

Notes On Galatians

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Galatians was most likely the first of Paul's epistles, targeted to what had once been an ancient Celtic settlement in what we know call Asia Minor. Paul's success in reaching Galatians caused jealousy among Jewish believers who still thought it was necessary to live under the law. The tone of Paul's letter implies that the Galatian believers had simply "caved" when the "Judaizers" swarmed in, and he makes a point of explaining that grace is still the only way of salvation.

This series of lessons is a survey to help believers encounter the main "points" as they work their way through the book. Each page includes one or more discussion questions. Some questions review the main points of the passage. Others are open-ended, with no one obvious "right" answer. If you are using these materials to lead a group, you may want to supplement them with other materials that relate the content more specifically to the needs of your members.

Also, if you have any comments, corrections, additions, or deletions, please contact us.

This study is divided into the following sections:

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Themes of Galatians

1. Blessings from the church and from Jesus who has saved us from our sins. (1:1-5)
2. I am surprised you are so easily led astray from the true gospel. (1:6-9)
3. Those who are misleading you claim to have received their message from great men, but I received this message directly from Jesus. (1:10, 2:1-10).
4. In fact, I've even had to reprove Christian leaders who are squeamish about living by grace in front of their legalistic friends. (2:11-21)
5. When you substitute works for grace, you make the Jesus' sacrifice on the cross worthless. (3:1-4)
6. Even Abraham, the father of the Jews, was saved by faith, not by works. (3:5-7)
7. Abraham's seed, Jesus, was prophesied to save the world through faith. (3:7-18)
8. The law was not an end itself, but a "tutor" to lead us all (men and women, slave and free, Jew and Gentile) to faith. (3:19-29, 4:1-8)
9. But when you turn from grace back to works, you are turning your back on the true Gospel that I taught you in great hardship. (4:9-16)
10. The false teachers don't want to help you, they want to make you dependent on them (4:17)
11. I wish I could be there now to help you sort this out. (4:18-20)
12. But even the Scripture teaches of the difference between the "children of the flesh" (works) and the "children of the promise" (faith). (4:21-31)
13. Attempting to go back to being saved by works is the same as denying the cross. (5:1-6)
14. This encouragement to trade faith for works doesn't come from God or through God's messengers. (5:7-12)
15. If we live by the flesh, we will eventually produce the fruit of the flesh. If we live by the Spirit, we will bring forth the fruit of the spirit. (5:13-26)
16. Be kind, wise, and concerned for each other's welfare. (6:1-10)
17. Don't be fooled by people who preach legalistic ideas but make exceptions for themselves. (6:11-13)
18. But those who follow Christ instead of the law will know peace and mercy. (6:14-16)

About Galatia:

Technically, Galatia was a Roman province in the northern part of Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey). The residents were Gauls (Celts). During Paul's ministry in Asia Minor, the southern cities of Antioch of Pisidia, Iconium, Lycaonia, Lystra, and Derbe were also part of the province, although they were assigned to other provinces later.

Timeline of Paul's Ministry to Galatia:

Paul (Saul) was a persecutor of the church who was converted after meeting the risen Jesus personally on the road to Damascus, in Syria. He began preaching the Gospel in Damascus and eventually had to be rescued from the trouble stirred up by Jews in that city. (Acts 9:1-26)

Barnabas brought Paul to the apostles in Jerusalem, but when Paul's life was threatened, the church sent him to his homeland of Tarsus. (Acts 26-30)

When a new church in Antioch of Syria needed leadership, the church at Jerusalem sent them Barnabas. (Acts 11:19-24) Barnabas went to Tarsus to ask Saul to help him in the work. (Acts. 11:26)

The church at Antioch sent Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem to bring relief for the famine. (Acts 11:27-30) Later, Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch (Acts. 12-25)

After being called to evangelistic work, Paul and Barnabas visited Galatia on their first missionary journey. In Antioch of Pisidia and in Iconium, they began their ministry by preaching in the synagogue. Some of the Jews accepted the message and many rejected. (Acts. 13)

In Lystra, a lame man was healed, causing a great misunderstanding. But when Paul and Barnabas got things straightened out, they were able to found a church there.

Jews from Antioch and Iconium heard what was going on, came to Lystra, stirred up the townspeople, and had Paul stoned and left for dead. But Paul survived and went on to Derbe and ministered there. (Acts 14:1-20)

Paul and Barnabas returned through Lystra, Iconium and Antioch of Pisidia before returning to Antioch of Syria (Acts 14:21-28)

Paul and Barnabas traveled to Jerusalem to help settle the question of whether Gentiles needed to follow the Mosaic law (Acts 15:1-33) They returned with assurances that the Gentiles did NOT need to.

On Paul's second missionary journey, he traveled back through Derbe, Lystra, and part of Galatia before striking out for Greece. (Acts 15:36-41, 16:1-7)

Galatians 1:1-12, 3:1-3 How Soon You Have Fallen!

Introduction:

- This is written after Paul's second trip through Galatia. He may be in Corinth. He has heard that false teachers have entered the church, claiming to be better than Paul and insisting that the Gentiles need to keep the Mosaic Law to be saved.
- Paul protests that their salvation has begun in faith, how could it be improved by following the Law, which doesn't save anybody?

Who is Writing?

- Paul, an _____, not by man but by _____ and God the Father (1:1)
- And all the _____ who are with him (1:2a)

Who is He Writing to?

- To the churches in _____ (the ones he and _____ founded) (1:2b)

Why is He Writing?

- To remind them how they were _____ from the present evil age (1:4-5)
- To warn them that they are being tricked into following a false _____ (1:6)

What Does He Want To Assert?

- That there is only one true _____ of Christ (1:7)
- That anyone preaching otherwise is _____ (1:8-9)
- That the gospel of Christ doesn't come from _____ (1:11)
- That Paul didn't receive the gospel through _____ but directly from _____ (1:12)

What Does He Remind them About?

- They received the Spirit by _____ with _____, not by works of the _____. (3:2)
- It is foolishness to think you can improve on Spiritual rebirth by the works of the _____. (3:3)

Remember, the Gentiles have already been asked to show compassion (Gal. 2:10) and to avoid immorality and idolatry (Acts 15:29)

Group Discussion:

What's Wrong With Adding a List of Other Do's and Don'ts to the Gospel?

Galatians 1:10-2:16 The Authority of Paul's Gospel

Introduction:

- Paul has heard that false teachers have entered the church, claiming to be better than Paul and insisting that the Gentiles need to keep the Mosaic Law to be saved.

Paul Has no Motive to Preach a False Gospel

- He is not seeking to please men but God. (1:10)

Paul Received the Gospel and his Calling Directly from Christ

- Paul did not receive his gospel or his calling at the hand of men, but directly from _____. (1:1, 1:11-12)
- If anyone could be saved by works it would have been _____. (1:13-14)
- But _____ had higher plans for Paul. (1:15-16a)
- Having heard directly from _____, Paul did not find it necessary to go to church leaders asking permission to fulfill his mission. (1:16b -17)
- When he did get to _____, he met with Peter privately, but did not meet with the apostles as a group. (1:18-29)
- He then ministered to the north and east of _____, even further away from the rest of the church. (1:21-22) During that time the church at _____ knew him only by reputation. (1:23-24)

Paul's Official Visit to Jerusalem

- Fourteen years later, Paul felt led by God to go to Jerusalem with _____ and Titus (after Paul and Barnabas' first missionary journey). (2:1-2)
- There was conflict in _____ over how much of the Law Christians should keep. (2:3-5)
- But the church leadership did not ask _____ and _____ to add the Law to their preaching; rather they encouraged them to carry on. (2:6-10)

Peter Dissembles at Antioch

- Later, when _____ was at Antioch, Paul had reason to reproach him. (2:11)
- _____ behaved differently around the Gentile Christians when his Jewish Christian friends came to town. (2:12-13)
- _____ rebuked Peter publicly for apparently adding the Law to Grace, or at least caving in to those who did. (2:14-16)

Group Discussion:

- Why does Paul stress that he did not receive the gospel "second-hand"?
- Why did Paul feel it was necessary to rebuke Peter Publicly?

Galatians 2:17-3:9 Faith Preceded and Supersedes the Law

Introduction:

- Paul has criticized those who add the Law to Grace, or at show fear of those who did.

Faith and the Law Do Not Work Together

- Paul explains that adding the Law to faith nullifies _____. (2:17-18, 21)
- We are dead to the Law and alive to God through _____. (2:19-20)

Paul's Challenge to the Galatians

- Who has cast a spell on you to draw you away from the _____? (3:1a)
- You clearly understood about _____ and His crucifixion. (3: 1b)
- Did you receive the Spirit of God because you were obedient to the Law or because you believed the _____ when you heard it? (3:2)
- What makes you think that obeying the _____ can add to your faith? (3:3)
- If you didn't cast your _____ away when you were suffering for it, why would you cast it aside now? (3:4)
- Did God use the Law to give you the _____, or did He use faith? (3:5)

Who are the True Children of Abraham?

- God counted Abraham as _____ because of Abraham's faith. (3:6)
- The true children of _____ are those who follow his example of faith in God. (3:7, 9)
- This was what God meant when He promised to bless all _____ through Abraham. (3:8)

Group Discussion:

- Can adding legalistic burdens to our Christian experience improve our faith or benefit us in any other way that counts for eternity?
- Why might Christians who know they are saved by faith allow legalists to dictate "codes of conduct" or other extra-Biblical standards to them?
- How might Christians tolerating, or even currying the favor of legalistic people hurt new believers?

Galatians 3:10-29 Faith, the Oldest and Best Covenant

Introduction:

- False teachers have entered the Galatian churches, insisting that the Gentiles need to keep the Mosaic Law to be saved. Paul has argued that even Abraham, the father of the Jews, was saved by faith, not by the Law.

The Law Holds Everyone Accountable to God

- The Law judges (3:10) but faith brings _____ (3:11)
- “Living by the _____” requires complete obedience (3:10, 12)
- But, by allowing Himself to be punished as a law-breaker, Christ redeemed us from the _____ that comes through the Law. (3:13)
- Through Jesus Christ, God’s blessing comes to the Gentiles, giving us the _____ through faith. (3:14)

Which Covenant Binds the Faithful?

- Even humans don’t go back and change a contract unilaterally once it has been signed, or change a will after the person has _____. (3:15)
- Consequently, God’s promise to _____ still stands. (3:16)
- The Law, which came 430 years later, does not invalidate God’s _____ to Abraham. (3:17-18)

Why Was the Law Given?

- The Law was given as a guide to right living, until _____ came. (3:19)
- But the _____ itself could not give life or even create righteousness in the Law-keeper. (3:20-21)
- Rather the Law has shown us how dependent we are on _____. (3:22-23)
- In this way, the Law was a “tutor” (pedagogue) that taught us our need for _____ in Christ. (3:24-25)

Is Salvation by Faith Different for Jews and Gentiles?

- All who are _____ into Christ are children of God. (3:26-27)
- Salvation by faith in Christ does not discriminate between Jew and _____, slave and _____, or male and _____. (3:28)
- We all belong to Jesus and are children of _____. (3:29)

Group Discussion:

- Why does faith in Christ remove boundaries between kinds of people?
- Why might some people who had a position of advantage under a legalistic system prefer that to relying only on faith in Christ?

Galatians 4:1-18 The Apostle's Personal Appeal

Introduction:

- False teachers have entered the Galatian churches, insisting that the Gentiles need to keep the Mosaic Law to be saved. Paul has argued that the Law does not invalidate God's promise to Abraham or salvation by faith.

The Law as a Guardian

- A child under guardianship has not really received his _____, because he is subject to his guardians. (4:1-2)
- So we were under the guardianship of the _____, while we were subject to the flesh. (4:3)
- _____ came to redeem those who were under the Law's guardianship. (4:4-5a)
- But now we have been adopted and have become heirs and children of _____. (4:5b-7)

Why Turn Back Now?

- When you were subject to the _____, you did not know God. (4:8)
- But now that you have a relationship with God, you are still depending on the works of the _____, such as ceremonial feasts. (4:9-10)

Paul Fears for His Disciples

- _____ is afraid that his work among the Galatians will be for nought. (4:11)
- Paul reminds them that when he first ministered among them, they received him and his teaching in spite of his _____. (4:12-14)
- But now that _____ is away from them, they have lost the sense of commitment to him that they once had. (4:15)
- Has Paul put them off by telling the _____ instead of attractive lies? (4:16)

Paul Warns that the False Teachers Have a Different Agenda

- Paul sought to build a relationship with the Galatians so that he could lead them to _____. But the false _____ seek to build a relationship with the Galatians to make the Galatians dependent on them. (4:17)

Group Discussion:

- Why would a false teacher want to make disciples feel like they control access to the truth? (see Matthew 23:13)

Galatians 4:19-31 The True Children of Abraham

Introduction:

- Paul has told the Galatians that the false teachers who are pursuing them don't really want the Galatians to grow in Christ – they want to make the Galatians dependent on them.

Paul's Godly Concern

- Paul is truly seeking the Galatian Christians' welfare. (4:18)
- Paul hungers for _____ to be "formed" in each Galatian Christian. (4:19)
- _____ wishes he could be with them now to help them sort this out. (4:20)

The Son of the Flesh (works) and the Son of the Promise (Faith)

- If the Galatians really understood the Law, they would understand that the _____ itself supports what Paul is telling them. (4:21)
- Abraham's son by _____ (the bondwoman) was "born according to the flesh;" that is his birth had nothing to do with faith, and he was not the "seed" that God had promised to _____. (4:23a)
- Abraham's son by _____ was born according to the promise, so his birth was a result of Abraham's faith in that promise. (4:23b)
- Mount _____ represents the children of Abraham who are only physically related, and who are still in bondage to the works of the flesh. This system dominates the physical city of Jerusalem as well. (4:24-25)
- The children of Abraham who are children of faith are citizens of a heavenly _____ (4:26) and children of the promise (4:27-28)
- Just as Ishmael persecuted _____, so the physical children of Abraham persecuted the spiritual children of _____. (4:29)
- The children of the flesh will not inherit with the children of _____. (4:30)

Children of Abraham by Flesh	Children of Abraham by Faith
Born of a bondwoman (Hagar)	Born of a free woman (Sarah)
Born according to "the flesh" (Ishmael)	Born according to the promise (Isaac)
Represented by Mount Sinai and contemporary Jerusalem	Represented by Heavenly Jerusalem
Will not inherit the promise	Will inherit the promise

Which do You want to be?

Galatians 5: 1-16 – Guided by Faith, Hope, and Love

Introduction:

- Paul is cautioning the Galatian disciples against being turned from a Gospel of Faith to a “gospel of works.” He has shown the Galatians that even the Old Testament history shows that Abraham’s faith in God’s promise outweighs the deeds of the flesh.

The Spirit Works through Faith, Hope and Love

- Salvation through faith gives us freedom, and we only hurt ourselves when we try to go back to earning salvation through _____. (5:1)
- Trying to be _____ by works as well as faith nullifies the work of faith and grace in our lives. (5:2-4)
- Through the Spirit and by **faith**, believers have the blessed **hope** of _____; we are guided in our day-to-day decisions by **love**. (5:5-6)

A Little Leaven Leavens the Whole Batch of Dough

- God is not behind any doctrine that nullifies the work of the _____. (5:7-8)
- Accepting even a little bit of false teaching in this matter will eventually cause our entire spiritual experience to be tainted, as well as tainting those around us. (5:9)
- The false teacher(s) will receive _____ in time. (5:10)

Liberty, License, Law, Love?

- Paul assures the _____ that he is opposed to the teachings of the Judaizers. (5:11-12)
- Still, Paul cautions not to let our freedom in _____ encourage lax morals. (5:13a)
- Our treatment of each other should always be guided by _____. (5:13b-14)
- Allowing the _____ to guide us according to this principle will help us to avoid living for the desires of the _____. (5:15-16)

Group Discussion:

- Why might it be easier to accept a code of conduct than to have a heart that is right with God and be guided by love and the Holy Spirit?

Galatians 5:16-6:2 – The War of the Flesh and Spirit

Introduction:

- Paul is cautioning the Galatian disciples against being turned from a Gospel of Faith to a “gospel of works.” He has contrasted living by faith with living by works.

Walking by the Spirit helps us resist living by the flesh.

- Living by the _____ helps us avoid being controlled by the desires of the _____. (5:16)
- There is a war between the Spirit and the desires of the flesh; if you are walking by the _____, you can not do whatever you please. (5:17)
- This doesn’t mean that you are under the _____ (5:18)

Living by the Flesh brings out:

- **Sins of morality:** immorality, impurity, sensuality (5:19)
- **Sins against God:** idolatry, sorcery (5:20:a)
- **Sins against others:** enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions (5:20b)
- **Bad attitudes toward others:** envyings (5:21a)
- **Self-destructive behavior** (5:21b)

Walking by the Spirit brings out:

- **A God-influenced heart:** unconditional _____ for others, unexplainable _____, peacefulness within and without (5:22a)
- **Godly attitudes** toward others: _____, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness (5:22b-5:23a)
- **Godly control** over one’s own responses to situations and temptation: self-control (5:23b)
- Living by the _____ actually helps you live as though you were obeying the Law.

Results of Walking by the Spirit

- If we have been _____ with Christ, and given new _____ through the Spirit, we should be able to walk by the Spirit. (5:24)
- We should have attitudes of respect, forgiveness, and helpfulness toward each other (5:26-6:1-2)

Group Discussion:

Why can’t living by the Law help bring out the fruit of the Spirit?

Galatians 6:1-10 – Faith Begets Compassion

Introduction:

- Paul has contrasted living by faith with living by works. He has pointed out that walking by the Spirit should keep us from feeling like we're in competition with each other.

Interact with Compassion, Care, and Carefulness

- Be compassionate when restoring those who have _____. (6:1a)
- At the same time be careful not to be similarly _____. (6:1b)
- Bear one another's burdens, which fulfills the _____ of Christ. (6:2), (John 15:12), (Matt. 22:36-40)

Judge Yourself, not Each Other

- Be careful not to fool yourself about how _____ you are. (6:3)
- Don't _____ your "spirituality" against others?. (6:4)
- _____ are ultimately responsible for yourself. (6:5)
- Be supportive of those who are giving you spiritual _____. (6:6)
- Don't think that if you've "gotten away with something," _____ will also overlook it. (6:7)
- What we do in and for the flesh will decay in time, but what we do in and of the _____ will benefit us for eternity. (6:8)

Make Doing Good for Others a Part of Your Life

- Keep doing good; _____ will eventually repay us. (6:9)
- Do the _____ that is "at hand" for others, especially for fellow believers. (6:10)

Group Discussion:

If the Spirit of God is living in us, why do we have to be reminded to "do good."?

Galatians 6:11-18 – A Last Reminder and Entreaty

Introduction:

- Paul has warned the Galatians against getting drawn into legalism and has encouraged them to live by the spirit instead of the flesh.

Summing Up Paul's Concerns for the Galatians

- Even Paul's penmanship shows his concern. (6:11)
- Those who are trying to make you become legalistic are chiefly concerned with making themselves look _____ and giving themselves something to _____ about. (6:12-13)

The Work of Christ and the New Creation

- But Paul wishes only to _____ in Christ (6:14a)
- Through Christ, the world has been _____ to Paul and Paul to the world (6:14b)
- What matters is not keeping the _____ but being created anew. (6:15)
- Blessings on those who live according to the Spirit (6:16-18)

Questions about Galatians

- Why does Paul stress that he did not receive the gospel "second-hand"?
- How does tolerating legalism hurt new believers?
- Why does faith in Christ remove boundaries between kinds of people?
- Why would a false teacher want to make disciples feel like they control access to the truth? (see Matthew 23:13)
- Why might it be easier to accept a code of conduct than to have a heart that is right with God and be guided by love and the Holy Spirit?
- Why can't living by the Law help bring out the fruit of the Spirit?
- If the Spirit of God is living in us, why do we have to be reminded to "do good"?