

## “Have We Labored in Vain?”

Use this guide as a tool to help you prepare to experience spiritual transformation in a practical way. It is a **flexible guide** that will help you discover, own, and apply the truths of God’s Word.

### Message Summary

Shortly after Paul planted the churches in the southern region of Galatia false teachers came in and taught that a person must not only believe in Jesus but also convert to Judaism in order to have eternal life. In other words, these false teachers taught people their righteousness was based on their works rather than the righteousness of Jesus Christ alone. So Paul wrote to these confused Galatian believers in order to correct this false teaching and help the churches live in the freedom they found in Jesus.

Throughout this letter Paul argued for the fact that righteousness comes through faith in Jesus Christ. In Chapter 3 Paul argued his point from the example of Abraham who believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness. Further, he argued his point from the example of Scripture, explaining that Scripture taught there were two paths, one of blessing and one of cursing. The path of faith leads to blessing but the path of trying to keep the Law leads to cursing. In other words, God has always acted the same. Salvation has always been through faith, even before the Law was given! Chapter 3 ended with Paul illustrating the difference between the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants. Since the Covenant of Promise was given to Abraham, and since Jesus was the true offspring of Abraham, because of their faith in Jesus, the Galatians were now part of Abraham’s family. The Galatians, who were once slaves to sin, were now sons and daughters of the King. As a result, in chapter 4, Paul explained that their faith in Christ which liberated them from their slavery to sin now afforded them the promised blessing of the Holy Spirit, who would enable them to identify with Jesus, the True Son and Heir of God.

In 4:8-11 Paul summarized his defense of salvation by faith alone by letting the Galatians know his great concern for their spiritual state. While he has called them “brothers” throughout this letter, there was still some question in his mind as to whether or not he labored in vain over them. After coming to faith in Christ, if they decided to begin practicing the Mosaic Law like the false teachers had encouraged them to do, then in Paul’s opinion, he had labored in vain. In other words, in Paul’s mind, some if not all of the Galatian believers never experienced a real Christian conversion.

This message examines Paul’s concern for the Galatians and outlines 3 elements of a real Christian conversion. As you prepare to meet with your Missional Community examine these elements. Are they present in your life? Do you have a relationship with God through worship? Have you been set free from the bondage of sin? Have you renounced your old lifestyle or do you use the grace of God as license to continue a life of sin? As you gather with your group encourage one another to turn your hearts, minds, and lives to Christ so you won’t labor in vain!

### Message Outline

**If you attempt to gain righteousness through religious practices after coming to faith in Christ then your faith is not genuine.**

Real Christian conversion involves...

**1. Redemption from slavery. (8)**

Set free...

- From the power of sin.
- To know God.
- To worship God.

**2. Relationship with God. (9a)**

- To know God is to call Him beloved Father.
- We know God because He first knew us.  
He Regenerates – makes us new in Christ.  
He Justifies – makes us right with Christ.  
He Sanctifies – makes us holy in Christ.  
He Glorifies – makes us like Christ.

**3. Renouncing old lifestyle. (9b-11)**

- The grace of God is not license to continue/return to life of sin.
- Christians cling to the cross.
- Perseverance functions as evidence of faith.

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### Group Discussion

Use the following questions to help make application of God’s Word to your Head (What God wants me to know), to your Heart (What God wants me to desire/value), and to your Hands (What God wants me to do).

In regard to Galatians 4:8-11:

1. What does this passage teach about God? (God’s Identity; Theology)
2. What does this passage teach about what God has done? (God’s Action; Christology)
3. What does this passage teach about man/me? (Old & New Creation Identity; Ecclesiology)
4. What does this passage teach about what I should do? (Reveals what I really believe about Questions 1-3; Missional Ecclesiology)
5. What does this passage teach about how I do it uniquely in my context? (personal action steps of obedience)

### Weekly Prayer Focus

- **Church:**
  - Pray for the Child Dedication Service on October 2<sup>nd</sup>.
  - Pray that all who have believed the Gospel will obey Jesus in believer’s baptism.
  - Pray for new relationships that will lead to Gospel conversations.
  - Pray for the elders as they lead us to accomplish the mission.
  - Pray for the Missional Communities to impact their communities with the Gospel.
  - Pray for Missional Communities to multiply into new neighborhoods.
  - Pray for new DNA groups to start.
- **Local:**
  - Pray that God would burden us with the lostness in our cities, neighborhoods, and at work.
  - Pray that God will identify 5 people you can begin to invest in and engage with the Gospel.
- **Global:**
  - Pray that God would give you a heart for the nations.
  - Pray for the team working in SEA, the new believers, for those who have heard the Gospel, and the church planting movement among the unreached.
  - Pray for Good Shepherd Ministries and Bill & Sandy Younger.
  - Pray for Servants Hearts Ministries and Bob & Georgette Kornegay.
  - Pray for Pastor Abraham and his church in Guatemala.
  - Pray for the work of Paul & Sarah Young and Dakota Baptist Church in North Dakota.