

FREEDOM - IN THE - IN-BETWEEN

Introduction:

Throughout church history Christians have struggled by coming to God by grace through faith, then spending their lives trying to obey by human willpower. They are trying to show God how wise he was to save them because they were pretty good people anyway! In Chapter four Paul continues to make his argument that faith in Christ is the only basis for salvation and living the Christian life after experiencing grace.

This Week's Main Point:

Turning back to the law as a condition for salvation takes away from the gospel.

Galatians four is a challenging chapter to grasp as Paul assumes a fair amount of Old Testament knowledge; don't let that frustrate you as you work through this chapter! Paul is using all of these Old Testament references as illustrations of his point, just like he used personal stories in chapters one and two. Still, if your group may need to spend some time referencing these Old Testament passages and may still need to agree with the Apostle Peter in saying that in Paul's letters "there are some matters that are hard to understand!" (2 Peter 3:16)

Paul continues the argument from 3:24-29 in 4:1-7 by using the example of an heir under the care of a guardian until the time when the guardian is no longer needed. The law is the guardian and the inauguration of the gospel in God sending His Son is the time when the heir comes into full realization of his sonship or inheritance. In verses 8-11 Paul reminds the Galatians of their past slavery before Christ to ask if they want to return to that way of life. Paul then moves to an emotional appeal in 4:12-20. Finally, in 4:21-31 Paul uses the Old Testament narrative of Abraham, his wives and descendants to contrast the son of the flesh and the son of promise as examples of law versus faith.

Sermon Response Question:

1) This weekend we were able to witness many people following through on one of the most defining moments in every Christian's life - baptism. As part of the call for people to respond to Jesus in faith and baptism, Pastor J.D. challenged us to "stop putting off to tomorrow what you know you should do today."

Share a time in your life that you stepped out in faith and did something you knew God commanded you to do. Or, share something you feel God is calling you to do now, and you need help and prayer to follow through.

Bible Study Questions: Read Galatians 3:23-4:31

2) Looking at verses 1-7, how does Paul show that living under the law is inferior to living by faith in Christ?

3) How does Paul characterize believers before Christ and after?

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4) In verses 8-11 Paul contrast the difference in the Galatians from being “enslaved to things that are not gods” to being known by God. Why do the Galatians (and us) desire to “turn back to the weak and worthless elementary principles of the world?”

5) Paul revisits his main purpose for writing Galatians in verses 12-20. What does this passage say his main purpose for writing to the Galatian church is? How does it change the way you read this chapter?

6) In verses 21-31 Paul uses Sarah and Hagar as an illustration to contrast the life produced by the gospel and the life produced by the false teachers. In what ways did the circumstances of Ishmael and Isaac’s birth differ from each other?

7) What does this difference in the two covenants (addressed in question 6) mean for the church today?

Group Application Questions:

8) How are you (individually) and we (as groups) prone to legalistic behavior? Why do you think this is so?

9) In verses 12-20 Paul makes an emotional appeal to the church using phrases like “I entreat/beg you” (12), “you received me as...Christ Jesus” (14), “I am in anguish...” (19), and “I am perplexed” (20). How passionate are we that our friends, families, and fellow small group members are rightly related to God?

Prayer:

The Bible is impossible to understand without understanding the two covenants Paul discusses in Galatians four - the old, according to the law and the new, according to grace.

- Praise God for your freedom in Christ.
- Ask him for wisdom to see any pitfalls in your life and group.
- Intercede for one another that we would have protection in our spirit and in our relationships with one another.