Alright, let’s go ahead and get started. What we’ll do today is move through rather quickly Second Corinthians. We’ll talk a little bit about its background and why it was written and its main theme etc. I won’t go into a lot more detail. This is one of the books we will fly rather high over but with Galatians we’ll dive down and take a closer look as far as what was going on with that book, why it was written and look a couple of the texts in a little more detail.

But let’s open with prayer and then we’ll try to ask the question: why another letter to the Corinthians? Father, thank you for your love for us and so for so graciously revealing yourself to us in the written word so that we have a record that continues to speak to us a written record of your the past revelation of the ongoing revelation to your people as well today. I pray that as a result of this class we’ll be enabled to think more deeply and profoundly about that revelation and its implication for our lives today. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

Alright, we ended the last class period looking at 1 Corinthians in some detail. But we also learned that 1 Corinthians is actually only one letter, at least that we know of, out of at least four that Paul wrote to the city of Corinth. This a city that he visited on one of his missionary journeys that we read about in Acts chapter 18. Paul basically lived in Corinth for about a year and a half and established a church there. Then Paul wrote at least four letters to the Corinthians. Two of them have survived in what we call First and Second Corinthians. We find references to the letters themselves in our First and Second Corinthians, but we no longer have those and for some reason they have not survived.

But why another letter to the Corinthians? So let’s pull out another piece of the early church's mail, that we call 2 Corinthians which we saw technically is Fourth Corinthians.
It's at least the fourth letter that we know Paul wrote to the Corinthians. But why another letter to the Corinthians?

First of all, after First Corinthians apparently many of the Corinthians did respond positively to First Corinthians with all the various instructions that Paul gave to the Corinthians all of them related to how the church had allowed the values and thinking of the secular Corinthian culture to infiltrate the church especially class distinctions and the social elitism and that patron/client relationship etc. Those kinds of social dynamics had crept into the church. Actually they caused a number problems that Paul addresses in the book of 1 Corinthians. So apparently for the most part the Corinthians had responded positively to his letter.

However, in the meantime, Paul received some news that his authority as an apostle had been challenged by some troublemakers in the Corinthian congregation. So after Paul writes 1 Corinthians, and again he's physically separated from the city. Some think Paul actually did make another trip to Corinth that we don't see referred to at this point in Acts. But Paul does receive news that there are some in the city of Corinth, in the church, who are challenging his authority as an apostle. So Paul writes a letter that is often known as the “Painful” or the “Tearful Letter.” In chapter 2 and verse four, Paul says, “For I wrote you out of much distress and anguish of heart and with many tears not to cause you pain but to let you know the abundant love that I have for you.” And if I can back up to verse one: “So I made up my mind not to make you another painful visit.” So you can see that there's a tension between Paul and many in the Corinthian congregation. “For if I caused you pain, who is there to make me glad but the one whom I have pained. And I wrote as I did” referring to this previous letter, probably not First Corinthians but another letter, “I wrote as I did, so that when I came I might not suffer pain from those who should have made me rejoice. For I'm confident about all of you that my joy would be the joy of all of you. For I am with you in much distress and anguish of heart and with many tears.” Many take that as a reference to this “tearful” or “painful” letter that Paul wrote sometime after he wrote 1
Corinthians to respond to the new problem and respond to this challenge to his authority.

Now following that painful letter Paul receives word that many Corinthians have responded to that painful letter and they have actually repented of the way they've been treating Paul. They not have responded appropriately and responded in the way that Paul hoped to this “tearful” letter. However, along with this good news, Paul receives bad news that there are still some in Corinth who are opposing him and his authority as an apostle. In response to this, Paul then writes the book that we know as 2 Corinthians, which technically is at least Fourth Corinthians. Again we know of at least four letters apparently Paul had written and our 2 Corinthians is the fourth of the letters that we know of.

But in response to the fact that many have responded positively to that “tearful” or “painful” letter but there are still some who are opposing him and his authority as an apostle. In response to both of those Paul now will write the letter of 2 Corinthians and send that to the Corinthians to address this issue.

So again hopefully you have caught on by now that the New Testament letters are not purely theological documents. Again at no point do we see Paul simply sitting down and writing an essay or a textbook expressing all his theological thinking. Paul's letters grow out of very pastoral concerns that is Paul is aware of issues and problems that have arisen in these churches he’s planted that we read about in Acts or even a couple churches such as the city of Rome; the letter to the Romans that he did not plant, but still hears of problems or difficulties. Now Paul sits down and writes these letter. So that it is theology that is directed towards a specific purpose and 2 Corinthians clearly is addressed to an important problem or issue that has arisen in the first century city of Corinth.

So what then is the purpose of a 2 Corinthians? Why did Paul write it? Basically Paul writes 2 Corinthians to praise the Corinthians for responding to his letter he had written to them, this “tearful” letter. So he writes to praise those who have responded but he also writes to warn and admonish those who still oppose him. A group of individuals that Paul called “super-apostles” to use an English translation. These super-apostles were
challenging Paul. Paul writes to warn and admonish them concerning the way they were acting. Therefore to re-establish his authority as an apostle, especially to those questioning his apostleship.

One of the issues in 2 Corinthians is the fact that when you read 2 Corinthians carefully there appears to be a rather abrupt change in Paul's attitude and tone. A little over halfway through the letter starting with roughly chapter 10. So chapters 1 through 9 are fairly positive in tone. This is where Paul establishes his authority as an apostle. He reminds them that he is a minister of this new covenant, that we talked a little bit about and in previous sections of the New Testament. Paul establishes his authority is apostle and a minister of the new covenant. But chapters 1 to 9 are very positive in outlook and tone.

When you come to chapter 10 through the rest of the letter Paul’s tone becomes much more negative and harsh. There's really no transition in between. You get to chapter ten it's not like there is something at the end of chapter 9 that prepares you for the more negative tone in chapter 10. It's just an abrupt change. This has led a lot of scholars to ask how can we explain that change? One of the solutions is that 2 Corinthians is actually, at least in the form that we now have it, when it was included in the New Testament canon, that some feel 2 Corinthians is actually a compilation of two separate letters that Paul wrote, because that shift is just so abrupt and the change so drastic that certainly it could be two letters. So some suggested chapters 1 through 9 and 10 to 13 are two separate letters that have been combined and when they made their with their way into the New Testament they were combined and edited into the letter that we now know as 2 Corinthians. There's probably some other reasons why people think they're two different letters as well. That's a very common suggestion that what we have is actually two separate letters. Some have even suggested that within this somewhere one of these is actually the “tearful” letter that Paul refers to in chapter 2. The “tearful” letter is one of the letters included in this section perhaps 10 to 13.

Now without spending a lot of time on this because again no matter what happened
in the form that we have it in the New Testament we do have to still account for the fact that we have this book we call 2 Corinthians that's chapters 1 to 13. So ultimately the goal is to deal with the finished text as we have it without spending a lot of time on this. Is there a way perhaps to explain the difference in tone between these two sections? Is this indicative of the fact that these are two separate letters? Can you think of another way to explain perhaps the difference between chapters 1 through 9 and chapters 10 to 13 without suggesting that what we have are two separate letters of Paul wrote in different occasions and later on a scribe or somebody brought them together as it made its way to the New Testament and put it together in this nice letter form that we call 2 Corinthians? Is there another way perhaps to account for the abrupt shift in perspective and tone between the first nine chapters and chapters 10 to 13 that are more negative? Maybe Paul had a rough night he woke the finished chapter 1 through 9, didn't sleep well and was irritable and woke up and wrote 10 to 13. You didn’t like that one? What might account for the difference? Think about some of the background that we just talked about. It’s possible we don’t need to think in terms of, although this may have been the case but did Paul have to sit down and write the whole thing in one sitting from beginning to end. I don't know maybe that is the way they wrote letters in the first century. Or could he have written some of it received new information that caused the him then to write the rest of the letter which then is more negative in tone in light of some of the information that he received? That's entirely possible.

You would think that especially in light of First Corinthians where he signals, “I received by, now I write to you concerning what was written to me,” you might expect in chapter 10 to begin with some indication that he may be received additional news. Good but that is plausible. He could have received additional information assuming that his readers knew what was going on and changes his tone. Could we not also look at it from the standpoint of chapters 1 through 9 Paul would be addressing particularly those who have responded favorably whereas chapters 10 to 13 Paul then addresses the segment of Corinth
and is still opposing him and challenging his authority. Therefore his tone becomes more harsh and negative towards those who are still opposed to him. So the change in tone may reflect not two separate letters but the two separate audiences in the church of Corinth. One that has responded positively, he praises: the other that is still opposed to him and challenging his authority, Paul becomes more harsh and negative in tone. So I don't think the change in tone necessarily has to lead us to think that there's two separate letters that a later scribe brought together but again they may just reflect two different segments of the Corinthian church and their attitude towards Paul.

One of the texts, just to say something very briefly, towards the end of the first section that's more positive in tone. In chapters 8 through 9 of 2 Corinthians in a rather lengthy section, in fact it is the lengthiest section that we have on the topic of giving or some of us would use the word “tithing,” Paul basically encourages the Corinthians because he wants to take up a collection that he will take back to Jerusalem. So Paul hopes that when he arrives at Corinth that the Corinthians will have taken a collection and he will take that back to Jerusalem to the church in Jerusalem. Historically the church in Jerusalem has often suffered famine and things like that in the first century and perhaps this is Paul's attempt to gather support from the Corinthian church to aid famine relief in the city of Jerusalem and Christians in Jerusalem.

Now a couple questions and an observation. First of all and one of them a more practical theological type observation but first of all a question: why do you think Paul would be keen to get the Corinthian Christians to take up an offering so he could send it back to Jerusalem? I mean I’m not saying there's only one reason. But thinking theologically about some of the things we talked about a relationship to the history leading up to the time the New Testament and some other things we've seen in the Gospels and the other letters of Paul is: Why might Paul be keen to encourage the Corinthian church to take up a collection, an offering, that he would then send the Corinthian church besides just being good humanitarians and showing compassion for those who have concerns for those
who are suffering and who are in need when they perhaps have the resources or even if they don't? Paul does tell them that they've given out of their poverty. But why would Paul be so intent on getting them to take a collection up so he could take that back to the Jerusalem church, the Christians in Jerusalem?

Yes, if the Jerusalem church's primary Jewish and the Corinthian church more Gentile this would be another way of Paul establishing the solidarity between Jew and Gentile, by having a Gentile church now support the church in Jerusalem. So this may be a more pragmatic manifestation of Paul's underlying concern of the unity between Jew and Gentile. And so by having the Gentile church now take up a collection that he will now send back to the Jerusalem church hopefully that would help pragmatically in the solidarity between Jew and Gentile that Paul has fought so hard to maintain that the gospel goes out to Gentiles as well as Jews so that there's now one true people of God. We’ll see that theme crop up in Galatians and a number of other places as well.

There very well could be the idea that it is also a call for the Gentiles to recognize the true roots of their participation in the Gospel to realize that you owe something. Not that they're paying for anything, but in a sense, it's a recognition that, as Paul will say elsewhere, the Gentiles were separated from the commonwealth of Israel, they were strangers and foreigners and aliens, but now they have been made sharers in the promises and covenants that have been made to Israel. Perhaps this is a way of reminding them and showing their gratitude to the Jewish background for the salvation that they possess. That’s a very good point.

The interesting thing about this text is again, this is more about practical theological matters that at least it's interesting think about particularly when you compare it with the Old Testament, its intriguing that the most extended treatment of giving in the New Testament doesn't mention anything about giving a tithe. In fact, when you read 2 Corinthians 8 to 9 carefully, Paul never, and as I understand the New Testament, never calls on us to tithe 10%. Instead, Paul makes it clear that the measure of our giving is
generosity, out of gratitude for Jesus Christ. In fact, I'm convinced today even, we’ve probably all heard that and I still hear that to say you need to give 10% of your of income is for some people simply unreasonable. For others that's criminal, they're getting off easy. 10% they should be giving 30 or 40% perhaps. But Paul doesn't ever talk in terms of giving a tithe. Instead in 2 Corinthians 8-9 it is clear that Paul talks in terms of giving as generously as you can, out of gratitude and love for Jesus Christ and what he has given you. So what I would suggest when we think about giving is the primary factors not to calculate 10% of what you make or earn but instead to ask, what's the most generous amount, how can I be as generous as possible in what I give.

One other thing to say about 2 Corinthians before we move on and I just state what I think is the main theme of the book perhaps or one of the main themes is Second Corinthians. From the start till the end it's very intriguing especially when Paul is combating the super-apostles or those who are opposed to him it’s intriguing that the primary sign or indication of the validity of Paul's apostleship is always his suffering. It’s intriguing that when he points to the genuineness or validity of his apostolic authority he doesn't point to his rhetorical skills or his ability to wield power over someone else, but instead, points to his suffering. So in the book of Corinthians suffering is not to be seen with Paul at least as an indication of his weakness for his subordination to these super-apostles. Apparently that’s what these super-apostles were doing they were pointing to Paul's weaknesses as an indication that he really was an apostle. But Paul makes it clear that his suffering is actually an indication on the validity of his apostleship. So, for example, towards the end of the letter in chapter twelve, it is interesting how he writes toward the very end of the chapter he says, and you can hear Paul being almost ironic in a sense. He’s telling these super- apostles and those who are boasting about their credentials and demeaning Paul because he lacks credentials and he lacks power of speech and presentation. Paul says, “It is necessary to boast, although nothing is gained by it, but I will go on to visions and revelations from the Lord.”
So Paul in a sense says I don’t want to boast but if I’m going to boast and you force me to I can lay down credentials as well. He said, I can go into visions and revelations that I’ve had. “I know a person in Christ who 14 years ago was caught up to the third heaven, whether in the body or out of body I don't know, God knows, and I know that such a person, whether in the body or out of the body I don’t know, God knows, [it’s interesting he repeats that twice] this person was caught up into paradise, into heaven, and heard things that are not to be told, that no mortal is permitted to repeat.” In other words, Paul has a visionary type of experience along the lines that you read about in Daniel in the Old Testament and the book of Revelation in the New Testament that we’ll look at later in the semester.

But Paul goes on and says, “On behalf of such a person I will boast but on my own behalf I will not boast except in my weaknesses.” And then he goes on and says, “to keep him from being conceited God gave him a thorn in the flesh.” This is a metaphor for some kind of hindrance or something that kept Paul from boasting, some limitation. There's been all kinds of a disagreement as to whether this was physical or whether it was spiritual. Some have tried to tie this to Paul had bad eyesight or did he have some disease or speech problem or was this a physical torment. The text doesn't tell us.

But what it does go on and say in verse eight: “three times I prayed to the Lord about this to remove this hindrance [whatever it was physically or spiritually] but the Lord said to me my grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in your weakness.” So Paul says, “so I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am content with weakness, insults, hardships, persecutions and calamities for the sake of Christ, for whenever I am weak then I am strong.” So part of the answer for Paul pointing to his weakness as a credential for his apostleship, he's convinced that it is through his weakness that God's power is made most manifest and apparent. Therefore in view of his weakness there can be no other option or no other conclusion that it's God's power that is working through him and not his own power, not his own ability. So
weakness and suffering play a very important role in 2 Corinthians especially as one of the credentials for Paul's apostleship over against these false super-apostles who are challenging his authority.

So what is the theme? If I could summarize the theme of 2 Corinthians at least one of the dominant themes would be: glory through suffering. Along the lines of those verses we just read. God’s power, God's glory is manifested through what the apostle Paul was suffering. Not in spite of it or in addition to it but through it and in it. Are there any questions on 2 Corinthians? Mainly what I want you to understand is that the main purpose of it is to respond in praise for those who responded to Paul's letter in his commands and his apostleship but to warn and admonish those who still oppose him. Paul does that by pointing to his suffering and weakness because it is through his suffering and weakness that God's glory and power are most evident.

So then on an exam you will be able to answer anything I throw at you about 2 Corinthians. I told you that we would sail through 2 Corinthians rather quickly. Let's open another piece of the early church's mail and reach in the mail box and pull out a letter that is addressed to the Galatians. Now one of the questions that arises is: where would you take the letter? If you were a first century mail-carrier, and hopefully you picked this up in your reading of your textbook Introducing the New Testament, if you are mail-carrier in the first century and Paul gave you a letter and said, “Here, take this to the Galatians.” Where in the world would you go? Because you’ll soon discover there is no city called “Galatia.” We’ve looked at Rome, Rome was a city and Corinth was a city, but when we get to the Galatians and you look at the map and there's no city called “Galatia.” But that’s where the debate is. Galatia was actually a region or country, for now just to put it generally. But where is it located? Again if you are a first century mail-carrier where would you have carried the letter to the Galatians? Who was Paul addressing? When you go back and read the book of Acts you don't find any mention of Paul going to the Galatians to establish a church or anything like that. So where was Galatia? Where would Paul have gone to
establish a church or churches in Galatia? Where would you have taken this letter? What was the destination for this letter that Paul writes.

He begins in the first verse as he does in all his letters he usually identifies himself and then mentions the recipients. That was just a common way of opening a letter in the first century much like we say “dear so and so” and then we launch into our bodies. Instead of “dear so-and-so” in the first century the author of the letter would've introduce himself and identify himself and the recipients as well.

So Paul begins, “Paul an apostle sent neither from human commission or from human authorities but through Jesus Christ in the God the Father who raised him from the dead, to the churches of Galatia.” So where are the churches of Galatia? This is a map you’ve seen before outlining Paul's missionary journeys in the book of Acts and his final trip that he makes to Rome in Acts chapter 28. You see, you can’t read this it’s a little bit distorted but you can obviously see that this map contains the names of most of the cities that Paul visited in his missionary journeys throughout Acts.

Now you'll notice, perhaps you can see this, but this right here says, “Galatia.” It's confusing where’s it’s placed because it’s not real specific. Here’s Galatia but in none of Paul’s journeys does he actually get up in this region at least that we know of in the book of Acts. Most of Paul’s activity has been in the southern part half of modern-day Turkey or Asia Minor. So is Paul addressing people that he's never visited again or what's going on? Where is Galatia? Where did Paul send this letter?

There are actually two theories that hopefully your will recall from your textbook. One of them is what is known as the North Galatia theory. That's originally the name Galatia referred to the ethnic Galatians which was in this area in the north part of the central Turkey or Asia Minor. This would've been a place settled by the Gauls and subsequently known as Galatia. That's known as the North Galatian theory. So some think that when Paul wrote a letter to the Galatians he was addressing the ethnic area of Galatia even though Acts does not tell us that he ever went up there. Some would even suggest
maybe Acts doesn't tell us everywhere Paul went. Maybe somewhere one of these journeys he ventured into the northern part of central Turkey, the area known as Galatia. Sometime he may have visited there to establish churches and now he's writing a letter to the Galatians. So that is what is meant by the North Galatia theory. So when Paul says, “to the Galatians,” he's writing to the ethnic Galatians to the actual northern country of Galatia.

However, there's another theory called the South Galatian theory. By the time of the first century when Rome took over, Rome actually established Galatia as one of its provinces. If you remember, as the Roman Empire took over one of the ways governed its territory was by dividing it into providences. Interestingly the Roman province of Galatia did extend south to the Mediterranean Sea. So that under this view, the South Galatian view, Paul is addressing a series of cities, Lystra and Derbe that were in South Galatia, that is, the province of Galatia.

So do you see difference? So the North Galatia says that Galatia only referred to the northern country of Galatia and ethnically the Galatian people that lived in the northern part of central Turkey. But by the time of the Roman Empire, Rome turned this into a province and extended Galatia all the way down into southern modern-day Turkey that would encompass a number of cities that Paul visited on more than one occasion. I don’t want to go into detail of why I think which one we should hold to and why, but it seems anymore that I think almost everyone agrees that Paul was probably addressing these cities here in South Galatia. That is, Galatia referring to not the ethnic country but referring to the Roman province. So most likely Paul is addressing a cluster of churches or cities that he visited on his missionary journeys in South Galatia that is the southern part of the Roman province of Galatia.

Now you can sleep tonight you know where Paul addressed the letter. That's right you got it down now, you know it’s south Galatia. It’s not like you’re going to read their letter completely differently but it does help when we are asking the question of how does this connect with Acts because again we don't see Paul going up to the northern area around
the ethnic area Galatia but we do see Paul in southern Turkey in what was known as the Roman province of Galatia of that time. So if you would've been Paul's mail carrier and he would've handed you the letters and said “here take this to the Galatians,” you would have traveled to this cluster of towns right here and delivered this letter to them. That was the Galatians.

The other question that again won’t make a big difference in the way you interpret Galatians but does have to do with how you relate Galatians to Acts. Whether you think it fits or contradicts or how do we fit Galatians in to what we know about Paul from the book of Acts, and that is: when was Galatians written? Was it early or late. Early or late in comparison to what? By early I mean Galatians was written early according to the earlier date as most scholars would date it would probably be the first letter written by Paul that we have, that we know of, that we have possession of. Remember the New Testament letters of Paul are not arranged in the order they're written. They’re roughly arranged in order of length. That's why Romans comes first. But if we date Galatians early then basically, I’ll put that up in just a moment, if we date it early basically we’re saying that Galatians is probably the first letter that Paul wrote at least that we have record of. If we date it late then probably First Thessalonians is going to be the first letter that Paul wrote. Galatians would come a few years later after he wrote First Thessalonians. I’m not addressing this point as to the exact date as far as the year of date but the main thing I want you to know is if you dated Galatians early it is the first letter that Paul wrote, if you date it later than most likely 1 Thessalonians. 1 Thessalonians is next in line it would get bumped to the head of the list as the first letter that Paul wrote.

Now how we answer this question whether this is the first letter or whether it is a later one again has more to do with how it relates to the book of Acts. The key factor is Acts chapter 15 which records what? The Jerusalem council. Remember the Jerusalem council where Paul and the other apostles got together and they addressed the issue: What is required of Gentiles to be the people of God? Do they have to submit to the law of Moses?
And the consensus was: no they don't. So Gentiles can be God's people along with Jews without having to submit to the Mosaic law from the Old Testament. That’s what happened in Acts 15. The question is: how does Galatians relate to that? Because in Galatians, these are not meant necessarily to line up I’m just listing, and you'll see why in a moment.

In Galatians 1 and 2 we read Paul gives us a summary of his life, from the time of his life as a Jew. Remember he was a Pharisee. We saw in Acts chapter 9 Paul was a Pharisee of the zealot type. He was like a first century terrorist. We tried to destroy the church out of his zeal for the law and for Judaism but then when Christ confronted him on the road to Damascus Paul is converted and also is called to be an apostle. Paul summarizes his life in chapters 1 and 2 of Galatians and in these chapters Paul refers to two visits to Jerusalem. One of the visits to Jerusalem happened not too long after his conversion in Acts chapter 9, on the way to the Damascus Road when God knocked him down and Christ appeared to him. Shortly after that Paul visits Jerusalem, but then later on in the Galatians 2 Paul mentions another trip to Jerusalem he makes. So Paul mentions that two trips to Jerusalem between his conversion and between the time he's now writing Galatians Paul says he's visited Jerusalem twice. But the first 15 chapters of Acts starting with chapter 9 with Paul's conversion Acts 9-15 mention three visits of Paul to Jerusalem. The first one in Acts 9 and 10 obviously is the same one he's referring to in Galatians 1. So that problem is solved. Paul clearly refers to a Jerusalem visit right after his conversion to Christianity and then Acts 9 and 10 record the exact same visit. I think everyone agrees with that.

The problem is the visit to Jerusalem in Galatians 2, which one does it correspond to? Is it the visit Luke, who wrote Acts, mentions? A visit apparently of Paul to Jerusalem in Acts 11 where Paul actually went to help in a famine relief effort to Jerusalem. And then Acts 15 is your Jerusalem Council. So the question is, this one is taken care of we can draw a straight line from Galatians 1 to Acts 9 and 10. They’re both the same. They’re an equal sign. They’re both the same visit. The question is when Paul talks about his visit to Jerusalem in Galatians 2 does it refer to Acts 11 the visit of Paul to Jerusalem relief effort?
Or is Paul in Galatians 2 referring to the Jerusalem council? Now you can see where the early and late come from. If Galatians 2 refers to Acts 11 the famine relief visit then Galatians is the earliest letter that Paul wrote. If Galatians 2 refers to Acts 15 the Jerusalem council then Galatians was written a few years later and 1 Thessalonians would be the first letter that Paul wrote.

So that’s the issue behind whether it's earlier or late. It all revolves around in Galatians 1 and 2 which is a summary of Paul's life in Judaism and his conversion. In Acts too he mentions one of his visits to Jerusalem a few years after he was converted. The key is which of the visits in Acts is it referring to because Paul doesn’t spell that out in detail. Which one you think it is referring to will affect whether you think Galatians is the first letter that we have that Paul wrote, that is, if it's referring to the visit referred to in Acts or if you think Galatians was written little bit later and maybe 1 Thessalonians was written first. That would be the case if Galatians 2 refers Acts 15 because obviously if it is Acts 15 and then Galatians could not have been written until sometime after that well past the halfway mark of the first century. But if it was referring to Acts 11 then Galatians must've been written before Acts 15 ever took place. That would place Galatians a little earlier. Just so you know but again I don't want to defend it. In my opinion Galatians chapter 2 is referring to Acts 15, the Jerusalem Council. For some reason Paul did not choose to mention this one. There may be different explanations why that might be the case but I think a good case can be made that Galatians 2 and Acts 15 are referring to the same event. So I think perhaps Galatians was a little bit later than 1 Thessalonians which probably was the first book written at least we have evidence of Paul's letters. Alright, any other questions on the issue of North and South Galatians, where Galatia was and the date Paul's letter?

Right, you are exactly right. This is actually a minority position. I don’t know why I take it. If you went to the library and looked at a bunch of New Testament Surveys or Introductions you would find most of them would link Galatians 2 with Acts 11 and place Galatians as the first letter that Paul wrote. But I'm still convinced the Galatians 2
resembles Acts 15 very closely. If you read the two accounts, they are obviously going to be different because the author of Acts is not going to record it exactly the same way Paul is. Especially Paul's going to abbreviate it greatly for his epistolary genre in which he is writing. But very good observation. You'll notice that what I've just said about the date of Acts and about Galatians 2 and Acts 15 is the opposite of what your textbook suggests.

Alright, let’s talk a little bit about why Paul wrote this letter in the first place. When it comes to the purpose or why Paul wrote Galatians, although some of the details might not be easy, it’s fairly easy to infer from reading the book of Galatians. If we took time to read the book of Galatians most of you could come up with a fairly reasonable suggestion of what Paul was trying to do if you read it carefully and thought about it a little bit. Paul seems to be addressing a situation very different from what he was in Romans and 1 Corinthians. That is, Paul seems to be addressing a situation where certain Jewish Christians, and we’ll see what they were doing and how they were doing it in just a moment, but certain Jewish Christians are actually undermining Paul's gospel. And if you remember Paul's gospel to summarize it is that Gentiles can also participate in the blessings of salvation and can become the people of God apart from submitting to the law of Moses. So Gentiles, based solely by faith in Christ, can participate in the promises of salvation and be God's true people along with Jews. They can do so without having to submit to the law of Moses. That gospel is now being challenged by a group of Jewish Christians that are calling into question and trying to undermine Paul's gospel.

Scholars usually refer to the group in Galatians as Judaizers, those who are trying to force the Jewish way of life under the law of Moses on Gentiles. Perhaps this slide will explain Paul and the Judaizers. So basically the Judaizers are who Paul's addressing, and it's important I think to realize that they do appear to be Christian Jews. They were not denying that one needs to place faith in Jesus Christ but they were suggesting that it also demanded conformity to the law of Moses. So Gentiles, yes, faith in Christ but one also needed to submit to the law of Moses as an indicator that they belong to the people of God.
That results in justification, or salvation as we saw back in Romans. Paul meant by justification, it was a legal term “to vindicate,” “to declare that one is not guilty,” “to vindicate” someone by faith in Jesus Christ plus taking on the identity marker and the lifestyle of the Mosaic law is what would have brought about justification.

Basically, although maybe a little too simplistically, Paul is going to in the sense redo this formula and suggest that faith in Christ is what brings about justification. But justification is clearly coupled with obedience to Christ which Paul is going to link with the Holy Spirit. Notice that he's removed the law of Moses from the equation. So it's not faith plus the law of Moses. It's faith alone that qualifies one for belonging to God's people and to be vindicated but that is accompanied by obedience which Paul attributes to the new covenant Holy Spirit. Remember we said, this is the same Spirit that I take it was poured out in Acts chapter 2 on the people of God back in the book of Acts, on the day of Pentecost. That is part of the New Covenant back in the Old Testament when God promised that one day he would establish a new covenant part of that was the pouring out of this Spirit upon his people. Now Paul attributes the obedience. Obviously Paul is not going to say, we’ll look at this a little bit later, this is not Paul's way of saying, “therefore you don’t have any responsibility or you don’t have to do anything. It's all the work of the Spirit. Paul links obedience not to living life under the law but by participating in the new covenant Holy Spirit that God has now poured out upon his people, who enter through faith in Jesus Christ.

So again you can see how Paul has kind of inverted the formula. Not that we want to attribute a formula to Judaism or even Paul's view, but if we could just to kind of spell it out in detail this seems to be what Paul is combating and what he is arguing against and his solution is to view it like this.

Now one interesting thing about this letter is you can begin to see where although we confess that the New Testament is the word of God that never diminishes the humanity of these documents that one can see that they were produced by human beings through very
human means of writing and composition and even reflect the distinct tone and style of the individual authors and the way they wrote. For example, when you start reading Galatians you get a very different picture of Paul than you did in Romans. In Romans, Paul appears to be slightly more, I'm not sure I really want to psychologize the letter, but at the same time it does appear Paul seems to be a little bit more reserved or more calculated in the way he presents himself. Whereas in Galatians you get the sense that Paul is really on edge and his tone is a little bit more abrupt and harsh. You get a sense he is really upset at the situation he is now facing.

So notice after the introduction, which we said Galatians begins like any first century letter. Paul identifies himself even though he elaborates on that a little bit and then he identifies his readers “to the Galatians.” That’s just how you begin a first century letter. Paul's not doing anything unusual. However, what is unusual is that in Galatians when you compare Galatians to all the other letters Paul wrote the New Testament it's missing something that you find all the other letters and it would've been found in any first century letter and that was a “thanksgiving.” All of Paul's letters begin with "I thank my God through my Lord Jesus Christ because of you.” Then he'll thank God because of something that his readers have done or because of something in the lives of his readers. In first century secular letters most people would have thanked the Roman gods or for the readers or thanked them for their good health or something like that. But Paul usually thanks the readers because of what they have done or because of their progress in the gospel. But Galatians is missing a Thanksgiving. Again that is odd in Paul’s letters but it would have been just as odd in a first century letter.

Instead, notice how chapter 1 and verse 6 begins, right after the introduction, Paul says, “I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel. Not that there is another gospel but there are some who are confusing you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should proclaim another gospel contrary to what we proclaim, let that
person be accursed.” Again this is strong language. Paul just skips the thanksgiving and says, “I am astonished that after all the time I spent preaching the gospel, I'm astonished that you would so quickly be led astray by something that is clearly other than the gospel.”

Chapter 6 and verse 11, notice how he ends the letter. He says, “See what large letters I make when I am writing in my own hand.” Now remember we said with Romans that Paul following a fairly typical convention of the first century letter writer, Paul would have employed the services of an amanuensis or secretary that most likely he would've dictated his letter to, that is probably true of Galatians. But now it appears that Paul now takes the pen, and he says, “See what large letters I make when I am writing in my own hand.”

Some have said, “Well, that’s because Paul [they connect this with the thorn in the flesh it back in 2 Corinthians] this thorn in the flesh was Paul's poor eyesight so he had to write in large letters because he couldn’t see.” I think that's wrong. I think this is an indication of Paul's anger, his distress and astonishment. He is trying to get their attention. Now he's saying, if I can paraphrase, it’s as if he is saying, “Now I'm going to take the pen and finish this letter. See what large letters I write.” In other words, pay attention to this because I'm astonished at how you have responded and so quickly turned from this gospel.

So in Galatians we see a very different tone in Paul. We don’t see a letter that is primarily going to be encouraging and he's these not going to praise his readers for much. Instead, it's going to be a letter where Paul is clearly writing out of frustration, despair and astonishment at what the readers are doing. And will now try to persuasively get them to not be led astray by these Judaizers who are trying to force the Gentiles to submit to the law of Moses, and life under Judaism. He’s going to try to get them to see that the Old Testament law no longer plays a role and faith in Jesus Christ is the primary requirement for being declared righteous, being vindicated, being justified and belonging to the true people of God. So we'll see just how Paul argues that and does that in his letter.

Have a great spring break.
Transcribed and rough edited by Ted Hildebrandt