

A LOOK AT THE BOOK GALATIANS REALLY FREE!

Ralph Porter

*Are we REALLY FREE?
Has your relationship with Christ made you feel free?
Have you been able to enjoy your freedom in Christ?
Or, do you feel guilty when you exercise your freedom?*

In Galatians, Paul is dealing with a church that started out down the road of faith. Now, they want to try to live so as to please God by a rule book.

Paul's message is that it is impossible to reconcile salvation by faith with sanctification by law.

EVERYTHING IS BASED ON FAITH, OR, EVERYTHING IS BASED ON LAW

His answer is the message of **OUR FREEDOM IN CHRIST**. We aren't under law—**ANY LAW!**

Our relationship with God is based on the work Christ did on the cross.

*Why do we feel so guilty?
Why are we struggling with our past, and the lack of peace and contentment?*

**WE ARE STILL TRYING TO GAIN ENOUGH POINTS
TO MAKE IT ON OUR OWN!**

You started out by faith—you had to stop trying to do it yourself, and rest in Him.

Now walk that way. **STOP** trying to do it yourself! Col. 2:6-7

You have what you have because you are "in Christ"

That's the basis of true FREEDOM!

AUTHOR AND DATE

No serious discussion challenges the Pauline authorship of Galatians.

He is mentioned repeatedly by external sources including Clement of Rome, Polycarp, Marcion, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and Tertullian.

The internal evidence also confirms that Paul wrote the letter.

The serious discussion concerning Galatians relates to its *date*.

The debate revolves around whether "Galatia" refers to the northern geographical region, which Paul did not visit until the second missionary journey, or the political province which extends to the south including the churches Paul visited on the first journey with Barnabas.

Those who hold the south Galatian view normally place the date before the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15, assuming Paul would have used that decision in his argument had it been earlier.

They place the date at A.D. 48-49.

The proponents of the north Galatian view place the letter after the council, in about A.D. 55.

One main reason for the later date is the problem of fitting fourteen years after Paul's conversion into the time before the famine visit in A.D. 46.

It is also argued that the book parallels the general pattern of Romans and Galatians.

The later date fits chronology better, while the south Galatian view seems to fit the description of events better.

There is nothing in the south Galatian view itself that denies a later date, if the letter was written after the Jerusalem Council.

It seems preferable to refer 2:1-10 to the Jerusalem Council and date Galatians about A.D. 55.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

After Paul founded the church in Galatia, he continued on his trip.

As usual, the Judaizers followed Paul and made definite inroads into the churches of Galatia.

The controversy centered on obedience to the Mosaic Law.

Three kinds of Judaizers developed:

1. *WHO* can be saved?

For the original Judaizers, salvation was only for the Jews!

Answer: Acts 10-11

Salvation is for all who trust Christ, whether Jew or Gentile.

2. *HOW* can a Gentile be saved?

The Judaizers eventually accepted Peter's testimony that Gentiles could be saved, but they still had to keep the law to obtain salvation.

Answer: Acts 15

Neither Jew nor Gentile is saved by keeping the law.

All must come by faith.

3. *HOW should a Gentile LIVE* to please God?

The issue is *sanctification*.

Answer: Galatians (also Colossians, Philippians, and other books)

Sanctification, like salvation, comes by faith alone.

The Judaizers had advanced beyond the old position of the Pharisees in that they no longer insisted that salvation was only for Israel.

Neither did they maintain the necessity of obedience to the law and the traditions to be saved.

Peter had answered the former position in the events of Acts 10-11.

The latter position was answered by the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15.

These Judaizers that plagued Paul had developed a new form of legalism.

Their doctrine accepted salvation by faith for Jews and for Gentiles without distinction.

However, they had added the concept of sanctification by law.

To be spiritual, the child of God had to live by the law.

PURPOSE AND THEME

Purpose: Paul wrote the letter to the Galatians to refute the position of the Judaizers.

Theme: Paul demonstrates that it's impossible to reconcile salvation by faith with sanctification by law.

The two cannot exist together.

In Galatians Paul deals with three issues:

1. The Judaizers tried to attack Paul's credibility by denying his authority and his message.

So, Paul defends his apostleship and his message 1-2

2. The Judaizers' message contradicted the gospel.

Paul presents the doctrine of sanctification by faith—the message of liberty in Christ. 3-4

3. The Judaizers built a religious system around their legalistic doctrine.

Paul responds by presenting the lifestyle that a true doctrine of sanctification will produce 5-6

ORGANIZATION

Galatians divides naturally into three parts:

1. Paul defends his authority and his message 1-2

2. He demonstrates theologically why sanctification by law and justification by faith cannot exist together 3-4

3. Finally, Paul demonstrates the practical implications of true sanctification, that which comes by faith, in our lives 5-6

DEFENSE OF PAUL'S APOSTLESHIP AND MESSAGE 1-2

GREETING

1:1-5

The polemic nature of the book is revealed in the initial greeting.

Paul departs from the normal pattern of praise to show the source of his apostleship.

He puts himself on the same level as those the church recognizes as authoritative.

His apostleship does not come from men but from God.

The entire greeting reflects the spirit of the argument.

SURPRISE AT THEIR DEPARTURE

1:6-9

Paul expresses his surprise that they have so easily been moved away from the gospel which he taught them.

He pronounces an anathema against anyone who would attempt to change the gospel.

Anyone who would dare to change the gospel message ought to be condemned.

Even if people *on his side* of the controversy were to try to change the gospel, they deserve to be condemned.

Paul considers the issue of sanctification an integral part of the gospel message.

SOURCE AND CONFIRMATION OF PAUL'S MESSAGE

1:10-2:21

The Judaizers seemed especially skilled in the use of the *ad hominem* attack.

They recognized the unique character of Paul's position and message.

They could not attack his message while his position was respected.

Therefore they began to criticize his authority and calling.

Paul answers their attack with a defense of himself and his message.

His content revealed by Christ

1:10-12

Paul demonstrates that his message is not of human origin.

The source of his gospel is a revelation of Christ Himself.

He argues that if he were seeking to please people, he would tell us what people like to hear, namely, that we are able to sanctify ourselves.

However, this message was divinely given and therefore does not flatter human abilities.

His commitment to Judaism

1:13-14

His former zeal in Judaism demonstrates his sincerity in seeking after God.

Paul had advanced beyond others of the same age because of his zeal.

It took supernatural intervention to change his direction.

He was thoroughly familiar with Judaistic teaching.

God had to show him the error of the system.

His conversion and preparation

1:15-17

After Paul's conversion, he was not taught by men but went away to Arabia to be taught by God.

His communion with the saints**1:18-24**

When he returned, he stayed just fifteen days in Jerusalem for fellowship with Peter.

Then he began to visit churches and to preach the gospel.

His confirmation by the apostles**2:1-10**

It was not until 14 years later that he returned to Jerusalem.

Throughout all this period he did not spend enough time anywhere to receive instruction by men.

Yet when he returned to Jerusalem, his gospel and practices were approved by the council.

Even then they did not instruct him.

They recognized his apostleship and his ministry to the Gentiles and identified with him in that ministry.

His confrontation with Peter**2:11-14**

Having demonstrated that the church recognized Paul's apostleship, he demonstrates the recognition of his authority when he rebuked Peter.

When he was obligated to reprimand Peter because of the same basic principles he is now defending, the acceptance of the rebuke by Peter indicates recognition that Paul's authority was equal to or greater than that of Peter.

His conclusion concerning the problem**2:15-21**

Peter recognized the mistake on his part.

He had been inconsistent concerning the truth of the gospel and was teaching by his example that the Gentiles ought to become Jews.

Paul argues that the law is for Jews, not Gentiles.

Justification is not based on the law, but on faith.

All the law can do is condemn.

Christ has liberated us from the law by putting us to death.

If the Judaizers would recognize this truth, as Peter did, and stop attacking the bearer of the truth, there would be no further controversy.

Paul realized that the Judaizers would not accept the message as Peter had accepted it, but he hoped to convince the Galatians of the truth.

Therefore, he concludes the personal defense after demonstrating the church's acceptance of his authority and attempts to prove his premise that sanctification by law contradicts justification by faith.

DEFENSE OF PAUL'S DOCTRINE 3-4

The second major division of the letter is a discussion of the theological basis for justification and sanctification by faith.

Paul uses the experience of the Galatians, combined with truth from the Old Testament, as the basis for his argument.

PROOF FROM THEIR RECEPTION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

3:1-5

Paul first refers to our own experience when we received the Spirit.

Paul assumes we will realize that we have received the Spirit by faith.

Justification is not the issue.

Having begun our Christian experience by faith, how can we expect to grow to perfection by works?

PROOF FROM THE BLESSING OF ABRAHAM

3:6-9

He supports his premise from the Old Testament.

The Judaizers claim that the Old Testament supports their view.

Paul demonstrates that his view is confirmed by the authority they claim to accept.

Even Abraham was justified by faith.

God revealed to Abraham that Gentiles would be blessed in him by faith, not by obedience to the law.

PROOF FROM THE REDEMPTION (BLESSING)

3:10-14

The argument is then expanded to show that the blessing could not have come by obedience to the law.

All the law can produce is a curse.

Justification and blessing came by faith.

PROOF FROM THE PROMISE GIVEN TO ABRAHAM

3:15-18

The blessing God promised to Abraham did not come by the law.

It came on the basis of the covenant which God gave to Abraham as a unilateral promise.

Even in human affairs, when a covenant is made, no one changes the conditions after it has been ratified.

If that principle is true on the human level, how much more is it true when God makes a covenant?

The passing of time could not change the covenant.

A system of laws given 400 years later could not invalidate a previously ratified covenant.

Yet, if the claim of the Judaizers were true, then the promise must be nullified.

If the inheritance of blessing is based on law, it cannot be based on God's promise as the covenant states.

PROOF FROM THE PURPOSE OF THE LAW

3:19-4:11

Paul explains how the law relates to the covenant by clarifying the true purpose of the law.

The law was added alongside the promise.

It was never intended to replace the promise.

Addition because of sin

3:19-22

The law was given temporarily to condemn all people and to demonstrate the cause of our condemnation.

It could not give life because no one could obey it.

It only served to show people our need of salvation by faith.

Function of the guardian

3:23-25

Using an illustration from the Roman concept of adoption, Paul further explains the purpose of the law (3:23-4:11).

An infant son is heir to all the possessions of his father.

He remains an infant legally, regardless of age, until the father places him as an adult son.

The adoption ceremony was performed before a judge when the father would formally recognize the son as an adult son.

At that time he would exchange the garments of a child for the garments of a man.

Until that time the son was kept under the protective custody of a pedagogue.

The pedagogue was a trusted slave who was responsible for the boy and was to prepare the boy for the day of adoption.

Similarly, until the day of grace came, all Israel was under the law as a pedagogue.

They were a redeemed people but still under the law's care.

The law served as a pedagogue until we came to maturity in Christ.

Fulfillment of the purpose

3:26-29

Now the day of grace is here, we are free from that guardian just as the adopted son was.

We have now become adult sons by our baptism into Christ.

Through identification with Him we are seed of Abraham and heirs of the promise.

Treatment of a minor

4:1-5

While the boy is an infant, he differs little from a slave.

When he is declared an adult son he receives freedom from that which formerly bound him.

Just as the father chose the right time for adoption of the son, so God chose the right time to send His Son that we might be freed from the law and become eligible to receive the inheritance.

Freedom from bondage 4:6-7

As a result we are now able to approach God as Father.

Contradiction of their desire for slavery 4:8-11

The Galatians had formerly been enslaved by false gods but were now seeking to become enslaved again, only this time to the law.

This enslavement is not necessary for one who has been given freedom as an adult son.

PROOF FROM THE RECEPTION THEY GAVE HIM 4:12-20

Paul next appeals to them on the basis of their original reception of him.

Their attitude toward him 4:12-16

He reminds them of the affliction which he had when he first went to them.

In spite of his condition, they received him as a messenger from God.

They were willing to give their eyes for him, if that would do any good.

After the way they responded to him, he would not deceive them.

His attitude contrasted with Judaizers 4:17-20

His desire to repay them for their kindness is contrasted with the motives of the Judaizers who desire to make the Galatians dependent on them.

Paul has been declaring our freedom, but the false teachers wish to enslave us.

PROOF FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT ILLUSTRATION 4:21-31

Paul concludes the doctrinal argument with an Old Testament illustration.

Contrast between two sons 4:21-23

He compares the contrast between law and grace to the contrast between Ishmael, son of the bondwoman, and Isaac, son of the free woman.

Contrast between two covenants 4:24-27

They represent two different covenants, of two different kinds.

Application to the Galatians 4:28-31

Those born of flesh are under the bondage of law.

Those born of bondage now persecute the free, just as Ishmael did Isaac.

Therefore, just as Abraham threw out Ishmael, so they are to throw out the Judaizers.

DEFENSE OF PAUL'S PRACTICE 5-6

Paul has demonstrated that people justified by faith are free from bondage to the law.

To return to the old enslavement is pointless.

We are now adult sons.

We no longer need the supervision of the pedagogue.

He then shows the relationship of this doctrinal truth to specific areas of our lives:

CONFLICT BETWEEN TWO SYSTEMS

5:1-6

The first issue he deals with is circumcision.

It stands for obedience to the entire law system.

He applies the doctrinal truth just presented to the issue which caused the problem.

Paul now clearly summarizes the point he has been developing: *sanctification by law is contradictory to salvation by faith.*

Summary

5:1

Alienation by law

5:2-4

Anyone who attempts to keep the law becomes a debtor to keep the whole law.

We could not keep the law before we were saved, and we cannot keep it now either.

By setting up the law as a standard we merely reveal our own sinfulness.

Righteousness by faith

5:5-6

To those who are in Christ obedience to the law is of no value for we are saved by faith.

The same contrast exists concerning sanctification that existed concerning salvation.

People who seek by their own effort to attain perfection fail.

People who accept the work of the Spirit by faith grow.

REJECTION OF THE JUDAIZERS

5:7-12

Paul next challenges the reason for their departure from the truth.

They did not receive their new desires on the basis of divine revelation.

He warns us of the danger of allowing this teaching to remain in the church.

He urges us to condemn false teachers and to reject their message.

LIBERTY ENSLAVED BY LOVE

5:13-15

In contrast to the sign of obedience to the law, circumcision, Paul states the sign of sanctification by faith, which is love.

Paul has been defending Christian liberty.

Now he demonstrates that this liberty is not license.

The Christian is enslaved by a new law: the law of love.

If we fulfill the demands of this law, no one will be able to judge us.

WALK IN THE SPIRIT

5:16-26

This doctrinal truth is then applied to the area of the Christian walk.

Conflict between the flesh and the Spirit

5:16-18

Experience demonstrates that there is continual conflict between the flesh and the Spirit.

Fruit of the flesh

5:19-21

If we try to walk in our own strength, our human nature will produce its natural fruit.

The fruit of the flesh prevents entrance into the kingdom.

Fruit of the Spirit

5:22-23

If we walk by faith, with the power which the Spirit provides, the Spirit will produce His natural fruit.

His fruit is Christlikeness.

Exhortation to live by the Spirit

5:24-26

Paul urges us to choose the walk of faith, by the power of the Spirit.

Those who walk by the Spirit have no basis for boasting.

The ability to walk this way comes from God.

OBLIGATION TO EACH OTHER

6:1-10

Paul applies the truth he is teaching to the relationships of believers with one another.

He first deals with our obligation to assist our brethren when they fall into sin (6:1-5)

This is a specific application of the more general principle that we should help each other in any area where we see a need.

When properly motivated by love, there is no room for pride in such assistance.

Each one needs to be aware of his own weakness and ability to fall.

Restoration of the fallen

6:1

Assistance for those in need

6:2

Necessity for self-examination

6:3-5

The second part of our relationships to one another deals with doing good to one another (6:6-10)

The general principle is specifically applied to paying financially those who teach us and benefit us spiritually.

A truly valuable harvest results from this kind of reaping for the good of others.

Support for teachers

6:6

Reaping a valuable harvest

6:7-9

Summary appeal to good works

6:10

PERSONAL CONCERN FOR THEM

6:11-18

Paul concludes by mentioning his personal concern for them and interest in this issue.

Personal touch

6:11

He demonstrates his concern by personally writing the letter.

Comparison of motives

6:12-16

The Judaizers are zealous because they want to look good to those around them.

They want to have the Galatians circumcised to avoid the stigma of the cross.

They don't want to arouse the anger of the Jews and be persecuted.

Paul, on the other hand, glories in the cross.

The cross has separated him from condemnation with the world.

It is the world which has drifted away and stands condemned.

The bond of true fellowship is not circumcision but the new creation, based on faith and the Spirit.

Desire to end dispute

6:17

Paul's final appeal to conclude this matter and to restore fellowship with them is based on his identification with Christ.

He had scars on his own body which he had received because of his identification with Christ.

Benediction

6:18

The letter concludes with a benediction.

Though brief and routine in appearance, it conveys his prayer for us.

He wants us to comprehend and experience the greatness of God's grace as revealed in Christ.