

To the Churches of Galatia (Slide 1)

Introduction: Galatians

Reading: Galatians 1:1-5

Of all the letters from the Apostle Paul, this one is unique because he addresses “churches” within the region of Galatia. Previously he has addressed a single church in one location. Forthcoming, he will again address either a single church or group of saints in one location or an individual as he does with Timothy.

Galatia is a part of Asia Minor, fixed now as a province of the Roman Empire. The “*churches*” were made up with what is believed to be a majority of gentiles with some jews intermixed amongst them. Some of those Jews, either because of tradition or other intent, held to elements of the Old Covenant and expressed that all must adhere to those practices in order to have a good conscience toward God.

The unique circumstance and purpose of addressing the churches of this district, is that evidently every church within the region was experiencing the same issue of which Apostle Paul is warning against.

I also think it’s interesting, but not surprising, that these people who are remnants of *Celtic* descent, who were once an independent people ruled by their own princes in their own land before being subdued by the Romans, that they would listen to the influence of others. They have lost the courage they once had in independence.

Careful consideration should be given to this point. This is something that can happen to the individual or to a group of people. Someone who is charismatic, with the ability to persuade others with fluent or flattering speech causes one to lose their ability to independently critically discern and test what is being said.

In other words, *“they are overwhelmed by someone's charm into believing falsehoods!”*

It is so often the case that the loss of physical independence erases independent thinking and creates a mental reliance on others. It is in stark contrast with having someone do all things for you physically and then suddenly have to rely on yourself. Many fail to function in such a metamorphosis from reliance to independence. Most struggle when it is reversed, that is; from independence to reliance.

We are all typically stronger and more independent when we are young. Nevertheless, we become dependent upon someone else when we are older. It is often difficult to endure going from independence to reliance. It often brings resentment and other negative feelings.

Despite being now under Roman rule, most scholars believe these people retained many facets of their heritage. They retained their native language and manner of life, yet they assimilated quickly into Greek culture. Perhaps that is because of their extreme intelligence.

Yet, we know intelligence isn't a sign that we have or are willing to relinquish our will to surrender to the will of God. I believe we live in a culture that bears that out quite convincingly. Intelligence often gets in the way of the simplicity of the Bible.

1 Corinthians 1:19-20 (Slide 2)

19 For it is written:

***“I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,
And bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.”***

20 Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?

Apostle Paul had an intimate relationship with the churches of Galatia and taught them the unadulterated facts of the Gospel as the churches in the area were established.

I think it important to note that these churches were troubled with a specific teaching that we likely won't experience. However, the underlying message of standing firm in the faith relates to our walk in accordance with the true Gospel.

Galatians 1:1 (Slide 3)

Paul, an apostle (not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead)

It is important to note that the Apostle clearly states by where he has received his apostleship. He was not appointed by a man or a group of men who make up a council of leaders.

The elders and deacons are appointed, yet, the Apostles set up that system of church of government. They were appointed first and by the only one who could select them and appoint them as Apostles, Jesus Christ.

Today, there are those who claim the title of Apostle which is absolutely contrary to Bible teaching and possibility.

Also, one important *contrast* to consider is in the appointment of Apostles compared to the appointment of men to serve the church today. Jesus had infallible authority (*He still does*) to appoint the Apostles. Today, we are reliant on our best judgment and the specifics of qualifications in appointing men to serve.

With that said, the church needs leadership! No doubt! I personally would rather be considered a church leader based on my voluntary desire to help strengthen, encourage and feed the church. It is difficult, to say the least, to fill three distinct roles in the church and ensure satisfactory outcomes of

those roles simply because the evaluator uses a Spiritual scale as He observes.

The second thing to consider is the fact that Apostle Paul would feel the need to establish the reality of his authority as an apostle once again.

It must have been *disheartening* to have his apostleship and authority challenged time and time again. Particularly by those he has worked so closely with. Yet, even today many are skeptical towards those who teach or preach.

Apostle Paul doesn't stand alone in his urgency to write this letter. In Brother Zerr's commentary, he states that these men share in Paul's greeting only and I believe they certainly share the sentiment of Paul's greeting. Yet, I am convinced that he could have also mentioned the brethren that are with him as a way to strengthen the message of his letter.

There is strength and validation when two agree as one and even more so when there are more than two with the same intent of message.

(Slide 4) *Grace and peace*.....We certainly had a great lesson last week on being "*Grateful for Grace*" from Brother Aaron Stevens.

Grace; as he defined it; *God giving us what we don't deserve* and Apostle Paul mentions that gift in his opening of this letter.

Peace isn't a gift. *Peace* is what is developed inside of us. *Peace* is the *result* of the free gift from God's Grace. That's where this peace originates, that is; in Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. It is how peace is obtained and that through baptism.

Apostle Peter highlights the saving power of baptism because of the cleansing of the conscience before God. That is peace.

1 Peter 3:21 (Slide 5)

The like figure (*The salvation of Noah and his family by the Ark in the water) whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:*

Peace is by nature for the conscience: *quietness, tranquility of mind* because through the blood of Christ, we have been reconciled back to God.

Jesus, ***who gave Himself***. This is an important concept that the Apostle is calling attention to for the sake of the churches of Galatia. In the lessons to come we will clearly see just how important it truly is.

(Slide 6) ***Who gave Himself***, that is; Jesus is that Gift of *Grace* in which the Apostle nearly always mentions in his greetings. It means that Jesus underwent *self-surrender* on our behalf. What a beautiful message of peace that ***for our sins*** *Jesus gave Himself!*

In the same vein of self-surrender:

2 Corinthians 8:1-5 (Slide 7)

1 Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia: 2 that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality. 3 For I bear witness that according to their ability,(Slide 8) yes, and beyond their ability, they were freely willing, 4 imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. 5 And not only as we had hoped, but they first gave themselves to the Lord, and then to us by the will of God.

So many times people are willing to give if it doesn't require any *self-surrender*, such as giving monetarily and not our time. But to be Christ-like is to be willing in so many ways to *voluntarily self-surrender*.

(Slide 9) This *self-sacrifice-self surrender* that Jesus underwent was done to ***deliver us from this present evil age.....***

This marvelous act of Grace is not something in which we can return the favor or do something of equal value.....In fact, God and Christ knew that was impossible from the beginning.

We simply cannot save ourselves but that does not mean that we can't act in a sense of *self-surrender* in which we would not expect the benefactor to return the favor.

What Jesus accomplished was God's gift by His Grace. *Thanks be to God for the Gift! Amen!*-means this gift, because of His Grace, is *made our own* if we are in Christ.

We will come to see more clearly why Apostle Paul would word the beginning of his letter in this way. Because salvation comes from no other source than Jesus Christ. Not by man, not by works of men but by God's Grace.

Invitation

As I have gotten older and have spent so much more time in God's word than I have in the past. I can truly see the darkness and the blackness of sin. I can more clearly understand because of sin's stains that only the precious blood of a spotless, without blemish, clean and pure lamb could wash away my sin. One who has experienced life as we have, yet without fault-without reproach.

I can't do it for you and you can't do it for me. It is only in Christ's blood we find cleansing power for a clear conscience. Have you been washed in the Blood of the Lamb? If not, don't delay any longer! Arise and be baptized!!

If you have once given your life to Christ but find yourself adrift floating away from Him, the call is to return. If you need prayer for strength, refreshing or for whatever reason, please let us know.....

Let your wish be known today!

Reading:

Galatians 1:1-5

1 Paul, an apostle (not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead), 2 and all the brethren who are with me,

To the churches of Galatia

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

Please visit our website for the full audio of this study:

Shelbyvillechurch.com

Shelbyville Church of Christ