



# Galatians

*A COMMENTARY OUTLINE*

CHRISTIANITY'S  
MAGNA CARTA

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# Outline

## *or “A Bird’s Eye View of Galatians”*

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# Background Information

## *or “Preparation for Galatians”*

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### THE BIRTH OF THE CHURCH

#### In Jerusalem

About two months after the death of Jesus Christ, the church was born in Jerusalem. Its first members were so fervent in preaching the gospel that the supreme court of Israel declared “you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching... (Acts 5:28).” As a result, a great persecution started (Acts 8:1). This in no way slowed the progress of the gospel for “those who had been scattered went about preaching the word (Acts 8:4).” This continued until Acts 13 where a radical change in the method of preaching the gospel took place. Two men, Paul and Barnabas, were selected and commissioned to “go west” with the message (Acts 13:1-2).

In obedience to this call, Paul and Barnabas sailed for Cyprus and preached while crossing the island. From there they sailed to Perga where there was a highway leading to Pisidian Antioch, leading in turn to Ephesus, the doorway to Greece.

#### In Galatia

Upon arrival in Pisidian Antioch, Paul became ill. He calls attention to this in Galatians 4:13 and notes that this was the occasion for preaching the gospel in Antioch. Antioch was one of the westernmost cities in the territory of Galatia.

### THE SEQUENCE OF EVANGELISM

**Paul preached in Antioch and was driven from town by force.**

**Paul preached in Iconium and was driven from town by force.**

**Paul preached in Lystra and was driven from town by force.**

In Lystra he was stoned and left for dead. In spite of the brutal persecution, Paul leaves a handful of new believers in each of these cities. From Lystra he has the courage to backtrack one hundred twenty miles of Galatian territory to follow up on the new converts.

### THE DISASTER IN GALATIA

In a very short time, disaster hit these new Galatian churches. It came in the form of false teaching. It was then, and is today, the most common problem of the body of Christ—the problem of legalism. While the word *legalism* is often tossed about, it is rarely defined. Legalism may be defined as *the mental attitude that man can do something to merit the blessing of God, either in salvation or in sanctification*. It is the problem that forms the background for the letter to the churches of Galatia.

### Evidences of Legalism in Galatia

First, there was insistence on performance of certain rituals such as circumcision (Galatians 5:1-5, 11; 6:12-13). This was done with the implication that the rite would give one a standing before God. Second, there was insistence on observance of certain days as special (Galatians 4:10).

### Results of Legalism in Galatia

First, the life of Christ was stifled (Galatians 5:4). Second, the grace principle for living was being canceled (Galatians 5:4). Third, hypocrisy had entered; and Christian living had become a matter of mere performance to impress men (Galatians 6:12). Paul answers all of this by teaching that salvation is by grace alone (Galatians 1-4), and sanctification is by grace alone (Galatians 5-6).

# **T**he Galatian Defection

*or “Embracing Another Gospel”*

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Galatians 1:1-10

## THE SALUTATION 1:1-5

### PAUL’S AUTHORITY ESTABLISHED 1:1-2

“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),  
<sup>2</sup> and all the brethren who are with me, to the churches of Galatia...”

### The Nature of Paul’s Office 1:1a

The essence of apostleship is authority. This is especially true in matters of doctrine and message. The doctrine of an apostle was the doctrine of God. Paul’s authority had been called into question by alleging that he was not a true apostle. For this reason, he takes two full chapters to establish his genuineness as an apostle and thus the divine authority of his message.

### The Origin of Paul’s Office 1:1b-2

#### *Defined from a Negative Standpoint*

Paul’s office did not originate in a human source. In saying it was *not from men*, Paul uses the plural number. This means he is referring, not to an individual man, but to a body of men.

Paul’s office did not originate through the human channel. The term *agency of man* uses the singular number. This shows that no single human being was the source of his apostleship, nor even the agency of his apostleship.

#### *Defined from a Positive Standpoint*

The apostle of the New Testament was similar to the prophet of the Old Testament. A prophet functioned as God’s spokesman or mouthpiece, so that if one rejected a prophet, he rejected God Himself. Likewise, the rejection of a true apostle was equivalent to

rejection of divine authority. The Galatians had questioned Paul's authority, and he therefore opens the letter with a statement about his position as apostle. The problem of legalism needs to be dealt with, and Paul is going to do just that. No problem can be solved, however, until the issue of authority is settled. This is why Paul gets with this issue immediately—even before he greets them!

The word *but* is a strong adversative used to set up a strong contrast. After Christ's death, burial, resurrection, and ascension, He appeared to Paul personally and placed him in the apostolic office. No human mediation was involved.

Why is it necessary for Paul to establish this point? It is because of the absolute and uncompromising gospel that he proclaims. Paul teaches that the only alternative to faith in the gospel that he preaches is damnation. Nowhere in Paul's writings do we find more fervor than in this letter.

### PAUL'S GREETINGS GIVEN 1:3

*"...Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ..."*

The greetings may be described as "short and cool." The greeting to the Galatian churches is unlike any other. Romans, I and II Corinthians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and I and II Thessalonians all begin with praise for the recipients. There is no praise for the Galatians.

Why the brief greetings? Because brevity indicates urgency. When a building is burning, you would not say, "This building, which was designed by Frederick Edwards, a local architect, and erected in 1940, is presently on fire." You would simply yell, "Fire!" The Galatian legalism is serious, and Paul deals with legalism more severely than any other problem faced by the church.

In the short greeting, Paul does assert the basic principle of the church age—*grace*—as well as the basic blessing of the church age—*peace*. The sequence is important; there is no peace until God's grace is realized. God is the Father only of genuine believers. The Bible knows nothing of the brotherhood of man, only the brotherhood of believers.

### PAUL'S DOCTRINE PROCLAIMED 1:4-5

*"...who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us out of this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, <sup>5</sup>to whom be the glory forevermore. Amen."*

The problem of the Galatian churches was that of legalism. Simply stated, legalism is the mental attitude that human goodness can merit the blessing of God. As such, it stands in complete contrast to grace. The leading features of grace may be found in the book *The Gift of Salvation*. Galatians 1:4-5 shows three of the leading denials

of legalism. At the heart of all legalism is confusion concerning the true nature of the gospel. In making reference to the will of our God, Paul means that it is his desire for us to experience delivery from the age in which we live. It also means that the method of delivery is planned by God and recorded in His word.

#### **Legalism Denies the Significance of Christ's Death 1:4a**

The words *who gave Himself for our sins* state the only grounds of acceptance before God. Legalism attempts to merit God's blessing based on man's works rather than Christ's work. The word *for* is *huper* and means *on behalf of*, conveying the idea of substitution. The guilt of sin was placed upon Him, and the penalty for sin was paid by Him. The death of Christ is totally adequate to deal with the sin problem. Legalistic attitude always adds something human to the cross work of Christ and thereby proclaims it not fully adequate.

#### **Legalism Denies the Purpose of Christ's Death 1:4b**

The word *that* points to a purpose clause and tells the intent of Christ's death. The word *deliver* is a term for emancipation and freedom, which is the keynote of Galatians. The phrase *this present evil age* describes that from which the death of Christ was intended to free us. The noun *age* refers to all the thoughts, opinions, and viewpoints that stand contrary to the word of God. This age is called *evil*. Greek uses two words for evil; one is *kakos*, which refers to passive evil where there is no desire to corrupt another. The word used here, however, is *ponaros*, which refers to active evil that seeks to penetrate and ensnare.

The words *according to the will of our God and Father* point to the desire of God and the plan of God. He wishes us to experience the freedom brought by the death of Christ; it is also true that it is only by knowing and heeding His plan that this freedom is known.

#### **Legalism Denies the Glory of God 1:5**

God is glorified only when all the credit goes to Him. Legalism focuses on human accomplishment, not the glory of God. It is not the nature of God to share His glory, and we dare not rob Him of it. The cross involves the benefit of man, but the glory of God is its prime object.

## **THE DESERTION 1:6-9**

### **ITS NATURE 1:6-7**

*"I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; <sup>7</sup>which is really not another;*

| *only there are some who are disturbing you, and want to distort the gospel of Christ.*"

### **In Terms of How It Affected Paul 1:6**

| The word translated *amazed* means *to be surprised by the totally unexpected*. It expresses the emotional pain that Paul felt because of their defection. Paul freely expresses his feelings, both here and in 4:11 where he says, "I fear for you...." In 4:19 he describes himself as suffering labor pain on their behalf.

### **In Terms of How It Affected the Defectors 1:7**

#### ***It Moved Them Away from Christ***

The word *deserting* is a present tense, meaning the process was going on but was not yet complete. This letter is written to halt the desertion. The word was used in classical Greek for a turncoat—one who abandoned his convictions in morals, religion, philosophy, or politics. Abandonment of doctrine is abandonment of the Lord. The defection was not merely theological; it was personal.

#### ***It Moved Them Away from Grace***

The Galatians were deserting *Him*, and they were deserting *grace*. The first is a person; the second is a truth. This is saying that the person of God and the truth of God cannot be separated.

#### ***It Moved Them Away from the Gospel***

Paul plays on the word *different* and the word *another*. The first refers to something of a different kind than something else. The second word refers to something added in addition to something else. The Galatians were going for the "gospel with a difference." Yet, there can be no such thing because there is only one gospel, and to change it is to totally destroy it. There may be no additions, no subtractions, and no modifications. When he speaks of their pursuit of a different gospel, the question naturally arises, "Different from what?" Paul will answer that question in verses 8 and 9 by showing that the gospel he preaches is the only true gospel. In short, the true gospel is the Pauline gospel. The word *some* in verse 7 refers to the teachers who were infiltrating the Galatian churches with a false gospel. It is noteworthy that Paul does not dignify them by calling their names. The word *some* almost carries a note of disdain.

The false teachers are said to be attempting to do two things. First, they are *disturbing* the Galatians. This is a term that is used to indicate mental agitation. They are working on their minds. Second, the word *want* points to their evil motivations. The word *distort* means *to reverse, to make something totally different from what it once was*.

The defection in Galatia, then, has three aspects. First, it had a human aspect, seen in the emotional impact it had on Paul. Second, it had a doctrinal aspect, proved by their failing relationship to grace and the message of the gospel. Third, it had a personal aspect; they were departing from *Him*.

## ITS GRAVITY 1:8-9

### As Illustrated by a Hypothetical Case 1:8

*“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.”*

The word *even* introduces a third class conditional sentence, meaning the case is hypothetical. Yet, when Paul speaks of an angel from heaven, he is not using a hyperbole (exaggerating to make a point). In Greek culture, charismatic speakers were often treated as though they were gods, as Paul and Barnabas learned at Lystra (Acts 14:8-18).

The word *contrary* is a Greek preposition meaning *besides* or *beyond*—it sets definite boundaries. Satan always works to complicate things. The simplicity of the gospel points to the purity of the gospel. The gospel as defined by Paul is *the* gospel; there is no other. The expression *accursed* means *to be set apart for the eternal judgment of God*.

### As Demonstrated in an Actual Case 1:9

*“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.”*

The *if* in this verse introduces a first class conditional sentence, meaning Paul assumes the condition described to be real. The verb *is preaching* is the indicative mood, meaning this is a fact.

## THE CONCLUSION 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.”*

The force of these words is obtained by noting that the word *now* is first in the sentence and therefore emphatic. Paul is saying, “Now, considering the strong words of verses 8 and 9, would you say I am seeking to curry the favor of men?” This verse also shows a great threat to those who preach the gospel—making adjustments in the message to please men. Paul will now use the rest of chapter 1 to establish that the origin of his gospel is a direct revelation from God.

## NOTES



# The Revelation of the Gospel

*or “The Pauline Independence”*

Galatians 1:11-2:21

## PAUL’S RECEPTION OF THE GOSPEL 1:11-24

### PAUL’S GOSPEL WAS RECEIVED DIRECTLY FROM GOD 1:11-12

*“For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. <sup>12</sup>For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.”*

#### Stated Negatively 1:11-12a

Paul has made the strongest possible claims for his message. He has said, “There is only one gospel, and that one gospel is the one which I am proclaiming—any variation from this message deserves the eternal judgment of God.” No one has the right to use such language or make such a claim except God Himself. Galatians 1:11-24 establishes that Paul’s message is in fact identical to God’s message. Galatians 1:11-24 must be seen as rising from the words of Galatians 1:6-9. They answer the question, “Why should Paul’s gospel be the standard by which all others are judged; why is Paul’s gospel normative?”

Paul here denies three possible sources of his teaching. First, it was *not according to man*. The word *man* is generic and refers to humanity as a whole. The words *according to* translate the Greek preposition *kata*, which is frequently used to introduce a standard or a norm. The gospel does not meet human criteria because man always chooses to flatter himself and affirm his personal goodness; Paul’s gospel does not do that. Second, Paul’s gospel was not *received from man*. This was a formal expression referring to the transmission of religious teaching. It was a technical expression for the process of memorization by which rabbis passed along traditions to students. The personal pronoun *I* is emphatic. Paul is emphasizing how he is different from all others in the way he received the gospel. It was not delivered to him via a human

instrument. Third, Paul was not *taught it*. This is the normal medium for the propagation of God's word. In normal circumstances man is the source of the message, and instruction is the method of communication. With Paul, God is the source; and direct revelation is the medium.

### Stated Positively 1:12b

The last half of verse 12 begins with *but*, which is a strong adversative setting up sharp contrast. The words *revelation of Jesus Christ* may be taken in one of two ways. First, they may mean revelation *about* Jesus Christ; second, they may mean revelation *from* Jesus Christ. The second seems to fit the context best.

## PAUL'S GOSPEL WAS NOT RECEIVED MEDIATELY FROM MAN 1:13-24

### His Gospel Was Received Apart from His Past Learning 1:13-14

*"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; <sup>14</sup>and I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my countrymen, being more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions."*

Paul's past had been spent in Judaism, which invalidated the word of God by the addition of tradition (Matthew 15:1-3), rejected Jesus Christ outright, and persecuted the church without mercy. Paul was not only part of this system, but he was Judaism's star pupil and ardent advocate. This is conveyed by the word *advancing*, which means *to cut before* and was thus used for blazing a trail. Paul went where no other Judaizer had ever gone.

### His Gospel Was Received Apart from the Apostles 1:15-20

#### *The Pauline Call 1:15-16a*

*"But when He who had set me apart, even from my mother's womb, and called me through His grace, was pleased <sup>16</sup>to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles..."*

In relationship to Paul's calling, God acted in three ways upon Paul. First, preceding his call, he was *set apart*. Second, coinciding with his call was God's call *through His grace*. Third, the culmination of the call was the revelation of Jesus Christ to him.

#### *The Pauline Independence 1:16b-20*

*"I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood, <sup>17</sup>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. <sup>18</sup>Then three years later I went up to Jerusalem to become acquainted with Cephas, and stayed with him fifteen days. <sup>19</sup>But I did not see any other of the apostles except James,*

*the Lord's brother. <sup>20</sup>(Now in what I am writing to you, I assure you before God that I am not lying)."*

This may be called Paul's "chronology of independence." The sequence of events starts immediately after his call on the Damascus road. In narrating his whereabouts during this time, he is showing that it was not through the pillars of the church that the gospel was given to him. This supports his reception of the gospel as a direct revelation from God.

### **His Gospel Was Received Apart from the Churches 1:21-24**

*"Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. <sup>22</sup>And I was still unknown by sight to the churches of Judea which were in Christ; <sup>23</sup>but only, they kept hearing, 'He who once persecuted us in now preaching the faith which he once tried to destroy.' <sup>24</sup>And they were glorifying God because of me."*

The final statement of his independence shows that he did not have contact with the churches where he could have been indoctrinated. They had heard about Paul, but they had not seen him.

## **PAUL'S APPLICATION OF THE GOSPEL 2:1-14**

### **HIS APPLICATION OF THE GOSPEL AT THE JERUSALEM CONFERENCE 2:1-10**

#### **The Relationship of Galatians 2 to Galatians 1**

Chapter 1 stressed the source of Paul's gospel; chapter 2 stresses the nature of the gospel. Chapter 1 shows Paul's independence of the other apostles; chapter 2 shows Paul's cooperation with the other apostles.

The first ten verses of this chapter record Paul's first historical encounter with legalism. The legalism he faced at the Jerusalem conference is the same problem that his readers are now facing in the scattered Galatian churches. It was the historical prelude to the Galatian letter. The issue involved at the Jerusalem conference was this: Is justification by faith alone? The incident that raised the issue is found in Acts 15:1, "And some men came down from Judea and began teaching, 'Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.' " Here are men who realize the need to be saved but have introduced major error on how to be saved. They argue that faith alone is not sufficient for salvation. On three critical occasions, Paul took a stand for the purity of the gospel of the grace of God—at the Jerusalem conference, before Peter at Antioch, and as he penned the letter to the Galatian churches.

### Paul's Strategy at the Jerusalem Conference 2:1-2

*"Then after an interval of fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along also. <sup>2</sup>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."*

#### *The Textbook Case of a Gentile Convert 2:1*

Titus was a Gentile, and thus uncircumcised. Since Titus was unquestionably a genuine believer and yet uncircumcised, he would be a valuable test case. If one had to be circumcised to be saved, the religious teachers would be forced to deny Titus's salvation. Paul states that the moving force in going to the Jerusalem conference was a revelation from God telling him to go. Again, Paul's independence is displayed in that he did not go at the call of the Jerusalem apostles but at the direct call of God.

#### *The Private Meeting with the Apostles 2:2*

Paul knows that if things go the way of legalism, his whole ministry will be invalidated. The issue is indeed critical; according to verse 4, had Paul not won the day, we would not have the gospel in its purity today.

### Paul's Victory at the Jerusalem Conference 2:3

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

This speaks volumes for the depth of Titus's Christianity. Even the legalists had to admit the validity of his salvation. He was accepted as a Christian and was not forced to submit to circumcision.

### Paul's Opponents at the Jerusalem Conference 2:4

*"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."*

The *false brethren* made up a group that entered into the church quite early in its history. Their major attempt was to introduce foreign elements into Christian doctrine. They were a major source of pain and grief to Paul (II Corinthians 11:25-26). What is Paul referring to by the words *our liberty*? He is speaking of the liberty to claim salvation by faith alone, and the bondage of which he speaks refers to anything that is added to faith as a condition of salvation. The words *sneaked in* point to the methods of the legalist. Legalists are not originators; they are infiltrators. Legalism is especially dangerous because once it enters, it permeates like leaven (5:9).

**Paul's Courage at the Jerusalem Conference 2:5a**

*"But we did not yield in subjection to them for even an hour, so that the truth of the gospel might remain with you."*

The word *subjection* has an article in front of it and thus reads *the subjection*. The particular subjection Paul is referring to is the pressure of the legalists to submit to their teaching. The words *even an hour* show that Paul did not compromise in any degree at any time for any reason. Paul knew when to be flexible and when to be firm and unyielding (I Corinthians 9:22).

**Paul's Insight at the Jerusalem Conference 2:5b**

Paul is able to see that the issue involved is not merely that of circumcision. The insistence on circumcision is merely the external evidence of a much deeper issue. Legalism is an attack on the entire truth of the gospel. Paul has the insight to see that without taking an uncompromising stand, the gospel would vanish. This verse is a beautiful illustration of love in action. Paul had the interest of God's grace and a pure gospel so much in mind that he was unbending and uncompromising.

**Paul's Independence at the Jerusalem Conference 2:6-10*****The Other Apostles Did Not Contribute Anything to Paul 2:6***

*"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."*

Paul is not being arrogant in stating his independence. He is simply stating the honest truth: The gospel was given to me fully and accurately, and the apostles had nothing whatsoever to add to it. They could not add anything to it because there was nothing to be added. The apostles laid no more on Paul than he had already taken upon himself under the call of God.

***The Other Apostles Did Confirm the Ministry of Paul 2:7-10***

*"But on the contrary, seeing that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been to the circumcised <sup>8</sup>(for He who effectually worked for Peter in his apostleship to the circumcised effectually worked for me also to the Gentiles), <sup>9</sup>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. <sup>10</sup>They only asked us to remember the poor—the very thing I also was eager to do."*

When Paul refers to the *gospel to the uncircumcised*, he does not mean this gospel differs as to content, but rather that it differs as to the recipients. It means Paul preached the gospel especially to the Gentiles. The same message was preached to both Jew and Gentile but was delivered by different men. That the apostles viewed Paul

as having been entrusted with the gospel shows that they were not merely responding to his arguments. It shows they were acting upon the basis of their own observation and recognition; the nature of Paul's ministry was obvious.

## HIS APPLICATION OF THE GOSPEL TO PETER AT ANTIOCH 2:11-14

### Peter's Guilt 2:11

*"But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned."*

Sometime after the Jerusalem conference Peter arrived in Antioch. Upon arriving he finds gentile and Jewish believers having fellowship together. In their eating they were disregarding Jewish dietary customs.

Jewish people did not eat with Gentiles for two basic reasons. First, eating involved fellowship and camaraderie that violated Jewish ideas concerning separation. Second, Gentiles ate things that were forbidden by the Law. Some Jewish Christians still had qualms about eating with gentile Christians. These Jewish Christians were practicing a legalism that contradicted grace. Peter, however, was among those Jews who associated freely with gentile Christians. As a result, a delegation was sent from Jerusalem to Antioch to convince Peter of his error. Peter was not convinced that he was wrong but withdrew from gentile fellowship anyway. Peter caved in to legalistic pressure. Galatians 2:11-21 is Paul's rebuke to Peter for his actions. The verb *opposed* points to a reaction to an attack. Paul regarded Peter's lapse into legalism as an attack on the gospel. Paul's opposition to Peter was direct (*to his face*) and public (*in the presence of all* 2:14). The expression *stood condemned* means *to be guilty*.

### Peter's Hypocrisy 2:12

*"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."*

Peter was now living as unto the legalists rather than as unto the Lord. Peter reverted to his particular personal weakness of making a loud profession and then falling prey to fear. During the trials of Christ, Peter had said he would die for the Lord and then denied Him for fear of a slave girl. Here he had extended the hand of fellowship to Paul before the whole church at Jerusalem and now denies the truth for fear of the legalists sent from Jerusalem.

### Peter's Influence 2:13

*"And the rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy, with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy."*

Peter's sin is labeled hypocrisy because it was not merely an honest mistake nor a sincere conviction. Peter knew better. He understood grace and practiced legalism, all out of fear! All of this must have been heart-rending to Paul for Barnabas had been Paul's sole companion in ministry to the Gentiles, and now he has gone turn-coat. From this point on, Paul and Barnabas are never associated together.

#### **Peter's Rebuke 2:14**

*"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?'"*

Paul rebuked Peter for the right reasons. Paul did not rebuke because he loved an argument or because of a pugnacious personality—Paul rebuked Peter because he loved and honored truth. This verse contains the second reference to the *truth of the gospel*. The truth of the gospel centers in the fact that men and women are not accepted before God on the basis of their own works or dedication but on the basis of the cross work of Jesus Christ. Peter's conduct did not reflect this truth; his theology was grace, but his conduct denied it.

### **PAUL'S EXPLANATION OF THE GOSPEL 2:15-21**

#### **THE DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH STATED 2:15-16**

*"We are Jews by nature, and not sinners from among the Gentiles;<sup>16</sup> 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."*

#### **The Candidates for Justification 2:15**

The Jews had a privileged position for they were God's chosen people and possessed the word of God. As great as the privilege was, it did not provide them with a right standing with God. Both Jew and Gentile are candidates for justification and stand on equal footing in terms of need.

#### **The Meaning of Justification 2:16**

The word *justified* is the Greek verb that means *righteous*. The ending of the verb shows that it has a declarative meaning. The word does not mean *to make righteous*, but rather *to declare righteous*. Justification is the act of God wherein He declares a guilty sinner righteous. The basis of the declaration is the cross work of Christ, and the means of appropriation is faith.

### The Conditions of Justification 2:16

Man, by nature, nourishes the opinion that his own efforts can gain him a standing before God. Because this is a problem common to all men, justification is often taught in a negative way; this is where Paul begins here. Paul reminds us twice in this verse how we are *not* justified.

#### *Justification Is Not by Works*

The noun *Law* does not have the definite article *the* with it. Thus, the text reads “works of law,” which means law-keeping or good works of any kind. The law is to salvation what the bathroom scales are to one’s body. They show we have a problem, but they can do nothing about it.

#### *Justification Is by Faith*

What cannot be obtained by achieving is obtained by believing. The total value of faith lies in its object, and here the object is Jesus Christ. See a doctrinal readout on the basic elements of faith in the commentary on James.

### THE DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION MISUNDERSTOOD 2:17

*“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!”*

One might reason that if one is justified by simply believing, this takes away a basis for moral responsibility. This, Paul says, is not so.

### THE DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION MISUSED 2:18-19

*“For if I rebuild what I have once destroyed, I prove myself to be a transgressor. <sup>19</sup>For through the Law I died to the Law, that I might live to God.”*

Paul is pointing to an inconsistency. If he abandons the Law as a means of justification and then returns to it in the living of the Christian life, he is inconsistent. However, this is precisely what Peter is doing. He turned from law keeping in order to be justified; and now, in his conduct, he is reaffirming that which he once abandoned.

### THE CONCLUSION OF JUSTIFICATION 2:20-21

*“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. <sup>21</sup>I do not nullify the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly.”*



### **The Starting Point of the Christian Life**

The starting point is identification with Christ and His cross death. To be crucified with Christ means we are identified so closely with Him that what He did on the cross counts for us. It is a way of saying that our day of judgment for sin is over. In the eyes of God, we were counted as there when He died. It is the place where all of our sins were dealt with forever. The verb *crucified* is a perfect tense indicating a past completed work.

### **The Center of the Christian Life**

The center of our life is Christ living in us. We are not told that Christ lives *instead of me*, but Christ lives *in me*. It is the desire of Christ to animate us, not annihilate us. The Lord chooses to operate within the framework of our individual personalities. The Holy Spirit does not desire to suppress the believer's personality, but rather desires to express Christ through the vehicle of our individual personalities.

### **The Arena of the Christian Life**

This is expressed by the words *in the flesh*. The reference is to our physical bodies. There are three aspects of the believer's relationship to his physical body. First, we are to recognize that God is sovereign over our physical appearance and abilities (Exodus 4:11-12). Second, our bodies are the residence of the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 6:19-20). Third, the body is not to dominate us (I Corinthians 9:27).

### **The Method of the Christian Life**

We are to live by faith. Faith is the way we respond to the word of God; it is living by interacting in a believing manner with God's word.

### **The Motivation for the Christian Life**

We are to be moved by His love for us that was manifested in His death for us.

NOTES

# **J**ustification by Faith

*or “Law Keeping Never Justifies”*

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Galatians 3:1-4:31

## **LAW KEEPING NEVER JUSTIFIES 3:1-14**

### **IT IS NOT THE WAY THE GALATIANS WERE JUSTIFIED 3:1-5**

#### **A Condition Described 3:1**

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

#### ***The Galatian Condition Was Irrational***

This is the first time since Galatians 1:9 that Paul deals directly with the Galatian problem of legalism. All the intervening verses deal with the concept of authority. Problems cannot be solved where the authority of the word of God is not fully honored.

When Paul calls the Galatians *foolish*, he is not calling names but is pointing to facts. The word refers to those who fail to use their powers of perception; it is used when the facts are clearly in front of one, but they are ignored. Jesus uses it of the disciples in Luke 24:25 saying, “O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!” They had the information from the prophets, but they did not use it. The Galatians were doing the same thing. Paul describes their condition using a metaphor from the world of magic. The word *bewitched* was used of one placed under the spell of a magician—the Galatians were mesmerized!

#### ***The Galatian Condition Was Inexcusable***

BECAUSE OF THE CLARITY OF HIS MESSAGE

The words *publicly portrayed* translate a verb that was used for the posting of public notices. A father, for example, posted a proclamation that he would no longer be responsible for his son’s debts; the message was put on a billboard at a busy intersection.

#### BECAUSE OF THE NATURE OF HIS MESSAGE

Paul had preached “Christ...as crucified....” The perfect tense points to a past completed act with abiding results. Paul’s message focused on the person and work of Christ and was uncomplicated; there was no occasion for it being misunderstood or forgotten.

#### A Question Asked 3:2

*“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 the hearing with faith?”*

The answer to this question determines the whole issue of the book of Galatians. Once this question is answered correctly, the argument is over and legalism is dead. Paul mentions the receiving of the Holy Spirit because it is the unmistakable evidence of one’s personal salvation, and it is the greatest guarantee of redemption. The only answer Paul wishes to hear is that they received the Holy Spirit by hearing the gospel message and believing it. The *works of the Law* are significant in that *of* translates *ek*, a Greek preposition pointing to the source of something. The noun *law* has no article with it and thus refers to the idea of rule keeping. The word *faith* describes the hearing in terms of what kind of hearing he is referring to, that is, the believing kind of hearing. Acts 10:43-45 is an excellent example of how God responded to the believing kind of hearing by sending the Holy Spirit. Paul does not wait for an answer, nor does he suggest one, because it is self-evident. He presupposes that they know the correct answer and thus begins to scold them for their foolishness.

#### An Inconsistency Shown 3:3

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

The area of the Galatian foolishness is now particularized by contrasting their past with their present. In so doing, Paul shows that they have violated the order of progress. The contrast hinges on the words *begun* and *are now*. Their beginning was *by the Spirit*, and their present is now *by the flesh*. Their Christian lives had been initiated by supernatural and divine power, and now they are trying to live the Christian life by natural and human power. In short, Paul is saying, “The greatest thing that ever happened to you came about because you believed; why have you now abandoned the faith principle?” The contrast of life under grace versus life under legalism may be charted as follows:

**UNDER GRACE**

God is source of blessing.

Man is the recipient.

Works are the result.

Result is an attitude of humility.

**UNDER LEGALISM**

God is indebted to bless.

Man is the producer.

Works are the means.

Result is an attitude of pride.

**Some Consequences Revealed 3:4**

*“Did you suffer so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain?”*

Legalism has a retroactive effect in that it can negate the benefits of past suffering. The words *if indeed* indicate there is still hope if the Galatians will heed Paul’s words.

**The Question Repeated 3:5**

*“Does He then, who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?”*

They had not only had a supernatural start in the Christian life, but they had known a supernatural continuation in the Christian life. The Galatians had experienced some normal Christian living. The word *then* is a term used to introduce a conclusion.

**IT IS NOT THE WAY ABRAHAM WAS JUSTIFIED 3:6-9****Abraham’s Salvation Obtained 3:6**

*“Even so Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.”*

***The Action Involved in Abraham’s Justification***

Paul is introducing Abraham as an illustration of how a person is justified. Why is Abraham a good choice to use as an example? First, because no one who believes Scripture can deny that he was a saved man—Genesis 15:6 says he was. Second, because it is equally clear *how* he was saved—he was saved by believing. Third, because it is clear *when* Abraham was justified. According to Acts 15:5, the legalists were insisting on law keeping and circumcision in order to be saved. Abraham, however, was saved four-hundred years before the Law was ever given: and he was saved before the rite of circumcision was ever instituted. He was justified at eighty-six and circumcised at ninety-nine!

***The Object Involved in Abraham’s Justification***

God is the object of Abraham’s faith, but not in an abstract way. Genesis 15:5-6 says that he believed God about His word expressed in His promise. God and His word are inseparable—to believe Him is to believe His word.

### ***The Results Involved in Abraham's Justification***

The word *reckoned* is an accounting term. An example of its use is found in words on a papyrus fragment where a business man says, "Let my revenues be placed on deposit at the storehouse."

### **Abraham's Salvation Applied 3:7-9**

*"Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham. <sup>8</sup>And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, 'All the nations shall be blessed in you.' <sup>9</sup>So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer."*

### ***The Conclusion 3:7***

This verse links the case of Abraham to the readers of this letter. Abraham represents the only way of receiving blessing from God. It ties Abraham's justification to our justification (see also Romans 4:22-24). It also links the method of justification in the Old Testament to the method of justification in the New Testament. There has been but one method of justification since Adam.

### ***The Prophecy 3:8***

Notice that Scripture is personified; it is treated as though it were a person. If one compares this quotation with Genesis 12:1-3, we find that in Genesis it is God speaking these words; and yet, here in Galatians it is Scripture speaking these words. God and Scripture are treated as the same. God and His word are inseparable. Verse 8 teaches us that the promise made to Abraham was meant to include Gentiles as well as Jews. It also shows that justification by faith was a principle in operation before circumcision, before the Law, before the priesthood, and before the sacrifices of Leviticus.

### ***The Blessing 3:9***

If we are to be justified, it must be in the "Abraham way." What must we do to be saved? We must respond to the gospel in the Abraham manner; we must be those who are *of faith*.

## **IT IS NOT THE WAY ANYONE IS JUSTIFIED 3:10-14**

### **The Curse of the Law 3:10**

*"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.' "*

Galatians 3 recognizes two classes of people: the *of faith* class; and the *of works* class. In each expression the word *of* is *ek*, which points to origin or source of something. The first class is comprised of all those who have discovered that the source of God's blessing is faith. The second class is made up of all those who think that God's

blessing is obtained by human effort. The verse in front of us is going to show the utter futility of a *by works* salvation. The thesis of Galatians 3:10 is this: Man cannot render the kind of obedience that the law of God requires.

#### ***The Truth Stated 3:10a***

Verse 10 begins with a categorical statement. To attempt to obtain a standing with God based on keeping the Law not only fails to bring blessing but, on the contrary, places one under a curse and ensures the wrath of God.

#### ***The Truth Proved 3: 10b***

Appeal is made from Deuteronomy 27:26. There are four basic facts about the Law as found in Galatians 3:10.

#### **GOD'S LAW NEVER MISSES A VIOLATOR**

The word *cursed* means *to be under the judgment and condemnation of God*. When Paul refers to *everyone*, he uses a single Greek word, *pas*, which means *all*. In human law there must be the legislation itself, the penalty for its violation, and someone to bring an accusation. All three occasionally work together, but often they do not. Most of us keep our driver's license for one reason only: The majority of our traffic violations remain undetected. This does not apply to God—every violator of His law, without exception, is detected; there is no *getting by*.

#### **GOD'S LAW ALLOWS FOR NO LAPSES IN COMPLIANCE**

The verb translated *abide* is both intensive and extensive. Intensity is shown by a prefixed preposition; its extensiveness is shown by the present tense verb. Five years of successful law keeping could not make up for five minutes of failure. Keeping the law is a pass or fail matter.

#### **GOD'S LAW REQUIRES TOTAL OBEDIENCE**

This truth is found in the words *by all things written in the book*. The Law knows nothing of partial obedience. *All things written* means just that and nothing less.

#### **GOD'S LAW DEMANDS ACTUAL PERFORMANCE, NOT MERE LIP-SERVICE**

The words *to perform them* express this idea. Agreement or admiration of God's law will not suffice; God's law must be performed.

### **The Blessing of Faith 3:11-12**

“Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, ‘The righteous man shall live by faith.’ <sup>12</sup>However, the Law is not of faith; on the contrary, ‘He who practices them shall live by them.’ ”

***Justification Viewed from Habakkuk 2:4***

This verse has had as much impact on history as any ever written. It is used three times in the New Testament, each emphasizing a different word. In Romans 1:17 the emphasis is on the word *righteous*; in Hebrews 10:38 the emphasis lies on the word *faith*, whereas here in Galatians 3:11 the focus is on the words *shall live*.

***Justification Viewed from Leviticus 18:5***

The statement that the Law is *not of faith* means *one cannot meet the demands of the law by believing*. Action is the starting point for the Law, not believing.

**The Redemption of Christ 3:13-14**

*“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’—<sup>14</sup>in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.”*

***Its Accomplishment 3:13***

First, the words *redeemed us* point to a finished and objective work. The preposition *for* points to God’s method of redemption, that is, the substitutionary death of Christ. Second, the verse quoted is Deuteronomy 21:23. It shows that when Christ died on the cross, He died as a technical lawbreaker. The curse was placed on one hanged on a tree, as was Christ. This shows the severity of the Law. One could hardly control what was done with one’s body in death.

See the “Observations on Redemption” at the end of this commentary for a survey of the doctrine of redemption.

***Its Purpose 3:14***

TO BRING ABRAHAM’S BLESSING 3:14A

This is a reference to justification, a right standing before God.

TO FULFILL GOD’S PROMISE 3:14B

The promise is that of the personal presence of the Holy Spirit resident in every genuine believer.

**THE PLACE OF THE LAW 3:15-4:7****THE LAW DID NOT MODIFY THE PROMISE 3:15-18****The Human Covenant 3:15**

*“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.”*



Everyone is familiar with the meaning of a covenant or contract. Paul lists three familiar items. First, a contract must be *ratified*. This would involve a written statement indicating the duties and privileges of each party to the contract. Signatures would be attached to ratify it. Second, once a contract is in effect, it cannot be *set aside*. After two weeks or so, one party cannot say, "I'm backing out." This cannot be done from either an ethical or legal aspect. Third, once in effect, one party cannot *add conditions to it*. Paul is not thinking in terms of exceptions, such as mutual consent to change.

### The Promise Covenant 3:16

*"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."*

The making of covenants in the time of Abraham observed the following conventions. First, a sacrificial animal was cut into two parts along the backbone; and the parts were placed in two rows. Second, the two contracting parties would then walk between the two rows of animal parts to confirm the pact.

This method of ratification was carried out when God established His covenant with Abraham in Genesis 15, with one significant exception. The preparation for the ceremony is recorded in Genesis 15:9-11. Abraham is put to sleep (15:20), and the symbolical presence of God passes, *without Abraham*, between the pieces (15:17). The covenant, then, was ratified by God *alone*. Genesis 15:8 and 13 show that the issue involved is the *certainty* of the promise that God had made. Since God Himself assumes the responsibility for its fulfillment, the issue of absolute certainty is settled.

Paul's high view of Scripture is noteworthy. He bases his argument on the fact that the word *seed* is singular, not plural. The ultimate fulfillment of the promise to Abraham involved Christ. Since our salvation depends on union with Christ, this shows the sense in which we are involved in the Abrahamic covenant.

### The Law Covenant 3:17-18

*"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. <sup>18</sup>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."*

#### ***What it Did Not Do 3:17***

First, the coming of the Law did not invalidate the promise made to Abraham. Second, the coming of the Law did not nullify the promise made to Abraham.

***What it Could Not Be 3:18***

The system of promise and the system of law do not mix; they mutually exclude one another. This does not mean, however, that the Law does not have a beneficial purpose. This purpose is explained in the following verses.

**THE LAW HAD DEFINITE PURPOSE 3:19-24****The Anticipated Question 3:19a**

*“Why the Law then?”*

If the Law was not given as a means of justification, why then was it given at all? The emphatic word in the question is *why*. Since Paul is going to address this question in a direct manner, this portion of Galatians must be regarded as a key passage on the subject of the Law.

**The Succinct Answer 3:19b-20**

*“It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed should come to whom the promise had been made. <sup>20</sup>Now a mediator is not for one party only; whereas God is only one.”*

The term *because of* is crucial to the understanding of Paul’s teaching at this point. It is the Greek word *charin*, which may point to two things. First, it may indicate cause. This would mean that because there were so many transgressions, something had to be done to curb them. This may be set aside as incorrect on the basis of Romans 5:20 where Paul says, “And the Law came in that the transgression might increase....” Second, the word may be used to indicate purpose. The Law was given so that sin would become obvious and manifest. It would therefore serve to show man how badly he needed a savior. This is confirmed by Galatians 3:24. Paul’s method of teaching in these verses builds around three comparisons.

***The Law Was Added, the Promise Was Original***

The Law followed the promise made to Abraham by over four-hundred years. It supplemented the promise by underscoring man’s desperate need for salvation.

***The Law Was Temporary, the Promise Was Permanent***

This is indicated by the term *until the seed should come* in verse 19.

***The Law Was Given Indirectly, the Promise Was Given Directly***

The Law came from God, to angels, to Moses, and finally to Israel (Acts 7:53, Hebrews 2:2). The whole process of giving the Law was marked by warning to Israel to keep away from the mount (Exodus 19:9-13, 20-25).

Verse 20 builds on the fact that wherever a mediator is involved, two parties are involved. A mediator does not represent one party only. With two entities involved, success depends upon the cooperation of both. In making the promise, God was both the maker and the fulfiller of it.

### An Incorrect Conclusion 3:21

*“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.”*

Some might come to the false conclusion that the Law stands in conflict with the promises. Paul negates this idea with an abrupt and emphatic denial. The whole idea of conflict between the two is abhorrent because it suggests a conflict within the character of God who was author of both the Law and the promise. The Law, however, is unable to impart life—it cannot save.

### The Success of the Law 3:22-24

*“But the Scripture has shut up all men under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. <sup>23</sup>But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed. <sup>24</sup>Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, that we may be justified by faith.”*

#### *The Law Is Successful as a Jailer 3:22-23*

Two verbs express the work of the Law under the figure of a jailer. The verb *shut up* was a technical term for detention; *incarcerated* would express the idea. The purpose of the Law is to shut off every line of escape except Christ. The verb *kept in custody* is a military term for blocking all escape routes.

The noun *faith*, which is the third word of verse 23 in our English Bible, is preceded by the definite article *the* in the Greek New Testament. This serves to particularize the noun—Paul is not speaking of faith in general, but rather to a specific faith. This specific faith is that spoken of in verse 22, which refers to *faith in Jesus Christ*. It is like the faith of Abraham, but different in that there are distinct Christian doctrines that rest on the revelation of Jesus Christ in time. We might paraphrase saying, “Before the church-age kind of faith came....”

#### *The Law Is Successful as a Tutor 3:24*

Notice the marginal note that translates *tutor* as *child-conductor*. The word referred to a slave who was responsible for a child between the ages of six and sixteen. One of his major functions was to see that the child got to school. A few lines from Plato’s *Lysis* make the meaning clear. “Do your parents allow you to do as you please, who has charge of you?” The reply is, “My paidagogos (our word

in Galatians 3:24) here.” The response then runs, “What! Even though he is a slave, what does he do?” Answer: “He takes me to school.” The figure Paul uses here is appropriate for two reasons. First, it shows harmony between the promise and the Law. The child-conductor cooperated with the teacher, but did not and could not do the teacher’s job. Second, the child-conductor functioned only for a designated period.

## THE POSITION OF THOSE JUSTIFIED BY FAITH 3:25-4:7

### We Are Heirs with Abraham 3:25-29

#### *We Are No Longer Under a Tutor 3:25*

*“But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.”*

We are *no longer* in the age of the Law; we are in the age of grace. The relationship that Israel sustained to the Law is no longer in effect.

#### *We Are Now Under Grace 3:26-29*

##### WE HAVE BECOME SONS OF GOD 3:26

*“For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.”*

Under the Law, man is under the curse of a righteous judge (Galatians 3:10). Under grace, however, we are under the paternal love of our heavenly Father. Notice that the passage at this point takes on a very personal flavor using the pronoun *we*. The word for *sons* refers to a child of full age, one who no longer needed a child-conductor.

##### WE HAVE BEEN PLACED IN UNION WITH CHRIST 3:27

*“For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.”*

The two statements of this verse explain one another. Being clothed with Christ explains being baptized into Christ. I Corinthians 12:13 addresses the same subject (See *Commentary and Outline of I Corinthians*).

##### WE HAVE ONENESS WITH ALL FELLOW BELIEVERS 3:28-29

*“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. <sup>29</sup>And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise.”*

Paul is not referring to loss of one’s identity—a male is still a male, and a female is still a female. He means that the distinctions that formerly divided us no longer exist. This applies to racial, social, and sexual status. It is all but impossible to find any ancient documents that speak of sexual equality except the New Testament. A

common prayer of the Jew was, “I thank God that thou hast not made me a woman.”

### We Are Heirs of God 4:1-7

#### *The Illustration 4:1-2*

*“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, <sup>2</sup>but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by the father.”*

Galatians 4:1-7 must be viewed historically to be understood. In antiquity the moment of growing up was a climactic event. It carried both religious and legal significance. In Judaism, a boy entered manhood after his twelfth birthday, becoming a “son of the law.” In the Greek world, this occurred at age eighteen. The same emphasis was upon the assumption of full responsibility as an adult. Under Roman law there was also a time for coming of age. There is evidence that this was not as fixed as the others, with the age of maturity left to the judgment of the father. It is probable that Paul is using this Roman custom as his illustration.

A Roman child became an adult at a sacred family festival called Liberalia, which occurred annually on March 17. In the ceremony he was given the *toga virilis* to replace his *toga praetexta*. The emotional flavor of this event can be felt by reading of the coming of age of Marcellus in *The Robe* by Lloyd Douglas. The word translated *child* in verse 1 was used to designate anyone who was a minor in the eyes of the law. In this state, he could make no decisions because he had no freedom. The condition of a minor is analogous to those under the Law. Those who are sons are those who have been justified by faith in Christ.

#### *The Application 4:3*

*“So also we, while we were children, were held in bondage under the elemental things of the world.”*

The words *so also we* introduce the application of the illustration Paul has used. The term *elemental things of the world* most likely refers to the totality of man’s religious experience. It points to all of man’s struggle to have a proper relationship to God.

#### *The Incarnation 4:4-5*

*“But when the fulness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, <sup>5</sup>in order that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.”*

#### JESUS CHRIST WAS SENT AT A PRECISE TIME

The word’s *fulness of the time* may be viewed from two perspectives. First, from the divine standpoint, they show that God’s plan is never haphazard or arbitrary. There was a “right time” in God’s

plan for the coming of Christ. God is not only wise in what He does, but is equally wise in when He does it. Second, from the historical standpoint, the time was appropriate. The Greek language made worldwide communication of a message possible. Alexander had taken Greek around the world so effectively that we call it *Koine* or common Greek. The existence of the Roman government made the time appropriate. Under the Caesars, there was one single world government along with miles of Roman highway, making travel possible in a unique way. These roads determined the course of Christianity. Finally, the Hebrew Bible stood complete, with the Septuagint translation putting Scripture in a form that could be read around the world.

#### JESUS CHRIST WAS SENT UNDER PRECISE CONDITIONS

The verb *sent forth* in verse 4 is never used of a voluntarily conceived mission. God the Father was the initiator of the plan of salvation, which was executed by God the Son. It is a verb that implies credentials and a specific mission. The words *born of a woman* need explanation because this is how all of us are born. What, then, do they mean? The answer lies in understanding who God's Son is. It is God the Son who was born of a woman. Jesus is the God-man; He is true humanity and absolute deity. The words *born under the Law* are significant in that they relate Jesus to the Jewish nation. It also means that He was under its obligations and was liable to its penalties.

#### JESUS CHRIST WAS SENT FOR A PRECISE PURPOSE

He was sent to redeem (see "Observations on Redemption" at the end of these notes) and to bring us *the adoption as sons*. The noun for *adoption* means *to place as an adult son*. We are sons, which is where our privileges start (4:5); we have the Spirit, which is where our power lies (4:6); and we have a father-son relationship, which is where prayer starts (4:6).

#### *The Indwelling 4:6*

*"And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!' "*

The word *crying* has nothing to do with tears. It was used of a loud, definite, and often public proclamation. The Holy Spirit makes a definite proclamation inside the believer. The word *Abba* tells what that message is. The key idea in the word is intimacy. The Gemara says a slave may not address the head of the house this way because it would indicate a closeness that would not be appropriate. As believers we are linked to the Father through the Son and by the Spirit.

***The Conclusion 4:7***

The old position of slavery is over. We are now sons and heirs, and our mode of living should reflect this fact.

**GOD'S SONS IN SLAVERY 4:8-31****Their Past in Religion 4:8**

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

***In Religion They Had No Knowledge***

One who does not know God is a non-Christian. This has moral repercussions, as stated in I Thessalonians 4:5; it has eternal repercussions, as in II Thessalonians 1:8. This condition of ignorance stands in contrast to the believer who knows God in a paternal sense (Galatians 4:6).

***In Religion They Had No Freedom***

In the service of religion, there was no freedom from anxiety and fear. The fear existed because the gods of ancient religion were never placated. Some new sacrifice or rite or performance was always required.

***In Religion They Had No Reality***

The gods of Greek religion were *no gods*. This is futility in the fullest sense of the word—a life of devotion to the unreal. A believer can return to this life of futility only in the sense of his loss of freedom, as Paul is going to show.

**Their Present in Legalism 4:9-20*****The Life of Legalism Described 4:9-11***

*"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? <sup>10</sup>You observe days and months and seasons and years. <sup>11</sup>I fear for you, that perhaps I have labored over you in vain."*

Paul is addressing believers; therefore, he is talking about a legalistic approach to the Christian life. The human side of their salvation is expressed by the words *you have come to know God*, and the divine aspect is expressed in the words telling them that they have come *to be known by God*. Paul makes this double statement because legalistic mentality sees man as able to find and know the favor of God. Paul is saying, "You found God, but don't forget that the heart of the matter is God found you."

## LEGALISTIC CHRISTIANITY IS RETROGRESSIVE

They are pictured as turning back once more to weak things. Turning back is retrogression, and the Christian life is meant to be one of continuous progression.

They were operating on a “saved by grace, sanctified by works” system. The verb *turn back* is used four ways in the New Testament. It is used of the physical act of turning. It is used to describe the act of becoming a Christian (Acts 11:21). It is used of a believer returning to fellowship with the Lord (Luke 22:32). Finally, as here in Galatians 4:9, it refers to a believer who embraces legalistic practices.

## LEGALISTIC CHRISTIANITY IS UNRELAXED

The words *you observe* translate a verb that refers to the careful and meticulous following of something.

## LEGALISTIC CHRISTIANITY IS RITUALISTIC

The reference to *days* points to the keeping of Jewish Sabbaths; *months and seasons* refer to rituals lasting more than one day; and *years* refers to the sabbatical year, the year of Jubilee. All of this is contrary to the Christian way of life that treats every day as holy and every moment as one in which the Lord is to be honored.

## LEGALISTIC CHRISTIANITY IS LADEN WITH DEFICIENCIES

It has no power, for it is *weak*; it has no wealth, for it is *worthless*; and it offers no freedom, but rather renders man *enslaved*.

***The Life of Legalism Discouraged 4:12-20***

## THE PERSONAL APPEAL 4:12A

*“I beg of you, brethren, become as I am, for I also have become as you are.”*

In what sense are the Galatian believers to become as Paul? They are to become like Paul in the abandoning of their legalistic performance. Galatians 4:10 describes the activities of the Galatians, not of Paul. The Galatian churches need to embrace the normal Christian life. Paul describes that life in Galatians 2:20 as a life that operates on a faith basis—a daily believing of the word of God in all of life’s experiences.

The reason for their becoming as Paul is because Paul had become as they. Paul, a Jew, did not insist that they engage in Jewish practices. Paul did not approach them as a Jew; he approached them as the Gentiles they were. Without compromise of conduct or belief, one should seek to become as much like those one seeks to win as possible.



## THE PERSONAL EXAMPLE 4:12B-14

*“...You have done me no wrong;<sup>13</sup> but you know that it was because of a bodily illness that I preached the gospel to you the first time;<sup>14</sup> 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.”*

Paul’s remark that they have done him no wrong refers to their initial treatment of him when he came to them with the gospel the first time. The spiritual history of the Galatians is as follows: They had spent years in pagan religion (Galatians 4:8). They had come to faith in Christ under Paul’s ministry (Galatians 1:6). For a short time they had lived successful Christian lives; they had run well (Galatians 5:7). Finally, as Paul writes, they had started slipping back into a legalistic system (Galatians 4:9).

In Galatians 4:13-14 Paul takes them all the way back to the first time they had heard the gospel. Paul had apparently not planned to preach the gospel in the Galatian territory. Paul had come to Galatia as the result of an unavoidable circumstance—a physical illness of some sort. Sickness was the means God used to substitute His plan for Paul’s. It is remarkable that they received him so well since they could easily have despised or loathed him. This may indicate that his sickness took the form of an unattractive appearance.

## THE PERSONAL QUESTION 4:15-16

*“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.<sup>16</sup> Have I therefore become your enemy by telling you the truth?”*

Legalism had changed their attitude toward Paul. The reference to their willingness to pluck out their eyes may give a hint that Paul’s physical illness was ophthalmic in nature. In Galatians 6:11 he calls attention to the “large letters I am writing to you with my own hand,” indicating Paul might have had a problem with his vision. There is really no middle ground concerning truth; we either hate it or love it. The test of our love for truth is this: What is our response when truth exposes a wrong attitude, a wrong belief, or wrong conduct? Strange as it may seem, their hostility was directed to the man who brought them truth.

## THE PERSONAL ATTACK 4:17-18

*“They eagerly seek you, not commendably, but they wish to shut you out, in order that you may seek them.<sup>18</sup> But it is good always to be eagerly sought in a commendable manner, and not only when I am present with you.”*

First, Paul points to the zeal of the legalists. Zeal is a quality whose value is determined by the direction it takes. The zeal of the legalists spoken of here is bad for two reasons. It was for their own

cause, not the cause of Christ; and it was for their own glory, not the glory of Christ (Galatians 6:13-14). Second, Paul points to the motives of the legalists. They were in bondage and they wanted others to be in the same bondage. They wanted to be courted by others—legalism is self, self, self.

#### THE PERSONAL PAIN 4:19-20

*“My children, with whom I am again in labor until Christ is formed in you—<sup>20</sup>but I could wish to be present with you now and to change my tone, for I am perplexed about you.”*

Paul vividly portrays his pain for them in terms of birth pains. If he were present with them, however, Paul would not grovel; and the tone of which he speaks would doubtless have taken the form of a sharp rebuke.

#### ***The Life of Legalism Illustrated 4:21-31***

##### THE STORY 4:21-23

*“Tell me, you who want to be under law, do you not listen to the law? <sup>22</sup>For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the bondwoman and one by the free woman. <sup>23</sup>But the son by the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and the son by the free woman through the promise.”*

The audience that Paul addresses is composed of those who are bent on justification by the Law. The formula by which they operate is law plus human effort equals God’s blessing. Their deficiency lies in that they have never really heard what the Law has to say.

Paul introduces the history of Abraham’s sons, Isaac and Ishmael, whose mothers were Sarah and Hagar respectively. The contrast between the two is introduced by the strong adversative *but*. Ishmael’s birth *according to the flesh* means he was merely a natural born child, born exactly like millions of other children were born. The event is described in Genesis 16:1-4 and involves no supernatural element at all. Isaac, on the other hand, was born *through the promise*. This means Isaac’s birth was supernatural in character. The phrase assigns potency to the word of God. God’s power always lies behind His promise, and to release God’s power one must simply believe God’s word.

##### THE ALLEGORY 4:24-27

*“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. <sup>25</sup>Now this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. <sup>26</sup>But the Jerusalem above is free; she is our mother. <sup>27</sup>For it is written, ‘Rejoice, barren woman who does not bear; break forth and shout, you who are not in labor; for more are the children of the desolate than of the one who has a husband.’ ”*

The allegory Paul presents here may be understood by arranging the facts in two columns. This arrangement is based on the word *corresponds*, which refers to things that are placed in the same column or that are put in a row.

Hagar (slave)	Sarah (free)
Ishmael (natural)	Isaac (spiritual)
Old Covenant (Sinai)	New Covenant (cross)
Earthly Jerusalem	Heavenly Jerusalem
Judaism	Christianity

#### THE APPLICATION 4:28-31

*“And you brethren, like Isaac, are children of promise. <sup>29</sup>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. <sup>30</sup>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.’ <sup>31</sup>So then, brethren, we are not children of a bondwoman, but of the free woman.”*

Believers are emphatically associated with Isaac as supernaturally born. The persecution of Isaac by Ishmael portrays legalism as the inveterate persecutor of grace. Genesis 21:9-10 is the text from which Paul draws this conclusion. Note that the words *at that time* and *so it is now* in Galatians 4:29 are making this connection. The method of dealing with the legalists is drawn from Sarah’s request of Abraham that he *drive out this maid and her son* found in Genesis 21:10. True believers are to disassociate themselves from legalists. They are to reject, not only legalism itself, but also those who teach it.

## NOTES

# **T**he Christian Life

*or “Walking by the Spirit”*

Galatians 5:1-6:18

## THE FREEDOM OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE 5:1-12

### THE TRANSITION 5:1

“It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery.”

### A Declaration 5:1a

This verse is a summary of all that has gone before and an introduction to all that is to follow. As such, this is a key verse in the book of Galatians. Think of the word *therefore* as a hinge of the book. The verse makes a declaration and follows with an appeal. The declaration proclaims Christ’s purpose in saving us *for freedom*. Three things should be remembered about freedom or liberty. First, unrestricted liberty is license; second, wrongly restricted liberty is legalism; and third, properly restricted liberty is controlled by love.

### An Appeal 5: 1b

The appeal is given in positive terms, *stand firm*, and negative terms, *do not be subject again*. The whole appeal assumes that a Christian lives under the pressure of forces that would rob him of that for which Christ died. The Christian’s resistance must be active; passivity will not bring success.

### THE TRAGEDY OF LEGALISM 5:2-4

“Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you. <sup>3</sup>And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law. <sup>4</sup>You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.”

### It Sidelines Jesus Christ 5:2

It is important to remember that Jesus Christ is the total solution or no solution and never a partial solution. He saves completely or not at all. Paul is not viewing Christ in relationship to their salvation but to their Christian lives. The words *receive circumcision* mean *to acknowledge it to be a divinely given obligation for Christians*. Paul is not, per se, condemning circumcision, for he had Timothy circumcised so he could enter the Jewish synagogues (Acts 16:3, Galatians 5:6). What he is condemning is the thinking that any sort of rite, biblical or otherwise, could gain a person a standing with God, either in salvation or in the Christian life. It is not the act but the attitude behind it that is significant.

### It Is Always Inconsistent 5:3

Legalism always “picks and chooses” its standards. Its most revealing feature is not what it forbids but what it overlooks. It will forbid lipstick and then use the lips to gossip. God’s law must be viewed as a unit; to adopt part is not possible. James 2:10 reflects the same fact saying, “For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all.” We are free from the Law in three ways. First, we are free from its condemnation. Second, we are free from it as a means of receiving God’s blessing. Third, we are free from obedience to its statutes. The ethics and standards of the New Testament epistles replace the Mosaic Law. To be sure, many of the moral and spiritual absolutes of the Law are repeated in the New Testament epistles.

### It Ruins Grace 5:4

We should keep in mind four fundamental facts about the Mosaic Law. First, it is an indivisible unit (James 2:10, Galatians 5:3). Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers all open with the Hebrew connective *vav*, showing the books are tied together. Second, the Law was given to Israel (Leviticus 26:46, Romans 9:4). Third, the Law is now done away (II Corinthians 3:7-11). Fourth, the Law can be abused through misuse (I Timothy 1:8). The expression *fallen from grace* has been extremely misused. The ones who have fallen from grace in this context are not those who have sinned in some horrible manner. On the contrary, they are those who are engaging in performance religion and are doing their best to be good! They are, to use the words of verse 4, *seeking to be justified by law*. The Christian who seeks to live the Christian life on the basis of his own efforts has fallen from grace. Falling from grace is not a defection in morals, but rather a defection in doctrine. God’s grace is our resource in becoming a Christian and living as a Christian.

## THE TRIUMPH OF GRACE 5:5-6

*“For we through the Spirit, by faith, are waiting for the hope of righteousness. <sup>6</sup>For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love.”*

Verse 5 begins with the emphatic personal pronoun *we*. It serves to establish a contrast between those described in verses 2-4 and those addressed in verses 5-6. Some of the major elements in the Christian life are found in these verses. First, there is the recognition of the worthlessness of ritual performance. Second, there is a recognition of the proper place of the Holy Spirit in the execution of the Christian life. Third, there is a daily living by faith, which manifests itself in love. Finally, there is willingness to wait patiently for righteousness to be developed in one's life.

## THE INVASION OF LEGALISM 5:7-11

### Its Effects 5:7

*“You were running well; who hindered you from obeying the truth?”*

Legalism destroys effective service. The Galatian believers had once known and experienced a normal Christian life. The verb *were running* is an imperfect tense, pointing to past continuous action. The metaphor of walking usually refers to the Christian's conduct, whereas running refers to service. The verb *hindered* means *to cut in* and is the figure of a runner cutting in on another so that he stumbles or his pace is broken.

### Its Source 5:8

*“This persuasion did not come from Him who calls you.”*

The idea of source comes from the preposition *from*, which is the Greek word *ek* meaning *out of as a source*. The word *persuasion* has a definite article with it and indicates previous reference. Thus, we could translate *the aforementioned persuasion*, that is, legalistic doctrine. This legalistic doctrine does not find its source in God. Prolegalism is anti-God.

### Its Nature 5:9

*“A little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough. ”*

Paul uses a proverbial expression in referring to leaven. The leaven metaphor contains several ideas. It refers to anything that has a permeating effect—anything that gains total control given time. Leaven is most frequently representative of evil when used in the Bible. Some poisons can be effectively diluted, but not so with the poison of legalism.

**Its Outcome 5:10-11**

*“I have confidence in you in the Lord, that you will adopt no other view; but the one who is disturbing you shall bear his judgment, whoever he is. <sup>11</sup>But I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why am I still persecuted? Then the stumbling block of the cross has been abolished.”*

***The Outcome Relative to the Galatians 5:10a***

At this point, Paul is optimistic. He has a settled conviction that those he is addressing will respond in a positive way and return to the concept of grace under which they were saved and by which they had lived for a while.

***The Outcome Relative to the Legalistic Teachers 5:10b***

Among the legalists there was a ringleader. Paul does not give him the dignity of a name but rests his fate with the justice of God. While Paul does all he can to correct the situation, he rests his case ultimately with God.

***The Outcome Relative to Paul 5:11***

Where grace is taught, there will be persecution of the one teaching it. Why, however, is the preaching of the cross so offensive? First, because it claims to be the total solution to sin and thus allows man no room for boasting. Second, because it rejects all of man's efforts and works.

**Its Rebuke 5:12**

*“Would that those who are troubling you would even mutilate themselves.”*

Paul is being very caustic at this point. He is saying, “Don't stop with circumcision, go on to castration!” The word *mutilate* refers to the castration practice by pagan priests in the cult of Cybele. Paul's argument is this: If the minor surgery of circumcision is effective for salvation, why not go on to the major surgery of castration for even greater results?

**THE DYNAMIC OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE 5:13-26****AN OUTLINE OF LIBERTY 5:13-15**

*“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. <sup>14</sup>For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ <sup>15</sup>But if you bite and devour one another, take care lest you be consumed by one another.”*



### The Possession of Liberty 5:13a

A predominant theme of Galatians is liberty (2:4; 4:26, 31; 5:1, 13). First, Paul has stressed that freedom was the very purpose of the death of Christ. Second, Paul has stressed that legalism will rob one of this freedom. Paul is now going to define this freedom in terms of conduct. He will show, negatively, that freedom is not license; freedom is not doing as we please; it is not giving our sin nature free rein. Positively, freedom is walking by the Spirit.

The first and thus emphatic word of verse 13 is the pronoun *you*. It shows the contrast between valid Christian living and legalism. Verse 13 is the second mention of liberty in Galatians 5. It is instructive to note that in each case the statement about liberty is followed by a warning. In 5:1 it is a warning about the loss of liberty; in 5:13 it is a warning about the abuse of liberty.

We would do well to establish the historical and cultural setting behind the word *freedom*. Slavery was part of the social fabric of Paul's day. Both people and objects could be held as property. If one were a slave, there was a process whereby he could be freed. A slave could be purchased from an owner by a Roman deity, like Apollos. The slave could not buy his own freedom because he had no legal or civil rights. To overcome this difficulty, he could pay money for his purchase to the temple treasury and a "god" could then buy him. When this was done, a document was drawn up attesting that a god had purchased the slave. He could never become the slave of another because he now belonged to a god. Finally, the document often contained the statement that he had been purchased *Ep Eleutheria*. This is the word *freedom* used in Galatians 5:13.

### Its Abuse 5:13b

The word translated *opportunity* is a term used to indicate a base from which military operations were carried on. The words *the flesh* point to the seat of sinful desire that manifests itself in attitudes and actions.

### Its Motivation 5:13c

If we are not under the Law, what will motivate right conduct? The answer is love. When love is present, obedience and service are inevitable; when love is absent, service is miserable.

### Its Expression 5:14-15

#### *Its True Expression 5:14*

Love summarizes everything that is in the Law. We will see more about love when we come to the fruit of the Spirit spoken of in 5:22.

### ***Its False Expression 5:15***

Absence of true love brings mutual destruction among Christians.

## **AN OUTLINE OF SPIRITUALITY 5:16-26**

### **The Walk 5:16-18**

*“But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. <sup>17</sup>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. <sup>18</sup>But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law.”*

#### ***The Command***

Paul uses three different words for *walk* in the book of Galatians, and each one is significant. The first is *peripateo* (5:16), a broad and comprehensive word meaning *walk all around*. Metaphorically, it refers to the believer’s conduct. The second is *stoicheo* and is found in 5:25. We had the noun form of this verb in 4:9 translated *elemental*. We noted that it refers to the fundamental elements of something. This carries a great truth: Our relationship to the Holy Spirit is the basic and elemental fact in our Christian experience. It is also true that the fundamental element of walking is taking a step. Thus, we are to “walk step-by-step” by the Spirit. The third word is found in 2:14 and is translated straightforward. The word is *orthopodeo* and means *to walk straight*. Peter was not walking according to truth before gentile Christians; Peter was “clubfooted” at Antioch.

#### ***The Relationship***

In the command to *walk by the Spirit*, the definite article *the* is not present in the Greek New Testament. This does not mean that the reference is not to the Holy Spirit; but even if the reference is to the human spirit, it is still true that the Holy Spirit works through the believer’s human spirit (Romans 8:16). The emphasis indicated by the absence of the article is on the quality and character of the walk.

#### ***The Promise***

If we walk in such a manner, we are promised that we *will not carry out the desire of the flesh*. The promise contains a double negative for emphasis. The verb *carry out* refers to actual performance. He does not say, “You will not *have* the desire of the flesh,” but “You will not *perform* the desire of the flesh.” We are not promised freedom from the *desire* of the sin nature but from the *victory* of the sin nature.

#### ***The Battle***

TWO SEPARATE ENTITIES ARE INSIDE EVERY CHRISTIAN

First, we have the *flesh*, which refers to the seat of all sinful desire. It is the part of us that suggests and enjoys sin. Second, *the Spirit*

refers to God the Holy Spirit. This internal arrangement exists until we die or the Lord returns.

#### THE FLESH AND THE SPIRIT ARE TOTAL OPPOSITES

This is expressed by the term *in opposition*, which refers to an opponent or an enemy. For this reason, they cannot co-exist peacefully. This means the inside of every believer is a battleground.

#### THE FLESH AND THE SPIRIT CARRY ON ACTIVE WARFARE CONTINUALLY

The words *sets its desire against* focus on the idea that the Holy Spirit continually desires to suppress the flesh, and the flesh continually desires to suppress the Holy Spirit.

#### THE FLESH AND THE SPIRIT DO NOT SHARE CONTROL IN THE BELIEVER'S LIFE

They may share "time slots," but one or the other is in control at any given moment.

#### OUR ACTIONS ARE THE RESULT OF WHICH IS IN CONTROL AT A GIVEN MOMENT.

#### THE MANIFESTATIONS OF THE FLESH ARE NOT STEREOTYPED

The flesh manifested itself in Corinth in lasciviousness; it manifested itself in Galatia in legalism; and it manifested itself in Colossae in asceticism.

#### *The Position*

The word *if* introduces a first class conditional sentence, which assumes something to be true. We could translate "since you are led by the Spirit..."

#### *The Summary*

A walk by the Spirit is not optional, for the verb *walk* is in the imperative mood. We respond to God's imperative by obeying or disobeying. A walk by the Spirit is a process, not a once-for-all experience, because the verb *walk* is in the present tense, pointing to continuous action.

### The Production 5:19-24

#### *The Works of the Flesh 5:19-21*

"Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, <sup>20</sup>idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, <sup>21</sup>envyings, drunkenness, carousings, and things like these, of which I forewarn you just as I have forewarned you that those who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

The *deeds of the flesh* listed here flow from the *desire of the flesh* spoken of in 5:16. One is the root; the other is the fruit. One is the desire of the sin nature; the other is the display of the sin nature. The words *things like these* show that the list is not exhaustive but representative. The things listed are examples that may be multiplied many times. The word *practice* is important to note. There are two words to express actions. First, there is *poieo* that refers to an act; second, there is *prasso* that refers to a continual practice. The latter word is used in Galatians 5:21.

### ***The Fruit of the Spirit 5:22-26***

*“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup>gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. <sup>24</sup>Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. <sup>25</sup>If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. <sup>26</sup>Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another.”*

Paul has spoken of the *deeds of the flesh* and now turns to the *fruit of the Spirit*. Why does Paul select the metaphor of fruit? It is because fruit is a natural product coming from an inner nature; fruit is not manmade. The word *fruit* is singular, indicating that the Holy Spirit produces all nine of these things as a unit. This means the person walking by the Spirit is a person of balance. To walk by the Spirit is to be balanced by the Spirit.

What is fruit? First, fruit may refer to people that we have been instrumental in bringing to salvation, as in John 4:36. It may also refer to believers in whom we have been instrumental in aiding their growth, as in Romans 1:13. Second, fruit may also refer to character—character in the sphere of righteousness (James 3:18, Hebrews 12:11, Philippians 1:11, Romans 6:13) or in the sphere of goodness and truth (Ephesians 5:9).

Paul adds a touch of irony with the words *against such things there is no law*. It is a pointed jab at the legalists. It is like saying, “Is there anything in the Law which you wish to impose that forbids love, joy, or longsuffering?”

Verse 24 points to the believer’s position. The cross dealt fully and effectively with our sin natures. There is no need to render obedience to its desires—the cross is our victory, both in justification and in sanctification. Verse 25 shows that the method of justification and the method of sanctification are the same; they are rooted in faith. The words *challenging one another* would cover those who might abuse liberty; the words *envying one another* would cover those who might surrender liberty.

## THE EVIDENCE OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE 6:1-10

### RESPONSIBILITY TOWARD A FELLOW BELIEVER 6:1-5

#### The Principle of Rescue Work 6:1

*“Brethren, even if a man is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, lest you too be tempted.”*

When we looked at the fruit of the Spirit in chapter 5, we did not do a detailed study of each of the nine items. The final chapter of Galatians shows why. This chapter shows the fruit of the Spirit being manifested in a very concrete, down-to earth manner.

#### *The Who of Rescue Work*

The words *you who are spiritual* tell us who is to be involved. What does it mean to be spiritual? If spirituality is attained by good works, then it could be nothing less than conceit to claim to be spiritual. However, spirituality, like salvation, is a matter of grace. Personal merit does not make us Christians, and personal merit does not make us spiritual. Being spiritual refers to those who are obeying Galatians 5:16 and walking by the Spirit. The spiritual stand in contrast to the legalists. The first issue in rescue work, therefore, is “me, not thee!”

#### *The What of Rescue Work*

The ministry involved is expressed by the verb *restore*. The word is used as a medical term for setting a fractured bone; it involves much care, compassion, and tenderness. It considers the pain of the patient.

#### *The How of Rescue Work*

It is to be done *in a spirit of gentleness*. Gentleness is one of the nine fruits of the Spirit listed in Galatians 5:22-23.

#### The Peril of Rescue Work 6:2-4

*“Bear one another’s burdens, and thus fulfill the law of Christ. <sup>3</sup>For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. <sup>4</sup>But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have reason for boasting in regard to himself alone, and not in regard to another.”*

#### *The Peril of Participation 6:2*

There is peril in rescue work because those who are “spiritual” have sin natures and are therefore susceptible to a fall also. The *burden* spoken of is that of helping other believers maintain fellowship with the Lord.

***The Peril of Pride 6:3***

Pride always denies reality. Anyone who engages in the activity of trying to help someone else stands in danger at this point. The danger is particularly great if we succeed in helping them. After all, they should credit their victory over sin to me!

Pride blinds to reality. The verb *deceives himself* is *phranapatao*, which refers to one who has subjective fantasies—inner delusion. We can and do lie to ourselves, and we also believe our lies.

***The Peril of Comparison 6:4***

Every man has a sin nature with its own peculiarities. Every sin nature has strong and weak areas. When we engage in comparison, we always tend to compare our strong area with the weak area of another and then conclude that we are spiritually superior. Paul's exhortation at this point precludes this kind of activity.

**The Balance of Rescue Work 6:5**

*"For each one shall bear his own load."*

Galatians 6:2 tells us we are to bear one another's burdens, whereas Galatians 6:5 says we are to bear our own load. Two different words for *burden* are used in these two verses. In verse 2 the word is *bara*, which refers to a very heavy burden—more than one should carry. In verse 5 the word is *phortion*, which was a common word for a man's pack. Believers should help one another, but one should not expect another to do for him what he is responsible to do for himself.

**RESPONSIBILITY TOWARD TEACHERS OF THE WORD 6:6-10****The Command 6:6**

*"And let the one who is taught the word share all good things with him who teaches."*

***The Privilege of the Student***

There are three concepts involved in the student-teacher relationship. First, the teaching has continuity. This is expressed by the present tense participle *taught*. This assumes the teacher maintains continuous teaching, and the student exposes himself to it. Second, the teaching has content. This is defined by the term *the word*, referring to the word of God. Third, the teaching has order. The word translated *taught* is *katacheo* from which we get our word *catechism*. This refers to face-to-face oral instruction that is organized.

### ***The Responsibility of the Student***

He is to *share all good things*. The verb is most commonly used in the New Testament for sharing in a material way (Romans 15:26, II Corinthians 8:4, 9:13). The words *good things* are also used to designate material items (Luke 1:53). Apparently the Galatian believers were not supporting those who taught them the word of God.

### **The Consequences 6:7-8**

*“Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. <sup>8</sup>For the one who sows to his own flesh shall from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit shall from the Spirit reap eternal life.”*

Paul now points out the consequences of not supporting those who taught them the word of God. The words *do not be deceived* relate to truth concerning those we support and associate with. The word *mocked* literally means *to turn up one's nose*. The Galatians were mocking God, not by what they said, but by what they did. Hogg and Vine comments, “It is true that men, even professing Christian men, will thoughtlessly do to God in act what they would shrink with horror from saying in word. Actions afford a better clue to the state of the heart of man than do words.” The same idea of sowing and reaping is used by Paul in II Corinthians 9:6 concerning giving.

Galatians 6:8 emphasizes two things. First, it lays stress on where we sow. The word *to* is *eis*, which indicates the direction toward which an action is taken. We could translate “one who caters to his own flesh.” Second, Paul stresses the source of the harvest. The word *from* is *ek*, which points to the source from which something comes. We reap from exactly the same ground in which we sow.

### **The Encouragement 6:9**

*“And let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we shall reap if we do not grow weary.”*

Spiritual harvest does not take place overnight. Anything that takes time also introduces the possibility of discouragement. It is easy to grow weary of waiting and thus give up. The words *due time*, however, refer to an exact time. The harvest is guaranteed, but the time of the harvest is unrevealed. We should live, therefore, in the light of the guaranteed harvest, however long it may take.

### **The Conclusion 6:10**

*“So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.”*

The word *opportunity* is the same as the word *time* in verse 9, which refers to an exact time. There is exactly a right time to do good, and we should not miss it. This verse also helps a Christian prioritize his acts of goodness. There is nothing wrong with a believer supporting good charities, but the family of God should always come first. Fellow believers should stand first in terms of the help we extend to men.

## RESPONSIBILITY TOWARD THE APOSTLE PAUL 6:11-18

### The Motives of Legalism 6: 11-13

*“See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand. <sup>12</sup>Those who desire to make a good showing in the flesh try to compel you to be circumcised, simply that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. <sup>13</sup>For those who are circumcised do not even keep the Law themselves, but they desire to have you circumcised, that they may boast in your flesh.”*

#### *The Dramatic Emphasis 6:11*

While these closing verses do summarize, they are certainly not like a postscript. They are full of fervor and are literally written in boldface letters. To understand the drama of verse 11, one needs to have a mental picture of the book of Galatians as it is being written. Paul normally used an amanuensis in writing his letters. Picture Paul dictating the words of Galatians to a scribe-secretary. The dictation takes place until we get to verse 11 of the last chapter. At this point, Paul takes the pen from the hand of the secretary and writes these last 8 verses in his own handwriting. Why does he do this? First, he does so to authenticate his letter (I Corinthians 16:21, Colossians 4:18, II Thessalonians 3:17). Second, he does so to emphasize his main points. He does this by writing in literary uncials (1" high letters). The large letters show his strong convictions about what he has written. It is very similar to John Hancock's signature on the Declaration of Independence.

#### *The Legalistic Hypocrisy 6:12-13*

Think of three classes of people that existed when the book of Galatians was written. First, there were religious unbelievers. These were Jews who rejected salvation by grace and substituted temple ritual. They were vocal and constituted a formidable class. Second, there were bona fide Christians who believed salvation to be entirely God's provision and that all blessing came by believing. This was the small class; but they had a great spokesman in the person of Paul, and they had divine truth on their side. Finally, there were the fence sitters, who wanted to keep both sides happy and in so doing fell prey to two evil motives. They fell prey to the desire to avoid persecution from the religious unbelievers. They wished to *make a good showing in the flesh*. On the other hand, there were those



who delighted in boasting about their success in making others bow to their legalism and were called those who *boast in your flesh*.

The words *make a good showing* translate one single Greek word, *euprosopeo*, which means *to present a good face*. Image was their object. As a result, true doctrine had to be compromised. The term *in the flesh* points to the insincerity of their conduct; it indicates the external and superficial, rather than the internal and genuine. Their desire to impose legalism on others shows their tyrannical nature. Their false motivation is shown by their refusal to be persecuted for the cross of Christ. The only way to avoid the offense of the cross is to add something to faith as the condition of salvation. There has never been a legalist who had the gospel straight. The only glory the legalist knows is his success in imposing his legalism on others.

### The Motives of Paul 6:14-18

*"But may it never be that I should boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. <sup>15</sup>For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. <sup>16</sup>And those who will walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God. <sup>17</sup>From now on let no one cause trouble for me, for I bear on my body the brand-marks of Jesus. <sup>18</sup>The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brethren. Amen."*

Paul's glory was in nothing but the cross of Christ. The idea of being *crucified* means *to be dead to something*. Paul was dead to the thinking of the world which excluded Christ. There are two important concepts in these closing words. First, peace and mercy are given only to those who adhere to the gospel. Second, all who believe the gospel are to live in harmony with it. As in all his letters, Paul concludes with reference to God's grace.

## NOTES

# Observations on Redemption

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When Roman generals returned from battle, they marched into the city leading enormous processions. Their troops arrived with the spoils of battle, which included captured men and women as well as booty taken in battle. The wealthy citizens of Rome anticipated this event greatly because it meant an opportunity to purchase booty as well as a chance to buy additional slaves who were to be put on the auction block. This is the scene the New Testament authors had in mind when they wrote of redemption—a common word for making a purchase in the market place.

The word *redemption* was selected by the Holy Spirit from the language of the first century to express one of the major truths concerning our salvation.

## THE CONDITION THAT DEMANDS REDEMPTION

### All Men Are Slaves to Sin

Romans 6:17 reminds believers that “you were slaves of sin...,” a reference to their former condition as unbelievers. A slave was owned by his master in a very real sense of the word and had no legal rights. His duty was obedience and service.

### All Men Are Cursed by Sin

Galatians 3:13 says, “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law...”

## THE INVOLVEMENTS THAT EXPLAIN REDEMPTION

### Redemption Involves a Purchase

The word translated redeem is a commercial term signifying the same thing that our word *buy* does in English. In Matthew 13:44, Jesus speaks of one who “sells all that he has, and buys that field.” Here the word *buys* is the word for *redemption*.

While we think of buying in terms of material things, in New Testament times people could be regarded as property and thus be purchased.

That Jesus Christ purchased (*redeemed*) us is the basis for the believer regarding himself as totally owned by the Lord. Paul reminds the Corinthians of who they are by asking them to recall, “Or do you not know that you are not your own. For you have been bought (*redeemed*) with a price... (I Corinthians 6:19-20).”

### **Redemption Involves a Price**

The price of redemption is most forcefully stated in I Peter 1:18-19 where we are taught “that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver and gold...but with the precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.”

Nothing on the human level can redeem man because all human payments are *perishable* and cannot solve the spiritual problem of man’s alienation from God.

### **Redemption Involves a Freedom**

We have referred to Galatians 3:13 that tells us, “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law....” The law brings a curse in that failure to meet its high standards carries the penalty of death. We are all, therefore, under that penalty.

The significant thing about the word *redeemed* in this verse is that though not seen in translation, the verb has the preposition *out of* attached to it, emphasizing the total freedom from the penalty of sin that redemption brings. It also implies a permanency—we are freed, never to return!