

**Tuesday  
Morning  
Bible  
Class**

**The  
Book  
of Galatians**



*Lord of the Lakes*  
LUTHERAN CHURCH



# Galatians 1:1–10

## Look

The book of Galatians can be divided into three parts of two chapters each. In the first part, chapters 1 and 2, Paul supports the gospel by making it clear that he received his call to be an apostle and his doctrine directly from God. Many of Paul's points in chapters 1 and 2 are answers to objections and challenges raised by the Judaizers in Galatia. (*Judaizers* is the term often used for people who teach that we are saved through faith in Jesus *and* by keeping the Old Testament laws.)

Verse 1            *"Apostle"*—Someone sent out on a mission. The Lord designated 12 of his disciples to be apostles in a special sense. They were to bear witness to his resurrection and preach the gospel of repentance and faith. Paul was called to be an apostle later, when Jesus personally appeared to him.

## Discuss

1. How does Paul support his apostleship in verses 1 and 2?
2. From your knowledge, what do *grace* and *peace* mean? What two results of grace and peace does Paul speak about in verses 3 and 4?
3. What do grace and peace on the one hand and God's will and glory on the other hand have to do with one another?
4. In verses 6–9, Paul addresses the main problem the Galatians were having. From what Paul says, what was that problem?

## Apply

5. Sometimes people use flattery to win the approval of others. It seems that the Judaizers accused Paul of preaching salvation by grace alone in order to please people and win their approval. How did Paul show that he was not doing it for that reason? What application does this have for Christians working together in a congregation?

*Paul began this letter with a sharp warning against "other gospels."*

# Galatians 1:11–24

## Paul received his message directly from God

### Look

Verse 17      *“I went away into Arabia”*—This was probably the area east of Damascus. Paul lived there for a time. This is likely where the Lord personally began teaching Paul and preparing him for his mission work.

### Discuss

1. It is clear from what Paul says in verses 11 and 12 that his detractors were challenging the source of his teachings. From where did they say Paul had received his teachings? What was Paul's answer?
2. Paul relates his previous way of life as a persecutor of the church. How did this factor into where he got his gospel? (Hint: Look ahead to verses 22 and 23.)
3. Paul preaches that we are saved by grace alone. How was this so clear from his own life?
4. In verse 20 Paul says that what he was telling the Galatians was “no lie.” Why was it so important for the Galatians to know this? Why did the truth of the gospel hang on the fact that Paul only met Peter (staying with him a mere 15 days) and James in Jerusalem and that the members of the churches in Judea did not know him personally?

### Apply

5. This seems like just a lot of history. But the truths of our faith are intimately tied with history. What would happen if Christians forgot the historical facts of Jesus' life?
6. Have you ever felt the joy of seeing someone who opposed Christianity turn around and support it? What thoughts did that generate in your heart?

*Paul did not receive his gospel from any man, not even from the apostles. Rather, he received it directly from the Lord.*

# Galatians 2:1–10

## Paul was accepted by the apostles

### Look

It was important for Paul to establish that he did not receive his gospel from the other apostles or get it wrong (which is what Paul seems to have been accused of). But it was also important for Paul to show that he did eventually meet with the apostles and have them realize that he was preaching the same gospel they were preaching. That was what he did here.

Verse 1            *“After fourteen years”*—It was many years before Paul spent any considerable time with the apostles. This further underscored the fact that Paul did not receive his gospel from the apostles in Jerusalem.

### Discuss

1. On one occasion, some 17 years after his conversion, Paul went to Jerusalem with a Jewish man, Barnabas, and a gentile man, Titus. Paul told the apostles about the gospel he preached to the Gentiles.
  - What did Paul and the other apostles not make Titus do? (verse 3)
  - Why was it crucial that Paul and the other apostles not circumcise Titus? (verse 5)
2. Paul almost sounds arrogant when he said that he did not care about the importance of the church leaders in Jerusalem. They did not add anything to his message. Do you think Paul was arrogant to say this? Analyze his reason for talking like this.
3. What mutual understanding was reached between Paul and the apostles in Jerusalem?
4. Why was it important for the preservation of the gospel that Paul reported this meeting and how the apostles gave him and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship?

### Apply

5. Why did Paul relate this history? How can we show the same concern for the gospel as Paul showed here?

*The apostles preached the same gospel that Paul preached. The apostles did not circumcise Titus. The apostles gave Paul and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship when they realized that Paul's gospel (received independent of their instruction) was the same as theirs.*

# Galatians 2:11–21

## Paul confronts Peter over the gospel

### Look

“You got your gospel secondhand from the apostles and misunderstood what they were saying!” That was the accusation Paul was facing from the Judaizers in Galatia. That was how they were trying to open the door for their alternate gospel. And that was why Paul was telling the Galatians his history. In this section of Scripture, we learn one more historical event of Paul’s life that put the nail in the coffin of the Judaizers’ argument.

- Verse 11      *“When Cephas [Peter] came to Antioch”*—We know nothing about this visit other than what Paul says here.
- Verse 12      *“Certain men . . . from James”*—James was head of the church in Jerusalem. Paul was not saying that James agreed with what his representatives did. The representatives from James were probably themselves weak in their understanding, which was the case with many Christians prior to the Jerusalem Council when this issue was formally discussed and acted on (Acts 15). In this case the representatives from Jerusalem refused to eat with Gentiles.
- Verse 12      *“The circumcision party”*—These were not necessarily the men from James. They probably referred to men in Jerusalem who still taught that circumcision was necessary for salvation and that Jews should not associate with Gentiles. Peter was worried about what they would say when they heard he did this.
- Verse 17      *“We too were found to be sinners”*—“Sinners” here is used as it was in verse 15. When Jewish persons turn to Christ, it is as if they become gentile “sinners;” that is, they are no longer under God’s law. So does Christ promote sin? No. If Paul preached that God did away with the law and then put people back under the law, he would be a sinner.

### Discuss

1. Why did Paul call Peter’s [Cephas’s] actions hypocrisy? (verses 11–14)
2. What does it mean to be justified? What role does justification play in our faith?
3. “Through the law,” Paul “died to the law” (verse 19). What did Paul mean by that?
4. Why is it necessary to die to the law so that we can live for God?

*Paul rebuked Peter [Cephas], and Peter accepted Paul’s rebuke. This shows that Paul’s gospel was no different than Peter’s and that both recognized the divine source of Paul’s teaching.*

# Galatians 3:1–9

## Four proofs—part 1

### Look

After Paul protected his gospel against false rumors that he got his gospel secondhand, and got it wrong besides, he turned his attention to the gospel itself. The gospel is the fact that the whole world has been justified by Christ Jesus and that God is at peace with his creation. Paul proved that in four ways. In Galatians 3:1–5, Paul proved it from the Galatians' own experience. In 3:6–9, he proved it from Abraham's case.

Verse 1        *"Who has bewitched you?"* The Galatians had experienced and were still experiencing God's blessings. It was clear to them how they had received those blessings. Paul was asking them, "What's gotten into you?"

### Discuss

1. In verse 2 Paul asked the Galatians how they received the Spirit. What were the two options Paul gave them for their answer? Expand on that by including verse 3 in your discussion.
2. What do you think brought on the suffering the Galatians endured?
3. How does the Holy Spirit come to us? How does the church do its miraculous work today?
4. How was Abraham justified? How do we become his children?
5. How was the way God blessed Abraham meant to be the pattern for his blessing all people?

### Apply

6. What has been your experience? How have you received the Holy Spirit?
7. The tension Paul talks about in this first proof is evident today. There is still the temptation to use works to experience and accomplish what God can give us only through faith in Christ. Can you give examples of how people fall into this temptation?
8. In the context of this section, what does it mean to be foolish?

*Paul proved from the Galatians' own experience that God justifies us and gives us good gifts through faith. Abraham was justified through faith, as are all those who imitate his faith.*

# Galatians 3:10–18

## Four proofs—part 2

### Look

In Galatians 3:10–18, Paul gives us two more proofs that justification comes by faith apart from the law. In verses 10–14, Paul proves that the law and the gospel are radically different. If they are mixed, they are destroyed. In verses 15–18, Paul uses the picture of a will to show that once a promise is made, conditions cannot be added to it.

Verse 16      *“And to your offspring, who is Christ”*—The word *offspring* can be a collective (that is, a word referring to a group of people as if the members were one person), or it can refer to an individual person. Here Paul interprets the Scripture passage as primarily referring to a single person, Christ. The promise given to Abraham looked far into the future, when Christ would be a source of blessing to all people. God’s promise to Abraham, not the law, pointed to the Savior and God’s salvation. Therefore, the law has a purpose other than bringing us the blessings of Christ.

### Discuss

1. If people try to find blessings through the law, what will they experience? (verse 10)
2. What is the difference between the law and the gospel? Why does mixing the law with the gospel destroy the gospel? (verses 11, 12)
3. What does it mean that Christ redeemed us from the law? Why did Christ redeem us from the law? (verses 13, 14)
4. Why does Paul introduce the idea of a will? Use this question to uncover the point Paul is making in this section.

### Apply

5. Why do people naturally try to mix law with gospel?

*The law must never be mixed with the gospel; otherwise the gospel turns into the law. The promise of the gospel came before the law covenant. Therefore, the law covenant has no power to nullify the gospel.*



# Galatians 3:19–25

## Why did God give us the law?

### Look

The law was given by God to Moses and the Israelites 430 years after God gave the promise to Abraham. Paul has told us what the law cannot do. Here Paul tells us why the law was given.

Verse 24      *“Until Christ came”*—This might refer to how the law both condemned God’s people and, once that was done, to how it led them to focus on Christ through its many pictures of his work and sacrifice. The phrase translated “until Christ came” emphasizes how the law was in force only for a specific time. This might be the best translation since Paul is talking about issues of time—“before faith came,” “until the coming faith would be revealed,” “now that faith has come,” and “we are no longer under a guardian” (verses 23, 25). In any case, the law as law does not lead us to know Christ. It only leads us to know our sins.

### Discuss

1. Explain how each of the following words (verse 19) describes the law. Then explain how each characteristic of the law makes the law something that cannot win our salvation.
  - “added”
  - “because of transgressions”
  - “until the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made”
  - “[the law] was put in place through angels by an intermediary”
2. According to verses 21–24, what can the law not do? What effect does it have? Why does the law have to do this?
3. To what does Paul refer when he says that in his day faith has come?

### Apply

4. Why should the gospel predominate in our churches? Why must it be the most important thing we think and speak about?

*The law has various purposes, but it cannot save us.*

# Galatians 3:26–4:7

## In Christ, we are all children of God

### Look

The law was given to supervise God's people until Christ came. Under the law, Jewish people, freemen, and males had a different status than Greeks (Gentiles), slaves, and women. But when Christ came and salvation by faith in him was preached, the law was no longer needed and the legal distinctions fell away. Now all who believe in Christ have the full rights of sons.

4:3                    *"The elementary principles of the world"*—The principle that when you do something, you will receive a reward. This is the natural way the world works.

### Discuss

1. One of the most difficult issues surrounding Galatians 3:28 is which distinctions have changed from Old Testament times and which distinctions remain. The Bible is clear about what distinctions remain. Identify those distinctions regarding

•Jews and Greeks.

•slaves and free.

•male and female.

How, then, has our status changed?

2. What picture does Paul use to illustrate the passing of the Old Testament law covenant and the ushering in of the new?

3. How did God satisfy the demands of his law?

4. God has given us the Holy Spirit. What does the Holy Spirit enable us to do?

### Apply

5. The final verse of this section teaches us that as children of God, we have an inheritance. What is that inheritance? How do we hold on to our inheritance?

*God's children are no longer under the Old Covenant with its laws and distinctions between people. We are free in Christ's redemption. We have the Spirit who enables us to cry out to God, "You are my father."*

# Galatians 4:8–20

## Paul was deeply concerned for the faith of the Galatians

### Look

Verse 13      *“Because of a bodily ailment”*—We know nothing about the nature of this illness or why this illness provided the opportunity for Paul to preach to the Galatians.

### Discuss

1. Why was Paul concerned about the Galatians? Why did he fear that his efforts might have been wasted on them?
2. Verse 12 is a short, compact verse that summarizes Paul’s main point in this section (verses 12–16). Why does Paul plead that the Galatians become like him? What did he mean when he said he became like them?
3. The Judaizers showed a lot of zeal. They pretended to be sincerely concerned about the Galatians’ spiritual life. What were they really concerned about?
4. How had Paul shown his zeal toward them? When he wrote this letter, how was Paul showing his zeal to the Galatians?

### Apply

5. Christians today want to be zealous for the faith. What advice does Paul give us in verse 18?
6. Christians sometimes want leaders who flatter them. What is Paul’s commentary on this? How can we encourage our spiritual leaders to imitate Paul? (verse 16)
7. How does Christ become formed in us?

*Paul warned the Galatians against going back to their old ways.*

# Galatians 4:21–31

## A picture from the Old Testament

### Look

Verse 21      *“Listen to the law”*—Paul is addressing people who want to submit themselves to the law. So he asks them what the law really says. By “law” Paul has in mind the books of Moses. These books contain not just laws to follow but the entire principle on which the Lord based his plan of salvation. Although the Law of Moses played a role in the life of God’s Old Testament people, the law contained instructions (here in the form of historical events and pictures) that warned against trying to find one’s hope in Moses’ Law.

### Discuss

1. Paul uses the picture of Abraham’s two sons. How was each born? (verse 23) Before you move on, can you guess what each son symbolized?
2. What did the mother of each of Abraham’s sons represent? (verse 24)
3. Why did Hagar represent the Old Covenant? Why did Sarah represent the New Covenant?
4. Paul quotes Isaiah 54:1. What point does this passage make?
5. Paul uses another part of the story of Isaac and Ishmael to teach the Galatians something else about their current situation. What is that?
6. What was the final end of each child and his mother?

### Apply

7. In life we cannot change mothers. But in our spiritual lives we can. Explain.

*Paul used the story of Isaac and Ishmael to teach the difference between works and faith.*

# Galatians 5:1–12

**We are free in Christ. Let's not lose our freedom.**

## Look

Verse 12      *"Would emasculate themselves"*—This is one of the strongest curses Paul ever pronounced. From circumcision to emasculation! But that shows just how important Paul considered his gospel to be.

## Discuss

1. Galatians 5:1 states the main reason Paul wrote this book. What was that?
2. What does a desire to find peace with God through the law do to our relationship with Christ? to our relationship with the law? to our possessing God's grace in Christ? (verses 2–4)
3. What is the opposite of works? List a number of them from verses 5 and 6.
4. There is one way faith and works seem to be alike. What is this way? (Hint: See the end of verse 6.) Nevertheless, faith and works are still opposites. Explain.
5. In verses 7–10, what pictures does Paul use to describe the damage the Judaizers were causing in Galatia?

## Apply

6. Give an example of a person who could have escaped persecution by introducing works into his or her religion. (The example might be from your own family or church.)
7. In verse 10, Paul says that people who preach salvation by works will suffer a penalty for doing so. What penalties come into people's lives when they do what the Judaizers did? How can we avoid those penalties?

*Paul urged the Galatians to keep their freedom by rejecting works as their source of hope. He urged them to reject the teachings of the Judaizers and to cling to the true gospel of freedom in Christ.*

# Galatians 5:13–26

## How our freedom works itself out in our lives

### Look

Verse 16      *“By the Spirit”*—In the original Greek, the word *Spirit* is not capitalized. It could be written “spirit.” In that case, it would refer to the new spiritual life in us that God’s Holy Spirit has created through the gospel message. The writer of this study prefers the ESV’s interpretation, “Spirit.” This keeps our minds on the divine source of our new nature, reminding us of the power behind our new nature, and clearly defining what it means to live in a spiritual way. The word *spirit* is used various times in this section. Arguments could be made where it might better be translated “spiritual nature” and where it is clear God’s Holy Spirit is being referred to. However, a consistent translation reflects the original Greek, which simply has “Spirit” (or “spirit”).

### Discuss

1. We are saved by faith, not by works. What might we be tempted to do with our freedom?
2. Why does living by the Spirit enable us to keep from satisfying the sinful nature?
3. After naming the sins of the flesh, Paul says that those who live “like these” (verse 21) will not inherit the kingdom of God. But doesn’t everyone sin?
4. What does it mean that we have crucified our sinful nature with Christ?
5. How do Christians “walk by the Spirit” (verse 25)?

### Apply

6. As time allows, discuss examples of the works of the sinful nature (verses 19–21). Ask the Lord to give you insight into how you personally might serve him by producing fruits of the Spirit.

*Paul reminds us that we are free in Christ. He encourages us to keep in step with the Spirit.*

# Galatians 6:1–10

## Continue sowing to the Spirit!

### Discuss

1. God wants us to deal with one another in a spirit of love. Paul gives us instructions for doing that. What should we bear in mind according to the following verses:
  - verse 1a?
  - verse 1b?
  - verse 1c?
  - verse 2?
  - verse 3?
2. What is our antidote for pride? (verse 4)
3. What warning does Paul give us in verse 7? Why will the one who sows to the Spirit reap eternal life?
4. What encouragement does Paul give us in verse 9?

### Apply

5. Is your congregation following Paul's instruction in verse 6?
6. To whom should we show love? Why do you think Paul makes a distinction between two groups in verse 10?

*Paul encourages us to correct others, but in humility. We are to sow to the Spirit and strive to show love to everyone.*

# Galatians 6:11–18

## Summary and closing

### Look

Verse 11      *“What large letters”*—Paul normally used a scribe to whom he dictated his letters. To show his concern, he may have written this entire letter, or at least the last part, in his own hand. We have no idea why he had to write “large letters.” But this was proof that Paul, not someone else, had written this letter.

### Discuss

1. Why do you think Paul calls attention to his unique way of writing?
2. What does Paul say is the motive of the Judaizers?
  - verse 12a
  - verse 12b
  - verse 13
3. What are Paul’s motives according to verses 14 and 15?
4. Who belongs to the true nation of Israel?
5. Why does Paul deserve to be honored according to verse 17?

### Apply

6. Why is it easier to carry out our faith if we add conditions to God’s blessings?
7. How do we boast about Jesus in our worship? in our evangelism? in our Bible study program?

*Paul gave the Galatians a final encouragement to hold on to the true gospel. May his words encourage us to do just that, to suffer if necessary, and to look forward to being with Christ in heaven.*