

Galatians: Freedom In Christ

Week 1: Introduction

Look Around

- Have you ever found yourself searching for answers to questions about your faith? If so, where do you look for information? Have you ever been led astray from answers you found?

Look at the Text – Key Concepts

- **Gentile** – The term Gentile describes a person of non-Jewish heritage.
- **Gospel** – A gospel is an announcement of good news. In particular, the gospel is the announcement that Jesus' life, death, and resurrection has brought about salvation for Israel and the world. When the word Gospel is capitalized, it may refer to one of the four New Testament narrative accounts of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection.
- **Justification** – Justification is a declaration from God that you are innocent of sin. Instead, you are in right standing (righteous) before Him. God the judge grants you freedom instead of a condemnation. Justification is God's declaration about the status of the relationship between God and an individual, not any change within the individual. In other words, justification doesn't make anyone holy; it simply declares us not guilty before God and, therefore, treated as holy.
- **The Law** – The Mosaic Law refers to the laws God gave Moses on Mount Sinai after releasing the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. They include the Ten Commandments, ordinances for living in society, and regulations for worship (requirements for priests, sacrifices, feasts, and the temple). The Bible gives at least four reasons God gave the

Mosaic Law to His people: for their own good, to reveal Himself to them, to set them apart in order to reveal Himself to others, and to reveal humanity's need for a savior.

- **Righteousness** – righteousness embodies the character, behavior, and status appropriate for the covenant relationship between God and humanity. God demonstrates righteousness by being faithful to his promises. Humanity expresses righteousness in and through loyal obedience to God's commands.

Author

The letter to the Galatians was written by the apostle Paul. Before his conversion, Paul was a zealous Jew who passionately persecuted and imprisoned Christians. After an encounter with Jesus on the Damascus Road (Acts 9:1 - 31), Paul committed his life to spreading the gospel to Gentiles. Over the course of his life, Paul made many missionary trips where he planted churches throughout Europe and Asia Minor. In his first missionary journey, Paul made an unexpected stop in the Roman province of Galatia where he planted many churches.

Date

It is believed that Paul wrote this letter shortly after his first missionary trip sometime between AD 48 or 49, making it the first of Paul's letters.

Audience

Galatians is written to the Gentile believers in the "churches of Galatia" (Gal 1:2).

Circumstance

After accepting the gospel message preached by Paul, the churches of Galatia were infiltrated by rival missionaries who were teaching a "different gospel" (Gal 1:6). These rival teachers were Jewish-Christians who believed in Christ but had not yet released their grip on their

Jewish roots. The rival teachers still believed that their identity as the people of God was secured by following The Law. Because they continued to believe that salvation was unattainable without observance of The Law, the rival teachers heavily promoted the practices of circumcision, observing food laws, and Jewish rituals of the sacred Jewish calendar.

The argument of the rival teachers was grounded in Genesis 12:1-4 and 17:1-22 where Abraham was promised to be the "father of many nations" whose descendants would inherit the promises of God. The promise made between God, Abraham, and Abraham's descendants was sealed by the act of circumcision (Genesis 17:9-11). The rival teachers argued that for Gentiles to also become descendants of Abraham who inherited the promises of God, they must also be circumcised and follow the Law.

Paul uses the letter to the Galatians to combat the argument of the rival teachers. As he did so, he reminded Galatians that the work of Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit are all that is needed to be justified and to live a righteous life before God. Paul's top priority is to dismantle the teachings of the rival teachers before any more harm is done to the theology or practices of the Galatian congregations.

Major Themes

- Paul's apostleship and gospel comes directly from God through Christ
- Faith and freedom are centered in Christ
- The Holy Spirit produces the righteousness The Law could not

Course Outline

- Week 2: A Different Gospel? (Galatians 1:1 - 9)
- Week 3: Under Whose Authority? (Galatians 1:10 – 2:10)
- Week 4: A Gospel for Everyone (Galatians 2:11 - 21)
- Week 5: Faith Alone! (Galatians 3:1 - 14)
- Week 6: The Purpose of the Law (Galatians 3:15 - 25)

- Week 7: Children of God (Galatians 3:26 - 4:7)
- Week 8: Who Are You Following? (Galatians 4:8 - 20)
- Week 9: Slavery or Freedom? (Galatians 4:21 - 31)
- Week 10: Spirit vs Flesh (Galatians 5:1 - 15)
- Week 11: Fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:16 - 26)
- Week 12: A Life of Grace (Galatians 6:1 - 18)

How to Use this Study

I designed this study to give you tools for digging deeper into God's Word for yourself! Each week you will find five elements that will help you sharpen your focus on God's Word:

- **Look Around**

This section asks you to "look around" at everyday circumstances in your life that parallel biblical events in each lesson. Doing so allows for a smooth transition as you apply the timeless lessons of Scripture directly to your life today.

- **Look at the Text – Context**

This section provides the situation and historical context for each lesson.

- **Look at the Text – Key Concepts**

This section helps you gain the perspective of the original readers. It defines historical or theological terms that the original hearers already understood. These definitions will enable you to hear the sermon as the original congregation heard it.

- **Look at the Text – Observation & Interpretation**

The section will help you sharpen your Bible study and interpretation skills. Each lesson provides valuable historical, social, and biblical context to aid in unlocking the passage's meaning. Next, the observation questions draw your attention to significant portions of the text that you might have overlooked in a casual reading of the passage. Finally, the interpretation questions help you decipher what the author might have wanted the congregation to understand from his message.

- **Look at God**

This section allows you to meditate on what you know and believe about Father, Son, and Holy Spirit based on each lesson. Thought-provoking questions prompt you to consider how your beliefs about God affect your relationship with God.

- **Look at Me**

Finally, we end with application. No Bible Study should leave you unchanged! In this section, you will apply God's Word directly to your life. How will you respond to God's life-changing Word?

This study will work best if you come to class prepared in the following ways:

- First, pray and ask the Holy Spirit to guide you in your study time.
- Then, read the passage for the week.
- Answer the questions in each section as fully as possible. Don't worry if you don't have an answer to every question. Getting the answers right isn't the goal. Instead, sitting with Scripture and allowing the Holy Spirit to guide you as you study is most important.
- Come to class ready to discuss how God spoke to you through this study!