



The Gospel  
is  
Life

# INTRODUCTION

## AUTHOR

The Apostle Paul



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## DATE

There are three possibilities for the timeframe of Paul's writing of Galatians:

1. It could have been written from Syrian Antioch at the end of Paul's first missionary journey (AD 48-49).
2. It could have been written from Corinth near the end of Paul's second missionary journey, after Paul had visited the Galatian Christians early in his second journey (AD 51-52).
3. It could have been written from Syrian Antioch at the close of the second missionary journey (AD 52).

## PURPOSE

After one of the stops made Paul made with the Galatian congregations, a group of false teachers entered the congregations (Judaizers) and taught the people that they had to keep the Old Testament Ceremonial Laws, such as circumcision, in order to be saved. It seems they even tried to undermine Paul's character and authority as one of Christ's apostles. Paul was heart broken that the Galatian Christians deserted the message of the Gospel and forcefully calls them back to God's grace. He proclaims clearly that the law will not save us but only faith in Jesus Christ and his work of salvation.

## LUTHER ON GALATIANS

The Galatians had been brought by St. Paul to the true Christian faith, from the law to the gospel. After his departure, however, false apostles came along. They were disciples of the true apostles, but they so turned the Galatians around that they believed they had to be saved by works of the law and were committing sin if they did not keep the law—as even several dignitaries in Jerusalem maintained (Acts 15).

To refute them, St. Paul magnifies his office; he will not take a back seat to any other apostle. He boasts that his doctrine and office are from God alone, in order that he might silence the boast of the false apostles who helped themselves to the works and reputation of the the true apostles. He says it is not true, even if an angel were to preach differently, or he himself, to say nothing of disciples of apostles, or of apostles themselves. This he does in chapters 1 and 2, and concludes that everyone must be justified without merit, without works, without law, through Christ alone.

In chapters 3 and 4 he proves all this with passages of Scripture examples, and analogies. he shows that the law brings sin and a curse rather than righteousness. Righteousness us promised by God, fulfilled by Christ without the law, given to us—out of grace alone.

In chapters 5 and 6 he teaches the work of love that ought to follow faith. (AE 35:384)

## OUTLINE

Introduction 1:1–5

- I. Defense of Paul's apostleship            Chapters 1 – 2  
*because false teachers opposed him*
- II. Christian doctrine                        Chapters 3 – 4  
*because false teachers denied it*
- III. Christian living                         Chapters 5 – 6  
*because false teachers led people away from it*

# CHAPTER 1

## CONSIDER

*Read 1:1-5*

### **1:1**

Why does Paul point to Jesus' resurrection in the very first verse?

### **1:3**

How does "grace and peace" summarize the gospel message

### **1:4**

What 2 important truths are found in this verse?

Why does Paul mention Christ's sacrifice already in the introduction?

#### "THIS PRESENT EVIL AGE"

*The Christian View of the World.*

1. It is good in the sense that God created it and even in its present state, it is something in which God gives us much to enjoy, and reflects the glory and goodness of God. (Acts 14:14ff; Psalm 19:1-4.)

2. It is evil in the sense that it is corrupted by sin, and must bear the curse of God (Genesis 3) and because many of the inhabitants of the world reject God and his Son, and are headed to destruction along with Satan. (Mark 13:9-13; Ephesians 6:12; 2 Peter 3:10; Revelation 21:1, 4.)

## DIG DEEPER

In what ways do you struggle in your loyalty to Christ?

## CONSIDER

*Read 1:6-10*

### **1:6**

What is the full impact and meaning of the word “desertion”?

### **1:7**

How could the false teaching in these congregations have been portrayed as a gospel?

### **1:9**

Why does Paul go out of his way to repeat himself? What is ultimately at stake?

### **1:10**

As proclaimers of God’s message how might we try to win the approval of men?

## DIG DEEPER

In what ways have you convinced yourself you need to keep the law to please God?

Why is it so important for us to make sure the message of the gospel is kept pure?

## VERSES 11–24

Paul wants to get to the main point of the letter. But before he does so, he must counter an accusation from some in the Galatian congregations. The accusation seems to have gone like this: Paul was not an apostle like the twelve who learned their Gospel from Christ himself. No, Paul had first learned it from others and had perhaps not understood it correctly or had even made additions of his own. The apostles taught it differently, because in Jerusalem the Christian congregation was still observing the Law.

## CONSIDER

*Read 1:11-17*

### **1:11-12**

Why is it important for Paul to make it known that the gospel he preaches is not something he made up?

### **1:13 -14**

Why does Paul mention his persecution of the church and his zeal in Judaism? What does this add to his argument?

### **1:15**

In what way was Paul no less an apostle than the other apostles?

## DIG DEEPER

Where does the credibility of the gospel finally reside?

What is the best way to defend the gospel?

## CONSIDER

*Read 1:18-24*

### **1:18**

Why would Paul wait three years to go to Jerusalem? Cf. Acts 7:54ff; 8:3; 9:1-3

### **1:20**

How does Paul express the seriousness of the present situation?

**1:15-21**

Is Paul's claim to authority from God convincing? Why or why not?

DIG DEEPER

The Church has been in constant struggle trying to keep the proper relationship between Law (God's commands) and the Gospel (God's free gift of salvation in Jesus Christ). Which verses, from your study today, do you think are most precious to someone who struggles to please a God and who had been taught that God was an angry and righteous judge who demanded his obedience?

## CHAPTER 2

### BACKGROUND

In chapter one Paul demonstrated that there were two opposing “gospels’ within the Galatian congregations. One was a “different gospel” (v.6), or the gospel of man. The gospel of man says that life is achievement based. However, the teachers who were teaching this “gospel” in Galatia were a little more nuanced. They said that Jesus plus following the law, particularly the ceremonial law, resulted in the forgiveness of sins. However, that is not God’s gospel. Paul summarized God’s gospel by saying, “Grace and peace to you.” God’s gospel places no responsibility on the individual to earn forgiveness. God’s gospel is grace: his love for you embodied in Jesus and everything he accomplished. And God’s gospel leads to peace: knowing that God has forgiven you and you are in a happy relationship with him.

Unfortunately, the teachers in the Galatian congregations who taught the gospel of man, the Judaizers, attacked Paul’s character and motivation in teaching God’s gospel. Because of this Paul spends the last half of chapter 1 demonstrating that the gospel which he teaches is not his message, but it was revealed to him by God and not taught to him by man or by the other Apostles for that matter.

In chapter two Paul continues his previous defense by showing he had not been to Jerusalem for fourteen years since his first visit after his conversion. However, he begins to focus in on what seems to be a second objection of the Judaizers. The Judaizers seemed to have claimed that the church in Jerusalem and the Apostles continued to follow the law contrary to Paul.

## CONSIDER

*Read 2:1-10*

### **2:1**

What visit to Jerusalem is this? Cf. *Acts 11:27-30 or Acts 15*

### **2:3**

Timothy, a pastor and whose father was Greek, while Titus was not circumcised. Why? Cf. *Acts 16:1-3*

### **2:4**

What charge is Paul leveraging against the false brothers? What does this mean?

### **2:5**

What does Paul mean when he says “the truth of the gospel remain” with the Galatians by not giving in to the false teachers?

### **2:7-8**

What correlation is Paul making? What does this correlation demonstrate?

### **2:9**

What is James, Peter, and John’s view of Paul’s work among the gentiles?

## DIG DEEPER

What are some of the things in your own life which threaten the freedom that you enjoy in Christ?

## CONSIDER

*Read 2:11-14*

### **2:11**

What is the significance of Paul opposing Peter “to his face?”

### **2:12-13**

What was the issue going on with Peter and the way he interacted with gentiles? What is hypocritical about what he was doing?

Why is it surprising that Barnabas would go along with Peter? *Cf. Acts 13ff*

### **2:14**

How would Peter’s actions compel the gentiles to live as Jews

### **1:10**

As proclaimers of God’s message how might we try to win the approval of men?

## DIG DEEPER

Think of some examples that a person has caused divisions in the church. What is the law that we should live by? How should we reconcile such divisions?

How does the actions of Barnabas serve as an example for Christians today?

## CONSIDER

*Read 2:15-21*

### **2:15**

What point is Paul making concerning even Jews know how people are justified?

#### JUSTIFIED

*It's a declaration.*

We don't really use the word "Justify," other than in the sense of someone's actions being justified. The term comes from a courtroom, and refers to the declaration of not guilty. The courtroom scene is this: You're sitting before the God as judge and Satan, the prosecuting attorney, airs before him a laundry list of your sins and why you cannot enter heaven. But in steps Jesus. He is not merely your defense attorney, but he tells you to get up out of your chair and he takes your place. He serves your punishment and you are declared "not guilty."

### **2:17**

In what way could Christ be viewed as promoting sin while those who are justified still sin?

### **2:18**

What is the ultimate purpose of the law?

### **2:19**

What does it mean that Paul died to the law? *Cf. Romans 6:2, 4-11; 7:4*

### **2:21**

Finish this sentence, "If you are trying to follow the law to be in a good relationship with God, then Christ..."

## DIG DEEPER

Re-read 2:15-21 and summarize this section in your own words.

Agree or Disagree, and why? Anyone who teaches Salvation by works just doesn't know the Bible, or doesn't care what it says.

## CHAPTER 3

Chapter three begins the doctrinal portion (3:1-4:30) of Galatians. Paul's main concern is to show that salvation comes by faith and not by following the law. He demonstrates this fact by offering the Galatians four main proofs:

1. Proof from the Galatian's experience. (3:1-5)
2. Proof from the life of Abraham. (3:6-9)
3. Proof from the difference between law and gospel. (3:10-14)
4. Proof from the covenant made with Abraham. (3:15-18)

### CONSIDER

*Read 3:1-5*

#### **3:1**

Why were the Galatians so foolish for thinking they needed to follow the law in order to be saved?

#### **3:2**

Put Paul's question in your own words. What would they have heard from Paul?

#### **3:3**

What is the difference between when the Galatians began living the faith to now?

#### **3:4**

The Greek word translated as "to suffer" here can mean "to experience" and is a neutral word. The shading of the word relies on context. Since in context there is no negative shading it may be better to understand Paul as saying, "Have you experienced so much for nothing—if it really was for nothing?" If this is the case, to what experience is Paul referring?

**3:5**

Though Paul speaks in strong terms, what is Paul NOT saying concerning the Galatians faith life?

## DIG DEEPER

Why can it be tempting for us to follow the law with the intent to please God and receive salvation?

## CONSIDER

*Read 3:6-9*

**3:6**

Read Genesis 15:2-6. Paul is quoting v. 6 of this section from Genesis. Based on these passages what is the definition of faith? In what condition did God see Abraham?

**3:7**

Recall that the Galatians were gentiles (non-Jews), if this verse were not true what would it mean for the Galatians?

**3:8**

When God called Abraham what was his plan from the very beginning?

**3:9**

In what way in particular are those who have faith blessed?

## DIG DEEPER

What gospel message do you see for yourself in this section?

## CONSIDER

*Read 3:10-14*

### **3:10**

Paul cites Deuteronomy 27:26. Break down the verse, what are the demands of the law?

### **3:11**

Paul cites Habakkuk 2:4. What does Paul and Habakkuk mean by saying “the righteous will live”?

### **3:12**

What are some differences between the law and the gospel?

### **3:13**

In what way does this verse connect with verse 10?

### **3:14**

From what has Christ Jesus redeemed us?

What is the promise of the Spirit?

DIG DEEPER

How have you failed to understand the full demands of the law?

What does it mean for you that you are a part of Abraham's family?

CONSIDER

*Read 3:15-18*

**3:15**

Consider two qualities of a covenant or will and how each applies to God's covenant with Abraham:

*Promise -*

*Legally binding -*

**3:16**

Genesis 22:18 says, "Through your seed all nations on earth will be blessed." What role does Christ play in this covenant?

**3:17**

In what way were the Judaizers tampering with the covenant God had established?

**3:18**

If God's inheritance is given through following his law, what is being undermined?

## DIG DEEPER

How does this section change the way you view God's covenant with Abraham and with you?

Concerning the following section Professor Armin Panning writes,

The inherent weakness of the Mosaic Law shows itself in four ways, and these are all enumerated in the first paragraph quoted (vv. 19,20) The second paragraph quoted (vv. 21,22) forms a commentary on the second weakness, while the third paragraph quoted (vv. 23-25) addresses primarily the third weakness. These are the four weakness that Paul identifies:

1. The Mosaic Law was not primary but was "added" to something superior, something already in existence.
2. The law had to do with sin and "transgressions," not salvation.
3. The law was of limited duration, "until the seed... had come."
4. The law was required as a "mediator."

## CONSIDER

*Read 3:19-25*

**3:19**

What does the fact that "the law was added because of transgressions" demonstrate about the purpose of the law?

**3:20**

Between which two parties was the Mosaic Law established? What does the mediator do between these two parties?

**3:21**

What was the problem with one of the parties' agreement to the Mosaic Law?

**3:22**

Which specific promise to Abraham will be fulfilled through faith in Jesus?

**3:23**

In what way were we once held prisoners by the law?

**3:24**

How does the law lead us to Christ?

**3:25**

How does "the faith which has come" change your life?

DIG DEEPER

What is the role of the law in your life?

## CONSIDER

*Read 3:26-29*

### **3:26**

God made a covenant with Abraham and his family. How have you been made a part of that covenant?

### **3:27**

When you are clothed with Christ, what does God see?

### **3:28**

What is the status of all believers before God?

## DIG DEEPER

What are the many different blessings that come with being an heir “according to the promise”?

## CHAPTER 4

### CONSIDER

*Read 4:1-7*

#### **4:1ff**

What is the comparison being made here?

#### **4:4**

What is the significance of the words “God sent his son”?

#### **4:5**

Now apply the answer from above to the phrase, “that we might receive the full rights of sons.”

#### **4:6**

Why did God send “the Spirit of his Son in our hearts”?

#### **4:7**

How has your status before God changed?

### DIG DEEPER

The term “Abba, Father” suggests a childlike trust in God. A young child has very little fear. They just trust. When filled with fear about the future what must we remember about our relationship with God?

## CONSIDER

*Read 4:8-20*

### **4:9**

Make a comparison between what Paul says here and back in verse 3.

### **4:10**

Why is Paul making such a big deal about the Galatians observing religious rituals?

### **4:12**

Based on the following context, what does Paul mean when he says, “become like me, for I become like you”?

### **4:16**

Why does Paul speak so sternly?

### **4:17-18**

Where is zeal properly placed?

## DIG DEEPER

Sometimes we can shy away from speaking the truth, but what is always the goal of speaking the truth? Why is the gospel truth so important?

## CONSIDER

*Read 4:21-31*

NOTE: This is the only allegory in the New Testament.

### **4:23**

Which two ideas is Paul contrasting here?

Which promise is Paul referring to?

### **4:24**

Which two covenants is Paul referring to?

### **4:25**

Jerusalem, in Paul's day, was the headquarters of the legalistic law theology.

### **4:26**

Paul is referring to the heavenly Jerusalem.

### **4:27**

This is a quotation from Isaiah 54 and speaks about the time when God would establish the New Testament Church.

### **4:30-31**

If the slave woman's son stands for law followers and the son of the promise stands for those living in grace, what is Paul's point in saying this?

## CHAPTER 5

### CONSIDER

*Read 5:1-6*

#### **5:1**

What is the freedom we have?

#### **5:2**

Paul rarely refers to himself by name, why does he do it here?

#### **5:4**

In what way are those who try to be justified by the law alienated from Christ?

#### **5:6**

In which way will faith manifest itself?

### DIG DEEPER

Can you defend the apparent paradox that we are truly free when we are slaves to Christ?

## CONSIDER

*Read 5:7-15*

### **5:9**

Recall the context and explain the significance of the proverb in verse 9.

### **5:11**

Why is preaching the cross of Christ an offense to people?

### **5:12**

Why does Paul use such strong language?

### **5:13**

What does our freedom not mean for us?

### **5:14-15**

In what way is the law still useful for us?

## DIG DEEPER

In what different ways can we use our freedom to indulge our sinful desires?

## CONSIDER

*Read 5:16-26*

### **5:16-18**

Describe the struggle within the Christian. Why is this a sign of spiritual life?

### **5:19-22**

Why is there a distinction between acts/works of the sinful nature and fruits of the spirit?

Why is it significant that the fruits of the Spirit mentioned are attitudes and not actions?

### **5:24**

What does it mean that our sinful nature was crucified?

## DIG DEEPER

Look at the text and count the number of time Spirit is used in this section. What is the function of the “Spirit” mentioned? What does it have to say about the outcome of our struggle?

## CHAPTER 6

### CONSIDER

*Read 6:1-10*

#### **6:1**

What should also be done when pointing out sin?

#### **6:2**

Recall Paul's summary of the law in Chapter 5. What is the law of Christ? Cf. John 13:34

#### **6:3-5**

What is Paul warning against here?

#### **6:7-8**

What does a life that "sows to please the Spirit" look like? How is this different from what the Galatians were doing by following the law?

#### **6:9**

Why do we sometimes "become weary in doing good"? How can we guard ourselves against this?

### DIG DEEPER

When sin is revealed in the life of an individual how should the situation be handled?

How will you prevent yourself from becoming weary in doing good?

## CONSIDER

*Read 6:11-18*

### **6:12**

We're not quite sure why Paul wrote in large letters. Some suggest that it could be due to illness or poor eyesight. Either way, his own handwriting is markedly different from the rest of the letter and this seems to indicate that the final paragraph was written in his own hand rather than by a scribe.

### **6:12**

Who might these people be trying to impress?

### **6:13**

About what would those who wanted the Galatians to be circumcised (the Judaizers) be boasting?

### **6:14**

What are we to boast in the cross of Christ?

### **6:15**

What is the new creation which Paul is speaking about?

### **6:17**

As a result of the truth he preached, Paul suffered persecution. Here he is asking that no one bother him again regarding the truth he has taught, but that they look at him and how he has suffered for Christ, and take up that same cross themselves.

### **6:18**

What significance do you see in this blessing?

## DIG DEEPER

Summarize in your own words the most important points of Galatians.