

Worship Material
Change for the better
Material from Roots Bible Study
Sunday 22nd June

Begin with an opening prayer

Lord God, thank you that you are always showing us new things in our world.

We remember rainbows after rain

and the cleansing effect of a strong wind.

We think of a grimy world made white and pure by snow,

and a beach washed clean by the tide.

Most of all, we thank you for the new start you gave the world in Jesus.

Amen.

Read the passage Galatians 3:23-29

Bible notes

Paul's great manifesto of freedom reaches a crescendo in this passage, namely that, through what Jesus has done, we are one family, heirs of the promise that God made to Abraham. And everyone who believes, whether rich or poor, Jew or Gentile, male or female, is equally an heir. These fault lines of the ancient world are each undermined by the gospel.

The importance of this is that believers in Jesus are included in the promise to Abraham, father of the people of Israel, a promise made before the Law was given, so the Law has nothing to do with this. As Paul says in verse 23, the Law acted as a jailer, keeping a lid on rebellious behaviour while the world waited for God to fulfil his promise and send a Saviour, Christ. The faith spoken of throughout this passage is as likely to be that of Jesus (in obedience to God) as of believers in him; it was his faithfulness to God's call that ensured God could keep his promise to Abraham to save the world.

Faith gives access to a community of equals where racial and gender divisions are important but not primary, where our place in the social pecking order has no bearing on our relationship with God – we are all one in Christ.

In keeping with the rest of the letter, the language here is very apocalyptic. Paul is contrasting two time-zones. The old order marked by sin, death and the Law has been swept away by the new order of reconciliation and life and freedom in the Spirit (which Paul will unpack as the letter unfolds). Paul uses

the imagery of the Law being a jailer and our redemption through Jesus being like a jailbreak; it is through Jesus that the new creation has erupted into the world, and we have been freed from 'the present evil age' (Galatians 1:4).

But the outcome is very practical: in the Church we are equals. We have each been freed by the cross and resurrection of Jesus and are equal participants in the new thing God is doing. As a result, we can help one another to change for the better.

Prayer

'If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise.' Galatians 3:29

Thank you, Lord, that we each have a story.

Maybe not as dramatic as the possessed man, but unique to us.

That man received new clothes and a new life,
and changed beyond all recognition.

Thank you for giving us the same amazing possibility,
and give us his faith and willingness
to share the good news of new life all around.

Amen.

A prayer to conclude

Lord, help us to recognise changes for the better in the world around.

Make us bold to face our fears so that we can reach out in love.

Be with us through the coming week as we go out wearing Christ's coat.

Amen.