

Jesus saved me from...

CONNECT RESOURCE

Campaign Introduction

Dates: Sunday 14th April to Sunday 5th May

Purpose of this campaign: To remind our congregation of the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ and what he saved us from.

Key text for this campaign: Galatians

Week 1: Jesus Saved Me from a False Gospel (Video Preach)

Week 2: Jesus Saved Me from The Law

Week 3: Jesus Saved Me from Slavery (Youth preacher)

Week 4: Jesus Saved Me from The Works of the Flesh

Key historical context, commentary, or references:

Galatians is one of the most theologically dense books of the New Testament. For a book that only consists of 6 chapters it certainly packs a solid punch for its size. This letter, written by the Apostle Paul to the churches (a group of churches in a region, not a single church location) of Galatia – specifically, as most scholars would now argue, to the region of Southern Galatia (modern Asia Minor). This then places Galatians as the earliest writing of the New Testament, dated approximately 48 AD.

Paul writes letters to a group of believers to address an issue at hand. The issue that is found in the letter to the Galatians is that they are “*turning to a different gospel*” (Galatians 1:6). This "gospel" is one taught by Jewish Christians who are going against the gospel taught by Paul by teaching that it is essential for the Law (the Torah) to still be adhered to. This problem presented itself as a division between Jewish

Christians and Gentile Christians through the expectation of Gentile Christians to be circumcised, as was required by the Law.

In addressing this issue, Paul paints the picture of the true Gospel, one of Faith in the crucified Messiah, that inaugurates a new age & produces a new, multiethnic family, that together is transformed by the Spirit of God.

Bible Project divides Galatians up into 3 sections and explains each main point using the sentence found below:

Chapters 1-2	Chapters 3-4	Chapters 5-6
The Gospel of the crucified Messiah...	Creates a new, multiethnic family...	That is transformed by the Spirit.

Side note: over the history of Protestantism Galatians has been read through the lens of the history of the Reformation. That is to say, Galatians was used strongly to address the salvation issues of the Reformation, and this has colored the exegesis and interpretation of the Galatians text in the centuries that followed. This is just a simple warning and encouragement as preachers of the Word to do our due diligence in handling the Word and seeking to understand the Word of God for what it was written to mean – this is the role of proper and effective exegesis.

Galatians has sometimes been overlayed predominately with concepts of sin & salvation. Yes, these are integral parts of the Gospel message but are not necessarily primary concepts explored in the letter to the Galatians. The issue at hand made it necessary for Paul to make an argument on what is the defining factor of those who are a part of the family of God is and should be the lens through which Galatians is read.

“Galatians is not about how to be saved from sin in order to go to heaven, and about the relationship of “faith” and “works” in that process. Actually, “sin” is hardly mentioned in the letter, and “salvation” not at all. Sin and salvation have been pressing questions in the Western churches, but we should not assume that they were the burning issue for Paul and his Galatian churches... Galatians is about “who should be ‘reckoned’ as part of the single family of God,” that is not to imply that the question of ultimate salvation no longer matters. If it wasn’t there in the background, the foreground discussion would be irrelevant... But if someone comes to Galatians expecting a discussion of ultimate salvation, that person will misinterpret the text at every point.”

– NT Wright, Galatians Commentary for Christian Formation.

A major implication of this teaching is then on how we treat the Jews as we find them represented in the book of Galatians. For a while, the predominant critique of the Jews was that they were trying to "earn" their salvation through the "works of the Law." Rather it should be looked through the lens not of sin & salvation but of who is part of the family of God. For the Jews, they were confident in their ownership by God and being the intended people of God. The Law therefore was a way of living that identified/set apart the people of God from the rest of the world NOT as a method of earning righteousness.

Paul explains that from the beginning righteousness has only ever been obtained through faith and he uses Abraham as the perfect example because even before the time of the Law (which came with Moses) Abraham *“believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.”* (Galatians 4:6 – quoting Genesis 15:6). That is, righteousness only ever came through faith in God and the Law was a covenantal marker for the people of God. Now, in the new era inaugurated by Christ, the law has been fulfilled and our

“covenantal marker” is faith in the risen Messiah Jesus Christ. This is what unites us and identifies us as part of the people of God.

Lastly, this preaching series is titled “Jesus Saved me From...” in which each week we explore a different aspect of what the work of Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension has done not only for us individually but more importantly us communally as the people of God. So, in the context of this campaign "saved" needs to be more appropriately explained as what the work of Christ (in His death, resurrection, and ascension) brought about through this new age that has been introduced. It could be better explained as what Jesus has "freed" us from, or "defeated," or what concepts have no place in this new age.

Key definitions:

Gospel = “good news.” A word that carries many cultural implications in the Greco-Roman world. It is a phrase that historically has referred to the coming of a new king and the inauguration of a new kingdom. It can be expected that when the New Testament writers use this term, they are making use of such cultural implications.

Further study - <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/euangelion-gospel/>

The Law = The Torah. This is not referring to a kind of “moral” law or “good works,” rather it is used in reference to the Torah – the Jewish Law, as found in the first 5 books of the Old Testament. So when we see phrases such as “works of the law” in Galatians this is NOT referring to attempts of individuals trying to “earn their salvation.” The Law should not be treated as if it is something inherently bad, rather it simply was playing a role for a time that has now been fulfilled in this new era that Christ has inaugurated.

Further study - <https://bibleproject.com/podcast/series/the-law-series/>

Justification = a state of being and identity of being a part of the people/family of God. In the mind of Paul, especially in Galatians, justification is NOT simply defined as “salvation” or being seen as “just if I never sinned.” It has much further reaching implications for unity in God and identifying who is part of the family of God. Note that the concept of justification has strong connections to redemption, but these similarly need to be understood not just as a single "salvation" moment but as a full & ongoing redemption of all the cosmos/creation. So, through this lens justification isn't the end goal but is just the beginning of an ongoing process that God has been working on throughout history.

Christ = an honorific title. It is not Jesus’ last name, but a title given that carries the meaning of an individual who is the long-awaited Messiah who is to bring about God’s purpose for Israel.

Further study 1 - <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/messiah/>

Further study 2 - <https://bibleproject.com/podcast/christ-not-name/>

Recommended resources (ordered by length & complexity)

Galatians Overview by the Bible Project

<https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/galatians/>

Bible Project Guides – Galatians

<https://bibleproject.com/guides/book-of-galatians/>

Galatians from *The IVP Bible Background Commentary*, Craig Keener

[Galatians, IVP Bible Background Commentary.pdf](#)

TNTC Galatians Commentary, R. Alan Cole

The NIV Application Commentary, Galatians, Scot McKnight

Galatians, Commentaries for Christian Formation, N.T. Wright

[Introduction from Galatians Commentaries for Christian Formation, NT Wright.pdf](#)

Note: although the attached commentary may be a bit more technical it is a quality summary of how to interpret and read Galatians through a lens that is more honest to the text at play. If you can give it a read and wrestle through the content available it is highly recommended

- *Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, Galatians*, Thomas R. Schreiner
- *BECNT Galatians Commentary*, Douglas J. Moo

Week 1: Ps Alex pre-recorded preach

Weekly subtitle: JESUS SAVED ME FROM A FALSE GOSPEL

Date: Sunday 14th April 2024

Section: Galatians 1:1-2:21

Key Point of this week (in context of the overarching point): We are reminded that the true Gospel of Jesus Christ unites all those who are justified only through faith, who then live by faith in the grace of God.

Key Scripture: Galatians 2:15-21 (ESV is used below)

"¹⁵We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; ¹⁶yet 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. ¹⁷But if, in our endeavor to be justified in Christ, we too were found to be sinners, is Christ then a servant of sin? Certainly not! ¹⁸For if I rebuild what I tore down, I prove myself to be a transgressor. ¹⁹For through the law I died to the law so that I might live to God. ²⁰I 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. ²¹I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose."

Historical Context, Commentary + supporting references:

*Please first read the notes from page 2 that summarise many of the key themes, theologies, and concepts that will be explored from this point on.

In this section (Galatians 1:1-2:21) there are 2 key aspects at play:

1. Paul's defense of his authority and Gospel.
2. Recount of Paul opposing Peter (Cephas).

Paul begins his letter to the Galatian church very strongly (unlike many of his other letters) by stating in verse 6 – *"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"* (ESV). He explains that there is no other Gospel, just the single Gospel that the Galatian church is distorting.

Paul had previously shared the Gospel of Jesus Christ with the Galatians, but now he hears of how they are going astray from that message so quickly. So, in this section, Paul is defending both (1) his role as an apostle to the Church and (2) the Gospel that he is preaching. Paul feels the need to defend both these facts as he is being accused of being a "people pleaser" (see 1:10) or "compromiser" as he appears to be opening the door/lowering the bar, for sinful gentiles to become part of the family of God without observing (following) the law (Torah). This phrase, "people pleaser" has a depth of meaning as found in important Jewish texts as it was used about those who were risking the future of Israel by compromising with the Gentiles, who were known for idolatry. Put yourself in the shoes of the Israelites and remind yourself of what happened last time the Law was broken by the people of God – exile of the whole population by both Assyria and Babylon.

So Paul in this section explores justification by faith (2:15-21) by firstly defending that the Gospel he preaches was not man-made but was given as a revelation from God (1:11-17) and that this Gospel was then not changed by anyone else (as Paul went to Arabia for the next 3 year – 1:17) and lastly, this

Gospel was approved by the Apostles of the Early Church (2:9-11). So, all of this is to set up Paul's authority to the Galatians and the Gospel that he has delivered and will now continue to unpack.

Verses 11-14 are important to understand as these provide context for the wider argument at play. In verse 11, Paul says he *"opposed him [Cephas = Aramaic name for Peter] to his face, because he stood condemned."* The problem was that Peter was separating himself from the Gentile Christians when it came to table fellowship. The reason behind this was that these Gentile Christians were uncircumcised.

The issue at hand was that suggesting the Gentile Christians needed to follow the Law (Torah) in being circumcised, suggests that the death, resurrection & ascension of Christ did not welcome in the "age to come" in which the Law (Torah) was fulfilled as a covenantal marker, and now in this "age to come" the people of God are marked only by faith in Jesus Christ. (more on this in later chapters)

"The gospel message wasn't simply offering a new way of being religious or a new way of "getting to heaven." It was declaring that something had happened as a result of which the world was now a different place. A new creation had arrived: anyone could become part of it, from any background or culture. Those who did constituted a new family. A new kind of "family." The ultimate "children of Abraham." The Messiah's people."

– N.T. Wright, Galatians (Commentaries for Christian Formation (CCF)) (p. 162)

Supporting points to Key point:

1. The False Gospel: Works of the Law – *"Yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law..." (2:16)*

Paul explains that this "different gospel" (1:6) the Galatian churches are turning to is one of being justified by the works of the law. But Paul strongly declares that there is only gospel (1:6).

"Gospel" (good news) is a word that is deeply ingrained in the culture of the world of the New Testament. So, when Paul uses the word "gospel" it carries connotations of an announcement of a new king who is inaugurating a new kingdom. In the context of Galatians this "gospel" is that Jesus delivered us from the "present evil age" (1:4) and introduces the long-awaited "age to come." This Gospel, and its implications, are what Paul unpacks in the letter to the Galatians.

Firstly, this "different gospel" (1:6) that Paul is referring to is that some Jewish Christians are under the impression that the Gentile Christian needs to follow the law in order to be "justified." As a reminder, in the context of this letter "justification" is about who is a part of the family of God, and "works of the law" is NOT about following any moral law or "good works" in order to receive salvation, but it is about adhering to the Jewish Law (Torah) as a covenantal marker (a sign to those outside this people group as what sets them apart) of who is a part of the family of God.

The reason why this is a different, or "false," gospel is that Paul believes (and preaches) that after the death, resurrection & ascension of Christ what marks the people of God is no longer adherence to the law (Torah). As Paul explains in his mini-summary of the Gospel in 1:3-5 Jesus *"gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age."* So to request, or demand, a continuing adherence to the Law (Torah) would suggest that Jesus did not accomplish what He did and inaugurated the long-awaited "age to come." In other words, attempting justification through the Law is in a way to ignore the life-altering work of Christ.

This is the problem Paul had with Peter (Cephas) in 2:11-14, which sets the context for the key passage in 2:15-21. Peter, we see, separated himself from the Gentile Christians when it came to table fellowship

(eating a meal) as the Law would demand Jews to separate from the uncircumcised Gentiles. So Peter's actions suggest a separation from Gentile and Jewish Christians based on following the Law. This, as explained above, denies the new age inaugurated by the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ. Or as Paul says in verse 21 – "*for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose.*" The "hypocrisy" (2:13) at play is that they believe one thing and are acting another way.

2. The True Gospel: Justified by Faith – "*...but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ...*" (2:16)

Paul, at the end of verse 2, explains in a nutshell that the true gospel is not one of justification by works of the law but justification through faith in Christ. This is what it means to be delivered from the "present evil age" (1:4) and now part of the new age in Christ. Paul will explain later in Galatians that the Law had a purpose for a time, but now post the work of Christ justification, which is a marker of those who are a part of the people of God, is dictated by faith in Christ.

In verses 17-18, Paul raises a possible counterargument. It can be summarized as – "if by seeking to be justified in Christ (which is only through faith) I am found to be a sinner (in the context of the Torah, not moral law) by going against the Torah and coming into contact with Gentile "sinners," does this mean Christ encourages/promotes sin?" Paul's answer is a clear no, and that in this new age sin itself has been redefined. That to have table fellowship with Gentiles is a sin no longer (hence again, Paul's outrage at Peter for separating himself from the Gentile believers over this).

To be saved from a false gospel is a reminder of the true Gospel of Jesus Christ – that all who put their faith in Christ are deemed wholly & unequivocally part of the one people of God. And to act in any way that betrays this fact is to suggest the actions of Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension were inadequate at inaugurating the new age to come, one in which we are delivered from this "present evil age."

3. Outcome of the True Gospel: Crucified with Christ – "*I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.*" (2:20)

There is a paradox at play here – Paul explains that he has (just as we have) been crucified with Christ but is nevertheless alive, and it is now the life of Christ that is within him (as it is within us). Through this theological and spiritual death & resurrection, which is upheld by the depth of the love of God (2:20), Paul is explaining that he is no longer the person he was (a Jew who was identified by his observance and adherence to the law). But now as Christ lives within him, this, and the faith that caused it, is what identifies Paul as part of the people of God.

Similarly, when we put our faith in Christ, we are no longer the person we once were. Our identity is no longer found in our culture, ethnicity, education, upbringing, sexual preference, or wealth, but simply (and may I add, more importantly) our identity is found in being part of the people of God. (Paul explains the implications of this later in the letter to the Galatians).

CONNECT QUESTIONS

14th April 2024

JESUS SAVED ME FROM A FALSE GOSPEL

Connect Group Discussion Questions:

GATHER: (ensure that these questions center around the community)

- What are the cultural marks of Christians today either perceived by believers or non-believers (for example eating habits, prayer habits, social habits)?
- What should they be according to the Bible?

GROW: (ensure that these questions prompt discussion on personal growth and maturity)

- What works and beliefs of this present age has Jesus freed you from?
- What is your relationship with the Torah like? Have you read the Old Testament? If you haven't read this important part of the history of God's people, it might be a good next step.

GO: (ensure that these questions prompt discussion ongoing and spreading the good news)

- How would you explain what unifies the people of God to someone unfamiliar with Christianity?
- Is there anyone in your world who is struggling with their identity? Pray for them to receive a revelation from God, who gives us new life and new identity in Christ.

Connect Group Resources:

The West Wing: Shibboleth

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u1VSFqMEISw&ab_channel=KristianPeralta

Week 2

Weekly subtitle: JESUS SAVED ME FROM THE LAW

Date: Sunday 21st April 2024

Section: Galatians 3:1-3:29

Key Point of this week (in context of the overarching point): through the work of Christ the law has been fulfilled and a new multiethnic family has been created and marked by faith in Christ.

Key Scripture: Galatians 3:23-29 (ESV is used below)

"²³ Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. ²⁴ So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, so that we might be justified by faith. ²⁵ But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, ²⁶ for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. ²⁷ For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. ²⁸ 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. ²⁹ And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise."

Historical Context, Commentary + supporting references:

Please first read the notes from page 2 that summarise many of the key themes, theologies, and concepts that will be explored from this point on.

We have just come from Galatians chapters 1 & 2 in which Paul defends his authority both as an apostle and in the gospel that he preaches. The key passage is found in 2:15-21 where Paul (1) expounds upon the idea of a false or "different" gospel that requires observance of the law (Torah), which he explains to do so would ignore the fact that Christ has brought in a new age. Then (2) sets up the true & proper gospel as one of "faith in Christ" which is the true marker of the people of God. Lastly, (3) exploration of how faith in Christ means death to our old identity markers and birth into the new family of God.

See the notes in the pages above for further information & discussion on these points.

Now, Galatians chapter 3 is quite deep linguistically and theology (hence just focusing on the one chapter for this week). In this chapter, Paul explores/explains:

- The Spirit working in the Galatians
- The Curse of the Law
- The Reason for the Law
- Implications of faith in Christ

Paul begins this section by saying he is going to ask a question, and then actually asks a series of 7 rhetorical and deeply scathing questions (if there is any insight into Paul's dismay at the Galatian churches, we find it here). The key question though is *"Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith?"* (3:2). What Paul is saying is that there have been obvious signs that the Galatians have received the Spirit of God through miracles even without adhering to the works of the Law (Torah). So he asks, if you have received the Spirit (which is evidence of being accepted into the people of God) then why is there a need to add the works of the Law now?

In verses 10-14, Paul explains *"For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse"* (3:10). So, for a Gentile Christian to now adhere to the Law would inhibit the exact thing that they trying to do, and have

already received through faith in Christ – being marked as a part of the people of God. Christ "*redeemed us from the curse of the law*" (3:13) as He came to the place of the curse and took it upon Himself.

The passage of Galatians 3:23-29 summarises much of Paul's argument for the role of the Law and transitions into the implications of faith in Christ, thus this passage has been chosen as the key scripture for this week and will now be covered in further detail below including these 2 remaining key themes for Galatians chapter 3.

Supporting points to Key point:

1. The Law as Guardian – "*The law was our guardian until Christ came so that we might be justified by faith*"(3:24)

Paul here now explains what the purpose of the law was. In verse 19 Paul begins the discussion by saying "*Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions until the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made, and it was put in place through angels by an intermediary.*" And then verse 23 states that we (being the Israelites) were "*held captive under the law.*" The reason for all of this is, as Paul explains, because of the role the Law played – that it was a guardian or a *paidagogos*. As N.T Wright explains:

The paidagōgos was the slave whose job it was to get the children to and from school and to make sure they didn't get up to mischief on the way. The role corresponds loosely to our concept of "babysitter" – neither parent nor teacher but the person in charge for certain purposes. This role lasts as long as it's needed. - Galatians (Commentaries for Christian Formation (CCF)) (p. 330).

Paul is saying, that the role of the Law (just the same as this guardian) was to safeguard the children (in this case the Israelites) until they had come of age. The Law was only ever a temporary measure until the fulfillment of Law came: Messiah, Jesus Christ. Just as He says in Matthew 5:17: "*Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.*"

2. Sons through Faith – "²⁵*But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, ²⁶for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith.*" (3:25-26)

Now, in & through Christ, the time had come and the role of Law was complete. The people of God are "*no longer under a guardian*" rather, through faith, all have become sons of God.

Note: it is important to recognize that although some translations make verse 26 a gender-neutral "children," contextually it is more adequate for this verse to be only translated as "sons." Paul recognizes that both males and females can be part of the people of God, but contextually it has implications regarding our identity as an heir and the inheritance that this brings. This will be explained further in the Week 3 notes.

The point at hand though is that Christ has inaugurated a new age. In this new age, it is not the observance of the law (Torah) that identifies those who are a part of the people of God, but faith – see the notes from Week 1 on Galatians 2:16.

3. Neither Jew nor Greek – "*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.*" (3:28)

The point that Paul is making is NOT that in Christ our personalities, roles, or genders don't matter and that we are simply blended into a formless, indistinct blob. This especially goes against Paul's teaching on

the need for diversity in the body of Christ – see Ephesians 4 & Romans 12. Rather the point here is that when it comes to the family of God none of these categories, nor any unlisted, have any impact or influence over who is a member.

That is, through Christ, a new multi-ethnic, multi-generational, and multi-everything family has been formed that is united under the banner of faith in Jesus Christ. This is what brings us together and will sustain us until He returns. As Paul says in 3:16 the promises were made to His "offspring" and not "offsprings" (or the same translations seed vs seeds), that is, there was only ever intended to be ONE family of God. The Galatians are currently facing a division between Jewish and Gentile Christians based on observance of the law, but Paul is arguing for unity and reconciliation as one family. This is the same attitude we should have toward potential divisions in the church nowadays. This is the beauty of the Church – an eclectic bunch of misfits brought together to function as a family, and in the same breath is a fulfillment of the promise given to Abraham in Genesis 26.

To be saved from the Law means that firstly, through the work of Christ, the people of God have been freed from their "guardian," and that the Law has been fulfilled. Secondly, with the inauguration of a new age, a new family has been born. A family that in the face of divisions of gender, culture, ethnicity, and background, are united together as the offspring of Abraham and fulfillment of the promise given to him – *"I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and will give to your offspring all these lands. And in your offspring, all the nations of the earth shall be blessed"* (Genesis 26:4).

Paul ends chapter 3 by stating that *"if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise."* This is a teaser for what is to come in chapter 4 – the implications of being a part of this family of God (to be explored in week 3).

Week 3

Weekly subtitle: JESUS SAVED ME FROM SLAVERY

Date: Sunday 28th April 2024

Section: Galatians 4:1-5:1

Note: Galatians chapter 5, verse 1, should be included in this section as a carry-on of the same point that Paul is making

Key Point of this week (in the context of the overarching point): those who put their faith in Christ are no longer slaves but have been adopted as sons of Abba Father and are therefore an heir to the inheritance.

Key Scripture: Galatians 4:1-7 (ESV is used below)

"I mean that the heir, as long as he is a child, is no different from a slave, though he is the owner of everything, ²but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by his father. ³In the same way we also, when we were children, were enslaved to the elementary principles of the world. ⁴But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, ⁵to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. ⁶And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" ⁷So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God."

Historical Context, Commentary + supporting references:

Please first read the notes from page 2 that summarise many of the key themes, theologies, and concepts that will be explored from this point on.

We have just gone through Galatians chapter 3 which explores (1) the role of the law (Torah) as a "guardian" of the Israelites, which Paul explains has been completed in this new age inaugurated by Christ, (2) that we are now all sons of God (will be further explored in this section), and (3) all those who have put their faith in Christ are united as a new multiethnic family of God.

The next section for this week is Galatians chapter 4 (including chapter 5, verse 1). In this section, Paul explores:

- Sons and heirs of God
- Slavery to "elementary principles"
- The story of Hagar and Sarah

Note that this section carries on directly from the key passage found in chapter 3 and will therefore continue/expound upon some key ideas found there.

The overall point at hand in chapter 4 is that through Christ we are not identified as slaves (whether this is to the "elementary principles" or the law). Rather we are identified and called to be sons of God and to act as such. Paul's concern for the Galatians is that although this fact is true spiritually, in reality, they are acting in a way that is not aligned with this truth.

Side note: these "elementary principles" are connected to what Paul explains in 4:8 to be "*by nature are not gods.*" This is Paul saying that the Gentile Christians were once enslaved by the idols of the world that they worshipped (similar to the enslavement of Jews to the Law – although we know this had a role and a time in God's plan). So, if the Gentiles are to be freed from these "elementary principles" of the

world by having faith in Christ, then to observe the Law in a time that the Law has been fulfilled would similarly put them in a position of slavery to which they had just been freed from.

Paul spends a lot of this section (4:21-5:1) using the story of Hagar and Sarah (from Genesis 16-21) as an analogy for this theology of slave vs son. Here is a summary of the story (but I do recommend re-reading the section in Genesis).

Abram (not yet Abraham) was promised a family of many offspring (Gen 15:3-6) yet his wife Sarai was unable to bear him a child. So Abram, at the advice of his wife, laid with his servant Hagar who conceived and bore him a son – Ishmael. Later (in chapter 17) Sarah (her name now changed from Sarai) was promised to bear a son in her old age whom God promises he will establish his "*covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his offspring after him*" (Gen 17:19). In chapter 21 we see the birth of Sarah's son – Isaac. Sarah then commands Abraham to cast out the slave woman (Hagar) and her son (Ishmael) as he is no longer an heir with Isaac being born.

Paul uses this story as an analogy for the situation that is happening with the Galatians. That is, he is implying that the Gentile Christians are like Isaac – born of the spirit and those Jewish Christians who are now suggesting the need to observe the law as a way of justification are like Ishmael – born of slavery.

Paul's suggestion is then the same that Sarah suggested in Genesis 21 – expel the son of the slave women. In Genesis this is referring to Ishmael, here in Galatians Paul is referring to those who are encouraging observance of the law, and the outcome is the same – remove them from the community.

Supporting points to Key point:

1. Once slaves – "*when we were children, were enslaved to the elementary principles of the world*" (4:3)

Paul is continuing the example he made in chapter 3 about the role of the law being a "guardian" of the children (the Jews) until the "*date set by his father*" (4:1). Read the week 2 notes for further discussion on this role of the law.

The point that Paul is explaining here is that we were all once slaves, either to the Law or to the "elementary principles." (See the note above that explores what these "elementary principles" are and what Paul means by them. Being a slave was our identity, it was who we all were until Jesus came to "*deliver us from the present evil age*" (1:4) when the "*fullness of time had come*" (4:4)

2. Now adopted as Sons – "*But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons*" (4:4-5)

When the time had come God sent His son (Jesus) to redeem the people of God (now marked by faith in Christ). This redemption includes a transition of identity – from being slaves to being adopted as a son.

Adoption in this sense has a depth of cultural meaning in Greco-Roman culture. It carries implications for both the legal process (in which the individual's old identity is no longer of relevance) and the status that comes along with being a part of a particular family. It was not uncommon in Roman society for well-off citizens to adopt an appropriate heir to inherit their wealth and property. There is also an implicit meaning when Paul chooses to use the language as being adopted "as sons" – not adopted as "sons and daughters." Some translations may produce a verse that is gender-neutral and inclusive of both genders, but they would then miss some of the meaning Paul is creating.

The takeaway is NOT that only male Christians can be part of the family, which would fly straight in the face of Gal 3:28 where gender plays no role in who is to be part of the family of God. But the cultural

implications are found in the status of the son, that is an adopted son would have a higher status than that of a born daughter. And part of this is the identity of the heir and receiver of the inheritance to come. So Paul is not making a point of gender preferences in the kingdom, but rather is adding in the fact that as adopted sons we are promised a future inheritance (more of this in the next verse). So the logical progression Paul has made so far is that we were once slaves -> adopted into sonship -> therefore heirs.

3. An heir of “Abba Father” – “*And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” (4:6)*”

Paul explains here that the implications of being adopted as sons are that we (1) receive the Spirit of God, (2) can call out to God as "Abba Father," and (3) are heirs through God.

To call God “Abba” is truly an honor. This title is one of intimacy and closeness/proximity to God. This is only possible for those who have been adopted as sons. Note that this phrase of "Abba Father" is the exact same phrase Jesus uses in the Garden of Gethsemane when He is praying to God the Father before His crucifixion (Mark 14:36). The suggestion is that as adopted sons we have this same closeness to God as Jesus did.

To Paul, there is a distinct connection between receiving the Spirit of God and having an identity as an heir. Paul explains in Ephesians (1:13-14) how the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives is the "*down payment*" of our full inheritance to come. That is proof we are part of the family of God, and it is only the beginning of the full redemption of creation that is to come.

To be saved from slavery means that we are adopted into the family and identified as Sons of the most high God. This has implications for our identity, status, and full inheritance that is to come. The human condition could not be solved or treated by the Torah or the “elementary principles” of the world. Rather the presence and power of God himself has healed us, adopted us into the family, and enabled us to walk in the power of the Spirit. This is our identity in Christ, and as Paul encourages us in 5:1 – “*for freedom, Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.*”

CONNECT QUESTIONS

28th April 2024

JESUS SAVED ME FROM SLAVERY

GATHER: (ensure that these questions center around the community)

- Jesus has saved many people, not just from the slavery of sin but slavery to other things. Share if you are able any stories of people set free.
- What are the things that can enslave people around us?

GROW: (ensure that these questions prompt discussion on personal growth and maturity)

- Adoption is a legal process initiated by the parent. How does it change things for you to know your position with God is secure and that He wanted relationship with you enough to adopt you?
- What part of our status as heirs is lived out in this life and what part are we waiting for?

GO: (ensure that these questions prompt discussion ongoing and spreading the good news)

- Does being a “son” change how to talk to others about God and your faith?
- Galatians 5:1 is a great verse to memorise and share with others. Maybe as a connect group you could commit to learn it by next week.

Week 4

Weekly subtitle: JESUS SAVED ME FROM THE WORKS OF THE FLESH

Date: Sunday 5th May 2024

Section: Galatians 5:2-6:18

Key Point of this week (in the context of the overarching point): as part of the people of God we are transformed by the Spirit of God and do not succumb to the works of the flesh.

Key Scripture: Galatians 5:16-26 (ESV is used below)

¹⁶ But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. ¹⁹ Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, ²¹ 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. ²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things, there is no law. ²⁴ And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

²⁵ If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. ²⁶ Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another."

Historical Context, Commentary + supporting references:

Please first read the notes from page 2 that summarise many of the key themes, theologies, and concepts that will be explored from this point on.

Previously, in chapter 4 we continued an exploration of what it means to be an heir of God. This included an exploration of the transition of identity from that of a slave (of either the "elementary principles" or the Torah) into that of a son and the implications that come along with this.

No, we finish up Galatians with chapters 5-6. Paul has gone through the letter firstly defending the gospel of Jesus Christ (chapters 1-2) and then explains how this Gospel created a new, multi-ethnic family, and now in this section the key idea that Paul is how the Spirit of God is transforming this community. In this section, Paul explores:

- The outcome of adhering to the law
- How this community should behave
- The work of the Spirit

In the beginning of Galatians chapter 5 Paul continues exploring what the outcome of adhering to the law is. The simple answer is that the Galatians would neglect the freedom they have in Christ and *"submit again to a yoke of slavery"* (5:1).

The slavery as Paul has explained through Galatians is for those in Christ to continue to live by the Torah. Paul says *"For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love"* (5:6). Note that the issue at hand is not circumcision. The issue is of continuing to

follow the Law (Torah) as a way to righteousness (a covenantal marker of who is part of the family of God) and circumcision is just the most common & culturally visible outworking of the Law, hence why Paul continues to refer to it.

Side note: notice the scandal of what Paul is saying in verse 12 – he says that those who are advocating for circumcision should just take it a step further and cut the whole thing off!

Paul goes on to explain that yes, we have found freedom in Christ (freedom from slavery to the Torah and the "elementary principles" – see last week's notes for further information), but we are not to abuse this freedom. Rather there is an exception to how this freed community of Jews & Gentiles should behave – just as we, the continuation of this same community, are to behave.

Note that Paul throughout Galatians is advocating for membership in the family simply through faith in Christ, and this is the only distinguishing factor for who is determined to be part of the family of God. But still considering this he sets expectations for how this group of people, this family, should behave.

What Paul first calls the community to do is *"through love serve one another"* (5:14). Verses 16-26 are our key passage for this week so that will be explained below along with an exploration of how the Holy Spirit is working within the community. But in chapter 6 Paul continues setting expectations for the community and they can be summarized as:

- Restoring individuals from transgressions in a "spirit of gentleness" (6:1)
- Bear one another's burdens (6:2)
- Have humility (6:3-4)
- Bear one's load (6:5)
- Share "all good things" to those who teach the Word (6:6)
- Not grow weary in doing good (6:9)
- Do good to everyone, especially those "of the household of faith." (6:10)

Note the apparent paradox at play in 6:2 & 6:5 in the comparison of bearing another's "burdens" yet bearing one's own "load." This is an intentional distinction and as NT Wright explains:

"Burdens" can bring a sense of a seriously heavy weight, while "load" is more general, though the distinction should not be pressed too hard. Overall, this short paragraph catches the subtle to-and-fro that any community, and all individuals within communities, must learn: how to be simultaneously mutually supportive and individually responsible. The pride of going it alone, and the laziness of hoping everyone else will do the hard work, are both to be avoided. That is fairly obvious. The trick is to discern which danger is the more pressing at any given moment."

- Galatians (Commentaries for Christian Formation (CCF)) (p. 490)

We now turn to our key passage in 5:16-26.

Supporting points to Key point (3-5 points max):

- 1. The Flesh & Spirit are opposed – *"But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do."* (5:16-17)**

Paul in 5:16 launches into an explanation of how this community of the people of God should live – to *"walk by the Spirit"* (5:16). "Walking" in the Jewish culture is a reference to rabbinic teaching (the

halakah) that is a direction/rules of how to live & behave, so this is Paul's focus in this section here – a guide for the family of God on how to live a life that is by the Spirit.

"Flesh" in this passage is NOT referring to our physical bodies but rather to a range of dehumanizing ways - or ways of death. "Spirit" refers to the humanizing ways, the ways of life. The comparison, and choice available to those in Christ, is that of death vs life and of living a dehumane life vs a humane life (that is, living a life that was the original intention of God).

At the end of both verses 16 & 17, there is the concept of being able to withstand the draw of the flesh, and as NT Wright explores the verse he states:

"I have then taken the second verb, telesēte, as expressing the result ("and you won't do what the flesh wants you to"). In other words, if you plant in your garden the seeds of the Spirit, the weeds of fleshly living won't be able to grow as they otherwise would." - Galatians (Commentaries for Christian Formation (CCF)) (p. 457).

So, having the presence of the Spirit in our lives leads & empowers us in a way to practically live a humane life that was always the intention of God.

Note the similarities with Paul's teaching Romans 7:13-20, and could be used as a supplementary passage

2. Works of the Flesh – "*Now the works of the flesh are evident...*"(5:19)

The first thing to acknowledge is how Paul explains that the works of the flesh are "evident." That is, it is clear to us (perhaps due to the image of God within us or the Spirit at work transforming us) the kind of actions that come from the flesh. It is not meant to be complicated to observe actions that are contrary to the work of the Spirit. Regardless Paul provides a list of various kinds of works of the flesh.

The works of the flesh a plural and are identified to be many, whereas the fruit of the Spirit is in the singular, not the plural. Therefore the implications are that just as there is only one Spirit of God there is only one fruit that accompanies the Spirit and all these attributes are non-negotiable – they are a package deal and we can't pick and choose.

"But there is an important point to be made about the contrast of plural "works" and singular "fruit." The "flesh" produces a miscellany of bad behaviors, linked only by their destructive tendencies. The "fruit," singular, comes as a package. One may not plead the necessity of specialization—selecting, say, "kindness" and "gentleness" while leaving faithfulness and self-control to others." – NT Wright, N. T.. Galatians (Commentaries for Christian Formation (CCF)) (p. 459).

Note that the list of the fruit of the Spirit is not intended to be an exhaustive list of all attributes that accompany the Spirit.

3. Fruit of the Spirit – "*But the fruit of the Spirit is...*" (5:22)

Galatians has sometimes been interpreted as Paul slackening the expectations or lowering the bar, for how the new community should behave. However here in chapter 5, we see that as a community that is marked by faith in Christ have expectations of our behaviors and actions. These behaviors and actions are characterized by unity and love for one another.

Note the difference between the attributes of the “works of the flesh” vs the “fruit of the Spirit.” The works of the flesh are self-centered or self-seeking attributes, whereas the fruit of the Spirit is only properly outworked in the community and with others. In other words – Spiritual behaviors are a team sport.

The key to the outworking of the fruit of the Spirit is found in verse 24 – *“and those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passion and desires.”* That to bear fruit the works of the flesh have to be crucified just like Jesus was crucified on the cross and we access this through faith in Christ.

Reading this though in the context of 5:17 in which we understand there is an ongoing opposition of flesh vs spirit means that there may still be the pull of fleshly desires and thus this “death” is an ongoing process. But what we need to be reminded of is that through Christ their desires of the flesh have no rule and reign in our lives and that the death of the flesh is part of what it means to be now in this new age inaugurated by Christ as he has delivered us from the present evil age (1:4).

In conclusion - to be saved from the works of the flesh means that we, as the family of God, are empowered by the Spirit of God to not be led by the flesh and gratify the dehumanizing desires. Rather to live a life of community and humanity – becoming human in the fullest sense as was intended for us to live.