

From the Garden to Glory

Galatians

Author: Paul the Apostle

Written to: The churches in the area of Galatia

Timeline: c. 48 - 56 A.D. written from Corinth during Paul's third missionary journey

Theme: Justification by Faith

Purpose of writing: Paul showed the believers freedom from the bondage of the Law. He warned against a reversion to Judaism.

Introduction:

The Apostle Paul preached the gospel in Asia Minor during his early missionary journeys and many people believed in the Lord Jesus and were saved. Several churches were formed in Galatia. After Paul had left the area false teachers entered the churches. These people were called "Judaizers" because they taught that salvation was by faith in Christ **plus** keeping the Law. They mixed Christianity with Judaism, grace and law, Christ and Moses.

Paul wrote to refute their teaching, to magnify God's grace in salvation, and to show the freedom God gives His people by grace. Warren Wiersbe said, "Galatians is God's strongest word against legalism. The flesh loves to do things religious - celebrate holy days, practice rituals, attempt to do good works for God...all of these are swept away in Galatians and replaced by the glorious liberty the believer has through faith in Christ."

As we begin our study of the book of Galatians consider the following questions and write your responses:

1. Paul wrote this epistle to several churches in the area of Galatia. His purpose was to address a problem that had infected the body of

Christ in many of the churches in this large region. What is one problem which is *infecting* many churches in our country today?

2. In the epistle to the Galatians Paul launched a strong attack against the *gospel of works*. What are some dangers of this type of teaching?
3. A major theme that runs through the epistle to the Galatians is that of grace. Define the word *grace*.

Only One Gospel

Read Galatians 1:1-24

1. Read verses 1-2 and 11-12. Paul's apostleship had been challenged by the false teachers. They questioned his authority because he had been ordained directly by Jesus Christ and not by men (see Acts 9:1-22). When has someone questioned your God-given authority? How did you react?
2. Paul spoke of grace *and* peace in verse 3. Grace always precedes peace in his letters because one must first experience God's grace in order to experience His peace. How has experiencing the grace of God caused *you* to experience the peace of God?
3. Paul taught that *the grace of God* was the basis for man's righteousness, for his right standing before a holy God. The false teachers were attempting to put the Galatians under the yoke of the law, teaching that *man's works* made him righteous. What might have drawn the Galatians (or might draw people today) to a gospel of righteousness based on works?

Justified by Faith

Read Galatians 2:1-21

1. Paul spoke of *liberty* and *bondage* in verses 4-5. Look up these words in a dictionary and write the definitions. How have you found *liberty* in Christ? From what *bondage* has your relationship with Him freed you?
 - liberty:
 - bondage:
2. In verse 16 Paul declared three times that salvation is found only through faith in Christ and not by the law. Write out this verse. In your own words explain what this means.
3. Meditate on verse 20. What does this verse mean? How is this concept manifested in your daily life? Be specific.

Freedom From Legalism

Read Galatians 3:1-29

1. Read verses 1-4. The word *foolish* in these verses means lack of obedience rather than lack of intelligence. Although they would never say it, many Christians live as though their salvation is through the crucified Christ *and* keeping some set of rules. Today we call this legalism. Paul said that this belief was *foolishness*. Ask the Lord to search your heart for any areas of legalism. Make a note of anything He reveals.
2. Look closely at verse 11. It has been said that Martin Luther crawled for miles on his knees, beat his body with whips and fasted for weeks

at a time in his desire to grow closer to God, but it was all futile. Then one day as he read Galatians 3:11, and he understood that the Christian experience is not a matter of, "do, do, do", rather it is a matter of "DONE!" Jesus did it *all*. How do you *live by faith* on a daily basis, keeping the focus on the fact that *Jesus did it all*?

3. The word *redeemed* in verse 13 was often used in the context of buying a debtor's or slave's freedom. Christ's death on the cross was the satisfying payment for sin. Paul's emphasis in this section of his letter was what *God* had done for them (and us). The church in Galatia was mistaken as they were putting the emphasis on what *they* should do for God. How do you avoid making this same mistake in your own life?

Law and Grace

Read Galatians 4:1-31

1. Meditate on verses 6-7 today. The word *Abba* was a term of endearment used by young children when speaking of their fathers; it is similar to our word *Daddy*. The Holy Spirit confirms our adoption as children and heirs of God through Christ. What does it mean to you to be a child and heir of God?

2. Read verses 8-11. It seems that the Galatian believers thought that they could earn God's favor by observing rituals, festivals and ceremonies. Are there any things that you do because you think it will earn God's favor? Comment on this saying, "There is nothing you can do to make God love you less and there is nothing you can do to make God love you more."

3. Paul only used the phrase *my little children* once in his epistles, here in verse 19. Why do you think this issue of law and grace was so dear to his heart? Is it dear to your heart? Why or why not?

Stand Fast in Christian Liberty

Read Galatians 5:1-15

1. Read verse 1. How do you do each of the following:
 - Stand fast in the liberty by which Christ has made you free
 - Keep from being entangled again in the yoke of bondage
2. How could Christian liberty be used as an opportunity for the flesh (verse 13)? How do you enjoy your liberty in Christ without allowing the liberty to become a license to sin?
3. Read verse 14. How is all the law fulfilled? What does this mean? What is one practical thing that you can do to fulfill this instruction?

Flesh versus Spirit

Read Galatians 5:16-26

1. Write out verse 16. The Greek word for *walk* means a habitual lifestyle or continuous action; it implies a life of progress. How do you *walk in the Spirit*? How has this protected you from *fulfilling the lust of the flesh*?

2. Look at verses 19-21. What are the *works of the flesh*? What do these verses say about those who practice them?

3. Define each aspect of the fruit of the Spirit found in verses 22-23. In which of these areas have you seen the most growth in your Christian life? In which area are you the weakest?
 - love
 - joy
 - peace
 - longsuffering
 - kindness
 - goodness
 - faithfulness
 - gentleness
 - self-control

Sowing and Reaping

Read Galatians 6:1-18

1. Read verse 1. The word translated *restore* is a medical term which means to mend or set a broken bone. As Christians we are to be aware of those who are struggling and help in their healing process so that they can *walk spiritually* again. What would you do to restore a fellow believer *in the spirit of gentleness*? What does it mean to *consider yourself lest you be tempted*? How would you do this?

2. Write out verse 2. What does it mean to *bear one another's burdens*? How do you do this?

3. Look at verses 7-10. The principle of sowing and reaping would have been understood easily in this agrarian society. How have you experienced the truth of this principle in your own life? Why do you think this principle is coupled with the words, *Do not be deceived, God is not mocked* in this verse?

Summary

As you conclude your study of the book of Galatians consider the following questions and write your answers:

1. What is the most significant thing that you have learned from your study about the Lord, His character, or His attributes? How does this encourage you? Take a few moments to thank and praise the Lord for the things that you learned about Him.

2. What is the most important lesson or new insight that you have learned from your study of this book? How can you apply this lesson in your life this week?