

GALATIANS

1- Objectives

- ❖ Bible study for the Epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians and pointing to the true Gospel of God versus the false teaching.

2- References

- ❖ Audio Sermon by HG Bishop Youssef
<http://suscopts.org/diocese/bishop/bible-study/epistle-to-the-galatians/session-01/>
- ❖ Interpretation of the Bible by Father Tadros Malaty
http://st-takla.org/pub_Bible-Interpretations/Holy-Bible-Tafsir-02-New-Testament/Father-Tadros-Yacoub-Malaty/09-Resalet-Ghalatya/Tafseer-Resalat-Ghalatia__00-index.html

3- Scriptural Verse

- ❖ “But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed” (Galatians 1:8)
- ❖ “I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain” (Galatians 2: 21)

4- Lesson Guidelines

Date and Place

- ❖ The Epistle to the Galatians is written by St. Paul from Ephesus to the Galatians in the southern part of Asia Minor around the year 55 AD. This is the only letter which St. Paul addressed to a group of churches.
- ❖ St. Paul wrote this letter with his own hand, in large letters although he had an eye problem, to show them how much he care about them as some Judaizers told them that he preaches to the Jews differently.

Aim of the Epistle

- ❖ To teach that salvation is only through the Blood of the Lord Jesus Christ opposing the “Judaizers” (Christian teachers from Jewish background who were teaching people that without keeping the words of the Law, you cannot be saved).
- ❖ To verify and defend his apostleship because these Judaizers, in order to defend their wrong teachings, attacked St. Paul saying that he is not an apostle from God as he did not see and follow the Lord while in the flesh as the apostles.

Features of the Epistle

- ❖ It shows the inflamed heart of St. Paul to reveal the truth of the Gospel: It is a strong theological epistle teaching about salvation, love, meaning of the Cross, the Law of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Law of Moses, working by the Spirit...
- ❖ It shows St. Paul's firmness with the Judaizers who deviated from the teachings and offended the faith of the humble people and in the same time he rebuked his followers who accepted the false teaching and he called them foolish.
- ❖ It reveals the service in the Apostolic Era and the orders of preaching for the Jews and the Gentiles and also about the discussions between the apostles.
- ❖ It gives us a great idea about the service of St. Paul although he did not mention it for this purpose but still it was a good documentation for his labor.

Introduction & Chapter 1

- ❖ Unlike all other introductions for St. Paul Epistles where he always define himself as a servant or a slave to the Lord, in this letter he insisted to say that he is an apostle chosen from God the Father and the Son Whom He raised from the dead as he was defending his apostleship and declaring that only through death and Resurrection we have been saved.
- ❖ St. Paul was disappointed because the Galatians turned away from the truth. He also rebuked those of the false teachings saying "let them be accursed", referring to the Lord's declaration: "It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones" (Luke 17:2)
- ❖ St. Paul declares that he is teaching the truth because he got his teachings from the revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ: although he was baptized by Ananias and the apostle laid their hands on him to be sent for preaching, yet he wanted to say that men are tools in the hands of God but the calling is from God.
- ❖ It is only through the grace of God that he was able to preach: he was exceedingly zealous for the tradition of the fathers but he was following men and his zeal was blind and not according to the truth; once the grace worked in him and he accepted through his free will the call of God; he unceasingly fulfilled the will of God in him to reveal the Lord in himself that's why people glorified God in him.

Chapter 2

- ❖ St. Paul went to Jerusalem by revelation to get the approval of his teaching and the support from the apostles in front of the Judaizers who came in secret to spy on his divine teachings (2: 1-10)
- ❖ The 1st Christian council was held in Jerusalem; the apostles approved the teaching of St. Paul regarding the grace of God and they gave him and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship to preach for the gentiles

- ❖ St. Paul confronted St. Peter because he was to be blamed (Galatians 2: 11- 21). He confronted him in front of everyone to correct the wrong act so that no one will be offended by him and his followers. St. Paul explained the issue of the grace and the works of the Law and concluded by saying that if righteousness comes through the Law, then the Lord Jesus Christ died in vain.

Chapter 3

- ❖ Justification through faith in the Lord and not through the works of the Law (Galatians 3:1- 9): Even Abraham was justified by believing in “Christ” as the Lord Jesus said: Abraham saw my day and rejoiced; only those who believe in the same faith of Abraham will be justified.
- ❖ The curse of the Law (Galatians 3:10- 14): No one can be justified under the Law; there were no grace, and justification was only by the works of the Law that’s why it was a curse “Cursed is the one who does not confirm all the words of this law by observing them (Deuteronomy 27:26). The Lord Jesus Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law by becoming a curse for us.
- ❖ Importance of the Law after The Lord Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:15- 25):
 - 1- A mirror to see ourselves and a light to clarify the path.
 - 2- The Law discipline us by saying “you shall not...” it limits our sins.
 - 3- The Law showed that we are unable to be justified by it and so we realized the need of the Savior.
- ❖ Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is dynamic (Galatians 3:26-29): Those who believe, should be baptized and fulfill all the works according to his teaching by the grace of the Holy Spirit and no privilege to any one over the others; we are all the One Body of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Chapter 4

- ❖ Before the Lord Jesus Christ, we were spiritually immature like children with no discretion and slaves under bondage; so we needed a guardian (The Law) but in the fullness of time, God sent forth His Son under the law (a Jew) to fulfill the Law on our behalf. He paid the debts and set us free from the curse of the Law. By putting on the Lord Jesus Christ in Baptism, we became children and heirs (Galatians 4:1-7)
- ❖ The gentiles were not under the law but they were enslaved to other gods; the Lord Jesus Christ delivered them from this slavery and St. Paul is urging them not to substitute slavery to other gods by slavery to the Law. He then showed them his love to them and his acknowledgement of their love to him and warned them from the false teachers who want to ruin this love (Galatians 4:8-20).
- ❖ Abraham had 2 sons; one born by a promise from the freewoman Sarah, and the other according to the flesh (will of man) from the bondwoman Hagar. We became sons by the promise of God not by the works of the law... Only the children of promise are the heirs “cast out the bondwoman and her son“ (Genesis 21:10) - (Galatians 4:21-31).

Chapter 5

- ❖ Freedom in God is freedom from the dead works of the Law though we choose by free will to serve one another and even enslave ourselves to one another to walk and live in the spirit. Under the Law, we are carrying a heavy burden without any benefit because we cannot be justified by the Law; but carrying the yolk of the Lord Jesus Christ is very light because we receive the grace and He will carry the heaviest part for us (Galatians 5:1-6).
- ❖ Do not underestimate the false teachings; it can drift you away from God and your salvation. It is wrong to seek justification through the Law, but because of your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, you will fulfill the Law (Galatians 5:7- 9).
- ❖ St. Paul encouraged the Galatians and advised them to do their part (Faith working with love) as God is doing His part (gave them grace) and so they will be justified. He also defended himself against the false teachers who accused him of preaching to the gentiles differently than preaching to the Jews (Galatians 5:10-13).
- ❖ Liberty is not an opportunity for the flesh (carnal desires – old nature) but let the new nature taken in baptism to lead you according to the Spirit. The works of the old nature are lust and sins but the Work of the Spirit is the beautiful fruits of the Spirit. We are keeping the Ten Commandments of the Lord as a fruit of our freedom in the Lord (Galatians 5:14- 26).

Chapter 6 & Conclusion

- ❖ Liberty in the Lord Jesus Christ involves responsibility and accountability: to restore those who are overtaken into trespasses, we have to help them by carrying the burden with them (helping them to get rid of the sin) with gentleness, and humbleness knowing that no one is above the sin, only the grace of God is justifying us (Galatians 6:1- 5).
- ❖ Give generously not only to the needy but to all those who gave their life to God and teach you “a worker is worthy of his food” (Matthew 10:10). Do not compete with the Law of God “you reap what you sow”; this law is given to restore us to God through affliction. For example, the prodigal son would not return to his father if he did not go through reaping what he had sown. St. Paul urges us to do good to all and to not become weary for we shall reap in due season if we do not lose heart (Galatians 6:6-10).
- ❖ St. Paul proves that he care much about them (wrote the Epistle with his own hand although he had an eye problem) and explained the intention of the Judaizers who are serving the flesh; where we should only glory in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ and withstand persecution for Him as St. Paul has the mark of persecutions in his body as a seal of his right apostleship. He concluded his Epistle by blessing their spirit with the grace of our Lord that justify them and give their spirit the ability to fulfill the law of Christ (Galatians 6:11- 18).

5- Conclusion

- ❖ Justification is only through the grace of God who give us the ability to fulfill the Law of the Lord Jesus Christ and not through the works of the Law. We cannot be justified by the works of the Law only because we cannot fulfill it and so we fall under the curse of the Law.

6- Activities / Discussion Points

- ❖ Discuss the following quotation from HH Pope Shenouda III:
“The works of the law cannot justify us, but we cannot be justified unless we fulfill the works of the law”