What is the Gospel?
A Study of the Book of Galatians
Part 1: Galatians 1:1 – 3:18

“. . . yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified” (Galatians 2:16 ESV).
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COMPONENTS OF THIS STUDY

This study guide is the result of the collaborative effort of T.J. Francis, Trent Weaver, Clay Deveau, and Casey Croy.

This eleven-week study guide comprises four parts:

1. An Introduction to the Book of Galatians
2. Sermon Listening Guides
3. Small Group Studies
4. Resources for Further Study

HOW TO PREPARE FOR EACH WEEK’S STUDY

- **Prayer**: Spend time each day asking God to open your mind to the truth of His Word. Additionally, pray for your family, friends, and co-workers who are not Christians.

- **Read the Bible**: We recommend that you spend fifteen to thirty minutes each day reading both the specific text from Galatians as well as the additional texts that are assigned for the small group study.

- **Consult the Resources**: We recognize the limitations of this study guide. Therefore, we have provided a section of recommended resources for further study.

The **Sermon Listening Guide** is meant to be used in both your time of preparation and during the Sunday morning worship service. In preparation for the weekly sermon, familiarize yourself with the text, the main point, and the life-application. During the sermon, take notes on each point, answer each question, and list ways that you can apply the text in your life.

The **Sermon Listening Guide** is divided into four parts:

1. **What’s it all about?** – Background and Big Picture
2. **So what?** – Main Point and Proposition(s)
3. **Questions from the Text**
4. **Now what?** – Applying the Text

The **Questions for Small Group Study** are intended to be used by community groups as well as families. The group facilitator will use the questions along with the assigned biblical texts to launch the group into gospel-centered conversations that are intended to encourage life application.
INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS THE GOSPEL?

Author: Paul, the author of the Letter to the Galatians, was formerly a Jewish religious leader and zealot who was known as Saul. Prior to becoming a Christian, Saul was infamous for his persecution of the early church and his participation in the death of a disciple named Stephen (Acts 7:58; Galatians 1:13-14, 23). After his encounter with the resurrected Christ on the road to Damascus and subsequent conversion to Christianity (Acts 9:1-19), his name was changed to Paul. During his encounter with the risen Christ, Paul was temporarily blinded, warned to no longer persecute the church, and, instead, he was to preach the gospel and make disciples in the non-Jewish world (Acts 9:1-19). The Lord restored Paul’s sight and then sent him on multiple missionary journeys in which he faced hardship and persecution. Paul traveled throughout modern day Greece, Turkey, Italy, Syria, and Israel proclaiming the grace of God available through the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Audience: The province of Galatia was in Asia Minor, in what is now central Turkey. The three prominent cities of the region were Derbe, Iconium, and Lystra. At the time of Paul’s correspondence with the Galatians, they were under the control of the Roman Empire but were influenced by Hellenistic (Greek) and Roman cultures (ESV Study Bible, 2243). The churches in Galatia were likely predominately made up of Gentiles. Gentiles were people groups who were not ethnically Jewish.

Message: The overarching message of Galatians is that the church must believe the pure gospel of God. “The church” refers to the redeemed followers of Jesus Christ. It is the institution he left to continue his mission on the earth until he returns. “Gospel” is a word meaning “good news,” and within Christian contexts, it refers to the message of the payment and forgiveness of sins provided through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ resulting in a renewed relationship with God and the hope of eternal life in his presence. “Pure” refers to the necessity that the gospel be unadulterated. That is to say, the believer’s faith in what the work of Christ has accomplished is all that is necessary for the payment and forgiveness of sin and the renewed relationship with God. This is precisely what the Galatians and many of the earliest Christian leaders were failing to recognize; they were attempting to add conditions which needed to be fulfilled by the believer in order to be completely accepted by God. Paul’s response is that a person can only be justified by faith in Christ (Galatians 2:16). To add anything beyond this requirement is to discredit the person and work of Jesus Christ and reject the free offer of forgiveness available in him. Although Paul is addressing a specific situation within the churches of Galatia (which means that some elements of the letter can only be understood when read within the specific context he was addressing), Paul did believe that his letters were applicable beyond the specific situations he was addressing (Colossians 4:16). His belief coincides with the early church’s gathering and dissemination of his letters among churches and with the inclusion of this letter collection within what we know as the New Testament. We should not read Galatians only to consider what Paul was telling the churches of Galatia but in order to consider how Paul might be addressing us, both as individuals and as members of New City Church. Are we, in any way, guilty of adding additional elements to the gospel and nullifying the grace of God (Galatians 2:21)?

Theological Themes

The Gospel of God: Paul’s discussion of the gospel is the main topic of the letter. There are a few points about the gospel to be kept in mind as you read through Galatians. First, Paul wants to make clear that the gospel of Jesus Christ originated in the plan and purposes of God, not Paul or any other apostle (Galatians 1:11-14). Humanity does not get to determine how they will be accepted by God. They can only discern how they will be accepted by God through his revelation. Furthermore, there are not “gospels.” If the gospel originated with humanity, this would be a possibility since there could be as many gospels as there are people, but since it originated with God, there is only one gospel. Second, Paul clearly believes that the Galatians (probably from the influence of a specific group of people) were deserting the gospel of Jesus Christ (Galatians 1:6). Since there is only one gospel (originating in God), any distortion (whether by addition or subtraction, purposeful or accidental, well-intentioned or malicious) of the gospel can only be understood a rejection of the gospel. Third, Paul believes that one’s acceptance or denial has eternal consequences and is the most serious question that humanity faces. Paul does not waste time with his customary thanksgiving introduction (most of his other letters open with a thanksgiving section). He does not refrain from questioning whether the Galatians are even Christians (Galatians 4:11). Fourth, even though Paul will not allow for any distortion of the gospel, notice that he does not have a strict formulaic expression of it (Galatians 3:8; 3:18; 5:1).

Justification through Faith: This is one of the key aspects of the gospel. Paul wants to make it explicitly clear that a person can only be justified from sin in the sight of God through his faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Again, since this is one of the key components of the gospel, any alteration from this teaching is not a mere distortion but a complete desertion of the gospel. Justification is the area of salvation that deals with our standing before God as sinful human beings. How is our sin paid for? Only through our faith in Jesus Christ. None of our “good deeds (works of law)” are able to mitigate our guilt before God. We cannot be a good enough person to make God overlook our sins. How are we counted righteous before God? Only through our faith in Jesus Christ. Again, none of our “good deeds” are able to gain God’s favor. God loves us because he finds us in his Son through faith. Notice that Paul is completely consistent in this mindset. When
Paul’s attention turns to how we should act and what we should do (Galatians 5:16-16:18), notice he does not say we need to act right in order to gain God’s favor or that we need to act right because of what God has done for us. To take this approach would be to throw us back upon the law, which we were not able to keep. Instead, Paul only insists that we be led by the Spirit of God (Galatians 5:18). We are to “act right” and serve God out of our love and devotion to him, not out of desire to justify ourselves.

Paul and the Law: One of the most difficult aspects of understanding Paul as a whole is understanding how he viewed the Old Testament laws. There are a few clear points. First, Paul does not believe that anyone can earn God’s favor through attempting to keep these laws (Galatians 2:16; 3:21). Second, Paul does not believe that the law is therefore useless. It has a unique ability to show us how far short we fall from God’s ideal (Galatians 3:19; Romans 6:7). It restrained human depravity until the advent (arrival or incarnation) of Christ (3:23–25). Thus, the Old Testament law is like a double edged sword: It cannot be used for our justification, but it restrains human depravity; It cannot be obeyed perfectly, but through disobedience, we are made keenly aware of our need for a savior.

The Gospel and Christian Freedom: Under the sin revealed by the law, Paul believes that humanity is held captive. They have no choice but to defy God in their actions. If given two roads, one following righteousness and another following disobedience to God, Paul believes sinful humanity always follows the road of disobedience. However, when accepting the gospel through faith in Jesus, we are freed to be led by the Spirit of God. Again, this should challenge the commonly held perspective that Christians must rigidly obey God’s laws because of what he has done for them or in order to earn his favor. Paul believes that the freedom found in the gospel allows us to follow God not to earn his favor but because we value him most.

Where does Galatians fit in Salvation History?
“Salvation History” is a term used by theologians to describe how God has interacted with His people throughout history. Though salvation always comes through the person and work of Jesus Christ, theologians have recognized that the expression of this faith has looked differently in different periods throughout human history. What is clear, however, from both the Old and New Testaments is the content of saving faith has always been the person and work of God. In the Old Testament, men and women were not saved by works, but by faith. Salvation (justification) has always been the result of one acknowledging their own wretchedness, turning from their sins, and placing their faith in the grace and mercy of God (Genesis 15:6; Psalm 51; Hebrews 11).

Salvation history is the progressive unfolding of God’s plan to redeem humanity that culminated in the person and work Jesus Christ (Galatians 4:4-5). Paul’s letter to the Galatians demonstrates the continuity that exists between the promises made to Abraham, the Law given through Moses, and the New Covenant that was inaugurated through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Paul makes it clear that the promises given to Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3) were not nullified by the Mosaic Law (Galatians 3:15-18). The Law served as a restraining force until the promises were fulfilled in Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:19-29). Paul’s statement in Galatians 4:4-5 demonstrates that in addition to fulfilling the promises of the Abrahamic covenant, Jesus who was “born under the law,” redeems (purchases through his death on the cross) believers from the curse of the Law (Galatians 3:23-23; 4:5). This redemption is the basis of the God’s acceptance of repentant believers and His subsequent adoption of them into His family (Galatians 3:26; 4:5-7). Paul’s contention, therefore, is that all of salvation history (both the promises to Abraham and the fulfillment of the Mosaic Law) is fulfilled in Jesus Christ, and the subsequent blessing (the gift of the Holy Spirit, Galatians 3:14) is given to all (both Jew and Gentile) who come to God by faith (Galatians 3:29). Providing clarity on the cohesiveness of the covenantal promises and ministry of Jesus Christ, Thomas Schriener writes, “The gospel of Christ fulfills what was written in the Old Testament scriptures, and believers inherit the promises made to Abraham. Thus, we can only grasp Paul’s mission adequately if we see that he believed that the promises given to Abraham came to fruition in Christ” (Paul: Apostle of God’s Glory in Christ, 73).

What is the gospel? Theologian and Pastor R. C. Sproul provides a very helpful explanation of the gospel. He writes, “The gospel is called the ‘good news’ because it addresses the most serious problem that you and I have as human beings, and that problem is simply this: God is holy and He is just, and I’m not. And at the end of my life, I’m going to stand before a just and holy God, and I’ll be judged. And I’ll be judged either on the basis of my own righteousness – or lack of it – or the righteousness of another. The good news of the gospel is that Jesus lived a life of perfect righteousness, of perfect obedience to God, not for His own well-being but for His people. He has done for me what I couldn’t possibly do for myself. But not only has He lived that life of perfect obedience, He offered Himself as a perfect sacrifice to satisfy the justice and the righteousness of God. For God to forgive you is a very costly matter. It cost the sacrifice of His own Son. So valuable was that sacrifice that God pronounced it valuable by raising Him from the dead – so that Christ died for us, He was raised for our justification. The Bible makes it clear that we are justified not by our works, not by our efforts, not by our deeds, but by faith – and by faith alone. The only way you can receive the benefit of Christ’s life and death is by putting your trust in Him – and in Him alone. You do that, you’re declared just by God, you’re adopted into His family, you’re forgiven of all of your sins, and you have begun your pilgrimage for eternity” (www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/what-gospel/).
The gospel DELIVERS

Paul, an apostle—not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead—and all the brothers who are with me,

To the churches of Galatia:
Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen (Galatians 1:1-5 ESV).

What’s it all about? Paul’s introduction anticipates the primary themes (the gospel of God, justification by faith, law and grace, and Christian freedom) and objections (Paul’s credentials, motives, and interpretation of the OT) that he will address throughout this letter. As the letter unfolds, Paul voices his concern that the churches in Galatia had fallen prey to false teachers (who were attempting to add works to the grace of God), and, as a result, were no longer enjoying the benefits of the gospel: grace and peace.

So what? The gospel is not merely a human invention but is of divine origins and is the only way we can be delivered from our sinful nature and this present evil age. Therefore, we must place our complete trust in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ and not in our own perceived merit or good works for salvation.

Questions from the Text:

1. Who was Paul (1:1; Page 4)?

2. What is going on in the churches of Galatia (Page 4)?

3. What are the effects of Christ’s death on the life of the believer (1:4)?
4. What should true theology lead to (1:5)?
We should never forget that theology is for doxology; the truest expression of trust in a great God will always be worship, and it will always be proper worship to praise God for being far greater than we can know (J. I. Packer).

Now what? The death of Jesus has rescued us from the punishment of sin, provides us with the grace to live in this present age, and gives us the promise of eternal life. Therefore, if you have never placed your trust and confidence in the sacrificial and substitutionary death of Jesus Christ, do so now by repenting of sin (turning from sin) and placing your faith in Him. By faith, we mean intellectual belief in the historical and theological truths about Christ (He was God in the flesh, died for our sins, was raised from the dead, etc.); emotional assent of the heart to these facts about Christ; and volitional (willful) trust in Christ as Savior and Lord. If you have repented of sin and have trusted Christ for salvation, praise God for His grace that has brought you joy and peace.

Small Group Questions
Scripture: 1st Corinthians 15:1-11; Ephesians 1:15-23; 2:1-10

1. What is the gospel?

2. What does it mean to repent of sin?

3. What does it mean to put your faith in Jesus Christ for salvation?

4. What are the immediate effects of the gospel on the life of a believer?

5. In what ways can we offer God praise (worship) for the blessings of salvation?

Week 2
The COUNTERFEIT gospel
I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed. For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ (Galatians 1:6-10 ESV).

What’s it all about? Paul is amazed that the Galatians are allowing others to add religious rituals and good works to the grace of God that is theirs in Jesus Christ. He informs the Christians in Galatia that no other message, regardless of who is preaching it, can compete with or compare to the gospel that he has received and made known to them.

So what? We must reject all messages, truth claims, and worldviews that conflict with or contradict the gospel of Jesus Christ as recorded in the Bible. In order to guard against false teachers and counterfeit messages, we must know the source and substance of the biblical gospel.

Questions from the Text:

1. What constitutes a counterfeit gospel (Page 7)?

2. Why does Paul describe the false teachers as cursed (1:8-9)?

3. Who was Paul trying to please, God or people (1:10)?
Now what? Like the Galatians, we too can be susceptible to false teachers, that is, if we don't know what is clearly taught in the Word of God. Therefore, we must ensure that we know and have applied the gospel of Jesus Christ to our lives. Additionally, we must avoid the temptation to add good works or religious rituals to the grace of God. Finally, we must place our complete trust in the death of Jesus Christ as both satisfying the wrath of God and paying for our sin in full. Jesus + Nothing = Salvation!

Small Group Questions
Scripture: John 14:1-7; Jude 3-16; Colossians 1:9-10; 1st Timothy 2:1-7

1. Why is there only one gospel?

2. How can we detect a false gospel?

3. Do all religions lead to God?

4. How can we please God?

5. What must a person believe and do to become a Christian?

Week 3
The gospel: DERIVED from God
For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel. For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ. For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it. And I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers. But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with anyone; nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia, and returned again to Damascus (Galatians 1:11-17 ESV).

What's it all about? The gospel that Paul was preaching was not of human origins, but was received by divine revelation from Jesus Christ. In this part of the letter, Paul describes his former life and defends his call to preach the gospel.

So what? Since the gospel is of divine origins (comes from God and not man), we must avoid the temptation to cater our message to suit people. Instead, like Paul, we must confidently proclaim the gospel as revealed in Scripture.

Questions from the Text:
1. What is the source of the message we proclaim (1:12)?

2. How did Paul's former life prepare him to proclaim and defend the gospel (1:13-16)?

3. What does it mean to be “set apart” to proclaim the gospel (1:15)?
Now what? Like Paul, all Christians have been called to faithfully proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ to unbelievers. Every Christian must intentionally look for opportunities to share how Christ has given them a new life. Our lives before our conversion should not be viewed as a hindrance to the mission, but as a testimony to the grace of God. Make a list of family members, friends, coworkers, and classmates who have yet to hear how Christ has changed your life. Commit to regularly praying for their salvation, and to telling them your conversion testimony as soon as possible.

Small Group Questions
Scripture: Acts 9:1-19; Romans 1:1; 1 Corinthians 1:26-31

1. Paul's conversion was the result of a supernatural encounter with the resurrected Christ. How did this experience change Paul’s life?

2. Can you describe how you were converted to Christianity and became a follower of Christ?

3. If you are a Christian, how has the power of the gospel impacted and changed your life?

4. Does God always choose prominent people to proclaim the gospel? Read 1 Corinthians 1:26-31 and make a list of the people God’s chooses and why?

5. Was Paul’s call to preach the gospel unique?

Week 4
The gospel: Not discovered but REVEALED

Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas [Peter] and remained with him fifteen days. But I saw none of the other apostles except James the Lord's brother. (In what I am writing to you, before God, I do not lie!) Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. And I was still unknown in person to the churches of Judea that are in Christ. They only were hearing it said, “He who used to persecute us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy.” And they glorified God because of me (Galatians 1:18-24 ESV).

What’s it all about? In this part of the letter, Paul continues to defend his apostolic credentials and to inform his readers that his gospel did not come from human authorities. Furthermore, Paul is seeking to demonstrate (through this narration of his journeys) that he was not dependent on the apostles for the substance of his gospel. The message Paul was preaching was not discovered through human interaction and council but was divinely revealed.

So what? Paul had been dramatically changed by the power of the gospel. As a testimony to this change, the churches who had once suffered as a result of his actions were now praising God for his conversion. Paul’s testimony and ministry were not powerful because of human influence but because of the transforming grace of God. Like Paul, we must rely upon and testify to the transforming grace of God that comes only through the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Questions from the Text:

1. What was Paul’s relationship to the other apostles immediately after his conversion (1:18-19)?

2. How did the lack of interaction with the Christians in Judea strengthen Paul’s claim that his message was of divine origins (1:21-23)?
Now what? Unfortunately, many people are concerned with making a name for themselves and are intentionally associating with prominent people as a way of validating themselves. Like Paul, we should not be concerned with popularity or prestige. In this age of “personality cult” Christianity, we cannot be distracted by who we know or who knows us. Instead, we must orient our lives to impact unbelievers from all walks of life with the gospel.

Small Group Questions
Scripture: Ephesians 3:7-13; 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12

1. In Ephesians 3, Paul refers to himself as the “least of all the saints.” What does this statement reveal about Paul’s character and approach to ministry?

2. In what ways does Paul’s life and approach to ministry serve as an example for us today?

3. What is more important to you: making a name for yourself or proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ?

4. In what ways do you need to rearrange your life and priorities to reflect a commitment to making the gospel of Christ known to all?

5. In 1 Thessalonians, Paul viewed his tent-making as a means to provide for his ministry. Based on this example, how should we view our jobs?

Week 5
The gospel: VALIDATED by the eyewitness
Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along with me. I went up because of a revelation and set before them (though privately before those who seemed influential) the gospel that I proclaim among the Gentiles, in order to make sure I was not running or had not run in vain. But even Titus, who was with me, was not forced to be circumcised, though he was a Greek. Yet because of false brothers secretly brought in—who slipped in to spy out our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus, so that they might bring us into slavery—to them we did not yield in submission even for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you. And from those who seemed to be influential (what they were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality)—those, I say, who seemed influential added nothing to me. On the contrary, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel to the circumcised (for he who worked through Peter for his apostolic ministry to the circumcised worked also through me for mine to the Gentiles), and when James and Cephas [Peter] and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given to me, they gave the right hand of fellowship to Barnabas and me, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. Only, they asked us to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do (Galatians 2:1-10 ESV).

What’s it all about?
Fourteen years after his conversion, Paul journeyed to Jerusalem to validate the gospel he had been preaching by presenting it to James, Peter, and John. During his visit, some of the legalists attempted to force the Jewish rite of circumcision on Paul’s young protégé Titus. The pillars of the Jerusalem church did not require circumcision and added nothing to Paul’s message. Quite the opposite, they validated the message and endorsed Paul and Barnabas as missionaries.

So what?
There are not any new doctrines to be discovered, no new revelations to be received, and no new message to proclaim. The gospel we proclaim was divinely revealed to the Apostles, validated by those who were eyewitness of the resurrected Christ, and recorded in the New Testament. Therefore, we are to verify the content of what we are taught and what we teach by the Word of God.

Questions from the Text:
1. Who were the pillars of the Jerusalem church, and why did Paul make it a point to verify the content of his message among them (2:2, 9)?
2. Why were the legalists demanding that Titus be circumcised (2:3-5)?

3. How was Paul’s authority to preach the gospel equal to that of Peter (2:7-8)?

4. How did the endorsement of the eyewitness (James, Peter, & John) validate Paul’s message (2:9-10)?

Now what? Like Paul and Titus, we must refuse to add any religious ritual, legal requirement, or perceived merit to our faith in Christ for salvation. We must be on guard for those who would seek to change or add to the gospel. Additionally, we must verify the content of what we are taught and what we teach by what has been divinely revealed and recorded in God’s Word.

Small Group Questions
Scripture: Habakkuk 2:1-3; Romans 3:21-31; Acts 17:10-12

1. How is a person justified (declared righteous) before God?

2. What was the core of Habakkuk’s message to Judah?

3. In what way(s) do the Bereans serve as an example to all Christians?

4. What are some of the current rites, rituals, and rules that some try to add to the gospel?

Week 6
The universal AUTHORITY of the gospel
But when Cephas [Peter] came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. For before certain men came from James, he was eating with the Gentiles; but when they came he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party. And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. But when I saw that their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, “If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force the Gentiles to live like Jews?” (Galatians 2:11-14 ESV)

What’s it all about? Peter had succumbed to the pressure of those who were adding religious rituals to the grace of God. His behavior was in direct conflict with the gospel that he had both preached and affirmed in Paul’s ministry. By confronting Peter’s hypocrisy, Paul demonstrated that the gospel is not merely one man’s opinion but has universal authority. There is only ONE gospel for all people at all times in all places!

So what? First, we must not allow peer pressure to cause us to compromise our beliefs. Second, we must strive to orient our lives according to the gospel and not live in a way that contradicts it. Finally, we must be willing to confront and rebuke fellow Christians who are compromising the gospel.

Questions from the Text:

1. How was Peter’s conduct hypocritical and counterproductive (2:11-13)?

2. What were the consequences of Peter’s actions (2:13)?

3. On what basis did Paul confront Peter (2:14)?
Now what? First, we need to identify the areas of our lives where our conduct or speech is in conflict with the gospel. Second, we must repent of any way in which we have compromised the gospel. Finally, we must submit ourselves to the authority of God’s Word and humbly receive correction from other believers.

Small Group Questions

Scripture: Matthew 18:15-17; 1 Timothy 5:17-21; Proverbs 9:8-9; Galatians 6:1-2

1. What are the steps prescribed by Jesus for handling sin in the church?

2. Is Church discipline an important element of a healthy church? Why or why not?

3. Why is it important to confront hypocrisy?

4. What are some the effects of sinful attitudes and behaviors that are not confronted in the church?

5. Why is it important to submit ourselves to the correction of other believers?

Week 7

The gospel: Justified by Faith Alone

We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified. But if, in our endeavor to be justified in Christ, we too were found to be sinners, is Christ then a servant of sin? Certainly not! For if I rebuild what I tore down, I prove myself to be a transgressor. For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose (Galatians 2:15-21 ESV).

What’s it all about? Paul explains that a right standing with God cannot be obtained through strict adherence to the Jewish Law. Those who revert to the Law are demonstrating their own sinfulness and rejecting the grace of God. Only faith in Jesus Christ can make one right with God.

So what? Since no one possesses a perfect nature and no one can perfectly adhere to God’s Law, it would be foolish to think that anyone can make themselves righteous (perfect). If a person could be made right with God (justified) by their works, then he or she could boast in themselves and the death of Jesus Christ would have been in vain. Therefore, we must completely reject the notion that a person can be saved by sincere effort, good intentions, or moral living. We must trust only in the substitutionary death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ for salvation.

Questions from the Text:

1. What makes the gospel unique and different from all other religions (2:16)?

2. What does Paul mean when he says, “I’ve died to the Law, so that I might live to God” (2:19)?
3. What does it mean to live “by faith in the Son of God” (2:20)?

4. Why is reliance upon one’s own ability to do good to obtain salvation a rejection of the cross (2:21)?

**Now what?** First, we must understand that, apart from Christ, God sees nothing in us that would warrant righteousness. Therefore, we must forsake the notion that any human being is good enough to merit or warrant salvation. Second, we must put our complete trust in the substitutionary death of Jesus Christ for salvation. Finally, we must not add anything to the gospel after conversion. We are saved by grace, and kept (preserved) by grace.

**Small Group Questions**

Scripture: Genesis 15:1-21; Psalm 32:1-2; Romans 4:1-12; Hebrews 11

1. Were people in the Old Testament saved by good works or by keeping the Law?

2. What does Hebrews 11 teach us about how people were saved in the Old Testament?

3. What does Genesis 15:6 say about how Abraham was saved?

4. How does Paul interpret and apply Psalm 32:1-2?

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**Week 8**

**The mark of the gospel: The Holy Spirit**

O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified. Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? Did you suffer so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain? Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith—(Galatians 3:1-5 ESV).

**What’s it all about?** Christians do not need to observe or adhere to any of the Jewish religious rituals to become part of God’s family. The mark that a person is saved is not external (circumcision) but internal (the indwelling of the Holy Spirit). The Holy Spirit is the mark of the gospel! Therefore, Christians know by the experience of receiving the Holy Spirit that they have been accepted into the family of God.

**So what?** Unlike many other religions that require very specific external marks for adherents, the Bible teaches that external marks do not qualify one as a member of God’s family. The only mark that believers receive is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, we verify that we have been saved by grace through the experience of being made alive (regenerated) and indwelt by the Holy Spirit. We must trust in the power and presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives as verification of our salvation.

**Questions from the Text:**

1. What was the core of Paul’s preaching (3:1)?

2. How does a person receive the Holy Spirit (3:2 cf. Ephesians 1:13-14)?

3. How does a person grow and persevere as a Christian (3:3-5)?
Now what? We must learn to fully rely upon the grace of God for the forgiveness of our sins as well as for our ongoing growth in Christ. We are saved and continue (persevere) in the Christian life by faith alone and in the power of the Spirit alone.

Small Group Questions
Scripture: Joel 2:28-32; John 16:4-15; Acts 2:1-13; 1 Corinthians. 12:4-6

1. According to Joel, what were the abilities, gifts, and signs that would accompany the coming of the Spirit?

2. How did Peter and the Apostles interpret and apply Joel’s prophecy on the day of Pentecost?

3. According to Jesus, what are the three primary activities of the Holy Spirit?

4. What does 1 Corinthians 12:4-6 teach about the person and work of the Holy Spirit?

Week 9
The gospel: Who are the Sons of Abraham?
Just as Abraham “believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness”?
Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, “In you shall all the nations be blessed.” So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith (Galatians 3:6-9 ESV).

What’s it all about? God made a covenant with Abraham wherein He promised to bless his offspring (Genesis 12-18). Both Paul and his opponents were claiming to be the rightful heirs of this covenant. The legalists (agitators) claimed that only those who had the mark of the covenant (circumcision) were the children of Abraham. On the other hand, Paul defended the view that, apart from any external signs, all believers in Christ (Jew and Gentile) were children of Abraham.

So what? Being an heir of the Abrahamic covenant is synonymous with saying that one is a part of the family of God. Believers do not come to God through Abraham, but we do come to God the same way Abraham did, that is, by faith alone. Therefore, we must not put our trust in outward signs or good works but in the grace and mercy of God that is only available through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Questions from the Text:
1. How was Abraham reconciled to God (3:6; cf. Genesis 15:6)?

2. What makes a person a child of Abraham (3:7)?

3. What does it mean to be a child of Abraham (3:8-9)?
Now what? Both the Old and New Testaments teach that people are saved (justified) by grace through faith alone and not by works, external marks, or ethnicity. Therefore, the only prerequisite for acceptance into the family of God is receiving the grace that God has provided through faith in Jesus Christ. Therefore, we must not look to our own perceived goodness or abilities to be accepted by God. Instead, we must trust that through the person and work of Christ, God has forgiven and adopted us as His children.

Small Group Questions
Scripture: Genesis 12:1-3; 15:6; Galatians 6:14-16; James 2:14-26

1. How does Paul interpret and apply the promises made to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3?

2. Do the promises made to Abraham apply to the modern nation of Israel or to believers of all ethnicities from all nations?

3. How does James interpret and apply the life of Abraham?

4. What role do good works play in the life of a believer?

Week 10
The gospel: REDEEMED from the CURSE
For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, “Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them.” Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for “The righteous shall live by faith.” But the law is not of faith, rather “The one who does them shall live by them.” Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree”—so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.

(Galatians 3:10-14 ESV)

What’s it all about? The curse of the Fall (Genesis 3) is revealed and illustrated in our inability to perfectly adhere to the Law. Therefore, any attempt to remove the curse through adherence to the Law is futile. The curse can only be removed by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Thus, faith in redemptive work of Christ is the only path to salvation and blessing.

So what? Only those who have been redeemed from the curse have received the promise of the Abrahamic covenant: The Holy Spirit. Any attempt to come to God on the basis of one’s own alleged righteousness or abilities will end in failure. Consequently, we must reject the idea that we can redeem ourselves through self-effort or moral improvement and fully trust in the blood of Christ to redeem us from the curse.

Questions from the Text:

1. What will be the end result for those who attempt to redeem themselves through good works and adherence to the Law (3:10)?

2. According to both the Old and New Testaments, how is a person made right with God (3:11, Pages 6-7)?

3. What does it mean to be redeemed from the curse of the Law (3:13-14)?
4. How did Christ redeem us from the curse (3:13)?

Now what? It is a fact that, even as Christians, we will still face the temptation to cling to (trust in) our own perceived goodness or alleged obedience as validation of our salvation. Nothing could, however, be further from the truth. At every moment we must cling to the cross of Christ alone for our salvation.

Small Group Questions
Scripture: Galatians 4:4-5; Titus 2:11-14; Revelation 5:9-10

1. What role did Jesus being born under the Law and perfectly keeping the Law play in our redemption?

2. How does the imagery of a slave market illustrate the doctrine of redemption?

3. In Titus, Paul gives some of the implications for living as redeemed people. List the ways in which the redeemed are to live as well as the significant event they are to live in anticipation of daily.

4. John’s view of heaven revealed that the promise of salvation and the effects of redemption would go far beyond one ethnicity. How should John’s view of the redeemed from all nations motivate believers to take the gospel to every ethnicity?

Week 11
The gospel: Grace TRIUMPHS over Law
To give a human example, brothers: even with a man-made covenant, no one annuls it or adds to it once it has been ratified. Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, “And to offsprings,” referring to many, but referring to one, “And to your offspring,” who is Christ. This is what I mean: the law, which came 430 years afterward, does not annul a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to make the promise void. For if the inheritance comes by the law, it no longer comes by promise; but God gave it to Abraham by a promise (Galatians 3:15-18 ESV).

What’s it all about? Paul continues his defense of justification by faith by demonstrating that the promise to Abraham preceded the Law and, therefore, is superior. Consequently, the inheritance of the promises are not received by works but through the promised seed: Jesus Christ.

So what? The superiority of the promise made to Abraham resolves any alleged contradiction between law and grace. The promises to Abraham were not nullified nor replaced by the Law. God’s provision of grace, as promised to Abraham, is fulfilled through Jesus Christ. Thus, as Christians, we must realize that we no longer live under the condemnation that was illustrated by the Law. Instead, we live in the victory and freedom that were promised to Abraham and fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

Questions from the Text:

1. Why is it important to understand the connection between Abraham and Jesus (3:15-16)?

2. Why was the promise made to Abraham superior to the Law given through Moses (3:16)?
3. What was the promise made to Abraham and how is it applied to believers (3:16-17; cf. Genesis 12:1-3)?

Now what? We cannot rely upon what we do to receive eternal life. No amount of merit, good works, or religious activity will provide release from the curse and victory over sin and its consequences. Each day we must remind ourselves that the freedom and victory we have over the curse was only made possible through Jesus Christ.

Small Group Questions
Scripture: Romans 5:12-21; 8:31-39; 1 Corinthians 15:56-58

1. How has all of humanity been affected by the actions of Adam?

2. How have all believers been affected by the actions of Jesus?

3. What is the basis of Paul’s claim that nothing can separate believers from the love of God?

4. On what basis does Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:56-58 assert that the Christian’s life and labor for the gospel are not in vain?

RESOURCES FOR FURTHER STUDY

Week 1
“What is the Gospel?” by Greg Gilbert
A definition of the gospel: http://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/what-gospel/

“The Explicit Gospel” by Matt Chandler

Week 2
“Counterfeit Gospels: Rediscovering the Good News In A World Of False Hope” by Trevin Wax

“The False Teachers” by Tim Challies http://www.challies.com/articles/the-false-teachers-muhammad

Week 3
“Sola Scriptura: The Protestant Position on the Bible” edited by Don Kistler

“Scripture Alone” by James White

Week 4

Week 5

Week 6
'Authority and Authorship’ Ligonier Ministries http://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/authority-and-authorship/

'Christ's View of Scripture'- White Horse Inn http://www.whitehorseinn.org/blog/2010/08/08/christs-view-of-scripture/

Week 7

Week 8
“Father, Son, and Holy Spirit” by Bruce Ware

“The Holy Spirit” http://www.ligonier.org/learn/series/the_holy_spirit/
Week 9
"The Royal Genealogy of Jesus" by T.D. Alexander
http://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/the-royal-genealogy-of-jesus

Week 10
“The Justification of God” by John Piper
“Jonathan Edwards and Justification” Edited by Josh Moody

Week 11
"Law and Grace: A Sermon" by Charles H. Spurgeon
http://www.spurgeon.org/sermons/0037.htm

'Lloyd-Jones on Scandalous Grace That Isn't Cheap’ by Kevin DeYoung

'I Do Not Nullify the Grace of God’ by John Piper
http://www.desiringgod.org/sermons/i-do-not-nullify-the-grace-of-god

Recommended for Teachers:
3. “Galatians for You” by Tim Keller.

Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me. (Colossians 1:28-29 ESV)