

Galatians – Freed to be Free

A study of the book of Galatians

Introduction

First Meeting

Acts 13-14 mention four Galatian cities visited by Paul: Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe. These cities had congregations established during Paul's 1st journey. However, the Jews of Pisidian Antioch became jealous of Paul's popularity and expelled Paul and Barnabas from the region. Paul had to flee from Iconium also. In Lystra, people thought Paul and Barnabas were Zeus and Hermes. They preached in Derbe, then returned to Syrian Antioch.

Date, Reason for Letter, Key Thoughts

Two theories exist about the date of writing. The Northern Galatian Theory dates this letter c. 54-55 A.D., after the Jerusalem Council. The Southern Theory dates it c. 48-50 A.D. The Southern Theory is preferred because it posits that Paul had already met these churches when writing this letter to them. It also fits with the timeline presented in Acts. What Paul speaks of in **Galatians 2** fits with **Acts 11:1-18** with the Jerusalem Council of **Acts 15** addressing in a public way the issues discussed in Galatians. The gospel was at stake. The false teaching was spreading which said a person had to follow Mosaic Law in addition to believing in the gospel. If you think you must follow law, you rebuild what Jesus has destroyed causing Christ to be of no value for you!

Chapter 1 – There is only one Gospel

Galatians 1:1-10

Paul, an apostle—sent not from men nor by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead—² and all the brothers with me, To the churches in Galatia: ³ Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, ⁴ who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, ⁵ to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen. ⁶ I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—⁷ which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. ⁸ But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! ⁹ As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned! ¹⁰ Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ.

1. Why did Paul introduce himself the way he did and say what he said about Jesus right away in his greeting?
2. What is the first thing Paul says to them in the body of the letter? (**v. 6-7**) Why this?

3. To what is Paul referring when he speaks about another or different gospel than the one they'd already heard?

4. Why is it truly dangerous to add to, take away from, or change the gospel? Said twice in as many verses, what should happen to those who teach a gospel different than the gospel of Christ?
 - Dealing with this "other gospel" is the central focus of Galatians.

 - How can we identify when human traditions are being added to the gospel? How do we ensure the focus is always singularly on Christ?

5. Why does Paul ask what he does in **v. 10**? Why is vying for the approval of people in general but especially in matters of faith so dangerous? What is the blessing of living to please God and who benefits?

Galatians 1:11-24

I want you to know, brothers, that the gospel I preached is not something that man made up. ¹² I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ. ¹³ For you have heard of my previous way of life in Judaism, how intensely I persecuted the church of God and tried to destroy it. ¹⁴ I was advancing in Judaism beyond many Jews of my own age and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers. ¹⁵ But when God, who set me apart from birth and called me by his grace, was pleased ¹⁶ to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not consult any man, ¹⁷ nor did I go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before I was, but I went immediately into Arabia and later returned to Damascus. ¹⁸ Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to get acquainted with Peter and stayed with him fifteen days. ¹⁹ I saw none of the other apostles—only James, the Lord's brother. ²⁰ I assure you before God that what I am writing you is no lie. ²¹ Later I went to Syria and Cilicia. ²² I was personally unknown to the churches of Judea that are in Christ. ²³ They only heard the report: "The man who formerly persecuted us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy." ²⁴ And they praised God because of me.

6. How does Paul's story in this reinforce the gospel's divine origin and subsequent superiority to all other "gospels"?
 - How did God equip Paul for the current situation in Galatia during his previous life?

7. Why didn't Paul consult anyone and go into Arabia? Why did Paul mention that he initially didn't talk to any of the other apostles but only James, Jesus' brother?

8. How can people praise God because of you?