

GALATIANS

3rd Edition – August 2008

		Page
Lesson 1	An outline of the book	1
Lesson 2	The story of Paul's Gospel	4
Lesson 3	The heart of the Christian message – Part 1 Justified by faith!	7
Lesson 4	The heart of the Christian message – Part 2 The life of Jesus in us	10
Lesson 5	Law and Faith in the Old Testament	13
Lesson 6	The end of Law and Slavery The beginning of Faith and Freedom	16
Lesson 7	Freedom	19
Lesson 8	Conclusion	24

Author:

Jack Krayenhoff, M.D.

SBCI, P.O. Box 324, Hillcrest 3650, South Africa
E-mail: sbci@absamail.co.za Tel. 031-7660284 Fax. 031-7660449

An outline of the book – Galatians 1:1-10

Lesson 1

A. Introduction

1. The one great message of Galatians is that we cannot EARN the riches of Heaven. They are ours completely and exclusively by God's grace, and are received by faith.
2. **GRACE** is what motivates God to give us everything we need, not because we deserve it, but because He loves us.

Illustration: A mother will never let her child starve, even if he misbehaves. Her mother-love is so strong that she will feed him even though he has not deserved her kindness.

3. **FAITH** is the confidence we have in God that He will give us what we need, not because we deserve it, but because He loves us and has promised to do it. Faith enables us to receive God's blessings even before we actually see them.

Illustration: A boy needs a bicycle to get to school, which is far away. His father says he will buy him one next week. The boy is delighted, and thanks his father. He knows his father always does what he promises; therefore, as far as the boy is concerned, the bicycle is already his. (If the boy was not sure his father was so reliable, he would have waited to thank him when he actually saw the bicycle.)

4. The devil wants to spoil our trust in God's father-love for us. Just as he did in the Garden of Eden, he whispers in our ear that God is not entirely trustworthy. Genesis 3:1-5.
5. His favourite strategy is to tell us that God's grace has limits, and that we are such sinners that we no longer deserve God's blessings. He says we have to behave better, or do something to earn God's blessing again.
6. This idea, which is a lie, is called **LEGALISM**. It teaches that God's grace is not enough to save us, but that we have to do things to earn His favour. This idea was being taught in the church Paul had founded in Galatia (a region in what is now called Turkey). Because this teaching was so dangerous (and it is just as dangerous today!), Paul wrote this letter to warn the Galatian believers against it.

B. Sender and address – Galatians 1:1-3

1. Paul reminds his readers that he is an apostle – he has been delegated by none other than Jesus Christ Himself to bring the Gospel to the Gentiles.
2. Therefore, what he is saying has divine authority behind it. It would be very foolish to disagree with it, or ignore it.

C. The Gospel in a nutshell – Galatians 1:4

1. Jesus gave Himself for our sins.

- a) God is just, so He could not let sin go unpunished. Romans 3:25.
- b) The punishment for sin is death. Romans 6:23.
- c) But God loved us so much that He could not bear to see us die.
- d) So, in the person of Jesus, He undertook to be punished in our place. Romans 8:32.

(**Note:** This sacrifice completely eliminated the guilt of our sin, and the need to punish us. We cannot possibly add anything to it, to be more deserving of God's grace. If anyone tried to do that anyway, for instance by submitting to circumcision, it would show that he did not trust Jesus for having taken his sins away. This is very serious, for if we lack faith, God's grace can no longer reach us. All this will be explained in chapter 5.)

2. To deliver us from this present evil age.

- a) The age we live in is evil, corrupted by sin. Its king is Satan, the ruler of this world. John 12:31.
- b) This present evil age (and its ruler) will be judged, and replaced by "the age to come" (Matthew 12:32; 13:40-43). That age, or world, will be free from sin, sickness and death (Romans 8:20-22). It is also known as the Kingdom of God, or the Kingdom of Heaven.
- c) Because Jesus has already paid the price for our sin, we are no longer condemned to live with its consequences. He has delivered us from the power of Satan.
- d) By faith, we can already now escape from this evil age and its ruler, by accepting instead the rule of Jesus, the King in the Kingdom of Heaven.

D. Accursed! – Galatians 1:6-9

1. There is only one Gospel message – the one briefly outlined in Galatians 1:4.
2. This is the heart of the Christian faith. It must not be changed in any way.
3. If anyone does try to alter it, add to it or take away from it, he will be judged very severely: he is accursed!

E. Man-pleaser or God-pleaser? – Galatians 1:10-11

1. Some preachers preach what their audiences want to hear. This will bring them success: quite likely the church will grow!

2. But when we are true servants of Christ, we dare not preach anything but the true Gospel - whether this will make us popular with the people or not.
3. On the stage of our lives, to which audience do we play: man or God? Whose approval are we working for? If our first concern is to please people, we cannot please God.

Memory verse

Galatians 1:10b, *"If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ"*.

Teachers Notes

1. "Apostle".

The Greek word "apostolos" means a person who has been delegated to act on behalf of someone else. He has a job to do for someone else, and he has been authorized to do it by that person. This is clearly seen in Matt.10:1-5, where Jesus sends out His twelve DISCIPLES on a mission, and gives them power and authority for the job. That made them APOSTLES.

"The twelve" were not the only apostles, however. In Rom.16:7 Andronicus and Junias are mentioned as apostles, and of course Paul himself was delegated and empowered as an apostle to the Gentiles. There is no reason why the Lord could not send out apostles today.

2. **"The present evil age"**. What follows, is a helpful illustration of the Fall; the present evil age; and the final redemption of believers and defeat of Satan when Christ returns, when the Kingdom of God will be fully revealed. It also shows the first coming of Christ and His death, whereby He cancelled the effects of sin, and enabled men to become citizens of the Kingdom of God now, even though the full redemption of their bodies has to wait for Christ's return.

The Story of Paul's Gospel – Galatians 1:11 - 2:14

Lesson 2

A. An unlikely prospect becomes a gospel preacher – Galatians 1:11-16

1. Paul was, at one time, violently opposed to the church of Christ.
2. But God had other ideas. He is sovereign – He carries out His plans no matter how unlikely these may seem to man.
3. In His grace, He caused Paul to have an encounter with the living, risen Jesus (also see Acts 22:6-10), who called Paul to take His message to the Gentiles.
4. Man can only see what is humanly probable and possible.
5. But God is the God of the improbable and the impossible. He is the great unknown factor in human affairs, and greater than the factors man can discern and reckon with.
6. What is more: God's actions are always motivated by love and grace.

Illustration: A recently hatched little bird fell out of its nest onto the ground. A man who loved animals picked it up. Naturally the parent-birds were frantic and tried to attack the man, being unable to recognize his good intentions, and seeing him as a threat. But the man went home with the young bird, carefully nursed and fed it, and when it was old enough to fly, he set it free.

In the same way, God's thoughts are higher than our thoughts (Isaiah 55:8-9). In His wisdom and love, He often carries out His plans for us in ways that we cannot understand at the time.

7. When we are in a situation that seems altogether bad and humanly hopeless, we can remember that God is still greater than the circumstances; that He loves us; and that we can trust Him to bring good out of them – even though we cannot see how He could do it. He is sovereign and He loves us – that is enough.

B. Paul's message: directly from the Lord – Galatians 1:16-24

1. After his conversion, Paul did not speak to the church leaders in Jerusalem, but instead spent time in Arabia (verses 16-17). (It seems likely that he used that time to search the Scriptures to understand how the Gospel of grace fitted in with the Old Testament. This is explained in chapters 3 and 4.)
2. Only three years later did he have some contact with Peter and James, but not with the rest of the Jerusalem Church headquarters (verses 18-20).
3. He then preached the Gospel in Gentile territory and, although he had not been taught by the church leaders, the churches in Judea were delighted by what he did (verses

20-24).

4. All this shows that Paul's version of the Gospel, having come directly from Jesus, and approved by Peter and James, was the true Gospel and the only Gospel.

C. The Jerusalem Conference – Galatians 2:1-10

For a fuller description of this event, read Acts15:1-21.

1. The reason Paul went to Jerusalem was to settle the question of circumcision. Acts 15:1-2.
2. The believers in Jerusalem were Jews who all their lives had tried to obey the Law of Moses. Though they had now received Jesus as their Messiah, they understood Him to be Lord and Saviour of the JEWS. Therefore, if a Gentile wanted to be saved, he had to become a Jew first.
3. Just as today a Christian confirms his faith by submitting to baptism, and is thereby made part of the church (1 Corinthians 12:13), so in those days a man sealed his decision to become a Jew by submitting to circumcision, and was thereby received into the Jewish community.
4. Once a man became a Jew, he was expected to be subject to the Law of Moses.
5. Jewish "missionaries" therefore travelled to Antioch (Acts15:1), where Paul's church was, to tell the Gentile believers that they needed to be circumcised (and submit to the Law of Moses).
6. But Paul saw that grace and faith were all that was needed to be right with God, and that Christians were therefore freed from the need to keep the law in order to find salvation.
7. To submit to circumcision was to submit to the law and thereby to bondage again.
8. Therefore Paul, absolutely without compromise, resisted the pressure on the Gentile believers to be circumcised. He and Barnabas were delegated to go to Jerusalem to settle this point with the church leadership (Acts15:2).
9. At the conference he was supported by Peter, who recalled his experience with Cornelius (Acts15:7-11, Acts10), and concluded that salvation was indeed by grace alone, and not by keeping the law.
10. The outcome of the conference was that Paul was judged right, and he was commissioned to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles without insisting on circumcision.
11. This was an extremely important decision. If Paul had given in to the pressures placed on him, the Gospel as we now know it would not have spread all over the world. You and I would still be in darkness.

12. If Paul had compromised he would have saved himself a great deal of trouble because it was always the Jews, in any place where he preached the Gospel, who started trouble for him (Acts13:45, 50; Acts14:19).
13. But Paul was a devoted servant of Christ. He had received his orders, and he was willing to take any risks in carrying them out.
14. Because of his courage and devotion to his Master, when he came to the end of his life, he was sure of his reward! (2 Timothy 4:6-8). What an incentive to obey and to persevere!

Teachers' Notes

Though the Jerusalem conference agreed that Paul did not have to make the Gentiles submit to circumcision, it was still a compromise solution which left a little legalism intact: new believers were to stay away from the meat of strangled animals and from blood. Even this little requirement strengthened the position of the law-party or "Judaizers" to such an extent that even Peter was later afraid of them (see lesson 3). This illustrates how extremely careful we must be to stay away from every suggestion of legalism.

The heart of the Christian message – Part 1. Justified by Faith! – Galatians 2:11-16

Lesson 3

A. An Historic Controversy – Galatians 2:11-13

1. The Law of Moses contained many regulations about food (see Leviticus 11). Disregarding them would make a Jew unclean.
2. Gentiles did not have these restrictions, and therefore Jews felt they would become unclean if they ate at the same table with Gentiles (Leviticus 20:26).
3. Peter had been shown in a vision, and then in his experience with Cornelius, that God had set this separation aside, and considers everyone clean who has faith in Christ. Acts 10:28.
4. In fact, as we saw in lesson 2, Peter had supported Paul at the Jerusalem conference.
5. But in spite of that, an influential group of believers in Jerusalem still believed one first had to become a Jew in order to receive Jesus as Messiah and Lord.
6. In Antioch, Peter had been eating with Gentile believers, as God had shown him he should.
7. But when a group of Jerusalem believers arrived in Antioch, he was so afraid of losing their approval that he stopped eating with the Gentile believers.
8. Paul challenged Peter about this to his face, in public.
9. Consider this sad picture: Peter, the foremost of the original twelve disciples, the earthly founder of the Church, gloriously baptized in the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, and then courageously defying the powerful Jewish leaders (Acts 4:19), has now, just a few years later, slipped away from God's grace, and fears men more than God – just as he did when he denied Jesus three times.
10. If this can happen to a great man of faith like Peter, how careful we must be to please God first, and not men. How we must depend on His Spirit to keep us in the fear of God from day to day and from moment to moment!

B. Justified through faith – Galatians 2:15-18

1. Every man will be judged by God, according to his deeds (Romans 2:6), and even according to his secret intentions (1 Corinthians 4:5).
2. No human being has a perfect record. We all fall short of God's standard (Romans 3:23). Even if we sinned only once in our life, the verdict would still be

"guilty" (of that sin).

Illustration: Let us compare God's standard of moral perfection with a treasure, and the Bible as the book of directions on how to find it. If we followed every instruction and clue faithfully, we would arrive at perfection. However, if we missed only one, we would also miss the treasure. It would be unimportant how many clues we missed: in all cases, we would not find the treasure.

3. That "guilty" verdict cannot be removed, no matter how many other things we do that are good.
4. Justice requires that sin is punished. God would not be just if He did nothing about sin.
5. The punishment for sin is death. Romans 6:23.
6. This death has two aspects:
 - a) Physical: In this present evil age death comes to all of us.
 - b) Spiritual: Knowing the peace, the joy and the love of God is real living; being cut off from God means futility, chaos and loneliness. That is spiritual death.
7. But God loved us so much that He could not bear the separation that sin had created between Himself and us. He wanted us back in His embrace of love.
8. To achieve this, He first had to satisfy divine justice. This He did by identifying Himself, in the person of Jesus, with sinful mankind. Jesus gathered all of mankind up into Himself. He became, so to speak, sinful humanity.
9. That way, acting as our representative, He made Himself responsible for the sin of all mankind, and offered Himself up to be punished for it.
10. So, on the Cross, He died in our place. He died physically, and also spiritually, when He cried out: "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Mark 15:34.
11. That way, justice was done. Both the guilt and the penalty of sin were dealt with. The accusations against us were wiped out. We are now declared "NOT GUILTY" of sin. We are JUSTIFIED.
12. All that remains is for us to accept this offer of forgiveness, and return to God's arms of love like the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-24).
13. This confidence in the effectiveness of Jesus' sacrifice, and the acceptance of God's offer of reconciliation, is called FAITH. We are now "justified by faith".

Memory verse

Galatians 2:16, *"...know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified".*

Teachers' Notes

This passage could be seen as the foundation of the Protestant Reformation. Martin Luther being a monk was greatly distressed because he found himself full of sinful impulses. He could not get rid of them, no matter how he tried, even though he punished and humbled himself to atone for them. This caused him great anguish, because he realized that his sinful nature was absolutely unacceptable to God.

Then he read Galatians, and he saw that his standing before God did not depend on the goodness of his actions or thoughts, but on the perfect sacrifice of Jesus. He needed only to accept it in faith. When that realization dawned on him, a great light went on in his soul, as he was set free from the condemnation of always failing to live up to God's standard. He published his discovery, and the Reformation was started.

This is also the central teaching of Galatians, and Paul defends it with all his might. If a Christian leader teaches that anything besides faith is required to be acceptable to God, he is saying that Jesus' sacrifice was insufficient. This is to cut out the heart of the Christian faith. A man who teaches that is accursed ("anathema" in Greek).

The heart of the Christian message – Part 2. The Life of Jesus in us – Galatians 2:17-21

Lesson 4

A. Dead to the Law, alive to God – Galatians 2:19

1. The law had condemned Paul as a sinner, and the sentence was death. It was Jesus who had undergone the sentence in Paul's place. Therefore Paul accepted Jesus' death as being, in fact, his own.
2. The man crucified on that cross was the Paul who had tried so hard to please God by keeping the law, and who had persecuted the church.
3. Now this sinful Paul was executed, and the law had no further claims on him. The law was finished with Paul, and Paul was finished with the law.
4. He was finished with the law which had always condemned him, even while he was trying so hard to obey it.
5. But now that his sin, condemnation, and penalty were out of the way, the road to God was open and a new life began for him: a life of full enjoyment of the love of God.

Illustration: A girl had two young men that wanted to marry her. One was a bad man, and the other good. Nevertheless, the bad man managed to charm her and she started to go out with him. By and by his evil character began to show, and she became very unhappy. However, she was unable to break with him, because he had acquired power over her.

Then the other suitor came back into her life, as he still loved her. He offered to forgive and forget her affair with the bad man, and to marry her. This set her free to cut off the old relationship, and from then on the bad suitor no longer had power over her. As far as her affections were concerned he was dead, and she was dead to his efforts to win her back. Instead, she was alive to her new fiancé; his love drew all her affections toward him.

B. Christ lives in me – Galatians 2:20

1. What enabled Jesus to go to the cross was His love for us, which was so strong that He totally identified with us, and took on the suffering that should have been ours.

Illustration: We identify with persons we love or trust very much. What happens to one happens to the other, so to speak. If a parent sees a vicious dog attacking his child, he considers it an attack on himself, and throws himself on the dog even if he gets injured while doing it. The process of losing one's identity into that of another is also seen in dangerous situations, when we put our lives into the hands of a trusted guide or leader. In such a case, the life of the follower is totally bound up with the one that leads. Taking on the identity of another is especially symbolized in marriage, when

the woman takes on the name of the man who loves her. It says that now she is his; that they are one.

In fact, in Ephesians 5:31-32 Paul uses marriage as an illustration of the oneness of Christ and the Church.

2. Paul had recognized that it was Jesus' love for him that had motivated his Master to give up His life. He had accepted this act of love, and in response, given his life to Jesus. They were united for all eternity.
3. Loving Jesus meant opening his life fully to Him, allowing Jesus to be Master, to take possession. Jesus now lived in him.
4. To make room for Him, Paul had to let go of his old life. As far as he was concerned, that old life was crucified, dead and buried.

C. I live by faith in the Son of God – Galatians 2:20

1. We have seen that Paul's first discovery was that God had declared him "not guilty" (justified him), not on the basis of his own efforts, but on the basis of Jesus' sacrifice. Paul's acceptance of that reality was FAITH.
2. Paul's faith made Jesus' sacrifice effective for him, because it reconciled him to God.
3. Now Paul goes further: not only does he accept Jesus' death as his own; he also takes Jesus' LIFE as his own. He says: "Jesus is forever linked with me. His life, His vision, His resources I have taken as my own. In my house He is the master". Paul's acceptance of this reality is also FAITH.
4. That faith makes the presence of Jesus' life in his own an effective reality. It enables the Spirit of Jesus to do a mighty work through Paul. (More about this in lesson 5).

D. Who loved me and gave Himself for me – Galatians 2:20

1. Perhaps Paul's faith in the presence and power of the life of Jesus in him wavered occasionally, as it does with most Christians.
2. Then he could reassure himself with this thought: his Master's love for him was so incredibly strong, that He had sacrificed His life for Paul.
3. Such a love would never leave him or forsake him. Such a love would be his strength and resource in the worst of circumstances: in persecution, in jail, and even in death.

Memory verse

Galatians 2:20, *"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me"*.

Teachers' Notes

- 1.** Note that it is faith that makes justification effective for us, but also faith that makes the life of Christ in us a reality. We exercised faith for the first time when we trusted Jesus as our Saviour, to save us from hell, but we are also to exercise faith day by day in the reality of Jesus' life in us.
- 2.** While faith makes spiritual blessings EFFECTIVE for us, it does not cause them. Some people think of faith as a creative power within us. This is a great mistake. The power is always God's. All faith can do is receive them. Therefore, when we lack faith, we must not try to somehow pump it up or make it stronger ourselves. Our faith is in God, not in faith. What we must do instead is to focus on the power of God, and His promise that we can use it in Jesus' name. As the Spirit impresses this on us, our faith increases.
- 3.** "Christ lives in me". This was explained in the above by saying that Christ identifies with us. This is true, but it must be stressed that this is not just an idea, but an experienced reality. The Holy Spirit makes the presence of Christ in the believer a living fact: Christ acts in and through the believer to heal, to prophecy, and to produce in the believer the fruit of the Spirit.

Law and Faith in the Old Testament – Galatians 3

Lesson 5

A. Spirit and Faith – Galatians 3:1-5

1. When the Galatians believed the Gospel, they received the Holy Spirit.
2. It was a tremendous experience for them. Miracles happened. They could not possibly have forgotten it.
3. The Holy Spirit came because they believed, not because they had earned Him by keeping the law.

B. Faith in the case of Abraham – Galatians 3:6-9

1. The Jewish nation began with Abraham. Did God bless Abraham because he kept the law? If that were the case, it would be hard to understand why God would change His plans and now start blessing people because of their faith.
2. But, in fact, God did bless Abraham because of his faith. God counted his faith as righteousness. Genesis 15:6.
3. This blessing, this grace, was also pronounced over Abraham's descendants. Because it was based on faith, it would rest on Abraham's SPIRITUAL descendants; that is, people of faith – not necessarily on his physical descendants, the Jews.

C. The Law is a curse – Galatians 3:10-14

1. The Old Testament itself says we cannot expect life from the law, because it places a curse on all who do not keep it perfectly. Deuteronomy 27:26.
2. But Jesus, in our place, took upon Himself this curse of the law and so freed us from it.
3. So, as we put our faith in Him, Jesus becomes the channel through which God's blessings on Abraham's descendants reach us.

D. Grace and promise were before the Law – Galatians 3:15-18

1. God's promise to Abraham was like a will or testament.
2. This testament could not be changed.
3. Therefore, it could not be changed by the law, which came 430 years later.

E. The purpose of the Law – Galatians 3:19-29

1. The law cannot make man righteous (morally perfect). In fact, it was not intended for that.
2. Its purpose was not to free man from his sin, but to point it out to him. It was not to save him, but to show him his need of salvation (verses 21-22).
3. The law was like a guardian: someone in control over us, but not our real father; the owner of great wealth.
4. God, our real Father, wanted us to receive His wealth, but not via this guardian (the law) but via Jesus, as our representative.
5. In other words: God's design was that we should receive what He had promised, not by keeping the law, but by faith.
6. The guardian, the law, was in control until Jesus came. Jesus revealed that faith was the way to God and His promise: grace, blessing, justification and righteousness (verses 23-24).
7. Once we belong to Christ by faith we are all children of God, with full access to His blessings.
8. Then, as Christians, it no longer makes any difference if we are Jew or Gentile, because the law has no power to save. Jews are no longer privileged over Greeks and other Gentiles.
9. Among Christians, other group distinctions likewise disappear: free men do not count for more than slaves; men are not superior to women

Memory verse

Galatians 3:6 "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness".

Teachers' Notes

1. To understand the believer's link with Jesus, it helps to look at 1 Corinthians 15:45-50, where Jesus is called "the last Adam".

We can understand what it means for us to "be in Adam" (1 Corinthians 15:22). Adam passed on his genes to his children, and so on, until they reached us. Adam's sin had contaminated his genes, so we are sinful like Adam. What happened to Adam in Eden, happened to us. He was cut off from God and, with him, we were cut off from God. He died – we die.

But now, as we receive Christ, we receive a new forefather. Through the Spirit, we are born again (the Greek word can also be translated: "begotten again"). We have a new set of genes that is sin-free. Christ has eternal life – we have eternal life. Christ has a resurrection body – so we will have a resurrection body. What Christ is, we are (or will be).

2. "In Christ there is neither male nor female". Nowadays, this is sometimes used to teach that there should be no difference in the way men and women function in the church.

The context of this verse (Galatians 3:27-29) is that, as far as our **STANDING** before God is concerned, Jews have no advantage over Greeks, and neither have men over women. But this is not the same as to say that men and women have the same **FUNCTION**. That their functions differ in marriage, for instance, is clear from Ephesians 5:21-33: the husband is the head of the wife. This could influence their functioning in church.

That value and function are not the same, is illustrated by the Godhead. Jesus is fully God, wholly worthy of our worship and adoration, but this does not change the fact that Jesus obeys the Father.

The End of Law and Slavery

The Beginning of Faith and Freedom – Galatians 4

Lesson 6

A. Sons, not slaves! – Galatians 4:1-11

1. Before their conversion, the Galatians were engaged in spirit-worship. These spirits, worshipped in the form of stars and other celestial bodies and their movements, could not save or free their souls (verses 3, 8, 9). Their worship was therefore spiritual bondage (verse 8).
2. This bondage, like the bondage of the law (Lesson 5, E3) kept them from receiving the freedom which God wants His children to have.
3. Jesus was sent to give them their freedom from slavery, and instead make them sons of God (verse 4-5).
4. When we are God's sons, we know it in our heart, because the Spirit of Jesus now lives there, and cries out to God as Father. The Galatians themselves had experienced that! (verse 6).
5. And now they wanted to start observing Jewish feasts, based on the movements of celestial bodies, just as in their own former religion. It was going back into slavery!
6. Today it is also easy to make Christians feel that their standing with God depends on how faithfully they carry out the expectations that the church places on them, like attending services, bringing Bibles along to church, women wearing head covering, etc. Even witnessing and tithing and other good things can be presented in a legalistic way. All these things have their value, but God's love and grace towards us does not depend on them.

B. Remember when you first became Christians? – Galatians 4:12-20

1. Paul reminds the Galatians how he brought them the Gospel, and with how much love they responded to him (verses 14-15).
2. They accepted and loved him even though he had a disagreeable health problem that made it impossible for him to travel (verse 13).
3. But now they seemed to have forgotten all that, and treated him like an enemy (verse 16).
4. The false teachers had won them over with flattery; not for their good, but because they, the teachers themselves, wanted the flattery of getting followers (verse 17).
5. Paul is deeply hurt by this. All his work, the whole wonderful experience of their conversion, seems to be lost.

6. But he cannot forget them, he loves them still: they are his spiritual children. So he labours over them in prayer, as a woman has to go through labour to have a child (verse 19).
7. The stupidity and ingratitude of those Galatians! Nothing would have been more natural for Paul than to give up on them. He had done all he could, God had blessed them abundantly – if they chose to forget all that, what more could anyone do?

But he could not cast them off. He was their spiritual father. He loved them in spite of the way they were treating him. He could not help but still agonize for them in prayer! If Paul felt that way about his straying children, how much more will our Saviour remain faithful to us when we get ourselves into trouble!

C. Isaac and Ishmael – Galatians 4:21-31

Paul now uses the story of Abraham's two sons, Isaac and Ishmael, as an allegory.

1.
 - a) Isaac was born on the basis of God's promise, which Abraham had received in the faith that God would fulfil it.
 - b) Isaac was born of Sarah, a free woman. She represents the Covenant of grace and faith.
 - c) Christians, being free from the law and being children of faith, are the spiritual descendants of Isaac.
 - d) We are the Church, the heavenly Jerusalem.
2.
 - a) Ishmael was born of the flesh: at Sarah's urging, Abraham did not wait for God to fulfil His promise, and so he had a son by Hagar.
 - b) Hagar was a slave. She represents the Covenant of law, given at Mount Sinai.
 - c) Ishmael, her son, was born of purely human action, and as a slave. His spiritual children are the Jews, who likewise depend on human effort in keeping the law, and so are in bondage, enslaved.
 - d) The earthly Jerusalem is the headquarters of the Jewish religion.
3. So the story of Isaac and Ishmael tells us that Christians do not in any way rely on the law to bring them the blessings that God promised to Abraham's offspring. They simply rely on God to be as good as His word, as Abraham did.



Memory verse

Galatians 4:6, *"And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!'"*

Teachers' Notes

1. People like to guess what Paul's sickness was. All we can say is that:
 - a) It was troublesome enough to keep Paul from travelling on, and to stay in Galatia (where he preached the Gospel, so apparently it was not too serious).
 - b) His condition was a trial to other people. This suggests there was something unpleasant involved, perhaps an infectious discharge.
 - c) The Galatians would have given Paul their own eyes, if that were possible. This suggests strongly that the condition involved Paul's eyes. It could have been a severe conjunctivitis; an inflammation of the eyelids.

There is no particular reason to connect it to Paul's "thorn in the flesh" (2 Corinthians 12:7), though it is a possibility.
2. The "heavenly Jerusalem" is the Church. Just as the earthly Jerusalem with its temple is the headquarters of the Jewish religion, so the headquarters of the Church is heaven, where Christ is, with all the Christians that have gone there before us. When the old fallen creation is replaced by a creation redeemed, the New Jerusalem will also replace the old Jerusalem (Revelation 21:1-2).

Freedom – Galatians 5

Lesson 7

A. Free! – Galatians 5:1

Free from what?

1. Free from the CONDEMNATION of sin – Romans 8:1-2.

As Christians, if we fail to live up to the requirements of the law, we no longer need to feel condemned, either by God, by the law, or by ourselves. Our sins, including the ones we commit after conversion, were fully atoned for by Jesus' sacrifice. Therefore the law can no longer condemn us, and thereby separate us from God's love and grace.

2. Free from the POWER of sin – Romans 6:14.

We no longer need to be controlled by sin, for when we give over control to the Spirit, we do not sin.

B. Cut off from Grace – Galatians 5:2-12

1. Circumcision is symbolic of the law.

To say circumcision is necessary to be approved by God is no better than saying one has to obey the whole law (verse 3), because either way Jesus' sacrifice is declared to be insufficient.

Illustration: A wealthy and generous man invites some friends to a sumptuous banquet, laid on especially for them. He tells them: "I am making sure you will have a wonderful time; you will be able to eat and drink anything your heart desires. I am doing this to show you how much I value your friendship, and to enjoy your fellowship. So please come as you are, and allow me to entertain you".

But some envious person wants to spoil the party. He calls the guests beforehand and says: "Your host may sound very generous, but you will be well advised to give him some money when you walk in, to help him with the expenses. Also, I hear there is not enough food for everybody, so bring some sandwiches". If the guests believe him and do as he says, how do you think the host will feel about that?

2. Whoever believes that lie is cut off from God's grace (verse 4). That grace can only reach us when we receive it in faith, trusting Him. If we think we have to do something to be worthy of it, we close the channel.
3. Our hope is for righteousness, and the secret is to trust the Spirit to achieve it in us. We can never do it in our own strength.
4. This trust, or faith, is produced in us because we know Jesus' love, and love Him in return (verse 6b).
5. Circumcision and law-keeping have nothing to do with this (verse 6a).

6. Legalism, even the smallest part of it, amounts to saying that Jesus died for nothing (verse 11). Trying to add anything to the value of His sacrifice shows we do not believe it was good enough.
7. Therefore we must resist even the slightest trace of it, because if we do not, it will spread through the Church like a bad infection. (verse 9).
8. Summary: the whole Christian life is a matter of receiving by faith what God has promised. We have seen this is true for justification (lesson 3B); it is also true for sanctification: the process of making us holy. To be holy is to be fit for the presence of God, and for His service. God will make us righteous and holy when we trust Him for it. We can never make ourselves holy, or deserving of holiness.

**C. Free, not to follow our fleshly impulses, but to follow the Holy Spirit.
Galatians 5:13-18**

1. The flesh is that part of us that feels attracted to sin that wants to give in to the devil.
2. The freedom of the Christian is not freedom to go back to sin, but to love and serve each other (verse 13).
3. When we love our neighbour, we actually fulfil the law anyhow! (verse 14).
4. The freedom of the Christian is not to follow the flesh, but to follow the Spirit instead.

Illustration: A man has become a hopeless alcoholic. He has lost his job, and his marriage is breaking up. He is admitted to a treatment centre, where he receives good counsel and excellent, loving care. After a while the director of the centre calls him in and says: "You have improved so much that I feel you can safely be discharged. You are free to go".

Does he mean: free to go back to the bottle? Of course not. He means: free from the compulsion to drink. Free to build a new life.

5. It is impossible to follow the impulses of the Spirit and the impulses of the flesh at the same time. Trying to do that paralyses us (verse 17).
6. If we are led by the flesh, we still live in the realm of law and condemnation. But if we are led by the Spirit, we escape them (verse 18).
7. **Summary:** a man has only two choices.
By nature he follows the flesh, living to satisfy his own impulses, which are corrupted by sin. He cannot help himself; he is a slave to the flesh and to sin (Romans 7:18). His only escape from this bondage is to place his trust in God. God's Spirit will empower him to live a life of holiness, and of love towards his fellow-man (Romans 8:3-4).

D. The effects of the flesh and the Spirit – Galatians 5:19-25

1. If we let the flesh have its way, the results will be:

- a) Sexual sin (verse 19):
 - i) Intercourse outside of marriage.
 - ii) "Impurity". The Greek word is "porneia", the root of the word "pornography".
 - iii) Debauchery: giving in to uninhibited lust.
- b) False religions and occult practices. What these have in common is that they promise access to spiritual realities and powers other than the one true God, and through ways other than the one Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus. 1 Timothy 2:5.

Note that the flesh even corrupts man's true longing for God! Most people pursuing these false religions and occult practices do it because they are sincerely hungry for God. We must acknowledge that, and encourage them to explore the Christian faith to satisfy their search for spiritual reality.

- c) Impulses and practices that injure other people, such as:
 - i) Harbours resentments.
 - ii) Quarrelling.
 - iii) Criticism of others, especially behind their backs.
 - iv) Causing disunity.
 - v) Begrudging others their success.

Note that this type of sin is mentioned in the same breath as sexual immorality and drunkenness. The latter two are usually not tolerated in the church, nor should they be.

But then should we not treat the sins in the "anger" category as equally serious? Some New Testament versions add "murder" to this list (after "envy", verse 21). This word really sums up the nature of all these destructive sins, as Jesus points out in Matthew 5:21-22.

- d) Drunkenness, orgies, etc. These are the sins where the flesh is given free reign. The end-result of yielding to the flesh is obvious moral squalor.

2. A solemn warning: people who practice these sins will be excluded from heaven; from the Kingdom of God. The fact that at one time in the past they indicated their decision for Christ will not save them (verse 21).

Note: This warning is for people who practise these sins habitually, as if there were

nothing the matter with it. Paul is not thinking of Christians who stumble but whose Christian commitment is otherwise sincere, and who repent of their sin.

3. If we let the Spirit have His way, the result will be love, peace, joy, etc., (verses 22-23a).
4. Notice these wonderful things are FRUIT. They are found in us not because we try to produce them, but because they are the natural result of the working of Christ's Spirit in us. Jesus explains this great spiritual secret in John 15:1-8.
5. When fruit is produced in us, we do not have to worry about the law (verse 23b).
6. This life of the Spirit is our new life. It is the true Christian life. The Cross was the end, not only of the penalty for living in the flesh, but of the life in the flesh itself (verse 24).
7. Conclusion: We have received eternal life from the Spirit. Now let that life become the power whereby we live from day to day! (verse 26).

Memory verse

Galatians 5:5, *“By faith we eagerly await through the Spirit the righteousness for which we hope”*.

Teachers' Notes

1. "Fallen away from grace" (Galatians 5:4); "Those who practise these things will not inherit the Kingdom of God" (Galatians 5:21). These verses have caused anxiety in sincere believers. To them it opens the possibility that they may not go to heaven when they fall into sin, and they have not repented of it at the moment of death. They also know how often their thoughts (even if not their deeds) are sinful, and they fear that this indicates that they are not Christ's at all.

Such fear can be relieved.

It is true that we are saved by faith, and that faith without works is dead (James 2:26). In other words, faith brings down God's power to save us, and this power is bound to become apparent in our works. Therefore if our works show no evidence of faith, that faith is dead. It clearly is not a saving faith.

However, the very fact that we are concerned about our sinful state shows that God is at work in us. It shows we are on God's side. We can now dismiss our fear of condemnation by simply remembering that Jesus died to take it away (Romans 8:1).

Condemnation was removed – let us not bring it back!

We can remind ourselves that our salvation does not depend on our faithfulness, but on God's. As it says in 2 Timothy 2:13: "If we are faithless, He will remain faithful". True, in the verse just before it says: "If we disown Him, He will also disown us". This speaks of an outright rejection of the Lord on our part, which certainly is not the case with a Christian who is concerned with God's judgment of him.

2. "Faith working through love" (Galatians 5:5, R.S.V.). When talking about faith, and about the fact that we cannot obtain God's blessings without it, it helps to remember that our faith in God is based on His love. He proved His love by sending Jesus to save us. When that fact is alive in us, how can we help but have faith in Him?

Conclusion – Galatians 6

Lesson 8

A. Church Discipline – Galatians 6:1-5

1. Occasionally, some believers fall into sin.
2. When that happens, our aim must be to restore the person back into fellowship with God, and with the Church.
3. We must deal with him gently – not with harshness and condemnation. Let us be aware that we ourselves can be tempted to sin in a moment of weakness (verse 1).
4. So, when a brother has sinned, let us stand by him. He is still one of us, so let us support and help him. That is obeying the law of Christ, the royal law: "You shall love your neighbour as yourself" (verse 2). (About the royal law – also see Galatians 5:14 and James 2:8.)
5. Let us not criticize our fellow-church members, but instead look at our own performance.
6. Let us not make the mistake of measuring ourselves by the weaknesses of others, so as to look better in our own eyes (verses 3-4).
7. We are going to be judged on our own performance; not in comparison with others (verse 5).

B. Supporting full-time workers – Galatians 6:6

Christian congregations need to look after the material needs of their full-time teachers. (This subject is more fully dealt with in 1 Corinthians .9:1-14.)

C. Perseverance pays off! – Galatians 6:7-10

1. It is true that we are restored to fellowship with God not by our efforts, but by grace alone.
2. But that does not mean that it makes no difference how we live!
3. We are still going to reap the reward for our actions (verse 7).
4. If we make it a habit to give in to the flesh, the result will be moral corruption and ruin (verse 8a).

Illustration: Go back to lesson 7, C4 – the story of the recovered alcoholic. This man received treatment that enabled him to start a new life. Without that help he would have drunk himself to death. But the man still had to accept the help and to co-operate with the treatment. While in the Centre he could probably have smuggled in alcohol, and certainly after discharge he had the choice to go back to drinking. No matter how good the help offered to him was, if he had not decided to receive it, it would not have done him any good.

5. But if we make it a habit to give in to the love of God, working in us through the Holy Spirit, the result will be eternal life. Eternal life is the quality of life that citizens of the Kingdom have. It shares in Jesus' resurrection life: free from sin and no longer subject to corruption and death (verse 8b).

Therefore let us not be discouraged, but persevere in doing right, for at the proper time we will see the rewards (verse 9).

Conclusion: This passage clearly shows what part the believer must play in his redemption. The power to escape from sin does not lie in us. It comes from God alone, and we must trust God to provide it. And He does! That is the meaning of salvation by faith.

This process of us trusting, and God providing, is the heart of the Christian life. Christian growth means learning to do this more and more. If at any time we stop trusting God and drawing on His grace, we are in trouble. We can never learn so much about the Christian faith that we can do it on our own, not having to lean on God so much. The moment we stop relying on God we are automatically back to the life of the flesh. There is no neutral middle ground where we can quietly go our own way. Either we sow to the Spirit, or we sow to the flesh.

D. Summary of Galatians – Galatians 6:11-18

(This part was hand-written by Paul himself. Up to this point he had been dictating to a secretary, whose handwriting was apparently smaller than Paul's – verse 1.)

1. The false teachers were not interested in the spiritual welfare of the Galatians – all they wanted was to impress the Judaizer, the law-party, by having the Galatian believers circumcised. That way they avoided trouble with the legalists (verses 12-13).
2. Their insincerity was shown by the fact that they themselves did not even abide by the rules of the law!
3. But Paul could never again want to impress people, or act out of fear of persecution. That was the old Paul, who had died with Jesus (verse 14).
4. What counts now is the new life in Jesus. Being circumcised or not, has nothing to do with that (verse 14).
5. Paul ends with a blessing on "the Israel of God" (verse 16). (By this he means the true believers: the spiritual descendants of Abraham – Galatians 3:9, 29.) Notice how gracious he is in his farewell! These people had treated him very badly, and given him great heartache. But, in the end, God's love in Paul was stronger than his exasperation. The Galatians were perhaps rejecting him, but he did not reject them in return. That was the fruit of the Spirit in Paul!



Memory Verse

Galatians 6:8, *"He who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption; but he who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life"*.

Teachers' Notes

Church Discipline – Galatians 6:1-5

Our first and greatest purpose in church discipline is not to punish a sinner, nor to make a public example of him, but to restore him to fellowship with God and with the other believers – especially the ones he has sinned against.

Jesus Himself said this very clearly in the parable of the shepherd who left his ninety-nine sheep in order to find the one that had gone astray, and bring it back safely (Matthew 18:10-14), and again in Matthew 18:15, where the purpose of confronting a sinner is to win him back.

Excommunication is a last resort, after everything else has failed (Matthew 18:17). Even then, our hope is still that he will come to his senses, repent, and so still be saved (1 Corinthians 5:4-5). In fact, the man mentioned in this passage was eventually received back into the church (2 Corinthians 2:5, 11).