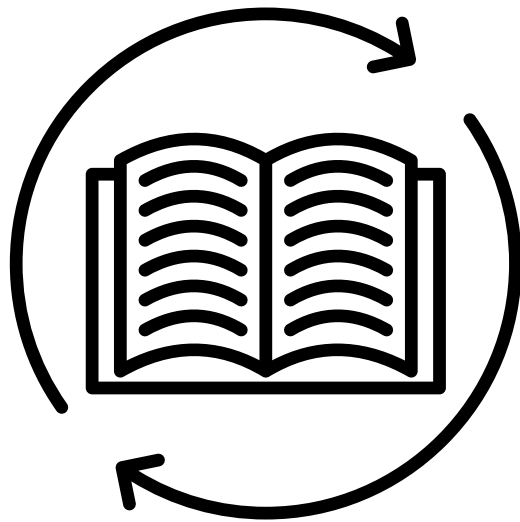


GALATIANS

THE TRUE GOSPEL



Term 3 Studies

The gospel of Jesus Christ is the true gospel that shapes every aspect of the Christian life. Paul writes to the Galatians because he is astonished that they are walking away from this gospel and returning to follow Jewish laws. So he shows them that faith in Jesus is the only way that we can be saved, and that this is what sets us free to live as God's blessed and Spirit-empowered children. As we unpack this letter together we will be reminded of our identity as God's children, the freedom that comes from knowing Christ, and the Spirit that enables us to follow him. Ultimately we will see that the gospel is not just how we begin the Christian life, but it is how we continue in it too.

Context of Galatians:

Having been called by the risen Jesus himself (Acts 9), Paul then went as a missionary to the Gentiles. The Christian churches in Galatia were formed during his first missionary journey that occurred in that region (Acts 13-14). However, it seems that a group of "false brothers" (Gal 2:4) had followed behind after Paul and insisted to the new churches that Gentile Christians ought to also adopt Jewish practices found in the OT law (eg. circumcision). It is this 'circumcision group' that sparks Paul's frustration which results in him penning this letter.

Though there is much debate about the precise dating of the letter, it is fair to conclude that the two mentions of his visits to Jerusalem in Galatians match up with those also recorded in the book of Acts. Paul's post-conversion visit mentioned in chapter 1 can be found in Acts 9:26-30 and his visit 14 years later referred to in chapter 2 is likely recorded in Acts 11:27-30. This places the date of the letter around 48AD, shortly before the large council at Jerusalem (Acts 15), that deals with these same issues.

Structure of Galatians:

Chapters 1-2: Paul defends how he received the true gospel.

Chapters 3-4: Paul explains the true gospel.

Chapters 5-6: Paul applies the true gospel to life.

For further help, visit the online Bible Commentary by Matthew Harmon and John Sloat on the TGC Website.



GALATIANS 1

STUDY 1

Brainstorm what you know about the Apostle Paul's conversion story (use Acts 9 for cheat notes).

Read Galatians 1:1-5

Use a Bible map or Google to look up a map of ancient Galatia to orientate yourself to the region Paul is writing to. What do you notice?

From the beginning what does Paul want them to know about:

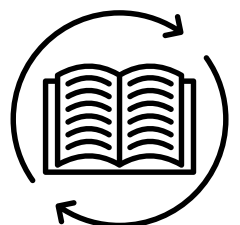
a) Himself

b) The gospel

Read Galatians 1:6-10

What seems to be the issue for the Galatians that has Paul so astonished?

Paul skips any kind of thanksgiving (present in his other letters) to address this issue. Why do you think it demanded such urgency and strong language?



Why can Paul say with such certainty that any other gospel preached by human/angel would be no gospel at all? (cf. 1:1)

Think of a time when you have been tempted to change the gospel message, perhaps to appease or get approval from people around you. Why do you think it is so easy to fall into this trap?

Read Galatians 1:11-24

What does Paul want the Galatians to know about the gospel he preached to them?

How does his conversion story prove that point?

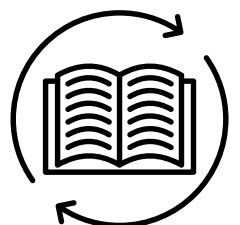
Next steps...

How does this passage help to build confidence in the gospel of Jesus Christ?

What things can we do at BPC to protect against deserting the true gospel?

“The gospel is not just the ABCs but the A to Z of the Christian life.” - Tim Keller

How does this quote help us to see that the gospel is something that we never need to move on from?



GALATIANS 2

STUDY 2

What do you remember from study 1?

Who has the most influence on what you believe about Jesus?

Read Galatians 2:1-10 (for context see page 2)

What is the matter that prompts Paul and his companions to go to Jerusalem?

When Paul presents his gospel message to the leaders at Jerusalem, how do they respond:

a) to his message?

b) to his job as an apostle?

Read Galatians 2:11-13

Why does Paul oppose Cephas (the Aramaic name for Peter) in Antioch?

Read Galatians 1:14-21



Define the word “justified.”

What does it mean to be:

a) (attempting to be) justified by works of the law?

b) justified by faith in Christ?

In what way was Cephas “not acting in line with the gospel” at Antioch?

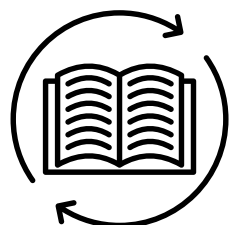
What difference does Paul say that having faith in Christ makes to someone’s life?

Next steps...

What kind of things might we be tempted to *add* to the gospel in 2024?

Discuss why peer pressure can influence us so much in regards to our ability to act in line with the gospel. What situations are you most likely to experience this?

“I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”
How will knowing Christ has already loved you make a difference to how we view our works of service?



GALATIANS 3:1-4:7

STUDY 3

What do you remember from study 2?

Finish this sentence: In Christ Jesus you are...

Read Galatians 3:1-6

What was it that the Galatians first heard from Paul that began their faith?

What is the “foolish” mistake that the Galatians were now being tempted to make?

Read Galatians 3:7-14

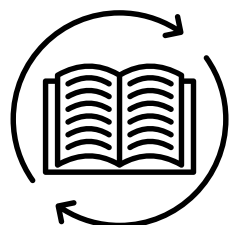
Quick recap: Who is Abraham and what was the promise (cf. Genesis 12:1-3)?

Compare the difference in these approaches.

- Those who rely on faith (like Abraham):

- Those who rely on the law:

How is that Gentiles (including us) can receive the promised blessing?



Read Galatians 3:15-29

What does the law NOT do? (v17-18)

What imagery does the Paul use to show what the law DOES do?

How does this show our need for Jesus all the more?

Now that Jesus has come, what does that mean for all who have faith in him?

Read Galatians 4:1-7

What privileges do Christians enjoy as children of God?

Next steps...

What practical steps can you take to remember your true identity in Christ and avoid being tempted to define yourself by performance-based identity markers?

Describe what 3:28 could look like (and not look like) at BPC.

This week: How will you enjoy the assurance and comfort that comes from knowing that, in Christ, you are one of God's blessed children?



GALATIANS 4:8-5:1

STUDY 4

What do you remember from study 3?

How did you go basing your identity on being a child of God this week?

Read Galatians 4:8-11

By returning to law keeping what have the Galatians made themselves?

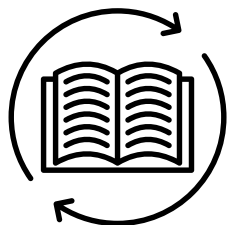
Why do you think Paul is so perplexed by this?

Discuss the value of not just knowing God but being known by him.

Read Galatians 4:12-20

What was the relationship like between Paul and the Galatians when they first met?

What seems to have happened since the Jewish group has infiltrated their church?



Read Galatians 4:21-27

Brainstorm (or skim Genesis 16-21) what you remember about the story of Abraham, Sarah and Hagar.

Paul uses that story as an allegory to make a point about being slaves vs being free. Write down the different things they are representing

Sarah



Hagar

Read Galatians 4:28-5:1

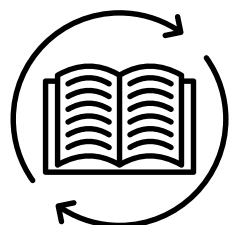
What is this allegory teaching the Galatians about how they should view:

- The people trying to get them to observe the law?
- Themselves?

Next steps...

What are the things in our life (even religious looking ones) that can enslave us?

Consider the most influential voices in your life: Are they tempting you back into slavery to the world or freedom in Christ?



GALATIANS 5

STUDY 5

What do you remember from study 4?

How would you define freedom?

Read Galatians 5:1-12

What have we been set free *from*?

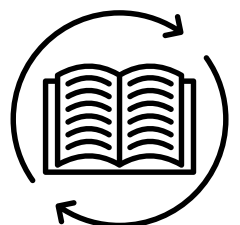
Why do you think Paul is so frustrated with these “agitators”?

What does he say is the only thing that matters?

Read Galatians 5:13-25

Given how much Paul has argued against law-keeping, what might the Galatians have misunderstood about what it means to be free?

Reflect on your definition of freedom from the start. How does this compare with what Paul says freedom in Christ should look like?



Write down the acts of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit

Flesh



Spirit

Go around your group and

1. Explain one part of the fruit of the Spirit.
2. Give a real life example of what it would look like.

Why should these things be the mark of a Christian?

Next steps...

Describe a time when you have experienced the battle of the Spirit and the flesh going on in your heart.

Identify one aspect of the flesh that you want to kill off in your life and one aspect of the Spirit that you want to cultivate more of this month.

What impact could this have on your church family if everyone shared the view that “the only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.”



GALATIANS 6

STUDY 6

What do you remember from study 5?

Recap from chapter 5 what it means to live by the Spirit.

Read Galatians 6:1-5

How does addressing the Galatians as brothers and sisters instantly set the tone?

Describe what it could look like to:

- Restore a person gently.
- Carry each other's burdens.
- Test our own actions (without comparison).
- Carry our own load.

Read Galatians 6:6-10

What is the principle Paul lays down here?



How does Paul apply this principle to the Galatians?

What would it look like to sow in the Spirit amongst your church family?

Read Galatians 6:11-18

What themes from the whole letter can you spot in this final section?

Why is it important that Paul included chapters 5 and 6 in this letter?

Next steps...

Brainstorm some ways that you can help each other to not get tired of doing good.

What would change in your life this week if you had verse 14 as your motto?

Share what has help you or challenged you from the book of Galatians.

