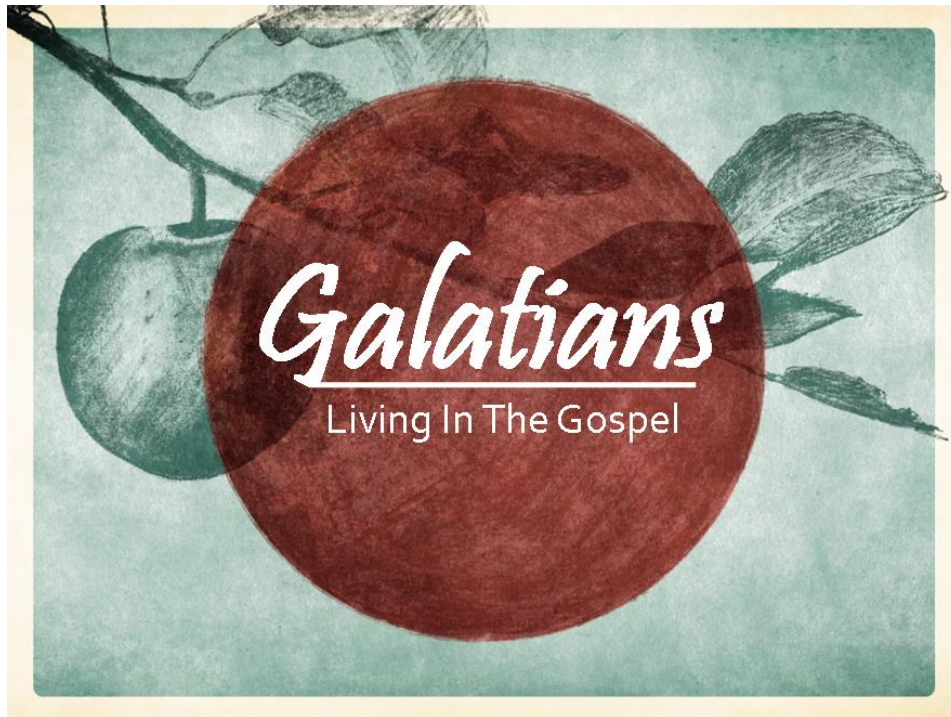


STUDY NOTES: GALATIANS



If you have time – before you begin your studies on your own or in your group, why not read aloud or listen to the book in one sitting. Take a pencil and mark what bits stand out.

You may also find it helpful to watch: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vmx4UjRFp0M>

Paul wrote this letter around 55AD to Gentile Christians in Galatia. Some people had come into the church and were spreading lies about the gospel and sadly some of the Christians were beginning to believe the lies. Paul is angry about this and writes to remind them what is true and what being a Christian is all about!

The letter can be hard to understand at first as Paul is arguing with the people who have come into the church on their own terms and in language they would have understood. However once we have worked out what he means it is a lot easier to see what this letter says to us today!

STUDY 1:

Welcome

Take it in turns to share three facts (two that are true and one that is made up) – see if you can guess which one is made up.

Word

Read Galatians 1

What does Paul say about the gospel in verses 3–5?

Paul is addressing the church in Galatia who have turned away from Christian ways, but rather than declare they have turned away from the gospel, what does Paul say they have turned away from? And how does that affect the way we understand the gospel? (verse 6)

What do you think motivates the people who are perverting the gospel? In what ways might we try and change the gospel today? And what would you say to a friend who was being led astray by false teaching?

In verses 13–14, Paul details his life before he was a Christian and the emphasis is on what *he* had done: 'I persecuted, I advanced, (I was) more exceedingly zealous'... Once Paul followed Jesus the emphasis shifted to what God had done: 'God, who separated me... called me, reveal His Son in me'. How should

Paul's shift in thinking post salvation also affect the way we Christians view our lives post-salvation?

Why should we believe the gospel is true and not just a 'nice' story?

Even after his conversion Paul was unknown to the church for many years (see v.21-24), he spent that time serving God in obscurity before he was used for the calling placed upon Him, and he was happy to do so. How should the timeline of Paul's conversion to the fulfilment of his calling influence the way we view our own callings and journeys with faith?

Worship & Witness

Take a moment to worship God for the GOOD NEWS maybe by singing or listening to a song of praise. Then in smaller groups pray for an opportunity over the next week to share the good news with someone. If there's time you could practice sharing the good news in no more than 3 sentences.

STUDY 2:

Welcome

What examples of hypocrisy have you come across recently – and if you're feel brave have you spotted any hypocrisy in your own life recently? And see if anyone had an opportunity to share the good news.

Word

Read Galatians 2

Why was it important that Titus should not be made to feel like he should get circumcised?

Looking at verse 4- what is the freedom that we have?

Paul explains in this passage that we are justified by faith not by good deeds. What then should be our attitude to good deeds (see chapter 6.9)? Do our actions matter or does our belief matter most?

In the second half of the passage, we see that Peter refuses to eat with Gentiles and in doing so he leads others to follow his behaviour:

- Why was this behaviour bad?
- In what ways do you think we might be hypocritical today (can you think of any nonessential customs that Christians might force on one another) and how do you think we should respond to hypocrisy?
- What do you think and feel about the way Paul handled this conflict?
- Was there anything significant in dealing with it so publicly?
- What if anything should we learn from this in dealing with conflicts in the church?

Peter acted out of fear – something many of us can relate to. He believed the gospel but failed to live it – who do we let hold us accountable in life?

What does it mean that you have been 'crucified with Christ' (see also Romans 6.5-14).

Worship

Put on some quieter music and invite people to ask God to gently correct us in any area where we might not be living out the gospel. You could have people write something down and then burn the paper as part of a confessions (health & safety to think about).

Witness

Pray together for opportunities to live out the gospel in a way that helps those that are seeking.

STUDY 3

Welcome

Share a time when you felt special. Or share some of the strangest rules/laws you have ever come across.

Worship

In this study we see how God loves us so much that he has redeemed us. Paul starts by reminding the Galatians of how they became Christians and that they had experienced God's Spirit. They had felt and experienced freedom from their sins and God's love for them. They did not now need to start following old rules.

As an Act of worship you could get a huge piece of paper and whilst some praise music is playing people could write down their own prayers of praise and thanks.

Word

Read Galatians 3

Do you ever feel unacceptable to God? In what ways do we try to earn God's favour by what we do?

How does thinking about the cross (verse 1) help us with the above?

What do we learn from Abraham? Why was it so significant that he 'believed God...'?

What does the word 'redeemed' mean? How and why did Christ redeem us?

Where does this passage leave the 'law'? Is it necessary to still live according to it? What should that look like today?

What does the gift of the Spirit reveal to us (verse 14)?

Verses 15-29 in many ways highlight to us that all have fallen short (see Romans 3.23) and that we all need one thing – JESUS. Are you excited by the wonderful news in verse 26 and all that means – how should or could that knowledge impact you today?

Witness

Today we hear that we are all God's precious children. It has prompted me to suggest though that we spend some time praying for the 0-18's in our church and in our community. For those doing exams and working out their futures, those recovering from the impact of the lockdowns, those with anxiety and stress, for those struggling with anything. Let's pray for revival amongst our children.

STUDY 4

Welcome

The theologian William Barclay writes about a group of soldiers in WW2 who had lost a friend in battle, and they wanted to give him a decent burial. They found a church with a graveyard surrounded by a white fence.

They found the priest and asked if they could bury him. When the priest found out that the soldier was not a Catholic, he said that they could not bury him in the graveyard, but they could do so just outside the fence, and he would make sure the site was cared for.

When the war ended the soldiers decided to go and visit the gravesite but when they arrived, they could not find it anywhere. They went and found the priest who explained to them that it just hadn't felt right to have him outside the fence. In horror the friends said, 'So you moved his grave?' 'No' said the priest 'I moved the fence'.

Through the Jewish nation God had always planned to make himself known to all nations – we have been brought inside the fence.

Can you think of any stories that could illustrate the fact that though we don't deserve it we have been brought into God's Kingdom.

Witness

Practice explaining in your own words what Jesus dying on the cross means. How clear is your explanation to someone who may have no understanding of the Christian faith at all?

Word

Read Galatians 4

In what ways do adults have greater privileges than children?

In verses 1-20 how was being a child like being a slave in Roman times?

Being under the law was a bit like being a spiritual child – now things have changed – what has changed (verses 4-7)?

In what ways have you experienced closeness to God (verse 6)?

Why does the behaviour of the Galatians surprise Paul (verses 8-11)?

Verse 19 – what does it mean for Christ to become fully developed in our lives?

What do verses 12-20 say about how we should treat others in God's family?

In verse 24 we hear that receiving the law was enslaving – what does that mean and why might some people prefer a law-based spirituality?

What does freedom in Christ mean and how do we live that out practically?

Worship

Read aloud Psalm 139 together and then praise God that he who formed you in the womb has adopted you into his family.

STUDY 5

Welcome

Have everyone write their name at the top of a bit of paper and then in a circle keep passing the paper around so everyone writes on everyone else's. Write down the fruit of the spirit that you see in that person and a brief encouragement to them.

Word

Read Galatians 5

Why do we need the warning in verse 1?

What is the hope of righteousness and how do we eagerly await it (verse 5)?

Looking at verse 7- we can see this happening sometimes in our own or others lives. What things can cause people to start well but finish poorly in matters of faith?

What is the metaphor of yeast teaching?

How are we to use our freedom (verse 13) and then what things can enable us to live out verse 14?

In verse 16 Paul commissions us to 'walk' by the Spirit, why does he use the word 'walk' specifically? And furthermore, how can we successfully walk in the spirit?

Why is it important to distinguish between fruit being the evidence of our relationship with God, rather than the means of our salvation?

What habits could help cultivate the fruit in your own life in this season?

Worship

Have some reflective worship to bring yourself before God and to ask God to both encourage you and help you where you feel weak.

Witness

What 'fruit' do you think is least visible in our church? How could you play a part in cultivating that fruit and displaying it in our times together?

STUDY 6

Welcome

It's a good idea to pause and think back through the sermons and studies – what are your two big take homes that you don't want to forget.

Word

Read Galatians 6

In many ways this chapter explains to us that our doing good is to flow out of a worshipful response to the good God has done us. How do we ensure we make space to receive first from God that we then live out of the overflow?

How can we carry each other's burdens (verse 2) and how does this compare to carrying our own load (verse 5)?

How does Paul say we should deal with sin in one another – what does it look like to restore someone gently?

How do we avoid weariness (verse 9)?

How can we go about boasting in the cross of Christ like Paul?

If all that matters is the 'new creation' how should that impact our personal faith journeys, our small group, our church?

Witness

Pray together for your contacts and family and friends that do not yet know God's amazing love for them – pray for opportunities where God will reveal himself and they will hear and understand the good news.

Worship

As we finish this series – spend a bit of time thanking God for each member of your group and praying for them.