

Teaching Plan
EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Date: September 2, 2018
Lesson Title: "True Gospel"
Lesson Passage: Galatians 1:1-10

ABOUT THIS LESSON

This lesson introduces a series of studies in Paul's letter to the Galatians. Paul goes to the central point of his letter at the very beginning. He is deeply concerned over the report that believers in Galatia are turning away from the true gospel and following teachers of a false gospel based on Judaistic beliefs. He reaffirms the integrity of the gospel he has preached to them by reminding them of his own spiritual pilgrimage from Judaism to faith in Christ.

TEACHING/LEARNING GOALS

(1) Describe the main problem that Paul seems to be addressing in Galatians. (2) Make a commitment to memorize at least five verses from the Galatian letter.

BEGINNING THE LESSON

To introduce your study in Galatians, ask various individuals to read the following verses: Gal. 2:20; 3:28; 4:6; 5:1; 5:13; 5:16; 6:2; 6:7; 6:9; 6:10. Ask: Do any of these verses sound familiar? Note that Galatians contains a number of "quotable" verses. Challenge class members to memorize five verses from Galatians during this series of lessons.

TEACHING PROCEDURES

1. *On a map that shows the missionary journeys of Paul, locate the Roman province of Galatia, and observe that Paul probably addressed this letter to several churches within this territory. Then note that these churches were in Gentile territory, although it is obvious that there were some Jewish converts in their congregations.*

2. *Summarize the situation that seems to have prompted Paul to write this letter: (1) False teachers were disturbing the believers in the Galatian churches, especially the converts who came from a Gentile background. They were raising doubts about the sufficiency of Christ as the basis for salvation. They insisted that, to be saved, one must observe the laws and customs of Judaism (including the rite of circumcision) in addition to believing in Jesus as the Messiah. To be a Christian, they said, one must obey the law of Moses as well as receive God's grace through Christ. (2) As these false teachers attacked the sufficiency of Christ, they also attacked Paul. They charged that Paul was not a true apostle, since he was not one of the original Twelve. And they also raised questions about the gospel that he preached. (3) The Galatians also seem to have been influenced by a pagan "antinomianism." ("Antino-*

mianism" comes from two Greek terms that mean "against the law.") In contrast to those who taught that meticulous observance of the law was essential to salvation, the antinomians took the position that salvation freed one of all moral responsibility. ("Since you're saved by grace," they taught, "it makes no difference how you live.") To them, Paul's demand for moral living was just another form of slavery to the law. (Paul seems to have been dealing with this issue in Gal. 5:16.)

3. *Note Paul's defense of his apostleship in the very first verse of his letter.* His critics had been telling the people that Paul's apostleship was inferior to that of the disciples who had known Jesus personally. They claimed that what he knew of the gospel had come from the Jerusalem apostles and that they had given him whatever authority he had to preach the gospel. That is why Paul says he is an apostle "not of men, neither by man." He had been divinely appointed to his apostolic mission by the resurrected Christ on the Damascus road (Acts 26:15).

4. *Discuss the reference to "all the brothers who are with me" in Gal. 1:2:* "Brothers" was Paul's name for fellow Christians. While there is no indication that they took part in composing the letter, they were there to lend their support as Paul replied to his critics. APPLICATION: Paul's reference to fellow Christians as "brothers" was not a casual formality. From the time he became a Christian, Paul considered himself to be a member of a spiritual family. He did not think of the church as an institution, but as an intimate fellowship bound together by their shared faith. Christians today would do well to recapture this sense of belonging to a family, not just an organization.

5. *Refer to Paul's direct attack on the main problem in vv. 6-10:* (1) The Galatian Christians had been called "into the grace of Christ" (v. 6); but, now, grace was the very element of the gospel that they were deserting. QUOTE: "The whole emphasis of the letter is that the Good News is made possible by the free gift of God through Jesus Christ (which is what grace really is) in contrast with obedience to the Jewish law" (Eugene Nida). (2) They had turned away "so soon" (v. 6) (either so soon after their conversion, or they had been so quick to embrace the false teachings of the legalistic Judaizers). FOR DISCUSSION: Evangelism is incomplete if it is not combined with careful instruction of converts; in the period immediately following conversion, new believers are particularly vulnerable to erroneous beliefs. (One result of this is that nearly one-third of all Southern Baptist church members are listed as "non-resident.") What does our church do about this? Could we do more to cope with this problem? (3) Verses 7-9 convey the intensity of Paul's feeling about the matter. The enemies of the gospel were not just "mistaken"; they were engaged in a deliberate effort to pervert truth (v. 7). "Let him be accursed" in vv. 7-8 is strong language. "Let him be damned" would be a fairly accurate translation. (4) Verse 10 suggests that some have accused Paul of trying to be popular.

CLOSING THE LESSON

Urge class members to memorize Galatians 2:20 this week. Suggest writing the verse on a card and reviewing it several times a day.

Lucien Coleman P.O. Box 2951 Weatherford TX 76086 682-262-1312