

rockypc SERIES COMPANION 2025

THE LETTER TO THE GALATIANS



*growing
disciples*
sacrifice. serve. speak.

*growing
disciples*
sacrifice. serve. speak

CHRIST ALONE

THE LETTER TO THE GALATIANS



AUTHOR, DATE, GENRE

The Apostle Paul wrote the letter of Galatians. It is his earliest letter, but the exact date is unknown. The letter is thought to fit into the timeline of Paul's travels in Acts, somewhere between Acts 13-18. So the letter was penned somewhere between 48 - 56 AD. Galatia is not a city, but a region (See the green section on map 119). Paul intended the letter to be circulated between a number of churches in that region. These churches mostly consisted of Gentile (non-Jewish) believers. Paul writes this letter in a *polemical* style. He sets out to argue against another proposition/gospel. It helps to remember that he isn't just letting these Galatians know some truths about Jesus. He is deliberately knocking down the argument of his opponents and preaching THE TRUTH, over-against their falsehood.

PURPOSE

Paul writes to the Galatian churches because of his concern that the true gospel of Jesus is being distorted, and the Christians are becoming confused and turning to a false gospel that cannot save anyone. As the letter progresses, it becomes clear that some Jewish Christians have been telling Gentile believers that they must obey the Jewish law. This entails becoming circumcised, eating kosher food, as well as all of the other legal requirements. Paul writes to correct this grievous error. He is at his most passionate in the letter of Galatians, because he is concerned that a gospel of Jesus plus law is no gospel at all and leads to being under God's curse. Paul argues, pleads, condemns and exhorts the Gentile Christians to rely on faith in CHRIST ALONE.

THEMES

SALVATION HISTORY

Paul says that to understand salvation in Christ, we need to see the big story of the Bible — from the Garden of Eden to the promises to Abraham, to the commandments at Mount Sinai, to the prophets, through to the coming of Jesus and beyond into the New Creation. Looking at the big picture means we can understand God's purposes for both Jew and Gentile where both receive justification, the Spirit, adoption to sonship and rescue from the present evil age through Christ.

GOSPEL

'Gospel' means an announcement of good news, like an emperor might declare a victory in battle through heralds. The true gospel is what is under contention. It is a propositional truth about Christ to believe in and to act in line with, by the Spirit. THERE IS ONLY ONE GOSPEL OF CHRIST ALONE. Adding to it nullifies what Christ has done.

SPIRIT

The Spirit is both how we begin the Christian life and how we continue in it. The Spirit guides and empowers us to walk and bear fruit. The coming of the Spirit signifies the new age we are in and enables us to live in the freedom and grace of Christ, in a way that the law could not (Joel 2v28-32; Ezekiel 36v22-32; Isaiah 44v3)

LAW

When Paul uses the term 'law' he is talking about the first 5 books of the Bible (Genesis - Deuteronomy), known as 'Torah.' These books contain laws (plural) as commandments. But there is also narrative, poetry, promises and prophecy. Paul has the whole of this body of law in mind as he discusses it in Galatians.

For example, he can say that the narrative of Hagar and Sarah is law (4v21). Sometimes he speaks more narrowly about the law as commandments (3v17). But it helps us understand Paul's argument in Galatians more clearly to

see that he has the whole Torah law in mind.

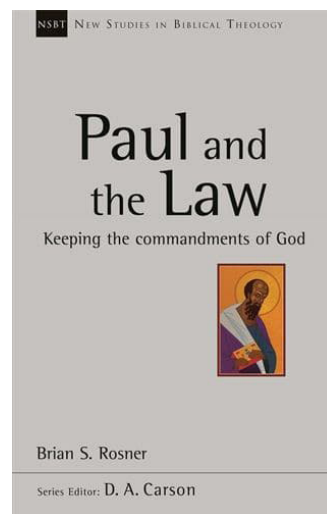
The Torah was extremely important to Jews as part of everyday life (eg Deuteronomy 6; Psalm 119). It set them apart as God's special people (Exodus 19). Paul describes Jews as those who are 'under the law'. They were under the law's authority and jurisdiction, until the coming of Christ. Gentiles, on the other hand, have never been 'under the law'. Paul argues that they never should be!

In understanding this, it is important to let Paul say one thing at a time. He makes 3 signature moves (as he does in other letters).

First, he *repudiates* the law. He says relying upon the law's commandments only brings curse and slavery, and can never justify anyone before God. It is obsolete and should not be turned back to as an attempt to gain life or blessing.

Next, Paul *replaces* the law. Christians are justified, and receive life a new way (which in fact is the old way, which predates the law). Obedience and works of the law are replaced by faith in Christ, the Spirit, freedom, love and the law of Christ (which is self-giving love for others, 6v2). The law is fulfilled and comes to completeness as we follow the Spirit and love one another.

Finally, Paul *reappropriates* the law. Christians don't obey, do or keep the commandments of the law. But that doesn't mean it is of no value to us. Paul says the law is important for Christians as prophecy (pointing to the coming of Christ and a new covenant — eg 3v8; 13; 16; 5v5); and as wisdom (wise instruction to shape living for Christ — 5v13-14).



If you want to think about this further, you can check out lectures by Brian Rosner here: <https://www.lionelwindsor.net/2011/09/01/paul-and-the-law-by-brian-rosner-free-download-of-lecture-series/> or read his book.

WE & YOU

When Paul is talking about 'we' or 'us', he means 'we Jews'. The Jews are those who had received the law from Moses and were bound to it, under its authority until Jesus came. When Paul says 'you', he means 'you Gentile Galatians', who were never under the law of Moses. This will help us to notice what Paul says to Jews and how that flows on to Gentiles.

HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF THIS SERIES COMPANION

ON YOUR OWN— If you have time, work through the questions before your GROWTH GROUP so that you've started thinking about the passage before you arrive. You can dig deeper into the Old Testament context at home too. Understanding the big story of the Bible will help you see how Paul develops his argument in Galatians.

WITH YOUR GROWTH GROUP—Don't be afraid to stop and talk about things that grab your attention or raise questions for you.

ON SUNDAY—Make sure you bring your SERIES COMPANION along with you, so that you can keep track of any questions you have and record the way that God's Spirit is helping you to understand His Word and grow in your love for Jesus.

These series companions are designed to be used as either a print version, or interactively on a device. Use whichever method is most helpful for you.

PAUL'S CONVERSION AND EARLY MINISTRY

ACTS 9:1-30; 11:19-30; 12:24-25
GAL. 1:11-24

- City
- ▲ Mountain peak
- () Pass
- Paul sent to Damascus
- Paul spends time in Arabia
- Paul returns to Jerusalem
- Paul flees from Hellenists
- Paul and Barnabas travel to Antioch
- Paul and Barnabas sent to Jerusalem
- Paul and Barnabas return to Antioch
- Kingdom of Agrippa I



THE FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY OF PAUL

ACTS 13:4-14; 28

- City
- Paul's routes
- Via Sebaste



NO OTHER GOSPEL

GALATIANS 1v1-10



IN THE SPACE BELOW YOU CAN TAKE NOTES FROM THE BIBLE TALK. (IF YOU'RE USING THIS ON A DEVICE YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO CLICK AND START TYPING.)

Something I Never Knew:

Something I Was Reminded About:

A Question I Still Have:

Something I Was Challenged To Think Differently About / Do Differently:

Something I Can Share:

A Key Verse:

My prayer in response to God's word:

PRESERVING THE TRUTH

GALATIANS 1v11-2v21



IN THE SPACE BELOW YOU CAN TAKE NOTES FROM THE BIBLE TALK. (IF YOU'RE USING THIS ON A DEVICE YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO CLICK AND START TYPING.)

Something I Never Knew:

Something I Was Reminded About:

A Question I Still Have:

Something I Was Challenged To Think Differently About / Do Differently:

Something I Can Share:

A Key Verse:

My prayer in response to God's word:

GROWTH GROUP STUDY
GALATIANS 1v1-2v10

How do you decide if an expert is trustworthy? What do you need to know or feel?

Galatia was a region in modern Turkey. It encompassed cities such as Lystra, Derbe and Iconium. We can read about the Apostle Paul's visit to the region in Acts 13-14 as a great number of Jews and Gentiles (non-Jews) came to believe in Jesus. This was accompanied by persecution from both Jews and Gentiles to his preaching. Paul appointed elders to lead and teach, and traveled on to keep sharing the gospel elsewhere.

Sometime later, Paul wrote a circular letter to the churches in the area. He is writing to correct some false teaching that they have begun to believe. We will hear more about this counterfeit gospel later in the letter. Today, we will see Paul's focus on the true gospel, that he received from Jesus himself.

READ GALATIANS 1v1-5

Paul begins his letter in the common style of introducing himself, identifying the recipients and bringing a greeting from God himself.

1. What do we need to know about Paul? (v1-2)

2. What do we learn about Paul's message? (v3-5)

While Paul's opening greeting resembles the greetings to his other letters to fledgling churches, there is an important element missing. In all of his other letters, Paul tells of his overflowing thankfulness to God for other churches, and his warm prayers for them. But in the letter to the Galatian churches, Paul launches in with passionate correction. This highlights the nature of the letter as *polemical*. Paul is writing over against another teaching, to point out how wrong it is.

READ GALATIANS 1v6-9

3. What have the Galatians been called to live in? (see also v3-5)

4. What have they turned to instead?

'Gospel' = good news, like the herald would spread the news of the emperor's victory

5. What is at stake in what gospel the Galatians believe?

READ GALATIANS 1v10-24

6. How did Paul receive the gospel he's preaching?

Cephas is the Aramaic version of the Greek name Peter, one of Jesus' key disciples

You can read the story of how Paul met Jesus in Acts 9. He was not a disciple of Jesus before his death, or commissioned by Jesus before his ascension (Like Peter (Cephas) and John were). Paul initially persecuted Christians, until he encountered the risen Jesus in a profound moment that completely transformed him.

READ ISAIAH 49v1-6

7. How is Paul like an Old Testament prophet?

8. How does it strengthen Paul's argument that he'd barely met any apostles during his early years as a gospel preacher?

READ GALATIANS 2v1-10

9. What hints do you get about what the false gospel might be?

10. How do the Jerusalem rulers view Paul's gospel? Where do you see this in this passage?

Note: Jerusalem was the birthplace and hub of Christianity

11. How is the gospel work spread between the apostles?

Note: Circumcision marked out the Jews as God's special people in the Old Testament law, more on that next week

There was a severe famine in Jerusalem (see Acts 11v27-28). Paul was instrumental in helping Gentile Christians to see themselves as partners with the suffering Jerusalem Christians and mobilising them to give generously to help (see 2 Corinthians 8-9)

12. How does Paul express that God is ultimately behind his ministry?

growing disciples

At **rockypc** we have 5 core values — we want to be growing disciples who are DEEP IN THE WORD, SEEKING GOD, on MISSION, as we SERVE in COMMUNITY together.

Are you convinced that the grace of Jesus is the only way to be rescued?

Are you convinced that Paul has received the true gospel?

What questions do you still have?

SEEKING GOD

When have you believed you need something other than Jesus?

Or that you need Jesus *plus* something else?

What was the impact on you?

SEEKING GOD

To what extent should we argue/stand up for the true gospel with those who add conditions to receiving Jesus' grace? (see also 2 Timothy 2v23-26)

COMMUNITY

How would you respond to someone who says that there are multiple ways to know God? Who are you praying for who is offended to hear Jesus is the only way to be saved?

MISSION

PRAYER IDEAS

- Praise God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ who gave himself to rescue us from this present evil age.
- Praise God for calling us to live in the grace of Christ, by his will and for his glory.
- Pray that we would believe this true gospel and never turn aside. Pray that we would be clear on this gospel, and that God would protect us from being thrown into confusion and sitting under his curse
- Ask for wisdom in talking with others who want to add to what Jesus has done with good works or an extra gifting or knowledge. Pray for gentleness and firmness when needed so that they might depend only on Jesus
- Pray that we'd share the good news of Jesus' grace with family and friends. Ask that they'd believe they don't need to work to earn their salvation, but that anyone can come to him freely.

FINISHING STRONG

GALATIANS 3v1-6



IN THE SPACE BELOW YOU CAN TAKE NOTES FROM THE BIBLE TALK. (IF YOU'RE USING THIS ON A DEVICE YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO CLICK AND START TYPING.)

Something I Never Knew:

Something I Was Reminded About:

A Question I Still Have:

Something I Was Challenged To Think Differently About / Do Differently:

Something I Can Share:

A Key Verse:

My prayer in response to God's word:

GROWTH GROUP STUDY
GALATIANS 2v11-3v6

Are you naturally a rule breaker or a rule keeper?

Last week, we saw that the apostle Paul received the true gospel of Jesus' rescuing grace from Jesus himself. He wasn't taught by Cephas (Peter), James or John, who were apostles in Jerusalem. But they confirmed that he had received the true gospel and sent him on his way to share this with Gentiles (non-Jews), while they continued to minister to Jews. Having previously agreed on the one and only gospel, Paul later comes into conflict about it with Cephas.

READ GALATIANS 2v11-14

1. How did Cephas start out treating Gentiles? What happened when those from the circumcision group arrived?

It's not clear what the relationship is between this circumcision group and James. But Cephas is clearly afraid of what they'll think of him. You can read more about this group in Acts 15v1-5, where they're reported to be teaching, 'Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved' and 'The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to keep the law of Moses'

READ GENESIS 17v9-14; EXODUS 12v43-49; LEVITICUS 20v22-26

2. What was the role of circumcision and food laws for Jews?

3. What is Cephas' hypocrisy here?

READ GALATIANS 2v15-16

4. What does Paul contrast in these verses?

Note: 'Justification' is a term from the courtroom about a not-guilty verdict. To be justified means to be vindicated and have a good and righteous status before God

'Works of the law' means keeping/doing the law as handed down by Moses in the first 5 books of the Bible. Paul has the whole law in mind, not just commandments but the whole narrative from Genesis to Deuteronomy.

READ GALATIANS 2v17-21

5. Paul knows his opponents will be raising an objection at this point. What will they accuse him of? v17

6. How does Paul describe the Christian's story in terms of death? In terms of life?

Note: We have not died to the law like Paul, because we are not Jews and have never been under the law. We are the sinful Gentiles of v15 and 17

7. How does this life in Christ answer the objection of v17?

Paul says that drawing back from eating with uncircumcised Gentiles is a problem because a bigger issue is at stake.

8. How does Paul explain what's at stake in v21?

READ GALATIANS 3v1-6

9. How are the Galatians being foolish and duped?

READ GENESIS 15v1-6

10. How is Abraham's story proof of Paul's argument?

Paul raises some ideas in these verses that he is going to explore further throughout Galatians, such as Abraham's story and the receiving of the Spirit. So more on those in later studies.

Paul says that the Galatians have started in faith and think that they can finish by the 'flesh'. Circumcision is 'in the flesh' (Genesis 17v13-14) as a bodily sign of the covenant. So this is another way of saying that these false teachers think they need to keep circumcision rules and obey the whole covenant law, in order to be justified and have life. But Paul says we receive justification and life in our bodies (literally flesh, v21) in a different way — by faith in the Son of God.

The disagreement between Paul and Cephas may seem quite removed from our experience — debates over circumcision and Jewish food laws aren't part of our day to day life. But Paul says distancing yourself from people who don't keep those laws or forcing them to obey the law of Moses, is actually preaching a false gospel. It's a false gospel that says works of the law would justify both Jews and Gentiles.

We can actually be in danger of believing a similar false gospel in our approach to the Old Testament law or even the New Testament commands of Jesus and the apostles.

growing disciples

At **rockypc** we have 5 core values — we want to be growing disciples who are DEEP IN THE WORD, SEEKING GOD, on MISSION, as we SERVE in COMMUNITY together.

SEEKING GOD

What are some examples of ways you/we try to be justified by working and doing (instead of faith)?

What are examples of how you/we tell others they need to keep rules to be right with God?

SEEKING GOD

What do you/we need to repent of?

How can our actions match what we believe about faith and works/law keeping?

SEEKING GOD

What is precious to you about being crucified with Christ, so that he lives in you and you live by faith in him?

MISSION

Christians often project to the rest of the world that we are right with God by obeying rules. How can you talk about this with not-yet-believing family and friends, so that they can hear about faith in the Son of God, who loved us and gave himself for us?

PRAYER IDEAS

- Praise God for his Son, Jesus Christ who loved us and gave himself for us. Thank him that Jesus was crucified to pour out his grace on us.
- Pray that our faith would be in Jesus. That his death was our death and that his life is now our life. Pray that we would live by faith in him. Ask that our actions would demonstrate that this is what we believe.
- Pray that we would hold firmly to this true gospel and finish in faith, by the Spirit.
- Ask forgiveness for times we've believed we have to work hard or keep rules to be right with God. And for when we've told others that they need to do the same.
- Pray that we would share this gospel of grace by faith in a crucified Christ with our family and friends. Pray that they would see that they don't need to work harder or be better people, but that they would believe that they can be justified before God, in Christ.

CHILDREN OF ABRAHAM

GALATIANS 3v6-4v7



IN THE SPACE BELOW YOU CAN TAKE NOTES FROM THE BIBLE TALK. (IF YOU'RE USING THIS ON A DEVICE YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO CLICK AND START TYPING.)

Something I Never Knew:

Something I Was Reminded About:

A Question I Still Have:

Something I Was Challenged To Think Differently About / Do Differently:

Something I Can Share:

A Key Verse:

My prayer in response to God's word:

Can you name the first 5 heirs to the British throne? No googling before your GROWTH GROUP!

In Galatians, we've seen Paul's determination to stick to the one true gospel of the Son of God who loved us and gave himself to rescue us from this present evil age. Our response to him is faith. Paul was standing up to Jews who said that Gentiles (non-Jews) need to obey the law of Moses. The Galatian church was predominantly Gentile and had been thrown into confusion about whether they must keep the law.

Paul appeals to the story of the Jewish patriarch Abraham to prove his point. It's important to understand this story to understand what Paul is saying. So here is the highlights package:

Genesis 12v1-7 — God called Abraham to leave his family's pagan land. He promised Abraham that he would become a great nation; his seed (offspring) would inherit the land of the Canaanites and that as God blessed Abraham, all nations on earth would be blessed.

Genesis 15v1-6 — Abraham was childless and couldn't see how God would keep the promises he'd made. So God reiterated that he would give him a son and heir, and innumerable offspring like the stars in the sky. As Abraham stared at the stars, he believed God and that was credited to him as righteousness.

Genesis 17 — God reiterated his promises to Abraham of a land, of a nation and of blessing. The sign of this covenant was to be in the flesh of Abraham's family as every male was circumcised.

Genesis 21 — Abraham's son, Isaac, is born — the son of the promise. The promises were passed to him in Genesis 26, to his younger son, Jacob (aka Israel) in Genesis 28 and on to his 12 sons in Genesis 49-50.

Exodus — 430 years later, Israel had become a great nation and through Moses, God rescued them so that they might be blessed in the promised land of Canaan. En route, God handed down laws to the people (through Moses). These commandments were how God would rule his people in the land. The body of the law (also spelled out in Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy) contained rules to be obeyed, punishments for disobedience and gave shape to how to worship the holy God, as his people, in his land.

Today, Paul is going to take us through the story of Abraham and his offspring, to show how the inclusion of Gentiles was always God's plan, through Christ.

READ GALATIANS 3v6-9

1. Paul quotes Genesis 15v6 and 12v3. How do they show God's plan for Gentiles?

READ GALATIANS 3v9-12

2. Fill in the table to see what Paul is contrasting.

	What to rely on?	Outcome?	Scriptures?
v9;11			
v10; 12			

In quoting these Scriptures, Paul is *not* saying that good people walk by faith or rule-keeping people by doing, as though they are just descriptive. Rather, he is saying that the path to life and righteousness is through faith (as it was for Abraham in 3v6). Life and righteousness do not come by doing everything written in the law, because it always leads to a curse.

READ GALATIANS 3v13-14

It is important to note that in Galatians, when Paul is talking about 'we' or 'us', he means 'we Jews'. The Jews are those who had received the law from Moses and were bound to it. When Paul says 'you', he means 'you Gentile Galatians', who were never under the law of Moses.

3. How does Christ redeem those who were under the curse of the law?

4. How does this flow on to Gentiles?

READ GALATIANS 3v15-18

Paul is contrasting the commandments of Exodus-Deuteronomy with the promise to Abraham in Genesis 12.

5. How does Paul show that the promise has priority over the law?

READ GALATIANS 3v19-25

6. What 2 questions does Paul anticipate the Galatians will ask of him?

7. How does Paul answer them, using the big story of the Bible?

In v19-20, Paul refers to the law being given through angels and a mediator. If you want to think about it more, check out Leviticus 26v46; Deuteronomy 5v5; 33v2; Acts 7v53 and Hebrews 2v2 later. He seems to be reminding them that the law and it's mediator Moses aren't to be worshiped. Worship and devotion are for God alone (see Deuteronomy 6v4-5)

READ GALATIANS 3v26-4v7

Remember that 'we' means Jews and 'you' means Gentiles. Gentiles have never been subject to the law of Moses, but they are slaves to pagan gods (4v8).

8. What metaphor does Paul employ to explain the relationship between Jews and the law?

9. How does the coming of Christ transform things for the Jews? For the Gentiles?

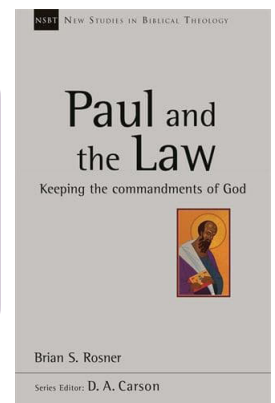
v28 is famously used to say that Christians should negate all differences, especially between men and women.

10. Do you think this is his point? Why/why not?

It is unclear what the 'elemental spiritual forces of the world' are. It is likely that Paul has the earlier stories of Genesis in the background, as he talks about Abraham and the law. In Genesis 3, a spiritual force in the form of a snake leads humanity to be under God's curse. But a seed/offspring is promised, who will be born of a woman to crush that evil power and its curse. The promises to Abraham hint that God is going to keep the promise to Eve through Abraham's seed. The Son of God is the offspring of Eve and of Abraham, the one who redeems and makes all humanity sons of God, as we have faith in him.

Brian Rosner says that we need to notice how Paul approaches the law in its different capacities.

Paul *repudiates* the law *in the capacity of* laws and decrees to be obeyed. Keeping the law's commandments could not bring life for the Jews. It is made obsolete by the coming of Christ, just as a son who comes of age no longer needs a guardian. Paul also *replaces* the law. There is now a new path to life by faith, the promise and the Spirit, as we are united with Christ. This doesn't mean the law has no place in the life of Christians, in a different capacity. More on that in future chapters of Galatians. If you want to learn more, check out this book or listen to Rosner's lectures at <https://www.lionelwindsor.net/2011/09/01/paul-and-the-law-by-brian-rosner-free-download-of-lecture-series/>



growing disciples

At **rockypc** we have 5 core values — we want to be growing disciples who are DEEP IN THE WORD, SEEKING GOD, on MISSION, as we SERVE in COMMUNITY together.

Do you rely of faith or on doing? How does your life show what you think will bring you life and blessing?

How has your faith in Christ been strengthened today?

SEEKING GOD

How has being united with Christ changed how you see yourself?

What are you rejoicing in?

SEEKING GOD

How can our **rockypc** COMMUNITY reflect 3v26-29?



PRAYER IDEAS

- Praise God that it was always his plan to save us. Thank him that we were included in his plan for salvation right from the very start.
- Confess times we have worked hard to keep God happy or thought we deserved blessing because of the good we've done. Praise God that we receive the blessings to Abraham by faith, not by working or keeping the law of Moses. Praise God for his gift of grace.
- Praise Jesus, the Son of God, born of a woman, born under law who bore the curse of the law to redeem all of humanity. Rejoice that he became a curse to bring us wonderful blessing.
- Thank God that we are united to Christ, clothed with him. Praise him for adopting us as his sons, and heirs of the promise and blessing. Thank him for his Spirit in our hearts, calling out to our Father God in faith.
- Pray that our **rockypc** COMMUNITY would see how Jesus makes us all children of Abraham and of God. Ask forgiveness for thinking we're better people or have a higher status than others. Pray that our COMMUNITY would reflect our oneness in Christ.

KNOWN BY GOD

GALATIANS 4v7-31



IN THE SPACE BELOW YOU CAN TAKE NOTES FROM THE BIBLE TALK. (IF YOU'RE USING THIS ON A DEVICE YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO CLICK AND START TYPING.)

Something I Never Knew:

Something I Was Reminded About:

A Question I Still Have:

Something I Was Challenged To Think Differently About / Do Differently:

Something I Can Share:

A Key Verse:

My prayer in response to God's word:

Tell the group something about your mother. What she's like? An anecdote?

Paul has been arguing that Jews were slaves to the law, before Christ came to adopt them as sons and heirs (4v1-5). What's more, Gentiles (non-Jews) are adopted as sons and heirs too. Paul goes on to explain what used to enslave Gentiles.

READ GALATIANS 4v7-11

1. What used to enslave Gentiles?

2. How is this similar to being enslaved by the law? (see 4v1-5)

3. Can we know God? What is the great truth here?

READ GALATIANS 4v12-16

Paul pauses his theological argument to talk to the Galatians on a personal level.

4. What is the history of Paul's relationship with the Galatians?

READ GALATIANS 4v17-20

5. What is motivating Paul's opponents?

6. What is Paul's motivation?

READ GALATIANS 4v21-31-

7. Fill in the table below to see what Paul is contrasting.

	Son #1	Son #2
Status?		
Born as a result of?		
Representing which mountain/city?		
Which power?		

READ GENESIS 21v1-12

8. What would be shocking to Jews about the way Paul uses this story?

Hint: From which son does the nation of Israel descend?

READ ISAIAH 65v17-66v2

9. How is the Jerusalem above a place of joy for us?

READ ISAIAH 51v1-6; 54v1-8;

10. How is it a comfort and delight to be children of Sarah?

READ ISAIAH 44v1-5

11. What is the power of the Spirit in us?

12. What does Paul say is the implication for us in Galatians 4 v30-31?

In the section of Isaiah Paul is quoting and alluding to, the new age and covenant is on view. In 587 BC, Israel had been exiled from the land God promised to Abraham because of their continual disobedience to the law. Isaiah says there would come a time where God would return them to himself in compassion, where there would be a multitude of sons (and daughters) in Israel, even Gentiles would be drawn in to the Jerusalem above and God would pour out his Spirit to give life and blessing. Paul reminds the Galatians that this is the time they are part of. This new age began with the coming of Christ and we are included into it.

growing disciples

At **rockypc** we have 5 core values — we want to be growing disciples who are DEEP IN THE WORD, SEEKING GOD, on MISSION, as we SERVE in COMMUNITY together.



What is something precious you've seen about who God is and what he has done for us? How has your heart been warmed towards Jesus today?



Paul reminds the Galatians of who they are in Christ, as sons not slaves. He seems to be saying, 'Be who you are.' How do you need to think or act differently to line up with who you are as a son of God?

How is Christ being formed in you?

PRAYER IDEAS

- Praise God that we are no longer slaves to false gods. Thank him for redeeming us through Christ and making us his sons and heirs.
- Ask his forgiveness for times we turn back as though those weak and miserable forces could save us. Pray that God would continue to form Christ in us.
- Praise God that he knows us, and we know him.
- Thank God that we are children of the promise to Abraham. Thank him that we belong to the new covenant and the Jerusalem above. Praise him for pouring out his Spirit to give us life and blessing.
- Pray that we would be the sons God has made us to be — getting rid of what enslaved us and delighting to be his children.

FOR FREEDOM

GALATIANS 5v1-12



IN THE SPACE BELOW YOU CAN TAKE NOTES FROM THE BIBLE TALK. (IF YOU'RE USING THIS ON A DEVICE YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO CLICK AND START TYPING.)

Something I Never Knew:

Something I Was Reminded About:

A Question I Still Have:

Something I Was Challenged To Think Differently About / Do Differently:

Something I Can Share:

A Key Verse:

My prayer in response to God's word:

'Aye, fight, and you may die. Run, and you'll live, at least a while. Dying in your beds many years from now, would you be willing to trade all the days from this day to that for one chance, just one chance, to come back here and tell our enemies that they may take our lives, but they'll never take our freedom?'

These are the words of Mel Gibson's portrayal of William Wallace, the Scottish freedom fighter, in the 1995 movie, *Braveheart*. The real William Wallace didn't give this speech. Why do you think this notion of freedom is so powerful for us in 21st Century Australia?



Paul has been explaining how Jews were slaves to the law (3v23; 4v1). Gentiles too, were in slavery to other spiritual forces (4v8). Paul compares slavery to the law like being Hagar's child — not receiving the promised inheritance. In contrast, those who have faith in Christ are the free sons of Abraham and Sarah, heirs to the promise (4v21-31). Let's see where he takes this image next.

READ GALATIANS 5v1-4

1. What is the purpose of Christ setting us free? How should we respond? v1

In the first 3 verses here, Paul explains the consequences of letting themselves be circumcised in 3 different ways.

2. What are the consequences of being persuaded that Gentiles must be circumcised?

3. Where will this lead in the end? v4

READ GALATIANS 5v5-6

4. How does the Spirit give us hope in the end?

5. How does v6 fit with what Paul has just said about circumcision in v2?

6. What really counts? From the letter so far, is there anything that leads you to expect this statement?

READ GALATIANS 5v7-10

7. How are the false teachers operating? What will happen to them in the end?

8. What is Paul confident the Galatians will see? (cf 1v3-7)

READ GALATIANS 5v11-12

9. What is offensive about the cross, that has led to Paul being persecuted?

Paul is in extreme sarcasm mode in v12. But there may be something more going on than just a sharp play on words.

READ DEUTERONOMY 23v1; GALATIANS 1v8-9

10. How is Paul giving a picture of how serious this false teaching is?

READ GALATIANS 5v13-15

11. We'll come back to these verses next week, but for now, how are faith, love, freedom and the law related?

growing disciples

At **rockypc** we have 5 core values — we want to be growing disciples who are DEEP IN THE WORD, SEEKING GOD, on MISSION, as we SERVE in COMMUNITY together.

SEEKING GOD

Who/what threatens to cut in on your race of obeying the true gospel?

What counts for you? What do you value most?



What is offensive about the cross that has led to you being persecuted?

How can you stand firm in the freedom of Christ and his grace, even when it means persecution?



Is faith simply an inner spiritual feeling?

How are you expressing your faith in love?

PRAYER IDEAS

- Praise God that Jesus has set us free. Praise him that he has given us freedom through his death on our behalf. Pray that we would value him most of all.
- Pray that we would stand firm in Jesus' grace. Ask that we would recognise when others are persuading us away from obedience to the true gospel. Pray that we wouldn't be thrown into confusion, but would be clear that faith is what counts.
- Pray that through the Spirit, we would eagerly await by faith the righteousness for which we hope.
- Pray that we'd express our faith in Christ through love for others. Pray that **rockypc** would be a COMMUNITY of love that flows from faith.
- Pray that we'd never try to avoid the offence of the cross. Pray that we would be willing to face persecution, standing firm in the gospel of Christ alone.
- Pray that God would judge those who burden others with obedience to the law or any other form of burdening and slavery that alienates others from Christ.

BY THE SPIRIT

GALATIANS 5v13-26



IN THE SPACE BELOW YOU CAN TAKE NOTES FROM THE BIBLE TALK. (IF YOU'RE USING THIS ON A DEVICE YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO CLICK AND START TYPING.)

Something I Never Knew:

Something I Was Reminded About:

A Question I Still Have:

Something I Was Challenged To Think Differently About / Do Differently:

Something I Can Share:

A Key Verse:

My prayer in response to God's word:

What is the favourite walk you've ever done? Where would you like to walk?

Paul told us that it's for freedom that Christ set us free in 5v1. We're freed from any obligation to the law (of circumcision and obedience). Now, through the Spirit, we eagerly await the coming righteousness by faith. Paul returns to an objection he knew would be raised, 'doesn't that mean Christ promotes sin?' (2v17). Does freedom in Christ mean that we can live how we want? Does freedom in Christ mean God no longer cares about sin?

READ GALATIANS 5v13-15

1. How does freedom mean slavery (or serving)? v13

2. Compare 5v3 with 5v14. How does Paul contrast 2 different relationships/approaches to the law?

Note: Fulfillment here is not about keeping a prophecy. It's about bringing to completion and achieving an end goal

READ GENESIS 4v1-11 (alluded to by Galatians 5v15 & 26)

3. What can brothers and sisters learn from Cain and Abel about relating to one another?

READ GALATIANS 5v16-18

4. What do you think 'desires of the flesh' means?

Paul has previously talked about circumcision in the flesh as a work of the law (3v3 cf 6v13). Now he seems to be talking about flesh as our impulse to sin and self-gratification. The two are related. Circumcision was a mark in the flesh, a sign of the law restraining evil, fleshy desires; while condemning those who gave in to those impulses. And we can either work hard to keep the law in our fleshy efforts or just give in to our flesh in sin. But neither approach will bring life and neither reflect our new reality. We now live life in the flesh by faith in the Son of God (2v20). And Paul contrasts our sinful impulses with another power.

5. What is going on between the Spirit and our flesh?

This conflict is not between our two natures, as though there is a battle between good and evil inside us. Or an angel on one shoulder and a devil on another. Our old nature wants to assert itself, but we are walking by a new power. We're led by the Spirit away from indulgence of the flesh and towards love. Note that the leading of the Spirit here is not a specific guidance to an action or decision. It is a way of life, a new way of walking.

READ GALATIANS 5v19-21

6. Group these fleshy acts into a few different categories. What do you notice as you do this?

7. If living like this prevents us from inheriting the kingdom of God, are we all in danger of missing out? What have we read throughout Galatians that helps you answer this question?

8. To what extent does Paul think you need the law of Moses to identify these things? How might v14 help inform your answer?

READ GALATIANS 5v22-26

9. What is the difference between the flesh having an *action* (v19) and the Spirit bearing *fruit* (v22)?

READ EXODUS 34v6-7

10. How do the fruit of the Spirit reflect God's nature?

11. If our fleshy desires are in conflict with the Spirit, who will win? How do you know?

12. What is our response to the Spirit in v25? (and v16)

growing disciples

At **rockypc** we have 5 core values — we want to be growing disciples who are DEEP IN THE WORD, SEEKING GOD, on MISSION, as we SERVE in COMMUNITY together.

Spend a minute with the acts of the flesh list. Which are your top 2-3 that you are struggling with? Share with the group if you're comfortable

From what we've read today, what encouragement is there for you in this struggle?

SEEKING GOD

Spend a minute with the fruit of the Spirit list. Which are the top 2-3 that you'd love him to grow in you?

What will it look like for you to keep in step with the Spirit in this moment?

What can you praise God for growing in you already?

SEEKING GOD

When/how have you experienced humble, serving love in the **rockypc** COMMUNITY?

How can we grow in this?

COMMUNITY

How would you explain a Christian approach to the law of Moses from this passage?

DEEP IN THE WORD

PRAYER IDEAS

- Praise God that we belong to Christ Jesus who has crucified our flesh with its passions and desires. Praise him that we've received his Spirit who leads us into a life a love.
- Ask forgiveness for the acts of the flesh that we want to gratify. They are in conflict with God's Spirit. Confess our impurity, idolatry, hatred, rage, envy, drunkenness and conceit.
- Pray that we would walk by the Spirit and not indulge our sinful flesh. Pray that we would desire the inheritance of the kingdom of God even more.
- Ask that God's Spirit would grow in us love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, gentleness and self-control, that we might be like our Heavenly Father.
- Pray that **rockypc** would be a COMMUNITY who serves one another humbly in love. Pray that the law would be fulfilled in us as we love. Ask that our freedom would be evident to our friends and family as we freely love our brothers and sisters.

WHAT COUNTS

GALATIANS 6



IN THE SPACE BELOW YOU CAN TAKE NOTES FROM THE BIBLE TALK. (IF YOU'RE USING THIS ON A DEVICE YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO CLICK AND START TYPING.)

Something I Never Knew:

Something I Was Reminded About:

A Question I Still Have:

Something I Was Challenged To Think Differently About / Do Differently:

Something I Can Share:

A Key Verse:

My prayer in response to God's word:

Why do you think we boast? Is it a good or a bad thing in your friendships and in our society?

Paul has been contrasting the freedom of walking with the Spirit and bearing fruit, with living to gratify our flesh. Now we serve one another in love. He's been drawing our eyes to the new age and new family that we're part of (1v4; 2v20; 3v3, 26-28; 4v6-7, 26; 5v5, 21). Today we're going to see more of what it's like to be part of this new creation family.

READ GALATIANS 5v26-6v6

1. How should we treat brothers and sisters who are caught in the sins of 5v19-21? See 6v1 particularly.

2. What temptation do you think Paul is talking about in v1? (compare with 5v26 & 6v3-4)

3. Are v2 and v5 contradicting each other? How can we carry each other's burdens, yet carry our own load?

4. How does sharing all good things with an instructor in the word follow on in Paul's train of thought?

Paul has told the Galatians repeatedly that they cannot approach the law of Moses as laws to keep and obey. Relying on it as a legal code won't bring life. Instead, he replaces the Torah law with faith in Christ, the Spirit, the promise of Abraham and freedom in place of slavery. In 6v2, Paul says we're fulfilling a new law — the law of Christ. This law is not a legal code, it's the principle of self-giving love. Just as Christ loved us and gave himself for us (2v20; 3v13; 4v4-5), we live in self-giving love of others (5v23-23)

READ GALATIANS 6v7-10

5. How might God be mocked here? (see also Proverbs 22v8-9)

6. How does Paul spell out what pleases the Spirit?

READ GALATIANS 6v11-18

7. What reasons do the circumcision group have for wanting Gentiles (non-Jews) to be circumcised?

8. What is Paul's only boast?

Today people wear a cross around their necks, trace it as a sign over their body and use it as a symbol of health care. The cross is quite a bland symbol to many people. But it was very different in Paul's day. It was the symbol of Roman power, oppression and cruelty. It was the means of shameful torture and execution. To understand how shocking v14 is, it might help us to imagine him saying 'May I never boast except in the electric chair or the hangman's noose'. Paul refuses to boast in the religiosity of circumcision, he'd rather be persecuted. And he won't shrink from the shame of Jesus' accursed death. He wants to shout about it from the rooftops.

9. What really counts? (see also Isaiah 65v17-25)

10. How is Paul thoroughly identifying with Jesus' crucifixion? v14, 17

11. What is Paul's prayer for his brothers and sisters, adopted into God's family? v16, 18

growing disciples

At **rockypc** we have 5 core values — we want to be growing disciples who are DEEP IN THE WORD, SEEKING GOD, on MISSION, as we SERVE in COMMUNITY together.

Is the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ your only boast?

How are you tempted to pride and boasting in other things?

How can you stir your heart to value Christ most of all?

SEEKING GOD



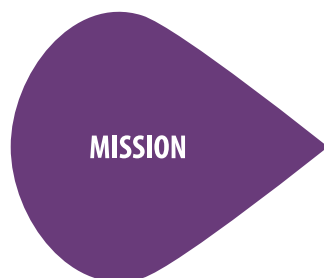
Do you see **rockypc** as a family of believers?

How have you been challenged in the way you relate to our church family? To those who instruct us in the word?



Are you becoming weary in doing good? Are you feeling the weight of others' burdens?

What do you think Paul would say to you?



When are you likely to change the message of the cross of Jesus in order to avoid persecution or to impress others?

How can we be crucified to the world and yet inviting others from the world to come to Jesus in faith?

PRAYER IDEAS

- Praise God that we are part of his new creation, a new age where we have life by his Spirit. Pray that we would live by the Spirit, seeking to please him.
- Praise God for adopting us into his family. We are his children and brothers and sisters to one another. Pray that we would gently restore those who are caught in sin.
- Ask forgiveness for our pride as we look down on those who are struggling. We think we're better, and more moral.
- Confess when we've been reluctant to help those in need. Ask forgiveness for growing weary in doing good to others.
- Pray that we'd fulfill the law of Christ, that we'd love others and give ourselves for them, just as he has done for us. Pray that we'd bear each others' burdens. Ask that we wouldn't give up doing good to all people, especially the family of believers.
- Pray that we would only boast in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, in his death that bore our curse so that we might have life and blessing.
- Pray that we would be crucified to the world, not valuing what our friends and neighbours say is important. Pray that we'd be prepared to be persecuted and bear Jesus' marks rather than compromise the message of the cross.
- Ask that we'd share the grace, mercy and peace that we've found in Jesus, so that others might find new life with him.