

**Date:** January 21, 2025

**Galatians Section:** Overview of Galatians

**Key Text:** Galatians 2:16

**Main Idea:** Justified by Faith in Christ

**Genre:** Letter

**Author:** Paul

**Audience:** The Church in Galatia (Specifically Gentiles)

**Setting:** Between 47 and 55 A.D.

**Quotes of the Week:** “An assumed gospel becomes a distorted gospel that results in a different gospel. And such a gospel is no gospel at all.” – Emeritus Pastor Pat

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## **Galatians Preview:**

### **Highlight:**

The Book of Galatians is a New Testament epistle written by the Apostle Paul to the churches in Galatia. This letter serves as a passionate defense of the gospel of grace, addressing the critical issue of justification by faith apart from works of the law. Paul confronts false teachings that insist on adherence to Jewish customs for salvation, affirming that believers are made right with God solely through faith in Jesus Christ. Themes of freedom in Christ, the role of the law, and the transformative power of the Spirit are central to the letter. Paul also emphasizes the unity of all believers, declaring that in Christ there is no distinction of race, social status, or gender. Galatians culminates in a call to live by the Spirit, producing the fruit of godly character, and to use this freedom to serve one another in love. The book is a foundational statement of the Christian faith, underscoring the sufficiency of Christ's work and the freedom it brings.

### **Focus of Galatians:**

- **Topic/Themes for Galatians:**

- Freedom in Christ Alone
  - The Gospel of Grace—No Additions Required
  - Justification by Faith, Not Works of the Law
  - The Spirit Empowers, Not the Flesh
  - **The Cross Defines Our Identity and Freedom**
    - Our response to this truth:
      - Believe in the True Gospel - Walk by Faith - Stand Firm in Freedom - Live by the Spirit - Love and Serve One Another
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## Overview Galatians 1-3:

- The Book of Galatians was written for the churches in the region of Galatia. This area is located in what is now modern-day Turkey. Paul wrote this letter to address the issues and challenges faced by these early Christian communities, particularly concerning the influence of Judaizers who were teaching that Gentile Christians needed to follow Jewish laws to be saved.
  - Paul is going to start out by addressing a few different issues. First, he says that he is astonished that they have turned so quickly to a different gospel. This was a church that had likely been established by Paul during his first missionary trip (Acts 13:1-14:28).
  - He had taught them the pure and clear gospel, and yet they are turning from it. This is going to be a theme that we see all through the Bible. So many times the people and churches mentioned in the text need further reminders.
  - They hear the truth and seem to understand it, but when the wind blows as we know it does. The people seem to forget what they have been taught.
    - We are going to see that there is a clear connection here with the problems we have in our Christian walk and in the modern-day church. The problems and struggles they had back in Paul's day were not unique to them.
    - As we try to navigate life on the horizontal, we are going to see the same immaturity and stubbornness pop up in our lives.
    - We know the truth of what God has said, we know the life-changing power of the gospel. And yet we still decide to turn to other means for satisfaction and we expect those things to sanctify us.
- We have talked about this before, but we believe that the biggest threat to the present-day church is a false gospel—those who are taking the finished work of Jesus and smearing it with all these added things.
  - It is a Jesus plus gospel. A “gospel” (not that there is another gospel) that says: ‘Yes, Jesus died for you and He is necessary, but He’s not truly enough’. That raises the question of whether Jesus’ sacrifice was truly enough.
  - The people who taught the false gospel were those who taught that there was something more that had to be done in order to get into the house of God.

## Paul Knew What He Was Talking About.

- In Chapter 1 Paul is going to appeal to his former life to prove why his point is true. If we think about it, with any sort of argumentative document, you will state what you are arguing against and then you will list off the points for why your argument is valid and true.
- Paul appeals to the **authority** and **grace** of God in verses 15-17:
  - **Galatians 1:15-17** 15 But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by his grace, 16 was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with anyone; 17 nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia and returned again to Damascus.

- Paul says that he was formerly involved with Judaism, and he was at one time a persecutor of the church of God. He was an expert in Judaism and thought that he was doing pretty well at keeping the law.
- And then Christ came and changed his life. He showed just how broken and flawed he was. He showed him that even his best attempts at keeping the law were nowhere near what God required.

#### What is a Judaizer?

- A Judaizer was a member of a group in the early Christian church who believed that Gentile converts to Christianity should adopt Jewish customs and laws, particularly those outlined in the Old Testament. This included practices such as circumcision and observing dietary laws. Judaizers argued that these practices were necessary for salvation and full inclusion in the Christian community.
- The Apostle Paul strongly opposed the Judaizers, emphasizing that salvation comes through faith in Jesus Christ alone, not by adhering to the Mosaic Law. This conflict is a central theme in the Book of Galatians, where Paul addresses the issue directly.

#### NOTE:

- Paul often referred to himself as the apostle who was called to bring the gospel to the Gentiles. He says that he was called by God himself to bring this good news. This is why we are going to see this theme of Paul writing to a predominantly Gentile church and talking about the unity that we have in Christ (Ephesians).
- We are going to see Paul oppose Peter for his hypocrisy and his fear of man rather than standing for unity through the gospel.

#### Justified by Faith

- We are then going to see Paul go into a rant about what exactly the Galatians were getting wrong. He is going to give us a lot of very clear language that is going to tell us that justification is through faith alone!
- If it is something that we could've attained ourselves then what did Jesus die for? I'm not going to talk about it for too long because we are going to hit on it in many other weeks. But Paul is going to hold up to the work of Christ, and He's going to Hold it up high!
  - He is going to tell them that this Jesus that they serve, this Jesus who died for their sins. He is the one who is enough. He is not only enough in justification, but He is enough in sanctification, and glorification as well!
  - He is essentially saying "What is wrong with you???!! Do you think that your works are going to be more powerful than the work of Christ??"
- He's going in hot and straight to the point. You don't think that Jesus' work was good enough and you think that there is more that you have to add. That is the false gospel that Paul warns about. He is warning about anyone who profanes and attacks the work of Christ. Even if it is with the best of intentions. **The gospel is one thing that we must always defend and should never compromise on!**
- Paul will then go on to talk about the new covenant and how it is a permanent covenant. It is a better covenant with better blood, better promises, and a better mediator. That will transition into chapter 4 where Paul will continue to expound upon the riches we have in Christ.

#### Overview Galatians 4-6:

- Structure of Galatians 4-6:
  - In Chapter 4 Paul continues to define the Gospel that he boldly claims in the first chapter by alluding to Old Testament Law and comparing freedom to slavery.
  - Since the gospel that Paul begins with is defined in the midsection of this book, in the final two chapters, Paul finishes with the implications of this gospel.
    - Chapter 5:
      - Circumcision vs. Freedom in Christ.
      - Serve one another, and cling to Christ despite persecution.
      - Walking in step with the Spirit.
        - Spirit vs. Flesh
    - Chapter 6:
      - Bearing burdens as a church, dealing with sin.
      - Boasting in Christ.
      - Final warning and benediction.
- Language of Paul:
  - He is lamenting as though he is writing to a dear friend.
    - It is important to note the language that Paul uses throughout the letter, I am sure we will go over this in further detail as we dive deeper into certain passages. That said, throughout sections 4, 5, and 6, Paul uses strong language that is sorrowful. Paul truly loves the church in Galatia and laments over the fact that they have missed the Gospel of Jesus Christ, how they were formerly in freedom but have turned back to bondage, and urges them to soak in the grace of God and lean on the freedom we have in Christ (4:8-20, 5:7-12, 6:11-12).
    - Paul cares deeply for this church and wants to see them boast in Christ and lavished in union with him instead of putting on the burden of looking to the Law for righteousness, which is ultimately self-redemption (navel-gazing), instead of to the one who accomplished righteousness for us.
    - He offers them a clear Gospel, in opposition to the flesh, Jesus fulfilling the Law and the promise (3:15-29) through his perfect life, death, and resurrection, so that through his eternal reign seated at the right hand of God the Father we may be freed of our sin debt and gain his righteousness, given his Spirit and are free to live as children of God (5:16-26).
- Themes:
  - Throughout all of Galatians, Paul is building an argument for justification by Faith versus justification by the Law, using many different methods of comparing the Gospel of Grace to the Law.
    - Faith vs. Law (3:1-9)
    - The Law and the Promise (3:15-29)
    - Sons and Heirs of the Promise vs. Slavery under the Law (4:1-7)
      - Example of Hagar and Sarah (4:21-31)

- Freedom in Christ vs. Circumcision - Law (5:1-15)
- Spirit vs. Flesh (5:15-26)
  - Fruit of the Spirit

**Reflection/Closing Questions:**

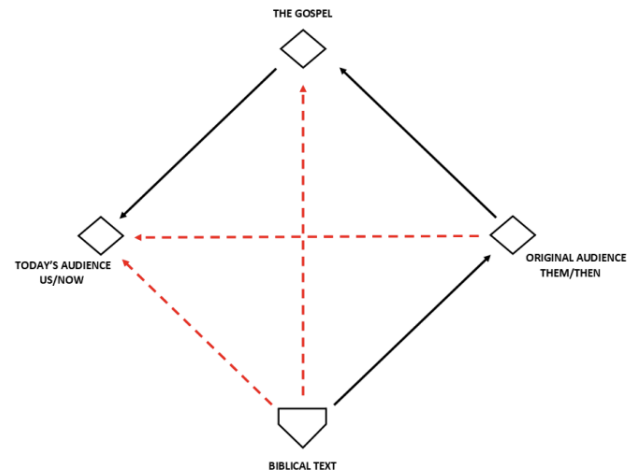
- What is meant when we talk about **the Law**? What about **Freedom in Christ**?
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## ANOTHER WAY TO GO ABOUT THIS IDEA: THINK BASEBALL

- When preparing and studying scripture, our focus is to always stay true to the scripture.
  - In order to best do this, we use a method called the Simeon Trust method, which simply lays out a process to faithfully discern the Bible.

- FIRST:

- Understanding who the text was written to. (The Audience)
- Understanding why the text was written. (The Purpose)
- Understanding the structure, genre, context, emphasis, and melodic line of the text.
- In a nutshell, The first step focuses on understanding what the text meant to its original audience.



- SECOND:

- Once we have done this, we must filter it through the Gospel.
- This means understanding when and why this text was written in reference to the cross. → Is it pointing to the coming of Christ (OT), is it pointing to Christ and what Christ has already done (NT), is the text speaking of law, is it speaking of the Gospel, etc?

- THIRD:

- Once we've understood the text's original meaning/audience and have filtered it through the Gospel lens, we are able to determine what it means to us now. Without this process, the proper application of the Bible is essentially impossible.

- COMING HOME:

- Once we understand the appropriate application of the text, our legwork essentially stops, and we become fully reliant on the Holy Spirit to work in us.
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## **The Gospel: *We Can't, God Can, Jesus Did!***

- **Sin.** None of us can escape it. Because of sin, we are enslaved and burdened under the weight of the law. We are trapped in a cycle of guilt and condemnation, unable to achieve the righteousness God requires. God's standard is perfection, and no amount of good works, rule-following, or religious activity can justify us. The law has revealed our sin, but it cannot save us from it.
  - “**10** For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, “Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them.” **11** Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for “The righteous shall live by faith.” **12** But the law is not of faith, rather “The one who does them shall live by them.” (Galatians 3:10-12)
- **Christ Redeems.** These two words are at the heart of the gospel. In His mercy, God provided the only way for our salvation—through Jesus Christ. Christ redeemed us by becoming a curse for us, bearing the full weight of our sins on the cross. Through His sacrifice, we are delivered from the curse of the law, declared righteous through faith, and granted the promised Spirit.
  - “**13** Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree”— **14** so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.” (Galatians 3:13-14)
- **Crucified with Christ.** Being crucified with Christ, our old self is put to death, and we are raised to new life in Him. This life is not earned by our efforts but is lived by faith in the completed work of Christ, who loved us and gave Himself for us. It is only through Christ that we are made alive and can live a life pleasing to God.
  - “I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life 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)