

Introduction¹: Understand the Context of Galatians

DATE: The letter to the Galatians was likely written in 48 AD before the Jerusalem council recorded in Acts 15 making it one of the earliest New Testament books².

AUDIENCE: Its intended recipients are understood to be believers in Southern Galatia which Paul had led to Christ, including Lystra, Iconium, and Pisidian Antioch. These were works established on Paul’s first missionary journey (Acts 13-14).

AD 44	AD 45	AD 46	AD 47	AD 48	AD 49	AD 50
James mentioned in a church leadership role		James writes his letter	Paul’s first missionary journey to Galatia area			
				Paul writes Galatians		James leads Jerusalem Council

PURPOSE: Paul heard that the believers in Galatia were being troubled by Jewish believers who were teaching that the non-Jewish Galatian believers that after salvation they needed to also be circumcised and follow the law of Moses in order to be perfected. In other words, they had been saved by grace through faith alone, but in order to be fully right with God, they had to obey the law. Paul is outraged at this attempt to nullify the cross of Christ.

Galatians 2:21

”I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain.”

ACTS 15 The Jerusalem Council

<p><i>1 And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.” 2 Therefore, when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders, about this question. 3 So, being sent on their way by the church, they passed through Phoenicia and Samaria, describing the conversion of the Gentiles; and they caused great joy to all the brethren. 4 And when they had come to Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders; and they reported all things that God had done with them. 5 But some of the sect of the Pharisees who believed rose up, saying, “It is necessary to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses.”</i></p>	<p><i>6 Now the apostles and elders came together to consider this matter. 7 And when there had been much dispute, Peter rose up and said to them: “Men and brethren, you know that a good while ago God chose among us, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. 8 So God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to us, 9 and made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. 10 Now therefore, <u>why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?</u> 11 <u>But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they.</u>” 12 Then all the multitude kept silent and listened to Barnabas and Paul declaring how many miracles and wonders God had worked through them among the Gentiles.</i></p>
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¹ Information regarding the background on the book of Galatians is primarily taken from the Nelson’s NKJV Study Bible.

² The book of James was written before Galatians and thus before the Jerusalem Council about which James was given wisdom about the Gentiles.

¹³ And after they had become silent, James answered, saying, "Men and brethren, listen to me: ¹⁴ Simon has declared how God at the first visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name. ¹⁵ And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written:

¹⁶ 'After this I will return
And will rebuild the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down;

I will rebuild its ruins,
And I will set it up;

¹⁷ So that the rest of mankind may seek the LORD,
Even all the Gentiles who are called by My name,
Says the LORD who does all these things.'

¹⁸ "Known to God from eternity are all His works. ¹⁹

Therefore I judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God, ²⁰ but that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and from blood. ²¹

For Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath. " ¹⁸ "Known to God from eternity are all His works. ¹⁹

Therefore I judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God, ²⁰ but that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and from blood. ²¹

For Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath. "

²² Then it pleased the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas, namely, Judas who was also named Barsabas, and Silas, leading men among the brethren.

²³ They wrote this, letter by them:
The apostles, the elders, and the brethren,
To the brethren who are of the Gentiles in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia:
Greetings.

²⁴ Since we have heard that some who went out from us have **troubled you** with words, unsettling your souls, saying, "You must be circumcised **and keep the law**"—to whom we gave no such commandment—²⁵ it seemed good to us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, ²⁶ **men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.** ²⁷ We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who will also report the same things by word of mouth. ²⁸ **For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: ²⁹ that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well.**

Galatians Chapter 1 Are You Preaching "Another" Gospel?

"Another" gospel is one which adds requirements to righteousness. In Paul's time "another" gospel referred to being perfected through circumcision and keeping the Law of Moses after salvation.

In the church today "another" gospel teaches that we are saved by grace through faith, but that after this we must perfect ourselves (or improve our relationship and right-standing with God) through various spiritual disciplines and good works. We call this "mixture". Paul called it "another" gospel.

Paul pronounces as "accursed" anyone teaching "another" gospel. This makes it VERY IMPORTANT that we analyze what we teach and hear.

¹Paul, an apostle (not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead), ² and all the brethren who are with me, ³ Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, ⁴ who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, ⁵ to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

1. This salutation by Paul contains only the basics³. In all the other letters his greetings there are personal comments and words of praise. Paul is skipping the niceties and getting right to the point. This points to the urgency and importance of what he is about to say. Compare with the letter to the Philippians.

*To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:
² Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ³ I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, ⁴ always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy, ⁵ for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now, ⁶ being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ; ⁷ just as it is right for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my chains and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers with me of grace. ⁸ For God is my witness, how greatly I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ. ⁹ And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, ¹⁰ that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ, ¹¹ being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.*

2. Paul begins by pointing out that his calling was from Jesus Christ, not man⁴. He is perhaps asserting his position and authority to say what he is about to say.

3. **GOOD NEWS: Grace and peace to you!**

Contrary to many teachings today, God is not at war with you and His favor is toward you.

Romans 8:31-32

What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?

4. **GOOD NEWS: Jesus died for our sins and was buried and rose again.**

1 Corinthians 15:1-4

*Moreover, brethren, I declare to you **the gospel** which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, ² by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word*

³ This Letter to the churches of Galatia shows a deliberate lack of warmth. Ordinarily Paul addressed believers as "the church of God," "saints," or "the faithful in Christ Jesus." He often expressed thanks for the Christians, or praise for their virtues. Frequently he mentioned individuals by name. But there is none of that here. The seriousness of the error in the Galatian churches caused him to be stern and cool toward them. -Believer's Bible Commentary

⁴ In saying this, Paul is not only saying that he was not appointed by the 12 apostles, but that Jesus Christ is God. -BBC

which I preached to you—unless you believed in vain.³ For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,⁴ and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.

- a. If someone teaches that Jesus was not resurrected from the dead, that person is preaching “another gospel”.
- b. Most believers understand this. They also understand that when we receive Jesus we are forgiven of our past sins.

5. GOOD NEWS: We are not only *initially* forgiven of *past* sins, but continually and forever forgiven of ALL SIN.⁵

1 John 2:12

I write to you, little children, Because your sins are forgiven you for His name’s sake.

1 John 1:7

But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses⁶ us from all sin.

Colossians 1:14

In whom we have redemption⁷ through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.

Hebrews 10:1-2; 11-14

For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect.² For then would they not have ceased to be offered? For the worshipers, once purified, would have had no more consciousness of sins.¹¹ And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.¹² But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God,¹³ from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool.¹⁴

For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.

6. GOOD NEWS: We have been delivered from the power of darkness.

Colossians 1:13-14

He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love.

Hebrews 2:14-15

Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil,¹⁵ and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

7. GOOD NEWS: God is our God and our Father. We are His people and beloved children.

Jeremiah 31:33

But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

1 John 3:1

⁵ See also Acts 5:31, Acts 13:37-39, Acts 26:18, Ephesians 1:7, Jeremiah 31:31-34

⁶ “Cleanses” in the Greek reads “is cleansing”.

⁷ In the Greek “in whom you are having the deliverance...the pardoning of sins”

Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!

⁶I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, ⁷ which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. ⁸ But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. ⁹ As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed. ¹⁰ For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ.

8. Paul gets to his purpose for writing the Galatians. He **MARVELS** that they have turned from the true gospel to another. Notice the contrast of a “different gospel” with what Paul calls the “grace of Christ”. He is making it clear that the gospel is the grace of God.

Acts 20:24

But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God.

John 1:14, 16-17

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. 16 And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace. 17 For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 1:10

As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful searches and inquiries.

Titus 2:11

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men.

Colossians 1:5-6

Because of the hope laid up for you in heaven, of which you previously heard in the word of truth, the gospel ⁶ which has come to you, just as in all the world also it is constantly bearing fruit and increasing, even as it has been doing in you also since the day you heard of it and understood the grace of God in truth.

2 Corinthians 4:15

For all things are for your sakes, so that the grace which is spreading to more and more people may cause the giving of thanks to abound to the glory of God.

Ephesians 2:8-9

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; ⁹ not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

9. When the gospel is perverted, we are troubled.

a. *Metastrepho*: "to transform into something of an opposite character"-Vines

b. *Meta*: Signifying a change. *Strepho*: to distort, twist, pervert.

The Grace of God
IS the Gospel.

10. *To trouble means to disturb. Many Christians after a couple years of faith begin to be troubled. Most of them don't know why. That joy they once knew begins to fade, but they are told this is normal. It isn't. Only a return to the true gospel of grace and forsaking "another" will yield the result of returning to one's first love.*
11. *Paul places a curse on any man or angel including himself who preaches "another" gospel. Usually, Christians have attributed this scripture as to referring to cults. However, Paul is addressing BORN AGAIN believers who had been led astray by false teaching. They started with correct beliefs, but quickly had been swayed by the false teachers.*
12. *Paul marvels at how quickly this happened, and we need to realize how quickly this type of indoctrination happens in the church today, often in new convert courses and almost always in discipleship courses.*
13. *Paul repeats the curse giving it added significance.*
14. *He makes it clear to them that he is not trying to please man by what he is saying, but God only.*

¹¹But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. ¹²For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ.

15. **The Gospel is not something that man would design. Man would make a "gospel" that involved self-effort that would result in being acceptable to God. In fact, most of the Christian church teaches continued salvation based on self-effort. Paul refers to this effort to be perfected by self-efforts as "the flesh".**
Galatians 3:3
Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?
16. **Paul did not receive the gospel of grace from men, nor did men teach him. It came to Him by revelation of Jesus Christ. He meant the 12 apostles had not taught him. He understood it just as we do, by revelation of Jesus Christ.**
2 Corinthians 4:6
For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.
Romans 16:25-26
Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began ²⁶ but now made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for obedience to the faith—
Ephesians 1:18
I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints
2 Peter 1:19
So we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as

to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts.

- a. **We need revelation in order to really comprehend the blessing and magnitude of the Gospel.**
- b. **Faith comes by hearing. So be careful what you listen to.**

¹³ For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it. ¹⁴ And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers.

17. Paul's religious pedigree was impressive. If there was anyone who might have been justified by the law, it would have been Paul. Yet, he put aside His religious qualifications so that He could be justified by faith.

Philippians 3:3-9

For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh, ⁴ though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: ⁵ circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; ⁶ concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. ⁷ But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. ⁸ Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith.

18. Paul was very zealous in his persecution of the church.

Acts 7:57 - Acts 8:1, 3

Then they cried out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, and ran at him with one accord; ⁵⁸ and they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul. ⁵⁹ And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on God and saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." ⁶⁰ Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not charge them with this sin." And when he had said this, he fell asleep. ¹ Now Saul was consenting to his death. At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. ³ As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison.

¹⁵ But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, ¹⁶ to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood,

19. "But when it was the good pleasure of the One who set me apart before I was born, and called me by His grace, to give me an inward revelation of His Son in order that I might proclaim Him as glad tidings among the Gentiles, immediately I did not put myself in communication with flesh and blood for the purpose of consultation."-Wuest's Word Studies

- a. **When we proclaim Jesus, we are preaching GOOD NEWS!**
- b. **To reveal His Son: A revelation of Jesus is a revelation of the Gospel.**

¹⁷ nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus.¹⁸ Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and remained with him fifteen days. ¹⁹ But I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother. ²⁰ (Now concerning the things which I write to you, indeed, before God, I do not lie.) ²¹ Afterward I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. ²² And I was unknown by face to the churches of Judea which were in Christ. ²³ But they were hearing only, "He who formerly persecuted us now preaches the faith which he once tried to destroy." ²⁴ And they glorified God in me.

20. Paul now gives account for what he was doing the many years before his met the apostles before him. He is doing this for a purpose: to prove that he was not taught by the 12 apostles. He learned about the gospel of grace through revelation.
21. When giving our testimonies, our goal is for people to see Jesus and glorify God, not ourselves or man.
22. **GOOD NEWS:** We have God living inside of us. We don't need to ask for His presence to come or be with us. He is already here. He promised to be with us when we gather in His name. He promised to never ever leave us or forsake us, not ever.
Colossians 1:27
To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.
Matthew 18:20
For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them."
Hebrews 13:5b
For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

LAST WORDS

Peter (Acts 15:7-11)

7 And when there had been much dispute, Peter rose up and said to them: "Men and brethren, you know that a good while ago God chose among us, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. 8 So God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to us, 9 and made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. 10 Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? 11 But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they."

Paul (Acts 28:28)

"Therefore let it be known to you that the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will hear it!"