

Dr. Dave Mathewson, New Testament Literature, Session 19, Galatians Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Mathewson, NT Literature, Session 19, Galatians, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Mathewson's lecture provides an overview of the book of Galatians, exploring Paul's arguments against the Judaizers who insisted that Gentile Christians needed to adhere to Mosaic Law. He examines Paul's rhetorical strategies in the letter, considering whether it follows Greco-Roman speech patterns, although Dr. Mathewson is skeptical that this was Paul's intent. The lecture highlights how Paul defends his apostleship by emphasizing he received his gospel directly from Jesus Christ, yet ensured his gospel aligned with the Jerusalem apostles. **Dr. Mathewson explains Paul's emphasis on salvation through faith in Christ, as opposed to works of the law, analyzing the reasons for Paul's conviction and contrasting traditional interpretations with the new perspective on Paul.** The lecture discusses how Paul uses the Galatians' own experiences with the Holy Spirit, Old Testament references, and cultural metaphors to argue that the law's role was temporary and has been fulfilled in Christ, so the Galatians did not need to submit to the law of Moses.

2. 11 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Mathewson, NT Literature, Session 19 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Major Prophets → Daniel).



**Mathewson_NTLit_S
ession 19.mp3**

3. Briefing Document: Mathewson, NT Literature, Session 19, Galatians

Okay, here's a briefing document summarizing the main themes and ideas from Dr. Mathewson's lecture on Galatians:

Briefing Document: Galatians (Lecture 19)

Main Themes:

- **The Central Conflict: Faith vs. Works of the Law (Mosaic Law):** The core issue in Galatians is Paul's forceful argument against the "Judaizers," Jewish Christians who were insisting that Gentile Christians needed to adhere to the Mosaic Law (circumcision, Sabbath, food laws) *in addition to* faith in Jesus for salvation. Paul argues that faith in Jesus Christ alone is sufficient for justification.
- "So, the book of Galatians then will be Paul's attempt to persuade the readers not to follow that course of action and instead to persuade them to trust solely in Jesus Christ."
- **Paul's Apostolic Authority:** A significant portion of Galatians (especially chapters 1-2) addresses the challenge to Paul's credentials as an apostle. He defends his direct commission from Jesus Christ, independent of human authority, while simultaneously demonstrating his gospel's alignment with that of the Jerusalem apostles.
- "Most likely, what had happened is that some of the Judaizers were actually calling into question Paul's apostolic credentials, and saying either that this guy isn't a true apostle, he's simply a self-appointed apostle or something like that, or if he is an apostle, he's kind of a renegade, he's actually not in line with the true Jerusalem apostles."
- "Paul, an apostle, not by human decision, nor by human will, but by commission from the Lord Jesus Christ."
- He has to "steer a course, between showing his independence of, but also his dependence on, the Jerusalem apostles."
- **Two Spheres of Influence:** Paul constructs a contrast between two realms or spheres: one dominated by "this present evil age," sin, death, and "the flesh," and the other characterized by life, righteousness, and the Holy Spirit experienced

through salvation in Christ. Paul places the *law* in the first category because it doesn't ultimately have the power to overcome sin and death.

- "Paul constructs another sphere or another realm of power or control or influence that he says is characterized by life and righteousness and by God's Holy Spirit, a realm in which we experience the blessings of salvation in Christ."
- "Paul also will place the law in this category, not because he thinks it's sinful or bad, but simply because it does not have the ability ultimately to overcome this situation."
- "Jesus Christ has rescued you from the present evil age...If they have already been delivered from the present evil age...then the law must no longer have authority over them."
- **The Temporary Nature of the Law:** Paul argues that the Mosaic Law had a specific, temporary role in God's plan, acting as a "disciplinarian" or "prison guard" until the coming of Christ. With Christ's arrival, the law's primary function as part of the Mosaic Covenant has ceased.
- "The law was also our disciplinarian until Christ came that we might be justified."
- "The Mosaic law only played a temporary role until the coming of Jesus Christ."

Important Ideas & Facts:

- **Southern Galatia Theory:** Mathewson believes that Galatians was written to churches in the southern part of the Roman province of Galatia.
- **Exam Information:** There is an exam coming up and there will be an optional extra credit review session.
- **Rhetorical Speech:** Some scholars argue that Galatians is structured like a typical first-century Greco-Roman rhetorical speech, with elements like an *exhortium*, *narratio*, *propositio*, *probatio*, and *exhortatio*. Mathewson is skeptical of this claim, arguing it is more likely a typical first-century letter.
- **Paul's Pre-Conversion Life:** Paul emphasizes his zealous adherence to Judaism before his conversion to underscore that his embrace of Christianity was not a gradual shift but a radical, divinely initiated change.
- "Paul was completely happy with his life in Judaism...he was even...persecuting the church and putting Christians to death out of zeal for the law and for Judaism."

- **Justification by Faith:** Paul makes the explicit statement that justification comes through faith in Jesus Christ, not through "works of the law." This echoes a major theme in Romans.
- "We know that a person is justified not by works of the law...but through faith in Jesus Christ."
- **"New Perspective on Paul":** Mathewson discusses the "new perspective" (or "new look") on Paul, contrasting it with Martin Luther's traditional interpretation. Luther saw Paul as opposing legalism (earning God's favor through works), while the new perspective (Sanders, Dunn, N.T. Wright) sees Paul as challenging Jewish exclusivism/nationalism (restricting salvation to those who live as Jews under the Mosaic Law).
- "The new look suggests the main issue is who are the true people of God? Is it only those who identify with Israel and with the Jews via the law, or can Gentiles become God's people simply by faith and without living life as a Jew?"
- **The Law as a Curse:** Paul states, "For all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse, for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who does not observe and obey all the things written in the book of the law.'" He argues that because no one can perfectly keep the law, attempting to be justified by it leads to condemnation.
- **The Role of the Holy Spirit:** Paul appeals to the Galatians' experience of receiving the Holy Spirit as evidence that they are already God's people under the New Covenant, making adherence to the Mosaic Law unnecessary. The Holy Spirit is proof that they are truly God's people.
- "Did you receive the Spirit by doing the works of the law or by believing what you heard?"

- **Abrahamic Covenant:** Paul emphasizes that God's promises of salvation were made to Abraham *before* the Mosaic Law, and that these promises are fulfilled in Christ. The law was a temporary addition, not the primary means of accessing God's blessings.
- "The law, which came 430 years later, does not annul the covenant previously made by God."

Important Considerations:

- Paul is not suggesting that Christians are free from all law or moral responsibility. He is specifically addressing freedom from the Mosaic Law as a binding covenant. The lecture indicates that the question of what role the Law of Moses plays in the life of Christians will be discussed in later sections.

4. Study Guide: Mathewson, NT Literature, Session 19, Galatians

Galatians Study Guide

Quiz

Answer the following questions in 2-3 sentences each.

1. Who were the Judaizers, and what were they teaching the Galatian Christians?
2. According to Mathewson, what are the two conceptual spheres or realms of influence that Paul contrasts in Galatians?
3. What is the "exhortium" in the context of Greco-Roman rhetoric, and how have some scholars applied this concept to the structure of Galatians?
4. Why does Paul emphasize that he received his apostleship "not by human commission" in Galatians 1:1?
5. What is the significance of Paul reminding the Galatians that Jesus Christ "gave himself for our sins to set us free from the present evil age" in Galatians 1:4?
6. According to Mathewson, what two things was Paul trying to demonstrate in Galatians chapters 1 and 2?
7. How does the "new perspective" on Paul's view of the law differ from the traditional (Lutheran) view?
8. According to Mathewson, why does Paul cite Deuteronomy 27:26 ("Cursed is everyone who does not observe and obey all the things written in the book of the law") in Galatians 3:10?
9. What does Paul mean when he says that "the law was our disciplinarian until Christ came" (Galatians 3:24)?
10. Why does Paul appeal to the Galatians' experience of receiving the Holy Spirit (Galatians 3:2-5) in his argument against the Judaizers?

Quiz Answer Key

1. The Judaizers were likely Jewish Christians who were teaching Gentile Christians that faith in Jesus was not enough for salvation; they also needed to adhere to the Law of Moses (including circumcision, Sabbath observance, and food laws).

They believed that Gentiles needed to become Jewish in practice in order to be fully accepted into God's people.

2. Paul contrasts life under the control of the "present evil age," characterized by sin, death, and the "flesh," with life under the influence of God's Holy Spirit, characterized by life, righteousness, and the blessings of salvation in Christ. The Law, Paul argues, falls into the sphere of the present evil age because it lacks the power to overcome sin and death.
3. The *exhortium* is a statement of the case and a statement of the issue or problem, found at the beginning of a Greco-Roman rhetorical speech. Some scholars have identified Galatians 1:6-11 as equivalent to the *exhortium* in a first-century Greco-Roman speech.
4. Paul emphasizes that he received his apostleship "not by human commission" to establish his authority and credibility as an apostle, independent of any human influence or endorsement. This assertion is important because it demonstrates that his gospel came directly from Jesus Christ, not from any human authority, particularly those in Jerusalem.
5. The reminder that Jesus Christ "gave himself for our sins to set us free from the present evil age" reinforces Paul's argument that the Galatians have already been delivered from the realm in which the law holds sway. By emphasizing the new reality inaugurated by Christ's sacrifice and resurrection, Paul is setting the stage to argue that the law no longer has authority over them.
6. In Galatians chapters 1 and 2, Paul is trying to demonstrate both his independence from human authority in receiving the gospel and his agreement with the Jerusalem apostles. He needs to show that his gospel came directly from Jesus Christ, not from any human source, while simultaneously proving that the Jerusalem apostles accepted and endorsed his message.
7. The "new perspective" argues that Paul was not primarily concerned with legalism (earning God's favor through good works) but with nationalism or exclusivism, i.e., the idea that salvation was restricted to those who lived according to the Jewish law. This view suggests that Paul was challenging the Judaizers' attempt to limit belonging to God's people by requiring Gentiles to adopt Jewish practices.
8. Paul cites Deuteronomy 27:26 to emphasize the high standard of obedience required by the law, and the curse that comes upon those who fail to keep it

perfectly. Paul's citation implies that no one can attain justification through the law because everyone falls short of perfect obedience.

9. When Paul says that "the law was our disciplinarian until Christ came," he means that the law served as a temporary guardian and guide, much like a babysitter, for God's people until they reached maturity in Christ. The law's role was to keep them in line and prepare them for the coming of Christ, but it was not intended to be a permanent means of justification.
10. Paul appeals to the Galatians' experience of receiving the Holy Spirit to demonstrate that they had already received the sign of God's approval and the blessings of the new covenant through faith in Christ, not through adherence to the law. Their reception of the Spirit serves as evidence that they are already part of God's people, making the Judaizers' demand for adherence to the law unnecessary and contradictory to their own experience.

Essay Questions

1. Explain Paul's attitude toward the law in Galatians, considering both the "traditional" and "new perspective" interpretations. How does Mathewson synthesize these views?
2. Analyze Paul's rhetorical strategy in Galatians 1-2. How does he balance the need to assert his independence as an apostle with the need to demonstrate his alignment with the Jerusalem apostles?
3. Discuss the significance of the "present evil age" concept in Galatians and how Paul argues that Christians have been delivered from it. How does this argument relate to his view of the law?
4. Explain Paul's use of Old Testament references, particularly Abraham, in Galatians 3-4. How does he reinterpret these texts to support his argument that justification comes through faith in Christ, not through adherence to the law?
5. Examine the cultural metaphors (prison guard, disciplinarian) that Paul uses in Galatians to describe the role of the law. How do these metaphors contribute to his argument that the law was only temporary?

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Apostle:** A messenger or envoy, specifically one of the original twelve disciples of Jesus or someone commissioned to spread the gospel.
- **Circumcision:** The surgical removal of the foreskin of the penis; in Judaism, a sign of the covenant between God and Abraham and his descendants.
- **Epistle:** A letter, especially a formal or didactic one.
- **Exhortatio:** In Greco-Roman rhetoric, the exhortations or commands to persuade or convince the readers of the course of action they should take in the future.
- **Exhortium:** In Greco-Roman rhetoric, a statement of the case and a statement of the issue or problem.
- **Flesh:** In Pauline theology, not merely physical flesh but the human nature that is susceptible to sin and under the influence of the present evil age.
- **Gentiles:** People who are not Jewish.
- **Greco-Roman Rhetoric:** The art of persuasive speaking and writing as developed in ancient Greece and Rome, with specific structures and techniques for constructing arguments.
- **Judaizers:** Jewish Christians who insisted that Gentile Christians needed to follow Jewish law, including circumcision and dietary laws, to be truly saved.
- **Justification:** Being declared righteous in God's sight; in Pauline theology, received through faith in Jesus Christ, not through works of the law.
- **Law of Moses:** The laws and commandments given to Moses by God, found in the first five books of the Old Testament (the Pentateuch or Torah).
- **Legalism:** The belief that one can earn salvation or God's favor by strictly adhering to laws and performing good works.
- **Mosaic Covenant:** The covenant that God made with the nation of Israel through Moses, characterized by the giving of the Law.
- **Narratio:** In Greco-Roman rhetoric, a narration of the main thesis and the main facts of the case.
- **New Covenant:** The covenant established by God through Jesus Christ, based on grace and forgiveness rather than adherence to the Law of Moses.

- **New Perspective (on Paul):** A reinterpretation of Paul's theology, arguing that he was primarily concerned with nationalism and exclusivism (restricting belonging to God's people to being a Jew and living life under Judaism) rather than legalism.
- **Present Evil Age:** The current period of time characterized by sin, death, and the influence of evil forces, from which Christians are delivered through Christ.
- **Probatio:** In Greco-Roman rhetoric, the marshalling of supports and proofs for your position.
- **Propositio:** In Greco-Roman rhetoric, a summary of the points of agreement in the case, and primarily the thesis that is going to be argued.
- **Rhetoric:** The art of effective or persuasive speaking or writing.
- **Works of the Law:** Actions or deeds performed in obedience to the Law of Moses, often debated in Pauline theology regarding their role in justification.

5. FAQs on Mathewson, NT Literature, Session 19, Galatians, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions About Galatians

- **What was the primary issue Paul addressed in the book of Galatians?**
- Paul wrote to the Galatian churches to address the influence of "Judaizers," who were Jewish Christians teaching that Gentile Christians needed to adhere to the Mosaic Law (circumcision, Sabbath observance, food laws) in addition to their faith in Jesus Christ. Paul vehemently opposed this, arguing that faith in Christ alone is sufficient for justification and salvation.
- **How does Paul contrast the "present evil age" with life in Christ in Galatians?**
- Paul presents a contrast between two spheres of influence. One sphere is dominated by "this present evil age," characterized by sin, death, and "the flesh" (human weakness susceptible to sin). The other sphere is defined by life, righteousness, and the Holy Spirit, representing the realm of salvation experienced through Christ. Paul argues that the Galatians have already been rescued from the former and now belong to the latter. He places the law in the former sphere, not because it is evil, but because it lacks the power to overcome sin and death.
- **What are the key elements of a Greco-Roman rhetorical speech, and how do some scholars believe Galatians aligns with this structure?**
- Greco-Roman rhetorical speeches often followed a specific pattern:
- **Exhortium:** An introduction stating the case and problem.
- **Narratio:** A narration setting out the facts.
- **Propositio:** A summary of points of agreement and the thesis to be argued.
- **Probatio:** The presentation of proofs and arguments.
- **Exhortatio:** Exhortations or commands to persuade the audience to a certain course of action.
- Some scholars argue that Galatians follows this structure, with sections of the letter corresponding to each element. However, it's also argued that Galatians is just a typical letter, and Paul is not intentionally following a specific structure.

- **Why does Paul recount his early life in Judaism and his conversion in the opening chapters of Galatians?**
- Paul recounts his past to defend his apostolic authority and the validity of his gospel. He emphasizes that his apostleship and message came directly from Jesus Christ, not from any human authority. His extreme zeal for Judaism *before* his conversion demonstrates that he wasn't predisposed to accept a gospel that deviated from traditional Jewish practices. He claims that he did not meet with anyone in Jerusalem before preaching, further indicating he received his gospel without human influence.
- **How does Paul demonstrate both his independence from and acceptance by the Jerusalem apostles?**
- Paul asserts that his gospel was received directly from Christ, independent of human influence, to establish his authority. Simultaneously, he acknowledges that the Jerusalem apostles (Peter, James, and John) eventually accepted and affirmed his gospel, thus showing that his message was not a perversion or deviation from the accepted truth. This balancing act aims to assure the Galatians that his gospel, focused on justification by faith, was valid and endorsed by key figures.
- **What is Paul's central argument for why justification cannot come through "works of the law?"**
- Paul argues against justification through "works of the law" because he believes perfect adherence to the law is impossible for humans due to sinfulness. Additionally, he contends that the Mosaic Law and Covenant were temporary, intended to function until the arrival of Christ. With Christ's coming and the establishment of a new covenant, the law's primary function has ceased. He says that "all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse, for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who does not observe and obey all the things written in the book of the law'" (Galatians 3:10).
- **According to Paul in Galatians, what role does the Holy Spirit play in demonstrating that believers do not need to submit to the law of Moses?**
- Paul argues that the Galatians received the Holy Spirit not through obedience to the law, but through believing the gospel message. The Holy Spirit is the sign of the New Covenant promised in the Old Testament. So they're not justified by faith *plus* obedience to the law, but by faith *alone*.

- **How does Paul use the Old Testament and cultural metaphors to argue for the temporary nature of the law?**
- Paul interprets the Old Testament to show that the promises made to Abraham preceded the Mosaic Law. He argues that the law was a temporary measure, like a prison guard (restricting and protecting until Christ's arrival) or a disciplinarian (supervising and guiding a child until adulthood). These metaphors illustrate that the law had a specific, limited purpose that has been fulfilled in Christ.