



The Book of Galatians
Discussion/Reflection Questions

Galatians 1:1-5

The book of Galatians opens with grace and closes with grace. First, Paul reminds the Galatians that he is an apostle, which means “one who is sent”. He declares that he was not sent by man but by God. Then, he uses a familiar phrase used in all of his letters, wishing them both grace and peace. Paul uses the word grace more than any other New Testament writer. He used it over 100 times in his writing and he explains that the grace comes from God our father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins.

Take note of the word order that Paul always puts in his greetings. He puts grace first and peace second. We must first experience God’s grace before we experience his peace. The Greek word for grace is *caris*, which is unmerited favor, or an unearned gift freely given. Because of God’s grace we have reconciliation and peace with God. Is Christ your Savior? How have you experienced the grace and peace of God in your life? When we do not have peace, often times it is because we are not walking in God’s grace. In what area of your life do you need more grace and peace today?

Galatians 1:6-10

Paul was surprised to find that the Galatians were so quickly abandoning their faith for a false gospel. Twice he repeats that those who preach another gospel are under God’s condemnation or curse. The phrase “let him be accursed” means “drop straight into hell.” This might sound unloving, but Paul was protecting them from being led astray and he reminds them that if he was trying to please man, he could not be a servant of Christ.

Paul lived for an audience of one: God. He refused to change his message so that those listening would like him. So, they didn’t just attack his message, but they attacked Paul as well. It can be tempting to water down the gospel so others will be more accepting of us. But we cannot live to please both God and man. If our goal is to please man, then we aren’t a servant of Christ. In what areas are you tempted to be a people pleaser when it comes to your faith? Pray and ask the Lord to help you to stand firm.

Galatians 1:11-24

Paul says he was set apart before he was born, to preach the gospel to the Gentiles. Yet, he was a man of high status in Judaism, who violently persecuted the church. God did not call Paul because of something he had done to please God. Instead, God extended his grace to Paul so that God would get all the glory. Jesus was revealed both to him and in him.

Paul has a powerful testimony. While he was religious, successful and in a powerful position, he was full of sin. He was trying to destroy the church - then he encountered God! Oh, what a beautiful testimony he has going from darkness to light. He says in verse 24, "they glorified God because of me." Because of his testimony, they glorified God. Some of us have amazing testimonies like Paul and others of us have ones that are simpler. Perhaps like me, you were saved at a young age, but we all have had our trials and - and that is a part of our testimony now too. God's glory is seen in all of our testimonies! What is your testimony? Write it below and pray for an opportunity to share it with someone.

Galatians 2:1-10

After 14 years, Paul went to Jerusalem to meet privately with the leaders. He wanted to be sure that they were preaching the same gospel because some false brothers had slipped into the church and were adding in legalistic rules for salvation. After it was clear that they all were in agreement, they asked that Paul remember the poor.

Right after clarifying the gospel, Paul talks about caring for the poor. He could have talked about anything else - tithing, loving one another, or perhaps styles of worship but the very next focus was the poor. Some believe if we preach too much grace then believers won't do anything for the Lord - but it's the opposite. God's grace should motivate us to help others. Because we have been rescued, we need to rescue others who are oppressed and in need. Paul was a very busy man --traveling, speaking, writing and in prison -- yet he was not too busy to help the poor. Instead, he was eager to help the poor. Are you eager to help the poor or are you too busy? How does remembering God's grace motivate you and in what ways can you do more to help the poor?

Galatians 2:11-16

The church in Antioch was the first church to bring Jewish and Gentile Christians together. But there was an influential group that Peter (Cephas) and Barnabas feared, and it was causing them to separate from the Gentiles. Paul boldly confronted them for not staying in step with the gospel. Then he clarified that a person is not justified by their works but through faith in Jesus alone.

The word justified is a legal term. God, as our judge, has declared us justified and righteous simply based on our faith in Christ alone. But there are still people in the church who try to make us feel like we need to be doing something more to be considered a true Christian. Like this group in Galatians 2, they may be influential and cause us to separate from other believers out of fear that things other Christians do or don't do make them unbelievers. Are you more like Peter and Barnabas or Paul? Do you tend to try to please certain groups of Christians and their rules or do you find yourself trying to focus on the heart and faith of other believers? The Christian church has hundreds of denominations and has separated over many different side issues. How can you bring more unity into the body of Christ through focusing on the main thing – the gospel?

Galatians 2:17-21

Before Paul knew Jesus, he thought he was saved through following the law. Then he realized the law made him guilty because he could not keep it. It was Christ's death on the cross that saved him from the law and his own sin. His new life was now lived in faith rather than by following the law. This faith was not in himself or his good works but in the son of God, who loved him and gave himself for him.

Jesus demonstrated his love for us when he paid the penalty for our sin on the cross. Now we live under a new and better law – the law of grace! We have a special union with Christ – because he lives in us. Our love for the world and our fleshly desires have been crucified with him. In what areas of your life do you need to be reminded of God's love and grace? And in what areas of your life do you need to live more by faith?

Galatians 3:1-9

Paul used strong language when he questioned the Galatians as to why they were being so foolish as to lean on their works of the law rather than their faith in Jesus. He reminded them of their heritage and how it was Abraham's faith that made him righteous. Abraham faithfully obeyed God by leaving his home and going where God

led him. He was even willing to give up his own son and yet this was not what made him righteous. It was his faith. Abraham was not righteous – he was a sinner. But God counted him as righteous because of his faith.

The law was given to reveal our sin. Salvation has always been by faith alone. But like Abraham, our faith is revealed by our obedience to God. Abraham was called to give up his home and land. What have you had to give up, in order follow the Lord? How has your faith been revealed through the way you have followed God?

Galatians 3:10-14

Paul continues to explain how those who live under the law will fail to keep it and as a result they will be cursed. But Christ has redeemed us from the curse, by becoming the curse for us. He bore our sins on the cross. And so, we rely on Jesus for our salvation rather than our works -- because the righteous will live by faith.

There are a lot of people who practice religious traditions, such as going to church on Sundays, praying before meals, giving to the poor, or even reading portions of scripture out loud. While all of these are good things, they do not save us. If they are not done out of sincere faith, then they are simply external good works. True faith is internal. God looks at the motives of our heart. Are there any spiritual practices you are doing right now that are done more out of habit than faith? Ask the Lord to change your heart and help you live more by faith.

Galatians 3:15-29

The law held them captive and imprisoned them. It revealed all of their sins and flaws. But when Christ came, they were set free through their faith in him. They became sons of God with a unique unity between races, nations, economic levels and gender. God erased the dividing lines and made them all sons of God.

In the family of God, there is no room for discrimination based on our differences. We are to treat everyone equally. Jesus has united us all through our faith in Christ. Yet, we live in a day in age when we are easily divided by our race, our political differences, our economic differences and our gender. Until Christ returns, we are called to strive for unity inside the church based on our faith alone. Is there an area in your life where you are struggling with discrimination? What can you do to live more united with your brothers and sisters in Christ?

Galatians 4:1-7

God had a precise plan for our salvation. When the fulness of time came, he sent his son to redeem those under the law, by fulfilling the law. His plan was accomplished when we became sons of God. He has adopted us into his family as his children and heirs - not based on our works but based on our faith in him.

As God's children, we have a special relationship with God. The word "Abba" in Aramaic means "Daddy". We have been adopted by him and we are meant to have a close bond with him, like a good father with his daughter. Typically, a king does not allow anyone access to him without permission, but you know who has access to a king? His children. We have access to the King of kings because we are his child. Isn't this an amazing gift? How does remembering this tight bond we have with God encourage you today? Thank God in prayer for this special relationship you have with him.

Galatians 4:8-20

The Galatians were being tempted over and over to abandon their faith-based salvation and instead return to elementary principles of working for their salvation through following the law. They were observing days, months, seasons and years commanded in the Old Testament but in Christ, they were freed from this legalistic obligation. It was not earning favor with God and greatly upset Paul. He had invested his time teaching them the gospel and they were departing from it and turning his hard work into vanity.

Many like to attend church on Christmas and Easter so that they will feel like a good Christian – but God looks at the heart. He wants our heart 365 days a year. All the world religions require good works. That is the weak and worthless principle this world offers to right our wrongs. This is not God's way. We are not saved by our good works. Are you ever tempted to trust in your good works or to be prideful about them?

Paul loved the Galatians so much he did not want to give up on them. Instead, he continued to preach with fervor to correct their errors. Is there someone in your life you are tempted to give up on? Write their name below. Do not give up. Keep praying for them and follow up with them this week to see how they are doing.

Galatians 4:21-31

Paul shifts his method of explaining to the Galatians that they are not saved by the law, by using the allegory of Hagar and Sarah and their two sons. One was a son of the flesh – born to a slave woman and the other was a son of promise – born to a free woman. They represent two covenants – the old covenant and the new covenant. Under the old covenant, they were slaves to the law and their man-made attempts to earn their salvation. Under the new covenant, they are free. Paul wants them to live free!

Sarah and Hagar did not get along and God told Abraham to send Hagar and her son away. Paul says to cast out the slave woman and her son. Law and grace do not get along. We will spend our entire lives trying to earn favor with the Lord if we do not kick legalism out of our lives. In what area do you struggle with legalism or trying to earn favor with the Lord? What do you need to let go so you can experience the freedom of grace?

Galatians 5:1-6

Christ had set them free from the law, the power of sin and the power of death and yet the Galatians were wanting to return to the yoke of slavery. They were relying on their circumcision to earn favor with God but it truly counted for nothing with God. God was only looking for their faith.

A free person should not want to return to slavery, yet we see some people reject the grace of Christ and try to earn favor with God either through their good works or through following legalistic man-made rules. Friends, if you are in the habit of adding too many rules to your life, you will grow weary in your walk with the Lord. A good work becomes a sin, if it is for the purpose of earning favor with God. Instead, we should do good out of a heart of faith and love. In what ways or areas have you fallen away from grace and freedom in your life?

Galatians 5:7-15

Paul reminded believers that they had been set free, but they needed to be careful not to use their freedom to serve their flesh. Their freedom was not freedom to sin – but rather freedom from sin. The grace of God was meant to lead them to serve one another in love.

One of the greatest fears of a legalist is that if they give people freedom, they will take advantage of it and sin. So, rules are made – that aren't in the Bible – to keep people in check. While this is a danger to the freedom Christ has given us – there is also a danger, when we feed the flesh what it selfishly wants, without loving others. Which do you

struggle with more – being too legalistic or being so free you fall into sin? How does remembering to love and serve others bring balance to your freedom?

Galatians 5:16-18

Paul did not want them to rely on the law to keep them from sinning but rather to walk by the Spirit. But he knew there would be a battle between the flesh and the Spirit because the two are opposed to each other. He told them that the only way to not gratify the desires of the flesh was to be led by the Holy Spirit. In doing this, they would be free from the law and would be pleasing God.

The Galatians may have felt there were only two choices, follow the law or sin. But we have a third choice and that is to walk by the Spirit. Paul says when we walk by the Spirit, we will not gratify the desires of the flesh. He does not say you will not have the desires. He only says you will not gratify them. What fleshly desire are you battling right now? The Holy Spirit is inside of you and he wants to free you, but you must be led by the Holy Spirit rather than the flesh to overcome that desire. Surrender that desire to the Lord right now and ask him to help you not gratify that desire but instead walk by the Spirit.

Galatians 5:19-21

Paul said that the works of the flesh are evident, yet he still felt compelled to list them and be specific for clarity sake. All of the sins on the list fall into one of four categories: sexual sins, religious sins, relational sins and social sins. Those who habitually practice these sins are clearly not walking by the Spirit and are living in rebellion to God. They will not inherit the kingdom of heaven.

The list that Paul gives is not meant to be turned into the law. The word “practice” is used in the present tense and it means a continual lifestyle of doing these things. The fact that someone can continually sin over and over is evidence that the Holy Spirit is not inside of them. But let’s face it, we all have committed some of the sins on this list. That does not mean we are in danger of losing the kingdom of heaven. We may commit some of these sins in our weakness, but we do not stay in them. Which of these sins on the list is your weakness? Repent. Ask the Lord to help you come up with a plan as to how you will avoid or stop this sin the next time you are tempted to fall.

Galatians 5:22-26

Paul uses the picture of fruit to describe the work of the Holy Spirit in the believer’s life. The fruit of the Spirit is in direct contrast to the fruit of the flesh, in the previous list.

Isn't the fruit of the spirit beautiful? The more we walk in the Spirit, the more we will not gratify our flesh and the more we will display the fruit of the Spirit in our lives.

It's interesting to note that right after Paul says to walk in the Spirit, he has to remind them to not get conceited! As soon as we are overcoming the flesh and living in the power of the Holy Spirit, the enemy will come in and tempt us with pride. It's easy to think we are right and everyone else is wrong. As a result, we provoke other believers or become envious of other believers who are more spiritual. Which fruit of the Spirit is your strength? Which fruit of the Spirit is your weakness? Are you ever conceited about your strength or envious of another believer who is strong in an area where you feel weak?

Galatians 6:1-5

Paul knows that some believers will fall into sin and they will need help getting out. Those who are more spiritual are responsible to help restore them in gentleness. He does not want them to be harsh or prideful but rather humble, recognizing that they too may fall into sin and need help being restored.

Some believers are carrying a very heavy load right now. Paul gives us a simple command – help them. When we help others with their burdens, we are fulfilling the law of Christ to love one another. So, essentially Paul is saying – if you want to follow the law so badly, follow the law of Christ to love one another. When you think of someone who has fallen into sin or who is heavily burdened – who comes to mind? What are some ways you can come alongside and love and help this person?

Galatians 6:6-10

Paul reminds them to not be deceived or fooled into thinking that they can feed the flesh and reap the fruit of the Spirit. God sees and will not be mocked in that way. God's grace is not a license to sin, so if they choose to sin, they would reap corruption. But for those sowing to the Spirit, he encouraged them to not grow weary in doing good. The principle of sowing and reaping requires patience. An oak tree does not appear in a single day. So, Paul encouraged them to not give up.

Our thoughts, actions, words, hobbies and habits are all seeds. If we plant pumpkin seeds, we get pumpkins. We cannot get a tomato from a pumpkin seed and in the same way, we cannot reap God's blessings when we are planting sinful habits. Divine discipline follows the law of sowing and reaping. If we sow bad decisions in our lives, we will suffer. Sometimes we might be tempted to think that we can get away with doing wrong, but God always sees and knows. Eventually, it does catch up with us. Pause and consider - What are you sowing right now? And what are you reaping right now? What changes need to

be made to sow more to the Spirit and less to the flesh? Stay strong, be patient and keep sowing to the Spirit. Do not give up!

Galatians 6:11-18

As Paul closes the book of Galatians, he writes one final plea for them to not return to the law. He reminded them that those who force circumcision had wrong motives. They were avoiding persecution and boasting in their flesh. Paul had suffered for Christ. He had been beaten, whipped and stoned. His body bore the marks of Jesus. And so, this is his final argument. Rules, religion and traditions would not save them. Only the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ would save them and that was Paul's only boast.

The Lord says in Jeremiah 9:23 & 24: *“Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, ²⁴ but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the LORD.”*

Absolutely nothing we do can bring us into a right relationship with God. Our works cannot save us. We are saved by faith alone, by grace alone, through Christ alone. Jesus deserves all the glory for laying his life down for our sins. Give God glory right now. Write a prayer below praising him for his grace. And may *“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers. Amen.” Galatians 6:18*