

Lesson 4 – Galatians

Text: Acts 15; Galatians

Key Passages:

- Galatians 2:20 – It is not we who live, but Christ who lives in us.
- Galatians 5:19-23 – Comparison between the works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit.

Background Information:

The book of Galatians was written to all of the churches in Galatia, a Roman province. The churches in this region were Antioch of Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, Derbe, and any others that may have started while Paul and the others were in the area on the first missionary journey (Acts 13-14). Paul had passed through this region in the second and third missionary journeys as well to encourage the brethren (Acts 15:41-16:6; 18:23).

It appears that the writing of the letter must follow the conference in Jerusalem (Acts 15), as the letter seems to make direct reference to some of the events that took place there. Moreover, there is a strong correlation between the subject of discussion at Jerusalem and the dominant argument that Paul makes throughout the epistle: the necessity for Gentiles (or anyone) to follow the Law of Moses, particularly regarding circumcision. Given Paul's visits and the main subject matter of the epistle, it is likely that Paul wrote the letter during the third missionary journey after visiting the churches, perhaps while at Ephesus.

Paul's purpose in writing the letter seems to have been to refute false teachers who taught that circumcision was required for Gentiles to become Christians (teachers who taught that elements of or the entire Law of Moses were required for salvation are often referred to as Judaizing teachers). These false teachers were not only teaching falsehood, but they were also trying to persuade the Galatian churches that Paul was not to be trusted as an apostle. For the many Gentile Christians in these churches, this caused a great deal of confusion. Instead of attacking these false teachers directly, Paul focused on defending his apostolic credentials and refuting the false doctrine being espoused by the Judaizing teachers.

Outline:

- I. Purpose: to refute the Judaizing false teachers who were trying to persuade the brethren that adhering to parts of the Law of Moses was required in order to be a Christian
- II. Paul's message was true; he was an apostle and had received his message directly from God (1-2)
 - a. There is no other gospel than what Paul had preached to them; even if an angel were to teach something different, it is not from God (1:6-9)
 - b. Paul learned the gospel directly from God, not from men (1:10-24)
 - c. The other apostles recognized Paul as a reliable authority who could teach the gospel (2:1-10)
 - i. Titus, a Greek, was not circumcised (2:3)
 - ii. Paul was commissioned to go to the Gentiles (2:9)
 - d. Paul rebuked Peter for being a hypocrite and reminded him of the truth (2:10-21)
 - i. No man can be justified by the law; we are justified through Christ (2:16)
 - ii. If righteousness could come by the law alone, Christ died for nothing (2:21)
- III. We are made free through Christ, not the Law of Moses (3-4)
 - a. Justification comes by faith in Christ, not by the law (3:1-9)
 - b. Those under the law were under a curse, but Christ became cursed to allow forgiveness (3:10-14)
 - c. The creation of the law did not invalidate the original promise to Abraham (3:15-4:7)
 - i. The law was instituted as a tutor to bring them to Christ (3:19-25)
 - ii. All who were baptized were one through Christ (3:27-29)
 - d. Do not believe that the false teachers are truly there for your benefit (4:8-20)
 - e. Illustration: we are not children of the bondwoman but of the free (4:21-31)
- IV. Now that you are free through Christ, do not become entangled in the world again (5-6)
 - a. Walk by the Spirit, not by the flesh (5:13-26)
 - b. Fulfill your responsibilities to one another (6:1-10)