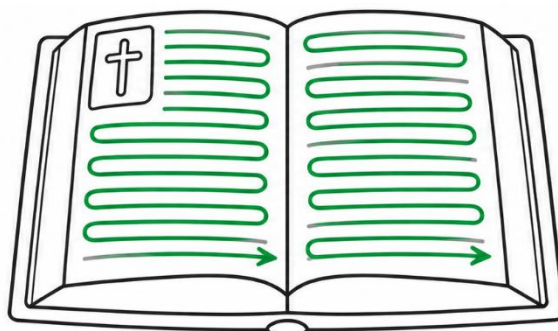
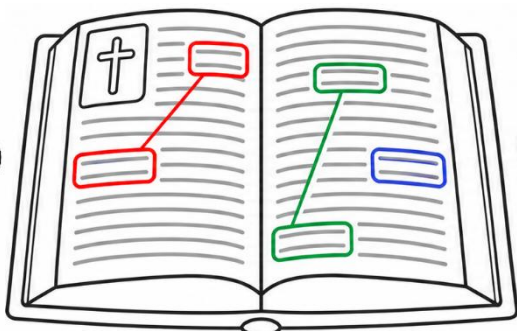


1. Method**Today**

Overview – a deductive approach

Other Sundays

Expository (verse-by-verse) approach

**2. Some terms and ideas before we begin****2.1. Circumcision**Circumcision is the cutting away of the male foreskin. It was *both*:

1. Given as a sign of God's covenant with Abraham (Genesis 17:10-11)
2. Commanded in the law of Moses (Leviticus 12:3)

2.2. Thought-categories

A. <u>True theology/worldview</u> e.g. 'God is holy' 'Jesus died for sinners' 'God promises a new creation!'	B. <u>Godly attitude</u> e.g. love joy, patience	C. <u>Godly completable works</u> e.g. 'go to church' 'read your Bible' 'do hospitality'
D. <u>False theology/worldview</u> e.g. 'God won't punish sin' 'This creation is all there is'	E. <u>Ungodly attitude</u> e.g. envy, malice selfishness	F. <u>Ungodly specific works</u> e.g. lying stealing looking at pornography

Group work #1

Add at least one more example to each category A to F above.

3. Who wrote the letter?

Galatians 1:1-2

Paul, an apostle

—not from men nor through man,
but through Jesus Christ and God the Father,
who raised him from the dead—

² and all the brothers who are with me,

To the churches of Galatia:

Paul wrote...

...to the Galatians

Galatians 6:11

¹¹ See with what large letters I am writing to you
with my own hand.

Paul usually has a co-author^a, so writing the letter alone suggests that his situation was *urgent* and *fraught*.

4. Tone of the letter

Galatians 1:6-9

⁶ I am astonished

that you are so quickly deserting him

who called you in the grace of Christ

and are turning to a different gospel

— ⁷ not that there is another one,

Absence of Paul's normal thankfulness at start of letter, e.g.

Philippians 1:3-4

³ I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, ⁴ always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy

but there are some who trouble you
and want to distort the gospel of Christ.

⁸ But even if we

or an angel from heaven

should preach to you

a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you,

let him be accursed.

⁹ As we have said before, so now I say again:

If anyone is preaching to you a gospel

contrary to the one you received,

let him be accursed.

Falling away to false teaching!

↓
(more in section #6)

All Bible references are English Standard Version Anglicised (ESVUK)

^a **Sosthenes** for 1 Corinthians; **Timothy** for 2 Corinthians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, Philemon

Galatians 3:1-3

O foolish Galatians!

Who has bewitched you?

It was before your eyes
that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified.

² Let me ask you only this:

Did you receive the Spirit
by works of the law
or by hearing with faith?

³ Are you so foolish?

Having begun by the Spirit,
are you now being perfected by^a the flesh?

Very terse and combative

Galatians 5:12

¹² I wish those who unsettle you
would emasculate themselves!

‘Your false teachers...
... are very keen on circumcision!
Why stop there?!’

^a Or now ending with

5. Who were the Galatians?

Galatians 4:13-15

- ¹³ You know it was because of a bodily ailment that I preached the gospel to you at first,
¹⁴ and though my condition was a trial to you, you did not scorn or despise me, but received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus.
¹⁵ What then has become of the blessing you felt?
For I testify to you that, if possible, you would have gouged out your eyes and given them to me.

They met when Paul was injured

They appeared to love Paul and his message

(Possible hint that Paul sustained *eye injuries* cf. 'large writing' 6:11)

Galatians 5:2-4

- ² Look: I, Paul, say to you that if you accept circumcision, Christ will be of no advantage to you.
³ I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is obligated to keep the whole law.
⁴ You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified^a by the law; you have fallen away from grace.

Galatians are *gentiles* because circumcision is a non-reversible procedure

Acts 14:8-23

⁸ Now at Lystra there was a man sitting who could not use his feet. He was crippled from birth and had never walked. ⁹ He listened to Paul speaking. And Paul, looking intently at him and seeing that he had faith to be made well,^b ¹⁰ said in a loud voice, "Stand upright on your feet." And he sprang up and began walking. ¹¹ And when the crowds saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in Lycaonian, "The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!"

Galatians are from Lystra and Derbe

¹² Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker. ¹³ And the priest of Zeus, whose temple was at the entrance to the city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates and wanted to offer sacrifice with the crowds. ¹⁴ But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of it, they tore their garments and rushed out into the crowd, crying out, ¹⁵ "Men,

^a Or *counted righteous*

^b Or *be saved*

why are you doing these things? We also are men, of like nature with you, and we bring you good news, that you should turn from these vain things to a living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them. ¹⁶In past generations he allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways. ¹⁷Yet he did not leave himself without witness, for he did good by giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness.” ¹⁸Even with these words they scarcely restrained the people from offering sacrifice to them.

¹⁹But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having persuaded the crowds, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing that he was dead. ²⁰But when the disciples gathered about him, he rose up and entered the city, and on the next day he went on with Barnabas to Derbe. ²¹When they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, ²²strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God. ²³And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

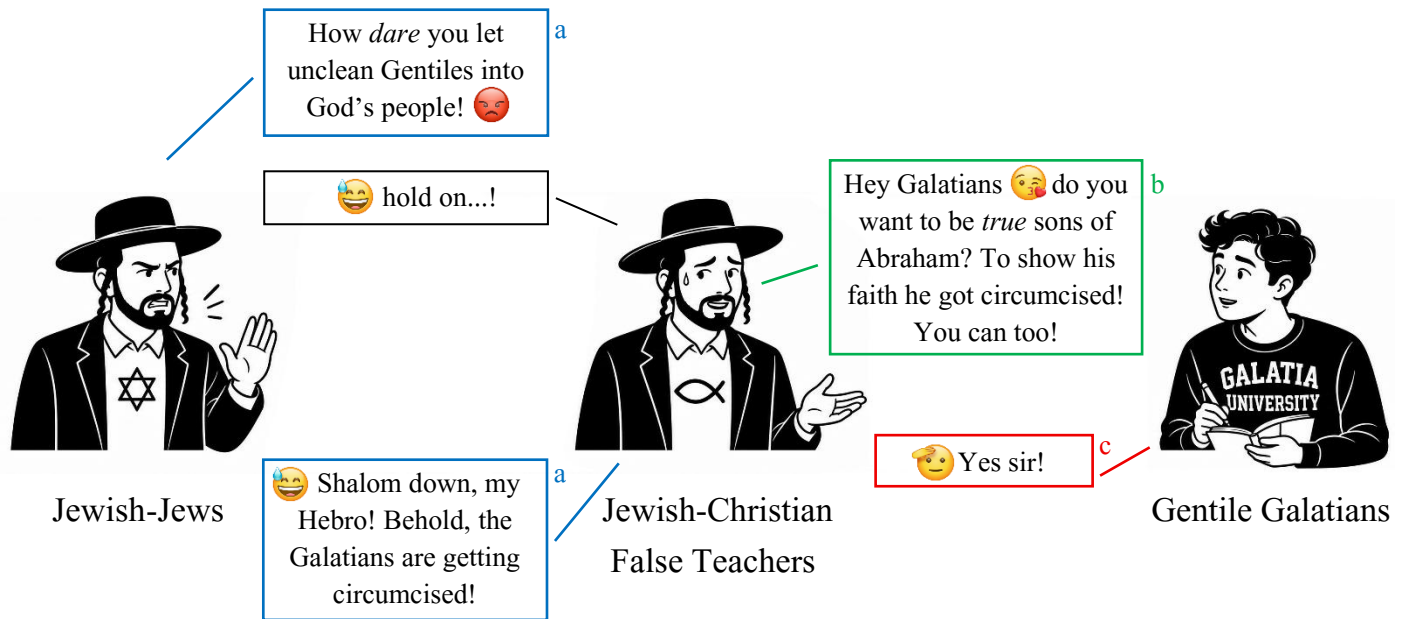
(still in Lystra)

likely how Paul got his ‘bodily ailment’ cf. Galatians 4:13-15

Paul planted churches in Derbe and Lystra



6. What was the false teaching that the Galatians were bewitched by?



a₁ Galatians 2:12

¹² For before certain men came from James, [Peter] was eating with the Gentiles; but when they came he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party.

Peter felt pressure from the pro-circumcision party

a₂ Galatians 5:11

¹¹ But if I [Paul], brothers, still preach circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offence of the cross has been removed.

Paul no longer preaches circumcision, but the false teachers claim he is

a₃ Galatians 6:12

¹² It is those [Jewish-Christian false teachers] who want to make a good showing in the flesh who would force you to be circumcised, and only in order that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ.

The Jewish-Christian false teachers fear the pro-circumcision party

a₄ Galatians 6:17

¹⁷ From now on let no one cause me trouble, for I [Paul] bear on my body the marks of Jesus.

Paul has borne wounds from the Jews, (cf. Acts 14:19) imitating Jesus

b₁ Galatians 3:6-9

⁶just as Abraham

“believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness”,

⁷know then that it is those of faith

who are the sons of Abraham.

⁸And the Scripture,

foreseeing that God would justify^a the Gentiles by faith,

preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying,

“In you shall all the nations be blessed.”

⁹So then, those who are of faith

are blessed along with Abraham,

the man of faith.

b₂ Galatians 3:29

²⁹And if you are Christ's,

then you are Abraham's offspring,

heirs according to promise.

c₁ Galatians 1:6-7

⁶I am astonished

that you are so quickly deserting him

who called you in the grace of Christ

and are turning to a different gospel

— ⁷not that there is another one,

but there are some who trouble you

and want to distort the gospel of Christ.

c₂ Galatians 3:1a

3 O foolish Galatians!

Who has bewitched you?

c₃ Galatians 3:3-4

³Are you so foolish?

Having begun by the Spirit,

are you now being perfected by^b the flesh?

⁴Did you suffer^c so many things in vain

—if indeed it was in vain?

From Paul's corrections, we
can deduce the argument the
false teachers gave:



‘Abraham's sons were given
promises; he was *circumcised*!’

‘You *do* want to be a true son of
Abraham, don't you Galatians?’

The Galatians clearly said ‘yes’ to the
false teachers

^a Or *count righteous*; also verses 11, 24

^b Or *now ending with*

^c Or *experience*

6.1. What did the Galatians do wrong, exactly?

Galatians 1:6-7

¹⁰ You observe days and months and seasons and years!

¹¹ I am afraid I may have laboured over you in vain.

In addition to getting circumcised, the Galatians were observing Jewish festivals: Sabbaths, new moons, annual festivals such as Passover, and sacred years. This would signal *Jewishness* to the Jewish-Jews

7. What else could possibly be at stake?

Galatians 2:11-13

¹¹ But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned.

¹² For before certain men came from James, he was eating with the Gentiles; but when they came he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party.

¹³ And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy.

Same incident!!

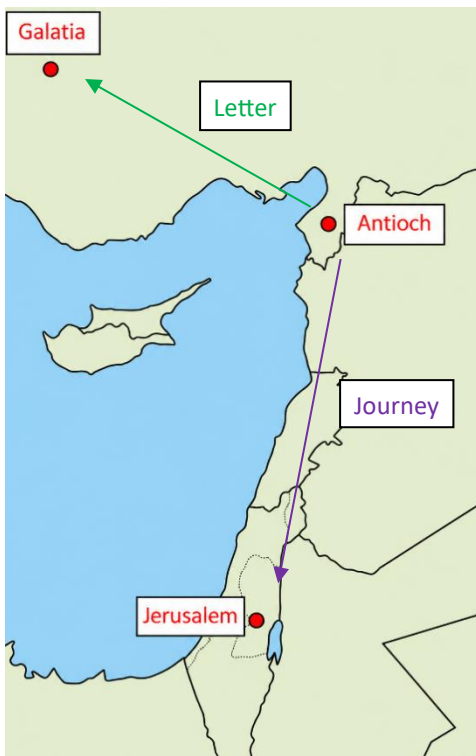
Acts 15:1-4

¹⁵ But some men came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved." ² And after Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with them, Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and the elders about this question. ³ So, being sent on their way by the church, they passed through both Phoenicia and Samaria, describing in detail the conversion of the Gentiles, and brought great joy to all the brothers.

Proposal timing of when Paul wrote to the Galatians

⁴ When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they declared all that God had done with them.

Paul *did not know* that the Jerusalem council would turn out well



How did the Jerusalem Council go in Acts 15?

Very well! A potentially explosive dispute ended with Paul endorsed, the troublemakers disowned, and churches reassured:

- 15:4-11 After debate, Peter affirmed salvation by grace for Jews and Gentiles alike
- 15:12-21 Paul and Barnabas recounted God's work; James endorsed Gentile inclusion
- 15:22 The whole church united behind the decision
- 15:23-27 A warm letter from the council **disowned** the demands of the unauthorised 'men from James' and commended Paul and Barnabas
- 15:28-29 No circumcision or obligation to keep the whole Mosaic law: just 4 concessions asked of Gentile believers
- 15:30-35 The believers rejoiced and were strengthened; gospel teaching continued

Group work #2

1. What's the worst that could happen?

Paul did not know how the Jerusalem Council meeting in Acts 15 would go. What might be his *worst* fear?



2. Luke's purpose

If Paul was very stressed about the Jerusalem Council before the happy outcome, why might Luke write Acts 15 in such a peaceful, united and cheerful manner? Why might he exclude Paul's stress?

8. What is the message of Galatians?

8.1. Structure

Verses	Section function
1:1-2:14	'My message is true'
2:15-5:26	'Here's the message'
6:1-18	'Go and implement what I've said'

8. What is the message of Galatians (cont.)

‘Don’t seek circumcision’ may well have been the original correction, but how are we to read Galatians today? Once we work out our similarities to the Galatians, what is its message for us?

8.2. Summary

The lesson of Galatians could be summarised:

God cares about the **heart**, not about **external metrics**

8.3. Thought-categories

If you wanted to break the book down by thought-categories:

1. **Care about A & B!**
2. **Do not care about C**, it will follow *freely* from A & B.
3. If you are only taught C, you will end up thinking D.
4. Even if you *say* you believe A, if you fixate on C, then you will end up in D, E & F

A. <u>True theology/worldview</u> e.g. ‘God is holy’ ‘Jesus died for sinners’ ‘God promises a new creation!’ ✓✓✓	B. <u>Godly attitude</u> e.g. love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control ✓	C. <u>Godly completable works</u> e.g. ‘go to church’ ‘read your Bible’ ‘do hospitality’ XXXXXX
D. <u>False theology/worldview</u> e.g. ‘God won’t punish sin’ ‘This creation is all there is’	E. <u>Ungodly attitude</u> e.g. envy, malice, selfishness	F. <u>Ungodly specific works</u> e.g. lying stealing looking at pornography

8.4. How is this different to James?

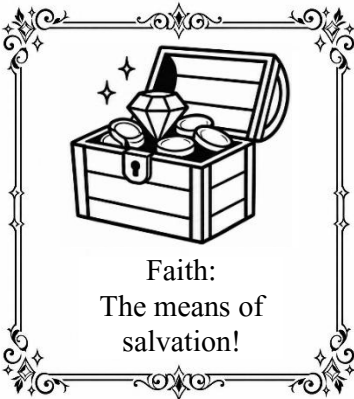
Paul and James are trying to defend the same thing, faith, but from very different attacks:



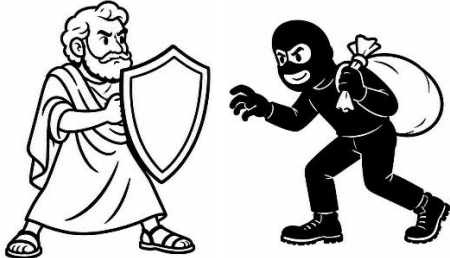
‘You need faith *and* works of the law!’

PAUL’S LETTER TO THE GALATIANS

‘The presence of C proves nothing except the presence of C. Stop caring so much about C!’



Faith:
The means of salvation!



EPISTLE OF JAMES

‘An absence of C proves a lack of A’

‘Faith is all I need; no works needed!’

9. Diagnostic: How Galatian are you?

At ABC, we can turn even good things into boxes to tick: doing the prep, serving, giving correct answers and spending time together. These can become reassuring evidence that we are ‘doing Christianity properly’, while our actual trust in Christ and concern for others receive much less attention.

For each question, place yourself between **1 and 4**. Answer from your actual reactions, preferably remembering a recent example. Knowing which answer *sounds Christian* is considerably easier than *being described by it*.

Entirely hypothetical warm-up

Do you ask people where they went to university because you’re interested in them so that you can help build them up, or because they might ask you back so you can mention Cambridge?

I want to understand
them, to build them up

1

2

3

4

I want to mention that I read
Chemical Engineering at the
University of Cambridge

1. Serving

A serving task would genuinely help the church family and you are well-placed to do it. If nobody would ever know it was you, how much would that reduce your enthusiasm?

If it helps ABC, I want
to serve

1

2

3

4

I would rather do something
that helps people *see* how
committed I am

2. Bible study prep

You’ve done the ‘optional’ prep questions. When you mention doing the prep, are you more interested in encouraging others to benefit from it, or in making sure they think well of you?

I want others to benefit
from the prep too

1

2

3

4

I want others to recognise
my spiritual seriousness

3. Spiritual health

A more mature Christian raises a specific concern about your faith. Which question occupies you more?

Could they be right?
Do I need to do business
with God directly?

1

2

3

4

Who else thinks this about
me? How can I change their
impression?

4. Wrong answers in Bible study

You give a *wrong answer* in Bible study. The correction helps you understand the passage, but everyone has seen you get it wrong. What are you most keen to do next?

Keep learning, even if
that means asking
another basic question

1

2

3

4

Plan a more intelligent
contribution, so people don’t
remember the wrong answer

5. Pub

You are at the pub after church on a Sunday. Why are you there – more to be *seen* to be at the pub, or more to help secure the eternal fates of church family?

I want to help these
people keep trusting in
God’s promises

1

2

3

4

At least nobody can say I
don’t make an effort

10. Snipping away at our assumptions

10.1. A vs D

<u>A. True theology/worldview</u> e.g. 'God promises a new creation!' <i>only Bible teaching gets A</i>	<u>B. Godly attitude</u> e.g. love, joy, patience	<u>C. Godly completable works</u> e.g. 'go to church' 'read your Bible'
<u>D. False theology/worldview</u> e.g. 'This creation is all there is' <i>we all start off believing lies</i>	<u>E. Ungodly attitude</u> e.g. envy, malice, selfishness	<u>F. Ungodly specific works</u> e.g. lying, stealing, looking at pornography

1. How persuaded are you that our natural worldview starts off in D?
2. If you were more actively aware that *only Bible teaching would increase A*, what differences would it make to your life?

10.2. Beliefs lead to actions

<u>A. True theology/worldview</u> e.g. 'God promises a new creation!'	<u>B. Godly attitude</u> e.g. love, joy, patience	<u>C. Godly completable works</u> e.g. 'go to church', 'read your Bible'
 <i>leads to</i>		 <i>leads to</i>

3. How intuitively do you assume that *thoughts lead to actions*?
4. To what extent do you think that *actions lead to thoughts*?

10.3. The Galatian problem

<u>A. True theology/worldview</u> e.g. 'God promises a new creation!'	<u>B. Godly attitude</u> e.g. love, joy, patience	<u>C. Godly completable works</u> e.g. 'go to church', 'read your Bible' <i>If we only hear C from our pastors...</i>
<u>D. False theology/worldview</u> e.g. 'This creation is all there is' <i>...then we'll end up thinking D...</i>	<u>E. Ungodly attitude</u> e.g. envy, malice, selfishness <i>...being E...</i>	<u>F. Ungodly specific works</u> e.g. lying, stealing, using porn <i>...and doing F!</i>

5. Why do we struggle to believe that churches that state A accurately, but teach mainly C can be so dangerous?
6. How do you feel about churches that focus on A often being called E?