

Freedom in Christ

Week 21: May 21-27 – Acts 14; Galatians 1-4

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Helpful Resources

Map of Paul's Missionary Journeys

Making Sense of It All

- The Big Picture

Paul and Barnabas enjoyed a successful first missionary journey to Cyprus and Galatia (Asia Minor). They took the gospel to new regions and thus fulfilled Jesus' prophecy in *Acts 1:8*. However, Satan did not make it easy for this dynamic duo. He immediately pushed back by sending agents to discredit Paul, to discourage him with violence, and to divide and destroy the new churches with false teachers. These false teachers were primarily Judaizers, Jews who held up the Mosaic Law as the standard of perfection and means to salvation. Thus, Jews who were coming to Christ for salvation slid back into practicing the Law for justification.

When Paul heard the news of their abandonment of the gospel, he immediately penned a letter. His letter is the book of *Galatians*. The purpose of *Galatians* is not only to defend Paul's apostleship but also to demonstrate the inability of the Law to save anyone. Thus, Paul pleaded with the Jewish Christians to leave behind the chains of the Law and walk in the freedom of Christ. In this review, we will reconsider his arguments to the Galatian believers.

- Paul's Grief Over the Galatians

"I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ for a different gospel, which is really not another. Only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ." *Galatians 1:6, 7*

"A man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus... By the works of the Law no flesh will be justified. If righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly." *2:16, 17, 21*

"You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you...?" Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?" *3:1, 3*

"Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us." *3:13*

"Now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, **how is it that you turn back again** to the weak and worthless elemental things, to which you desire to be enslaved all over again?" *4:9*

"When the fulness of time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, **so that He might redeem those who were under the Law,** that we might receive the adoptions as sons. So then, brethren, we are not children of a bondwoman (Law), but of the free woman (Christ). Therefore, you are no longer a slave, but a son." *4:4, 7, 31*

- Paul's Goals for *Galatians*

The Apostle Paul offered several arguments in defense of the gospel against the Judaizers.

1. **Defending His Apostleship** (*Gal. 1:1-2:21*): Like our cancel culture today, the enemy tries to discredit the message of the gospel by attacking the messenger. Thus, Paul felt the need to defend his apostleship with six arguments.

The gospel he preached was from God, not the mind of man (*1:10-12*).

The gospel he preached contradicted his training as a zealous Pharisee (*1:13, 14*).

Paul did not consult with anyone after his conversion (*1:16, 17*).

Paul was not trained or mentored by the other Apostles (*1:18, 19*).

Paul's ministry was affirmed by the Twelve Disciples or Apostles (*2:6-9*).

Paul confronted Peter in his hypocrisy in Antioch (*2:10-21*).

2. **Only One Gospel** (*Gal. 1:6-9*): There is only one gospel. Salvation is in Christ alone by faith alone, not by works. Any distortion of that gospel does not create a new gospel (another means to salvation) but rather a false gospel. Satan hates the exclusivity of Christianity, that there is one way to be saved. He likes to add to the gospel, subtract from the gospel, and tweak the gospel so that people will not hear the true gospel.
3. **Perfecting Ourselves?** (*Gal. 3:1-5*): Paul asked five rhetorical questions with the goal of pointing out that the Jews were not perfected by the Law, but by Christ. Why, then, would they continue in the Law after coming to Christ? Doing so negated Christ's sacrifice.
4. **Father Abraham** (*3:6-14*): The Jews love Abraham and claim that he is their father. Since he was circumcised, they believe they must be as well. But Paul used Abraham's story to support the gospel rather than the Law. Abraham was a Gentile who was declared righteous before being circumcised and before the Law was established.
5. **Purpose of the Law** (*Gal. 3:15-29*): The Law was necessary, not for salvation but to show us our sin and need for a Savior. The Law was only meant to be temporary until Christ came, fulfilled it, and redeemed us from it. We are no longer under the Law.
6. **No Longer Slaves But Sons** (*Gal. 4:1-31*): Paul used the story of Hagar (Ishmael) and Sarah (Isaac) to explain the difference between the slave (Law) and the freeman (gospel). Because of Christ, we are no longer slaves to the Law but are instead sons of God, adopted members of His family. Those who remain under the Law will not be included in the heavenly family of God.

The Bottom Line

Christ came to set us free from the curse of the Law. Let us embrace and enjoy our freedom in Him.

Questions to Consider

1. The enemy still deceives believers today. What are some of Satan's lies that Christians believe today? What would Paul write to us if he heard about these deceptions?
2. What is meant by the exclusivity of Christianity? How does Satan cloud the one way?
3. In what ways does the enemy distort the true gospel today? Why does he do that?
4. Have you ever fallen into the perfection trap, trying to earn God's favor by your works, even after salvation? Explain.
5. Is it easy or difficult to walk in the freedom of Christ? Explain.