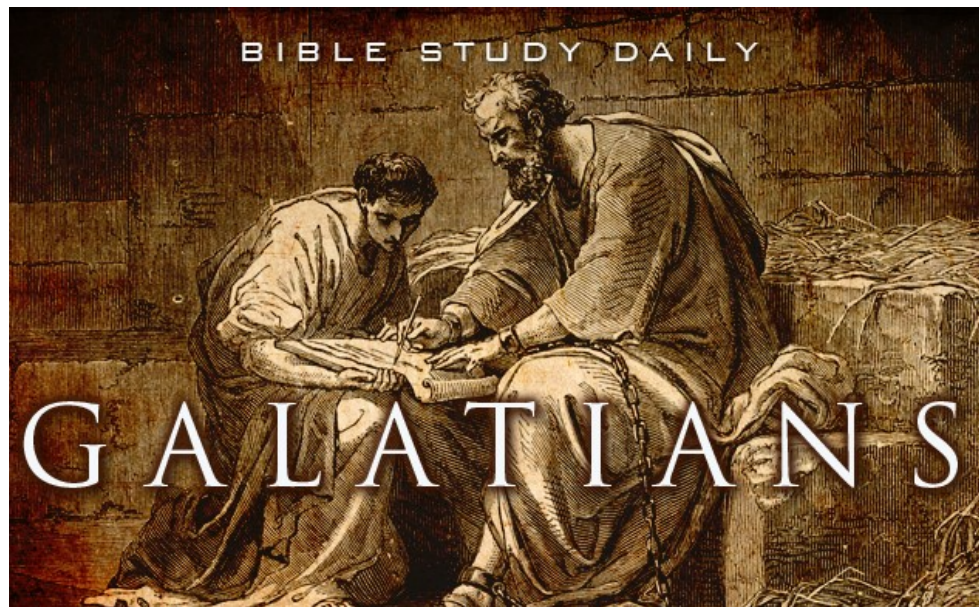




BIBLE STUDY DAILY



This document contains the introduction to the book of Galatians as well as my study notes for the book.

Name

The title “Galatians” comes from the intended audience designated in 1:2, “To the churches in Galatia.” The the body of the epistle makes it clear that Paul’s intended audience in Galatia is both Jewish and Gentile Christians.

Author

Paul claims authorship of [Galatians 1:1](#), [5:2](#), and indirectly in 6:11.

External sources also acknowledge Paul as the author of the epistle to the Galatians. Among them are Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen.

Genre

Epistle

Literary Form

The epistle to the Galatians is a personal letter of exhortation and instruction.

Time Frame

There are two theories regarding the dating of the book of Galatians depending on how the term “Galatia” is interpreted.

The Northern Theory. If the term Galatia is interpreted as an ethnic area then the ethnic Galatia is the northern area. It is only implied in the New Testament in [Acts 16:6](#).


The Southern Theory. If the term Galatia is interpreted as a political area, then because this was part of the Roman province it would include the southern region and its cities: Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe.

If the northern theory is correct then a date of A.D. 52-53 is probable.

If the southern theory is correct then a date of A.D. 48-50 is probable. Many scholars place the writing of Galatians from Syria in A.D. 49 prior to the Jerusalem Council. If the southern theory is correct then the book of Galatians is among the earliest of the New Testament books.

Emphasis

The emphasis of Galatians is on correcting the beliefs of the Galatians who were being led astray by the Judaizers. Specifically, Paul defended his calling as an apostle, his ministry, the doctrine of justification by faith alone and not by works, the freedom in the life of a Christian living by the power of the Holy Spirit.



Outline

- Introduction (1:1-1:10)
- A defense of Paul's calling and ministry (1:11-2:21)
- The doctrine of justification by faith alone (3:1-4:31)
- Freedom and liberty in the Christian life (5:1-6:10)
- Summary, conclusion and benediction (6:11-6:18)

What I Noticed Today (Galatians 1-3)

Galatians 1

In verses 1-3 Paul's opening states he is an apostle, not from men or by man, but from Jesus Christ and God the Father. Some people rejected Paul's authority and his apostleship because he was not one of the original Twelve. Paul makes his claim of apostleship based on being called by the risen Christ and God the Father.

Note: Paul begins the book of Galatians with the usual opening: the author, the recipient, and the greeting. However, he does not include a section expressing praise and thanksgiving for the believers.

In verses 4-5 Paul describes Christ's work on the cross to rescue us from our sins, by the will of God.

Note: Salvation through faith in Christ becomes the theme for much of the book of Galatians.

In verses 6-10 Paul admonishes the Galatians for turning away from Jesus who called them by grace. He accuses some of changing the gospel and says if anyone preaches a different gospel a curse be on him. Defending his directness, Paul says he is trying to win the approval of God, not men, otherwise, he would not be a slave (servant) to Christ.

In verses 11-21 Paul defends his position as an apostle:

- The gospel Paul preached did not come from man but by revelation from Jesus Christ (probably referring to the Damascus Road experience) (vv. 11-12). How can the Galatians question his authority since Paul's gospel came from Christ?
- Paul began as a zealous persecutor of the church. A Pharisee, he excelled beyond others because of his zeal for Jewish traditions (vv. 13-14).
- God had called him at birth and set him apart by grace and revealed the Son to him so he could preach to the Gentiles (vv. 15-16a).
- After his conversion he did not go to Jerusalem to consult with anyone on matters of doctrine, but immediately went to Arabia and back to Damascus (vv. 16b-17).
- He waited three years after his conversion before he went to Jerusalem to get to know Cephas (Peter). At that time he didn't know any of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother (James was the leader of the Christian church in Jerusalem at that time) (vv. 18-20).

Note: Expecting some to question the truthfulness of his claims, Paul swears an oath, "I am not lying, as God is my witness."

- He then went to Syria and to Cilicia. He was unknown to the brothers there, though they heard reports about Paul that the man who once persecuted the church now preached faith in Christ, and because of this they praised God (vv. 21-24).

Galatians 2

In chapter 2 Paul continues the defense of his apostleship and ministry showing how his message was accepted by other apostles, and how he remained true while Peter compromised.

- After 14 years Paul returned to Jerusalem with Titus and Barnabas, because of a revelation from God to go there and preach to the leaders of the church the same gospel he preached to the Gentiles (vv. 1-2).
- Titus was not compelled to be circumcised, even though he was a Greek. The issue of Titus' circumcision arose because of some false brothers (Judaizers) who wanted to impose the Mosaic Law on Christians. Paul said doing so would reduce their freedom in Christ and make Christians slaves (to the Law) (vv. 3-5).

Note: Titus was a Gentile believer, and Barnabas was a Jewish believer.

- After meeting with the leadership, they had no corrections or modifications to Paul's gospel message. The One who gave the gospel to Paul (for the uncircumcised) also gave it to Peter (for the circumcised) (vv. 6-8).

Note: Those recognized as "important" were Peter, James, and John.

- James, John, and Cephas (Peter) acknowledged the grace given Paul they extended fellowship to Paul and Barnabas. Further, they agreed that Paul and Barnabas should go to the Gentiles, and they would go to the Jews (vv. 9-10).

In verses 11-21 Paul revealed how he had confronted Peter for conduct that threatened the Gospel.

- When Peter came to Antioch Paul opposed Peter to his face because he regularly ate with Gentiles, but when leaders came from James in Jerusalem he withdrew, separating himself because he feared the Jews (vv. 11-12).
- Then the rest of the Jews joined in Peter's hypocrisy so that even Barnabas joined them (v. 13).
- But when Paul saw they were deviating from the Gospel by separating themselves from the Gentiles he rebuked Peter in front of everyone (vv. 13-14).
- Paul explained Jewish believers know that no one is justified by works of the Law, but by faith in Christ (vv. 15-16).

Note: Paul uses the word "justified" for the first time in verse 15. It

means to be declared righteous. It is the opposite of being condemned.

- Paul's opponents argued that because justification by faith eliminated the law, it encouraged sinful living. Paul's response was, if this were true then Christ would be a promoter of sin (vv. 17-18)!
- Paul says he has died to the Law so that he might live for God. He has been crucified with Christ and he lives in him, by faith in the Son of God (vv. 19-20). Paul's emphasis here is on the believer's union with Christ.
- Paul refused to set aside the grace of God because if righteousness comes through the Law then Christ died for nothing.

Note: Paul's comments, directed at Peter's behavior, suggest that Peter is rejecting God's grace by returning to the Law.

Galatians 3-4

The focus of chapters 1 & 2 was on Paul's credentials as an apostle and the issue of hypocrisy among leaders. In chapters 3 & 4 he turns his attention directly to a defense of the doctrine of justification by faith.

Galatians 3

In verses 1-5 Paul is both direct and stern with the Galatians referring to them as foolish. He wonders who has hypnotized them to reject the teaching of Christ crucified. Paul asks four questions:

- How did you receive the Holy Spirit? Was it from the Law or by faith? (v. 2)
- How will you be sanctified? How can you become a Christian by faith and then become spiritually mature by obeying the Law? (v. 3)
- Did you suffer in vain? Paul and Barnabas warned them they would suffer persecutions. (v. 4)
- How does God work miracles among you? Does God give you the Holy Spirit and then work His miracles the works of the Law or through faith? (v. 5)

In verses 6-9 Paul reminds the Galatians that Abraham believed God and it was credited to him for righteousness (Genesis 15:6). God planned in advance that Gentiles would be justified by faith, and even told Abraham nations will be blessed through (Genesis 12:3). So believers are justified by faith just as Abraham was.

Note: Paul is building his argument on the authority of specific Scripture and what God says; not what is simply his opinion.

In verses 10-14 Paul argues it is illogical to rely on the Law for justification.

- Everyone who relies on works of the Law is under a curse (Deuteronomy 27:26). No one is justified by the Law, the righteous live by faith (Habakkuk 2:4). (v. 10-11)

- Leviticus 18:5 states a person under the Law must follow the statutes and rules. Perfection is required under the law, so faith and Law do not go together. (v. 12)
- Christ has redeemed us from the Law (Deuteronomy 21:23). (v. 13)
- The purpose of Christ's work on the cross was to bring the blessing of Abraham to Jesus Christ so that we could receive the Holy Spirit by faith, not by works. (v. 14)

In verses 15-18 Paul illustrates the logic of the argument he has just made saying no one modifies or adds conditions to a human covenant already made.

Note: A Roman covenant or will could not be set aside easily. Paul's point is God's covenant with man is unchangeable (except by God).

Therefore, the Law given to Moses 430 years after Abraham, does not revoke the promise (covenant) God made with Abraham. The inheritance (eternal life) does not come from the Law, but through the promise God made to Abraham.

In verses 19-26 Paul focuses on the purpose of the Mosaic Law. Paul begins asking why the Law was given:


- The Law was given because of the transgressions (sins) of man.
- The Law was in effect until the Seed (the Messiah) came.
- The Law was put into effect through an angel as a mediator.
- A mediator is not for one, but God is one. The Abrahamic covenant was a promise given unilaterally by God, no mediator was necessary.
- If the Law had been able to save (give life) then righteousness would come through the Law. But Scripture says the whole world is a prisoner to sin (Deuteronomy 27:26).
- Paul compares the Law to a jail cell; before faith, we were confined by the Law. Next, Paul suggests the Law is like a guardian until Christ came so that we could be justified by grace.

Note: The word translated "guardian" was a slave who took care of a young person until they came of age and could care for themselves.

- But, since faith did come, we are no longer under the control of a guardian, because we are all sons of God through faith in Christ.

In verses 27-29 Paul switches from first person to second person directing these comments specifically to the Galatian believers. For all those who have been baptized into Christ, there is no Jew or Greek, no slave or free, all or female, we are all one in Christ.

- We have become sons of God.
- We are all one in Christ Jesus.

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- Believers are heirs of the promise to Abraham (salvation through faith).

Some additional thoughts for consideration:

- *Paul's focus in the letter to the Galatians is on the Judaizers who want to supplement the Gospel message of salvation by faith with the addition of works of the Law. Do we do this today by placing additional requirements on people after they accept Christ as their personal savior?*
- *The purpose of the Law was to make us aware of our sins, so we would recognize God's grace of salvation through faith in His Son, Jesus Christ.*

What I Noticed Today (Galatians 4-6)

Galatians 4

In verses 1-7 Paul continues his point about inheritance with an illustration of a child who is an heir.

- A child who is an heir is no different than a slave, even though he is the owner of property.

Note: A minor child might be an heir, but had no right to claim his inheritance until he reached the legal age (which varied depending on whether you were in Greek, Roman, or Jewish societies).

- The heir was under the control of a guardian and the property managed by a steward until the time set by the father.

Note: The point of the illustration is under the Mosaic Law the people were heirs but were under God's guardianship until the coming of Christ.

At the appointed time God sent His Son to redeem those under the Law, and for those who believe to receive the full rights as sons, adopted into God's family. Additionally, God sent the Holy Spirit into our hearts.


Note: We see again the Trinity involved in salvation: God the Father sent the Son who redeemed mankind from sin (through his life, death, and resurrection) and sent the Holy Spirit into our hearts.

As a result, we are no longer a slave to sin, but a son and heir.

Note: Paul switched from plural to singular in verse 7 to indicate this was specific to the individual.

In verses 8-20 Paul pleads with the Galatians not to return to the slavery of justification by works.

- Before they knew God they were enslaved to things they thought were gods but were not (Zeus, Hermes).
- But now that you know God and are known by Him, how can you turn back to the slavery again?
- Judaizers were convincing the Galatians to observe the special months, days, and seasons of the Mosaic calendar.
- The result was Paul was concerned his original work there in bringing the Galatians to Christ was lost.
- Paul exhorted the Galatians to become like him; free of the Law.

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- Paul asked what happened to this sense of blessing (joy) you had when you first believed.
 - The false teachers were full of zeal, but not for the people's good. They attempted to isolate the Galatians so they would only know what the false teachers told them.
 - Paul compares himself to a mother who suffers for her children; Paul suffers for the Galatians that they might become spiritually mature.

Note: Paul's reference to the Galatians "until Christ is formed in you" in verse 19 comes from the Greek word *morphothe*, which means "taking on the form of" and is where we get our word *metamorphosis*.

- In verses 21-31 Paul uses the story of Sarah and Hagar to illustrate the doctrine of justification by faith.
- The Galatians were listening to the Judaizers who wanted them to hold to the traditions of the Law, so Paul argued from the books of the Law (the Pentateuch), which showed justification was by faith not by works.
- Abraham had two sons, one son by a slave named Hagar, and one son by his wife Sarah.
- Ishmael, the son of Hagar, was born of an impulse of the flesh, while Isaac, the son of Sarah, was born out of a promise of God.
- The two women represent two covenants. Hagar's covenant is from Mt. Sinai (where God gave Moses the Law) which bears children into slavery. Hagar corresponds to present-day Jerusalem in slavery to the Law.
- Sarah's covenant was the Abrahamic covenant which brought forth children of freedom through the Messianic promise.
- Paul quotes Isaiah 54:1 suggesting Israel before the Babylon captivity was like a woman with a husband, while the barren woman was like Israel during the captivity. The woman bearing children represents Israel restored to the land after the exile.

Note: According to Jewish tradition the status of the mother impacted the status of the child. A slave bears children born into slavery, a free woman bears children into freedom.

In concluding the illustration Paul makes three comparisons:

- Galatians are like Isaac, children of the promise.
- Ishmael persecuted Isaac, just as the Judaizers persecuted the believers with their false gospel.
- When Sarah saw Ishmael mocking Isaac she asked Abraham to expel Hagar and Ishmael, otherwise, Ishmael might become an heir. In the same way, the Galatians should expel the Judaizers and those who accepted their false doctrines.

- Therefore, says Paul, we are not children of the slave, but of the free woman.

Galatians 5-6:10

In this section Paul provides a practical defense of Christian liberty: a life of freedom apart from the Law, walking by the spirit versus the flesh, and the believer's life of service.

Galatians 5


In verses 1-15 Paul describes the Christian's life of freedom apart from the Law:

- Summarizing all of chapter 4, Paul says Christ has liberated us to be free, therefore stand firm and do not submit to slavery of the law. Using the example of circumcision, Paul says as an act of obedience to the Law, it is of no value in terms of salvation.
- Turning to Law for salvation makes you a slave to the entire Law. If you are relying on any part of it for justification, you are obligated to all of its requirements and its curse.
- Anyone turning to the Law alienates themselves from Christ and has rejected God's grace. True believers realize righteousness come by faith alone, not by works of the flesh. For those in Christ, circumcision means nothing. Faith is expressed through love.
- Using the metaphor of a race, Paul describes the Galatians as runners who started off well, but the Judaizers caused them to stumble. Their false teaching was like yeast; a little yeast leavens the whole lump.
- Some may have accused Paul of still preaching circumcision (perhaps referring to Paul allowing Timothy to be circumcised, Acts 16:3). If that was the case asks Paul, why are you still persecuting me? Paul suggests the Judaizers who were saying this should go the whole way and get themselves castrated.
- Paul exhorts the believers not to use their freedom in Christ as an excuse to serve the flesh, rather they should serve each other through love, for the entire law is fulfilled in the commandment, "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Leviticus 19:18).

Note: In some pagan Asian religions the priests castrated themselves. Paul's point is that this has no more significance in terms of salvation than circumcision or any other work of the flesh.

In verses 16-26 Paul teaches the Galatians to walk in the Spirit to defeat the urges of the flesh.

- Walk by the Spirit and not by the flesh. They are opposed to each other. If you are led by the Spirit you are not under the Law.
- The works of the flesh are obvious, originating in man's sinful nature:



sexual immorality, moral impurity, promiscuity, idolatry, sorcery, hatreds, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and so on.

- The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against these things there is no law.

Note: The first three fruits of the Spirit (vs. 22-23) love, joy, and peace come from God. The second three patience, kindness, and goodness define our relationships with others. The third group of three faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control are the evidence of living by the Holy Spirit.

Since we belong to Jesus Christ we have crucified the flesh. We live by the Spirit and must follow the Spirit.

Galatians 6


In verses 1-10 Paul describes the attitude of a believer committed to living by the Spirit.

- Attitude toward sin. When a Christian is caught in sin, those who are spiritual should restore the brother with a gentle spirit.
- Attitude toward a burdened brother. The believer should help carry another's burden and thus fulfill the Law of Christ (love your neighbor as yourself, Galatians 5:14). Don't think you are better than someone else, rather take pride in what God has done in your life. Test yourself by carrying your own load.

Note: The word used for "burden" in verse 2 means a crushing burden that no one could carry without help. The word used for "pride" in verse 4 means personal exaltation, not sinful pride. The word used for "load" refers to a backpack that a soldier would carry. There are some "loads" we must carry ourselves, but Christ has assured us that His burdens are light.

- A believer should help support the pastors and teachers in the church. The principle of reciprocity is in view here: when a teacher shares the Word, the student should reciprocate by sharing resources with the teacher.
- Do not mock God by ignoring the law of the harvest: a man reaps what he sows. If a person sows to his sinful nature he will reap a sinful life. If you sow to the Spirit you will reap a harvest that will last forever; eternal life.
- Do not become discouraged sowing to the Spirit, because the harvest will come on God's timing.
- Therefore, we must all work for the good of all, especially for fellow believers.

In verses 10-18 Paul closes the letter to the Galatians summarizing the key points:

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- The Judaizers who insisted on adding Mosaic law as a requirement for salvation were only trying to make a good impression, they were afraid of being persecuted as believers, and they wanted to boast about how many Galatians they won to their point of view.
 - Paul said he would boast only in the Cross of the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - Circumcision and uncircumcision mean nothing. What matters is the new creation of a believer.

Paul closes asking for peace for believers and mercy for the Israel of God.

Note: The “Israel of God” referred to in verse 16 is most likely a reference to the remnant of Jewish believers in Israel.

Paul closes with a benediction asking for the grace of the Lord Jesus upon the Galatians.

Some thoughts for further consideration:

- *There is no freedom in the Law, only slavery. The freedom that comes from faith in Christ cannot exist alongside legalism.*
- *The law rejects God’s grace, it turns the believer into a debtor to sin, it hinders other believers, and it voids Christ’s work on the cross.*
- *The fruit of the Spirit should be prevalent and visible in the believer’s life. If you were put on trial for being a believer, would there be enough evidence to convict you?*