

Grace and (not) race in Galatia 4: The Gospel That Brings Freedom

discussion guide based on **Galatians 4** (linked to sermon of 25/6/23)
which can be accessed at www.stjamesbythepark.org/galatians

What does the word freedom conjure up? Can you think of any phrases or sayings that people use from day to day, using the word?

Read Galatians 4:8-20

What has been the transformation in the lives of the Galatians? What has brought this about?

What dangers do they face now? What freedoms have they gained in the past and what are they in danger of losing? Do you ever feel tempted to slavish observance and if so, how? Discuss.

Verses 12-20 describe two sets of relationships; what are they? What characterises Paul's relationship with the Galatians and how does this compare with that of the "Judaizers"? How do you see the character of Jesus and his people mirrored in Paul and the Galatians?

Has anyone ever said something to you that seems to threaten or question your very identity? What was your response? (xref John 8:31-59)

Read Galatians 4:21 to 5:1

How is the identification of present-day Jerusalem and her children (the Jews) with Hagar surprising in Paul's allegory? How and what would you have felt as a Jewish believer in a Galatian congregation as this letter was read aloud?

What is the slavery that Paul talks about in verse 25? How has this been dealt with?

Look back at the covenant promises given to Abraham in Genesis Chapters 12, 13, 15, 17. Get several people to find these and read them aloud. In what ways does the completion of Jesus Christ's work on the cross fulfil the promises made to Abraham? Is the distinction between the two covenants a racial one? What do these verses tell us of the identity of the true free people of God?

How might looking at this passage fill you with a new determination to focus on the most important things and not be distracted or sidetracked by things which threaten to divide the body of Christ and enslave believers?

In what way does 5:1 sum up the passage? (xrefs for "not turning back" can be found in Numbers 14:1-12 and Hebrews 10:26-39)

Note: I'm aware that there are quite a few questions here and that the arguments presented can be fairly complicated. Feel free to pick the questions which seem likely to be most relevant to your group at this time.