

Four Cities of Galatia

During Paul's time, Galatia was a Roman province in central Asia Minor, now known as Turkey. The ancient name originated from the Latin "Gallia," the land of the Gauls of western Europe. The Greeks called these people "Galatai."

When Paul wrote the letter to the Galatians, this province was divided into two regions. The principal cities of the northern region were Ancyra, Pessinus, and Tavium. The cities of the south included Antioch (near Pisidia), Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe. Paul's letter was probably addressed to the four southern churches, the ones he visited on his first missionary journey.

Paul was a native of Tarsus. The main roads leading away from his hometown passed through the southern part of Galatia, which was teeming with Jews.

Barnabas and Paul began their first missionary journey at Antioch in Syria, sailing for the island of Cyprus. From Paphos, on the western side of the island, they sailed for Perga, on the southern coast of Asia Minor. They then traveled overland some 140 miles to Pisidian Antioch. From there, they traveled 90 miles southeast to Iconium, another 18 miles south to Lystra, and yet another 60 miles southeast to Derbe.

Let's take a journey to these ancient sites.

Pisidian Antioch

Ancient Antioch of Pisidia is 2 miles west of the modern city of Yalvac in Turkey. Seleucus I had named 16 different cities for Antiochus, his father. Therefore these towns had to have an added designation—in this case, Pisidian Antioch. It was founded in 300 B.C., and became a part of the Roman province of Galatia about 25 B.C. It was considered the capital of southern Galatia.

Excavations on this site have uncovered two large city squares, partially bordered with houses and shops. In the upper-city Square of Augustus, archaeologists uncovered an impressive stairway of 12 steps, some 70 feet in length. This led to the lower Square of Tiberius. Excavated were remains of its beautiful entrance gateway with three arches, in honor of Caesar Augustus. Archaeologists have also unearthed a copy of an important document, "Deeds accomplished by the Divine Augustus." This shows that faithful Jewish worshippers lived alongside those who favored the emperor.

Also uncovered at Antioch was an outstanding water system, including pipes and ruins of a Roman aqueduct some 5 miles to the north.

The Roman colony of Pisidian Antioch had some exquisite ancient buildings, including a Roman theater and a temple honoring one of their chief gods, Men.

Ruins of churches, along with a small inscription bearing the name of Optimus, bishop of Antioch during the years 378-81, tell us that Christianity continued at Antioch long after the time of Paul and Barnabas.

Upon leaving Pisidian Antioch for Iconium, Paul and Barnabas traveled one of the famous Roman military roads. The Via Sebaste, a paved road, was built in 6 B.C.

Rome was known for its road-building. They were made of four layers of sand, lime, broken stones, and mortar, topped with stones or gravel set in concrete. Major roads were 20-25 feet wide, allowing couriers to travel up to 75 miles in a day.

Iconium

Iconium was an important city, mentioned six times in the New Testament. The modern city of Konya in Turkey is the site of the ancient city.

Iconium was located in a small plain, almost 3,400 feet above sea level. The high Pisidian mountains lay to the west, and mountains of lesser height lay to the east. Snow and rain provided moisture for growing wheat, flax, and other produce.

Coins found in excavations show the earlier Greek influence on Iconium after the third century B.C. Some of the coins show Perseus, believed to be the first ruler, exhibiting the head of a mythological, snake-like creature. Other coins show Zeus with a scepter, and the goddess Athena with a spear entwined by a serpent.

Another of the discoveries includes an altar with a Greek inscription dedicated to Men, the god worshiped by the Iconiums. At one time, Emperor Claudius (A.D. 41-54) prefixed his own name to the city, and came up with Claudiconium. This name appears on some of the coins that have been found.

Lystra

This was the hometown of Timothy. It was almost 20 miles south of Iconium on the Roman road Via Sebaste.

The site of the ancient ruins of Lystra has been verified by an ancient Roman altar found there. On it was the Latin inscription "Lustra."

Around 6 B.C. Augustus sent troops to Lystra to capture it as a Roman colony. Coins show that the name of the city was changed to Julia Felix Gemina Lustra.

The inhabitants of Lystra worshiped Greek gods. It was here that Barnabas was mistaken for Zeus, and Paul for Hermes. In 1909, an inscription found near Lystra gave a list of several "priests of Zeus." Coins have been discovered showing the founder of Lystra digging a boundary line with a plow pulled by a bull and a cow. Another coin shows the goddess of Lystra sitting on a rock and crowned with a crescent.

Unlike most other cities Paul visited, no record of a synagogue or a Jewish community has been found at Lystra's site. It is possible that the Jews worshiped in a temporary location.

Derbe

Derbe was a secluded town, some 60 miles southeast of Lystra. The site was not confirmed until 1956. In that year, an inscribed block of limestone was found that had been dedicated in honor of the Emperor Antoninus Pius in A.D. 157 by the town council and the citizens of Derbe. It became known as the Derbe Stone.

The mound now over what was once Derbe measures about 900 feet in length, 600 feet in breadth, and stands 60 feet in height.

Derbe was the only town of the four cities that Paul and Barnabas visited in Galatia in which they were not persecuted.

by Lorraine O. Schultz

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ACTION GOAL FOR UNIT 2

Redeeming the Past

July 29—August 26, 2007

Paul's Past

There is a decade in the life of Paul, after his conversion, about which the scriptural account is virtually silent. During Paul's silent decade, God was equipping him for the years of ministry ahead of him, preparing his head and heart. You can be certain that part of Paul's preparation was his emotional and spiritual healing.

After Paul's Damascus road experience, he sorely regretted his former role in the persecution of Christians. He had not only put many believers in prison, he had cast his vote against them when they were put to death (Acts 26:10). Even though he had experienced God's forgiveness, it is likely that a great deal of healing had to take place so that Paul could cope with his memories of those he had once persecuted.

We find an early indication of that healing in his letter to the Galatians (ca. A.D. 48-49). Paul was able to report that those he once persecuted were praising God because of his conversion (Galatians 1:23-24). Paul had come to see that God could take the ugliest thing he had ever done and redeem it so that something good came from it (Romans 8:28).

Near the end of Paul's life, God had redeemed his past to such an extent that Paul could speak of the time when he was "a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man" (1 Timothy 1:13) to show the extent of God's mercy and grace.

Your Past

God's grace not only cleanses the heart from sin, it

cleanses the guilty conscience (Hebrews 10:22). However, in spite of God's grace, some believers hold on to their feelings of guilt unnecessarily. In some instances, those old guilty feelings have been ignored and denied for so long that it is hard to convince ourselves that we should no longer feel guilty. Let there be no question, the sacrifice of Christ is adequate to cleanse the heart of a guilty conscience.

- What is it that has you bound and holds you back?
- Do you still grieve over things God has forgiven?
- Are you victimized by a wrong that remains unresolved?
- Are you overcome by your record of repeated failures?

God's Sufficient Grace

Let it go! Turn it over to the Lord. Let Him redeem your past and free you from that bondage. Allow Him to make something good come from your greatest regret.

During the next four weeks, from July 29 through August 26, you are encouraged to follow these simple disciplines:

- Pray daily with a spirit of thankfulness for God's gracious dealings in your life.
- Resolve any unfinished business in your life that has to do with either seeking or granting forgiveness. NOTE: If the other person is either deceased or in whereabouts unknown, write out the things you need to say to him or her, and submit your statement to the Lord.
- Consider keeping a daily journal, focusing specifically on your memories and thoughts about forgiveness.

Our Mission

1. We recognize the mutually supportive roles of the adult Sunday School, namely nurture, fellowship, and outreach.
Nurture: The personal and spiritual growth of the individual through ongoing encounters with God's Word within a community of believers.
Fellowship: Building caring and supportive relationships between adults.
Outreach: Reaching beyond the group-setting to others outside through evangelism, service, and personal application of session truths.
2. WordAction curriculum is committed to a twofold emphasis of both content learning (Word) and life change based on that encounter with the Word (Action).
3. WordAction curriculum is distinctly Wesleyan-Holiness in theological perspective in selection of scripture themes and presentation.
4. We seek to provide the tools and confidence for adults to read, understand, and live by God's Word.
5. This curriculum explores the Bible in its variety of scope, literature, and themes.
6. The Bible is lifted up as the fundamental, legitimate, and practical authority and guide for living today.
7. We desire to allow the powerful Word of God to speak for itself as adults discover its message, understanding its proper context and application.
8. These materials show that the Bible tells a unified and comprehensive story of God's gracious interaction with people throughout history.
9. Encouragement is given to provide an environment where emphasis is placed on discovering God's Word within a community of believers in contrast to an individual-only course of study.
10. Knowing that adults learn through a variety of learning styles, this curriculum encourages a variety of presentation methodologies.
11. We desire to assist the adult leader in personal spiritual growth and excellence in facilitating group growth.
12. The importance of daily individual study of God's Word through Scripture memorization and reading is emphasized each week.