

Series Overview

FALL 2016

Objective

- *What we hope to see God accomplish in us through this study*

We enjoy full spiritual liberty.

STATEMENTS OF THE OBJECTIVE

“Christ has liberated us to be free. Stand firm then and don’t submit again to a yoke of slavery.”

—Galatians 5:1 HCSB

“Let us learn, therefore, to magnify this our liberty, which no emperor, no prophet or patriarch, no, nor any angel from heaven has obtained for us, but Jesus Christ the Son of God, by whom all things were created both in heaven and earth. Which liberty He has purchased with no other price than with His own blood, to deliver us, not from any bodily or temporal servitude, but from a spiritual and everlasting bondage under most cruel and invincible tyrants, to wit, the law, sin, death, and the devil, and so to reconcile us to God His Father.”

—Martin Luther,

Commentary on Galatians, 315-316

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Premise

- *Why we are studying this*

We struggle with freedom. We lack it in our daily lives – and not merely because of external factors. Perfectionism, legalism, and selfishness enslave our hearts. When we do battle these slavers, our souls often jump into equally entrapping nonsense like licentiousness, idolatry, or hypocrisy. We desperately need to know how to live as God’s freed people! Galatians was given to expressly meet that need by teaching us how to keep in step with God’s Spirit.

STATEMENTS OF THE PREMISE

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.”

—Galatians 5:22-15

Galatians is a dangerous book...After spending months studying Galatians, I am humbled and challenged. Humbled because I don’t think God is too impressed with our ministries, no matter how impressed men may be. Challenged because I myself...need to dare to let the Holy Spirit have His way.

—Warren Wiersbe,
Be Free, 7

Theme

- *What the study is about*

God guides His people to genuine liberty. They are freely justified by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus alone, and are freely sanctified by walking in His Spirit. In fact, everything He has ordained is part of a grand design to implement his gospel of grace. When grace is absorbed and exemplified through people following the Lord, the world is changed.

STATEMENTS OF THE THEME

“But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!”

—Galatians 4:4-6 NASB

“When Paul learned that the Galatians had been infected with a faulty theology of grace and works, he knew he had to deal with that mess right away, because trying to substitute works for grace always undercuts grace...This kind of mixed-up thinking takes a huge toll on a believer’s assurance of salvation. You can hardly expect to have peace about your relationship with Christ when you’re doing all kinds of things to try to hang on to something that God has already given you as a gift.”

—Tony Evans
Totally Saved, 159-160

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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SCRIPTURE QUOTATIONS

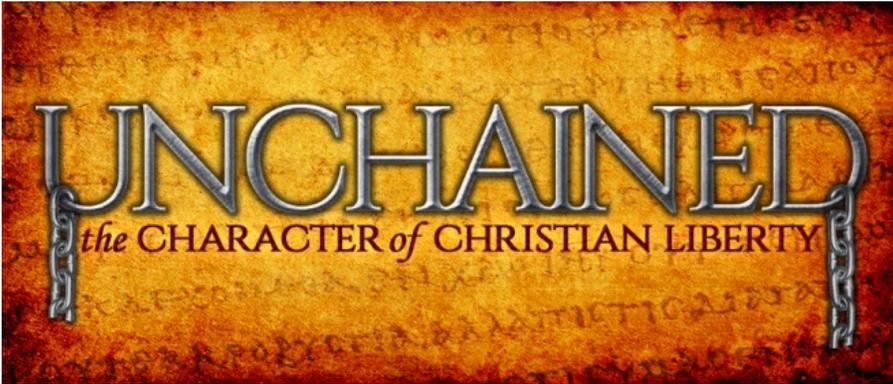
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Grace to You

Galatians 1:1-10

LESSON OVERVIEW

LESSON 1

OBJECTIVE:

We Base Our Freedom in God's Grace Alone

Theme

Paul desires that people know the challenges of spiritual liberty, and remember that grace is the only means of relationship with God.

Explicit Grace

Paul mentions *grace* four times in the opening sentences of his letter to the Galatians, twice explicitly and twice implicitly. The first explicit occurrence is in verse 3: "Grace to you..." While this was a common greeting in the Greek culture, we can imagine those words being enthusiastically adopted and used by Paul the letter-writer with fervent and heartfelt intentionality. For Paul, it is likely that this was not simply a passing "Hello!"; it was an opening prayer by him for his audience. "May God's grace flow to you, today and every day."

The second explicit mention of *grace* is in verse 6, where Paul states that the Galatian Christians were "called...in the grace of Christ." The new creation of every believer begins with the call of God, a call of grace. God's grace is there at the beginning, and His grace sees us through all along the way.

Implicit Grace

Back in verse 1, Paul paints the picture of grace in his own calling, stating that it was "not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father." God's grace was unmistakably the catalyst in Paul's conversion. But Paul broadens the circle of God's active grace

in verse 4 to include his audience (and even us by extension) in the work of Christ, "who gave himself for our sins to deliver us..."

Paul was actively persecuting the church when God's grace changed his life forever. In the same way, even if not as in dramatic a fashion, we were all dead in our sinful fallen nature before grace made us alive in Christ. "God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8).

Indispensable Grace

As the message of Galatians unfolds during our study, the importance of grace as the foundation of Christian liberty will become manifestly clear. Our sin nature, the devil, and our fellow humans, knowingly or unknowingly, all work against that liberty.

"We desperately need to know how to live as God's freed people! Galatians was given to expressly meet that need by teaching us how to keep in step with God's Spirit."

Wayne Braudrick,
from the Premise of the
Unchained series

Paul explains the foundational truths of the gospel of grace for the Galatians who were being troubled by contrary teaching. They were forgetting that the grace of Christ called them, delivered them from the penalty of sin, and

DISCUSSION

- Discuss the quiz included in the appendix for this lesson with your group. Which items resonated, and why?
- What are some examples of ways in which non-Christians try to earn their way to heaven?
- What are some ways Christians think they need to augment the work of Christ?

JESUS HAS SET US FREE

"When we are tempted to focus on religious rules rather than a living relationship with God, Galatians will sink deep into our souls and remind us that Jesus has set us free."

—J. Daniel Hays & J. Scott Duvall,
The Baker Illustrated Bible Handbook

unchained them from the "weak and worthless elementary principles of the world" (4:9). God intends for us to live in the freedom of His grace, not enslaved to religious legalism and rules, which strive to replace the glory of God's grace with the idol of our own efforts.

Paul saw clean through the façade of the heresy of replacing grace with works, and condemned anyone who tried to teach it: "let him be accursed" (1:8, 9).



WHAT DO YOU SEE?

Read Galatians 1:1-5 together.

- From whom, and to whom, was this letter written?
- From whom does Paul derive his authority as an apostle? From whom does he explicitly state that he did *not* receive his authority?
- What does Paul say is the means of our deliverance “from the present evil age”?

Read Galatians 1:6-10 together.

- How does Paul say we were called? (Which *sola* describes this doctrine?)
- What does Paul say should happen to anyone who distorts the gospel of Christ?
- Whom is Paul trying to please as he preaches the gospel? Whom does he serve?

TWO THREADS IN GALATIANS

“The two threads which run through this Epistle—the defence of the Apostle’s own authority, and the maintenance of the doctrine of grace—are knotted together in the opening salutation. ...[Paul] meets the personal attack of his enemies; and... resists their doctrinal errors.”

—J.B. Lightfoot,
The Epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians

GENUINE LIBERTY

“God guides His people to genuine liberty. They are freely justified by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus alone, and are freely sanctified by walking in His Spirit. In fact, everything He has ordained is part of a grand design to implement his gospel of grace. When grace is absorbed and exemplified through people following the Lord, the world is changed.”

—Wayne Braudrick,
Study Notes



WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Given Paul’s direct commission from the risen Jesus, how should we view his authority in relation to that of the other apostles like Peter, James, John, etc.?

We know from the rest of this letter that the Galatian Christians were being taught that they must complete their salvation by adhering to the law of Moses, including the requirement to be circumcised. (See Gal. 2:1-3, 3:1-6, and 4:21-5:12.)

- Why does Paul call this a distortion of the gospel of Christ (Gal. 1:7)?
- Why does Paul so strongly condemn those who are distorting the gospel of Christ?



HOW DO I USE THIS KNOWLEDGE?

It has been observed that Christianity is so much more than correct doctrine, but it is never less. The importance of the teaching of correct doctrine has been a part of the Christian church from the very beginning.

- Are you committed to a local church which faithfully and correctly teaches the Scriptures, both the Old and New Testaments? If not, make every effort to find a church in your area in which you can receive sound teaching.
- Personal Bible study is an important part of each believers’ growth because it helps us to recognize distortions of the gospel. Do you have a steady habit of spending time regularly in God’s word? If not, what can you do to build this discipline?

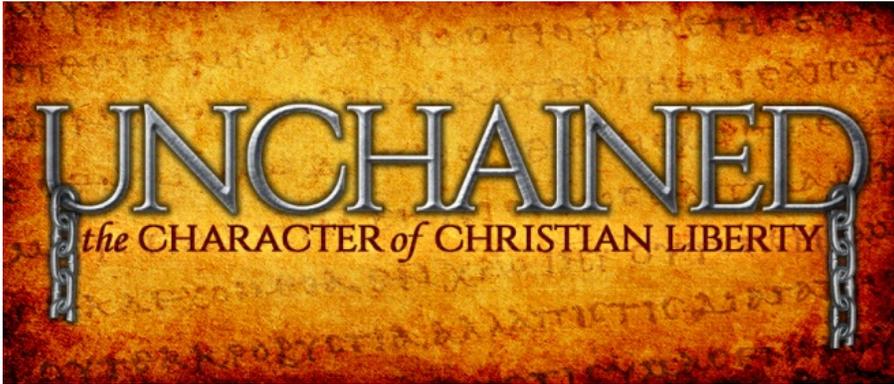
The undistorted gospel of Christ teaches us that Christ’s sacrifice of Himself for our sins is what has delivered us from the present evil age. We have been unchained by grace alone.

- Have you distorted the gospel of Christ in your own mind or in your life? If so, pray that God reforms your mind, heart, and life to live in the freedom of His grace.
- Have you distorted the gospel of Christ to someone you know? If so, ask them for forgiveness, and discuss with them the truth of freedom by God’s grace.

MAGNIFY THIS OUR LIBERTY

“Let us learn, therefore, to magnify this our liberty, which no emperor, no prophet or patriarch, no, nor any angel from heaven has obtained for us, but Jesus Christ the Son of God, by whom all things were created both in heaven and earth. Which liberty He has purchased with no other price than with His own blood, to deliver us, not from any bodily or temporal servitude, but from a spiritual and everlasting bondage under most cruel and invincible tyrants, to wit, the law, sin, death, and the devil, and so to reconcile us to God His Father.”

—Martin Luther,
Commentary on Galatians



Called by His Grace

Galatians 1:10-24

LESSON OVERVIEW

LESSON 2

OBJECTIVE:

We Grow in and Share Jesus Apart from Tradition

Theme

Paul asserts his choosing and calling apart from any human pressure or tradition.

Audience of One

After just three weeks of the 2016 NFL season, rookie Quarterback Carson Wentz emerged as one of the most watched and talked-about players in the league. He led the Philadelphia Eagles to a surprising 3-0 start, while completing almost 65 percent of his pass attempts, five touchdowns, and zero interceptions. He is the first rookie in NFL history to throw at least one touchdown pass with no interceptions in his first three games.

Not surprisingly, Wentz was named the NFL Offensive Rookie of the Month for September, and is widely expected to be the NFL Rookie of the Year.

Just before being drafted by the Eagles, Wentz played his final collegiate game at Toyota Stadium in Frisco. As a senior quarterback, he led North Dakota State University to a record fifth-straight FCS national championship.

Wentz has amassed an impressive list of victories, awards, and statistics during his short career. But perhaps the most surprising thing about Wentz is not his athletic achievements, but rather his purpose and focus. His faith has always been the most important thing in his life.

As a reminder to stay the course, Wentz has "AO1" tattooed on the underside of his wrist, which stands for "Audience of One" in reference to playing for God. Every time he holds a football, he is reminded to please God alone.



"It was kind of a motto I picked up early in my career," Wentz said. "I finally put it on my body just to live with the Lord as my audience, whether it was playing football, going to school, or whatever I'm doing in my life."

Strive to Please God

Similarly, the Apostle Paul explains in Galatians 1:10-24 that he is striving to please God alone. If he was seeking to please men, he could not be a servant of God. It is impossible to serve both God and man.

The false teachers had criticized Paul for peddling a message received from man rather than God, and thus for preaching to please man rather than God. Paul strongly defends his message by explaining that he was called by God's grace before he was born, and his message was revealed to him by Christ.

DISCUSSION

- What are some of your favorite traditions? Consider your family, church, or society. Do traditions have a positive or negative influence? Share some of your experiences.
- Do you feel that you have been called to a particular ministry? Share about your calling. Does every believer have a calling?
- What does it mean to "please God"?

SEEK TO PLEASE GOD ALONE

"When we seek to please God, men are blessed. When we seek to please men, neither God nor men are edified."

—Wayne Braudrick

Thus his calling and his message were not influenced by any human or tradition. Paul placed the emphasis entirely on God's initiative and grace, and not on anything he had accomplished.

Ephesians 2:10 teaches that God graciously created us for a purpose that that He prepared for us beforehand. We should respond to His calling by growing in Him and serving him alone.

In everything we do, God is the only audience that matters.



WHAT DO YOU SEE?

Read Galatians 1:10-24 together

- Who is Paul trying to please (verse 10)?
- What, or who, is the source of Paul's message (verses 11-12)?
- How does Paul describe his former life (verses 13-14)?
- When and how was Paul called? For what purpose? (verses 15-16)
- With whom did Paul consult (and specifically not consult) (verses 17-24)?

SEEK TO PLEASE HIM

So then whether we are alive or away, we make it our ambition to please him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be paid back according to what he has done while in the body, whether good or evil.

--2 Corinthians 5:9-10

WE ARE CHOSEN BY GOD

"...he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.

Ephesians 1:4-6

OUR WORK WAS PRE-PLANNED

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Ephesians 2:10



WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Review verse 10. What is the conflict that Paul presents?

- Why doesn't Paul seek the approval of men?
- In what ways do we seek approval of men?
- What is the end result? (Consider reading Matthew 6:24)

Review verse 15. Paul indicates he was set apart before he was born.

- Does Paul's experience apply to all believers? Are today's believers set apart, or called, before birth?

Review verse 17. Why did Paul go to Arabia?

- How did this help Paul sort out the truth from tradition?
- How are today's believers influenced by tradition?

Review verse 18. Why did Paul meet with Cephas and James?

- Why was it important to Paul to have a relationship with Cephas and James?
- Why is it important for believers to build relationships with other believers?



HOW DO I USE THIS KNOWLEDGE?

Paul said that if we are trying to please men, we would not be a servant of Christ. We must follow Paul's example and seek to please God alone.

- In what ways are you seeking to please God? In what ways do you seek to please men instead of God?

We must follow Paul's example and seek to grow in Christ and understand the scriptures apart from our traditions.

- What are some of the traditions that influence you? How can you sort out the truth from tradition?

We need to follow Paul's example and seek wise partnerships that will help us grow and positively shape each other.

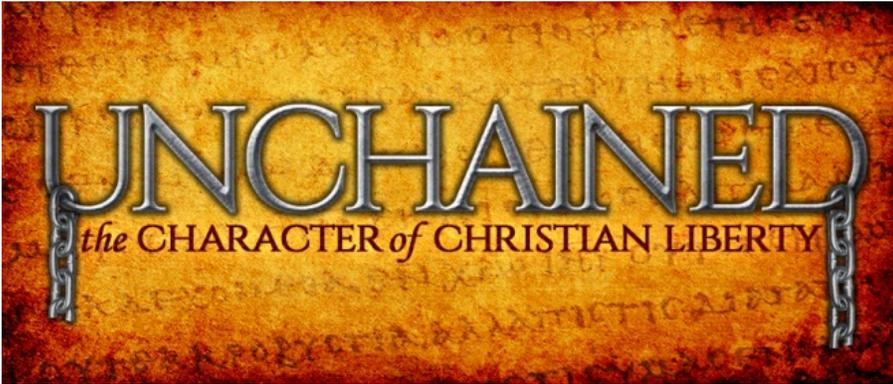
- Do you have a close Christian friend who truthfully and lovingly helps you keep your focus on God? Are you such a friend to another believer?

THE GRACE OF GOD

Last of all, as to one untimely born, he [Christ] appeared also to me. For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.

1 Corinthians 15:8-11



Live By Faith

Galatians 2

LESSON OVERVIEW

LESSON 3

OBJECTIVE:

We Live Free

Theme

Paul uses recent history to display the pain and price of independence. Both the Acts 11 events and the confrontation with Peter illustrate his theme of freedom found in faith alone.

Recent History

To understand Galatians 2, it helps to keep in mind the history recorded in Acts which sets the context for what Paul relates to the Galatian churches.

In brief:

- **Acts 7:** Stephen is stoned by the Jews, with the consent of Paul.
- **Acts 8:** Paul ravages the church, which sends disciples into new regions and cities further from Jerusalem.
- **Acts 9:** Paul is converted on his way to harass believers in Damascus. Escaping from Jews who are now turning on him, he returns to Jerusalem where he is befriended by Barnabas and is introduced to some of the apostles. Eventually, he moves to Tarsus (his hometown).
- **Acts 10:** Peter is used by God in the first conversion of Gentiles at the household of Cornelius at Caesarea. He sees God pour out the Holy Spirit and hears these Gentiles speaking in tongues, just as he and the Jewish disciples did on the day of Pentecost.

- **Acts 11:1-18:** Peter returns to Jerusalem and relates the events of Caesarea.
- **Acts 11:19-26:** The leaders of the church in Jerusalem then hear that Gentiles are also becoming converts in Antioch, so they send Barnabas there. He gets Paul from Tarsus to join and help him, and they spend a year building this new church.
- **Acts 11:27:30:** The church in Antioch learns of a coming famine and decides to send aid to the church at Jerusalem. Paul and Barnabas are chosen to make this trip.

Teaching from Experience

Luke then relates new persecutions against the church in Jerusalem by Herod in Acts 12, ending that chapter by saying that Barnabas and Paul went back to Antioch.

Most scholars believe that Paul's recounting in Galatians 2:1-10 of him, Barnabas, and Titus meeting with the Jerusalem church leaders is during the same visit Luke records in Acts 11:30. The confrontation with Peter retold by Paul in Galatians 2:11-14 occurs after they return to Antioch.

While perhaps not crucial to Luke's narrative, these episodes later (after Paul's first missionary journey) prove instrumental in helping Paul to argue against the errors of the Judaizers who are troubling the young Galatian churches.

DISCUSSION

- What are some false teachings commonly found in churches today?
- Choose one or two of the examples and discuss how these false teachings undermine the core of the gospel of Jesus Christ?
- Have you ever taken a stand to defend the truth of the gospel from error? If so, describe to your group what happened.

CLARITY ACROSS CENTURIES

"In the early church, as the separation between Judaism and Christianity was taking place, the letter to the Galatians no doubt helped clarify that cleavage. Centuries later it played such a key role in the Reformation that it was called 'the cornerstone of the Protestant Reformation.' This was because its emphasis on salvation by grace through faith alone was the major theme of the preaching of the Reformers."

—Donald K. Campbell
Galatians



WHAT DO YOU SEE?

Read Galatians 2:1-10 together.

- With whom did Paul go to Jerusalem? What do we know about them from other Scriptures?
- With whom did Paul meet in Jerusalem?
- What were some of the outcomes of the meeting?

Read Galatians 2:11-21 together.

- What was the reason Paul confronted Peter in Antioch?
- By what is a person *not* justified? How many times does Paul state this in verse 16?
- By what *is* a person justified?

PAUL & BARNABAS

“The report of this [Gentile conversions] came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. ... So Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. For a whole year they met with the church and taught a great many people. ... So the disciples determined, everyone according to his ability, to send relief [for a famine] to the brothers living in Judea. And they did so, sending it to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul.”

—Acts 11:22, 25, 26, 29-30

LOOK ONLY TO CHRIST

“The consciences of believers, while seeking the assurance of their justification before God, must rise above the law, and think no more of obtaining justification by it. ... Therefore, laying aside all mention of the law, and all idea of works, we must in the matter of justification have recourse to the mercy of God only; turning away our regard from ourselves, we must look only to Christ.”

—John Calvin,
Institutes of the Christian Religion



WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

- What does Paul mean when he says he wanted “to make sure that I was not running or had not run in vain”? (v.2) Was he unsure about the gospel he had been preaching? Did he need the approval of the church leaders in Jerusalem?
- Paul presents Titus to his Galatian audience as a fellow Christian and a Greek, meaning that he was not circumcised. Why is it important that Titus “was not forced to be circumcised” by the church leaders in Jerusalem? (v. 3)
- Why was it important that Paul confront Peter about Peter’s behavior in Antioch? (v. 11)
- What does it mean to be “justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law”? (v. 16)



HOW DO I USE THIS KNOWLEDGE?

Paul had the utmost confidence in the gospel he preached as he received it from Jesus Christ. He was zealous that nothing would dilute the truth of that gospel, either in deed or in perception, either deviously or unintendedly.

- What are some ways you can prevent errors from creeping into your understanding of the gospel? What is our source for the truth of the gospel?
- What are some ways you can take a stand when you see this truth being diluted?

Paul was unequivocal about the inability of human effort to earn justification in the sight of God. The basis of the gospel is that people—whether Jew or non-Jew—are justified only by faith in Jesus Christ—*sola fide*.

- Examine your life, especially your attitude toward the spiritual disciplines (prayer, Bible study, fellowship, giving). Do you engage in these by faith in the Son of God with gratitude for the liberty He has given you?
- Can those around you see the grace of Christian liberty in your walk? Or do they see you relying on your own efforts to earn or maintain justification before God?

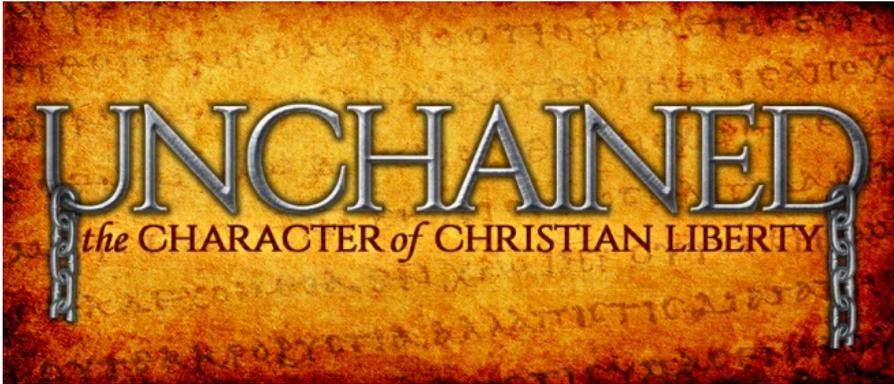
NOT I, BUT CHRIST

Not I, but Christ;
Not mine, but His;
It’s in His strength alone
That I truly live.
I’m dead and gone;
I’m crucified;
He’s raised me up to His
Eternal life.

It’s all about You;
It’s not about me;
It’s living by faith in You
Abundantly.

All glory and honor,
Praises and power
To Christ our King.

—Scott Dyer



Abraham's Sons

Galatians 3:1-14

LESSON OVERVIEW

LESSON 4

OBJECTIVE:

We Are Perfected by God's Spirit

Theme

From Abraham's covenant Paul draws the seminal point that the Gentile who trusts God the Son can and should be perfected by God's Spirit without any work of the law.

Ancestry

People love to study and know about their family heritage. Knowing about our ancestors helps us to understand where we came from and who we are. Family traditions help to reinforce a sense of identity and they shape our values. Even those who are adopted find comfort by learning and embracing the traditions of their adopted family.

These dynamics were on display in the Galatian church. The Galatian believers received Paul's message and became the adopted sons of Abraham. The Judaizers were eager to teach their traditions to the Galatians, and the Galatians fell under their spell.

We are True Sons

The Judaizers accepted the Galatian believers as adopted sons of Abraham, but they taught that the Galatian believers must also conform to the Law.

Paul rejected this false teaching. While the Judaizers frequently referred to Moses, Paul took them farther back in their history to show them that God justified Abraham because of his faith, not because of his observance of the Law. Paul wanted the Judaizers and the Galatians to see that his gospel was also derived from Old Testament teaching.

Living under the Mosaic law resulted in a curse, not a blessing, because nobody could keep the whole law. But Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law.

Those who believe God by faith, regardless of whether they are Jew or Gentile, are the true sons of Abraham and will inherit the blessings of salvation.

We are Sealed

The Judaizers likely taught that circumcision was the seal of our justification, but Paul argued that we are sealed by the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13-14). Just as justification is a work of the Holy Spirit in response to faith, sanctification is also a work of the Holy Spirit in response to faith.

Modern believers seek to be perfect by their own efforts, essentially making up their own law. The irony is that we are utterly incapable of keeping even our own law. We are redeemed from the curse of the law, and perfected by the Holy Spirit.



DISCUSSION

- Share about a time that you or someone you know received an inheritance. What did the inheritance mean to you? What did you do to earn the inheritance?
- Describe your family heritage and how it has shaped you. How has your family influenced your faith?
- Have you ever been or known anyone who was hypnotized? Describe that experience.

TWO COVENANTS

The Judaizers emphasized the Mosaic covenant, but Paul reminded them of the Abrahamic covenant. God's plan of redemption works through both, but each serves a particular purpose.

Abrahamic Covenant

- One-sided, unilateral (God is the only actor)
- Requires divine commitment
- Results in redemption and restoration
- Grace and mercy

Mosaic Covenant

- Two-sided, bilateral (both God and man are actors)
- Requires human obedience
- Results in judgment and curse
- Law and obedience



WHAT DO YOU SEE?

Read Galatians 3:1-14 aloud together

- How does this section relate to Paul's argument in Chapter 2 that justification is by faith alone?
- Identify the list of the questions Paul asks in verses 1-5.

Read Genesis 12:3, 15:1-6, and 18:18

- What are the promises God made to Abraham?
- What was Abraham's response to God's promise?
- According to Paul, who are the sons of Abraham? (Galatians 3:7-9)

Read Deuteronomy 27:26 and Habakkuk 2:4

- What happens to anyone who does not keep the Law? (Deut. 27:26)
- How do the righteous live? (Hab. 2:4)

COUNTED AS RIGHTEOUSNESS

3 And Abram said, "Behold, you have given me no offspring, and a member of my household will be my heir."

4 And behold, the word of the Lord came to him: "This man shall not be your heir; your very own son shall be your heir."

5 And he brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be."

6 And he believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness.

Genesis 15:3-6

THE WAY OF SALVATION

[Paul] shows here that the way of salvation for a sinner is by grace, through faith, plus nothing. He shows that salvation has been going on for centuries before there was any Law of Moses, and that the way of salvation was then, as it is now, and always must be, through faith alone, apart from Law-works.

William Pettingill,
By Grace Through Faith Plus Nothing



WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Refer to the list of questions Paul asks in verses 1-5.

- What point is Paul trying to make in each question?
- How do Paul's points relate to believers today?

Refer to your list of promises that God made to Abraham.

- Who are the true sons of Abraham today?
- How are believers today affected by God's promises to Abraham?

Refer to your notes regarding Deuteronomy 27:26 and Habakkuk 2:4.

- Why did Paul cite these particular verses in Galatians 3:10-11? What do these verses mean for believers today?
- Regarding the curse, what did Christ do for us (Galatians 3:13-14)



HOW DO I USE THIS KNOWLEDGE?

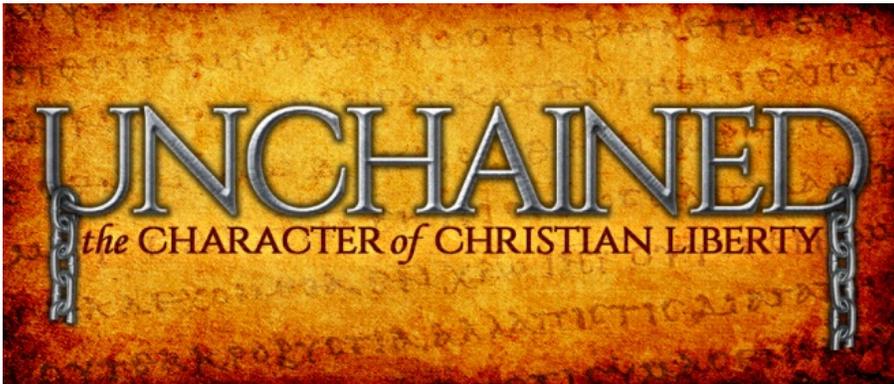
Modern believers fall for the same nonsense as the Galatians, trying to be perfect through personal effort. We make up our own standards and laws apart from trusting God, and the irony is that we are utterly incapable of keeping even our own standards. People of faith are redeemed from the curse of the law. We are perfected by the Spirit, not our own effort.

- What are some ways that you have attempted to be perfect in your own effort? What are some ways that you have seen others attempt to be perfected?
- If the previous question reveals any ways that you may be trusting your own effort, commit afresh to trusting God in faith for your salvation. If you are meeting in a group, consider sharing your responses with another person in the group and praying for each other.

THE TRUE LIFE

"The true life, then...is not, as is so commonly thought, a life lived by the individual with some assistance from God at crucial times; but is rather a life of God Himself, by Jesus Christ, His Son, through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. It is manifested to those who are yielded to God and are willing to do His will."

J.F. Strombeck,
Disciplined by Grace



Appendix

FALL 2016

Series Overview

Objective:

That we enjoy full spiritual liberty.

Premise:

We struggle with freedom. We lack it in our daily lives – and not merely because of external factors. Perfectionism, legalism, and selfishness enslave our hearts. When we do battle these slavers, our souls often jump into equally entrapping nonsense like licentiousness, idolatry, or hypocrisy. We desperately need to know how to live as God’s freed people! Galatians was given to expressly meet that need by teaching us how to keep in step with God’s Spirit.

Theme of the Study:

God guides His people to genuine liberty. They are freely justified by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus alone, and are freely sanctified by walking in His Spirit. In fact, everything He has ordained is part of a grand design to implement his gospel of grace. When grace is absorbed and exemplified through people following the Lord, the world is changed.

Textual Background

1. Authorship. Here’s how certain we can be of the Pauline authorship of *Galatians* – when the “higher critics” of the 19th c. *Tübingen* school were disavowing apostolic authority for every other NT book, they staunchly stood by the fact that Paul must have penned this letter. If even those self-absorbed deconstructionists accepted Paul, it’s hard to imagine anyone arguing otherwise.

Twice in the epistle (1:1 & 5:2) Paul declares himself the author. Further, all the internal evidence – both biographical and theological – fits with Paul. Externally, we have multiple witnesses in the 2nd and 3rd centuries recognizing Pauline authorship. Even the heretic Marcion said *Galatians* came from the Apostle Paul!

2. Time & place of writing. If one accepts the “south Galatia” hypothesis (as I do, see below), it then follows that this letter was penned in Syrian Antioch just before the 48 AD Jerusalem Council described in Acts 15. Consider this brief synopsis:

- Barnabas and Paul return to the great Christian center of Antioch after the first mission trip.
- Peter comes down from Jerusalem to visit them. During that fellowship, Peter withdraws from the Gentile Christians – a move which earns a stinging Pauline rebuke.

PASTOR’S SUGGESTED READING

A Scandalous Freedom: The Radical Nature of the Gospel, Steve Brown

All of Grace, Charles Spurgeon

Be Free, Warren W. Wiersbe

Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians, Martin Luther

Disciplined by Grace, J.F. Strombeck

Grace, Lewis Sperry Chafer

In the Name of Rome, Adrian Goldsworthy

Keep in Step With The Spirit, J.I. Packer

So Great Salvation, Charles Ryrie

The Epistle to the Galatians, F.F. Bruce

The Grace Awakening, Charles R. Swindoll

Totally Saved, Tony Evans

Transforming Grace, Jerry Bridges

- Judaizing false teachers infiltrate the churches in Galatia begun by Paul and Barnabas. These false teachers deny Paul's authority as an apostle, teaching legalisms necessary for justification – especially that circumcision for salvation.
- In response, Paul pens this strong letter before attending the Jerusalem Council called to discern the status of Gentile Christians.

Regarding the above summary, F.F. Bruce writes,

“This...would yield the most satisfactory correlation of the data of Galatians and Acts and the most satisfactory dating of Galatians. It must be conceded that, if this is so, Galatians is the earliest among the extant letters of Paul.”

– F.F. Bruce
The Epistle to the Galatians, 55.

Historical background:

1. The Galatians. The following summary is adapted from the class notes of my old professor and friend, Stan Toussaint:
 - In the dim recesses of history, we trace Celtic peoples migrating west. Their origins are not fully understood, nor why they moved. It appears that only the Atlantic stopped their wanderlust, by which time they had conquered much of modern France, Britain, and Ireland.
 - Fascinatingly, some Celts (usually called Gauls by Rome) retraced their forefathers' steps in the years of the Roman Republic. They roamed back east and angled south, sacked Rome itself in 390 B.C.
 - Repulsed from the Italian peninsula, they wandered into Thrace and Macedonia after Alexander the Great's death. Their attempted invasion of mainland Greece was routed at Delphi in 279 B.C.
 - The Gauls then moved into Asia Minor, overrunning much of that world and disrupting trade. In 230, Attalus, king of Pergamum, defeated a combined Celtic army and successfully confined the Gauls to an area in north-central Asia Minor.
 - There the Celts/Gauls became known as Galatians. They accepted a more settled life and participated in trade while never losing their martial bent. The narrow area where they lived became known as Galatia.
 - In 189 B.C. the Roman conquest of Greece was surprisingly completed and the Greco states of Asia Minor came under Roman sway. Like many strong nations, Galatia operated as an independent kingdom under the Republic – somewhat like medieval German duchies that enjoyed great independence under the general oversight of the Holy Roman Empire.
 - However, the Romans were in charge and regularly redrew the boundaries of Galatia, extending the territory further south. This brought under the title Galatia political areas that had little Celtic ethnic influence. Certainly some Gauls moved into these newly-christened annexations to Galatia, yet much of the influx into southern Galatia appears to have been Jewish. The southern parts of Galatia became rather wealthy by developing robust trade and safe travel. By the mid first century B.C., “Galatia” was used of the northern ethnographic peoples, the broader political territory, or just the wealthy southern portion of the province.
 - The last great king of independent Galatia was Deiotarus, who befriended and assisted Julius Caesar. He was wealthy and famous, and was even defended by the great Cicero at a trial. Following Caesar's assassination Deiotarus at first backed Brutus & Cassius, but after Octavian's victory at Philippi the Celtic king wisely and successfully switched his allegiance. He was rewarded with the promise that after his death Galatia would become a Senatorial province – guaranteeing Roman citizenship for all Galatian citizens. Augustus kept that promise and even named a newly built legion in the king's honor (Legio XXII Deiotariana).

- The northern Galatians appear to have held their Celtic heritage for a long time. In the late 4th c. A.D., Jerome noted that the people of the northern (ethnographic) Galatian cities still spoke Celtic as their first language (Greek and Latin being also universal, of course). Though we can't know for certain if the same was true for the southern (political) Roman province, it seems less likely.

The historian Adrian Goldsworthy points out one more interesting observation regarding the Galatians:

Augustus had formed an entire legion, XXII Deiotariana, from Galatian soldiers and the province was considered to provide high-quality recruits. Interestingly enough, the levy to bring the legions up to strength occurred at about the time of the Apostle Paul's missionary journey through Galatia, although there is some debate over his route through the province. His later letter to the Galatian churches contains a striking amount of martial vocabulary and imagery. – Adrian Goldsworthy, *In The Name of Rome*, 310-311.

This not only exposes the relevance of terms like "liberated," "running," and "forces" for the audience, it also assists us in appreciating Paul's tone. I know that when I speak to military members and their families or audiences comprised of athletes and their kin, I often adopt a more forceful voice than when addressing other audiences.

2. The recipients of the epistle. The great question is whether the epistle is directed to Galatians who lived in the southern cities where Paul had planted earlier churches or whether the northern Celtic people are in view. Personally, I think the greeting in 1:2 is directed to the southern political area. There are a number of reasons, but mainly I am persuaded by Paul's regular use of political terms. The apostle normally uses political terms in reference to land areas and not ethnicity. Bruce nails the bottom line, saying:

"The weight of the evidence, it seems to me, favours the South Galatian view...(however) The question of whether the North or South Galatian destination of our epistle is not one in which it is proper to take up partisan attitudes or indulge in dogmatic assertions; and it ill becomes champions of either view to disparage the rival view or those who maintain it. The fact that so many competent scholars can be cited in support of either position suggests the evidence for neither is absolutely conclusive."

– F.F. Bruce
The Epistle to the Galatians, 17-18

3. Import and impact. Another of my old teachers, Donald Campbell, probably best summarized the impact of this letter:

"Galatians eloquently defends Paul's apostolic authority and contains in summary form what the apostle taught. In particular it contains a clear statement of justification by faith and builds on that foundation a defense of Christian liberty against any form of legalism."

"In the early church, as the separation between Judaism and Christianity was taking place, the letter to the Galatians no doubt helped clarify that cleavage. Centuries later it played such a key role in the Reformation that it was called "the cornerstone of the Protestant Reformation." This was because its emphasis on salvation by grace through faith alone was the major theme of the preaching of the Reformers. Luther was especially attached to Galatians and referred to it as his wife. He lectured on the book extensively and his *Commentary on Galatians* was widely read by the common people."

"The profound influence of this small epistle continues. It is indeed the "Magna Charta of Christian Liberty," proclaiming to modern generations that salvation from the penalty and power of sin comes not by works but by grace through faith in God's provision."

– Donald K. Campbell
Galatians, 4

Transformational Background

When grace is absorbed and exemplified through people following the Lord, the world is changed. This was the great theme of the churches in the 1st century and the transformative news of the 16th c. Reformation. It was also what most transfixed de Tocqueville when he visited America in the early 19th century. By God's grace, it can and should once again reform our lives, our church, and our world.

1. The impact of the Reformation is directly tied to Luther's commentaries on Galatians. The concept of freedom for each person, restrained under willful submission to God's Spirit, revolutionized Luther's thinking – and through him all of western Europe. That's why Luther wrote in the Commentaries, "The Epistle to the Galatians is my epistle. To it I am, as it were, in wedlock." (15)
2. Without Galatians, there is no great re-forming of society. As Dr. Tenney observed, "It is the cornerstone of the Reformation." (xv)

Lesson 1 Guide: Grace to You

Objectives

What should we learn in this study?

- Paul received his apostleship and authority directly from Jesus Christ (verse 1).
- There is no other gospel besides the gospel of grace through Jesus Christ (verses 7-9).
- This grace is based on the substitutionary death of Jesus for our sins, according to the will of God. We are saved *sola gratia*—by grace alone (verses 3-5).

Key Concepts

- Paul and Barnabas founded the Galatian churches on their first missionary journey (Acts 14).
- These churches were now being attacked by “judaizers,” teaching that Gentile Christians must follow the dictates of the Law of Moses, including circumcision, to attain salvation. This is a distortion of the gospel, and not to be tolerated.
- Since Paul takes great pains to defend his apostleship directly from Christ, the judaizers may have also tried to cast Paul’s authority as being less than that of their own.

Discussion Questions

This little quiz will help your group ascertain how well they understand liberty in Christ. Much of this quiz is drawn from the writing of the late great Jerry Bridges, especially his book *Transforming Grace*. Ask each person to record an answer of *true* or *false* to each question. After disclosing that the correct answer to each one is *false*, ask for volunteers to share which issues resonated the most with them, and why.

If your group has already experienced this quiz, then you can move right into the discussion of which issues resonated the most and why.

Quiz: True or False

1. If I oversleep and do not read the Bible in the morning, I expect God to give me a worse day.
2. God doesn’t care what I do. All my sins are forgiven, so I can do whatever I want with no consequences.
3. Having believed and received justification (salvation that makes me right with God), I must keep doing my part or I will lose that justification.
4. If you or your views are unpopular, it stands to reason that you are wrong.
5. The impact on my quality of life must be considered before choosing to obey a command of God.
6. If I forget to pray forgiveness for a sin, God does not forgive that sin.
7. There are certain rites (such as baptism) that must be performed for one to go to heaven.
8. It doesn’t matter what the Bible says as long as we all just get along.
9. There are no real threats of spiritual slavery in modern churches.
10. If you perform well, you will be more loved than if you do poorly.

What Do You See?



In this section, encourage your group to carefully read the text and observe as much as possible. The goal is to understand what the author intended to communicate to the biblical audience. Consider historical context, grammar, significant words, writing style, and so forth.

Galatians 1:1-5

From whom, and to whom, was this letter written?

For a brief description of the time and place of writing, see point 2 under **Textual Background** beginning on page 19 of this Appendix. Thomas Constable has this further comment:

“We cannot identify all the Christian brothers who were with Paul when he wrote this epistle, but Barnabas and the Christians in the church in Syrian Antioch were probably part of this group.

The churches of Galatia were probably the churches in the southern Roman province of Galatia (Iconium, Lystra, Derbe, et al.) rather than those in northern ethnic Galatia. This is the only one of Paul’s inspired letters that he addressed neither to Christians in one specific town nor to an individual.” (1)

The first visit of Paul and Barnabas to this area, during which they founded these Galatian churches, is recorded by Luke in the book of Acts:

- Iconium: Acts 14:1-7
- Lystra: Acts 14:5-20
- Derbe: Acts 14:20-23

Paul uses his standard greeting to the churches in Galatia (v.3). Here, as in each of his letters, it is some form of, “Grace to you and peace.” (See Rom. 1:7, 1 Cor. 1:3, 2 Cor. 1:2, Eph. 1:2, Phi. 1:2, Col. 1:2, 1 Thess. 1:1, 2 Thess. 1:2, 1 Tim. 1:2, 2 Tim. 1:2, Tit. 1:4, and Phil. 3). Paul combined the common Greek greeting of *charis*—grace—with the common Hebrew greeting of *shalom*—peace, creating an introductory blessing to his audiences which likely contained Christians from both cultures.

From whom does Paul derive his authority as an apostle? From whom does he explicitly state that he did *not* receive his authority?

Paul emphatically states at the beginning of his greeting that his apostleship is from Jesus directly, and not from any man. He elaborates on this in the rest of chapter 1 and most of chapter 2.

According to Paul, what is the means of our deliverance “from the present evil age”?

Paul states in verse 4 that the substitutionary death of Jesus for our sins, according to the will of God, is what delivers us. God’s grace in Christ Jesus liberates us from the bondage of the present age.

Galatians 1:6-10

How does Paul say we were called?

Paul says that we were called “in the grace of Christ” (v. 6). This is a succinct form of the statement he later makes to the church in Ephesus: “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast” (Eph. 2:8-9). This is the basis of what the reformers called *sola gratia*—salvation by grace alone.

What does Paul say should happen to those who distort the gospel of Christ?

Paul does not mince words here, stating that those who distort the gospel are under the judgment of God. He goes so far as to level this curse against men and angels. Islam claims that Mohammed received his revelations from Gabriel, an angel mentioned in the Bible who appeared to Daniel (Daniel 8:16, 9:21) and Mary (Luke 1:19, 26). Mormonism claims that Joseph Smith was directed by an angel to golden plates which, when translated by him, became the Book of Mormon.

Paul shows no tolerance for such claims when they contradict the gospel of Christ as he received it from Jesus Himself. He literally writes, “Let them be damned!”

Whom is Paul trying to please? Whom does he serve?

Paul states that he is not trying to please men by faithfully preaching the gospel of Christ as he received it, but that he serves Christ in doing so. Jesus stated that no one can serve two masters (Matt. 6:24; Luke 16:13). Paul says that he is a δοῦλος (*doulos*)—a slave—of Christ.

What Does It Mean?



In this section, lead your group to identify the differences and similarities between the biblical audience and us. What are the principles reflected in the text that relate to both the biblical audience and us? These principles are the key to understanding and applying the meaning.

How should we view Paul's authority?

Paul takes great pains to defend his apostleship as being directly from Christ Himself. He does this here in the opening lines of the letter, as well as in the rest of chapter 1 and most of chapter 2. This may imply that the agitators tried to cast Paul's authority as being less than that of their own in the eyes of the Galatian Christians. Paul states that his authority is not from any man, but from Jesus Himself, the same as the authority given the other apostles. Paul is no less of an authority on Christian doctrine than Peter, James, John, and the other nine apostles. And he is without dispute a greater authority than any of the agitators roaming around south Galatia distorting the gospel of Christ.

Why does Paul call this a distortion of the gospel of Christ?

Paul is eager to maintain the purity of the doctrine and teaching he has received from Jesus. He is so focused on addressing this issue with the Galatians that he foregoes his normal blessing and prayer at the beginning of this letter. "In every other one of his canonical epistles Paul commended his readers before launching into the main subject of his letter regardless of his general purpose in writing. Here he recorded no such praise. Its absence stressed the seriousness of his readers' error and the urgency of his appeal." (1)

Why does Paul so strongly condemn those who are distorting the gospel of Christ?

Paul is eager to maintain the purity of the doctrine and teaching he has received from Jesus. He is so focused on addressing this issue with the Galatians that he foregoes his normal blessing and prayer at the beginning of this letter. "In every other one of his canonical epistles Paul commended his readers before launching into the main subject of his letter regardless of his general purpose in writing. Here he recorded no such praise. Its absence stressed the seriousness of his readers' error and the urgency of his appeal."

Maintaining correct doctrine is of paramount importance to the sanctification of believers and the witness of the church. It is addressed by Paul in multiple letters, and by other authors of New Testament letters. It is even addressed directly by Jesus in the revelation given to John. Warnings against creeping heresy, false teachers, and even "itching ears" (the desire to hear something new) are given over and over again for our benefit, so that we will take care to guard what has been entrusted to us and be vigilant against Satan's constant schemes to taint and twist it.

For further study of such warnings in the New Testament writings, see

- Romans 16:17-20
- 2 Thessalonians 2:1-5
- 1 Timothy 1:3-11, 4:1-8, 6:3-5
- 2 Timothy 2:14-19, 4:1-5
- Titus 3:9-11
- 2 Peter 2:1-3, 3:14-18
- 1 John 2:18-27, 4:1-6
- 2 John 6-11
- Revelation 2:12-29

How Do I Apply This Knowledge?



In this section, we should apply the principles to our specific situations. While there are probably few principles identified, there will be many possible applications. Each person will apply the principles in different ways depending on their current situation.

The teaching of correct doctrine has been a part of the Christian church from the very beginning.

- Jesus commissioned Peter to, "Feed my sheep" (John 21:17).
- The apostles' primary role was teaching the first church in Jerusalem (Acts 2:42, 4:1-2, 5:21,25, 6:2-4).

- Paul placed men like Titus and Timothy in local churches to teach believers correct doctrine, and to train others to teach as well (2 Tim. 2:1-2,15).

As one of the roles of the church, believers should be committed to a local church which faithfully and correctly teaches the Scriptures, both the Old and New Testaments.

Correct doctrine is based on the Scripture alone (*sola Scriptura*). We are blessed to live in an age where most people can read, and have access to the Scriptures in their own language. Luke commended the Bereans for testing what Paul was preaching to them by examining the Scriptures (Acts 17:10-12); and Paul exhorted Timothy to spend time learning the Scriptures (2 Timothy 2:15).

Personal Bible study can be aided by reading or study plans, such as ninety-days or one-year plans which can be found in numerous formats. Accountability partners or groups can also help to keep each other on track while building a steady habit of personal Bible reading discipline.

The Two Threads of Galatians

"The two threads which run through this Epistle—the defense of the Apostle's own authority, and the maintenance of the doctrine of grace—are knotted together in the opening salutation. By expanding his official title into a statement of his direct commission from God, he meets the personal attack of his enemies; and by dwelling on the work of redemption in connection with the name of Christ (v. 4) he resists their doctrinal errors." —J.B. Lightfoot, *The Epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians*

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Lesson 2 Guide: Called by His Grace

Objectives

What should we learn in this study?

- We should follow God, and not the traditions of man.
- We are created and called for a purpose, by His grace.
- In everything we do, it should be our aim to please God.

Key Concepts

- Paul's desire was to please God alone.
- Paul was called to his ministry before he was born, and by God's grace.
- Paul's message did not originate with human or traditions, but was revealed to him by Christ.

Opening Discussion Questions

What are some of your favorite traditions? The purpose of this question is to help your group see how many traditions are influencing our lives every day. Traditions can have a positive influence: they can foster a sense of unity; they can promote social order; they can teach and reinforce truth; and they can be fun. But traditions can also have a negative impact when we substitute them for the truth of Scripture.

Do you feel you have been called to a particular ministry? The purpose of this question is to help your group understand that every person has a unique purpose. The Apostle Paul was chosen by God before he was born. Likewise, Paul said we are created for good works, which God prepared for us before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 2:10).

What does it mean to "please God"? Paul's primary point in this passage is that he seeks to please God alone, not man. Man cannot serve two masters. Your group may describe various ways in which people please God (serving, praying, giving, attending church, helping neighbors, and so forth). These are all great things to do, but it's important to understand that pleasing God is a lifestyle, not an occasional activity. We should seek to please God *alone*, and in *all* we do.

"When we seek to please God, men are blessed. When we seek to please men, neither God nor men are edified."

What Do You See?



In this section, encourage your group to carefully read the text and observe as much as possible. The goal is to understand what the author intended to communicate to the biblical audience. Consider historical context, grammar, significant words, writing style, and so forth.

Background

In the previous section (Galatians 1:1-9), Paul addresses the false teaching that many believers were falling for, and says "...if any one is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, let him be condemned to hell!" Some of the believers apparently questioned whether Paul's message was the true message, and thus were tempted to follow a different teaching. Some apparently criticized Paul for peddling a message received from man rather than God, and thus for preaching to please man rather than God.

In this section (Galatians 1:10-24), Paul presents a defense of his calling and his message. Paul seeks to clarify the source of his message to convince his readers that the gospel he preached is the true gospel. Paul's defense is not borne out of resentment, but rather a true pastoral concern that the Galatians receive the authentic message rather than a false message.

Discussion Questions

- **Who is Paul trying to please (verse 10)?**

Paul is trying to please God only, and the rest of this section is his attempt to prove it.

- **What, or who, is the source of Paul's message (verses 11-12)?**

Paul's message is **NOT** of human origin, or learned from any human source; rather, it **IS** by revelation of Jesus Christ.

Paul received the revelation in an encounter with Jesus on the Damascus road (see Acts 22:3-21 and 26:9-18)

- **How does Paul describe his former life (verses 13-14)?**

Paul acknowledges his former life: He savagely persecuted and tried to destroy the church; he persecuted God; he advanced in Judaism beyond his peers; he was extremely zealous for his traditions. However, he does not renounce his status as an Israelite; in Romans 11:1, Paul affirms that he is an Israelite and a descendant of Abraham.

- **When and how was Paul called? For what purpose? (verses 15-17)**

Paul was set apart by God before he was born. God had taken the initiative in grace, and Paul had simply responded to that grace. God's purpose was that Paul would become an evangelist to the Gentiles. This calling had been God's intent from the time of Paul's birth.

In the Old Testament, God's focus was on Israel. In the New Testament, there is no distinction; all can come to faith in Christ.

- **With whom did Paul consult (and specifically not consult) (verses 17-24)?**

Paul did not go immediately to Jerusalem, but to Arabia (which includes modern-day Jordan and southern Syria), most likely staying in or near the city of Damascus. Paul mentions this to show that he did not receive the gospel from the apostles in Jerusalem, nor was he officially sanctioned by the church in Jerusalem, but by God. Paul was not dependent on the other apostles for his ministry any more than he was for the message he proclaimed. This explanation would have further convinced his readers of the divine source and authority of his message.

After three years, Paul went to Jerusalem. He stayed with Peter (Cephas) for fifteen days, and also met James, establishing relationships with two preeminent leaders of the faith.

Paul did not seek affirmation from the early churches or church leaders, but when they heard about his ministry to the Gentiles, they affirmed him and glorified God (verse 24). This further underscores Paul's authority.

What Does It Mean?



In this section, lead your group to identify the differences and similarities between the biblical audience and us. What are the principles reflected in the text that relate to both the biblical audience and us? These principles are the key to understanding and applying the meaning.

Discussion Questions

- **What is the conflict that Paul presents? (verse 10)**

Paul presents two opposing goals: seeking approval of men vs. seeking approval of God. Paul's argument is that these goals are incompatible. If he is still trying to please men (which he is not), then he could not be a bond-servant of Christ (which he is).

Compare Paul's statement to Matthew 6:24: "No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other."

- **Does Paul's experience apply to all believers? (verse 15)**

Paul indicates in verse 15 that he was set apart before he was born. The false teachers taught that people become holy through their own effort, that justification is earned. Paul rejected this false teaching by placing the emphasis on God's initiative and grace; Paul was not called because of anything he had accomplished.

Today's believers are also called by God's grace. Consider Paul's teaching in Ephesians 1:4-5 (he has chosen us before the foundation of the world) and 2:8-10 (we were created for good works that God prepared beforehand).

- **Why did Paul go to Arabia? (verse 17)**

Paul went to Arabia where he could study the Scriptures and grow in Christ apart from the influence and traditions of Hebrew and Greek schools. Also, Paul was likely fulfilling his calling by preaching to the Gentiles in the area (see 2 Corinthians 11:32-33). He could have been in Arabia for as long as three years (verse 18).

Today's believers are also influenced by many traditions that originate from sources such as church, society, and family. Traditions can be good, but they become dangerous when they replace sound study of the Scriptures and a personal relationship with Christ.

Consider the following question, for instance: What must a person do to be saved? Many Christians would say that a person must “pray the sinner’s prayer,” or “walk down the aisle,” or “ask Jesus in your heart,” or “confess your sins.” Some might say a person has to attend a confirmation class, or be baptized, or demonstrate good works of some sort. These are responses borne out of tradition rather than a clear understanding of the gospel message.

We must follow Paul’s example and seek to grow in Christ and understand the scriptures apart from our traditions.

- **Why did Paul meet with Cephas and James? (verse 18)**

After three years of growing in Christ and studying the scriptures, Paul traveled to Jerusalem and met with Peter (Cephas) and James. His purpose was not to seek affirmation, but rather to forge a spiritual bond with the apostles. He went to Jerusalem to get personally acquainted with Peter and James, not to get information from them or to check his message. If he were trying to work out his theology or develop a message consistent with the apostles, he would have surely met with other apostles and stayed longer than 15 days. Paul wisely met with Peter and James to form a partnership so they could positively influence each other as it says in Proverbs 27:1: “Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another.”

Too many believers try to be lone-wolf Christians, and become dull and ineffective as a result. We need to follow Paul’s example and seek wise partnerships that will help us grow and positively shape each other.

How Do I Apply This Knowledge?



In this section, we should apply the principles to our specific situations. While there are probably few principles identified, there will be many possible applications. Each person will apply the principles in different ways depending on their current situation.

Paul said that if we are trying to please men, we would not be a servant of Christ. We must follow Paul’s example and seek to please God alone.

In this section, use the discussion questions to guide your group to reflect on their own lives and identify traditions that may be interfering with their understanding of scriptures or hindering their growth. Also, identify ways in which we seek affirmations of men rather than seeking to please God. Encourage your group to pray for each other.

During the discussion, you may discover that some people in your group are unsure about their purpose or calling. Many churches, including Frisco Bible Church, offer various resources (spiritual gift survey, discipleship groups, etc.) that can help people discover and get plugged in to ministry. Encourage them to visit with one of their church pastors.

Lesson 3 Guide: Live By Faith

Objectives

What should we learn in this study of Galatians 2?

- The truth of the gospel must be diligently guarded against being undermined by false teachers. (v. 4-5)
- The truth of the gospel must be diligently guarded against being diluted or misrepresented by hypocritical behavior. (v. 13-14)
- The truth of the gospel is “that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ” (v. 16).

Discussion Questions

The intent of the discussion questions is to get the group thinking about how to recognize errors in the church. In Galatians 2, Paul recognizes and deals with a single error through two completely different circumstances: overtly brought in by false teachers, and subtly represented through hypocritical behaviors of believers. Thinking through examples from personal experiences will help the group relate to Paul’s zeal to guard the truth of the gospel.

What Do You See?



In this section, encourage your group to carefully read the text and observe as much as possible. The goal is to understand what the author intended to communicate to the biblical audience. Consider historical context, grammar, significant words, writing style, and so forth.

Galatians 2:1-10

With whom did Paul go to Jerusalem? What do we know about them from other Scriptures?

Barnabas

- Barnabas is introduced in Acts 4:36 as a Levite and a native of Cyprus. He sold land and donated the proceeds to the early church in Jerusalem. His given name was Joseph, but the apostles called him Barnabas, which means son of encouragement.
- After Paul’s conversion and his subsequent flight from Damascus back to Jerusalem, Barnabas was the first disciple in Jerusalem to trust Paul’s story. Barnabas took Paul and introduced him to the apostles, telling them everything that had happened to Paul since Jesus appeared to him. (Acts 9)
- When the Jerusalem church heard that Gentiles in Antioch were becoming converted, the leaders sent Barnabas to help nurture the new church. “When he came and saw the grace of God, he was glad, and he exhorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose, for he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord. So Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. For a whole year they met with the church and taught a great many people. And in Antioch the disciples were first called Christians” (Acts 11:23-26).
- The visit to Jerusalem by Paul and Barnabas mentioned in Acts 11:27-30 is likely the same visit Paul describes to the Galatians in Gal. 2:1-10.
- Barnabas accompanied Paul on his first missionary journey, during which they established the churches in the cities of south Galatia as described in Acts 14.

Titus

- Titus was possibly a convert by Paul in Antioch. He was the recipient of the letter bearing his name, wherein Paul refers to him as “my true child in a common faith” (Titus 1:4).
- Titus was a faithful coworker and ambassador for Paul to the church at Corinth (2 Cor. 7:5-7, 13-15; 8:16-23).
- Paul left Titus in Crete to finish establishing the young churches there, to “put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town” (Titus 1:5). In Titus 2, Paul instructed him to teach (v. 1), model good works (v. 7), exhort, and rebuke (v.15).

With whom did Paul meet in Jerusalem?

Paul had a private meeting with at least James, Peter, and John, the leaders of the church in Jerusalem. (v. 9)

What were some of the outcomes of the meeting?

- Titus was not forced to be circumcised. (v. 3)
- The truth of the gospel was preserved for the Gentiles. (v. 5)
- The Jerusalem leaders did not add anything to Paul’s teaching. (v. 6)
- James, Peter, and John were in one accord with Paul and Barnabas, “they gave the right hand of fellowship.” (v. 9)
- All agreed to remember the ministry to the poor. (v. 10)

Galatians 2:11-21

What was the reason Paul confronted Peter in Antioch?

Peter participated in meals with Gentile Christians until some Jews arrived who were of the “circumcision party” (v. 12). By separating himself from the Gentiles out of fear of these Jews, Peter acted hypocritically and caused others—even including Barnabas—to behave the same way (v. 13). Having agreed with Paul on the gospel of grace in Jerusalem (v. 9), Peter began acting like obedience to the Law was also a requirement (v. 14).

By what is a person *not* justified? How many times does Paul state this in verse 16?

“yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.”

By what *is* a person justified?

“yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.”

What Does It Mean?



In this section, lead your group to identify the differences and similarities between the biblical audience and us. What are the principles reflected in the text that relate to both the biblical audience and us? These principles are the key to understanding and applying the meaning.

What does Paul mean when he says he wanted “to make sure that I was not running or had not run in vain”? (v.2)

“Paul’s fear that he ‘should run...in vain’ (lit.) may seem to refer to concern that the Jerusalem apostles upon hearing what he had been preaching would disapprove of it. However this cannot have been his fear. He previously said he was absolutely certain that his gospel, which came to him by special revelation, was the true gospel (1:11-12). He also said he did not need to get it approved by the other apostles (1:16-17). It seems rather that Paul feared that if he did not contact the Jerusalem apostles (Peter, James, and John) his critics might undermine his evangelistic work. They might point to the fact that Paul had had no fellowship with the Jerusalem apostles. They might go on to suggest that there was no fellowship because there was a difference of opinion between Paul and the other apostles over the gospel message. To avoid this possibility Paul met with Peter, James, and John privately. They may have met in private because Paul was a wanted man in Jerusalem at this time, and a public meeting could have resulted in more harm than good.”
—Thomas Constable (1)

Why is it important that Titus “was not forced to be circumcised”? (v. 3)

Circumcision was one of the first steps a non-Jew had to take to become a Jew. The “circumcision party” claimed that in order to receive the full benefits of participation with the Jewish Messiah, non-Jews still had to become Jews first. Paul countered that faith in Christ is all that is required, both for Jews and non-Jews alike. He makes the point in verses 6-9 that the leaders of the church in Jerusalem agreed with him, and one proof of this is that Paul’s coworker, Titus—a non-Jew—was not forced to be circumcised.

Why was it important that Paul confront Peter about Peter’s behavior in Antioch? (v. 11)

Peter was an original recipient of the new understanding of Christian liberty through faith in Christ (the visit of Paul to Jerusalem described in Gal. 2:1-10 is recorded in Acts 11, after Peter’s encounter with Cornelius at Joppa in Acts 10). He agreed with Paul on the gospel of grace in Jerusalem (Gal. 2:9). While in Antioch, Peter publicly lived out this liberty by sharing meals with the non-Jew Christians, something that was not allowed under the Law. But when men arrived from Jerusalem who were not as convinced about this Christian liberty as Peter and Paul were, Peter curtailed his behavior and conformed to the customs of the Law. His influence as a

“pillar of the church” was so great that most of the other Jewish Christians in Antioch, including Barnabas, followed his example to such an extent that the non-Jews were receiving the message loud and clear that unless they became Jews they would not be equal Christians with the Jews.

Paul considered this hypocrisy poisonous both to the truth of the gospel of grace in Christ, and to the unity of the church where “there is neither Jew nor Greek...for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring, and heirs according to promise” (Gal. 3:28).

What does it mean to be “justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law”? (v. 16)

It is hard to improve on the explanation given by John Calvin in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*:

“[T]he consciences of believers, while seeking the assurance of their justification before God, must rise above the law, and think no more of obtaining justification by it. For while the law...leaves not one man righteous, we are either excluded from all hope of justification, or we must be loosed from the law, and so loosed as that no account at all shall be taken of works. For he who imagines that in order to obtain justification he must bring any degree of works whatever, cannot fix any mode or limit, but makes himself debtor to the whole law. Therefore, laying aside all mention of the law, and all idea of works, we must in the matter of justification have recourse to the mercy of God only; turning away our regard from ourselves, we must look only to Christ. For the question is, not how we may be righteous, but how, though unworthy and unrighteous, we may be regarded as righteous.” —John Calvin (2)

How Do I Apply This Knowledge?



In this section, we should apply the principles to our specific situations. While there are probably few principles identified, there will be many possible applications. Each person will apply the principles in different ways depending on their current situation.

What is our source for the truth of the gospel?

While Paul received the gospel by special revelation directly from the risen Lord Jesus, our source today is the Bible, the Word of God inspired by the Holy Spirit. The New Testament contains eyewitness accounts of the life and teachings of Jesus while on earth, and the inspired writings of His apostles and disciples. Jesus “opened their minds to understand the Scriptures” (Luke 24:45), and said that they would be His witnesses “to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8). He also promised that “the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you” (John 14:26). The New Testament contains the writings of these men, and it is our source for the truth of the gospel.

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1. **Constable, Thomas L.** Constable's Notes on the New Testament. *Lumina*. [Online] <https://lumina.bible.org/bible>.
2. **Calvin, John.** *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1559. Hendrickson Publishers, 2008. Translated by Henry Beveridge, 1845.

Lesson 4 Guide: Abraham's Sons

Objectives

What should we learn in this study?

- Abraham believed God's promises by faith, and it was counted to him as righteousness.
- We are the spiritual sons of Abraham, and partakers in the blessings promised to him by God.
- Paul uses Abraham to teach us that salvation by faith is also an Old Testament concept.

Key Concepts

- The Law cannot save us; it brings a curse.
- People of faith are redeemed from the curse, through Christ.
- We are perfected by God's Spirit, not our own efforts.

Opening Discussion Questions

Have you ever received an inheritance? Encourage your group to think about an inheritance they received and the impact it had on them. How was the inheritance originally earned by their ancestor? Why did the ancestor include them in the inheritance? Did they do anything to earn the inheritance? In this lesson, your group will learn about the inheritance they receive as sons of Abraham.

Have you ever been hypnotized? The purpose of this question is to help your group understand the state in which Paul describes the Galatians in verse 3:1. When a person is hypnotized, he becomes hyper-focused on one thing and loses peripheral awareness. In addition, he becomes highly susceptible to the power of suggestion.

Hypnotized comes from the Greek word *baskainō* (βασκαίνω), which means to charm, bewitch, or delude.

Describe your family heritage. The purpose of this question is to guide the group to identify with the Galatian readers. As spiritual sons of Abraham, they embraced their adopted Jewish heritage. The Judaizers, however, confused them by teaching that they had to observe all the Jewish traditions in order to be sons of Abraham.

What Do You See?



In this section, encourage your group to carefully read the text and observe as much as possible. The goal is to understand what the author intended to communicate to the biblical audience. Consider historical context, grammar, significant words, writing style, and so forth.

Galatians 3:1-5

How does this section relate to Paul's argument in Chapter 2 that justification is by faith alone?

In the previous chapter, Paul explains that Christians are justified by faith, and describes the folly of trying to mix law and grace. In Galatians 3, Paul begins to apply the principles he taught in Chapter 2. The Galatians were behaving as if they were under a spell and not using their full rational faculties. In Galatians 3:1-5, Paul seems to be trying to jolt them out of their spiritual stupor and bring them to their senses by asking a series of questions.

Identify the list of questions Paul asks in verses 1-5.

- **Question 1:** *You foolish Galatians! Who has hypnotized you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was vividly portrayed as crucified?* (HCSB) (verse 1)
- **Question 2:** *Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith?* (verse 2)
- **Question 3:** *Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?* (verse 3)
- **Question 4:** *Did you suffer so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain?* (verse 4)
- **Question 5:** *Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith...?* (verse 5)

Galatians 3:6-9

The Judaizers frequently referred to Moses, emphasizing the Mosaic Law. In response, Paul took them back farther in their history to Abraham, the father of the Jewish nation. He cited Genesis 15:6 to prove that God justified Abraham by faith, not because he kept the Law. Abraham believed the promise that God would bless him. Abraham could do (and did do) nothing but believe God's promise that He would do something supernatural for him (see Romans 4:3). Abraham's faith was his trust in God. (1)

What are the promises God made to Abraham? (Genesis 12:3, 15:1-6, and 18:18)

God promised Abraham that his offspring would be as numerous as the stars, that they would become a great and mighty nation, and that all the nations of the earth would be blessed in him.

What was Abraham's response to God's promise? (Genesis 15:6)

Abraham believed God, and God counted it to him as righteousness.

According to Paul, who are the sons of Abraham? (Galatians 3:7-9)

The Judaizers were likely teaching the Galatians that they had to be circumcised to become Abraham's children by adoption. They may have taught that God declared the Galatian Christians righteous by faith even while uncircumcised (like Abraham), but now they had to be circumcised as a seal of their justification (like Abraham). In other words, circumcision would make them true sons of Abraham.

Paul rejected this false teaching, stating that the true sons of Abraham were not his physical descendants, but those who believed God by faith, regardless of whether they are Jew or Gentile. Circumcision cannot make a person a son of Abraham. Only those who are of faith are the true sons of Abraham and will inherit the blessings of salvation.

Galatians 3:10-14

In verses 6-9, Paul sets forth a *positive* argument for justification by faith. In verses 10-14, he shifts and presents a *negative* argument against the possibility of justification by works.

What happens to anyone who does not keep the Law? (Deut. 27:26)

Living under the Mosaic Law did not bring a blessing but a curse. A person had to keep the Law perfectly to obtain God's blessing; even one failure brought God's curse. Of course, nobody could keep the whole Law.

How do the righteous live? (Hab. 2:4)

The righteous live by faith.

What Does It Mean?



In this section, lead your group to identify the differences and similarities between the biblical audience and us. What are the principles reflected in the text that relate to both the biblical audience and us? These principles are the key to understanding and applying the meaning.

Galatians 3:1-5

Refer to the list of questions Paul asks in verses 1-5. What point is Paul trying to make in each question? How do Paul's points relate to believers today?

- **Question 1:** The first question is a rhetorical question probably intended as a rebuke, as well as an attempt to grab their attention. Scripture describes fools as those who disregard God's word (Psalm 14:1, Luke 24:25), so this is indeed a strong statement by Paul. Paul believes his teaching of the gospel was so vivid that it's as if the Galatians were eyewitnesses of the crucifixion, and yet they did not fully appreciate its significance. While Paul rebukes the Galatians for falling for false teaching, he also acknowledges that the false teachers were very cunning. They had, in effect, hypnotized the Galatians by mentally disarming them and convincing them to believe a false doctrine.
- **Question 2:** Paul is essentially asking "How did you receive the Holy Spirit?" Believers did not receive the Spirit by keeping the Law, but rather by hearing and believing through faith. When we hear, and believe, the gospel of salvation, we are sealed by the Holy Spirit as a guarantee of our inheritance (Ephesians 1:13-14). Faith is clearly superior to obeying the Law.
- **Question 3:** This question is referring to the process of practical sanctification, whereby the Christian grows more like Christ in his daily experience. Just as justification is a work of the Holy Spirit in response to faith, sanctification is also a work of the Holy Spirit in response to faith. The notion that Christians can be perfected by the flesh (i.e. their own nature) by keeping the Law is abhorrent to Paul. Unfortunately, this is a fallacy that persists to our day.

- **Question 4:** There are two ways to interpret this question. The Greek word for “suffer” is *paschō* (πάσχω), which means to be affected by or to experience something, regardless of whether it is good or bad. Paul could be specifically referring to the persecution that believers in Galatia experienced (Acts 14:19-23), but he is more likely referring broadly to all their experiences—good and bad—since their conversion. His point is that God is working in them through the Holy Spirit, and their experiences have not been useless and meaningless.
- **Question 5:** The last question is related to the previous question, which is why Paul is more likely referring to their experiences in a broad sense. The Galatians experienced many miracles (Acts 14:3, 8-10), and Paul asks the Galatians what accounts for the miracles they witnessed. God did not perform miracles because the Galatians had earned them by performing works of the Law; rather, they were given freely in response to their hearing and believing the gospel by faith.

Galatians 3:6-9

In the previous section, Paul argued that the Galatians’ own experience of receiving the gospel by faith should inform them that salvation is by grace and not by keeping the law. In this section, Paul issues a second direct appeal to the Galatians: the Old Testament example of Abraham also teaches that it is through faith—not the law—that one is counted righteous.

Refer to your list of promises that God made to Abraham. Who are the sons of Abraham today?

Just as in Paul’s day, all who believe God by faith are the sons of Abraham, and are blessed along with Abraham. Believers are perfected by the Holy Spirit.

How are believers today affected by God’s promises to Abraham?

The Old Testament example of Abraham teaches that it is through faith, not the law, that one is counted as righteous. Paul uses this example to show that God’s promises to Abraham are for all who “hear with faith,” and not just for the people of Israel. Abraham is not the father of God’s people because he is the biological ancestor of the Jews, but because he has spiritual children who follow in his heritage by believing as he did.

Galatians 3:10-14

Refer to your notes about Deuteronomy 27:26 and Habakkuk 2:4. Why did Paul cite these particular verses?

The Juadaizers would have known and respected this passage since it comes from a highly legal section of Scripture. That is why Paul cited Deuteronomy 27:26 in Galatians 3:10, to emphasize the folly and futility of pursuing the Law.

In Galatians 3:11, Paul quoted Habakkuk 2:4 to show that justification by faith has always been God’s method. Since Scripture says that it is the person who is righteous by faith that will live, no one can be justified by works of the law.

What do these verses mean for us today?

Those who rely on the law for salvation—both in Paul’s day and ours—are confounded by its demands and condemnation. They have failed to obey the law, and thus they stand under the curse of the law (verse 10). They stand in contrast to Abraham and all believers who are blessed (verses 8-9). Nobody can keep the whole law because all humans fall short of what God commands (Romans 3:20,23).

Regarding the curse, what did Christ do? (Galatians 3:13-14)

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law by becoming a curse for us. Christ’s death resulted in two blessings: (1) the blessing of justification that Abraham enjoyed is available to Gentiles, and (2) the blessing of the promised Spirit is available to believers. The burden of the curse has been lifted by Christ’s work on the cross.

How Do I Apply This Knowledge?



In this section, we should apply the principles to our specific situations. While there are probably few principles identified, there will be many possible applications. Each person will apply the principles in different ways depending on their current situation.

Modern believers fall for the same nonsense as the Galatians, trying to be perfect through personal effort. We make up our own standards and laws apart from trusting God, and the irony is that we are utterly incapable of keeping even our own standards. People of faith are redeemed from the curse of the law. We are perfected by the Spirit, not our own effort.

Many believers trust their own paganisms, legalisms, or other creative attempts to perfect themselves apart from God. Guide your group discussion to help people identify their own “law” that they are trying to keep. Just like the Galatians who were hypnotized by the cunning teachers, it is easy for modern believers to become disarmed by smooth-talking teachers.

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