

The Epistle of Paul to the Galatians

Instructor: Antipas Desai

Time: Saturdays 11:30 AM – 12:30 PM ET

Class Size: No limit

Paul's epistle to the Galatians is the most severe of his epistles. In no other epistle does he call the recipients of his epistles "foolish." In no other epistle does he publicly rebuke two of his fellow apostles, and subtly implicate a third. In no other epistle does he refer to certain brothers as "false," smuggled in to "spy out" the "freedom" that others enjoyed in Christ. In no other epistle does he call these ones "dogs." Who were these people? How did they exercise such a strong influence on the churches? What provoked Paul's ire? Join us as we embark on a nine week journey to diagnose the spiritual malady that afflicted not only one church, but a cluster of churches, that threatened to pervert the true gospel of Jesus Christ, and reduce the Christian faith to a sect of Judaism. The epistle to the Galatians is a catalyst that determines the direction and continuity of the Christian faith. It is the first of the four seminal epistles of Paul (Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians), known as the "heart of the divine revelation." Without Galatians, we would not have the adequate revelation of the church (Ephesians). Nor the proper experience of Christ (Philippians), nor the proper revelation of the headship of Christ (Colossians). If Paul's epistle to the Romans gives us a clear definition of the law and faith, and their respective roles, his epistle to the Galatians goes deeper to lead us into the condition of churches which had begun by the regeneration of the Spirit through faith in Christ, and had been "bewitched" into attempting to live the Christian life by their own works, and the disastrous consequence of living a life of the flesh.

This is a one year (two semester) course, each semester (Fall and Winter) comprising nine weeks. We will examine the first three chapters during the Fall Semester, and the last three chapters during the Winter Semester.

SYLLABUS (WEEK BY WEEK):

Following the chapters in the Epistle to the Galatians:

Week 1: Chapter 1:1-3: The background and setting to Galatians, and the apostleship of Paul, the writer of this epistle; timeline of Paul's apostleship, focusing on his conversion and his movements recorded in Galatians, in conjunction with events recorded in the book of Acts.

Week 2: Chapter 1:4-10: The purpose of this epistle, which is to unveil the will of God, which is to deliver us from the present evil age, from a different gospel.

Week 3: Chapter 1:11-24: The revelation of God's Son; Paul's "Arabian" and "Damascus" experience, and his fellowship with Peter and James

Week 4: Chapter 2:1-6: Paul's visit by revelation to Jerusalem to lay before the brothers the gospel he preached to the Gentiles, and his confrontation with the religious practices being imposed by the "false brothers" (the Judaizers).

Weeks 5 & 6: Chapter 2:7-21: Paul's contention for the truth of the gospel, specifically in relation to the "Antioch incident" involving Peter and Barnabas; Paul's revelation of the indwelling Christ, with whom every believer has been crucified.

Week 7: Chapter 3:1-14: The works of the law versus the hearing of faith; the Spirit versus the flesh; the blessing of Abraham.

Week 8: Chapter 3:15-24: The unique seed; the function of the law under the old covenant.

Week 9: Chapter 3:25-29: The inheritance of the promise of sonship of the believers in Christ, through faith in Christ, and the obliteration in Christ, and by Christ alone, of every distinction of race, social status and gender that divides the human race.

COURSE OBJECTIVE

As believers in Christ, we begin our Christian life by being born of the Spirit and justified by faith in Christ alone. However, all of us still tend to seek to attain God's standard of righteousness by our own efforts. We fail to realize that Christ has already done all the work necessary, and that we have been justified, once for all, through faith in God's Son. God's good pleasure is to reveal His Son in us, not to give us an outline of how to improve our Christian life, or how to be a holier and more righteous Christian. Many of us fall into this trap. This course will endeavor to unlock the secret of living a life of the Spirit, and no longer a life of trying to be a "good brother" or a "good sister," or trying to do all the "right things." This does not mean that we are passive, waiting for the Lord to do everything. On the contrary, Galatians unveils a living according to the Spirit, and a function according to vision and burden, which strives to please the Lord, and not man or the church. Our living is not even a living to please the church, or satisfy any systematic standards imposed by ourselves or any institution, but rather solely unto the Lord and for His good pleasure.

RESOURCES

The Epistle of Paul to the Galatians, The Bible

STRUCTURE

Lecture with a 10-15 minute question/discussion period

HOMEWORK

Participants will be expected to invest 30 minutes each week in reading assigned verses and giving short answers to assigned questions. Group work is encouraged. Some questions may ask participants to share their thoughts in the discussion period, thus facilitating group discussion.

The timing and content of this class has been specially considered in view of participation of saints from Africa. For those from Africa who wish to join, please register through the church in Accra or the church in Kampala. Even though this class has been designed with Africa in view, all saints from everywhere are welcome to join them. All other registration is still through this website.