

NOON BIBLE STUDY: GALATIANS

GALATIANS IS A LETTER FROM PAUL TO THE CHURCHES OF GALATIA. THERE ARE MANY DIFFERENT GENRES IN THE BIBLE. BOOKS OF HISTORY, BIOGRAPHY, LAWS, POETRY AND PROPHECY. ONE OF THE MAJOR TYPES OF SCRIPTURE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT IS WHAT WE ARE STARTING TO LOOK AT TODAY. PAUL AND OTHER CHURCH LEADERS WOULD WRITE LETTERS (ALSO CALLED EPISTLES) AND HAVE THEM SENT AND READ TO INDIVIDUALS AND CHURCHES. WITH NO RADIO, TV OR EMAIL, A LETTER WAS A PERSONAL WAY TO STAY IN TOUCH AND COMMUNICATE IN THESE ANCIENT TIMES. GALATIANS IS WRITTEN IN GREEK BECAUSE AT THIS TIME GREEK WAS THE MOST SPOKEN/READ LANGUAGE IN THE WORLD (CP. ENGLISH IN OUR TIMES).

GALATIANS 1:1-5 - OPENING GREETINGS & REMARKS

V. 2 - "TO THE CHURCHES OF GALATIA"

	A.D.	30	35	40	45	50	55	60	65	70	75	80
Death, resurrection of Christ (A.D. 33 [or 30]) [†]												
Paul's conversion (33/34*)												
Paul's first Jerusalem visit (36/37*)												
Paul's second Jerusalem visit (famine relief) (44–47*)												
Paul's first missionary journey (46–47)												
Paul writes letter to the Galatians (48*)												
Paul's third Jerusalem visit (apostolic council) (48–49*)												
Paul's second journey (48/49–51*)												
Paul's third missionary journey (52–57*)												
Paul martyred in Rome (64–67*)												

* denotes approximate date; / signifies either/or; [†] see *The Date of Jesus' Crucifixion*, pp. 1809–1810

ACTS 13-14 - FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY

ACTS 13:13-16 - PAUL ARRIVES IN PROVINCE OF GALATIA

V. 14 - PISIDIAN ANTIOCH (FIRST CITY MENTIONED IN GALATIA)

PAUL'S TYPICAL MISSIONARY ROUTINE INVOLVED ARRIVING IN A CITY AND FIRST VISITING THE LOCAL SYNAGOGUE. THE JEWISH PEOPLE, ORIGINALLY CENTERED IN JUDEA, HAD SPREAD THROUGHOUT THE SURROUNDING REGIONS. THIS HAPPENED FOR VARIOUS REASONS, BOTH AS A RESULT OF PERSECUTION OR ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY.

PAUL WOULD VISIT THE JEWISH CENTER IN THE CITY WITH HOPES OF SHARING THE GREAT NEWS OF GOD'S COMING KINGDOM AND THE IDENTIFICATION AND WORK OF THE MESSIAH (WHICH IS A TERM MEANING THE ANOINTED KING OF GOD'S KINGDOM). HE WOULD SHARE A MESSAGE FROM THE HEBREW SCRIPTURES AND PIVOT FROM A WELL KNOWN STORY OR PRINCIPLE AMONGST THE JEWISH PEOPLE TO JESUS AS MESSIAH. THIS WAS THE POINT THAT WOULD STIR UP VARIOUS REACTIONS AMONGST THE AUDIENCE.

WE SEE THIS PATTERN OVER AND OVER AGAIN IN ACTS. THIS SET THE FOUNDATION FOR THE EARLY CHURCH BEING MADE UP OF BELIEVER'S OF JEWISH DESCENT.

ONE FINAL NOTE AND OBSERVATION: PAUL WILL ADDRESS HIS AUDIENCE THIS WAY "MEN OF ISRAEL, AND YOU WHO FEAR GOD..." (V. 16)" IT WAS COMMON PRACTICE FOR NON-JEWISH PEOPLE TO SHOW INTEREST IN THE GOD AND WAYS OF ISRAEL. THESE WERE "PROSELYTES", OR PEOPLE WHO HAD BEGUN TO LEARN OR PRACTICE THE JEWISH LAW AND WORSHIP YAHWEH, BUT WERE NOT BIOLOGICALLY JEWISH. THUS THE DESIGNATION "MEN OF ISRAEL AND YOU WHO FEAR GOD."

ACTS 13:16-22 - PAUL'S BRIDGE BUILDING MESSAGE

ACTS 13:23-39 - PAUL PIVOTS TO JESUS

ACTS 13:40-41 - CONVICTION PHASE

PAUL'S NOT TRYING TO JUST IMPART FACTS OR INFORMATION - HE IS PREACHING TO THE END THAT THERE IS REPENTANCE AND FAITH IN JESUS. THE GOSPEL ISN'T JUST INFORMATION, IT'S AN ANNOUNCEMENT OF SOMETHING THAT HAS HAPPENED, WILL HAPPEN AND IS HAPPENING NOW.

ACTS 13:42-43 - REACTION OF AUDIENCE: WE WANT TO HEAR MORE!

ACTS 13:44-52 - NEXT WEEK'S EVENTS

FOR THOSE OF US FAMILIAR WITH THE BOOK OF ACTS, THIS SEEMS TO BE THE COMMON PATTERN:

PAUL ARRIVES AT A SYNAGOGUE → SOME GOOD/BAD RESPONSES → LARGER AUDIENCE HEARS/RECEIVES THE GOSPEL → JEWISH LEADERS UPSET → CAUSE TROUBLE

AS A RESULT, PAUL & HIS TEAM WILL SPEAK THE GOSPEL TO THE GENTILES AND/OR MOVE OR BE PUSHED INTO A NEW CITY. IN THIS CASE THEY DO BOTH, EVENTUALLY ENDING UP IN **ICONIUM** (V. 51) THE SECOND NAMED CITY IN GALATIA.

ACTS 14:1-7 - PAUL IN ICONIUM, LYCAONIA, LYSTRA, DERBE & THE SURROUNDING REGION

NOTICE THE SAME "PATTERN" AS WE SAW IN PISIDIAN ANTIOCH. BUT PAUL AND BARNABAS ARE UNDETERRED AND SO CONVINCED OF THEIR MESSAGE AND THE FAVOR OF GOD UPON THEM THAT THEY KEEP ON KEEPING ON.

WHAT FOLLOWS IS A HUMOROUS RECORD (ACTS 14:8-18) WHERE AFTER A MIRACLE IS PERFORMED IN LYSTRA, THE GENTILES THINK THE "GODS HAVE COME DOWN" AND BEGIN TO WORSHIP PAUL & BARNABAS! PAUL USES THE OPPORTUNITY TO TELL THESE PAGAN CITIZENS ABOUT THE TRUE GOD.

ACTS 14:19-28 - TROUBLE, TENACITY, AND THE TURNAROUND TRIP

THE FINAL PART OF THE "PATTERN" WE HAVE DISCUSSED INVOLVES JEWS FROM ANTIOCH & ICONIUM (THE TWO CITIES IN GALATIA PAUL WAS JUST IN) COMING TO LYSTRA, WINNING OVER THE CROWDS AND STONING PAUL. IT IS HIGHLY POSSIBLE THAT PAUL ACTUALLY DIED AS A RESULT OF THIS STONING AND WAS RAISED FROM THE DEAD AS THE DISCIPLES GATHERED AROUND HIM OUTSIDE THE CITY.

& AFTER HIS REVIVAL, PAUL GOES BACK INTO THE CITY OF LYSTRA! HE'LL THEN HEAD WITH BARNABAS TO DERBE TO PREACH THE GOSPEL.

AFTER THESE STOPS AND ENCOUNTERING THE OPPOSITION HE DID IN EACH PLACE, PAUL DECIDES TO RETURN TO THESE GALATIAN CITIES TO ENCOURAGE AND ESTABLISH LEADERS FOR THESE CHURCHES. HE GOES *BACK* TO LYSTRA AND ICONIUM AND PISIDIAN ANTIOCH (V. 21). HE REMINDS THE DISCIPLES IN EACH OF THESE CITIES TO REMAIN STRONG IN THE FAITH AND TO REMEMBER AND ANTICIPATE TRIALS AS THEY JOURNEY TOWARDS THE COMING KINGDOM OF GOD. A FITTING WORD FOR PAUL'S OWN EXPERIENCE TRAVELING THROUGH GALATIA.

EARLY IN THE MOVEMENT OF THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST, ONE OF THE MAJOR CHALLENGES THE NEW CHURCH FACES IS HOW TO RECONCILE THIS "NEW" INFORMATION WITH THE "OLD" INFORMATION EMBRACED IN/BY JUDAISM. THE EARLY CHURCH WILL GRAPPLE WITH "WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A CHRISTIAN?" AS WELL AS "HOW DO I RELATE TO THE OLD TESTAMENT LAW?" IT'S HARD FOR US TO UNDERSTAND THE MAJOR SHIFT THAT IS TAKING PLACE. JEWISH BELIEVERS IN JESUS AS MESSIAH ARE BEING TOLD THAT THE MESSIAH HAS COME, BUT HE HASN'T TAKEN OVER THE WORLD YET BECAUSE HE IS DECLARING THAT THE NATIONS TURN TO HIM, RECEIVE FORGIVENESS, AND THUS BE INCLUDED IN THE PROMISES OF THE AGE TO COME.

MANY JEWS OF THIS DAY WOULD HAVE BELIEVED THE MESSIAH WAS TO COME BUT HAD A SURE EXPECTATION THAT HE WAS GOING TO COME IN POWER AND GLORY, NOT IN HUMILITY AND SUFFERING. THE EXPECTED MESSIAH WAS CERTAINLY NOT GOING TO DIE AT THE HANDS OF THE ROMANS! YET PAUL, SCHOOLED IN THE OLD TESTAMENT TEACHINGS AND PROPHECIES IS EXPLAINING TO THEM *FROM THE SCRIPTURES* THAT INDEED THIS WAS GOD'S PLAN. HE'S GOING FROM SYNAGOGUE TO SYNAGOGUE WITH THIS MESSAGE. AND IF THAT WEREN'T SHOCKING ENOUGH, HE'S EVEN SPEAKING TO AND WELCOMING CROWDS OF GENTILES TO HEAR AND BELIEVE TOO!

THE JEWS WHO DO NOT TURN TO JESUS AS MESSIAH/CHRIST LOOK AT THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL AND THE WAY OF JESUS AS A THREAT. IT'S NOT JUST WRONG OR MISGUIDED, IT'S A THREAT. THEY LOOK AT THE WORDS OF PAUL AS BLASPHEMOUS AND A CORRUPTION AND DEPARTURE FROM THE "TRADITIONS OF THE FATHERS". THAT'S WHY THEY ARGUE WITH HIM, RUN HIM OUT OF TOWN, THREATEN HIM, TRY TO GET HIM IN TROUBLE WITH GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS, AND EVEN STONE OR BEAT HIM TO DEATH.

THIS BACKDROP IS SOMEWHAT UNFAMILIAR TO MODERN AMERICAN CHRISTIANS AND BIBLE READERS, AND IT MAY EVEN SEEM TO BE IRRELEVANT TO THE MODERN PROBLEMS WE ALL FACE. HOWEVER, IT IS CRITICALLY IMPORTANT TO BUILD ON BEFORE WE READ GALATIANS, AND FOR A FEW REASONS.

FIRST, THE EVENTS OF ACTS 13 & 14 HAPPEN *BEFORE* PAUL WILL WRITE GALATIANS. AS WE HAVE DISCUSSED, HE IS WRITING "GALATIANS" TO THE CHURCHES IN GALATIA, THE CHURCHES THAT ARE BEING FORMED AND ESTABLISHED IN THE VERY RECORDS WE JUST READ. THESE ARE THE FIRST BELIEVERS AND CHURCHES ESTABLISHED DURING PAUL'S MISSIONARY JOURNEY AND THEY ARE NEAR AND DEAR TO HIS HEART. AND SOMETHING HAS HAPPENED AFTER HE WAS WITH THEM THAT IS TROUBLING NOT ONLY PAUL, BUT MORE IMPORTANTLY THE FAITH OF THESE NEW DISCIPLES.

SO IF WE WANT TO UNDERSTAND GALATIANS, WE HAVE TO UNDERSTAND WHAT HAPPENED IN ACTS 13 & 14.

SECONDLY, IN MANY WAYS, WE'RE LOOKING AT THE QUESTION OF "WHAT DO I HAVE TO DO TO BE SAVED"? WHAT DO WE HAVE TO BELIEVE TO BE SAVED? WHAT DO WE HAVE TO DO AS A FOLLOWER OF JESUS? WHAT DO WE HAVE TO EMBRACE OR REJECT? YOU AND I MAY NOT LOSE ANY SLEEP

ASKING THE QUESTION WHETHER OR NOT WE NEED TO KEEP THE MOSAIC LAW - BUT WE CERTAINLY OUGHT TO BE CONCERNED ABOUT WHAT IS BEING ASKED OF US. IF WE GET THIS QUESTION WRONG OR PERHAPS MORE LIKELY IN OUR GENERATION, NOT EVEN TAKE THE TIME TO THINK ABOUT IT MUCH, WE'RE TAKING A BIG RISK. WE SHOULD DEVOTE TIME AND THOUGHT AND CONVERSATION AND DISCUSSION TO, AS PETER WRITES:

2 PETER 1:10A - THEREFORE, BRETHREN, BE ALL THE MORE DILIGENT TO MAKE CERTAIN ABOUT HIS CALLING AND CHOOSING YOU:...

AND AS PAUL HIMSELF WILL URGE: "WORK OUT YOUR OWN SALVATION WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING" (**PHILIPPIANS 2:12B**)

SO THIS IS NOT WASTED TIME OR SIMPLY AN EXERCISE IN THE ACCUMULATION OF MORE BIBLE KNOWLEDGE.

LASTLY, WE TURN AGAIN TO THE REASON PAUL IS GOING TO WRITE TO THE GALATIANS. HE PREACHED IN THIS REGION, MADE DISCIPLES AND THEN RETURNED AGAIN ON HIS WAY BACK TO STRENGTHEN AND ENCOURAGE THESE CHURCHES. BUT AFTER HIS DEPARTURE, THE TROUBLEMAKERS THAT HAD FOLLOWED HIM FROM CITY TO CITY HAVE NOW BEEN WORKING TO TROUBLE THE GALATIAN CHRISTIANS. MUCH OF WHAT WE WILL DISCOVER AS WE READ THE LETTER OF GALATIANS IS THAT PAUL NOW FINDS A CHURCH THAT HAS BEEN DUPED INTO BELIEVING SOMETHING OTHER THAN WHAT HE FIRST TAUGHT THEM. THEY HAVE BEEN LED ASTRAY, THEY HAVE BEEN LED AWAY, THEY HAVE MOVED FROM WHERE THEY ARE SUPPOSED TO BE. WE AREN'T GOING TO GET INTO THE REASONS WHY THIS HAPPENED JUST YET, BUT WE CONCLUDE THIS INTRODUCTION WITH A WARNING: IF WE DON'T HOLD FAST TO WHAT WE HAVE, WE CAN LOSE IT.

IN OTHER WORDS, BEING A CHRISTIAN TODAY IS NOT COMPARABLE TO FLOATING DOWN THE LAZY RIVER. MANY CHRISTIANS ARE JUST ENJOYING LIFE, GOING WHERE THE CURRENT TAKES THEM, RESTING, SMILING, AND SPLASHING ALONG. MANY CHRISTIANS ARE JUST ALONG FOR THE RIDE BEING PULLED BY THEIR PASTOR OR SPOUSE OR BIBLE TEACHER OR DENOMINATION. THEY ARE FLOATING BUT SOMEONE ELSE IS IN CONTROL OF THE JOURNEY.

NEITHER OF THOSE EXAMPLES OUGHT TO COMFORT US.

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS FILLED WITH JOY AND PLEASURE AND GOODNESS AND LOVE AND MIRACLE AND TESTIMONY AND REST AND HEALING. BUT IT IS A LIFE CHARACTERIZED NOT BY JUST "GOING WITH THE FLOW" BUT ONE OF DISCIPLINE, EFFORT, FIGHT, RESOLVE, DETERMINATION AND DECISION. JESUS HAS DONE THE WORK OF SALVATION THAT WE RECEIVE, BUT WE ARE LIVING IN AN EVIL WORLD AND LIES, DECEPTION, SHORTCUTS AND COMPROMISE ARE ALL AROUND US AND WE HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO BE STRONG AND COURAGEOUS AND VIGILANT OR ELSE WE CAN GET TAKEN OUT IN THE WAVES.

SO, IF YOU FEEL OVERWHELMED BY THIS CALL AND CHALLENGE, **GOOD**. IT IS OVERWHELMING. THAT'S A GOOD CONCLUSION YOU ARE DRAWING TODAY. THIS IS A REMINDER THAT WE MUST TRUST IN GOD, CLING TO CHRIST AND READ AND KNOW OUR BIBLE AND PRAY THAT GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT WILL ILLUMINATE TRUTH AND DISPEL ERROR AS WE NAVIGATE OUR OWN MOMENT IN TIME. IT IS A GOOD WORD THAT PAUL GIVES TO THE GALATIANS AND TO US THAT WE NEED THE

"GRACE AND PEACE FROM GOD OUR FATHER AND THE LORD JESUS CHRIST" (GALATIANS 1:3)

AND THE REMINDER THAT:

"JESUS GAVE HIS LIFE FOR OUR SINS, JUST AS GOD OUR FATHER PLANNED, IN ORDER TO RESCUE US FROM THIS EVIL WORLD IN WHICH WE LIVE. ALL GLORY TO GOD FOREVER AND EVER! AMEN." (GALATIANS 1:4-5, NLT)

AMEN INDEED.