

## **Paul's Letter to the Churches of Galatia**

### *Lesson One*

#### **Introductory Material:**

##### ***Author:***

- Paul identifies himself in the very first verse of the letter. There is no evidence that can offered to the contrary and no reason to believe otherwise:

##### ***Audience:***

- There are really only two possibilities as to who the Galatians were:
  - The first has to do with the assumption that Paul is writing to a district of the Roman Empire called Galatia, which is a much broader and general territory, and that at some point Paul had established some congregations there.
  - The second, and the one that I believe more accurately reflects the text, is that Paul is not referring to the broad territory but the much smaller province of Rome known as Galatia.
    - This would have included Churches that were established during Paul's first missionary journey as recorded in Acts 13 and 14; Antioch of Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe;

##### ***When Was it Written?***

- Again I believe there are only two good possibilities;
  - Some have posed that he wrote it on his 2nd journey, perhaps during a lengthy stay in Athens
  - But while certainly avoiding dogmatism about it, I think that the textual evidence points to it being written it being written on his 3rd journey during his long stay in Ephesus;
  - One reason that it is helpful to try and determine when these letters were written is that it helps with the narrative in the books of Acts:

- As you are reading chapters 13 and 14 and learning about the brethren in these churches, it is helpful to then be able to go and look at what Paul wrote to them;
- As you pick up in about Acts 18 and begin Paul's 3rd journey, and read about the events that took place there, it is again helpful to know that those events are taking place in the background as Paul is writing this letter.

### **Outline of the Book:**

- The main purpose of Galatians is to try and undo the damage that was being done by Jewish teachers;
- This was being brought about by their false and destructive teaching, but they were also trying to put a lot of effort into undermining Paul's effectiveness in the Gospel;
- Paul seems to have three main Points that he wants to make, and they help to neatly divide the book into three sections, two chapters a piece:

**Chapters 1 and 2:** *Paul is a true apostle and his message is from God*

**Chapters 3 and 4:** *We are not justified by the law but faith in Christ Jesus*

**Chapters 5 and 6:** *Claiming to live in the spirit, means we must walk by the spirit*

### **Verse 1-5**

#### **v 1**

- We will look at this more in depth as Paul elaborates on this point later; but the very first sentence that he writes begins to lay the groundwork for the first claim is going to make in this chapter; Paul's Apostleship has nothing to do with man, but is something that was divinely appointed

#### **v 2**

- It is worth noting that as mentioned a moment ago, this is not written to a single congregation, but rather a group of churches: "to the churches of Galatia"

### **v 3-5**

- The rest of the introduction is a pretty standard greeting from Paul, as he goes on to ask spiritual blessings on his brethren that he is writing to.

### **Verses 6-10**

#### **v 6**

- Paul is amazed at the behavior of the Galatians; in other words he finds it hard to believe that they would do this:
  - And there are really two parts to what has stunned Paul,
    - One is that they are turning their backs on the gospel, and really deserting the grace they have found in Christ
    - But the most amazing thing is that they are doing it so quickly;
      - After they were converted? Even if this was written on the second journey, but especially if written on the third, it has been many years since their conversion;
      - Another possibility is so quickly after his most recent visit;
      - But what I think may be the case based on their attitude displayed in the book, is that they so quickly gave in to these false teachers so quickly after their arrival:
      - There was no great defense of the truth, there was no searching the scriptures daily or testing the spirits; there seems to have been a willingness to not only eagerly accept these teachers and their doctrine, but to throw Paul under the bus as well;

#### **v 7**

- Paul calls it a different gospel at first, but goes on to clarify in the following verse; Not a different gospel in the sense that there might actually be another true gospel out there to choose from, but rather what they have given into is a perversion of the gospel of christ:
  - And indecently Paul states that the only thing an altered gospel accomplishes is to disturb the faith of brethren.

### **v 8-9**

- The essence of the message of these two verses could be stated like this: “It doesn’t matter how attractive the speaker is; the only part that matters is the message”
- The brethren at Galatia had to learn to stop looking at how qualified the speakers seemed to be, or pay close attention to their words:
  - Is there anyone this doesn’t apply to? Whether its a man or even an angel from heaven-- if the message is different they are to be accursed:

### **v 10**

- Paul is getting ready to make his first proposition with the statement in this verse; But he is basically stating that this attitude isn’t going to make him or anyone who adopts it a lot of friends.
- Holding this strictly to preserve the truth will not please men; but thats not why we do it!

### ***Verses 11-14***

#### **v 11-12**

- These two verses contain Paul’s first claim: He is a true apostle and his message is from God;
- What was happening here is something that happens often today, and needs to be guarded against;
  - Often when someone wants to make inroads in the church today, the first step they take is to try and discredit whoever is teaching what they’d like to change:
  - And so the claims being made by these men are essentially; “Paul wasn’t an original Apostle; in fact, I have my doubts as to if he is even an apostle period”
    - Paul was not being petty; but to discredit him was to discredit his message;

#### **v 13-14 *Proof I His Jewish Background:***

- There was absolutely nothing in Paul’s previous background that would have established him as an apostle or a teacher of the gospel;
- His family and countrymen lived to stamp out Christianity, and Paul was leading the charge.

***Verses 15-24 Proof 2: His Conversion and the Events that Followed***

- After Paul's conversion; there was no opportunity to get his message from other men:
- His first destination was to Arabia: He appears to have been preaching there, not just meditating
- When he finally did go to Jerusalem, it was 3 entire years after his conversion; and his stay in Jerusalem was only for a short time: And during that short trip (v 18) he only saw 1 Apostle; aside from that he only saw James

v 22

- Even if people had seen him at the time; they didn't know who he was; they had no way of recognizing him because he had spent so little time with the brethren: