

Paul's Epistle  
To  
The Galatians



Bible Study Series  
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# Paul's Epistle to The Galatians

▪ This is the only epistle which Paul sent to a group of churches in several cities in the province of Galatia in Asia Minor (Turkey now), in contrast to his usual individual epistles to individual churches in different cities as the case with Ephesus, Colosse, Corinth, Philippi and Thessalonica.

It is not at all strange, that Paul knew about these cities, since as we know that he was born in Tarsus in the province of **Cilicia** which was not that far from the province of **Galatia**.

Paul's life history took a sudden dramatic miraculous turn after his famous encounter with the Glorious Resurrected Christ the Lord on his way to Damascus (Acts 9), which changed Paul from the greatest persecutor of the church, to the greatest evangelist ever who proclaimed and preached the Gospel (the Good News) of God to humanity; for his three or four missionary trips (counting his trip to Rome for trial), have transformed Christianity from a dogma believed by a handful of Christian Jews in Palestine, to a great Christian Empire (if we may say so), of which Galatia was a small sect. And so, this epistle became one of thirteen Epistles Paul wrote inspired by the Holy Spirit to the churches of previous Gentiles and those who worked with him such as Timothy and Titus.

### **Author of the Epistle:**

Paul without dispute, as he mentioned his name in 1:1

Who is Paul? He was first introduced in the Bible as Saul at the stoning of Stephen (Acts 7:58). He was a Jew born in Tarsus as a Roman citizen. Circumcised on the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, Pharisee as per the law, zeal, persecuted the church, as righteous (blameless) as far as the law can go. (Philippi 3:5, 6)

### **Time of the Epistle:**

Some date it around 57-58 A.D., and others between 49 and 51.

However, since Paul talked in chapter 2, about his visit to the council (Assembly) of Jerusalem, which most Scholars agree that it was around 49 A.D., then the Epistle must have been written after that.

**Purpose of the Epistle:** Two folded:  
Paul and the Gospel were under attack.

Had this attack been successful, Christianity might have been a history, or at least a sect of the Jewish faith mainly circumcision and keeping the Law, instead of the full Grace of God, and the Gospel would have never reached us the Gentiles. Consequently there would have been no salvation for us. This of course did not happen because God so loved the world and not one nation or people.

### **The attack on Paul:**

1- Paul's Apostleship was denied.

According to Acts 1:21, 22 an apostle must be one who was with the disciples all the time of the Lord's earthly life from the time of John the Baptist, until the day He ascended, and he must have witnessed the resurrection.

Paul did not fulfill these conditions.

2- Not so long before, he persecuted the church and killed or caused to kill many of the early Christians.

### **Paul's Defense:**

1- In the very first verse, he says that his apostleship, was not from human, but directly from the resurrected Lord Himself face to face on the road to Damascus. So he have seen the Lord and witnessed Him resurrected.

2- Then he turns to say that he was not commissioned by any man. And he carefully in chapters 1 & 2 listed his visits to Jerusalem (the castle of Christianity where all the pillars of the church like John, Peter, and James lived).

3- The Gospel he is preaching is not a second hand message received from any man, but it is the one he received directly from the Lord Jesus Christ.

4- And although his message was received in entire independence, yet it had been approved by the acknowledged leaders or pillars of Christianity then (2:6-10).

### **The attack on the Gospel:**

1- The promises of God are for the Jews only and not for the Gentiles.

So, one has to be a Jew before he receives the good news (Gospel).

2- Faith is not the answer to salvation; it is the works of the law.

These two are Jewish views.

### **Paul's answer :**

1- Christ is sufficient and the only way to salvation.

2- Nothing could be added to Christ's atoning work.

3- What one must do to be saved?

These three points are the core of this epistle as we shall see later.

So, Paul wrote this Epistle to oppose the false Jewish teachers who were undermining the doctrine of the New Testament regarding righteousness by faith (Rom. 3:31) which they did not only undermine, but they also ignored the Jerusalem council decision (Acts 15:23-28), and they spread their destructive teachings which called for the Gentiles to

become Jews first and obey all the requirements of the Mosaic law before they become Christians (1:7 ; 4:17,21 ; 5:2-12 & 6:12,13)

[The Jews felt that since all the Spiritual Gifts of God were given to them (His Elect), then, in order to qualify for Salvation, the Gentiles must become Jews first, because Spiritual gifts cannot be given directly to Gentiles.]

Shocked by the Galatians' very quick acceptance to this deadly Heresy (1:6), Paul urgently wrote this epistle to defend the Doctrine of "**righteousness by Faith**", and to warn these churches of the dangerous sequences if they ignore this fundamental doctrine.

It is worthy to mention here that the epistle to the Galatians is the only epistle where Paul did not mention any sort of praise to its recipients (on the contrary he addressed them as being fools or stupid in 3:1), and this also reflects how much Paul felt the necessity to confront them immediately with their mistakes, and to defend the fundamental doctrine of righteousness.

### ***What else does the epistle contain?***

- 1- Valuable historical information about Apostle Paul's background (chapters 1 & 2), including the three years which he lived in Arabia (1:17, 18) which was not mentioned in the book of Acts.
- 2- His fifteen day visit to Peter after being in Arabia (1:18, 19).
- 3- His trip to the Jerusalem council (assembly) (2:1 – 10)
- 4- His confrontation with Peter (2:11 – 21).

### ***Recipients of the epistle:***

Here, one has to pose a while to define what Galatia is.

At the time of Paul, the word "Galatia" carried two meanings:-

#### **1- Tribal meaning:**

Geographically, Galatia was the middle region of Asia Minor, and it was inhabited by the original Galatians who were called **Gaul** who in the third century B.C. were originally tribes that immigrated from the south west of Germany and east of France who were called Gaul at that time, and they were part of the Celtic tribes who spread all over Europe; and some of them still inhabit Scotland, Ireland, and Wales till our present time.

In fact this name is not a name of certain race, but it is of the civilization and the life style of these tribes, and also of their language which was a mixture of Indian and European languages.

These tribes were nomads in continuous move. They mastered knighthood and the use of articles made of iron which was their main craft and source of living more and over the spoils of raids on other tribes.

They believed in the world of Satan and also in the continuation of spirit which leaves the person at his death, to dwell in another body other than human.

They also sacrificed animals and occasionally humans.

#### **2- Political meaning:**

When the Romans conquered Galatia, it became a Roman province, yet it enjoyed a special sort of independence which continued till 25 B.C. when it became officially a Roman province and some other territories were added to it, which were not originally inhabited by the original Galatians, such as the regions of **Licaonea, Phrygia and**

**Pisidia.** So, as an official Roman province, Galatia was inhabited by a mixture of the original Galatians as well as non-Galatians from the added territories.

And Acts 13:14 – 14:23 tells us how Paul established churches in southern Galatia in the cities of **Antioch, Iconium, Lystra,** and **Derbe** which though they were part of the political Galatia, they did not belong to the original tribal Galatia. There is no historical record which tells us that Paul had established churches in northern Galatia which was not inhabited in the proper sense, simply because the original inhabitants were nomads moving from one place to another all the time.

And although, Paul crossed the borders to northern Galatia twice at least (Acts 16:6 ; 18:23), yet the book of Acts shows no record of Paul establishing churches, or even making any missionary effort there, and to my knowledge, he stopped there only because he was sick.

And since, neither the book of Acts nor the Epistle to Galatians, mentions any city or people in northern Galatia, then it would be more appropriate to believe that the Epistle was written to the southern churches.

Not only that, but the book of Acts records Paul establishing the churches of **Antioch Pisidia** (Acts 13:14-50), **Iconium** (Acts 13:51 - 14:7 & 16:2), **Lystra** (Acts 14:8-19 & 16:2), and **Derbe** (Acts 14:20,21 & 16:1). [They were on the main road of traveling at that time.]

Also, one should not forget that the churches which Paul intended by this epistle should have been established before the Jerusalem council (Assembly) as mentioned in Acts 15:2 , and the churches of southern Galatia fits this category since they were established during Paul's first missionary trip before his meeting with the Jerusalem Council, and Paul did not visit northern Galatia till after the Jerusalem Assembly (Acts 16:5,6).

As mentioned before, the Epistle circles around **Righteousness by Faith** as the case in the Epistle to the Romans. And here, Paul defends this Doctrine which is the core of the Gospel with its **Theological content** (Chapters 3 & 4), **Practical content** (Chapters 5 & 6), as well as his **defense for his Apostleship** (Chapters 1 & 2) since the false teachers, as was the case in Corinth, attacked his Apostleship so that they may be able to spread their heresy teachings.

And one cannot help but noticing the striking resemblance between this Epistle and the one to the Romans in their fundamental theological teachings:

- 1- The inability of the Law to cause righteousness (2:16 & Rome 3:20).
- 2- The believer's death to the Law (2:19 & Rome 7:4).
- 3- The believer's crucifixion with Christ (2:20 & Rome 6:6).
- 4- Abraham's righteousness by faith (3:6 7 Rom 4:3).
- 5- The believers are Abraham's children spiritually (3:7 & Rome 4:10,11).
- 6- Consequently, they are blessed (3:9 & Rome 4:23,24).
- 7- The Law does not save, but brings the wrath of God (3:10 & Rome 4:15).
- 8- The righteous lives by faith (3:11 & Rome 1:17).
- 9- All have sinned (3:22 & Rome 11:32).
- 10- The believers are spiritually baptized in Christ (3:27 & Rome 6:3).
- 11- Believers are spiritually God's children by adoption (4:5-7 & Rome 8:14-1

- 12- Love completes the Law (5:14 & Rome 13:8-10).
- 13- The importance of conduct by the spirit (5:16 & Rome 8:4)
- 14- The flesh opposes the spirit (5:17 & Rom. 7:23, 25).
- 15- The importance of believers carrying each other's burdens (6:2 & Rom. 15:1)..

***Challenging Verses:***

- 1) 2:1-10 Tells about Paul's visit to Jerusalem and meeting with Peter, James and John. Was that his meeting with the Jerusalem assembly mentioned in Acts 15?
- 2) 3:27 Those who teach that Baptism is essential for salvation depend on this verse to support their views. Is this doctrinally correct?
- 3) 3:28 This verse is used by some to attack the traditional situation of men and women which calls for submission. Is this doctrinally correct?
- 4) 5:4 "you fell off Grace"" Does this mean that a true believer can lose his salvation?
- 5) 6:11 "You see how large a letter I have written unto you by mine own hand." What does it mean?
- 6) 6:16 "And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God." What does this mean?

We shall discuss each one of these separately when it comes in our study.

## ***Outline of the Epistle***

### ***A) Introduction (1:1-9)***

- 1- Salutation 1:1-5**
- 2- Denunciation 1:6-9**

### ***B) Personal: Authentication of Paul's Apostleship (1:11 - 2:21)***

- 1- Paul's Gospel received by Special Revelation 1:10-12**
- 2- Paul's Gospel was independent of Jerusalem's Apostles 1:13 - 2:21**
  - a- Evidenced by his early activities as a Christian 1:13-17
  - b- Evidenced by his first post-Christian visit to Jerusalem 1:18-24
  - c- Evidenced by his second post-Christian visit to Jerusalem 2:1-10
  - d- Evidenced by his rebuke of Peter at Antioch 2:11-14
  - e- Paul's view about applying the law wrongly 2:15-21

### ***C) Doctrinal: Justification by Faith (Chapters 3-4)***

- 1- The Galatians' experience of the Gospel 3:1-5**
- 2- Abraham's experience of faith 3:6-9**
- 3- The curse of the Law 3:10-14**
- 4- The priority of the promise 3:15-18**
- 5- The purpose of the Law 3:19-25**
- 6- Sons not slaves 3:26 - 4:11**
- 7- Appeal to enter into freedom from the Law 4:12-20**
- 8- The Allegory of Sarah and Hagar 4:21-31**

### ***D) Practical: Life of Liberty and Faith (5:1 - 6:10)***

- 1- Exhortation to freedom 5:1-12**
- 2- Life by the Spirit, not by the flesh 5:13-26**
- 3- Call for mutual help 6:1-10**

### ***E) Conclusion: (6:11-18)***

## **A) Introduction (1:1-9)**

### **1- Salutation 1:1-5**

To write a letter at those days, it was the custom to write the writer's name, then to whom it was written, then salutations (Greetings), then a word of good wishes that all is well, then the purpose of the letter, then at the end a short conclusion and good wishes.

This is actually not any different from what we do now. So, we write our letters most of the time on letterheads indicating the sender, then we write "Dear so" indicating the recipient, then we write some words of greetings and good wishes, then we go into the purpose of the letter, then at the end we write a short conclusion and good wishes assuring our sincerity "Sincerely or Truly Yours".

Now, Paul was not any different either. He wrote all his Epistles in that manner. So, in this Epistle, he writes his name, then to whom it is written, then salutation. Nothing is better than to extend the grace and peace of God to whom we are addressing. I took it on myself since the time I accepted Christ the Lord as my savior, to write the salutation in my letters as such "The Grace and peace of God which exceeds any comprehension be with you ", not that I am bragging of what I write, but boasting about the unimaginable blessings of God and extending them to others. And it is worth mentioning that the word "Grace" was adopted as a greeting by the Greeks, while the word Peace (Shalom) was adopted as a greeting by the Jews. Paul here mentioned both words, but he puts "Grace first pointing at the new era of Grace versus the Old.

But we must not neglect what he says in v.1, that he is an apostle (messenger or ambassador sent for a mission with full authority of representation), who is not sent by a man (which usually was a king, an emperor, a governor, a ruler, or any important person) ; but sent by God Himself Jesus Christ who raised himself from the dead. This is also part of authentication of his credentials.

Then in v.2, he mentions the brethren who were with him. It is always nice to acknowledge those who work with us, which reminds me with the Maestro who accepts the applause and acknowledges all the other performers.

Now we must look in "what qualifies a person to be an apostle". This is mentioned clearly in Acts 1:21-22. Peter stood in the middle of his brothers the disciples and said that they must choose someone to take the place of Judas who betrayed our lord and committed suicide. That one whom they choose, must have companied with them, all the time that the Lord Jesus Christ went in and out among them, beginning from the baptism of John, unto that day He was taken up from them, and he must be one ordained to be a witness with them for His resurrection. According to this, Paul was not an apostle to the Jews generally and to those of Galatia in particular. But was he not?

Sure he was. We may say he did not live with them the three plus years that Jesus lived with them. But he witnessed the raised king face to face in a dramatic appearance on his way to Damascus. Then, though he was not in the group whom the Lord commissioned before his ascension, yet he was personally commissioned by the Lord Himself. (see what the Lord said to Ananias in Acts 9;15.16).

Then he did not write any word of praise or good wishes (he may have been angry) as was explained before; but in v.6, he goes directly to the purpose of his message:

## **2- Denunciation 1:6-9**

He says he marveled how soon they shifted from the gospel of Grace which he preached about Jesus Christ the Lord who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from the present evil world (very interesting the world has always been evil; it was evil then as it is now). They left this gospel of Grace to another gospel, which is actually not another, but some of you (The Judaizers), who are causing this shift and confusion to pervert the gospel of Christ.

Then, he puts the curse (Anathema in Greek which was considered in the Idol world a payment for a vow to the temple of that idol), on anyone - including himself or an angel from heaven - who teaches anything different from the Gospel he taught them before.

Then in v.10, he says that he did not come to please men (don't we do that all the time even in churches), for if he does that, then he is not servant of Christ. The word "servant" in some other versions is translated a "Slave" which is more appropriate, since we as well as Paul were slaves to sin in the past, but after we were redeemed, we became free from sin slavery, but also slaves to He Who redeemed us.

## ***B) Personal Authentication of Paul's Apostleship (1:11 - 2:21)***

### **1- Paul's Gospel received by Special Revelation 1:11-12**

I certify you brethren, or I declare to you. Here, he sets forward the Gospel he received. We find the same declaration in 1st Cor. 15:1. What does he want to declare about this Gospel?

- \* That it is not after man, i.e. after God v.11
- \* That he did not receive it by man, i.e. mediator. v.12
- \* That he was not taught it. v.12
- \* That it was revealed to him by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself (referring to his encounter in Acts 9. See also Eph. 3:2-6 which describes what is this revelation.

### **2- Paul's Gospel was independent of Jerusalem's Apostles 1:13 - 2:21**

a- Evidenced by his early activities as a Christian 1:13-17

- \* His past Speaks for him, since he persecuted and wasted the church of God beyond any measure.
- \* His religious background being obedient to the law and exceedingly zealous For the traditions of his fathers (these were orally communicated by fathers to sons over the years since the law came into effect).
- \* God, by His Grace (not by Paul's righteousness and obeying the law), separated him (sorted him out) from his mothers womb (Isaiah said the same).
- \* He was chosen to reveal God's Son to the nations (Gentiles).
- \* He immediately did not consult flesh and blood referring to the weak human nature, and rightly so, after all it was God who called him.

- \* He did not go to Jerusalem either. Why Jerusalem? It was the religious center of Judaism, and then became the birth place of Christianity. Here, he meant he did not go to Jerusalem to ask for the blessings or to get the O.K or permission from the pillars of the church (John, Peter or James).
- \* He immediately went to Arabia (the region of Nabatean kingdom in Trans-Jordan extending from Damascus southwest to Suez); then went back to Damascus.

b- Evidenced by his first post-Christian visit to Jerusalem 1:18-24

- \* 3 years later, he paid his first post-Christian visit to Jerusalem to meet Peter and stayed with him 15 days. At this visit, he did not meet any of the other Apostles save James the Lord's brother.
  - \* In v. 10, he assures that what he said is the truth, probably to stress that he was not taught the Gospel by anyone, and certainly 15 days are not enough to be taught by Peter.
- We shall discuss Paul's post- Christian visits to Jerusalem later.
- \* Then he visited Syria and Cilicia where he was not known by face, but the people there glorified God for the miracle that happened to him as for preaching the Gospel which he was persecuting before.

c- Evidenced by his second post-Christian visit to Jerusalem 2:1-10

- \* 14 years later, he, Barnabas and Titus went to Jerusalem by revelation.
- Who was Barnabas?** He was a Levite from the Island of Cyprus. His Name means "One who encourages". His given name was Jose or Joseph. He sold his land and brought the money and laid it at the Apostles' feet (Acts 4:36). He was Mark's uncle (Mark's mother's brother).  
P.S. Levites as per God's instructions to Joshua, do not own land. So this land in question, could have been his wife's, or it could be that the law did not apply in Cyprus being a foreign country.
- Who was Titus?** He was a Gentile who became Christian through Paul's ministry. Then he became his delegate to Corinth, and later he was left in the island of Crete to oversee the church there (Tit. 1:5). He was not compelled to be circumcised (v.1).

**Purpose of this visit:**

- 1- To meet the pillars of the church, and communicate unto them the gospel he preached among the Gentiles.
- 2- To discuss the false teachings of the judaizers who were forcing the Christian Gentiles to circumcise and follow Moses' law and rituals; the thing which Paul did not yield to.

The pillars of the church approved his ministry among the Gentiles, and gave him and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship.

**Now**, back to the first Challenging question on page 5 dealing with Paul's visit to Jerusalem mentioned in 2:1-10 and whether it was his meeting with the Jerusalem council mentioned in Acts 15?

To answer this question, we must realize that Paul being a true Hebrew Pharisee, he observed visiting Jerusalem at least once a year (which was usually during the Passover) if not more. Remember Jesus' visit to Jerusalem with Mary and Joseph when He was 12 (Luke 2:41-52). Then we should not forget the story of his encounter with the Lord on his way from Jerusalem to Damascus. Of course that was during his pre-Christian time. But in his post-Christian time, he visited Jerusalem 3 or 4 times, at least as per what is recorded in the Scripture:-

- 1- The visit mentioned in 1:18, was 3 years after going to Arabia (we do not know how long he stayed in Arabia), and it was for the purpose of meeting with Peter as mentioned before on page 9.
- 2- The visit mentioned here in 2:1-10, was 14 years after the visit of 1:18, and Here, he met with the pillars of the church as mentioned above.
- 3- As for the visit mentioned in Acts 11:27-30, it was for delivering the collected gifts from Antioch to the poor Saints in Jerusalem during the famine which was prophesized by Agabos the prophet. This trip was not for teaching or seeking the blessings of the pillars of the church.
- 4- And the visit mentioned in Acts 15:1-35 ; obviously as we read, was for the purpose of seeking the opinion of the pillars of the church about the false teachings of the Judaizers in Antioch, who were calling for Judaism and following Moses' law and teachings.

Here the Scripture tells us that the council wrote a short message and sent it to the people of Antioch by the hands of Judas who was called Barsabas, and Silas who were chief men among the brethren. The outline of the message is mentioned in Acts 15:23-29.

d- Evidenced by his rebuke to peter at Antioch 2:11-14

Before we talk about this rebuke, we must understand the following.

The Jews considering themselves the chosen people of God, looked down at the other nations (Gentiles). They did not associate, do business, or eat with them, or even give a helping hand to a gentile in distress, lest they get defiled. They looked at the Gentiles as unclean people (Sinners).

The word sinner here does not necessarily mean committing a moral sin.

e.g. if a Jew ate one of the forbidden foods, he is a sinner because he ate unclean food. So, when Paul says we Jews are not sinners like the Gentiles, he means that they do not eat unclean food like the Gentiles. And of course Gentiles are unclean or sinners because they eat unclean food.

Now we go back to the story. Peter went to Antioch. We do not know why he went. Probably he was returning Paul's visit, or he may have wanted to see the progress of Christianity in Antioch (remember the Scripture tells us that Believers were called Christians first in Antioch Acts 11:26). Any how, Peter shared the love (Agape) meals offered by the congregation who were mostly Gentiles and of course it were unclean by the Jewish standards. Yet it was no problem for Peter. But when some Jews came from Jerusalem, he began to draw himself away from these Agape (unclean !!) meals, and the other Jews did the same, even Barnabas followed them. Paul noticed that, and knew it was wrong and he had to stop it. So, he rebuked Peter in front of all, even though Peter was one of the Big pillars of the Jerusalem church and a guest.

e- Paul's view about applying the Law wrongly 2:15-21

The message that was sent from the Jerusalem council to the church of Antioch, was to tell them that they are not required to circumcise or follow the law of Moses; but it did not tell the same to the Christian Jews. So in effect that message was a compromise message. And like any compromise, it created a problem of a class distinction (double standard). So we are now left with two classes of Christians in Antioch: The Gentile Christians whose faith was based on Grace; and the Jewish Christians whose faith was based on the works of the law.

Paul knew that this was wrong, and that was his argument in these verses.

So, in v.16, he says "By the works of the law, shall no flesh be justified"

This is the **KEY VERSE** in Galatians. No one is justified by observing the law is mentioned three times. This was coupled three times also, by the fact that faith in Christ is the only way to justification. Faith is the means by which justification is received, not the law. (Rom. 1:17 & Phil.3:9)

Paul here is not undermining the law, because he clearly maintained that God's law is Holy, Just and good (Rom. 7:12) , but he is arguing the illegitimate use of the law by making its observance, the grounds of acceptance with God or justification.

And in v.20, he describes the essence of Christian life. He says "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me..... who loved me and gave Himself for me".

### **C) Doctrinal Justification by Faith (Chapters 3 &4)**

#### **1- The Galatians' experience of the Gospel 3:1-5**

Paul here, is starting by his compliment !! He tells them, you fools; how could you not obey the truth, the truth of the crucified Christ, the truth that I have portrayed to you, and you saw it by your own eyes? Have you then received the Spirit (mentioned 16 times in this Epistle) by the works of the law or by the hearing of faith? (Rom.10:13)

You began by the Spirit, and now you are perfecting (justifying or sanctifying) yourselves by the flesh (referring to circumcision, eating certain foods and all the rest). Was our ministry to you of the Spirit or of the flesh? I hope you have not suffered in vain.

#### **2- Abraham's experience of faith 3:6-9**

Abraham's faith in God's promise was accounted to him for righteousness. All believers (Jews or Gentiles) are Abraham's children (also called seeds or descendants in v.16 & Heb. 2:16).

God long before giving the law to Moses told Abraham "In thee shall all nations be blessed". That was God's eternal plan to save all nations (not the Jews only), even before Abraham has a son.

#### **3- The curse of the law 3:10-14**

He who does not obey all what is written in the law is cursed.

It is obvious that no one can, because Isaiah in 53:6 says “all we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned everyone to his own way.”

So, without God’s Grace, we all are cursed, because we cannot obey the law. God offers Grace. Those who refuse this, and depend on their works are cursed. The just shall live by his faith (Hab. 2:4). We believers are saved from this curse, by Christ who made himself a curse for us, so that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through Him.

#### **4- The priority (Superiority) of the promise 3:15-18**

The basis of the covenant between God and Abraham was faith.

The law came through Moses 430 years later.

The law cannot nullify a promise God had given, even 430 years before, nor can it add to, or omit any part of it.

It was faith which put Abraham right with God. The law cannot alter that, and faith is still the only way for a man to be right with God.

God’s promise was to Abraham and his seed (not seeds). So, God meant one and not many. This one person is Jesus Christ the Lord in Whom the covenant finds its consummation. So, the way to peace and right relations with God, is the way of faith which Abraham took, and believers must take the same way.

So, the choice is ours : Shall we burden ourselves by trying to be right with God through the works of the law which we cannot keep anyway, or shall we better leave everything by faith to our Lord Jesus Christ who already did that on the cross?!

#### **5- The purpose of the Law 3:19-25**

William Barclay, in his book on Galatians, said “This is the most difficult passage, Paul ever wrote. It is so difficult that there is at least 300 different interpretations of it”.

Paul starts by saying that if the covenant cannot be changed, then why was the law given? Then he puts few points:

\*The law was put for the sake of transgression. Paul said in Romans 7:7 “I had not known sin, but by the law, for I had not known lust, except the law had said, thou shall not covet” Which means that sin was always there, but man could not recognize it as a sin till the law came. One cannot break the law, if there is no law. Man cannot be condemned of wrong doing, unless he is told before hand that this is wrong. **So, the function of the law is to define sin or wrong doing.**

So, the strength of the law is to define sin, but the weakness of the law is that it cannot cure sin. It is like a doctor who only diagnoses diseases but does not treat them.

The law in the Jewish understanding was not given directly to Moses. They believed then and probably till now, that God is so Holy and remote from human beings, that He could have not possibly given the law directly to Moses, but it was first given to the Angels then from the Angels to Moses (Acts 7:53 & Heb. 2:2).

So, compared with the covenant which was given directly from God to Abraham, the law is considered a second-hand thing which came through intermediaries.

Before we go any further, I disagree with this view, because if God does not deal directly with man, then how come that He talked directly to Abraham and gave him the covenant (promise)!!

Now, we come to the most difficult part: Paul says in v.20 "Now a mediator is not a mediator of one. But God is one" What does this mean?

Paul here is trying to explain that the law which was given through mediator can be broken by either parties and sure enough it was broken by man, but the covenant (promise) is given by one, and no one can break it except that one who is God in this case, and God does not break His promises.

So, the conclusion is that the covenant is superior to the law and the inferior cannot nullify or alter the superior.

Now, Grace is eternally given by God (one), and nothing can man do that can alter it. Man can break the mediated law and sin, but the Grace and love of God stand unaltered.

And so without argument, man can and should depend on the unchanging Grace and Love of God than on the mediated law which was broken anyway by man. Wow! What an argument!

And after all that, Paul asks "Is the law then against God's promise?" Then he answers "God forbids" meaning "**NO**", because if there has been a law that can give life, then definitely righteousness should have been by law. But this is not the case, because righteousness is by the unaltered Grace through faith. Again Paul is stressing the superiority of the promise.

But before this faith, we were kept under the law prisoners of sin which the law cannot heal, on the contrary feeding it, so man would recognize the need for a healer. Then once faith came, there is no need for the law anymore.

### **6- Sons and Slaves 3:26 - 4:11**

Baptism to the Jew was a ritual of acceptance to the Jewish faith and community (Family). And as a member, he is added to the brothers of that community.

And that is what Paul says here. We brothers in faith are God's children, exactly as the Jewish brothers were Abraham's children.

Then we come to a custom practiced in early Christianity, and I think till now in some Christian communities. The baptized person after emerging from the water puts on new white garments, symbolizing his or her new pure life. And Paul is saying here that Christ is this new pure life that the Christian should put on. And we all are putting Christ on, then we are all equal, no difference between free and slave, man or a woman, Jew or Gentile. This is specifically, because the Jewish man prays every morning a thanksgiving prayer saying: "**Thou have not made me a Gentile, a slave, or a woman**".

Then he concludes the passage by the fact that, if Christ has fulfilled the Promises of God to Abraham (In thy seed all nations shall be blessed), then as we put on Christ, we also inherit these promises, not by legalistic keeping of the law, but by the act of faith in God's Grace and Love.

There are two Challenging verses that I would like to discuss before we leave this Chapter : These are v. 27 & 28.

**v. 27 says** "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ" Those who believe that there is no salvation without Baptism, take this verse as a proof and support to their belief.

It seems to me that those people have forgotten that true Baptism is by Spirit or circumcision of the heart and not by water. Listen to the Scripture:

- \* Rom. 2:29 “And circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, and not in the Letter (The Law), whose praise is not of men, but of God.”
- \* Acts 2:4 “And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit.”
- \* Acts 2:17 “I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh.”
- \* Acts 19:1-6 “Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus : and finding certain disciples, he asked them have you received the Holy Spirit since you believed? And they said we have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Spirit. And he said, **unto what then you were baptized ?** And they said unto John’s baptism.....and when Paul laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them.

And in all honesty, I cannot see anything in this verse that supports their claim.

As for salvation, the Holy Scripture is full of verses that clearly indicate that salvation is by faith. Here are some of them:

- \* John 3:16 “ For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him Should not Perish, but have everlasting life.”
- \* John 3:18 “ He that believes on Him is not condemned.”
- \* John 10:9 “ I am the door, by Me if any man enters in, he shall be saved.”
- \* Acts 2:21 & Rom. 10:13 “Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord, shall be saved.”
- \* Acts 4:12 “ For there is no other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved.”
- \* Acts 15:11” But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be saved.”
- \* Acts 16:31” And they said, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved, and your house.”

**v. 28 says** “There is neither Jew nor Greek, no bond nor free, no male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

This verse is used frequently by those who attack the traditional social differences between sexes.

In my view, this verse does not negate the fact that God according to His wisdom and purpose, has arranged some racial, social, and sexual differences between the believers as well as the nonbelievers. On the contrary, it assures that there is no spiritual inequality in God’s sight. And this spiritual equality does not mean its unsuitability to the basics of sovereignty and submission appointed from God in the church, society, and home. And we should take an example of our Lord Jesus Christ Himself who, while He is equal to the Father in every respect, He took the Position of submission in His incarnation. See what the Scripture says: “Who (Jesus Christ), being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of

men. And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”

We are still discussing Sons & Slaves.

Paul in Chapter 4 is applying Legalism and social life to religion. All nations including Jews, had and still has, a certain age which is a distinctive line or mile stone in the life of the child, where he becomes an adult, (reliable and responsible for his actions), both in the eyes of the law and society.

To the Jews it was and still is age 13, or precisely the first Sabbath after the twelfth birth day. To us here is the age of 18 or 21. In the Roman and Greek era, it was ranging from 15 to 18. Anyway, before that line, the child had no legal power of his own no matter who or what he is. Even underage kings ruled under Guardianship. So, Paul is using this analogy, to tell the Galatian Christians (Jews or Gentile) who followed another teaching, that by doing that, they turned to their childhood under guardianship, after they once were adults in faith knowing The Lord Jesus Christ. And specifically, he is addressing the Jews, who by going back to the law and its rituals, they are going back to their childhood, where the law was appointed to them as their guardian, till the fullness of time came (the Lord Jesus Christ), where the guardianship of the law is lifted up, and then they became adults as he put it in Hebrews, needing to leave milk and to eat solid food.

So, what is the use of going back to rituals, observing days, months, years, festives, foods, and stars (for the pagans), except clinging to the past where you were slaves to these things under guardianship of the law, And here, Paul uses this analogy of slaves and under guardianship as of the same meaning, since the person (Child or adult) who is under guardianship, has no power of managing his own life, exactly as the slave who does what his master tells him and nothing else.

Paul also used the word “Heir”, because the Jews being Abraham’s children, they are entitled to inherit God’s promises to him which is the land of Canaan. We believers are also entitled to the Spiritual inheritance of God, because we are His children proved by the fact that we can call on Him Abba or Father.

And in v. 9, Paul marvels again about how could you turn away from the Grace of God and go back to the slavery of the law.

And in v. 11, he states that he is afraid that his labor in them may have been in vain.

#### **7- Appeal to enter into freedom from the law 4:12-20**

In this section, Paul changes his tone. In 3:1, he branded the Galatians as being fools, which seems to be very harsh. But we would be also fools if we did the same. Listen to what the Holy Scripture says in Heb. 2:3 “How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation.” There is no other way.

Here, Paul’s tone is much softer, and he appeals to the old bond between him and them. With strong expression of love, he beseeches that they become as he is. He asks them to do the same for him as he did for them, when he first preached the Gospel to them. He severed himself completely from all the requirements of the law. He lived among them (the law forbids that), he ate their food (the law forbids that), he did not observe days, months, years and all the other festive days (the law forbids that). So, he

asks them, now it is your turn to sever yourselves from the yolk of the law for me as I did for you.

Then, he reminds them of their kindness towards him. He says, you have done me no wrong. Probably he is referring to the beating and stoning he endured in Lystra (Acts 14:19,20). If this is the case, then Paul must have been in very bad shape when he arrived to Derbe (he was thought to be dead as per v.20)

Whether this is the infirmity, he is talking about in v.13 or something else, no body knows. Some say, he caught Malaria which was infesting that region. Others say it is his eyes caused by that extreme glare he experienced at his encounter with The Lord on his way to Damascus though very long before.

Anyhow, he says that they did not despise him or his Gospel because of that, instead they accepted him as an Angel from heavens, even as Christ the Son of God Himself.

Then in v. 15, comes the big question: That was your attitude then, where is it now? You would have even sacrificed your eyes for me!

Then in v.16, he says, now things have changed, you even consider me as an enemy, because you do not want to hear the truth.

Those who made you change, are not doing that out of love for you, but their actual purpose is to shut you out of the Grace of God, so that you follow their teaching and depend on them for your faith.

This zeal for you is not for the good. Zeal is praised if it is for the good, the thing which I found in you when I was with you. So let it be the same in my absence also.

Then in v. 19, Paul addresses them as his little children, an expression which was and I suppose still is very passionate and flattering. Don't' we all address our children sometimes as little devils or little pretty pussy cats!

Now, he says, you little children whom I love very much, for whom I endured lots of pains, even the pains of giving birth, so that you may picture The Lord Christ being crucified for all mankind.

Then in v.20, he says that he wishes to be with them now, that he may change the tone of this letter and show his real love and of course the love of Christ.

### **8- The Allegory of Sarah and Hagar 4:21-31**

You want to be under the law; then hear what the law says: Then he tells the story of the two elder children of Abraham. One (Ishmael) born by Hagar the bondwoman (maid servant) after the flesh, and the other (Isaac) by a free woman Sarah born by God's promise after the Spirit.

These two women represent two covenants: Sarah represents the covenant of God (referred to later as Spiritual). And Hagar represents the covenant of the law (referred to as flesh) which came from Sinai, the symbol of bondage, since Sinai where Hagar actually came from, was the region of supply of servants males or females. Plus Hagar in Arabic means stone which also points to mount Sinai being composed of stones.

The law is enforced in present Jerusalem, so, we can say it is the land of the law and rightly so till now. And the law came from Sinai, so the present Jerusalem represents mount Sinai, the Place of bondage. And sure the present Jerusalem is under siege of the law of bondage for it knows no other redemption than the law.

The children of God (the believers) are represented by Sarah, because they are the Children of the promise (born by the Spirit), looking forward to be in the Heavenly

Jerusalem Where they will be always with Christ. This, the free Spiritual Jerusalem not controlled by the law, but by the eternal Grace of God.

And in v. 27, Paul sites a quotation from Isaiah, which is about Zion's restoration after captivity, which says that Zion in captivity is barren and forsaken, like a woman separated from her husband with no children, but rejoices, because she will have more children, because she is not forsaken by the Lord.

This Paul applies to the relation between the present Jerusalem and the Heavenly one. And he sees the fulfillment of this prophesy in the gathering of believers from allover the world in Christ.

As the case with Isaac, so is the case with the believers, because both are born by the Sovereign Grace of God. So, one comes to the conclusion that leaving this Sovereign Grace by going back to the law, is a profanity to the Divine work of God.

And as Isaac (Born of the promise), was persecuted by Ishmael (Born of the flesh), so also the believers are persecuted by the nonbelievers.

But the Holy Scripture says "Cast the bondwoman and her son out, for the son of the bondwoman, shall not inherit with the son of the free woman (Who is born of the promise or Spirit). So, are we the believers, shall inherit the New Heavenly Jerusalem.

#### ***D) Personal Life of liberty and faith (5:1 - 6:10)***

##### **1- Exhortation to Freedom 5:1-12**

In this section, Paul is exhorting the Galatians to stay in the freedom given to them by the Grace of God. And here, he gives two options for salvation:

a- Accept it free by the Grace of God, and this is easy, just keep the faith in the Savior Lord Jesus Christ.

b- Go back to the law depending on your own deeds, and you will achieve nothing, since you put Jesus on the Shelf. You are fallen from the Grace!

Circumcised or not, it does not matter, because the only way for salvation or righteousness (which means to be right with God) is only through Jesus Christ.

You were O.K. Who have led you astray? Your persuasion to go back to the law was not by Christ, but by few Judaizers, and a small or little leaven, leavens the whole lump of dough.

Then he goes back to appeal to their intelligence, saying that he is confident in their way of thinking (how their mind works) and that he who troubles them shall be judged. Be logic; if I preach the law, then why I am persecuted?

You should sever yourselves from those who trouble you.

Before we leave this section, we should discuss the challenge of v. 4 which says "You are fallen from the Grace."

Some use this verse as an indication, that a true believer can loose his salvation. But, they are actually confusing the issue.

When we carefully look at the context here, we find that it is quite clear that he is simply saying: "if you choose the law over the faith, then you are out of the scope of God's Grace (or the field of God's Grace). Exactly like when you say out of the magnetic field,

you mean that the magnet has no effect on you.

Moreover, there can be no righteousness by the law. (See 2:16 & Rom. 3:20).

And if we look at their side of the argument, which implies that, a true believer, can loose his salvation. This is not true either because once saved, always saved; which means he who looses his salvation was not originally saved. **So, how can he loose something he originally did not have?!**

Please see also:

**Luke 8:13,14** “ They on the rock, are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy, and these have no root, who for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away . And that which fell among thorns, are those, who when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares, and riches, and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection.”

**1 John 2:19** “They went out from us. But they were not of us. For, if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us. But they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.”

## **2- Life by the Spirit, not by the flesh 5:13-26**

After manifesting a strong theological view, Paul, always put a practical summary that the ordinary person can understand and do.

He did the same here, as he also did in the Epistle to Romans.

Paul, so far, has declared that the law has gone, and now we are under Grace where all sins are forgiven. This to the untrue believer is a cart blanche to do whatever he likes. But actually, Paul did not stop here. He says the above is true, but the true believer has two obligations:-

### **a- An obligation towards God:**

If God loves us that much, then the love of Christ restrains us. We cannot soil or stain a life which God paid for, by His own life.

### **b- An obligation towards fellow men 5:13-26**

We are free, but that freedom is a freedom which loves its neighbor as itself. Christianity is the only true democracy, because everyone would think as much of his neighbor, as he does for himself.

Christian freedom is not a license to sin, but by the Grace of God, it compels us not to sin. Why ! Because of the indwelling Spirit of Christ in us. And you, who went back to the law, hear it yourselves from the law, because it says “Love thy neighbor as thy self”.

Then v. 16 says it all: “walk in the Spirit and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.” And of course, if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law anymore.

Then in v.19-21, Paul enumerates the works of the flesh.

Then in v.22-23, he enumerates the fruit of the Spirit.

And here, please observe that he says the **works** of the flesh, but as for the Spirit there is no works, there is **fruit**. Also please observe that works are plural, while fruit is singular.

And those who are Christ's have crucified the desires of the flesh, to live for and by the Spirit.

### **3- Call for mutual help 6:1-10**

A person can slip, even if he is a good or true Christian. Some true Christians, in trying to live a good Christian life, tend to judge others. They may be bleakly unsympathetic to others' problems or failures, especially if it is caused by not quite well observing a good Christian life.

But Paul says that if a man does make a slip, the real Christian duty, is to get him back on his feet. So, here we are not looking for punishment, but for help and cure. Correction is not thought of as a penalty, but as an amendment. Then, Paul goes on to rebuke conceit. And here one should not compare himself with others and feel good if he thinks he is better, but rather compare himself with what he might have been if he had done his best. Then there will never be any cause for conceit.

It fulfills Christ's law to help everyone who is up against a burden (sorrow, crisis, emergency or the like). On the other hand, there are some burdens, which we have to carry ourselves, and no one, no matter how kind and helpful, can carry it for us. But put it at the cross, and ask for His help and He will help.

The early Christian churches were truly sharing institutions in every respect. The book of acts, tells us they shared their meals, some sold their properties and brought it at the feet of the Apostles, they took care of the widows, they took care of each others' problems, and they prayed for their sick. So it is not strange that if a person is teaching you the eternal truths, that the least you can do, is to share with him the material things.

If a person allows his lower side of his nature to dominate him, then at the end, he can expect nothing but a harvest of troubles, and the opposite holds good, for sooner or later, every good thing will come up when allowing our upper side of our nature to dominate.

God surely can and does forgive sins. But no one even God himself can wipe out the consequence of sin. For example, if a man sins against his body, sooner or later, he will reap the consequences in ruined health even if he was forgiven. Like wise, he who sins against his loved ones, regardless of forgiveness, the waters will not run as smooth as it was before. Remember, the scars remain.

Origin, the early great Christian scholar, said "Although sin is forgiven by God, yet its marks remain." All this may look so gloomy, but it is a fact no one can deny. And remember that God in Deut. 5:9, said "I the Lord thy God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me."

So, the bottom line is that, we may sin and break the law of Christ and then we may be forgiven, but we must remember that it is not a rose garden; we break it at our own peril.

Then Paul, finishes the passage by saying that he who casts his bread upon the waters, it will return someday to him.

### ***E) Conclusion (6:11-18)***

v. 11 Here, Paul calls the recipients' attention to the large letters with which he is

writing. This can indicate several things:-

- 1- He may be indicating the importance of the Epistle.
- 2- He may be indicating the authenticity of the Epistle.
- 3- He may be indicating certain emphasis on the conclusion of the Epistle.
- 4- He may be indicating that his eye sight is bad.
- 5- He may be indicating how great the word or message of God is.

It is a well known biblical fact that Paul used to dictate his epistles to one of his aids who writes it, then Paul signs it at the end. For example, we know that the Epistle to Rome was written by Tertius and carried by Phoebe servant of the church of Cenckrea, and the one to Ephesus by Tychicus, and the one to Philippi by Epaphroditus, and the one to Colosse by Tychicus and Onesimus, and the one to Philemon by Onesimus.

It was not that Paul was not good at writing or his hand writing was distinguished by certain robustness and vigor as some suggested, but simply as I think, it was because he was in chains (he referred to his chains so often), which were made of metal and they were heavy, which certainly did not give him much of a free hand to write. (this solves Challenge #5).

- v. 12 Leads to a final sharp attack upon the Judaizers. He disparages not only their action, but also their motives. They are making a bid for the favor of the people who were mostly Jews, because probably they feared persecution. But actually it was the persecution of the cross that they feared. Why? Because the preaching of the cross speaks of the sufficiency of Christ's work and the uselessness of the law to grant salvation.
- v. 13 The real motive of these Judaizers Zealots is selfish pride. They want to boast of the fact that they brought Gentiles to Judaism. Their Egoistic effort is accomplished at the cost of others.
- v. 14 These Judaizers, their glory is in the flesh however religious it may seem to be. But Paul says that his glory is in the cross which to the Judaizers is an image of weakness and misery, but to him it is the power of God which crucifies the world for him. He has written the world off as a basis for glory and trust. And because he has learned to put all his hope and confidence in Christ, the world has nothing to charm him.  
Paul here is speaking of the cross as the only one and sufficient ground to build on. By the cross, the believer is saved, while by the law, man is condemned.
- v. 15 Circumcision does not serve anything, but what matters is to be a new creation (having a new life in the Holy Spirit), or regeneration. This new creation is a free gift, and in this we glorify God. For what counts is the circumcision of the heart (Rome 2:29).
- v. 16 This is the rule or standard by which things can be measured. It is the cross of Christ. It is the normal thing to walk by.  
Then he gives the benediction which speaks of peace (Jewish greeting "Shalom"). , and mercy or Grace (Greek greeting) of God which is a free gift granted in the body of Lord Jesus Christ

- And the word Israel here, designates the new Israel (the believers) who are the new people of God. (This solves Challenge #6 on page 5).
- v. 17 Then he appeals to the churches, not to give him any more trouble, because he bears the marks (sufferings, difficulties, persecution) of Jesus Christ, which practically every believer may suffer in a way or another because of his belief. A certain transfer of suffering from Christ to the believers takes place by virtue of the fellowship, the corporative, and federal oneness existing between them..
- v. 18 This is a closing blessing. There are no personal greetings or other personal particulars as the case in many or almost all of Paul's epistles. This attitude, perhaps helps to press the message home upon their conscience. Then he calls them brethren (which is what we are in Christ), wishing them the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, which signifies and emphasizes His Glory, His saving significance, and His Divine commission. This Grace to be with your spirit, Amen.

-----< *God Bless You All* >-----

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