

The Heart of Paul's Theology

Lesson Guide

LESSON
TWO

PAUL AND THE GALATIANS



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HOW TO USE THIS LESSON GUIDE

This lesson guide is designed for use in conjunction with the associated video. If you do not have access to the video, the lesson guide will also work with the audio and/or text versions of the lesson. Additionally, the video and lesson guide are intended to be used in a learning community, but they also can be used for individual study if necessary.

- **Before you watch the lesson**
 - **Prepare** — Complete any recommended readings.
 - **Schedule viewing** — The Notes section of the lesson guide has been divided into segments that correspond to the video. Using the time codes found in parentheses beside each major division, determine where to begin and end your viewing session. IIM lessons are densely packed with information, so you may also want to schedule breaks. Breaks should be scheduled at major divisions.
- **While you are watching the lesson**
 - **Take notes** — The Notes section of the lesson guide contains a basic outline of the lesson, including the time codes for the beginning of each segment and key notes to guide you through the information. Many of the main ideas are already summarized, but make sure to supplement these with your own notes. You should also add supporting details that will help you to remember, describe, and defend the main ideas.
 - **Record comments and questions** — As you watch the video, you may have comments and/or questions on what you are learning. Use the margins to record your comments and questions so that you can share these with the group following the viewing session.
 - **Pause/replay portions of the lesson** — You may find it helpful to pause or replay the video at certain points in order to write additional notes, review difficult concepts, or discuss points of interest.
- **After you watch the lesson**
 - **Complete Review Questions** — Review Questions are based on the basic content of the lesson. You should answer Review Questions in the space provided. These questions should be completed individually rather than in a group.
 - **Answer/discuss Application Questions** — Application Questions are questions relating the content of the lesson to Christian living, theology, and ministry. Application questions are appropriate for written assignments or as topics for group discussions. For written assignments, it is recommended that answers not exceed one page in length.

Preparation

- Read Galatians
- Read Acts 13–14

Notes

I. Introduction (0:28)

II. Background (2:43)

A. First Journey (3:17)

Paul's first missionary journey began around A.D. 46 after God told the church in Syrian Antioch to set aside Paul and Barnabas for special missionary work.

Itinerary:

- Syrian Antioch
- Salamis
- Paphos
- Perga
- Pisidian Antioch
- Iconium
- Lystra
- Derbe

- Lystra
- Iconium
- Pisidian Antioch
- Perga
- Attalia
- Syrian Antioch

It seems likely that Paul wrote Galatians in A.D. 48, within a year or so of leaving Galatia, but before the Jerusalem council was held.

B. Problems (6:33)

1. Influx of Gentiles (6:57)

As a Jew, Paul naturally gave priority to Jewish evangelism, but their negative reactions to the gospel convinced Paul that God was calling him to reach the Gentiles.

2. **False Teachers (8:48)**

False teachers in Galatia came up with their own ways of dealing with Gentiles in the church by insisting that they be circumcised.

Paul believed that insisting on circumcision for Gentile Christians reflected serious misunderstandings of the Christian faith.

- It denied the sufficiency of Christ's death and resurrection for salvation.

- It demonstrated an improper reliance on the power of the flesh.

- It resulted in division within the churches of Galatia.

III. Content (14:22)

Paul's Epistle to the Galatians divides into six main sections.

A. Prescript / Postscript (15:28)**B. Introduction to Problem (15:49)**

Paul immediately attacked the problem of false teaching in Galatia.

C. Historical Accounts (16:50)

Contains several historical accounts in which Paul proved his authority.

1. Call and Training (17:21)

Paul had spent three years in Arabia learning the gospel and Christian doctrines directly from Jesus.

Jesus himself had taught Paul his new views.

2. Meeting with Leaders (18:53)

The second historical account in this section of Galatians, reports Paul's meeting with the leaders of the church in Jerusalem.

In this meeting they confirmed his approach to bringing the gospel to the Gentiles.

3. Conflict with Peter (20:13)

Paul's third historical account describes a conflict with Peter in Syrian Antioch.

If Paul's authority had been sufficient to correct even the preeminent apostle Peter, it certainly was sufficient to correct the false teachers in Galatia.

D. Theological Proofs (21:57)

Paul offered more direct theological arguments for his doctrine of justification by faith.

1. Early Experience (22:40)

Paul focused on the Galatians' earlier experience of the Christian faith.

2. **Abraham's Faith (23:47)**

Paul turned to the example of Abraham's saving faith. Paul argued that God had blessed Abraham because of his faith, not because of Abraham's obedience to God's law.

First, Paul pointed out that Abraham was justified by having faith in God's promise that he would have a son.

Second, Paul went on to point out that God had told Abraham that the blessing of salvation would spread through him to the Gentiles.

Third, Paul wanted the Galatians to understand that the bloody cutting of the flesh in circumcision was a symbol of self-cursing, not a way to gain righteousness.

Fourth, Paul preempted an objection from the false teachers by arguing that the Law of Moses did not reverse Abraham's example.

Fifth, Paul declared that God's blessings came only to those who belong to Abraham's special son, namely Christ.

3. Current Experience (29:29)

Paul expressed deep concern for the Galatians spiritual well-being; he wanted them to recognize their desperate spiritual condition.

4. Abraham's Wives & Sons (30:16)

Paul argued his case against the false teachers by focusing on the biblical record of Abraham's wives and sons.

E. Practical Exhortations (32:28)

Paul addressed a number of practical problems that the false teachers had caused in Galatia.

1. Freedom in Christ (33:13)

Paul called on the Galatians to remain true to their freedom in Christ. He stressed the need to maintain Christian freedom.

Paul warned the Galatians not to use their Christian freedom from Jewish traditions as a license for disregarding God's moral law.

2. Power of Spirit (35:32)

Paul answered that every believer must rely on the Holy Spirit for leading and empowerment rather than on the flesh.

3. Divine Judgment (37:17)

Paul warned the Galatian churches not to forget the coming judgment of God. He hoped that this warning would encourage them to rely on Christ and the Holy Spirit for salvation.

IV. Theological Outlooks (38:54)

Paul's teaching in the book of Galatians was an application of his central eschatological views.

The more fundamental error in Galatia was that the false teachers seriously underestimated the degree to which Christ had brought the age to come through his death and resurrection. They failed to realize just how much of the age to come was already present.

“Under-realized eschatology” diminished the significance of Christ's first coming.

A. Christ (41:29)

Paul drew attention to the purpose for which the Father had sent Christ: “to rescue us from the present evil age.”

B. Gospel (43:08)

Paul revealed his concern over the Galatians' under-realized eschatology by describing his disagreement with the false teachers as a matter of the “gospel.”

When Paul said that the false teachers had “no gospel at all,” he implied that they denied that Christ had brought the age to come, the age of salvation, the age of the kingdom of God. By teaching circumcision, and implying justification by works of the law, the false teachers rejected the true significance of Christ’s first coming.

C. Law (45:57)

Galatians 3:19: “What, then, was the purpose of the law? It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come.”

The Law wasn’t instituted to give God’s people salvation or to empower them to live righteously; it was instituted to reveal their sin.

D. Union with Christ (49:21)

Paul insisted justification and righteous living had to come through union with Christ.

Paul saw Christ as Abraham's seed through whom every aspect of salvation comes, making it clear that believers receive all God's blessings only as they are joined to Christ.

E. Holy Spirit (52:42)

The role of the Holy Spirit was one of the main ideas Paul had in mind as he wrote this letter.

Paul called great attention to the contrast between the work of the Holy Spirit and the work of fleshly human effort. In Galatians 5:16-26 he developed a strong contrast between the flesh and the Spirit.

Paul reminded the Galatians that those who belong to Christ already possess the Holy Spirit in fullness of his power. When followers of Christ rely on the Spirit's power; he moves within them to produce the fruit of righteousness.

F. New Creation (56:36)

Paul's heavy dependence on his doctrine of the latter days can be seen in his appeal to the new creation which appears in the postscript of his epistle.

What matters is that every person becomes a part of "the new creation."

V. Conclusion (58:17)

9. Why did Paul call the false teacher's gospel a different gospel or no gospel at all?

10. How did Paul explain the purpose of the law to the Galatians?

11. Explain how Paul's argument of union with Christ related to his eschatology.

12. What was Paul's perspective on the role of the Holy Spirit in the believer's life?

13. How did Paul emphasize that living in the new creation is to be the preeminent concern of every believer?

Application Questions

1. The Galatian Christians had lapsed into spiritual childhood instead of growing to maturity. List some similar ways that you or your Church need to grow in maturity.
2. What was Paul's disposition as he ministered, and how did he use Scripture to help the Galatians? How can you and your church learn from the ways in which Paul addressed problems?
3. What kind of distinctions does your church community make? In light of Galatians 3:28-29, are your distinctions righteous before God?
4. Paul addressed the balance between freedom and responsibility in Galatians 5. How can you appropriately balance freedom in Christ with a proper respect for God's moral law?
5. What role does the Holy Spirit play in our lives? What does it mean to live by the Spirit?
6. As you study this letter today, how has God's grace become more evident to you?
7. What aspect of this lesson has been the most meaningful to you? Why?