

## **Galatians – Background for Study of Walking in the Spirit**

**Tuesday April 28 2020:**

[DISCLAIMER: This is only one person's reflections on Galatians. God uses different parts of the body of Christ to bring out the whole picture of the Truth as He wishes to reveal, so this work gives one point of perspective on the Galatian letter and ministry. The Scriptures are completely true, no matter how any of us misunderstand or misinterpret what we may think they say. I might have some insight that is Holy Spirit led, and might also get some things wrong, as a believer who still needs to have his senses trained by "use" to discern good and evil (from Hebrews). Don't hesitate to correct me any time an error is found, or edit anything that needs to be improved.]

Galatians is a fascinating and important book of the Bible. It is written through Paul, and done in a way that serves as unique evidence and confirmation of the truth of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God. The setting for Galatians is presented in Acts 14:1-3. There we see that both Jews and Gentiles are coming to Christ within the Galatian territory. "...A great multitude both of the Jews and of the Greeks believed."

Acts 13 and 14, in their record of Paul's first work in Galatia, reveal the geographic territory involved, which includes Antioch in Pisidia, Iconium and Lystra, all a part of Galatia. Today those locations are a part of the country of Turkey.

In the middle of the miraculous work there for the Gospel, a great conflict breaks out from Judaizers who come against this Gospel. Trouble escalates rapidly, and leads to Paul being stoned and left for dead outside Lystra. What he writes about in Galatians, is what caused him to be stoned during the work described in Acts. He is risking his life by writing this book in defense of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God.

Galatians helps answer a question about a particular kind of attack on Christianity that could have been made after Jesus's ascension. The attack is to accuse the remaining 11 apostles, who walked this earth with Jesus, of

being from some sort of cult. The argument there is focused on the fact that they were influenced only by a singular charismatic personality. Jesus would be discounted as some kind of overpowering speaker and a kind of magician, not the only Begotten Son of the Father. We have seen some charismatic types among political and religious figures during the 1900s and early 2000s so the concept of a charismatic personality having an unnatural power over people should not be new to us.

How can we confirm that those 11 apostles, unusually affected by Jesus's powerful influence, really knew and walked the truth? Is there any independent evidence to suggest they were under more than the power of a cult that was distorting the Scriptures in a charismatic personality?

Remember that a major cause for Paul writing this letter is that the Judaizers are specifically pushing circumcision and other aspects of Torah law onto believers here in the Galatian churches. Those Judaizers were from the area where the people had stoned Paul. So why should Paul then risk life and limb in writing some of the strong criticism of Galatians? What was being pressed upon the Galatians would effectively denigrate the power of salvation through the blood of Christ, and only the blood of Jesus Christ. Paul is risking everything to hold to the only true Gospel.

Think about this one issue- the whole transforming power of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God. The central perversion in the kind of attack of the Judaizers against the Galatians is that Christ alone cannot save. We must add first circumcision onto surrendering our lives to Christ, which takes us down the legalistic road to self-motivated works, not faith initiated works done in response to the Father's leading. Self-centered denial of certain habits is another example of such works.

[Once a person heads down this self-destructive trail of salvation depending partly on some other requirement[s], there is no end of extras we will need to cover our sense of inadequacy, and our growing fear of not being able to measure up. That route ends up in a kind of continual guilt trip].

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Do we get tricked into thinking that Christianity is really a lot of dos and don'ts? Do we descend to the kind of thought that "Jesus PLUS something is what really saves...." That trap prevents us from fully experiencing the LIBERTY THAT IS IN CHRIST (Galatians 5:1, 2), and from being able to live the kind of joy filled life that attracts the attention of people without Christ.

Besides the conflict over returning to legalistic Jewish practices, some or many of the Galatians in this letter are turning back to what Paul describes as the elemental things of the world, traditions and practices from the Gentiles' background. Paul frankly confronts both groups of believers with this statement: "I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ..." There is serious trouble in Galatia with people leaving the true faith that had been growing strongly among them. So Paul is taking on the error here that is evidenced among the Galatian believers. It is damaging both the Gentile and the Jewish believers.

Paul's very isolated 17 plus years during his personal growth, leading up to this letter, provide us with good questions that we can ask about the pathway over which Paul has come. His growth in faith contrasts with that of the 11 other apostles, as well as with the other believers that came from the three year walk of Christ on the earth, and also the year that followed after the Crucifixion.

My impression of a key to why Galatians happened is- the Lord God Almighty planned for all of this Galatian experience with Paul, and the separate experiences of the eleven others as an independent confirmation of the Kingdom Gospel truth. I believe He very deliberately brought together Paul's life in Christ completely removed from the apostles' Gospel. Paul's independent journey helps put to rest any confusion causing people to think that the other apostles might have come from a personality cult. They all speak the same Gospel of the Kingdom.

In fact, the Lord took a man who was paradoxically a great enemy of the Gospel (See Gal 1:13, 14, I Cor 15:9 and Gal 1:23); who also was one of the

most “religious” Jewish men in His Jewish traditions; and a Jew of the most highly religiously educated Pharisees. And the Lord used him` as the vehicle through whom He gave this startling confirmation of the ministry of Jesus and the Gospel of the Kingdom of God.

And so Galatians begins immediately speaking of Paul’s isolation: “Paul an apostle, NOT from man, NOR through man, but through Jesus Christ, and God the Father.” Maybe one of the most important points we need to get from the book of Galatians is the following reality: since this book has no connection to any teaching by the other apostles, it independently confirms the Gospel truth. Our eternity depends on the blood of Jesus Christ, and only the blood of Christ.

This book on Galatians is also removed from any influence of Jesus’s earthly ministry, other than how Christ’s earthly work brought out the persecutor in Paul. Until after Christ’s Ascension, just 10 days before the great Pentecost event, Paul remained a dedicated enemy of Christ and His followers. So then, this Gospel teaching in Galatians came by a revelation (Gal 1:11) “of Jesus Christ” to Paul the apostle, and only the revelation of Jesus to him after Pentecost and the Ascension were history.

There is something so important about the pure Gospel of the Kingdom, or so profound as we see in statements elsewhere, as in Eph 6 “the Gospel of peace;” or Mark 1 “the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.” In Romans 1:16 Paul announces, “I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation to everyone who believes, for the Jew first, and also for the Greek.” Also, we see that great explanation in I Cor 15:3,4 “For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ dies for our sins according to the Scriptures. And that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.... And that He was seen” by more than 500 witnesses, many of whom were alive when Paul wrote this Scripture. I Cor 15:3,4 is grounded in solid evidence in that day of the truth of what Paul had said.

We have a great challenge coming to the full realization of our liberty in Christ for many reasons, which are a subject for another work. However, to emphasize again, the point about Paul's unique role in the proof of the Gospel truth depends in part upon his very much isolated learning of the Gospel. This letter, as a completely unique presentation of the Gospel of Christ. That fact helps drive home the fact that Paul's supernatural understanding of the Gospel is identical to what separately had been established with the apostles during Christ's earthly ministry.

Reflect on, and pray over the following confrontational questions that Paul is led to raise with the Galatians as the Holy Spirit directs this examination of the Gospel of the Kingdom, and only the Gospel plus nothing else.

1. The [enemy attempt to add to the Gospel] crisis in Galatia prompted Paul to state outright in Gal 1:6: "I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel..."

PAUL ASKS A NUMBER OF QUESTIONS THAT SHOULD HELP FOCUS OUR ATTENTION ON THE ENEMY'S ATTACK ON THE PURE GOSPEL:

Gal 3:1 "O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth..."

Gal 3:2 "Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?"

Gal 3:2,3 "Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?"

Gal 3:5 "...He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, does He do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?"

Gal 4:9 "...how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage?"

And finally, Gal 5:5 "You ran well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth?"

WHAT DO THESE VERSES ABOVE MAKE US THINK ABOUT?

What are our thoughts about things that give us a guilt trip? Are we fully experiencing the PERFECT LAW OF LIBERTY, OR ARE THERE REGRETS THAT ARE CLOUDING THE JOY OF THAT LIBERTY? AM I PULLING EMOTIONAL DAMAGE ALONG WITH ME, SOME KIND OF ANGER, REGRET, LONGING FOR THE PAST, SOME FALSE SENSE THAT I FAILED TO MEET MY DESTINY? I suggest that these kind of thoughts conflict with Paul's personal testimony that he forgot what lay behind, and he pressed forward. Write down any kind of regret that we need to cast on Him, and release these things to Jesus in faith.

2. Summarizing the independent Gospel points revealed to Paul as he first mentions them in the letter is as follows, and is crucial to the remainder of New Testament history. How would we position ourselves in our walk with Christ if the following history was our own?

Paul's pathway to when this letter is written:

- a. About A.D. 32, not long after the Ascension, Paul heads to Damascus to persecute believers and Gal 1:12 reveals what happened in the 3 year period beginning with when he was physically confronted by the Lord Jesus on the road to Damascus and the next years after: "it [the Gospel] came through the revelation of Jesus Christ"

- b. Gal 1:16 “to reveal His Son in me” which started on the road to Damascus when Paul was blinded by the Lord Jesus Acts 9:5  
“I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting...”
- c. Acts 9:6-19 Jesus has Paul go into Damascus where Paul waits in prayer for three days, and Ananias comes to give him his sight, and filling of the Holy Spirit. The Lord reveals Paul’s surrender to Ananias in such a way that when Ananias greets him he calls him “brother.”
- d. Gal 1:15-17 Paul has three years in Arabia, and back in Damascus, learning the Gospel from God alone.
- e. Gal 1:18-20 He goes for 15 days to see Peter, and Jesus’s brother James, and confirms the Gospel vision he had received. These two men have been called as apostles by the Lord and are an important check for Paul on what he needs to confirm from His three years with the Lord.
- f. Then Paul goes to Cilicia and Syria, and after 14 years, with Barnabas, Titus, and some others, he returns to Jerusalem (Gal 2:2 “by revelation... “lest by any means I might run, or had run in vain...” [Gal 2:3 Titus not being circumcised is an example that Paul gives regarding the subject of whether or not he had run in vain. [This trip is highlighted in Acts 15, including the great dispute over circumcision.]

So, again, how would we walk and live if we went through what Paul described? What kind of power do we see in the Gospel that Paul is fighting for, and risking his life for in Galatians?

Paul in his insecurities here is pushing for and pursuing to find out where he fits in God’s plan for mankind. Someone recently mentioned to several of us in a home study group that hypocrisy is focusing on something outward rather than what God is doing inside us. What is within us concerns the real work of God, not some kind of show of something that we are not. Circumcision is outward, a superficial change, not Spirit [like Jesus]. (See Philippians 3:3)

How do the subject of forgetting what lies behind, how do we release to the Lord those regrets and the emotional baggage (and in many folks actual physical wounds and injuries from abuse) and leave all this behind in seeking our place and calling for the Gospel wherever we may live?

3. The Gospel of Christ is at stake here in Galatians in the attack to add to Christ's sacrifice, resurrection and ascension. That attack has been repeated again and again in history. So, let's list here from Galatians what are the critical points of this completely independent Gospel of the Kingdom? His first mention in the letter is here listed:
  - a. Paul mentions one of the most important Scriptures on faith from the Old Testament (the Abrahamic covenant) Gal 3:11 "But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for 'the just shall live by faith...'" If I think that I can personally, of myself, bring anything worthy to the Lord God, I have in effect denied His holiness, which is absolute. By the way, Hab 4:2, quoted here, is one of only two Scriptures all the way though the Scriptures until we get to Matthew, with the word "Faith."
  - b. First mentioned Gospel Truth: Gal 1:1 Paul's apostleship is from the One "who raised Him [Jesus Christ] from the dead..."

- c. Gal 1:3 “our Lord Jesus Christ.” Jesus, and He alone has lordship over us, I have nothing I can offer to affect Justification and Redemption, except to surrender to Him.
- d. Gal 1:3 “...who gave Himself for our sins” If I try to add anything to this Eternal Act of Sacrifice, I destroy (?) or at least eternally insult the Truth of what he did.
- e. Gal 1:3 “...that He might deliver us from this present age...” Jesus desperately wants to get them out of the exact perverted destruction of truth, bondage, and all that goes with it, that the Judaizers are trying to force upon them.

Let's ourselves below list the critical points of the Gospel, and imprint these in our hearts? (Romans 12 refers to this kind of work as being transformed by the renewing of our minds.) Are we really seeing this the way that the Holy Spirit put this down through Paul?

Am I seeing things in how I thought about the Gospel, that the truth in Galatians is making me rethink? What are some examples?

Paul's former life, in many ways, boiled down to this statement here in Galatians 1:13 "I persecuted the church of God beyond measure, and tried to destroy it...." He is telling them he was the enemy of enemies of the Gospel. If this guy is the one writing Galatians, if he has rejected his persecuting past of Christians, and now is being persecuted and tortured for exactly what he writes in this letter, then we had better pay close attention.

### WHAT IS REQUIRED OF US?

There is a faith demanded of us in Galatians that, in my opinion, defies human reasoning. Gal 5:5 "We through the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith." Here is part of the mystery of this "pie in the sky by and by" kind of statement to those who would demand "show me the wounds..." Our faith, in the great mystery of godliness, is bound up in a personal hope of righteousness. That hope is centered in our hearts, it is not a visible, tangible, physically identified mark on us.

When we learn that Jesus became for us (I Cor 1:30) wisdom from God- and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption," we then have to learn to stand upon the intangible reality that He is, in fact, our righteousness, our sanctification, our wisdom and our redemption. As difficult as it may be, we need to say that we are righteous, sanctified, redeemed, and that we now have wisdom. For me the key is this, " Jesus is my wisdom, and my righteousness, sanctification and my redemption. This invisible reality is another situation similar to Jesus's description of the invisible wind in John 3. We cannot see the wind, but it will act on everything and there will be results that we can see, if we have eyes to see.

The physically un-seeable facts are:

Through the Spirit, Who is invisible [like the John 3 wind comparison that Jesus gave to Nicodemus]:

We wait, no one can measure our waiting;

We grasp righteousness [that of Christ Himself] in our hearts, again unseen;

And we grasp righteousness through FAITH... again an invisible truth;

WE CAN help ourselves with personalizing Biblical truth like I Cor 1:30, He IS our righteousness, our wisdom, our sanctification, He is our redemption

One key theme of Galatians: Gal 5:1 “Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free:”

PROCLAIMING THESE FOLLOWING TRUTHS AND  
PERSONALIZING THEM TO EACH OF US IN PRAYER WILL  
PROVIDE SUPPORT TO US GROWING IN WALKING IN THE  
HOLY SPIRIT:

Gal 3:5 We, by faith, Proclaim our Holy Spirit and our miracles

3:4 We are, in the Spirit, attaining perfection

3:5 We will continue to speak things of the Spirit so we keep receiving the Spirit by faith

[Example, Annanias to “brother” Saul, “be filled with the Spirit...”

This is a continuing need, and Ephesians emphasized our need to be filled with the Spirit, and compares it with the effects of drinking wine, that wear off after time.

[For your meditation later: I John 3:23, John 6:29, and here Gal 3:6-8

We are blessed with Abraham by faith, our Believing in God and He whom God sent is unto our righteousness [but mysteriously only His]

3:8 We stand in our Justification by faith

3:8 We have been blessed in Abraham, We proclaim that we are living by faith

3:13 We repeat that we are redeemed from the curse

3:14 We are in Christ, We have the promise of the Spirit, He is filling us

3:29 We are all sons of God through Christ, and therefore, Abraham's children 3:29. In the same way that Abraham will welcome us his family some day. In Abraham's blessing we will welcome others as family, and enter into our eternal reward.

4:6 The Spirit in us right now is crying out to the Father and calling Him most intimately as our parent, "Abba Father."

We stand fast in all these truths, unseeable, but Known by what We now walk in:

Love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control,.. We have crucified the flesh and it's passions and desires.... God Almighty has crucified our flesh, past tense, and today we live in the Spirit

In the mystery of godliness, all of these truths work like the wind: We and others will see this Holy Spirit wind affecting us, although the wind itself not visible.

What do these things have in common? Electricity, aerodynamic lift, gravity, our sense of balance, principalities and powers, maturity in the faith? All of these things act upon our physical world, and are not, in and of themselves, visible.

Think about the following, what is common to the forces that cause electric current, aerodynamic lift, our gravity, and common as well to principalities and powers.

I Tim 3:16 "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness"