

- **Feedback on experience with Galatians so far (Index Cards)**
 - (front) 3 words to describe Galatians (3 separate words, or 1 3-word sentence)
 - (back) any questions you've always had about the book
- **Introduction to study**
 - Historical Significance
 - Possibly one of the earliest letters, and gives us insight into one of the first major doctrinal controversy of the church, and some rare corroborating historical information with which to compare with Acts.
 - It was later used by Marcion and other gnostics in an attempt to abandon the inferior God of OT and posit Paul as the chief apostle of the revelation of the loving Father of the NT
 - It was critical in the Reformation's case for justification by grace through faith based on the finished work of Christ, in contrast with the meritorious works of medieval Roman Catholicism.
 - In modern times it has often been used by scholars in their positing of different factions present in the NT Church and ultimately an irreparable breach between the original Jewish Christianity (represented by James and Matthew, for example) and a predominantly gentile faction that broke off from that (represented by Luke and Paul, for example)
 - Significance of book
 - The importance of getting the gospel right and living consistently with it.
 - The definition of the people of God, and the relationship of Jew and Gentile in light of Christ
 - ★ Who belongs to the family of Abraham, the heirs to the promise of Abraham, and how can you tell? This question takes up a large subsection of the letter, nearly all of chapters 3 and 4, and it is a load-bearing for the rest of the letter.
 - Relationship of the Mosaic law and the gospel, and the relevance of the law in the life of the Christian.
 - Life in the Spirit and union with Christ
 - Our goals:
 - Understand the Key Points of each section
 - See what each passage tells us about God
 - Consider what application can be made of each text
- Background information
 - ? **Why do we care about background information (Date, recipients, historical situation, etc.):**
 - Well, consider if I read you an editorial letter that spoke about the encroachment of the Federal government being so severe that it's damaging our economy, violating our constitutional freedoms, and upending our traditional values - what would you think I was talking about? Well, a lot of possibilities come to mind, but Obamacare and the Gay marriage issue would be likely candidates, right?
 - ? **But what if I told you that the date of the letter was written by a Georgia plantation owner in 1860 - what does that change?**
 - Agreements/disagreements
 - Agree: Author
 - Disagree: Everything else (Recipients/Date/Opponents/Situation/Result)
 - Authorship
 - Recipients/Date
 - North/South
 - North:
 - "Galatians" refers only to ethnic Galatians which would properly be those in North Galatia.
 - These would have been visited by Paul in Acts 16:6 (possibly implied) and a second visit in 18:23.
 - Because of the late visit, a North Galatian audience virtual requires a late date for the letter, usually around 56-59 AD.
 - South:
 - "Galatians" refers to the Roman province, including those regions in South Galatia, which Paul would have visited in Acts 13-14 and then returned again in Acts 16.
 - Antioch in Psidia
 - Iconium
 - Lystra
 - South Galatian hypothesis is compatible with both early and late dating
 - Date
 - ? **Why does the date of Galatians matter?**

- In a sense, the historical reliability of the book of Acts and/or the honesty of Paul is at stake in the question of dating.
 - The biggest issue regarding the date is how what is reported by Paul (under oath, no less) in Galatians aligns with what is reported by Luke in the book of Acts. While there are a number of different historical points of concern, of particular note is how many trips Paul made to Jerusalem, when he made them, and especially how Galatians fits with the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15.
 - **? Who is familiar with this story? (if needed, read the story in Acts 15)**
 - **This event can be pretty accurately dated to sometime between 48-49 AD.**
 - Without getting too bogged down in the details just yet, there are two possible options that I find the most convincing, with slightly different historical reconstructions.
 - Acts 11:30; 12:25 = Gal. 2:1-10, and Galatians was written from Antioch prior to the Jerusalem council, possibly with the events of Galatians 2 that led to the confrontation between Paul and Peter being the catalyst for the council's meeting and decision.
 - Acts 15 = Gal. 2:1-10, and Galatians was written after the Jerusalem council and sometime after the events of Acts 16:1-6.
- Opponents
- Paul wrote this letter as a direct response to teaching that had infiltrated the churches of Galatia. From the letter, we can highlight some things they were clearly teaching. As we go through the study, we'll get even greater clarity into several aspects of it:
 - The teachers were Jewish Christians, that is they were Jews professed to be followers of the Messiah Jesus
 - **? What were some aspects of the teaching?**
 - They did not deny the basic facts of the gospel story
 - They taught the necessity of Gentiles to become circumcised and keep certain tenets of the Mosaic law
 - For entrance into the family of Abraham, and
 - For the life of holiness and restraining of sin
 - They claimed that, regardless of what he taught them initially, Paul really believed and taught circumcision
 - From Paul's perspective, their motivation for teaching what they did was to avoid being persecuted.
 - General Jewish Background
 - **? Who were the primary persecutors of Christians in the middle of the 1st Century?**
 - **? Who were the other persecutors of Christians at the time?**
 - **? What is one reason aligning closely in external form with Judaism would be beneficial for a 1st century Christian?**
 - Jewish persecution was zealously focused on anything that threatened the integrity of the Jewish distinctiveness, in particular anything Gentile.
 - Roman persecution was against anything that threatened disorder and did not give obeisance to Caesar.
 - The two-fold draw of aligning with Judaism was to placate the zealous Jews, and to appear as a Jew (which was an accepted religion) to the Romans.
 - Let me paint a picture of what was going on in first century Israel that directly impacts on our conversation about Galatians. Start by drawing an analogy:
 - The first shots of the American Civil War were fired in 1861, with the fundamental issues being the economic and political sovereignty of the individual states, particularly with regards to the issue of slavery.
 - **? But when did the storm clouds of war begin to form?** Consider some critical events:
 - In 1820, the Missouri Compromise
 - In 1822, the Denmark Vesey slave revolt was suppressed
 - In 1831, Nat Turner's rebellion was suppressed
 - Throughout the 1830's, slavery is a hotly debated issue in politics and literature
 - In 1839, the famous slave ship revolt on Amistad
 - In 1849, Harriet Tubman escapes and begins what would be 20 return trips to the South to free slaves on the Underground Railroad
 - In the 1850's, that slowly gathering steam heated to a rolling boil
 - The Kansas Nebraska Act
 - Bleeding Kansas

- The Dredd Scott decision
 - John Brown at Harper's Ferry
- This finally spilled over into all out war in the 1860's
- The same type of thing was going on in Palestine in the 1st century, with same storm clouds gathering well before the eruption of full blown war.
 - ★ **Draw timeline on board with 167 BC, 63BC, and 70AD, with a notation of 30AD for the cross.**
 - On December 25th, 167 B.C., Syrian Ruler Antiochus Epiphanes took over the Jerusalem temple and established worship of himself in its place.
 - This triggered a revolt led by Judas Maccabeus, temple cleansed 3 years later (hence Hanukkah)
 - This was a formative moment in Jewish history, much like the Exodus and the Exile
 - However, the following 100 years were filled with ambiguity and in-fighting
 - In 63 B.C. the Romans led by Pompey sieged Jerusalem and once again desecrated the Holy of Holies.
 - This led to generations of ambiguity and an ongoing undercurrent of revolt
 - Throughout this period, but especially picking up steam into late 30's and 40's was the growth of extreme views of loyalty to YHWH with an expectation that the coming restoration of Israel was dependent upon the nation being faithful to the covenant and purging wickedness. Chief in focus were key Jewish Distinctives, the things that set Israel apart from the Gentiles, such as circumcision, food laws and ritual purity, the importance of the Temple, etc.
 - The desire to defend and enforce this loyalty began to take on a more and more stringent character. The term zeal was commonly used in the mid to late 1st century to describe this mentality. It has been said often enough, that for the 1st century Jew, zeal was something you did with a knife. The models they looked up to were:
 - Phineas - Numbers 25:1-13
 - Elijah - 1 Kings 18:20-40
 - Maccabees
 - It's important to note that these were not only looked up to as examples to follow, but that following in their footsteps would serve to remove the wrath of YHWH and open the door to forgiveness and restoration for Israel.
 - In 66 A.D., this undercurrent of revolt spilled out into full-blown civil war which eventually led to the Roman invasion and complete destruction of the city of Jerusalem and its Temple.
 - At the time period in which Paul penned Galatians, regardless of the date chosen, these things were beginning to bubble up:
 - There were several well-known revolts in the mid-40's that led to their leaders getting crucified
 - Under the Roman procurator Cumanus, which overlaps exactly with our time period, there was a conflagration at the time of Passover in Jerusalem that resulted in the death of upwards of 20,000 Jews.
 - This time witnessed rising zeal (in the full sense of the word) in Jerusalem and increasing antagonism toward Gentiles
 - More importantly, we see outright hostility and violence to other Jews who appeared to be threatening the purity of the nation.
 - You get some glimpses of all of these things in the accounts in the Book of Acts and in the NT epistles.
 - That's barely a scratching of the surface of the complexity of the 1st century, but hopefully you get the picture - many perceived that the faith of YHWH was under threat and were willing to act to defend it. This situation is not unlike what you see happening with radical Islam in the middle east today, where what began as isolated terrorist incidents, slowly developed into an fully organized terrorist group with official sanction, that recently with ISIS has become a political entity in its own right willing to wage war...
 - The point of all this is that looming large over all of these Jew/Gentile debates in the NT, particularly the closer you get to Jerusalem itself is the threat of persecution and violence for those who are perceived as a threat to the purity of the Jewish community under Torah.

- Specific beliefs held by Judaizers
 - "Sympathizing with heretics"
 - **When we read a letter like Galatians, we're seeing Paul's polemic argument against the false teachers, but what would their teaching have actually looked like?**
 - (1) that through Messiah Jesus the God of Israel was graciously inviting Gentiles into the covenant;
 - (2) that entrance into the covenant was gained by faith in the Messiah followed (for males) by circumcision; and
 - (3) that God expected his covenant people to live distinctive lives of holiness in which they observed the Law of God
 - **What are some of their potential arguments and rationale**
 - The necessity of circumcision: Gen 17 ; Jub. 15
 - Circumcision as a identity marker of God's people
 - Circumcision as a rite of entry into God's covenant family (even for those not physically descended from Abraham): Gen 34:14-24; Exodus 12:48; Esther 8:17 LXX; Judith 14:10
 - To be saved was to be a part of the people who would inherit the blessings promised to Abraham and would be found as "the righteous" when Lord came in judgment.
 - Jewett: "circumcision was presented as a prerequisite for entering fully into Abraham's promise, into the chosen people whom God would spare in the parousia."
 - Jewish tradition and interpretation of several OT scriptures connected circumcision with redemptive benefits protection from evil and ultimate promise of perfection.
 - Jewett: "At first glance it may seem strange that a Hellenistic congregation would consider undergoing circumcision simply to enter the promised people of Israel. It may be, however, that the contact with their own Hellenistic aspirations was at the point of the promise of perfection which the Judaic tradition attached to circumcision."
- The Galatian Region Religious Background (Garland) - there were some key aspects of the Galatians' pre-conversion religious background that may have made some of the false teaching especially appealing to them, and help to make sense of the context of the letter:
 - The obligation to fulfill cultic requirements to maintain a favorable standing with the deity.
 - Performing the proper rites, not neglecting religious obligations, keeping the appointed festival times, keeping one's vow, and maintaining ritual purity was vital to keep from experiencing the judgment of the gods. To disregard any of these obligations could lead to the anger of the god and divine punishment. The Galatians would have been particularly sensitive to the maintenance of ritual purity, so as to prevent the anger of the gods. Infractions of ritual purity often carried stiff penalties.
 - The obligation to perform good works to maintain a favorable standing with the deity.
 - A fairly stringent moral code characterized many of the religions of central Anatolia during the Roman period. Numerous monuments depict the Anatolian gods Hosios ("Holy") and Dikaios ("Just") carrying a set of scales and a measuring rod to weigh and measure the deeds of their worshippers. These deities, along with other local gods and goddesses, sought to compel the observance of a wide range of ethical behavior. They took grave offense at thievery, sexual improprieties, acts of hatred and bitterness, violence and witchcraft. When these deities became aware of the infractions against their moral law, they often exacted a harsh and immediate punishment against the violator.
 - The Pauline Gospel, the gospel of the opponents and the temptation to defect.
 - ? Paul brought them the message of a loving and merciful God who has finally and forever forgiven their sins. Rather than pay for their sins in the present life, Paul shared with them the good news that a propitiatory act had already taken place. The Lord Jesus Christ "gave himself for our sins" (1:3-4). This simple but profound fact would have been revolutionary in the lives of the Galatians. No longer would they need to fear vengeful deities striking them down for any particular infraction and sin. They could live in the freedom of life in Christ (5:1)...Given this remarkable good news that Paul shared with these central Anatolian Gentiles, who had formerly given their allegiance to a variety of vindictive gods and goddesses, How is it possible that they could so quickly turn away to a law-centric form of the gospel? The answer in brief, is that when the other missionaries came to the Galatian communities and asserted their objections to Paul's gospel, the nature of their objections would have resonated well with the Galatians, given the structure of their former belief-system. Their insistence that the Galatians be circumcised would have been a discouraging blow to them after the freedom of the Pauline gospel from such ritual obligations. Nevertheless, it would have made sense to them, based on the similarity of the Judaizers' demands to the structure of their former convictions, according to which the gods pressed particular cultic requirements for the forgiveness of sins.
 - The religiosity of the propitiatory inscriptions and contextualization in Galatians
 - There are a few other features of Galatians that suggest that the kind of religiosity expressed in the propitiatory inscriptions is something Paul may have been aware of when he wrote this letter. Among these are witchcraft, castration, supernatural revelation and angelic mediation, all of which find points of contact in Galatians.