

# Galatians *Freedom in Christ*

## 1. Introducing Galatians: Who, What, When, Why? *Galatians 1.1-10.*

**Aim:** To introduce people to the Galatian churches, their struggles, and what Paul's letter to them is addressing. To look at context and cultural background to help 'set the scene'.

**To start with:**

**What do we know?**

- 'Pin the Galatia on the Map'. Divide into pairs or small groups, each with a copy of Map 1. Get them to decide where they think Galatia was, and mark it on their map. Compare answers and show them Map 2 with the correct position.

*then*

- Using a large piece of paper write down everything people know about the letter to the Galatians.

*(N.B. It may be that people don't know much at all - but that's ok - hopefully it will inspire them that they are going to learn some things this term! You could ask them WHY they feel they know so little, which may lead to an interesting conversation about how people view the Bible in general)*

**Engaging with the text:**

**Information for Leaders:** (Use as much or as little of this as you want during the study) - Galatia was a province in Asia Minor (Modern-Day Turkey), and was one of the places Jewish settlers had gone to live after the Diaspora (Exile). During Paul's first missionary journey, he visited Galatia and converted both Jewish and Gentile inhabitants of the area, starting a number of churches. However the Galatian believers were definitely a religious minority and it would seem that traditional Judaism was a powerful force in the church.

### 1. Read Galatians 1.1-10

- What do you make of Paul's tone and what he's saying?
- What do you think has happened to make him write so strongly?
- Having considered that, read v1-5 again. Why does Paul deliberately give **this** greeting? (What is he trying to say do you think?)

2. If you had to summarise the gospel, what would you say were the core truths, the absolute non-negotiables of the Christian faith? (You could ask people to work this out in groups and write a one sentence summary.)

3. When have you had an experience where someone presented you with an 'alternative gospel'? (i.e. something that is close to the true gospel but not quite right somehow.) What did it look like, and what did you think about it? (E.g. Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons...)

As the letter goes on it becomes clear that some outsiders, probably Jewish Christians, have come to the churches in Galatia to tell them a different gospel - that they must be circumcised and obey the Law of Moses in order to become 'proper Christians'. Paul vociferously reminds them that being under Christ means being set

4. What did Paul seem to think was at stake if this 'alternative gospel' got hold of people? What effects do you think it would have had?

5. Paul argues that Jesus sets people free, but that false thinking enslaves us (Gal 2.4)

- In what ways have you experienced freedom as a follower of Jesus?
- What sort of 'false thinking' do you think can be common in the western church today? And what affects do you think those things can have in enslaving Christians?

6. As Christians, it can be tempting to either refuse to consider the ideas of those from other church traditions or to unthinkingly adopt them. How can we practically remain open to other Christians' opinions and ideas, whilst remaining true to the fundamentals of the gospel? How do we weigh those things up?