

Grace and race in Galatia 5: One Spirit

discussion guide based on **Galatians 5** (linked to sermon of 2/7/23)
which can be accessed at www.stjamesbythepark.org/galatians

Intro Q: Dan sported belt and braces (as a visual aid!) in this sermon. What are the other worst sartorial disasters you've seen in your time?!

Read Galatians 5.1-6

Paul is (very) concerned that some of the Gentile Galatian Christians are contemplating circumcision. Using Dan's belt-and-braces analogy, see if you can articulate why Paul thinks that would be an utterly disastrous idea.

In what ways can we be tempted to supplement the cross of Christ with rule-keeping / legalism to as the means of our salvation?

Read v 7-12

Paul turns his attention to the false teachers. Why is he so harsh on them?

In v11 he contrasts his gospel of 'salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone' (which gets him persecuted) with the false teachers' 'gospel' of salvation by faith in Christ supplemented by law-observance. Why is the true gospel message so offensive? (See also 6.12.)

In what ways do you find it tempting to water down the gospel message for your friends?

Read v 13-15, 26

Paul is writing to deeply divided congregations. He warns them that their behaviour through their disagreements is critical for the future health of the church. Sometimes our 'biting' and 'devouring' each other can be unintentional. Similarly, we may not realise how our pride can provoke others. Without mentioning names, describe a situation where you have felt 'bitten' or 'got at' by another Christian, or provoked by their spiritual pride? What can we learn from those situations about how to make sure we don't fall into the same trap in the future?

What would it look like for you to serve someone else (especially those you disagree with) humbly in love?

Read v 16-25

Paul turns his attention to how his liberating gospel message doesn't just become an excuse for ungodly living. What do you think is the key verse here? Why?

If our 'flesh with its passions and desires' has already been crucified with Christ (v24), why do we still feel such a battle to do what is right (v17)?

Rather than battling the desires of the flesh on our own, Paul encourages us to 'live by the Spirit' (v16), 'be led by the Spirit' (v18), display 'the fruit of the Spirit' (v 22-23), 'keep in step with the Spirit' (v25). How might the fruit of the Spirit help you overcome any 'acts of the flesh' (either ones listed here, or other ones) that you struggle with?

How could you co-operate with the Spirit's work in your life more?

Spend some time praying for each other and our church community – that we wouldn't be tempted to believe the 'cross + works gospel'; that we'd have the courage to proclaim the 'grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone gospel'; that we'd serve one another humbly in love; that we would be increasingly open to the Spirit's work in our lives.