



# BIBLE IN A YEAR 2020



## Summary

Paul wrote to a church in crisis. They believed in Jesus but were being pressured to adopt Old Testament law as their way of life.

Despite his own background of observing this law religiously, Paul knew that his life changed when he met Jesus. In this letter, Paul shares with passion and authority that a Christian's life comes from faith in Jesus expressed through love, a product of the Spirit's work in believers.

While technical in parts, Paul's argument to believers to trust Jesus over religion results in powerful practical guidance for living in freedom a Spirit-filled, world-changing life.

**Bern Leckie**

# **Wednesday February 19: Galatians 1-3**

## **Stop relying on religion, start trusting Jesus**

Every day we're reading or listening to part of the Bible together and sharing thoughts with you. Today it's Bern Leckie:

### **What did I like about today's reading?**

One of the things keen Christians do (like us, digging into the Bible today!) is to look for ways to put what we read into practice. We ask, "What am I going to do differently?" every day in this series because we don't want God's word to run through our heads without changing our lives. However, this does not mean that we should do everything we read about.

That's obvious with some stories, like when Moses murdered an Egyptian; we obviously are not meant to copy that. But what about God's instructions and laws? If God gave them to Israel so that people could draw close to him, shouldn't we obey them too?

I love that Paul answers this question here directly and with passion and authority. The short answer: no! The slightly longer answer: no, because all you need is faith in Jesus.

As I listened to Paul's reasoning, I loved remembering how close Paul was to Jesus despite not being one of the disciples who lived with Jesus for years. God chose Paul, revealed the gospel to him directly and it changed his life dramatically. Paul had to stop relying on a religious system and start trusting Jesus. Only then could he see God's law for what it had always been – a "guardian until Christ came." I am massively grateful that, because of Jesus, I am not just a believer and follower but a child of God. Because of this, I am not separated from other believers by different opinions on various issues, but united by God with them.

### **What did it show me about Father God, Jesus or the Holy Spirit?**

The Spirit has given Paul insight into God's plan unfolding over centuries, as God's people waited expectantly to be delivered from enemies. God did not make this happen in the way that people expected. He knew that religious people were hoping for God to recognise and bless their zeal and let the rest of the world leave them in peace. Instead Jesus challenged them to live differently, empowered by him, so that God could work through them to change the world.

God wants us to live sinless lives but knows that we can't do this in our own strength. Jesus justifies us, removing our guilt, so we can live as God's children and Spirit-filled partners in his kingdom-building work.

### **What am I going to do differently as a result?**

Remember, and thank God more often for, my life in Christ and the grace by which I received it. Resist the temptation to believe that I am working to earn God's favour or love.

### **Who am I going to share this with?**

Family and people I pray with this week.

# **Saturday February 22: Galatians 4-6**

## **Live free, powered by the Spirit**

Every day we're reading or listening to part of the Bible together and sharing thoughts with you. Today it's Bern Leckie:

### **What did I like about today's reading?**

I love Paul's passion for believers in Jesus to swap slavery to religion for freedom to love, so that we can meaningfully choose to serve people instead of being trapped grudgingly into a system of commitments.

"The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love." When Paul talks about faith, he doesn't mean weak belief that never leads to action, but strong belief which results in love showing up in practice, overcoming the doubt and hesitation I feel when I don't know how things will work out. That's a life I want more and more.

I also love that Paul credits the Spirit as the enabler of this life - it's not possible through our cleverness or ideas. Being empowered by the Spirit is amazing, but in case we thought it was easy, Paul points to the battle which results from living like this - a conflict between our "flesh desires" and the leading of the Spirit. Recognising this conflict, Paul shows us something life-changing that we need to know, seek and share as we work this out.

"The fruit of the Spirit" - love, joy, peace and the rest in a single, tasty package seems necessary to me all the time. If I lack something on that list, I'm in trouble. So I often use this as a gauge to see how well I am letting myself be led by the Spirit instead of my flesh.

I've also found that spiritual fruit is brilliant for sharing missionally, even where there are rules against evangelising. Lots of people don't want religion, but who doesn't want love, joy and peace? "Against such things there is no law." This fruit is grown in us for sharing. I love that God's mission to us is simply to share what he produces in us and give him the credit.

### **What did it show me about Father God, Jesus or the Holy Spirit?**

God is less concerned with an old rulebook and more with what we can do with his new, outrageously good and abundant blessing. For this reason, he is pleased to pour out his Spirit on us. He grows love in us while giving us freedom to share it, and this will change the world more than any religious system ever could.

### **What am I going to do differently as a result?**

I'm going to keep a closer eye on the quality of what I produce over the next week at least – how much will be spiritual fruit rather than products of "flesh desires"? If I'm not seeing faith expressed through love, I will need to take my priorities to Jesus for a re-think.

### **Who am I going to share this with?**

As we get started on "The SHAPE of you" course, we are going to look out for what we see God doing in each other. This will be a great chance to share and receive encouragement.