

GALATIANS

Introduction

Almost certainly written to South Galatian churches of Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe founded by Paul on his 1st missionary journey. Almost certainly the first of Paul's epistles from AD 48.

Paul is writing to churches that faced a choice – between the true gospel and a counterfeit gospel. It's still a choice which faces us today, Christ plus something (usually works) is still an attractive alternative for many, those of us who are Christians need to ask ourselves what gospel we're relying on.

Agitators who Paul was writing against were probably both Judaisers and those who wanted to break with Judaism and be libertines.

Chapter 1

Vv1-5 are a greeting. Paul changes the standard by injecting “grace to you”. Paul identifies himself by his Roman name Paul, he calls himself an apostle. This name now referred not just to the original 12 but extended to other prominent workers as the church reached out to the Gentiles. Paul regards his state as completely equivalent.

In v2 Paul identifies himself with all believers – although there is no suggestion anyone else participated in writing the letter.

Christian congregations primarily means all believers and has a secondary meaning of all the churches in Galatia

In v3 the Father and the son are a joint source rather than separate sources.

In v4 the present age is evil because it is under the sway of the devil.

In verses 6-10 Paul roundly condemns the counterfeit gospel – there is no thanksgiving for them after the salutation. All this indicates the seriousness of the situation.

V6 quickly deserting implies the letter is early, not only have they turned away from the gospel but they have turned to another. Word used is that applied to deserting soldiers

V7 what they have turned to is no gospel at all Paul calls the true gospel the gospel of Christ to emphasise its legitimacy.

V8 the only true gospel is what he has already taught them and Paul condemns anyone who teaches anything else. Clearly already the gospel was a fairly well settled body of information and doctrine. The mention of angels suggests Jewish intervention.

V9 repeats 8 for emphasis

What's Paul's mood as he writes surprised astonished angry

Why is he in this frame of mind? because the Galatians have quickly turned away from the true gospel after having accepted it. Paul's anger is directed at those who are perverting the gospel.

How does Paul describe himself? An apostle appointed by God because he was directly called by Christ on the road to Damascus.

In Romans 1:8-10 Paul thanks God for the Romans, he's not thanking God for the Galatians because they've turned away.

Verses 1-5 contain the core of Paul's gospel – what is it? We're all lost all sinners. we all need rescuing from this world which is in rebellion against God. Jesus came to rescue us, he sacrificed himself and God raised him from the dead. This gospel brings grace and peace from God (v3) because the sacrifice of his son for us sinners was pure unmerited favour. God gets all the glory for the gospel because he did everything.

Verse 5 is Paul's motivation – why is this a challenge? We often live as if we want all the glory, but we should give it to God.

Galatians 3:1-5 – how was the gospel message being changed? The Galatians were being told they had to follow Jewish Law.

What does Paul say about any change to the gospel in vv6-7? It perverts the gospel and annuls it.

What does Paul say about those who pervert the gospel vv8-9? They should be eternally condemned.

When did the Galatians hear the real gospel, how can we know it was the real gospel? They heard through Paul's preaching and Paul is an apostle appointed by God.

How do people today add to the gospel message? Feelings, legalism, being a good person, following particular rituals or lifestyles. We don't always condemn them like Paul did either because we don't notice or because we don't want to seem intolerant.

Why is the real gospel great? Because it saves us from our sins, reconciles us to God and opens the door to eternal life.

V10 probably the Judaisers said Paul was relaxing true gospel requirements by not insisting on circumcision etc.

V11 despite the Galatians defection , Paul still calls them friends.

V12 Paul refers to his road to Damascus experience

V13 Paul points up the divine nature of his revelation by pointing out that he used to persecute the church. The tradition of the elders (better translation) is probably not equivalent to just “Jewish tradition generally, both written and verbal,” but are, rather, the special ancestral traditions of the party to which Paul belonged (cf. Phil. 3:5; Acts 22:3; 23:6; 26:5). That is, they are Pharisaic traditions and more particularly those enshrined in the oral

law transmitted and expounded in Pharisaic schools, which comprised the 613 prescriptions (248 positive commands and 365 prohibitions) of rabbinic exegesis.

Even before he was called Paul had realized that Christianity and Judaism were not really compatible because of the threat to the supremacy of the Law.

From Paul's preaching it sounds as if the thing he found most difficult was the Messiah crucified, abrogation of the Law wasn't an important feature of early apostolic preaching.

V15 God's revelation represented a complete break in Paul's life

V16 it seems Paul went to Arabia (near to Damascus) – and perhaps preached there (we know the Arabian king was later hostile to him) - before going to Damascus to witness which is not recorded in Acts.

V18-22 Paul asserts the independence of his mission and teaching. He mentions personal contact with Peter.

V20 Paul affirms the truth of what he says with an oath, generally in Roman legal proceedings you didn't have to swear under oath but here Paul does it voluntarily to show his seriousness.

V22 I think Paul means he was unknown as a Christian

Paul is saying he is not and never was subject to the leaders of the church in Jerusalem

Is church unity important and is it ever bad? We need to root out false teaching but not insist on conformity in non-essentials.

What does Paul tell us about his life before he became a Christian He persecuted the church and killed Christians. He was very learned and very good at following Jewish Law. He was filled with pride.

How did Paul become a Christian? By direct revelation from Christ Acts 9:1-19. He only went to Jerusalem and met the Apostles later.

What did Paul do after he became a Christian? He preached the gospel especially to the Gentiles.

What's special about verses 15-16a? God was working in Paul's life long before his call. Paul was full of pride but God called him through his grace. God was pleased to use Paul.

What kind of claims about himself is Paul answering? He's saying his message didn't come from others or from his own thoughts and he's saying it's the same as that of the other real apostles.

What does v10 tell us about the change in Paul's life? He no longer seeks approval of men, but only the approval of God. He can't do both. Because God has forgiven us and we are reconciled to him we know that we now have his approval.

Chapter 2

V1 This visit probably accords with the famine relief visit of Acts 11.

V2 this was probably a private meeting with the Jerusalem church leadership. Paul was concerned to free Gentile Christians from the requirements of Jewish Law.

V3 points up interpretation of 2

V4-5 Paul clearly doesn't regard it as legitimate to require gentile Christians to submit to Jewish Law. The bogus Christians are probably to be linked with the Judaisers of Acxts 15 whom Paul went to Jerusalem again to sort out.

V7-9 agreement over division of labour – Paul goes to the gentiles they go to the Jews.

V10 possibly means the Jerusalem church

The false teachers had been saying that faith in Christ was not enough and the people were only saved by faith plus following Jewish Law – if the Apostles in Jerusalem had agreed with them the church would have split.

Why was the Jerusalem leaders decision about Titus so significant? Titus was a 'test case' as an uncircumcised Greek they didn't insist that he had to be circumcised. Titus shows us that the gospel alone makes us acceptable to God.

If the leaders had agreed with the Judaisers (the false brothers) how would the truth of the gospel have been lost? The church would have been split and the Jerusalem apostles would have been insisting on a gospel of works.

what did the Jerusalem apostles recognise about Paul? He was called to preach the gospel to the Gentiles. They accepted him as a fellow Christian and entered into unity with him.

How does this episode show the importance of unity in the church? Unity helps the mission of the church and it isolates and discredits false teachers and teachings.

How does it show the limits of unity? We can only have unity with those who accept the true gospel, we can't have unity with those who don't

Both Paul and the Jerusalem leaders made the poor a priority (Leviticus 23:22; Deuteronomy 15:7-8; 1 John 3:16-17; 2 Corinthians 8:8-15; Matthew 5:43-48 and 25:31-46. Why is it right that the apostles made it a priority to remember the poor – what does caring for the poor and not caring for the poor show about us?

How does the gospel give us freedom in a way that 'works based religions don't? We can be completely sure of our salvation because it doesn't depend on us or what we do. We don't need unity (e.g. cultural) in anything except the gospel.

In vv11-14 Paul turns to an incident at Antioch. May be after Paul's first missionary journey

V14 Paul confronts Peter

V15 doctrine of justification by faith

Who needs the gospel? We all do

Peter was one of Paul's closest friends, what's surprising about v11? Peter was one of the chief disciples but he got something seriously wrong, so Paul opposed him to his face. Peter had allowed culture to become more important than gospel unity.

How did Paul view the actions of Peter and Barnabas, what's the significance for us?

As not acting in line with the truth of the gospel, which we must do. Paul tells Peter to remember the gospel – we need to remember the gospel which graciously welcomes us and all other believers.

Why might we do what Peter did? Fear of what others think, comfort, pride. Do we need to change our attitudes?

In v15-16 what does Paul remind Peter about following God's commands and having faith in Jesus? God's commands can't justify us or save us from our sins. No one will be saved by observing the Law. Faith in Jesus does justify us and save us.

How do verses 15-16 shed light on the meaning of the word 'justification'? Being justified is like being clean – clean of sin. Justification is a legal term. We are made legally righteous by faith, but not really righteous, we don't suddenly become good people. God accepts us because Christ has paid the penalty that our sins deserve.

What objection does Paul raise in v17? Answer is in verses 18-21. Because we are forgiven **all** our sins through faith, we could go on sinning as if it didn't matter. Paul says **NO** we should obey God's moral commands out of love.

In verse 19 Paul says that when he was trying to save himself by obeying the Law he was not able to 'live for God' – why is this? Before he turned to Christ Paul was being as good as he could be, but to get a reward from God not out of love for God. Anyway we can never be good enough to meet God's standards 1 John 1:8.

Now Paul has 'died to the Law' why does this mean he is truly able to 'live for God'? Because he is justified and so accepted by God he wants to give himself to the Christ who 'gave himself for me'. His acceptance for God gives him a stronger motive for obeying God.

What does the beginning of v20 tell us has happened to our old sinful selves? Who does God see when he looks at a Christian? Old self was crucified with Christ. God treats us as if we had died on the cross and paid the full penalty for our sins because Christ died as a substitute for us all. We are seen as if we were Christ.

What difference does this make to the way a Christian lives? We live in line with the gospel out of love for Christ who died for us.

From these verses what is the truth of the gospel? That simply and solely through faith in Christ all the sins of each and every one of us are forgiven. We can't save ourselves through works. This gospel changes our lives as we accept forgiveness with gratitude.

Chapter 3

Begins with most famous statement. Paul is arguing the 'real' Christianity is much better than the still law based version of the Judaisers.

Vv1-5 a series of questions. Paul asks them to remember how they received the spirit and how their experiences occurred. He asks them how the material can help them, but he doesn't think their situation is hopeless. Paul equates law and flesh this latter he usually uses of human nature in all its fallenness.

v1 They've been bewitched by people perverting the gospel

v2 we receive God's Spirit by faith in Christ and not by works

v3 they are being foolish, they need to turn back to the gospel

v4 having suffered for tuning away from paganism they now risk wasting that sacrifice

v5 the spirit stays and works with them because of faith not works

Paul is making the point to the Galatians that everything is by faith not works.

What do these verses tell us about how we grow as Christians? We're saved by the gospel and we grow as we apply the gospel more and more in our lives. We need to continually return to the pure gospel and not to works.

V6 Paul makes his point by going back to scripture (we should remember and copy that). Paul is not saying that Abraham's faith was a meritorious work, but he is saying that Abraham was given a right status before God simply by virtue of his faith in God.

As James Denney observed,

The spiritual attitude of a man, who is conscious that in himself he has no strength, and no hope of a future, and who nevertheless casts himself upon, and lives by, the word of God which assures him of a future, is the necessarily and eternally right attitude of all souls to God. He whose attitude it is, is at bottom right with God.

Furthermore, according to Rom. 4:22 Paul himself suggests that Abraham's faith was counted to him for righteousness because it gave glory to God and constituted trust in his faithfulness and power.

For Paul there is a parallel between the Galatians receiving the Spirit by hearing and receiving the gospel and Abraham's faith. Paul obviously regards receiving the Spirit as very closely bound up with justification.

How did Abraham become right with God? By faith, by believing God. This faith was credited to him as righteousness. Abraham was treated as though he lived righteously even though he didn't.

How was this a model for the Galatians as non-Jews some 1500 years later? Saving faith is believing the gospel promise. Abraham believed God's promises and so must we. We don't believe in God we must trust him.

Read Genesis 15

Vv7-14 Paul passes from the personal about the Galatians to a general consideration of who are the people God accepts and why. Once again he appeals to Abraham. Judaisers had probably appealed to Abraham to argue for the need of circumcision, but Paul gives a different Christian understanding.

Vv7-9 Paul says all who believe (have faith in the gospel) are Abraham's children and that he told Abraham that all nations would be blessed through him. Sonship is no longer physical but spiritual. Paul sees the culmination of the blessing in the conversion of the gentiles and the significance is that God foresaw this as a justification by faith.

Vv10-12 Paul argues against the possibility of justification by works of the law. He justifies his position by appealing to scripture. In verse 10 he quotes Deuteronomy 27:26 – possibly an unfairly harsh portrayal of the Jewish position.

V11 quotes Habakuk 2:4 and apparently interprets it “he who is righteous by faith shall live”

V12 Paul quotes Leviticus 18:5 as a demonstration of the incompatibility of faith and law.

So Paul uses 3 scriptures to demonstrate that faith is a way to blessing and that faith and the law are incompatible.

What does living by or relying on the law lead to? God's condemnation, a curse, because not keeping all of God's law brings God's curse.

Why is this? Because we can't perfectly keep the law.

How can God credit us with righteousness without being unjust? Jesus experienced God's curse in our place.

What does trusting in this give us? Blessings, because Christ has secured redemption for us. The spirit is gradually making us really righteous, our salvation is more than just eternal life.

V13-14 Paul says that Christ provided the transition from law to faith. In his death Christ became a curse by being hung on a tree (Deuteronomy 21:23) (Jews regarded crucifixion in this way, although in the original OT context the hanging wasn't the means of death but the exposure of a corpse). Christ's submission for the curse is for us.

By submitting to the curse of the law Christ redeemed us from that curse by satisfying the penalty that lawbreaking brought. Redemption was to bring Abraham's blessing to the gentiles.

Paul now turns to the law and promise vv15-22

V15-18 Paul speaks of the priority of the promise. The covenant with Abraham was first before the law and the covenant of the law at Sinai doesn't overturn it. It's a unilateral covenant by God so it can never be changed or broken. The covenant was given to Abraham and his seed, his seed in the singular – which means Christ. So in Paul's view Christ is the true heir and can determine who his fellow heirs will be. The inheritance is not based on law.

V19-22 Paul speaks of the purpose of the law. Paul says the law came after the Abrahamic covenants and came because of sin – to make sin a legal offence. That is the purpose of the law was to reveal sin and its seriousness and to convict us of it. In Jewish thought angels assisted in the giving of the law to enhance the glory of the law. Here Paul turns that around and says it reduces the authority and value of the law because it wasn't given directly by god.

V21 the laws inferiority doesn't mean it contradicts the Abrahamic covenant. Paul is saying that the function of the law was not to make us righteous before god – because we couldn't keep the law.

V22 Paul personifies scripture as a judge – god speaking through the scripture locks all men up under the condemnation of sin and gives them no escape. He's saying that the original Abrahamic promise is received by those who have faith in Christ.

Paul's contention in vv. 19–22 may be summed up as follows: The law is an institution inferior to the covenant of promise and it does not bestow righteousness. Its “true effect ... is to nail man to his sin. As the prison holds the prisoner ... so man is shut up by the Law under sin... . Rightly understood, then, the Law prevents any attempt on man's part to secure righteousness before God in any other way than ... that promised to Abraham.” There is no essential contradiction of the promise by the law, because, simply, the law is intended to serve the purposes of the promise, which has to do with justification by faith.

In this section (3:15–22) Paul has again demonstrated that justification is by faith and not by works of the law. He has done it in terms of the relation between the law and the promise, by showing clearly that it is the original covenant of promise which represents God's intention in his dealings with men, and that the law is an inferior institution designed to serve the purposes of the promise. Hence the Judaizers were wrong, in the terms used in v. 16, to impose new conditions for salvation (“add a codicil”) upon the original covenant of promise, which cannot be rendered null and void (“set ... aside”) in this way.

The entire passage is, in fact, an elaboration of the antithesis between law and promise already introduced in vv. 13f. As in that earlier passage (cf. especially vv. 13f. and v. 22), the doctrine of justification by faith is explained historically, that is, from the perspective of salvation history. This perspective is continued in the next section (3:23–4:11). Before turning to that, however, we may briefly note again the nexus of ideas in which justification belongs: promise (vv. 16, 18, 22), inheritance (v. 18), and life (v. 21). If in 3:15–22 justification is treated primarily with reference to the promise, in the next section it is the notion of sonship (implied in the concept of inheritance) that will occupy the dominant place.

Moses was given the law after the promises to Abraham, so isn't the Law an improvement on the promises and if so why don't we need to keep the law to be saved? The Law doesn't nullify God's previous promises to Abraham. The Law was an agreement between the Israelites (only) and God which the Israelites broke and now there is a new promise, a new covenant, in Christ.

So what does the Law achieve? It shows us how we are enslaved by sin.

So what is the point of the Law? The Law shows us how much we need a saviour – Christ. Once we have the New Covenant the Law is irrelevant and obsolete.

What should our attitude towards the Law be? We shouldn't try and obey the Law to be saved, but we should obey the moral principles behind the law because these are God's character and are what he wants for and from us.

Why do people need to know a God who has Laws before they can understand why Jesus' death is good news? If there were no sin and if sin wasn't serious there would be nothing to be saved from

What's the difference between Christianity and other religions.

V3:23 – 4:11 Paul speaks of Christian maturity.

V23-29 the coming of faith. Law is like a guardian. With the coming of Christ, the way of justification by faith is thrown open.

V26 we are all sons of god (adopted sons) through Christ.

V27 Baptism is regarded as the rite of initiation into Christ and as “putting on” Christ as a garment covering us. Jews often changed clothes to symbolize a spiritual state (e.g. sackcloth). We shouldn't attach too much importance to baptism. Paul talks about baptism once and faith 15 times. Faith for Paul is key and baptism is assign of faith - baptism is the “outward and visible sign of [an] inward and spiritual grace” (*Book of Common Prayer*).

V28 all who have united themselves with Christ are one in a sense that goes far beyond normal human differentiation – Paul has chosen his examples carefully a pious male Jew daily thanked God: that he was not made a Gentile, a slave or a woman—categories of people debarred from certain religious privileges.

Who is a son of God and why? All Christians. God sees us as sons because we've taken on Christ's righteousness. We're called sons because only sons could inherit property.

Why is it wonderful to be a son of God? God's sons are heirs according to the promise given to Abraham. To be God's sons and Abraham's seed are intimately linked because Christ is Abraham's true seed – thus being intimately linked to Christ we become Abraham's true seed.

Chapter 4

Vv1-7 talk about spiritual maturity. The heir is relating back to the idea of heirs of Abraham.

Vv1-2 speaks of an heir who is still a minor, he is no better than a slave as regards freedom of action. Legally he owns the whole estate, but he has no power over it.

V3 Paul likens our spiritual infancy to the legal minority of an heir.

V4-5 just as a human father sets a time for guardianship to end, so God has sent his son to bring us out of spiritual infancy.

V6 Our instatement as sons is accomplished by the coming of Christ and is made real within us through the gift of the Spirit.

V7 so we are no longer slaves (no longer spiritually immature) but full grown heirs.

From our study of 4:1–7, two points may be emphasized in connection with Paul's exposition of the doctrine of justification by faith. (1) There is here a close-knit nexus of ideas between deliverance from enslavement to the law, adoption to sonship to God, and reception of the Spirit: the first makes the second possible, the second provides the logical basis for the third, the third furnishes the evidence for the second. But since freedom from the law implies justification by faith (cf. 3:23f.), we may say that 4:1–7 implies a close connection between justification by faith, sonship to God, and reception of the Spirit. It is not surprising that this connection was already present in 3:26–29 since that section and the present section represent two parallel movements. But whereas there justification, adoption and receiving of the Spirit appear as different aspects of a single experience, here they are presented in their logical relationship to one another.

(2) The entire discussion is, once again, carried on within the framework of salvation history. As in 3:23–29, Christ's appearance is presented as that which brings about the fullness of time, as that which puts an end to the domination of law and achieves for mankind the coming of age: the twofold (and parallel) sending of the Son (v. 4) and (the chronologically subsequent) sending of the Spirit (v. 6) effected the breach between the old aeon of slavery under law and the new aeon of adoption to sonship and reception of the Spirit. Thus, salvation history and the eschatology of the two aeons are closely interwoven, and central to both is the historical event of Christ's advent, passion, and triumph.

More thoughts on why it's wonderful to become a son of God When we were redeemed through faith in Christ we became of age. Before we were like young children promised much in the future but still slaves. Now we have become of age and are fully heirs of all that God has to give.

We have an intimate relationship with almighty God and can even call him 'Daddy'. We can depend on God's fatherly love and draw close to him in prayer.

V8-11 Cultic observance.

V8 Paul tells them they used to be ignorant of God. They were in servitude to that which is not God (though demonic influences might lie behind them)

V9 but now they know or have come to know the true God – Paul is obviously referring to the knowledge given by his missionary preaching – how can they turn back to the inferior.

V10 Paul sees evidence of this in the Galatians observance of sacred times and seasons – these could be either Jewish or pagan or both.

V11 These observances lead Paul to think he might have taught them in vain.

Vv12-20 a personal appeal

V12 Paul says be like me because I became like you (Paul became like a gentile)

Vv13-16 Then and now

V13 Paul's appeal is based on facts known to his readers. Paul preached the gospel when he was ill – in bodily weakness. Perhaps he had originally planned to go somewhere else, but his illness forced him to stay. Could have been malaria which could have been Paul's recurrent thorn in the flesh.

V15 a marked contrast between the Galatians former and current attitudes.

V16 Paul says he has no become the subject of their animosity by telling them the truth (of the gospel)

Vv17-20 False zeal and true concern

V17 the agitators are eager to influence the Galatians but not from good motives. They want to terminate the Galatians relationship with Paul – which will mean the Galatians being alienated from the true gospel.

V18 Paul doesn't mind others influencing the Galatians so long as its for good.

V19-20 Paul speaks with great emotion, because he's deeply disturbed by the idea of the Galatians being led astray. He feels like a mother to them, he's enduring labor pains until they truly take on Christianity.

V20 Paul wishes he were in possession of heavenly language which would authenticate and convince them of his message. He thinks that if he were with them he could again win their trust and allegiance.

The Galatians had come out of an idolatrous pagan background, now they're in danger of turning to law keeping Judaism. What's the implication of what Paul's saying here? They're in effect turning back to being enslaved. Paul preached the gospel to them and they accepted it, but now they're seeing him as an enemy. Paul says his ministry is different in its goals (Paul just wants to bring them to Christ likeness and wants nothing for himself) and its means (Paul loves them enough to criticize). Fruitful ministry can be hard and unpopular – it urges people to be like Christ.

Vv4:21 – 5:1 the analogy – better allegory – of Sarah and Hagar. Paul turns back to scripture in another attempt to convince the Galatians.

V21-23 the facts.

V21 He tells them that if they are anxious to be under the law they should be aware of what it says.

V22-23 The free woman's son was born under God's promise to Abraham. The other woman was a slave woman and her son was not born under the promise.

Vv24-27 the spiritual meaning.

V24 this is not the original meaning of the passage it's what it means to Paul.

V28-30 its application to the Galatians.

V29 Ishmael "mocks" Isaac, scripture doesn't say he persecuted him. The persecutors of the Galatians were both Judaisers and other gentiles.

V30 Paul suggests the Galatians cast out the Judaisers.

V4:31 and 5:1 are a kind of final entreaty.

What's the difference between Ishmael and Isaac? Read Genesis 16:1-4; 18:10-14; 21:1-10. Ishmael was the son of the slave woman. Isaac was the son of Abraham's wife according to God's promise. Abraham needed to have complete faith in God in order for Isaac to be born.

What does Paul say each mother represents and why? Hagar/Ishmael represent the Law and earthly Jerusalem (because Jerusalem hadn't accepted Christ). Sarah represents God's promise and grace and therefore salvation by faith.

How much faith did Abraham need to have a son with Hagar and How much did he need to have a son with Sarah? Abraham needed no faith with Hagar, but a lot of faith with Sarah.

The residents of Jerusalem would have thought of Sarah as their mother and Hagar as the mother of the Gentiles. How does this give extra force to what Paul says here? Paul is swapping the family trees over.

What is Paul saying the Galatians should expect? To be persecuted. The sons of the slave will always persecute the sons of the free woman – see v31.

Why do both religious and non-religious people need the gospel? Because most people are trying to earn their salvation. Non-religious people worship money and power, religious people rely on good works. We all need God's grace.

Why do religious people persecute gospel people? Because the gospel is challenging, they don't want to depend on God's grace.

Chapter 5

V1 What has Christ done and what should be our response? Secured the forgiveness of our sins and set us free from sin. He's also set us free from Law.

Vv2-6 Faith v works

V2 Paul exerts his apostolic authority. If they allow themselves to be circumcised then they have to keep the whole law. Paul's mention of circumcision here makes it clear that the agitators were Judaisers as we have been supposing.

The resultant meaning of the two statements is, as J. B. Lightfoot has put it:

Circumcision is the seal of the law. He who willingly and deliberately undergoes circumcision, enters upon a compact to fulfill the law. To fulfill it therefore he is bound, and he cannot plead the grace of Christ; for he has entered on another mode of justification.

Only justification by faith counts.

V3 Paul tells them that if they give in to the Judaisers and are circumcised then they have to obey the whole law. Probably the Judaisers just had the limited goal of wanting the gentile believers to be circumcised.

V4 the good of v2 is clearly justification. If you're circumcised you are cut off from relations with Christ and so are cut off from his grace. In Paul's mind justification is either wholly by faith or it is nothing.

V5 the realisation of the hoped for things pertaining to the state of righteousness, although justification itself is immediately conferred on conversion.

V6 neither circumcision or uncircumcision is valuable – such things are no use to Christians – physical signs are no use only faith counts. Faith leads to love, love is not a condition of justification. On this question G. Bornkamm has provided an excellent answer:

We must guard against the misunderstanding current especially in Catholic theology (though Protestantism is far from exempt) that only faith made perfect in love leads to justification. This represents a serious distortion of the relationship between faith, love, and justification. In speaking of justification Paul never talks of faith *and* love, but *only* of faith as receiving. Love is not therefore an additional prerequisite for receiving salvation, nor is it properly an essential trait of faith; on the contrary, faith animates the love in which it works.

The work of the spirit (which we receive when we are justified) sanctifies us and should produce love.

What are expressions of real saving faith and what are not? Eagerly awaiting – hope isn't a vague hope we have real assurance about our salvation. Love – our faith in Christ fills our hearts with love. Circumcision isn't – it's irrelevant.

Vv7-12 the cross v circumcision

V7 Paul has shown the futility of relying on circumcision he now appeals to their original attitude to the gospel.

V8 the persuasion they have been getting from the Judaisers is not of divine origin.

V9 Paul's proverbial saying about yeast (also used in 1 Cor 5:6 – but not found except in Paul's writings). So the doctrine of the few Judaisers is threatening to corrupt the whole Galatian church.

V10 Paul says he is confident they will see this and the sense of his arguments. The one throwing them into confusion may be someone of high standing in the church.

V11 Paul had been charged with preaching circumcision, but Paul never did this to gentiles after his conversion (at least there is no record of such). Perhaps the charge arises from his being a Jew to the Jews (1 Cor 9:20). I think the circumcision of Timothy (Acts 16:3) was a voluntary act by Timothy to further their joint ministry rather than a religious observance. He says the preaching of the cross causes offence in a way that the Law does not.

V12 sarcasm – he wishes the agitators would castrate themselves. Double meaning here as he could also be referring to them cutting themselves off from communication with his converts.

In 5:13 to 6:10 Paul turns to direct teaching regarding the Christian life. Having explained Christian doctrine he now talks about application. Paul gives general teaching about life in the Spirit (5:13-26) and then gives some specific exhortations (6:1-10). He is taking issue with the idea that freedom from the Law leads to immorality.

5:13-15 Liberty not license

v13 Paul distinguishes his converts from the agitators. The believer's freedom is through God's call mediated by the gospel – so the act of Jesus Christ is the basis of their new life of freedom. Freedom from the Law is not lawlessness, they have an obligation to use their freedom properly – and so do we. The sinful nature means bodily desires and lusts (to which Paul returns in vv19-21). A proper use of freedom is that we should be servants (literally serve as slaves) of one another in love.

V14 Paul quotes Leviticus 19:18 which Jesus also quoted as second most important command. It sums up the spirit of the Law. Jesus told us who our neighbours are in the parable of the good Samaritan – it's all who we come into contact with.

What should we use our gospel freedom to do? To serve others – everyone – in love.

How does the gospel free us to truly love God and others? We don't serve God to earn a reward (we have a reward as a free gift). We can love and serve without demanding or needing anything in return.

How does the gospel motivate us to love God and others? Because Christ paid the ultimate price of dying for us we want to please him out of love and appreciation. Christ calls us to love others as we love ourselves.

How might we obey God for wrong reasons? Fear, duty, reward, debt repayment, our reputation.

V15 maybe the Galatians were quarrelsome – certainly they were not being loving.

Vv16-18 the Spirit the overcomer

V16 they have been told to live in love. If they remain in the Spirit they will be enabled to do this.

V17 The Spirit and the flesh or the sinful nature are diametrically opposed. If we walk by the Spirit we won't gratify our sinful nature.

What is going on inside every Christian? A conflict, a battle, between the renewed side of our nature and the sinful nature.

What's encouraging about this and what's challenging? It's challenging because we often do what we don't want to do – sin. It's comforting because Paul says this is normal Christian life.

How can the sinful nature work by making us over desire good things? We can desire good things and make the good into a god. We can feel we must have something and do anything to get it.

V18 Basically Paul is saying that the Law and the sinful nature are closely linked. The Law doesn't restrain us in a way it has the opposite effect – although it does convict us of sin.

Vv19-21 the works of the flesh

V19 Paul lists representative activities of the sinful nature. Classified into 4 basic categories sexual sins, religious deviations, disorders in personal relationships, intemperance. In Paul's eyes sexual sins form a kind of union that can't be undone (1 Corinthians 6:15-18). Hence the warnings to abstain from fornication (see also Thess 4:3 Eph 5:3). At the same time it can be forgiven. Paul begins his lists of sins with the sexual both because he sees them as particularly severe and also probably because they were prevalent in Roman society.

V20 Often idolatry also involved sexual sin with temple prostitutes.

V21 ending with and the like shows the list is not exhaustive. Those who do such things could be better rendered those who practise such things – those who do such things and don't repent show that they have not accepted the rule of Christ in their lives. They have not turned to Christ with real faith.

Vv22-23 the fruit of the Spirit. A contrast to the works of the flesh.

How do the fruits of the spirit products of believing the gospel? We get them by having the Holy Spirit within us and we get them though serving others in love.

What's our part in getting these fruits and what is the spirit's? We submit to the spirit and allow him to work in us. We have to try and help the spirit work in us but we can't achieve without the spirit and we mustn't put too much of ourselves into it.

V22 Elsewhere Paul talks of the Spirit distributing gifts as he wills (1 Cor 12:11). Love is at the head of the list of virtues – love is superior to all other spiritual gifts. Joy is joy in the

faith, joy of the Lord. Peace is shalom. Paul often joins joy and peace. God is forbearing and patient. Kindness or gentleness is found only in Paul's letters. The fruits of the Spirit are NOT the same as the gifts of the Spirit.

V23 the law has nothing to do with the manifestations of the Spirit.

Vv24-26 Application and Appeal

V24 Paul applies the truth of the Spirit flesh conflict.

V25 We need to be ruled by the Spirit and observe the fruits of the Spirit in our lives.

V26 Paul says we mustn't exhibit behaviour which is the opposite of Spirit led behaviour.

Which acts of the sinful nature are most common and acceptable in our culture? sexual immorality, witchcraft, idolatry, rage – all of them.

Why does being conceited produce provoking and envying? If we're insecure and fixate on comparing ourselves to others. We then feel either superior or inferior.

How will the gospel make people both humble and bold. We can't earn salvation which is humbling, but we know we are loved and honoured by God which makes us bold.

How does the gospel remove conceit? We have a new self image as honoured and loved by God and we don't need to worry about what people think. We have all we need in Christ.

Chapter 6

Vv1-6 Specific Exhortations

V1 Walking by the Spirit means not only that we inculcate that kind of behaviour in our own lives, but that we restore others who have fallen into sin. Elsewhere Paul advises withholding fellowship from certain serious offenders (1 Cor 5:11, 2 Thess 3:14). Offenders are to be restored gently, in a spirit of meekness.

V2 We need to actually help offenders and indeed all those in need.

V3 We shouldn't think a lot of ourselves.

V4 We should test ourselves against the criteria Paul has laid out. We need to scrutinise what we do and have done. Everyone should take responsibility for themselves.

V5 When our load is not insupportable we should carry it ourselves.

Vv6-10 Doing Good

V6 we should contribute to our teachers support – 1st evidence for full time ministry.

What does Paul tell Christians to do? Don't overlook someone caught in sin. Seek to restore that person – gently and watching ourselves carefully. We should carry each others

burdens and be humble in serving them. Load v5 is not the same as burden. Those being taught in the faith should share all good things with their teachers.

V7 We can't fool God. In the end we'll get what our behaviour deserves – maybe not in this life, but in the next.

V8 Paul applies the sowing and reaping idea to the Christian life and combines it with the Spirit/flesh contest. The two lifestyles are opposed to each other and yield completely different results.

If we sow to please the sinful nature we'll reap destruction – we must sow to please the spirit.

V9 expands on reaping what one sows. We mustn't loose heart. "If we persevere in doing good, we shall at the appointed time reap the fruit of our labors."

V10 We need to do good to all people not only Christians, but especially Christians.

Vv11-18 Summary and Conclusion

Vv12-13 The motives of the Judaisers are exposed. He notes they don't keep the Law – perhaps they weren't of Jewish origin or he could just have meant that they don't keep it effectively. Still their object is not to keep the Law but to escape persecution.

Why are the Judaisers telling the Galatians they must be circumcised/ To avoid being persecuted by other Jewish Christians. and so that they can gain influence (boast).

Vv14-15 The Meaning of the Cross As opposed to the Judaisers, Paul says he will only boast in the cross. Pride in the Law has been replaced by pride in the cross.

Paul is saying in these two verses (vv. 14f.) that Christ, by virtue of his coming and his atoning death on the cross, has inaugurated and brought about a new creation: his cross marks an absolute break between the new and the old world. Therefore, what matters now is no longer circumcision or uncircumcision, since that distinction belongs to the old world, but participation in the new order of existence.

The cross marks the demarcation between circumcision and the Law on the one hand and justification by faith on the other.

How is real Christianity different? Real Christians don't boast about what they've done but about what Christ has done.

V16 These last two verses are so important that Paul pronounces a blessing on all who follow them.

V17 Is a final appeal. Marks are probably scars left on Paul's body as a result of his beatings etc on account of preaching the gospel. His idea is that of branding slaves, especially temple slaves to denote ownership. He's saying he's branded as Christ's slave. These brand marks are the antithesis of the circumcision of the Judaisers – Christ is the true circumcision and the new Israel

V18 Concluding benediction. Paul ends all his letters except Romans with a benediction, although they're not all identical.