

GETTING ACQUAINTED WITH GALATIANS

The Gospel of Liberty

Introduction: Galatians is an explosive book. Paul wrote it in the heat of battle. He made no attempt to hide his deep feelings. The issue was too crucial for the apostle to write calmly. At stake was the gospel of God's grace to all men.

I. Who Wrote Galatians?

A. Galatians Claims to be from Paul:

1. Writers of ancient letters identified themselves at the very beginning.
2. Implications of this claim:
 - a. The Book of Acts can supply background for this book.
 - b. The other letters of Paul can help in interpreting this book.

B. Galatians as Compared to Other Pauline Letters. Galatians is one of Paul's most personal letters.

1. He was defending himself against certain false charges by his opponents. As a result he includes many personal references in the letter. A rather lengthy section (1:11-2:14) is autobiographical.
2. Some of the personal facts about Paul revealed in Galatians are mentioned elsewhere: his persecution of the church, his conversion, his call to preach to the Gentiles.
3. But other facts revealed here are recorded nowhere else in the New Testament.

II. To Whom was Galatians Written?

A. The Simple Answer (1:2): *the churches of Galatia*. The problem is, Which Galatia?

1. In Paul's day the Roman province of Galatia stretched across the middle of Asia Minor (modern Turkey). The province had been formed in 25 BC.
2. On his first missionary journey Paul established churches in the province of Galatia (Acts 13-14).
3. At the beginning of his second journey, Paul traveled *throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia* (Acts 16:6).
4. At the beginning of his third missionary journey, Paul *traveled from place to place throughout the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples* (Acts 18:23).

B. The Difficult Question:

1. Was Paul referring to ethnic (northern) Galatia? Prior to 25 BC the term *Galatia* applied to that region of Asia Minor settled by the Gauls who entered that region in the third century BC. Main argument: Luke usually referred to places by their older regional names instead of by their newer Roman provincial names.
2. Was Paul referring to Roman (southern) Galatia? He mentions Phrygia and Galatia together in Acts 16:6 and 18:23. This may have been his way of referring to the southern Galatian area. Main argument: Paul in his letters normally referred to places by their Roman provincial names. Antioch of Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe were located in this political Galatia.
3. The stronger evidence seems to support the southern Galatian theory. Therefore, Paul wrote this letter to the churches mentioned in Acts 13-14.

III. When was Galatians Written?

A. The Earliest Possible Date. The letter would have to have been written after the end of the first missionary journey (Acts 14:23). This journey ended in AD 48. Some undetermined time must have elapsed after Paul was there to allow false teachers to arrive and do their damage, then for Paul to hear of it.

B. The Jerusalem Conference (AD 51).

Galatians 2:1-10 mentions a visit to Jerusalem by Paul. Is this the same visit mentioned in Acts 15? Many scholars believe that this passage refers to a private conference that took place in connection with the Jerusalem Conference. See Acts 15:6. If this connection could be made, the dating of Galatians would be shortly after this conference in AD 51.

2. But other scholars present arguments against identifying the Galatians 2 Jerusalem visit with the Acts 15 conference. Paul makes no direct reference to the decision of the conference in this letter. That would be strange since that conference had a bearing on the issues of this book.

3. The Galatian churches had been made aware by Paul of the decisions of the Jerusalem conference (Acts 16:4). Galatians 2 may have been Paul's way of indirectly reminding them of the decision of the Jerusalem conference.

4. Therefore, Galatians was probably written after the Jerusalem conference in AD 51, probably in Corinth (Acts 19:1-20:1).

IV. Why was Galatians Written?

A. The Rise of the Judaizers.

1. Jewish believers who wanted to force Gentiles to become Jews before they became Christians. Long after the Jerusalem conference they continued to make this demand. Galatia turned out to be the major battleground with these false teachers.

2. Their position: faith in Jesus was essential, but not sufficient. These immature Christians needed something more. Jesus was a *Jewish* Messiah. To accept him, one had to become a Jew.

3. Many of the Galatians had been taken in by these teachers, but why? They would give up their freedom in Christ; they would turn their backs on Paul, their mentor in the faith.

B. The Authority of Paul.

1. The Judaizers must have been very persuasive and very crafty. They had succeeded in undermining the authority of the apostle with many of his converts.

2. They may have suggested that Paul was less of an apostle than the others. They represented themselves as true followers of Christ. They accused Paul of preaching only a partial gospel. Faith, they said, must be accompanied by circumcision and law keeping.

V. What Does Galatians Say? Three main divisions.

A. Galatians Defends the Gospel of Grace (1:6-2:21).

B. Galatians Warns about the Dangers of Legalism (3:1-4:31).

C. Galatians Challenges Believers to Live a Godly Life (5:1-6:10).

INTRODUCTION

Galatians 1:1-3

Introduction: Comparison of this greeting with those found in Paul's other letters:

A. It is Strikingly Brief. Paul wished to plunge at once into the matters that concerned him.

B. It is Devoid of Warmth. This is the only epistles greeting in which Paul expresses no gratitude for his readers, no praise for their growth in Christ. Paul was too agitated to pass out compliments.

C. It is Strictly Formal: the name of the writer, the designation of the readers, and an expression of good wishes.

I. Writer (1:1-2a):

A. An Apostle (1:1a): *Paul an apostle...* In each of his letters Paul so identified himself, but here he has a special reason for doing so. His claims to be an apostle had been questioned in Galatia.

1. The term *apostle* means *one sent*. Like our word *missionary*.
2. The term is applied to the twelve disciples chosen by Jesus (Luke 6:13). To be a member of this group one had to be directly called by Christ, and to have been an eyewitness of the resurrection (Acts 1:21-22).¹
 - a. Apostleship was the highest office in the church.
 - b. The chief work of an apostle was to preach Christ, especially to those who had not yet heard the gospel.
 - c. An apostle also exercised special authority over the churches he founded.
3. The term is used of other persons who were sent out by churches to preach the gospel (Acts 14:4,14; Gal 1:19; Rom 16:7).

B. One Called by Christ (1:1b):

1. Not a man-made apostle (1:1b): *sent not from men nor by man...* Paul is defending his apostleship from those in Galatia who were trying to undermine his authority.
2. A heaven-sent apostle (1:1c): *but by Jesus Christ and God the Father...* Paul lays claim to having been called by Christ directly, just like Peter, James and John. He was simultaneously called by other the Father and the Son.
 - a. He stresses the Messiahship of Jesus: He is Christ.
 - b. He stresses the Fatherhood of God.
 - c. He stresses the resurrection of Jesus (1:1d): *who raised him from the dead*. This reinforces still more the connection between Christ and the Father.
3. Therefore: divine authority stands behind Paul's call to apostleship. Paul is god's own and special ambassador. Here Paul introduces the first major issue in the book, viz., the authority of Paul.²

C. The Brothers (1:2a): *and all the brothers with me...*

1. These brethren are probably Paul's co-workers, not the believers at the place where he wrote. The identity of these co-workers cannot be ascertained.
2. These brethren are not mentioned as fellow-authors, but are nevertheless included in the address and salutation.

¹ Had Paul met this requirement?

² What conviction should a gospel preacher have about himself? About his message?

3. These brethren obviously support Paul in his contention with the Galatian churches. The word "all" indicates that numerous brethren supported Paul.

II. Recipients (1:2b): *To the churches in Galatia.*

A. Background: Paul visited Galatia on his first and second missionary journeys.

B. Terseness of the Designation: Uncommonly short. In keeping with the tense relationship between Paul and the churches in Galatia.

C. Plural Designation: "Churches" refers to various local churches in the territory of Galatia.

D. Geographical Designation: Scholars debate what are called the southern Galatian theory and the northern Galatian theory.

III. Greetings (1:3): *Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ...* Both a wish and blessing coming upon these believers from a fully accredited apostle of Jesus.

A. Two Glorious Gifts (1:3a):

1. The gift of *grace*: God's favor towards his people in Christ; a favor that rests on forgiveness, on reconciliation. This introduces the second issue in the book: the grace of God.

2. The gift of *peace*: Four usages in the New Testament:

a. The well-being in which the whole world will share through Christ's coming (Luke 2:14).

b. The restored relationship between God and man; judicial peace (Rom 5:1).

c. The inner peace that Christ grants through the Holy Spirit (Rom 15:13; Phil 4:7).

d. The Christian unity that exists among God's people (Rom 14:17).

B. Two Glorious Givers (1:3b):

1. *God our Father*. In v. 1 God is called "Father" in relation to Jesus. Here this name expresses his relationship to believers. We must beware, however, in trying to understand divine Fatherhood by analogy with fatherhood.

2. *The Lord Jesus Christ*. In Christ God's fatherly disposition goes out to believers.

VINDICATION

Galatians 1:4-2:21

Declaration of the Gospel

Galatians 1:4-5

I. What Jesus Did for us (1:4): The mention of the name of Jesus triggers a description of his work on our behalf. Here the third issue in the book is introduced, viz., the significance of Jesus.

A. Great Sacrifice (1:4a): *who gave himself for our sins.*

1. Giving: a participle is used, indicating that Paul did not have in mind one act of giving; rather Christ's whole being is characterized by giving. The verb is active, indicating that his "givingness" was voluntary.

2. Gift: Christ himself. The writer will say much more about this later.

B. Great Deliverance (1:4b): to rescue us from the present evil age...

1. This present world is evil, i.e., dominated by sin. The Devil is its god (2 Cor 4:4).
2. Because of its sin, this present world is doomed.
3. The purging of sin through Christ delivers us from this doomed world. The sinful ties to this sinful world are loosened.

C. Great Plan (1:4c): *according to the will of our god and Father...*

1. God's will has been revealed: Not just god's counsel, but the will that issues from it; hence, command or commission. This *will* has been made known in Christ and has been fulfilled by him in his work on the cross.
2. God's will reflects his nature, especially his omniscience and omnipotence. The God of the bible is the god of redemption, salvation, deliverance.
3. God's will reflects his disposition: His fatherly disposition as well as his omnipotence determined his will.

II. What We Do for Jesus (1:5): *to whom be glory forever and every. Amen.* The thought of what Christ has done for us moved Paul to worship.

A. Praise belongs to God: for his great redemption. We are hereby summoned to join in giving him glory for his great redemption.

B. Praise belongs to God Eternally: *for ever and ever.*

C. Praise belongs to God Doubly: *Amen:* Serves to underscore the truth just stated. Let all the people say, *Amen.*³

Desertion of the Gospel

Galatians 1:6-10

Introduction: The brief and terse greeting is over. Paul plunges into the subject at hand. He is not pleased with them, and he lets them know forthwith.

I. Paul's Astonishment (1:6-7a):

A. Deserting of Christ (1:6).

1. Their desertion shocked Paul (1:6a): *I am astonished...* What these Christians had done was incredible to him, and painful as well. Paul was disappointed with the Galatians.
 - a. Nature of their sin (1:6b): *I am astonished that you are...deserting...* They had done a right-about-face from what Paul had taught them. The whole gospel was at stake. Though their about-face got its impetus from others, Paul holds the Galatians responsible for allowing themselves to be drawn away.
 - b. Speed of their sin: *so quickly...* They had deserted Christ quickly after accepting him, and soon after Paul had last been in their midst. They had made a glorious beginning in their walk with the Lord. Now they were walking away from their salvation.⁴

³ Can we say "Amen" to Paul's worship? How can we give glory to Christ?

⁴ What are some factors that cause new Christians to desert Christ and the gospel?

2. Their desertion abandoned the Caller (1:6c): ***the one who called you...*** The one who called them might be Paul himself, who preached the gospel to them. *Called* is also the technical term for the divine activity with the gospel. See Rom 8:30; 9:12, 24; 1 Cor 1:9; etc. A divine "calling" is full of power (cf. Rom. 11:29); it carried with it an obligation to accept and obey.

3. Their desertion was an affront to grace (1:6c): ***by the grace of Christ...*** They were also called *to* Christ's grace. The way of Christ is not just another religion whereby man seeks God and salvation. It is not man's reaching up trying to find an elusive God. Rather, it is based on God's grace reaching down to find sinful man.

B. Embracing Another Gospel (1:6d-7a):

1. A different gospel (1:6d): ***and are turning to a different gospel...***

Paul is alluding to the heresy of those who want to deflect the Galatians from the one and only gospel. The term "gospel" means "good news." The gospel refers to the salvation that has appeared in Christ.

2. No gospel (1:7a): ***which is really no gospel at all.*** The teaching of the Judaizers was not worthy of being called "gospel." There is only one gospel by which men are saved.

II. Paul's Disgust (1:7b). *Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ.* Paul was disgusted with the Judaizers.

A. What they had Permitted (1:7b):

1. The obvious conclusion (1:7b): ***Evidently...*** Paul knew that somebody had turned their minds from the gospel. Cults and sects attempt to "steal" God's sheep, to take over churches.

2. The unnamed culprits (1:7c): ***some people...*** Those who propagated this other "gospel" are a group of persons, probably from outside the region. Did they follow Paul around as a kind of "truth squad" to correct Paul's preaching?

B. What had Done to God's People (1:7b): *are throwing you into confusion...* The verb implies that they were constantly busy at the business of throwing believers into confusion.⁵ The confusion revolved around their understanding of the basis of salvation.⁶ They created this confusion by suggesting that Paul's gospel was inadequate.

C. What they had Done to Christ's Gospel (1:7c): *and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ...* The intent of the false teachers was to overturn the gospel that had Christ as its center. The gospel of Christ is that message which speaks about the all-sufficient work of Christ on the cross. When the cross is removed from its place of prominence the gospel is turned upside down and robbed of its strength.

III. Paul's Declaration (1:8-9): Paul here makes a declaration concerning gospel preaching.

A. Perfection the Gospel (1:8): One cannot improve on perfection. Since the gospel is perfect, no one must tamper with it like the false teachers had done.

1. Earthly preachers must not alter the gospel (1:8a): ***But even if we...should preach...*** Paul introduces a hypothetical case. The point: the faith has been once for all time delivered to the saints. Even preachers, who once were faithful proclaimers of the gospel, must be repudiated if they "get off the track" in their preaching.

⁵ Why do false teachers seem to be so much more zealous than those who preach New Testament Christianity?

⁶ What are some issues today about which false teachers attempt to spread confusion?

2. Heavenly angels must not alter the gospel (1:8b): *if...an angel from heaven should preach...* Angels have not been authorized to preach the gospel, but even if one should appear in their midst he should be rejected if he presented another gospel.

B. Purity of Paul's Gospel (1:8c): The gospel they had heard was the standard of truth: *a gospel other than the one we preached to you...* Paul was deeply conscious of the divine truth of the gospel he preached and of his apostolic authority.⁷

C. Punishment for Altering the Gospel (1:8d): *let him be eternally condemned!* Paul pronounces the curse of God ("anathema") upon man or angel who would pervert the only gospel.⁸

a. The certainty of it: "Let him be": Not a wish merely, but a solemn affirmation of what certainly shall be. One who independently modifies the gospel brings this curse of God upon his head.

b. The duration of it: "eternally condemned" (v. 8).

D. Perversion of the Gospel in Galatia (1:9):

1. Preaching in Galatia (1:9a): *If anybody is preaching to you a gospel...*

a. Galatians were listening to *anybody*: This *anybody* was a nobody, i.e., not an apostle or an angel from heaven.⁹

b. Galatians were encouraging the distortion of the gospel by listening to a distorted gospel.

c. Galatians were listening to new gospel: *a gospel other than what you accepted...*

2. Punishment of those preaching in Galatia:

a. The curse is repeated: *As we have already said, so now I say again...*

b. The punishment in the concrete present is the same as that of the hypothetical future of v. 8: *let him be eternally condemned!* This should induce the readers who know better to keep themselves far from the threatening heresy.

IV. Paul's Determination (1:10). Paul here states his determination regarding the ministry.

A. Man's Approval vs. God's Approval (1:10a): *Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God?*

1. Paul was not desirous of having the approval of men. Some were claiming that Paul was trying to play up to certain people in order to gain their support. They viewed Paul as lowering the standards of the Christian faith, of making religion too easy!

2. In the light of what Paul had just said in the previous verses did they "now" still wish to make these charges? These hard-hitting verses were designed to curry favor with no one. Paul was obviously not just telling people what they might want to hear.

3. Paul wanted only the approval of God. This had to be his motive, since the message he preached gained him no favor with men. His gospel had brought him only sharp conflict with men. He spoke as he had spoken out of obedience to God.

⁷ How did Paul demonstrate by his life his conviction of the truth of his message?

⁸ Was Paul a bigot for holding to such an exclusive view of the gospel? Would not a broad-minded man have conceded that he could have been mistaken? See John 14:6; Acts 4:12. If there was a disease which had only one remedy, would a doctor be a bigot to insist on that one remedy?

⁹ Why do congregations tolerate preachers who distort the gospel?

B. Man Pleaser vs. Christ Pleaser (1:10b): *Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ.* Serving Christ is inconsistent with being a servant of men.

1. At one time in his life Paul was devoted to pleasing men.
2. At the present time Paul was only interested in serving Christ.¹⁰

Dynamic of the Gospel

Galatians 1:11-24

Introduction: In 1:11 Paul begins the autobiographical portion of the letter. This is the first main division of the letter. Paul here has two purposes in mind.

1. To demonstrate the supernatural origin of his gospel.
2. To defend his right to speak with authority as an apostle of Christ.

I. Paul's Reception of the Gospel (1:11-17):

A. Assertion of Paul's Thesis (1:11-12):

1. Introduction (1:11a-c):

a. Ignorance of the readers (1:11a): *I want you to know...* The readers do not yet know, or no longer know, the truth that is to follow. Paul has to begin, so to speak, at the very beginning.

b. Tone of the writer (1:11b): *brothers...* But this formal assertion shames them. If they did not know by now that Paul's gospel was not of men, then they needed to be told this truth in a most formal way.

c. Focus of concern (1:11c): *The gospel I preached...* The Galatians had heard him preach that gospel. Paul is taking no responsibility for what others had preached as gospel.

2. Negatively stated (1:11d-f):

a. Not concocted by man (1:11d): *is not something that man made up.*¹¹

b. Not received from man (1:11e): *I did not receive it from any man...* It did not come to him by tradition handed down.

c. Not taught (1:11f): *nor was I taught it...* He did not study it in the academies.

3. Positively stated (1:12):

a. Revelation (1:12a): *rather, I received it by revelation.*

b. Revelation from Christ (1:12b): *from Jesus Christ.* The text could also be understood as a revelation about Jesus Christ. A revelation is that which man cannot know apart from supernatural disclosure. Paul is referring to what happened on the Damascus road (Acts 9:3ff).

II. Argument of Paul's Case (1:13-17).

A. Paul's Pre-conversion Experiences do not Account for his Gospel (1:13-14):

1. Zealous against the church (1:13):

a. His readers were knowledgeable about his earlier life (1:13a): *For you have heard ...*¹² Before his conversion, Paul doubtless had a fair knowledge of the main truths of the Christian message. No doubt he had heard the facts of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

b. His zeal in Judaism (1:13b): *Heard of my previous way of life in Judaism.* The language is used of ethical conduct.

¹⁰ What does this lesson tell us about how Paul dealt with the issue of backsliding?

¹¹ How many preachers can say today that the message they preach is not shaped by the tastes and opinions of men?

¹² How had the Galatians become knowledgeable about Paul's pre-Christian life?

c. His zeal in persecution (1:13c): ***how intensely I persecuted the church of God...***¹³

(1) Term *church (ekklesia)* refers to the church universal of which each congregation is a manifestation. By calling it the church of God Paul makes the frightfulness of his previous conduct the more obvious. The term *ekklesia* was used in the Greek Old Testament to designate the congregation of Israel. Here Paul uses the term in distinction from Judaism. Thus he means to imply that Judaism is no longer the congregation of the Lord.

(2) He ***tried to destroy it*** [the church]. See Acts 8:1ff.; 9:1ff.; 22:4ff.; 16:9ff.

3. Zealous for Judaism (1:14a).

a. ***I was advancing in Judaism...*** See Philippians 3:5-6. The term *advanced* has the connotation of hewing out a path as a pioneer. He had gone where no man had gone before.

b. He went ***beyond many Jews of my own age...*** He probably refers primarily to his fellow students in the theological school of Gamaliel in Jerusalem.

4. Zealous for tradition (1:14b): ***and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers.*** This tradition in Paul's day existed in oral form. It was later written down in the Mishnah. The tradition was loosely based on the Torah [first five books of the Old Testament]. Orthodox Jews to this day follow this same tradition. Together with later additions, it became known as the Talmud.¹⁴

B. Paul's Calling alone Accounts for his Gospel (1:15-16a):

1. His consecration (1:15a): ***But when God, who set me apart from birth...*** Even before his birth, God had chosen this zealous Jew for the special function of apostolic ministry. Paul had an extremely keen sense of his divine call.

2. His call (1:15b): ***and called me by his grace.***¹⁵ God calls men to salvation through the gospel; he calls men to service in various ways. Sometimes he calls men to service through his written word, or through the encouragement of Christian leaders, or through the Holy Spirit influence on the heart and mind. In Paul's case the call to service came in the form of a miraculous vision of the resurrected Christ when Paul was traveling to Damascus to persecute the Christians.

3. His conviction (1:16):

a. God revealed his Son (1:16a): ***was pleased to reveal his Son...*** (1:16a): The term points to the sovereignty of God. Here Paul ascribes the revelation to God, although it had been the Son of God himself who spoke to him on the Damascus road.

b. God revealed his Son ***in me...*** The preposition can also be translated *to* or *through* me. It was a most intimate and personal experience. But it was not, according to Acts, merely an internal experience. Jesus actually appeared. Then he realized that the Jesus he despised was none other than the Son of God.

4. His commission (1:16c): ***so that I might preach him among the Gentiles...*** Christ commissioned Paul to make Gentiles the special burden of his ministry. See Acts 26:17,18; Gal. 2:8.

C. Paul's Post-call Experiences do not Account for his Gospel (1:16d-17).

1. His gospel did not result from consultation (1:16b): ***I did not consult any man*** (1:16b). He did not turn to others for advice. He was conscious from the beginning of his independence.

2. His gospel did not result from delegation (1:17a): ***nor did I go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before I was...*** for the purpose of learning what the gospel is. His gospel and his interpretation of it came from no one but God himself. The Twelve apostles did not appoint him, delegate him, or hand him

¹³ Why does Paul bring up his pre-Christian life here?

¹⁴ Do you think that even during his pre-conversion days God was providentially preparing Paul for his future mission?

¹⁵ Should we have a sense of a divine call to kingdom service?

a pre-packaged gospel. This verse acknowledges the authority of the apostles, but also claims equal authority with them.

3. His gospel was received in isolation (1:17b): ***but I went immediately into Arabia and later returned to Damascus.*** After his conversion, Paul went immediately into Arabia, the thinly populated region stretching from the environs of Damascus all the way to the southern tip of the huge peninsula. But he probably went into the desert regions close by Damascus.¹⁶ He later returned to Damascus where he preached the gospel (Acts 9:19-20).

III. Application of Paul's Claim

A. Stupidity of Works Salvation: Why do people seem to have a natural tendency to want to earn their salvation? What frustrations come to those who try to earn salvation? Can good deeds cancel the effect of sinful deeds? What assurance could one have if he was committed to works salvation?

B. Superiority of Grace Salvation: How many gospels are there? Why is the gospel of grace superior to any system of works salvation? What is the source of this true gospel of salvation by grace through faith? Could men have ever dreamed up such a solution to the sin problem? What does one have to admit before he can take advantage of salvation through grace?

C. Necessity of Personal Salvation: Is there any substitute for a personal encounter with the living Christ? Where do we encounter him? How has he changed your life since you opened your heart to him?

D. Necessity of Growth after Salvation: How does real salvation reveal itself in Christian experience? How can new believers be indoctrinated in the truths of the Christian faith? What often happens to those who are not grounded in the truth of the gospel?¹⁷

Paul's Reputation in the Gospel

Galatians 1:18-24

Introduction: Paul has been arguing that his gospel was not derived from men, but from God. His point is that he was preaching the gospel before he ever met the apostles or Jerusalem leaders.

I. Acquaintances in Judea (1:18-19).

A. Paul Met Peter (1:18):

1. Time of the meeting (1:18a): ***Then after three years...*** [of preaching the gospel]. Thus Paul's gospel is independent of them. It is not clear whether the three years date from his conversion or from his return to Damascus.

2. Place of the meeting (1:18b): ***I went up to Jerusalem...*** This visit to Jerusalem is probably the same as the one recorded in Acts 9:26-30 (though not all scholars are agreed on this). The departure from Damascus was under duress (Acts 9:23; 2 Cor 11:32-33). An emergency brought about his trip to Jerusalem.

¹⁶ Why do you think Paul went off into the desert of Arabia after his conversion? How long did he stay in Arabia?

¹⁷ What main truth will you take with you from this lesson?

3. Purpose of the meeting (1:18c): **to get acquainted with Peter**. The language suggests the idea that this was their first meeting. The visit was personal, not official. Paul did not seek out Peter in order to find out what he should be preaching.

4. Length of the meeting (1:18d): **and stayed with him fifteen days**.¹⁸ This was enough time for a get acquainted visit, but not sufficient to time for Peter to tutor Paul in the deep mysteries of Christian theology.

B. Paul Met James:¹⁹

1. James was the only other church leader that Paul met on his first Jerusalem visit (1:19a): **I saw none of the other apostles...** The other apostles must have been absent from Jerusalem on preaching missions when Paul was there. Paul's point is that his gospel was not handed over to him by any of the apostles.

2. James was a relative of the Lord (1:19b): **only James, the Lord's brother**. [Not to be confused with James the son of Zebedee and James the son of Alphaeus who were two of the twelve apostles] He had become a believer after Christ's resurrection (1 Cor 15:17). In Galatians 2:9 he is grouped with Cephas and John as the pillars of the church. Was this James also an apostle? The Greek expression used here does not necessarily imply that Paul is here reckoning James as one of the apostles. At the time of Paul's visit all the apostles of Christ (including Mathias) were still living. Thus there would have been no justification for adding another according to the logic expressed by Peter in Acts 1. Furthermore, James would not have met the qualifications for an apostle stipulated by Peter in Acts 1. But the term "apostle" is also used in a broader sense in the New Testament of one who was sent out. James was the hero of those Judaizers who opposed Paul. Paul is saying somewhat ironically, "I certainly did not get my gospel from James!"

II. Assurances Regarding Judea (1:20):

A. Forcefulness of this Oath (1:20a): I assure you before God... He enforced his credentials by an appeal to God himself.

B. Purpose of this Oath (1:20b): that what I am writing you is no lie. Why does Paul use the oath in v. 20? He may have been charged by his enemies with misrepresenting the facts of his visits to the other apostles. A crucial issue was at stake: the genuineness and independence of his apostleship.

III. Absence from Judea (1:21-24).

A. Paul's Ministry Continued Outside Judea (1:21):

1. Time note (1:21a): **Later**, i.e., after the two-week visit to Jerusalem.

2. Travel note (1:21b): **I went to Syria and Cilicia**. Paul went into distant lands as a preacher of the gospel, outside the direct sphere of influence of the apostles. The places are named in geographical rather than chronological order. Cilicia was more distant from Jerusalem than Syria.

a. Cilicia: See Acts 9:30. He tarried there a while in his hometown of Tarsus. Here Barnabas came and invited Paul to come to Antioch to help out. This was Gentile territory primarily. This was not an area where Paul would likely go if he were subject to the other apostles, because they were not yet ready to undertake any mission to the Gentiles. Some of the hardships mentioned in 2 Cor 11:24-27 may have taken place while Paul was in Cilicia.

¹⁸ How do you think these two great apostles spent their time together?

¹⁹ What kinds of information might Paul have solicited from James?

b. Syria, i.e., Antioch and its environs. Acts 11:25. The church in Antioch dispatched Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey which Paul does not mention here.²⁰

B. Paul's Presence was Unknown in Judea (1:22):

1. Personally, the churches [of Judea] are said not to have known Paul (1:22a): *I was personally unknown...* The point is that his ministry had been conducted in those early years totally outside the sphere of influence of the apostles in Jerusalem.
2. Geographically, the churches are designated by region (1:22b): *to the churches of Judea...* Jerusalem was the capital of Judea. Paul was certainly known to the brethren there, if only briefly. *Judea* here is the outlying region around Jerusalem. Paul's point: after his brief stay in Jerusalem, he had not lingered in the vicinity, but had immediately taken off to remote areas.
3. Spiritually, the churches are described in relation to Christ (1:22c): *that are in Christ.*²¹ The expression indicates...
 - a. The *character* of these churches in distinction from the Jewish assemblies.
 - b. The *election* [selection] of these churches. They were included in the redemptive work of Christ.
 - c. The *submission* of these churches to the authority of Christ.

C. Paul's Ministry was Reported in Judea (1:23-24):

1. Judean churches knew Paul only by reputation (1:23a): *They only heard the report...* They knew of his conversion and preaching only through hearsay.²²
2. Judean churches knew Paul as a persecutor (1:23b): *The man who formerly persecuted us...* Some in those Judean churches probably had been victimized by Paul when he was persecuting the church.²³
3. Judean churches knew that Paul was now preaching the faith (1:23c): *is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy.* *The faith* includes the cardinal doctrines of Christianity *and* those who are committed to those doctrines.
4. Judean churches praised God for the report about Paul (1:24): *And they praised God because of me.* They apparently did not question the genuineness and integrity of Paul's calling and preaching. No one questioned his right to preach.

Conclusion: Note that those who had suffered at Paul's hand accepted his preaching and office, and those Galatians who had experienced only good from Paul's labors now questioned his right to preach and the message he presented.

Defense of the Gospel

Galatians 2:1-21

Introduction: This section continues the defense of Paul's apostolic qualifications. Paul has argued that he was independent of the apostles in Jerusalem. Now he argues that they recognized his special ministry within the church. The occasion is the so-called Jerusalem Council (ca. 48-49 AD) when the issue of the evangelization of Gentiles was publicly discussed (Acts 15).

I. Challenge to the Jerusalem Church (2:1-10):

²⁰ Why did Paul leave Jerusalem so quickly for these remote areas?

²¹ How does an individual get into Christ? See Rom 6:3.

²² How would they have heard reports about Paul's work in Cilicia and Syria?

²³ How should we view the former sinful life of those who have surrender to the Lordship of Christ?

A. A Fateful Journey (2:1-2):

1. Time of the journey (2:1a): **After fourteen years.** From the time Paul first visited Jerusalem after his conversion (1:21) to this visit was fourteen years.

a. In those years Paul's message developed independently. For fourteen years there had been no communication with the apostles. During that period the original apostles and Paul had been ministering on separate tracks, Paul to the Gentiles, and the apostles mainly to the Jews. During those years with the help of the Holy Spirit Paul had developed his own interpretation of the Gospel and his own methods of evangelism.

b. In those years Paul's work had been opposed vigorously.

2. Destination of the journey (2:1b): **I went up again to Jerusalem.** Throughout the period of which Paul is speaking Jerusalem was the headquarters of the apostles. Paul mentioned his first visit to Jerusalem to establish his independent authority. Here he is stressing his agreement with the apostles on the issue of where Gentile Christians were bound by the law of Moses.

3. Companions in this journey (2:1c):

a. Barnabas was with Paul (2:1c): **This time with Barnabas.** Barnabas had stood up for Paul on his first visit to Jerusalem (Acts 9:27). He was Paul's companion on the first missionary journey through Cyprus, and Galatia. On the other hand, Barnabas had been a close associate with the apostles since the very beginning of the church (Acts 4:36f; 9:27). Because he came from Cyprus, he was well suited to mediate any dispute that might arise between Paul and the original apostles. The situation which forced Barnabas and Paul to go to Jerusalem is documented in Acts 15:1-2. The church at Antioch had appointed that Barnabas equally represent them with Paul. Paul makes no reference to the others appointed by the church for this trip.

b. Titus was with Paul (2:1d): **I took Titus along also.** Titus had no official part of the delegation. He seems to have been brought along deliberately by Paul, not so much as a leader, but as a test case. Paul was not ashamed of the fruit of his labor for the Lord. Titus was a prime example of what the gospel was doing among the Gentiles. Paul was determined to put a face of the issue of Gentile conversion. Titus was a Greek who had never been circumcised. He was a walking illustration of the power of the Gospel to change the lives of Gentiles. Paul wanted the Jewish Christians to see the wonderful results of the preaching of the Gospel to Gentiles. Later Titus would serve an important role in Paul's ministry to the church at Corinth (2 Cor 2:13; 7:6). Late in his life Paul addressed a letter to Titus giving him instructions concerning his ministry on the island of Crete.

4. Reason for the journey (2:2): **I went up in response to a revelation.**

1. Negative considerations: Paul was not summoned to Jerusalem as if he must answer to the apostles for his message or the conduct of his work. Paul did not undertake his journey arbitrarily, nor by way of experiment.

2. Positive considerations: He went to Jerusalem in the strength of divine commissioning and empowerment. In addition, Acts indicates that he made the trip as a representative of the church at Antioch (Acts 15:1). It could be that the revelation here mentioned came to the church (as in Acts 13:2, 4) rather than to Paul personally. Or Paul may have received the revelation confirming that he should accept the appointment to represent the church at Antioch at this meeting. Or it may have been on the basis of this revelation that Paul suggested to the church that a delegation be sent. In any case, Paul was directed by the Holy Spirit to go to Jerusalem and force the leaders there to take a public stand regarding the validity of the gospel he had been preaching. That Paul had received a revelation implies that he was in a state of doubt about whether to go to meet with the apostles in Jerusalem. God settled that doubt.

5. Purpose of the journey (2:2b).

- a. An orderly presentation (2:2b): ***and set forth among them...*** Paul laid before the Jerusalem leaders his gospel. This is the same language used in Acts 25:14-21 for setting forth Paul's case before King Agrippa with a view of careful consultation concerning it.
- b. A thorough presentation (2:2c): ***the gospel that I preach among the Gentiles.*** This would include the conditions of salvation and the obligations that he was instructing new believers to undertake. He was in no doubt about the validity of the message he preached. But it was important that the entire church perceive that her leaders were all in harmony about the message. There were those who were trying to drive a wedge between Paul and the Jerusalem leaders on the issue of Gentiles.
- c. A private presentation (2:2d): ***But I did this privately...*** To these Paul presented his message privately. These discussions allowed for full and frank discussion of the issues. All of these men wanted to present a united front to the church, so they first spoke privately. These consultations were a wise precaution to prevent misunderstanding and interruption from those who had an axe to grind on this issue.
- d. A high level presentation (2:2e): ***to those who seemed to be leaders...*** Lit., *those who were of repute.* The term is used four times. This suggests that Paul was using a term employed by those who were trying to denigrate his ministry. According to Paul's critics the leaders of real reputation preached a different message. So Paul here gives these great leaders their due by referring to them as men of "repute." In v. 9 some of these men of "repute" are named.
- e. A serious presentation (2:2f): ***for fear that I was running or had run my race in vain.*** The private discussion with the Jerusalem leaders was to prevent the Judaizers from wrecking Paul's past and future work among the Gentiles. Paul saw a danger that his work on behalf of Gentiles might be rendered useless by the active opposition of the Jerusalem church, or at least some members of that church. These leaders would have much more influence over the Judaizers than he would have. Paul pressed them to take a strong stand against the notion that Gentiles had to abide by Mosaic law. If the Judaizers won out, then all that Paul had thus far done for the Lord was ruined. He would have to start all over again. The success of his whole ministry was at stake. Moreover, he deeply desired harmony between the two sectors of Christendom, Jewish and Gentile.

B. A Concrete Challenge (2:3-5):

1. Test case (2:3a): ***not even Titus who was with me...*** Bringing Titus was a bold move on Paul's part. He forced the issue to be personalized. Either Titus would be accepted as a brother or he would not. If he was accepted, even though he had never been circumcised, then the battle was won. Paul here gets to the bottom line. Titus, a Gentile Christian, was accepted by the leaders in Jerusalem as a brother in the Lord. Words and decrees can be twisted or willfully misunderstood. But this concrete case cannot be explained away. Titus was present at the conference; yet he was not required to be circumcised. He was allowed to move freely among the Jerusalem brethren. The Judaizers wanted all Gentiles to be circumcised. But they were not even able to persuade the leaders that this one Gentile had to be. The non circumcison of Titus was in reality a decision of the principle.
2. Outcome (2:3b): ***was [not] compelled to be circumcised, even though he was a Greek.*** Though it was well known that Titus was a Greek and therefore uncircumcised, no directive was ever issued that he had to be circumcised. If a Gentile Christian was allowed to associate with Jewish Christians--even church leaders--without being circumcised, then surely no one could argue that circumcision was required for Gentile fellowship with Jewish believers in other regions. This is the first mention of circumcision in this letter. That this is the bone of contention between Paul and the Judaizers is the underlying assumption throughout Galatians.
3. Opposition (2:4).

a. Their zeal was evident: ***This matter arose...*** The Judaizers raised the issue of Titus. Perhaps in so doing they were falling into a trap which Paul had set for them. The fact that the greatest leaders of the church refused to demand the circumcision of Titus was a powerful blow to the efforts of these men to Judaize the church.

b. Their status as brethren was questionable: ***because some false brothers...*** They made their approach as brothers in the Lord, and they were received as such among the churches. As brethren they were given the right to address various congregations. But Paul challenges the right of the Judaizers to be considered members of the church.

c. Their methods were underhanded: ***had infiltrated our ranks to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus.*** They came into the churches in a stealthy, dishonest way, concealing their real motives. Their conduct after they were in a church marked them as false and unauthentic members. They were like spies behind enemy lines. They learned all the buttons to press; they identified all those who might potentially be swayed by their message. The "freedom" which we have will later be explained as freedom from Mosaic regulations.

d. Their motivation was evil: ***and to make us slaves.*** Christ set us free from those regulations by fulfilling the demands of the law on our behalf. The false teachers were trying to bring the church once again under the dominion of that law.

4. Their intimidation was resisted (2:5).

a. The leaders did not yield one inch to the Judaizers: ***We did not give in to them for a moment.*** Paul and his associates--perhaps all the apostles-- were adamant. The issue was not merely whether Titus should be circumcised, but the very truth of the gospel of God's grace. Paul would accommodate himself in order to aid the influence of the gospel. See 1 Cor 9:19-23; Acts 16:3; 21:23ff. But the issue this time was significant, even foundational. There could be no compromise. Nothing in the gospel could be surrendered to appease these legalists.

b. The leaders stood firm on behalf of all Gentile believers: ***so that the truth of the gospel might remain with you.*** To keep peace in the Jerusalem church, the leaders might easily have knuckled under to the pressure applied by the Judaizers. Paul, however, took his resolute stand because he had the churches in Galatia in his mind's eye. He wanted no damage done to the gospel by which the Galatians had been introduced to salvation. Paul had the courage of his convictions.

C. An Amicable Conclusion (2:6-10).

1. What did not happen in Jerusalem (2:6).

a. Paul was not overawed by the Jerusalem leaders (2:6a): ***As for those who seemed to be important--whatever they were makes no difference to me.*** Paul again refers to the Jerusalem leaders as being men of reputation. He resented the way the Judaizers were trying to down play his gospel because, so they said, he was not one of the elite leaders of the church. One gets the impression from this verse that Paul was less impressed by those leaders than the Judaizers who had built them up so much. The fact that the apostles once had the unique privilege of associating with Jesus did not intimidate Paul. Facts like that meant nothing to Paul. Apostleship rests on a present relation to the glorified Christ, not on past associations.

b. Paul was not subjected to the oversight and judgment of the Jerusalem leadership (2:6b): ***God does not judge by external appearance.*** Everything depends on God's judgment, and God does not pay any heed to outward prestige. Paul would support no wrong principle even if those with the greatest prestige were arguing against him.

c. Paul had not been required to change his message (2:6c): ***those men added nothing to my message.*** Paul had not gone to Jerusalem to subject himself to the judgment of the apostles; he went there to

convince them that the gospel he was preaching was the true gospel. They taught him nothing that had not already been revealed to him. This showed that God had as fully entrusted his will to Paul as to the greatest of the apostles. The Jerusalem leaders had laid no more upon Paul in the way of obligation in his missionary work among the Gentiles than he himself had already assumed. The reference is specifically to Jewish ceremonies (cf. Acts 15:28).

2. Realization of the leaders (2:7-8).

a. They recognized that Paul had a special sphere of labor (2:7a): ***On the contrary, they saw that I had been entrusted with the task of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles...*** Through the arguments of Paul and the reports of his victories in his first missionary journeys the apostles came to realize that God had chosen this man for a special ministry among the Gentiles (literally the uncircumcised).

b. They recognized Paul's leadership role (2:7b): ***just as Peter had been to the Jews***. Peter had been leading out in evangelizing the Jews (lit. the circumcised). So Paul was now regarded as the leader in evangelizing the Gentiles.

c. They recognized that God was working through Paul's ministry (2:8): ***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***. The insight that Paul had been entrusted with the preaching of the gospel as much as Peter was based on the fact that God had empowered both ministries. It is interesting in Acts to see the parallels in the ministries of these two leaders. The reference is to the signs and wonders which confirmed the message that these two great men brought.

3. Endorsement of the leaders (2:9).

a. Jerusalem leaders are identified (2:9a): ***James, Peter and John, those reputed to be pillars***. These men had the reputation of being pillars in the church. Paul's intention is not to take away from the prestige of these three or to question their position of leadership. He merely wants to underscore that those who the Judaizers thought were so important were actually in agreement with him about the gospel.

b. Jerusalem leaders extended the right hand of fellowship (2:9b): ***gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship***. This was more than reciprocal acknowledgment or a gesture of friendship. The language suggests a covenant. All were partners in the same cause--fellowship. Neither side tried to impose its will on the other. This was an encouragement as well as an endorsement.

c. Jerusalem leaders recognized the legitimacy of Paul's office (2:9c): ***when they recognized the grace given to me***. In v. 8 Paul claims apostleship for himself. That was the grace--the unmerited favor--that God had bestowed on him. He was God's special envoy to the Gentiles. This is now formally recognized by the original leaders of the church.

d. Jerusalem leaders agreed to a division of labor (2:9d): ***They agreed we should go to the Gentiles and they to the Jews***. Because of the fellowship that both sides acknowledged they could arrive at a binding agreement. The agreement was that the field of labor was to be divided. This was not an agreement that excluded Paul and Barnabas from working with Jews, or Peter and the others from working with Gentiles. Rather it recognized that the primary thrust would be toward the two groups, Paul to the Gentiles, and Peter to the Jews.

4. Addendum to the agreement (2:10).

a. Request of the Jerusalem leaders (2:10a): ***All they asked was that we should continue to remember the poor***. To the major agreement of the division of labor there was appended by special request of the Jewish contingent that the poor saints in Jerusalem be remembered (cf. Rom 15:26). That this help was requested suggests that the brethren in Jerusalem were particularly destitute. Acts 11:29ff. suggests that the cause was a famine. An offering was collected by the Gentile Christians in Antioch and sent to Jerusalem as early as AD 41 during the great famine (Acts 11:28-30).

b. Response of Paul (2:10b): *the very thing I was eager to do*. Gentile Christians would share with their Jewish brethren materially since the Jewish brethren had shared spiritually with them the message of Christ. Paul showed in his fund raising efforts that he honored the request that the Jerusalem leaders made of him at this meeting. This action had the practical purpose of relieving an immediate need, and of testifying to the general unity throughout the church. On his third missionary tour Paul raised a large contribution in the Gentile churches for this purpose.

II. Crisis in Antioch (2:11-21): Review: Ch. 1: Paul received his apostolic commission from God himself independently of the other apostles. Nonetheless, he and the other apostles were in essential agreement (2:1-10). Preview: Paul had stood firmly for that gospel in the face of questionable conduct by the other leaders (2:11-21).

A. Immediate Issue: Hypocrisy (2:11-14).

1. Opposition to the hypocrites (2:11).

a. Peter's travels (2:11a): *When Peter came to Antioch...* Nothing is said here about the purpose of Peter's visit. It seems to have been after the Jerusalem council alluded to in the preceding paragraph. As many as 10,000 Jews lived in Antioch (Josephus). The church there seems to have been predominately Gentile.

b. Peter's rebuke (2:11b): *I opposed him to his face...* Peter here is not presented as an opponent of Paul, but as a person who did not have the courage of his convictions. Paul set him straight. The word "opposed" suggests a reaction to an attack. Paul regarded Peter's conduct, inadvertent as it may have been, as an attack on the truth of the gospel. The two great apostles had a showdown over Peter's conduct. This was a case so public and well known that Paul administered the reproof before the whole church. Why did Paul not take Peter aside and point out his error to him? Because more was involved than Peter's feelings. The whole matter of the freedom of the gospel and the essential unity of the church was being tested.

c. Peter's error (2:11c): *because he was clearly in the wrong*. Paul did not beat around the bush. By his conduct Peter condemned himself. That is why Paul did not hesitate to oppose him publicly. Peter had introduced Gentiles to the gospel some ten years earlier at the house of Cornelius. He knew that God had accepted them. His conduct in Antioch was not the result of ignorance, but of fear of offending the Jewish prejudice.

2. Actions of the hypocrites (2:12-13).

a. Peter's behavior (2:12).

(1) His previous behavior (2:12a): *Before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles*. Peter had no qualms about eating with Gentiles in the past. The Greek tense suggests that he had kept this up for some time. He had paid no heed to the Jewish ritual rules about kosher foods and cleanliness at meals. Presumably more than communion is meant, although that often coincided with regular meals or love feasts. Peter's practice changed with the arrival of certain Jewish Christians from James in Jerusalem. This need not mean that James had sent these men, or that they reflected his views although they probably claimed to do so (cf. Acts 15:24). James was the recognized leader in the Jerusalem church. To come from James simply means to come from Jerusalem. The Jewish Christians from Jerusalem would not participate with their fellow (Gentile) Christians in meals. Their actions suggested that Gentiles could be only second class Christians, not on the same plain of holiness of Jewish Christians.

(2) His changed behavior (2:12b): *But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles*. After the delegation arrived from Jerusalem, Peter changed his behavior toward Gentiles. He "began to draw back," i.e., make an unobtrusive retreat. Instead of fellowship with the

Gentile believers, separation took place. Actually the Old Testament nowhere forbids Jews to eat with Gentiles, but eating with Gentiles made it difficult for them to avoid eating non-kosher foods.

(3) His inexcusable behavior (2:12c): ***because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group.*** Peter acted, not out of conviction, but out of fear. He was afraid that he would be regarded as a transgressor of the law if he were seen to be in full fellowship with Gentiles, especially at meal times. Twice in the context Paul labels this as hypocrisy. Paul contemptuously refers to the Judaizers as "the circumcision group." Until a man was circumcised, these teachers regarded him as unclean, even though he may have been washed in the blood of Christ. The implication is that the blood of Christ was not viewed by them as sufficient to bring about total cleansing.

b. Peter's influence (2:13):

(1) Influence on other Jewish Christians (2:13a): ***The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy..*** Peter's sudden coolness toward the Gentile Christians rubbed off on other Jewish believers. Hypocrites are easy to follow.

(2) Influence on Barnabas (2:13b): ***so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray.*** Here we see the strong tug of hypocrisy. Barnabas had been reared on Cyprus among Gentiles. He had helped Paul found many Gentile churches. He had eaten many times with Gentiles. Yet now he too began to treat the Gentiles as second-class citizens of God's kingdom, unfit for full fellowship with those of Jewish birth. Why did not Paul rebuke Barnabas? He certainly must have talked to him privately later. It may be significant that there is no record that he and Paul ever traveled together again. Paul focused on Peter because he was the leader. Had he not withdrawn from the Gentiles probably none of the others would have withdrawn.

c. Rebuke to the hypocrites (2:14).

(1) Measure of hypocritical conduct (2:14a): ***When I saw that they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel...*** Here Paul names the motive that prompted him to take exception to Peter and the others. When he saw that the true gospel of Jesus was at stake, he did not hesitate to confront the hypocrites.

(2) Exposure of hypocritical conduct (2:14b): ***I said to Peter in front of them all..*** Since Peter was an apostle, he was the most blameworthy. So Paul singled him out for the public rebuke.

(3) Embarrassment of hypocritical conduct (2:14c): ***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 points out that only days before Peter was not observing the Jewish ritual code in his association with Gentiles. After such an attitude, how could he now compel the Gentiles Christians to live as Jews? Such conduct on the part of a leader like Peter would prompt the Gentiles to try to emulate him. Otherwise there would be no room for both Jews and Gentiles at one table. They could only be treated as equals in the church if they would live by the ritual rules of the Jewish believers. Paul is then pointing to the inconsistency in Peter's conduct. Peter was virtually saying to the Gentiles that they must live like the Jews or they could not associate with him. We are not told, but Peter must have acknowledged his wrong under this reproof and changed his course. Not to have done so, when his sin was thus pointed out, would have intensified it. For him to acknowledge his wrong would have been another acknowledgment of Paul's authority as an apostle. They recognized only one condition for salvation, viz., faith. But they added another condition for full fellowship, viz., obeying Jewish customs. Adding separate conditions for fellowship denies Christian freedom, and it produces split-level churches.

B. Broader Issue: Justification (2:15-16).

1. What the Jewish believers know (2:15-16a).

a. Jews have a distinct advantage over Gentiles (2:15): ***We who are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners...*** Is this a continuation of Paul's public rebuke of the Antioch hypocrites, or a more general

discussion of the issues at stake? In either case, Paul is speaking from the viewpoint of Jewish Christians. Paul concedes that some in the church (for whom he speaks) are Jews by birth. He wants to take nothing away from that. Gentiles in general were regarded as sinners. In fact, the word *sinners* is virtually equivalent to Gentiles in some passages. The language reflects Jewish pride at being in possession of the Torah. Paul concedes here the privileged status of Jews. Even though the Jews viewed themselves as spiritually superior to Gentiles, they had been driven by their own sense of sin to embrace the gospel. They had come to recognize that no person could possibly earn salvation through perfect obedience to the law. They too were sinners in need of a Savior.

b. Jews know the path to justification is through faith (2:16a): ***know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ.*** The privileged superiority of the Jews did not achieve for them a righteousness with God. That is something all Jewish Christians knew. "Not justified" is a judicial phrase. It does not refer to personal morality, but to the juridical judgment of God. It refers to one who is protected from the penalty of the law and thus is acquitted. On the basis of observing the law one cannot achieve that status. The term has nothing to do with how they feel about themselves or regard one another. One cannot achieve legal acquittal before God for sins committed on the basis of keeping Mosaic law. Only through faith in Christ is that possible. By faith we appropriate to ourselves the righteousness of Christ. By faith we have communion with him. On the basis of that faith God can rule us to be just as if we had never sinned.

2. What the Jewish believers have done (2:16b). ***So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law...*** Paul reminds Peter and the Jewish believers that they, in spite of their privileged status, had put their faith in Christ in order to be legally justified before God. Thus for Jews as well as Gentiles the only way to be justified is to put faith in Jesus. When they put their faith in Jesus they turned from that which made them Jews, and identified themselves with sinners needing a Savior. Until we discover that our good works will not save us, we will not turn to Jesus for salvation for we do not sense that we need a Savior. One obtains salvation when he accepts by obedient faith what Christ has done for him in his atoning death and victorious resurrection.

3. What Jewish believers must acknowledge (2:16c): ***because by observing the law no one will be justified.*** Paul alludes to Ps 143:2. The psalmist expresses the realization that no man can be justified before God. This implies that the psalmist did not expect justification to result from his observance of the Mosaic Law. Old Testament saints realized that they could not be justified by law keeping.

C. Underlying Issue: Grace (2:17-21).

1. Past striving (2:17-19).

a. Those who strive for justification fall short (2:17): ***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!*** Frustrated by their inability to keep the Mosaic law perfectly, many Jews had sought salvation in Jesus. In the light of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus they came to recognize that they were in fact sinners just like the Gentiles. They had no grounds to look contemptuously on Gentiles as "sinners" as if Jews were morally superior. Did Christ make them sinners when through the gospel he revealed to them their sinful condition? Of course not. That would be like accusing a doctor of causing the cancer that he diagnoses. To infer that Christ turns Jews into sinners is a dreadful distortion of the truth. Christ did lead Jewish Christians to abandon reliance on the law; but in doing so he was certainly not serving the cause of sin.

b. Those who strive for justification are frustrated (2:18). ***If I rebuild what I destroyed, I prove that I am a lawbreaker.*** The figures of building up and destroying refer to self-righteousness on the basis of law works. Once Peter had trusted in Christ and had thereby broken down his own righteousness under the

law. By his conduct in Antioch he was signaling that he wanted to build up that self-righteousness again. The Galatians were, in a far graver sense, rebuilding what they had first destroyed. When a person returns from the faith path to the law path he is only increasing his sin. He is only demonstrating anew that he cannot keep the law. Hence turning from faith to law does not diminish sin, it increases it. If Peter had done right in refusing to eat with Gentiles, he had done wrong in associating with them earlier. On the other hand, if he had done right to obey the Joppa vision, he was a transgressor now in disobeying it. What had Paul torn down?--reliance on the law. What had he built up?--reliance on Christ.

c. Those who strive for justification discover spiritual death (2:19): ***For through the law I died to the law so that I might live for God.*** To die to something is to cease to have any relation to it, so that it has no further claim upon or control over one. To die to the law means to give up on its potential to save; to cease to trust in it as an instrument of salvation. This opened the door for the God-directed, God-consecrated life. The possibility of living this kind of life was only open to him after he died to (i.e., gave up on) the law. Now comes the irony. Paul died to the law through the law. He means that the impossible demands of the law whipped him to death, so to speak, by its demands. The law cannot give man life; it can only demand, forbid, judge and condemn. It cannot give men the ability to serve God. The implication of this verse is that subjection to the law prevented the unreserved devotion of the life to God. Legalism comes between a soul and God. The apostle had been driven away from reliance on the law by the law itself. Its demands were too much for him; he could not meet them; they killed him. No longer, therefore, had the law any claims upon him. It was a dead issue.

2. Present status (2:20-21).

a. A new life (2:20a): ***I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.*** So if the law does not give life to the sinner, how can one ever hope to live unto God?

(1) Christ was crucified. In the original text the word Christ stands first in this verse for emphasis. Though he had fulfilled every obligation imposed by the law, yet Christ endured the most extreme penalty imposed by that law upon transgressors. To bring life to his people, Christ had to first taste of death. He bore the penalty of the law. This made possible the escape of all of us from the curse of the law and the death which the law justly requires.

(2) The believer is crucified with Christ. When we acknowledge by faith that Jesus died for our sins, we are accepting God's judgment on Christ as punishment for our guilt. In this faith, we become identified with him in his death. The life unto God comes from communion with Christ. Paul uses the perfect tense here to indicate that this death with Christ once took place in the past, but still has not lost its power since.

(c) The believer is dead with respect to the old life. Death nullified all prior claims and obligations. Hence the believer is no longer under the jurisdiction of the law. Because by faith we belong to Christ, when he died, we died. Our baptism brought us into the death experience of Christ, and claimed that experience as our own (Rom 6:3).

(d) The believer has Christ living within. Through the Holy Spirit, Christ dwells in every believer. There is a new power at work within our lives.

b. A faith life (2:20b): ***The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God...*** Paul himself was still living in a certain sense. The new life is received through faith (3:27), and it is maintained by the exercise of faith (2 Cor 7:7). He is saying that his faith in Christ enables him to live a life that is approved by God. The faith is in the deity of Christ, the divine and personal love of God and the self-sacrifice of Christ upon the cross for our sins.

c. A valuable life (2:20c): ***who loved me and gave himself for me.*** In his love for the church (Eph 5:25) Christ does not lose sight of the individual believer. Each member of his body is the direct object of his love, and it is as true that he died for each as it is that he died for all. Hence the individual believer appropriates to himself that which is the possession of all. When Paul believed in Christ, he died to the

law by becoming no longer subject to its demands. His identification with Christ's death left him still very much alive; but now it was Christ, not Paul, who was living his life. It was not a life of law-keeping but of faith. Its basis was unconditional surrender to Christ.

d. A grateful life (2:21): ***I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing.*** Others may try to add something alongside this faith that saves and sustains, but not Paul. If one were to rely on the works of the law, or good deeds, or anything else he would be adding something to that faith. If mankind could attain right standing with God apart from Jesus' death on the cross, then Christ would not have had to die. Legalism makes the atoning death of Jesus useless. If sinner could get right with God by their own efforts at law-keeping, there need never have been a cross on Calvary's hill.

VINDICATION OF THE GOSPEL

Galatians 3:1-4:31

Law and Faith

Galatians 3:1-14

Introduction: *You foolish Galatians* (3:1a). For the first time since 1:11, Paul addresses his readers by name. He refers to them now, not as brethren, but as Galatians. Some warmth has gone out of the address. Perhaps he intends to shock them into accepting their responsibility. The language is intense. All that Paul has just said about the excellence of Christ was on the verge of being rejected by them.

I. Interrogation about Faith and Law: The testimony of experience (3:1b-5).

A. First Question (3:1b): *Who has bewitched you?*

1. Implication of the question: When Christians surrender their faith in the Lord for something else it almost seems that they have been charmed or bewitched. What spiritual folly! Paul is trying to startle his readers into reflection about the danger that faces them. The verb translated "bewitched" can refer to the superstition known as "the evil eye." By gaining and holding the gaze of their victims, sorcerers were supposed to be able to suck the very life out of them.

2. Reason for the question:

a. Christ had been graphically preached to them (3:1c): ***Before your very eyes...*** These words point to the graphic quality of Paul's preaching about the cross. Salvation can come only to those who can mentally see Jesus on the cross dying for their sins. Paul concluded that they now had taken their eyes off Jesus. The evil eye could have its effect only if the victim met the sorcerer's gaze. If the Galatians had kept their eyes on Christ and his cross, they would never have fallen prey to any legalistic perversion of the gospel.

b. Christ had been clearly preached to them (3:1d): ***Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed...*** They had heard the gospel preached in clarity and power. In that preaching they had come to see the utter hopelessness of their dependence upon the works of the law. "Clearly portrayed" refers to forceful and factual proclamation of a fact. Paul had fully and clearly set forth the death of Christ as the one hope of the world. Paul had placarded Christ--had held him up before his audience like a poster or a billboard.

c. Christ had been preached to them truthfully (3:1e): ***as crucified.*** The tense of the word "crucified" in the original is such as to indicate the continuing benefits of that act.

B. Second Question (3:2):

1. It is a crucial question (3:2a): ***I would like to learn just one thing from you:*** Paul isn't interested in hearing whatever defense the Galatians might make for their shift in thinking about Christ and the law. This question that he is about to ask gets right to the core of the issue between them. If they answer this question truthfully, they will bear witness against their own folly.

2. It is a verifiable question (3:2b): ***Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard?*** This question reminds the Galatians of the time of their conversion when they obeyed the gospel and received the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). Paul may be referring to those special manifestations of the Spirit that he as an apostle sometimes conveyed to his converts after their baptism (cf. Acts 8:14-17; 19:6). The reception of the Holy Spirit was surely the most unmistakable evidence of God's favor and the plainest guarantee of the forgiveness of sins. Faith comes by hearing the word of God. So here observing the law is the opposite of faith that came by hearing. God has chosen the word as the means through which he works. If the Galatians would answer this question honestly they would know whether they were on the right tack with their emphasis on the works of the law. The Judaizers did not deny the necessity of believing in Jesus; what they said was that circumcision needed to be added. This, they taught, would be moving toward a higher state of acceptance with God. Paul argued that faith is a thing of the spirit, whereas circumcision is a thing of the flesh. Therefore, to attempt to add circumcision to one's faith experience would not be spiritual progress but retrogression.

C. Third and Fourth Questions (3:3): ***Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?*** Paul now employs two questions to rebuke the Galatians. He is suggesting that they have been inconsistent and therefore foolish. They began their Christian experience with the Spirit of God imparted to them by the hands of the apostle Paul. Then they had made a new beginning through the Spirit. Now they were giving up on divine power to return to their impotent human effort to attain salvation by their deeds. Perhaps the false teachers were suggesting that higher goals could be attained in the Christian faith by observing the law. Paul repudiates any such notion.

D. Fifth Question (3:4) ***Have you suffered so much for nothing--if it really was for nothing?*** The Galatians had suffered much because of their loyalty to the gospel. They are now denying the very gospel for which they had suffered in the past. Paul hopes they had not suffered in vain. Does it make sense to give up to false teachers what they once refused to surrender to those who tormented them?

E. Sixth Question (3:5): ***Does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you because you observe the law, or because you believe what you heard?*** This verse explains what is meant by receiving the Spirit in v. 2. He speaks of miraculous gifts of the Spirit. The gifts that they received proved that the gospel they started with was the true gospel. Never under the law did ordinary believers ever demonstrate such power. It seems to have been common during the period before the New Testament scriptures were completed, when persons were converted, to bestow upon them such gifts as were needed to bring to their minds the instructions given by the apostles. Paul must have bestowed these gifts on the Galatians.

II. Illustration of Faith Before Law: The testimony of Scripture (3:6-9).

A. What Scripture says Concerning Abraham (3:6): ***Consider Abraham: "He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."*** The Judaizers placed more importance on Moses and the law. Paul went back further still to Abraham himself. God dealt with Abraham on the same principle that he deals with men under Christ. Old Testament Scripture asserts that it is on the basis of faith that people can be declared righteous by God. Abraham was the father of Israel. He stood at the beginning of the history of

redemption in respect to the people of Israel. With him God had made the covenant. To him God had given the promises. Yet this man was credited with being righteous because of his faith. His faith is described in Gen 15 as the willingness to surrender totally to the word of the Lord regardless of how incredible it seemed. In Romans 4:3ff. Paul argues that this judgment of righteousness (innocence) on the part of God was an act of pure grace. Abraham did nothing to deserve it. He simply trusted God's word and acted on it. To be "righteous" means to be free of condemnation; to be innocent.

B. Paul's Conclusion (3:7): *Understand, then, that those who believe are children of Abraham.* No doubt the Judaizers were saying that one had to be a child of Abraham in order to be in the proper relationship with God. For them that meant following Abraham in circumcision. But Paul points out that descent from Abraham is not determined by physical descent, nor by circumcision, but by spiritual kinship with Abraham. Believers are Abraham's kin. Faith is the criterion for being sons of Abraham. The promise made to Abraham still is valid, but faith is the method by which that promise may be claimed. Paul's argument can be summed up as follows: Since Abraham was justified by faith, not works, the true children of Abraham are justified by faith, not works. Abraham was not primarily the father of the circumcised; he was the father of the faithful, that is, of those who exercised faith in the promises of God. The Judaizers taught that the people of God--the true Israel--were persons who had submitted to circumcision and were striving to keep the law.

C. What Scripture foresaw Concerning Gentiles (3:8): *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."* Paul now moves forward in his argument to prove that Gentiles as well may inherit the blessing promised to Abraham and his descendants. God never intended the blessing of his redemption to be confined to one nation or race of people. If faith is the method by which the promises to Abraham may be claimed, then Gentiles can claim those promises as well as Jews. This is not merely a logical deduction from Scripture, it is explicitly stated in the Old Testament. Scripture is here personified. God announced in Gen 12:3 that all nations would be blessed through Abraham. Plainly the sharing of all the nations in Abraham's blessing cannot be based upon biological relationship with him. Faith is the mechanism by which all people can become linked to that blessing. That promise to Abraham is here called "the gospel." The good news that God intended for all peoples is that they could be saved through faith in Christ. Abraham believed in Christ. He believed that one day his descendant would bring blessing to all people. There has never been but one way of salvation--the way of grace through faith.

D. Paul's Conclusion (3:9): *So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.* This verse repeats the conclusion reached in the previous verse. Only through the communion of faith could the Gentiles be blessed together with Abraham. The promise to Abraham preceded any Mosaic law works or even circumcision. In that fact lies a clear indication of the way the nations can share in his blessing. As Abraham secured the blessing through faith, all who believe as he did, whether Jews or Gentiles, will be blessed with him. All persons of faith stand together as being spiritual descendants of Abraham.

III. Inadequacy of Law Apart from Faith: The Testimony of Logic (3:10-14).

A. Condemnation under the Law (3:10-12).

Paul has just shown that righteousness is by way of faith. Now he proceeds to show that righteousness cannot be by way of the law.

1. Curse of the law (3:10): ***All 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."*** Salvation cannot be of the law, for the law brings a curse. At best all the law can do is identify areas of man's sin. The law is like warning signs at the beach; but Jesus is the lifeguard who rescues when we are in danger. All who seek their justification out of the works of the law in reality lie under the curse of that law. Paul cites Deut 27:26 which declares that those who do not keep all aspects of the law fall under its curse. Taken strictly and literally, this verse would require one to live a perfect life in order to find approval with God. This verse knocks the bottom out of every hope of being saved by keeping the works of the law.
2. Commendation of faith (3:11): ***Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because, "The righteous will live by faith."*** In Habakkuk 2:4 faith is presented as the one thing necessary for redemption. Those who are pious and godly will live a life that is unafraid of God's judgment. This life they live by faith, i.e., because of their faith they know a satisfying life.
3. Concept of the law (3:12): ***The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, "The man who does these things will live by them."*** The law has nothing to do with saving a sinner. The law does not speak of believing, but of doing. Paul quotes Lev 18:5. The law lays down the condition of life as keeping the commandments. Thus Paul points out that the Old Testament knew of two potential ways of finding favor with God, the faith way of Habakkuk and the law way of Leviticus. If it were possible to live perfectly by the law, then theoretically one could be saved by law-keeping. But this no man can do. Being human, we all would slip up somewhere.

B. Redemption in Christ (3:13-14).

1. Means of redemption (3:13): ***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."*** How is it that faith can obtain the blessing of Abraham if the law brings a curse on all who do not fulfill it? In the name CHRIST lies the secret of the whole redemption for both Jews and Gentiles. The word REDEEMED has the idea of "purchased." It has to do with delivering a person from slavery by the payment of a price. The word was regularly used of buying a slave in the marketplace. A price had to be paid for our salvation. Other Scriptures speak of ransoming (Matt 20:28; 1 Tim 2:6). Our sins violated God's justice, and thus incur the wrath of God. Behind this imagery is the idea of ransom money being paid for a forfeited life (Exod 21:30). People under the curse are under a sentence of death. They are as good as dead now in their trespasses and sins and they are headed for the second death. Christ redeemed us by becoming a curse in our behalf. This refers to the way in which he gave himself to death. The thought is that of substitution. Deut 21:23 indicates that those whose dead bodies were impaled on a "tree" after death were considered accursed of God. After his death, Christ hung on the cross as a condemned and executed criminal. The idea is that Christ frees us from slavery to sin and the law, and we become his bondslaves for time and eternity. When Christ died on the cross he acted in our place and took upon himself the penalty due to us. Because he suffered the curse of the law, we can be free. As believers we are free from the fear of the curse; we also are free from the necessity of obeying the law to obtain justification.
2. Purpose of redemption (3:14): ***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.*** Through the sacrifice of Christ, wonderful blessings became available to Gentiles. The "promise of the Spirit" refers to Jesus' promise of the coming of the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4; 26:6; Heb 9:15). The gift of the Spirit is now designated as the content of the promise to Abraham. It is the guarantee or pledge of the perfect redemption that Abraham was promised. These blessings come through faith without merit of works. Christ's death put an end to the rule of the law. He brought to perfect realization God's

eternal plan to save men through faith. Now anyone, Jew or Gentile, may obtain the promised blessing through faith in the name of Jesus.

Law and Promise Galatians 3:15-29

Introduction: Paul now looks at his subject from the point of view of the history of salvation. The law was given much later than the promise. Hence no one may make the fulfillment of the promise dependent upon keeping the law. That would do violence to the unconditional character of the promise.

I. Living under the Promise (3:15-18).

A. Promise was Inviolable in Character (3:15): *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.* The term "brothers" softens the tenseness of the preceding words. On the basis of the tightly woven logic of the preceding verses, Paul is appealing to his readers to accept his understanding of faith and law. In business dealings a party to a contract cannot unilaterally alter the terms of the contract. How much less can anything guaranteed by God be modified. A "covenant" is a settlement drawn up and legally in force. The word "established" is a legal term in the Greek. It refers to a legal sanction. The point that Paul is leading up to is this: The law is not a later addition to the promise by which the promise is robbed of its effect or subjected to new conditions. The idea here is that if a mere man cannot change a contract once it has been duly ratified, God can surely be depended on to stand by his solemn promise.

B. Promise was Singular in Specification (3:16): *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.* Now Paul begins to apply what he said in v. 15 to the covenant God made with Abraham. "Promises" here is equivalent to "covenant" in the preceding verse. The word is appropriate because God's covenant with Abraham consisted of promises. Paul argues that right from the first those promises were intended for those who are in Christ. God gave the promises to Abraham and his "seed" (singular). The seed of Abraham was Christ. All who are included in him, viz., believers, can claim the promises made to Abraham.

C. Promise had Priority in Time (3:17): *What I mean is this: The law, introduced 430 years later, does not set aside the covenant previously established by God and thus do away with the promise.* The Judaizers were placing the law in competition to the promise, in fact they placed the law above the promise for they made obedience to the law a condition of the salvation granted in the promise. The promise of salvation through the seed of Abraham (Christ) is not canceled by the law. The fulfillment of the law is not dependent upon a human fulfillment of the law. For over four centuries God's promise to Abraham had been effective without benefit of the law. How could that which came centuries later deprive the word that God had given Abraham of its power? God's covenant with Abraham was established or confirmed when Jacob and his sons descended into Egypt (Gen 15:30). The Israelites were in Egypt for 430 years (Exod 12:40) before they journeyed to Sinai to receive the law. The point here is that God's promise to Abraham could not be changed by his giving of the law several centuries later.

D. Promise was Divine in its Origin (3:18): *For if the 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.* Promise and law as

ways of salvation cannot be combined. The promise required faith in the coming seed; the law demanded obedience to 613 commandments. The promised salvation is here called "inheritance" to emphasize that it is not something anyone earns. God dispensed his salvation to Abraham by way of faith in the promise. This was an act of pure grace. If Abraham can claim the inheritance because of his faith in the promised seed, so also can anyone else. A person's faith is more important than his family tree.

II. Living under the Law (3:19-24).

A. Reason for the Law (3:19a).

1. Fundamental question (3:19a): ***What, then, was the purpose of the law?*** If the law cannot make salvation available, then why did God give it?
2. Law was added to the promise (3:19b): ***It was added...*** The law was not part of God's original promise to Abraham.
3. Law functioned to reveal sin (3:19c): ***because of transgressions...*** The law was given in order to make show what sin is. It exposed sin as being a transgression of God's will. "Transgress" means to cross over a line, and the law draws that line in the moral realm. The law forces men to acknowledge the awful character of sin. The law makes guilt and evil greater (Rom 5:20). This had to take place so that the indispensability of Christ would be recognized. The law cannot produce goodness. It can also only define minimum standards of what is right. It can condemn those who fail to reach this standard. The law was added to show what sin was.
4. Law was a temporary measure (3:19d): ***until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come.*** The promise pointed to Christ and was fulfilled in him. Until he came into the world the law focused the spotlight on human wickedness. Thus the law made clear man's need for a savior. The law was a temporary measure until the coming of that offspring to whom the promise referred, viz., Christ.

B. Mediators of the Law (3:19e-20): ***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.*** The Judaizers considered the law to be a direct revelation from God. But Paul declared that it was ordained by angels through a "go-between" (Moses). The promise was given directly by God to Abraham. Thus the promise is superior to the law. The law was given to Israel through angels by Moses, the mediator of that covenant. Deut 33:2 indicates that angels accompanied God when he came down on Mt. Sinai. From that Jewish tradition deduced that angels were involved in the giving of the law (cf. Acts 7:38, 53; Heb 2:2). Thus the promise was superior to the law. Whenever a mediator is involved, two parties are involved. To achieve its purpose the law depended on human compliance. In the giving of the promise, however, no mediator was involved. God was at work alone. He is not only the author of the promise, he fulfills the promise as well.

C. Limitations of the Law (3:21-22).

1. Law not opposed to the promises (3:21a). ***Is the law, therefore, opposed to the promises of God? Absolutely not!*** What has been said in the preceding verses might make someone think that there is a conflict between the law and the promise. They might think that the law made the fulfillment of the promises useless. But such is not the case as Paul will now explain. The law does not annul the promises; but neither does it take their place.
2. Law could not impart life (3:21b). ***For if a law had been given that could impart life, then righteousness would certainly have come by the law.*** Theoretically, the law would be able to guide a person to salvation. The law could make one guiltless before God if only it were not dependent upon the compliance of man. Law cannot impart life, cannot inspire and motivate someone to meet its demands. If

there were such a law, no other way of salvation would have to be opened up to man. Both the law and promise aim for the same thing; but the law cannot get men to fulfill itself. The law cannot impart life. It can define sin, but it can do nothing to cure it.

3. Law could not liberate from sin (3:22a). ***But the Scripture declares that the whole world is a prisoner of sin....*** The law cannot give righteousness. Therefore the sanctions and threats against transgressors of the law found in Scripture declares the whole world to be a prisoner of sin. There is no escape under the law from the penalties of sin. The law reveals man as impotent to achieve his salvation by law-keeping. This verse means that all men are prisoners of sin till Christ sets them free.

4. Law reveals the need for the gospel (3:22b). ***so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe.*** The work of the law was to so convict people of sin that they would be driven to seek escape from sin by way of the promise, i.e., the gospel. The blessings of the promise are given through faith in Jesus. This is simply saying that Christ is the source of salvation from sin. The implication is that the law is too hard to obey. So the struggle to earn a right standing with God by works of the law drives us to despair. God intended it to be that way so that we might fall back upon his promise.

D. Function of the Law (3:23-24).

1. Men were imprisoned by the law (3:23). ***Before this faith came, we were held prisoners by the law, locked up until faith should be revealed.*** Here Paul further develops the thought that the law holds people in bondage. Such guardianship and restraint was a moral and social necessity. This was the status of people before the salvation that was revealed in Christ. The law was a kind of jail-keeper. The law brought wrath upon transgressors. Because it was unable to empower righteous living, the law also was the means of making people conscious of ethical inadequacy. The function of the law, then, was to drive men to despair, and to cause them to yearn for a new life that would fulfill the will of God. The bondage under the law urged people towards the faith. The faith plan of salvation was revealed in the fullness of time by the coming of Jesus.

2. Men were led to Christ by the law (3:24). ***So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith.*** The law is compared to a tutor (Greek = *paidagogos*; KJV = schoolmaster), i.e., an attendant to minor boys. In that time young boys were put under the discipline of a governor. Slaves were sometimes used for this purpose. They were hard and severe to their pupils. Paul is stressing here, not the general positive teaching purpose of the law, but the negative disciplinary function. Young boys would develop a growing desire to be free of the harsh discipline of their tutor. The point is that the law makes people dissatisfied, teaches them how they will not get to the redemption of life. In this sense the law drives us to Christ who alone can emancipate us from the curse and impotence of the law. The

III. Living under Christ (3:25-29).

A. Description of our Status (3:25-26).

1. We are not under the supervision of the law (3:25): ***Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law.*** When young boys reached maturity they were liberated from the supervision of their tutors. Once Christ came, the law had fulfilled its purpose in the history of salvation. Here is the status of those who have put their faith in Christ. They are no longer under a moral supervisor or guardian. They have entered upon their spiritual maturity.

2. We are sons of God (3:26): ***You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.*** Compared to the immaturity of the life of slavery under the tutor, we have now become mature sons. We have freedom in

Christ. There is special emphasis on the word "all." All kinds of people have equal worth and oneness in Christ. Faith in Christ has given them the full status of authentic sonship to God.

B. Explanation of our Status (3:27). V. 27 explains how faith made them the sons of God. Faith had led them to follow Jesus, to put themselves under his leadership.

1. Those who are sons of God have been baptized (3:27a). *For all of you who were baptized...* Baptism is a faith act. It manifests for all to see our faith in Jesus.

2. Those who are sons of God had been baptized into Christ (3:27b): *baptized into Christ*. As culmination of our initial commitment to Christ, it was baptism which brought us "into" Christ. We became sons of God and members of the chosen family when we were baptized. We all become Christians in the same way. Here baptism is set forth as part of the law of faith. It is placed in contrast to the works of the law by which no man can be saved.

3. Those who are sons of God had put on Christ in baptism (3:27c): *have clothed yourselves with Christ*. Just as a garment which one puts on envelopes the person wearing it, and identifies his appearance and his life, so the person baptized in Christ is quite entirely taken up in Christ and in the salvation brought by him. He has clothed himself with the character of Christ.

C. Result of our Status (3:28): *There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus*. Reconciliation with God brings about reconciliation with men. The old discriminations mean nothing anymore. People find a new unity in Christ. All believers are one in him. In terms of salvation, there is no descent, rank or sex in Christ. All come to Christ the same way. All stand on equal footing before him. The uncircumcised Greek becomes a Christian in the same way as the Jew. The slave and free man, the man and the woman, all come to know the blessings of salvation in the same way. All who have obeyed the gospel have access freely to the blessings in Christ. There is no discrimination. Sonship is not limited to the natural sons of Abraham. Racial, social and sexual prejudice is gone.

D. Reward of our Status (3:29): *If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise*. In vv. 7-9 Paul called believers the seed of Abraham. Christ is expressly declared to be the seed of Abraham in v. 16. Union with Christ constitutes the true spiritual descent from Abraham and secures the inheritance of all the messianic blessings. This status is reached through our relationship with Christ, the promised Seed. If we are Abraham's seed, then we are also heirs. It is not the land of Canaan which we inherit, but that which the land of Canaan symbolized, viz., living in the kingdom of God. Belonging to the seed of Abraham is not determined by physical descent, but by faith. Abraham's seed consists of those who share his faith in the promised Seed, i.e., Christ. An inheritance is always a gift, not something one earns. So salvation is the gift of God's grace, not a human achievement.

Slaves and Sons

Galatians 4:1-11

Introduction: Again Paul emphasizes the great change that has taken place with the coming of Christ. We are no longer slaves, but sons.

I. Under Law: Servants (4:1-3).

A. Illustration (4:1-2).

1. Immature children are like slaves (4:1): ***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.*** The maturity of the heir determines how he is treated. When he is a minor he has no voice in how he is raised. He is like a slave in that he must do what his superiors tell him to do. The heir may have the right to vast wealth. Yet while he is a child he has nothing. Children look to present gratification and not to future good. Before Christ came, neither Gentiles nor Jews were any better off than slaves. God intended that on the way to full grown sonship, mankind had to pass through a stage that differed little from slavery.

2. Immature children are subject to supervision (4:2). ***He is subject to guardians and trustees until the time set by his father.*** In Paul's view both paganism and Judaism made men slaves. The picture here is of a child whose father has died at an early age. The guardians and trustees are those who supervise the raising of the child and who guard his possessions. That guardianship, however, would last only so long as stipulated in the will of the father. When the child reaches that age, he is free from supervision. He is free to enjoy the wealth that he has inherited.

B. Application (4:3):

1. We were once children (4:3a): ***So also, when we were children...*** When they were children, incapable of being moved by promises of future good, God kept them for a time under the law of Moses.

2. We were once in slavery (4:3b): ***we were in slavery...*** Prior to Christ's coming all men, Jew and Gentile, were like minor children. As such they were in slavery to the principles by which men lived before the time of Christ.

3. We lived under basic principles (4:3c): ***under the basic principles of the world.*** The *world* refers to the world of mankind in its lost state needing redemption. The *principles of the world* include all which men thought they knew about finding redemption apart from Christ. This would include the rules and ordinances to which religious men outside of Christ surrender themselves.

a. Heathen sometimes actually do harm to their bodies in an effort to find redemption for their souls.

b. Jews try to earn salvation by performing the ceremonies of the law. It is true that the law was of divine origin; but the use that men made of that law was wrong. Those who lived under the law in this sense were as much in bondage as the Gentiles who practiced the principles of their respective religious cults.

c. Paul represents the Jewish system as an elementary religion of childhood, full of external rites and ceremonies, pointing beyond themselves to an age of manhood in Christ. Both Jews and Gentiles were slaves to elementary religious observances. Such observances had no power to redeem and set men free. These elementary forms of religion, Jewish and Gentile, have been superseded by the new revelation in Christ.

II. Under Christ: Sons (4:4-7).

A. Facts of Christ's Coming (4:4):

1. He came in the fullness of time (4:5a): ***But when the time had fully come...*** God established the time limit under which the world would be in slavery to the basic principles of the world. The language suggests that the time was opportune for the great event to take place.

2. He came from the Father (4:5b): ***God sent his Son...*** The Son was sent forth from heaven and was commissioned by his Father to accomplish a certain mission. Christ is the turning point of history, the end of the old world and the beginning of the new. Cf. Mark 1:15.

3. He came as a man (4:5c): ***born of a woman...*** The Son emptied himself of his heavenly glory to enter the world as a man. He was fully human as well as divine.

4. He came as a Jew (4:5d): **born under law...** By being born of a Jewish woman, the Son took upon himself the yoke of the law that he might fulfill the law, take it out of the way and deliver his people from the bondage of the law.

B. Purpose of Christ's Coming (4:5):

1. He came to redeem those in bondage (4:5a): **to redeem those under law...** Christ fulfilled the ethical demands of the law. But neither his coming in the flesh nor his keeping the law in the days of his flesh availed, in whole or in part, for the redemption of men. His redemptive work proper began and ended on the cross. It was on the cross that he became our sin bearer. He died as a substitute to bear the curse of the law on the cross. Thus for those who put their faith in him, the curse of the law has been removed.

2. He came to make us sons (4:5b): **that we might receive the full rights of sons.** The redemption from the law enabled people to become children of God. Christ has given us the freedom contained in sonship. We are his by adoption. We were not born by natural birth into the family of God. We are prepared for the adoption by faith and repentance. Then by a burial out of the old family relations and a resurrection in the new ones we are adopted into the family of God. Baptism is the act of adoption by which we pass out of one family--that of Adam--into the new family of God with Jesus himself as our elder brother. Paul's image of adoption probably reflects the Roman practice. It was a legal arrangement by which a wealthy childless man might take into his family a slave youth, who thus ceased to be a slave and became a son and heir. Christ is God's Son by nature; we are God's sons by grace.

C. Blessings of Christ's Coming (4:6):

1. Gift of God's Spirit (4:6a): **Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts...** The fruit and evidence of the truth that God has received them as sons is the giving of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is here called "the Spirit of his Son." The emphasis here is on sonship. Just as the Son and the Father had unbroken communion, so the Spirit of Jesus within our lives enables us to experience communion with the Father. According to Acts 2:38 every believer receives the gift of God's Spirit at the time of his baptism. The Spirit is said to be in the believer's heart. The law was solely an external authority; it could not change the heart. The Spirit penetrates hearts in order to quicken and renew them. Under the law of Moses, Jews were servants; under the law of Christ they are sons.

2. Work of the Spirit (4:6b): **the Spirit who calls out, Abba, Father.** Because they were sons, not servants, God sent the spirit of a son into their hearts. The Spirit brings the believers to the Father, and grants them the assurance of kinship. The crying out here probably refers to the joy of the redemption. The Spirit together with believers and in believers cries out to God. He causes believers to cry out in joyful and grateful acknowledgement of their salvation. "Abba" is an Aramaic word which means Father. In the earliest days of the church most of the Christians spoke the Aramaic language. In a letter to these Gentile Christians Paul had to use the Greek equivalent of Abba. There is no proof that Abba is a more intimate way of referring to the Father equivalent to our "Daddy." This cry of the Spirit connects with the way Jesus told his disciples to pray, i.e., Our Father who art in heaven. The Spirit teaches believers to understand and pray this prayer.

D. Result of Christ's Coming (4:7):

1. We are no longer slaves (4:7a): **So you are no longer a slave...** The receiving of the Spirit makes it apparent that the believer is no longer a slave but has become a son. A slave obeys out of fear; a son obeys from love.

2. We are now sons (4:7b): **but a son;** Paul repeats the emphasis of the preceding verses.

3. We are now heirs (4:7c): **and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.** If the believer is a son, he is also an heir (cf. v. 1). All the inheritance guaranteed to Abraham is also intended for the believers from the Gentiles.

III. Under Pressure: Sellouts (4:8-11). Here we come to one of the most shocking arguments of Galatians. Paul regards both paganism and Judaism as being in bondage.

A. Their Past Condition (4:8):

1. They were ignorant of God (4:8a): **Formerly, when you did not know God...** Before Christ the Gentiles had no true knowledge of God. Only through Christ is that knowledge possible.

2. They were slaves to idols (4:8b): **you were slaves to those who by nature are not gods.** The lack of true knowledge resulted in slavish fear and worship of a multitude of idols. No matter how they lived they would be offending one of the many gods which were worshiped by the heathen.

B. Their Present Condition (4:9a):

1. They now know God (4:9a): **But now that you know God...** In Christ these Gentiles have come to know God.

2. They now were known by God (4:9b): **or rather are known by God...** The bond uniting them with God was not established by them but by God himself. He had wanted to know them as his own people. He was interested in them. He chose to share himself with them before they chose him.

C. Their Perilous Condition (4:9c-11).

1. That to which they were turning (4:9c): **how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable principles?** Paul is amazed that these Gentile Christians were choosing to place themselves again under the bondage of those principles which had governed their lives before they met Christ. It was not that they wanted to revert to idolatry. They wanted to subject themselves to all sorts of legalistic stipulations. These kinds of pre-Christ principles are called weak and miserable because they can give no firm ground of confidence and no comfort in regard to standing with the Lord.

2. That to which they were heading (4:9d): **Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again?** What sense did it make to turn back to the very system from which Christ had liberated them? Their actions remind one of the children of Israel who, when set free from Egypt, constantly lusted after the things of Egypt and even proposed from time to time to return.

3. That which they were observing (4:10): **You are observing special days and months and seasons and years!** Here Paul explains what those miserable principles were to which the Galatians were returning. They were attracted by the observation of all kinds of ceremonial regulations. "Special days" would include sabbath-days. The "months" would include the observance of the New Moon festivals. The "seasons" refer to the Jewish feasts. The "years" refers to the Sabbath and Jubilee years. They had taken over the entire Mosaic system.

4. That which they were engendering (4:11). **I fear for you, that somehow I have wasted my efforts on you.** The actions of the Galatians shocked and pained Paul. He had invested a lot of energy and emotion in these Christians. These people were choosing to reject the gospel of free grace through faith in Christ as preached by Paul. They were embracing a doctrine of salvation based on legalistic observances. If they continued down this path, Paul would have to wash his hands of them.

A Preacher's Earnest Appeal

Galatians 4:12-31

Introduction: Paul here is not merely arguing and contending; he makes an appeal to the old bond which existed between himself and the churches of Galatia.

I. Appeal for Faithfulness (4:12-16).

A. Essence of the Appeal (4:12a):

1. Appeal was based on brotherly love (4:12a): *I plead with you, brothers...* One can sense a strong upsurge of love in these words.
2. Appeal was for them to imitate Paul in what he was (4:12b): *become like me...* Paul wants the Galatians to have the same freedom which he has in Christ. To enjoy this freedom, they needed to disentangle themselves from their bondage to the law.
3. Appeal was for them to imitate Paul in what he had done (4:12c): *for I became like you.* Paul had torn himself loose from legalistic attitudes about Gentiles when he came among them to preach. He desired to be saved by faith and nothing more just like the Gentiles. He put aside all of his early prejudices and ideas of works-salvation when he went forth preaching to the Gentiles. The Galatians had now become entangled in that from which Paul had freed himself.

B. Appeal to Remember Past Associations (4:12b-14).

1. Galatians had treated Paul well (4:12b): *You have done me no wrong.* When Paul had been among the Galatians, he had been treated very well. In the light of their former treatment, their present changed attitude is all the more painful and inexplicable.
2. Paul had come to them because of an illness (4:13): *As you know, it was because of an illness that I first preached the gospel to you.* In the light of the record in Acts, it would appear that the illness may have been the result of persecutions which Paul had experienced just prior to coming into Galatia (Acts 14:19ff.). Others speculate that Paul may have been an epileptic or that he was diseased in the eyes.
3. Paul's illness was a trial to them (4:14a): *Even though my illness was a trial to you, you did not treat me with contempt or scorn.* The illness was a temptation to the Galatians to ignore and despise Paul, i.e., to pay no attention to him. Jews and Gentiles regarded illness as a divine punishment for some unconfessed sin (Cf. Acts 24:8). Whatever the ailment was, it had led him to stop among the Galatians to get some needed care.
4. They had accepted Paul in spite of his illness (4:14b): *Instead, you welcomed me as if I were an angel of God, as if I were Christ Jesus himself.* Instead of turning aside from Paul because of his illness, the Galatians had received Paul as a messenger of God. They had put great confidence in him and treated him with the respect that would be worthy of Christ himself.

C. A Question Regarding Present Attitudes (4:15-16):

1. They had lost the joy of association with Paul (4:15a): *What has happened to all your joy?* Once they were overjoyed by Paul's presence among them. This was indicated by the way they had treated him. Now their attitude toward him had soured. The zeal and enthusiasm which people show when they first respond to the gospel can quickly cool off under the influence of false teaching.
2. They no longer felt committed to Paul (4:15b): *I can testify that, if you could have done so, you would have torn out your eyes and given them to me.* When Paul was among them they would have sacrificed anything for him. These words have suggested to some commentators that Paul's illness had something to do with his eyes.

3. They now were hostile to Paul (4:16): ***Have I now become your enemy by telling you the truth?*** The attitude of the Galatians toward Paul had changed. Now they are hostile toward him. Paul can find no other explanation other than that they no longer want to hear the truth of God. Some think Paul had written an earlier letter to the Galatians in which he took strong exception to the teaching of the Judaizers. Others think that when Paul visited these churches on his second missionary journey that he personally warned them about the Judaizers. In either case it is clear that the Judaizers had been at work in Galatia, and it is clear that Paul had made clear his stance regarding them. The Galatians had not taken his stance in good spirit. The truth hurts, and those who do not love the truth will detest the one who brings it to them. Paul had not changed, nor had his gospel changed.

II. Analysis of Unfaithfulness (4:17-20).

A. Improper Zeal (4:17): *Those people are zealous to win you over, but for no good. What they want is to alienate you from us, so that you may be zealous for them.* The Judaizers were zealous for their doctrine. They must have effective in presenting it, for many were deceived by them even though the Christianity which they preached was a much harsher kind. But they were not unselfishly motivated. They wanted to isolate the churches. They wanted to drive a wedge between Paul and his converts so they might have a monopoly on the Galatians' zeal. They wanted to be able to brag that they had won the Galatians from Paul's gospel of freedom to themselves and their emphasis on the law. In order to do this they were trying to make the Galatians feel that they were second-class Christians who must conform with the Jewish law in order to qualify for full status. Like modern cult leaders, they turned their disciples against all who might influence them in any other direction. In this case, they wanted to insulate the Galatians against any intervention by Paul. The Judaizers wanted to control the Galatians, to make them totally dependent so that they would have to work under those teachers as their spiritual overseers. At the moment they were trying to win over the Galatians; in the end they will rule over them.

B. Proper Zeal (4:18). *It is fine to be zealous, provided the purpose is good, and to be so always and not just when I am with you.* Paul is admitting that it is good to desire the favor and love of the churches. Paul wants this for himself also, but only for a good purpose. In fact, he would like to receive in his absence the same devotion from the Galatians that he had received when he was present with them.

C. Paul's Zeal (4:19-20).

1. He longs for their maturity in Christ (4:19): ***My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you....*** Paul's deep affection for these brethren breaks through again. They are his "little children" in the Lord. He is like a mother struggling to give birth to them as his spiritual children. His struggle for them will not end until they reach maturity in Christ. He wants the form of Christ to appear in their lives, i.e., he wants to see in them lives ruled by Christ, lives which depend on Christ, and trust in Christ. Though he thought of his readers as children, he yearned that they should become mature men and women in Christ.

2. He longs to come to the Galatians (4:20): ***how I wish I could be with you now and change my tone, because I am perplexed about you.*** Paul feels the need of being able to speak to the Galatian churches personally. His wish is one that could not be fulfilled for the present. We do not know why. Perhaps the distance was too great for him to leave his present duties. Obviously the living voice can convey much that the written word cannot convey. Only in hearing him speak on the issues here being discussed could they ascertain his earnestness, compassion and frustration. Their recent leanings on law rather than gospel, on commandments rather than the cross, has Paul perplexed. He no longer knows what he must do about

them or think about them. If he could only be with them he could better size up the situation and deal with it directly and effectively. As it was, he was worrying himself into a near frantic state.

III. An Allegory (4:21-31).

A. Allegory Presented (4:21-23).

1. Opening question (4:21): ***Tell me, you who want to be under the law, are you not aware of what the law says?*** The conduct of the Galatians suggested that their desire was to be under law rather than gospel. If they really want to be under law, they surely must listen to the law. The Torah (law) contains much besides commandments. Whoever reads the entire Torah will find that its bearing is quite different from the one the Galatians were putting upon it.

2. Abraham's two sons (4:22). ***For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and the other by the free woman.*** Paul now turns to an episode in the history of Abraham recorded in the Torah. The two sons of Abraham upon whom the teaching of Genesis focuses are Ishmael and Isaac. In these two sons Paul sees the same opposition manifesting itself currently between those who live by law and those who live by faith. One can be a child of Abraham either through observing the law, or through sharing Abraham's faith in the promised seed. Ishmael was the son of a slave woman, Hagar the Egyptian. Isaac was the son of Sarah, Abraham's wife of choice.

3. Contrasting births (4:23): ***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.*** Although both Ishmael and Isaac were sons of Abraham, there was a big difference between them. Ishmael's conception and birth were ordinary. Isaac was born through promise after Sarah was, humanly speaking, no longer able to conceive. In v. 29 "result of a promise" becomes "after the Spirit." The power of God's Spirit enabled Sarah to conceive Isaac. Paul's charge here that the unconverted Jews are actually the descendants of Ishmael, Abraham's banished son by an Egyptian maidservant.

B. Allegory Explained (4:24-27).

1. General significance (4:24a): ***These things may be taken figuratively, for the women represent two covenants.*** Hagar and Sarah represent two covenants. Hagar represents the covenant of Sinai which is characterized by rules and rituals. Sarah represents the covenant with Abraham, characterized by promise and the powerful working of the Spirit of God.

2. Significance of Hagar (4:24b-25): ***One covenant is from Mount Sinai and bears children who are to be slaves: This is Hagar.*** The Sinai covenant was a privilege for Israel because the Lord accepted Israel as his people. Still this dispensation was characterized by law. While that law showed God's gracious concern for Israel, it could not in itself bring redemption. For sinful men that law was a yoke that they could not bear. The bond woman and her son represent a system which enslaved men (cf. 3:23 and 4:7).

3. Earthly Jerusalem (4:25): ***Now Hagar stands for Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present city of Jerusalem, because she is in slavery with her children.*** In Paul's day, Hagar was represented by the physical city of Jerusalem where the Sanhedrin was located. Here additional laws and regulations were set forth and required of all those who professed to be children of Abraham. Physical Jerusalem propagates bondage, for it knows no other redemption other than the law. "Children" here are fleshly Israel that seeks its hope in obeying every law.

4. Heavenly Jerusalem (4:26-27).

a. Heavenly Jerusalem is free (4:26a): ***But the Jerusalem that is above is free...*** In contrast to physical Jerusalem is another Jerusalem. It is just as real, but it is spiritual in nature. This Jerusalem is "above" in that it is heavenly, not earthly. It cannot be approached physically, but must be entered spiritually. From

above--in heaven--Christ rules this Jerusalem. In this holy city every Christian has citizenship (Phil 3:20). To this heavenly Jerusalem all Christians have come (Heb 12:22). This Jerusalem is free. The citizens of this Jerusalem are not bound to slavish observance of rules and rituals. Rather their lives are governed by the free gift that they have received through faith in Christ. Grace, not race, is the principle of this holy city.

b. Heavenly Jerusalem is the mother of Christians (4:26b): ***and she is our mother.*** Heavenly Jerusalem is the mother of all Christians. From heaven flows the empowerment of God's Spirit that fills lives and crowds out sin. The gospel of Christ's triumphant enthronement in heaven makes alive those who are dead in sin and enslaved to man-made schemes. Thus heavenly Jerusalem gives birth to all Christians.

c. Scriptural anticipation (4:27): ***For it is written: "Be glad, O barren woman, who bears no children; break forth and cry aloud, you who have no labor pains; because more are the children of the desolate woman than of her who has a husband."*** In support of what he has said about heavenly Jerusalem Paul cites Isa 54:1. This quotation is taken from the prophecy of Zion's restoration and expansion after the captivity. Restored Zion will have more children (citizens) than in the time when she, before the captivity, was the religious center of Mosaic faith. Paul is indicating that Isaiah was not talking about the physical city of Jerusalem, but the spiritual Zion, the messianic kingdom. Zion's miraculous growth is due to the conversion of multitudes of Gentiles who by faith become citizens of that city. This growth of Zion is the work of God, the result of pure grace through the gospel.

C. Allegory Applied (4:28-31).

1. Christians are children of promise (4:28): ***Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise.*** Gentile Christians are children of Abraham in the manner of Isaac. They are children of promise because they owe their existence to the promise first given to Abraham, then repeated by the prophets. Their new birth was engendered by the Holy Spirit through the word of God. As in the case of Isaac, God's grace and sovereign power were the cause of the birth. In effect Paul is accusing the Judaizers of trying to undo the work that God had done among the Galatian Christians.

2. Children of promise are persecuted (4:29). ***At that time the son born in the ordinary way persecuted the son born by the power of the Spirit. It is the same now.*** Here Paul takes the allegory a step further. The two sons illustrate how those born after the flesh treat those born after the Spirit. Ishmael, the older son, persecuted Isaac (Gen 21:9). He did not leave Isaac in peace. He was jealous over Isaac's privileges and priorities. So it was with the Judaizers. They were determined to harass and undermine at every opportunity the spiritual seed of Abraham.

3. Children of promise claim the inheritance (4:30): ***But what does the Scripture say? "Get rid of the slave woman and her son, for the slave woman's son will never share in the inheritance with the free woman's son."*** The point here is that the threats and enmity of the fleshly seed must be resisted. Sarah demanded that Ishmael and his mother be expelled from the camp of Abraham (Gen 21:10). This demand was sanctioned by the Lord (Gen 21:12). Sarah saw in Ishmael a constant threat to her son Isaac. The Galatians needed to recognize the wisdom in Sarah's demand. They needed to avoid the Judaizers and defend themselves against those who would drag them back under the principle of works salvation.

4. Conclusion (4:31): ***Therefore, brothers, we are not children of the slave woman, but of the free woman.*** This verse is a summary of what has been argued in the previous verses. Everyone who has accepted the gospel--Paul included--are Sarah's sons. We are free in Christ, not under the bondage of trying to accomplish the impossible task of saving ourselves one good deed at a time. This freedom in Christ must be protected at all costs.

APPLICATION OF THE GOSPEL

Standing Fast for Freedom

Galatians 5:1-12

Introduction: This unit is really a conclusion to the preceding paragraph.

I. Freedom Defended (5:1).

A. Purpose of Christ's Work (5:1a): *It is for freedom that Christ has set us free.* It is self-evident that if Christ set us free, he did not intend for us to be slaves. The *freedom* mentioned here is freedom (1) from the curse of the law (cf. 3:13, 24); (2) from the spiritual impotency of the law to save us (cf. 3:21); (3) from the bondage of sin and guilt; and (4) from the bondage of legalism. Attempting to find salvation in the law of Moses leads to spiritual death. From that state of spiritual death Christ has raised us up. Falling back into slavery is inexplicable and inexcusable.

B. Perseverance in Christ's Freedom (5:1b): *Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.* We must resist every effort to bring us back under the yoke of legalistic demands. We can still learn from the law, but it no longer has any claim upon us. Even though Gentiles never had received the law directly, still they, like Israel, were subservient to it. To stand fast in one's Christian freedom calls for a determined resistance to every influence that would bring one under a yoke again.

II. Freedom Eroded (5:2-6).

A. Dangers of Submitting to Circumcision (5:2-4).

1. To submit means Christ has no value (5:2): *Mark my words! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all.* The opening words, *I, Paul* are emphatic. Paul speaks with his full apostolic authority. Submitting to circumcision as demanded by the Judaizers, was the first step down a path of betraying Christ. They must choose either circumcision or Christ. The Judaizers wanted to add circumcision to faith in Christ. Paul says that is impossible. Paul is not saying that circumcised people cannot be saved. He is saying that circumcision is not a requirement of salvation. To make circumcision a condition of salvation was to deny the sufficiency of Christ's work. The Galatians had not yet entirely yielded to this false teaching, but they were leaning in this direction. They cannot put their confidence in circumcision and at the same time put your entire trust in Christ. Christ is everything or he is nothing.

2. To submit is to obligate oneself to the whole law (5:3): *Again I declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole law.* Paul uses here the most formal language of testimony. If one thinks he must be circumcised to be saved, he should realize that he must obey the entire law of Moses. The Galatians did not realize this. They thought they could continue with Christianity, but needed to be circumcised into order to qualify to receive the promises made to Abraham. It is not circumcision itself that stands between a man and God, but the teaching that circumcision somehow makes one eligible to receive additional blessing beyond those which Christ purchased for us on the cross. The law is not a cafeteria line where some items may be chosen and others ignored.

3. To submit is to become alienated from Christ (5:4a): *You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ...* One can try to be declared justified or innocent before God on the basis of

living by the law, but he must realize that he must live a perfect life. There cannot be even one minor infraction of God's law. If one chooses to go that route he had cut himself off from the free and complete salvation that Christ offers to those who put their faith in him. Those who trust in law to save them simply are not Christians.

4. To submit is to fall from grace (5:4b): ***you have fallen away from grace***. Trying to earn salvation by law-keeping is miles removed from the concept of salvation as a free gift which cannot be earned. To take the law-path means that we are turning our backs on God's unspeakable grace.

B. Glories of Living by Faith (5:5-6).

1. Faith facilitates patient waiting (5:5):

a. Our active trust: ***But by faith...*** Salvation comes by the Spirit of God working through our faith in Christ--not by works of law. Rules, rites and regulations have nothing to do with it.

b. Our eager wait: ***we eagerly await...*** Because of our absolute confidence in what God has already done for us we can eagerly look forward to what God will do for us.

c. Our heavenly helper: ***through the Spirit...*** The Holy Spirit is the empowering force in those who put their faith in Christ. What the Spirit gives and works is known and received by faith.

d. Our destined goal: ***the righteousness...*** Our goal is righteousness, i.e., the official recognition by God that our life is right with him. We wait for the final verdict, the final declaration of acquittal which will be announced for all to hear when Christ returns. Those who walk the law-path are never quite sure if they have done enough. They do not have the same assurance as those who walk the faith-path.

e. Our glorious hope: ***for which we hope***. Paul here includes himself among those who fix their hope, not on the law, but on Christ. Any hope that we might have is based on what Christ did for us. Christ is either the only Savior or he is no Savior at all.

2. Faith removes superficial distinctions (5:6a): ***For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value***. To be "in Christ" is to be a Christian, to be saved. Circumcision is not essential to salvation; nor does it give a man a higher status after he is saved. In fact, as a spiritual act circumcision no longer has any value in the plan of God. Up to now Paul had been speaking of the legalism of circumcision, but now he introduced its opposite, the legalism of non circumcision. He recognized the fact that a person who rejects law as a way of salvation may so pride himself on his freedom from external observances as actually to suppose that he thereby will gain acceptance with God. Such an attitude could make a person just as legalistic as the Judaizers. True religion is neither a matter of external observances nor the absence of such observances.

3. Faith expresses itself in love (5:6b). ***The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love***. Among the saved it is only faith that counts for something. Biblical faith is more than intellectual agreement with basic Christian doctrine. Biblical faith expresses itself in love, and love in turn expresses itself in obedience to Christ. The kind of faith Paul meant is not the cold intellectual acceptance of some proposition, but the warmhearted confidence in Christ that finds its expression in love.

III. Freedom Attacked (5:7-12).

A. False Teachers Have a Devastating Effect (5:7): *You were running a good race. Who cut in on you and kept you from obeying the truth?* Paul here uses the figure of running a race. The Galatians had gotten off to a good start in their service to Christ. By means of a question Paul expresses his amazement that they had now gotten off the course. Someone had gotten in their way like a person cutting in on a runner in a race and slowing down his progress. *The truth* here is the gospel. Obedience to the gospel

begins with baptism, and continues throughout the Christian life. It is the gospel we must obey, not the law.

B. False Teachers Do the Work of Satan (5:8): *That kind of persuasion does not come from the one who calls you.* The Judaizers were persuading the Galatians that they needed to add the Mosaic law to the gospel. That kind of persuasion did not come from God who had called them through the gospel to accept Christ. It is the gospel that brought about their conversion. To listen to the Judaizers is to turn their backs on the one who called them unto salvation. It is God who calls (present tense). God who initially called the Galatians keeps on calling them, even by means of this very letter which Paul was sending them. God was calling the readers to abandon their involvement in legalistic religion. He was calling them to recommit themselves to Christ and the gospel of grace.

C. False Teachers Ruin the Gospel (5:9): *A little yeast works through the whole batch of dough.* This is a proverb that means that little things often have a big impact. To insist on circumcision, for example, results in a denial that the work of Christ on the cross was effective. To the Jews, leaven almost always stood for some evil influence. A small amount of legalism of the Judaizers had the potential of spreading throughout the Galatian churches and corrupting them all.

D. False Teachers Must be Resisted (5:10a): *I am confident in the Lord that you will take no other view.* Previously Paul has expressed his concern over the direction of the Galatians. Here he expresses his confidence that, in the end, the Galatians will agree with him that the cross alone is sufficient to procure our salvation, and that faith is the only avenue by which Christ's cross work can be accessed. "In the Lord" shows us where Paul placed his confidence. He was sure that God's Spirit, working in the Galatian churches, would bring about a victory for the truth.

E. False Teachers will be Punished (5:10b): *The one who is throwing you into confusion will pay the penalty, whosoever he may be.* Paul seems to focus here on the leader of the Judaizers. This man was bringing confusion in the church regarding the way of salvation. Such action will be judged by the Lord. The person who has caused the confusion will have to bear the penalty of God's judgment as a heavy burden. Although God's name is not mentioned, it is clear that Paul has in mind the judgment of God. "Whosoever he may be" means irrespective of how important and esteemed the person may be or may act. Paul was willing to leave the person who was unsettling the Galatians in the hands of God.

F. False Teachers Take the Easy Path (5:11): *Brothers, if I am still preaching circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been abolished.* Hypothetically Paul could have preached the circumcision message just like the Judaizers. Had he done so, he would not have faced the persecution, opposition and traps with which the Jews confronted him in every city. The doctrine of the cross rejects all human merit and glory. Only through faith in the crucified Christ is there hope of salvation. For many this doctrine is offensive. It is a stumbling block to proud men. The doctrine of circumcision, however, denies the effectiveness of the cross alone to save men. The message that salvation comes through a crucified Christ was indeed a scandalous concept to Jews who refused to believe in Jesus. Therefore, true gospel preachers like Paul were often persecuted by rigorous Jews.

G. False Teachers are Inconsistent (5:12): *As for those agitators, I wish they would go the whole way and emasculate them-selves!* Paul labels the Judaizers as agitators, for they were stirring up trouble in the churches. The priests of some pagan religions at that time practiced self-castration. He is being sarcastic.

Here Paul is putting the circumcision advocated by the Judaizers on the same level as the surgical mutilation of the pagans. By these strong words Paul is saying that a perverted gospel is no better than paganism. The Galatians would be familiar with the priests of Cybele. She was a Phrygian goddess, and Phrygia was adjacent to Galatia. Her priests actually castrated themselves.

Life in the Spirit Galatians 5:13-26

Introduction: The Judaizers argued that to reject the law would mean that the great ethical standards of the Law of Moses would be abandoned. They feared that Christianity without the law of Moses would not provide a sufficient defense for the terrible immorality of the pagan world.

I. Dangers of the Spirit Life (5:13-15).

A. Danger of Overindulgence (5:13a). *You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature...* The Judaizers called men to bondage under the law, but Christ calls men to freedom from that bondage. That freedom, however, must not be interpreted to mean that a Christian can follow the impulses of the sinful nature. Christ calls men to responsible freedom, not unbridled lust. Being free from the law, we are not free to do as we please. Liberty is not the equivalent of license. Christians have not been made free in order to sin, but by God's grace have become free in order not to sin. Christian freedom must be responsible freedom. The gospel does not cancel God's moral law; it shows how God's people can fulfill that law. It creates love in the hearts of believers so that with gladness they do the will of God as revealed by Christ. Christians obey the law of love, not that they may be saved, but because they have been saved.

B. Danger of Self-centeredness (5:13b-14):

1. We are commanded to serve one another (5:13b): *rather serve one another in love.* Christ set us free so that we might be devoted to service. Christianity does not hand converts a catalog of prohibitions, like the law of Moses. Christians are called to serve their fellowman. One who is devoted to serving others has neither time nor energy to indulge the sinful nature. Here is the true standard of Christian freedom--the readiness to serve others. Paul in effect was saying, "Don't use your Christian freedom as a launching pad for self-indulgence." The moral motivation of the Christian is not the Ten Commandments but the indwelling Holy Spirit. People living under the control of the Holy Spirit will keep the commandments without thinking about them.

2. We fulfill the law through love (5:14): *The entire law is summed up in a single command: "Love your neighbor as yourself."* When Christians engage in loving service to others, they are in fact fulfilling the basic social command of the Mosaic law. Paul cites Leviticus 19:18. Jesus taught that the command to love God and the command to love others are the foundation of all that is recorded in the Mosaic law (Mat. 22:34ff.). The love in which the law has its fulfillment is the fruit of faith (v. 6). "Our neighbor" is any and all whom we may encounter in our daily routine. Self-love is natural. For a Christian it should be just as natural to love our neighbors. When we seek the highest good of our fellowman, we spontaneously fulfill the moral laws of God.

C. Danger of Bickering (5:15): *If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.* "Biting" refers to inflicting pain, wounding. "Devouring" refers to destroying the lives of others. These figurative terms refer to the results of hatred and jealousy. When the sinful

nature rules rather than faith working through love this is what happens in a congregation. The Galatians must have been fighting among themselves like cats and dogs.

II. Difficulties of Spirit Life (5:16-18).

A. Result of Life in the Spirit (5:16): *So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.* Here Paul presents his vision of what the Christian life should be. Christians are to live "by the Spirit," i.e., the Holy Spirit, rather than by the flesh. Some fear becoming a Christian because they cannot measure up to the high standards of Christ. Such fail to realize that we are not expected to live the Christian life in our own strength; the Holy Spirit is our helper. The believer must allow his life to be ruled by the Spirit. This does not mean that human effort is unnecessary. The Spirit supplies energy, strength and direction in the Christian's walk. He who allows the Spirit to fill his heart will be able to resist the flesh in its wicked desires. Here we have the true Christian ethic. Its source is not an external precept, but an internal Presence. The Holy Spirit takes the place of the law as the controlling power in the Christian's life. The "sinful nature" is literally "the flesh" -- all the aspects of unregenerate human nature, not just the physical.

B. Struggle of Life in the Spirit (5:17): *For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want.* A civil war rages within our hearts. The believer's earthly nature is often in conflict with the Spirit of God who dwells within. This struggle is actually a sign of inner spiritual life. Often the struggle intensifies as the Christian accepts the challenge of higher levels of commitment and consecration. Being tempted is not a sign of sin; sin consists in yielding to temptation. We must choose one or the other, the Spirit or the flesh. The two are irreconcilable. They are in constant conflict. Sometimes believers do not actually do what they set out to do, what they want to do for the Lord. The flesh is always dragging us down, beating us down, arguing us down. This is another way of saying that we do not always practice what we preach.

C. Freedom of Life in the Spirit (5:18): *But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law.* Christians must follow the leading of the Holy Spirit in the written word and in the heart. He does not lead us around like a horse on a bridle. Rather he gently persuades us through the gospel to follow his lead. Such people are not under the curse of the law (3:13), the bondage of the law (3:22,25), the impotence of the law (3:21). The man who lives only by the Mosaic law is defenseless against the flesh. He is bound to lose the struggle with the flesh. Only in the Spirit can there be victory. The Judaizers taught that there were only two possible ways to live. Either one was controlled by fleshly desires, or he lived under the commandments of the law. Paul presents a third way, the way of the Spirit.

III. Antithesis of Spirit Life (5:19-21).

A. Listing of the Acts of the Sinful Nature (5:19-21c): *The acts of the sinful nature are obvious.* Paul previously has been speaking in generalities about the sinful nature. Now he indicates specifically how the sinful nature manifests itself. Paul says that the works of the flesh are "obvious," i.e., they are plainly recognized as works of the flesh. The evil deeds of the earthly nature are distortions of impulses that are not wrong in themselves. When rightly exercised these impulses even have potential for good. Certainly Paul did not regard the physical side of man as inherently sinful.

1. Acts in the sexual realm (5:19b):

- a. **Sexual immorality.** Some versions render "fornication." This refers to illegitimate sexual intercourse in the widest sense of the word--promiscuous sexual intercourse whether premarital or extramarital.
 - b. **Impurity.** Paul always uses this term in an ethical sense. Here it seems to have a sexual connotation.
 - c. **Debauchery** or lasciviousness refers to a lack of restraint and self-control. Debauchery means that one has cast aside all sense of decency or shame; he no longer cares what people think or say about his conduct.
2. Acts in the worship realm (5:20a).
- a. **Idolatry.** The service or worship of images or man-made gods. This word occurs only in Christian literature. An idol is anything that takes the place of the true God in a person's devotion--money, sex, power, status, pleasure, etc.
 - b. **Witchcraft** or sorcery means magical arts practiced in connection with idolatry. The word refers to one who mixes up magic potions; a drug dealer. We get our word PHARMACY from the Greek word used here. Horoscopes and mind altering drugs are two modern manifestations of this witchcraft.
3. Acts in the Mental Realm (5:20b-21a):
- a. **Hatred.** In the original the word is plural, so some versions translate it "enmities." This stresses continuous and numerous hatreds.
 - b. **Discord** or strife refers to quarreling; being out of harmony with those around us.
 - c. **Jealousy.** The word is plural in the original. It refers to the desire to possess what someone else has.
 - d. **Fits of rage** or outbursts of anger. This describes the actions of a "hot head."
 - e. **Selfish ambition.** This describes those self-centered persons who will wound, hurt or crush anyone who stands between them and their goals.
 - f. **Dissensions.** Those who create or participate in divisions in the church. Dissensions grow out of the eager and selfish striving for position and power.
 - g. **Factions.** Cliques and parties within the church.
 - h. **Envy.** The word in the original is plural referring to envy and malice in all of its manifestations.
4. Acts in the physical realm (5:21b).
- a. **Drunkness.** Private or public intoxication. Taking anything to cloud the mind. Seeking any "high" outside of Christ.
 - b. **Orgies.** Partying. Drinking bouts, carousels.
 - c. **And the like.** Paul's list is by no means complete.

B. Warning about Acts of the Sinful Nature (5:21c). *I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.* All of the above activities are impediments to coming into the kingdom of God. In presenting this list Paul is exercising his authority as an apostle to make use of the keys of the kingdom (cf. Matt 16:19). He had warned them before about such behavior, while he was present with them. He repeats his former teaching now in the light of the contention of the Judaizers that Paul preached an anything-goes-as-long-as-you-have-faith religion. The verb here is in the present tense so it refers to people who live a life style, not people who occasionally slip in some of these areas.

IV. Evidence of Spirit Life (5:22-23).

A. Concept of Fruit (5:22a): *But the fruit of the Spirit...* A fruit is not something that is manufactured or done. It grows out of a life force that already exists. In this case the life force is the Holy Spirit. The singular stresses the fact that what the Spirit produces in our lives constitutes a unity. What follows is a list, not of supernatural gifts as in 1 Cor 12, but rather that which the Spirit grants to all who choose to live by him. The more we give over our life to the Spirit, the more fruit will be evident in our lives.

B. Kinds of Fruit (5:22b-23a).

1. First triad: our association with Christ.

a. **love**: The context suggests that love is to be understood especially as the love for the brethren (cf. v. 14ff.). Christian love is not the same as ordinary human love. It is not sentimentality but is a matter of the will, the determination to always treat others as precious souls beloved of our heavenly Father. Christian love always seeks the best, even for those who seek the worst for us.

b. **joy**: Delight in God because of the salvation in Christ, reconciliation, and being received as children. Christian joy is not based on earthly circumstances but on one's relationship to God.

c. **peace**: A general condition of blessedness and well-being which is ours through Christ. He brought peace between God and believers (Rom 5:1). The word can also mean the removal of enmity between people in their relations with each other (Eph 2:14ff.).

2. Second triad: our association with our men.

a. **patience**: This word assumes that Christians will experience various provocations and attacks in which the sinful nature might be inclined toward anger and hostility. The Spirit makes it possible to maintain peace and love in spite of these provocations.

b. **kindness**: Patience manifests itself in kind deeds, even to those who hate us.

c. **goodness**: Here the term refers to our attitude toward others. We have a positive attitude toward everyone, even our enemies.

3. Third triad: our conduct.

a. **faithfulness**: loyalty, dependability in the things of God and man.

b. **gentleness**: tolerance toward others.

c. **self-control**: Restraint, moderation. It can be interpreted as referring specially to sexual relations (1 Cor 7:9) as well as pleasures in general. Here the thought is probably self-control in expression of love for others.

C. Pleasantness of the Fruit (5:23b): *Against such things there is no law.* The law brings a curse upon the disobedient (cf. 3:10, 13). But the law is not against those who walk by the Spirit because in principle they are fulfilling the law (cf. v. 14). Law cannot create these qualities, and law does not destroy them.

V. Challenge of Spirit Life (5:24-26).

A. Challenge of Crucifying the Old Life (5:24): *Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.* Those who acknowledge Jesus as Lord have crucified the sinful nature. Though we still struggle against the sinful nature, we do not acknowledge it as lord of our life. We no longer bow to the dictates of the sinful nature. We acknowledge the corruptness of the sinful nature; we assign it to death as far as its influence in our lives is concerned. The terms "passions" and "desires" point to the sinful, corrupt urges such as have been indicated in the preceding verses. That is the type of behavior which we must banish, with the help of the Spirit, from our lives.

B. Challenge of Living by the Spirit (5:25): *Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.* Living by the Spirit is Paul's way of referring to the influence of Christ and the Holy Spirit upon our lives as Christians. The Spirit is the source of spiritual energy in the life of the believer. He is always setting ever higher standards for our conduct as he instructs us through the Word. We have a responsibility, however, to keep in step with the Spirit--not to run ahead or lag behind him in our lives.

C. Challenge of Working Together in the Lord (5:26): *Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.* This sentence is taken by some to be the opening sentence of chapter 6. Living in the Spirit should produce modesty in our lives. A conceited person is one who swaggers and brags. Such an attitude is provoking because it is eager to appear superior to another person. Envy is the flip side of conceit. Self-glorification goes hand in hand with jealousy.

Responsibilities to Brethren

Galatians 6:1-6

I. Bring Back the Straying (6:1).

A. Individuals Addressed.

1. They are called *brothers* (6:1a). Brothers have responsibility to look out for one another.
2. They are considered spiritual (6:1b): *you who are spiritual.* Those who are spiritual, i.e., are living in the Spirit, then have a special opportunity to display the fruit of the Spirit.

B. Situation Envisioned (6:1c): *if someone is caught in a sin.* If ever we slow down in our spiritual race, sin will certainly overtake us. Brothers are sometimes unwittingly overtaken in a trespass or sin against God. Paul speaks here of one who is a member of the body of Christ, a Christian. His guilt is manifest, and he is ashamed of what he has done.

C. Goal Identified (6:1d): *restore him.* Literally, "set him right." The Greek word was used of such things as setting broken bones and mending torn fishing nets. Our goal is to get the wrongdoer back where he should be. We should not rejoice over the fallen, but rather help the sinner to leave his evil way that he might return to all the privileges of being a member of the body of Christ.

D. Manner Prescribed (6:1e):

1. Restore **gently** (6:1e). This corrective effort must be made in gentleness and friendliness. Any time a Christian sets out to help someone guilty of wrong doing, he needs to be led by the Spirit. The modern church seems to go to the extremes of either Pharisaism (extreme, harsh, judgmental) on the one hand, or total permissiveness (hands off, let everybody do their own thing) on the other.
2. Restore cautiously (6:1f): *But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted.* We must at all times be vigilant about our own spiritual status. Being spiritual does not automatically protect us against sin. What happened to the other brother could just as easily happen to us. Satan attacks when we least expect it. Sometimes in reaching out to help another out of sin we ourselves get caught up in that sin.

II. Shore Up the Drooping (6:2):

A. Command (6:2a): *Carry each other's burdens...* A burden is whatever oppresses a brother spiritually, threatens to induce him into sin or keeps him in sin. This pressure is compared to a burden because one is bowed down under its weight and fears that he will succumb to its pressure. In the bearing of such a burden the Galatians must help and support each other. Basically, we need to stand by each other in the struggle against sin. In the event of a setback, we need to raise one another up again.

B. Explanation (6:2b): *and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.* Christians are not so concerned to follow Moses the lawgiver, but Christ. Our obedience is to him. The bearing of one another's burden

harmonizes in every respect with what Christ by word and deed taught his disciples. In the practical help we give one another real love is manifested, and love is the fulfillment of everything Christ and Moses taught (cf. 5:14).

III. Size Up Ourselves (6:3-5).

A. Think Correctly (6:3): *If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself.* Conceit is self-deceit. Measured by the true standards of God's Word, none of us amounts to anything. All that we are or have become is by the grace of God. Pride is at the root of so much misconduct in the church.

B. Test Accurately (6:4):

1. The proper sphere of testing (6:4a): *Each one should test his own actions.* A proud person takes no steps to help the brother who falls into sin. On the contrary, he actually inflates his own ego by contrasting himself with the erring brother. Paul challenges each Christian to confine any judging to himself. The previous verse indicates that we are nothing, except for what Christ has done for us. So if we compare ourselves to God's standard and have anything at all to be proud of it would be Christ and what he has accomplished in and through us (cf. 2 Cor 10:12-18).

2. The improper sphere of testing (6:4b): *without comparing himself to some.* If we measure ourselves by others in the church we will always find those whose conduct makes us look very good. That, however, is not the true test of the Christian life. We make it too easy for ourselves by measuring our conduct by the faults of others.

3. The result of proper testing (6:4c): *then he can take pride in himself.* False humility is as bad as no humility. We should be able to take pride in our accomplishments for the gospel. Most of us, however, find it difficult to be proud of what we have done without comparing ourselves to others.

C. Take up Responsibility (6:5). *for each one should carry his own load.* The guilt of another person does not excuse us before God. Every person is responsible for his own conduct to God. The word "burden" in this verse refers to the normal duty that falls upon every person. We should carry that burden now, because we shall in fact carry it (i.e., be responsible for it) at the final judgment.

IV. Lift Up Instructors (6:6): *Anyone who receives instruction in the word must share all good things with his instructor.* Students of the Word should share material things with those who teach it. This verse points to the existence of ministers or teachers in the local churches at an early age. "Instruction in the Word" refers to that detailed teaching which the churches needed after the first preaching of the gospel.

Our Choices Galatians 6:7-10

Introduction: Although a man in Christ is freed from the law, he is bound by the higher demands of Christian love and Spirit-filled living. These demands may be less clear-cut and more intangible than the demands of the legal code. But how men respond to these demands has inevitable consequences.

I. Principle (6:7).

A. Not-so-obvious Principle (6:7a): *Do not be deceived...* Freedom can be abused. The Spirit's promptings can be ignored. The demands of love can be lowered. Men may assume that they are getting by with such actions. But eventually they will have to face the consequences. By the same token, the responsibilities of freedom can be honored. The Spirit's promptings can be obeyed. The demands of love can be met. Because positive results are sometimes slow to see, Christians may be tempted to believe that their efforts have been in vain. But this is not true; the harvest is sure. Paul puts his readers on alert. Something important is at stake in what he is about to say.

B. Theological Principle (6:7b): *God cannot be mocked.* God requires an account of every person, and God is not mocked. He does not permit man to make light of, ignore and pervert the preaching of grace that comes to him and the obligations that are derived there from.

C. Inevitable Principle (6:7c): *A man reaps what he sows.* In life, just as in agriculture, a person will reap what he/she has sown. This principle holds for everybody and for everything he does. The whole of earthly life is here represented as sowing time. The harvest comes at the final judgment of God. The way we respond to the gospel of God's grace both in surrendering to the Lordship of Jesus and in living by the Spirit determines our eternal destiny.

II. Explanation (6:8).

A. Sowing to the Sinful Nature (6:8a): *The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction;* In 5:19-23, Paul contrasted the works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit. Here the apostle refers again to the final outcomes of these two contrasting ways of life. We shall be what we are in the process of becoming. The ultimate outcome of our lives is predictable. None of us should be taken by surprise. The "sinful nature" represents a man trying to live in his own strength. If we sow in the field of sinful nature, we will reap from that field corruption. That which is natural and native to mankind is at odds with the Spirit. He who lives for the flesh, shall reap of it. It has its own kind of fruit, viz., corruption. "Corruption" here refers to grief and woe both here in this life and hereafter for all eternity.

B. Sowing to Please the Spirit (6:8b): *the one who sows to please the Spirit from the Spirit will reap eternal life.* The man living in the Spirit is a man who has responded to God's grace and who is living in fellowship with God. Sowing to please the Spirit means devoting our life to him and yielding our hearts to him. This person will reap eternal life from the Spirit. The Spirit is the great life-giver in the Bible. "Eternal life" speaks of the whole of life, both of body and soul. It begins here with the life more abundant, and continues in the glorified life of the resurrection.

III. Exhortations (6:9-10).

A. Exhortation to Patience (6:9).

1. Continuing labor (6:9a): ***Let us not become weary in doing good...*** The worst kind of weariness for a Christian is weariness in doing good. Christian people seem to get tired of doing good faster than sinful people get tired of doing evil. Because the final harvest (the judgment) seems to be delayed in coming, we must not get weary in doing the work of the Lord. *Doing good* is the same as living in the Spirit which has been described in the previous verses.

2. Coming harvest (6:9b): ***for at the proper time we will reap a harvest...*** The motive for faithfulness in the Christian life is the promise that the harvest will surely come. *At the proper time* refers to the time that God considers appropriate.
3. Conditional element (6:9c): ***if we do not give up.*** We shall then reap a wonderful harvest if we do not give up in the struggle to live in the Spirit. Paul is not here indicating that our eternal salvation depends upon our works, for he has previously indicated that no man can be saved in that manner. Rather he views the life of well-doing as a gift bestowed by grace upon those who choose Jesus and who choose to live in the Spirit.

B. Exhortation to Perceptiveness (6:10).

1. A general obligation (6:10a): ***Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people...*** As long as the harvest is yet future, we must continue sowing in the Spirit. We must seize every opportunity to do what is good. This duty should be carried out toward everyone.
2. A specific obligation (6:10b): ***especially to those who belong to the family of believers.*** Christians have a special responsibility to our brothers in the Lord. Believers constitute one large household or family.

CONCLUSION Galatians 6:11-18

I. A Personal Note (6:11):

A. Paul Writes in Large Letters (6:11a): ***See what large letters I use...*** Why Paul used large letters in writing cannot be determined. Was it for emphasis? Was it because of poor eyesight? Merely to distinguish what he wrote from what the scribe had written?

B. Paul Writes in his Own Hand (6:11b): ***as I write to you with my own hand!*** Probably Paul used a scribe to record this letter to the Galatians down to this point. Now he takes up the pen himself and writes in his own distinctive hand. This would underscore (1) that the letter was genuinely from Paul, not some forger; and (2) that the final truths which are here set forth were of great importance.

II. False Teachers' Motives (6:12-13).

A. Motive of Persecution (6:12):

1. Actions of the false teachers (6:12a): ***Those who want to make a good impression outwardly...*** Paul concludes with a final attack on the Judaizers. They tried in every way to be popular with the people, not in spiritual things, but in outward, fleshly, external things.
2. Objective of the false teachers (6:12b): ***are trying to compel you to be circumcised.*** The objective of these jovial, good-natured teachers was sinister. They would win people's confidence, impress them with their learning and logic, and then compel them to deny the effectiveness of the gospel by submitting to circumcision.
3. Cowardice of the false teachers (6:12c): ***The only reason they do this is to avoid being persecuted for the cross of Christ.*** The cross was the cause of the persecution of Christians that the Judaizers feared. The cross speaks of the sufficiency of Christ's work and the insignificance of circumcision. "Persecuted" embraces enmity, opposition, threats, economic pressures brought to bear by prominent Jews against those

who preached the cross. Those who compromised the gospel by tacking on to it certain aspects of Judaism apparently were not persecuted.

B. Motive of Pride (6:13).

1. False teachers are inconsistent (6:13a): *Not even those who are circumcised obey the law...* Paul here refers to the Judaizers themselves. These teachers of Mosaic law did not themselves take the law very seriously. There was hypocrisy here and certain accepted alterations in the exact requirements of the law.

2. False teachers are prideful (6:13b): *yet they want you to be circumcised that they may boast about your flesh.* The real motive of the Judaizers was selfish pride. They wanted to boast of the fact that they had brought Gentiles to the point of circumcision. They wanted to be able to boast of this accomplishment in Jewish circles. They did not care whether or not these Gentiles professed to be Christians, as long as they could chalk up another convert to circumcision. In essence, circumcision would mean the triumph of Judaism over Christianity.

III. Faithful Teachers' Motives (6:14-18).

A. His Boast (6:14a): *May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ...* Paul boasts only of what the Judaizers despised. The cross was an image of weakness and misery. But the cross had become a staircase to glory for the one confessed by Christians as the Lord Jesus Christ.

B. His Focus (6:14b): *through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.* Because he had put his hope and confidence in Christ, the world had nothing left with which to charm him and bind him. *The world* is everything outside of Christ in which a person puts trust and glory. The glorying of the Judaizers was worldly, vain, and godless, even though it seemed to be religious. In his personal life, Paul had written off the world as a basis for glorying and trust. He had turned his back upon all other things no matter how desirable and mighty they may be. For him the glory of the world was dead.

C. His Concern (6:15).

1. What no longer counts (6:15a): *Neither cir-cumcision nor uncircumcision means any-thing;* The Judaizers gloried in circumcision. As far as salvation is concerned, it makes no difference whether a man has been circumcised or not.

2. What really counts now (6:15b): *what counts is a new creation.* What really counts is that one has a new life in Christ in the Holy Spirit. Becoming a Christian is likened elsewhere to a new birth. Here it is likened to being part of a new creation. In Christ people are reborn, renewed, recreated. What counts now is circumcision of the heart (Rom 2:29) not circumcision of the flesh.

D. His Desire (6:16).

1. His double desire (6:16a): *Peace and mercy...* Peace with God refers to reconciliation. When we have peace with God we can have peace with our fellowman. *Mercy* is withholding punishment justly due. We constantly are in need of God's mercy.

2. His double designation (6:16b):

a. *To all who follow this rule...* *This rule* refers to everything Paul has said in the previous chapters embracing the cross of Christ and the new creation. Everything must be measured by this rule or standard. It is the standard for determining what is of real importance, for what is to be accepted, and what is to be rejected. To *follow* this rule means to be guided in thought and deed by the principles of salvation by grace and life in the Spirit.

b. ***Even to the Israel of God***, i.e., the new Israel, the church of Christ. All believers in Christ constitute the new people of God. Messiah in prophecy is called Israel (just like Jacob of old). His twelve apostles are the spiritual fathers of the new family through their preaching, just like the twelve sons of Old Testament Jacob were the physical fathers of the old Israel.

E. His Testimony (6:17).

1. An appeal (6:17a): ***Finally, let no one cause me trouble...*** Paul appeals to the Galatian churches not to cause him further trouble by allowing the Judaizers to deflect them from the truth in Christ. When these Christians caused Paul anguish and trouble they were further wounding one who already had put his life on the line for Jesus. The implication is that by causing Paul trouble, they were assailing Jesus himself and inviting the punishment of God upon them.

2. An explanation (6:17b): ***for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus.*** He bears on his body the marks of suffering for the cause of Christ. All believers who stand with Jesus and his cross must suffer affliction even as the Lord suffered affliction.

F. His Obsession (6:18): *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers. Amen.* The letter closes with a blessing. There are no personal greetings to old friends and fellow soldiers as in some of Paul's other letters. Perhaps this indicates the tensions that existed between Paul and the Galatians.

1. He mentions for a final time the word ***grace***. Paul wishes his readers to have a new experience of Jesus' grace--his undeserved, unearned outpouring of blessing. He wants them to enjoy the fullness of their salvation.

2. He mentions all the names of the Lord. They emphasize his glory, his saving mission, his divine commission.

3. He mentions their ***spirit***. He wants the thought of Jesus' grace to move the Galatians in their inner being. He wants them to live in that grace, be guided by that grace, put their trust in that grace.

4. He calls them ***brothers***. In spite of their lapses Paul clings to his fellowship with them as part of the family of God.

5. He concludes with ***Amen***. This term underscores the fervency of Paul's final blessing upon them.