

**THE LETTER TO THE GALATIANS:
KEY ISSUES ADDRESSED BY THE APOSTLE PAUL
(Emphasis: How to Change to Be More Christ-like and Christ-centered)
Equipping Hour at Saving Grace Bible Church, Osprey, FL
(Lesson 1: 5/6/2018)**

GENERAL COURSE OUTLINE FOR OUR 8 LESSONS IN GALATIANS

Lesson 1 (Today) Topics:

- A. Purpose of Our Study
- B. A General Introduction to the Letter
- C. The Historical Background of the Letter: Answering Seven Questions
- D. Paul's Greeting to the Galatian Churches (Galatians 1:1-5)

Lessons 2-7 Planned Topics Include:

- Paul's Greeting and His Call to Apostleship (Galatians 1)
- Paul's Contacts at Jerusalem (Galatians 1)
- Defending the Gospel (Galatians 2)
- Apostle Paul Reproves the Apostle Peter, Barnabas and others (Galatians 2)
- Forsaking Reliance on the Law for Salvation (Galatians 2)
- Justification by Faith in Christ Alone for Salvation (Galatians 3)
- Sanctification not According to the Flesh (Galatians 3)
- The Purpose of the Mosaic Law (Galatians 3)
- Sons and Heirs According to the Promise (Galatians 3-4)
- Believers in Christ: Sons of God (Galatians 4)
- Freedom vs. Bondage for the Churches in Galatia (Galatians 4)
- The Distinction Between the Two Covenants (Galatians 4)
- Christian Liberty: Called to Love and Serve (Galatians 5)
- Love Fulfills the Law (Galatians 5)
- Walking in the Spirit: The Battle Between the Flesh and the Spirit (Galatians 5)
- The Deeds of the Flesh vs. The Fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5)
- Spiritual Restoration of a Sinning Brother: Pick/Hold/Build Him (Galatians 6)
- Sowing and Reaping (Galatians 6)
- Glorifying in the Flesh vs. Glorifying in the Cross (Galatians 6)

Lesson 8 Planned Topics Include:

- A Review/Summary of Lessons 1-7
- Further Personal Application: Practicing Biblical Principles Learned
- Where to Go From Here?

POINTS OF EMPHASIS: LESSON 1 (TDOAY'S LESSON)

A. PURPOSE OF OUR STUDY

To equip you to understand and address the key issues raised by the Apostle Paul to the Galatian churches. Why? So you may live more Christ-like and evidence Christ-centeredness flowing from your life and heart. In doing so, you may be better equipped to be able to teach others and present every person complete in Christ (Colossians 1:28-29).

In our study of this challenging letter to the churches of Galatia, you will face the following questions:

How do I live my life as a Christian every day?

What does it mean to live by faith as a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ?

What does it mean to fully trust God?
What does justification by faith mean?
What role does the Holy Spirit have in my daily life?
What is the historical context of the letter?
Who are the opponents in the letter?
What is the situation that Paul is addressing?
What opposition is Paul confronting?
Am I right with God? How will I stand before Him when I face Him for eternity?
How am I to personally apply the principles I am learning in this letter?
Am I ready to learn this letter academically and, most importantly, personally?

B. GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO THE LETTER

The letter to the churches of Galatia has been referred to as:

- The freedom of God's true sons
- The magna carta or charter of spiritual liberty
- The Christian's declaration of independence

The most pressing controversy in the early church was the relationship of new believers, primarily Gentiles from pagan spiritual backgrounds, to the Jewish laws and requirements.

C. The Historical Background of the Letter: Answering Seven Questions

Background/History on the Galatian People.

We gain a tremendous understanding and respect for the issues and principles raised in the letter by answering the following seven questions:

1. Who Authored the Letter to the Galatian Churches?
2. What is the Letter to the Galatian Churches?
3. Where were the Galatian Churches located?
4. When was the Letter to the Galatians written?
5. Who were the Galatians?
6. Who were the Judaizers and what did they teach?
7. Did the Galatian churches ultimately follow the Judaizers?

1. Who Authored the Letter to the Galatian Churches?

The Apostle Paul (Roman name), formerly known as Saul (Hebrew name).

- Philippians 3:3-6 : A concise/general synopsis of his background in Judaism.

2. What is the Letter to the Galatians?

It is a letter written by the Apostle Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, to the churches of Galatia (Galatians 1:2). These were believers not assembled in one local church, but in several local churches in various cities/towns in the Galatia. The churches include Pisidia Antioch (not in Syria), Lystra, Derbe, and Iconium (documented in Acts 13 and 14).

Not a detached theological treatise but a deeply personal letter written from the grieving heart of a godly man for his spiritual children, whose faith and Christian living were being undermined by false teachers. His heart cry to these believers in the churches, which he planted, is highlighted in Galatians 3:1-4 and 5:1.

3. Where were the Galatian churches located?

The key introductory issue in a study of the letter to the Galatians is the destination or intended audience. As to the location of the Galatian churches, note that respected Bible scholars take one of two positions: (i) North Galatian Theory and (ii) South Galatian Theory. There is much material written regarding whether

Paul's letter was written to those in northern or southern Galatia. So, "Does knowing who Paul was writing to affect how we read and apply it?" Not necessarily, but it does impact the way you look at the book of Galatians in relation to the Book of Acts.

(i) North Galatian Theory.

Until relatively recent times, biblical scholars assumed that this epistle was written for and sent to the churches in a relatively small geographical region known as Galatia, in north central section of Asia Minor (i.e., modern day Turkey). The four main arguments presented for the "North Galatian theory" are:

- a) The popular use of the term "Galatians" usually signified people in this geologic area.
- b) In the Book of Acts, Luke normally referred to geographical districts rather than specific Roman provinces.
- c) There is some similarity between the Galatians as Paul referred to them in this epistle and the Gallic inhabitants of northern Galatia.
- d) Paul traveled through this northern region during his second missionary journey (Acts 16:6-8), which would date the letter after that trip (i.e., between A.D. 54- 57).

(ii) South Galatian Theory. Scholars holding to this theory maintain that these local churches were located in the cities of Pisidia Antioch (not in Syria), Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe, which were in the political province of Galatia, which was a very large geographical area. This is the more common view held today by most biblical scholars and historians, which purports that Paul wrote to the churches located in the Roman province of Galatia that he founded on his first missionary journey (cf. Acts 13:38-39, 46, 48; 14:3, 8-10) which took place 44 A.D. – 46 A.D.

The main support for this "South Galatian theory" include:

- a) Acts 16:6 and 18:23 offer no support to the theory that Paul made a trip to northern provincial Galatia.
- b) There is no specific information about the northern Galatian churches in Acts.
- c) The geographic isolation of the North Galatia district makes a visit by Paul improbable.
- d) Paul usually referred to provincial titles in his writings.
- e) The name "Galatians" was very appropriate for the large southern area.
- f) The mention of Barnabas in Galatians 2 suggests that the Galatians had met him, which would have been during the first missionary journey.
- g) The absence of a North Galatian representative in the collection delegation referred to in I Corinthians 16:1 implies that it was not an evangelized area.
- h) The influence of the Judaizers was extensive in South Galatia.

John MacArthur's Summary:

Because neither Acts nor Galatians mentions any cities or people from northern (ethnic) Galatia, it is reasonable to believe that Paul addressed this epistle to churches located in the southern part of the Roman province, but outside of the ethnic Galatian region. Acts records the founding of such churches at Pisidian Antioch (13:14–50), Iconium (13:51–14:7; cf. 16:2), Lystra (14:8–19; cf. 16:2), and Derbe (14:20, 21; cf. 16:1).

4. When was the Letter to the Galatian Churches Written?

The most crucial factor in dating the letter is the relationship between the journey of Paul to Jerusalem (Galatians 2:1) and the meeting of the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:1ff). If the decision of the Council in Acts 15 had been common knowledge when the letter to the Galatians was written, Paul surely would have used the council's decision in defense of Gentile freedom and especially in his rebuke of Peter (Galatians 2:11-13). Be advised that very outstanding biblical scholars and commentators differ on the date the letter was written based on the position they take regarding the audience – South Galatian churches.

5. Who were the Galatians?

- It was the Apostle Paul's practice to establish groups of churches around the capitals of the Roman provinces. Thus, he made the provincial capitals of Psidian, Corinth, and Ephesus, the centers of church life.

- The southern Galatian area (i.e., larger geography), where Paul planted these churches during his first missionary journey, also had more passable transportation routes/roadways in comparison to the northern area of Galatia, which was more rural.

6. Who were the Judaizers and what did they teach?

The word *Judaizer* comes from a Greek verb meaning “to live according to Jewish customs. The Bible is clear that the attempt to add human works to God’s grace overlooks the very meaning of *grace*, which is “undeserved blessing.” See Galatians 5:1, 13.

7. Did the Galatian churches ultimately follow the Judaizers?

“There is no record that this occurred, although there is no record to the contrary. The fact that the letter has been preserved, however, would seem to indicate that the Galatian congregations treasured it, even though it severely confronted and censured them. Also, for the benefit of other congregations, in humility and repentance, they were willing to have the letter copied and distributed abroad. There is good reason, then, to believe that Paul’s strong response had its intended effect.” -- Jay E. Adams

D. Paul’s Greeting to the Galatian Churches (Galatians 1:1-5)

o Verse 1: The letter opens with the author’s name and the designation of his office: An Apostle, which identifies his position and authority but no commendation for the recipients of the letter.

o Paul proceeds, accordingly, to an emphatic vindication of his divine commission, *not from men, neither through man*. He raises here a twofold issue, evidently corresponding to two specific points in his qualifications for the office, which his adversaries had on their side selected for attack.

o Verse 2: No specific name is mentioned: neither Timothy, Barnabas, nor Silas, nor any other companion of Paul known to the Galatians was with him when he wrote. The phrase is akin to Philippians 4:21)..

o There were four churches in the cities of Southern Galatia were bound together by the great imperial highway that ran through them, which provided opportunities for periodic contact.

o Verse 3: The apostolic blessing summed up in the comprehensive words *grace and peace*.

o Verse 4: The sin offerings of the Law were designated in Hebrews 10:6,8, were equally applicable with reference to Christ’s offering of Himself for our sins of His elect or chosen ones (see also 1 Peter 3:18).

o gave himself—(see also Galatians 2:20); unto death, as an offering.

o for our sins—which condemned and enslaved us to the present evil world (see also Romans 6:16).

o deliver us from this—Greek, "out of the,". The Father and Son are each said to "deliver us" (Colossians 1:13); the Son, not the Father, gave Himself for us; he made us citizens of a heaven (Philippians 3:20).

o world—Greek, "age"; system or course of the world, regarded from a religious point of view.

o according to the will of God and our Father. Without human merit; only His sovereign will and plan.

Verse 5:

be glory—rather, as Greek, "be the glory";

HELPFUL RESOURCES FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY ON THE LETTER TO THE GALATIANS

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