

RIGHTLY DIVIDING THE WORD OF TRUTH



**Survey Studies in the
New Testament**

G A L A T I A N S

by Steven Harper

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Preface

The content and purpose of the book of Galatians is similar to the letter to the Romans in that it addressed the fact of some who were intent on maintaining a distinction between Jew and Gentile. In the letter to the Romans, Paul addressed both sides and their apparent desire to maintain their differences [and the unnecessary division that resulted], where, in the letter to those in Galatia, Paul addressed the imposition of circumcision on the Gentiles by some Judaizing teachers who insisted that it be practiced for the Gentiles to be acceptable [ostensibly, to God]. In one case, both sides sought to maintain and highlight differences, while the other situation was one where one side was intent on making the other become just like them. Neither situation was acceptable to God, though.

Paul was one who was uniquely qualified [besides the fact he was inspired by the Holy Spirit] to address these issues because he had, at one time, lived according to those same prejudices and had the same vehement desire to draw lines of distinction between Jew and Gentile. Before his conversion, he was one of one of Judaism's greatest defenders and Christianity's greatest persecutors and would not have had anything to do with a Gentile and would certainly not have considered one to be his equal. Now, as a Christian, he could speak from a perspective of having been one of those who insisted on highlighting the differences and separation [or the proselytizing of the Gentiles] but who now accepted the Gentiles into Christ as they were, without further demands. Whether that perspective made any difference to this letter's recipients, we do not know, however.

Though this letter was written to address a particular issue that existed in that day and which is not seen among any churches of the modern era, the principles found within this letter about how to address and overcome irrelevant differences is one that can help us forge strong bonds of unity among disciples of varying backgrounds if we are willing to accept that the differences are actually immaterial to the faith. It is when we start creating reasons to make distinctions or when we start inventing false demands on others that discord and strife will result and not much will be accomplished, as a result. [This is not an argument for accepting erroneous doctrines and practices among us; this is a matter, Paul said, that did not matter one way or the other; **Gal. 5:6; 6:15.**]

As with all workbooks in this series of studies, the aim is to help you get the most out of your study. Each section has introductory notes to help you to get in the right frame of mind before you begin, with some work to do before you begin the actual study itself [**Preparation**]. You will also be given some short observations about certain people and events within the text and are challenged to make your own notes about what you have read [**Observation**]. Then, you will need to explain what has been said by the writer [**Interpretation**]. Several questions are given in this portion to help you to understand what was said and foster discussions within the class setting. **[Take the initiative here and bring your own questions to class to help others grow in the faith. Try not to simply give superficial answers, but rather dig deeper into the text and try to learn something new and help others to also learn something more than what they already know.]** Next, we have one of the most important portions of the study — the part where you must make this text useful to your own life [**Application**]. Think about how the text applies to **you**, rather than to others. For those students who wish to get more out of the text or to simply learn more than what this workbook can give, you will be challenged to do additional investigations to find information that might be helpful in understanding even more about the circumstances, people, and places mentioned in the context [**Further Study**]. And, finally, each section will offer a couple of short quotes from the portion of text that was covered that you might consider the import of those words after you have already studied [**Consideration**].

And, as with all other workbooks in this series, use the text provided in each section to make your notes and observations. Use your pencil! Use colored pencils, markers, pens, and whatever else you want to make the words jump out to you and help you to see the message of the writer. Remember: *“He who gets wisdom loves his own soul”* (**Prov. 19:8**).

Steven C. Harper
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KEY VERSE(S):

GALATIANS

FAITH VERSUS WORKS OF THE LAW

1:1									
1:13									
3:1									
3:19									
3:26									
4:8									
4:21									
5:7									
6:1									
6:11									

KEY WORD(S):

Source of Liberty		Contrast To Liberty	
Gospel's Source	Gospel's Defense	Gospel's Superiority	Gospel's Liberty
			Gospel's Action
			Effect of Liberty

Lesson One:

Overview

Overview. Using the chart on the facing page, briefly summarize the letter to the Galatians and outline what may be seen as the main points in each section. Note the ‘theme verse(s)’ and key words and/or phrases — those which are significant in the overall message of the book.

Background. The letter to the Galatians is unique among Paul's writings in that it is written to a plurality of churches in a particular region [Galatia] instead of an individual city [such as Ephesus or Philippi]. Written about A.D. 49, this is the first of the letters to the churches, possibly because of his personal involvement in the establishment and strengthening of those congregations and probably initiated on his first evangelistic effort [dated to about A.D. 46-48]. We get a hint of the first possible visit by Paul and Barnabas in **Acts 14:5-7**, where we read of the attempts to stone them in Iconium, leading them to flee to “*Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and to the surrounding region.*” That “*surrounding region*” may very well have been **Galatia**.

After a return to Antioch and a resolution of the circumcision question there [via the letter from the apostles and elders of Jerusalem], he suggested a return trip, going back “*to visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they are doing.*” (**Acts 15:36**) We then read that he took Silas with him and “*went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches*” (**Acts 15:41**), and continued the efforts to strengthen the churches in Derbe and Lystra and “*the region*” (**Acts 16:1-5**). Galatia is then specifically named when we read that “*they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia.*” (**Acts 16:6**) From this passage, we may rightly conclude that Galatia was one of those places that Paul intended to “*go back*” to where they had “*preached the word of the Lord.*” We know that Paul had visited Galatia by A.D. 57, for on the third evangelistic journey, he again “*went over to the region of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples.*” (**Acts 18:23**) Also, in **1st Corinthians 16:1** Paul points to instruction he had given “*to the churches of Galatia,*” indicating he had personally visited there [since no such instruction exists in the letter we now have]. Together, these point to a certainty that there had been visits prior to A.D. 57 and that there were indeed disciples already in existence. Certainly, those congregations addressed in this letter *may* have included Lystra, Derbe, Iconium, and Antioch, but none are technically in the Galatian region. It is quite possible that there may have been other churches that were addressed of which we know nothing. Whichever churches they were, we know that Paul had dealt with them personally (**Gal. 4:11-13**) and he wrote with an understanding that what he [and others] had preached to them was well known (**Gal. 1:8, 9**).

Major Theme: Grace versus Law. It seems the main intent of Paul's letter to these churches was to address the problem of Judaizing teachers whose false teachings about the necessity of circumcision were infiltrating the body of believers. Apparently, some were teaching that the Gentiles were required to practice the Jewish tradition of circumcision in order to be acceptable in the sight of God (6:12). Paul equated such actions and teachings with going back to the Old Law for justification and an annulment of the New Law and, in effect, the blood of Jesus (5:2-4). This teaching was not the only time Paul would face this question, for he would deal with the same problem at Antioch, having to go down to Jerusalem and get a more "authoritative" word from the apostles there to bring back (Acts 15).

Another similarity in the two situations was that some at Antioch apparently did not give Paul the same standing as the other apostles, and in the letter to the Galatian brethren, he dealt with any possibility of doubt right away, stating right from the start that his apostleship was "not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead." (1:1) He then presents an extended explanation of his experiences [pointing out that he had not consulted **any** man] to further bolster his defense (1:11-24).

Having established his authority, Paul seeks to correct the thinking that going back to even **one point** of the Old Law was acceptable — or even necessary. The emphasis of the letter was to show that justification **never** came by the law, and this is summed up well in 2:16, where he states "a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, 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 shall be justified."

The True Gospel Brings True Liberty. The message throughout the letter to the Galatians is one that teaches the law could never justify man, but that through faith in Christ Jesus, we are truly set free from the law, free from being excluded from the blessings [as Gentiles], and free from sin. Note the contrast Paul makes throughout the letter, noting the positive side of FAITH and the liabilities of following the false gospel that had been preached and followed.

WORKS AND THE LAW

(3:10) ⇒

(2:16; 3:11) ⇒

(4:3; 5:1) ⇒

(2:11-14) ⇒

(4:3-7) ⇒

FAITH

Blessed (3:9)

Justified (2:16; 3:8)

Set free (4:7)

All one in Christ (4:28)

Adopted as son and heirs (4:5-7)

(5:16-21) ⇒

Led by the Spirit (5:22-25)

(6:13) ⇒

Boast in the cross of Christ (6:14)

Questions and Application.

1. Is there any real difference between those of Paul's time who sought justification by works of the law and those who demand perfect obedience — even under the law of Christ — as a means of salvation? If so, note the differences. If not, can it be said of those who so live and teach that they “*live by faith*”?
2. The book of Hebrews is a letter to Jewish Christians who were tempted to go back to the Old Law due to persecutions they suffered because they followed Christ. In Acts, we read of severe persecutions suffered by the apostles and early Jewish Christians because they forsook Judaism for Christ. Here, Paul writes to Gentiles who were being pressured by others to keep Jewish traditions. Why was there so much apparent persecution and pressure on those who forsook Judaism, or who followed Christ instead of Judaism?
3. What was one motivating factor for these false teachers compelling others to follow Jewish traditions? (cf. **6:12**)
4. Are there any today who compel others to follow certain doctrines or traditions for the same reason?
5. How is one truly free? Cite Scripture [including those outside Galatians] for your answer.

The False Gospel Preached to the Galatians. A good portion of the false teaching promoted among the Galatian brethren is not directly or specifically mentioned, but is addressed often through Paul's written word that served to answer the false teaching. Note, from the following passages, what apparently was being taught by what Paul says. [A hint is given next to each reference.]

2:16 [its effect] ⇒

2:21 [what comes through the law] ⇒

3:3 [how made perfect] ⇒

3:18 [how inheritance is obtained] ⇒

4:9, 10 [persuaded them to do what?] ⇒

4:21 [subject to what law?] ⇒

5:2-6, 1; 6:12-15 [practice what?] ⇒

The Consequences of this False Gospel. In addressing the false doctrine(s) promoted among the Galatian brethren, Paul stressed the consequences of following such a message as had been preached to them, and which was evidently being followed by some who had once obeyed the true gospel. From the passages noted below, note the consequences of following this false gospel. [Again, hints will be noted beside each reference.]

2:11-14 [how others will be treated] ⇒

2:16 [their justification] ⇒

2:18 [what happens when we go back] ⇒

2:21 [God's grace] ⇒

2:21 [Christ's death] ⇨

3:10 [their status] ⇨

5:1 [freedom] ⇨

5:2 [value of Christ] ⇨

5:3 [debtor to what?] ⇨

5:4 [how related to Christ?] ⇨

5:16-18 [led by what?] ⇨

Galatians 1:1-12

1:1 Paul, an apostle (not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead), ²and all the brethren who are with me, To the churches of Galatia: ³Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, ⁴who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, ⁵to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

⁶I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, ⁷which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. ⁸But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. ⁹As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed. ¹⁰For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ.

¹¹But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. ¹²For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ.

MAIN THOUGHT:

NOTES:

Lesson Two:

The True Gospel

1:1-12

After almost 1500 years of exclusivity as God's people, the gospel message has now been delivered to all men, revealing to us that now all men — not just the Jews — may enjoy the blessings of God as His people. It was foretold that the blessings of God would be to all nations as early as Abraham (cf. **Gen. 12:3**) and was noted throughout the prophetic writings — most notably in the words of Joel, which spoke of how “*whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved*” (**Joel 2:32**). When the gospel began to be preached, it was even said that the promise of salvation was “*to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call*” (**Acts 2:39**).

But the idea of salvation being offered to the Gentiles and no longer exclusive to the Jewish nation was not comprehended by many Jews and simply too much for some to bear (cf. **Acts 22:21, 22**). Some believed, in spite of this hesitancy, but old habits and beliefs die hard. The apparent demand put on the Gentiles that they also be circumcised was, simply put, an addition that polluted the pure message of the gospel. What they were being taught, in fact, was not the gospel at all! Let us heed the warning of Paul regarding additions to the pure gospel message, and not let others lead us astray by something that is **close** to the true gospel's message.

► Preparation.

Note the following passages that speak about the scope of the gospel message and who may receive it and enjoy its blessings. Add other relevant passages you may find, also: (**Rom. 10:12, 13; Acts 10:34, 35; 15:7-9; Rom. 3:22; Gal. 3:28; 1st Cor. 12:13; Eph. 3:6; Rom. 1:16**). Be prepared to discuss what is taught in these passages and how it might be an answer to the problem in Galatia.

► Observation.

1. **Not From Men Nor Through Man.** (v. 1) As a way of getting right to the point with the problem he will address in this letter, Paul introduces himself as an apostle “*not from men nor through man,*” as a contrast to the Judaizing teachers who had led the Galatian brethren astray. He would remind them that his desire was not to please men, but God (v. 10), and that the gospel message he had preached was not of man, either (vv. 11, 12).

Even today, this will be the choice we have when it comes to religious teaching. Jesus set forth the choices we have: from heaven or from men (**Matt. 21:25**); there is no other option. And if it is not of God, should we accept it on an equal standing as that which comes from God? According to Paul: certainly not!

2. **Lest We Forget.** (v. 4) In his introduction, Paul sends greetings to them, wishing them grace from the Lord Jesus Christ, “*who gave Himself for our sins*” — a fact we should never forget, especially those of us who are His disciples. It is, after all the very reason we follow Him.

3. **Paul marvels!** (v. 6) We might expect to read about people marveling at Jesus for the miracles and wonders He worked, but it is somewhat surprising to read that **He** marveled at someone. But Jesus marveled at the faith of the centurion (**Matt. 8:10**), and for the lack of faith in those from His home region (**Mark 6:6**). Here, Paul marvels — but not for something good.

Have you ever thought about why Paul marveled? Maybe it was because he could not comprehend how someone could learn of the true gospel message and obey, and then be led astray into error by others. Maybe he thought about the end of those who turn their backs on the truth (**2nd Pet. 2:18-21**), and why anyone would willingly give up their eternal salvation.

4. **A 'Different' Gospel.** (vv. 6, 7) Paul uses some specific terms here that have specific meanings. First, he tells them they have been turned away to a “*different*” gospel, but then says it is “*not another.*” The Greek word for “*different*” is **ετεροω** [heteros], which means *strange*, or *altered*. Paul was revealing this 'gospel' as one that had

been **changed**; it was no longer the pure message they had once received. He then described it as one that was “another” — that is, it was an additional message. It was one, he would go on to say, that had been perverted [lit., *twisted*] by these men who had led them astray.

Let us keep in mind that when we change — either by adding to or taking from — the gospel, it is no longer the pure gospel, and it is no 'gospel' at all. Anything other than the pure, true gospel message will do no one any spiritual good and is a false hope.

5. **Once Delivered, No Changes.** (vv. 6-9) Noted here what Paul said: “*But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.*” Paul doesn't just say if **someone else** brings another message; he includes himself in this warning! Paul wanted them to know that they were to not accept some strange teaching just because **Paul** brought it. Even if an **angel** brought them something different, it was to not be accepted and the messenger accursed.

Oh, how this should be heeded today! We have some brethren who are going around the country preaching false doctrines and leading people to eternal destruction, and I am afraid many people who once held firmly to the truth are allowing these errors to gain a foothold or be heard simply because of **who** is teaching it. Paul did not tell the brethren they should accept what he teaches, no matter what; he warned them against accepting anything other than what he had already delivered to them.

6. **An Accursed Messenger.** (vv. 6-9) Paul makes a strong statement here about the gospel as it was preached to them, a warning that we should heed even today. That message was once and fully delivered to mankind [in the context, to the Galatians] and afterwards, anything that taught anything different was not of God and the messenger who brought it was to be accursed. He was not to be patted on the back and told we should just “agree to disagree,”; he was to be accursed! Paul did not mince words and gives us a clear picture as to how **we** should respond to someone who brings something other than the pure gospel message.

7. **Again, A Choice.** (v. 10) Paul put the question to them to illustrate the fact that he was not out to please some man by what he taught. If he was seeking to please men, he knew that he could no longer claim to be a servant of Christ. These Judaizing teachers were propagating this 'different gospel' to please their cohorts and in the hopes they would face less ridicule or persecution (**6:12-15**).

8. **The Source of His Message.** (vv. 11, 12) To make the point once again, Paul notes that what he preached to them did not originate from man, nor was he even taught God's word by a man. He received his message by the inspiration of the Holy spirit, just like all the other apostles (**1st Cor. 2:12, 13**), and could honestly say that what he spoke was God's word, not something from the minds of mere men.

9. Your Observations:

► **Interpretation.** From the text on page 8, complete the following:

Paragraph Divisions: at 1:1, 6, and 11.

Note the paragraph divisions and give a short title for each main thought. [Note: Some paragraphs may be grouped together.] Note the number of times Paul refers to the 'man vs. God' contrasts, and why.

1. Why did Paul place so much emphasis on the fact he was an apostle from God and not from men, that he sought to please God and not men, and that his message was of God, and not of men? ___

2. What had the addition of circumcision, as a part of the 'gospel message' done to it? _____

3. What was Paul's exhortation regarding those who brought "any other gospel" to them? Why such a strong condemnation for such ones? _____

4. Why could Paul not be a bondservant of Christ if he had sought to please men? _____

► **Application.**

1. Explain the difference between that which originates from men and that which comes from God, and what difference it makes to us in spiritual things. _____

2. Should we accept men who are known to have preached error, 'as long as they don't preach it here'? If so, explain why this is acceptable; if not, why not? _____

3. Since we do not have direct revelations of God's will today, what is our standard when preaching? _____

► **For Further Study.**

Consult a map of the region of Galatia and note the churches that may have been there because of Paul's missionary journeys, or because of the work of other men. Note those locations on a modern map, also, to gain perspective of the length of his journeys. Consult a topographical map if possible, to see the terrain.

► **For Consideration.**

"I marvel that you are turning away so soon..." (1:6)

"... if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed." (1:9)

Galatians 1:13-2:21

1:13 For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it. ¹⁴And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers. ¹⁵But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, ¹⁶to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood, ¹⁷nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus.

¹⁸Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and remained with him fifteen days. ¹⁹But I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother. ²⁰(Now concerning the things which I write to you, indeed, before God, I do not lie.) ²¹Afterward I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. ²²And I was unknown by face to the churches of Judea which were in Christ. ²³But they were hearing only, "He who formerly persecuted us now preaches the faith which he once tried to destroy." ²⁴And they glorified God in me.

2:1 Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and also took Titus with me. ²And I went up by revelation, and communicated to them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to those who were of reputation, lest by any means I might run, or had run, in vain. ³Yet not even Titus who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised. ⁴And this occurred because of false brethren secretly brought in (who came in by stealth to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage), ⁵to whom we did not yield submission even for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you. ⁶But from those who seemed to be something—whatever they were, it makes no difference to me; God shows personal favoritism to no man—for those who seemed to be something added nothing to me. ⁷But on the contrary, when they saw that the gospel for the uncircumcised had been committed to me, as the gospel for the circumcised was to Peter ⁸(for He who worked effectively in Peter for the apostleship to the circumcised also worked effectively in me toward the Gentiles), ⁹and 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, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. ¹⁰They desired only that we should remember the poor, the very thing which I also was eager to do.

¹¹Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed; ¹²for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision. ¹³And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy. ¹⁴But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before them all, "If you, being a Jew, live in the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews? ¹⁵We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, ¹⁶knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, 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 shall be justified. ¹⁷"But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is Christ therefore a minister of sin? Certainly not! ¹⁸For if I build again those things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. ¹⁹For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God. ²⁰I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. ²¹I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain.

MAIN THOUGHT:

NOTES:

Lesson Three:

Paul's Defense of The Gospel

1:13–2:21

Who of us would have chosen the man named Saul to preach the gospel?—and to the Gentiles, no less! Yet here he is, writing to the Gentile Christians in the region of Galatia and condemning his Jewish brethren for trying to impose circumcision upon them as a requirement of God. Paul did not shy away from mentioning his former conduct as a persecutor of the church, but only as a matter of fact in explaining how God had shown great grace towards him and allowed him to be the one who was charged with bringing the good news of salvation to the Gentiles in that region.

But Paul writes about his past only as a way to strengthen the impact of his words which would condemn the imposition of circumcision; here was a former zealot for the traditions of his fathers [which would have included the demand for circumcision] now teaching that it was not necessary and, in fact, a “*yoke of bondage*” rather than the freedom that was possible in Christ. This is a man who would have made clear distinctions between Jew and Gentile but is now condemning Peter to his face for making such distinctions. This is a man who strived to live faithfully according to the law that he might be justified in God's sight but is now telling them “*by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.*” Paul made it clear that who he was before and what he taught before was no longer acceptable to God. Now, he stood in defense of the true, pure, gospel which would save them from their sins — something the Old Law could not do.

► Preparation.

Note in the following passages what Paul wrote about the gospel and its power and place in the lives of disciples and potential disciples. Add any other relevant passages you may find, also: (**Rom. 1:16**; **1st Cor. 4:15**; **15:1, 2**; **Eph. 1:13**; **3:6**; **Col. 1:23**; **2nd Thess. 1:8**; **2:14**; **2nd Tim. 1:8-10**). Be prepared to discuss what is taught in these passages and why it might have been a factor in Paul's defense of it.

► Observation.

1. **Paul's 'Old Man.'** (1:13) Paul now mentions, for the purpose of making his point, his old way of life [before he was converted]. Before he obeyed the gospel, he was one who “*persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it*” and he was “*exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers.*” Now, Paul was a defender of the very gospel he once tried to destroy and was “*exceedingly zealous*” for the truth instead of traditions. If there was ever a picture of the meaning of **conversion**, Paul was the one! Without a doubt, Paul “*put off...the old man*” (**Eph. 4:22**) and followed his own divinely-given instruction and did “*works befitting repentance*” (**Acts 26:20**).

We may not have been persecutors of the church before Christ, but we were all outside of it and the only way we can have a hope of being a part of it is to truly repent and put away the old ways and follow the words of Jesus Christ, as Paul did.

2. **What Did Paul Give Up?** (1:14) Sometimes, we might think that some faithful disciples only do so because they didn't have much to give up, or that there was no real “change” [repentance] needed — that there really wasn't much difference between who they were before conversion and who they were afterwards. Such thinking ignores the reality that no matter how “good” we were outside of Christ, we were still counted as the enemies of God and still lost in our sins. Paul, however, demonstrated the depth of his convictions when he gave up a promising future within the circle of the Jewish religious leaders for the sake of Christ. These things, he would write to the brethren at Philippi, he “*counted loss for Christ*” and “*suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ*” (**Phlp. 3:7, 8**). Would we be so willing to follow Christ if we had as much to give up? **Have** we surrendered all for Christ's sake? The devil believed Job served God only because he was blessed (cf. **Job 1:9-11**); if he made the same charge against us, would he be found a liar?

3. **Called By Grace.** (1:15, 16) Paul here speaks of the special call of God to him for service and preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, recognizing that who he was before was not worthy of being called a servant of God. That is the power of grace — granting to us what we do not deserve. Though we are not going to be called as Paul was, we are still called [by the gospel, **2nd Thess 2:14**] to serve Him. Who of us was worthy to be called, though? Let us never forget that none of us was "worthy," but God calls us to hear and obey, nonetheless.

4. **Paul Sought No Human Counsel.** (1:16, 17) Paul now makes a point of emphasizing that, in the course of being called by God to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, he did not stop or take the time to seek counsel from other men about what to do or teach; what he taught was **not** of man. Why make this point at the beginning? The letter itself is written to expose the Judaizing teachers who were imposing circumcision on the Gentile brethren of Galatia, and what **they** taught **was** from men. Paul makes a clear distinction between that which came from God and that which originated with men. Only one would lead them to salvation, while the other would only deceive them into **thinking** they were headed to heaven.

5. **Paul's Early Travels.** (1:17-22) In Luke's record, we really have no record of what Paul did and where he went in between the time of his conversion in Damascus (**Acts 9:10-25**) and when he went to Jerusalem (**Acts 9:26**). In fact, the text would lead us to believe that his trip to Jerusalem was almost immediately after his departure from Damascus. However, here Paul reveals that, after he left Damascus, he went to Arabia for a still-undisclosed period of time, then returned to Damascus. [The flight to Arabia was probably because they sought to kill him at Damascus; **Acts 9:23-25**.] After his return to Damascus, it would be **three years** before he went to Jerusalem.

After his stay in Jerusalem [where others again tried to kill him, **Acts 9:29**], he departed for Syria and Cilicia [**Acts 9:30** tells us he was taken to Cæsarea and sent to Tarsus, which is in Cilicia]. Paul's mention of these travels is not merely noting his places of travel but, again, to make the point that he consulted with no man regarding what he should preach and teach and these travels prove that what he initially taught [in Damascus] did not come from any man — not even the other apostles.

6. **Unknown By Face, But Certainly Known.** (1:22-24) While Paul makes it a point to say that his face was unknown to the Christians in Judea, he certainly knew that they still had heard about him. And why not? Here was a man who had "*formerly persecuted*" the church was now preaching "*the faith which he once tried to destroy*!" Again, we see the proof of conversion in deeds, and not mere words. Paul may not have been recognizable if any of the Christians in Jerusalem saw him, but they certainly knew about him — what had happened and what he was now doing.

If others heard about our conversion, or if others simply knew we claimed to be a Christian, what evidence would be given to them so that if they never saw our face, they would know that our conversion or our claim was true? Would there be any convincing evidence that our conversion and repentance was real?

7. **A Return to Jerusalem.** (2:1-10) Paul continues his recounting of his travels, pointing out that it was another 14 years before he returned to Jerusalem [after departing for Syria and Cilicia]. This trip was most likely **not** the one where he and Barnabas took the support to the elders in Jerusalem (**Acts 11:29, 30; 12:25**), but the one where they went to Jerusalem to settle the matter of circumcision (**Acts 15**); the purpose of that journey and the events that transpired would mesh with what he goes on to write about in this portion of the letter.

8. **It Matters How Sometimes.** (2:2) Paul notes here that when he went to Jerusalem again, he explained and summarized the work and the gospel he taught to the Gentiles — publicly for some, but privately to others. Paul did not go with the attitude of "take it or leave it," but considered the situation and standing of some and decided it would be more beneficial to tell them about his work privately so his work would not have been in vain. Because he did not insist on the Jewish customs among the Gentiles, he knew that would stir some to anger and some would simply have nothing to do with him. Today, do we think about our "audience" and their standing and situation and adapt to benefit our efforts? It matters not only what we say but, sometimes, how and where it is presented that makes a difference.

9. **Unbending.** (2:3-5) When he felt it necessary, Paul did not hesitate to have his fellow workers circumcised, as he did with Timothy (**Acts 16:1-3**). But when pressured by those who were likely the same ones who were giving the Gentiles trouble over the circumcision issue, Paul “*did not yield submission even for an hour.*” He was not about to do something because someone falsely believed it to be a matter of obedience when it was not. Paul did it to further his work, but not as a matter of *obedience*.

10. **Not Even For An Hour.** (2:5) Just to show how our perception of time has changed, Paul said he didn't yield “*even for an hour*”; today, we would say “not even for a *second*.” My, how time has changed!

11. **It Makes No Difference To Me.** (2:6) Apparently, some influential men tried to persuade Paul to change his message [and to likely demand circumcision of the Gentiles], but they had no influence on him. To make the point, Paul did not even acknowledge or recognize whatever position of influence they thought they had and that they thought would be a matter of influence to him, identifying their positions only as “*whatever they were.*”

12. **The Gospel For The Circumcised and Uncircumcised.** (2:7, 8) The way Paul phrases this, it might sound like there were two different gospels, but the point he was trying to make was that it was one and the same. The only distinction Paul intended here was to be understood as the difference between him [as one sent to the Gentiles] and Peter [sent to the Jews]. The messages were the same! Furthermore, Paul notes that the same one who worked through Peter among the Jews had also worked through him when amongst the Gentiles — God.

13. **The Right Hand of Fellowship.** (2:9) We might say that they shook hands on it, but the point is, they saw that what Paul had done and continued to do was of God and a good work, indeed, and with that knowledge, they could find no reason to prevent him and no reason to demand a change in the message.

14. **Remember the Poor.** (2:10) With no further questions or reasons to delay, Paul was sent with the single admonition to “*remember the poor,*” which Paul said he was eager to do, anyway. Paul would tell the Ephesian elders the words of Jesus: “*It is more blessed to give than to receive*” (**Acts 20:35**), and this should be ever in our mind that we, too, might remember the poor. Don't forget the admonitions of the wise writer regarding our treatment of the poor (**Prov. 14:21, 31; 17:5; 19:17; 21:13; 22:16; 28:27**), and the Judgment scene Jesus described (**Matt. 25:31-46**) where the matter of helping those in need was an issue for which we will be judged.

15. **Peter Stood Condemned?** (2:11-13) Some men erroneously believe and teach that if a man has the Holy Spirit, he cannot go astray or teach error. This confrontation would lead us to believe otherwise. Peter, we know, had already received a miraculous endowment of the Holy Spirit (**Acts 2:1-4**), but here Paul confronted him and he writes that Peter “*was to be blamed.*” A few translations say Peter “*stood condemned.*” How could Peter be condemned if he had the Holy Spirit? This scene **proves** that the Holy Spirit did not — and will not — overrule our will as we live for and serve the Lord.

16. **Hypocrisy.** (2:11-21) What Peter had done and had influenced others to do was pure hypocrisy. He associated with the Gentile brethren as long as there were no Jews from Jerusalem, but as soon as they showed up, Peter distanced himself from the Gentile brethren, showing obvious favoritism and implicitly showing one to be more 'worthy' than the other.

17. **Even Barnabas.** (2:13) This simple statement says a lot about the character of Barnabas; if Paul said that “*even Barnabas*” was carried away with their hypocrisy, this must have meant that Paul expected better of him than this, and was surprised to see Barnabas follow their hypocritical behavior.

18. **Not Straightforward.** (2:14) The Greek word translated as “*not straightforward*” has a literal meaning of not walking straight. [The ESV translates this as “*not in step with the truth of the gospel.*”] Peter, and then others, were — by their actions — teaching a different gospel. Because of this hypocritical behavior, they were effectively teaching that God makes distinctions. The very core of the gospel message is that Christ died for **all** men!

19. **What Justifies?** (2:16) In answering what was probably one of those “evergreen” questions among the brethren, Paul addresses the matter of circumcision as a matter of the Old Law and then states the rebuttal: “*a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ.*” The Law could not do that!

20. **Justified.** (2:16) We read this word so many times in the New Testament, we may get in the habit of simply reading **over** it without stopping to think about what it really means. According to the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, it means "[shown] to be just or right" or "declared innocent or guiltless; absolved; acquitted." In spiritual terms, this applies to we who were, without a doubt, **guilty** but who are now declared to be guilt**less** by God because of our faith in Christ.

21. **False Conclusions.** (2:17, 18) This passage is confusing to many, and rightly so, if the context surrounding the verse is not considered, as well as the context of the entire letter. But we must consider that Paul was just, prior to this verse, talking about "we Jews" who understood justification did not come by the works of the Law and who had believed in Christ. Some [those Jews who were trying to impose circumcision on the Gentiles] wrongly believed that freedom from the law would necessarily mean freedom from any commands and, thus, no sin. But they were still found to be sinners! Was this Christ's fault? Paul's answer: Absolutely not! If anyone is guilty of sin, it is only self to blame!

22. **Dead to the Law.** (2:19) Paul declares that, yes, he was dead to the Law, but that did not mean he was now living for himself; he was still living to God. In the letter to the Romans, he declared then, "Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another—to Him who was raised from the dead" (**Rom. 7:4**). It was in that sense that they must have died to the law — not so they could be free to live as they wished, but that they might now live for Christ.

23. **Crucified With Christ.** (2:20) Often, we cite this verse with reference to the need to completely surrender ourselves to Christ and no longer live for self. I believe that is still a proper application of what Paul states here but, in the immediate context, he was still speaking to the idea that no longer living for the law would mean one could now live for himself and do whatever he wanted to do. Paul again makes it clear that such would definitely not be the case; those who believe in Christ and who desire to be justified before God do not live for self, but for Christ. Freedom from law did not mean freedom from obedience or freedom from a life of holiness and godliness.

24. **A Personal Savior.** (2:20) We often hear some religious people speaking about "accepting Jesus as your personal Savior"; I cannot say what they mean by that, but the idea of Jesus being seen as our personal Savior is not a wrong concept. Here, Paul speaks of Jesus in a very personal way: "the Son of God, who loved **me** and gave Himself for **me**." It is easy to speak about Jesus as "the" Savior, but if I do not see that Jesus died for **me**, and that He is **my** Savior, then I probably have not fully come to grips that it was for **my** sins He died, either. Each and every disciple needs to understand this and have in mind, "It was **my** sins that put Him on the cross."

25. **A Grace Made Void?** (2:21) Paul closes out this particular argument by again making it clear that what he did, he did for God and Christ and not from selfish motives. To emphasize the point, he states that he did not nullify the grace of God [which brought salvation by faith in Christ], knowing that righteousness did not come through the law. For these ones to now declare circumcision was necessary was to set aside the grace of God and claim righteousness was of self, instead.

26. Your Observations: _____

► **Interpretation.** From the text on page 12, complete the following:

Paragraph Divisions: at 1:13 and 18; then 2:1 and 11.

Note the paragraph divisions and give a short title for each main thought. [Note: Some paragraphs may be grouped together.] Note the ways Paul says and proves that what he taught did not come from man.

1. What was the point of Paul mentioning his "former conduct" and his conversion? _____

2. How did Paul's former standing among his Jewish brethren relate to the main message of this letter, and what impact would that former conduct and his conversion have on how the message would be received? _____

3. What was the point of Paul mentioning the places he had been after his conversion? _____

4. How significant was Paul's conversion, based on the fact the brethren at Galatia (1:13) and those in Judea (1:23) had heard about it? _____

5. What trip to Jerusalem is Paul referring to in 2:1, 2? What was its main purpose? _____

6. Why did Paul teach some men privately (2:2)? Was Paul trying to keep the conversion of some hidden? Was it done secretly because some might be ashamed? Explain your answer. _____

7. Why did Paul have Timothy circumcised (**Acts 16:1-3**), but not Titus? _____

8. How did Paul demonstrate his lack of favoritism when at Jerusalem, and how significant was this demonstration, in light of who he was and in light of what happened with Peter at Antioch? _____

9. Why did Peter, James, and John emphasize the need to remember the poor to Paul? _____

10. Give a brief description of the events at Antioch regarding Peter, and why *“he was to be blamed.”*

11. What is implied by Paul writing that *“even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy”*? _____

12. Why did Peter separate himself from the Gentiles only after *“certain men came”*? _____

13. Why was it necessary for Paul to emphasize the inability to be justified by the works of the Law? _____

14. What was Paul speaking of when he wrote about *“those things which I destroyed”* (2:18)? _____

15. How could Paul have *“set aside the grace of God,”* and what was he implying by even writing this?

► **Application.**

1. From Paul's example, what must we do after we have been converted to demonstrate our conversion, and that it was a true conversion? _____

2. How important is it for us today to make it clear that what we teach and preach did not originate with man, or even that what we speak is not from the thoughts of other men? _____

3. Considering Paul's actions with Timothy and Titus regarding circumcision, what can we learn about how we preach and teach the gospel, and what methods or approaches we can use as we do so? _____

4. Today, why may it be necessary, sometimes, for us to teach some “*privately*” as Paul did? _____

5. How can others today seek to influence us and what we teach [or do **not** teach], or even **whom** we teach, and how must we respond to such attempts? _____

6. How might we lose sight of the fact we are justified “*by faith in Jesus Christ*” and start thinking perfect obedience to even Christ's words is what brings justification? _____

7. What is meant by being “*crucified with Christ*” and why is this essential for every disciple to do so? _____

8. Can we, also, “*set aside the grace of God*” today, and how might we do so? _____

► **For Further Study.**

Research the modern day practice of circumcision amongst followers of Judaism and note the reasons given for why it is still practiced [if it is] and the restrictions mandated by tradition as to how and when it is done.

► **For Consideration.**

"He who formerly persecuted us now preaches the faith which he once tried to destroy." (1:23)
"... it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me..." (2:20)

Galatians 3:1-25

3:1 O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified? ²This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? ³Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh? ⁴Have you suffered so many things in vain -- if indeed it was in vain? ⁵Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, does He do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? -- ⁶just as Abraham "believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." ⁷Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham. ⁸And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, "In you all the nations shall be blessed." ⁹So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham.

¹⁰For 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 in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them." ¹¹But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for "the just shall live by faith." ¹²Yet the law is not of faith, but "the man who does them shall live by them." ¹³Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree"), ¹⁴that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

¹⁵Brethren, I speak in the manner of men: Though it is only a man's covenant, yet if it is confirmed, no one annuls or adds to it. ¹⁶Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, "And to seeds," as of many, but as of one, "And to your Seed," who is Christ. ¹⁷And this I say, that the law, which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ, that it should make the promise of no effect. ¹⁸For if the inheritance is of the law, it is no longer of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise.

¹⁹What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator. ²⁰Now a mediator does not mediate for one only, but God is one. ²¹Is the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not! For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law. ²²But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. ²³But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. ²⁴Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. ²⁵But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.

MAIN THOUGHT:

NOTES:

Lesson Four:

What the Law Could Not Do

3:1-25

We who are Gentiles probably cannot fully grasp the great shift in thinking that had to take place in the mind of every Jew who was converted to Christ. Everything they had ever known about God and His ways was evident in every aspect of their daily lives. The Old Law regulated what they could eat (**Lev. 11**), what they could wear (**Lev. 19:19**), what they could do on the Sabbath (**Exod. 35:3; Jer. 17:21, 22**), the sacrifices they were to make (**Lev. 1-5**), and many other laws that literally covered just about every waking hour of their lives. Now, imagine waking one morning with the understanding that almost all of those regulations are no longer in effect. How hard would that be to change, and in such a short period of time?

It was this difficulty in giving up the old ways that most likely led to the Judaizing teachers to demand circumcision of the Gentiles. Yes, these Jews had converted to Christ, but they had the Old Law [as well as the traditions of their fathers] so thoroughly ingrained in their lives that it was difficult for them to accept the Gentiles as their equals without the Gentiles becoming like them [through circumcision]. They were used to the Old Law, where if a Gentile wanted to enjoy the blessings of God or even to join in worshiping and serving him, he had to basically give up his national identity and live as a Jew. Under the law of Christ, though, there was no more distinctions. What was forgotten in all of this was the truth that the Old Law and all its ways could not do the one thing that they needed to be concerned about most: save them from their sins! Perfect obedience to the Old Law [which no one except Jesus accomplished] did not justify them in the sight of God now, nor did it ever; it was faith in Jesus Christ that justified them!

► Preparation.

Study and compare **Romans 3:21-5:11** with the things Paul is saying here about our justification and the part *faith* has in it. Be ready to discuss the similarities in the two letters' appeals, and their differences.

► Observation.

1. **Bewitched.** (3:1) Paul uses a term here that literally means the use of "black magic" on someone to charm them. It is more likely that he means this in the figurative sense, though, implying only *deception*. They had been apparently deceived by these Judaizing teachers into thinking that circumcision and obedience to the Old Law was necessary, and that strict obedience to the Old Law was what brought their justification. Paul did not believe that they had accepted this argument based on sound reasoning, but had been led to follow these men because of clever deception and trickery. He goes on to remind them that they had been eyewitnesses to the truth of the gospel being preached, implying that these men had, through deception, "pulled the wool over their eyes" and convinced them that what they knew [Jesus Christ and Him crucified] wasn't really the important part of the gospel message. As hard as it may be to believe Christians can set aside the crucifixion as the center of their faith, it happened then and it can happen today — if we don't keep our eyes open.

2. **By the Spirit or By the Law?** (3:2, 3, 5) Paul pointedly asks them about the Spirit they had received and its cause for being given, as well as the miracles worked among them by the Spirit. His point was to show that through the deeds of the Law, the Spirit did not come, and the miracles that were done were not by the deeds of the Law, but because of their faith in Christ. That *should* have told them that it wasn't the works of the Law that pleased God and brought justification. Having been born of the Spirit (cf. **1st Cor. 12:13**), they were now led to believe it was the deeds of the flesh that brought about God's justification — wrongly so.

3. **Foolish!** (3:1, 3) Twice, Paul uses the term *foolish*, declaring them such and then asking if they were. This is not an insignificant usage, for Paul wants to demonstrate their foolishness in being led astray by these men,

when they should have obviously known better. Paul really wanted to know: Were they so foolish as to believe the erroneous doctrines of these men and allow themselves to be led astray so easily? Remember, in the opening portion of this letter, he said he “*marveled*” that they had so quickly abandoned the true gospel. Paul really found it hard to believe these false teachers had found success with them!

4. **Was Their Faith in Christ in Vain?** (3:4) Paul then asks about their suffering and its validity; that is, he asks if the persecutions they suffering were in vain because **now** they were following a doctrine that diminished Christ's place in their spiritual life. Plainly stated, since it was their faith in Christ that was the cause for any persecutions they had suffered, believing that the works of the Law [particularly, circumcision] was what brought justification meant that they had uselessly suffered!

5. **Just As Abraham.** (3:5-7) In making the point about what brought the Spirit and justification, Paul asks if the miracles were by the deeds of the Law or by the hearing of faith — “*just as Abraham ‘believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.’*” If they were truly walking in the same steps of faith as Abraham, they had to see that their justification came in the same way **his** did: through faith, not works of the Law. Though the Jews called themselves the sons of Abraham, Paul pointed out that the true means of being so called was not through physical lineage or even some physical deed [i.e., circumcision], but through faith in Jesus Christ.

6. **Prophecy Fulfilled.** (3:8, 9) One of the great promises made to Abraham was, “*In you all the nations shall be blessed,*” which — not understood by the Jews — meant the Gentiles would also be included. Those of faith — Jew and Gentile — would be blessed with “*believing Abraham*” and it would be because of their faith in Jesus Christ. Their blessings would not come by deeds of the Law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. The Gentiles in Galatia were being misled by those who were still trusting in the deeds of the Law as their mark of righteousness.

7. **Cursed!** (3:10-14) To further emphasize the foolishness of thinking that by deeds of the Law they would be justified, Paul reminds them that those who lived under that Law were duty-bound to keep every one of the commands, else they be considered cursed. [Since no one kept it perfectly, that meant everyone would have matched that description, hence the fate of being “*cursed*” by their failure to do so.] But even within the Old Law, it was said, “*the just shall live by faith*” (**Heb. 2:4**). Many of the Jews had misunderstood what God had always wanted [*faith*] and had focused on mere ritual and the outward 'obedience' to the letter of the Law, and some were now trying to mislead the Gentiles brethren into following that same line of false teaching. Christ became the “*curse*” for us when He was crucified, nailing those requirements for perfect law-keeping to the tree and making it possible for those who truly live by faith in Him to be justified — the promise that was made to Abraham.

8. **Paul's Emphasis on Our Justification.** (3:11) For the third time [twice in **2:16**], Paul notes that no man is justified by the works of the Law. It would seem that he is striving to make this point absolutely clear!

9. **The Mystery Revealed.** (3:14) In the letter to the Ephesians, Paul called that which was once a “*mystery*” but the message now revealed to them by the Holy Spirit — the gospel — was “*that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel*” (**Eph. 3:6**). Here, Paul points out that this blessing was made available to the Gentiles by the death of Jesus on the cross.

10. **An Illustration All Would Understand.** (3:15) To make the point about God's promise being sure, Paul uses common knowledge among men about covenants in that when it is confirmed, no one can add to it or nullify it except the original covenant-maker. This sets up what he is about to say about God's covenant and promise to Abraham that through his seed all nations would be blessed.

11. **This Is Why I Am Nit-Picky.** (3:16) Some people think I and many others are too fastidious when it comes to properly interpreting God's word, the Bible. This verse alone is the reason why I am so demanding. Just **one letter** makes the difference in proper understanding of God's promise. **One letter!** Paul's point here is that the promise was particular and exact, and that “*Seed*” was none other than Jesus the Christ — **not** through “*many*” [the Jewish nation]. This only served to strengthen his argument against the necessity of circumcision, something the Jews believed was their mark of acceptance by God and which some now imposed on the Gentiles.

12. **430 Years Later.** (3:17) What is Paul referring to when he writes about “*the law, which was four hundred and thirty years later*”? He was talking about the time span between the promise made to Abraham [ca. 1880 B.C.] and the time the Law was given on Mount Sinai [ca. 1451 B.C.]. It was this same time period referred to in **Exodus 12:40**, but which then declared it to be the length of the Israelites bondage in Egypt, rather than the span between the original promise to Abraham and the giving of the Law of Moses. However the time is determined, though, the statement still stands that one cannot annul the covenant that was made. As it applied to the immediate situation, the Gentiles could not now be arbitrarily excluded if they failed to be circumcised because God had always intended that they be included in the plan for man's salvation, made possible by Christ's death.

13. **Law, or Promise?** (3:18) Even the staunchest defender of the Jewish way would have to admit Paul's argument here, that the inheritance was by promise, not by law. That being true, they would have to readily admit that the inheritance for which they waited was by promise, too [to Abraham], and not by or in the Law of Moses. If it was righteousness and eternal life they sought, they would have to abandon the idea that it was obtained by the works of the Law because the inheritance came by the promise; that is, through faith in Christ.

14. **Why, Then, the Law?** (3:19) Right about now, some of the Jews would be thinking, “If this was all made possible through faith and by the promise, why did we even have the Law, then?” Good question! Though salvation would come because of the promise made to Abraham, the Law was “*added*” because of sin; that is, it identified sin (cf. **Rom. 7:7**), its nature, and its result. In the law, God gave a means for the guilty to obtain forgiveness [through animal sacrifices] until the One Sacrifice was made, and the Law was done away. We now understand that it was not the blood of bulls and goats that paid the price, but Christ's blood.

15. **Is There A Conflict of Law and Promise?** (3:21) Again, this might confuse some, who would ask, “*Is the law then against the promises of God?*” It might sound reasonable to think that the two were in natural conflict, but Paul answers those doubts and questions. The law was brought in because of sin (v. 19), but that law could not provide what they needed: spiritual life, righteousness, and forgiveness. If it had, then they could argue that righteousness came by the Law and the performance of its deeds.

16. **The Law: Our Guard.** (3:22, 23) Paul now describes the Law and its purpose as being their [the Jews'] guard, where all “*were confined under sin.*” It would not be until the Christ came that the promise of faith might be given, since the law demanded perfect law-keeping. Before faith came, they [the Jews] were kept under guard by the Law until Christ came and the necessity of faith was revealed to them and to others. It was the only thing that both identified sin and pointed to the way of escape. But it didn't **provide** that escape!

17. **The Law: Our Tutor.** (3:24, 25) Paul follows that description with another one: a tutor. A *tutor* is one who instructs another [usually a child or adolescent], helping them to understand the important matters. The original Greek word, though, refers to a *pedagogue*; this term has a stronger and deeper meaning because a *pedagogue* is one who is given charge of a child up to the age where he or she moves out of the house and either lives on his or her own or starts a new family and residence. The *pedagogue* is charged with giving them **all** the necessary instruction the child would need to that when the day came, they could be allowed to go out into the world prepared. In the same way, that is what the Old Law did for the Jews: it instructed them about what they needed to know [about God; obedience, righteousness, holiness, and sin] and followed them everywhere they went and guided them in all that they did — until the Christ came and they were led by their *faith*. Now, they were on their own — without the *tutor* [the Old law] — yet they were prepared for that day!

18. Your Observations: _____

► **Interpretation.** From the text on page 20, complete the following:

Paragraph Divisions: at 3:1, 15, and 19.

Note the paragraph divisions and give a short title for each main thought. [Note: Some paragraphs may be grouped together.] Note the ways Paul contrasts the Law and its works versus faith. Note also Paul's arguments for the promise being superior to the Law in bringing them the inheritance through faith and not deeds of the Law.

1. What was Paul's estimation of those who were leading the Galatians away from the truth, based on his words about them (3:1)? _____

2. What was the point of Paul's series of questions regarding the origin of the Spirit (3:2), the work of the Spirit on them (3:3), and the miracles done by the power of the Spirit (3:5)? _____

3. In what way would they have "suffered in vain"? _____

4. What had these Judaizing teachers obviously not understood about the promise made to Abraham that in his seed "all nations shall be blessed"? _____

5. What was the "curse of the law" and why was it a curse? _____

6. According to Paul's words (3:8-9, 14, 22), how does one receive the promised blessings of God? Explain. _____

7. Why did Paul take the time to make a distinction between the terms "seeds" and "seed"? _____

8. Why was it important for Paul to note the Law, which came *after* the promise to Abraham, did not annul that same promise? _____

9. How did Paul answer their apparent question about the place of the Law (3:19) and its purpose? _

10. The original term used by Paul is the Greek word παιδαγωγός [paidogogos], which means a *pedagogue*. What is a *pedagogue* and in what way was the Old Law the *pedagogue* of the Jews? _____

► **Application.**

1. What is the danger of thinking that the blessings we receive from God do not come by faith? _____

2. What must every Christian remember about what Christ has done for us (3:13)? _____

3. Considering Paul's precise distinction between "seed" and "seeds," should we be just as fastidious with the word of God? Why, or why not? _____

4. Was/is the Law *our* tutor? If not, what was/is its purpose for us? Cite Scripture for your answer. _____

► **For Further Study.**

Research the claims of the Islamic adherents that the blessings promised to Abraham came through Ishmael and, thus, through and to the Arabic people. Explain their claims and why it is false, according to Paul's words here.

► **For Consideration.**

"So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham." (3:9)

"He does not say, 'And to seeds,' as of many, but as of one, 'And to your Seed,' who is Christ." (3:16)

Galatians 3:26-4:7

3:26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁷For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. ²⁸There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

4:1 Now I say that the heir, as long as he is a child, does not differ at all from a slave, though he is master of all, ²but is under guardians and stewards until the time appointed by the father. ³Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world. ⁴But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, ⁵to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. ⁶And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!" ⁷Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

MAIN THOUGHT:

NOTES:

Lesson Five:

Sons of God

3:26-4:7

Surely, one of the most amazing things about God's plan of salvation is that we who were once called the enemies of God (**Rom. 5:10**) are able to be called His children. I must agree wholeheartedly with John, when he wrote, "*Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!*" (1st **John 3:1**). We cannot truly grasp the measure of His love and the scope of His grace shown to us because we cannot truly understand the magnitude of man's sin. Even on a personal level, I cannot grasp why God would choose to provide for me a means of forgiveness after the sins I have committed. But because He has provided me that means, I will be forever grateful!

"Sons of God" — what exactly does that mean? Let us stop and consider the full knowledge of what it means to be called God's children, with all the love, care, concern, provision, protection, and promises of a spiritual, heavenly Father who knows all, sees all, and is over all. Consider all of these things, and the fact that God had conceived and established this plan even before we were created!

► Preparation.

Consider the following passages concerning the character of those who would be called God's sons [or children], or what enables them to be so called: **Rom. 8:14, 16; Matt. 5:9; Rom. 9:8; Phlp. 2:14, 15; 1st John 3:9, 10; John 1:12**. Be ready to discuss these passages and how they relate to Paul's words here to the Galatians about becoming God's sons.

► Observation.

1. **Sons of God Through Faith.** (3:26) After having just spoke about the Old Law as their *pedagogue*, Paul now brings them up to date and speaks to their current spiritual state as no longer under that *pedagogue* [the Old Law], but now considered as full sons of God — standing on their own, free to make their own decisions, enjoying an even closer relationship with the Father, and heirs of the blessings of the Father. It was not through circumcision that this came, though; it was by *faith* in Christ Jesus. As was noted in the opening of this lesson, it is quite amazing, is it not, that we who were once the enemies of God can now be called His children?

2. **A Change of Person.** (3:26-29) Just prior to this, Paul was using the encompassing term "we" when he talked about the Old Law [**"we were kept"** (v. 23); **"our tutor...that we might be justified"** (v. 24); **"we are no longer under a tutor"** (v. 25)], but now he changes the person of his writing and now directs his words at the Galatians [**"you are all sons of God"** (v. 26); **"for as many of you as were baptized"** (v. 27); **"you are all one in Christ Jesus"** (v. 28); **"if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed"** (v. 29)]. The point Paul is making emphasizes the need for them to realize and acknowledge that they are no longer under the Old Law and, thus, circumcision is not required. The Gentiles could receive and enjoy God's blessings without it!

3. **Baptized Into Christ.** (3:27) Sometimes, in discussions of this verse with our denominational friends, there may be an attempt to direct the focus on the "as many of you as were" part of the verse, rather than the portion that notes they who "were baptized into Christ...put on Christ." The attempt is to make it sound like Paul is questioning whether or not the Galatians had, in fact, been baptized. That is not the point of the verse! Paul is reminding them that those in Galatia **who had been baptized** [Jew and Gentile] had been baptized into Christ and, thus, put on Christ and the holiness which He embodies. Let us not overlook the truth that is revealed here, that it is by the act of baptism that our spiritual position changes from being **outside** of Christ (cf. **Eph. 2:12**) to **in** Christ. Remember where all spiritual blessings are found (cf. **Eph. 1:3**), and let us remember to make sure we "put on Christ" by taking His character and way of life upon us, walking as He walked (1st **John 2:6**).

4. **All One.** (3:28) Where these Judaizing teachers were trying to prolong the distinction between Jew and Gentile by demanding circumcision [the imposition itself implied they were different and must be the same in that one act], Paul makes it

clear that, in Christ, there **was** no distinction. He added other distinctions [male and female, slave and free] just for emphasis and to show the broad application of the statement, but in its immediate application, the Gentiles could see that they need not be circumcised because Christ accepted them as they were.

For us today, the issue will probably not be circumcision, but brethren still try to insist on ungodly divisions such as race, nationality, education, which Bible translation is used, and so on and so on. Such foolish divisions do not reflect the truth that, in Christ, all are one — all are to be seen as equals. The only distinction within the church that is acceptable is recognizing Christ as head and the disciples as followers. Period.

5. **Abraham's Seed.** (3:29) This would be the cause for great agitation in the stubborn-minded Jews who were holding so tightly to the Old Law. They prided themselves in their lineage, calling themselves the children, or seed, of Abraham (cf. **Matt. 3:9; Rom. 11:1**; Paul himself!) and rested on that lineage as some marker of acceptability before God. To even **think** that the Gentiles could share that title would be unthinkable to many Jews of that day. Jesus reminded them that if it was through some physical lineage, God could raise up children out of stones, if He so desired. But **that** was not the relationship God desired of us; He sought those who would be the *spiritual* children of Abraham, walking in faith as did he, and heirs of the blessings promised him, because of our faith in Christ, the Seed of Abraham.

6. **The Change in Status.** (4:1-3) As Paul continues writing about the idea of the Law being their tutor, he expands on that now by arguing that when the heir is a child [that is, when the Israelites lived under the Old Law, their tutor], he [they] do not differ at all from a slave, but is under that guardianship and stewardship of the *pedagogue* until "*the time appointed by the father.*" And so it was that the Israelites lived under the Old Law until the time appointed by the heavenly Father. Under that Law, they lived "*in bondage under the elements of the world.*" The Greek word translated as "*elements*" is one that implies "first things," or basic, foundational instruction; that is, they lived according to a Law that taught them the basics — about God, their service, sin, sacrifice, love, social relationships, war, holiness, etc. It was by that Law that they learned about God, about themselves, and what God expected of them.

7. **The Fullness of Time.** (4:4) Our English word is easily understood when we break it down into its parts: *full* [completed], *-ness* [a state of]. Basically, this means God had appointed a specific time in the history for all creation for the Messiah to come.

8. **Born Under the Law, To Redeem Those Under the Law.** (4:4, 5) At the appointed time, Jesus [the Messiah] was sent to be born of a woman [thus, His humanity] and under the Law [as one bound to keep the Law of Moses], to redeem [buy back from the guilt of sin] those who lived under the Law [the Jews]. There is **so** much teaching done in this one verse that we could spend the rest of our time considering all of these things and have a meaningful study in itself!

9. **Adoption.** (4:5) The Gentile Christians would surely understand the illustration of *adoption*, as they were once outside the family of God (cf. **Eph. 2:12**), but I imagine it sounded strange to the Jews — those who were divinely called the children of Israel — to hear from Paul that the coming of the Messiah was what enabled them to "*receive the adoption as sons.*" They thought they were **already** God's children! An important point to make here is that this sonship was not a natural thing, nor something one might take, but a gift to be "*received*" from God.

10. **"Abba, Father!"** (4:6) There are two interesting points made by commentators on this verse. First, B.W. Johnson [*Johnson's Notes on the New Testament*], and the Jamieson-Fausset-Brown commentaries note that the term *abba* is Syriac and thus we have a Jewish term [*abba*] and a Gentile [*father*] used, to illustrate the inclusiveness of the adoption. Second, Albert Barnes states that, in an ancient Jewish book, the author revealed that slaves were not allowed to use the term *abba* in relation to the master, so this usage here would indicate [as Paul argues] that they are now considered true sons.

11. **The Spirit Sent Into Our Hearts?** (4:6) It should be noted that the capitalization of the word "spirit" is always done at the translator's discretion, and is done with the immediate context in mind. That said, I believe it is incorrectly done here, for Paul is speaking of the spirit of Christ **not** in literal terms, but figuratively, for it is that "spirit" that cries out — like Jesus the Son — "*Abba, Father!*" It is the similar cry of us as, now, adopted sons that this is made.

12. **Heirs.** (4:7) Here is revealed one of the great blessings of being called the sons of God: we are heirs. When we think about the term, we understand that it means we *inherit* something, and that "something" would be all the spiritual blessings God has promised for those who are His children.

13. Your Observations: _____

► **Interpretation.** From the text on page 26, complete the following:

Paragraph Divisions: at 3:26.

Give a short title for the main thought of this section [other than this lesson's title. Note the arguments of Paul regarding the illustrations of the son and slave relationship and the concurrent blessings [or lack of] for each.

1. What, according to Paul, made them sons of God — “in Christ” (3:26, 27)? _____

2. What does Paul say are some benefits of being in Christ? _____

3. How might the declaration of the ability to be called "Abraham's see" for non-Jews be received by the Jews? How might this play a part in what was being taught to the Gentiles in Galatia? _____

4. According to Paul's words here, what are some differences between a slave and a son? Are there any noteworthy similarities? _____

5. What was the purpose of Christ's coming, according to Paul (4:4, 5)? _____

► **Application.**

1. Since Paul is mainly addressing the Jewish brethren at this point, what lessons should we gain from this text? _____

2. What does your “adoption” mean to you? What does it motivate you to do? _____

► **For Further Study.**

Research the origin and purpose of the Greek *pedagogue* and the responsibilities given to him. Be prepared to discuss this illustration as it relates to the text of this lesson.

► **For Consideration.**

"For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.." (3:27)

"...when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son..." (4:4)

Galatians 4:8-20

4:8 But then, indeed, when you did not know God, you served those which by nature are not gods. ⁹But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage? ¹⁰You observe days and months and seasons and years. ¹¹I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain. ¹²Brethren, I urge you to become like me, for I became like you. You have not injured me at all. ¹³You know that because of physical infirmity I preached the gospel to you at the first. ¹⁴And my trial which was in my flesh you did not despise or reject, but you received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus. ¹⁵What then was the blessing you enjoyed? For I bear you witness that, if possible, you would have plucked out your own eyes and given them to me. ¹⁶Have I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth? ¹⁷They zealously court you, but for no good; yes, they want to exclude you, that you may be zealous for them. ¹⁸But it is good to be zealous in a good thing always, and not only when I am present with you. ¹⁹My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you, ²⁰I would like to be present with you now and to change my tone; for I have doubts about you.

MAIN THOUGHT:

NOTES:

Lesson Six:

Paul's Fears For Them

4:8-20

Parents who are Christians have as their greatest concerns the spiritual welfare of their children. That doesn't cease with age, either, for they may worry **more** about them after they move out of the house, get married, or move off to another city. It is not much different, if at all, for a spiritual 'parent' who has led another to obey the gospel. All of the temptations, trials, and erroneous doctrines that can lead one astray are constant sources of concern for the ones who have helped others to know and obey Jesus Christ, and that is the picture we see here as Paul writes to the brethren in Galatia.

These fears are only heightened when one sees that those who are responsible for leading them astray are not just teaching error, but also attempting to draw them away from those who are teaching truth. Often, those who teach the erroneous doctrines present themselves as a 'friend' who is concerned for their spiritual well-being when, in reality, they are only looking out for themselves or are trying to make a name for themselves by building up a number of 'followers' who will blindly follow them and their teachings, rather than the words of faithful men or even the words of Jesus Christ. These are the concerns of Paul for the brethren in Galatia, so he addresses these fears for them openly, that they may judge who is truly concerned for them versus those whose interests are selfish.

► Preparation.

Read the discourse of Jesus in **John 14-16** as he speaks to the apostles shortly before He is taken away to be crucified. Note the concerns He has for them and the dangers they will face after He departs. Note also how He prepares them for these coming dangers. Compare and contrast the words and concerns of Jesus with those of Paul for the Galatian brethren.

► Observation.

1. **The Object of Their Service.** (4:8, 9a) Having addressed the Jewish brethren and the doctrines and ways of their past that were influencing things now, Paul turns to the Gentile brethren and reminds them that, before they knew the true God, they had served the false. It is interesting to note that he describes those false gods as "*those which **by nature** are not gods.*" The phrase "*by nature*" means its very characteristic; that is, it should have been obvious to all that they were not truly gods at all. It is a stark contrast to the true God, whom they now knew and served.

2. **Known By God.** (4:9) When Paul said that they now knew God, he clarified himself by saying, "*...or rather are known by God.*" This should not be a surprise to Bible students and should not have been a surprise to even the Jews who knew Old Testament Scripture, for God had said long before regarding the coming Messiah, "*I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles, that You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth*" (**Isa. 49:6**). God knew the Gentiles long before they would know Him, and that was a point, too, that Paul was making; they did not come to know God of their own search or reasoning, nor of their own creation. This God was the true God and had them in His plans before time began.

3. **Turning, Again.** (4:9) At the beginning of this letter, Paul said he marveled that they were so soon "*turning away*" to another gospel; here, he asks if they, having known God now, were truly going to "*turn again*" to the "*weak and beggarly elements*" — the same "*elements*" of **4:3** that could do no spiritual good. Though the Gentiles had followed the pagan gods and the Jews the Old Law, both were a matter of trusting in physical, material things to bring about spiritual good — a wasted effort. With certain Judaizing teachers trying to convince the Gentiles that a physical act [circumcision] was necessary, they were, in effect, turning away from the freedom they had in Christ and allowing one's self to be once again enslaved to material things that would do them no spiritual good.

4. **Days, Months, Seasons, and Years.** (4:10) Not only was circumcision being demanded of the Gentiles, but, apparently, they were going further and holding to the practice of remembering “*days and months and seasons and years*” as were prescribed under the Old Law (cf. **Lev. 23; Num. 28, 29**). It was no wonder Paul would say he feared for them! As one who had lived under the Old Law and was, as he had said earlier, “*exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers*” (**Gal. 1:14**), he would understand all the intricacies of the Law and how far-reaching it was in their lives. He did not want them [Jew **or** Gentile] to go back to that which would do nothing for them spiritually and which would only render them in bondage once again.

5. **All For Naught?** (4:11) Paul's fear for them was not just the issue itself, but the fact that it would destroy all his efforts with them to bring them to freedom in Christ. This was not, as some are quick to say today, “majoring in minors,” but a serious matter that would deny them salvation because they had added to the pure gospel and were demanding of others what Christ did not demand. Let us not be fooled into thinking “as long as he teaches the truth” on ‘important’ matters, it doesn't matter what else a man adds to, or takes from the whole counsel of God. Remember God's warning to His people of old: “*Therefore you shall be careful to do as the LORD your God has commanded you; you shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left*” (**Deut. 5:32**). Remember, also, that Paul had chastised the apostle Peter because he “*walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel*” (**Gal. 2:14**; ASV); Peter, in effect, had turned aside to the right to please men and stood condemned.

6. **“Become Like Me.”** (4:12) It speaks well of Paul that he is able to write [by inspiration of the Holy Spirit and not of his own opinion] that others should become like him. He would say the same thing to the Corinthians (**1st Cor. 11:1**) and to the Philippians (**Phlp. 3:17; 4:9**) and he could say so because he was living as an example worthy of following. In the immediate context, though, he was speaking of the need for them to cease following after the Jewish customs and treat one another as equals. For us, could we honestly tell others they should follow our example? If not, why not?

7. **A Mutual Acceptance.** (4:12-15) Paul pleaded further with the Galatian brethren based on the friendship and fellowship that already existed between them, reminding them that they had once accepted him and his “*physical infirmity*” [whatever it was, we are not told and I will not begin to speculate] and did not turn him away, though it seems to have been a burden to them to do so. So thorough was their acceptance of him, Paul was convinced that they “*would have plucked out your own eyes and given them to*” him, if he had asked and if they believed it would have done any good. With this reminder, Paul would then ask:

8. **Have I Become Your Enemy?** (4:16) After having reminded them of how they once accepted him “*as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus,*” he now wonders if he has become their enemy simply because he was teaching them a truth that was difficult to accept by some [the Judaizing teachers]. Basically, Paul was asking, “What happened to our friendship that we had? Are you going to throw all that away?”

This passage has been used by many a preacher and many disciples who, having had or built long-standing friendships or relationships with others, find that certain truths all of a sudden stand between them and the relationship that has long been enjoyed by both parties. Sometimes, men will cut off all discussion and all further communication simply because there are some things too hard to hear.

9. **Courted, But For No Good.** (4:17) The Judaizing teachers had apparently endeared themselves to the Gentile Christians with the hidden motive of winning their favor while simultaneously putting them at odds with others. Because of this divisive doctrine and the position it put them in, the Gentiles [if they upheld it] would be left out [“*excluded*”] and these men could then play the hero by “being their friend” and accepting them. The problem was, it was all a ploy to make the life of the Judaizing teachers easier [the Jews would be more favorable to them and ease off on the persecutions, **6:12**].

10. **Zeal is Good — IF.** (4:18) I would be the first to agree that *zeal* is a much-needed attribute among disciples today but, as Paul says, only if it is for a good thing. Some people have zeal, but misdirected (cf. **Rom. 10:2**). Let's make sure that we have zeal, but zeal for a truly “*good thing*” and not our own ways or opinions.

11. **Paul's 'Children.'** (4:19, 20) Paul was one who did not make superficial friendships. As much work as he did, he never appears [in any of his writings] to care any less for any disciple, and seemed to be especially close to those whom he had a part in bringing to obedience and salvation. Here, he makes it clear that he considers the Galatian brethren — the **Gentiles**, no less — "*My little children.*" This speaks to the genuine concern Paul had for them, and it is not surprising to read that he wished he could be with them and speak face-to-face and express his love for them personally because, as it was, he had doubts about them. Doubts are not good.

12. Your Observations: _____

► **Interpretation.** From the text on page 30, complete the following:

Paragraph Divisions: at 4:8.

Note the paragraph division and give a short title for the main thought. Be prepared to identify Paul's main fears regarding the brethren of Galatia, and any one group, in particular, if it applies. Note also The personal appeals Paul makes in an effort to get them to see the path they were taking was erroneous.

1. What was Paul's Main fear regarding the brethren of Galatia? _____

2. Paul said he was afraid for them (4:11) and he had doubts about them (4:20); What, in essence, was his solution to ease these doubts and fears? _____

3. How did he use his personal relationship with them as an appeal to do right? Is that a tactic Christians should use with one another, or even with unbelievers? If so, explain why. If not, why not? _____

4. What was the tactic of the Judaizing teachers (4:17)? _____

► **Application.**

1. What is the danger of focusing on physical/material things in spiritual matters? _____

► **For Further Study.**

Read through **Acts 15** to see the arguments and refutations of the Judaizing teachers then and compare that situation to the one Paul is addressing in this letter.

► **For Consideration.**

"I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain." (4:11)

"...it is good to be zealous in a good thing always..." (4:18)

Galatians 4:21-5:6

4:21 Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not hear the law? ²²For it is written that Abraham had two sons: the one by a bondwoman, the other by a freewoman. ²³But he who was of the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and he of the freewoman through promise, ²⁴which things are symbolic. For these are the two covenants: the one from Mount Sinai which gives birth to bondage, which is Hagar — ²⁵for this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children -- ²⁶but the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all. ²⁷For it is written: "Rejoice, O barren, You who do not bear! Break forth and shout, You who are not in labor! For the desolate has many more children Than she who has a husband." ²⁸Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise. ²⁹But, as he who was born according to the flesh then persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, even so it is now. ³⁰Nevertheless what does the Scripture say? "Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman." ³¹So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman but of the free.

5:1 Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.

²Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing. ³And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law. ⁴You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace. ⁵For we through the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. ⁶For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love.

MAIN THOUGHT:

NOTES:

Lesson Seven:

The Two Covenants

4:21–5:6

There are some who have argued [and still argue] that God has only ever had one covenant with man. One man argues, "When [God] said he would bring a new covenant, he gave it to us like he did Abraham. He gave it as promise. But it was no real new covenant." [http://www.nabion.org/html/one_covenant.html] So, *God didn't really mean what He said?* Obviously, this argument must be rejected as false based on the fact of his rejection of God's own words. When God said "new covenant," He **meant** it would be a "new covenant." Sadly, there are even some preachers within the Lord's church who are promoting this "one covenant" idea [Jim Puterbaugh] and, not surprisingly, it is to support a false argument for the authority of the words of Moses regarding marriage, divorce, and remarriage. Why is it that men persist in twisting Scriptures to uphold their false ideas? Wouldn't it be simpler — and **truthful** — to simply let the Scriptures tell us the answer?

In this portion of Paul's letter to the Galatians, he uses very plain language when he wrote, "*For these are the two covenants,*" speaking of the symbols of Abraham's two sons and Sinai *versus* Jerusalem. Obviously, Abraham had two sons [Ishmael and Isaac] and Sinai and Jerusalem are two different places, so how could one argue that when Paul spoke of "*the two covenants*" that there really was only one?

► Preparation.

Read through **Hebrews 7:20-10:25**, noting the things said about the covenants, especially anything that points to there being more than one and what is said about "*the second*" covenant as compared to "*the first.*" Be prepared to discuss the arguments for the "*better covenant*" and the implications of the arguments of the writer as it relates to Paul's arguments to the Galatian brethren.

► Observation.

1. **Do You Not Hear?** (4:21) Paul's argument here is compelling when he asks if those who desire to live under the Law actually listened to what was said within that same Law. Maybe they missed that part that talked about God making "*a new covenant*" (**Jer. 31:31-34**), the part about God calling those who were not His people to **be** His people (**Hos. 2:23**), or the part where God said to those who were not His people, "*You are sons of the living God*" (**Hos. 1:10**). As Paul continues, though, he appeals to none of these, but a story from the first five books of Law [regarding Abraham and his sons] to make the point.

2. **Abraham's Two Sons.** (4:22-31) To make the point about which law truly gave them freedom, Paul appeals to the story of Abraham's two sons, Ishmael and Isaac. Through one of those sons [Isaac], a promise was given that all nations would be blessed. Whether they understood that or not, that meant **all** nations, including the Gentiles. Through that son, true freedom came and not through Ishmael. The two sons symbolically represented the two covenants, also, for the son of the bondwoman [Ishmael] represented the old covenant [the Law of Moses] given at Sinai and the son of the free woman [Isaac] represented the freedom that came through the promise made to Abraham [i.e., Jesus Christ and the new covenant]. Those living in the literal Jerusalem [the Jews] were in bondage to that Old law while those living according to the New Testament were of the "*Jerusalem above*" and free. Paul's argument: We are children of the free woman, not of the bondwoman, therefore we are free and not in bondage to the Old Law.

3. **And Another Thing...** (4:29) In the story of Isaac and Ishmael, there was a time when Sarah saw Hagar, the mother of Ishmael, scoffing [presumably at her or Isaac, or both; **Gen. 21:8-10**]. Paul uses that to make the point that the one of the bondwoman [those living under the Old law] was **still** persecuting the one of the free woman [those living for Christ]; that is, those who were clinging to the Old Law were trying to make it difficult for

the Gentiles by demanding more of them than what Christ expected or commanded in requiring circumcision. In effect, Paul says, things haven't really changed.

4. **No Shared Inheritance.** (4:30) When Sarah had Hagar and Ishmael sent away, she further added to her desire to make a distinction by making this statement, that Ishmael would not be heir with Isaac. This again points to the fact that Ishmael did not receive the usual blessings of the firstborn son, and it is certain that it was **not** through Him the promise of God to bless all nations was made possible.

5. **Children of the Free.** (4:31-5:1) The conclusive point was that they — Jew and Gentile Christians — did not live under the Law that rendered them in bondage, but by faith in Christ, who set them free. Upon this argument, Paul pleads with them to not go back to the law that would put them once again in bondage.

6. **Christ — Worthless to Them?** (5:2) Paul states in no uncertain terms that if they persisted in going back to the Old Law [particularly on the issue of circumcision], they were effectively negating what Christ had done for them. That was the problem: You can't pick and choose which parts of the Law you want to keep, nor can we choose to demand obedience of one law while living under another.

We should take particular note of this passage, for it is the best answer to those who want to run back to the Old Law for justification of certain practices among religious people today. Many, finding no passages in the New Testament for instrumental music in worship, will find multiple examples in the Old; some religious groups want to justify their "priesthood" by appealing to the Old Testament examples; and some brethren now are appealing to the words of Moses on marriage, divorce, and remarriage, rather than accepting what Jesus and the New Testament writers have given us. Let us be just as bold in pointing out what Paul said: If you go back to the Old Law for even **one** thing, you make the blood of Christ of no effect to you. I am positive most [if not **all**] who use these arguments would not want that as a consequence, but it **is**, whether they want it or not.

7. **And Not Only That...** (5:3) Another [almost certainly *unintended*] consequence of going back to the Old Law and demanding obedience to even **one** thing is that you then place yourself in the unenviable position of having to keep **all** of it. And what man ever did that? Hint: **Gal. 3:10-12; Rom. 3:20, 23**. Men today who go back to the Old Law and pick out examples of mechanical instruments in worship have never then gone on and demanded we continue to make animal sacrifices, nor do they require that all men make a trip back to Jerusalem three times each year for the required feast days. Why is that? Sadly, these are common examples of the foolishness of men, who presume to be able to pick and choose which parts of God's law[s] they want to keep and which ones they can ignore. **Never** has that been acceptable to God!

8. **Estranged From Christ!** (5:4) Yet another almost certainly unintended consequence of going back to the Old Law seeking justification, is that those who do so make themselves estranged [i.e., cut off] from Christ. The Greek term here literally means "to make void"; in effect, their actions **voided** the saving effects of Christ's blood for themselves. Wow! When you do that, to whom would you turn for salvation, seeing how it was God's plan all along that it be made possible through His sacrifice and shedding of His blood?

Again, let us use this passage and speak boldly the consequences for those who want to run back to the Old Law for justification of some teaching or practice. Though Paul was speaking about personal justification [making them right again in God's sight], the application still fits. Doing so, they "fall from grace"; that is, they abandon the very means by which God's grace is made effective to them. Furthermore, we cannot call ourselves "Christians" [i.e., followers of Christ] if we are appealing to another authority for anything we say and do.

9. **Righteousness By Faith.** (5:5) The Judaizing teachers claimed righteousness through deeds of the Law, but Paul argues from the divine revelation that it comes through faith alone. Unfortunately, the idea of righteousness through deeds persists among religious people and even brethren can get caught up in the mistaken concept that if we show up to worship enough times or say enough prayers or contribute so many dollars that this will somehow render us 'righteous' in the sight of God. When, or if, we act this way, we should not be surprised when we hear others call us 'Pharisees' for that is exactly the mind set they had.

10. **It Just Doesn't Matter.** (5:6) Paul neatly sums up the answer to the Judaizing teachers demand for circumcision: It just doesn't matter. They could, if they wanted to, or they could **not**, if they wanted to; to God, what mattered was "faith working through love" — something that was conspicuously absent among these men.

11. Your Observations: _____

► **Interpretation.** From the text on page 34, complete the following:

Paragraph Divisions: at 4:21; then 5:2.

Note the paragraph division and give a short title for each main thought. Be prepared to identify Paul's use of the children of Abraham to argue for the superiority of the New Covenant, and be prepared to describe Paul's main argument against going back to the Old Law seeking justification.

1. Why did Paul appeal to the story of Ishmael and Isaac as a means of explaining the two covenants? What did each son represent in Paul's argument? _____

2. Explain what Paul meant in **4:29**. _____

3. In what way was obedience to one "bondage" and the other "freedom"? _____

4. Explain the consequences of going back to the Old Law. _____

► **Application.**

1. What are the consequences for us today if we go back to the Old Law as our authority? _____

2. Is there any difference in the consequences noted here for going back to the Old Law and the consequences of binding human laws and traditions? Explain. If not, why not? _____

► **For Further Study.**

Read through various religious publications to see the practices and teachings that appeal to the Old Testament for their authority and compare those things to the subject covered in this study.

► **For Consideration.**

"Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free,..." (5:1)

"... Christ will profit you nothing." (5:2)

Galatians 5:7-26

5:7 You ran well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth? ⁸This persuasion does not come from Him who calls you. ⁹A little leaven leavens the whole lump. ¹⁰I have confidence in you, in the Lord, that you will have no other mind; but he who troubles you shall bear his judgment, whoever he is. ¹¹And I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why do I still suffer persecution? Then the offense of the cross has ceased. ¹²I could wish that those who trouble you would even cut themselves off! ¹³For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. ¹⁴For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." ¹⁵But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!

¹⁶I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. ¹⁷For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. ¹⁸But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. ¹⁹Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, ²⁰idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, ²¹envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. ²²But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. ²⁴And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. ²⁶Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

MAIN THOUGHT:

NOTES:

Lesson Eight:

The Spirit vs. The Flesh

5:7-26

In many stories and movies written and produced by man, there is an underlying — or even outright — theme of "good *versus* evil." This great conflict in the life of man is not just a story, though; it is a fact of life. Whether we want to admit it or not, all men have two sides — the physical and the spiritual — and they are always at odds with each other. Since they always coexist within each man, there is always conflict and, depending on which side each man chooses, only one side can be given preference while the other side must be suppressed. [One cannot choose both.] A man who is spiritually-minded will suppress and overcome his fleshly desires and live for spiritual things; on the other hand, a man who is fleshly-minded will suppress and overcome his spiritual desires and live for the flesh. What should not be forgotten is that, while we may suppress one side or the other, we cannot deny the existence of the side we do not pursue; suppression does not mean it doesn't exist!

In this portion of Paul's letter to the Galatians, he addresses the conflicting sides within each man and makes a plea to the brethren of Galatia to recognize these conflicting sides within them and choose the spiritual over the fleshly. Especially since they were being enticed to rely on physical measures to be approved in spiritual matters, Paul wanted them to see that the opposing sides could not ever agree and to impose fleshly standards in order to achieve spiritual goals was a foolish endeavor. Circumcision, which was being demanded of them, was obviously a fleshly matter that had nothing to do with their spiritual standing before God.

► Preparation.

Read through **Romans 5:12-8:17**, noting the things said about the conflicting and opposing lives of one who follows the flesh versus one who follows the Spirit. Note what Paul says to the Roman brethren and his arguments against one who is in Christ living for the flesh any longer and why one cannot, and then be prepared to discuss those arguments with what he writes to the Galatian brethren in this portion of the letter.

► Observation.

1. **Good Runners Hindered.** (5:7) Paul wrote the letter to the brethren of Galatia because he was genuinely interested in getting them to follow the truth; following anything else would not lead them to heaven. From Paul's own words (1:8, 9) and Luke's record in the book of Acts, we know personally had a part in preaching the gospel to them, so he knew they knew the truth. Now, he wonders who it was that was that was that was standing in the way of them continuing on the course they had begun — in truth, and not following these false directives.

2. **This Persuasion.** (5:8) Paul refers to those who had "hindered" the Galatian brethren as "*this persuasion*" and stated that they did not come from God — a clear, necessary statement that needed to be said. This is a restatement of the fact the "*other gospel*" that had turned them away (1:9) was not "*from Him who called you in the grace of Christ*" (1:6).

3. **One Bad Apple.** (5:9) Paul will use this phrase elsewhere (cf. 1st Cor. 5:6) and its application is seldom talking about **positive** influences. In this case, the infectious doctrine of these men would spread easily and broadly if it was not stopped. To be followers of the pure gospel, they needed to purge this "*leaven*" and become once again free of its polluting influence on them and any who would hear them.

4. **Paul's Confidence.** (5:10) Only a couple of paragraphs earlier, Paul had said he was afraid for them (4:11) and that he had doubts about them (4:20), but now he says he is confident in them, that they would "*have no other mind*" [that is, a mind for truth]. The earlier admonishments were written to get their attention and for them to recognize that it was no small matter what they were doing. Now, having warned them, he encourages them to do the right thing by expressing his confidence that they **will** do right.

5. **Paul Preaching the Same Thing?** (5:11) Lest anyone think that Paul would have anything to do with those who were spreading this false demand of circumcision upon the Gentiles, Paul asks a question that should have gone without answer for its obvious answer. If he, too, was preaching it, why was he also then suffering persecutions from those who were also promoting it? He would face very vehement protests when in Jerusalem (**Acts 21:21; 30-32**) from those who were the Old Law's staunchest defenders; why, if he was preaching the very thing they desired?

6. **Yikes!** (5:12) The meaning of Paul's next statement may be lost in translation. In effect Paul is saying to those who were demanding circumcision that he would wish they themselves be "cut off." The Greek word here means a literal *amputation*, and referred to the "private parts" of a man! Marvin R. Vincent wrote in his commentary:

Paul says in effect: 'These people are disturbing you by insisting on circumcision. I would that they would make thorough work of it in their own case, and, instead of merely amputating the foreskin, would castrate themselves, as heathen priests do. Perhaps that would be even a more powerful help to salvation.'

[*Vincent's Word Studies*]

If Paul meant this term literally, he was not saying these men who demanded circumcision should likewise be circumcised; he was saying that these men ought to have their private parts cut off altogether! Now, whether Paul meant a literal usage of the word, or he was using a strong term that expressed his desire that they be cut off [in presence] from the true disciples, I cannot determine; but the mere usage of the term demonstrates Paul's serious tone towards these men and that he meant, in no uncertain terms, that they should no longer be around to persuade others to follow them and their false ways.

7. **Freedom to Serve — Not For Selfishness.** (5:13) There may have been a misunderstanding among the Gentiles [some of whom likely came out of pagan practices] to think that their "liberty" in Christ meant liberty to do whatever they wanted. Such arguments are heard even today amongst some who promote the doctrine of "once saved, always saved" and the consequence is that we see professing believers indulging in fleshly pursuits and pleasures with the false concept that it matters not. The Gentiles were liable to believe that, once freed from sin and forgiven of all past sins, the blood of Christ covered them to the point of freeing them to resume their fleshly pursuits, or that matters of the flesh [such as the matter of circumcision] was just as important as the spiritual]. Paul sought to correct that mistaken idea and to remind them they were not freed for the purpose of selfish indulgences or for the purpose of self-righteousness, but freed to serve **one another**. Their first consideration should not have been "What can I do now?" but, "What can I now do for others?"

8. **If You Want To Appeal to the Law...** (5:14) Paul, here, uses their own appeal to the Old Law against them and points them to the greater command: "*You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*" They should have been more concerned with that command under the Old Law than the one about circumcision!

9. **Biting and Devouring One Another.** (5:15) Now, Paul gets to a most serious matter and consequence of this doctrine being pushed upon the Gentiles: It would only serve to **divide** them [Jew and Gentile, and Gentile against Gentile], rather than a means of bringing them together. As long as one promoted this false demand, there would be others who, knowing the truth, would oppose them [as did Paul]. Such actions would **not** help them to unite and work for the Lord, but only divide them along "party lines" and hinder the work. In the end, their contentions with one another would only lead to the destruction of all involved, and not salvation.

10. **The Spirit vs. The Flesh.** (5:16-25) The danger of even *starting* to think that a fleshly deed [circumcision] mattered was that it would lead some to think only in terms of fleshly things and, ultimately, turning back to the pursuit of fleshly things. Paul, here, lays out the reality that the two sides are incompatible and always working against each other. He reminded them that if they had truly "died to sin" and were truly Christ's, they would put to death any desire for fleshly pursuits. He further points out that if they were truly following the spiritual side, they would not be trying to live under the Old Law, either. As he had written to the Roman brethren, pursuing fleshly things [a fleshly mind set] is enmity with God and, doing so, we cannot be pleasing to Him.

11. **What Is the 'Spirit'?** (5:16-25) I know that in most translations, the word *spirit* is capitalized, indicating the Holy Spirit. That very well may be the case, in the context, but it seems to me that the line of argument Paul is making is the choice of either following fleshly desires or following spiritual desires [as in **Rom. 8:1-14**]. If so, then the *spirit* he means is our spiritual side, versus the fleshly side — and that, too, would make sense. If we follow our fleshly desires, we will practice the things listed in 5:19-21; if we follow our spiritual side, we will practice the things listed in 5:22, 23.

12. **The Works of the Flesh Are Evident.** (5:19-21) Though we may sometimes claim ignorance of what sin is, we cannot **honestly** make the claim. As Paul states it here, “*Now the works of the flesh are evident.*” We can understand this in two ways: [1] They are obviously “sin” because of their nature [*evident* because they are unquestionably impure], or [2] because they are outward manifestations [*evident* because they are visible] of the fleshly desire within the one who commits it. Either way, when practiced, one cannot excuse himself by claiming ignorance, since it is an appeal to one’s personal desire (**Jas. 1:14, 15**).

13. **The Fruit of the Spirit.** (5:22, 23) Whether this means the Holy Spirit or our own spiritual side, the result of being spiritually-minded or being led by the Holy Spirit should be the same. If we are spiritually-minded, our actions and demeanor will demonstrate “*love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, [and] self-control.*” Contrast these things with the previous list and it is truly “*evident*” which ones are of the world and which ones are of God.

14. **The Reward For Fleshly Works.** (5:21) Paul’s concluding remark about the works of the flesh is that those who practice such things “*will not inherit the kingdom of God.*” In other words, a fleshly mind is not compatible with God and Christ and the spiritual nature of the kingdom. Surely, we would not expect to be welcomed into the kingdom if we have pursued fleshly desires all of our lives! That would be like two soldiers of two different, warring kingdoms fighting mercilessly and relentlessly against one another and then the losing side asking to be accepted in as a faithful citizen and soldier. It isn’t going to happen!

15. **A Simple Truth.** (5:23) “*Against such there is no law.*” You really cannot but appreciate the simplicity of Paul’s statement here regarding the fruit of the spirit. Where in the world is there a kingdom that punishes someone for practicing these things? Where is it in the world that doing these things equates to criminal activity? These are the very attributes we would want all men to have, and societies would relish the idea of having a citizenry populated by men and women who radiated these traits as their very character!

Sadly, we must admit that our own society is increasingly opposed to the idea of self-control and many do not even like hearing someone suggesting it! The very suggestion nowadays is met with cries of “Censorship!” with overwhelmingly negative connotations. The thought now is, “Why should I regulate myself? Why can’t I do what I want? I have my freedoms!” And, like Paul’s warning earlier, they falsely believe they have a right to indulge in whatever fleshly desires they want — without consequence. It is a false hope; there are **always** consequences, and these will be eternal.

16. **Those Who Are Christ’s.** (5:24) The need to kill the old fleshly passions and desires is a recurring message of Paul; he reminded the Roman of the fact they had “*died to sin*” (**Rom. 6:2, 11**); he said earlier in this letter that he had been crucified with Christ and it was no longer he who lived (**Gal. 2:20**); and to the Colossians, he reminded them of the need to “*put to death*” the fleshly desires (**Col. 3:5**). Those who are truly Christ’s will have done this because they know it is the only way to be able to claim the reward of eternal life (cf. **Rom. 8:1-14**).

17. **If.** (5:25) Paul’s concluding statement on the issue was simple: “*If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.*” Again, this may be speaking of either our spiritual mind, or of our need to follow after the leading of the Holy Spirit [through the revealed word of God], but it is true, whichever it is. Paul’s final argument against the circumcision was to remind them their live was not about some fleshly requirement, and being “right” in the sight of God did not depend on this fleshly act; what God wanted was for them to be spiritually-minded, with faith in Christ and love for one another.

18. **Acts of Selfishness.** (5:26) Paul's warning was that they "not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another." When we honestly consider these things, they are all selfish, at their core. *Conceit* is thinking too highly of **self**; *provoking* others is a selfish lack of concern for the feelings of another; and *envy* comes from a materialistic mind set that looks at the possessions of another and wants what they have while simultaneously wanting them to **not** have it.

19. Your Observations: _____

► **Interpretation.** From the text on page 38, complete the following:

Paragraph Divisions: at 5:7 and 16.

Note the paragraph division and give a short title for each main thought. [These paragraphs may be combined.] Be prepared to explain Paul's line of argument, and the need for contrasting the spirit versus the flesh.

1. Briefly summarize Paul's apparent view of those who were troubling the saints in Galatia. _____

2. What did Paul wish of these Judaizing teachers? _____

3. What was Paul's answer should someone say he was also teaching the need for circumcision? _____

4. What did Paul remind the brethren about the "liberty" they had as it related to their behavior? _____

5. What are the two "sides" presented here by Paul, and what was their relationship to each other? _____

6. Why did Paul enumerate these works of the flesh in the midst of a discussion about whether or not circumcision was necessary? _____

7. What was the point of naming the fruit of the spirit [or, Spirit] at this point in the letter? _____

8. Why did Paul say, at this point in the letter, that those who are Christ's "have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires"? _____

9. For what reason would Paul now warn against becoming conceited, provoking one another, and envying one another? _____

► **Application.**

1. How does the way Paul addresses and confronts the errors of these Judaizing teachers stand as an example for how we should deal with errors among brethren today? _____

2. In what ways can we use our liberty in Christ "as an opportunity for the flesh" today? _____

3. Why is it essential that we, as disciples, understand the difference between the works of the flesh and the fruit of the spirit/Spirit? _____

4. Explain, using real, everyday terms and examples, how we manifest the "fruit of the spirit/Spirit" in our lives. _____

5. How important is it that we understand "fleshly lusts...war against the soul" (1st Pet. 2:11)? Explain. _____

► **For Further Study.**

Research the religious concept of *antinomianism*. Note its spread throughout religious circles, then find out what the doctrine means and how it is related to the warnings of Paul given in this portion of the letter.

► **For Consideration.**

"...you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh,..." (5:13)

"... those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires." (5:24)

Galatians 6:1-10

6:1 Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. ²Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. ³For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. ⁴But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. ⁵For each one shall bear his own load.

⁶Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches. ⁷Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. ⁸For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. ⁹And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. ¹⁰Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.

MAIN THOUGHT:

NOTES:

Lesson Nine:

Doing Spiritual Good

6:1-10

Whenever there is a discussion about the issue of authority for the use of the local church's treasury for supporting unbelievers [acts of benevolence], it is almost inevitable that the one who supports the use will come to this passage and try to use it as Scriptural evidence that it is not only permitted, but **necessary**. Some will read verse 10 and then ask, "Doesn't **all** mean **all**?" What is often missed, however, is the **context** of where this statement is found, and the **meaning** of "good," as Paul uses the phrase here. Beginning with the previous section, Paul has been emphasizing the *spiritual* mind set, rather than a *physical* one, and that line of argument and exhortation continues into this section of the letter all the way up to and including verse 10. When Paul says that these Christians should "do good to all men," he is not speaking of *physical* matters [such as feeding and clothing them], but of *spiritual* matters.

And if that is not enough, go back to 5:7 and read through 6:10, noting the personal pronouns. Was what Paul writing directed to the church, as a collective group, or to individual disciples? Honesty demands we understand these things to be directed to the individual disciple! If you really want to "do good" to all men, it is your **personal** responsibility to do so — not the local church's responsibility. So, are you doing good?

► Preparation.

Read through **Romans 12:1-15:13**, noting the things commanded to the church in Rome. Note also the commands that are given that can only be applied on a **personal**, rather than a **collective**, level. [That is, commands for individuals to do, rather than commands given to the church as a collective group.] Compare the commands given there with the things Paul writes to the Galatians in this portion of the letter and note the similarities and the responsibilities placed upon every disciple, as individuals, to do these things.

► Observation.

1. **The Fallen Brother.** (6:1) It is a sad fact that some brethren will be caught up in their fleshly desires and fail to resist the temptations, and sin is the inevitable result. Even "good" brethren fail, but what do we do when they fail? Well, we don't give up on them, but neither do we berate them, keep reminding them of their failure, or shun them. Paul's admonition was to the "*spiritual*" one to restore him — bring him back. That is the ultimate goal regarding brethren who have sinned, is it not? Unfortunately, we sometimes forget the goal and we end up [1] shame the fallen one to the point they do not think they would be welcome back even if they **did** repent, [2] talk about it, but never confront it, [3] shun the guilty one and never have anything to do with him at all so there is not even an opportunity to repent and be restored, or [4] receive them back on a "probationary" basis, watching to see if the fallen one "really repents" before treating him as a faithful brother once again. There is a reason God directs this at the "*spiritual*" one and a reason he wants this done "*in a spirit of gentleness*" with the restorer considering himself; one who is not "*spiritual*" would be thinking in purely physical terms and if it is not done in gentleness, the guilty one might not **want** to return.

2. **Bearing Burdens [1].** (6:2) A follow-up command to the one to restore the fallen brother is the further admonition to be willing to bear one another's burdens. Yes, we all have individual responsibilities to keep, as disciples, but part of those responsibilities are that we watch out for one another. In so doing, Paul says, we fulfill the law of Christ. And what is that "law"?—"This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you" (**John 15:12**). If we truly love one another, we will gladly step up and help them in difficult times, asking nothing in return. Let us not forget that we are not traveling the road to heaven **alone**, but with fellow travelers who seek the same homeland. If we see one who has fallen, let us take the time to stop and lift them up and help them on their way. We would want the same done for us if we fell, right?

3. **Dangerous Thinking.** (6:3, 4) Paul's warning is to the one who thinks better of himself than what he truly is. In the context, we see multiple dangers of having a self-righteousness attitude when considering a brother who

has fallen: [1] such an attitude causes us to look at the fallen brother with contempt, rather than with love; [2] if we do deem to help him, we remind him of how weak he must be to have fallen; [3] we act as if we "would never do **that**"; and [4] we do not see it as "our" responsibility to help him be restored, sometimes thinking "He got himself into this mess; he can get himself out of it." All of this comes from the mind of one who "thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing." All the more reason for each disciple to "examine his own work" when dealing with a fallen brother!

4. **Bearing Burdens [2].** (6:5) In verse 2, Paul admonished the brethren to "Bear one another's burdens"; now, he admonishes them that "each one shall bear his own load." Is this a conflict or contradiction? At first glance, it may appear to be, but let us not forget that our duty is multifaceted and never singly focused. That is to say, we never think **only** of self or **only** of others; we must bear our own burdens, **and** we must help others bear theirs. If we consider the original Greek word in its literal meaning, Paul is saying that each man will bear the weight [give an account] of his own deeds. It will not be a matter of comparison, though, to one's neighbor. As it fits with what he has just written, we must consider our own deeds and whether or not we are pleasing to Christ, not whether or not we are "better" than our brother or neighbor.

5. **Share In All Good Things.** (6:6) Many make a physical application of this passage, even among brethren. Some say it means something similar to the following: "One who has been taught the word should materially support the one who taught him." The danger in taking this position is that, later (v. 10), the same word "good" is used where Paul admonishes us to "do good to all"; will we be consistent and say it means only physical things there?

Consider the possibility that Paul is instead saying something along these lines: "One who is taught the word should be willing to join with that one in every [spiritually] good thing." The word translated as "share" ["communicate", KJV] is the Greek word **koinoneo**, which is translated as *partaker* or *common[-ality]* and whose root word is the same one we translate as *fellowship*. It would certainly seem logical that Paul would, in the context, be urging a common fellowship and bond in the faith, especially since he has just talked about a brother who was overtaken in a sin and restored. What better admonition than to urge him to spend more time with a godly brother for spiritual fellowship?

6. **Do Not Be Deceived.** (6:7) The whole letter was one addressing the problem of thinking on fleshly things [with circumcision being the overriding issue], so it is not out of place for Paul to once again remind them that a mind set on fleshly things while claiming to live for Christ is an impossibility and they were deceiving themselves if they thought otherwise. God could certainly not be viewed with contempt by those who so lived, but that was the result of their doctrine, where Christ's sacrifice was set aside so they could cling to a part of the Old Law. They needed to know that emphasizing the fleshly would render them unfit for the spiritual blessings, because...

7. **You Reap What You Sow.** (6:7, 8) The principle is as old as time itself. Especially in light of what was just urged upon the brother [to share in spiritually good things with the one who has taught him], it would naturally follow that Paul would warn him to keep his mind focused on spiritual things, rather than the physical things, that he might avoid falling again. Spending time and thought on the fleshly things would almost certainly guarantee falling again and, if continued, eternal condemnation; focusing on the spiritual, on the other hand, would bring eternal life.

8. **Doing Good.** (6:9, 10) It is inexplicable to me to read that many men want to make the "doing good" of these verse mean benevolent acts of kindness such as feeding, clothing, or housing those in need. [The necessity of individual disciples doing such acts is certainly taught elsewhere; we need not force the context to make it say so here.] All through this letter, Paul has tried to make the case for the brethren being *spiritually-minded*, and now I am supposed to believe he all of a sudden changes his mind and starts exhorting them to "do good" to others, meaning physically-oriented "good"?

9. **Do Not Grow Weary.** (6:9) It is certainly tempting to give up on doing any spiritual good in this fleshly-minded world where it seems so few are interested in spiritual matters, but we cannot lose heart. We reap spiritual blessings in the end only if we do not give up!

10. **As We Have Opportunity.** (6:10) Someone once said, "Opportunity plus ability equals responsibility." I believe that is a biblical principle that should be exhorted more often! Paul reminds the brethren here to do good at

every opportunity; our task, then is to [1] make sure we recognize opportunities when they come and [2] take those opportunities while they are present; we may not get another one. Sometimes, we only get one shot at helping someone to know the truth, so let's make the best use of our time (cf. **Eph. 5:15, 16**).

11. Your Observations: _____

► **Interpretation.** From the text on page 44, complete the following:

Paragraph Divisions: at 6:1 and 6.

Note the paragraph division and give a short title for each main thought. Be prepared to discuss Paul's continued admonition to have a spiritual focus and the various ways in which that spiritual focus would be demonstrated.

1. What are the demands on the *spiritual* one when a brother is overtaken in sin? _____

2. Explain the apparent contradictions of verses 2 and 5. _____

3. What is the "good" to be done in verse 6, 9, and 10? _____

4. How is it a man might think God can be mocked? _____

► **Application.**

1. What is the danger of approaching a fallen brother with the wrong attitude? _____

2. What "good" can we do "to all, especially...those who are of the household of faith"? _____

► **For Further Study.**

Consult several commentaries on the proper interpretation of verse 6, 9, and 10 on the term "good." Consider the arguments for a physical application versus the spiritual and the consequences of each position. Which would best fit with the context of Paul's letter and its subject matter?

► **For Consideration.**

- "... you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness,..." (6:1)
 "... as we have opportunity, let us do good to all..." (6:10)

Galatians 6:11-18

6:11 See with what large letters I have written to you with my own hand! ¹²As many as desire to make a good showing in the flesh, these would compel you to be circumcised, only that they may not suffer persecution for the cross of Christ. ¹³For not even those who are circumcised keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh. ¹⁴But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. ¹⁵For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation. ¹⁶And as many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.

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

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

MAIN THOUGHT:

NOTES:

Lesson Ten:

The Motives of Their Teachers

6:11-18

Martin Luther King, Jr., said in his famous "I Have A Dream" speech,

"I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character."

As sad and as unjust as the racial prejudice of the South was in the 1960s and either before or after, I have to say, from my experience, that it was easier to deal with than the prejudice I have seen in other regions of these United States, where someone will smile and tell you how terrible it is in the South, that they don't have a prejudiced bone in their body, and how they would "never do that" — until you leave the room; then they speak of you in clearly unflattering ways and use bigoted speech and racist terminology. Although all racism is disgusting and unjust, at least with the outright and open bigot, you know what you get.

But in a very real example of the fulfillment of that dream of King's, the apostle Paul wrote — almost 1000 years before King spoke — a judgment of men based on the content of their character, while those same men were effectively judging others by their race [Jew *versus* all non-Jews, or Gentiles]. Unfortunately, the judgment of the character of those men was not favorable. Their *motives*, we see, were not pure and sincere; they were disingenuous as they tried to persuade the Gentiles that they were looking out for their spiritual interests when, in reality, they were protecting their own hides.

Beware the teacher who claims that all he is doing is for your good, that he has only your best interests in mind, or that others [who criticize him and who dare expose his teachings as false or erroneous] are mistaken and merely "misunderstand" him and what he is "really" trying to say. As they say back in Arkansas, "If it walks like a duck, quacks like a duck, and looks like a duck..."

► Preparation.

Read through **1st Corinthians 4:1-5** and **1st Corinthians 13:1-3**, noting the things Paul writes about *motives* for our deeds and how they will be a factor of our final Judgment. Be ready to discuss *motives* and how the true motives of these Judaizing teachers drove them to pressure the Gentiles to practice circumcision; then compare and contrast their motives with the motive of the apostle Paul.

► Observation.

1. **Paul's Personal Contribution.** (6:11) Some of Paul's other letters were said to have been written by the hand of another (cf. **Rom. 16:22**), though he would write closing words on a few (cf. **1st Cor. 16:22**; **Col. 4:18**; **2nd Thess. 3:17**); he did write at least one other in his own hand (**Phlm. 1:19**). Some have speculated that Paul's "thorn in the flesh" (**2nd Cor. 12:7**), with consideration of his words to the brethren of Galatia in **Gal. 4:13-15** and his words here, was poor eyesight. Again, this can only be speculation and it is unimportant in the big picture.

Ignoring the speculation for a minute, though, consider that Paul took the time to personally write this letter to them. He was keenly interested in their spiritual well-being and he took it upon himself to write the letter, possibly helping them to see the urgency and genuineness of his words.

2. **Making A Good Show in the Flesh.** (6:12) Paul nails it right on the head when he describes these Judaizing teachers as ones "who want to make a good showing in the flesh." Like their Pharisee predecessors (cf. **Matt. 23:25-28**), they were focused on the outward appearance more than their hearts, and they were willing to proselytize their Gentile brethren to themselves and their persuasion, rather than make them true disciples of Jesus Christ. Focus on the flesh was misdirected, at best, and false doctrine that would destroy their souls, in the final Judgment.

3. **Compelled to Be Circumcised.** (6:12) The mere fact these brethren had to “*compel*” the Gentiles to be circumcised tells us the Gentiles had no thought to do so without their attempts of persuading them. There is no indication of the methods used to compel them, but just the fact that they had to resort to compulsion should tell us they had little evidence from any authoritative source to convince them intellectually to do so. Beware those who pressure you to do something they insist must be done to please God. Just like those salesmen who warn us ‘this is a one-time-only offer,’ we would do better to wait and investigate the claim, testing it against what God has already revealed in His written word. It will likely fail the test.

4. **The True Motive.** (6:12) Did these Judaizing teachers really care about the spiritual condition of their Gentile brethren? No. As Paul states it, they did it “*only that they may not suffer persecution for the cross of Christ.*” It was for purely selfish motives that they did this, thinking that if they convinced the Gentiles to do this, their Jewish brethren would ease off on persecuting **them**. They were not interested in the truth; they were interested in what would make their own lives easier!

But, again, we should not be surprised nor should we think such behavior would not be seen even today. Unfortunately, there are far too many examples of this in religious circles. How many have compromised the truth and are now saying we should tolerate and embrace “our Islamic brothers” only because they fear the threats of death to those who oppose them and expose the religion as false? We don’t have to go outside our brethren, though, to see ulterior motives; how many preachers have already compromised the truth and will not preach on certain subjects because they fear getting fired and losing their only source of income?

5. **For the Cross of Christ.** (6:12) Paul uses this phrase, or something similar, often in his letters (cf. **1st Cor. 1:17, 18, 23; 2:2; Phlp. 3:18**), and often as a representative phrase of the message he believed and taught, and the very reason he lived as he did. The cross of Christ [His death], stands for all we believe: He is the Son of God; this was God’s plan for our salvation; and His death was the price paid for our sins. The life we now live as disciples is because of the cross of Christ.

6. **The True Motive #2.** (6:13) Not only did these Judaizing teachers compel the Gentiles to be circumcised to ease their own situation, they also did so to have a point of boasting — for the simple pleasure of being able to tell their Jewish friends the Gentiles had done this because of their influence. It would be like me boasting that one had been baptized because of the fact I had taught him! If it is not about Christ, and if it is not done for the spiritual good of the lost, then we are in this for the wrong reason. This should never be about **us**; salvation is all about what God and Christ have done for us.

7. **Paul’s Motive.** (6:14) As a contrast to the impure motives of these Judaizing teachers, Paul makes it clear that if he had any reason to boast, it would be only in the cross of Christ. Paul had counted as loss whatever physical gains he had that he might gain salvation in Christ (**Phlp. 3:4-11**), and he himself had been crucified with Christ and no longer lived for himself (**Gal. 2:20**). Though he once lived as the Pharisees and many of his Jewish brethren, erroneously focusing on the physical side while neglecting the spiritual, that was no longer the case.

8. **To Repeat: It Just Doesn’t Matter.** (6:15) Earlier in the letter (**5:6**), Paul had stated that neither circumcision nor uncircumcision mattered; he repeats that statement here, but changes the focus to what **does** matter to being “*a new creation.*” In other words, some minor alteration of the physical body is not what matters to God; what matters to God is that we make a complete transformation in mind and spirit.

9. **To Those Who Agree...** (6:16) Paul’s closing benediction and blessing is limited to those who have the same mind to focus on spiritual matters and put away any thoughts of physical matters as the measure of faithfulness. While many today would say Paul was being unnecessarily exclusive in his remarks, think about who was really drawing the lines of distinction here. If these Judaizing teachers abandoned their erroneous ideas and joined with the faithful in following only the true word of God, there would be unity. Who really was being divisive?

10. **One More Jab.** (6:17) Even in his closing remarks, Paul does not let lie the erroneous teachings that demanded circumcision of the Gentiles. When Paul said he bore in his body the marks of the Lord Jesus, there

was a two-fold jab at their false claim of the necessity of circumcision and at the teachers themselves. First, by Paul referring to literal marks on his body due to his faithfulness to the Lord, he indicated he was willing to suffer to the greatest degree for the Lord — something these Judaizing teachers sought to avoid (cf. 6:12). Second, Paul could point to these physical marks of suffering as something that truly pleased the Lord [though not **required** of all disciples], in contrast to their demand for circumcision, which was irrelevant.

11. Your Observations: _____

► **Interpretation.** From the text on page 48, complete the following:

Paragraph Divisions: at 6:11, 17, and 18.

Note the paragraph division and give a short title for each main thought. [Some paragraphs may be combined.] Be prepared to discuss Paul's exposure of the motives of these Judaizing teachers and be prepared to discuss how motives play a part in false teachings and demands among brethren today.

1. What were the motives of these Judaizing teachers, according to Paul? _____

2. Whose interests did these teachers really have in mind? _____

3. What was Paul's only boast [if at all]? _____

4. What does it mean to be "a new creation" and why is this more important to God than circumcision? _____

► **Application.**

1. How important is it that [or, **why** must] we have the right *motives* when we teach others? _____

2. What "*marks of the Lord Jesus*" must we have today that demonstrate our faithfulness to Christ? _____

► **For Further Study.**

Consult extra-Biblical sources to learn about the churches of Galatia: Where were they? What do we know about them other than what Paul writes here? What happened to them?

► **For Consideration.**

"But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ,..." (6:14)

"... I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus." (6:17)

SUMMARY

Let us look back, for a moment, on this letter. Think back to its primary message[s] and the main point of Paul's writings as he deals with some who were compelling the Gentiles to be circumcised. With these things in mind, answer the following questions...

1. What was the motivation for Paul writing this letter? Generally speaking, how did he address the issue?
2. How did Paul's past experience [before his conversion] help his argument [if at all] against what these Judaizing teachers were demanding?
3. What does this letter teach us about drawing lines of distinction among brethren that God did not create?
4. How would this letter be received by the Gentile brethren of Galatia? The Jewish brethren? How should **we** receive it?
5. What should Paul's words about what "*avails anything*" motivate us to do and be?