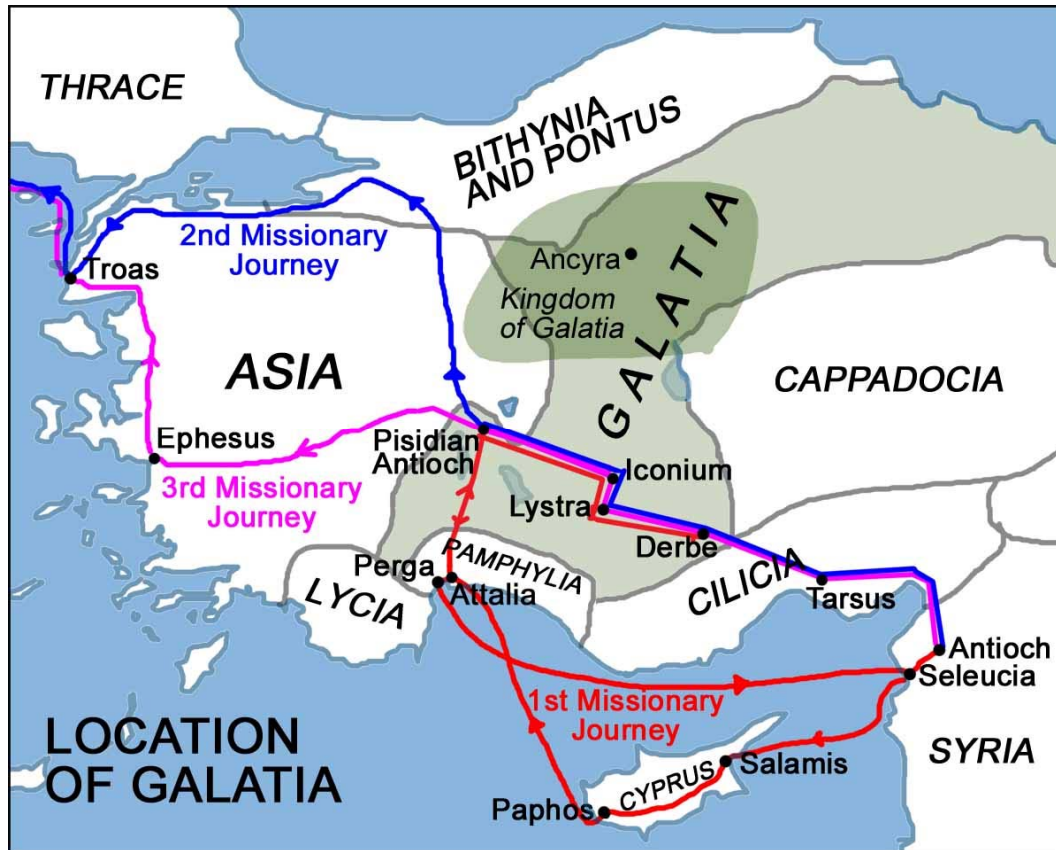


Galatians – Chapter 1

Region of Galatia



<http://www.jesuswalk.com/galatians/0introduction.htm>

Martin Luther, the father of the Reformation, loved Galatians and considered it the best of all books. He even compared his love for this book with his love for his wife, Katherine. Luther said, "The epistle to the Galatians is my epistle. To it I am, as it were, in wedlock. It is my Katherine."

Introduction

1:1 Paul, an apostle (not sent from men nor through the agency of man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead.)

It is clear that Paul is the author of this letter to the Galatians. He wrote this letter during his first missionary journey which Luke wrote about in Chapters 13 and 14 of Acts. Paul starts his letter to the Galatians with a salutation or greeting, just as he did with the letter to the Ephesians taught by Mike.

In Acts, Apostles were distinguished from disciples. Originally, Jesus chose twelve men as disciples. Disciples are followers. After Jesus' death, Paul and the original twelve disciples through the Holy Spirit converted numerous Jews and Gentiles into disciples. The word disciples became used as an equivalent to believers. An apostle is one that has actually been taught by Jesus. John MacArthur defines an apostle as "one who is sent with a commission." The original twelve disciples are apostles because they were taught by Jesus and in Acts 1:8, Jesus gave them the Great Commission.

Acts 1:8 (ASV)

“but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”

Paul is an Apostle regardless of which definition you choose. We don't know exactly how much teaching Paul received from Jesus but throughout the book of Acts and his letters, Paul refers to things that he could only have learned from Jesus. On the road to Damascus, Paul was commissioned by Jesus to take the Gospel message to the Gentiles. (Acts 9:15-16)

In the very first verse, Paul points out that his calling comes from the highest possible source. It is from God and from Jesus and not from men or self.

As we previously studied in Acts 13:14-14:23), Paul founded churches in the cities (see map) of Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe. These churches are in the southern region of Galatia. He visited these churches in his first, second and third missionary journeys to encourage them. In Acts 15, we are told that after Paul returns from his first missionary journey that Paul faces the Counsel in Jerusalem. Ultimately, they send a letter to the Gentile believers. It tells them that in order to become a believer they do not have to be Jews but there are four laws that they should follow. Acts 15:29 tells us, “You are to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality. You will do well to avoid these things.”

“Paul wrote this epistle because, after his departure from the Galatian churches, Jewish-Christian fanatics moved in, who perverted Paul's Gospel of man's free justification by faith in Christ Jesus.” (Martin Luther)

“The gospel of Jesus Christ is good news to rebellious creatures facing the righteous judgment of a holy God. It is, in fact, the best news ever announced. The gospel liberates. It transforms. It saves.” (John MacArthur)

Galatians is so much different than the Books of Acts which was written by Luke. The Book of Acts was more of a historical account. Galatians is more of a theological thesis. Each verse contains deep teaching.

1:2 and all the brethren who are with me,

To the churches of Galatia:

3 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, 4 who gave Himself for our sins so that He might rescue us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, 5 to whom be the glory forevermore. Amen.

Paul tells the Galatians that this letter is not from him alone but from “*all the brethren who are with me*”.

Even in his opening salutation, Paul Teaches. The letter is written to encourage and to teach the churches in Galatians the true Gospel message.

The first words in verse 3, “Grace to you” (NASB) may have been chosen by Paul to attack the Judaizers. The word “Grace” means that salvation is a gift from God. The Judaizers would have believed that salvation comes from works and the Law in addition to faith in Jesus Christ. The

Galatians were ignoring the crucifixion of Jesus which was the only work necessary for our salvation. Grace not only saves us from the penalty of sin; it also delivers us from the power of sin.

Gospel: The Greek word translated as gospel means “a reward for bringing good news” or simply “good news.” In His famous sermon at the synagogue in Nazareth, Jesus quoted Isaiah 61:1 to characterize the spirit of His ministry: “The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel [good news] to the poor” (Luke 4:18). The gospel does not reveal a new plan of salvation; it proclaims the fulfillment of God’s plan of salvation that was begun in Israel, was completed in Jesus Christ, and is made known by the church. The gospel is the saving work of God in His Son Jesus Christ and a call to faith in Him. Jesus is more than a messenger of the gospel; He is the gospel. His life, teaching, and atoning death declared the good news of God. In turning from grace to a legalistic system of salvation by works, the Galatians had ignored the significance of the death of Christ. (Nelson’s New Illustrated Bible Dictionary)

Paul incorporates the resurrection of Jesus into his salutation. He wants to make it clear to the Galatians that salvation is not tied to works or the Law but salvation comes from what Jesus did.

Perversion of the Gospel

1:6 I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; 7 which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. 8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! 9 As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!

Paul wastes no time blasting the Galatian believers. He says he is amazed (NASB) or astonished (NKJV or NIV) at how quickly they deserted Christ. Paul essentially says that adding to or diluting the Gospel message is not just a different Gospel but is the same as No Gospel at all. He says it doesn’t matter whether the different Gospel message is given to you by other men, such as the Christian leadership in Jerusalem, or angels, they are cursed by God.

*1:10 For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ.
Paul Defends His Ministry*

Paul tells them that as a believer, we are to be Christ pleasers and not man pleasers. If he works to make people happy, then he cannot be a servant of Christ.

1:11 For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. 12 For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

Paul wants them to know that the Gospel message that he is preaching does not come from man. He wasn’t taught by man received his Gospel message directly from Jesus Christ. He received it by divine revelation.

1:13 For you have heard of my former manner of life in Judaism, how I used to persecute the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it; 14 and I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my countrymen, being more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions. 15 But when God, who had set me apart even from my mother’s womb and called me

through His grace, was pleased 16 to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood, 17 nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went away to Arabia, and returned once more to Damascus.

Paul reminds the Galatians of where he came from and how he got to where he is in his life. He persecuted believers and tried to destroy the Christian church. He was a better Jew than many who studied the Jewish Law. He was set apart by God from birth to carry the Gospel message to the Gentiles. He didn't get taught by men, even the Apostles but went to the Gentiles. Guzik says "Paul probably lived in some quiet desert place outside of Damascus."

18 Then three years later I went up to Jerusalem to become acquainted with Cephas, and stayed with him fifteen days. 19 But I did not see any other of the apostles except James, the Lord's brother. 20 (Now in what I am writing to you, I assure you before God that I am not lying.)

Paul stayed there for three years before spending 15 days with Peter. He spent time with Jesus' brother, James also. We know that this wasn't the brother of the Apostle John because James, the brother of John was beheaded by King Herod Agrippa I (Acts 12:2) Paul assures them that he is not lying.

21 Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. 22 I was still unknown by sight to the churches of Judea which were in Christ; 23 but only, they kept hearing, "He who once persecuted us is now preaching the faith which he once tried to destroy." 24 And they were glorifying God because of me.

Before meeting all of the other Apostles, Paul travel to Syria and Cilicia. He was known by them by his preaching the faith, he once tried to destroy.

"In Syria and Cilicia Paul won the indorsement of all the churches of Judea, by his preaching. All the churches everywhere, even those of Judea, could testify that he had preached the same faith everywhere. "And," Paul adds, "these churches glorified God in me, not because I taught that circumcision and the law of Moses should be observed, but because I urged upon all faith in the Lord Jesus Christ." (Martin Luther)

"Paul's whole point in the second part of this chapter is important. His gospel was true, and his experience was valid because it really came from God. It is fair for every Christian to ask if their gospel has come from God, or if they have made it up themselves. Each should examine if their Christian experience has come from God, or if they have made it up themselves. The questions are important because only what comes from God can really save us and make a lasting difference in our lives." (Guzik)