

**“The Right Gospel”
Studies in Galatians
Prepared by Bob Young**

Lesson #1: Paul Sets Forth his Personal Experience with the Gospel

Introduction

Paul writes a “missionary letter” to the churches he had established in the region of Galatia. A simple outline of the letter is that Paul defines the gospel, contrasts the demands of the gospel with those of the law, and urges a lifestyle that demonstrates the gospel. These could also be outlined as an explanation of the essence of the gospel, the exigencies of the gospel, and the example of the gospel.

Outline and Overview

Introduction, 1:1-5

An introductory and summary admonition to “get the gospel right”, 1:6-9

Paul’s “independent” experience in the gospel

Paul not focused on the need for human approval, 1:10

Paul called directly by God, apostolic authenticity, 1:11-16

Paul’s independence demonstrated by his isolation in Arabia, 1:17

Paul’s trip to Jerusalem three years later was limited, 1:18-19

Paul was basically an unknown and an outsider the Christian community, 1:20-24

Paul’s independent experience confirmed by the apostles

Fourteen years later, 2:1ff

His preaching to the Gentiles confirmed, 2:1-3

Freedom in Christ cause of suspicion, 2:4-6

Fellowship extended, 2:7-10

Paul’s independence demonstrated by his opposition to Peter, 2:11-14

Paul’s experience provides insights for defining the gospel, 2:15-21

Justification by faith in Christ, not by law

Justification by Christ is the source of genuine freedom

Freedom from sin, from the law, to live by faith, by grace, to righteousness)

Conclusion

The gospel, when properly defined and understood, calls individuals to Christ without regard to personal or human approval.

The gospel does not depend on majority rule or preference.

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Lesson #2: Paul Compares the Demands of the Gospel with the Demands of the Law

Introduction

This has often been called the doctrinal section, setting for the doctrine of liberty. As Goldilocks, Paul sees three gospel “options”: too hard, too soft, and just right.

Outline and Overview

The personal experience of the Galatians, 3:1-5

- The Galatians’ conversion was spiritual, by faith
- Five verses, five questions

The promise anticipated: the teaching of the Old Testament, 3:6-14

- The promise was by faith
- Faith the source of Abraham’s justification
- The law the source of the curse

The promise confirmed: the purpose of the law, 3:15-29 [3:15-25]

- The purpose of the law was to prepare the way for faith
- Law does not undo promise
- Law was temporary
- Law enslaved
- Law pointed to and prepared for Christ
- Law could not bring equality

The promise realized: the teaching of the New Testament, 4:1-11 [3:26-4:7]

- Faith and adoption superior to law and slavery
- To return to slavery is a regression

Paul’s relationship with the Galatians, 4:12-20 [4:8-20]

- Turning back to a “false faith”
- Shared faith

The “mountainous” faith allegory, 4:21-31

- The facts of the historical parallel, 4:21-23
- The interpretation of the allegory, figurative meanings, 4:24-27
- The application of the allegory to the Galatians’ experience, 4:28-30
- Concluding the allegory, 4:31

Conclusion

Legalism denies the gospel. The gospel is promise, not law. Paul contrasts law with promise, gospel, faith, and grace. Legalism is attractive: the too hard gospel feels good.

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Lesson #3: Paul Affirms that the Right Gospel Provides Power for Living

Introduction

Properly defining the gospel and avoiding artificial and inconsistent demands brings a new relationship with God through the Spirit, no longer a Master-Slave relationship, but a Father-Son relationship.

Outline and Overview

Be free, allow others freedom, 5:1-15

 What Christian freedom is (freedom and legalism, liberty and license)

 The false teachers do not provide freedom

 What Christian freedom is not

Be spiritual, live life in the Spirit, 5:16-26

 Contrasting life in the Spirit and life in the flesh (law)

 The acts of “law” (where law controls)

 The results of the “Spirit” (where law does not control)

 The contrast summarized

Be sharing, live life in the body, 6:1-10

 Bearing burdens

 Sharing blessings

Conclusion

Paul concludes the letter by affirming the centrality of the cross.

Not circumcision but a new creation.