

Preview of Galatians

Galatia, a Roman province in central Asia Minor, included the cities of Antioch in Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe. The apostle Paul had visited these cities on his first missionary journey (Acts 13 and 14) and most, if not all of them, again on later journeys. The date of this writing is uncertain.

Paul wrote this epistle to refute the doctrine of the Judaizers, who came among them to "pervert the gospel of Christ." This perverted gospel stood in contradiction to "the grace of Christ" (Galatians 1:6) and to "our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 2:4). The Judaizers purported to perfect the work of the Holy Spirit through "the works of the law" and fleshly energy (Galatians 3:2-5). They traded justification by faith for justification by the Law (Galatians 3:10-14), renouncing mature sonship and reverting to childhood and servanthood (Galatians 4:1-7). They were turning back to "the weak and beggarly elements" (Galatians 4:9-11) and to "mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage" as well as turning away from "Jerusalem which ... is free" (Galatians 4:24-31). Their fruit was entanglement "again with the yoke of bondage" (5:1) and the corruption of "the works of the flesh" (Galatians 5:16-21).

Paul vigorously opposed the Judaizers' doctrine, declaring that justification comes through faith in Jesus Christ, not by the works of the Law. "Galatians is an echo of the great truth of justification so masterfully set forth in Romans." Because the theme of Christian liberty runs throughout the epistle, Galatians has been called the Christian's Declaration of Independence.

The epistle divides into three distinct movements. The first two chapters are personal. After a brief introduction (1:1-5), the apostle Paul proclaimed that the Gospel he preached was the only authentic Gospel. It had originated with God, not with men (chapter 1), and it stood in full agreement with what the other apostles preached (chapter 2). The middle two chapters are polemical. The apostle argued that the authentic

Gospel is superior to what the Judaizers were promoting. By faith, believers enjoy a close relationship with Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit (chapter 3). This relationship, however, also incurs definite responsibilities (chapter 4). The final two chapters are practical. Paul emphasized that the authentic, superior Gospel produces true liberty. He urged the Galatians first to continue steadfastly in Christ's liberty, warning against "the yoke of bondage" that entangles those who endeavor to be "justified by the law" (Galatians 5:1-15), and second, to "walk in the Spirit," warning against bondage to the "works of the flesh" (Galatians 5:16 through Galatians 6:17). He closed the epistle with a brief benediction (Galatians 6:18).

The Authenticity of the Gospel—Its Origin

Lesson Scope: [Galatians 1](#)

Lesson Focus

Paul and Barnabas had planted the Galatian churches on the first missionary journey. Paul's powerful sermon at Antioch in Pisidia climaxed with these words, "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts 13:38-39). Expelled from Antioch by persecution, Paul and Barnabas moved on to Iconium in Galatia.

Paul's message of salvation by faith in Christ was again under attack, not from unbelieving Jews, but from Christian Jews, who felt it necessary to keep the Law of Moses in addition to exercising faith in Christ in order to be saved. Although these issues had been addressed at the Jerusalem Conference, these false teachers continued to spread their doctrine. In their effort to discredit the Gospel that Paul preached, the Judaizers tried to discredit Paul's apostleship. Paul, in turn, defended both his apostleship and the Gospel.

The Gospel, which Paul received by divine revelation, originated with God. This message of "the grace of Christ" is the only authentic provision for man's justification.

In many ways men seek to change the Gospel message today. Many times fragments of Gospel truth are used to support ideas and programs that are basically unscriptural. Many times the Gospel is changed to make room for the flesh. Sometimes, even today, the teachings of Paul are discredited because they are not the words of Christ or they supposedly belong to another time period. Such false teachings come very close to us at times. This lesson should reinforce our faith in and commitment to the "all things" of the Scriptures.

Lesson Aim: To prove the validity of Paul's commission and message to the Gentiles.

Theme Verses: [Hebrews 1:1-2](#). God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds.

Lesson Text

One Gospel

[Galatians 1:1-7](#) ¹ Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead;) ² And all the brethren which are with me, unto the churches of Galatia: ³ Grace *be* to you and peace from God the Father, and *from* our Lord Jesus Christ, ⁴ Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father: ⁵ To whom *be* glory for ever and ever. Amen. ⁶ I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: ⁷ Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.

One Revelation

[Galatians 1:8-12](#) ⁸ But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. ⁹ As we said before, so say I now again, If any *man* preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed. ¹⁰ For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ. ¹¹ But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. ¹² For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught *it*, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.

One Faith

[Galatians 1:13-24](#) ¹³ For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it: ¹⁴ And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers. ¹⁵ But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called *me* by his grace, ¹⁶ To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I

conferred not with flesh and blood: ¹⁷ Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus. ¹⁸ Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days. ¹⁹ But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother. ²⁰ Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not. ²¹ Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia; ²² And was unknown by face unto the churches of Judaea which were in Christ: ²³ But they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed. ²⁴ And they glorified God in me.

Questions for Study

One Gospel

1. What is the summary of the message Paul preached?
2. Why was the teaching of the Judaizers "another gospel"?
3. What are some false gospels promoted today?

One Revelation

4. What happens if we live to please men?
5. Why is it significant that Paul received the Gospel as a revelation from Jesus Christ?

One Faith

6. How was Paul's conversion central to the genuineness of his message?
7. Why did Paul emphasize his limited contact with others when he received the Gospel?
8. What tests help us determine if a teaching supports the genuine New Testament Gospel?

Analyzing the Passage

Paul's apostleship was "not of men," that is, from human source, "neither by man," that is, through a human channel (Galatians 1:1).

"Christ ... gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world" (Galatians 1:3-4)—an excellent summary of the Gospel.

Another (Galatians 1:6) means "of another sort." Another (Galatians 1:7) means "another of the same sort."

Divine intervention changed Paul's course of life and gave him a new

message. Paul's credentials with Judaism were impressive: "circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews, as touching the law, a Pharisee: concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless" (Philippians 3:5-6). Some feel that Paul was a member of the Sanhedrin at an unusually young age, based on his involvement in Stephen's indictment (Acts 7:58; 8:1; 26:10). Consider also Paul's testimony: "I ... profited in the Jews' religion among many my equals" (Galatians 1:13-14).

Note the development of Paul's argument in Galatians 1:11-22. First, his Gospel was "not after man" nor "of man" but by direct revelation (Galatians 1:11-12). Second, after being called from persecuting the church to preaching Christ, he "conferred not with flesh and blood" (Galatians 1:13-16). Third, indeed he did not go to the other apostles at Jerusalem at that time (Galatians 1:17). Fourth, only after three years did he pay a short visit to Jerusalem, but even then he met only Peter and James (Galatians 1:18-19). Fifth, he remained "unknown by face unto the churches of Judaea" (Galatians 1:22-23).

He gave these facts to emphasize that his message was from God. Because he had not conferred with men, he did not represent a heretical sect or the private interests of himself or some secret group. The God who sent Christ and who ordained the other apostles had also commissioned Paul.

Principles and Applications

One Gospel

1. Paul received his commission to apostleship directly from the Lord (1:1). He was "born out of due time" (1 Corinthians 15:8). Yet he was privileged to have seen the risen Christ (Acts 22:14), who commissioned him to take the Gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 22:21). At various times during his ministry, he received reassurances directly from the Lord that he was indeed fulfilling his calling.

2. Jesus' perfect offering provides full deliverance from sin (Galatians 1:3-4). Christ's work disannuls the demands of the Judaizers. Christ brought an end to the Law. He did not destroy it; He fulfilled it (Matthew 5:17-18). Every jot and every tittle of righteousness that the Law required, He had met. At no point had Christ failed in His love for God

or man. Christ did not fulfill the Law in our place; rather, He fulfilled the Law so that it could pass away. As a man made under the Law, He fulfilled the Law in order for His sacrifice to be perfect under the Law. Every debt of sin that the Law exacted against the account of every man was now provisionally removed (Psalm 103:12). Every promise and type of the coming Redeemer, given in the Law, was fulfilled.

3. The only valid Gospel is the message of "the grace of Christ" (Galatians 1:6-7). The social gospel promotes human betterment programs. Some pietists overemphasize emotionalism and experience while neglecting discipleship and brotherhood. Legalists revert to the Old Testament or seek spiritual security in good works or asceticism. While the Scriptures declare that God's grace comes only to the humble, some teachers declare that the grace of Christ is irresistible or use it as a license for sin.

One Revelation

4. God's curse rests upon those who distort the Gospel (Galatians 1:8-9). Those who wrest the Scriptures do so to their own destruction. See 2 Peter 3:16. "For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book" (Revelation 22:18-19). We should not use storybooks that add to the simple Bible story.

5. The Gospel is shown to be authentic when its messengers give single-minded service to Christ (Galatians 1:10). A double-minded, two-faced person cannot be trusted. A man serving his own interest cannot be trusted as a steward for another. The true Gospel will not be heard from men seeking wealth or the praise of men.

6. Paul received his message by direct revelation from Jesus Christ (Galatians 1:11-12). The Old Testament had foreshadowed and foretold God's inclusion of the Gentiles and a new dimension of salvation by grace. Even the apostles struggled to comprehend the tremendous implications of the New Covenant. Besides specifically calling Paul to bear His Name to the Gentiles, Christ also revealed aspects of the Gospel to Paul, which he preached among the Gentiles and expounded for

us in his epistles.

The writings of the apostles are equal in authority to the words of Jesus Himself. Some discredit the doctrines of the devotional covering and woman's place in the church because they are not the words of Christ. This is false. By divine inspiration, the epistles are the words of Christ. "If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord" (1 Corinthians 14:37).

One Faith

7. The validity of Paul's message is supported by the dramatic change Jesus Christ wrought in his life (Galatians 1:13-16). Paul's conversion from a violent persecutor of Christians to a zealous preacher of the Gospel was widely known. Paul describes himself as a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an injurious person. Paul's conversion was pattern and proof of God's long-suffering.

8. Paul's message was not subject to the influence of men (Galatians 1:15-19). His old Jewish prejudices were laid bare and crucified. Paul did not try to synthesize the Old Testament with the Gospel. He did not rationalize, philosophize, or adapt his message because of pressure from men.

9. Paul preached the same message the other apostles preached (Galatians 1:18-23). John the Baptist announced the coming "kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 3:2). "Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel" (Mark 1:14-15). The apostles preached repentance and baptism in the Name of Christ for the remission of sin. Paul described his ministry among the Gentiles as "preaching the kingdom of God" (Acts 20:25). The message was exactly the same.

10. God is glorified by the preaching and practice of the Gospel (Galatians 1:24). This is the real test of the true message. If anything or anyone but God is receiving the glory, we do well to question the sincerity of the messenger and the truth of the message.

Important Teachings

1. Paul received his commission to apostleship directly from the Lord (Galatians 1:1).
2. Jesus' perfect offering provides full deliverance from sin (Galatians 1:3-4).
3. The only valid Gospel is the message of "the grace of Christ" (Galatians 1:6-7).
4. God's curse rests upon those who distort the Gospel (Galatians 1:8-9).
5. The Gospel is shown to be authentic when its messengers give single-minded service to Christ (Galatians 1:10).
6. Paul received his message by direct revelation from Jesus Christ (Galatians 1:11-12).
7. The validity of Paul's message is supported by the dramatic change Jesus Christ wrought in his life (Galatians 1:13-16).
8. Paul's message was not subject to the influence of men (Galatians 1:15-19).
9. Paul preached the same message the other apostles preached (Galatians 1:18-23).
10. God is glorified by the preaching and practice of the Gospel (Galatians 1:24).

Answers to Questions

1. What is the summary of the message Paul preached?
Paul preached the resurrection of Christ, His redemptive death, and power over this evil world through Christ (Galatians 1:4).
2. Why was the teaching of the Judaizers "another gospel"?
The Judaizers were not unbelievers. They were Christian Jews who believed that Gentiles must keep the Law of Moses as a necessary requirement for salvation. This meant a rejection of the sufficiency of the finished work of Christ. This was a failure to realize that the Old Covenant had passed away. They did not accept the New Covenant as God's plan of salvation apart from the Old Covenant. This resulted in legalism instead of liberty.
3. What are some false gospels promoted today?
Some false gospels of today are the social gospel, ecumenism, Calvinism, dispensationalism, fundamentalism, pietism (the branch that re-

places discipleship and brotherhood with emotion), pacifism, and Roman Catholicism.

4. What happens if we live to please men?

We will make excuses for the flesh in ourselves or others. We will heap to ourselves teachers having itching ears. We will have men's persons in admiration because of advantage. We will have divided interests and loyalties, and it will be impossible to please Christ, who requires our all.

5. Why is it significant that Paul received the Gospel as a revelation from Jesus Christ?

Because Jesus gave Paul a personal revelation of Himself and the Gospel, Paul was a genuine apostle. Paul's writings carry the authority of inspired Scripture. What he said could be contested if he had received it from men.

6. How was Paul's conversion central to the genuineness of his message?

Paul first showed his immeasurable zeal for the old Jewish system—rejecting Christ completely. If anyone would have wanted to save it along with Christianity, it should have been Paul. But then God stepped into Paul's life, revealing Christ to him and giving him a new life and message. That Paul would preach the Gospel of apostles whom he had insanely persecuted could only be a divine act. Paul made no attempt to compromise the Gospel with his old life.

7. Why did Paul emphasize his limited contact with others when he received the Gospel?

Some could have argued that Paul's Gospel represented a minority faction who had gained the support of a gifted man. Others could have said that he influenced the other apostles to believe as himself. Paul solemnly declared that his Gospel was a direct revelation from God, and because of limited human contacts, a human origin was not possible.

8. What tests help us determine if a teaching supports the genuine New Testament Gospel?

We should ask some serious questions. Who first promoted this teaching? What else is often taught along with this teaching? How do the lives of these teachers compare with the New Testament? How does the teaching compare with the New Testament and example of Christ and the apostles? Does this teaching properly divide between the Old and

New Testaments? Does this teaching interpret the Old Testament by what is taught in the New Testament? Is this teaching in harmony with other Scriptures?

Summarizing the Lesson

The Gospel faces furious attacks in our day, as it did in the apostle Paul's day. The simple, straightforward principles outlined in this lesson should convince us anew that the Gospel is valid and fully sufficient for salvation. Paul was certainly a living demonstration of the vitality of the message he preached.

Research Guide

Read in Halley's Bible Handbook "A Young Man Named Saul" (p. 567) and "The Judaizers" (p. 609).