

GALATIANS: CALLED TO FREEDOM

Message #1 Galatians the Back-Story

The Background to Galatians—Paul’s 1st mission (Acts 13:13-14:28)

1. NT Timeline

4 BC. Jesus born

30 AD. Jesus crucified/resurrected & ascended

- Jesus said, “Go, make disciples of all nations...” (Matt. 28:19)
- “Be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, to the ends of the earth” (Ac. 1:8)
- Pentecost—the birth of the Church—3,000 & 5,000 saved in Jerusalem (Acts 2-3)
- Spread in Judea & Samaria; persecution & scattering by Saul (Paul) & Co. (Acts 4-8)

33 AD. Paul’s encounter with Christ outside Damascus, Syria (Acts 9, 24:10-21; 26:1-29)

38 AD. Peter witnesses to Roman soldier, Cornelius in Caesarea (Acts 10:1-11:18)

44-47 AD. Paul serves Church in Antioch. [15+ years after Pentecost] (Acts 11:19-30)

46-47 AD. Paul’s 1st Mission to Cyprus, Galatia, etc. [Paul saved 14+ years] (Acts 13:13-14:28)

48 AD. Paul writes to Galatians (from Antioch?)

49 AD. Jerusalem Council (Acts 15)

2. Date of Galatians: The main indicator is the lack of reference to the Jerusalem council (Acts 15). This is an argument from silence, but, it is a “deafening silence.” It would have been enormously helpful to Paul’s argument if he could’ve mentioned the Jerusalem decision that Gentiles shouldn’t be circumcised: this, was a major point of contention between Paul & the false teachers influencing the Galatians. The council took place in AD 48/49, & Paul evangelized Galatia in AD 47/48; so, around AD 48 is a plausible date for Galatians. This would make it the 1st of Paul’s (surviving) NT epistles.

3. Theme of Galatians: Christ’s death has brought the new covenant era (3:23-26), in which believers don’t have to become Jews or follow the outward ceremonies of the Mosaic law (2:3, 11-12, 14; 4:10). Requiring these things denies the heart of the gospel, which is justification by faith alone, not by obedience to the law (2:16). In this new age, Christians are to live in the guidance & power of the Spirit.

4. What Prompted Paul’s Letter to the Galatians? A crisis hit the churches in Galatia. The church began as a result of God’s Spirit at work in Paul’s proclamation of the gospel (3:1-5; 4:13-15). But within the short time since Paul left (1:6), the church was visited or infiltrated by false teachers whom Paul calls those “who trouble you” or “those who unsettle you.” These teachers convinced the Galatians of a false gospel requiring them to adopt Jewish OT rules. Paul strongly opposes their message. Although the Galatians have been convinced by the false teachers’ teaching, Paul doesn’t regard the situation as hopeless. Paul is more critical of his audience than in any other letter; he chastises the Galatians for being foolish (3:1) & provides numerous reasons why they should return to the truth.

5. Style of Galatians: Galatians follows the conventions of letter writing in NT times. There is no initial thanksgiving, which indicates Paul’s agitation & alarm over the situation. Paul gets right to the point—the Galatians are in danger of turning to a different gospel. The letter’s main argument uses autobiography, example, allegory, satiric rebuke, and exhortation. Paul’s letter to the Galatians displays the apostle’s intensity of tone, which comes through strongly—especially in his intolerance of false doctrine & his indignation with people who promote it.

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Message #2 The Gospel

Read Galatians 5:1, 13a; 1:1-9

I. The Genuine Gospel

A. The Lord Jesus Christ gave Himself for our sins (2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet. 2:24)

1. Delivering us from this present evil age (1 Jn. 5:19; Eph. 2:2)
2. Fulfilling God's will

B. What is the Gospel?

Definition: *“Gospel means ‘good news.’ This includes not just a call to initial saving faith but [the] entire message about Jesus Christ and how Christ’s saving activity transforms all of life”* (ESV note Rom. 1:1) – it includes salvation (regeneration/ born again), baptism, consecration, serving, church, Christ transforming our thinking, choosing, priorities, goals, living, etc. – TOTAL RESPONSE

1. “Gospel” in the New Testament – 90 times
 - a. “Gospel of the Kingdom” (Matt. 4:23)
 - b. “Gospel of Jesus Christ” (Mk. 1:1)
 - c. “Gospel of God” (Mk. 1:14)
 - d. “Gospel of God’s Son” (Rom. 1:9)
 - e. “Gospel of Christ” (Rom. 15:9)
 - f. “Gospel of the glory of Christ” (2 Cor. 4:4)
 - g. “Gospel of your salvation” (Eph. 1:13)
 - h. “Gospel of peace” (Eph. 6:15)
 - i. “Gospel of our Lord Jesus” (2 Thess. 1:8)
 - j. “Gospel of the glory of the blessed God” (1 Tim. 1:11)
2. The Gospel releases us from slavery to live in freedom (Gal. 5:1, 13)
3. The Gospel changes our status and identity and gives us a new identity
 - a. children of the devil (1 Jn. 3:10) to children of God (Jn. 1:12)
 - b. sons of disobedience (Eph. 2:2) to sons of God (Rom. 8:14)
 - c. darkness to light (Acts 26:18)
 - d. the power of Satan to God (Acts 26:18)
 - e. brings us forgiveness of sins (Acts 26:18)
 - f. gives us a place among God’s people (Acts 26:18)

II. Accepting a “Different Gospel”, a “Contrary Gospel”, a “Distorted Gospel”

- “I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to **a different gospel**—not that there is another [gospel], but there are

some who trouble you and want to **distort the gospel** of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you **a gospel contrary** to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed.” (Gal. 1:6-8) [ESV Note: The phrases *deserting him* and *different gospel* show that these are not issues over which Christians might legitimately disagree. The Galatians are questioning the very gospel itself, and Paul is a model of forthright frankness when central gospel issues are at stake.]

- “I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ. For if someone comes and proclaims **another Jesus** than the one we proclaimed, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or if you accept **a different gospel** from the one you accepted, you put up with it readily enough.” (2 Cor. 11:3-4) [ESV Note: The instrument of Satan’s deception is the opponents’ preaching of another Jesus (instead of the Jesus proclaimed by Paul), a different spirit (not the Holy Spirit but some false or demonic spirit), and a different gospel... The “gospel” of Paul’s opponents may have promised everyone health and wealth, but no suffering, contrary to Paul’s message and experiences—a “Prosperity gospel”?]

A. No initial requirement but responding by faith for salvation (Jn. 19:30; 3:16-17; Rom. 10:9-10; Eph. 2:8-9)

- “Jesus... said, ‘It is finished,’ and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.” (John 19:30)
- “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.” ((John 3:16-17)
- “If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.” (Rom. 10:9-10) [ESV Note: “*with the heart one believes*” Saving faith is not mere intellectual agreement (assent) but a deep inward trust in Christ at the core of one’s being.]
- “Even when we were dead in our trespasses, [God] made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved...For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.” (Eph. 2:5, 8-9)

Different gospels do NOT save – they DENY some of the ESSENTIALS

1. Jehovah’s Witness, Mormonism – deny Christ’s person & work
2. Gaga & Oprah – nothing wrong with you – denies the Fall of mankind and man’s Sin
3. Pantheism – says be one with nature – Avatar, environment – denies that creation is fallen, substitutes the Creation for God, the Creator (Rom. 1:23, 25)
4. Liberal – says worship is old/embarrassing – mental relationship with God, not love

B. No other requirement but responding by faith after salvation (Rom. 4:12; Gal. 3:1-3, 6; 2 Cor. 5:7; Gal. 5:16, 25)

- We “also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham...” (Rom. 4:12)
- “O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified. Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of

the law or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?...just as Abraham “believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness”? (Gal. 3:1-3, 6)

- “...for we walk by faith, not by sight.” (2 Cor. 5:7) [**ESV Note:** *by faith, not by sight:* This is not believing the unbelievable, but living all of one’s life based on confident trust in God’s promises for the future, even when one cannot yet see the fullness of the coming glory.]
 - “Walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh....If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.” (Gal. 5:16, 25)
1. We simply need to continue the way we began—responding to the Lord (the Spirit), by faith
 2. Not adding requirements (laws or practices) to ensure our salvation or to gain God’s approval of our living
 - a. Tongues
 - b. Church affiliation
 - c. Certain practices
 - d. Prosperity

John Stott “Only One Way: The Message of Galatians” (pp. 27, 28)

“We are not to be dazzled by the person, gifts or offices of teachers in the church. They may come to us with great dignity, authority, and scholarship. They may be bishops or archbishops, university professors, or even the pope himself. But if they bring a gospel other than the gospel preached by the apostles and recorded in the New Testament, they are to be rejected. We judge them by the gospel; we do not judge the gospel by them.”