

**LESSON 4**  
**THE BOOK OF GALATIANS**  
**CHRONOLOGICAL STUDY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT**  
**SECOND SEMESTER**

Key verse: It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery. Galatians 5:1

**PRAYER FOCUS:** Ask the Lord to reveal to you the freedom that you have in Christ! Stand firm, don't be burdened, and enjoy your relationship with the Lord. Tell Him how much you love Him and appreciate what He has set you free from in your life.

**GALATIANS**

Resources: www. Padfield.com; Adventuring Through the Bible by Ray Stedman; *The Untold Story of the New Testament Church* by Frank Viola; and *The Kingdom, Power, and Glory* by Chuck and Nancy Missler.

**Author:** Paul (Gal. 1:1).

**Date of Writing:** A.D. 49

**Purpose:** A defense of Paul's apostleship and a contrast between the Law and Gospel.

**Background:** The background of the Galatian churches is found in Acts 13:13—15:25. These churches were begun by Paul on his first missionary journey, when he traveled with Barnabas into the cities of Antioch, Iconium, Derbe, and Lystra. The name of the province comes from the same root as the word *Gaul*, the ancient Roman name for France.

The Galatians were not Arabs or Turks or Asians. They were a Celtic race, of ancestry similar to that of the Scots, the Irish, the Britons, and the French.

**Overview:** Galatians is a letter against legalism. The letter comes to grips with the questions of what real Christian life is like. The answer can be framed in a single word: liberty. As Christians, we are called to liberty in Jesus Christ. The goal of this epistle is that Christians might discover the liberty of the children of God in accordance with all that God has planned for humanity in the way of freedom and enjoyment. The letter has been called the Bill of Rights of the Christian Life, or the Magna Charta of Christian Liberty, or Our Spiritual Emancipation Proclamation – emancipation from all forms of legalism and bondage in the Christian experience.

Paul answers every argument that the Judaizers (hardened legalists who had come from Jerusalem with what Paul called “an alien gospel”) used to persuade the Galatians into following the Law of Moses. In this letter Paul will connect with the Phrygian slaves who populate the Galatian churches. He will use the word “slave” (or a derivative) 16 times.

The two issues of the gospel – justification and sanctification – make up the basic outline of the letter to the Galatians.

Since Galatians can be a controversial book, perhaps we should start with Peter's warnings:

2 Peter 3:15-18

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Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.

Therefore, dear friends, since you already know this, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of lawless men and fall from your secure position. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.

NIV

**DAY ONE**  
**READ Galatians 1 and 2**

In Paul's first letter, he indicates that he is taking the pen in hand (instead of using an amanuensis, or assistant) because he is so concerned about these new believers. This letter is circulated among the churches in the region of Galatia, from which he recently returned. (This would be modern day Turkey.) It is unknown how much time has passed since he was in Galatia,

Paul begins with a greeting that becomes typical for all of his epistles.

1. What is that greeting? (1:3)

Define those two words: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

❖ **Think of ways that you experience God's grace and peace in your life,**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. What word does Paul use in verse 6 that indicates he is upset? \_\_\_\_\_

Because Paul says they are "quickly deserting" may indicate it was a short time since he had been in Galatia.

Paul underscores the need to please God and not men in order to be truly free. He gives a short biography of his life in 1:13-2:5. He is coming clean about his previous way of life. He is showing us that he is the "poster boy" for knowing what freedom is.

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3. Galatians 2:3 reveals what the issue is that has caused dissension among the believers there. What is the issue? \_\_\_\_\_

Let's look at the background of this issue: God required circumcision of Abraham in Genesis 17 as a sign of the covenant that He was going to be making with Abraham. God's relationship is always covenantal, not contractual. God was giving a lot; he was requiring only circumcision of Abraham. This was to be a mark in the flesh that would serve as a constant reminder of obedience and commitment to a faithful God. For the Jews, circumcision defined them. It confirms they've descended from Abraham and have a part in God's covenant with them. There was more than the outward, physical cutting of the flesh, it was an inner, spiritual rite.

The Jews were now having trouble with how fast the gospel was spreading and Gentile converts were outnumbering Jewish believers.

After Acts 10:45 when Peter had his vision and God illustrated to him that the Gentiles were to be considered worthy of evangelization as well, there was a lot of upheaval. When the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard those words, the "circumcision" was astonished! The gift of the Holy Spirit had been given to the Gentiles. (Acts 11:18)

The controversy grows and circumcision became the single-most contentious issue in the New Testament. Finally there had to be a ruling regarding whether circumcision (becoming a Jew) was required for salvation. In 50 A.D., there was an official ruling about whether the Gentiles needed to be circumcised. (Most scholars think that this was after Galatians was written). Several witnesses presented the case for the Gospel of grace, beginning with Peter (Acts 15). After some discussion, James (brother of Jesus) the leader of the church, gave a summation and conclusion of the matter. As a Jew, he made it clear that a Gentile does not have to become a Jew in order to become a Christian. Jews and Gentiles are saved the same way, through faith in Jesus Christ.

4. What had some false brothers been trying to do in 2:4? \_\_\_\_\_

5. How did Paul remind the Galatians they are justified? (2:16) \_\_\_\_\_  
Define "justified" \_\_\_\_\_

6. Aren't we glad that God justifies sinners? Once we are justified, how are we to live? (Hab 2:4; Romans 1:17, Galatians 3:11, Hebrews 10:38) \_\_\_\_\_

8. If righteousness could come by the law, what would be the consequence (2:21)? \_\_\_\_\_

❖ **Record one of your faith journeys that has assisted in your living in freedom.**

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**DAY TWO**  
**READ GALATIANS 3**

1. What would be a good definition of the word foolish that Paul uses in 3:1? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. How was the gospel announced in advance to Abraham? 3:6 \_\_\_\_\_

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3. How did Christ redeem us from the curse of the law? \_\_\_\_\_

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4. What was the purpose of the law (3:19–25)? \_\_\_\_\_

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❖ What do you think verse 27 means in that we are clothed with Christ?

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5. What does it mean to be “an heir according to the promise”? \_\_\_\_\_

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What promise does this speak of? \_\_\_\_\_

**DAY THREE**  
**READ GALATIANS 4**

In chapter 4, Paul is helping these pagan Gentiles understand what true freedom is. He is describing how a Jewish child was under the care and discipline of a tutor. The tutor was actually a slave that was in charge of the child from about 6 years of age until 16 years of age. Many of the converts in Galatia had been slaves. Perhaps that’s why Paul was driving home this point.

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The following commentary also helps to understand this practice.

Under Roman law, the status of the minor still under a guardian was roughly that of a slave.

- Minors were required to be under legal "guardians" even if their father was deceased; this guardian was normally chosen from the father's will, or, if this were unspecified, the role fell to the nearest male relative from the father's side of the family. The "managers" (NASB) or "trustees" (NIV, NRSV) or "stewards" of estates were often slaves or freedmen but wielded considerable power.
- In their previous, pagan state, the Galatians had revered the elements of the universe as deities (Judaism had long since demythologized them as angels who ruled over nature, like those implied in Psalm 148:2-4). Most ancients feared the personified, tyrannical power Fate, which was thought to exercise its will through the astral spirits, the gods who ruled the stars. Paul believes that even the Jewish people were enslaved by such evil spiritual powers apart from Christ.
- Jewish texts often speak of the fulfillment of appointed times in history as a way of recognizing God's perfect wisdom in and sovereignty over history. (Some commentators have compared "the fullness of the time" - NASB — to how ripe Greco-Roman culture was for the spread of Christianity; yet others could counter by citing the almost insurmountable obstacles that this culture presented to the early Christians.) Here Paul compares this fulfillment to the point at which a boy attains maturity and is considered an adult (about thirteen or fourteen years old). "Born under "law" means that Jesus was obligated to keep the law of Moses.

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1. How can these new believers address God now? \_\_\_\_\_

2. Who is sent into our hearts that we might be able to do that? \_\_\_\_\_

**❖ Describe your relationship with God. It is as a servant/child/friend?**

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Paul helps these pagans see that just as they might have been a tutor, or disciplinarian for a child until he reached maturity, using the phrase "fullness of time." Paul is warning the Galatian slaves to not go back to their pagan ways of worshiping false gods and become enslaved by them again.

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4. To what did Paul compare his ordeal of helping them grow spiritually and let Christ be formed in them? (v. 19) \_\_\_\_\_

5. What two women did Paul use to explain the difference in being free and being a slave?

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This explanation from Brad Scott of *Wildbranch Ministries* helps explain this passage.

The first four and a half chapters of this book have been teaching us that redemption and sonship are not acquired by obedience to God's law, or any law, for that matter. The focus on inheritance, the seed, and relationship precedes the allegory of Hagar and Sarah. Man is saved by grace through faith, and it is this gift from God that establishes the relationship. Inheritance, i.e. the promise, can only be obtained through relationship.

Those who desire to be under the law, are attempting to establish righteousness without trust and relationship through faith. They are doing it on the basis of obedience to the law alone.

The covenant at Mt. Sinai cannot stand alone, because the covenant of Sinai cannot save man or atone for him. Paul tells those who desire to be under the law that their inability to be heirs of the promise by obedience to the law is actually written in the law. He shows this by the use of allegory. He begins by using two very familiar women, and one man, from scripture: Hagar, Sarah, and Abraham. It is imperative to know the story of these three, for it is their actions that form the basis for the comparison.

The story, found in Genesis Chapters 16 through 21, tells of a promise by God to Abraham and Sarah that even in their old age they would bear a child that would carry the seed of the woman, that the everlasting covenant would go and that his seed would produce a multitude of nations. Abraham and Sarah were already of the seed of the woman through the same eternal covenant of faith. As time went on, Abraham and Sarah began to lose their trust in God's words and soon took it upon themselves to establish this promise by their own works and by their own ways.

Abraham listens to his wife, does not trust God and produces a child, Ishmael, by means of a maid named Hagar. This son, because he was produced by works rather than trust, could not be Abraham's heir, because he was not produced by relationship through trust, or by faith. The seed of faith was through Isaac because his birth was the result of Abraham and Sarah's trust in their 'Father' God, and so children of faith are produced by children of faith. Inheritance is not earned, but acquired by birth and given by promise.

The difference between Hagar and Sarah is the basis for the two covenants. The covenant at Mount Sinai is clearly referring to the Law of Moses. If you carefully read the covenant given on the mount you will see that there is no salvation or redemption found here, but only a promise that the children of Israel will be treasured above all other people on the earth as a result of obedience. If the covenant relationship of trust is established first, then obedience to the law given on Mount Sinai will distinguish you from all other peoples. If the Law of Moses is sought after without the relationship, then the natural result is bondage, because one is seeking righteousness outside of relationship. And it is not because the law itself is bondage, but because we fail to keep the law. **THE LAW DID NOT DELIVER ISRAEL FROM**

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EGYPT! The law was given after they were delivered, and after the trust-based relationship was established.

**DAY FOUR**  
**READ GALATIANS 5**

1. Memorize Galatians 5:1 and write it here: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

❖ Describe a time that you have had to “stand firm” and be reminded that you are free in Christ.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. How does verse 6 tell us to express our faith? \_\_\_\_\_

3. Does freedom in Christ mean that we can continue in sin, satisfying a sinful nature?  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. What should happen to the old sinful nature? \_\_\_\_\_

5. What should be different about our life once we have Christ in our life? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

6. Compare the works of the flesh with the fruit of the Spirit. Which one of the fruit do you find the most challenging to allow to flow through you? \_\_\_\_\_

***“Works of Law”***

Qumran document 4QMMT (4Q394-5) gives us some insight into a Jewish sect in the first century called “Works of Law”. The Jewish Works of Law believed many things that were contrary to God’s Law and also taught that Gentiles could not be saved. They were not living God’s Law in faith but were living their own invented law-which was a twisted form of God’s Law and a similar practice of the 6 sects of the Pharisees. Their doctrine was very similar to those of the “Circumcision Party.” Galatians 6:13 states that this group is supposedly teaching God’s Law for salvation, but does not even keep God’s Law themselves. The Jewish sect of the Circumcision Party appears in Acts 10:45;11:2; 15; Gal 2:7-12 Gal 5:12; Eph. 2:11.

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Therefore, Paul was not teaching against the Law of God but commandments and doctrines of men. The Circumcision Party demanded Galatians to be circumcised a certain way for justification to gain salvation. We are to not be “circumcised “ (cut away the flesh) for salvation, but as a response to our salvation. There is a difference between those motives, and that is what Paul was trying to teach. Circumcision for justification through God’s Law profits us nothing. We can only receive salvation through the finished work on the cross (Gal 5:2). If we were to try to achieve salvation by circumcision, then we must keep the whole Law perfectly as well (Gal 5:3). This is not possible, which is why we need grace (Gal 5:4), through faith (Gal 5:5). However, do we make void God’s Law because of faith? God forbid!

**DAY FIVE**  
**READ GALATIANS 6**

1. What are we to bear or carry for each other? \_\_\_\_\_

❖ **Do you find it harder to carry someone else’s burden or to share your own?**

\_\_\_\_\_

2. What are we fulfilling when we do this? \_\_\_\_\_

This underscores the fact that the law was not thrown out when Christ came. This chapter especially points out and underscores what James taught that we are to do good as a result of our following Christ, not in order to earn our salvation.

3. Describe the law of sowing and reaping.

\_\_\_\_\_

4. To whom are believers especially to “do good”? \_\_\_\_\_

5. Paul concludes this book with a discussion of circumcision to remind them that just being circumcised doesn’t make them righteous. What does he remind them is the only thing to boast in?

\_\_\_\_\_

Paul is speaking of the freedom that Christ offers through salvation by grace alone. He is not speaking against obeying God’s laws. Salvation means “to liberate, to set free.” It literally means to deliver from bonds by a payment or ransom (sounding familiar?) Paul is teaching against acquiring your salvation by your good works.

Remembering the steps of salvation is important to understand the book of Galatians. When we first come to Christ and are born again, we are declared righteous and holy. This is called

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*justification* (declared not guilty before God). This is based on what Christ has done. This is past tense. This is only the first step of our salvation.

*Sanctification*, the process by which God conforms us into His image, is the second step. This is a lifelong process that will outwardly reveal that we have been saved. Sanctification is our choice of how we cooperate with God in the process. It is the role of the Holy Spirit (which Paul reminds the Galatians in chapter 3, verse 2 that they didn't receive from their own works.)

The final step is *glorification*, which is future tense. Faithful, obedient, and sanctified believers (the overcomers) who depend upon the Holy Spirit for everything will be qualified to inherit the kingdom. (*The Kingdom, Power and Glory* by Chuck and Nancy Missler)