

Notes & Outlines

GALATIANS

J. Vernon McGee

GALATIANS

WRITER: Paul (Galatians 1:1)

DATE: About A.D. 57

This epistle was probably written on the third missionary journey from Ephesus, during Paul's two years of residence there. There is substantial basis, however, for the claim that it was written from Corinth, shortly before Paul wrote the Epistle to the Romans. Dr. Lenski advances the theory that it was written from Corinth on the second missionary journey, about April, A.D. 53.

OCCASION:

Paul visited the Galatian churches on each of his three missionary journeys. There is no mention in the epistle of another visit to the churches. The epistle was evidently Paul's last word to these churches, written after he had visited them on the third missionary journey.

GALATIANS — The people:

The destination of this epistle has given rise to what is known as the North Galatian and the South Galatian theories. It seems more reasonable to suppose that it was sent to the churches in the area Paul visited on his first missionary journey, but this does not preclude the possibility that it had a wider circulation, even as far north as Pessinus, Ancyra, and Tavium. The word "Galatians" could be used in either an ethnographic sense, which would refer to the nationality of the people, or it could be used in a geographic sense, which would refer to the Roman province by that name. Regardless of the position taken, there is a common blood strain which identified people in that area where there was a mixture of population. The people for whom the province was named were Gauls, a Celtic tribe from the same stock which inhabited France. In the 4th century B.C. they invaded the Roman Empire and sacked Rome. Later they crossed into Greece and captured Delphi in 280 B.C. At the invitation of Nikomedes I, King of Bithynia, they crossed over into Asia Minor to help him in a civil war. They were warlike people and soon established themselves in Asia Minor. They were blond orientals. In 189 B.C. they were made subjects of the Roman Empire and became a province. Their boundaries varied, and for many years they retained their customs and language. The

churches Paul established on his first missionary journey were included at one time in the territory of Galatia, and this is the name which Paul would normally give to these churches.

These Gallic Celts had much of the same temperament and characteristics of the American population. Caesar had this to say: “The infirmity of the Gauls is that they are fickle in their resolves, fond of change, and not to be trusted.” Another described them as “frank, impetuous, impressible, eminently intelligent, fond of show, but extremely inconstant, the fruit of excessive vanity.” Remember that they wanted to make Paul a god one day, and the next day they stoned him (see Acts 14).

Surely the Epistle to the Galatians has a message for us of like temper, who are beset on every hand by cults and isms innumerable that would take us, likewise, from our moorings in the gospel of grace.

GALATIANS — The epistle:

1. It is a stern, **severe**, and solemn message (Galatians 1:6-9; 3:1-5). It does not correct conduct, as the Corinthian letters do, but it is corrective — the Galatian believers were in grave peril. Because the foundations were being attacked, everything was threatened.

The epistle contains no word of commendation, praise, or thanksgiving. There is no request for prayer, and there is no mention of their standing in Christ. No one with him is mentioned by name (Galatians 1:2). Compare this with the other epistles of Paul.

2. The heart of Paul the apostle is laid bare, there is deep emotion and strong feeling. This is his **fighting epistle** — he has on his war paint. He has no toleration for legalism. Someone has said that Romans comes from the head of Paul while Galatians comes from the heart of Paul. “Galatians takes up controversially what Romans puts systematically.”

3. It is the **declaration of emancipation** from legalism of any type. This was Martin Luther’s favorite epistle, and it was on the masthead of the Reformation. It has been called the Magna Charta of the early church, the manifesto of Christian liberty, the impregnable citadel, and a veritable Gibraltar against any attack on the heart of the gospel. “Immortal victory is set upon its brow.”

4. It is the strongest declaration and defense of the doctrine of **jus-**

tification by faith in or out of Scripture. It is God's polemic on behalf of the most vital truth of the Christian faith against any attack.

Not only is a sinner saved by grace through faith, but the saved sinner lives by grace. Grace is a way *to* life and a way *of* life.

OUTLINE:

I. Introduction, Chapter 1:1-10

A. Salutation — **cool greeting**, vv. 1-5

B. Subject stated — **warm declamation**, vv. 6-10

II. Personal, Chapters 1:11— 2:14

Authority of the apostle and glory of the gospel

A. **Experience of Paul in Arabia**, Chapter 1:11-24

B. **Experience of Paul with apostles in Jerusalem**, Chapter 2:1-10

C. **Experience of Paul in Antioch with Peter**, Chapter 2:11-14

III. Doctrinal, Chapters 2:15 — 4:31

Justification by Faith

Faith vs. Works, Liberty vs. Bondage

A. Justification by faith — **doctrine** stated, Chapter 2:15-21

B. Justification by faith — **experience** of Galatians, Chapter 3:1-5

C. Justification by faith — **illustration** of Abraham, Chapter 3:6 — 4:18

D. Justification by faith — **allegory** of Hagar and Sarai, Chapter 4:19-31

IV. Practical, Chapters 5:1 — 6:10

Sanctification by the Spirit

Spirit vs. Flesh, Liberty vs. Bondage

A. Saved by faith and **living by law** perpetrates **falling from grace**, Chapter 5:1-15

B. Saved by faith and **walking in the Spirit** produces **fruit of the Spirit**, Chapter 5:16-26

C. Saved by faith and **fruit of the Spirit** presents **Christian character**, Chapter 6:1-10

V. **Autographed conclusion**, Chapter 6:11-18

A. Paul's own **handwriting**, v. 11

B. Paul's own **testimony**, vv. 12-18

1. Cross of Christ vs. circumcision, vv. 12-15

2. Christ's handwriting on Paul's body, vv. 16-18

(The new circumcision of the new creation)

COMMENT:

Galatians is God's polemic against legalism of every and any description. The Law is not discredited, despised, nor disregarded. Its majesty, perfection, demands, fullness, and purpose are maintained. Yet these very qualities make it utterly impossible for man to come this route to God. Another way is opened — which entirely bypasses law — for man to be justified before God. The new route is by faith. Justification by faith is the theme, with the emphasis upon faith.

Three epistles in the New Testament quote Habakkuk 2:4, "The just shall live by his faith."

Romans 1:17 emphasizes *the just*;

Hebrews 10:38 emphasizes *shall live*;

Galatians 3:11 emphasizes *by faith*.

In Romans, the emphasis is upon the fact that man apart from the Law is justified before God. In Galatians, Paul is defending the gospel from those who would add law to justification by faith.

Faith plus law was the thrust of Judaism;

Faith plus nothing was the answer of Paul.

The Judaizers questioned Paul's authority as an apostle and his teaching that simple faith was adequate for salvation. Paul defends his apostleship and demonstrates the sufficiency of the gospel of grace to save.

I. **Introduction**, Chapter 1:1-10

A. **Salutation — cool greeting**, vv. 1-5

v. 1 — Paul is this kind of apostle — no parenthesis is necessary here. *Apostle* is used in a twofold sense:

1. One of the Twelve (Acts 1:21-26):

a. With Jesus during His 3-year ministry (Acts 1:21);

b. Witness of His post-resurrection ministry (Acts 1:22);

c. Chosen by Christ (Acts 1:22, 9:15, 26:17).

2. One sent forth, used in a wider sense. Paul, in our judgment, took Judas' place (Acts 14:4, 14; cp. notes on Acts 1).

“Not of men” — the preposition *apo* conveys the meaning of “not from men”; that is, not legalistic, not by appointment or commission after having attended a school or taken a prescribed course.

“Neither by man” — the preposition *dia* indicates that it was not through man; that is, not ritualistic by means of laying on of hands, as by a bishop or church court. For example, marriage involves both the legal (license from the state) and the ritual (ceremony).

“But by Jesus Christ” — Jesus laid His hand upon Paul, called him, and set him apart for the office (Acts 9:15, 16).

v. 2 — The greeting is very cool, brief, formal, and terse. No one is mentioned personally by name.

“Churches” — a local church is in view, not the corporate body of believers as seen in Ephesians.

v. 3 — This is Paul's formal greeting in most of his epistles (see notes on Ephesians for explanation).

v. 4 — “Gave himself” — at the mention of the Lord Jesus Christ, Paul gives the germ of the subject. Nothing can be added to the value of His sacrifice.

“Deliver us from this present evil [age]” — there is a present value of the gospel which proves its power and genuineness.

“According to the will of God” — He can deliver us, *not* according to law, but according to the will of God.

v. 5 — God gets more from the salvation by grace of a sinner than the sinner does. It is to God's glory.

B. Subject stated — warm declamation, vv. 6-10

v. 6 — The gospel concerns “the grace of Christ.” Two aspects of the gospel (used in two senses):

1. Facts — death, burial, resurrection of Christ (1 Corinthians 15:1-4).
2. Interpretation of facts — received by faith plus nothing (Galatians 2:16).

The facts were not challenged by the Judaizers, but they sought to add

law to grace (faith + law).

v. 7 — There is only one gospel — one in fact and interpretation.

“Pervert” (Greek: *metastrepho*) is a strong word, as in “sun...turned into darkness” (Acts 2:20); “laughter...turned to mourning” (James 4:9). Attempting to change the gospel has the effect of making it the very opposite of what it really is.

v. 8 — If an angel dared to declare any other message than the gospel, he would be dismissed with a strong invective.

v. 9 — If any message is received other than the gospel, it is spurious and counterfeit.

“Accursed” (Greek: *anathema*) is “be damned.” The gospel shuts out all works.

But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. (Romans 4:5)

God saves only one class of humanity — the ungodly. The reason is that this is the *only* class — even the righteousness of man is as filthy rags in God’s sight. Law condemns us and it must make us speechless before grace can save us.

Now we know that whatever things the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. (Romans 3:19)

The real difficulty is not that people should be “good enough” to be saved, but that they are not “bad enough” to be saved. Humanity refuses to recognize its lost condition before God. This is the human predicament.

The Judaizers did not deny the facts of the gospel; they perverted it and therefore were anathema. The “gospel” of law plus grace is a mixture that has no power, no growth, no victory.

It robs grace of its blessing, beauty and glory;
It robs the Law of its majesty and authority.

v. 10 — “Persuade” (KJV) is “to make a friend of.” The New Scofield Bible translates it “seek the favor of.” In 1 Thessalonians 2:4 and 4:1 it is “please God” in contrast to self or others. The preaching

of the gospel is not pleasing to lost man. No man can please both God and man.

II. Personal, Chapters 1:11—2:14

Authority of the apostle and glory of the gospel

A. Experience of Paul in Arabia, Chapter 1:11-24

Origin of the gospel and conversion of Paul

v. 11 — “Certify” (κῑν) is “remind.” “After man” is “according to man.” The Judaizers also questioned Paul’s apostleship. He was not one of the original 12, but a Johnny-come-lately. They cast a shadow upon the validity of Paul’s authority as an apostle.

v. 12 — Paul’s gospel came directly by a revelation (*apokalupsis*) of Jesus Christ.

vv. 13, 14 — Paul now calls the religion in which he was brought up “the Jews’ religion.” Paul was saved, not *in* Judaism, not *by* Judaism, but *FROM* Judaism.

vv. 15-17 — After his conversion, Paul went into the desert of Arabia before conferring with other apostles.

vv. 18, 19 — Paul then went up to Jerusalem (see Acts 9:26-29). He spent less than three years in the desert.

v. 20 — Either we believe Paul or we make him a liar.

vv. 21-24 — Paul outlines his first years after conversion.

B. Experience of Paul with apostles in Jerusalem, Chapter 2:1-10

Oneness of the gospel and communication between Paul and other apostles

v. 1 — More likely this is a reference to the council of Jerusalem as recorded in Acts 15 than when Paul and Barnabas took relief to the church in Jerusalem, as recorded in Acts 11:30 and 12:25.

vv. 2-5 — The church in Jerusalem approved Paul’s gospel. Paul took Titus, a Greek, as a living example of a Gentile who was saved by faith apart from the Law.

vv. 6-10 — The apostles accepted Paul’s apostleship. “Fellowship” (v. 9) is *koinonia*, one of the great words of the gospel and the high-

est expression of a personal relationship. It means sharing the things of Christ.

C. Experience of Paul in Antioch with Peter, Chapter 2:11-14
Opposition to the gospel and conviction concerning conduct

v. 11 — Paul actually rebuked Peter.

vv. 12-14 — In the apostolic church they had a love feast that all shared. When Gentiles came into the church, it posed a problem, for they ate meat which had been sacrificed to idols and meat forbidden by the Mosaic Law. Two tables were set up. Peter ate with the Gentiles until the elders came up from Jerusalem. Then he beat a retreat back to the kosher table. His conduct indicated that he condemned the Gentile table. While he was free to eat at either table, he had no right to eat at the Gentile table and then withdraw as if it were wrong. He was, by his conduct, putting the Gentiles under law.

III. Doctrinal, Chapters 2:15 — 4:31

Justification by Faith

Faith vs. Works, Liberty vs. Bondage

A. Justification by faith — doctrine stated, Chapter 2:15-21

v. 15 — “We”: Paul identifies himself with the Jews. The Jews of that day considered the Gentile a sinner in contrast to himself under the Law.

v. 16 — This is a clear-cut and simple statement of justification by faith. “Man” (Greek: *anthropos*) is the generic term, meaning both Jews and Gentiles.

“Justified” (Greek: *dikaioo*) is to have “declared a person right” — not *make* him right. A sinner, who is guilty before God and is under condemnation, is declared right with God on the basis of his faith in the redemption in Christ. It is not just forgiveness of sins, a subtraction, but the addition of the righteousness of Christ. He is declared righteous. The Jew had to forsake the Law and take his place as a sinner in order to be saved by faith in Christ. No statement could be more dogmatic and crystal-clear than “by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.”

v. 17 — The sense of this verse seems to be that since the Jew had to forsake the Law in order to be justified by Christ and therefore take

his place as a sinner, is Christ the one who makes him a sinner? No, the Jew, like the Gentile, was a sinner by nature and could not be justified by the Law, as he had demonstrated.

Now, therefore, why put God to the test, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they. (Acts 15:10, 11)

v. 19 — This is the great principle that Paul states here and in Romans. We were executed as sinners in Christ. “He was made sin for us” (see 2 Corinthians 5:21). We are now called to live unto God by a new principle stated in the next verse.

v. 20 — We were crucified when Christ was crucified — almost 2000 years ago. The new life of the believer is the life of Christ lived through him, by the power of the Holy Spirit.

v. 21 — “Righteousness” is “justification.” “In vain” means “without a cause” (e.g. Christ said in John 15:25, “They hated me without a cause” [same word]).

B. Justification by faith — experience of Galatians, Chapter 3:1-5

v. 1 — This begins a series of 6 questions which Paul puts to the Galatians. “Who hath bewitched” — they were not using their minds (Greek: *nous*). It can be paraphrased, “You are foolish. What has gotten into you?”

“Set forth” means literally “placarded” or “painted.”

v. 2 — They never received the Spirit by the Law. The Holy Spirit is evidence of conversion.

But ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. (Romans 8:9)

In whom ye also trusted, after ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also after ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise. (Ephesians 1:13)

The gospel is true irrespective of experience. The gospel is objective. Experience corroborates the gospel.

And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Spirit, whom God hath given to them that obey him. (Acts 5:32)

vv. 3-5 — The gospel is sufficient — experience confirms this.

C. Justification by faith — illustration of Abraham, Chapters 3:6 — 4:18

Chapter 3

v. 6 — This quotation is from Genesis 15:6. The incident referred to is after Abraham's encounter with the kings of the East in his rescue of Lot and his refusal to accept anything from the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah. God appeared to Abraham to assure him that he had done right in turning down the booty, saying, "I am thy shield, and thy exceedingly great reward" (Genesis 15:1). Abraham reminded God that he did not have a son. God led Abraham out to behold the night sky and asked him to number the stars. God promised numberless offspring to Abraham. It was then that Abraham believed God; he said amen to God. Abraham's faith was counted for righteousness. Abraham's works, since the Law was not yet given, could not have anything to contribute to Abraham's salvation. It was faith plus nothing.

v. 8 — When did God preach the gospel to Abraham? See Genesis 22:17, 18. It was at the time of the offering of Isaac upon the altar as a human sacrifice. The offering of Isaac is one of the finest pictures of the offering of Christ. Although God spared Abraham's son, God "spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all" (Romans 8:32). (See author's book, *Going Through Genesis*.) James wrote in his epistle:

Was not Abraham, our father, justified by works, when he had offered Isaac, his son, upon the altar? (James 2:21)

This was toward the end of Abraham's life and refers to the offering of Isaac. His act of offering his son was the work of faith, not works of the Law. Paul said that Abraham was justified by faith before there were any works — before Isaac was even born. This makes it evident

that the writings of Paul and James do not conflict.

v. 9 — “Faithful” is “believing.” God saves the sinner on the same basis that He saved Abraham — *faith*.

v. 10 — The important word here is “continueth.” No one ever kept the Law day and night, 24 hours every day, 7 days a week, 52 weeks out of the year, in thought, word, and deed. The Law could only condemn; faith justifies.

v. 11 — Even the Old Testament made it very clear that “the just shall live by faith” (see Habakkuk 2:4).

v. 12 — Faith and law are contrary principles for salvation and for living. One cancels out the other. The Law required that a man live by the Law. Any righteousness he might accumulate would be inferior to the righteousness of God. Man’s righteousness is forever labeled “filthy rags” (Isaiah 64:6).

v. 13 — This quotation is from Deuteronomy 21:23. This was a very strange law, since the method of capital punishment under the Law was by stoning. If the crime was aggravated and atrocious, the body of the criminal was taken after death and hung up to display the seriousness of the crime (see Deuteronomy 21:22, 23). “Cursed [of God] is everyone that hangeth on a tree.” The cross is called a tree (*xulon*) in Acts 5:30; 10:39; and 1 Peter 2:24 — the cross is the tree of life. We are not under law because Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the Law.

v. 14 — Christ took our place that we might receive what the Law could never do. The Spirit is the peculiar gift in this age of grace.

vv. 15-18 — The sense of this section is that the Law, which came 430 years after God’s promise to Abraham, cannot alter or disannul it. When two men make a contract, one member of the agreement cannot alter it later to suit his personal wish. The original must stand inviolate. God’s promise to Abraham cannot be abrogated. Actually, God confirmed it in Christ.

“Seed” (v. 16) refers specifically to Christ (see Genesis 22:18). Christ said:

Your father, Abraham, rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it, and was glad. (John 8:56)

v. 19 — Why was the Law given? It was added for the sake of

transgression.

“Till” indicates it was temporary. The Law reveals sin — sin had already come.

Man is not a sophisticated, refined and trained sinner; he is a sinner by nature — in the raw a primitive and savage sinner. The Law is a mirror to show the smudge spot. You do not wash it off with the mirror. God has provided a wash basin with the mirror:

There is a fountain filled with blood
Drawn from Immanuel’s veins;
And sinners, plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains.

Law proves that man is a sinner and that he is never able to make himself a saint.

v. 21 — Law could not give life. Man is already dead in trespasses and sins. Man needs life — only faith in Christ can give life.

v. 22 — Man is in the state of sin, and the only help is by faith in Christ. The Law is inexorable and unchanging. “The soul that sinneth, it shall die” (Ezekiel 18:20).

vv. 23-25 — The key word here is “schoolmaster” (Greek: *paidagogos*) and has nothing to do with a school teacher in present-day context. The term designated a slave or servant in a Roman home who had charge of any child born in the home. He fed, dressed, bathed, wiped the nose of, and paddled the son born in the home. When the little fellow reached school age, he took him by the hand and led him to school. This is where he got the name of *paidagogos*. The Law took mankind by the hand, led him to the cross of Christ, and said, “Little man, you need a Savior.” The Law turns us over to Christ. We are under Christ now and not under the Law.

v. 26 — “Children” (KJV) is rather “sons” (Greek: *huios*). Only faith in Christ can make us legitimate sons of God. An individual Israelite was never a son, only a servant. Although David was a man after God’s own heart, the Scripture calls him “my servant.” Nicodemus was a legalist and religious to his fingertips, but he was not a son of God. Jesus said, “Ye must be born again” (John 3:7).

He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But

as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the children of God, even to them that believe on his name; who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. (John 1:11-13)

The most damnable heresy today is the “universal Fatherhood of God and universal brotherhood of man.” Jesus said to the religious rulers, “Ye are of your father the devil” (John 8:44). The Law could never bring a sinner to the place of sonship.

v. 27 — “Baptized into Christ” — the baptism of the Spirit puts us into the body of Christ, and we are identified with Him.

v. 28 — There were 3 great divisions in the Roman world:

1. Racial and religious — Jew and Greek.
2. Social and class — bond and free: 1/2 of the population of the Roman Empire was slave; 60 million were slaves, 60 million were free.
3. Male and female — man’s world and woman’s world.

v. 29 — All in Christ belong to the same family and all share in the inheritance.

Chapter 4

vv. 1-5 — This section teaches the doctrine of **adoption**. Adoption does not have the same connotation here as it does in our thinking. A couple see a lovely little child in an orphanage and take legal steps to make the child their own. This is adoption in our contemporary society. However, the thinking here follows the practice of Roman society in the first century A.D.

v. 1 — “Child” (Greek: *nepios*): a minor child in a Roman home was placed in the hands of a servant or slave. He plays with the slave children and is disciplined by the adult slaves.

v. 2 — “Time appointed of the father” is the important phrase. This points to the day when the boy becomes a full-grown adult with all the legal rights and privileges pertaining thereto.

v. 3 — Israel under law was like a child under the discipline of a master.

v. 4 — At the time determined by God, God the Father sent forth God the Son, born of a woman, born under the Law. He kept the Law *in toto*.

v. 5 — Christ did this for a twofold purpose:

1. To redeem those under the Law, which means they are no longer under the Law;
2. That they might receive the adoption of sons.

“Adoption” (Greek: *huiiothesia*) means literally placing as a son. Now let’s return to the Roman custom. One day the child’s father notes that his son is growing up. He invites all the relatives in for the ceremony of the *toga virilis*. The father places a robe on the boy and a ring on his finger. That ring, a signet, is the father’s signature. The boy is now a full-grown son. No slave better touch him now! He has the authority of maturity. God brings us into His family as full-grown sons, capable of understanding divine truth (see 1 Corinthians 2:9, 10, 13, 14; 1 John 2:20, 27). The mature saint and the babe in Christ are equally dependent on the Holy Spirit to teach them divine truth. The Law never did this for man.

v. 6 — This is another accomplishment of the grace of God which the Law did not dare to offer. *Abba* is an intimate word that denotes the close and dear relationship between a child of God and the Father. It is during the time of testing and trial that God makes Himself real to the heart of the believer (see author’s book, *Reasoning Through Romans*, vol. 1, comment on Romans 8:15, 16).

v. 7 — This does not mean that a child of God reaches the plane of sinless perfection. He still retains his old nature.

v. 8 — Paul describes idols as vanities — “nothings.”

vv. 9-11 — To turn to the Law now that they are saved by grace is the same as returning to their former idolatry. “Ye have known God” (v. 9) not by law, but by faith in Christ.

vv. 12-18 — This is a personal and polite word injected in this section. Obviously Paul’s thorn in the flesh was eye trouble (vv. 14, 15). They would not be willing to pluck out their *eyes* for him if Paul’s thorn was *foot* trouble. Verses 17 and 18 are more easily understood in the American Standard version:

They zealously seek you in no good way; nay, they desire to shut you out, that ye may seek them. But it is good to be zealously sought in a good matter at all times, and not only when I am present with you.

D. Justification by faith — allegory of Hagar and Sarai,
Chapter 4:19-31

All is contrast in this section between Hagar and Sarai. Hagar, and every reference to her under other figures of speech, represents the Law. Sarai, and every reference to her under other figures of speech, represents faith in Christ.

v. 21 — They had not actually heard the Law. The giving of the Law was not beautiful and cozy, but terrifying (see Exodus 19:16-18; 20:18, 19).

v. 24 — Not “are” an allegory, but *contain* an allegory. It is an historical event that contains an allegory.

A child born to a bond woman was a slave.

vv. 30, 31 — Abraham could not have both the son of Hagar and the son of Sarai. He had to make a choice. Paul is saying that you cannot be saved by law and grace. You have to make a choice. If you try to be saved by Christ and also law, you are not saved.

Behold, I, Paul, say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. (Galatians 5:2)

IV. Practical, Chapters 5:1 — 6:10

Sanctification by the Spirit

Spirit vs. Flesh, Liberty vs. Bondage

A. Saved by faith and living by law perpetrates falling from grace, Chapter 5:1-15

We enter now a new section of this letter. Paul follows his regular pattern. After giving doctrine, he concludes with a practical application. Paul always puts doctrine in shoe leather.

v. 1 — Paul challenges the believer to *stand* first of all in the liberty of grace before beginning to walk by faith in the power of the Spirit. The Law is not the rule of faith for the believer.

v. 2 — This is one of the most startling verses in the Scripture.

Paul is not saying that to trust something other than Christ means you are not saved — he has said that before. He is saying that if you trust Christ *and also* trust something else, you are not saved.

v. 3 — Even to put on the badge of the Law, which is circumcision, means that you are indebted to do the whole Law. James gave the negative side:

For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. (James 2:10)

It is faith plus nothing that saves the sinner. God will not let salvation become a complicated matter. Nothing can enter in to rob Christ of His glory. Imagine a person sending in a testimonial about Geritol saying, “After taking 254 bottles, I feel good. I also made up my own formula, and I have been taking it along with Geritol.” You can see that such a testimonial would be of no value. The home remedy might have been the cure.

v. 4 — “Fallen from grace” does not mean to fall out of salvation or lose it. It means to try to be saved by some other means. You fall from the high plane of grace down to the low level of legality. To be saved by grace and then to try to live the Christian life by law is to fall from grace.



v. 5 — “Hope of righteousness” is the only prophetic reference in the entire epistle. The only hope is the blessed hope. Christ is made unto us “righteousness” (2 Corinthians 5:21).

v. 6 — No legal apparatus will produce a Christian life. The formula is a simple simile: “faith which worketh by love.”

v. 7 — Paul chides the Galatians. They were doing excellently until the Judaizers came along.

v. 9 — In Scripture, leaven is always used as a principle of evil.

v. 10 — Paul believed that the Galatians would ultimately reject

the teaching of the Judaizers.

v. 11 — See author’s booklet, “The Offense of the Cross.”

v. 13 — Paul presents 3 methods for trying to live the Christian life, of which 2 will not work:

1. Life of liberty (vv. 1, 4);
2. Life of legalism (vv. 2, 3, 14);
3. Life of license (v. 13).

Paul gives, in the remainder of this chapter, the *modus operandi* of living by liberty. The life of legalism not only includes the Ten Commandments, but a set of regulations that Bible believers follow. They can keep all these and still not live the Christian life! There are the antinomians who think they can do as they please and live the Christian life. These are as extreme as the legalists.

v. 14 — Here the Law is reduced to the lowest common denominator. This is the acid test of those who think they are living by law.

v. 15 — A sermon entitled “Christian Cannibals” should be preached from this text.

B. Saved by faith and walking in the Spirit produces fruit of the Spirit, Chapter 5:16-26

v. 16 — Here is stated the great principle of Christian living — *walk by means of the Spirit*. The word for “walk” is *peripateo*, which refers to the direction and purpose of the life.

“Lust of the flesh” refers to desires of the flesh, many of which are not immoral but are of the flesh (music, art, and works of do-gooders, etc.).

v. 17 — A transliteration of this verse will help convey the meaning:

For the flesh warreth against the Spirit, and the Spirit warreth against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.

The believer has a new nature and an old nature. Christ clarified this in a dialogue with Nicodemus (see John 3:3-16).

v. 18 — Walking by the Spirit is the antithesis of living by law (see Romans 8:1-13).

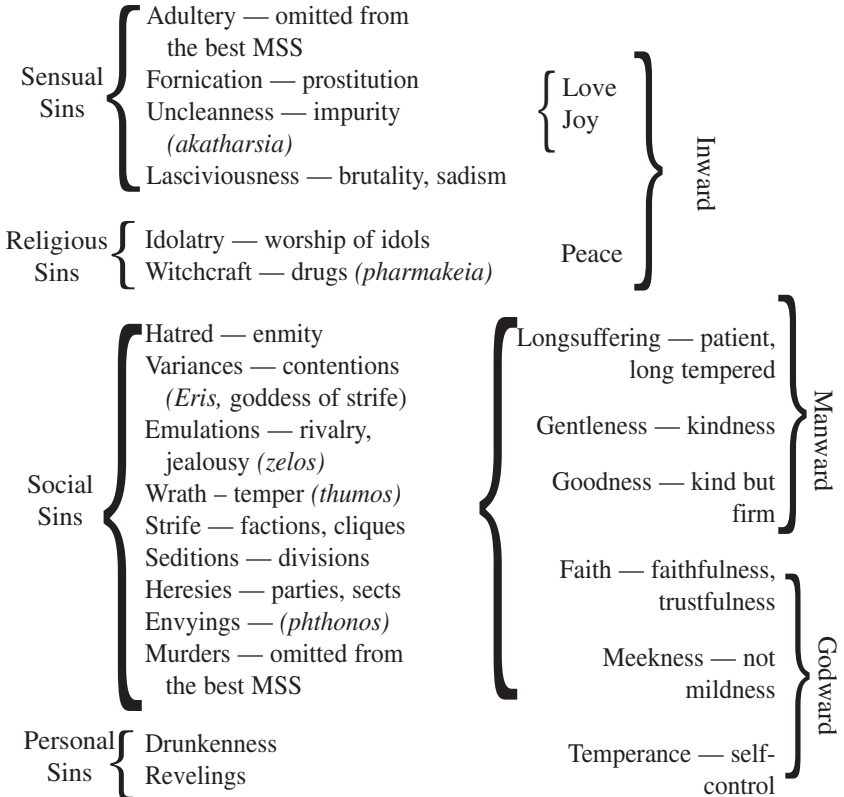
vv. 19-21 — The old nature can do but one thing: “the works of the

flesh” (v. 19). These are labeled so that there can be no mistaking whether or not a person is living by the flesh (see chart).

“Do” (v. 21) is “practice” (see 1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

vv. 22, 23 — The new nature is the instrument through which the Spirit produces the “fruit of the Spirit” (v. 22). This is not human effort or “our best.” It is strictly the fruit of the Spirit (see chart).

WORKS OF THE FLESH (Antithesis) FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT



The Law attempted to require love, but failed. The Spirit alone can produce love.

Law restrains — flesh;
Spirit constrains — new nature.

What God required under law, the Spirit produces. The Christian life

is not moral rectitude, which is negative. It is the fruit of the Spirit, which is positive.

Law made a slave — fear;
Grace makes a son — love.

Grace frees the believer to do right.

v. 24 — (Compare to Colossians 3:3, Galatians 2:20) In all of these passages the thought is that when Christ was crucified, the believer was crucified at the same time. The believer is now joined to the living Christ, and the victory is not by struggling but by surrendering to Christ. The scriptural word is “yield;” it is an act of the will (Romans 6:13).

v. 25 — “Walk” (Greek: *stoichomen*) means that which is basic and elemental, proceed or step in order. (This is different from the word for “walk” in v. 16.) It means to learn to walk. Just as we learned to walk physically by the trial-and-error method, so we are to begin to walk by the Spirit. This is a learning process. There will be failure and a fall, again and again. The important thing is to begin and then keep trying. This is realistic and not idealistic.

C. Saved by faith and fruit of the Spirit presents Christian character, Chapter 6:1-10

v. 1 — “Fault” is “trespass, fall beside.” The believer does not lose his salvation when he sins.

“Restore” is as to set a bone. “In the spirit of meekness” is required.

v. 2 — “Burdens” (Greek: *baros*) is “weight.” Bear one another up in frailty, weakness, grief, tension or pressure. “A load is half a load when two are carrying it.”

v. 3 — This is one of Paul’s sledgehammer blows against pride.

v. 4 — This is also a characteristic statement of Paul, that a man needs to keep close tab on his own life’s work (see 1 Corinthians 16:13; 2 Corinthians 13:5).

v. 5 — “Burden” (Greek: *phortion*) is something to be borne, as a ship’s cargo; a child in the womb; a responsibility. Dr. Phillips has a good interpretation: “Shoulder his own pack.”

There are burdens you can share; there are burdens you must bear alone. We are born alone, become sick alone, suffer alone, face problems alone, and go through the valley of the shadow of death alone. We go before the judgment seat of Christ alone (see Romans 14:12; 2 Corinthians 5:10).

v. 6 — This simply and bluntly means to pay your preacher. If someone ministers to you spiritual benefits, minister to him of material benefits.

v. 7 — *Principle stated:* This is an immutable law that operates in every sphere of life. In agriculture and horticulture if you sow corn, you get corn; if you sow cotton, you reap cotton. In the moral sphere you reap what you sow. Jacob, who deceived his father, was deceived by his uncle in the same manner. Pharaoh, who slew male children, had his own son slain. We see this law at work in the lives of Ahab and Jezebel, and also in Paul's life.

v. 8 — *Practice suffered:* Paul applies this law to the believer. He says that the believer can sow to the flesh or to the Spirit. Sowing to the flesh leads to a harvest of corruption. Sowing to the Spirit leads to a harvest of life everlasting.

v. 9 — *Patience satisfied:* This is an encouragement to a child of God who has patiently taught the Word of God and served the Lord. Such a one will reap a harvest of blessing eventually. For example, Jochebed taught Moses, although Egypt was against her. Then came the day when she reaped.

V. Autographed conclusion, Chapter 6:11-18

A. Paul's own handwriting, v. 11

The true sense is, "I have written with large letters." This is an indication that Paul's thorn in the flesh was eye trouble (see Galatians 4:14, 15). Characteristically, the handwriting of a person who does not see well is with large letters.

B. Paul's own testimony, vv. 12-18

1. Cross of Christ vs. circumcision, vv. 12-15

v. 14 — A cross stood between Paul and the world. Paul stood on this side of the cross. Christ's death and resurrection had brought him

out of the world into a new relationship with God.

v. 15 — Circumcision was the handwriting of religion and the Law. Outward badges are not acceptable with God — only a new creation (see 2 Corinthians 5:17).

2. Christ's handwriting on Paul's body, vv. 16-18
(The new circumcision of the new creation)

v. 17 — “The marks” (Greek: *stigma*) were the personal handwriting of Christ. In the Roman world, “marks” were used in 3 ways:

1. Runaway slaves were branded on the forehead when captured;
2. Soldiers had the names of their commanders tattooed on their foreheads;
3. Devotees of a pagan goddess in a mystery religion had her name branded on their foreheads.

Paul had physical scars, “brand marks of the Lord Jesus,” all over his body (see 2 Corinthians 11:23-27).

v. 18 — Paul concludes this marvelous epistle by commending the brethren to the grace of God.

These notes, prepared by J. Vernon McGee, are for the purpose of giving assistance to the listeners of the THRU THE BIBLE RADIO program. They are to be used with the Bible and will be more meaningful as you look up all the Scripture references. Due to the necessary brevity of both notes and broadcasts, a list of recommended books is included for those wanting a more detailed study. These books may be obtained from a Christian library or bookstore or ordered from the publishers.

RECOMMENDED BOOKS:

- Cole, R. Alan. *The Epistle of Paul to the Galatians*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1965.
- DeHaan, M. R. *Galatians*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Radio Bible Class, 1960.
- Gromacki, Robert G. *Galatians: Stand Fast in Liberty*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1979.
- Hendriksen, William. *Exposition of Galatians*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1968. (Comprehensive.)
- Hogg, C. F. and W. E. Vine. *The Epistle to the Galatians*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel Publications, 1922. (Excellent.)
- Ironside, H. A. *Expository Messages on the Epistle to the Galatians*. Neptune, New Jersey: Loizeaux Brothers, 1940.
(All of his books are especially fine for young Christians.)
- Kelly, William. *Lectures on the Epistle to the Galatians*. Addison, Illinois: Bible Truth Publishers, n. d.
- Kent, Homer A., Jr. *The Freedom of God's Sons: Studies in Galatians*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1976.
(Excellent for personal or group study.)
- Luther, Martin. *Commentary on Galatians*. 1525. Reprint. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel Publications, n. d. (Abridged.)
- Ridderbos, Herman N. *The Epistle of Paul to the Galatians*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1953.
- Strauss, Lehman. *Devotional Studies in Galatians and Ephesians*. Neptune, New Jersey: Loizeaux Brothers, 1957.
- Tenney, Merrill C. *Galatians: The Charter of Christian Liberty*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1954.
(Excellent illustration of ten methods of Bible study.)
- Vaughan, Curtis. *Galatians: A Study Guide Commentary*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1972.
- Vos, Howard F. *Galatians: A Call to Christian Liberty*. Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 1971.
(An excellent, inexpensive survey.)
- Wiersbe, Warren W. *Be Free (Galatians)*. Wheaton, Illinois: Scripture Press (Victor Books), n. d.
- Wuest, Kenneth S. *Galatians in the Greek New Testament for English Readers*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1944.

SAMPLE SUMMARY FOR EACH CHAPTER
(for your personal study)

1. Theme of chapter—
2. Most important verse—
3. Most prominent word—
4. Teaching about Christ—
5. Command to obey—
6. Promise to claim—
7. New truth learned—



Thru the Bible Radio Network
Pasadena, CA 91109



