

- Last week looked at the first missionary trip the new apostle Paul made, who went with him, and some of the adventures they experienced. We also looked at meeting called the “Jerusalem Council” including what it involved, who the appealing parties were, who spoke at the meeting and what they said, as well the guidance that came out of this meeting. We concluded with a look at the way the apostles decide to team up in the future.
- Today we will look at letter that Paul writes to the church in Galatia, either right before or right after the council. In letter we will note how Paul encourages and builds up the Christians there even as he is warning them about the possible dangers facing them if the same persons who insist on keeping the Jewish Law happen to show up in their town. We will also look, along the way, at some basic doctrinal assumptions Paul makes famous here.
- Paul opens the letter by identifying himself as an apostle of God. (Galatians 1:1-4)
- Paul cautions them against accepting any other Gospel, pointing out there is only one Gospel and that those who do not accept that are to be accursed. (Galatians 1:6-10)
- Paul notes that he used to persecute the Church but was called by Christ himself to be an apostle to the Gentiles. (Galatians 1:11-24).
- We learn that Paul stayed in Jerusalem for 14 years before he and Barnabus left. Paul notes that those Jews who were commanding Gentiles to follow Jewish law even tried to have his friend Titus be circumcised as an adult. Paul mentioned that they held their ground against them and reiterates that he was apostle to the Gentiles as Peter was an apostle for Jews. (Galatians 2:1-10)
- Paul says he criticized Peter for following Jews and socializing with them and not socializing with Gentiles. He emphasized that salvation is for everyone and talks clearly about the symbolism of baptism as being crucified with Christ and becoming like Him. Especially verse 20 has become very famous and is the basis for one of our songs. (Galatians 2:11-20).
- Next, Paul makes the point that we are justified by faith in Christ, not by just hearing about the faith of others. He references the faith of Abraham here as an example. (Galatians 3:1-9)
- Paul makes a comparison between the Jewish law and the new law. He points out that just as faith in the old law could not save a person, faith in the new law will not save a person either. He notes that faith means living what you believe. In a famous quote, Paul notes that the “just will live by faith.” (Galatians 3:10-14)
- This reminds us of the admonition James the Brother of Jesus makes which we will study next week, that we are to be not just hearers of the word, but doers. (James 1:22)
- Paul does note that the giving of the law to all people was the fulfillment of a promise made to Abraham. (Galatians 3:15-18)
- Remember the promise which God made to Abraham that through his descendants all the people of the earth would be blessed. (Genesis 12:3, Genesis 22:18)

- Paul talks about how Christianity is a great equalizer in that anyone can have salvation. Some people stretch this concept as a way of saying we are all equal, but Paul does not say that, he says that despite our differences the one thing that makes us equal is our entitlement to salvation. (Galatians 3:26-29).
- Paul says that we are all adopted as sons of God with the same rights and privileges as an heir would have. (Galatians 4:1-7)
- Paul encourages the readers and urges them to be faithful despite temptations to be like they were before. (Galatians 4:8-20)
- Paul compares the new covenant of believers to Isaac the son of Abraham born to a freewoman. He also compares the old covenant and non-believers to Ishmael, another son of Abraham born by Hagar, a woman who was in slavery. He even quotes Isaiah 54:1 and notes that we will always be plagued by non-believers, just as the descendants of Ishmael always troubled the descendants of Isaac. (Galatians 4:21-31)
- Paul reiterates that the only way to really have faith is by showing it through our love, and that we have the liberty under Christ to make that happen. (Galatians 5:1-6) Incidentally, we sing a song called “Declare His Love” which is taken from this passage.
- Paul notes that it is important for us as the body of Christ to make the choice treat one another with great love. (Galatians 5:7-15)
- Paul famous contrasts works of the flesh and works of the spirit. The works of the flesh he lists are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, and revelries. The works of the spirit he lists are: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. (Galatians 5:16-26).
- Paul says to bear and share one another’s burdens. (Galatians 6:1-5)
- Paul appears to contradict himself when he says in verse 2 that we should “...bear one another’s burdens...” and in verse 6 he says, “For each one shall bear his own load.” This is easily reconcilable. A prime example is sin and confession – a brother or sister may ask for prayers and support with a certain sin for which they struggle. If they do happen to sin again despite our help we aren’t not the ones responsible for their sin. For example, a common Jewish belief was that the responsibility for sin was carried on throughout the family. Even Christ disciples thought that might be case (John 9:2), although the prophet Jeremiah had made clear that this wasn’t going to be the case. (Jeremiah 31:27-30)
- Paul explains that we should not grow weary in our efforts to do good, especially to people “of the household of the faith” meaning our fellow Christians. He also notes that it is pointless to deceive ourselves, since God will know everything we do anyway. (Galatians 6:6-10)
- Some people think that they can “skate by on grace.” Paul points out in this passage that “God is not mocked.” God knows whether we are really trying or not. We can’t fool Him because He searches the heart (1 Samuel 16:7, Psalm 7:9, Proverbs 21:12, Jeremiah 17:10, Acts 1:24, Romans 8:27)

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- Paul closes the letter by acknowledging that he may not be as healthy as he once was because he has been under severe persecution, but he wants everyone to be a “new creature” by being baptized with Christ (we sing a song to that effect). He notes that there is no reason for himself or anyone else to brag except about the cause of Christ. (Galatians 6:11-18)

Questions:

1. How does Paul open Galatians?
2. How many Gospels does Paul say there are?
3. Who was Paul primarily intended to address with his preaching?
4. How long was Paul in Jerusalem before he left with Barnabas?
5. What is the name of the Gentile the Jews tried to have circumcised?
6. Were the Jews successful? Why or why not?
7. What does Paul say one major difference was the focus between Peter and Paul?
8. What does Paul confront Peter about?
9. What does Paul say our baptism represents?
10. How does Paul say we are justified? Who does he cite as proof of that?
11. Why does Paul compare the Old and New Laws?
12. What does he mean that “the just shall live by faith?”
13. To whom does Paul say the New Law is fulfilling a promise?
14. What promise is Paul talking about?
15. What does Paul encourage the Galatians to do?
16. What principle does Paul reiterate to the Galatians?
17. How does Paul say we should try to treat one another?
18. What are some of the works of the flesh and works of spirit Paul lists?
19. How does Paul say we are to treat each other’s burdens?
20. Why would Paul say each man must carry their own burden then?
21. To whom are we to do good and why?
22. Can we fool God into thinking that we’re trying when we really aren’t?
23. What is the probable reason for Paul’s poor health when he writes Galatians?
24. What does Paul say we should brag about?

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