

NEW TESTAMENT LETTER: PAUL'S MESSAGE TO THE GALATIANS

The book of Galatians is a letter written by Paul to a group of Jesus' followers in Galatia (where Paul previously preached with Barnabas in Acts 13-14). Paul's purpose in writing was to clarify that salvation comes through faith in Jesus alone, not through following Jewish laws. Paul emphasized the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice and invited believers into freedom from strict rules and customs.

Paul drew upon his personal experiences (such as his encounter with Jesus) and his understanding of the Old Testament Scriptures to reinforce his argument that salvation is found through faith in Christ. Paul argued that following Jesus brings freedom from legalism and that believers are adopted into God's diverse family.

MAIN IDEAS: FREEDOM TO LIVE IN THE SPIRIT OF GOD

- **There is no gospel message apart from Jesus, the one true Savior and Messiah.** (Galatians 1:10)
- **The righteous are not slaves to the law but are justified through faith in Jesus.** (Galatians 3:11)
- **God unifies believers; there is no discrimination by heritage or background.** (Galatians 3:28)
- **The Spirit and the flesh are at odds, but the Spirit produces more righteous fruit.** (Galatians 5:16-25)

EXAMPLE OF GOD'S PRESENCE: DWELLING WITHIN BELIEVERS

The book of Galatians is most commonly recognized for documenting the fruit of the Spirit. Paul listed nine qualities of believers whose lives have been transformed by the Holy Spirit. Although the decision to follow Jesus is an inward decision, there are outward signs of the renewal and transformation of believers. Galatians identifies these qualities as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Paul shared that believers have been given freedom in Christ. Instead of using that freedom to serve themselves, they are called to utilize their freedom to follow the Holy Spirit. In contrast, Paul listed the qualities of humanity's natural tendencies, or the desires of the flesh. In contrast to the fruit of the Spirit, following the desires of the flesh will lead to sexual immorality, impurity, idolatry, envy, drunkenness, anger, and other destructive habits. Paul called believers to rely on the Holy Spirit for sanctification (the process of being made more like Christ). When God sent the Holy Spirit to dwell within believers, He chose to live among them and serve as a constant guide and helper (Acts 2). God desires for His people to live fruitful lives, and He guides them toward holiness and righteousness.



JESUS IN GALATIANS: JUSTIFICATION THROUGH CHRIST ALONE

Of Paul's many letters, Galatians most heavily focuses on justification through faith as opposed to justification through the law. The Jewish people strove to keep the law and were diligent in their pursuit of righteousness. Paul stated in Galatians 2:16 that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ. In the verse, Jesus is presented as the object of faith, and justification comes through faith in Him rather than through works. This idea was both new and offensive to the Jewish people, to whom God had originally given the law.

In Galatians 3:26-28, Paul wrote that through faith in Christ Jesus, all believers are adopted as children of God. For the first time, there was no difference between Jewish and non-Jewish people, for all were made one in Christ. Believers are unified through Jesus, emphasizing the transformative power of a relationship with Him.