



THE LOOKOUT

AUGUST 2021

Unit: GALATIANS Theme: CHOOSE

Overview: Galatians has been called the Magna Carta of Christian freedom. In it, Paul defines the gospel in terms of liberation. If it feels like a straitjacket, it probably is not the gospel. One man said, “Since I became a Christian, I do anything I want to—the only difference is that Jesus changed all my want-tos.” This liberating gospel contains the righteousness found only in Christ, which is sufficient for living by the Spirit.

HOW TO USE

Each week has a **lesson aim**, **lesson text**, and **supplemental text**.

WEEK OF AUGUST 1, 2021

LESSON AIM: Choose the one gospel of Christ and resist adding requirements to yourself and your neighbors.

TEXT: Galatians

LESSON TEXT: Galatians 1:1-2:21-33

SUPPLEMENTAL TEXT: Galatians 1:1-2:24, 1 Corinthians 2:14, 15:1-8

STUDY

VERSE GOSPEL
BY MARK SCOTT

Galatians 1:1-2:21-33

Paul's letter to the Galatians is a powerful and clear statement of the gospel. It is a letter that is both personal and universal. Paul writes to a group of churches in Galatia, but his message is for all Christians. He begins by declaring that the gospel he preaches is not of human origin, but is the gospel of Jesus Christ. He then goes on to explain that the gospel is a message of freedom, not a message of law. He argues that we are justified by faith in Christ, not by works of the law. He concludes by urging the Galatians to live by the Spirit and to love one another.

Paul's message is a powerful reminder that the gospel is a message of freedom, not a message of law. He argues that we are justified by faith in Christ, not by works of the law. He concludes by urging the Galatians to live by the Spirit and to love one another.

Tabs indicate the week of each lesson.

Each week features three sections: **Study**, **Application**, and **Discovery**.

APPLICATION

DON'T FORGET TO REMEMBER
BY DAVID FAUST

Remember to remember that the gospel is a message of freedom, not a message of law. We are justified by faith in Christ, not by works of the law. We are to live by the Spirit and to love one another.

DISCOVERY

BY MICHAEL C. FRANK

1. How does Paul's message of freedom relate to the gospel message of grace?
2. How does Paul's message of freedom relate to the gospel message of grace?
3. How does Paul's message of freedom relate to the gospel message of grace?
4. How does Paul's message of freedom relate to the gospel message of grace?
5. How does Paul's message of freedom relate to the gospel message of grace?
6. How does Paul's message of freedom relate to the gospel message of grace?
7. How does Paul's message of freedom relate to the gospel message of grace?
8. How does Paul's message of freedom relate to the gospel message of grace?
9. How does Paul's message of freedom relate to the gospel message of grace?
10. How does Paul's message of freedom relate to the gospel message of grace?

Use the **Discovery** questions to study, discuss, and apply the Scripture passages in a group or class.

WEEK OF AUGUST 1, 2021

LESSON AIM: Choose the one gospel of Christ and resist adding requirements to yourself and your neighbors.

UNIT: Galatians

THEME: Choose

LESSON TEXT: Galatians 1:6-12; 2:1-10

SUPPLEMENTAL TEXT: Galatians 1:13-24; 1 Corinthians 2:1-5; 15:1-5

WHICH GOSPEL?

BY MARK SCOTT

Sometimes what is missing matters. Disneyland without Mickey Mouse, Superman without a cape, or the Rocky Mountains without snow would seem most odd. In fact, the absence of those things would stand out and make a statement. Likewise, an Epistle from Paul without a typical prayer and thanksgiving at the beginning makes a statement. That is the book of Galatians.

Putting it mildly, Paul is chapped (cf. Galatians 5:12). In the Corinthian correspondence, Paul squared off against moral defection. But with the churches of Galatia, Paul squared off against doctrinal defection. The gospel that came from heaven cannot be improved. Adding to it or subtracting from it totally dilutes it.

The Gospel that Came from Heaven*Galatians 1:6-12*

Even in the opening salutation, Paul gave more than a subtle remark about the gospel that he preached. It was “not from men nor through man” (Galatians 1:1, *English Standard Version*). It came, just as Jesus did, from heaven. In what was the normal spot for the thanksgiving and prayer, Paul attacked this wrongheaded gospel. He expressed his dismay by using the strong word *astounded* (marveled or shocked). Since Galatians is one of the earliest New Testament books, it must not have taken long for this corruption of the gospel to set in following the first missionary journey (Acts 13–14). The people were *deserting* (literally “placing aside,” as in a military desertion) the original gospel.

This *different* (not even comparable) gospel was *really no gospel at all*. False teachers were confusing people and perverting (distorting or changing the form of) the gospel. Paul raised the stakes when he said that even if angels or people preached (evangelized) any other message, they should *be under God’s curse* (anathematized or sent to hell—so important that Paul said it twice). Paul cared nothing for human approval. He was not a people pleaser. He played to an audience of One. His overriding passion was to be Christ’s *servant* (slave). Paul’s gospel was not generated from *human origin*, nor was it *received* from anyone, nor was it *taught* in some rabbinic school. Paul received the gospel by *revelation* (God unveiling it).

The Gospel that Cannot Be Improved*Galatians 2:1-10*

Paul spent the latter half of Galatians 1 defending his apostleship. In Galatians 2:1 he returned to defending his message. In this section we learn more about the nature of this heresy. It is the gospel by addition. It is Jesus plus. But Paul would point out that a gospel of legalism is no gospel at all. To trace the nature of his true gospel, Paul revisited his numerous trips to Jerusalem. Scholars debate which trip to Jerusalem Paul had in mind here (Acts 9, 11, 15, 18, or 21). Perhaps even the *fourteen years* is not to be understood literally (cf. 2 Corinthians 12:2). What we know is that Paul went up by God’s design and that he did not travel alone (in fact he hardly ever did). He took *Barnabas* and Titus along with him. Titus became a test case for Paul’s real gospel. During this trip, Paul met with the leaders—these are mentioned later in the text as *James, Cephas and John*.

Paul *presented* (set before) his gospel alongside an athletic metaphor (lest he had run in vain). The false teachers tried to compel (to violently force) Titus *to be circumcised*. For them, circumcision was necessary for salvation (cf. Acts 15:1). Paul would have none of it. He knew these false teachers had *infiltrated* (snuck in) the freedom the believers had in Christ. He would not *give in* (submit) so that the true gospel would not be compromised.

Adding clout to Paul’s defense of the gospel was his solidarity with the other main leaders of the church concerning the nature of the true gospel. *James, Cephas, and John* were *held in high esteem*—and rightly so. But their influence meant little to Paul since God *does not show favoritism* (regard the face of people). Even the last words of Peter recorded in Acts affirmed that he agreed with Paul’s gospel (Acts 15:7-11). Any difference between the workers could be chalked up to varying gifts of the Holy Spirit and opportunities for ministry. Some would preach to the Jews (circumcised), and some would preach to Gentiles (uncircumcised). The result was a warm embrace (*the right hand of fellowship*). The one additional caveat was *to remember the poor* (the truly needy). Paul was more than glad to do that as the collection for the saints was constantly on his radar. ■

APPLICATION

DON'T FORGET TO REMEMBER

BY DAVID FAUST

Memory loss is a serious issue, but gentle humor can ease our anxiety about it. Someone quipped, "I've reached the age where my train of thought often leaves the station." Someone else said, "I'm going to change my password to 'Incorrect.' That way, when I log in with the wrong password, the computer will remind me, 'Your password is "Incorrect."'"

Memory lapses can happen at any age. Have you ever forgotten a friend's birthday? Or momentarily drawn a blank when asked to provide your phone number? Or walked through a grocery store trying to remember what you planned to buy? Or struggled to recall a well-known saying or Bible verse?

Chronological Snobbery

Rampant forgetfulness leads to historical illiteracy. We diminish our understanding of the present by neglecting the lessons of the past. Rick Cherok, a history professor at Ozark Christian College, writes about "the disease of contemporaneity"—wording borrowed from the late theologian D. Elton Trueblood, who worried Americans incorrectly assume "that all our problems are new." Cherok also cites a phrase from C. S. Lewis, "chronological snobbery"—the assumption that those who lived in the past are morally inferior to those in the present.

The Galatian Christians were forgetting the gospel of grace and reverting to religious legalism. They needed firm, loving guidance, and so do we.

Urgent Reminders

Here are six important points to remember taken straight from Scripture.

1. "Remember your Creator in the days of your youth" (Ecclesiastes 12:1). Genesis 1:1 lays the foundation for the rest of the Bible. Let's never forget that God created the universe and made us in his image.
2. "Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead" (2 Timothy 2:8). Christ's death, burial, and resurrection are the heartbeat of our faith. Each week, the

Lord's Supper pushes away distractions and brings our priorities back into focus as we commune with the one who said, "Do this in remembrance of me."

3. "Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you" (Hebrews 13:7). We should keep examining what we have been taught, as the Bereans did with Paul's teachings (Acts 17:11). But if we disregard the counsel of past generations and cast aside time-tested truth because it's not trendy, the disease of contemporaneity will make us ill.

4. "Recall the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets and the command given by our Lord and Savior through your apostles" (2 Peter 3:2). Jesus warned about false prophets (Matthew 7:15-23). So did the apostle Paul (Acts 20:28-31), Peter (2 Peter 2), John (1 John 4:1-6), and Jude (vv. 3-16). Wolves are dangerous, even when they wear sheep's clothing and use cool-sounding lingo. Old Testament insights spoken "by the holy prophets" and New Testament directives given "through your apostles" put us on the right path. "For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope" (Romans 15:4).

5. "Forget not all his benefits" (Psalm 103:2). Ingratitude is often a first step toward unfaithfulness. After all he has done for us, why would we desert the Lord "who gave himself for our sins" (Galatians 1:4)?

6. "Remember the poor" (Galatians 2:10). Remembering requires more than mental reflection on the past. It should lead to action in the present. When we appreciate what the Lord has done for us, he opens our eyes to the needs of others.

Never forget to remember!

Personal Challenge: Select one of the six reminders listed above (God the Creator, Jesus the risen Lord, faithful leaders, biblical truth, God's blessings, and caring for those in need) and decide how you will give it special attention during the week ahead. ■

DISCOVERY

BY MICHAEL C. MACK

1. How were you a godly influence with the people closest to you last week?
2. What challenge or opportunity did you face over the past week?

Ask two people to read aloud **Galatians 1:6-12 and 2:1-10** one after the other, preferably from different Bible versions. Then ask a third person to summarize the passages in one minute or less.

3. With what issue or issues was the apostle Paul dealing in these passages?
4. Let's dig deeper:
 - From these passages, what is and what isn't the gospel?
 - What specific issues of that time were involved in assuring the true gospel was being preached?
 - How did Paul receive and confirm the true message of the gospel?
 - What tactics were the false teachers employing?
 - How would you describe Paul's passion for defending the gospel message?
 - How did Christian leaders work together to communicate the gospel to the world?
5. What do you learn about God from these passages?
6. What do you learn about people?
7. What do you learn about obeying God from these passages?
8. Paul and his team were called to go to one group of people while James, Cephas (Simon Peter), and John were called to preach the gospel to another group. With whom do you sense God has called you to share the gospel?
9. Based on our study and discussion, complete this sentence: "This week, I will . . ."
10. What challenge might you be facing this week?

For Next Week: Read and reflect on **Galatians 2:15–3:6** as we continue studying this Epistle. You can also read next week's supplemental texts as well as the Study and Application sections as part of your personal study. 📖