

1/25/26

### Introduction to Galatians

We begin our study of Galatians with an introduction to the book, as we always do with every book we study to better understand the content of the letter and the heart of the apostle Paul towards the Galatians.

The failure of too many Christians is that they do not study the word of God, bringing much hurt to their own lives by their willful ignorance and carnal Christians.

1. They think they know the word by just reading it.
2. They do not take the time to study the word.
3. They too often are the first to start complaining to or against God and the church.

The book of Galatians warns the believer about the danger of not living continuously dependent on the grace, word and the Holy Spirit and begin to live by the religious law in the energy of flesh!

#### **I. The epistle to the Galatians was a proclamation for protection.**

- A. The epistle has stood as a lighthouse preventing people from suffering shipwreck of the faith.
  1. Galatians is called the “Magna Carta of Christian liberty”.

2. “Spiritual dynamite” and “The Christian Declaration of Independence”.
3. Galatians was the epistle that brought spiritual awakening to Luther, “The just shall live by faith”. Gal. 3:11c
4. Galatians has been called “The battle cry of the reformation.”

- B. The epistle has received personal witness through out history.
  1. On October 31, 1517, Luther nailed his 95 thesis against the claims of Rome on works to merit salvation.
    - \* Luther declared, “The epistle to the Galatians is the character of evangelical faith.”
  2. John Wesley’s assurance of faith was Galatians.
  3. John Bunyan claimed to prefer Luther’s commentary on Galatians above any book except the Bible.
- C. The particulars of the epistle.
  1. The epistle contains only six chapters, containing 149 verses.
  2. Yet, it has proven to be one of the most powerful epistles Paul ever wrote.
  3. The apostle wrote 13 epistles, 14 if he wrote Hebrews.
  4. The other 13 books were written by 7 other men.

5. The letter is the only one that is addressed to a group of churches. Gal. 1:2b; 3:1
6. The letter to the Galatians is one of the four epistles that fall in the category of Soteriological, dealing with the theme of salvation based on the atonement of Christ.  
\* The other three are Romans, First and Second Corinthians.
7. The epistle is Polemic in nature, defending the faith.
8. The date of the epistle is one of the most difficult, depending on which theory one accepts, the Northern or Southern theory.
9. The letter had to have been written during the second missionary journey after Paul visited the Galatian churches, for he delivered the decree of the church council of Jerusalem to them and Acts says nothing about false teachers in the churches of Galatia. Acts 16:4
10. Most likely then, Paul probably got word when he was at Corinth, either from Timothy or some Galatians and wrote the letter to the Galatians.
  - a. Just as he did to the Thessalonians about the same time, which one was written first is impossible to know? 52-53 A.D.
  - b. The dates may differ a bit, depending on the date given to the council, the important thing is that they were written and we have them, not the exact date!

11. The epistle to the Galatians is the only one Paul calls attention to his hand-writting. Gal. 6:11
    - a. Some say it refers to the size of the letter to correspond with the idea of his eye infirmity.
    - b. Others say say it refers to the length of the letter.
    - c. Remember that Paul's letters were written by an amanuensis and he just added closing words and salutation. 1Cor. 6:11; Col. 4:18; 2Thess. 3:17
    - d. So Paul could have written all of the Galatian letter by his statement and Philemon. Phil. 1:19
- D.** The providential hope of the epistle is in the grace of God.
1. So I pray that as we go through this epistle anyone who is held bound by anything that is not based on grace, that they let it go.
  2. Also from traditions that oppose and contradict the Word to be set free.  
\* Be it Catholicism, liberal theology of modernism, so called Neo-orthodox and Post-modernism of "The Emergent Church" or "New Apostolic Reformation". etc.
  3. Those of you that are bound by works to merit salvation that you might rest of the finished work of Christ.

4. Those of you bound by legalism, which is self-righteousness that you might see your error.
5. And those of you satisfied with the ritual and ceremonies of the liturgical church, oh, that you might see the deception and repent.

***The epistle to the Galatians has been a proclamation for protection!***

## **II. The Galatians were a pagan people.**

### **A. The origin of the Galatians.**

1. The Galatians were Celtic tribes of ancient Gaul, combined with the Gernamic Tectosages from Toulouse.
2. These Celtic tribes invaded Greece early in the 3rd century, 280 B.C. and established the kingdom of Thrace, called Thyle, they appeared on the shores of the Hollespont in Asia Minor.
3. They crossed over to Asia Minor, modern day Turkey, by invitation of Nikomedes I, king of Bithynia to help him in his civil war.
4. Once they established themselves in Asia minor the warlike tribes extended their ravages far and wide and in 232 B.C., the state became known as Galatia, after the people who occupied it, the Gauls.  
\* The late J. Vernon McGee called them "blue eye blonds Asians".

5. In the following years they were repressed and finally conquered, the final wars established the power of the Romans in their territory, being subdued by Manlius, the Roman consul, in 189 B.C.
  6. They became a subject kingdom under a tetrarch, then under a king of their own and their boundaries of the territory varied from time to time, yet they retained their language and customs for many years.
  7. King Amyntas relinquished the kingdom to Rome and after the death in 25 B.C., it became a Roman province, the province of Galatia was formed by adding to the northern territory over which these Celts had spread to certain southern sections.
  8. The greater part of the Pisidian region, Isauria, Lycaonia, and portions of eastern Phrygia, the whole province as thus formed, being called Galatia.
- B. The question that has arisen is how was Paul using the term Galatians?**
1. The first option is that Paul was using the term "Galatians" to identify the geographical and the ethnic race prior to Rome's possession, the North Galatia theory.
  2. The second option is that Paul was using the term to identify its political association to

Rome as a province of Rome, the Southern Galatia theory.

3. There are different opinions by scholars where the churches of Galatia were located.
  - a. There are those of the Northern Galatian theory.
    - 1) This was the traditional view until the 18th century, that the term “Galatians” was used to identify the geographical and ethnic race.
    - 2) The cities would include Pessimus, Ancyra and Tavium
  - b. There are those of the Southern Galatian theory.
    - 1) It was proposed by J.J. Schmidt in 1748.
    - 2) This view came to be in the 1899 by Sir William M. Ramsay, understanding the term “Galatians” of being used as the political Roman province.
    - 3) The churches were those of Pisidia, Iconium, Antioch, Lystra and Durbe.
4. There are some important observations to be noted.
  - a. When Luke speaks of Asia Minor and the other districts, he does so without regards to the boundaries of the Roman provinces, while Paul employs the names of the Roman provinces regardless of the nationalities inhabiting them.

\* Lenski the Greek Scholar points this out, as part of the confusion of the commentators failing to note this fact.

- b. The province of Galatia is not the identical kingdom of the descendents of the Celtic tribes.
  - c. The province included now the southern sections which incorporated the descendants of other ethnographic stocks.
  - d. In Lystra, the natives were Lycaonians who still clung to their ancient language. Acts 14:11
  - e. Yet the southern parts of the province were not made up of Celtic population.
  - f. Therefore the term “Galatians” does not have to indicated only and absolutely Celts, but any inhabitant of the Roman province, including Jew, Greeks and Latins living in the area.
- C. The question of weather the epistle of Galatians was addressed to “North or South Galatians” is settled for us in the book of Acts.
1. The First missionary journey by Paul and Barnabas reveals Paul established churches in the area of South Galatia. Acts 13-14
    - a. They went from Antioch to Seleucia and sailed to the Island of Cypress, preached to Sergius Paulus, then sailed from Paphos to Perga in Pamphilia. Acts 13: 4-13

- b. Then they went from Perga to Antioch in Pisidia, then to Iconium and Lystra, where the Jews from Antioch and Iconium arrived and persuaded the multitudes to stone Paul. Acts 14:6, 19
  - 1) It was there that Paul and Barnabas were taken for gods as they were in Lystra when a lame man was healed.
  - 2) Barnabas was taken for Jupiter and Paul for Mercury or Hermes.
- c. They departed the next day to Derbe, where they made many disciples and returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch to strengthen the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith and saying, “We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God. Acts 14:20-22
- d. They appointed elders in every church, prayed with fasting and commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed. Acts 14:23
- e. After this they passed through Pisidia, to Pamphylia, preached the word in Perga, went down to Atalia and sailed back to Antioch in Syria. Acts 14:24-26
  - \* They returned in the same circuit they had come, retracing their steps!
- 2. The second missionary journey was brought about by Paul’s desire to visit again the

- brethren in every city they had preached and see how they were doing. Acts 15:36
- a. A strong contention between Paul and Barnabas occurred over John Mark having left them in the First missionary journey, Barnabas took John-Mark and sailed to Cyprus. Acts. 15:39
  - b. Paul and Silas sailed arriving at Derbe and Lystra, taking Timothy with them. Acts 16:1-3
  - c. They went through the cities and delivered to them the decrees of the church council from Jerusalem regarding the Gentiles not being subject to the Law, the churches were strengthened and increased. Acts 16:4-5
  - d. Acts tells us they went through Phrygia and the regions of Galatia, but the Holy Spirit forbade them to preach the word in Asia. Acts 16:6
  - e. Then they came to Mysia and tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them. Acts 16:7
  - f. Then they passed Mysia and came to Troas where Paul received a vision in the night, a man of Macedonia calling them to come and help them. Acts 16:8-9
  - g. Paul and Silas immediately recognized the Lord was calling them to preach the gospel in Europe, so they sailed from

Troas to Neapolis, to Philippi. Acts 16:10-12

- h. They preached at Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth and Ephesus. Acts 17-18
  - i. There was no preaching or new churches established in the second journey in the area of Galatia, especially North Galatia, only in Europe!
3. The third missionary journey tells us Paul went over all the country of Galatia and Phrygia to strengthen all the disciples and remained Ephesus. Acts 18:23; 19:1
- a. So, we know that Paul was both in the North as well as the South, yet Luke is clear, no churches were established in the North, the Holy Spirit forbidding them to preach the word.
  - b. Not one city in the north is named be it Pessinu, Ancyra, Tavium, only those in the Southern region, this is the focus of the book of Acts.
  - c. The region was the more flourishing with sea ports, cities, trade routes, etc.
  - d. The epistle is the only one that addresses a group of churches, though we know that some were circular letters, such as Ephesians. Gal. 1:2
  - e. So Luke uses the term Asia Minor and the other districts, without regards to the boundaries of the Roman provinces.

- f. Paul used the term Galatians as the political province of Rome. 1Cor. 16:1; 2Tim. 4:15; 1Pet 1:1
- g. We must try to harmonize the epistles with the book of Acts as best we can, to accept as valid or invalid the theories of man!

*The Galatians were a pagan people!*

### **III. The Galatian problem was the preaching of another gospel.**

- A. Paul identified it as a different gospel from the one he had preached to them.
  - 1. He said, "I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel." Gal. 1:6
    - \* The word different "heteros" means different and distinct in kind from the gospel of Christ they had received.
  - 2. He said, "which is not another." Gal. 1:7a
    - \* The word another "allos" means of the same kind. it is not the same source of the gospel Paul gave to them.
  - 3. He said, "but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ." Gal. 1:7b
    - \* The word pervert "metastepho" means to twist around, reverse and distort.

4. The letter is polemic in nature, defending the true faith by exposing the false counterfeit, a lie!

\* Paul was constantly concerned for the churches, caring for them, “Besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches.”  
2Cor. 11:28

- B.** The deceivers were Judaizers who were trying to bring the Gentile under the law of Moses in order to be saved.

1. Paul refuted their false charges that his apostleship was inferior to the twelve. Gal. 1:1, 15-16; 2:6, 9
2. Paul refuted that his gospel was inferior. Gal. 1:11-12
3. Paul was not dependent on the apostles in Jerusalem. Gal. 1:21-23
4. Paul had confronted the focus of their false teaching about circumcision at Jerusalem. Gal. 2:1-3; 5:2, 3
5. Paul called them false brethren. Gal. 2:4
6. Paul says they came in by stealth to spy out their liberty. Gal. 2:4
7. Paul identified them as “certain men came from James” misrepresenting the gospel. Gal. 2:12
8. Paul declared they were teaching the law versus faith. Gal. 3:5

9. Paul pointed out they failed to see the law was a schoolmaster or tutor to bring mankind to Christ, to be justified by faith. Gal. 3:4-5, 23-24
10. Paul says they focused on the observance of days, months, seasons and legalism. Gal. 4:10, 21
11. Paul dealt with their true motives, to make prosylite converts to boast. Gal. 4:17; 5:6-7; 6:12-13
12. Paul spoke out against them by accusations and severe consequences. Gal. 1:8-9; 3:1; 5:9, 12
  - a. The strong warning and severe consequences, “But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.” Gal. 1:8-9
  - b. The direct accusation, “O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified?” Gal. 3:1
  - c. The real dangerous outcome, “A little leaven leavens the whole lump.” Gal. 5:9

- d. The righteous verdict, “I could wish that those who trouble you would even cut themselves off!” Gal. 5:12

**C.** The ones being deceived were converts of Paul, mostly Gentiles.

1. Paul had established the churches due to an infirmity. Gal. 1:8, 11; 4:13-14, 19-20
2. Paul remained long enough to see that the Galatians were well on their way. Gal. 5:7
3. Paul’s language is stern, severe and without any praise for the Galatians, except for the words “brethren” and “My little children one time”. Gal. 1:11; 3:15; 4:12, 19, 28; 5:11; 6:1, 18
4. Paul declared the Galatians were uncircumcised. Gal. 5:2; 6:12
5. Paul used much of the Old Testament, due to the fact that the Judaizers were attempting to make the Gentile a sect of Judaism, but it could also be evidence of small minority of Jews? Gal. 3:7-9, 10-12; 4:21-31
6. Paul expressed his love for them. Gal. 1:10; 3:11-14, 16, 19-20
7. Paul used many contrasts to show the incompatibility of the false teaching.
  - a. Spirit and flesh.
  - b. Law and faith.
  - c. Circumcision and new creation.
  - d. The cross and the world.
  - e. Freedom and bondage.

- f. Material and spiritual.
- g. Christ and Moses.

**D.** The message of Galatians.

1. All who preach another gospel are to be accursed. Gal. 1:8
2. Faith in Jesus Christ is what justifies a man or woman. Gal. 2:16
3. The life of Christ is a crucified life. Gal. 2:20; 6:14, 17
4. Any attempt to finish in the flesh what is begun in the Spirit is foolishness. Gal. 3:3
5. The Law condemns man. Gal. 3:10
6. The Law was a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ. Gal. 3:24
7. All are sons of God through Jesus Christ. Gal. 3:26; 4:7
8. A person is free from all bondage in the liberty of Christ. Gal. 5:1
9. The flesh and the Spirit are contrary to one another, it is an ongoing warfare. Gal. 5:17
10. The works of the flesh will keep you from inheriting the kingdom of God. Gal. 5:19-21
11. Love is the mark of the believer, the fruit of the Spirit. Gal. 5:22; 6:1
12. Whoever sows will reap, be it to the flesh or the Spirit. Gal. 6:7-8
13. A new creation is what God honors. Gal. 6:15

**E.** Some key words.

1. Gospel, seven times. Gal. 1:6, 7, 11; 2:2, 5, 7, 14
  2. Preach, seven times. Gal. 1:8 (2x's), 9, 11, 16, 23; 4:13
  3. Justified, eight times. Gal. 2:16 (3x's), 17; 3:8, 11, 24; 5:4
  4. Law, 33 times.
  5. Faith, 22 times. Gal. 1:23; 2:16 (2x's), 20; 3:2, 5, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 14, 22, 23 (2x's) 24, 25, 26; 5:5, 6, 22; 6:10
  6. Promise, ten times, . Gal. 3:14, 16, 17, 18 (2x's), 21, 22, 29; 4:23, 28
  7. Grace, seven times. Gal. 1:3, 6, 15; 2:9, 21; 5:4; 6:18
  8. Sons, nine times. Gal. 3:7, 26, 6, 7 (2x's), 22, 30 (3x's)
  9. Spirit, sixteen times. Gal. 3:2, 3, 5, 14; 4:6, 29; 5:5, 16, 17 (2x's), 18, 22, 25 (2x's); 6:8 (2x's)
- F. Some key verses.
1. Gal. 1:8
  2. Gal. 2:20
  3. Gal. 3:3
  4. Gal. 4:7
  5. Gal. 5:1
  6. Gal. 5:16
  7. Gal. 6:7-8
  8. Gal. 6:15

*The Galatian problem was the preaching of another gospel!*

#### IV. The outline.

- I. **The personal regarding the gospel of grace: Authenticity of apostleship and gospel of grace versus the counterfeit. Gal. 1:1-2:21**  
\* Conversion and consternation!
  - A. The salutation and greeting. Gal. 1:1-5
  - B. The rebuke for turning from the gospel of grace, the theme of the epistle. Gal. 1:6-9
  - C. The gospel revealed to Paul by Jesus Christ was preached by Paul. Gal. 1:10-24
  - D. The authority of Paul's apostleship and gospel recognized by the apostles. Gal. 2:1-10
  - E. The authority of Paul's apostleship and gospel to rebuke Peter. Gal. 2:11-21
- II. **The doctrinal regarding the doctrine of grace: Justification by faith versus works of the law. Gal. 3:1-4:31**  
\* Clarification and consecration!
  - A. Salvation by faith, not works. Gal. 3:1-14
  - B. Salvation is by promise, not law. Gal. 3:15-21
  - C. The purpose of the Law. Gal. 3:22-29
  - D. The heirs of promise are sons of God. Gal. 4:1-7
  - E. Slaves vs. Sons. Gal. 4:8-29
  - F. Bondage vs. Freedom. Gal. 4:30-31

**III. The practical regarding the practice of grace: Spiritual freedom versus carnal bondage. Gal. 5:1-6:10**

\* Celebration and confrontation!

- A. Liberty and legalism. Gal. 5:1-12
- B. Liberty must not be abused. Gal. 5:13-26
- C. Liberty should be used to serve. Gal. 6:1-10

**IV. The closing regarding the genuine apostleship and gospel of grace: The cross and grace is superior to circumcision and law. Gal. 6:11-18**

\* Confirmation and transforation!

- A. Paul's personal authenticity by handwriting. Gal. 6:11
- B. Paul's boast is in the cross of Christ. Gal. 6:12-15
- C. Paul's commendation to God's peace and mercy. Gal. 6:16
- D. Paul's marks of persecution. Gal. 6:17
- E. Paul's commendation to God's grace. Gal. 6:18

*This is a simple basic outline to the epistle to the Galatians!*