



STUDY GUIDE

GAL ATI ANS

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overview

The pursuit—and defence—of *freedom* is one of the greatest ideals of the Western world. As Priyan Max Jeganathan wrote, “freedom—somehow—goes to the heart of what it means to be human.”¹ Whilst in the past our culture had been concerned with freedom from slavery and other tyrannical forms of oppression, today we tend to be preoccupied with individual freedoms associated with personal identity. We long to be unshackled by the expectations of others and free to express ourselves. We are not satisfied with voting, property, or civil rights, but long for—and even demand—sexual, financial, and emotional freedom, too.

But what sort of freedom do we ultimately need? As Paul wrote to the churches in Galatia, he exhorted them that we were called to be free. It was a timely message as some of the believers were imposing conditions and prerequisites (*especially circumcision*) on Gentiles wanting to become part of God’s family. But Paul emphatically rejects these additional requirements proclaiming that the gospel alone—with the grace that it brings—is perfectly sufficient. The gospel is the source of true freedom: from sin and death, and to live for God in the power of his Spirit. In this ten-part series, we’ll explore the beauty of the *ultimate* freedom that we can know because of the Good News that Jesus is Lord. We’ll explore what it means to live in freedom from sin and death, in the very power of God’s Spirit.

Galatians

- **Genre & Audience:** the *letter* to the Galatians is addressed to a number of churches in the Roman province of Galatia. Paul had visited the region on one of his missionary journeys (Acts 13-14).
- **Date:** Likely between 47 and 50 AD.
- **Purpose:** Paul writes this letter with an emphasis on the gospel along with the freedom it brings (to all people). It’s evident that Paul writes with a dash of frustration as some of the Jewish Christians were seeking to impose obedience to the laws of Moses (especially circumcision) as a prerequisite for the Gentiles to become part of God’s family. Paul

¹ Priyan Max Jeganathan, *The Freedom Trap*, p.5.

emphatically rebukes this, arguing that the gospel (with emphasis that Jesus is the crucified and risen Messiah) is sufficient. *It's through God's grace alone that anyone can become part of God's family and receive his Spirit.*

Outline

Week 1	<i>The Gospel is Unique</i>	Galatians 1:1-10
Week 2	<i>The Gospel is For All</i>	Galatians 1:11-2:10
Week 3	<i>The Gospel is the Line</i>	Galatians 2:11-21
Week 4	<i>The Gospel is Received by Faith</i>	Galatians 3:1-14
Week 5	<i>The Gospel is Fulfillment</i>	Galatians 3:15-29
Week 6	<i>The Gospel Makes us Heirs</i>	Galatians 4:1-31
Week 7	<i>The Gospel Brings us Freedom</i>	Galatians 5:1-15
Week 8	<i>The Gospel Shapes our Living</i>	Galatians 5:16-26
Week 9	<i>The Gospel Transforms Relationships</i>	Galatians 6:1-10
Week 10	<i>The Gospel Boasts of the Cross of Christ</i>	Galatians 6:11-18

General Resources

- *Read (book):* “The Freedom Trap” by Priyan Max Jeganathan. 
- *Read (book):* “Why the Gospel” by Matthew Bates.
- *Read (commentary):* “Galatians (The Story of God)” by Nijay Gupta.
- *Read (commentary):* “Galatians for Everyone” by Tom Wright.
- *Watch (video):* “Galatians” by the Bible Project:
<https://bibleproject.com/guides/book-of-galatians/>

St Bart's Resources (including for families)


For the series overview, weekly sermons, small group material, and weekly children's curriculum, visit: www.stbarts.com.au/sermon-series/galatians

For weekly children's and youth materials, visit stbartskids.org

ADAM LOWE

St Bart's Toowoomba, April 2025

 Summaries by Adam Lowe (AL), Amy Norman (AN), and Daniel Rouhead (DR).

 Available to borrow from the St Bart's Church Library (stbarts.com.au/library)

how to use this series overview

For each week in the series, a Bible reading, “the big idea”, some reflection questions, and a prayer is provided.

- **PRAY**

Begin with prayer, for example:

Gracious God, please enlighten our minds, enliven our hearts, and shape our wills according to your life-giving Word. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

- **READ from Galatians**

Read the part of Galatians that we are focusing on for that week. Some key verses (from that reading) are also printed — you might even like to memorise these!

- **REFLECT**

Read the ‘big idea’ and use the questions to reflect on the Bible passage. This will help prepare for the sermon and the following week’s small group questions (provided on the St Bart’s website).

- **PRAY**

Each day a prayer is provided that you may like to use. Of course, you need not be limited to this prayer.

Week 1

The Gospel is Unique *Galatians 1:1-10*

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you to live in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel — which is really no gospel at all. Galatians 1:6-7a

READ GALATIANS 1:1-10

REFLECT. Paul writes to the churches of Galatia amidst a sea of confusion as some Jewish Christians insist that Gentiles must adhere to the laws of the Torah (*especially circumcision*) as a prerequisite for membership in God's family. *Paul is astonished that so many have seemingly forgotten that the means of salvation is through the grace of the crucified and resurrected Lord Jesus.* Paul is emphatic that any 'gospel' that adds (or subtracts) from *the Gospel*, is no 'gospel' at all — it has been perverted beyond the point of recognition *and power*. As Paul opens his letter, he not only reaffirms the beautiful simplicity of the gospel (i.e., ...*the Lord Jesus Christ who gave himself for our sins to rescue us*) but also the danger of modifying it in any way (two themes that Paul will go on to develop in great detail throughout the letter). Whilst some would have been offended by Paul's reprimand, he's uncompromising because his goal is *not to win the approval of people*, but *to serve the Lord—who has set him free*. Released from the bondage of sin and death *through Jesus' death and resurrection*, we are freed to live our lives in service of the King. AL

- How were some people distorting the beautiful simplicity of the gospel?
- What are the common ways that the gospel can be distorted today?

PRAY

Gracious Father, we thank you for the Good News of the grace that has been won for us through Jesus' death and resurrection. Please help us to faithfully proclaim the Good News and live as servants of Christ. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Week 2

The Gospel is For All *Galatians 1:11-2:10*

As for those who were held in high esteem — whatever they were makes no difference to me; God does not show favoritism — they added nothing to my message. On the contrary, they recognized that I had been entrusted with the task of preaching the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been to the circumcised. Galatians 2:6-7

READ GALATIANS 1:11-2:10

REFLECT. Paul's story is proof that no one is beyond the reach of God's grace. He reminds the Galatians that the gospel he preached wasn't man-made — it was revealed to him directly by Jesus Christ. This is coming from someone who used to persecute Christians. He wasn't looking for Jesus... but Jesus found him. What's even more powerful is what happens next. Paul, once the enemy of the church, is now sent to share the gospel — *not just with people like him*, but with the Gentiles. Meanwhile, Peter is called to share the same gospel with the Jews. Two different people. Two different audiences. One message: **Jesus saves.** The early church leaders recognise Paul's calling, and they shake hands in partnership. No competition. No rivalry. Just unity — because *the gospel is for all*. Not for the perfect. Not for the religious elite. Not for those who "have it all together." *For all.* DR

- Have you ever felt like the gospel wasn't "for me"? What changed this?
- How can you show that the gospel is for **all** in your everyday life?

PRAY

Lord Jesus, thank you that the gospel is not just for the few — but for the many. Thank-you that it reached Paul... and that it reaches us. Help us to remember that your love reaches across every culture, language, and background. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Week 3

The Gospel is the Line *Galatians 2:11-21*

When I saw that they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in front of them all, "You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile and not like a Jew. How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs?" Galatians 2:14

READ GALATIANS 2:11-21

REFLECT. Paul opposes Peter (Cephas) for he *is not* acting in line with the truth of the gospel. This is a serious charge, for Peter is one of the key leaders of the church. Paul condemns Peter for withdrawing from eating with the Gentiles, for fear of the "circumcision group" — a group likely promoting that Jewish Christians needed to maintain the food laws, and therefore not eat with Gentiles. This is not just a matter of who was invited to a dinner party, but cuts to the core of the gospel - what must one do and who can be justified before God. Returning to separated eating practices implied that something additional (i.e., fulfilling the law) was *needed* to be justified by God. But Paul is emphatic - even those born Jews know that a person is *only justified by faith in Jesus Christ*. As Paul practically identifies: "...for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!" *The gospel alone, only faith in Jesus Christ, is needed to be justified before God.* AN

- Why were Peter's actions particularly hypocritical? (cf. Acts 10-11)
- Have you ever been in a community or group where it seems like something additional is required, in order to be justified before God?

PRAY

Gracious Father, thank you for the sufficiency of Jesus' death for us. Please Lord, by your Spirit, help us to live in line with the truth of the gospel. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Week 4

The Gospel is Received by Faith *Galatians 3:1-14*

You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by believing what you heard? Galatians 3:1-2

READ GALATIANS 3:1-14

REFLECT. Paul, a bit bewildered, enquires how the Galatians could have gotten so muddled about the gospel, when they started off so well! They know that they didn't receive the Spirit by carefully keeping the law — it was only through believing what they heard. But now it seems they have taken things into their own hands, convinced by others that they need to focus on fulfilling the requirements of the law. This foolish approach implies that faith is no longer enough to be accepted by God. But Paul shows this can't be the case, for Abraham “believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.” Faith had been part of God's salvation plan *long before* Moses, and the laws given to the Jews. Abraham demonstrates how *faith in God is how* we are fully accepted into the family of God. Paul gives a stark warning: those who rely on faith are blessed, however those who rely on the works of the law are cursed. And Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law! We can be like the foolish Galatians, looking to other things to assure ourselves that we are accepted by God. But we are to *live by faith* like Abraham. AN

- Why is Abraham an important example of faith in God?
- What things are you tempted to rely on, instead of faith, for assurance?

PRAY

Gracious Father, thank you that it is by faith in Christ that we are justified and welcomed into your family. Please may our faith in you shape our lives. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Week 5

The Gospel is Fulfillment

Galatians 3:15-29

There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. Galatians 3:28-29

READ GALATIANS 3:15-29

REFLECT. One of Paul's goals in this letter is to correct the idea that Gentiles become members of God's family by fulfilling the laws of Moses, especially circumcision. In effect, some were teaching that the only way to be part of God's people was by becoming Jewish. Paul rejects this on the basis of four key points: (a) that God's promise to Abraham predates the law; (b) anyone can be connected (through Christ *who is the seed — the faithful representative and fulfilment of God's people*) to that promise; (c) the giving of the law does not annul the promise to Abraham because the purpose of the law was to convict us of sin and highlight our need for a mediator; and (d) faith in Jesus is the way through which the curse of sin is broken and we are included in God's family as a fulfillment of his promises to Abraham. The way into God's family is not through circumcision (or any other law—*that was never its purpose*) but through faith in Jesus Christ. The result—as Paul proclaims in verses 28-29—is that absolutely anyone can be part of God's family through Christ. It is not that the gospel erases our differences, but that these differences pose no threat to becoming heirs of God's promises in Christ. AL

- What is the one way in which we are connected into God's family?
- Do Christians ever create 'stumbling blocks' for inclusion into God's family?

PRAY

Lord, thank you that you are faithful to your promises! Please help us to proclaim Jesus as the only way for inclusion into your family. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Week 6

The Gospel Makes us Heirs *Galatians 4:1-31*

Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “Abba, Father.” So you are no longer a slave, but God’s child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir. Galatians 4:6-7

READ GALATIANS 4:1-31

REFLECT. Paul uses the image of inheritance to help us understand the incredible gift of the gospel. He says that before Christ, we were like children under guardians — not yet able to receive the full inheritance. But now, because of Jesus, we are no longer slaves... *we are sons and daughters. Heirs.* We don’t relate to God as distant followers or fearful servants. We relate to Him as *beloved children* — deeply known, fully loved, and freely accepted. And more than that, we share in Christ’s inheritance. That means all the promises of God — freedom, forgiveness, purpose, eternal life — now belong to us, too. We didn’t earn them... Jesus gave them. Paul contrasts this with going back to the old ways — trying to earn God’s approval, living under law instead of grace. But why would an heir go back to slavery? We are no longer trying to prove ourselves to God. We belong. We’re loved. We’re heirs. DR

- Do you live like a child of God — or like a servant trying to earn approval?
- What would change if you truly believed you are an heir with Christ?

PRAY

Father God, help us to live in the freedom and joy of being yours. Help us to live with confidence, peace, and purpose because we are known and deeply loved by the King. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Week 7

The Gospel Brings us Freedom

Galatians 5:1-15

It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery. Galatians 5:1

READ GALATIANS 5:1-15

REFLECT. The modern world loves the idea of freedom but sometimes has low aspirations compared to the freedom proclaimed by the gospel. As Paul proclaims that it is *for freedom* that Christ has *set us free*, three questions immediately surface: (a) What *type* of *freedom* did Christ win for us? (b) *How* did Christ *set us free*? (c) What threats do we need to stand firm against, lest we be burdened by a ‘yoke of slavery’ again? Let’s address those one-by-one. First, those who are in Christ have received *freedom* from the yoke of the law (and its consequences). That freedom is not to do whatever we want (e.g., ‘to indulge in the flesh’, v.13) but to serve God’s purposes. Second, Christ has *set us free* through his death and resurrection. We receive that freedom by having *faith* in him. Third, the threat (as we’ll be very familiar with by now) is those who are imposing regulations—such as circumcision—as the means of grace and the mechanism by which we are included in God’s family. Paul is frustrated and cross because God’s people are being led astray by these ‘agitators’ (note the tone of Paul’s language *along with the number of images he uses to negatively describe what is happening to them*). Therefore, Paul implores the people to *beware* of the danger, *trust* in the saving work of Jesus alone, and *express* their faith in Christ with godly love. AL

- What are the various images that Paul uses to describe their situation?
- What *quality* of freedom has Christ won for us? How do you express that?

PRAY

Saving God, thank you that it is in Christ that we’ve been set free from the ultimate enemy. Help us to use this freedom for your purposes. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

Week 8

The Gospel Shapes our Living *Galatians 5:16-26*

So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. Galatians 5:16-17a

READ GALATIANS 5:16-26

REFLECT. In what could be the anthem of our modern culture, the Rolling Stones famously sang, “I’m free to do whatever I want any old time.” A later cover added, “I’m free to *be* whatever I choose any old time”. On the surface, it sounds empowering — yay to me! But on closer inspection, this kind of freedom is a counterfeit. It betrays both the nature and the purpose of the freedom we have in Christ. In fact, according to Paul, the freedom we receive in Christ is precisely not a license to do whatever we want. Why? Because that freedom is from God and marked by the presence of his Spirit in us. It's not freedom *from restraint*, but freedom *for living* by the Spirit. That means, *starving* the desires that are incongruent with God's character (v.19) and *cultivating* the fruit of the Spirit who is at work in us (vv.22-23). When Paul warns that, “those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God” he does not mean that we need to be perfect in order to be saved, but that persistently—and *defiantly*—submitting to the ways of the flesh reveals a heart not truly surrendered to the Lord. *We are to put to death that which is not of God, and keep walking in God's ways with his help.* AL

- What does the freedom who have in Christ call you to say ‘no’ to?
- What aspects of the fruit could you particularly grow in with God's help?

PRAY

Heavenly Father, thank you for the freedom that we have in Christ! Please help us to deploy this freedom not to satisfy our desires but to walk with you. Amen.

Week 9

The Gospel Transforms our Relationships *Galatians 6:1-10*

Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other's burdens... Galatians 6:1-2

READ GALATIANS 6:1-10

REFLECT. Having warned (and possibly chastised) the churches in the province of Galatia for not keeping in step with the Spirit, Paul now turns his attention to how they can lovingly restore someone caught in sin. Note that Paul is clear about the circumstance (i.e., the person must actually be guilty of a sin), the person doing the restoring (i.e., they must not be a hypocrite, but are living faithfully by the Spirit), and the approach (i.e., it is to be loving and demonstrate a willingness to carry the other's burden). Paul warns that not only should the person seeking to assist be careful (for they too could be tempted) but also that they should have an accurate view of themselves. There is no room for people taking a 'high and righteous position', only a gentle and loving coming alongside of another. Even more seriously, Paul warns that following the ways of the flesh will only lead to destruction, but following the ways of the Spirit leads to life. Once again, Paul is not suggesting that only those who live perfectly are saved, but that a sincere faith seeks to follow in the ways of God and is quick to seek forgiveness when we fall short. AL

- How do you think you are 'sowing to please the Spirit' in your life?
- Do you ever feel tired of 'doing good'? What helps you to not give up?

PRAY

Heavenly Father, please forgive us when we fall short of what you desire for us. Please help us to continually rely on your Spirit and walk in your ways. Amen.

Week 10

The Gospel Boasts of the Cross of Christ *Galatians 6:11-18*

May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is the new creation.
Galatians 6:14-15

READ GALATIANS 6:11-18

REFLECT. Paul now takes the scribe's pen to demonstrate the authenticity of his words to the Galatians. The people compelling the Galatians to be circumcised are doing so to avoid persecution and to boast in circumcision numbers. But Paul counters that there is only one thing to boast in: *the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ*. It turns out that our identity and the assurance we have to stand before God, is not found in being circumcised or uncircumcised. Instead, what matters is that God has brought about redemption in each person and that God ushers in new creation through the work of Christ on the cross. All of this is God's work - and so we should boast in Christ! This is not just for Paul - but for us too! When we think about our lives following Jesus, we shouldn't boast in our faithfulness, how sacrificially we've lived, or our generosity to others - but we can boast in Jesus alone. In an ironic contrast to circumcision, Paul points to the marks on his body. Unlike those compelling the Galatians, Paul has not avoided persecution, but the marks on his body show his obedience to Jesus. AN

- When it comes to following Jesus, what are you tempted to boast in?
- How can you boast in the cross of Christ on your frontlines? How would that change where you find your assurance, value, purpose, and hope?

PRAY

Heavenly Father, please help us to see what we are tempted to boast in and help us to live lives that only boast only in the cross of Jesus Christ. In Jesus' Name, Amen.