

Finding Freedom in Christ ***A Study in the Book of Galatians (#1)***

The Author:

His Name

This epistle (letter) is self-identified as the work of Paul. Apparently, he had two names: Saul and Paul. His name did not change at his conversion (Acts 9), but it was a common practice in that day for men to have two names. Likely his Jewish name was Saul (after the first king of Israel) and his Roman name was Paul (perhaps as a reflection of his weak bodily appearance).

He is first referred to as Saul in Acts 7:58, but by Acts 13:9, Luke (the writer of Acts) shifts and begins calling him Paul.

His Office-Apostle

The term “apostle” literally means messenger (see II Cor. 8:23 and Phil. 2:25). Originally the term referred to the 12 men chosen by Jesus in Luke 6 and Matthew 10. But the same term was used for the 70 sent out in Luke 10, for Mathias (Judas’ replacement) and 10 other New Testament leaders, including Paul.

An apostle was an overseer, someone responsible for the believers, a leader who had spiritual authority and devoted himself to the ministry of the church.

Paul makes clear we know that his office (and his authority) was not a man’s idea.

An approximate timeline

5 AD Born an Israelite, in Tarsus of Cilicia. A Roman citizen by birthright (Acts 22:25)

15-20 AD A student at the school of Gamaliel (Acts 22:3)

31 AD Becomes a Pharisee (Phil 3:5)

32 AD Present at Stephens’ stoning (Acts 7, 8)

34 AD Converted on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:30)

Travels to Arabia and remains there (Gal. 1:17)

Returns to Damascus and exits the city for safety (Acts 9)

Goes up to Jerusalem (Acts 9, Gal. 1:18)

Returns to Tarsus for safety (Acts 9:30)

47 AD Goes to Antioch with Barnabas and is sent out on their first missionary journey

49 AD Goes up to Jerusalem for the Council

50-53 AD Second Missionary Journey

54-58 AD Third Missionary Journey

58-60 AD Imprisoned in Judea

61-63 AD Imprisoned in Rome

63-67 AD Post Imprisonment Journeys

Approximate dates for writing the New Testament Books:

First Thessalonians: 52 AD

Second Thessalonians: 52 AD

Galatians: 55-57 AD

First Corinthians: 57 AD

Second Corinthians: 57 AD

Romans: 57-58 AD

Ephesians: 62 AD

Philippians: 62 AD

Colossians: 62 AD

His Associates: "The brethren with him"

Sosthenes (I Cor. 1:11), Apollos (I Cor. 1:12), Timothy and Silvanus (I Peter 5:12), Titus (II Cor. 7:6), Tychicus (Eph. 6:21), Epaphroditus (Phil. 2:25), Onesimus (Col. 4:9)

The Churches of Galatia:

Galatia is a large district in Asia Minor (current day Turkey) that contains many cities including Antioch (Pisidian), Iconium, Lystra and Derbe. Paul would have visited this region on all three missionary journeys.



The Occasion: This book was probably written after the first missionary journey but before the council in Jerusalem (Acts 15). That puts the writing somewhere between 48-57 AD (only 20 plus years after the crucifixion).

The Jewish leaders challenged Paul's spiritual authority and wanted to impose additional requirements on the Gentile believers (circumcision, keeping the ceremonial law and so on). See Acts 15.

Paul addresses these concerns in Gal. 3:2, 10, 4:10, 21, 5:2, 6:12, 13.

He is concerned that they are preaching a different gospel, following an old set of rules and forcing the Gentiles to adhere to the confines of the OT Law. According to the Talmud (an intergenerational rabbinic conversation that is studied by all good Jews), there are 613 specific laws in the OT that must be obeyed in order to earn God's favor



Paul is preaching about the New Covenant. He urges them to NOT make a “U-turn” or reversal from the good news (gospel) preached by Christ and His apostles. He is emphasizing the role of God’s grace and mercy earned for us on the cross.

So What? Embrace the Gospel

Definition

“The gospel is the joyous proclamation of God’s redemptive activity in Christ Jesus on behalf of man enslaved by sin.” (R.H. Mounce. *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*)

This good news is:

1. biblical (his death and resurrection are according to the Scriptures)
2. theological and salvific (Christ died for our sins, to reconcile us to God)
3. historical (if the saving events did not happen, our faith is worthless, we are still in our sins, and we are to be pitied more than all others)
4. apostolic (the message was entrusted to and transmitted by the apostles, who were witnesses of these saving events)
5. intensely personal (when it is received, believed, and held firmly, individual persons are saved). (The Gospel Coalition)

Explanation

The Gospel is the power of God for salvation ([Romans 1:16](#)) and the preaching of the Gospel is the great “means” and “methodology” of missions.

The Gospel is, first and foremost, God in Christ reconciling the world to Himself ([II Corinthians 5:19](#)). It answers the eternal question of how a just God can rightly justify wicked men ([Romans 3:26](#)).

It points to Christ alone, who bore the sins of His people upon the cross, was forsaken of God, and crushed under the full force of His just wrath against sin.

The Good News of the Gospel is that through Christ's death, the justice of God was satisfied, and salvation was won for a great multitude of people. This is evidenced by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead – “He who was delivered over because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification” ([Romans 4:25](#)). (From Heart Cry Missionary Society)

Questions to Consider: If you were going to write an autobiography of yourself, what would you include? What would you gloss over? Would your timeline reflect a consistent walk with the Lord? Who would be mentioned traveling alongside you? What was their influence? Overall, is it time for a change?

Verses to Memorize: Galatians 1:3-4

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father.

Tips for studying God's Word:

When studying a particular passage, start by reading it silently over and over again. Then read it out loud as well. What did you notice? Write those observations down.

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