

Grace and race in Galatia 3: The Whole Gospel

discussion guide based on **Galatians 3 – 4:7** (linked to sermon of 04/06/2023)
which can be accessed at www.stjamesbythepark.org/galatians

Can you think of a time when you had a strong disagreement with a close friend or family member? Were you able to talk through the disagreement? Did your relationship survive this challenge?

In Galatians Paul's language and tone (see chapter 1:6 and 3:1 & 3) indicate that what he was talking about was something that was so important that he was prepared to risk falling out over it. The issue at stake was the "gospel of Christ" (1:6-9).

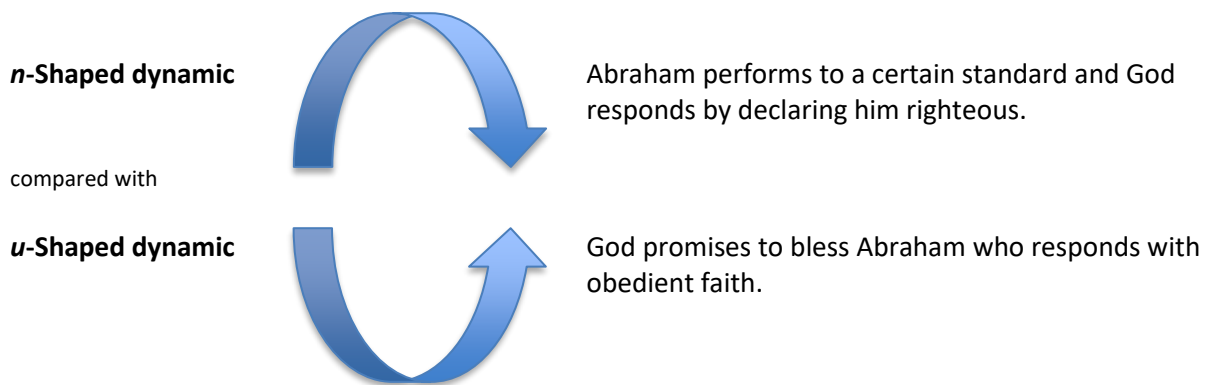
Before reading Galatians 3:1 – 4:7 share with each other what you understand by the gospel. Try and limit yourself to 2 or 3 sentences.

Read Galatians 3:1 – 4:7

Paul's soundbite for the gospel seems to be "*Jesus Christ clearly portrayed as crucified*" (3:1) – in what way does this capture the essence of the gospel?

Paul says in v8 that God announced the gospel in advance to Abraham. What does this mean and what can we learn about the gospel from this?

Optional: Simon in his sermon referred to the difference between an n-shaped dynamic and a u-shaped dynamic quoting from Christopher Watkin's book *Biblical Critical Theory* to contrast a common view of religion that 'performance leads to reward' with the Biblical dynamic of 'blessing leading to response'.



How does this help us understand the gospel better?

What does Paul teach about the Law of God? See v19 – 25.

Why was the Law given?

What is its purpose?

Now that Christ has come, is the Law now irrelevant or redundant?

What did Jesus have to say about the Law of God – hint see Matthew 5:17-20?

How does what Jesus said fit in with what Paul is saying here?

Galatian 3:13 is an incredible verse. Try and put it into your own words so that you can share this with others in the group.

Look at v26-29 – what do these verses teach us about the community-dimension of the gospel?

When Paul talks about justification, we often imagine a *criminal court* with a judge presiding with ourselves in the dock. While this is helpful in understanding one aspect of what it means, Tom Wright suggests when Paul speaks of being justified by faith in Galatians 3:24 in the context of 3:6 - 4:7 we would do better to think of a *family court* where a child's adoption into a new family is being considered. How does this help your understanding of the gospel?

Why is the promise of the Holy Spirit such a vital part of the gospel according to Paul in Galatians? Consider how what Paul says about the Holy Spirit fits with Jeremiah's prophecy about the New Covenant in 31:31-34. Ask someone to look this passage up and read it out aloud to the group.

Now that you have reached the end of this section in Galatians, has your understanding of the gospel changed? If so, how has it changed?

Our society speaks a lot about diversity and inclusion and sometimes condemns Christians for being narrow-minded and exclusive. How would you respond to this accusation?

Spend some time in prayer thanking God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit for such a glorious gospel which speaks to each of us as unique individuals precious and loved by God but also points to a whole new society and community where our ethnic & cultural diversity is treasured, affirmed and celebrated.