



“The righteous . . . shall grow  
like a cedar in Lebanon”

Psalm 92:12

Reading Companion  
to the Book of  
**Galatians**

*“So they read in the book in the law of God . . .  
and caused them to understand the reading”*

Nehemiah 8:8

By  
Bill Daniels

## **Preface**

The contents of this book were part of a course taught in the Bible College at New Germany Baptist Church in 2007. In order to present these materials in a form more readily available for further class use we have kept the class divisions used in the course. Listed separately on the Contents page you will find the starting pages for both the 10 class portions as well as for the 6 chapters of the book of Galatians.

May the Lord take you far beyond what I ever could through my feeble efforts in stirring and encouraging your heart through the study of Paul's powerful epistle to the churches of Galatia. He is both able and willing to bless as we earnestly pursue Him in His eternal words.

Bill Daniels

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# Contents

## Classes

Class 1 . . . . .	1
Class 2 . . . . .	15
Class 3 . . . . .	33
Class 4 . . . . .	49
Class 5 . . . . .	67
Class 6 . . . . .	85
Class 7 . . . . .	107
Class 8 . . . . .	125
Class 9 . . . . .	137
Class 10 . . . . .	157

## Chapters

Chapter 1 . . . . .	15
Chapter 2 . . . . .	39
Chapter 3 . . . . .	67
Chapter 4 . . . . .	96
Chapter 5 . . . . .	125
Chapter 6 . . . . .	157

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“Stand fast therefore  
in the liberty wherewith  
Christ hath made us free,  
and be not entangled again  
with the yoke of bondage”

(Gal. 5:1)

## **Class 1 – Introduction**

This little book of Galatians was the weapon in the hand of Martin Luther in his momentous battle against the perversion and power of the Roman Catholicism of the early 1500's. And with it he led a great, liberated throng out of "*the power of darkness*" and "*into the kingdom of His [God's] dear Son*". How many countless times before and since has this book been used of God in the deliverance of souls from the bondage of legalism and false religion. For described with greatest force within these few chapters is the wonder of our liberty from law in Jesus Christ. Herein is found the core doctrine of justification by faith, "*the righteousness of God without the law*", defended against many forms of perversion.

### **Background**

Galatia was a province in central Asia Minor. Apparently the name "Galatia" comes of a contraction of "Gaul" or Gallo and "Grecia", describing in a term the background of the population there. They were a people resulting from an earlier Gallic invasion (200's B.C.) combined with the resident Grecian population of central Asia Minor. As was also true of some of the other

provinces of the Roman Empire, the actual boundaries of Galatia tended to change occasionally and remain an uncertainty. Partly as a result of this, and also because we do not have enough direct information on the matter in the New Testament (N.T.), it is a disputed point whether these “*churches of Galatia*” (1:2) to whom Paul wrote were churches unknown to us and somewhere in northern Asia Minor as some suggest, or if these were in fact the churches we know, established by Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey to central Asia Minor (Antioch, Iconium, Derbe, & Lystra). These familiar churches of southern Galatia seem to have been the most likely target of Paul’s letter. Whether churches in north or south Galatia might affect the date of the writing but it would not affect the thrust of the message and is certainly nothing to wax passionate over. It has been left an uncertainty and therefore cannot be a point of great importance.

Paul began work among the people this epistle likely targets during his first missionary journey with Barnabas. He then visited the area again when passing through on his second missionary journey (Acts 15:41ff), delivering the letter of decision from the apostles concerning the matter of the law’s influence on the gospel (Acts 16:4). And then he

visited again on his third journey (Acts 18:23). At some point trouble arose among these churches of Galatia through the entrance of false teachers who combined the gospel with legalism, with aspects of the Law of Moses. These teachers are commonly referred to as “Judaizers” because of the Judaizing or Jewishizing result of their views on Christian teaching. Their impact on the churches of Galatia seemed on the verge of sweeping those believers from their grounding in the truth (1:6; 3:1). Word of this threat came to the Apostle Paul, giving rise to the writing of this epistle. Paul perhaps wrote while in Corinth on his 2<sup>nd</sup> missionary journey or when in Ephesus on his 3<sup>rd</sup>. The time and place of the writing is unknown, but it seems Paul wrote immediately upon hearing of the concern, for he demonstrates a burning passion and urgency.

Consider Satan’s very typical approach in these churches of Galatia. When the gospel first entered the region the attack of the evil one was physical and violent (Acts 13-14). At the height of it, through the influence of incensed Jews, Paul was stoned and left for dead at Lystra. But through the Lord’s miraculous aid, coupled with the courage and perseverance of Paul and Barnabas, this violent tack proved unsuccessful and churches were established in spite of the storm. So the evil one

then shifted from noisy hostility to quiet subtlety, sending legalistic Jewish teachers or Judaizers in after Paul's departure to cast doubt upon his authority, ministry, and message. Their purpose was not to directly deny the truth. This would be a bit too obvious. Their effort was rather only to add to God's truth, to mix in a dose of error. And where the rage of overt violence failed, the subtlety of covert falsehood proved much more successful. The evil one still finds this subtle approach quite useful. Rather than openly attacking the truth the more effective way is to infiltrate and adulterate with a clever mixture of reasonable sounding error, resulting in a sinister brew that looks, sounds, and smells Christian, but is in fact worlds apart from biblical Christianity!

The approach of Satan's infiltrators there was to teach a salvation through faith in Christ *plus* the addition of certain Jewish practices. It seems they taught that salvation is by faith...*partly!* Yet a measure of obedience to God as expressed in His Old Testament (O.T.) law is necessary as well to ensure or maintain or perfect that salvation. It was a message of salvation received by grace through faith, God's giving, yet maintained or finished by law, by man's keeping. Roman Catholicism is a variant on this Judaizer theme, adding their church

traditions to the equation of things ensuring salvation.

Note the evidence of the teachings of these evil emissaries;

- 1:6 – *“removed from...the grace of Christ”* – Any mixture of human works with divine grace is a departure from grace.
- 2:16 – *“a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ”* – Their view based man’s justification on his works in some measure.
- 3:2 – *“are ye now made perfect by the flesh?”* – They elevated the flesh to the ability to perfect a soul before God.
- 4:9-10 – *“how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years”* – Bondage to rites and rituals as a means to God’s pleasure was a key tenet of their beliefs.
- 4:21 – *“ye...desire to be under the law”* – They willingly put themselves under the Law of Moses as their taskmaster.
- 6:12 – *“they constrain you to be circumcised”* –

A sign of Israel's covenant relation to God intruding into church practice.

Note the references to the teachers;

- 1:7 – *“there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ”.*
- 3:1 – *“O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you?”*
- 4:17 – *“They zealously affect you, but not well; yea, they would exclude you, that ye might affect them”.*
- 5:10 – *“but he that troubleth you shall bear his judgment, whosoever he be”.*
- 5:12 – *“I would they were even cut off which trouble you”.*

## **Message**

Paul wrote to expose the false teachings of these legalists. From his very first words he affirmed both his own apostleship and the authenticity of his gospel, themes he underscores strongly, especially in the first two chapters. Through Paul's response we can perceive much of the message and method of the false teachers there in Galatia. It appears they attacked both the authority of the messenger

and the authenticity of his message. They poured scorn on Paul's good news of God's justification by grace through faith alone as insufficient. They demanded that more than only faith was required to receive the blessing of justification. They insisted there must be some adherence to the Law of Moses, circumcision at least (Acts 15:1-2). And toward their cause of elevating their own message over Paul's gospel they raised a question mark over the credibility of God's apostle as well. Who is this "Apostle" Paul? Is he an apostle of God as he claims? He never followed Jesus with the twelve. Who appointed him as such? Who does he think he is changing the time-honoured religion handed down from of old through Moses? Who gave him such authority? People were beginning to listen in the churches of Galatia, and so Paul wrote to confirm some things to their troubled hearts;

- That his claims concerning himself and his gospel were indeed true.
- That salvation or justification is *through faith plus nothing!* (2:16; 3:11, 24; 5:4).
- That keeping God's law plays no part in saving a soul or keeping one saved.
- That any mixture of law with the gospel is an assault upon grace.

- That only a life of liberty in Christ can generate the genuine fruits of the Spirit (chapter 5).

In this letter Paul writes in an extremely strong manner;

- His greeting was brusque and formal.
- He expressed no thanksgiving or appreciation for them compared to the evident warmth in his other epistles. Not that there was nothing in them worthy of appreciation, but that this was an emergency situation requiring the most urgent attention, all else aside.
- He immediately scolded their “*so soon*” defection from the truth (1:6).
- He was very evidently upset over the damage caused by the troublemakers;
  - o He hurled double anathemas at them (1:8-9).
  - o He wished mutilation upon them (5:12).
  - o He exposed their hidden motives (6:11-13).

There is the swirling of dark clouds over this book, with the flash of lightning and the angry rumble of

thunder as Paul fearlessly fought for the hearts of these believers. His love for them would not allow them to just go their own foolish way unchallenged.

## **Comparisons and Contrasts**

Such an interesting contrast exists between the message of this book of Galatians and that of the book of James. In many ways they are at two ends of the biblical spectrum, like two opposite sides of a scale balancing each other out. The message of James is lined up against that loose form of Christianity which insists that since I am saved by grace through faith it does not matter what I do after salvation. My works are not important. Concerning such antinomianism or lawless easy-believism James assures us that “*faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone*” (compare James 2:14-26). Galatians on the other hand lines up against the other extreme that says, “Sure a soul is saved by grace, but that salvation must then be *kept* and that soul *perfected* by the keeping of God’s law, by works of righteousness.” It is a salvation that is by faith plus something, some form of works. Galatians and James put side-by-side form the balanced N.T. teaching on the place of works in a faith salvation. “*Seest thou how faith wrought with his works?*” (James 2:22). Galatians affirms our freedom in

Christ. “*Christ is the end of the law [of any legal relation to God] for righteousness to every one that believeth*” (Rom. 10:4). Our “*hope of righteousness [is] by faith*” (Gal. 5:5). It is in fact termed “*the righteousness of faith*” alone (Rom. 4:13), a righteousness imputed to a believer rather than earned (Rom. 4:11). We cannot make ourselves the righteousness of God, we are “*made the righteousness of God in Him [Christ]*” (II Cor. 5:21). James then insists that though this be true, still we are bound by the royal law of love, and true faith will be moved to live by that law.

Galatians compares well in some respects to the book of Romans. In both books Paul emphasizes salvation and liberty from the law in Jesus Christ. Both books discuss the Jew/Gentile question and their common ground in the church. But Romans is a much calmer, fuller, broader shining forth of “*the faith once delivered unto the saints*”, while Galatians is a more intense burning beam, blazing at violated aspects of our “*so great salvation*”.

## **Outline**

The message of Galatians is rather obviously presented in three sections of two chapters each;

**Chapters 1-2** – An Authentic Message.

- Message and messenger are defended.

### **Chapters 3-4** – An Explained Message.

- Salvation by faith alone.

### **Chapters 5-6** – An Applied Message.

- Living in liberty.

## **Survey**

**Chapter 1** – Paul was apparently accused of being a man-pleaser, of preaching an easy salvation that redeems a man’s soul but not necessarily his lifestyle. Paul affirms that his gospel was given by direct revelation from God.

**Chapter 2** – Though Paul’s ministry and message were given directly from God they were approved by the apostles at Jerusalem as well. *“They gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship”* (vs. 9). Paul in fact even had to straighten out Peter (the *“Pillar”*, 2:9), rather than they needing to straighten Paul out.

**Chapter 3** – Here begins the doctrinal core of the book. This chapter contrasts faith and the law. Note the number of times the words *“faith”* and *“law”* are found. We find here as well much on the

purpose of the law in leading a soul to salvation by faith.

**Chapter 4** – An interesting illustration from Abraham, Sarah, Hagar, Ishmael, and Isaac;

- Abraham began with Sarah, even as God began with His chosen nation on the basis of His promise to Abraham (Gen. 12). Hagar was later added, even as the law was later added through Moses. So God began on the basis of faith in the promised son and then later added the law, which is according to man's doing.
- Ishmael through Hagar pictures an arm-of-flesh solution, a fleshly birth and effort by man's power and design. Even so law-keeping, an attempt to make ourselves righteous before God, brings only trouble and bondage.
- When the promised, miracle-born son, Isaac (Christ), at last came, that which was added (Hagar/Ishmael/law) was cast out.
- Isaac pictures spiritual birth by the miraculous power of God according to promise. Even so by faith in the promise of God in Christ we are "made the righteousness

*of God*", setting us free!

- As Ishmael persecuted Isaac, even so those under the law (Jews) persecute those justified freely by grace through faith.

**Chapter 5** – Essentially all of the commands applied to the reader in this book are found in chapters 5-6. Chapter 5 concerns the Christian life lived in the Spirit;

- In liberty from bondage to the law.
- In victory over the works of the flesh.
- According to the law of love, the one law now guiding us (5:13-14). Though we are free in Jesus Christ, yet the guiding principle of Christian liberty is genuine love for God and man.

We find a balance in this chapter between obedience to God's direct commands and our source of power in the Holy Spirit. Our sanctification (growth to spiritual maturity) is both by our own effort and the Spirit's working. Even as the priests must go forward by God's command until their feet were in the water on the brink of the flood and only *then* did the Lord provide the essential miracle of a dried up riverbed (Josh. 3). Even as Jesus commanded His

disciples of the hungry thousands in “*a desert place...give ye them to eat*” when it was not within their power to do so. When they managed to secure the donation of a little boy’s lunch, *then* came the multiplication miracle of their meagre effort. The one who says we must get up and do God’s work is right. The one who says that God’s work is all of God is equally right. It is yes, yes!

**Chapter 6** – Love applied in the service of struggling brothers (vs. 1-5).

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### **Contrasts in Chapters 5 & 6**

- Liberty and bondage (5:1).
- Standing in liberty and falling from grace (5:1-4).
- Liberty and license (5:13).
- Flesh and Spirit (5:17).
- Works of the flesh and fruit of the Spirit (5:18-23).
- Sowing to the flesh and sowing to the Spirit (6:8).

## **Class 2 – Galatians 1:1-17**

This book of Galatians is the fourth of Paul's four soteriological books (theme especially focused on salvation) with Romans and I & II Corinthians. Some 60% of Paul's writings are centred around this vital theme.

Galatians is an epistle of conflict. The Apostle Paul is on the attack from the first words, or perhaps we should say on the defence. He battles herein the doctrine or view that man can and must earn at least a part of his salvation by law obedience, defending the great doctrine of justification by faith. The false teaching Paul lines up against in this epistle was promoted by teachers coming into the Galatian churches after Paul passed through preaching the true gospel message. They were men who sought to marry the newer Christian teachings with the ancient Jewish religion. They attempted to lead the believers in the churches to "Judaize" or adopt a more Jewish manner of life or religion. Thus they have been termed "Judaizers". These teachers would have agreed with Paul on many points, particularly on the question of who Jesus Christ really is. They agreed that Jesus is the promised Messiah, perhaps even that He is God the Son. They agreed that Jesus rose from death and

that salvation is by faith in Him. But to this salvation, in the keeping of it, they added something else, some additional works. There is a world of difference between works demonstrating real faith and works completing faith. Their concern was that Paul taught the way imperfectly, partially, a cheap, easy form of admission into God's kingdom. In essence they actually held in their vision a lesser view of Jesus Christ's finished work on the cross. For the salvation Jesus freely offered they considered insufficient to deliver a believing soul to glory. From their perspective salvation could no more be considered an actual present possession than could a house on which one still owes a bond. There is still some payment to be made from our side before full transfer of ownership takes place.

Paul's approach from the outset is to insist that his appointment as an apostle was from God. He was no self-appointed impostor. And he as well insists that man's salvation is based squarely and solely upon the finished work of Jesus Christ.

## **Chapter 1**

### **1:1-5** – Greetings

Vs. 1 – "*Paul, an apostle*" – The title "apostle" means one who is sent. In the N.T. it took on the particular

*Gal 1:1 Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man,  
but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised  
him from the dead;)*

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meaning of that handful of men God especially gifted and gave for the founding of the early church (Eph. 2:20) and for the completion of the Bible. In this epistle Paul had good reason to assert his apostleship. As long as his authority remained beyond dispute his message was a force against the progress of false teaching. Thus the approach of false teachers to raise the question of Paul's appointment as "*an apostle*", suggesting he was perhaps a second-hand apostle at best, with a hand-me-down gospel. This Paul puts straight from his very first words.

*"Not of men, neither by man"* – His appointment was not sourced from human authority but from divine authority (compare vs. 12 on his message).

Do not miss the evident implication in Paul's opening words here. In a few words Paul assures his readers that his appointment is neither from men nor through a man and in the next he assures us that Jesus Christ was the One who did the appointing. Are you listening? Implied is the apostle's obvious assumption that Jesus is at least

*Gal 1:2 And all the brethren which are with me, unto the churches of Galatia:*

*Gal 1:3 Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ,*

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beyond mere humanity.

“*God the Father, who raised Him from the dead*” – Christ’s resurrection is that crowning miracle proving the Father’s acceptance of the Son and His sacrifice, proving Jesus to be the Messiah.

Vs. 2 – “*Unto the churches of Galatia*” – See anything peculiar here? In every other epistle of Paul some approving comment is made about the recipients at this point.

- Romans 1:7 – “*To all that be at Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints*”.
- I Corinthians 1:2 – “*Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints*”.
- Ephesians 1:1 – “*To the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus*”.

Here we find only a rather formal “*unto the churches of Galatia*”. No mention of the saved or sanctified condition of the readers. For here was a church at

*Gal 1:4 Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father:  
Gal 1:5 To whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

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a crucial turning point and Paul was in no mood for offering commendations. He was fighting for their spiritual well-being and had no time for pleasantries. Makes me wonder how God's apostle to the Gentiles would address our church if he were writing to us.

Vs. 4 – *“Who gave Himself for our sins”* – By their teaching the Judaizers diminished Christ's great sacrifice on the cross. No other conclusion can be drawn. If man's works are in any way necessary for salvation, then Christ's atoning work was insufficient (5:2). And if Christ's sacrifice is fully sufficient to secure a soul's salvation then every work of man for his atonement is of absolutely no effect! Therefore the point is highlighted even here as he opens. If there is still something yet to be paid then Jesus did not pay the whole price for our sin. It is not finished after all!

*“In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace” (Eph. 1:7).*

*Gal 1:6 I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel:*

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*“That He might deliver us”* – Behold what the law could never do *“in that it was weak through the flesh”* (Rom. 8:3), *“...from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses”* (Acts 13:39). Here is the whole purpose of *“God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh”*. The O.T. law is and always has been utterly impotent to accomplish any deliverance! It can only showcase man’s failure to keep it perfectly. Only Jesus brings deliverance.

### **1:6-10** – One Gospel Only.

Vs. 6 – *“I marvel”* – Paul hits the ground running and never even pausing to tip his hat. Here is the point where we might expect his customary expression of thanksgiving and prayer for his readers. But instead of “I give thanks” it is *“I marvel”!* To your shame I am surprised at you! Throughout Paul’s opening words his approach marks the urgency of his concern. As David, when confronting lion and bear busy ravaging the flock, would give no time to his usual cuddle and caress of the sheep, but ran straight to the work of attacking the threat to their safety. So Paul wades

right in here, as a warrior into the battle, wielding the weapon of his words, fighting for the preservation of truth and Christian liberty. His children in the faith, his Father's sheep were under attack, they were being led away to poison grass and no caring shepherd could stand idly by and do nothing. Praise God for the one who may not always give you praise when you want it, but who loves enough to plant himself firmly in the way of your waywardness, whether you like it or not.

What is especially striking here is the comparison with Paul's opening in his first epistle to the Corinthians. Though that was a church with deep moral defects and sporting all of the typically modern muddled view of spiritual gifts, yet Paul took time there to express his thanks for God's grace and gifts to them (I Cor. 1:4-5). How much more serious this doctrinal error must be than we tend to view it? It seems this error, though common among modern charismatics, is far more serious than their confusion over gifts. To deny the truth of eternal security, that once one is saved he cannot lose his salvation, is to deny a salvation that is all of God. It is to believe that our salvation is kept through our own ability or righteousness. A truly urgent concern in Paul's (God's) estimation!

*“That ye are so soon removed”* – As fickle and unstable and changeable as these Galatians were at the first, turning from worship to murder in a day (Acts 14:6-19), so the same trait comes through in their readiness to “so soon” turn again from truth back to error. We must look well to our own ways. For the old tendencies, the grave clothes of our pre-salvation life, still tend to cling to us though we have been washed in Christ’s blood.

*“Ye are...removed from Him that called you into the grace of Christ”* – In their determination to return to some practice of the law they were not just making a safe little addition, just in case these new teachers were right. They were actually denying the efficacy of Christ’s deliverance. *“Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by law”* (5:4). It is like a toggle switch. It cannot be both ways at the same time. It is like adultery. To receive the 2<sup>nd</sup> partner is to deny the 1<sup>st</sup> or the exclusive rights of the 1<sup>st</sup>. It is to proclaim the 1<sup>st</sup> insufficient. Understand how vital the difference between a religion of merit (earned) and a religion of grace (received). To trust God only for a part of it is the very essence of unbelief! And such unbelief carries with it the scathing curse of God! There are only two ways to be saved;

- Keep the law, *all of it!* This option is of course

a door closed to us by our sin.

- Accept the free gift of salvation Christ offers through the cross.

Notice as well that they were in fact removing themselves “*from Him that called you*”. Their desertion was not merely from some hair-splitting system of theology, but from God Himself. This is always the real issue. Our purpose must be to please our God, both in our beliefs and practices. Those who deny the value of doctrine since it brings division to the church do not know what they are talking about. When one departs from God’s word and way, he departs *from God!* And from such departers the godly are wise to depart.

“*Unto another gospel*” – Suggesting that the Judaizers also referred to their message as the “gospel”, though theirs would be presented as a corrected gospel, a “full” gospel, one that did not “leave out” anything God meant to include.

Vs. 7 – “*Which is not another*” – There is a bit of a word play here, lost in the English translation. “*Another*” in vs. 6 & 7 are different words in the original Greek behind the English. In vs. 6 it is *heteros*, expressing a qualitative difference, another of a different kind. In vs. 7 it is *allos*, expressing

*Gal 1:7 Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.*

*Gal 1:8 But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.*

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quantitative difference, another of the same kind. So Paul is saying, “You have removed yourselves to another gospel of a different kind, which is not another of the same kind”. He speaks not of another gospel of a similar nature to the true, but of a “gospel” so very different that it had no right to the term “gospel”. For it was no gospel at all! It was and is a perverted gospel, something entirely different. It is “the gospel of man” in contrast to “*the gospel of Christ*”. Either it is a message of a salvation entirely out of man’s reach and thus a free gift, or it is attainable or sustainable by man, robbing Christ’s great sacrifice of its true greatness.

Vs. 8-9 – “*Though we, or an angel from heaven*” – No matter who or how great the human messenger might be. Though it even be “*an angel*”, a being with greater might and magnificence than any man, and seemingly a good one “*from heaven*”.

“*Let him be accursed*” – The term in the Greek is *anathema*. As Jericho was handled in the conquest of Canaan, the idea is of someone or something

*Gal 1:9 As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.*

*Gal 1:10 For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.*

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devoted or delivered to God for complete destruction, utterly beyond man's power to help. Indeed "*it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God*" (Heb. 10:31). The supreme confidence Paul demonstrates here displays his clear awareness that he was "*moved by the Holy Ghost*" in relaying his gospel to man, and that God would not be making any changes in it.

Vs. 10 – "*Do I seek to please men?*" – Paul's point in these early chapters is that he was no man's man, and his message was no man's message. Apparently the other side was suggesting that Paul was diminishing the full gospel to an easier more comfortable or conciliatory message in an effort to accommodate the Gentiles who cared nothing about the Law of Moses. Such an accusation Paul denied. Men-pleasers do not hurl anathemas! He obviously was not out to please those carrying a false gospel. Paul's account in chapter 2 of rebuking Peter will demonstrate the same. In his closing comments he will in fact expose the Judaizers as the true

*Gal 1:11 But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man.*

*Gal 1:12 For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.*

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accommodators (6:12-13).

Vs. 11-12 – In these verses we find the formal statement of Paul’s theme in these early chapters. His gospel message as well as his ministry was from God Himself. Therefore any changes or “corrections” to what he had delivered suggested it was God who was in need of correction. This the Muslim proposes to do as well, attempting to foist his Koran onto the world, what he calls “the Last Testament”. As if it were the completion of God’s Old and New Testaments. As if Mohammed’s denials and replacements of the true words of God are some latter-day correction of God’s previous words. The Book of Mormon is another example of the same twisted effort to usurp God’s truth with lying perversions. *“Let him be accursed”!*

### **1:13-24** – Paul’s Personal Testimony.

Paul now reviews the history of how the gospel came to him in demonstrating that what he received could only be from God. In the process he gives the three

*Gal 1:13 For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it:*

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elements of a good personal testimony; his life before salvation, his salvation experience, and his life after salvation.

Vs. 13-14 – Pre-salvation. In those early days Paul was quite successful in persecuting saints and destroying the church. This effort was clearest evidence of his absolute commitment to the religion of the Jews in that era of his life, and of his determined resolve to crush Christianity as well. In touching “*the church of God*” Paul was touching the God of the church. None can do so without being touched by God. In the Acts accounts of Paul’s testimony it becomes evident that God’s people, both men and women, were tortured, killed, and scattered from Jerusalem (Acts 20:4). This served as more help than hurt to God’s cause in scattering the seed of the gospel to the four winds. Persecution has never succeeded in silencing true Christianity. Its only success is in separating false and fair-weather Christians from among the true saints.

Vs. 14 – “*And profited in the Jews’ religion*” – Paul was a brilliant young prodigy rising quickly among

*Gal 1:14 And profited in the Jews' religion above many  
my equals in mine own nation, being more  
exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers.*

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the ranks of the Pharisees in those earlier days. He was inwardly driven to be the very best he could be in his “*exceedingly zealous*” protection and promotion of the Jewish religion. Far from any kind of questioning doubter with hesitant misgivings about his religion, Paul was utterly sold-out to “*the traditions of my fathers*” in those days, waxing rather than waning in the promotion of such.

Now one obvious result of such well-known history was that none could accuse Paul of ignorance of the law of God and traditions of the Jews. He knew such things better than the Judaizers themselves. Yet though thoroughly versed and so completely committed he purposely set the law and traditions aside for the gospel.

*“But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested...even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe”* (Rom. 3:20-21).

Vs. 15-16 – Salvation.

*“But...God”* – Then came Paul’s most stunning

*Gal 1:15 But when it pleased God, who separated me  
from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace,*

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about-face on the Damascus road when Jesus Christ Himself intervened in the life of this man. Praise God there is a “*But God*” with all of us who have found Jesus as Saviour.

Another important point becomes obvious here. If a man so utterly dedicated to the destruction of Christianity, so fanatically prejudiced against it, and on the rise in the intensity of his expression of this consuming devotion, could within a matter of days turn right around to become one of Christ’s greatest promoters, then obviously only a genuine work of God could explain such a stunning transformation. Do you see how Paul points to his history as confirmation of God’s direct involvement and transforming power upon him? In his sudden, remarkable about-face he went from supreme persecutor to sold-out preacher, from chief hater of the church to supreme lover of God and His people, even from staunch despiser of the Gentiles to loving minister to the same. He could never have made such sweeping changes in his own strength. This could never be attributed to the work of mere human influence. Paul’s history affirms that he was neither converted nor commissioned through men.

And it follows that he would naturally be proclaiming the same essential truths that so transformed his own heart and life. He preached from personal experience of God's transforming power.

Paul speaks of three things God did for him;

- Separated from birth. Literally “set apart”. A reference to God's electing love. Perhaps contrasting Paul's previous existence as a Pharisee, a name meaning “separate” or “separatist”. God separated the separatist to something better and set him apart for his special work.
- Called by His grace to salvation and service. The correlation of God's election and call with the evident freedom of human responsibility is like Agur's comment on “*the way of an eagle in the air*” (Prov. 30:18-19). It is “*too wonderful for me*”, and for you too.
- Revealed His Son (vs. 16). The outward revelation of Jesus on the Damascus road was followed by the inward revelation of the full significance of Christ in His glory, grace, and purity. This apparently took place in Arabia. Perhaps close to Sinai, which would have been a fitting place to answer law with

*Gal 1:16 To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood:*

*Gal 1:17 Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus.*

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grace.

Vs. 16 – “*That I might preach Him among the heathen*” – Here was God’s purpose from the beginning for Paul. That he would be a preacher and to the Gentiles. And that the theme of his message would be “*Him*”, Jesus Christ. Both ministry and message given by God.

Thus the master wolf became master shepherd. Persecutor turned preacher. Eliminator became evangelist. The great faith destroyer became the great faith defender. He who was once so consumed with a salvation through works of the law understood like few others the grave danger of the faith-twisting false doctrine of salvation by human merit. Paul understood how such falsehood mingled in would entangle and deform true Christianity, undermining its power.

Vs. 16ff – Post-salvation. The Judaizers probably claimed that Paul must have had extensive training

by the Apostles at Jerusalem. But to such a suggestion Paul affirmed that he was three years in Damascus and Arabia before his first brief visit to Jerusalem (1:18; Acts 9:26-29). Then he was eleven years in Tarsus and Syria (Antioch) before his second visit to Jerusalem (2:1; Acts 11:30). The point is that his message came from heaven, not from Jerusalem. Paul's conversion, coaching, and commission owed nothing to man.

## Class 3 – Galatians 1:18-2:10

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*Gal 1:18 Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days.*

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We left Paul in our last class in the middle of relating his personal testimony in chapter 1. In vs. 13-14 he spoke of his infamous pre-salvation life. In vs. 15-16 he related his famous salvation experience on the Damascus road. And then from the end of vs. 16 Paul began to review the order of events following his salvation. He was not taught of man but of God during a period of 3 years while in Damascus and Arabia. Only after those crucial foundational years of Paul's Christian life when the Lord revealed His gospel to him did he go up for a brief visit to Jerusalem. The point is that he was preaching God's gospel before he ever saw any of the apostles in Jerusalem. This he related to counter what the false, Judaizing teachers were teaching about him in the churches of Galatia.

Vs. 18 – “*To see Peter*” – His purpose in going up to Jerusalem was not to receive instruction, but for a friendly visit. He wanted “*to see*” or get acquainted with Peter. Paul knew of Peter because he had early become the key church spokesman after Christ's

ascension. Peter was;

- The preacher in Acts 2 after the Spirit's coming.
- The one healing the lame man at the temple in Acts 3 and following up with a sermon to the intrigued crowd.
- The one "*filled with the Holy Ghost*" to answer the interrogating Jewish leaders in Acts 4 & 5. Paul may very well have been there on those occasions.

Paul did not go to Jerusalem to compare notes with Peter, though certainly some such expression of their experiences with Christ would have been shared with each other then. Paul was there to get to know that one so central to the cause of Christ in that day and place. Paul's point is that his visit with Peter for fifteen days was too brief for him to be instructed by Peter. It was much less significant in shaping his views than those 3 years at the feet of Jesus in the wilderness. Luke adds to the record that during those few days in Jerusalem Paul was busy preaching "*in the name of the Lord Jesus*" and debating with the Grecian Jews (Acts 9:28-29). More teacher than learner while there. More master than neophyte. And Luke explains then the situation arising where Paul was forced to an

*Gal 1:19 But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother.*

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immediate departure because of the efforts to kill him (Acts 9:29-30), just as had developed in Damascus. It is an obvious assumption that during such a two week period Peter and the other leaders in Jerusalem would have had some opportunity to discover where Paul was in his views and to offer corrections if it were deemed necessary. But there is no suggestion of any offered corrections either in Dr. Luke's or Paul accounting of his visit. In fact Peter later applied his public stamp of approval to Paul's writings and teachings in his own final words to the church in II Peter 3:15-16, testifying of Paul writing his epistles "*according to the wisdom given unto him*" and putting his writings on a par with "*the other Scriptures*".

Vs. 19 – "*James the Lord's brother*" – It seems this was the James;

- Who was commonly known as "James the Just", the half-brother of Jesus.
- Who had become the pastor of the Jerusalem church (Acts 15).
- Who was not one of the 12 apostles. Christ's

*Gal 1:20 Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not.*

*Gal 1:21 Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia;*

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half brothers and sisters did not believe on Him before His resurrection (Matt. 12:46; Mk. 6:3; Jn. 7:3-5).

- Who was the author of the N.T. book of James.

It may be that one of Paul's particular interests in his 1<sup>st</sup> Jerusalem visit was to learn of Jesus, both from one of His main followers and from one having grown up in the same home.

Vs. 20 – Paul's solemn vow of the truth of these things implies that some were raising question over the same, perhaps suggesting he had spent years under the instruction of the apostles at Jerusalem. The possibility of doubt in the minds of some in Galatia raised the necessity of Paul's vow.

Vs. 21 – *“The regions of Syria and Cilicia”* – Luke relates that Paul was escorted to Caesarea and from there was sent on to Tarsus in the province of Cilicia (Acts 9:30), where Barnabas later found him (Acts 11:25-26). While there during the following decade

*Gal 1:22 And was unknown by face unto the churches of  
Judea which were in Christ:*

*Gal 1:23 But they had heard only, That he which  
persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith  
which once he destroyed.*

*Gal 1:24 And they glorified God in me*

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Paul was separated completely from any influence of the apostles. He was then active for some time in the ministry at Antioch of Syria.

Vs. 22-24 – Through this time the churches of Judea knew Paul only by reputation, rejoicing in the power and grace of God in His dealing with that one they once feared. The point here is that Paul held the approval of the wider body of churches ranging out from Jerusalem. The believers of Judea knew him for one who “*preacheth the faith*”, not one who preached a twisted, half-way gospel. There was no check in their spirits or opposition to Paul’s manner or message. They only “*glorified God*” for His evident work in this once great persecutor turned preacher. Paul demonstrates to the Galatian believers that those Judaizing false teachers were in fact the odd ones out in their assessment of Paul. The believers of Judea did not agree with them.

Vs. 23 – “*Now preacheth the faith*” – This term “*the faith*” commonly refers to that body of doctrine

received by faith in Jesus Christ (Acts 6:7; Jude 3; I Tim. 3:9; 5:8; 6:10, 21; II Tim. 4:7). This body of truth incorporates all of the N.T. teaching bundled together with the gospel. Faith is the central characteristic of the whole, and Jesus Christ is the central object of our faith.

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## **On the Side**

Paul made a great point of the fact that he had received no qualification from man. He had nothing from the apostles, those recognized authorities on the truth of Christ and His ministry and message. Consider how in our modern world a man might tend to take quite the opposite tack to Paul's here. He might be more inclined to proudly display his qualification by the certificates signed by recognized men and hanging on his office wall. He might tend to wear such qualifications before others like emblems of rank tagged onto the tail end of his name. But what Paul had that really mattered he had received from Jesus Christ, through His words. Paul underscores the point that authority in relation to spiritual things does not come through men but from God Himself. Though in our modern world men feel they must be qualified through proper training from qualified men, this approach of

*Gal 2:1 Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also.*

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seeking human recognition is not according to the pattern of either Jesus or the apostles.

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## **Chapter 2**

**2:1-10** – Paul’s Gospel & Authority Affirmed.

In another visit to Jerusalem over a decade later Paul’s gospel was approved by the church leaders in Jerusalem. At the same time his apostleship to the Gentiles was recognized as on a par with Peter’s gift and commission to the Jews. Paul’s point in this portion is that when finally presenting to the apostles the gospel he was preaching no corrections or additions were made. Instead his message was readily recognized and he received from James, Peter, and John the handshake of fellowship.

Vs. 1 – *“Fourteen years after”* his salvation at Damascus it seems, eleven years from his first visit to Jerusalem.

*“I went up again to Jerusalem”* – It is unclear

whether this visit was when Barnabas and Paul were sent from Antioch in Acts 11 (vs. 30), or perhaps when they went up in Acts 15 to confirm answers over the same doctrinal dispute the churches of Galatia were facing. The timing and context seems to point to the latter. His earlier visit in Acts 11 was for the purpose of bringing a relief offering to those who were suffering poverty in the Jerusalem church. It seems Paul discounted this visit since it had nothing to do with doctrinal matters, but was purely a mission of mercy.

*“With Barnabas”* – Barnabas was that caring “son of comfort”, as his name means, who collected Paul from Tarsus and introduced him to ministry at Antioch. He was a man gifted of the Lord in teaching, counselling, and encouragement who later joined Paul on their 1<sup>st</sup> missionary journey to Cyprus and Galatia. The mention of his name here was appropriate in that Paul’s readers knew Barnabas well.

*“And took Titus with me also”* – Titus was apparently led to Christ by Paul, perhaps during the days of his ministry in Antioch. Along with Timothy and a few others, Titus became one of Paul’s most trusted, life-long companions and co-workers. Throughout the years of Paul’s ministry we see Titus involved in

*Gal 2:2 And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain.*

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the work at Ephesus, Corinth (II Cor. 12:18), Macedonia (II Tim. 4:10), and on the island of Crete (Titus 1:5). He apparently spent the remainder of his days in ministry for the Lord on Crete and was buried there.

Vs. 2 – *“I went up by revelation”* – Paul was directed by God to this visit in some unknown manner, this revelation confirming his commission by the church at Antioch. In a similar way he, with Barnabas, was later sent by both the Spirit and the church when called to their first missionary journey in Acts 13.

*“Communicated unto them that gospel which I preach”* – The gospel Paul presented at Jerusalem was of course the same he expounded to the churches through his epistles, the message of salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, God’s gracious gift of justification to a soul quite apart from works of the law, and this offered freely and equally to all men, both Jew and Gentile alike. The Judaizers on the other hand taught the need for Gentiles to add circumcision to their faith as a sign

of their covenant relation to God followed by some measure of keeping of the Law of Moses.

*“But privately to them which were of reputation”* – It was right and proper for Paul to take his views privately to the approved leaders first, allowing them the opportunity to either affirm, correct, or condemn as they saw fit. Paul’s purpose for this visit is stated here. He was at that point seeking the affirmation of *“them which were apostles before”* him. Not because he was in any way unsure of himself or of the revelation he had received, but because of the nature of the whole Jew-Gentile, old-new covenant issue, and the need to present a united front in the taking of the message to the world. It was perhaps something like two parents agreeing together in their position on some matter in order to avoid being manipulated. It seems it was the Lord who was guiding Paul to attaining this assurance at that time, knowing that He was about to thrust Paul and Barnabas further out into the Gentile world. There was danger that the scattering of the gospel to the world could be disrupted by this serious dispute between a free salvation by grace through faith and the inclusion (intrusion!) of the Mosaic Law. The foundational church must be wholly agreed on the message they were carrying.

*Gal 2:3 But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised:*

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Acts 15 gives the context to these events. Men had come to Antioch from Judea teaching, “*except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved*” (Acts 15:1). But these “*certain men*” ran right into Paul and Barnabas there, and there arose “*no small dissension and disputation with them*”. The result of which was the famous 2<sup>nd</sup> church council at Jerusalem to settle this dispute.

Vs. 3 – Titus “*being a Greek*” was not “*compelled to be circumcised*” – Titus constituted a test case, and was perhaps brought along for precisely that purpose. Would the need of circumcision be pressed upon him, after having come to salvation in Christ? And with the test of circumcision was implied other aspects of the keeping of the law, either for the receiving or keeping of salvation. But that important church council denied the need to press such requirements upon one such as Titus, and Paul’s position on Christian liberty was upheld there against his Judaizing opponents. The only suggestions made and sent out to the churches from that key council are given in Acts 15 (vs. 29). If a believer would do right by God and others he must abstain from;

- *“Meats offered to idols”* – Paul later qualified this. There was only need to abstain when someone made an issue of having so offered the meat (I Cor. 10:27-28). Eating such offered meats was not a wrong in itself. The only concern was in the testimony to others, that we imply no tacit approval of idolatry.
- Eating blood or *“things strangled”*.
- Fornication.

The first two seem to relate particularly to matters of testimony, that the practices of believing Gentiles not be offensive to believing Jews. Not acts of evil in themselves, but that each should be mindful of others, that saved Gentiles be willing to abstain from things that violate Jewish scruples (Rom. 14).

*“It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak”* (Rom. 14:21).

*“Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God”* (I Cor. 10:32).

Paul’s circumcision of Timothy was on this basis; *“Because of the Jews which were in those quarters: for they knew all that his father was a Greek”* (Acts 16:3). Apparently because Timothy’s mother was a

*Gal 2:4 And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage:*

*Gal 2:5 To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.*

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Jew it was important in that context that he be circumcised to avoid offence. No thought of completing salvation or pleasing God thereby was involved.

Vs. 4 – In these “*false brethren*” slyly creeping into the Christian congregation Paul likely refers to the likes of the “*certain men*” they had wrangled with at Antioch, who taught the need of circumcision in order to be saved. Paul does not even allow that they were saved men, but that they were “*false*” in their claim to be “*brethren*”. These crept in to spy on Christians in their freedoms and to lead them back into the bondage of the law.

Vs. 5 – Not for one minute did they yield to the demands of such false teachers, lest anything short of “*the truth of the gospel might continue with you*”; that justification is by faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ, not by works of the law, that “*ye are complete in Him*” fully by virtue of being “*in Him*”.

*Gal 2:6 But of these who seemed to be somewhat,  
(whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me:  
God accepteth no man's person:) for they who seemed  
to be somewhat in conference added nothing to me:*

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It is our calling, as it was for these earlier church leaders, that we also hold “*the faith...once delivered unto the saints*”. We as they must also earnestly contend against every effort of error to encroach upon the truth of God’s word and way in order that the precise message of the gospel may in no way be hindered in its progress through our generation and into the next.

Vs. 6 – “*These who seemed to be somewhat*” – Paul’s consistent term for the church leaders at Jerusalem was “*those seeming*” to be something (vs. 2, 6, 9). He would not concede that they actually *were* anything special among men. It is not that he would look down his nose at God’s apostles. It is that he was in no way in awe of any man, for “*God accepteth no man’s person*” (lit. “face”). This was no *negative* attitude toward these men but a *neutral* one. Human fame or reputation or rank or beauty does not touch God or affect His responses, neither would Paul allow such to touch him. No man is any more than another.

*Gal 2:7 But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter;*  
*Gal 2:8 (For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles:)*

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*“Added nothing to me”* – The apostolic leadership at Jerusalem suggested no alteration in Paul’s gospel message.

Vs. 7-9 – *“But contrariwise”* – On the contrary rather than *altering* Paul’s gospel and commission they *affirmed* it. They acknowledged that just as Peter was called of God as an apostle to the Jews so Paul was called as an apostle to the Gentiles. Paul’s authority, power, and commission were on an equal par with the apostles, though directed differently. *“The right hands of fellowship”* of the church leaders marked their vote of confidence and public recognition of this.

*“The gospel of the uncircumcision”* – Not that Peter never preached to Gentiles. He was in fact the man God used to open the door to Gentile inclusion at the house of Cornelius (Acts 10).

*“The gospel of the circumcision”* – Not two different gospels, but the one and only gospel sent in two

*Gal 2:9 And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision.*

*Gal 2:10 Only they would that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do.*

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differing directions. And again, not that Paul never preached to Jews. He in fact usually began in the synagogue of a city. But their callings speak of the main thrust of their mission.

Vs. 10 – “*Remember the poor*” – This likely related particularly to the poor saints in Jerusalem and Judea. For the Lord was busy turning blessing to cursing upon that nation who murdered their Messiah, which would ultimately result in their city and nation destroyed and scattered beginning in 70 A.D. Life for believers was difficult under such circumstances as well. It is right and appropriate within the family of God for those with much to care for those struggling with little.

## Class 4 – Galatians 2:11-21

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*Gal 2:11 But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed.*

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### **2:11-21** – Paul’s Authority in His Rebuke of Peter.

Vs. 11 – “*When Peter was come to Antioch*” – Antioch in Syria, about 500 kms north of Jerusalem, became the centre of the Gentile church after the Christians were scattered from Jerusalem through persecution (Acts 11:19). In a sense Paul, in the rabid rage of his unsaved state, had much to do with the founding of that church at Antioch. Thus there is a touch of irony in this church becoming the starting place of his ministry, and the church from which he was sent out to the world. Sometime after Paul had begun ministry in Antioch certain men came down from Jerusalem teaching that believers in Jesus must be circumcised to be saved (Acts 15:1). Paul and Barnabas took up the dispute with these men insisting their view was false (vs. 2). The result of it was that Paul and Barnabas were sent by the Antioch church to Jerusalem seeking clarity on the question. A full meeting was called there generating a great deal of discussion on the matter. Peter stood and reminded them how the Lord used

him to open the door to the inclusion of Gentiles into salvation and the Spirit's indwelling (Acts 10), no circumcision or law-keeping was suggested by the Spirit then. Paul and Barnabas then testified to the council of how greatly and evidently the Lord had worked with them in reaching Gentiles for Christ out in Galatia, yet again without involving any form of law-keeping. God's work through them was all and only through faith in Jesus Christ. And so those church leaders agreed and confirmed together in that great church council that salvation is *by grace alone through faith alone*, the gift of God not of works. They composed a brief letter to be sent from the Jerusalem church to the Gentile churches stating their decree and encouraging the Gentile believers in some practices to be avoided as well. Not actions to followed in order to *be* saved but *because* they were saved and changed and wanted to be a blessing to the Lord and His church; guidelines encouraging the Gentile believers away from the world's defilement and from offending their Jewish brothers. Avoiding both involvement with the world and offence to the church is the Spirit's way for us.

Though for the church the question was settled there that day, it was far from a settled issue with many. For Paul is found fighting this false view that

combines law with grace throughout the years of his missionary career. And still to this day he fights the same truth twist through his writings. These “Judaizers” hounded his footsteps from city to city and have hounded him down through the age, always attempting to distort God’s true gospel message of salvation by faith, always seeking to undermine Paul’s authority as God’s apostle and spokesman. If the evil one cannot *stop* the missionary or message then he seeks to *pervert* both message and attitude toward messenger. These efforts Paul seeks to counter in this epistle.

After the happy news of decisions in that 2<sup>nd</sup> great church council at Jerusalem reached Antioch all returned to normal with Paul & Barnabas continuing their ministry there for a time before later heading out on the next missionary journey. It was apparently during this time, some months later, that an unfortunate event took place. Paul now gives the record of it from vs. 11 of Galatians 2. He tells of a visit from Peter who came down from Jerusalem to Antioch, a visit that resulted in more debate.

*“I withstood him to the face”* – Paul ended up in Peter’s face, nose to nose with him.

*Gal 2:12 For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision.*

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“*Because he was to be blamed*” – Because what Peter did there was worthy of blame.

Vs. 12 – When Peter first arrived in Antioch he conducted himself wholly according to the spirit of that Jerusalem decision. He did freely “*eat with the Gentiles*” without any apparent concern and in a happy spirit of unity. Compare Acts 10:10-20, 48. But when other Jewish believers then arrived from the church at Jerusalem, strangely Peter “*withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision*”. He was *afraid* he would face scorn from his Jewish brothers, for the old rule was that Jews did not associate with Gentiles on a friendly basis, certainly not to eat with them (Acts 11:2-3). So Peter pulled away and would not eat with the Gentile believers anymore, forgetting God’s command to him, “*What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common*” (Acts 10:15). It is another little window into how very deeply this attitude of the Jews toward the Gentiles was entrenched. Peter probably did this subtly, quietly. But Paul did not miss it! Nor did the other Jews who followed

*Gal 2:13 And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation.*

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Peter's lead. Nor did Paul fail to chase through the implications of Peter's actions. At the very least Peter was implying two bodies in Christ, Jew/Gentile, them/us, opposing what Paul would later express in Ephesians 2:11-19 of the unity within Christ's body.

Vs. 13 – *“Other Jews dissembled likewise with him”* – Here is the heartache of our wrong choices. Others of the Jewish believers were influenced by Peter's actions as well. Men who had been there at the Jerusalem council. Men who should have known better. *Even Barnabas* was drawn in; the one least likely to be so moved away on this score, that caring companion of Paul in ministry to the Gentile world, that Son of Comfort, that one who had fought with Paul against the Judaizers in Antioch, who had taken the matter with him to the Jerusalem church, who had joined him in testifying there. In fact, Peter had contributed his testimony at that council as well. It speaks to us of the power of our example and of the effective influence of a crowd, whether for right or wrong. I think of the heartache of Rebekah's example leading Jacob to

deception. Jacob's sons later followed in the same to multiplied heartache and shame through the following decades. As Jacob was led to lie to his Dad so his sons did the same to him. Let not precedent be your guide but God's words. Do not blindly follow the actions of respected predecessors. Be wise to check all, even the most notable examples, against the perfect standard of God's Word. Think through the implications of your actions. Are they consistent with your words, with what is right? For our example has the power to "*compel*" others. Consider that;

- When in the name of "friendship evangelism" you fail to get the gospel across in words, you imply no urgency. Friendship evangelism often ends up meaning no evangelism. With concerns as crucial as eternity it is better to err on the side of offence than over-caution.
- When your Christianity does not change your life the unsaved conclude "why bother?" They know their music is dirty, their jokes sick, their cursing wrong, their booze ruinous, their worry deadly, their bitter anger ugly, their dark depression a dead end. If you partake of the same you imply that you have nothing better to offer. If you display nothing better you create no hunger in them for the

wonder of what you have found in Christ.  
When they say;

- You cannot get along with your spouse either.
- You speed like the wind too.
- You have no regard for the laws of the land either.
- You are a racist like the rest of us.

Then your blade is dulled to the point of cutting nothing, shaping nothing. Oh that they may see our good works and glorify our Father in heaven.

*“Carried away”* – As if situation and celebrity overcame sense and sound judgment, and picked them up and carried them off captive.

*“Dissembled...dissimulation”* – The term in the Greek is that from which we get our English word hypocrisy. They were denying in their practice what they had publicly claimed to believe, and in so doing they were acting with hypocrisy and inconsistency. Their actions were against what the church had together discerned the Spirit to be saying. Thus they moved against church and Spirit in this response. And all out of fear of each other, of what

others might think. Fear of men! Proverbs warns that “*the fear of men bringeth a snare*” (29:25).

Consider how this is the same inclination earlier seen in Peter. Though he was a man so often so impulsive and bold, yet the sin which did so easily beset Peter was this tendency toward the timid fear of men. Alford said of Peter, “Ever the first to recognize, and the first to draw back from the great truths”. Compare King Saul’s fearful responses in I Samuel 13 & 15, his fear of men forcing his disobedience to God.

Again there is warning here that the tendencies of our old, pre-salvation ways are still in us. In moments of weakness these can so easily pop out into expression. Peter was like some double-tongued preachers;

- Fearing people, parishioners, and peers.
- Acting or preaching one way when with some and differently when with others.
- Moved by people more than principle.

We too must ever beware of denying in practice what we would claim publicly to be true. The reality of hell *must* breathe urgency into our witness, if we believe it. The reality of judgment *must* instil purity,

*Gal 2:14 But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?*

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honesty, and integrity into our lives. A true Bible *must* be in our heads and hearts and ever on our tongues, if we believe it. My soul actually and forever in God's hand *must* breed everlasting joy in my outlook. By this we see that beliefs *and* life must line up or rebuke is due.

Vs. 14 – *“They walked not uprightly”* – *“Uprightly”* is literally “straight-footed”. They were not walking a straight course, but were veering into a forbidden side track or rabbit trail.

*“Before all”* – Paul spoke to Peter publicly because his crooked leadership was public. Do you see Paul boldly standing there alone from a human perspective? Not even Barnabas siding him this time. But Paul feared no man. What Peter might seem to be before other men meant nothing to him (vs. 6). He feared none but God. And he loved the church too much to leave Peter's actions unchallenged. His words were strong, though neither harsh nor rude nor angry. Praise God for men like this, standing even alone against the tide.

Standing in the courage of their convictions. Paul risked making lifelong enemies of good friends. But the lasting friendship of the wise is not put at risk by fair reproof. II Peter 3:18 confirms that Paul did not lose a friend in Peter, certainly not in the long term. And do not miss the fact that we are not even told Peter's response here, or that of those following his lead. As if to underscore the point that response does not matter. The crucial issue is that Paul was standing firmly on the platform of right and was right to speak as he did. Some there might have accused Paul at this point of stirring trouble and disrupting the peace. Fear of a split might have kept his mouth closed. But it was Peter who was causing a split. Rebuke and repentance and return to right were the only path to continued peace.

Consider Paul's way and example in his rebuke;

- Rebuke must be spoken with frankness "*to the face*" of the offender or to one who is responsible.
- Rebuke must be as public or private as was the crime (I Tim. 5:20).
- Rebuke must not be partial or with respect of persons. Even those "*who seemed to be pillars*", strong Christians who have been in Christ longer than you, can be wrong and

need rebuke when in the wrong. Paul's reproof touched his own good friend, Barnabas, as well.

- Rebuke must be without fear of the potential consequences.
- Rebuke must be clear and specific and straightforward. Beating around the bush only introduces confusion.
- Rebuke should be without much hesitation.
- Rebuke should arise out of an evident tender love.

*“Faithful are the wounds of a friend”* (Prov. 17). David said, *“Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me: it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head”* (Ps. 141:5). Remember that beautiful scene depicted in Proverbs of *“apples of gold in pictures [settings] of silver”,* or *“as an earring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold”,* describing the beauty of the *“fitly spoken”* words of *“a wise reprover upon an obedient ear”* (Prov. 25:11-12). Again Paul shows that he was no man's man, and his message was no man's message.

*“Why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the*

*Jews?*” – The phrase here “*to live as do the Jews*” is literally to judaize in the Greek behind the English. If Peter, though Jewish, had left off life according to O.T. law, why was he now implying by his actions that Gentiles are 2<sup>nd</sup> rate citizens in the kingdom? Why was he giving the tacit impression that Gentile believers in some way fell short of the level of believing Jews? In so doing he was forcing the Gentiles to think in terms of something else, something additional for salvation or for fullest fellowship.

Consider the fact that from the moment of Peter’s blunder here and fall again to fear, the record of his active involvement fades in the Acts account, and focus swings to Paul. Perhaps in a measure opportunity for Peter was lost in his fall again to fear? “*My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation*” (James 3:1). Peter was a natural leader among men. But he was without the clear, consistently fearless resolve of Paul.

Paul in the remaining verses of this chapter goes on to explain that it is not just a question of Christian liberties. It is not just a matter of bearing with the infirmities of others that we not be an offence and not allow them to be one either. But the very

*Gal 2:15 We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles,*

*Gal 2:16 Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.*

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essence of the gospel is at stake in this. Are Gentiles to judaize or be compelled “*to live as do the Jews*”? Are they to live as though the O.T. law is necessary? Should they in fact be circumcised after all? The answer in clearest possible terms is NO!

Vs. 15 – “*We who are...not sinners of the Gentiles*” – These words were spoken with a twist of irony to be sure. This was the old view of the Jews, that Gentiles were unclean sinners. To this unchristian attitude the Peter party was now reverting back.

Vs. 16 – Whether for Jew or Gentile, whether it be “*we*” or they, “*a man is not justified [made righteous] by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ...for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified*”.

Paul’s commonly used terms “justify” and “justification”, “righteous” and “righteousness” are of extreme importance. They refer to God’s gracious

*Gal 2:17 But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid.*

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work of reckoning sin off the account of the sinner and onto Christ in His death. And at the same time the very righteousness of Christ's perfect obedience is reckoned to the sinner's account in God's sight. Guilt is gone with sin "as far as the east is from the west" in that moment of justification, and God's pardon is secured. This transaction is received solely based upon the faith of the believer, faith in God's promise to do as He said.

Vs. 17 – "Is therefore Christ the minister of sin?" – Here is a charge begun by the Judaizers and echoed by many throughout the ages, including Muslims today. If justification is a free gift without the least recourse to the keeping of God's law does not this result in a kind of easy-believism that winks at sin, caring little whether the believer chooses to follow through with living in righteousness or not. Does not such easy religion effectively make "Christ the minister of sin", suggesting a cheap salvation that does not necessarily change the life of one who is saved? "God forbid" Paul exclaims! Literally "May it never be"! Yet Peter's actions would seem to force the same suggestion. His implied division of

*Gal 2:18 For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor.*

*Gal 2:19 For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.*

*Gal 2:20 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.*

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Christ's body between circumcised and uncircumcised, law-keepers and non-law-keepers, suggested the idea that Christ's sacrifice alone cannot *fully* justify. Thus making Jesus out to be a promoter of lawlessness in those who merely believe for salvation, with no further law-keeping required.

Vs. 18 – To return to what Peter had “*destroyed*” or pulled down, reliance on law-keeping to earn merit in God's sight, would be to desert Jesus Christ, making useless His great work and sacrifice. In such a foolish response as this Paul insists “*I would make myself a transgressor*” indeed!

Vs. 19-20 – “*I am crucified with Christ*” – Here is the great answer to the above charge of a sin-promoting Christianity of a too-easy salvation. To be saved is not merely to put on religion like a costume. It is to be *fundamentally changed*, transformed to the very core of our being. It is to be “*dead to the law*” with Jesus Christ, and alive in Him with newness of life

*“unto God”*. Compare Romans 6-7. Paul found the whole tendency of his new life in Jesus to be all toward the practice of righteousness rather than toward continuance in sin. The law demanded perfect obedience, which no man can give. By the law’s unbending demand for perfection sin took *“occasion by the commandment...and by it slew”* Paul (Rom. 7:11), that he might be raised to new life in Jesus Christ. So in a sense Paul was not the same Paul he used to be. The old Paul, so helplessly, hopelessly shackled by sin’s power, was dead and buried with Jesus Christ, in identification with Him. The new Paul was now raised and living with Christ, living the new life of Jesus Christ. *“In Christ he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new”* (II Cor. 5:17). *“Christ liveth in me”*, Paul said, through the indwelling Holy Spirit. Thus God Himself is the source and driving force of a believer’s new life. This allows for no open door to easy sin in the believer walking in the Spirit. Far from Jesus being *“the minister of sin”* He is in fact the minister of righteousness in and through the believer. The law indeed thankfully pointed the way by shutting off all hope of earning salvation through works, driving the desperate seeker to the only solution of peace in the gospel. Paul now lived *“by faith of the Son of God”*, drawn by cords of love to live for that Son

*Gal 2:21 I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.*

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*“who loved me, and gave Himself for me”.*

Vs. 21 – *“I do not frustrate the grace of God”* – To continue to think righteousness could *“come by the law”* is to set aside or make void Christ’s great work of grace. It is to rob His death of meaning and worth. So the old law is gone as a mode of living and means to God’s acceptance. Faith that clings to Christ, as the branch to the vine, is now the believer’s mode of living. *“If by grace, then is it no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace”* (Rom. 11:6). There is just no middle ground between the two concepts of law and grace, works and faith.

“Are ye so foolish?  
Having begun in the Spirit,  
are ye now made perfect  
by the flesh?”

(Gal. 3:3)

## Class 5 – Galatians 3:1-18

### Chapter 3

In the first two chapters of Galatians Paul has been defending his independent, authoritative apostleship. As he explains, there was no initial contact to speak of between he and those who were first apostles. When he at last did meet with them over a decade later to compare notes they found their gospel to be identical. It was the display of God's authorship of *this* message over the perverted, law-embracing "gospel" the Judaizers had cobbled together, attempting to put the new wine of the true gospel into the old wineskin of the law. It was the display of Paul's gospel as from above (heavenly), while that of his enemies from below (earthly). The one from above exalting the grace of God and the God of grace. The one from below exalting man in his imagined ability to join with God in making his way to heaven. In fact Paul even had to straighten out Peter in his drift in the same direction. Coming off the transition at the end of chapter 2 Paul now gives himself wholly in this next section to the proving of justification by faith alone. Featuring strongly in this section is *faith/belief* (7 times) in God's *promise* (8 times) contrasted with *law* (10 times).

*Gal 3:1 O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you,  
that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes  
Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified  
among you?*

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### **3:1-5** – Consider Your Experience.

Vs. 1 – “*O foolish Galatians*” – The opening “O” here is an expressive word describing Paul’s exasperation with his spiritual children to whom he speaks as a father. Similar to Christ’s attitude and words when He cried over the city of His rejecting people “*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem...*”

“*Who hath bewitched you*” – An interesting choice of words here, speaking of those who had deluded the Galatian believers as if through the use of dark arts. It refers to that aspect of their deception that was not their own self-deception but the work of outsiders coming in with subtle, evil motives.

“*That ye should not obey the truth*” – He turns the attention now to the fault in the believers themselves, for they were not without blame in allowing themselves to be so led away from the truth. It is the same with us. The tempter ever seeks to lead God’s people astray as a prowling lion seeking whom he may devour, dark work for which he will indeed be judged. Yet no man is without

fault in falling to sin, following that treacherous tempter's lead. Paul's readers were doubly at fault in that the crucified Christ had been so graphically portrayed before them through the preaching of God's missionaries.

See again what was ever the focus of Paul's preaching. "*We preach Christ crucified*" (I Cor. 1:23).

Notice that Paul put no blame upon himself as some might tend to have done in his place. He did not seem to question if perhaps he had failed to communicate the truth fully or accurately. He did not wonder if maybe he had not spent enough time with them hammering the truth home to them. Paul was secure in himself that he had indeed given them enough and clear enough for them to respond appropriately. He saw the foolishness as residing all in them for failing to cling to right conclusions concerning God's truth. Just as the writer of Hebrews saw the entire problem of rejection in the heart of the rejecter, who heard "*the gospel preached*" as well as everyone else. But the failure for the rejecter was wholly in that "*the word preached*" did not meet "*with faith in them that heard it*" (Heb. 4:2-3).

*Gal 3:2 This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?*

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Vs. 2 – How did you receive the Spirit? Pointing to the moment of their conversion when they received that great “earnest [down-payment] of our inheritance” (Eph. 1:14). Compare 4:6. From the moment of their salvation, the moment they became sons, “God sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, *Abba, Father*”. From that matchless moment of the Spirit’s indwelling presence at new birth God was no longer somebody else’s God, but *my* God, my Father. And I sensed the change in that relation to Him. The sense of distance was gone and His presence became a known, tangible thing as the Spirit began His inward work of witness to my spirit that I am a child of God (Rom. 8:15-16). Paul’s point is this; “You received the Spirit of God before you ever heard the teaching of the Judaizers, before even the thought of attempting to gain merit by law-keeping. And if you received the Spirit of God apart from works of law what more can the works of the law possibly bring you? What surer sign of a salvation received than the Spirit’s presence?”

*Gal 3:3 Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?*

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## **On the Side**

The receiving of new birth and the receiving of the Spirit occur at the same moment. Only in the transitional period of the Acts record do we find a gap in time between salvation and the Spirit's indwelling, for there is given the record of the Spirit's initial coming, first to Jews (Acts 2), then to Samaritans (Acts 8), and then to Gentiles (Acts 10). Now throughout this current church era "*by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body*" (I Cor. 12:13). And "*if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His*" (Rom. 8:9). To be saved is to have the Spirit's indwelling presence.

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Vs. 3 – Is our flesh equal to the Spirit that we, through our own efforts, can perfect what the Spirit began?

*"Are ye so foolish?"* – Again a measure of earnest emphasis comes through. Are we to be saved by faith and the Spirit's power with the work then

*Gal 3:4 Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if it be yet in vain.*

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made complete by human effort? “As *ye have therefore received Christ Jesus, so walk ye in Him*” (Col. 2:6). And how did we receive Him? By faith! Even so “*we walk by faith, not by sight*” (II Cor. 5:7), for “*the just shall live by faith*” (Heb. 10:38). Those who have received justification not only *come* to it by faith and God’s power but that new life is *kept* by faith and God’s power as well. Justification in its entirety is a divine work, by grace alone through faith alone.

Vs. 4 – Was your suffering for your faith all for nothing if salvation is not by faith after all? Paul now looks back to the persecution suffered in Galatia when the gospel first came to them. We have no record of such persecutions suffered by the believers there. We have only the record of what Paul and Barnabas endured in giving birth to the churches there (Acts 14), especially at the hands of the Jews. We can assume from this that the same followed for the Galatians believers after the missionaries left the area. Paul’s point; “If you are now going to fall at last into a practice which would have saved you all the trouble, what was the use of enduring the trouble in the first place?” Perhaps

*Gal 3:5 He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit,  
and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the  
works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?*

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the underlying idea is implied as well that we can expect the carriers of the truth to face persecution in this corrupt world. But if adopting a legalistic twist escapes persecution from legalists then is this not a strong clue that something's wrong with their version of the gospel?

Vs. 5 – On what basis did God perform the signs of an apostle among you? We see in Acts 14 (vs. 3, 8-11) something of God's miraculous power experienced by the Galatian believers in the ministry of Paul and Barnabas there. Paul's point; "Did I not, who brought to you the message of salvation by faith alone, come with divine proofs of authority? Did you not see in your own experience the evidence of the Spirit and the miraculous in us?"

*"The hearing of faith"* – This is the hearing of the gospel of Jesus Christ *"being mixed with faith in them that heard it"*, with the result that *"we which have believed do enter into rest"* (Heb. 4:2-3).

Consider that there must then be a *hearing* before there can be a believing. And how can there be

*Gal 3:6 Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.*

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hearing without preaching? (Rom. 10). It is the great motivating truth that has launched an army of preachers into the world through the ages. With every preaching of the gospel message there is the potential for hearing and believing unto glorious deliverance from God's curse for some.

**3:6-9** – Consider Abraham.

Romans 4 is a commentary on this next portion. Though the Judaizers clung to Moses and the law, Paul runs right back to the first principle. He goes beyond Moses, back to the very fountainhead of the Jewish race, to Abraham before he was even circumcised. It is a question of how Abraham found blessing before God, before the law and circumcision.

Vs. 6 – Abraham was blessed *“by the hearing of faith”*, not *“by the works of the law”*, for Abraham's faith *“was accounted to him for righteousness”*. Both the words *“believed”* and *“accounted”* here are in the aorist tense in the original Greek, speaking of momentary action, an *event* not a *process*. Event followed event. Abraham simply believed God for

*Gal 3:7 Know ye therefore that they which are of faith,  
the same are the children of Abraham.*

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His ability to perform what He promised; that Abraham would have countless descendants when he at that time had not one child, and that through him blessing would come to all mankind through one very special Descendent (“Seed”). The point is that salvation by faith was nothing new. And this should not have been a surprise. Faith was the first basis upon which God dealt with the nation of Israel in Abraham.

Paul quotes here from Genesis 15:6, while circumcision, the sign of Israel’s covenant relation to God, was only initiated later in Genesis 17 (vs. 24).

Vs. 7 – Abraham’s spiritual sons, those who follow in his faith, are his descendants more than are his physical descendants. There is emphasis here to this effect, “*they which are of faith, the same [these] are the children of Abraham*”. These and these alone!

Now this is not to offer support to the Amillennial view that transfers all of the promises made to physical Israel onto spiritual (“true”) Israel in the

*Gal 3:8 And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.*

*Gal 3:9 So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.*

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church. God's promises to the actual sons of Jacob will be fulfilled on them, because that is the way God keeps His promises. He keeps His words in the way they are normally understood.

Vs. 8 – The prophecy that God would bless the world with justification through Abraham was the good news of the gospel in kernel form. Paul's point is that the essence of the gospel (Abraham) precedes the giving of the law (Moses) by many centuries. O.T. saints, like N.T. saints, received the gospel of the grace of God by faith – then in promise form (to come), now in historical narrative form (past). Either way, either era, *“the just shall live by faith”*.

Vs. 9 – Abraham's spiritual sons who follow in his faith are the ones blessed with Abraham.

### **3:10-14** – Consider the Curse of the Law.

Paul now shifts gears to centre his arguments on the nature of the law, what the law can and cannot

*Gal 3:10 For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.*

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do. His point is that the law cannot justify. It can only curse or condemn.

Vs. 10 – Those of the law are cursed. Quoting from Deuteronomy 27:26. If one would seek to find justification through the law, here is the kind of taskmaster we are looking at. God’s curse is upon *every man* (“*every one*”), who does not keep *all the law* (“*in all things*”), all the time (“*continueth*”). Everybody! Every ordinance! Every moment! Utterly perfect obedience is God’s standard, all the time! *Impossible!!* Precisely. That man is incapable of rendering this kind of obedience is assumed. “*By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight*” (Rom. 3:20).

Vs. 11-12 – Law and faith are mutually exclusive, like trying to press the south ends of two magnets together. It is in fact in the O.T. that we find God’s decree that “*the just shall live by faith*”. And if by “*the hearing of faith*”, then not by the doing of law. The nature of law is *doing*, and it is a fundamentally different concept than faith.

*Gal 3:11 But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith.*

*Gal 3:12 And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them.*

*Gal 3:13 Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree:*

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## **On the Side**

These words of the Lord to Habakkuk, “*the just shall live by faith*” (2:4), are quoted three times in the N.T.;

- Romans (1:17) – Focus on *coming to* new life by faith.
  - Galatians (3:11) – Focus on *keeping* the new life by faith.
  - Hebrews (10:38) – Focus on *walking* the new life by faith.
- 

Vs. 13 – “*Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law*” – It is not only a matter of understanding the mutually exclusive nature of faith and law. It is a matter of understanding the meaning of what the Lord accomplished on the cross. Jesus took the

curse of the law upon Himself there that we might receive the free gift of salvation “*through faith*”.

“*Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree*” – The quote is from Deuteronomy 21:23. In the O.T. days the body of a criminal was hanged on a tree or stake after execution to display divine rejection or curse, to show that God agreed with the execution of justice. Such a handling became a token of greatest contempt. This is why it was such a matter of urgency that the bodies of Saul and sons be taken down A.S.A.P. when the Philistines nailed them to a wall in Bethshan (I Sam. 31:11-12). To such a place of cursing Jesus Christ willingly allowed Himself to be nailed, putting Himself under the curse of God for us, in our place.

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## **On the Side**

Crucifixion was a form of execution apparently devised by the Romans, and perhaps in view of the curse proclaimed in Deuteronomy 21:23. By design, part of the horror of death by crucifixion was to know the shame of being hung in that cursed place *while still alive*, to die there. The one so dying experienced that shame and contempt in the closing

moments of his life.

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Our Saviour hung between heaven and earth as if unworthy of both, as if rejected by both. I have read that the Jews in contempt refer to Jesus as “the hanged one”. Their great objection is that He died the accursed death. Indeed He did die with God’s curse upon Him in that cursed place and way. But what they did not understand is that it was for the crime of *their* sins laid upon Him, not for His own sin. They did not see His death for the *substitution* it was (Matt. 20:28; I Pet. 1:18-19).

In Christ we are redeemed from the curse or penalty of the law – we are guiltless. In Christ we are redeemed from the bondage of the law (4:3-5) – we are free.

“*Christ hath redeemed us*” – Again “*redeemed*” is written as an aorist in the Greek, again suggesting momentary action. He brought us out from under the curse of the law as an event, and so we are entirely out. We cannot now join our efforts in the ongoing process of crawling out from under the law’s curse. We look back to the event of our once-for-all deliverance.

*Gal 3:14 That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.*

*Gal 3:15 Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; Though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto.*

*Gal 3:16 Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.*

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Vs. 14 – Two “that’s” or purposes of Christ’s substitutionary death;

- That Gentiles might receive the blessing of justification by faith in Abraham.
- That all the redeemed might receive the promise of the indwelling Spirit.

**3:15-18** – Consider the Precedence of Promise.

Vs. 15 – An illustration from human experience. In the transactions of men upon earth (matters of infinitely lesser importance than divine, eternal concerns), once an agreement between two or more parties has been publicly ratified it cannot later be changed or dissolved by one party. How much less will God change when once He has given His word.

Vs. 16 – “*To Abraham and his Seed were the promises made*” – Pictured here are three parties

forming an agreement; *God* making promise to *Abraham* and to Abraham's *Seed* or descendant. And this "*Seed*", as Paul explains, refers not to Abraham's descendants in general but to one particular descendant, namely Jesus Christ the promised Messiah (and to all connected with Him, becoming a part of His "*body, the church*").

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## **On the Side**

Do not miss the fact that the whole argument here hinges on God's use of the singular "*seed*" (descendant) over the expected "*seeds*" (descendants). Paul obviously stood with Jesus in believing the old Book could be trusted right down to the finer details of jot and tittle. "*Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled*" (Matt. 5:18).

So what of Bible translations not clinging to a more word for word approach but using the so-called "dynamic equivalence" method, such as the popular New International Version (NIV)? Would it not seem apparent that God would require a more word-for-word translation approach?

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*Gal 3:17 And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.*

*Gal 3:18 For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise.*

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Vs. 17-18 – Paul now explains his point. The law came 430 years after God had already spoken His words of promise to Abraham and his Seed (Ex. 12:40-41). So when the law came God had already long before made confirmation on the matter. His blessing of justification is to be received by faith in His promise, and to be received by all who believe, both Jews and Gentiles blessed in Abraham. Moses' law, coming later, cannot make void what had already been agreed upon between God, Abraham, and his Seed. The fundamental relation between God and man is a covenant of promise through Abraham-like faith. There would be no adding new conditions or changing old ones! No moving of the goal posts! That promise/faith-based covenant is everlasting, unconditional (Gen. 15:8-21), and coming to us with fullest effect in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

So obviously then the law/works-based covenant of Moses had some purpose other than as a means of justification before God. Because again it had

already been long before affirmed that justification was by faith in the promise of God. This will naturally lead us then to a consideration of what the purpose of the law might have been. But what is evident on the surface of it now is that the law is entirely distinct from justification by faith, subsequent to it, additional to it, unrelated to it, and temporary. God purposely, historically put distance between the two concepts or covenants to display the *distinction* between them.

The Judaizers were likely insisting that since the law came later it takes precedence over all that came before. Much the same as the Muslims speak of the “last testament” of their Koran, insisting it takes precedence over (even displacing) the Old and New Testaments coming before. But this is simply not true. God does not undo earlier, unconditional promises through what comes later. It is why His promises to national Israel cannot be undone, even though they rejected their Messiah. It is why we who are in Christ’s hand can never sin our way out.

## **Class 6 – Galatians 3:19-4:7**

This 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter of Galatians is essentially the Old Testament in a nutshell. In it are highlighted the roles of three main characters in God's great plan of redemption;

- Abraham, to whom the promise of life by faith was first given.
- Moses, through whom came the law.
- Jesus Christ, Abraham's Seed, in whom the promise was fulfilled.

In this chapter Paul lays out very effective arguments in support of the blessing of God's righteousness to man as the gift of God apart from deeds of the law;

- Did you not receive the Spirit through the gospel of justification by faith without law keeping? (vs. 2)
- Is your flesh equal to the Spirit such that it can perfect what the Spirit began? (vs. 3)
- Was your suffering all for nothing when you were persecuted for believing the gospel of a righteousness received by faith? (vs. 4)

- We who brought you this gospel, did we not come with evidence of God’s stamp of authority in the signs of an apostle? (vs. 5)
- Was Abraham not justified by faith long before the law, and even before circumcision? (vs. 6)
- Is it not true that those who are of the law are cursed, for they cannot keep every ordinance every moment? (vs. 10)
- Since “*the just shall live by faith*”, can we then find life by law? How can it be both? (vs. 11-12)
- Was it not the very nature of Christ’s death to redeem us out of the curse of the law? (vs. 13) And if redeemed, then *redeemed!* The work is complete.
- Is it not true that God confirmed justification to be by faith in His promise long before the giving of the law? (vs. 15-18) The latter agreement cannot void the former.

Clearly then the law had some purpose other than any kind of means of justification before God.

**3:19-25** – The Law’s Purpose.

*Gal 3:19 Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.*

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Vs. 19 – “*Wherefore then serveth the law?*” Paul anticipates the response of the legalist. If the law cannot give the Holy Spirit, justification, or life, if it cannot help faith in the receiving of these things, what purpose does the law then serve?

“*It was added*” – Added onto the promise, affirming the addendum-like, secondary nature of the law.

“*Because of transgressions*” – The law was given to arrest sin’s advance, to preserve mankind from complete moral decay by its threat of judgment (I Tim. 1:9). As well, awareness of God’s law makes one more aware of his failing before God, and therefore more inclined to see his need of a Saviour. For “*by the law is the knowledge of sin*” (Rom. 3:20; 5:20; 7:13; I Cor. 15:56)

So God’s law was limited in its *purpose*, serving only to hinder sin’s way of running to complete ruin, and given for a preserving influence during that intervening gap between the giving of the promise and its fulfilment in Jesus.

*“Till the Seed should come”* – Only *“till”*, affirming the law’s temporary nature, limited in its *time*. With the coming of Jesus Christ, *“the Seed”*, the law’s term was complete. The dispensation of law served a preparatory purpose toward the current age to follow.

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## **On the Side**

I have a couple questions for those given to dividing between ceremonial law and moral law, who insist that only the ceremonial law ended with Christ’s first coming but the moral aspects of the law, encapsulated in the 10 Commandments, remain in effect in this age. We see here that the law was in effect until Christ and served as a check against sin. What preserving effect did the ceremonial law ever have upon sin if these words refer only to the ceremonial aspects? Would not such moral preservation be the work of the moral aspects of the law? Is it not evident that we must include the moral law in this *“till”* as well, and completed with the coming of *“the Seed”*? Indeed the moral aspects of the law are precisely the focus here as being in effect *“till the Seed should come”*.

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*Gal 3:20 Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one.*

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*“Ordained by angels...mediator”* – Whereas the law was given through messengers (Ps. 68:17; Acts 7:53) and mediator, the promise was given directly by God Himself. Where Moses stood between the Lord and His people in the giving of the law (Deut. 5:5), no third party stood between God and Abraham in the giving of the promise. So Paul now points to the superiority of the promise over the law. *“For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious”* (II Cor. 3:11).

So the law was also limited in its *significance*, when compared to the much grander introduction of the promise.

Vs. 20 – *“A mediator is not...of one”* – A mediator is an arbitrator between two parties. *“A mediator is not...of one”* in the sense that he is not needed if there is only one party involved in the terms. In the case of Mediator Moses officiating the covenant of law there were two parties involved, God and Israel, with Moses serving as go-between. In this is expressed the *conditional* nature of the law (if you will, then I will), for both parties were involved in the terms of their covenant. But in the giving of the

*Gal 3:21 Is the law then against the promises of God?  
God forbid: for if there had been a law given which  
could have given life, verily righteousness should  
have been by the law.*

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promise there was no need of a mediator, for “*God is one*” in that He was the only One expressing terms to Abraham. He simply stated there His determination to bless the one who believes. He was the only One who covenanted and therefore the only One who passed between the divided animals in Genesis 15:17-21. In this is expressed the *unconditional* nature of the promise, not depending upon man’s keeping.

So the law was limited in its *effectiveness*, in comparison to the unconditional promise, which cannot fail due to man’s inability to keep his side of the bargain.

Vs. 21 – “*Is the law then against the promises of God?*” – Paul hears and responds now to another type of reaction. If the doing of law and the believing of promise are two separate lines that do not meet, are we to conclude that they run in opposite directions? “*God forbid!*” May it never be! Parallel lines perhaps but not opposing each other. It simply was never the purpose of the law to give life

*Gal 3:22 But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.*

*Gal 3:23 But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed.*

*Gal 3:24 Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.*

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or righteousness in the first place. This was the purpose of the *promise*, which came first.

Notice that it is a matter of making alive what was dead that is under discussion here. This God does through faith in His promise, as Isaac's miracle birth, and as His miracle cure when they looked in faithful obedience to the lifted brass serpent in the wilderness. The law was never equipped with this life-giving capability.

Vs. 22-24 – “*Scripture hath concluded all under sin*” – The underlying sense of “*concluded*” is “shut up together”. Add to this the other words suggesting the prison house of the law;

- Vs. 23 – “*We were kept under the law*” – Guarded or kept in ward.
- Vs. 23 – “*Shut up*” – Same word used in vs. 22.

- Vs. 24 – “*Schoolmaster*” – Pedagogue or strict child trainer. A trusted slave (merely a servant). Guardian of the child from all physical and moral evils who followed the child everywhere. “To follow like a pedagogue” was a proverbial expression from the responsibility of this one to shadow the son wherever he went. So the law (Deut. 6:8).
- 4:2 – “*Tutors*” – Guardians of the *person*.
- 4:2 – “*Governors*” – Stewards of the *property*.
- 4:3 – “*We...were in bondage*” – Enslaved.

Vs. 23 – “*Before faith came...which should afterwards be revealed*” – Obviously we know that justification by faith in God’s promise was in effect in the O.T., for we have the examples of Abraham (Gen. 15), David (Rom. 4), and God’s great instruction to Habakkuk, “*the just shall live by faith*” (Hab. 2:4). But the clear reality of a faith-based relation to God without the deeds of the law has only come to fullest expression in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

So if the law does not oppose justification by faith in God’s promise, how do the two harmonize? The law served a similar role to John the Baptist, the hard-hitting, unbending herald of Christ’s first

coming. The one prepared the way for the other, making the other much more recognizable and necessary. As the law, John came declaring the world a prisoner to their sin and in need of repentance. It is all he could do. What else? Even so the purpose of the law was to bluntly display man's hopelessness in himself, his bondage in sin, and his desperate need of a Saviour. The law's approach is like that of the farmer driving the cows out of the road, from a deadly place, with the crack of the whip and the thud of clubs. All who recognize their danger in standing in violation of God's righteous law are prepared to be driven to safety in Jesus Christ. The Law of Moses is that tutor (whip/club) driving souls to Christ, that they might find deliverance from the curse of the law in Him. Moses the Lawgiver cannot carry us into Canaan. He can only bring us to the brink of it, to the sight of it from Pisgah's height. There Moses must drop from the scene and the lead passed to Joshua, Captain of the Lord's host, that O.T. picture of Jesus. He alone is commissioned and capable to lead the true "*children of Abraham*" into their inheritance. John the Baptist could not redeem souls. He could only point to "*the true Light*". And then John must drop from the scene as all focus turns to Jesus of Nazareth, who alone "*shall be great, and shall be called the Son of Highest*". Even

so the law must drop from the scene with the entrance of the glorious gospel, as Moses and John before Joshua and Jesus.

The passage that Moses led through the Red Sea was as the baptism of John, a baptism unto repentance. Not enough! This passage ushered in the law, serving only to prepare the way for the baptism of Joshua through the Jordan, a baptism unto life and the Spirit and inheritance and fruit-bearing in Canaan.

As the brass serpent in the wilderness, so the law was given by God for a special temporary function, but then was exalted by foolish man far beyond its God-given purpose (consider Mary, the mother of Jesus, as another example of the same). Such were meant to point to Jesus Christ, ushering Him into our focus, directing all attention to Him. But then these vehicles ushering in Christ were made by men to overshadow and crowd out Jesus Christ and His sufficient work. It is what man so commonly does, taking things meant to introduce to us the full brilliance of understanding of Jesus the Messiah and turning these things into a means of avoiding that true Light. They are veils erected to detract from His glory, and to put man's involvement and input into a seemingly brighter prospect.

*Gal 3:25 But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.*

*Gal 3:26 For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.*

*Gal 3:27 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.*

*Gal 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.*

*Gal 3:29 And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.*

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### **3:26-29** – Free Sons and Heirs.

Vs. 25 – The law having served its purpose falls away from further application.

Vs. 27 – “*Have put on Christ*” – Christ is as the “*toga virilis*”, the Roman garment of the man, worn from the time he ceased to be a child at the age of fourteen. As a man would never return to the clothing of his childhood days, so we cannot turn back to the stifling robe of the law having now “*put on Christ*”. As new wine cannot be put into old wineskins without causing damage and loss, so the tenets of the new covenant cannot be made to fit into the old without the same tragic result.

Vs. 29 – “*Then ye are Abraham's seed*” – A return to 3:7.

*Gal 4:1 Now I say, That the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all;*

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## **Chapter 4**

In the early verses of this 4<sup>th</sup> chapter Paul further contrasts man's old condition under the law (vs. 1-3) with his new condition in Christ (vs. 4-6). Under the law we were as slaves, but in Christ we are *sons* and *heirs!!*

### **4:1-7** – Slaves vs. Sons.

Vs. 1 – “*The heir...differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all*” – In *position* the heir might be lord of all, and one day it will all be his own possession, but in *practice*, while yet a minor, he is as a servant. The inheritance is already his by *promise*, though it is not yet his by *present possession* while still a child. Paul's point is that in the O.T. days under the law folks were like a young heir during his childhood years. There was a promise of blessing made to mankind from the days of Abraham, but the time of that promise had not come yet. Under the law sons of promise were much like a servant, ruled by the demands and fearful threats of God's commands.

*Gal 4:2 But is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father.*

*Gal 4:3 Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world:*

*Gal 4:4 But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law,*

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Vs. 2 – *“But is under tutors and governors”* – Those *“tutors and governors”* control that young heir’s person and property and command and chastise him as if they were his lords, as did the law.

*“Until the time appointed of the father”* – Until the day the father determines that son is ready to be released to independence and granted his inheritance, never again to go back under the old guardian.

Vs. 3 – *“Even so we...were in bondage”* – So it was with mankind and the Jewish nation in particular. Before Christ came, when man was still under the law, as if still in his childhood, we were heirs of that promise of blessing God had made to Abraham and to the world through Abraham. We were heirs of the promise, but had yet to inherit.

Vs. 4-5 – *“But when the fulness of the time was come”* – That date determined by God;

- When sin was fully developed.
- When man's helplessness was fully revealed.
- When the hopelessness of the law's enslavement was fully realized.
- When it was time at last for the children to come to maturity receiving their liberty and independence.
- When the flight of God's prophetic arrows, sent from ancient times, converged in Jesus of Nazareth.

Man's bondage under the law continued for about 1300 years. A long, difficult trek between mountain tops, from Mt. Sinai to Mt. Moriah (Calvary). Harsh years of man's "*childhood*".

"*God sent forth his Son*" – Here is another of those great "*but...God*" portions of the Bible (compare Eph. 2:4; Rom. 5:8).

"*Sent forth*" – Christ's coming and sacrifice was no *accident*, but was by the Father's *appointment*. His 2<sup>nd</sup> coming will be on the same basis, at God's appointed "*fullness of time*".

Paul never lets us lose sight of the fact that Jesus

*Gal 4:5 To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.*

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Christ was that One who was perfectly qualified to bring man's redemption. For He is both God's own Son "*sent forth*" from eternal pre-existence in His presence and "*made of a woman*" as a man born of a human mother. Compare in Isaiah 9:6, "*a child born...a Son given*". Jesus is both human and divine, reaching all the way up to God and all the way down to man. Thus He alone is supremely, uniquely fitted to accomplish our redemption. Had He not been man He could not have redeemed mankind. Had He not been God He could not have redeemed men to God.

Vs. 5 – "*To redeem them that were under the law*" – God's gracious purpose in sending His Son was that we might be redeemed. To "*redeem*" means to purchase by paying a price. The picture comes from the slave market. Once somebody purchased a slave that one became their private property and they could do what they wanted with them. They could keep that person as their own slave, give him to somebody else, or they could set that slave free, effectively giving him to himself. Here is the wonderful picture God's redemption presents. Man was as a slave under bondage to the law, harshly

but fairly condemned by that slave-master for our sin. Condemned because man continually fails to live up to the expectation or standard of the slave-master of God's law. But through Christ's once-for-all sacrifice God paid off all that we owed and purchased us from that slavery. And the breathtaking wonder of it is that He purchased us *to set us free* from the law!

Jesus was "*made under the law*" (vs. 4) where man was, shut up "*under sin*" where the law held us bound, that He might redeem man out from "*under the law*", leading "*captivity captive*". He came to where man is, that He might lead man to where He is.

*"Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."* (Heb. 2:14-15).

*"That we might receive the adoption of sons"* – That we might be placed as sons, as God's own children. The picture comes from the legal means by which a wealthy man with no children might adopt into his family a slave child. Thus by the most incredible stroke of good fortune that child of poverty would

*Gal 4:6 And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.*

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arise from slavery, where he did not even own himself, to his own freedom or self-possession. But as well, his adoption would lift him from the most extreme form of poverty possible to become an heir of great wealth. Through Christ not only did God buy us out of slavery to sin and the law and set us free, but He took that additional step of grace, adopting us into His own family, making us heirs of His own eternal wealth. *O the depth of God's goodness!!*

Vs. 6 – “*God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son*” – Note the two blessings “*sent forth*” from the Father; His Son (vs. 4) and the Spirit of His Son (vs. 6). And do not miss the working together of the Trinity here. God the *Father* sent first His *Son* into the world and then the *Spirit* into our hearts.

“*Crying, Abba, Father*” – “*Abba*” is the Aramaic, child-sized version of the more formal term “*father*”. Something like “Daddy” or “Papa” or “*dear Father*”. It is the tender, familiar expression a child would use in addressing his *own* father. It is the term the Son of God Himself used in the Garden of

Gethsemane in a time of most intimate prayer to His Father. It is the way every true child of God can address his heavenly Father. With the entrance of the Spirit of the Son immediately our heart is led to call upon “*Abba, Father*”. Not necessarily the actual word but the sentiment. In Romans 8:15-16 Paul adds a bit more;

- Romans 8:15 – When we received the Spirit of adoption (adopted into God’s family and given the Spirit of His Son) it is by that indwelling Spirit that we cry “*Abba, Father*”.
- Romans 8:16 – It is the Spirit of God bearing witness with our own spirit that we *are* in fact God’s child, through the cry to “*Abba, Father*” within us.

Flesh and blood cannot reveal such. The ability to sincerely deal with God as Father in this way is the supernatural result of the Spirit of the Son within a renewed heart. No servant could ever speak to his master in such a manner. Only a son with his father can know such intimacy. God sent forth His Son that we might have the *position* of sons. God sent forth His Spirit that we might have the *experience* or *intimacy* of sons.

Do you see the wonder of it? God does not mean

*Gal 4:7 Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.*

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only to redeem us through Christ, but also to set us free. God does not mean only to set us free, but also to bring us into adoption as His own sons. God does not mean only to make us sons through the sacrifice of His Son, but He means as well to *assure* us that we are in fact sons, through the indwelling Spirit of God bearing witness with our spirit. In His grace He concerns Himself with both facts and feelings.

Vs. 7 – *“Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son”* – Again, He has restored to us our own self-possession, purchasing us out of sin’s slavery and the law’s condemnation and setting us free! Then making us not only free, but His own sons! And now as a mature son, no more as if a servant. No more the demanding, controlling schoolmaster of the law over us. We now conduct ourselves according to the inward principle of the indwelling Spirit, the law written upon the heart in this new covenant era rather than the outward law of man’s “childhood” days.

*“And if a son, then an heir of God through Christ”* – He has laid up an inheritance before us of eternal bounty, galaxies beyond mere physical treasures.

For God's child is "*an heir of God*" Himself. And He has given us the added bonus of the present knowledge of all of this, thrilling our hearts with all that He has laid up before us. *He giveth and giveth and giveth again!!*

"*Because ye are sons...*" – Those are the happy, heart-warming key words of vs. 6, leading beyond all that God *has* done to what He continues to do and will continue to do into eternity. "*Because ye are sons*" you have been given the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, who testifies to your soul of your sonship, prompts your prayers, and is that earnest of our inheritance of an even fuller future measure of God's own presence. Simply "*because ye are sons*" does the Spirit dwell within. Do you hear? There are no other conditions ensuring such bountiful blessing. No formulas to be recited. No prayers to be prayed through. No special experience or environment or mediums to be sought. Just "*because ye are sons*" does the Spirit dwell within. And the way God assures us that we are sons and heirs is not through some special sign or outward gift, but through the quiet testimony of the Spirit of God witnessing within, as we are moved to commune with the God of glory as our own dear Father!

Now see the difference between the way of legalist religion and the way of God's children. The one is related to God only by *ritual*, the other by *relationship*. The one has only his *own* spirit, the other has the very *Spirit of God* within. The one has only some outward conformity to a code of conduct, the other has received the very nature of his heavenly Father within. As Peter said, God's child is a partaker of God's divine nature (II Pet. 1:4). As any true son, the child of God has the same nature as his Father within through the indwelling Spirit of God. How on earth could the outward law and the keeping of it ever give a person God's nature within? This can only come by the miraculous work of new birth through faith in the promise of God. The law could only give a man outward disciplines. All it could ever do is display man's failure and desperate *need* for God's nature within. To be related to God through the practice of law is to know Him as God, perhaps even as Father. To be related to God as His own child is to know Him as "Abba, Father", dear Father!

“So then, brethren,  
we are not children  
of the bondwoman,  
but of the free”

(Gal. 4:31)

## Class 7 – Galatians 4:8-31

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*Gal 4:8 Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods.*

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Paul has described man's days under the Law of Moses as like a child not yet come of age and therefore too young to receive what is his by inheritance as an adult. Now he turns to address his Galatian readers directly, raising the question of why the Galatians were in essence returning to their childhood, not acting like mature sons in putting themselves back under guardians and governors. Why would they turn from the free privilege of a son back to legal bondage as if a servant?

### **4:8-11** – Paul's Fear for Their Spiritual Condition

Vs. 8 – “*No gods*” – Before coming to know the only “*living and true God*” men worship and serve no true gods at all. Notice that Paul makes no distinction among these, indicating some more or lesser true than others. They are all only empty illusions every one, fed and fostered, animated and charged with a surface show of reality by Satan's deceiving host. For it is the God of the Bible who has said “*I am God, and there is none else*” (Isa. 45:22). Full stop!

*Gal 4:9 But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?*

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“*Ye did service*” – The verb here expresses the bondage of slavery. False religion is a bondage while true religion is a relationship.

Vs. 9 – “*How turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements*” – Having come to relation with God, knowing Him and known by Him in an intimate way, why would they return to another kind of bondage after the pattern of Judaism? Do not miss how Paul classifies the new together with the old;

- Both are forms of religious bondage.
- Both depend in some measure on outward rites and observances to appease God.
- Both are powerless to grant the blessing of intimate relation to God.

The law was indeed “*weak and beggarly*”;

- “*Weak*” in that it has no power to redeem or rescue us. It can only lay God’s standard of right before us and condemn our inability to live up to it.

*Gal 4:10 Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years.*

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- “*Weak*” in that the law of God has no ability to make any inward changes in us. If changes are made because of the influences of law, *we* made those changes. And they could only be changes of an outward, cosmetic nature. The law cannot give a new heart or nature.
- “*Beggarly*” or poor in that the law has no wealth from which to bless. It has only the ability to *curse* and *condemn* us (3:10).

Vs. 10 – “*Ye observe*” – Some technical thoughts about the verb here;

- It is written in a present, continuous tense (“you are observing”), indicating that they were not just thinking about Jewishizing their lives but were already doing it.
- Careful, scrupulous observance is communicated in the word used, indicating the consuming nature of legalistic bondage.
- It is written in the middle voice (“you are observing for yourselves”), suggesting that what they were doing was not for God as they intended.

*Gal 4:11 I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain.*

*Gal 4:12 Brethren, I beseech you, be as I am; for I am as ye are: ye have not injured me at all.*

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They were carefully observing;

- “*Days*” – Weekly Sabbaths.
- “*Months*” – New moons on the first day of each month (Num. 28:11).
- “*Times*” – The annual feasts and festivals.
- “*Years*” – The land Sabbath every 7<sup>th</sup> year and Jubilee every 50<sup>th</sup>.

Vs. 11 – “*I am afraid of you*” – Paul was deeply concerned for their spiritual wellbeing.

**4:12-20** – Personal Plea.

Vs. 12 – “*Be as I am*” in my freedom from bondage to the law.

“*For I am as ye are*” – Paul begged them to discard bondage to the scrupulous law-keeping of Judaism, just as he had discarded the restrictive racial prejudices of Judaism in ministering to them. “Cast off that binding legal system now leading you to distrust and despise me, just as I cast off the same

*Gal 4:13 Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first.*

*Gal 4:14 And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus.*

*Gal 4:15 Where is then the blessedness ye spake of? for I bear you record, that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me.*

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in freely loving and ministering to you the gospel of grace.”

“*Ye have not injured me at all*” – They had shown only fondest love and concern toward him in the days of his ministry among them. He appeals to them on the basis of his past close and caring relationship with them, hoping to touch a tender spot in their hearts.

Vs. 13-15 – Far from wronging him in any way, they would in fact have given up anything for him in those earlier days, even their own eyes had it been for Paul’s good (vs. 15). They had dearly cherished Paul before the false teachers had done their spoiling work among them. But legalistic teaching and teachers had poisoned hearts and driven wedges of division.

The “*infirmity of the flesh*” Paul suffered while

*Gal 4:16 Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?*

*Gal 4:17 They zealously affect you, but not well; yea, they would exclude you, that ye might affect them.*

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among them is unknown (vs. 13). Some suppose it was perhaps an eye problem, leading to his comment in vs. 15.

Vs. 16 – If the Judaizers were correct, then Paul had brought a deceiving gospel, and he was being exposed now as the enemy of the church in denying them the truth. But Paul raises the question whether the tender relation they had with each other gave any indication that he had come as one without their best interests at heart. Had he not consistently demonstrated his determination to allow only the truth in his confrontations of both the legalistic teachers (2:5) and the legalistic trend in Peter (2:14)?

Vs. 17 – *“They would exclude you”* – Paul refers to their false teacher friends in contrast to himself now. There are hints here to their method of dealing with the Galatians. Where Paul’s approach was ever the earnest, affectionate pursuit of them for their best, the approach of the Judaizers appears to have been more the threat of judgment upon those

*Gal 4:18 But it is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing, and not only when I am present with you.*

*Gal 4:19 My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you,*

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holding to an “incomplete gospel”. It seems they would exclude them from hope of heaven and from fellowship with those accepting their more “complete” gospel, dividing between the “haves” and “have nots”, attempting to stir the believers to earnest pursuit of the new teachers and what they had to offer.

Vs. 18 – “*Not only when I am present with you*” – Paul was quite willing for others to minister among them, as long as it was according to what was “good” and right and true. He was not exclusive or possessive.

Vs. 19 – “*My little children*” – This is an expression common with John but used only here by Paul. It is the affectionate expression of this father with the children he had helped bring to spiritual birth and discipleship. Again a subtle reminder to them of their spiritual birth into eternal life as a result of Paul’s influence. These saints were in a position of indebtedness to him above all men upon earth. Paul is tender in his appeal to their hearts. Beyond

*Gal 4:20 I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice; for I stand in doubt of you.*

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merely a zealous pursuer, Paul writes as a father to his own children.

*“I travail in birth again”* – Continuing the parent/child picture, but now shading to a more motherly role, he speaks as if he were travailing in the pains of childbirth for them all over again. *“Again”* he found himself full of the same anxious intensity for them as when pleading with their souls for Christ at the first. Whether for their deliverance from the penalty of sin as unsaved or from the power of sin as saved, Paul seems unsure as to which he was dealing with.

*“Until Christ be formed in you”* – Until the truth of Christ and our liberty in Him should come to full dawning and disclosure and development in them.

Vs. 20 – *“I stand in doubt of you”* – He was perplexed and unsure just how to approach them. If he could only *“be present with”* them and deal with them directly he could know more exactly how to *“change my voice”* or adapt his speech or manner toward them.

*Gal 4:21 Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law?*

*Gal 4:22 For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman.*

*Gal 4:23 But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise.*

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Do not miss how emotionally involved Paul was with his disciples. As his commitment to the truth was no cold and distant thing, so his commitment to people. He felt the pain and experienced the frustration of wayward sheep the same as does the Lord. But as well, do not miss how one committed to proclaiming the truth will surely make enemies. And how desperately unfortunate that those enemies will often be among those we love and once considered friends!

### **4:21-31** – “*Hear the Law*”.

Vs. 21 – “*Do ye not hear the law?*” – Paul now takes up the weapon of his enemies, “*the law*”, and skilfully uses it against them. He goes back to the book of Genesis, to the account of Abraham’s two sons through the two women in his life, Sarah and Hagar.

When Abraham and Sarah were not able to have the son God had promised, they decided together that

*Gal 4:24 Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar.*

*Gal 4:25 For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children.*

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Abraham should have a child by Hagar, Sarah's slave, as a surrogate (Gen. 16). It was man attempting to fulfil God's promise through his own fleshly effort. Ishmael was the result, "*born after the flesh*". God then made it clear to Abraham that His promise would be fulfilled in a son born to Sarah (Gen. 17). Several years later Isaac was born "*by promise...after the Spirit*", miraculously, when Sarah was well past the ability to have children humanly speaking. Then on the celebration day of Isaac's weaning (3-4 yrs old), Sarah saw Ishmael "*mocking*" or persecuting Isaac (Gen. 21:9-10). Ishmael's actions were understandable. For years he had been the focus of his father's attention. But now he was forced to share that focus with Isaac. And not only shared attention, but he had been shunted to 2<sup>nd</sup> place. For Isaac being Sarah's son was now the son of promise and heir of all that was Abraham's. The privilege of that position would pass over Ishmael entirely, he being merely the son of a servant girl. And so Sarah, with the Lord joining her, forced Abraham to reluctantly remove

Ishmael and his mother from their home. It was a task “*very grievous*” to Abraham, perhaps the hardest thing he ever had to do.

Paul now uses this historical situation in a very interesting way, as an allegory to contrast the way of bondage to the law with the way of blessing through the promise.

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## **On the Side**

An allegory is when a subject within a narrative represents some other subject or truth as well, beyond the obvious facts on the surface of it. Do not miss the true sense of an allegory in the Bible as taught to us here. Though Paul viewed these events as allegorical, with subtle, secondary meaning, never did this void the truth of the historical account. Abraham, Sarah, Hagar, Ishmael, & Isaac were actual historical people and the events recorded actual happenings. The original narrative is not figurative but factual, actual history used allegorically. Here is a crucial lesson for those who by the term “allegory” dismiss the truth of biblical narratives and prophecies as no accountings of actual events. Though other subjects may be represented, the narrative in

Genesis 1 of a 6-day creation can only mean 6 literal, 24-hour days. Though secondary themes may be implied, the prophecy in Revelation 20 of the coming 1000-year reign of Jesus Christ means what it says, 1000 years, on earth, this specific time period mentioned 6 times there in fact for the sake of the denser Amillennial types among us.

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Let's now consider Paul's application of the allegory of Abraham's two women and sons;

- Hagar was "*a bondmaid*" or servant under bondage.
- Sarah was "*a free woman*" (vs. 22).
- Hagar's son Ishmael "*was born after the flesh*", according to normal physical birth (vs. 23). And perhaps "*after the flesh*" as well in the sense of a carnal, arm-of-flesh effort to fulfil God's promise.
- Sarah's son Isaac was born "*by promise*" (vs. 23), "*after the Spirit*" (vs. 29).
- Abraham's two women picture "*two covenants*", the old and the new.
- The old (Hagar) relates to Mt. Sinai, and gives

*Gal 4:26 But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.*

*Gal 4:27 For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband.*

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birth or “*gendereth*” only bondage to the law (vs. 24). Hagar’s name means “a rock” and was a term used in Arabia for Mt. Sinai. Thus Paul’s words, “*this Hagar is mount Sinai in Arabia*” (vs. 25).

- This corresponded with the Jerusalem of Paul’s day (i.e. Judaism), still “*in bondage with her children*” (vs. 25).

So Hagar the bondswoman allegorically represents the hard Mosaic Law system initiated at the rock of Sinai.

- The new (Sarah) relates to the Jerusalem to come, the “*Jerusalem which is above...which is the mother of us all*” who are free in Jesus Christ (vs. 26).
- Sarah the free woman represents the miracle son/Son received by faith, and righteousness received in Him.
- Since Hagar was a slave in bondage therefore her son, whatever she gendered, was also a

*Gal 4:28 Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise.*

*Gal 4:29 But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now.*

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slave in bondage. Just as anyone following the Law of Moses is in bondage.

- In the union of Abraham and Hagar, free and bound, perhaps pictured the effort to combine law and grace, bondage with liberty.
- Since Sarah was a free woman her son too was born free, describing the freedom of every soul claiming God's promise by faith, free from the bondage of the law and guilt of sin.
- So Ishmael pictures the flesh and physical birth by man's power and design, making us sinners under bondage to the law and sin (our 1<sup>st</sup> birth).
- Isaac illustrates spiritual birth by the miraculous power of God, setting us free as God's own "*children of promise*" (vs. 28), our 2<sup>nd</sup> birth through faith in God's promise (Jn. 3).
- Then Ishmael, "*born after the flesh*" persecuted Isaac, "*born after the Spirit*" (vs.

*Gal 4:30 Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman.*

*Gal 4:31 So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.*

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29).

- “*Even so it is now*” that those under the law (Jews and others devoted to law-keeping) persecute those justified freely by grace through faith. Throughout his ministry Paul’s persecutors were mostly from among the Jews. And after the same principle our old nature or flesh “*lusteth against the Spirit*”, mocking the new nature within us.
- N.B. that it was God Himself who told Abraham to “*hearken unto her voice*” in all that Sarah demanded in casting Hagar and Ishmael out, her words quoted here (vs. 30; Gen. 21:10-12).
- So Abraham began with Sarah (promise), then Hagar (law) was added later (3:17-19).
- But when the promised son, Isaac (Christ), was miracle-born, that which was added (Hagar/Ishmael/*law*) was to be cast out, describing the faith and law systems as

mutually exclusive. They cannot live together. Now that the promised Seed has come, with the gift of grace and the indwelling Spirit, the law, which was only “*till the Seed should come*”, is cast out. In Christ we are entirely separate from the law system. Concerning the law, compare II Corinthians 3:11, 13, “*done away*” and “*abolished*”, and Colossians 2:4, blotted out and “*took it out of the way*”.

- So now in speaking to “*brethren*” or those in Christ Paul affirms that “*we are not children of the bondwoman (law) but of the free*” (vs. 31).
- Salvation is received by faith in God’s promised Seed, with the law cast out.

Perhaps we could see a parallel as well in Abraham’s “*very grievous*” broken heart in sending Ishmael away. His heart-broken obedience meant Isaac’s (and thus Israel’s) liberty to inherit. Even so God the Father’s grief in sending His Son as our sin-bearer and sacrifice meant our liberty in Christ and the eternal inheritance of the saints. Abraham’s grief in letting Ishmael go may as well picture the hard-sell in moving saved Jews to let go of their dependence upon the service and ceremonies of the

O.T. law. This is the burden of the book of Hebrews.

The offspring of the law persecuted the offspring of promise (vs. 29). This was/is not out of genuine interest in God's will or way but purely out of jealousy, a jealous insistence that we are the people of God, refusing to accept change, left behind in the forward progress of God's purposes on earth. Had Ishmael's heart been right he would have rejoiced in the exaltation of the miracle child, even over himself. He would have marvelled in the evident hand of God in bringing him, as Israel should have marvelled in Christ. Even so we, when our hearts are right and humble we are willing to rejoice in the miracle Child, the Lord Jesus Christ, even over ourselves, over our own purposes, our own law-keeping, our own hand in accomplishing our redemption. It is pride that keeps a soul from full reliance on Jesus Christ for salvation from sin but rather trusting in man's own bankrupt efforts at righteousness.

The vs. 27 quote of Isaiah 54:1 expresses the overwhelming joy of Messiah's kingdom, that a vast throng will be found sons of promise at the last. What appears in this age to be a meagre remnant ("*desolate*") will be found to be a different story then. When all is said and done and the final tally taken,

the sons of promise will be found more numerous than the sons of the flesh. *Happy prospect!!*

Vs. 28 – “*We, brethren...are the children of promise*” – Believers, though Gentiles, are sons after the manner of Isaac, being miracle-born according to promise. The relation of the Jewish race to Abraham in their physical ancestry gives them no claim to the promise. Their natural birth left them only as the spiritual descendants of Hagar.

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### **Contrasts in Chapters 3 & 4**

Law and promise

Works and faith

Bound servants and free sons

Old covenant and new

- Hagar and Sarah
- Bondwoman and free
- Ishmael and Isaac
- Born after the flesh and born after the Spirit
- Sinai and Jerusalem

## Class 8 – Galatians 5:1-12

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*Gal 5:1 Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.*

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### Chapter 5

Paul has defended his message and himself as the messenger of the authentic gospel of God in chapter 1-2. He then demonstrated the truth of his message through several brief but effective arguments in chapter 3-4, sourcing the gospel in the O.T. Now in chapter 5 Paul begins with more practical considerations of living out our liberty in Jesus Christ.

#### **5:1-6** – Stand in liberty.

Vs. 1 – “*Stand fast*” – In light of his effective proofs in the preceding chapters of justification by God’s grace alone through faith alone, “*therefore*” stand firm against the efforts of legalist teachers to seduce you into law-keeping.

“*Christ hath made us free*” – Having left the servant-like bondage of their childhood they had graduated to the liberty of sons (4:1-5). “*Ye shall know the*

*Gal 5:2 Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing.*

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*truth, and the truth shall make you free...If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed” (Jn. 8:32, 36).*

*“Be not entangled again”* – Entangled now *“again”* into Judaism as they once had been in the rituals of their idolatry (4:8). The empty rituals of one were as much a bondage as the other. Compare Peter’s apt words in Acts 15:10.

*“The yoke of bondage”* – Compare the two yokes;

- The hard, enslaving yoke of bondage to the law.
- The *“easy”*, liberating yoke of Christ (Matt. 11:28-30).

Vs. 2 – *“Behold, I Paul”* – The apostle is using great emphasis here, literally *“Behold (Look!), I Paul myself am saying to you...”*, speaking now with great plainness and force.

*“If ye be circumcised”* – The point is not that the act in itself is wrong, but to turn to circumcision as a religious obligation or condition for ensuring

*Gal 5:3 For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law.*

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salvation is in the same move to turn away from dependence upon Jesus Christ alone for full salvation. The two systems cannot be mingled in even the least little rite or measure.

*“Christ shall profit you nothing”* – The sacrifice of Christ in your behalf becomes of no use to you. Either Jesus does it or you do it. And if you do it then you make Jesus of no value. Either you pull the plough yourself or you plough with the tractor. But if by your own power then you make the tractor useless.

Vs. 3 – *“He is debtor to do the whole law”* – It is all or nothing (3:10). Paul views the law as an indivisible whole. None can partake of the smallest crumb of the law system without swallowing the whole loaf. If you would submit to the inch measure of circumcision, then you must go the whole mile of keeping all the law for salvation, if you can. Any integration of the two systems is denied. They wanted to believe on Christ and keep the works of the law also, just to make sure. Like the ex-Catholic who still crosses himself, just in case they are right. Probably more commonly the motivation

*Gal 5:4 Christ is become of no effect unto you,  
whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are  
fallen from grace.*

---

for holding onto a measure of the old is the fear of offending or angering the old guard and thus attracting their persecution or rejection.

It is a religious syncretism common to man, seeing the merits of the gospel but still seeing a measure of merit in the old religious practices as well or fearing to depart from them. Not seeing the gospel wholly for the liberation it is. Not seeing it as the complete answer, cancelling out the old. But to not see the gospel in its completeness is to just not see it! Hinduism is happy to adopt Jesus into its vast system of gods and demi-gods. But they must see in Jesus the *complete* answer, casting out all others, if they would find salvation and liberty in Him. African Zionism is a product of such a faithless combination of old beliefs and new, which has resulted in just another Christianised pagan religion. This is the end Paul knew would develop in Galatia, and desperately sought to avoid.

Vs. 4 – “*Christ is become of no effect unto you*” – Paul gradually steps up the force of his words. The verb here carries the sense of cut off or separate.

*Gal 5:5 For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.*

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Interesting that the same word is used of the law in II Corinthians 3, translated “*done away*” and “*abolished*” there. Compare also Romans 7:2, 6. Again, like the throw of a toggle switch, it is one way or the other. Either your hope is in your soul secured by law-keeping in some measure, in which case you renounce Christ’s purpose and power to redeem your soul, or your hope is in Christ’s redeeming power, putting away all hope of merit in law-keeping.

“*Ye are fallen from grace*” – Paul is not suggesting they had lost their salvation, as some see in this verse. Paul refers to them as “*brethren*” 9 times in this epistle, a term he reserves for the saved. Compare 4:6. Paul’s statement here merely means that they had fallen from their grasp or understanding of justification received by grace through faith. They had plunged from the loftier level of perceiving the grace of God to the lower, “*weak and beggarly*” level of a justification held by human merit through works of righteousness. A justification in any way earned is the ruin of grace! It is surprising how commonly the deceived will point to a Bible portion meant to correct their

*Gal 5:6 For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.*

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deception as support for their foolishness.

Vs. 5-6 – Righteousness is “*by faith*”, not by any deed of the law. Again, all such deeds are represented together by the rite of circumcision.

“*Faith which worketh by love*” – Here is Paul’s agreement with James. Though our justification before God is entirely by faith alone it is not an idle faith but an active, working one. Faith is the key to the transformation of unredeemed hearts and therefore it is the key to transformed lives as well. And the way faith expresses itself in a believing soul is “*by love*”, love for God and love for others. If there is new life there is love. No love, no life! Compare in I Corinthians 13:13 the same three Christian virtues found within these two verses. “*And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.*” “*Charity*” there in I Corinthians and “*love*” here in Galatians are the translation of the same Greek word (agape), speaking of that active commitment kind of love that seeks the best for others, regardless of the cost and regardless of returns. Love is a work of God within

*Gal 5:7 Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?*

---

and arising from our transformed hearts through the Spirit. It is that constraining force that drives us to Christian service in behalf of others. Hope is directed toward God and looks to the future. It is that constraining force that keeps us leaning toward the Lord and looking for better things. Faith is our spiritual vision, seeing the reality of things invisible. Without faith there is no sight of things unseen or things yet future, and therefore no hope. Without faith there is no love, no reason to love or live for anyone but ourselves, no reason to live for anything but the here and now.

**5:7-12** – Troublers Condemned.

Vs. 7 – An illustration from athletics. This is a common type of illustration with Paul (2:2; Phil. 3:14). He never uses such to illustrate the idea of becoming a Christian, but always to picture the living of the Christian life. One must be a citizen before he could compete.

*“Ye did run well”* – You were running well, speaking of their past in the early days of their salvation and growth in Christ.

*Gal 5:8 This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you.*

*Gal 5:9 A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.*

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“*Who did hinder you*” – Literally “who cut in on you”. Who stepped in front of you, deflecting and slowing your progress, even forcing some off the right track?

Vs. 8 – Paul would bluntly have them know that this new view was simply not of God. Compare 1:6.

Vs. 9 – “*A little leaven*” – This is spoken as if a proverbial phrase, perhaps commonly used in that day. Paul used it again of the influence of a man in the Corinthian fellowship living in open sin and unrepentant (I Cor. 5:6). Leaven or yeast is often used in the Bible to describe the permeating effect of sin. Jesus said “*Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees*” (Matt. 16:6) in referring to their false beliefs or teachings, the very truth twist Paul is dealing with in this epistle in fact. Leaven was to be absent at Passover as a type or picture of the sinlessness of Christ our Passover.

“*Leaveneth the whole lump*” – The smallest allowance of evil or error would soon ruin the health

*Gal 5:10 I have confidence in you through the Lord, that ye will be none otherwise minded: but he that troubleth you shall bear his judgment, whosoever he be.*

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of the entire body. The smallest allowance of legalist teaching would lead to loss of the whole of liberty in Christ. The gospel message would be perverted to “another gospel” of a different kind, “which is not another” of the same kind (1:6-7).

Perhaps the use of leaven causing bread to rise could be understood as well to describe the puffing effect of pride at the root of all sin. Evil and error are but the practice of pride. It is good to have sound standards for Christian living, as long as we never begin to proudly wear those standards like a badge of spirituality.

Vs. 10 – “*I have confidence in you*” – Paul seemed to have an assurance from the Lord that the Galatian believers would not remain enamoured with the leaven of the Judaizers.

“*Whosoever he be*” – Regardless of the prominence or qualifications or titles carried by the false teacher, God would deal with him appropriately. Again the Lord, like Paul, is no respecter of “*they*”

*Gal 5:11 And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offence of the cross ceased.*

---

*who seem to be somewhat*” among men (2:6). Condemnable heresy comes packaged in people ranging from peon to professor.

Vs. 11 – Apparently it was being suggested that Paul was in fact teaching the need of circumcision as well. Again, it was out of that same area that Timothy came, whom Paul circumcised for the sake of the Jews when bringing him into ministry (Acts 16). This because Timothy’s mother was Jewish. A matter of testimony only in that case. It was a case of becoming as a Jew to the Jew, becoming *“all things to all men, that I might by all means save some”* (I Cor. 9:22). Paul demonstrates the falseness of such a charge against him in that he was still persecuted by those under the Jewish system. Bondage persecutes freedom just as Ishmael persecuted Isaac, the one born free (4:29). And bondage was still persecuting Paul. Therefore it could only be that Paul was still standing fast in the liberty wherewith Christ had made him free. For Paul to return to bondage, marked by preaching the necessity of circumcision, would be to deliver himself from persecution.

*“The offence of the cross”* – What is *“the offence of the cross”*? The cross put Jesus in the cursed place, dying the most shameful kind of death while hanging *“on a tree”* (3:13). Not understanding Christ’s substitutionary death in their place, the Jews presumed that for Jesus to die such a death proved God’s curse upon Him for His own evil, rather than for their sin laid upon Him. They were offended in Him for this cause, taking this as the final proof that Jesus could not possibly be the Messiah.

But more to the point in this context the cross is an offence as well in that it puts an end to all human merit through works of the law as a basis of salvation. The work of the cross demands that the work is done, man’s redemption secured. The cross demands that God allows no measure of DIY redemption. The cross removes all possibility of attention upon me and my ability to do for myself and turns all attention to Jesus Christ and what He has done for us. A salvation received by faith is an offence to man’s pride for it makes us wholly indebted to God. Israel stumbled in this regard, for following after the law of righteousness, they did not attain to the righteousness of the law, *“because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone”*

*Gal 5:12 I would they were even cut off which trouble you.*

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(Rom. 9:31-32).

Vs. 12 – *“I would they were even cut off”* – Other translations;

- NASB, RSV – “Mutilated”
- NIV – “Emasculated”
- NEB – “Make eunuchs of themselves”

See well Paul’s intensity against the false teaching and teachers in this touch of wry sarcasm. He wished upon those troublesome tutors, who so pushed the fleshly rite of circumcision, a slip of the knife! That beyond circumcision they might actually mutilate themselves, lopping off more than they planned. Hard words, which we must understand to accurately communicate God’s own heart and passion.

*“They...which trouble you”* – Paul’s distress was as the Lord’s. He was concerned for the unsettling, perverting effect of false teaching upon God’s sheep. The shepherd’s heart has no love for the troubling wolves of this world. Compare Acts 13:10.

## Class 9 – Galatians 5:13-26

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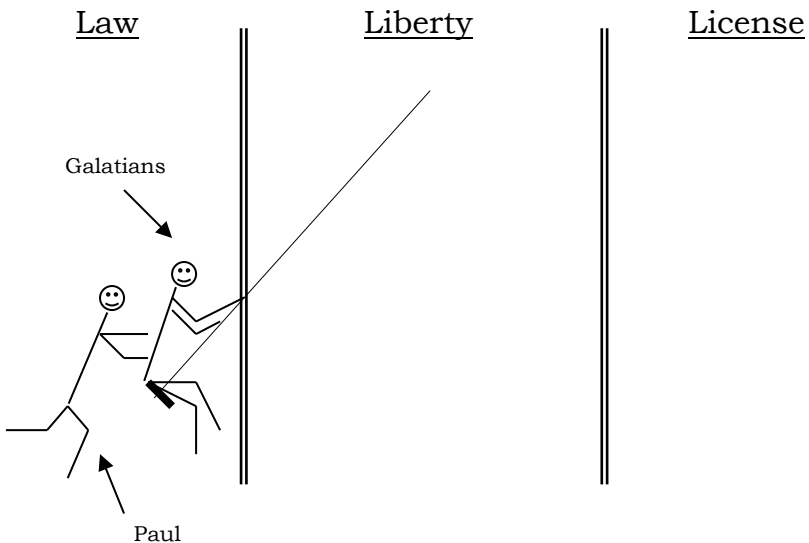
*Gal 5:13 For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.*

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### **5:13-15** – Liberated to Love.

Vs. 13 – “*Ye have been called unto liberty*” – Paul sums up in this phrase his previous discussion, turning his focus now to a new theme.

*“Use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh”*



Paul would caution them against swinging to the other extreme, out of law, through liberty, and right over into license. Do not use your liberty as a springboard into lawlessness, without restrictions at all. For freedom abused becomes a bondage of a different kind, craven servitude to the flesh. “*As free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God*” (I Pet. 2:16). Though we are not under law we are not to be lawless. All of the essential enduring principles of moral right from the Law of Moses have been built into the religion of Christ.

“*By love serve one another*” – We are free, but free to serve one another in love. Here is the guiding principle of Christ’s easy yoke, in contrast to the hard yoke of bondage to the law. “*A new commandment I give unto you that ye love one another*” (Jn. 13:34, 35).

Christ’s Yoke = Christ’s Law = Law of Love

This law of love is the central thrust of N.T. teaching and the one law that now guides us.

Do not miss the interesting contrast between 5:12 & 13. Real love can be pretty tough! The God of love casts countless souls to hell’s eternal torment!

*Gal 5:14 For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*

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Is He less than loving in doing this?

Vs. 14 – “*All the law is fulfilled*” – Paul quotes Jesus, who quoted Leviticus 19:18 when asked what was the greatest commandment (Matt. 22:36-40). There are three words in Greek behind the English translation “love”;

- *Eros* – Describing sensual love. Not found in the N.T.
- *Philia* – Feeling or friendship love. The noun form found only once on its own in the N.T. in James 4:4, describing the friendship of the world.
- *Agape* – A volitional or decision oriented love, describing the choice to deny self to meet the needs of others. The noun form is found well over a hundred times in the N.T. Obviously God underscores what we *decide* to do, with little concern for how we *feel* about it. Not surprisingly prominence of word usage is the other way around in classic secular Greek literature.

Consider the great emphasis placed upon our loving

one another with this agape kind of love in the N.T.;

- John 13:34-35 – “A *new commandment*”.
- Matthew 22:37-39; Mark 12:29-31 – The two great commands on which “*hang all the law and the prophets*”.
- Matthew 5:43-48 – “*Love your enemies*” even.
- Romans 13:8-10 – Owe nothing but “*to love one another...the fulfilling of the law*”.
- Galatians 5:14 – “*All the law is fulfilled*”.
- I Timothy 1:5 – “*The end of the commandment*”.
- James 2:8 – “*The royal law*”.
- I Peter 1:22 – “*With a pure heart fervently*”.
- I John 2:9-11; 3:10-19, 23-24; 4:7-13, 20-21 – John greatly emphasizes love for fellow Christians, even as an evidence of salvation. He also makes connection between love and the Spirit’s indwelling presence in I John 4.

“*By love serve one another*” – The strongest word for service is used here, and given as a present, ongoing command. *Agape* love is ever sold out to the service of others for their best.

*Gal 5:15 But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.*

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Vs. 15 – “*Bite...devour...consumed*” – Picturing the saints as if wild animals in a mortal struggle. Return to the law-keeping obviously had not caused love to blossom in their midst. While the Pharisees legalistically tithed to the n<sup>th</sup> degree, Jesus rebuked them for their loveless devouring of “*widows’ houses*”. Martin Luther, who was delivered from the strict legalistic system of Catholic monasticism, described in his writings the monks of his day. Though they carefully fasted and watched in prayer, yet Luther says they “hated each other to the death”. Their mutual hatred they did not consider a sin. But to cease from their fasting and prayers they considered “a crime of the first magnitude”.

### **5:16-26** – Life in the Spirit.

Paul now turns to the importance of a life lived after the Holy Spirit as opposed to a life lived after the flesh. The remainder of this chapter is given to the Spirit’s purpose to lead us into a life of love and victory over the works of the flesh. This whole discussion takes place in the light of Paul’s command in vs. 13 to “*by love serve one another*”. What we find here is that a life of loving service is

*Gal 5:16 This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.*

*Gal 5:17 For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.*

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the outworking of a life lived after the Holy Spirit. God's kind of love is sourced in a walk in the Spirit. The Spirit-filled life is always others-centred (Eph. 5:18ff; 4:29-31; Rom. 5:5). The *recluse* for Christ is no recluse *for Christ!* Compare the association of the Spirit and unfeigned love of brothers in I Peter 1:22 and I John 4.

Vs. 16 – “*Walk in the Spirit*” – Let the Spirit's direction be your guide in the way you should go. Again we have a command of a present, ongoing nature here to “be walking in the Spirit”.

“*And ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh*” – There is emphasis here, “you shall not possibly fulfil the lust of the flesh”. Fill up the basket with wheat and there will be no room for tares. Fill your life with Christ and others and there will be no room for self.

Vs. 17 – “*These are contrary*” – To follow the Spirit is to run directly against our fleshly desires. “*The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not*

*subject to the law of God neither indeed can be*” (Rom. 8:7). Our old sin nature still remains within us after salvation, now there together with our new nature. The old nature is enflamed by the outward influences of Satan and the world. The new is stimulated by the inward influences of the indwelling Holy Spirit and God’s Word. These two natures are hopelessly at odds, in constant conflict, both striving for the throne of the believer’s heart and life. It is a conflict the unsaved soul does not know, with the flesh alone being the ruling principle there. This struggle is well illustrated by that between King Saul and David. Though Saul was entrenched as king, David was chosen and anointed as the appointed heir of the throne after Saul was rejected in I Samuel 15. And Saul hated and pursued David’s life with a kind of insane passion. Even so our old nature is the old rejected king entrenched in us. And with the entrance of the new nature with our new birth the fight is on within for dominance.

*“So that ye cannot do the things that ye would”* – As long as both the old and new natures remain present within the work of the one stands in the way of the complete dominance of the other.

Vs. 18 – *“Led by the Spirit...not under law”* – Note

*Gal 5:18 But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.*

*Gal 5:19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,*

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the contrast of the two guidance systems; the old, obsolete outward system of the law and the new, inward presence of the Spirit, with the law now written on the heart. One following the Spirit's guidance will actually fulfil the principles of the law, thus the outward restrictions of the law are not needed in such a one. Rules and restrictions are only really necessary for those who resist the one in authority (I Tim. 1:9-10). The indwelling Holy Spirit now provides that inward will to do God's will. And so when walking in the Spirit there is no longer the need for outward restrictions. Thus, being led by the Spirit we are not under law.

Vs. 19-21 – *“The works of the flesh”*

As to sexuality;

- *“Adultery”* – Marital unfaithfulness.
- *“Fornication”* – All sexual deviance, particularly pre-marital involvement.
- *“Uncleanness”* – Impurity of a sensual nature.

*Gal 5:20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies,*

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- “*Lasciviousness*” – The selfish, insolent rejection of decency, and of all restraint to pleasing the flesh.

As to false worship;

- “*Idolatry*” – Bowing to anything in the place of the true God.
- “*Witchcraft*” – Sorcery, magic arts, etc. The Greek is *pharmakeia*, giving a hint to the drug related heritage of occult practice.

As to lovelessness;

- “*Hatred*” – Bitter hostility.
- “*Variance*” – Strife, and the quarrelsome spirit leading to it.
- “*Emulations*” – Jealous despising of others for what they have.
- “*Wrath*” – Swellings and outbursts of anger.
- “*Strife*” – Selfish divisiveness.
- “*Seditions*” – Dissensions leading to divisions.

*Gal 5:21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.*

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- “*Heresies*” – Separation into factions due to differing opinions.
- “*Envyings*” – The bitter wish to possess what others have.
- “*Murders*” – “*Hatred*” of the worst kind.

As to excesses;

- “*Drunkenness*” – Not the *use* of wine but the *abuse* of it.
- “*Revellings*” – Riotous drinking parties.

The Bible contains several such black lists (Mk. 7:20-23; Rom. 1:29-32; I Tim. 1:9-10; II Tim. 3:2-5).

Vs. 21 – “*They which do such things*” – The reference here is not to occasional action, but to the *practice* of such as an ongoing life habit. Such habitual practice displays the heart or settled character of the individual.

Vs. 22-23 – “*The fruit of the Spirit*” – The use of the

*Gal 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace,  
longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,  
Gal 5:23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is  
no law.*

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word “*fruit*” here instead of “*works*” (vs. 19) is an interesting turn, reflecting the difference between the old and new covenants. The old was a matter of works of the law counteracting “*the works of the flesh*”. But the essence of the new is the fruit or outgrowth of the indwelling Spirit of God, that “*divine nature*” as if planted and growing within the believer’s soul and sprouting its distinctive fruits when properly nurtured. The essence of true Christianity is not a question of outward good deeds. It is God’s nature within nurtured to fruit-bearing, displaying itself in godly attitudes and actions.

Note that “*fruit*” is singular here, perhaps indicating that the fruit of the Spirit is love, resulting in the other qualities or attitudes listed. Compare I Corinthians 13, where love is defined by some of the same characteristics listed here.

- “*Love*” – Again, this is the Greek word *agape*. A love given to self-sacrifice toward the best for others.

- “*Joy*” – Mankind never knows real joy until at last happy in Jesus.
- “*Peace*” – Not referring to “*peace with God*” through justification (Rom. 5:1), but the product of it in “*the peace of God*” in our experience (Phil. 4:9). This is that settled sense of serenity because we are right or at peace with God.
- “*Longsuffering*” – Patient endurance under hardship or provocation. Compare love that “*suffereth long*” and “*is not easily provoked*” (I Cor. 13:4-5). Compare Christ’s response to unjust abuse in I Peter 2:23, leaving vengeance to He who is the sole owner of it.
- “*Gentleness*” – Kind graciousness, the contrast of heartless harshness.
- “*Goodness*” – A heart ruled by good and honourable purposes rather than selfish passions.
- “*Faith*” – Faithfulness, loyalty, trustworthiness.
- “*Meekness*” – Not weakness, but humbly submitted to and resting in God’s Almighty power despite the mishandling of men.
- “*Temperance*” – Self-control over fleshly

*Gal 5:24 And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.*

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appetites or desires. *“But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection”* (I Cor. 9:25-27).

Compare Paul’s description of a servant of the Lord in II Timothy 2:24-25.

*“Against such there is no law”* – Same point as in vs. 18. The law in effect falls away for the one walking in the Spirit and showing forth His wonderful fruit.

Vs. 24 – *“Have crucified the flesh”* – The verb here is written in the aorist tense, speaking of a definite event. It refers to the moment of salvation when we renounced and repented of sin. In that crucial moment of decision our old self was crucified, depicted in our water baptism (Rom. 6), and the power of the sin nature within us was broken. Compare the N.T. prominence of this theme;

- *“I am crucified with Christ”* (2:20).
- *“We that died to sin...are buried with Him”* (Rom. 6:2, 4).
- *“Our old man is crucified with Him”* (Rom.

*Gal 5:25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.*

*Gal 5:26 Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.*

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6:6).

- “*Ye are...buried with Him in baptism*” (Col. 2:11-12).

“Christians are conceived of as crucified to the flesh, by which its power is subdued, and its sinful impulses are rendered ineffective” (Clark).

Vs. 25 – “*Let us also walk in the Spirit*” – Here is the right place to be walking, after the promptings of the Spirit rather than in the practice of sin.

Vs. 26 – “*Let us not be desirous of vain glory*” – “*Vain glory*” speaks of the groundless illusion of a high self-opinion. It is the empty pursuit of attempting to bring glory to self. Love, the very opposite of self-focus, is rather consumed with the good and glory of others.

“*Provoking one another*” – Stirring trouble and picking fights. This is perhaps the effect of the previous attitude of self-seeking upon those who consider themselves strong. One sure of his

superiority wants to demonstrate this over others. Pride is at the root of all such contentions. Again, love is the very opposite, seeking to build the other up rather than to leave him bleeding on the ground.

*“Envyng one another”* – Now the effect of a self-seeking attitude upon the weak perhaps, those who consider themselves inferior and wish to be superior. Whether moved by superiority or inferiority selfishness is the prime mover, and self-focus is the very opposite of the Spirit’s primary fruit of *agape*.

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## **How to Walk in the Spirit**

In Ephesians 5:18 we read, *“be filled with the Spirit”*. It is a present, continuous command calling every believer in Jesus to the ongoing life habit of being Spirit-filled. In Galatians 5:16 we read, *“walk in the Spirit”*. Again, a present, continuous command calling us to the ongoing life habit of walking in the Spirit. This is the walk of the Spirit-filled life, a lifestyle commanded of every believer. Now it is important to recognize that because Spirit filling and walking are commanded of us, therefore a deliberate act of our will must be involved. The Spirit is involved but so are we. It is a matter of our

choosing whether we are going to allow this work of the Spirit. Spirit filling/walking is like a coin, one item but with two sides, involving *our* part and *God's* part. Both aspects are necessary for a life of walking in the Spirit. The neighbour who comes wanting friendly help in figuring out some problem, but who stands back in an uninterested manner instead of climbing in with you wanting to learn, is really not wanting you to help him with his problem. He just wants you to sort it out for him. Such a one probably will not have your help for long. Even so the Lord must see our heart sleeves rolled up and we wholly in on the project of our Spirit walk. Thus the matter of our will, our yieldedness is of primary concern. This being said, consider the following two key aspects. Walking in the Spirit involves;

- A commitment to **LOVING SERVICE** – In Galatians 5 the command of vs. 13, “by love be serving one another”, is an obvious parallel with that of vs. 16, “be walking in the Spirit”, with the resulting fruit of love in evidence in vs. 22. There is some sense in which the decision to yield to the one is to yield to the other. There is a correlation between the commitment to spend ourselves in a life of loving service for others and walking in the Spirit. Again the Apostle John has made this same correlation in I John 4. Sandwiched

between two passages dealing with the Spirit of God there (vs. 1-6 & vs. 13) is perhaps the greatest passage on love in all the Bible. Compare chapter 15 of John's gospel as well. Thus it seems you cannot be walking in the Spirit without yielding to a life of loving service toward others.

- A commitment to **LIVING SCRIPTURE** – Comparing the parallel passages of Ephesians 5:18-6:9 and Colossians 3:16-4:1 we again discover parallel commands heading these two lists of responses (wives submit...husbands love...children, fathers, servants, masters). In Ephesians (5:18) it is *“be filled with the Spirit”* at the head of the list. In Colossians (3:16) the parallel command is *“let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom”*. Thus being filled with the Spirit involves filling our minds richly or abundantly with God's words, making them a part of our lives. Walking in the Spirit involves time in God's Book of books every day, sincerely seeking God's ways in His words. But there are many with a great knowledge of the Bible who are not godly people walking in the Spirit. Because letting Christ's word dwell in us richly also involves the determination to put what we discover

into practice in our lives (“*in all wisdom*”), as Ezra *set his heart* in a holy resolve to study, and to do, and teach God’s word. So not only the resolve to know God’s Word, but a commitment to **LIVING SCRIPTURE**.

So walking in the Spirit involves our yielding to solid commitments;

- To a life of loving service.
- To a life of living Scripture.

And with such a holy decision for genuine abiding yieldedness in us the indwelling Spirit of God begins to bear His holy fruit in and through us.

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## **Ponder Points**

Compare the limitations of Christian liberty here in Galatians 5:13-14 with I Corinthians 8-10 (esp. 8:9 & 13), I Peter 2:16, and James 2:8.

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Note the balance between God’s several direct commands and our source of power in the Holy Spirit in Galatians 5. On the question of whether sanctification is by our own effort the answer is yes and no. Compare God’s command to the priests to

go forward with their feet into the water in Joshua 3. Only upon their obedience did the miracle of the dry riverbed open before them. Compare Christ's command to the disciples to "*Give ye them to eat*" (Matt. 14:16). Only upon their failed effort at obedience did the miracle of the multiplication come. The one who would say we must get up and do God's work is right. The one who would say God's work is all of God is right too. It is two sides of the same item.

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#### Contrasts in Chapters 5;

- Liberty and bondage (5:1).
- Standing fast in liberty and falling from grace (5:1-4).
- Liberty and license (5:13).
- Flesh and Spirit (5:17).
- Works of the flesh and fruit of the Spirit (5:18-23).

“Be not deceived;  
God is not mocked:  
for whatsoever a man soweth,  
that shall he also reap”

(Gal. 6:7)

## **Class 10 – Galatians 6:1-18**

The last two chapters of Galatians concern the practice of the gospel;

- In liberty (5:1-12).
- In love (5:13-15).
- In the Spirit (5:16-26).
- In service (6:1-10).
- In surrender (6:11-18).

There is a key phrase found often in the N.T., which seems to sum up Paul's discussion in this section. It is the phrase "*one another*". Some examples;

- "*Love one another*" (at least 12 times in the N.T.).
- "*By love serve one another*" (5:13).
- "*Pray for one another*" (James 5:16).
- "*Edify one another*" (I Thess. 5:11).
- Prefer one another (Rom 12:10).
- "*Use hospitality one to another*" (I Pet. 4:19).

I have read that William Booth, founder of the Salvation Army, unable to attend one of their

international conventions due to poor health, cabled the delegates meeting there a message containing one word: “*Others!*” This final portion of Galatians supports his simple point. We see here a great emphasis on service centred on others. There seems perhaps to be a bit of a contrast within this context;

**Others-centred**

**Self-centred**

Restore sinning brothers (6:1) – desiring the best for others

“*Desirous of vain glory*” (5:26) – desiring the best for self

“*Spirit of meekness*” (6:1)

“*Provoking one another*” (5:26)

In love, help others bear their burdens (6:2)

“*Envyng one another*” (5:26)

Bears his own burdens (6:5)

Thinks himself something when nothing (6:3)

**Chapter 6**

**6:1-10** – Love Applied in Service.

*Gal 6:1 Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.*

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Vs.1-5 – Restoring burden-bearers.

Vs. 1 – “*Overtaken*” – Either in the sense of overwhelmed by the suddenness of sin ascending to dominance or surprised in the exposure of being discovered by others.

“*Fault*” – Apparently referring to open sin of the nature and magnitude to be harmful to the doer and those around him.

“*Ye who are spiritual*” – Those walking in the Spirit rather than after the flesh, and therefore mature and genuinely godly in their responses.

“*Restore such an one*” – The Greek word here is the same used of mending, as of a net. To set right or put straight. Paul does not say “nail such a one”! Do not walk in with a determination to knock him flat or crush him for his sin, though there may be the need to hurt before there is help. Paul does not say “gloat over such a one” or “slander such a one”. This is not about self, but about helping the other back to dignity and integrity, knowing that you may

have need of the same kind of help someday.

We find much encouragement in the Bible to be watchful for problems in the lives of other believers and to take action to deal with it. *“Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works”* (Heb. 10:24-25; 12:14-15).

What you *are* determines how you respond to trouble discovered in others. If spiritual then your heart is drawn out to help. You might seek counsel in how best to proceed. You will likely begin to pray. You will need to go speak to those concerned, difficult though that may be. But you will go with a spirit of meekness, with a goal in your heart to restore the fallen one to spiritual growth.

*“Lest thou also be tempted”* – A sense of our own weakness and vulnerability to sin is meant to temper our approach to others with a good measure of gentleness and understanding.

There is an interesting little shift from plural to singular, from *“ye”* to *“thy”* here, turning the application more to the individuals involved, and pointing up temptation’s very individual, personal threat.

Vs. 2 – *“Bear ye one another’s burdens”* – There are

*Gal 6:2 Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.*

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hard burdens we all face in life, of unimaginable tragedies, of weakness in temptation and sinful leanings. Such are burdens needing others to be there for us to help, to care enough to confront or stand in our way in the strong pull of temptation or in the heavy burden of guilt through temptations succumbed to or in the spiritual failures so common to man or in bitterness erupting in an unguarded moment. Those who are spiritually mature must be there for others at such times. They cannot be put off by the hardness of it. They must not be crushed by the lying cover-up or harsh backlash they may face. They cannot be given to retaliation. Why do those *“who are spiritual”* not respond so? Because their heart is not full of pride, but rather is full of God’s love through a walk in the Spirit.

*“So fulfil the law of Christ”* – The *“law of Christ”* is His *“new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another”* (Jn. 13:34). *“This is My commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you”* (Jn. 15:12).

Vs. 3-4 – If one would be a burden bearer, a lover of

*Gal 6:3 For if a man think himself to be something,  
when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.*

*Gal 6:4 But let every man prove his own work, and then  
shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in  
another.*

*Gal 6:5 For every man shall bear his own burden.*

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his neighbour as himself, then something must be laid aside. Conceit, pride, self-centredness must be put away. For all such vices breed intolerance of others and of their failures, and lead one to think himself above failures or to overlook his own shortcomings more readily than those of others. Compare Philippians 2:1ff; Romans 12:3, 16. The same humility is necessary as well if we would be willing for the help of others in those times when our own burdens are too heavy to carry.

Vs. 5 – The word behind the English “burden” here is different from that in vs. 2. This refers to the normal load we are all meant to bear. In contrast to the word used in vs. 2 speaking of the more overwhelming burdens of life on the verge of caving our strength. For those types of burdens we sometimes need the help of each other.

Vs. 6-10 – Doing of “good”.

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## Story Time

Picture it this way. It is like every believer at the moment of his salvation is given access to two adjoining fields. One called “Fleshly Field” and the other called “Spirit Meadow”. He is given a supply of seed, called “Seeds of Attention”. And he has no assurance as to how long his supply of seeds will last. The two fields are very different from one another. The soil of “Fleshly Field” is dry and cracked because it receives no water at all. The soil of “Spirit Meadow” is rich and healthy because it is continually fed from the “Springs of Living Waters”. And so, with access to the fields and with his supply of seed, the new believer is officially proclaimed a “Fellow Farmer”.

Now our “Fellow Farmer”, being a wise man, he goes to the books. In fact he has been given access to a series of volumes, 66 in all, describing proper, productive, prosperous principles and procedures for particularly profitable planting. In his studies he discovers that planting seeds in “Fleshly Field” produces a surprisingly consistent crop of precisely *nothing!* The seeds just rot, with the one and only result being *loss*, both of his time and of his limited seeds. However through his research he also discovers that every last seed planted in “Spirit

Meadow” eventually results in a harvest of some type of positive fruit. So where do you suppose our wise “Fellow Farmer” is going to begin throwing his seeds? Where else but in “Spirit Meadow”? For to throw them to “Fleshly Field” would involve the same amount of work and might at first give the impression of a profitable use of time, energy, and seeds, but *all* such expenditure will eventually result only in *loss!*

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Paul in this section speaks of where we choose to plant our “Seeds of Attention”. As he does so many times in Galatians, he lays out a contrast. You can spend your time, talents, attention, and resources on your flesh, and you will reap a consistent crop of nothing but corruption. Or you can give yourself to spiritual things, which will result in the fruit of eternal life. This not referring to the eternal life of the believer himself since he was already saved at the moment of faith and can neither earn nor lose the free gift of salvation. The eternal life of others is the point, in the investment of our limited opportunity into the advancement of eternal life in the “soil” of soiled souls around us. Paul used a similar analogy of materials built into a building in I Corinthians 3. The Lord seems to be dealing with one specific aspect of planting or building here, how

*Gal 6:6 Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things.*

*Gal 6:7 Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.*

*Gal 6:8 For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.*

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we choose to share (invest) our material things.

Vs. 6-8 – “*Communicate...in all good things*” – The sense behind “*communicate*” here is to share with others. Paul is not speaking of our conversation, but the sharing of our material “*good things*” or help. Those fed by the Word of God should be ready to benefit those who feed them from God’s Word. It is a response commonly encouraged in the Bible (I Cor. 9:11-14; I Tim. 5:17-18), a response expressing the value one places on biblical instruction. Then immediately following this encouragement to help with the support of those who teach God’s Word we find that well-known passage on sowing and reaping in vs. 7-8. What Paul seems to encourage here is our care as to where we sow our “Seeds of Attention”. If we devote ourselves to spiritual causes there will be a reaping of eternal life and rewards. If we devote ourselves to false or fleshly causes we will reap only corruption. We who would be wise “Fellow Farmers” must place our “Seeds of

*Gal 6:9 And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.*

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Attention” carefully. If we should give of ourselves and material things toward the support of sound church ministries, mission works, tract ministries, sound radio broadcasting, etc., then we are sowing in eternally profitable directions, all aimed at the common goal of “*eternal life*” resulting from the correct teaching of God’s Book of books. But if we give of ourselves and material things toward the support of false teaching, or even unsound “Christian” organisations given to compromise and mere social services then the rewards will not be truly profitable. And of course to spend our time, talents, and tickies on fleshly desires will equally be a dead end.

Vs. 9 – “*Let us not be weary*” – Do not get lazy and quit in the doing of good. Harvest time will certainly eventually come. You will receive for your good though you may have to wait long for it. That “*tree planted by the rivers of water*” only brings forth “*his fruit in his season*” (Ps. 1). Eternal rewards do not grow in “Spirit Meadow” overnight. Every “Fellow Farmer” knows he must wait “*for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it*” (James 5:7). Proverbs suggests that “*If you faint in the day*

*Gal 6:10 As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.*

*Gal 6:11 Ye see how large a letter I have written unto you with mine own hand.*

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*of adversity [difficult times] your strength is small” (24:10).*

Vs. 10 – *“Especially...of the household of faith”* – The special focus of our well doing is to be toward fellow believers. The world should be able to look on and say, “behold how they love each other”. But we must not exclude others around us in such good service. God Himself is our great example in this. Though the focus of His blessing is upon His own children He sends His rain and sunshine upon just and unjust alike.

**6:11-18** – Purposes in Contrast.

Vs. 11 – *“How large a letter I have written”* – Paul often made use of a secretary or amanuensis in the writing of his epistles, as Tertius in the writing of Romans (16:22). Then as he came to the end of his letter Paul would take up the pen himself and write some closing remarks with his own hand. Compare II Thessalonians 3:17, *“the salutation of Paul with mine own hand, which is the token in every epistle,*

*Gal 6:12 As many as desire to make a fair shew in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised; only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ.*  
*Gal 6:13 For neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the law; but desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh.*

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so *I write*". This was done to authenticate the letter, like a signature, as being from Paul himself. Compare I Corinthians 16:21; Colossians 4:18. Paul does the same here but this time ending with a rather lengthy tailpiece.

Vs. 12-13 – A final word on the legalist teachers. Paul further exposes the true motives of the judaizing teachers. We now learn that they were in fact men-pleasing hypocrites. What really drove these false teachers in their corrupting work was their desire to keep the peace with their Jewish clan, or perhaps more precisely to keep *themselves* in one piece. To avoid the persecution of the Jews they must display that they were still holding to the law system. This they did by seeking to bring Christians under law, and by this means attempting to make "*a fair show in the flesh*", impressing the Jews with this evidence that they were still with them. It seems it was not the *truth* they were really concerned with after all, but their own hide. And their hypocrisy went further, in that "*neither they*

*Gal 6:14 But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.*

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*themselves...keep the law*". Having made themselves debtors "to do the whole law" they themselves were not succeeding in this any more than any other. Again, no man is able to continue "in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them". In this they were not being honest with themselves. Such honesty is the beginning of finding real help from God.

Vs. 14 – "God forbid that I should glory" – Such a contrast in purposes we see in Paul. While the Judaizers were looking over their shoulders to the Jews and glorying in "conversions" to their legalist way, Paul was looking to the Lord Jesus Christ and glorying in the cross, exalting in the very thing they diminished through their heresy.

*"The world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world"* – "The world" here takes in the whole summation of things earthly. To all such temporal, transient concerns Paul was aloof, affirming again by this that he was no man-pleaser. He was not looking to any man, attempting to please or impress anyone. He was looking only upward with the entire focus of his

*Gal 6:15 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.*

*Gal 6:16 And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.*

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heart and life to please God. He was dead to the world, with no desire for popularity or acceptance before people. Amazing statement! This apostle was so unbelievably cured of the inroads and effects of pride.

Vs. 15 – Notice how the first part of this verse is the exact duplicate of 5:6. Thus the last portions would seem to be parallel;

*“faith which worketh by love” = “new creature”*

Genuine faith issuing in genuine love is the evidence of a *“new creature”*. By faith we become a new creation in Christ (II Cor. 5:17). And issuing from the reality of this new life within will be a life characterized by love. *“We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren”* (I Jn. 3:14).

Vs. 16 – Those walking in love will at last find the peace and joy they had been searching for in the fields of fleshly self-centredness. To sow love is to

*Gal 6:17 From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.*

*Gal 6:18 Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.*

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receive back in kind.

*“The Israel of God”* – Paul again makes distinction here between those who are Abraham’s children in flesh only and those following both in Abraham’s flesh and faith (3:7). The *“Israel of God”*, of which Paul was a part, clung to the cross and preached the true gospel, whereas the *“synagogue of Satan”* (Rev. 2:9; 3:9) denied the cross, preaching a false gospel of works.

Vs. 17 – *“The marks of the Lord Jesus”* – Paul refers to the scars he bore on his body through the persecutions he had faced for the true gospel he proclaimed, scars received for the most part at the hands of offended Jews. *“Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned”* (II Cor. 11:24). Can you imagine the marks he wore on his body, especially his back?! Those physical scars were the irrefutable evidence that Paul preached not the law but the cross, and a salvation by grace alone, received without human effort or merit. Such

marks the legalist teachers could not show, because their approach was to avoid the offence of the cross.

The Greek word for “*mark*” is *stigma*. Kenneth Wuest states that it was a word used of slaves in the Phrygian temples who were attached for life to the service of the temple, and were thus branded with the name of their deity. Common slaves and soldiers as well were apparently branded with the name of their master or commanding general. The marks or scars Paul had received in his persecutions forever branded him as a servant and soldier of Jesus Christ, tokens he wore to his grave of his faithfulness to Christ’s cause. For “*all that live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution*” (II Tim. 3:12). They were to Paul “*the marks of the Lord Jesus*”.

## Seven Principles of the Harvest

These principles apply whether planting good or evil. We are sowing every moment of our lives.

1. When sowing is done the reaping of a harvest *will* result (“they shall reap”, Hosea 8:7).
2. *What* is sown determines what is harvested, for we reap *in kind* what we sow (“wind... whirlwind”, Hos. 8:7), “*for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap*” (Gal. 6:7).
3. The *measure* harvested will *exceed* what is sown, for the produce is by nature a *multiplication* of the planting (“wind... whirlwind”, Hos. 8:7). “*Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over*” (Lk. 6:38).
4. We reap in a *different season* than when we sow (“*in due [right, appropriate] season*”, Gal. 6:9). Thus a farmer’s patience is required.
5. We reap a full harvest, *if we persist* (“*if we faint not*”, Gal. 6:9). Compare James 5:7.
6. We reap in the same *proportion* with which we sow (“*sparingly...sparingly...bountifully... bountifully*”, II Cor. 9:6), “*for with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be*

*measured to you again*” (Lk. 6:38). The *function* of the harvest is multiplication; the *factor* is determined by us.

- 7.** We cannot do anything about *last year's* harvest, but we can about *this year's*. “*Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before*” (Phil. 3:13-14). Whether to bemoan or to boast of the past, such a backward look will only trip you in your forward progress for the Lord today.

