

Gleanings from Galatians

Many scholarly books have been written explaining and amplifying the apostle Paul's message to the churches in the Roman province of Galatia. The letter to the churches in Galatia deals with such subjects as Christian liberty, justification by faith, and the purpose of the Law of Moses. My attempt to write an article based on Galatians has similarities to the practice of "gleaning" in the law of Moses. Under the law of Moses, God permitted the poor and disadvantaged to gather the leftovers from the fields and vineyards after the owner had taken the bulk of the harvest. With that thought in mind, the following are my gleanings from this somewhat unique and difficult book.

These churches in Galatia were established by Paul and Barnabas during their first missionary journey sometime between 46 and 48 AD. The letter was written between 49 and 57 AD, but most seem to think a date between 49 and 53 is most likely. These Galatian brethren had accepted the message of some Jewish Christians who taught that the Gentile Christians needed to be circumcised and keep the law of Moses. The apostle Paul was taken back by the fact that they had fallen away from the God's word in such a short time.

A lesson we should learn from this letter is that a congregation can fall away in a very short time if we do not diligently follow the scriptures. Apparently, the Judaizing teachers were so persuasive some congregations had also instituted Jewish festival days and ceremonies (Gal. 4:10). We must be like the brethren in Berea, who searched the scriptures daily (Acts 17:11).

Another lesson becomes very clear from even a casual reading of Galatians. If the brethren add or subtract from God's word in worship and/or practice, the result is a perverted message and not the gospel of Christ. This principle was firmly established long before when God dealt with Nadab and Abihu for offering profane fire unto the Lord (Lev. 10:1). Likely, most of us know of congregations of the Lord's church who have done in principle what the churches in Galatia did: teaching and practicing a different gospel.

We must collectively and individually *Examine ourselves as to whether we are in the faith. Prove ourselves* (II Cor. 10:5a). In the last chapter of Galatians, Paul recognizes we may fail and need our brethren to help us remain faithful. He wrote, *Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted* (Gal. 6:1).

For the elders,
Don Denton