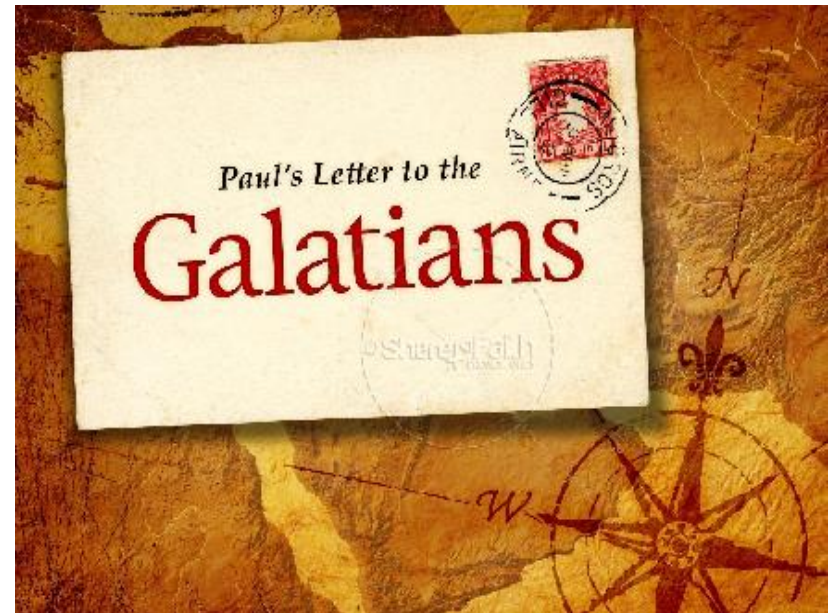


**Paul's Letter
to the GALATIANS
BIBLE CLASS #13**



INTRODUCTION:

The Epistle to the Galatians, often referred to as “Galatians”, is the ninth book of the New Testament. It is a letter from Paul the Apostle to a number of Early Christian communities in Galatia. Galatians has exerted enormous influence on the history of Christianity, the development of Christian theology, and the study of the apostle Paul. No original of the letter is known to survive. The earliest reasonably complete version available dates to approximately the year 200 AD.

AUTHORSHIP:

Paul identifies himself as the author of the Letter to the Galatians: “Paul, an apostle not from human beings nor through a human being but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised him from the dead, and all the brothers who are with me, to the churches of Galatia.” (Galatians 1: 1 & 2).



WHEN AND WAS IT WRITTEN WHERE (AND CONTEXT):

Scholars have suggested two possible theories, one that this is either the Roman province of Galatia in southern Anatolia, or a large region defined by an ethnic group of Celtic people who settles in central Anatolia around the 3rd century BC, and had settled in the territory around Ancyra (modern Ankara, Turkey).

If it is addressed to the Galatians in the north, the letter was probably written around A.D. 54 or 55, most likely from Ephesus after Paul's arrival there for a stay of several years on his third missionary journey (Acts 19; 20:31). On the South Galatian theory, the date would be earlier, perhaps A.D. 48–50. Involved is the question of how one relates the events of Gal 2:1–10 to the “Council of Jerusalem” described in Acts 15.

The context and main reasons were that the new Christians whom Paul is addressing were converts from paganism (Gal 4:8–9) who were now being enticed by others to add the



observances of the Jewish law, including the rite of circumcision, to the cross of Christ as a means of salvation. For, since Paul's visit, some other interpretation of Christianity had been brought to these neophytes, probably by converts from Judaism (the name "Judaizers" is applied to them).

The Judaizers insisted on the necessity of following certain precepts of the Mosaic Law along with faith in Christ. They were undermining Paul's authority also, asserting that he had not been trained by Jesus himself, that his gospel did not agree with that of the original and true apostles in Jerusalem, that he had kept from his converts in Galatia the necessity of accepting circumcision and other key obligations of the Jewish law, in order more easily to win them to Christ, and that his gospel was thus not the full and authentic one held by *"those of repute"* in Jerusalem (Galatians 2:2).

Paul argues that the Gentile Galatians do not need to adhere to the tenets of the Mosaic Law, particularly circumcision, by contextualizing the role of the law in light of the revelation of Christ.



OVERVIEW:

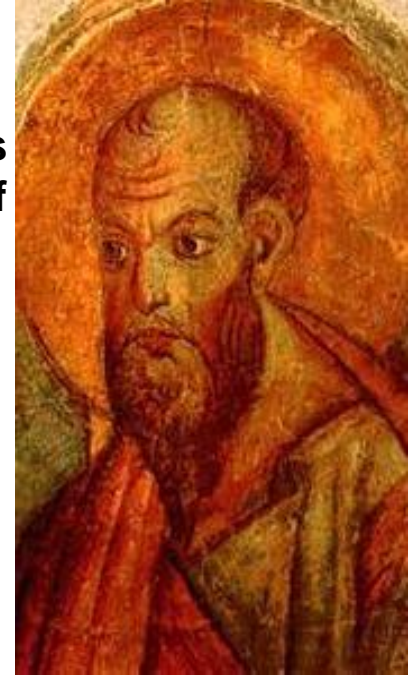
Part autobiographical, Galatians gives us Paul's own accounts of how he came to faith and his conversion (Galatians 1:15–24), the agreement in “the truth of the gospel” (Galatians 2:5, 14) that he shared with the Jewish Christian leaders in Jerusalem, James, Cephas (Peter), and John (Galatians 2:1–10). Paul stresses the primary need of Loyalty to the Gospel (Galatians 1:6–10), Paul, because of attacks on his authority in Galatia, defends his apostleship and continues with his Defense of His Gospel and His Authority (1:11–2:21). He is not an apostle commissioned by a congregation (Philippians 2:25; 2 Corinthians 8:23) or even by prophets (1 Timothy 1:18; 4:14) but through Jesus Christ and God the Father.

He also speaks as well of his change of his former ways into Christ: *“Now I want you to know, brothers, that the gospel preached by me is not of human origin.*

For I did not receive it from a human being, nor was I taught it, but it came through a revelation of Jesus Christ. For you heard of my former way of life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it, and progressed in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my race, since I was even more a zealot for my ancestral traditions. But when [God], who from my mother's womb had set me apart and called me through his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, I so that I might proclaim him to the Gentiles” (Galatians 1: 1-16).

Next he focuses on the true meaning of Faith and Liberty (3:1–4:31).

The center of Christian life and belief is Justification by Faith, and not by the Law:



“Realize then that it is those who have faith who are children of Abraham. Scripture, which saw in advance that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, foretold the good news to Abraham, saying, “Through you shall all the nations be blessed.” Consequently, those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham who had faith. For all who depend on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, “Cursed be everyone who does not persevere in doing all the things written in the book of the law.” And that no one is justified before God by the law is clear, for “the one who is righteous by faith will live.” (Genesis 3: 7-11).

Probably the most famous single statement made in the Epistle, by Paul, is in chapter 3, verse 28: "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

He further extolls the Galatians that true Christian Living (Galatians 5:1–6:10), which mainly consists on standing firm on their faith: “For through the Spirit, by faith, we await the hope of righteousness. For in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.” (Galatians 5: 5-6). To live by the Spirit, not the desires of the flesh (and lists vices and virtues) (Galatians 5:16-26).

Galatians consist of six chapters.



Some Quotable Quotes from Galatians:

- *"For I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the gospel that was proclaimed by me is not of human origin; for I did not receive it from a human source, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ." (1:11-12)*
- *"Yet we know that a person is justified not by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ. And we have come to believe in Christ Jesus, so that we might be justified by faith in Christ, and not by doing the works of the law, because no one will be justified by the works of the law." (2:16)*
- *"As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ." (3:27)*
- *"There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus." (3:28)*
- *"And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!' So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God." (4:6-7)*
- *"For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything; the only thing that counts is faith working through love." (5:6)*
- *"For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another. For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' " (5:13-14)*
- *"Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ." (6:2)*
- *"May I never boast of anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world." (6:14)*

CONTENT OF GALATIANS:

- I, Address (1:1–5)
- II. Loyalty to the Gospel (1:6–10)
- III. Paul's Defense of His Gospel and His Authority (1:11–2:21)
- IV. Faith and Liberty (3:1–4:31)
- V. Exhortation to Christian Living (5:1–6:10)
- VI. Conclusion (6:11–18)

RESOURCES USED AND RECOMMENDED:

- NAB Bible, at: <http://www.usccb.org/bible/books-of-the-bible/index.cfm>
- Agape Bible Study at: http://www.agapebiblestudy.com/Agape_Bible_Studies_Menu.php
- Agape Bible Study Lessons for the Letter of Paul to the Romans
At: http://www.agapebiblestudy.com/Romans/Romans_Menu.php
- Pauline Chronology: The Life and Missionary Work of St. Paul of Tarsus. Material provided by Rev. Felix Just, S.J. at:
http://catholic-resources.org/Bible/Pauline_Chronology.htm
- New Testament Letter Structure, from Catholic Resources by Felix Just, S.J. At:
http://catholic-resources.org/Bible/NT_Letters.htm#Edited

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