

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 13-14), 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” (1:6) and to “our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus” (2:4). The Judaizers purported to perfect the work of the Holy Spirit through “the works of the law” and fleshly energy (3:2-5). They traded justification by faith for justification by the Law (3: 10-14), renouncing mature sonship and reverting to childhood and servanthood (4:1-7). They were turning back to “the weak and beggarly elements” (4:9-11) and to “mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage,” as well as turning away from “Jerusalem which . . . is free” (4:24-31).

Their fruit was entanglement “again with the yoke of bondage” (5:1) and the corruption of “the works of the flesh” (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 contains three distinct divisions. 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 endeavour to be “justified by the law” (5: 1-15), and second, to “walk in the Spirit,” warning against bondage to the “works of the flesh” (5:16-6:17). He closed the epistle with a brief benediction (6: 18).

Lesson 8 28 June, 2020

The Divine Origin of the Gospel

Lesson Scope: Galatians 1

References in brackets relate to Lesson Scope unless noted otherwise

Lesson Focus

Paul established the Galatian churches on his first missionary journey. They included Iconium, Lystra, Derbe, and Antioch of Pisidia. He visited them on his second and third missionary journeys. Many Gentiles believed and abounded in the Lord.

As time went on, Paul needed to reaffirm his apostleship with the Galatians because of false Jewish teachers (Judaizers) that came in discrediting Paul’s apostleship. The Judaizers insisted that these Gentile Christians needed to keep the Law of Moses. Many believed them and were circumcised. Paul marvelled that they were so soon removed from believing the Gospel of the grace of Christ to a gospel of perversion. Paul declared himself to be an apostle of God “not of men, neither by man,” but by Jesus Christ who was raised from the dead (1:1), and that the Gospel he preached was not after man (1:11).

Jesus Christ Himself revealed the Gospel to the apostle Paul. Though perversions of the truth and false messages abound, the Gospel stands as the only provision for man’s justification.

The chronology of Paul’s Arabian experience, according to Galatians 1:17 and Acts 9:23, falls into the period of time stated as “after . . . many days.” What Paul received in Arabia was given to him by direct revelation from Jesus Christ. This cannot be overemphasized. If we begin to question the validity of the Pauline Epistles as inspired Scripture, we begin to strip the bride of Christ, the church, of many tenets of faith and understanding of life in Christ. Paul was well versed in the

Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament). He made applications of doctrine and practice that many today have cast aside as baggage, for what they call liberty in Christ.

The legalists (Judaizers) of Paul's day were determined to pervert the Gospel by substituting Law for grace, circumcision for the cross, works for faith, bondage for liberty, and self for Christ. We need to be alert to this error today as well lest we begin to trust in good works.

The true Gospel of Christ is justification by faith in Jesus' blood, a faith that works without the works of the Law.

Lesson Aim: To present the validity of Paul's apostleship and message to the Gentiles.

Theme Verses: 1 Corinthians 15:1-2. Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.

Lesson Text

One Gospel

Galatians 1:1-6

¹ (KJV) 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:

One Revelation

Galatians 1:8-12

⁸ (KJV) 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 (KJV) 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. From these verses, list some blessings of the Gospel of Christ.
2. What perversions of the Gospel are evident today?

One Revelation

3. How are we to discern whether one is teaching the true Gospel of Jesus Christ?
4. What is the serious result of preaching or teaching another gospel?

One Faith

5. Compare Paul's profit in the Jewish religion with his profit in the faith and grace of Christ.
6. Why did Paul not confer "With flesh and blood"? Where did he go? Whom did he confer with?
7. What fact in Paul's life caused the churches to glorify God?

Analysing the Passage

Apostle (1: 1) means “delegate of God, ambassador of the Gospel, commissioner of Christ”; not of men, that is, not from human source, neither by man, that is, not through a human channel (1: 1).

The resurrection of Jesus from the dead (1:1) is what sets the Gospel of Jesus Christ apart from and transcendent over any and all religions.

Another gospel (1:6) is not another Gospel (good tidings), but one that leads to perversion.

Pervert (1:7) means “to transmute, corrupt, and change completely from what was originally pure.”

To be accursed (1:8-9) is to receive the disfavour of Jehovah. The apostle Paul declares in the strongest manner that the Gospel he preached is the one and only way of salvation.

To certify (1:11) is “to establish or make known by authorization.”

To the Jews, the heathen (1:16) were the Gentiles.

Flesh and blood (1:16) signifies man, stressing the limitations of humanity.

Arabia (1:17) was the Arabian Desert region, east of the east prong of the Red Sea (today’s Gulf of Aqaba).

Principles and Applications

One Gospel

1. God called Paul to the office of an apostle (1:1). “And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time. For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am: . . . yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me” (1 Corinthians 15:8—10). Paul was not self-made.

2. Jesus died for our sins to deliver us from evil (1:3-4). He gave Himself for our sins. “Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed” (1 Peter 2:24). His soul did not become sinful as some believe and teach. All who believe and receive Him can claim this promise: “The Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen” (2 Timothy 4: 18).

3. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the only valid message of salvation (1:6-7). “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). “There is no other hope, . . . no other plea.” The validity of the message of salvation hinges on the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. No “other gospel” can claim a leader who has power over death and the devil.

One Revelation

4. Those who preach another gospel are accursed (1:8-9). “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). Wresting the Scripture sets one on a course away from God to his own destruction (2 Peter 3:16).

5. The call to preach the Gospel comes not from man but from God (1:10-12). Paul was arrested by God on the way to Damascus and was told, “Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do” (Acts 9:6). In the city God revealed to Paul through Ananias the nature of his future life work. Later God again spoke through the church at Antioch where Paul received his commission to actually begin his itinerate ministry to the Gentiles. Today the call to service comes through the church as well.

One Faith

6. Paul’s past life gave evidence of the power of God in changing his life (1:13-14). Paul testifies that he “was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy. . . . And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love. . . . That in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should here-after believe on him to life everlasting” (1 Timothy 1:13-14, 16).

7. God called Paul to preach the Gospel unto the Gentiles (1:15-16). And this he did without fail. We thank God for His mercy on the Gentiles who “were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: but now in Christ Jesus ye who some-

times were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ” (Ephesians 2: 12-13). “No more a stranger, nor a guest, / But like a child at home.”

8. Paul received the message of the Gospel not from men but from God (1:15-19). Paul was well versed in the Hebrew Scriptures (1:14; Philip-
pians 3:5-6). While he was new in the faith, he quickly grasped the va-
lidity of the Gospel of Christ. But for this work of preaching Christ
“among the heathen,” he needed to seek the face of God. He chose to go
into Arabia, where the Lord revealed many things which are written for
us in the Epistles: doctrines and practices which we hold dear as the
things “most surely believed among us” (Luke 1:1). Paul declared unto
all believers “all the counsel of God” (Acts 20:27) that he had received
of the Lord.

9. The complete change in Paul’s life caused men to glorify God (1:23-
24): Paul’s conversion was dramatic, in one sense, but no more a mira-
cle than any other person that turns to God from idols. Paul stated the
facts of his past life in short, without explicit details. His main focus in
the telling of his conversion was to glorify the mercy and grace of God
(Acts 22, 26). His manner of life gave evidence that he “was not diso-
bedient unto the heavenly vision” (Acts 26:19). To glorify one’s sinful
past detracts from the glory of the Lord’s deliverance and could bring a
snare to oneself and to others.

Important Teachings

1. God called Paul to the office of an apostle (1:1).
2. Jesus died for our sins to deliver us from evil (1:3-4).
3. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the only valid message of salvation (1:6-7).
4. Those who preach another gospel are accursed (1:8-9).
5. The call to preach the Gospel comes not from man but from God (1:10-12).
6. Paul’s past life gave evidence of the power of God in changing his life (1:13-14).
7. God called Paul to preach the Gospel unto the Gentiles (1:15-16).
8. Paul received the message of the Gospel not from men but from God (1:15-19).
9. The complete change in Paul’s life caused men to glorify God (1:23-24).

Answers to Questions

1. From these verses, list some blessings of the Gospel of Christ.

Some blessings from these verses are the resurrection power of Jesus (v. 1); grace and peace from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ (v. 3); the vicarious death of Jesus (v. 4); deliverance from this present evil world (v. 4); and living according to the will of God and our Father (v. 4).

2. What perversions of the Gospel are evident today?

Some perversions or deviations include the denial of the deity of Christ. Many today say that the teachings of the apostle Paul are not inspired by God. Some believe that Jesus became sinful to save us: “He hath made him to be sin for us” (2 Corinthians 5:21) means He became a sin offering for us. See also 1 Peter 2:24: “in his own body,” just like the lamb in the Old Testament sacrifices. Isaiah 53:6 “the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.”

Many believe the Bible, but also hold the teachings by their founder to equal credence with the Bible, such as the Mormons and Russelites (Jehovah’s Witnesses). All human founders die! Jesus lives!

3. How are we to discern whether one is teaching the true Gospel of Jesus Christ?

We are to try the spirits (1 John 4:1). Further, we are “to know them which labour among you” (1 Thessalonians 5:12). The life and practice (fruits) of any teacher, if observed long enough, will surely tell whether he is genuine (Matthew 7:16). Any teaching from books or from individuals that we do not know must also always be tested by the Word of God.

4. What is the serious result of preaching or teaching another gospel?

“If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed” (1:9). To be accursed is to be unapproved of by God. “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).

5. Compare Paul’s profit in the Jewish religion with his profit in the faith and grace of Christ.

He profited in the Jewish religion above many of his equals, such as being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of his fathers (1:14). Philippians 3:5-7 gives more specific details: “an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; . . . touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.”

When Paul surrendered to Christ, he served with the same zeal that he previously had in keeping the Law. “For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Philippians 1:21). “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20). “For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing” (2 Timothy 4:6-8).

Paul’s chief desire was that he would glorify God both in life and in death.

6. Why did Paul not confer “with flesh and blood”? Where did he go? Whom did he confer with?

The concept of salvation for the Gentiles (heathen, v. 16) had not yet been fully made known to Peter and others, according to the chronology of Acts 9-10. Paul apparently saw no benefit in consulting them. He went into Arabia. By inference he conferred with the Lord, by whom he received the glorious Gospel. Jesus, by direct revelation, taught him there (vv. 12, 15-22). Details of this experience are not revealed as such, but the account of 2 Corinthians 12:1-5 may be included. Also, at some point in his life, probably on the road to Damascus, he saw Jesus in person like all the rest of the apostles (1 Corinthians 15:8).

7. What fact in Paul’s life caused the churches to glorify God?

The fact that their former persecutor was now preaching the faith that he once tried to destroy! Paul’s main focus in the telling of his conversion was to glorify the mercy and grace of God (Acts 22, 26). He stated the facts of his past life without specific gory details. To enumerate suggestive details or glorify one’s sinful past detracts from the glory of

the Lord's deliverance and could bring a snare to one's self and to others.

Summarizing the Lesson

“Continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister; . . . according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, . . . to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:23, 25, 27).

Research Guide

1. Study Paul's testimonies of his conversion from Acts 22 and 26. Notice how he stated the facts of his past life in general terms and emphasized the grace of God in his life to save him and perform God's specific calling to take the Gospel to the Gentiles.
2. Study the chronology of Paul's life in relation to the Arabian experience to better grasp the movements of events preceding the founding of the churches in Galatia. See Acts 9; Galatians 1:15-22; 1 Corinthians 15:1—10.
3. Study Galatians 2-4, along with our lesson text, to better understand what “other gospel” the Judaizers were promoting.