



CONTRAST

the series guide

CROSSWALK

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CROSSWALK Church

10421 Corporate Dr,

Redlands, CA 92374

Ordering Information:

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Welcome to the next and newest series from Crosswalk Church.

We decided that we would study this book of Paul, Galatians, as it holds wonderful questions and even greater answers. The truths found here are timeless for the follower of Christ, and we should all take heed to the advice and counsel given.

Studying a book of scripture takes commitment, dedication, and desire. While this is not the longest of the series we have done, we will go deep into the word of God as expressed in this letter from the Apostle Paul. We know that Paul wrote this letter, its authorship has never been in question, but we are not 100% sure when it was written. We do think it was written before the letter to the Romans, as it seems to be Paul's first step in a much broader theological argument laid out in Romans 1-8 specifically.

We welcome you to this study, and hope that you find a deeper meaning and further focus on Jesus through the study of these words, the context in which they were written, and the meaning held therein.

As the Apostle often states: *Grace to you, and Peace.*

Pastor Tim and the Crosswalk Team

WEEK 01

Galations 1:1-5

Something is brewing, and I'm not talking about a great cup of coffee.

The atmosphere is charged, it is sultry, even sweating. It's like being in Florida before the squalls that inevitably come each late afternoon. There is lightning, there is thunder, and there is bound to be an interruption of the status quo. Although Paul has his wits about him, and is being led by the Holy Spirit, this epistle, or letter, is being written with Paul being deeply frustrated as to how they are perverting the Gospel in Galatia.

It is with deep clarity, and some restraint, that Paul is reaching out to them in order to address the mistakes they are making, in order to clarify, and in order to redirect them back to the true Gospel.

While there is restraint in these first five verses, you can sense the storm that is coming.

Sometimes this happens in our lives, we have to exercise restraint when trying to teach people who are doing something so wrong that it actually

gives God a bad name. For Paul, it was the choices that the church in Galatia was making that caused him pain, anxiety and frustration. He sent this epistle, this letter, in order to help them understand they were heading in the wrong direction. It is truly a study in CONTRASTS; what is of God and what is not of God, what is kingdom and what is not kingdom, what is truth and what is half truths or lies.

This letter was sent as a pastor, as a mentor, as an elder, and as a person of authority in the church. It was Paul's hope that they would listen to him and lean back into the kingdom of God. It is so easy to be led astray by those who have selfish motives, but right sounding words.

This is why we study scripture, to know what God is trying to tell us, each and every day.

**Have you ever had a storm
in your life that you
needed to recognize?**

**Do you think Paul had a right
to be upset about what was
happening in Galatia?**

**What does the authority of
the church mean in your life?
Does it mean anything?**

When was the last time you had to establish the authority given to you?

Have you ever decided to commit to studying and sharing the Gospel?

What are the consequences of the Gospel that you can think of?

**When was the last time you
prayed for other believers?
Do it now!**

**Do you know who is out
there praying for you?**

**Why do you think it is
important that communities
of faith watch out and care
for each other?**

How do you finish your emails? What is your greeting? How can you point those you are corresponding with to the gospel?

Do you like getting letters that have great introductory sentences?

How can you let someone know that you are praying and caring for them today?

Jesus gave his life for our sins, just as God our Father planned, in order to rescue us from this evil world in which we live.

While Paul had already referred to the resurrection of Jesus in verse 1, here he brings into view the suffering and death of Jesus on the cross. The NEB translates this as "who sacrificed himself for our sins." This brings to mind Jesus' own description of his mission in Mark 10:45 "The son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." Behind this language stands the image of the suffering servant we see in Isaiah 52 who bore our sins and carried our sorrows...

We get a glimpse into the radical character of sin, another major theme Paul develops throughout Galatians. Paul takes sin seriously, as should we.

In the second part of the verse, we see that Paul describes the death of Jesus that did something that nothing else could do, which is bridge the gap between us as sinners and God as righteousness. It is only his righteousness that is able to save us

from what the world has become. And while Paul speaks of "this evil age" as being in the first century, we can certainly understand the implications for that in today's world as well. It seems that things have not gotten better, and probably worse. However, I think that every generation feels like they are living in the worst age ever, so lets be circumspect here. There has always been evil, and we need to recognize that Christ died in the midst of an evil age, and we are living in one as well. The only one who conquers an evil age is Jesus!

What feels evil about this “age”?

How does Jesus bridge the gap between sin and righteousness?

Why do you think Paul has spoken of the Gospel so often, even in just these 4 short verses?

Galatians 1:5

All glory to God forever and ever! Amen.

When Paul speaks of God, he always gives the highest praise. This is why he concludes this long introduction with a doxology, "To whom be the glory forever and ever, Amen!" This was no mere formality to include this praise. To contemplate who God is and what he has done in Jesus is to be in a stance of worship, of praise and thanksgiving.

Of course we study the bible, we study doctrine, but not out of simple curiosity or vain conceit. We don't study just to know more or be right more often. Rather, we do this in order that we might fully understand what Grace and Peace truly are. We do it to understand the Gospel to its full extent, and to live that truth in a more profound and powerful way. As Calvin put it so well, "So glorious is this redemption that it should ravish us with wonder." (Calvin, CNTC 11)

When was the last time you sang a doxology to God?

Do you feel awe at the mention of the Gospel and God's great love for us?

Has the Gospel become commonplace in your life? Or are you still "ravished with wonder?"

**The following is a guide to help facilitate discussion.
Feel free to add or subtract or change questions to fit the
conversation, and pray for the Spirit to lead in all things.**

Open

Have you ever held a position of power or authority? What is/was it like? Is that an easy or difficult position for you to be in? What challenges or triumphs did you encounter?

Head

- Read together Galatians 1:1-5, and share anything that stands out to you or any questions/comments that immediately pop-up.
- Right from the start, Paul clarifies his authority before getting to the heavier matters. Where does his authority come from and why is that important?
- How does our attitude or approach to sharing the gospel change if we're seeking man's approval instead of God's?
- In vs.4 Paul gives a brief, but beautiful, presentation of the gospel. In this presentation, what did God the Father "plan" and what did Jesus' actions do for us? Do those things differ from any of your previous ways of thinking?
- After presenting the gospel, Paul leans into "the glory of God." What are some ways we can glorify God in everything we do?

Heart

- In this text we see that one of Jesus' motivations for dying for us was to "rescue us from this evil world..." What evils of the world are you most often aware of, or plagued by? How can you experience relief or rescue from them?
- In this letter, Paul is writing to a group of believers who are tempted to believe that their salvation is based on what they do (works). Have you ever fallen into a similar trap (legalistic thinking/performance-based mindset)? What are some ways you can break free from that type of thinking?

Hands

- Paul is very clear about how he obtained his authority. How can we more boldly proclaim and live in the authority and power Christ has given us?
- Paul ends this section by proclaiming glory to God. How can we better reflect that attitude in all that we do?

Has there ever been a time when you were led astray?

What was that like?

How did you lose sight of the gospel? What were the mitigating factors that led you astray?

Have you ever mistaken something that sounded right for the gospel of Jesus Christ?

Why would anyone want to put something else on top of the simple Gospel message?

What can you do to make sure that never happens in your life either again, or at all?

When did you first hear of the Gospel in a way that made sense to you?

Did you share it immediately, or did you take the time to understand it more completely before you began to share?

Do you think Paul should have been trying to get approval of people? Should have have said things in a kinder way?

Was your conversion so dramatic?

Have you told your conversion story?

Who do you think might benefit from hearing the story of how God chased you?

**15 But even before I was born, God chose me and called me by his marvelous grace. Then it pleased him
16 to reveal his Son to me so that I would proclaim the Good News about Jesus to the Gentiles. When this happened, I did not rush out to consult with any human being.**

Paul is continuing to let them know that his appointment to the Gospel was divine, and not by any human machinations. He is confident in his calling, as you can see. He is sure that God called him to this ministry and had a plan for him from the very beginning. And the calling was not general, rather, it was specific to his job to proclaim the good news to those outside of the Jewish faith. This also reminds us of the initiative of God to choose and call Paul to this work. Paul was set apart for this work. Paul was called to this work. And God revealed his son through Paul.

It is with the power of the Holy Spirit that this calling is shown to the world, it is through the Spirit's efficacy that the world can know who Christ is, through you!

Furthermore, this is the call that we all have. Not from a church or another human being, but from God. The fruits of your labor will confirm the call that God has on your life.

To what kind of ministry were you called?

How can you know this is the type of ministry you were called to? What are the results?

Has your call ever changed?

Galatians 1:17-19

17 Nor did I go up to Jerusalem to consult with those who were apostles before I was. Instead, I went away into Arabia, and later I returned to the city of Damascus. 18 Then three years later I went to Jerusalem to get to know Peter, and I stayed with him for fifteen days. 19 The only other apostle I met at that time was James, the Lord's brother.

Paul is again affirming that his calling or his credentialing is not coming from any human being, but rather, it is coming from God, and continues to come from God. He reminds us that he did not seek approval of the church, the approval of Peter, until much later. Paul waited 3 years before he went up to Jerusalem to have that conversation. Perhaps he waited as he needed the world to know that he had changed, perhaps he wanted to study, or perhaps he was simply led by the Holy Spirit. The reason doesn't matter, the process does, as he is telling us now.

Paul is setting up the argument that his authority, which comes from God, supersedes the authority of those who are preach-

ing in Galatia as he was writing this. It is important to note that Paul is doing this because the church was becoming established, and Paul's authority did not come from the church, initially. However, it was affirmed later with Peter. Paul did not need the church's authority. Paul only needed the power of the Holy Spirit, which was in abundance in his life.

Where does gospel authority come from? Do you have it?

Why is it important for Paul to walk us through his history?

What sort of argument do you think Paul is setting up?

How can you claim the authority that has come from God to you?

The following is a guide to help facilitate discussion.

Feel free to add or subtract or change questions to fit the conversation, and pray for the Spirit to lead in all things.

Open

Were you ever tricked, maybe by a sibling or a friend, into believing something to be true that clearly wasn't true, but you only found out the truth much later? If so, what was the trick and what was the truth?

or do they have good intentions? Explain.

- What do you think is the good news that Paul is talking about? What then is the "other gospel" that is being presented and how is it framed as good news?

Head

- Context: Paul and Barnabas would have helped plant the churches in the region known as Galatia, and according to the letter, it's not long after Paul has brought the good news of Jesus to this region that some other Jews, known as Judaizers, are trying to preach a gospel of Jesus AND Law to those without a Jewish background (i.e. Gentile believers). Paul is trying to root out this Jesus AND teaching.
- Read as a group Galatians 1: 6-9 and share any thoughts, insights, or impressions you had as you read through the passage.
- According to verse 6, why is Paul shocked?
- How have the people in Galatia turned away from God according to Paul?
- Who do you think are the ones that are twisting the truth and why are they twisting it? Do you think they are trying to purposefully deceive

Heart

- If the gospel isn't good news for everyone, is it good news for anyone? Discuss.
- Why do you think Paul's language is so strong here (he's shocked, he curses)?
- The Judaizers were trying to tell the Jewish Christians that to be made right with God that had to accept Jesus AND get circumcised (i.e. obey the old covenant law). What do we ADD to the gospel of Jesus in our world today, saying that it's not just believing in Jesus that saves us, it's Jesus AND...?
- Why do we complicate the gospel so much? Why is it so hard to simply accept what He has done for us? Why do we keep thinking our salvation is up to us?
- Why was it hard for the Jews to accept the Gentiles? Why did they try to make the Gentiles act and think and look like them? How do we as Christians do this today?

WEEK 03

Galations 1:20-24
Galations 2

Have you ever had to establish your authority to say something?

Was it easy or difficult? Did people believe you?

Paul is trying so hard to get them to listen, what were the obstacles they had to deal with in hearing him?

What helps you listen to someone from the church?

What sort of trust needs to be built in order for you to listen to them?

What makes you lose trust in the words coming from the church?

Do you trust your pastors now?

What is freedom in Christ to you? Write it out so you can really think about the words you are using.

Why is it so important to Paul?

What does it mean to live without the freedom which Christ gives?

How does it make you feel to work together with those who believe?

What is the passion of your heart, and are you working in that space for Jesus?

How can the church help you realize your gifts and your passions?

11 But when Peter came to Antioch, I had to oppose him to his face, for what he did was very wrong. 12 When he first arrived, he ate with the Gentile believers, who were not circumcised. But afterward, when some friends of James came, Peter wouldn't eat with the Gentiles anymore. He was afraid of criticism from these people who insisted on the necessity of circumcision. 13 As a result, other Jewish believers followed Peter's hypocrisy, and even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. 14 When I saw that they were not following the truth of the gospel message, I said to Peter in front of all the others, "Since you, a Jew by birth, have discarded the Jewish laws and are living like a Gentile, why are you now trying to make these Gentiles follow the Jewish traditions?"

Boom!
Now we are getting to the meat of the discussion. Paul is not too happy with Peter and the wishy-washiness of Peter's convictions when it comes to what Gentile believers were to do and not to do. Paul had experienced the freedom in Christ, as had Peter. But Peter was too connected to his tradition of origin and he caved to some peer pressure that was happening from the other disciples.

Have you ever pulled back from the freedom you have had in Christ due

to the pull of your tradition? For those of us who grew up in the SDA tradition, sometimes it feels as if we have a great deal of rules and regulations that we need to adhere to in order to be in good standing with God. Do you find that to be true?

What do you think of Paul's question to Peter at the end of this text?

How can we not get sucked back into behaviorism?

Does freedom mean there are no rules?

What do you think about keeping the law?

Does it feel weird to say that we don't need to keep the law for salvation anymore?

Why was Paul so serious about this?

**The following is a guide to help facilitate discussion.
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conversation, and pray for the Spirit to lead in all things.**

Open

Have you ever met a public figure or celebrity that you admired? Did meeting them live up to your expectations? Why or why not?

Head

- Read together Gal 1:18-24. Why do you think it's so important for Paul to express how little contact he had with the Twelve?
- Notice the actions of the believers in verse 24. It's a testament to the believers' faith that they could believe Paul had experienced a genuine conversion and could glorify on his behalf.
- Read Gal 2:1-10. According to Paul, what was the attitude of the leaders of the church to his work?
- What is the significance of Titus, a gentile, not being required to be circumcised (v. 3)?
- Paul states that false believers were the ones who caused problems surrounding Jewish regulations. (v. 4-5) What freedom were these false believers attacking? Why did Paul refuse them so strongly?
- Compare and contrast the attitudes and experiences of Paul and the church leaders in Gal 2:1-10 with what happened in Gal 2:11-15. Identify the ways in which Peter's hypocrisy conflicted with Paul's mission.
- In Gal 1:17-21, Paul proudly proclaims that our old selves were crucified with Christ and that the Christ lives in us now. That's the gospel truth in this passage, and the warning is that when we fall back on keeping the Law, we render the Christ's grace meaningless.

Heart

- What "commission" has God given you?
- Paul was very adamant about fulfilling his divine calling even if it pitted him against other church leaders. How can we protect our commission from becoming about people-pleasing?
- Think about your walk with Christ. Has your understanding of "freedom in Christ" grown over the last two years?

- In this passage, we read about Paul becoming upset with Peter because his hypocrisy could create a crisis of faith among the Gentile believers in Antioch. Are there any aspects of the Christian faith that challenge you when you're public? What implications would a faithful vs inconsistent witness have in those situations?

Hands

- How might we fall back into living by the Law? What can we do to be true to our new life in Christ?
- How would you explain to someone new to the Christian faith the meaning of "justified by faith in Christ"?

LIVING WORDS for YOUR WEEK

carry these words with you
this week as a reminder

My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So, I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

(Gal 2:20)
