

STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES

GALATIANS

Our Freedom in Christ

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INTRODUCTION TO THE EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS

The book of Galatians is one of the shorter epistles of Paul. It takes up perhaps six to eight pages of the Bible and can be read in twenty minutes. As a piece of literature it is not remarkable for its artistry or beauty. Its historical allusions are rather obscure and its arguments regarding circumcision do not immediately appear to be relevant to modern issues.

In spite of this, I consider the Epistle to the Galatians to be one of the most important books of the Bible. It is the charter of freedom from externalism in worship and from frustration in the personal spiritual life. It is the book that sets the believer free.

It is entirely possible that the book of Romans was Paul's own expansion on the theme originally set forth in Galatians. The two epistles have certain similarities in theme and content.

Galatians	Romans
Passionate and emotional	Calm reflection
Christianity on the battlefield	Christianity in the study
One of the earlier epistles	One of the later epistles
Justification through faith defended from attacks	Justification through faith set forth systematically
Our Declaration of Independence	Our Constitution

Romans is written at a later date when the fire of the controversy had abated and when the church at large needed counsel in its thinking more than reproof for its errors.

QUOTATIONS REGARDING GALATIANS

1. John W. Lawrence: *The Magna Charta of Christian Liberty*.
2. Donald Gray Barnhouse: *Galatians is one of the most important documents in human history*.
3. Martin Luther: *The Epistle to the Galatians is my Epistle. I have betrothed myself to it. It is my Katie - it is my wife*.

Speaking of Luther's use of the book of Galatians, Godet says: *This was the pebble from the brook which, like another David, he went forth to meet the papal giant and smite him in the forehead. In this epistle Luther found the secret of his own deliverance. Taking this as his weapon, he plunged into the fearful conflict with the Papistry and religious materialism of his time.*

DATE OF WRITING

The first two chapters of Galatians contains a number of historical notes from the life of Paul. These aid us in attempting to establish a date for the book. Assuming that the epistle is written to those churches established in the Southern Galatia region, we are left with two possible dates.

- It was written before the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15.
- It was written after the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15.

The difference between these two positions will be determined largely by whether or not Paul's visit to Jerusalem in Galatians 2:1-10 took place during the Jerusalem Council. We shall deal more with this question when we come to Galatians 2. In either case, this would have been one of the earlier epistles to have been written, with a date between 48-52 A.D.

OCCASION FOR THE EPISTLE

Certain Jewish teachers had come from Jerusalem teaching that one had to become a Jew in order to be saved (Acts 15:1). They were stressing

circumcision and the keeping of the Law. They presented themselves as having authority from the church at Jerusalem and they seem to have questioned the legitimacy of Paul's apostleship. Paul has several purposes in writing:

1. To establish his apostleship as being independent of Jerusalem and the other apostles. He does this, not as an end in itself, but to show that his gospel came from the Lord, not from some church council.
2. To demonstrate that a man is justified through faith alone. If salvation can come in any other way, then Christ died in vain.
3. To establish the method of Christian living that is not according to the keeping of the Law, but through the Spirit's work in our lives as we live in faith and in love.

These three purposes correspond to an outline of the book. Paul takes two chapters to deal with each section.

Chapters 1-2	Chapters 3-4	Chapters 5-6
History	Doctrine	Practice
Paul's Apostleship and his Gospel come from the Lord	Man is Justified through Faith Alone	We are to walk by Faith and Love
Vindication	Exposition	Application
Testimonial and Apologetical	Doctrinal and Argumentative	Practical and Encouraging
Source of the Gospel	Defense of the Gospel	Application of the Gospel
The Gospel is from God, "not according to man" (1:11)	The Gospel is Superior to the Law in what it is able to Accomplish	The Gospel of the Spirit: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Live by the Spirit• Walk by the Spirit

This is a book about the gospel. It serves to remind us of what the gospel is and also what the gospel does in a person's life.

STYLE OF WRITING

This epistle is short and to the point. Its style is abrupt, passionate and full of strong emotion. Like a surgeon's knife, Paul wants to cut out a deadly cancer that he sees eating away at the church. Look at the emotional content in these statements:

- *I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him (1:6).*
- *If any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed! (1:9).*
- *You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you? (3:1).*
- *Are you so foolish? (3:3).*
- *I wish that those who are troubling you would even mutilate themselves (5:12).*

We Christians are called to be people of passion. When we love the Lord, we are to do it with all of our heart, our mind, our soul and our body.

OPENING SALUTATIONS

GALATIANS 1:1-5

The writers of the Bible use a number of different literary forms to communicate their message. There is historical prose, drama, biography, poetry, proverb and prophecy. But one of the most distinct forms in the New Testament is the epistle.

The epistles of the New Testament are personal letters written both to individuals and to churches. I can think of no other literary device more designed to communicate on a personal level. It is the form of intimate relationship.

Whenever the mail is delivered to our house, I go through it very briefly to sort out what to open and what to discard. I look for what we commonly refer to as “junk” mail. These are not personal letters but actually mass mailings designed to appear personal. It will be addressed to me, so the only way I can tell that it is junk mail is to check the return address. When people wrote letters in the ancient world, they always followed a specified format.

1. First came their own name.
2. Then came the name of the recipients of the letter - those to whom the letter was addressed.
3. Finally would come a greeting.

Any number of examples of this format can be found both in the pages of the Bible as well as in ancient letters brought to us via archaeology. Below we have three different examples, one from a formal letter that was written by a king during the Old Testament era, one from a New Testament epistle, and one from the Roman Emperor, Julius Caesar:

Format	Ezra 7:12	James 1:1	Julius Caesar
Name of the Author	Artaxerxes, king of kings...	James, a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ...	Gaius Julius Caesar Imperator and high priest and dictator the second time...
Name of the Recipients	To Ezra the priest, the scribe of the law of the God of heaven...	To the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad...	To the magistrates, senate, and people of Sidon...
Greeting	Perfect peace	Greetings	Greeting

In each of these examples, the entire greeting would take place within the equivalent of a single verse. And yet, here in Galatians, Paul takes up five verses to give us his opening salutation in this epistle. Why? It is because he will utilize the format of the salutation to introduce the message of his letter. This is not filler material so that the real epistle can start in verse 6. This introduction is foundational to his message and sets the stage for everything that is to follow.

PAUL'S NAME

Paul, an apostle, not sent from men nor through the agency of man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead (Galatians 1:1).

Before we start with the concept of an apostle, let us take a step back and say something about the name “Paul.” When he is first introduced in the book of Acts, his name is not “Paul” but rather “Saul.” It has been customary to think that Paul changed his name from its original “Saul” to “Paul” so that he could better identify with the Gentiles (Saul is a Hebrew name, while Paul is a Latin name). However, I do not believe that this is completely the case.

Paul was a Roman citizen. Indeed, he had been born as a Roman citizen (Acts 22:28). We do not know how it came about that his parents had obtained the coveted citizenship. Perhaps there was some past service to the Empire. In any case, Paul was a Roman citizen and that would have called

for a Roman name. In the days in which Paul lived, Roman citizens had three names.

Praenomen	An individual name given at birth
Nomen	A tribal name. In Rome there were about 1000 tribes which could trace their ancestry back to a common origin
Cognomen	At first, the cognomen was given as a family nickname, usually referring to some outstanding feature in the individual. Here are a few examples... <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Crassus (Fat)• Longus (Tall)• Rufus (red)• Felix (Happy)• Paulus (Little)

As you can see in the above example, *Paulus* was regularly used as a cognomen. As such, it was a family name. Thus, when Paul uses this name for himself, he is not making it up. He is merely using one of his names which would serve to better identify himself with the Gentiles. It is rightfully his own name. If we look back through the book of Acts where this name first begins to be used for him, it is when he is in Cyprus and standing before the Roman proconsul, Sergius Paulus (Acts 13:7-9).

PAUL'S APOSTLESHIP

Paul, an apostle, not sent from men nor through the agency of man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead (Galatians 1:1).

It was customary when identifying yourself in a letter to include whatever official titles might be yours. Paul does this when he calls himself an apostle. Our word "apostle" is a transliteration of the Greek word *apostolos*. The Hebrew counterpart of this word was the *sheliach*. A well-known Hebrew proverb states: "The authority of the send one (*sheliach*) is equal to that of the sender." Thus authority is inherent in the term "apostle"

from both its Greek and Hebrew backgrounds.

While the word “apostle” comes from the root verb “to send from” it seems to have a more specific meaning. Indeed, the Greeks of the Peloponnesian Wars used this as a military term for the admiral of their fleet who was “commissioned” with a special duty. When used in this sense, it seems to speak of one who is sent out with special authority. The authority of the apostle was dependent upon the authority of the one who sent him out.

1. Stated in the Negative.

Sometimes in order to find out what a thing is, you have to understand what it is not. Before Paul states what is the source of his apostleship, he first sets for what is not the source of his apostleship.

a. *Not sent from men.*

Paul had not been sent by the church in Jerusalem to be an apostle. No board had ever looked over his resume and decided, “Yes, Paul has what it takes to be a worthy apostle.” There was no council involved in choosing him to this position. He did not win his apostleship through a popularity vote. He never claimed to be sent by the apostles in Jerusalem.

b. *Nor through the agency of man.*

God often works through the agency of man. Men are the tools that He most often uses. The Lord had used the early church and the casting of lots to choose Matthias to be the Twelfth Apostle to fill the vacancy of Judas Iscariot. But this was not the case with Paul. His apostleship did not come through the agency of any man. It came directly through the agency of Jesus Christ when He knocked Paul to the ground on the Damascus Road and blinded his eyes so that he could see.

2. Stated in the Positive.

Paul, an apostle, not sent from men nor through the agency of man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead

(Galatians 1:1).

Paul's commission to apostleship had come right from the top. Jesus Christ Himself had appointed Paul and an apostle. To dispute Paul's message is to dispute Jesus Christ and God the Father. Paul is the legally appointed representative of the Godhead.

Now I want you to notice something. Paul did not have anything to do with his becoming an apostle. To the contrary, Paul's former occupation had been an enemy and a persecutor of the church. But God struck him down and called him on the Damascus Road. Paul did not choose God. It was God who chose Paul.

It is the same with us today. Our calling was probably not as dramatic as Paul's, but it is still God who chooses us and who calls us to Himself.

PAUL'S RECIPIENTS

Paul... and all the brethren who are with me, to the churches of Galatia (Galatians 1:1-2).

For the last four thousand years the plains of central Anatolia have been a smelting pot of a multitude of ethnic groups and races. From earliest history invading armies have marched through this land. This was the scene for the Hittite Civilization. Then came wave after wave of invaders -- the Phrygians, the Assyrians, the Lydians. And then came the armies of Cyrus, Darius, Xerxes and Alexander.

In the 3rd century before Christ a great migration of Germanic tribes began a push that was to influence the entire ancient world. There were three different groups involved in these movements:

- The Gauls moved into France.
- The Celts moved across the English Channel into Britain.
- The Galatians crossed the Hellespont and moved into central Anatolia. They were stopped in their eastward push by the Seleucid king Antiochus and they settled in the highlands south of the Halys River.

The Galatians came under the rule of Rome in 25 B.C. when the region was divided up into a series of Roman provinces. Thus when you spoke of the Galatians, there were two ideas which could be designated:

- (1) Old Galatia: This was made up of all of the lands in which the Gauls had settled throughout the central territories of Anatolia.
- (2) The Roman Province of Galatia: Included not only the northern territories but also most of the cities in the south that Paul and Barnabas had visited during their First Missionary Journey. Octavius Augustus had established this region as a Roman Province in 25 B.C. This included Psidian Antioch, Iconium and Lystra. In 41 A.D. the boundaries were extended southward to include Derbe.

Paul and Barnabas came to the Province of Galatia during their first missionary journey. Coming up from the ocean, they moved from city to city, setting up churches as they went. Each of these cities had a mixed population of both Jews and Gentiles. It was from the Jewish synagogues that the greatest opposition arose.



As Paul writes this epistle, it is evident that the Jewish opposition has now taken a new form. It will be in the teaching that it is necessary for one to be circumcised and become a Jewish proselyte in order to become a Christian.

Most of us do not face this kind of opposition. I know very few Christians who have struggled with whether they ought to conform to Judaism in order to be saved. If this is the case, then is this epistle important for us today? I believe that it is. Paul is going to deal with the issue of legalism.

Strictly speaking, legalism refers to a system of law-keeping. Legalism can be defined as any attempt to stand before God on the basis of my own good works. As such, there are two kinds of legalism.

- a. Legalism for Salvation: This is the attempt to try to be saved on the

basis of something that I do as opposed to something that God has done on my behalf.

- b. Legalism for Spirituality: This is the attempt to try to be spiritual merely on the basis of my own self-efforts and keeping of certain rules rather than by trusting in the Lord and depending upon His Spirit.

Notice the brevity of Paul's description of his recipients: *Paul... and all the brethren who are with me, to the churches of Galatia*. This is the only time in any of Paul's epistles that he does not include some qualifying statement when addressing a church.

- *To all who are beloved of God in Rome, called as saints* (Romans 1:7).
- *To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling* (1 Corinthians 1:2).
- *To the church of God which is at Corinth with all the saints who are throughout Achaia* (2 Corinthians 1:1).
- *To the saints who are at Ephesus, and who are faithful in Christ Jesus* (Ephesians 1:1).
- *To all the saints who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons* (Philippians 1:1).
- *To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are at Colossae* (Colossians 1:2).
- *To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ* (1 Thessalonians 1:1 and 2 Thessalonians 1:1).

There is no such qualifying statement made in this epistle. It is unique. Paul does not thank God for the Galatians. He does not praise them. He does not even state that they are in Christ. He has nothing good to say to them. Why is this? It is because he has received news that they are in the process of turning from the faith. They are denying that the death of Christ was sufficient in and of itself to save them. Their position does not lend itself to thanksgiving. There is nothing to be praised in what they are doing. It is even questionable as to whether they are really saved.

Even the Corinthians with all of their sinful practices are referred to as *those who have been sanctified* (1 Corinthians 1:2). But the Galatians are in the process of denying the very basis of any possible sanctification.

PAUL'S GREETING

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ (Galatians 1:3).

The normal greeting found in most ancient letters was only one or two words. But Paul takes it much further than this to use it as the introduction for his epistle. Most letters contained the single word *chairein* ("greeting"). An example of this is seen in the salutation of James 1:1. But instead of the usual *chairein*, Paul uses *charis* ("grace"). And that is not all. He also adds the word "peace."

The Hebrew equivalent (*shalom*) was used by the Hebrews as the greeting in the beginning of their letters, just as *chairein* was used by the Greeks. Thus, Paul's greeting combines the Greek and the Hebrew salutations into one greeting.

1. Grace and Peace.

Paul combines the Greek and Hebrew greetings in his salutation to the Galatians. However, I think that there is also another reason for this particular greeting. There is a definite order and plan to this arrangement. Peace must always come after grace. Without grace there can be no peace.

Grace is the undeserved favor of God directed toward man. It excludes all human merit. You cannot earn it through your good works. It doesn't involve anything that you can do for God. It is the sum total of all that God has done for you. The problem with the world today is that it is trying to find peace without grace. But it is only as man meets the grace of God and accepts it that he can find peace with God, with himself, and with his fellow man. This was the problem in Galatia. They were seeking peace through their own self effort. But peace cannot come through works.

2. The Source of Grace and Peace: *Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ (Galatians 1:3).*

Here is the only source of grace and peace. It is from God. The Father is mentioned first. This is because the Father holds a position that is higher than the Son (John 14:28). But our grace also comes from the Son. This is not a separate source. It is the same

source. There is a oneness among the members of the Godhead. Therefore, it is from this one source that grace and peace are offered to the Galatians.

The Galatians do not deserve this. They have been guilty of turning aside from the grace of God. They have demonstrated themselves to be undeserving. But this is how grace works. Grace is always extended to the undeserving.

PAUL'S GOSPEL

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, ⁴ who gave Himself for our sins so that He might rescue us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, ⁵ to whom be the glory forevermore. Amen. (Galatians 1:3-5).

Paul now proceeds to outline the basics of his gospel message. It can be summed up in three words: God saves sinners.

1. The Gift of the Gospel: *Who gave Himself for our sins* (1:4).

Paul turns to the mechanics of how grace and peace have been brought to man. It is through the death of Christ. Paul considers three aspects of that death: The sacrifice, the purpose, and the origin of the plan. The death of Christ involved the greatest sacrifice ever made. He literally gave Himself for us. He did this willingly. At His own trial before Pilate, He testified that no man was able to take His life from Him.

Now let me ask you a question. For how many of our sins did Christ give Himself? The answer is obvious. He gave Himself for all our sins. If He gave Himself for all our sins, then how many of our sins are still separating us from the love of God? None at all! This means that the sin issue has been settled forever with reference to our right to approach God.

The error of the Galatians was over this very point. They felt that the work of Christ on the cross was not enough in itself to take away their sins. They thought that they had to add something to the work of Christ if they were to have a right standing before God. But Christ's sacrifice was able to accomplish what it was designed to do.

Who gave...	Himself...	for our sins
So that He might rescue...	Us...	from this present evil age

2. The Goal of the Gospel: *So that He might rescue us from this present evil age (1:4).*

This is what Christ's death was designed to do. It was a rescue mission. It was to save us. This is important. If the Galatians cannot be saved through faith in the finished work of Christ, then Christ's work must not be enough. If Christ's work is not enough to save, then Christ died uselessly.

These Galatians who were placing themselves back under the law were allowing themselves to be enslaved. Those who had been delivered from bondage were placing the chains back upon their members.

3. The Plan of the Gospel: *According to the will of our God and Father (1:4).*

Now we come to the origin of the plan. The death of Christ was according to the will of the Father. We read elsewhere in the Bible that the death of Christ was planned by God before time began:

*“This Man, delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death.”
(Acts 2:23).*

Who has saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity. (2 Timothy 1:9).

The death of Christ was no accident. It was the reason for which He came to earth. That plan includes our freedom. The end result is that God is glorified.

4. The Glory of the Gospel: *To whom be the glory forevermore. Amen*

(Galatians 1:5).

Here is the point of legalism. Legalism always glorifies man. We look at man's work, man's obedience, man's righteousness, even man's faith. But the true gospel always glorifies God. Notice the tenses that are used throughout these two verses. They reflect the three tenses that are used of our salvation.

Past Tense	Present Tense	Future Tense
<i>Who gave Himself for our sins</i>	<i>So that He might rescue us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father</i>	<i>To whom be the glory forevermore</i>

Our salvation is seen in all three tenses. There is a time when Christ came and accomplished the work of our salvation upon the cross in His death, burial and resurrection. That salvation is today being carried out through the Spirit. There is coming a day when it shall be completed.

Discussion Questions

- What does it mean to you that the Bible contains personal letters to various churches?
- Paul was sent by Jesus Christ as an apostle. Is there a calling in your own life to which you feel the Lord has directed you?
- Have you come to the place in your spiritual life where you know that you have received God's gift of eternal life?
- If you were to stand before God today and He were to ask you why He should let you into His heaven, what would you say?

DESERTERS OF THE GOSPEL

GALATIANS 1:6-10

From the earliest history of military organizations, generals have wrestled with the problem of deserters — those men who had once pledged themselves to the service of their country, but when faced with the fire of the enemy, have abandoned their company. The penalty for desertion on the battlefield has always been most severe, reflecting the serious nature of the infraction. The Christian church has not been immune to this phenomenon. Paul, near the end of his life, wrote of Demas who had deserted the cause of Christ because of love for the present world (2 Timothy 4:10).

The churches of Galatia were going through this same problem. They had become citizens of heaven and heirs of the kingdom through faith in Jesus Christ. They had entered into the spiritual conflict against sin and against Satan. But now they were deserting and going over to the enemy. And so, Paul rebukes them. This section will be comprised in three parts:

- | | |
|----|---|
| 1. | Paul's Amazement at their sudden Desertion of the Gospel (1:6-7). |
| 2. | Paul's Mandate concerning the Preachers of this other Gospel (1:8-9). |
| 3. | Paul's Motivation in Preaching the True Gospel (1:10). |

In this paragraph, Paul outlines the problem in the churches of Galatia. The root of the problem was that a false message was being preached and the Galatians were leaving the truth to follow the lie. What was this false message? It was a message concerning the gospel. It was an addition to the gospel. It stated that a man is only saved who believes in Jesus and then keeps the Mosaic Law.

Don't miss this! They did not outwardly deny salvation through faith. They merely said that good works were also necessary with that faith. But this message was a lie. Paul is going to announce that it is accursed.

You see, when Satan wants to preach his lie, he does not tell men that the death of Christ was worthless or that faith in Christ cannot save. Rather,

he states that you must add something of your own effort to secure that salvation. His teachers agree that salvation is by grace, but then they want to add to that grace some of their own efforts. To do so is to change from truth to error.

It is easy to distort the gospel. Just add something to it. Many modern day cults and religions are doing the same thing today. You can listen to a sermon for an hour and hear a number of things said which are absolutely true. But then the preacher turns around and adds doctrinal error to the end of his message. The result is usually a false gospel. This was the case in the Galatian churches. The false teachers came in and they used Scriptural terms and “God words” and smiled as they taught their lies. Instead of standing up for the clarity of the gospel, the Galatians sat and nodded their heads and were swept away.

PAUL’S AMAZEMENT

I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; 7 which is really not another, only there are some who are disturbing you, and want to distort the gospel of Christ. (Galatians 1:6-7).

Immediately following his opening salutation and introduction, Paul launches into the purpose of his epistle. There is no beating around the bush. Paul comes right to the heart of the matter.

1. Amazement over the Desertion: *I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him (1:6).*

How can we miss the deep emotion of this passage? Paul is shocked. He is amazed. But I want you to notice just what he is amazed at. It is not over the fact that false teachers had come. He expects that. He knows that false teachers will come.

But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, 2 by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron, 3 men who forbid

marriage and advocate abstaining from foods, which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth. (1 Timothy 4:1-3).

Paul isn't surprised that false teachers have come into the church. What surprises him is that the Galatian believers have been so quickly deceived by their message. A general may expect a few desertions over the course of many years of warfare. But he doesn't expect to walk outside his tent on the second day of the campaign and find that his entire army has gone A.W.O.L.

Notice that they were not merely deserting Paul or Paul's message. They are deserting the One whom Paul represents. They are deserting God.

2. The Issue of Paul's Amazement: *You are so quickly deserting Him... for a different gospel (1:6).*

The gospel that Paul had preached was that salvation was through faith in the finished work of Christ. The message that the false teachers were preaching was that salvation was through faith in the finished work of Christ — plus the keeping of the Law.

Thus the issue becomes clear. Salvation is either through faith alone, or it is through faith plus something else. It does not matter what else you add to faith. Anything will do. It can be faith plus baptism. Faith plus joining a certain church. Faith plus giving a certain amount of money. Faith plus keeping the Ten Commandments. Faith plus doing the best you can. Faith plus anything. Anything that you add to the gospel makes it a different gospel. And a different gospel is not a gospel at all. Paul makes this very clear.

3. The Problems behind Paul's Amazement: *Which is really not another (1:7).*

The word "gospel" is translated from the Greek word *euaggelion*, meaning "good message" or "good news." But a message that teaches that the work of Christ on the cross was not enough to secure my salvation cannot be referred to as good news." Such a message would be bad news. Thus Paul denies that there are two gospels.

The message of the false teachers is not a gospel at all. This goes directly against the grain of many religious leaders of today. People are teaching that there are many ways to God, that there is really no difference between Roman Catholics and Mormons, Christian Science and

Buddhism, Judaism and true Christianity. They become angry at any teaching which claims to be exclusive. But truth is always exclusive. Truth is not the same as non-truth. Jesus taught this same exclusiveness.

There are two different Greek words that can be translated “another.”

- *Eteros* (ἕτερος): Another of a different kind (NAS translates this as “different” in verse 6).
- *Allos* (ἄλλος): Another of the same kind (used in verse 7 to say that such a false gospel is really not *another*).

Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the lifer no one comes to the Father but through Me.” (John 14:6).

You cannot get much more exclusive than this! Jesus didn’t teach that there are many ways to find God. He did not say that His way was one from among many. He claimed to be the only way that a man can come before God. This is the gospel, the good news that Paul proclaimed. Any other message to the contrary is not a gospel at all.

4. The Disturbing Nature of this Amazement: *Only there are some who are disturbing you, and want to distort the gospel of Christ (1:7).*

Now Paul brings his charges against the false teachers. There are two charges brought against them.

- a. They are disturbing.

Notice that this is in the present tense. This activity was going on even as Paul wrote his epistle. The believers in Galatia were being agitated and confused by the false teachings which were being presented.

This is the difference between truth and error. Truth is

instructive. Truth is designed to build you up and make you solid. Error is destructive. Error will always cloud the issue, pull you down, and confuse you.

- b. They are distorting.

The false teachers have a specific end in view. They desire to distort the gospel of Christ. They have no sincere desire to know the truth for themselves. Their motives are not pure. They are only doing this for what they can get out of it. This is the mark of a false teacher. He has selfish motives. He wants to bring believers into bondage (Galatians 2:4). He wants to lift himself up. He does this by taking people's attention off Christ and focusing it on himself. Paul will describe this process in Galatians 4.

They eagerly seek you, not commendably, but they wish to shut you out, in order that you may seek them. (Galatians 4:17).

You see, the false teachers wanted to be teachers of the Law. If they could get people to set their attention on the laws and traditions of the Jews rather than on Christ, then they could set themselves up as teachers and leaders in the churches. Above all else, the false teachers wanted to be praised and respected and revered by men. They wanted to take the place of God.

There is an application for us here. We all like to be praised and respected and revered. Such desires can become an idol of the heart. It is not long before we desire the praise and respect of men over an above being pleasing to God.

PAUL'S MANDATE

But even though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed.

As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed. (Galatians 1:8-9).

Verses 8 and 9 present two hypothetical situations. At first glance they seem to be very similar. But we shall see that there are some very important differences.

Verse 8	Verse 9
Hypothetical Situation	Actual Situation
<i>Even though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you</i>	<i>If any man is preaching to you</i>
<i>A gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you</i>	<i>A gospel contrary to that which you received</i>
<i>Let him be accursed</i>	

1. The First Situation — An Improbable Hypothesis: *But even though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you (1:8).*

The first hypothetical situation is obviously improbable. It is not very likely that Paul is going to preach a different gospel than the one which he has preached to the Galatians. It is even less likely that an angel is going to come from heaven and preach a different gospel. But even if this happens, the result will be the same. That one will be accursed.

Do you see the point? It is not the preacher that makes the gospel true, it is the gospel that makes the preacher true. False teachers come in all different shapes and sizes. You might even find a false teacher with the purest motives. But that doesn't make him right. You don't judge the truthfulness of a message by the status of the man who is preaching it. If you do this, then you will quickly fall into Satan's trap, for his preachers often have the very best credentials.

For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ.

14 And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.

Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness whose end shall be according to their deeds. (2 Corinthians 11:13-15).

Satan is a master of deceit and disguise. His church does not have a big sign outside which says, “False doctrine taught here.” His followers pretend to be teachers of the truth. This is why you must always examine the message that is being taught. It does not matter who is teaching. Even if the apostle Paul himself comes back from the dead or if an angel comes down from heaven to announce a different gospel, then it is not true.

2. A Resulting Curse: *Let him be accursed* (1:8).

The word “accursed” is translated from the term *anathema*. This is a compound word made up of *ana* (on) and *tithemi* (to put). Plutarch used this word to describe the consecration of offerings in the Greek temple. Later it came to describe something that had been consecrated to divine wrath with destruction as its end result.

This same word is used in the Septuagint of Joshua 7:11 to describe those things that were placed under the ban. Aachen had taken some of those things that had been dedicated to destruction and, as a result, he brought destruction upon his entire household. This is heavy language. Paul is saying that even if he changes his message, then he is to be put in God’s hands to be destroyed.

3. The Second Situation — A Current Problem: *If any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed* (1:9).

Now Paul repeats his mandate. However, within the repetition there are some very important distinctions. This begins with a different type of conditional clause than we find in verse 8. There are four conditional clauses in the Greek language. Each type has a different implication.

- The first class condition assumes the hypothesis to be true.
- The second class condition assumes it to be false.

- The third class indicates uncertainty.

It is this third class which was used in verse 8. It is unlikely that Paul, his companions, or an angel from heaven would preach a different gospel, but it is still a remote possibility. But here in verse 9 we have the first class condition. It indicates that the condition was in fact a reality. There were at that moment men who were preaching a contrary gospel to the Galatians.

Verse 8	Verse 9
<i>If we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you</i>	<i>If any man is preaching to you</i>
Third Class Condition: Perhaps it is true and perhaps it is not true	First Class Condition: It is assumed to be true

There is no doubt about it. Paul is directing this mandate toward the false teachers. This is more than just a scathing rebuke. It is a pronouncement of judgment. Instead of Paul and angels, this mandate is directed to anyone who is preaching a false gospel.

Do you see the point? It does not matter who is doing the preaching. The important thing is not who is doing the preaching, the important thing is what is being preached.

PAUL'S MOTIVATION

For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ. (Galatians 1:10).

Now Paul turns to the question of motives. He evidently had been accused of changing the truth of the gospel so that he would be more popular among the Gentiles. It had been said that he was making it easier for Gentiles to become Christians by doing away with the Mosaic Law — that his message of salvation through faith alone was a watering down of the truth. The same charge is often made against those who preach salvation through

faith today. They are denounced as preaching “easy believism” and accused of making the gospel to easy and too simple for people to accept.

Paul did have a tendency to tailor his actions based upon those who were his recipients. He says that to the Jews he became as a Jew to with those who were under the Law. And to those who were apart from the Law, he became as one who was freed from the Law (1 Corinthians 9:20-21).

But Paul’s message did not change when it ran into opposition or became unpopular with a certain group. To the contrary, he was ready to stand up for the truth of the gospel to the point of death. This had been demonstrated at the Galatian church of Lystra where he had been stoned and left for dead because of the anger of the Jews at his message (Acts 14:19-20).

By the same token, Paul would not be using the type of stern rebuke that he was making toward the Galatians and toward the false teachers if he were only interested in pleasing men. The very fact that he has just spoken so harshly is evidence that he is not out to win a popularity contest.

Let’s face it, Paul wouldn’t have made a good advertisement for the book “How to Win Friends and Influence People.” He would have made a terrible politician. Look at the things that he called the Galatians: Deserters, accursed, foolish (and he repeats this twice in case they didn’t get it the first time).

Thus, Paul is able to clearly demonstrate that it is God whom he is trying to please and that it is Christ whom he continues to serve. He is no renegade from the army of heaven. His status is not that of a deserter from the gospel of Christ. He is not a turncoat. He is an apostle of Christ Jesus. And the gospel that he preaches is the gospel of Christ.

CONCLUDING LESSONS

1. The Precariousness of the Church.

Paul had left the churches in Galatia in reasonable health. From his words, we gather that there had not been a great deal of time that passed since he had last been with them. How long does it take for sheep to go astray? I have never watched sheep, but I used to have a friend that did. You can take your eyes off them for just a few moments and they will be scattered. Put a wolf in their midst, and the scattering will be to the four winds. The lesson is that we need to be on guard, both personally and for the church in which we serve.

2. The Passion for the Gospel

Paul does not see this as a mere theological issue that can be calmly debated. It is not on the same level as disputes about Calvinism versus Arminianism or various views of eschatology. This is a matter of life and of death. And Paul speaks out with a passion that befits the seriousness of the issue.

Do you have a passion for the gospel? You ought to have a passion for those things about which God is also passionate. The gospel ought to be that for which you hunger and thirst. I didn't say that; Jesus did. He spoke of coming to Him and eating of Him and drinking of Him.

3. The Poison of a False Gospel

It doesn't take much to turn the truth into error. It does not take much to turn the true gospel into a false message. It only takes the addition of a little error. Imagine someone offering you a cup of coffee, but as you prepared to drink, they said, "Oh by the way, I put a couple of drops of arsenic into your drink. But it was only a few drops and the coffee is mostly good, so drink up!" It does not take much to poison a cup of coffee. And it does not take much to poison the gospel, either.

Discussion Questions

- What is the Gospel?
- What are some of the distortions of the Gospel that are common today?
- Paul's reaction to the situation in the churches of Galatia is filled with emotion and pathos. What is there within the church today that generates that level of emotion and pathos in your heart?
- How would you answer the charge that the claims of Christianity are intolerant toward other religions?
- What motivates you to live the Christian life? Or if you do not see yourself as a Christian, what motivates you in your life?

THE SOURCE OF THE GOSPEL

GALATIANS 1:11-24

Most Christian leaders can look back and point to those who were instrumental in teaching them and in molding and shaping their lives. It may have been the work of a single teacher or pastor, but more often it has been the ministry of a number of men, each who contributed something toward the growth of that growing Christian.

The Bible is full of examples of this process. Moses trained up his servant Joshua to be a leader of men. Elijah taught Elisha, both through word and through example. John the Baptist had his disciples, one of whom was Andrew, the brother of Peter. The ministry of Jesus with the Twelve is a classic example of the process of discipleship.

Priscilla and Aquila took Apollos under their wing and taught him. Paul gave specific instructions to Timothy on how to train up teachers who would be able to teach others.

But the case of Paul is unique. Who discipled him? Who explained to him all of the truths of the gospel? It is true that Ananias was sent to Paul after he had been blinded on the road to Damascus. But we read through that passage in vain to find any mention of Ananias or anyone else who taught Paul the gospel which he now preached. Who taught Paul his gospel? The answer is given here in the epistle to the Galatians. The One who gave Paul his gospel is the same One who gave Paul his apostleship. It came through Jesus Christ and God the Father. Paul set this forth at the very beginning of this epistle.

Paul, an apostle (not sent from men, nor through the agency of man, but through Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead). (Galatians 1:1).

Paul had not been appointed as an apostle through the vote of any council or group in Jerusalem. No man or group of men had made Paul an apostle. Jesus Christ had commissioned Paul. It was Jesus Christ who had given Paul the message that he now preached.

This is important. Paul was not just defending his good name or his honor. It was the message that he preached that had come under attack. He sets out to prove that he had the authority from Jesus Christ to preach this message. Just as his apostleship was from Jesus Christ, so also the message that he preaches is also from Jesus Christ.

Paul has been accused of changing the message that was preached by the apostles at Jerusalem. However, Paul will show that the message that he preached was not given to him by anyone in Jerusalem. His message is from God.

1:11	The Source of Paul's Gospel	Not according to man I received it... <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Neither from man• Nor was I taught it• But through a revelation of Jesus Christ
1:13	Paul's Former Manner of Life in Judaism	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Persecuted the church of God• Tried to destroy it• Advancing in Judaism• Extremely zealous
1:15	Paul's Conversion	BUT WHEN HE... <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Who set me apart• Called me through His grace WAS PLEASED to reveal His Son in me... <ul style="list-style-type: none">• I did not...<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Consult with flesh and blood- Go up to Jerusalem• I went away to Arabia and returned once more to Damascus
1:18	Paul's Visit to Jerusalem	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Three years later• Fifteen days• Peter and James, the Lord's brother
1:21	Paul in Syria and Cilicia	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Unknown by sight in Judea• They only heard• They glorified God

This section and the chapter that follows form the closest thing that we can find to an autobiography of the life of Paul. And yet, the theme is not

the life of Paul but his relationship to the gospel and the authority that was given to him to preach it. This is made very clear in the first two verses.

THE SOURCE OF PAUL'S GOSPEL

For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man.

For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ. (Galatians 1:11-12).

These two verses introduce the theme which will run to the end of Galatians 2. Everything else that is said in these first two chapters will be designed to prove the truth presented here. It is that the gospel that Paul preached was not given to him by man or even through a group of men, but came to him directly from Jesus Christ.

1. A Gospel not according to Man: *For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. (1:11).*

Paul's message did not have man as its source. Man was not involved in the planning of the gospel. Man was not involved in the presenting of the gospel to Paul. In fact, the gospel was not even the kind of message that man would have given if he had so desired.

Paul literally says, "The <i>gospel</i> which was <i>gospelized</i> by me is not according to man" (το εὐαγγέλιον εὐαγγελισρεν).

Man likes the kind of message that shows him in a good light. People flock to the "self-improvement" type of message. But the gospel isn't like this. The gospel says that you are helpless to really improve yourself. The gospel says that the very best that you can do to make yourself better isn't good enough. The gospel says that your self-effort will send you to hell. This gospel isn't man's gospel. This gospel is not according to man.

2. A Gospel not received by Man: *For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it (1:12).*

Paul did not get the gospel second or third hand. It was not hearsay. He didn't take a course entitled "Gospel 101" at the Jerusalem Baptist Bible College. He didn't even get his gospel from the other apostles at the church in Jerusalem.

This is in direct contrast to the Jewish false teachers. These men had not gotten their teachings from Jesus Christ. They hadn't gotten their teachings from the apostles in Jerusalem or even from the Scriptures.

They had gotten their teachings out of the oral traditions of the Jews. Everything that they taught came from what some other man had taught. The Jewish theology was a theology based on the traditions and the speculations and the sayings of men. They took their teachings from the Mishnah, the Talmud, and the Midrashim (and they still do). These books were nothing more than commentaries and oral laws and traditions of men.

3. A Revealed Gospel: *But I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ. (1:12).*

The message that Paul preaches came to him directly from Jesus Christ. This is foundational. The words that Paul writes are the words of God.

I remember talking to someone who used to read a red-letter Bible. All of the words of Jesus were typed in red letters while the rest of the pages were in a normal black print. There is nothing wrong with this, but this person had the idea that the words in red letters must be "more true" than the rest of the Bible. Nothing could be further from the truth. All of the Bible is the word of God.

*All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable
for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training
in righteousness. (2 Timothy 3:16).*

Every single part of the Bible is the Word of God. There are not some parts that are more inspired than other parts. Paul received the gospel in a way that is totally different from the way we receive it. We receive it from man. We are taught it by a Bible teacher or an evangelist. We receive it through what other men have written. But Paul didn't get the gospel that way. He didn't even get it from reading the Bible. He got it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

But that is not all. Jesus not only gave him the revelation.

Jesus was the revelation. It was not just a revelation from Christ. It was a revelation of Christ.

PAUL'S FORMER LIFE IN JUDAISM

For you have heard of my former manner of life in Judaism, how I used to persecute the church of God beyond measure, and tried to destroy it; ¹⁴ and I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my countrymen, being more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions. (Galatians 1:13-14).

Paul's first line of evidence that he did not invent his own gospel but received it from Jesus Christ is his former lifestyle. It is very evident from Paul's past life that he would not have chosen to be a Christian apart from supernatural intervention.

1. Paul's Reputation: *For you have heard of my former manner of life in Judaism (1:13).*

Paul had been a Pharisee, holding to the literal interpretations of the Law and the Prophets. He was not merely a Jew. He was the wonder-boy of Orthodox Judaism. His zeal and his knowledge and his natural ability had taken him far and promised to take him even farther. His teacher was the famous Gamaliel. He held the traditions of his fathers with a deep fervor. He considered himself blameless under the Law.

2. An Enemy of the Church: *I used to persecute the church of God beyond measure, and tried to destroy it (1:13).*

Paul was the product of his religious upbringing. He was fanatical in his beliefs. He viewed Christianity as the ultimate blasphemy and sought to stamp it out. He seems to have been personally responsible for the execution of Stephen. He began going through private homes throughout Jerusalem, arresting Christians and having them imprisoned. It came to the point where he could not find any more Christians in Jerusalem and so he received permission to travel to Damascus to persecute Christians there.

Do you see the point that Paul is making? There was absolutely nothing in his life or background that would cause him to invent or hold to the kind of gospel that Paul now held. Something happened to Paul. And no convincing preacher could have ever changed his mind. It took God's direct intervention to change the mind of Paul. Thus, we can see that Paul never got his message from men. There was nothing in his prior life that would have allowed him to accept such a message.

PAUL'S CONVERSION

But when He who had set me apart, even from my mother's womb, and called me through his grace, was pleased ¹⁶ to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood, ¹⁷ nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away to Arabia, and returned once more to Damascus. (Galatians 1:15-17).

Paul did not stop and reflect one day, saying, "I think that I will change the way I believe so that Gentiles can be saved more easily." Paul didn't hear someone preach the gospel and have it make sense to him. In fact, this passage doesn't describe Paul making any kind of decision at all. The decision had already been made for him.

1. A Sovereign Calling: *But when He who had set me apart, even from my mother's womb, and called me through his grace, was pleased ¹⁶ to reveal His Son in me (1:15-16).*

Paul didn't choose God. It was God who chose Paul. Paul didn't realize it at the time, but he had been chosen by God all of his life, from the time he took his first breath to that day on the Damascus Road. Paul gave an official account of that day in his defense before King Agrippa.

"While thus engaged as I was journeying to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests, ¹³ at midday, O King, I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining all

around me and those who were journeying with me.

“And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew dialect, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.’

“And I said, ‘Who art Thou, Lord?’ And the Lord said, ‘I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.

“‘But arise, and stand on your feet; for this purpose I have appeared to you, to appoint you a minister and a witness not only to the things which you have seen, but also to the things in which I will appear to you.’” (Acts 26:12-16).

Paul had no say in the matter. It was right there on the Damascus Road that God called him to be an apostle. He who had been commissioned by the chief priests to destroy the church was now commissioned as a minister and a witness for the Head of that church. God chose the greatest enemy of the church and made him into His personal representative.

God didn’t choose Paul because he was faithful or because he was devout or because he deserved to be chosen. God didn’t even choose Paul because He foresaw that Paul would believe. God chose the way He did because it pleased Him to do so.

Now we can understand the point that Paul is making. He did not get his apostleship or his authority from men. He did not decide one day that he would take up apostling. God had set him apart to be an apostle from his mother’s womb. From the time that Paul was born, he was destined to be an apostle and he didn’t have anything to do with it. God stopped Paul on the Damascus Road and turned his



life around.

This should come as no surprise to us. This is the way that God always works. He is the same God who chose John the Baptist before he was even conceived. He is the same God who named Cyrus as his servant over a hundred years before Cyrus was even born. He is the same God who chose us to be in Him before the foundation of the world. And, just as God called Paul on the Damascus Road, so He has called each of us who have come to Him. Our call may not have been accompanied with shining light or a voice from heaven, but it was no less compelling.

2. An Absence of Human Consultation: *I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood, ¹⁷ nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me (1:16).*

Most brand new believers are in desperate need of some flesh and blood consultation. A new believer is like a newborn baby. He needs to be carefully and tenderly looked after. He needs to be fed a good diet of the milk of the Word. He needs to be spiritually burped of the gas of legalism and humanism that he is so quick to swallow. And God uses other believers to perform these tasks. But Paul's case was unique.

As a new believer, he was not disciplined by others. Instead, he immediately began to preach the gospel. From the moment that his blinded eyes were opened, Paul began to do the work of an apostle.

And immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he regained his sight, and he arose and was baptized: ¹⁹ and he took food and was strengthened. Now for several days he was with the disciples who were at Damascus.

And immediately he began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "He is the Son of God." (Acts 9:18-20).

Notice that Paul immediately began to preach Jesus among the Jews. He did not first take out four years to go to Seminary. He did not even travel down to Jerusalem to confirm his apostleship with the other apostles that were there. When he finally did leave Damascus, it was to journey to the deserts of Arabia before returning once again to Damascus.

Many have thought that perhaps it was during the sojourn in Arabia that Jesus Christ personally taught Paul. However, such an incident is not clearly mentioned here. The truth is that Paul had already been taught the fundamental truth of the cross and the resurrected Christ on the Damascus Road. This was to become the basis for all future teaching.

3. Arabia and Damascus: *I went away to Arabia, and returned once more to Damascus(1:17).*

We do not know exactly how long this sojourn in Arabia lasted. We do know that it took place within the first three years of Paul's conversion. The point is that if Paul was in Arabia and then in Damascus, then he wasn't in Jerusalem being taught his message by the apostles. Paul's apostleship was independent of the Jerusalem apostles. His apostleship was only dependent upon Jesus Christ.

Now I want to ask you a question. Why did Paul go to Arabia? We are not told. Perhaps he wanted to be alone with God and reorganize his thoughts. Remember, the revelation of Jesus Christ had blasted away the very foundations of the Pharisaic theology that he had once championed. Thus, he no doubt needed time alone with God so that he could learn the dynamics of which he would later pass on to us through his epistles. However, I do not think that we can conclude that Paul remained idle during this period. To the contrary, by the end of these three years, the Jews in Damascus were doing all they could to put him to death.



And when many days had elapsed, the Jews plotted

together to do away with him, 24 but their plot became known to Saul. And they were also watching the gates day and night so that they might put him to death: 25 but his disciples took him by night, and let him down through an opening in the wall, lowering him in a large basket. (Acts 9:23-25).

The Jews would not have been concerned with Paul if he had been an unknown hermit during this period. The truth was that he must have been overturning the city with his teaching for them to take such extreme measures against him. Notice that it was his disciples who helped him to escape the city. The fact that he had disciples shows that he had an active teaching ministry during this period.

There is a lesson here. It is that spiritual reflection does not occur in a vacuum. It takes place in the context of ministry and people. That is not to say that one should never have a quiet time to be alone with the Lord. But such periods are to be balanced in with time in community with other believers and in reaching out to the world.

PAUL'S VISIT TO JERUSALEM

Then three years later I went up to Jerusalem to become acquainted with Cephas, and stayed with him fifteen days.

But I did not see any other of the apostles except James, the Lord's brother.

Now in what I am writing to you, I assure you before God that I am not lying. (Galatians 1:18-20).

Paul had been a believer and had been preaching the gospel and had been making disciples in Damascus for three years before he ever visited Jerusalem or had any direct contact with any of the apostles. It is only at the end of this period that he journeyed there to meet Peter.

1. A Meeting with Cephas: *I went up to Jerusalem to become acquainted with Cephas (1:18).*

Notice that the purpose of this visit was to get to know Cephas. I suppose that we ought to mention that Cephas is the

Aramaic word for the Greek name *Petros* (Peter). Both names can be translated “the rock” although we would probably shorten it to “Rocky.” This was the nickname that Jesus had given to Simon upon their first encounter (John 1:42).

Paul’s reason for this trip is clearly stated. It was not so that he could become acquainted with the gospel. It was so he could become acquainted with Peter.

This does not mean that Paul was indifferent to the intimate knowledge that Peter had of Jesus. I am sure he took advantage of Peter’s experiences to learn something of the words and works of Jesus. Peter had been an eye-witness of much of what Jesus said and did.

However, Paul did not depend on Peter for the truth of his message or for the authority of his apostleship. Neither was he taught the whole counsel of God by this visit. He makes this clear by referring to the length of that visit.

2. A Short Sojourn: *...and stayed with him fifteen days* (1:18).

This short period of time was not enough for Paul to get a degree in Saint Peter’s Bible College. In fact, Paul did not spend this time merely listening to Peter or anyone else. This was an active time of ministry for Paul.

And he was with them moving about freely in Jerusalem, speaking out boldly in the name of the Lord. 29 And he was talking and arguing with the Hellenistic Jews, but they were attempting to put him to death.

But when the brethren learned of it, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him away to Tarsus. (Acts 9:28-30).

Paul did not spend his time sitting at the feet of Peter. The greater part of his time here was spent in active ministry. He was out preaching in the streets of Jerusalem. By the end of the second week, he had raised such a commotion that the Jews were trying to kill him.

This is clearly not the actions of a second class apostle who has come to learn the message that he will teach. The conclusion is unavoidable. Paul received his apostleship and his message independent of the apostles and the church at Jerusalem.

PAUL'S MINISTRY IN SYRIA AND CILICIA

Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. 22 And I was still unknown by sight to the churches of Judea which were in Christ; 23 but only, they kept hearing, "He who once persecuted us is now preaching the faith which he once tried to destroy." 24 And they were glorifying God because of me (Galatians 1:21-24).

After this short trip to Jerusalem, Paul was forced to leave the city and travel to the north because of the intense persecution at the hands of the Jews. Luke tells us that some of the believers in Jerusalem took him to the seacoast city of Caesarea and put him on a ship for Tarsus, his hometown in Cilicia (Acts 9:30).

1. Syria and Cilicia: *I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia (1:21).*



Syria was known as the crossroads of the Middle East. Caravans traveling from Asia to Europe or to Egypt found their routes going through Syria. Antioch and Damascus were the two major cities of this region and Paul's ministry in each city was extensive. Cilicia was a coastal region hemmed in on the east, north, and west by high mountains. Its principle city was Tarsus, the original home of Paul. It was to these two regions that Paul now came to minister. How

successful was Paul's ministry during this period? We are not given any specifics, but we can take note that the church at Antioch eventually would begin to send financial support to the Jerusalem believers and it would be this church that would finance Paul's first two missionary journeys.

The point that Paul is making is that he could not have been disciplined by the apostles (or anyone else) in Jerusalem during this period if he was planting churches and preaching the gospel in Syria and Cilicia.

2. The Unknown Apostle: *I was still unknown by sight to the churches of Judea* (1:22).

Paul did not have his picture stamped on a missionary letter and sent down to the churches of Judea. They didn't even know what he looked like. They knew him only by reputation. But what a reputation!

3. A Reputation of Preaching: *They kept hearing, "he who once persecuted us is now preaching the faith which he once tried to destroy"* (1:23).

They had first begun to hear of Paul's conversion when Paul made his fifteen day visit to Jerusalem. But many of the believers had thought that it must be some kind of Jewish trick. It is almost as though they couldn't believe that God had the kind of power that would change a man like Paul.

But as time passed and Paul returned to the north, the reports of his activities continued to be rumored throughout Jerusalem and Judea. These rumors were very explicit. They stated that Paul was now preaching the faith which he once tried to destroy.

Notice what these rumors did not say. They did not say that Paul had changed the gospel. They did not say that Paul had invented a new gospel. The gospel he was preaching was the same that the apostles and elders and deacons of the Jerusalem church had been persecuted for preaching.

Paul concludes this section of his argument. He is an apostle. His authority is independent of anyone in Jerusalem. His authority is from God and his message is from God. He has demonstrated that his gospel could not have come from any other source...

- Before his conversion because he was against that message.
- After his conversion because he met with none of the other apostles.

As we shall see in chapter 2, when he finally did have some significant interaction with Peter, it was not a case of Peter giving revelation to Paul, but Paul giving revelation to Peter.

Discussion Questions

- Many of us have been impacted by our religious or non-religious upbringing. How has your upbringing made a difference in your life?
- What is the different between a “self improvement” message versus the Gospel?
- What place does the Bible have in how you lead your life and in how you make your day-to-day decisions?
- Do you define your faith in terms of what you know, who you know or how you feel? Explain the difference.

CONFIRMATION BY THE JERUSALEM CHURCH

GALATIANS 2:1-10

Throughout Paul's ministry, he was continually faced with the attacks of those who sought to discredit him. So determined were his enemies that they had him stoned, beaten, arrested and imprisoned, all for the crime of preaching the truth in love. But the attacks against Paul and his message were not limited to the outward and the obvious. Much more devastating were those subtle moves against him which pretended to be for the cause of Christ. Such were the false teachers who had infiltrated the churches of Galatia. They did not deny that Christ had died for sins. They merely added the keeping of the Law as a requirement for salvation.

The tactics of the enemy have not changed much in 2000 years. The same false doctrine has infiltrated many churches today. There are many who would label the teaching of justification by faith as an "easy believism theology." They insist that certain outward actions are necessary prerequisites to salvation. The substance of these works differ from church to church. They include such things as baptism, church membership, verbal pronouncements of allegiance, tithing, and even extend to such extremes as the length of a person's hair or the type of music to which he listens. It does not matter what form of works you might subscribe to. Anything that you add to the gospel renders it accursed.

The false teachers who had come into the churches of Galatia claimed to be representatives of the Jerusalem church and the Twelve Apostles who used that church as their base of operations. They had charged Paul with being a secondary and subservient apostle who was given his message third hand from the Twelve.

In chapter 1 of Galatians, Paul goes to great lengths to demonstrate that his gospel and his apostleship was given to him, not from Peter or James or any of the other apostles, but from God. He did this by relating his conversion experience and then by showing what little contact he had with the church at Jerusalem in the years that followed. The conclusion is that Paul was independent of the Jerusalem apostles.

This brings up another problem. The accusation can now be made that Paul is merely a renegade, that he has departed from the truth because he never had the truth and that this is demonstrated by his lack of cooperation with the church and the apostles at Jerusalem. Therefore Paul now sets out to show how the church at Jerusalem had confirmed both his apostleship as well as his message.

He has already related the divine revelation of the gospel. He now relates the human endorsement of that same gospel. This endorsement will show that the gospel that Paul preaches is the same that is preached by the apostles in Jerusalem.

2:1	Coming to Jerusalem	His traveling companions <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Barnabas• Titus Because of a Revelation A meeting in private
2:3	Compulsion Attempted	Titus was not compelled to be circumcised <ul style="list-style-type: none">• False teachers• Sneaked in to spy• We did not yield
2:6	Commendation of the Apostles	Those of high reputation contributed nothing new. On the contrary, they ... <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gave the right hand of fellowship• Asked us to remember the poor

This section can be divided up into three parts.

1. Paul's Coming to Jerusalem (2:1-2).

After a period of 14 years, Paul returns to Jerusalem with Barnabas and Titus to proclaim the gospel that had been preached among the Gentiles.

2. The Compulsion of Titus (2:3-5).

When the news broke out that Titus, an uncircumcised Greek, was traveling with Paul and was considered to be a Christian brother, pressure was brought to bear to compel Titus to submit to the rite of

circumcision. However, neither Titus or Paul submitted to this pressure, nor did they compromise their message.

3. The Commendation by the Apostles (2:6-10).

The Jerusalem apostles demonstrated that they understood and were in agreement with Paul's message and his apostleship.

Thus, by the end of this section Paul will have shown that the very church and apostles whom the false teachers were claiming to represent, had sanctioned and commended both his apostleship as well as his gospel.

PAUL'S COMING TO JERUSALEM

Then after an interval of fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along also.

And it was because of a revelation that I went up; and I submitted to them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but I did so in private to those who were of reputation, for fear that I might be running, or had run, in vain. (Galatians 2:1-2).

Paul has already related a trip to Jerusalem that took place three years after his conversion. On that trip he had only remained fifteen days and had only met Cephas and James of the apostles. Now he tells of a later trip to Jerusalem which had a much different purpose from the first. Luke relates the events which led up to this meeting at Jerusalem in Acts 15.

And some men came down from Judea and began teaching the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved."

And when Paul and Barnabas had great dissention and debate with them, the brethren determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders concerning this issue. (Acts 15:1-2).

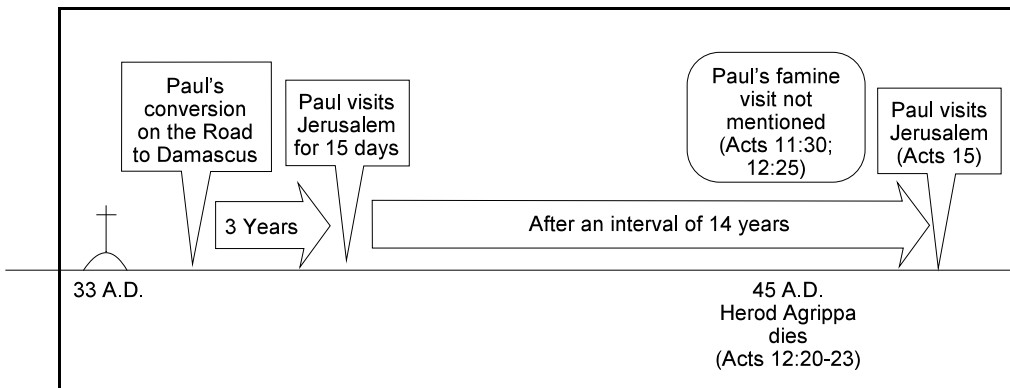
The purpose for this visit to Jerusalem was to meet with the apostles and the elders of the Jerusalem church and to officially settle the controversy

on who can be saved and how that salvation takes place. This is going to be extremely relevant to the Galatian believers. There are false teachers in their midst who are saying exactly the same thing — that you cannot be saved apart from the Jewish rite of circumcision.

This is also very relevant to us today, too. Many false teachers have come into the church today, preaching that you cannot be saved apart from baptism, apart from church membership, apart from keeping the Ten Commandments, apart from speaking in tongues. But Paul will make it very clear that anything that is added to the work of Christ in our salvation renders the effect of that work null and void.

1. The Chronology of Visits and the Famine Visit: *After an interval of fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem* (2:1).

This is fourteen years after the last visit that he had mentioned in Galatians 1:18. That trip had taken place three years after Paul's conversion. But now, as Paul makes his way once more to Jerusalem, he is no longer a new believer. He has been preaching and ministering and teaching for seventeen years.



There are some Bible teachers who have attempted to equate this visit to Jerusalem as the famine visit of Acts 11:27-30 where Paul and Barnabas were sent to Jerusalem with relief funds to assist the believers who were in financial trouble. The major problem with this view is that it does not fit the chronology of Acts. The death of Herod Agrippa (recorded in Acts 12:20-23) took place AFTER Paul and Barnabas had come to Jerusalem in this famine visit. We know from secular sources that Agrippa died in 44 A.D. If the visit recorded here in Galatians 2 is the same as the famine visit, then Paul's conversion would have had to take place in the year 27 A.D., two years before

Jesus began His public ministry!

Now we are confronted with another question. Why didn't Paul mention the famine visit in his letter to the Galatians? Won't this omission be considered as a time when Paul might have received authority or part of his message from the apostles? I don't think so. You see, it is not necessary for Paul to mention this trip because it took place quite some time after his conversion and he had already been actively preaching his gospel throughout the churches of Cilicia and Syria by this time. He has already shown that it was three years before he even visited Jerusalem, and that this initial visit had only lasted two weeks. The point that Paul learned his gospel independently of the Jerusalem apostles has already been proven.

Now Paul is going to prove a different point that his independence of the Jerusalem apostles. Now he is going to demonstrate his agreement and his unity with those apostles.

2. Barnabas.

This man needed no introduction to the Galatian believers. He had accompanied Paul in the first missionary journey that had resulted in the formation of the Galatian churches. He was a man who was well-respected by all of the believers throughout that part of the world. He would be an eye-witness of the events that Paul is now going to relate. There is something that I like about Barnabas. He seems to have had a ministry of reconciliation.

- It was Barnabas who had taken Paul at his first trip to Jerusalem and who had introduced him to Peter and the other believers of the Jerusalem church. All of the other Christians had been afraid of Paul because of his past reputation. Only Barnabas had been brave enough to take Paul and reconcile him with the church he had once persecuted.
- It was Barnabas who was sent as a representative of the Jerusalem church to visit the new believers at Antioch and to recognize that the Greek believers were also a part of the church.
- It was Barnabas who brought Paul to Antioch to be involved in an extensive teaching ministry. And it was Barnabas who was ready to forgive the defection of Mark and give him a

second chance. Barnabas had a ministry of restoration. He had that same quality that Paul would speak of in Galatians 6:1 of one who restores the believer who has been separated from the body.

3. Titus.

Titus was a Greek convert. Paul called him “my legitimate child in the faith.” Paul himself seems to have led Titus to faith in Christ. Titus is going to be “Exhibit-A” in Paul’s defense of the gospel. The false teachers have been insisting the a man cannot be a Christian unless he has been circumcised. But Paul has Titus with him. Titus is an uncircumcised Greek. He is also a Christian. His life and his actions must have been such that it was very obvious that he was a Christian and that the Holy Spirit was active in his life.

4. The Revelational Reason: *it was because of a revelation that I went up (2:2).*

Once again we see Paul’s independence of the Jerusalem church. He did not go to Jerusalem because the apostles had ordered him to do so. He went up because God had ordered him to do so. You see, the purpose of this visit was not so that Paul could get straightened out by the Jerusalem church. The purpose was so that Paul could straighten out the legalists and the confusion that had resulted in their teaching.

This revelation to go to Jerusalem was confirmed by the determination of the church at Antioch. They also voiced their decision that Paul and Barnabas should go to Jerusalem (Acts 15:2).

5. The Gospel Presented: *I submitted to them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles (2:2).*

Paul is going to let the Jerusalem church hear first-hand the message that he has been preaching among the Gentiles. He does not do this because he is unsure whether it is a true message or not. He does it to put an end to the controversy that has arisen. He does it to show that his message and the message of the apostles in Jerusalem are one and the same.

There are not two gospels. There are not two ways to be saved.

There is only the one true gospel and anything else is not really a gospel at all.

What is the gospel? It is that God has provided salvation to man through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and that this salvation can be had by anyone who believes. It does not matter whether you are a Jew or a Gentile, whether you are rich or poor, whether you are slave or free, whether you are male or female, whether you are Baptist, Presbyterian, Methodist or Catholic. The way of salvation is the same for all. It is through faith in Jesus Christ.

Now I want you to be aware of something. The false teachers were not denying the importance of the death of Christ. Neither were they claiming that Christ did not rise from the dead. They were not even teaching that you are not saved through faith in Christ. But they were saying that faith is not enough. They insisted that a man must believe in Christ PLUS proselyte to Judaism and begin to keep the Mosaic Law in order to be saved. It is for this reason that Paul has come to Jerusalem. He will reveal the lie of the false teachers for what it really is.

6. A Private Proclamation: *But I did so in private to those who were of reputation, for fear that I might be running, or had run, in vain (2:2).*

Now Paul describes the tactics that he used in dealing with a potentially explosive situation. He didn't walk into the gathering-place of the Jerusalem church on Sunday morning, stand up, and say, "Hello, I'm the Apostle Paul and I'm here to set all of you straight." If he had done this, he probably would have succeeded in tearing the church in two.

Paul used common sense. He first went to those who were respected in the church, those who held positions of responsibility. In verse 9 he will identify these men as Peter, James and John. Paul began by meeting with these men privately and explaining the situation to them. Once it has been made clear to these leaders what is happening, they will be prepared to present a united front to the rest of the church. In fact, this is exactly what finally happened.

Acts 15 tells us the outcome of these private meetings. The entire church in Jerusalem was assembled to discuss the matter. Paul and Barnabas were allowed to give a missionary report on what they had done and on the gospel that they were preaching. Then when opposition arose from the false teachers, it was not Paul or Barnabas

who answered their accusations. Rather it was Peter and James who stood up before the elders of the church and defended the message that Paul and Barnabas had been preaching.

The elders of the Jerusalem church would have thought of Paul and Barnabas as outsiders and might not have wanted to listen to their reasonings. But when those same reasonings were presented by the very men whom everyone at Jerusalem considered to be the very pillars of the church, they were ready both to listen and to agree.

THE COMPULSION OF TITUS

But not even Titus who was with me, though he was a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised.

But it was because of the false brethren who had sneaked in to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, in order to bring us into bondage.

But we did not yield in subjection to them for even an hour, so that the truth of the gospel might remain with you. (Galatians 2:3-5).

We have already seen that Titus was brought to Jerusalem to be a test case. He is Paul's proof that a Christian can be filled with the Spirit and yet not be circumcised. You can be sure that his presence brought a stir to Jerusalem. The false teachers were not long in making their opposition known. They quickly sought to bring pressure to bear that would force Titus to be circumcised.

1. The Presence of Falsehood: *But it was because of the false brethren who had sneaked in to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus (2:6).*

Paul is quick to point out that it was not the Jerusalem apostles who try to compel Titus to be circumcised. Rather it is a group of outsiders. He calls them "false brethren." They are not believers. But they are pretending to be believers. They are in the army of the enemy. They might not realize it, but their father is the devil. They have not been born into the family of God. They are illegitimate children. They have sneaked into the church. They have come on a secret mission. They are spies, coming in to spy out the

Christian liberty enjoyed by Paul and Barnabas and Titus. Their goal is to bring believers into bondage.

2. The Purpose of Falsehood: *In order to bring us into bondage (2:4).*

Satan's children are those who are doing his work. His work is to bring believers into bondage. He seeks to slave believers. He seeks to bind them. Jesus described the hypocrisy of these false teachers in the days before His crucifixion.

"And they tie up heavy loads, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves are unwilling to move them with so much as a finger." (Matthew 23:11).

Notice that the false teachers are not really interested in putting themselves under the same legalistic burden that they insist on laying on others. They don't say, "I want to uphold a law that will stop me from doing certain things." Rather, they always want to focus on laws which will affect others. The bondage the false teachers sought to bring in this instance was the forced circumcision of Titus.

3. The Resistance to Falsehood: *But we did not yield in subjection to them for even an hour (2:5).*

Paul and his companions were firm in their stand against the pressure of the false teachers. This was not an issue on which they could compromise. The truth of the gospel was at stake. If Titus were to submit to the rite of circumcision, then this action would make it seem as though circumcision was a necessary part of salvation.

Circumcision was not the real issue. Paul was not against Jews being circumcised. He had even had Timothy, who was part Jewish, to be circumcised so as not to cause a stumbling block. The real issue was whether circumcision or any other ceremony or ritual is necessary for salvation.

Salvation through faith alone is at stake. Paul's gospel is on trial. Paul was not unmovable because his personal reputation might be at stake or because he simply wanted to have his own way. He refused to yield because the truth of the gospel was in the balance. There are issues that we face where compromise is proper and

acceptable, but the truth of the gospel is not one of them.

THE COMMENDATION OF THE APOSTLES

But from those who were of high reputation (what they were makes no difference to me, God shows no partiality)—well, those who were of reputation contributed nothing to me.

But on the contrary, seeing that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been to the circumcised ⁸ (for He who effectually worked for Peter in his apostleship to the circumcised effectually worked for me also to the Gentiles), ⁹ and recognizing the grace that had been given to me, James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we might go to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcised.

They only asked us to remember the poor — the very thing I also was eager to do. (Galatians 2:6-10).

Paul now picks up the same thread of thought that he left at the end of verse 2. The intervening verses have been parenthetical. They dealt with the opposition of the false teachers. But now Paul turns back to his dealings with the leaders of the Jerusalem church.

1. The Reception of the Jerusalem Leaders: *Those who were of reputation contributed nothing to me (2:6).*

The leaders of the Jerusalem church did not demand any change in Paul's message or in his method of preaching. They did not confer any authority upon Paul or elevate him to any rank within the church. Instead, they recognized the rank that God had given him. They agreed with the message that he presented. They gave their full approval of his gospel.

They recognized the realm of his ministry — that it was to the Gentiles. Earlier in this verse, Paul speaks of these who were of reputation, saying, "What they were makes no difference to me." This does not mean that Paul thought any less of the position or of the authority of the Jerusalem apostles. Rather, it means that their position had no bearing on the truthfulness of his gospel as far as Paul

was concerned. If this is the case, then why does Paul even mention the decision of the Jerusalem leaders? It is because they were reputed to be pillars in the church. Everyone recognized them as having authority in the church. Even the false teachers were forced to recognize that they had authority in the church. In fact, it is very possible that the false teachers who had now come to Galatia were claiming to be representatives of the Jerusalem leaders.

Now these same leaders of the Jerusalem church had agreed with Paul's message and to Paul's authority without adding anything to it. To the contrary, they realized that Paul had been sent to the Gentiles with equal authority and with the same message with which Peter had been sent to the Jews.

2. The Recognition of the Jerusalem Leaders: *Recognizing the grace that had been given to me, James and Cephas and John... gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship (2:9).*

The result of this Jerusalem conference was that the pillars of the Jerusalem church gave Paul and Barnabas the "right hand of fellowship. A handshake today is considered merely a polite form of greeting with very little significance. It was quite different in the ancient world. The handclasp was a sign of promise and friendship. It indicated a pledge of agreement.

We cannot miss the implications of this. The false teachers had implied that their authority was from the Jerusalem apostles, but Paul now shows how those same apostles were in perfect and total agreement with his ministry.

3. The Remembrance of the Poor: *They only asked us to remember the poor (2:10).*

Although the remembrance of the poor is a general principle, in this particular context it may have referred to an appeal for the assistance of the poor and needy believers in Jerusalem. Even though Paul's primary area of ministry was among the Gentiles, the Jerusalem apostles requested that he also be involved in gathering funds which would help to support the needs within the Jerusalem church. Paul readily consented to this request for assistance and sought funds from many of the Gentile churches (Acts 24:17; Romans 15:26-27; I Corinthians 16:1-4).

There is an important principle here. It is that salvation

through faith alone does not mean that good works should be absent from my life. To the contrary, one of the reasons that I have been saved is so that I will do good works.

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. (Ephesians 2:10).

You have been saved so that you will do good works. But this is not all. I will go one step further. If you are claiming to be a Christian and yet there are no good works in your life, then something is tragically wrong with your Christianity. You see, if you have placed your faith in Jesus Christ, then He is at work within you, conforming you into His image.

For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus. (Philippians 1:6).

The reason that a believer does good works is because God is producing a change in his life. This work is never finished while the believer is still alive on planet earth. In fact, it is only completed when Jesus returns. It is a gradual process. It does not take place overnight. But, no matter how slow the rate may seem to be, there will be a continued progress.

But speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ. (Ephesians 4:15).

Discussion Questions

- Are you a member of a local church or Bible study? Do you feel like an insider or like an outsider? What do you think are the reasons for your feelings?
- What are some of the ways we typically try to get on someone's "good side"?
- In what ways have you been seeking to try to gain God's favor?
- What motivates you? What do you believe are the reasons you do good things in life?

PAUL'S CONFRONTATION WITH PETER

GALATIANS 2:11-21

From the days of the exodus from Egypt, the Jews had lived under the Mosaic Law. Their children were born into the Law, circumcised on the eighth day according to the Law, and publicly pronounced “sons of the Law” when they reached manhood. They lived and worked and died under the Law. The Law even regulated the form of their burial.

The Law affected every part of life for the Jew. It was much more than just the Ten Commandments. Laws were included as to what kind of clothing the Jew was to wear, what types of food he was allowed to eat and how it was to be prepared, how he was to plow his field and how his animals were to be fastened to the plow, how to plant and harvest his field, how to treat his family and servants, and how to worship. His entire life was patterned and ruled by the Law.

The disciples of Jesus were brought up under the Law. From an early age they had been rooted in its influences. When they came to Jesus, they saw in Him the fulfillment of that Law.

“Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill.

“For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law, until all is accomplished.” (Matthew 5:17-18).

The personal character of Jesus Christ was a fulfillment of the Moral Law. He was the only man who ever lived a perfect life. His life also reflected a fulfillment of the Civil Law. He remained in submission to the civil authorities and governments. And He is the perfect and total fulfillment of all of the Ceremonial Law. All of the legal rituals and all of the Temple sacrifices looked forward to His person and work. He was the perfect lamb of God who took away the sins of the world.

The earthly ministry of Jesus was initially directed toward the nation of Israel. When He first commissioned His twelve apostles, He charged them to go *“to the lost sheep of the house of Israel”* (Matthew 10:6). It was only after Israel had rejected Him as a nation that He had instructed His disciples to *“make disciples of all the nations”* (Matthew 28:19).

However, the early years of the church saw little or no evangelism directed toward the Gentiles. Although the church in Jerusalem continued to grow, it was some time before the preaching of the gospel was heard in lands outside Palestine, and even in those cases, the preaching was always directed toward Jews.

It was not until the events of Acts 10 that it was revealed to Peter in a vision that the gospel was to be freely given to the Gentiles. God had to tell Peter three times that it was permitted for him to enter a Gentile home and freely give the gospel to Gentiles.

This would have been a very difficult thing for him to accept. As a Jew, he had been brought up to believe that it was forbidden him to have close fellowship with a Gentile or for him to eat a meal in a Gentile home. Peter had always eaten kosher food. But, in spite of his cultural upbringing, Peter obeyed the instructions of the Lord and he entered the home of Cornelius, leading him and his family to the Lord.

Peter later related his experiences with Cornelius at the council in Jerusalem when the question arose as to whether Gentiles could be saved apart from circumcision and keeping the Law.

And after there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, “Brethren, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe.

“And God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He also did to us; 9 and He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith.” (Acts 15:7-9).

By the time of the Jerusalem Council, Peter had come to understand that the Gentiles were to be admitted into the church in the same way that the Jews were admitted — through faith alone. This is important. None of the Jewish Christians thought that they were saved by keeping the Law. All of the Jewish believers realized that they had fallen far short of God’s righteous standard. They knew that they could only be justified through faith in Jesus Christ. But they continued to live their lives under the Law. They did not abandon their heritage. They continued to keep the Sabbath day and to offer

sacrifices in the Temple (although these sacrifices now had a new meaning to them) and they continued to observe the legal dietary laws of the Mosaic Law.

The Jerusalem Council agreed that the Gentile believers did not need to submit to these Jewish customs. Gentiles would not be required to offer sacrifices or keep the Sabbath day or observe dietary laws.

But soon, a new problem arose. It was a problem with Jews who were still keeping the Law. It specifically dealt with the dietary regulations. It had been agreed that Gentiles were now free to come into the church and fellowship with Jewish believers. However, the Jews who were still keeping the elements of the Law were inhibited from going into Gentile homes and eating meals that had been prepared by Gentiles and were therefore not kosher. The problem came to a head when Peter came to Antioch for a visit. It was here that Paul confronted Peter over this issue of breaking fellowship with the Gentile believers.

It is important to see the difference between the issues presented in Galatians 2:1-10 at the Jerusalem Conference and the issue which Paul now confronts at Antioch.

Galatians 2:1-10	Galatians 2:11-14
Takes place in Jerusalem	Takes place in Antioch
The Issue: Can a Gentile be saved and come into the church and fellowship with believers without proselyting to Judaism?	The Issue: Can Jewish believers be allowed to forsake the Law and enter into a Gentile home and eat Gentile foods?
Underlying Question: Is the Christian, whether he be Jew or Gentile, required to keep the ceremonies of the Mosaic Law?	

In Jerusalem the question had been whether a Gentile could be saved and come into the church and fellowship with believers without proselyting to Judaism. Now as Peter comes to Antioch, a different question will be at issue. Can Jewish believers be allowed to forsake the Law and enter into a Gentile home and eat Gentile foods? However, even though the particular issue is different in this section, the main question is still the same: Is the Christian, whether he be Jew or Gentile, required to keep the Mosaic Law?

PETER'S DISPUTE

But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. (Galatians 2:11).

Paul has gone to great lengths in the first part of this chapter to show that the Jerusalem apostles, including Peter and James, were in agreement with his ministry and with his gospel. But now he moves to a time when a disagreement between himself and Peter did arise. The incident took place when Peter came to Antioch.

1. The Identity of Cephas: *But when Cephas came to Antioch (2:11).*

The name “Cephas” is Aramaic. It means “the Rock.” It is the counterpart of the Greek name *Petros* (Peter). Jesus had given this nickname to the apostle when they first met (John 1:42). The name was to be a play on words. Peter was to be a solid rock on which the church could be built. But Peter’s actions on Antioch would be of the most unstable kind.

2. Peter Comes to Antioch: *But when Cephas came to Antioch (2:11).*

Peter came on a trip to Antioch. This trip took place some time after the Jerusalem Council. It took place after the issue of Gentiles entering into the church had been settled. Perhaps this was one of the reasons that Peter came to Antioch — to encourage the believers at Antioch and to take part in their acceptance.

3. Peter Opposed: *I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned (2:11).*

During Peter’s visit to Antioch, Paul found it necessary to rebuke him. This was not an easy task. It would have been very easy for Paul to ignore Peter’s misconduct. But Paul did not do this. Instead, he confronted Peter face to face.

Many preachers are quick to speak against sin, but are reluctant to do anything about it. They speak very clearly that certain things are wrong and that Christians are to live accordingly, yet when it comes to a specific application they fall short. The result is devastating. The result is that both false doctrines and false practices

are permitted to come into the church. But Paul was not going to allow this to happen in Antioch. And so, he confronted Peter face to face.

PETER'S DEFECTION

For prior to the coming of certain men from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he began to withdraw and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision.

And the rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy, with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy. (Galatians 2:12-13).

Now Paul explains the circumstances which led up to his rebuke of Peter. It concerned the practice of eating with Gentiles.

1. A Past Practice: *He used to eat with the Gentiles (2:12).*

Peter realized that God had done away with the ceremonial laws regarding ritual washings and ritual uncleanness. God had revealed to Peter that it was acceptable for him to enter a Gentile home and eat at a Gentile table.

Now that Peter has come to Antioch, he has begun to practice this new freedom by fellowshiping with Gentiles. He has been accepting Gentile invitations to dinner and he has been eating Gentile foods.

This was consistent with the plan of God for this age. It is not God's plan to have two separate groups who are His people. He does not have a Jewish church and then a Gentile church. He has taken both of these groups and made them into one.

For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one, and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, ¹⁵ by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, ¹⁶ and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it

having put to death the enmity. (Ephesians 2:14-16).

From the days of Abraham, the Jews had been God's chosen people. They were the recipients of the promises of God. It was to them that the Scriptures were given. It was with them that God established His covenant. He had chosen them to be His people and had set them apart from the other nations of the world. But the cross changed all of that.

The cross effected a reconciliation between these two groups by making them into one body — the Body of Christ. God's people are no longer just the Jews. Now God's people are made up of both the Jew and the Greek, both the bond and the free, both the male and the female.

It is not that the Jews ceased to be God's chosen people. Rather it is that more people were chosen in addition to the chosen people. God's election has extended to people of every race and tongue and nation.

Peter was not unaware of this change in God's program. Jesus had told him that he was to go forth and make disciples of all the nations (Matthew 28:19). Later God had revealed to Peter through a vision that he was to enter into a Gentile home and share the gospel. He was a witness to the truth that Gentiles were saved and received the Holy Spirit in the same way that Jews did.

Thus, when Peter comes to Antioch, he expresses his understanding of the unity of the church by freely eating and fellowshiping with Gentiles. This goes on until one day when some visitors arrive from Jerusalem.

2. A Presence from Jerusalem: *Prior to the coming of certain men from James (2:12).*

Who were these men? We are told that they were from James. James was the half-brother of Jesus, one of the sons of Mary and Joseph. James had grown up with Jesus. He had been a witness to many of the miracles of Jesus. And yet, he had remained an unbeliever throughout the Lord's entire earthly ministry. It was not until after the resurrection that James believed. You see, James saw Jesus after He had died and then rose from the dead. He was a witness of the resurrection. I believe that it was the miracle of the resurrection that convinced James.

Perhaps this tells us something about James. It seems as

though James had a rather obstinate character. He seems to have been stubborn when it came to changing his views. This had a positive effect in that James was not likely to be carried about by every wind of doctrine. He was solid and unmovable in what he believed. But this may have had a negative effect in that he seems slow to accept the revelation that believers are free from the Law.

These men who now came to Antioch were from James. They were self-styled disciples of James. In the end of this verse, they are referred to as “the party of the circumcision.” They gravitated to James. But they took their views on circumcision and the keeping of the Law to far greater lengths than James did. They identified themselves with James, but I am not certain that James would have wanted to identify himself with them. They were men who agreed with James that it was not necessary for Gentiles to keep the Law to be saved. But they insisted that the keeping of the Law made you more spiritual. They demanded that all Jewish believers observe the Law. And they now come to Antioch where Peter and the other Jews have been eating with Gentiles. You can see right away that there is about to be a conflict.

3. *A Pointed Departure: But when they came, he began to withdraw and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision (2:12).*

Instead of standing up for what he knew was right, Peter backed down from the party of the circumcision. He began to withdraw from the Gentile believers within the church at Antioch.

This action is described in an imperfect tense. This indicates that it was a gradual and continued action. Peter didn’t stand up in the middle of dinner and walk out. He was much more tactful. He just stopped accepting dinner invitations from Gentiles. When Sunday morning rolled around, Peter was not in church. He was meeting with a group of Jewish believers. A Jewish church was in the making.

Why did Peter do this? Was he abandoning what he had formerly believed? Had he changed his mind about the Law? Not at all. He did this because he was intimidated.

Peter had stood before the high priest in Jerusalem and had refused to stop preaching the gospel, though he was beaten and imprisoned and threatened with death. Herod Agrippa had actually sentenced Peter to death and it had only been because of an angelic jailbreak that he was still alive. In spite of all of these experiences,

Peter was still afraid when it came to facing these legalistic Christian Jews.

You see, legalism can be very intimidating. It goes on in today's churches just as it did in the early church. People think that they are more spiritual if they dress a certain way, talk a certain way, and even carry a certain type of Bible. Then they measure the status of others according to this false standard.

Peter's sin was basically the sin of nationalism. He insists that Christians can't be pleasing to God unless they become Jewish. But nationalism is just one form of legalism. Legalism is looking to something besides Jesus Christ in order to be acceptable and clean before God. (Timothy Keller 2003.45).

Peter was afraid of what these Jewish Christians were going to think of him. He was afraid that they might carry negative reports about his behavior back to the Jerusalem church. And so he began to make a practice of separating himself from the Gentile believers.

4. A Pervasive Hypocrisy: *And the rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy, with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy (2:13).*

Peter's defection had a disastrous effect on the Antioch church. The reason for this is that all of the Jews in the church began to follow example. Peter was a natural leader. No matter what he did, people would follow him.

- When Jesus asked His disciples who they thought He really was, it was Peter who acted as their spokesman.
- When the gift of tongues was given at Pentecost, it was Peter who addressed the crowd that gathered.
- And when Peter decided to go fishing after the resurrection, the disciples were quick to follow him, even though they had been instructed to remain in Jerusalem.

Once again we see people following Peter. The entire Jewish-Christian community began to follow his example of separation from the Gentile believers. Even Barnabas was swept up in this separation. The result was a giant split in the church.

To make matters worse, this involved a split over the eating of the Lord's Supper. The one place where unity should have been the most evident had now become the scene of division. Paul calls this action "hypocrisy." They were saying and believing one thing while they were doing another. They were preaching the gospel but they were not living the gospel. They were preaching that faith in Jesus Christ is sufficient for salvation, but they were living as though Gentiles were second-class Christians.

Peter and Barnabas knew better than to act like this. But they had been intimidated. Peter was intimidated by the disciples of James. Barnabas and the other Jewish Christians were intimidated by Peter's defection. By running away from the problem, Peter had created a far greater problem.

PAUL'S DIAGNOSIS

But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in the presence of all, "If you, being a Jew, live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, how is it that you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?" (Galatians 2:14).

Imagine the scene. Paul comes into church one Sunday and notices that there are no Jews present. Peter has gone and Paul is the only Jew left in the church. He asks about the situation and someone tells him that all of the Jewish Christians are meeting down the street in a Jewish home. As the Gentile Christians hear this news, they begin to wonder whether faith is really enough for salvation. After all, isn't Peter demonstrating that followers of Christ are required to observe the Mosaic Law? And so, Paul is forced to act quickly if he is to save the unity of the church and the clarity of the gospel.

1. A Public Rebuke: *I said to Cephas in the presence of all (2:14).*

Now I want to ask you a question. Why did Paul confront Peter in the presence of all? Why did he rebuke Peter in public? Why didn't he go to Peter in private as he had in Jerusalem when he had presented his message to Peter and James and John?

I think that the answer is seen in the nature of Peter's sin. Peter had sinned in public. His defection had affected the entire

church. His actions had resulted in splitting the church in two. Therefore, only by an equally public rebuke could the harmful effects of Peter's sin be remedied. The only way that the divided church could be brought back together was for the reproof of Peter to be made manifest to the entire church.

This is an important principle of church discipline. A leader in the church who continues in a sin before the eyes of the entire church is to be rebuked before the entire church.

Do not receive an accusation against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses.

Those who continue in sin, rebuke in the presence of all, so that the rest may be fearful of sinning. (1 Timothy 5:19-20).

If we are preaching that believers are to live a holy life and yet do nothing to discipline those who continue in disobedience, then soon people will begin to think that we do not believe what we say.

Peter has been preaching that all men are saved through faith in Jesus Christ and not by the keeping of the Law. But now he is cutting himself off from the Gentile believers who do not keep the Law. People are going to think that Peter's actions indicate that believers must keep the Law to be saved.

2. A Penetrating Question: *"If you, being a Jew, live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, how is it that you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?" (2:14).*

Peter was a Jew. He had been raised to live like a Jew. He had once kept all of the Jewish rituals of Judaism. But he has been given a revelation from God and all of that has changed. Since that time, he has been living like the Gentiles. Since that time, he has been going into Gentile homes and having fellowship with Gentiles and eating with Gentiles. This is not the way an Orthodox Jew lives. This is the way a Gentile lives. Peter has been living like a Gentile.

But now Peter had begun to separate from Gentile believers because they did not follow the ceremonial ritual washings and eating habits of the Jews. He does not want to be caught eating Gentile food contrary to the Laws of the Jews. This means that if Gentile believers were to remain in contact with Peter, they are going to have to take up a Jewish lifestyle. They are going to get the idea that living like a

Gentile and not keeping the Mosaic Law will make them a “second-class Christian.”

In effect, Peter is insisting that Gentiles must live as Jews live, even though he himself has not been living as Jews live. And so, Paul points out Peter’s inconsistency.

There is an important lesson of which we need to take note. It is that even great people of God still make mistakes. God’s Word is infallible, but God’s people are not. They make mistakes.

Sometimes their mistakes are made in private. But sometimes, as is the case with Peter, their mistakes are out in the open for everyone to see. This means that you are going to be hurt and misdirected and led astray if you keep your eyes on people rather than on the Lord.

THE DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH

We are Jews by nature, and not sinners from among the Gentiles; ¹⁶ nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we may be justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified.”
(Galatians 2:15-16).

Paul now moves to the root of the problem. It is summed up in the single question: How is a man justified before God? Perhaps before we go any further we should define what we mean when we use the term “justification.” It is really very simple. To justify something means to declare that it is righteous. It is translated from the Greek word *dikaioo* (δικαίω). It is a term that was used by a judge to pronounce a verdict of “not guilty.”

I think that we can best understand it when we contrast it with its opposite. The opposite of justification is condemnation. To condemn is to declare that someone is guilty. To justify is to declare that someone is righteous.

The only problem with this is that we are not righteous. How can we be declared righteous when we are so obviously not righteous? It is through faith. When we believe in Jesus Christ, His righteousness is put to our

account and credited to us. In the same way that our sins were credited to Him on the cross, so His righteousness is credited to us when we believe.

He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. (2 Corinthians 5:21).

This is the issue that Paul is dealing with as he confronts Peter. Peter is acting as though keeping the Law is necessary for a man to be justified. Peter's hypocrisy is leading people astray. They have been taught that justification comes through faith. Is it also necessary to proselyte to Judaism and to be circumcised and to keep the Mosaic Law to be saved? Is there some special merit in the eyes of God to being Jewish?

1. Jews Versus Sinners: *We are Jews by nature, and not sinners from among the Gentiles (2:15).*

The "we" in this verse refers to Jewish Christians. Peter and Paul are both Jewish. They are Jews by nature. They did not proselyte into Judaism. They were born Jewish.

The word "sinners" is synonymous with being a Gentile. A Gentile was considered to be a sinner. This is not so much a moral term as it is a legal term. You see, the Gentile had no Law. He had never been given the Mosaic Law. The Law had only been given to Jews. The Gentile did not have the Law. Therefore he could not help but to be one who did not keep the Law.

Because he did not have the Law, he lived in violation of it. Since he had none of the ceremonial laws, he could not obey them. By virtue of being a Gentile, he was automatically classified as a sinner.

The Jews, on the other hand, lived by the Law. They were brought up to observe the ordinances of the Law. But here is the point that Paul is going to make. Don't miss this!

Even the Jews who had the Law and were brought up to keep the Law soon discovered that there was only one way to be justified. They discovered that they could only be justified through faith. This means that Jews are the same as Gentiles when it comes to being justified. Jews are not justified by keeping the Law. Jews, even though they are not sinners from among the Gentiles, still have to be justified by faith and not by keeping the Law.

2. The General Truth of Justification: *A man is not justified by the works of the law but through faith in Christ Jesus (2:16).*

This verse contains three statements. Each statement deals with this same truth of justification. The first statement is general. The second. statement is personal. The third statement is universal.

General	Personal	Universal
<i>A man is not justified by the works of the law but through faith in Christ Jesus</i>	<i>We have believed in Christ Jesus, that we may be justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the Law</i>	<i>By the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified</i>

This first statement is general in nature. Paul is stating a general principle. He is stating a principle with which Peter is already familiar. Both Peter and Paul know this as apostles. They have both made apostolic proclamations to this effect. The truth is that no man can be justified by piling up good works, by going to church, by giving money, or by trying to keep the Ten Commandments.

The only way that a man can be saved is through faith. This brings us to an important question. What is faith? Faith involves the acceptance of certain facts. It involves believing that Jesus is the Son of God and that He died for sins and that He rose again. But this is not all that faith is. Satan believes that Jesus is the Son of God and that He died for sins and that He rose again.

You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. (James 2:19).

Satan and his demons believe that God exists. They are acquainted with certain historical facts about the life and ministry of Jesus. But they are not saved. What is the difference between their faith and the faith of a child of God? Faith involves an appropriation of the facts. This is the kind of faith that leads to salvation. Faith is a dependance upon God. It is not simply realizing that the gift of salvation has been offered, but it is also the taking of that gift.

It is like having a glass of water. You can hold that glass in your hand, be fully aware of its chemical makeup, know that it has

been freely offered to you and that it is yours to drink, but if you do not actually drink of it, there has been no benefit.

2. The Personal Truth of Justification: *We have believed in Christ Jesus, that we may be justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the Law (2:16).*

Now Paul moves from the general to the personal. The same principle is repeated in a way that relates it personally to Peter. It is a plea to his personal experience.

Both Peter and Paul were Jewish. They had been brought up under the Law. And they had both learned from personal experience that they would never be able to be justified by keeping the Law. They had been born into the Law, but the legalistic experiment ended in failure in both their lives. They eventually had discovered that they were bankrupt before the Law. They had each come to the point where they realized that the Law could only condemn them and that they could only be justified by faith in Jesus Christ. Even though they were Jews and not sinners and Gentiles in the legal sense, they still had to be justified by faith, just like any Gentile.

3. The Universal Truth of Justification: *By the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified (2:16).*

The first statement was general. The second statement was personal. Now the third statement moves to the universal. It has its authority rooted in the Scriptures. One of the Old Testament Psalms had recorded a prayer of David. It was a prayer of mercy.

*Hear my prayer, O Lord,
Give ear to my supplications!
Answer me in Thy faithfulness, in Thy righteousness,
And do not enter into judgment with Thy servant,
For **in Thy sight no man living is righteous.** (Psalm 143:1-2).*

What Paul is telling Peter is not some new teaching. It goes back to the Old Testament. David had known that it was impossible for any man to be justified before God on the basis of his own works. This is why David had asked for mercy instead of justice. David knew that if he received justice, it would result in eternal death. David

knew that only by the mercy of God would he receive eternal life.

THE DANGER OF INCONSISTENCY

But if, while seeking to be justified in Christ, we ourselves have also been found sinners, is Christ then a minister of sin? May it never be!

For if I rebuild what I have once destroyed, I prove myself to be a transgressor. (Galatians 2:17-18).

Peter's problem hadn't been that he didn't know that justification was only by faith. Rather his problem was that he was acting inconsistently with what he knew to be the truth. Paul now confronts Peter (and anyone else who engages in such inconsistent acts of legalism) with the logical results of this inconsistency.

1. The Questioning of Christ's Character: *But if, while seeking to be justified in Christ, we ourselves have also been found sinners, is Christ then a minister of sin? (2:17).*

Even though Peter and Paul had been brought up under the Law, they had both come to realize that the Law could never save them. Therefore, they are now seeking to be justified in Christ. However if they and all of the Jewish believers that followed them were wrong in leaving the Law and seeking only to be justified in Christ, then that means that Christ is the way of sin and not the way of salvation.

This is the question that has come up. Are Jewish Christians supposed to seek to be justified only by faith in Jesus Christ, or are they to seek justification through obedience to Jewish rituals, including separation from Gentiles?

If the latter is true, then Jesus has been promoting sin. Jesus taught that it is not what goes into a man that defiles him but what comes out of him. He taught that all things are clean. He taught that you could be saved just by believing. Peter, by his actions, has been implying that Jesus was wrong. By his actions, Peter has been condemning Jesus. Jesus taught that the separation of Jew and Gentile was now invalid. He broke down the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile.

But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one, and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall. (Ephesians 2:13-14).

The work of Jesus was to bring the Jew and the Gentile into one body — the body of Christ. This means that there is to be no more separation between Jew or Gentile. Now Paul says, “Peter, you are going to have to make up your mind. Either Jesus was right and it is okay to eat with Gentiles or else He was wrong and He is guilty of leading us into sin.”

2. Evidence of Peter’s Transgression: *For if I rebuild what I have once destroyed, I prove myself to be a transgressor (2:18).*

If Paul or Peter or any other Jewish Christian seeks to rebuild the legalistic system with which he did away when he was saved, then he is showing by his actions that he is a transgressor. He is either a transgressor for having torn the system down in the first place, or he is now a transgressor for trying to rebuild what he once tore down. In either case, he is showing that he has sinned. The point is obvious.

Paul is saying in effect, “You are guilty of transgression, Peter. The only question is when did you do it? Did you do it when you first followed Jesus and set aside the ritualistic system of Judaism, or did you sin just now when you stopped eating with Gentiles?”

DEAD TO THE LAW

For through the Law I died to the Law, that I might live to God.

I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me.

I do not nullify the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly. (Galatians 2:19-21).

If there was ever a man who might have been justified through the keeping of the Law, it would have been Paul. He had been circumcised on the eighth day according to the Law. He had become a Pharisee of the Pharisees — he was a Jew who held to the literal interpretation of the Scriptures. He had been trained in the school of Gamaliel. He had been zealous in his legalism.

And yet, the only thing that Paul ever got from the Law was condemnation and death. The very Law that he struggled to keep condemned him because he was unable to keep it perfectly. The penalty for not keeping the Law perfectly is death. Thus, the Law condemned Paul to death.

1. A Legal Death: *For through the Law I died to the Law (2:19).*

This is the reason that Paul cannot rebuild the Law that he has in effect destroyed. This is the reason he cannot go back to the Law. It is because he is dead to the Law. The Law judged him as a guilty sinner. The Law condemned him to death. And then the sentence was carried out. When did this take place? In what way did Paul die to the Law? The answer is found in the next verse.

2. A Lasting Union: *I have been crucified with Christ (2:20).*

When the Law demanded that the penalty of death be carried out, those demands were carried out against Christ. This means that Jesus was crucified as Paul's representative. Paul was legally crucified with Christ. He is legally considered to have been put to death.

You see, Paul has been identified with Christ through faith. Anyone who has placed their faith in Jesus as their Savior has been identified with Christ. When the Law demanded our death, the sentence of death was carried out in the death of Christ on the cross. He took our place. He died instead of us. The sentence has been carried out. We are considered by the Law to have died on the cross. This means that the Law has no more dominion over us. The Law does not condemn a dead man. The Law only judges the living. The Law can no more judge us than a court could dig up a corpse and require it to stand trial.

3. A Living Destiny: *Christ lives in me (2:20).*

Not only have we been placed into the body of Christ, but

Christ has also come to live within us. This means that my life is eternally wrapped up in Jesus Christ. His destiny is my destiny. His inheritance is my inheritance. His life is my life.

Christianity is not merely a theological system of beliefs or a code of moral conduct that I am to follow. Christianity is a new relationship. It is a person living inside me.

4. A Loving Call: *And the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me (2:20).*

Even though I now have a position with Christ in heaven, I still have to live out this life confined within this earthly body. But this does not mean that my present life is not affected by that heavenly position. Because I have been crucified with Christ, I now have a new responsibility to live accordingly.

How am I to live? Paul gives the principle here in this verse. I am to live by faith and in the light of God's love. I am to live in accordance with the new life that I believe I now have.

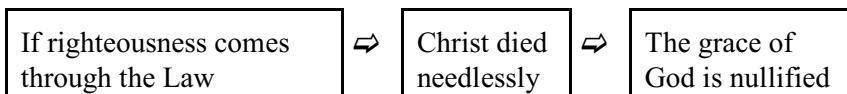
- If I believe that I have eternal life, then I should live for the future and not just for today.
- If I believe that God has set me apart and declared me to be righteous, then I ought to live a righteous life that is set apart from the world.
- If I believe that I have been crucified with Christ, then I should live as though I am dead to the Law.

Peter's problem was that he had not been living by faith. He had been living by public opinion. He had been living as though righteousness could come through the keeping of the Law instead of through faith in Christ.

5. A Lamentable Conclusion: *I do not nullify the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly (2:21).*

Either righteousness comes through the keeping of the Law or else it comes through faith in Jesus Christ. Peter has been living as

though it could come through the Law. But if this is true, then Christ did not have to die on the cross for our sins.



God's grace has been offered to all men through the cross. But if you believe that Christ died needlessly, then you are declaring that grace to be null and void. But the death of Christ was not in vain. To the contrary, it is the source of salvation for all who will believe.

Discussion Questions

- Who are you? In what ways do you typically describe your own identity? Who is the “real” you?
- This chapter pictures Peter's response to peer pressure. In what ways do you find yourself tempted to bow to peer pressure?
- Have you ever given a trusted friend or spiritual authority the permission to confront you if they see something wrong in your life?
- There are several levels of faith. There is a belief in certain facts; there is the reliance of the truth of those facts; there is a personal appropriation of those facts and there is an aligning of yourself in loyalty to the one in whom you have faith. At which level are you in your current spiritual journey?

LEGAL LIABILITIES

GALATIANS 3:1-18

There is nothing more upsetting than to see a Christian who has departed from the faith. This is the case of one who has come to the Lord, who professes Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, but who then is ensnared by false teaching. Many Christians come to Christ through faith, only to be ensnared by various systems of legalism. They get involved in external rituals of baptism or confirmation or mass, seeking to find acceptance from God on the basis of those outward actions. They begin to focus upon the observance of certain days or upon the wearing of certain types of clothes as if these things make them “more spiritual.”

These Galatians were in danger of falling into a similar type of trap. They were in the process of substituting the living reality that they had in Christ for a shallow ritual. They did not actually reject Jesus. Rather they felt the need to add something of their own merit to the work of Christ. In doing so, they were in danger of short-circuiting the grace of God.

The issue here is not the moral law. Paul was not telling the Galatians to live in adultery or to steal or to covet or to worship other gods. It is the ceremonial law that is at issue here. They were seeking to find acceptance before God on the basis of their religious rituals. It is not that the rituals were in themselves bad, but that they were seeking to make the rituals either a substitute for or a means to the reality.

Paul has just spent two chapters in defense of his apostolic authority. By so doing, he wants to show that the message that he preached was really authorized by God.

Galatians 1-2	Galatians 3-4
Primarily Historical	Primarily Doctrinal

Paul shows how the gospel that he preaches was not given by men or by man, but was granted through a revelation from God.	Paul establishes the doctrinal evidence for the truthfulness of the gospel that he preaches.
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In the last chapter we saw Paul rebuking the error of Peter. Now we see him rebuking the same error in the Galatians. He is full of emotion and passion. Twice within the first few verses he will refer to the foolishness of the Galatians. He is upset because this is no small doctrinal issue. This is a matter of spiritual life or death.

THE FOOLISHNESS OF THE GALATIANS

You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified?

This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?

Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?

Did you suffer so many things in vain -- if indeed it was in vain?

So then, does He who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? (Galatians 3:1-5).

Each of these first five verses contains a question. In each case, it is a rhetorical question. That is a question which requires no answer because the answer is obvious. It is a question for the sake of rhetoric – a question for the sake of the argument being made.

Paul is not afraid of being emotional. We can hear the outburst of his cry drawn from the depths of his heart. It is true that his response will be logical and calculating, but it is also designed to touch their hearts. He asks how the Galatians could possibly accept a salvation by works when they had already received a salvation that is through faith. When they were saved by faith, they got everything. What more were they looking for as they sought to go under the Law? Paul mentions four aspects of their Christian experience:

Verse 1	Verse 2	Verse 3	Verse 4	Verse 5
Who has bewitched you from what you saw?	Did you receive the Spirit by Law or faith?	Beginning in Spirit, are you now perfected in faith?	Did you go through all this in vain?	Are you provided with the supernatural by Law or faith?
Their salvation in Christ	Their receiving of the Holy Spirit		Their persecution for the faith	The work of the Father
Sight	Spirit	Sanctification	Suffering	Salvation

1. A Question of Sight: *You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified? (3:1).*

Paul's first question is directed to what the Galatians had seen. They had come to see the power of God and to partake of His gift on their behalf.

- a. The Gullibility of the Galatians: *You foolish Galatians (3:1).*

This is a cry from Paul's heart. He calls them a bunch of fools. Charlie Brown would have said, "You blockheads!" There are two Greek words that Paul could have used here:

- (1) *Moros* (μωρος): Someone who is mentally or spiritually impaired (from which we get our English word "moron."
- (2) *Anoetos* (ἄνοητος): Describes someone who is able to think, but fails to do so.

It is this second word that is used here. Paul accuses them of not thinking. It is not that they had no capacity to think for themselves. But they have not been utilizing that which God had given.

- b. The Guile of the Judaizers: *Who has bewitched you (3:1).*

This is a rhetorical question. It does not really expect an answer. The answer is that they have been carried away by the false teachings of the Judaizers.

- c. The Gospel Displayed: *...before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified? (3:1).*

In what way had Christ been publicly portrayed as crucified before the eyes of the Galatians? It was by Paul's preaching of the gospel and then by their participation in the Lord's Supper. In this manner, they had seen through both physical eyes and spiritual eyes and had blinded themselves to both.

- 2 A Question of the Spirit: *This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? (3:2).*

Now Paul moves from their experience with Christ to their experience with the Holy Spirit. How did they receive the Spirit? Was it by works? No, it was by faith.

The gift of the Holy Spirit is an evidence of salvation. Only those who are given the Spirit are saved. If you do not have the Spirit, then you do not have salvation. The Spirit is a guarantee of your salvation.

In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation, having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise (Ephesians 1:13).

Notice His title. He is called *the Holy Spirit of promise*. The Holy Spirit is the down-payment of your salvation. You don't have a glorified body. But you have an engagement ring from Christ. It guarantees that you shall be at the wedding feast of the Lamb. If God does not save one who has the Holy Spirit, then He is going against His own guarantee.

Legalists tend to treat God as a formula instead of as a person. God doesn't fit into a legalistic box. He is a lot bigger than that. He doesn't give His Spirit on the basis of your keeping of certain rules. He gives His Spirit when HE desires. He gives the Spirit through faith.

3 A Question of Sanctification: *Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? (3:3).*

Both verse 2 and verse 3 speak of the Spirit. But there is a difference in the question that is asked.

Verse 2	Verse 3
Asks about the initial entrance of the Spirit into the believer	Asks about the continuing sanctifying work in the life of the believer.

Your spiritual life started, not because you began to adhere to a code of conduct, but because the Spirit of God came into your life and brought life to you. Having begun by the power of the Spirit, how could you then do any better by trying to save yourself through your own efforts? What makes you think that you can finish something that you cannot even start? Do you really think that you can do more than God can do?

This does not mean that there will not be works in the Christian life. James points out in his epistle that good works are another of the evidences of your salvation. You are saved to do good works (Ephesians 2:10). But those good works do not bring about your salvation.

4 A Question of Suffering: *Did you suffer so many things in vain -- if indeed it was in vain? (3:4).*

The Galatians had suffered for their faith. They had been persecuted. Who did this persecuting? It was not the Gentiles. The Roman persecution had not yet begun. They did not care about Christ or the cross as it posed no threat to them.

The Greek word translated "suffer" in verse 4 is the aorist active indicative of *pascho* (πάσχω) and is used of experiencing things both good and bad. But when used without a qualifier, as it is here, it usually refers to suffering a bad experience (Matthew 16:21; Mark 5:26).

All persecution thus far had come at the hands of the Jews. They did not persecute Christians because the Christians were trying to keep the law. They persecuted them because the Christians were being justified apart from the law and this made them angry.

Here is the principle. Legalistic people will always try to get other people to be legalistic, too. When they fail, it makes them angry.

Legalists are not by nature very happy people. It is not a happy thing to consider having to try to earn the pleasure of God and never knowing whether you have made it or not. Because of this, legalists often resent it when other people are happy.

- 5 A Question of Salvation: *So then, does He who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? (3:5).*

This is similar to the question that was asked in verse 2. But there is an important difference.

Verse 2	Verse 5
<i>Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?</i>	<i>Does He who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?</i>
Past tense (Aorist)	Present tense
Looks at the time when the Galatians first believed	Looks at the ongoing spiritual life of the Galatians
From the Galatians' point of view	From God's point of view

God's miracles do not depend upon our rituals. They never did. God works when He wants to and He does it right well.

THE FATHER OF FAITH

Even so Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness. 7 Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham.

The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to

*Abraham, saying, "All the nations will be blessed in you." 9
So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the
believer. (Galatians 3:6-9).*

There was in the Jewish mind no one who was more revered than Abraham. He was the father of the nation and the Jews prided themselves on being sons of Abraham. It is for this reason that Paul turns to the example of Abraham to show that justification comes by faith and not on the basis of works. The false teachers may have used Abraham as an example of why it was necessary for all Christians to undergo the rite of circumcision. After all, Abraham was circumcised. They reasoned that if you want to approach the God of Abraham, then you must be circumcised in the same way that Abraham was circumcised.

1. The Fact of Abraham's Faith: *Even so Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness (3:6).*

Paul wants to make the point that Abraham's circumcision did not save him. It is true that Abraham was circumcised. But he was saved through faith. He was saved when he believed the promises of God. To prove this, Paul quotes from Genesis 15:6.

This event took place before Abraham was ever circumcised. It took place before he offered up Isaac on the Altar. And it took place apart from any works that Abraham did.

2. The Fruit of Abraham's Faith: *It was reckoned to him as righteousness (3:6).*

The Greek word translated "reckoned" is the aorist form of *logizomai* (λογίζομαι). It is used in the papyri writings of that day as an accounting term. It describes the crediting or putting to one's account of certain funds.

Whatever was reckoned to someone did not belong to them naturally. It was their by legal possession, but not by actual possession. For example, if I use a credit card, I am not actually paying for the item that I am purchasing. I am merely charging it to my account and the payment will take place on a later date.

In the same way, our sins were put to Christ's account on the cross. He did not actually become a sinner, but my sin was credited to Him and therefore He was judged by God as though He were a guilty sinner.

This brings us to the point of our verse. In the same way that our sins were put to Christ's account, so also His righteousness was credited to us. It is on this basis that God is able to justify us -- to declare that we are righteous. It is because we have been credited with His perfect and infinite righteousness.

3. The Family of Abraham's Faith: *Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham (3:7).*

What does this mean? It means that all who follow Abraham in faith have entered into a family. It is a spiritual family. It is the family of God. Abraham was a part of that family. When we believe in the same God in which Abraham believed, there is a sense in which he becomes our spiritual father.

This verse was a slap in the face to the Judaizers. They were always depending upon their ancestry for their acceptance before God. But John the Baptist pointed out that the God who created Adam from the dust of the ground is able to make children of Abraham from anything, even stones of the ground (Luke 3:8)..

When you became a Christian, you became a part of something that is very old. It did not start at Pentecost. It goes all the way back to Abraham and before. This means that the Old Testament is no longer a closed book to you. You may have been taught that the Old Testament was written just for Israel and that it has no bearing for Christians today. Not true! If you are a Christian, then you have been adopted into the family of Abraham and grafted into the tree of the family of God. The promises of God's coming kingdom are promises that you can claim today.

4. The Foreshadowing of Abraham's Faith: *The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "All the nations will be blessed in you." (3:8).*

Notice what this passage does not say. It does not say that people had to become Jewish in order to be saved. To the contrary, it quotes a promise given to Abraham in Genesis 12:3 that through him blessings would come to all the nations.

Throughout the entire Old Testament era, the gospel was entrusted to one small group of people. They were the descendants

of Abraham. They were the nation of Israel.

Old Testament	New Testament
Salvation focused primarily upon one nation	Salvation goes out to the world
Temple worship focused in Jerusalem	“Make disciples of the nations”
The redeemed gathered to Jerusalem to worship	The church sent to the uttermost parts of the earth.

Even when God first called Abraham, His plan was not merely to save Abraham and his physical descendants, but to bring salvation to all the nations. That was the promise that was given to Abraham when he was first called to follow the Lord. It was always the plan that in Abraham the Lord might bring salvation to the world. That promise is quoted here by Paul when he cites Genesis 12:3 where God promised Abraham, *“All the nations will be blessed in you.”*

5. The Fellowship of Abraham’s Faith: *So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer (3:9).*

Paul’s conclusion is this. When we believe in the same way that Abraham believed, we are blessed in the same way that Abraham was blessed. We become a part of God’s forever family and we become a blessing to the rest of the world.

THE FAILURE OF THE LAW

For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, to perform them.”

Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, “The righteous man shall live by faith.” ¹² However, the Law is not of faith; on the contrary, “He who practices them shall live by them.” (Galatians 3:10-12).

Having seen the example of Abraham in obtaining salvation apart from the law, Paul now calls us to look at the failure of the law to provide salvation.

Galatians 3:6-9	Galatians 3:10-12
Lesson of Abraham: He was justified by faith and apart from circumcision.	Lesson from the Law: No one is justified by the Law before God.
Abraham and those who follow him are blessed and are a blessing to the world.	Those who attempt to be justified by keeping the law are under a curse.
Positive proof of Justification	Negative proof of Justification

In 1984 a passenger ship was on its way into the Port of Miami when a small fire broke out in the engine room. Instead of calling for the fire department, the engineer attempted to extinguish the fire with a garden hose. It didn't go out and the fire spread throughout a good portion of the ship. Ultimately the Miami Fire Department went aboard with their big hose lines and put out the fire, but not before two people had died. It is a tragic example of what happens when you try to use the wrong tool for the job.

The Judaizers were doing the same thing with equally tragic results. It was not that there was anything wrong with the Law. But it was not designed to do what the Judaizers wanted to make it do. They were trying to be justified by law-keeping and the law was never designed to accomplish this.

1. The Law Carries a Curse: *For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, to perform them" (3:10).*

The Judaizers taught that the law was a means of justification. The way to be justified was to believe in Christ and keep the law. To disprove this teaching, Paul quotes Deuteronomy 27:26. It shows that the law is a means of condemnation to anyone who does not keep it. Notice the inclusiveness of that passage:

- Cursed is *everyone*.
- Who does not *continually* remain (Greek present tense).

- By *all* the things written in the book of the law.

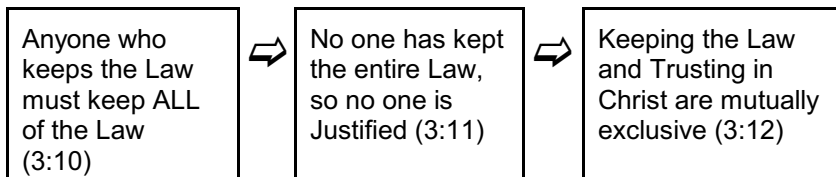
The point is that those who seek to find their justification on the basis of the works of the law find themselves coming under the curse of the law. There are no exceptions.

2. The Law Cannot Justify: *Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, "The righteous man shall live by faith" (3:11).*

The truth that no one is justified by the law is seen in Habakkuk 2:4 which says, "The just shall live by faith." If it is true that the just shall live by faith, it must follow that the just does not live by law, since law by its very nature is the opposite of faith. This is seen in the next verse.

3. The Law is Contrary to Faith: *However, the Law is not of faith; on the contrary, "He who practices them shall live by them" (3:12).*

Law and faith are mutually exclusive. If you are attempting to be justified through your own keeping of the law, then you are not trusting in the finished work of Christ on your behalf. We can summarize these three verses like this:



FREEDOM IN CHRIST

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us -- for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree" -- 14 in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. (Galatians 3:13-14).

The word “redemption” is a term from the marketplace. It denotes buying and selling. We usually think in terms of buying and selling consumer goods, clothes, food, a car, a house. But in the ancient world, there was another commodity that was commonly bought and sold -- people. In an age where slavery was the norm, it was common to speak of buying and selling people.

There are two primary words that are used in the New Testament to designate a “tree.”

Dendron (δενδρον): Refers to a tree in our normal sense of the word.

Xulon (ξυλον): Normally used to describe something made of wood.

- A staff (Matthew 26:47, 55; Mark 14:43).
- A stake or cross (Acts 5:30; 10:39; 13:29; Galatians 3:13; 1 Peter 2:24).
- Stocks (Acts 16:24).
- The Tree of Life (Revelation 2:7; 22:2, 14, 19).

The idea behind redemption points to the purchase of a slave within the marketplace. The basic Greek word for redeeming is *agorazo* (ἀγοράζω). It comes from the root word *agora*, describing the marketplace. It describes the act of purchasing a slave in the marketplace. But in this verse there is a subtle difference. Here we find the word *exagorazo* (ἐξαγοράζω). The prefix that is attached takes in the idea, not only of buying the slave within the marketplace, but then taking him out of the marketplace.

The tense used to describe this action is very specific. The phrase *having become a curse for us* is a translation of the perfect tense. This tense describes an action which took place in the past and which has continuing results. Christ became a curse for us in the past with the result that we are no longer under that curse.

Christ not only purchased us from the curse of the Law, but He also then took us out from under that law. That is the point that is made here in this verse. We were bought and paid for by Christ’s atoning death on the cross and because of that, we now serve a new master.

Our Old Master	Our New Master
The Law and its ordinances	Jesus Christ
Brought a curse upon all who did not obey	Became a curse for us so that we might receive the blessing promised to the children of Abraham

The specific curse is taken from the Greek Septuagint text of Deuteronomy 21:22-23. To be hung upon a tree was considered to be the act

of greatest disrespect. In was done to one who was shown to be under a curse. In such a way, Christ became a curse for us.

What does it mean in verse 13 when we read that “Christ became a curse *for* us”? The Greek preposition used there is *huper* (ὑπερ). When this is used with the genitive (as it is in this passage) it carries the idea of “for the sake of.” Christ became a curse for our sake. We are the beneficiaries of his having been accursed on the cross.

The religion says, “Obey and be blessed; disobey and be cursed.” By contrast, the gospel says, “Believe that Jesus was cursed in your place so that you can be blessed in His place.”

THE FIDELITY OF THE COVENANT

Brethren, I speak in terms of human relations: even though it is only a man's covenant, yet when it has been ratified, no one sets it aside or adds conditions to it.

Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, “And to seeds,” as referring to many, but rather to one, “And to your seed,” that is, Christ.

What I am saying is this: the Law, which came four hundred and thirty years later, does not invalidate a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to nullify the promise.

For if the inheritance is based on law, it is no longer based on a promise; but God has granted it to Abraham by means of a promise. (Galatians 3:15-18).

What is a covenant? Humanly speaking, it is a contract, an agreement between two parties. It sets forth an agreement between those two parties with terms and conditions. Once it has been signed and ratified by both parties, then the contract becomes legally binding.

The Old Testament covenant was such a contract, but it was also more than a mere contract. It involved a life and death oath. When a person entered into a covenant, he swore an oath that placed a curse upon himself if he did not keep the terms of the covenant.

The Bible teaches that God entered into a covenant relationship with men. There were terms to this covenant agreement and both parties accepted those terms and it was ratified. The Lord even went through a very intricate process of sealing the covenant with the blood of a sacrificed animal. The idea was that, if He broke the terms of the covenant, then may He be

destroyed in the same way the sacrificed animal was destroyed.

1. A Ratified Covenant becomes Legally Binding: *Even though it is only a man's covenant, yet when it has been ratified, no one sets it aside or adds conditions to it (3:15).*

Once you enter into a contract and sign on the dotted line, it takes effect and the terms and conditions begin to apply. Just because you later decide that you don't care for certain of the stipulations does not mean that you can arbitrarily go back and change them.

If this is true with normal contracts, how much more is it the case with God's holy covenant? The covenant that God made with Abraham continues to stand and is not changed by something that takes place at a later date.

Now you might be thinking, "That is all well and good. But what does the Abrahamic Covenant have to do with me? I was not there and I am not Jewish. Does it have any application with me today?" It really does. The reason that it does is because that covenant was Messianic in nature.

2. God's Covenant with Abraham was Messianic in Nature: *Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, "And to seeds," as referring to many, but rather to one, "And to your seed," that is, Christ (3:16).*

We tend to look at the promises given to Abraham and think in terms of a nation of Jews and a land in Palestine. But the promise to Abraham was to his seed, not to his seeds. Paul makes a point that this seed is in the singular -- that it refers to one person. It is a Messianic promise. It is a promise that Abraham would have a descendant who would be a blessing to the world.

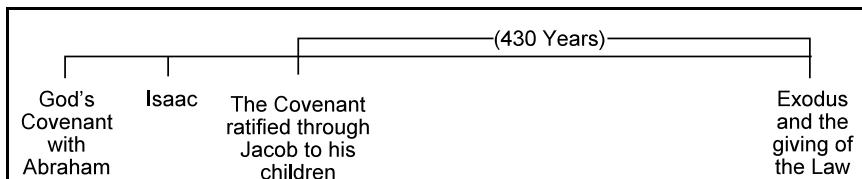
Covenants, by their very nature, are conditional. When two parties enter into a covenant, that covenant is conditioned by whether it is kept by the two parties. The problem is that man has never been able to keep his part of the covenant. Man is, by nature, a covenant-breaker. And so, God has entered into a covenant with Abraham and with his seed, specifically with the Son of Abraham. God has entered into a covenant with Jesus Christ. He is the covenant-keeper. He has perfectly kept any and all the terms of the covenant.

That is where we as Christians enter into the covenant. We who believe in the same way that Abraham believed have been united

with Christ. We have therefore become a part of the one seed of Abraham. Our new identity is rooted in Him. And because of that union, we have a lasting promise because He perfectly kept the covenant on our behalf. The fact of His covenant-keeping is credited to us as though we had kept that same covenant.

3. The Advent of the Law did not Nullify the Covenant Promise: *What I am saying is this: the Law, which came four hundred and thirty years later, does not invalidate a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to nullify the promise (3:17).*

The promise given to Abraham was passed on to Isaac and then to Jacob and then to the sons of Jacob. Four hundred and thirty years after it was ratified for this last time, the Law was given. But the coming of the Law did not invalidate the covenant that had been ratified 430 years earlier.



4. Our Inheritance is Based upon God's Covenant Promise, not upon Law: *For if the inheritance is based on law, it is no longer based on a promise; but God has granted it to Abraham by means of a promise (3:18).*

The Judaizers wished to make salvation dependent upon the keeping of the Mosaic Law. But if this is the case, then it no longer is based upon the promise that God made to Abraham so many hundreds of years earlier. The fact that God saved Abraham before the Law was ever given is evidence that salvation does not come through the keeping of the Law.

Discussion Questions

- How and when did your spiritual life and awareness begin?
- Do you feel closer to the Lord today than you have in the past? If not, then at what point in your life did you feel the closest to Him? What changed?
- Do you consider yourself to be a Christian? What evidence is there in your life that this is the case?
- Is it the evidence that makes you a Christian or is it being a Christian that produces the evidence? How can you tell which is the cause and which is the result in your own life?

BEFORE AND AFTER

GALATIANS 3:19-29

Have you ever seen one of those “before and after” advertisements? It begins by showing you a picture of a person before they had used the advertised product. The person doesn’t look so good. Depending what product is being advertised, the subject is overweight, bald, windblown, harried or otherwise unhappy. But then we see a photo of the individual after he or she had utilized the product. A wonderful change has taken place! Whatever it was that was ailing them has now disappeared.

Paul does something similar for us in Galatians 3:19-29. He paints a verbal “before and after” picture. He presents what life was like under the Law and what life is like now that we have come to Christ.

Galatians 3:19-24	Galatians 3:25-29
Then	Now
Life under the Law	Life now that Faith has come
<p>The Law was given...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Because of transgressions (3:19-20). • To shut all under sin (2:21-22). • To bring us to Christ (3:23-24). 	<p>In our present liberty in Christ, we have...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A position as an adult son (3:25-26). • A baptism in Christ (3:27). • A bond of unity (1:28). • An inheritance (3:29).

LIFE UNDER THE LAW

There is a tendency among Christians to look at the Law and to think of it as something that was bad. This is wrong and an over-reaction to the wrong use of the Law. Consider the following passages of Scripture:

*O how I love Thy law!
It is my meditation all the day. (Psalm 119:97).*

*Those who love Thy law have great peace.
And nothing causes them to stumble. (Psalm 119:165).*

But we know that the Law is good, if one uses it lawfully, ⁹ realizing that law is not made for a righteous man, but for those who are lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane; for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, ¹⁰ and immoral men and homosexuals and kidnappers and liars and perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching. (1 Timothy 1:8-10).

The Law was considered by the Jew to be a wonderful thing. It presented the very heart of God. Paul presents three primary usages of the Law and three purposes that the Law fulfilled.

1. The Law was Given Because of Transgressions

Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed would come to whom the promise had been made. ²⁰ Now a mediator is not for one party only; whereas God is only one. (Galatians 3:19-20).

Paul begins this section with a natural question that arises when we consider what he has said concerning our redemption apart from the Law. Let's review:

- Paul has appealed to the past experiences of the Galatians to show that the Law cannot save (3:1-5). They received the Holy Spirit through faith. What more can they possibly receive through keeping the Law?
- Paul appealed to the example of Abraham to show that the Law cannot save (3:6-9). Abraham believed and it was counted to him for righteousness long before he was ever circumcised and long before there was any Law.

- Paul appealed to the very nature of the Law to show that it cannot save (3:10-12). The Law only curses; it does not save. It is designed to punish the offender. And since all have offended, then it is universal in its condemnation.
- Paul appealed to the redemption that Christ provided to show that His death was required in order to overturn the curse of the Law (3:13-14).
- Paul appealed to the Abrahamic Covenant that could not be overturned just because of a Law that came at a later date (3:15-18).

Each of these points were set forth to establish that the Law would not and could not save men from their sins. The Law was not designed to justify, it was only designed to condemn. At this point the reader naturally asks the question, “If the Law did not save, then what good is it? Why did God give the Law in the first place?”

The first reason for the Law is *because of transgressions* (3:19). It was given because there was a problem with sin. This is important. Which came first, sin or the Law? There is a sense in which you cannot have a breaking of the Law until there is a Law established that you

Ridderbos interprets the phrase “because of transgressions” to mean that the Law was given in order to make transgressions more manifestly sinful. While this principle is taught in Romans 5:20, that does not seem to be the idea here in this context. The Law was not only given to increase that we might see how sin in its true light, but also that sin might be retrained.

can break. Romans 5:13 talks about this when it says that *sin is not imputed where there is no law*. At the same time, there are moral absolutes that existed before the Law was ever given on Mount Sinai. They come from the very character of God and are built into the very framework of the universe.

The Law was given because of transgressions. It was given to teach men the difference between right and wrong. It was given to correct their way and to tell us how we ought to live our lives.

I have been given to understand that there is a rule in the student handbook of Bob Jones University that prohibits the flying of kites from the roof of the men’s dormitory. Why do you think they have such a rule in their handbook? It is because someone tried to do

that very thing. The rule was given to prevent an action that could have some very negative consequences. The Law was given for the same reason. Notice the manner in which this Law was given.

- *Having been ordained through angels.*

It was commonly taught among the Jews that the Law was given through the agency of angels.

- *By the agency of a mediator.*

The word translated “mediator” is the Greek word *mesites* (μεσιτης). It is used several times in the New Testament and always has reference to the ministry of Jesus as a mediator between God and man. Interestingly, it is also used once in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament. It is found in the book of Job. You remember Job’s story. He had lost everything and he didn’t know why. He prayed, but heaven remained silent. And in his grief, he wondered what God was doing.

*“For He is not a man as I am that I may answer Him,
That we may go to court together.
There is no UMPIRE between us,
Who may lay his hand upon us both. (Job 9:32-33).*

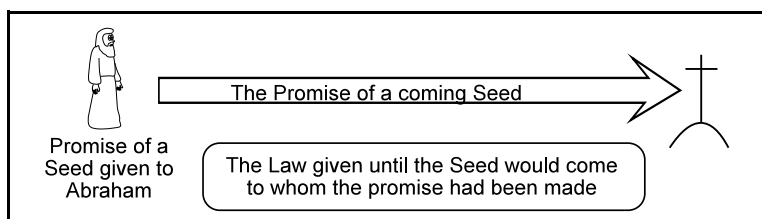
Job mourns that there was no mediator between himself and God. But the Law was given through the agency of a mediator. Who was this mediator?

- (1) Was it God himself? No, for *a mediator is not for one party only; whereas God is only one* (3:20).
- (2) Was it Moses? He did serve as a mediator, yet he would have been for only one party, since he was just a man.

The mediator had to be one who was both God and man. I suggest that Paul is making a reference to the deity and the corresponding humanity of Jesus.

- *Until the seed would come to whom the promise had been made*

The Law was given in an interim. It was given until. It was given, but was only to be there until something better would come. Its legal systems were designed to be temporary.



Rather than being permanent, the Law was provisional. It was provided until the Promise that predated it could be fulfilled. The car that I drive has a spare tire. But the spare is not as large or as sturdy as the other four tires on the car. It is a skinny little tire which is only designed to last as long as it takes me to get to a place where I can replace it with a permanent tire. The Law was like that. It was a temporary provision to get me where I needed to go so that I could get something better.

The Law came third-hand. It was ordained through angels and given by the agency of a mediator. The Promise, on the other hand, came directly from God. Do you remember the narrative of Genesis 15? It was the presence of God who moved in the form of a burning furnace through the elements of the sacrificed animals to ratify His covenant promises with Abraham.

2. The Law was Given To Shut all Under Sin.

Is the Law then contrary to the promises of God? May it never be! For if a law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law.

But the Scripture has shut up everyone under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. (Galatians 3:21-22).

The fact that the Law was given in the interim between the promise of a Seed and the fulfillment of that promise brings up an important question. *Is the Law then contrary to the promises of God?* Are we to become theological dualists in seeing the Law as bad while the Promise is good? Not at all. It is not a matter of one being good while the other is bad. The real issue is that the Law was not designed to do what the Promise was designed to do.

You do not say that a hammer is bad because it cannot saw wood. Or that a saw is bad because it cannot hammer nails. By the same token, the Law was not designed to impart life. That is not what it was supposed to do, so it should come as no surprise that it doesn't do it. What the Law did do is to *shut up everyone under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe* (3:22).

The Law is like a mirror. It shows you where the dirt is. It doesn't clean the dirt. It isn't designed for that task. But it reveals the fact that a cleansing is necessary. This brings us to Paul's next point.

3. The Law was Given To bring us to Christ.

But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed.

*Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith.
25 But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. (Galatians 3:23-25).*

Paul will further develop this theme in the next chapter. He says that the Law is like a tutor. The word "tutor" is translated from the Greek *paidagogos* (παιδαγωγός). It comes from the root word *paidon* (παιδιον) which refers to a baby or a child.

When we think of a tutor, we think of someone hired to help teach a difficult subject. But a tutor in the ancient world was more of a baby sitter. Children in the ancient world were often placed under the authority of a supervisor, usually a household servant, who would make sure that they got their lessons done and did not get lost along the way.

The Law served as a tutor during the infancy years of God's

people, making sure that they did not go far afield, but keeping them in line for that which was to come. The purpose of the Law was to bring them to see the Messiah. But once faith has come, then the ministry of the tutor is no longer needed.

Imagine that you are on a ship that is cruising across the Atlantic. Suddenly the alarm rings. There has been a collision and the ship is taking on water. It will certainly sink. People are rushing around in panic as the deck begins to list. But then you notice a large metallic sign saying “Floatation device.” It has an arrow pointing to a large box. Without hesitation, you pull off the heavy metal sign and you clutch it to your bosom and throw yourself into the waters. What is the result? You sink to the bottom of the ocean and drown. Why? What went wrong? You confused the sign with that to which the sign pointed.

The Judaizers were doing the same thing. They were clutching to themselves the Law instead of the One to whom the Law pointed. And the result was just as devastating.

The fact that we are no longer under a tutor does not therefore mean that we are now lawless. The reason that an adult does not need a baby-sitter is not only because he is now grown, but also because his behavior is now established apart from the tutelage of the baby-sitter. The Law was our baby-sitter, but now that we are grown, we live in a manner than requires no further baby-sitting.

Being free from the Law does not make us lawless. It means that we are under a higher law. This will be established in Galatians 5 when we shall be called to serve one another in love.

LIFE IN THE LIGHT OF LIBERTY

Notice the change in personal pronouns. Up to this point, Paul has been talking in the first person plural: *WE were kept in custody... the Law has become OUR tutor... WE are no longer under a tutor.* Now there will be a change. Paul switches to the second person plural. He addresses himself to **you**: *YOU are all sons of God... all of YOU who were baptized into Christ... YOU are all one in Christ Jesus.*

This is significant. Up to this point, he has been describing the Jewish experience of life under the Law. It was an experience that the Galatian church did not share. They had never been under the Law. They were

Gentiles. But they have entered into the salvation experience. And they have entered into this quite apart from the Law.

1. You are All Sons: *For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. (Galatians 3:26).*

If you have believed in the Son of God, then you have become a son of God. The word used here for “sons” here is *huioi* (υἱοι). It is different from the *paidon* (παιδιον) who is only a child. A *huios* is a son -- it can refer either to an infant son or to an adult son, but he is not a mere child.

There are some today who read this and note with varying degrees of distress that the language is not gender neutral. It does not read “sons and daughters.” It is specific to describe the position of sons. It does this for a reason. The reason is not to deny the place of the feminine in spiritual matters, but to communicate the fact that the role into which we have been brought is that of a high position. Paul does this by using the term that described in that day not only a physical offspring, but a legal receiver of inheritance.

2. You are All Baptized: *For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. (Galatians 3:27).*

The Judaizers wanted to enforce circumcision as the initiatory rite into the church. But Christians have a new initiatory rite. It is the rite of baptism. And Paul points out that all who were baptized into Christ have been clothed with Christ.

What is baptism? I am not really talking about modes of baptism or whether the word speaks exclusively of immersion or pouring or sprinkling. All of these involve getting wet. But what does the rite of baptism actually signify?

The verb comes from the Greek word *baptizo* (βαπτίζω). Whenever it is used, there is always one idea at the forefront. It is the idea of identification. When you are baptized, you are being identified with something. This is seen in every baptism within the New Testament.

Baptism of John	Matthew 3:1-6	John baptized people to identify them with the coming kingdom
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Baptism of Jesus	Matthew 3:13-15	Jesus was baptized by John to identify Himself with the kingdom of which John was preaching
Christian Baptism	Acts 3:38-41	Believers and their households were baptized to identify themselves with Jesus Christ and the cleansing power of His death, burial and resurrection
Baptism of Jesus' Death	Mark 10:38-39; Luke 12:50	Jesus was identified with our sins upon the cross. He described this as the "cup of His baptism" from which He must drink
Baptism in the Holy Spirit	Acts 1:5; 1 Corinthians 12:13	All believers have been identified with Christ through the ministry of the Holy Spirit
Baptism into Moses	1 Corinthians 10:2	The Israelites coming out of Egypt were identified with Moses and the God whom he followed

Each of these baptisms involve the idea of identification. The person being baptized is somehow being identified with that into which he or she is being baptized. As Christians, the rite of circumcision has been replaced by the rite of baptism.

- Both were given as a sign of faith (Romans 4:11).
- Both served as a sign of the covenant.
- Both were binding upon entire households (Acts 16:15; 16:31-33; 1 Corinthians 1:16).

It is important to remember that Paul is not substituting baptism for circumcision as a means to obtaining the favor of God. This is the Roman Catholic view of baptism. They teach that baptism is a means of obtaining the grace of God. Their error is much the same as the Judaizers except that they substitute circumcision for baptism as the requirement for being accepted by God. Baptism is merely a sign. It points to a spiritual reality, but there is no saving

grace imparted by the physical act of baptism.

Paul tells us here that all who have been baptized into Christ have clothed themselves with Christ. This is a striking statement. What does it mean to be “clothed with Christ?”

- It means we have been identified with Christ. This is the language of baptism. It points out that we have a new identity. You can look at a policeman or a fire fighter and see who is their identity on the basis of the uniform they wear. We are much the same way. We wear the person of Christ and He serves as the “uniform” to tell the world who we now are. There is a saying that reminds us that “the clothes make the man.” This is true in this sense. Our being clothed with Christ make us who and what we are as Christians.
- It also signifies our proximity to Christ. There is nothing that is physically closer to you than your clothes. We are called to draw near to God and, as a result, He will also draw near to us.
- Clothing ourselves with Christ has made us acceptable to God. There is a theology of clothing that goes back to the Garden of Eden. When Adam and Eve first sinned, they realized their nakedness and sought to cover themselves. What they were doing on the outside was reflective of an inner need of which they had become aware. We stand naked before God and are lacking in ourselves any covering righteousness. It is only when we are clothed with Christ that we are acceptable to God.

Our clothing tells people who we are. Nearly every kind of clothing is actually a uniform showing that we are identified with others of the same gender, social class or national group. But to say that Christ is our clothing is to say that our ultimate identity is found, not in any of these classifications, but in Christ. (Timothy Keller 2006:80).

Tim Keller reminds us that our clothing projects our identity, that nearly every kind of clothing is actually a uniform that identifies us. My friends in eastern Europe have often mentioned that they can tell an American at least in part by the way we dress.

3. You are All One: *There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. (Galatians 3:28).*

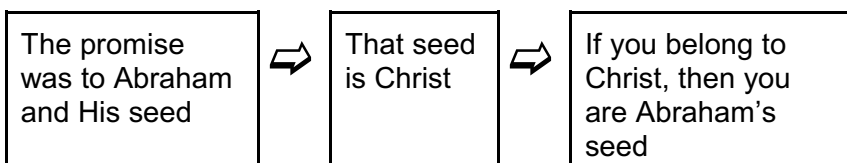
If the women of the Galatian church heard the teaching in verse 26 that we are all sons and wondered if that applied to them, here is the answer. Our unity in Christ transcends all racial, social and gender boundaries. We are all one in Him.

Racism, culturalism, and nationalism have no part in the kingdom of God.

We must be careful here. Paul is not saying that all Christians necessarily have the same functional roles within the church. He elsewhere has some very specific instructions for men and women as well as for masters and slaves. What he IS saying here is that we all equally share our participation in the body of Christ.

4. You are All Abraham's Descendants: *And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise. (Galatians 3:29).*

There is an unfortunate translation here that loses a bit of the impact of Paul's closing statement. When he says, "*You are Abraham's descendants*" (Αβρααμ σπέρμα ἐστέ), it literally reads, "You are Abraham's seed." This cannot be divorced from what Paul said about the promise of the seed in verse 16.



If you have come to Christ in faith, then you are one with Him. And if you are one with Him, then you are His seed. And since He is the seed of Abraham, you are also the seed (singular) of Abraham.

Being of the seed of Abraham, the very thing that the Judaizers were offering to the Gentiles by means of circumcision, was already their through faith in Jesus Christ. Indeed, this is the only way in which anyone can be a true recipient of the promise.

Discussion Questions

- Describe the character of your life and what it was like before you came to know and understand the Gospel.
- What are the three reason Paul proposes for the giving of the Law? How have these three reasons had an impact in your own life?
- Why is racism antithetical to Christianity? What are some ways in which racism can be seen in our culture today?
- Is it wrong for a Christian to be patriotic? At what point does patriotism move into nationalism and a denial of the unity that we have with Christians of other nations and cultures?

SONS OF GOD

GALATIANS 4:1-11

The Jewish people took great pride in their heritage. Their identity was bound up in the fact that they were children of Abraham and descended from the 12 tribes of Israel. God had chosen them out of all of the other nations of the earth to be distinct and special and set apart for special blessings. He had gone to great lengths to have them keep their racial purity, forbidding them to give their sons and daughters in marriage to the Canaanites or other idol worshipers of the land. Therefore it may have come as something of a shock when, in the last chapter, Paul stated that all who believe as Abraham believed can be reckoned as Abraham's children and heirs according to the promise. But that is nothing compared to what he is going to say in this chapter.

Chapter 3	Chapter 4
All who believe are children of Abraham	We have received the adoption of sons and call God our Father

It is one thing to speak of being a son of Abraham. It is quite another to speak of being a son of God. The Jews normally refrained from any mention of a "son of God." This need not have been the case. The prophets of the Old Testament occasionally likened the relationship of God with His people as that of a father and son.

Then you shall say to Pharaoh, "Thus says the Lord, 'Israel is My son; My first-born.

"So I said to you, 'Let My son go, that he may serve Me;' but you have refused to let him go. Behold, I will kill your son, your first-born.'" (Exodus 4:22-23).

*When Israel was a youth, I loved him,
And out of Egypt I called My son. (Hosea 11:1).*

Israel was described as both the son and the firstborn of God. That does not mean that Israel was the first nation to exist. This was not the case. The idea of firstborn pointed, not to the first chronologically, but the first in priority.

Israel enjoyed the rights and privileges of sonship. The Jew was one who had God as his father. But what we shall see in this chapter is that Gentiles are also able to enter into this child-parent relationship with God. Not only that, the relationship that we enjoy today is actually better than the one that the Jews enjoyed with the Lord under the Old Testament system.

Jews under the Old Covenant	Believers under the New Covenant
Though they were heirs of the kingdom, they were like child-heirs who must submit to tutors and baby-sitters until they have reached their adulthood.	We are no longer under the tutelage of the Law, but have been brought into the family of God with all of the privileges of adult sons.

Paul does not want to present the Law as being a bad thing. It is not. The Law of the Lord is perfect. But the Judaizers were trying to do something with the Law that it was not designed to do. Furthermore, their desire to remain under the Law was a sign of their own immature faith.

THE ILLUSTRATION OF SONSHIP

Now I say, as long as the heir is a child, he does not differ at all from a slave although he is owner of everything, but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by the father.

So also we, while we were children, were held in bondage under the elemental things of the world. (Galatians 4:1-3).

Paul closed the last chapter with the truth that those who belong to Christ are heirs according to the promise given to Abraham. Now we see that being an heir is not all that it is

The words translated “child” and “children” are from the Greek root *nepios* (νηπιος) and describe an infant or baby.

cracked up to be. He is going to use the contemporary son-placing customs of his day to illustrate the relationship that we enjoy as Christians.

1. The Jewish Custom of Bar Mitzvah.

Among the Jews, a boy received his Bar Mitzvah at around the age of twelve or thirteen. At that time he would become a “son of the commandment” and would be legally reckoned as an adult.

2. Roman Customs of Son-placing.

A Roman child became an adult at the sacred family festival known as the Liberalia, held annually on the seventeenth of March. At this time the child was formally brought into adulthood by the decree of his father and received the *toga virilis* in place of the *toga praetexta* that he had previously worn.

It did not matter whether you were Jewish or whether you were Roman, if you had not reached the age of adulthood, then you could be an heir but still not have the freedom of the house. You would be under the authority of guardians and managers.

In the same way, the Jews who lived under the Old Testament era were heirs of the kingdom, but lived under the rule and the bondage of the Law until the time that they could come into their inheritance. This tells me something of the Old Testament era. It was a time of childhood. But now with the coming of Christ, this period of childhood has matured into an age of adulthood.

Here is the principle. The Law was a temporary measure given until God’s people grew up and were ready to partake of their inheritance. Those who lived under the Law *were held in bondage under the elemental things of the world*. Their existence was really quite simple and elemental. They were told, “Do this and don’t do that.” These rules generally focused only on the outward actions, not the inward attitudes.

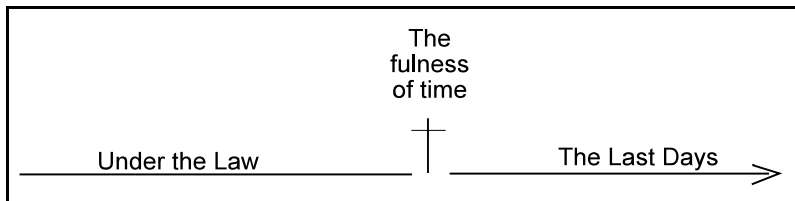
Notice that Paul is speaking in the first person plural - “*while **we** were children.*” He is speaking of himself and his fellow Israelites. But when he comes to verse 6 he will change and speak to the Galatians (“**You** are sons”). The Galatians were never children under the Law. They did not become elevated into a position of adulthood after having first served under the tutelage of the Law. Instead we shall see that they were adopted into that position.

THE ADOPTION OF SONSHIP

But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. (Galatians 4:4-5).

The coming of Jesus took place *when the fullness of the time came*. This correlates to the illustration that we saw in verse 2 of *the date set by the father*. This indicates that there was a long wait before the fulness of time had come. It points to the fact that everything that happened up to that point is affected by it. Everything after this point could be described as “the last days.”

This points out the centrality of the cross in human history. The event of the crucifixion of Christ is the centerpoint of all of human history. It was to this event that all of the Old Testament prophecies primarily looked forward.



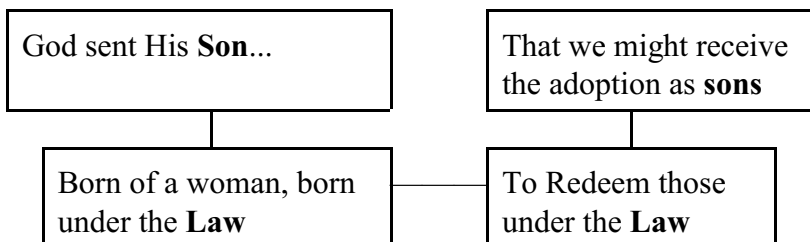
In a very real sense, Jesus was born when the fulness of time came. His birth took place at a propitious time in history.

- This was the time of Pax Romana, the peace of Rome. It was generally a time of relative peace throughout the Roman Empire. This had not been the case 30 years before the birth of Christ. The empire had been plunged into a time of civil war. It would not be the case 40 years after the death of Christ. Jerusalem herself would be destroyed in the fighting. Jesus came at just the right time.
- The Romans had developed a system of roads to tie their empire together. These roads would be used to spread the gospel throughout the world.
- The entire known world spoke a common language in the Koine

Greek of the day.

- The Bible had been translated in the Greek Septuagint and was therefore available to Gentiles.
- The diaspora had resulted in Jewish synagogues being planted throughout the entire known world.

This verse is arranged in a type of parallelism known as a *chiasm*. It is designed to contrast the idea of sonship versus the idea of the Law.



Jesus was born and raised and lived under the Law. He allowed the Law to exercise authority over Himself. He had made the Law. But He became submissive to it. The One who instituted the rite of circumcision was Himself circumcised.

When I was growing up there were rules in my house. There were rules for cleaning and for sleeping and for eating. There was only one person who did not come under the rules -- the maker of the rules. But in Jesus' case, the maker of the rules allowed Himself to be placed under the authority of those rules.

Jesus became....
A man that He might redeem men
A Jew that He might redeem those who were under the Law

Jesus was born under the Law. He was Jewish. The Law exercised dominion over Him even to the cross where it judged Him as though He were a guilty sinner.

- The Law judges: He was judged for our iniquities.
- The Law executes: He died for our sins.

The purpose of Christ's coming was that He might redeem. This is the same word that we saw in Galatians 3:13 where Christ redeemed those who were under the curse of the Law. The basic Greek word for redeeming is *agorazo* (ἀγοράζω). It comes from the root word *agora*, describing the marketplace. It describes the act of purchasing a slave in the marketplace. But both here and in Galatians 3:13 there was a prefix attached to the word -- *exagorazo* (ἐξαγοράζω). The prefix that is attached takes in the idea, not only of buying the slave within the marketplace, but then taking him out of the marketplace. This is important. Christ did not purchase His people so that they might remain under the bondage of the Law. He purchased them in order to take them out from under that bondage.

As a result of that redemption, we now *receive the adoption as sons* (4:5). This brings up an interesting question. To what does this adoption refer? There are two possibilities:

1. Adoption of those who were not Previously Related.

When we normally speak of "adoption" we think of the taking in of a homeless child and giving him a family and a name. My son-in-law is such a case. He was adopted by a family who gave him both their name and their love and a portion in the family inheritance. Christ has provided that kind of adoption through the redeeming work upon the cross. He has effected our entrance into the family of God.

2. Placing of the Son as the Legal Heir of the Inheritance.

Paul has already reminded us in the early verses of this chapter that a young child was regularly kept under the supervision of tutors and stewards. It was not until a specified date that the child was taken and placed as an adult son so that he came into his full inheritance. The word translated "adoption" in verse 5 lends itself to such an event. It is the Greek word *huiiothesia* (υἱοθεσία). It is a compound word, made from the joining of two Greek words:

- The word *huios* (υἱός) refers to a "son."
- The verb *tithemi* (τίθημι) means "to place."

Though the combined word normally refers to adoption in our own modern sense of the word, it is also possible that it is used here to describe the placing of an adult son as the heir to the family

inheritance. These two ideas were not mutually exclusive in the ancient world.

One of the most famous adoptions of the ancient world was that of Octavius Augustus, the Emperor of the Roman Empire at the time when Jesus was born. The uncle of Octavius was Julius Caesar. When Caesar was assassinated, his will was opened and it contained adoption papers. Caesar had legally adopted his teenage nephew Octavius, but that adoption only went into effect with his death and the reading of his will. Our adoption is similar in that our adoption only went into effect with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus.

THE SPIRIT OF SONSHIP

Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" (Galatians 4:6).

When a child came of age, he would come into his inheritance. What is the inheritance that we have received as adult sons of God? It is the inheritance of the very Spirit of Christ who has come into our hearts. God not only provides the inheritance; He is the inheritance.

There are several different aspects to the ministry of the Holy Spirit in our lives. They each seem to have their own distinctiveness:

Ministries of the Holy Spirit		
Baptism	Indwelling	Filling
<i>For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13).</i>	<i>However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him (Romans 8:9).</i>	<i>Be filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18).</i>
Takes place once and for all		Intermittently

The Spirit does a work for you	The Spirit does a work in you	You cooperate with the Spirit
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Paul here is describing the indwelling ministry - *the Spirit of His Son into our hearts*. The results of that ministry is that we find ourselves in the closest possible relationship with God. This is seen in the term we use to address the Lord.

The term “*Abba*” is taken from the Hebrew/Aramaic *Ab*, “Father.” This rendition of it seems to be an endearment akin to our modern, “Daddy.” Such an endearment is appropriate only to the closest possible relationship. Its use here points to the depth of our new relationship with God on the basis of our union in Christ.

THE RAMIFICATIONS OF SONSHIP

Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God.

However at that time, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those which by nature are no gods.

But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how is it that you turn back again to the weak and worthless elemental things, to which you desire to be enslaved all over again?

*You observe days and months and seasons and years.
11 I fear for you, that perhaps I have labored over you in vain.
(Galatians 4:7-11).*

Having established the fact of our adoption as sons of God, Paul goes on to speak of the ramifications of that adoption. There is a lesson here. It is that no teaching of the Bible is an end to itself. All doctrine requires application in order to be *profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness* (2 Timothy 3:16).

1. If you are a Son, then you have an Inheritance: *And if a son, then an heir through God (4:7).*

You know what an inheritance is. It is made up of all of the wealth that a person owns. That accumulation of wealth is taken and given to the heir. The value of an inheritance is in direct proportion

to the wealth of the benefactor. If a poor man leaves you an inheritance, then you might not even bother claiming it. But if the King of the Universe who owns the cattle on a thousand hills and the planets around a billion galaxies makes you His heir, then you have incredible fortune.

2. If you are a Son, then you Know God: *You have come to know God, or rather to be known by God (4:9).*

There are two parts to this. The first part is that a son knows his father. There are those unfortunate children who do not know their fathers. For one reason or another, they have been abandoned. My own mother was such a child. She was given up on the streets of San Juan as an unwanted child. But if you are a Christian, then you know your Father. And that means that you know God. You've heard the expression that it is not what you know, but who you know that is important. It is true. And if you are a Son, then you know the One who really counts.

But that is not all. If you are a Son, then you are known by God. This is the kind of knowledge that expresses love. It is the kind of knowledge that the Old Testament is describing when it says that Adam **knew** his wife and she bore a son. It is a knowledge that includes intimacy and love. If you are God's Son, then He knows you in the most intimate and loving manner possible.

Psychiatrists tell us that we are at the same time afraid of being known and also that we are desirous of being known. We are afraid because of our guilt and our sin shames us. We are desirous of being known because we are lonely with a cosmic loneliness. It is only in Christ that this desire and this fear are met at the same time.

3. If you are a Son, then there is No Going Back to your Former Slavery: *How is it that you turn back again to the weak and worthless elemental things, to which you desire to be enslaved all over again? (4:9).*

If you have gone from being a slave to a son, from being an enemy of the kingdom to being the heir of the kingdom, from being an ignorant idol-worshiper to knowing God and being known by God, then why would you possibly want to go back?

What You Were	What You Are
A Slave (4:7)	A Son and an Heir (4:7)
You did not know God; you were slaves to those which by nature are no gods (4:8)	You have come to know God, or rather to be known by God (4:9)

In light of where you have been and where you are now, it is absolutely ludicrous to contemplate returning to the spiritual poverty that you once enjoyed. The Lord wants to treat you as an adult son rather than as a baby. Babies are fun, but to develop a real relationship requires adulthood.

Discussion Questions

- Have you ever wished you could return to childhood? What are some of the things from your childhood that you wish you could revisit? And what are those things from your childhood that you are glad are in the past?
- Do you know anyone who was adopted? In what way is their relationship different than a natural child?
- If you could ask the Lord for any single thing and be guaranteed an answer, for what would you ask?
- List some of the ways in which God has already blessed you.

A CONTRAST IN CHARACTER

GALATIANS 4:12-20

It is customary to think of Paul as normally dividing his epistles into two parts: Doctrine and Application. But that is a bit of an oversimplification because Paul's doctrine is applicable and practical. True doctrine is always *extremely* practical.

As we approach the last part of this epistle, Paul will draw out certain applications from his teaching. But we haven't quite gotten to the application portion of the letter. We are in Chapter 4. We are somewhere in between. We are in the process of moving from Paul the theologian to Paul the pastor, Paul the person, Paul the spiritual father, Paul the friend of the Galatian Christians. He is no longer simply making a theological case. Now he will be trying to persuade and exhort and appeal to the Galatians to respond to the case he has been making

The fourth chapter of Galatians is a study in contrasts. We have already seen a contrast between the former bondage under the Law versus the present position as a Son. Now the contrast becomes more personal as Paul contrasts his own ministry with the Galatians versus those who are attempting to effect their return to the Law.

4:1-11	SLAVERY versus SONSHIP
4:12-20	FALSE TEACHERS versus PAUL
4:21-31	HAGAR versus SARAH

At the same time, there is a continuing contrast between where the Galatians are now versus where they have been in the past.

A RECIPROCAL REPRESENTATION

I beg of you, brethren, become as I am, for I also have become as you are. (Galatians 4:12a).

Paul's pastoral heart now begins to come to the forefront. He has been preaching doctrine. Now he is making a heartfelt plea for their return. He wants nothing more than for them to enjoy the freedom that he enjoys. Therefore he begs for their return to their former stance in grace.

The Greek is given in the form of a quip - a short and blunt statement: "Be as I, for I as you."

What is involved in this plea? In what way are the Galatians to become as he is and in what way has Paul become like them? Several have been suggested.

The Galatians are to become Like Paul	Paul has become Like the Galatians
They are to return to the love that he has for them	He has come to love them in the same way they once showed such devotion to him that they were ready to pluck out their own eyes for his benefit
They are to enter into the freedom that Paul enjoys	He has once been under the Law to which they are attempting to return
They are seeking to enter into Judaism, but instead they are to follow in Paul's footsteps who departed from that legalistic Judaism to follow Christ	In following Christ, Paul has become free from the Law and has been able to enter into fellowship with Gentiles who are apart from the Law

Paul did not win the Galatians to Christ by keeping all of the Jewish purification rituals or by remaining in the Temple in Jerusalem. He won them through a ministry of incarnation; a ministry in which he went to where they were and ate what they ate and lived where they lived and talked as they talked. This was Paul's pattern for evangelism. But it was not original to him. He got it from Jesus.

To the Jews I became as a Jew, so that I might win

Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law though not being myself under the Law, so that I might win those who are under the Law; 21 to those who are without law, as without law, though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ, so that I might win those who are without law.

To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some. (1 Corinthians 9:20-22).

When the Lord wanted to save His people, He did it by leaving heaven and coming to earth and living where we live and eating what we eat and dying where we die. There is a sense in which He became every man. This is seen in the manner in which He is represented in various art forms. If you look at most artistic depictions of Jesus in the western art world, He is painted as a white Anglo-Saxon, not as a Semitic Jew. If you go to Africa and see a painting of Jesus, how is He pictured? He is seen as black. When He is portrayed in the east, He has oriental features. Is this bad? No, it is a demonstration of the truth that Jesus is the Savior of all men.

We are called to mirror that same approach in our efforts to evangelize others. That does not mean that we enter into sin so that we can reach sinners. But it does mean that we look for cultural bridges to span the gaps that separate us.

A RECOLLECTED RECEPTION

You have done me no wrong; 13 but you know that it was because of a bodily illness that I preached the gospel to you the first time; 14 and that which was a trial to you in my bodily condition you did not despise or loathe, but you received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus Himself. (Galatians 4:12b-14).

Paul's initial reception among the Galatians was completely out of accord with his physical appearance and bodily demeanor. He was not at his physical best when he first preached the gospel to them. He had been sick. We are not told what manner of sickness this involved, but apparently it was something of an outward visible nature.

- It was *a bodily illness*.
- It constituted a potential *trial* to the Galatians.
- It was of such a nature that their reaction could have been to *despise or loathe* his presence.

We do not know what was this bodily affliction. Paul elsewhere speaks of *a thorn in the flesh* from which he suffered (2 Corinthians 12:7). But we are given no clue as to what it may have been.

Here is the point. The Galatians accepted His message in spite of the appearance of the messenger. They were not won to the Gospel by a charismatic personality or a good-looking preacher. They came because they heard truth and they recognized Paul to be a messenger from God. That is what an angel is. The word angel simply means “messenger.”

People tend to gravitate toward that which looks pleasing to the eye. Elections are often won in this video age, not by the most qualified, but by the most ruggedly handsome. This was seen in the 1960's election between Kennedy and Nixon and it was seen again in the 1990's and the election between Bush and Clinton. One was more pleasing to the eye.

God sees the heart. And when He works in a person's heart, He sometimes allows them to catch a glimpse of that same vision. When you see things through His eyes, you get to see that which goes beyond the outward exterior.

A REMARKABLE READINESS

Where then is that sense of blessing you had? For I bear you witness that, if possible, you would have plucked out your eyes and given them to me. (Galatians 4:15).

There had been a time when the Galatians were ready to do anything for Paul, even down to tearing out their own eyes and handing them over. Some have thought that this may be a hint as to what was Paul's bodily affliction, but that is not the point that Paul is making. His reference to eye-plucking is similar to the words of Jesus when He calls for people to cut off hands or feet or pluck out eyes if they are a cause for stumbling (Matthew 18:8-9). The point is that the Galatians were once ready to give to Paul that which was most dear and precious to them. Paul is not asking them for anything and instead they have become antagonistic toward him.

In the Past	In the Present
You would have plucked out your own eyes and given them to me	I am become your enemy for telling you the truth
You were willing to hurt yourself for my sake	You are wishing to hurt me for your sake and for the sake of the false teachers

It is not always a pleasant thing to hear the truth. Doing that sort of thing has resulted in the breakup of friendships and the stoning of prophets. But we are called to be truth-tellers, not for the sake of hurting others, but for their ultimate good.

A REACTIVE REMOVAL

*So have I become your enemy by telling you the truth?
(Galatians 4:16).*

This is the only charge that can be laid at Paul's doorstep. He has presented and held to the truth of the gospel. There is a lesson here. It is that the preaching of the gospel does make enemies. The gospel divides. It divides friends and families and neighbors. It divides with an eternal division. That does not mean that we ought to add to such divisions. We are ambassadors of peace and we proclaim a gospel of peace. We are on a mission of reconciliation. But we ought also to realize that those who reject the gospel are rejecting the peace of God. The result is spiritual warfare.

A RUINOUS REASON

They eagerly seek you, not commendably, but they wish to shut you out so that you will seek them.

But it is good always to be eagerly sought in a commendable manner, and not only when I am present with you. (Galatians 4:17-18).

Paul finally comes to the contrast between Himself versus the legalistic Judaizers. There is both a contrast as well as a comparison.

The Judaizers	Paul
They eagerly seek the Galatians	He has eagerly sought the Galatians
They eager seeking of the Galatians was to shut them out from God's blessings	His eager seeking of the Galatians is to bring them into God's kingdom
Their seeking is not commendable	His seeking is in a commendable manner
Their goal is that they might be glorified	His goal is that God might be glorified

We are not told the specifics of who were these Judaizers, but we are given several hints of their identity. We can draw several conclusions from what Paul has said up to now.

- They had come on the scene preaching a different gospel (Galatians 1:6-9).
- Their message was that circumcision was a necessary part of salvation (Galatians 6:12).
- It seems that they claimed to have inside information from Jerusalem as to the truth of the gospel.
- Their message was couched in terms that were designed to be pleasing to the ear (Galatians 1:10).
- Although circumcision was the main issue at hand, it was not the only issue. The same problem arose when Judaizers tried to get the Galatians to *observe days and months and seasons and years* (Galatians 4:10). The point is that there are many possible applications of this as legalism bears many faces.

There are not a lot of instances today in Christian circles of people attempting to teach that circumcision is vital and necessary to the Christian life. But that does not mean we cannot find instances of legalism in the church. Legalism takes place when we attempt to approach God on the basis

of our keeping of the Law or on the basis of any moral code. By contrast, Christianity involves approaching God on the basis of Christ's keeping the Law on our behalf.

Legalism	Christianity
Approaches God on the basis of our keeping of the Law.	Approaches God on the basis of Christ keeping the Law on our behalf.
Gives the Law-keeper a reason for pride and boasting.	Leads the believer to humility as he finds nothing worthy in himself.
Self-effort.	Christ's effort.

Are we justified by works in the sight of God? Yes, there is a sense in which we are. But we are not justified by our own works. We are justified by the work of Christ that was accomplished for our benefit.

A RELUCTANT REPRODUCTION

My children, with whom I am again in labor until Christ is formed in you -- 20 but I could wish to be present with you now and to change my tone, for I am perplexed about you. (Galatians 4:19-20).

This image that Paul presents is of a mother who has given birth to children, but now for some strange reason is having to go back and again suffer the labor pains. In essence, he is saying, "We've already been through the pain of childbirth and there was a successful delivery. Now that you have been born again, you ought to be growing and developing rather than bringing on more labor pains."

Only a mother can truly empathize with these words. Can you imagine having to give birth two and three times to the same child? It would be a lesson in futility. Childbirth is no picnic. The only thing that makes it bearable is the conclusion of having brought a life into this world. You've heard the saying, "No pain, no gain." Paul is saying, "I went through the pain, now I want to see the gain!"

Is there perplexity in your own Christian walk? Or have you been

going through the labor pains of childbirth when it come to understanding the role of the gospel in your life? It may be time to say “yes” to the gospel and to trust in the One who labored on your behalf.

Discussion Questions

- What are some of the ways in which you can span cultural gaps in order to demonstrate the love of Christ to others with whom you come into contact?
- What are some of the ways in which a church can reach out to non-Christians and unchurched people in its neighborhood? Are there ways in which you can reach out to those who come into your own church?
- We expect to see opposition to the Gospel coming from the world, but have you seen that type of opposition coming from the ranks of the church? Are there areas in which you have found yourself opposing the Gospel?
- Are there instances in which you have found yourself more attracted to a spiritual leader for non-spiritual reasons, judging on the basis of outward appearances? Are there instances in which you have esteemed either a church or a Christian work solely because of outward appearances?

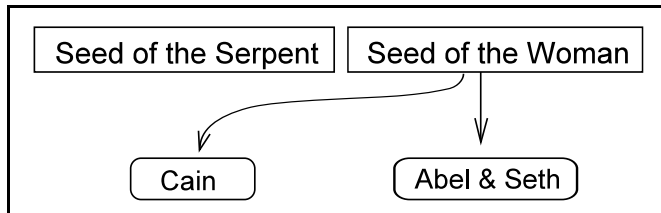
A TALE OF TWO WOMEN

GALATIANS 4:21-31

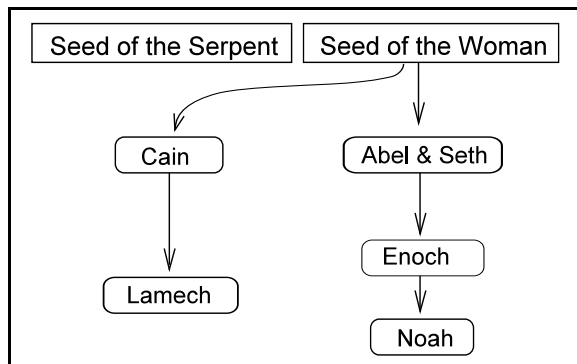
Throughout the Bible there runs two groups of people. The story is an old one. It goes back to the Garden of Eden when a smooth-talking serpent conned a backwoods babe with a fixation on forbidden fruit. There followed a voice in the Garden, some embarrassing questions and then a promise from the Lord that was to set the stage for the rest of history.

“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise Him on the heel.” (Genesis 3:15).

This verse provides the theme of the rest of Genesis. This will be a book about two seeds:

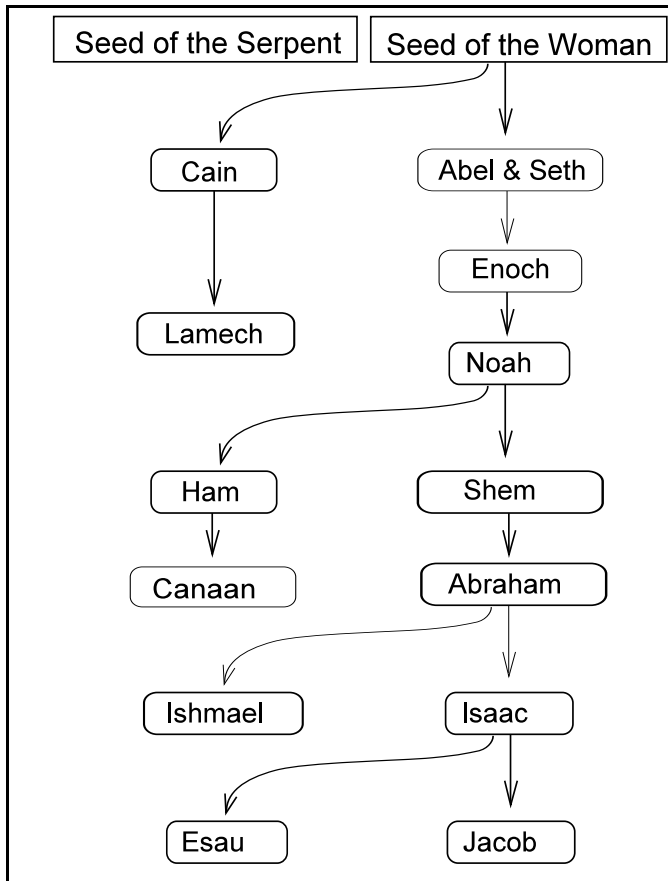


Even though Cain was descended from Eve, he eventually follows the way of the Serpent in rebellion against God. While he is the physical descendant of Adam and Eve, he is the spiritual descendant of the Serpent. Like the Serpent, he rebels against God. And like the Serpent, he is cursed



for his rebellion. The story continues as we are given two separate genealogies representing each of these two seeds.

Lamech is the culmination of the Seed of the Serpent through Cain. He takes Cain's sin and compounds it, threatening to do seven times the damage that Cain had done. In contrast, Enoch walks with God and Noah obeys the Lord in the building of an ark. ~~Seed of the Serpent~~ ~~Seed of the Woman~~, there is again a departure of a seed to follow after the Seed of the Serpent.



Ham sins and shows by his sin that he is of the Seed of the Serpent. His son Canaan is cursed and continues to be a curse to the Israelites. The pattern continues as Ishmael is cast out while Isaac shows himself to be the son of faith. And again when Esau despises the promises of God, it is to Jacob that the promise is given.

Moses writes the book of Genesis to the Israelites in the wilderness. It is much more than a mere history book. It is a call to be a seed and a generation and a people. The question before the Israelites in the wilderness

is which seed they will be a part of - the seed of the serpent or the seed of the woman? Each new generation will determine which seed it is. Will it continue in the covenant relation to God and show itself to be a part of the promised seed? Or will it turn from God to join and be a part of the seed of the serpent?

But the question does not stop with Genesis. The rest of the Bible, indeed, the rest of history contains the same issue. There are those who will seek the Lord and there are those who will seek their own way. As we come to the end of Galatians 4, we see that Paul establishes a similar contrast. It is a contrast between two groups of people.

Two Churches	The true church	The false church
Two Cities	New Jerusalem	Spiritual Babylon
Two Crops	Wheat	Tares
Two Women	The bride of Christ (Revelation 21)	The harlot of Revelation 17

- Don't get mixed up with the wrong girl.
- Don't eat a junk food crop.
- Don't move to the wrong city.
- Don't be a part of the wrong church

We have already seen this chapter as a study in contrasts. We have contrasted the bondage of the Law versus the Adoption that we have in Christ. We have contrasted both the teachings and the attitudes of the Judaizers versus that exhibited by Paul. The final set of contrasts will come in the form of an allegory.

4:1-11	SLAVERY versus SONSHIP
4:12-20	FALSE TEACHERS versus PAUL
4:21-31	HAGAR versus SARAH

What is an allegory? Paul uses the term in verse 24 when he says: *This is allegorically speaking.* The Greek term used here is the present participle of *allegoreo* (ἀλληγόρεω). It is a compound word made up of the joining together of two Greek words:

- *Allos* (ἄλλος): Another
- *Agoreuo* (ἀγορεύω): To speak

An allegory is a story which speaks another message beyond the plain meaning of the story. In the midst of its narrative it carries a deeper message which is apart from the story itself. This brings up a question to our Western minds. Why would Paul summarize his arguments with an appeal to an allegory? Several reasons can be proposed:

1. This allegory brings us full circle back to where Paul began in chapter 3 with the story of Abraham.
2. It is possible that this method had been used by the Judaizers and now Paul turns their own method against them.
3. Paul is able to use this allegory to illustrate and to review all of his main points.
 - There is a radical difference between law versus faith.
 - Life under the Law brings a curse; the life of faith brings blessing.
 - Life under the Law leads to slavery while the life of faith is liberating.
4. The story is a fitting climax to both the formal argument of 3:1 - 4:11 as well as to the personal appeal of 4:12-20.
5. It allows Paul to gently suggest in story form what he wishes the Galatians to do as a result of his epistle -- that the Galatians should obey God by casting out the legalizers.

A PORTRAIT OF TWO WOMEN

Tell me, you who want to be under law, do you not listen to the law?

For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the bondwoman and one by the free woman.

But the son by the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and the son by the free woman through the promise. (Galatians 4:21-23).

Paul is going to tell a story. It is a story that is known to his readers. It is a story about Abraham. Paul began his doctrinal section with Abraham and now he has come full circle and will close this section with Abraham.

Abraham had two sons. That in itself was significant because he originally was unable to have any children. He and his wife were both old and his wife had been barren even when she was young.

The use of the allegory does not deny the historical reality of the events of Genesis. There is a true allegory here, but it is in addition to this historicity of the narrative, not in place of it.

God had promised to take Abraham's offspring and make from it a great nation. Abraham figured that he would help God out by having a son by his wife's handmaid. This was considered to be an acceptable practice in those days - I don't recommend trying it today.

Abraham had Ishmael by Hagar the Egyptian handmaid. But then God demonstrated that He didn't need Abraham's help in the first place when Sarah became pregnant. She gave birth to Isaac. Instead of having no sons, Abraham had come to have two sons. And to make matters worse, they did not get along. This was sibling rivalry multiplied by a factor of ten.

Judaizers and their Legalism	Paul and his Message of Grace
Abraham had a son by the bondwoman	Abraham had a son by the free woman
Hagar gave birth to Ishmael	Sarah gave birth to Isaac
Born according to the flesh	Born according to the promise.
A natural birth	A supernatural birth

The birth of Ishmael is the story of Abraham not trusting God but instead, trying to accomplish the right thing in the wrong way. It is a story of unbelief. And that is exactly what has been at issue in Galatia.

Here is the point. It is possible to be the physical son of Abraham and still not be a partaker in the promise. The Judaizers were the sons of Abraham, but they had abandoned the promise that came through Abraham and Sarah. They wanted to hold on to the old bondage of the Law. They wanted to hold onto their own works-righteousness. It is as though they were of Hagar. They are like Ishmael who *was born according to the flesh* but are

not children of the promise.

A PERSONIFICATION OF LEGALITY

This is allegorically speaking, for these women are two covenants: one proceeding from Mount Sinai bearing children who are to be slaves; she is Hagar.

Now this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. (Galatians 4:24-25).

Now we have a further development of the allegory. We have already seen how one woman represents the flesh while the other represents a birth that is by promise.

Hagar	Sarah
The Mosaic Covenant	The New Covenant
Proceeds from Mount Sinai	Proceeds from Mount Calvary
Bears children who are to be slaves	Bears children who are to be free
Corresponds to the present Jerusalem	Corresponds to the New Jerusalem

This would have been a shocking statement to the Judaizers. They knew that Ishmael had given birth to the Arab nations. They were quick to look down upon the Arabs as being the people who were descended from a slave of Abraham and therefore of less position than themselves. But Paul points out that all who were under the Mosaic Covenant were in this same position of slavery

Paul is not necessarily picking on the Jews. He is not anti-Semitic. He is Jewish himself. The truth of the matter is that all people who are outside of Christ are in this same position of slavery.

A PROMISED FRUITFULNESS

*But the Jerusalem above is free; she is our mother. 27
For it is written, "Rejoice, barren woman who does not bear;*

break forth and shout, you who are not in labor; for more numerous are the children of the desolate than of the one who has a husband.”²⁸ And you brethren, like Isaac, are children of promise. (Galatians 4:26-28).

In contrast to the earthly city of Jerusalem is *the Jerusalem above*. To what does this refer? The book of Revelation had not yet been written and John had not yet seen his vision of a city coming down from heaven. Notice that the picture is not of a city that is coming in the future, but of one that exists today. The question is not *when*, but *where*. It is the *the Jerusalem above* as opposed to the Jerusalem below - the one that is in the heavenlies as opposed to the one that is on earth.

Hagar	Sarah
The Jerusalem below	The Jerusalem above
A picture of earthly Jerusalem and its sacrificial system	A picture of heavenly Jerusalem where Christ is bringing many sons to glory

There is a lot of excitement these days among Christians about the possibility of the Jews rebuilding their Temple as though that had some wonderful prophetic ramifications. And perhaps it does. But the blessings of Jerusalem do not lie in the earthly state of Israel. They lie in the heavenly Jerusalem. Our hope is not in a geographic location in the Middle East, but in heaven itself.

A PERSECUTED PEOPLE

But as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, so it is now also. (Galatians 4:29).

The Judaizers were persecuting the Gentile Christians by insisting that keeping the Old Testament Law is a priority and a privilege. Paul himself had been beaten to the point of death for preaching the gospel to the Galatians.

This corresponded to a persecution that took place by Ishmael against

Isaac. Abraham seemed to be unaware of that persecution, but it was apparent to Sarah. Ishmael went out of his way to mock his younger sibling. His treatment of Isaac was paralleled by the treatment of the Gentiles by the Judaizers. Just as the flesh wars with the Spirit (5:17), so Ishmael, a child of the flesh, was at odds with Isaac, a child of the promise, born according to the Spirit (4:29).

Ishmael	Isaac
Role of the persecutor	Role of the persecuted
Israel was the persecutor of Christ	The church is persecuted by Israel

A PERSUADED PARTING

But what does the Scripture say? “Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be an heir with the son of the free woman.”

So then, brethren, we are not children of a bondwoman, but of the free woman. (Galatians 4:30-31).

Paul draws his argument to a conclusion by pointing to what end Hagar and Ishmael were brought. They were cast out of the family. We normally look at the historical account and are inclined to feel that Sarah over-reacted in her jealousy and that Abraham made a poor decision because he was afraid to stand up to his wife. We read the narrative and our heart goes out to Hagar and her son who came close to death in their resulting banishment.

But the issue was the inheritance. If Ishmael was allowed to remain, he might have become a contestant for the inheritance of Abraham. God had promised a supernatural inheritance through a supernatural seed. If that promise were not allowed to be fulfilled, there would be no salvation and the human race would find itself without hope in its sin. At stake was nothing less than the salvation of mankind.

The tragedy is in those who seek to follow in the way of Ishmael. These are the people who insist on trying to approach the Lord on the basis of their own works.

1. The Ishmael Church is a product of the flesh.

It is the plan of self-effort. That is how Ishmael came about in the first place. Abraham and Sarah had a promise. But they tried to produce the promise through their own efforts. There are a lot of churches today that are only there because of self-effort. If the Holy Spirit got up and left, it would be business as usual.

2. The Ishmael Church is man's substitute for the real thing. It is the Isaac church that is genuine.

This goes all the way back to the Garden of Eden. You recall what happened when Adam and Eve first fell into sin. They instituted "Operation Figleaf." They attempted to hide their nakedness with a bunch of fig leaves. Fig leaves may work very well on fig trees, but they don't do the job when it comes to hiding human nakedness. Man's substitutes will always fall short.

It is possible for a church to grow physically and to have all sorts of programs and to merely be a counterfeit substitute. The way of legalism lacks a quality of genuine spiritual life.

3. The Ishmael Church is permitted a measure of blessing.

Ishmael was permitted to be born. God promised to bring 12 princess from Ishmael and He did so. The Arab nation continues to exist as an influence in the world today. But the covenant was given to Isaac.

4. The Ishmael Church mocks the things of the Spirit.

The older they get, the sharper the division that will exist between the two. If you want to find the true church, then look to see who is persecuting whom.

The religion of promise and the religion of works cannot co-exist. God will not divide His blessing between them.
(Pinnock, quoted by Fung (1988:214).

5. The Ishmael Church remains in the same house for a while.

It is interesting to note that within God's plan there is always a Cain to every Abel, an Esau to every Jacob, a Korah to every Moses

and a Judas to every Peter. The same is true for the church. God has allowed the tares to grow up with the wheat. Why? Because they will each expose the other. Ishmael had no problems until Isaac came along. But the existence of the two of them brought about contention. In the same way, the Pharisees looked great until Jesus came along.

The good news is that if we are in Christ then *we are not children of a bondwoman, but of the free woman*. We have partaken of a supernatural birth. It has linked us to the promises of Abraham. That has brought us true freedom.

Discussion Questions

- Are there areas in your life in which you have fallen into the habit of pretending to have a spiritual reality while the truth is that real vitality is lacking?
- What could you do to be more honest with yourself and with others in your own spiritual self-assessment?
- Have you ever found yourself in the role either of persecuted or persecutor within the church?
- Do you feel your spirituality today is characterized by freedom or bondage?

LIVING FREE

GALATIANS 5:1-14

Freedom. It is an important word. It is something that we in the United States take for granted. After all, we live in the land of the free and the home of the brave. Our forefathers lived and fought and died so that we might be free. Every fourth of July we celebrate Independence Day - a day in which we celebrate our freedom. We are called upon to remember the price for which that freedom was purchased and to resolve to preserve that freedom for the next generation.

It was on July 4th, 1776 that a group of men signed their names to the Declaration of Independence. By those signatures, they were declaring themselves to be free of what they considered to be the tyranny of England. Paul's epistle to the Galatians gives such a declaration. It is the Christian's Declaration of Independence - his Magna Charta - his call to Freedom.

YOU HAVE A CALL TO FREEDOM

It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery. (Galatians 5:1).

Notice that for the Christian, freedom is an established fact. If you have come to Jesus Christ in faith, trusting in Him as your Lord and Savior, then you have been set free. This verse says three things:

1. Christ set you free.

This is what we call Redemption. When you redeem something, you are purchasing it. The Bible says that you have been bought with a price. The purchase price was God's own Son. His life was given so that you might be purchased and set free.

Do you remember Barabbas? We don't know much about

him, but what we know is all bad. He was a robber and a murderer. In the course of time he had been caught and sentenced to death. He was on death row awaiting his execution - death by crucifixion. And then, through an amazing twist of providence, he found himself released from prison and set free. Someone else had taken his place, being nailed to the very cross which had been destined for him.

You are Barabbas. You were destined for a cross, but a Galilean Rabbi took your place. You were under the sentence of death, but He took your death upon Himself and died in your place. He became your substitute. And then He set you free.

2. Christ set you free that you might BE free.

That is what the passage says: *It was for freedom that Christ set us free.* This brings up a question. From what have you been set free? What were the chains which bound you and from which Christ loosened you?

a. The chains of your sin.

Sin is addictive. The Bible says not only that we have all sinned but that we all continue to increase in our sinfulness. Sometimes that sin becomes socially acceptable and sometimes we find creative methods of covering it up, but we are nevertheless bound by sin.

b. The chains of guilt.

Guilt is not always a bad thing. There is both legitimate guilt and illegitimate guilt.

(1) True guilt when you violate the Law of God.

Legitimate guilt is the thing that drives us to the throne. That is why we need to preach the Law. The Holy Spirit uses that to convict and to bring us to the throne of God. This is a legitimate use of guilt. But if we remain living in unresolved guilt, it will kill us.

(2) False guilt is that which is not attached to anything legitimate. People often feel guilty over things about

which they had absolutely no control.

The feelings of guilt are the same, no matter whether it is true or false guilt. The difference is that false guilt is not attached to a violation of God's Law. There is a cycle that we naturally go through:

- You do something bad.
- You feel guilty.
- You get punished.
- You are set free.

Here is the point with regard to false guilt. If you did not do something bad to bring about the guilt, then you cannot be released from your guilt. These people feel guilty and punish themselves and feel more guilty and punish themselves some more and go round and round and never get any better. They bounce back and forth between #2 and #3 and cannot break out. If you don't have #1, then you cannot ever have #4. The remedy for healthy guilt and for unhealthy guilt is the same. It is the gospel.

c. The chains of the law.

Paul has already spent two chapters to show that you are free from the Law, not only for salvation, but for spirituality.

Now at this point, you might be thinking, "Wait a minute, John. Wasn't the Law given by God to show His people how they ought to live? I thought that the Law was a good thing. How can it be a bondage from which I need to be released?"

The truth is that the Law was given to stop people from sinning. This is always why laws are given. I am told that at Bob Jones University there is a rule which says that students are not permitted to fly a kite from the roof of the dormitory. How do you think that rule came about? It was because some student did exactly that!

Our jails are full of people who have broken laws. The effect of prison is to stop their continued law-breaking. A bank robber does not rob any banks while he is in prison. A car thief cannot steal any cars while he is making license plates in prison.

In the same way, the Law was like a prison. It was given to stop people from sinning. But now that you have been released from that prison, you are not to try to return to it.

3. Therefore, if Christ set you free and He set you free that you might be free, do not become unfree - do not become subject again to a yoke of slavery.

We have a problem. It is the problem of the “good old days.” Have you ever longed for the “good old days”? Our problem is that the good old days were never so good as you remember them now.

The Israelites had that problem in the wilderness. As soon as things started to get a little difficult, they began to long for the good old days of Egypt. After all, in Egypt there was good food and plenty of water - things you miss in the desert. It wasn't long before the Israelites were wondering whether it might not be better to return to Egypt.

They had forgotten. They had forgotten their slavery. They had forgotten the taskmaster's whip. They had forgotten their dreary toil. They had forgotten that they were a people under the sentence of death.

Don't you forget. You are sometimes tempted to go back to Egypt - to go back to a pagan lifestyle. You are tempted by the delights of the world. And you are tempted to forget about the slavery of that lifestyle. The world says, “Take a drink and forget!” The Lord says, “Come to My table, eat, drink and remember.”

YOU FACE A DANGER TO FREEDOM

Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you.

And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law.

You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace. (Galatians 5:2-4).

The Galatians were facing a danger to their freedom. It was a danger

of going back to the Mosaic Law as a means of trying to approach God.

The number one issue was that of circumcision. This was more than a mere surgical operation to the Jews. Each newborn Jewish male was circumcised on the eighth day following his birth. This circumcision identified him as a child of Abraham and a keeper of the Law. A Gentile who converted to Judaism was also required to undergo this operation. It was only after he had been circumcised that a man was considered to be a keeper of the Law.

Paul had come to Galatia preaching the good news that Christ died and rose again and that He saves both Jew and Greek, both circumcised and uncircumcised. The Galatians initially believed this message. They turned to Christ in faith. They trusted in Him as their Lord and Savior. But now a group of self-appointed law-keeping legalists have come to town. They see these Christians who have turned from their idols to serve the living God. And they say, “Hold it! You people can’t really be Christians unless you are circumcised the way Jesus was circumcised.” After all, Jesus was Jewish. All of His disciples were Jewish. Perhaps trusting in Christ is not enough.

The first church council had met in Jerusalem over this very issue. There had been those who maintained that you must be circumcised and keep all of the Mosaic Law in order to become a Christian. Paul says, “Not so!” Indeed, he points out that such a stance actually has the opposite effect of cutting you off from the benefits of Christ. If you are returning to these rituals as a means to please God...

- *Christ will be of no benefit to you (5:2).*
- *You are under obligation to keep the whole law (5:3).*
- *You have been severed from Christ (5:4).*
- *You have fallen from grace (5:4).*

Don’t miss this! The only way that Christ will save you is if He is the only way. If you try to trust in Christ and in something else, then Christ becomes of no effect. The theological term for this is *sola fide* - that is Latin for “faith alone.” Circumcision is a non-issue for most people today. But ask nine out of ten people why they are going to heaven when they die, and out comes a list.

- Because I try not to hurt anyone.
- Because I have been baptized.
- Because I am not as bad as the fellow down the street.
- Because I am a member of a church.
- Because I believe that God exists.

Those are not bad things. But it is possible to do all of those things and to still be lost. None of those things will save you. Only Christ can save you and the only thing that you can do is to trust in Him.

YOU HAVE A HOPE THAT LEADS TO FREEDOM

For we through the Spirit, by faith, are waiting for the hope of righteousness.

For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love. (Galatians 5:5-6).

Notice that phrase: “The hope of righteousness.” When you speak of hope, you are speaking of something that you do not yet realize. That is the difference between faith and hope. Faith looks to the past and to the present. Hope is merely faith in the future tense.

As Paul comes to verse 5 he stops talking about “you” and starts talking about “we.”
--

When you come to Christ, you trust in Him as your Lord and Savior. You believe that what He did upon the cross was sufficient to satisfy the just demands of God. And as you have faith in Him, you become the present possessor of eternal life.

But there is something else that you do not yet possess. It is the realization of righteousness. This is different than justification. Paul already said back in chapter 2 that we are not justified, that is, declared righteous, by the works of the Law, but by faith in Jesus Christ.

Justification is when you trust in Christ and the very righteousness of Jesus Christ is credited to your account. It is not that you become righteous. Your salvation does not depend upon how good you can become. Rather, it is that the complete and total and infinite righteousness of the holy Son of God is reckoned to you. And on that basis, God makes a legally binding declaration about you. He declares you to be righteous with that same complete and total and infinite righteousness.

You have your justification as a present possession. But that is not the end of the story. And wondrous as is your justification, it is only the beginning. You also have a hope of righteousness. This is called “sanctification.” It means that God not only makes some legal declarations

about you, He also does a real work in you.

So how do you get there from here? How do you tap into that “hope of righteousness”? I can see some of you getting ready to take notes on four points that you can write down and follow on “how to be holy.” You are already thinking, “Okay, I can discipline myself to do these four things and I will become righteous.” No! No! NO!

This illustrates our problem. It is that we are legalists at heart. We think to ourselves, “If I can just try a little harder and do a little better.” But Paul offers quite a different approach. Notice what he calls you to do in verse 5.

- a. Wait.
- b. Through the Spirit.
- c. By Faith.

Do you see it? Our Christian growth takes place in the same way in which our entrance into salvation took place. It is through faith and it is as He works through you and in you.

Notice also in verse 6 that this faith works through love. Faith isn’t much good by itself. In fact, you could have enough faith to go into the mountain-moving business and if love is lacking, you have absolutely nothing.

Jesus never said, “They will know that you are My disciples because you have the theologically correct *ordo salutis*.” He said, “They will know that you are My disciples by your love.” Love is central. It is the hallmark of being a disciple and it ought to be at the center of who you are.

There are some who want to spend a lot of effort and argument to bringing Christ back into Christmas and the manger scene back into shopping malls. Others have the opposite reaction, holding that Christmas is derived from a pagan holiday and ought not to be observed at all. We can paraphrase Galatians 5:6 to speak to both these issues: For in Christ Jesus neither does the celebration of Christmas or the non-celebration of Christmas mean anything, but faith working through love.

Or perhaps your own pet issue is not the celebration of Christmas or the keeping of any certain holiday, but the method and manner of our worship. We can take the principle of this passage to say that in Christ Jesus neither does the traditional worship service or the contemporary worship service mean anything, but faith working through love.

What is the main thing in your life? If it is not faith working through love, then you have lost sight of what is to be the main thing in your life and you have replaced it with something that brings bondage.

YOU HAVE A PERSUASION OF FREEDOM

You were running well; who hindered you from obeying the truth? ⁸ This persuasion did not come from Him who calls you. ⁹ A little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough.

I have confidence in you in the Lord that you will adopt no other view; but the one who is disturbing you will bear his judgment, whoever he is. (Galatians 5:7-10).

There is a battle going on. It is a battle of persuasions. It is a battle of the mind and a battle for your soul. The temptation is that you might be hindered. Verse 7 says that you are running a race. You would think that guilt makes you run faster. But it isn't so. Guilt actually hinders you from running the race. Laying a load of guilt is like putting a heavy yoke on someone.

Imagine the Olympic Races. The stands are filled with spectators. The runners are at the starting gate. And here is one runner who is carrying an 80 pound knapsack on his back. "What is that?" asks one of the judges. "That is all of my instruction manuals on how to be a good runner." Silly, isn't it? It is equally silly to try to run the Christian life while lugging around the burden of legalism.

Furthermore, it doesn't take a lot of legalism to weigh you down. That is what Paul means when he says in verse 9, *A little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough*. Leaven always speaks of influence. It can be a good influence or it can be a bad influence. The Law becomes a bad influence when you attempt to use it either for salvation or as a means to achieve spirituality through rule-keeping. At such a time it becomes pure poison.

Winston Churchill was noted for his exchanges with Lady Astor. During one heated argument, she quipped: "Winston, if I were your wife I'd put poison in your coffee." Winston replied, "Nancy, if I were your husband I'd drink it." Legalism is pure poison and a little bit goes a long way.

YOU ARE WARNED OF A PERSECUTION OF FREEDOM

But I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why am

I still persecuted? Then the stumbling block of the cross has been abolished.

I wish that those who are troubling you would even mutilate themselves. (Galatians 5:11-12).

People who are free will always be attacked by people who don't want anyone to be free. Legalism cannot stand freedom. That was one of the things that made the Pharisees so angry with Jesus. He was free to...

- Tough a leper.
- Forgive a prostitute.
- Eat with tax collectors.

Can you hear the objections? "But Jesus, don't you know that you are not portraying a good testimony by associating with such people?" I love His answer: "I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Matthew 9:13).

Paul is calling people to be free and, to that end, he uses some very strong language. He makes a play on words from the idea of circumcision that speaks of a cutting ceremony. It is like saying:

- "I wish that those who think that water baptism saves would drown themselves."
- "I wish that those who are depending upon their church membership to save them would dismember themselves."
- "I wish that those who think that circumcision is the answer would..." You get the idea.

Why does he use such strong language? Because we are speaking of eternal realities with eternal consequences. And such things will evoke a passionate response. There are things about which we ought to be passionate. On the one hand, it is silly to be excited about unimportant things. On the other hand, we do ourselves and others a great disservice if we do not engage our passions in those things about which God is passionate.

YOU HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY IN FREEDOM

For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not

turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." (Galatians 5:13-14).

Freedom means opportunity. That is why the United States has for so long been known as both a land of freedom and a land of opportunity. When you come to Christ, you find that a vista of opportunities open up to you. But there is a warning in this. It is a warning that you do not use your freedom to make an opportunity for the flesh. That is one of the dangers to freedom. It is that you will try to utilize that freedom in the wrong way.

In the year 2000, I made my first trip to Moldova. This was a country and a people who had just recently found their freedom. Until 1991 they were a part of the USSR and were under the suppressive bondage of a communist regime. But then they were free. And in their new found freedom, they found a pitfall. It was related to me how that the children under the old regime were afraid to misbehave in class because misbehavior could result in both you and your entire family being shipped off to Siberia.

But then they became free. There was no longer that threat of a repressive punishment. And with that threat also went an understanding of personal self-discipline. The children were no longer under a repressive law, but they had not learned that freedom brings with it a corresponding responsibility to utilize that freedom in a responsible way.

Here is the principle. Freedom doesn't mean no more responsibility. Freedom means a willingness to be a servant for Christ and for others. That is why you were made free. You have been set free to serve. But it is not a service of bondage. Rather it is a servitude of love.

This is more than mere serving out of gratitude. There is nothing wrong with gratitude and we should be grateful to the Lord, but to serve only from gratitude can become burdensome. It can be taken to imply that we are repaying a debt of gratitude and we can never repay the cross.

Paula and I often go to the beach in our free time. We find it relaxing to sit and to read and to talk under a couple of palm trees by the ocean. On one such visit, I turned to her and I asked her, "Why do you love me?"

I knew what her answer would be even before she gave it. After 35 years of marriage, that happens a lot. Do you know what she said? She mentioned a number of things, but she said, “The main reason I love you is because you love me.”

That’s Biblical! 1 John 4:19 says “*we love because He first loved us.*” And when you really love someone, then service is not servitude, but a manifestation of that love in action.

Elizabeth Elliot wrote a book entitled: “The Freedom of Obedience.” She is a wonderful Christian, but she is wrong. There is no freedom in obedience. But there is obedience in freedom. The only way that people ultimately become obedient is by realizing that they are loved.

Discussion Questions

- Are there some “good old days” in your life? What sort of things do you think of when that phrase comes to mind?
- What does the fact that God has purchased you with the life of His own Son say about His love for you?
- Is there a little bit of legalism in your life? What is your attitude toward such legalistic tendencies in your life?
- What baggage have you been carrying with you as you attempt to run the spiritual race of life?

WALK FOR LIFE!

GALATIANS 5:13-26

The theme of Paul's epistle to the Galatians can be summed up in one word - Liberty. He has been telling them to be free from the Law and from the rituals and regulations of men. They were called to freedom and now they are to stand firm in their freedom and not allow themselves to be enslaved in a yoke of legalism.

But there is a danger here. It is that they might use this principle of freedom as an excuse to sin. If they are free from the Law, does this mean that they can now live any way they wish? Does this mean that it is okay to sin? Not at all.

THE WALK OF FREEDOM

For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

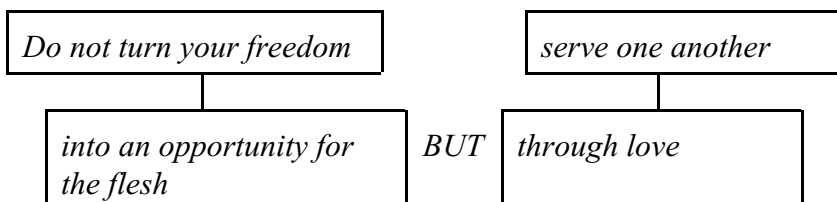
But if you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another. (Galatians 5:13-15).

Paul is going to bring an exhortation, a command and a warning. All three of these are outgrowths of the fundamental principle that *you were called to freedom*. Because you were called to freedom, don't use your freedom to sin, but rather use your freedom to serve.

1. Freedom Versus License: *Do not turn your freedom into an*

opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another (5:13).

God did not save you in order that you might be free to sin. God is diametrically opposed to sin. It is the very antithesis of what He is. The salvation He provides is not mean to make it easier for you to sin; it is mean to make you to love and to serve.



God did not even save you so that you would be free as an end unto itself. He set you free in order that you might serve. You were saved so that you might do good works (Ephesians 2:10). That is the goal of your salvation.

2. Love Fulfills the Law: *For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” (5:14).*

This is not a new teaching. Jesus said it first. He was once asked that is the greatest commandment of the Law. He answered that it is love.

And one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, ³⁶ “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?”

And He said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. ³⁸ This is the great and foremost commandment. ³⁹ The second is like it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. ⁴⁰ On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.” (Matthew 22:35-40).

The scribe was asking a question about the law. When you say the word “law” and then look for a corresponding verb to go with it, that word is “obedience.” We would all agree that obeying God is important. That is not at issue here. What this scribe is asking is this:

“What is the number one way of obeying God?” The answer is love.

When asked about the secret to the Christian life, Augustine replied, “Love God and live as you please.” He wasn’t advocating sin and he wasn’t saying that we can ignore the commandments of God. He was saying that when you love, obedience comes naturally. When you love, then leaving as you please means that you live as pleases the one whom you love.

Jesus did not say that all of the commandments were equally important. He could have. He could have said, “When God talks, you listen and you obey with equal vigor everything He says.” But Jesus didn’t do that. He recognized that there are some commandments which are foundational to all the rest. And the most foundational is love.

Think about it. If you really love God, you don’t have to be told not to set up any other gods or idols or not to take His name in vain or to set aside a day to worship Him. If you really love your parents whom God has given to be an authority over you, then you do not have to be told to honor your father and mother. And if you really love your neighbor who is created in God’s image, then you don’t have to be told not to bear false witness against him. You don’t have to be told not to steal from him or murder him or commit adultery with his wife or covet his possessions.

This is the greatest command. Your greatest calling is to be relational. You will never be judged for how many programs you planned or how many sermons you preached or how many fliers you printed up. You will be judged for how much you loved. If there is no greater commandment than this, then it is also true that there is no greater sin than to fail to do this.

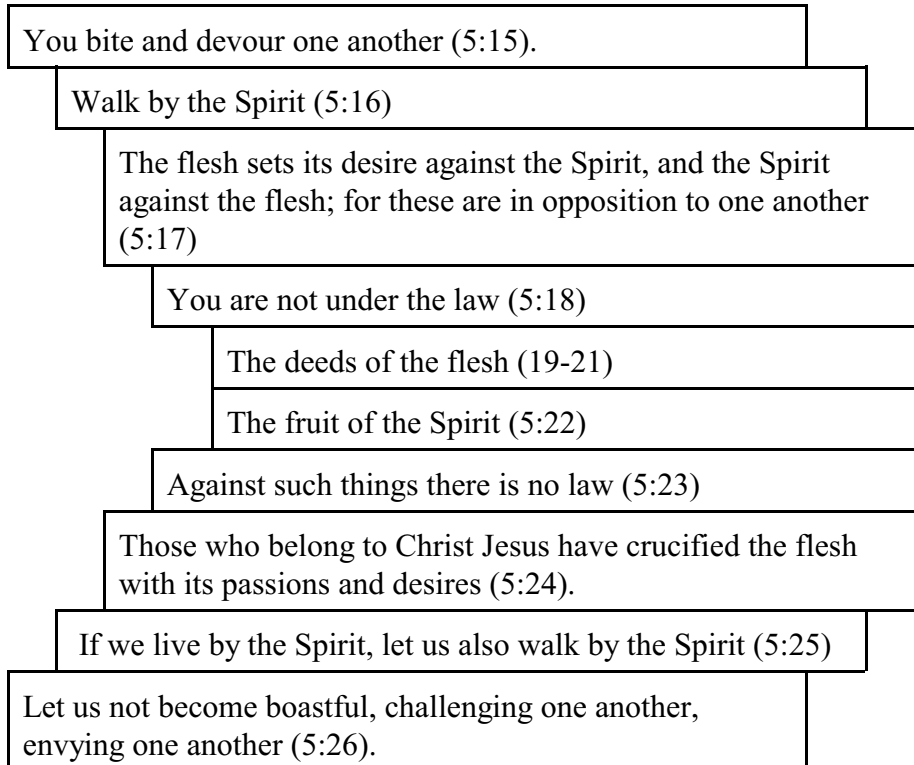
3. Christian Cannibalism: *But if you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another (5:15).*

Paul goes from the command to love to the reality of what is too often seen among those who profess to be Christians. He gives a vivid picture of what we could call “Christian cannibalism.” This is a graphic warning. Christians are called to love one another. But Paul knew that all too often there is fighting among Christians. And so he gives a warning. Snapping at one another can result in being eaten up.

Have you ever seen someone who was eaten up with jealousy

or with bitterness or with resentment? A person like that is in bondage. They are enslaved. They cannot love because they are being consumed with that which binds them.

Verse 15 begins a series of parallels that will take us through to the end of the chapter. It is given in the form of a chiasm.



The point of this parallel is to see two different ways of living. They will be characterized as the way of the flesh versus the way of the Spirit. They will be seen as the difference between that which God provides versus that which we attempt to accomplish by our own strength. They are a contrast between the life that seeks to approach God on the basis of law-keeping versus the life that is dependent upon the Spirit.

THE WALK OF THE SPIRIT

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. 17 For the flesh sets its desire

against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law. (Galatians 5:16-18).

How can we as Christians become what we ought to be? What is the secret to spiritual living? A number of different answers have been suggested:

- The Sinai system: This is an attempt to be spiritual through legalism. It is the system that was adopted by the Judaizers as they attempted to force the Gentiles to be circumcised and follow Jewish rituals. Today it might be some system where you are required to witness once a day or give a certain amount of money or attend a certain type of church. Invariably it deals with some outward form or ritual.
- The Second Blessing Experience: Very popular today is the idea that you must have some type of special experience, whether it involves speaking in tongues or a vision or some emotional reaction. This is described as a “second blessing.” The problem with this thinking is that you never get over the first blessing. You have already been blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ (Ephesians 1:3).
- Single-Step Spirituality: I have heard certain preachers teach that all you need to do to be spiritual is to confess your sins. I agree that this is a good beginning, but this in itself does not bring spirituality.
- Static Christianity: Another teaching that has been circulated in the name of grace is that the Christian life involves doing nothing. Just sit where you are and wait for God to move you. People who try consistently to hold to this teaching for any length of time usually get moved, but only by a hand of discipline.

The truth is that none of these is an adequate depiction of true Christianity. The Christian walk is by the Spirit.

1. What it Means to Walk: *Walk by the Spirit (5:16).*

- A walk starts with one step, but it does not stop there

The definite article is absent with the word “Spirit” both here and in verse 18. Paul says, “Walk by Spirit.”

with only one step. It consists of one step after another in a continuous cycle. In the same way, a spiritual walk involves a continuing trust in the Lord and a practice of following Him.

In the Greek text, the command to walk is given in the present tense. This indicates continuing action. It means continue to be walking in the Spirit. It is not a once-and-for-all event. It is a continuous walk.

- One step at a time. True spirituality involves progressive growth. When my daughter was only about four years old, she came to me and asked if she could be allowed to drive the family car. I told her that she would have to grow up first. I could see the wheels turning in her little mind and suddenly she brightened up and said, “I want to grow up right now!” Spirituality does not come like that. It comes one step at a time.
- The synergistic nature of our walk. Walking by the Spirit means that I depend upon the Spirit for guidance and direction as well as for strength and endurance. But it also means that I must do the walking. It is not just the Spirit and it is not just self-effort.

This is seen in the imperative mood. This is a command. We are not told to stand still and to wait. We are not told to sit. We are told to walk. This implies movement on our part.

- The cadence of our walk. When you walk by the Spirit, that means you walk in step with the Spirit. It is a bit like dancing. I’ve never been that good at dancing, but I do know that it is important in any dance to keep in step with the music.

The Spirit sets the pace. He leads and it is incumbent upon us to follow. How do we do that? By reading His Word and by obeying that which is given there. By listening for His movement in the circumstances of our life and being willing to serve where He sends.

What is this walk? It refers to your life. When Paul speaks

of our Christian walk, he is referring to our life in the spiritual realm. To walk by the Spirit means to orient your life so that it is in line with the moving of the Holy Spirit. Instead of being conformed to the world, your life is being conformed to God. This is no easy task. It is a battle.

How do I do this? By looking to the cross and walking in that direction. Being filled with the Spirit is nothing less than just loving the Lord and being filled with that love.

2. The Battle against the Flesh: *For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another (5:17).*

The walk of the believer involves a struggle. The struggle is with the flesh. When we speak of the flesh, we are not just referring to the physical body, though the flesh seems to be connected to that physical body. It refers to that part of us that is polluted with sin.

Notice the results of this conflict. It is that you are unable to do the things that you please. The battle involves the human will. There is a battle over your will. Does this passage sound familiar? It should. Paul gives us a glimpse in Romans 7 of his own personal struggles with living the Christian life.

For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate. 16 But if I do the very thing I do not want to do, I agree with the Law, confessing that the Law is good.

So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. 18 For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not.

For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want. 20 But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me.

I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good. 22 For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, 23 but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a

*prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members.
(Romans 7:15-23).*

There is a war going on inside every believer. Anyone who thinks that it is easy to be good has never tried to be good. How can you succeed in walking by the Spirit? How are you able to orient your life so that it conforms to the Lord?

- By being led by the Spirit (Galatians 5:18).
- By being filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18).
- By letting the Word of Christ richly dwell within you (Colossians 3:16).
- By renewing your mind (Romans 12:2).

It is not a matter of choosing one of these and ignoring the others. Rather, these all work together to lead you in the way of the Spirit.

3. The Spirit and the Law: *If you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law (5:18).*

There are some who would suggest that there is a difference between walking in by the Spirit, being led by the Spirit and being filled with the Spirit. I do not believe that to be the case. These are merely different analogies to describe the same phenomenon.

Verses 13-14	<i>Through love serve one another</i>	<i>Love fulfills the law</i>
Verse 16	<i>Walk by the Spirit</i>	<i>You will not carry out the desire of the flesh</i>
Verse 18	<i>If you are led by the Spirit</i>	<i>You are not under the Law</i>

Just as when you show love to one another, you are fulfilling the law because love fulfills the law, so also when you are led by the Spirit, you will naturally find yourself in line with the law. The Spirit does not lead you to steal or to murder or to commit adultery or to bear false witness against your neighbor. The Spirit leads you to love and that is a fulfillment of the law.

THE WALK OF THE FLESH

Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, ²¹ envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. (Galatians 5:19-21).

Paul now gives a representative sample of some of the deeds of the flesh. He states that it is evident that these come, not from God, but from the sinful flesh.

Deeds of the Flesh		
Relates to Self	Relates to God	Relates to Other Men
<i>Immorality, impurity, sensuality</i>	<i>Idolatry, sorcery</i>	<i>Disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing</i>

There is a lesson here about sin. It is that sin affects every part of a man. It affects how he relates to the Lord, how he relates to others, and even how he relates to himself.

THE RESULTS OF THE SPIRIT

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. ²⁶ Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another. (Galatians 5:22-26).

In the same way that the deeds of the flesh were grouped together, so also here there is a particular grouping together of the fruit of the Spirit.

Fruit of the Spirit		
Inward state of man	Expressions toward men	Expression toward God
<i>Love, joy, peace</i>	<i>Kindness, goodness, faithfulness</i>	<i>Gentleness, self-control</i>

There is a contrast here. It is a contrast between what Paul lays out in these verses against what he has set forth in the previous verses. It is a contrast between the deeds of the flesh versus the fruit of the Spirit.

Deeds of the Flesh	Fruit of the Spirit
A product of the sinful flesh	A product of God's Holy Spirit
Spoken of as "deeds" (plural)	Described as "fruit" (singular)
The man who is in the flesh might only commit some of these deeds	The man who is in the Spirit will exhibit all of this fruit
A deed can be done immediately in a single action	Fruit takes time. You don't go and "do" an apple; there are no shortcuts to growth

The image of fruit is a familiar one in the Old Testament. In Isaiah 5, the nation of Israel had been described in terms of a vineyard that produced worthless fruit and, as a result, would be laid waste. Here in his epistle to the Galatians, Paul has demonstrated that God's people are not limited to national or physical Israel and that they are nevertheless gives a similar call to fruitfulness. Indeed, Isaiah 32:15 promises that there would come a day when the Spirit would be poured out upon God's people and that which was previously unfruitful would become a fertile field. The prophet goes on to say:

*Then justice will dwell in the wilderness
And righteousness will abide in the fertile field.
17 And the work of righteousness will be peace,
And the service of righteousness, quietness and confidence
forever.
18 Then my people will live in a peaceful habitation,
And in secure dwellings and in undisturbed resting places*

(Isaiah 32:16-18).

One can hardly avoid taking note of the similarity of language to Paul's description here of the fruit of the Spirit. The point can be made that the Old Testament promise of a spiritual renewal is to be fulfilled in the believer today.

1. The Singular Aspect of this Fruit.

The word "fruit" is *karpos* (καρπος). It is in the singular. It speaks not of fruits, but of a single fruit. This single fruit of the Spirit is made up of all of these attributes. That means you cannot pick out just one or two of these attributes and say that you are manifesting the fruit of the Spirit.

This also tells us the how of procuring this fruit. It is not the fruit of self-effort. It is the fruit of the Spirit. You don't have to try to work up a certain level of love and peace (too bad about patience). All you need to do is to walk in the Spirit and He will produce His fruit in you.

2. The Representative Character of the Fruit.

I would suggest that the fruit of the Spirit might include a number of things that don't appear on our lists (like the Beatitudes - like all of the other descriptions of what it means to be a Christian). Instead of the Galatians list being an all-encompassing enumeration of the fruit of the Spirit, it is merely representative.¹

3. The Organic Nature of the Fruit.

You can take all of the chemicals that make up an apple and you can put them into a box and shake them up, but this will not make an apple. Apples have to be grown. They have to grow on apple trees.

By the same token, the fruit of the Spirit cannot be gotten by reading a list of attributes and then trying to do them through self-

¹ Ronald Fung says the same thing when he notes that the phrase in verse 23, "such things as these" shows that the list just given is again (cf. "and the like" in v. 21), not exhaustive but representative. 1988:273.

effort. It is fruit. It must be grown. This growth is brought about by the energy of the Spirit. It is His work. This is why it is called the fruit of the Spirit.

The fruit of the Spirit in our lives is not what we do, it's how we are. Everything listed in Galatians 5:22 is an attribute of one's character. The Spirit changes me, which in turn changes what I do.

4. The Evidential Nature of Fruit.

Fruit does not give life to a tree. It is the other way around. The existence of fruit demonstrates that the tree is alive. Growth and movement and fruitfulness are signs of life.

These qualities are given so that you might examine your own life for signs of spiritual life. Are you more patient than you were last year? If your heart softer? Is your laugh deeper? Are your concerns broader? Is your love larger? You are not saved by your deeds, but you are revealed by your deeds.

5. The Jurisdictional Exclusion of the Law from such Fruit: *Against such things there is no law.*

What does it mean that *against such things there is no law*? It means that these fruit lie outside the jurisdiction of the law. Can you imagine a law that tried to regulate your joyfulness? Can you imagine trying to enforce a law that mandated gentleness or love? The law can only regulate the outward actions. It cannot regulate inner attitudes. To change inner attitudes, you need the Spirit that moves within.

When the law says, "Thou shalt not," there is an implied, "Or else." The law says, "Do these things and don't do those things **or else** you will be punished by God or brought before the courts of the land or disciplined by those in authority over you." Do you see how that is in contrast to the fruit of the Spirit? The law uses as its motivation things like joylessness and peacelessness and insecurity.

On the other hand, the Spirit produces a love and a joy and a peace and a patience and a gentleness that comes from within and does not need threats in order to come about.

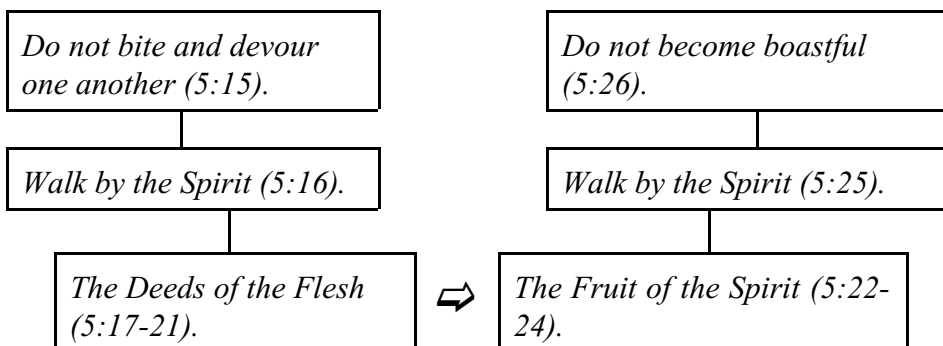
Finally, Paul sums up: *If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit (Galatians 5:-25)*. This time a different word is used for "walk" than was found in verse 16.

“Walk” in Galatians 5:16	“Walk” in Galatians 5:25
<i>Peripateo</i> (περιπατέω): Literally, to walk (moving your legs as a means of locomotion)	<i>Stoicheo</i> (στοιχέω): To be in line with or conform to; taken from the root word <i>stoichos</i> (στοιχος) describing a “row or line.”
Has the idea of living my life by the Spirit and with His power.	Has the idea of living in accordance with spiritual principles.
<i>WALK by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh</i>	<i>If we live by the Spirit, let us also WALK by the Spirit</i>
Gives the “how to” of the Christian walk.	Gives the “result” of the Christian walk.

There is an important principle here. It is that living a life of grace does not mean doing away with all of the rules. But it is important to see that rule-keeping is the result of the Christian walk and not the means of that walk.

The Judaizers had it backwards. Legalism always gets it wrong. Legalism teaches that if you do enough then you will be able to please God. Grace says that God has granted His grace to you apart from anything you can earn or deserve and calls you to live in accordance with that free gift.

This entire section begins and ends with a command. The command that begins and the command that ends this section are related. They both deal with our attitude and our actions toward others.



In a book about law and grace, why does Paul pick out these particular commands? It is because these are the two weaknesses of legalism.

Legalism tends to become proud and boastful of its accomplishments. Or else legalism drives one to envying and wishing that one could enjoy the accomplishments of others with the result that it wants to bite and chew up the object of jealousy. The issue of legalism has a direct impact upon the “one another” relationships within the church.

There is a principle here. It is that you become like the God you worship. If you worship a mean, petty little god, you will become mean and petty and little. But if you ever come to recognize the wondrous grace of God, it will make you more loving and gracious to others.

Paul closes this section with a warning. It is a warning against a particular type of sin. *Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another. (Galatians 5:26)*. The sins that he mentions in closing are at the heart of legalism. They are the sins that lead to boasting. What is it that leads to boasting? Pride. The flip side of pride is envy. Pride involves lifting up and glorifying yourself. Envy involves the coveting and desiring of that which is possessed by another.

It has been noted that modern advertising is an appeal to pride and envy. It is a deliberate enticement to the hearer to enter into envy so that he or she might feed personal pride. Pride and envy are gangrene to the soul. They will literally eat up the soul.

What is the opposite of pride and envy? It is humility and love for others. We are called to see ourselves as God sees us and then we are called to love as God loves.

Discussion Questions

- How is your love life? The older you get, do you find it easier or harder to love God and to love others?
- Is there something or someone that is bringing bitterness to your soul? How can you move from a place of bitterness to a place where you will manifest the fruit of the Spirit?
- Read the various descriptions that make up the fruit of the Spirit. Are there certain areas in which you have recently been growing? Are there certain areas in which you are in need of growth?
- As you look at the listing of the deeds of the flesh, what do you see regarding your own life? How do you feel about your self-assessment?

BEARING BURDENS

GALATIANS 6:1-5

Have you ever tried to imagine the perfect church? I think that a lot of people move from church to church, looking for that perfect church. They stay only long enough to see a problem, and then they are off to the next place on their endless quest. The rest of us smile a sad but understanding smile because we know that there is no such thing. In my more sarcastic moments, I tell such people that if they ever do find the perfect church, they must leave at once, for their presence would certainly contaminate it.

Frederick the Great of Prussia was touring a prison. Each of the prisoners he saw insisted upon his own innocence and described having been falsely accused and convicted. Finally he came to one man who, when questioned, admitted that he was guilty of the crime with which he had been charged and was deserving of the penalty. “Quick!” called Frederick to the prison guards, “Remove this man from this prison at once and set him free. He is in danger of corrupting all of these innocent men!”

When we think of the perfect ministry, we are inclined to picture a nice, clean building full of pleasant people who have it all together. They come on Sunday morning in their stylish dresses and pressed suits to sit in softly upholstered pews and listen to softly upholstered sermons.

How different was the ministry of Jesus! He did not come to minister to those who had it all together. He came to help the down and out. He came to help those who were contaminated with the pollution of sin and who knew it.

BURDEN-BEARING AND RESTORATION

Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted. (Galatians 6:1).

Paul begins this section by suggesting a hypothetical situation. It is introduced with a conditional clause - "If." This is a third class condition, indicating that Paul does not have some specific type of trespass in mind.

He has been exhorting his readers to walk in the Spirit in order that they might bear the fruit of the Spirit. That is the standard for the Christian life. But if perchance this does not take place, then there is something else that should take place - restoration.

1. The Need for Restoration: *Even if anyone is caught in any trespass (6:1).*

Paul never says that we should view our ongoing sin as something that is to be accepted and expected. We have been called to a higher walk. We have been called to walk in the Spirit and not to do the old dead works of the flesh. And yet, it is a normal fact of life that Christians fall into sin.

My wife's grandfather had convinced himself that this was not the case. He held to a theology that said it is possible to arrive at a point as a Christian where you no longer sin. He claimed not to have sinned for 20 years. He did this by not stepping out of his house for nearly 20 years.

I got to know him a bit and I learned something about him. I learned that he was wrong. If sin is defined as "any want or transgression of the law of God," then he was a sinner. I can say this because I can point to specific areas of the law of God that he transgressed. For example, he cut himself off from regular fellowship in the church and that is a direct transgression of the command not to forsake the assembling together of the saints (Hebrews 9:25).

This passage describes one who is *caught*² in a sinful situation. It describes one who has been overcome. The implication is that he is one who has in the past been demonstrating the fruit of the Spirit, but who has now been overcome in a temptation.

2. The People of Restoration: *You who are spiritual, restore such a one (6:1).*

The qualification for having a ministry of restoration is that you first be spiritual. What does it mean to be spiritual? The context

² προλημφθη, aorist passive subjunctive of προλαμβάνω.

has already told us what it means. It means that you...

- Are walking by the Spirit (5:16).
- Are not practicing the works of the flesh (5:19-21).
- Are demonstrating the fruit of the Spirit (5:22-23).

Here is the point. You cannot restore someone to a spiritual walk if you yourself are not walking by that same Spirit. You cannot dispense what you do not have. And if you try, you will be like a blind guide who tries to lead another blind man through a series of pitfalls. You are both going to end up taking a nasty fall. If your Christianity does not work in your own life, it doesn't work at all. Don't try to export it.

3. The Spirit of Restoration: *Restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness (6:1).*

If we are harsh when we are attempting to restore, the result will be that we drive people away instead of bringing them back to Jesus. Our example is Jesus. He called sinners to repent, but when they did, He did not beat them over the head with their sin. Instead He loved them.

Do you remember the story of Jesus and Peter? Peter had denied Jesus. He hadn't only done it once. Three times he had said, "I don't know Him." By the third time he was swearing and sweating. After the resurrection, Jesus and Peter came together. What did Jesus say to Peter? Did He rebuke him? Did He say, "That's it, Peter; you have really blown it now! You are hereby suspended from being an apostle until you have demonstrated an adequate time of repentance and remorse and then we will put you on probation to see whether we will restore you." That isn't what happened.

Instead we see Jesus asking Peter, "Do you love Me?" And when the answer came back in the affirmative, He said, "Then pastor my sheep." Do you see it? Jesus restored Peter and He did so in a spirit of gentleness.

4. The Danger of Restoration: *Each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted (6:1).*

We must never come into the restoration process believing

that we are immune to the temptations which caused another to fall. Pride goes before a fall (Proverbs 10:18; 1 Corinthians 10:12).

When Paul said that those who are spiritual are to do the work of restoration, he means that those who are spiritual at that particular time. But that same person who is spiritual now might need to be restored at a later time.

5. The Fact of Restoration: *Restore such a one... (6:1).*

It is so obvious that it almost doesn't need to be said, except that far too many churches have ignored that the church is supposed to be in the restoration business. I should know. I am a part of the Reformed tradition. We believe in the total depravity of mankind, but if we find any indications of it in our pastors, then we kick them out.

This teaching of restoration ought not to be taken as being contrary to church discipline. The Bible clearly teaches that one of the marks of the church is its discipline of its members. But church discipline is to be gracious. Titus 2:11-13 tells us that the grace of God teaches us how to live in a disciplined manner. And that means that the discipline of the church is to be embroidered with the tapestry of grace.

BURDEN-BEARING AND THE LAW

Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ. (Galatians 6:2).

It is simply amazing that Paul should be speaking of "the Law of Christ" after all that he has said about the Law. Or is it? Do you remember what he said in the last chapter?

For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." (Galatians 5:14).

This was the same thing that Jesus had told the Pharisees. He had pointed to love as the fulfillment of the Law. The Law said to have no other gods and not to take the name of the Lord in vain and to have no graven images. If you really love God, you will not have any other gods before Him

or take His name in vain or worship some silly statue in His place. The Law said not to murder or to steal or to commit adultery or to bear false witness. If you really love your neighbor, then you will not murder him or steal from him or commit adultery with his wife or bear false witness against him. Love is the fulfillment of the Law. And if you really love someone, you will be ready to bear his burden.

How do we bear one another's burdens? One way has already been mentioned in the previous verse. We bear one another's burden when we restore them after they have fallen into a trespass. But that is not all. We also bear one

With his teaching on burden-bearing, Paul dashes the myth of self-sufficiency. Christianity is a religion of dependence. We enter into it by confessing our dependency on Christ. And we also come to depend upon the body of Christ.

another's burden when we become proactive in encouraging each other not to fall into such a trespass in the first place.

THE ATTITUDE OF THE BURDEN-BEARER

For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. (Galatians 6:3).

The thing that makes us into a gentle restorer of the fallen brother is the realization that my needs are not more important than anyone else's. This is what Paul was speaking of in Philippians 2:4 when he called believer to have this mind in you that was also in Christ Jesus, who emptied Himself and became humbly obedient to the point of going to the cross on our behalf.

Jesus said that there is coming a day when we shall all stand before the Lord to be judged. The standard of that judgment will be how we treated one another. To some He will say, "You visited Me when I was sick and imprisoned, you fed me when I was hungry, and you clothed me when I was naked. Come into My kingdom and enjoy what has been prepared for you." And when they ask, "Lord, I don't recall doing any of that," He will reply, "When you did it for one another, you were doing it for Me."

Then He will turn to others and say, "You didn't bother to visit Me when I was sick and imprisoned or to feed me when I was hungry or to clothe me when I was naked. And so, I am casting you into outer darkness." And they will protest, "Lord, if we had known it was you, we would have baked you cookies." Remember to serve one another and to bear one another's

burdens as though you were serving Christ Himself. Because you ARE.

BURDEN-BEARING VERSUS RESPONSIBILITY

But each one must examine his own work, and then he will have reason for boasting in regard to himself alone, and not in regard to another. 5 For each one will bear his own load. (Galatians 6:4-5).

These two verses set forth a dual examination. The first takes place so that we will be ready for the second.

Galatians 6:4	Galatians 6:5
Self examination by believers in this present life	The evaluation of Christ at the future Judgment Seat
<i>Each one must examine his own work</i>	<i>Each one will bear his own load</i>

1. The Call for Self-Examination: *Each one must examine his own work (6:4).*

There are some people who will try to use these verses on burden-bearing as an excuse to dump on anyone who will hold still. They are seeking to depend upon others instead of depending upon God.

A man was walking through some woods and he came to a wooden bridge spanning a deep chasm over a rushing river. As he approached the center of the bridge, he saw a man there with a rope. “Here, hold this rope,” said the man and then jumped over the railing. The first man found himself holding the full weight of the jumper who hung suspended over the river. “You are responsible to me. If you let go of this rope, I will fall into the river and drown.”

The man holding the rope called down, “Climb back up. I can’t hold you much longer.” Back came the answer, “You are responsible to me. If you let go of this rope, I will fall into the river and drown.”

Finally the man holding the rope said, “Look, I will hold you

for another 15 seconds so that you can climb back up and then I am going to let you go.” The other man repeated, “You are responsible to me. If you let go of this rope, I will fall into the river and drown.”

“One... two... three...” He made it to fifteen and the other man never made the attempt to climb back up, so he let go and the jumper fell into the river with a splash. The man continued on his way. Six months later he happened by this same bridge. And standing on the middle was the same man standing on the center span and holding a rope.

The point of the story is that there are some people that merely want you to stop everything you are doing and just sit there and hold their hand through life. That is not what burden-bearing is all about. This is what Paul means when he says that each man shall be called to bear his own load. The point is not that you become self sufficient, but it IS that you become God-sufficient.

2. The Promise of Divine Examination: *Each one will bear his own load (6:5).*

The call to burden-bearing will serve as no excuse on the day of judgment. No one will be able to say, “It’s not my fault, Lord. I just didn’t have enough people helping me to bear my burdens.”

Discussion Questions

- How well do you feel your church or small group follows the restoration principles set forth in verse 1?
- Can you think of someone who has been caught in a trespass and who is in need of restoration? In light of this passage, what can you do about it?
- Have you been moving in the direction of self-sufficiency or God-sufficiency? How can you tell which is the more prominent in your life?
- Is there someone in your circle of awareness in need of assistance in bearing a particular burden? Have you been especially equipped to help bear that burden?

SOWING AND REAPING

GALATIANS 6:6-10

I've never been much of a farmer. I was born with a black thumb and tend to kill any plants that I touch. Between my wife and I, we have even managed to kill artificial plants and that takes real skill. But my grandfather lived on a farm and I did learn a few things about farming from him. Some of those lessons come home to roost in this passage.

The universe operates according to certain natural laws. Science involves the observation and the study of these laws, be they in the fields of biology, geography, physics or chemistry. These laws are consistent. Our universe is dominated by them. The reason that we have an organized and consistent universe is because the Builder is organized and consistent.

These laws are universal. They do not care whether you believe in them or not. If you do a swan dive off a twenty-story building, it does not matter that you do not believe in the law of gravity. It will still be operational as you pass the tenth story.

Ignoring God's laws can be disastrous. I speak from experience. I have spent some time in my career as a fire fighter hanging from ropes a number of stories off the ground. One cannot merely ignore the law of gravity. It is equally dangerous when one tries to ignore any of God's spiritual laws.

A SPECIFIC APPLICATION

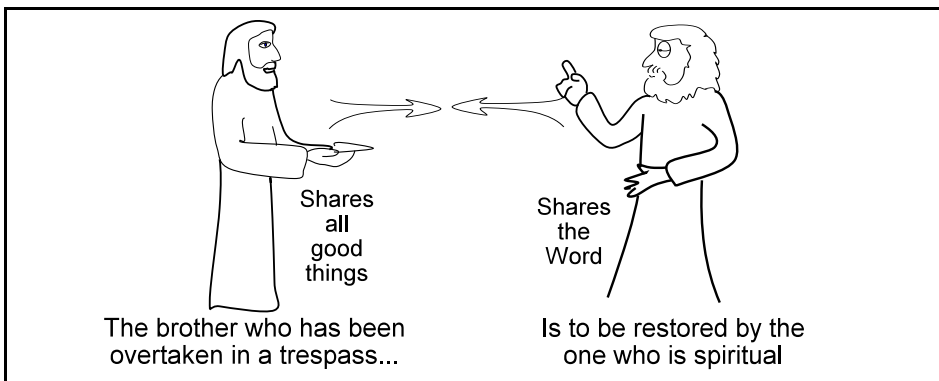
The one who is taught the word is to share all good things with the one who teaches him. (Galatians 6:6).

In the previous verses, Paul has been talking about the importance of bearing one another's burdens. Now we move from bearing burdens to sharing blessings. What is taught in this verse is a practical outworking of Paul's teaching on bearing one another's burdens.

Galatians 6:1-5	Galatians 6:6	Galatians 6:7-10
Bear one another's burdens	The one who receives spiritual help is to share in all good things	What a man sows, this he will also reap

We must be careful to read this in the context of the burden-bearing passage of the previous verses. Paul has been dealing with the problem of one who has fallen into sin. Such a one is to be restored. This work of restoration is to be done by those who are spiritual. It is they who have the obligation to bear one another's burdens.

Here is the point. The one who has fallen and who is now in need of restoration is to share in all of the good things enjoyed by the one who teaches him.

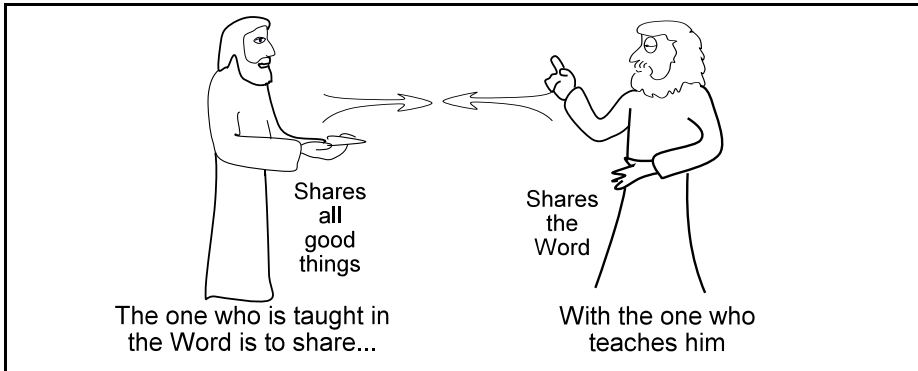


The principle here also has application to the remuneration of ministers of the gospel. Paul is not saying this as a fund-raising tactic. He is not out to line his pockets with money. It was often his custom to support himself and others in ministry through his skill in the tent-making business (Acts 18:3; 2 Thessalonians 3:7-8). But this custom is in no way binding upon all ministers of the gospel. Paul teaches here that the minister who ministers the Word of God to others is to be the recipient of *all good things*. What are these things? They include such necessities as a salary and a manner and means of support for a family.

At the same time, the emphasis

The term for “teaching” and “being taught” is taken from the Greek word κατηχῶ. It is a root word made up of κατα, “down,” and ηχος, “a sound or noise.” It is from this compound word that we derive our English term “catechism” to describe those teachings that are “sounded down.”

here is not upon payment for services rendered. Such thinking would view the pastor as merely an employee of men. Instead we are given a picture of two groups of people ministering to each other.



The teacher of the Word is sharing the Word and the one who receives that ministry is likewise sharing *all good things*. That tells me something about the Christian life, no matter whether it is being lived by the clergy or by the laity. The Christian life is about sharing good things.

THE PRINCIPLE BEHIND THE PRACTICE

Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap.

For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. (Galatians 6:7-8).

Paul begins this section with a warning. The warning is that you not be deceived. When you give a negative command in the Greek language, you can utilize one of two tenses — a present tense or an aorist tense.

Present Imperative	A command to stop doing an action already begun	<i>“STOP JUDGING lest you be judged.” (Matthew 7:1). Jesus said to her, “STOP CLINGING to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father...” (John 20:17).</i>
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Aorist Subjunctive	A command or warning against doing a thing not yet begun	<i>And they said to one another, “Let us NOT TEAR it, but cast lots for it, to decide whose it shall be...” (John 19:24).</i>
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The phrase translated, “Be not deceived” is in the present imperative. It is a command to stop being deceived. The point is that the Galatians had been continually deceiving themselves as to the realities of sowing and reaping. Paul has already described some of that deception in Galatians 3:1-5.

In his book *Down to Earth*, John Lawrence sets forth a number of principles drawn from this passage. They are based upon the principles of sowing and reaping as found in this passage.

1. You Sow what you Reap: *Whatever a man sows, this he will also reap (6:7).*

Louis Pasteur was the scientist credited with proving that there is no such thing as spontaneous generation. Nothing comes into existence in and of itself. Every effect has a corresponding cause. This is a law of nature that has been written by the Creator of the universe.

Nothing comes without effort. This is true in the physical world as well as it is true in the spiritual world. Even your salvation does not come without effort. It took the greatest effort in the universe to save you. It took the death of God’s own Son to bring about your salvation.

This is an important corollary to the law of sowing and reaping. God can sow on our behalf. He can expend effort for us. He did that in order to bring about our salvation. He continues to do it to bring about our growth.

This is important for you to know. It is related to the way you look at your Christian life. It is related to the way you view your family. It is related to the manner in which you look at your employment.

*With good will render service, as to the Lord,
and not to men, knowing that whatever good thing
each one does, this he will receive back from the
Lord, whether slave or free. (Ephesians 6:7-8).*

God has made you a promise. It is a promise that the good you do will be rewarded. It is a promise that you will reap the good things that you sow. At the same time, the fact that this promise is given in the terms of sowing and reaping suggests that the process is an organic one; it is the natural process of the way God made the world to operate.

2. You Reap the Same in Kind as what you Sowed.

Let's say that you are a farmer. You get up in the morning and you go out to your cornfield. The reason it is a cornfield is because you planted corn there. That corn has been growing. You would not be too surprised to find the absence of a field of apples. The only way you can find apple trees is to first plant apple seeds.

This is a basic law of nature. It is an integral part of God's creation. The principle was repeated over and over in the creation account.

Then God said, "Let the earth sprout vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees on the earth bearing fruit after their kind with seed in them"; and it was so.

The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed after their kind, and trees bearing fruit with seed in them, after their kind; and God saw that it was good. (Genesis 1:11-12).

This same principle was seen, not only in the realm of plants and seeds, but also in the animal kingdom.

Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures after their kind: cattle and creeping things and beasts of the earth after their kind"; and it was so.

God made the beasts of the earth after their kind, and the cattle after their kind, and everything that creeps on the ground after its kind; and God saw that it was good. (Genesis 1:24-25).

This same principle extends into the human realm. When Paula and I had a child, that child was not a lizard or a monkey or a

giraffe. We had a child that was *after our kind*. The same principle is seen in the realm of regeneration. Jesus made this observation when He spoke with Nicodemus.

“That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” (John 3:6).

When a natural person gives birth, she gives birth to another natural person. It takes the Spirit of God to give birth to a spiritual person. This means that you cannot be born again through your own self-effort.

There is a principle here. Paul stated it in verse 8: *The one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life (6:8).*

Paul has already set forth a contrast between the flesh and the Spirit in the previous chapter. He warned us to walk in the Spirit that we might not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. Now the contrast continues:

The one who sows to his own flesh	The one who sows to the Spirit
Reaps corruption	Reaps eternal life
Deeds of the flesh	Walking in the Spirit

The Galatians were being told to live the Christian life through law-keeping. This is tantamount to sowing in the flesh. The result leads to corruption and death. The death in their case involved a separation from the joy of their salvation. Rather than enjoy spiritual growth, there was a putrid stagnation.

But when a Christian sows to the Spirit, he enjoys all of the benefits of his eternal life. That tells me something about eternal life. It is more than merely a life that lasts a long time. It is also a kind of life. It is a quality of life. It is a life that produces the fruit of the Spirit.

3. You Reap more that what you Sow.

Farmers would go out of business if this were not so. A farmer does not plant a watermelon in order to harvest another watermelon. He plants a single seed in order to harvest a wealth of

fruit.

- Sometimes he reaps 30-fold.
- Sometimes he reaps 60-fold.
- Sometimes he reaps 100-fold.

The exact ratio differs from harvest to harvest, but the farmer always reaps more than what he sowed. The same is true in life. It is true for the Christian and it is true for the non-Christian.

“Everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or farms for My name’s sake shall receive many times as much, and shall inherit eternal life.” (Matthew 19:29).

The price of discipleship is great. There is toil and sacrifice involved. But the reward of discipleship is much greater. What you do in this life will grow.

4. You Reap in Proportion to what you Sow.

This principle seems to be in contradiction to the previous one, but it is not. It states that you reap in proportion to what you sow. If you sow sparingly, you will reap sparingly. If you sow bountifully, you will also reap bountifully.

Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. (2 Corinthians 9:6).

Notice that this law operates both negatively and positively. It operates for those who only sow a little and it also operates for those who sow a lot. If you only plant a single seed, you will not reap as much as if you had planted an entire field of seeds.

5. You Reap in a Different Season than when you Sowed.

When a farmer goes out and plants his seed in the ground, he does not plan on coming out the very next day to partake of the harvest. He knows that there must first be a long period of growth. Several months will pass before the season of harvest will arrive.

During this time of waiting, there is always the temptation to believe that the harvest will not come to pass.

Because the sentence against an evil deed is not executed quickly, therefore the hearts of the sons of men among them are given fully to do evil. (Ecclesiastes 8:11).

God's judgment against sin is not immediate. He is patient. He is waiting for repentance. When you sin, a great bolt of lightning does not automatically come down to zap you. The time of judgment has not yet arrived. But one of these days the time of waiting will be over.

There once was a traveling minister in the old west, making a circuit of a number of parishes along the way. One particular home at which he would stay was remembered for its particularly delicious meals. When dinner was over, the woman of the house would collect the dishes, but would advise him to save his fork.

"Save the fork," became a watchword, for it announced that there was a fabulous desert about the be served. He would hear her say, "Save the fork" and know that the best was yet to come. It is, you know. If you belong to the Lord and if you are walking in His Spirit, then you have something wonderful for which to look forward. And the Lord whispers to you, no matter how good or how bad things are, "Save the fork, the best is yet to come."

AN ENCOURAGEMENT TO FOLLOW THE PRACTICE

Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary.

So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith. (Galatians 6:9-10).

Paul started off by stating the natural and universal laws of sowing and reaping. There is an implication of that law. Here it is. It is that endurance leads to harvest. Paul says that in due time we shall reap if we do not run out of gas.

Here is the reason that Paul has been relating the natural laws of sowing and reaping. His reason has been to encourage believers to continue in their Spiritual walk. Don't give up. There are good times ahead. Do you remember Jesus? He learned this same lesson.

Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ²fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. (Hebrews 12:1-2).

We have an example of One who did not give up. We need to sharpen our focus upon Him. He is not only an example of One who pressed on toward the goal; He IS the goal. We need to sharpen our focus upon Him.

I did a little bit of running when I was in high school. I learned that when you run in a race, you do not look at the bleachers or at the clouds. You don't look behind you to see how the other runners are doing. You only look in one direction. You look ahead. You look toward the goal. The danger is that it is possible to run the race for a time and then to fall by the wayside and lose the race. You cannot coast on yesterday's victories.

But another important lesson in running is that the race only goes to the one who finishes. No one ever won a prize for the fastest start. This speaks of the quality of endurance.

Endurance. It is the stuff that mothers are made of when their children are sick. It is seen in the missionaries who work for years in a foreign land with little visible result. It is that quality that keeps good employees coming to work on time every day, ready to put forth their best effort even though it might not be noticed or even appreciated by the boss.

Paul says that we need to endure in doing good. We need to keep on doing good, even when we are not noticed. We need to keep on doing good, even when we don't feel like it. We need to keep on doing good, even when we are discouraged.

Chuck Swindol once said, "The hardest thing about daily living is that it is so daily." There is a lot of truth to that. It is easy to be a sprinter. But a long distance runner takes a lot of work. If you want to win the race of life, you need to keep on keeping on.

Discussion Questions

- Is there someone in your life who has served as your spiritual leader or guide? Is there a way in which you can be an encouragement to that person?
- Remember the description of the fruit of the Spirit and the deeds of the flesh. What sort of harvest are you currently reaping in your life? Is it a harvest that has come by planting the things of the Spirit or the things of the flesh?
- Do you feel as though you have been “running out of gas” in your spiritual life? What do you think you can do about this situation?
- When has been the time of your greatest spiritual growth? What were the factors involved in bringing that level of growth?

CONCLUSIONS

GALATIANS 6:11-18

One of the basic rules for public speaking is that you should get up and tell the people what you are going to say, then say it, and then tell them what you have said. That is what Paul does in Galatians. After a brief introduction in the first part of chapter 1, he speaks out on the problem of legalism in all of its various forms.

Now that he has come to the end of his epistle, he gives a brief summation of all that he has said. We could entitle these verses: “The Reader’s Digest Version of Galatians.” It will be outlined in five points.

6:11	6:12-13	6:14-16	6:17	6:18
Paul has written with his own hand	The motives of the Judaizers	Paul’s motives	The evidence of Paul’s motives	Paul’s closing benediction
	The issue of motivation			

As we read through this section, it is very clear that verses 12-17 form a literary unit. These verses deal with the subject of motivation. But how does verse 11 fit in? What does Paul emphasize the fact that he has written this epistle in his own hand? Is this merely a commercial break? Did he need to catch his breath before completing the epistle? Not at all.

A HAND-WRITTEN LETTER

See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand. (Galatians 6:11).

To what is this referring? Galatians is not a particularly lengthy epistle, especially when compared to the epistles to the Corinthians or others of Paul’s epistles. Neither is there any evidence that Paul had written any previous letters to the Galatian churches.

This seems to be a reference to Paul's handwriting. Why should the fact that Paul wrote this letter by hand and used large letters be of any particular significance? Paul's usual habit was to dictate his epistles to a secretary. Then at the close of the letter, Paul would sign his name and write the closing salutation.

- *I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand, and this is a distinguishing mark in every letter; this is the way I write. (2 Thessalonians 3:17).*
- *I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. Remember my imprisonment. Grace be with you. (Colossians 4:18).*
- *The greeting is in my own hand Paul. (1 Corinthians 16:21).*
- *I, Tertius, who write this letter, greet you in the Lord. (Romans 16:22).*

But this time Paul does something different. This time he writes the entire epistle in his own handwriting. It may have been that Paul's handwriting was not very good. I have a friend who writes so poorly that it is easier for me to read his Hebrew than his English. This is not due to a lack of education; indeed, it is someone who has done doctoral work. In the case of the epistle to the Galatians, it might have been because of Paul's poor handwriting that he wrote with such large letters.

It has also been suggested by some commentators that Paul suffered from poor eyesight. They take the reference to his "bodily illness" in Galatians 5:13 and their willingness to pluck out and give to him their own eyes in verse 15. If this is correct, then it is conceivable that Paul suffered from a visual ailment that made it difficult for him to write clearly.

But what has this to do with the remaining verses of Galatians? It has everything to do with it. Paul is going to be comparing his motives with those of the Jewish false teachers.

The Judaizers	Paul
They want to make a showing in the flesh (6:12).	He wants to sow to the Spirit (6:7-10).

They want to compel men to be circumcised (6:12).	He wants to bring men to Christ so that they can partake of a new creation (6:15).
They do not keep the Law themselves, though they want to place others under bondage to the Law (6:13).	He fulfills the Law through his love which leads him to bear the burdens of others (6:2).
They want to boast in the flesh of men whom they have pressured into being circumcised (6:13).	He wants only to boast in the cross of Christ (6:14).
They want to avoid persecution (6:12).	He bears on his body the brand-marks of Jesus (6:17).

This is not a doctrinal research paper. It is not a light devotional. It is not a sugary sermon for sugary saints. It is a letter from Paul's heart. You do not write this kind of letter through a secretary. This kind of letter is too personal for that. You might write this kind of letter by hand.

Even in his handwriting, Paul reflects the sacrifices that he has made for the cause of Christ. He isn't in it for the money. He isn't in it for the power or the fame. He is in it because he loves Jesus.

THE MOTIVE OF THE JUDAIZERS

Those who desire to make a good showing in the flesh try to compel you to be circumcised, simply so that they will not be persecuted for the cross of Christ.

For those who are circumcised do not even keep the Law themselves, but they desire to have you circumcised so that they may boast in your flesh. (Galatians 6:12-13).

There was a group of men who were in it for the money. They wanted the power and the fame. And when it came right down to it, they didn't really love Jesus. I think that there are a lot of people today who go by the name of Christian who fit into this category. They go to church. They say all of the right religious words. They wear the right clothes. But when it comes right down to it, they don't really love Jesus. Their motives lie along different lines.

1. An Fleshly Showing: *Those who desire to make a good showing in the flesh (6:12).*

The Judaizers are very concerned that they look good. They want people to look at them and to admire them. After all, most people do not go out of their way to look bad. It is interesting that these are the same people who have accused Paul of seeking the favor of men (Galatians 1:10 - *For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ*). It is a trait of human nature that a person will tend to accuse others of the very sin of which he himself is guilty.

What bothers you about other people? What faults do you find yourself pointing out in others? What accusations do you commonly lay at the feet of others? Chances are that those are the very things of which you yourself are guilty.

2. An Fearful Compulsion: *Those... try to compel you to be circumcised, simply so that they will not be persecuted for the cross of Christ (6:12).*

At the root of the motive of the Judaizers was a desire to escape persecution. There is a principle here. It is that the message of the cross will always bring opposition. If you take the cross out of Christianity, you will also take out the persecution. You can substitute circumcision for the cross and the world will flock to it.

Here is how you can tell a Christian from a pretender. The pretender will compromise the cross when he is faced with persecution. The Christian will not.

PAUL'S MOTIVE

But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation.

And those who will walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God. (Galatians 6:14-

16).

Having explained the motives of the Jewish false teachers, Paul now turns to his own motives. This is what made Paul tick. This is what moved him. What moves you? What is it about the Christian faith that motivates you? If it is anything besides that which Paul describes here, then perhaps there is an imbalance in your life.

1. A Boasting in the Cross: *But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ (6:14).*

What was the motivating factor in Paul's life? It was the cross and all it represented. What does the cross represent?

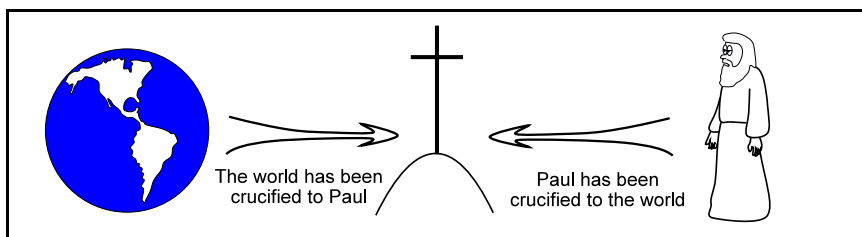
- It represents the love of God.
- It represents the holiness and the justice of God.
- It represents the grace and the mercy of God.
- It is the one place where all of God's attributes come together and are manifested.

Don't miss this! The basis of Paul's motivation was not in himself. It did not depend upon how he felt or which side of the bed he rolled out of in the morning. It did not depend on whether he had gotten his second cup of coffee. It did not depend upon other people and whether they had been nice to him. It did not depend on anyone else. It depended only upon God.

2. A Crucifixion to the World: *Through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world (6:14).*

The reason that Paul's motivation does not depend upon the circumstances of the world around him is because he considers himself to be dead to the world. When you are dead, the concerns of the world do not really affect you. I haven't noticed any protestors at the local cemetery. There is nobody there carrying a sign demanding more money, fresher flowers, and better dying conditions. Those who rest in a graveyard are not concerned with the things of this world. Why not? Because they are dead to this world.

Paul says that, in the same way, he is dead to the world. He has been crucified to the world and the world has been crucified to him.



Paul realizes that he has been identified with the death of Christ and that he can now look at the world through the eyes of a dead man. This life has no more hold over him. It is the next life that is important.

3. A Creation of God: *For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation (6:15).*

It does not matter to a corpse whether he is circumcised or uncircumcised. He doesn't care what you do to his body. He has had a change of address. He doesn't live there anymore. What DOES matter to a corpse is the new creation.

Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. (2 Corinthians 5:17).

When you came to Jesus Christ in faith, trusting in Him as your Lord and Savior, you changed identities. You are no longer the person that you used to be. You have become a new person. You have a new identity. That new identity is rooted in the person of Jesus Christ.

- Because He is the Son of God, you also have become a child of God.
- Because He was crucified, you are considered to have been crucified with Him.
- Because He died, you are dead to the world.
- Because He rose again from the dead, you also have risen to a new life.
- Because He sits on the right hand of the Father, you are considered to be seated with Him in the heavenlies.
- Because He has eternal life, you also have eternal life.

Now there is only one question that remains. Are you going to believe what God says about you? Are you going to walk in the realm to which you have been called?

4. A Heavenly Citizenship: *And those who will walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God (6:16).*

What is the *rule* to which Paul calls believers to walk? It is the walk of the Spirit that he has described in chapter 5. It is the walk in the new commandment of love. It is the walk by faith.

Those who have entered into such a walk are given a new identity. They are no longer of the world. They are now *the Israel of God*. Is this a reference to Jews or to the Church? A part of this depends upon how you translate *kai* (καί). “And as many as walk according to this rule, peace on them and mercy, even [*kai*] upon the Israel of God.”

- If we translated this *kai* as “and” then we must ask whether Paul is asking for peace and mercy on those Jews who do not walk according to the rule which he has established.

He has just stated in verse 15 that neither circumcision is anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. This is a message which was diametrically opposed by the Judaizers. Paul had pronounced, not peace and mercy, but the highest anathema against those who proclaimed a false gospel. It is unthinkable that he might now be reversing this curse on the heels of his statement about the uselessness of circumcision.

Those who would wish to translate Paul’s words as a blessing upon nationalistic and unrepentant Israel find themselves in complete opposition to the words that he has written in the verse immediately preceding.

- Another possibility is that this *kai* might be translated as “even.” In this case, we are not to identify this as two separate groups, but as one

A third possibility is that the “Israel of God” refers only to believing Jews. The problem with this is that Paul has just finished saying that neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything. Is he now reversing that position?

and the same.

Is this a reference to physical descendants of Abraham or to those who are His spiritual seed as per Galatians 3:7? I think it completely evident from the context of Galatians that the latter is in view. Paul has spent this entire epistle showing that it is not the Jew according to the flesh that is blessed by God, but the one who has a faith relationship with the Lord who is the true *Israel of God*.

Even so Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness. 7 Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham. (Galatians 3:6-7).

And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise. (Galatians 3:29).

Such a teaching is not exclusive to Galatians. The same thing is taught in Paul's epistle to the Philippians.

Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the false circumcision; 3 for we are the true circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh. (Philippians 3:2-3).

How did such a thing come about? Does this mean that the promises that were given to Israel have now been given to the church? That is exactly what it means. Jesus made this very clear as He confronted His rejection by the Jew leaders in Jerusalem.

Jesus said to them, "Did you never read in the Scriptures, 'The stone which the builders rejected, this became the chief corner stone; this came about from the lord, and it is marvelous in our eyes'? 43 Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people, producing the fruit of it. 44 And he who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; but on whomever it falls, it will scatter him like dust."

When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard His parables, they understood that He was speaking about them. (Matthew 21:42-45).

The Kingdom was never given to unrepentant people. When the leaders of the nation rejected Jesus as their Messiah, they in turn were rejected by Him. The kingdom that was offered to them would now be taken away from them and given to others *producing the fruit of it*.

THE EVIDENCE OF PAUL'S MOTIVES

From now on let no one cause trouble for me, for I bear on my body the brand-marks of Jesus. (Galatians 6:17).

Paul has been beaten, he has been stoned, he has suffered sickness and injury, all for the cause of the Gospel of Christ. If you want to know whether Paul is sincere, all you have to do is to look at the scars that mark his body. They are the marks of dedication.

The Jewish false teachers have been glorying in their circumcision. They believe that this mark on they body sets them apart for God. But Paul says that he has a real mark of God. His is the mark of persecution. The very persecution that the false teachers seek to avoid has left its brand-mark upon Paul's body.

Jewish False Teachers	Paul
The glory in the mark of circumcision upon their bodies	He points to the marks of persecution on his body
This is a ritual sign of their physical heritage	This is a real sign of his faith and commitment

In the ancient world where slavery was commonplace, it was customary for a master to place a brand upon his slave. It was a mark of ownership. It marked that slave as the property of his master. No one else had the right to give orders to that slave. Only his master had that right.

In the same way, Paul tells those who are giving him a hard time that they are interfering with one who is the servant of God. That is a right that

only God has.

There is a promise of protection here. If you are a Christian, then you have become the property of the Lord. He considers you to be His prized possession. He does not let anyone else mess with His possession. Are you going through hard times? Take heart! The God of the universe is aware of your situation. He cares. Stand tall. Be free.

Discussion Questions

- When you listen to a sermon or a Bible Study, what are the major criteria that you utilize to evaluate its value?
- What has been your primary motive throughout your involvement in this study? Has it been self-centered or God-centered?
- Is there a particular trait or habit in others that you find especially grating? What does that tell you about your own areas of weakness?
- If you were given the opportunity to change your circumstances or your heart, which would you choose? How does your present prayer life reflect that priority?

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