GALATIANS

Galatians
Key Verse:

INTRODUCTION TO GALATIANS

Paul the Apostle probably wrote this letter from Syrian Antioch sometime between 48-53 A.D., to the Galatian churches which he had pioneered on his first missionary journey.

This letter is about freedom in Christ. There were some Jewish Christians who could not accept the Gentile believers as true brothers. They did not accept world mission from their hearts. They only worried because the Gentiles had not been circumcised and did not keep some of the Old Testament regulations. And they just didn't like people who were different from them. They did not see the amazing grace and mercy of God who was opening the door of salvation for all the people of the whole world.

Paul reminds us that we are saved by grace alone, through faith in Jesus alone (2:16). We are set free from bondage to sin by the blood of Jesus so that we may live lives of faith by the power of the Holy Spirit.

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TO RESCUE US FROM THIS PRESENT EVIL AGE

Galatians 1:1-5 (Mon.) April 12

Key Verse: 1:4

1. An apostle sent by the Risen Jesus (1-2)

The Risen Jesus sent his disciples into all the world as apostles of the good news (Ac 1:8; Mt 28:19,20). Paul was also sent by the Risen Christ and by the Father to be an apostle to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15,16; Gal 2:8). He wrote this letter to some of his Gentile sheep. As disciples of Jesus, we are also sent by the Father and by the Risen Jesus to make disciples of all nations. He is our power source (Mt 28:18-20). We may fail or become discouraged because of our own weaknesses and sins, but he will never fail.

2. To rescue us from this evil age (3-5)

Jesus did not please himself; he obeyed God’s will. He gave himself for our sins to rescue us from this present evil age. We are forgiven sinners. We belong to Jesus. We don't have to be melted into the worldly culture. He set us free from guilt and from the power of sin so that we might live for the glory of God.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for sending Jesus to rescue me from the world. Thank you for giving me your work to do. Help me to live for your glory.

One Word: Rescued to live for God's glory

NO OTHER GOSPEL

Galatians 1:6-10 (Tue.) April 13

Key Verse: 1:8

1. There is no other gospel (6-7a)

The gospel is simple: Jesus died for our sins and God raised him from the dead. He did this according to God's promise in the Scripture. When we repent and believe in Jesus, we receive forgiveness of sins and eternal life. We are saved by God's grace alone, by faith alone. We need only Jesus. We do not need rituals or exciting experiences. His grace is enough to save us fully.

2. A fearsome responsibility (7b-10)

In Paul's day there were some who insisted that salvation by faith in Jesus alone was too simple. Some Jewish Christians insisted on Jesus + circumcision. In every age false prophets appear who try to "improve" the gospel by adding or subtracting something. Paul uses strong language about those who change the gospel. We serve Jesus because we are grateful for his grace, not to earn salvation. God's servants must teach God's gospel and live before God, not before men.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for your saving grace.

One Word: Only Jesus

THEY PRAISED GOD BECAUSE OF ME

Galatians 1:11-24 (Wed .) April 14

Key Verse: 1:24

1. Called by God (11-12)

The gospel Paul preached was not a theory made up by men. It was the good news that Jesus Christ died for our sins and rose from death. The Risen Jesus personally met Paul on the road to Damascus and changed his life. He forgave his dirty sins and called him to preach this gospel of life to the Gentile world.

2. A changed life (13-24)

The mission Paul received from Jesus was shocking for a zealous Pharisee. The Jews could not conceive of God's caring for the Gentiles. But Paul did not seek human opinions. He studied the Bible and prayed until he could see God's world salvation purpose. God worked in him to change his narrow Pharisee's heart into a heart that could embrace the world. The Apostles and believers whom he had harassed praised God because of his changed life.

Prayer: Lord, help me to follow you until everyone can praise God because of my changed life.

One Word: Praise God for changed lives!

A CONTROVERSIAL MISSION

Galatians 2:1-10 (Thur.) April 15

Key Verse: 2:8

1. We did not give in (1-5)

From the first, the ministry to non-Jews was controversial. Rigid Jewish Christians tried to make Paul push his Gentile converts to become Jews: i.e., to be circumcised and accept Jewish laws and rituals, in order to be full-fledged Christians. Paul went to Jerusalem and laid the gospel he preached before those who had been closest to Jesus. He wanted to hold on to the truth of the gospel and protect the freedom believers have in Christ.

2. Paul’s call and mission from God confirmed (6-10)

The apostles in Jerusalem did not add or subtract from Paul's message. They recognized that God was working through Paul to bring Gentiles to God, just as God worked through Peter to bring the gospel to the Jews. They didn't like Gentiles, but they realized that God loved them and had sent Jesus to die for the sins of all people.

Prayer: Lord, help me to go where you send me, recognize your work, and encourage your servants.

One Word: God loves the world

PAUL OPPOSES PETER

Galatians 2:11-16 (Fri.) April 16

Key Verse: 2:16

1. Paul rebukes Peter (11-14)

Peter was the spiritual leader of the church, but he was not infallible. He thoughtlessly allowed his Jewish cultural taboos to hurt some Gentile Christians. When he visited Antioch, he enjoyed eating with Gentile Christians until some strict Jews arrived. Then he didn't eat with the Gentiles again. Paul was angry for two reasons: The implication of Peter's action was that the Gentiles were not accepted fully as Christian brothers. More importantly, his actions called the absolute sufficiency of the gospel into question.

2. Justified by faith in Jesus (15-16)

This problem became an opportunity for all the apostles, including both Peter and Paul, to affirm the fact that we are justified by faith in Jesus Christ alone. We are not made righteous by zealously keeping the law, nor by practicing religious ritual.

Prayer: Lord, help me to challenge cultural patterns that run counter to the gospel.

One Word: Follow the gospel, not habit or culture

CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST

Galatians 2:17-21 (Sat.) April 17

Key Verse: 2:20

1. Don't rebuild what you destroyed (17-19)

It is easy for a Christian to get in a rut. Instead of walking with Jesus to challenge life and the culture, we slip back into comfortable old patterns. This is a real temptation for those with Jewish or cultural Christian backgrounds. When Paul talks about rebuilding what he destroyed, he is talking about living habitually and about following (consciously or unconsciously) the Jewish laws and customs instead of following Jesus.

2. I have been crucified with Christ (20-21)

The Christian cannot be judged by whether or not he conforms to certain rules or rituals. I am a Christian because I accepted Jesus' death for my sins and his resurrection. I died with Christ when I repented of my sins, and I must die daily. So I have been crucified with Christ and the Risen Christ lives in me, as he promised. He loves me; I love him. I want to live by faith in him.

Prayer: Lord, help me not to live habitually, but to live by faith in the One who gave himself for me.

One Word: Crucified with Christ

BLESSED ALONG WITH ABRAHAM

Galatians 3:1-9 (Sun.) April 18

Key Verse: 3:7

1. Believe what you heard (1-5)

What have we heard? We hear about Jesus Christ, crucified for our sins and raised to life by God. This is what we believe. We believe that God has cleansed us and given us his Spirit. I cannot change anyone--not even myself. But God works miracles in the hearts and lives of those who believe.

2. Blessed with Abraham (6-9)

Abraham is our spiritual ancestor. He was made righteous because of his faith. We are children of Abraham if we believe God's promises. God is the God of the whole world; he looked forward to the time when all people of all nations would be justified by faith, and he announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: "all nations will be blessed through you." (Ge 12:3; 22:18) Those who have faith in Jesus are blessed along with Abraham, the man who believed God. Like him, we are blessed so that we may be a blessing to the world.

Prayer: Lord, teach me to walk by faith as Abraham did. Bless my life and make me a blessing.

One Word: We are Abraham’s children

CHRIST BECAME A CURSE FOR US

Galatians 3:10-14 (Mon.) April 19

Key Verse: 3:13a

1. Redeemed from the curse (10-13)

Some people are so independent that they want to do everything for themselves. This seems good, but if we depend on ourselves to follow the way of righteousness through law, we will fail--because no one can keep the law perfectly. If we do not keep the law, then we are cursed by the law. The way of faith is different. "The righteous will live by faith." Christ died on the cross to redeem us from the curse of the law. He became a curse for our sakes. If we live by faith in Jesus who died for our sins, then God clothes us with his righteousness.

2. God's blessing (14)

It is not enough just to have the curse removed. God redeemed and blessed us so that he might make us a blessing to the world. He kept his promise to Abraham by sending Christ to die for the

sins of the world. Through Christ, he redeemed us from sin and curse so that we might share Christ with a sinsick world. By faith, we receive forgiveness and the promised Holy Spirit.

Prayer: Lord, take away my sin and dwell with me, as you promised.

One Word: Claim God's promise by faith

THE LAW AND THE PROMISE

Galatians 3:15-25 (Tue.) April 20

Key Verse: 3:24

1. The Promise (15-18)

God promised that Abraham and his Seed, that is Christ, would be a source of blessing for all people. God redeemed us from bondage to sin so that the blessing of forgiveness and the Holy Spirit might come to us, and through us, to all the world (14). This is the promise of God. A promise is an expression of God's grace. God's promises belong to anyone who claims them by faith. If we are redeemed by God's grace alone, what is the purpose of the Law?

2. The Law (19-25)

God gave the Law at Mount Sinai through Moses, because his people, whom he had delivered from slavery in Egypt, needed training in order to become a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Ex 19:4-6). They needed guidelines for living in a moral and spiritual wasteland. The whole world is a prisoner of sin. The Law is powerless to set us free. The Law is a supervisor or a tutor, put in charge to lead us to Christ so that we might be justified by faith.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for your law, which disciplines us in love. Thank you for the grace of forgiveness through Jesus.

One Word: God's love through law and grace

ALL ONE IN CHRIST JESUS

Galatians 3:26-29 (Wed.) April 21

Key Verse: 3:28

1. Clothed with Christ (26-27)

Through faith in Christ we have been baptized by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit has given us new birth into the family of God. We have been washed clean and we have on new clothes. All the dirty sins of our past lives have been washed away and all the dirty clothes of our own righteousness have been put off. We have all been clothed in Christ.

2. One in Christ Jesus (28-29)

Everyone who belongs to Jesus is Abraham's seed and an heir of God's promise. There is no distinction of race, gender, social position or any other human condition among those who belong to Jesus. This means that I am precious to God and all my brothers and sisters in Christ are also precious, for Jesus died for each one of us. We are Abraham's seed, so the promises of God belong to us. As was Abraham, we too are blessed to be a blessing.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for clothing me in Christ and making me an heir of your promises.

One Word: One in Christ Jesus

GOD SENT HIS SON

Galatians 4:1-7 (Thur.) April 22

Key Verse: 4:4,6

1. A son or a slave? (1-3)

Those who lived under the Old Testament law were indeed God's people. They had God's word; they had all the promises of God. But living under the law made them slaves, practically speaking. They were like sons who were still under the tutelage of a governess or a guardian. They were not free. This time of training of the people of Israel prepared the world to receive Christ. God also trains us so that we can know how to obey Christ and please God.

2. When the time came (4-7)

God is the God of history. He sent his Son at the right time. Jesus was born under the Law to redeem those under the Law. But whoever receives Jesus is set free from the Law and set free from sin. God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts because we are his children. Because of the Spirit of Jesus in us, we call God, “Father.” It is the Spirit dwelling in us who makes us truly free.

Prayer: Father, let the Spirit of your Son rule my heart and life so that I may be truly free.

One Word: Abba, Father

UNTIL CHRIST IS FORMED IN YOU

Galatians 4:8-20 (Fri.) April 23

Key Verse: 4:19

1. Formerly you did not know God (8-11)

Before Paul preached the gospel to the Galatians, they did not know God. So they were slaves to false gods, to their own passions, or to material things. Now, they were in danger of forgetting God's grace. When believers do not continue faithfully in Bible study and prayer, they become easy prey to false teachers and/or they easily fall back into old, habitual ways of thinking and acting.

2. What happened to your joy? (12-18)

When Paul first came to them, he was physically sick--but they welcomed him and joyfully accepted Jesus whom he preached. But now they were listening to teachers who tried to alienate them from Paul and from the gospel.

3. Until Christ is formed in you (19-20)

Paul prayed for them earnestly, like a woman in labor. He prayed that Christ might be formed in them, and that he alone might rule their hearts.

Prayer: Lord, teach me Paul's patience and persistence in prayer.

One Word: Until Christ is formed in you

HAGAR AND SARAH

Galatians 4:21-31 (Sat.) April 24

Key Verse: 4:31

1. Two women and two covenants (21-28)

Paul draws a parallel between Abraham's two sons and the two covenants God has made with men. Ishmael was the son of Hagar, the slave woman. Hagar represents the covenant of law made on Mount Sinai. The Jews who reject the Messiah are slaves of the law. Isaac was the son of Sarah. He was born according to God's promise. Those who believe God's promise and claim Jesus as their Savior are free. We are citizens of the Heavenly City. We are not under the law, but are bound to God by a new covenant in Jesus' blood. We can claim God's promise of fruitfulness in Isaiah 54:1.

2. Get rid of the slave woman (29-31)

Those who insist that Christians must practice religious rituals are like Ishmael who persecuted Isaac (Ge 21). Thus we must cast out such ideas, as God told Abraham to cast out Ishmael and Hagar. We must depend on God's grace alone.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for your promises and for your grace. Help me to use my freedom to love and to serve you and others.

One Word: Children of the promise

FREEDOM IN CHRIST

Galatians 5:1-12 (Sun.) April 25

Key Verses: 5:1,6

1. Faith is expressed in love (1-6)

Sometimes Christians become confused about how to please God. Over-zealous Jewish Christians in Paul's day insisted that Gentile Christians be circumcised. Paul called this the yoke of slavery. Religious ritual does not save anybody. We are saved by God's grace, through faith in Jesus alone. The gospel is sufficient to save sinners. Religious ceremonies such as circumcision (or even mass, confession, baptism or communion) cannot make a person righteous. Our faith in Jesus must be expressed in love.

2. You were running a good race (7-12)

What happened? Someone came and planted doubt in the hearts of growing Christians. Doubt is the gift of Satan. Paul was angry. The cross of Jesus offends those who don't want to repent of sin, those who do not want to die with Jesus. But there can be no substitute for repentance and faith.

Prayer: Lord, help me to express my faith in life that builds up fellow believers.

One Word: In Christ we are free to love

LIVE BY THE SPIRIT

Galatians 5:13-21 (Mon.) April 26

Key Verse: 5:16

1. Called to be free (13-15)

Christ has set us free so that we can love others. If our fellowship is full of arguments, rivalry and jealous competition, we will only destroy one another. Only when we love our neighbors as ourselves can we have real freedom in Christ.

2. Led by the Spirit (16-21)

Some people think that being free is doing everything one feels like doing. Some think that freedom is gratifying one's physical desires. But this is not freedom; it is the sure way to slavery. The desires of the sinful nature are listed in verses 19-21. These desires enslave us when we

yield to them. When we are led by the Spirit, we have power to overcome the sinful nature. The sinful nature leads us to destruction; the Spirit leads us to the heavenly kingdom.

Prayer: Lord, help me to use the freedom you have given me to build up and encourage others--not to tear them down, nor to tear myself down.

One Word: Led by the Spirit--real freedom

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

Galatians 5:22-26 (Tue.) April 27

Key Verses: 5:22,23

1. The fruit of the Spirit (22,23)

When God's Spirit is in us, and we yield to his gentle leading, then good fruit is produced in our hearts and lives. Love, joy and peace--the things that all people want--are there. Instead of being irritable and impatient, we are patient and kind. The Spirit helps us be faithful and self-controlled. Think about the practical meaning in your own life of each of the fruits of the Spirit.

2. The sinful nature crucified (24-26)

We belong to Christ when we come to him with repentance and faith, and we are united with him in his death and resurrection by the work of the Holy Spirit. So the sinful nature, with its passions and desires, is nailed to the cross. We must claim this promise by faith, and by faith we must keep in step with the Spirit. We have no reason to be proud; as forgiven sinners, we must love and respect one another.

Prayer: Lord, nail my sinful desires to the cross and fill me with your Spirit. Grant the fruit of the Spirit in my life.

One Word: The fruit of the Spirit

CARRY EACH OTHER'S BURDENS

Galatians 6:1-6 (Wed.) April 28

Key Verse: 6:2

1. Carry each other's burdens (1,2)

An individualistic society tends to make people indifferent and selfish. But Christians must care about others. This means that we must gently rebuke and lovingly exhort a brother who sins. But when we do this, we must be keenly aware of our own shortcomings and weaknesses. We exhort

others, not as righteous judges, but as forgiven sinners. We must be responsible for helping a brother who has a burden too heavy to carry.

2. Each one must carry his own load (3-6)

Each of us must strive to live before God, not before people. When we do this, there is no room left for inordinate pride. We should not compare ourselves to others or be dependent, either emotionally or materially on another. We must learn to be dependent on God and be an encouragement, not a burden to our Bible teachers.

Prayer: Lord, help me to depend on you alone, and to care about others enough to lovingly rebuke them when necessary.

One Word: Carry each other's burdens

A MAN REAPS WHAT HE SOWS

Galatians 6:7-10 (Thur.) April 29

Key Verse: 6:9

1. God cannot be mocked (7-8)

No one can deceive God. Every person reaps what he sows. Those who think they can live dissolute lives, ignoring God, and ignoring others, will find that they have deceived themselves. God's judgment may be slow, but it is very sure. One who seeks to please God by obeying his word and by following the leading of the Holy Spirit is sowing good seed. He will reap eternal life. One who does whatever he feels like doing and seeks only to satisfy his physical desires, will reap destruction.

2. Let's not be weary in doing good (9-10)

Sometimes a sacrificial life seems foolish and fruitless. But God's word tells us not to give up. He assures us that if we do not give up, we will reap a good harvest. So, let's not miss any opportunity to do good to others, especially to believers.

Prayer: Lord, help me to sow good seed throughout my lifetime. Forgive me and cleanse me of the self-indulgence that produces bad fruit.

One Word: Don't become weary of doing good

A NEW CREATION

Galatians 6:11-18 (Fri.) April 30

Key Verse: 6:14

1. Those who try to avoid the cross (11-12)

There are those who want to take the cross out of Christianity. In Paul's day, they urged new converts to be circumcised to avoid persecution. Some people try to avoid suffering at all costs. Some want to get human benefit from their Christianity. They say and do things just to be praised by others. Because they are very skillful to find a way out of any suffering, they can never really know Jesus.

2. I boast only in the cross of Christ (13-18)

Paul had many things to boast about. He had a good family background; his résumé contained excellent educational and experience credentials. But he said, "May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." He crucified worldly pride and desire on the cross with Jesus. He found peace and God's mercy in the cross of Christ. And he became a new creation. He discovered what really counts.

Prayer: Lord, help me to crucify my worldly pride and boast only in Jesus' cross.

One Word: A new creation is what counts