

**Introduction to Galatians**

**Slide – Sermon Title**

Good morning everyone. As usual it's great to be with you. I really enjoy the few opportunities I get to share on Sundays, and this morning, I will cover an introduction to Galatians, because we are starting the same study on Wednesday. So covering Galatians this morning helps me for Wednesday as well as link our ministry efforts together– which, I hope, is helpful to all of you as you interact with our students as friends & mentors and within discipleship. Before I get too carried away....Lets pray! Join me please.

**SLIDE - Prayer**

Lord I do thank and praise you for joining us together, here or online. We ask for you Holy Spirit to be active in our hearts and motivate us to live out the call to go and make disciples. We need you to motivate and encourage us to live this way. Thank you for loving me, thank you for loving us, thank you for loving your church. Please cover my words with your protection and grant understanding, and use this time to honor and glorify Your name. Please answer these humble requests within Your power and glory – Amen.

**Slide – Title**

Well, a study of Galatians. Why that letter? That's a great question, I'm glad you asked. The answer is that we have been talking about WHY we should trust and read the bible on Wednesday nights. And, we have helped hammer home the truth that the Bible is THE VERY WORD of GOD. That it's profitable to teach us,

rebuke us, correct us, and train us in Godliness, so that we completely prepared for the good works God has for us to do (2Tim3:16-17).

**SLIDE: Bible Address**

But now, its time to study the Bible directly on Wednesdays and I believe God led me to choose Galatians months ago....because Galatians addresses false Gospel messages. And our students (all of us) are being attacked with false messages left and right. But before I start talking about the text, let's read the 10 verses I'm, covering today. Please open your bibles, to the book of Galatians, towards the back of your bible **after** 1 and 2 Corinthians, but **before** Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians...if you weren't sure where to turn, I hope that helped....(someone to read???) (to honor God, please rise if you can for the reading of His word)

**SLIDE: Galatians 1:1-10**

Galatians 1:1-10 please read along with me.

*1 Paul, an apostle—not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead— 2 and all the brothers who are with me, To the churches of Galatia:*

*3 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, 4 who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, 5 to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.*

*6 I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— 7 not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. 8 But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel*

*contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. 9 As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.*

*10 For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ.*

You may be seated.

Now, I hope to help understand this text in 2 ways. First, I have paid attention to the actual words, the actual people, and the circumstances revolving around them (in other words keeping this text in context) and in that process of study, I hope to accomplish a second level of understanding....to overhear what God is saying to us within what He was saying to the region of Galatia.

So, First – what is God actually saying to them. We see right away that Paul is reminding his readers that he was called to be an apostle by Jesus Christ – not any man. If anyone struggles to believe the crazy story about Paul getting knocked off his horse in the middle of nowhere – I agree that kind of story would be very easy to make up. But it's basically impossible to fabricate being blinded, brought into town, put up in a hotel, cared for while blind...only to request a Christian (who you came to arrest and possible kill) to come to you – and that guy heals you! That's a story way easier to believe once you consider the impossibility of fabricating such a publicly witnessed event. Anyway - Paul was blind...but now he sees! Jesus did that – not men. Jesus sent Paul – not men. And Paul is setting the stage in the first 2 verses – hey people, listen to ME – not these other men. Paul then summarizes the Gospel. They are all sinful, that sin brings a punishment

(awaiting punishment is NOT peaceful), but God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ bring Peace (verse 3). How does Jesus bring peace? He gave Himself up to torture and death for their sins– to deliver them from the evil surrounding them (verse 4). This is Gods will for them and all glory will be given to Him forever – Amen (verse 5).

Now let me point out that this is Paul's first letter...and its different from his other letters. The first 5 verses are very normal...but Paul usually follows his opening greeting with a compliment or praise, but with this letter – Paul fires off strong statements with strong language. He's pulling no punches – Paul's in FIGHTING MODE. And that is understandable, Paul started several churches in the region of Galatia, and now He hears they are believing a different gospel (verse 6) a distorted Gospel (verse 7). He's made enough to state that anyone teaching a false Gospel (even an angel) should be accursed (thrown into hell) (verses 8-9).

But like I said, lets study the context of this, because that will help us apply it to our lives more accurately...

For starters this letter is written to several churches, all his other letters were written to specific churches. These churches were planted ON HIS FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY (**SLIDE: See map**). This first journey took place between 46 and 48A.D. Before this Paul had been teaching the Gospel for over 10 years in the city of Antioch (in Syria). I hope you can see things on the map. The blue line marks the first half of the journey, the red line marks the return.

We read in Acts chapter 13 that they sailed to the island of Cyprus first. And, let's take a moment to read about Paul's willingness to fight with others when Gospel

issues were on the line months before he wrote the letter to the Galatians. Allow me to read Acts 13:6-12 <sup>6</sup> *When they had gone through the whole island as far as Paphos, they came upon a certain magician, a Jewish false prophet named Bar-Jesus. <sup>7</sup> He was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, a man of intelligence, who summoned Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God. <sup>8</sup> But Elymas the magician (for that is the meaning of his name) opposed them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith. <sup>9</sup> But Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him <sup>10</sup> and said, **“You son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, full of all deceit and villainy, will you not stop making crooked the straight paths of the Lord? <sup>11</sup> And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you will be blind and unable to see the sun for a time.”** Immediately mist and darkness fell upon him, and he went about seeking people to lead him by the hand. <sup>12</sup> Then the proconsul believed, when he saw what had occurred, for he was astonished at the teaching of the Lord.*

Are those fighting words or what – “YOU SON OF THE DEVIL” “FULL OF DECEIT AND VILLAINY” **and then** God empowers Paul to blind the guy! Whoa – its not just Paul’s displaying a fighting attitude, its also God. The Roman official, Sergius Paulus became a believer – praise God! Side note: Because Sergius Paulus was a Roman official (a man of importance), there have been several inscriptions found through historical and archeological efforts proving he was a real historical figure. But I found it interesting that when we were watching a Rightnow Media series with the Middle school a few years back (The Bible Unearthed) the professor had been reading about these important inscriptions as a student, but had never seeing any of them on display in museums or read about them in any current magazine articles. So when he was traveling on Cyprus he got into the basement

of the local museum and found this **(SLIDE: show pic)** one of the Roman/Greek inscriptions from this time period with “Paulos the Proconsul” inscribed on it.

This is a side note, it doesn't have much to do with the letter to the Galatians, but to me, its always fascinating and empowering to see and know that the Bible is continually being proven to be accurate, as well as frustrating to see biblical proofs being ignored and stuffed in basements!

Back to Paul and Barnabas and why Paul was so upset in his letter to the Galatians.

**(SLIDE: See map).**

They travel from Cyprus to Perga and then went north, they ended up traveling to 4 cities in the region of Galatia and had extremely similar results in 3 of the 4 stops. They received a great amount of acceptance and rejoicing over the gospel message, which is (ALL people are sinful and separated from God, but God loves them and paid for them through the death of His son Jesus, and through the power of His resurrection they can receive eternal life through faith!). But they also received great resistance.

At the first stop, Antioch in Pisidia, within one week they had the entire city interested in their preaching, but they also had Jews influence city officials to drive them out. Next was the town of Iconium where they had many come to faith but needed to flee before getting murdered. Then at Lystra, third stop, it goes a bit different. First they heal a cripple man and the city starts praising Paul and Barnabas for being Greek gods like zeus....that causes Paul and Barnabas to

but on burlap – throw ashes on their head (a classic OT way of displaying great grief) they wanted people to understand...it is the power of Jesus that heals and saves, not fake Greek gods. Like previous stops, some people in Lystra are upset, they are joined by others from Antioch and in their anger – they stone Paul, drag his body out of the city and leave him for dead. Paul, he's feisty in word **and deed** – after some disciples gather around him, he gets up, walks back into the city and preaches the Gospel and many come to believe! They went to Derbe next, and maybe all the passion and resilience to overcome violence and persecution finally turned a corner for Paul and Barnabas. I'm not totally sure, it just says they preached the Gospel in Derbe and "made many disciples". No beatings or violence or resistance mentioned. They then retraced their route back to Lystra, Iconium, Antioch in Pisidia (that's brave and bold!!! – So inspirational!). Then back to the coast, back on a ship and back to Antioch in Syria to report on all the God had done and how the "door had been opened to the Gentiles". The door, being the Gospel had been preached and now the people who heard it were able to submit to the Holy Spirit to embrace faith or ignore it....

Now, with these 10 verses in mind, for our time today, we need to look backward into the book of Acts and forward in the letter of Galatians for clarity on what the distortion to the Gospel message was. And to save time, I will keep this brief. Basically, Paul had already confronted Peter about eating certain foods with gentiles while ministering in Antioch. The timelines are fuzzy but for my understanding, it seems to me Peter had visited Paul's ministry before the missionary journeys, sometime within the 10+ years Paul was teaching in Antioch. When Peter visits he hung out with the gentiles and ate whatever they were serving – generally accepting them as they were because of their faith in Jesus.

But then some Jews (who believed in Jesus) but also believed that you needed to apply some of the OT laws in order to be a “real Christian” showed up – Peter withdrew from hanging out with the new Christians, to hang out with these Jews, and only eat the “right foods” (the no pork, no shellfish...Kosher diet). This made Paul so angry he confronted Peter publicly and Peter admitted his actions were wrong – that dietary laws of the OT had no bearing on the Gospel. (Find this by looking forward, Galatians chapter 2:11-14).

Now, as Paul and Barnabas are back from their first missionary journey, around 48-49A.D., some Jews come from Jerusalem and oppose his efforts with similar complaints, I'll read it for you, this is in Acts 15:1-2 *But some men came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers, “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.”*<sup>2</sup> *And after Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with them, Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and the elders about this question.*

So, Paul's team, and the Jews wanting to force new converts to get circumcised, travel to Jerusalem to explain the disagreement to Peter, James, John and the other apostles and let them give a final ruling on what to teach within all this....this is called the “council of Jerusalem”. I'll read it, Act 15:6-11

*<sup>6</sup>The apostles and the elders were gathered together to consider this matter. <sup>7</sup>And after there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, “Brothers, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. <sup>8</sup>And God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, by giving them the Holy Spirit just as he*



*did to us,<sup>9</sup> and he made no distinction between us and them, having cleansed their hearts by faith.<sup>10</sup> Now, therefore, why are you putting God to the test by placing a yoke on the neck of the disciples that neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear?<sup>11</sup> But we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will.”*

So these “extra” requirements of only eating certain foods and getting circumcised had been swirling around since the beginning of the New Covenant. And Paul was very upset by these false teachings and did all he could to eliminate them from Church teaching. And yet, while he is debating these false requirement issues in Jerusalem, he finds out that the 4 churches he just planted in Galatia, are believing this stuff. With Godly frustration he writes his first letter, imploring them to ignore these false teachings.

That’s the background behind these opening words. That’s the context. New believers in Jesus Christ were being taught that there were extra requirements for them to DO in order to be real Christians and enjoy “true salvation”.

**SLIDE: Only By**

And Paul’s strong reaction is – NO – you are saved only by grace, through faith in Jesus, which has been clearly taught to you, and now, I’m putting it in writing! All for the glory of God. (this is where we often see posters...use slide...)

But what do circumcision and a kosher diet have to do with us in today’s day and age? Nothing really, in general we are not in crisis mode because of Christians forcing people to get circumcised or eat kosher diets.

But we do have problems with Gospel impurity today. Lots of problems. It's been often brought up. False Gospels like the prosperity gospel, the social justice gospel, the self-help gospel, the "all roads lead to heaven – thank you very little Oprah" gospel....in fact – there is no way I would be able to cover everything. I believe God led me to bring a few other things up....but they might just be my opinions....here we go...

I'll start with an observation that leads to what I believe is a very applicable truth. This letter is the only letter Paul wrote to a region – a group of churches in an area. I think God is sending a message to all of us in this, false Gospel messages are so wrong, that they call us to speak out with boldness. I think we are called to address false Gospel teaching inside AND outside East Lincoln Alliance Church. This is serious, this is a big deal. Whenever ANYONE is teaching a false Gospel – we see Paul in fighting mode, as we should be also.

My study also helped me recognize my reaction to Eric's sermon back on Nov, 5th Titus3:1-11. Eric did a great job, as usual. He preached about our responsibility to be submissive and gentle and respectful in the face of opposition and adversity, whether that comes from government or culture. All truth, great sermon. But something seemed off to me. It seemed to 'NICE', it seemed to 'EASY' of an answer – but then it hit me....Eric was 100% right about our reactions to challenges brought on by government and culture. But Paul's not addressing governments or culture – Paul is addressing false Gospel messages within the church of Jesus Christ! When this happens – its time to be bold. As Micheal DeFazio, a professor at Ozark Christian College states, "some things are worth fighting for". (I highly recommend going onto Rightnow Media and watching

anything by Micheal DeFazio, Galatians and more, In my opinion, he's good!) But, before a bunch of you start blasting false teachers left and right while leaving gentleness and respect in the dust. Let's pay careful attention to when and how Paul reacts with strong rebukes.

### **SLIDE: Ways to Fight**

First, Paul rebuked false messaging, face to face (Peter & Bar-Jesus). Second, Paul embraces debate and clarification WITHIN the church....(debate in Antioch & council meeting in Jerusalem) and third, Paul rebukes false teaching within personal correspondence (letter to the 4 churches). This is not a letter to the editor, not a Instagram post, not a tick-tock, Facebook, or any other social media platform. This is fighting mode within personal interactions either face to face, in public debate, or personal correspondence. Let's keep that in mind.

Application for us? What is worth fighting for? What is the Gospel Freedom we should be enjoying? An easy application is we are free from all OT rituals. We don't have to sacrifice animals at the alter, we don't' have to wear certain cloths, eat certain foods or avoid others...etc. Jesus fulfilled all the law within Himself. We are free! His yoke is light.

But those OT laws are not tripping us up, it's a TON of other false messages that ARE (too many to cover). Here's a quick way to help identify any false teaching. Look and listen for Gospel Additions or Gospel Subtractions.

### **SLIDE: False Gospels**

Gospel Addition is anytime you hear someone teach that you need to DO ANYTHING in repetition in order to KEEP your salvation. Because lets be honest –

we DO things...we confess with our mouths that Jesus is Lord and believe in our heart that God raised Him from the dead... (Rom10:9). And we often help people demonstrate this confession with a public baptism. But think about it, are we required to repeat our baptism and confession, over and over, so that we won't LOSE our salvation. Of course not.

Gospel additions often stress, how you NEED to practice confession, or communion, or baptism, or pray certain prayers, and if you don't do those things and/or keep repeating them, then your NOT saved.

Or, addition messages often teach that you do things a certain way and "God will bless you" (self-help & health, wealth, prosperity stuff). These add weight to the Gospel, because if people don't receive the blessings for their actions – they must not have enough faith, or they are too impure..etc.

And there are a bunch of false addition gospel teachings revolving around doing good things like taking care of the planet and helping people who are being mistreated (social justice and ecology stuff). This are great things to do – I actually hope all of you are active in taking care of our planet and making the world a better place....I just know that if I tell others they are not saved if they're not involved in these things – then I guess I've placed myself on the throne of God alongside Him and that I'm included in deciding who is in and who is not. (and we are all thankful that's not the case).

We also see many Gospel subtractions in today's Church. What I mean by subtraction is, sin is ok. Sin is subtracted from being an issue for Christians, This mentality is embraced because of the idea that correcting sinful behavior is 'not-loving' or 'not like Jesus' and anything judgmental and unloving is wrong – and,

you must NOT be saved if you judge others for sin. First, whenever anyone tells you “Christians aren’t supposed to judge, only God can judge” – that’s false – look at 1Corinthinas 5:12, which says, *It isn’t my responsibility to judge outsiders, but it certainly is your responsibility to judge those inside the church who are sinning.* Believers are supposed to confront, and demand, an effort to fight sinfulness in all shapes and forms.

This approval of sin reduces the need for Jesus to die for sin – it keeps Him as a teacher of love but subtracts our faith in His death and resurrection as a rebirth into NEW life – a transformative life. Rom6:1-2 says, *[1](#)What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? [2](#)By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? AND, Romans 6:4 says, [4](#)We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.*

We are called to be different than the rest of the world – to Stop being sinful – *[1](#)Therefore I urge you, brothers, on account of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. [2](#)Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God.* Romans 12:1-2. Our “spiritual service of worship” of Jesus is not done to earn salvation or retain salvation, it’s a display of His work within us and our response of thankfulness, which brings glory to God.

We see messages subtracting from the gospel all the time, they condone sensuality of all kinds, the obvious is teaching against Gods design for marriage to be one man and one women and sex to be only enjoyed within that marriage

(Lust of the flesh). We have pastors who misuse their wealth to build up their own possessions and encourage their people to do the same (lust of the eyes), We have preachers condoning sinfulness of - “its good to be bold and disrespectful with anything that you find offensive – go ahead fight as Christians for the glory of a nation, or a personal conviction, etc” (I think Eric's sermon addressed lots of those things) – (Pride of life, 1John 2:16).

As I close out our time I am well aware that the issue of false gospel teaching and belief is not just rampant because of the obvious false teachers all around us. I recognize we have subtle threads of “false” belief woven within all of us. We are all flawed. Some of us are more knowledgeable, some less, but even the most mature among us have flawed viewpoints where growth is needed (if someone doesn't have any flaws....then they are God!?)

The benefits of each of us being honest with ourselves about what false beliefs we may have are 1. We begin a process of victory over the “pride” that we probably have because we think we are right, then upon opening ourselves up to being teachable, we find out we were wrong or had some flawed views. 2. We grow. Period – we become more like Jesus. And 3. We tap into an increased capacity to extend compassion for those who are lost and believing false messages due to our recognition of being just like them....

And lastly – we all need to grow in defending the gospel, because not only are some things worth fighting for – the pure Gospel is desperately needed by you and me every moment, of every hour of every day. Because the truth of the Gospel is the absolute light, water, bread, and blood of life that we NEED. It's even more important to continue to improve our knowledge of it. To fully know

the height, depth, width of the love of God is really to know perfect joy and peace....to be filled with the fullness of God – says Ephesians 3:18-19.

Therefore, I know many of you are already with me, but I also ask all of you to join me – in pursuing a knowledge of the Gospel, found in the scriptures, that is so pure, we can't help but be empowered to live in grace and peace for our own benefit, as well as enabling ourselves to help others know God's grace and peace as well. Let's know it well, really, really well.... and let's go make disciples because of this wonderful gospel. Amen? Amen

**Let's Pray. (Slide – Prayer)**

### **Benediction**

2Peter3:17-18 [17](#) You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability.

[18](#) But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.