they say about Paul's attitude toward the Galatians?

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4) Why wouldn't a person be blessed if they tried to win God's blessing by rules and self-effort according to verses 10-14?

5) Paul's goal in verses 15-25 are to explain the difference between the law and the promise and to show that the promise (of the Spirit through faith in Jesus) is superior to the law (and perpetual obedience to it). How would you make the case that the inheritance God has planned for his people (the Spirit) is based on the promise, not the law using these verses?

6) Why is it "foolish" and "bewitched" (3:1) to choose human effort over faith in order to have fellowship with the Spirit? Find all the reasons you can in these verses, and add any others you can think of.

7) To the Judaizers who were misleading the Galatian Christians, Abraham was a hero and patriarch. How does Paul turn the tables and use Abraham as an example of faith instead of law keeping?

8) Why do people need to know God is a God who has laws before they can understand why Jesus' death is good news?

Application Questions:

9) After beginning our Christian lives by faith, most of us at one time or another imitate the Galatians and fall into relying on our own efforts. Why do you think this happens?

10) How can you, as a group, point one another toward reliance on faith and away from reliance on works on a regular basis?

Prayer:

- Break up into groups of 2-3.
- Name all the ways you can think of that Jesus Christ has done for you what you could not do for yourself.
- Take turns praying and thanking God for his salvation through Jesus taking the punishment for our sins on the cross.