



~THE BOOK OF GALATIANS, PART 2~
~AN OVERVIEW AND SURVEY~
~ROUTE 66~



Book: The Book of Galatians is a defense of the true Gospel of Jesus Christ and a challenge to legalists, individuals who add to the Good News or try to hinder people's walk by setting up manmade rules. Paul spends time refuting Judaizers, legalistic Jews, who were trying to bring believers under the OT Law.

Author: The author is Paul. That is rarely debated.

Let's first consider the internal evidence. **One**, the author claims to be Paul (**Gal. 1:1-2; Gal. 5:2**). **Two**, the character of the book is what we call "Pauline", seen in the writing style and theological vocabulary. **Three**, the content of the book is the style of Paul, stressing the grace of God and deliverance from the Law. **Four**, events discussed in Galatians tied with the history as found Acts shows it is Pauline (see **Acts 11-16 and Gal. 1-2**).

Now the external evidence. **One**, earliest MSS of the book have Paul's name. **Two**, citations from Galatians are found in writings of the Church Fathers. This includes Polycarp, Tertullian, Justin Martyr, and Irenaeus. **Three**, the Gnostic heretic Marcion, who put together an early canon of the Bible, considered Paul the author. **Four**, even critics who do not agree with the inspiration of Scripture do note that Paul wrote it.

Breaking Down Galatians – The Defense Of The True Gospel is seen in **1:1-2:21**. The next section is **Freedom From Legalism** in **3:1-4:31**. The last section is **Freedom To Love And Serve** in **5:1-6:18**.

1. Defense Of The True Gospel – Gal. 1:1-2:21 (A continuation from Part 1)

E) Gal. 2:11-21 includes Paul's confrontation with Peter because he refused to fellowship with Gentiles when some Jews were present. **Vs. 12** does not mean that these men were sent by James. They may have come from Jerusalem claiming to have been sent by the church or James or having his endorsement. A look at the Jerusalem Council in **Acts 15** shows that what they were teaching and doing was not what James and the others held to.

Peter's response and buckling under pressure is somewhat surprising since in **Acts 10** God specifically gave him a mission to go to the Gentiles. He did not do this all at once. He gradually withdrew from the Gentiles to eat with the Jews out of fear (**vs. 12**). Even Barnabas got caught up in the situation (**vs. 13**).

Vs. 17 might be a little hard to understand. The **Life Application New Testament Commentary** has a good note on this verse,

“In this verse, Paul responds to one objection that might be raised by his opponents. They might say, What if we seek to be made right with God through faith in Christ and then find out that we are still sinners? Has Christ led us into sin? How could Paul claim that

justification by faith is effective when Christians still sin? To say that the law doesn't matter is to say that standards and morality don't matter. This leaves the door open for people to become believers and then live any way they choose.

But Paul's reply is vehement: Of course not! Sin does not result because people are justified; Christ is not responsible for promoting sin. Obviously, those who have been justified—Christians—can and do sin, for that, unfortunately, is part of our human nature (Paul details his own struggle with sin in Romans 7). But the sin led to the need for justification, not the other way around.

The Judaizers saw Christianity as an excuse to get out from under Jewish law. But Paul (and the Jewish Christians who had experienced justification) knew that while offering freedom from the restrictive law, justification by faith demanded lifestyle and behavioral changes. When God truly gets hold of a life, nothing can remain the same. Grace does not abolish the law with its standards and morality; rather, it moves it from an external standard impossible to keep to an inner motivation for living a pure and God-honoring life.”

Paul's point is that we are not justified by faith because of what we do (vss. 16-19). Vss. 20-21 remind us that we have been crucified with Christ and the life we now live we live through faith in God's Son. Christ lives through us because He lives in us. Our old life is crucified in Christ and we now live a new life under the guidance of Christ.

2. Freedom From Legalism – Gal. 3:1-4:31

A) Gal. 3:1-9 is a reminder from Paul that we receive the Holy Spirit by faith, not by keeping the law. He points out that Abraham was justified by faith and not by the law (vss. 6-9) so in the area of faith we also, the church, are sons of Abraham.

B) In Gal. 3:10-14 Paul makes it clear again that no one is justified by keeping the works of the law. We are justified by faith. We are under condemnation if we are trying to be justified by the law because the law demands complete obedience. Jesus died to free us from the law (vs. 13), taking our place on the cross.

C) In Gal. 3:15-18 Paul shows how the promise of faith which comes through Christ was made to Abraham 430 years before the giving of the law. The 400 plus years was how long Israel was in Egypt but God's original promise to Abraham in Gen. 12:3 was over 600 years before the giving of the law.

Paul continues his explanation that the law cannot justify anyone (vss. 19-29). The law condemns, it cannot give life. We are made children of God through faith in Christ, spiritually baptized in Him and all share the same blessings (vss. 26-29).

Some would challenge Paul by asking what the law was good for. Note the following regarding Gal. 3:19,

“What, then, was the purpose of the Law? Why *was* a change made at Sinai? Paul answered by declaring the purpose and character of the Law. First, it was given because of transgressions, that is, the Law was given to be a means for checking sins. It served as a restrainer of sins by showing them to be transgressions of God's Law which would incur His wrath (cf. 1 Tim. 1:8-11). Second, the Law was temporary and served until the Seed (the Messiah; cf. Gal. 3:16) came, after which it was no longer needed. Third, the Law was inferior because of the manner of its bestowal. While God made promises to Abraham directly, the Law was established by a mediator. There were in fact two mediators, the angels representing God, and Moses representing the people.” – The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures by Dallas Seminary Faculty.

D) Gal. 4:1-7 continues Paul’s previous thoughts in **Gal. 3**. Paul reminds us that until someone came of age they had a “guardian.” He carries that over to the fact that we had no real rights, spiritually, until Christ came (**vss. 1-4**). To help understand Paul’s meaning here, note the following from the **Life Application New Testament Commentary**,

“To further illustrate the spiritual immaturity of those who insist on remaining under the law, Paul used an example from Roman law and custom. In ancient times, the “coming of age” of a son carried tremendous significance. This did not occur at a specific age (such as twelve or thirteen), as it did among Jews and Greeks; rather, the “coming of age” was determined by the father. In Rome this event was usually marked on March 17 by a family celebration known as the *Liberalia*. During this event, the father formally acknowledged his son and heir. The son received a new “grown-up” toga and entered into adult responsibilities.

Paul pointed out, however, that while the young children and heirs are still minors (not yet of age), they are not much better off than slaves until they grow up. Although they are the future owners of an estate and a fortune, while they are young, they have no claim to it nor any right to make decisions regarding it. In the eyes of the Roman law, the young heirs were no different than slaves. Paul’s application of the illustration reveals that when we were under the law, we were no better off than slaves.”

Christ redeems us from the law (**vs. 5**) and adopts us (we are never unadopted), we receive the Holy Spirit (**vs. 6**) and we are not slaves to sin or the law, but we are sons of God and heirs of His (**vs. 7**).

We must keep in mind that the Galatians were for the most part Gentiles. Thus understanding **vs. 3** might seem a little difficult. One author writes,

“The scope of that slavery was described as being under the basic principles (*stoicheia*, "elements") of the world. Though often interpreted as a reference to the Mosaic Law, this view does not fit the Galatians, most of whom were Gentile pagans before conversion and were never under the Law. It seems better to understand the "basic principles" to refer to the elementary stages of religious experience, whether of Jews under the Law or Gentiles in bondage to heathen religions (cf. "weak and miserable principles" in v. 9, and "basic principles of this world" in Col. 2:20) Thus all were enslaved until Christ emancipated

them.” – **The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures by Dallas Seminary Faculty.**

E) Gal. 4:6-20 shows Paul’s concern for the Galatian church. **Vss. 8-11** shows that some within the church were drifting back to pagan and OT practices. They were forgetting grace.

Paul encourages the church to consider the relationship he had with them and that he would not preach anything but the truth and that he was “perplexed” that they were getting caught up in legalism (**vss. 12-20**). The false teachers wanted to gain favor with the people and alienate them from Paul, and thus from the truth of Christ.

F) Gal. 4:21-31 is Paul’s example of law and grace. Paul explains that they are incompatible and that we as followers of Christ are children of the promise, the promise given through Isaac. The law enslaves (**vs. 24**) but we are free in Christ.

H.L. Willmington summarizes this text well,

“Hagar and Sarah, law and grace. Paul presented Hagar and Sarah, with their sons Ishmael and Isaac, as types of the contrast between the bondage of legalism and the liberty of grace. Hagar, like those who depend on the law, was a slave; and her son, who was naturally born, was also a slave. Sarah, like those who depend on grace, was free; and her son, whose birth was miraculous, was Abraham's heir (Galatians 4:21-27; see Genesis 16:1-18:15; Genesis 21:1-21).

Christians, like Isaac, are the true heirs of God's promise to Abraham (Galatians 4:28, 31). Just as Sarah asked Abraham to "get rid of that servant," Christians should have no desire to be in bondage to the law (Galatians 4:30; see Genesis 21:10). Just as Ishmael persecuted Isaac, the Judaizers were persecuting Paul (Galatians 4:29; see Genesis 21:8-9).”

– Willmington's Bible Handbook.