

## Galatians Class 1 Transcript

Greetings and welcome to FI Online.

With today's class we begin a study of a very challenging book: Paul's epistle to the Galatians. Peter told the people of his day that Paul had written some things that were *hard to understand*, and that some, in his day, had twisted Paul's words *to their own destruction* [**2 Peter 3:16**]. Of course, Peter did not disagree with Paul's words. He simply pointed out that those who were, as he said, "unlearned and *unstable*," were guilty of distorting Paul's meaning. Unfortunately, that's still true today.

In this series we hope to help you "untwist" and understand what many great scholars have not. That's not because we're so wise, but because God has *blessed* our eyes and ears—just as Jesus said in **Matthew 13 [verse 16]**—so that we're able to comprehend what the wise of this world have not. Being able to understand these truths should be humbling to us because none of us are great scholars.

But we also wanted to take a moment to explain a change in our format for these classes. In our first year of Foundation Institute, we attempted to record the FI Online classes in the classroom as the classes were given. Unfortunately, we encountered a number of technical issues and decided we could produce a better product if we recorded the classes in the studio instead. That's what we've done ever since. However, with our move to the new facility, and the much-improved technology in both our media facilities and our classroom, we decided we would like to try moving back into the classroom for our recordings. This has several advantages for us, and we felt we could give **you** more of a feeling of the actual FI classes in this way.

As usual, each of these classes will begin here in the studio where we will answer any questions that have been submitted from the previous class. We'll have a prayer asking God's blessing on the class and then move immediately into the actual class recorded in the classroom. Each FI class is 50 minutes long, and these online classes will be slightly longer depending upon the questions and answers and the opening prayer.

We will continue to do some of our FI Online classes here in the studio because that may be a more effective way for some of our instructors to cover their subjects. And please understand that we will not be able to offer some of the FI classes because they simply would not work in a recorded format. For example, when Dr. Levy covers the book of Job, he teaches the class inductively, with many questions and much classroom discussion. There's really no effective way to record and play that back.

We hope you will enjoy this new approach, and that it will be effective in conveying a little more of what Foundation Institute actually offers our students.

Now, if you'll join me, we will ask God's blessing on today's class.

[Prayer]

[4:13]

We are, of course, today beginning the book of Galatians. Galatians is one of the most challenging of the books that we have. And it's going to take a little bit of time, and some detail, to work our way through it. But it is very important that we are able to spend a little time doing this.

The book itself—one of the reasons it's so important for us is because it is probably the primary book that is used to try to say that "God's law is done away." So, it's very important that we get a grasp of this book.

I hope that this year we'll be able to move quickly. You are the first class that I've been able to approach this book in quite this way, because last summer I covered it in our Continuing Education classes. And it

enabled me to put together, I think, a little bit more streamlined version. So, I hope that we'll be able to move relatively quickly. But you will find that we have to make our way slowly through portions of it.

I've chosen to call the presentation, **Galatians: True Freedom in Christ**. There are certainly many people who would agree with me that the book of Galatians gives freedom. But their concept of freedom is a very different one than what we have in mind.

We're going to have to spend probably—I'm guessing, it's going to take us a couple of classes to move through the background. I do want to look at the historical background and the cultural background there. But there's another aspect of this that we need to build as we go forward, as well.

So, we begin with one of the simplest of questions: Who wrote it? Well, there's been very little question through the years that Paul was in fact the author. His characteristic style is here. But beyond that, there's a great deal of autobiographical material that Paul has in here. There's a great deal we know about how Paul learned the gospel that's given in this book that we don't find anywhere else. It would've been very difficult for someone else to write in the way that Paul did. So there really hasn't been a great deal of question about it. And, in fact, there are many who are grateful that Paul is the one who wrote this because of their focus on what they call: Pauline Theology.



There is, actually—when we talk about the date in which it was written—there's a very good discussion of this in *Expositor's Bible Commentary*.

[6:45]

Yes, Josh?

[Question from student]: “You say we believe Paul wrote it because of a style. Is there any—like things—that are actually saying that Paul wrote this, like actual verses or...?”

Oh, okay. The question was—and I have to remember to repeat the question. So, the question was: “Is there anything, besides the style, that particularly indicates that Paul wrote it?”

Yes, there are several places in here, obviously, where Paul *specifically* tells us he's the author. He's the one that writes. He begins—he tells us that at the end. So yes, that's there, and I probably should've mentioned that in the first place. Yes. He does very clearly identify himself. And the style backs up, I guess I would say, what the assertion is.

I won't take the time to go through all the detail about the dates, but I do think there are a couple of things we need to keep in mind. There are those who believe that the book of Galatians was written prior to the Jerusalem conference, which is pretty much universally acknowledged to be 49 A.D. Now, you may remember we went through the book of Acts. We looked at that Jerusalem conference, and what it was talking about. It focused on: what is required of Gentiles in order to be Christians? Must they, in a sense, become Jews in order to become Christians?

So that was a watershed in the early Church, and we'll see a little bit more as we go further. Some therefore say: “Well, since the decision about circumcision, and what is required of Gentiles, was made at the conference, if Paul wrote this book *after* that conference, he would've simply said: ‘We've already made that decision, and here it is, here are the letters,’” and so on. I can understand why someone would think in that way. But I don't agree with it. I will have to say—and I'm giving a personal opinion here—I would have to say that as we'll go forward, and we get into **chapter 1** and **2**, we'll find that one of the primary problems that's taking place in Galatia—much as we found in Corinth—is that there are those who are doubting the authenticity of Paul's apostleship, and are claiming that what they're teaching is in fact

true, and what he's teaching was not really correct.

So, a great deal of what Paul is going to talk about is: how he got the truth; how he learned it in the first place. If Paul—and we'll see what takes place there—if Paul simply quoted a decision that was made by other people in Galatia, it would basically have undermined his argument about the fact that *he* is an apostle. So, I don't think that's a valid reason to believe that it was written prior to 49 A.D. On the other hand, I think there's good evidence, as we go through the epistle, that he wrote this epistle sometime after that. I would say frankly, probably several years after that.

[9:41]

The issue of "Gentile circumcision" was decided at the conference. But understand that simply because the decision was made doesn't mean that everybody associated with the Church was happy with that decision. The Gentiles undoubtedly were very happy with the decision. But there are probably many of those who were [of] Jewish background who, for very good reason, struggled with that. And it took a while for that to be implemented fully in the minds and hearts of the people. We find, as we will go through this, that the subject of circumcision is going to come up. And it's going to be a significant one, in a sense, as we go forward. But it is, in fact, in this book basically—I guess I would say—an identifier of a system. And it is the system that needs to be addressed. It is that approach that needs to be addressed.

Many of the authorities would place the writing of this book probably around 52 A.D. But then they say it was probably written from Ephesus. I don't think that makes sense, and I'll give you a couple reasons for it as we go forward. But one that immediately comes to mind—and we'll see in a moment as we look at where Galatia is and what churches we're talking about—if Paul had been in Ephesus at the time these problems came up, he would've simply gone out to those churches. I mean, it was just a journey up the Lycus River Valley, and he would've been there. So that would have been an easier thing to do.

I think it more likely that Paul wrote this book some time just before he left Corinth at the end of his second journey. Now Paul did not spend any significant time in Ephesus until his third journey which would again place it a little bit later. So I think it's likely that it is written from Corinth toward the end of that second journey, which places it around 52-53 A.D., maybe even as late as early 54 A.D. But I think 53 is probably a pretty good date for it. So, we would place it around that period of time.

What would that mean? Well, if the Jerusalem conference takes place in 49 A.D., and this is written in 53, we're looking four years later. There's been a period of time for people to consider the decision. It has been—and again, as the book of Acts shows us—it has been instigated and made a part of the way things are done in Galatia, in the areas that Paul is dealing with. This is his approach. He takes this with him wherever he goes. But what we find in this book is, there are some individuals who have come from Judea—perhaps Jerusalem itself—and they have come to the churches in Galatia. And they are saying: "No. That isn't adequate. That you need to be circumcised, and," as we'll see, "come under the entire system of law that existed for the Levites."

[13:06]

Okay, we'll look at that a little bit more here in just a second. But I want to address one more aspect which is called "canonicity." Why is this book included in the Canon? Or, has there been any question about it?

Probably the most critical group ever, when it comes to what should be a part of the Bible, were the German higher critics of the 19th century. And they were individuals who rejected a good bit of what we accept as the Bible as being false—as being—well not necessarily "false." But let's say, not something that was inspired and should be a part of the Canon. But Galatians was never really challenged because they really liked Galatians. Remember, this is Germany. Who's famous in Germany? Oh. There's a guy named

Martin Luther. And Martin Luther absolutely loved the book of Galatians.

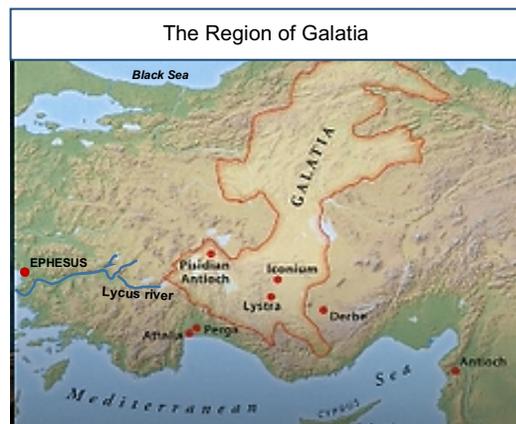
The higher critics ranked Galatians—along with 1 and 2 Corinthians and Romans—as the most genuine of the Pauline epistles. They referred to them as the *hauþt brive*—the “highest expression” of Pauline theology. Now, again, their approach is that Paul’s theology is somehow *different* from the theology of Jesus Christ through the other apostles. Which, again, we would say: “No. That doesn’t square with what Scripture tells us. That’s not what’s true.” But they see this as the “highest expression.”

Now, of course, what this does for you, when you begin to pick and choose what you will except as being the standard, then you are able to eliminate anything that disagrees with what you approve of. So, that’s in essence what they do. Again, remember we were talking about those who measure themselves by themselves. This is kind of the same kind of thing where you decide what you believe, then you choose those things that agree with you, and you eliminate the ones that don’t. That’s not acceptable. Most of the modern scholars would also include 1 Thessalonians, Philippians, and Philemon among those epistles that are undisputed, but they would have some questions otherwise.

[15:21]

Okay, moving on beyond that. It’s important to understand to whom Paul wrote this. And we’re going to have to spend a little bit of time talking about that.

For many years Biblical scholars have debated exactly to whom this was sent. The term “Galatia”—as you can see on the map—was originally applied to an area of northern Asia Minor, or what we would call “Turkey” today, that had been occupied by a group of Celts from Gaul around the third century B.C. So they had come—we always think of expansion being to the west. But no—in this case they came from the west to the east, and they went into this area just south of the Black Sea in the 3rd century B.C. But they were Gauls, and therefore the area became known as Galatia, or as probably they would’ve pronounced it in those days: Galatea [Ga-lah-tee-yah]. But if I start talking about Galatea, no one knows what I’m talking about. So, we’ll go ahead with the way we normally pronounce it.



So that was the area that was originally called Galatia. However, by around 150 B.C., the Romans had taken control of this area. And they expanded the name to include areas further to the south that were known as Phrygia, Lyconia and some of the other areas there of central Asia Minor. So, if it was used one way at one point, and another way at another point, how did Paul use the term?

Well, the fact that the Romans had been using this term for about 200 years to include that southern area is a pretty good indicator that that’s probably what Paul was doing. He probably didn’t go back—as we were talking about the book I was talking about reading: *The Pioneers* by David McCullough. When he talks about the “Northwest Territory,” he was talking about Ohio, Indiana, Michigan. But obviously today, if I were to talk to people and I mentioned something about: “We’re going to the Northwest,” you would not think we were going to Ohio. Okay. That would not be what you thought. Why would I go back 200 years to use a term that was used then? I don’t think Paul did either. But, let’s go further.

[17:46]

For many years it was assumed that the term referred to the northern areas and this book was, therefore said, written to those people in that area. We have a couple of problems with that. For one thing, there is no record that Paul ever visited those northern areas. If you remember, as we go through in the book of

Acts, there are a couple of places where Paul *tried* to go up into that area around the Black Sea, and the doors were closed. There is no record that Paul *ever* raised up any churches in that area. In fact, there are no records of any churches *anywhere* in that area in the New Testament times. Now, undoubtedly, later there were. But there's no record whatsoever. And this is a very corrective book. We're going to see that from **chapter 1**. This is a very strong corrective book. Why would Paul write a corrective letter to people he really didn't know very well or at all?

Now, it is true that the Biblical record does have some blank spots historically. So, it's possible that Paul went into that area and preached, and maybe even raised up congregations. But if he did, it's an argument from silence, which doesn't prove much. There's nothing there. So, I doubt that that is what it's talking about.

Now near the end of the 19th century—so, what 125 years ago, or so—Sir William Ramsay put forward the theory that Paul was actually writing to the people in the southern part of the Roman province of Galatia. Acts 13 ...

Yes, again.

[Student]: "Is it just in the top part of Galatia that didn't have any churches?"

Yes. The question was: "Is it just the northern part that didn't have the Churches?" Yes. And I think the map kind of indicates where some of the Churches are in the southern part. But again, there's nothing up there north of those churches that would indicate there was anything there.

Ramsay tells us, again, that he thinks it's the southern area. **Acts 13 and 14** clearly records Paul raising up congregations in Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe. All of those in the south-central part of what we would call "Asia Minor" and would have been on the southern edges of what was called "Galatia" by the Romans.

**Acts 16** refers to Paul going through there again. Now **Acts 15** is the conference. **Acts 16**, Paul goes through there again. He passes through rather quickly, which again would indicate to me that those areas are not troubled at that time. He didn't spend a lot of time trying to address difficulties. He was just there for a relatively short period of time and then moved on. And, of course, that's the second journey, which is the one that takes him over to Macedonia and Achaia or into Corinth as well.

[20:45]

Again, it would make sense for him to write to people that he knew, that he had been involved with, and to help them. Again, there is an excellent discussion of this in *Expositor's Bible Commentary* in its *Introduction to Galatians*. I will say that as far as *Expositor's Bible Commentary* on Galatians is concerned it's got some *wonderful* material. It's just one of those passages—one of those sections where you will see, over and over, the author comes right up to the truth and then veers off because it's like he's got us—he can't say what's actually there. He already [has] preconceived ideas about "Galatians does away with the law," that even though he very clearly shows it doesn't, he veers away as you get there.

The weight of the evidence has actually led most modern scholars to accept Ramsay's proposal that it was in the southern area that he [Paul] wrote. Those congregations—as you read through the book of Acts—you know that Paul followed his typical pattern when he went to Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, Derbe. He went first of all to the synagogue and spoke there. And spoke *to* those who were Jews and those—as we have explained—who are the God-fearers, the Gentiles who are not proselytes. But they are adherents to the teachings of Judaism, and what's there.

So, there in the synagogue, he goes there and there are quite a number of those who are converted. We

find that the core of the congregations in this area started out as Jewish. But it's also very clear—and Galatians will make this clear as well—that the congregations were largely Gentile. There was a Jewish core, but there is a large number—there are many Gentiles who've become a part of the Church.

I think it's really hard for us to grasp how different those two groups were—the Jews and the Gentiles. And when you have a very different worldview, you tend to view everything through a certain lens. The Jews and Gentiles viewed each other through a distorted lens. They saw each other in the wrong way—both of them. And we all have to understand that learning new ways of thinking—getting rid of the old way of thinking—is not something that happens overnight. The fact that, for example, in **Acts chapter 10**, it became clear that God was opening the door of salvation to the Gentile world. It obviously—as we study the history—goes forward because five chapters later, they're still trying to figure out circumcision and what's required of Gentiles who want to be Christians. So, it takes a while—even when you understand, and you're given understanding through God's Spirit—it takes a while for the old thinking to change.

[23:50]

Jews and Gentiles despised each other. The Gentiles lived in a world filled with supernatural powers. The sun, the moon, the stars were all seen as spirit powers that had control over human lives. Even the other day, as Mr. Baker was presenting the section on Hindu, you remember he talked about how important—or actually I guess it was Buddhism—where he talked about how important astrology was for those folks. And I frankly hadn't realized that. But astrology is guiding some people's lives and that was the old Gentile way of seeing things. They saw everything from this superstitious viewpoint. Anything that happened that they couldn't immediately explain “must have been done by the gods.” And therefore they were affected by that.

Idols were everywhere. Remember when Paul went to Athens, he was highly offended because everywhere there were idols. If you were to go to Greece today, you would find all kinds of pagan temples—not the people are going there to worship today. But you will find the remnants are everywhere. They're all over the place. Sexual immorality was considered normal. All of that would've been completely unthinkable to a Jew.

The Jews had been instilled with a belief that they were God's special people. They *were* chosen. God had set apart Israel, and especially Judah in that sense, since Israel had wandered off. They had been given a special calling and responsibility. But, instead of seeing it as a special calling and responsibility, they saw it as: “God chose us because we're better than anybody else.” And that's the way they viewed the Gentiles. Bringing together both Gentiles and Jews into one Church is going to be an amazing transformation! And it was not something that was going to be easy. Much of what we find in Paul's epistles—and even the general epistles later, in the book of Acts—describes this struggle of trying to bring together two groups of people who have this entirely different worldview and an entirely different view of each other. And again, how do you do that? How do you bring people together in that way? And yet, making a unified body out of those very different people was absolutely essential for God's plan to be accomplished. Not going to be possible otherwise.

[26:36]

Now, when we go through this epistle, we're going to see it's very clear that Paul completely rejects the Judaism of his day. However, theologians in looking at that, assume that Paul rejected everything that Jews believed as well—Sabbath, Holy Days, clean and unclean foods, all of those things. That's not what Paul was rejecting. We have to keep in mind that the Judaism of Paul's day was not the religion God revealed. The Judaism of Paul's day was a completely different, and even a competing religion, with true Christianity.

Now remember, as we read in the book of Acts very early on when the Church begins to come into existence after the day of Pentecost, there's not this outward resistance or rejection by the Jews in Judea. They simply saw the Christians as a sect of Jews who believed that Jesus fulfilled the promise of being the Messiah. The Christians themselves saw themselves that way. So that's not a surprise. But as time went forward here—now again, we're dealing with, what, 31 A.D. up to 53 roughly, by this point—so we're dealing with well over 20 years have passed. And in that period of time, those of Judaism who were not going to accept Jesus as the Messiah are now being set in their position. And those who do accept this are also being set in their position. Their practices are pretty similar. The Romans look at them and they can't tell them apart. But you can believe that after 20 years the Jews and the Christians knew that they were not the same. And Judaism was a competing religion with Christianity in the minds of those people. Though the Romans couldn't see the difference, undoubtedly, the Jews and the Christians did. They did see the differences and they began to walk separate paths.

Consider some of the things about Judaism that Christianity had to reject. Even those who sat in Moses' seat, as Jesus described them—their rulers, their priests and so on, who were the custodians of the Word of God—rejected the Son of God. When you reject that, how can you walk together? Jesus' sacrifice had been the fulfillment of all of the washings, the sacrifices, the bloodletting and the other rituals that was overseen by the Levites and centered in the physical temple. He had replaced all of that. Now, we're not going to see that until we get all the way to the book of **Hebrews**—at least fully. But that was a part of what was there. How can you continue to go back to the temple, and do all of those things, when you recognize that the ultimate sacrifice has been given?

[29:40]

The Jewish family—while it was much better than most Gentile families—still saw women as property, gave them few rights, and no sense of equality before God. Christianity cannot accept that. That's not God's way. The Jews saw being chosen as God's people as a call to special privilege, instead of as a call to special service. That is a danger that we face, but it's also one which they failed to see. And Christians can't walk in that way. We cannot look upon our calling as “we're special,” as opposed to “God loves us and not anybody else.” That's not appropriate.

Judaism was an erroneous mixture of outward obedience to some of God's laws, disobedience to other laws, and human commandments, where they decided what they thought was right instead of what God said. This is one of the reasons why—and again, I don't want to spend a lot of time right now—but it's one of the reasons why when people today are attracted to Messianic Judaism, or they want to start doing more “Jewish things,” I think you fail to understand that Paul rejected that whole system. He rejected the Judaism of his day. That does not mean he rejected God's law. But he did reject the ritualism that had become Judaism.

Let's continue on about this historical background. The animosity between the Jews and the Gentiles was very deep and profound. Both groups had rules against associating with and forming relationships with one another. As we've talked about before, Jews tended to live together in certain areas and had certain occupations. Part of that was because the Gentiles limited them. They generally would put them in the worst place to live, which they would immediately turn into the best neighborhoods.

They were limited in certain occupations that they couldn't do, so they became excellent craftsmen at the ones they were allowed to do. And they prospered. But they wanted to—the fact that they couldn't live just anywhere they wanted was not really a problem to them. They didn't want to live in the middle of the Gentiles. They wanted to live with one another. So, it kind of worked for them in that way. But both groups had rules, strong rules, against associating and forming relationships with the other group.

[32:27]

Judaism had several competing sects. We know, for example, the Sadducees and the Pharisees who had competing views. They didn't see things the [same way]. But even with all of the Jewish sects, the one thing that they accepted and agreed upon was the rejection of those who were not Jews. They viewed God's laws and His promises as being exclusively for the Jews, and all others were excluded. People today sometimes find it surprising. But you will find many Jewish people today who are totally perplexed by the idea that you—whom they automatically assume are Gentiles—would keep the Sabbath, Holy Days, things like that. "They are our laws. They're not yours." In fact, some are even offended by the idea that you would do this.

They viewed God's laws and promises as exclusively for them—again, laws *and* promises—exclusively for them and everybody else is excluded. Some of that was based on a misunderstanding of God's instructions that they should not intermarry with the nations around them. They took that as a racial, ethnic command: "Don't intermarry because you're better than these other people." But as you examine it, you find that God's injunction was about, "don't be corrupted by their religions." It wasn't a matter of their DNA. It was a matter of their teachings. And God had told them not to make alliances with them because of their corrupting influence in that way.

They began to see this as if God were saying that the people of these other nations were not as good as the people of Israel. Over the years, they developed a whole series of laws designed to separate themselves from any contamination with the Gentiles. We read, for example, the indications in the Gospels about the way they viewed tax collectors. Now every time we go there, almost everybody says: "Well, yeah. Nobody likes tax collectors, even today." That wasn't the issue at all. The issue was not the fact that they collected taxes.

Tax collectors were despised for three reasons:

Number one. They just didn't like paying taxes to the Romans. That was an acknowledgment of Roman rulership over them.

But second, and probably more important, tax collectors constantly had to handle Roman coins. And Roman coins had on them idols, pagan images of all sorts. So, to handle those things was considered "defiling."

Third, because they were tax collectors for the Romans, they were constantly in contact with Gentiles. And again, this left them defiled as far as the Jews were concerned.

So, it wasn't simply a matter [that] they didn't like paying taxes. It was more than that.

[35:38]

You could [not]—according to the Jewish rules—you could not share a meal with a Gentile, for fear that he would defile the food. Anything touched by a Gentile was considered defiled. As we've mentioned before, if you were in the room with food, and a Gentile was there, and you had to leave the room, when you came back you could not eat the food because you don't know if he touched it while you were gone.

If you bought a pot, a cooking pot made of metal, if a Gentile had touched it you could scrub the pot and it would be okay to use. But if a Gentile touched a clay pot, all you could do was destroy it. Or perhaps, I guess, sell it to another Gentile. If a righteous Jew was in the marketplace and the shadow of a Gentile passed over him, he would go home and bathe.

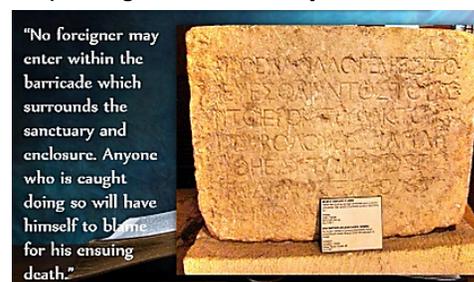
Gentiles were considered to be less than human. To allow your son or daughter to marry a Gentile was

considered the same as allowing them to marry a dog—and literally. That’s taken very, very literally. Even today, there are Orthodox Jews who would, if their children marry outside of Judaism, will—the term is: “sitting shiva.” They will hold a wake, as if that person has died, and cut off communication with them. Now that’s not the majority of Jews today, I understand. But it does happen even today. The famous example, given in *Fiddler on The Roof*, shows what happened when the daughter married a Gentile. This was considered the proper way to do things. It was a misunderstanding of what God said. But understand, this is what Judaism was, and not something that, again, Christianity could accept.

One of the things which we have mentioned before, but again, I want to look at, is concerning the Gentiles coming to worship God in Jerusalem. If a Gentile wanted to worship the God of Israel—and we find in Scripture that there are certain Gentiles who, over the course of time, recognized and acknowledged the true God of Israel—if they came to Jerusalem where the temple was and they wanted to worship the God of Israel, there was a balustrade that ran outside of the temple. It was on the Temple Mount. It was in the area—the flattened area—that we call “the Temple Mount” or the area where the temple was constructed. And it was a low balustrade. It could go up to about four feet high. It had openings in it, but only Israelites were allowed inside of that. Gentiles who came to worship the God of Israel were excluded from being able to go in there. They were told they could come so close and no further because they were not allowed to do this.

And around this, there were a series of stones that were erected. Those stones said:

“No foreigner may enter within the barricade which surrounds the sanctuary and enclosure. Anyone who is caught doing so will have himself to blame for his ensuing death.”



That’s a copy—that’s one of the stones actually, from Jerusalem. It’s in a museum in Istanbul. But we do actually have that. We heard about it. It’s written in history, but it was there.

[39:11]

So, Gentiles were completely cut off. Even those who wanted to serve the God of Israel were considered not clean enough to come in and be closer to the temple. This is the way Judaism taught. Again, obviously this isn’t the religion of the Bible. But it is what Judaism taught in the first century. You cannot have a unified Church when people have this way of thinking. But, these people are taught this from the time they’re children. I don’t know how many of you have ever watched the old Rogers and Hammerstein musical: *South Pacific*. But there is a song in it that’s called, “*You have to be taught to hate.*” And it’s an interesting perspective on these things. These people were taught [to have this] perspective.

How do you change that? If you’ve looked at a certain group of people in a certain way your entire life, you come to a group—to a church—that teaches you that that’s wrong. Okay. You accept it mentally. How do you make the change in your thinking? It doesn’t just happen overnight. It takes a while. The transformation of the Church, from being an almost entirely Jewish institution into a Church that was largely Gentile, was not a smooth transition. **Acts 10** and the acceptance of the Gentiles as Christians, did not resolve all of the problems. In fact, it opened a *whole* new set of challenges that they’d never had to face before.

Interestingly, Jesus Christ did not give them specific solutions to those problems during His earthly ministry. He expected them to apply the Scripture and the guidance of God’s Spirit to come up with godly answers, which, I think, sets a pattern because there are a lot of things today that Jesus Christ did not

address directly. And yet, we must use Scripture and God's Spirit to have godly answers as well. The good news is that the Church eventually did do exactly that. But even at this point, with many of their preconceived prejudices about one another still intact, God was moving His people to a position that was far more enlightened and accepting and understanding than the rest of the world would have for hundreds of years. And I think that's important to keep in mind.

[42:02]

If you were to look at the early Church—by “early” I mean 31 A.D. moving forward, before we get to the book of Galatians—you would find a group of bigots. But, they were God's Church. The flaws that were there—the human flaws—did not stop it from being the Church of God. Those human flaws had to be addressed. They had to grow out of them. But human flaws never stop God from working in His Church.

The New Testament history goes on to tell us of many struggles as God began to open the door of salvation to the Gentiles. One of Satan's most powerful tools is division. And he attempted to use every possible issue to divide the Church. And, undoubtedly, he succeeded with some individuals as he, unfortunately, sometimes does today. But in the long run, the very issues that he tried to use to divide the Church, ended up making the bonds of Christianity even stronger. Issues like circumcision, and the decision that had to be made, that was made, that brought a closeness and a bond in the Church that had not existed before that:

- Sharing meals together.
- Eating food that had been offered to idols. How do you address that?
- The early inroads of Gnostic philosophy.
- The role of the priesthood and the sacrifices in the temple all had to be addressed.
- The role of the Jewish system of civil law which we will see much more about as we go through this book.

The early Church had to struggle with all of those issues and each issue produced its own set of spiritual casualties. But as they sought God's answers, a new relationship began to be formed between those that God was calling. A relationship based upon the sharing of God's Spirit, the hope of the gospel, and the truths that God's Word gave. That began to bring the converted Jews and Gentiles into a very special bond. We've often likened it to the relationship of brothers and sisters in a family, and we experience that in the Church today. The bonds that we experience when we go to the Feast are a good example, where you meet people that you perhaps have never known before. And yet, it's almost like: “Oh, we're family.” We know this even if we're traveling in other parts of the world.

[44:47]

But while this truth was producing a greater unity in the Church, it often produced a separation from the outside. Because, of course, as Jews and Gentiles began to form relationships with each other, those Jews and Gentiles who were part of their family, part of their society who were not being called, viewed those who were a part of the Church as compromising with those very important standards. If you believed, as a Jew, that you should not have anything to do with a Gentile and here were these people in this weird little sect called “Christianity”—ultimately—who are sitting down with Gentiles and sharing meals, going to each other's homes—eventually even intermarrying—well, you're certainly going to think they're compromising with the standards. So, you begin to separate yourself from them, so that as the people who are called to become closer to one another, they're being forced out by their own families.

We also have to understand that in everything I've said so far, we've been looking at this through the lens of Judaism. Understand that the Gentiles who were being called, throughout Asia Minor and beyond, had

their own views about the Jews as well. There was a great deal of prejudice and hatred from the Gentiles toward the Jews, and it was certainly as strong as what the Jews had toward the Gentiles. The Gentiles had many laws which isolated the Jews from contact with Gentiles, requiring them to live in limited areas, restricting what occupations they could pursue, limiting their civil rights. We remember that we've talked already about the Emperor Claudius expelling all the Jews from Rome. Certainly wasn't because of any legitimate reason. He was just angry. And he had the right because he was in power, so he expelled them. And Rome suffered as a result of it. Eventually they began to come back, as we'll see in history as well. But the Gentile heart had to change as much as the Jewish heart in order for there to be a unity in the Church.

[47:10]

So why did Paul write this? Well, as with all the other epistles, we generally have to read between the lines to discern what the situations were that led to writing the epistle, and the issues that the author is addressing. As we've said, it can be compared to listening to one side of a phone conversation. You can piece certain things together. Other things you're left trying to figure out.

The congregations in Galatia were being troubled by some unknown accusers. They're never named. We don't know who they were. We're not even sure exactly what they were saying, although much of it can be figured out. Clearly, the accusers were from a Jewish background. We also have to understand these were not people who came from Judea and came to the city center and started talking to the Gentiles. These are people who came to Church people, and began to try to tell them that what Paul was teaching was not accurate.

They began by attacking him as if he is not a legitimate apostle. The logical extension of that is that, "what he taught wasn't the same gospel the other apostles taught. After all, we came from Judea. Peter's there. James is there. John's there. We were there. We heard Jesus ourselves. What Paul is teaching, no, not right." And they went further to say that what Paul was teaching encouraged lawlessness and sin.

Well, Paul didn't write this epistle in self-defense. There are many times when Paul was falsely accused and he simply let his own personal example speak for itself, which again is probably the wisest thing to do in most cases. But in this case, what we find is all of those accusations and teachings were threatening the faith of the believers. They were introducing ideas that were contrary to the truth of the gospel, that were going to lead people down a path that was a destructive path.

[49:34]

Now again, we've had similar situations in the modern Church today when people start down a path, and there are others who are saying: "Wait a minute. That path is leading where we don't want to go." And they may say: "Oh no, no, no. We're just—we're actually—what we're trying to do is to bring Christianity into the 21st century. Not just living as people did in the past. You know, when Mr. Armstrong was around. I mean things have changed a lot, so we need to do things differently." Some would recognize the path. Some perhaps recognize the path but denied it. Paul recognizes where this is leading, and he can't let that go.

We have to keep in mind that these were not accusers who simply showed up in the community. They were being received in the congregation as fellow believers from Jerusalem. In fact, **that's** the way they presented themselves. They did not come condemning the Gentiles but telling them that what they heard from Paul was incomplete. It wasn't adequate. That they would lose their salvation if they didn't become circumcised and keep the whole law. You need to understand what that means.

These people probably viewed Paul as a heretic, and the Gentile members as victims of Paul who needed their help. At one level they were probably convinced of their sincerity. But as we will see in this book,

specifically in **chapter 4** and **verse 17**, Paul reveals what their true motive was: wanting to gain followers for themselves. Their sincerity did not make them correct. And in their sincerity, they were undermining the faith of the believers.

And, one more thing. Apparently, many of the brethren lacked the discernment to recognize the errors.

This book has great value to us, which we will pick up at the beginning of the next class.

[51:47]