

# THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

FEBRUARY 25TH, 2024 // GALATIANS

## PAUL'S LETTER TO THE GALATIANS INTRODUCTION

Written to a number of churches in Galatia by Paul, where he traveled during one of his missionary journeys (Acts 13–14).

- Written from a place of great care but also great frustration because Jewish Christians were trying to get all non-Jews to conform to the practices or laws of the Torah to become a part of the family of God.

## DATE OF THE LETTER TO THE GALATIANS

Galatia, a Roman province, is a region in modern Turkey. The term Galatians was used ethnically and politically, and since it is uncertain which is used here, there is debate on the exact date of the Epistle being written.

- Most scholars date the writing to the late 40's or early 50's, making Paul a Christian for about 15 years.

## WHO IS PAUL?

Paul was converted on the Damascus Road by the resurrected Christ (Acts 9:1–19) around AD 35.

- Paul was a Jew with Roman citizenship. He was a highly educated religious leader (Pharisee) who persecuted early followers of Christ before his conversion. Paul would be imprisoned in Rome and killed during the reign of Nero in AD 68.

## SALUTATION (GALATIANS 1:1–5)

### CHOSEN BY JESUS AND GOD THE FATHER

Paul broke from his customary opening of praise to defend apostolic authority, showing he was not chosen by man or through man, but **his message originated with God**.

- Paul didn't defend his calling to gain glory or favor from people. However, people needed to know **the words he spoke came directly from God and were His words**.

### "PAUL, AN APOSTLE..."

Some in Galatia said that Paul was not a genuine apostle because he was not one of the twelve who walked with Christ during His earthly ministry. However, the resurrected Christ called him directly.

- Whether or not Paul's name is included in the twelve apostles of the Lamb (Revelation 21:14), it cannot be argued that **Paul helped lay the foundation for the church** (Ephesians 2:20).

### "TO THE CHURCHES OF GALATIA."

During his first missionary Journey (Acts 13:13–14:23), Paul was in the southern part of Galatia and visited the northern parts during his second (Acts 16:6) and third missionary journeys (Acts 18:23).

- It is not known which region Paul was writing to, but he intended his letter to be read to all the churches at that time, and **his letter still has something to say to every Christian today**.

## THE GOOD NEWS

Paul closed his greeting in typical fashion, bringing the focus to the **grace and peace we receive from God the Father**.

- Through the grace of God, His unmerited favor, we are offered salvation (Ephesians 2:8–9). **Those who believe in Christ receive salvation, which leads to peace with God**.

## THE CENTRALITY OF THE CROSS

Paul reminds us of the completed work of the cross, where Jesus **"gave himself for our sins to rescue us from this present evil age."**

- **We are sent into this world, and we will not be rescued from the presence of this present evil age until we go to be with Jesus, but we are rescued from the power of the present evil age now** (John 17)!

## PAUL'S REASON FOR WRITING (GALATIANS 1:6–9)

### SKIPPING THE PLEASANTRIES

Paul wrote to the Galatian churches because of how quickly they had deserted the true gospel for an illegitimate one.

- There was no "different" gospel, as some claimed, because truth is not relative. **This false gospel brought to the Galatians was illegitimate, troublesome, and a distortion of the true gospel**.

### SUBTLE CHANGES CREATE COMPLETE DISTORTION

This "different" gospel brought to the Galatians was a blend of law and grace, and the truth was distorted, creating a works-based gospel to earn salvation, which is contrary to the message of grace.

- This subtle twist of truth is how the enemy operates, **"for Satan disguises himself as an angel of light"** (2 Corinthians 11:14).

## WHY WOULD SOMEONE DISTORT THE GOSPEL?

The true gospel is in opposition to human nature. **The gospel opposes our pride**. It tells us we are incapable of saving ourselves and we need a Savior. **The gospel opposes our wisdom and knowledge**. It tells us that God became flesh and died a humiliating death to defy our understanding and rise from the dead in a glorious new body.

## IF A GOSPEL IS FALSE, IT WILL NOT SAVE THE LOST

Paul said that anyone, whether himself or an angel, who brings a false gospel should be accursed. Paul didn't just warn the Galatians not to listen to these people who brought a false gospel but repeated again that they should be cursed.

- Paul's harshness was because **this false gospel could not save the lost**.

## DEFENDING HIS APOSTLESHIP (GALATIANS 1:10–24)

### GOD'S MESSAGE IS UNCHANGING

Paul's critics claimed he watered down the gospel by removing the law so that it was more accessible to Gentiles.

- Paul did not remove the law as grounds for salvation and Christian maturity to gain popularity among the Gentiles but only to please God. **He refused to change his message to please man**.

### PERSECUTOR OF CHRIST TO 'BOND-SERVANT'

We all have received the gospel through someone else (Romans 10:14–15), but Paul received it through direct revelation on the road to Damascus.

- **"The 'bond-servant' of Christ is not free to offer or withhold his service; his life is not his own, but belongs entirely to his Lord"** (John Duncan).

### GOD CALLED PAUL THROUGH HIS GRACE

God called when it pleased Him but not because He saw something in Paul that pleased Him.

- Paul's language before Christ communicates all the things he had done (*I persecuted...I advanced...I was extremely zealous*), but after his conversion, **Paul's emphasis was on what God had done** (*God, who set me apart...called me...revealed His Son in me*).

### DIVINE REVELATION

Paul makes the point that the gospel he preached was not from man but was given to him by God before he met any of the disciples.

- Paul's message was true because it really came from God. **Did the message we receive come from God? The world does not need the good advice and wisdom of men, it needs a revelation from God**.

### FAITH ALONE

- "For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift—not from works, so that no one can boast" (**Ephesians 2:8–9**).
- We are not saved *by our works*, but we are not saved *from our works*. **A life saved should be marked by good works** (**James 2:18; 2:26**).

### CHRIST ALONE

- Jesus is enough. His sacrifice is sufficient to save us, and we do not follow a "Jesus and..." gospel. **We are saved by the work of Christ alone when we receive our Savior by faith** (John 1:12).
- We do not add to or take away from the gospel to make it more palatable. **To remove any part of the gospel is to desert it entirely**.