



The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the

# GALATIANS

*Faith, Freedom & Fruit*

ATLANTA BELVEDERE SDA CHURCH

## PASTOR'S BIBLE CLASS

*with Dr. Samuel U. Bulgin*

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## INTRODUCTION

According to Martin Luther the Epistle of Paul to the “Galatians is the Magna Carta of Christian freedom and the charter of evangelical faith”. Paul in Galatians, as in Romans, has significantly influenced Christian theology. Paul and the doctrine of salvation was under attack and if it had succeeded, Christianity would have become just another Jewish sect dependent on circumcision and the keeping of the law instead of being by grace.

According to Paul both Jews and Gentiles come into a right relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ—God’s incarnate Son. (4:4) Jesus rescues believers from bondage to sin by His death on the cross. (1:4. Human beings cannot will acceptance by God through conformity to law. We are not justified by works of law but through faith in Christ. (2:16)

Salvation through faith in Jesus Christ is contrasted with human effort directed towards making oneself acceptable to God according to obedience to law and code. The contrast is clearly between a religion of rescue and a religion of achievement.

According to Paul, sin is an invading corrupting power which makes the human will incapable of moral action. Sin brings mankind into bondage and ultimate death. (Rom. 7:13-14; 5:12-14)

Only God’s identification with Sinners through the incarnation of Jesus Christ, and the sinners trusting in Jesus Christ, can bring salvation/deliverance from sin’s power (Gal. 5:3-6:10). Paul strongly opposes and resists the idea that a right relationship with God must be won through obedience to the law in addition to faith in Jesus Christ.

## OPPONENTS OF PAUL'S GOSPEL

The Jewish Christians from Jerusalem who belonged to the legalistic wing of the church (Gal. 2:4; Acts 15:5).

To these Paul was very forceful. Salvation was entirely a thing of grace. For him, no man could ever earn the favor of God. All he could do was to accept the love God offered him by taking an act of faith and casting himself on God's mercy. The Jews would go to God saying, "Look! Here is my circumcision. Here are my works. Give me the salvation I have earned." Paul on the other hand had discovered another way—the right way.

*"Not the labor of my hands  
Can fulfill the law's demands;  
Could my zeal no respite know,  
Could my tears for ever flow,  
All for sin could not atone:  
Thou must save, and Thou alone.  
Nothing in my hand I bring,  
Simply to the cross I cling;  
Naked, come to Thee for dress;  
Helpless, look to Thee for grace;  
Foul, I to the fountain fly;  
Wash me, Savior, or I die."*

Salvation is not what a man can do for God, but what God can do for him.

## **OPPONENTS OF PAUL'S GOSPEL**, *continued*

### **Gentile Christians Living in Galatia**

Gentile Christians living in Galatia who had become Judaized and wanted other Gentile Christians to do likewise.

### **Jewish Christian Gnostics**

Jewish Christians Gnostics like those in Corinth who were leading the Galatian Christians into worship of world power and certain ritual observances (including circumcision, and the keeping of sacred days and feasts) (Gal. 4:9-10), as well as into immoral conduct.

## **PLACE AND DATE OF WRITING**

The Epistle of Paul for the Galatians was written from Ephesus about AD 54 or 55. We have the Apostle Paul with the only glory he desired: on his body, the stigmata (brand-marks) of Jesus. The debt which under God, we owe to Paul for his almost solitary vision is inestimable.

## **THE THEME OF GALATIANS**

The gospel of justification (right relationship with God) by faith in Jesus Christ and not by obedience to the requirements of the law. This is the essence of the gospel—it is the only gospel.

## OUTLINE

### INTRODUCTION (1:1-10)

- I. The clear call of the Gospel (1:1-5)
  - a. The certainty of God's call
  - b. Paul's work given by God.
  - c. Paul wishes the Galatians—grace and peace (Grace-undeserved generosity and Peace-everything for man's highest good).
  
- II. The Slave of Christ (1:6-10)
  - a. Paul was a slave to the law and chief persecutor of the church.
  - b. Paul is a slave because of God's eternal plan.
  - c. Paul was chosen for the task, not for honor but for service.

### THE BODY (1:11-6:10)

- I. Paul's life, an exhibit of the divine origin of the gospel (1:11-2:21).
  - a. Paul's conversion from Judaism, an act of God (1:11-16).
  - b. Paul's independent missionary activity (1:15-24).
    - i. He went to Arabia, Damascus, Jerusalem, Syria, and Cilicia.
  - c. The Jerusalem endorsement of Paul's work (2:1-10).
    - i. Paul respected authority, conscious of a special task, and was never overawed by leaders.

## OUTLINE, continued

- d. The Gospel won out in Antioch over the struggle with Peter and the Jerusalem advocates for law keeping by the Gentiles (2:11-21).
  - i. The Essential Unity (2:11-13)
    - 1. The church ceases to be Christian if it contains class distinctions
    - 2. Paul acted with dispatch to counter the drift towards division.
  - ii. The End of the Law of Ceremonies (2:10-17).
  - iii. The Crucified and Risen Life (2:18-21).
- II. Paul's experience, Scripture, and Reason supports the gospel. (3:1-4:31)
  - a. The Galatians received new life in the Spirit through the gift of grace, not through obedience to the law's demands (3:1-5).
  - b. Abraham's right relationship with God is the result of faith—trust in God (3:6-9).
  - c. Seeking a right relationship with God through observance of the law leads to condemnation (3:10-14).
  - d. God's fundamental relationship with His people since Abraham has been a promise—faith relationship (3:15-4:7).
    - i. It is a covenant that cannot be altered (3:15-18).
    - ii. The law defines transgression (3:19-22).
    - iii. The coming of faith (3:23-29).
    - iv. The days of childhood (4:1-7).

## **OUTLINE**, *continued*

- e. The Galatians who follow the path of justification by faith must not turn away from it to seek justification by obedience to the law (4:8-20).
    - i. Progress in reverse (4:8-11).
    - ii. Love's appeal (4:12-20).
  - f. The law teaches that the true sons of God will inherit God's promises through faith, not through the law (4:21-31).
- III. Paul's Gospel leads to a life of controlled freedom in Christ (5:1-6:10).
- a. Circumcision is the symbol of slavery, don't submit to it (5:1-12).
  - b. Love and the Spirit provide adequate controls for the life of Christian freedom; live by them (5:13-6:10).

### **CONCLUSION** (6:11-18)

- I. Beware of those who insist on circumcision (6:11-16).
- II. Respect the authentic mark of Paul's status and service as an apostle (6:17).
- III. Farewell in Christ (6:18).

