

FREE *at* LAST



Touching Lives
with James Merritt

FREE AT LAST

SERIES OVERVIEW

In this series, we are going to take a deep dive into the book of Galatians, a letter written by Paul to the Christians in Galatia. More than any other person, Paul shifted the focus of Christianity from the proclamation of Jesus to the proclamation about Jesus. He singlehandedly transformed Christianity from an exclusively Jewish faith to a faith that included both Jews and Gentiles. He made Christianity open to everyone, everywhere, at every time.

As we begin to study the book of Galatians, we will see that the theme of this book is “Free at Last!” Paul began his ministry to churches emphasizing the freedom Jesus Christ brings from sin, from the fear of death, and from trying to be good enough for God. No other book in the Bible explains why Christianity is completely, uniquely, and absolutely different from every other religious faith. Jesus offers freedom that no one else can, and that’s the freedom Paul explains in Galatians.

SERIES VERSES

Galatians 1:6-6:14

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PART 1: There is Only One

Galatians 1:6-12

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Do you struggle with trying to be good enough for God, thinking you need to follow rules and regulations to be loved and accepted by Him? Where do you think that belief comes from?
2. How would you define grace?
3. Why do you think grace can sometimes be a difficult concept to grasp?

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PART 2: The Only Way To Live

Galatians 2:20

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Do you feel like you are living in bondage to something such as bitterness towards someone who has hurt you? The trap of pornography, drugs, and alcohol? The feeling that you never measure up?
2. If so, what is keeping you from accepting and living in the freedom you are offered in Christ?
3. What is one way you can continually remind yourself that you don't have to face life alone and that Jesus is with you wherever you go?

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PART 3: Start Strong, Finish Well

Galatians 3:1-6

3. We Look to the Scripture

The Galatians were saying Jesus is not enough and God's grace is not enough for God to accept them. Instead, they insisted in performing, living up to a certain standards, and keeping the rules and regulations of the law. But Paul shuts down that kind of legalistic thinking by referring to the godfather of all Jews, Abraham. He says, "So also Abraham 'believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,'" (Galatians 3:6).

Basically, Paul was reminding the legalists that God accepted Abraham despite him never having been circumcised, nor ever having kept the law because Abraham lived centuries before the law would be given to Israel through Moses. Do you know how Abraham was saved? By faith. Everyone who has ever come to God and been accepted by God has come by faith.

God wants you to start strong and finish well. God started with you by grace. You started with Him by faith. God will finish with you by grace and you will finish with Him by faith. Then, you will start strong and you will finish well.

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QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. In what ways do you try to work your way to gain acceptance from God?
2. As you walk with Christ, do you find yourself focusing more on what Jesus has done for you or what you do for Him?
3. What is one verse or passage of Scripture you can begin to memorize to remind you that faith is all you need to be accepted by God?

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PART 4: Losing Your Religion

Galatians 3:10-14, 21-22

4. The Law is an Advocate for, Not an Addition to Faith

We must realize that God only accepts us one way. It has nothing to do with our performance, our position, or our popularity. It's not a matter of what we do for Him. It is a matter of simply accepting by faith what He has done for us. The law always pointed to grace, not goodness. It always pointed to faith, not fulfillment. Because of that truth, you only have two choices to make when it comes to having a relationship with God: your goodness or God's grace; your religion or His redemption. Once you make these choices, lay down the law, and lose your religion, you will find everything you need at the cross of Jesus Christ.

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QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Do you view the Law of God in the same way you view the Law of Humanity? How so?
2. In what specific ways does Scripture highlight our sinfulness and ungodliness?
3. What is a practical way you can begin choosing to focus more on God's grace rather than your own goodness?

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PART 5: The Only Thing That Counts

Galatians 5:1-6

Substitute any word you want to put in there for circumcision - baptism, religion, ritual, rules, voting Republican, or voting Democrat. Doing your best, trying your hardest - to Jesus none of that has value. The only thing that counts to Jesus is faith, and that should be the only thing that counts to us as well.

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QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Is there someone in your life who is trying to add rules and regulations to their faith? How could you encourage that person this week by reminding them that Jesus says faith is the only thing that counts?
2. Do you find yourself judging other people because they don't follow the same rules and rituals you do? What would it take for you to look at this person through the light of faith being the only thing that counts?

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PART 6: Tender Loving Care

Galatians 6:1-2

3. We Are to Graciously Rebuild Burdened Believers

In verse 2, Paul shifts gears from one type of burden to another, "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way, you will fulfill the law of Christ," (Galatians 6:2). The assumption behind this verse is that we all have burdens, and God never intends for us to carry those burdens alone. Did you know that one of the ways God helps us bear our burdens is through the believers He has brought into our life? One of the responsibilities of family members is to bear each other's burdens. When you are bearing burdens, you are really sharing blessings. No believer is ever a burden to another believer. If you refuse to allow others to share your burden, you are robbing them of the blessing of bearing your burden. Let us be a body of believers who show tender loving care to the burdened believers around us.

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QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Can you think of a time when you approached a burdened believer with condemnation instead of compassion? What can you learn from that experience?
2. Is there someone in your life who is caught in sin or is walking far from God? How can you show them love and kindness and help them get back on their feet?
3. Are you trying to carry a burden alone? What is a way you can ask for help from your fellow believers and allow them the blessing of carrying your burden with you?

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PART 7: Don't Waste Your Life

Galatians 6:7-10

It is not that you may reap a harvest, or you might reap a harvest. It is not even if you could reap a harvest or you should reap a harvest. God Himself promises you will reap a harvest. But you must remember the harvest doesn't come on your clock, it comes on God's. There is a return on the investment of serving. Keep serving. Keep doing good. Keep working for God, because you will reap what you sow.

3. Don't Be Disinterested: You Will Rejoice When You Share

Paul has given us fantastic advice on how to live a life worth living. He ties it up with a bow saying, "Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers," (Galatians 6:10). Every day life gives us opportunities to sow good seeds, to serve other people, and to share with the hurting. Every time you get the opportunity to do something good for somebody else, do something good for somebody else! You will have finally arrived in life when you realize the greatest blessings are not when someone does something good for you, but when you do good for someone else.

God has given all of us gifts and abilities. But if you are not taking your gifts and abilities in some way and serving the church, you are living a big part of a wasted life. Jesus himself said, "I didn't come to be served. I came to serve." Jesus didn't save you to be served; he saved you to serve. Don't waste your life. Don't ever quit serving the Lord. Don't ever quit sowing the seeds. Don't ever quit sharing the good, and you will know that your life wasn't wasted when you hear these words at the end of your life, "Well done good and faithful servant."

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QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What is an example of a time where you reaped what you sowed? How can this experience be an encouragement to you as you are currently sowing seeds of faithfulness and obedience to God now but are still waiting to harvest?
2. When was the last time you were presented with an opportunity to serve someone else? How did you respond? Do you wish you had responded differently?
3. What is a gift God has given you that you can be using to help others so that you do not waste your life?

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PART 8: Front and Center

Galatians 6:14

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What does it look like practically to boast in the cross of Jesus Christ, as Paul says in Galatians 6:14?
2. Is there a struggle or sin that is currently overpowering you? What steps can you take to begin living in the power that Jesus died on the cross to give you?
3. If there was a greater purpose behind the worst day in all of history (Jesus' crucifixion), do you believe God also has a greater purpose for the difficulties and trials you're currently walking through?

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TRAVEL WITH

JAMES MERRITT

TO THE GREEK ISLES



GREECE TOUR

SPRING 2020

I would like to invite you in joining me on this incredible journey of retracing the footsteps of the Apostle Paul. This amazing trip will enable us to experience Philippi, Thessaloniki, Berea, Athens, Corinth, Crete, Patmos, and Ephesus. Together we will step into Bible days and walk alongside of Paul. The Holy Scriptures will come to life in unimaginable ways. I promise this will not only be a trip of a lifetime, but a life changing experience for all of us!

*in Christ,
James and Teresa Merritt*