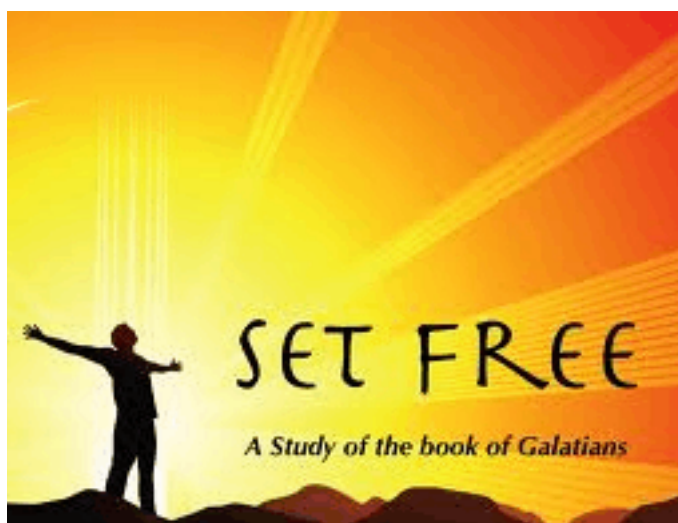


# THE BOOK OF GALATIANS



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## THE BOOK OF GALATIANS

## INTRODUCTION

**I. THE AUTHORSHIP**

This epistle (letter), bears the distinct mark of Paul's personality as in comparison with any other of his writings. Every since the first gathering together of the Pauline writings in a corpus (a collection of writings by one author) early in the second century AD, the book of Galatians has been given a secure place among them. This book remains as a solid witness to the many facets of the character of this great apostle to the Gentile people. We find recorded a brief but concise testimony of his pre-Christian life (1:13 ff). In some ways it is surprising that he only gives a little bit of detail about his conversion - yet what he does say is very significant. He was called to be an apostle from the time he was in his mother's womb (1:1,15,16).

This epistle reveals an intensely human man. It also reveals a rugged independence that is fixed upon the Word of God. We find throughout this letter the words of a preacher not a theologian. He wrestled out his theology on his feet. He makes it clear that he did not receive his messages from men but rather directly from God (1:11,12). All of this could make a man boastful but Paul kept his life in balance. He saw himself not only as an apostle (a position of honor), but also a slave (a position of humiliation). He had been freed from the **bondage of the law** but he maintained that he subjected himself to becoming a **bondman for Christ**.

Paul was a Hebrew from birth and belonged to the strictest of the Jewish sects, that of the Pharisees. He had studied the Law under Gamaliel, who was considered to be one of the leading Jewish teachers of the day. Paul also had the opportunity to understand the Gentile world. He was born in Tarsus, in which his father had the distinctive privilege of gaining Roman citizenship. He was surrounded by Greek culture. Tarsus was third in importance as a university centre for Greek studies (after Athens and Alexandria).

## II. THE AIM

“Wherever religion has lost its reality, wherever ritual is more regarded than right living, wherever subscription to a creed is substituted for submission to Christ, wherever loud claims of orthodoxy are accompanied by conduct devoid of charity, wherever deeds of self-righteousness are obscuring the glory of the cross, there this epistle should be made to sound out its clarion call to a new dependence upon justifying grace, to a faith that is shown by works, to a walk that is by the Spirit, to a life inspired by love.”

Charles R. Erdman  
“The Epistle of Paul to the Galatians”  
p. 5

This epistle was destined to become the *Magna Charta* of spiritual freedom.

“The Epistle to the Galatians stands in relation to the Roman letter, as a rough model to the finished statue . . . Two dominant themes in Galatians which are given equal emphasis in Romans are the insistence on justification before God by faith, apart from legal works, and the presentation of the Spirit as the principle of the new life in Christ which believers enjoy as freeborn children of God.”

J.B. Lightfoot  
“The Epistle to the Galatians”  
p.49

Paul was able to help his readers see that when the substance had come, the shadow could disappear; when Christ had fulfilled the law, he became an “*end to the law*” to everyone who believed in him. Paul was convinced that even in the Old Testament, men were saved by grace through faith in God as He had revealed Himself.

Paul also understood the great “*mystery*” that in Christ, the Law that separated the Jew and Gentile, had been done away with, and that by faith in Jesus Christ both the Jews and Gentiles formed one body, the Christian Church and yet each able to maintain their distinctiveness without becoming disunified.

## II. THE AIM (Contd.)

Many did not share Paul's beliefs. The Judaizers insisted that even though Jesus was to be accepted as the Messiah, it was necessary for everyone who professed their faith in Him to observe with all the strictness of the Law, the ritual that Moses had established. These legalists used the Scriptures to support their views. They showed the sanctity of the Law. They also argued that Christ was careful to observe the requirements of the Law.

This letter is in response to the disturbing news that the Judaizers had visited the Galatians and were persuading the new converts to accept a different form of teaching than what they had been taught. Paul calls these people *“trouble-makers”* (1:7; 5:10) or *“agitators”* (5:12). They were trying to impose on the Galatian Christians some of the requirements of the Jewish Law - namely circumcision. It also seems to indicate that they were trying to get these converts to observe the Jewish special days according to the Jewish calendar (4:10).

“The Galatian converts were being urged to observe ceremonies of the O.T. law as integral to the gospel and to accept a doctrine of justification by personal merit.”

F. F. Bruce  
 “Commentary on Galatians”  
 p. 22

They attempted to gain credence for their cause by disparaging Paul and casting doubt on his apostolic credentials. Paul therefore spent a great deal of time on his commission to being an apostle of Jesus Christ.

They projected Paul as one who played both sides of truth - He proclaimed freedom from the Law to the Gentiles while continuing to keep the Jewish feasts and take upon himself Jewish vows as well as glory in his Jewish heritage. Paul argued that he observed them so as not to offend his Jewish friends but he also believed that it was not necessary for the Gentile believers to observe the Jewish ceremonies and practices.

Paul wanted the church to practice their belief through **faith not ritual.** This faith had to be so real as to involve complete submissions to God's will, so vital to manifest God's virtues and so true as to follow the perfect law of love.

### III. THE DESTINATION

There has been an increased argument about to whom this letter was addressed to. Did it belong to Galatia proper or to the larger Roman province known by that name? The former view is known as “*North Galatian Theory*.” This would include the churches located in the cities of Ancyra, Pessinus, and Tavium which would have been established on Paul’s Second Missionary Journey.

The “*South Galatian Theory*” would include the churches located in Pisidia, Iconium and Lystra, and Derbe which Paul founded during his First Missionary Journey. The provincial district of Rome was established in 25 B.C. on the death of King Amyntas who had reigned over the areas of Pisidia, Isaura, part of Pamphylia, West Cylicia, Lycaonia, and Galatia. The Provincia Galatia therefore stretched from Pontus on the Black Sea to Pamphylia on the Mediterranean.

In other words the term Galatia could describe either the geographical district in the north of the province or the province as a whole. Up until the eighteenth century, no commentator seemed to have disputed the northern geographical district. At this time the renowned R.W. Ramsay (1851-1939) wrote a commentary in 1899 based upon a systematic survey of Central Asia Minor along with a comprehensive and detailed study of epigraphy (a scientific study of inscriptions) and classical literature.

The Greek word for “*Galatia*” is a variant form of the word “*Celts*.” The Celts were first seen as residents of Central Europe in what was known as the Danube basin. Jerome quoted the Christian writer Caecilius Firmianus Lactantius stating that they were so called because of the whiteness of their skin. He believed that the name was derived from the Greek word “*γαλα*” meaning “*milk*.”

Due to the fact that many competent scholars stand on both sides of the argument suggests that neither is absolutely conclusive. Yet it should be said that the weight of evidence seems to favor the South Galatian viewpoint.

Another important area of evidence is found within Scriptures themselves. In Acts 16:6 it is noted that they traveled through the Phrygian and Galatic region. Again in Acts 18:23 this area is mentioned as Paul was making his back to Ephesus after leaving Palestine. Other references include I Corinthians 16:1; Galatians 1:2 and I Peter 1:1.

#### IV. THE DATE

Once again we are confronted with different conclusions. Those agreeing to the South Galatian Theory center their thoughts around the dividing line of the time seen in Acts 15 (the Jerusalem Council) which is believed to correspond with Galatians 2. A second theory brings Acts 11:30 and Galatians 2:1-10 together in time. Another way of dating is by comparing the doctrinal development found within the writings. We find that the Thessalonian epistles are mainly eschatological (future events) while Galatians contains few hints of such a doctrine.

We do know that Paul was converted around 29-30 A.D. Some believe that the doctrine of the Galatians is too mature to be placed during the earliest stages of Paul's epistles.

"It is often forgotten that as many years passed before he wrote any epistle . . . It is impossible to suppose that a mind as active as that of Paul would not have reached considerable maturity after such a period of extensive thought on the major themes of Christianity."

Donald Guthrie  
"The New Century Bible Commentary of Galatians"  
p. 37

If we believe that this epistle was written early we would place it about 15 years after Paul's conversion (i.e., 45 A.D.). If we choose the later date, it would have been written during Paul's third missionary journey (Acts 18:23ff. Between 55 & 60 A.D.).

#### V. THE MODERN RELEVANCE

It was this epistle along with the Book of Romans that played a significant part in thinking and actions of Martyn Luther in bringing about the Reformation. His commentary on Galatians is a notable exposition of Reformed doctrine. He saw the Judaizers as examples of legalists in religion, and therefore as vivid examples of any religion system in which its approach to God was based upon legal requirements. Paul's justification by faith became the kingpin of Luther's reform.

We also must guard against this form of bondage by well meaning people.

## V. THE MODERN RELEVANCE

### A. Proclaiming a Serious Warning against Legalism

The Judaizers were very sincere in what they believed - but they were sincerely wrong. Whenever the doctrine of Justification by faith in God is proclaimed, believed and acted upon, the result is a dynamic Christianity that affects both individuals as well as nations.

### A. Proclaiming a Serious Warning against Legalism (Contd.)

People find security in maintaining a well-defined list of duties. It seems easier for some to apply themselves wholeheartedly to a fixed procedure than to an exercise of discipline in personal faith.

### B. Proclaiming A Serious Warning against Libertinism

The other side of the coin is clearly seen in our nation since the adoption of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. We have accepted a freedom without responsibility. We have endorsed a self-centered system of law that denies any rights to the unborn and is quickly moving to support euthanasia and infanticide. We have drunken drivers and people high on drugs that escape justice because they didn't know what they were doing. The list goes on and on.

In Christianity we must be very careful that we don't use our freedom for an opportunity for the flesh to have its way (5:13). Paul makes it clear that we must crucify the flesh with its desires and passions (5:24). We are not to use our Christian liberty to become a stumbling block to each other.

### C. Proclaiming a Message of Non-Complacency and Non-Compromise

We may appear as too stringent, but we must not move an inch on this issue. Paul adopted a firm line whether on matters of doctrine or discipline. He knew that strong church could only be built that way.

Paul used three main foundations to build his belief upon.

#### 1. Direct Quotations of The Old Testament

Paul uses Deuteronomy 27:26 as recorded in 3:10 referring to the curse of the Law (as well as in 4:21, 4:27)

**V. THE MODERN RELEVANCE (Contd.)**

**2. Indirect Quotations of the Old Testament**

This can be seen when comparing 1:15 with Isaiah 49:1, Jeremiah 1:5; 2:16; Psalm 143:2. Also Galatians 6:16 seems to allude to Psalm 125:5.

**3. Allegorical Usage of the Old Testament**

The example of Sarah-Hagar and their sons Ishmael and Isaac as recorded in Galatians 4:21-31 is a notable case.

**C. Proclaiming a Message of Non-Complacency and Non-Compromise (Contd.)**

This epistle has been rightly regarded as the charter of Christian freedom. As long as its teaching is heeded, the church will never become enslaved in the bondage that men unintentionally create.



## THE BAD NEWS ABOUT GOOD NEWS

### Chapter 1:1-10

Paul had devoted his life to preach the Good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Before the churches had time to grow, they were bombarded with Judaizers who were convinced that the people needed to be taught differently. Paul begins this letter like a runner at full speed. He realizes that he only has a little time to save these new converts from the deceitfulness of these false teachers.

There are three main points to Paul's argument

#### I. HE EXPLAINS HIS AUTHORITY (1:1-5)

#### II. HE EXPRESSES HIS ANXIETY (1:6-7)

#### III. HE EXPOSES HIS ADVERSARIES (1:8-10)

#### I. HE EXPLAINS HIS AUTHORITY (1:1-5)

**1:1** - *“Paul an apostle”* - The name *“Paul”* was a common Roman surname. It was found frequently in classical literature, inscriptions and papyri. It was originally an aristocratic Roman name and was later used by many newly enfranchised citizens. Beyond the fact that Paul was born a Roman citizen, we know little of his origin. He certainly never had a drop of Roman blood in his veins.

##### A. His Ministry (1:1-2)

Paul highlights his claim of being an apostle in direct contrast to those who were trying to fight against him. The word *“apostle - “αποστολος”* is used to explain his claim that he was commissioned by Jesus to preach the gospel with authority and to plant thriving churches. In early Greek writing, the word was used to describe a naval expedition (i.e., when someone was commissioned to represent Greek interests in foreign service). Among the Greek-speaking Jews, it was used also to describe authorized representatives, (special messengers with a special status) either an individual or a body of persons. When Christ came the word “apostle” was used to describe those who were commissioned by Christ as bearers of the Gospel. This is the way this word is used in all of the 79 instances that we find it used in the Scriptures.

According to Acts 1:22-26 there were two main requirements for being an apostle. **First,** they had to be an eyewitness of Christ's ministry from the time of John the Baptist up until the resurrection. **Secondly,** they had to be chosen for this office by Jesus Himself. The twelve apostles (including Matthias) all qualified. There is no indication that the number had to be limited to twelve men.

**I. HE EXPLAINS HIS AUTHORITY (1:1-5)(Contd.)****1:1 A. His Ministry (1:1-2) (Contd.)**

Paul claimed to have fulfilled the conditions as a result of his Damascus Road experience. Luke endorses Paul's claim and also mentions Barnabas (Acts 13:2; 14:14). Others listed as apostles are James (I Corinthians 15:7) and Silas (I Thessalonians 2:6,7, cf. 1:1).

“In the first clause he distinguishes himself from the false apostles, who did not derive their commission from God at all [whereas] in the second he ranks himself with the Twelve, who were commissioned directly by him.”

J. B. Lightfoot

It is interesting that Paul used other words to describe his calling as well. In Romans 1:1 he calls himself *“a slave or servant.”* In Philemon 1 he calls himself *“a prisoner of Jesus Christ.”*

*“sent not from men nor by man”* - The reason why Paul became an apostle was NOT because of some man-made endorsement (Acts 9:15). In the final analysis no man can make another a servant of God. God simply allows us to lay hands upon those He has already chosen. The NEB translates it as *“not by human appointment or human commission.”*

*“But by Jesus Christ and God the Father”* - The only way to question Paul's authority would be to question the authority of the other apostles. It's not surprising that they would question Paul. After all, the Jewish leaders questioned both John the Baptist (John 1:19-28) and Jesus' authority (Matthew 21:23-27).

*“who raised him from the dead”* - Remember that it was Paul's experience with the risen Lord on the Damascus road that convinced him that Jesus was alive and set the foundation for his call to be an apostle.

**1:2** - *“All the brothers with me”* - Paul didn't feel he needed a group of men to defend any of the false charges brought against him so he doesn't name them as he had in his other epistles. The word *“brothers - αδελφοί”* was used to describe those who belonged to a religious community.

*“To the churches in Galatia”* - The following explanation seems to put the whole picture into perspective.

**I. HE EXPLAINS HIS AUTHORITY (1:1-5)(Contd.)****1:2 A. His Ministry (1:1-2) (Contd.)**

“Several hundred years before the birth of Christ, some fierce tribes migrated from Gaul (modern France) into Asia Minor, and founded Galatia, which means *‘the country of the Gauls.’* When the Romans reorganized the ancient world, they made Galatia a part of a larger province that included other areas, and so they called the entire province Galatia. So, back in Paul’s day, when a person talked about Galatia, you could not be sure whether he meant the smaller country of Galatia or the larger Roman province. Bible students are divided over whether Paul wrote to churches in the country of Galatia or in the province of Galatia. The former view is called the “north Galatian theory” and the latter the ‘south Galatian theory.’ The matter is not finally settled, but the evidence seems to indicate that Paul wrote to the churches in the southern part of the province of Galatia - Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, Derbe - churches he founded on his first missionary journey (Acts 13-14).”

**B. His Message (1:3-4)**

**1:3** - *“Grace and peace to you”* - The word *“grace”* (Greek - *“charis”*) has two meanings. The first is *“sheer beauty”* while the other is *“undeserved generosity.”* This word is very important especially to a church that is struggling whether salvation by grace is sufficient.

The word *“peace”* (Greek - *“eirene,”* Hebrew - *“shalom”*) is also important. It speaks of the state of favour and well-being into which men are brought by Christ’s death on the cross and in which they are kept by God’s persevering grace. The Galatians were both falling from grace and losing their peace by turning from the uncorrupted gospel.

**1:4** - *“who gave himself for our sins”* - The message of the cross is an important theme of this book (See 2:19-21; 3:1,13; 4:5; 5:11, 24; 6:12-14).

*“To rescue us from the present evil age”* - Jesus not only came to offer us a complete forgiveness of past sins but also to free us from the realm of sin that we once found irresistible. Therefore, He not only forgave us of the guilt of the past but also from the power of sin over our lives. Jesus came to proclaim liberty to those who were captives (Luke 4:18).

## I. HE EXPLAINS HIS AUTHORITY (1:1-5)(Contd.)

### C. His Motive (1:5)

**1:5** - *“To whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen”* - Like the doxologies which append the first four books of the O.T. psalter (Psalm 41:13; 72:19; 89:52; 106:48), the NT doxologies also end with *“Amen.”* In its simplest form it meant *“let it come to pass.”*

In stark contrast to the false teachers, Paul wanted his ministry to bring glory to God (I Corinthians 10:32). Those who seek personal glory often find it on earth but they will be very disappointed when they stand before God.

## II. HE EXPRESSES HIS ANXIETY (1:6-7)

**1:6** - Paul makes it clear why he is so concerned about their actions. *“So quickly”* seems to indicate that either Paul was referring to a time shortly after their conversion; shortly after the false teachers arrived; or shortly after Paul left to continue his journey. The word *“deserting”* is used both of military revolt and of a change in attitude. It was a serious case of defection. Paul was speaking of their carefully planned move from liberty back to legalism. We can only fail when trying to follow a gospel that centers on works and not one that centers upon grace. Anything other than the pure gospel (100%) is a perversion.

**1:7** - *“which is really no gospel at all”* - Legalism is never the gospel message. The gospel is *“good news”* while legalism becomes a form of bondage to a series of rules and regulations, often dictated by man. Our relationship to God should never be based upon satisfying the claims of a group of LAWS but rather a consistent attempt to meet the obligations set forth by God’s LOVE. Love makes us want to obey while the Law forces us to do so.

*“Some people are throwing you into confusion”* - It is an awful thing when people play games with our minds. The word used here is also translated *“trouble you.”* It speaks of physical agitation, sometimes mental disturbance and sometimes seditious activity.

*“Trying to pervert the gospel of Christ”* - The word *“pervert”* means *“to transfer to a different opinion.”* It meant that the Galatians were being swayed to change their belief in the message of the gospel. They were not just **twisting** the gospel, but rather they were **transforming** it into something totally different from it originally had been.

## II. HE EXPRESSES HIS ANXIETY (1:6-7) (Contd.)

“Indeed, the Church’s greatest troublemakers (now as then) are not those outside who oppose, ridicule and persecute it, but those inside who try to change the gospel.”

James Montgomery Boice  
“The Expositors Bible Commentary”, Vol 10, p. 428

## III. HE EXPOSES HIS ADVERSARIES (1:8-10)

The true test of a man’s ministry is not his popularity (Matthew 24:11); or miraculous signs and wonders (Matthew 24:23-24); but rather his faithfulness to God’s Word (Isaiah 8:20; I Timothy 4; I John 4:1-6). The apostle John even warns us not to associate with those who are false teachers (II John 5-11).

**1:8** - *“If we or an angel . . . ”* - The outward appearance of the messenger does not validate the message; rather, the nature of the message validates the messenger.

*“Let him be eternally condemned”* - The word used here is *“anathema”* which is closely related to the Hebrew word *“herem.”* (cf. Joshua 7:1, 20f). The Hebrew word had a meaning of *“ban”* and was used during the time of a holy war where everything and everyone were to be devoted to God for destruction. Read Acts 23:14 for a further use of this word in the NT. To the Jew, everything had to be completely devoted to Yahweh. Anyone who disobeyed was considered as cursed and their judgement brought about their death.

**1:9** - *“now I say again”* - Paul repeats his warning in order to impress upon the Galatians the seriousness of the false teachers and those who were being led astray. It was upon Jesus hearing a false gospel, one without a cross, that Jesus said, *“Get behind me Satan. You do not have the mind of the things of God, but the things of men.”* (Mark 8:33).

*“Other than that which you accepted”* - This is the only change from verse eight. The emphasis shifts from the messengers to the recipients. The gospel needs to be more than just preached - it needs to be received and acted upon.

**1:10** - *“Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God?”* - This is, of course, a rhetorical question. It is easy to see how deceivers can take our words and twist them to say something we never intended (cf. I Corinthians 9:22). Paul knew that it was foolish to try to persuade God into changing. This action is only done by religious charlatans (*“one who falsely claims to have expert knowledge or skill”* - Webster’s) and practitioners of magic.

### III. HE EXPOSES HIS ADVERSARIES (1:8-10) (Contd.)

**“I would not be a servant (slave) of Christ”** - Paul made his life unreservedly available to God for the sake of others. Those who try to please men will ultimately have to choose whether God’s will or man’s will is to be followed. The choice should be clear.

These opening words show Paul as a defender of the faith. He does so throughout the book in three ways. The first is a **Personal Approach (chapters 1-2)**; his second is a **Doctrinal Approach (chapters 3-4)**; and his third is a **Practical Approach (chapters 5-6)**.

#### PAUL’S AUTOBIOGRAPHY (How God Works Through our Weaknesses)

##### Chapter 1:11-24

Before Paul begins his short autobiography, he once again reemphasises the fact of how he received the revelation of the Gospel.

**1:11- “I want you to know”** - The verb used here is “**Ἐνοπιζω**” means **“to make known or to make clear or to certify.”** The thing that Paul wants to make clear is actually three things. **First**, he wanted them to understand that the gospel he preached was **“not something that man made up.”** It is not within our normal thinking to come up with a message that is central to the cross and the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

**1:12** - **“I did not receive it from any man”** - **Secondly**, Paul uses an interesting set of words that describe the process of memorization by which the rabbis passed along their rabbinic traditions to their students. Later on, Paul used this word to describe the process in which he passed on this revelation to the Church (I Corinthians 15:1,3).

**Thirdly**, Paul adds that he was not **“taught it.”** This is now the normal process, but Paul was not taught the gospel by anyone else. He makes it clear that he **“received it by revelation from Jesus Christ.”**

“God the Father was the revealer; it was Jesus Christ who was revealed, and in that revelation Paul received his gospel, together with the command to make it known in the Gentile world.”

F.F. Bruce  
“Commentary on Galatians”  
p. 89

What happened to Paul on the road to Damascus brought about a series of events that completely changed the direction of his life. These next few verses explain the changes in a brief but a concise manner.

### **I. PAUL THE PERSECUTOR (1:13-14)**

### **II. PAUL THE PUPIL (1:15-16A)**

### **III. PAUL THE PREACHER (1:16B-24)**

#### **I. PAUL THE PERSECUTOR (1:13-14)**

**1:13** - *“you have heard”* - A more detailed account can be found in Acts 22, 26 as well as in Acts 9 and Philippians 3:6. Paul saw his past career of persecuting the church as a testimony to the grace of God that is able to change people completely. His enemies used it to insinuate that Paul had a doubtful character that couldn't be trusted.

*“of my previous way of life”* - This refers to his whole way of life including his ethical, mental and religious way of life.

*“in Judaism”* - It was Judaism that had rejected the risen Christ.

*“How intensely I persecuted the church of God”* - The word for *“persecuted”* is the same word used in Acts 9:4. This was not a one time event. Paul was persistent in his persecution until Jesus met him. The word used for *“intensely or violently”* literally means *“beyond measure or excessively or to an extraordinary degree.”*

*“To destroy it”* - The word is also used in verse 23 as well as in Acts 9:21. Paul was out to totally annihilate the church.

**1:14** - *“I was advancing in Judaism”* - The same word of *“advancing”* was used to describe how Jesus matured (or *“made great strides”*) in Luke 2:52. If it could be seen as a race, Paul was way ahead of the rest of the pack.

*“was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers”* - This meant he had spent much time studying the Torah and the rabbinical traditions (or oral tradition) that followed it. He first studied the Mishnah, then the secondary later collection called the Gemara, with the two together forming the Talmud. The Rabbis would say that the Scriptures were the water; the Mishnah was the wine, while the Gemara was the spiced wine. Jesus had some strong words against those who placed this teaching higher than they should have (Mark 7:6-13).

## II. PAUL THE PUPIL (1:15-16A)

It is one thing to be taught, while it another to be re-taught. We find it so difficult to “unlearn” what we once have accepted as truth. It is hard to accept the fact that we have been led astray.

**1:15** - *“But when God, who set me apart from birth”* - Paul recognized that human salvation is first and foremost initiated by God Himself. These words parallel the description given by other writers (Isaiah 49:1-6; Jeremiah 1:5; Luke 1:5-17). Paul accepted the fact that he had been chosen to be an apostle before he was even conceived within his mother’s womb - before he could think for himself.

*“and called me by his grace”* - Grace is a powerful motivation to change us from the grip of manmade traditions. God’s voice speaks into the darkness of hidden truth. Those who say they can’t find God are only fooling themselves.

**1:16a** - *“to reveal his Son in me”* - As for Paul the outward vision of the risen Christ and the inward illumination of the living Word coincided. We can never become an effective ambassador of the message of God’s grace without first receiving the revelation within our inner man (Galatians 2:20; 4:19).

## III. PAUL THE PREACHER (1:16b-24)

**1:16b** - *“so that I might preach him among the Gentiles”* - He was called to preach the Bankruptcy of the Law in comparison to the Sufficiency of Christ. The word translated “Gentiles” literally means “peoples or nations.” It identified those of foreign or non-Jewish descent. It would take an authentic conversion to have Paul serve the non-Jewish people (Acts 13:46-48; 22:21,22; Ephesians 3:1,8). His calling was to the Gentiles just like Peter’s was to the Jews.

*“I did not consult any man”* - Paul did not receive this revelation through “flesh and blood.” It came not by human origin (cf. II Peter 1:20,21). Paul went to speak with God before speaking to other men. It is a good example to follow.

**1:17** - *“nor did I go up to Jerusalem”* - We are not sure why Paul avoided a consultation with the leaders in Jerusalem. He may have felt that it gave further support to his revelation by God only.

*“but I went immediately into Arabia”* - This was probably the area that included Damascus that stretched southwards in the direction of the Sinaitic peninsula. It is most likely that Paul secluded himself to this area in order to meditate upon the phenomenal experience he just had. It is just like God to bring us from times of great activity to times of reflection and clarification.



### III. PAUL THE PREACHER (1:16b-24) (Contd.)

We do not know how long this took. Suggestions seem to vary from a few weeks to several months and some also believe up to the three years mentioned in the next verse.

It should be noted that Paul's statement does not contradict that recorded by Luke in Acts 9:20-30.

***“and later returned to Damascus”*** - It was during this time Paul was met with great hostility from the ethnarch Aretas and also of the Jews (II Corinthians 11:30-33; Acts 9:24).

**1:18** - ***“Then after three years”*** - The end of one year, along with a full year and the beginning of third year, can constitute a period of three years in Jewish calculations. We are dealing with a time somewhere between A.D. 32-35.

***“I went up to Jerusalem to visit with Peter”*** - The wording suggests that Paul primarily went up to get acquainted with Peter. The Greek word **“historeo”** is the word from which we get our word **“history.”** They probably told each other their life's story/testimony. Some feel that it was during this time that Paul discovered that Jesus appeared to Cephas on the third day after His crucifixion (I Corinthians 15:5).

Whatever did take place during this time, we know that nothing happened that changed the fact that Paul's affirmation came directly from Christ, through no intermediary like Peter.

**1:19** - ***“I saw none of the other apostles”*** - Once again Paul shows that he kept his visits to a limit. This proved to be added support for his divine revelation as opposed to one given by man.

***“only James, the Lord's brother”*** - There is no doubt that Jesus had other brothers (Mark 6:3; Matthew 13:55; I Corinthians 9:5). The view that James and the others were uterine brothers of Jesus was affirmed by Helvidius in AD 380. In AD 383 Jerome suggested that the Lord's “αδελφοι - brothers” were actually his first cousins, the sons of Alphaeus by Mary of Clopas, whom he referred from John 19:25 to be the virgin Mary's sister. This was taught in order to safeguard the teaching of the perpetual virginity not only of Mary but also of Joseph. The weight of historical fact proves otherwise.

“The word **‘brother’** can mean (1) A true brother born of the same father and mother, (2) a stepbrother, and (3) a cousin. But there is no reason to take the word in any other than the first and most natural sense here, particularly as Mark 6:3 indicates that as many as six other children had been born to Mary. It may have been this family relationship that compelled Paul to make James' acquaintance.

### III. PAUL THE PREACHER (1:16b-24)(Contd.)

The theory that these were sons and daughters of Joseph by a former marriage is purely a product of Roman Catholic thinking regarding the supposed perpetual virginity of Mary rather than the product of sound exegesis or even probability (cf. Lightfoot, pp. 252-291)."

According to the gospel writers (Mark 3:21, 31-35; John 7:5) they were far from being Jesus' followers until the time of His death. It was then that they dealt with their misgivings.

**1:20** - *"I assure you before God"* - Anyone who believes they can fool God with their lies are a fool themselves. Paul recognized that everyone must stand before God to make an account of what they have said and done (II Corinthians 5:10). For other uses of this expression see Romans 9:1,2; II Corinthians 1:23; 11:31; I Thessalonians 2:5; I Timothy 2:7). Nothing is hidden from God (Matthew 10:26).

*"that what I am writing to you is no lie"* - This followed the Roman judicial procedure that was normally discouraged and therefore used ONLY when absolutely necessary. Paul must have felt that the independence of the gospel and his apostleship was at stake. The same thing occurs in our courts today (*"Do you promise to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help you God?"*) This stands even more important for those who follow the Lord's injunction (Matthew 5:33-37).

**1:21** - *"Later I went to Syria and Cilicia"* - This is not meant to be in chronological order (cf. Acts 9:30; 11:25,26). He actually visited Cilicia and then Syria. This means that he spent a great deal of time far from Jerusalem. It also meant that he was often on his own. Tarsus, Paul's hometown was in Cilicia. It was Barnabas who went there to bring him to Antioch which is the capital of Syria (Acts 11:25). It was the center of the missionary activity at this time.

**1:22** - *"I was personally unknown to the churches of Judea"* - Paul had the ability to become an instant celebrity - He chose not to. He preferred to live in relative obscurity until the Holy Spirit called him to begin his famous missionary journeys. God's timing is always right.

We must remember that the early church was spread out because of great persecution (Acts 8:1 cf. 1:8).

**1:23** - *"They only heard the report"* - Isn't it surprising that Paul, being one of the great persecutors, was unknown to the churches in the area. It most likely means that even though his previous reputation was known, most of the church did not know him personally because he spent such little time in Judea.

**III. PAUL THE PREACHER (1:16b-24)(Contd.)**

*“The man who formally persecuted us in now preaching the faith”* - God is still transforming the **persecutors** into the **preachers**. Our greatest opposition can become our greatest support. God is still a miracle working God.

**1:24** - *“And they praised God because of me”* - The inescapable logic of Paul makes it clear that he believed that **the message has a way of validating the messenger**. This was not a one time “praise meeting” but rather a continual praise offering to God because the great persecutor was now the greatest preacher.

The chapter began with a **perversion** of the gospel and **persecution** against those who held to the truth. It ended with **praise**. Too many Christians try to submerge themselves in praise without first wading through the waters of persecution with its waves of perverted doctrines. God uses many ways to make us stronger in our belief and walk with Him.

## THE FREEDOM FIGHTER PART I

### Chapter 2:1-10

Elmer Davis, a veteran news analyst wrote in his book *“But We Were Born Free”* said in speaking of the United States,

“This will remain the land of the free only so long as it is the home of the brave.”

The book of Galatians brings out the fact that Paul was willing to fight for what he believed. There were many times when he wouldn't have won a popularity contest. There were no back doors on these issues. Paul had to come face to face with those who opposed his revelation. The stages in this process are recorded in this chapter.

“So it is to Paul's steadfastness in conflict that Christians owe, humanly speaking, the continuation of the full gospel of grace in subsequent church history.”

James Montgomery Boice  
“The Expositor's Bible Commentary”  
Vol. 10, p. 438

#### I. A PRIVATE CONSULTATION (2:1-2)

**2:1 - “*Fourteen years later*”** - There are differences of opinion whether this dates from his previous visit to Jerusalem or whether it dates from the time of his conversion. The important thing to see is that Paul had plenty of time to develop his mission's perspective to the Gentiles. The main reason for any details such as dates is to establish his claim as an apostle.

**“*I went up again to Jerusalem*”** - This is most probably the same visit that is recorded in Acts 15 which is commonly known as “*The Jerusalem Council*.” The most probable dates to consider are that Paul's conversion took place in A.D. 32; his visit with Peter was in A.D. 35 and the meeting at Jerusalem was in A.D. 49.

**“*his time with Barnabas*”** - The name “*Barnabas*” means “*son of encouragement*.” Barnabas was a close associate with Paul (I Corinthians 9:6). At first Barnabas was seen as the senior member but as the years past it became evident that Paul was the dominant partner. The early work of Barnabas was recorded in Acts 9:27; 11:19-30. According to Luke, Barnabas was a Levite from Cyprus whose personal name was Joseph (Acts 4:36).

## I. A PRIVATE CONSULTATION (2:1-2) (Contd.)

**2:1 - “I took Titus along also”** - Titus was a Gentile (Greek) who was evidently from Antioch. It is believed that according to Titus 1:5 that he was the first bishop of the Cretan Church. Titus became an important figure in the discussion to follow. Being a Gentile who was a close associate of Paul, he stood as an example to prove that grace was equally sufficient for both Jews and Gentiles whether they had been circumcised or not.

**2:2 - “I went in response to a revelation”** - This does not contradict the statement recorded in Acts 15:2-4. God has many ways to reveal His will to us. In this case the revelation and the decision came about to confirm what God wanted Paul and his associates to do. God still uses many people along with the working of the Holy Spirit to confirm His will for our lives.

“It gave to Paul the absolute assurance that it was the will of God for him to go to Jerusalem to attend the historic Council which determined for all time the very question which the false teachers had revived in Galatia.”

Charles R. Erdman  
 “The Epistle of Paul to the Galatians”  
 p. 42

Paul makes it clear that he did NOT respond because of a request of the apostles in Jerusalem.

**“and set before them the gospel”** - What Paul is saying is that he **“communicated; declared, referred; laid before them for consideration”** the gospel that he was still preaching (present tense). It was NOT that he was opening up the discussion for changes. He simply gave opportunity for feedback on the content of the gospel message that he was appointed to proclaim to the Gentiles. Never compromise the true gospel message in spite of opposition.

**“But I did this privately to those who seemed to be leaders”** - The identity of these leaders is revealed in vs. 9 to be James, Peter and John. He met privately with them to offer a better opportunity to openly discuss the matter and avoid misunderstandings that often come through group discussion. An open meeting with Judaizers present would only add to the confusion that many young converts were experiencing. Once their approval was established, the opportunity for a three-way division was avoided.

**“for fear that I was running or had run my race in vain”** - There is no hint that Paul would have modified his message if it hadn’t met the approval of the Jerusalem apostles. It simply brings out the fact that God works His will best in an atmosphere that maintains Christian unity.

## I. A PRIVATE CONSULTATION (2:1-2) (Contd.)

“It is to be carefully noted that it is not a question of two different gospels being preached; it is question of the same gospel being brought to two different spheres by different people specially qualified to do so.”

William Barclay  
“The Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians”  
p. 17

This athletic metaphor is used to describe a futile procedure - running a race that is impossible to win. Paul was sensitive to the need to show respect since little is gained by rudeness. Even though he respected them, he remained constant and inflexible to the specific task that God had placed upon his life. Even though his commission was not derived from Jerusalem, it could not be effectively executed without the fellowship and support of the Jerusalem leaders. When God gives a special task, He also gives the special wisdom and strength to carry it out.

## II. A PUBLIC CONVOCATION (2:3-5)

**2:3** - *“yet not even Titus . . . was compelled to be circumcised”* - If anyone struggled with the message of circumcision for the Gentile Christians, Titus became a significant test case. The Jerusalem leaders supported Paul and Titus in this very important decision. After the **Private Consultation** had reached an agreement, it was time for a **Public Convocation**.

Some may find it confusing why Paul had Timothy circumcised and not Titus (Acts 16:3). These two situations were quite different. Titus was not circumcised because it would have served to support the false teaching of the Judaizers. As for Timothy, he was the son of a Jewish woman, while Titus was a pure Gentile. Timothy was circumcised as a matter of racial and social significance not as a ground for salvation.

**2:4** - *“because some false brothers had infiltrated our ranks to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus”* - Paul uses a military term to indicate a subversive and militant nature of the evil that Paul was fighting against.

It is not clear whether these false brothers came on their own or were secretly invited by some members of the church at Jerusalem. There was a large group of Jerusalem Christians who had belonged to the Pharisaic party (Acts 15:5) as well as a large group of ex-priests that became Christians (Acts 6:7) and also those who were zealous to maintain the Law of Moses (Acts 21:20-21).

*“and to make us slaves”* - It is true that the Galatians had not been slaves to the Jewish system before. *“A change of masters is not an escape from slavery.”* Alan Cole

## II. A PUBLIC CONVOCATION (2:3-5)(Contd.)

**2:5** - *“We did not give in to them for a moment”* - This battle was not for Paul’s sake as it was for the Gentile converts. This is not a contradiction to Paul’s writing in I Corinthians 9:20.

*“so that the truth of the gospel might remain in you.”* - To yield to the rite of circumcision would have been to deny the foundational truth of the Gospel. Either the gospel must be maintained in its entirety or it is not the Gospel. We must stand firm and never waver when standing for the truth of the Word.

## III. A PERSONAL CONFIRMATION (2:6-10)

**2:6** - *“As for those who seemed to be important”* - This is another reference to the 12 apostles and specifically to James, Peter and John. There seems to be a progression of expression. Paul first says *“those who seemed to be leaders”* (vs. 2) then this phrase *“those who seemed to be important”* (vs. 6) and finally *“those reputed to be pillars”* (vs. 9). Most commentators are reluctant to say that Paul was using a form of speech that was indignant to the other apostles. We will never know the tone in which he made these comments. But to be harsh with his words would have played into the hands of the Judaizers.

*“God does not judge by external appearance”* - There are a number of Scriptures to support this statement (cf. Deuteronomy 10:17; I Samuel 16:7; II Corinthians 5:16). This word is sometimes translated *“partiality”* which carries with it the thought of looking and being influenced by outward appearances (literally the *“face”* or *“mask”*). God is not swayed by outward appearances.

*“those men added nothing to my message”* - The *“authorities”* in Jerusalem were content to leave the message that he had been given by God in its full content. If the Jerusalem leadership added nothing to Paul’s Gospel, who did the Judaizers think they were.

**2:7** - *“they saw I had been entrusted with the task of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles”* - God would allow the wisdom given to Gamaliel (Paul’s Rabbi) to remain as the years went by (Acts 5:33-39). It should be clear to see God’s hand at work. Paul uses an aorist participle *“having seen”* or *“when they had seen”* indicating that the Jerusalem leadership may have at first been skeptical but were convinced by the overwhelming reports of what God was doing in accordance to His Word.

**2:8** - *“the ministry of Peter as an apostle to the Jews . . . my ministry as an apostle to the Gentiles”* - They had both been entrusted with the same gospel but were called to serve in different fields of mission. The One who commissioned and empowered both of them was God. This does not mean that Paul didn’t have a heart for the Jews (Romans 9:1-3).

### III. A PERSONAL CONFIRMATION (2:6-10) (Contd.)

**2:9** - *“James, Peter and John”* - The order of these names is significant. James (who chaired the Jerusalem Council) was named first. It was followed by Peter (who was the missionary to the Jews) and then by John the beloved disciple/apostle. By the time of this visit in Acts 15, James the son of Zebedee had been put to death by King Herod Agrippa I (Acts 12:2).

*“reputed to be pillars”* - The fact that Paul gained their endorsement was of great value to spreading the Gospel message that had been entrusted to his care. The word *“pillars”* describes those who gave support and defense. Those who overcome are seen as pillars in the house of God (Revelation 3:12).

*“gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship”* - The shaking of hands signified an agreement. As of today the refusal to shake hands is regarded as an open testimony to disunity.

**2:10** - *“all they asked is that we should continue to remember the poor”* - It is interesting how meeting the needs of others is often used to break the divisional lines that we create. Correct doctrine is never a substitute for Christian duty (cf. James 2:14-26). Paul is asked to keep doing what he had already done. We know that the Gentile believers were actively involved in the relief efforts for the poor in Jerusalem (I Corinthians 16:1-4; II Corinthians 8:1-9:15; Romans 15:25-28; Acts 11:29,30).

*“the very thing I was eager to do”* - Paul’s generous thought of others was another important element of his apostolic policy. He was involved not because it was imposed upon him by the leadership in Jerusalem but rather he had the heart of God to serve others in need. Paul uses a past tense (aorist) to prove that his eagerness was already a fact that had taken place.

These first ten verses set the foundation that Paul and his chosen ministry was accepted by the other apostles without requirement to make any changes.



## THE FREEDOM FIGHTER PART II

### Chapter 2:11-21

“Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty”

Wendell Phillips  
spoken 1852 at Massachusetts  
Anti-slave meeting

Thus far we have read the account of the famous Jerusalem Council in which Paul proved his equality of authority given by God. He now follows with another important historical incident. This time he stands firmly against even Peter because of his hypocritical conduct at Antioch. If Paul had to deal with this problem because there was a threat of compromising the purity of the Gospel.

#### I. PETER'S RELAPSE (2:11-13)

#### II. PAUL'S REBUKE (2:14-21)

#### I. PETER'S RELAPSE (2:11-13)

**2:11** - *“When Peter came to Antioch”* - This would have been the Antioch in Syria not the one in Pisidia. This was the leading city of Syria second only to Rome and Alexander. Antioch was very important as a setting because it was a community where the Jewish and Gentile Christians lived together. This meant that they would have eaten together in apparent disregard of Jewish custom.

This probably took place as Paul and Barnabas were returning from their missionary journey through Cyprus and Galatia (Acts 14:26-28).

*“I opposed him to his face”* - Paul clearly showed his equality with Peter by confronting him face to face.

*“because he was clearly in the wrong”* - Peter should have known better after his vision on the roof of Simon the tanner's home (Acts 10:15) and subsequent meeting with Cornelius. Peter had also agreed with the decision reached at the Jerusalem Council but now was making an abrupt digression in thought and action. The literal meaning of this was that he was *“condemned.”* This was a self-condemnation because of his inconsistent conduct.

## I. PETER'S RELAPSE (2:11-13) (Contd.)

“As you examine church history, you see that, even with a complete Bible, believers though the years have been slow to believe and practice the truths of the Christian faith . . . It is one thing for us to defend a doctrine in a church meeting and quite something else to put it into practice in everyday life. Peter's freedom was threatened by Peter's fear.”

Warren Weirsbe  
“Be Free”  
p. 50

**2:12** - *“Before certain men came from James”* - It is more likely that these men were those recorded in Acts 15:1,24 and not with those in Acts 15:22,23. The purpose of their visit probably intensified as they witnessed Jews and Gentiles partaking meals together. These Judaizers probably felt betrayed and believed that their efforts to evangelize their fellow-Jews would be hindered.

*“he used to eat with the Gentiles”* - Peter probably felt no concern after his experience at Joppa and Caesarea. This means that he would have been eating non-kosher food as well.

*“he began to draw back and separated himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group.”* -

“The same Peter who had denied his Lord for fear of a maidservant now denied Him again for fear of the circumcision party.”

John Stott

In matters of contention we should always recognize the balance that the Scriptures offer us (see Romans 14).

**2:13** - *“The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy”* - We need to clearly understand that the greater our position or responsibility, the more possible it is to influence others. If one of the chief apostles was struggling with his beliefs and actions, it would have an effect upon others who were beginning their journey of faith. Some versions translate his action by calling it *“play acting.”*

**2:13** - *“so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray”* - There were therefore two tragedies. The **first**, was that Peter was being judged as a hypocrite. **Secondly**, Peter was leading others astray who should have known better. Just think of the implications for Gentiles today if Peter had been successful and Paul never would have rebuked him!

## I. PETER'S RELAPSE (2:11-13) (Contd.)

“The anomaly is that, had not Barnabas been what he was, there might well have been no Paul to withstand him; for under God, Paul owed to Barnabas both his introduction to the Christian circle at Jerusalem and, later, to the Christian ministry at Antioch (Acts 9:27, 11:25f). But Paul was too faithful a friend to allow him to go unrebuked.”

Alan Cole  
 “The Epistle of Paul to the Galatians”  
 Tyndale N.T. Commentaries; p. 76

## II. PAUL'S REBUKE (2:14-21)

We often run into problems in life simply because of the way we handle difficult situations that come our way.

“The fact of the matter was that the Jerusalem decision was a compromise, and, like all compromises, it had in it the seeds of trouble. In effect the decision was that the Jews would go on living like Jews, observing circumcision and the law, but that the Gentiles were free from these observances. Clearly, things could not go on like that, because the inevitable result was to produce two grades of Christians and two quite distinct classes in the Church.”

William Barclay  
 “The Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians”  
 p. 20

**2:14** - *“they were not acting in line with the truth”* - Paul was letting them know that they had taken a detour on the road and he wanted them to get back on the right track. We should not think that he loved exposing error or even that he loved getting involved in arguments in order to enhance his own prestige. The gospel continues to offer a straight path to walk. There can never be superior Christians based upon race or traditions.

**2:14** - *“You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile”* - Peter was adjusting his beliefs and practices according to those who were present.

*“How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs”* - Paul acted out of the very concern that Peter lacked. The controversy was so painful for many of the Church Fathers that they tried to remove it from the Scriptures. Jerome, in his commentary on Galatians, said that Paul actually believed that Peter’s action was justified, but opposed it at Antioch ‘in order to soothe the minds of troublemakers.’

## II. PAUL'S REBUKE (2:14-21) (Contd.)

Jerome claimed he had the support of Origen. Augustine took him to task by giving a more reasonable account of the situation.

**2:15** - *“We who are Jews by birth and not ‘Gentile sinners’”* - Paul is addressing the fact that he and Peter were natural-born Jews and therefore possessed the advantages of a privileged birth and a religion based upon revelation from God Himself. The *“Gentile sinners”* comment seems to have an ironic tone to it. According to the Law all Gentiles had fallen short by simply being non-Jewish.

**2:16** - *“know that man is not justified by observing the law”* - Paul now goes on to explain that even the best of the Jews (with all their privileges) must still come by faith unto God and not by works.

“After working through the rest of the Epistle, one turns back to [these verses] and finds in [them] the whole truth in embryo.”

Ramsey

*“but by faith in Jesus Christ”* - We must remind ourselves that the nature of faith is given in the object to which that faith is directed . . . Faith always means faith in . . . Anything less of this truth will lead to a direction the Scriptures never encourage us to go.

*“that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law”* - This may have been a paraphrase of Psalm 143:2. The Law dealt with the question of sin while the Gospel offered a clear answer of how to overcome it.

**2:17** - *“it becomes evident that we ourselves are sinners”* - There are many who can testify how the message of the gospel has opened their eyes to the fact that sin needs to be dealt with. It is HOW that sin is dealt with that seems to be the argument here.

*“Does that mean that Christ promotes sin? Absolutely not!”* - The thought of some seemed to be that if the process of justification leads men to sin, then Jesus would have become an agent of producing sin. Justification cannot leave sin untouched. The Jews had to be told that salvation by grace through faith does not remove the incentive to live a moral life - it rather places it to the forefront.

**2:18** - *“If I rebuild what I destroyed”* - Anyone who builds up what he formerly demolished acknowledges his fault. It is difficult enough to tear something down - but it is even more difficult to put it back into its original condition once it has been torn apart. This was essentially what Peter was attempting to do. It would be a futile effort. For a similar argument see Hebrews 6:4-6.

## II. PAUL'S REBUKE (2:14-21) (Contd.)

***“I prove that I am a lawbreaker.”*** - To go back to the Law of Moses meant that they were to deny everything that God had done **for** them and **through** them.

**2:19** - ***“For through the law I died to the law”*** - If it was foolish for a Jew to return to the death sentence of the Law, how much more preposterous was it for a Gentile to assume the yoke of the law when they had no ancestral link to it.

***“so that I might live for God”*** - In the very fact that the Law destroys all hope of salvation based upon the works of men, it also opens the door to the fact that our new life in Christ comes by faith in Christ alone. Dying to the Law ultimately suggests that we will live unto God.

“In the revelation of Jesus Christ on the Damascus road the moral bankruptcy of the law was disclosed: for Paul, therefore, this involved the end of his old life ‘under law’ and the beginning of his new life ‘in Christ.’”

F.F. Bruce  
 “The New International  
 Greek Commentary on Galatians”  
 p. 143

**2:20** - ***“I have been crucified with Christ”*** - The cross was, for Christ (as well as for Paul), a complete end of His previous life. The tense of the verb (perfect) indicates that Paul believed that he had a specific completed event which marked his identification with Christ and which had an enduring effect upon the rest of his life. The perfect tense on the verb refers to something that happened in the past but whose influence continues into the future. We are saved by faith in Christ (He died for us), and we live by faith in Christ (He lives in us).

***“and I no longer live”*** - To live by the Law of Moses would be like returning to the graveyard. Crucifixion carried with it such a disgusting feeling that no one would want to go through it simply for something to do. Our old nature should have died at the grave that was dug by good works.

***“but Christ lives in me”*** - We do not simply live with Christ, but Christ also takes up His abode in us.

## II. PAUL'S REBUKE (2:14-21) (Contd.)

“Thus, his death for sin was the believer’s death; his resurrection was (in one sense) the believer’s resurrection; his ascension was the believer’s ascension, so that the believer is (again in one sense) seated with Christ “in the heavenly realms” (Ephesians 2:6).”

James Montgomery Boice  
 “The Expositor’s Bible Commentary”  
 Vol. 10, p. 451

**“The life I live in the body”** - Our new life in Christ does not deny the fact that we will be having to live in an imperfect body. It is still a mystery to many how our mortal bodies can house an immortal soul once we’ve been regenerated.

**“I live by faith in the Son of God”** - Whenever we acknowledge that Jesus is the Son of God, we also are expressing the great sacrifice that He made for common man to have life as He has it.

**“who loved me and gave himself for me”** - A good measurement of love is how much it gives in comparison of how much it takes. It is the love God bestowed upon us that helps us to live by faith in God.

**2:21** - **“I do not set aside the grace of God . . .”**

“If anybody insists that justification is by works, and that he can earn his salvation by his own efforts, he is undermining the foundations of the Christian religion. He is nullifying the grace of God (because if salvation is by works, it is not by grace) and he is making Christ’s death superfluous (because if salvation is our own work, then Christ’s work was unnecessary).

John Stott

Freedom from the Law has never meant a freedom to sin

## THE DOCTRINAL ARGUMENT “FAITH OR WORKS”

### Chapter 3:1-5

Paul just concluded his *Personal Argument* in the first two chapters. He had focused on the Grace of God and the Gospel. The next two chapters are often considered as the *Doctrinal Argument* that he sets forth. In this section we see the Grace of God received through faith as opposed to obtaining our salvation by adhering to the Law.

There are a number of similarities among the first five books of Romans and the letter to the Galatians. In Romans, Paul explains that justification by faith is the way of salvation as opposed to acceptance by a full obedience to the requirements of the Mosaic system of Law. In Galatians, Paul insists that justification is by faith alone. The Judaizers had to be stopped or else the purity of the Gospel was at risk.

“They taught, however, that Christians would attain to a fuller salvation and a higher sanctity and a superior place in the Church if they would obey the requirements of the Jewish Law. Paul argues, however, that any attempt to thus supplement the work of Christ is in reality to supplant the work of Christ.”

Charles Erdman  
“The Epistle of Paul to the Galatians”  
p. 59

Paul introduces a **Threefold Argument (3:1-4:7)** followed by a **Threefold Appeal (4:8-31)**.

Lets look a little closer at the first of the **Threefold Argument** by looking at his **Personal Argument**.

#### **I. A PERSONAL ARGUMENT (3:1-5)**

**3:1** - “*You foolish Galatians*” - Paul had the choice of two different words here. He could have used “*moros*” which refers to “*one who is mentally deficient or who plays the fool, particularly in the moral and spiritual realm.*” Instead he uses the word “*anoetos*” that describes “*one who can think but fails to use his ability to perceive what is right or wrong*” (Luke 24:25; Romans 1:14; I Timothy 6:9; Titus 3:3).

Paul was making it clear, first, that they were being intellectually inconsistent, self-contradictory and irrational. Sometimes a sheer lack of logical reasoning can lead us into an inconsistent belief system and lifestyle.

## I. A PERSONAL ARGUMENT (3:1-5) (Contd.)

It was not violating God's Word when Paul called them "*foolish*" (cf. Matthew 5:22). He was simply saying that they were spiritually dull (Luke 24:25). What Jesus had warned about was judging a person's godliness. Paul was declaring a fact; Jesus was warning against any form of verbal abuse.

**"Who has bewitched you"** - This passage is full of Greek words that would have carried a powerful impact in the minds of those who read them. Paul is speaking about an "*evil eye.*" The Greeks feared that someone could cast a spell upon them simply by giving them the "evil eye."

"Above all I pray that you may be in health *unharm*ed by the *evil eye* and faring prosperously."

Milligan  
"Selections from the Greek Papyri"  
No. 14

The word "*bewitched*" finds its root word in what the English have called "*fascinated.*" We must be careful in what we find fascinating. It can lead into many destructive pathways.

**"Before your very eyes Jesus was clearly portrayed as crucified"** - The word for "portrayed" was one that the Greeks used when talking about putting up a poster. A father would often post a notice that he was no longer responsible for his son's debts. It was also used to advertize an auction sale. The crucifixion of Jesus was a public display in a prominent place before the people.

**Secondly** , Paul was saying that their conduct was inexplicable because the Gospel message had been clearly preached to them and the memory of Jesus had not faded from history.

**3:2** - "*I would like to ask just one thing from you*" - Paul was acting like a teacher asking a question that would cause a student to wake up and seriously consider the consequences of their unreasonable thinking.

**"Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law or by believing what you heard?"** - The third reason Paul judged their action was that their defection was totally contrary to their initial experience. We must remember that Paul is addressing the Galatians who were for the most part Gentiles. They knew very well that the Holy Spirit came to them through faith and not by adhering to the Law.



**I. A PERSONAL ARGUMENT (3:1-5) (Contd.)**

**3:3** - *“Are you so foolish”* - This hypothetical question needs no answer.

*“after beginning with the Spirit”* - Again it must be made clear that the Gentile Galatians never began by keeping the Law, instead they began their Christian walk by being born again by the Spirit of God. Paul mentions the Holy Spirit 18 times in this epistle which therefore places Him in the area of high priority in Paul’s defense arguments.

*“are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort”* -

“How absurd then it was for these Galatians to seek for higher sanctity by actually descending from the plane of the Spirit to the level of the flesh, to turn from that which was divine to that which was human.”

Charles Erdman  
 “The Epistle of Paul to the Galatians”  
 pp. 61,62

There should always be a stark contrast between human efforts (the flesh) and the work of the Holy Spirit. It would be preposterous to think that after having our natural birth we had to return to the hospital regularly to have our ears, eyes, nose etc. added to our bodies. The same fact applies when we are born of the Spirit of God.

“What Paul means is that the whole Christian way is ‘supernatural’ from start to finish; but the Jewish path (whatever it might have been in design and origin) has become a thoroughly ‘naturalistic’ way.”

Alan Cole  
 “The Epistle of Paul to the Galatians”  
 p.90

**3:4** - *“Have you suffered so much for nothing”* - This term is usually used to describe an unpleasant suffering. Paul was essentially asking whether their suffering was either *“ineffective”* or *“needless.”* Outward suffering is often accepted when a long-lasting inner peace is gained.

**3:5** - *“Does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you because you observe the law,”* - Paul now turns from their past personal experience to their present one. This question makes it clear that the Holy Spirit is given to us as a gift and not to be gained by human efforts. A gift is never earned.

## I. A PERSONAL ARGUMENT (3:1-5) (Contd.)

The word used for “*give*” means “*to grant freely*.” The root of this Greek word is “*choregia*.” **First**, in ancient Greece it was used during the great festivals when dramas by such notables as Euripides and Sophocles presented their plays. These plays all had a chorus that became expensive to equip and train. Those who appreciated the endeavors would offer to defray the entire expenses. That gift was described as “*choregia*.”

**Secondly**, the word was used to describe the money that was contributed by patriotic citizens who attempted to help eliminate the high costs of war that the state had made. **Finally**, later on in history, this word described the financial support that a husband would commit himself to regarding his wife in their marriage contract.

“*or because you believe what you heard*” - Belief is at the heart of the Gospel message. Anything else is a corruption of the “Way” that Jesus came to lead us into.

Paul sums up in these five verses the contrast between one who lives according to the Spirit as opposed to one who lives by the flesh. This portion deals with the **Personal argument** that makes up the beginning of Paul’s **Doctrinal argument**.

**THE DOCTRINAL ARGUMENT**  
**“A FAITH FOUNDED UPON THE WORD OF GOD”**

**Chapter 3:6-14**

In this section we look at the second part of the **Doctrinal Argument** that is a **Scriptural Argument**. Anyone who attempts to find a secure foundation for their faith without a Biblical support is building upon shifting sand. They can expect to be destroyed when the winds and waves of a chaotic world come against them (Matthew 7:24-27).

In the first sections Paul asked six questions: in this section he turns to six Old Testament quotations to prove his argument.

**I. THE SONS OF ABRAHAM (3:6-9)**

**3:6** - *“Consider Abraham”* - This reference to Abraham was very significant. It was Abraham that the Jewish teachers would often turn to with pride (as their spiritual father) as the channel that God poured His blessing from, to the nation of Israel. The Gentile Christians in the area around Galatia would be well-informed of this patriarch of the Jewish faith.

*“He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness”* - Once again the Old Testament conceals the New Testament while the New Testament reveals the Old Testament. It was the gospel message of the blessing of God and not the Old Testament message of the Law that was revealed to Abraham. He simply believed the promise that God gave him while living in the idolatrous homeland in Mesopotamia (Genesis 15:6). We must remember that he came on the Scriptural scene well before the establishment of the Levitical law under Moses.

God promised Abram that his offspring would become as numerous as the stars of the sky. This would take a great measure of faith to allow God to have His way. In believing God’s promise he had a credit added to his account. The word *“credited”* means *“to put to one’s account”* (see also Romans 4:9-25).

**3:7** - *“those who believe are children of Abraham”* - The Jews were very proud of their heritage. They falsely believed that their relationship with Abraham guaranteed them eternal salvation. John the Baptist warned the people against this false security (Matthew 3:9).

When we trust God to do what we have given up trying to do ourselves, we then come into the family lineage of Abraham by faith and not works. Jesus brought out a powerful truth (to the Jews it was seen as scathing) in John 8:31-47 in order to bring the Jews to their senses. In this verse Paul stresses their spiritual descent over their physical descent. It must be remembered that God has no grandchildren; each generation must stand on its own.

## I. THE SONS OF ABRAHAM (3:6-9)(Contd.)

**3:8** - *“The Scripture foresaw”* - This is not to say that the Scriptures work independently of God. It is like saying *“the Lord of the Scriptures foresaw.”* (cf. Romans 9:17). The Scriptures are therefore an extension of the divine personality of God.

“It was not, however, the Scripture (which did not exist at the time) that, foreseeing God’s purposes of grace in the future, spoke these precious words to Abraham, but God himself in his own person.”

H. J. Nutley  
*“The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible”*  
 p. 299

*“that God would justify the Gentiles by faith”* - What happened in the time of Abraham was actually a forecast of what was going to happen in the future.

*“and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham”* - We need to understand that God does many things in the present that do not make sense to us because we often live in the “here and now.” God’s ways are eternally the same. His reasoning for the present is often determined by the future impact that it could have on us. Somehow, God placed the faith into Abraham in order to see (in part) the day when the gospel would be presented in the Person of Jesus Christ (cf. John 8:56).

*”all nations will be blessed through you”*

“When you read God’s great covenant with Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3, you discover that many different blessings were promised - some personal, some national and political, and some universal and spiritual. Certainly God did make Abraham’s name great; he is revered not only by Jews. But also by Christians, Muslim, and many others. God did multiply his descendants, and God did bless those who blessed Abraham. He also judged those who cursed his descendants (Egypt, Babylon, and Rome are cases in point). But the greatest blessings that God sent through Abraham and the Jewish nation have to do with our eternal salvation. Jesus Christ is that promised “Seed” through whom all the nations have been blessed (Galatians 3:16).

Warren Wiersbe  
*“Be Free”*  
 pp. 69,70

## I. THE SONS OF ABRAHAM (3:6-9)(Contd.)

**3:9** - *“So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham”* - The word used for *“faith”* (Greek - *“pisto”*). It is in an active sense. Paul is referring to those who are *“believing”* not just those who have *“trusted”* at one time or another in the past. It is a present faith, not just a past one.

An active faith has its rewards. Those who walk in active faith experience a present blessing. In some ways Paul now answers the question he introduced in verse five.

## II. THE CURSE OF THE LAW (3:10-14)

**3:10** - *“All who rely on observing the law are under a curse”* - Paul now introduces another phase of his argument. Many have asked if the law was able to bring a blessing. Here we find that it is capable of bringing a curse.

James Boice offers a valuable summary of the next area of thought.

“Three points follow: (1) Those living under the principle of the law are under the law’s curse, for the law pronounces a curse upon all who fail to keep the law in its entirety; (2) no one is justified by law, since the law itself teaches that men are justified by faith; and (3) no mixture of these principles is possible, for they are mutually exclusive.

To this argument Paul adds a full reference to the work of Christ. It is twofold: a work of redemption from the curse the law has been imposed on everybody and a work of blessing by which the promise of the Spirit made to Abraham is fulfilled for all who believe on Christ as Savior.”

James Montgomery Boice  
“The Expositor’s Bible Commentary”  
Vol 10, p. 458

**3:10** - *“cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the book of the law”* - Obedience is a tough taskmaster that offers no exceptions. It must be continuous and unbroken in word and deed. This quote is taken from the conclusion of what was called the “Shemchemite dodecalogue” (Deuteronomy 27:26) which were the twelve curses pronounced upon the Levites standing on Mount Ebal to which the people responded with “Amen.” This was in contrast to the corresponding blessings recited from Mount Gerizim.

## II. THE CURSE OF THE LAW (3:10-14) (Contd.)

Of the two famous Rabbinic schools, the school of Shammai reckoned that a 99 percent achievement was a failure, while the school of Hillel treated 51 percent as a passing mark. Those who passed were entitled to enter the world to come. It is interesting that Paul would use the Shammai passing mark since his Rabbinical teacher (Gamaliel) was from the school of Hillel. Jewish tradition even places Gamaliel as the successor of Hillel.

We must note that there was provision in the Law for those who unintentionally (inadvertent or not deliberate) sinned. This was what the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16) was all about. Paul was also not excluding the need for the Burnt and Sin offerings as recorded in the book of Exodus.

The best that the Old Testament offered was that they had a series of laws and regulations that had to be met without a single compromise or act of disobedience (Leviticus 18:3-5).

**3:11** - *“Clearly no one is justified before God by the law”* - This does not mean that the Law served no purpose. It had its place and its time. (cf. Ecclesiastes 8:6).

*“The righteous shall live by faith”* - This verse is so important that God focused on it in three different books. In Romans 1:17 we see how the “the just” can be justified before God; in Galatians we how the just “shall live” by faith; while in Hebrews 10:38 we see how the just shall live “by faith.”

**3:12** - *“The law is not based on faith”* - A person can live under the Law or by faith but not both now that Jesus brought to the church grace by faith in Him. Faith by its very nature excludes the law, and law by its very nature excludes grace. This does not mean that a legalist cannot possess faith, but rather that the law does not depend on faith for its basis.

*“The man who does these things will live by them”* - A man is not called to believe the law but to do it.

**3:13** - *“Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us”* - The original use of the word *“redeemed”* surrounded a slave that was purchased for an agreed price. These slaves were often set free after the redemption price was paid.

Three Greek words are translated *“redemption”* in the English NT: **lutroo** *“to loose or set free,”* **agorazo**, *“to buy in the marketplace,”* and **exagorazo**, *“to buy out of the marketplace.”* Paul was saying that Jesus paid the price that men could not pay for themselves and thus Jesus set them free from the bondage of sin (cf. I Peter 1:18,19). Jesus took upon Himself our penalty for sin. He bore the curse for us (Leviticus 16:5ff cf. Matthew 27:46).

## II. THE CURSE OF THE LAW (3:10-14) (Contd.)

*“Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree”* - The Jews did not practice crucifixion instead they stoned criminals to death. The text that Paul used was originally used in reference to keeping a corpse on a tree (or post) after sundown (cf. Deuteronomy 21:22; Joshua 10:26; Joshua 8:9; John 19:31; Mark 15:42).

“Crucifixion was not a mode of capital punishment among the Israelites, but the disgrace of execution was intensified thus by hanging. The latter was regarded as witnessing in the presence of God that a just and sufficient penalty had been paid, and it was furthermore a testimony of God’s abhorrence to sin.”

Charles R. Erdman  
 “The Epistle of Paul to the Galatians”  
 p. 65

**3:14** - *“in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Jesus Christ”* - There are two blessings that Paul refers to in this verse. This **first blessing** came about as Abraham believed God through faith. The many blessings found in Genesis 12:1-3 could apply here. Indeed all nations have been blessed through Abraham and his seed.

Some have wondered how the One who became our curse could also be the source of our blessing. The answer is found in the fact that the cross symbolized the curse, while the resurrection of Jesus proved that the Father vindicated Him - the price was paid in full (once and for all).

*“so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit”* - The **second blessing** is the promised Holy Spirit. There is no indication in the Old Testament that the Holy Spirit was given as a result of obeying the law. This is not to say that the Holy Spirit did not come upon certain O.T. saints for special purposes.

When you begin to compare the law with the gospel you find a clear summary in this epistle.

- 1). The law cannot justify the sinner - 2:16
- 2). The law cannot offer righteousness - 2:21
- 3). The law cannot give the promise of the Spirit - 3:2,14
- 4). The law cannot guarantee a spiritual inheritance - 3:18
- 5). The law cannot give life - 3:21
- 6). The law cannot give liberty - 4:8-10

## THE DOCTRINAL ARGUMENT

### “THE PROMISE AND THE LAW”

#### Chapter 3:15-26

#### I. THE LAW CANNOT ALTER OR MAKE VOID THE PROMISE (3:15-18)

**3:15** - *“Brothers, let me take an example from everyday life”* - Paul uses the same expression in Romans 3:5. He is attempting to explain the matter in human terms which are not entirely capable of conveying divine truths. He is literally saying *“I speak as (or according to) a man.”*

*“Just as no one can set aside or add to a human covenant that has been duly established, so it was in this case”* - Paul makes it clear that even our human **wills** or **covenants** (either word can be used here to translate the Greek word **“diatheke”**) cannot be changed without the permission of the one who originally wrote it and signed it in the presence of witnesses. It would be illegal for a third party to tamper with even one word of the agreed covenant.

“When a deed of settlement is properly signed, sealed and delivered and the property legally conveyed, not even the original owner can revoke it or alter its terms.”

FF. Bruce  
“New International Greek New Testament Commentary of Galatians”  
p. 170

The covenant is sealed and secured once it is signed and it comes into effect once the testator’s death is proven (cf. Hebrews 9:15-21). It should be noted that this covenant came into effect in Genesis 15. At this time of history an oath was often confirmed by a ceremony in which animals were cut into pieces by dividing them along the backbone and placing them in two rows, side by side. A space would be left between the divided animals in which the parties making the oath would walk through together verbally announcing their part of the oath/covenant. This ceremony was considered very sacred because an animal was slain and its blood was poured out.

In Abraham’s case only God walked through the divided carcasses of the animals as Abraham was in a deep sleep. Therefore, God was proclaiming that this covenant was unconditional. The writer of Hebrews brings out this truth wonderfully in 6:13-15.



**I. THE LAW CANNOT ALTER OR MAKE VOID THE PROMISE (3:15-18)(Contd.)**

“In the final analysis, God made this covenant of promise with Abraham *through* Christ, so that the only two parties who can make any changes are God the Father and God the Son. *Moses cannot alter this covenant!*”

Warren Wiersbe  
“Be Free”  
p. 77

The interesting twist of truth in this case was that Abraham was brought into a promise not a Law. The promise was into effect the day God walked through the sacrificial animals although it took time for the promise to be acted out. Just because there was no visual sign that the promise was in effect (Isaac had not been born), it did not nullify the fact that it was an eternal promise.

**3:16** - *“The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed.”* - The promises that God made to Abraham embraced not just him but also his seed/posterity. Therefore, it dealt with the future as well as the present.

*“And through your offspring (Gr. “σπερμα” - “sperma”) all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me.”*

Genesis 22:18  
Cf. 26:4b; 28:14

*“The Scripture does not say ‘and to his seeds,’ meaning many people, but ‘to your seed’ meaning one person, who is Christ.”* - The argument here seems to say that if the promises were made only to Abraham and his immediate seeds (Ishmael & Isaac) then the covenant had served its purpose and time. It would have been completed well before the establishment of the Law of Moses. Therefore, the Law would have inaugurated a new covenant to replace the one given to Abraham.

Paul argues that the promises given to Abraham were to be realized in the coming of the Messiah who would bring the fulness of the Abrahamic blessing to pass. In spite of all that has happened during the intervening period, the promise still stands wholly ratified.

## I. THE LAW CANNOT ALTER OR MAKE VOID THE PROMISE (3:15-18)(Contd.)

**3:17** - *“What I mean is this: The law, introduced 430 years later”* - The actual time between the first promise given to Abraham and the establishment of the Law of Moses was 645 years. This has brought the sceptics once again to the forefront.

1. Abraham was 75 yrs. when God called him (Genesis 12:4)
2. Abraham was 100 yrs when Isaac was born [100-75 = 25 years] (Genesis 21:5)
3. Isaac was 60 yrs when Jacob was born [25+60 = 85 years](Genesis 25:26)
4. Jacob was 130 yrs. when he arrived in Egypt [85+130 = 215 years] (Genesis 47:9)
5. Israel lived in Egypt 430 years [215+430 = 625 years] (Exodus 12:40)

The best explanation of the 430 years is that Paul was referring to the span of time from Jacob entering the land of Egypt to the giving of the Law to Moses at Mount Sinai. It is important to note that the same covenant that had been given to Abraham was restated to Jacob just before he entered Egypt (Genesis 46:1-4). Both Genesis 15:13 and Acts 7:6 uses the rounding off figure of 400 years.

*“does not set aside the covenant previously established by God and thus do away with the promise.”* - Both had their place. One did not nullify the other. The promise and the Law both stood on their own without requiring a change from each other. If the Law would have modified the promise, it would have emptied the promise of its original meaning.

**3:18** - *“For if the inheritance depends on the law, then it no longer depends on a promise”* - The Jews were constantly aware of the inheritance through Abraham. They were incorrect in thinking that it secured a place for them in spite of their faith and actions (John 8:33). The law had its place but it had to be kept in that place.

- *“but God in his grace gave it to Abraham through a promise”* -

“How are we to achieve this right relationship? Shall it be by a meticulous and even self-torturing obedience to the law, by performing endless deeds and observing every smallest regulation the law lays down? If we take that way we will be forever in default, for man’s imperfection can never fully satisfy God’s perfection; but if we abandon this hopeless struggle and bring ourselves and our sin to God, his grace opens its arms to us and we find ourselves at peace with a God who is no longer judge but father.”

William Barclay  
“The Letters to Galatians and Ephesians”  
p.28

## II. THE LAW IS NOT GREATER THAN THE PROMISE (3:19-20)

**3:19** - *“What, then, was the purpose of the law?”* - Paul asked the question that was definitely in the minds of his readers. Paul didn't want to leave his readers with the thought that the law had no purpose at all in the plan of salvation or that it opposed the work of salvation. The Law was the means that God used to expose the inner heart of man's sinful character. It proved that no man could provide for his own salvation.

### A. The Law was Temporary (3:19a)

*“It was added because of transgression until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come.”* - Once Jesus established the New Covenant through His death, burial and resurrection, the Old Covenant was no longer in effect. This does not mean that there was no Law. Now God placed His law into the hearts of the people. The Law was never meant to be permanent.

To suggest that the Law was an addition to the promise would indeed cause the Jews to have to readjust their thinking about the purpose of the law in regard to the promises given to Abraham.

*“because of transgressions”* - the Greek word *“parabaseis”* means *“to step aside from the right track.”* These would be considered as intentional faults. The law essentially was put into place to make clear the pathway they were intended to walk.

### B. The Law Required a Mediator (3:19b-20)

*“the law was put into effect through angels by a mediator”* - (See Deuteronomy 33:2; Acts 7:38,53; Hebrews 2:2). The words *“put into effect”* or *“ordained”* simply have the meaning of administration. God therefore sent the Law through angels to Moses for the nation of Israel. If the Law required these additional mediators, how much better was the Promise that was given to Abraham directly and brought into effect by the work of Jesus Christ alone.

**3:20** - *“A mediator, however, does not represent just one party”* - This is probably the most obscure verse in the book of Galatians. There has been 250 (J.B. Lightfoot) to 300 (Fricke) interpretations of it. There are three main schools of thought though. The **first**, simply speaks of the role of a mediator as one who acts between two parties. The **second**, see the mediator as a specific reference to Moses. The **third**, is that Paul was referring to Jesus Christ as in I Timothy 2:5.

*“but God is one”* - Once again Paul makes the point that God gave His promises to Abraham without a mediator - He worked by Himself/One. This once again supports the view that promises of God are unconditional and unilateral in nature.

### III. THE LAW IS NOT CONTRARY TO THE PROMISE (3:21-25)

#### A. The Law was Not Given to Provide Life (3:21)

**3:21** - *“Is the law, therefore, opposed to the promises of God? Absolutely not!”* - Paul is ready for the strong opposition that would be raised with his arguments thus far. He wanted the Judaizers to know that the Law doesn't **compete or contradict** the Promise, but rather **cooperates and complements** its fulfilling of the purposes of God. When Paul says *“Absolutely not!”* he is saying that such a thought would be close to blasphemy. Both the Law and the Promises came from God.

*“For if the law had been given that could impart life, then righteousness would certainly have come by the law.”* - The Law could only expose the need that man required a new quality of life. It had no power to bring life to that which was pronounced as dead in sin. It was never intended for that purpose. It did what it was intended to do - nothing more - nothing less. It demanded righteousness but had no means of delivering/providing it.

#### B. The Law was Given to Reveal Sin (3:19a, 22)

*“But the Scripture declares that the whole world is a prisoner of sin,”* - Paul puts in a clear capsule of thought (expanded in Romans 1-3) the fact that everyone whether immoral, ethical or religious have need of a Savior because of their sin. The Law worked like a mirror to help us see all our wrinkles, spots, blemishes and dirt (James 1:22-25). The Law doesn't make us sinners (we do that) but rather it exposes the sin we have (Romans 3:20).

*“so that what he has promised”* - once again the promises of God come to the forefront.

*“being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe”* - The proper use of the law is simply to allow it to expose the sin. It is used improperly when we try to achieve a right standing before God by keeping the law (whether in part or in whole).

#### C. The Law was Given to Prepare the Way for Christ (3:23-26)

**3:23** - *“Before this faith came, we were held as prisoners by the law”* - Like a jailer, the Law kept Israel locked up to keep them out of trouble until their Liberator (Jesus) came to set them free. The specific faith mentioned here is that directed toward Jesus - a Christian or salvation faith by grace alone.

*“locked up until faith should be revealed”* - The Law worked like a restraining to keep those under it protected. Once faith was in place there was no longer a need for that kind of restraint.

### III. THE LAW IS NOT CONTRARY TO THE PROMISE (3:21-25)(Contd.)

**3:24** - *“So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith.”*  
The Law was not something that the Jews were **born** into but rather **brought** up by. The Law did **not give life**, it **regulated life**.

*“to lead us”* - the law worked as (Gr. - “pedagogue”) **“a child conductor”** to bring us to Christ.

“In many Roman and Greek households, well-educated slaves took the children to and from school and watched over them during the day. Sometimes they would teach the children, sometimes they would protect and prohibit, and sometimes they would even discipline. This is what Paul means by schoolmaster (3:24).

Warren Wiersbe  
“Be Free”  
p. 81

**3:25** - *“Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law.”* - The reign of the Law has ended for those believers who through faith in God after His coming have become mature sons of God. The restraints of the past are gone. This does not mean that the Law never had a purpose. It is simply no longer required as a method of acquiring justification because no one could honestly meet its requirements.

### IV. THE LAW CANNOT DO WHAT THE PROMISE CAN DO (3:26-29)

In these final verses, we see three results of the work of God’s grace through faith.

#### A. We Have Become Mature Sons of God (3:26-27)

**3:26** - *“You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus”* - It is only when a child reaches the age full maturity and responsibility that he can take on the privileges of a son. It would appear rather foolish to be recognized as someone mature and yet still rely on a **“child conductor”** for protection and correction.

#### IV. THE LAW CANNOT DO WHAT THE PROMISE CAN DO (3:26-29)(Contd.)

##### A. We Have Become Mature Sons of God (3:26-27)(Contd.)

“The “**pedagogue**” in the days of Paul, was a trusted servant, usually a slave, whose duty was not merely to lead this young master to school but in some measure to supervise his manners and morals. He was not qualified to instruct, nor was he given authority to control, but he was appointed to attend and to safeguard the child until his charge attained maturity and was no longer in need of guidance and discipline.”

Charles R. Erdman  
 “Epistle of Paul to the Galatians”  
 p. 75

**3:27** - “*for all of you who were baptized into Christ*” - Water baptism was an outward sign of an inward change. It is a sign of a union that has already taken place. Circumcision, on the other, simply initiated a person into a system of law.

“*have clothed yourselves with Christ*” - This is a daring analogy to liken Christ to garment that we put on. This denotes the taking upon oneself the very virtues and excellences of Christ. There may be a connection here to the Greek and Roman customs of changing from boyhood garments to the toga of an adult citizen when passing from boyhood to manhood. He was now seen as moving from under the rule of his family to the responsibility of a citizen.

“Faith is not merely an intellectual assent to certain doctrines. It is the going forth of the whole being toward a divine Person. It is the submission of the will to Christ. It implies devotion and obedience to Christ. It results here in spiritual maturity which is manifested to the world by a likeness to the character of Christ.”

Charles R. Erdman  
 “Epistle of Paul to the Galatians”  
 p. 77

##### B. We Have Become One with Each Other (3:28)

**3:28** - “*There is nether Jew nor Greek, . . .*” - This does not mean that there were no differences in nationality, status, or gender. We do not loose these identities once we become a Christian. We simply find ourselves on an equal playing field in our relationship with God.

#### IV. THE LAW CANNOT DO WHAT THE PROMISE CAN DO (3:26-29)(Contd.)

##### B. We Have Become One with Each Other (3:28) (Contd.)

“... *slave or free*,” - There are no advantages of birth, social position or human relationships in anyone securing the promises made to Abraham. All barriers have been broken down through Christ (Ephesians 2:11-18). The ideal church should compose of a blend of people who are poor and wealthy, educated and uneducated, straight and long haired, management and labor.

“*male or female*,” - Jewish men used to pray “*I thank God that I am a Jew and not a Gentile and thou hast made me a man and not a woman; and a freeman not a slave*” in their morning prayer time. Josephus wrote “*Woman is inferior to men in every way.*” (*Contra Apion*, 2:24). Christianity has done more to liberate women than any other religion in the world.

“*for you are all one in Christ Jesus*” - The only proper place for distinctions in the Church is in our area of function (I Corinthians 12).

**3:29** - “*If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise*” - These heirs did not come into their inheritance through the Law. Our inheritance comes through faith not the Law (Ephesians 1:13,14). What the legalizers were offering through circumcision was already theirs through faith.

According to Romans 8:18-25, believers enter into their full heritage when they are publically received as sons of God on the day of their final redemption.

Once again we see the O.T. and N.T. working together. In the O.T. we have the **preparation for Christ**; in the Gospels we have **presentation of Christ**; and in the Acts through Revelation we have the **appropriation of Christ**.

## THE DOCTRINAL ARGUMENT

### “FROM SLAVERY TO SONSHIP”

#### Chapter 4:1-20

The process of maturity in the ancient world was set forth in clear patterns. Once a **Jewish boy** had passed his twelfth birthday, he was taken by his father to the Synagogue, where he would be recognized as a **“Son of the Law.”** At the close of this ceremony, the father would pronounce this benediction. *“Blessed be thou, O God, who has taken from me the responsibility for this boy.”* The boy would then pray the following words. *“O my God and God of my fathers! On this solemn and sacred day, which marks my passage from boyhood to manhood, I humbly raise my eyes unto thee, and declare with sincerity and truth, that henceforth I will keep thy commandments, and undertake and bear responsibility of mine actions towards thee.”*

For those of **Grecian descent**, a boy was placed under his father’s care from seven years old until he was eighteen. The festival to mark this occasion was called **“Apatouria.”** At that time he was called an **“ephebos”** which is what we would call a **“cadet.”** During this two-year period he was under the care and direction of the state. The Athenians were divided into ten **“phratriai”** or **“clans.”** Before a boy was accepted as an **“ephebos”** he had to be ceremonially accepted into a clan. His long hair would be cut off and offered to the gods.

**The Romans** did not fix the exact year of change boyhood to manhood. It happened between the ages of fourteen to sixteen. The festival which celebrated this event was called the **“Liberalia”** which was held annually on the seventeenth of March. This was when his **“toga praetexta”** (which was a toga with a narrow purple band at the foot of it) was removed and replaced with a **“toga virilis”** (which was a plain toga which adults wore). He was then brought before the people and introduced as an adult. Another part of this custom was that on that day the boy offered his ball and the girl her doll, to Apollo to signify that they had put away childish things.

Lets look closely at how Paul sees this transition from “slavery” (one without rights) to sonship (one with full rights and authority). This section concludes the six part doctrinal argument that Paul so eloquently sets forth.

“One of the tragedies of legalism is that it gives the appearance of spiritual maturity when, in reality, it leads the believer back into a “second childhood” of Christian experience.”

Warren Weirsbe  
 “Be Free”  
 p. 87



**I. HE LUCIDS THEIR ADOPTION (4:1-7)**

**4:1** - *“What I am saying is that as long as the heir is a child, he is no different from a slave”* - The word used for child **“nepios”** describe a younger person who was still under the protection of someone mature. In I Corinthians 3:1,2, it describes a babe who is still feeding upon milk because he cannot yet digest solid food. It is noted that jealousy and quarreling that brought divisions to the church were a clear sign of immaturity.

*“although he owns the whole estate”* - The patrimony is his, but he has no legal right to dispose of it until he can prove his sonship by reaching the level of adult maturity. His freedom is basically hedged in by legal requirements. He has no more right than a common slave.

**4:2** - *“He is subject to guardians and trustees”* - Paul clearly focuses upon their status by using the words (**“epitropous”** or **“guardians”**) and (**“oikonomous”** or **“trustees”**). The guardians care for the **person** while the trustees care for the **property**.

*“until the time set by his father”* - Our Father still knows best. Even under Roman law, the father was given the final say in whether the son was mature enough (come to age) to take on the responsibility before him.

**4:3** - *“So also, when we were children”* - Paul is clearly addressing the Christian church at Galatia. This verse can easily include any and all Christians even up to the present time. It also includes those of Jewish descent or Gentile, male or female, bond or free.

*“we were in slavery under the basic principles of the world”* - The word used to describe the **“basic principles of the law”** is **“stoicheia.”** It originally meant lining up things in order or side by side as in a row. It came to mean the ABC’s of learning. The basic principles of learning are found in the alphabet. For fifteen centuries, Israel had been subjected to kindergarten learning. It was now time to move onto a higher education. The principles which they had learned now were to be built upon. They needed not just the Alpha but also the Omega of their spiritual education.

As the Greeks, Philo spoke of the four major elements of water (Poseidon), earth (Demeter), air (Hera) and fire (Hephaestus). They worshiped these in a childlike manner. We all know that none of these elements have inert abilities to alter our way of life if we chose to worship them.

**4:4** - *“But when the time had fully come”* - God always has His timing right. This thought goes beyond the fact that the Romans had established their empirical law (pax Romana); the Greek culture and language was well established; Roman roads were well made; travel was once again safe. It must also be said that the spiritual condition of the people made it imperative that the Messiah come. Even the pagans were crying out for justice.

## I. HE LUCIDS THEIR ADOPTION (4:1-7)(Contd.)

**4:4** - *“God sent forth his Son”* - This does not mean that Jesus didn’t exist before being incarnated (John 1:14; I Corinthians 8:6; Philippians 2:6ff; Colossians 1:15ff; I John 4:14). Jesus was sent out from a previous state and existence with the Father.

*“born of a woman”* - This was the supreme example of humility. He had all the normal limitations, weaknesses and helplessness of a young baby. Being born a Jew He entered into a prison system with His people in order to set them free. He was not enslaved as they were. He merely entered in with the key to unlock them from their enslavement.

*“born under law”* - To Jesus, obedience to the law was a joyful thing because it held no bondage to him since he was sinless (Psalm 40:8). He was subject to the restrictions, requirements, and demands of the law.

**4:5** - *“to redeem those under the law”* - Deliverance has a double aspect to it: We are redeemed from the bondage of the law to a freedom as clearly portrayed by a mature son who has gained his full legal rights.

*“that we might receive the full rights as sons”* - Roman adoption required seven witnesses to be present. Their testimony was critical. If after the adoptive father’s death, the “natural” heirs disputed the validity of the adoption, these seven witnesses would be called forward to testify that everything had been done legally.

**4:6** - *“Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts”* - The purpose of the Son’s mission was to give the rights of sonship. The purpose of the Spirit’s mission was to give the power to use these rights. Here the Bible again clearly portrays the doctrine of the Trinity.

Our hearts are portrayed as the seat of our will. It is here that the Holy Spirit takes up His residence.

*“the Spirit who calls out, ‘Abba, Father.’”* - The Aramaic word *“Abba”* was used by Jesus (Mark 15:36) and was passed unto those who had an intimate relationship with the Father. The Hebrew word *“Father”* spoke of the first Person of the Trinity. There are two sure signs of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The **first** is by those who can clearly call out to *“Abba.”* The **second** is when they acknowledge Jesus as **“Lord.”** (I Corinthians 12:3).

**I. HE LUCIDS THEIR ADOPTION (4:1-7)(Contd.)**

**4:7** - *“So you are no longer a slave, but a son”* - The contrast of a slave and a son is also seen in John 15:15. How foolish it would be to return to a position of a slave after receiving the adoption as mature sons. It is one thing to have the faith of a servant while it is another to have that of a son.

*“And since you are a son, God has made you also an heir”* - We are not called to be God, Lord or the Son, but rather sons and heirs of the promises of God. We are heirs of God through Christ; not by our own merit.

**Contrast between a Son and a Slave**

Son	Slave
- has the nature of the Father	- has his own nature (often rebellious)
- has a father	- has a master
- obeys out of love	- obeys out of fear
- is rich in possessions	- is poor; owns nothing
- has a hopeful future	- no hope; no future

**II. HE LAMENTS THEIR REGRESSION (4:8-11)**

Starting off well in our Christian walk is one thing. It is quite another to progressively move forward in maturity. There seems to be a constant barrage of obstacles to overcome in order to reach the goals that are set before us. **From 4:8-31 we have a threefold appeal.**

**A. An Appeal to their Pride (4:8-11)**

The purpose of sacraments were to be channels for God’s grace to flow. However, they often became observances that lost their meaning and became empty forms without faith.

**4:8** - *“Formerly, when you did not know God”* - Most of the Christians who read this letter were converted from paganism. This is the third time Paul speaks of their former enslaved state (3:23ff. , 4:1ff.). In reality, there is a time in all of our lives when we must all admit that we never really knew God.

*“you were slaves to those who by nature are not gods.”* - This was a typical Jewish way of describing those who once worshiped and served idols. The problem that continued to exist was that these counterfeit gods (dumb idols) continued to have a sinister effect, even demonic influence to those who continued to dabble in pagan practices (cf. I Corinthians 10:18-22).

## II. HE LAMENTS THEIR REGRESSION (4:8-11)(Contd.)

### A. An Appeal to their Pride (4:8-11)(Contd.)

**4:9** - *“But now that you know God - or rather are known by God”* - Paul also refers to this truth in I Corinthians 13:12. In these scriptures, God has a perfect knowledge of us (in the aorist tense) while we shall come to know Him fully (in the future tense). Paul is very careful in what he says here because the gnostic teachers declared that only they had a full knowledge of God.

*“how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable principles?”* -

“They were giving up the power of the Gospel for the weakness of the law, and the wealth of the gospel for the poverty of the law. The law never made anybody rich or powerful; on the contrary, the law could only reveal man’s weakness and spiritual bankruptcy.

Warren Weirsbe  
“Be Free”  
p. 97

The word used for *“principles”* is the word *“stoicheia.”* It basically describes the rudiments of religion. The adjectives of *“weak”* (feeble) and *“miserable”* (*“to crouch or cower”*- hence to show the qualities of a beggar) show a stark contrast. They literally have been interpreted **“powerless and bankrupt.”** These principles are neither able to set people free and offer nothing as a future inheritance.

*“Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again?”* - It is without question that the Judaizers were not consciously intending to bring the Galatians into enslavement, and the Galatians never intended to return to such idolatrous bondage. Paul essentially uses a “shock treatment” in an attempt to bring them back to their senses.

**4:10** - *“You are observing special days and months and seasons and years!”* - The Galatians were being tempted to observe the Jewish ritual observances. The uses of the word for “observing” carries with it the sense of watching for them and actually calculating their arrival. There is a similar list in Colossians 2:16.

*“special days”* - most probably in reference to Sabbath days.

*“and months”* - refers to those celebrations tied to recurring monthly cycles such as the festival of the New Moon (cf. Isaiah 1:1:14).

*“and seasons”* - refers to seasonal events which often lasted for several days (i.e. Feasts of Tabernacles, Passover etc.).

*“and years”* - most naturally refers to recurring years of Jubilee (every 50 years).

## II. HE LAMENTS THEIR REGRESSION (4:8-11)(Contd.)

### A. An Appeal to their Pride (4:8-11)(Contd.)

**4:11** - *“I fear for you, that somehow I have wasted my efforts on you.”* - Paul’s labor would have been in vain if either the Galatians had lapsed into legalism or into libertinism. A legalistic spirit that caters to the flesh eventually will lead to an unhealthy pride. It makes the outward event replace the inward experience.

## III. HE LONGS FOR THEIR AFFECTIONS (4:12-20)

### B. An Appeal to their Affection (4:12-20)

**4:12** - *“I plead with you, brothers, become like me, for I became like you. You have done me no wrong.”* - When Paul first came to Galatia he refrained from observing his ancestral customs and his national traditions. He made no claim of superiority. Even though he was a Jew, he gladly entered into fellowship with the Gentile converts (I Corinthians 9:20-22). He now asks them to treat him in the same manner. He felt that love for others should bring about love in return. If we want someone to accept our convictions we must also share with them our compassion.

Paul knew the importance of balancing a rebuke. He turned from spanking to embracing. There is a time for doctrine as well as time for personal devotion.

**4:13** - *“As you know, it was because of an illness that I first preached the gospel to you.”* - The *“illness”* mentioned here can only be speculated upon. Three diverse ailments are often argued by scholars - **malaria** (W. M. Ramsay); **epilepsy** (W. Wrede & J. Klausner); and **ophthalmia** eye infection (see vs. 15 & 6:11) (J. T. Brown).

**4:14** - *“Even though my illness was trial to you, you did not treat me with contempt or scorn. Instead, you welcomed me as if I were an angel of God, as if I were Christ Jesus himself.”* - This is not to say that Paul encouraged the people to worship him (cf. Acts 14:8-18). He instead saw it as a matter of respect for his faithfulness through difficult trials.

“Ministers should not be received and evaluated on the basis of their personal appearance, intellectual attainments, or winsome manner, but as to whether or not they are indeed God’s messengers bearing the word of Christ.”

James Montgomery Boice  
 “The Expositors Bible Commentary”  
 Galatians, Vol 10, p. 479

### III. HE LONGS FOR THEIR AFFECTIONS (4:12-20)(Contd.)

#### B. An Appeal to their Affection (4:12-20)(Contd.)

**4:15** - *“What has happened to all your joy?”* - The word for “joy” (“*makarismos*”) literally means “*blessedness*.” It is derived from a verb meaning “*to congratulate or to count happy*.” At one time they had felt blessed at the ministry of Paul. He wonders why this is no longer the case. The answer was clear that the Judaizers had stolen it from their hearts.

*“I can testify that, if you could have done so, you would have torn out your eyes and given them to me.”* - It is not sure whether this is figure of speech or that it is in reference to an eye ailment. Some people have the gifting not only to be exceptionally affectionate but also can bring out this affection in others.

**4:16** - *“Have I now become your enemy by telling you the truth?”* - It is unfortunate that we can become an offence to someone even when we speak the truth in love (Proverbs 27:6; Ephesians 4:15). The “*truth*” that is mentioned here is none other than the message of the Gospel. I wonder what would happen in the church if all we believed and practiced was the Word of God. Do we really keep to God’s Word in our life and practice?

**4:17** - *“Those people are zealous to win you over, but for no good. What they want is to alienate you from us, so that you may be zealous for them.”* - Paul had no desire to win converts unto himself. His ardent desire was to betroth his disciples to Christ (II Corinthians 11:2). The Judaizers wanted their converts to commit themselves exclusively to their new leaders - to be enrolled in a lifetime membership at the school of higher learning. Beware of demands to exclusive allegiances. The true task of a spiritual leader is to get people to love and follow Christ, not to promote himself and his ministry. When Paul uses the word “*alienate*” (“*ekkleisai*”) he was referring to the practice of “*barring a door*” or bolting them together inside as an isolated group. This practice is continued today.

**4:18** - *“It is fine to be zealous, provided the purpose is good, and to be so always and not just when I am with you.”* - We need to not only be zealous, but also zealous for the right thing. It is unfortunate that some Christians are only stable when they are around others whom they admire for their stability.

**4:19** - *“My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you,”* - Paul was in deep distress because these false messengers had so easily stolen the hearts of the Galatians and bitterly turned them against Paul whose love was from a sincere heart. He felt the pains of a mother giving birth to a child who is experiencing medical problems that could take its life away. Pastoral concern and evangelistic fervor needs to constantly be blended together. *“When young they step on your toes; when old they step on your heart.”*

**III. HE LONGS FOR THEIR AFFECTIONS (4:12-20)(Contd.)****B. An Appeal to their Affection (4:12-20)(Contd.)**

**4:20** - *“how I wish I could be with you now and change my tone, because I am perplexed about you!”* - This does not mean that he would change his teaching or have less expectations of them, but rather that he would change his approach. Instead of making a clear statement, he could begin to ask questions in order to understand the reason for their change of thought.

This ends a very important part of this particular train of thought. Once again Paul has addressed a very sensitive issue in a non-compromising yet very sensitive manner. May we learn many lessons not just from **WHAT** he said but also **HOW** he said it.

## THE DOCTRINAL ARGUMENT (Contd.)

### “FROM SLAVERY TO SONSHIP”

#### Chapter 4:21-31

#### I. AN ALLEGORICAL APPEAL

##### C. An Appeal to Intelligence using an Allegory (4:21-31)

Jewish Rabbis had four ways to interpret the Scriptures.

1. **Peshat** - Its simple or literal meaning
2. **Remaz** - Its suggested meaning
3. **Derush** - Its meaning deduced by investigation
4. **Sod** - Its allegorical meaning

The first four letters of these words form **PRDS** which are consonants of the word “paradise.” These scholars believed that when someone had exhausted these four interpretations, that he had reached the joy of paradise.

“In an allegory, persons and actions represent hidden meanings, so that the narrative can be read on two levels: the literal and the symbolic . . . Paul’s use of Genesis in this section does not give us license to find ‘hidden meanings’ in all the events of the Old Testament. If we take that approach to the Bible, we can make it mean almost anything we please. This is the way many false teachings arise . . . We must accept the plain statements of Scripture and not try to ‘spiritualize’ everything.”

Warren Weirsbe  
“Be Free”  
p. 100

**4:21** - *“Tell me, you who want to be under the law, are you not aware of what the law says?”*

- Paul now appeals to their mind - as ones who pride themselves in understanding the Mosaic Law and place themselves under it’s precepts. It is important every so often to sit back and evaluate what we believe according to the Scriptures.

There are many people who genuinely believe they are following God’s Word even though they have never seriously taken the time to evaluate their beliefs according to the Scriptures.



## I. AN ALLEGORICAL APPEAL (Contd.)

### C. An Appeal to Intelligence using an Allegory (4:21-31) (Contd.)

**4:22** - *“For it is written”* - This Biblical account is recorded in Genesis 16,17. We must remember that to Jew the Law (Torah) included all of the first five books of the Bible. Therefore, Genesis was as important as Leviticus and Deuteronomy.

*“that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and the other by the free woman”* - It was never God’s plan for Abraham to have Ishmael. He was born from a lack of faith in the promises of God. There was no problem as long as only Ishmael born. As soon as Isaac was born there came about a conflict because of the change of status for both Hagar and Ishmael (Genesis 21:9f.). Even though the Ismaelites have been granted many blessings, they will never become joint-heirs of the promises of God (see Romans 9:6-9).

A historical account is helpful in understanding the events surrounding the birth of Isaac.

- |                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| <b>1. 75 yrs</b>  | - Abram called to go to Canaan (Genesis 12:1-9)   |
| <b>2. 85 yrs</b>  | - Abram marries his maidservant Hagar (Genesis 16:1-3)  |
| <b>3. 86 yrs</b>  | - Hagar is pregnant and Sarah is jealous and mistreats Hagar and her son but God returns them to Abraham’s home (Genesis 16:4-16) |
| <b>4. 99 yrs</b>  | - God appears to Abram and once again promises him a son (Genesis 17-18)  |
| <b>5. 100 yrs</b> | - Isaac is born when Ishmael is 14 yrs old (Genesis 21:1-7)   |
| <b>6. 103 yrs</b> | - Isaac is weaned/Ishmael mocks Isaac (Genesis 21:8 ff.) and must leave his ancestral home (Genesis 21:9-14)                      |

**4:23** - *“His son by the slave woman was born in the ordinary way; but his son by the free woman was born as a result of a promise.”* - Isaac was born because God’s Word brings forth life no matter what kind of odds it must face. A barren womb is no match for the promises of our God.

Paul makes a clear contrast using this allegory. Sarah was free woman while Hagar was a slave. Sarah gave birth in a way that was considered impossible (supernatural) while Hagar simply had a natural birth.

**4:24** - *“These things may be taken figuratively, for the women represent two covenants. One covenant is from Mount Sinai and bears children who are to be slaves: This is Hagar.”* - If Paul was not careful with this allegory the Jews would say they were Sarah’s offspring while the Gentiles were Ishmael’s offspring. The next few verses bring the apostle’s thought into a clear argument.

**I. AN ALLEGORICAL APPEAL (Contd.)****C. An Appeal to Intelligence using an Allegory (4:21-31) (Contd.)****THE OLD COVENANT**

Based upon the Law of God  
 Hagar the slave/bondwoman  
 Ishmael - the natural birth  
 Earthly Jerusalem in bondage  
  
 Judaism

**THE NEW COVENANT**

Based upon the Grace of God  
 Sarah the freewoman  
 Isaac - the supernatural birth  
 Heavenly Jerusalem which is  
 free  
 Christianity

**4:25** - *“Now Hagar stands for Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present city of Jerusalem, because she is in slavery with her children.”* - Arabia was a wilderness area and was fitting symbol for the barrenness that one felt while living according to the law. There are a number of verses which link Hagar to those living in the desert of Arabia (Hagarites - see Psalm 83:6; I Chronicles 5:10,19; 27:31).

*“stands for”* - This word is used to primarily of soldiers dressing ranks. It indicates how one is much like the other when looked at quickly. Without getting too technical, Hagar was a symbol of the Old Covenant as linked with Mount Sinai where the Law came from.

**4:26** - *“But the Jerusalem that is above is free, and she is our mother”* - Here is a wonderful contrast between the Old and the New; the Law and Grace; Sinai and Jerusalem; Hagar and Sarah; Isaac and Ishmael; bondage and freedom.

Paul could understand the symbolism that the Scriptures had clearly made for centuries (Isaiah 62; Ezekiel 48; cf. Hebrews 12:22; 11:10,16; Revelation 21:2,9 ff).

**4:27** - *“For it is written: ‘Be glad, O barren woman, who bears no children; break forth and cry aloud, you who have no labor pains; because more are the children of the desolate woman than of her who has a husband’* - This is a quote from Isaiah 54:1. The mocking of the past will fade as the voices of joyful praise are heard.

**4:28** - *“Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise”* - The New Testament church has become much more fertile than that of the Old Testament. Sarah became not just ultimately the mother of the Israeli nation but also the mother of all who have accepted the Saviour by faith (cf. Romans 9:25 f; I Peter 2:10).

**I. AN ALLEGORICAL APPEAL (Contd.)****C. An Appeal to Intelligence using an Allegory (4:21-31) (Contd.)**

**4:29** - *“At that time the son born in the ordinary way persecuted the son born by the power of the Spirit. It is the same now”* - As in Genesis 21:9, so those born under the law despised those who were born of the Spirit. Even today those who live under the law of manmade rules and regulations persecute those who have gained freedom in Christ. Those who have not accepted the newfound freedom in Christ are constantly antagonistic to those who have believed. Mental persecution can be as brutal as any form of physical abuse.

**4:30** - *“But what does the Scripture say? Get rid of the slave woman and her son, for the slave woman’s son will never share in the inheritance with the free woman’s son”*- There is no doubt that the two will never live in harmony with each other. The only way to bring peace is through separation. Man-made religion and God-made freedom can never be compatible. This should not be understood to mean that Christians should attack those who have attacked them. The thought is more of isolation because the two can never truly become one (cf. Amos 3:3; II Corinthians 6:14-7:1).

**4:31** - *“Therefore, brothers, we are not children of the slave woman, but of the free woman”* - This verse once again sums up the appeal of Paul’s heart for freedom to those who are in Christ Jesus.

“There are many insidious influences which would incline the followers of Christ to accept some form of legal bondage and to forfeit the freedom of faith. Christians should be on their guard lest they seek for salvation by some other means than that of faith in Christ alone. As grounds for acceptance with God, no human expedients or efforts are needed or can avail.”

Charles R. Erdman  
“Epistle of Paul to the Galatians”  
p. 96

## THE MORAL/ETHICAL ARGUMENT

### “A LIFE OF FREEDOM IN CHRIST”

#### Chapter 5:1-12

“The first two chapters were concerned with Paul’s apostolic authority; the third and fourth, with the doctrine of justification by faith; these last deal with the maintenance of Christian liberty. The first two chapters were **personal**; the second two were **polemical**; these last were **practical**. In the first two the doctrine of Christian liberty was **stated**; in the second it was **defended**; in the third it is **applied**. Or, as some have described these three great divisions of the epistle, the first presents “**the apostle of liberty**”; the second, “**the doctrine of liberty**”; and the third, “**the life of liberty.**”

Charles R. Erdman  
 “Epistle of Paul to the Galatians”  
 p. 97

**Note:** Polemical means “*war of words; art of controversy; branch of theology dealing with differences in doctrine.*”

During the last four chapters, Paul has defended his apostleship and he has defended the gospel itself. He showed that it is by faith alone through grace and not works that we have been brought into fellowship with God and freed from the curse of the Law. The conclusion of this letter brings the proper balance that is always necessary in the Bible.

“But there is one more point to be made before Paul concludes his letter: that the liberty into which believers are called is not a liberty that leads to license, as his opponents would charge, but rather a liberty that leads to mature responsibility and holiness before God through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. This theme dominates the last two chapters of the Epistle.”

James Montgomery Boice  
 “The Expositors Bible Commentary”  
 Vol. 10, p. 486

## I. IMPERILED BY LEGALISM (5:1-12)

### A. A Slave - You Lose your Liberty (5:1)

**5:1** - *“It is for freedom that Christ has set us free.”* - Before going on, Paul interjects a verse that really summarizes the main thought of the previous chapters. Christ did not set us free so that we might become slaves again.

*“Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.”* Paul realized that they were standing upon a slippery path. Once they lost their footing they would find it difficult to regain their stability. Now was the time to get a solid foothold. The Jews were taught to take upon themselves the **“yoke of the Law”** as something good and also as the essence of their religion. Paul sees it as a yoke of slavery. Elsewhere Paul describes the Law as a yoke that even their forefathers were unable to bear (Acts 15:10). Every animal that was under a yoke was bound to submit to its master. On the other hand our Lord’s yoke was **“easy”** and **“light”** (Matthew 11:29,30) in comparison. It is one of the wonderful paradoxes of the Scripture.

### B. A Debtor - You Lose Your Wealth (5:2-6)

**5:2** - *“Mark my words!”* - The actual word is **“behold.”** or **“look [with intensity].”**

*I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all.”* - There is an unlimited help offered by Christ to those who place their undivided trust in His unmerited grace. There is also though no help given to those who attempt to bypass His saving work through circumcision or other legal requirements. We must come like those in the Parable of the Two Debtors (Luke 7:36-50) and acknowledge that our debt is too great for us to pay.

**5:3** - *“Again I declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole law.”* - When we accept the privilege of becoming a Canadian citizen, we also agree to accept and obey the whole law which our country has adopted - not just the ones we agree to. It is a matter of **submission** not **selection**. The Law was not instituted for **“cafeteria eating”** - choose the best and leave the rest. Just think of the foolishness of running a red light and trying to explain to the police officer that you never stole or committed adultery or cheated on your income tax.

“No amount of obedience can make up for one act of disobedience.”

Warren W. Weirsbe  
 “Be Free”  
 p. 119

**I. IMPERILED BY LEGALISM (5:1-12) (Contd.)****B. A Debtor - You Lose Your Wealth (5:2-6) (Contd.)**

**5:4** - *“You who are trying to be justified by the law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.”* - This alienation from Christ is apostasy. The aorist verb form means that it is an established fact based upon a previous action. Anyone who returns to the law cuts themselves off immediately from the grace of God. They will not mix with each other.

“There can be no compromise, no divided allegiance, no combination of contradictory methods. The choice must be made. It is either law or grace, either faith or works, either self-righteousness or the righteousness provided by God, either circumcision or Christ.”

Charles R. Erdman  
 “Epistle of Paul to the Galatians”  
 p. 100

**5:5** - *“But by faith we eagerly await through the Spirit the righteousness for which we hope.”* - The word used for *“hope”* is not simply a pious wish but rather a strong assurance. There is an assurance of our full possession of righteousness which is inherited by faith (Titus 2:13,14). This does not mean that our salvation is not assured today. Salvation is past, present and future. What happened in the past assures us of our present status which will reach its full manifestation when we go to be with God.

**5:6** - *“For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value.”* - Circumcision was sign of the Old Covenant while crucifixion was the sign of the New Covenant. Both offered entrance but one could not enter both by the same way. Each was an “Admit One” ticket.

- *“The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.”* - We can see a wonderful summation of the Gospel in this verse. We begin with Jesus Christ. It proceeds to show that there is no value in ceremony in determining our relationship with Christ. It ends with combining faith and love as the accepted expression of our new found relationship. Faith must find love as the avenue to walk upon.

- In Corinthians 7:17-19 we find a different emphasis because of the permissiveness that was the problem among the church compared to the legalism problem in Galatia. The Word of God will always bring balance to those who are taught my it and submit to its wisdom.

## I. IMPERILED BY LEGALISM (5:1-12) (Contd.)

### B. A Debtor - You Lose Your Wealth (5:2-6) (Contd.)

- In Corinthians 7:17-19 we find a different emphasis because of the permissiveness that was the problem among the church compared to the legalism problem in Galatia. The Word of God will always bring balance to those who are taught by it and submit to its wisdom.

### C. A Runner - You Lose Your Direction (5:7-12)

**5:7** - *“You were running a good race.”* - Paul often used an athletic imagery to describe the Christian race (I Corinthians 9:24-27; Galatians 2:2; Philippians 3:13,14; II Timothy 4:7).

*“Who cut in on you and kept you from obeying the truth?”* - This military term meant *“to set up an obstacle or break up the road.”* - A runner could often lose a race simply because of an illegal interference of another that hadn't been witnessed by the judges. There could also be the thought that someone had influenced them to disobey the rules and become disqualified from the race. It must be a terrible frustration from someone who has put so much time, and talent into their preparation for an important race to be either disqualified or never cross over the finish line.

**5:8** - *“That kind of persuasion does not come from the one who calls you.”* - This kind of persuasion is contrary to the purposes of God. In any race each runner is informed of the track they are to run upon. They understand how many laps or metres are required to finish the race. Anyone who gets off track will be disqualified. God called the runners; trained the runners; set the rules and entered their names in the race. God would never change the rules either before, during or after the race.

**5:9** - *“A little yeast works through the whole batch of dough.”* - Normally leaven is seen as symbol of evil influence (Exodus 12:15-19; 13:7; 34:25; Matthew 16:6-12; I Corinthians 5). Yeast (like sin) is small but left to its own will permeate a whole loaf of bread. It can be introduced secretly but it quickly spreads. Spiritual standards (as important as they are) will never keep the spreading influence of sin from entering our churches. There is a great importance of dealing early with evil influences.

**5:10** - *“I am confident in the Lord that you will take no other view* - There is no firmer basis for our confidence than that of our Lord. It usually proves to be foolish to base our hope on anything grounded in man's wisdom or strength. Paul had confidence that God would keep them running the race in the right direction if they only would keep their eyes open.

*“The one who is throwing you into confusion will pay the penalty, whoever he may be.”* - Those who bring confusion to the body of Christ will eventually pay the price. It really didn't matter to Paul whether he named those who were trying to get the church off track. The important thing is that the church is sensitive to their presence and their hidden agenda.

**I. IMPERILED BY LEGALISM (5:1-12) (Contd.)****C. A Runner - You Lose Your Direction (5:7-12)**

**5:11** - *“Brothers, if I am still preaching circumcision, why am I still being persecuted?”* - Some of the opposition that was levelled at Paul seemed to be accusations stating that he would preach circumcision or non-circumcision depending upon what would be better for him. If that was the case why was he still being persecuted?

“I am suffering persecution because I preach the cross, but these false teachers are popular celebrities because they preach a religion that pampers the flesh and feeds the ego.”

Warren W. Wiersbe  
“Be Free”  
p. 122

**5:12** - *“As for those agitators, I wish they would go the whole way and emasculate themselves!”* - There seems to come a point when even a man of faith reaches his limit. Here Paul is not so much venting a malicious spirit or ill temper. He had a great concern that would go to extreme limits to guard the grace God and the truth of His Word.

“If we were as concerned for God’s church and God’s Word as Paul was, we too would wish that false teachers might cease from the land.”

John Stott

Since these enemies of grace were encouraging circumcision, Paul uses a strong illustration to wish that they would go to the extreme level of castrating themselves. Paul likely realized that his readers knew of the practice of heathen priests (such as Cybele) who emasculated themselves as sign of extreme devotion. Jews were not allowed to mutilate themselves without being excommunicated (Deuteronomy 23:1).

We seem to continue to struggle with this heresy today. Thank God that He knew we would need this kind of Biblical foundation to build our church on in the last days as well as the early days. May we never be misguided in believing that salvation can be gained through human endeavour.



## THE MORAL/ETHICAL ARGUMENT

### “A LIFE OF FREEDOM IN CHRIST”

#### Chapter 5:13-26

In the early part of this chapter we studied the peril of legalism by using three analogies:

#### I. IMPERILED BY LEGALISM (5:1-12)

A. A Slave - You Lose your Liberty (5:1)

B. A Debtor - You Lose Your Wealth (5:2-6)

C. A Runner - You Lose Your Direction

Let us continue to study the moral and ethical argument as set forth by the apostle Paul. The apostle has been dealing the importance of becoming free in Christ. Now he deals with it in a practical manner. In a negative sense, he shows that our freedom should not lead to a license to sin. On the positive side, our freedom should allow us opportunity to better serve God and our fellow man.

#### II. PERVERTED AS LAWLESSNESS (5:13-26)

##### A. The Christian Life is a Life of Freedom (5:1-15)

**5:13** - *“You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love”* - There is always the flip side of every coin. Some were bound by legalism while others were perverting the freedom they had received to live in a manner that was NOT worthy of the One who had called them out of darkness into His glorious light.

*“You, my brothers, were called to be free* - The word *“free or freedom”* is an aorist verb which indicates that their freedom was established in the past so that they had already experienced it but they could not understand its value. Therefore, they were not making the best use of it.

*“But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love”* - Anyone who uses their newfound freedom as a license to sin is simply attempting to find an excuse for their self-indulgence. Liberty can degenerate into a license to sin when it should be offering us an opportunity to serve one another.

The word used for *“indulge’ or ‘as an opportunity”* (Gr. - *“aphormē”*) is a military term that speaks of *“setting us a base camp for operations.”* Our sinful nature is always looking for an opportunity to become established in our lives.

## II. PERVERTED AS LAWLESSNESS (5:13-26)(Contd.)

### A. The Christian Life is a Life of Freedom (5:1-15)(Contd.)

Paul did not want these brothers in Christ to come to a wrong conclusion (as is stated below) as could have been possible for them to believe.

“That, then, means that I can do what I like; all the restraints are lifted and I can follow my inclinations wherever they lead me. Law is gone and grace ensures forgiveness anyway.”

William Barclay

**5:14** - *“The entire law is summed up in a single command: “Love your neighbor as yourself”* - This summation of the law can be found in Leviticus 19:18. Its truth was commonplace in rabbinic belief and was supported in the teaching of Jesus (Matthew 22:39; Luke 10:25-28). If we would obey the “law of love” we would fulfill all the requirements of any legal or moral law. Jesus’ teaching on the “Golden Rule” (Matthew 7:12) sums up the requirements of the law and the prophets. The law brought many positive contributions to the Jewish nation.

**5:15** - *“If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other”* - Paul now uses a vivid illustration to bring contrast. These words illustrate a pack of wild animals attacking the throat of their victim - going for the jugular vein. The word *“biting”* speaks of the fierce and cruel manner of their actions. The *“devouring”* indicates the ultimate destructiveness created by their actions.

### B. The Christian Life is a Life of the Spirit (5:16-26)

#### 1. The Conflict (5:16,17)

**5:16** - *“So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature”* - It is one thing to point out the problems we face, while it is another to offer constructive solutions. The answer that Paul gives is by turning to the power of the Holy Spirit. The *“Spirit - pneuma”* was originally translated *“wind, air, breath, or life.”* It is as God breathes into our spirit a breath of life that we become a living soul. As we surrender and respond to the leading of the Holy Spirit we will find the strength to turn from our sinful desires.

When he says *“live by the Spirit”* he is telling them to keep living or walking in the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit as they began in their Christian walk. It is not something to start doing but rather to keep on doing.

## II. PERVERTED AS LAWLESSNESS (5:13-26)(Contd.)

### B. The Christian Life is a Life of the Spirit (5:16-26) (Contd.)

#### 1. The Conflict (5:16,17) (Contd.)

*“and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature”* - There is an assurance for those who walk by the Spirit. They will definitely not (an emphatic verb) fulfill their fleshly desires.

**5:17** - *“For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not what you want”* - Our sinful nature can and only will be in direct opposition with the Spirit of God living within us. This will be a constant battle as long as we live in our corruptible body.

“Some have maintained that there is no conflict within the Christian because of the supposition that the old nature governed by the flesh is eradicated. But this is not true according to this and other passages. Naturally, the flesh is to become increasingly subdued as a Christian learns by grace to walk in the Spirit. But it is never eliminated. So the Christian is never released from the necessity of consciously choosing to go God’s way. There is no escape from the need to depend on God’s grace.”

James Montgomery Boice  
 “The Expositor’s Bible Commentary”  
 Vol. 10, Galatians p. 495

#### 2. The Conquest (5:18)

**5:18** - *“But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law”* - The solution is not to set our will against the flesh as much as it to surrender our will to the Holy Spirit to lead and govern as He so desires. It is not so much a matter of force as it is our choice as He guides us to do His will (Hebrews 10:14-17).

#### 3. The Crucifixion (5:19-21,24)

##### a). The Sexual Sins (5:19, 21a)

**5:19** - *“The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery”* - The first sin of *“sexual immorality is actually dealing with two sins - Gk. - porneia”* or *“adultery”* is illicit sex between married people and *“fornication”* which is the same type of sin among unmarried people. This was the most open and shameless vice practiced in the Roman and Greek world at the time of Paul.

## II. PERVERTED AS LAWLESSNESS (5:13-26)(Contd.)

### B. The Christian Life is a Life of the Spirit (5:16-26) (Contd.)

#### 3. The Crucifixion (5:19-21,24) (Contd.)

##### a). The Sexual Sins (5:19, 21a) (Contd.)

*“Impurity” (Gk. - akatharsia)* was used to describe the pus in an unclean wound; an unpruned tree; as well as un-sifted material.

*“Debauchery”* - This has been translated *“wantonness - KJV; licentiousness - RSV*. It has been defined as *“readiness for any pleasure.”* This sexual sin basically has no form of restraint. People committing this act cease to care what others may think about their actions.

##### b). The Superstitious Sins (5:20a)

**5:20a** - *“idolatry and witchcraft”* - In *“idolatry”* man essentially worships the creature rather than the Creator. It is when we worship the things we have made. It is essentially materialism in today’s mind set.

The term *“witchcraft”* comes from the Greek word *“pharmakeia”* which means the *“practice of medicine or drugs.”* We derive our word *“pharmacy”* from this word. Drugs were often used to enhance a magical performance. The altering of the mind was the goal of sorcerers which was forbidden for God’s people (Deuteronomy 18:9-22). Both Peter (Acts 8:9-24) and Paul (Acts 13:8-11) dealt severely with sorcerers they came in contact with.

##### c). The Social Sins (5:20b-21a)

**5:20b** - *“hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions”* - The word for *“hatred”* speaks of one who is hostile to his fellow man. It can be seen between classes, nations and individuals. This kind of attitude defies and challenges others into acts of hostility. Jesus taught us to love our enemies (Matthew 5:44).

One who brings *“discord”* or *“strife”* depicts one who has entered a rivalry over a prize. This can be seen when we compete against each other in a way of making ourselves look good while attempting to make others look bad. Paul was concerned that this attitude and action be kept out of the church (I Corinthians 1:11; 3:3).

## II. PERVERTED AS LAWLESSNESS (5:13-26)(Contd.)

### B. The Christian Life is a Life of the Spirit (5:16-26) (Contd.)

#### 3. The Crucifixion (5:19-21,24) (Contd.)

##### c. The Social Sins (5:20b-21a) (Contd.)

When Paul speaks of “*jealousy*” comes from the “*zelos*” from which we get the word “*zeal*.” Here we see Paul is referring to a “*perverted or selfish zeal*,” one that strongly desires what another has.

Those who struggle with “*fits of rage*” are those who have an uncontrolled temper. It describes a quick temper that flares up and dies out rather than one that is prolonged.

**5:20b** - “*hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions*” - Those who struggle with “*selfish ambition*” are like a hireling (which is its root word) who will only work for pay. This as well as others sins are also mentioned in II Corinthians 12:20.

The word “*dissensions or seditions*” means “*a standing apart*” while “*factions*” describe one with a party spirit. This type of partisan spirit has destroyed many good churches.

**5:21** - “*and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.*” - Those with “*envy*” continue to walk with grudges against others because of what they have gained - not because this person is jealous.

Even though the Greeks and Romans drank wine instead of milk in their home along with their children they did condemn those who reached the state of “*drunkenness*.” They thought it turned a man into a beast.

It came to be associated with the drunken “*orgies*” of the day. Some versions use the word “*carousing*” which describe a band of celebrants who accompanied their friend after becoming a victor in a competition.

“It described unrestrained revelry, enjoyment that has generated into license.”

William Barclay  
The Daily Bible Study  
The Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians  
p. 49

## II. PERVERTED AS LAWLESSNESS (5:13-26)(Contd.)

### B. The Christian Life is a Life of the Spirit (5:16-26) (Contd.)

#### 3. The Crucifixion (5:19-21,24) (Contd.)

##### c). The Social Sins (5:20b-21a) (Contd.)

*“I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God”* - Paul is not talking about the **act of sin** as much as the **habit of sin**. Paul also mentions these in I Corinthians 6:9f and Ephesians 5:5.

#### 4. The Christian Character (5:22,23)

**5:22** - *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness”* - There are four words in the Greek language that we translate as love. We should all strive to attain to the “queen of graces” and that is love - agape love (John 13:35; I John 3:14; Romans 13:8).

##### a. Attitude Toward God

###### i. Love

**Physical Love** - The first is “*eros*” which is never used in the N.T. It speaks of a love for a maid; a passionate kind of love that is self-seeking.

**Friendship Love** - The second is “*philia*” which is a warm love that we feel toward our nearest and dearest friend.

**Family Love** - The third is “*storge*” which describes the affection of parents toward their children

**Divine Love** - The fourth is “*agape*” which is a Christian word describing an unconquerable benevolence. This kind of love is demonstrated when someone may insult, injure or humiliate etc. and we never seek for revenge but rather we deliberately bring out the highest good. It is a feeling of the mind as well as the heart. It also concerns the will as much as the emotions.

## II. PERVERTED AS LAWLESSNESS (5:13-26)(Contd.)

### B. The Christian Life is a Life of the Spirit (5:16-26) (Contd.)

#### 4. The Christian Character (5:22,23) (Contd.)

##### a. Attitude Toward God (Contd.)

###### ii. Joy

This is that inward peace and sufficiency that is not affected by outward circumstances. Happiness depends upon circumstances where joy does not. A case in point can be found in the life of Paul (Philippians 4:10-20)

###### iii. Peace

The common Hebrew word “*shalom*” was used as a form of greeting. People pronounced a peace upon those they greeted. Those who are at peace with God should act as an arbiter in their community.

##### b. Attitudes to our Fellow Man

**5:22** - “*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness*”

**i. Patience** - The KJV translates it as “*longsuffering.*” This describes the courageous steadfastness of one who is tried to their limit. The Hebrew counterpart is one who is “*long in nostril*” which is where they believed that anger was vented.

**ii. Kindness** - God used His kindness to lead people to repentance (Romans 2:4). There is no better way to continue in God’s kindness than to show others the kindness of God (II Samuel 9:3).

**iii. Goodness** - This has been described as “*virtue equipped at every point.*” This word appears to be more active (love in action) than kindness although it is very difficult to distinguish between them. Some see it as being generous.

##### c. Attitudes toward Ourselves

**i. Faithfulness** - This word speaks of being dependable. This fruit shows that we are trustworthy either in the sense of remaining true to the standards of truth or in the sense of being reliable in our dealing with others.

## II. PERVERTED AS LAWLESSNESS (5:13-26)(Contd.)

### B. The Christian Life is a Life of the Spirit (5:16-26) (Contd.)

#### 4. The Christian Character (Contd.)

##### c. Attitudes toward Ourselves (Contd.)

**5:23** - *“gentleness and self-control”*

**ii. Gentleness** - It contains three meanings in the N.T. **First**, it speaks of being submissive to the will of God (Matthew 5:5; 11:29; 21:5); **Secondly**, it refers to being teachable; a person who is not too proud to learn (James 1:21). **Thirdly**, it mostly refers to being considerate to the needs of others ((I Corinthians 4:21; II Corinthians 10:1; Ephesians 4:2). Aristotle used this word to describe someone who finds a proper balance in the extremes of anger. This fruit shows itself by being angry at the right time. It was used to describe a wild animal that had been tamed.

**iii. Self-Control** - Plato used this word to speak of someone who had mastered himself. If we never master ourselves, we will find it difficult to serve each other. It was often used of describing control over sensual passions; hence chastity.

- *“Against such things there is no law”* - The Law never forbid these qualities to exist. *Such virtues actually fulfilled the law.* Those who practise these fruit will never have to worry about the consequences of breaking the law. These virtues can only be manifested as we allow the Holy Spirit to flow into and through our life. The Law prescribed certain forms of conduct and prohibited others, but love, joy, peace and the rest cannot be legally enforced.

“A vine does not produce grapes by Act of Parliament; they are the fruit of the vine’s own life; so the conduct which conforms to the standard of the Kingdom is not produced by any demand, not even God’s, but is the fruit of that divine nature which God gives as the result of what he has done in and by Christ. ”

S. H. Hooke  
 “What is Christianity?”  
 P. 264

**5:24** - *“Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desire.”* - In a true sense, the battle of the flesh only begins once we become born of the Spirit of God and choose to walk in a manner that is pleasing to Him.



## II. PERVERTED AS LAWLESSNESS (5:13-26)(Contd.)

### B. The Christian Life is a Life of the Spirit (5:16-26) (Contd.)

#### 4. The Christian Character (Contd.)

“When we accepted Christ, those evil impulses and appetites which sought to control us were regarded as nailed to the cross. In reality they are not dead. They still harass us. They are doomed to death, and to them we need not submit. However, as we oppose them, we, too, feel the bitterness of the cross. It is no easy struggle . . . We behold him who died for us and ever lives.”

Charles R. Erdman  
 “Epistle of Paul to the Galatians”  
 p. 114

**5:25** - *“Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit”* - We have got to learn to walk WITH the Holy Spirit. The NEB translates it *“If the Spirit is the source of life, let the Spirit also direct our course.”*

**5:26** - *“Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other”* - This verse brings us back to a summation of verse 15. The word “conceited” describes someone who boasts when in reality they have nothing to boast about. Those who do not refrain from this kind of conceit will lead others into competition and division. We may win a theological debate but lose a brother to the world.

The word *“provoking”* means *“to call forth”* or to *“challenge.”* - Many a church war could be avoided if God’s people would simply allow the Holy Spirit to produce His fruit in and through our lives.

We will all put on the nature of a spirit. If it is not that of the Holy Spirit, it will be that of the unholy spirit of the evil one. The choice is really ours. What choice have you made?

## THE MORAL/ETHICAL ARGUMENT

### “A LIFE OF FREEDOM IN CHRIST”

#### Chapter 6:1-10

Every Christian lives under the Law of Love. The last chapter concluded with a contrast between the acts of the sinful nature and the fruit of the Spirit. Here Paul shows how we should conduct ourselves around a fallen brother as well as in relation to our religious teachers.

### III. PERFECTED BY LOVE (6:1-10)

There are two types of burdens that a Christian is required to carry on behalf of another.

#### A. The Burden of Moral Fault (6:1-5)

##### 1. A Contrast in Aim (6:1-2)

**6:1** - *“Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin”*- Even the best of men slip. The word that Paul uses in the Greek is *“παραπτωμα”* or *“paraptoma”* which refers not to a deliberate sin but rather to *“one who had slipped as like a man on an icy road or a dangerous pathway.”* It carries an element of surprise.

*“you who are spiritual should restore him gently”*- The word for *“restore”* was used for *“executing a repair like a surgeon removing a growth or setting a broken limb back into place.”*  
- Paul is more interested in a cure than in punishment. The correction is more of an amendment than a punishment.

*“Nothing reveals the wickedness of legalism better than the way the legalists treat those who have sinned.”*

Warren W. Wiersbe  
“Be Free”  
p. 140

*“But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted”* - Paul has also reminded us

*“So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don’t fall.”*

*I Corinthians 10:12*

### III. PERFECTED BY LOVE (6:1-10)(Contd.)

#### A. The Burden of Moral Fault (6:1-5) (Contd.)

##### 1. A Contrast in Aim (6:1-2) (Contd.)

**6:2** - *“Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ”* - Four times in the letter Paul uses the word *“bearing.”* In this case Paul uses a word that is often translated *“shoulder.”* We all need someone to help us bear heavy loads of temptation and the trials of life that often try to weigh us down. If we are to place a burden on one another, may it be a burden of mutual sympathy. If we need to observe a law, may it be the law Christ. Those who bear one another’s burdens are exemplifying a divine quality (Psalm 55: 22).

The most difficult burdens to bear are those associated with moral fault or failure. These are the kinds that need to be borne by those who are strong.

##### 2. A Contrast in Attitude (6:3-5)

**6:3** - *“If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself.”* - Just as in Romans 12:3, the Galatians were not to consider themselves more highly than they actually were. This teaching would be in strong contrast to the Pharisaic concept of self-righteousness. This is like the old saying *“the white man speaks with forked tongue.”* The one who is being deceived though is the speaker, not the hearer.

**6:4** - *“Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself with someone else”* - We need to scrutinize our own work. The word for *“test”* was used when metals were tested to see how pure they were. In II Corinthians 10:12, Paul also speaks of the foolish of us measuring ourselves or comparing ourselves with one another. To use each other as a standard in which to follow is a kind of escape from reality. When a Christian has his eyes on God rather than on other Christians, then in his own eyes he will be at best an unprofitable servant (Luke 17:10) and God Himself will receive glory (II Corinthians 10:12-18).

**6:5** - *“For each one should carry his own load.”* - The word Paul uses is one that describes a *“soldier’s pack.”* This is the kind of burden that each of us needs to bear by ourselves. The type of burden described in 6:2 is one that we need to bear together because it is too heavy to bear alone.

### III. PERFECTED BY LOVE (6:1-10)(Contd.)

#### B. The Burden of Temporal Needs (6:6-10)(Contd.)

**6:6** - *“Anyone who receives instruction in the word must share all good things with his instructor”* - Paul also describes this principle (in I Corinthians 9:11, 14; I Timothy 5:17,18; cf. Luke 10:7), that a workman is worthy of his pay. As the teacher shares the good things of the Word, so the congregation needs to share their good things with their teacher.

**6:7** - *“Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows”* - Although we can try to fool ourselves (by sowing little but expecting much), we cannot fool God. The results of poor sowing will be poor reaping.

**6:8** - *“The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction”* - The prophet Hosea said that we would sow the wind and reap the whirlwind - Hosea 8:7. No farmer would think of sowing in his field decaying matter because he would realize that he would have a crop failure. We have often sown a harvest of rotten seeds hoping there will be a crop failure. The unfortunate thing is that these rotten seeds bring forth a harvest, which is destructive.

“There are those who feel that they have escaped the results of moral conduct if they have been able to conceal from the world their wrongdoing. Others seem to imagine that if the wrong is merely forgotten and regarded as a matter of the past there will be no harvest of suffering or pain. Still others seem to imagine that religion is a device intended to secure immunity from the results of a moral fault. They deceive themselves by believing that the paying of penance or the confession of a fault to a priest or minister will prevent a wrong course of action from producing any distressing consequences. They even believe that the saying of masses and prayers will enable a gross sinner to escape from purgatory to paradise. Others suppose that the asking and the receiving of the forgiveness of God will cause this law of sowing and reaping to be suspended.

There is a reality in pardon, but it does not prevent the sinner from reaping a harvest of punishment and of shame. It does secure this supremely important thing; namely, the removal of the barrier of conscious guilt which separates the soul from God.”

Charles Erdman  
 “Epistle of Paul to the Galatians”  
 p. 119,120

### III. PERFECTED BY LOVE (6:1-10)(Contd.)

#### B. The Burden of Temporal Needs (6:6-10)(Contd.)

**6:8** - *“the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life”* - In the book of Romans 6:20–23, Paul also shows the contrast between these two types of reaping. The context of this verse shows that congregations that support good teachers will reap a spiritual harvest. They will see many souls brought into the kingdom of God.

**6:9** - *“Let us not become weary in doing good”* - One of the great hindrances into sowing spiritually is that there is a lapse of time between planting and harvest. Those involved in the work can become weary and discouraged. We need to continue working despite many tears and aching hearts.

*“for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up”* - There are seasons for the soul just as there are seasons to nature, and we must give the seed time to take root and to bear fruit.

**6:10** - *“Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people”* - We testify to people not simply by our **words** but also by our **work**. The Bible tells us that there are those who do evil things (Psalm 34:16). There are people who will return good for good and evil for evil (I Thessalonians 5:15; Luke 6:32-35). To a Christian, we are to return good for evil (Romans 12:18-21). We need to use every opportunity available to do good to others.

*“especially to those who belong to the family of believers”* - This does not mean that the church is to become an isolated group of members. God makes us a receiver of good things so we can also be a transmitter of those same good things. If Christians neglect one another they will have little thought for the needs of non-Christians. There is an old saying that goes **“generosity begins at home.”**

## THE MORAL/ETHICAL ARGUMENT

### “THE MARKS OF FREEDOM”

#### Chapter 6:11-18

As the apostle Paul comes to the close out his letter, he takes the pen from his scribe (amanuenses) and begins to write the final words in his own handwriting. In this summary we find a fresh warning against the legalizers. We also find him restating that Christianity is internal and supernatural rather than external and human. His abrupt ending leaves the reader with a sharp contrast between faith and works.

**6:11** - *“See what large letters I used as I write to you with my own hand!”* - The large letters may be due to three things: (1) It may be due its importance, as if it were printed in a heavy type like block capitals (2) It could have been that Paul was not used of writing, therefore, his printing was larger than the scribe had been using. 3). It may be that Paul’s eyes were weak (II Corinthians 12:7; Galatians 4:15), so therefore, he wrote with larger letters to be able to see what he wrote.

#### I. THE LEGALISTS (6:12,13)

**6:12** - *“Those who want to make a good impression outwardly are trying to compel you to be circumcised. The only reason they do this is to avoid being persecuted for the cross of Christ.”*  
- When Paul says they wanted to *“make a good impression”* he was trying to point out their insincerity. He was essentially saying and they were not what they seemed to be. We also need to be on our guard against those who try to make an impression.

“To the Jewish mind which had not been liberated from legalism, the finest outward display of a man’s serious intentions towards piety was his willingness to submit to circumcision.”

Donald Guthrie  
“The New Century Bible Commentary”  
P. 149

The word used for *“compel”* was also used in Galatians 2:14 speaking of how Peter was strongly influencing the Gentiles to follow Jewish customs. It is a strong word. Paul seems to use it to underline the serious threat that he is dealing with.

## I. THE LEGALISTS (6:12,13) (Contd)

The first reason Paul gives for the circumcision, is that the Judaisers wanted to save themselves from persecution. The Romans recognized the Jewish religion and officially allowed it to be practised. However, any changes from the normal were usually looked upon by the Romans as a splinter group that would probably cause an insurrection if left unchecked.

“The difficulty is the cross, because the cross speaks of the necessity of a divine death as the only solution to the sin of man. To have the cross is to have three disquieting and humiliating doctrines: (1) man is a sinner; (2) his sin brings him under the curse of God, which curse Christ bore; and (3) nothing man can do can earn salvation, for if this were possible, the cross would have been unnecessary. These doctrines humble men. Consequently, men hate the cross and actively persecute those who proclaim it.”

James Montgomery Boice  
The Expositor’s Bible Commentary Vol 10; Galatians  
p. 506

**6:13** - *“Not even those who are circumcised obey the law, yet they want you to be circumcised that they may boast about your flesh.”* - Paul saw it ironic that the Judaisers were not even able to keep the law that they expected others to. Paul was not criticizing them for failure to keep the law, but for failure to recognize their inability to do so. In fact, no one could! It was like having someone join a company that had gone bankrupt. They wanted to glory in their power over people whom they reduced to the same level as their legalistic slavery.

Paul saw these ones as trophy hunters who wanted to add to their inflated figures of conversions to Judaism. Unfortunately the same practice is perpetrated today by those who take pride in their boasting.

## II. JESUS CHRIST (6:14-16)

**6:14** - *“May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.”* - If anyone wishes to boast, this is the way to do it without sinning. In essence, this is the foundation message of the gospel. In using the full names of the Saviour, he was literally proclaiming *“the God who saves, the Messiah.”*

Paul realized that he once was ruled by external laws. He once glorified in human attainment (Philippians 3:3 – 6). Paul replaced his selfish and fleshly attitudes with this new life based upon the crucifixion of his Saviour.

## II. JESUS CHRIST (6:14-16) (Contd.)

**6:15** - *“Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is the new creation.”* - There was the time when circumcision did matter. But now that they have become a new creation Christ, the obligations of the law were completely inconsistent with the teaching of the gospel. It is important not only to be crucified with Christ but also to be recreated by Christ.

**6:16** - *“Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule, even to the Israel of God.”* - Paul makes three points in this statement (1) the peace and mercy of God are given to those who adhere to the gospel. (2) all who believe the gospel have an obligation to walk in its truth (3) those who do are the true Israel.

Paul was not trying to speak of Jewish Christians as a separate group within the churches. It seems like he held a good hope in the ultimate blessing of Israel according to the Scriptures (Romans 11:26). This probably carries with it an eschatological perspective.

## III. THE APOSTLE PAUL (6:17-18)

**6:17** - *“Finally, let no one cause me trouble, for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus.”* - Paul was appealing to the churches not to trouble him by giving way to the legalistic heresies of the Judaizers. He had suffered enough. It was time for the churches to bear some of their own suffering by resisting this kind of teaching.

It was a common practice that the master would brand his slaves with a mark that proved that they were his. Paul doesn't use his apostolic authority but rather his wounds to prove his commitment to Christ. Among some of the most permanent marks would have been left from his stoning at Lystra (Acts 14:19; II Corinthians 6:4-6; 11:25).

**6:18** - *“The grace of our LORD Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers. Amen.”* - After all Paul's arguments and rebukes, he ends with the grace of God. In reality, grace is a priority word of this letter. This was a common way that Paul ended his letters (Romans 16:20; I Corinthians 16:23; Philippians 4:23; I Thessalonians 5:28; II Thessalonians 3:18).



**III. THE APOSTLE PAUL (6:17-18) (Contd.)**

“the letter to the Galatians, with its trumpet call to Christian freedom, has time and again released the true gospel from the bonds in which well-meaning but misguided people have confined it so that it can once more exert its emancipating power in the life of mankind, empowering those who receive it to stand fast in the freedom from which Christ has set them free.”

F.F. Bruce  
“New International Greek Testament Commentary on Galatians”  
p. 278

Any church that is able to bear the grace of God along with the scars or marks (Gr. - “stigmata”) can walk with the assurance that they are distinguished as God’s people.