

NOON BIBLE STUDY: GALATIANS 1

AS WE LOOKED AT PAUL'S FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY LAST WEEK, WE DISCOVERED THAT PAUL HAD TRAVELED THROUGH THE REGION OF GALATIA, STOPPING AT VARIOUS MAJOR CITIES IN THE AREA ALONG THE WAY TO PREACH THE GOSPEL. IT SEEMS THAT HE HAS A MIX OF FAVORABLE RESPONSE AND UNFAVORABLE REJECTION ALONG THE WAY. WE SEE A PATTERN DEVELOPING: A FIRST TEACHING STOP AT A JEWISH SYNAGOGUE → SOME GOOD/BAD RESPONSES → LARGER AUDIENCE HEARS/RECEIVES THE GOSPEL → JEWISH LEADERS UPSET → CAUSE TROUBLE.

THIS "TROUBLE" INCLUDED MOBS, PUBLIC ARGUMENTS, AND VIOLENCE AGAINST PAUL HIMSELF. BEFORE PAUL RETURNS TO ANTIOCH (WHERE HE WAS COMMISSIONED AS A MISSIONARY), HE REVISITS THE GALATIAN CHURCHES & HELPS SET UP LEADERSHIP AND SHEPHERDS. HERE'S HOW ACTS CONCLUDES THE 1ST MISSIONARY TRIP:

ACTS 14:21-28 - AFTER THEY HAD PREACHED THE GOSPEL TO THAT CITY AND HAD MADE MANY DISCIPLES, THEY RETURNED TO LYSTRA AND TO ICONIUM AND TO ANTIOCH, 22 STRENGTHENING THE SOULS OF THE DISCIPLES, ENCOURAGING THEM TO CONTINUE IN THE FAITH, AND SAYING, "THROUGH MANY TRIBULATIONS WE MUST ENTER THE KINGDOM OF GOD." 23 WHEN THEY HAD APPOINTED ELDER'S FOR THEM IN EVERY CHURCH, HAVING PRAYED WITH FASTING, THEY COMMENDED THEM TO THE LORD IN WHOM THEY HAD BELIEVED. 24 THEY PASSED THROUGH PISIDIA AND CAME INTO PAMPHYLIA. 25 WHEN THEY HAD SPOKEN THE WORD IN PERGA, THEY WENT DOWN TO ATTALIA. 26 FROM THERE THEY SAILED TO ANTIOCH, FROM WHICH THEY HAD BEEN COMMENDED TO THE GRACE OF GOD FOR THE WORK THAT THEY HAD ACCOMPLISHED. 27 WHEN THEY HAD ARRIVED AND GATHERED THE CHURCH TOGETHER, THEY BEGAN TO REPORT ALL THINGS THAT GOD HAD DONE WITH THEM AND HOW HE HAD OPENED A DOOR OF FAITH TO THE GENTILES. 28 AND THEY SPENT A LONG TIME WITH THE DISCIPLES.

PAUL TRAVELLED IN GALATIA AROUND 48 AD AND WILL TRAVEL TO JERUSALEM AROUND 50 AD SO MOST SCHOLARS BELIEVE PAUL IS GOING TO WRITE THIS LETTER TO THE GALATIAN CHURCHES IN BETWEEN THIS TIME. HERE'S A RECAP OF PAUL'S MESSAGE. HE WAS PROCLAIMING THE GOOD NEWS THAT GOD'S MESSIAH/CHRIST HAD COME AND HIS NAME WAS JESUS. HE ANNOUNCED THAT JESUS HAD DONE THE GOOD WORK TO RECONCILE HUMANITY BACK TO GOD. AS A RESULT FORGIVENESS AND SALVATION IS NOT DEPENDENT ON SPECIFIC RELIGIOUS ACTIONS NOR BIOLOGICAL OR FAMILIAL TIES.

ACTS 13:38-39 - "THEREFORE LET IT BE KNOWN TO YOU, BRETHREN, THAT THROUGH HIM FORGIVENESS OF SINS IS PROCLAIMED TO YOU, 39 AND THROUGH HIM EVERYONE WHO BELIEVES IS FREED FROM ALL THINGS, FROM WHICH YOU COULD NOT BE FREED THROUGH THE LAW OF MOSES.

FOR GENTILES (AKA NON-JEWISH PEOPLE), THIS WAS WELCOMED NEWS! THEY COULD APPROACH THE CREATOR GOD BY REPENTING AND TURNING TO JESUS THROUGH FAITH. RECEIVING GOD'S SPIRIT WAS THE "MARK" OF CHOSENNESS. FOR SOME DEVOUT JEWS, THIS WAS A BIT MORE COMPLICATED. UNTIL CHRIST CAME, THE WAY TO A RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD WAS THROUGH ADHERENCE TO THE LAW OF MOSES. CIRCUMCISION WAS THE "MARK" OF CHOSENNESS. SO WHILE MANY JEWS BELIEVED THAT JESUS WAS THE PROMISED MESSIAH AND EMBRACED HIS WAY, MANY HEARD PAUL'S MESSAGE AS A THREAT TO JUDAISM AS OPPOSED TO THE GLORIOUS NEXT PART OF GOD'S UNFOLDING STORY.

AND SO MANY JEWS DID MORE THAN DISAGREE, THEY ACTIVELY WORKED TO STOP THE GOSPEL MESSAGE:

ACTS 13:44-45 - THE NEXT SABBATH NEARLY THE WHOLE CITY ASSEMBLED TO HEAR THE WORD OF THE LORD. 45 BUT WHEN THE JEWS SAW THE CROWDS, THEY WERE FILLED WITH JEALOUSY AND BEGAN CONTRADICTING THE THINGS SPOKEN BY PAUL, AND WERE BLASPHEMING.

ACTS 13:49-50 - AND THE WORD OF THE LORD WAS BEING SPREAD THROUGH THE WHOLE REGION. 50 BUT THE JEWS INCITED THE DEVOUT WOMEN OF PROMINENCE AND THE LEADING MEN OF THE CITY, AND INSTIGATED A PERSECUTION AGAINST PAUL AND BARNABAS, AND DROVE THEM OUT OF THEIR DISTRICT.

ACTS 14:1-2 - IN ICONIUM THEY ENTERED THE SYNAGOGUE OF THE JEWS TOGETHER, AND SPOKE IN SUCH A MANNER THAT A LARGE NUMBER OF PEOPLE BELIEVED, BOTH OF JEWS AND OF GREEKS. 2 BUT THE JEWS WHO DISBELIEVED STIRRED UP THE MINDS OF THE GENTILES AND EMBITTERED THEM AGAINST THE BRETHREN.

ACTS 14:3-6 - THEREFORE THEY SPENT A LONG TIME THERE SPEAKING BOLDLY WITH RELIANCE UPON THE LORD, WHO WAS TESTIFYING TO THE WORD OF HIS GRACE, GRANTING THAT SIGNS AND WONDERS BE DONE BY THEIR HANDS. 4 BUT THE PEOPLE OF THE CITY WERE DIVIDED: AND SOME SIDED WITH THE JEWS, AND SOME WITH THE APOSTLES. 5 AND WHEN AN ATTEMPT WAS MADE BY BOTH THE GENTILES AND THE JEWS WITH THEIR RULERS, TO MISTREAT AND TO STONE THEM, 6 THEY BECAME AWARE OF IT AND FLED TO THE CITIES OF LYCAONIA, LYSTRA AND DERBE, AND THE SURROUNDING REGION:

ACTS 14:19 - BUT JEWS CAME FROM ANTIOCH AND ICONIUM, AND HAVING WON OVER THE CROWDS, THEY STONED PAUL AND DRAGGED HIM OUT OF THE CITY, SUPPOSING HIM TO BE DEAD.

PAUL HAS NOW LEFT GALATIA BUT, AS WE'LL DISCOVER AS WE JUMP INTO HIS LETTER TO THE GALATIAN CHURCHES, THE OPPOSITION DIDN'T END AFTER HE LEFT.

GALATIANS 1:1-5 - PAUL'S OPENING GREETINGS

Q - DOES ANYTHING FROM THIS OPENING STAND OUT TO YOU IN LIGHT OF WHAT WE KNOW OF THE CONTEXT TO THIS LETTER?

PAUL HIGHLIGHTING HIS APOSTLESHIP - COMING DIRECTLY FROM JESUS AND GOD. IT'S A REMINDER THAT JESUS GAVE HIMSELF FOR OUR SINS, ACCORDING TO GOD'S WILL.

GALATIANS 1:6-7 - PAUL'S URGENT CONCERN

HERE IS THE PURPOSE OF THE LETTER SPELLED OUT. SOMETHING HAS HAPPENED SINCE PAUL LEFT GALATIA THAT HAS LED TO THE CHRISTIANS THERE "QUICKLY DESERTING" GOD AND TURNING TO A "DIFFERENT GOSPEL". PAUL SAYS THAT "THERE ARE SOME WHO ARE DISTURBING (THE GALATIANS) AND WANT TO DISTORT THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST."

Q - BASED ON WHAT WE HAVE READ SO FAR IN ACTS, WHAT DO YOU THINK IS GOING ON HERE? WHAT PROBABLY HAPPENED IN GALATIA SINCE PAUL LEFT?

PAUL TELLS THE GALATIANS THAT THEY AREN'T "DESERTING" HIM OR THE CHURCH, BUT GOD HIMSELF! THE GOSPEL IS THE INVITATION TO RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD AND BY MOVING AWAY FROM THE TRUE GOSPEL, THEY ARE DESERTING GOD. LOOK AT SOME OF THE WORD PAUL USES TO DESCRIBE HOW HE'S PROCESSING THIS CHANGE

"AMAZED" - θαυμάζω (*THAUMAZO*) - SHOCK, WONDER, USED OF PETER WHEN HE COMES TO EMPTY TOMB, AND OF CROWDS AFTER SEEING JESUS CAST OUT A DEMON

"QUICKLY DESERTING" - μετατίθημι (*METATITHEMI*) - (AS OPPOSED TO SLOWLY DRIFTING)

"GRACE" - THIS IS A BIT OF AN INFLAMMATORY USAGE OF THIS WORD IN THIS CONTEXT. AS WE WILL SEE MORE OF AS WE READ THE REST OF THE LETTER, THE REAL BATTLE HAPPENING IS NOT ABOUT JEW OR GENTILE OR PAUL OR OTHER PREACHERS, BUT ABOUT WHETHER OR NOT ONE IS SAVED BY GRACE OR SOMETHING ELSE. PAUL ACCUSES THE GALATIANS OF MOVING AWAY FROM "HIM WHO CALLED YOU BY GRACE" TO A "DIFFERENT GOSPEL". PAUL'S GOSPEL WAS ABOUT GRACE, THE OTHER MESSAGES ARE NOT. PAUL WILL USE THE WORD "GRACE" 7X IN THE LETTER.

"DISTURBING" - GREEK WORD ταρασσω (*TARASSO*) MEANING TO "STIR UP" OR "TO TROUBLE"

"DISTORTING" - GREEK WORD μεταστρέφω (METASTREPHO) MEANING "TO TURN ABOUT", "TO PERVERT". THE ROOT OF THE WORD IMPLIES TURNING AWAY FROM ONE THING TO LOOK AT ANOTHER THING (CP. TURN THE OTHER CHEEK)

THERE ARE MANY ISSUES WITHIN THE CHURCH THAT WE MAY HAVE DISAGREEMENT OVER, BUT THE GOSPEL IS NOT ONE OF THOSE NON-ESSENTIAL ISSUES. PAUL IS NOT PULLING ANY PUNCHES AS HE ADDRESSES THIS.

GALATIANS 1:8-9 - PAUL'S ADMONITION

PAUL GIVES A VERY DIRECT AND UNWAVERING WARNING TO THE CHURCH: IF ANYONE COMES WITH ANOTHER GOSPEL THAN WHAT YOU HAVE ALREADY RECEIVED, NOT ONLY DON'T LISTEN OR BELIEVE, BUT KNOW THAT THIS PERSON IS TO BE "ACCURSED".

HE USES THIS PHRASE "HE IS TO BE ACCURSED" TWICE IN AS MANY VERSES (V. 8 & 9). THIS IS THE GREEK WORD ἀνάθεμα. WHILE IT IS TRANSLATED "ACCURSED" OR "CURSED" IN OUR ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS, THE WORD ITSELF MEANS "SOMETHING THAT IS LAID UP OR BROUGHT". IT WAS A WORD USED FOR THE VOTIVE OFFERINGS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT - THE KIND OF OFFERING WHERE SOMETHING WAS SET ASIDE TO BE BURNED UP OR DESTROYED. HERE'S MORE FROM MERRIAM-WEBSTER'S WORD HISTORY:

THE GREEK ROOT OF **ANATHEMA** ORIGINALLY MEANT SIMPLY "A THING DEVOTED" OR "AN OFFERING," AND IN THE OLD TESTAMENT IT COULD REFER TO EITHER REVERED OBJECTS OR OBJECTS REPRESENTING DESTRUCTION BROUGHT ABOUT IN THE NAME OF THE LORD, SUCH AS THE WEAPONS OF AN ENEMY. SINCE THE ENEMY'S OBJECTS THEREFORE BECAME SYMBOLS OF WHAT WAS REVILED OR UNHOLY, THE NEUTRAL MEANING OF "A THING DEVOTED" BECAME "A THING DEVOTED TO EVIL" OR "CURSE." (SOURCE: [HTTPS://WWW.MERRIAM-WEBSTER.COM/Dictionary/ANATHEMA](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/anathema))

THIS IS WHAT PAUL IS SAYING ABOUT THE PEOPLE, OR ANYONE REALLY, WHO IS PREACHING A GOSPEL CONTRARY TO WHAT WAS ORIGINALLY ANNOUNCED BY PAUL. PAUL MAKES A LOT OF STRONG POINTS DURING HIS MINISTRY AND THE LETTERS HE WILL WRITE TO CHURCHES, BUT HE ONLY USES THIS WORD ONE OTHER TIME TOWARDS THOSE OPPOSING CHRIST AND HIS GOSPEL (1 CORINTHIANS 16:22).

THIS SPEAKS TO THE SERIOUSNESS THAT PAUL HAS TO THOSE WHO ARE DISTORTING THE GOSPEL ITSELF. AT THE ROOT OF THE THINGS WE READ IN ACTS, THIS IS THE REASON WHY PAUL IS UPSET. PEOPLE HAVE COME INTO THE GALATIAN CHURCHES AND SAID THAT IN ORDER TO BE SAVED (WHICH IS THE MESSAGE THE GOSPEL PRESENTS) YOU MUST DO SOMETHING OTHER THAN OR IN ADDITION TO WHAT PAUL HAS PROCLAIMED. THIS SITUATION HITS RIGHT AT THE FOUNDATIONAL LAYER OF THE FAITH.

PAUL IS SO CONFIDENT THAT WHAT HE PREACHED TO THE GALATIANS WAS RIGHT, THAT HE EVEN PUTS HIMSELF UNDER A CURSE IF HE COMES BACK TO THEM WITH SOMETHING NEW/DIFFERENT. WOW.

GALATIANS 1:10-12 - WHERE PAUL GOT HIS MESSAGE FROM

PAUL IS NOT GOING TO BEGIN HIS DEFENSE OF THE GOSPEL AND HIS OWN MINISTRY. HE OPENS UP BY SAYING THAT HIS MOTIVATION IS TO BE PLEASING TO GOD AND BE A SERVANT OF JESUS CHRIST. HE'S NOT DOING THIS TO BE LIKED BY OTHER PEOPLE OR WIN THEIR APPROVAL OR ACCOLADES. THIS IS GOING TO MAKE MORE SENSE IN THE NEXT SECTION OF SCRIPTURE WHERE HE WILL MENTION SOME WELL KNOWN CHRISTIAN LEADERS. HIS POINT IS THAT HE'S PRIORITIZING BEING RIGHT OVER POPULARITY AND BEING LIKED.

PAUL BEGINS TO GIVE HIS RESUME AND CITE HIS SOURCE MATERIAL FOR THE GOSPEL HE PREACHED. HE TELLS/REMINDS THE GALATIANS THAT JESUS CHRIST HIMSELF PREACHED THE GOSPEL TO PAUL AND APPEARED TO HIM ON THE ROAD. HE IS CHALLENGING THE GALATIANS TO CONSIDER THE SOURCE OF THE CONTRARY MESSAGES THEY RECEIVED. WHO WAS IT THAT PREACHED THE "DIFFERENT GOSPEL" TO THEM AND UNDER WHOSE AUTHORITY WERE THEY SPEAKING?

GALATIANS 1:13-24 - PAUL'S JOURNEY

Q - WHY IS PAUL RECOUNTING HIS BIOGRAPHY AND CONVERSION STORY?

PAUL IS TRYING TO MAKE THE POINT THAT JESUS HIMSELF IS THE ONE WHO INFLUENCED HIS CHANGE. THOUGH PAUL DID JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM AND HAVE INTERACTION WITH OTHER APOSTLES/DISCIPLES (INCLUDING PETER AND JAMES), IT WAS AFTER HE HAD ALREADY MET JESUS AND AFTER HE HAD COME TO KNOW THE MESSAGE/TRUTH OF JESUS. IT WAS GOD WHO CALLED HIM, THROUGH CHRIST AND THAT'S HIS RESUME TO BE ABLE TO SAY "WHAT I PREACHED TO YOU WAS ~~THE~~ GOSPEL TRUTH."

PAUL REMINDS THE GALATIANS THAT HE WAS A ZEALOUSLY ADHERENT JEW AND AT ONE TIME WOULD HAVE BEEN LEADING THE CHARGE OF THE VERY JEWISH OPPOSITION THAT HAD LIKELY COME INTO GALATIA TO DISTORT WHAT HE HAD PREACHED - BUT THAT HE LEFT THAT MOVEMENT BECAUSE HE MET JESUS THE MESSIAH. HE'S BOLSTERING HIS CLAIM TO AUTHORITY BY REFERENCING HIS OWN REPENTANCE AND THE JOURNEY HE TRAVELED TO ARRIVE AT THE TRUTH.

IN SHORT: JESUS HIMSELF REVEALED THE TRUTH TO PAUL AND HE DIDN'T CONSULT WITH OTHER HUMANS TO FIGURE IT ALL OUT. HE IS THE RARE INDIVIDUAL WHO GOT DIRECT LINE ACCESS TO THE GOSPEL FROM GOD AND CHRIST. SO WHEN HE SPEAKS IT, LISTEN TO IT AND BELIEVE IT AND JUDGE ALL OTHER VERSIONS YOU MIGHT HEAR AGAINST IT.

WE WILL GET INTO MORE OF PAUL'S STORY WHEN WE PICK UP AGAIN BUT WE'LL PAUSE HERE FOR NOW. PAUL IS NOT HAPPY ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED WHEN HE LEFT GALATIA. THE BIGGEST PROBLEM IS THAT THE GOSPEL MESSAGE ITSELF WAS BEING ATTACKED AND DISTORTED. WE LEARN FROM HIS LANGUAGE THAT THE GOSPEL IS A (THE?) CRITICAL PIECE THAT WE NEED TO KNOW, AND KNOW WELL.

BROTHERS AND SISTERS, WE NEED TO GET THE GOSPEL RIGHT. WE CAN HAVE AND WORK THROUGH DIFFERENCES ON END-TIMES TIMELINES, THE BEST (OR WORST) TYPE OF MUSIC TO HAVE IN CHURCH, WHICH VERSION OF THE BIBLE IS BEST, AND EVEN MORE TOUCHY SUBJECTS LIKE THE GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT, WOMEN IN MINISTRY, DIVORCE & REMARRIAGE OR THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH IN THE POLITICAL WORLD. BUT WE CAN'T MISS THE GOSPEL.

THE GOSPEL MESSAGE IS INITIAL INFORMATION THAT IF HEARD AND BELIEVED WILL RESULT IN SALVATION. IT IS THE INVITATION TO A RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD THROUGH CHRIST. WITHOUT THE INVITATION, YOU DON'T GET INTO WHERE YOU'RE HOPING TO GO. AND SO IF YOU HAVE THE WRONG INVITATION OR EVEN MORE DANGEROUS, A COUNTERFEIT VERSION OF THE "RIGHT" ONE, YOU'RE NOT GOING TO "GET IN."

IN OUR CASE TODAY, WE DID NOT RECEIVE THE GOSPEL FROM PAUL THE APOSTLE HIMSELF. WE ARE NOT EYEWITNESSES TO THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS AND WE DIDN'T HEAR GALATIANS WHEN IT WAS FIRST READ TO THE SAINTS IN THAT REGION. WE HAVE MORE WORK THAT IS REQUIRED TO SORT THROUGH THE MESS OF CHRISTIANITY AND THE CHURCH TODAY. WE DON'T HAVE THE LUXURY THAT OUR PASTORS OR PREACHERS OR PODCASTERS CAN SAY "DON'T LISTEN TO ANYTHING ELSE ANYONE SAYS BECAUSE WHAT I JUST TOLD YOU IS 100% PURE GOSPEL TRUTH."

MORE WORK IS INVOLVED FOR US. WE NEED TO STUDY THE SCRIPTURES, PRAY, RELY ON THE SPIRIT, HAVE GOOD AND GODLY CONVERSATIONS AND DISCERNMENT. YET AT THE SAME TIME, GOD IN HIS GOOD GRACE HAS PRESERVED THE GOSPEL AND IT'S A LOT SIMPLER THAN WE MIGHT THINK.

AS WE READ THE GOSPELS, ACTS AND THE REST OF THE NEW TESTAMENT, WE DISCOVER THAT IN ITS SIMPLEST FORM WE KNOW THE GOOD NEWS ANNOUNCEMENT RELATES TO THESE SIMPLE TRUTHS: JESUS CHRIST DIED. JESUS CHRIST WAS RAISED. JESUS CHRIST IS COMING AGAIN.

THERE'S A LOT MORE WE KNOW IS PACKAGED IN THOSE TRUTHS, BUT THAT'S THE CORE OF THE MESSAGE. WE WILL SPEND OUR LIFETIME DIGGING IN AND SWIMMING IN THE GLORIOUS TRUTHS OF THIS SAVING MESSAGE. SO WE STAY ON GUARD, AND TEACHABLE AND HUNGRY FOR THE GOOD NEWS THAT HAS BEEN ANNOUNCED AND IS BEING HELD OUT AS AN INVITATION TO US TODAY.