

**GALATIANS**

**GRACE**

**GOSPEL**



KIAMA ANGLICAN  
CHURCHES

KAC Term 2, 2022 'Galatians - Grace Gospel' Sermon Series Bible Study

# Galatians

## Grace // Gospel

**BIBLE STUDIES**

*Rev. A. M. Sib.*

*Study leaders:*

In this series, we are using what's called 'The Swedish Method' as a basic framework for letting the text speak. The key question is: "What is God saying to his people *today*, as we encounter him in word and Spirit?"

I have offered some thoughts in each study, but this is only to prompt your own thinking.

The two key disciplines for leading these studies well are 1) knowing the text yourself, and 2) getting a feel for how much to let people 'have their head.' It can be easy for a study to run off on a tangent when there is not a strict form to follow. However, one powerful question you can always ask is, "Where do you see that in the text?" Or, "What was it about what Paul says here that brought that up?" These are helpful questions to ask, because while sometimes it will bring your group back from a tangent, other times it will turn out that it is not a tangent at all - - indeed, rich new horizons in your own understanding of the text may open up before you!

So please enter into this series with a sense of *adventure*, looking to where the Spirit may take you and your group in your ongoing journey of discipleship, both in mind and in deed.

*By way of users' notes:*

Where you see **Pre-read** appear, these are passages which are helpful to have in mind as you come to the primary Matthew reading attached to the study.

I am keen for you to leave room for what Paul is saying to you through the Galatians passage, so the questions in the study-proper will be more 'open.'

However, these **Pre-read** passages are attached to what you might call 'leading questions' ('leading the witness'), in order to draw out their significance as they are brought to bear upon the Matthew passages.

Additionally, each passage includes the "**Preached on...**" date. This is not to say that you have to wait for the sermon, nor fully depend upon the preacher's own work. However, reflecting on the sermon may be an aid to you in your preparation, or it may help to expand your thinking on a passage. Our preachers are men and women who have 'studied to show themselves approved workers' (2 Tim. 2:15). Yet it remains true that they, like us, are fellow disciples—learning to discern the face and voice of God in the text: at times perceiving 'in part, as in a mirror' (1 Cor. 13:12). So please use the sermons as a resource, even as you yourselves 'search the scriptures, to see if these things are so' (Acts 17:11).

## **Notes on Galatians**

In 2022 during Term 2, we are taking the time to look at Paul's epistle to the Galatian church.

In this letter, we clearly see the nature and application of the Grace-Gospel. Those are two key words. The word 'gospel' (Grk: Euangelion) is a declaration of a new emperor. It is the declaration that "Jesus is Lord!" The word 'grace' (Grk: Charis) means "gift."

Thus if the Gospel we proclaim is a Gospel of Grace, this means that Jesus is Lord, and it means that all of the benefits of his

lordship come to us as a gift. It is not something we earn, nor merit, nor inherit by virtue of our nationality. It is simply something that God determines to give to all who believe, out of his 'lovingkindness,' as the old KJV used to translate it.

The implications of this are massive. It means that we are to be people of grace, formed by grace, who walk in grace. The Galatian church become almost a 'foil' for our own walk with Christ. They are tempted to believe that they have earned the gospel. If not that, then they are tempted to believe that they must earn the Gospel. But Paul reminds them (and therefore us) that all of the 'earning' was done by Christ (1:4). He reminds them of the moments of grace that emerge when this truth penetrates into their heart (4:15) and the great ugliness that comes from failing to remember who we are and how we were justified (2:11ff).

We do not have the time to cover the whole letter, but I invite preachers to consider the whole: ransomed by Christ, standing in grace, we are called to be people of grace: living lives of self-giving freedom (5:1ff), keeping in step with the Spirit, and bearing one another's burdens (6:1ff). This overall frame must inform our application, every week. It is Paul's application of these great truths, and therefore if we are to be authentic to the text, it must be ours. And yet the challenge is not simply to repeat the same application verbatim, but instead to imaginatively (and prayerfully) reflect on what these great truths mean in the lives of the individuals.

If this seems like the task of a lifetime, that is only because, well... it is. Don't feel to overburdened to cover it all, though, because that's the plan for Term 3: we have asked congregations to think about where we might apply these truths, and we will tackle our Term 3 series with this in mind.

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Remember to fill out our Term 3 Grace // Gospel Application survey! You can access it via this QR link.



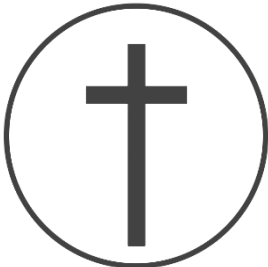
# The Swedish Bible-Study Method



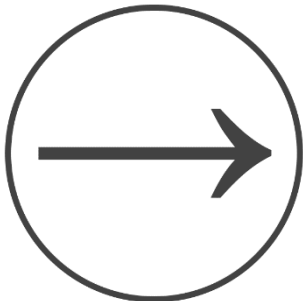
A **'light bulb'** is anything that 'shines through' in the passage. What stood out when you read it? What struck you? What grabbed your attention? It could be an idea, a literary device, a fact... Anything!



A **'question mark'** is anything that puzzles you, or raises a question for you (however basic or simple). It is extra important to ask how this might connect to the rest of the Bible. You might not have all the answers yourself, but as the group pools their resources, you may get closer to an answer together!



The **'cross'** is asking how this passage relates to Jesus. Where is Jesus in this passage? How does this passage help us understand his nature, his work, or his purpose? How does this passage help you to know Jesus more?



The **'arrow'** is asking, 'so what?' This is where we think about what preachers call 'application.' How might this change my life? One prompt is S.P.E.C.K.: is there a Sin to avoid, a Promise to know, an Example to follow, a Command to obey, or new Knowledge of God or ourself? The arrow asks, "What difference will this make to you?"

Ideally, in running the Swedish method, you will allow a time for the group to read the passage, and to reflect on it. Members might individually jot down some thoughts next to the icons in the study. When it comes time to share, you then initiate the discussion by asking, "So what were some of the things people noticed?" The study will flow on from there, as you work through the categories.

Finish by praying that we will be changed by what we learn. Pray that we would not be like one who looks in a mirror, and then walks away, immediately forgetting what he looks like (James 1:24). Pray that we might see the face and hear the voice of God in the text, and that we might be changed by it.

Preached May 8 <sup>(8/10)</sup> and May 15 <sup>(8:30/6pm)</sup>

## The Grace-Gospel

Galatians 1:1-10, Jeremiah 23:16-22 (8am Gospel Matthew 7:13-23)

Biblically, false prophecy is always a swift road to a dire sentence; the outcome is never good. And while we often imagine that prophecy has some fantastical elements (revealing secrets, foretelling the future), in reality the prophetic act is any speech which claims to reveal God's mind to God's people. So it can even entail commentary on what has been achieved in the past; including what was achieved at the Cross of Christ. We must walk humbly when we seek to declare the mind of God.

False prophecy is the presenting problem in the Galatian church. The clarity of the Gospel has been marred by false teachers who insist on justification through adherence to the Jewish law—Paul will refer to this many times throughout the letter. And as this insistence on DIY-justification undermines God's declaration of the Gospel of Grace (that is, the teaching of DIY-justification is false prophecy) Paul rightly calls it, 'accursed' (1:8-9).

The truth is, Christ is the one who gave himself for our sins, in order to rescue us from the power of Satan, sin and death. As the Dustin Kensrue song says, it is finished—he has done it!

## Read Galatians 1:1-10



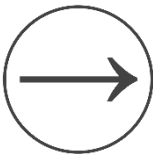
What shines out?



What raises questions?



How is Christ revealed?



What difference  
will it make?

Preached May 15 (8/10) and May 22 (8:30/6pm)

## The Grace-Gospel Confirmed

Galatians 1:10-2:10, Isaiah 52:7-10 (8am Gospel - Mark 7:24-30)

The Gospel of God's Grace is not only for Jewish people. Rather, it is God's salvation, "prepared in the sight of all nations" (Isaiah 52:10). So after Paul's conversion, once the Gospel 'clicks' for Paul, he heads East: to preach to Gentiles, non-Jews. It is only after 14 years that he returns to the home of the Jewish faith in Jerusalem.

The fact that the Jewish Messiah is to be the Lord and Saviour of all people is both expected and unexpected. Old Testament passages assuring us of God's reign in all the world (Jer. 23:23-24) and his intention to bless all the nations (Genesis 18:18, 22:18) are contrasted with promises that Israel would be His 'special possession' (Deut. 7:6) and assurances that God would redeem Israel specifically (Ps. 130:8, et. al.)

In this passage, we see that the Gospel is for all: the children of Israel, and 'the alien and the sojourner' (to use the language of the KJV). So I would suggest that the Apostles' instruction to "remember the poor" (Gal. 2:10) is not incidental, rather it is at the heart of the Gospel. In God's eyes, we are all 'poor' (Romans 3:9-11), and all are called to come to Christ (Rom. 3:19-24).



## Read Galatians 1:10-2:10



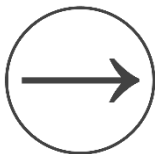
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Preached May 22 <sup>(8/10)</sup> and June 5th <sup>(8:30/6pm)</sup>

## The Grace-Gospel Defended

Galatians 2:11-21, Isaiah 64:1-7 (8am Gospel: Matthew 23:13-15)

In this key passage, Paul defends the Gospel of Grace against the idea of “Judaizing”. Judaizing is the idea that for Christians to properly receive the Jewish Messiah, they have to not only become disciples of Jesus, but also participate fully in contemporary Judaism: meaning the synagogue (not only church), circumcision (not only baptism), and all 613 commands of the Pharisees that go along with it.

Peter had been given a vision on the road to Joppa (Acts 10:9ff) where it was demonstrated to him that the Gospel is for everyone—even ‘unclean’ Gentiles in their ‘uncleanness’. And yet it is sad to see that in this passage, after Jewish people visit from James, Peter (Cephas) no longer participates fully in the community of grace alongside Gentiles / non-Jews. Instead, he introduces some order of division.

It’s interesting that even for both the Apostle Peter and Jesus’ own brother James (see Matt 13:55 / Mark 6:3), the Christian life is one of growth in discipleship, grace and knowledge. These titans of the faith, pillars of the early church, are rebuked by St Paul. Perhaps there’s a lesson in grace and humility in that for the rest of us!

Paul sharply rebuked this behaviour. The thing that truly matters is **grace in Christ**, for those who are in Him—whether Gentile or Jew. Makes you wonder where we might sometimes be tempted to “rebuild where we once tore down” (2:18).

## Read Galatians 2:11-21



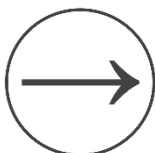
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Preached June 5 (8/10) and June 12 (8:30/6pm)

## The Gospel of Abraham

Galatians 3:1-29, Leviticus 18:1-5 (8am Gospel: John 8:42-59)

In Leviticus 18, The Lord God says to the children of Israel, *Keep my decrees and laws, for the person who obeys them will live by them.* In the context of Leviticus, God is telling them not to live like the Egyptians or the Caananites, and to maintain sexual purity. But it is interesting that in Galatians 3 (and Romans 10:5), Paul takes this as key for understanding Judaism's moral teachings. The one who keeps the law *will* live. But Paul is honest in his assessment that no person can do this; and so Judaism benefits us only insofar as it casts us, broken, upon God's grace: desperate for a Saviour.

Thankfully, before the Law, before Judaism (and even before the Patriarch Judah), God had promised a man that all the nations of the earth would be blessed through his offspring. The man the promise was made to was Abraham. And what is striking about Abraham is that he kind of comes out of nowhere. Joshua 24:2 indicates that Abraham's family were idolaters; not upright god fearers. And yet God begins promising salvation through Abraham's offspring, when he had done nothing to earn it (perhaps other than listening to God, and trusting him—though we know that his trust had its ups and downs). It is a story of **grace first**.

Of course, in the fullness of time, the world is blessed through Abraham's offspring: his great (great, great, great...) grandson, Jesus. Jesus reveals God's salvation and grace, bringing to its fulfilment a story that began with grace. The question is, do we really understand the story, and what it says to us? Do we realise that God whispers grace upon every page of our lives, and our bibles? Or have we not put it all together? Thankfully, in this passage, Paul draws a straight line from Abraham to Jesus.

Perhaps a question to ponder later is, does the line from Abraham to Jesus “strike through” the Law? Why or why not?

Abraham ~~Law~~ → Jesus

## Read Galatians 3:1-29



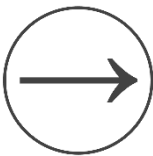
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Preached June 12 <sup>(8/10)</sup> and June 19 <sup>(8:30/6pm)</sup>

## The Gospel of Adoption

Galatians 3:25-4:7, Psalm 100 (8am Gospel: John 17:20-26)

Whilst this week's passage is a relatively short passage, it is profound. If 'we' (whether Jew or Gentile) have been adopted as God's children, then we are heirs of all.

This is a mystery almost too profound and beautiful to contemplate, and yet it is scrawled across our bibles: and especially here in Galatians 3. Our adoption as God's children means that we are the heirs of all that is God's. It means that all of the promises of the Old Testament, which speak of the blessing of being God's children, are rightly ours (in Christ).

Sometimes, on a bush walk, it's easy to lose yourself in the trail. Walking, worrying about changing light and whether you have enough water; if you're not careful you can miss the most magnificent views, as the horizon opens up just off to the side of the trail. I want to urge you, with this short reading, to take a moment—step off to the side of the track and look at that amazing truth: *what does it mean for us to be called children of God?*

**Read Galatians 3:25-4:7**



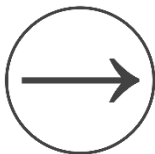
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Preached June 19 (8/10) and June 26 (8:30/6pm)

## The Gospel of Charity

Galatians 4:8-20, Ezekiel 36:33-36 (8am Gospel: John 13:33-35)

You may remember from my brief introductory notes that the Greek word for 'grace' is 'charis.' It means 'gift.' It is the same word that goes into our English word, 'charity.' It is worth noticing that the Galatians' initial response to the gospel of 'charis' (grace) is to *practice* 'charis' (charity): Paul says that they welcomed him, and that if they could have, they would have torn out their eyes and given them to him (4:15b).

It is a *strange* act of charity, though, isn't it?

We don't say, 'Welcome to my home—can I give you a snack, or a drink—or ... how about an eye?' In what culture is that a measure of generosity? Unless, of course, Paul was going *blind*. Which really wouldn't be that much of a surprise, given that the optical trauma from his Damascus road conversion experience blinded him for three full days (Acts 9:9). Then when Ananias finally baptised Paul, 'something like scales fell from his eyes' (Acts 9:18). The "large handwriting" he uses for his signature in Gal. 6:11 now makes a little more sense, doesn't it?

So the Galatians are offering to meet Paul's need: wishing they could alleviate the distress of his blindness. This is the spirit of generosity that the gospel of grace ought to foster! But in this chapter, Paul says: *Where has it gone?* (4:15). And the answer is that they've been captured by something else - *something other than grace*.

What about us?



## Read Galatians 4:8-20



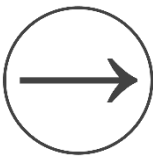
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Preached June 26 <sup>(8/10)</sup> and July 3rd <sup>(8:30/6pm)</sup>

## The Gospel of Freedom

Galatians 5:1-15, Deuteronomy 10:14-21 (8am Gospel: Matthew 11:25-30)

Circumcision is, admittedly, an uncomfortable topic. And yet this was the symbol given for God's covenant with Abraham: perhaps *because* it was a covenant that looked towards a Son and heir who would eventually be born of the line of Abraham, the patriarchs, and David. But by Paul's time, circumcision had become the defining symbol of belonging to Judaism.

So as the Galatian Christians are lured into thinking they must become observant Jews, they are invited to take on the yoke of the law, and the symbol of circumcision that goes along with it. But Paul's whole argument is that the law and Judaism cannot save—only Jesus can! In 3:24, he wrote that the whole point of the law is to lead us to Christ: it is a means, not an end in itself. And so, as he says in verse 6: in Jesus, your belonging to the law does not matter - the only thing that counts is faith. Because it is faith in the saviour that saves!

So Paul calls us to faith. And when we ask what difference the life of faith should display, Paul points us to the same place Christ does. Not to the minutiae of the law, but to the heart behind it: God's heart of love (5:14).

## Read Galatians 5:1-15



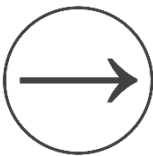
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Preached July 3 <sup>(8/10)</sup> and July 10 <sup>(8:30/6pm)</sup>

## The Gospel of the Spirit

Galatians 5:13-25, Isaiah 57:14-21 (8am Gospel: Matthew 20:20-28)

An encounter with the living God can't help but change a person.

In these verses, much like Proverbs, Paul shows us how to tell whether somebody has encountered the Spirit of God, or whether they live by 'the flesh'—Paul's shorthand way of referring to the Adam-man, the dying-man, the judged-man. They either manifest 'the acts of the flesh,' or else they bear 'the fruit of the spirit.'

Paul calls us to live as the people we *are*. Christ *has* saved us, and so we are those who truly live: and it is in the power of God's Spirit that we live. So we are called to *be* the people that we *are*. Paul says in verse 25, "if in the Spirit we live, then in the Spirit let us walk." The word translated "keep in step" (NIV) or "walk by" (ESV) has that sense of being part of a parade, where all the soldiers march together.

So, the question is: do we know who we are? And if we know who we are, do we live as who we are?

## Read Galatians 5:13-25



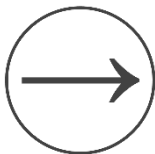
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Preached July 10 (8/10) and July 17 (8:30/6pm)

## The Gospel that Gives

Galatians 6:1<sup>ff</sup>, Matthew 5:11-16, (Isaiah 49:5-7)

In these verses, Paul tells us not to lose steam when it comes to blessing others. He says that when the time is just right, if we can hold out, we will reap a great harvest. So whenever we have the opportunity to seize the moment, let us do good to all: and especially those who belong to the church. He's calling us to live as people of the Spirit, because it is God's life-giving Spirit that brings life and salvation to those who trust in Christ.

So as well as being a call to live as who we *are*, Paul brings in this idea of 'harvest.' We can't help but think of Jesus saying, 'the harvest is plentiful but the workers are few.' What do you think the harvest Paul is referring to might be? Is it a good reputation? Is it the strengthening of our fellow Christians? Could it extend to evangelism?

What might it mean for us to live in a way where we seek to "do good to all?" What might it mean for this to begin / be a priority in 'the household of faith'? Is Church the place where people will first "see our good deeds, and glorify our father in heaven"? Big questions, and it's been a big letter to work through! These don't always have fast and easy answers, but it's worth asking the question. So stay with us through Term 3 as we continue to do just that!

**Read Galatians 6:1ff**



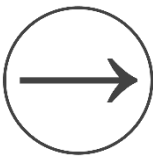
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