

Galatians: verse by verse

BBI 2000

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Based on commentaries by William Barkley, Wycliffe Bible Commentary, Holman NT Commentary, Everyman's Bible Commentary, NIV Application Commentary, and the books What's so Amazing About Grace, Phillip Yancey; In the Grip of Grace and The Applause of Heaven, both by Max Lucado and Growing Strong in the Seasons of Life and Simple Faith, both by Charles Swindoll.

Quote:

"This land will remain the land of the free only as long as it is the home of the brave." —Elmer Davis

End of quotation

General Introduction:

William Barkley writes:

Someone has likened the letter to the Galatians to a sword flashing in a great swordsman's hand. Both Paul and his gospel were under attack. If that attack had succeeded, Christianity might have become just another Jewish sect, might have become a thing dependent upon circumcision and on keeping the law, instead of being a thing of grace. It is strange to think that, if Paul's opponents had had their way, the gospel might have been kept for Jews and we might never have had the chance to know the love of Christ.

Galatians has been described as the "Magna Carta" of Christianity. Luther, the father of the Reformation, took the message of grace revealed in the epistle as his battle cry.

You may recall the coup of 1983 which occurred in the Caribbean Island of Grenada. Cuban-backed communists overthrew the government and installed a totalitarian dictatorship. Under martial law, the people of Grenada lost their freedom/liberty literally overnight. Over 100 dissenters, including 50 children, were rounded up and locked in the fort of the capital city of St. George.

President Ronald Reagan quickly called on the military. They struck in the middle of the night. Within a day, the island was free again. The people of Grenada learned that liberty is most precious when it is suddenly taken away.

Something like the coup in Grenada occurred in the first century church. Jewish believers—called Judaizers—invaded the Galatian churches and through legalism tried to steal the people's freedom in Christ. These Judaizers said several things about Paul and his message. They said that:

1. Paul was watering down and cheapening the gospel by saying salvation is through grace alone by faith in Christ. They said he was trying to please the people he preached to by failing to tell them that they needed to keep the Jewish law in addition to faith in Christ in order to be saved.

They said Paul was right in what he said, but he didn't go far enough. Paul should have told you Galatians that in addition to faith in Christ you need to be circumcised, keep the kosher food laws and practice the Jewish religion. They told the new believers in Galatia that if they wanted to have salvation they had to be careful who they associated with. They also told them this was necessary for sanctification.

This was based on the Jewish thinking of the time. The Jews believed that God's promises and gifts were for Jews alone. No Gentile could be given God's blessings or salvation.

There was a type of Jew who arrogantly believed that Jews were "chosen people." They were saved simply by being Jews.

God loves only Israel.

God will judge Israel with one measure and the Gentiles with another.

"The best of the snakes crush; the best of the Gentiles kill."

"God created the Gentiles to be fuel for the fires of hell."

It was illegal to help a Gentile mother in her time of birth, because this would only be bringing another Gentile into the world.

Many Jewish males prayed, "God, thank you that you didn't make me a woman or a Gentile."

This was the attitude of many Jews in Paul's day. Even those who allowed that it might be possible for a Gentile to be saved if he/she became a Jew, felt strongly that salvation came through faith in Christ plus keeping the entire Jewish law.

When this type of Jew heard Paul bringing the gospel to the dispersed Gentiles, he was appalled and infuriated.

2. They denied his apostleship as well. They said men like James, Peter, John had seen the Lord. They were the true apostles. This Paul guy was a latecomer. He had never been appointed an apostle by Christ or the church.

They were very pious. Can you imagine them pulling on their beards and saying, "Paul's a good guy, but he short changed you all. He didn't give you the entire package. He forgot to tell you about the necessity of keeping the law. How could someone like that, who teaches something different than the Jerusalem church, be an apostle?"

3. They said Paul's gospel of grace alone through faith would lead to lawlessness. If the Galatians didn't have rules to follow surely they would fall headlong into all kinds of sinful behavior. How could you expect the new Gentile believers to live holy lives if you took away all the Jewish rules? Didn't the Holy God say in the OT, "Here are the laws I have instructed you to keep. Be ye holy for I am holy." No one can be holy without the constraints of the law.

In answer to these false charges we have the great Epistle of Grace, the Book of Galatians. In it we see Paul's emotions as he defends what to him is a life and death matter. To Paul the matter of legalism, grace, and faith went to the very heart of the gospel. Paul recognized that if the Judaizers had their way, the Galatian Christians would lose their freedom in Christ which he had worked so hard to bring into being. Paul was horrified to see the Gentile Christians, who had experienced glorious freedom in Christ, choose to go back to the slavery of legalism

and law. They had come out of slavery to pagan gods only to consider going into slavery to the law.

Paul saw correctly that if anything was added to grace through faith the cross of Christ was stripped of its power and meaning. If something else but the cross was required for salvation, the cross was not complete. The Galatians would lose the joy that came from walking in the power of God the Holy Spirit. Paul was mad! Concerned! Agitated!

The Writer

Paul identifies himself as the writer in chapter 1 verse 1. Much of chapter 1 and 2 is autobiographical. In chapter 6 he picks up the pen, from the secretary, and tells us that he is writing the closing lines in his own hand probably to authenticate the epistle as his.

There is perhaps no NT book whose authorship is so well-accepted as the Book of Galatians. Even the liberal school of scholars present very few objections to the Pauline authorship.

The Recipients

The letter is addressed to "the churches of Galatia" (ch. 1 v.2). That seems rather straightforward until we try to identify the term "Galatia".

In Paul's time there were two areas known as "Galatia". The term is derived from a people who invaded Italy about 390 BC. They were the Gauls, or Celts. These people invaded Asia Minor appo. 278 BC. By 230 BC. they were confined to an area of north-central Asia Minor and the area was named "Galatia" after them.

In 189 BC they were defeated by Rome. They were allowed to retain their independence, but now as Romans. Between 189 BC. and appo. 40 BC., Rome added additional territory to the province called Galatia. The province occupied appo. the central third of Asia Minor. Galatia was used in an ethnic sense to describe the territory in north-central Asia Minor and in a political sense to describe the entire province of Galatia.

So the question before the house is did Paul write to North or South Galatia?

Fortunately for us, it doesn't really matter. From the study I've done, I tend to choose the South Galatian Churches as the recipients of the letter. They were visited on Paul's first missionary journey. They knew Barnabas (chapter 2 v.1, 2:9,13). Barnabas was only with Paul on the first missionary journey.

There is no good evidence that Paul ever visited the Galatians in the north, surely not while Barnabas was with him. There are many more arguments for and against the north/south position. The message of the epistle does not depend on or change for either group of people.

The Date

The date of the epistle is closely tied to its destination. If it was written to the southern Galatians, it was probably written soon after the first missionary journey, probably before the council at Jerusalem mentioned in Acts 15 which occurred in AD 50. It could have been written as early as AD 48, which would make it the earliest of Paul's epistles.

If it went to North Galatia, it would have been written much later, sometime between AD 52-56.

Again, the date of its writing has no practical bearing on its message of justification by faith alone.

Holman NT Commentary:

IN A NUTSHELL

In chapter 1, Paul explains to the Galatian Christians: I am astonished that you are turning away from the gospel of grace which I taught you to a system of works and law. Anyone who teaches you this should be accursed. I learned this message from Jesus himself, as the church leaders in Jerusalem will verify.

I. Paul's Introduction...1:1-9

A. Salutation...1:1-5

Paul uses the customary pattern of letters written during the first century.

The writer named himself and his addressee, sent greetings, then wrote the main body of the letter.

- v. 1 "Paul", his Gentile name, always used in his work among the Gentiles. "Saul would have been his Jewish name. Paul sets out immediately to defend his apostleship. "Paul an apostle" ("sent one"). Every Christian has a call from God, but Paul quickly adds "not of men/by man" "but by Jesus Christ" and "God the Father". If the Judaizers had any authority, it was from men (the Jerusalem church). Paul says, "My authority is from God!" The word "apostle" meant one sent with a message and with the authority to deliver it. "Raised from the dead"...The risen Christ appeared to Paul and made him an apostle and sent him on a special mission to evangelize the Gentiles.
- v. 2 Also from the Brethren with him, to help support his authority, message.
- to the churches of Galatia.
- v. 3 "Grace and peace" Always in that order. Grace- God's unmerited, unlimited favor by which he extends salvation to us. Grace leads to salvation which leads to peace with God, others, and self. Peace (Hebrew shalom) not possible without grace (charis). An unexpected bonus, sea captain, army officer. No works to earn. Grace/peace can only come from God. "God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ"...Second "from" not in best texts. Tends to sharpen the deity of Christ.

v. 4 Christ gave himself for our sins. Did you hear that! Christ gave himself! To die! To suffer! To be humiliated! For us!
 In our places he took our sins.
 Rescued us from Satan's kingdom.
 Col. 1:13 says Christ delivered us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved son. He delivered us out from under Satan's authority.
 This was done because it was God's will.
 Present "evil" world. The word denotes not just a man who sins, but one who corrupts others. An apt description of Satan.
 The best English word is "pernicious".
 Webster: That which works mischief or destruction. The present evil world not content with corruption, but seeks to drag mankind down to destruction with it (Rom. 1:32).

v. 5 Praise to God forever! For his grace which saves us from both the penalty and power of sin.

Holman Bible Dictionary:

To praise is to recognize the importance of another, the weight the other carries in the community. With God it is to recognize the essential nature of his "Godness" that gives him importance and weight in relationship to the human worshipping community.

End of quotation

Truly God is worthy of our praise.

B. Theme of the Epistle...1:6-9

Instead of expressing thanks to God for his readers, Paul expresses amazement at their defection from the faith. He pronounces no blessing, but hurls a warning anathema (curse).

Paul says for Christians to submit to legalistic rules/slavery is almost beyond comprehension and calls for strong condemnation.

v. 6 "I marvel (KJV)", "I am amazed (NAS)"
to wonder at, to marvel (Gr.)
"Are removed"... "To transpose two things"... "Putting one in place of the other (Gr.)"... "Turncoat" Gr. tense indicates the Galatians were in process of removing themselves from freedom in Christ.

"So soon"... 1 Tim. 5:22... Don't ordain someone too quickly.
"Quickly, rashly, readily"

One who called them ("God")

There was still hope of turning them back. Defection was not complete

"Another gospel". Another of a different kind, nothing like the true gospel.

Today we can do this by saying to new convert,

This is how to be saved,

Join our church

Obey our rules

Submit to our baptism

Practice our traditions

Worship like we do

Work hard, Prove your worth

Earn God's love

In the end if you are good enough, God will accept you.

All works-based gospels are different from the message of grace.

v. 7 Paul says works-based gospel is no gospel at all.

A demand for impossible human achievement is not good news!

Judaizers trouble you. "To disturb mentally" with excitement, perplexity, fear (Gr.)

"Pervert"...to reverse, to change to the opposite, to turn around (Gr.).

- v. 8 Hypothetical case— Even if an angel preaches another gospel, let him be accursed.

"Anathema"— a person/thing devoted to destruction for God or because it is hateful to God.

Jericho cursed, placed under ban for God.

Completely destroyed.

Very strong words. Literally, "May he be damned and go to hell!"

- v. 9 Repeats for emphasis! Anger, intensity.

Said before, not v. 8, previous letter or in person. Paul had apparently warned the Galatians of the Judaizers before.

II. Paul's Apostleship Defended...1:10-2:21

A. A Special Apostleship Affirmed...1:10-17

- v. 10 Paul had spoken harshly. It should be clear now that the charge of the Judaizers that he sought to "please men" was baseless.

The minister/teacher is always faced with the temptation to adjust or change the message in order to suit his hearers. Paul says that would be inconsistent with being a servant of Christ. The servant of Christ preaches the message God gives to him no matter the audience.

Discussion: I was at a lovefeast assisting the officiating minister. his examination sermon didn't touch very much on 1 Cor. 11.

There wasn't any teaching on headship or the woman's veiling. Suppose you are asked to speak at a church where veiling is not practiced very much. Should you speak about it?

Paul had been accused of preaching "easy believism". Can we do that today? How?

To please people is to desert Christ. We must choose: Serve people's fickle pleasures or serve the faithful Christ.

- v. 11 "Certify"...Make known in an emphatic way that which they had already been convinced of (Gr.)

"Brethren"— Tender touch. Lit.— "from same womb" A brother, here plural. Both Paul/Galatians found the source of their regenerated lives in the Holy Spirit. Thus they were children of the same heavenly Father.

"Gospel"...Good news about Christ. Paul did not originate it. It came from Christ. If it had come from man, it would have been works-based.

- v. 12 Paul did not receive his gospel from men, through course of instruction, but by revelation from Jesus Christ. It doesn't get any better than that! Damascus Road and then for 3 years in Arabia. Don't tell me my message is inferior to other apostle's message!

- v. 13-14 I certainly didn't receive my gospel from my religious background/upbringing.

"You have heard" from Paul himself— from the notoriety of his past.

Paul was a driven man. Obsessed with destroying the Christian sect which was so different from his Jewish religion.

"Conversation"— Manner of life— Way of living. Paul was following a good religious system, was very sincere, but sincerely wrong— How can we do that today?

"Persecuted", "Wasted", "Profited"...very strong words. Tense shows that they were a settled way of life for a long time with Paul.

"I kept on persecuting/wasting". Acts 26:9-11.

"Wasting"...devastating— ravage— ruin— destroy.

"Profited"...to blaze a way through forest, to pioneer a path.

This guy was a tiger! He didn't follow conventional paths of dealing with Christians. He thought up new and better ways—

"Traditions"— brilliant student of Gamaliel, one of Judaism's most famous rabbi's.

"Of my fathers"— Jewish background— Important— Pagan background/Normal to convert to Christianity— Jews already worshipped God. Nothing in Paul's background prepared him for his conversion. He made a complete break from his former background.

v. 15-16 God chose Paul while he was still in the womb before he had any impulses or ideas of his own.

Sovereign God who has our lives in his hands. Has a plan for our lives.

Wants us to yield our lives to him. Not just for salvation, but to allow him to choose our paths and direct our lives.

We see this in the life of Samson in Judges 16:17

and in John the Baptist in Luke 1:15.

Psalmist Fearfully, wonderfully made: Knit together (Psm. 139:13, 15, 16).

What Paul is asserting is that he was chosen by God for apostleship before he was born.

"To reveal"...to Paul?— Through Paul to the world? The context and tense speak of God's revelation of himself to Paul who then revealed him to the world. Again God revealed himself to Paul— Not through the apostles.

"conferred not with flesh and blood"— I didn't get my message from the other brothers.

- v. 17 Didn't go to home church at Jerusalem, but went to Arabia. Paul needed to be alone with God, think, ponder on this new gospel God revealed to him. God had blasted away the foundation of the proud Pharisee. For 3 years he restudied OT and, led by the Holy Spirit, discerned God's message for him.
 - "apostles before me"— Showing that Paul regarded himself and the others as essentially the same.
 - "Arabia"...Don't know where Paul means— Word means an arid, sparsely populated place. Plenty of them around in Palestine. Apostles taught for 3 years, now Paul taught for 3 years.

B. Lack of early contact with the apostles at Jerusalem (1:18-24).

- v. 18 Acts 9:19-25...Paul driven out of Damascus, went to see Peter at Jerusalem. Stayed 15 days. Paul went to see Peter to get acquainted with him (see) 15 days, not long enough to learn extensively of the gospel or to become Peter's disciple. Possible sought Peter's advice on what to do next in his ministry. Went to see Peter as a peer, not a persecutor. Shows his equality of apostleship.
- v. 19 Also saw James, the Lord's brother. No one else. Others possibly away. "James Lord's brother"

Son of Joseph by previous marriage, a cousin of Jesus.

Younger son of Joseph and Mary (preferred)

- v. 20 I'm telling the truth! Awkward, but Paul was defending his apostleship and trying to save the Galatians from slavery to legalism. See Rom. 9:1, 2 Cor. 1:23, 2 Cor. 11:31
Paul was very conscious of his reputation for telling the truth. Shows how important it was to Paul.
- v. 21 "Syria and Cilicia"
Syria first because Paul ministered first at Antioch, then at Tarsus.
Cilicia was a district of Syria.
This verse records appo. 10 years of Paul's life. These years were spent around Tarsus and Antioch in Cyprus and Asia Minor.
Barnabas brought Paul to Antioch where he labored for a year or more (Acts 11:24-26). Great courage, son of consolation; he was an encourager.
- v. 22 Paul had been away from Judea for appo. 10 years. Lit. "I remained unknown" Continuous state.
"By face"— lit. "with respect to the face" They did not know Paul by sight— He had left Jerusalem so quickly the Judean churches had no opportunity to become acquainted with him.
All part of his independent apostleship. If he were part of the 12, his work would have been in Judea, under the supervision of Jerusalem church and the 12.
"In Christ" distinguishes Christian from unconverted Jewish assemblies.
- v. 23 "They kept constantly hearing"
"destroyed", "to ravage", "to overthrow", "to make havoc". Paul tried to destroy the faith.

- v. 24 lit., they kept on glorifying. Not Paul, but God who brought the change in him.

Holman NT Commentary:

PRINCIPLES

- Perversion of the truth is more difficult to spot than blatant falsehood.
- God has given us only one way to be saved—through Jesus Christ.
- A teacher may be sincere and still be sincerely wrong.
- Your testimony is a powerful witnessing tool.
- The gospel is true because it comes straight from God and it changes lives.

APPLICATIONS

- Beware of people who say we need more than simple faith in Christ to be saved.
- If you have never put your faith and trust in Christ to save you, then tell him now that you believe and accept him as your Savior.
- Thank God that you are free from the burden of having to earn his love and approval.
- List three changes Christ has made in your life.
- Enjoy the fact that God is working in your life.
- Pray and ask him to work even more.

ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION

1. What does Paul mean by "the present evil age"? Do you have any alternative choice but to live in this present evil age?
2. What substitute gospels do people teach today that tempt people to depend on something besides Christ for security and salvation? How do you talk to people who believe such gospels?

3. What attitudes, actions, and habits do you have that show the world you are trying to please God and not people?
4. How did you hear the gospel for the first time? How do you know it is not something made up by human imagination?

End of quotation

C. Failure of Later Contact to Question his Apostleship or Add to His Gospel...2:1-10

This visit was plainly different than the visit mentioned in v. 18. Here he is accompanied by Barnabas and Titus. He goes with the purpose of having the brethren at Jerusalem validate the gospel message he has been bringing to the Gentiles.

Apparently Judaizers said the visit showed Paul's subordination and inferiority to the Jerusalem apostles. Paul says not so! I went to show them my gospel and they received me as an equal and validated my message (right hand of fellowship).

v. 1 14 years after what? Conversion? Stay in Arabia? No one knows for sure.

Difficult to fit this with the chronology in Acts. Could be famine visit of Acts 11:27-30. But, why would the brethren be suggesting that Paul help the poor when he was bringing a gift? Famine took place around the time of King Herod's death appo. AD 44. Which would give a date of Paul's conversion of appo. 27 AD. Too early (probably 37 AD).

Council of ch. 15? But why would Paul not have mentioned the decision of Acts 15 in Galatians? We just don't know.

"Barnabas"— "Titus"...Apparently as a test case. Titus, a Gentile, would need to be circumcised if the Judaizers were correct.

v. 2 "Revelation"...Acts 15:2— Church sent/Lord confirmed by a revelation.

"Reputation" "To those who were reputed" Paul seems to be downplaying the human leaders in Galatians (v. 6, v. 9). Good lesson for us. The church is Christ's— not the pastors'/teachers'

"Run or had run in vain"...If the Jerusalem brethren would insist on Mosaic ritual it would endanger his work which was built on "grace alone".

Wycliffe Bible Commentary:

Did Paul really have a fear that he was running in vain and had run in vain since his conversion, that he had possibly been wrong about the gospel and now needed to be set right? By no means. But circumstances forced him to submit his message to the apostles, for only in this way could he hope to shut the mouths of his detractors, the Judaizers, and the mouths of those who had been taken in by their propoganda.

End of quotation

vv. 3-4-5 Titus was a test case. If he was forced to be circumcised, then all Gentile believers would have to be circumcised also. If, however, he remained uncircumcised, the Gentile believers could continue on in the freedom of grace alone through faith in Jesus. Paul understood the issue went straight to the heart of the gospel. If circumcision was required, in addition to faith in Christ for salvation, then the gospel was compromised.

King James a bit obscure. Apparently some false brethren (Judaizers) insisted on Titus being circumcised, but Paul stood firm and was not compelled to circumcise him. A further proof of his equality with them and of the correctness of his message. Paul did not resist because of stubbornness, or a feeling of superiority. He knew when to go to the mat with an issue. This was an issue which he understood could not be compromised.

How do we do at picking issues to defend? "Be sure you're right, then go ahead."

Three parties in the Jerusalem controversy:

1. Paul/Barnabas maintained that the Gentiles need not be circumcised.
2. The false brethren (Judaizers) who demanded that the Gentiles be circumcised.
3. The Jerusalem apostles who for the sake of expediency were urged by the false brethren to insist that Paul and Barnabas require their Gentile converts to be circumcised.

"Expediency" "To keep the peace" How far do you go in keeping the peace? Depends on the issue. If it is painting the walls— No big deal.

If it involves "stumbling" someone, it's a different matter.

"Privily" (KJ), "Sneaked in" (NASB)...indicates a gradual infiltration of unsaved Jews who had accepted Jesus as Messiah, but who knew nothing of salvation through grace. They still clung to salvation by works of the Jewish system.

"spy out"...Spying out a city to discover its weak points in a military position.

v. 6-10 In conference with the leaders at Jerusalem, Paul's message was affirmed.

Rom. 1:5— Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles. Acts 9:15, Acts 22:17-21. But he did minister to Jews and "God-fearers" in the synagogues he ministered in.

Paul was to minister to Gentiles/Peter (Cephas— aramaic name) was to minister to Jews. Both were highly successful as they followed God's divine call to them.

Paul's privilege to preach gospel to Gentiles is called a grace (1 Cor. 15:9,10; Eph. 3:2). The leaders at Jerusalem recognized this grace by extending the right hand of fellowship to Paul and Barnabas. Not just formality, but a ringing endorsement of their message and ministry among the Gentiles.

Don't forget the poor brothers at Jerusalem. Rom. 15:26, 1 Cor. 16:1-4 tells us that Paul raised a substantial offering which he took to Jerusalem on his last visit.

- D. His independent authority vindicated in the encounter with Peter at Antioch...2:11-21

The third time Paul meets Peter. On this occasion Paul takes Peter to task because of his inconsistency in eating with Gentiles. Paul is using this incident to show the Galatians that he was not inferior to Peter.

v. 11-13 "Withstood"— "To set one's self against, to withstand, resist, oppose. Verb implies attack from the other side. Paul saw Peter's inconsistency as an attack on his gospel message of grace.

"Blamed"...Paul saw Peter as in the wrong. Not only that, but the other Jewish believers were carried along with their hypocrisy.

"Dissembled"— "Concealing one's real character under the guise of conduct implying something different", "To answer from under" (As an actor who speaks from under a mask)

The church was split wide open. The lovefeast which should have bound the church together was divided into two different groups! They were covering the knowledge of grace because of the fear of the conservative brothers from Jerusalem.

No change of conviction, simply fear of disfavor. Can you believe it! Even Barnabas was carried into this hypocrisy! What a cruel blow to Paul. Barnabas had been like a rock in his defense of the message of grace. Now he caved in because of peer pressure!

Barnabas had become a turncoat! May have played into dissention (divorce) which led to their separation (Acts 15:39). How we can hurt our closest friends/allies. How we can be hurt by our friends.

It was not my enemy! But you my own familiar friend who betrayed me! Et tu, Brute! What a tragedy to be let down by someone you love/trust. Challenge each of us to be committed/faithful.

Peter's example influenced others. Even Barnabas. How carefully we need to conduct our lives in order not to lead others astray. Not to tie our hands, but to avoid putting a stumbling block in another's way.

- v. 14 The truth of the gospel was involved. Peter was a Jew living like a Gentile, now he was compelling the Gentiles to become Jews. he was splitting the fellowship into Jewish/Gentile camps. The unity of the gospel, for both groups, had been affirmed at the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15. Now Peter was negating that decision. The truth of the gospel was involved.

- vv. 15-18 Paul pointed out to Peter that they, as Jews, had to come to the place of simply trusting Christ for salvation, just as any poor Gentile had to do.

Peter had made this declaration in Acts 15:11. Even the OT said no man is righteous (Psm. 143:2).

To be justified (v. 16) means to be declared righteous in God's eyes, to be vindicated of any charge of sin.

Paul says in v. 16 we are saved (justified) through faith in Jesus Christ. Law could not justify—Man could not keep it! Some Jews felt that this lowering of the Jew to the level of the Gentile involved Christ making him an agent of sin. The Judaizers argued that since violation of the law is sin, abandonment of the law in

an effort to be justified in Christ is also sin. Thus Christ is a promoter of sin.

Paul says "God forbid! Perish the thought! May it never be!"

- v. 18 Paul, showing great skill (tact), takes Peter's sin and transfers it to himself. The real transgressor is not Christ, but the one, who like Peter, builds up again a wall that has been torn down. Peter was erecting the wall of Jewish superiority all over again.

Why a public confrontation?

Because of the importance of the issue. Because all the Christians were involved.

What risks did Paul take? Peter could have resisted. Public pressure tends to harden positions. Paul could have taken Peter aside and convinced him of the importance of him correcting his hypocrisy. Some of them may have missed the lesson. Peter may not have heeded the admonition.

How do we determine a public or private confrontation today?

Matt. 18...Go in private. May be thrust upon us. We may have to react to some attack. Generally not as serious if personal, more serious if it affects others.

- vv. 19-21 Paul became exhausted in his zeal for keeping the law. The condemnation of the law drove him to Christ for deliverance from his spiritual predicament. Thus he died to the requirements of the law through his freedom in Christ.

Once the law has enforced the death penalty it cannot do so again. Paul sees himself as dying with Christ (crucified) Rom. 6:1-7. The law has exacted the death penalty, but we are already dead (In Christ), so the law has no more power over us.

- v. 19 "For I through the law am dead to the law"

- v. 20 Magnificent verse! Christianity is not a matter of carefully checking off a list of do's and don'ts. Not a matter of human effort trying to bring off a superior kind of morality, but divine life surging through the Christian (2 Cor. 5:17).
 "I am crucified" I have been and remain crucified. Because I have been raised to newness of life, I live. But it is Christ that lives in me! Incredible! God lives here. Col 1:27, 1 Cor 6:19-20 Col. 2:9..."The fullness of the Godhead bodily" John 14:23, Eph. 4:6, 2 Cor 6:16. What an antidote for discouragement, frustration, and weakness! Truly we are more than conquerors through him that loved us (Rom. 8:37).
 What an incentive not to return again to the slavery of the legalism of the law!
- v. 20 Christ's love/sacrifice for me! How awesome, how wonderful. We must never lose the wonder of our salvation.
- v. 21 "I do not set at naught, make void, or set aside" the grace of God as Peter and the Judaizers have been doing.
 Indeed, if we could be made righteous by keeping the law, then Christ's sacrifice was needless and in vain.
 Everyman's Bible Commentary:
 Quote:
 Only two religions in the world: Christianity which is salvation through grace by faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ or salvation by man's efforts. Unfortunately too much passes for Christianity which smacks of the latter.
 End of quotation

Holman NT Commentary:

The Pure Gospel Stream

The gospel is like a pure stream. Those who drink from it receive eternal life; but when people add requirements to salvation that are unnecessary, the stream gets dirty. The false teachers in Galatia were polluting the gospel by requiring the Christians to obey Jewish law, especially circumcision in addition to believing Christ. Many today would have us return to trying to earn God's favor through following rituals or obeying a set of rules. Whenever anyone tries to earn their salvation, they are falling into the bondage of legalism. Legalism pollutes the stream, changing it from a pure, life-giving stream to a bitter, deadly-toxic stream. When we try to earn God's favor or eternal life, we are drinking from a deadly stream.

PRINCIPLES

- When you affirm others, you give them wings to fly!
- One of the greatest needs of your family, friends and coworkers is appreciation.
- Submission to authority is a sign of spiritual maturity.
- Confrontation is hard but often necessary.

APPLICATIONS

- Look for opportunities to affirm others.
- Express your gratitude to God and others for the good they do.
- Submit to spiritual authority which God places over you.
- Have the courage to confront someone over his sin if God shows you it is necessary.

LIFE APPLICATION

The Wrong Bag

Two bank robbers in Sangus, Massachusetts, walked into a small delicatessen, pulled out their guns, and demanded all the money in the cash register. The owner stashed all the money into a brown bag and laid it on the counter. Nervously, they grabbed the bag and fled.

Later, in a safe place they opened the bag to divide their haul only to be completely surprised. The bag contained two pastrami sandwiches and a slice of baklava. They couldn't believe it. In their nervous haste they picked up the wrong bag.

In the area of legalism and grace it is also easy to "pick up the wrong bag." Legalism's bag has written on it "do." Legalism has within it a long list of deeds one must do to be saved. It offers spiritual sandwiches that are low in nutriment.

Pastor and author Max Lucado gives a similar assessment of legalism when he writes:

A legalist believes the supreme force behind salvation is you. If you look right, speak right, and belong to the right segment of the right group, you will be saved. The brunt of responsibility doesn't lie within God; it lies within you. The result? The outside sparkles. The talk is good, and the step is true. But look closely! Listen carefully. Something is missing. What is it? Joy. What's there? Fear. (That you won't do enough.) Arrogance. (That you have done enough.) Failure. (That you have made a mistake.) Legalism is slow torture, suffocation of the spirit, amputation of one's dreams. Legalism is just enough religion to keep you, but not enough to nourish you. So you starve. Your teachers don't know where to go for food, so you starve together. Your diet is rules and standards. No vitamins. No zest. Just bland, predictable religion (Max Lucado, *He Still Moves Stones*, Dallas: Word Publishers, 1993, 128-129).

In contrast to legalism stands grace. The bag of grace has written on it the word faith. Under "faith" is written John 3:36, "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life." In contrast to legalism, grace has no rules, code or ritual. It is an invitation directly from the heart of God simply to believe and receive. It has no price tag. Paul states in another passage, "For it is by grace you have been saved, through

faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast" (Eph. 2:8-9).

Yes, legalism and grace are the two bags that rest on the counter of life. While the legalists may claim that their bag is full of wealth, in all reality, it is just an old bag with some dry, spiritual pastrami and baklava. The good news is that the wealth is found in grace. The bag of grace is full of forgiveness, joy, and eternal life. Which bag have you picked up? Which bag is in your possession? Legalism or grace? It will be a sad surprise to reach heaven's gate to find that your bag is full of worthless legalism. It will be a sad plight to enter eternity utterly destitute. All religion, apart from grace, is worthless legalism. Beware! Which bag is yours?

Holman NT Commentary continued:

IN A NUTSHELL

In chapter 3, Paul gives six points to show the Galatians the superiority of grace over law. (1) By grace, salvation and the Holy Spirit are given. (2) Abraham, the father of our people, was saved by grace. (3) Grace gives redemption and salvation; the law brings condemnation. (4) Abraham was saved by grace hundreds of years before the law was given. (5) The law's purpose is to act as a guide that leads us to Christ. (6) By grace a love relationship with God and one another is obtained.

Raging Rapids

C.H. Spurgeon, the "Babe Ruth" of the Christian ministry, told a story about two men in a boat caught in severe rapids. As they were being carried swiftly downstream toward the perilous rocks and falls, men on the shore tried to save them by throwing out a rope. One man caught the rope and was saved. The other man, in the panic of the moment, grabbed a log that was floating alongside. It was a fatal mistake! The man who caught the rope was drawn to shore because he had a

connection to the people on land. The man who clung to the log was carried downstream by the rapids...never to be found. Faith is like grabbing the rope from shore; it's our saving connection to Jesus Christ. Good works, like grabbing onto the log, carry men to their doom.

That is the point that Paul makes in Galatians 3. In response to the Judaizers who emphasize salvation by works, Paul clearly argues that faith in Christ is superior to obedience to the law. Paul knew that the message of salvation through grace by faith in Christ is a saving "rope" that leads men to eternal life. He also knew that salvation by works, which the Judaizers preached, was a "log" that would carry anyone clinging to it to their spiritual death. Paul uses six strong arguments in this chapter to prove conclusively that grace is superior to the law.

End of quotation

III. Paul's Gospel Explained...3:1-4:31

A. The Argument From Experience (The Galatians)...3:1-5 (1st argument)

Paul says the Galatians entered into freedom in Christ by faith in his death and that the Holy Spirit was given to them as a proof of their new life. Are they now going to throw away the freedom, in Christ, and return to the slavery of the law, to the folly of keeping the law through their own efforts?

v. 1 "O Foolish Galatians"— Surprise mixed with indignation. Could be translated, "You dear stupid idiots of Galatia" or "O Galatians who fail in the first characteristic of the Galatians, namely the ability to use their heads."

"Bewitched"...from the popular metaphor of the evil eye. You obviously aren't using your heads. What evil influence has you in its grip?"

"Jesus Christ set forth"...Placarded, the act of setting up public announcements. Speaks of a father posting notice that he would not be responsible for debts of his son. Here it means a public announcement proclaiming the fact that Christ has been crucified. This placard should have been enough to ward off the evil eye. Perfect tense— Risen, ascended, Christ who had been crucified, who was alive, whose glorified body still bears the marks of the nails and the scars of the crown of thorns and is the living Savior by virtue of his atoning work on the cross.

- v.2 Tell me only this one thing! I rest my case on this argument alone—How did you receive the Spirit? Of course the answer was through faith in Paul's message of grace.
- v. 3 "Made perfect"...To bring to the place where it is complete. Describes a spiritually mature Christian, one living a well-rounded, well-balanced, mature life.
"Flesh"...All the effort of the unsaved man, body, soul, and spirit controlled by his totally depraved nature.
The OT has no provision for an indwelling, sanctifying Holy Spirit. The Judaizers were drawing the Galatians away from reliance on the Holy Spirit to the demands of the law.
How foolish to think you can bring yourselves to a state of spiritual maturity. Only the Holy Spirit can do that (Phil. 1:6, 2 Cor. 8:6).
- v. 4 "Suffered"...They had suffered as a result of becoming Christians. Don't know how, but Acts 14:2, 5, 19, 22 are a start.
"If it really is in vain"...(I don't know whether to believe that you are really deserting grace.)
- v. 5 "Therefore"...Continues and emphasizes thought of vv. 2-3.

"Ministereth"... "To supply abundantly or bountifully", "liberally". God the Father through the Holy Spirit had bestowed miracle-working power upon certain members of the church. Also he was working to sanctify members of the church. These were current works of the Spirit. Even though the Judaizers were hindering his work. The point is the Galatians still had the confirming working of the Spirit to show that salvation came through grace by faith in Christ. Paul says do these works/miracles come by law or grace(faith)? They didn't even know about law when they were saved! Yet they were forsaking the gospel for a system which had no evidences to prove its veracity.

B. The Argument From Scripture...Abraham...3:6-9 (2nd argument)

vv. 6-9 Paul now goes to OT to show that the revered patriarch, and father of the Jews, depended on faith for righteousness. Only those with a faith like Abraham will be blessed by God.
See Rom. 4:9-12

vv. 6-7 Abraham was justified by faith (Gen. 15:1-6, Rom. 4:3, James 2:23).

The real children of Abraham are not his natural descendants, but those who share his faith (Matt. 3:9, John 8:38-44).

v. 8 This was anticipated in the language of the covenant which had all nations in view. Abraham was faithful in the sense of being full of faith. His justification is available to all nations. This is their promised blessing, not a guaranteed salvation just because they are Jews.

C. The Argument From the Law...3:10-4:11

1. The Curse of the Law from Which Christ Must Deliver...3:10-14 (3rd argument)

Paul, having proved that physical descent does not guarantee salvation, now proceeds to the other refuge of Judaism, the possession of the law.

v. 10 Faith brings blessings, but the law produces a curse, because you are never done fulfilling its requirements (Deut. 27:26).

vv. 11-12 Not only is it impossible to be justified by law, but God uses another method anyway (The just shall live by faith... Hab. 2:4, Rom. 1:17). Paul is stressing that one can become just in God's sight only by faith.

v. 12 (Amplified): "But the law does not rest on faith—does not require faith, has nothing to do with faith—for it itself says, he who does them (the things prescribed by the law) shall live by them [not by faith]. Lev. 18:5

v. 13 Christ purchased our freedom at Calvary. The law condemned us/Christ took our curse by hanging on a tree. Deut. 21:23 emphasizes the element of curse. Christ, the perfect one, took the place of the lawbreaker. Even though he was perfect, he had to endure the same penalty as any other who came under the curse of the law.

v. 14 What was the blessing of Abraham? Justification. Jesus Christ through his death brought justification to the Gentiles. Another blessing we receive is the Spirit through faith.

2. The Inviolability of the Covenant of Promise and its Priority to the Law...3:15-18 (The argument from the permanence of the law— 4th argument)

Paul says a covenant, by nature, is fixed, not subject to change. This is true even of a human covenant. The promise of faith cannot be set aside by the law, which came much later.

- v. 15 "Speak after the manner of men"...technical expression. Paul is adjusting his speech to the human point of view. He wants to be sure they understand his point.
 "Brethren"...Love, urgency, conciliation in his tone.
 "Covenant"...One of two individuals obligating himself. It refers here to an agreement in which God enters into covenant relations with Abraham and in which he promises to justify him on the basis of his faith in the atonement which he would someday offer. God made that covenant. God would not void it 430 years later (v. 17).
- v. 16 The promises were made to Abraham and his seed. Not all descendents of Abraham ("seeds"), but to Christ (3:19). Christ brought to an end the age of Law.
 Corporate sense of Christ is found again in 1 Cor. 12:12.
- v. 17 The promise to Abraham enjoyed priority over the giving of the law since it came 430 years before the law. The law could not possibly set aside the previous arrangement that God made and confirmed.
- v.18 Judaizers said salvation rested upon promise and the law. Paul says if the law affects the promise at all it makes it null and void. It cannot be added to it without destroying it. Salvation either rests on promise or on law. But Paul says God gave it to Abraham by promise. No one can change that fact!
 "Gave"— a gift given out of the spontaneous generosity of the giver's heart. With no strings attached. Same root as "grace".
 Difference between law / grace. This word shows that promise

is by grace freely given. Law is by obligation to earn salvation by good words.

3. The Purpose of the Law— Temporary in its standing and negative in its operation...3:19-22 (argument from the purpose of the law...vv. 19-25— 5th argument)

Paul has been pointing out the law's deficiencies, which leads to the question, what is the purpose of the law?

v. 19 "Transgressions"— To step beyond a fixed limit into forbidden territory, a deviation from the right course of action. The law came not just to point out that we willfully disobeyed God's specific laws. This revelation of the true nature of sin would cause man to fear God's wrath. Thou shalt, Thou shalt not. Law given to show that sin was a violation of God's commandments.

Added alongside till Christ would come. To prepare the way for Christ to come. Grace flowed full and free from Adam to Abraham to Moses to Paul to the present. It will be in force as the only way in which God saves sinners till the great white throne. The promise is permanent, beginning before and continuing through the period of the law.

"Angels"...Acts 7:53, Heb. 2:2. At Sinai the law was given through two intermediaries, angels and Moses. The people stood afar off. Grace says, "Come near." Law says, "Stand off." Several hundred interpretations.

v. 20 Mediation assumes two parties. But God is one. God acted alone in the covenant with Abraham (Gen. 15). God needed no one to stand between himself and Abraham. Paul's point: Mediation shows God's remoteness, shows the inferiority of law to promise. God is one: He acts alone when he offers salvation through grace. Grace is superior to law.

v. 21-22 The law does not oppose the promise of God. It operated in a different sphere. Life could not come by the law. Those who enjoyed spiritual life under the law had it by grace, which forgave the sins committed against the law.

Illustration: A father discovers his son has disobeyed his commands. He calls the son's attention to the law he broke, pronouncing him guilty, thus letting the boy see his sin in its true light. The son repents; the father forgives. The father is not in conflict with himself.

God is not in conflict with himself when he uses the law to show man his sin. We will not cry out for salvation until we realize we are lost.

4. Sonship Not Through the Law But Through Faith...3:23-4:7

v. 23 Man could not come by faith under the law.

"The faith" of v. 22...Like Abraham's faith but different.

Abraham looked forward; We look back.

"Kept"....to keep, guard under lock and key

Law convicted of sin, pointed forward by faith in Christ.

v. 24 "Schoolmaster" (paidagogos)...A slave employed in Greek or Roman homes who had general charge over a boy from about years 6-16; Watched his behavior; Went with him when he went to school; Entrusted with moral supervision of the child. Quite different from "schoolmaster".

"Kept" (v. 23)...Guardian of a child in its minority. Emphasizes both the inferiority of law to grace and its temporary character.

v. 25-26 "The faith" in Christ (v. 22-23)

Argument From the Believers Present Position...vv. 26-29 (6th argument)

You Galatians have salvation by faith. Why would you want to go back to the paidagogos after you have graduated from his supervision?

"Ye"...includes both Jew/Gentile. Wall broken down between them at the cross.

"Children"...Someone of full age. They had outgrown their need of the guardian of the law.

vv. 27-29 Baptized into Christ when they put faith in him as Savior.

The Holy Spirit placed them in vital union with Christ.

Baptism...(Rom. 6) somehow puts us in union with Christ.

Salvation doesn't come by baptism, but it is a very important step of obedience which places us in union with Christ.

"Put on"...clothing oneself with strength, righteousness, glory, salvation.

Chrystostom says, "If Christ is Son of God, and thou hast put him on, having the son in thyself and being made like unto him, thou hast been brought into one family and one nature."

One heart now beats in all. No class, racial distinctions. These are merged in that higher unity of our common life in Christ.

One mind guides all the mind of Christ.

Judaizers taught the Galatians they become children of Abraham by keeping the law. Paul says no! By faith in Christ! To be in Christ, belonging to him makes us Abraham's seed since Christ is that (Gal. 3:16-19). Sonship makes the believer also an heir.

Holman NT Commentary:

PRINCIPLES

- Some people have mental barriers preventing them from believing in Christ. It is our responsibility to help distinguish between legalism and righteousness that comes by faith.

- Our inability to obey the Ten Commandments perfectly shows us that we need Jesus Christ as our Savior.
- If observing the law could have saved us, then God would never have sent Jesus to die on the cross.
- The law was a guardian personally taking us by the hand and leading us to Jesus Christ—our personal Lord and Savior.
- Christ breaks down the barriers that divide people (v. 28).

APPLICATION

- Recognize that God's entrance requirements for heaven is perfection.
- Realize that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23).
- Allow your imperfections to humble you before God.
- Put your faith in Jesus Christ for forgiveness and eternal life.
- Thank God that his "grace way" is the best way.
- Rejoice that you now live under God's blessing and not sin's curse.
- Do not consider yourself as inferior or better than anyone else. We are all equal in Christ.

ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION

1. What are some ways people seek right standing with God other than the way of grace through faith? Why are these ways tempting?
2. How was Abraham a representative of the faith way of salvation even though he lived almost two thousand years before Christ? When did God initiate the faith way of salvation?
3. When did God decide that salvation should not be given only to Jews but also to Gentiles?
4. How does the law lead us to Christ?
5. What does it mean that we are all one in Christ? What distinctions have been extinguished? Which distinctions still remain true?

"It is doubtful if there is any greater joy on earth than the joy of being free. And the ecstasy is heightened if a person has once been in bondage, held captive by a power that is impossible to overcome. Being liberated from such clutches brings pleasure beyond description."

—Charles Swindoll

IN A NUTSHELL

In chapter 4, Paul explains the glorious reality of what it means to be God's children and how awful it would be to forfeit such a privilege. Thus he warns his readers not to listen to the false teachers seducing them away from Christ and back into slavery to the law rather than freedom in Christ.

End of quotation

4. Sonship not through the Law but Through Faith (continued)

4:1-3 The minor child who is an heir is no different from a servant.

He is under control of those who have been appointed to care for and educate him.

Just so we were like minor children, under the law. We were heir to salvation through faith, but we were guarded / controlled by the law.

4:4 "Fullness of time:... Time appointed of the father (v. 2). God

decided when to send Christ into the world. The law required a long time to do its work, but when God saw that everything was ripe for Christ, he sent him into the world. Roman world

uniquely prepared for Christ:

Universal language (Greek)— communicate the gospel

Roman roads to spread the gospel

Roman peace (pax romonas)— stable conditions, protection for missionaries.

"Made of a woman"...stresses his virgin birth and his humanity.

"Made under the law"...circumcised, presented, reared in terms of the law's requirements, fulfilling all righteousness.

4:5 Christ kept the law perfectly in order to redeem his people from the bondage and curse of the law and to secure for them the adoption of sons.

4:6-7 This adoption is attested by "the Spirit of his son", the Holy Spirit, whose mission is to further and apply the work of the son. He confirms to the Christian his salvation by his testimony in his heart.

"Abba"...aramaic for "Papa", "Da-da", "Father" (Greek)...Mark 14:36, Rom. 8:15,16

Sonship rules out servanthood and includes heirship. The Holy Spirit is the guarantee of these future blessings (Eph. 1:13-14).

5. An Appeal Not to Return to Bondage...4:8-11

Paul turns, once more, to the Galatians and their situation regarding legalism and liberty.

4:8 Before conversion, they served things which were not gods (idols, Zeus, Hermes). They did not know God; God did not know them (in the sense of having a relationship with them through faith).

4:9-10 But now you do know God. He knows you. He lives in you. His Spirit testifies to your spirit. How can you now go back to a state of slavery to the law?

How weak the law is compared with grace. Apparently Judaizers first told them about the necessity of keeping Jewish days/feasts, the more pleasant side of obedience to the law (The Galatians were already observing these things).

Apparently the Galatians had not yet fully accepted circumcision (Gal. 5:2).

4:11 Paul was afraid his hard work / sacrifice would be for nothing if legalism were to continue and increase.

D. The Argument From Personal Reception by the Galatians...4:12-20

The attitude of the Galatians toward Paul stands in sharp contrast to their original appreciation of him as God's messenger.

4:12-13 Paul pleads with them to throw off the yoke of legalism. Paul used to be a Jew, bound by legalism, now he was free. He had become like a Gentile in his relationship to the law. Back in the days when I first visited you and shared the gospel with you. You did me no wrong. You accepted me.

4.14 You even resisted the temptation to despise me when I had a loathsome illness. But you all received me as an angel, even as Christ.

What a contrast—Now the Judaizers were tempting them to despise Paul and his message and authority.

4:15-16 They congratulated themselves on being visited by an emissary of the Lord. Their gratitude was unbounded. They would have sacrificed their eyes for Paul. Some feel this indicates the disease of ophthalmia, a disease which causes much pain and discomfort and causes a repulsive appearance.

Paul's illness:

1. The Galatians observed its repulsive symptoms and still showed tender sympathy to Paul.

2. The Galatians knew that Paul had intended to go to the mainland of Greece. He was detained among them by the illness.
3. It incapacitated him from travel but allowed free discussion with them.
4. His sick chamber was his pulpit. He won many to Christ while he was ill.
5. He says in v. 15 that they would have given him their eyes if possible. Points toward an eye problem along with 6:11 ("You see how large letters I have written")

In the lowlands of Pamphylia, which Paul passed through, the oriental eye disease of ophthalmia was prevalent. We don't know for sure what the disease was. Could be Paul is just singling out the eyes because of how important they are to us. Paul could have contracted malaria which would have caused him to have repulsive symptoms and would have weakened him for further work.

In v. 16 Paul contrasts his truth-telling with Judaizers' falsehood. "Affect"...to strive after— to earnestly desire and to play court to as a lover plays court to his lady. The Judaizers were standing on their heads to win the Galatians over.

4:17-18 Paul told the truth. They flattered and paid false affection to the Galatians to win them over.

In case they would think Paul was writing out of self-interest, he says he is not averse to having others minister, but only the true gospel. The Judaizers tried to keep other teachers away from the Galatians. "Exclude" from Paul or from grace, to hem them in so they had nowhere to turn but to the Judaizers.

4:19-20 Paul's pain and concern like a woman in labor. Paul knew they had been saved. Now he earnestly desires for them to become like Christ, to walk in the freedom of grace (Eph. 4:13, Phil. 3:10).

Paul desired to be with them in person. Then he could speak softly to them as a mother to an erring but beloved child.

"Change his voice"...from harsh to soft.

E. The Argument From the Covenant of Promise...4:21-31

Paul had called the Galatians "children" (4:19). Now he tells them a story to show them their folly (Story-telling very effective method of teaching—David/Nathan).

4:21-23 If you desire to be under the law listen to the law (Gen. part of Pentateuch). Ishmael born of slave Hagar; Isaac born of Sarah, a freedwoman. Ishmael born naturally, Isaac by promise of God.

4:24-25 Allegory— Story capable of telling truth. In addition to the simple historical facts of the account. These two women are like two covenants. Hagar like covenant given on Mt. Sinai, the Law of Moses. As Hagar left the land of promise and went to the bleak desert, so the Galatians had done in departing from Christ.

"Sinai" in Arabia...Interesting sidelight. Normal location in Sinai Peninsula. Evidence has been found locating it in Saudi Arabia. "Jerusalem"— Sad to say, not just you Galatians are in bondage, but many Jews are also. Jerusalem is symbolic of Judaism.

4:26-27 Another Jerusalem (allegory) refers to a present spiritual reality. The heavenlies of Eph. 1:3 and the City of the Living God of Heb. 12:22.

Here (v. 27) Paul quotes Isaiah 54:1, showing future glory and triumph for Israel based on the work of the suffering servant

(Christ). Like Sarah who was barren and then fruitful. The church was enjoying many more spiritual children than Judaism. Judaism was static and losing ground to Jewish believers in Christ.

4:28-31 NT saints are children of promise. Isaac was persecuted by Ishmael (Gen. 21:9). The Galatians were persecuted by legalists (Gal. 2:3- Titus).

The trial did not last; Hagar was cast out. The Judaizers did not have the authority or the blessings of God. Their work must come to naught.

"Legalists in our churches today warn that we dare not teach people about the liberty we have in Christ lest it result in religious anarchy. The Christian who lives by faith is not going to become a rebel. Quite the contrary, he is going to experience the inner discipline of God that is far better than the outer discipline of man-made rules." —Warren Wiersbe

Holman NT Commentary:

IN A NUTSHELL

In chapter 5, Paul explains to the Galatian Christians: Through grace, Christ has set you free. Stand firm, and do not fall back into the slavery of the law. Yet do not use your freedom as an opportunity to sin. Do not give yourself over to the deeds of your carnal desires but rather to the deeds of the Holy Spirit.

End of quotation

IV. Paul's Gospel Practiced...5:1-6:15

A. The Gospel Practiced in Liberty...5:1-12

Refusal to become circumcised was a prime token of the enjoyment of this liberty.

- 5:1 NAS— "**It was for freedom that Christ set us free**". AV not too clear. Paul follows this declaration of fact with an appeal to stand in that liberty. Do not get tangled up again in the slavery of law. There are some ways in which it's easier to live in slavery than freedom.
- Ex: Israel in OT wishing to return to Egypt.
Men at mission who have been at prison.
Men at mission who are making the transition back into the real world.
Someone makes your decisions for you. No responsibilities, food, clothing shelter are provided. Someone to answer all questions. It's easy to be a slave.
The Galatians / and us / tending toward legalistic rules and control. Freedom can be scary. But it is also exhilarating.
- 5:2-4 One must choose between Christ and circumcision. This is spoken of Gentiles / not Jews. There would be no reason for a Gentile to be circumcised except as a deliberate attempt to create merit, by adopting a legalistic position and seeking righteousness by works. In the beginning circumcision had no such connotation. For Abraham it was a sign and seal of his covenant with God. But over time it had become a legalistic badge of merit. Because of this Christ could not profit the recipient of circumcision who had, in reality, placed himself under obligation to do the whole law. To assume circumcision meant to leave the ground of grace (fallen from grace) in favor of the lower and impossible ground of self-righteousness.
The true believer stands in grace (Rom. 5:2).

- 5:5 The legalist is bogged down with insecurity. He never knows when he has done enough to satisfy the standard of divine righteousness. The one who stands on grace through faith, who has the Spirit as a pledge of his acceptance with God, confidently waits by faith the consummation in glory (the hope of righteousness (Rom. 8:10-11)).
- 5:6 Paul has shown faith's hope. Now he shows its outreach in love. Circumcision or the lack thereof makes no difference to the one who is in Christ. What counts is love (Rom. 13:8-10). Faith operates through love. Love is the only workable way to meet the demands of the law. It's so easy for us to be right doctrinally, but unkind and unloving. Ever know anyone like that? I've known Christians who had their doctrine down pat. They knew exactly how many angels could stand on the head of a pin! But they were cold, harsh, unbending, and unloving. To be around them is not uplifting— it's depressing. They major on critical, unkind remarks. Never have a positive thing to say. You would think they had drunk pickle juice! How awful—What a contradiction in terms for that kind of person to call themselves Christian! Any of us ever been like that? Any of us still like that? Let's check our love tanks and be sure they are full. Let's major on seeing the positive and the good in others.
- 5:7-10 Paul is using the word picture of the running games. The spiritual progress of the Galatians has been arrested. Someone has cut in ahead of them and tripped them up. Paul has spoken generally of the Judaizers before. Here he seems to be mentioning one individual. Perhaps he is thinking of the ringleader. This propaganda did not come from the one who called and started them in the race (1:6).

The Galatians had been deceived by false teaching. Paul quotes a familiar proverb to emphasize his point: "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump."

Probably there were only a few who had accepted the Judaizers' teachings, but Paul warned them to be on their guard lest the error spread. If it was honestly faced it could be stopped. If it was ignored it would grow and split the church wide open. Important for us to deal with problems in our lives and in our churches. We can't please all the people all the time. If we don't deal with issues and discipline sin in our midst, it will cause dissention and confusion in the body.

Paul expresses confidence that they would do the right thing (Apparently they did). But he reminds them that whoever leads others astray is liable to severe punishment. Christ says, "Better to be drowned in the depth of the sea than to cause one of these little ones to go astray."

5:11-12 Some may say Paul was inconsistent. He had Timothy circumcised (Acts. 16:3). This was a special case. Timothy was a half-Jew with a Greek father who had not circumcised him. If he would have gone with Paul as a Jew, to the Jews it would have created needless opposition with the Jews (How would they know?). Paul did not compromise the gospel. In fact the proof that he did not preach circumcision lay in the fact that he was still persecuted for not preaching it (v. 11). Offense of the cross— to Judaism was that salvation came by grace alone through faith. No works of the law were needed, thank you very much! Man is helpless to earn salvation. That was very offensive to the legalizers because it took away the need for effort, works on their part. In fact, Paul says in a very strong statement, "I wish they would mutilate themselves." Paul is speaking of castration. Like a castrated man has lost his ability to reproduce, so may these

Judaizers lose their ability to make new converts among you. Paul is dealing with white hot emotion which leads him to this very strong statement.

The town of Pessinus was the home of the worship of Cybele, in whose honor the heathen priest practiced castration. Paul says, "They are insisting on circumcision, I wish they would not only amputate the foreskin but would go on to completely castrate themselves."

We see that Paul saw circumcision as purely an outward form or habit, done simply to gain favor in God's eyes while missing the true meaning of being in covenant relationship with God.

How easy it is for us to do things because...."We've always done it that way!" Never mind if it makes sense, if it enhances our walk with God. It is simply form / habit. How carefully we must watch this.

B. The Gospel Practiced in Love...5:13-15

Liberty and freedom can lead to license and sin. We need to constantly guard this. The one effective counter-measure to this is to serve others / God by "love".

If we love others we will not sin against them.

If we love God we will not disobey him.

You are very zealous to keep the law which I told you will lead to bondage. If you are really looking for bondage, let me recommend that you be in bondage to serve each other in "love" (Rom. 13:8). The OT says, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." (Lev. 19:18).

Christ said the first commandment is "Thou shalt love the LORD thy God and him only shalt thou serve." Second like it— "Love your neighbor as yourself."

There was a great need for love to be exercised in the Galatian church. Sharp fightings and bitter strife, probably between those who sided with the Judaizers and those who did not.

How we need this admonition today! Fighting, gossip, character assassination, are out for the Christian who walks in love. Argument without love result in continuing friction

C. The Gospel Practiced in the Spirit...5:16-26

This section with its contrast between the flesh and the spirit is very important if we are to win the battle against the desires of the flesh. This is a legitimate warfare as contrasted with the biting / devouring of 5:15.

5:16-17 Walk in (by) the Spirit...Daily yield to him. Allow him to umpire your decisions. Emphatic promise, "Ye shall not at all fulfill the lust of the flesh".

Flesh and spirit are opposite, locked in conflict with each other. If the Christian is walking by the power of the one, he cannot be controlled by the other.

5:18 To realize victory over flesh, one must be led by the Spirit. Then Paul makes an interesting deduction. Instead of saying, "If you are led by the Spirit you will not be under the control of the flesh", he says you will not be under law. Paul sees a close bond between flesh and law. Law leads to pride, legalism, hairsplitting.

5:19-21 Works of the flesh will flourish in an atmosphere of legalism. Note the flash of irony! Look at the accomplishments of the flesh:

First, the sensual sins:

Adultery Unlawful sexual relations with a person who is married to someone else

Fornication— Unlawful sexual relations with one who is unmarried.

These words are used in KJV. But actually, the Greek says, "immorality, impurity, sensuality." The word adultery is not in the best texts.

Immorality is a very broad word, covers all kinds of sexual activity outside of marriage.

Impurity or uncleanness means sensual impurity.

Sensuality— One who acknowledges no restraint— one who has ceased to care what others say or think about its actions.

Next, Religious Sins:

Idolatry— Worship of an image or the God represented by it

Witchcraft— pharmakia (Gr.)— The use of drugs. Always used in a bad sense in the Bible. The whole practice of the magician's art—Also called sorcery in KJ.

A third class includes the temperamental or social sins:

Hatred— Opposite of love— Enmity and hostility; the word is plural in the Greek text.

Variance— Contention, Strife, Fighting, Discord, Quarrelling, Wrangling

Emulations— Jealousy; the unfriendly feeling when another prospers, the eager desire for possession created by seeing another's possessions

Wrath— Passionate, violent outbursts of anger or hostile feeling.

Seditions— Dissensions and divisions

Heresies— One choosing an opinion varying from the true exposition of the Word of God; A body of men separating themselves and following their own beliefs. May have reference to Judaizers.

Envyings— Not just desiring what others have, but grudging the fact that the other person has the things at all; the quality of an embittered mind.

Murders— Possible to murder in your mind— 1 John 3:15, 1 John 2:9, 1 John 4:7-8

In a fourth class:

Drunkenness— Not a serious problem in the ancient world. Greeks drank more wine than milk. Even children drank wine. Both Greeks and Christians would condemn drunkenness.

Revelings— Nocturnal / Riotous procession of half-drunken and frolicsome fellows; drinking parties

The one who habitually practices these things shall not inherit the kingdom of God (v. 21). 1 Cor. 6:9-10. A believer may fall into these sins but should not habitually practice them. Need to keep our minds pure. Guard very carefully what we feed our minds on. Trashy novels, soap operas, pornography all feed the flesh. If we feed on these we will probably engage in the works of the flesh. Need to feed the mind on good, wholesome material.

5:22-23 The Fruit of the Spirit

All these fruit stand in contrast to the deeds of the flesh already listed.

What a desirable list for us to strive for in our lives. How important for self-examination. The word "fruit" is singular, emphasizing the unity and coherence of the life of the Spirit. This in contrast to the disorder and disharmony of the life lived in the flesh. It is possible that the singular (fruit) may point to Christ in whom all the fruit abound in complete perfection.

The way to produce these fruits is to become more and more Christlike.

Romans 13:14 tells us to "...make no provision for the flesh in regard to *its* lusts."

Gal. 5:16 says, "... walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh." So a secret to fruit bearing is to put on Christ and to yield to the Spirit.

Love— Crucial to the Christian— 1 John 4:7-8, 1 Cor. 13:13, Gal 5:6

Agape— The selfless, Godlike love which loves in spite of the response of the beloved. Its chief ingredient is self-sacrifice for the one loved.

Joy— Conferred by Christ upon his own followers (John 15:11). Mediated by the Holy Spirit (1 Thes. 1:6, Rom. 14:17).

Depends not on outward circumstances but on a deep, inner joy based on one's relationship to Jesus Christ.

Not happiness, but joy.

Peace— The gift of Christ (John 14:27). Includes inward repose (Phil 4:6).

"Peace of God" not "Peace with God"

Tranquility of mind based on the consciousness of a right relation to God.

Long-suffering— Relates to one's attitude toward others and involves a refusal to retaliate or work vengeance for wrongs received.

Speaks of the steadfastness of the soul under provocation; forbearance and patient endurance of wrong under ill treatment.

Gentleness (Kindness)— Benevolence in action.

This should pervade the whole character, mellowing it from that which is harsh and austere.

Goodness— An uprightness of soul that abhors evil, a clean-cut honesty of motive and conduct, that quality in a man who is ruled by and aims at what is good, namely the quality of moral worth.

Faith— Faithfulness (See Titus 2:10—"fidelity") produced in the life of the saint who is yielded to the Holy Spirit

Meekness— Based on humility and denotes an attitude toward others in keeping with due denial of self. Strength under control, as a gentled horse. Mildness, gentleness in dealing with others.

Temperance— Self-control. Lit., "a holding in with a firm hand" or control of the self life by means of the Spirit.

"Possessing power; strong; having mastery or possession of. Continent, self-controlled.

The mastery of one's own desires and impulses.

"...Against such there is no law"— Law is to restrain evil, but the fruit of the Spirit have nothing to restrain. Rom. 8:4

5:24-26 Those who are truly Christ's must be like him in that they participate in his cross. They have crucified the flesh.

Ideally, this points to our identification with Christ in his death (Gal. 2:20).

Practically it emphasizes the need of carrying the cross principle into the redeemed life, since the flesh, with its affections and lusts, is still an ever-present reality (Gal. 5:16-17). We "live" in the Spirit by our own choice to daily yield our wills to him. If we are walking "In the Spirit" we will not be desirous of "vainglory" (ambition for self and frustrated when unsuccessful). "Vainglory" provokes competition to which the stronger respond in kind and the weaker are moved to envy.

Holman NT Commentary:

PRINCIPLES

- Everybody is a slave to something...either good or bad. You cannot expect to harvest the fruit of God when you are sowing the seeds of evil.
- It only takes a few cancer cells of sin to infect and destroy vital spiritual organs.
- Freedom in Christ does not give us the right to do as we please, but the liberty to do as we ought.
- God must work in me so he can work through me.

APPLICATIONS

- Choose your bondages well. Make yourself a slave to Christ.
- Catch sin early. Like cancer, it spreads.
- Imitate Jesus in all you do.

ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION

1. In what ways does the church with its programs and rituals threaten to enslave us and thereby keep us from the freedom Christ wants us to enjoy in him? What can we do to ensure that we are not enslaved to the church? What can we do to make sure the church is enslaved to Christ?
2. How does faith express itself? What evidence of faith do you see in your own life? In the life of your church?
3. Why does freedom in Christ not give you freedom to enjoy the pleasures of the world?
4. How do you keep in step with the Spirit?

"It is easy to talk about the fruit of the Spirit while doing very little about it. So Christians need to learn that it is in concrete situations, rather than in emotional highs, that the reality of the Holy Spirit in their lives is demonstrated." —James Boice

IN A NUTSHELL

In chapter 6, Paul advises the Galatian Christians: In light of the gospel of grace and the power of the Holy Spirit (chap. 5), you are now free to help others. You can help them in three ways. First, you can help other Christians carry their burdens (6:1-5). Second, you can help your pastor(s) by financially supporting them. Third and finally, you can help others by serving them with pure motives.

End of quotation

D. The Gospel Practiced in Service...6:1-10

Christians still have a law to fulfill— the law of Christ. They can fulfill it only in the power of the Spirit, as they serve one another in the fellowship of the church.

6:1-5 "A man"...one like you, subject to like passions, Liable to fall."
 "Be overtaken"— apprehended, taken by surprise, caught in the act. Apparently refers to a Christian being overtaken by the sin before he is aware that he has done wrong.
 "Fault"— A lapse, a false step, a blunder, a failure to achieve.
 A Christian who desires to do right but who does not give the Spirit control and thus falls into sin.

A sinning saint needs restoration as well as divine forgiveness. The one qualified is "spiritual", possessing to a notable degree the fruit of the Spirit, especially love and meekness. The one who restores must meekly realize that he may someday fall into sin and need to be lovingly restored.

A true spirit of helpfulness should lead to helping to bear one another's burdens. Contrast Luke 11:46. The Law of Moses is described as a burden, but the law of Christ is not a burden (1 John 5:3). His burden is light (Matt. 11:30).

The warning in 6:1 is carried over in 6:3. Over-evaluation of oneself is deception. Let each man test his own work (not someone else's). If he passes the test, he can rejoice in his own works. His feelings will be of gratification and contentment rather than pride and superiority over his brother.

This burden is the burden each saint should feel for the spiritual welfare of his fellow saints, especially when they have sinned."

"Bear his own burden"..."Soldier's pack". Each of us have certain areas of temptation in which we must continually resist Satan.

The burden of self-examination is one we must bear alone.

Not one of us can give account for another before a holy God (Rom. 14:12).

6:6-10 Paul returns to the thought of bearing each other's burdens, specifically giving support to those who are in Christian work.

v. 6 NAS: "And let the one who is taught the word share all good things with him who teaches."

"Communicate" "To share" "To be a partner in a thing with a person"

By sharing our material things with our teachers, we are participating in the work of the Lord.

This is God's plan. Don't try to set it aside. "God is not mocked" "Turning up the nose"...No one can successfully snub God or stand against his principle that "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap". (See also 2 Cor. 9:6)

A selfish Christian sows "to his flesh", spending his resources to gratify his own personal desires. That which might have brought reward by being invested in the Lord's work will be nothing but a decayed mess.

On the other hand, responding to the Spirit in love and kindness, and gladly participating in the extension of the

gospel by supporting Christian workers, will add interest to the capital of eternal life.

This passage fits well with v. 7.

The specific issue of giving leads naturally to a consideration of the more general theme of doing good which is sowing. The harvest will come in "due season".

Two spheres of Christian good are suggested. "All men" (everybody, pagan and Christian) and the "household of faith", which are the special responsibility of the Christian.

"Blood is thicker than water." We are related to each other as Christian brothers and sisters.

If one refuses to care for his family (and believers are the family of God), he is worse than an unbeliever (1 Tim. 5:8).

E. The Gospel Practiced in Separation From the World...6:11-15

Paul uses this final section as a means of underscoring some of the emphases of the epistle as a whole, stressing the centrality and sufficiency of the cross and the division it created between believers and men of the world.

6:11 NAS: "**See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand.** "

Not in length— Galatians is not a long epistle.

Here Paul took the pen from the hand of the scribe and wrote the final portion in his own hand. He was in the habit of dictating his writings to a secretary who wrote them for him.

Paul returns to the Judaizers and circumcision in v. 12 and exposes their motives.

They desired to make a "fair show" (a good outward appearance in the sphere of the flesh).

Not in the Spirit, because they are walking by the flesh.

If they would teach the sufficiency of the cross without circumcision they would be persecuted.

Concision (cutting party)...Phil. 3:2

Paul has told their real motive. Now he reveals their professed motive (zeal for the law).

They took one item (circumcision), an external one, and made it stand for the entire law.

Paul would not glory in circumcision, but in the cross (by whom Christ) the world with all its allurements was crucified to him. (He was dead to the world. Utterly separated from it unto Christ.) Paul cared not for comfort or reputation as the Judaizers did.

What truly counts is not circumcision, but the new life that comes from being in Christ Jesus.

This amounts to a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17). "New"— That which is superior to the old.

V. Conclusion...6:16-18

A. Closing Prayer...6:16

"Rule"— Canon, standard of faith

The cross of Christ and the message of grace that centers there.

For those who walk by this rule Paul requests "peace" and merciful, loving kindness. He prays for the same blessing for the "Israel of God"— probably refers to Christian Jews such as Paul himself. These are the real Israel as opposed to those who merely bear the name (Rom. 2:29).

B. Closing Testimony...6:17

If any wished to question Paul's devotion to Christ, let them realize that the marks of persecution which he bore on his body, scars suffered for

the sake of the Lord Jesus, spoke more eloquently than the marks of circumcision which the Judaizers loved to impose on others as the proof of their zeal (See 2 Cor. 11:23-29). Paul bore the brand-marks of a slave of Christ. He was marked as his bondsman.

C. Benediction...6:18

This parting word with its emphasis on "grace" summarizes the message of the epistle as a whole. Nothing could be more appropriate.

Holman NT Commentary:

PRINCIPLES

- Love is bighearted not bigheaded.
- Legalism condemns while grace restores.
- You impress others with what you know. You impact others with how you love.
- Conceit is deceit. The one who toots his horn the loudest is usually in the deepest fog.
- Life is like a boomerang; what you throw is what returns to you.
- You harvest spiritually, mentally, relationally, and physically in direct proportion to what you plant. There are no miracle crops.
- Not only our deeds, but also our motives, are important.
- Spiritual change is an inside job begun with the new birth and sustained by a new power—the Holy Spirit.
- Scars for Christ here on earth produce stars from Christ there in heaven.

APPLICATIONS

- Put yourself in others' shoes before you judge them harshly for sin.

- Put yourself in others' shoes before you turn away from their material needs. We cannot help everyone, but we must be sensitive to the Lord's leading.
- Do what you can to be sure your church is meeting your pastor's needs.

ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION

1. In what way does your church function as a community to restore sinners and carry other believers' burdens?

Chuck Colson, founder of Prison Fellowship, tells a remarkable story of the power of grace being manifested in a prison near the city of Sao Jose dos Campos, Brazil. Twenty years ago the Brazilian government turned the prison over to two Christians, who renamed it Humaita, and began to run it on Christian principles. With the exception of two full-time staff, inmates do all the work. Families outside the prison adopt an inmate to work with during and after the term of imprisonment. Colson heard about the prison and one day visited it. He reported:

When I visited Humaita I found the inmates smiling—particularly the murderer who held the keys, opened the gates, and let me in. Wherever I walked, I saw men at peace. I saw clean living areas, people working industriously. The walls were decorated with Biblical sayings from Psalms and Proverbs. My guide escorted me to the notorious prison cell once used for torture. Today, he told me, that block houses a single inmate. As we reached the end of a long concrete corridor and he put the key in the lock, he paused and asked, "Are you sure you want to go in?"

"Of course," I replied impatiently, "I've been in isolation cells all over the world." Slowly he swung open the massive door, and I saw the prisoner in that punishment cell: a crucifix, beautifully carved by the Humiata inmates—the prisoner, Jesus, hanging on a cross.

"He's doing time for the rest of us," my guide said softly. ("Making the World Safe for Religion," Christianity Today, 8 November 1993, 33).