

Lesson 1: Overview of the Galatians Region & Church

(Much of the information in this lesson was gleaned from a series of online resources.)

The Epistle to the Galatians is a letter from the apostle Paul to a number of early Christian communities in the region of Asia Minor known as the Roman province of Galatia. **Paul is principally concerned with the controversy surrounding Gentile Christians who were being taught that the Law of Moses was binding.** Paul teaches on this subject with some of his strongest language.

The central dispute in the letter concerns whether gentiles should also follow the practices of the Old (Jewish) law in addition to Christianity. **The “Jerusalem Council” met in Acts chapter 15 due to this controversy (around 48-49 AD); these Jewish church leaders, including Peter and James, confirmed what Paul taught in Galatians.** It is logical to assume that if Paul had written them afterwards, he would have put this decision front and center in his arguments. Since Paul evangelized southern Galatia in 47 or 48 AD, the book was likely written shortly before he left for Jerusalem to meet with the apostles and James the elder in either 48 or 49 AD.

Paul's letter is addressed "to the churches of Galatia". The Roman province of Galatia was in central Asia Minor, which had been settled by immigrant Celts in the 270s BC and still retained Gaul-ish features of culture and language when Paul arrived almost 300 years later (more details on pages 4-5). Acts records Paul traveling to the "region of Galatia and Phrygia", Phrygia lies immediately west of Galatia.

We first read of Paul (and the people accompanying him, which included Barnabas) entering the region in Acts 13:14. “But when they departed from Perga, they came to

Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and sat down. And after reading of the Law and the Prophets” [they would have read the Hebrew texts easily, proving that they were pious Jews!], “the rulers of the synagogue sent to them, saying ‘Men and brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say on.’” The text relates that Paul stood up and spoke at length about Jewish history, about John the Baptist and Christ. It also relates that on the next Sabbath” almost the whole city came together to hear the word of God”, which made most of the Jews (but not all!) jealous. Paul and Barnabas were expelled shortly thereafter, moving on to the next Galatian city—Iconium.

Many in Iconium believed Paul's message, but, when the city became divided, they had to flee to Lystra. In Lystra Paul heals a well-known cripple (from birth) who was known in the city in a most dramatic manner, causing many to call Paul (in their Celtic language, the scripture records) Hermes and Zeus! But shortly after they stopped the people from sacrificing to them, the Jews from Antioch Pisidia and Iconium stirred up a crowd, and they stoned Paul, leaving him for dead. (But read on—the story has a happy ending.)

Paul and Barnabas continued preaching in Iconium (don't you know that got their attention, after he was supposedly stoned to death!) making many disciples. They then returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, “strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, ‘We must through



many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.' So, when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed." (Acts 14:21-23)

Let me paint a possible or even probable scenario: You live in one of these towns and you hear about some strangers that began teaching some powerful things about a man that they claim to be the Jewish Messiah (whom they claimed had been raised from the dead after being crucified by the Romans). One of them heals a crippled man that everyone knew had never walked in his entire life. (Perhaps you knew who.) But the Jews hate this teacher; they stir up a crowd and stone him to death. But as he lays there dead, his friends pray over him until he gets back up and keeps right on teaching. *Can you imagine the stir and buzz this would have created?*

We assume that these Galatian churches were composed of 1) Jews who had been converted to Christ, 2) Gentile proselytes who had been converted from paganism to Judaism and now to Christianity, and 3) Gentile converts (which soon became the largest group). Paul and Barnabas leave; Acts 15:1 says, "And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren (including Galatia, apparently!): "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved". It further records that Paul and Barnabas had "no small dissention and dispute with them" (they were no longer in Galatia) and that it was agreed that the matter would be settled by the apostles and elders at Jerusalem.

Themes and Overall Teachings of the Book of Galatians

Paul, being directed by the holy spirit, pointed out (in very strong language) that this teaching they were receiving from these Jewish teachers was a "different gospel" from what He and Barnabas had taught them.

Who were these false teachers? They were Jewish Christians (or perhaps Jewish proselytes) who taught that in order for these new converts to belong to the People of God, they must be subject to some or all of the Jewish Law (which is why they are often called "Judaizers"). It would appear, from Paul's response, that they cited the example of Abraham, who was circumcised as a mark of receiving the covenant blessings. They also questioned Paul's authority as an apostle.

In the book, Paul discusses his life before Christ, Christ selecting him to serve as His apostle, and his early ministry, including interactions with other apostles in Jerusalem. This is the most extended discussion of Paul's past that we find in the New Testament. This narrative serves as Paul's defense of his apostolic authority, but it also teaches about the nature of the gospel and the Galatians' own situation.

In Chapter 3, he exhorts them to stand fast in the faith as it is in Jesus. Paul draws upon the figure of Abraham and the priority of his faith to the covenant of circumcision. **Paul explains that the law was introduced as a temporary measure, one that is no longer efficacious now that Christ, the seed of Abraham, has come.** Chapter 4 then concludes with a summary of the topics discussed and the benediction, followed by teaching about the right use of their Christian freedom.

In the conclusion of the epistle, Paul wrote, "See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand." Some have postulated that Paul's large letters are owed to his poor eyesight, his deformed hands, or to other physical afflictions. Classics scholar Steve Reece has compared similar autographic subscriptions in thousands of Greek, Roman, and Jewish letters of this period and observes that large letters are a normal feature when senders of letters, regardless of their education, take the pen and add a few words of greeting in their own hands.

The Roman Province of Galatia & The Celtic Peoples of Galatia

From UNRV.COM, a scholarly discussion web forum about ancient Rome (with additional notes from Ross in brackets)

<https://www.unrv.com/provinces/galatia.php>

The territory in modern central Turkey known as Galatia was an oddity in the eastern world [during the Roman empire]. An area in the highlands of central Anatolia (now Turkey), it was bounded on the north by Bithynia and Paphlagonia, on the east by Pontus, on the south by Lycaonia and Cappadocia, and on the west by the remainder of Phrygia. It was originally home of the ancient civilization of the Hittites but came to be occupied by Gallic Celts [Gauls] in the 3rd century BC, hence Galatia, or "Gallia of the East."³

[The Greeks, then Romans, called these people "Gauls" or "Gals". In their own language, they called themselves "Celts". The two terms are interchangeable. Modern-day Celts include the peoples of Ireland and Scotland, and their "Gaelic" language used today is a descendant of one of the many ancient Celtic languages. The conquest of Gaul, modern-day France and Germany, was claimed by Julius Caesar around 57 BC.]

The Gauls had migrated [from central Europe] east and south during the reign of Alexander the Great in the late 4th century BC, but he held them off and pushed them back towards the Danube. A couple of generation later, around 280 BC, [three tribes of] the Gauls were on the move again, first settling in Thracia and then continuing south into Macedonia and Greece.

Led by a second 'Brennus' (the first being the Brennus who sacked Rome in 390 BC), the Gauls stormed through Macedonia and Greece, sacking Delphi and causing a great deal of disorder before being stopped at the Dardanelles. Brennus was killed and the Gauls were forced to look for new opportunities elsewhere. As luck would have it, King Nicomedes I of Bithynia was deeply embroiled in a dynastic struggle with his brother.

The homeless Celts would prove to be the perfect mercenaries accepting an invitation to join Nicomedes. They crossed the straights from Thracia to Asia Minor with upwards of 20,000 people, including women and children, and fell into a role as mercenary warriors that they would relish for the next couple of centuries.

Helping establish Nicomedes on the Bithynian throne, the Gauls were awarded with living space on the Anatolian plateau. There, they continued to live in their tribal lifestyle, essentially established in three separate tribes. The central part of Galatia belonged to a tribe known as the Tectosages, who established a capitol at Ancyra (which bears the name Ankara, Celtic for Anchor, today). In the west, the Tolistobolii took up residence, with their capital at Pressinus. In the East, the Trocmi established themselves at Tavium. They were loosely organized (as was Celtic custom). Despite this, they still managed to establish a national council which brought together representatives of each tribe to deal with issues that affected the community as a whole.

Much like their Hittite predecessors, the Gauls found that the central plateau was a perfect launching point for raids on their surrounding neighbors. As fierce warriors, they proved to be a constant source of trouble in the region, overrunning their former hosts in Bithynia and plundering all around them with little resistance. Between 235 and 225 BC, however, King Attalus of Pergamum was finally able to hold the Gauls in check, inflicting several defeats on them but conceding their right to occupy Galatia. Though the Gauls were weakened, they continued to be a constant source of aggravation.

Real Roman contact with Galatia came during the Syrian War against Antiochus. With the death of Attalus in Pergamum, circa 197 BC, raids west into Asia Minor began anew, and the Gauls soon found themselves as

³ For more information about the Gauls, who were in control of most of central Europe, and who are the forebearers or most of today's central Europeans: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gauls>

mercenary allies of the Syrian king. Rome, however, being allied to Pergamum, was forced to finally take matters into their own hands, launching an expedition under Ca. Manlius Vulso in 189 BC. His invasion, and the war against Antiochus (led by Scipio Africanus and his brother Gnaeus) were wildly successful and Roman influence spread deeply into the east.

The Galatians soon fell under the sway of the great Roman enemy, Mithridates. In the early to mid 1st century BC, the Celts were under the thumb of Pontus, but remained surprisingly loyal to Rome. During the campaigns of both Sulla, and later Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus [whom we call “Pompey⁴” today], the Celts proved formidable allies in the cause. With Pompey's victory, the Galatians were organized as a client state in 64 BC. Despite the existence and apparent recognition of Celtic custom by Pompey, the three-tribe system was soon uprooted by the efforts of one chief, Deiotarus.

The Romans were soon occupied with their own internal political turmoil, the war in Gaul under Caesar, and the civil war that followed. The Galatians, despite their political and government shift remained mostly quiet, and the Romans formally recognized Deiotarus as the Galatian King.

This political situation remained in effect until after the victory of Octavian in the second civil war, and his ascension as Augustus [Caesar]. In 25 BC, the third Galatian king, Amyntas died, and Augustus formally incorporated Galatia into an official Roman province. From that point on, Galatia remained a provincial backwater, with little economic exploitation or political dissent of any kind. The Galatians remained loyal to the empire throughout its history.

Contributing to this loyalty, the Celts were inundated with Hellenistic culture, and later writers referred to the inhabitants as Gallo-Graeci. Celtic culture continued to flourish as well, and the people were still known to speak a Celtic tongue similar to that of the Gallic Treveri as late as the 5th century AD. However, this culture had all but faded away by the time the Seljuks took the region from the Byzantines in the 11th century AD.

Galatia became an early stronghold for the Christian church. The Apostle Paul visited the province around 47 or 48 AD and later wrote his Epistle to the Galatians. The Celts apparently took to his teaching in earnest⁵ and the early church spread and flourished.

⁴ Pompey, 106 BC – 48 BC, was one of Rome’s greatest statesmen and generals. He conquered Judea in 63 BC as a part of his greater Syrian campaign. It is worth knowing, at least in general terms, more about the man:

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pompey>

⁵ The Galatian people seemed to have an interest in improving themselves both spiritually and economically. They had adopted Greek, and later Roman culture, government and teachings because they recognized that they were superior to their own. They had remained loyal to Rome even when they were tempted to rebel during Rome’s early days. In Acts, virtually the entire city came to hear Paul speak on the second sabbath at the synagogue in Acts 13-14. Perhaps some of them may have been a little too quick to adapt the “additional” teachings of the Judaizing teachers before Paul put a stop to it thru the teachings of the book of Galatians.

Questions from Lesson One (the Galatian church overview)

Read the above pages as well as Acts 11:19-25 and Acts 15:1-34 and answer the following questions:

1. Based on what you've read above about the peoples of southern Galatia, why do you think they understood and accepted the Gospel of Christ so readily, and why do you think that "almost the entire city" came to hear Paul's second sermon at the synagogue in Antioch of Persidia (Acts 13:44)? (Speculation is allowed.)
2. Is there anything that you learned about the Galatian people (in the previous few pages) that really sticks out in your mind? Their history perhaps? Or facets of their character? Or of their cities?
3. Let's go back to Acts 10, where we read where Peter was sent by the Holy Spirit to preach to Cornelius, and that the Holy Spirit fell upon these Gentiles. Describe the confrontation the Jews had with Peter (in Acts 11) when they found out that he had eaten with "uncircumcised men". Describe the conclusion they drew when Peter told them what happened to him and to these Gentiles.
4. In Acts 11:19-25, it describes how some early believers in Cyprus and Cyrene (modern Lybia) went to Antioch (in Syria) and preached to the "Hellinists" (non-Jews) about Jesus. What was the result of this preaching? Who sent Barnabas to Antioch, and who did he next seek to come help in the work?
5. Last quarter we read that the church at Antioch was instrumental in its efforts to evangelize, sending out Paul, Barnabas and others to teach, preach and establish churches. It was shortly after the second missionary journey (after they had returned to Antioch and reported their work) that the problem with the so-called "Judaizing teachers" (those who taught that all converts must keep the Old Law) came to a head at Antioch and in other places. (Apparently it was at this time that Paul heard that this false teaching had spread to the new churches in southern Galatia, and he wrote the Epistle to the Galatians.) In Acts 15:1-2, Paul and Barnabas—formerly devout Jews—had "no small dissention" with these false teachers who had now come to Antioch. What was decided?
6. What was the reaction of the churches of Phoenicia and Samaria when they heard about the conversion of the gentiles? What did they report to the apostles and the elders in Jerusalem?
7. In Acts 15:5, who rose up and insisted that gentiles keep the Old Law? Do you see anything interesting, or perhaps ironic, that it was this group?
8. What was the apostle Peter's response to this dispute? What question did he ask the Pharisees?

9. After Paul and Barnabas described the “many miracles and wonders that God worked through them among the Gentiles”, what was the reaction of those assembled? (Do you think Paul may have described how he was stoned and left by the Jews for dead in Iconium? I wonder!)
10. What Old Testament scripture did James the elder⁶ quote to help settle this matter?
11. What did James the elder state he believed that they should tell the Gentiles?
12. What are some of the points of what they wrote the Gentiles in Acts 15:22-29 that you find to be the most interesting, based on your re-reading of the scripture this time?
13. Who else did the apostles send back to Antioch - and why do you think they did this?
14. How did the church at Antioch react to this letter and its contents?
15. If Antioch was already so strong, why would God deem it important to send additional teachers to continue to work with them? How is this applicable to us today?
16. Is there any evidence of how quickly this letter from the apostles and elders of Acts 15 was circulated to all of the new churches of the first and second missionary journeys (including Galatia) by Paul and Barnabas? Was it spread to Rome, Libya, Crete—all churches? How do you think it was received by the Gentiles in these cities? How do you think it was received by the Jewish Christians?

⁶ James the brother of Jesus was an important figure in the early church and was one of the elders in Jerusalem. He is called “James the elder” in order to not confuse him with the apostle James, who was the first apostle to be martyred.

Lesson 2: Galatians Chapter 1

Please read ALL of Galatians 1, Ephesians 3:1-7 and II Peter 3:14-16, then answer the following:

Galatians 1:1-5

1. What, in your mind, is the importance of Paul not only identifying himself to them as an apostle but pointing out that it was Christ who appointed him to serve in that role?
2. Which, if any, of Paul's teachings in verses 3-5 stand out to you – and why?

Galatians 1:6-10

3. Why do you think it is important that what the Jews were teaching the Galatians be identified as “a different gospel”?
4. Paul speaks of those who would trouble them and who would pervert (or “distort”) the gospel- then says that those who would do so should be accursed. Why such strong language?
5. What's his key point in verse 10?

Galatians 1:11-17; Ephesians 3:1-7

6. In verses 11-12, where does Paul say that he had received his teaching, which he had given them?
7. He makes some excellent, logical points in 13-14 about his own background. Why would these points carry weight against those who are trying to mislead them?
8. Verses 15-17 refers to how Christ confronted and then called Paul for the work. Comment on what Paul said he did after his conversion, ~~comment on~~ and why this is important.
9. Read Ephesians 3:1-7 and comment on what he taught the church in Ephesus about his apostleship.

Galatians 1:18-23; II Peter 3:14-16

10. Think about the three years before Paul went to Jerusalem and spent significant time with Peter and James the Elder. What do you think would have been discussed- and how would that have changed their relationship?
11. Read II Peter 3:14-16 and comment regarding what Peter had to say about Paul and his writings.
12. In Galatians 1:21-24, where did Paul go? (please find these areas on a map) Relate what was being said about him by the Jewish Christians in Judea while he was there.

Lesson 3: Galatians Chapter 2

Please read ALL of Galatians 2, briefly review Acts 10, then answer the following:

Galatians 2:1-5

1. In last week's lesson we discussed how Peter and James the Elder had met with Paul extensively. In Galatians 2:1-3 he notes that he takes Barnabas and Titus after being away fourteen years. Discuss Barnabas, his background and acceptance by the apostles; then discuss who Titus was, and why Paul bringing this disciple with him was one of the keys to his teaching the Galatians.
2. In Galatians 2:4-5, Paul explains why he selected Barnabas and Titus, saying that while he was doing things openly, these false teachers were being secretive—saying they were “brought in” to spy out their liberty and bring us into bondage. Who brought them in? Why would he call it bondage?

Galatians 2:6-10; Acts 10

3. He notes that while some of them “seemed to be something” (meaning, noteworthy Jewish Christians, I think), Paul wasn't impressed. Why not?
4. What did these people see and hear regarding Paul's mission versus Peter's mission?
5. What was the significance of James (the elder), Cephas (Peter) and John giving Paul and Barnabas “the right hand of fellowship”? Is this still applicable today?
6. How powerful was it that Peter had first been selected in Acts 10 to preach to the Gentiles and that God had given these Gentiles the Holy Spirit?

Galatians 2:11-16

7. Why do you think that Paul relating the hypocrisy of Peter and Barnabas in Antioch is important to his teaching the Galatians- and in teaching Christians today?
8. What were Paul's arguments when he confronted Peter publicly?

Galatians 2:17-21; Romans 7:1-6

9. What's the key point made in verse 17?
10. Verses 18-21 compare “life” under Christ to “death” under the Law. After reading this passage, also read Romans 7:1-6 and comment. (Bonus: Can you think of other New Testament passages that teach that not only was the Old Law dead—but that it was actually “death”?)

Lesson 4: Galatians Chapter 3

Please read ALL of Galatians 3, then answer the following:

Galatians 3:1-9

1. In verses 1-4, what are some of the (very direct!) questions the apostle asks?
2. Verse 5, who is the “He” described, and what key question does Paul ask about what He did?
3. In verses 6-10, Paul brings in Abraham—father of the Jews—and says that only those of the “faith”, or the New Testament, are Abraham’s sons. How so?

Galatians 3:10-14

4. In verses 10-12, Paul now begins to introduce the Old Law with quotes from Deuteronomy 27:26, Habakkuk 2:4 and Leviticus 18:5. What are Paul’s key points from the Old Testament and his contrasts with what is taught in the New Testament?
5. In verses 13-14, what does it mean that Christ “redeemed us”? What blessing given to Abraham is being spoken of? (Cite the verse in Genesis 12, please.)

Galatians 3:15-18

6. Paul adds new teachings in verses 15-18. He speaks of contracts (“covenants”) which, once confirmed, cannot be annulled or added to. He states that the promises were made not only to Abraham, but to Christ. How so?
7. He next points out that the Law of Moses, given 430 years later, cannot and did not annul or add to this covenant made to Abraham “in Christ”. Why is this an important point against the false teaching?

Galatians 3:19-25

8. In verses 19-20 we learn one of the key purposes of the Old Law. What?
9. In verses 21-25, Paul gives a series of teachings about the purposes of the Old Law- to guard and to guide toward something coming later. Describe his key points.
10. Justification literally means “to show something to be right or reasonable.” What does it mean to be “justified by faith”? Why do we no longer need a “tutor” or “schoolmaster”?

Galatians 3:26-29

11. In these verses, Paul calls all believers “sons of God” and says “for as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ”. He then says that we are “all one in Christ Jesus”? What are some of the deeper implications of these statements that would apply to all Christians—Jews and gentiles, citizens, bondservants and slaves?

12. He now says that the new believer is one of Abraham’s seed and an heir. In legal terms, what does it mean to be an heir? Thought question- how can natural born children lose their rights as heirs?

Lesson 5: Galatians Chapter 4

Read Galatians 4 and Isaiah 54:1-8 in their entirety before answering the following questions:

Galatians 4:1-7

1. In verses 1-3, Paul adds to the teachings of chapter 3 (“We are all sons of God in Christ Jesus” and “heirs according to the promise”) by discussing the oversight given to slaves and free-born children (who are heirs). Describe that oversight.
2. Verses 4-5, we are taught some interesting facets of Jesus’s role (as a Son) in being sent to mankind and what we can receive as a result. Select one or two points that interest you to discuss in class.
3. What does the phrase “Abba, Father” mean in verses 6-8? Using the teachings of verses 1-3, what is the result to the believer? Contrast that with the Jews under the Old Law.

Galatians 4:8-20

4. In verses 8-11, Paul speaks to them as gentiles- who had not known God before, pointing out that they had not served the true and living God. What’s powerful about the question he then asks?
5. Paul speaks of “weak and beggarly elements” and Jewish observations of “days and months and seasons and years”. What are some of those elements and days laid down in the Old Law?
6. Was Paul right to say he was “afraid” for them (verse 11)? What did he mean by “afraid”?
7. In verses 12-16, Paul asks them to recall his own state when he taught them and his deep love for them. How so?
8. Why would he ask, “Have I therefore (“in conclusion”) become your enemy because I tell you the truth?” (both then and now in this letter?)
9. In verses 17-18, he reminds them that while it’s nice to be courted (such as when a politician courts voters or couples courting each other), that not all courting of the world—nor this courting- is automatically good. Why, according to Paul, are the Jewish false teachers courting them?
10. In verses 19-20, Paul pleads with them tenderly but firmly. How so?

Galatians 4:21-31; Isaiah 54:1-8

11. In verses 21-24, Paul uses a great contrast: the first son of Abraham (Ishmael), born of a slave vs his second son (Isaac), his heir, who received the inheritance of his father. What contrasts does Paul give between these two sons?

12. Paul notes that Hagar and her son's descendants controlled Arabia (including Mt. Sinai), while the Jews inherited Palestine, including Jerusalem), which he calls "the mother of us all". How would that apply to all Christians? (Guesses are allowed- these are discussion questions, after all!)

13. Paul quotes Isaiah 54:1, reads Isaiah 54:1-8 and describes what is being taught. What?

14. In Galatians 4:28-31, Paul calls these gentile Galatians—and himself — "children of promise." He points out that Ishmael's descendants- children of the flesh- continue to be enemies of the Jews. But he then reminds them of what Abraham (who loved his first son deeply!) was commanded to do with both him and his mother. How should that apply to their (and our!) attitude toward the Old Law?

Are we free? We can be! We will discuss that more next week in chapter 5.

Lesson 6: Galatians Chapter 5

Read Galatians 5 in its entirety, and then answer the following questions:

Galatians 5:1-6

1. In chapter 4, Paul taught them that they had been made heirs and that they were the sons of God. He pointed out that as Isaac was the son of a free woman, and named Abraham's heir by God, we are also free. In verses 1-3, he commands them to "stand fast in the liberty by which Christ made us free" (from sin) and warns them not to be entangled with a "yoke of bondage." He says that if they "become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing." Why such strong words?
2. What does it mean that they would be "a debtor to keep the whole law" (verse 3)? (**Please remember this verse in particular!** In lesson 8 we will devote an entire class period to "Christians" today who believe that Jesus will return to earth, believing that the Jewish nation, the high priest, the sacrifices, etc. are going to re-occur in the future and that we Christians are to return to the Old Law.)
3. In verse 4, Paul confronts them with the sins that they have been led into. What are they?
4. In verse 5, Paul again notes that the New Testament is a "hope of righteousness by faith." What does he mean by that statement? Does it remind you of the Old Testament teaching about those "who wait on" or "who wait upon" the Lord?
5. What's the power implied in verse 6? How does faith work through love?

Galatians 5:7-15

6. What does Paul mean by verse 7?
7. He points out that "this persuasion" (false teaching) did not come from Christ, then points out that this "leaven" has the potential to poison the entire church. In verse 10 he describes his confidence in them that they will see his points, but what does he say about the false teachers?
8. In verses 11-12, he reminds them that his not preaching circumcision (the Old Law) has produced much persecution in his life. Had they seen that first-hand?
9. He rather morbidly states that he wishes that those who were preaching that these gentiles be circumcised "would even cut (some translations say-"mutilate") themselves off! Why such a strong statement?

10. In verses 13-15, he again reminds them that they answered the call of liberty (from sin). What should they use that liberty for?
11. In verses 14-15, he amplifies this through what Old Testament teaching? What warning does Paul give when they start to attack one another rather than love one another?

Galatians 5:16-22; Romans 6:12-14

12. In verses 16-18, he takes what he just taught about love and adds to it by telling them to “Walk in the Spirit”, pointing out that our flesh “lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh” and because of this, we “do not do the things that you wish”. Read Romans 6:12-14 and describe how we do so.
13. Read verse 19. Which items on this list would surprise some people of the world? What are the implications of the apostle spelling things out like this?
14. Read verses 22-23. What does Paul mean by “Against such there is no law.”?
15. Read verses 24-25. How, in your opinion, must those who follow Christ crucify the flesh with its passions? How do we walk in the Spirit?
16. Are conceit and envy serious enough to warrant being taught against?

Lesson 7: Galatians Chapter 6

Read Galatians 6, Matthew 18:15-17 and Philippians 2:5-6 in their entirety, and then answer the following:

Galatians 6:1-5

1. Chapter six now introduces whole new thoughts. In verses 1-2, we are taught how to help those who are “overtaken in any trespass” (as we all can be, from time to time). Read Matthew 18:15-17 in the context of this teaching in verses 1-2 and describe the entire process of dealing with a brother or sister who are overtaken in a trespass.
2. Read verses 3-5, and then read Philippians 2:5-6. Discuss how, in your mind, these verses work well together.

Galatians 6:6-10

3. What does verse 6 mean?
4. Read verses 7-10. What does it mean to “mock” someone? How can we mock God?
5. It seems to me that these verses would parallel what James 2:18 says: “But someone will say, ‘You have faith, and I have works.’ Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.” Also consider Ephesians 2:8-10 which explains that we were created “for good works”. How can these passages here in Galatians on “sowing what you reap, and our not growing weary while doing good” parallel what’s being taught in James and Ephesians?
6. What does it mean to “Do good to all, especially those of the household of faith”?

Galatians 6:11-15

7. In Galatians 4:13, Paul speaks of a “physical infirmity” he had as he preached to them. Many have speculated that because of Galatians 6:11 it was weak eyesight, but that’s only speculation. It also could be that he is drawing attention to the epistle, or to important facts. He also notes that they should notice that this is his own handwriting (again, perhaps confirming this is from him).
In verses 12-13 he gives two reasons why some Jewish teachers were insisting that the Galatians keep the Old Law. What were these two reasons?
8. In verses 14-15 he contrasts their desire with the cross and the crucifixion of Christ. How so?
9. In verse 15 he states that being circumcised does not matter at all. What happens to the new believer?

10. In Acts 16:1-5, Paul circumcised Timothy before he would let him accompany him on his missionary journey. Yet in Galatians 2:3 Paul notes that Titus, who had accompanied Paul to Jerusalem earlier, was not circumcised.

Before you view this as hypocrisy, here's a passage that will help you: I Corinthians 9:19-23: *"For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more; and to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law; to those who are without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those who are without law; to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. Now this I do for the gospel's sake, that I may be partaker of it with you."*

Comment on this passage, please, based on everything we know about Paul.

Galatians 6:16-18

11. What "rule" is Paul talking about in verse 16?
12. Explain verse 17.
13. How can the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with us?
14. Finally, read Philippians 3:2-11, which neatly describes who Paul had been before becoming an apostle and why he counted all of these as "rubbish". What are your thoughts on this after having studied Galatians?

Next week: Some practical applications of the books of Galatians in false teaching today.

Lesson 8: Apply Galatians to Modern False Doctrine

Seeking to understand local and “protestant” thinking about the Old Law today

Many of the churches and preachers in northwest Florida consider themselves to be “Pentecostals” (although many prefer the term “Charismatics”.) These churches teach that “the gift of the Holy Spirit” that is promised in Acts 2 are speaking in “tongues”, miracles, gifts of prophesy and other “gifts” that were given to first century believers by the laying on of the Apostles hands, and that they still apply today. (This is not to say, however, that all of their members have depth of knowledge as to what is the official church doctrinal positions are.) We should note that we read nowhere in scripture where those who had any of these gifts were able to pass gifts on to others—we only read about the apostles doing so.

Most Pentecostals/Charismatics also believe in what they call the “rapture”- which, in their mind, includes the return of Jesus come back to finish what He started, and to rule for one thousand years over the nation of Israel.⁷ Most believe that the Jewish high priest will be restored (ignoring that no Jew today can trace his heritage back to Aaron) and that all nations will flock to Jesus and the Jewish people for leadership. (This belief is why President Harry Truman supported the establishment of the nation of Israel in 1948.)

They view future events from a *prophetic* perspective (in addition to scripture). “Prophetic” to them can mean God speaking directly to a person to complete an objective, and, in their minds, this does not necessarily need to be rational, predictable, or even a major communication. This could include God speaking to them about a financial commitment, planting trees, political involvement, volunteering, helping in immigration, all night prayer vigils, fasting, raising specialized cattle, evangelism, etc.; the list can go on and on.

For example, some say they have heard God call them to personally help Jews return to the Holy Land. One of the better-known Christian organizations, Ebenezer Emergency Fund’s *Operation Exodus*, was started by a “prophetic vision” to Steve Lightle, a South African. Bruce Balfour, a Canadian affiliated with the Pentecostal-based Maranatha Evangelistic Association believed he was called by God in dreams to plant trees in Lebanon. Other of their beliefs include being “called to expedite God’s plan for the end”. For example, Clyde Lott, a cattle rancher and an ordained National Pentecostal Assemblies of Jesus Christ Minister, had an epiphany from God to raise red heifers according to Old Testament command in Numbers 19:1-10.

Maoz Israel Ministries relates on their website a story about a 9 year old boy who believed God had called him to send his \$10.00 of birthday money for Israel, so he sent it to the Jewish government (who gladly deposited it). This may not seem like much, but this is a grassroots event that Pentecostals are doing world-wide. Yechiel Eckstein has raised over a quarter of a BILLION dollars from roughly 400,000 Christian donors alone, all of which went into the Israeli treasury. The Pentecostals are seen as a veritable gold mine, for obvious reasons.

Of greater importance, the American people are much more attuned to the Jewish nation of Israel than they are the Muslim nations that Israel opposes. The votes of both American Jews and American Pentecostals are heard loud and clear by American presidents, congressmen and senators. It’s a huge voting bloc.

The call to pray for Israel is big with Pentecostals. Robert Stearns, who grew up in an Assemblies of God Church, the world’s largest Pentecostal denomination⁸, helped organize the annual Day of Prayer for the Peace

⁷ In addition to the scripture not teaching or supporting this belief, the Jewish leaders and the Jewish people both in Palestine and around the world consider this belief laughable- or in many cases, it deeply angers them. For example, in March 2023 two members of the Knesset, the official assembly (congress) of the Jewish nation, introduced a law that actually outlawed the preaching of Jesus as the Christ—with a penalty of jail time for those who did so. Does that sound like a nation that looks forward to Jesus ruling over them for a thousand years?

⁸ The Assemblies of God far outnumber any other denominations in our area. They consider themselves to be “Pentecostal” or “Charismatic”.

of Jerusalem, “instituted with the endorsement of hundreds of Christian leaders from around the world, representing tens of millions of Christians.”

The “mystic” side of Pentecostalism exists as a doctrine that transcends denominations and religious institutions— even parts of the Roman Catholic Church. It is also a physical entity as expressed in Churches like the Assemblies of God, the Churches of God and many, many other denominations. There are tens of thousands of independent Pentecostal Churches around the world with little or no denominational affiliation; their leaders include Jack Hayford, Jimmy Swaggart, T.D. Jakes, and Pat Robertson.

Their teachings about the “rapture” and the thousand-year reign of Christ reaches into most other denominations today, including many Southern Baptist, Methodist and independent “non-denominational” churches.

For example, Wayne Hilsden describes himself as a pastor and preacher who “travels the world sharing with the nations about the restoration of Israel.” He was also in charge of Aliyah Ministries Network, a center for other Christian Zionist based Jewish immigration agencies and a board member for the Ebenezer Emergency Fund, whose aim is to help Jewish people (not Christian Jewish people) to emigrate to Israel.

Questions for this lesson:

1. We’ve studied the book of Galatians and what it says about keeping the precepts of the Old Law. List at few key points from this book that disputes keeping the Old Law today and disputes the restoration of the nation of Israel.
2. There are many other teachings in the New Testament (other than II Corinthians 5:21, below) that also refute this teaching. Pick one or two of these passages and describe their key teaching.
3. II Corinthians 5:21 says the Old Law was “nailed to the cross”. Read the passages before and after this verse and describe how you would use this verse to answer those who would seek to apply the Old Law today.
4. How would you answer the teaching of any return to Christ here on earth and a thousand-year reign? You’re welcome to use any passages in the New Testament.
5. What arguments are made by Pentecostals about the restoration of the temple and the Aaronic priesthood as to how this will be accomplished?
6. I am sure there are at least one or two key points that Paul makes to the churches at Galatia that really resonated with you- maybe something you had missed earlier. Please share with the class.