

Galatians #1**July 28, 2024****Series: Galatians: Treasuring the Gospel of Grace****Today's Message: An Introduction to Galatians; Galatians 1:1; Acts 13-14**

When Paul was delivered from death to life his life became a beacon reflecting the glory of the Gospel of Grace. Having once been steeped in Judaism and its demands to “do” works for righteousness through personal obedience to the law of Moses, he, now, having been found by the Lord Jesus on the road to Damascus, was a new man having been born again by the Spirit of God and found in Christ, not having a righteousness of his own, but that of God—a righteousness that is by faith according to the grace of God! (see Acts 9; 2 Corinthians 4:4-6; Galatians 2:21; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Philippians 3:9; Romans 3:21-26)

Perhaps there is good reason why Paul treasured the Gospel of Grace. If you remember his pedigree listed in Philippians 3: 4b-9 you will be surprised by his conclusion of the matter as it relates to his glowing resume of religious achievements: He relates,

“I anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless. But whatever was to profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Jesus Christ my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish/ trash/ dung/ etc. that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.”

He had found the Treasure of treasures. He *was* the man who found *The Treasure Hidden in the Field* (Matthew 13:44). When he “found” Christ he found everything; there was nothing of value in his life after encountering the Living Christ!

The message of the Gospel was easy for Paul to preach because it was the message of Freedom from the bondage to sin. Paul was passionate and zealous for the purity of the Gospel of freedom. As he proclaimed God's Good News to Jew and Gentile alike, and as he witnessed the effectual work of grace of God through the inner working of the Holy Spirit, how could he not treasure the Gospel and guard the message so severely and carefully?

The message of the Gospel was easy for Paul to defend because he himself, along with countless other people had been radically transformed by the message. Whereas before Christ found him, the Christian message was considered a heresy, a false religion being foisted upon people by religious zealots belonging to a dangerous sect. Now, having encountered God, his life was radically and permanently changed by the “gospel, which is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes.” The Gospel, rather than demanding sinners to “do” works for righteousness, was a gift from God, which declaring that which was “done” for us, according to the grace of God through the person and works of Jesus Christ!

Why did Paul write a letter we simply call “Galatians”? And why are we going to study it? Having started churches in the Roman province of south Galatia Paul had discovered that false teachers sent from Jerusalem had thrown believers into great confusion concerning the Gospel of Grace. These false teachers descended upon the Galatians churches, and with great authority they, in a sense, cast a spell over the believers convincing many and confusing most into thinking that Christ and His Gospel of Grace was not enough. And that is why we are taking time to study Galatians. It is becoming apparent that there is a growing Hebrew Roots movement that is casting a spell of confusion on Christians causing many to downgrade the Gospel of Grace in efforts to bring that Gospel in submission to the Law of Moses and other traditions. In our

study, we will try to demonstrate the supremacy of the Gospel of Grace and also explain the proper use of and the purpose of the Law of Moses. In other words, I hope to show the vast separation that exists between the Gospel of Grace for the salvation of everyone who believes, and the proper place of works in the Christian life.

But today we begin our study of Galatians. 1) We are going to learn something of the background history of the people of Galatia, 2) we are going to learn something of Paul's love of the Gospel and 3) we are going to learn something about Paul first missionary journey, and his purpose

- I) A History of the Spread of the Gospel of Grace, pt 1: God prepares a people group: A Brief Background and History of Galatia and of the Galatian people.
 - A) Alexander the Great and his domination and influence on his empire.
 - 1) Succeeded his father Philip II and became ruler over the Greeks in Macedon in 335 B.C., age 20.
 - (a) By the age of 30 his empire had spread from Macedon (Greece) to northwest India and down to Egypt, including Israel.
 - (i) He was ruling king over Egypt, Persian (Babylon)
 - (ii) He ruled over the Balkan region (Bulgaria) and Thrace.
 - 2) Along with his empire he imposed the language, economy, religions and culture of the Greek Empire.
 - B) The Galatians
 - 1) Were known as the Gauls, a people group whose origins are of the Celtic peoples.
 - (a) The Celts did not constitute an empire or kingdom, but formed a people group including people who settled in what is now known as Ireland, Britain, Spain, and much of Europe, and who spoke Celtic languages.
 - 2) In 275 B.C. about 20,000 Gauls living in Thrace (southern Bulgaria today) migrated to northern Turkey.
 - (a) Archaeological evidence suggests that the Gauls moved southward toward the coast of the Mediterranean Sea
 - (i) These people became known as the Galatian people.
 - 3) In 25 B.C. this area became a Roman Province.
 - (a) (Look at your map) The Southern Roman Province of Galatia consisted of the regions known as Phrygia, Pisidian, Lycaonia.
 - (b) In Paul's time, the Province of Southern Galatia probably extended south to the Sea, including the regions of Pamphylia and Cilicia. So, the letter to the Galatians probably reached a much greater audience than earlier scholars thought.
 - (c) Cities of interest: Perga in Pamphylia, Pisidian Antioch in Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe, cities situated in Lycaonia, and also Attalia.
 - C) Galatia also had many Jewish people who settled during the time of Antiochus III the Great. Around 220 B.C. he resettled Galatia with many Jews who had scattered in the 1st diaspora.
 - 1) The 1st diaspora consisted of Jews who had been exiled to Assyria and Babylon but did not return to Israel, but instead settled throughout the regions west of their former captivity.
 - (a) A scattered people: In 1 Peter 1:1 we read as Peter addresses Jewish Christians whose ancestry is linked with the 1st diaspora: "To God's elect, strangers in the world, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia."
 - 2) These Jewish people established synagogues in the towns of dispersion including those of Galatia.
 - 3) These settlers largely spoke Greek and incorporated many Greek customs into daily life. They were distinct from the Jewish people in Israel who spoke Aramaic and held to Hebrew customs.
 - 4) So, the people living in Galatia consisted of people from many diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds, much like our own country today, even our city of Columbus Indiana.
 - II) The History of the Spread of the Gospel of Grace, pt 2: God prepares a Missionary: The Apostle Paul.

- A) Saul becomes Paul:
- 1) Acts 9 Jesus confronts Saul opening his eyes to the Truth about Jesus Christ the Lord (9:5)
 - 2) Acts 13:9. Saul becomes Paul: Saul refers to his Jewishness; Paul indicates his ministry to the Greeks (Gentiles). See also 13:46-48.
 - (a) By the way, Paul grew up in Tarsus, as part of the Hellenized (Greek influenced) Jews.
- B) Paul loved the Gospel of Grace! Christ was everything to him!
- 1) Romans 1:16-17: The Gospel is the Power of God for salvation; a salvation received by faith!
 - 2) Romans 3:23-25: The Gospel is the gift of God, resulting from Christ, our propitiation.
 - 3) Romans 5:8: The Gospel shows us the love of God toward us, and His wrath against sin as Christ dies in place of the ungodly.
 - 4) Romans 6:13-14: The Gospel makes us alive to God and free from the dominion of sin!
 - 5) Romans 8:1: The Gospel frees us from the condemnation deserved (as former law breakers).
 - 6) 2 Corinthians 5:21: The Gospel reveals that our sin guilt is imputed to Christ, and the righteousness of God is imputed to us through faith in Jesus Christ our Savior!
 - 7) Galatians 2:20: The Gospel is a substitutionary Gospel: Christ gave Himself up for our salvation.
 - 8) Ephesians 1:7: The Gospel boasts in God's riches of grace provided in Christ for our redemption.
 - 9) Ephesians 2:4-9: The Gospel saves us from God's wrath, transforms us into objects of His love according to the riches of grace and mercy. By grace you have been saved-- made alive to Him!
 - 10) See also, Rom. 4:4-5; Galatians 2:16; 1 Tim. 1:15; 2 Tim. 1:9; Titus 3:4-7; Heb. 4:16.
- C) It should become evident that the Gospel is to be our highest and greatest joy! Remember how for Paul that knowing Jesus Christ surpassed everything: every attainment, every earthly joy, that knowing Christ gave him hope when he was hurting and suffering (2 Cor. 4:17), etc.
- 1) How is it with you? Will you commit yourself to praying that God will teach you the surpassing greatness of knowing Jesus Christ? That during our study you will commit to knowing Him better?
- III) The History of the Spread of the Gospel of Grace, pt 3: God sends Paul to Galatia.
- A) We read the account in Acts 13-14
- 1) Commissioned in Antioch (by the way, Antioch was named by Seleucus Nicator after his father Antiochus III the Great!)
 - 2) Sent out from Antioch; Departed via the port city of Seleucia. (Remember the Seleucid wars with Egypt as we studied Daniel 11? This is a city also named by Seleucus Nicator!)
 - 3) First landed on Cyprus. They preached in Salamis and Paphos. Then sailed to Perga.
 - 4) They then went inland preaching throughout the regions of Pamphylia, Pisidia, and Lycaonia.
 - 5) Then they returned to Antioch after retracing their route through Galatia.
- B) The length of the first missionary journey.
- 1) 12-18 months covering 1350 miles. 700 by sea and 650 by land.
- C) The traveling conditions for Paul
- 1) No doubt Paul's recalling of the difficulty in travel (2 Cor. 11:25-27) found some seed in this trip.
 - (a) "Three times I have been shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers...danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger and sea, danger from false brothers; in toil and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure."
 - 2) Extant sources describe traveling in the first century as anything but pleasant.
 - (a) Mostly traveled on foot. Rugged roads. 20 miles a day.
 - (b) Often having your goods and possessions requisitioned by Roman soldiers or stolen.
 - (c) Hot days, cold nights; extreme variations of elevation. From sea level to 3,000 ft above sea level in one day. Endurance was required. Food and water were often very scarce.
 - (d) To stay at an inn was costly. Paul the tent maker. Made wages while traveling to pay his way.
 - (e) Bedbugs, bedbugs, bedbugs, on top of hostility from hostile Jews and Greeks.
- D) God sent Paul out in harsh and cruel conditions with the Mostly Costly Treasure: **The Gospel of Grace!**