

Living Free
A Bible Study on the book of Galatians
Introductory Material
November 2, 2009

Background

One of the questions that confronted the Christian community soon after the resurrection of Jesus and the pouring out of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost was whether a person had live as a faithful Jew in order to be a Christian. At first, this was not an issue. The answer was, emphatically, “yes.” Jesus had lived as a Jew, his disciples were Jewish, they preached in Jerusalem and the surrounding areas. However, soon after Pentecost, the Holy Spirit began putting the disciples in places and among people who were not Jewish. Acts 8 tells of how the Spirit sent Philip to preach to an Ethiopian eunuch, who because he was a eunuch, would not have been welcomed in the temple in Jerusalem, even if he had been a faithful Jew. Philip told him of Jesus’ death and resurrection and baptized him. In Acts 10, the Spirit had to work a little harder to convince Peter that a non-Jew could be baptized. But through a vision in which the Lord told Peter to “kill and eat” animals that were unclean according to Jewish law, and through the vision of the Spirit falling upon the Roman Centurion Cornelius, Peter was convinced that God was accepting Gentiles into the Kingdom of God.

But change does not come easily. While the Scriptures had foretold a day when Gentiles would be welcome in God’s kingdom, it had been assumed that in order to be welcome, they would have to abide by the Jewish law. Men would have to be circumcised, women would have to obey the Jewish purity laws, observance of High Holy Days, as well as faith in Jesus, would make one right with God. While some in the Christian church were arguing for this, Christ appeared to Paul on the road to Damascus and called him to be the apostle to the Gentiles. During the next twenty plus years, Paul preached the good news of Jesus Christ among non-Jews. A discussion arose in Jerusalem as to whether Paul and other missionaries should demand that Gentiles become Jewish when they confess faith in Christ, and a Church Council was held to discuss the matter. Acts 15 tells the outcome – even the Jewish leaders of the church allowed for Gentiles to become a part of the church without being circumcised.

But the matter kept coming up. At the time Galatians was written, probably in about AD 53, the churches in the region of Galatia were being convinced by Judaizers, people who argued that in order to be Christian you have to be Jewish, that they needed follow the Jewish law in order to be right with God. When the Galatian Christians responded by saying that Paul had not told them this was necessary, the Judaizers argued that Paul was not a real apostle, and thus had no authority to release them from the demands of the Torah. This letter is Paul’s response to the claims of these Judaizers.

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Mondays, November, 2009
7 – 8:15 pm

Class Schedule

<u>Date</u>	<u>Chapter</u>
11/2/09	Introduction and Galatians 1:1 – 2:14
11/9/09	Galatians 2:15 – 3:29
11/16/09	Galatians 4
11/23/09	Galatians 5
11/30/09	Galatians 6

*If you cannot attend a class, you may download the worksheet from our website:
www.standrewslcsd.org*