

Fresh Perspectives:
A Short Commentary
On Galatians

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Introduction and Background

The book of Galatians is one probably the most misunderstood book of the Bible. It is commonly and falsely taught that it is the chief book of the Bible that “does away” with the Law of God. As you read this brief commentary, you will see that nothing could be farther from the truth! We see in Galatians one of the tremendous battles in the New Testament church and in the church today: human effort versus God’s power. In this, we also get to hear more about one of the great testimonies of the Bible: The Apostle Paul.

Galatians was written by Paul probably early on in His ministry. Sources indicate that it was written around 53 A.D., though it is possible he wrote it even earlier than this. Galatia was a region in what we call today central Turkey. The book of Galatians is unique in that it is not written to a specific church, but to a group of churches. We see this in Gal. 1:2, where Paul states that the letter is written to the “churches in Galatia”. The word church is plural in this verse. The other letters of Paul are written to the body of believers in a specific city, such as Rome, Corinth, Ephesus, Philippi, etc. For instance, to the Corinthians Paul said, “Unto the church of God which is at Corinth...” (I Corinthians 1:2). Galatia is a region and has multiple groups meeting in different locations. This is why Paul uses church in the plural form. Since it is a region, he is going to address an audience of many different people. We will see Him address a variety of topics, though the basic theme remains the same.

Acts 13 and 14 give us some historical insight and other valuable information. From these verses, we learn that there are four main cities mentioned in the Bible that are in the region of Galatia: Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe. Pisidia is a sub-region of Galatia. For this reason, this Antioch is often called Psidian Antioch in the book of Acts (Acts 13:14). There is another Antioch in Syria mentioned in the Bible, but remember that Galatia was in what we call modern day central Turkey. Lystra and Derbe had very little, if any Jewish influence. All of the cities had heavy Gentile influence. It is commonly taught that the Galatian churches were a group of Jews “going back” to keeping the Law. Many people assume that

Paul's letter to the Galatians was written to a group of Jews who are 'going back' to law keeping. First and foremost, we must understand that Paul was an apostle to the Gentiles, not to the Jews. While he often went into a city's Jewish synagogue, Paul always affirms himself as a preacher and apostle to the Gentiles. In Galatians 1:15-16, he wrote that his calling in Jesus Christ was to preach the gospel to the *Gentiles*. Why would he write this in Galatians unless his audience was largely Gentile? A second thing to keep in mind is that one of the main issues in Galatia was adult circumcision. If He was speaking to a group of Jews 'going back' to law-keeping, then the issue of circumcision would not have arisen because the Galatians would have already been circumcised. We will see throughout the letter that Paul refers to their life before knowing Christ, which was rife with paganism. In Galatians 4:8, he addressed them by saying, "Formerly, when you did not know God..." In fact, Paul really addressed pagan practices in this letter and that we should avoid them. These facts alone disprove the idea that these believers are all Jews.

Between 279 B.C. and 189 B.C., the peoples of this region were influenced by their own traditions of pagan worship as well as Greek mythology. The region was conquered by the Romans around 189 B.C and was declared an official Roman province around 25 B.C. By the time Paul wrote to these churches in approximately 50 A.D., this region was dominated culturally and politically by the Roman Empire. The days, months, seasons, and years to which Paul refers are the Greek and Roman worship practices that permeated Galatian culture over 300 years before Paul's visit to Galatia (see Acts 14:8-20 for an example).

One of the main themes of the book is that circumcision does not save a person. It was simply a sign that Abraham received as a sign of a righteous, consecrated life to God Almighty. The act of circumcision itself is not wrong in the Bible because Paul himself circumcises Timothy (Acts 16:3). Paul takes issue with the Galatians over circumcision because of their **intent to be circumcised**. They thought that their circumcision or outward action earned their salvation. This contradicts the freedom we have in Christ. Our salvation has been earned for us through the blood of the Lamb. The book of

Galatians, like all the other books of the Bible, is concerned with your motivation for action: Are you trusting in yourself or are you trusting in the Lord? The Galatian believers were moving dangerously close to trusting in their own works for salvation instead of allowing the Spirit of God to live the Law of God through them.

The other thing many people teach about Galatians is that Paul changed the Sabbath and Feast Days. Paul kept the Sabbath with Galatians churches in Acts 13 and 14. In Acts 13, we learn that He preached on the Sabbath. In Acts 13:43, the Bible reads, “Now when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas: who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God.” They urged them to continue in the grace of God. In the very next verse, the Bible reads, “On the Sabbath, almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord.” So, after urging people to continue in the grace of God, we learn that they gathered together on the Sabbath. We learn Gentiles were among those present (Acts 13:48). These verses clearly show that grace and Law are not contradictory. This also shows us that Paul did not change the gospel when He went to the Gentiles. Paul just wants us to obey the Word of God through the leading of the Spirit, not by human reasoning and effort. We will see this theme throughout the letter.

Lastly, Paul is very scholarly. Some sources say that he was the second ranking rabbi in Judaism at the time of His conversion. We know he sat under Gamaliel, who was a renowned doctor of the Law (Acts 5:34, 22:3). Gamaliel was so renowned that his words caused the Jewish leaders to release Peter when he was imprisoned for preaching the gospel (Acts 5:34-40). This means Paul discourse on the Law is not understood from merely surface reading. It is very deep and requires us to look deeper to understand it. Peter actually wrote and said that Paul’s letters are hard to understand (2 Peter 3:15-17). The Greek language Paul uses and other letters of Paul will help us understand Galatians. Paul teaches the same thing in every church, so his letters will line up perfectly (I Cor. 4:17). As a side note, it is interesting that Timothy was from the region of Galatia (Acts 16:1-3).

Galatians 1

Verses 1-5—1 Paul, an apostle—sent not from men nor by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead— 2 and all the brothers with me, To the churches in Galatia: 3 Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, 4 who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, 5 to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

In this opening exhortation, Paul lays out the authority by which he speaks this letter and a general praise to God the Father for the work that He has done in the world through His Son Jesus Christ. By pointing out that He was sent not by men, but by God – we see a theme that will continue throughout the letter: man’s ways of doing things versus God’s divine intervention and calling. Human effort versus God’s power; being taught by man versus being taught by God. He starts this dynamic early because He wants them to know He was sent by God.

Verses 6-9—6 I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— 7 which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. 8 But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! 9 As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned!

Even as early as 53 AD, Paul is having to address the preaching of **another gospel!** About 20 years since the Lord’s death, another gospel is going out. Paul quickly shifts his focus to the problem. Apparently, some false teachers came along and taught the Galatians things that were contrary to the gospel or good news of Jesus Christ. This different gospel is actually bad news because it has perverted the message that Paul has already taught to so many other churches and believers. Paul affirms that the Galatians have already accepted the gospel in its pure form as taught by him and the other disciples. Some might consider Paul’s words to be harsh or over-

bearing. If you consider the gravity of the situation, he has a point. The preaching of the resurrection of Christ is in its relative infancy, and such measures are necessary to protect it. You see, the believers in Galatia will certainly teach others their beliefs. If even one church perverts the gospel, then countless others will be lead astray. Paul understands that the gospel must be preserved at all costs. In verse 8, I believe that Paul actually prophesies because he mentions that an angel might try to bring another gospel. Interestingly enough, two religions were formed out this way. Mohammad claimed that the angel Gabriel gave him the Koran, which is the basis for Islam. Another religion similarly founded is Mormonism, which Joseph Smith claimed he received from an angel. Paul clearly warned us about such events many years before these two religions came about.

Verses 10-12—10 Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ. 11 I want you to know, brothers, that the gospel I preached is not something that man made up. 12 I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ.

Paul begins this section by making a bold statement that being a servant of Christ means that you will not try to please men. He then goes on to say that the gospel he preached to them the first time is not from man nor taught by men, but that he received it directly from Jesus Christ. The Greek word used in these verses translated as revelation is *apokalupsis*. It is a word that means an unveiling or a revealing. Imagine that you have looked at the same white wall at work every day for 10 years. You have only seen the color of the wall, which is white. One day you come into work and see a painting on the wall! You were certain that it was never there, but others knew it was there all along. This is how a revelation from God works. A revelation is something that just happens. A teaching from man has structure and an outline to it; it is predictable. You can control, formulate, and even manipulate a teaching, but you do not really have any control over the timing of a revelation. Man cannot teach or understand this revelation of Jesus Christ by his own power; he can only have true understanding if it is revealed to

him by God. Because the revelation of Jesus Christ occurs not by human effort or of human origins, it frustrates mankind. In this, we learn another theme of Galatians: the importance of revelation in the life of the believer.

Verses 13-17—13 For you have heard of my previous way of life in Judaism, how intensely I persecuted the church of God and tried to destroy it. 14 I was advancing in Judaism beyond many Jews of my own age and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers. 15 But when God, who set me apart from birth and called me by his grace, was pleased 16 to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not consult any man, 17 nor did I go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before I was, but I went immediately into Arabia and later returned to Damascus.

In this next section, Paul gives an example from his own life to show how the gospel frustrated him before He came to Christ. He explains how he tried to destroy the church of God through persecution. Prior to revelation, even he acted in his flesh! However, when he least expected it, God revealed to him Jesus Christ. He tells his own story to show that the only way he could have been turned from his former way of life was through God's revelation. A million Teachings are not able to do what one revelation can accomplish! Revelation initiated his faith and kept it going! Paul at one time was one of the biggest persecutors of the church. His calling into the Body of Christ, magnifies God. Someone who was so zealous for the only way of life he had ever known could only be changed by a sudden, unexpected revelation. It had to confound his natural, sinful nature. This revelation was so powerful that it completely changed Paul's life – Paul went from living one way to a completely different way. Instead of persecuting the Church, he now is a promoter of Jesus Christ! The revelation of Jesus Christ is so powerful that you will never be the same – you will love instead of hate. You will live at enmity with your natural self! Once this revelation was made within him, he did not go to consult any man to be taught, but he went straight to Arabia to learn from Christ himself. What was in Arabia? The Mountain of God was in Arabia. It is also called Mount Horeb or Mount Sinai. It is the mountain

where the commandments were given in Exodus 20. The mountain most people call Mount Sinai today is not the correct mountain. Most people think it is on the Sinai Peninsula. Exodus 3:1 explains that Mount Sinai is in Midian. Midian was in modern-day Saudi Arabia. Serious archeological evidence in the last 30 years has proven this. On this Mountain, Paul was taught face to face by the Lord Jesus. This is how he knew exactly what Jesus said on the night He was crucified (see I Cor. 11:24-25).

Verses 18-24—18 Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to get acquainted with Peter and stayed with him fifteen days. 19 I saw none of the other apostles—only James, the Lord's brother. 20 I assure you before God that what I am writing you is no lie. 21 Later I went to Syria and Cilicia. 22 I was personally unknown to the churches of Judea that are in Christ. 23 They only heard the report: "The man who formerly persecuted us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy." 24 And they praised God because of me.

It wasn't until three years after Paul was taught by the Lord in Arabia that he actually went to Jerusalem to talk to other servants of Christ. He saw only Peter and James. Because both of these men personally walked with Christ and were so close to Christ, their revelation of Jesus Christ was trusted. Paul makes mention of this to stress the purity of his revelation from the Lord. Notice the distance of time he mentions. After three years of revelations from the Lord, He only sees the Apostles for fifteen days. This emphasizes the purity of the message He received and that people had little, if any opportunity to influence it.

Galatians 2

Verses 1-5—1 Fourteen years later I went up again to Jerusalem, this time with Barnabas. I took Titus along also. 2 I went in response to a revelation and set before them the gospel that I preach among the Gentiles. But I did this privately to those who seemed to be leaders, for fear that I was running or had run my race in vain. 3 Yet not even Titus, who was with me, was compelled to be circumcised, even though he was a Greek. 4 This matter arose because some false brothers had infiltrated our ranks to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus and to make us slaves. 5 We did not give in to them for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might remain with you.

The next time Paul goes up to Jerusalem is fourteen years later and only because of a revelation given to him. We see another distance of time mentioned; this one was lengthy. This is another way of emphasizing how little influence the other Apostles or other people had influenced his message. Why did he go? We learn in verses 3-5 that some of the Judeans were teaching a gospel contrary to what Paul was shown in Arabia. God has shown Paul that some of the brothers in Judea were leading others astray with a false gospel. Paul says that these “false brothers” were spying on their freedom in Christ to make them slaves. What is the freedom we have in Christ? In Christ, we are free from the yoke of disobedience which leads to death. We are free to live an obedient life for God which leads to eternal life. This freedom comes only through the blood of Jesus and His sacrifice. These “false brethren” were teaching that circumcision was necessary for salvation in Christ. We see this argument play out in Acts 15. They required circumcision because they believed that circumcision was a requirement for the forgiveness of sins. The freedom we have in Jesus Christ comes only through faith in Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection. Only through His blood can our sins be atoned for because His blood is the sign of the New Covenant. Our selfish, sinful works caused us to be in bondage to death and need a Savior, so no amount of works will ever earn our innocence before God. Relying on works would be going back to the slavery of disobedience that Christ came to free us from with His life and sacrifice.

Verses 6-10—6 As for those who seemed to be important—whatever they were makes no difference to me; God does not judge by external appearance—those men added nothing to my message. 7 On the contrary, they saw that I had been entrusted with the task of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, just as Peter had been to the Jews. 8 For God, who was at work in the ministry of Peter as an apostle to the Jews, was also at work in my ministry as an apostle to the Gentiles. 9 James, Peter and John, those reputed to be pillars, gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship when they recognized the grace given to me. They agreed that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the Jews. 10 All they asked was that we should continue to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do.

The Judean leaders did not change Paul’s original revelation of Jesus Christ. Paul was not swayed by their positions of authority or by their national origin. After laying before the Judeans his revelation of the gospel, the Judeans agreed that God had called Paul to preach the gospel to the Gentiles. The same gospel that Paul laid before the Judeans is the same gospel that he was revealed in the beginning by Jesus Christ. This is absolute confirmation that Paul did not go to the Gentiles and preach that the Law was done away with. The same gospel that the Judeans accepted was the same gospel that Paul preached to the Galatians. It was the same gospel revelation he received in the beginning. It was unchanged! God’s revelation is consistent, even between people of different backgrounds.

Verses 11-14—11 When Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he was clearly in the wrong. 12 Before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group. 13 The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray. 14 When I saw that they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter in front of them all, “You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile and not like a Jew. How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs?”

Paul now shifts his focus to the acts of the Judean apostles. Peter was accustomed to eating with Gentiles, but when brethren from Judea came to Antioch, he began to draw away from the Gentiles. Paul notes that Peter did this because he was afraid of the circumcision group and that others were led astray. Peter had a tremendous influence among the Judean Christians because they knew how close he was to Jesus during the earthly ministry of Jesus. What was the Jewish custom that Peter was forcing the Gentiles to follow? One of the customs among Jews was to not eat with Gentiles because Gentiles were seen as unclean or impure. This specific issue was a problem that Peter had in Acts 10 when Peter was asked by God to visit the Gentile Cornelius. In Acts 10, Peter had a vision that he should not call any man impure or unclean. In Acts 10:27-28, Peter says “You are well aware that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with a Gentile or to visit him. But God has shown me that I should not call any man impure or unclean.” Obviously, there was a custom among Jews to not associate with Gentiles (this custom comes from tradition and is not found in the Law of God). If Christ has forgiven someone and cleansed them, then they are accepted by Him! The Jewish or Judean custom that Peter is forcing the Gentiles to follow is the law of exclusion. Up until the point he divides himself, Peter has been living like a Gentile by eating and associating with whoever he wants. Now that other Judeans have arrived, Peter withdraws himself and forces upon the Gentiles the law of exclusion.

Verses 15-16—15 “We who are Jews by birth and not ‘Gentile sinners’ 16 know that a man is not justified by works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.”

First of all, Paul says that your works do not justify you before God. He even points out that **Jews by birth should already know that man can only be justified before God by faith**. What these Judeans are teaching and living is totally out of line with what natural-born Jews already know. Justification refers to being declared innocent in court. It refers to how our past sins are atoned for. Even Jewish people understand that works cannot make us innocent. We

need a sacrifice, which is Christ. Christ sacrificed His life because our works could not justify us before God. The only way we can receive justification from God is by believing in Christ's perfect sacrifice. The problem Paul characterizes in Galatians 2:15 and onward is between external works by human effort or inward faith which leads to action. Faith is not just a mental acknowledgment of a fact, event, or person. Faith is the force that drives us to act; it is our motivation for acting.

Verses 17-21— 17 "If, while we seek to be justified in Christ, it becomes evident that we ourselves are sinners, does that mean that Christ promotes sin? Absolutely not! 18 If I rebuild what I destroyed, I prove that I am a lawbreaker. 19 For through the law I died to the law so that I might live for God. 20 I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. 21 I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!"

Just because we set our hearts on serving Christ and being justified through faith in his example does not mean that we will never sin again. In fact, God saves us from sin so that we would not sin anymore. If we do somehow sin after destroying the sinful nature, Paul says that we only prove ourselves to be lawbreakers. Sinning after coming into Christ does not mean that Christ is sin; it reminds us that we are still sinners and proves even more that we still need Christ's perfect sacrifice. It also proves that we are still transgressors to His Law.

It is important that we understand Paul's phrase in verse 19. The transgression of law requires death. Dying to the law through the law means that we must die to our own desires to meet the penalty of death required by the Law. Once we have died, we can be freed from the penalty of the Law and free to serve God in a new life. How do we meet the requirement of death required by the Law? Paul says in verse 20 that he is "crucified with Christ" so that "I no longer live, but Christ lives in me." Paul is trying to tell us that he met the penalty of death required by the law by crucifying **himself**.

We crucify ourselves by sacrificing our own desires and committing ourselves let Christ live through us! Once we crucify our desires, we satisfy the Law's requirement of death. With our desires out of the way, Christ can now live through us.

Paul's new life to serve God means that he no longer lives after his own desires and selfishness. He now lives obedient to God by faith in the Son of God. In Paul's old life, he had faith in himself; he was self-motivated to pursue his own interests and desires. In his new life, Paul now has faith in Jesus Christ. The fact that God would send His own righteous Son to die for unrighteous men truly displays God's grace. Our works continually show us as unrighteous creatures. As Paul says, if we proclaim that our human effort can gain us righteousness, then Christ's death was for nothing. Christ lived a righteous, perfect life and died because our works were unrighteous, imperfect, and insufficient.

Paul's statement in Galatians 2:21 is to emphasize that living by the law by human effort (without Faith in Christ to lead you) cannot attain you righteousness. If we could live right on our own, why do we need Christ's Spirit in us? Paul wrote in Romans 2:12-15 that those who hear the law will not be righteous, but those that obey the law. How do we obey it? In Romans, Paul gives examples of Gentiles who have the Spirit of God who are obeying God's Law without having the head knowledge of what it says! This means they were spontaneously not stealing, lying, or committing adultery. They were keeping the Sabbath, tithing, etc. Paul does this to show us that righteousness comes when we obey the Law through the leading of God's Spirit. This will not contradict the written word, but will uphold it. Paul wrote in Romans 8:4 that the Spirit will lead us to obey the righteous requirements of the Law.

Paul's concern, as we will see throughout this letter, is the frame of reference that believers are using. Are your actions based upon or starting from human effort, or is your starting point faith in Christ? We see these themes continue into chapter 3. Paul will start by explaining the insufficiency of human effort and then follow up by going to an example of spontaneous obedience through faith – Abraham.

Galatians 3

Verses 1-5- 1 You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. 2 I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard? 3 Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you know trying to attain your goal by human effort? 4 Have you suffered so much for nothing – if it really was for nothing? 5 Does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you because of works of the law, or because you believe what you heard?

We see the theme of human effort versus the power of God’s Spirit continued in the beginning of this chapter. Paul wants them to realize they did not receive the Holy Spirit because of something they did. In other words, there is not a commandment which says, “If you do this, then you will receive the Holy Spirit.” Miracles were a normal experience of the early church. They obviously cannot be attributed to works or they would not be miracles! They would be predictable events of mankind, which contradict the notion of God’s revelation.

Verses 6-14- 6 Consider Abraham: “He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.” 7 Understand, then, that those who believe are children of Abraham. 8 The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: “All nations will be blessed through you.” 9 So those who **rely on** faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith. 10 All those who **rely on** observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.” 11 Clearly, no one is justified before God by the law, because, “The righteous will live by faith.” 12 **The law is not based on faith**; on the contrary, “The man who does these things will live by them.” 13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.” 14 He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.

Paul transitions to discuss Abraham. Abraham's faith was counted as righteousness before God, not his works. Abraham, like all of us, made mistakes along the way. However, Abraham's main motivation for acting was faith in God. He believed what God said and acted accordingly. Abraham had works to compliment his faith. In Genesis 26:4-5, God said to Isaac, "...And I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; Because that Abraham **obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws.**" This is technical language to summarize all the components of God's Law. Abraham did not have tablets of stone, yet He obeyed God's commandments. This is irrefutable evidence that the commandments of God are still a vital part of the believer's life today. The end result of Abraham's faith was obedience to the commandments. Faith was his starting point. Obedience was the end result.

The underlying Greek phrase for "rely on" in verses 9 and 10 means the point from which action or motion proceeds. If human effort is the basis of our actions, then we will always fall short (Romans 3:23). Flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God (I Cor. 15:50). If we can attain God's promises by human effort, then we would really not need God or His Spirit! Faith is the entry point for our covenant blessings in Christ. Just like Abraham, faith must be followed by works. Those works will be in line with the commandments, not in contradiction to them.

Paul even says that the Law is "not based on faith." In other words, the law does not have its origin in faith. The Israelites believed in God's redemption from Egypt and received that redemption. God then established His covenant with them on Mount Sinai. Their redemption came first, and then God's expectations for how they would live in a covenant relationship. In the New Covenant, we believe that Christ redeems us from Sin. We then confess our sins and live for Christ. Once we exercise our faith in the Messiah by the confession of our sins, then God establishes His Covenant with us by writing the Law on our hearts and minds.

The law was given for our good so that we might be blessed and prosperous in our lives. Our inability to keep everything written in the Law by our human effort brought the curse of death upon our lives. Christ became a curse by being “hung on a tree” for our disobedience. Paul is showing that Christ’s righteous example prevented Him from being cursed in the same way that we were cursed. We were cursed due to disobedience. Christ’s curse comes because of our unrighteousness. Christ is the means by which Abraham’s blessing comes to the rest of the world.

In verse 14, He concludes by saying that through faith we receive the promise of the Spirit. The phrase “the promise of the Spirit” is a specific phrase used in the New Testament. It refers to the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. In Acts 1:4-5, Jesus told the disciples to wait in Jerusalem for the promise of the Father. The disciples were filled with the Spirit in Acts 2. On this day, Peter said, “... having received of the Father the **promise of the Holy Ghost**, he hath shed forth this, **which ye now see and hear.**” God has promised us a mighty outpouring from on high if we will accept it. At salvation we receive the Spirit of God. The Baptism of the Holy Spirit is the full measure of this Promise.

Verses 15-18—15 Brothers, let me take an example from everyday life. Just as no one can set aside or add to a human covenant that has been duly established, so it is in this case. 16 The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say “And to seeds,” meaning many people, but “and to your seed,” meaning one person, who is Christ. 17 What I mean is this: The Law, introduced 430 years later, does not set aside the covenant previously set aside by God and thus do away with the promise. 18 For if inheritance depends on the law, then it no longer depends on a promise, but God in his grace gave it to Abraham through a promise.

The Old Covenant and the Law were given after God’s covenant with Abraham. This does not mean that the covenant with Abraham is done away with or altered. The promise made to Abraham still comes to pass through his Seed – who is Christ. Christ was perfect and died for our unrighteousness – He is the means of blessing to

the world. The covenant on Mount Sinai was just renewing the covenant with Abraham. God was affirming His covenant with Abraham's descendants in Exodus.

Verses 19-22—19 What, then, was the purpose of the law? It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come. The law was put into effect through angels by a mediator. 20 A mediator, however, does not represent just one party, but God is one. 21 Is the law, therefore opposed to the promises of God? Absolutely not! For if a law had been given that could impart life, then righteousness would certainly have come by the law. 22 But the scripture declares that the whole world is a prisoner of sin, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe.

Paul now begins to explain the purpose of the Law. The Law was added because of our transgressions. When you read the Torah, which is the first five books of the Bible, you learn that when the Israelites sinned, God added more rules. The rules were not wrong; the rules were right. More rules were necessary to explain the rules already given because the Israelites did not trust God's spoken Word to them. They continued to disobey, so He continued to add more rules. In fact, the sacrifices were given for this purpose (see Jeremiah 7:21-25, KJV as an example). Paul then says that the Law is not opposed to the Promises of God. This is a tremendous statement! In verse 14 of this chapter, he wrote that the infilling of God's Spirit is one of the promises of God. Therefore, the Law cannot be contrary to the Spirit of God, nor can the Spirit lead us to contradict the Law. They are mutually reinforcing. The Law was carried out by Angels through a Mediator, but it was still from God! As discussed in the last chapter, righteousness by the Law through human effort is impossible. It must come by faith in the Son of God. Then obedience to the Law can manifest. The promise had to come through faith in Christ.

Verses 23-25— 23 Before this faith came, we were held prisoners by the law, locked up until faith should be revealed. 24 So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by

faith. 25 Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law.

The King James Version uses the phrase “school master” in these verses. Others use tutor. The Greek word for schoolmaster is *pedagogue*. It was used of a tutor or disciplinarian that would make sure children always went the right way. In school, we only need a tutor if we are having a hard time with a subject. If you are failing math, you need a tutor. When we have faith in Christ, we are trusting Him to guide us in obedience to the commandments of God. When we have faith in Christ, then the Law’s requirements should spontaneously manifest because it is the life that Christ lived. This was also reinforced by Paul in Romans 2:11-15. This means a tutor is no longer necessary. We are proficient in doing the right thing because we are trusting in Him to walk it out in us. These verses prove that faith in Christ leads to obeying the commandments of God. We should not steal, lie, cheat others, etc. because we have faith in Christ to live through us. Paul’s concern is our motivation for obedience. Our obedience should come out of faith in Christ, which means a tutor is not necessary. Christ teaches us the right way to live the Law, which does not negate its requirements. It is the way of life He lived on earth.

Verses 26-29—26 You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. 27 For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Paul is explaining how our faith transcends natural distinctions. The natural distinctions that once caused division among mankind are erased in the body of Christ. Racism, sexism, and other forms of hatred and discrimination exist in this present world. They should not exist within those who are believers or in the Christian congregation. The Spirit was not given because of your natural predisposition; the Spirit was given because of your inward submission. Christ died to remove curses and bring blessing. Since we who have faith are Abraham’s children, our lives ought to pattern his.

Galatians 4

Verses 1-7—1 What I am saying is that as long as the heir is a child, he is no different from a slave, although he owns the whole estate. 2 He is subject to guardians and trustees (or stewards) until the time set by his father. 3 So also, when we were children, we were in slavery under the basic principles of the world. 4 But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, 5 to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons (adoption of sons). 6 Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “Abba, Father,” 7 So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.

A child is no different than the slave when it comes to an inheritance because the child cannot access his inheritance. Other people have to watch out for that child and manage the inheritance until he comes to an age when he can manage the inheritance on his own. So like the heir who cannot receive an inheritance until a certain age, all of us were enslaved to the basic principles of the world until the time set aside by God for us to become heirs. The time for us to inherit the promise came when Jesus Christ came into the world.

In verses 4-5, the phrase “under the law” is used. It is vitally important for us to understand what this phrase means. Paul wrote that Christ came to redeem those that were “under the Law”. In Romans 6:14, Paul wrote: “For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.” This is one verse used by many to say that the requirements of God’s Law, especially the Ten Commandments, are no longer necessary. The key with this verse, and all verses, is the context. In Rom. 6:15-16, he wrote, “What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?” One definition of sin in the Bible is transgression of God’s Law (I John 3:4). If the phrase “under the law” in Romans 6:14 means obeying the Law, then Paul said in Galatians that Christ only came to redeem those that were obeying the Law. We know that this is not true! Christ came to redeem all mankind (John 1:29, 3:16). The phrase “under

the law” means under the penalty of the Law. Christ was born under the penalty of the law to free those who were under its penalty – which is all of us! Later in Romans, Paul wrote that the Law is holy, righteous and good (Romans 7:12-14). In Romans 8:7, Paul explains that the sinful mind is hostile to God’s Law and refuses to submit to it. Being under grace means that when we make a mistake, we are not going to be stoned. We have a grace period to learn right from wrong. We are not under the law’s penalty, but we are not free from its requirements because grace is not a license to sin. Our goal and aim is to let the Holy Spirit of God guide us in obedience to the commandments. We know we are children of God because we have the Holy Spirit (see also Rom. 8:12-14).

Verses 8-11—8 Formerly, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those who by nature (by the order of things) are not gods. 9 But now that you know God – or rather are known by (under) God – how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable (poor or lacking) principles? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again? 10 You are observing special days and months and seasons and years! 11 I fear for you, that somehow I have wasted my efforts on you.

These verses are typically used by people to say that Paul was teaching against celebrating the Feasts or Sabbath. People come to this conclusion because they assume that Paul’s letter to the Galatians was written to a group of Jews who were ‘going back’ to law keeping. As discussed in the Introduction, we must understand that Paul was an apostle to the Gentiles, not to the Jews. While he often went into a city’s Jewish synagogue, Paul always affirms himself as a preacher and apostle to the Gentiles. In Galatians 1:15-16, he wrote that his calling in Jesus Christ was to preach the gospel to the *Gentiles*. A second thing to keep in mind is that one of the main issues in Galatia was adult circumcision. If He was speaking to a group of Jews ‘going back’ to law-keeping, then the issue of circumcision would not have arisen because the Galatians would have already been circumcised. Third, Paul begins this passage by saying, “Formerly, when you did not know God, you served those gods who were by nature not gods.” Paul is addressing a group of churches who at one time worshipped other gods. Fourth, the lan-

guage used in this passage does not support any claim that Paul is preaching against observances found in the Old Testament. The phrase Paul uses - “days and months and seasons and years” - does not contain **any** of the Greek words used in the New Testament for the Sabbath (*sabbaton*), New Moon celebrations (*neumeneia*), or Feast Days (*heorte*).

If you will recall from the introduction, the Galatian region was dominated culturally and politically by the Roman Empire and the Greeks over 300 years prior Paul’s visit to Galatia. For an illustration of this, take into consideration the “days” that Paul mentions. Every day was dedicated to a specific god or goddess in Roman and Greek culture. The practice of naming every day of the week comes from this custom. The day we know as the second day of the week (Monday) was dedicated to the moon god (**days**). In addition to these days, the Romans also dedicated each month to a specific god or goddess. They held ceremonies during the month to commemorate that particular deity. The month we call January was a month dedicated to the goddess Janus, who was said to have two faces. The Roman New Year was moved from March to January to commemorate Janus, who was said to be looking back to the past with one face and into the future with her other face. The month of March derives its name from the Roman god Mars (**months**). The Romans also kept certain seasons or times of celebrations to their gods that coincided with events in nature. The Saturnalia was a seasonal festival held in December to commemorate the god Saturn during the winter solstice (**seasons**). The combination of observing all these events makes up years (**years**). These ancient celebrations involved worship practices such as making sacrifices and/or vows to these gods, which are the “weak and miserable principles” Paul mentions in Galatians 4:9.

He uses the word “and” between each word in the phrase “days and months and seasons and years” to show the Galatians the cumulative effect of how far they strayed from the true Creator God. In other words, observing pagan days has led to observing pagan months which has led to observing pagan seasons which has led to observing pagan years. This passage reiterates what he wrote in Galatians 5:9: “A little yeast leavens the whole lump.” These prac-

tices were causing them to serve the gods that Christ freed them from – which makes Paul fearful that they will be enslaved once again. Paul links these days, months, seasons, and years to a time when the Galatians served or worshipped **other gods**. The Sabbath, New Moon Celebrations, and Feast Days were named by God and ordained by God, which is why they are called holy in the Old Testament. Paul kept the Sabbath with Galatian churches in Acts 13 and 14. Therefore, he would never condemn observances of them.

Verses 12-17—12 I plead with you, brothers, become like me, for I became like you. You have done me no wrong. 13 As you know, it was because of an illness that I first preached the gospel to you. 14 Even though my illness was a trial to you, you did not treat me with contempt or scorn. Instead, you welcomed me as if I were an angel of God, as if I were Christ Jesus himself. 15 What has happened to all your joy? I can testify that, if you could have done so, you would have torn out your eyes and given them to me. 16 Have I now become your enemy by telling you the truth?

Paul wants the believers in Galatia to know that he is for them, not against them. People were stirring up the church against him and making him an enemy to them. He reminds them of their generosity. This is so that they can realize the indebtedness he has to them to tell them the truth and his deep love for them.

Verses 17-20—17 Those people are zealous to win you over, but for no good. What they want is to alienate you from us, so that you may be zealous for them. 18 It is fine to be zealous, provided the purpose is good, and to be so always and not just when I am with you. 19 My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you, 20 how I wish I could be with you now and change my tone, because I am perplexed about you!

From verse 17 forward, Paul is focused on exposing the intent of these false teachers. There are people who are zealous to learn about the Law, but have poor intentions. These Judaizers were zealous to win a convert. As Christ identified, the Pharisees were willing to cross sea and land to win a single convert (Matthew

23:15). The Judaizers had passion for their cause, but no true understanding of God's Law. Indeed, we can have passion for a cause, even Christ, but lack understanding of His Will, Word, and purpose. In verse 19, Paul describes himself as being in labor for Christ to be formed in them. We learn a very interesting revelation from this. When we are saved, Christ is conceived in us. Over time, Christ is formed in us and we give birth to Him in our lives. We also see this in Revelation 12, where the woman who gives birth to Christ is the same one who is taken up to Him. God is expecting us to nourish and mature in the image of Christ.

Verses 21-31—21 Tell me, you who want to be under the law, are you not aware of what the law says? 22 For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and the other by the free woman. 23 His son by the slave woman was born in the ordinary way; but his son by the free woman was born as the result of a promise. 24 These things may be taken figuratively, for the women represent two covenants. One covenant is from Mount Sinai and bears children who are to be slaves: This is Hagar. 25 Now Hagar stands for Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present city of Jerusalem, because she is in slavery with her children. 26 But the Jerusalem that is above is free, and she is our mother. 27 For it is written: "Be glad, O barren woman, who bears no children; break forth and cry aloud, you who have no labor pains; because more are the children of the desolate woman than of her who has a husband." 28 Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise. 29 At that time the son born in the ordinary way persecuted the son born by the power of the Spirit. It is the same now. 30 But what does the Scripture say? "Get rid of the slave woman and her son, for the slave woman's son will never share in the inheritance with the free woman's son." 31 Therefore, brothers, we are not children of the slave woman, but of the free woman.

Paul's assault on the Judiazers continues in these verses. He makes a very blunt statement. He tells the Judiazers that they are under the law – under its penalty! This is bold, but true. Paul then sets up an interesting analogy comparing the two sons of Abraham. God had made a promise in Genesis that Abraham would have a son. Abraham was older and so was Sarah. In fact, the Bible says in Genesis

18:11, “Now Abraham and Sarah were old and well stricken in age; and it ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women.” The phrase “after the manner of women” means that she had gone through menopause. This means she was past the age of bearing children. At the time the promise was given, they were called Abram and Sarai. After time elapsed, they became weak in their faith. Sarai wanted a child and gave Abram her handmaiden, Hagar. Abram consented and had a child with her, which was named Ishmael.

Hagar was a slave. The child she bore was born in the ordinary way. God has set up the world so that any time a man and a woman have relations, a child can be conceived. This is the ordinary way of things. Sarai was past the manner of women. She technically could not have children. Thus, Ishmael was the son born in the ordinary way. Some time later, God renamed Abram Abraham. Sarai was renamed Sarah. Not long after this, Isaac was born from Sarah’s body. Sarah could not have children. Isaac was born because of God’s promise. It was not physically possible for her to have a child, but she did still had one because God promised her she would do so.

Paul ties these two children to two covenants. The covenant from Mount Sinai and the New Covenant. It is important for us to consider what happened at Mount Sinai. In Exodus 19-20, God prepared the Israelites to go up on the Mountain to meet with their God. When the long blast sounded, they were supposed to go up to meet God. However, the Israelites were afraid and sent Moses up instead (Deut. 5:5). God wanted them to come up on the Mountain and see Him so that they would not fall into sin (Exodus 20:20). The people shrunk back from their God.

Thus, Hagar represents Mount Sinai because at Mount Sinai the people disobeyed the Lord. They were afraid, and it led to sin. The incident with Hagar arose out of fear that there would be no male heir to Abraham. Both Abraham and Sarah were afraid that they would not have a child. It caused sin and has been a source of conflict for the promise children of Isaac ever since. In the same manner, Jerusalem in Paul’s time was in slavery with her children. The

Romans were ruling Jerusalem. Why did this happen? In Deut. 28, God prophesied that if the Israelites disobeyed him they would become the tail and not the head. When you read the history of the Kings of Judah, you can see how the people disobeyed God continually, especially during the reign of Zedekiah. God sent them into captivity into Babylon, and brought them back. Since that time, they had been disobedient again and enslaved by the Romans. Disobedience and fear caused slavery. Fear causes disobedience, which is sin (2 Timothy 1:7). As Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 1:7, “For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.” Paul compares Hagar to Mount Sinai and the city of Jerusalem at that time because the normal way of life is to sin out of fear. This leads to slavery and death. The Judaizers are trying to bring fear into the church and force the Galatians through worldly fear to be circumcised. Paul wants them to realize that the motivation of fear will lead to failure!

When we enter into the New Covenant, we are grafted into Israel. This is contrary to nature, but occurs because of God’s promises! This is the same way in which it was impossible by nature for Sarai to have child. Also, when we receive the Holy Spirit we become members of the Heavenly Jerusalem, also called the New Jerusalem. The writer of Hebrews explains this in Hebrews 12:22-25. This is contrary to nature; we are earthly, fleshly creatures. By a PROMISE, we become citizens of a Heavenly Jerusalem. This Jerusalem is free; it is ruled by the perfect Law of Liberty. In verse 27, Paul quotes Isaiah 54:1. In this verse, the Lord is prophesying that the members of the Heavenly Jerusalem will outnumber those of the earthly! We are children of promise because our salvation and eternal destiny is not natural or by natural means. People who live by human effort and fear will persecute those who live by the Spirit and faith in God. There are Pharisees in every church today that try to enforce man-made rules on everyone in the congregation out of fear. The devil always wants to discourage those who are doing right from obeying God and continuing forward in His plan and purpose. We will not share in the inheritance of the Kingdom of God if we live by fear because it leads to slavery. In every way we defy the natural realm we live in and thus affirm that we are children of the promise.

Galatians 5

Verses 1-4—1 It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened **again** by a **yoke of slavery**. 2 Mark my words! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all. 3 Again I declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole law. 4 You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.

Unfortunately, there are people who say that the “yoke of slavery” Paul refers to is the Laws of God. This is because they believe that Galatians is written to a group of Jews “going back” to keeping the Law. In the Introduction and in Galatians 4, we refuted this notion. Many people tend to think that rules and regulations hamper personal freedom, but God’s Law actually promotes freedom. In Deuteronomy 30:11-14, God says about the Law, “Now what I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you or beyond your reach. It is not up in heaven so that you have to ask, ‘Who will ascend into heaven to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?’ Nor is it beyond the sea, so that you have to ask, ‘Who will cross the sea to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?’ No, the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart so you may obey it.” The word of God is near us because we can obey it. It is not hard. The Law of God are rules for basic human living so that we can live a healthy, prosperous life. Even the Apostle John says about the Law, “This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands. This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome...” (I John 5:2-3). God’s commandments are easy to keep, not a burden. James, the half-brother of Jesus, even calls it the Law of Liberty (James 1:27).

Notice the word AGAIN in Galatians 5:1. The Galatians were in danger of going back to serving other gods, which make us bound to sin! In Ezekiel 20, God rebuked the Israelites for being disobedient to His laws and commandments. He said in verses 24-25, “Because they had not executed my judgments, but had despised my statutes, and had polluted my sabbaths, and their eyes were after

their fathers' idols. Wherefore I gave them also statutes that were **not good, and judgments whereby they should not live;**” In these verses, disobedience to God is called being given over to statutes that you cannot live by – in other words, statutes that are bondage. The Galatians were in danger of going back to worshipping other gods. They are in danger of going back to the attitudes and ways of thinking of the pagans.

Verses 2-4 become easy to understand when we understand the Gentile mindset. You see, the Gentile religions of this world believe in self-affliction as a means of atonement for sin. In many ancient cultures, the people walked over hot coals, walked over boards of nails, or struck themselves to purify themselves from sin (see also Colossians 2:20-24). They did not believe they could be forgiven unless they punished themselves. Some Catholic priests strike themselves to this day for this reason. Christ took the beating so that we do not have to beat ourselves up! Paul is saying that if we think our works will save us (in this case, the act of circumcision), then Christ means nothing to us.

Paul also discusses the doctrine in the Bible of justification. The Law, and no law, can justify us. Justification means a cleansing from past sin. In other words, how do we come back to God now that we have sinned? If our works alone can do this, then we do not need Jesus. Only the blood of Jesus can justify or wipe out our past sins so that we are declared innocent before God (Romans 5:9-11). Paul tells the Galatians that if they believe circumcision will save them, then they are a debtor to obey the entire law. This means that they must obey the entire law without ever breaking it again. Paul's issue is not circumcision because he circumcised Timothy (Acts 16:1-3). The Galatian's intent for being circumcised was the issue. They thought it was for their salvation and justification before God. This is too much like the Gentile religions they were saved out of, which believed in forgiveness through bodily affliction.

Verses 5-6— 5 But by faith we eagerly await through the Spirit the righteousness for which we hope. 6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.

Paul then states that through God's Spirit we wait for the righteousness for which we hope. Paul defines righteousness as keeping God's commandments in Romans 2:12-14. Paul wants the Galatians to realize that their desire to keep God's commandments is a good thing. The requirements of the Law are righteous (Romans 8:1-8). The righteous requirements of the Law are something we should hope for. HOWEVER, we should do so through the Spirit of God. In other words, our obedience to the Law should spring out of the leading of God's Spirit. We should not rely on human effort.

Paul's statement in verse 6 is very similar to a statement he made in I Corinthians 7:19, which reads, "Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God." Paul's statements are virtually one and the same, he just words them a little differently. Paul became all things to all people. In other words, he met people where they were at! The Corinthians could flow in the Spirit and bragged about their great Faith. They lacked simple obedience to the written word. He simply commands them to obey the commandments. The Galatians wanted to obey the word, but they needed to do so through the power of the Spirit out of a motivation of love, not fear. He wants their motivation to be that of Love. The Law is a Law of Love (Deut. 6:4, Lev. 19:18). The Law is the revelation in the natural world of a spiritual love that the Father and the son shared in the beginning. The details of the Law show us the intensity of their love and are a revelation of how Spiritual love manifests in a natural world.

Verses 7-12—7 You were running a good race. Who cut in on you and kept you from obeying the truth? 8 That kind of persuasion does not come from the one who calls you. 9 "A little yeast works through the whole batch of dough." 10 I am confident in the Lord that you will take no other view. The one who is throwing you into confusion will pay the penalty, whoever he may be. 11 Brothers, if I am still preaching circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been abolished. 12 As for those agitators, I wish they would go the whole way and emasculate themselves!

God calls us to run the race (see I Cor. 9:24-27). This means following His commandments, being led by His Spirit, and answering our calling. We always have to guard ourselves from false teachings because they can derail your faith. They can hinder or literally chop you out from running the race. When teachings are not in line with the Word of God, then we must avoid them. We must adhere to the Word in its purest form. The Galatians are going back to pagan thought-patterns and actions which they obeyed before they knew Christ (see 4:8-11, 5:1-4). It appears that the false teachers were saying that Paul also taught circumcision as a means of salvation. Paul points to his own persecution as proof that he has opposed this false doctrine. The message of the cross requires us to change the way we think and our natural inclinations so that we live in opposition to the natural desires of man. We are in constant warfare to them.

Verses 13-15—13 You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love. 14 The entire law is summed up in a single command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” 15 If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.

The Greek word Paul uses for free and freedom in Galatians 5 is *eleutheria*. Thayer’s concordance says concerning the meaning of this word: “True liberty is living as we should, not as we please.” We tend to think that freedom in Christ means a freedom to do whatever we want. This is not true! When in your life has doing whatever you want kept you in freedom? Did it work as a kid when you talked back to mom and dad? No! Will it work when you drive as fast as you want? Absolutely not! If you speed, then you will get a ticket. Paul expresses that the Law is summed up in “Love your neighbor as yourself”. This is a quote from Leviticus 19:18. Remember that a sum total has addends. The sum of 2 plus 2 is 4. 2 are the addends. 1 plus 1 plus 3 equals 5. 5 is the sum. 1, 1, and 3 are addends. Therefore, the sum total of the Law is loving your neighbor as yourself. The addends are not lying, not stealing, not coveting, keeping the Sabbath, etc. The verse Paul quotes comes from Leviticus 19, which is an entire chapter on rules concerning

how to love your neighbor as yourself. Paul's words do not negate the commandments, but reinforces that love should be our motivation for acting. The believers in the various Galatian churches are fighting each other and devouring each other. The false teachers hindered the individual believer's faith in God as well as the unity and love between believers.

Verses 16-18—16 So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. 17 For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law.

The language Paul uses here is very similar to what he says in Romans 8:1-8. He gives some different details in Romans. In Romans, Paul explains that the Spirit desires to manifest the righteous requirements of the Law (Rom. 8:4). He goes on to say, "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Romans 8:7). The sinful nature refuses to submit to the Law of God. When we willingly transgress God's Law, it puts us under the penalty of that Law, which is death. Paul elaborates on this in the next few verses:

Verses 19-21—19 The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; 20 idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions 21 and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the Kingdom of God.

In this list, Paul basically gives us a list of transgressions of the Law. Each of these sins is taught against either in principle or in plain language in the Law. When we are not walking in the Spirit, these sins will manifest in our lives. We find a tremendous contradiction in these verses. The Galatians wanted to obey the Law, but at the same time were breaking it! This is definitive proof that we need the Holy Spirit to obey the written word of God. These sins disqualify us from inheriting the Kingdom of God. If we are going

to have dominion over the world, we must allow Christ to have dominion over our flesh. Without the submission to our Savior, then we are our own king. To rule with Christ, we must let Christ conquer and rule over us. No one will rule with Christ who has not been totally conquered and ruled by Him! How can we be trusted with authority in His coming Kingdom when we cannot submit to His authority now?

Verses 22-25—22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. 24 Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. 25 Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. 26 Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.

The qualities listed in verses 22-23 are listed as in opposition to the ones found in 19-21. To understand them, it is important to distinguish them from the gifts of the Spirit. In I Corinthians 12, Paul lists nine gifts of the spirit. These are nine abilities given to believers to advance the Kingdom of God. They are distributed in the body so that not every believer has every gift. A believer must choose to exercise them or not at any given time. The fruits of the Spirit are different. First, the fruits are supposed to manifest in every believer's life. Secondly, you cannot force fruit to grow. The fruits of the Spirit are not nine characteristics that come from human effort. For instance, the fruit of self-control is not self-control that you choose to exercise on your own power. It is a self-control that spontaneously grows as you yield to God. Each of these nine attitudes manifests as a person yields to the Spirit of God. You cannot make fruit grow by shaking a tree. The tree must be nurtured, watered, and have a proper environment for the fruit to grow. We do not choose to manifest these fruits; they simply manifest as we yield to the Spirit of God (water) and obey Him in trials (sunlight). We choose to obey God and they spontaneously manifest.

The first fruit of the Spirit is love. It is the first fruit because the Spirit of God is the love of God shed abroad in our hearts (Romans 5:5). We need the Love of God to love God and others. We cannot

love God with our flesh. The Greek word for love is *agapeo*. We tend to think of love as a “touchy-feely” thing. *Agapeo* love is decisive love which leads to self-sacrifice. It is a mindset where we desire to make any cost to please God. The second fruit of the Spirit is Joy. We think of joy as simply being happy, but it is much more than that. It is the joy that a person experiences from fulfilling their intended purpose as a member of God’s family. Peace is the next fruit. In our modern world, we define peace as the absence of war or conflict. The Hebrew word for peace is *shalom*, and it means wholeness. Jesus said, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid” (John 14:27). When our lives are falling apart on the outside, we are not falling apart on the inside. With Christ, there is peace with or without conflict. The next fruit is Patience. It can also be translated as endurance, perseverance, or longsuffering. To have fruit that lasts, we must have trials that last. Some trials do not last long in terms of human time, but it seems like a very long time when we are going through them. Patience manifests in a believer’s life as he or she endures in trials. The normal, fleshly reactions we usually have are restrained so that the longsuffering Christ had for us may be visible to others.

The fifth fruit is called kindness. It can also be translated as gentleness or moral integrity. This word has a connotation of usefulness, being employed, or benevolence. It is the character God has built into a person so that they are useful for God’s Kingdom. The next fruit is goodness. Like kindness, it has a connotation of usefulness. It is a decision-making process where good and upright decisions are made in the life of the believer and especially in Kingdom work. The seventh fruit is translated as faithfulness or faith. There is a common faith we must all have to be saved (Romans 10:9-11). The fruit of faith is different. It is a fruit that manifests as continued confidence in the promises and leading of God. This fruit also pertains to faithfulness and reliability in the work of God with diligence and persistence. Gentleness is the eighth fruit. It can also be translated as meekness or humility. This is not martyrdom, self-piety, or a lowly countenance. The Greek word for gentleness is *praotes*. It was used of an animal that was wild, but now is tame. In other words, gentleness or meekness entails knowing the right time

and situation to exercise God's Power. The ninth and final fruit is self-control. It is sometimes translated as temperance. This virtue was held by the Greeks to be the foundational virtue. Paul makes it the last virtue. He did this to show that this fruit is not self-control brought about by human effort, but it is a self-control manifested by the Spirit of God. Self-Control is the highest form of submission to God so that the Spirit of God has mastery over the believer. It is restoring the dominion that was given to Adam. Therefore, we can see a progression in these fruits from Love to Dominion; from self-sacrifice to self-mastery. It requires that we go through trials to learn the meaning of the gospel of peace. It requires that we display His patience, kindness, and goodness to the world through our singular vessel. This is so that we can administer it to others in the Kingdom of God.

According to verse 24, we are supposed to crucify our way of doing things. There are some people that say Christ nailed the Law to the Cross. Paul never said anything close to that in his letters. We are supposed to crucify our sinful desires, which war against God's Law.

The fruit of a plant protects the seed. These qualities protect the community of believers from outside interference. It protects what they believe from being snatched away by the evil one. Fruit is full of nutrients and contains the seeds within. You cannot see the seed immediately, but you see the fruit of the seed. These fruits are to show us those who are being led by the Spirit versus those that still need repentance. Further still, the fruits help guard us from those who are being used by the devil to disrupt God's church. They will bear no spiritual fruit (see Matthew 12:35). These fruits are again contrasted with selfishness, argumentativeness, and jealousy. Instead of doing things ourselves, we should let God's Spiritual Fruit work out differences in the Body.

Galatians 6

Verses 1-5—1Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. 2Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. 3If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. 4Each one should **test** his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else, 5for each one should carry his own load. 6Anyone who receives instruction in the word must share all good things with his instructor.

Interestingly enough, the Greek word translated as “gently” in verse 1 is *praotes*. It is the same Greek word used for the fruit of gentleness (meekness in the King James). As mentioned in the last chapter, it is not martyrdom, self-piety, or a lowly countenance. The Greek word for Gentleness was used of an animal that was wild, but now is tame. It has a connotation of being strong and powerful, but knowing the time and situation with which to exercise power. It is a further level of trusting God because we are allowing Him to manifest the emotions and manner of actions we should display in a given situation. To this end, we must display gentleness or meekness in how we treat people who are struggling or overcoming sin. We may have victory in an area where others are weak, but we should be meek in how we treat them. As Paul explains, we could fall into the same sin. We should help others when they are struggling and in this way share in their burdens. Christ carried our burdens when we were unable to carry them. We should be willing to help those who are weaker among us to overcome. This does not mean we allow them to become dependent on us. At times, we all need encouragement.

Sometimes we think we have it going on when others are helping us. We must not be conceited or puffed up in our minds. We have to be careful to test our own actions – or be willing to go through the fire ourselves. The Greek word for **test** in verse 4 means to put a metal like gold in the fire to see if it is genuine gold or another metal. We should be willing to go through trials on our own to see if we are genuinely saved and in God’s family. While we need help from others at times to boost our faith, we should still carry our

own load. We should be able to operate in our own faith independent of others. We can get so used to someone else's anointing and faith that we think we are something we are not. We can think we are on a level we have not yet reached. When we get help, we need to take the initiative to pursue God on our own time as well. We have to go through trials and prove faithful. Remember, it takes a personal relationship with God to walk with Him and march in rank with His spiritual fruit. We must ultimately overcome with our own will and through the power of God's Spirit.

In verse 6, Paul's instruction is that when we are taught by someone who is helping us overcome, we need to share our revelations with our instructor. This also carries on to giving our instructor reports of our progress, as the disciples did in the gospels (Mark 6:30-31). A good report is necessary for the teacher or instructing believer to know what needs to be taught next. The instructor needs to know your progress, as it is in school.

Verses 7-10— 7Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. 8The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. 9Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. 10Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers. 11See what large letters I use as I write to you with my own hand!

All of us will receive what we deserve. We have to examine our time and see what we are doing with it. Are we sowing into our sinful nature and our natural desires? If this is the case, then we will reap destruction or death. When we sow to please the Spirit of God by humbling ourselves and yielding ourselves to God, we will reap eternal life. Paul gave us the descriptions in Galatians 5:19-21 of the lifestyle according to the sinful nature. In verses 22-23, he gave us the descriptions of the lifestyle according to the Spirit. Sowing to please the desires of the Spirit also extend into fulfilling our calling into the Kingdom of God and carrying out His Spiritual assignments. Sometimes in the course of ministry and seeking God, we

get weary (verse 9). We are pressing in with all of our heart, but we are not seeing the results we believe we should see. Paul's encouragement is that we should not get weary. There is a time and a season for everything. When the farmer sows wheat, he cannot expect a harvest in his own timing. There is a season in which wheat ripens. The Greek word for timing in verse 9 refers to God's timing. God's timing is not predictable by man's standards. We must trust Him that our reward will come at the proper time. Just as wheat has a definite reaping point, so does our work in the Lord. Verse 11 is evidence in the Bible that Paul had poor eyesight. This is why some of his letters were dictated to a secretary or other believer who wrote them down (see Romans 16:22). For Paul to say that he wrote the letter with his own handwriting is emphasizing its importance and urgency.

Verses 12-15—12Those who want to make a good impression outwardly are trying to compel you to be circumcised. The only reason they do this is to avoid being persecuted for the cross of Christ. 13Not even those who are circumcised obey the law, yet they want you to be circumcised that they may boast about your flesh. 14May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. 15 Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a **new creation**.

Paul exposes the intent of the false teachers: they simply want to add to their numbers so they can boast of their converts. As Christians we must be careful and guard ourselves against this. We want people to come to the Lord, but we must be careful to do so with pure motivations, not just to add to church membership. Our boasting should be in the Lord's redeeming work. Paul even notes that these Judiazers do not even obey the Law. As Christ pointed out, they negated the Word of God through their traditions (see Matthew 15:1-20, Mark 7:1-23). To this end, Paul says in verse 15, "Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a new creation." This is a profound statement. It is the exact same statement found in Galatians 5:6 and I Corinthians 7:20. It is just worded differently. The Greek word for new means renewed. The Greek word for creation is *ktisis*. According to Thayer's concor-

dance, *ktisis* was used by Rabbi's to indicate the "...a man converted from idolatry to Judaism". Wow! Essentially Paul says this: Neither circumcision or uncircumcision matters. What matters is a life that is a renewed form of Judaism. Christianity was called a sect of Judaism in the New Testament (see Acts 24:14). It was a sect known as "The Way". This is because Christianity was so similar to Judaism in practice. Early Christians, both Jew and Gentile, kept the Feasts, Sabbath, tithing, dietary Laws, and other aspects of the Law of God. This continued even as Christianity spread into Gentile regions, as is proven in the book of Galatians. The only difference is that Christianity or "The Way" believed that Jesus had come as the Messiah. The other sects of Judaism were still waiting on the Messiah. So, what matters is a renewed form of Judaism that does not look like paganism. One of the problems in Galatia was going back to keeping pagan customs, so it makes sense Paul would use the term *ktisis*.

Verses 16-18— 16 Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule, even to the Israel of God. 17 Finally, let no one cause me trouble, for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus. 18 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers. Amen.

In His final remarks, Paul refers to the church as Israel. The Greek word for church is *ekklēsia*, and it also refers to Israel (see Acts 7:38, King James Version). Whenever someone comes to believe in the Lord, they are grafted into Israel (Romans Chapters 9-11). This means all Christians are considered Israelites (see Ephesians 2:11-22). In verse 17, Paul refers to the beatings he took for the gospel. His sufferings have similarities to the sufferings of Christ. This is a truly literal way to look at becoming "Christ-like". Thus, he puts the final touches on the purity of the gospel he preaches. He began this theme in the beginning of the letter. He preaches the true gospel and has undergone the true suffering as a mark of that. In ancient times, slaves and soldiers were bound to their masters by a mark. Worshippers of other gods would sometimes mark themselves as a sign to that god. To a pagan people, this is the highest identification of Paul's true, pure gospel with the true, pure Christ. This is a powerful end to a powerful letter. He wishes grace upon them to help them in their pursuit of Christ's example. Amen.

Meet the Author

Kelly McDonald Jr. is an ordained Evangelist at Hungry Hearts Ministries in Jackson, TN. For 21 years, Kelly attended Trinity Baptist Church in Bemis, TN, where he was saved in 1992. While at Trinity, a small independent Baptist church, Kelly learned boldness for the Kingdom of God and that being a Christian is an all or nothing experience. In June 2006, Kelly was called to his first ministry, going door to door in the Bemis community and inviting people to church. In September 2006, Kelly was called to begin a Christian men's group at his then college, Lambuth University. In February 2007, Kelly was called to preach. Less than a month later, he became introduced to Hungry Hearts Ministries.

Since becoming a member of Hungry Hearts, Kelly has taken on many roles to further the ministry's work, from going door-to-door to pass out booklets, preaching, administering the prison ministry, teaching Bible Studies, and starting churches. Due to his service in the ministry, he was ordained a Deacon during the Feast of Pentecost on May 31st, 2009. His spiritual growth and desire to serve God led to his ordination as an Evangelist during the Feast of Pentecost on May 25th, 2012.

Kelly has written for a local Christian magazine, *The Christian to Christian Connection*, and for the international Sabbatarian magazine, *The Sabbath Sentinel*. He currently writes for and serves as the Editor for the Ministry's magazine, *Pursuit*. Kelly has written five books on how to live a holy life. Kelly graduated *summa cum laude* from Lambuth University in Jackson, TN in 2009. He earned a Bachelor of Science with a double major in Political Science and Sociology with a minor in Legal Studies. As a Torah Observant/Spirit Filled minister, Kelly has spoken at several different congregations in four different states, and is available to speak at your church upon request.

The letter to the Galatians is indeed one of the most powerful books of the Bible. In it, we find Paul's appeal to a mostly Gentile people to trust in the leading of God's Spirit instead of leaning on human understanding. In this booklet, you will gain valuable insight into the book of Galatians. You will learn about living a Spirit-led life and the importance of revelation in your daily life. You will see the letter to the Galatians like never before!



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