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T H E B O O K O F G A L A T I A N S

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The message of Galatians is simple, clear, and life-changing: Jesus is enough. Jesus is everything.

The Christians in Galatia had started well. They heard the good news that Jesus Christ died for their sins and rose to bring them new life. They received the Holy Spirit by faith, not by keeping rules. But soon, new teachers arrived with a subtle but deadly message: faith in Jesus is good, but it is not enough. To really be accepted by God, they said, you also needed to keep the law, adopt the right customs, and follow the right rules.

Paul's response is urgent and uncompromising: any gospel that adds to Jesus is no Gospel at all. The heart of Christianity is not "Jesus plus effort" or "Jesus plus ritual" or "Jesus plus your best performance." The true Gospel is Jesus plus nothing. His death and resurrection are completely sufficient to make us right with God.

That is why this series is titled **Jesus + Nothing = Everything**. When you add anything to Jesus, you actually lose the Gospel. So you could also say **Jesus + Anything = Nothing**. But when you trust Jesus alone, you gain everything: full forgiveness, adoption into God's family, the gift of the Spirit, and the hope of eternal life. This is the message that brings freedom, joy, and new life.

As you study Galatians, you will see how fiercely Paul defends this truth. He warns about the subtle dangers of adding anything to Jesus. He also shows what it looks like to live in the freedom of God's grace, walking by the Spirit, loving others, and boasting only in the cross.

These studies have been compiled using and adapted from the following resources:

- Keller, Timothy. *Galatians: Gospel Matters*. The Good Book Company, 2012.
- Richards, Kel & Jensen, Phillip, *Free for All* Matthias Media, 1993.

Our prayer is that through this series you will see Jesus more clearly, trust him more deeply, and live in the joy and freedom that only He can give.

STUDY 1: GALATIANS 1:1-10 – NO OTHER GOSPEL

Galatians begins with urgency. Unlike most of Paul's letters, there is no warm thanksgiving, only shock and rebuke. The Galatian Christians were turning from the Gospel of grace to something else entirely. Paul is astonished that they would trade the good news of Christ for a distorted version.

The heart of this passage is the exclusive nature of the Gospel. The true Gospel is about what God has done in Christ: Jesus gave himself to rescue us from sin and the present evil age, and he brings grace and peace to all who trust him. Any message that adds to or changes this, through legalism, rituals, or cultural expectations, is no Gospel at all. Paul's strong words show how serious it is to distort God's message of grace.

This study helps us consider why the Gospel is so precious and why any counterfeit, however subtle, is spiritually deadly. It calls us to treasure Christ's grace and stand firm in the freedom it brings.

Share

What are some ways people today define what it means to be a Christian?

How would you answer someone who says, "*Faith is just a matter of opinion*"?

Extra notes/prayer points for this week.

Observe & Reflect

1. What stands out about Paul's tone in verses 6-9? What does it reveal about how serious he is?
2. Why is there only one true Gospel? What is at stake if we get the Gospel wrong?
3. According to verses 1-5, what does the Gospel of Christ include?
4. What does Paul want us to understand about grace in verse 4?
5. Why do you think people are tempted to change or distort the Gospel?
6. Paul says that even if an angel preaches a different gospel, it is to be rejected (v. 8). What does this say about the authority of Scripture over personal experience or charisma?

Next Steps...

7. How do you personally distinguish between the true Gospel and a counterfeit?
8. What might it look like today to desert the Gospel of Christ?
9. Where might you be in danger? Spend some time praying about this.

STUDY 2: GALATIANS 1:11-2:10 – GOSPEL FROM GOD

Paul moves from defending the content of the Gospel to defending its source. He insists that the Gospel he preaches is not man-made, but revealed to him directly by Jesus Christ. His dramatic conversion, from persecutor to preacher, shows that the Gospel is God's work from start to finish.

In this section, Paul recounts how he spent years preaching independently of the Jerusalem apostles. When he finally met with them, they fully affirmed his message. Titus, a Gentile Christian, was not required to be circumcised, proving that salvation is by grace alone, not by law-keeping or cultural conformity.

This passage highlights the unity of the early church around one Gospel. Differences in background, culture, and calling did not divide them because their fellowship was rooted in Christ alone. It challenges us to consider where our confidence lies and what truly unites believers.

Share

Have you ever trusted someone because of who they were, rather than because you fully understood what they were saying? How did that trust feel?

Extra notes/prayer points for this week.

Observe & Reflect

1. Why does Paul make such a point of saying that his Gospel came from Jesus, not men (1:11-12)?
2. What do you learn from Paul's past (vv. 13-14) and his dramatic conversion (vv. 15-16)?
3. Why does Paul emphasise how little he interacted with the apostles early on (1:16-24)?
4. What might Paul have feared when he went to Jerusalem 14 years later (2:1-2)?
5. What was the significance of bringing Titus, a Gentile, to that meeting?
6. What does Paul mean when he says they did not "yield in submission" for a moment (2:5)?
7. In what ways did the apostles in Jerusalem affirm Paul's message and ministry (2:6-10)?
8. Why does the source of the Gospel matter so much?

Next Steps...

9. How should this passage shape our confidence in the Gospel we preach today?
10. What principles can we draw about handling internal disagreement in the church?

STUDY 3: GALATIANS 2:11-21 – JUSTIFIED BY FAITH ALONE

Here we witness a dramatic moment in church history: Paul publicly confronts Peter for his hypocrisy. By withdrawing from Gentile believers, Peter sent the message that faith in Christ was not enough, that law-keeping was required for full acceptance. For Paul, this was a denial of the Gospel in practice.

Paul restates the heart of the Christian message: we are justified, declared right with God, by faith in Jesus Christ, not by observing the law. True Christian life begins with dying to the old way of law and self-reliance, and living by faith in the Son of God who loved us and gave himself for us.

This passage warns how easy it is to slip into performance-based Christianity and reminds us that our standing with God rests entirely on Christ's finished work. It invites us to live in the freedom and confidence of faith.

Share

Can you think of a time you felt pressure to prove yourself, either at work, school, or socially? What did that pressure do to you?

Extra notes/prayer points for this week.

Observe & Reflect

1. Why was it such a big deal that Peter stopped eating with Gentile believers (vv. 11-13)?
2. What does it mean that Peter's actions were "not in line with the truth of the Gospel"?
3. Why would returning to the law compromise the Gospel of grace (vv. 15-16)?
4. Paul says, "I have been crucified with Christ..." (v. 20). What does that mean practically for daily life?
5. Why is the doctrine of justification by faith such a dividing line for Paul?
6. What does verse 21 say about Christ's death if righteousness could come through the law?
7. How does this passage expose legalism in our hearts or churches today?
8. Can someone rely on grace and still fall back into law-keeping tendencies? How?

Next Steps...

9. How would you explain the difference between obeying God out of love vs. obeying to earn favour?
10. What are some ways you can live "by faith in the Son of God" this week?

STUDY 4: GALATIANS 3:1-18 – FAITH OR WORKS?

Paul confronts the Galatians with a piercing question: after starting with the Gospel of grace, are they now trying to finish the Christian life by their own effort? He reminds them that they received the Spirit through faith, not by obeying the law.

Drawing on the story of Abraham, Paul shows that God's way of salvation has always been by faith. Abraham was declared righteous before the law was given. The law can only reveal sin and bring a curse, because no one can fully keep it. Christ became a curse for us so that the blessing promised to Abraham might come to all who believe.

This study challenges us to examine where our confidence lies. The Gospel is not only how we begin the Christian life, it is how we continue. All our hope rests in what Christ has done, not in what we achieve.

Share

When was a time you worked really hard for something, only to realise later that it was unnecessary or already provided for you?

Extra notes/prayer points for this week.

Observe & Reflect

1. Why do you think Paul calls the Galatians "foolish"? What had they forgotten (v. 1)?
2. How did the Galatians receive the Spirit, by faith or by works (v. 2)?
3. What does Paul's argument from Abraham (vv. 6-9) teach us about how people are saved?
4. What do verses 10-14 say about trying to live under the law?
5. How did Jesus become a curse for us? Why is that vital to understand?
6. What does it mean that the Gospel was "announced in advance" to Abraham (v. 8)?
7. How is the law different from the promise (vv. 15-18)?
8. What is the result of relying on the law to be accepted by God?

Next Steps...

9. How do people today show that they are still trying to earn their salvation?
10. In what areas of your life are you tempted to add something to faith in Christ?

STUDY 5: GALATIANS 3:19-4:11 – FROM SLAVES TO SONS

If salvation comes by faith, why did God give the law? Paul explains that the law was a temporary guardian. It showed people their sin and their need for a Saviour but could never give life. Now that Christ has come, believers are no longer under the law, they are adopted as God's children and heirs.

Paul paints a beautiful picture of Gospel identity. Through faith, we are not slaves but sons and daughters of God, and the Spirit of his Son lives in our hearts, crying, "Abba, Father." Returning to law-keeping as a way to be accepted by God would be like a grown heir choosing to live again as a household servant.

This passage invites reflection on what it means to truly belong to God as his children and to live in the freedom and intimacy of that relationship.

Share

Think of a time you really felt at home or truly accepted. What made that place or relationship feel safe and freeing?

Extra notes/prayer points for this week.

Observe & Reflect

1. Why was the law given if it could not save (3:19)? What role did it play?
2. Paul says the law was like a guardian or jailer. What does that metaphor tell us?
3. What changed when Christ came (vv. 23-25)?
4. What are the implications of being children of God through faith (vv. 26-29)?
5. According to 4:1-7, what does it mean to be adopted as God's child?
6. How do we know we are truly sons or daughters of God (v. 6)?
7. Why is it foolish to go back to slavery once you have been made a son (v. 9)?
8. What things today tempt Christians to return to slavery (legalism, rituals, old habits)?

Next Steps...

9. How does understanding your identity as a son or daughter of God change the way you live?
10. What encouragement do you take from God's promise of inheritance for his children?

STUDY 6: GALATIANS 4:12-5:12 – THE DANGER OF TURNING BACK

Paul's tone becomes deeply personal. He reminds the Galatians of their past love for him and grieves that their hearts have grown cold under the influence of false teachers. These teachers are not just bringing error, they are leading believers back into spiritual slavery.

Using the story of Hagar and Sarah, Paul shows the contrast between life under law and life under promise. One leads to slavery, the other to freedom. To add circumcision or any law as a requirement for salvation is to reject Christ's sufficiency.

This passage presses home the urgency of the letter. Adding anything to the Gospel destroys its power. Christ has set us free, and that freedom must not be traded for chains.

Share

Have you ever gone back to an old habit or pattern, even though you knew it was unhelpful? Why do you think we are drawn back to what is familiar?

Extra notes/prayer points for this week.

Observe & Reflect

1. How does Paul describe his earlier relationship with the Galatians (4:12-16)?
2. What caused that relationship to shift? What role did the "troublers" play?
3. Why does Paul use the story of Hagar and Sarah (4:21-31)?
4. What is Paul's point in contrasting the two covenants and the two sons?
5. According to Paul, who are the true heirs of God's promise?
6. What does freedom in Christ mean in the context of 5:1-6?
7. What is the spiritual danger of accepting even a little legalism (v. 9)?
8. How does Paul balance warning with pastoral affection in this section?

Next Steps...

9. What "yokes of slavery" do Christians today risk putting on themselves or others?
10. How can we stay rooted in Gospel freedom while still living holy lives?

STUDY 7: GALATIANS 5:13-26 – WALKING BY THE SPIRIT

What does Gospel freedom look like in practice? Paul makes it clear: freedom is not an excuse to indulge sin but the power to serve in love. Love is the fulfilment of the law, and it grows in the life of someone walking by the Spirit.

Paul contrasts the acts of the flesh with the fruit of the Spirit. The flesh produces division, impurity, and destruction, while the Spirit produces love, joy, peace, patience, and other Christlike qualities. Those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh and now walk in step with the Spirit.

This study casts a vision for Christian life that is neither legalistic nor careless but Spirit-filled, fruitful, and free.

Share

Who is someone you know whose life seems to overflow with kindness or joy? What makes their character stand out to you?

Extra notes/prayer points for this week.

Observe & Reflect

1. What are we set free from, and what are we freed for (v. 13)?
2. How is loving your neighbour connected to fulfilling the law (v. 14)?
3. What are the acts of the flesh in verses 19-21? Which of these are common in churches?
4. What is the fruit of the Spirit (vv. 22-23)? Why is it one "fruit" and not many?
5. How do these two lists reveal the ongoing conflict inside every Christian (v. 17)?
6. What does it mean to "walk by the Spirit" or be "led by the Spirit"?
7. What role do effort and prayer play in growing the fruit of the Spirit?
8. What are some ways Christians today might indulge the flesh under the banner of "freedom"?
9. Why does Paul end this section with a call to crucify the flesh (v. 24)?

Next Steps...

10. Which fruit do you long to grow in more deeply? What step could you take this week?

STUDY 8: GALATIANS 6 – SOWING TO THE SPIRIT

Paul closes his letter with practical instructions for a Gospel-shaped community. Believers are to bear each other's burdens, gently restore the wandering, and do good to all, especially within the household of faith. Yet each person is also responsible for their own conduct.

He uses the picture of sowing and reaping to encourage perseverance. Those who sow to please the Spirit will reap eternal life. Paul ends where he began, boasting only in the cross. Religious performance counts for nothing, what matters is being a new creation in Christ.

This final passage ties the letter together. Gospel grace leads to Gospel living, humble, persevering, and cross-shaped.

Share

What is an example of something in life that only grew or paid off after a long time of patient effort?

Extra notes/prayer points for this week.

Observe & Reflect

1. What does Paul say about restoring someone caught in sin (v. 1)?
2. How should we carry each other's burdens, and yet still carry our own (vv. 2-5)?
3. What does "sowing to the Spirit" mean (v. 8)?
4. How does this metaphor help us understand Christian growth and perseverance?
5. What kind of reward does Paul say we will reap (v. 9)?
6. Why might people grow weary of doing good? What encouragement does Paul give?
7. What does verse 10 teach us about doing good in and outside the church?
8. Why does Paul bring the focus back to the cross in his closing words (vv. 14-15)?
9. How is boasting in the cross the opposite of religious pride or self-righteousness?
10. What final warning and blessing does Paul leave his readers with? How can we take that to heart?

Next Steps...

11. Paul talks about sowing to the Spirit rather than to the flesh. Looking at your own life rhythms, what is one habit you could start, strengthen, or stop that would help you sow to the Spirit this week?
12. Across these studies, what has most clearly shown you that Jesus plus nothing really is everything? How could that truth change the way you face challenges or pressures in daily life?
13. Paul ends Galatians boasting only in the cross. What might it look like for you to make the cross your main boast or confidence in the coming months?

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