

The Gospel in

Galatians

Living like God is for sale?



Field  Notes

The Gospel in *Galatians*

Living like God is for sale?

Contributors

Carlos Astorga, Th.M.
Rhome van Dyck, Th.M.
S. Jonathan Murphy, Ph.D.
Vanessa van Dyck, M.Ed., M.A.[BS]

Field Notes

a journal of exploration and discovery



SacraScript

Table of Contents

I. How does this book work?

Keys to your <i>Field Notes</i>	vii
Understanding the design	x
The art of active learning	xi
Old and New Testament scrolls	xii

II. Survey the Land

FIELD STUDY 1: Corrupting the gospel is an age-old tendency	
Galatians background	1
Discoveries	11

III. Excavate the Site

FIELD STUDY 2: Tampering with the gospel offends God	
Galatians 1:1–10	17
Discoveries	27
FIELD STUDY 3: Only God has the power to change lives	
Galatians 1:11–24	33
Discoveries	43
FIELD STUDY 4: The truth of the gospel must never be compromised	
Galatians 2:1–10	49
Discoveries	59
FIELD STUDY 5: Justification before God is only by faith in Jesus	
Galatians 2:11–21	65
Discoveries	75
FIELD STUDY 6: Justification before God has always been by faith	
Galatians 3:1–14	81
Discoveries	91
FIELD STUDY 7: Even the law points to justification by faith	
Galatians 3:15–22	97
Discoveries	107
FIELD STUDY 8: The law prepared us for the gospel of Jesus	
Galatians 3:23–4:7	113
Discoveries	123
FIELD STUDY 9: Believers are to live in freedom not bondage	
Galatians 4:8–31	129
Discoveries	139

FIELD STUDY 10: Christians are free from law and sin to live for God	
Galatians 5:1–15	145
Discoveries	155
FIELD STUDY 11: Christians are free to live in step with the Spirit	
Galatians 5:16–26	161
Discoveries	171
FIELD STUDY 12: Christians are free to serve one another	
Galatians 6:1–18	177
Discoveries	187

IV. Analyze the Find

FIELD STUDY 13: Salvation is God's gift received and lived by faith	
Galatians in Scripture	193
Discoveries	203

V. Toolbox

Glossary	209
----------	-----

How does this book work?

Field Notes

INTRODUCTION

Keys to your Field Notes

Welcome to your *Field Notes* on Galatians. You are about to embark on a journey of discovery. Your destination is first century A.D. Christianity in the regions of Galatia. In order to be ready for your exploration of this book, we highly recommend you spend a few minutes understanding the way your *Field Notes* work. This book serves as a guide to the ancient biblical text as well as a journal for your discoveries along the way. Let's get started.

Studying the Bible

Studying the Bible is much like heading off into an unknown land to dig around the ruins of an ancient civilization. You need to know where to dig, what you are discovering, and what is important about what you find. This book will guide you on a journey of ancient discovery: the discovery of the meaning of the biblical text.

This Bible study follows the metaphor of an expedition, or a quest for biblical and theological discovery. Your *Field Notes* contain three specific parts which correspond to the three steps used in an ancient dig. Each step will help you in the process of understanding and applying God's Word to your soul. Each *Field Study* begins with learning the content and meaning of the text, followed by a section called *Discoveries*, which includes discussion questions, exercises, and activities to apply the text to your life. Let's begin by understanding the three steps.

Step one: Survey the land

The first step to making a discovery is a comprehensive survey of the land, notating everything that is around. In your *Field Notes*, the site is the biblical book we will study. This inspection helps us to better understand the characteristics of the terrain. With regard to the Bible, our survey helps us see the function of a book as part of the grand

A Field Study

Your *Field Notes* are divided into individual field studies. Each *Field Study* is designed to take a minimum of 30 minutes. The content of the *Field Study* takes at least 15 minutes, and the remainder is for *Discoveries* including discussion questions, exercises, and activities. Every *Field Study* contains over an hour's worth of questions and activities. They are designed for you to pick and choose the ones that are most helpful for you or your group.





The Setting of Galatians

Paul's letter to the Galatians was probably addressed to the churches he planted on his first missionary journey recorded in Acts 13–14. Paul was most likely writing from his home church in Antioch in Syria before the Jerusalem council had convened.



Antioch on the Orontes

Today the ancient city of Antioch of Syria is the modern Turkish city of Antakya. At the time of Paul, Antioch rivaled Alexandria in Egypt in importance. The church flourished there and Antioch became known as the cradle of Christianity.

What was going on at the time?

The Christian church sprung from Jewish roots in the first century. Once Christ came, Christianity emerged as the natural offspring of a Jewish faith awaiting his arrival. As the gospel of Jesus Christ spread from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth, the church transitioned from a predominantly Jewish to a Jewish-Gentile constituency just as God had desired. It was a period of excitement and some confusion as a baby church learned about life with God within the framework of a new age.

Acts 13–14 record the account of Paul's first missionary journey with Barnabas. They traveled throughout Cyprus and into the southern areas of Asia Minor in modern day Turkey. Visiting town after town, they preached the gospel and planted churches.

Upon return to their home church in Antioch, Paul received news that other teachers had visited these churches after him. They confused the Gentile believers with a different message. These false teachers proclaimed a gospel with Jewish conditions attached—after all, Christianity had Jewish roots. The law had played a major role in the

The Church at Antioch

The church of Antioch was founded by Christians who left Jerusalem due to the persecutions by Saul following the death of Stephen (Acts 11:19). It soon became the hub of Gentile Christianity and eventually surpassed the church in Jerusalem as the leading church in the first century. This growth was fueled by the multitude of Gentile conversions, the fall of Jerusalem to the Romans in A.D. 66–70, and the missionary passion of this church.

A False Gospel

For a portrait of the type of gospel the false preachers proclaimed in Galatia consider the following Galatian passages:

- On circumcision (2:3; 5:2, 3; 6:12, 13)
- On life according to Jewish customs and calendars (2:14; 4:10)
- On observing the law (2:16; 3:2, 5, 10, 11; 5:4)

Discrediting Paul

A common way of promoting a point was to damage the credibility of the opposing party. It is called an *ad hominem* attack—an attempt to shame a person to discredit his or her message. Many political campaigns use this strategy today. In light of Paul's counter argument in Galatians 1–2, the false teachers were clearly attacking Paul in this way.

50	60	70	80	90	100 A.D.
49? Jerusalem Council	60–62? Paul arrives in Rome under house arrest	70 Temple is destroyed		John writes Revelation 95–96?	
50–52? Second Missionary Journey by Paul	64 Fire in Rome	79 Pompeii and Herculaneum are destroyed by Vesuvius eruption			



Map of the Galatian Region

On this map, Galatia is the large Roman province encapsulating many different people groups. The *Southern Galatian Theory* suggests that cities like Antioch, Lystra, Iconium, and Derbe, in the southern province of Roman Galatia, are the recipients of the letter. The *North Galatian Theory* proposes the letter is written to an ethnic group, the Galatians, in the northern part of this map but we do not have any biblical references mentioning any northern cities.

history of God's dealings with man so far. These *Judaizers* argued salvation was incomplete if one did not embrace the Jewish lifestyle. They taught that faith in Jesus was essential, but only in partnership with adherence to the law—particularly circumcision. These *Judaizers* would even quote the Hebrew Scriptures to support their position. To advance their point, Paul's character and credibility was undermined. These false teachers claimed Paul left the Galatians only partly evangelized! Their strategy was effective. The Galatian believers were rapidly deserting Paul and his gospel. This false teaching set human works on equal footing with God's work in Jesus Christ on the cross. It was a subtle deviation from the true gospel coated in biblical language; a contemporary expression within the church of that age-old tendency for man to try to save himself. Even in the early days of the church, the tendency toward self-salvation quickly emerged. Paul knew this was insulting to God and dangerous for man.

Who was the audience?

The letter of Galatians is written to a group of churches located in Galatia. The most important thing to note is that the letter is written to Christians. The identity of the Galatians however, is a disputed issue. The problem is that the term *Galatia* or *Galatian* was used in two distinct ways in ancient society. At times, it was used in the ethnic sense, referring to a specific people group living in a very specific region in northern Asia Minor. This ancient Celtic Kingdom had been under Roman rule since Pompey had captured it in the mid-first century B.C. On other occasions, *Galatia* was used in a political sense by the Romans, referring to a much larger political province and all peoples within it. This province of *Galatia* included southern regions of Asia Minor, which was home to many different people groups.

If the term Galatians is being used in the ethnic sense, then the letter was written at some point after Paul's second missionary journey to allow for his visit to this specific region. This is after Acts 16:6 or Acts 18:23, but is not recorded in detail in the book of Acts. In this case, the writing would be after the Jerusalem Council's decision in

A.D. 40

42

44

46

48

50

Paul's First Missionary Journey 46–47?

Jerusalem Council 49?

Paul writes Galatians
(*South Galatian Theory*)

48?



Ancient Letters

Ancient letters followed an established format. These are some of the major features they included:

1. Introduction:
The introduction named the writer and recipient. It contained a greeting and either a word of thanksgiving, or a prayer of thanksgiving.
2. Main body:
The main body of the letter dealt with the issue that caused the letter to be written.
3. Conclusion:
The conclusion expressed final greetings, perhaps a description of how the letter was written—with the assistance of a scribe or not—and a benediction.

The Sacrifice of Lystra

In the Galatian town of Lystra, Paul healed a man who was lame from birth (Acts 14:8–18). The people thought that Paul and Barnabas were gods and wanted to offer sacrifices to them but they tore their clothes in protest stating that they were merely men and it was the Creator God who was the source of power.



Raphael, 1515

Galatians was addressed to the Roman province of Galatia, it would have been written around A.D. 48. The latter seems most likely since it appears from the letter that the Jerusalem council, which occurred around A.D. 49, had not yet convened.

How should we read this type of book?

There are three additional issues you need to be aware of before opening the book of Galatians. Understanding these matters will equip you to dig through this ancient yet timeless document. Consider them tools that will help you frame your thinking in areas that allow you to appreciate what God is declaring in this letter.

First, the book of Galatians is a letter. Ancient letters like ours today had set features. Letters are *situational*; they deal with specific issues that arise in a particular context. Galatians is no different. In it we see only half of a conversation and must build an understanding of the undisclosed other half. We will do this in our study as we go through it. Letters are also very *personal*. They are filled with emotion. Paul wrote knowing that Galatian congregations would listen to the letter as it was publicly read. It is *emotionally packed*. Paul does not shy away from confronting these churches with truth!¹ Therefore, read the letter as a passionate, personal letter from God to your situation. The problem it addresses remains relevant today.

Second, you need to understand the broader Christian teaching concerning salvation. Salvation is a broad term which when opened up reveals three aspects: justification, sanctification, and glorification. Understanding these concepts will not only help you stay on track with Paul, it will also help you understand your own Christian walk.

Justification is being declared righteous. The instant someone believes in Jesus Christ that individual is justified before God. He is declared saved and set free from the penalty of sin. Justification is the past tense of salvation—that point in time when you first believed.

Sanctification is the process of being made righteous. As a justified sinner grows by faith in Christ-likeness throughout life, he or she becomes more

1. Galatians 3:1; 4:19



and more holy. That is, the Spirit of God makes that individual more like Jesus. In this way, the one declared saved is being saved by learning to live free from the power of sin. This is the present tense of salvation—the Christian life.

Glorification is what occurs when one becomes perfectly righteous. It will occur when the believer stands before God in heaven and is actually made holy. The one declared saved who was being saved is now experiencing the culmination of salvation—a sinless life with God. The believer is free from the presence of sin. This is the future tense of salvation.



Todd Balen, www.BiblePlaces.com

Ruins of Lystra

Here are a few stone remains of a structure from the ancient city of Lystra. Little more than an archeological mound of dirt or *tel* is left on the site where Paul and Barnabas shared the gospel and were stoned, as recorded in Acts 14.

It is crucial that you understand these categories. Central to the letter of Galatians are the justification and sanctification aspects of salvation. They are part of the outline of the book.

Third, it is important you understand what legalism is and how it relates to Christianity. Legalism is living according to certain standards of conduct in an attempt to gain God's favor. Israel's faith was not intended to be legalistic but it became so in practice as the Jews misused the law. According to the Jewish interpretation of the Mosaic Law, what one did or did not do, determined one's standing before God. This mindset entered the church from the start. Galatians is testimony to it. Christian legalism arises when believers live life as though what they do and don't do in some way earns them favor before God. In God's plan of salvation, good works are not to be used as a currency to buy rights to him. Galatians is addressing this specific issue—legalism. Paul will address legalism by demonstrating that both justification and sanctification function through faith. Make sure you read this letter with this in mind.

50

52

54

56

58

60 A.D.

53–57? Paul writes Galatians
(North Galatian Theory)

**Basic Outline of Galatians**

Chapters 1–2:
Defense of Paul's Authority

Chapters 3–4:
Justification: How one
becomes a Christian

Chapters 5–6:
Sanctification: How one lives
as a Christian

Why did God give us this message?

So, why does God want us to explore this letter? It was a letter written by Paul to a particular group of churches long ago. While Paul had no knowledge of us, God does. He wrote Galatians. How he addressed the Galatian problem through Paul's letter, is how he addresses the same issue today. The Galatian problem is a Christian problem. Your heart is inclined toward living as if God's salvation needs to be supplemented with your own good works. It shows that same old tendency toward self-salvation that is so offensive to God. Galatians is crucially important to you. With this in mind, here are a few areas of application to think about before going deeper in this letter. Take some time to answer them personally.

How do you understand the gospel of Jesus Christ?

Think about this question. How have I understood the gospel? Misunderstanding it is a dangerous mistake. Resting on anything other than the true terms of salvation offered by God is to live with false hope. Eternity is at stake! What is the true gospel? Have I believed a counterfeit? Am I ignoring God or even supplementing his provision with my own terms? These are important questions for you to wrestle with. How you have understood the gospel affects the manner in which you live it out. Our study in Galatians will help you.

What role do good works play in your life?

You are a believer—a Christian—just like the Galatians. So, what drives your Christian lifestyle? Why do you dress up, go to church, and tithe when the offering plate passes by? Why do you serve in Christian ministry? What role do godly, Christian practices like baptism, communion, and tithing play in your life? Why do you do the Christian things you do? Is there any sense in which they make you feel like you deserve God—like you are earning a right to him? Living by a list of do's and don'ts as if this achieves holiness is not God's will for your life. There are many things he wants you to do or avoid, but only on his terms. There is such a thing as a Christian lifestyle but how is this lived? We will deal with this in our study. For now, think about whether you are in bondage to a lifestyle that you assume impresses God—as though you're buying life with him. It's easy and subtle to live like that. Are there traces of legalism in your life?

Excavate the Site

Galatians 2:11–21

Justification before God is only by faith in Jesus

Field Study 5

Galatians 1–2:

Defending the true Gospel

1:1–10 Corrupting the gospel

1:11–24 The power of the true gospel

2:1–10 Unity in the true gospel

2:11–21 Defense of the true gospel

Galatians 2:11–21

FIELD STUDY 5

How is the text arranged?

This *Field Study* closes out the first major section in Galatians. The gospel of Jesus Christ proclaimed by Paul was under attack. The tragedy was that the attack was from within the church; *believers* were corrupting the gospel. This moved Paul to defend his authority in order to defend his message. This study explores a third piece of evidence or a third proof from Paul that ends chapter 2 with a summary presentation of the essence of the gospel. Read and meditate on the text for a few moments in order to recognize its basic outline and argument. Remember to make use of the guide provided. The passage presents the following logical structure:

Galatians 2:11–21

Section	Bible Text
Evidence Three: Paul's authority to correct the apostle Peter	
Conflict	¹¹ But when Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned.
Cause	¹² For before certain men came from James, he was eating with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he drew back and separated himself from the Gentiles, fearing those who belonged to the circumcision group. ¹³ The rest of the Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy.

The Names of Peter

The apostle Peter is also referred to in the Bible as both Simon and Cephas. Simon seems to be Peter's given name, but he was renamed Cephas by Jesus in Matthew 16:18. Cephas is the Aramaic equivalent of the Greek word for Peter meaning *rock*. See John 1:35–42; Matthew 4:18; Mark 1:16; Luke 5:1–11; 6:13 and Mark 3:16.



Galatians 2:11–21

Section	Bible Text
Corrective Confrontation	¹⁴ But when I saw that their conduct was not in line with the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter in front of them all, “If you being a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force Gentiles to live like Jews?”
Concluding summary that presents the gospel	
Justification by faith in Jesus not works	¹⁵ We are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; ¹⁶ yet we know that no one is justified by works of the law, but through faith in Jesus Christ. So we also have believed in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.
Answer to an objection	¹⁷ But if, while seeking to be justified in Christ, we too were found to be sinners, does that mean that Christ promotes sin? Absolutely not! ¹⁸ For if I rebuild what I destroyed, I prove myself to be a lawbreaker. ¹⁹ For through the law I died to the law so that I might live to God. ²⁰ I have been crucified with Christ and it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. ²¹ I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness comes through the law, Christ died for nothing!

Ad hominem

The Latin phrase *ad hominem* is short for *argumentum ad hominem*. It means “to the man” or “to the person.” This type of argument is an attempt to negate the truth of a claim by pointing out a negative characteristic or belief of the person supporting it. It is considered a logical fallacy.

As you can see from our structural outline of the passage, there are two major movements in this section: in verses 11–14, we have a third proof from Paul’s personal experience. The second movement is a summary presentation of the gospel in verses 15–21, which concludes the first two chapters of Galatians.

Evidence three: Paul continues to defend his authority through an interesting counter-argument to the *ad hominem* type of attack he faced. The attack was to discredit his message. He therefore establishes his credibility and that of his message by telling the Galatians of the time when he rebuked even the great apostle Peter on a similar issue to (11–14)

B.C. 2000

1850

1700

1550

1400

1250

2091 God calls Abraham?

Receiving the Law on Mount Sinai? 1446

1925 God calls Abraham?

Receiving the Law on Mount Sinai? 1260



the one the Galatians' were entertaining. If he could rebuke Peter, he could rebuke them.

(15–21) **Conclusion:** The rebuke of Peter leads smoothly in to a summary conclusion of what the gospel is and is not. As Paul closes out the first division of his letter, he declares up front what he will then proceed to explain. The gospel is all about God's gracious provision of Christ. A right standing before God is only possible by faith in God's provision of Jesus, not by works of the law.

What is this passage saying?

What are some key terms and phrases?

We will now examine several terms, phrases, and concepts that occur in this passage. Understanding them will help us grasp the meaning and significance of this section of the letter.

Meaning of Key Terms

Key word or phrase	Meaning and significance
The Circumcision Party (2:12)	The circumcision party was a group within the early church who believed Christians were to continue to embrace the demands of the Mosaic Law; particularly the requirement for circumcision and certain dietary prohibitions. They took offense at believers who did not live according to these laws and practices. This group, or those closely aligned with them, often appear in the events of the early church. It is important to understand that many of them were true believers that were just struggling to understand the role of their Jewish history with God now that they had embraced Christ. Others were not believers. Those causing trouble in the Galatian churches were part of the circumcision party which emerges elsewhere in the New Testament. See for example Acts 11:2; 15:1; 21:17–26; Titus 1:10.
Hypocrisy (2:13)	Paul rightly renders the actions of Peter and of those who followed him as hypocrisy. This word originates in the ancient theatres. It translates literally as <i>play-acting</i> and describes what stage actors did. They wore masks, for example, to exhibit the role of a character in the play and in doing so hide who they were in reality. You can see from this how the term came to be used negatively of those who pretend to be or do what they are not. Paul's charge of hypocrisy is tough but true. Peter's behavior violated his own convictions about the gospel.

Ancient Theater Masks

This mosaic from the baths of Decius in Hadrian's villa on Aventine Hill in Rome, pictures second century theatrical masks of tragedy and comedy. It is from these face-masks that the idea of hypocrisy originated.



Antmoosa, 2005

1250

1100

950

800

650

500 B.C.

Saul becomes king 1050

David becomes king 1010

Solomon becomes king 971

930 The kingdom divides

722 Northern kingdom falls to Assyria

Southern kingdom falls to
Babylon and the temple is destroyed 586



Importance of Justification

Justification is an aspect of salvation. It is the point in time when a believer first embraces the promises of the gospel. This is a central topic to our passage as well as to the teaching of Galatians 3–4. Be sure to understand it.

Meaning of Key Terms

Key word or phrase	Meaning and significance
Justification (2:16, 17)	<i>Justification</i> is a term borrowed from the courts of law where a verbal verdict was pronounced on an accused standing before a judge. This idea is carried into the realm of sinful man, standing before God as judge. To be <i>justified</i> is to be <i>declared righteous</i> or <i>declared holy</i> by God. It is a heavenly verdict pronounced over a sinner. Justification does not mean to be <i>made</i> just but to be <i>declared</i> just. Paul is convinced one is <i>declared</i> just only by faith in Jesus Christ, for Christ alone satisfies God's justice. This is central to his God-given gospel message. Man's good works do not count towards being <i>declared</i> just before God. When one trusts in Christ alone, Jesus represents that person before God, who then renders a verdict of <i>not guilty</i> . Because of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, God is able to pronounce such a verdict on those trusting his Son without compromising his divine justice.
Union with Christ (2:20)	The teaching of the believer's union with Christ helps us understand the language of verse 20. Faith in Jesus unites the believer with Christ so closely that Christ's experience becomes that of the individual. The individual shares in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. It is because of this intimate union with Christ that Paul can declare that he "has been crucified with Christ." Paul elaborates this concept elsewhere in passages such as Romans 6:1–6. Take time to read it.

What about the culture?

A few cultural issues will help our understanding of this passage. Let's look now at three of them.

The Love Feast

While the only direct mention of the *love feast* in Scripture is in Jude 1:12, there are several early church writings that discuss it, including Ignatius of Antioch's letter to Smyrna. Unfortunately, as time passed the *love feast* stopped due to abuses of over indulgence. Paul shows us abuse was occurring even in his day.

Believers ate together at the church in Antioch. This was a common practice in the early church often referred to as a *love feast*.¹ Fellowshiping around food was a common custom in Mediterranean cultures at the time. In church gatherings, these practices often lead to partaking of communion together. Though fellowship around food was common in that society, the Christian love feast stood out since in no other context would you see the rich and poor, the free and slaves, men and women, and Jews and Gentiles eating together in a spirit of equality, unity, acceptance, and love. As such, it was a visual testimony to society that believers are equal under God through faith in Jesus Christ. Peter himself regularly enjoyed food fellowship in Antioch.

1. 1 Corinthians 11:20–34

B.C. 1 A.D. 10

5? Birth of Jesus

4–6? Birth of Paul

John the Baptist begins his ministry 28–29?

Jesus begins his ministry 28–30?

Jesus is crucified and resurrected 30–33?

30

33–34? Paul encounters Christ on Damascus road

Paul writes Galatians

40

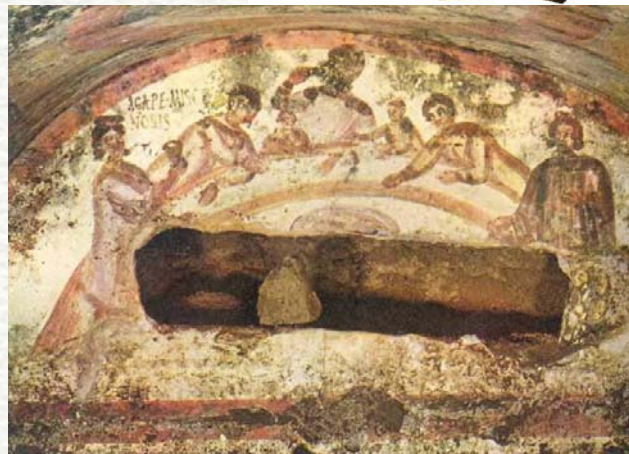
46–47? First Missionary Journey by Paul

48?

50



What was the big deal with Peter eating with Gentiles? Why the tension? The issue was initially rooted in the dietary prohibitions found in the Law of Moses.² God communicated to Israel his desire for them to be set apart or *holy* in the midst of a godless world. The sacrificial system, the seasonal festivities, and the laws guided holy living to maintain fellowship with God. He also granted Israel food prohibitions in order that they remain undefiled and separate for him. In time, Jews protected these food restraints in mixed-cultures by not eating with Gentiles. In mixed company, they couldn't be sure where the food came from or how it was prepared—perhaps it was bought in the market after being sacrificed to an idol. Such prohibitions to engage with Gentiles transcended food and reached into business and travel. In short, Jews who became Christians often struggled not just with what to do with the Law of Moses but with embracing an unrestricted lifestyle with Gentile Christians.



Catacomb of Saints Marcellinus and Peter, Via Labicana, Rome, Italy

Love Feast Fresco

This fresco or mural painted on a tomb in the catacomb of Saints Marcellinus and Peter in Rome depicts Christians celebrating the Lord's Supper as they ate together.

Lastly, we must discuss the historical situation that added to the existing tension between Gentiles and Jews. The ancient Jewish writer Josephus tells us of a surge in Jewish militant nationalism at this time. The Romans came down hard on militant leaders, crucifying two of them. Jews who were perceived to be socializing with Gentiles or adopting aspects of their lifestyle were despised and viewed as traitors. The church's unrestrained Gentile contact was a practical problem for Jewish Christians who feared reprisal. They may also have seen it as an obstacle in the evangelism of Jews.

What is the explanation?

Let's examine in closer detail what Paul is saying in this passage of Scripture.

(11–14) **Third evidence:** Paul now provides the Galatians with a third personal example that validates his authority and that of his gospel message. The setting is the church in Antioch. While there had been harmony between Paul and Peter in Jerusalem concerning the gospel, tension arose between them in Antioch. Paul confronted Peter directly

Jewish Nationalism

"But of the fourth sect of Jewish philosophy, Judas the Galilean was the author. These men agree in all other things with the Pharisaic notions; but they have an inviolable attachment to liberty; and say that God is to be their only Ruler and Lord. They also do not value dying any kind of death, nor indeed do they heed the deaths of their relations and friends, nor can any such fear make them call any man Lord."

(Flavius Josephus and William Whiston, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 18:23)

Josephus went on to record that this fourth sect desired to lead the Jews in a revolt against the Romans.

2. Leviticus 11

50

60

70

80

90

100 A.D.

49? Jerusalem Council

60–62?

Paul arrives in Rome
under house arrest

70 Temple is destroyed

John writes Revelation 95–96?

50–52? Second Missionary
Journey by Paul

64 Fire in Rome

79

Pompeii and Herculaneum are
destroyed by Vesuvius eruption



Primus inter pares

Although the New Testament never gives any formal position of authority to Peter over the rest of the apostles, it is clear from the narratives of the Gospels and Acts that Peter was a natural leader (Acts 1–3). He was frequently mentioned first as in Luke 9:27–28 and was also the apostle with greater initiative to lead the rest of the group (Luke 9:32–33; Matthew 16:13–18). For this reason he has been recognized throughout church history as a *leader among equals* or the *first among equals* which in Latin is expressed with the phrase *primus inter pares*.

The Church in Antioch

The church in Antioch was on the north side of the Roman Province of Syria. It was in this church that Paul and Barnabas were called by the Spirit to the missionary work in the regions of Asia and Galatia. It is therefore an important church in the history of the expansion of Christianity. The travels of Paul began here. You can read more about it in Acts 13.

because Peter was wrong; his conduct was inconsistent with his belief.¹ We cannot underestimate the shock this would bring to believers in the early church since Peter was considered *primus inter pares*. But Peter was fallible, and in this letter Paul tells us Peter's error.² Peter rightly enjoyed eating with Gentile believers in Antioch. He did so regularly, which was consistent with his understanding of the gospel of Jesus Christ. After all, he had already experienced the vision from God presented in Acts 10. God had told him directly that the Old Testament dietary prohibitions had been abolished. Circumcision and dietary laws were irrelevant to the gospel.

It appears that when news of his eating with Gentiles reached Jerusalem, James sent some messengers to Peter to let him know his actions were grieving a particular faction of the church—the *circumcision party*. Out of fear of this group, Peter withdrew from mixed table-fellowship. Presumably, tables were set up for Christian Jews and others for Christian Gentiles, which led other believers, including Barnabas to follow suit. Paul recognized this behavior was born out of hypocrisy. In principle, Peter believed the gospel granted the freedom to enjoy interracial fellowship. But now out of fear of man, Peter changed his behavior and his conduct no longer reflected his belief. He was evidently endorsing primary and secondary status in the body of Christ. Paul publicly and personally called Peter out on this. This was not to embarrass Peter, but to address a growing, public

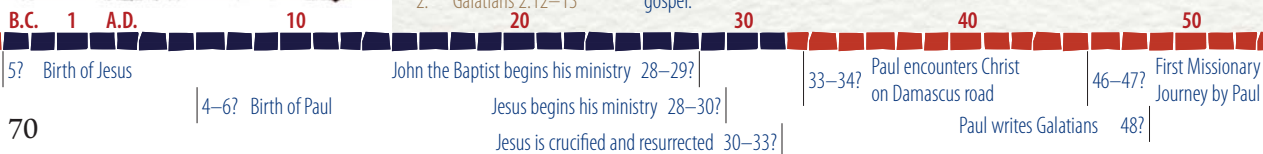
(11–14)



Antioch in Syria

Antioch was founded in the fourth century B.C. by Seleucus I Nicator, one of Alexander the Great's generals. It has sometimes been referred to as the "cradle of Christianity" because of the important role it played in the spread of the gospel.

1. Galatians 2:11
2. Galatians 2:12–13





problem before it got out of hand. Peter was not walking in step with the truth of the gospel.³ He had acted as the Galatians were acting now, and in both cases, Paul had the authority to correct such deviation from the essential message of the gospel.

- (15–21) **Conclusion:** This section of the letter ends with a summary presentation of what the gospel is in contrast to what it is not. The Galatians got to hear the gospel again! Let us now trace Paul's reasoning carefully in order to understand the complexity of his affirmations.
- (15–16) The Galatian churches were adding at least one Jewish work, namely circumcision, as an essential part of salvation. They were deserting the truth for a different gospel, which required a Gentile to become a Jew in order to be a Christian. Paul, therefore, argues from the perspective of those who were both Jews by birth, and Christian—the very state these Galatians wanted to adopt. In verse 15, Paul uses the phrase, “we of Jewish birth.” These men like Paul, Peter, and Barnabas were not born as *Gentile sinners*. Paul argues that even these Jewish believers knew that one is declared righteous or *justified* before God only by faith in Jesus Christ. They were not made righteous by practices and adherence to Jewish laws. Paul is so emphatic about the impossibility of justification by works that in these two verses he repeats the truth repeatedly. Three times, he declares one does not satisfy God by *works of the law* and twice he states that it is by *faith* in Jesus. He argues from a shared belief with the apostle Peter. It's as though he is saying, “We who are exactly what you Gentiles desire to be, do not believe it is necessary to become a Jew in order to embrace the gospel.” Jews and Gentiles alike satisfy God through *faith in Christ*.⁴

- (17–20) Paul is charged with implying that Jesus opposed good works because the gospel was exclusively by faith in Jesus and not works of the law. We see this repeatedly in Paul's other letters. His opponents claimed that he was a promoter of lawless living, an advocate of a lifestyle of sin. There are glimpses of this in Galatians 1:10. But this was definitely not the case. *Faith in Jesus* and *works of the law* are opposed only if competing or collaborating to render a person right before God. Paul counters the charge beginning in verses 17–18. He reasons that it is illogical to return to a manner of living, which was never designed to

3. Galatians 2:14

4. Romans 3–5

Paul rebuking Peter

Given the forward chronological movement Paul employs in Galatians 1–2 when presenting his activities, it appears this event took place after the private meeting in Jerusalem described in Galatians 2:1–10 and Acts 11:27–30. It seems likely the rebuke also occurred before the Jerusalem Council recorded in Acts 15 since Peter speaks there in agreement with Paul on not needing to become a Jew to be a Christian. It is unlikely Peter and Barnabas would have acted as they did after the Jerusalem Council.

What was Peter thinking?

Though wrong for his hypocritical actions, even though it was unintentional hypocrisy, you can't but feel a little sorry for Peter. He probably did not think through the broader implications of his actions and thought he was invoking what Paul elaborates elsewhere as the weaker brother principle: setting aside legitimate rights of conduct in Christ to avoid difficulty for an immature Christian. Peter and Barnabas probably thought they were minimizing tension in the church and problems in the evangelism of Jews. In doing so, they were creating problems about an essential truth of the Christian faith. This was too public an event, and Peter too big a figure, for it to go unnoticed. A Jewish-Gentile class structure was being sanctioned within the church and Paul had to correct it.





Call of the Reformation

The 16th century witnessed major changes in the church. The goal of men like Martin Luther and John Calvin was to reform the church doctrinally. Two calls stand out. They wanted the church to get back to the Bible as the authoritative deposit of God's will for faith and practice. This was the cry for *Sola Scriptura* or *the Scriptures alone*. They also called for a return to the Scriptural teaching advanced by Paul in Galatians: salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. This was *Sola Fide Solus Christus* or *faith alone in Christ alone*.

please God. Even if a Jewish Christian like Paul, reverted back to an attempt to satisfy God through law-keeping, then he would find that under the law he was a failure—a law-breaker. That is what the law reveals in a man living under it. Verse 19 tells us that life under the law accomplished exactly what it was supposed to do—kill any confidence that God could be satisfied this way. The law should lead one to faith in God, not faith in God's law. In doing so, one turned to God, not laws to find life. The introduction of the phrase “death to the law” and “life to God” in verse 19–20 is a perfect platform to describe how faith in Jesus and not laws, allows one to live to God. When we are united to Jesus by faith, we benefit from the only sacrifice that satisfies God's justice—Christ's death!

Paul closes out this short albeit complex presentation of the gospel (21) with a clear statement. To add laws to faith in Jesus in order to satisfy God is to nullify God's gracious way of salvation through Jesus Christ. It renders the death of Jesus pointless. It is to live as though God could be satisfied without the need for Christ!

Where else is this taught in Scripture?



Abraham's Journey to Canaan

By faith, Abraham trusted in God to lead him to this new and unknown land. Abraham believed in God throughout his life and was saved by faith.

Romans 3:28

We consider that a person is justified by faith apart from works of the law.

does one stand before God under the headship of Christ.

Romans 3:26

So that he would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

Paul devotes considerable attention to salvation by faith alone in Romans 3:21–5:21 which is an expansion of Galatians 2:15–21. Read this section of Romans with the following summary in mind: God justifies an individual by grace through faith in Jesus because only Christ's sacrifice satisfies God's justice and justifies those who turn to him. This removes any ground for boasting in how one lives. Abraham, before the law, and David, during the period of the law, demonstrate this. Only in following their example of justification by faith can a person find abiding peace, future hope, joy despite suffering, assurance of love, and the aversion of God's wrath. Only then

David Playing the Harp

God called David a man after his own heart because of his faith rather than because David kept the law.





What is God saying?

At the start of his argument, Paul declared that his gospel is God's gospel.¹ After presenting three pieces of evidence,² he concludes with a brief presentation of that same gospel he had already preached to the Galatians. In this passage, we saw Paul's third evidence, which was his need to oppose Peter in Antioch. This stands out as a huge contrast with the previous piece of evidence where Paul and Peter were presented in harmony in Jerusalem. However, Peter was acting inconsistently with the gospel he believed. In correcting even Peter on an issue of the gospel, Paul makes it clear to the Galatians that his authority and message are not to be disputed. This case of positive rebuke is not unlike Jesus' ongoing training of the disciples in the entire Gospel of Mark. Read, for example, the rebuke of James, John and then the rest of the disciples in Mark 10:35–45 where Jesus teaches them concerning true greatness. No follower of Jesus is above constructive rebuke.

Antinomianism

Antinomianism literally means *against the law*. The most common understanding of this idea is that a believer is under no obligation to live by a moral code because salvation is by grace through faith. This is not what Paul is declaring here though it is what he was accused of advancing. Paul is against the wrongful use of the law but still maintains believers have a responsibility to live a life of good works in light of their faith in God. Paul will address this further in Galatians 5–6.

Where else does this happen in history?

The teaching that justification before God is by faith alone in Christ alone got a hold of the life of a young monk and rising theologian in the early 1500's. His name was Martin Luther. Luther had pursued pleasing God through being a monk and had eventually confessed that he hated God because he could never please him. It wasn't until he began to teach through the book of Romans that Luther found comfort in the message of Romans 1:17. His response was the spark that ignited the Protestant Reformation. For Luther, this truth as expressed by Paul in passages like Galatians 2:15–21 or Romans 1:17 was a gateway to heaven. In them, Luther learned that God is the one who justifies a person. All a person has to do is to receive God's gift by faith. Luther saw that the righteousness of God was a status that sinners

Romans 1:17

For in the gospel a righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith, just as it is written: 'the righteous will live by faith.'

could possess by faith. It was not something to be feared. Justification by faith changed Luther's life and transformed the church. Soon, the institutional church lost its grip on people's conscience because Luther and the other reformers helped to recover the biblical teaching of salvation by faith alone in Christ alone. One's standing before God is not based on any merit of their own.



Lucas Cranach the Elder, 16th century

Luther as an Augustinian Monk

Martin Luther pursued salvation by trying to please God as a monk. He devoted himself to prayer, fasting, going without sleep, whipping himself and other practices of self denial. He later stated that, "if anyone could have earned heaven by the life of a monk, it was I."

1. Galatians 1:11–12
2. Galatians 1:13–24; 2:1–10; 2:11–14



As Paul closes out his three-fold defense, he reiterates his gospel message for the Galatians: Man is justified before God only by faith in Jesus Christ and not by works of the law. This is a theme Paul emphatically presents in many of his writings.¹ It is a truth that runs through Scripture. Paul shows this in Galatians 3–4 where he appeals to other biblical passages.

What does God want?

Now that we have explored in depth this portion of Scripture, we are ready to propose some applications for our Christian walk. Here are some of the important lessons we find in this passage. Think about their implications for your life:

Acceptance before God is only in Jesus so don't render him pointless

Paul reminds us that only Jesus Christ can satisfy God's justice. For this reason, only trusting in his gracious provision of salvation is sufficient. To attempt to earn God, motivated by a combination of *faith in Jesus* and *self-effort* is to ignore what God said and did in Jesus Christ. To offer up your good works in this arena alongside of Jesus is to compete with Jesus. It presumes his work on the cross is insufficient. But we are justified by faith in Jesus, not by living well! This is not to say, however, that believers have the right to live as they please. Remember, trusting in Jesus alone, not *good living* does not mean Jesus endorses *sinful living*. Believers are not licensed to sin. They are responsible for outwardly manifesting the life of Jesus Christ who resides within them. God desires you to live a godly life by faith, a life of love for God. You do not need to earn God's love.

Live aware that your day-to-day activities proclaim the gospel

Peter reminds us that how we live our daily lives makes a statement concerning the gospel. He warns us to be careful. Our conduct must be consistent with our convictions and anything else is hypocrisy. Peter made a mistake. Godly people make mistakes. However, we must strive to make sure our actions, reactions, words, and attitudes are in line with what we believe concerning God and his will for our lives. How we live out our new life in Jesus Christ is important. Don't contradict the gospel by the way you live. Be warned that fear of man is a powerful motivator. Peter made the mistake of modeling a false gospel. We all compromise our faith out of fear of people at times, and compromise can be contagious, leading others astray. Rather, we as individuals and as the body of Christ are to take the right stand because of fear of God. The person, who consistently fears God, consistently lives by faith in Jesus.

1. Romans 3:28; Ephesians 2:9; Philippians 3:6–8



Discoveries

Now you have completed your fourth excavation into the book of Galatians. It is again time to stop digging and carefully examine what we have learned and what difference it can make in our lives. Pick the questions that will be most helpful for you or your community.

Connecting with the community

Here are some discussion questions to help you better understand the text. Do not merely reflect on them as an individual but rather think of each question, when applicable, in terms of your family, your community, your nation, and your church.

1. In Galatians 2:11–14, Paul describes the attitude of Peter and the other Jews as having “a conduct not in line with the truth of the gospel.” Could this attitude be considered a form of “preaching a different gospel” (Galatians 1:8–9)? What does the attitude of Peter teach you regarding the potential that every believer has for corrupting the truth of the gospel?
2. Verses 15–16 are a major peak in the argument of the epistle. What are the doctrinal principles presented by the apostle? Why do you think this is so important to the gospel of God? How is this relevant in your life and the life of your church?
3. In light of the principles of verses 15–16, what is the purpose of verses 17–19? What is the objection Paul foresees that may arise from his teaching?
4. Explain the meaning of verse 20. How can you live your life “in the body” as “by faith in the Son of God?” What does this kind of life look like within the body of believers?
5. According to verse 21, what kind of attitude and belief would imply that “Christ died for nothing?” Do you see this kind of attitude and belief in your church?
6. What purpose does the rebuke of Peter serve in Paul’s defense of his gospel message? Meditate carefully for a moment on the

Notes, Observations & Questions



Notes, Observations & Questions

behavior of Peter, Barnabas and the rest of the Jews. If you had been the observer of such conduct, would you have considered it a big issue? Would you have seen their actions as “contrary to the gospel” and dangerous to the local church? Defend your answer.

7. The concept of justification is crucial to the message of verses 15–17. What does justification mean? How is a sinner justified before God?
8. Sometimes, division arises in the church as a result of the most common and seemingly irrelevant things, such as food. This was the case in Galatia. Can you think of any other topics that today tend to cause strife in a congregation even though they are simple and seemingly unrelated to doctrinal issues?
9. What is the basis of your acceptance before God? Have you ever tried to earn God’s favor through your actions? Is your acceptance based on any way in your behavior?
10. When you experience failure in your Christian walk, what is your response? What do you think God wants you to do after falling?

Probing deeper

These exercises are to help you look deeper into some of the secondary issues of our passage and may require reading from the rest of Scripture.

1. Read Acts 10. Do you believe the attitude of Peter described in Galatians is in some way connected to his experience in Acts 10? What does this event tell you about the impact leaders can have in the rest of the community?
2. Take some time now to summarize the differences we have explored so far between the gospel preached by Paul and that embraced by the Galatians. What can you learn from these differences? Ask a close friend or mentor if he or she thinks your faith resembles more the gospel of Paul or the gospel of the Galatians. What can you learn from this?
3. Make a list of the most important activities that guide your actions through a typical day. How can you proclaim the gospel in the context where God has placed you?



4. Read Romans 3:28; Ephesians 2:9 and Philippians 3:6–8. What is the role of the law in our salvation? Write out your answer and show it to a Christian friend or family member. See if they agree that you have accurately captured the meaning of these texts.

Bringing the story to life

Paul is adamant in this section of Galatians that we as believers are not justified by the works of the law. In light of this lesson, create a one-page handout or explanation explaining why our self-effort does not please God. Create your handout for a specific individual or group. You can design it to teach children or young adults this concept.

Your one-page handout can be creative in the way you explain the concepts Paul teaches us in Galatians 2:11–21 however, you must include this Galatians reference on the handout. Pictures, timelines, exercises, questions, role-play or any other creative idea can be used to help your students understand this important message.

Take the opportunity to use your one-page handout in a real teaching setting. Make sure you review Paul's message in Galatians 2:11–21, and this *Field Study* carefully before you teach. You may also do this as a group project with several people involved in making the lesson clear and memorable to your students.

The purpose is to carefully and creatively explain to others what Paul is saying. This will help you internalize the message for yourself.

Memorizing the key

Commit to memory the key phrase for this *Field Study*. The key phrase for Galatians 2:11–21 is:

Justification before God is only by faith in Jesus

Part of learning the Bible is remembering what the Bible is about and where to find things. Memorizing each of the key phrases will help you to better understand and apply the key points of Galatians. Once you have completed the entire study of Galatians, you will be able to recite the main point or purpose of each section of Galatians. These phrases will remind you of the entire argument that Paul makes through the letter.

Notes, Observations & Questions



(22–23) *The fruit of life in the Spirit:* In sharp contrast to the works of the flesh, Paul presents a description of the type of life the Spirit produces in the believer who walks under his influence and control. The list is a portrait of the Christian life of freedom God desires for his children. It is a life of faith that expresses itself through love. It is important we note that this fruit is produced by the Spirit in those believers that submit their lives to him. The law served many purposes but one aspect that is often overlooked is that it reveals the will and heart of God. If the Galatian believers walked continually by the Spirit there would be no need for them to seek life under the legislations of law anyway. God himself would produce a lifestyle in conformity with his desires in those leaning on him by faith. Here is the list the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write.

The Fruit of Love

Grammatically it is valid to render the fruit of the Spirit simply as *love*. If love is the fruit of the Spirit, the other eight virtues are expressions of this love. This fits Paul's previous description of the Christian life as a life of faith expressing itself through love. It is also consistent with Paul's emphasis on a life of love as a fulfillment of God's law (5:14) as well as with the pre-eminence of love in 1 Corinthians 13.

The Fruit of Life in the Spirit

Love	Unconditional and costly affection toward God and people despite merit in that person or current circumstances.
Joy	Deep-seated gladness or attitude of delight irrespective of circumstances.
Peace	Tranquillity of mind and heart despite the surrounding situation.
Patience	Long-suffering or forbearing, usually with people.
Kindness	Graciousness, benevolence, and compassion toward others irrespective of their merit.
Goodness	Inner and outer moral excellence.
Faithfulness	The trait of being loyal, dependable, reliable, and trustworthy.
Gentleness	Considerate of, and toward, others.
Self-control	The ability to exercise mastery or discipline over self in all areas of life.



Life in the Spirit



Concluding exhortation: Paul concludes this, his third clarification of what the Christian life of freedom is, with the same exhortation he used to begin it. He exhorts the Christians in Galatia to live by the Spirit. They were to “keep in step with the Spirit” on a daily basis. Only under the Spirit’s influence and direction would their wrongful treatment of others—and of Paul—cease. After all, the flesh lost its right to control them when they believed by faith in Jesus Christ. Their sinful nature was crucified by their union with Jesus. Though the flesh remains in the present age as a reality in the life of every believer, it has no right to master him or her. Only by walking by the Spirit is the allurement of the flesh crucified. (24–26)

Where else is this taught in Scripture?

God repeatedly expresses his desire for us to walk in a manner that pleases him. Even though Paul argued that Abraham received justification before God by faith, (Genesis 15:6), it is clear that God also desired that he live an upright and godly life (Genesis 17).

One of the first books Jews study from a young age is the book of Leviticus. Although its ceremonies and practices are confusing to us today and thus we tend to ignore it, Leviticus is a clear command from God to an already redeemed people to live life in a manner that pleases him. This means to live in a way that reflects his character. God calls those he rescues by grace to live godly lives. A brief outline of Leviticus shows this point. Everything within the book has to do with manifestations of holy living in his people in that era of life under the law.

Genesis 17:1–2

God tells Abraham,
“I am God Almighty.
Walk before me and be
blameless.”

Leviticus 11:45

You are to be holy,
for I am holy.

Worship before God in holiness (Chapters 1–16)
Walk before God in holiness (Chapters 17–27)



Abraham

God called Abraham to a life of holiness and purity, not to gain salvation, but in response to being saved.

Therefore, prepare your minds for action by being self-controlled, and set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the evil urges you had when you lived in ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, you also be holy in all your conduct, for it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.”

1 Peter
1:13–16

Analyze the Find

Galatians

Salvation is God's gift received and lived by faith

Field Study 13

Reviewing Galatians

- 1–2 Defending the true Gospel
- 3–4 The Gospel: Justification by faith
- 5–6 The Gospel: Sanctification by faith

The Message

FIELD STUDY 13

We arrive at our last *Field Study* in Galatians. Having finished our excavation of the book, we are ready to analyze all of our findings. Together we've explored the significance and uniqueness of the gospel of Jesus Christ in this letter. We have dug into its teaching and have been challenged about its implications for daily life. Let's now bring all of our excavated gems together by answering some key questions.

What is the contribution to Scripture?

From Genesis to Revelation: The story of history

The human heart longs for salvation *because it is lost*. We know life is not as it should be. But this was not always the case. God's wish for humanity in creation was not to be lost, suffer, and die. His desire was that man and woman could enjoy life under God's authority serving as his representative rulers over a wonderful creation. Mankind was created to enjoy life, not to fear death. God created us to walk with him, not to be isolated from him.

Adam and Eve's willful rebellion against God's desires plunged mankind, and therefore creation, into this lost condition. When mankind chose life without God that is exactly what we received. God allowed his own created beings, made in his image, to rebel. However, God graciously declared his intention, for the sake of his name, to undo the intrusion of evil into his creation through a descendant of Eve. Man's embracing of evil and rebellion against God deserved separation from him. However, God would not

Genesis 3:15

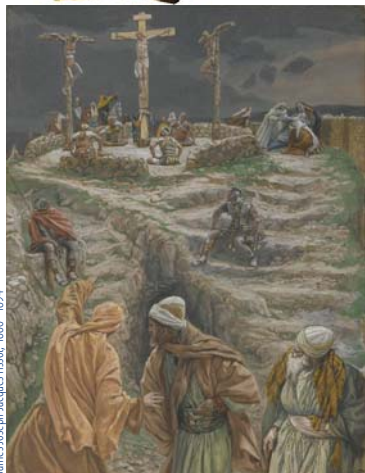
And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he will bruise your head and you will strike his heel.

The Garden of Eden

God placed his most prized creation, Adam and Eve, in a garden of perfect order and tranquility.



Jacob Savary, 1601



James Joseph Jacques Tissot, 1886–1894

Mount Moriah

Mount Moriah is the place where the Lord led Abraham for the binding of Isaac for sacrifice in Genesis 22, and where God intervened with his own provision. This mountain is traditionally believed to be the location where the Temple Mount is situated in Jerusalem today. God provided his own Son for sacrifice many years later on Mount Moriah, which Abraham had named "The LORD will provide."

Genesis 22:14

And Abraham called the name of that place, "the LORD will provide." As it is said to this day, "On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided."

allow Satan and sin to have the last say. A descendent of Eve would come, crush Satan, and destroy the curse of sin over man.

The divine intention to undo the intrusion of evil in his creation was also expressed as a promise to Abraham, the promise to bless the nations through him.

Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go out from your country, from your relatives, and from you father's household to the land I will show you. Then I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you, and I will make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you but the one who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth will be blessed."

Genesis 12:1–3

One who was a descendant of Abraham and before that, a descendant of Eve, would be the channel of blessing to the nations. God would provide a son to Abraham through whom he would restore mankind to life under God. Abraham believed God *himself* would fulfill the terms of his promise. This was illustrated to Abraham when he was called to take Isaac to Mount Moriah and sacrifice his son. God faithfully intervened providing an alternate sacrifice. Abraham's faith in God was evident through obedience. As such, Abraham's faith modeled for mankind what God wants from people so that they can experience the blessings of his promise.

Genesis 15:6

Abram believed the LORD, the LORD credited his response of faith as righteousness.

In anticipation of the arrival of the One through whom the nations would be blessed, God prepared history for his coming. For this purpose, he called the nation of Israel into a partnership with him.

Then Moses went up to God, and the LORD called him from the mountain and said, "Tell the house of Jacob, and the people of Israel, 'You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now then, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, then you will be my treasured possession out of all the nations, for the whole earth is mine, and you will be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words that you will speak to the Israelites."

Exodus 19:3–6

B.C. 2000

1850

1700

1550

1400

1250

2091 God calls Abraham?

Receiving the Law on Mount Sinai? 1446

1925 God calls Abraham?

Receiving the Law on Mount Sinai? 1260



God and Israel entered into a covenant whereby he would be their King and they his people. Israel was to live life under the rule of God according to his laws, sacrifices, and other observances. In doing so, Israel *advertised* to the world the blessing of the life of faith under the one true God in anticipation of God's fulfillment of the promise to Abraham. However, Israel rebelled in spite of repeated calls for repentance and obedience from the prophets. During this period mankind was to learn the extent of this lost condition and yearn for the promised One to come. God remained true to his Word. He clarified more and more on the details of his promise. Particularly, he revealed that the anticipated One would also be a son of David—a king to rule over an everlasting kingdom.



Jean-Léon Gérôme, 1895–1900

Moses receiving the Law

At Mount Sinai God created a nation out of a family of slaves.

When your days are complete and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his father, and he will be my son. When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, with floggings inflicted by men. But my steadfast love will never be taken away from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever.

2 Samuel 7:12–16

At just the right time, God sent his own Son—a descendant of Eve and Abraham and David.

The arrival of Jesus Christ and his earthly ministry is the essential anticipated act that would fulfill God's promise to undo the intrusion of evil in his creation. The death and resurrection of Jesus is the basis upon which God's gift of eternal life with him is made possible without compromising God's justice. Though Satan has been defeated, he is yet to be destroyed. Believers in Jesus Christ today are the

Paradise Regained

We live under the rule of the Spirit of God in anticipation of the hope of life with God in a re-created realm—life as God wanted it to be.



Jan Buegel, 1620





church. We live life under the rule of the Spirit of God in anticipation of the hope of life with God in a re-created realm—life as it should be. Until then, we proclaim God's offer to mankind in Jesus Christ—the gospel—displaying to the world the hope of life under the rule of God.

Ultimately, God's desire in creation will be fulfilled. The story is not yet fully developed in history, but the outcome is certain. God's plan continues to move to its culmination, when he will rule undisputed over creation once again.

When I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and earth had passed away, and the sea existed no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling of God is among human beings. He will dwell with them and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death will not exist anymore, nor mourning, nor crying, nor pain, for the former things have ceased to exist." And the one seated on the throne said, "Behold! I am making all things new!" Then he said, "Write these down for these words are faithful and true." And he said to me, "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the one who is thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life. The one who is victorious will inherit these things, and I will be his God, and he will be my son."

Revelation 21:1–7

Paul's Key Letters

Galatians, Romans, and 1 and 2 Corinthians are known among scholars as the *Hauptbriefe*. This is a German term for capital or principal letters in recognition of their importance among Paul's writings.

The Contribution of Galatians

Galatians is one of Paul's key letters. Why is it so important? What role does it play in the story of history? Why did God preserve this letter for the church? Now that we have studied the biblical text carefully, we can affirm that Galatians makes several contributions to our *understanding* of God's eternal plan. Four major contributions come from the letter to the Galatians because they are addressed with *precision* and *detail*. These contributions are the subject matter in other letters such as Romans.

The first contribution Galatians makes is that *it clarifies the core terms of God's gospel*. The gospel presents God's offer of eternal life based on the work of Christ. This teaching is presented elsewhere in Scripture, but Galatians is distinctive in its precision while explaining what the gospel is *and* is not. Galatians focuses significant attention on the

B.C. 1 A.D.

10

20

30

40

50

5? Birth of Jesus

John the Baptist begins his ministry 28–29?

Jesus begins his ministry 28–30?

Jesus is crucified and resurrected 30–33?

33–34? Paul encounters Christ on Damascus road

Paul writes Galatians

46–47? First Missionary Journey by Paul

48?

4–6? Birth of Paul



details of how one enters into a relationship with God. God's terms are spelled out. Galatians anchors the gospel of justification by faith in history, that is, within God's plan all along.

The second contribution of this book flows out of the first and is noticeable in the precision with which it is elaborated. *Galatians clarifies the logical implications of justification by faith, namely, sanctification by faith.* Sustained attention is granted to the operating principle of how one lives the Christian life in fellowship with God while awaiting the culmination of history. The letter reaches its climax in teaching about the daily Christian life. Freedom from the penalty of sin before God by faith should result in freedom to *live* before God by faith. No other letter declares as loud as Galatians that the Christian life is one of freedom—freedom to live by faith.

The third contribution of the book of Galatians emerges in the process of establishing the first two. It clarifies the issues surrounding the law. In order to spell out God's terms as they are laid out in the true gospel, *the letter must deal with the purpose of the law and its relationship to the gospel.* After all, we have a tendency to corrupt the gospel with our good works. In dealing with this issue, the apostle sheds light concerning the role of the Old Testament law in history and its relationship to the Christian life. No other book of the New Testament sounds as loud a warning as Galatians when it comes to the principle of how one lives life before God. It leaves no doubt that *God will not accept any trace of self-righteousness no matter how clothed in religious practices and biblical language it is.* Galatians helps us understand the proper function of the law in God's plan.



Moses and the Decalogue

Moses brought down the Ten Commandments or *Decalogue* from Mount Sinai. It serves as an image of the law God called his people to obey. This was not to grant them justification before him but rather to guide them in life.



Trumpet Call

"For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery."

Galatians as a Trumpet Call

"Martin Luther put [Galatians] to his lips as a trumpet to blow the reveillé of the Reformation. His famous Commentary summoned enslaved Christendom to recover the 'liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free.' Of all the great Reformer's writings this was the wisest in its influence and the dearest to himself. For the spirit of Paul lived again in Luther, as in no other since the Apostle's day. The Epistle to the Galatians is the charter of Evangelical faith."

(*The Epistle to the Galatians*, George G. Findlay, 1888, p. 3)

Galatians also makes an important statement concerning the apostle Paul. No other letter of Paul's presents such a passionate and sustained declaration of his authority as an apostle. He is presented as God's

50	60	70	80	90	100 A.D.
49? Jerusalem Council	60–62? Paul arrives in Rome under house arrest	70 Temple is destroyed	John writes Revelation 95–96?		
50–52? Second Missionary Journey by Paul	64 Fire in Rome	79 Pompeii and Herculaneum are destroyed by Vesuvius eruption			



Luther on Galatians

"The Epistle to the Galatians is my epistle, to which I am betrothed. It is my Katie von Bora." [Luther's wife]

(Martin Luther, *Lectures on Galatians*, 1535, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald and Helmut Lehmann, 1999)

authoritative voice and what he declares is God's Word. Anchoring Paul's authority in God as Galatians does, establishes without doubt all his other writings in Scripture as authoritative for the church. Therefore, Galatians makes general and specific contributions to God's plan in history. It places the gospel of Jesus Christ on history's timeline. It looks *back* to what God promised and *forward* to the hope to come, which is assured by the Spirit. In the specifics, the gospel is placed under a microscope. Its key terms and implications are then closely observed.

How did it end?

We do not know what happened when the Galatian churches

Acts 15:1

Now some men came down from Judea and began teaching the brothers, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved."

JERUSALEM COUNCIL
PROCLAMATION

From the apostles and elders, your brothers, to the Gentile believers in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia, greetings!

Since we have heard that some persons have gone out from among us without our authorization and have confused you, upsetting your mind by what they said, it seemed good to us, for we are of one mind, to choose men to send to you along with our dear friends Barnabas and Paul, men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, we are sending Judas and Silas who will tell you these things by word of mouth. For it seemed best to the Holy Spirit and to us not to place any greater burden on you than these requirements:

- that you abstain from meat that has been sacrificed to idols
- and from blood
- and from the meat of strangled animals
- and from sexual immorality.

If you keep yourself from doing these things you will be doing well. Farewell.

ACTS 15:23–29

received this letter. There is no follow up correspondence that we know of. We can assume the letter was copied and circulated among the churches and read in public. Given Paul's passion for the gospel and love for the Galatians, it is hard to believe the issue remained unresolved.

In Acts 15:1, we read that a version of this same problem spreading among the Galatian churches infected Paul's home church of Antioch. If Galatians was written just after the first missionary journey, at around the same time as the events of Acts 15:1, then this issue was clearly spreading through the early church. Paul and Barnabas traveled to Jerusalem where the first Christian church council was held to deal with this very problem. Key leaders spoke at this meeting. The conclusion reached and proclaimed officially around the early churches echoed Paul's words in Galatians. As a result, circumcision ceased to be a problem in the early church for the most part. Before the decision of the Jerusalem Council, the

B.C. 1 A.D.

10

20

30

40

50

5? Birth of Jesus

John the Baptist begins his ministry 28–29?

33–34? Paul encounters Christ on Damascus road

46–47? First Missionary Journey by Paul

Jesus begins his ministry 28–30?

Jesus is crucified and resurrected 30–33?

Paul writes Galatians

48?

4–6? Birth of Paul