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Description automatically generated**True Freedom in Grace:**

**A Study in Paul’s Letter to the Galatians**

**Session 8: Two Religions, Two Ministries**

June 20, 2022 • Monday Night Bible Study

1. **Introductions and Prayer**
   1. Teaser: What helps you focus?
   2. Prayer
2. **Recap: Knowing the Galatians & Greeting**
   1. 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.
   2. 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.
   3. 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
3. **Words to watch for**
   1. slave (*doulos*) — In Greco-Roman society, you had freemen (often tradesmen and merchants), servants (chamberlains, foremen, etc; position of some prestige), and slaves (*doulos*). Slaves had limited rights, limited upward mobility and no social status.
   2. or rather are — this expression is more properly translated as “more importantly.”
   3. Brothers (*adelphoi*) — not gender exclusive in their thought, *the family of God*
   4. Gospel/Good News (*euangelia*) — note angel is part of it
   5. torn out your eyes — some look to this passage to answer questions about Paul’s infirmities, perhaps even the “thorn in the flesh” (2 Corinthians 12:9–12)
4. **Reading Galatians 4:8–20**
5. **Questions for Reflection**
   1. If many Galatians come from pagan backgrounds, how do you think they would have heard vv. 8–11?
   2. Paul talks about two “approaches to faith,” but one is Christian and the other is not. Does this seem harsh to you? What do you think of his definition?
   3. Paul demonstrates two ways of doing ministry. Can you reflect on the differences between the two?
6. **Why does this matter?**
   1. Christians often let non-Christian faith approaches creep into their relationship with Christ. Paul helps us find where that line is.
   2. Loving God in Jesus Christ is always first, but it’s closely followed by expressing grace to others. Truly caring for people and ministering to them is not a “for me” love, but a “for God,” or “for you” love.

**Justify/Right/Righteousness**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Usual English** | **Better English** | **Part of Speech** | **Greek** |
| justify | make right | verb | *dikaio* |
| righteousness, justice | right relationship with God | noun | *dikaiosune* |
| right, just | right (in God’s eyes) | adjective | *dikaios* |

Faith/Trust/Believe

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Usual English** | **Better English** | **Part of Speech** | **Greek** |
| faith | trust or belief | noun | *pistis* |
| faith | trust or believe | verb | *pisteuo* |
| faithful | objectively, trustworthy, subjectively, trustful | adjective | *pistos* |

**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.”
* Virulently, violently opposed the early Christians, those of “The Way.”
* 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.
* He has four missionary journeys up into Syria, Turkey, Greece, and last of all, Rome.
* 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.