

Introduction to the Book of Galatians



The title of the book of Galatians is derived from an area in modern Turkey where the churches addressed in this book were located. The book, with its theme of justification by faith alone, and its rejection of doctrines that tamper with the pure gospel, served as much of the impetus for the Reformation. Martin Luther, the famous Reformer, was heard to say, *"This is my epistle. I am wedded to it."*

Author:

No conservative theologians doubt that Paul wrote Galatians. The internal evidence is much too strong to really even raise any reasonable questions. Paul's masterful teachings on the gospel are condensed nicely in this book, causing people to refer to it as *"Diet Romans."*

Background & Setting:

Galatians was penned sometime after the Jerusalem Council in A.D. 49 to the churches in southern Galatia that were planted by Paul. Paul wrote the book in order to counter the claims of Judaizers who had entered into the church, claiming that works (specifically circumcision) must be added to faith in order to produce salvation. This is a letter of warning. Abandoning justification by faith has dire consequences.

Themes:

As we've already stated, the prominent theme of Galatians is that of justification by faith. The law, though purposeful for a time, was limited. We now have access to God through Jesus alone.

Think about it:

As you read through the book of Galatians, here are a few things to pay careful attention to:

1. Notice the severity of Paul's opening remarks, manifesting his passion for the gospel.
2. Look at the temptation that all of us face to add to the gospel.
3. Focus on the importance of walking in the Spirit & producing His fruits.

Introduction to the Book of Galatians



The title of the book of Galatians is derived from an area in modern Turkey where the churches addressed in this book were located. The book, with its theme of justification by faith alone, and its rejection of doctrines that tamper with the pure gospel, served as much of the impetus for the Reformation. Martin Luther, the famous Reformer, was heard to say, *"This is my epistle. I am wedded to it."*

Author:

No conservative theologians doubt that Paul wrote Galatians. The internal evidence is much too strong to really even raise any reasonable questions. Paul's masterful teachings on the gospel are condensed nicely in this book, causing people to refer to it as *"Diet Romans."*

Background & Setting:

Galatians was penned sometime after the Jerusalem Council in A.D. 49 to the churches in southern Galatia that were planted by Paul. Paul wrote the book in order to counter the claims of Judaizers who had entered into the church, claiming that works (specifically circumcision) must be added to faith in order to produce salvation. This is a letter of warning. Abandoning justification by faith has dire consequences.

Themes:

As we've already stated, the prominent theme of Galatians is that of justification by faith. The law, though purposeful for a time, was limited. We now have access to God through Jesus alone.

Think about it:

As you read through the book of Galatians, here are a few things to pay careful attention to:

1. Notice the severity of Paul's opening remarks, manifesting his passion for the gospel.
2. Look at the temptation that all of us face to add to the gospel.
3. Focus on the importance of walking in the Spirit & producing His fruits.



Date: Wednesday, March 20

Passage: Galatians I

1. Most of Paul's letters begin with a moment of thanksgiving to the audience that he is writing to. Not so with Galatians. He launches right into attack mode in verse 6. Why do you think he does this? What does it tell you about the way Paul is feeling at the moment?

2. The original language is neat in verses 6-7. Paul is actually accusing them of turning to a gospel "of a different kind." It's not actually even the gospel! And if that "other" gospel is preached, the preacher should be "delivered over to God for final judgment" (v. 9). What does that tell you about the importance of the purity of the gospel?

3. Who does Paul claim to have received the gospel from (v. 12)? What kind of impact would that claim have had on the listeners?

4. Look back at our notes in the introduction to this book. Why do you think that Paul includes his testimony of being called out of Judaism (vv. 11-24)?

Galatians starts off with a bang! Let's think about it. First, Paul staunchly rebukes those who teach or accept the false gospel taught by the Judaizers (vv. 1-9). Second, he claims that he seeks only the approval of Jesus (v. 10). Next, he uses his testimony to validate the fact that he got the gospel that he preaches from Jesus Himself (vv. 11-24). Take a deep breath, thank God for the gospel, and get ready for chapter two.



Date: Wednesday, March 20

Passage: Galatians I

1. Most of Paul's letters begin with a moment of thanksgiving to the audience that he is writing to. Not so with Galatians. He launches right into attack mode in verse 6. Why do you think he does this? What does it tell you about the way Paul is feeling at the moment?

2. The original language is neat in verses 6-7. Paul is actually accusing them of turning to a gospel "of a different kind." It's not actually even the gospel! And if that "other" gospel is preached, the preacher should be "delivered over to God for final judgment" (v. 9). What does that tell you about the importance of the purity of the gospel?

3. Who does Paul claim to have received the gospel from (v. 12)? What kind of impact would that claim have had on the listeners?

4. Look back at our notes in the introduction to this book. Why do you think that Paul includes his testimony of being called out of Judaism (vv. 11-24)?

Galatians starts off with a bang! Let's think about it. First, Paul staunchly rebukes those who teach or accept the false gospel taught by the Judaizers (vv. 1-9). Second, he claims that he seeks only the approval of Jesus (v. 10). Next, he uses his testimony to validate the fact that he got the gospel that he preaches from Jesus Himself (vv. 11-24). Take a deep breath, thank God for the gospel, and get ready for chapter two.



Date: Thursday, March 21

Passage: Galatians 2

1. Most agree that Galatians 2:1-10 is a summary of Paul's efforts at the Jerusalem Council, which is recounted in Acts 15. Paul, sensing that there was some confusion among the churches as to what necessitates true salvation, followed the voice of the Lord and travelled to Jerusalem to commune with the pastors of the church there, Peter, James, and John. At the conclusion of the meeting, they all agreed that salvation was opened to the uncircumcised Gentiles (v. 9), since it is all of grace through faith. What are some ways in which we are tempted to add to the gospel of grace through faith?

2. After the Council, it appears that Peter still preferred to withdraw from fellowship with the Gentiles. This caused Paul to rebuke Peter publicly (vv. 11-14). What do you think would motivate Peter to do this? How do you find yourself susceptible to the same temptation?

3. Next, Paul begins to explain what justification by faith looks like (vv. 15-21). Summarize Paul's explanation of the gospel in the blanks below.

4. Paul's conclusion? If I can achieve righteousness through my own works, then Jesus died in vain (v. 21). How can Paul say that?

Do you realize that there is nothing you can do to gain favor in God's sight? Do you understand that salvation is all of grace? Do you get the fact that if you even begin to add to salvation, you defeat the purpose of Christ's death? God, help us to cling to Jesus!



Date: Thursday, March 21

Passage: Galatians 2

1. Most agree that Galatians 2:1-10 is a summary of Paul's efforts at the Jerusalem Council, which is recounted in Acts 15. Paul, sensing that there was some confusion among the churches as to what necessitates true salvation, followed the voice of the Lord and travelled to Jerusalem to commune with the pastors of the church there, Peter, James, and John. At the conclusion of the meeting, they all agreed that salvation was opened to the uncircumcised Gentiles (v. 9), since it is all of grace through faith. What are some ways in which we are tempted to add to the gospel of grace through faith?

2. After the Council, it appears that Peter still preferred to withdraw from fellowship with the Gentiles. This caused Paul to rebuke Peter publicly (vv. 11-14). What do you think would motivate Peter to do this? How do you find yourself susceptible to the same temptation?

3. Next, Paul begins to explain what justification by faith looks like (vv. 15-21). Summarize Paul's explanation of the gospel in the blanks below.

4. Paul's conclusion? If I can achieve righteousness through my own works, then Jesus died in vain (v. 21). How can Paul say that?

Do you realize that there is nothing you can do to gain favor in God's sight? Do you understand that salvation is all of grace? Do you get the fact that if you even begin to add to salvation, you defeat the purpose of Christ's death? God, help us to cling to Jesus!



Date: Friday, March 22

Passage: Galatians 3

1. What is the argument that Paul is making in verses 1-7?

If you have a study Bible, the paragraph title may tell you. What is Paul's conclusion to the argument (v. 9)?

2. So, Jesus came to release us from the law! How, specifically, did Jesus release us from the curse (v. 13)? How do we receive the promised Spirit (v. 14)?

3. Read verse 15-29. Was the law necessary? What was it used for? Why was it necessary (v. 19)?

4. Paul concludes this section with a reminder that the gospel unifies us (vv.27-28). Why do you think so many in the church today forget that? Why do you forget that?

Let's go ahead and summarize this incredibly rich chapter. The Galatians had been duped into thinking that they could add works to their faith (vv. 1-7). Paul argues that the righteous live by faith alone (vv. 8-14), and that though the law was at one time necessary to bring us to Christ, the death of Christ has nullified the law, and unified us together under one gospel (vv. 15-29). Make sense? You can rejoice for two reasons today. First, God provided the gospel for you to have freedom from the law. Second, God provided the gospel in order for you to experience unity in the faith.



Date: Friday, March 22

Passage: Galatians 3

1. What is the argument that Paul is making in verses 1-7?

If you have a study Bible, the paragraph title may tell you. What is Paul's conclusion to the argument (v. 9).

2. So, Jesus came to release us from the law! How, specifically, did Jesus release us from the curse (v. 13)? How do we receive the promised Spirit (v. 14)?

3. Read verse 15-29. Was the law necessary? What was it used for? Why was it necessary (v. 19)?

4. Paul concludes this section with a reminder that the gospel unifies us (vv.27-28). Why do you think so many in the church today forget that? Why do you forget that?

Let's go ahead and summarize this incredibly rich chapter. The Galatians had been duped into thinking that they could add works to their faith (vv. 1-7). Paul argues that the righteous live by faith alone (vv. 8-14), and that though the law was at one time necessary to bring us to Christ, the death of Christ has nullified the law, and unified us together under one gospel (vv. 15-29). Make sense? You can rejoice for two reasons today. First, God provided the gospel for you to have freedom from the law. Second, God provided the gospel in order for you to experience unity in the faith.



Date: Saturday, March 23

Passage: Proverbs 22; Review Hebrews 12-13

1. Proverbs 22:1 is one of those Proverbs that you will hear quoted time and time again throughout the course of your life. Your reputation is super important! Why is your reputation important in the Christian community? Why is it important to the unsaved world?

2. What is the reward for humility and the fear of the Lord, according to verse 4?

3. What kind of person should you stay away from, according to verse 24?

4. List at least one truth from Hebrews 12 that you can cling to throughout the coming week that God has planned for you.

5. Look back at Hebrews 13. Offer some observations on the chapter, and the book of Hebrews as a whole, as you consider Christ.



Date: Saturday, March 23

Passage: Proverbs 22; Review Hebrews 12-13

1. Proverbs 22:1 is one of those Proverbs that you will hear quoted time and time again throughout the course of your life. Your reputation is super important! Why is your reputation important in the Christian community? Why is it important to the unsaved world?

2. What is the reward for humility and the fear of the Lord, according to verse 4?

3. What kind of person should you stay away from, according to verse 24?

4. List at least one truth from Hebrews 12 that you can cling to throughout the coming week that God has planned for you.

5. Look back at Hebrews 13. Offer some observations on the chapter, and the book of Hebrews as a whole, as you consider Christ.



Date: Sunday, March 24

Passage: Proverbs 23; Review Galatians 1-3

1. The first part of Proverbs 23 addresses the importance of fleeing from a desire for riches. Why, according to verse 5, should we avoid such desires?

2. Look for all of the verses in this chapter that offer instruction as to how you should respond in wisdom to the godly input from your parents. What references do you find this instruction in? Sum up the attitude you should have in one sentence.

3. What does the startling introduction to Galatians 1 tell you about the importance of preserving a pure gospel?

4. What does Paul's bold opposition against Peter in Galatians 2 tell you about his attitude towards the gospel?

5. What are the benefits of the gospel, as opposed to the law, according to Galatians 3?



Date: Sunday, March 24

Passage: Proverbs 23; Review Galatians 1-3

1. The first part of Proverbs 23 addresses the importance of fleeing from a desire for riches. Why, according to verse 5, should we avoid such desires?

2. Look for all of the verses in this chapter that offer instruction as to how you should respond in wisdom to the godly input from your parents. What references do you find this instruction in? Sum up the attitude you should have in one sentence.

3. What does the startling introduction to Galatians 1 tell you about the importance of preserving a pure gospel?

4. What does Paul's bold opposition against Peter in Galatians 2 tell you about his attitude towards the gospel?

5. What are the benefits of the gospel, as opposed to the law, according to Galatians 3?



Date: Monday, March 25

Passage: Galatians 4

1. Paul keeps chipping away at the power of the law as he makes the stirring point that, through the gospel, you are a joint heir with Christ (vv. 1-7)! Consider the position that Jesus has afforded to you through His sacrifice. How should that motivate you to respond today?

2. Paul is deeply concerned for the Galatians. He's worried that through adding to the gospel, they will return to where they were before the gospel was ever preached to them (vv. 8-20). Why does Paul take the status of the Galatians so personally (v. 19)?

3. The story of Hagar and Sarah is included (vv. 21-30) in order to illustrate the contrast that Paul has been developing throughout this whole book between the two covenants. Hagar, Ishmael, and Mt. Sinai represent the law, while Sarah, Isaac, and the heavenly Jerusalem represent the gospel. Who are we the children of, according to verse 30?

4. Does Paul's illustration of the old covenant with Hagar seem too harsh for you? Why or why not?

"Free from the law – oh, happy condition! Jesus hath bled, and there is remission; Cursed by the law and bruised by the fall, Christ hath redeemed us once for all!" – P. Bliss



Date: Monday, March 25

Passage: Galatians 4

1. Paul keeps chipping away at the power of the law as he makes the stirring point that, through the gospel, you are a joint heir with Christ (vv. 1-7)! Consider the position that Jesus has afforded to you through His sacrifice. How should that motivate you to respond today?

2. Paul is deeply concerned for the Galatians. He's worried that through adding to the gospel, they will return to where they were before the gospel was ever preached to them (vv. 8-20). Why does Paul take the status of the Galatians so personally (v. 19)?

3. The story of Hagar and Sarah is included (vv. 21-30) in order to illustrate the contrast that Paul has been developing throughout this whole book between the two covenants. Hagar, Ishmael, and Mt. Sinai represent the law, while Sarah, Isaac, and the heavenly Jerusalem represent the gospel. Who are we the children of, according to verse 30?

4. Does Paul's illustration of the old covenant with Hagar seem too harsh for you? Why or why not?

"Free from the law – oh, happy condition! Jesus hath bled, and there is remission; Cursed by the law and bruised by the fall, Christ hath redeemed us once for all!" – P. Bliss



Date: Tuesday, March 26

Passage: Galatians 5

1. Why did Christ set you free, according to verse one?
(Hint: This is super easy! 😊)

2. In verses 2-6, Paul makes the point that if you are going to keep one part of the law (circumcision in this case), then you are logically obligated to keep the whole law. Why is this the case?

3. Paul offers a warning --- Do not use your freedom as an opportunity to feed your fleshly desires (v. 13). Have you ever felt tempted to use your freedom in Christ in this way? Most Christians have. How does the sacrifice of Christ help you to gain the right perspective on your freedom?

4. Verses 16-26 are the famous verses in Galatians about walking in the Spirit. Ultimately, what is the purpose of walking in the Spirit, according to verse 16?

5. Walking in the Spirit will impact the way that you relate to other believers (v. 26). How have you failed to walk in the Spirit in your relationships to others recently? How can you ask Christ for help in this matter today?



Date: Tuesday, March 26

Passage: Galatians 5

1. Why did Christ set you free, according to verse one?
(Hint: This is super easy! 😊)

2. In verses 2-6, Paul makes the point that if you are going to keep one part of the law (circumcision in this case), then you are logically obligated to keep the whole law. Why is this the case?

3. Paul offers a warning --- Do not use your freedom as an opportunity to feed your fleshly desires (v. 13). Have you ever felt tempted to use your freedom in Christ in this way? Most Christians have. How does the sacrifice of Christ help you to gain the right perspective on your freedom?

4. Verses 16-26 are the famous verses in Galatians about walking in the Spirit. Ultimately, what is the purpose of walking in the Spirit, according to verse 16?

5. Walking in the Spirit will impact the way that you relate to other believers (v. 26). How have you failed to walk in the Spirit in your relationships to others recently? How can you ask Christ for help in this matter today?



Date: Wednesday, March 27

Passage: Galatians 6

1. Paul's conclusion to this entire book falls along the lines of how we relate to each other in the body of Christ. Look at verse two. What "fulfills the law of Christ?"

2. The principle of sowing and reaping is mentioned in verses 7-10. As you consider the context of the book (grace vs. law), why do you think that it was important to Paul to bring this topic up?

3. As Paul concludes his letter by arguing for the fact that he wrote it, he mentions in verse 17 that he "bears the marks of Jesus" in his body. This refers to the marks that he has received from the beatings that he has taken. What does that tell you about his courage for Christ? How does your courage stack up to that example?

4. Consider the entirety of this book. If Paul were with you right now, what do you think is one central truth that he would want you to grasp from his writings? Express that truth in one to two sentences.

Lord, help us to grasp the freedom that you have provided for us through the triumph of Christ over the law. May we never look back!



Date: Wednesday, March 27

Passage: Galatians 6

1. Paul's conclusion to this entire book falls along the lines of how we relate to each other in the body of Christ. Look at verse two. What "fulfills the law of Christ?"

2. The principle of sowing and reaping is mentioned in verses 7-10. As you consider the context of the book (grace vs. law), why do you think that it was important to Paul to bring this topic up?

3. As Paul concludes his letter by arguing for the fact that he wrote it, he mentions in verse 17 that he "bears the marks of Jesus" in his body. This refers to the marks that he has received from the beatings that he has taken. What does that tell you about his courage for Christ? How does your courage stack up to that example?

4. Consider the entirety of this book. If Paul were with you right now, what do you think is one central truth that he would want you to grasp from his writings? Express that truth in one to two sentences.

Lord, help us to grasp the freedom that you have provided for us through the triumph of Christ over the law. May we never look back!