

Galatians

Lesson #3

Return Church

Wednesday Bible Study

August 13, 2025

Galatians

- We learned how Paul was shocked that the new believers in the churches of Galatia were listening to and believing false teachers that offered a different gospel. Paul said it was no gospel at all.
- Paul said they perverted the gospel, or reversed it, turned it inside out.
- Paul was saying, if I or an angel from heaven would come and tell you another gospel, don't listen to me or the angel. Throw us out.
- Your faith is not based on what I say to you, but what Jesus has said.
- Don't follow your heart, or your conscious. You need the Bible to be your guide.
- Doctrinal truth is absolutely critical. It matters what you believe.
- We must defend the truth of the gospel. If the truth of the gospel is gone, your freedom is gone, your power is gone, your love is gone. If you lose the truth of the gospel, you lose it all.

Our souls are a work in progress

This past Sunday we jumped ahead to Galatians 2:20.

*I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. **Galatians 2:20 NKJV***

Please do not misunderstand me, when I say “I am crucified with Christ,” I am not saying that I am perfect and do not sin. We all have a soul that is a work in progress. I am saying that I am dead to the law, and therefore my struggle is over with. My new man is my new and true identity as my old man is dead.

The Apostle Paul

So the trouble is not with the law, for it is spiritual and good. The trouble is with me, for I am all too human, a slave to sin. I don't really understand myself, for I want to do what is right, but I don't do it. Instead, I do what I hate. But if I know that what I am doing is wrong, this shows that I agree that the law is good. So I am not the one doing wrong; it is sin living in me that does it. And I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. I want to do what is right, but I can't. I want to do what is good, but I don't. I don't want to do what is wrong, but I do it anyway. But if I do what I don't want to do, I am not really the one doing wrong; it is sin living in me that does it. ***Romans 7:14-20 NLT***

Paul is saying, my new man doesn't sin, instead this is the sinful nature of my soul. My soul is not yet sanctified.

He who calls you, will also do it

Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you *is* faithful, **who also will do it.** *1 Thessalonians 5:23-24 NKJV*

- Your **spirit** is redeemed, justified, sanctified. This is your new man, your new identity. It is righteous, and in perfect relationship to God.
- Your **soul** is a work in progress, your soul is in the process of being sanctified and transformed, this will take the rest of your life.
- And you are promised a new glorified **body** at the resurrection.

You don't do it, God does. God redeems you, God makes you holy, or sanctifies you, God makes you righteous, God makes you blameless. He does it, not you.



The tip of the iceberg

You think you have a problem with anger or lust or pride, you don't have any idea what's inside of you or ahead of you.

Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. ***1 Corinthians 10:12 NKJV***

Therefore let the one who thinks he stands firm [immune to temptation, being overconfident and self-righteous], take care that he does not fall [into sin and condemnation]. ***1 Corinthians 10:12 AMP***

Galatians 1:13-24 NKJV

For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and *tried to destroy it*. And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers. But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called *me* through His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those *who were* apostles before me; but I went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and remained with him fifteen days. But I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother. (Now *concerning* the things which I write to you, indeed, before God, I do not lie.) Afterward I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. And I was unknown by face to the churches of Judea which *were* in Christ. But they were hearing only, He who formerly persecuted us now preaches the faith which he once *tried to destroy*. And they glorified God in me. **Galatians 1:13-24 NKJV**

Saul was giving his testimony

*For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it. **Galatians 1:13 NKJV***

Saul was Christianity's #1 enemy.

I was circumcised when I was eight days old. I am a pure-blooded citizen of Israel and a member of the tribe of Benjamin—a real Hebrew if there ever was one! I was a member of the Pharisees, who demand the strictest obedience to the Jewish law. I was so zealous that I harshly persecuted the church. **Philippians 3:5-6 NLT**

Saul converted on the road to Damascus

Meanwhile, Saul was uttering threats with every breath and was eager to kill the Lord's followers. So he went to the high priest. He requested letters addressed to the synagogues in Damascus, asking for their cooperation in the arrest of any followers of the Way he found there. He wanted to bring them—both men and women—back to Jerusalem in chains. As he was approaching Damascus on this mission, a light from heaven suddenly shone down around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, Saul! Saul! Why are you persecuting me? Who are you, lord? Saul asked. And the voice replied, I am Jesus, the one you are persecuting! Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do. ***Acts 9:1-6 NLT***

This was probably 34 AD.

Paul meets Jesus on the road to Damascus

- If you say I know the gospel, but my life has not been changed, you don't really know the gospel.
- If you say, I know God has forgiven me, but I hate myself, I am wrapped with guilt, and I feel condemned, you don't understand the gospel.
- If you say I have understood the gospel for years, but I still have an anger problem, or I am still very self-centered, or I still get offended easily, you need to allow the gospel to profoundly touch your life.

The gospel is a power.

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. ***Romans 1:16 NKJV***

- Paul's life was radically changed. Has the gospel changed your life?
- In 1988 when I had what I call my born-again experience, my life was radically changed. I remember renting a hotel room in New Orleans just so I could spend 2 hours in prayer.

Called me

God picked Saul to be His Apostle before he was born.

But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called *me* through His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, ***Galatians 1:15-16 NKJV***

God set me apart from birth

- Think about it, God knew that before Saul was even born, that he would one day persecute and kill Christians.
- Everything in your life has worked together for your good. Even your mistakes, your sins, all your failures, everything helped make you into the person you are today, and God is still working on you.
- Even the stupid things, God is so great, that He has woven it all together for good.
- God has been sharpening you, tempering you, honing you, turning you into something beautiful for years now.
- It was all a part of His plan and purpose for your life.
- When Joseph forgave his brothers, he said, “you meant it for evil, God meant it for good.” (Gen 50:20)

God has to prepare a person for ministry

I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those *who were* apostles before me; but I went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus. ***Galatians 1:16-17 NKJV***

From the time that Paul got converted on the road to Damascus, it was 12 years before he began his ministry in Antioch. It was 13 years before he began his first missionary journey.

Paul did not run to Jerusalem to meet with the apostles, instead he went to Arabia to get alone with God.

Paul went to Arabia for 3 years

Here in the desert, is where he probably got his divine revelations straight from Jesus Christ.

I was caught up to the third heaven fourteen years ago. Whether I was in my body or out of my body, I don't know—only God knows. Yes, only God knows whether I was in my body or outside my body. But I do know that I was caught up to paradise and heard things so astounding that they cannot be expressed in words, things no human is allowed to tell. ***II Corinthians 12:2-4 NLT***

He then went back to Damascus for a short time, then he went to Jerusalem for 15 days.

*Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and remained with him fifteen days. But I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother. **Galatians 1:18-19 NKJV***

Saul meets Peter and James

And when Saul had come to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, and did not believe that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him and brought *him* to the apostles. And he declared to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus. So he was with them at Jerusalem, coming in and going out. And he spoke boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus and disputed against the Hellenists, but they attempted to kill him. When the brethren found out, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him out to Tarsus. **Acts 9:26-30 NKJV**

Saul's hidden years

Saul spent the next 8 to 9 years in Tarsus.

These are hidden years for Saul, we do not know much about his life or ministry in these years. He probably received a flogging here, maybe two. He more than likely spent these years making tents and studying the Old Testament, growing in his personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Then Barnabas departed for Tarsus to seek Saul. And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people. And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch. **Acts 11:25-26 NKJV**

Then Paul and Barnabus went on their first missionary journey. Then returned back to the church at Antioch.

Galatians 2:1-5

Then fourteen years later I went back to Jerusalem again, this time with Barnabas; and Titus came along, too. I went there because God revealed to me that I should go. While I was there I met privately with those considered to be leaders of the church and shared with them the message I had been preaching to the Gentiles. I wanted to make sure that we were in agreement, for fear that all my efforts had been wasted and I was running the race for nothing. And they supported me and did not even demand that my companion Titus be circumcised, though he was a Gentile. Even that question came up only because of some so-called believers there—false ones, really—who were secretly brought in. They sneaked in to spy on us and take away the freedom we have in Christ Jesus. They wanted to enslave us and force us to follow their Jewish regulations. But we refused to give in to them for a single moment. We wanted to preserve the truth of the gospel message for you.

Galatians 2:1-5 NLT

Galatians 2:6-10

And the leaders of the church had nothing to add to what I was preaching. (By the way, their reputation as great leaders made no difference to me, for God has no favorites.) Instead, they saw that God had given me the responsibility of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, just as he had given Peter the responsibility of preaching to the Jews. For the same God who worked through Peter as the apostle to the Jews also worked through me as the apostle to the Gentiles. In fact, James, Peter, and John, who were known as pillars of the church, recognized the gift God had given me, and they accepted Barnabas and me as their co-workers. They encouraged us to keep preaching to the Gentiles, while they continued their work with the Jews. Their only suggestion was that we keep on helping the poor, which I have always been eager to do. ***Galatians 2:6-10 NLT***

Two stories

- You won't find these verses on anyone's refrigerators, nor are they common memory verses, but they are as important as anything you will ever read.
- Galatians chapter 2 tells of two stories, or actually, two visits;
- Paul went down to Jerusalem to visit Peter and the leaders of the Jerusalem church, and later Peter goes up to Antioch to visit Paul and the Gentile church there.
- This first story is where Paul, Barnabas and Titus go to Jerusalem, and they meet with Peter, James and John.
- The first visit, Paul's visit to Jerusalem, tell us **what the gospel is**: Jesus Christ plus nothing.
- The second visit, Peter's visit to Antioch, tell us **how the gospel works**.
- Why was this meeting a big deal? Why was it so important?
- There was a huge, critical and very important issue at hand.

The Supreme Court of Christianity

- Paul, Peter, James and John wrote the great majority of the New Testament. Here they were having a meeting that would determine the course and the future of Christianity.
- Paul and Barnabas take Titus who was an uncircumcised Greek Christian down to Jerusalem to meet with the leaders or the pillars of the Church in Jerusalem.
- There were certain false believers, who believed in putting their faith in Jesus Christ for salvation, **but** they also wanted to add onto this that you also must be circumcised and keep the Jewish ceremonial laws, or the clean laws.
- Here they were, probably 15 to 16 years since the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the leaders of Christianity were still wrestling with this issue.
- It goes to show you how slippery the gospel message is in our hands. Not that the gospel is slippery, but our human hands are slippery.

Is Jesus enough?

- Paul was there to push one truth: that you are accepted by God through faith in Jesus Christ plus nothing.
- The question is this: is Jesus Christ love and grace enough to save you, cleanse you and make you beautiful?
- These false believers, (lets call them the circumcision group) were saying you must believe in Jesus, but you must add to this, circumcision and the ceremonial laws of Moses.
- Paul was not teaching that you shouldn't keep the moral laws of God, he was saying that you don't add anything onto your faith in Jesus Christ for your salvation, or your acceptance by God.
- All of the ceremonial laws have been fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

Ceremonial laws

- They were also called the clean laws. There were hundreds of these types of laws.
- These were laws showing you what was clean and unclean.
- Like: don't touch a dead body, or a dead animal. What kind of foods to eat or not eat, like don't eat pork. How to wash your hands and feet and when. Don't eat with Gentiles.
- What was the purpose of the clean laws, to show a person there is absolutely no way to make yourself clean enough, or acceptable to God.
- The rules and regulations are for only one thing. To get you to see that you need a savior.
- You need to be clean to approach God, He is a holy God. The clean laws show you that you must be holy to approach God.
- But no matter how hard you tried to be holy all week, you still needed a blood sacrifice before you could go into the presence God.
- The ceremonial laws were never there to make you acceptable to God.
- In Jesus Christ, God sees you as clean, holy as a beauty.

2 completely different religions

- **Paul was saying,**
 - Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ
 - You are now saved
 - Now you will want to keep the moral law of God. (obey)
- **The false teachers were saying:**
 - Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - Keep the law of God best you can, (obey).
 - Now you are saved.
- They both believed Jesus was the Son of God, that He died for our sins and rose from the dead.
- But this difference is the difference between two different religions.
 1. Jesus Christ is your savior.
 2. Jesus Christ your example and teacher. Jesus is part of a package where you save yourself.

This is not the gospel

- Many people that say they are Christians. They say they believe in Jesus Christ. They believe Jesus is the Son of God, the Messiah. They also believe that He died on the cross for our sins and rose from the dead. But they also believe that they have to live a good moral life, and try their best to be good in order to stay saved.
- They believe in the wrong religion, not the gospel that Paul taught. Instead, they believe you have to add something to the gospel.
- What most Christians are afraid of is this: if you preach Jesus plus nothing, then what will motivate believers to live a holy life. They don't understand the power of the gospel.
- The more you understand the gospel, the more you fall in love with Jesus, the more gratitude you have, and the more you want to live a holy life.
- I once asked someone, how are you doing spiritually? They said, "I'm trying my best." That is not the gospel.

They had nothing to add

And the leaders of the church had nothing to add to what I was preaching. ***Galatians 2:6 NLT***

- It was a happy ending, Peter, James and John gave Paul the right hand of fellowship. They added nothing to Paul's message.
- Paul's whole point is to say, Jesus Christ plus nothing is the gospel.

The one thing you have to do to become a Christian is to stop working.

*However, to the one who does not work but trusts God who justifies the ungodly, their faith is credited as righteousness. **Romans 4:5 NIV***

Remember the poor

They desired only that we should remember the poor, the very thing which I also was eager to do. ***Galatians 2:10 NKJV***

- They did say to remember the poor.
- The Bible says a lot about taking care of the poor.
- But even taking care of the poor will not save you.

Galatians 2:11-14

But when Peter came to Antioch, I had to oppose him to his face, for what he did was very wrong. When he first arrived, he ate with the Gentile believers, who were not circumcised. But afterward, when some friends of James came, Peter wouldn't eat with the Gentiles anymore. He was afraid of criticism from these people who insisted on the necessity of circumcision. As a result, other Jewish believers followed Peter's hypocrisy, and even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. When I saw that they were not following the truth of the gospel message, I said to Peter in front of all the others, "Since you, a Jew by birth, have discarded the Jewish laws and are living like a Gentile, why are you now trying to make these Gentiles follow the Jewish traditions?" ***Galatians 2:11-14 NLT***

How the gospel works

- The first visit, Paul's visit to Jerusalem, tell us what the gospel is: Jesus Christ plus nothing.
- The second visit, Peter's visit to Antioch, tell us how the gospel works.
- Paul went to Jerusalem, and they had a meeting and all agreed that Jesus is enough.
- You think the people that believed in Jesus + circumcision would have given up, but no, now some time later, they show up again, here in Antioch.
- The devil is relentless, and he knows he can defeat you if he gets you to believe a lie.

Peter was wrong

- Peter was wrong, he began to draw back from the Gentiles.
- This was Peter the great Apostle, the leader of the early church.
- Peter who was in the inner circle of Jesus's disciples.
- Peter that preached on the day of Pentecost where 3,000 people got saved.
- This is Peter who walked on water, who performed miracles.
- Even a great man of God like Peter, wrestled with this issue of the gospel.
- He very carefully drew back. He understood that the Gentiles were accepted by God through faith, he knew that, and he was eating with them and fellowshiping with them.
- But when the circumcision group showed up, they put enormous pressure on him not to eat with the Gentiles, and Peter drew back.

Not acting in line

But when I saw that they were **not straightforward** about the truth of the gospel, ***Galatians 2:14 NKJV***

When I saw that they were **not following the truth** of the gospel message, ***Galatians 2:14 NLT***

When I saw that they were **not acting in line** with the truth of the gospel, I ***Galatians 2:14 NIV***

Walk the line

- There are lots of people who believe the gospel, and understand the gospel, but it may not be the controlling reality of their lives. The reason is because they are not walking in line with the gospel.
- Paul confronts Peters racism. When I saw they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel.
- This word means walk straight. Police tell you to walk a line if they think you have been drinking and driving.
- Johnny Cash wrote a song called “I walk the line”.
- The gospel has a line, we are to walk.

Walk the line

- Now that you are a Christian, it's your job to bring your life in line with the gospel. Or to walk the line.
- Do you believe you are a sinner saved by grace? If so, then think out the implications of the gospel and bring your entire life in line with the gospel.
- Paul confronts Peter and says to him in front of everyone: God did not have fellowship with you on the basis of your race and culture. How dare you turn around and have fellowship with others on the basis of race and culture.
- What difference does it make? Why didn't he just say to Peter you are a racist. Paul doesn't say that, He says racism is not in line with the gospel. The cause of your sin is forgetting that you are saved by grace.

Do you feel superior to others

- Peter you are treating people differently based on race and culture, but God didn't treat you that way, you are trying to add to Jesus Christ.
- Christ work is not enough to cleanse and beautify you, you have to find something else. It's typical to find things in your culture to make yourself superior to others.
- Paul is not just saying racism is a sin, no, he is saying it is not in line with the gospel. Paul is saying here is the reason you are a racist. You are trying to find something else beside Jesus to cleanse and beautify you.
- In other words, Peter, if you really realized that you are saved by grace, then you should realize that the cross makes us all equal. We are all sinners saved by grace, we all were poor in spirit. We are all the same.
- How could you draw back from fellowshiping the Gentiles when the Jewish Christians showed up. That is racism. That is feeling superior to another group of people.

Returns strength

Return Church has a core group of mature believers that love everyone. That see everyone as equals. We have a group of leaders that are not racist, they do not look down on others that are different than them. We love and accept all walks of life, all kinds of people. It does not matter how you look, how you dress, how much money you have, or what your culture is, we are going to love you, accept you, and include you.

We want to always make people feel that they belong before we ask them to believe.

Religion does the opposite, it will make people believe before they belong.

The gospel

- The gospel is not just the ABC's of Christianity, it is the A to Z.
- The gospel is not just the elementary doctrine, it is the advanced doctrine.
- You never get beyond the gospel. All of your problems are that you are adding to Jesus Christ.
- Everybody's problem with sanctification is that they have a problem with justification. Sanctification is the process of becoming more and more holy, Justification, you are completely accepted by God.
- Your real problem is you are not really enthralled with Jesus.
- Most Christians want the advanced stuff, the mysteries, brides bread. NO, you really just need to understand the gospel.

Body, soul, spirit

- Our **spirits** are born again, justified, redeemed, sanctified.
- We will get new glorified **bodies** at the resurrection.
- Our **souls** are being sanctified, transformed, changed. It's a process that will take the rest of our lives.

Even a great man of God like Peter made mistakes. He had a soul that was a work in progress. His soul was in the process of being sanctified and transformed. Here they were 16 years after the resurrection of Jesus and God was still working on him.

Even Barnabas was led astray

As a result, other Jewish believers followed Peter's hypocrisy, and even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy.

- Barnabas was called the son of encouragement. He was Paul's travelling companion on the first missionary journey. He was the one who stood in the gap for Paul and later for Mark. He was the man who sold a piece of land and laid it at the Apostles feet to help the poor.
- How could he have pulled back? He was a great man of God.
- The besetting sin of a tender heart is to get out of balance and lean more toward grace than truth.
- He was like a lot of people who don't want to judge or condemn people. Heavy on love and light on judgment. Or heavy on grace light on truth.
- Paul was willing to split the church rather than compromise on this point.
- While Barnabas was afraid to speak up, afraid to confront. Heavy on grace, light on truth.

Is your life in line with the gospel?

- Here we have Paul and Barnabas, truth and grace.
- If you are a Barnabas, say, I know I am loving, am I compromising?
- Barnabas was full of grace, but he needs to be free from their fear of hurting people.
- We need to find the middle. Jesus was perfectly in the middle.
- Is your life in line with the gospel?

We should love and accept everybody

- It is easy to take our cultural baggage and say if you are a real Christian, you will look like us, you will dress like us, you will eat like us. You should listen to the same kind of music that we listen to.
- The point of this passage is that anyone God has accepted freely as Jesus plus nothing, we must accept that person too, Jesus plus nothing.
- We should love and accept everybody, no matter how different they are from us.
- The traditional thinking is that the gospel gets me into the kingdom but the way I make progress, and grow is through self or human effort. No. The way you make progress is to keep believing the gospel, and allow it to profoundly touch your life.