

Notes on Paul's Letter to the Galatians

St. Jerome Adult Bible Study

I. Introduction

Paul wrote the epistle to the churches in Galatia, a province of Asia Minor. They were not Orientals, but Gauls or Celts. According to this epistle, they seemed to be a people easily persuaded and unstable. Paul visited Galatia, according to Acts 16:6 and 18:23, and with God's blessing many became followers of Christ; churches were established. From the epistle itself we learn that Paul suffered from affliction while there and was cared for and treated kindly (Galatians 4:15). Paul said that they would have plucked out their own eyes and given them to him.

II. Judaizing Teachers Trouble Galatia

Their teaching was in opposition to the gospel of grace and taught that a simple faith in Jesus Christ was not sufficient for salvation. To this was added that one must keep the Law of Moses. Circumcision was especially emphasized. According to Acts 15:1, the Judaizing teachers went to Antioch and taught "*Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.*" We still have teaching like this today; that salvation is not through Christ but Christ plus something else, whether it be keeping the Law or many other things. These teachers tried to undermine the apostleship of Paul; they attacked his authority.

III. The Purpose and Practical Value of the Epistle

Paul wrote this epistle in defense of the Gospel of Christ, received by revelation from Him. So that this might be effective, Paul first had to defend his apostolic authority, after which he exposed the false teaching to which the churches of Galatia had been subjected. His defense is strong for the work of Christ on the cross.

| Scripture | Description | Catechism | Principle |
|-----------|--|-----------|--|
| 1:1 | What is an Apostle? | 857 | Apostles and their mission chosen by Christ Himself |
| 1:4 | Jesus gave Himself according to the will of the Father | 2824 | Jesus' sacrifice delivered us from our sins |
| 1:13 | Church of God | 752 | The Church is the entire Universal community of believers |
| 1:15-16 | God reveals Jesus as His only son | 442 | Jesus Christ is the only son of God |
| 1:15 | Faith is a gift of God | 153 | Our faith is a Grace from God |
| 1:16 | Jesus Himself visited Paul to set him straight | 659 | Apparition of Christ makes Paul an Apostle |
| 1:19 | Paul visits Jesus' brother James | 500 | This James is the son of a different Mary |
| 1:20 | Paul makes an oath that he tells the truth | 2154 | Oaths made for grave and right reasons are ok |
| 2:10 | Paul encouraged to preach to the Gentiles but to take care of the poor as well | 886 | The Church is for everyone and its aid is specifically extended to the poor |
| 2:20 | Paul lives in Christ not of the world | 478 | The Son of God loved me and gave himself up for me |
| | | 616 | Jesus knew and loved us all |
| | | 1380 | The person of the Eucharist is the one who loved us and gave himself up for us |
| | | 2666 | Whoever invokes the name of Jesus is welcoming the Son of God who loved him and gave himself up for him. |
| 3:1 | The Galatians have seen representations of Jesus' Crucifixion | 476 | Since Jesus' body was finite, holy images are legitimate |

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| 3:8 | Abraham was the father of faith | 59 | God chose Abraham and all nations are blessed through him |
| 3:10 | One who relies on works of the law are cursed | 578 | No one can perfectly obey the law (except Jesus) |
| 3:13 | Jesus takes upon Himself the curse of the Law | 580 | Jesus' death redeems us from the curse of the Law |
| 3:14-16 | We receive the promise of the Holy Spirit through Jesus Christ | 693 | One of the titles of the Holy Spirit is "the Spirit of Promise" |
| | | 706 | Abraham's progeny is Christ who will gather the children of God |
| 3:24 | The Law is a gift from God designed to lead us to Jesus | 582, 708, 1963 | The Law was incomplete in that it did not offer Salvation until Jesus' sacrifice |
| 3:27-28 | We are all heirs of Abraham Jews AND Gentiles | 791 | We are all one in Christ Jesus |
| 3:27 | All baptized are "clothed with Christ" | 1227, 1243, 1425, 2348 | Baptized Christians have "put on Christ" i.e., have taken on his grace, charity, and salvation |
| 4:1-7 | Through Christ we are heirs and sons of God | 1972 | The <i>New Law</i> is called a "Law of Love" because our love will help us act rightly |
| 4:4-5 | Jesus, born under the law, of a woman is the Son of God | 422 | Jesus Christ is the only Son of God |
| 4:4 | In the fullness of time God sent his son | 484, 488, 527, 531, 580, 702 | When it was time to fulfill His ultimate promise, God sent His only Son to be born of a virgin and become man |
| 4:5-7 | We receive the Holy Spirit and are redeemed | 1265 | Baptism makes us partakers in the divine nature of Christ |
| 4:6 | God sent the Holy Spirit into our hearts calling out "Abba, Father" | 683, 689, 693, 742, 1695, 2766 | God the Holy Spirit dwells within us and speaks to us and leads us to righteousness |
| 4:19 | Paul is anguished until Christ is formed in each of the Galatians | 526, 562, 793 | We must strive to resemble Christ until He is fully "formed" in us |
| 4:21-31 | We are children of the promise not of The Law | 1972 | The <i>New Law</i> is called a "Law of Love" and the "Law of Freedom" because our love will help us act rightly |
| 4:26 | The Jerusalem above is our mother | 757 | This is the Church, Christ's bride |
| 5:1 | Christ has set us free | 1741, 1748 | Christ has set us free from sin that held us in the bondage of slavery |
| 5:3 | Each who is circumcised must obey whole Law | 578 | Only Jesus was perfect and could obey the whole Law. Everyone else who depended on the Law for salvation would sin. |
| 5:6 | In Christ only faith expressed through love counts | 162, 1814 | Faith is a free gift from God and it works through charity |
| 5:16-25 | Live by the Spirit to avoid the desires of the sinful nature | 2744, 2819, 2515 | There is a battle between flesh and Spirit. Pray and let the Spirit guide our behavior |
| 5:19-21 | Acts of sinful nature are obvious | 1470, 1852, 2113, 736, 1108, 1695, 2345, 2515, 2543, 2555, | Those who do these things will not inherit the Kingdom of God but those who are "in the Spirit" will be saved. The Holy Spirit is especially present in the Sacraments |
| 6:2 | Carry each other's burdens to fulfill the law of Christ | 1642, 2030 | We are called to community and the Sacraments |
| 6:15 | Obedience to the Law means nothing – conversion of the heart is everything | 1214 | We become "new creatures" in Baptism to share in Christ's resurrection |