

SVC

A GOSPEL CENTERED LIFE

A Study In The Book Of Galatians
DISCIPLESHIP GUIDE



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INTRODUCTION

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This guide has been specifically and prayerfully created with you in mind. It is designed to complement your personal daily devotion, Sunday service engagement, and Life Group gatherings. Additionally, each week includes unique content designed for students and our littlest participants; if you are a parent, we encourage you to go through this Discipleship Guide together as a family!

KNOW

This section is designed to complement the weekend service and supplement your daily time with God. Each chapter of the Guide corresponds with the passage of Galatians covered in the weekend message and each daily reading explores a different facet of it.

Join us Sundays at any of our three physical campuses—or online—throughout the series to get acquainted with the text. Then, take time each day throughout the week to dive deeper into God's word using the daily readings. It is our desire that you would come to Know and Be Known by God in a new and fresh way through this study.

BE KNOWN

This section is intended to be used in a group setting with questions to facilitate conversation and look deeper at the weekly text. If you are not currently in a Life Group, we would highly recommend you join one! We were never meant to do life alone, and we don't want you to miss out on what God has for you in this season.

Learn more at www.summitview.net/groups.

Going through this material with a Life Group creates a space to dig deeper into Scripture, hear real stories from others in our church, engage spiritual questions, and grow deeper in the faith.

Each week there are conversation starters to help get things rolling, followed by questions for discussion based on the text. This section concludes with a weekly Application & Reflection challenge to help you grow spiritually.

A COUPLE MORE THINGS...

This resource is designed to function as a guide, not a straitjacket. If you miss a day—it's ok! You may not get through every question with your Life Group. This Discipleship Guide is designed to support your personal growth and spiritual community—not replace them.

Additionally, we encourage you to find and utilize supplementary resources throughout our study. Our desire for this Guide is that it might be used to facilitate a firmer grasp of Scripture, a stronger connection to Christ, and a hunger for spiritual growth.

WE ALSO WANT TO TAKE A MOMENT TO THANK AND RECOGNIZE OUR CONTENT CREATORS

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WE ALSO WANT TO TAKE A MOMENT TO THANK AND RECOGNIZE OUR CONTENT CREATORS

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INTRODUCTION

The Mission of Summit View Church is “To equip and empower the body of Christ to lead and impact every sphere of life with Gospel-Centered Living.”

If you’ve been around church culture for any length of time, you might find yourself a bit desensitized to a phrase like “Gospel-Centered living.” We invite you not to dismiss it so quickly, but rather to take a moment to sit with it and consider the implications of what a life centered around the Gospel might actually look like.

It is a life free from the burden of relying solely on our own efforts, plans, objectives, and experiences. The Gospel invites us to trade the yoke of striving for one that is easy and light and cultivates a soul at rest (Matthew 11:28-30). When we choose to live apart from the power of a Gospel of grace, we lose sight of our salvation, our ability to change, and our access to a life of freedom.

This is exactly what was happening in the church at Galatia. Having initially embraced the good news of salvation through faith alone, the Galatians found themselves deceived by false teachers. The Gospel of grace once preached to them by Paul, became distorted by an attempt to re-burden the Galatians with a religion of works. In his letter to the Galatians, Paul unabashedly calls out the false teachers and pleads with the Galatians to return to the pure simplicity of the Gospel of grace. Throughout the text, Paul resolutely builds his defense, driven by the knowledge that a gospel without grace is void. It is the very heart of the gospel and why Jesus came!

AUTHOR

It is abundantly clear when reading Galatians that it was written by the apostle Paul. Throughout the letter, Paul appeals to his experience with the Galatian church (see 3:2-5, 4:8, and 5:15) as well as including a lengthy overview of his own conversion (1:13-17) and call to ministry (1:19-2:14).

In addition to the direct references provided within the contents of letter itself, we find the theological components to be both congruent and closely resemblant of his other writings. The emphasis on justification by faith alone and the necessity of the Holy Spirit to empower believers to live righteously in particular, mirrors his letter to the Romans.

DATE

Many scholars believe that Paul's conversion took place somewhere between 33-34 AD and place his original sojourn with the Galatians between 47-48 AD. Throughout his letter to the Galatians, Paul references his conversion, his missionary journeys, and his previous interactions with the Galatian church, placing this letter decidedly after these events—no earlier than 47 AD. At the same time, one of the predominant themes of the text was the emergence of false teachers and the resulting debate surrounding adherence to Jewish law—circumcision in particular. This issue would be addressed and ultimately rejected as heresy at the Jerusalem council of 49 AD. As Paul makes no reference to this council, it is likely the letter was penned prior to 49 AD. When taking the known timeline into consideration, we can reasonably conclude that Paul wrote the letter to the Galatians sometime between late 47 AD to early 49 AD.

INTRODUCTION

MESSAGE & PURPOSE

We know from the text that Paul had previously spent time evangelizing and teaching in an area known as Galatia—now modern-day Turkey. The church in Galatia had embraced his teachings and found salvation by faith alone in Jesus. However, sometime after receiving Paul's initial teachings, the church found itself in crisis.

It had been invaded by false teachers who were attempting to distort and destroy what God has done in the lives of the Galatians. These false teachers, or “Judaizers,” were teaching that the work of the cross was not enough—that God still required His followers to observe rituals and rules in order to be reconciled to God.

When we consider Paul's investment in the church of Galatia, his concern is unsurprising when he learns of the false teaching that was infiltrating their theology. It provokes Paul to write to the Galatians and discard his usual jovial style for an almost abrasively direct address. In it, he tackles three primary points of contention:

1. QUESTION OF AUTHORITY (Chapters 1-2) Who do we believe and how do we know what to believe?
2. QUESTION OF SALVATION (Chapters 3-4) How do we get right with God?
3. QUESTION OF HOLINESS (Chapters 5-6) How to please God by living a life of righteousness and wrestling with our fallen nature.

MAJOR THEMES

THE GOSPEL

The message Paul proclaims throughout the letter is not his personal opinion or the unique theology of his personal disciples. Nor did he acquire it second-hand from another scholar, but rather received it directly from God. The gospel Paul teaches is exclusive and allows no distortion, additions, or exchanges. Paul constantly contrasts the gospel of Jesus to the Old Testament Law throughout the letter; he is emphatic that salvation comes through faith alone—never achieved through works of the law or personal performance.

CHRISTIAN LIBERTY

As a primary tenet to the Gospel, Paul defends the principle of salvation by faith alone rigorously throughout Galatians. He assures the struggling Galatians of God's acceptance and blessing as unconditional, and Jewish rituals—particularly circumcision—as irrelevant to salvation. Galatians is a letter of liberation to all weighed down by sin, failure, and suffering.

WORKS OF THE SPIRIT

Just as salvation is initiated by God through grace, our ability to live out our faith also comes from Him through the Holy Spirit. Paul's letter to the Galatians was emphatic that our redemption and growth comes through the power of the Spirit alone. It is His work in us that brings about our transformation and displays lives changed by the power of grace.

DIVERSITY

As Paul seeks to address false teachings surrounding Jewish ritual and rites, the text expands to address the cultural implications as well. Galatians highlights the transcendency of the Gospel and its relevance to all peoples, of all ethnicities. The Gospel calls people to Christ—not a particular cultural expression of Christianity. Paul makes it clear that there is no single superior culture designed to receive and respond to the gospel.

INTRODUCTION

DATE

- I. Introduction: Desertion from the Gospel to Another Gospel (1:1-2:21)
 - A. Paul's Apostleship & Divine Message (1:1-10)
 - B. Paul's Call from God to Salvation & Ministry (1:11-2:10)
 - C. Paul's Conflict with Peter (2:11-14)
 - D. Justification by Faith (2:15-21)
- II. Defending the Gospel from Experience & Scripture (3:1-4:11)
 - A. Experience from Faith (3:1-5)
 - B. Experience from Scripture (3:6-29)
- III. A Call to Freedom in the Spirit from the Law (4:12-6:10)
 - A. Freedom from Bondage (4:12-5:12)
 - B. How to Live In God's Freedom (5:13-6:10)
- IV. Final Summary (6:11-18)

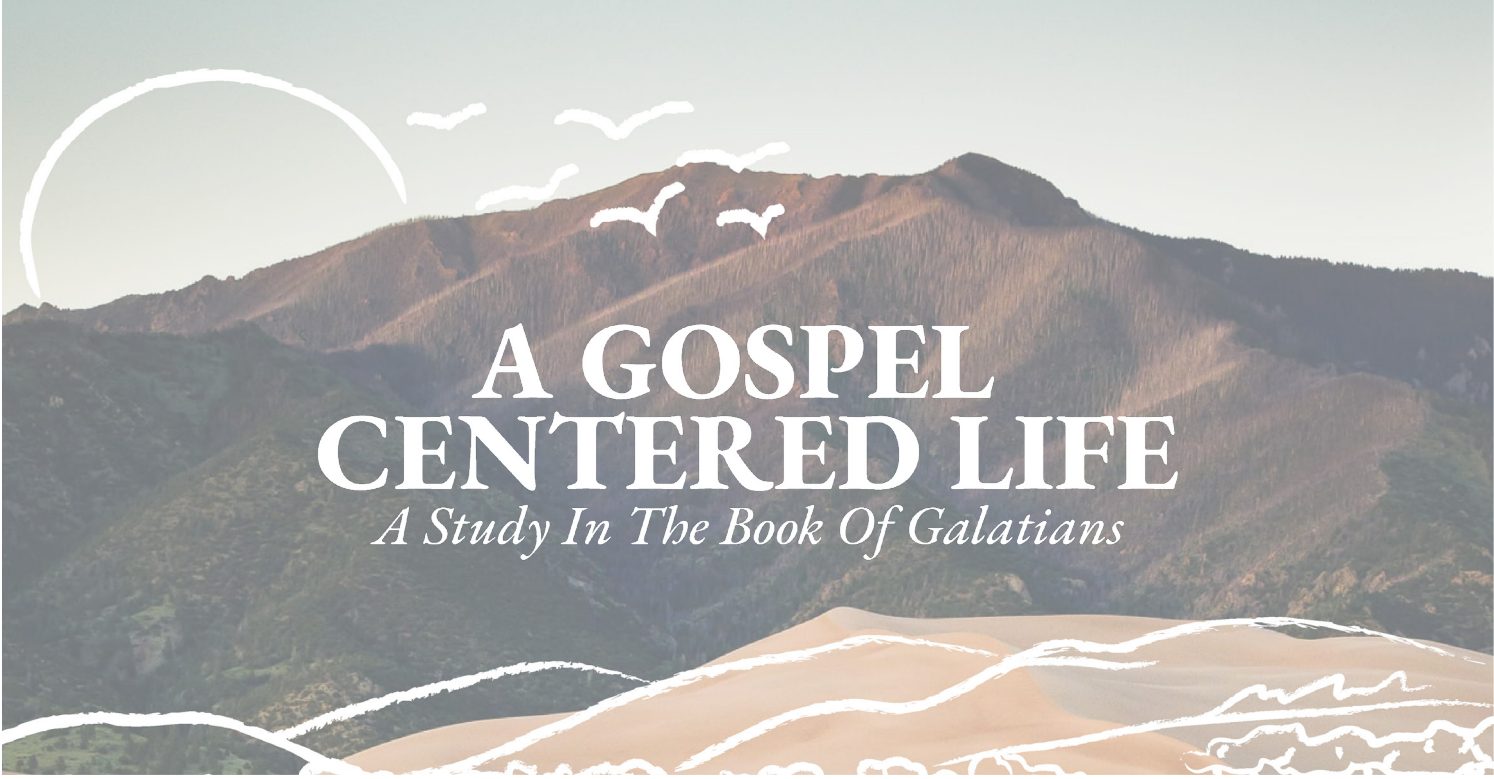
SUPPLEMENTAL RESOURCES

VIDEO

The Bible Project: Galatians Overview | <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/galatians>

COMMENTARY

- *Exalting Jesus in Galatians* by David Platt & Tony Merida
- *Galatians For You* by Timothy Keller



A GOSPEL CENTERED LIFE

A Study In The Book Of Galatians

INTRODUCTION

MAIN IDEA

You cannot add to or
compromise the gospel
without losing it entirely.

In the New Testament, there is a collection of letters sent from early church leaders to local churches to provide insight, give encouragement, and answer questions these churches may have had. Many of the letters share the same structural format, but the letter to the Galatians is different. One would expect to find an introduction of the author to the recipients of the letter as well as some brief salutary remarks. However, in the letter of Galatians, the Apostle Paul wastes no time addressing the reasons why he has penned the letter. The Galatian Church was at great risk of leaving behind the truth of the gospel for man-made religion. Paul is so committed to the grace of God and His peoples' experience of it, that he takes the church to task and expresses astonishment at their potential departure. Paul is emphatic in reminding the Galatians that God's grace is a free, abundant gift for those who do not deserve it and can do nothing to deserve it.

KNOW

Day One

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.
Galatians 1:1–2 (ESV)

It can be tempting to skim through the first few verses of Galatians. We want to get to the substance of the book, the truths to take away—the instruction for life. Yet, according to 2 Timothy 3:16–17 every word of the Bible is meaningful and profitable to us, not just some. When we take the time to slow down and not rush past the “boring” parts, we find gems in the text we might have otherwise missed.

These first few verses of Paul's greeting to the Galatians are no exception. He establishes the foundation of his letter and the truth upon which everything else he writes is based: Jesus Christ was raised from the dead. To us, this might be a truth so familiar we've become immune to the impact, but if we slow down long enough to let it wash over us anew, the implications are profound!

Paul reminds us in 1 Corinthians 15:14 that if it were not for this truth, our faith would be completely in vain. If Christ was not raised, preaching the gospel is useless. If Christ was not raised, our faith is worthless. If Christ was not raised, every eyewitness to the resurrection and proclaimers of the resurrection are liars. If Christ was not raised, Christianity is a myth—a fairy tale at best. If Christ was not raised, we are all still captive to sin.

So today, as you begin this daily study, we invite you to start by sitting with this fundamental truth. Jesus is alive! Spend some time thanking Him through prayer today.

Day Two

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 1:3–5 (ESV)

It's not uncommon to find moments within Paul's letters where he paused his address to praise God. While the contents of his letters were designed to answer questions and flesh out theology, it is clear his motives stemmed from a love for God. The church of Galatia found herself in a dire situation—one Paul addressed with the urgency it

Today, whatever troubles lie ahead, whatever difficulties await you, bring them to the feet of Jesus. In place of worry and striving, choose the better thing that is trust in Jesus. Spend some time today being still before God with a heart of worship.

Day Three

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 1:3-5 (ESV)

Francis Crosby was a teacher and missionary who composed more than 9,000 hymns throughout her 90 years of life—many still sung in churches today. Despite losing her sight at an early age, Francis was undeterred from all that God had for her. She was an activist and advocate for the blind and a leading voice for developing education for the blind in every state. She was also a ferocious consumer of the word of God which left a lasting impact on her life and led her to pen songs that influenced presidents, pulpiteers, and congregants alike. One in particular was written in response to this week's passage:

To God Be the Glory

*To God be the glory, great things he has done!
So loved he the world that he gave us his Son,
who yielded his life an atonement for sin,
and opened the life-gate that all may go in.*

*Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord,
Let the earth hear his voice!
Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!
Let the people rejoice!*

*Great things he has taught us,
great things he has done,
and great our rejoicing through Jesus the Son,
but purer and higher and greater will be
our joy and our wonder, when Jesus we see.*



Let the words of this hymn of praise and adoration lead and guide your time with God today. Give thanks for the great things He has done, for the gift of salvation through Jesus, and for the guidance He brings. Pray for the day we get to see Him face to face.

Day Four

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. Galatians 1:6-7 (ESV)

The human mind and heart can be wonderful allies, yet simultaneously our worst

KNOW

enemies. One moment the heart is certain with no shadow of doubt and the mind clear and confident. Yet in an instant, we find we no longer know what we want in a distressing state of confusion. Moreover, we have this insidious talent for justifying our own actions, while criticizing others for falling victim to the same folly.

As we begin to walk through the letter of Galatians together, let us be cautious not to judge too harshly. We cannot belittle and demean the Galatians for their waywardness when we recognize that the same capacity to flee the truth of the Gospel lives in us just as readily as it did in them. We too are tempted to believe there must be something we can do to achieve our salvation in place of trusting the finished work of the cross. We trade the richness of Christ for earthly wealth and pleasures—deceived into believing they will satisfy us more. Rather than trusting the truth found in Scripture, we concoct our own faith system to suit our emotional and intellectual preferences.

Paul's warning to the Galatians applies just as readily to us as it did to them. The false gospel messages we are tempted to embrace are no gospel at all. There is only one, and it is found in Christ alone.

Today as you spend time with God, ask Him to reveal to you the areas you are most tempted to allow false teaching to corrupt the gospel in your life. Pray with us that we might not astonish one another at our abandonment of Christ but rather leave one another astonished by our radical commitment to Jesus.

Day Five

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. Galatians 1:8–9 (ESV)

A hard truth can be difficult to say—and even harder to receive! Pastor Charles Spurgeon spoke of the gospel being “an arrow which can pierce the hardest heart, and a balm which will heal the deadliest wound.” As we study the book of Galatians together, we find the Apostle Paul speaking some very hard—some might even say harsh—truths. Despite the jarring nature of his address, as we read Paul's words it becomes clear he is not some raving fanatic wishing doom on the Galatians. He is gravely concerned for them, and the thought of any falling victim to a false gospel preached by the false teachers compels him to speak up. It was not simply a matter of being right or wrong—it was a matter of eternal life and eternal death. A false gospel leads to a false connection and knowledge of Christ. Paul's plea is a pastoral one, filled with humility. There is no finger pointing or accusatory pronouncements but a challenge to all—including himself—to hold fast to the purity of the true gospel.

Do we have the same level of commitment to protecting the truth? Or do we withdraw when we hear a distorted gospel, assuming someone else will speak up and come to its defense in our stead? Spend some time today asking God to grow your discernment to recognize mistruth when you hear it, courage to speak up in defense of the gospel, and compassion to speak the truth in love.

Day Six

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 1:10 (ESV)

Have you ever wrestled with the drive to say or do or wear the right thing to be accepted



Courage & Compassion

KNOW

*"We fear man so much because we fear God so little."
– William Gurnall*

by the "in" crowd? We all have a deep need to belong and most of us have struggled with the temptation to compromise at some point in our lives to fit in. Some of us struggle to this day; our thoughts are consumed with how to satisfy the demands of others to win their approval. Yet as Paul Tripp so poignantly reminds us:

"There's only one place where your heart can be healed, satisfied, and protected. It won't be healed by exacting vengeance. It won't be satisfied in human approval. It won't be protected by hiding. No, your heart will only be healed, satisfied, and protected when you trust in the Lord and follow his Word."

In Matthew 6:24, Jesus told His followers "no one can serve two masters"; it is impossible to dedicate your efforts and alliance in opposite directions. When the pressure is on, we will always find ourselves choosing the one who holds our deepest loyalties. Where does your allegiance lie? When forced to choose, which do you sacrifice on the altar? Obedience to God or the approval of others?

Spend some time today prayerfully considering the following questions penned by Tripp and ask God to reveal to you where your loyalties might require realignment:

"When you're mistreated by another person, do you get angry and try to prove them wrong? Do you get intimidated and blindly follow their orders? Do you get wounded and attempt to avoid all future encounters with them?"

Is this an area you struggle with? Take the time to write out Galatians 1:10 on a notecard or on a mirror where you will see it daily; let it be a reminder to daily ask the Lord to free you from the trap of people pleasing.

Trust in the Lord & follow His Word.

BE KNOWN

Getting Started:

When you want to emphasize a point to someone, how do you do it?

1. The “Gospel” is a term referenced frequently in the church, yet, when pressed, many struggle to articulate what it actually means.
 - a. What is the message of the gospel based on Paul’s description in verses 3-5 of this week’s passage?
 - b. Why can it be so uncomfortable or difficult to explain the gospel?
2. Read verse 6. What is Paul accusing the Galatians of doing to the gospel message? What are the implications of the Galatians abandoning grace? Why might it be appealing to discard grace as our mode of salvation, rather than holding fast to what we have received in Christ?
3. Legalism is a problem for the Galatians as we will see throughout the rest of the book. How would you define legalism? How does legalism twist and distort the gospel?
 - a. How does legalism show up in your own thoughts and actions?
 - b. How can one tell the difference between legalism and obedience?
4. Paul uses extremely condemning language towards those who are teaching a different gospel.
 - a. Why might Paul take such a strong position against these false teachers?
 - b. How should his example influence the way we view and interact with those who proclaim a different gospel today?

BE KNOWN

5. How does Paul's contrast between pleasing God and man in verse 10 strike you? Do you struggle with "fear of man"—seeking others' approval instead of God's? How can we encourage ourselves and others to overcome this sin?
6. When we fear the opinion of others, it can hold us back from living the life God wants for us. Yet, we do not see this reflected in Paul's ministry. If you weren't held back by the fear of others' opinions, what might change in your attitude toward sharing the gospel?



REFLECTION & APPLICATION

One of the biggest critiques of Christianity is the idea of exclusivity, meaning that salvation and a right relationship with God is solely secured through the person and work of Jesus. Many push back against this idea but as we see, this issue is one that has been present since the inception of the church. This truth is at the heart of what Paul is defending here in Galatians 1:1-10. Paul is unapologetically stating there is no other message, no other savior, and we shouldn't even entertain other ideas. The reason for this is not in the quality of the worshiper, but in the quality and character of the one being worshipped. As you conclude your study, take time reflecting upon the words of Psalm 96:4-5 (ESV), *For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; For all the gods of the people are worthless idols, but the LORD made the heavens.*

NO OTHER GOSPEL

Galatians 1:1-10

BACKGROUND REVIEW

Paul, also called the Apostle Paul, wrote this letter we call Galatians; what do you know about him? If you want to learn more about Paul, he shares his story in the book of Acts in chapters 9, 22, & 26.

MAIN IDEA

You cannot add to or compromise the gospel—the good news—without losing it entirely.

BIG IDEAS

There is only one gospel and it is good news!

First, the bad news: we are all rotten sinners. We cannot live a good life all by ourselves—we just don't have what it takes.

But there's also good news: God loves us no matter what! He loves us even though we are rotten people; even though we are sinners. God could just leave us in our sins, destined to spend forever separated from Him, but instead, He sent His Son, Jesus, to save us.

The gospel says that Jesus died for our sins and rose again. Because of this, we can be forgiven and live in heaven with Him someday. This good news is the most important message in the world!

But in Galatia—the place Paul wrote to—there were bad people he called “false teachers” that were leading the believers in Galatia astray; telling them a gospel that wasn't true and didn't come from God.

We all know what gold is. It is a metal that has been used for thousands of years by people all over the world to make jewelry, decoration, money, and even to celebrate achievements through gold medals and trophies.

The value of gold is based on its purity—people want 100% gold, nothing added to it. It would be a crime to add copper or silver to gold and try to sell it as pure gold! In the same way, these false teachers were trying to add to the gospel, even though the value of the gospel is in its purity—it's already perfect and nothing needs to be added to it.

The good news of the gospel is that we cannot do anything to rescue ourselves—Jesus already did it all for us. These bad people were falsely teaching the Galatians that people needed to do something more to be rescued from sin, and that grace alone wasn't enough.

Grace is a major piece of the good news of the gospel. But what is grace? Undeserved favor given to people by God. It is not getting what you deserve—separated forever from God. Instead, it is getting what you do not deserve—being rescued from sin and living in heaven someday.

Our rescue from sin is due to grace. It is a gift from God.

KNOW

False teachings are sometimes hard to recognize because they are a distorted truth—truth with some tweaks and additions. By knowing God's Word, we are able to recognize God's truth from false messages.

BE KNOWN

Paul had to speak harshly to the believers. He did not worry about trying to please everybody; he only wanted to serve God faithfully. As we spend time with believers—on Sunday, in Bible Study groups, etc.—we find the support to be bold in speaking God's truths.

BACKGROUND REVIEW

Read Galatians 1:6-7 (ESV): *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.*

Q What does the placement of this passage within Paul's letter tell us about his perspective on its importance?

Q What are your thoughts on these two equations with regards to your salvation?:
Jesus + nothing = Everything
Jesus + something - Jesus = Nothing

Q What can those who are adding to the gospel—or those believing a different gospel—expect to have at the end of the day?

Read verse 10: "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."

Q What does Paul use to determine if someone is believing the true gospel or not?

Make a chart with two columns, one labeled "God" and the other "Man." Take a moment to consider things you've done or said in the last month; now categorize those things by listing them under the header that best aligns with who you were motivated to please in those moments. Use the questions below to reflect.

Q Which side had more items? What could you have done differently to move an item from the "Man" to "God" column? What does your pursuit of one over the other tell you about your priorities? Does this chart align with where you thought you looked for recognition? Why or why not?

Q What do you gain from chasing after the recognition of man? Why do it? For another perspective, check out 1 John 2:15-17.

INTRODUCTION

MAIN IDEA

The gospel tells a story of transformation, and that story is worth sharing.

Stories are one of the most powerful tools a communicator can use to engage and connect with an audience. Think of your favorite books, movies, television shows, and songs. All are penned by storytellers who not simply relay facts but move us to a point that leaves a lasting impact. The Apostle Paul shares his testimony to help us see how his calling to God and calling as a minister of the gospel was not something he simply conjured up on his own, but something he has received from God himself. Within Paul's testimony, we find that God's grace knows no bounds in who it can reach. Paul's conversion is a reminder for all of us about the difference Jesus Christ can make in any sinner's life. While everyone's salvation story is unique, we share in the fact that the gospel is not of human origin, we are all recipients of God's grace. All of us have a story about that worth sharing.

KNOW

Day One

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. Galatians 1:11-12 (ESV)

When you think of great storytellers, who comes to mind? What types of stories were they able to weave together? Was it a story of adventure that got your heart pounding? Or one of love that melted your heart? Perhaps a comedy that left you in tears with laughter, unable to catch your breath? Some artists are so gifted they weave a tale that elicits the full spectrum of emotion. Great storytellers have the power to move us, but true stories, in which we find ourselves to be characters, have the power to transform us.

The story of the gospel is one such saga. Despite the best attempts of scholars to disprove and the enemy to thwart, the untainted gospel story has survived these 2,000+ years. It's power to survive? The author is the living God, and its contents are true. Paul makes it clear in his letter to the Galatians that the story of redemption is not one created through his own efforts or ingenuity. It is a message that comes from on high—from God himself. The story of salvation did not stem from the mind of an individual, but the heart of our living God.

C.S. Lewis beautifully captures this truth: *"Now the story of Christ is simply a true myth: a myth working on us in the same way as the others, but with this tremendous difference that it really happened."*

This story of salvation that Paul shares, the one we read about in Scripture, the one we hear proclaimed each Sunday: it is true. It came from God. If you have never stepped across the line, we invite you to today: believe in the great true myth. Spend some time talking to the living God today; thank Him that we get to be a part of His greater story and ask Him to reveal your role—the "character"—you were created to be within the greater narrative.

Day Two

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. Galatians 1:13-14 (ESV)

When we consider the life of Paul before he met Jesus, it can be easy to conclude he was simply a bloodthirsty religious Pharisee. We know from passages in Acts that he

KNOW

fiercely opposed the advancement of the gospel, but we must remember that had the Christian movement been false, his reaction would have been justified. Paul's virulence against the message of Jesus was not driven by his personal preference or simple dislike; his passion stemmed from a belief that those following Jesus were still condemned and cursed—doomed for hell. And furthermore, that they were deceiving and taking others down with them!

How does one get through to someone so convinced of their own perspective? Many would have looked at Paul at this point in his life and concluded he was beyond redemption. Yet we know that no one is beyond God's reach. Human words couldn't reach him; appeals to mercy fell on deaf ears. Only a personal encounter with Jesus could change Paul's heart; and one day, on the road Damascus, he experienced just that.

The story of the gospel is so beautiful! It takes misguided, hard-hearted, perplexed, confused individuals, and transforms them. It has the power to soften hearts, open minds, and radically change lives. Paul, who once despised the gospel, now comes to its defense. Before Jesus, he ruthlessly hunted His followers; his death would be as one of them.

The gospel is your story too. You once had a life apart from Christ. While you may not have spent it murdering believers, all lives before Christ stand in opposition to God. Romans 5:8 says that *"God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."*

Do you marvel at Paul's story of transformation? What about in your own life? Spend some time today thanking God for the redemptive work He has done in your life; invite Him to guide you further up and further in to the transformed life He has for you.

Day Three

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. Galatians 1:15-16 (ESV)

We find three miraculous truths in these two short verses:

1. GOD SET YOU APART

We find this truth echoed throughout Scripture in passages such as Isaiah 49:1, Jeremiah 1:5, Luke 1:12-17, and Ephesians 1:3-14. Before we even believed, God had in mind a path and a purpose for each of us. As John Calvin put it: "We owe it to the goodness of God, not only that we have been elected and adopted to everlasting life, but that he deigns to make use of our services, who would otherwise have been altogether useless."

2. GOD CALLED YOU BY GRACE

If someone were to ask Paul how he became a Christian, he would have summarized it in a single word: grace. Paul was not searching for God—in fact he was confident he had already found Him. Paul's reconciliation to God emanated simply from an act of God's grace and a pouring out of unmerited favor. The same grace and favor extended to us.

3. GOD WAS PLEASED TO REVEAL HIS SON

There is no other name by which we can be saved. There is no other mediator between God and man apart from Jesus. Your own story of redemption demonstrates this truth. Our salvation through Jesus is only possible because it pleases God to do so. When we encounter Jesus and see Him for who He truly is, we bring God great delight.

KNOW

We invite you to sit with each of these truths today and let the depths of God's love seep into the depths of your heart. When we know and are known by God, we become unshakable. Ask God to reveal the personal implications of each of these truths for you, in your life and personal relationship with Him, today.

Day Four

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. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and remained with him fifteen days. Galatians 1:17-18 (ESV)

When someone first becomes a follower of Jesus, it can be tempting to overload them with next steps, events, and programs—there's just so much to teach and instruct them in the way of Jesus! Their calendar gets inundated with church to-dos, and simply being with Jesus gets lost in the hustle. Yet this is the opposite of what we find modeled in Scripture. We don't have the full picture of what happened during the early days of Paul's Christian life, but from what we do know, we find it to be filled with meditation, prayer, and study of the Word. Paul dedicated his early Christian days communing with God and seeking His insight. Before he met with the other church leaders, or set off on his missionary journeys, Paul retreated for a time and diligently learned from Jesus.

That is not to say that we should all quit our jobs, withdraw from the church, or forego our Bible studies, but there is a principle Paul models here that is worthy of imitation. Paul refused to short-circuit what God wanted to do in His life by slowing down and prioritizing time learning directly Him. We far too often seek to address our deep questions in life quickly by asking others what they think or by downloading a podcast in place of retreating and asking Jesus directly ourselves. There are absolutely times that God speaks through the wise counsel of others or uses the message of a pastor to guide us, but we miss the heart of God if we only ever seek it through others.

Most of us do not have the luxury to spend three uninterrupted years learning from Jesus, but we do have three minutes, or perhaps even three hours. Knowing Jesus requires taking the time to retreat, sit quietly, and learn to hear His voice. So today, start with three minutes. Set a timer if you must. Find a quiet space—for some of us, this is the most challenging part! Silence your phone. Open your Bible or just sit in stillness. Ask God to make you aware of His presence. What does He want to teach you today? What part of your life does He want to transform in this moment? You may not hear anything definitive the first time—it takes time to train our spiritual ears to hear, but we invite you to start today.

Day Five

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 1:23-24 (ESV)

Word of Paul's conversion had spread, and it left people in awe and wonder of what God had done and can do. While conversion stories like Paul's are often the ones that garner attention, we shouldn't underestimate the power of our own stories. God is glorified when we share how He's changed our lives. Perhaps you were the radical conversion story or grew up in church, were saved at a young age or found God as an adult—whatever the circumstances, all salvation stories are miraculous.

In fact, personal testimonies are one of the most influential tools God uses to reach the hearts and minds of others. God can—and desires to—use your story to spiritually stir

*Meditation, Prayer
& Study of the Word.*

KNOW

up those around you. Your testimony displays the greatness of God's love and its power to transform lives—the details of your conversion reveal the intimate involvement of God in your life as He pursued you.

Who has God placed in your life that might be encouraged by your story? Have you ever written out your full testimony? Take the time today to consider: who were you before Jesus? How were you exposed to the truth? How has your life changed since choosing to follow Him? Write out your journey and prayerfully consider who needs to hear it this week. Keep in mind that fitting God into your life story isn't what is important but rather considering how your story fits into His. May your story be one that stirs and moves others to worship our God.

Day Six

For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. 1 Corinthians 15:9-10 (ESV)

Paul's conversation story is shared in several of his letters, including Galatians. In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul describes his transformation from persecutor to proclaimer of the gospel. Within his story, we discover two significant character traits: humility and ambition.

HUMILITY:

Paul's transformation wasn't the result of his own initiative, wisdom, or gifts; it was the result of God's grace pursuing him. Knowing this, Paul found it easy to readily admit his unworthiness and gratefully receive all God had done for him. In the same way, we too are unworthy of all Christ has done for us, and like Paul, we share in this same grace.

AMBITION:

As a recipient of grace, and having been called by God, Paul became motivated to live a life worthy of what he had received. In place of apathy, the grace he received impassioned Paul with a holy motivation to faithfully fulfill what God had called him to. Humility should never be an excuse for passivity but rather harness our ambition. John Stott in his commentary on the Sermon on the Mount says this:

"Ambitions for God, however, if they are to be worthy, can never be modest. There is something inherently inappropriate about cherishing small ambitions for God. How can we ever be content that he should acquire just a little more honor in the world? No. Once we are clear that God is King, then we long to see him crowned with glory and honor, and accorded his true place, which is the supreme place. We become ambitious for the spread of his kingdom and righteousness everywhere."

Spend some time today asking God to give you a holy ambition for His Kingdom and righteousness that flows from knowing what Jesus has done for you. Invite Him to soften your heart and fill it with a humility borne from awe of who He is and what He's done for you.

Humility & Ambition.

BE KNOWN

Getting Started:

What are some personal accomplishments you're proud of—ones you frequently share with others?

1. In this week's passage, Paul iterates that he did not receive the gospel he preaches from man, but from Jesus Christ.
 - a. How can we know if this is true? If you are unfamiliar with the conversion story of Paul, consider taking some time to read Acts 9:1-19.
 - b. Why is it important to remember that salvation always starts with God and His invitation to us?
2. Read verses 15-16. What are the three things God did for Paul when He intervened in his life? In your own words, what do each of these three things mean?
3. Take some time to ponder Paul's statement in verses 23-24. Paul went from persecutor to proclaimer. How does this change alone generate confidence in the power of the gospel?
 - a. This action caused others to worship and praise God; when encountering someone else's story of salvation, do you have a similar response? Why or why not?
 - b. Is there anything else that we can learn from Paul's testimony? Consider his background with Judaism, the law, and zealotry versus his new life with Jesus.
4. Read Paul's description of his salvation story found in 1 Timothy 1:12-17. What similarities does it have to his account in Galatians? What stands out to you? What does his story tell us about the extent of God's grace?

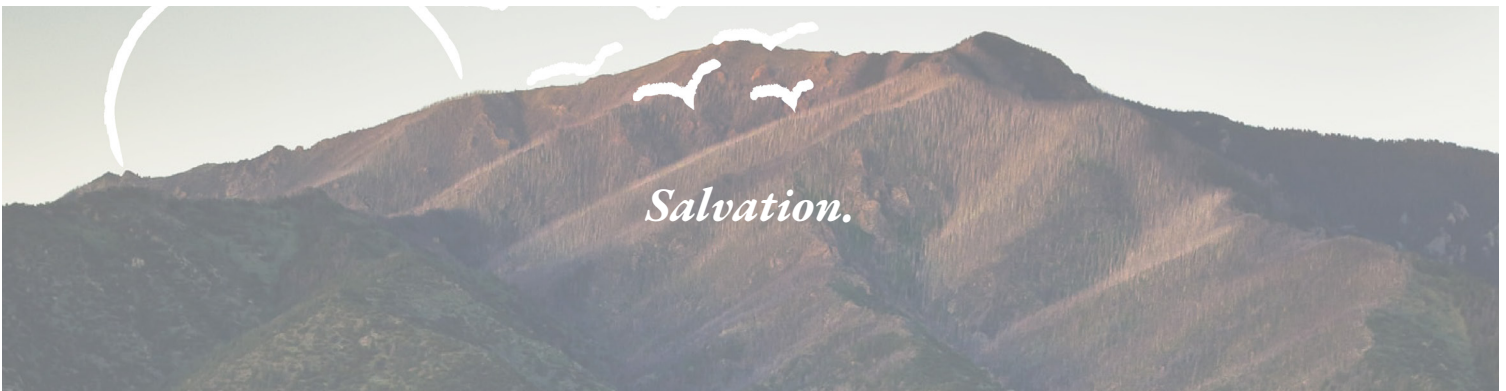
BE KNOWN

5. Paul shares his story in three stages. He talks about who he was before Christ, how he encountered Jesus, and who he became after he met Jesus. This is a great template for sharing our own stories! It can be tempting to assume only radical or dramatic conversion stories are worth sharing, but God gave you your specific story and circumstances for a purpose. There are people God wants to use your unique story to reach. Using the three stages of Paul's conversion story, take some time to write out your own story and share it with your Life Group or family.

a. What was your life like before Jesus?

b. What happened that led you to follow Him?

c. What changes have you seen in your life since?



REFLECTION & APPLICATION

Paul's testimony in this week's passage reveals the power of the gospel to radically transform anyone. Paul went from gospel persecutor to gospel proclaimer. The radical change in Paul's life displays the gospel's ability to take the greatest sinner and, through grace, turn them into a mighty saint. Take some time today as you conclude to pray for those in your life who seem furthest from God. Ask the Holy Spirit to do a miraculous work in their lives, confident in the knowledge that no one is beyond the reach of the love of God.

SUNDAY NOTES

Dotted lines for writing notes.

BACKGROUND REVIEW

Paul was exposing the false teachers for teaching a false gospel. The gospel is the good news about Jesus.

MAIN IDEA

The gospel tells a story of transformation, and that story is worth sharing.

BIG IDEAS

Paul was called by God. His enemies struck back by arguing that Paul's ministry and message were not really of God. Paul wrote this part of Galatians to give evidence that he was called by God.

Originally Paul was well known as one of the major persecutors of the church. He wanted to destroy the church and kill believers. One day, Paul was on the way to Damascus to persecute believers when he encountered God. A few days later, he was in Damascus, preaching that the believers were right! This amazing change could only come from God!

Paul's story is a great reminder for us that:

- Nothing is impossible for God. He can change anyone—even someone like Paul; someone who seemed like the worst sinner.
- Sharing our story about how God has changed us can make an impact and help others want to know more about Him.

Review the changed life of Paul—who Paul was and who he became:

PAUL BEFORE	PAUL AFTER
Persecuting church and believers	Preaching and teaching believers
The Jewish religious leaders were proud of his reputation	The Jewish leaders were embarrassed by his transformation
Religion was outward rituals and “show”	Faith in Jesus brought an inward change
Influential Jewish leader	Minister to the despised Gentiles (non-Jewish people)
Glory for himself	Glory for God

KNOW

The gospel is for everyone. There is no sin “bad” enough from which God cannot rescue you. Paul, the man who hated Christians and wanted to see all of them arrested or killed, became one of the primary writers of the New Testament! No one is too sinful or too evil to be saved by God's perfect goodness, grace, and mercy.

BE KNOWN

Isn't it wonderful that God already knows everything about you, and He doesn't turn away—He accepts and loves you! In fact, God knew you before you were even born. He wants you to believe in Him, be close to Him, to love Him, and to live out the purpose He has for you. Believers not only have the right to approach God, but we can approach Him with confidence and boldness. We are welcomed with open arms because we are part of God's family—we are God's children.

Q Who is the gospel centered around?

Q What is significant in the way Paul chooses to see his life before Christ? How does this relate to the Israelites and their wandering in the desert?

Q What do you do to actively combat these influences? In what way(s) can you strive to do better?

Q Using this same formula—life before Christ, how you met Christ, and how your life is different as a result of your interaction with Jesus—write out your own testimony.

INTRODUCTION

MAIN IDEA

There is *one* gospel message to proclaim for *all* to believe.

Whether one likes it or not, reputation plays an important part in various arenas of life. Most of us can remember a time when we were concerned about other people's perception about us. In business, companies go to great lengths to develop a good reputation and distance themselves from previous blunders, knowing it will impact the bottom line. In this section of Galatians, Paul has to defend his ministry and message to the skeptics. However, his greatest concern is not for how people, or the other apostles perceive him, but for the purity of the gospel message. Paul desires to show that while the ministry, calling, and context in which he worked was different compared to Peter, James, and John, they were all unified in their message. Paul knew that if he permitted a fracture in this message, the reputation of the gospel would be lost. The gospel was at work in the early church, not creating a two-tiered system between Jew & Gentile but creating one people who exhibit humility and unity in gathering together because the grace of God.

KNOW

Day One

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. Galatians 2:4–5 (ESV)

Legalism, or working in our own power, under our own set of rules seeking to earn God's favor, is as prevalent in the church today as it was for the Galatians. In Galatia, people, or "false teachers," were coercing believers to incorporate Jewish rituals into their salvation theology, insisting reconciliation to God was dependent on their inclusion. From our modern cultural perspective, the contention around these issues found in Galatians 2—circumcision and dietary law—might seem laughable. However, at the time, these laws were central to Jewish cultural and religious life. Christian Jews throughout the empire had to relinquish cultural norms to embrace the message of the gospel—through grace alone.

It can be tempting to fall into "chronological snobbery"—presuming oneself to be above exempt from such faulty conclusions. Yet, our contemporary Christian culture comes with its own foibles. We chastise ourselves for an inconsistent quiet time while simultaneously judging others for spending less time in the Word. We faithfully avoid certain sins, while embracing others wholeheartedly. We dedicate time to ministry while subconsciously expecting it to influence our favor with God. Our new inner self is at war with a sin nature decrying the sufficiency of His grace.

Take stock of your own inner conflict today. Set aside some time to be still alone with God and ask Him to reveal where in your life you've created your own legalistic laws. Where might you carry resentment for the things you've done for God, secretly hoping—or expecting—it to garner His attention or favor? Release those things to Him. Invite the Holy Spirit to replace it with a sense of peace and freedom from striving. Allow His presence to bring freedom and joy in being fully known by God, uninfluenced by efforts and failure alike.

Day Two

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. Galatians 2:7 (ESV)



Fully known by God.

KNOW

Paul was called by God to bring the gospel to the Gentiles—non-Jewish individuals, whereas Peter was given the ministry of reaching the Jewish community. Two unique men. Two unique callings. One shared mission. Paul and Peter both understood the need to work together for the advancement of the gospel. Nowhere in Scripture do we see a spirit of envy or competition depicted between the two. Neither wasted time wishing for the calling or gifts of the other. Quite the opposite! Throughout the writings of both apostles, we see how highly they each thought of the other. They were secure in who they were and what God had called each of them to do.

What freedom that must bring! To be so secure in your identity in Christ and calling in life that the need to compare, contrast, or critique disappears completely. This freedom isn't reserved for the Pauls and Peters of the Christian faith; it is for us too.

How acquainted are you with your identity and calling in Christ? How familiar are you with the ways God has gifted you to serve in His kingdom and advance the gospel? If you are a follower of Jesus Christ, you have been given gifts and abilities by God to aid you in fulfilling a calling and purpose unique to you. For some of us, God reveals clear, long-term direction with a call to serve Him in one specific career or location our whole lives. But for most of us, He calls us simply to respond to a seasonal or even daily calling to walk out each moment, faithful to His direction.

Today, spend some time asking God to reveal to you your unique make up and giftings. See what He brings to mind and write it down. Invite Him to guide you to the next step in your calling. Close by asking God to grant you the grace to live out your calling in fellowship & partnership with your fellow brothers and sisters as they seek to live out theirs.

Want to go deeper? We have a Spiritual Gifts test available at www.spiritualgiftstest.com/my-account-registration. Use the code E61D3B to link to Summit View Church.

Day Three

And when James and Cephas 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. Galatians 2:9 (ESV)

Whatever your perspective or wherever you stand on current issues, we can all agree that over the past few years, our society has become increasingly contentious. Friends and families divided; fellowship fractured; civility abandoned for hostility—where there once was love & compassion, now resentment and animosity fill minds & hearts. Sadly, this shift hasn't remained in the secular “world” but has infiltrated the household of God—the church. Unity and peace have dissipated as lines of division expand.

Our present context illuminates the unity displayed by the apostles in this week's passage all the more. Church leaders from vastly different backgrounds and perspectives came together and made the unanimous decision to prioritize the flourishing of the church over personal agendas. Here we see key influencers of the early church—James, Peter, John, Paul, and Barnabas—joining together and prioritizing the heart of the gospel over secondary issues. The gospel remained the same—regardless who taught it. The uneducated fisherman was saved by the same Jesus who called the upper-class scholar. Despite their stark political and economic differences, the early church leaders found complete unity. The result? The gospel would find its way to all corners of the known world—to Jew and Gentile alike.

KNOW

In your time with God today, spend some time contemplating what it might look like for such unity to be found in the church today if our politics and opinions, causes, and passions took a backseat to the unifying simplicity of the gospel. As you reflect on the example set by the early church leaders, spend some time in prayer for the unity of Jesus' church today.

Day Four

Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along with me. Galatians 2:1 (ESV)

As we consider the landscape of the Church today, we find a multitude of denominations, theological schisms, political or social agendas, conflicting views on worship style, allegiances to specific Bible translations—the list goes on. When we remove these surface-level characteristics however, at the heart of every gospel-centered church, we find a set of uncompromised, core beliefs. In 340 AD they became known and summarized as The Apostles' Creed.

While not written directly by the Apostles themselves, this collection of theological tenets contains a summary of their teachings. It has come to provide an aligning rubric for all believers throughout history, summarizing the gospel and laying a bedrock for our beliefs. It was at meetings such as the one referenced in this week's passage that the following statements of faith were derived:

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit
and born of the virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to hell.
The third day he rose again from the dead.
He ascended to heaven
and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty.
From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy universal church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

In your time with God today, reflect on the statements above and let these truths sink into your soul. They are the foundation and imperatives of the Christian faith. State them aloud and remind yourself what you really believe. The next time you are tempted to focus on what divides us, ask God to bring these to mind instead; let our shared foundation dictate our unity—not our shared culture, politics, or denomination.

Day Five

Only, they asked us to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do. Galatians 2:10 (ESV)

Towards the end of Jesus' earthly ministry, He instructed his disciples to care for those

Shared foundation.

KNOW

on the outskirts—the overlooked, underrepresented, downtrodden—the “least of these” (see Matthew 25:40). Jesus did not give this command out of a desire to simply appear benevolent—He truly loves the poor. Compassion flows from his heart for those who are poor—physically, spiritually, or otherwise. That includes you and me! Apart from Jesus, we are all spiritually destitute.

Consider Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 8:9: *“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.”* Generosity to the materially and spiritually poor should be a defining marker of the Christian community today.

As you go about your week, consider the following three ways to “remember” the poor: First, through our prayers. Pray that God would bring comfort, cheer, and relief. Second, through our interactions. The poor often goes unseen or overlooked in the community at large; our eyes have been sinfully trained to ignore them. A simple acknowledgement restores dignity and provides a reminder of whose image they bear. Finally, we can remember the poor by tangibly caring for their needs. Just as we are unable to ever reciprocate the lavish sacrifice and love of Jesus for us, our acts of service and care for those unable to respond in kind, reflects and magnifies the love of Jesus to the world.

Spend a few moments asking God to open your eyes to the needs around you today. Where might God was to use you to be His hands and feet in your immediate sphere of influence? Who is He calling you to pray for? Commit to caring for the poor around you as He leads.

Day Six

But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned...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)

Conflict is not something that comes easily for all of us. While some of us find it exhilarating—perhaps even seeking it out like a thrill ride, others recoil at the thought of direct confrontation. Neither extreme is healthy—the reckless pursuit nor the avoidance at all costs—but rather we should pursue a Spirit-led approach. In each of us lives a still small voice that, when it is time to speak up or speak out, prompts us to engage—regardless the outcome.

In this week's passage, Paul confronts Peter for ungodly behavior. Peter understood the gospel, believed in it, and was committed to living by its principles. Yet he still allowed fear of public opinion to outweigh the love of the gospel, refusing to eat with the non-Jewish community. When we consider that Peter received direct instruction from Jesus in Acts 10 to not only dine with Gentiles but to even let go of Jewish dietary restrictions when doing so, his backsliding becomes even more surprising. Peter's withdrawal from the Gentiles would not have been merely hurtful to non-Jews around him, but it would have been influential to those who looked to him for guidance—perhaps the Gentiles weren't fully acceptable before God after all, or perhaps they were included but as second-class citizens. Not only was Peter guilty of personal hypocrisy but his actions threatened to lead others astray. With so much at stake, Paul could not remain silent and confronted Peter head on.

The good news is that while conflict can certainly be painful or uncomfortable, it doesn't have to end in broken relationships. Conflict is often the vehicle through which God refines us, smooths out our rough edges, and molds us into the image of Christ. As

Compassion.

KNOW

painful and embarrassing as Paul's confrontation must have felt to Peter, we do not see them part as enemies; in fact, throughout both their writings we find only the greatest respect for the other.

As you spend time with God today, take a moment to consider where He might be calling you to grow. Is there someone you need to reach out to? Perhaps someone confronted you recently and you didn't respond as you would have liked. Do you need to cultivate the practice of pausing and praying prior to engaging others in conflict? Invite God to develop your healthy conflict skills today.

BE KNOWN

Getting Started:

Growing up, who had the greatest influence on you? Who in your life today impacts how you think, act, or behave? Do you find yourself acting differently when you're around them?

1. Except for a brief fifteen-day period, Paul had been by himself on mission for over fourteen years, proclaiming the gospel to the Gentiles. According to verse 2, why does Paul go back to Jerusalem?
2. Read verses 7-9. How do James, Peter, and John respond to the mission that Paul had been set on?
 - a. In your own words, what is the difference between the missions that each of these men have been called to do by God? How are they similar?
 - b. To whom have you been entrusted to preach the gospel?
3. The ministry of James, Cephas, and John was different from Paul's and required different methods and approaches. Read verse 10.
 - a. What one thing did they request Paul include in his ministry? Why do you think they did so?
 - b. What would your response be to their request? Explain.

BE KNOWN

4. What was Peter doing that made Paul so angry? Why did Paul care so much about how and where Peter ate?
For background read Acts 10:9-36.
5. Paul was deeply concerned by a divide in the body of Christ that was beginning to form. The natural direction of the world is to be divided by differences such as race, gender, social constructs, etc. and when we aren't intentional to fight that inclination, we will find it infiltrating the body of Christ as well. What are ways we allow similar issues to bring about division in the church today?
6. Despite Peter's frequent encounters with grace—and even clear direction from Jesus himself regarding dietary restrictions—why do you think Peter struggled here?
 - a. In what areas of your life do you relate to Peter's struggle? How have you distanced yourself from others in the past?
How can such behavior impact one's ability to communicate the gospel message?



Prejudice hinders the community.

REFLECTION & APPLICATION

While each of us have different backgrounds and experiences, we all struggle with partiality, favoritism, and prejudice. Regardless of how long we have been walking with Jesus, these issues can still live within our hearts and get in the way of the mission. Prejudice hinders the community Jesus is building and prevents us from being the ambassadors we have been called to be. As we conclude this week's study, take time to pray for those in your life you find difficult to relate to, communicate with, and connect to. Pray that God would bless them and give you a heart of service towards them.

SUNDAY NOTES

BACKGROUND REVIEW

Paul recounts a time he went to meet with other disciples in Jerusalem, known as the Jerusalem Council. You can read more of the details of this story in Acts 15.

MAIN IDEA

There is *one* gospel message to proclaim for *all* to believe.

BIG IDEAS

God used Paul to minister to the non-Jews (Gentiles), and He used Peter to minister to the Jews. God used each of them for a special purpose so that everyone could hear and know the gospel!

Paul wrote a lot about Jews and Gentiles. Jews are the people of Israel, and the Gentiles are everyone else! Some Jewish believers thought that Gentiles needed to follow the same rules as the Jews when they became believers. But Paul knew that is not what God wanted, and that they just needed Jesus.

Peter knew that he did not have to follow all the Jewish laws. But when other Jews were around, he cared more about what they thought than what he knew to be true. Religion and rule-following divides people. That is not what God wants!

The gospel is about what Jesus did for us. We are not rescued from sin by anything that we can do because Jesus already did it all. The gospel is simple and for everyone. God does not want us to “add” anything to it. The gospel, or good news, is about bringing all people, cultures, and races into one family.

KNOW

It's important to know God and His Word so that we do not believe things about the gospel that are untrue. How can you make time each day to learn more about God and what the Bible says?

BE KNOWN

Who can you eat lunch with this week that you don't normally sit with? Who can you play with at school that you don't normally play with? The simple gesture of telling someone, “Hey, come join me!” helps them feel known!



Know & Be Known.

Read Galatians 2:5 (ESV): “to them we did not yield in submission even for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you.”

Q What practice does Paul reference several times in this passage? Where in the Bible do we find the significance of this procedure? For a refresher, read Genesis 17.

Q Reflecting on our past two weeks in the book of Galatians, why is Paul addressing this issue with circumcision? What do you think would be the equivalent in today's churches? What are things we see churches require new Christians to do in order to be a part of the faith family?

Read Galatians 2:14 (ESV): “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?”

Q Who is Cephas? For a refresher, check out John 1:42.

Q Paul calls out Cephas for his actions. How does Paul rebuke Cephas? What is an example of a time you acted like Cephas?

NOTES

"The gospel is not just the 'A-B-C' but the 'A-to-Z' of the Christian life. The gospel is not just the way to enter the kingdom, but is the way to address every problem and is the way to grow at every step."

– Tim Keller

INTRODUCTION

MAIN IDEA

As followers of Jesus, we believe He is everything we need for every moment.

In Paul's letter to the Galatians, his greatest critique hits close to home for us today. In fact, it is probable that there are areas in each of our lives where we fall victim to the same error. We joyfully accept the news of Christ's work on our behalf—yet our actions reveal an underlying belief that there is more required of us. We are regularly reminded that it is not adherence to religious law or one's performance that reconciles us to God. Yet, the feeling we must do or contribute something lingers. Some kind of effort on our part must be required for God to accept us...right?

Paul emphatically addresses this question in this week's passage: No! No one is made right with God through works. While the gospel message of grace may be familiar to you, may it never lose its effect and impact on your life. It was never meant to be received once in passing but rather embraced weekly, daily, and hourly.

KNOW

Day One

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)

Three times in this passage Paul refers to the "works of the law." Most scholars would agree that Paul is referring comprehensively to both the Mosaic law found in Exodus, as well as any paradigm that attempts to view our own efforts, or works, as a basis for our relationship with God. Paul challenges the Galatians in this passage to relinquish all efforts to reconcile themselves to God in exchange for faith in His sufficient grace.

So, if works are not an acceptable offering to bring to God in relationship to Him, what exactly can we offer Him? Robert Capon, an Episcopal priest, answers it this way:

"Jesus came to raise the dead. The only qualification for the gift of the gospel is to be dead. You don't have to be smart. You don't have to be wise. You don't have to BE anything...you just have to be dead. That's it."

Nothing in us warrants, initiates, merits, or causes God to save us. As offensive as this message might be to some, it isn't until we reach the end of ourselves, to the point of exhausting our own faculties, that we are able to fully embrace the gospel message. All that is required for us to be justified is to abandon our "self-salvation" projects, acknowledge our sin and helplessness, repent of our self-assertion and self-righteousness, and place our trust in Jesus Christ to save us.

In your time with God today, we challenge you to sit with the following questions. Have you surrendered to Jesus' saving grace? Are you still clinging to a self-sufficiency back up plan or have you found freedom in His unconditional love and acceptance? If you have never made the decision to surrender fully to Him, we invite you to take a moment in prayer to do so today; don't delay your freedom any longer! If you are already a follower of Jesus but find yourself slipping back into old ways of thinking, spend some time meditating on His promises, exchanging your self-reliance for His grace.

KNOW

Day Two

For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. Galatians 2:19 (ESV)

What do you live for? The implication of this question is far greater than some existential or hypothetical philosophizing. Life is not lived in a university auditorium daydreaming about reality. In the day to day, here and now, if you were to answer with complete transparency, what do you live for? Or perhaps the better question: WHO do you live for?

There is a driving force behind everything we do. Something, or someone, motivates us to get out of bed in the morning. It occupies our thoughts, fills our calendars, and consumes our resources. For some, if we were to be honest, we are driven in life to prove and validate ourselves to others. Perhaps a parent, a coach, or a role model. Maybe a spouse, family member, or child. For some it is as simple as living for ourselves.

In Galatians 2:19, Paul makes a statement worthy of reflection: am I truly living for God? Before Paul devoted his life to God, he first had to reach the end of himself and realize his own self-righteous attempts to fulfill the law was not possible. It was only after he turned to Christ for salvation, that he was able to, as he describes in 1 Corinthians 10:31, do all things for the glory of God.

Spend some time today thinking about your life, the people in it, and the responsibilities it brings. Nothing in your life is a mistake—each aspect is orchestrated by God. While we can't always control what's in our lives, we can choose how to respond and what we allow to motivate us. Ask yourself "Am I doing this for God?" and "Am I doing this in a way that brings God glory?" All work, parenting, play, recreation, etc. can be done to the glory of God. Ask Him to show you today where He might be calling you to adjust your motives and methods; that every aspect of your life would be glorifying to Him.

Day Three

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. Galatians 2:20 (ESV)

Finding the words to describe our faith can be difficult. As imperfect people, in an ongoing state of redemption, it can feel as though we ourselves never fully line up with the things we tell others about God and what He's done for us. Yet it can be this very incongruence, our weaknesses, that God uses to reveal Himself to others.

A.W. Tozer's books *The Knowledge of the Holy*, *In Pursuit of God*, and *The Attributes of God* are commonly found on Christian bookshelves—for congregants and pastors alike. In a well-known passage, he speaks of these "glorious contradictions" that are at play within the life of a believer. He writes:

The Christian is dead and yet he lives forever. He died to himself and yet he lives in Christ. The Christian saves his own life by losing it, and he is in danger of losing it by trying to save it. It is strange but true that the Christian is strongest when he is weakest and weakest when he is strongest. When he gets down on his knees thinking he is weak, he is always strong. The Christian is in least danger when he is fearful and trusting God and in the most danger when he feels the most self-confident. He is most sinless when he feels the most sinful, and he is the most sinful when he feels the most sinless. The Christian actually has the most when he is giving away the most; and in all of these ways, the Christian is simply putting into daily practice the teachings and example of Jesus Christ, his Savior and Lord!

KNOW

This is the key to the Christian life: faith in Christ—not just the Christ who died on the cross for you 2000+ year ago, but the living Christ who loves and guides you today. Our prayer for you as you engage this study, is that you would come to feel at home as a walking glorious contradiction; dead to sin and self, yet alive in Jesus. In your time with God today, spend some time thanking Him that we don't have to be perfect, to be perfectly reconciled to Him.

Day Four

"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." Galatians 2:20 (ESV)

Some people attend church for the same reason they listen to podcasts—to hear “a good moral talk.” For some, they’re in the midst of a personal crisis and things are falling apart; they turn to the church hoping something there might give them enough wisdom and insight to make it through. They hope the church can save their marriage, help with unruly kids, or give them direction for a hard decision they’re facing.

At first blush, this might seem to be a movement to celebrate—and we certainly want the church to be the kind of community that walks through the hard things of life together. But it's equally important that we never lose sight of what Christ ultimately came to do. Christianity is not a self-help program to try out when uncertainty and chaos inevitably invades our lives. A life with Jesus radically changes everything! While Jesus absolutely steps into our mess and mends the broken places, He also does so much more.

Anglican Priest Fleming Rutledge in her book *The Crucifixion: Understanding the Death of Jesus Christ*, writes: “The Son of God did not come to make good people better but to give life to the dead.”

C.S. Lewis in *Mere Christianity* wrote: “mere improvement is not redemption... God became man to turn creatures into sons: not simply to produce better men of the old kind but to produce a new kind of man.”

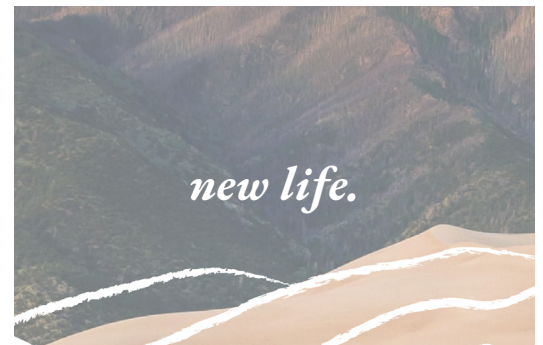
This is what lies at heart in the gospel. If we have been united with Christ, there's so much more in store for us than a comfortable, cleaned up life. Death is undone and we are offered a new life entirely. When we understand the full implications of what Christ has done for us, there is great security and comfort in the knowledge that He has given Himself for us.

Spend some time with God today meditating on the implications of these truths. How might you live your life differently knowing you've been given a brand-new life in Him? Consider how this might alter your perspective on hardships and the purpose of this temporary season leading up to eternity with God.

Day Five

I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose. Galatians 2:21 (ESV)

No follower of Jesus would blatantly suggest that His death on the cross and resurrection were meaningless. Yet, many of us behave as though we believe that to be true. Within each of us lives the temptation to question the sufficiency of Christ: *Was it really enough? I don't need to do anything, really? Maybe I should try something just in case...* We all have moments we fall prey to this train of thought but consider the



KNOW

implications—it suggests the work Jesus did on the cross was not enough.

On the cross something miraculous took place, famously referred to as the “great exchange.” 2 Corinthians 5:21 and Romans 8:3 tell us that our sin and imperfections were placed on the perfect and sinless Savior, and His perfection and right standing with God were granted and merited to us. In John 19:30 when Christ called out from the cross “It is finished!” He truly meant it. It was a declaration that from that point on, there should be no doubt to the lengths at which God would go to redeem and rescue humanity.

Read again Paul’s words in Galatians 2:21. He makes it clear that if right relationship with God could be achieved by rule-keeping or people pleasing religion, Christ’s death was unnecessary. Let that sink in. If works, efforts, and actions can save us, then Christ’s death on the cross was a complete waste. The breathtaking glory of God on display and the manifestation of His divine love becomes squandered and purposeless.

Beloved, He knows that is not your intention when you doubt. His invitation to you today is to rest. Rest assured in the fact that Jesus has paid the price for you. He has given Himself, joyfully and freely on the cross so that you would be His and He would be yours. In your time with Him today, we invite you to simply rest in His presence. Let go of the need to do today and simply just be with Him today.

Day Six

Isaac Watts (1674-1748) was an English minister and theologian; best known for the hymns he wrote. Most famously known for *When I Survey the Wondrous Cross* and *Joy to the World*, Watts wrote over 700 hymns that would equip churches worldwide with songs of worship. One of his lesser-known hymns, *Vain are the Hopes of Sons of Men*, poetically communicates the truth emphasized in this week’s passage. It reads:

*Vain are the hopes the sons of men
On their own works have built;
Their hearts by nature all unclean,
And all their actions guilt.*

*In vain we ask God’s righteous law
To justify us now,
Since to convince and to condemn
Is all the law can do.*

*Let Jew and Gentile stop their mouths
Without a murmuring word,
And the whole race of Adam stand
Guilty before the Lord.*

*Jesus, how glorious is your grace,
When in your name we trust,
Our faith receives a righteousness
That makes the sinner just.*

As we conclude this week’s study, reflect on the following summary of the text:

1. Man’s greatest need is to be made right with God.
2. Being made right with God comes not by our own efforts, but through faith in Jesus.
3. To NOT trust in Jesus is an insult to the grace of God.
4. When one trusts in Jesus, they receive a new life and are united with Christ.

We invite you to spend your time with God today, as we conclude our week in Galatians 2:15-21, meditating on and internalizing the following creed of Paul: *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.*

Rest in His presence.

BE KNOWN

Getting Started:

Are there any lessons you learned early on in life that still ring true today? Any words of advice or wisdom that you've received that you consistently come back to?

1. This week's passage emphasized the beautiful truth interlaced throughout Scripture: the doctrine of justification. Take some time to read further on the topic using the following passages: Genesis 15:6, Psalm 32:1, Isaiah 53:11, Habakkuk 2:4, Romans 5:9, 2 Corinthians 5:21, and 1 Peter 2:24.
 - a. Can you think of any other key texts that teach justification by faith alone?
 - b. In your own words, what does "justification by faith alone" mean? How would you describe it to someone who is not a believer and has no Bible knowledge?
 - c. Martin Luther, prominent theologian during the Protestant Reformation, argued that justification by faith alone is the doctrine on which the church stands or falls. Why does this doctrine affect everything else about the church?
2. Read verses 15-16. Paul is attempting to correct the false belief that religious adherence to Jewish law influences our standing with God.
 - a. According to Paul's argument, why is that a foolish thing to attempt?
 - b. What are ways people try to justify themselves today?
3. Paul understood that certain teachings might generate misunderstanding or misapplication. In verses 17-18 Paul addresses those that might be inclined to misconstrue his justification-by-faith-alone emphasis and take advantage of their freedom in Christ to justify living however they wanted.
 - a. Do you feel this was a valid concern? What about for us today? Why or why not?

BE KNOWN

4. In verses 19-21 Paul narrates his salvation in very personal terms.
 - a. What words does he use to describe his salvation?
 - b. What was the outcome of his transformation?
5. Galatians 2:20 is a familiar passage in contemporary Christian culture. It is not uncommon to find it emblazoned on t-shirts, coffee mugs, posters, and even tattooed onto skin.
 - a. What does it mean to have been crucified with Christ?
 - b. What type of effect should this have on your daily life? For further reading check out Romans 6:8-19 and 7:6.



Crucified with Christ.

REFLECTION & APPLICATION

“Catechisms” have been written throughout church history to provide a summary of the key doctrines of the faith. They exist for instruction, and to prompt our hearts to worship. The Heidelberg Catechism, written in 1563, speaks beautifully to what lies at the heart of justification by faith. It answers the question “How are you right before God?” with the following:

Only by true faith in Jesus Christ. Even though my conscience accuses me of having grievously sinned against all God’s commandments, of never having kept any of them, and of still being inclined toward all evil, nevertheless, without any merit of my own, out of sheer grace, God grants and credits to me the perfect satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness of Christ, as if I had never sinned nor been a sinner, and as if I had been as perfectly obedient as Christ was obedient for me. All I need to do is accept this gift with a believing heart.

As we conclude this week’s study, we invite you to take time to praise God in prayer for this wonderful gift of salvation. If this is a principle you struggle to apply or integrate into your everyday living, we encourage you to meditate on and memorize Galatians 2:20.

SUNDAY NOTES

SUNDAY NOTES

BACKGROUND REVIEW

The Jewish people were descendants of the Israelites—God’s chosen people. When Jesus died on the cross as the ultimate sacrifice, rules and rituals previously necessary to be forgiven were no longer needed. Additionally, Jesus came for everyone—not just the Jews! The things that make us different like race, social status, or denomination no longer matter.

MAIN IDEA

As followers of Jesus, we believe He is everything we need for every moment.

BIG IDEAS

We are rescued from sin, not because of anything we have done, but because of what Jesus did for us on the cross. Jesus did it all for us! Our rescue was not because we followed every rule or law—we couldn’t do that even if we wanted to. We just don’t have what it takes! But Jesus did follow every rule perfectly, and His death was a sacrifice for our sin.

Imagine we are in a court room, standing in front of the great judge—God. We are guilty of sin but when we believe in Jesus (faith), we no longer stand in front of God alone. Jesus stands with us. Our sin is put on Jesus and Jesus’ righteousness is put on us—meaning we are made right with God through Jesus. Because Jesus took our sin, God declares us not guilty (justification). Our sin is not put on our record. And we can never be held guilty again!

When we believe and are declared “not guilty,” we are called to then live a gospel-centered—Jesus-centered—life. This means that we have believed the good news of Jesus and that we understand and apply the gospel to our lives. We make following Jesus a lifestyle, not an activity. We learn to live holy lives, each day more and more.

If our rescue from sin was not because we followed every rule or law, why is the law important? Because it points us to God. Romans 3:20 says that the law shows us our need for God—our inability to follow every rule or law perfectly. Once we become believers, the law helps guide our actions. While we cannot follow the law perfectly to earn our rescue from sin, once we are part of God’s family, Romans 3:31 tells us that we get to follow the law out of a heart of gratitude for all that Jesus has done for us.

KNOW

God offers to rescue anyone from sin. God planned for all the world to be blessed and to know about Him through His people (that’s us!). We are called to introduce others to Jesus. When we get to know other people, we get to tell them about what Jesus has done for us.

BE KNOWN

Have you ever said to your parents, “You just don’t understand!”? Who can really understand what we’re feeling or what’s going on inside our heads? As both fully God and fully man, Jesus does. As man, Jesus can relate to and understands our challenges—including temptation. And as God, He knows what goes on inside your head. He is all-knowing, all powerful, and knows us better than we know ourselves. Hebrews 4:15 promises that He will lovingly provide exactly what we need.

He is everything we need.

BACKGROUND REVIEW

Q Can you think of a time where you were trying to earn something? Money? A grade? An award? Someone's good opinion?

Paul says that *"a person is not justified by works."*

Q Why do you think people try to earn God's favor and work to be justified?

Read Galatians 2:20. What does Paul mean when he says, *"I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me."*?

Q How can we help each other remember salvation has already been freely given? That we don't have to work for it anymore?

NOTES

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INTRODUCTION

MAIN IDEA

We become a member of God's family through faith in Jesus—not by perfectly following the law.

It's natural to feel some hesitation when we hear news we perceive to be "too good to be true." There's a certain level of cynicism and skepticism inside each of us that seeks to protect us from disappointment and prevents us from accepting good news at face value. The simple gift of eternal life, forgiveness of sins, and acceptance by God, for example, might elicit such a response.

While the Galatians had initially embraced the gospel, they were quick to allow skeptics to deceive them. Questioning the free gift of grace from God, they determined it must require additional effort or work on their part. In response, Paul spends Galatians 3 recounting 2,000 years of Old Testament redemptive history, highlighting Abraham, the father of the faith, who was justified by faith, though no effort of his own.

KNOW

Day One

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? Galatians 3:2-3 (ESV)

We've all seen television shows, websites, or social media posts highlighting the foolish and bumbling things people do. Our culture has made it easy to find humor at each other's expense. And when it happens in front of us, it's easy to deem the person a fool or thoughtless—though we usually save any verbal critique for our recounting with someone else. It would take something extraordinarily reckless or dangerous to move us to speak out in the moment or address it with the person directly.

In this week's passage, the foolishness of the Galatians crosses that line and prompts Paul to confront them. In their case, their indiscretion was not some immature prank, but the heretical thinking that they could live their Christian life through their own strength. While our initial reaction might not be quite as strong as Paul's—from your perspective this might not even be considered all that “foolish”—perhaps we're not fully grasping the problem Paul seeks to address.

Paul is astounded that the believers in Galatia would rely upon their own efforts to carry them through life. His warning doesn't solely pertain to the issue of how one begins the Christian life through faith in Jesus, but also how one finishes. Paul reminds them that the gift of God's Spirit came not by their works, but by hearing and believing in the gospel. To reject what had been so graciously given, and to seek an alternative, would be incredibly foolish.

In your time with God today, consider why—knowing that salvation does not come from works of the law—the Galatians so quickly turned from relying on the Spirit for their spiritual growth and formation? Where do you find yourself relying on your own strength to get you through? Where might God be inviting you to rest in trust instead of striving? Invite Him to speak to you today.

Day Two

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."
Galatians 3:8 (ESV)

It can be easy to presume, if we aren't in them daily, that the Old and New Testaments are vastly different. Perhaps we get lost in the genealogies or assume that because it



KNOW

predated Jesus, the Old Testament does not apply to us. So, we ignore it, focusing on New Testament passages. Yet when we do this, we miss significant chunks of the story. We would never open a mystery novel halfway through and expect the story to make sense. The same is true of the Bible. From the first character of Genesis to the final punctuation mark of Revelation, Scripture tells one unified story of salvation. And like a well written novel, we sometimes must read it through several times to fully catch or understand how the twists and turns along the way contribute to the overarching narrative—in the Bible's case: the divine rescue and reconciliation of God and His people through Jesus.

While the Old Testament spends most of its time detailing the story of God's covenant relationship with the people of Israel, there is foreshadowing throughout of His ultimate intention to redeem all of humanity from the very beginning. In Genesis 12, God promises Abraham to give Him a people and a Person through whom all people will be blessed in His divine rescue mission. Throughout the full account of redemptive history, we find this reoccurring theme.

For us to grasp the full breadth of our spiritual lineage and heritage we can't ignore the Old Testament account, nor dismiss it as irrelevant to us. What comes to life in the New Testament is planted and nurtured in the Old. We must learn to see ourselves within the greater story; God's original promise to Abraham includes us! Our salvation was promised and set into motion in the earliest pages of our recorded history.

We encourage you to spend some of your time with God today reading through the full story. Have you ever taken the time to read the whole Bible, cover to cover? Start today! Purchase, download, or subscribe to an annual Bible reading plan and commit to letting God reveal the full unabridged story of redemption to you this year.

Day Three

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" Galatians 3:13 (ESV)

It's extremely humbling when we consider the method through which Jesus brought about our redemption. We know that God is all powerful, sovereign, and good. Holding all that as true, consider this: the cross was the method God deemed best to facilitate our redemption. Karl Barth, one of the more prominent and influential theologians in the twentieth century, called it "almost unbearably severe." Jesus Christ accomplished redemption for us by becoming a curse.

In theological circles, this verse is often cited when speaking to the concept of "penal substitutionary atonement"—the work Jesus did on the cross (atonement), taking the punishment for our sins (penal), as a substitute in our place (substitutionary). You and I were at the mercy of the curse of the law, yet Jesus voluntarily took our place and was made a curse for us.

This act of love has moved believers throughout history to sing in worship and pen beautiful lyrics. One in particular, *What Wondrous Love is This*, puts it this way:

What wondrous love is this, O my soul, O my soul!

What wondrous love is this, O my soul!

*What wondrous love is this that caused the Lord of bliss
to bear the dreadful curse for my soul, for my soul,
to bear the dreadful curse for my soul!*

KNOW

*When I was sinking down, sinking down, sinking down,
when I was sinking down, sinking down,
when I was sinking down beneath God's righteous frown,
Christ laid aside his crown for my soul, for my soul,
Christ laid aside his crown for my soul*

In your time with God today, meditate on and sing the lyrics of this hymn. Invite Him to reveal to you the personal implications of the work He did for you on the cross; what freedom and joy might He have for you? When you feel as if you're under God's curse, run to the cross and find it placed firmly on Jesus, no longer a burden you must carry.

Day Four

So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. Galatians 3:24 (ESV)

In Paul's day a guardian was an individual who had been entrusted with the care of young children, typically from the age of six to adolescence. The guardian was there to ensure that the children were fed, clothed, and made their way to school and back home safely. They would serve as a tutor, aid in the child's development, and provide disciplinary action to help correct or curb poor manners and improper etiquette.

In the same way, Paul suggests that the law was given by God to tutor, aid, and discipline His people until Christ came. It provided the instruction necessary for God's people—and us—to recognize that only through faith in Jesus could justification be made possible. The law was never meant to serve as a permanent guardian, but as an instrument to help instruct, protect, and guide God's people—preparing the way for the promised Messiah. Today, the law shows us our sinfulness, and points us towards the solution. Despite its insufficiency for salvation, the law was—and still is—something to be examined, understood, and respected.

David writes in Psalm 19:9b-11 (NIV)

"The decrees of the Lord are firm, and all of them are righteous. They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the honeycomb. By them your servant is warned; in keeping them there is great reward."

Do you feel this way about instruction found in Scripture? In your time with God today, ask Him to help you shift your perspective and attitude toward His commands and direction. In place of something restrictive and confining, ask Him to help you see it as your guardian; tasked to lead, protect, and guide you through life.

Day Five

for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. Galatians 3:26 (ESV)

Over the past few weeks in our study of Galatians, this concept of justification seems to be a reoccurring theme. However, it isn't the only aspect of the gospel worthy of admiration. In his book *Knowing God*, J.I. Packer writes the following:

"Adoption is the highest privilege that the gospel offers: higher even than justification. . . Justification is the primary blessing, because it meets our primary spiritual need. We all stand by nature under God's judgment; his law condemns us, guilt gnaws at us, making us restless, miserable, and in our lucid moments afraid; we have no peace in ourselves because we have no peace with our Maker. So we need the forgiveness of our sins, and assurance of a restored relationship with God, more than we need anything else in the



Adoption.

KNOW

world; and this the gospel offers us before it offers us anything else... But this is not to say that justification is the highest blessing of the gospel. *Adoption is higher, because of the richer relationship with God that it involves... To be right with God the Judge is a great thing, but to be loved and cared for by God the Father is greater.*"

Let that sink in. Not only does God provide for our spiritual redemption but He goes beyond to bless us richly through the redefinition of our relationship to Him. The absolution of our sin makes us right with God—no longer His enemy or opponent. Yet this reconciliatory act carries us beyond a neutral position, to that of intimate relationship. We are adopted into His family; loved and cared for by Him.

As you time you spend time today with God, let this truth dominate your thoughts: God is not merely some cosmic judge declaring your innocence—He is a Heavenly Father proclaiming His radical love for you.

Day Six

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. Galatians 3:28 (ESV)

When considering the implications of the cross, we spend a lot of time examining the vertical ramifications, but often miss the horizontal repercussions. What Jesus did on the cross was of paramount importance to our relationship with God—how we relate to Him, how we are known by Him, how we are saved, etc. Yet the impact of redemption goes even further.

At the close of Galatians 3, Paul continues to recount not only what the gospel does to redefine our vertical relationship with God, but also what it does to our horizontal relationships—the way we relate to one another. Galatians 3:28 lends its support to the significant assertion that the gospel is inclusive of all people. In Christ, we find the unique opportunity for diversity among believers to become a point of celebration—redemption is unlimited and belonging an open invitation. Through our shared identity in Christ, we are empowered to overcome all that divides and separates us from each another. In fact, we are called to be known for a love that overcomes barriers of ethnicity, social status, and gender. Our ability as a church to overcome such barriers holds the power to become a beautiful witness of the redemptive power of Christ. Sadly, the church historically has failed to embody this reality. Today, Sunday morning is still the most segregated hour of the week.

The gospel calls us to treat one another with dignity and equality, knowing Christ's life was laid down for all regardless of race, gender, or social status. If our Sunday morning or midweek experience is largely comprised of people just like us, we miss out on all the Body of Christ was meant to be.

Spend some time with God today considering, envisioning, and dreaming of what the church could look like if we took the time to reach out and engage with those different around us. Ask God to reveal to you who in your immediate sphere does not share your demographic but does share your love for Christ. Ask Him to provide the opportunity to connect and to guide you in your efforts, knowing that the only common ground you need is Him.



BE KNOWN

Getting Started:

We're all tempted to forget or lose sight of things at times. Do you find yourself easily distracted by new or interesting ideas?

1. The beginning of Galatians 3 starts with the Apostle Paul asking one blunt question and five rhetorical questions to the Galatians church.
 - a. What are they and what is the Apostle Paul seeking to teach them by each question?
 - b. What does it mean to pursue “perfection by the flesh”? Paul most likely was referring to the Mosaic Law (rule following) and personal accomplishments (competitive achievement).
 - c. How does this question help get to the heart of what Paul has been teaching the Galatians throughout his letter?
2. In verses 10-11, Paul asserts that, short of achieving everything in the law, we are cursed. Additionally, no one is declared righteous by the law.
 - a. How does Jesus Christ address these problems for us? Read verses 13-14.
 - b. Paul argues that we can see God's plan was always for Christ, not the law. How does he make this argument in verses 17-18?
3. Abraham is a big figure in the Old Testament and is key to understanding the overarching story of salvation. If you're unfamiliar with the story, check out the following passages in Genesis: 12:1-9, 15:1-6, 17:1-14, 22-27, and 22:1-19.
 - a. Why do you think Paul used Abraham as an example of justification by faith?
 - b. Based upon Paul's argument here, and from what we've studied thus far in Galatians, what is the relationship between faith and obedience?

BE KNOWN

4. Read verses 19-24. If the law was insufficient to bring about salvation, there must be no need for it in the first place—right? Yet, that's not what Paul says.
- a. What are some of the reasons he gives for the purpose of the law?
5. How does the image of being clothed with Christ in verse 27 explain our salvation? What does verse 28 tell us about its impact on equality?



REFLECTION & APPLICATION

Since the late 1700s, *Rock of Ages* has been a familiar song sung in many churches. The second verse of the song, in particular, beautifully articulates the truth we find in the book of Galatians:

*Not the labors of my hands
Can fulfill the laws commands
Should my passion never fade
And my efforts all be weighed
All for sin could not atone
You must save and you alone*

As we conclude this week's study in Galatians 3, we invite you to spend time singing this hymn or meditating on its words. Let it inspire you to thank God for meeting the demands of the law that we could not, forgiving us our sins, and saving us from ourselves.

SUNDAY NOTES

BACKGROUND REVIEW

Paul spent the first two chapters of Galatians explaining how the gospel or “good news” he taught them was the true gospel—it came directly from God and was not made up by people.

Sometimes believers might think it’s too good to be true: eternal life, forgiveness of sins, acceptance by God—all these great things coming to us simply as a gift. While the Galatians had initially accepted the gospel, they were quickly deceived into believing that the free gift of grace from God required additional effort or work on their part.

MAIN IDEA

We become a member of God’s family through faith in Jesus—not by perfectly following the law (rules).

BIG IDEAS

It was God’s plan from the very beginning for everyone to be a part of His family. God knew that Adam and Eve would sin, which is why He planned all along for Jesus to rescue us from being separated from God.

Salvation—being rescued from our sins—is a gift. It is free! There is nothing that we need to do to receive it. There is nothing that we can do to earn it. The Galatians were told lies that they had to do other things to be rescued from their sins. Paul helped them see that wasn’t true!

Paul told them about Bible history, showing how Abraham, the father of the faith, had been saved not by any effort of his own. Abraham was made right with God because of his belief and belief alone. God fulfilled His promise to Abraham that through him the nations would be blessed—that blessing was Jesus!

Jesus paid the full price for our rescue from sin. When people “add” to the gospel, it’s like saying that Jesus dying on the cross and rising again was not enough. This rescue from sin is for anyone, no matter their age, gender, or where they live. Everyone can be made right in God’s eyes by their belief in Jesus.

But if all we need is Jesus, why did God make The Law in the first place? First, it shows us that if we try to be righteous on our own, we are just going to fail! If you break one law, you have broken them all! Second, the Law helped guide and protect people until Jesus came. Can you imagine being in a classroom with no rules? That might seem fun at first, but it would quickly become chaos and that would not feel very safe. To learn more about this topic read Romans 7-8.

KNOW

The whole Bible is one continuous story of Jesus. Yes, Jesus! From start to finish the Bible is the story of God’s plan to save people through Jesus.

BE KNOWN

Ask a friend or family member how they came to know Jesus. When we hear stories about how Jesus works in other people’s lives, it encourages us! Consider telling your friends or family member how Jesus has helped you.

Salvation is a gift!

Q Have you ever forgotten something super important?

Q What point is Paul trying to get across with his questions?

Q What significance does that have for how we relate to God?
How would it be different if your relationship was based on your performance?

Q Why is this so hard for us to do?

"If you want to judge how well a person understands Christianity, find out how much he makes of the thought of being God's child, and having God as his Father. If this is not the thought that prompts and controls his worship and prayers and his whole outlook on life, it means that he does not understand Christianity very well at all.... 'Father' is the Christian name for God. Our understanding of Christianity cannot be better than our grasp of adoption."

– J.I. Packer, *Knowing God*

INTRODUCTION

MAIN IDEA

We are no longer slaves to sin or the law, but now children of God.

Regardless of your background, we all understand the power of family. Be it positive or negative, we all have family stories that leave a lasting impact. Paul, in his letter to the Galatians, emphasized the benefits of following Jesus, including the experience of gaining a new spiritual family. What's truly remarkable about the gospel of grace is that not only do we receive forgiveness of sins and a restored relationship with God, but we are actually adopted into the family of God, and we can call Him Father. If this is not your primary view of God, then you may in fact be slipping into the exact same error as the Galatians. Is your picture of God one of a divine taskmaster enslaving you to obey? Or is your picture of God a Father who lovingly cares for and provides for His children?

KNOW

Day One

Have I then become your enemy by telling you the truth?... my little children, for whom I am again in the anguish of childbirth until Christ is formed in you! I wish I could be present with you now and change my tone, for I am perplexed about you.

Galatians 4:16, 19-20 (ESV)

Scholars have often considered Galatians to be one of Paul's most critical letters. Yet we know from passages such as Galatians 4:12-20 that he found no pleasure in chastising the Church. It was only when the deception allowed in threatened the unity and integrity of his family—the church body—that he was willing to speak up. Paul's words are full of passion and ardor yet interspersed with tender terms of endearment and reminders of their love for one another. This is the model we should follow when loving one another; to love each other well enough to have the hard conversations.

"Love enters the fray of betrayal and brokenness with a bold, courageous desire for the kind of reconciliation that redeems all the Evil One's efforts to destroy... love is the inconceivable, unexplainable pursuit of the offender by the offended for the sake of restored relationship with God, self, and others." – Dan Allender, *Bold Love*

When has someone spoken important, hard things to you this way? How did you respond? When have you been willing to do this for others? Take a moment today to ask God to guide you in your conversations:

Lord, give us the courage to lovingly confront one another when necessary. Likewise, soften our hearts that our delivery would be tender and tempered with grace. Thank you that, when we fail in either regard, "all Christian efforts to love are made lovely and useful by a great Lover who superintends all our bumbling efforts and turns the dross of mixed motives to the gold of eternal intentions." – Dan Allender, *Bold Love*

KNOW

Day Two

But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son...to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. Galatians 4:4-5 (ESV)

In the early 1700s John Newton, a British native, became both the captain of multiple slave ships and a baby Christian. This occupational choice followed his own brief experience of enslavement in 1745 as a result of his defection from the royal navy—a prime example of the cyclical nature of sin—hurt people hurting others.

Through the maturing work of the Holy Spirit—and a personal health crisis—Newton was convicted of the immoral nature of his occupation and became a staunch abolitionist. Today, we remember him best as the author of the hymn *Amazing Grace*. In the spirit of this week's passage, Newton's reflections on the transition from spiritual slave to son is particularly poignant in light of his intimate proximity to slavery—as both a former slave and slaver.

As you spend time with God today, consider his lesser-known song “Alas! By Nature”:

Alas! By nature how depraved,
How prone to every ill!
Our lives, to Satan, how enslaved,
How obstinate our will!
And can such sinners be restored?
Such rebels reconciled?
Can grace itself the means afford
To make a foe a child?

Yet one thing more must grace provide,
To bring us home to God;
Or we shall slight the Lord, who died,
And trample on His blood.
The Holy Spirit must reveal
The Savior's work and worth;
Then the hard heart begins to feel
A new and heav'nly birth.

Yes, grace has found the wondrous means
Which shall effectual prove;
To cleanse us from our countless sins,
And teach our hearts to love.
Jesus for sinners undertakes,
And died that we may live;
His blood a full atonement makes,
And cries aloud, “Forgive.”

Thus bought with blood, and born again,
Redeemed, and saved by grace,
Rebels in God's own house obtain
A son's and daughter's place.

To listen to a modern rendition, type out or select the following links:

Internet: <https://psallos.bandcamp.com/track/alas-by-nature>

Spotify: <https://open.spotify.com/track/5QoytkewVorFeeoU7f00Xs>

Day Three

And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!' Galatians 4:6 (ESV)

Several years ago, there was a beautiful little girl in the foster system who had been separated from her biological family for a very long time. At ten years old, she knew adoption into a new family was her only future, yet due to legal constraints, she found herself waiting for years, in and out of different foster homes.

But the time finally came! And when her new family sat down with her to write out her adoption story, she was asked how she felt and what she thought about getting



KNOW

adopted. Her future family ached as they waited to hear her answer: how was this little one going to sort through all those years of hopes and fears that must have burrowed deep down into her soul? It wasn't fair to expect her to find the words to express something so big and nuanced and distill it down to fit a few lines on a form.

After a moment of silence, in her usual soft-spoken voice, she finally said, "Adoption is a good thing because when you're adopted, you know the people really want you and so they will love you. And you know this, so you will love them back."

This is the heart of the Gospel! It is an invitation to join a "forever family"; to be truly wanted and deeply loved in such a way that we find ourselves capable of truly loving both our adopted Father, and our new siblings, back.

Have you allowed the love of your adopted Heavenly Father to reach your heart? Have you let it soften your heart and bring forth a love for Him and your spiritual siblings? Spend some time sitting with your Heavenly Father today, letting His love wash over you and change you from the inside out.

Day Four

But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and worthless elementary principles of the world, whose slaves you want to be once more? Galatians 4:9 (ESV)

The false teachers depicted in this week's passage were attempting to blur the lines between a life of holiness empowered by the Holy Spirit, and the rule-oriented nature of widely accepted Jewish traditions and culture. They wanted the best of both worlds: to avoid offending the Jewish community—by watering down the Gospel—without losing the advantage of Christianity's unique appeal to the Gentiles. By converting others to this hybrid "Judaism" they were able to increase their numbers and impress important people. Sadly, this sort of self-centered leadership is all too common today.

Paul does his best to warn the Galatians: "*They make much of you, but for no good purpose. They want to shut you out, that you may make much of them*" (4:17). When the incongruence of their theology began to weaken their influence, exclusivity became their strategy for turning potential followers into eager pawns. Thousands of years before social media, adept individuals already knew how to manipulate community relationships.

In his letter, Paul sought to reveal the truth to the Galatians. In contrast to the false teachers' social games, Paul comes to them simply, on their terms: "*Brothers... I have become as you are!*" (4:12). He reminds them who they are and calls out the best in them: "*Though my condition was a trial to you, you did not scorn or despise me, but received me... if possible, you would have gouged out your eyes and given them to me.*" (4:14-15). Then, in turn, reminds them who he is: "*Have I then become your enemy by telling you the truth?... my little children.*" (4:16, 19).

This is what gospel-centered leadership looks like. Full of tenderness and humility—yet also full of truth.

Spend some time today asking God to increase your discernment. Here is a simple prayer to get you started:

Lord, like Paul, may we reject exclusivity. May we reach out in tenderness, truth, and humility—even to brothers and sisters who've been deceived, unfaithful, and "perplexing." Help us learn to differentiate between false teachers and worthy leaders, and may we—like the Galatians—come to serve them sacrificially.



KNOW

Day Five

"One is from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery; she is Hagar." Galatians 4:24b (ESV)

In the original story of Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar found in Genesis 16, we are not told explicitly where Hagar came from, simply that she was an Egyptian servant to Sarah, and that her existence was not a happy one. She is used in Abraham and Sarah's mistrustful attempt to accomplish God's work for Him—to bear a child in place of waiting on God to provide miraculously. Her experience makes her bitter and she comes to despise Abraham and Sarah, at one point running away with her child.

It is there, in the middle of the desert, fleeing her situation that she encounters a merciful God. The interaction leaves her changed: "You are the God of seeing...him who looks after me" (Genesis 16:13). We are left to wonder if she had ever felt truly seen before.

The use of this passage in Galatians is not designed to belittle Hagar—it was not HER decision to go against God's plan. But rather to illustrate the outcome of the two choices we face as we seek to follow Him: trust His grace to be enough or try to achieve our salvation through works.

Hagar's situation was the result of Abraham and Sarah's choice to instigate God's plan using their own devices. Instead of waiting on God to show them the way, they substituted logic and efficiency for faith. God refused to bless their choice in the same way He rejects our attempts to earn spiritual merit through our own efforts.

In contrast, Sarah's miraculous post-menopausal pregnancy brought about in God's timing illustrates God's miraculous provision of grace. There was nothing Abraham and Sarah did to accomplish His work—her age and barrenness ensured they knew it too!

The fate of Hagar's descendants further illustrates the limited nature of trying to accomplish salvation through rule-following; the offspring of works is an endless exhausting cycle that never leads to freedom. In contrast, the future of Sarah's descendants illustrates the freedom and spiritual inheritance available to the sons and daughters of grace—those who come to God by way of His intended path.

Unlike Ishmael (Hagar's son) and Isaac (Sarah's son) we get to choose which spiritual line we want to be a part of: a slave to rule following and our own efforts? Or the freedom that comes from grace? Which will you choose today?

Day Six

"For it is written, 'Rejoice, O barren one who does not bear; break forth and cry aloud, you who are not in labor! For the children of the desolate one will be more than those of the one who has a husband.'" Galatians 4:27 (ESV)

Throughout Scripture we find a God who is creative and an artist. He speaks through the beauty of creation, through poems and song, just as He speaks through simple and directive text. In this week's passage we encounter a reference back to Isaiah.

The children of Israel had found themselves once again in exile, experiencing the discipline of a loving Father in response to their corporate disobedience and unfaithfulness. Broken and disheartened, He begins to invite them back into grace and reconciliation. This invitation is captured through poems and song:

"Awake, awake, put on your strength, O Zion; put on your beautiful garments, O



KNOW

Jerusalem, the holy city; for there shall no more come into you the uncircumcised and the unclean. Shake yourself from the dust and arise; be seated, O Jerusalem; loose the bonds from your neck, O captive daughter of Zion.” - Isaiah 52:1-2

The passages which follow speak of a future of hope, restoration, and a coming Messiah. Maybe death in exile wouldn't be the final resting place of a nation. Perhaps the promises of God were not so fragile after all. Fast forward to Galatians and we discover God's heart for His people remains unchanged.

Through Paul's words we find eternal promises come full circle. The offer of freedom once promised to physical captives comes to fruition in Jesus and is offered to those of us today ensnared in spiritual captivity. Our spiritual exile is over; we are forgiven and invited to release the heavy burden of perfectionism for the light and easy yoke of grace.

What spiritual captivity do you find yourself in today? His grace is enough. Let that truth wash over you today. Spend time sitting with God, letting the implications of His promises sink in and bring back the exiled places of your soul.

BE KNOWN

Getting Started:

The need to belong is a fundamental drive for human beings.
Can you remember a time you were warmly welcomed into a group or community?

1. At the end of Galatians 3, Paul tells us that those who are in Christ—those who believe are also sons of God. In addition to this newfound identity and relationship to God, we learn that we are also “heirs.”

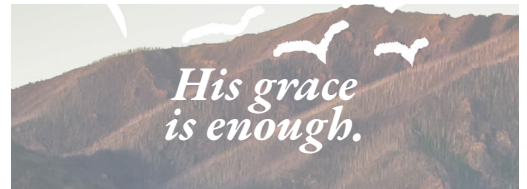
a. What does it mean to be an “heir” of God? What sort of inheritance do Christians stand to receive?

2. Verse 5 tells us that the goal of redemption all along was our adoption. What is the difference between redemption and adoption?

a. How does our redemption and adoption impact our everyday living?

b. When someone is adopted, what are some of the practical change that take place?
What parallels do you see to our spiritual adoption?

c. According to verses 6-7, what practically identifies us as children of God?



BE KNOWN

3. Paul argues in verses 8-9 that, prior to knowing and being known by Jesus, we were all enslaved to lesser “gods.” What are some of the “gods” that formerly enslaved you or that you see enslaving others today?
 - a. The truth found in verse 9 should humble us; what does it mean to be “known by God”?

4. Some of Paul's letter might come across as harsh and critical, but verse 19 reveals his heart. What does Paul deeply desire for the Galatians?
 - a. How can we model this behavior toward one another?

5. At the beginning of Galatians 4, Paul draws out a distinction between a “son” vs. a “slave,” and he references a story from Genesis to illustrate the difference. In Genesis 17 and 21 we find the story of Sarah & Hagar, Isaac & Ishmael. Isaac, born of Sarah, is Abraham's son and heir, born through God's provision, through no effort of their own save trust. Ishmael, born of Hagar, represents a son born under slavery; his conception came from Abraham attempting to fulfill God's promise with his own power—through works.
 - a. What might we learn from this story and its implications for us? Who in this story experienced the freedom and blessing through faith as a gift? Who sought—and ultimately failed—to achieve God's blessing on their own?

REFLECTION & APPLICATION

Throughout Paul's letter to the Galatians, he frequently uses the Greek word “*adelphoi*,” which translates to “brothers and sisters”. How does this familial language influence your experience of the text? How does it impact your perception of the church? What might the church community look like if we began to truly view one another as family members? Brothers and sisters don't always get along with each other; in fact, siblings often disagree and see life differently. But at the end of the day, a healthy family sticks together, loves one another, and takes care of each other. With this in mind, consider your current relationship to your local spiritual family; how might God want to adjust your attitude or actions in light of this new perspective? Spend some time prayerfully asking Him to guide you in the way He would have you grow.

BACKGROUND REVIEW

MAIN IDEA

We are no longer slaves to sin or the law, but now children of God.

God's plan from the very beginning of time was for us to be a part of His family. We become a part of that family through believing in Jesus.

Adoption: the action or fact of legally being responsible for and raising another person's child as one's own.

Imagine a King noticing an orphan living on the street. The King could bring him to the palace as a servant. There he would have food, shelter, and clothing—a much better life than what he or she has now. But to everyone's surprise, the King chooses instead to adopt the orphan! They become a prince or princess alongside the King's other children. He or she gets to enjoy the same position, privileges, and inheritance as the other children.

When we believe that Jesus died for our sins, rose again, and trust that He alone can save us—we become that child adopted by a Heavenly King. We have a position, privileges, and an inheritance. We are co-heirs with Jesus!

BIG IDEAS

Paul wrote a lot about believers being “heirs.” An heir is someone who will one day receive an inheritance. They are usually children or grandchildren, and they receive an inheritance from their parents or grandparents when those family members die.

We are not only rescued from sin, but also a member of God's family. He is our Father, and we are His children. Belonging to God's family should give us joy!

Paul asked the Galatians to consider whether they would rather be slaves or be children of God. If they continued to believe the lies that the false teachers told them, they would basically become slaves to all the rules—The Law. As children of God, they would get to embrace freedom from sin without needing the rules; obedience would come from loving their Heavenly Father, not because they had to.

The Gospel or “good news” tells us that Jesus came at the exact right moment, and in the exact right way—as a baby, born of a woman, fully man and fully God. It also tells us WHY He came: to redeem us—to set us free. Without Jesus we remain slaves to sin but through Jesus' death on the cross, our debt is paid.

Read Luke 15:11-31. Notice any similarities to Galatians 4? Just like Paul, Jesus warns of the dangers of treating God as a slavedriver instead of a Father. The result is a self-righteous, joyless life. The prodigal son's brother was not able to celebrate with his brother because he valued works over grace.

To learn more about the story of Abraham and the two sons that Paul mentions in Galatians 4:21-31, read Genesis 16 and 21.

KNOW

Galatians 4:9 says that we are known by God.
Whoa! Pause and think about that for a minute.
How does it make you feel to know that God knows
YOU?!

BE KNOWN

Do you want to be known as a miserable follower of Jesus or a joyful one? Remember, a follower of Jesus does not obey God because they think that they have to—a child of God obeys Him because they love Him and want to honor their Father.

BACKGROUND REVIEW

Recall a time when you were chosen or selected to a team, group, club, or organization.

Q Who chose you? What were the circumstances?
How did that make you feel?

Q Do you often picture God as someone who just wants obedience or as someone who wants a relationship with you? Why?

Read 2 Samuel 9. Now re-read Galatians 4:5.

Q What does it mean for us that we “receive the full rights as sons”?

We do not get “full rights as sons” because we are special. We get them because we are God’s children.

Q How does the idea that we have been adopted as sons and daughters into the family of God make you feel? How does that idea propel you towards more Christlikeness?



The Family of God

"Modern people like to see freedom as the complete absence of any constraints. ... Freedom is not so much the absence of restrictions as finding the right ones, those that fit with the realities of our own nature and those of the world."

– Tim Keller, *Every Good Endeavor*

INTRODUCTION

MAIN IDEA

Christ has set us free to live a life of love and service.

Freedom is a topic of conversation that evokes a range of responses—what does it mean? How is it best expressed? What should be done to receive or protect it? For many, freedom is the same as autonomy; the freedom of rejecting any authority but our own and ridding ourselves of restrictions we consider inconvenient or undesirable. However, when we explore the biblical definition of freedom, it contradicts this image many of us hold.

In this passage of Galatians, Paul takes on a pastoral tone and provides a practical depiction of the type of life that is honoring to God and marked by freedom. Paul contends that those who have been set free by Jesus, are to live lives of freedom characterized by self-control, obedience to God's Word, and loving service to their neighbors.

KNOW

Day One

For freedom Christ has set us free; Galatians 5:1a (ESV)

Today let's linger on the first part of this verse, for it holds the powerful message about our salvation.

In Luke 4:18-19 we encounter Jesus in the synagogue on the Sabbath at the start of His ministry, reading from the book of Isaiah:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." (ESV)

This was Jesus' mission statement, the whole of why He was here on earth.

When we sit with this passage, questions may come to mind: Who are the captives and oppressed? What are they being set free and liberated from? What does this freedom look like?

As we explore these passages further, the answers become clear. We are the captives. We have been held captive and oppressed from the moment we were born. Satan is our oppressor, sin our bondage, and eternal death our sentence. Yet when we embrace Jesus' death on the cross as our salvation and surrender our lives to Him, we are set free! In the original Greek the phrase "has set us free" in Galatians 5:1 refers to a single, past tense action that is now complete. Our complete freedom was secured once and for all by Jesus' death on the cross!

But what does this freedom look like? In today's culture, people pursue the right to do whatever they want and call it "freedom." Yet the freedom offered to us through Christ is different. It is liberty from the tyranny of our own sin nature, of guilt, condemnation, and the crushing burden of earning our salvation. Freedom IS our salvation.

Spend a few moments sitting in Jesus' presence and thank Him with a grateful heart for all the ways His sacrifice has set you free.

KNOW

Day Two

It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery. Galatians 5:1 (NIV)

While our salvation is secure, the freedom in our daily lives that comes through Jesus is fragile and can slip from our grasp unless—as Paul says—we stand firm. The phrase “stand firm” in this passage was a military term used to describe a man poised and ready for an attack from the enemy. His feet firmly planted, his senses on high alert—he is ready to defend himself at any moment.

The imagery of the yoke in this passage provides a poignant picture of the control sin allowed in can have over your life. Just as the farmer uses a yoke to control and direct his oxen (beasts much bigger than him!), what we allow to slip past our defenses compromises our freedom and impacts the direction of our lives.

The yoke we allow to settle over our lives is often something that gratifies the senses, making it difficult to resist until it's too late and in full control; even more so when aligned with the values of the culture. When we allow the world to define our freedom and trade surrender to God's grace for our own self-reliance, the more enslaved we become, and the more sin controls our lives.

When Christ sets us free, we're not magically removed from tempting or difficult situations, but we are given the strength to resist and the power to let Jesus rework our hearts. When we surrender to Jesus, we find freedom from sin and destructive habits.

What would it look like for you to surrender and find freedom from the specific areas of bondage in your life? Take a moment to bring those things to Jesus in repentance and seek the Holy Spirit's power to take specific steps toward freedom in those areas today.

Day Three

I am emphatic about this. The moment any one of you submits to circumcision or any other rule-keeping system, at that same moment Christ's hard-won gift of freedom is squandered. I repeat my warning: The person who accepts the ways of circumcision trades all the advantages of the free life in Christ for the obligations of the slave life of the law.

I suspect you would never intend this, but this is what happens. When you attempt to live by your own religious plans and projects, you are cut off from Christ, you fall out of grace. Galatians 5:2-4 (THE MESSAGE Interpretation)

Do you ever feel that no matter what you do, you'll never be good enough? That you just need to try harder—read your Bible more, pray more, go to church more?

The problem is that salvation and freedom aren't attained by “trying harder.” No one is reconciled to the God of the universe by following a bunch of rules. In this passage we see the Galatians wrestling with this concept. They had been set free through Jesus, but as they listened to different teachers, someone came along and insisted God's grace wasn't enough, that they needed to follow The Law and be circumcised on top of that to be saved. The Law was a set of standards God gave to the Jews during the time of the Exodus as a precursor to salvation and precisely what Christ set out to free us from! The human heart can never achieve perfection by trying to follow a set of rules—it's impossible! We must be transformed by grace.

This goes against our natural tendencies. We live in a society built around checklists,

Transformed by Grace.

KNOW

achievements, and fast results. Change through grace can be a slow and messy process that digs deep into who we are. Yet our natural tendency is to be impatient for results and to take control of the process to make sure we're all set to enter eternity.

Eugene Peterson says our redemption requires us to commit to "a long obedience in the same direction." To do that we need to be a disciple—apprenticed to the master, Jesus Christ, in a growing relationship; much as a craftsman learns his trade.

Consider what your life would look like as an apprentice to the master, Jesus. Are you willing to surrender to growing and learning in relationship with Him?

Day Four

For through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love. Galatians 5:5-6 (ESV)

"Eagerly wait" speaks to an attitude of intense yearning and excitement as we wait for something hoped for. Envision a five-year-old on Christmas Eve, waiting up with anticipation, hoping they've been good enough to tip the scales in their favor and land on Santa's Nice list, the reward for their good behavior on its way.

Paul tells us in this passage that our hoping is not in vain. We don't need to wonder about our standing with God and the hope of Heaven. In the Greek the word used for "hope" here is used to describe a total assurance of the thing hoped for. Working and striving is no longer needed; we can "eagerly wait" with confidence in a guaranteed future with Jesus.

While we no longer need to strive for reconciliation, this doesn't mean we get to live passively. Our hope empowers us to live life to the fullest, completing our assigned tasks, confident that God will provide the rest. As we live faithfully, surrendering to the work of the Spirit, we are transformed each day into the likeness of Christ. He leads us on a redemptive journey of delight as we discover all we have been given in Christ.

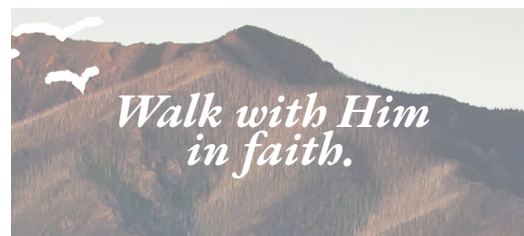
While we wait for the details, God desires our trust. In place of control, He extends to you an invitation to walk with Him in faith. Where do you need to trust God today? What step of faith might He be calling you to take?

Day Five

You were running the race so well. Who has held you back from following the truth? It certainly isn't God, for he is the one who called you to freedom. This false teaching is like a little yeast that spreads through the whole batch of dough! I am trusting the Lord to keep you from believing false teachings. God will judge that person, whoever he is, who has been confusing you. Galatians 5:7-10 (NLT)

Many of us have fallen victim to the lure of clickbait on social media. One article or blog post leads to another with increasingly questionable sources. How do we differentiate between truth and lies, half-truths and manipulation? As Christians we know that the character of God is perfect and the standard for absolute truth.

In this passage the Galatians were being confused by untrustworthy sources. In response, Paul exhorted them—and us—to choose our way carefully and stay true to the ultimate source of truth: God and His word. When we choose to follow Jesus and



KNOW

how He says to live, it opens us up to His correction, guidance, and loving discipline—making us more like Him.

Paul exhorts us to choose our way carefully, choosing holiness amid the hundreds of little decisions we encounter each day. The more we listen to and follow the Holy Spirit within us, the more we hone our ability to discern between right and wrong. In the same way, the more we listen the voices of the enemy—Satan and our own sin nature—the more our senses are dulled to recognize truth and lies when we see them.

Have you ever made your own pizza dough from scratch? A little flour and a little yeast, some warmth, and time to sit all serve to create a dough exploding with growth! In the same way, Paul describes the effect of allowing a little bit of untruth to seep into your theology. Truth doesn't always include the most comfortable or popular perspective, but the price of compromise is far worse in the long run.

What “yeast” might exist in your current way of thinking? Is there anything in the current worldview you cling to that hasn't been filtered through God's Word? Is there anything in your perspective that has hindered you from obeying the truth? Take some time today to pray through these questions with God and ask Him to uncover any areas of untruth in your life.

Day Six

For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another. Galatians 5:13-15 (ESV)

In this passage Paul warns us not to abuse our gospel freedom. The use of the word “freedom” here can be misleading, allowing us to convince ourselves that we have the freedom to do whatever we want because at the end of the day we are covered by grace. Others might focus solely on the benefit to self that comes from freedom and resent the opportunity to extend this grace to others.

The freedom we have been granted removes our burden of making ourselves worthy of God's favor and love; it does not remove the call to actively engage who God calls us to be as a result. When we don't fully embrace and accept the grace and love of God in our own lives, it is impossible to see others as God does. As a result, every relationship that excludes God becomes dysfunctional and destructive.

When we love God and live in the richness of His grace, we are:

1. Able to resist our sin nature.
2. Motivated to love and serve others.
3. Empowered to obey God.
4. Free from hate.

In today's polarized society, the active love of God could not be more needed. As Tim Keller put it “Tolerance is not approving an opinion you do not hold. It's about treating the person—who's saying what you can powerfully disagree with—with respect, humility and love.”

Who in your life is God calling you to show His loving kindness to today? Is there someone you need to seek reconciliation with through the power of the Spirit and the freedom you've been given? Prayerfully reach out to them today!

Respect. Humility. Love.

BE KNOWN

Getting Started:

What do you like to do in your free time?

1. Read Galatians 5:1-15 out loud (*there is so much value in hearing God's Word read audibly*). What stands out to you?
2. Focus on verses 1-2. Paul gives some very important insight here and an equally important command. What are they?
 - a. Why—or for what—has Christ set us free?
 - b. What are we supposed to do—or not do—with our newly found freedom?

Christians tend to think of freedom only in terms of being set free from sin, but Paul's understanding of freedom in Christ is SO much bigger: we have been set free from both sin AND the Law (think works, or things we do to try to earn righteousness). Why is this distinction important?

- c. For deeper insight, check out Romans 3:19-24.
3. When you read the words, "For freedom Christ has set us free," which area of freedom comes to mind for you first? Which do you struggle to resist more often, sin or works?
4. Look at verses 3-6. Paul gives a sobering warning to the church followed by a great encouragement. Where might you be tempted to trust your own efforts or "add to" the good news of the gospel?

BE KNOWN

5. Read verses 7-12. The Galatians had come so far! But just like we do, they fell into the trap of legalism. Focus on verses 7-8. What specifically did the Galatians stop doing?

a. Who does Paul say caused this?

b. Why is it important for you to keep this in mind?

6. Look at verses 13-15. Paul reminds the church what they are called to (freedom). What does he say our freedom is meant to be used for? Why do you think he stresses this so strongly (see John 13:34-35)?



The Gospel shapes our liberty.

REFLECTION & APPLICATION

We all find ourselves “adding to” Christ’s work from time to time. Where do you struggle with this? Consider what you lay in bed at night replaying in your mind on repeat. What do you agonize over? What causes shame to wash over you? What do you wish you could just “get right?” Take some time to release these areas to God in prayer, thanking Him that the work is finished. Ask Him to help you remember He was enough next time you’re tempted to try to “fix” yourself on your own.

BACKGROUND REVIEW

False teachers were distorting the good news of Jesus, even though the good news or “gospel” is complete—nothing needs to be added to it. They had been falsely teaching that people needed to do more to be rescued from sin.

MAIN IDEA

Jesus has set us free to live a life of love and service.

BIG IDEAS

The false teachers claimed that believers needed rules or The Law to be free from sin. So, the false teachers added “rule keeping” to the good news message. In other words, they said followers of Jesus had to believe and obey all the rules to be rescued from sin.

Paul corrected them by reminding readers:

- We can do nothing to earn our rescue from sin. Followers of Jesus just need to believe. Because of this, we depend on God and seek to obey The Law out of a heart of gratitude—not because we have to. We will want to turn away from sin and seek to be more like Jesus.
- Those who think they need to obey all the rules before they can be rescued from sin will eventually give up because they can’t.

FREEDOM	SLAVERY
This person will live for God and others and not their selves.	This kind of living is living for self. The person believes, “I can be part of my rescue from sin, or I can do it myself.”
This person’s change begins in the heart; it is an inward change.	This person’s change begins with actions and doing things; it is an outward change.
This person is spiritually rich. He has all he needs to live the way God wants him to live.	This person is bankrupt. He owes a huge debt that he could never pay.
This person is free.	This person is in bondage. He is a slave to sin and a long list of “do’s and don’ts.”

There is a danger, as followers of Jesus, to forget that we can do nothing to earn God’s love. He cannot love us more because He already loves us completely! And we can do nothing to lose God’s love.

We might begin to believe we need to “behave” better. But as we learn more about God and become even more aware of our sin, we only need to continue in awareness and gratitude for what Jesus did for us. This deepens our trust in God and helps us be more like Jesus.

Freedom from sin is a privilege and a responsibility. In our freedom we are to love and serve one another.

KNOW & BE KNOWN

KNOW

The amazing thing about knowing and loving others is that it helps us follow many of the 10 Commandments. When we love God, we are able to love others, and when we love others we don’t steal from them, lie about them, envy them, or try to hurt them (Romans 13:8–14).

BE KNOWN

God sheds light on your bondage to sin—He illuminates it and heals you of it. He does this when you are honest with God about your sin and invite His cleansing power into the darkest parts of your life. He doesn’t merely show you your failings, He is kind enough to reveal what fears, pain, and destructive thought patterns are causing you to commit them.

BACKGROUND REVIEW

Paul was dealing with people who sought to follow the Old Testament law as a means of being saved. While most Christians today may not try to follow the entire OT Law, we do find other rules and guidelines to follow in order to make ourselves acceptable and to try to earn our salvation. This corruption of the gospel is called “legalism.”

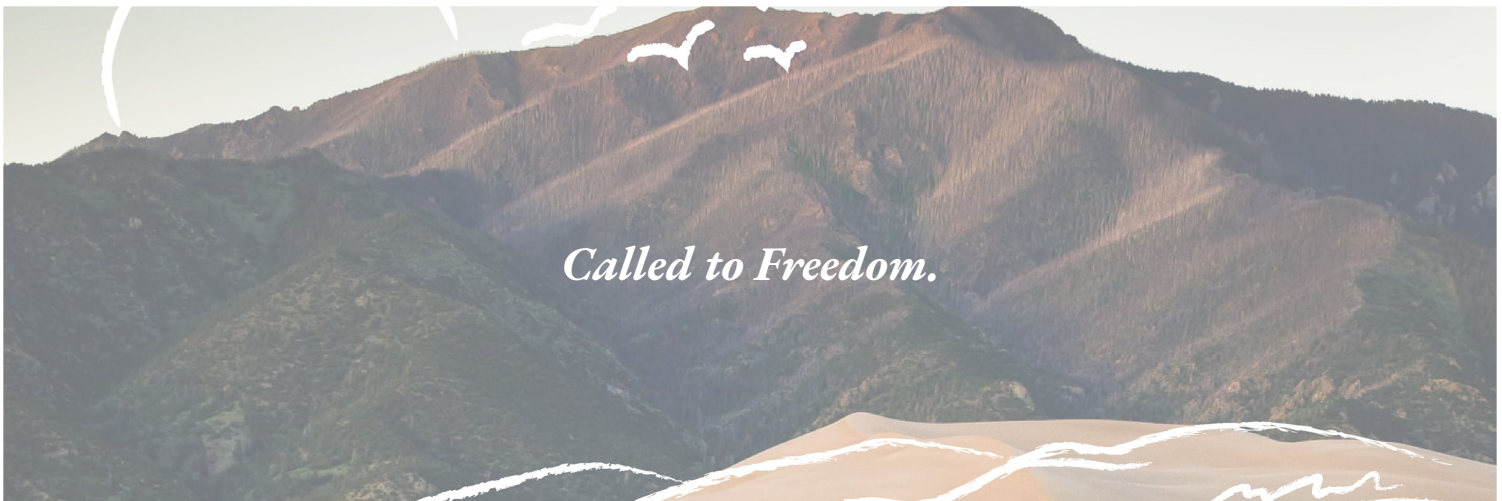
Q What does legalism look like today in our church culture? What are things believers tend to do to make themselves more acceptable to God or “earn” their salvation?

Galatians 5:2 says, *“Look: I, Paul, say to you that if you accept circumcision, Christ will be of no advantage to you”* (ESV).

Q What does Paul mean? Why would Christ be of no advantage to someone who sought to follow the OT law as a way of being saved?

Galatians 5:13 says, *“For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another”* (ESV). “Flesh” here refers to our fallen, sinful nature.

Q What are some examples of how Christians today may use this promised freedom as an opportunity to sin? What false beliefs might lead someone to think it's ok to use freedom that way?



SUNDAY NOTES

INTRODUCTION

MAIN IDEA

Walk by the Spirit and you
will not gratify your sinful
passions.

Martin Luther, the German pastor and theologian, once described the Christian situation on earth as “simul justus et peccator” meaning “simultaneously justified and sinful.” Luther was attempting to put into the words the inner tension and turmoil we all face; when our hearts and minds are drawn to two opposing and competing passions.

We know that when we choose to follow Jesus we become “a new creation” in Christ. Yet we also know that freedom from sin doesn’t usually come overnight. When we choose to follow Jesus, the Holy Spirit comes to reside in us and begins the slow messy work of redeeming us, eradicating sin little by little.

In this week’s passage Paul refers to this sin, and its constant pull back to old ways, as “flesh.” It is because of this flesh we constantly find ourselves doing the opposite of what we want to do. This can be so frustrating! Yet there is hope. The promise found in Galatians 5 is that for those of us who are in Christ, the Spirit will do in us a work that brings forth a new way or “fruit” that pleases God. In place of old ways which seek to please the flesh, we are invited to draw near to God and His grace and from it find a new life.

KNOW

Day One

In the natural world, fruit reveals the identity of the plant it comes from, as well as the measure of its health and environment. The same is true in the spiritual realm. What we say, do, think, and believe, all result directly from the spirit at work within us—Holy Spirit or other. The metaphor of fruit as a product of spiritual vibrancy or disease is repeated throughout the Bible (see Matthew 3 & 7, Luke 3 & 6, John 15, Romans 6-7, and Colossians 1).

It’s not surprising that love begins the listed fruit of the Spirit. We are made in God’s likeness, and love is utterly essential to His character—1 John 4:9 tells us that God in His very essence IS love.

Read verses 19-21 again. These desires and behaviors (fleshly “fruits”) certainly come from love, but it is a love of self instead of love for God or others. It is easy to gratify our own comfort, pride, wants, and presumed rights. But the embodiment of love, Jesus Christ, gave up all these things and more to glorify God and to save us all from the seductive, destructive forces of self-love.

So, what does the “fruit” of the selfless, powerful love of the Heavenly Father look like in broken people still being sanctified? Exemplified on every page of God’s word, love is lived out practically in sacrifice, humility, truth, trust, and undivided commitment. We’ll unpack these ideas more in the days to come.

Which fruit of the Spirit do you feel comes most naturally to you? Which do you struggle with the most? Spend some time thanking God for the areas of your life you see His Spirit shining through and invite Him further in to the areas of weakness that need His help.

Day Two

By God’s design we are relational creatures. Healthy human relationships flourish when there is a healthy balance of giving and receiving, of sacrificing for one another with the intent to bless the other. To care for another person, we may give up time, resources, preferences, or even our own comfort—healthily done in freedom and wisdom of course—to further the other person’s well-being.

KNOW

The list of fleshly desires in Galatians 5 stands in graphic contrast to the fruit of sacrificial love. Sexual gratification, anger, jealousy, drunkenness—indeed, the entire list—are all evidence of self-centered, self-indulgent love; the forceful preference of one’s own wants, rights, and opinions regardless of—or even benefitting from—the pain and belittlement of others.

God’s love incarnate, Jesus, was extended sacrificially to all, including those deemed a stranger, enemy, and unlovable. Jesus took time for people no matter how “undeserving” society saw them to be. He showed them—and us—the greatest love imaginable by dying in our place while we were still sinners.

When we love in the Spirit, we do so because it is an outpouring of the undeserved and unrepayable love we received from God first. As such, we can’t take any credit for how well or sacrificially we love others—it didn’t come from us in the first place. The love of the Spirit requires no reciprocity or recognition; it is for His glory alone.

Who is God calling you to love sacrificially? Are you feeling depleted and unable to extend love today? Spend some time with God, however you experience Him best; be still, go for a walk, sing worship songs, journal—whatever leads you to sit in His presence and soak in His love for you. We can’t give to others what we haven’t taken the time to receive for ourselves!

Day Three

Essential to sacrificial love is humility—letting go of selfishness and pride. Paul encourages us in Romans 12:3 not to think of ourselves more highly than we should “but rather with sober judgment.” One modern rephrasing puts it as “don’t think less of yourself; think of yourself less.” In other words, don’t spend time putting yourself down in search of humility, but simply shift your focus to God, replacing the time spent thinking about yourself—good or bad—with focus on blessing others.

Jesus provides the perfect example of humility, through His life focused wholly on fulfilling God’s will and our salvation. From His lowly birth in a stable to His entry to Jerusalem on a donkey to His submission to crucifixion, Jesus did not cling to His divinity but became like us and lovingly took our place in death.

Read back through verses 19-21 and consider how many of these “fruits” of the flesh come from pride. Without humility, we lose sight of who we truly are in relation to the God of the Universe and to our fellow humans. We fight zealously for our own opinions and rights instead of seeking first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. But in humility, we can truly echo our Savior’s words, “not my will, but yours, be done” (Luke 22:42b).

How do we do this practically? We can serve, we can listen, and we can grow. Look for ways this week to be the hands and feet of Jesus to somebody else. Choose to listen to others without preconceived conclusions; give others the gift of your unrushed presence. Release the need to be right; choose to ask questions and be teachable when interacting with others who don’t share your perspectives on life.

Spend some time asking God to reveal to you where pride might be getting in the way of Him using you in the lives of those around you and surrender those areas to Him today.



KNOW

Day Four

The spiritual fruit of love would be incomplete without its devotion to truth. The global culture today embraces relativism, rejecting an objective moral standard, and redefining identity to be inseparable from politics, worldview, and perceptions of reality. Love, according to the culture, no longer allows for accepting people, but rejecting or disagreeing with their choices and beliefs. It comes as a single comprehensive package.

Yet Scripture tells us that godly love does not delight in wrongdoing but rejoices in the truth—truth defined by God’s Word and confirmed by His Spirit (see 1 Corinthians 13:6). If we stop and consider these opposing perspectives lived out in real life, the love of the culture simply doesn’t work on a practical level. Even the most committed atheist cannot remain silent when faced with the choice to look the other way or speak up when they see a friend about to walk off a cliff!

Jesus could not. When we encounter the forcefulness with which He confronted the Pharisees, for example, it certainly doesn’t look like the feel-good emotion we’re told love entails, yet His death on the cross was for them just as much as for those He spoke to with tenderness. In Matthew 16:23 we read of Jesus rebuking Peter, whom He dearly loved, for speaking in human wisdom and comfortable “truth” in place of God’s truth.

In Ephesians 4 Paul warns us not to be swayed by the world’s “truths” but rather to heed the Christian call to speak the truth in love. That said, this calling is not permission to destroy one another through bitterness, rage, or slander—indulging in the fleshly “fruits” of division and dissension. Truth cloaked in love requires a love marked by kindness and gentleness, not the biting or devouring depicted in this week’s passage. Love marked by truth sets us apart from the rest of the world, and, according to John 13:35, is how the world recognizes us as followers of Christ—a love unafraid to speak the truth, but motivated by the desire for unity, reconciliation, and holiness.

Most people find themselves on one end of the spectrum or the other—prone to speaking truth without love or prone to loving without truth. Where do you feel you land between the two? If you struggle to pepper your truth with love, ask God to grow your compassion and patience for people. If you struggle to speak up, ask God to grow your courage and strength.

*Grow my courage
and strength.*

Day Five

Many of the fleshly desires and behaviors listed in this week’s passage are ultimately motivated by fear. We don’t trust God to provide for us, and choose instead to fight for ourselves, demanding our immediate needs be met, settling for distraction in place of peace. Over and over again God has shown Himself to be gracious, slow to anger, forgiving, and merciful—offering reconciliation through the cross. When we rely on ourselves to get what we need, we miss out on what God has to offer and the perfect love that casts out fear (1 John 4:18).

It is only when we rest our hope completely in Him that we are able to move past our fears and “bear with one another in love” (Ephesians 4:2), trusting the work of the Spirit and eagerly desiring the renewal of our hearts and minds. Love, as fueled by the Holy Spirit, extends to others the same grace, trust, and hope we gain through Christ.

When we choose to love others like Jesus, it can be tempting to adopt a self-righteous

KNOW

attitude or victim mentality, but that is not the kind of love we are called to. We know that humility is vital to love in the Spirit, and we are equally in need of grace from God and others. We give grace because we have received it, and we forgive as we have been forgiven.

Do you trust God to meet your needs? What areas of your life might you need God's love to free you from fear? Spend some time talking to God and asking Him to replace your fears with His love.

Day Six


What we love, we worship. We commit our attention, time, energy, and resources to the object of our affection, and we often identify with it in profound, formative ways. We are shaped by what we love—be it a technological device or a social media platform, a reputation or a life goal, a career or a habit, a relationship with our Heavenly Father or a fellow human being.

The fleshly fruits listed in verses 19-21 reveal a distorted love—an affection for gratifying our own desires, fears, ambitions, and presumed rights without concern for God's sovereignty or the well-being of others. This type of love "desires what is contrary to the Spirit" (verse 17) and is divided from its source, committing us to destruction.

But the Lord offers us another way. Despite humanity's repeated rejection and unfaithfulness, God loves us with a devotion that is vast, steadfast, unending, and intimately committed (see Psalm 36:5-7; Romans 8:35, 37-39; Ephesians 3:18-19; 1 John 3:1). God loves not just because He cares deeply for us, which He does, but also because He chooses to. And we are called to make the same choice.

We are told in Exodus 20:3 that we are to have no other gods—to value no other person or thing—above the God of Heaven, our Father. We are called to love God with everything we are. St. Augustine referred to virtue as "rightly ordered love," a love that properly worships God first and foremost, and enables us to love others as we should. Love is perfectly exemplified in God the Father and in Jesus Christ, and through the Spirit we are empowered to love as we have been loved—with sacrifice, humility, truth, trust, and hope.

Is God first in your life? If you were to take account of where you devote your attention, time, energy, and resources, would they reflect God as your highest priority? It is easy in today's world to allow God to move further and further down our list if we aren't careful. Spend some time today writing out how you spend your time, energy, and resources and ask God to show you what changes He might be asking you to make to put Him first in your life.



We are shaped by what we love.

BE KNOWN

Getting Started:

Pretend to describe yourself to someone you don't know. What words would you use?

1. Read Galatians 5:16-26. Paul makes some great comparisons here. What does he compare and contrast?

2. Let's look closely at verses 16-17. Paul tells the Galatians that the flesh and Spirit are opposed or "set against" each other. Take a moment to really stop and think about what the flesh and spirit being opposed means practically for us. What comes to mind?


3. If you grew up around church you are probably familiar with the idea of the fruit of the Spirit, but did you know the works of the flesh produce fruit too? Paul says the fruit produced by the flesh is evident, or obvious. Read verses 19-20. What fruit is produced in a life lived in submission to the flesh?
 - a. Read Matthew 15:19-20. According to Jesus, where do our fleshly impulses originate?

4. Verse 20 closes with a stark warning. Sometimes harsh sounding words like these make us bristle. What is Paul's warning? Why do you think he includes this?
 - a. Have you ever needed to give someone a strong warning to keep them from harm? What was it?

BE KNOWN

REFLECTION & APPLICATION

There is good news for those who are in Christ! It is God's kindness that leads us to repentance. Read 1 John 1:9 out loud and rest in the knowledge that if you are in Christ, your sins are forgiven! What might you need to confess in prayer today to be restored to right relationship with God? Sometimes confession includes admitting an area that we continually struggle with, not just one-off instances. Look at the list of the works of the flesh in this week's passage and identify one or two of your weak areas to bring to God. Remember, wherever you are weak, He is strong (2 Corinthians 12:9).



*Wherever we are weak,
He is strong.*

BACKGROUND REVIEW

We cannot do anything to earn our rescue from sin. God loves everyone, so won't everyone go to heaven? It is true that God loves everyone, but this does not mean everyone gets to go to heaven. We do not get to go to heaven because we have perfect attendance at church, or because we are good all the time—never saying mean things, clean our rooms when our parents ask, or share our toys. We do not get to heaven by doing good things; we are still sinners. Even if we try our best to do everything perfectly, we will slip up and sin somewhere. The only way to go to heaven is through Jesus.

We just need to believe that Jesus came to earth to die in our place for our sins and that God raised him from the dead. We say out loud that we are sinners saved by Jesus. As a result, followers of Jesus will seek to obey the law out of a heart of gratitude. They will want to turn away from sin. They will seek to be more like Jesus.

MAIN IDEA

Be led by the Spirit and you will be able to deny your sinful desires.

BIG IDEAS

When we become followers of Jesus, we are changed from the inside out. We become new creations! We may be the worst of sinners, yet Jesus can forgive us and change our lives.

You have seen those before and after shows—home remodeling, or makeup and clothing makeovers, even restaurant transformations. Those who do not have a relationship with Jesus do not look good on the inside; it is a “before” picture of their lives.

Think of this “before” and “after” like an “old person” (not age) made into a “new person.” Though followers of Jesus are made new, the “old person,” or the old nature is still there and causes an inner battle; sinful tendencies remain. We constantly find ourselves doing what we don't want to. Believers will struggle with things like naughtiness, jealousy, anger, hard feelings, bitterness, and worshipping things other than God. We can't resist our old nature by ourselves.

So how do we resist? This week's Bible reading has the answer. It tells us that the old person is “being led by the flesh” where the new person is “being led by the Spirit.” This means:

- Our new self has the Holy Spirit living inside us, and it is through the Spirit, through God's power, that we are able to have a changed heart.
- For followers of Jesus, the Spirit will produce fruit that pleases God rather than works that please the flesh.

KNOW

God gives us power to do His work. Relying on God's power, not our own, will keep us from pride and motivate us to stay close to Him—our power source. If we do this, many will see God's Spirit shining in us and be drawn to Him. They will notice that, although we have normal struggles and challenges, there is something different about how we handle them. They will be able to tell that we rely on another power source, and they will want to know more.

BE KNOWN

We may hesitate when it comes to relating with others. We want to keep people from knowing us completely because we are afraid that they will discover something about us they won't like. At the same time, we have a deep desire to be known and still accepted despite our shortcomings. That is why we are drawn to those who know us fully and choose to be in a relationship with us anyway.

BIG IDEAS

In this week's passage Paul describes opposing desires that each Christian must navigate: sinful desires caused by our fallen human nature (desires of the flesh) and good desires that God works in us by His Spirit (desires of the Spirit).

Q Knowing both kinds of desires live in us, how might we react differently when a desire arises in us? How is that different from how unbelievers respond to their desires?

In verse 16, Paul says, *"walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh."* God calls us to avoid sin by walking with the Spirit who He gives us. To "walk" refers to regular, ongoing action. Walking by the Spirit means living by God's power in our lives.

Q How does this statement make you feel about your ability to deal with the sin in your life? How should this shape the ways we seek to avoid sinning?

Q What are some practical ways we can recognize and accept God's power in our lives? What can hinder us?

Verses 19-21 list sin that results from our fallen, sinful natures: *"Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God."*

Q Carefully read over the list and reflect on what you see in your own life. How can you submit those areas of life to God and walk by His Spirit, rather than sin?



Walk By The Spirit.

SUNDAY NOTES

Galatians 5:16-26

SUNDAY NOTES

INTRODUCTION

MAIN IDEA

We love because He
first loved us.

The word “love” has come to represent a variety of meanings in our culture. We often throw it out to describe things in which we take great delight. We love certain foods. We love a particular sports team. We love a nice quiet morning. We love our families. One could accuse us of using the word “love” too flippantly—the expectation to interpret its significance falling to our listeners. Yet, to God, “love” is not a junk drawer catch all term. Love is the heart and soul of who God is and what He has done for His people.

This is put on full display Easter weekend as we remember Jesus’ act of service and love on the cross. When we consider its significance to God, Paul’s emphasis on love in Galatians is not surprising. Love is the focal point and underscored as the defining marker of a believer. As believers, we ought to be known for how we love others. In fact, Scripture tells us that our love for one another is an indication of whether we’re walking by the Spirit.

KNOW

Day One

But the fruit of the Spirit is love... Galatians 5:22 (ESV)

For God loved the world in this way: He gave His one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life. John 3:16 (CSB)

How does God love? He shows His love for the world at great cost to Himself; more costly than the most impressive engagement ring, dearer than any token of affection. God sent His dearly loved Son to express the depths of His heart’s love. This is true, sacrificial love so that the world would have an example to point to. Look to the cross, see how greatly we are loved! There is no room to doubt. God sent Jesus before we believed so that anyone who believes would be welcomed into eternal life with Him. There was no cost too great, no sacrifice He would not make. God’s perfect plan was massively expensive, and it is for our great joy and comfort! It is His love that saves and frees us to love in turn.

Have you embraced God’s love for you? Spend some time today meditating on and thanking God for the ways His love has impacted your life.

Day Two

The LORD the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and faithfulness. Exodus 34:6 (ESV)

Great comfort should be found in the words God uses to describe Himself; He is gracious, slow to become angry, and abounding in steadfast love. Read those last four words again, and allow them to sink into your soul. Abounding in steadfast love. God doesn’t have a little love, or just enough for everyone to have a taste. No, His steadfast love is abundant! His love is plentiful! And it isn’t just a regular love like we have for our favorite pair of shoes, but steadfast. It is loyal, deeply committed, unchanging, unwavering—going to great lengths to display immense care. God keeps His promises because He is steadfast. His love is not conditional or based on our day-to-day performance; it cannot increase or decrease. Despite our shortcomings, God’s love can’t be diminished because it is based on who He is, not what we do. The greatest display of God’s steadfast love is through Jesus. Jesus embodied this divine love through His life, death, and resurrection. His steadfast love made visible through the

KNOW

*Day Five**We love because He first loved us.* 1 John 4:19 (ESV)

God didn't have to love us—and He most certainly doesn't love us because we deserve it! Have you ever stopped to consider WHY He loves us? What benefit could there possibly be in loving such stubborn, prideful people? Consider this: everything exists for the glory of God. Everything God does or calls us to is meant to bring glory to His name. That may sound self-centered to us because we are sinful and unable to fully grasp who God is. But He is holy, set apart, and different—there is no sin in Him. His glory is for our good! If all that exists is ultimately designed to glorify Him, then we can be sure that this divine exchange—His perfect love bestowed on imperfect, unlovable people brings Him glory too!

It is only through His love that we are able to love Him in return, and then love those He has placed in our lives. We become little “outposts” of His love, proclaiming and living lives of love, glorifying God as we enjoy His great gift.

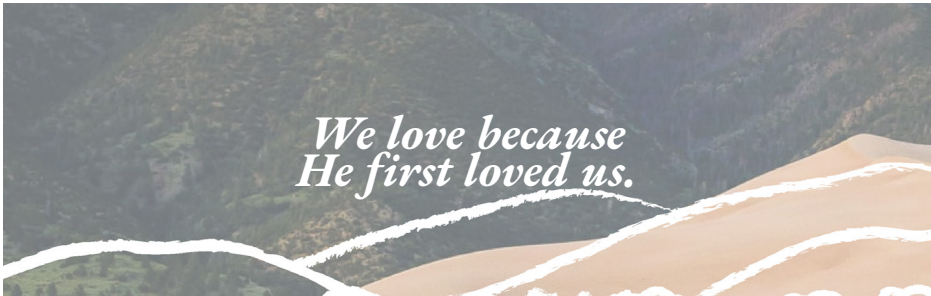
One of the ways we glorify God is by expressing our love to Him through worship! Spend some time today telling God how much you love Him by singing songs of worship at home, outside, in the car—wherever you are.

*Day Six**But the fruit of the Spirit is love...* Galatians 5:22a (ESV)

Spring is such an incredible season. Flowers bloom, trees begin to bud, and the promise of a fresh start fills the air. As we look around this time of year, we can begin to identify which plants grow around us by the flowers and fruit they produce. The same can be said of those who follow Christ. In John 13:35 we read that the world will know we are Jesus' disciples by how we love one another—it is a defining characteristic of the Christian life. Paul even writes in 1 Corinthians 13:2 that without love, we are nothing! The extent to which we love reveals the depth of our understanding of who God is and His love for us. The more we experience love ourselves, the more love is produced in our own lives, and the more we are transformed into the image of Christ.

This isn't a process we can force or fake. Love blooms in us as we spend time in the presence of our Savior, submitting to His good and perfect will.

Take a love inventory of your life today; is your life marked by radical love? If love is not as evident in your life as you would like, the solution is to spend time in God's Word—learning about love—and with God—experiencing His love for yourself.



*We love because
He first loved us.*

Getting Started:

Can you remember the last thing, or person, you said you loved? What, or who, was it?

1. When we submit to, or walk in the Spirit (verse 16), we are transformed over time into the likeness of Christ. It is the Holy Spirit in us that empowers us to love like Christ has loved us. Our love should then echo His love for us. To understand how we are to love, we first need to understand how greatly we are already loved. Read John 3:16, Ephesians 2:4-5, Psalm 86:15, and 1 John 4:7-11.
 - a. What do you find these passages say about God's love?
 - b. What is the defining marker of knowing God?
2. God's love is astounding! Read Romans 5:6-8; God loved us while we were still sinners—His enemy!
 - a. According to this passage, what was our status in relation to God when Christ died for us?
 - b. What does Christ say about love in John 15:13? How does this description of our relationship to God differ from the depiction in Romans 5?
3. Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-7.
 - a. What attributes of love does Paul include on this list? How does this passage encourage or challenge you?
4. The evidence of God's love is all around us! What are some things in your life—past or present—that have heightened your awareness of God's love for you? Take some time to give God the honor and thanks He deserves for His generous, steadfast love.

BE KNOWN

REFLECTION & APPLICATION

When we walk in the Spirit, we will love like Christ loved us. That includes people we don't like! When you consider your own life, how successful—or unsuccessful—have you been in showing love to your enemies—or even just people you disagree with? How does Romans 5:6-8 help you better grasp God's love for you, and our call to radically love one another? Take some time today to pray; confess any resistance you feel toward loving those around you as you've been loved. Invite the Holy Spirit to fill you with a Christlike love for others.



*His Generous &
Steadfast Love*

SUNDAY NOTES

BACKGROUND REVIEW

Paul taught that the love that Jesus showed us when He died on the cross sets us free, and that we should use our freedom to love and serve one another.

When we believe, we are made into new creations—new selves. Our new self has the Holy Spirit living inside us, and through Him—God’s power—we are able to live in a new way with a changed heart.

For followers of Jesus, the Spirit will produce fruit that pleases God rather than works that please the old self also called the “flesh.”

The fruit of the Spirit has to do with character—being more like Jesus. Just like fruit has seeds to grow more fruit, God wants us to produce fruit and grow more fruit which glorifies Him.

MAIN IDEA

We love Him because
He first loved us.

BIG IDEAS

Love is listed as the first fruit of the Spirit—all the other fruits grow out of love.

When we are led by the Spirit, the love that Jesus has for others will be seen in us. John 13:35 tells us that Jesus was a living example of God’s love and that we are to be living examples of His love. Believers are called to let God’s love and forgiveness shine through them by how they live, love, and forgive others.

Because God loved us first, we love Him. And because we love Him, we are to love others. Can we do that on our own? No way! Just as a lamp must be plugged in before its light can shine, and just as branches must be connected to a tree before they can produce fruit, you and I must stay connected to Jesus to produce His spiritual fruit.

KNOW & BE KNOWN

KNOW

Love isn’t just really liking something. Love is an action. It means sacrifice and a willingness to do what is right, regardless of the cost.

BE KNOWN

Jesus showed us what real love looks like when He laid down His life willingly for us. He laid down His life for you because He loves you—no matter what.

All the other fruits grow out of love.

BACKGROUND REVIEW

In Galatians 5:14 Paul says, *"For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'"* Verse 22 lists love as the first "fruit" of the Spirit.

Q Why do you think love is emphasized so much? What does this tell us about what it means to be a Christian and to live by God's Spirit?

Jesus modeled love when He came to earth to die for our sins. This love required great sacrifice and showed great care for people.

Q In what ways might God be calling you to love the people around you? What might you have to sacrifice to do so?

Q When do you find it most difficult to love others? How can God's Spirit help you?

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

MAIN IDEA

The Spirit is at work within us to make us more like Jesus.

Galatians 5:22-23 continues to be a popular passage for study and reflection among Christians. Despite its brevity, these verses provide a comprehensive overview of a life lived in submission to Christ and the resulting Christlikeness. If we were to put into practice all that Paul has taught up to this point, we would expect to see results—a tangible expression of faith. The fruit of the Spirit.

It is important to remember that as we take the next two weeks to explore the fruit of the Spirit, the invitation here is not to grit it out or work harder to become something. If that's our takeaway we have missed the point and might need to reread the beginning of Paul's letter. The next two weeks are an invitation to pause, reflect, and take stock of our lives; to ask ourselves where we see evidence of the work of the Spirit in our lives today, and to come away deeply desiring more.

KNOW

Day One

But I say walk by the Spirit and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.
Galatians 5:16 (ESV)

When the time comes to plant a garden, a farmer—whether a novice or a seasoned veteran—will often place labeled markers to keep their rows distinct. The farmer sows purposefully, with care, placing each seed into the ground, watering and fertilizing each according to its need—all to reap a plentiful harvest. The same should be said of the Christian. The fruit in our lives reveals just how carefully—or not—we are sowing. Originally, the term Christian, “little Christ” was used as an insult, as if to put down the one imitating their Lord. Here were all these “little Christs” turning the world upside down! Imagine a church today, filled with Christians who sowed with such purpose, that they would warrant the moniker “little Christs”!

As we walk by the Spirit, His good fruit should be evident for all to see. We should start looking more like Christ and less like ourselves. Our fruit is not hidden, buried, or kept secret. It is on full display for the glory of God and good of others. May it be said of us that we walk by the Spirit and produce “little Christs”!

In your time with God today, take stock of your current spiritual “gardening” routine. What habits, routines, and attitudes do you have currently that might support fruit growth in your life? What habits, routines, and attitudes might inhibit growth? Prayerfully consider how God might be using the things in your life to cultivate the proverbial soil of your heart to better bear fruit.

Day Two

God is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? Psalm 27:1 (ESV)

What is your biggest fear? What brings you the most joy? For many of us, our answers are things that can be lost—relationships, career, health, etc. These are all good and important things, but none are the most significant. Salvation in Christ meets our deepest needs and should be our greatest joy. For those of us in Christ, we are reconciled to God and restored to right relationship with Him. This salvation cannot be taken, nor can it be damaged—this should cause us to overflow with joy! Joy can feel much like happiness but lacks its reliance on circumstance. Happiness ebbs and flows—it can be fleeting. This joy is based on our unchanging position in Christ.

When we begin to fully understand the ways His salvation meets our deepest needs and longings, our natural response—born of the Spirit—is joy! Praise the Lord, He



Our salvation is secure!

2 Corinthians 4:17 tells us, *“For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.”* Did you catch that? This is so significant. Right now, what you are facing, the things you just want to end, is producing something in you.

KNOW

This passage gives us a glimpse into something taking place unseen—something eternal. This momentary trial—yes, the one that feels never-ending—is doing work that is beyond comparison! Everything, even the pain of what you are currently walking through, will ultimately be worth it. Someday, in this lifetime or the next, we will all reach a point where we see what the pain accomplished, and we will be grateful for it.

Paul’s words in Romans were given to instill patient endurance by reminding its reader of this promised outcome. Have patience in tribulation, dear friend. God is at work. He will not waste your pain. Endure, keep going. In the end, this trial, this suffering, this ordeal will shape you more into the image of Christ. The pain will pale in comparison to the beauty of glory that is to come. Rejoice, God is working. Persevere. Fix your eyes upon Jesus. It will be worth it.

Where do you need the hope of eternity to instill patience in your life today? Sit with God today and invite His presence and hope into the pain and struggle. Invite Him to shift your perspective as you rest in His loving care—He cares for you and what you are going through. You are not alone.

Day Five

Or do you presume on the riches of His kindness, forbearance, and patience, not knowing that God’s kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? Romans 2:4 (ESV)

God’s kindness is shown to us for a very distinct purpose: to draw us to Himself. His kindness entices us to come to Him and exposes our deep need for Him that we might turn from our fallen ways. The world would suggest that God is an irritable old judge, just waiting for the slightest slip up to pounce and wipe you out. But this could not be further from the truth! God responds to the corrupt and sinful with a counterintuitive approach, that we might soften at His kindness and come to Him.

In situations where we would react with indignation—harshly demanding restitution—God reacts with kindness. It is not extended as a bottomless trust fund to be abused but rather purposed to transform us increasingly into His likeness. The more we understand the kindness that has been bestowed upon us, the more we are able to react in kind—mimicking the kindness of God and leading others to Him.

In your time with God today, thank Him for the kindness He has shown you! Ask Him to grow your kindness to reflect His, that you might be used to bring redemption to the lives of those around you.

Day Six

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness Galatians 5:22a (ESV)

It is amazing, almost magical, to watch healthy plants produce their fruit. The branch buds, a flower blooms, then gives way as fruit springs forth. Yet all this is reliant on the branch’s attachment to the vine. By itself, a branch is good for little more than firewood, but when connected to the vine—it derives from it nutrients and life; it’s very existence a testament to the life-giving nature of its source.

Jesus calls us to live our lives in the same way. He says, “Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.” (John 15:4-5, ESV).

KNOW

Jesus desires our lives to produce spiritual fruit and knows the only way to do so is by maintaining our connection to Him. It is His power in us—His Spirit—that produces the fruit. You are free from striving. Your call now is to remain in the vine, fully reliant on Him for your needs. As you abide in Jesus, His Spirit will produce love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, and more because that is who Christ is.

So today, remain, abide, be still, cease striving. Spend your time with Him resting and rejoicing—abiding—in Him.

BE KNOWN

Getting Started:

Which of the four fruits described in this week's passage would you most desire to be known for?

1. JOY: Take a moment to read the following passages, paying close attention to how and when we are instructed to rejoice and what the outcome of rejoicing is; you may also need to look at the surrounding verses.
 - a. Read Romans 12:12 | Philippians 4:4-7 | 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 | 1 Peter 1:8-9
 - b. Why is it so important for us to remember to rejoice when life is hard? What can you rejoice in right now?
2. PEACE: Because we are at peace with God—remember, we are no longer His enemy—we can boldly approach Him with our needs, much like a child would approach a loving parent.
 - a. Read Philippians 4:6-7. What are we instructed to do with our needs and what is the result?
 - b. What do you need to bring to the Lord right now?
3. PATIENCE: Patience is defined as the capacity to accept or tolerate delay, trouble, or suffering without getting angry or upset.
 - a. What is the last thing you had to wait for unexpectedly? How did you react?
 - b. Exodus 34:6 tells us God Himself is slow to anger. Why is that good news? How does our patience reflect Christ?

BE KNOWN

4. KINDNESS: What comes to mind when you hear the word *kind*? Read Romans 2:4. God’s kindness has a purpose—what is it?

a. How does this enhance your view of God?

b. How does it change your heart toward showing kindness to those who “don’t deserve it”?

REFLECTION & APPLICATION

When you consider these four attributes—love, joy, peace, and patience—which do you value the most? Spend some time contemplating a time God has shown you love, expressed His joy over you, been a presence of peace, or been patient with you. Take the time to thank God for each of those moments and invite the Holy Spirit to cultivate each of these fruits in your life, that you might be a living display of His character to those around you.



Love, Joy, Peace, Patience.

SUNDAY NOTES

BACKGROUND REVIEW

When we become followers of Jesus, we are changed from the inside out. We become new creations! We may be the worst of sinners, yet Jesus can forgive us and change our lives. Think of this “before” and “after” like an “old person” (not age) made into a “new person.”

Our new self has the Holy Spirit living inside us, and it is through the Spirit—through God’s power—that we are able to live a life in a new way with a changed heart. For followers of Jesus, the Spirit produces fruit that pleases God rather than works that please the old self.

The fruit of the Spirit has to do with character, meaning being more like Jesus. Love is listed as the first fruit of the Spirit—all the other fruits grow out of love.

Because God loved us first, we love Him. And because we love Him, we are to love others. Can we do that on our own? No way! Just as a lamp must be plugged in before its light can shine, and just as branches must be connected to a tree before they can produce fruit, you and I must stay connected to Jesus to produce His spiritual fruit.

MAIN IDEA

The Spirit is at work
within us to make us more
like Jesus.

BIG IDEAS

Paul tells us that when we let the Spirit lead us, fruit grows in our lives:

JOY: When we cling to Jesus, we get to experience a joy not based on physical circumstances—what we see now—but on our spiritual future—forever in Heaven.

PEACE: In John 16:33, Jesus tells us that we all will suffer in this world, but that in Him we can have peace—He has already conquered the world! We don’t have to live in fear.

PATIENCE: 2 Peter 3:9 tells us that God patiently waits for the lost to come to Him. If we are to be like Him, we too must be patient with others.

KINDNESS: Kindness is the ultimate expression of our love towards God and being kind to others shows that we are following Him. Just as Jesus showed compassion and forgiveness to us, he asks us to do the same for others.

Paul not only tells us the best way to live, but he also points us to the Holy Spirit as our guide. As we follow God and allow the Spirit to lead us, we will naturally bear fruit that point back to Him.

KNOW & BE KNOWN

KNOW

Leading people to God simply requires us to follow Him. Our selfishness is what leads us to a life of sin.
Paul tells us that when we walk in the Spirit, we can say no to ourselves.

BE KNOWN

Paul tells us in Galatians to let go and let God. When we let go, God’s Spirit starts to make us more like Him. Read John 15:4-5. We don’t need to make it complicated; we just have to let Him lead.

BACKGROUND REVIEW

Read Galatians 5:16-26.

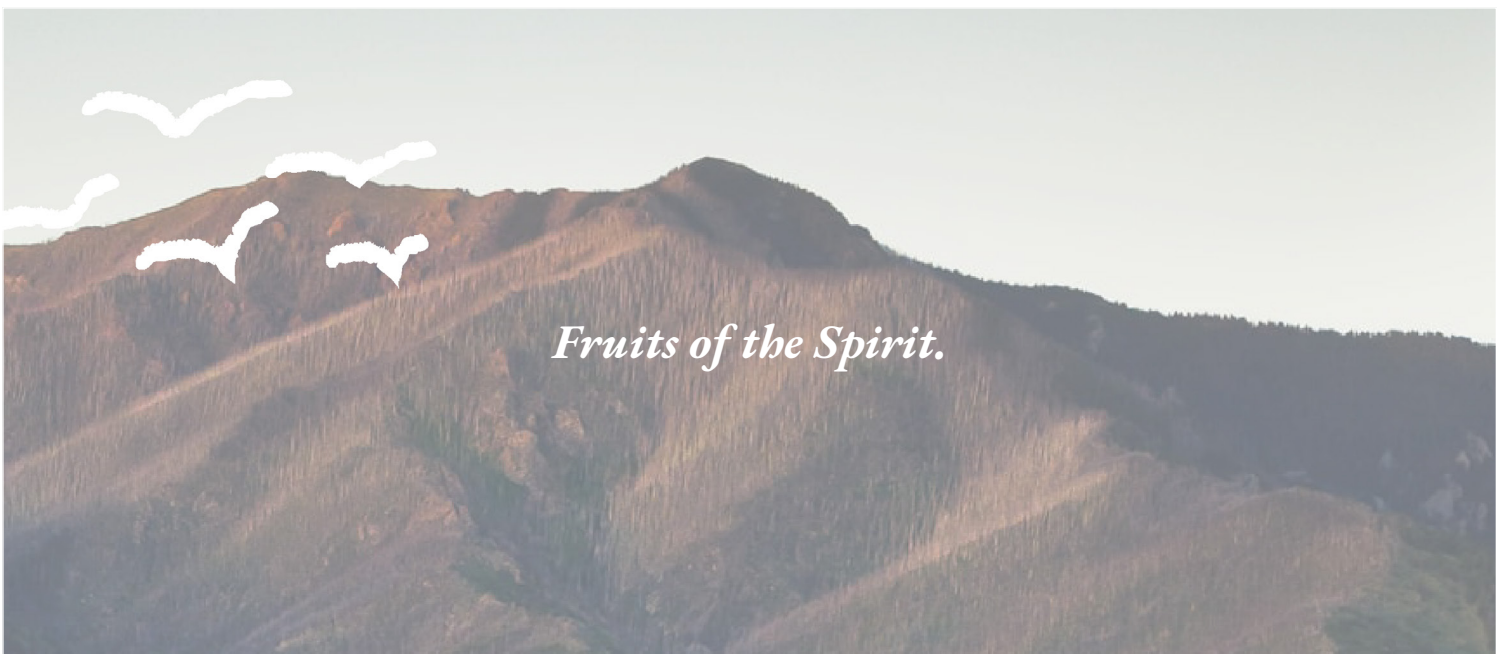
Q What is the significance of Paul using the term “fruit” to represent areas of Christlikeness in our lives? Who makes fruit grow?

Think of a story in the Bible where God makes His love, joy, peace, patience, etc. known to us. Take a moment to read that story today and thank God for His righteous character.

Q Can't think of any? Do a keyword search at www.biblegateway.com or look each fruit up in the back of a study Bible.

Consider a time in your life where God made His love, joy, peace, or patience known to you through the fruit of the Spirit in someone else's life. Take a moment to thank God for His work in that person's life.

Q How have you seen the Spirit of God make you look more like Christ? What difference has that made in your life? Take a moment to thank God for His work in you.



INTRODUCTION

MAIN IDEA

The Gospel enables us to live a Spirit-filled life.

Growing up, most of us had role models or celebrities we looked up to and tried to emulate. These people were plastered on our walls, doodled in our notebooks, and spoken of around the dinner table. While we may no longer seek to be the greatest athlete, biggest movie star, or best writer anymore, we all should desire to become more like our Savior.

Jesus perfectly modeled a Spirit-filled life, rich with its fruit. Miraculously, Jesus is not merely some celebrity, sketched in the margins of a page, but personally inserts Himself into our lives, making recompense for our failures and guiding us in our growth. He shepherds us with His Spirit, indwelling and empowering us to live in truth and life.

KNOW

Day One

So God created mankind in His own image, in the image of God He created them; male and female He created them. Genesis 1:27 (NIV)

Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery; we often imitate those we admire or love, desiring the results of their life choices or affiliation to their reputations. While the imitation of others might be considered compromise in our individualistic society, the truth is that we were created to imitate our creator—to reflect God's glory and character to the world. We were designed to exude His glory, attracting the gaze of the world, pointing to the one and only God.

Yet sin shatters that image, distorting what we were meant to beautifully reflect. Only Jesus, fully man yet fully God, perfectly reflected the heart and character of God to a broken world. Perfectly attuned to the Spirit, Jesus exhibited a consummate depiction of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Hebrews 1:3 tells us He is the perfect example of God's very nature.

God's generosity is so vast; not only did He send Christ to restore us to Himself, but He revealed Himself to us through Christ. Now, He invites us to live as Christ did by the power of the Spirit which He offers us freely.

In your time with God today, invite Him to show you where He wants to mend your life's distortions; where might He want to bring healing and restoration that you might reflect His heart better to the world? Invite God to begin His redemptive work today.

Day Two

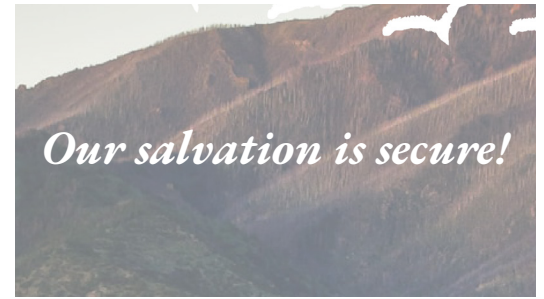
Taste and see that the Lord is good. Psalm 34:8 (ESV)

God's goodness envelopes us in His creation—echoing the earliest pages of Scripture: "it is good" (see Genesis 1). Majestic waves crashing upon the sand, rose hued sunrises, birds drifting along a gentle breeze, leaves rustling amid the trees, the crunch of a freshly picked apple, the aroma of newly baked cookies—all proclaim the goodness of God!

James 1:17 tells us that every good and perfect gift comes from Him. In Matthew 6:8, Jesus informs us that our Heavenly Father knows what we need even before we do. As His children, we can trust His care for us because he is good and has consistently shown His goodness to us. Paul wrote to the Philippians that God had been so generous to him, that he was willing to give everything else away because knowing Christ was worth so much more (Philippians 3:8). Paul recognized God's radical generosity in his life and responded by releasing everything into His hands.

Day Three

Day Four



Our salvation is secure!

KNOW

yet when the answer was “no” submitted to His will.

Gentleness chooses to trust in God’s goodness without question regardless our circumstances. It is the relinquishment of self-interest—trusting God to work all things for our good in His perfect timing. It is only through this supernatural trust in His sovereign goodness that we, like Job, can meekly proclaim, “though he slay me, I will hope in Him” (Job 13:15).

Meekness and control live in direct conflict with each other in your life. We cannot live a life exuding His gentle spirit while also avoiding pain. Do you trust His heart for you? In your time with God today, ask Him to reveal what parts of your life He might be calling you to release into His hands, trusting His will in place of your own.

Day Five

But Jesus remained silent and gave no answer. Mark 14:61 (ESV)

Self-control may not be the first adjective that comes to mind when we think about Jesus, but it should be one we are immensely grateful for! Under great duress, Jesus displayed perfect self-control. His trial was illegal and unjust, yet he submitted Himself to it with no protest. His accusers manipulated the hearing and sought to trap Him in His words, yet He remained silent; entrusting His fate to God. Imagine what you would have done if innocently facing execution on a cross!

Jesus could have brought the whole farce to an end with a few simple words of truth and logic, but that was not the plan. He understood the power His actions and words possessed but chose self-control and revealed to us a sovereign God worthy of our trust. Self-control is the fruit produced by a trustworthy and established faith. Christ relinquished control, knowing God would be glorified through His humility

When we experience His faithfulness first-hand, our trust in His goodness grows. And when we struggle to see it in our own lives, He offers us the Word, saturated with evidence of His past faithfulness. Complaining, posturing, and a propensity toward gossip reveals a lack of trust in His goodness and unwavering presence.

We invite you to spend some time with God today, prayerfully surrendering control. Invite Him to reveal what areas of your life generate an attitude of complaint or posturing and release them into His restorative hands. Let self-control become an adjective reflective of our lives.

Day Six

And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Galatians 5:25 (ESV)

Come and die is not a very hospitable invitation. In fact, it hardly would seem an invitation at all. What in the world would induce us to accept? Freedom. Death to self is invitation to a new life, as a new creation. A life freed from the tyranny of the flesh. Christ bids us to come to Him and die so we can be set free.

We are granted a glimpse here into God’s original design and intention—what He alluded to whence proclaiming “it is very good” in the garden. When we are in Christ, we bear His image and declare hope to a broken world. When we deny the cries of our flesh and walk in the Spirit, His fruit is borne in us. At first it is just a whisper, then bursting forth in an abundance of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. They spring forth to overflowing for the glory

KNOW

of God and the good of others as we point them to Him.

Have you found your freedom in Him? Dying to self is not a one-time affair, but a daily exercise in submission, as we relinquish our claim to autonomy in exchange for a restored soul. In your time with God today, we encourage you to spend it in surrender, dying to self so that you might truly live.

BE KNOWN

Getting Started:

We inherit physical characteristics from our biological family and mannerisms from people we spend time around. Whose physical traits do you bear? Whose mannerisms do you mimic?

1. GOODNESS: Psalm 106:1 and 107:1 tell us that God is good and James 1:17 tells us He is the source of every good thing—everything good in the world comes from Him and reflects His goodness.

a. Where do you see evidence of God's goodness in your life?

b. How does identifying those areas build your trust in God?

c. How can you reflect His goodness to those around you?

2. FAITHFULNESS: 2 Timothy 2:13 and Psalm 23:1-3 tell us God is faithful first and foremost to Himself. Because He cannot be unfaithful to who He is, we reap the blessing of knowing His steadfast love. God is both faithful in love and justice. Look at the following passages and take note of what the Bible says about God's faithfulness to us: Deuteronomy 7:9-10; Psalm 90:1-2; Isaiah 64:4.

a. What do you learn about God's faithfulness?

b. How does understanding God's faithfulness first to Himself, and then to you, empower your faithfulness?

BE KNOWN

3. GENTLENESS/MEEKNESS: We can tend to equate the word meek, or gentle, with someone who is weak in character. True meekness displays a reliance on God and trust in His steadfast love and justice. Look at the following passages: Matthew 11:29; 1 Corinthians 13:5; Philippians 2:3-8.

a. What do these reveal to you about gentleness/meekness?

b. How does Christ's example encourage or challenge you?

c. Where is the Holy Spirit leading you to act with gentleness/meekness? What would that look like?

4. SELF-CONTROL: Compare Galatians 5:19-21 with 5:24-25. One is evidence of a life out of control, and one is a life exercising great self-control.

a. How are we to live lives of self-control?

b. We all like to think we are self-controlled, but when is the last time you lost your temper? Or indulged in an inner monologue berating the person who cut you off in traffic? Where are your actions and heart out of alignment?

REFLECTION & APPLICATION

We need the power of the Spirit to resist the desires of the flesh. Keeping in mind all we've learned about each fruit of the Spirit, how can we practice living in the power of the Spirit? Which fruits do you feel God desires to cultivate in your current season? Take time to explore passages that expound on each fruit; write them out where you will be reminded daily.

SUNDAY NOTES

BACKGROUND REVIEW

Paul lists a collection of powerful positive characteristics—the fruit of the Spirit—that grow in us when we allow the Spirit to lead us.

The fruit of the Spirit has to do with character, meaning being more like Jesus.

Can we produce this fruit on our own? No way! Just as a lamp must be plugged in before its light can shine, and just as branches must be connected to a tree before they can produce fruit, you and I must stay connected to Jesus to produce His spiritual fruit.

MAIN IDEA

The Gospel enables us to live a Spirit-filled life.

BIG IDEAS

Jesus is the perfect model of a life led by the Spirit. Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to live in us so that we may be empowered to live differently. When we live a Spirit-filled life, the fruit of the spirit will be present and visible. In the Spirit's power we can say no to our selfish desires.

- GOODNESS: Goodness is for the benefit of others. It is selfless acts for others.
- FAITHFULNESS: Faithfulness requires trust and loyalty. When we realize we need a Rescuer, we learn to lean on God and not on ourselves.
- GENTLENESS: Another word for gentleness is “meekness.” This is power under control.
- SELF-CONTROL: To have self-control is to surrender to God. Understanding that we cannot do life on our own. Through the Spirit, we are able to control our thoughts, words, and actions.

Throughout the Bible we find examples of how to live out every fruit of the Spirit.

KNOW & BE KNOWN

KNOW

When we disobey God—or are tempted to disobey—the Holy Spirit tells us what God wants us to do instead. When we aren't sure what to do, the Spirit gives us wisdom to understand God's Word and obey it, showing God's glory to the world.

BE KNOWN

As we allow the Spirit to demonstrate His power and presence through us, others will see Him in us.



Fruits of the Spirit

BACKGROUND REVIEW

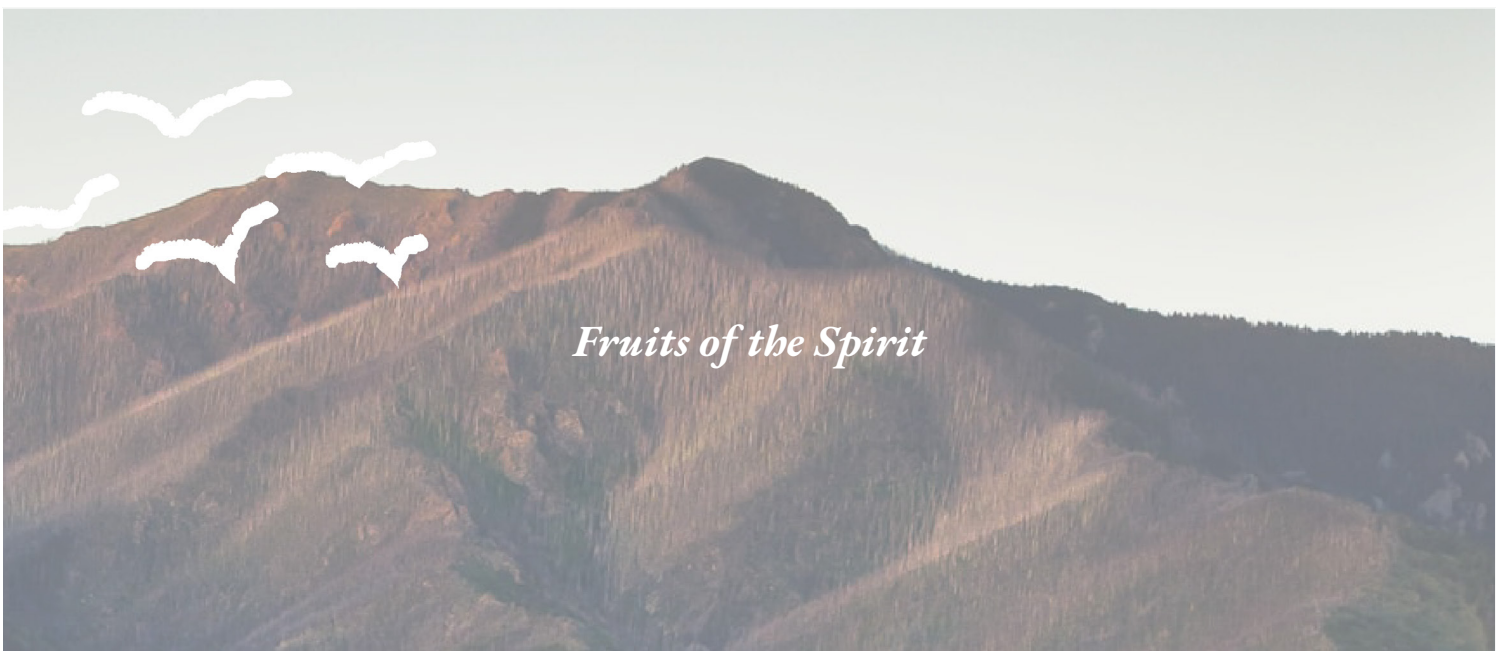
Q Which fruit of the Spirit do you believe God wants to grow in you this month?

The fruits of the Spirit all represent character qualities that impact our relationships.

Q What are 2-3 relationships in your life that need the transforming power of God's Spirit?

Q What are 3 specific ways you can choose to live out this aspect of God's character in those relationships?

Pick 2-3 people to share your answers with. Ask them to pray for God to grow you in Christlikeness and to transform your relationships



INTRODUCTION

MAIN IDEA

Being set free by Jesus and led by the Spirit enables us to live lives focused on others.

When we approach Scripture, it is important to remember that it wasn't written solely to us, and its contents go beyond what it means for each of us specifically. Let us not forget that Galatians was written to a community of believers—not one person. This community of faith was struggling to live gospel-centered, Spirit-filled lives. As we've teased out over the last twelve weeks, this problem wasn't unique to their situation, but continues to be a struggle for us today.

In the concluding chapter of Paul's letter, we receive a beautiful picture of what a Spirit-led community could look like. A community defined by the cross is diverse, humble, gentle, gracious, burden-bearing, generous, future-oriented and—most of all—makes much of Jesus.

What would it take for this to be said about Summit View Church? As we seek to emulate what Paul calls us to here, may we not grow weary of doing this good work. May we be a people, like Paul, who boast only in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

KNOW

Day One

If anyone thinks they are something when they are not, they deceive themselves.
Galatians 6:1 (ESV)

Young children are often told they can be whoever or whatever they want to be. As a result, they boast of incredible strength, great wealth, selfless generosity, and how they will one day grow up and become billionaire superheroes.

Children claim outstanding feats and characteristics because they lack self-awareness. They lack an understanding of their human fragility. When we are young, we are blinded by an idealistic future and fail to recognize our own dependencies. We see ourselves as who we want to be and forget who we actually are—reliant and vulnerable children.

Just as children do not deceive adults by describing their superhuman strength, we do not deceive God by our claims of earning salvation, designing our own future, and creating our own purpose. We do, however, deceive ourselves. When we see ourselves for the ordinary humans we are—lacking power, wisdom, strength, control, and generosity—not only do we become individuals with greater self-awareness and humility, but we are also empowered to better recognize the glory of our all-powerful God who is everything we are not.

What fantastical thing did you believe yourself capable of as a child? How might those beliefs manifest for you as an adult? In your time with God today, invite Him to mature your perception of self and empower you to see Him for all that He is for you.

Day Two

Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.
Galatians 6:2 (ESV)

The Powell River Circuit is a 35-mile canoeing journey that crosses 8 lakes and includes 5 hilly “portage” hikes. The idea of portaging is simple: canoe across a lake and pull up to a portage (hiking trail) then unload the gear and carry it—including the canoe—to a re-entry point on another lake. Adventuresome hikers quickly discover when laden with tents, sleeping bags, cooking gear, and food rations, crammed into overnight backpacks, they need help to carry such a burden. After miles of endless canoeing and shouldering the burden of a canoe atop a cumbersome backpack, the phrase “bear one another's burdens” takes on a whole new connotation.

KNOW

carrots will grow, and if you bury your favorite tulip bulbs before the first frost, vibrant swaths of color will burst forth each spring for many years to come. What you sow in the garden is what you'll reap in the harvest.

This is true for us on a spiritual level as well, but with an added caveat: what we plant spiritually reveals who we are driven to please—our own fleshly desires or the Spirit of God. The first yields destruction; the latter, eternal life.

Romans 6:6, Romans 8:13, and 2 Corinthians 5:21 all tell us that when we truly know Christ and surrender to His will, we die to our old sin nature and exchange it for righteousness. Gratifying our own indulgences and selfish desires produces a garden requiring serious attention. Paul's warning in this week's passage should prompt us to ask ourselves some really hard questions about who we're trying to please and if we're truly following Christ.

If you were to plant a garden, you most likely wouldn't choose vegetables your family dislikes or flowers they don't find beautiful—the result simply wouldn't satisfy, and the effort would be wasted. We encourage you to likewise heed Paul's warning and ensure the seeds you are sowing are the ones you want sprouting.

In your time with God today, spend some time taking stock of your spiritual garden. What is growing currently that requires weeding? What is blooming that needs nurturing? What new seeds might God be inviting you to plant? We encourage you to write down what you find to reference in seasons to come.

Day Five

Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Galatians 6:9 (ESV)

As Paul concludes his letter to the church in Galatia, he urges them not to grow weary of doing good—to keep living in a way that is consistent with what they have been taught and believe about Jesus.

First penned by Paul in Greek, we can find great encouragement knowing that the original word for “weary” can be defined as “losing heart.” It would be wonderful if our efforts to live, serve, lead, and love for Christ's glory continually granted us energy and satisfaction, but frequently they drain our resources and leave us exhausted instead. It is not the promise of rejuvenation that motivates us to “do good” but rather trusting the promised outcome—the harvest in season is worth today's fatigue.

Paul reminds the church of Galatia that while they'll eventually reap what they sow, they may not experience the outcome of their efforts until “the proper time.” And he doesn't specify whether that will take place on earth or in Heaven. Continuing to pour effort into a work without instant results can be disheartening, but the reality is that our reward is rarely immediate. Do not lose heart! Keep going. Plant and tend what you've been given well. There is a bountiful harvest waiting on the other side of your faithfulness.

Are you discouraged dear one? You are not alone. In your time with Jesus today, lean into His presence and rest. Let His Spirit minister to your heart and refresh your soul. Let the promise of the harvest reenergize you as we continue doing the “good,” we have each been called to do.

KNOW

Day Six

Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers. Galatians 6:10 (ESV)

The phrase “as we have opportunity” included in Paul’s exhortation to the Galatians is of note. We live in a fast-paced culture where our actions are not determined by opportunity but our measure of time, energy, and resources. We are kind to the slow, elderly woman in front of us in the grocery store line when it is convenient to us but swiftly find ourselves frustrated when we have somewhere to be or are already emotionally depleted. We have the same opportunity as the Galatians to “do good” in this scenario, but often we find ourselves silently fuming, glancing at our watches, roughly loading our groceries onto the belt the moment she is finally finished.

As followers of Jesus, every interaction is an opportunity to “do good” to those around us; an opportunity to decide if we’re going to let the worries and care of this world supersede our eternal perspective and the things that really matter. If our ability to “do good to all people” is impacted by our own situation, a current conflict, a political perspective, the time of day, or our evaluation of a person, then we are not in any way living by the model laid out for us in this passage. We are living by the “as we feel like it” model not “as we have opportunity.”

It’s easy for us to convince ourselves of our intentions to do good to all people. And yet, we conveniently fail to look for, find, and act on the opportunities that present themselves. To be fair, it’s not something that comes naturally to anyone—it takes practice. We must cultivate the habit of looking beyond ourselves and our limited perspective to see others for who they really are—the glorious, worthy, and dignified image-bearers of God.

We do not get to determine who deserves our good works, respect, or care. We have a responsibility to do good to all people—especially our brothers and sisters in Christ—simply because we have been given the opportunity and ability to do so.

In your time with God today, reflect on your actions over this past week. Are you prone to looking for opportunities to connect with, serve, and “do good” to those who naturally cross your path? Or do you find yourself irritated and impatient with others when they throw off your routine or inconvenience you? If you find you struggle in this area—as many of us do—we encourage you to spend some time inviting the Holy Spirit to soften your heart. Invite Him to slow your pace of life and bring stillness to your soul that you might find joy in the good we get to do.



BE KNOWN

Getting Started:

How do you feel about those you attend church with?

Outside of those in your immediate Life Group or close friends, how well do you know them?

1. Read Galatians 6:1-4. Paul encourages those who are spiritually more mature to serve their spiritually younger siblings when they struggle with sin.
 - a. What does Paul specifically call the older siblings to do?
 - b. Why is this important? Consider what Paul says in Romans 2:4.
2. Paul warns the more mature brothers and sisters not to forget their own weakness. As we seek to help a brother or sister, it is imperative we are mindful of our own propensity to fail. How might this admonition impact the way you approach a sibling in need?
3. Reread verse 2. Paul says that by bearing one another's burdens, we fulfill the law of Christ. What is the law of Christ? To go deeper read John 13:34.
4. Keeping in mind the love Christ displayed for us on the cross, how are you to practically love your brothers and sisters in Christ?
5. Read verses 6-10. Paul encourages those who are in Christ to display radical generosity toward those who teach them. Because we have been given every good thing through Jesus, we are called to imitate His generosity.
 - a. Do you look at the work on the cross as God's generosity toward you?
 - b. How does this perspective impact your desire to live generously yourself?

BE KNOWN

6. Read Paul's warning in verse 7. There are both consequences and benefits to what we choose to sow. Look back to Galatians 5:19-23.
- Based on your current actions, what will you be reaping in the future?
 - What do you need to change?
7. Read 6:11-18. Paul closes by reminding the Galatians not to add to the cross of Christ.
- Why does he circle back to his opening argument? See 1:6-9, 2:16, and 3:1-7
 - What are you trying to do to "add to your salvation" or, where do you need to find freedom by resting in the work of the cross?
 - How does being set free from earning your own salvation set you free to radically love and serve others?

REFLECTION & APPLICATION

As we conclude our study in Galatians, remember that Paul was writing to members of a church just like us. Throughout His letter, he used the Greek word *adelphoi*, which translates to "brothers and sisters." How does this familial language help to shape your perception of the church and other believers? Why would Paul want us to view the people we go to church with as our family members? Consider how this perspective might impact how you interact with fellow believers going forward.

SUNDAY NOTES

Dotted lines for writing notes.

BACKGROUND REVIEW

Freedom from sin is a privilege and a responsibility. In our freedom we are to love and serve one another.

Paul wrote this letter to the Galatians—not only speaking to them as individuals, but as a community.

MAIN IDEA

Being set free by Jesus and led by the Spirit enables us to live lives focused on others.

BIG IDEAS

Paul adds to the list of “one another’s” that are key phrases in the Bible, telling us we are to share with one another—both our burdens and our blessings.

Paul ends his letter to the Galatians by reminding them that they live in a community, and because of this, they should help others with a spirit of humility.

This last chapter also teaches that we are responsible for our actions, and that we will be held accountable for the choices we make. When we see someone making wrong choices, we should correct them with a spirit of gentleness and humility. We need to show grace to everyone, especially fellow believers.

As the community of Christ, we all have gifts that God has given us so we can love Him and serve others. Read Romans 12 and compare it to what Paul said in Galatians 6.

KNOW & BE KNOWN

KNOW

As followers of Jesus, we are called to live in community with other believers; serving others with grace and humility and helping each other with a servant’s heart.

BE KNOWN

We are called to live in community. True community comes when we are open with others and let them see us—our hearts, our deepest fears, and our struggles. When we let others walk alongside us, during both the good and bad times, we get to experience the body of believers firsthand.

Called to community.

BACKGROUND REVIEW

Q Have you ever had someone gently and graciously restore you when you sinned? How did that affect you?

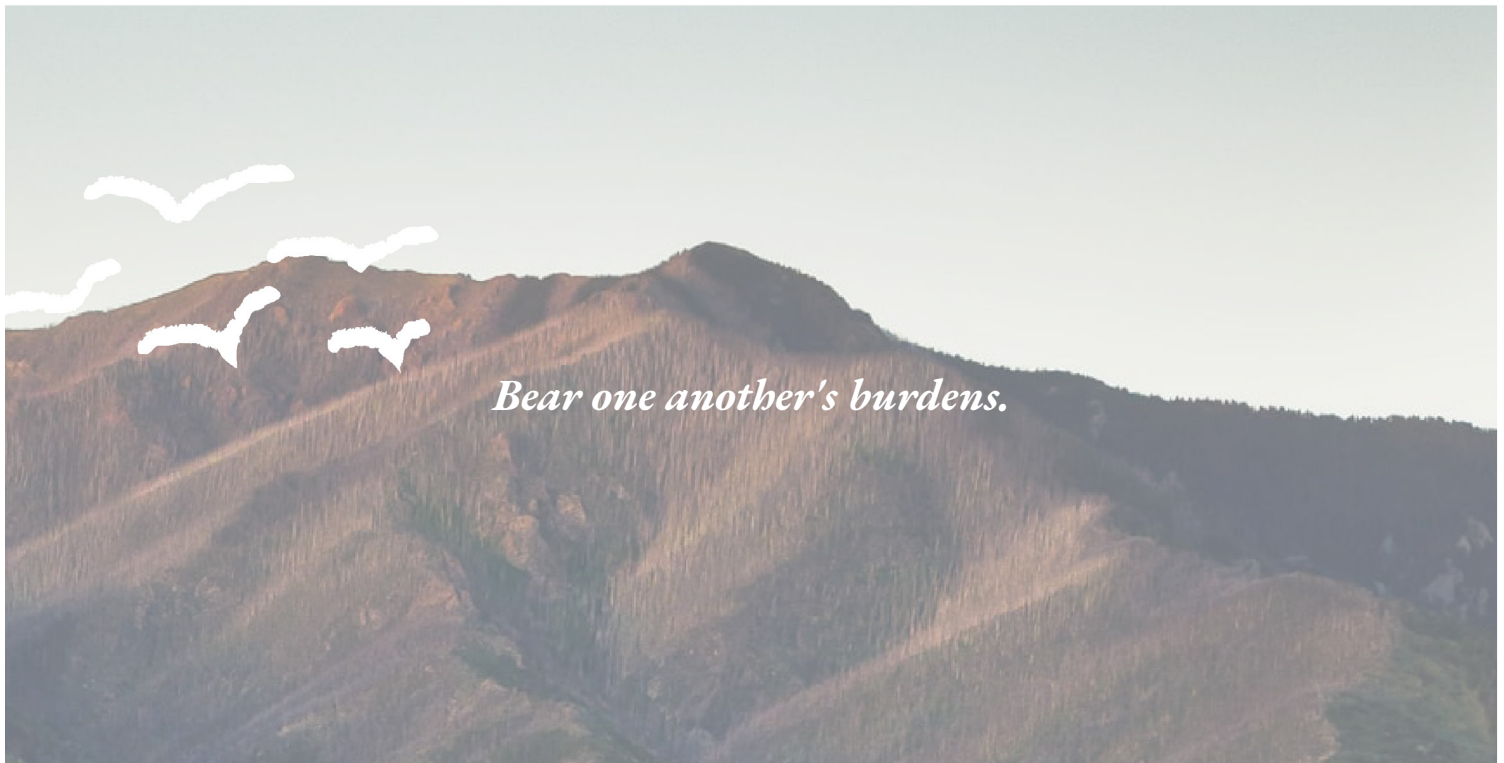
Take a few minutes to imagine what it might look like if we all lived this way in relationship with one another.

Paul says that to bear one another's burdens is to "fulfill the law of Christ."

Q Are there people you know whose burdens—emotional, physical, spiritual, financial—you can help bear? How can you practice this over the course of this week?

Imagine what it could look like for us to have such humility that we only boasted about how great our savior is.

Q How might that change the way you act with those you interact with at work or school? How might it change the way we interact with one another at church?



This guide has been specifically and prayerfully created with you in mind. It is designed to complement your personal daily devotion, Sunday service engagement, and Life Group gatherings. Additionally, each week includes unique content designed for students and our littlest participants; if you are a parent, we encourage you to go through this Discipleship Guide together as a family!

The 'Know' section is designed to complement the weekend service and supplement your daily time with God. Each chapter of the Guide corresponds with the passage of Galatians covered in the weekend message and each daily reading explores a different facet of it. Engage with our Sunday sermons at any of our three physical campuses—or online—throughout the series to get acquainted with the text. Then, take time each day throughout the week to dive deeper into God's word using the daily readings. It is our desire that you would come to Know and Be Known by God in a new and fresh way through this study.

The 'Be Known' section is intended to be used in a group setting with questions to facilitate conversation and look deeper at the weekly text. If you are not currently in a Life Group, we would highly recommend you join one! We were never meant to do life alone, and we don't want you to miss out on what God has for you in this season. Going through this material with a Life Group creates a space to dig deeper into Scripture, hear real stories from others in our church, engage spiritual questions, and grow deeper in the faith. Each week there are conversation starters to help get things rolling, followed by questions for discussion based on the text. This section concludes with a weekly Application & Reflection challenge to help you grow spiritually.

This resource is designed to function as a guide, not a straitjacket. If you miss a day—it's ok! You may not get through every question with your Life Group. This Discipleship Guide is designed to support your personal growth and spiritual community—not replace them. Additionally, we encourage you to find and utilize supplementary resources throughout our study. Our desire for this Guide is that it might be used to facilitate a firmer grasp of Scripture, a stronger connection to Christ, and a hunger for spiritual growth.



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