



# *Galatians*

## The Gospel of Grace

An Introduction to the Book of Galatians





## What is Galatians all about?

-Acts 15:1 Some men came down from Judea and *began* teaching the brethren, “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.”

-Many Jewish believers and unbelievers alike held that in addition to faith in Christ, you also needed to be circumcised and follow the Law of Moses for your salvation.

-This didn't come from just the outside world, but from inside the church as well.

-This attack on the gospel is just as prevalent today as it was in the early church.

Gal 1:7 ". . .only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.”

Gal 3:11 Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, “The righteous man shall live by faith.” [Habakkuk 2:4]

**-This is what the Epistle of Galatians is all about!**



In our Introduction we will look at three main points:

## **I. Who Were the Galatian People**

## **II. The Occasion for the Epistle**

## **III. The Characteristics of the Epistle**

### **I. Who Were the Galatian People?**

-In the third century BC Rome had conquered the known world, and the Celtic people from Europe (the Gauls) settled in Asia Minor, now known as Turkey as well as many other areas in the world.

-The Gauls were a tribe of people rather than a nation and were continually in conflict with Rome until 25 BC. One such tribe populated Southern Galatia called the Lycaonians with their own distinct language. We see this in Acts 14:11 “When the crowds saw what Paul had done, they raised their voice in the Lycaonian language. . .”

-In 25 BC Augustus Caesar established a Roman Province in this area.



Ethnic Galatia was founded by Celtic Tribes in the 3rd century BC. The name Galatia comes from the Greek word Gaul.

Political Galatia was established as a province in 25 BC by the Roman Emperor Augustus.



-There has been a controversy as to who the Epistle was written to, and when it was written:

-**Ethnic Galatia** during Paul's third missionary journey in 54-55 AD?

-the **Province of Galatia** in the south, right after the first missionary journey in 48-50 AD?

-There is ample evidence to believe this took place shortly after the first missionary journey, written to the churches in the Province of Galatia in the south.

-Major evidence of this is found in the Epistle itself:

Gal 4:13 "but you know that it was because of a bodily illness that I preached the gospel to you **the first time. . .**"

In addition, Barnabas is mentioned in Gal 2:9 but he was no longer with Paul after the first missionary journey.

-There is **no** biblical evidence that Paul went to any of the churches in Northern Galatia, though he may have.



# Timeline of the Early Church

(All Dates Approximate)

## 33 to 57 AD



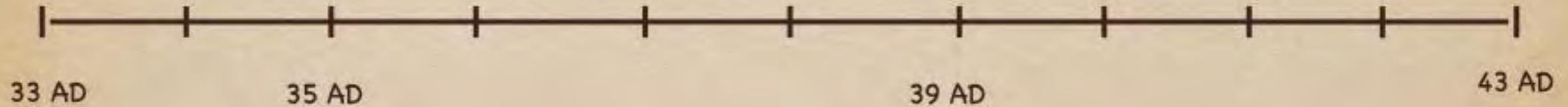
**Matthew Written**  
mid 40s AD

Day of  
Pentecost  
33 AD

Saul's  
Conversion  
35 AD

Peter &  
Cornelius  
39-40 AD

Saul in  
Antioch  
43 AD



**James Written**  
45 AD



**Galatians Written**  
49-51 AD



**1&2 Thessalonians**  
Written 51 AD



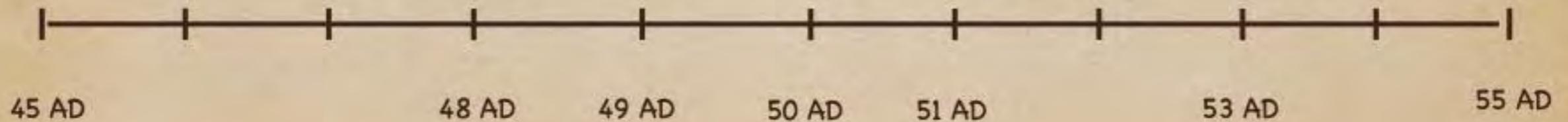
**1&2 Corinthians, Romans**  
Written 56-57 AD ->

1st Missionary  
Journey 47-48 AD

Jerusalem Council  
49-50 AD

2nd Missionary  
Journey 50-52 AD

3rd Missionary  
Journey 53-58 AD





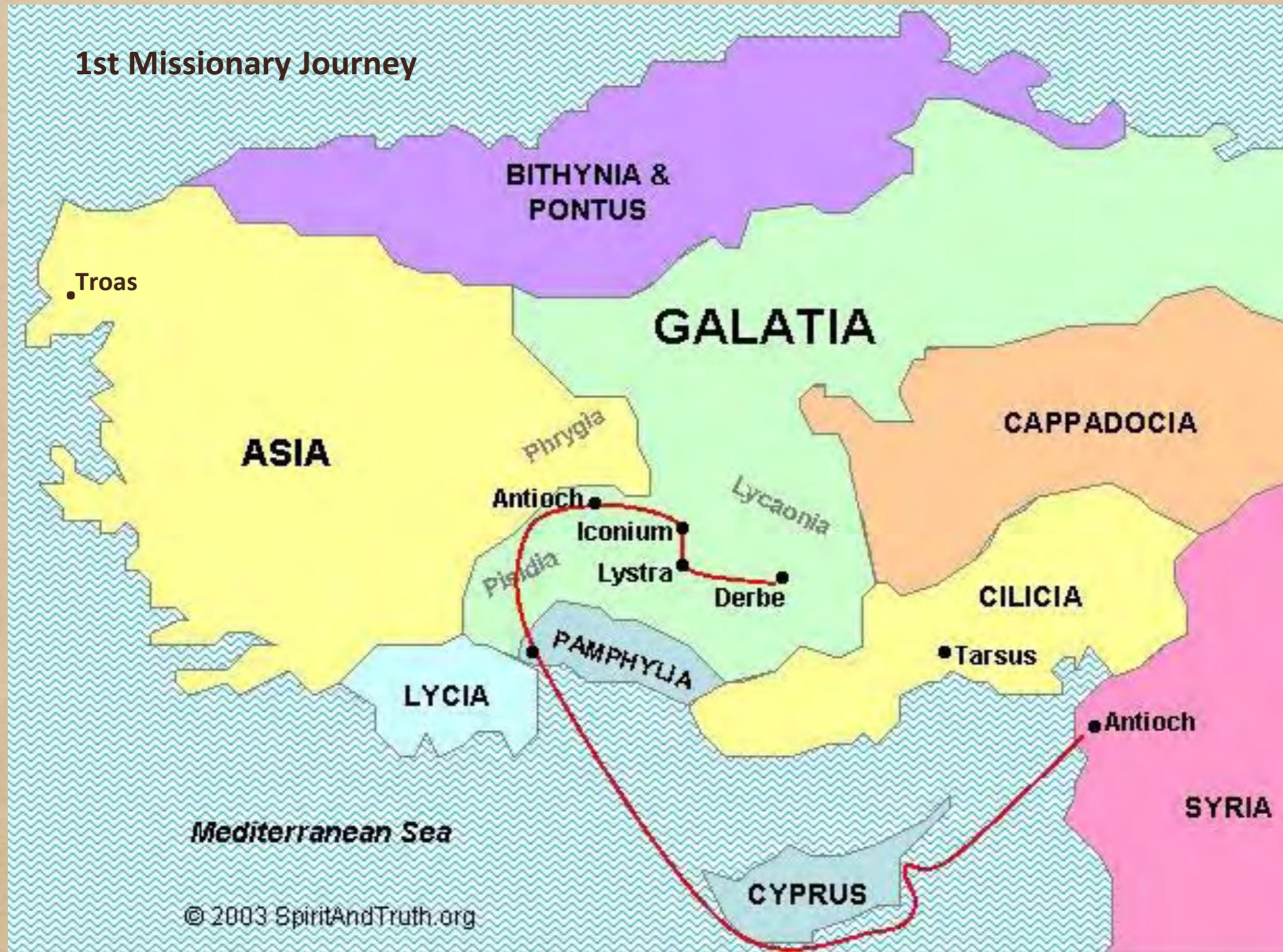
## II. The Occasion of the Epistle

- We saw the who, what and where; Now **Why was Galatians written?**
- A short study of the first missionary Journey in Acts will answer that.
- We will mainly dwell on the **opposition to the Gospel** during the period from Acts 13-15.
- Before Acts 13, Saul had spent a few years in Tarsus before Barnabas retrieved him to help in the ministry in Antioch of Syria.
- Up until now the gospel had spread naturally by the dispersion of Christians from Jerusalem because of persecution. (The Diaspora)
- The church in Antioch, through the power of the H.S., saw the need of an organized Christian outreach:

Acts 13:2,3 “. . .the Holy Spirit said, ‘Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’ Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.”



# 1st Missionary Journey



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-Barnabas and Saul arrive in Pisidian Antioch and the gospel to the Gentiles flourishes:

Acts 13:38-39 Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through Him forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, [both Jew and Gentile] and through Him everyone who believes is freed from all things, from which you could not be freed through the Law of Moses.

Acts 13:45 But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and began contradicting the things spoken by Paul, and were blaspheming.

Acts 13:48-50 When the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed. And the word of the Lord was being spread through the whole region. But the Jews incited the devout women of prominence and the leading men of the city, and instigated a persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their district.

-From here they moved on to the city of Iconium.



-In Iconium there was a large number of Jews and Gentiles who believed:

Acts 14:2 “But the Jews who disbelieved stirred up the minds of the Gentiles and embittered them against the brethren.”

Acts 14:5-7 “And when an attempt was made by both the Gentiles and the Jews with their rulers, to mistreat and to stone them [Paul and Barnabas] , they became aware of it and fled to the cities of Lycaonia, Lystra and Derbe, and the surrounding region; and there they continued to preach the gospel.”

-While in Lystra, Paul was stoned because of his teaching by the Judaizers:

Acts 14:19,20 “...Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having won over the crowds, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead. But while the disciples stood around him, he got up and entered the city. The next day he went away with Barnabas to Derbe.”

-They went back through Lystra, Iconium, and Pisidian Antioch, encouraging the brethren. And ending up at the church in Antioch of Syria.

Acts 14:22 “. . .strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith. . .”



-Paul and Barnabas spent a "long vacation" in Antioch with the disciples.

Acts 14:27 When they had arrived and gathered the church together, they began to report all things that God had done with them and how He had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles. 28 And they spent a long time with the disciples.

-Certain men (Judaizers) came down from Jerusalem teaching a perverted gospel:

Acts 15:1,2 Some men came down from Judea and began teaching the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved." 2 And when Paul and Barnabas had great dissension and debate with them, the brethren determined that Paul and Barnabas and some others of them should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders concerning this issue.

-On the way they went through both Gentile and Jewish areas proclaiming salvation for all:

Acts 15:3 Therefore, being sent on their way by the church, they were passing through both Phoenicia and Samaria, describing in detail the conversion of the Gentiles, and were bringing great joy to all the brethren.



-When they arrived in Jerusalem there were certain believers who insisted “on keeping the Law” for salvation in addition to Faith.

Acts 15:5 But some of the sect of the Pharisees who had believed stood up, saying, “It is necessary to circumcise them and to direct them to observe the Law of Moses.”

**-This led to ‘The Council at Jerusalem’. A turning point in the History of the church and the main reason for the Epistle to the Galatians.**

-Even Peter was finally fully persuaded by this time of Justification by Faith alone apart from the Law.

Acts 15:11 But we [Jews] believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they [Gentiles] also are.”

-James, the head of the Jerusalem church, had a letter written to all the brethren declaring the unity of the council, concerning Justification by Faith alone.

Acts 15:24-27 “. . . it seemed good to us, **having become of one mind**, to select men to send to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.



-Acts 15:30 So when they went away, they went down to Antioch; and having gathered the congregation together, they delivered the letter. When they read it, they rejoiced because of its encouragement.

-Throughout the first missionary journey Paul and Barnabas were criticized, persecuted, and condemned for evangelizing the Gentiles. At one point Paul was stoned, dragged out of the city, and left for dead.

-The Judaizers, as they were called, demanded that if the gentiles wanted salvation, they would also have to be circumcised and follow the Jewish Laws.

-Even after “The Council at Jerusalem” Judaizers continued their false teaching.

-This was very prevalent in the Galatian churches.

-Paul, through the power of the H.S., was compelled to write to those believers in Southern Galatia. This would be the Epistle to the Galatians.

Gal 1:6,7 I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.



### III. The Characteristics of the Epistle

-Which brings us to this last point.

-In the next several weeks we'll examine Galatians verse by verse, but here are **four** characteristics which makes this Epistle unique.

#### A. Paul shows his Justifiable Anger

-Both Paul and the Gospel were continually attacked in Galatia during his ministry there.

-Not only from the unbelieving Jews, but also from his fellow believers.

-That attack continued in Galatia, even after Paul had returned to Antioch.

-Some of his statements are pretty condemning:

Gal 1:6,7 I am amazed that you are so **quickly deserting** Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.



Gal 1:8,9 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, **he is to be accursed!** As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, **he is to be accursed!**

Gal 2:11 But when Cephas [Peter] came to Antioch, **I opposed him to his face,** because he stood condemned.

Gal 3:1 **“You foolish Galatians,** who has bewitched you. . .”

Gal 5:12 I wish that those who are troubling you would even **mutilate themselves.**

Gal 6:17 From now on **let no one cause trouble for me,** for I bear on my body the brand-marks of Jesus.

## **B. Paul’s Defense of His Apostleship**

-In many of Paul’s Epistles he simply states, he is an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God.



-Not so in Galatians – “An apostle (not from men nor through the agency of man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead).”

-Paul spends 28 verses in Galatians defending his apostleship. 1:11-2:14

-Why was this necessary?

1. There were those who followed Paul from city to city in Galatia condemning him and “Judaizing” the believers.
2. They attacked not only his message, salvation by faith alone, but also his authority as an apostle.
3. Although **not** one of the original 12, he received his apostleship by direct revelation from Christ during his three years in Damascus.

Gal 1:11,12 For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

-This was Paul’s first Epistle, and he had to establish both his message and his authority.



Here is an easy way to remember the order of Paul's letter:

### **Timeline of Paul's Epistles** (dates approximate)

1<sup>st</sup> Missionary Journey 47-48 AD

1 book – Galatians

2<sup>nd</sup> Missionary journey 50-52 AD

2 books – 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians

3<sup>rd</sup> Missionary Journey 53-58 AD

3 books – 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians, Romans

4<sup>th</sup> trip, Imprisonment in Rome 60-63 AD

4 books – Philemon, Colossians, Ephesians & Philippians

Later, after the last chapter of Acts 64-68 AD

Last 3 Books – 1st Timothy, Titus, & 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy



## C. Galatians as a Precursor to Romans

-Galatians was written first and then about ten years later Romans reflects a much more detailed teaching on what we find in Galatians.

-You might call Galatians a 'Mini-Romans'.

-Here are just a few similarities between the two books:

1. Galatians 3:6 and Romans 4:3 – “Abraham believed God and it was reckoned (credited) to him as righteousness.”
2. Galatians 3:8 and Romans 4:16,17 Through Abraham all the nations will be blessed. Both Jew and Gentile.
3. Galatians 3:11 and Romans 3:21 Justification is apart from the Law.
4. Galatians 5 and Romans 6 declare the liberty and freedom we have 'In Christ'.

-There are many other similarities between the two Epistles.



## D. The Liberty that we have in Christ

-In chapters 5 and 6 of Galatians we find the best description of the freedom that comes with being 'In Christ'

Gal 5:1 "It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore, keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery."

-We are no longer slaves to the old sin nature, but 'In Christ' serve one another in love. vs 13

**-In these last two chapters we are not only saved by faith alone, but we are encouraged to live by faith alone.**

Gal 5:5 "For we through the Spirit, by faith, are waiting for the hope of righteousness. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love."

-This is only accomplished through faith by the power of the Holy Spirit.



# THREE STAGES OF SALVATION

## Phase One



**Justification**

## Phase Two

**Experiential  
Sanctification**

## Phase Three



**Glorification**

**Saved From the  
Penalty of Sin**

**Saved from the  
Power of Sin**

**Saved from the  
Presence of Sin**

**“you were saved”**

**“you are being saved”**

**“you will be saved”**



Gal 5:25 “If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit”

- Not only does Galatians warn us about Judaizers, but also Legalism in the Church.
- The primary definition of Legalism in Galatians is working for our salvation.
- But a secondary definition is following a bunch of rules to gain favor with God after Salvation.
- This is what Chapters 5 and 6 are all about.

Gal 6:14-16 But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been **crucified to me, and I to the world**. For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, **but a new creation**. And those who will walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.

**If we live by the Spirit, through faith, let us also walk by the Spirit.**



## Next week we will do a flyover of the whole Epistle

- Before we examine the individual verses, we need to look at the book as a whole, as well as the paragraphs and sentences.
- In Botany, to identify the leaves, we need to examine the bark, and the tree, as well as the whole forest.
- The phrase, "**You can't see the forest for the trees**" is especially important in Bible study.
- The number one rule in Bible study--

### **Context – Context - Context**

- If you take the **'text'** out of **'context'**;  
you end up with a **'con-job'**.
- The more you're familiar with the whole book, the easier it is to understand the individual passages.



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