

# **GALATIANS - A STUDY GUIDE**

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## **THE CENTRAL QUESTION:**

### **What does this book/story say to us about God?**

This question may be broken down further as follows:

- a. Why did God do it/allow it?
  - b. Why did He record it for our study?
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1. What picture of God would you have if all you had was the book of Galatians? Or only the writings of Paul? What do we know about the churches of Galatia? What other New Testament books were written about the same time? What other book seems to talk about many of the same subjects? What was happening in Galatia that led to the writing of this book? How do you suppose Paul found out about it?
2. Do you think the false teachers whom Paul referred to (Galatians 1:7; 3:1; 4:17; 5:7,12) knew Paul personally? Where do you think they came from? (Acts 15:5) What kind of people were they? What do you think was attractive about what they were preaching? Why would anybody want to return to the legalistic and ceremonial requirements of the Jews? What were those false teachers saying about Paul and about what it meant to be a Christian?
3. How could Paul be so confident about his version of the gospel that he could say the following?  

We have said it before, and now I say it again: if anyone preaches to you a gospel that is different from the one you accepted, may he be condemned to hell! (Galatians 1:9, *GNB*)

Is it possible for us today to be that confident about our understanding of the gospel? What did Paul mean when he said "gospel"? What do you mean when you say gospel? Did Paul lose his temper in this passage? Is it ever justified for Christians to use such language?
4. Could you stand in the pulpit and preach a sermon and at the end say, "If anyone disagrees with what I have just preached, may he be condemned to hell"? (Galatians 1:8,9) What would you do if your pastor did this? In Romans 14:5-10, Paul seemed to be so gracious in allowing differences of opinion. Why would he not extend the same courtesy to the people who come with a different gospel?
5. If an angel appeared and said he had come from heaven to bring us the "good news," should we hesitate at all in accepting what he had to say? (Galatians 1:8,9) How could he possibly be wrong? (2 Corinthians 11:13-15) What criteria would you set up to determine what is the real gospel or good news? Where did Paul learn his version of the good news?
6. Is God able to foreknow enough about even our moral choices that He could know that Paul would do what he did even before he was born? (Galatians 1:15)
7. What changed Paul from being the foremost proponent of Judaism and a strict supporter of the ceremonial requirements of the law to being a Christian apostle who could speak so strongly against those requirements and emphasize faith? Where do you think that change first began to take place? (Acts 7:58-8:1) On that occasion, what happened so that "His (Stephen's) face looked like the face of an angel"? (Acts 6:15)
8. Did Paul have adequate respect for the church leaders? How could he say, "But those who seemed to be the leaders—I say this because it makes no difference to me what they were . . ."? (Galatians 2:6, *GNB*) Would you feel comfortable speaking like that about your pastor or the conference leaders?
9. How could Paul rebuke Peter "in front of them all"? (Galatians 2:14) Is this the way a real Christian should act? How did Peter react? How did he feel about Paul later? (2 Peter 3:15) Is there ever a time for us to stand up and "call sin by its right name"? How would you know when

it is right to do that?

10. Could you write out your understanding of the good news or gospel in a paragraph or two? What are the essential truths that would have to be included? Does Paul say, in Galatians, what he believed the good news was? Did he describe it in any of his other books?
11. Why did Paul go to Jerusalem and explain his gospel to the church leaders? (Galatians 2:1-3) Did he want their agreement? Or, did he want to make sure he had the “good news” straight? Did he want to win them to the same viewpoint? Were they having troubles with the gospel at headquarters?
12. What do you think led Paul to raise the central question in the book of Galatians, “Why then the law?” or “What was the purpose of the law?” (Galatians 3:19) Do we know the answer today?
13. If the truth is supposed to make us free, (John 8:32) why **does** God make so much use of law? In 1888, Seventh-day Adventists held a General Conference in Minneapolis, Minnesota at which this was the central question. At that time, the General Conference president, Elder G. I. Butler, said it was the most controversial issue ever to be discussed among Seventh-day Adventists. Ellen White had apparently summarized the truth back in 1870. (See 1SP 261-265) We are still discussing it. Does this mean Paul did not answer the question adequately? Why do you think the delegates at that 1888 conference spent most of their time arguing, not about the main question, but about “which law was added, the moral (or Ten Commandment) law or the ceremonial law”? What does it mean to say, “The truth will set you free”? (John 8:32) How can the truth set someone free?
14. What did Paul mean when he said, “The law was in charge of us until Christ came” (or, “to bring us to Christ”)? (Galatians 3:24, *GNB*) What is implied in this verse about the purpose of the law?
15. What is implied by Paul’s words in Galatians 3:28 about how Christians should relate to each other? What do you think Paul’s Judaizing opponents thought of this verse?
16. Why had Paul become so opposed to circumcision? Was he himself not circumcised? How could he possibly say what he did in Galatians 5:12?
17. When someone is fully a Christian, is he not supposed to be “controlled by the Spirit”? If so, why did Paul write that the “Spirit produces . . . self-control”? (Galatians 5:22,23, *GNB*) As we grow to be more and more like Christ, (1 Corinthians 11:1) will we have more “self-control” or less?
18. In the book of Galatians, Paul talks a great deal about freedom. What do you think he meant by that? How free does God really want us to be? What is the relationship between freedom and consequences? Why did Paul say, “A person will reap exactly what he plants”? (Galatians 6:7, *GNB*) Is it safe to allow a two-year-old to do whatever he wants?
19. Why do you think Paul said, “See what big letters I make as I write to you now with my own hand!”? (Galatians 6:11, *GNB*) Didn’t he write all of his letters? Could this have had anything to do with his poor eyesight which some think was his “thorn in the flesh”? (2 Corinthians 12:7; see Galatians 4:15; compare Romans 16:22)
20. Would you agree with Paul in Galatians 6:15? How many other Christian issues would fall into the same category as circumcision does in this verse? Does *anything* ultimately matter if it does not lead to “being a new creature”?

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