



"REASONS TO REJOICE"

"Your Words were found, and I ate them, and Your Word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart." Jeremiah 15:16

Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians LESSON 1

Welcome to our 20-week study of Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians. We will begin by digging into the exciting and life-changing book of **Galatians**. After reading this letter from the apostle Paul, it's hard not to jump up and down and shout, "Yahoo ... I'm free!" at the top of your lungs. Paul gives us one of the clearest definitions in Scripture of what the Gospel of Grace is all about. The Galatians seemed to have a sincere heart for the Lord and a desire to grow, but unfortunately, they also seemed to lack spiritual discernment. Because of the openness of their hearts, false teachers had come in, telling them that they needed to put themselves back under the bondage of the Old Testament Law. Paul pens this letter in response to that report, passionately declaring that salvation is by faith alone. The book of Galatians emphasizes the bondage of the Law and the freedom of grace. It is sometimes called the "Christian Declaration of Independence," or the "Battle Cry of the Reformation." Merrill C. Tenney wrote, "Galatians was the cornerstone of the Protestant Reformation, because its teaching of salvation by grace alone became the dominant theme of the preaching of the reformers." This may possibly be one of Paul's earliest epistles, making Galatians one of the oldest books of the New Testament.

Our goal in studying any book of the Bible is to get to know the Lord in a deeper, more intimate way, and for the truth of God's Word to change us and conform us into the image of Jesus Christ (Romans 8:29). We want to be more like Him in how we think, in what we say, and in what we do. As we get to know Him, we can ask the Holy Spirit to point out those areas in our life that need to be changed (Psalm 139:23-24). We want to learn how to apply the truth in God's Word to our life, and for that truth to affect our daily living.

To reach this goal, we need to study the Bible like a detective. This is done by observing all the facts in the passage we are studying. Every book has a purpose for being written, as well as every chapter and every verse. Discovering that purpose is one of the keys to understanding what the author is saying and why he's saying it. This step is called "**Observation**," meaning that you observe all the facts. John Wycliffe said, "It shall greatly help you to understand Scripture if you mark not only what is spoken or written, but of whom, with what words, at what time, where, to what intent, with what circumstances, considering what goes and what follows." In our study of Galatians, we will begin with Observation. Each week you will be asked to read the entire chapter, taking note of each fact you find. As you read, ask yourself questions like: **Who** said it? **Who** did they say it to? **What** happened? **Where** did it happen? **Why** did it happen? **How** did it happen? Ask any questions you can think of to gather information.

The next step is "**Interpretation**." After you observe the text, you want to find out what those facts mean. When you observe, you are asking yourself, "**What does the text say?**" As you Interpret, you now ask, "**What does the text mean?**" You can go back and answer any questions you might have had during your observation. You can cross-reference, use a Bible Encyclopedia, dictionaries, and other study helps. You can do word studies, as well as look up words in an exhaustive concordance. Your goal is to find the correct meaning so you can apply God's Word correctly.

Finally we get to the **Application** of the text. After asking, "**What does it mean?**" you now ask, "**What does it mean to me?**" How does this apply to my life? How will this conform me into His image? Is this an encouragement? A rebuke? A correction? **Application** requires thought, prayer, planning, and action. We need to spend time alone with the Lord, hearing His answer to the above questions. We must never neglect this step because it is the most important part of our study of Scripture. What good is knowing God's Word if we are not applying God's Word, like it says in James 1:22. God's Word should have an effect on our life.

The "**Reasons to Rejoice**" Bible Study is to be used as a tool for your study of the Book of Galatians. Each lesson has a 5-day homework plan to help you discipline yourself each week. Take your time. Don't rush through. Meditate and ponder on each Scripture, allowing the Holy Spirit to speak to

your heart personally. You don't want to miss anything the Lord has for you! (I know I don't!) You also will be given a memory verse each week. Galatians 1:10 is the first memory verse, telling us that God is the One we should seek to please, not men. As you memorize this verse, spend time each day thinking about how you can apply it to your own life.

As you study, always have a pencil ready for recording your observations. Various translations of the Bible are helpful to add color and meaning. (This study uses the New King James Version for the text.) As I mentioned before, a dictionary, a Bible dictionary, and a concordance would be very helpful. Commentaries are great, but they are only to be used after completing your own study. You want the Holy Spirit to have a chance to speak to your own heart before you read someone else's comments and opinions.

The most important thing to do before you start your lesson each day is to begin with prayer. Ask the Holy Spirit to search your heart and reveal any sin that may be there (Psalm 139:23-24). Confess those sins and ask for His forgiveness (1 John 1:9). Ask Him to fill you with His Spirit (Ephesians 5:18) and open up your understanding as you read His Word. We can't understand the Bible on our own. We need Him to enlighten and instruct us in all spiritual things (John 14:26).

Okay, we're now ready to begin our study. Do you want God to change your life? If the answer is yes, continue on!

First Day

It's very important to know the background of the book you are studying. You should know who the author is, when the book was written, and why the author is writing. **We'll be doing a little more reading than usual this week, so hang in there.** It's important stuff!

Who is the author?

Unlike some other books in Scripture, the authenticity of Paul as the author is unchallenged. He names himself in 1:1, 5:2, and 6:11. Usually Paul would have another actually pen the letter, and then he would sign his name. But according to 6:11, Paul wrote this letter himself.

Saul, whose name was later changed to Paul (Acts 13:9), was born a Jew, in Tarsus of Cilicia, brought up under the teaching of Gamaliel,

according to the strictness of the law (Acts 22:3). He was also a Roman citizen (Acts 22:25-28). Paul was of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews, a strict Pharisee (Philippians 3:5-6). He was definitely a zealot for the cause of Judaism. He passionately persecuted those in the church for abandoning Jewish tradition and calling themselves by the name of "Christian" (Acts 26:10-11, Acts 9). While chasing them down, he found himself on the road to Damascus. Something exciting happened to him that day that changed his life forever.

1. Read Acts 9:1-31. Describe Paul's dramatic conversion and the events that followed.

Paul became even more zealous as he traveled the world to share the good news of the Gospel of Grace. He had a great love for his fellow Israelites (Romans 9:1-4, 10:1), but he was called by God to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15, 22:18, 21). The Law was given to us through Moses, but on the road to Damascus, Paul learned that the Law cannot save us. We obtain salvation through faith in the person of Jesus Christ. Paul was God's missionary to the Gentile world. (That's a "Reason to Rejoice" right there!)

When and to Whom was Galatians written?

Galatians 1:2 tells us that Paul was writing to the churches of Galatia. What we don't know is exactly whom he is referring to. About 280 B.C., a group of Celtic barbaric warrior tribes from Gaul, known as the Galatians, settled in Northern Asia Minor, which is modern-day Turkey. The word "Galatians" simply means "the country of the Gauls." Years later, this kingdom became subject to Rome, and soon a Roman province by their name was established, which included the northern region of Asia Minor and extended southward, almost to the Mediterranean Sea. For years scholars

have debated about whether Paul was writing to the people in the north or those living in the southern region. (North Galatian Theory or South Galatian Theory) We aren't really sure if Paul is talking about those that live in the smaller country of Galatia, or those in the entire Roman province. Most evidence suggests that Paul is writing to the southern Galatians, because Paul traveled through that region on his first missionary journey (Acts 13:4-14:28) and established churches throughout the area. If this is true, Paul probably wrote this letter about **A.D. 49** from the city of Antioch.

Why was Paul writing?

This is a very important question because without fully understanding his purpose, we miss the heart of what he's trying to communicate to the Galatians, and to us. Paul, by the power of the Holy Spirit, wrote this letter to the Galatians for three main reasons:

(1) Paul wrote to correct false doctrine.

Both Jews and Gentiles accepted Christ during Paul's missionary trip through the region of Galatia. These people had been living in shackles, imprisoned either by their own sin or by living under the bondage of the Old Testament Law. When they received Christ, the shackles were opened and they were set free! Free to love and serve the Lord and experience liberty in Christ. Unfortunately, certain men called "Judaizers" were trying to entice the Christians back into the Jewish religious system. These Judaizers believed that all of God's promises and gifts were only for the Jews. They were offended at the idea that Gentiles could partake in the Good News. So ... they figured out a way to make it work. They tried to make the Christian become a Jew first. By putting them under the law, requiring them to be circumcised, observe dietary laws, etc., they would make them "Christian Jews." The Galatians were falling for it, willingly putting back on the very shackles from which they had been freed.

Paul had a deep love for the truth. In Paul's writings, he frequently exhorts the believers to teach the truth, guard the truth, hold fast to the truth, etc. (1 Timothy 4:16, 2 Timothy 4:2, Titus 2:7, etc.) He had obviously previously warned them about those who would try to distort the truth Galatians (1:9), so he appears to be very grieved at what was happening. Most of Paul's letters begin with an encouragement or some type of

commendation to his audience, but not this one. Paul goes right for the jugular, so to speak. In our lingo, he says, "What do you guys think you're doing?"

(2) Paul wrote to defend his authority.

Not only was the truth being attacked, so was Paul himself. His authority as an apostle was being questioned. Paul meets that challenge head on and reminds the Galatians that his authority was given to him by Jesus Christ Himself (1:12). Although he had been persecuting the church of God, he now was commissioned to preach among the Gentiles (1:15).

(3) Paul wrote to give practical instruction.

In the last two chapters, Paul gives them instruction on how to live out their Christian faith in love and service. He reminds them that walking in the Spirit produces fruit of the Spirit in their lives.

2. Tomorrow we will begin to go through chapter by chapter, but to end our first day, read through the Book of Galatians. (Don't panic -- it's only six chapters!) Write your first impression of the book as you read it in one sitting.

Memory Verse of the Week: "For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a servant of Christ." Galatians 1:10

Second Day

Review your memory verse. Meditate on it throughout the day.

1. It's important to look at the book of Galatians as a whole picture before we break it down into smaller sections. That way we will get a good overview and see how it all ties together, instead of getting lost in a chapter, wondering how it fits in. For today's lesson, please read each chapter and give it a title. Be creative! Write the main point or thought of the chapter. Do you notice any

words or phrases that seem to be repeated? (Repetition usually means that the author is emphasizing a certain point.) As you read, notice that the first two chapters are **personal** as he defends his authority. Chapters 3 and 4 are **doctrinal**, as he defends justification by faith, and then chapters 5 and 6 are **practical**, as he shares insight on how to walk in the Spirit.

Chapter One: Title-

Chapter Two: Title-

Chapter Three: Title-

Chapter Four: Title-

Chapter Five: Title-

Chapter Six: Title-

2. What would you say is the tone of Paul's letter?

3. What verse tells us the motive of Paul's writing?

4. Choose a verse that best explains the theme of the letter.

We'll end here for today. I pray that as you read through this book, you sensed Paul's heart for the truth. I pray that we have the same heart for keeping God's Word spotless and undistorted. And may you rejoice in the freedom that can only be found in Jesus.

Third Day

Study your memory verse. Does it speak to your heart?

Today we will look at chapter 1 in more depth. Remember to pray before you begin, asking the Holy Spirit to give you an understanding mind to learn and an open heart to receive.

1. Read Galatians 1:1-24. Observe and list the facts you find. (Ask yourself: Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?)

2. Are there any thoughts or truths in this chapter that are new to you?

3. How do you think Paul feels about the Galatians at this moment?
4. Reread the salutation in verses 1-5. Whom does Paul say his authority comes from?

The word “**apostle**” comes from the Greek word “*apostolos*” and is defined as one who is sent with a commission. Donald Campbell says that “it refers to a person who has a right to speak for God as His representative.” The commentator John R. Stott explains the term “as not a general word which could be applied to every Christian like the word “*believer*,” or “*saint*,” or “*brother*.” It was a special term reserved for the twelve and for one or two others whom the risen Christ had personally appointed.” Paul was obviously not one of the twelve apostles who ministered with Jesus while He was on earth, but he later did fulfill the requirements of witnessing the resurrection (Acts 1:21-22, 2:32, 3:15) when he saw the risen Lord and was commissioned by Him on the road to Damascus. Because he was not one of the twelve, he was open to criticism, but he reminds them that he was an apostle by divine appointment (1 Corinthians 15:5-8; Acts 9:15). He didn’t “choose” himself; he was “chosen” by God. Paul didn’t make up the message; the message came directly from the Lord. Paul’s writings are divinely inspired by the Holy Spirit (2 Timothy 3:16) and God Himself is the author of every word.

5. Why do you think he mentions “all the brethren who were with him” in verse 2?
6. Why do you think Paul included both the death and resurrection of Christ in the very first five verses? (See Romans 5:8-9 and 4:25)
7. The grace of God, which brought joy and peace, was purchased at a great cost. What was the price? What was the purpose? (Gal.1:4)

You'll notice that in Paul's writing, grace is always found before peace (Gal. 1:3). God's peace can't be found before God's grace is received. What exactly is "grace," you may ask. The word **grace** comes from the Greek word "charis," which speaks of "sheer beauty." To the Greeks, anything of beauty, favor, or delight in which a person could rejoice spoke of "charis." In a theological sense, the word grace means "divine favor that is completely undeserved by man." That is something we can rejoice in! John MacArthur defines the grace of Christ as "God's free and sovereign act of love and mercy in granting salvation through the death and resurrection of Jesus, apart from anything men are or can do, and of His sustaining that salvation to glorification." Bottom line, God's grace is something we don't deserve. It takes away the guilt of our sin. Isaiah 53:5-6 tells us that "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." Wow! Jesus paid a price He did not owe; we owed a debt we could not pay. One way to remember the definition of grace is:

G R A C E: God's Riches At Christ's Expense

8. According to Galatians 1:4, what did the death of Jesus deliver us from? How?

That's it for today. Tomorrow we'll define the word "Gospel," and see how the Law ties in. These two words are used frequently in this book and are extremely important for us to understand. See you then!

Fourth Day

Review your verse. Recite it to someone in your family and discuss what it means to you.

1. Read Galatians 1:6-9. Why is Paul amazed and bewildered?

The phrase "turning away" comes from the word "metatithemi," and is used to describe military desertion. It was a voluntary act on the part of the Galatians. They were not only turning away from a doctrine, but from the One who had called them to salvation. They were turning away from God Himself.

2. Was Paul more surprised by what the false teachers were doing or by the response of the believers?
3. How do you think this happened? Can you think of some reasons that the Galatians would be so quick to listen to these false teachers and turn away from the truth?
4. Does this still happen today? How can we prevent this from happening to us? (1 Timothy 6:20-21; 2 Timothy 2:14-18, 3:16-17, 4:3-5) Give other Scriptures for your answer.

Paul said these men were teaching a different kind of Gospel. The Gospel of Christ is literally defined as "**Good News.**" This good news refers to the message God entrusted Paul to preach. Walter A. Elwell defines the Gospel as "the joyous proclamation of God's redemptive activity in Christ Jesus on behalf of men enslaved by sin." Paul defines the Gospel in a nutshell in 1 Corinthians 15:3-4; "For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received; that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures." It is said that Christ's willingness to die is the heart of the Gospel, and His resurrection is the power of the Gospel. (I love that!)

Why was Paul so adamant about keeping the Gospel pure? **Because when you add to the Gospel, it stops being the Gospel.** Paul was teaching the truth; that our salvation does not depend on our own efforts to keep the law. Salvation is not about human effort, but faith in God. Ephesians 2:8-9 says, "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and not that of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast." No one can become a Christian by agreeing "to do" something. The Gospel of faith "plus" works undermines the real Gospel, making salvation a partially human accomplishment instead of a miraculous work of God. We become a Christian by submitting ourselves to Christ and receiving the free gift of salvation He offered us by dying on the cross. **Romans 10:9-10** tells us that "if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes to righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made to salvation."

If the Law can't save us, then what's the purpose of the Law? Charles Swindoll puts it like this: "The Law does not save us, because none of us can keep the Law perfectly (Although legalists would have us believe we can.) Discarding legalism, however, doesn't mean we despise the Law. The Law is good; it has a purpose. God gave us the Law to serve as a "tutor" to show us our sin and drive us to the grace found in Jesus Christ. The Gospel frees us from trying to work our way to God through rule-keeping. But the Gospel also keeps us from drifting into libertinism -- taking our freedom in Christ to unhealthy or unloving extremes. As those saved by grace, we are now free to love and obey Christ as well as love and serve one another. We're free -- not to do whatever we want, but to do what God wants."

5. Why do you think we, as humans, like to think we can earn our salvation by "doing" things for the Lord?

6. Do you get caught up in the doctrine of works? Are you right now? Take some time and examine your heart. If the answer is yes, what should you do?

7. What did Paul say about those who were preaching other's Gospels? Do you think Paul was being mean or wicked? Why was he so passionate about that?
8. How do you react to others who preach another Gospel? Do you just brush it off or do you take the time to point out the error of their teaching? How passionate are you about the truth? (I'm not saying that you should run up to them and yell "accursed" but I think you know what I mean.)
9. How does Galatians 1:1-9 speak to your heart?

Let's close for now. We'll finish off our chapter tomorrow. I challenge you to pray for more passion for the truth. Can you imagine if all Christians were as in love with the truth as Paul was? Look out world!

Fifth Day

Write out your verse from memory.

1. Let's begin today by reading Galatians 1:10-24. What is the main point of this section?

Paul may have been accused of trying to be a man-pleaser because of his teaching that we should become all things to all men for the sake of the Gospel (1 Corinthians 9:19-23). Of course this is not what Paul meant. Paul simply wanted to win others for Christ. In verse 10, he makes his motives quite clear.

2. Who did Paul want to please?
3. Is it possible to please God without pleasing man? Is it possible to please man without pleasing God? Explain.
4. Do you struggle with being a man-pleaser? In what way? How can you change that?

Paul now reminded them of his past and how God dealt with him. I don't think they quite understood to what extent God's grace was shown through the conversion of Paul. He now takes a minute to drive the point home.

5. How does Paul describe his old life?
6. Paul was saved on the road to Damascus, but when was he "called"?
7. What did Paul do as soon as he was saved, according to Galatians 1:16-24?
8. Why do you think God didn't allow Paul to "confer with flesh and blood" right away? What might have happened if he would have gone straight to Jerusalem to be with the apostles?

9. Why was it so good for Paul to spend so much time alone? What do you think he did? (Who else in Scripture spent time in the desert before his ministry began?)
10. How much time do you spend alone with the Lord? Do you enjoy being with others more than being alone with the Lord? (Should you spend time with other Christians?)
11. How did the churches in Judea respond when they heard that Paul was now preaching "for" Christ instead of "against" Christ?
12. Explain how Paul's life is a great example of God's grace.
13. How about your life? How is it a picture of God's grace? Where would you be right now without Him?

As we end our lesson, there is one more question that needs to be asked. Have you received God's free gift of salvation? Have you confessed your sins to the Lord, asking Him to forgive you? (1 John 1:9) Have you asked Jesus to come and dwell within your heart? Have you received God's grace in your life? If not, please don't do another thing until you consider making that commitment to the Lord. It's the most important decision you'll ever make.