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A Study of Galatians

Lesson 1: Introduction; Gal 1:1-10 – Turning to Another Gospel

1. Who Received This Letter From Paul, and Why?

- A. The meaning of “Galatia”: The term simply means “country of the Gauls,” a reference to the Gallic tribes who invaded northern Asia Minor from Europe in the 270s BC. Of this region, Charles Erdman notes:

“It was inhabited in the time of Paul by a mixed population in which the descendants of the Gaulish tribes formed only a minority, while the larger number were of the ancient population, and to these were added many Greeks, Romans, and Jews. By the time of the apostle the region had passed under the power of Rome and formed part of a province which included within its southern borders the cities which Paul visited upon his first missionary journey” (*The Epistle of Paul to the Galatians*, p. 15-16).

- B. So, there is an ethnic region in northern Asia Minor known as Galatia, and there is a Roman province known by the same name which includes much more territory than the land of the Gauls. This has led to much dispute concerning whom Paul addressed in his epistle (and thus when he may have written it).

1. The “north Galatian theory”: This was the older view of liberal critics who held that Paul evangelized this area in passages such as Ac 16:6 and 18:23. This idea rests in part on Paul’s reference in Gal 4:13: “*You know that because of physical infirmity I preached the gospel to you at the first.*” This circumstance is considered incompatible with Luke’s record of Paul’s preaching in Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe. According to this view, Paul established churches in northern Galatia on his second journey, visited them again at the beginning of his third and wrote the epistle shortly thereafter.
2. The “south Galatian theory”: This is the prevalent view of modern scholars who hold it unlikely that Paul wrote such an important epistle to a group of churches unnamed and unknown relative to their founding. Other points of interest: a) Barnabas seems well known to these brethren (Gal 2:13); b) the Galatians have already received the gospel by the time of the Jerusalem conference in Ac 15 (Gal 2:5); c) these are the churches described by Luke in Ac 13-14 (and neither reference mentions Paul’s physical affliction).

- C. Whether or not this issue can be settled to everyone’s satisfaction, the theme and purpose of Galatians is quite clear: these relatively new converts have succumbed to the pressure of “Judaizers” (Jewish Christians who demanded that Gentiles be circumcised and observe certain elements of the Law of Moses) and have adopted

Jewish practices in addition to the expectations of Christ. Paul correctly sees this as abandonment of justification by faith by reverting to a law/works system. Paul expresses his anger at the Judaizers and his incredulity toward the Galatians for their instability.

2. Broad Outline of Galatians

- A. Chapters 1-2: Authenticity of the gospel and Paul's apostleship defended.
- B. Chapters 3-4: Principle of justification by faith (apart from law) defended.
- C. Chapters 5-6: Practical applications of a faithful life.

3. Schedule of Study

- Lesson 1: Introduction; Gal 1:1-10 – Turning to Another Gospel
- Lesson 2: Gal 1:11-24 – The Legitimacy of Paul's Apostleship
- Lesson 3: Gal 2:1-10 – The Jerusalem Conference
- Lesson 4: Gal 2:11-21 – Standing Up to Peter
- Lesson 5: Gal 3:1-18 – The Just Shall Live by Faith
- Lesson 6: Gal 3:19-4:7 – The Purpose of the Law of Moses
- Lesson 7: Gal 4:8-31 – The Jerusalem Above
- Lesson 8: Gal 5:1-15 – Faith Working Through Love
- Lesson 9: Gal 5:16-21 – Works of the Flesh
- Lesson 10: Gal 5:22-26 – Fruit of the Spirit
- Lesson 11: Gal 6:1-5 – Bear One Another's Burdens
- Lesson 12: Gal 6:6-18 – Sowing to the Spirit
- Lesson 13: Words and Terms of Interest in Galatians

Galatians 1:1-10

1. Salutation – 1:1-5

A. 1:1 – Paul begins with a bold affirmation of the very thing his enemies deny: that he is a true and legitimate apostle having been made so by Jesus and the Father.

1. Men (particularly the original apostles) were neither the originators nor the agency of Paul's appointment (as they were in the case of Matthias). It was the Lord, Himself, who delivered Paul's commission.
2. Paul not only had to live with the knowledge of his former rebellion, but having turned to the Lord he now faces opposition from within. Some for their own selfish purposes undermine his authority, malign his motives, twist his teaching and otherwise try to neutralize his considerable influence. This constant assault must have put him under great stress.

B. 1:2 – The “churches of Galatia” seem to be uniformly affected to one degree or another by the issues Paul will address in the epistle. False doctrines might be an influence regionally as well as congregationally.

C. 1:4 – As he does so often in his writings, Paul begins by focusing the attention of his readers squarely upon the Father and Jesus.

1. Whatever may be ailing them, the remedy in one form or fashion is related to regaining a proper balance in their relationship with the Lord. So it always is.
2. Paul gives a subtle hint of where he is going in the epistle by suggesting that Jesus is the source of deliverance from “*this present evil age*.” Most any age or culture of mankind is characterized by evil. The prevailing moral climate, political aspirations, values and objectives of the majority of mankind are not in harmony with God's will. Left unaided, we all succumb to the pervasiveness of evil.
3. But the key to deliverance from our own sins and the evil age in which we live is the sacrifice of Jesus – not the Law of Moses or any other law system by which we attempt to work our own way to righteousness.

Galatians 1:1-10

1:1 Paul, an apostle (not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead), **2** and all the brethren who are with me, To the churches of Galatia: **3** Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, **4** who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, **5** to whom [be] glory forever and ever. Amen. **6** I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, **7** which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. **8** But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. **9** As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed. **10** For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ.

2. A Stern Warning – 1:6-10

- A. 1:6 – “*I marvel ...*”. Paul states his incredulity that the Galatians have compromised their beliefs so quickly. Paul apparently could not see this coming or he would not have expressed his consternation at the turn of events. Note that such apostasy is “*turning away ... from Him who called you.*” We sometimes speak accommodately of someone “leaving the church.” But this is merely a consequence: the deeper issue is leaving *the Lord*, of abandoning Him.
- B. 1:7 – A different, perverted gospel. The term gospel means “good news,” but what was being introduced in the Galatian churches was neither good nor news. It had been demonstrated for 1500 years that the Law of Moses could not save or justify a man before God. The gospel of Jesus Christ was the “good news” that men had been delivered from such futility. This concept will be developed by Paul.
- C. 1:8-9 – Paul speaks in a flat, unequivocal, absolute way: “*anyone* (angel or apostle or man) who preaches *anything* that contradicts what we have previously taught you is accursed.” So forceful and uncompromising is Paul in this declaration that he repeats himself. He thus emphatically states: 1) We are the legitimate conveyors of the gospel message, 2) we have done our job completely and properly, 3) you have received the full measure of the gospel, 4) there is no room for additions or substitutions, and 5) any substantive changes is *prima facie* evidence of falsehood and consequent condemnation.
- C. 1:10 – One of the reasons Paul is so plain and resolute is to refute the charge that his preaching was simply to please men. Perhaps they charged Paul with cowardice in not teaching the Gentiles to be circumcised. Perhaps they pointed to the “inconsistency” of having Timothy circumcised but being unwilling to demand the same of the Gentiles. But, as Paul will explain, his teaching is consistent with the covenant of grace, and it is the perversions of the Judaizers that represented the attempt to gain the favor of men. We are often guilty of that for which we criticize others.

Questions:

1. What factors may make churches in a geographic region vulnerable to the same error?
2. What result follows the introduction of false doctrine into churches (Gal 1:7)? If you have a Greek dictionary or commentary on Galatians, what is the meaning of “trouble”?
3. Paul noted that if he were interested only in pleasing men or gaining their favor, what would he not be?

A Study of Galatians

Lesson 2: Gal 1:11-24 – The Legitimacy of Paul's Apostleship

1. Paul's Jewish Background – 1:11-14

A. 1:11-12 – Paul now elaborates on his opening observation in 1:1: Paul affirms that his comprehension of the gospel was by direct revelation as opposed to natural learning.

1. Note that Paul ties together his apostolic commission with the gospel he preaches. The two are inseparable. There are modern critics who likewise wish to silence Paul because he is not so politically correct as to endorse their causes.
2. Note the implied deity of Christ: since his gospel did not originate with "man" but Christ, Jesus must not be merely a man.
3. Paul is having to "make known" to them that which he already taught them. The truth must be constantly reiterated because of Satan's constant denials and the attractiveness of false notions.

B. 1:13-14 – Paul reviews his own previous zeal for Judaism. Note the extremes:

1. Paul persecuted the church "beyond measure."
2. He advanced in Judaism "beyond many of my contemporaries."

3. He was "more exceedingly zealous" for his ancestral traditions. Paul was not a marginal Jew, nor was he a rebel in any sense. He had no sympathy whatsoever for Christianity, considering it to be apostasy. He devoted himself to the annihilation of this heresy, and thus the charge that he decided on his own to adopt the tenets of Christianity is preposterous. As Paul previously noted, if he was simply a man-pleaser, there's no way he would have become a Christian (1:10).

Galatians 1:11-24

11 But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. **12** For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught [it,] but [it came] through the revelation of Jesus Christ. **13** For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and [tried to] destroy it. **14** And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers. **15** But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called [me] through His grace, **16** to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood, **17** nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those [who were] apostles before me; but I went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus. **18** Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and remained with him fifteen days. **19** But I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother. **20** (Now [concerning] the things which I write to you, indeed, before God, I do not lie.) **21** Afterward I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. **22** And I was unknown by face to the churches of Judea which [were] in Christ. **23** But they were hearing only, "He who formerly persecuted us now preaches the faith which he once [tried to] destroy." **24** And they glorified God in me.

2. Early Contacts with the Apostles – 1:15-20

A. 1:15-17 – Paul affirms again that he was called as an apostle by God.

1. He takes no credit for such a call but rather God “*called me through His grace.*”
2. The purpose of such an astounding act of heaven: “*to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles.*” In these affirmations Paul is giving the Galatians a clear choice: He is God’s agent; He preaches God’s message. If they embrace something else, they are rebelling against God, not merely Paul.
3. Paul gives a detail not included by Luke in Acts: after his conversion he went to Arabia and back to Damascus, a period spanning three years. As intriguing as this period is, Paul did not reveal what transpired during this time. But one thing **didn’t** happen: he didn’t confer with the apostles in Jerusalem, either to get their approval or learn the basics of the gospel from them.

B. 1:18-20 – Paul now refers to the incident in Ac 9:26-28. He affirms that there was neither enough time nor a quorum of apostles for Paul to co-opt anything from them. Paul then affirms before God the truthfulness of what he is reporting, perhaps because false accounts were circulating.

3. Paul’s Absence from Judea – 1:21-24

- A. Paul continues to assert that his distance from Palestine precluded a gradual assimilation into Christianity by common association. His travel to the regions of Syria and Cilicia apparently refer to his time in Tarsus after escaping Jerusalem (Ac 9:30) and the work he did alongside Barnabas in Antioch (Ac 11:25-26).
- B. Paul says he was “*unknown by face*” to the churches in Judea. In other words, Paul preached the gospel he received from the Lord, concentrated his efforts among the Gentiles as he was told – all unilaterally and without approval and/or oversight of the apostles in Jerusalem or the brethren in Judea.
- C. Note also that the Judean churches “*glorified God*” in the work Paul was doing, a far cry from what the present Judaizers from this same area were now doing.

Questions:

1. Why is it so easy for us to “forget” that which we once knew?
2. What is the significance of the observation “*who separated me from my mother’s womb*”?
3. What lessons about our own service to God might we learn from Paul’s defense of himself in this passage?

A Study of Galatians

Lesson 3: Gal 2:1-10 – The Jerusalem Conference

1. Titus: A Test Case – 2:1-5

A. Background: Acts 15:1-29.

1. Paul now jumps 14 years ahead to the controversy in Antioch which arose over Gentiles being accepted into fellowship without circumcision and the subsequent conference in Jerusalem. Paul's purpose in this reference is to establish the consistency between his work/message and that of the "original" apostles.
2. Note that the instigators were "*certain men ... from Judea*" (Ac 15:1). In spite of Peter's conversion of Cornelius and the work of Paul and Barnabas in southern Galatia, these Jewish loyalists continued to agitate over this matter. And in spite of the letter circulated from the Jerusalem elders, the issue has now spread to Galatia.

B. What we learn about the Jerusalem conference in Galatians 2 is that Titus, a Gentile, accompanied Paul and Barnabas as a "test case."

1. Paul first presented publicly the gospel which he preached among the Gentiles (Gal 2:2a; Ac 15:4).
2. After the Jewish faction demanded that Gentiles be circumcised (Titus particularly, cf. Ac 15:5), Paul and Barnabas met privately with "*those who were of reputation*" (2:2; Ac 15:6) in order to come to a common mind. Paul was not looking for their approval, but he wanted to make sure that they were "on the same page." If not, his work among the Gentiles was in jeopardy.

Galatians 2:1-10

2:1 Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and also took Titus with [me.] **2** And I went up by revelation, and communicated to them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to those who were of reputation, lest by any means I might run, or had run, in vain. **3** Yet not even Titus who [was] with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised. **4** And [this occurred] because of false brethren secretly brought in (who came in by stealth to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage), **5** to whom we did not yield submission even for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you. **6** But from those who seemed to be something – whatever they were, it makes no difference to me; God shows personal favoritism to no man -- for those who seemed [to be something] added nothing to me. **7** But on the contrary, when they saw that the gospel for the uncircumcised had been committed to me, as [the gospel] for the circumcised [was] to Peter **8** (for He who worked effectively in Peter for the apostleship to the circumcised also worked effectively in me toward the Gentiles), **9** and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we [should go] to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. **10** [They desired] only that we should remember the poor, the very thing which I also was eager to do.

C. Paul said the demands for circumcision were resisted for two main reasons:

1. Those advocating circumcision were *"false brethren secretly brought in ... that they might bring us into bondage"* (Gal 2:4). They *"came in by stealth to spy out our liberty."* These brethren were deceptive and insincere. They had infiltrated congregations for the express purpose of defending the integrity of the Law of Moses. The result of this would have been spiritual enslavement, as Paul will further develop in the epistle.
2. The truth of the gospel would be compromised. Part of the "good news" was that men had been set free from the constraints of justification by law. The gospel made faith in Jesus the standard of justification via forgiveness through His atoning sacrifice. To now allow insidious forces to saddle Jew and Gentile with the burdens of a now-defunct law system would have been a denial of the truth and a return to bondage. Paul refused to give in to these ungodly men.

2. Harmony of Labor Between Paul/Barnabas and Peter/John/James – 2:6-10

- A. The evidence presented at Jerusalem was clear: there was no disunity of principle between Paul on the one hand and James, Peter and John on the other.
 1. *"The gospel for the uncircumcised had been committed to (Paul)"* – 2:7.
 2. *"The gospel for the circumcised was (committed) to Peter"* – 2:7.
 3. The same God was working cooperatively through both – 2:8.
- B. The "leading lights" at Jerusalem "saw" and "perceived" the situation as it was (2:7, 9), and in submission to the will of God *"they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship"* (2:9). They *"added nothing to me"* (2:6).
- C. Thus Paul asserts that there is no discrepancy between his teaching/practice and that of the "original" apostles. It was slanderous for men to say, "Paul is teaching novel ideas that are contrary to the 'orthodox' position of Peter and the others."

Questions:

1. Describe the context of Paul's observation: *"God shows personal favoritism to no man."*
2. What did Peter ask for Paul to do as he did his work among the Gentiles? What was Paul's reaction to this?
3. How would you reconcile these two principles: *"to whom we did not yield submission even for an hour"* (Gal 2:5) and *"if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat"* (1 Cor 9:22)?

A Study of Galatians

Lesson 4: Gal 2:11-21 – Standing Up to Peter

1. The Sin of Hypocrisy – 2:11-13

A. The scenario:

1. After the Jerusalem conference, Peter came to Antioch for some period of time during which he associated with the Gentiles as spiritual equals.
2. But when Jewish brethren came from Jerusalem, apparently claiming the support of James, Peter began to shun the Gentiles.
3. His influence was significant, spreading even to Barnabas and other Jewish brethren.

B. Observations:

1. On the one hand, it is difficult to conceive of Peter behaving in this way, especially after being the one to convert Cornelius and after the clarification at the conference. On the other hand, history records several “flip-flops” of Peter (Jn 13:8-9; Mt 26:33-35).
2. Harder to imagine is Barnabas’ actions. But such an episode should warn us of the danger of peer pressure and social acceptance.

C. Paul sees the deeper implications of such behavior and he publicly confronts Peter on his hypocrisy. Paul refers to this incident in order to demonstrate that his view of the Gentiles was even the basis of upbraiding the great apostle Peter. Peter “added nothing” to Paul’s teaching (2:6); did not “coach” Paul (1:18-19); gave Paul the “right hand of fellowship” (2:9). Furthermore, *Paul even rebuked the great apostle for violating the essential nature of the gospel by shunning the Gentiles.* Thus Paul continues to vindicate the legitimacy of his preaching.

Galatians 2:11-21

11 Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed; **12** for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision. **13** And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy. **14** But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before [them] all, "If you, being a Jew, live in the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews?" **15** "We [who are] Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, **16** "knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified. **17** "But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, [is] Christ therefore a minister of sin? Certainly not! **18** "For if I build again those things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. **19** "For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God. **20** "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the [life] which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. **21** "I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness [comes] through the law, then Christ died in vain."

2. Rebuilding the Law – 2:14-18

A. Paul reveals his logical argumentation in confronting Peter:

1. 2:14 – Paul says that Peter had lived “*in the manner of Gentiles, and not as the Jews.*” Peter had recognized the Jewish laws and customs were no longer binding, and he had dispensed with them in his fellowship with the Gentiles. But when the “orthodox” brethren came to Antioch, Peter withdrew from association with the Gentiles, saying to them in essence: “I can’t participate with you because you aren’t Jewish.” His behavior had the effect of faulting them for their “non-Jewishness,” thus compelling them to “*live as Jews.*”
2. 2:15-16 – An essential principle that the Jewish converts such as Peter and Paul had to learn in the gospel was that “*a man is not justified by the works of the law.*” Salvation could not come to mankind on the basis of obedience under a law-system of any kind, for man inevitably violates whatever law he is under. The gospel was “good news” because it revealed a system of justification that was attainable for man: faith in Christ.
3. 2:17-18 – These verses are somewhat obscure, but I suggest the following:
 - a. It was not sinful (in fact, it was necessary) for Jews to abandon the law as a means of justification. Peter and the other Jews had done this and testified to it by eating with Gentiles.
 - b. But the Judaizers convinced Peter, Barnabas and others that they were sinful by not observing Jewish distinctiveness; thus, Peter was persuaded to pull back from the Gentiles. If this premise is true – that a Jew sins by not observing the law after his conversion – then the logical conclusion is that Christ is a minister or promoter of sin *because the law must be abandoned* (as an instrument of justification). Paul recoils from such an absurdity.
 - c. The sin, says Paul, is in trying to “*build again those things which I destroyed*”; i.e., to go back to the law and figuratively reinstate it by refusing to extend full fellowship to the Gentiles. Peter is sinfully inconsistent: he was wrong to abandon the law in the first place, or he is wrong in now going back to it. But Peter knows better: he knows what God did in persuading him to go to the house of Cornelius; he understood the significance of the circular letter that grew out of the debate at Jerusalem.

B. Peter and Barnabas both demonstrate how insidious and devious sin is: Peter, a man of impetuous bravery and universal renown, and Barnabas, a man of tender compassion and wise circumspection – two opposites in character and aptitudes – yet unified in succumbing to wiles of the devil.

3. Living by Faith – 2:19-21

A. 2:19 – The law of Moses as a means to fellowship with God was death, as Paul will develop in chapters 3-4. Living to God meant dying to the law, which Paul affirms he was gladly willing to do. He did this “*through the law*,”; i.e., it was the testimony of the law, itself, that supported the conclusions of the gospel of Christ.

B. 2:20 – It is in this context that Paul pens one of the most concise yet profound personal testimonials of faith. Paul has put to death everything that carries the flavor of personal concern or ambition.

1. “*It is no longer I who live*” – His own motives, inclinations and wishes are of no importance.

2. “*Christ lives in me*” – Paul’s every intent is to exude the character of Christ, perform the will of Christ, broadcast the influence of Christ, teach the gospel of Christ. For Paul (and for us?!), life is Christ; Christ is life.

3. “*I live by faith in the Son of God*” – Paul’s spiritual life-principle is not the law, Jewish heritage, the culture, language, traditions of a dead system but faith in Christ who is the culmination of all the law.

4. “*Who loved me and gave Himself for me*” – This is the underlying motive for Paul’s willingness to give up all for Christ. If Christ gave up all for him, how petty and shallow for Paul to cling to something that not only is defunct but would only result in death if he tried to justify himself by it.

C. 2:21 – Paul refuses to adopt any position that nullifies the grace of God, for it is that wondrous quality that has removed obedience to law as the means of justification. Grace and law stand opposed. All sin; all violate law. Justice demands death for the violation of divine law. But God’s grace intervenes and substitutes a way to be saved apart from law. But it isn’t “cheap grace”; it comes at great cost (as mentioned in the previous verse). The logical implication of Peter’s action (which Peter failed to recognize) was that “*Christ died in vain*.”

Questions:

1. What effect would the behavior of Peter, Barnabas and the others have had upon Gentile believers?
2. What might be some criteria for the public rebuke of sin?
3. What did it take for Paul to engage in this correction of Peter and the others?
4. Comment on the destructive effects of influence from this passage.

A Study of Galatians

Lesson 5: Gal 3:1-14 – The Just Shall Live by Faith

1. Origin of the Galatians' Faith – 3:1-5

- A. Whereas in chapters 1-2 Paul defended his apostleship, he now turns in chapters 3-4 to a defense of the gospel's content. In 3:1, Paul says the Galatians are acting like they are "bewitched" or under a spell since they have so quickly abandoned the crucified Jesus whom he had preached to them.
- B. Paul considers the presence and work of the Holy Spirit to be of fundamental importance in making his point.
1. They had received the Spirit – 3:2. The Holy Spirit's role and work are more prominent in the new covenant. When men obey the gospel they are *"born of water and the Spirit"* (Jn 3:5), *"for by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – whether Jews or Greeks ... and have all been made to drink into one Spirit"* (1 Cor 12:13). The Galatians were in fellowship with the Spirit by virtue of submitting to His teaching and thus were to *"walk in the Spirit"* (Gal 5:16) and bear *"the fruit of the Spirit"* (5:22). **Did this acquaintance with the Spirit come by the Law of Moses, or by the faith which Paul had preached to them?**
 2. They had begun in the Spirit – 3:3. Their spiritual life had taken root and they had learned the truth of God amid the idolatrous superstitions of their culture. The Holy Spirit was the source of such a new spiritual beginning. **Were they now going to achieve spiritual maturity by reverting to some physical, fleshly operation** (circumcision, as demanded by the Judaizers in compliance with the law of Moses)?

Galatians 3:1-14

3:1 O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified? **2** This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? **3** Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh? **4** Have you suffered so many things in vain -- if indeed [it was] in vain? **5** Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, [does He do it] by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? -- **6** just as Abraham "believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." **7** Therefore know that [only] those who are of faith are sons of Abraham. **8** And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, [saying,] "In you all the nations shall be blessed." **9** So then those who [are] of faith are blessed with believing Abraham. **10** For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, "Cursed [is] everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them." **11** But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God [is] evident, for "the just shall live by faith." **12** Yet the law is not of faith, but "the man who does them shall live by them." **13** Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, "Cursed [is] everyone who hangs on a tree"), **14** that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

3. God had supplied them with the Spirit – 3:5. As a result, God through the Holy Spirit worked miracles among them. **Had they beheld the suspension of natural law by the works of the law or the truths of the gospel?** This is not to say that God didn't work miracles during the tenure of the law, but Paul neither preached nor imparted the Spirit via Mosaic regulations. Rather, it was through the One who fulfilled and removed the law as a judicial document – Jesus.
- C. Paul severely chides them for their instability. If this epistle is written to the southern Galatia churches, an example of their fickleness can be seen in the episode at Lystra (Ac 14:8-20).

2. The True Sons of Abraham – 3:6-9

- A. As he does in Romans, Paul appeals to the example of Abraham to illustrate the principle of faith and its existence apart from the law of Moses. He quotes the statement from Gen 15:6 wherein God declares Abraham acceptable by virtue of his viable and active faith – 3:6.
- B. 3:7, 9 – Paul makes a similar point to that of Jesus when He spoke to the Jews: the one who is the **true** and **spiritual** descendant of Abraham is the one who duplicates the faith of Abraham. If faith makes a man righteous – and it does according to Gen 15:6 – then of what advantage is it to be genetically descended from Abraham but not possess a faith like his??
- C. Paul substantiates the primacy of faith by quoting the very promise made to Abraham in Gen 12:3: *“In you all the nations shall be blessed”* – 3:8. It was always God's intention to implement a way of fellowship and salvation for *all mankind*; the Jews (and their law) were merely the means to this end. Paul thus affirms that the gospel he preaches finds its origin in the faith and the purpose for which God selected Abraham in the first place.

3. Escaping the Curse of the Law – 3:10-14

- A. In these verses we find the very core of the gospel. Paul juxtaposes justification by law with justification by faith. He says in 3:10-12:
 1. To be under a law system is to be under a curse. Why? Because no man can perfectly obey the law of God – 3:10. This is not the fault of God; that is, He has not given a law that is impossible because it demands more of man than his resources would allow. Rather, man has demonstrated that, without exception, he succumbs to his own lusts and desires and **chooses** to disobey God's law.
 2. But this is not a “new truth,” for Paul has already quoted Dt 27:26 and now cites Hab 2:4 which acknowledges that *“the just shall live by faith”* – 3:11. By grace God considers a man “just” without being perfect; he lives before God by faith.

3. Paul next says the law provides justification only upon the basis that a man perfectly obeys its statutes and precepts: *“the man who does them shall live by them”* – 3:12. There was no true justifying power in the law for violators (cf. Heb 9:9-10, 13, 15; 10:1-4; 11:40). Thus *“the law is not of faith”* (Gal 3:12). The two systems are mutually exclusive.
- B. The “good news”: Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law – 3:13. God could not satisfy His divine justice merely by agreeing to ignore the sins of man and arbitrarily accept them on the basis of faith. No, it took the satisfaction of that justice by restitution in order to accept the just on the basis of faith. **Sin had to be punished, and the punishment for sin is death.**
1. Jesus became a curse for us; i.e., He took our place and paid the penalty that was owed to us willingly and voluntarily. Other allusions to this concept: *“He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him”* (2 Cor 5:21); *“For what the law could not do ... God did by sending His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us ...”* (Rom 8:3-4).
 2. All of this, Paul affirms, ties together with the “blessing of Abraham.” The Jews viewed these blessings as exclusively theirs; Paul says no: the blessings were always intended to come upon the Gentiles as well – 3:14.
- C. Thus, “the promise of the Spirit” is received by both Jew and Gentile “through faith.” It cannot be otherwise. The law condemns all as transgressors; only through redemption via the blood of Jesus – and genuine faith in God which appropriates that redemption – can any man stand justified in God’s sight. ***This is the heart of the glorious gospel of Christ!***

Questions:

1. What contributes to a person’s vulnerability in being led astray into false doctrine?
2. What strong language does Paul use toward the Galatians in this section? Does it violate Jesus’ warning in Matthew 5:22? Why, or why not?
3. What had been characteristic of their early days of faith (Gal 3:4)? Why does Paul refer to this?
4. Where else in the NT is Gen 15:6 quoted? For what purpose(s)?
5. In the context of Gal 3:1-14, what is the “promise of the Spirit” (3:14)?

A Study of Galatians

Lesson 6: Gal 3:15-4:7 – The Law: A Tutor Leading to Christ

1. The Covenant with Abraham and the Law of Moses: Two Different Entities – 3:15-18

A. After asserting that law brings curse via violation (and thus salvation must come on another basis), Paul now demonstrates that the spiritual promises *cannot* arise from Mosaic law.

1. 3:15 – Principle: Covenants or agreements cannot be altered once the concerned parties have accepted the stated conditions.
2. 3:16 – Paul demonstrates that God made a covenant with Abraham involving certain promises to a select line of descendants. These descendants would eventually encompass those in a relationship with the “seed” of Abraham – the Christ (Messiah). (Not all descendants were included; viz., Ishmael, children with Keturah, Esau, etc. These special promises only concerned the redemptive line of descendants chosen by God.)

B. The Law of Moses came hundreds of years after the covenant with Abraham – 3:17.

1. God had made the covenant with Abraham and confirmed it with an oath (cf. Heb 6:13-18). Thus, the law could not alter the promises to Abraham; it was a completely separate entity with a different purpose.

2. If the inheritance of the Abrahamic promises is by the law of Moses; i.e., if Gentiles must keep the law in order to be saved, then the blessings are no longer of promise but law – 3:18. This violates the nature and word of God.

2. The Purpose of the Law – 3:19-25

Galatians 3:15-4:7

15 Brethren, I speak in the manner of men: Though [it is] only a man's covenant, yet [if it is] confirmed, no one annuls or adds to it. **16** Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, "And to seeds," as of many, but as of one, "And to your Seed," who is Christ. **17** And this I say, [that] the law, which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ, that it should make the promise of no effect. **18** For if the inheritance [is] of the law, [it is] no longer of promise; but God gave [it] to Abraham by promise. **19** What purpose then [does] the law [serve?] It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; [and it was] appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator. **20** Now a mediator does not [mediate] for one [only,] but God is one. **21** [Is] the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not! For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law. **22** But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. **23** But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. **24** Therefore the law was our tutor [to bring us] to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. **25** But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.

A. The natural question which would occur to the Jew is: *"What purpose then does the law serve?"* – 3:19. This is a fair question, but one that reveals a lack of understanding regarding the law.

B. Paul answers that sin made the addition of the law necessary until the promises were fulfilled.

1. *"It was added because of transgressions ..."* – 3:19. Other scriptures bear out this observation. The law clarified man's sinfulness, for the Jews were chronic lawbreakers (cf. Rom 3:20; 5:20; 7:7). Also, the constant teaching and enforcement of the law helped curb the explosive tendency of sin (cf. 1 Tim 1:9-10).

2. *"The Scripture has confined all under sin ..."* – 3:22. This is said in contrast to what kind of system can produce spiritual life within man: *"For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law"* (3:21). This is a crucial passage in understanding our relationship with God. Righteousness **cannot** be attained on the basis of law. Law condemns **all men** because all have violated law. If righteousness could be on the basis of law, the law of Moses would have remained intact.

3. *"We were kept under guard by the law ..."* – 3:23. Man was enslaved by law and sin (cf. 1 Cor 15:56) so that he would appreciate the grace and mercy to come.

4. *"The law was our tutor to bring us to Christ ..."* – 3:24. Thus the law was not *"against the promises of God"* (3:21a); rather, it educated mankind as to his inability to save himself and his need for a savior.

C. Paul affirms the temporary nature of the law and its removal now that its purpose has been fulfilled in the coming of "the faith": *"It was added till the seed should come ..."* – 3:19; *"after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor"* – 3:25. This passage, along with other concepts in the new testament, clearly establish that the law of Moses is no longer a viable judicial document. That it contains much instruction and useful information is undeniable (for such was its purpose), but *it is contrary to the spiritual welfare of man*. It cannot save; it can only condemn. Salvation can only come by "our faith" in "the faith."

Galatians 3:15-4:7

26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. **27** For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. **28** There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. **29** And if you [are] Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

4:1 Now I say [that] the heir, as long as he is a child, does not differ at all from a slave, though he is master of all, **2** but is under guardians and stewards until the time appointed by the father. **3** Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world. **4** But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, **5** to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. **6** And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!" **7** Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

3. Sonship for All – 3:26-4:7

A. Paul's argument reaches its crescendo here: it is faith in Christ that makes one a son of God, not the law or his Jewishness – 3:26.

1. Those "*baptized into Christ have put on Christ*" – 3:27. Not Christ + circumcision, Christ + the Sabbath, not Christ + *anything*. (Note how naturally Paul ties baptism with entry into the family of God. His argument here is not that baptism is necessary for salvation; rather, this is a point he takes for granted. He merely says that nothing of the Mosaic system had to supplement baptism in order for them to be saved.)
2. Faith in Christ eliminates all cultural, social, religious and gender barriers – 3:28-29. God had always determined that the way into His family would be open to all men in His Son, whom Paul identifies as the true seed of Abraham. This connection with Abraham via faith was totally foreign to the Jewish outlook which had placed so much stress on externals such as genetics and acreage.

B. Paul now develops the theme of spiritual sonship relative to the law and the gospel. Note the following comparisons in 4:1-7:

1. The juvenile child is a slave, though he will be master upon maturity – 4:1. In his youth, he is under guardians and stewards who oversee him – 4:2. This continues until such a time as determined by the father – 4:2.
2. *Even so* ...mankind was in bondage to "*the elements of the world*" in his spiritual youth – 4:3. At the appointed time "*God sent forth His Son*" (4:4), the result of which is that mankind was elevated to full sonship by adoption (4:5).
3. This liberation, brought on by spiritual maturity fostered by God, allows all mankind to acknowledge God as our spiritual Father – 4:6. We have progressed from slave to son to heir, *not by the provisions of the law of Moses*, but by the blessings and promises originally bestowed upon Abraham and his seed – culminating in Jesus Christ.

Questions:

1. Research the term "schoolmaster" or tutor. Describe this role from Greek society.
2. How many times is "promise(s)" used in 3:14-4:1? It is used in contrast to what?
3. What various terminology refers to saved people in this section of Galatians?
4. Describe the frame of mind these truths should produce in the Christian.

A Study of Galatians

Lesson 7: Gal 4:8-31 – The Jerusalem Above

1. Paul's Anxiety over the Galatians' Departure from the Truth – 4:8-20

A. After defending his apostleship and the content of the gospel, Paul returns to the present state of the Galatians – 4:8-11.

1. In their former ignorance, they “*served those which by nature are not gods*” (4:8).
2. Upon learning the truth as preached by Paul, they came to know the true God. Note the significance of the gospel; it is not just another religious doctrine but brings to man true knowledge of God. But more than this, the one who obeys God *is known by God* – the greater blessing.
3. Incredibly, Paul says, the Galatians are abandoning this intimate fellowship for the “*weak and beggarly elements*” of Mosaic observances. This disparaging language takes into account the fact that the law was given by God, but it also acknowledges the inability of the law to create spiritual union. Thus the restrictions, ceremonies and fleshly statutes and ordinances were of no more spiritual benefit than pagan rituals. The Galatians had exchanged one form of religious futility for another.

B. A nostalgic look back – 4:12-16.

1. These observations give rise to much curiosity. Paul originally came to them as a non-practicing Jew (“*for I am as you are,*” 4:12).
2. Furthermore, some physical malady of unknown origin, but apparently of a repulsive nature, created an opportunity for Paul to spend time among them and preach

Galatians 4:8-31

8 But then, indeed, when you did not know God, you served those which by nature are not gods. **9** But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how [is it that] you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage? **10** You observe days and months and seasons and years. **11** I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain. **12** Brethren, I urge you to become like me, for I [became] like you. You have not injured me at all. **13** You know that because of physical infirmity I preached the gospel to you at the first. **14** And my trial which was in my flesh you did not despise or reject, but you received me as an angel of God, [even] as Christ Jesus. **15** What then was the blessing you [enjoyed?] For I bear you witness that, if possible, you would have plucked out your own eyes and given them to me. **16** Have I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth? **17** They zealously court you, [but] for no good; yes, they want to exclude you, that you may be zealous for them. **18** But it is good to be zealous in a good thing always, and not only when I am present with you. **19** My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you, **20** I would like to be present with you now and to change my tone; for I have doubts about you. **21** Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not hear the law? **22** For it is written that Abraham had two sons: the one by a bondwoman, the other by a freewoman. **23** But he [who was] of the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and he of the freewoman through promise, **24** which things are symbolic. For these are the two covenants: the one from Mount Sinai which gives birth to bondage, which is Hagar --

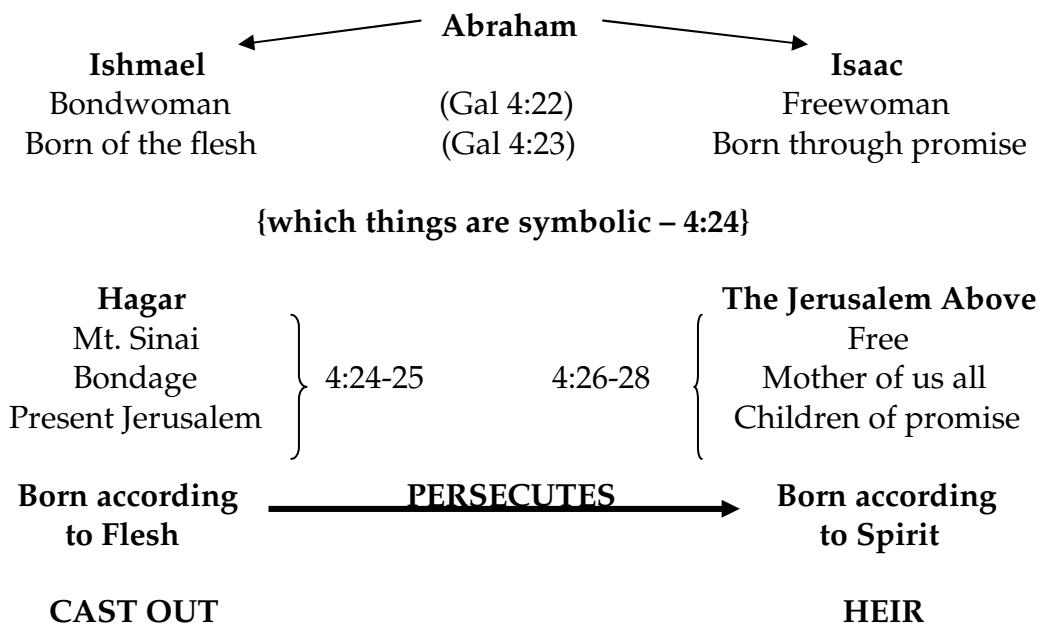
the gospel. Their reaction? They had great sympathy for Paul (4:14-15).

3. And now? *"Have I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth?"* (4:16). These Judaizers have succeeded to some degree in alienating the Galatians' feelings for Paul. Subversive teachers often undermine the influence of good men in order to promote their doctrines.

- C. Paul lays bare the true motives of the Judaizers: *"They zealously court you ... they want to exclude you, that you may be zealous for them"* (4:17). This is the heart of sectarianism, a party spirit. Truth is no longer the issue; merely the building of a following from which the egotistical gain self-affirmation and praise.

2. An Old Testament Allegory – 4:21-31

- A. Paul chides the Galatians for wanting to be under the law but not seeing the deeper truths revealed in the law. He presents a contrast between Ishmael/Judaism and Isaac/Christians:



Galatians 4:8-31

25 for this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children -- **26** but the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all. **27** For it is written: "Rejoice, O barren, [You] who do not bear! Break forth and shout, You who are not in labor! For the desolate has many more children Than she who has a husband."

28 Now we, brethren, as Isaac [was,] are children of **29** But, as he who was born according to the flesh then persecuted him [who was born] according to promise. the Spirit, even so [it is] now.

30 Nevertheless what does the Scripture say? "Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman." **31** So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman but of the free.

- B. Points of comparison/contrast:

1. Paul draws upon the history of Abraham and his descendants to make a point about who the people of God truly are. Abraham had children by natural means

(only Ishmael is considered). But Abraham further had a child only by the promise and intervention of God, for Isaac was born after Abraham and Sarah were infertile.

2. The Jews cannot rightfully claim the eternal blessing of God simply upon the basis of physical descent. Ishmael, too, was a physical descendant of Abraham, but he was cast out because of an adverse spirit. Rather than accept the purpose of God in Isaac and rejoice in his own role in God's scheme, *"he persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit"* (Gal 4:29).
 3. God always had in mind that "true Israel," the people who would be in fellowship with Him, would be those for whom He made spiritual provisions. Spiritual freedom is represented by Isaac, the child born not in the realm of Abraham's servants but unto Sarah, Abraham's wife. Thus the true, free children of God are not produced from the union between God and the law but between God and the covenant made via His Son. It is on the basis of faith and grace, not law and obedience, that God bears spiritual children.
 4. Paul bolsters his allegory (a historical story with deeper, spiritual meaning) with a quotation from Is 54:1 in which Isaiah foresees the abundance of the kingdom/church. Isaiah notes that what God had in mind to accomplish through His Messiah was far greater than a blessing for physical Israel: *"Indeed He says, 'It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles, that You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth'"* (Is 49:6).
- C. Both Jew and Gentile had to accept the fact that God's plan all along was to extend salvation and family membership beyond the borders of physical Israel. The Jewish nation and its law were both means to a greater end. The Gentiles rejoiced in this blessing; the Jews were jealous. But their jealousy was directed at undermining the Gentiles' faith and bringing them back into bondage. This Paul has attacked in his main thesis.

Questions:

1. Why do men have the tendency to reject truth in favor of more rigorous doctrines?
2. What is the significance of Gal 4:11 in light of Calvinistic teaching?
3. Why does speaking the truth often alienate others (Gal 4:16)?
4. Comment on the zeal of the Judaizing teachers. Does zeal alone suggest godliness?
5. Though Christians, what (who) has not been fully formed in the Galatians?

A Study of Galatians

Lesson 8: Gal 5:1-15 – Faith Working Through Love

1. Stand Fast in Liberty – 5:1-6

- A. The last two chapters of Galatians are various exhortations that grow out of the truths of the gospel that Paul has explained and defended.
1. After speaking of the spiritual freedom of the children of the heavenly Jerusalem (Gal 4:26, 31), Paul now urges the Galatians to hold fast to that liberty and not take up again a yoke of bondage – the law of Moses (5:1).
 2. But the implications are more severe than external enslavement: if they continue along this path “*Christ will profit you nothing*” (5:2) and “*you have become estranged from Christ ... you have fallen from grace*” (5:4).
 3. **The Calvinistic doctrine of the impossibility of apostasy (once saved, always saved) is clearly refuted.** The Galatians have “begun in the Spirit” (3:3), are “sons of God by faith in Christ” (3:26) and have been “known by God” (4:9). They were saved *in fact*, not merely in appearance.
- B. Justification by law (5:4) stands in direct contrast to waiting for the hope of righteousness by faith (5:5).
- C. The effective principle of life in Christ: “*faith working through love*” (5:6). Thus the personal faith of which Paul has spoken in Galatians is not a mere mental exercise but conviction that transforms the life (cf. his own statement in Gal 2:20). This active, loving faith introduces the further concerns of Paul for the welfare of the Galatians.

Galatians 5:1-15

5:1 Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage. **2** Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing. **3** And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law. **4** You have become estranged from Christ, you who [attempt to] be justified by law; you have fallen from grace. **5** For we through the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. **6** For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love. **7** You ran well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth? **8** This persuasion does not [come] from Him who calls you. **9** A little leaven leavens the whole lump. **10** I have confidence in you, in the Lord, that you will have no other mind; but he who troubles you shall bear his judgment, whoever he is. **11** And I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why do I still suffer persecution? Then the offense of the cross has ceased. **12** I could wish that those who trouble you would even cut themselves off! **13** For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not [use] liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. **14** For all the law is fulfilled in one word, [even] in this: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” **15** But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!

2. Harsh Words for the Judaizers – 5:7-12

- A. “*You ran well ...*” – 5:7. They had gotten off to a good start in their faith, but they

have been “hindered.” Paul emphasizes that they are following men who are not in harmony with the will of God: *“This persuasion does not come from Him who calls you”* – 5:8.

- B. *“I have confidence in you ...”* – 5:10. Paul, as he often does in his epistles, changes his tone. He has previously said: *“O foolish Galatians”* (3:1); *“I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain”* (4:11); *“I have doubts about you”* (4:20). He tries to inspire them by raising his expectations of them.
- C. Paul’s observation in 5:11 seems to indicate that the Judaizers claimed Paul, himself, practiced circumcision (likely referring to the case of Timothy). His answer: *“If that is true, the Jews would have stopped persecuting me long ago.”*
- D. Most shocking to our sensibilities is Paul’s statement in 5:12 wherein he wishes the Judaizers would take circumcision one step further and just go ahead and castrate themselves. Why such a seemingly crude exclamation?!
 - 1. Paul understands the true ramifications of this insidious doctrine. As he has already proven, the end result is estrangement from Christ. Thus, he is filled with righteous indignation.
 - 2. Castration was abhorrent to the Jews and a practice of pagan priests. He is saying it would be better for all concerned for the Judaizers to castrate themselves and thus be openly anathema (thus neutralizing their influence) than to continue subverting Christians while hiding behind the robe of Moses.

3. Through Love Serve One Another – 5:13-15

- A. Paul seems to address an additional problem among the Galatians: a tendency toward strife and contention. Perhaps this is an outgrowth of the influence of the Judaizers, since inward turmoil has always seemed to plague the Jews.
- B. Liberty from salvation by works is a wonderful expression of God’s grace; it is relief and peace and joy. However, Satan can twist even this and use it against men.
 - 1. *“Only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh”* – 5:13. *“Opportunity”* means “a starting point, was used to denote a base of operations in war” (Vine, p. 440).
 - 2. An unfettered, free-wheeling view of this liberty is that the Christian is free from *everything*: obligation, duty, resistance to sin, service to others. An unrestrained view of liberty turns into self-indulgence. Satan can use this as a beachhead to gain entry into the life of a Christian and subvert his faith.

3. Paul says ironically that “liberty” involves “service”: *“through love serve one another”* – 5:13. True, fulfilling service in the name of Christ does not arise from obedience to a command but is motivated by love.
- C. Paul then does something that seems peculiar: he quotes from the law of Moses, which he has said is defunct, to stress the importance of loving one’s fellow man – 5:14.
1. But Paul is not saying that there is no truth, no valid principles contained in the old law. In fact, he already quoted from Is 54, Hab 2, Lev 18 and Gn 12, 15. It is useful, if one uses it properly. But his charge against the Judaizers and Galatians is that *they are not using the law properly*. They are appealing to it as a means of justification, which will result in condemnation.
 2. The heart of any law/covenant God has made with man pertaining to his interaction with others is to love one’s neighbor as oneself, to treat others as we would wish ourselves to be treated.
 3. He warns the Galatians about consuming each other by animosity and infighting (5:15). They are so wrapped up in circumcision and the observance of feasts that they have *“neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith”* (Mt 23:23). **A warning for us all ...**

Questions:

1. What additional debt do those who would be circumcised have?
2. How would you apply “a little leaven leavens the whole lump” in this context?
3. What ominous warning does Paul give concerning the one sowing the seeds of trouble among the Galatians?
4. What would make the “offense of the cross” cease in reference to Paul’s preaching?
5. Can you give a specific example of how Christian liberty might provide opportunity for the flesh? How might you have observed this in someone’s life, or your own?
6. Suggest some ways in which strife consumes churches.

A Study of Galatians

Lesson 9: Gal 5:16-21 – Works of the Flesh

1. The Spiritual Battle Within – 5:16-18

A. Paul now describes the great struggle going on within the heart of every person who tries to please God and maintain a pure conscience: *“For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another ...”* (5:17).

1. The term “flesh” has a variety of meanings in the New Testament. Paul’s use of it in this context seems best explained as that element in man which is governed by unenlightened and unrestrained passion. It is a surrender to one’s desires and the rejection of discipline and control one might otherwise have when under the influence of God’s will.

2. The human struggle is to arrest these desires and conform to the character and wishes of God. This is more easily said than done, and great effort must be expended to triumph through the help of God.

B. *“Walk in the Spirit ...”* (5:16). Paul urges the Galatians to live by the guidance of the Holy Spirit who has revealed both the will of God and the incentives for following that will. If we so order our lives, we will not fulfill the lust of the flesh. It is when we lose sight of God’s will that we wander off the path and make ourselves vulnerable to the considerable power of the flesh.

C. Paul also notes that the one being led by the Spirit (analogous to “walk in the Spirit”) is not under the law. This may carry the idea of either being bound to keep the law (of Moses) or under the curse of sin which grows out of law-righteousness – in which case Paul is saying that such fleshly passion does not have to rule in the life of a Christian even though he may feel these impulses.

Galatians 5:16-21

16 I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. **17** For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. **18** But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. **19** Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, **20** idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, **21** envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told [you] in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

2. Some Characteristics of the Flesh – 5:19-21a

A. There seem to be four basic classes of sins mentioned: 1) sensuality or impurity (fornication, uncleanness, licentiousness); 2) religion (idolatry, sorcery), 3) violations of love/personal relationships (hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, and 4) intemperance (drunk-

eness, revelries). This list does not contain adultery (5:19) or murders (5:21) for lack of manuscript support. Note the brief definitions of each of these:

1. Fornication (*porneia*): This is a general term for all kinds of unlawful sexual conduct. This sin was rampant throughout Roman society in the first century, even being incorporated into pagan worship rites. Sexual appetites were considered as natural and common as eating and sleeping, so the moral standards advanced by Jesus and His followers were shocking. Too, such conditioning made it all too easy for Christians to revert to the old ways of sexual license.
2. Uncleanliness (*akatharsia*): This is even a more general term than *porneia*, for wherein *porneia* refers to acts, *akatharsia* refers to general sexual uncleanness. That is, it would be inclusive of anything which promotes sexual perversion or illicit excitement (filthy language, double entendres or suggestiveness, pornography, risqué dress, flirtatious enticement, etc.). Any language or behavior that encourages or condones sexual impropriety is *akatharsia*.
3. Licentiousness (*aselgeia*): This is difficult to distinguish from *akatharsia*, but the difference seems to lie somewhat in attitude. *Aselgeia* is lack of restraint, *shameless* conduct, flagrant, brazen sexuality with no sense of self-consciousness. So wholly given to immorality are they that “*they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you*” (1 Pet 4:4). Such people are “in your face” with their vileness and open debauchery.
4. Idolatry (*eidololatria*): Simply, the worship of false gods. Idols are the products of human imagination and self-desire. Idols take on the characteristics (good and bad) of their makers and so become self-justification for whatever their adherents wish to do.
5. Sorcery (*pharmakeia*): This word came to mean engaging in witchcraft, spells and incantations, often with drugs to enhance the effects of the sorcerer. These degenerate and deceptive practices prey upon ignorance, anxiety and despair that life normally creates by its rigors. Sorcerers (or in our day palm readers, fortune tellers, astrologists, channelers, necromancers, etc.) take advantage of the weak and dupe them with falsehoods.
6. Hatred (*echthrai*): A general term meaning enmity, a lack of love manifested in ill will, bitterness, an enemy-mindset. Such treatment among human beings is all too evident from our local newspapers to satellite feeds from abroad. It is the source of most murders (particularly among family members) as well as multitudes of other crime and violence.
7. Contentions (*eris*): The practical result of inward *echthrai*: discord, quarreling, fighting, wrangling – general disunity and adversarial treatment.

8. Jealousies (*zelos*): This is a morally neutral term that means zeal, ardor. In a good sense it refers to ambition or healthy competition. In a negative sense, it means to resent the fact that one does not possess what another has. Given the inherent inequities in life, the person who is jealous of what others possess (material, intellectual, appearance, etc.) will be constantly tormented and driven to achieve what others have – sometimes at all costs.
 9. Wrath (*thumos*): This is explosive anger, temper, uncontrolled outbursts that can create deep wounds and destroy trust and love.
 10. Selfish ambitions (*eritheia*): This word referred to hirelings who merely worked for money or politicians interested in political gain. The end result of such self-motivated people is the creation of parties or warring factions.
 11. Dissensions (*dichostasia*): Divisions; breaking up the unified body of Christ into unauthorized sects, whether in respect to social, racial, educational or opinion issues. Such behavior destroys spiritual influence and zeal.
 12. Heresies (*haireisis*): Mike Willis observes: “a group of people who rally around some particular belief and advances in meaning beyond the preceding two words in that the former refers to divisions that still maintain some outward semblance of unity whereas this word describes the situation after a formal and complete division has occurred” (*Commentary on Galatians*, p. 261).
 13. Envy (*phthonos*): This word closely resembles jealousy (*zelos*) but carries this distinction: Jealousy is self-pity for what one does not have; envy hates the one who possesses what is desired. Envy will attack the prosperous via gossip, slander, innuendo or the attempt at outright harm.
 14. Drunkenness (*methe*): Just what it sounds like.
 15. Revelries (*komos*): Celebrations, parties, carousing punctuated by drinking, lewdness, lack of inhibition, late night/early morning hours – the excesses of people who are feeding the flesh with drugs and lusts.
- B. “*And the like*” (5:21) indicates that this is not an exhaustive list but is representative of any people in any culture or society who give in to base impulses.
- C. The shocking assessment of fleshly behavior: “*Those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God*” (5:21). The removal of Mosaic law and the approval of God on the basis of faith is not moral license – a charge made against Paul’s preaching. In fact, the opposite is true, for it is the heart motivated by love and gratitude for what God has done in *freeing him from law* that promotes true devotion and the pursuit of self-control. Such a man will “*walk in the Spirit.*”

A Study of Galatians

Lesson 10: Gal 5:22-26 – Fruit of the Spirit

1. The Fruit of the Spirit – 5:22-23

A. The term “fruit” bears the idea that the man who is attentive and submissive to the will of God as revealed by the Holy Spirit will develop certain characteristics. Vine says it is used of “works or deeds, ‘fruit’ being the visible expression of power working inwardly and invisibly, the character of the ‘fruit’ being evidence of the character of the power producing it” (p. 256). The Christian character includes:

Galatians 5:22-26

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, **23** gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. **24** And those [who are] Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. **25** If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. **26** Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

1. Love (*agape*): This word in Greek means so much more than the corrupted modern use in English. It is a favorable disposition toward one's fellow man that appreciates his true value and seeks his welfare. It is a response of the *will* rather than an *emotion*. Thus, it is commanded, and its absence within the life is a matter of disobedience. The flesh incites hatred and vengeance; the Spirit promotes seeking the best interest of others – even our enemies. This kind of love originates from the Creator, Himself, who is love (1 Jn 4:8).
2. Joy (*chara*): Again, this is a word that goes beyond a mere feeling that arises from pleasant circumstances. It is a deeper, spiritual disposition of well-being and fulfillment that comes from harmony with God. Christians are sometimes destitute, often suffering and always tempted by the adversary. Grief, loss, failure and disappointment are the lot of all men – even children of God. The quality of joy does not pretend as if these things do not exist; rather, it allows the deeper reality of fellowship with God to place them in their proper perspective. Thus, in spite of writing from prison, Paul can say, “*Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!*” (Ph 4:4).
3. Peace (*eirene*): Peace is the ultimate state of tranquility, harmony and contentment. In the Christian's life it involves peace within oneself, peace with God and peace with others. Though it is not possible to be at peace with all men while living faithfully as a Christian (cf. Mt 10:34-39), the Christian does everything in character and action to promote harmony (Rom 12:18). The root of this peace is the fact that, through Jesus, we are at peace with God (Rom 5:1).
4. Longsuffering (*makrothumia*): This is the ability to patiently endure trying or unfavorable circumstances without sinking into fleshly responses such as anger, resentment or retaliation. It is steadiness of mind that endures hardship.

5. Kindness (*chrestotes*): This is the quality of gentleness, a welcoming attitude that puts others at ease and invites them to approach. It is the absence of harshness. It involves the ability to identify with others, sympathize with them and seek to embrace them for the purpose of helping them.
6. Goodness (*agathosune*): This word can be difficult to distinguish from the one above. Goodness is an unswerving allegiance to what is good and right; it suggests integrity and soundness that always promotes godliness. This quality, however, might involve confrontation, correction, rebuke or any number of other responses to things that oppose truth and right. The good man will do what fosters higher spiritual good even if it requires stern reproof. Some misunderstand this, thinking that a Christian who stands firm is not necessarily kind and good. Remember, Jesus made a whip of cords and drove the moneychangers out of the temple. He was standing for what was good and right, though in that circumstance He did not display the kind of gentleness that He did toward the Samaritan woman, the woman taken in adultery or in other cases of sin.
7. Faithfulness (*pistis*): This is the man who is predictable, constant and reliable because he acts consistently on inner principles. He is not given to whims, personal desires or the emotion of the moment. Rather, he is steady, dutiful and responsible, and as a result he inspires confidence and trust.
8. Gentleness (*prautes*): Almost universally the quality of meekness is considered to be weakness, a spineless, cowardly lump of jello that is afraid to mount a defense to injustice or mistreatment. But this is not the case. Consider the observations of W.E. Vine: "It must be clearly understood ... that the meekness manifested by the Lord and commended to the believer is the fruit of power. The common assumption is that when a man is meek it is because he cannot help himself; but the Lord was 'meek' because he had the infinite resources of God at His command. Described negatively, meekness is the opposite of self-assertiveness and self-interest; it is equanimity of spirit that is neither elated nor cast down, simply because it is not occupied with self at all" (p. 401).
9. Self-control (*egkrateia*): The Christian endeavors to curb his passions and master his impulses. Unlike the Greco-Roman world, where men indulged their basest lusts, the Christian is able with the help of God to control or deny them for a higher good. And in this process the Holy Spirit also provides the incentive to gain control of himself. In the first century, and in our own day, those who are unenlightened cannot grasp *why* a man would even want to deny himself any pleasure he can afford. But the Christian has learned about the destructive side of sin and the wonderful grace of God that has given him liberty from the dominion of his sinful passions. He thus seeks to channel his desires in the direction which God approves and which is in his ultimate best interest. Evidence abounds of the damage done by unrestrained impulses and reckless abandon.

- B. *"Against such there is no law"* (5:23b). What does Paul mean by this self-evident statement? To attain such a character does not leave a man disadvantaged in any way relative to the law of Moses. The Jew did not have a right to condemn his Gentile brother because he did not observe the law; rather, *"all the law is fulfilled"* (5:14) by such spiritual attainments. The law would not condemn one who, through the Holy Spirit, produced such fruit.

2. Crucifying the Flesh – 5:24-26

- A. *"And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh ..."* (5:24). This does not refer to some mystical union that destroys sinful impulses, for Christians continue to have these (temptation). Rather, it is a decision of the will that takes into account the death of Jesus and the full range of meaning that this event has relative to sin. When the Christian understands the ramifications of the cross, he will determine to resist and then work to control the impulses leading to disobedience.
- B. *"If we live in the Spirit ..."* (5:25). This is the third such phrase describing a spiritual manner of living (as opposed to trying to adhere to the letter of the law): *"walk in the Spirit"*; *"led by the Spirit"* (5:16, 18). True spiritual life does not conform to slavish obedience to a law-system; rather, it is being animated by the Holy Spirit in the inward man as he conforms to the will/truth revealed by the Spirit. Rather than inhibit obedience, as the Judaizer would contend, such fellowship with God in the gospel is the key to loving submission and complete devotion to a godly life.
- C. *"Let us not become conceited ..."* (5:26). This could be the lead-in to the thoughts of chapter six. At any rate, Paul is concerned about a deepening sense of alienation and a spirit of unholy competitiveness. Rather than attack each other, he will elaborate on serving and submitting to one another in the next verses.

Questions:

1. Is this a complete list of the fruit of the Spirit?
2. Describe from earlier passages in Galatians "those who are Christ's." What things contribute to establishing a relationship with Christ?
3. What does Rom 6:11-13 say about crucifying the flesh?
4. At what point do we commit to this wholesale change (Col 2:11-12; Rom 6:3-4)?
5. What kind of behavior grows out of conceit?

A Study of Galatians

Lesson 11: Gal 6:1-5 – Bear One Another's Burdens

1. Bear One Another's Burdens – 6:1-2

A. Rather than *"bite and devour one another"* (5:15) and *"provoking one another (and) envying one another"* (5:26), Paul encourages the Galatians to seek the welfare of their brethren.

1. *"Overtaken in a trespass"* carries the idea of one who has fallen into transgression by weakness rather than one who has developed a callous disregard for God. This is not to minimize his guilt but to explain the burden that rests upon others to reclaim him.
 2. *"You who are spiritual"* plays upon the earlier description of a godly man (5:16, 18, 25). These are ones who are spiritually aware, who understand the heinousness of sin and its mortal danger. These will seek the well-being of their weak brethren and will understand their plight most clearly.
 3. *"Restore such a one"* refers to a comprehensive series of steps that may be necessary in successfully reclaiming the sinner.
 4. *"In a spirit of gentleness"* prohibits the haughtiness and harshness that so often drives the guilty into deeper rebellion.
 5. *"Considering yourself lest you also be tempted"* is the great equalizer. Anyone with self-awareness and spiritual insight will understand through his own experiences how vulnerable we all are to transgression. This tempers those who must confront and urge the sinful brother to repent, for they can surely see themselves in him.
- B. *"Bear one another's burdens ..."* (6:2). Our common brotherhood and the example of our Lord will convince the spiritually-minded that we have responsibilities to our fellow-believers that cannot be shirked. This life is full of burdens – some emotional, some material – but the heaviest of all are spiritual. These we must help our brethren bear, and it will not do to say with Cain, *"Am I my brother's keeper?"* The spirit of the law of Christ is fulfilled in such care for others, though the full obligations of the new covenant are not discharged in so doing.

Galatians 6:1-5

6:1 Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who [are] spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. **2** Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. **3** For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. **4** But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. **5** For each one shall bear his own load.

2. Each One Shall Bear His Own Load – 6:3-5

A. Paul again strikes at the heart of discord by addressing *“anyone who thinks himself to be something”* (6:3).

1. This matches with the conceit mentioned in 5:26, the attitude of the Judaizers who wished the Gentiles to be in their “party” (4:17).
2. Such a self-inflated assessment overlooks the fact that *“he is nothing.”* Here is where such men go wrong: they compare themselves with others, and they feel morally superior when those they compare themselves with are guilty of sin. If we would compare ourselves with the Savior and remember that He had to die to save us, we would retain humility and stop the competitive wrangling.

B. The opposite view: *“But let each one examine his own work ...”* (6:4). Putting all others aside, how do I stack up before the Lord? Do I have reason to rejoice on account of my teaching, my encouragement of others, my service rendered to those in need? **Note:** There is a legitimate place for enjoying a sense of accomplishment in spiritual things. Not all such satisfaction is evil boasting. It can become so if we vaunt ourselves at the expense of others or credit ourselves for what we have done. But there is a deep, rich sense of achievement in kingdom work that is undertaken in fellowship with the Lord and the Holy Spirit.

C. *“For each one shall bear his own load.”* A contradiction? Surely Bible writers would not be so clumsy. The seemingly contradictory statements (6:2, 5) must be understood in their individual contexts. The first has reference to lending assistance when others falter and succumb to the flesh (which we all do at times). The latter refers to the work that we are expected to do in view of the resources and opportunities with which God has endowed us. I am ultimately responsible for what I am and do, but God has blessed me with loving, spiritual brethren who will help me be what I should – even if I give in to the flesh and fall into sin.

Questions:

1. What steps might be involved in the process of restoring the sinner to faithfulness? What is the role of the “spiritual” one, and what is the role of the sinner, himself?
2. How will unspiritual men react to sin in the lives of others?
3. In what condition is the man who thinks he is something when he is nothing?
4. Comment on 2 Cor 10:12-18 in connection with Gal 6:1-5. What points are relevant?

A Study of Galatians

Lesson 12: Gal 6:6-18 – Sowing to the Spirit

1. Do Good to All – 6:6-10

A. 6:6 – As Paul has directed spiritual support for those struggling with sin (6:1), he now urges material support for those devoted to teaching the word.

1. There is no separate “clergy” or priesthood among God’s people, but there were men who devoted themselves fully to the task of teaching and preaching.
2. Paul indicates that such men should be supported in reciprocation for the blessing they have imparted (cf. 1 Cor 9:7-14).

B. 6:7-9 – The principle of sowing and reaping.

1. It is axiomatic that the sown seed will produce after its kind. This is not only an agricultural truth but a spiritual one as well.
2. In context, sowing unto the flesh refers to the purpose of accumulating and expending material resources. If our efforts are aimed at material goals, then we should not be surprised when we reap corruption. An honest evaluation of our expenditures will reveal what harvest we should expect.

3. A warning for those who are sowing to the Spirit: we run the risk of growing weary in our service. We must not measure the harvest by external circumstances but rather by the promise that faithful, patient sowing will produce the harvest God desires. It is so easy to measure “success” by human standards and lose heart when those standards are unmet.

C. 6:10 – A blessing to others. Peter described Jesus as One who “*went about doing good*” (Ac 10:38). What a simple, noble assessment! Our lives are to be a source of blessing and goodness to all with a special obligation toward spiritual family.

Galatians 6:6-18

6 Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches.

7 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. **8** For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. **9** And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. **10** Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith. **11** See with what large letters I have written to you with my own hand! **12** As many as desire to make a good showing in the flesh, these [would] compel you to be circumcised, only that they may not suffer persecution for the cross of Christ. **13** For not even those who are circumcised keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh. **14** But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. **15** For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation. **16** And as many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy [be] upon them, and upon the Israel of God. **17** From now on let no one trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus. **18** Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ [be] with your spirit. Amen.

2. Glory Only in the Cross – 6:11-15

A. In his closing comments Paul reviews in his own hand the differing motives between himself and the Judaizers who have stirred up strife. **The Judaizers:**

1. They desire to make a good showing in the flesh – 6:12. They do not have deeper spiritual motives in mind; they are only interested in outward conformity.
2. They are trying to avoid persecution from their fellow Jews – 6:12b. They are guilty of the very thing for which they criticized Paul (cf. Gal 1:10). The Judaizers had some regard for Christ, but their devotion was not absolute. They want to have it both ways.
3. They do not honor the law in its entirety – 6:13. The Judaizers are hypocrites because they do not honor the law for its own sake. Rather, *“they desire to have you circumcised that they may glory in your flesh,”* thus minimizing persecution from their unbelieving Jewish associates. This is a corrupt, selfish use of the law.

B. Paul:

1. Only glories in the cross – 6:14. Paul has seen the truth from both sides, first as a zealous Jew who lived and breathed the law of Moses, and then as an eyewitness of the crucified Son of God. **No comparison.** Paul says human popularity, predicated upon a system that leads to spiritual death, is meaningless. The cross is where Paul found full self-realization and eternal meaning, and there can be no other ground of boasting.
2. The world has been crucified to Paul – 6:14b. It holds no allure, no satisfaction, no ambition, and Paul certainly has no motive to strive for such empty goals through fleshly means such as hypocrisy and deceit.
3. Paul has been crucified to the world – 6:14c. The idea seems to be that the feelings are mutual. Since Paul has repudiated the world and its values, the world has repudiated him. The unenlightened, unsaved world has no use for one who lives for truth, purity, godliness, self-denial and who will condemn the bankrupt character of those who have rejected God.

C. Paul repeats his observation of Gal 5:6 with a different ending: *“For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision, nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation”* (6:15). Circumcision was a fleshly operation that was indicative of Abrahamic heritage; it had no bearing upon the inner man. But the life that matters to God is the one that has been renewed and transformed according to the gospel of the cross. Paul himself is the embodiment of these principles; the Galatians could learn much about what God expects of them by examining the one who originally taught them.

3. Closing Remarks – 6:16-18

A. Paul invokes the blessings of peace and mercy upon those who would live by the principle he has just stated – 6:16. Such people, he says, are *“the Israel of God.”* The teaching of the new covenant is that: *“if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise”* (Gal 3:29).

1. The true people of God are those who live *“by faith”* – 3:11. They are not under the law; they are not circumcised; they are children of promise as was Isaac; they are citizens of the Jerusalem above. They have undergone spiritual rebirth.
2. Paul does not hesitate to call these people **the true Israel**. But actually, the “true Israel” has always been the remnant of Abraham’s descendants who had genuine faith. Never did God bless fleshly descendants of Abraham merely because of genetic connections. Granted, the unfaithful were blessed residually because of God’s regard for the faithful, but when that number shrank to insignificance God punished Israel along with the heathen nations.
3. In spite of premillennial fabrications, God has no special plans or purposes for anyone of fleshly descent from Abraham now or ever. That race of people has served its purpose as a class, and what a glorious purpose it was: they brought the Savior to the world. But God only has interest in Jews as individuals, and every Jew has the potential to become part of “the Israel of God.”

B. Paul, with a tone of weariness or exasperation or both, pleads for an end to such trials as the Judaizers are bringing upon him. His evidence of genuineness as an apostle of Christ: *“I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus”* – 6:17.

C. A final plea for the Lord’s grace to bless their spirits – 6:18.

Questions:

1. Under what condition will we reap everlasting life in due season (Gal 6:9)?
2. What factors would make someone grow tired of doing good?
3. Why should we pay special attention to “the household of faith”?
4. What type of circumcision is operative in the Christian dispensation (cf. Col 2:11-12)?
5. Describe the “new creation” wrought by the gospel.

A Study of Galatians

Lesson 13: Words and Terms of Interest in Galatians

Words mean things. This is a favorite saying of mine, especially in our day of growing subjectivism and ambiguity. Lately, the English vocabulary has been under assault by those who twist words and change their meanings to suit their own purposes. Euphemisms intended to obscure or deceive abound: like “negative patient outcome” instead of death. When this movement toward political correctness infringes upon the Scriptures, it creates a serious problem. The Holy Spirit chose the very words recorded by the original writers and preserved in the manuscripts that are available today. When we ignore legitimate meanings or frivolously assign our own definitions, we do violence to the expressed thoughts of God.

Therefore, in our Bible study we must pay close attention to the meaning of words, for words are the very building blocks of thought. While every word used by the Holy Spirit is important in its own right, here are some key words that contribute to the basic framework of the book of Galatians.

1. Law

- A. The term “law” (Gk. *nomos*) is used extensively by Paul in the epistles of Romans and Galatians, for in these letters he is explaining the essence of salvation – that it is not through any meritorious compliance with a law-system (of which the law of Moses is mainly at issue) but through one’s personal faith in Jesus Christ and the forgiveness that comes to man through His atoning death.
- B. Some difficulty arises in determining when to understand “law” as reference to the law of Moses specifically or a more general reference to the principle of law. This is made so by a peculiarity of Greek language: it does not contain the indefinite articles “a” or “an.”
 - 1. Spiros Zodhiates notes in *The Complete Word Study New Testament*: “Sometimes it is best to translate an anarthrous word (a word without a definite article – “the,” jj) by supplying “a” or “an” before it. In fact, due to reasons of English style or Greek idiom, the word “the” is even an appropriate translation in some cases. However, there are many times when supplying an article would be incorrect” (Grammatical Notation #5).
 - 2. He further notes: “The definite article in Greek is sometimes translated with the English definite article “the.” However, the function of the two is quite different. In English, the definite article serves merely to particularize, to refer to a particular object. In Greek, however, it serves to emphasize, in some way, the person or thing it modifies” (Grammatical Notation #24).

3. In simpler terms, what this means is that it can be difficult to determine whether “*nomos*” should be translated “a law” or “the law.” Conversely, it is not always clear whether “*nomos*” preceded by the definite article should be translated “the law” or merely law. *Context must often decide which usage is meant by the author.*

C. Consider these passages:

1. Gal 3:17 – “*And this I say, that the law, which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the covenant ...*”. “Law” here clearly refers to the law of Moses.
2. Gal 3:19 – “*What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions ... and it was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator.*” Again, this clearly refers to a definite law, the law of Moses. Cf. 3:23-24.
3. Gal 3:21 – “*For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law.*” Paul is here affirming that justification cannot be based on merit via *any* system of law, either that of Moses or Eden.

2. Faith

- A. As noted, “faith” stands in contrast to “law” as the means of justification before God. Again, there is some ambiguity in Greek grammar that makes it difficult to discern whether the author is talking about “the faith” (the gospel) or “faith” as an act of personal belief and trust in God. Context must be considered to determine which meaning best suits the author’s purpose.

B. Passages:

1. Gal 1:23 – “*He who formerly persecuted us now preaches the faith which he once tried to destroy.*” Paul tried to destroy the body of truth that he now advocates.
2. Gal 3:25 – “*But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.*” Subjective faith existed in Abraham long ago, but *the* faith came via Jesus and the apostles.
3. Gal 3:6-9 – Abraham was justified before God by his genuine faith and trust antecedent to the giving of the law of Moses. Paul makes the application that “*only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham,*” indicating a certain inner quality reflected in Abraham. This context speaks of one’s own personal faith in God as opposed to flawless adherence to law or mere genetic relation.
4. Gal 3:26 – Sonship does not come via self-justifying works but through faith which embraces what God offers and the conditions by which He offers it. It is personal faith that leads one to obey the command of Jesus to be baptized (3:27), and thus “*by works faith (is) made perfect*” (Jas 2:22).

3. Liberty

A. There is some manuscript discrepancy in Gal 5:1 as indicated by the following translations:

1. *“Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free ...”* (NKJ).
2. *“It was for freedom that Christ set us free ...”* (NAS).

B. The word “liberty” or “freedom” means loosed from restraints, whether of marriage or slavery or another form of bondage. The specific kind of freedom Paul speaks of is indicated in chapters 3-4: freedom from the obligation to justify oneself through works; freedom from guilt of sin; freedom from the copious statutes and ordinances of Mosaic law. Note also the related concepts:

1. Bondage – Gal 4:3 (under the elements of the world); 4:9 (returning to the bondage of law); 4:25 (the present bondage of Jews who have not accepted Christ).
2. Confined – Gal 3:22 (all confined under sin via the law).
3. Kept under guard – Gal 3:23 (by the law until faith would come).
4. Slave – Gal 4:7 (no longer, but now a son).
5. Redeemed – Gal 3:13 (by Christ from the curse of law); 4:5 (from the law unto adoption).
6. Free – Gal 4:26 (Jerusalem above), 31 (Christians born of promise).

4. Promise

A. This term is used 11 times in Galatians (3:14, 16, 17-19, 21,-22, 29; 4:23, 28) and is connected with the root of salvation and sonship. That is, Paul affirms that true fellowship with God is not the outgrowth of the law of Moses but the promises made by God to Abraham.

B. The qualities connected with the “promises” of God are His grace which freely offered such blessings and the certainty of fulfillment which is an outgrowth of God’s fidelity.

5. Other Terms

Other words such as flesh, spirit, justification, gospel and the enumerated lusts of the flesh and gifts of the Spirit are likewise noteworthy in Galatians.