

## Galatians – Christians and the Mosaic Law

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## Galatians – Christians and the Mosaic Law

This was originally an expository series of sermons given in the church where I was serving as Pastor. A few years later, they were edited to be used as a Bible Study. There are a few things I feel I should share with you before using this material:

First: I had no intent of sharing or publishing this material until encouraged to do so by some friends. While I did consult several commentaries as I was preparing the original sermon series, I did not make notes of the references used in the messages. There was not in the beginning, nor is there now, any intent to plagiarize. Should you see anything you feel is the original thought of another, I ask for your grace and mercy.

Second: In my notes for teaching (or preaching), I tend to spell certain words phonetically for the purpose of emphasis. When transforming these notes from sermon notes to teaching notes, I felt inclined to leave a number of these phonetic spellings. They help me to make emphasis in the lesson at particular points.

Third: In my notes for teaching (or preaching), I make little effort to conform to rules of grammar. One example is that I often use a hyphen ( - ) to indicate a point where I may want to pause slightly and to keep certain thoughts connected as I speak. Another example is that I will use local colloquialisms to make points in the message.

Please accept that these notes are not an academic work. But I do hope they will help the preacher or teacher to be able to more quickly prepare their own sermon or teaching.

As we check out commentaries on the book of Galatians, we see many Bible scholars have spent a great deal of time and energy arguing and debating which churches are addressed in this letter to the Galatians.

To some people the term "Galatia" referred only to the old region in the central plateau of Asia minor which was originally inhabited by the Gauls. But to others the term "Galatia" was more of a political term and referred to the whole Roman province which included the cities to the south.

I am tempted to think too much time has been expended in trying to determine whether the letter was originally written to churches in the North part of Roman Galatia or to churches in the South part of Roman Galatia – or both. I have come to terms with this issue and, for my own mind, am comfortable as to just which area Paul was probably writing. But even if I am wrong as to which area it was originally intended, that won't change the message which is found inside this wonderful letter to the churches.

I am sure that many of these types of debates are originated by Satan. When we get really caught up in trying to solve an almost unsolvable puzzle which will not alter the main message regardless of the outcome – we usually never see the main message because we can't get away from the puzzle.

I admit that it matters to which area he was writing if you desire to determine the date in which the letter to the Galatians was written. But truthfully, that still will not alter the main message of the letter. This letter to the Galatians is, as is most of Paul's letters, a masterfully written work inspired by the Holy Spirit.

What really matters to us, is not so much when it was written, or whether to the north or south areas - But what does it have to say to us today - right here where we live?

## Galatians – 01 Who Called You?

Read Galatians 1:1-5 and make notes:

There are some notable things here in the Salutation portion of this letter. One is that the writer identifies himself by his Roman name "Paul" instead of his Hebrew name "Saul." Another notable thing in the salutation is found in verse 3. Paul begins his letter to the Galatian Christians with a greeting that is similar to the customary greeting of that day and culture. It was similar, but not identical.

The customary salutation of that day was simply the Greek word "*chairen*" which means "greetings." It was the usual and accepted way to begin a letter; to say "greetings". Paul exchanged that simple customary "greeting" - to the Greek words "*charis hymin*"; which means "grace to you."

This simple but important phrase tells us right at the beginning of the letter that it is not just a social letter. Paul is wishing, praying, and hoping that they receive the "Grace of God." Paul desired the free and unmerited favor of God - to fall continuously upon the sinful mankind in Galatia.

There is a double blessing called forth here to the Galatian Christians. He also said "peace be to you." The Greek word "*eirene*" has the same overall meaning as the Hebrew word "*shalom*" - which denotes basically a stage of wholeness - not only peace between you and the other person - but peace within yourself - and peace with God.

The Grace of God and the Peace of God have an interesting relationship. When a person will accept the Grace of Jesus - then the peace of Jesus is sure to come upon them. When a household accepts the Grace of Jesus - then the peace of Jesus comes upon that home.

## Galatians – 01 Who Called You?

Paul didn't just wish grace and peace upon the Galatians - he wished the "grace and peace FROM God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ." What do we wish for those around us?

If we look closely at verse 1 and then at verse 3 - we see that Paul sees Jesus in His exalted status. In verse 1 he uses a single preposition "by" to refer to his commissioning being "by" Jesus and God. Then in verse 3 He uses a single preposition "from" to refer to God and Jesus. This reflects the preeminent place that Jesus Christ occupies in Paul's thinking. Have we given Jesus Preeminent place in our fellowship?

Paul closes his salutation with the phrase "to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen." The average Christian today misunderstands "Glory to God" about as much as they mis-understand tithing. We think we are giving God something we we tithe! But in reality, it belongs to Him.

In the original text there appears to be no verb. The text literally says, "to whom glory for ever." This text actually says that "glory" belongs to God. Glory is a basic attribute of God. God's "glory", His "doxa", generally denotes His divine and heavenly radiance, His loftiness and His majesty.

The idea is that we cannot give God "glory" for this is His already. We can at best acknowledge that "Glory" is His - We can hand over to Him what is His already - but we cannot give Glory to Him in the sense that we make a gift of it to Him.

After Paul declares that "glory" is God's – and it shall be for ever and ever - he closes with the simple statement "amen" - which is to say "so be it" - or in today's vernacular - "I wouldn't have it any other way."

Another notable thing in this salutation is that he refers to his office or status as an Apostle. This word "apostle" to the people of New Testament times - denotes one who is sent and invested with authority of the commissioning party.

## Galatians – 01 Who Called You?

In verse 17 of this chapter we find the reference to "the apostles." Many Bible scholars agree that this is referring to the original 12 appointed by Jesus Himself. And this is the way in which it is used by many contemporary Christians today.

There are those today who accept no one as an Apostle - except the 12 which Jesus selected and appointed during His earthly ministry. Because this is a major point to so many contemporary Christians, this makes Paul's salutation very important to study.

There are those today who say that there simply are no Modern Day Apostles. "If Jesus didn't select you and appoint you during His earthly ministry - then you ain't one." Some have yielded only in so much as they will include Paul as an Apostle - "After all, Jesus did appear to Paul on the road to Damascus - and we do have to admit that Paul wrote more documents that became part of our New Testament than anyone else. So we will call him an apostle - But not anyone else. He was the last of them."

But it is not correct to state that Paul used the term "apostle" in this way. As we look at the writings of Paul – and believing the Holy Spirit inspired every one of them – we see that Paul referred to others as apostles – some who were outside the original twelve.

Read 1 Corinthians 9:5-6 and make notes:

This passage indicates Paul recognized Barnabas as an Apostle - "can't we do as the OTHER APOSTLES - or must only I and Barnabas be different?"

## Galatians – 01 Who Called You?

Read 1 Corinthians 15:6-7 and make notes:

This passage gives us the idea that Paul recognized James, the brother of Jesus as an Apostle. Some people may try to argue that isn't what this text says. They want to interpret it to say that Jesus appeared to 500 people, then He appeared to James, then He appeared to the Apostles, then He appeared to Paul. We can easily be persuaded to read this text in this manner until we consider other text.

Read Galatians 1:18 – 19 and make notes :

It is pretty clear in this text that Paul counted James as one of the "other apostles." Here is our "two witnesses" which would be sufficient in most courts of that day. But Paul saw others who were outside the circle of the original 12 as apostles.

Read 1 Thessalonians 1:1 and 1:7 and make notes:

## Galatians – 01 Who Called You?

We get a third witness in that Paul looked at Silas (or Silvanus) as an Apostle. As we go back and check our Gospel accounts - where they list the names of the 12 that Jesus called as disciples - we don't find Barnabas or James or Silas listed with that group.

Read Galatians 2:6 – 8 and make notes:

Paul apparently had no difficulty seeing himself as "equal" with the "original 12" in the office and work as an apostle - and where Paul seems to differ with some of the Christian leaders of today is that he also had no problem seeing others who were outside that original circle as equal in the office of an apostle.

In Romans, in 1 & 2 Corinthians, as well as in Galatians - we find numerous texts where Paul was willing to see himself as equal in apostolic rank, being qualified to bear witness, and having visible concrete evidences of his apostleship.

When we look at Acts 1:21, you will see that one of the qualifications that was laid out by the "men" - was in order to be considered as an apostle - you had to be personally acquainted with Jesus during His earthly ministry.

What Paul is saying here and in his other writings is that this is not the prerequisite of apostleship. He is saying to "us today"- that the personal encounter with and the commission by the risen Lord Jesus is alone sufficient.

Is it possible for you to have a personal encounter with the risen Lord Jesus Christ – today? Is it possible for you to be commissioned by Him to do His work - today - if He should so choose? If this is true - then there "can be" modern day apostles!



## Galatians – 01 Who Called You?

Paul's emphatic contrast with the assessment of others of that day is seen in verse 1 : "sent not from men nor by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father." He did not receive his commission nor his authority from men but from Jesus Christ AND God the Father.

The Greek words used here really say "not through men." Paul didn't fail to give respect to the men through whom God worked in bringing Paul to his calling. Paul didn't forget Ananias who laid his hands upon him in Damascus where God restored his sight. Paul didn't forget Barnabas who took him to Jerusalem and talked the "other Apostles" into meeting with Paul. What Paul was saying, is that even though God used men to reach him and help him in certain ways, his authority comes directly from Jesus Christ .

If we look honestly, most ministers can look back and see how God used many different people in preparing us for the work of ministry. Some may have been people that we met in various churches we have attended - others may have been people that we met in the business world - some may have even been people that we met in social situations. Many people have influenced our decisions along the way - but not one of them - nor has any group of them - been responsible for our being called to the ministry - or our answering the call to do so.

There may have been several different groups of people who have taken the time to say that they recognize the call of God upon our life to preach or to teach the Word. Perhaps several groups have taken the time to "lay hands" upon us before witnesses. But the truth of the matter is that we receive the "call from God" before any of these people acknowledged or laid hands upon us.

If everyone should withdraw their "ordination" and everyone should say we no longer believe you are called" - we would still have to obey the call from God and minister according to that call - for the call is not "from men" nor is it "through men" and it certainly is not "of men"but of God, from God, and by God! And so it is for every Believer, not just those holding a church office.

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God will most likely use other people to get our attention, or other people to bring us to a place where can receive help - or at least be willing to receive help. But if we receive any commission - it will come directly from the Lord - God's authority - God's commission - God's power - comes directly from Him to us - and not THROUGH some person or group of persons.

Who among us today is open to receive from God? Do we NEED the appointment of man before you will get busy about the ministry we have been appointed to? If we KNOW that we have been called of God to do a particular work - will we stop performing our appointed task if the people around us don't give us the recognition?

Even in this small group - there are those whom God has already appointed to several works of ministry. What are we waiting on? Whose additional appointment are we waiting on? Who can add one thing to God's authority? ARISE "called out ones" and MINISTER!

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

Have you ever heard someone say "I have another Gospel" or another "Testament?" What is the proper response to those who claim to have "another gospel?"

Could it be – that our Bible really isn't complete? Could it be – that we are missing something important? Is it possible that we need to do something more than just believe in Jesus? Is it possible that there is another way to God besides Jesus – or in addition to Jesus?

When we look at other letters of Paul we find, he describes the people to whom he wrote the letter. In Romans, he begins the letter by saying it is to those who are "loved by God and called saints." In 1st Corinthians he says it is to those "who are sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy." But here in Galatians, he simply says "to the churches in Galatia."

We find another difference is in style of this letter to the Galatians. In many of his other letters, Paul includes a section of thanksgiving following his salutation. But here in the letter to the Galatians, he goes right into an indignant protest.

Read Galatians 1:6 – 9 and make notes:

The strong protest is against the Galatians' acceptance of another message claiming to be "the gospel." Paul asserts rather firmly that there simply is no other gospel than the one he preached to them. It is apparent in the wording of Paul's letter that he sees the situation as very serious.

Since the Galatians are deserting the one true gospel, Paul can find or see no reason for thanksgiving, but can only express his complete astonishment. Like a person in sin – unfulfilled - gets angry when you suggest they should change!

In a sense, Paul is accusing the Galatians of being religious turncoats, - traitors. They are turning their backs on "the one who called you." This is a phrase Paul uses in several of his letters to refer to God.

The phrase used in verse 6 saying that they were called "by the grace of Christ" is "*en chariti*" in the Greek. This can be translated "in grace" or "by grace". The real context of the Greek phrase is that of pregnant sense. They were called into a state of grace, which is expected to grow and develop, and then one day bring the fruit of reproduction. Paul didn't see this as just deserting an idea or ideal.

Perhaps the reason Paul was so indignant was that he saw their turning from the True Gospel to this new message - like that of "Aborting" something with life in it - SO that they could go after this "other thing." It was like the pain we feel when we hear someone has aborted their baby just so they can somehow further their career or go after some other worldly thing.

We would cry out, "What on earth is more important than human life?" Paul was crying out, "What is more important than real life in Christ?" The phrase "so quickly" indicates it wasn't a very long time after their conversion experience. This phrase is not sufficient to determine an exact length of time but it certainly implies that it wasn't long. This word is "*tacheos*" - can be interpreted "so easily". It seems they turned "so easily" from the True Gospel of the Saving Grace of Jesus Christ. Since it was so easy for them to turn away, then it didn't take long for them to turn away.

The Galatians deserted the True Gospel message and turned to "another" or "different Gospel" message. These new teachers of this different Gospel probably didn't use the phrase "different gospel." We see in 5:3 & 6:12 that they were pushing circumcision. These new teachers were probably telling people something like – “we are telling them the rest of the story” or teaching the "complete gospel."

They may have presented Paul's teachings as incomplete and only a beginning. They probably did not say this is a different gospel, but probably said that this is the "rest of the gospel." Maybe they even said that theirs was the "full gospel."

Paul doesn't allow any margin for this type of teaching. He states emphatically that any "gospel" that differs fundamentally from the one of "Grace" that he has preached to the Galatians is No Gospel at all.

By the time we get to verse 7, we see Paul refuses to recognize it as another gospel but declares, "this is no gospel at all." Paul's attitude seems to be that "no one would consider calling this a gospel" except those persons who intend to bring you into confusion. Paul goes on to say - he believes such a "no-gospel" type of message is the product of those who have set out to distort or pervert the Gospel of Christ.

Paul does not name the persons who brought forth the teaching to the Galatians. It seems unlikely that he did not know their names or identities. If he has heard of the distorted teaching then it is reasonable to believe that he has also heard of who was teaching there.

Paul's refusal to name them but to simply refer to them as "those" or "some who" and other vague references to them indicates his great disdain for these persons. He will not give them the respect of calling their name. According to the culture of that day, there was a certain power associated with every name. When someone was believed to be bad or evil, it was not acceptable to say that name.

Paul has already stated, he saw their intentions were to raise seditions among the Galatians, causing them to change their allegiance from the Gospel of Christ that Paul had brought to them - over to this other message of law and bondage. Paul saw it as an effort to bring the Galatian Believers out of grace and mercy - and into Legalism.

Paul desired for the Galatians to understand that the "True Gospel" was the one "of Christ", "about Christ", and "centered on Christ." He felt it was important for the Galatians to understand that Jesus Christ is the complete content of the Gospel.

Christ was the "obtainer of peace" with God for them. It was never outward actions and practices. If you want to do a word study on the "Gospel of Christ", you will find that it really means, "the gospel which tells of Christ." This was what Paul wanted the Galatians to understand as the "True Gospel."

The gospel which declares a message of having to accomplish various acts of the law, and proclaims requirements of fulfilling the law, is not a "good news" message, for who has ever been able to fulfill the law? It can only be the gospel, or good news, when it is a message that Christ has done it for us, has accomplished it for us, has given it to us.

By the time we get to verse 8, we can see Paul doesn't seem to hesitate to pronounce judgment upon whoever may teach something different from Christ being sufficient. Paul declares a clearly impartial judgment. "If anyone - if we ourselves - if an angel from heaven" - "then let that person be held as an outcast" - let them become unspeakable - let them become eternally condemned."

There are some Bible Scholars who say Paul lost control here and let his anger show. They say it is out of character for Paul to curse someone - recognizing the real meaning here is "let them be forever damned." If Paul had named the individuals that he was saying "let them become eternally condemned", then I might tend to agree. But he didn't name anyone - and he didn't even exclude himself. This is why I believe Paul did not lose control - he wasn't cursing in a fit of rage - Paul was expressing the importance of the Message of Grace in Jesus Christ - and the seriousness of the offense for those who would try to bring the people back into a place of legalism and bondage.

Who can you imagine is more committed to serving God than was the Apostle Paul? And yet, Paul placed the Gospel message as greater than himself. The Gospel message was not to be perverted; not by him, not even by angels from heaven. We have sufficient evidence in Paul's other writings that he had a genuine concern to see the lost come to salvation in Christ Jesus.

It was Paul who said, "let me become a fool if that is what it will take, - let me be a vegetarian if that is what it will take, - let me become whatever I have to be - in order to bring the lost to Christ Jesus." So we know Paul had a tender heart - wanted everyone to be saved - when we see Paul calling forth such a curse upon someone, we cannot just look over it lightly. This declaration of eternal condemnation upon those who would teach a message other than "Jesus being sufficient" shows just how serious Paul saw the matter.

## Galatians – 02 – Jesus Plus Nothing

Have you not noticed how these kinds of additional teachings have come into the Church in our generation? There are those in our generation who teach that if you don't do certain things in a certain way, then you cannot be saved. Don't you recognize the performance in this? - If you don't do a certain performance, then you can't be saved.

What the Bible really says - is that Jesus is sufficient to save us. If we believe in our heart and are willing to confess with our mouth - then we are saved. The "acts" are things that follow salvation - just because we Love the Lord and want to be obedient to Him - but not as part of salvation.

This type of teaching has even made it into so many contemporary churches. There are those who teach such things as "oh yeah - God still heals today - but "only if you have enough faith." Do you recognize the performance requirement in this? "If you don't have enough faith - then you don't get healed - and it is all your fault."

The New Testament says clearly that without faith it is impossible to please God. But it also says that Jesus is sufficient to heal you and me - that it was by His stripes that we were healed - and not by our faith.

How much faith did the man have who was let down through the roof? The Bible says when Jesus saw the "faith of his friends" He healed the man. It had nothing to do with the faith of the man on the mat - Jesus was enough. What was wrong with Paul's faith - when Jesus said He wouldn't remove the thorn in the flesh but would give Paul the grace to withstand it?

There are those who teach that once you completely sell out to Jesus - completely surrender to Him in every part of your life - then God will make you physically prosperous - with a great deal of Finances and worldly "stuff". Do you recognize the performance side of this? "If you surrender enough - or if you submit enough - then you will be wealthy" - "so if you are not wealthy in earthly things - then you are not up to the level of surrender that the rest of us are" - "you haven't performed sufficiently enough yet."

The Bible does say that we will have what we need - it even has record of several people who served God and were wealthy in the goods of this earth - but nowhere does the Bible promise us that we will be rich in earthly goods if we follow Jesus. Don't forget the poor beggar Lazarus not only got into Heaven, but the Bible states he received "much" there.

These types of teachings today, just as in Paul's day are perverted: They teach God did not send His Son into the World to show that He loves us - but that He loves people who live religious lives. They teach Jesus did not come to earth to secure righteousness for us - but came to show us how to live a life that pleases God. They teach Jesus did not come to die for man - but He came to teach us that we should be so committed that we would die for God's cause. They teach the death of Jesus was not sufficient – and we must add the obedience to some law to His death.

When are we going to stop allowing all these teachings that are Jesus Plus Something else to come into our Churches? It is time that we get back to the "Real Gospel." The future of the Church is to be found in its going back to the "Old Message." "Our Future" is to be found in the "Message of our Past."

Let's get Back to the Future - concerning the Gospel. Jesus is enough! - Jesus is all that we need! Jesus is enough to bring about our salvation! Jesus is enough to heal us! Jesus is enough to supply our every need! Jesus is enough to bring us Joy and Happiness! Jesus is enough to set us free from bondage!

Jesus is enough to bring about Spiritual Gifts into our life. We don't get Spiritual Gifts because we have arrived - or because we finally accomplished. We get everything from Jesus the same way we get salvation - By Grace!

It is worth noting how close the "false teaching" is to the real "gospel". It is so very close in text, with only a slight additions here and there. In Matthew 15:9 Jesus warned that in the last days people would be "worshipping Him, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." Oh how I wish every Believer today could come to the place that Paul had come to when he wrote down verse 10.



Read Galatians 1:10 and make notes:

Paul had been accused by some Jews of being a "man pleaser". They charged, Paul was doing what was necessary to please Gentiles in order to get them to receive his message. For instance they said - he let go of the circumcision requirement in order to get the Gentiles to accept the message. Paul ask them to consider whether it appears that he is trying to win God's approval or man's approval. He is asking to consider if it really sounds as though he is trying to please men.

Paul states clearly that if he were still trying to please men then he would not be a servant of Christ. All of us come into this world with a certain desire for acceptance of others, recognition by others, and a desire to please others.

When we accept Jesus as Savior, the majority of us still try to please others and to win their acceptance. I did. My wife did. For years we did. In different Churches in different states, we did. We finally came to a place where we realized that it is impossible to please others. So, we finally quit trying to please other people.

We truly desire to minister to the people around us. Many of them can't yet imagine how much we want to help – I'm certain the majority can't yet imagine how bad it hurts when people refuse - but we just don't care whether people like what we do or not.

We have learned that while it is impossible to please people for very long - it is so very easy to please God continuously. We have also come to realize that God is the only one that matters. As long as God is pleased with what we are doing - then it really doesn't matter whether anyone here on earth likes it or not.

## Galatians – 02 – Jesus Plus Nothing

The things that God asks us do, sometimes will be unacceptable to the people of this World. We cannot serve God faithfully and please people. So, if we want to please people - then just give up on serving God. When we want to serve God more than we want to please people - then serve God.

As long as we want to please people - then we are going to be subject to the perverted messages that preach Jesus plus something else. It is human nature to want to be in charge - we want to be the one who accomplishes - we want to be the one who overcomes. So when someone comes by and preaches the message that "YOU" can be "thus and so" - it appeals to us – because we want to please people – We will take them the message we think will please them. When we desire to please God more than men – then we are a lot less likely to buy into these perverted messages.

It pleases God for people to come to realize that we are not capable within ourselves - we are so in-sufficient, even with the help of the law. It is only in Jesus that we are able to accomplish, overcome, stand, or obtain.

NO, it doesn't please people to tell them that they are not good enough. NO, it doesn't please people to tell them that God may have a better idea as to how to handle situations. NO, it doesn't please people to tell them that we can only become strong when we realize that we are weak. NO, it doesn't please people to tell them that it is Jesus plus nothing else and that we must accept Him this way or it is no way at all. It doesn't please people - But it does please God!

God makes no requirement for us to have worldly goods - or for us to refuse worldly goods. There is no inherent holiness in having or in not having. God wants us to believe in Him, trust Him, and have faith.

When Jesus healed people - it was never the fact that He touched them - for sometimes He just spoke - and they were healed. It was never the mud He put on someone's eyes - for sometimes He only touched their eyes.

## Galatians – 02 – Jesus Plus Nothing

It was never the things that He told them to do - for sometimes He didn't tell them to do anything. It was never the specific actions that brought about healing. It was always the Grace of Christ.

Jesus released His Grace upon people who had faith or were obedient - but never upon a person who deserved it - or earned it. Who among us could deserve healing - financial blessing - deliverance from oppression - let alone salvation? Who among us could ever earn anything from God?

Please keep these test in mind: If the message says we must perform in order to receive – or if the message says we must add something else to Jesus - Then it isn't "The Gospel of Jesus Christ." If the message is one to make people happy - Then it isn't "The Gospel of Jesus Christ."

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

Paul had previously been used of God to start Churches in Galatia. The report has come that many of the Galatians are deserting the Gospel of Grace in Jesus Christ and beginning to follow after another message of legalism and bondage.

It is very likely the Galatian Believers have been told that the message Paul preached was only a beginning - that now they needed to hear the rest of the message - or that perhaps there is more than the message they had received - or perhaps they have been told that there is a new Gospel of Jesus.

The message Paul had preached among them has been challenged - and efforts had been made to discredit it and proclaim it weak and inadequate. This is the situation Paul is addressing in this letter to the Believers in Galatia.

Read Galatians 1:11 – 12 and make notes:

It is noteworthy that even in the face of the evidence - that many of them have defected from the Gospel of Grace in Jesus, - Paul still addresses them as "brothers". The use of the word "friends" – indicates "fellow believers." He begins by referring to the "Gospel I preached" - in an effort to bring to their remembrance the original message they heard - perhaps in all the excitement and turmoil - a great number of the Galatians were no longer mindful of the Message that Paul preached to them.

This is the place Paul wants to bring them back to - remember the original message - It was not a message that was made up among men. "I didn't get it from any man & no man taught it to me"- "Do you remember the Divine message - the one that did not originate with man?" "It was a Divine message that I received by revelation from Jesus Christ."

### Galatians – 03 - Obedient to – Traditions or God?

The overall context of this letter to the Galatians - this is still the same message that I am currently preaching- it has not changed! "That same Divinely originated message of Grace in Jesus Christ is still the same message – unchanged."

Please make a mental note of this declaration by Paul - He is preaching the Message of Grace in Jesus Christ - He is preaching the Jesus of the Cross - and the Jesus of the Resurrection - This will become more important a little later in this lesson.

Read Galatians 1:13 – 17 and make notes:

Many people see Paul beginning to give his testimony in verse 13 - telling of just how "BAD" he was before he came to Christ. It is apparent in Paul's writings that he did use the testimony of his past life in preaching the Gospel – but I believe Paul was doing something else here. Look closely at what he wrote in this text. He is appealing to their reason and logic - He is not telling them of his "BAD" reputation - He is stating matter-of-factly that they all had heard of the way he was when he was still practicing Judaism.

Paul is asking them to remember what they had heard - about how he was out to destroy the Church. Then he asks them to remember what they had heard - about how he was excelling in the national religion of the Jews - "remember how you heard that I was advancing beyond many who were the same age that I am ?" Remember that you heard that I was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers?"

Read Philippians 3:4 – 6 and make notes:

### Galatians – 03 - Obedient to – Traditions or God?

Paul could declare, "a Jew by birth, of the best stock of Israel; a Pharisee by choice, the strictest sect of Judaism; exceedingly zealous in conduct and rigid in my adherence to the law" - "You have heard all this."

Pharisaic traditions gave some 613 prescriptions for living the everyday life. There were 248 positive commands and 365 prohibitions – or negative commands. To the Pharisee, Judaism was not just a religious practice you engaged in from time to time - it was a way of life - involving every aspect of their life. To the Pharisee, this tradition was a living testimony to the Torah given to them on Mt. Sinai.

To Paul, the Pharisee, - the law, both the oral and the written, represented the basis for his life and the stimulus for his zeal. It was Paul's zeal to uphold the ancestral law that drove him to the intense persecution of these Jesus Believers. For Paul, the Pharisee, there was essentially an incompatibility problem between Judaism and this Christianity stuff. This same Paul is the one who said:

Read 1 Corinthians 1:18 and make notes:

Read 1 Corinthians 1:23 and make notes:

### Galatians – 03 - Obedient to – Traditions or God?

To Paul, the Pharisee, as to any committed Jew, - a crucified Messiah was not only an insult to his national-political messianic hopes, it was also incomprehensible and absurd. To the Jew, the Messiah was, almost by definition, one who was uniquely favored by God - and at the same time, one who was hanged upon a tree, according to the law, was cursed by God. To any Pharisee, the cross was definite refutation of the claim to Messiahship.

To the Pharisee, the crucifixion immediately rendered it unnecessary to give any serious consideration to the idea of Jesus being the Messiah. To the Pharisee, the crucifixion declared Jesus not only to be condemned by the court of Judaism but also by the high court of heaven.

For Jesus' followers to claim that He was the Messiah was blasphemy worthy of death - and their claims that He had risen from the dead had to be treated as a serious criminal deception. To the Pharisee, the claims of these Nazarenes were blasphemous and blatantly false - and this highlighted the fundamental incompatibility between Judaism and Christianity.

To the Pharisee, it would be a sacred duty to uproot this blight from among God's Holy Religion. It seems right for Paul to address the Stumbling Block and the Foolishness - you see, this message of the Cross had been a stumbling block to him. He wasn't saying the Cross was a Stumbling Block to the Jews out of a self-righteous attitude. He had been there - He knew what it was like!

In this text, Paul declares it was his devotion to the law that drove him to persecute the Church. It was his devotion to the traditions of his fathers that drove him to persecute the Church!

Do you remember what I asked you to make a mental note of? Do you remember what the basic message of Paul's preaching was?

### Galatians – 03 - Obedient to – Traditions or God?

Here is the point of Paul's logic and reasoning in which he was appealing to the Greeks in Galatia. What he was taught from man - the message that he received from man - was the very thing that drove him to be at cross angles with God – or opposing God rather than fulfilling God's plan.

He appealed to their logic - "No one was more devoted to the traditional teachings and practices than was I - and in my stubborn determination to remain true to the traditions - I came to a place of working against the move of God - being unshakably faithful to the traditions - I became contrary to the direction and will of the Holy Spirit of God for His people today - Now look at what I am teaching and how I am living my life - This is so far out of character for me - surely you can see that it took divine intervention to accomplish this in me - Don't be so quick to lay aside this message for one of mere men!"

What does all this have to say to us today? If you haven't already keyed into it, let me share a couple of incidents from the Bible that may help formulate the picture in your mind. In Noah's day - there certainly wasn't any tradition of Boat Building was there? If Noah had not gone against the traditional practices of the day - he would have perished along with his whole family.

When the Israelites had been in Egypt for 400 years - what kind of traditional lifestyles had developed? When God sent Moses to lead the people out into the wilderness - it was asking the people to lay aside the lifestyles that had become traditional. Had the people not obeyed the leading of God to go against what had become traditional way of life - they would not have been delivered from bondage.

After the Israelites had roamed and lived in the wilderness for 40 years what were the traditions of lifestyle? When God told Joshua to lead them into a New Land to fight for it - this went against the traditional lifestyles. Had they not been willing to follow the will of God to lay aside their traditions - they never would have entered into the Promised Land.



### Galatians – 03 - Obedient to – Traditions or God?

For years God manifested His Glory in the Ark which He commanded them to keep in a tent. This had become the established tradition. Then one day God said I want the Ark brought into a Temple. This went against the established tradition.

When the Word became Flesh and dwelt among men, this was certainly different from the traditional relationship between God and mankind. What Jesus declared to be the "now acceptable" relationship between God and man - violated a great many traditions of men. Had some of the Jews not been willing to lay aside the traditions of their fathers - then no Jews would have been saved.

No longer would the Glory of God reside in a Building - now He would reside in a Temple of Flesh. When God poured out the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost - that sure went against the traditions of men - No longer would there be a tribe of priest through whom the Holy Spirit would work - Now any and every Believer was a potential priest of the Holy Spirit.

Here's where it gets personal: Am I holding faithfully to some traditions of men - which are keeping me from the current move of the Holy Spirit?

Am I being so faithful to uphold some traditions that I am actually working against the present will of God? What is the evidence to support this answer?

Am I willing to be obedient to the leading of the Holy Spirit? - even if it goes against the traditions that I have held to be so important? - maybe even traditions that I have held to be Holy? What is the evidence that supports this answer?

God never changes. He is the same yesterday - today - and forever! But it is apparent from the Scriptures that He does change what He wants us to do from time to time. I believe one of the major reasons that He does this - is because we tend to worship the method and worship the traditions. God wants us to worship Him and Him alone.

**Galatians – 03 - Obedient to – Traditions or God?**

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

In this lesson, we are going to see Two Primary Characteristics of a True Minister of God.

Paul received a radical re-orientation of his thinking. Paul had thought the legal obedient lifestyle was the ultimate righteousness - now he realized that this was a "dead end street." Do you know what it is like to travel a path and it stops abruptly and there is no other place to turn - it doesn't go forward, neither does it turn left or right - this is it - this is as far as it goes - there isn't any more to it?

Can you imagine, at the very height of Paul's success, at his peak, at his zenith - he finds out that he is persecuting the very Messiah he had lived his life in hopes of seeing? All that he thought he was living in honor and hope of seeing - he was now persecuting in the person of those who were believing and following the Messiah. Can you imagine how Paul must have felt - when at the very peak of success in his Pharisee experience - he discovers he has arrived at the end of a "dead end street" - and he isn't where he needs to be? When he had gone as far as he could go in his legal obedience, - he discovers righteousness was to be found in a believing dependence upon Jesus!

We need to understand as a good Pharisee, Paul understood that one day, - this precious age of the Torah would give way to the age of the Messiah. While he was so busy striving for the recognition of and approval of the Torah - this transition had taken place and he had missed it. Through Divine revelation, he finally realized that the recognition and approval was now only in belief in this Jesus.

Read Galatians 1:15 – 16 and make notes:

## Galatians – 04 - Characteristics of True Ministers

Read Galatians 1:17 – 24 and make notes:

Read Galatians 2:1-3 and make notes:

Paul states God did 3 things for him:

- . 1 - set him apart from birth
- . 2 - called him by grace
- . 3 - revealed Jesus in him

Verse 15 - "But When God" signals a complete break in Paul's life. "From birth" literally from my mother's womb and probably means "before I was born." This is reminiscent of Jeremiah's declaration that God had called him before he was born. This is also reminiscent of Isaiah's word that he would be a messenger to nations. Refer to Jeremiah 1:4-5 and Refer to Isaiah 49:1.

Such a statement by Paul shows that he is aligning himself with O.T. figures of history. Paul is saying that God's call to him was the same as God's call to them. Paul is saying that God's call to him is a renewal of His plan and call to salvation of the Gentile peoples.

Verse 16 "revealed His Son IN ME" - stresses the intensely personal character of God's revelation to Paul of the risen Jesus. Paul testifies in another letter about the blinding light. There was an outward manifestation of God's revelation to Paul. This was followed by an outward manifestation in the way Paul lived his life. But Paul is here stressing the inner revelation that he received. This may very well have taken place during the 3 days that he was physically blind. As we saw in the Scriptures of the last lesson, Paul thought he was a Pharisee, - and he thought his purpose in life was to live to the utmost the life of a Pharisee. Paul received an inner illumination as to who he really was and what his real purpose was in life.

Paul may also be stating that he received some unique insight into the nature of Jesus' son-ship. But Paul was stating that he received insight that Jesus was indeed the Messiah. Paul was stating that since Jesus was the Messiah then He was also Lord. Paul was declaring that this one who had been crucified, was indeed the Messiah - that He had indeed risen from the dead - and He was indeed the Lord.

Paul was declaring also that God's purpose in revealing Jesus to him - was so that he could and would proclaim Him to the Gentile peoples - Paul was declaring that this was not a new plan on God's part. This was not a change in plans on God's part.

God had planned all along to make a way of salvation for the Gentiles - and God had planned all along to use Paul in this area - Paul has just found out about it! Paul was now seeing everything that had happened in his life up to this point in a different light.

Paul was now seeing where he was born and where he was raised as all being part of God's ultimate plan for him - Paul was now seeing all those experiences and all that training as being part of God's preparation for him - Paul was now seeing everything that had happened to him - and everywhere he had been - and all the people he had met as being part of God's preparation of him for this purpose - his entire life was seen as having a meaning in a much bigger picture than he had ever seen before.

All Believers need to come to the place where we see our lives in this way. We are not wasted if we come to Jesus. But rather, we are trained and prepared.

**# 1 The first characteristic of a true minister of God -  
They understand - they have been called by the Grace of God  
and were so called even before they were born.**

This brings about some interesting differences. There are the True Ministers of God - and then there are the Professional Ministers.

In the Old Testament you will find the True Prophets of God - but you will also find the Professional Prophets. The Professional Minister today is much like the Professional Prophet of the Old Testament. They will do whatever they think will bring them the most gain. It could be money, worldly possessions, or just the recognition and approval of men.

The Professional Minister today, like the Professional Prophet of the Old Testament, - will tell you whatever they think you want to hear - in hopes it will advance their personal standing. The Professional Minister will be careful as to what they preach and proclaim - to make sure it doesn't offend those who bring in the money.

The True Minister of God, like the True Prophet of God in the Old Testament, - will not alter the Word of God, nor the Message of God - even to their own detriment, financially, physically, or even their reputation. The True Minister will proclaim the Word of God the way God presents it - even if the money isn't there - even if the recognition isn't there!

The Professional Minister will only minister when there is enough money. The Professional Minister will complain to the people and harass them when there isn't enough money. The Professional Minister will always go where there is more money offered; or perhaps more recognition.

The True Minister of God will minister where God calls them to minister – regardless. Sure, I believe that it is God's plan and will for the local assembly to meet the financial needs of the Minister. You don't have to be all that brilliant to figure out that the minister has more time to prepare to minister - when they don't have to spent time being concerned about whether their family is going to have a place to stay or have something to eat.

But the mark of a True Minister of God is they recognize that this is what they have been created to do - this they must do - and it is up to God to meet their needs and those of their family. They just minister what God has given them - and they leave it in God's hands to deal with those who are supposed to be helping to see to their financial and physical needs.

In the secular world as well as in the Church - you need to stay clear of those who's primary interest is money. In the secular world, as well as in the Church - you need to stay clear of those who's primary goal is the attaining of worldly goods.

2 Corinthians 11:9 - keep myself from being a burden

2 Corinthians 12:14 - I want not your possessions but your

1 Thessalonians 2:6-9 - we were like a mother caring for her children  
we worked night and day so we would not be a burden

2 Thessalonians 3:8 - worked night and day

## **# 2 The second characteristic of a true minister of God -**

**They are willing, and in fact desire, to make themselves  
and their message accountable.**

In verse 2 of chapter 2, we find the second important characteristic of God's minister. He went before those who were looked upon as leaders and laid before them the revelation he had received - he shared in their presence the Gospel message he was preaching - he was willing to submit his insight, revelation, and message to the readers of the Church. He did this to ensure that he was not "running his race in vain."

Some today have made a doctrine out of Paul's claim to be independent of the Apostles in Jerusalem. Some have made a doctrine out of Paul not needing the approval of the Jerusalem Church leaders. These people set themselves up as having no accountability to anyone -"after the manner of Paul", they say. The people who do this don't mind if the Body of Christ becomes divided and at odds with one another.

These people have neither read the rest of the New Testament nor have they seen or heard the heart of God. Paul didn't require the approval of the Jerusalem Apostles in order to be obedient to the call of God on his life - once he realized and recognized that there was a call of God on his life. When he finally realized that he had a God given purpose to fulfill - he set out to preach to the Gentiles. But Paul makes it clear in this text that he had a concern that the Church not be divided - He had the heart of God in this matter - He desired that the message the people heard from him - be compatible with the message the people heard from the other Apostles and if everyone is hearing from God -their messages will be compatible!

Paul was willing to lay "his revelation" before the other Apostles to make sure that the work he was busy doing was not being done in vain. He didn't want his work for the Lord to be "without a gift" or "empty".

Paul was sure that he had received "Divine Revelation" concerning a Gospel message of Grace in Jesus Christ. What if he were mistaken? What if he was wrong in the message he had been preaching among the Gentiles?

Can you imagine the consequences it could have had - if all these many people who had come to believe in Jesus through Paul's preaching - were not being obedient to the real message of God? What if he had missed something? What if God really did expect them to be circumcised?

What if God really did expect these Gentiles to do other things? What if in Paul's zeal, he had run with the message of Grace too quickly before he heard the full message?

So Paul went before the other Apostles, - shared with them the message of Grace in Jesus that he was preaching among the Gentiles - he even brought along one of the converts - Titus - one who was now a believer in Jesus as the Christ - and had not been circumcised - they could not only evaluate the message - they could evaluate the fruit of such a message - they could question Titus to see just where his heart was concerning God. Paul declares that they did not require him to be circumcised and agreed the message was compatible and in line with what they had received from God.



## Galatians – 04 - Characteristics of True Ministers

If you have truly received revelation from God, - then you can be confident to lay it before others who are hearing from God. If you are not confident enough to lay your revelation and your message before others for them to judge it - then you had better stop preaching it!

If the person you are listening to is unwilling to make themselves and their message accountable to the Body of Christ then you had better stop listening to them!

What about it? Does this only apply to the Pastors, Missionaries, and others who are on staff in some ministry? Doesn't this also apply to every Believer?

I answered the Call of God upon my life to Teach His Word when I was in my early 20's. It wasn't until I was in my early 30's - that I realized that the call of God had not occurred in my early 20's but had actually occurred when I was created. I just didn't recognize the call until my early 20's. When I realized that I had been created for this purpose and that this had been God's plan for my life from the very beginning of my life - it changed my outlook of me, of everything that had happened to me, and of everyone who had crossed my path.

Yes, it even changed my view of all those things I had seen as bad in my life. I was able to see all these things as having purpose - even able to see some of the "bad" things as being useful from what I learned from them.

What about, you? Do you realize that you were created for the purpose of serving God? Have you acknowledged that God wants to use you – and do you realize that this isn't just something He decided to do since that day you recognized His call? Do you realize that God planned - as soon as you were conceived - to use you in ministering to the needs of others?

Everything in your life - God has been using to mold you - shape you - and train you for this purpose. Once you realize this, then you won't minister for the recognition or reward of others - because it is God we are serving ! And you will be able to serve - even if no one seems to appreciate what you are doing - because it is God we are serving!

## **Galatians – 04 - Characteristics of True Ministers**

And because we are committed to serving God - we will desire to submit our service for inspection - for we don't desire to bring about any division within His household.

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

Chapter 2 began with Paul's statement that he went to Jerusalem 14 years after his ministry started. He went there specifically to present to the Apostles the Gospel message, the revelation, and the insight he was preaching to the Gentiles.

He shared with them the message of Grace in Jesus Christ he was preaching. He told them he was preaching Faith in Jesus was sufficient and the observance of the Law was in-sufficient.

Read Galatians 2:6 - 2:9 and make notes:

There have been those - and there are some today - who like to take this text and a few others that are similar and make a doctrine of it. They want to state Paul refused to receive anything from the Apostles at Jerusalem. He wouldn't receive instruction, he wouldn't receive teaching or training, - nor would he receive their ideas of what God's Word says.

This is a perversion of the text. When we look back at verse 2, it is clear that Paul's intention was to present the message he was preaching - to the Apostles for their examination. He even brought Titus, one of the un-circumcised converts, with him for them to meet.

He begins to give the outcome of this council meeting in verse 3 - where he declares they decided not to require even the one who had come into their presence to be circumcised. This was a statement of the Apostle's decision – that requiring circumcision would not add one thing to this "Christian's" place with God and relationship with Jesus Christ.

## Galatians – 05 - Returning To Legalism Is Sin

Verse 6 is a continuation of the report of the outcome of this council meeting. It states the Apostles had nothing to add to the message Paul was already preaching. Verse 7 states the Apostles accepted Paul as an Apostle with a call primarily to the Gentiles. Verse 8 basically says they saw Paul as being on an equal plane as the other Apostles. Then in verse 9 three of them are named and it states they gave Paul and Barnabas the "right hand of fellowship."

The order of names given here in verse 9 – is significant. James is listed first, then Peter, and then John. Throughout the Gospels, James and John are almost always listed together - and usually referred to as the "sons of Zebedee" or the "sons of thunder." The reason the names James and John are separated here is that it is not referring to the brothers.

King Herod killed James, the brother of John, by the sword as recorded in Acts 12. This visit to Jerusalem by Paul did not occur until later as recorded in Acts 15. By the time Paul made his 14 year ministry trip to Jerusalem - James, the brother of John, had already become the first Apostle martyr. Stephen had been killed, but he was a deacon martyr.

In Galatians 1:19, Paul refers to James, "the Lord's brother" in his first trip to Jerusalem - about the 3rd year of ministry. By the time he made this trip, there was no need to make such a designation. Everyone knew about the other James having been killed years before.

One of the significant points about this listing of the Apostles - is the prominent place given to James, the brother of Jesus. There are those who claim they are following a ministerial line that goes all the way back to Peter. They usually declare Peter was the first "head of the church" and they have maintained this line unbroken up through today.

First, let's consider what might be called "external evidence":

It is unlikely that any of those first Disciples could be called the head of any particular denomination or local church today. The monarchical episcopate did not become established until the second century A.D. It is most likely that all of the original Disciples (including Apostles) were dead by this time.

Secondly, let's consider what we might call "internal evidence":

As seen in the first chapter of Galatians, with Paul's visit to Jerusalem, James, the brother of Jesus, appears to hold a most prominent place. Then, here in chapter two, we see James being listed "before" Peter. Acts 12:17 indicates Peter recognized James as prominent. Acts 15:13 indicates it was James who spoke for the Apostle's decision to accept Paul's gospel message. Acts 21:18 indicates James was the first to be visited upon coming to the Jerusalem Church.

If we consider the New Testament passages concerning the Apostles - it would make much more sense to declare James, the brother of Jesus, to be the Pastor or head of the first Church in Jerusalem. This is not to throw Peter aside. God had plans for Peter and they were nothing to make light of. But the New Testament will not support Peter as the Head of the Church in the first century. We should not forget Peter is named among "those reputed to be pillars" in the Church at Jerusalem.

One of the important messages for us today is found in the last part of chapter 2:

Read Galatians 2:11 and make notes:

Please don't try to make this say, as some have, that Paul met Peter at the edge of the city and began to rebuke him and to put him down in front of everyone. Verse 11 is a summary statement of what happened when Peter came to visit the work in Antioch. The next several verses will explain how this came about.

Refer back to Verse 6 where Paul says, "As for those who seemed to be important - whatever they were makes no difference to me; God does not judge by external appearance." There were already those in that day beginning to raise up the Apostles to a divine level. This was one of the things Paul was trying to combat then, and we need to combat today.

## Galatians – 05 - Returning To Legalism Is Sin

Refer to Galatians 6:3: "If anyone thinks he is something - when he is nothing - he deceives himself." Paul was trying to get the Believers to understand - the Apostles - though called of God, anointed of God, and gifted of God - were still human beings. As a follow-up to the comment in verse 6 - Paul is now going to give an example of why "leadership" people are not to be worshiped.

Read Galatians 2:12 and make notes: ( this refers to Peter )

This is the same Peter who at one moment would draw his sword in the face of being outnumbered - willing to die in battle with Jesus - and then a few hours later cower in the face of one little servant girl and deny even knowing Jesus because of fear. This is the same Peter who had earlier been threatened with death by the Sanhedrin but stood boldly and proclaimed that he must preach the Gospel of Jesus - is now cowering in the face of a few religious representatives from the Church at Jerusalem.

Peter came to visit the work in Antioch. No doubt Peter still remembered the vision he had received from God - the sheet coming down from Heaven with all manner of meat upon it - he seemed to have no trouble sitting down to eat with the Believers here - even if many of them were Gentiles. Peter knew he could accept as "clean" whatever God had declared as clean.

Read Galatians 2:13-14 and make notes:

## Galatians – 05 - Returning To Legalism Is Sin

The other Jewish Believers began to withdraw from the fellowship with the Gentile Believers when they saw Peter had withdrawn. Apparently, up until this time, many of the Jewish Believers who were in Galatia had accepted the message of Grace in Jesus and found no problem in daily fellowship with another Believer – whether Jew or Gentile. Maybe some of them found the confidence to do this when Paul and Peter were willing to do so.

When Peter began to withdraw and would not eat with a Gentile - even if they were a Believer - many of the Jewish Believers followed his lead and would no longer eat with Gentile Believers. This shows the tremendous responsibility that comes with being a leader in the Body of Christ. People basically look to the leader for the standard. Basically - if the people see the Leader engaging in certain activities - then they will accept these activities as good and righteous. Basically - if the people see the Leader refraining from certain activities - then they will accept these activities as bad and unrighteous.

Paul's point is - while they were Apostles - they are fallible - as can be seen in this example. Paul declares that Peter sinned!

Read Galatians 2:15 – 2:16 and make notes:

Paul is saying to Peter, "you and I were not born into the sinful Gentile family. We were born and raised as part of God's chosen people. And even though we were Jews, we still found that we had to accept Jesus in order to be made innocent."

## Galatians – 05 - Returning To Legalism Is Sin

Read Galatians 2:17 – 2:19 and make notes:

Peter has not simply made an honest mistake here. He had received a vision from God and personal instructions on such matters. Peter had already experienced the blessing of fellowship with Believers based on Grace. Peter knowingly pulled away from the position of Grace and headed back toward a position of legalism.

Paul was reminding Peter that they had died to the Law in order to “Live by Grace” for God. To return to living under the Law is sin because it rejects the Grace of Jesus. To return to living under the Law would be to say, "if I don't return to the Law then I am sinning - I am a sinner."

If while we are living the Life in Grace - we come to the place that we declare that we are a sinner if we don't obey the Law - then we are saying that following Christ leads us into a life of sin! "Does Christ promote Sin?" "Absolutely NOT!" Paul said, "We destroyed the life in the Law. If we try to rebuild that life - then that is proof that we are a sinner."

The next two verses are a summary for the rest of the letter to the Galatians:

Read Galatians 2:20 – 2:21 and make notes:



## Galatians – 05 - Returning To Legalism Is Sin

I accept the crucifixion of Jesus as having been for me. I accept the fact that the life I live now is for Christ to live through me - and not of myself. The life I live is a life of Faith in Jesus. I do not set aside the Grace of God. If righteousness could have been accomplished through the obedience to the Law - then Jesus died for nothing.

"Peter, give up this return to the Law!" "For you to go back to a life of legalism - leaving behind the life of Grace - is sin." "Peter, stop sinning - live the life you have been Saved to live."

We must not blindly follow anyone - regardless of the position they hold or regardless of the way God may use them in the ministry. Everyone who sees themselves as being a Leader in the Body of Christ, should be very careful how they live. Everyone who believes, or even claims, to be a Leader should make sure they are living the Life of Grace in Jesus - and not a life of legalism.

What about those of you who say, "Well I'm not a Leader in the Body of Christ." Are you a leader in your home? Are you a leader at work - school -community? Are you sure that there isn't someone who is watching you to see how you live your life?

Until we accept Jesus' Grace for us - it is unlikely we will be able to share Grace or show Grace to those around us. We will not be able to live a Life in Grace until we fully accept Grace from Jesus to us PERSONALLY.

Everyone who has accepted Jesus as Savior, has been saved by Grace - to live your life in Grace. We must not allow ourselves to be drawn into the legalistic lifestyle of "do's and don'ts make righteous!"

Let's consider our testimony and the things we profess to believe:

Am I guilty of teaching a legalistic Christian walk? Have I been leaning toward a legalistic Christian walk? Have I left behind the Life of Grace? Do I need to make any changes? If so, what do I need to change?

## **Galatians – 05 - Returning To Legalism Is Sin**

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

From the very beginning of the letter to the Galatians, Paul has been defending the Gospel of Grace. Up until Chapter 3, he has done so from the viewpoint of his own experience. Now he begins to call upon the Galatians to consider their own experience.

Read Galatians 3:1 and make notes:

Jesus used the word "foolish" many times. In most cases it was the Greek word "*moros*" which refers to one who is mentally deficient or simply unable to learn or understand. The word Paul used here, is the Greek word "*anoetos*" which refers more to a person is capable of understanding but fails to use the perception with which they have been blessed.

The word "bewitched" is worth looking at. It is the Greek word "*baskain*", which can be mean; slander, bring evil on one by feigning praise, charm. Paul is trying to get them to realize they have "allowed" someone to rob them of their freedom and their joy. Paul is also inferring that when they live in Christ and through Christ - they would be keenly sensitive to the senseless folly by trying to return to observing the law.

Read Galatians 3:2 and make notes:

## Galatians – 06 - Questions To Ask Ourselves

Paul is prompting them to consider how contrary their present walk in Christ is to the way they began with Christ. He is saying, "I don't want to hear anything else from you, except the answer to this most basic question." It would seem - that if they would just answer this one question - then the argument of the importance of works could be set in order.

Read Galatians 3:3 and make notes:

The word "foolish"; is the same as in verse 1. They are capable - just aren't using the power of perception they have. Instead of following the leading of the Spirit - they had put themselves back under the power of the law. This is nothing less than the power of the flesh. The Law can command you to control your flesh - but the law cannot give you power to control your flesh.

Read Galatians 3:4 and make notes:

The word translated "suffered" - is the Greek word "*pascho*"; which means "to be affected, in a good sense to be well off, in a bad sense to be in a bad plight."

Many people have taught and preached about the Galatians being persecuted for their Faith in Jesus Christ. There is no record in the Book of Acts to indicate a Galatian persecution. Understanding the original meaning of this word translated "suffering" helps us to grasp the message.

## Galatians – 06 - Questions To Ask Ourselves

The closing phrase of this verse is good - "if it really was for nothing." Paul still has hope that it isn't over for the Galatians. Even this experience will be useful for them along with those they have experienced earlier; when they turn their hearts back to Jesus Christ - and walking by the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

Read Galatians 3:5 – 3:6 and make notes:

The Jewish segment boasted of their relationship to Abraham. It was only natural for those who would "work" to become part of the Jewish community - to take pride in being considered part of Abraham's relationship and covenant. So Paul uses the greatest part of their pride and boasting to help them with their argument.

We must be careful that we don't fall into the snare of thinking that Abraham had enough faith to earn the righteousness. When God looked down and saw Abraham believing His Word, God then saw Abraham - Believing - as acceptable to Him. At that moment - when Abraham believed - God passed on to Abraham's account the righteousness of God.

We don't earn righteousness by coming to a certain level of faith. The very fact that we believe makes us acceptable to God. When we believe - God transfers His righteousness to our account.

We never earn it or deserve it - we receive the righteousness of God by Grace.

Paul asks the Galatians 4 very important questions. These 4 questions should be asked of every one of the "Church People" today.

## Galatians – 06 - Questions To Ask Ourselves

#1: (verse 1)

Who has bewitched you?

#2: (verse 2 & 5)

How did you receive the Spirit; observing the Law or believing what you heard?

#3: (verse 3)

Are you now trying to earn the Spirit by works?

#4: (verse 4)

Has your experience been for nothing?

Question #1 can be rephrased, "Who has brought evil upon you by faking praise of you and charming you?" "Are you giving any serious consideration to the person or persons, who is saying the words you like to here?" "Are you giving any consideration as to who it is that is saying the things you like to hear?"

Question #2 can be rephrased, "Can you remember just how you received Salvation?" "What kind of works did you have to perform in order to receive salvation?" "What kind of accomplishments did you have to achieve before God was willing to Save you?" "Don't you remember? Didn't you receive Salvation simply by BELIEVING the Word of God?"

Question #3 is a follow-up to #2: "Why are you putting so much emphasis on works?" "Why are you placing yourselves under the legal obligation to perform?"

Question #4 is a natural progression or follow-up to #3: "Will you allow all your blessings to become meaningless?" "Don't you understand, when you have been miraculously healed by God and then turn back to works, the healing is wasted?" "Don't you get it, when God has worked miracles in your life and you turn back to living a life of works and achievement, then these miracles are all wasted?"

There are far too many "Church People" today who are wasting the experiences of their lives! Remember, the word translated "suffer" can refer to the good experiences as well as the bad experiences.

Satan has sent many bad experiences to God's people to hurt them and try to destroy them. God will take everyone of those "bad experiences" and use them to train us, teach us, prepare us, and even bless us, if we will just give them to Him.

The vast majority of "Church People" today are trying to repress the "bad experiences" of their life. They want to try and pretend that these things never occurred. There are others, who realize full well that they cannot pretend that these things never happened - but choose to ignore them and never ever dwell upon them and keep them hidden and out of sight.

There are two major problems with these attitudes:

First, Satan can use these things against us and will continually attack our subconscious with them. Secondly, we will never receive the "good" that God has planned for us to receive from them.

If we allow this to happen, then all these "bad experiences" are not only painful when they occurred in our life but we allow them to become wasted experiences! They serve no worthwhile purpose in our life.

But there is also the "other side of the coin." There are at least as many "Church People" today who have been blessed by God - and they never mention it - they don't give God the Glory for what He has done. Some, if not most, will allow these miracles and blessings to slip from our memory - we seem to forget all about them.

There are two major reasons why God blesses His people or works miracles in their lives: First, He delights in doing "good" for us and in providing for us -especially in the times when it is impossible for us to help ourselves. Secondly, He intends the miracles to be like a remembrance bracelet – every time we look at a particular miracle it serves to remind us that God loves us -cares for us -and will be there for us when we need Him.

## Galatians – 06 - Questions To Ask Ourselves

The miracles in our lives should serve to encourage us and protect us from discouragement. When we forget about them and fail to remember them - they are wasted.

Yes, these 4 questions are very relevant for today's "Church People". Everyone of us needs to re-examine ourselves from time to time. We need to ask ourselves these questions from time to time.

Wouldn't it be great - when we examine ourselves with these four questions - to find the answers to be something like this :

"Praise God - no one is charming me into an evil attitude or situation." "Yes, I still remember and am very much aware that I was SAVED by simply believing." "I can honestly say that I am not looking to - nor depending upon - my works or accomplishments to be acceptable to God - I know that because I believe - God is seeing me as acceptable to Him." "Yes, I do remember some things that came my way that tried to destroy me but I now see how God is using those things to strengthen me and train me I praise God for what I have learned from these experiences." "And I call to my remembrance everyday how God has blessed me and performed miracles for me - I am greatly encouraged to know that He cares this much for me"

If we can't answer these questions this way today - then it is time to make some changes isn't it?

How about those of us who are sure we are saved? How about those of us who have also been baptized with the Holy Spirit? How did we receive the Baptism of the Holy Spirit? Were we Baptized with the Holy Spirit because we achieved - or performed sufficiently well? Were we Baptized with the Holy Spirit because we Believed God's Word concerning it?

Man can never deserve or earn anything from God - much less His Holy Spirit. No matter how good and how much law a Believer is able to keep. The True Believer knows - we deserve nothing good from God. The True Believer knows - we receive what we receive by Grace through Faith. We Believe God's Word - it's really that simple. Please note that I said simple and not easy. Sometimes, it is not easy for us to believe God's Word - is it?



## Galatians – 06 - Questions To Ask Ourselves

It is by Faith - it is by Believing God's Word that we grow toward perfection. No amount of good works - and no amount of observing the law can make us righteous, perfect, or acceptable to God.

The True Believer lives their life by Faith. We receive the blessings and miracles by Faith. We survive the sufferings by Faith, and by placing everything into the care and guidance of God. By Faith - everything in our life becomes beneficial.

Let us not waste our experiences - whether they first appear to be glorious or horrible. And let us be careful that we do not teach others that they must "earn" from God - but must only believe.

Paul declared two powerful and attractive messages had been presented to the Galatians. One was the power of the message of Grace and Faith through Jesus Christ. The other was the "earning" of place by the observance of the Law.

Paul was seriously surprised that the Galatians would choose the way of the Law over the Grace of Jesus Christ. It is still the same today. It boggles my mind to see people choosing to follow after the way of the Law, when the Life in Grace has been presented to them.

The way of the Law appeals to us because it allows room for us to believe that "we earned" our place. There is only one thing we can earn - that is an eternity without God.

Have there been any painful experiences in my past that I have wasted? If so, what can I do now to make these experiences no longer wasted?

Have there been any glorious (God came through for me) experiences that I have wasted? If so, what can I do not to make these experiences no longer wasted?

## Galatians – 06 - Questions To Ask Ourselves

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

How do you view those Christians who demand such a high standard of lifestyle? What is your attitude of those Christians who seem to say anything is okay as long as you are saved? How do you see those Christians who demand obedience to the Law? What do you think of those Christians who say the law doesn't matter once you are saved?

The Galatian Believers had listened to some powerful teaching about the importance of keeping the Law in order to be acceptable to God. They had come to a place where they were striving to obey the points of the Law - in order to attain a righteous and holy life. These Galatian Christians wanted to be counted as Abraham's descendants so they were now trying to obey all the Jewish laws.

Read Galatians 3:6 and make notes:

The word translated "credited" is the Greek word "*logizomai*" which means - transferred from God's account to Abraham's.

Read Galatians 3:7 – 3:14 and make notes:

False teachers had risen up in the churches in Galatia. They were teaching that a man must focus his life upon the rituals and teachings of religion and the works of the law. They were teaching that a man had to ritualize his life in order to become acceptable to God.

They placed ritual and law above the Grace of Jesus Christ. They placed their own works and efforts above the work of Christ Jesus. They would have the people focus upon what they had done instead of focusing upon what Christ had done.

They would have the people to concentrate upon the flesh - the physical and natural strengths of man instead of the Power of God. Their boasting of becoming Abraham's descendants - gave Paul a great place to begin the argument against Believers returning to a life under the Law.

Abraham is an excellent example of someone being justified by faith and faith alone. Abraham believed God - and this made him acceptable to God. Abraham left behind his family, friends, and land - and headed to a land - he didn't know where, or how far. Abraham went out trusting God and that made him acceptable to God.

It wasn't Abraham's keeping of the law that made him acceptable to God. Some may want to argue that to take this position is to misunderstand what the Scriptures say. No!, it is not a misunderstanding. Because the law had not been given to man at that time! !

**Abraham was BEFORE the Law!**

**If Abraham was justified - if Abraham was accepted by God as righteous – then it happened without the Law!**

Abraham was given nothing more than an oral promise by God. And this promise had a lot of open spots in it. God didn't tell him where the land was - how far away it was - when he would get there - what the land would be like when he did get there. God didn't tell him how long it would be before his wife Sarah would give birth to that son of promise. There was only one condition attached to this promise – and with all the information that was apparently left out - it was quite a lot to ask. The one condition was that Abraham had to believe God.

Abraham did believe God (Rom 4:3, Gal 3:6). Abraham was counted as righteous because he believed God. The proof that Abraham believed God is that he went out and did what God told him to do (Heb 11:8).

## Galatians – 07 - Righteousness Outside The Law

In Galatians 3:8 - "Scripture preached the gospel to Abraham." Paul believed the Scripture to be the Word of God. Therefore Paul could just as easily say that Scripture spoke to Abraham as he could say that God spoke to Abraham. Paul understood the Scripture to be the "voice of God." Paul wanted the Galatians to see that the Scriptures declared the gospel of faith even before Christ was born.

Scripture says the Law puts man under a curse. A person either keeps the Law or they are cursed. Before you jump on the band wagon of condemning and putting down the Law, there are three things you should consider:

First:

There is a righteousness that is of the law. if any man will keep all the Law - obey all its commands perfectly - then that person will be righteous.

Second:

The law helps to show men their sin and the need for divine help.

Thirdly:

The Law was man's guardian to guide him to Christ.

However; for those who would have us all go back under the Law, there are four things we should consider:

First:

Every person under the law is automatically under a curse for no one keeps every point of the law.

Second:

The law has no power to give life.

Third:

Jesus Christ came to deliver us from the Law.

Fourth:

The Law is inferior to God's Grace.

If we choose to go back under the Law - then we are under a curse. We will not have life; we will be rejecting Christ's provision; and we will be settling for something inferior to God's Grace.

Where does any of this apply to us as Christians today? Some may object saying things like; "we don't want to make people have to live according to laws those Jews were having to live by;" or "the way I see it, these verses are okay to study - but they don't apply to us today."

What about those churches that will let you in or keep you out based dietary restrictions? What about those churches that will let you in or keep you out based upon past actions or works? Or perhaps, past lifestyles? Many of today's churches in America are at least as bound up in legalism as the churches in Galatia were if not more so.

There are churches in America that will not allow you to become a member if you have done certain things in your past. There are churches in America that will not allow you to become a member if you do certain things. Some won't allow you to be a member if you smoke. Some won't allow you to be a member if you have married - divorced - remarried. Some won't allow you to be a member if you use make-up. Some won't allow you to be a member if you don't wear the right kind of clothes.

Basically, what it all boils down to is this: These churches will not accept you as saved - until you "perform" or at least "live up to certain standards." If we truly get saved, there will be changes in our life; but we won't become perfect overnight! When we put performance in a higher priority than Grace - we're floating in an inner tube when we could be sailing in a luxury liner.

What are we going to do with people who do things we know are wrong? Have you ever known of or seen a family with a large number of children? Perhaps, if not a large family, at least one where the children's ages were considerably spread out. Those children who are toddlers are not expected to be able to do the task of those who are already teenagers. At least not until they become teenagers themselves.

When we see someone who is doing something we believe to be incorrect for a believer – when we see someone who is doing something we know is a sin – let's stop ask ourselves - is this person still under the Law - or is this person now under Grace? If they are under law, then pray for them! If they are under Grace, then we don't have anything to worry about concerning them.

God will take care of them and their situation. We can still pray for them, but we don't need to become overly alarmed. We certainly don't need to condemn them.

If we are unsure whether they are under the law or under Grace – we should ask ourselves this question: Am I going to look at them from the point of Law - or am I going to look at them from a point of Grace? If we simply must look at them from the point of the Law - then we should pray for ourselves - we need it at least as much as they do - and maybe more. If we are going to look at them from the point of Grace - then we just might be able to help them when they get ready.

**The Believer is no longer under the Law!**

**The Law is still in force for the UnBeliever!**

There is a righteous apart from the Law. When a person believes God - and obeys His instruction - they are counted as righteous before God. Is that is the place we want to be? Is that the place we desire for others to be? Am I ready to begin living my life in a state of Grace? What is the evidence?

Am I ready to begin looking at others through the viewpoint of Grace? What am I doing that shows this to be true?

**Galatians – 07 - Righteousness Outside The Law**

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:



How important is your heritage? How important is your genealogy? How important is the religious background of your family? How important is your nationality? How important is your social status, appointments, titles, degrees, and accomplishments?

Read Galatians 3:15 – 3:16 and make notes:

It has been the established principle for literally thousands of years; the provisions of a covenant cannot be changed. A covenant can be revoked, but not changed. One of the primary reasons a covenant carries such strength, is that the conditions and provisions are set and do not waver.

There are some translations of the Bible that use the word "testament." A careful examination and study of the Scriptures indicates the more accurate translation is "covenant."

God has established a "covenant of grace" or a "covenant of salvation" with those who believe in Jesus as their Savior. The conditions of this covenant cannot be changed. So until such a time as someone can prove that the covenant has been revoked, we have every reason to expect the provisions of the covenant to be fulfilled.

The promise was that the God of all - would bless the nations through the offspring of Abraham. This offspring is Christ the Lord. The promise found its destination in Jesus, through whom the nations received a blessing. There were many, such as Moses, Samuel, Elijah and others tracing their descent from Israel, who were called his offspring according to nature. But this genetic fact is not what brought the fount of blessings to the nations. Jesus is the one through whom, according to the promise, God has bestowed the blessing on the nations.

## Galatians – 08 - Giving Up Distinction

Read Galatians 3:17 – 3:18 and make notes:

The Law was given many years "after" the "promise" of the covenant was given. The Law, while important and powerful, does not void the covenant, nor does it change the covenant.

If we take the position that the Law justifies, then we must conclude that Abraham was not justified, because he was before the Law. If we agree that the Scriptures are true, and that Abraham was justified, then we must conclude that a person is not justified by the works of the Law.

All of the ancient heroes of the faith were justified by faith, in fact the same faith by which we today find ourselves justified. The Holy Spirit reveals this true to us in a variety of ways when we place our faith in Jesus as Savior.

The Jews do not believe the promise to Abraham was made void by the giving of the Law. And yet they hold firmly to the necessity of obedience to the Law to attain justification. We might think it odd that they fail to see the contradiction of this, but so many Christians take a similar position.

As stated clearly in this verse "if the inheritance depends on the law, then it no longer depends on the promise." We cannot have it both ways.

Read Galatians 3:19 and make notes:

## Galatians – 08 - Giving Up Distinction

Since we already had the promise, before the Law was given; what was the purpose of the Law? If the people before the Law were justified, what need was there to give the Law?

The Law was given after the people had shown their offense toward God, and after their murmurings against God. The Law was given to help "spell it out" and to clearly identify to the people "what is sin." The Law was given to a proud people. The grace of love cannot be received by anyone unless they are humble.

Without grace, the Law can be administered; but the precepts of the Law are surely misunderstood outside the light of grace. Without grace, the Law cannot properly be fulfilled. The Law helps humble the proud, by shining a light upon our transgressions. The Law helps remove the arrogance from our hearts and minds. The Law helps us come to understand that we can never be justified by our own merits. It helps us come to grasp how utterly impossible our Salvation would be without the loving hand of our Divine Mediator.

The word "angels" is best understood as "God's messengers." Not necessarily divine spiritual beings, but the likes of Moses, Joshua, and others, right up to John the Baptist. It is also accurate to see God having used divine beings (angels) in the process, but the messengers that brought the Law to the people were obedient servants from among the people.

Read Galatians 3:20 – 3:21 and make notes:

A "mediator" represents neither party in a dispute. A mediator works equally for both parties to help bring reconciliation to the differences. "But God is one." Since God is one, God cannot be dual or any number of multiples. As the perfect mediator, God is the ultimate in reconciling differences.

## Galatians – 08 - Giving Up Distinction

On one side we have the Jews, with the works of the Law; the new moons, circumcision, keeping of the Sabbath, distinction of foods, and other things. On the other side we have the Gentiles, with their plurality of gods, cult like view of the elements, and many other things abhorred by the Jews. God takes these former enemies with what appears to be irreconcilable differences, and brings them to a place of peace and unity.

It would be a rather obvious question to ask: "why would you allow anyone to take you back to a place of enmity, and a place of legalism; once you have tasted such peace and grace?"

When Moses worked as a mediator between God and the people; it was the same God who both gave the promise to Abraham and imposed the Law. It is very important that we recognize that it was not one God who worked on one side and another God who worked on the other. We clearly see God working on both sides of the situation; and His purpose is to fulfill the needs of both sides.

Since God gave the Law, it is not reasonable to suggest the Law was given against the promises. If it had been possible for "a law" to impart life, then there would have been no need for a covenant or it's promise. If that were possible God would have given the Law to start with.

Read Galatians 3:22 – 3:23 and make notes:

There were those who were glorying in their descending from Abraham. They tended to boast of their natural righteousness that they believed was theirs by inheritance. This led them to harm others. It was common for them to arrogantly flaunt the merits of such things a circumcision.

## Galatians – 08 - Giving Up Distinction

The Gentile converts could be easily humiliated. Many of them had received no root wisdom since their parents had been, maybe still were, slaves to idol worship. They had never received such a scar of honor.

The Law was not given to take away sin, but only to shine a light on sin. The Law helped the Jew see that in their blind arrogant pride, the things they considered righteousness had actually become sin.

Law without grace, might be compared to a medical diagnostic tool which can expose or identify that we have a disease, but cannot heal the disease. The Law can help us identify sin in our life, but it cannot remove the sin.

The Law was not against the promises and the Law was not empty. While it can be said that the Law kept us lockup as a prisoner, it also helped us look forward to the fulfilling of the promise.

Read Galatians 3:24 – 3:25 and make notes:

A child may be placed into the care of a custodian, or guardian. The guardian is not the father of the child, and the child does not look forward to the guardian's inheritance. The guardian protects, trains, and guides another person's child until the lawful time for them to receive the inheritance of their father.

This is a fair analogy of the Law. It was necessary that the law be given, as it fulfilled our need of a guardian. And it freed us from our previous impiety, taught us knowledge of God and then brought us to Christ the Lord as though to some wise teacher, so that we might be instructed by him in perfect learning and acquire the righteousness that is through faith.

## Galatians – 08 - Giving Up Distinction

If the Law was a guardian and we were confined under its direction, it was not opposed to grace but cooperated with grace. If we use the Law to continue to bind us after grace has come, then we are opposed to grace.

What would be our attitude toward a guardian who continued to keep a person under their close supervision, even after the child was grown and full legal age to receive their inheritance?

Read Galatians 3:26 – 3:27 and make notes:

It is here stated as fact, "You are all sons of God", but it is identified as being true for those who have faith in Christ Jesus. Whether Jewish lineage or from Gentile lineage, when we accept Jesus as our Savior, then we are a son of God. And the reverse of this is true; whether we are brought up in a Christian home or in a pagan home, we are not a son of God until we have faith in Jesus as our Savior.

When we are baptized into Christ, this is like clothing ourselves with Christ. All of outward parts are covered by Christ as if we have put on clothes.

Read Galatians 3:28 and make notes:

## Galatians – 08 - Giving Up Distinction

When we "put on" Christ – then we have clothed ourselves the same as every other Believer. In other words, we all look alike. We no longer are the "one wearing red" or the "one wearing blue", but we are the "one wearing Christ."

When we are wearing the clothes of our earthly culture, it is usually easy to identify us as to who is a Jew, a Gentile, and who is a slave. When we clothe ourselves with Christ, then so goes the distinction of Jew or Gentile. Keep in mind for a few minutes, the analogy of the Jew or the Gentile dressing in clothing that indicates their religious background or heritage.

It is worth dwelling on the next few statements in this verse. It also says that when we clothe ourselves with Christ, that we no longer appear "slave or free" and no longer "male or female"; for everyone is wearing Christ.

The former Jew is clothed exactly as the former Gentile, who are both now Christians. The former free person is clothed exactly as the former slave, who are both now Christians. Since we do not lose our gender when we are saved, we may struggle more with the last comparison, but it is still true. And when we fully grasp the message here, it helps us understand the first two comparisons much better.

The physical body we are given while on this earth is either male or female. The differences are notable, and in many ways wonderful. But the real person we are, the person who will live with God for eternity is neither. When we clothe ourselves with Christ, we cover our "man-ness" or our "woman-ness". To appear "as Christ" should be more the goal than appearing "male or female."

You were asked to keep in mind the difference in the way the Jew dressed from that of the Gentile. For some it was a matter of pride to be able to be identified by the proper Jewish garments. Most likely there were those who were proud of their identifiable Gentile clothing as well. Those who were free no doubt took some pride in being able to dress in such a way as to remove all doubt that they were free. The slave had little or no choice. Every where they went, others could tell they were a slave. It takes the laying down our "pride of heritage" to be fully clothed with Christ. It takes the laying down of our pride of being free to be fully clothed with Christ.

## Galatians – 08 - Giving Up Distinction

The unity of the faith in Jesus takes away the difference in race, the condition or status in the community, and even takes away the difference of gender. Surely, most of us recognize that we do not cease to have a male or female body when we are clothed with Christ. There are physical differences we still must accept and accommodate. But we must work toward preventing our gender from interfering with our being Christ like. If we understand this, then it helps us understand the struggle and necessary adjustments required by the former Jew and Gentile.

When we fully come into the life of Faith in Jesus, we do not observe such distinctions as race, social status, religious heritage, or even gender. Yet within the orders of this life these all continue to persist. So we strive to walk this path in a way that the name and doctrine of God will not be blasphemed, and the lost will actually want to come into God's family.

Read Galatians 3:29 and make notes:

Short and to the point: If we belong to Christ, then we are heirs to the promise.

What if any changes to our attitude do we need to make, to give better evidence that we are clothed in Christ?



## Galatians – 08 - Giving Up Distinction

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

In the preceding chapter, the word “heir” was used in reference to being an heir of Abraham. Being an heir of Abraham carried certain privileges and it also carried certain responsibilities.

Here in chapter four, we are told of a change in relationship and a change in freedom. Sons when they become fully grown, experience a change in their relationships. Children who are fully grown adults have a different relationship than minor children.

Read Galatians 4:1 – 4:2 and make notes:

The “heir” who is a child, signifies the whole human race. A point is being made here about our relationship with God and how it changes. This point was very clear to the people of Paul's day, but it may be clouded to people today, and perhaps missed all together.

In the culture of that day, there was a specific point in time when a young boy was recognized as moving from being a “boy” to being a “man.” In the Jewish culture, it was shortly after a boy's twelfth birthday. A ceremony was held for friends and family to attend. The Greeks recognized the “boy” becoming a “man” closer to his eighteenth birthday and at the festival of “Apatouria” he passed from the care of his father to the care of the state. Under the Roman law there was a time of coming of age, but it was at the discretion of the boy's father to declare the time of his son's maturity. A boy became an adult at the Roman festival of “Liberalia.”

Whether the person was coming from a tradition of Jewish, Greek, or Roman background; they all recognized the significance of a “child” becoming an “adult.” This statement had a clear and significant meaning to them.

## Galatians – 09 – Relationship Change

As long as the person was a “child”, or today we might say “minor”, this person had no more rights than a slave. Even if this “child” was the future owner of a large estate, business, etc., they could make no decisions and had no freedom. However, on the day when the “child” was recognized as an “adult” all of that changed. As suddenly as if someone had flipped a switch, this “adult” who only a few hours before had no say in their life or that of anyone else, could now make decisions and had freedom over their life.

Some like to see the prophets of old as being the “guardians and trustees” of our faith. By their words and actions, the people of God were made ready for the coming of the Savior. Others like to see the “preachers” and ministers filling this role of getting the people ready for Christ's second coming.

Some Believers live their life in a “fearful” relationship with God. They experience no sense of freedom or privilege. They feel as if the ministers are their tutor and/or guardian. This may be a good analogy of the immature Christian, as a child of God, but not a mature Believer. There comes a time, not set by a specific time of age, but at the discretion of the Father to say when we are mature. Then, while still an adopted son or daughter of the Father, we are now treated as an adult; being allowed to make decisions and freedom to go and to do.

Do you recognize anyone (or several someones) in your past that you would call spiritual guardians or stewards? If so, who and why do you think so?

Read Galatians 4:3 and make notes:

## Galatians – 09 – Relationship Change

Most of the non-Jewish and non-Christian people of that day believed people were under the control of the “elements of this world.” The general belief was that the position of stars, moon, and sun, controlled the experiences of human life.

It is reasonable to accept that Paul was not referring to such control since he would have been more likely thinking of this from his Jewish traditions. This terminology would have been very appropriate for that time, for not only the Jews, but almost everyone felt the elements such as a “new moon” and “sabbaths” had control over their lives.

There are those who interpret the elements as being the prophets of old or even the apostles along with the prophets. Some include the Mosaic law and others see the traditions and practices of the church. It appears the most likely and helpful interpretation is the one expressed in the previous paragraph.

Read Galatians 4:4 – 4:5 and make notes:

There is a fullness of time; “when the fullness of time had come.” This can be seen as when the Father decided everything that needed to be done to prepare for His Son's arrival was completed. This can be seen as when it is the time to give people their freedom. And when God's Son did come, He arrived in the manner that was natural. He was born “of a woman, under the law.” He fulfilled the requirements of the Law.

The Law held people in a type of bondage. There was no hope of deliverance. God sent His Son subject to the Law, so that He could redeem everyone who lived under the Law. Christ did not merely come to show people the way of life; but Christ came and provided a way for us to be adopted into God's family. When we are adopted into God's family, then we are no longer subject to the Law.

## Galatians – 09 – Relationship Change

Read Galatians 4:6 and make notes:

It is a beautiful thing that is done here, even if it is not significant to everyone. The word “*abba*” means father to those who were from the Jewish tradition but it would not hold that meaning to those who were from the Gentile tradition. It probably was not the intention to say “father, father” or to say “daddy, daddy” but to say “father, daddy.” Using the two words that were used for “father” or “daddy” by both the Jews and the Gentiles, lets them know they are both adopted into the same family.

Read Galatians 4:7 and make notes:

It is unlikely that a person would adopt a son without the concept of leaving this person as an heir. The idea that a mortal man could somehow become the heir to God who is immortal, is difficult for many people to grasp.

Some believe God was only using terminology that we could understand regarding inheritance. Others believe we became eligible to inherit as soon as Jesus died; claiming that the fact he was only dead for three days does not nullify the death. The ending phrase can easily be seen as supporting this view.

## Galatians – 09 – Relationship Change

Read Galatians 4:8 and make notes:

If we do not know Jesus, then we cannot know God. God is known only through Christ Jesus. Now that Jesus has appeared, has taught, and has revealed God through himself; we have no excuse not to know God. As long as anyone is serving those who are not gods, they do not know God!

Read Galatians 4:9 and make notes:

Those who come to Christ are the ones whom God sends and God calls. Those who are known of God receive the Spirit by which they know God.

Through the whole letter he shows that no one has disturbed the faith of the Galatians except those who were of the circumcision. They wished to lead them into carnal observations of the law, as though salvation is to be found in these things.

He is speaking to them as though they are attempting to return to Gentile superstitions. When he says, “you turn again,” he is not talking to the Jews, but to Gentiles. He is not saying they are returning to circumcision, in which they had never been, but he is saying “to the weak and beggarly elements,” which you wish to serve again.

## Galatians – 09 – Relationship Change

The “beggarly elements,” refers to the pagans, who make gods for themselves even from the elements of this world. He is saying to the Galatian Believers, that to turn from Christianity to the things of Judaism would be as wrong for them as returning to idol worship. This would be like turning back to the weak things of this world after having been given the strongest thing of the whole universe.

When he says “the beggarly elements” of this world, he is referring to those who, understand the law carnally. The flesh is always hungering. It yearns for the sustenance of food and drink and it frequently reaches out to the objects of desire, all of which, however, are weak .

These elements that he calls “weak and beggarly” are also called the “elements of the world.” As long as someone is an infant, they are subject to the elements. For the Jews this would be the law of Moses. When they receive the freedom due to an heir and then revert again to the law, such as desiring to be circumcised and to follow the whole letter of Jewish legal illusions, then those things that were merely the elements of the world to him before are now said to be “weak and beggarly elements.” The law of Moses, which before was rich, affluent and illustrious, became after Christ’s coming and in comparison with Him as mere “weak and beggarly.” The “weak and beggarly elements” are those unworthy traditions of the Jews, which interpret according to the letter. They were poor excuses for interpretations and “commandments that were not good.”

Can you think of any examples in your own life, or examples from a local church, that shows modern day efforts to return to things of weakness and leaving behind the things of strength?

## Galatians – 09 – Relationship Change

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:



The Galatian Believers have begun to mix the Jewish practices and regulations in with their Christian way of life. These words are directed toward those who are attempting to become “Jewish Christians.”

Read Galatians 4:10 and make notes:

“You observe days and months and seasons and years.” Those who observe days might be heard to say something like, “Tomorrow no one can set out on a journey.” Those who observe months might say something like, “This is the seventh month, no contracts can be signed in this month.” People who observe seasons might say things like, “This is the first day of spring, it is a festival today.”

It is one thing to observe days, as for example to rest on the sabbath, another thing to observe months, as for example to observe new moons, another thing to observe years, and another thing to observe seasons, such as fasting, the Passover, the feast of unleavened bread and other things of this kind. Those observing years might promote the seventh year of release or the fiftieth year and call it the year of jubilee.

We know from the writings of Paul, that he promotes loving God with our whole heart and that makes every day a special time with God, regardless of the month, year, or season. We could count every day the same. No day would be a special high and holy day and neither would any day be one for fear or dread.

Do you have any days where you are concerned about a particular superstition? Do you have any days you acknowledge as being more holy than others?

## Galatians – 10 – Stronger Or Weaker Things

Read Galatians 4:11 and make notes:

Paul is not saying that he is "afraid" as one who is overcome by fear. He is not referring to the kind of fear many of them have on certain dreadful superstitious days. The Believers in Galatia were being corrupted. Paul is very concerned that all the ministry effort he has put forth in an effort to bring the Galatians to Christ Jesus is on the verge of being wasted – or "in vain." Paul is genuinely concerned for their spiritual welfare more so than for his ministry reputation.

Consider a New Believer in Jesus as Savior. They have been told they are saved by grace and not by works. Then they begin to see others who also say they are Christians and they are observing Jewish laws and Jewish special days. Do you think this might have caused some confusion to these new Believers?

Do you think it causes confusion in the church today when some professing Christians promote the observance of Jewish rituals and special days? Why or Why not?

Read Galatians 4:12 and make notes:

## Galatians – 10 – Stronger Or Weaker Things

Since he is addressing those trying to take the Christian church to Jewish practices, it is very appropriate for Paul to bring himself into the discussion. Paul did not arrive in Galatia preaching the gospel and asking the people to become Jewish Christians, only to become Christians. In fact Paul became like them, "Gentile." Paul had been a person who burned with great zeal toward the observance of the Jewish law, but he was not afraid to lay aside the law and to depart from the Jewish lifestyle in favor of the Christian lifestyle.

Paul declares that he was in no way injured by laying aside the Jewish lifestyle for the Christian lifestyle. So it makes no sense at all for those who have accepted Jesus as Savior to try to put themselves under Jewish Law and Jewish practices.

Many of us have learned that continuous flattery tends to ruin a person or a people. And it is also true that continuous hard speech does a lot of damage. We see here a move toward balance. Paul moves from the harsh words regarding their attempts at taking their Christianity into Jewish rituals. By bringing his experience into the discussion, he lets them know that it is not all indignation but it is concern for their well being. It is like a person who had to inflict pain while digging out a thorn or splinter, now applies some soothing oil to begin the healing; "you did not injure me."

Read Galatians 4:13 and make notes:

Some interpret this passage to say that Paul saw the Galatians as physically infirm people and he adjusted his preaching and teaching style to accommodate their pitiful spiritual condition. Some think Paul pretended to be weak or infirm to gather their sympathy or attention.

## Galatians – 10 – Stronger Or Weaker Things

In other writings of Paul, he does tell us that he tried to be "all things to all men" in an effort to win some over to Christianity. However, neither of the above mentioned interpretations seem appropriate. Paul would be more likely to "not announce his wisdom" and allow people to see him as average than it would be for him to pretend to be ignorant. In a similar manner, it does not seem likely that Paul would pretend to be sick. The other reason for rejecting the "pretending to be sick" interpretation is the next verse.

Read Galatians 4:14 and make notes:

Paul says clearly, "my trial which was in my flesh." Paul really was experiencing some physical infirmity at the time of his initial preaching the gospel to the Galatians. They did not despise his infirmity, nor did they reject him due to his infirmity.

The infirmity was a type of test for the Galatian people. Would they reject this "minister" and the gospel message he proclaimed because he was not in the best of health? Would his lack of physical health and strength be a stumbling block to them believing and accepting? Would they humiliate the minister?

To their credit, the Galatians received the gospel message. They had their hearts and minds filled with hope. They accepted Christ and no longer feared present death.

The word "angel" in this text is probably better understood as "messenger" than referring to a divine spiritual being "angel." Paul states that the weakness of his body was not an obstacle to them, and they not only received him as a minister, but they received him pretty much like they would have received Christ Jesus himself.

## Galatians – 10 – Stronger Or Weaker Things

Read Galatians 4:15 and make notes:

Do you remember the joy you experienced when you accepted Jesus? Do you remember the blessing you enjoyed when you became Christian? As I recall, you were filled with joy that there wasn't anything you would have done for me, even to plucking out an eye. So how can taking on Jewish rituals and practices be better than that joy? How can becoming Jewish as a Christian be a better blessing?

Read Galatians 4:16 and make notes:

I am the messenger who brought you the message of hope, joy, and blessing. I am the messenger that brought you the message of freedom. Does it make sense that I am now your enemy?

Can you think of someone in your past, who was trying to tell you the "truth" about changes you needed to make in your life – but you saw them as an enemy at that time? Can you think of some examples of local churches you declared someone an "enemy" when in fact they were trying to tell them the truth?

## Galatians – 10 – Stronger Or Weaker Things

Read Galatians 4:17 – 18 and make notes:

Those who were trying to get the Christians in Galatia to come under the legalism of Jewish practices were "zealously" courting them. They were going to great lengths in an effort to entice them to make the transition into "Jewish Christianity." The real goal was not to bring the Galatian Christians to a higher level of blessing, but it was to exclude them from freedom they had been given in Christ Jesus. They actually wanted these Galatian Christians to become zealous for the Jewish Christian way of life.

Paul acknowledges that being "zealous" is actually a good thing as long as we are being zealous for good things and a good cause. Simply being zealous is not good. Being zealous for evil things is certainly a bad thing. And what's more, don't be zealous only when I am present, but be zealous for the cause of the gospel even when I am not near.

Give some careful thought to your personal life. Are there things for which you are zealous? If so, for what things or causes are you zealous? Is there anything for which you are zealous that is not really a good thing?

## Galatians – 10 – Stronger Or Weaker Things

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

Paul begins to express anguish and concern over the Believers in Galatia. In the following verses he gives the distinct impression of parental love and concern.

Read Galatians 4:19 and make notes:

Sons and daughters are spoken of in many senses. Sometimes they are children by love, sometimes by nature, sometimes as by blood, sometimes even as by religion. What Paul means by "my little children" probably falls into the category of "children by love." As far as religion, they would be children of God since they have experienced the new birth. The tone and the words used here, makes Paul sound more like a mother than a father of these believers. He even uses the phrase "I labor in birth again" and says he will continue to do so "until Christ is formed in you."

Someone who merely approached the Galatians from a worldly mindset might quickly write them off when they strayed from the gospel message. They might be counted as a loss in the manner of a miscarriage. But Paul expresses his parental love for them, even if the moment they are more like an abortion or a miscarriage from the gospel new birth. Paul is intent on continuing to work and minister to them in an effort to get them to "re-birth" if that is what it takes.

This is not a discussion on whether a person can lose their salvation or can be saved more than once. The language used here does provide imagery that helps us grasp the severity of the situation from Paul's perspective.



In a perfect world, humans that are conceived in the mother's womb, remain there until they are fully formed. Only then does the mother go into labor. Paul was explaining the travail to get these people to salvation in Jesus was as strenuous at times as when a mother travails in childbirth. In the human instance, once the child is born, the travail of childbirth is over. In the spiritual instance, as with the Galatians, sometimes the travail begins all over again, because the children are being seduced away from the life they have received and into danger.

A new Believer is not so different from the new implanted seed in a mother's womb. We are a New Creature in Christ Jesus, but we have much growing, maturing, and forming to do. As with the newly implanted child in a mother's womb, sometimes outside influences can damage the child's ability to receive from the mother and the child miscarries or is aborted, thus never experiencing the full life for which it was intended. This is how Paul views what is happening to the Galatians.

Read Galatians 4:20 and make notes:

Paul expresses how much he would really like to be present with them at this time. He also would rather speak to them in a different tone altogether. But, Paul has serious doubts about their welfare and their future.

How you noticed that we can pour our heart out to someone in a letter, but they cannot see the smile on our face, they cannot see the tears streaming down our cheeks, nor can they hear the actual tone of the words we speak. In so many cases, the word we speak can have a different meaning based upon the "tone" in which it is spoken. This tone is difficult, and often impossible, to communicate in the written word.

## Galatians – 11 – Liable Or Set Free

Perhaps it is knowing that words can be more forceful when given in person than they can when written - is the reason Paul would prefer to be with them. But it is likely that at least part of the reason is Paul's love for them. When we love someone, we want to be with them.

Read Galatians 4:21 and make notes:

Paul takes a practical approach to the situation among the Galatian Believers. Okay, those of you who desire to put yourselves under the law, do you understand what the law requires of those who are subject to it?

If one only sees the beauty of the rituals and the clear and distinctively laid out limits, it can appear to be "just the thing" to take away our uncertainty about what is right and wrong. The Law is so much more than simply a list of things that can and cannot be done or eaten. Everything of the Old Testament, including the Law, was a prefiguring of the New Testament which was to come.

Read Galatians 4:22 - 4:26 and make notes:

Abraham had two sons. While one was born of a free woman and the other born of a slave woman, both were really sons of Abraham. It was fleshly desires and fleshly reasoning that brought about the birth of one son. It was the promise of God and the Grace of God that brought about the birth of the other son. And yet both were sons of Abraham.

Two different origins and methods, but both are sons. And we must take care that we do not miss what is said in verses 24 and 25; both of these are symbolic. They are symbolic of the two covenants. One is symbolic of the covenant that gives birth to bondage (the law) and the other is symbolic of the covenant that gives birth to freedom.

Does this analogy help us see more clearly why Paul is concerned? A person who has come to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ has been encouraged to place themselves under the bondage of the old covenant.

Both sons were able to multiply and increase in number; but only one was able to make an heir to the kingdom of God and the new covenant. And it was not enough that one of them was born to a mother who was a free woman. After Sarah's death, Abraham married another free woman named Keturah and had children by her. None of the children born of Keturah was able to make an heir to the new covenant. The point is that it was not simply the fact the Isaac was born of Sarah, a free woman. It was more important that Isaac was born according to the Promise.

If we understand Ismael to be symbolic of those under the Old Covenant, then it would be appropriate to see those under the Law as "sojourning" or "wandering." This is a clear difference from those who are under the New Covenant and have received the "possession" of the promise.

Read Galatians 4:27 – 4:31 and make notes:

We, Christians, are children of the promise just like Isaac. Many years of being barren along with the advanced age of Sarah, made it apparent that for birth to take place would necessarily take an act of God. That is such a good picture for many of us. The past life we have lived, the circumstances in which we were raised, and a few other things, makes it look like a true miracle for us to be saved. And it is!

## Galatians – 11 – Liable Or Set Free

As an individual, or as a local church, we must not allow a long time period of appearing barren to cause us to give up. There is every reason to expect children of the promise to be born. Let us continue to work toward, prepare for, and expect children to be born into the kingdom of God.

What a sad picture; one born of the flesh, the born according to the Spirit, then trying to return to the flesh. As Christians, we are not born according to nature, but according to Grace.

Let's consider this from the perspective of an earlier example Paul used in this letter. Why would someone who has been declared "a legal adult" and given the liberty of "an adult"; why would this person desire to go back under the control of a guardian and give up their adult status?

As long as we are heirs of the slave woman, we are liable for our sins. When we are adopted into God's family and become heirs of the promise, we are now free from the sins of our past. Why would anyone who has been released from liability for a crime, go and demand to pay the penalty for the crime? Why would anyone who has been set free, demand to be put back into slavery again?

Are there examples in our life which indicate that we have tried to move from freedom back into legalism?

**Galatians – 11 – Liable Or Set Free**

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

Have you ever known someone who was set free, and then intentionally asked to be made a prisoner again? Does it make any sense to us that a person who is sick, and then is healed, would ask to be made sick again? It is this type of logic that is being questioned, or challenged in this week's study.

Read Galatians 5:1 and make notes:

Believers are free by faith. Only in faith will we have true freedom. It is by faith Christ has brought us back to freedom and made us free.

Several reasons are given in an effort to lead the Believers away from the error of trying to become Jewish Christians. First, it is foolishness to have been set free from being a slave and then desire to give up the freedom to become a slave again. Secondly, it is being ungrateful of the benefactor of their freedom. It is as though they despise the one who has freed them. Thirdly, since you have been purchased and set free from the Law, it has no power over you.

"Stand fast in the liberty." This is only possible for one who has been set free. The slave is bowed by the constraints of the yoke of their slavery. Paul pleads with the Galatians not be be entangled again with a yoke of slavery.

Prior to becoming Christians, the Galatians had been slaves to observing the pagan laws of seasons, lunar seasons, and special days. While becoming a Jew would be different from being a pagan; to take on the Jewish legalism would be just as much slavery as what they had in their paganism. This is why he can say they would be returning to slavery or going to slavery again.

## Galatians – 12 – For Freedom Christ Has Set Us Free

Read Galatians 5:2 and make notes:

If you become circumcised, then Christ will be of no benefit to you. What could circumcision, or any other Jewish ritual, add to what they had already received from being a child of God with Jesus as their Savior?

Read Galatians 5:3 and make notes:

If you set out to be a "keeper of one part of the Law" then you are obligated to keep all parts of the Law. We cannot pick and chose what parts of each Covenant that we will be a part of. We are either participants in the Old Covenant or the New Covenant. It is impossible to be a partial participant in either, let alone both.

So, if we decide that we will observe the part of the law that calls for circumcision, then we must also observe the days of the Law, and we must make the sacrifices of the Law. Then, of course, there are the dietary aspects of the Law along with many other aspects of its impact on daily life.

Read Galatians 5:4 and make notes:

## Galatians – 12 – For Freedom Christ Has Set Us Free

This is a straightforward word to those who have attempted to justify themselves by adding the Law to their Christianity. It must have felt like a punch in the stomach. If you have tried to place yourselves under the law, then you have become estranged from Christ and "you have fallen from grace."

All the virtue a Christian has is by the Grace of God. This is not a matter of merit, but a matter of faith. When we attempt to place ourselves under the law, we have already fall from grace. To place our justification in the hands of the law is to look to works. Do we observe the sabbath correctly and faithfully? Do we refrain from traveling more than what is allowed? Our hope has been removed from Christ and placed into the works.

Read Galatians 5:5 – 5:6 and make notes:

The Christian eagerly waits for righteousness by faith which comes to us from Christ through the Holy Spirit. Neither being circumcised or not being circumcised counts for nothing in regards to our being justified. The only thing that counts toward this for us is "faith working through love."

Consider an athlete and their ability to win in the competition. How much does it really matter that the athlete is handsome or homely in appearance? How much does it matter that they have smooth skin or have pitted? What difference does it make if they have dark hair or light colored hair? None of these things attribute to the strength or skill which is required to win in the contest. So it is with the things such as circumcision when it comes to being justified before God. For the athlete, what matters is strength; and for the Christian, what matters is faith.



Read Galatians 5:7 – 5:9 and make notes:

This is not a question of one who is seeking knowledge, but a question asked in the process of grieving. Paul already knew it was the false teachers, and was asking in a manner to get them to evaluate and think through what they have done. "You were running the race so wonderfully, how could you have cut the race short like that?" "Who did you allow to stop you in your tracks and walk off the course?" "You were in the lead, why would you listen to someone to stop racing?"

Those who persuade Christians to take on the yoke of the law are acting on a human and fleshly decision. They are not acting on the decision and leading of God when they do this.

It may be that some of the Galatians responded with something like, "why are you so upset, we only kept this only little part of the law. It may seem like a small thing to take on "just this part of the law." Paul sounds the caution alarm. Even a small amount of "leaven" will infect the entire mass of dough. Regardless of how small our tempter may tell us this is, regardless of how small this may look to us; even a small amount of the Law will infect the entire life of Grace – and ruin it.

The inference in this text is that the Galatian Christians – and us today – are being encouraged to remain "un-leavened" bread. That little part of the law – circumcision – has the ability to alter the entire course of the Grace filled life. Don't allow any part of the Law in.

Read Galatians 5:10 – 5:12 and make notes:

Even though they have made some bad decisions, Paul is able to say he has confidence in them. But notice how it is stated, this is important; "I have confidence in you, in the Lord." Paul's confidence is not simply in the Galatian Believers. His confidence in them rest upon the fact that they are "in the Lord." In other words, as long as they remain in Christ, remain in a personal relationship with Christ, he is confident they will correct what is wrong and will do the right thing.

This is such an important principle for us to know today. When someone we love is falling short of the mark, yes we should point it out in love, but we should not be so quick to punish them. Instead we should encourage them to remain in a personal relationship with Jesus, knowing that He will guide them away from error and into deeper truth when they are ready. It is difficult to be at ease when our loved one is in error, but as long as they remain "in the Lord" we can be confident that they will be okay in the end.

The false teachers have made the issue of circumcision something with which to persecute Paul. It is interesting that earlier these Jews were offended at the cross, but now they have left the offense of the cross and want to fight over circumcision.

Some have interpreted verse 12 as Paul wishing that the false teachers would not only circumcise themselves, but instead be emasculated (cut the whole part off). It would be easy to see how Paul could get fed up with their attacks, grow weary, and respond in the flesh. However, that may not be the proper interpretation. It could be that Paul was wishing the false teachers would find a reason to "cut themselves off" from any contact with the Galatians. It could be that Paul was praying something like, "Lord, let these false teachers see something or hear something that would cause them to desire to move on and leave the Galatian Believers alone."

## Galatians – 12 – For Freedom Christ Has Set Us Free

These pushers of the Law had already cut themselves off from the Grace of God. Maybe Paul was only desiring to see them cut themselves off from any contact with the Galatians as well.

It might be most accurate to say Paul placed in his confidence "in the Lord." So as long as the Galatians remained "in the Lord" then he could be confident that "the Lord" would guide them. That's what we need to be careful about today. Where is our confidence? Is our confidence in our ability to do the right thing? Is our confidence in our loved one's ability to do the right thing? Is our confidence "in the Lord"?

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

Paul has been addressing the Galatians who have been listening to teachers telling them they had to go back and obey the law and closely follow it's rituals in order to be acceptable to God. Even though they had been "Saved by Grace through Faith in Jesus Christ."

Paul has spent some time in his letter, explaining how they were no longer subject to the law since they have accepted Jesus as Savior. He has used logic and reasoning that would have appealed to the people and culture of that day to explain the foolishness of trying to live under the law after being saved.

Read Galatians 5:13 – 5:18 and make notes:

Verse 14 proclaims "all the law is fulfilled in this one instruction: Love your neighbor as yourself."

1 Corinthians 13:4-7 give us a breakdown and description of what love is:

Love is \_\_\_\_\_

Love is \_\_\_\_\_

Loves does not \_\_\_\_\_

Love does not \_\_\_\_\_

Love is not \_\_\_\_\_

Love is not \_\_\_\_\_

## Galatians – 13 – The Sins Of The Flesh

Love is not \_\_\_\_\_

Love is not easily \_\_\_\_\_

Love keeps no record of \_\_\_\_\_

Love does not delight in \_\_\_\_\_

Love rejoices in \_\_\_\_\_

Love always \_\_\_\_\_

Love always \_\_\_\_\_

It is not the message for this study, but it is okay to remind ourselves, "if we would walk in love toward another person, then there would be no need for any law." When you love someone, you simply don't hurt them, take from them, or in any way threaten them. The Law is only for people who do not love one another.

Now back to Galatians chapter 5. Verse 15 offers us a word of caution: "If you are out to bite and devour one another, you had better be careful that you are not consumed and destroyed yourself." Our flesh lust and craves - while our spirit loves.

Verse 16 encourages us in that "if we walk in the Spirit, then we will not fulfill the lust of the flesh." Verse 17 states "what the flesh desires is contrary to what the Spirit desires, and what the Spirit desires is contrary to what the flesh desires."

In Romans 7:15-20, Paul laments, "The things that I want to do, I can't seem to do them because of my flesh." In this text of Galatians in verse 17 He states, "so you cannot do the things you want to do."

## Galatians – 13 – The Sins Of The Flesh

Some people teach the entire relationship between the flesh and the Spirit is that of a constant war. There certainly are times when they fight one another - but this is not the entire relationship - more on that a little later.

Read Galatians 5:19 – 5:21 and make notes:

The different translations may have slightly different words, but the actual meanings are the same. Perhaps some definitions will help:

**Adultery** - is sexual unfaithfulness to a husband or wife.

Jesus stated that if we looked upon the opposite sex and lusted after them - we were guilty of adultery. I wished it wasn't necessary to mention this among God's people - but it is necessary. This applies to looking upon the opposite sex on the street, at work, in a magazine, book, movie, on the beach, or anywhere else with lusting and imagining.

**Fornication** - is sexual relations with someone when you are not married.

If a person who is not married, has sexual relations with a person who is married – the single person committed fornication and the married person committed adultery. I believe it is a safe analogy - if a married person lusting in their heart is adultery - then an unmarried person lusting in their heart is fornication.

**Uncleanness** - refers to all and any forbidden sexual conduct.

**Lasciviousness** - indecency, shamelessness, unrestrained evil thoughts.

This is doing far more distasteful things than just ,that is wrong.

**Idolatry** - the worship of anything other than the One True God.

This is placing more importance on making money than serving and obeying God. This is placing more importance upon our reputation and community standing than serving God. This is anything that becomes more important to us than serving and obeying God.

**Witchcraft** - use of anything to obtain control over someone's life.

Originally this word connected with the use of drugs and chemicals to control another person's life. Then it came to also include the using of evil spirits to control another person. Then it came to include fear, intimidation, or anything one person might use to control or manipulate another person. The Church today is flooded with people who are using all sorts of subtle methods in an effort to control others.

**Hatred** - enmity, hostility, animosity.

1 John 3:15 "Whoever hates his brother is a murderer." Proverbs 10:12 "Hate stirs up strife."

**Discord** - contention, quarreling.

How often do Christians get involved with these things in order to get a promotion, position, recognition, or other things?

**Jealousy** - wanting and desiring of what others have.

This could be material things, their honor, or position

**Fits of Rage** - indignation, explosive temper.

Anger will fade away rather quickly - rage will last a long time.

**Strife** - conflict, fight.

Proverbs 20:3 "It is honor for a man to cease from strife."

**Factions** - division, splitting off.

There are very few churches in America that have not had the experience of a group of people moving in this area of sedition - dividing the congregation and splitting off.

**Heresies** - rejecting the fundamental beliefs of God, believing or holding to some teaching other than the truth.

Remember, we have seen in the Scriptures, Jesus is the Truth.

**Envyings** - wanting what another person has beyond the point of jealousy.

This is going beyond wanting what they have, this is also begrudging the fact that they have it. Very often it includes the desire to see the other person lose what they have and experience some kind of suffering in the loss. I have heard these kinds of comments coming out of the mouths of people who profess to be Christians.



**Murders** - to take the life of another person.

This word has a much broader meaning than just the taking of the physical life of a person. It also includes the taking of things or persons from another -when they have given their life to it or them

**Drunkness** - is the use of chemicals to effect one's pleasure senses.

It is the turning over of one's control and actions to the power and influence of the chemical.

**Revelings** - uncontrolled license, indulgence, pleasure seeking.

There are people who profess to be Christians today who are guilty,of this sin. They will only go to a meeting or a place if it sounds like they will have a "good time." These people will not accept the responsibility to help raise others up in the faith. You will see the "real Christian" in action and often look at their actions and ask "what is in it for them?" "why are they doing what they are doing?" Too many professing Christians today will only do what "feels good to them."

Verse 21 should be the sobering thought for us. "The people who live this way, are not going to inherit the Kingdom of God. A careful examination and study of the Scriptures has convinced me that this text is not saying, "If a person ever does anyone of these things, then they cannot inherit the kingdom."

What this text is saying is that if a person lives their life with these actions and attitudes as a "lifestyle" - or way of life - then they are not going to inherit the kingdom. Remember, all of these things are actions of the flesh - these things are the fruit of the flesh. The things of the flesh are against the things of the Kingdom of God.

## Galatians – 13 – The Sins Of The Flesh

People in the Churches today will profess their Christianity - they will practice their Christianity they will talk their Christianity - they may even fight to defend their Christianity. But they will go ahead and live the way they want to - regardless of their Christianity. People today seem to believe that they should do whatever they want to do - God will forgive them anyway.

The average Christian today seems to be ignorant of the call of God to live a life of holiness - They seem to be ignorant of the fact that God is looking for a people who will serve Him because they love Him and not just "so they want go to hell."

If you have ever wondered why God allows us to keep these fleshly bodies after we get saved - I am going to let you in on part of it. God desires to have a people who follow Him, obey Him, and serve Him -because they choose to do so – not because they have to.

If we were to lose all the fleshly desires after we are saved, then we would not have temptations - we would only have righteous thoughts and desires. We would be serving God because there was nothing else in us. In a sense we would "have to" because we couldn't do anything else.

The reality of our situation is this: Every single day, we must make a decision to follow Christ today. For some of us it may be a decision to make every hour of the day. The fact remains, every day, all along our walk and life - we must choose to obey God or choose to obey the flesh. If someone is serving Christ today, it is because they choose to do so -it isn't because they have to!

Everyone of us who has a job - must decide everyday whether we are going to work or not - we don't have to - we can choose to stay home - sleep a little longer - get some rest. The real fact is that we don't have to go to work - we actually have a choice - and I trust you make the right choice most of the time.

We seem to be able to weigh the circumstances and look at the consequences of going and not going - and decide going to work doesn't sound like fun but I'd rather do that than suffer the consequences.

## Galatians – 13 – The Sins Of The Flesh

Today's Christians seem to be having a greater problem deciding whether they are going to serve God - than they do in going to work. I really wish it wasn't necessary to talk to Christians today about the sins of the flesh - but it is necessary. Please take note of these fleshy desires - know that these things all work against the will and desires of God. Be mindful that everyday, we must choose whom we are going to serve today - "I will serve my flesh or I will serve my Lord."

It isn't necessary to curse our flesh when it tempts us to do evil or to go against God's desire for our life. It isn't necessary to feel that we are unworthy because we are being tempted again. We can look at it as one more opportunity to show God that we love Him more than others – by choosing to follow Him. We can look at it as one more opportunity to show God that we love Him more than ourselves - by choosing to serve Him instead of our flesh.

When we see someone who is a Christian walking in the way of one or more of these fleshy desires – We know we should really pray for them and lift them up. The next time we find ourselves being faced with one or more of these fleshy desires – we know we have an opportunity to do good just as much as to do bad.

Do I have any “works of the flesh” that I need to put aside? Do I recognize the “desires of the flesh” in me, for what they are? What changes do I need to make in order to commit anew to God - to serve Him and to obey Him - regardless and at all times?

## Galatians – 13 – The Sins Of The Flesh

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group: