

Explosive Grace Study in Paul's Letter to the Galatians Session 8: True Freedom

- I. Introductions and Prayer**
- a. Teaser: When you are driving, do you talk to**

yourself? Is there something drivers do that drives you crazy?

b. Prayer

II. Recap: Knowing the Galatians & Greeting

a. Galatians — Galatia is a mountainous region in Turkey. The Galatians are mostly Gentiles,

**wanting to be hard-core
for God. Paul was the
founder of some
churches in Galatia.
This letter would have
been read aloud in
worship at one house-
church, then passed to
another. Probably
written in 50–56 AD.**

b. Themes to watch for —

Some Jewish-Christian missionaries are telling the Christians in Galatia that they have to keep all the Jewish Law to be saved. Paul wants to be clear that grace is what matters. Watch how Paul defines grace and

**how it affects/changes
Jesus' followers and
their futures.**

**c. Context — The climax
of Chapter 3–4 is our
unity in Christ,
regardless of all sorts of
differences. Now Paul
communicates both his
love and his fear/pain**

**over the direction of
their fellowship**

III. Words to watch for

**a. has set us free — the
verb tense indicates a
past act that has been
completed. Paul is
thinking of Jesus' death
on the cross and**

resurrection from the dead.

b. stand firm —

**“...military word, mixing together the ideas of keeping alert, being strong, resisting attack and sticking together.”
(Keller)**

- c. yoke — Usually worn by oxen or horses, yokes came in human sizes too. They were a sign of forced labor, hence slavery.**
- d. circumcised/uncircumcised — Circumcision (besides the act) signifies choosing to try**

to be made right with God by “following the rules” of Jewish Law. Uncircumcision is a choice to not rely on the Law. These terms are also short-hand for parties or factions in the early church.

e. justified...righteousness — see back

f. Brothers (*adelphoi*) —
Not gender exclusive in their thought, *the family of God*

g. flesh/sinful nature — not just body, but human frailty.

IV. Reading Galatians 5:1-15

V. Questions for Reflection

a. Verse 1 is a “transition paragraph.” It summarizes the section before, and the section that follows.

- b. List the verbs in
verses 2–6. What does
this progression tell us
about Paul’s point?**
- c. What is the “offense of
the Cross” Paul
mentions in verse 11?
(See 1 Corinthians 1:18–
2:5)**

d. Why doesn't Paul end with verse 14?

VI. Why does this matter?

**a. Grace has to be grace.
Don't backslide into
works righteousness!
We cannot mix a little
works righteousness
into our faith system.**

Keller: “We cannot hold onto grace if we are living by works.” (p. 134)

b. Grace is not only our salvation, but guards us.

Keller: “...we didn’t earn our salvation by our behavior, and we

can't 'un-earn' it by our behavior."

c. We can give up our freedom, but by God's grace, we can always get it back.

d. This passage helps us keep our eyes on the prize: "What matters is faith expressing

itself/working itself out in love.” Keller writes, “Faith literally energizes love.”

e. This passage asks us if God loves us for who we are (not what we do for Him), do we love God in the same way? Do we

love others in the same way?

Justify/Right/Righteousness

Usual English	Better English	Part of Speech	Greek
justify	make	verb	<i>dikai</i>

righteo usness, justice	right relati onshi p with God	noun <i>dikai</i> <i>osun</i> e
right, just	right (in God's eyes)	adje <i>dikai</i> ctive <i>os</i>

Faith/Trust/Believe

Usual
English

Better
English

Part
of
Speech

Gre
ek

faith

trust or
belief

noun

pisti
s

faith

trust or
believe

verb

piste
uo

faithf

objectiv

adjec

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subjecti
vely,
trustful

What Do We Know about the Life of Paul?

- **Birthname was Saul. After becoming Christian, changed his name to Paul.**
- **Born in Tarsus, a city on the southern coast of what is now Turkey, near northern Syria. Tarsus was a Roman colony, which meant Paul was a**

Roman citizen. Being a Roman citizen was a privileged status, and brought certain benefits and protections that saved Paul's life.

- **Studied under Gamaliel, one of the greatest Jewish Rabbis of the first century, really ever.**

- **Paul was a Pharisee, the hardest core, most passionate, elite, keepers of the Law. Paul was considered to be the “elite of the elite.”**
- **Held people’s cloaks so they could more easily throw rocks at Stephen, the first Christian killed**

**for his faith. (See Acts 7.
Paul's cameo is in 8:1.)**

- **Got warrants from Jewish authorities to persecute the church:
“But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, Saul dragged off men and**

women and put them in prison.” (Acts 8:3)

- **When the early Christians scattered ahead of these persecutions, Paul got warrants to follow the Christians to Damascus, capture them and return**

to Jerusalem. (Acts 9:1-2)

- Jesus appears to Paul on the road to Damascus, blinds Paul and sends him on to Damascus. Paul is healed by a brave Christian, named Ananias, and begins life as a Christian.**

- **Paul spends some time with Christians in Damascus, then (as we learn in this passage in Galatians) he heads into the deserts of Arabia to learn from Jesus.**
- **On his return, Paul is part of one of the first,**

inclusive churches—Jews and Gentiles.

- **Paul participates in the Council of Jerusalem in 45 AD, where the church leaders believe God is leading them to include Gentiles as well as Jews, and without having to keep the Law.**

- **Paul is eventually martyred (impaled) in Rome in AD 67 by Emperor Nero, in the persecution following the burning of Rome in AD 64.**