

BOOK OF  
**GALATIANS**

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# MASTER/TEACHER MODEL AT LOUISIANA CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

## GALATIANS BIBLE STUDY MATERIAL FALL SEMESTER 2023

### *Background of Paul's Letter to the Galatians*

Galatians was written by the apostle Paul in the late 40s AD to a group of churches in the region of Galatia, which was located in Asia Minor or the modern-day country of Turkey. Paul passed through this region during his first missionary journey as detailed in Acts 13–14. As was his common practice, Paul demonstrated his pastoral care and concern for these new believers by writing letters to encourage and challenge them. The church was composed of Jews and an increasing number of Gentile (non-Jewish) converts.

Since the Jesus movement began among the Jews, one of the major issues the early church was facing was at this time was how the salvation of Jesus applied to Gentiles. Right around the time Paul wrote this letter he met with the major Jewish leaders, like Peter and James, to discuss this very issue in what is referred to as the Jerusalem Council. You can read about this in Acts 15, but their conclusion on the matter was this: “We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are” (Acts 15:11). This was a significant discussion because Christian Jews elsewhere throughout the Roman Empire were claiming that the Gentiles had to adopt the customs of Moses (circumcision and food laws) in order to be saved. Salvation is based only on God’s grace through Jesus Christ; anything else amounts to false teaching.

Enter Galatians. It seems that this issue of Gentile salvation and practice was the primary cause for Paul writing this letter. In Galatians 1:6–7 Paul says, “I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ.” As you read through this short letter, you’ll notice that Paul is firm and unwavering in his approach to these Christians. He is direct and sometimes harsh in his criticism of them because he does not want them to be led astray by this false teaching. Be looking for how Paul defends the true gospel and how he highlights what life looks like when we embody the grace and love of Jesus.

### *Text of Galatians 1:1–10*

1 Paul, an apostle—sent not from men nor by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead— 2 and all the brothers with me,

To the churches in Galatia:

3 Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, 4 who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, 5 to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

6 I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— 7 which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. 8 But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! 9 As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned!

10 Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ.

### *Questions for Discussion*

- How would you describe the main characteristics of “the present evil age” (1:4)? How does Jesus’ sacrifice for us rescue us from this evil age?
- What is the biblical understanding of “gospel”? Do you think that people today fall for a different “gospel,” and if so, how?
- How do you respond to messages that seem to be seeking the approval of men rather than God? Why should we be on guard against such messages?

*Text of Galatians 1:11–12*

11 I want you to know, brothers, that the gospel I preached is not something that man made up. 12 I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ.

*Questions for Discussion*

- How do we know that the gospel Paul is proclaiming is not made up?
- Paul places all his stock in the fact that Jesus, not someone else, revealed to him the message he is preaching. Read 1 Corinthians 15:1–9 and discuss why Jesus' appearance to Paul is significant.
- Why is it important to acknowledge that Scripture was written by men/humans but inspired by God?

### *Text of Galatians 1:13–24*

13 For you have heard of my previous way of life in Judaism, how intensely I persecuted the church of God and tried to destroy it. 14 I was advancing in Judaism beyond many Jews of my own age and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers. 15 But when God, who set me apart from birth and called me by his grace, was pleased 16 to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not consult any man, 17 nor did I go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before I was, but I went immediately into Arabia and later returned to Damascus.

18 Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to get acquainted with Peter and stayed with him fifteen days. 19 I saw none of the other apostles—only James, the Lord’s brother. 20 I assure you before God that what I am writing you is no lie. 21 Later I went to Syria and Cilicia. 22 I was personally unknown to the churches of Judea that are in Christ. 23 They only heard the report: “The man who formerly persecuted us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy.” 24 And they praised God because of me.

### *Questions for Discussion*

- Reflect on and share how God has radically changed who you were before you knew him and who you are now as a result of Jesus’ salvation. Consider creating a short “testimony” based on this that you could share with someone in less than 1 minute.
- Paul’s transformation from persecutor of the Christian church to preacher of the gospel was due to God’s grace. His transformation was for God’s glory alone, as we see here in this text the Judean churches praised God after witnessing Paul’s transformation. How does your life in Christ lead others to glorify God?

### *Text of Galatians 2:1–10*

1 Then after an interval of fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along also. 2 It was because of a revelation that I went up; and I submitted to them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but I did so in private to those who were of reputation, for fear that somehow I might be running, or had run, in vain. 3 But not even Titus, who was with me, though he was a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised. 4 Yet it was a concern because of the false brothers secretly brought in, who had sneaked in to spy on our freedom which we have in Christ Jesus, in order to enslave us. 5 But we did not yield in subjection to them, even for an hour, so that the truth of the gospel would remain with you. 6 But from those who were of considerable repute (what they were makes no difference to me; God shows no favoritism)—well, those who were of repute contributed nothing to me. 7 But on the contrary, seeing that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been to the circumcised 8 (for He who was at work for Peter in his apostleship to the circumcised was at work for me also to the Gentiles), 9 and recognizing the grace that had been given to me, James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right [h]hand of fellowship, so that we might go to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcised. 10 They only asked us to remember the poor—the very thing I also was eager to do.

### *Questions for Discussion*

- Because the Judaizers taught that people must keep the Mosaic law in addition to believing in Christ. Paul feared he had shared the gospel “in vain” (v.2); however, he did not give in to the false teachers. How well do you know “the truth of the gospel” (v.5)? What are some ways you can learn more about what you believe?
- Jesus brings freedom; freedom prompts obedience. In contrast, the false teachers tried to rob the gospel of spiritual freedom by adding to the message. In what ways can you be tempted to add to the gospel? For example, you must also \_\_\_\_\_ in order to be saved.
- God was “at work” (v. 8) among the Jews and Gentiles. In other words, the good news that Jesus forgives sin and offers new life was spreading among the religious and the worldly. Who around you needs to hear the gospel? How can you prepare yourself to share the good news of Christ with a teammate, roommate, or friend?

### *Text of Galatians 2:11–16*

11 But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. 12 For prior to the coming of some men from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he began to withdraw and separate himself, fearing those from the circumcision. 13 The rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy, with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy. 14 But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in the presence of all, “If you, being a Jew, live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, how is it that you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?”

15 “We are Jews by nature and not sinners from the Gentiles; 16 nevertheless, knowing that a person is not justified by works of]the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the Law; since by works of the Law no flesh will be justified.

### *Questions for Discussion*

- 2:12 Paul confronted Peter because Peter expressed a certain level of fear from “the circumcision group.” **Who/what dictates or somehow pressures what you will or will not do?** (For example, your friends, social media, desire to please others, seeking popularity...) **Are your decisions based upon your beliefs or what other people think?**
- 2:13 Paul said the Judaizers were hypocrites because they believed in one thing but taught something else. We are often hypocrites too. **In what ways do you do the opposite of what you believe?** (For example, I believe we should be kind and compassionate to people but express cruelty when I talk about them behind their backs.)
- 2:14 Paul encouraged believers to act “in line with the truth of the gospel.” If a fellow believer confronted you with truth, you might get defensive. **How can you become more receptive to someone trying to help you? What are the benefits of listening to someone in authority or to a fellow Christian?** (For example, helps you learn and grow, fights an attitude of perfectionism, ...)

### *Text for Galatians 2:15–21*

15 “We are Jews by nature and not sinners from the Gentiles; 16 nevertheless, knowing that a person is not justified by works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the Law; since by works of the Law no flesh will be justified. 17 But if, while seeking to be justified in Christ, we ourselves have also been found sinners, is Christ then a servant of sin? Far from it! 18 For if I rebuild what I have once destroyed, I prove myself to be a wrongdoer. 19 For through the Law I died to the Law, so that I might live for God. 20 I have been crucified with Christ; and 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 up for me. 21 I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly.”

### *Questions for Discussion*

- 2:15-16 Paul said we are made right before God not because of what we do but because of the faith we have in Christ. **Have you placed your faith in Jesus Christ alone?** If not, talk to your pastor or someone on campus after chapel.
- 2:17 Being forgiven of past sin does not give us the freedom to keep sinning. Instead, we should turn from sin because we love God. **Is there any habit of sin you need to surrender to Jesus now?**
- 2:20 Look up Galatians 2:20. Copy it as a note in your phone or even write it out on an index card. Read it again and try to memorize it. Meditate on the verse and think about what Paul meant by saying he was “crucified with Christ.”



### *Text of Galatians 3:1–9*

1 You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified? 2 This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? 3 Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? 4 Did you suffer so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain? 5 So then, does He who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it by works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?

6 Just as Abraham “believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.” 7 Therefore, recognize that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham. 8 The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, “all the nations will be blessed in you.” 9 So then, those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer.

### *Questions for Discussion*

- Paul points to a common tendency in verses 1–3: Christians tend to slide into an over-emphasis on their actions. This over-emphasis can happen in one of two ways. First, some Christians over-emphasize their good works. The Galatians seem to have so emphasized the good things they did that they strayed from the gospel. Second, some Christians over-emphasize their sinfulness. At times, we can focus so heavily on our sinfulness that we begin to doubt God’s goodness and patience. What tendency do you believe you are most inclined to? What does the gospel say to each of these tendencies?
- Paul points to Abraham as an example of his point in verse 6. Who is Abraham and why is he important?

### *Text of Galatians 3:10–14*

10 For all who are of works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all the things written in the book of the Law, to do them.” 11 Now, that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, “the righteous one will live by faith.” 12 However, the Law is not of faith; on the contrary, “the person who performs them will live by them.” 13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”—14 in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham would come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

### *Questions for Discussion*

- Paul talks a lot about the Law in Galatians. What is the Law?
- Paul says in verses 10 and 11 that everyone who does not obey the Law perfectly is under a curse. He concludes that no one is justified by the Law. Why does Paul reach this conclusion? What does this conclusion say about our spiritual state? What solution does Paul propose, and how do we accept the solution Paul proposes?

### *Text of Galatians 3:15–22*

15 Brothers and sisters, I speak in terms of human relations: even though it is only a man's covenant, yet when it has been ratified, no one sets it aside or adds conditions to it. 16 Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, "And to seeds," as one would in referring to many, but rather as in referring to one, "And to your seed," that is, Christ. 17 What I am saying is this: the Law, which came 430 years later, does not invalidate a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to nullify the promise. 18 For if the inheritance is based on law, it is no longer based on a promise; but God has granted it to Abraham by means of a promise.

19 Why the Law then? It was added on account of the violations, having been ordered through angels at the hand of a mediator, until the Seed would come to whom the promise had been made. 20 Now a mediator is not for one party only; but God is only one. 21 Is the Law then contrary to the promises of God? Far from it! For if a law had been given that was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law. 22 But the Scripture has confined everyone under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

### *Questions for Discussion*

- Paul talks about Abraham's seed as the recipient of the promises. What promises did God make to Abraham? How does the New Testament fulfill these promises?
- Paul hints at the purpose of the Law near the end of this passage, and he talks about the purpose of the Law in the upcoming verses in Galatians. What is the purpose of the Law? Do you think Christians handle the Law well? Why or why not?
- How does the purpose of the Law affect the way you understand God?

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