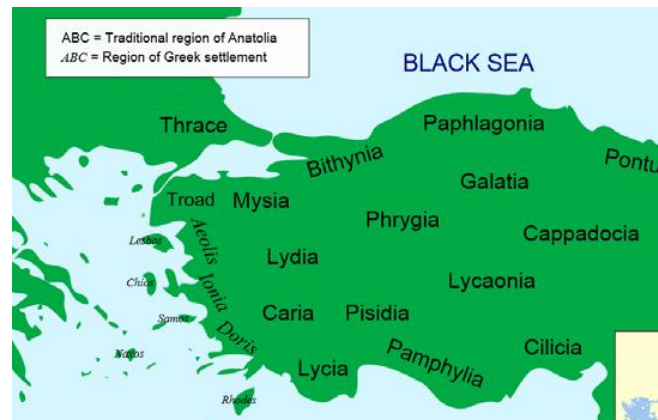


GALATIANS*

History and Background

Ancient Galatia was an area in the highlands of central Anatolia (Ankara, Çorum, Yozgat Province) in modern Turkey. Galatia was named for the immigrant Gauls from Thrace, who settled here and became its ruling caste in the 3rd century BC, following the Gallic invasion of the Balkans in 279 BC. It has been called the "Gallia" of the East, Roman writers calling its inhabitants Galli (Gaul or Celt). The Galatians themselves were not literate, and their name for themselves remains unknown. (Wikipedia)

In 1 Peter 1:1-2, Peter listed Galatia as one of the places too which Jewish Christian were scattered:



1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, that you may obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in fullest measure.

On his second missionary journey in Acts 16:6-7, Paul traveled throughout the region:

6 And they passed through the Phrygian and Galatian region, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia;
7 and when they had come to Mysia, they were trying to go into Bithynia, and the Spirit of Jesus did not permit them;

Later on his third journey Paul visited Galatia again, as recorded in Acts 18:23:

23 And having spent some time there, he departed and passed successively through the Galatian region and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples.

During one of these visits Paul became ill and reported it in Gal 4:13-15:

13 but you know that it was because of a bodily illness that I preached the gospel to you the first time; 14 and that which was a trial to you in my bodily condition you did not despise or loathe, but you received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus Himself.



* Scriptures are NASB unless noted otherwise.

GALATIANS 1

Greeting

Galatians 1:1-5

Paul, an apostle (not sent from men, nor through the agency of man, but through Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead), 2 and all the brethren who are with me, to the churches of Galatia: 3 Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ, 4 who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us out of this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, 5 to whom be the glory forevermore. Amen.

Paul begins the letter attesting to his apostleship, which establishes the authenticity of the Galatian letter as the inspired word of God. He addresses the letter to the churches in Galatia, where church means, literally, called out body or congregation. Church is used also in a geographic sense, hence, congregations in Galatia.

The grace of God and the gift of Jesus for our sins constitute the core of the salutation. Eph 2:4-7 also uses this grace (unmerited favor) and the resurrection of Christ to explain God's incomparable kindness toward believers:

4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), 6 and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus, 7 in order that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

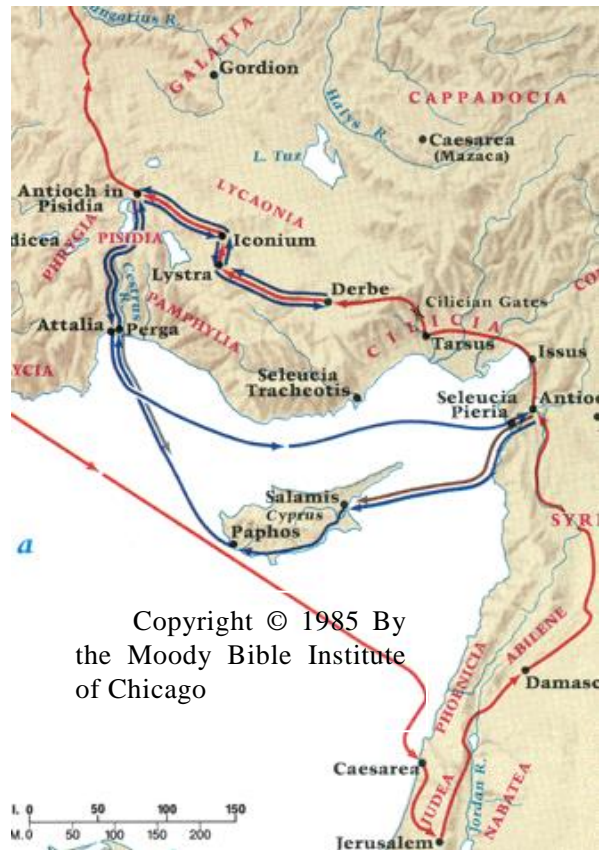
This gift of God's grace makes salvation possible in every way. Titus 2:11-14 teaches:

11 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, 12 instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, 13 looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus; 14 who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.

Only One Gospel

Gal 1:6-10

6 I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; 7 which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you, and want



to distort the gospel of Christ. 8 But even though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed. 9 As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed. 10 For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ.

This statement, contrasting the one true gospel with other perverted gospels, establishes once and for all the certainty and integrity of the unchanging gospel of Christ.

The Gospel Is the Truth

In Ephesians 1:13-14, the gospel is the word of truth and it alone can guarantee our inheritance and redemption:

13 In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation — having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, 14 who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory.

Our very hope of heaven depends on God's grace in all of its truth—the gospel. Colossians 1:5-8 teaches:

5 because of the hope laid up for you in heaven, of which you previously heard in the word of truth, the gospel, 6 which has come to you, just as in all the world also it is constantly bearing fruit and increasing, even as it has been doing in you also since the day you heard of it and understood the grace of God in truth;

The Gospel Is the Power of God for Salvation

Therefore, the mighty power of God for salvation is the gospel in which is revealed righteousness, according to Rom 1:16-17:

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "But the righteous man shall live by faith."

It is the gospel that Paul preached; it is the gospel, which we received and on which we take our stand; it is the gospel by which we are saved; but only if we hold firmly to the word preached!

Everything else is vain. 1 Corinthians 15:1-2 reads:

15 Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, 2 by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.

This is the certain, true, unchanging gospel of Jesus Christ born of his sacrifice in his death, burial, and resurrection as stated in 1 Corinthians 15:3-6:

3 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, 5 and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.

The Gospel Is Not Made Up

Galatians 1:11-12

11 For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. 12 For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

Anything that man adds to the gospel or takes away perverts the gospel, rendering its power ineffectual—no true gospel, no salvation. Paul explains here and in Ephesians 3:2-6 exactly how the gospel came to the apostles:

2 if indeed you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace which was given to me for you; 3 that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief. 4 And by referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, 5 which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit; 6 to be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

The Penalty for Perversion Is Eternal Condemnation

Anyone—even an apostle or an angel from heaven—who preaches another gospel or perverts the gospel of Christ is to be eternally condemned. In older translations, the Greek and English words are the same—anathema, cursed in the worst possible way. It is clear: all the religions of today that change the teaching of Jesus are condemned. The exception is those who practice New Testament Christianity just exactly as it was revealed through the apostles and prophets.

Call to Apostleship (cf. Acts 9:1-25)

Galatians 1:11-17

11 For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. 12 For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ. 13 For you have heard of my former manner of life in Judaism, how I used to persecute the church of God beyond measure, and tried to destroy it; 14 and I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my countrymen, being more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions. 15 But when He who had set me apart, even from my mother's womb, and called me through His grace, was pleased 16 to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood, 17 nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went away to Arabia, and returned once more to Damascus.

Paul discussed way of life as a fervent Jew in Philippians 3:4-6:

4 although I myself might have confidence even in the flesh. If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more: 5 circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; 6 as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless.

Acts 22:2-5 describes Paul's previous life in his own words:

2 And when they heard that he was addressing them in the Hebrew dialect, they became even more quiet; and he said, 3 "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated under Gamaliel, strictly according to the law of our fathers, being zealous for God, just as you all are today. 4 "And I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and putting both men and women into prisons, 5 as also the high priest and all the Council of the elders can testify. From them I also received letters to the brethren, and started off for Damascus in order to bring even those who were there to Jerusalem as prisoners to be punished.

In Acts 8:1-3, we are offered a real life view of Paul, called then Saul, persecuting the church:

8 And Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death.

And on that day a great persecution arose against the church in Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. 2 And some devout men buried Stephen, and made loud lamentation over him. 3 But Saul began ravaging the church, entering house after house; and dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison.

On the day of Saul's conversion, he was on his way to persecute the saints in Damascus, recorded in Acts 9:1-3:

9 Now Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest, 2 and asked for letters from him to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

Contacts at Jerusalem (cf. Acts 9:26-31)

Galatians 1:18-24

18 Then three years later I went up to Jerusalem to become acquainted with Cephas, and stayed with him fifteen days. 19 But I did not see any other of the apostles except James, the Lord's brother. 20 (Now in what I am writing to you, I assure you before God that I am not lying.) 21 Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. 22 And I was still unknown by sight to the churches of Judea which were in Christ; 23 but only, they kept hearing, "He who once persecuted us is now preaching the faith which he once tried to destroy." 24 And they were glorifying God because of me.

Acts 9:19-31 offers additional details of Paul's life after his conversion:

18 And immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he regained his sight, and he arose and was baptized; 19 and he took food and was strengthened.

Now for several days he was with the disciples who were at Damascus, 20 and immediately he began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "He is the Son of God." 21 And all those hearing him continued to be amazed, and were saying, "Is this not he who in Jerusalem destroyed those who called on this name, and who had come here for the purpose of bringing them bound before the chief priests?" 22 But Saul kept increasing in strength and confounding the Jews who lived at Damascus by proving that this Jesus is the Christ.

23 And when many days had elapsed, the Jews plotted together to do away with him, 24 but their plot became known to Saul. And they were also watching the gates day and night so that they might put him to death; 25 but his disciples took him by night, and let him down through an opening in the wall, lowering him in a large basket.

26 And when he had come to Jerusalem, he was trying to associate with the disciples; and they were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple. 27 But Barnabas took hold of him and brought him to the apostles and described to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had talked to him, and how at Damascus he had spoken out boldly in the name of Jesus. 28 And he was with them moving about freely in Jerusalem, speaking out boldly in the name of the Lord. 29 And he was talking and arguing with the Hellenistic Jews; but they were attempting to put him to death. 30 But when the brethren learned of it, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him away to Tarsus.