

The Christian Application Commentary

Galatians



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Background

To begin with this background, we must first go to the book of Acts. The first time Galatia comes up is during Paul and Barnabas' first missionary trip. Having been set apart and sent out by the church in Antioch in Acts 13 they then go on a journey through Cyprus and the region they called Galatia. This consisted of Lystra, Derbe, Iconim, Pisidia, and a few others. Paul would visit these again on his second journey. It was where Paul truly started the ministry that God had set apart for Him. It was here he saw his first labor and his first fruit. Then, a controversy hit the early church, circumcision. The Jewish believers began to say that non-Jewish believers needed to be circumcised (side note, this is an Old Testament practice, if you want more detail you can look it up on any medical website). Paul was against this as he knew the law and the Gospel. He knew that Christ had fulfilled the law and there was no need for circumcision. Paul contended for this in the Jerusalem as the church came together to work out the growing disagreement in the early church in what would become known as the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15. The elders of the Jerusalem church agreed. Paul wanted to make sure that the churches he had help start on his first trip had an explanation of why circumcision was not needed and wanted to exhort them to continue in the faith they had started with. Paul wrote this letter to the Galatians to help correct false views and to encourage them to continue in the freedom given by Christ. The exact date it was written is still debated, but it was likely between 48 and 51 A.D. after the Jerusalem Council. Paul was invested in the Galatians and loved them. They were his first fruit and they were hit with controversy from those claiming to have authority of the church in Jerusalem. This was the emotion Paul wrote with and why he says the things he does. It was out of concern for the Galatians and a desire to see them turn back to the gospel. He encourages and corrects them as a loving father, desiring for them to come back to Jesus.

Galatians Chapter 1

1 Paul, an apostle—not from men or by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead— 2 and all the brothers who are with me: To the churches of Galatia. 3 Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, 4 who gave Himself for our sins to rescue us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father. 5 To whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.¹

You may notice Paul starts his normal greeting, but then adds a point to the end of it. Paul points out that he is an apostle, and then defends his claim by pointing out that it was not man that made him an apostle, but God. There may be some confusion here as the term apostle is used in 2 senses. For most people the word apostle is only associated with the 12 apostles of Jesus who founded the early church. To be sure the Bible does use it this way referring specifically to the 12 disciples who Jesus empowered as the Apostles, but it also uses the term apostle generically. Used generically an apostle was one who had been taught by Jesus and had seen Him resurrected from the dead. Jesus appeared to Paul on the road to Damascus in Acts 9. Paul was an apostle and it was because Jesus choose to appear personally to him. He goes into a little more detail when he says this in 1 Corinthians 15:3-8.

Having made a point of his apostleship he then finishes the greeting, include all that are with him. He is writing to the churches in Galatia and prays for grace and peace from God for them. He reminds them that Jesus died to save them from their sin and that it was according to God's will. As such God deserves the glory and honor forever.

6 I am amazed that you are so quickly turning away from Him who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— 7 not that there is another gospel, but

¹ Unless otherwise stated all Bible passages are cited from the HCSB translation.

there are some who are troubling you and want to change the good news about the Messiah. 8 But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel other than what we have preached to you, a curse be on him! 9 As we have said before, I now say again: If anyone preaches to you a gospel contrary to what you received, a curse be on him! 10 For am I now trying to win the favor of people, or God? Or am I striving to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a slave of Christ.

Having already defended his apostleship and reminded the Galatians of what Christ had done for them, Paul wastes no time or words but hits right at the problem. He is shocked by how easily the Galatians have moved away from what he had presented to them. Some believers from the church in Jerusalem were insisting on circumcision and were adding it as a requirement to salvation. Paul cannot stand this and tells them that there is no other gospel, and that if anyone teaches them something different than what they had already received that they should not listen to them, even if it were angels or Paul himself. If anyone teaches a different gospel then a curse should be on him. God will hold those who twist His words and messages in severe judgement. That is why Paul teaches the gospel, for God's approval and not man's. As he points out, if it were just about the approval of man he would not bother to suffer as he does.

11 Now I want you to know, brothers, that the gospel preached by me is not based on human thought. 12 For I did not receive it from a human source and I was not taught it, but it came by a revelation from Jesus Christ. 13 For you have heard about my former way of life in Judaism: I persecuted God's church to an extreme degree and tried to destroy it. 14 I advanced in Judaism beyond many contemporaries among my people, because I was extremely zealous for the traditions of my ancestors. 15 But when God, who from my birth set me apart and called me by His grace, was pleased 16 to reveal His Son in me, so that I

could preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with anyone. 17 I did not go up to Jerusalem to those who had become apostles before me; instead I went to Arabia and came back to Damascus. 18 Then after three years I did go up to Jerusalem to get to know Cephas, and I stayed with him fifteen days. 19 But I didn't see any of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother. 20 Now I am not lying in what I write to you. God is my witness. 21 Afterward, I went to the regions of Syria and Cilicia. 22 I remained personally unknown to the Judean churches in Christ; 23 they simply kept hearing: "He who formerly persecuted us now preaches the faith he once tried to destroy." 24 And they glorified God because of me.

He continues his last thought by telling the Galatians that his gospel was not based on human thought. He did not receive it from men nor was he taught by men. He received his gospel from Jesus Himself. This is referring back to what he said in his greeting, the fact that Jesus had appeared to him on the road to Damascus. This is why he was an apostle. Then he gives his testimony, including his education and persecution of the church. He met Jesus and went into the desert. He only consulted people after 3 years and they did not say anything about it. At this point, few knew who Paul was, but had heard that the one who persecuted the church was now preaching for it. Because of this the people gave glory to God as He deserved.

So What Do I Do With This Now?

All the information is great, but what do I do with it now?

- 1 Remember that the Gospel is from God and we should not seek to add anything to it.
- 2 Continue to grow in the faith we have been given and do not be thrown off track by those who teach something different than what the Bible teaches.

3 Those who teach and preach must remember the added responsibility and accountability of this privilege, and seek to honor God's words or they will come into judgment for misleading others.

Galatians Chapter 2

This chapter really picks up on Paul defending his apostleship. It is interesting where the Bible breaks up sections for chapters as really these two parts have to be addressed in relation to each other. Without further delay let's start on chapter 2.

1 Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along also. 2 I went up according to a revelation and presented to them the gospel I preach among the Gentiles—but privately to those recognized as leaders—so that I might not be running, or have run the race, in vain. 3 But not even Titus who was with me, though he was a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised. 4 This issue arose because of false brothers smuggled in, who came in secretly to spy on the freedom that we have in Christ Jesus, in order to enslave us. 5 But we did not give up and submit to these people for even an hour, so that the truth of the gospel would be preserved for you.

Paul had visited the Apostles in Jerusalem at the end of the last chapter. After that visit he continued to minister and went on his first missions trip with Barnabas and after that returned to tell them the gospel as he presented it. While there he was hit with the issue of circumcision as Titus was confronted about not being circumcised. Paul points out that those that raised the issue were false believers that desired to stop the freedom gentiles had in Christ. Satan was able to use the sense of identity the Jews had placed in circumcision to cause problems in the church. Paul makes a point of not giving in to these people for even an hour as he would not compromise the truth of the gospel.

6 Now from those recognized as important (what they really were makes no difference to me; God does not show favoritism)—they added nothing to me. 7 On the contrary, they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel for the uncircumcised, just as Peter was for the circumcised, 8 since the One at work in Peter for an apostleship to the circumcised was

also at work in me for the Gentiles. 9 When James, Cephas, and John, recognized as pillars, acknowledged the grace that had been given to me, they gave the right hand of fellowship to me and Barnabas, agreeing that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. 10 They asked only that we would remember the poor, which I made every effort to do.

Continuing with his defense Paul points out that the elders and apostles in Jerusalem did not add anything to the gospel he presented. In fact, they recognized God's hand on Paul to minister to the gentiles just as they had been called to the Jews. The only thing they asked was to remember the poor, words that echo Jesus' own when he declared that true ministry was taking care of widows and orphans. On a side note go back to verse 6 and notice what Paul says about leaders in the church. There are those that humanly we place more value or importance on. They are pastors and leaders like John Piper, Chris Tomlin, or Francis Chan. Paul points out thought that they are not viewed with any favoritism by God. God loves all believers the same. Paul would address something similar in 1 Corinthians when he talked about division over those who followed Apollos and those that followed him, stating that glory needs only go to God. Likewise, Jesus talked about how those that are the highest on earth will be the lowest in heaven. We are all God's children and God does not show favoritism.

11 But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face because he stood condemned. 12 For he regularly ate with the Gentiles before certain men came from James. However, when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, because he feared those from the circumcision party. 13 Then the rest of the Jews joined his hypocrisy, so that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy. 14 But when I saw that they were deviating

from the truth of the gospel, I told Cephas in front of everyone, “If you, who are a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you compel Gentiles to live like Jews?”

Here Paul shows that there truly is no favoritism, but also the need and benefit of correcting believers. Peter had been eating with those who were not circumcised, but when others came who believed that the gentiles needed to be circumcised Peter stopped eating with them. Seeing Peter, the respected and honored apostle, leave the table, the other Jews did as well, to the point that even Barnabas joined them. Paul did not hesitate to confront this unrighteous behavior and directly addressed Peter in front of the believers about it. He makes a point that the Jews were too quick to forget. They could not live up to the law and its demands, but here they were demanding the gentiles be held to a standard they knew they could not meet.

15 We who are Jews by birth and not “Gentile sinners” 16 know that no one is justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ. And we have believed in Christ Jesus so that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no human being will be justified. 17 But if we ourselves are also found to be “sinners” while seeking to be justified by Christ, is Christ then a promoter of sin?

Absolutely not! 18 If I rebuild the system I tore down, I show myself to be a lawbreaker. 19 For through the law I have died to the law, so that I might live for God. I have been crucified with Christ 20 and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. 21 I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died for nothing.

Finally, having reached the end of his defense, Paul starts explaining more of why the law is no required. The Jews knew that no one could keep the entire law without messing up.

That is why so many rejoiced over Jesus' coming as He had come to do what no one could. They knew that Jesus had fulfilled the law for them and that no act of obedience through the law would have been able to do that. As if Paul knew someone would take this point to a dangerous extreme he makes sure to clarify. Jesus is the only thing that saves us, but if we recognize we are sinners as we are seeking Jesus to justify us, does that mean he promotes sin? Paul answers simply, no. By trying to live up to law after having grace we show that we are still sinners. It is not Jesus that makes us sinners, but ourselves. Through Christ we die to the law and now it is not us, but God that lives in us. What does that mean? Christ died to pay the penalty on the law and when we come to God our flesh is put to death and Christ takes its place. God no longer sees our sin, but Christ's righteousness. At the same time, Christ dwells in us and changes our desires and heart to match His, and in that sense, it is no longer us that live out through our flesh (as in we no longer seek to only do our will and desire) but Christ who lives through our bodies (in that He changes our desires and gives us the desire to do His will). That is what is meant by living in faith in the Son of God. Paul finishes his thought by pointing out the biggest problem of righteousness based salvation, that if we can save ourselves then Jesus died for no reason. We cannot set aside the grace of God.

BONUS: Grace vs Works

If you have read Romans or James you likely have had to process through this argument, but I wanted to put a note here for clarity. In James and a few other places the Bible talks about faith being useless without works. In others, like Galatians and Romans, it says works are useless without faith. On the surface, it seems like a contradiction, but it is not. Let me explain, and take a quick breath as I try not to over complicate this. Paul is making a specific point. He is saying that being good (or obeying the law) is not enough to save us. That is most certainly true. We

must have faith in Jesus or all the good works we do are nothing but filthy rags. On the flipside, we have James. James points out that if you say you have faith but do not do works your faith is useless. Now hear this part as it is essential, James is not saying works are what bring salvation. What he is saying is that if you truly have faith in Jesus then it should change your life and that change is evident in the works we do for Jesus as He commanded us to. Can you really say you believe if you do not take action? Let's say someone tells you your house will collapse. And let's say you believe him. However, you do nothing about it and finally your house collapses. Would you really say you believed? James points out that even demons know Jesus is real and they shudder and are not saved. If you truly believe in Jesus and have truly repented of your sin, then your actions will show it. John says nearly the same thing in 1 John 3:18 "Little children, we must not love with word or speech, but with truth and action." On the off chance you try to dismiss this as just James, look at the words of Jesus in Matthew 7:21-23:

"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord!' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of My Father in heaven. On that day many will say to Me, 'Lord, Lord, didn't we prophesy in Your name, drive out demons in Your name, and do many miracles in Your name?' Then I will announce to them, 'I never knew you! Depart from Me, you lawbreakers!'"

Salvation comes through faith, but without obedience and works to Jesus faith will die. As John says in 1 John 5:2-3 *This is how we know that we love God's children when we love God and obey His commands. 3 For this is what love for God is: to keep His commands. Now His commands are not a burden.* Do not let anyone deceive you, faith is what leads to salvation, but without obedience faith will die. Be vigilant and seek to do God's will to prove that Christ is truly alive within you instead of your flesh.

So What Do I Do With This Now?

All the information is great, but what do I do with it now?

1 Never compromise the truth of the gospel, not even if leaders in the church pressure you to do so. The gospel must not be compromised and if your leaders are asking you to compromise it then you likely need to leave that church.

2 Remember that although some leaders may get a lot of attention and respect God does not show favoritism and neither should we.

3 Remember the poor. Give money to help those in need and when you see someone asking for money, food, or water you need to go up to them and provide what you can. This is a simple truth but very hard to put into practice, keep trying and don't become discouraged.

4 When people undermine the truth and teaching of the Bible you must not be afraid to tell them that they are wrong.

5 Remember if we love Jesus we will obey His commands. Continue to read and study the bible and when a command comes up do your best to apply it each day.

Galatians Chapter 3

Paul has spent the first two chapters defending his apostleship, his message, and the fact that the law is not what saves believers. Paul continues with the thought here, going on the offensive to point out what he has touched on, that the law is powerless to save us.

1 You foolish Galatians! Who has hypnotized you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was vividly portrayed as crucified? 2 I only want to learn this from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law or by hearing with faith? 3 Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now going to be made complete by the flesh? 4 Did you suffer so much for nothing—if in fact it was for nothing? 5 So then, does God supply you with the Spirit and work miracles among you by the works of the law or by hearing with faith?

It is interesting how Paul phrases this. They had a vivid portrayal of the crucifixion, which likely means they had a good and vivid teaching from Paul himself on the subject. Having this knowledge just makes their mistake worse. To make them think on this he asks if they received the Holy Spirit through their faith in Jesus, or by the works of the Mosaic law. The answer is by faith. Paul then points out that what has been started in the Spirit cannot be finished by our flesh. If it is by the law, then they would have been suffering persecution from the Jews for no reason. So how does God supply the Holy Spirit? Through hearing with faith, and not through the works of the law.

6 Just as Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him for righteousness, 7 then understand that those who have faith are Abraham's sons. 8 Now the Scripture saw in advance that God would justify the Gentiles by faith and told the good news ahead of time

to Abraham, saying, All the nations will be blessed through you. 9 So those who have faith are blessed with Abraham, who had faith.

Here Paul uses Abraham as an example. You may remember that Abraham lived over 400 years before Moses and the Mosaic law found in Leviticus. Paul points out that the law did not save Abraham, but instead his faith did. James also uses Abraham, pointing out that Abraham proved his faith by obeying all that God asked him to. Again, not the works of the law, but the works that result from desiring to follow God and out of love for Him. (For a more detailed account of works and faith please refer to the previous chapter). Paul also points out that God promised to bless all nations through Abraham. Jesus came through Abraham's line and died to save all. Those who have faith like Abraham, proven through their deeds, are blessed with Abraham.

10 For all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse, because it is written:

Everyone who does not continue doing everything written in the book of the law is cursed.

11 Now it is clear that no one is justified before God by the law, because the righteous will live by faith. 12 But the law is not based on faith; instead, the one who does these things will live by them. 13 Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, because it is written: Everyone who is hung on a tree is cursed. 14 The purpose was that the blessing of Abraham would come to the Gentiles by Christ Jesus, so that we could receive the promised Spirit through faith.

Here Paul explains what he means about the law being useless for salvation. He says those who rely on it are under a curse. The reason being the law is not based on faith and its purpose is to show our sin. Therefore, our sin is shown with no real way to fix it. The only thing waiting under the law is punishment for our failures, but Jesus came to earth and bore that

punishment on Himself. That is why faith brings salvation, because only Jesus can pay the price. If you try to rely on your own goodness and actions without believing in Jesus and the price He paid, then you are doomed to fail. No amount of goodness can save a person, only the grace of God. Jesus died to fulfill the promise made to Abraham and to bring salvation to all of us.

15 Brothers, I'm using a human illustration. No one sets aside or makes additions to even a human covenant that has been ratified. 16 Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say "and to seeds," as though referring to many, but referring to one, and to your seed, who is Christ. 17 And I say this: The law, which came 430 years later, does not revoke a covenant that was previously ratified by God and cancel the promise. 18 For if the inheritance is from the law, it is no longer from the promise; but God granted it to Abraham through the promise.

Paul tries to put this in terms they will be able to understand. He points out that people do not just ignore or stop an agreement put in place through legal means. Think about our government, we do not cancel the constitution when we add things to it, it still stands as it is. The promise to Abraham came before the Mosaic law, so the law itself cannot cancel the promise that God made to Abraham. Paul points out that the promise to Abraham was made in a singular sense, restricting it to Jesus. This blessing only comes through the promise made to Abraham, and not through the Mosaic law. It is the belief and faith in that promise that brings salvation.

19 Why then was the law given? It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise was made would come. The law was put into effect through angels by means of a mediator. 20 Now a mediator is not for just one person, but God is one. 21 Is the law therefore contrary to God's promises? Absolutely not! For if a law had been given that was able to give life, then righteousness would certainly be by the law. 22 But the Scripture

has imprisoned everything under sin's power, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. 23 Before this faith came, we were confined under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith was revealed. 24 The law, then, was our guardian until Christ, so that we could be justified by faith. 25 But since that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, 26 for you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

Now comes the question that likely hit you as it did the original audience. If the law cannot save and came later, then why was it given at all? Paul explains there was sin in the world as they waited for the seed, so they needed a temporary guardian. The guardian in this case shows our need for salvation by showing we are fallen sinners. The verses about a mediator can be confusing. What Paul points out is that a mediator is usually reconciling two parties, the offended party and the party that did the offending. However, when dealing with God there is only one party that needs full reconciliation and that is man. God is God and therefore we have to accept Him as who He is because He is perfect goodness and holiness and we are not. Therefore, we are the only party that needs to change, and that is all Paul means. Paul then moves back to the subject he had said before about the law and the promise. He asks the next question that comes to mind, is the law working against God's promise. Paul says no, because if righteousness came through the law then there would be no need for the promise. Paul then says the Scriptures but everything under the power of sin. Many will likely be asking 'what does that mean?' (honestly I asked that myself and had to read *The Message of Galatians* by John Stott²) For Paul, particularly at the time he wrote, Scripture meant the Old Testament. After all, Galatians is one of the earliest letters and the New Testament had not been collected. Paul points out that the Old Testament tells us of the failing of man and no one is righteous. It also spells out

² John R.W. Stott. *The Message of Galatians*. (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1986) 91.

what sin leads to. Therefore, the Scripture tells us of how everything in this world is held under the power of sin (or wrong doing). Therefore, we too were trapped by sin and in that time, before we come to God's grace, the law serves as a guardian. Like a guardian today, the law looked out over us until we came to maturity. In the world, today that is 18, but spiritual maturity is not limited to a specific age. So finally, Jesus came and saved the whole world, thus the law had fulfilled its responsibility as guardian and was no longer in authority over God's people. Instead we have received what we were promised and through Jesus' death we are now sons of God. The law was there to watch over God's people and remind them of Jesus who would come to save them. Since Jesus has already come the law has reached its purpose and is no longer needed.

27 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ like a garment.

28 There is no Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female; for you are all one in Christ

Jesus. 29 And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, heirs according to the promise.

The law is no longer needed because as we have come to Christ and identified ourselves with Him we have received the Spirit and in that sense Jesus is like a coat that is put over us. He guards our hearts and draws us to Him. He reveals sin in our lives and pushes us to obey God. As such when God looks at us He does not see male or female. He does not see skin color or cultural background. He does not see servant or slave or master. For that matter He does not even see our old selves. Because Jesus is in us when God looks at us all He sees is Jesus. We are all one body united in Christ. As such, we are united with Jesus, the one seed and therefore we are all heirs of the promise given to Abraham.

So What Do I Do With This Now?

All the information is great, but what do I do with it now?

1 If you have not yet, accept Jesus' gift of salvation and believe in Him, no longer trying to justify yourself by being 'good enough.' We can never be good enough and must accept and submit to Jesus

2 Study the Old Testament. The law may be unnecessary because of Jesus, but what the Old Testament teaches goes beyond the law. The Old Testament is just as valuable as the New Testament and will help us to know God and appreciate the fulfillment that Jesus is.

3 Forget about status, culture, skin color, or anything else. We are the body of Christ, children of God, and when He looks at us He sees Jesus. We must learn to do likewise.

4 Follow Abraham's example. He had faith in God and showed that faith by obedience. We must seek to obey God remembering that it is faith and not the action that saves, but that the action shows our faith.

Galatians Chapter 4

Paul continues to talk about the law. To help his readers he uses an analogy, in this case using a known story relating to Abraham. He talks of Sarah and Hagar to show the difference of slavery and promise. Take a breath and dive in as we seek to know God's word.

1 Now I say that as long as the heir is a child, he differs in no way from a slave, though he is the owner of everything. 2 Instead, he is under guardians and stewards until the time set by his father. 3 In the same way we also, when we were children, were in slavery under the elemental forces of the world. 4 When the time came to completion, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. 6 And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba, Father!” 7 So you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.

Paul continues his visual of a guardian talking about how children are under a guardian until they come of age. Therefore, until that it is like being a slave because you do not get to make your own choices. Likewise, the law was our guardian until the appointed time, in this case the day Jesus came and died. Now we are no longer slaves to sin and the world, heirs and sons of God giving us the ability to cry out to God as our father. Paul spells out the gospel again that he came and fulfilled the law that we could become sons and daughters of God.

8 But in the past, when you didn’t know God, you were enslaved to things that by nature are not gods. 9 But now, since you know God, or rather have become known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and bankrupt elemental forces? Do you want to be enslaved to them all over again? 10 You observe special days, months, seasons, and years. 11 I am fearful for you, that perhaps my labor for you has been wasted.

Before knowing God, we were slaves to sin and the things of the world which are far short of God. Then Paul uses a turn of phrase. Because we now know God, actually because we have become known by God. What does that mean? God has graciously let Himself be known by man, something He was not obligated to do. He again condescends that we may come to know Him and He knows us. It is yet another picture of God's grace. In light of that relationship with God and how we know the truth, how is it we can turn back to the foolish things that are so much less than God? In fact, things apart from God are bankrupt meaning they have nothing of value. Do you really want to be enslaved to those things again? Things you know cannot make you happy and will lead to death. The Galatians had become so focused on rituals and rules and had lost the heart of what mattered. They were devoted to the things that Jesus had done away with, going back to a system that could not save them, when they knew Jesus and His grace. As such Paul was worried about them.

12 I beg you, brothers: Become like me, for I also became like you. You have not wronged me; 13 you know that previously I preached the gospel to you because of a physical illness. 14 You did not despise or reject me though my physical condition was a trial for you. On the contrary, you received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus Himself. 15 What happened to this sense of being blessed you had? For I testify to you that, if possible, you would have torn out your eyes and given them to me. 16 Have I now become your enemy by telling you the truth? 17 They are enthusiastic about you, but not for any good. Instead, they want to isolate you so you will be enthusiastic about them. 18 Now it is always good to be enthusiastic about good—and not just when I am with you. 19 My children, I am again suffering labor pains for you until Christ is formed in you. 20 I would like to be with you right now and change my tone of voice, because I don't know what to do about you.

Paul is urging the Galatians to become like him. He says to do this as he had become like them. What does that mean? In his visit, he did not distance himself because they were gentiles, instead he embraced Jesus grace for them over the rules of the law. That is Paul wants them to imitate. He goes on to describe how they once had been. They received him well, not caring that he was sick. They had been concerned over Paul to the point he felt they would have given him their eyes if they could have. They cared and were enthusiastic and so Paul asks the obvious question, what happened? Was Paul an enemy because he was not afraid to tell them the truth? He points out their new teachers were not truly concerned about the Galatians but only wanted to see the law enforced. Paul is pained by this, to the point that emotionally, he feels like a woman in labor. They are his spiritual children and as their father he cannot help but be distressed.

21 Tell me, those of you who want to be under the law, don't you hear the law? 22 For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by a slave and the other by a free woman. 23 But the one by the slave was born according to the impulse of the flesh, while the one by the free woman was born as the result of a promise. 24 These things are illustrations, for the women represent the two covenants. One is from Mount Sinai and bears children into slavery—this is Hagar. 25 Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. 26 But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother. 27 For it is written: Rejoice, childless woman, who does not give birth. Burst into song and shout, you who are not in labor, for the children of the desolate are many, more numerous than those of the woman who has a husband. 28 Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise. 29 But just as then the child born according to the flesh persecuted the one born according to the Spirit, so also now. 30 But what does the Scripture say? Drive out the slave and her son, for the son of the slave will

never be a coheir with the son of the free woman. 31 Therefore, brothers, we are not children of the slave but of the free woman.

Again, Paul hits them where they are putting trust, the law. He points out those who “know” the law and hits them with a story they would have known. Abraham had two children while Sarah still lived. One was through Hagar Sarah’s slave, while the other was the one promised who came through Sarah. He then likens the law to Hagar’s son, born not from God’s promise but as a slave. Sarah’s son though was born as God promised and inherited that promise, not slavery. Hagar’s son was born out of a lack of faith by Abraham and Sarah, while Isaac was born only through the faith in God. Paul uses this analogy to show the fight between the flesh and the spirit. We are to send out the ways of the flesh and follow God. Works without faith cannot save. God gives us His free gift of salvation and through it impacts our lives and changes us. We seek to do the good works He has prepared for us. For more conversation look at Galatians 2 bonus section at the end of the chapter about Faith and Works.

So What Do I Do With This Now?

All the information is great, but what do I do with it now?

1 Remember that if you have accepted God and been saved that you can cry out to Him. He is your Father, a perfect Father who loves you. Turn to Him for strength, talk with Him and love Him

2 We were once enslaved to other things before we received God. Do not go back to those things. Leave the sin behind and when you fall seek God and repent. We will struggle, no doubt, but we must not become comfortable with it, but turn away from it and cry out to our father to forgive us and He is faithful to forgive

3 Do not lose sight of love for God in the pursuit of righteousness. As you do good works remember why you do them, not for a sense of self-importance but out of love for God and the free gift He gave us.

I really hope these words are impacting you. The word of God is powerful and it ought to change your life. If you are truly a Christian, if you truly love God, then these words will convict and change you. What is the most important thing we can do? Love God because out of that love will come the desire for good works, love toward your neighbor, and change in everything. Think about what He has done for us! His love, suffering and justice in making a way for us to come to Him. To call Him Father! Us who are such sinners, who fail daily. Praise His name! And listen to his words. As Jesus says in Luke 11:28 “those who hear the word of God and keep it are blessed!”

Galatians Chapter 5

Paul wrapped up chapter 4 with an analogy using Hagar and Sarah, the wives of Abraham. Paul continues here by expressing the freedom that comes through Christ through the promise made to Abraham and to Isaac. Let's dive in as we prepare to finish up Galatians.

1 Christ has liberated us to be free. Stand firm then and don't submit again to a yoke of slavery. 2 Take note! I, Paul, tell you that if you get yourselves circumcised, Christ will not benefit you at all. 3 Again I testify to every man who gets himself circumcised that he is obligated to keep the entire law. 4 You who are trying to be justified by the law are alienated from Christ; you have fallen from grace. 5 For through the Spirit, by faith, we eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness. 6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision accomplishes anything; what matters is faith working through love.

Freedom comes through Christ. Having been set free by Jesus we must not put ourselves back into slavery under a system of works-based salvation. If you try to make yourself righteous by works then Jesus is not benefiting you because you are again under slavery. Paul points out that if you try to follow one part of the law you will have to follow all of the law. By trying to earn our own salvation we become separated from God and have despised and rejected grace.

We are to wait for righteousness that comes through the Holy Spirit, the only hope for us to be righteous. A point like circumcision on its own accomplishes nothing, but acting in faith and out of love is what accomplishes God's will. It is interesting the way he says it, faith working through love. Faith is trust placed in God. We place trust in God because we love Him and because He is faithful, and He is faithful because He loves. The two seem to be inseparable.

7 You were running well. Who prevented you from obeying the truth? 8 This persuasion did not come from the One who called you. 9 A little yeast leavens the whole lump of

dough. 10 I have confidence in the Lord you will not accept any other view. But whoever it is that is confusing you will pay the penalty. 11 Now brothers, if I still preach circumcision, why am I still persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been abolished. 12 I wish those who are disturbing you might also get themselves castrated!

Paul has made his point about freedom and the ineffectiveness of the law and now turns to the Galatians themselves. He asks a question that has been burning within him, why? Who had stopped them from obeying the truth. This requirement to follow the law did not come to the gentiles from God, but from false teachers. Their teaching is destructive and spreads like a virus, or as Paul says like yeast in bread. However, even with all that has happened Paul expresses confident that they will agree with what he is saying. He also expresses that those that are teaching this false command will be punished for what they are doing. Paul then tries to get them to see the truth. If circumcision is part of Christianity, then why is Paul being persecuted? If circumcision is still required, then the cross is worthless because works are bringing salvation. The false teachers have so infuriated Paul that out of a righteous indignation and a bit of witty sarcasm he says he wishes they would go a step further and cut their privates off.

13 For you were called to be free, brothers; only don't use this freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but serve one another through love. 14 For the entire law is fulfilled in one statement: Love your neighbor as yourself. 15 But if you bite and devour one another, watch out, or you will be consumed by one another. 16 I say then, walk by the Spirit and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. 17 For the flesh desires what is against the Spirit, and the Spirit desires what is against the flesh; these are opposed to each other, so that you don't do what you want. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

Now Paul seems to know that someone will read his words and think they can do all kinds of sins since they are saved by grace. He is quick to tell them not to use this freedom to do the desires of the flesh, but to instead serve each other through love. In fact, the point and purpose of the law can be put into two major points, love God and love your neighbor as yourself. Jesus says this in Matthew 22:34-40 when he is asked what is the greatest command. On the other side, if we instead fight against each other we will bring destruction on ourselves. We are to walk in the Spirit and in love, opposed to the flesh. The flesh will always look to do the opposite of the Spirit. Those who stay in the Spirit and allow Him to lead them are not slaves of the law.

19 Now the works of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, moral impurity, promiscuity, 20 idolatry, sorcery, hatreds, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambitions, dissensions, factions, 21 envy, drunkenness, carousing, and anything similar. I tell you about these things in advance—as I told you before—that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

So, what are the works of the flesh? Sexual immorality. Well what's that? Many things actually, so I will try to keep it brief. Sexual immorality can be broken into 2 categories, sexual acts outside of marriage and sexual acts with someone other than your spouse. The first is easiest to deal with. Literally all sexual acts (not talking hugging and kissing as long as your clothed) are prohibited before marriage. Now you can quibble over where to draw the line, but you should refer to Jesus' words that anyone who lusts after someone has already sinned sexually. If you can do it without sexual feeling, appeal, or thrill then it is likely fine, but if it makes you lust you should not do it. As for the other there needs to be a basis. This applies to a man and a woman who are married. Before you ask God does not condone homosexual marriage anywhere in the

Bible and it is not part of His design. Paul himself lists homosexuality as a sin in many of his other letters. That being said it is not some greater sin, it is a sin like all else and as Romans tells us we all have sinned. However, if you claim to be a believer then you need to have turned from that sin to do the things the Spirit leads us to do and that the Bible commands us to do. If you want a more in-depth argument there are many books and commentaries to read on the subject, but as for me I will end the argument here with God's words and I do not intend to do more. Moving on, the other type of sexual sin is done in marriage when one spouse goes to someone outside of their marriage and has sexual relations of any kind with them. Promiscuity really hits both types and continues the idea, this is just more specific as it means the actual act of sex. It is what it is and there is nothing to add to it.

The next point is moral impurity. This is more vague, but touches on justice. It is the idea of compromising on the standards given in the Bible and doing what we know is wrong. It really encompasses all sins, but comments more on the loss of morals than the acts committed. The next ones can be paired down into groups. Hatred, selfish ambition, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, dissensions, factions, and envy all share the idea of anger and hate. Jesus talked about how hating someone was the same as murder. We are called to love and care for all people, regardless of whether they are Christians or not. On the same note we are called not to serve our own interests but to serve others.

Idolatry and sorcery both hold the idea of worshipping a different god and trying to call on them for power. The Bible points out that these 'powers' of sorcery actually come from demons. Now idolatry has more meanings. In fact, God often used it as a charge against Israel who would wander after other gods, but he also used it in conjunction with adultery. It is the idea of chasing after something other than God and giving it more importance. Idolatry is not just

chasing false gods, it is putting something before God. For some people that becomes money, power, or even sexuality.

The last section consists of drunkenness, carousing, and anything similar. Drunkenness should be obvious, referring to anyone who gets drunk. A sin that goes hand in hand with that is carousing. This is the idea of partying in a way where you indulge in various other sins such as sexual sins. Likewise, anything like this is of the flesh as well. There is not much more to say on this list. These are sins and do not please God. You either believe God's word or you do not. If you do then you must stop doing these things.

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, 23 gentleness, self-control. Against such things there is no law. 24 Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25 Since we live by the Spirit, we must also follow the Spirit. 26 We must not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

Now in direct opposition to the works of the flesh we have the works of the Spirit. We are called to love, to be patience, to be full of joy (remembering what God has done for us), to be patient, to be kind, to be good, to be faithful (believing and trusting in God), to be gentle, and to exercise self-control. These are all things God approves of and there is no law against them. If we belong to Jesus, then the flesh and the works it produces are dead. In that case, we live by the Spirit. If we live in the Spirit, then we must follow the Spirit. We must not be conceited or provoke each other, but continue in love.

So What Do I Do With This Now?

All the information is great, but what do I do with it now?

1 Remember you are saved by faith and not works, however also remember that if the Holy Spirit is in you then you must not continue in sin.

2 Do not let false teachers lead you from the truths of scripture. You should check what they say against the Bible and be careful not to follow blindly. They may have good intentions, but if they are wrong it is still wrong.

3 We have freedom in Christ, but we are not to use this freedom to serve ourselves. We are called to serve others.

4 Do not do the works of the flesh, such as sexual sins, practice witch craft, put something before God, hatred or anger, drunkenness, or anything like them.

5 Do the good works God has prepared for you and remember that we are to be dead to the flesh and the sins it desires.

Well all, that was long. There is a lot of material here, and important commands. There are things we enjoy that are in fact sinful. We must repent and turn from these asking God for strength to overcome. Please press on and if you have been convicted of sin in your life please do not wait. Repent today and seek God.

Galatians Chapter 6

1 Brothers, if someone is caught in any wrongdoing, you who are spiritual should restore such a person with a gentle spirit, watching out for yourselves so you also won't be tempted. 2 Carry one another's burdens; in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. 3 For if anyone considers himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. 4 But each person should examine his own work, and then he will have a reason for boasting in himself alone, and not in respect to someone else. 5 For each person will have to carry his own load.

After telling them to be good Paul goes to the end important point. If you see your brother sin you are to correct them. You are to do this with grace and gentleness be I alert so that you will not be tempted by the sin. We are to care for our brothers and sisters and help them carry their burdens. On the flip side Paul points out that if someone thinks they are a Christian then they should look at their works to see if they confirm it. Then Paul reminds us we should only look at ourselves as we know all the things we do and we should avoid comparing ourselves to our neighbor and instead compare ourselves to God's standards.

6 The one who is taught the message must share all his good things with the teacher. 7

Don't be deceived: God is not mocked. For whatever a man sows he will also reap, 8

because the one who sows to his flesh will reap corruption from the flesh, but the one who

sows to the Spirit will reap eternal life from the Spirit. 9 So we must not get tired of doing

good, for we will reap at the proper time if we don't give up. 10 Therefore, as we have

opportunity, we must work for the good of all, especially for those who belong to the

household of faith.

Paul moves on to comment that those who teach the gospel are entitled to payment. After this Paul reminds them that what they give is what they will get because God knows what they do. Therefore, we must not grow tired of doing good works but continue knowing it is for God and that we will spend eternity with Him. Do not give up because as you invest in others the time will come when your works in the Spirit will bring others to God. Since we know this we must work for the good of all.

11 Look at what large letters I use as I write to you in my own handwriting. 12 Those who want to make a good impression in the flesh are the ones who would compel you to be circumcised—but only to avoid being persecuted for the cross of Christ. 13 For even the circumcised don't keep the law themselves; however, they want you to be circumcised in order to boast about your flesh. 14 But as for me, I will never boast about anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. The world has been crucified to me through the cross, and I to the world. 15 For both circumcision and uncircumcision mean nothing; what matters instead is a new creation. 16 May peace come to all those who follow this standard, and mercy to the Israel of God! 17 From now on, let no one cause me trouble, because I bear on my body scars for the cause of Jesus. 18 Brothers, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

Paul then uses the next verse to let people know it is truly from him and not a false teacher in his name. These false teachers are the ones tell them to be circumcised. Paul knows they do this to avoid persecution and not for the good of God's church. They cannot keep the law themselves but want the gentiles circumcised so they can boast about it. But Paul will boast only in God as should we all. Everything is made nothing in light of the cross. Circumcision means nothing as God brings in His new creation. He then prays for peace to all

who follow Jesus and prays God will have mercy on Israel. He then closes the letter by telling them not to let anyone trouble them and to live in the Grace of God.

So What Do I Do With This Now?

All the information is great, but what do I do with it now?

1 If we see a brother or sister in Christ in sin we are commanded by God to confront them. We need to do so in grace and humility knowing that we too are open to temptation.

2 Do not compare yourself to others, but look at your own works and the standards of Christ.

3 Give to teachers and preachers as they are entitled to it.

4 Continue to do good works, do not give up on them as God will bring them to completion and use them in His time, and He will reward you.

5 Do not be concerned about impressing people, but crucify everything and follow God

Book Recap

Paul was invested in the Galatians and loved them. They were his first fruit and they were hit with controversy from those claiming to have authority of the church in Jerusalem. This was the emotion Paul wrote with and why he says the things he does. In chapter 1 he immediately expresses his grief over the fact that they have followed these teachers and have forgotten the gospel. He then defends his apostleship, as those teachers were seeking to discredit him. This continues into chapter 2, where Paul talks about how he checked his message with the apostles there and they confirmed it. Then Peter came to Galatia and showed hypocrisy by separating from the gentiles when the Jews came. Paul confronts them because he loves the Galatians and he reminds them that Jesus has fulfilled the law. Those who try to return to the law will find that it cannot save them.

Chapter 3 tells us of Abraham's faith before there was a law and tells us how Christ's death has brought in a new covenant. The law was a guardian for us, but with Christ's death we are now heirs. Chapter 4 continues this and expresses Paul's concern for the Galatians. Then Paul tells us we are children of God, of the promise made to Abraham. Chapter 5 tells us we are free in Christ, and we must not use that freedom to hurt each other. We must live by the spirit and not by the flesh. Chapter 6 tells us to carry each other's burdens. Paul concludes by telling us to boat only in Christ.

So what are the major points of this book?

1 Remember that the Gospel is from God and we should not seek to add anything to it. Also do not be afraid to confront those that are undermining the truth or distorting it, intentionally or unintentionally.

2 Continue to grow in the faith we have been given and do not be thrown off track by those who teach something different than what the Bible teaches.

3 Those who teach and preach must remember the added responsibility and accountability of this privilege, and seek to honor God's words or they will come into judgment for misleading others.

4 Remember that although some leaders may get a lot of attention and respect God does not show favoritism and neither should we.

5 Remember the poor. Give money to help those in need and when you see someone asking for money, food, or water you need to go up to them and provide what you can. This is a simple truth but very hard to put into practice, keep trying and don't become discouraged.

6 Remember if we love Jesus we will obey His commands. Continue to read and study the bible and when a command comes up do your best to apply it each day.

7 If you have not yet, accept Jesus' gift of salvation and believe in Him, no longer trying to justify yourself by being 'good enough.' We can never be good enough and must accept and submit to Jesus

8 Study the Old Testament. The law may be unnecessary because of Jesus, but what the Old Testament teaches goes beyond the law. The Old Testament is just as valuable as the New Testament and will help us to know God and appreciate the fulfillment that Jesus is.

9 Forget about status, culture, skin color, or anything else. We are the body of Christ, children of God, and when He looks at us He sees Jesus. We must learn to do likewise.

10 Follow Abraham's example. He had faith in God and showed that faith by obedience. We must seek to obey God remembering that it is faith and not the action that saves, but that the action shows our faith.

11 Remember that if you have accepted God and been saved that you can cry out to Him. He is your Father, a perfect Father who loves you. Turn to Him for strength, talk with Him and love Him

12 We were once enslaved to other things before we received God. Do not go back to those things. Leave the sin behind and when you fall seek God and repent. We will struggle, no doubt, but we must not become comfortable with it, but turn away from it and cry out to our father to forgive us and He is faithful to forgive

13 Do not lose sight of love for God in the pursuit of righteousness. As you do good works remember why you do them, not for a sense of self-importance but out of love for God and the free gift He gave us.

14 We have freedom in Christ, but we are not to use this freedom to serve ourselves. We are called to serve others.

15 Do not do the works of the flesh, such as sexual sins, practice witch craft, put something before God, hatred or anger, drunkenness, or anything like them.

16 Do the good works God has prepared for you and remember that we are to be dead to the flesh and the sins it desires.

17 If we see a brother or sister in Christ in sin we are commanded by God to confront them. We need to do so in grace and humility knowing that we too are open to temptation.

18 Do not compare yourself to others, but look at your own works and the standards of Christ.

19 Give to teachers and preachers as they are entitled to it.

20 Do not be concerned about impressing people, but crucify everything and follow God

Sweet! You made it to the end. Galatians can be a difficult book as Paul holds nothing back, even confronting Peter the apostle. The truth is this is God's word and we need to apply it to our lives. Also remember that we need God's help to do this. Even the apostles failed at times and so it should not surprise us if we fail too. Don't give up but turn in repentance to God and seek Him with your whole heart. God bless.