

**Connecting Through the Word**  
**Set Free To Serve**  
**Galatians**

**Galatians 5:7-15**

<sup>7</sup> *You ran well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth?*

<sup>8</sup> *This persuasion does not come from Him who calls you.*

<sup>9</sup> *A little leaven leavens the whole lump.*

<sup>10</sup> *I have confidence in you, in the Lord, that you will have no other mind; but he who troubles you shall bear his judgment, whoever he is.*

<sup>11</sup> *And I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why do I still suffer persecution? Then the offense of the cross has ceased.*

<sup>12</sup> *I could wish that those who trouble you would even cut themselves off!*

<sup>13</sup> *For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.*

<sup>14</sup> *For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."*

<sup>15</sup> *But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!*

This epistle was written by the Apostle **Paul** to the **churches** in the southern part of the province of Galatia—Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe. These are churches that he founded on his first missionary journey (Acts 13-14).

You can tell immediately that something is radically wrong, because he does not open his letter with his usual **praise** to God and **prayer** for the saints.

False teachers are spreading a **false** "gospel" which is a **mixture** of Law and grace, and Paul is not going to stand by and do nothing.

**Galatians 1:6-8**

*I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.*

**In these opening verses, the apostle takes three definite steps as he prepares to fight this battle.**

**He Explains His Authority (1:1-5)**

**The sources of his authority**

**His Ministry**

**Galatians 1:1-2**

*Paul, an apostle (not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead),*

**His Message**

**Galatians 1:3-4**

*Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our*

*Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father,*

### **His Motive**

#### **Galatians 1:5**

*To whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.*

### **He Expresses His Anxiety**

#### **Galatians 1:6-7**

*I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ.*

### **He Exposes His Adversaries (1:8-10)**

#### **Galatians 1:8-10**

*But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed. For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ.*

Sad to say, many of the Galatian Christians had turned away from Paul, their “spiritual father” in the Lord, and were now following legalistic teachers who were mixing Old Testament Law with the Gospel of God’s grace.

(We call these false teachers “**Judaizers**” because they were trying to entice Christians back into the Jewish religious system.)

What approach will Paul use to convince the Galatian believers that all they need is **faith** in God’s **grace**?

A quick survey of the entire letter shows that Paul is a master defender of the Gospel.

### **Paul’s first approach is *personal*.**

#### **(Galatians 1-2)**

He points out that he had received the Gospel independently, from the **Lord** and not from the twelve Apostles (Gal. 1:11-24)

But that they had **approved** his message and his ministry (Gal. 2:1-10).

Paul had even defended the Gospel when **Peter**, the leading apostle, had compromised his earlier stand (Gal. 2:11-21).

### **Paul’s second approach is *doctrinal*.**

#### **(Galatians 3-4)**

Paul presents several arguments to establish that sinners are saved by faith and grace, not by works and Law.

First he appeals to their own **experiences** (Gal. 3:1-5).  
How did they get saved?  
By works or by faith?

### **Galatians 3:1-5**

*O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified? This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?*

*Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?*

*Have you suffered so many things in vain--if indeed it was in vain?*

*Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, does He do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?--*

Then he goes back to the Old Testament Law in Galatians 3:6-14 to show that even **Abraham** and the prophets understood salvation as being by grace through faith.

### **Galatians 3:6-9**

*Just as Abraham "believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, "In you all the nations shall be blessed." So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham.*

The word *redeemed* in Galatians 3:13 means to purchase a slave for the purpose of setting him free. It is possible to purchase a slave and keep him as a slave, but this is not what Christ did. By shedding His blood on the cross, He purchased us that we might be set free.

The Judaizers wanted to lead the Christians into slavery, but Christ died to set them free. Salvation is not exchanging one form of bondage for another. Salvation is being set free from the bondage of sin and the Law *into* the liberty of God's grace through Christ.

This raises an interesting question: how could these Judaizers ever convince the Galatian Christians that the way of Law was better than the way of grace? Why would any believer deliberately want to choose bondage instead of liberty? Perhaps part of the answer is found in the word *bewitched* that Paul uses in Galatians 3:1. The word means "to cast a spell, to fascinate." What is there about legalism that can so fascinate the Christian that he will turn from grace to Law?

For one thing, legalism appeals to the flesh. The flesh loves to be "religious"—to obey laws, to observe holy occasions, even to fast (see Gal. 4:10). Certainly there is nothing wrong with obedience, fasting, or solemn times of spiritual worship, *provided that the Holy Spirit does the motivating and the empowering*. The flesh loves to boast about its religious achievements—how many prayers were offered, or how many gifts were given (see Luke 18:9-14; Phil. 3:1-10).

Another characteristic of religious legalism that fascinates people is the appeal to the senses. Instead of worshiping God "in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24), the legalist invents his own system that satisfies his senses. He cannot walk by faith; he has to walk by sight and hearing and tasting and smelling and feeling. To be sure, true Spirit-led worship does not deny the five senses. We see other believers; we sing and hear the hymns; we taste and feel the elements of the Lord's Supper. But these external things are but windows through which faith perceives the eternal. They are not ends in themselves.

The person who depends on religion can measure himself and compare himself with others. This is another fascination to legalism. But the true believer measures himself with Christ, not other Christians (Eph. 4:11ff). There is no room for pride in the spiritual walk of the Christian who lives by grace; but the legalist constantly boasts about his achievements and his converts (Gal. 6:13-14).

Yes, there is a fascination to the Law, but it is only bait that leads to a trap; and once the believer takes the bait, he finds himself in bondage. Far better to take God at His Word and rest on His grace. We were saved "by grace, through faith" and we must live "by grace, through faith." This is the way to blessing. The other way is the way to bondage.

### **Paul now explains why the Law was given originally (Gal. 3:15-4:18).**

"But why then did God even give the Law?" his objectors would argue. Paul gave three answers:

### **The Law was temporary and only for Israel.**

#### **Galatians 3:19-20**

*What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator. Now a mediator does not mediate for one only, but God is one.*

Rom. 2:14 and Acts 15:24 make it clear that God never gave the Law to the Gentiles. The moral law was already written in the Gentiles' hearts (Rom. 2:15). But the ceremonial law (including the Sabbath laws) was never given to the Gentiles. The law was "added" and was not a replacement for the Abrahamic promises.

Once the Seed (Christ) came, the Law was superseded. "But the Law was given with such glory!" the Judaizers would reply. "How can you say it was only temporary?" Paul is ready with an answer: the Law was given by angelic mediators, but God spoke personally to Abraham. God is one—and the fulfillment of His promise to Abraham depended on Him alone.

### **The Law convicted us of sin but never saved us from sin.**

#### **Galatians 3:21-22**

*Is the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not! For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law. But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.*

If there were a law that saved sinners, then God would have spared His Son and used that law instead of the cross. The Law is not contrary to God's promises; by revealing sin, the law forces the sinner to trust God's promises. Law shows us our need of grace; grace enables us to please God through faith. The Law places all under sin, which means that all can be saved by grace. If God permitted even one sinner to be saved by law, then no man could be saved by grace. All must be saved the same way.

### **The Law prepared the way for Christ (vv. 23-29).**

#### **Galatians 3:24**

*Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.*

"Before the faith we now know came, the law shut men up, revealing their need for a Savior." As L.E. Maxwell has put it, "We were crowded to Christ!" The Law was God's "schoolmaster" (tutor) for the Jews in their national infancy. The Greek and Roman tutor used to guard and teach the minor children until they reached legal adulthood, after which the children were on their own. The Law kept the Jews "in line," so to speak, until Christ came and the full revelation of the Gospel was given to Jews and Gentiles.

Paul then uses the story of Sarah and Hagar and their sons to illustrate the **relationship** between Law and grace (4:19-31).

An allegory is an event or story that has a hidden meaning. Paul uses the story of Abraham's two sons ([Gen. 16](#) and [21](#)) to show that the new covenant of grace has superseded the old covenant of law.

We may illustrate the contrasts in this way:

<b>The Old Covenant of Law</b>	<b>The New Covenant of Grace</b>
1. Symbolized by Hagar the slave-girl	1. Symbolized by Sarah, the free woman
2. Ishmael, a son born after the flesh	2. Isaac, a son born miraculously by God's promise
3. Represents Jerusalem in Paul's day, still in spiritual (and political) bondage	3. Represents the heavenly Jerusalem which is free and glorious

### **The final two chapters of the letter are *practical* in emphasis, as Paul turns from argument to application.**

The Judaizers accused Paul of promoting **lawlessness** because he preached the Gospel of the grace of God; so in this section:

Paul explains the relationship between the grace of God and practical Christian living.

### **Paul shows that living by grace means:**

## **Liberty, not bondage (Gal. 5:1-12)**

### **Galatians 5:1**

*Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.*

## **Depending on the Spirit, not the flesh (Gal. 5:13-26)**

### **Galatians 5:16-21**

*I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.*

*For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.*

*But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.*

*Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.*

### **Galatians 5:22-26**

*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.*

*If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.*

*Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.*

## **Living for others, not for self (Gal. 6:1-10)**

### **Galatians 6:1-2**

*Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.*

## **Living for the glory of God, not for man's approval (Gal. 6:11-18).**

To the very end of the letter, Paul has grace in mind. The Christian who depends on grace, through the Spirit, will always bring glory to God; the legalist who "practices religion" will earn the approval of men. How the world honors "religious people" and hates the dedicated Christian!

### **Galatians 6:12-15**

*As many as desire to make a good showing in the flesh, these would compel you to be circumcised, only that they may not suffer persecution for the cross of Christ.*

*For not even those who are circumcised keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh.*

*But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.*

*For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation.*

## **Jesus Christ (Gal. 6:14-16)**

Paul keeps coming back to the cross (Gal. 2:20-21; 3:13; 4:5; 5:11, 24; 6:12). "If righteousness come by the Law, then Christ is dead in vain" (Gal. 2:21). The wounds of Calvary certainly make Christ a "marked Man," for those wounds mean liberty to those who will trust Him. The Judaizers boasted in circumcision; but Paul boasted in a crucified and risen Saviour. He gloried in the Cross. Certainly this does not mean that he gloried in the brutality or suffering of the cross. He was not looking at the cross as a piece of wood on which a criminal died. He was looking at the cross of Christ and glorying in it.

Why would Paul glory in the Cross?

**Paul knew the Person of the Cross.** Jesus Christ is mentioned at least forty-five times in the Galatian letter, which means that one third of the verses contain some reference to Him. The person of Jesus Christ captivated Paul, and it was Christ who made the Cross glorious to him. In his early years as a Jewish rabbi, Paul had much to glory in (Gal. 1:13-14; Phil. 3:1-10); but after he met Christ, all his self-glory turned to mere refuse. The legalists did not glory in the cross of Christ because they did not glory in Christ. It was Moses—and themselves—who got the glory. They did not really know the Person of the Cross.

**Paul knew the power of the Cross.** To Saul, the learned Jewish rabbi, a doctrine of sacrifice on a cross was utterly preposterous. That the Messiah would

come, he had no doubt, but that He would come to die—and to die on a cursed cross—well, there was no place for this in Saul's theology. The cross in that day was the ultimate example of weakness and shame. Yet Saul of Tarsus experienced the power of the Cross and became Paul the apostle. The cross ceased to be a stumbling block to him and became, instead, the very foundation stone of his message: "Christ died for our sins."

**For Paul, the Cross meant liberty: from self (Gal. 2:20), the flesh (Gal. 5:24), and the world (Gal. 6:14).**

In the death and resurrection of Christ the power of God is released to give believers deliverance and victory. It is no longer we who live; it is Christ who lives in us and through us. As we yield to Him, we have victory over the world and the flesh. There is certainly no power in the Law to give a man victory over self, the flesh, and the Law. Quite the contrary, the Law appeals to the human ego ("I can do something to please God"), and encourages the flesh to work. And the world does not care if we are "religious" just so long as the Cross is left out. In fact, the world approves of religion—apart from the Gospel of Jesus Christ. So, the legalist inflates the ego, flatters the flesh, and pleases the world; the true Christian crucifies all three.

**Paul knew the purpose of the Cross.** It was to bring into the world a new "people of God." For centuries, the nation of Israel had been the people of God, and the Law had been their way of life. All of this was preparation for the coming of Jesus Christ (Gal. 4:1-7).

Now that Christ had come and finished His great work of redemption, God had set aside the nation of Israel and brought into the world a "new creation" and a new nation, "the Israel of God." This does not mean that God is finished with the nation of Israel. Today, God is calling out from both Jews and Gentiles "a people for His name" (Acts 15:14), and in Christ there are no racial or national distinctions (Gal. 3:27-29). Paul clearly teaches, however, that there is a future in God's plan for the Jewish nation (Rom. 11).

**One purpose of the cross was to bring in a new creation** (Gal. 6:15). This "new creation" is the church, the body of Christ. The "old creation" was headed by Adam, and it ended in failure. The new creation is headed by Christ, and it is going to succeed.

To the Romans, Paul explained the doctrine of the two Adams—Adam and Christ (Rom. 5:12-21). The first Adam disobeyed God and brought into the world sin, death, and judgment. The Last Adam (1 Cor. 15:45) obeyed God and brought life, righteousness, and salvation. Adam committed one sin and plunged all of creation into judgment. Christ performed one act of obedience in His death on the cross, and paid for all the sins of the world. Because of Adam's sin, death reigns in this world. Because of Christ's victory, we can "reign in life" through Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:17). In other words, the believer belongs to a "new creation," a spiritual creation, that knows nothing of the defects and limitations of the "old creation" (see 2 Cor. 5:17).

**Another purpose of the cross was to create a new nation, "the Israel of God"** (Gal. 6:16). This is one of many names for the church found in the New Testament. Jesus said to the Jewish leaders, "The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof (Matt. 21:43). Peter identifies that nation as the family of God: "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation" (1 Peter 2:9).

As mentioned previously, this does not mean that the church has permanently replaced the nation of Israel in the program of God, but only that the church is "the people of God" on earth today just as Israel was in centuries past.

What a rebuke to the Judaizers. They wanted to take the church back into Old Testament Law, when that Law could not even be kept by the nation of Israel! That nation was set aside to make way for God's new people, the church!

Believers today may not be "Abraham's children" in the flesh, but they are "Abraham's seed" through faith in Jesus Christ (Gal. 4:28-29). They have experienced a circumcision of the heart that is far more effective than physical circumcision (Rom. 2:29; Phil. 3:3; Col. 2:11). For this reason, neither circumcision nor the lack of it is of any consequence to God (Gal. 6:15; see also Gal. 5:6),