

GALATIANS

Author :

Paul an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Date :

Sometime between 49 and 58 AD.

Themes :

At least some of the churches in the province of Galatia (an area in what is now the country of Turkey) were a direct result of Paul's labors (4:13-15. See Acts chapter 14. Iconium, Lystra and Derbe were towns in what was known as Lacaonia, but sometimes called "Southern Galatia"). Later on some Jewish Christians who professed to be servants of Christ came there and tried to pervert the gospel of Christ. They taught that for salvation faith in Christ and the grace of God were not sufficient, but that all Christians, whether Jews or not, must keep the law of Moses. Paul had taught the Galatian Christians what he taught everywhere: Salvation comes only by the grace of God through faith (compare Eph 2:8,9). In this letter, using the illustration of Abraham the father of the Jewish nation, and setting forth other evidence, Paul proves this truth once and for all. He also emphasized that spiritual completeness and a holy life can be realized only by the same means – by grace through faith. Some key words in this letter are "faith", "justified", "grace", "freedom", "flesh", "Spirit", "cross." Some key verses are 2:16-21.

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1 Paul, an apostle (not *sent* from men or by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead), 2 and all the brethren who are with me, to the churches of Galatia:

3 Grace *be* to you and peace from God the Father, and *from* our Lord Jesus Christ, 4 who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of our God and Father, 5 to whom *be* glory for ever and ever. Amen.

6 I am amazed that you are turning away so

soon from him who called you by the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, 7 which is not another. But there are some who are troubling you, and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. 8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than the one we have preached to you, let him be under a curse. 9 As we already said, so now I say again: If anyone preaches any other gospel to you than the one you received, let him be under a curse.

10 For do I now try to gain men's favor, or

1:1 "Apostle" – Matt 10:2; Rom 1:1.

"From the dead" – Matt 28:6. Observe the distinction Paul makes between Jesus Christ and God the Father. Both are in the one Godhead, but are distinct persons. See notes at Matt 3:16,17; John 17:1; etc.

1:2 Galatia was a large area in the land now called Turkey. Iconium, Lystra and Derbe (Acts 14:1-20) were in that province.

1:3 Rom 1:7. "Grace" is a key word of this letter – 1:3,6,15; 2:9,21; 3:18; 5:4; 6:18. Paul clearly sets forth what the gospel of grace means.

1:4 "For our sins" – Isa 53:6,8,10; Matt 26:28; John 1:29; Rom 3:24,25; 1 Cor 15:3; 2 Cor 5:21; Heb 9:28; 1 Pet 2:24; 3:18.

"Deliver us" – here is one very important reason why Christ died. It was God's appointed way to rescue people from the power of evil in the world, from the chains which bind men. A title given to Christ in Rom 11:26 is "the Deliverer." Compare Matt 1:21; Luke 4:18; Col 1:13; Titus 2:14; Heb 2:15. He liberates people from everything that could keep them from God – 5:1; John 8:36; Rom 6:17,18.

"Evil world" – or "evil age." The desires, aims, ideals, and works of this age (as all former ages) are bad. See John 3:19; 7:17; Rom 3:19,23; 12:2; 1 John 2:16; 5:19. Our rescue is accomplished like this: Christ died to take away our sins and to deliver us from condemnation (Rom 8:1). When we repent and trust in Him He forgives us and God's Spirit comes to live in us. We then have power and strength to renounce the world and live for God, and Christ begins the process of purifying us from all that would bind us to the evil in the world. Eventually He will return and separate us altogether from evil. The foundation for all of this is His death in the place of sinners. Without that there could be no rescue, no deliverance.

1:5 "To whom be glory" – Rom 11:36; 16:27; Eph 1:6,12,14; 2:8,9; 3:21.

1:6 "Are turning away" – they had begun to move away from the truth of God (the one who called them) because they were being deceived by evil men, but they had not fully turned away yet.

"Called you" – notes at Rom 1:6; 8:30.

"Different gospel" – this was the teaching that salvation comes by keeping the law of Moses (3:1-5; 4:9-11,21; 5:2-4. See Acts

15:1,5). Paul had taught them the true gospel of Christ – that salvation is a free gift of God and received by faith (2:16; 3:6-9,26; 5:5,6. Compare Rom 4:5; 6:23; Eph 2:8,9). False teachers preaching a false gospel came and told them that faith in Christ was not sufficient, that they also needed to obey the law of Moses, that self-effort had an important part in salvation. And these Galatian Christians were turning toward that false teaching.

1:7 "Not another" – the word gospel means "good news", and the teaching that Christians were under the law and had to obey it was certainly not good news (3:10; Acts 15:10). Today also there are many so-called gospels in the world, but any teaching that salvation can come by some way other than by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is no gospel at all. And any teaching that tries to add something (some religious ceremony, some good work, some self-effort) to faith for salvation is a perversion of Christ's true gospel.

"Some who are troubling you" – 4:17; 5:10,12; 6:12,13.

"Pervert" – comparatively few people on earth are willing to accept Christ's gospel as it is and not try to change it to suit themselves.

1:8 "Under a curse" – he uses this strong language to show the great importance of the gospel he preached and the terrible sin of people who try to pervert it. He knew that Christ Himself had revealed the gospel to him (vs 11,12), and that it alone was the power of God for salvation (Rom 1:16). Anyone trying to change it was, knowingly or unknowingly, trying to take away from men the only way of salvation. See Matt 23:13; Luke 11:52. This is a great crime against mankind and against God, and no language is too strong to condemn it. And those guilty of it will pay for their great crime, unless they repent of their folly and wickedness.

1:9 He repeats this for emphasis. He wants no one to be in doubt about the wickedness of tampering with God's revealed truth. Compare Rev 22:18,19. Other references to false teachers: Matt 7:15; 24:11; Acts 20:29,30; Rom 16:17,18; 2 Cor 11:13-15; 1 Tim 4:1,2; 2 Tim 4:3,4; 2 Pet 2:1; Jude 4.

1:10 Did Paul's enemies accuse him of preaching only what he thought men wanted to hear? Verses 6-9 should show them that

God's? Or am I seeking to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be the servant of Christ.

11 But I tell you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not of man. 12 For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught *it*, but *learned it* by the revelation of Jesus Christ.

13 For you have heard of my former conduct in the Jews' religion, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure, and *tried to* destroy it.

14 And I advanced in the Jews' religion more than many of my contemporaries in my own nation, far surpassing them in zeal for the traditions of my fathers. 15 But when it pleased God, who set me apart from my mother's womb and called *me* by his grace, 16 to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood, 17 nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before

me, but I went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus.

18 Then, after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and stayed with him fifteen days. 19 But I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother. 20 Now about these things I am writing to you, look, in the presence of God, I am not lying. 21 Afterwards I came to the regions of Syria and Cilicia, 22 but my face was not known to the churches of Judea that are in Christ. 23 They had only heard that "He who formerly persecuted us is now preaching the faith he once *tried to* destroy." 24 And they glorified God in me.

2 Then fourteen years later I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took along Titus also. 2 And I went up *in accordance with* a revelation, and set before them the gospel that I preach

the opposite was true. Paul always preached the truth God had revealed and held none of it back for fear he might offend someone (Acts 20:20,26,27). As far as his message was concerned he did not try to please anyone but Christ. He knew that no one can be a true servant of Christ if he is not willing to preach the whole message of Christ whether men like it or not. But in other matters he was willing to please men in order to win them to Christ or help them grow in Christ. See Rom 15:1-3; 1 Cor 9:19-23; 10:33. We should follow him in both these ways.

1:11 See 2 Pet 1:16; Heb 2:3,4; Acts 1:1-3,8; 2:32; John 7:16,17; 12:49,50; Luke 24:45-48.

1:12 Eph 3:2-5; Rom 16:25-27; 1 Cor 15:3; Acts 22:14,15; 26:15,16. This is of the utmost importance. Paul insisted on this because the false teachers who had gone to Galatia denied it. He knew he was not guessing about the truth. He was not passing on something he heard from men and which he might have misunderstood. Christ Himself had revealed the truth to him, and so he could speak with complete authority. He did not have to compare the gospel he preached with any other so-called gospel to see if it was true. (But we need to compare the gospel we preach with Paul's. If ours is not the same as his, it is not the true gospel.) See also 2 Cor 1:12-14.

1:13,14 Acts 7:58; 8:1-3; 9:1,2; Phil 3:4-6; 1 Tim 1:13.

1:15 "From my mother's womb" - compare Jer 1:5; John 15:16.

"Called . . . by his grace" - v 6. God gave this call many years after Paul's birth and began to fulfill the purpose for which He had set him apart at birth.

1:16 Christ was revealed to Paul (Acts 9:3,4; 1 Cor 9:1). But here he speaks of God's purpose to reveal Christ *in* him. Paul understood that Christ was living and working in him and that he was to show forth Christ to others (2:20; 2 Cor 4:10,11; Col 1:29). This

is God's purpose for all believers.

"Gentiles" - 2:7; Acts 22:21; 26:17,18; Eph 3:8. In the New Testament the word "Gentiles" means people who are not Jews.

1:17 This is the only place the New Testament speaks of this trip into Arabia. It took place sometime during the events described in Acts 9:19-22. Paul does not tell us why he went there, but seems to imply that it was for the purpose of prayer, fellowship with Christ, and thought and meditation. He did not consult any man (v 16); he wanted to consult God.

1:18,19 Acts 9:26-30. The other apostles were probably not in Jerusalem at that time. If Peter and James welcomed him it is reasonable to think the others would have done so had they been there.

1:20 He solemnly states this matter because their acceptance of the true gospel was at stake. If they did not believe him they might continue to do what they began to do (v 6).

1:21 Acts 9:30; 11:25,26. Tarsus was in Cilicia (a part of what is now called Turkey). Antioch was in Syria.

1:22 Paul's work was in other areas and he spent only a very brief time in Jerusalem. So most of the Christians in Judea had no personal acquaintance with him.

1:23,24 They knew of the change in Paul but they didn't praise Paul for it. They praised God who changed Paul. And this was just what Paul desired above all (1 Cor 3:4-7; Eph 1:6,12,14; Phil 1:11).

2:1-10 Paul continues the subject he introduced in chapter 1. There he says God called him to be an apostle and revealed the gospel to him. Here he says the other apostles accepted him as an apostle and recognized that the gospel he preached was the same as the gospel they preached.

2:1 "Barnabas" - Acts 4:36; 9:27; 11:25,30; 12:25; 13:2; 15:2.

"Titus" - 2 Cor 2:13; 7:6; 2 Tim 4:10; Titus 1:4.

2:2 "A revelation" - a revelation from God. "Privately" - Paul did not want to get

among the Gentiles, but *I did this* privately to those of reputation, lest by any means I was running, or had run *my race*, in vain. 3 Yet not even Titus, *who* was with me and who was a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised. 4 And this *came up* because of false brethren brought in secretly. They came sneaking in to spy on our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, so that they might bring us into bondage. 5 We did not yield submission to them, no, not for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might remain with you.

6 But from those who seemed to be something (it makes no difference to me what they were – God shows favoritism to no man), for those who seemed *to be something* in conference added nothing to me. 7 On the contrary, when they saw that

involved in any possible argument in public with the leaders of the church in Jerusalem about the gospel. He hoped that privately they would fully agree with him about what the gospel was, and then this agreement could be made public. And this is what happened.

"Lest. . .in vain" – Paul was not afraid that he did not have the true gospel. He knew very well he had (1:12). But he was afraid if the other apostles opposed him and denounced the gospel he preached that it would destroy his work among the Gentiles. **2:3** Circumcision was one of the important issues of the day – v 12; 5:2,3,6,11; 6:12-15; Acts 15:1-5; Rom 4:9-16. The question was, did Gentile Christians have to become converts to the Jewish religion, accept circumcision and keep the law of Moses? The answer Paul and all the apostles gave was "no." Titus was a test case. He was a Gentile believer, and the apostles in Jerusalem accepted him as a true follower of Christ even though he was not circumcised.

2:4 These "false brethren" were Jews whom the believers in Jerusalem regarded as fellow believers. The aim of these Jews was to bring all Christians, Jew or Gentile, under the bondage of the law of Moses. Paul knew that one reason Christ came was to set people free from this law. The real question was, how do people obtain salvation – by obeying the law, or by the grace of God? The answer is very plain – 5:1-4; Acts 13:38,39; 15:10,11; Rom 3:24-28; 6:14; 7:4.

2:5 Paul knew that yielding to false teachers even for a moment could result in great loss for the churches of Galatia. And in all he did he kept in mind the effect it might have on other people.

2:6-9 Paul was not one to exalt men, either himself or others – 1 Cor 3:5,22,23. In this case, the important thing to him was not what people seemed to be, or the great privileges they had, or the high position they occupied, or their reputation with others. His one concern was whether they accepted as true the gospel Christ had revealed to him. And he could inform the Galatian churches

the gospel for the uncircumcised had been entrusted to me, *just as the gospel* for the circumcised *had been* to Peter 8 (for he who was working effectively in Peter in the position of apostle for the circumcised, the same one was working effectively in me for the Gentiles). 9 And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, *agreeing* that we *should go* to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcised. 10 But *they wanted* us to remember the poor. I too was eager to do the same thing.

11 But when Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he was to be blamed. 12 For before certain men came from James, he

that Peter, James and John, the leaders of the Jerusalem church, were in agreement with him about the meaning of the gospel (v 9).

In verses 7,8, and 9 the words "uncircumcised" and "circumcised" signify Gentiles and Jews. In those days people often spoke of these two groups of people in this way.

2:10 When Paul took the gospel to the Gentiles, the other apostles did not want him to forget the physical needs of the Jewish Christians in Judea. Paul himself was eager to help meet the needs of the poor there – Acts 24:17; Rom 15:25-28; 1 Cor 16:1-4; 2 Corinthians chapters 8,9. In the middle of a profound theological discussion this word about helping the poor shows the importance they all attached to such service. See also Ex 23:11; Deut 15:7,8; Ps 41:1; Prov 14:31; 19:17; 21:13; 29:7; 31:9; Matt 19:21; 2 Cor 9:9.

2:11-21 In this section Paul continues to defend his authority as an apostle. He was absolutely sure that Christ had revealed the gospel to him (1:12). So he was willing to stand publicly against anyone who spoke or did anything to bring the truth into doubt. Peter was a leader among the original apostles of Christ. He was a good man and one whom God had greatly used (Acts chapters 2-11). But he was not perfect, and there came this time when Paul, for the sake of the gospel, had to rebuke him to his face. **2:11** We do not know when Peter came to Antioch or the specific purpose of his visit. At that time Antioch was the largest city in that part of Asia and the center of Gentile Christianity (Acts 11:19-26; 13:1-3).

2:12 "From James" does not mean necessarily that James sent these men; it may mean simply that they went out from the church in Jerusalem where James was a leader. Compare Acts 15:13,20,24. James along with Peter and John had already given the right hand of fellowship to Paul, showing that they agreed with the gospel he preached (v 9).

Paul here calls the men who came to Antioch "of the circumcision." They were Jewish Christians who taught that Jews who

ate with the Gentiles, but when they arrived, he drew back and separated himself for fear of those who were of the circumcision. 13 And the other Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy.

14 But when I saw that they were not behaving in line with the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter in front of *them* all, "If you, being a Jew, live the way the Gentiles do, and not like the Jews, why do you compel the Gentiles to live like the Jews?"

15 "We *who are* Jews by nature, and not Gentile sinners, 16 know that a man is not justified by the works of the Law, but by faith in Jesus

believed in Christ should continue to keep the rules and ceremonies of the law of Moses. They did not think it was right for Jewish Christians to eat with Gentile Christians unless the Gentiles were willing to follow Jewish rules and ceremonies. Peter had learned that this attitude was wrong (Acts 10:27-29; 11:2-17). So he ate with the Gentile believers in Antioch. But when the "circumcision" group came there he stopped doing this.

Peter was very bold when he was filled with God's Spirit (Acts 2:4,14,36; 4:18-20,31; 5:29-33,41,42), but when he was not, he could easily give in to fear (compare Matt 26:69-75). And how true are the words of Prov 29:25!

2:13 "Played the hypocrite" is Paul's name for Peter's behavior. This is because Peter believed one thing (that it was all right to eat with Gentile believers), but acted as if he believed another thing (that it was wrong to eat with them). In this way fear of others or a desire for their approval can make even great men of God fall into hypocrisy. The Jewish Christians native to Antioch and even Barnabas, good man that he was (Acts 11:24), fell into the same sin – and sin it certainly was.

2:14 Paul saw that the situation was very serious. Peter knew the truth very well, but he was not acting according to the truth he knew. His actions were casting doubt on the real meaning of the gospel, just as the words of others had done (Acts 15:1,5).

"Live the way Gentiles do" – Paul meant that Peter himself was no longer following Jewish ceremonies and rules.

"Compel" – Peter was not forcing the Gentiles by words, but bringing pressure on them by his actions. So Paul had to rebuke him for the sake of the truth. He then set forth in vs 15-21 the meaning of the gospel. All the rest of this letter is based on the foundation of the truth in these verses.

2:15 Paul also was a Jew by birth and speaks from that point of view now.

2:16 He says that the Jewish Christian leaders had learned a very basic and important truth – salvation cannot come by trying to keep the law God gave through Moses. Sinners, whether Jewish or Gentile, can be

Christ, and we too have believed in Jesus Christ that we might be justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the Law. For by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified.

17 "But while we seek to be justified by Christ, if we ourselves also are found to be sinners, is Christ therefore a servant of sin? Absolutely not! 18 For if I rebuild the things I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. 19 For I through the Law am dead to the Law, that I might live for God. 20 I have been crucified with Christ. Nevertheless I live – yet not I, but Christ lives in me. And 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.

justified only by faith in Christ (compare Acts 13:38,39; Rom 3:24-26,28,30; 5:1). Any pressure brought on Christians to make them think they had to follow the rules and regulations of the law struck at the heart of the gospel. It still does. Any teaching that keeping any religious law whatever leads to salvation or contributes an iota to salvation is false. Any teaching that self-effort, and good works, and human merit can lead to salvation is equally false.

2:17 For the sake of some who might not have had a full understanding of the truth, Paul begins to answer a possible objection against the gospel. The language here is quite obscure, but it is very probable that this objection is the same he speaks of in Rom 6:1,15. He admits that all who are justified, including himself, are sinners. But does this mean that believing in Christ actually encourages sinning? The answer is, "absolutely not" (see note on this expression at Rom 3:30). See Romans chapter 6 and notes.

2:18 The meaning seems to be: "After denying that the law God gave through Moses is a way of salvation, if I (or anyone) turn back to it as if it is a way of salvation, I become guilty of sin, and the law itself will condemn me." Compare Heb 2:1-4; 6:4-6; 10:26-29; 12:25.

2:19 "Am dead" – see Rom 7:1-4. Rejecting the law as a way of salvation does not promote sin. It enables believers in Christ to "live for God". And the law, instead of giving life, was an instrument of death (Rom 7:9-11; 2 Cor 3:6).

2:20 "Crucified with Christ" – this is true of all believers, not just of Paul. See Rom 6:3-8. Christ died in their place and God counts His death their death. This is the way to a new kind of life. Believers are not the source of this spiritual life. Christ is. And the power to live this new life does not come from the physical or mental life of believers but from Christ living in them. Compare Rom 8:1-10. The new life can be lived only by faith in Christ the Son of God. The true Christian life begins by trusting in Him and continues in the same way (2 Cor 5:7; Col 2:6,7). Paul here is doing what he instructed others to do in Rom 6:11.

21 I do not set aside the grace of God. For if righteousness *comes* by the Law, then Christ died in vain."

3 O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you, that you should not obey the truth. Before your eyes Jesus Christ has been clearly portrayed among you as crucified. **2** This one *thing* I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? **3** Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now going to be made perfect by the flesh? **4** Have you suffered so many things in vain? If indeed *it is* in vain. **5** *The One* who grants the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, *does he do it* by *your* works according to the Law, or

by *your* hearing with faith?

6 Even as Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness. **7** Understand, therefore, that those who believe, they are *the ones who are* the children of Abraham. **8** And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles through faith, announced the gospel in advance to Abraham, *saying*, "In you all nations will be blessed." **9** So those who have faith are blessed with believing Abraham.

10 For as many as are of the works of the Law are under the curse. For it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the book of the Law." **11** But *it is* clear that no one is justified by the Law in the sight of God, for, "The righteous will live by faith." **12** And

"Gave himself for me"-1:4; Rom 5:6-8. **2:21** The teaching that men can be saved by keeping God's law makes the death of Christ meaningless and useless. So Paul has no hesitation in rejecting it. Why would Christ come and die for people to make them right with God if they could make themselves right with God by what they do? The choice is plain - salvation by grace or no salvation at all. **3:1** It is foolish to believe that Christ died for no reason. But false teachers were trying to lead these Christians into just such a foolish position. They would never have said that Christ died for nothing. But by teaching the necessity of law-keeping along with Christ's death they were indirectly teaching that His death was unnecessary. And such teaching was completely contrary to the truth Paul had "clearly portrayed" among them when he preached to them the gospel. **3:2** He appeals to their own experience as evidence that he taught the truth. When they believed the gospel he preached, they received God's Spirit (compare 4:6; Eph 1:13; Acts 10:44; Rom 8:15). God gave His Spirit to live in them not because of their efforts to keep God's law, but when they trusted in Christ. No one yet ever received God's Spirit by observing religious rites, rules and regulations. Observe that people do not have God's Spirit by nature. That Spirit must be received by faith in Christ. See John 14:17. **3:3** When they believed in Christ they experienced what God did by grace. Was it not foolish to think now that self-effort or rules and ceremonies of the law could carry them forward? Would it not be equally foolish for us to think so? **3:4** He is doubtful about them. Will the false teachers succeed in their efforts? Will the Christians there accept a perverted gospel? Will they lose the rewards their sufferings might have brought them? Their behavior makes him wonder and doubt (4:11,20). **3:5** He repeats the question of v 2 in a different form. To resist the false teaching they had heard he wants them to think and use the knowledge of the truth they had. **3:6** "Abraham" - Paul's purpose is to give

Scriptural proof that God justifies men by faith apart from the works of the law.

"Righteousness" - Gen 15:6; Rom 4:3. **3:7** Rom 4:11,12,16,17. "Children" here means, of course, spiritual descendants. **3:8** Gen 12:3; 18:18; 22:18.

"Scripture" - Rom 3:10; 4:3.

"In you. . .blessed" - see Gen 12:3; 18:18; 22:18.

3:9 People everywhere think that God's blessing can be earned by keeping the rules and ceremonies of religion, by attempts to obey the laws they think God has given. The Jews were confident they could gain God's blessing by observing the law God gave through Moses. Paul shows that God's blessing comes by faith, not by self-effort. Notes on "blessing" at Gen 12:1-3; Num 6:23-27; Deut 28:3-14; Ps 1:1; 119:1; Matt 5:3-12; Acts 3:26; Eph 1:3.

3:10 See Deut 27:26. By trying to keep God's law people do not gain the blessing they hoped for. Instead God's condemnation comes on them. How can this be? Because the law demands full, perfect, constant obedience to everything in it, and no person is capable of this obedience. See notes at Ex 19:5,6,8,21-25. Paul said in Phil 3:6 that his "legalistic righteousness" was faultless. But even he came under the curse the law pronounces on lawbreakers because he could not keep the tenth commandment (Rom 7:7-14). And if a person ever breaks one command of the law of God he is guilty of breaking the whole law (Jam 2:10,11). So condemnation has come on every person who has tried to be right with God by trying to keep God's law.

3:11 This is one of three places Hab 2:4 is quoted in the New Testament (Rom 1:17; Heb 10:38). It is by faith in God, not by efforts to keep His law, that a person can be right with God.

3:12 Lev 18:5. Law and faith are totally different principles. Faith trusts God and receives salvation and eternal life as a gift. The law promises life only to the person who "does them" (the commands of the law), not to the person who merely tries to do

the Law is not of faith; but, "The man who does them will live through them." 13 Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the Law, being made a curse for us (for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree"), 14 so that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

15 Brethren, I speak of man's ways: no one annuls or adds to a human covenant once *it has been* confirmed. 16 Now the promises were made to Abraham and his offspring. It does not say, "And to offsprings", meaning many; but, "And to your offspring", meaning one *person*, who is Christ. 17 And this I say, *that* the Law, which came four

them or says he does them. And since no one perfectly, constantly does them, the law brings death and condemnation (v 10; Rom 3:19,20).

3:13 See what the Lord Jesus was willing to do for sinful men! He took our place and let the curse of the broken law fall on Him. He paid the penalty for our crimes against it. Compare Rom 5:6-8; 2 Cor 5:21; 1 Pet 3:18. See notes on redemption at Ps 78:35; Matt 20:28.

"Tree" - Deut 21:22,23. In ancient times the authorities in Israel hung condemned and executed criminals on trees. This was a public display of their condemnation and disgrace. So Jesus died for crimes which we have done, and bearing our condemnation and disgrace hung on the cross (called "tree" in Acts 5:30; 10:39; 13:29; 1 Pet 2:24). We are the ones who deserve to be there.

3:14 In His suffering He thought of our blessing. His desire for our good was greater than His desire to avoid the condemnation and death of the cross. Now all believers in Christ are redeemed from the curse of the law (Rom 8:1). And they are heirs of the blessing God promised through Abraham (see vs 8,9).

"The promise of the Spirit" - Luke 24:49; John 14:16,17; Acts 1:4,5; 2:39. Notice carefully the teaching here. The blessings of God come only to those who have received God's Spirit. We receive God's Spirit "by faith" (vs 2,5; Luke 11:13; Eph 1:13). And all this is through "Christ Jesus", not through anyone or anything else. And it is clear from this verse that before believing in Christ we do not have God's Spirit.

3:15-17 This is generally true of human contracts and agreements - events which take place after they have been made do not affect them. Paul's point is that this is certainly true of God's covenant with Abraham. The law of Moses, coming centuries after it, could have no affect on it.

3:16 See Gen 12:7; 13:15; 24:7. Paul means that Christ is the heir of the promises God gave to Abraham. He is the "offspring" of Abraham (Matt 1:1). Believers in Christ are Abraham's heirs only because they are linked with Christ and are joint heirs with

hundred and thirty years later, cannot set aside the covenant previously confirmed by God in Christ, and so make the promise void. 18 For if the inheritance *comes* by the Law, *it is* no longer by promise. But God gave *it* to Abraham by promise.

19 What purpose then does the Law *serve*? It was added because of transgressions, until the offspring, to whom the promise was made, had come. *And it was* ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator. 20 Now a mediator is not a *mediator* of one *party only*; but God is one.

21 *Is* the Law then against the promises of God? Certainly not. For if a law had been granted that could have given life, then surely righteousness would have been by the Law. 22 But the

Christ (vs 14,29; Rom 4:13; 8:17).

3:18 Just as the law and faith are different principles (v 12), so the law and God's promise to Abraham are totally different. God's promise to bless people through Abraham had nothing whatever to do with the law. When God gives a promise men should simply believe it and rejoice, not try to get God to fulfill it by keeping rules and ceremonies.

"Inheritance" - Rom 4:13,14; 1 Cor 3:22; Matt 5:5; Heb 11:8-10; 1 Pet 1:4. Believers in Christ will inherit the earth and heaven too. All that Christ will have they will share, and Christ will have everything (Heb 1:2).

"Gave" (1:6) - Paul speaks of grace as he does of "faith" and "promise," as the opposite of "law." A gift of God cannot be earned by self-effort (Rom 4:4,5; Eph 2:8,9). It should simply be accepted with gratitude.

3:19 The law brought a curse to those under it. Then why did God, who wants to bless men, give the law? See Rom 3:20; 4:15; 5:20; 7:7. God used the law to bring sin out into the open, to reveal its nature and power. By this method He was teaching people their need of Christ. And to learn of one's need of Christ and to receive Him is the greatest of all possible blessings.

"Until" - God had set a time for the reign of Old Testament law. It was only until the "Offspring" (Christ) should come and provide salvation for people.

"Angels" - see Heb 2:2; Acts 7:38,53. The mediator through whom the law came was Moses.

3:20,21 Paul deals with a possible objection - since God is "one" (there are many so-called "gods", but not many Gods) why did He give His promises to Abraham and then give the law which was opposed to His promises? Paul says this is a misunderstanding. The law is not opposed to God's promises of blessing. But God's promises cannot be fulfilled as long as people depend on the law for salvation, because the law is unable to give spiritual life or make men righteous (see Rom 7:14; 8:3).

3:22,23 Compare Rom 3:19-24. The law can

Scripture has included everyone under sin, so that the promise *which comes* through faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

23 But before faith came, we were kept under the Law, confined for the faith that would later be revealed. 24 Therefore the Law was a tutor in charge of us *to bring us* to Christ that we might be justified by faith. 25 But now that faith has come, we are no longer under *this* tutor.

26 For you are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. 27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female – in Christ Jesus you are all one. 29 And if you *belong* to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, and heirs according to the promise.

only condemn and lock men up in the prison they have chosen for themselves – the prison of sin. Before Christ came and provided salvation and taught the way of faith, the law was like a jailer. Even the best of men apart from Christ were in this jail. In God's eyes those who break His law are condemned criminals who are held for punishment. They have no spiritual freedom and no hope of release apart from the Lord Jesus Christ.

No one can escape from this prison by self-effort, good works, law-keeping, religious rules and ceremonies, or anything else they can do. Salvation, liberation, spiritual freedom, and God's eternal blessings come only by the means He has appointed – faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (vs 9,14,26; 2:16; Rom 1:16,17; 3:22,28; John 3:16,36; 5:24; Eph 2:8,9).

3:24 The law could not save people, but God used it to discipline them until the way of salvation in Christ was revealed. See in Rom 7:7-14 how the Law was a "tutor" to Paul.

"Justified by faith" – 2:16.

3:25 Since Christ revealed the way of faith in Himself, and after people put their trust in Him for salvation, the law of Moses has no more authority over them (Rom 6:14).

3:26 Men are not sons of God by nature. Though God is the creator of all men He is not the spiritual father of all men (compare John 8:44). Only by faith in Christ do people become children of God – John 1:12,13.

3:27 "Baptized into Christ" – see notes at Rom 6:3. It is faith that makes us children of God (v 26), not water baptism, which is only an outward sign of an inner spiritual change. Baptism into Christ is only by God's Spirit – 1 Cor 12:13.

"Put on Christ" – clothed themselves with Christ – this means that believers stand before God in Christ, covered by His righteousness, as acceptable to God as Christ Himself is.

3:28 "You are all one" – 1 Cor 12:13; John 17:20-23; Col 3:11. God makes no distinction between human beings in Christ.

4 Now I am saying *that* an heir, as long as he is a child, though he owns it all, does not differ at all from a slave, 2 but is under guardians and managers until the time appointed by the father. 3 Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the rudimentary things of the world. 4 But when the fulness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, 5 to redeem those who were under the Law, so that we might be adopted as sons. 6 And because you are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, calling out, "Abba, Father." 7 Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

8 But at the time when you did not know God, you were enslaved to those who by nature are not gods. 9 But now after you have known God, or

With Him background, origins, social position, caste, race, etc, mean absolutely nothing. What men would count the poorest and lowliest believer in Christ is as acceptable to Him as any other.

3:29 Verses 7,14,18.

4:1-7 Paul refers to some customs of those days, and uses them as illustrations of spiritual truth. Male children were heirs and would eventually possess all their fathers had. But if they could afford to do so, fathers kept guardians to look after their children until they reached a certain age. When that age was reached the children were regarded as mature "sons" and no longer as children.

Paul is saying that people under the law were in a state similar to childhood, a condition of immaturity, not all that God wanted them to be. But with the coming of Christ, God's time had come to give to believers the rights of sons. Before Christ came they were under the "rudimentary things of the world" (v 3), or under the law (v 5). Now they are freed from all such "guardians and trustees." They have full freedom and all the privileges of the sons of God.

4:4 The "time" was about 2000 years ago; God's Son was Jesus. He was born "of a woman" (Matt 1:18-21; Luke 1:26-38). He had true human nature (John 1:14; Heb 2:14). And He was born a Jew under the law of Moses (as all Jews were).

4:5 "Redeem" – 3:13,14. As long as men were under the law they could not have the full rights that God's sons now have.

4:6 See 3:2,14; Rom 8:15. "Abba" is the word for father in the Aramaic language (a language closely related to Hebrew).

4:7 Believers in Christ are not like slaves who have to labor under a whip. They are God's sons who have been freely given everything God has (1 Cor 3:21-23).

4:8,9 These Gentile believers were formerly in bondage to false religion and false gods, but they had gained freedom by a knowledge of the true God. Now they were considering putting themselves under the law of Moses. This was to exchange freedom

rather are known of God, how is it that you turn again to those weak and beggarly rudimentary things to which you desire again to be in bondage? 10 You are observing days, and months, and times, and years. 11 I am afraid for you, that perhaps I have labored for you in vain.

12 Brethren, I appeal to you, become like me, for I *became* like you. You have not harmed me at all. 13 You know that because of bodily infirmity I preached the gospel to you at first. 14 And you did not despise or scorn my trial which was in my flesh, but received me as if I was an angel of God, *even as if I were* Christ Jesus. 15 Where, then, is that blessedness you spoke about? For I testify about you that, if *it had been* possible, you would have plucked out your own eyes and given them to me.

for a new bondage after escaping from old bondage into freedom.

4:10 Paul is speaking of the law of Moses. By "days" he means Sabbath days; "months" – celebration of the new moon festival; "times" – Jewish feasts; "years" – Sabbath and Jubilee years (Ex 20:8; 23:10,11,14-17; Leviticus chapter 23; 25:8-12). To keep these religiously was to turn to what he calls "weak and miserable principles" (v 9). Those days, etc, were only pictures, types, or shadows of spiritual truth, and believers in Christ have no obligation whatever to observe any of them. Compare Heb 8:5; 10:1. Paul well knew (and we should know) that keeping or not keeping certain days can not make us either better or worse. But the teaching that believers *must keep them brings them into bondage and injures their spiritual life.*

4:11 "I am afraid for you" – their observance of Jewish holy days, etc, alarmed Paul. To him it was an indication that they were turning to the perverted gospel of false teachers (1:6,7). It must have made him wonder if they had really understood the true gospel.

4:12-20 Paul has been speaking of very important doctrinal matters. Now he speaks of the personal relationship that existed between him and the Galatians. Here his pastor's heart is revealed. They are his "little children". He loves them and is deeply concerned about them.

4:12 "Become like me" – Paul was freed from any bondage to the law and rejoiced in the grace of God alone. He wanted them to follow him in this.

"I became like you" – they were Gentiles and so when he went there to preach the gospel he became like a Gentile, like one who had never been a Jew. Compare 1 Cor 9:20-23. He says he has not been speaking to them as he has because they have wronged him personally. On the contrary, he shows in the following verses that there was much love between them.

4:13 "Infirmity" – or "illness." We do not know what he is referring to. Was it an eye disease (v 15)? Was it the "thorn" of 2 Cor

16 Have I now become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?

17 They zealously pursue you, *but* not for a good *purpose*. Yes, they want to separate you *from us* so that you might zealously go after them.

18 But *it is* good to be zealous in a good *thing*, always, and not just when I am present with you.

19 My little children, for whom I feel again the pains of birth until Christ is formed in you, 20 I desire to be in your presence now, and to change my tone, because I am perplexed about you.

21 Tell me, you who desire to be under the Law, do you not understand the Law? 22 For it is written that Abraham had two sons, the one by a slave woman, the other by a free woman. 23 But the one from the slave woman was born according to

12:?? Was it a result of the mistreatment he suffered (Acts 14:19)? We cannot be sure.

4:14 "My trial" – they may have been tempted to think his infirmity was a punishment from God, and so to reject him as a messenger of God. But they did not give in to such a temptation, but welcomed him with great respect.

4:15 The teaching of false teachers that was bringing them into bondage to the law of Moses was killing their joy and their love for Paul. The doctrine of self-effort for salvation will always be a joy-killer.

4:16 Telling people God's truth is the greatest thing we can do for them, but all too often people reject and hate us because we do it.

4:17,18 "They" – he means the false teachers who preached a perverted gospel (1:6,7). Such people always want to be leaders of sects and factions and to have people zealously on their side. Compare Rom 16:17,18. Paul (and he is an example to us all) wanted people to be zealous for God. Compare 1 Cor 3:4-9,21.

4:19 The believers in Galatia were Paul's spiritual children (compare 1 Cor 4:15). They were born again (John 3:3-8) because of his efforts among them, efforts as painful to him as childbirth to a woman. Now he is in pain for them again. What they needed was not to have another spiritual rebirth (there is nothing in the New Testament that even suggests the possibility of such a thing. Indeed, how could an individual be born by God's Spirit again and again?)

What they needed was for Christ to be formed in them. That is, for Christ who was already in them (3:2,26-29) to live His life in them as He did in Paul (2:20). They needed to be transformed in their thinking and acting (Rom 12:2; 13:14; 2 Cor 3:18; Eph 4:13-15).

4:20 "Perplexed" – v 11; 1:6; 3:1. He hardly knew how he should speak to them by letter.

4:21 "Desire to be under the law" – this was the great error of some of them, and Paul knew it was because of their ignorance of what the law meant.

4:22,23 See Gen 16:1-4; 17:15,16;

the flesh, but the one from the free woman *was born as a result* of promise.

24 These things are symbolic, for these are the two covenants. The one *is* from mount Sinai, which produces bondage. This is Hagar. 25 For this Hagar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to the present Jerusalem that is in bondage with her children. 26 But the Jerusalem that is above is free, and is the mother of us all. 27 For it is written,

“Rejoice, barren *one*,
you who do not bear *children*.
Break forth and cry out, you who have
no labor pains;
for the desolate *one* has far more

21:1-5; Rom 4:18-21.

4:24-31 Paul draws spiritual lessons from the Old Testament stories of Abraham, Abraham’s wife Sarah, and the slave girl Hagar. He knew they were real people in history. But he saw them also as types or pictures of spiritual things. Some scholars have objected to his method here, but Paul was inspired by God’s Spirit and was not making a mistake. The tabernacle and the whole law were shadows of spiritual things (Heb 8:5; 10:1).

We may even say the whole Old Testament is a type, figure, picture, or shadow of the spiritual realities of the new covenant established by Christ. Of course, we should be very careful in our interpretations of the events and details of the Old Testament. God gave Paul special inspiration by His Spirit, and made him infallible in his teaching. This is not true of us. And in our days sometimes some very wild interpretations and spiritualizing of literal OT passages are heard in the churches.

4:24,25 Hagar represents the old covenant God made through Moses at Mount Sinai (Exodus chapter 19). Sarah represents the new covenant of Christ announced in Matt 26:28. Hagar was a slave girl and her offspring was not to be regarded as the free-born son of Abraham (see Rom 9:7,8). Hagar is a symbol of the law of Moses, of Mount Sinai where that covenant was given, and of the city of Jerusalem which was the center of the practice of the old covenant. And the old covenant, Paul says, means spiritual bondage or slavery (vs 1,9; 3:10,23).

4:26 Sarah is a symbol of the new covenant and of the heavenly Jerusalem which is the center of the spiritual realities of the new covenant (Heb 12:22). There is no bondage, no slavery there. And believers now are related to the new Jerusalem, not to the old.

4:27 See Isa 54:1. Isaiah spoke of the glorious future of Israel when it would come under the blessings of the Messiah and the new age He would establish. Fruitless before, it would become fruitful by God’s grace and power.

4:28 Abraham believed God’s promise, and God gave him Isaac. Isaac came into

children than she who has a husband.”

28 Now we, brethren, like Isaac, are children of promise. 29 But then just as he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him *who was born* according to the Spirit, just so *it is* now. 30 Nevertheless what does the Scripture say? Send away the slave woman and her son; for the son of the slave woman will not be an heir with the son of the free woman. 31 So then, brethren, we are not children of the slave woman, but of the free.

5 Therefore stand firm in the liberty for which Christ has set us free, and do not allow yourselves to be tied again to the yoke of

existence because of the life-giving, miracle-working Word of God. This is the same way believers now receive new life and become the spiritual descendants of Abraham (Jam 1:18; 1 Pet 1:23). “Promise” here is put in contrast to the law of Moses.

4:29 See Gen 21:8,9. Ishmael was born “according to the flesh,” in the usual way that people are born. There was nothing supernatural about his birth. Isaac was born “according to the Spirit.” That is, God’s Spirit enabled Abraham and Sarah to have him when, humanly speaking, it was impossible (Heb 11:11,12; Rom 4:18-21). As Ishmael persecuted Isaac so did those under the old covenant (Jews) persecute those under the new covenant (followers of Christ). See Acts 5:40; 7:54-58; 13:49,50; 14:19; etc. And so will unspiritual people in every era persecute spiritual people.

4:30 “Scripture” – Gen 21:10. The spiritual meaning is that those who are trying to be saved by their efforts to keep the law are in bondage and have no place with those who receive salvation and freedom by God’s grace. These two totally different ways do not mix. The old covenant and the new covenant cannot somehow be joined and made into a third thing. Any such attempt produces only a perverted gospel (1:7).

4:31 This means that believers in Christ have no connection with the law of Moses, with the old covenant, with Judaism. They are children of the new covenant alone. They are born again by the power of God through the promises of the gospel of Christ. For two other comparisons of the old and new covenants see 2 Cor 3:6-18; Heb 8:6 – 10:18; 12:18-24.

5:1 All teaching that promotes self-effort and observance of laws and rules and rites and ceremonies as a way of salvation is like a yoke of slavery (4:3-9). Especially, Paul has in mind the law of Moses (compare Acts 15:10,11). Christ has set believers free from any such yoke. This means He has set us free from all forms of religious bondage whether it goes under the name of Judaism or of any other religion or of a perverted kind of Christianity. Free means free. Believers in Christ should recognize

bondage.

2 Look, I, Paul, tell you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you at all. 3 For once again I solemnly declare to every man who receives circumcision, that he is duty bound to keep the whole Law. 4 Christ has been put at a distance from you, you who are *trying to be justified* by the Law. You have fallen away from *the position of grace*. 5 For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness *which is by faith*. 6 For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision nor their freedom and value it and not give it up. They are yoked to Christ (Matt 11:28-30). This is the only yoke they need. And this yoke brings freedom.

5:2-12 Here Paul in plain language sets forth the impossibility of mixing the two ways of law and grace. Men must choose one or the other. They cannot have both. Men cannot be saved both by God's grace and by their own efforts, both through faith and through ceremonies and rules and law keeping.

5:2 "I, Paul" – he speaks with absolute authority as an apostle of Christ (1:1), as one who had the revelation of the gospel from Christ Himself (1:12).

"Circumcision" – note at Gen 17:11-14; Lev 12:3. The physical act of circumcision is nothing in itself. But Paul is speaking about the situation they were in. If the Galatians agreed with those false teachers and accepted the religious ceremony of circumcision at their hands, and so took themselves under the law of Moses, they could not have the benefits of the new covenant. They had to choose either Christ as the way of salvation or the law of Moses which could never save.

5:3 He means that circumcision in that situation would make them like Jewish converts and as such they would be obligated to keep the whole law of Moses. And, as he had pointed out already, this would not result in blessing but in a curse (3:10-12).

5:4 "Christ has been put at a distance from you" – this means that such people remove themselves from the effectual working of Christ in their lives. They are turning their backs on the realm of grace where He is active.

"Fallen away from. . . grace" – Paul is not saying believers will do this. In fact, he was confident that even the Galatian Christians, weak and vulnerable as they were, would not (v 10). But he is emphasizing this principle: law and grace do not mix. The way of faith and the way of self-effort have nothing in common. To go to the law, to depend on rules and ceremonies is to forsake the way of grace. Paul is not teaching here (or anywhere) that believers will lose their salvation by falling into sin (compare Rom 5:9,10; 8:29-39; 1 John 1:9; 2:1).

By "fallen away from grace" he does not mean fallen into the usual temptations that beset us all. He means fallen away from the teaching that it is by God's grace alone

uncircumcision can accomplish anything, but only faith that works through love.

7 You ran well. Who hindered you that you should not obey the truth? 8 This persuasion *does not come* from the One who calls you. 9 A little yeast permeates the whole lump. 10 I have confidence in you in the Lord, that you will have no other mind. But the one who is troubling you will bear his judgment, whoever he is. 11 And *as for me, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why do I still suffer persecution?* For then the offense of

that men are saved. It may be possible for those who are not well grounded in the truth of the Gospel to be temporarily deceived by false teachers, but to permanently abandon the Gospel of grace altogether – this is something else. Those who do it show that they do not really belong to Christ (1 John 2:19). Christ will keep His sheep and they will not permanently fall away and be lost (John 10:27,28; 17:11,12).

5:5 "We" – we true believers in Christ, who reject the way of law and self-effort. The law brings bondage and death. Faith inspires eager hope for the final fulfillment of God's promises (3:18,29). Compare Rom 8:23-25.

"Righteousness" here does not mean the righteousness God has already counted to the believer (2:16; Rom 3:21-24; 5:1), but being actually made perfectly righteous in every way (Rom 8:29; 1 John 3:2). And this awaits the future and is a glorious hope inspired by God's Spirit.

5:6 See 6:15; 1 Cor 7:19; Rom 2:28,29; 4:9-12. The same is true of any outward ceremony. There is none which can make a person acceptable to God. God counts men righteous and saves them through faith alone, and after He saves them they are to walk by faith and obey Christ's command to love one another (John 13:34; 15:12). What possible good could it do us to observe any number of rules or ceremonies if we do not trust and love Christ? A faith that results in love is not one important thing among many. It is the only thing that counts.

5:7 "You ran well" – 1 Cor 9:24; Heb 12:1.

"Who hindered you" – 1:7.

5:8 The one who called them was God (1:6). He certainly was not the one who kept them from obeying the truth.

5:9 See 1 Cor 5:6-8. Even a little false teaching can eventually affect a whole church, a whole denomination.

5:10 After warning them about falling away from the way of grace (v 4), he expresses his confidence that they will not. The Lord Himself had made him sure that they would agree with the truth he has written to them.

Compare Heb 6:9 after 6:4-8 and Heb 10:39 after 10:26-31. As for the false teacher (or teachers) who was leading them astray he was sure that God's judgment would come on him in due course. Compare 2 Pet 2:1-3.

5:11 Had anyone there said that Paul taught circumcision was necessary for salvation? If

the cross has ceased. 12 I wish those who trouble you would amputate themselves!

13 For, brethren, you have been called to liberty. But *do* not *use* liberty as an opportunity for the flesh. Instead, with love serve one another. 14 For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, *even* in this: "You shall love your neighbour as yourself." 15 But if you bite and devour one another, watch

out that you are not consumed by each other.

16 So I say, walk in the Spirit, and you will not fulfil the desires of the flesh. 17 For the flesh desires *what is* against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh. These are opposed to one another, so that you cannot do what you want. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law.

so, it was a slander.

"Persecution" – the Jews persecuted Paul because he taught that the law of Moses was not a way of salvation and that circumcision in itself had no spiritual importance to Christians.

"Offense of the cross" – compare 1 Cor 1:23. What is this offense? How does the offense cease by turning back to the law of Moses? The offense is that the cross of Christ proclaims man's complete ruin in sin. It declares that people are so bad and so weak that they can never be saved by self-effort, religion, rules and ceremonies; that their only hope is in the death of the Son of God in their place.

This strikes at people's pride and self-esteem and brings them into the dust at Christ's feet, and so is offensive to them. There is no offense of the cross in the teaching that keeping religious rules and ceremonies is sufficient for salvation. This is what many religious people like to hear. They like to think they can pile up merit with God and save themselves by what they do. Such teaching is very agreeable indeed to their proud blind hearts.

5:12 "Those who trouble you" – the false teachers were stirring the Galatians to rebellion against God's truth. Paul suggests they were no better than some fanatical priests in idol temples who castrated themselves.

5:13 Paul now turns to the practical application of the truth he has written up to this point. This is his usual method – he lays a foundation of truth and then pleads with believers to live in accordance with it. Compare Rom 12:1,2; Eph 4:1.

"Liberty" – v 1. Christ does not make us free so that we can live a life of sin (sinning is not freedom, but the worst kind of bondage – John 8:34; Rom 6:16). Christ frees us so we can become the willing servants of God and of one another. See Rom 6:15-23.

"For the flesh" – in Greek "sarx", the word Paul used to indicate what we all are by nature. See Rom 7:5,18; 8:3,5,8. Christians do not become free from the law so that they can indulge their sinful natures – quite the opposite (see Romans chapter 6).

5:14 Did they want to be under the law (4:21)? Paul says forget the rules and ceremonies of the law and fulfill the whole essence of the law – love (Lev 19:18; Matt 22:39; Rom 13:8-10; Jam 2:8). Actually the essence of the law can be fulfilled only in those who believe in Christ and have His Spirit (Rom 8:4).

5:15 The false teachers there had brought

strife and divisions. This is always one result of their activities (Rom 16:17). God wants His people united in love and truth – not in love without truth nor in truth without love. Error and strife destroy churches. Truth and love keep them spiritually alive and growing.

5:16 "Walk" – or "behave" or "live" or "go forward." This is Paul's theme from here up to 6:10. By "Spirit" he means God's Spirit. He is the one who gives believers the power to live a spiritual life in Christ. Compare Rom 8:4-14. Paul does not deny that the sinful nature (the "flesh" – v 13) and its desires are in believers. He very plainly indicates that they are. This is even clearer in the next verse. See also Rom 7:14-25; 13:14; 1 John 1:8. The flesh and its desires are in us all, but we can subdue and conquer them by God's Spirit.

5:17 God's Spirit and the flesh (man's fallen, sinful nature) have absolutely nothing in common. They have different desires, different thoughts, different aims (Rom 8:5-8). They will be at war with one another until the end of our earthly lives. The flesh – what we are by the nature we received from our parents – will never give up, will never stop desiring the wrong things, will never become good and holy. In fact, with the passing of time it gets worse (Eph 4:22). And God's Spirit will resist the flesh every step of the way, and will never give in to a single one of its demands.

What does Paul mean by "you cannot do what you want"? It may mean that believers do not do all the good they want to do because their sinful natures hinder them (see Rom 7:15,18,20). Or it may possibly mean they do not fulfill the desires of their sinful nature because the Holy Spirit in them opposes those desires. To some extent both of these things are true, and both show that the sinful nature is still in believers.

And observe carefully that Paul is not teaching the Galatians that the way of victory is to have their sinful nature eradicated here on earth. He does not hold out this hope in any of his letters (and it is not found anywhere else in the Bible). In fact, he teaches something else altogether. The way to victory, Paul says, is living by God's Spirit (v 16).

5:18 "Led by the Spirit" – see Rom 8:14. God's Spirit has led believers out of religious bondage, away from the principle of self-effort for salvation. He does not lead them back into such things.

"Not under the law" – Rom 6:14. People

19 Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are *these*: adultery, fornication, impurity, lewdness, 20 idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, discord, jealousies, rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, heresies, 21 envy, murders, drunkenness, carousing, and the like. Concerning these I tell you in advance, just as I have told you in time

past, that those who go on doing such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patient endurance, kindness, goodness, faith, 23 meekness, self-control. Against such there is no law. 24 And those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

generally think that the only way to subdue the desires and works of the flesh is by laws and regulations. Paul knew that such things can actually promote sinful desires and sin (see Rom 7:5,7-13). He knew that living by God's Spirit is the only possible way for us to conquer the flesh.

5:19-21 Observe that he puts idolatry alongside immorality, and selfishness and strife alongside drunkenness and debauchery. To spiritual people it is "evident" that these things come out of the sinful nature, out of the fallen heart of man. Compare Matt 15:19; Mark 7:21-23; Rom 1:29-32; 3:9-18. Paul does not list here all the acts of the sinful nature. These are only examples. Some of these acts are directly against God, some against other men, some against the person who does them. They are all destructive and worthy of God's anger and judgment.

"Idolatry" - Ex 20:3-6; etc.

"Witchcraft" - Deut 18:9-12; etc.

"Dissensions", "heresies" - 1:6,7; 1 Cor 3:3,4.

"Envy" - Prov 14:30; 27:4; Matt 27:18; Acts 17:5; Jam 3:14,16.

5:21 "Do" - practice.

"Will not inherit the kingdom of God" - see 6:7,8; 1Cor 6:9,10; Eph 5:5,6; Rev 21:8. In spite of such words there are always some so-called Christians who persuade themselves they can sin as they please and get away with it. Avoid such people. They have deceived themselves and will try to deceive us. Note on "kingdom of God" at Matt 4:17.

5:22,23 These things are not fruit of the believer's spirit but produced by the Spirit of God in the believer. They are not the result of self-effort. But this does not mean that the believer should be passive and do nothing. He must live in the Spirit and follow the Spirit's leading. Otherwise his fruit will not appear in his life. The word "fruit" suggests a process of growth. Compare Matt 13:23.

For fruit to appear in the realm of nature there must be first the seed, then the growth of the plant or tree, then the bud and the flower, and then the fruit. So it is with spiritual fruit. When we first believe in Christ there is often a rush of love, joy and peace to the heart. But these need to be developed and perfected, and other spiritual virtues added. Things like patience, faithfulness and self-control develop over a period of time. Compare 2 Pet 1:5-8.

God wants everyone of His children to have all the qualities in this list, and by the working of His Spirit we can have them. Paul

puts love first. He knew it was the greatest of all qualities (vs 6,14; 1 Cor 13:13).

"Joy" - John 15:11; 16:20-22; 17:13; Rom 5:11; 14:17; 15:13. The happiness that people in the world may sometimes feel is based on outward circumstances. The joy of believers is based on eternal realities.

"Peace" - Luke 2:14; John 14:27; 16:33; Rom 1:7; 14:17; 15:13.

"Patient endurance" - one word in Greek, having both meanings. Rom 5:3; Col 1:11; Heb 6:12; 10:36; 12:1; Jam 1:3,4.

"Kindness" - (a better translation of the Greek word than "gentleness") 2 Cor 6:6; Eph 2:7; Titus 3:4.

"Goodness" - Rom 15:14; Eph 5:9.

"Faith" or "faithfulness" - Matt 24:45; 25:21; 1 Cor 4:2; 7:25; Rev 2:10; 17:14.

"Meekness" or "gentleness" - Matt 11:29; 2 Cor 10:1; 1 Thess 2:7.

"Self-control" - 2 Tim 1:7; 1 Cor 9:25,27; 2 Pet 1:6.

All these qualities are given by God's Spirit so that we should exercise them and live them out in our daily lives. We can either hinder or encourage their growth in us.

5:24 This is true of all real believers, all who belong to Christ, and not of just a few exceptional saints. In 2:20 Paul speaks of the believer's crucifixion with Christ. Here he speaks of what the believer himself has done. He does not say believers should do this, but that they have done it. Believers did this when they first repented and trusted in Christ.

Repentance signifies a complete break with the old way of living which was under the power of the sinful nature. Faith in Christ accepts His death in the believer's place. In other words, by their action in repenting and believing in Christ they are saying (though in the very beginning they may not have a good understanding of this), "I am the one who should have been crucified, not Christ." They are confessing that the proper place for their sinful nature is on a cross. They agree with God's verdict about it.

And they deny themselves and take up their cross and follow Christ (Matt 10:38,39; 16:24-26. See notes there). If people are not willing to do this there is no good reason to think they are true Christians. Paul is here defining what true believers are. If they have not "crucified" their sinful nature they do not belong to Christ.

However, this whole passage from v 16 does not lead us to think that believers will have no more trouble with their sinful nature. Paul shows very plainly that the opposite will be true. Believers, in the attitude

25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. 26 Let us not desire empty glory, provoking one another, envying one another.

6 Brethren, if anyone is taken in a sin, you who are spiritual restore such a one in the spirit of meekness, considering yourself, so that you also are not tempted. 2 Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. 3 For if a man thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. 4 But let everyone *test and* prove his own work, and then he will have reason to rejoice in himself alone, and not in someone else. 5 For everyone should bear his own burden.

6 Let the one who is being taught the Word

they take toward God and sin, have crucified the sinful nature, and they are united with Christ who was crucified in their place (Rom 6:4-7). But the sinful nature is not dead and buried in believers. And it continually tries to get its own way again in their lives (v 17). So Christ tells us we must take up our cross "daily" - Luke 9:23.

"Crucified the flesh" speaks of the attitude of believers toward their sinful nature and toward the cross of Christ.

5:25 God's Spirit has given spiritual life to all believers (John 3:3-8). Since this is true they should follow where the Spirit leads and go step by step with Him. This is the only way of victory over the sinful nature, the only way to keep it where it belongs - on a cross.

5:26 Paul begins to speak of keeping in step with God's Spirit in some very practical matters. The Spirit hates conceit, strife, and envy, and so should we who want to walk with Him. They are works of the flesh.

6:1 "Spirit of meekness" - 5:23; 2 Tim 2:24,25. Harsh, unloving condemnation of someone fallen into sin is not the way to bring him to repentance. Compare Luke 22:60-62; Mark 16:7; John 21:15.

"Tempted" - even those who are spiritual should not think they are beyond temptation and sin (1 Cor 10:12).

6:2 Believers are not under the law of Moses (3:25; 5:1), but they are under the law of Christ. This is the law of love (John 13:34). If we love fellow believers we will want to help them in everything that makes life difficult and burdensome for them.

6:3 One of the great obstacles to fulfilling v 2 is conceit (5:26). We must have a right attitude toward ourselves if we are to be really helpful to others. This right attitude is seen in Luke 17:10; Rom 12:16; 1 Cor 3:5-7; Phil 2:3.

6:4 See 2 Cor 10:12-18. If we think we are better than other believers, or that our ministry is superior to theirs, this will promote pride and will be an obstacle to the fulfilment of verse 2.

6:5 Every individual has his own duties and he is responsible to God only for them, not for someone else's (John 21:21,22; Rom 14:12).

share all good things with the one who is doing the teaching.

7 Do not be deceived; God is not mocked. For whatever a man sows, that is what he will reap. 8 For he who sows to his flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; but he who sows to the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap life everlasting. 9 And let us not be weary in doing good, for in due time we will reap, if we do not give up. 10 Therefore as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, especially to those who are of the household of faith.

11 You see with what large letters I have written to you with my own hand.

12 As many as desire to make a good showing in

6:6 Compare 1 Cor 9:9-14; Rom 15:26,27; 1 Tim 5:17,18.

6:7 This is a truth that appears throughout the Bible - Lev 26:3-17; Deut 30:15-18; Hos 8:7; 10:12; Prov 22:8; Ps 18:25-27; Job 4:8; 2 Cor 9:6.

6:8 There are only two possible ways to live: pleasing self ("flesh"), or pleasing God's Spirit. The one way ends in destruction as it should. The other way ends in eternal life (5:19-21; Rom 2:5-11; 8:5,6,12-14). Paul has already said that believers have crucified the flesh (5:24). So anyone whose life is taken up in pleasing his sinful nature is no true believer in Christ (though it is possible for every true believer to fall sometimes into that error).

But is eternal life something to be reaped? Paul knew it is a gift (Rom 6:23), but he is showing here that it is an inheritance that is entered after a certain kind of life (compare Rom 2:7-10). He is not teaching salvation by works, but transformation of life by God's Spirit. Believers are not like anyone else in the world. They alone of all people actually sow to the Spirit.

6:9 "Doing good" is one way believers sow to please the Spirit of God. And it is an evidence that God's Spirit is in them (5:22). Believers will receive a reward for the good they have done - Matt 5:12; 10:42; 25:21; 1 Cor 3:14; 15:58; Rev 22:12. Those who want to do good in a world like this will find many opportunities, but will meet with many discouragements also and will sometimes be tempted to give up. Paul encourages us all with thoughts of the future reward.

6:10 "All" means all - even our enemies (Matt 5:43-48; Luke 6:35; Rom 12:20,21).

6:11 "Large letters" - did Paul write large letters because his eyes were bad? Or because he wanted to make this concluding portion stand out? Or because he was emphasizing what follows? We do not know.

6:12 The false teachers there tried to please men. They wanted to impress the Jews with their ability and zeal. And they did not want to bear the "offense of the cross" (5:11). Some so-called servants of Christ will do anything to avoid persecution and be popular. Compare 1:10.

the flesh, *are trying to* compel you to be circumcised, only so that they can avoid suffering persecution for the cross of Christ. 13 For not even those who are circumcised keep the Law. But *they* want to have you circumcised so they can boast about your flesh. 14 But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified to me, and I to the

world. 15 For in Christ Jesus *what* avails *is* neither circumcision nor lack of circumcision, but a new creation. 16 Peace and mercy *be* on all those who live according to this rule, and on the Israel of God.

17 From now on let no one trouble me, for I bear on my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.

18 Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with your spirit. Amen.

6:13 "Keep" – Rom 2:17-24. Not one of the false teachers fully kept the law of Moses.

"Boast" – the boasting would be that they had made converts to their views.

6:14 "The cross" – this is the believer's true ground for glory and pride. It is not in himself or in what he has done, but in the death of Christ for sinners. Compare Rom 3:27; 1 Cor 29-31; Eph 2:9. We should learn to be careful of those who do not follow Paul in this but boast in themselves and what they have done. What a man boasts about is a good indication of his character.

"Crucified" – 2:20; 5:24. By the "world" Paul means "this present evil world" (1:4). He means the sinful world – all that men want and seek and boast in. Compare John 1:10; 7:7; 17:14; Rom 12:2; 1 John 2:15-17; 5:19. Paul wanted nothing from the sinful world. It was a poor dead thing as far as he was concerned. And he was crucified to the world. The world regarded him as a fool, and wanted nothing from him. Between the world and him there was a great gulf caused by Christ's death. The world crucified Christ – what part would Paul want with Christ's murderer?

See in Galatians how Paul uses the word "crucified" in relationship to the believer – crucified with Christ (2:20), crucified the flesh (5:24), crucified to the world (6:14).

6:15 "A new creation" – 2 Cor 5:17. The important thing is transformation of the inner person, new spiritual life, not rites, ceremonies and religious laws like the Jews practiced. If we have not been born again

(John 3:3-8), those outward things cannot have the slightest real value. If we have been born again we should see that they do not.

6:16 "This rule" – the principle he has laid down in vs 14,15.

"And on the Israel of God" – the NIV (1978 edition) has this translation: "even to the Israel of God." This is unnecessary and could be misleading. The Greek word is "kai", usually translated "and" in the New Testament. (In the KJV the word is translated "and" 8,182 times, "also" 515 times, and "even" only 108 times.) By "Israel" Paul means only those Jews who had rejected the way of self-effort and believed in Christ. They were the true Israelites. Compare Rom 2:28,29; 9:6; 11:1-7. In the New Testament the Church made up of believing Jews and Gentiles is never called "the Israel of God." (The NIV does not even have a note stating that the Greek word usually means something other than "even.")

6:17 Paul appeals to the Christians there to accept his teaching, reject false teachers, and no longer be a source of trouble to him.

"Marks of the Lord Jesus" – he is probably referring to the scars received in the service of Jesus – 2 Cor 1:5; 11:23-25; Col 1:24.

6:18 Paul ends the letter as he began it with "grace" (1:6). This was a reminder to them that every blessing they had, especially every spiritual blessing, was by the grace of Christ.

