

GALATIANS

Part 1 - Introduction

Something to think about:

- 1) What are some things that would make a whole people group migrate?
- 2) How does the universality of Christianity set it apart from other world religions?
- 3) What's the difference between traditions and Tradition?

I) Understanding Galatians (or any ancient document)

A) 5 “Keys” to understanding Galatians

- 1) Don't read it through a 21st Century American lenses
 - sometimes called “domesticating” the text
 - Look at **Galatians 3:28**. What “problem” is being addressed?
 - This is the world of the 1st Century Roman empire; things were different then
- 2) Christianity and Judaism were NOT separate religions when this was written
 - “Christian” were seen as a sect of Judaism until sometime after the Temple destroyed
 - Pharisees, Sadducees, Christians - all branches of the same “tree”
 - How does a non-Jew (Gentile) become a true Jew?
 - * Gentiles don't have circumcision of the flesh; the Abrahamic covenant
 - * Gentiles don't have the 10 Commandments or laws of Moses
 - * Gentiles are not part of God's chosen people and their history
 - * Does a gentile have any “skin in the game”?
- 3) “The Law” - what does this mean?
 - Very different understandings between OT & NT
 - “Torah” in Hebrew had connotation of “gift, instruction, life (how to live)”
 - “Nomos” in Greek has connotations of “oppressive, restrictive, controlling”
 - Both “sides” can be using the same word but mean vastly different things
- 4) Written to be *heard* not studied in silence
 - this is a letter (epistle) meant to be read to the assembled congregation
 - the Word is meant to be *heard* (faith comes from hearing...Romans 10:17)
 - 90% of Paul's world couldn't read
 - meant to be heard communally; it's for **us** not **me** (plurality / community)
- 5) Genre is “Occasional Literature” - written for a specific issue or event
 - Paul is not trying to write a theologically reviewed treatise on a topic
 - This is called a “hot” letter; written in haste to solve a particular problem
 - poor grammar, sharp tone, “heat of the moment” feel to it
 - to understand the letter, you have to know the situation it was written for

B) Who were the Galatians?

- 1) 3 Celtic tribes; the Tectosages, Trocmii, and Tolistobogii (Celts = Gauls by Rome)
 - Part of the Baltic migration from Western Europe (France, Germany, Low countries)
 - Served as mercenaries for King Nicomedes of Bithynia in 278 BC
 - Were granted land in central Asia Minor (Turkey) today called Anatolia

2) Run ins with Rome

- The Galatian war 189 BC
 - * these Gauls were under the kingship of Antiochus III (Seleucid / Greek)
 - * Fought as mercenaries for Antiochus *against* Rome
 - * After the Greco-Roman war, Galatia was plundered, but not destroyed
- the Client Kings phase; 163-25BC
 - * Galatia had to pay an annual tribute (food, coin, soldiers) to Rome
 - * No troops stationed there unless needed (rebellions, failure to pay, etc)
 - * Fought as *auxillia* - Gallic archers were renowned
 - * Served with Caesar in Gallic wars and Pompey in Eastern campaigns
 - * A “king” would be appointed by Rome (like Herod was for Judea)
 - * made Galatia a “buffer state” between Rome and Pontus / Parthia (East)
- Annexation by Augustus - 25 BC to 396 AD
 - * After the Great Civil War (43-30 BC) Augustus did not appoint a king
 - * the last “client king” died in battle in 25 BC; no new king appointed
 - * Augustus (Octavian) made Galatia an official Roman province with a governor

3) Galatia in the days of Paul (35-63 AD)

- * Galatia was split along ethnic lines
 - Northern Galatia was Celtic (language, customs, gods, etc.)
 - Southern Galatia was Hellenistic / Latin (Roman ways of doing things)
 - Paul passed through southern Galatia on Missionary Journey 1
 - * cities of Lystra, Derbe, and Iconium
- * Vast majority of “Christians” were converts from paganism of various sorts
- * “Judaizers” came up from Jerusalem - you must be a Jew to be a Christian
- * These launched many personal attacks against Paul
 - an “inferior” apostle, really no apostle at all, as he never walked with Jesus
 - Paul didn’t have the authority of the apostles at Jerusalem to be preaching
 - * “apostolic succession” issues run older than we thought
 - a “watered down” faith to make it acceptable to the Gentiles (antinomian)

4) When did Paul write Galatians (2 theories still under heated debate)

- The early proposition (pre Council of Jerusalem ca. 50AD - see **Acts 15**)
 - * would make the date of writing 48-49 AD; during the time of MJ 1
 - * Predates any written Gospel account (Mark is earliest around 55 AD)
 - * Galatians 2:1-10 *might* refer to a “relief” visit to Jerusalem (Acts 11)
 - * Paul never mentions the Council nor its decision in this letter
 - * That Council was called to address the issue of gentile believers / circumcision
 - if Paul wrote *after* the Council, much of what he wrote would be a non-issue
- The late proposition (Post Council)
 - * Would put the date around 52-55 AD; still before a written, canonical Gospel
 - * Written to *Northern* Galatia which he *might* have visited on MJ 2
 - * Galatians 2:1-10 is Paul’s 1st person account of the Jerusalem Council
 - Luke is writing 3rd person from what he was told by Paul then Peter
 - The topics are the same he’s dealing with in this letter with same decisions
 - the “players” are all the same; Paul, Barnabas, Peter, James
 - Paul describes the meeting in the past tense; it’s already happened
 - * Quite possible the “letter” from the Council never made it North

C) Three main points in the letter (spread and repeated throughout)

- 1) Paul's defense of his authority and apostleship
- 2) Justification by faith, not obedience to the Law
- 3) Freedom of the Christian (from ceremonial Law)

Course Breakdown:

Sept. 2 - Introduction

9 - Galatians 1:1-2:10 > Paul's defense of his apostleship

16 - Galatians 2:11-3:25 > What is the Gospel?

23 - Galatians 3:26-4:31 > Adoption into god's family by grace through faith

30 - Galatians 5:1-6:18 > Bearing fruit for Christ

Homework: Read Galatians 1:1-2:10 three times

Round 1 - read quietly to yourself

Round 2 - read **out loud** as if you were the "scribe" in Galatia presenting Paul's letter

Round 3 - Listen to this portion being read; as though you were a member of a house church

* Cue up the Bible being read on Cassette (extinct?) or CD

* Possibly YouTube or a Bible app

* Family member can read it to you

- Feel free to jot down any thoughts that might arise, questions, insights, etc. for next week

GALATIANS 2
Part 2 - Paul's Apostleship
Galatians 1:1-2:10

Let's talk about this:

- 1) What is an "apostle"?
- 2) From where does an apostle's authority come from?
- 3) Why do churches (denominations) regularly have meetings? (Conventions, Assemblies, etc.)
- 4) How do you usually begin a letter?
- 5) What are some of the "other gospels" (really no gospel at all) are there in our world?
- 6) How does a personal testimony bear more "weight" than a polished narrative?
- 7) Why is it so difficult to challenge Church authorities?

II) Paul's defense of his apostleship and the Gospel

A) Epistolary prescription (1:1-1:5)

- 1) Where does Paul say his apostolic authority comes from?
- 2) Does verse 3 sound at all familiar?
- 3) What do we learn about Jesus from this "opener"?

B) Only 1 true Gospel (1:6-10)

- 1) Why is Paul "amazed" at the Galatian apostasy?
 - Cicero often used this as a rhetorical device
- 2) How do people "turn away" from the true Gospel?
- 3) What is the appeal of these "other" gospels?
- 4) Why is Paul so vehement in verses 8&9?
 - this is the strongest language he uses *anywhere* in his letters
- 5) Why would the Gospel be displeasing to people?
- 6) What does it mean to be Christ's "slave"?
- 7) Why do we not react to these "other" gospels in our world as forcefully as Paul did?

C) The Great Reversal shows the Gospel's true power (1:11-24)

- 1) How does Paul show that the true Gospel is superior to those "other gospels?"
- 2) How does Paul recount his conversion experience?
 - How does that relate to how Luke recorded it in Acts 9:1-31
- 3) How long did it take for Paul to get "credentialed" by the Church leadership?

- 4) How did Paul meet with in Jerusalem?
 - How does this square with Acts 9:26-30?
- 5) How do verses 22-23 show the transformative power of the Gospel?
- 6) What does it mean to be “zealous” for the traditions of one’s faith?
 - Is this a good thing?
- 7) How does one’s personal history and reputation affect the way the Gospel is received by others, especially those outside the faith?

D) The Jerusalem Council (2:1-10 - see also Acts 15:1-35)

- 1) How long did it take for “the Gentile question” to come to a head?
- 2) What was Paul’s concern coming to this Council? (Verse 2)
- 3) Who was “stirring the pot” regarding Titus?
- 4) Where does authority in the Church come from?
 - “Men don’t follow titles, they follow courage.” - William Wallace to the Bruce
- 5) What was the result of the Council?
 - According to Galatians 2:7-10
 - According to Acts 15:12-29
- 6) Why would it be so important to “remember the poor”?
- 7) What do you see as the biggest challenge (requiring a Synod convention) in the Church today?

For next week: (Your “homework”

Read

- * Galatians 2:11-3:25 to yourself
- * Galatians 2:11-3:25 out loud
- * Listen to someone else read Galatians 2:11-3:25

- Feel free to take notes, journal, or jot down any thoughts, questions or insights to share

Pray prayers of thanksgiving

- * For God’s approval of you in Christ Jesus (don’t need man’s approval)
- * That the Gospel can be preached in it’s fullness, truth, and purity
- * For the “pillars” of the Church; congregation, circuit, District, Synod

GALATIANS 3
What is the Gospel?
2:11-3:29

Let's talk about it:

- 1) What are some ways we insist other Christians act as we do?
 - 2) What is a “false dichotomy”?
 - can you give an example?
 - 3) What's the difference between the “unchurched” and the “dechurched”?
 - Which one needs the Gospel more?
 - 4) What are the three uses of the Law for those who live under grace?
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III) What is this Gospel anyways?

A) Paul's opposition to Peter (it's not robbing Peter to pay Paul) - 2:11-14

- 1) What was Peter's “problem”?
- 2) How did his actions contradict the decision of the Jerusalem Council?
- 3) Why is hypocrisy such a stumbling block to:
 - the hypocrite:
 - The one “calling him out”
 - The observant bystander

B) Law or Gospel (and rightly distinguishing the two) - 2:15-21

- 1) What advantages were there to being a Jew in the days of the early Church?
- 2) What disadvantages were there to being a Jew in the days of the early Church?
- 3) What does it mean to be “justified”?
- 4) What does Paul mean by “rebuilding what I tore down” in verse 18?
- 5) How do verses 19-20 mesh with his message to the **Romans 6:23**
- 6) How do verses 20 and 21 shape the way we go about our daily lives?
- 7) Does this passage mean we can ignore God's Law? Why / why not?

C) Faith vs. works - 3:1-14

- 1) What role does the Spirit play in this “faith vs. works” debate?

- 2) What is the purpose of a “rhetorical question”?
- 3) How did Abraham become “right” with God?
- 4) How does this apply to the Galatians some 2,000 years after Abraham?
 - If Paul is writing to northern Galatia, would they even know of Abraham?
- 5) Why does the Law curse all those who follow it?
 - If all the Law can do is accuse and condemn, why would I want any part of it?
- 6) How does Paul “frame” the Gospel in verse 14?
- 7) If we’re under blessing (through faith in Christ), why does it sometimes (oftentimes) feel like we’re living under a curse and God is mad at us?

D) Oh, Grow up! - 3:15-29

- 1) What are some examples of “binding covenants”?
- 2) Is the word “offspring” singular or plural (in English)?
- 3) Did the Law, added 430 years after the covenant, modify the terms of the covenant?
- 4) Why was the Law given?
- 5) Does it still perform the functions for which it was given?
- 6) How is everything(one) imprisoned (bound) under the Law?
- 7) Why is it necessary for the Law to *precede* the Gospel?
 - girlfriend quote: “Redemption is not a reward for the good, it is a grace for those who realize they need salvation”
- 8) How does the Law act like a guardian for a minor?
- 9) How do we “grow up” in Christ Jesus?
- 10) How do we “put on” Christ?
 - Has Jesus ever been “the latest fashion”?
 - Where else is this image of clothing oneself with Christ used?
- 11) How is verse 28 often misused?
- 12) What does it mean to be an “heir”

For next week:

Read Galatians 4:1-31

- * 1st time quietly to yourself
- * 2nd time out loud to yourself
- * 3rd time, close your eyes and just listen to it being read to / for you
- * Remember to jot down any thoughts, questions, insights to share next week

Pray: Intercessions for those living under the Law (known or not) that they may hear Gospel