

# **Northwest Community Evangelical Free Church**

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Sermon manuscript

## **Sermon Series: Operation Liberation**

### **Gospel: It really is GOOD NEWS**

(Acts 13-14; Galatians 1:1-9)

Study #1

#### **Introduction:** Freedom...

Freedom. Or, as Mel Gibson said it in Braveheart, “FREEEEEDOM!!” Who doesn’t long for, value, and cherish freedom.

For over two hundred years, the longing for freedom has prompted massive waves of immigrants to head to the United States.

Here in San Antonio, we revere the Alamo as the birthplace of Texas liberty. Even though it was a place of defeat, that defeat led to the Texicans’ victory at San Jacinto - and freedom.

Our nation’s Constitution guarantees you and me certain freedoms, specifically: speech, religion, press, assembly, and petition for redress of grievances.

We cherish the freedoms we have and hunger for freedom when we are denied it.

And to people who yearn for freedom, Jesus promises it. Of all the promises Jesus makes, are any more mouth-watering than these?

[Luke 4:18] ***“The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me,  
Because He anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor.  
He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives,  
And recovery of sight to the blind,  
To set FREE THOSE WHO ARE OPPRESSED***

and

[John 8:31] ...***“If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; [32] and you will know the truth, and THE TRUTH WILL MAKE YOU FREE.”***

and

[John 8:36] ***“So if the Son makes you free, YOU WILL BE FREE INDEED.”***

For just a moment, think about the possibility of enjoying the freedom Jesus offers.

- He offers you freedom from a crippling past that may have you feeling bound up or even “scripted” to behave in certain ways.
- He offers you freedom from addicting habits, hurts, and hang-ups that feel just like chains.
- He offers you freedom to love well, to serve with joy, to pursue holiness, and to know Him who is the source of freedom.

There are moments, even seasons, when I experience the freedom Jesus offers. But I also know what it is to find myself stuck again in old patterns. And I know many, many people who are, like me, sometimes stuck in cages of their own making.

Freedom is our birthright from God. Freedom is what we were made to enjoy. And freedom is the gift God wants to give us. He really does.

In the New Testament, there is a letter that is all about freedom. You won’t find any reference to freedom of speech or of the press in this letter. But the letter does chart the path to a more profound liberty, the liberty to live as God intends for us to live which is, by the way, the only path to the abundant life Jesus also promised.

Referred to by many as The Magna Carta of Spiritual Freedom<sup>1</sup>, Paul's letter to the churches of Galatia tells us that, paradoxically, when we declare our dependence on God we are ushered into the beautiful life of spiritual and moral and personal freedom.

If your heart longs for freedom, you're in for a treat as we explore Galatians together.

I am eager to jump into the book of Galatians with you. Before we do that, though, let's back away and gain a bit of historical perspective.<sup>2</sup>

We discover the setting that prompted Paul to write Galatians in the book of Acts.

### **Background to the Book of Galatians**

#### **Leading Up to the First Missionary Journey (13:1-3)**

##### *Milestones of the early church*

By the time we come to the thirteenth chapter of the book of Acts, the church is about fifteen years old, deep in the growing up world of adolescence. Lots of water has passed under the bridge in those fifteen years.

- There was the launch of the church on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2).
- The apostles have been imprisoned more than once. (Acts 4).
- Stephen has become the first Christian martyr. (Acts 7).
- Believers in Jerusalem have scattered because of the Roman jihad against the faith. (Acts 8).
- AND a zealous young Pharisee, Saul of Tarsus, has been saved. He is now a vital part of a New Testament church fellowship in the Syrian city of Antioch, north of Israel.

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<sup>1</sup> I have not been able to find a source for this phrase. But Paul's letter to the Galatians has had a profound impact on the men and women who have changed their worlds for Christ. The great reformer, Martin Luther, was one. In his commentary on Galatians he "*Galatians is my wife. I have betrothed myself to her. She is my Katie von Bora.*"

<sup>2</sup> At the beginning of any new series of studies in a book from God's Word, I always like to investigate the context in which that book was written.

### *The church at (Syrian) Antioch*

#### Its character

You would have loved the church at Antioch! It was at this church that believers were first called "Christians" (Christ-ones), no doubt because they talked about Jesus Christ all the time!

By the fifth decade of the first century, the church at Antioch had grown into a stable, active, spiritually alive congregation that looked like its community. It was diverse, made up of Jews and Gentiles (both Greeks, and Romans).

#### Its deeds

It was a healthy church that cared for fellow Christians living in far away places. As far as we know, the church at Antioch was the first church to send money to help another church when they sent the famine relief offering to feed the starving Christians in Jerusalem.<sup>3</sup>

And, as far as we know, it was the first church to intentionally launch an effort to take the Christian Gospel to places and to people who had never heard the name of Jesus.

***[Acts 13:1] Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was there, prophets and teachers: Barnabas, and Simeon who was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. [2] While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."***<sup>4</sup> ***[3] Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.***

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<sup>3</sup> We read about this in Acts 11:27-29.

<sup>4</sup> We don't know how the Holy Spirit spoke to this congregation. My assumption is that it was through the ministry of the prophets and teachers there. But, in the early days of the church it is conceivable that the Spirit gave explicit revelation.

After this commissioning, Saul (soon to be known as “Paul,” a name with a Greek flair to better suit his Gentile ministry), Barnabas, and Barnabas’ nephew, John Mark set sail from Antioch for points west and north<sup>5</sup> to reach lost men and women with the Good News that Jesus saves!

### The First Missionary Journey’s First Steps (Acts 13:4-12)

After spending some time on the island of Cyprus (Barnabas’ home),<sup>6</sup> the three men traveled north across the Mediterranean to the Asian continent. Their goal was a region known as Galatia<sup>7</sup>, a large political region in what is now the country of Turkey.<sup>8</sup>

The Galatian peoples that Paul, Barnabas and John Mark were to visit were an ethnically mixed group of Romans, Greeks, Phrygians, and Jews - and more.

So, going to Galatia would have been sort of like going to an H-E-B in San Antonio, where on any shopping trip you are likely to run into Anglos, Hispanics, African Americans, Asians, and Middle Easterners.

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<sup>5</sup> Ironically, they traveled the same path on the Mediterranean that Jonah, the reluctant prophet, had traveled centuries earlier, in disobedience to God!

<sup>6</sup> While they were there, they evangelized, Saul’s name was changed to Paul, and the missionary group’s identification changed from “*Barnabas and Saul*” (13:2) to “*Paul and his companions*.” (13:13) Already, Paul had become the *de facto* leader of the First Missionary Journey.

<sup>7</sup> “Galatian” is a variant form of the word “Celtic” as in the “celts” from Britain.

<sup>8</sup> In the ancient world, the term “Galatia” was used in two ways. It sometimes referred to the region inhabited by **ethnic Galatians** in the northern part of the great inner plateau of Asia Minor. These ethnic Galatians ruled over the Phrygians and the Cappadocians, and had the reputation of being highly superstitious, of engaging in religious rites of extreme cruelty, and were known to be horribly immoral. And sometimes, the term “Galatia” referred to the larger geographical region of the Roman province of the same name, which was annexed to the Roman Empire in 25 B.C. By New Testament times, the province stretched from the Black Sea in the north, to the Mediterranean Sea in the south. This province included regions that were not in any way ethnically “Galatian.” It is my opinion that this second way is the sense in which Paul used the term in his letter, and in which Luke used the term in the book of Acts. Luke almost always referred, not to the geographical or ethnic area, but to the political area. Acts 13, 14, and 16 show churches in south Galatia, but, as F.F. Bruce notes, neither of the two routes for Christian expansion led to the north Galatian region. For instance, Ancyra, a large north Galatian city was not reached with the Gospel until 192 A.D.

For reasons that Luke, the author of Acts, does not make explicit, just before entering Galatia, proper, John Mark left Paul and Barnabas.

We are never told why he left the expedition.<sup>9</sup> But, in reading of the experiences Paul and Barnabas had while on this missionary journey, we can’t help but wonder if John Mark had some premonition that the time in Galatia might not be particularly pleasant...<sup>10</sup>

### The Galatian Ministry (Acts 13:13-14:23)

Geographically, the Galatian region was rough, rugged country. Think west Texas, beyond Fort Davis, or out Highway 90 near Langtry, where Judge Roy Bean was “the Law West of the Pecos” in the late 1900’s.

Galatia was wild and remote and Doctor Luke lines out the route Paul and Barnabas traveled.

#### Four cities, four stops

They went to a few of the major cities in the region, stopping off at Pisidian Antioch and Iconium and Lystra and Derbe.

This trip represented at least six hundred miles of travel - all of it on foot, through mountainous regions, in all kinds of weather, facing natural and human dangers all along the way.

#### Bold proclamation

As they traveled, they shared the Gospel. Each of the four cities heard a clear presentation of the Gospel. Paul and Barnabas preached to Jews and to Gentiles alike. And in each city people came to faith in Jesus.

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<sup>9</sup> Paul held John Mark culpable, though, for leaving and later would refer to John Mark in the most negative terms. (Acts 15:38) However, in one of the great “turn-around” stories of the New Testament, toward the end of his own life Paul says that John Mark has become useful, a sure sign of God’s redemptive work. (2 Timothy 4:11)

<sup>10</sup> Not that this would have been an excuse to “abandon ship” of course. But, it might explain his actions.

The life-changing power of the Gospel was unleashed as Saul and Barnabas boldly proclaimed the message. But they paid dearly for the fruit they saw. They experienced serious persecution on this trip.

### Serious suffering

They stayed in the various cities varying lengths of time. Mostly, they stayed in each city until it was no longer possible to do so!

The deeper into Galatia they traveled, the more severe the persecution got.

Nothing of overt suffering occurred in Pisidian Antioch, but it was a different story in Iconium. Some of those who opposed the message of Jesus tried to stone Paul and Barnabas. And when this plot became known, Paul and Barnabas moved on to Lystra.<sup>11</sup>

Luke tells us that while they were at Lystra, Paul healed a lame man - which prompted the citizens of that city to fall at Paul's and Barnabas' feet and worship them as gods!

They got that little misunderstanding straightened out, preached the Gospel - and then got tossed out of town by the Jewish opponents of the Gospel who had traveled from Antioch and Iconium to cause Paul and Barnabas more grief!

According to verse 19, the opposition "*won over the multitudes.*" Then, they actually did what they had planned to do in Lystra. They stoned Paul with such violence that they were satisfied he was dead (are you beginning to see why John Mark left?!)

And then, after all he had suffered in getting the Gospel out to these folks, Paul picked himself up, dusted himself off, and traveled THE NEXT DAY to the city of Derbe, to continue telling the Good News to people who had never heard!

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<sup>11</sup> Timothy hailed from Lystra. It is likely that Paul met Timothy while on this First Missionary Journey.

### Re-tracing their steps

After the difficulties they had experienced I wouldn't have blamed Paul and Barnabas if they had traveled from Derbe back to the warm embrace of their home church in Antioch.

After all, there was a major highway heading right out of Derbe to Antioch. And this road ran right through Paul's hometown of Tarsus!

But, rather than do that they retraced their steps, passing through Lystra, Iconium and Pisidian Antioch again. They spent time with the new converts, strengthening and encouraging them in their faith. They appointed elders in every church. THEN, they sailed across the Mediterranean home to Antioch!

The First Missionary Journey was Paul's introduction to Galatia. Why, then, did he write a follow-up letter to these folks?

Well, here's my take...

### **Point: The REASON for the Letter to the Galatians**

About the time Paul and Barnabas returned from their trip, taking some much needed R&R, some Christian Jews came from Judea to Paul's home church in Antioch, with a strange teaching.

These guys taught - [Acts 15:1]... "*Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.*"

They were combining the old system of rabbinic Judaism with the new teaching of Christianity. The result of their hybrid teaching was a "Jesus AND" Gospel.

When they had been in Galatia, they had not preached a Jesus AND message. Paul knew that a Gospel requiring anything from a person other than faith in the finished work of Christ on the cross was no Gospel at all.<sup>12</sup>

We know that these men were causing trouble in Syrian Antioch where Paul and Barnabas went to church.

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<sup>12</sup> That's why we'll hear him accuse the men from Judea of being "troublemakers."

And, based on the content of the book of Galatians, I think they were also troubling the new Christians in the region of Galatia, where Paul and Barnabas had just planted vibrant churches, shedding blood, sweat, and tears in the process!

So, as quickly as he was able, Paul sat down to write the letter we find in our Bibles to the churches of Galatia to draw them back to the purity and clarity of the true Gospel!<sup>13</sup>

And what did Paul do right out of the chute? He reminded his friends in Galatia of his apostolic credentials. That makes sense, given that the message he had brought them was being undermined.

### **Greetings and Salutations (1:1-5)**

#### **From and To (vv. 1-2)**

*From the APOSTLE Paul*

***[1:1] Paul, an apostle (not sent from men nor through the agency of man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead)***

Paul did not become an apostle of Jesus Christ by winning an Idol competition. There was no nomination process or election. He wasn't appointed by the other apostles.

His apostleship was bestowed by God.<sup>14</sup>

And, no, he is not just getting up on his high horse so that he can boss people around. He defends his apostleship so that he can defend the Gospel!<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> In short form, here is my chronology: (1). Paul and Barnabas returned to Syrian Antioch from the famine visit to Jerusalem described in Acts 11; (2). They embarked on the First Missionary Journey and returned to Antioch; (3). Reports of Judaizers working in the Galatian churches founded by them come to the missionaries; (4). Paul writes Galatians from Antioch of Syria; (5). The Jerusalem council was held shortly after the writing of Galatians.

<sup>14</sup> You can read the thrilling story of how Paul (then Saul) was chosen by God to become a Christian and an apostle in Acts 9.

*From others*

***[2] and all the brethren who are with me***

He then mentions ***“the brethren who are with [him].”*** These would have been Barnabas, whom the Galatians all knew as well as they knew Paul, and the other leaders mentioned in Acts 13:1-3.

And, to whom was this letter written?

*To the churches of Galatia*

***[2]...to the churches of Galatia***

His words are specifically targeted to those new Christians who made up the new churches in the cities he had just visited - the Galatian cities of Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, and Pisidian Antioch - AND to all who since that time have struggled to keep the main thing the main thing and who have wanted to protect the pristine clarity of the Gospel of Jesus.<sup>16</sup>

Now in many of Paul's letters, there are a few flowery words of affirmation at the beginning. Or there may be an expression of gratitude for the recipients' faithfulness and their witness.

There is none of that here. Not one word of affirmation. At the same time, the letter is distinctively Christian as he prays “grace and peace” for them.

#### **Grace and Peace (vv. 3-5)**

***[1:3] Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, [4] who gave Himself for our sins so that He might rescue us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, [5] to whom be the glory forevermore. Amen.***

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<sup>15</sup> The troublemakers were maintaining that Paul's “apostleship” only came from man, as they were going around corrupting his work in Galatia. But, in these introductory words, Paul contradicts that idea, and reminds the Galatians of his true commission.

<sup>16</sup> It is worth mentioning, too, that Paul's letter to the Galatian churches, written as it was before the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15, was sent out around A.D. 49, making it Paul's first inspired correspondence.

I am not going to say a lot about these words at this point, except to note that the main issues of the whole letter are condensed in these words, **grace** and **peace**.

Grace and peace are wonderful gifts. But they are only available when we pursue them God's way - by means of the Gospel.

There is no Good News other than the Good News Paul preached. It is the message that takes away our sin and that brings true liberty.

We receive God's grace by believing the Gospel. We receive God's peace by walking in the truths of the Gospel.

Freedom does not come as God and an individual work together. No! God delivers - and we receive!

Salvation in Jesus Christ consists of getting out of the way and asking Him to deliver. No works required, or accepted. ***“He gave Himself...that He might rescue us.”***

That's the introduction. Now things heat up.

Paul is upset as he writes. You can usually tell when someone is upset by the tone of a letter. Galatians is a well-reasoned and brilliantly logical letter, but there is an edge to it.

### **The Gospel, but Bent (vv. 6-9)**

#### **An Anxious Apostle (vv. 6-7)**

##### *Deserters*

Remember how much he - and the Galatians! - had suffered when the churches were just being established. The work of God went forward, but at a great price. Given all of that, Paul was blown away that they had so easily and so quickly turned away from the true Gospel.

But listen carefully to the way he says what he says. He uses a military term that described the Benedict Arnolds of the ancient world.

***[1:6] I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting<sup>17</sup> Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; [7] which is really not another...***

Paul didn't fault the Galatians for deserting the Gospel (which they did), but for deserting God (***“deserting HIM who called you”***).

And in what way had they deserted God? By opting for a ***“different [kind of a] Gospel.”***<sup>18</sup>

Moving away from the simple Gospel - faith alone in Jesus alone saves forevermore - was a betrayal of the One who had rescued them!

They had turned FROM the true Gospel. And TO what had they turned? “Another” Gospel...

The word that we translate “another” in verse 7 is a different Greek word than the word for “another” he used in verse 6! The word in verse 6 meant *“another of a different kind.”* The word in verse 7 means *“another of the same kind.”*

And what he is saying is that the gospel the troublemakers were preaching was NOT another similar, but slightly different (“new and improved!”) gospel from the one Paul preached. It was an entirely different sort of gospel!

The false Gospel Paul was combating said that THEY had to finish what JESUS began.<sup>19</sup> And this is the essence of all false Gospels - ***“Jesus AND.”***

But any message that says, ***“Jesus AND”*** violates grace - and as we have already seen (vv. 3-4) once you violate grace, there is no peace!

<sup>17</sup> “Deserting” (*μετατιθημι*) - Jude 4; Heb. 11:5; Heb. 7:12

<sup>18</sup> The word that we translate “different” here is the Greek word “heteros” (*ετερος*) from which we get our English word “hetero-sexual.”

<sup>19</sup> But, when Jesus said, from the cross, ***“It is finished”*** He meant, ***“It is finished.”*** There was no work left for Him or anyone else to do.

Paul doesn't come right out and tell us here what the differences were between the Gospel he preached and the one that was being offered to the Galatians in his absence.<sup>20</sup> But in some way the troublemakers had offered poisoned candy to these spiritual babies. And the Galatians had gobbled that candy right up.

The result, he says, is that they were being "*disturbed.*"

*Disturbed*

*[7]...only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.*

I wonder. Did the Galatians **feel** disturbed? Were they emotionally discombobulated by the teaching of the troublemakers?

Or, is it possible that they were "disturbed" without knowing it?

The body of a person with an undetected cancer is physically disturbed - he just doesn't know it.

An otherwise normal child learns to live in a dysfunctional family, never knowing that they are living in a disturbing environment.

Might a Christian be truly "disturbed" yet not **feel** disturbed? Sure.

It is possible for a believer to be off track - and comfortable in his disturbance. I think it is likely that the Galatians had swallowed the bitter pill of a rules-based orientation to the Christian life (what we call "legalism"), and hadn't even noticed how disturbing it was.

It is a far more serious thing to be "disturbed" and not know it than to be "disturbed" and disturbed about it! Tragically, the Galatian believers had been disturbed - and seemed to just fine with it.

And that, as much as anything, has Paul deeply disturbed for them! He is writing to expose how they had been disturbed and to call them back to truth.

<sup>20</sup> Except that it involved circumcision; see Galatians 5 and Acts 15.

So, lest the Galatians (or we) should slough off his concerns as insignificant, Paul attacks those who would present any message other than the pure and simple, beautiful message that brings freedom - the GOSPEL.

Paul pulls no punches here. He is playing hardball.

### **An Errant Message (vv. 8-9)**

*[1:8] But even if we, or an angel from heaven,<sup>21</sup> should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed!<sup>22</sup> [9] As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!*

*Truth - and open mindedness*

Paul is not being terribly open-minded here. This is the same Paul who would later say, "***I have become all things to all men.***" (1 Corinthians 9)

But, he does not look for points of contact between his Gospel and that of the Judaizers. He doesn't say, "*You have your Gospel and I have mine, and that is fine.*"

No! This expansive, flexible, broad-minded, culturally eclectic man was as narrow as a rail when it came to the content of the Gospel.

*The practical downside of a "Jesus AND" Gospel*

Paul knew that a message that teaches salvation by law-keeping, or a message about how to live the Christian life that says what WE DO maintains our status before God is a deadly snare.

It's a bad "gospel" and it never brings freedom! That's the practical, day-to-day downside of a "Jesus AND gospel" - it doesn't work!

<sup>21</sup> Why "angel from Heaven" (or "messenger from Heaven")? Perhaps he wants the Galatians to recall when he and Barnabas were mistaken for gods in Lystra (Acts 14).

<sup>22</sup> In the Old Testament, this word denoted something devoted to destruction (under the ban), Joshua 6:21.

But look closely at a message about salvation where the formula is “faith in Jesus + ANYTHING” and the implications are far more serious.

*The implications of a “Jesus AND” Gospel*

What are we saying about Jesus if forgiveness of sin and eternal salvation is achieved through Jesus’ work AND something - anything! - we do?

We have reduced the cross of Christ from being the central point of our faith to something that is helpful.

And then, rather than being overwhelmed with gratitude for what Jesus has done for us (Colossians 2:7), we are mildly appreciative. After all, we’ve done our part, too...

But this formula: [Jesus’ death and resurrection] + [our ANYTHING] = [salvation] is a dangerous heresy worth fighting over.

And Paul has some fighting words for those who are promoting this formula.

*Fighting words!*

I am not totally convinced of all that Paul meant by his use of the word “**accursed**” (*anathema*) here. It’s a strong word.

In Romans 9, for instance, Paul said that if it were possible he would be willing to be separated from Christ - that would mean going to Hell (“**anathema**”) - if he could see his fellow-Jews come to saving faith in Jesus.

So here, when he says of anyone who preaches a “Jesus AND” Gospel, “**let him be accursed**” he is telling us what is at stake in the clarity of the Gospel.

Heaven and Hell is at issue. Freedom and bondage is on the line!

- The Gospel is beautiful, and any distortion of it uglifies it.
- The Gospel is powerful, and any perversion of it weakens it.
- The Gospel is liberating, and any deviation from it makes it shackling.

- The Gospel brings glory to God, and any change in it only detracts from that glory.

Those who would dare tamper with God’s Gospel are treading on thin ice.

They are not only plunging redeemed men and women into bondage, they are denying people who are lost the privilege of hearing the true, saving Gospel. And even worse, they are detracting from what the Lord Jesus Christ has accomplished!

After all, as Paul says later on in Galatians, [2:21] *if righteousness comes through the Law* (i.e. - something WE DO), *then Christ died needlessly.*”

*True words*

Here is what is true:

When you place your trust in the Lord Jesus, believing that the death He died paid the penalty for your sin and that His resurrection from the dead delivers you from condemnation and guarantees you eternal life you are saved forevermore.

That’s Gospel!

Salvation is an extraordinary gift given freely by a gracious God to people like you and me.

And, while this point is made in the book of Galatians, the equally crucial message of this letter is that as a Christian, there is nothing you can do to earn MORE merit from God, and nothing you can do to KEEP yourself safe and secure.

We are **saved** by grace through faith - and we **live** by grace through faith!

**Conclusion:**

So, here we are, a congregation of bright people in northwest San Antonio, Texas, 2009, giving serious attention to a short letter written in the first century by a then more-or-less unknown Jewish Christian to obscure little congregations tucked away in the mountains of Galatia.

Why?

- Maybe it is because we have noticed a tendency to fall into a “Jesus AND” mentality in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, just as they did in the 1<sup>st</sup>.
- Maybe it is that we see the strains of legalism staining our lives.
- Maybe it is because we long for the freedom that only Jesus can offer.

Operation Liberation has begun. Be ready to have your categories exploded as we march through these six chapters together.

Prepare to watch of legalisms and Pharisaisms drop off as you learn to relax in the truths of the Gospel.

Expect that freedom will be yours - freedom to love and to serve - as you come to better understand the Good News of Jesus Christ.