

GALATIANS

THE FREEDOM OF THE GOSPEL

The Gospel is from God - Galatians 1:11-2:10

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

*(Leaders, please use these questions **as a guide for discussion**. Please don't feel like you have to go through every one!)*

Connect: What is one truth about the gospel that you want to remember this week?

Warm-Up

1. Can you think of a time when you had to convince someone that something was true? What evidence did you use?

Read Galatians 1:11-12

2. What is Paul's main claim in these opening verses?
3. Why is it important that Paul received the gospel "through a revelation of Jesus Christ" rather than from another person?
4. How does knowing the gospel comes from God give us confidence today?

Read Galatians 1:13-24

5. How does Paul describe his life before becoming a Christian? What made him an unlikely convert?
6. According to verses 15–16, what was God's role in Paul's conversion and calling?
7. Why does Paul mention that he did not immediately consult the apostles after his conversion? What point is he making?
8. How does Paul's conversion strengthen your confidence that the gospel is God's work rather than a human invention?
9. Why is the timing and length of Paul's visit to Jerusalem significant?
10. What does the reaction of the churches in Judea tell us about Paul's ministry and message?
11. Why do you think it matters that the Jerusalem believers glorified God because of Paul instead of correcting him?

Read Galatians 2:1-10

12. What is the significance of Titus remaining uncircumcised even after the trip to Jerusalem?
13. What pressure did Paul face from the false brothers, and how did he respond?
14. What does it mean that the apostles "added nothing" to Paul's message?
15. Why is the "right hand of fellowship" such an important moment in Paul's argument?
16. The sermon suggested that Christians today face pressure from society and from within themselves to compromise the gospel. Where do you see those pressures today?
17. How does knowing that the gospel is God's message, not a human invention, change the way you: trust Jesus, resist false teaching and/or share the gospel with others?

PRAY: *Gracious God, thank you that the gospel isn't simply good advice or a religious philosophy, but the true good news revealed in Jesus Christ. Please deepen our confidence in the gospel, guard our hearts from false teaching, and embolden our evangelism. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

TITLE: The Gospel is From God

PASSAGE: Galatians 1:11-2:10

LOCATION: St John's Wishart 9AM

BI: The Gospel isn't humanly made but is from God

STRUCTURE:

- 1:11-12 - Thesis: Paul's Message is from God
- 1:13-17 - Proof 1: Paul's Conversion
- 1:18-24 - Proof 2: Jerusalem Visit #1 - The Consultation
- 2:1-10 - Proof 3: Jerusalem Visit #2 - The Confirmation
- Conclusion: The Gospel is From God

- How do you know that something is true?
 - *In a court room setting - (not that I'm a lawyer or anything like that, my legal knowledge is from TV), you bring in different pieces of evidence, expert witnesses, witnesses to try and give the jury beyond reasonable doubt that the person is either guilty or not guilty...*
 - *At home when trying to negotiate a peace deal between your children who have been fighting over the TV remote, you gather evidence and proof, before maybe just sending them outside and turning off the TV.*
- Well in this next section of Galatians, Paul is laying out his case that his Gospel isn't man made.
- He's making it clear that he isn't just the parrot for the apostles in Jerusalem. He isn't a second-rate second cousin with a second-hand message...
- No, Paul wants the Galatians to know that he is an Apostle from God with the Gospel from God.
 - Paul's opponents in Galatia were trying to discredit him. They were trying to get the Gentile Galatians to doubt him in order to doubt his message and to get them to be circumcised.
- But Paul here lays it out very clearly, that his message is from God.
 - If you've written an essay lately, you know that you generally have a hypothesis, you lay it out, and then you have three or four paragraphs to support that hypothesis?
- Well, this is exactly what Paul does here.
- His hypothesis is that his message is from God.
- His three proofs are his conversion from Judaism, his consultation with Peter and James, and his Confirmation before the rest of the Apostles.

- And he lays this out so that the Galatians can have complete confidence in the truth of the Gospel.
- Complete confidence in the solid ground that is the Gospel - so that they won't be taken astray by those who tried to get them to follow the Law.
- And for us here today, God wants us to have the exact same confidence in the Gospel so that we aren't taken astray by social pressure or by our own thoughts or internal monologues.
- Let's get into it...

- **Thesis: Paul's Message is From God**
- V11 "For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel. For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ."
- It's pretty simple isn't it? It doesn't need too much explanation.
- The Gospel that he taught when he first went to the churches in Galatia as described in and around Acts 13-14 - isn't man made. It isn't created or made up by humans.
- It's not like the disciples after Jesus was killed all kind of got together in a big huddle, or in an early type of synod...
 - *You know what would be a good idea? To spread the word that Jesus is actually risen from the dead....*
 - *And that people don't need to go to the temple anymore to have sins forgiven, but can just trust in Jesus...*
 - *We'll tell people that when he died, he became the offering for sins...*
- No! It's not man-made.

- We need to remember that after Jesus died, the disciples were either huddled together in a locked room, walking home in despair, and/or went fishing - back to their own way of life! They were in no state or frame of mind to make this stuff up!!
- Logically - it just doesn't make sense that the Gospel is human-made.
- What's more is that Paul couldn't have come up with it, because as we'll see, he was so deeply embedded in Judaism and in the Jewish way of life!!
- But Paul says that he received it from God.
- This is God's gospel. It's the true Gospel. The one and only Gospel.
- Paul isn't just regurgitating what he was told by other people, no - he was preaching what Jesus himself gave to him.
- He received the news from Jesus.
- It was revealed to him by Jesus.
- Acts 8 describes this awesome event. Paul meeting Jesus on the way to Damascus.
 - He was going to round up more followers of Jesus to put them into prison but then Jesus appeared in a great light, blinded Paul, threw his servants into disarray, and then spoke to Paul himself...
 - It was apocalyptic!
 - In fact - that's the Greek word here for revelation, Apokalipsis!
 - Jesus made fully known, he completely disclosed, uncovered and revealed the Gospel to Paul.
- So the Thesis: The Gospel that Paul preaches is from God.
- And his three proofs are his Conversion, the Consultation with Peter, and the Confirmation by the Apostles. Conversion, Consultation, and Confirmation.
- **Proof 1: Paul's Conversion**
- Before talking about his conversion, Paul makes it completely clear that before turning to Jesus, he was well embedded in Judaism.
- And his big point in his Proof #1 is that his own conversion is evidence that the Gospel is from God. Because no human intervention could have changed his mind so drastically - only God could have done this.
- V13 "For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it. And I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among me people, so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers."
- Paul was a Jew of Jews. He was trained as a Pharisee in Judaism. He was deeply embedded.
- He was jealous for the Jewish traditions to the point of violence.
- Paul probably saw himself in the line of a people called the Maccabees.
 - These were a group of Jews who lived 200 years before Jesus in the time when the nation of Israel was under the rule of Greek or more specifically your Seleucid Empire.
 - The local ruler at the time tried to enforce Greek Polytheism into the Jewish Temple and he desecrated the temple. He made following the Sabbath illegal and made circumcision illegal.
 - So then because the Maccabees were so jealous for the Jewish customs, they took up their swords and spears and managed to kick the Greeks out of Jerusalem.
- So then Paul in the first century seeing these followers of Jesus go back on the Jewish customs, seeing them call Jesus Lord - he took up arms to round them up and throw them into prison just like the Maccabees did.
- That's how serious Paul was about his Jewish religion and customs!
- But:
- V15 "But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called my by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with anyone; nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were Apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia, and returned again to Damascus"
- God had set Paul apart before birth. Not the other apostles, not the church in Jerusalem, God himself did.
- God called Paul by his grace - not the other apostles.
- And immediately after his conversion, Paul didn't go to the Apostles but went the other way to Arabia, which is an area south of Gaza, present day Jordan.
- So - his message isn't from the Apostles, but from God himself.

- The only way that Paul could have been converted from staunch, enthusiastic, jealous Judaism to worshipping Jesus was divine intervention and appointment. Only God's Gospel could have done this.
- And it's God's gospel that he preaches.
 - This is a bit of a side-bar and no one in the commentaries have really commented on this, but if there's anyone who would have insisted on the circumcision of the Gentiles, wouldn't it be Paul? The one who was jealous for the Jewish customs?
 - He could have been tempted to mix in the Jewish practises into his Gospel! But he doesn't.
- Paul's message is from God because of his conversion

- **Proof 2: Jerusalem Visit #1 - The Consultation**
- Paul's message is from God because of his consultation with Peter.
- V18 "Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and remained with him fifteen days. ¹⁹ But I saw none of the other apostles except James the Lord's brother."
- It was a whole three years before Paul met up with another apostle.
 - Three years of maybe searching the scriptures, doing business with God. A theory is that he went to Mt Sinai which is in the region of Arabia. He almost surely was sharing the Gospel in that area as well.
- But then he meets with Peter for 15 days - (Cephas is just the Aramaic name for Peter)
- Now 15 days isn't the longest time. It's not like Paul got a full on theology degree from Peter. It wasn't enough time for Paul to become a disciple of Peter. So his message wasn't from Peter.
- But it's hard to imagine that Peter and Paul were just chatting about the weather for 15 days either!
- So I'm sure that they were talking about the stories of Jesus, Peter talking to Paul about his experience, Paul talking to Peter about his conversion experience.
 - *Paul had enough time to learn where the cutlery went in Peter's kitchen and how to stack the dishwasher - but not enough time to be able to be accused of learning everything from Peter.*
- Paul goes off on a missionary journey to Syria and Cilicia.
- Meanwhile - the people in Judea - the area of Israel including Jerusalem, Galilee and probably Samaria - the places where Jesus walked - these people didn't know Paul personally.
 - So they couldn't have taught him everything that he knows!
- But they praised God for Paul. They didn't have a problem with him. They didn't have a problem with his message of salvation by grace through faith alone!
- Because Paul's message is from God. The Gospel is from God.
 - We can see that through his conversion, his consultation with Peter, and lastly his confirmation by the Apostles.

- **Proof 3: Jerusalem Visit #2 - The Confirmation**
- This is the final and best proof that Paul's message is from God.
 - *Now I have no intention of going for a PHD - I'm 100% sure that I'd go completely crazy and lose all my hair with stress and will end up in a little ball underneath my desk...*
 - *But I do know that after the three or so years of hard work on your paper, you submit it, and then the thesis gets scrutinised and then you have to answer a whole bunch of questions about your work to give a defence of your body of work - and then they decide if you get the tick of approval.*
- Now Paul's trip to Jerusalem in 2:1-10 is kind of like this.
- He goes up to Jerusalem and meets with some of the apostles, he meets with the pillars, the founders - and goes to check his work with them. He goes to verify that what he is preaching is true.
 - He doesn't go to learn at their feet, he goes to get their support and tick of approval.
- 2:1-3
 - "Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along with me. I went up because of a revelation and set before them (though privately before those who seemed influential) the gospel that I proclaim among the Gentiles, in order to make sure I was not running or had not run in vain. But even Titus, who was with me, was not forced to be circumcised, though he was a Greek."
- He goes and has a private chat with them. He lays out his working, his message, the gospel that he proclaims, to make sure he's on the right track.
- He takes his two mates along for the ride as well - Barnabus, who was Jewish, and Titus who was a Gentile.

- And notice how he slips in the info there that even the people in Jerusalem, the so-called big wigs didn't require Titus to be circumcised?
- But at this meeting, there was drama. Some people came into the meeting who were spies, who were trying to bring people back to Jewish practise! Paul could have compromised, he could have agreed with them to win the approval of men! But they didn't yield to the truth of the gospel.
- Neither those who were in Jerusalem, nor Paul who was an Apostle from God agreed with them..
- V6 "And from those who seemed to be influential (what they were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality)—those, I say, who seemed influential added nothing to me"
- The big wigs didn't call into question Paul's message at all. They added nothing. They said that it was the real deal - that Paul's message is from God. That the Gospel that he proclaims is the one true Gospel.
- They recognised Paul's ministry to the gentiles, just as they recognised Peter's ministry to the Jews.
- They gave him a hand of fellowship, a sign of their support and approval, and sent them on their way.
- Because of Paul's conversion, his consultation with Peter, his confirmation by the Apostles - we have been left in no doubt that
- 1:11b-12 "the gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel. For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ."
- So what?
- Maybe you have been thinking that we've never doubted the truth of Paul's message, surely we could have just skipped this passage all together and got an early mark for delicious coffee and our Sunday roast.
- Well potentially - but it's in here for a reason!
- At any point of his journeys, Paul could have compromised on the truth. He could have changed his message in order to escape scrutiny from his objectors, he could have tweaked things to make it more appealing for the false teachers - but he didn't. Because he knew that the Gospel is from God and that the Gospel is true.
- And here in Australia, we too need constant reminding that the Gospel isn't man-made, it isn't a religious system given to us, it isn't a set of rules to follow - know it's the true Good News from God!
- It's the true good news that Jesus Christ came as a man to die to take away our sins so that we can be forgiven and have an eternal relationship with God.
 - It kind of seems too good to be true but it's not! It's the truth. It's the only Gospel.
- And the more that we recognise this in our lives, the more that we preach the gospel to ourselves and each other here - the more that our confidence in the gospel will grow. The more our sense of assurance will grow.
- Which will inevitably lead to a more gospel-shaped godly life - our holiness will grow in the light of the truth of the Gospel.
- And it will lead to a deeper peace, a greater praise to our gracious God, and a bolder proclamation of the Good News.
- This isn't just good advice, this isn't a religious system or philosophy to live by, this is the true message from God:
- *When Satan tempts me to despair, and tells me of the guilt within, upward I look and see him there, who made and end of all my sin; Because the sinless saviour died, my sinful soul is counted free, for God the just is satisfied to look on him and pardon me*