

Reflection on the readings of LOH for Sun. Feb. 7, 2021 Gal. 1:1-12 and St. Augustine's explanation of St. Paul's letter to the Galatians.

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Around 53 A.D. (Acts 18:23) Paul passed through Galatia to visit the church communities he had established (Act 13:14) and also visited during his second journey. Paul apparently was not able to spend time with them and wrote the letter from Ephesus. Galatia is in modern day Turkey.

Paul expresses amazement that the Galatians so quickly departed from the true gospel he had preached to them to believe the circumcisers. They evidently were easily influenced. There were Jewish converts who called themselves Christians who insisted that to be saved one must observe the Mosaic law, but this had been settled in Acts 15:28-29 where the Gentiles were only required to abstain from what had been sacrificed to idols, blood from strangled animals and unchastity. Paul stated that "If anyone preaches a gospel to you other than the one you received, let a curse be upon him."

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Paul points out his correction to them is not a way to ingratiate himself to them, obviously. He states he is not looking for man's approval, but God's. He states that transition from alienation from God to the state of grace happens only through faith in Jesus. To do otherwise is to fall back into the slavery of the law. He essentially said accepting the Mosaic doctrine would be denying the value and freedom of redemption by the grace of faith.

In the second reading Augustine point out that the old covenant laws were meant to show men their sin, not to take it away or atone for it. By contrast, sin is taken away by faith working through love.

Evidently some of the apostles had initially yielded to Jewish "converts" in requiring Gentile converts to become circumcised according to Mosaic law. Augustine says, "For sin is taken away only by the gift of faith that works through love."

Paul had strongly asserted that he was an apostle schooled by Jesus Himself. Gal. 1:12 "For I did not receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came from a revelation of Jesus Christ."