



JOURNEY
THROUGH

GALATIANS





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GALATIANS

DEVELOPED BY THE
Assemblies of God
Men's Ministries Department

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The Journey Begins

The lessons you're about to engage are meant to help strengthen your biblical knowledge, understanding, and application. Studying the culture, land, language, and other background information will produce a broader and deeper understanding of what Scripture is saying to you. These lessons are intended to help provide that for you.

The format of these lessons is built on the following five questions that will help you explore the biblical author's intent, your perspective as a modern reader, and how the Holy Spirit can apply it to you. In order to gain a fuller understanding of Scripture, you should ask:

1. What did this Scripture mean to the original author and audience?
2. What does this Scripture mean to me today?
3. How can this Scripture apply to my life?
4. How does this Scripture deepen my love for God?
5. How can I demonstrate this Scripture to my family and those around me?

These questions are the foundation for every lesson, which is divided into four sections: The Author's Lens, My Lens, The Holy Spirit's Lens, and Upward and Outward Focus. The sections will encourage you to wrestle with the text and discover a deeper biblical understanding that will allow you to rightly apply what you've learned. If you have a *Fire Bible*®: English Standard Version, there is also a section that allows you to engage with it.

The lessons utilize several resources to provide you with an in-depth study. While it is not required to have all of them, for the most optimal study experience we recommend using the following:

- *Fire Bible*®: English Standard Version
- Journal
- Colored Pencils
- Fine Point Pen

The ultimate goal of these lessons is to equip you to ascertain what the Holy Spirit and God's Word is saying to you. To do that, it's recommended that you work slowly and methodically through this deep dive into the Scripture.



For Group Leaders

If you intend to use this material in a group format, below are some tips to help you better utilize these lessons in that setting.

- Determine who will be the group leader. The leader will be responsible for making copies, coordinating meeting times, and facilitating discussions.
- The group leader should select individuals to read aloud The Author's Lens and My Lens sections.
- Before each session, the group leader should read through the questions in The Holy Spirit's Lens section. Many lessons have more content than can be covered in one session, so the leader may choose to engage only some of the questions or assign group members to work through them before arrival.
- If your group is very large, dividing into groups of three or four people is the best way to work through selected questions from The Holy Spirit's Lens for thirty to forty minutes. These groups should also commit to work together throughout the week.
- After you've divided into smaller groups, bring the entire group back together to discuss a few of the selected questions from The Holy Spirit's Lens for ten to fifteen minutes.
- Finally, the leader is responsible to hold group members accountable for completing the Scripture reading before each session and for writing in their journals.



Lesson and Scripture Checklist

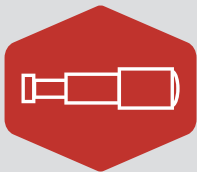
- Lesson 1: Introduction
- Lesson 2: Galatians 1:1-10
- Lesson 3: Galatians 1:11-24
- Lesson 4: Galatians 2:1-10
- Lesson 5: Galatians 2:11-21
- Lesson 6: Galatians 3:1-14
- Lesson 7: Galatians 3:15-25
- Lesson 8: Galatians 3:26-29
- Lesson 9: Galatians 4:1-11
- Lesson 10: Galatians 4:12-31
- Lesson 11: Galatians 5:1-13
- Lesson 12: Galatians 5:14-26
- Lesson 13: Galatians 6:1-18



Journey through Galatians

Lesson 1: Introduction

Main Idea: Before you begin to chew the bite-sized pieces of Galatians, it is best to be familiar with its entirety. This first lesson will provide an overview of the entire Book of Galatians to prepare you for the ones to come.



The Author's Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.

As you begin this study, background knowledge is helpful. Read the following synopsis excerpted from the *Fire Bible*^{®1}

- Author: the apostle Paul
- Theme: spiritual salvation and freedom by grace through faith
- Date of writing: AD 49
- Background: This book was written to the churches in the southern region of the Roman province of Galatia (Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, Derbe) during Paul's first missionary journey (Acts 13-14). This letter was probably his first.
- Purpose: Paul wrote Galatians to reject the teaching that a person had to follow the requirements of the Mosaic law in order to fully experience

¹ Donald C. Stamps, *Fire Bible®: English Standard Version®*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishing, 2011), 2003-2004.

God’s grace. He wanted to reiterate that spiritual salvation is possible only through faith in Jesus Christ, not by relying on the Old Testament law.

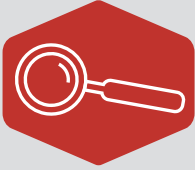
- Survey: Paul’s opponents wrote to weaken his influence in the churches.
 - » They presented three claims against Paul.
 - He was not an original apostle.
 - He did not have a consistent salvation message with the Jerusalem church.
 - He taught grace, which would result in lawless and careless living.
 - » Paul responded succinctly, powerfully, and fully to each charge. He showed that new life through Christ involves freedom from Jewish legal traditions. He also pointed out that Christian freedom involves living by the power of the Holy Spirit in a lifestyle of loving submission to God and loving consideration toward others.
- As you read through this introduction, journal any thoughts or questions you may have.



My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through studying the biblical explanations and principles in the text and bullet points below, you will better understand what God’s Word is saying to you today.

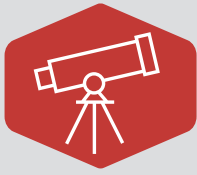
- Read the entire Book of Galatians before the first session according to the schedule below. Before you begin your daily readings, please see the next section where you will find additional instructions for each day.
 - » Day 1: Chapter 1
 - » Day 2: Chapter 2
 - » Day 3: Chapter 3:1-14
 - » Day 4: Chapter 3:15-25
 - » Day 5: Chapter 3:26-4:20
 - » Day 6: Chapter 4:21-5:15
 - » Day 7: Chapter 5:16-26
 - » Day 8: Chapter 6



The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

How can the Scripture apply to your life? By listening to the Holy Spirit's leading as you answer this series of questions, you can gain useful insights that will help you apply the truth of God's Word to your daily life.

- Highlight and write down the following in your journal as you read through Galatians:
 - » Recurring words
 - » Places mentioned
 - » Names mentioned
- Circle the following words with the recommended colored pencils:
 - » "Faith" in orange
 - » "Grace" and "freedom" in green
 - » "Jesus, Christ, Jesus Christ" in purple
 - » "Law" in red
- Look over your notes for Galatians and write down three things you hope to learn and apply to your life as a result of this study.
- What thoughts did the Holy Spirit bring to your mind as you read Galatians this week?
- What was your favorite verse from Galatians this week?



Upward and Outward Focus (Telescope)

How does the Scripture affect your relationship with God and others? You experience God's Word in action as you use it to direct your journey with Him and those around you. Answer the following questions and record the answers in your journal.

- How can studying the Book of Galatians deepen your love for God?

- How can you practically demonstrate to others your deepened love for God?



Using My *Fire Bible*

Read the study notes for the introduction to the Book of Galatians in the Fire Bible and then answer the question.

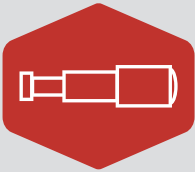
- What information did you learn from the introduction that was new to you?



Lesson 2: One Truth, One Gospel

Main Idea: Paul wrote this letter to address a major source of opposition to the gospel message in the church in Galatia. In this lesson, you will discover the reasons for Paul's confidence to speak and act in ways that challenged the Galatians.

Scripture: Galatians 1:1-10



The Author's Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.

Galatia was not just one city but a province of Rome. New Testament scholar Craig Keener states, "The assemblies of God's people in Galatia (Galatians 1:2) include multiple house churches in multiple cities."¹ The churches were located in Galatian cities like Antioch of Syria, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe. Paul and Barnabas traveled to all of them to share Christ and start churches. God moved in miraculous ways as new believers lived in the power of the Holy Spirit and experienced God's grace.

Once Paul and Barnabas finished their missionary trip, Paul received a concerning letter with news that something had happened in the church at Galatia: some people had come to the church preached a different message than Paul's. And people were beginning to believe them.

Some commentators call these people *Judaizers*. The Judaizers would

¹ Craig S. Keener, *Galatians: A Commentary*, New Cambridge Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2019), 51.

come to the church at Galatia and teach something like this: “You say you are Christians and following the Lord, but are you following all the Jewish customs? You do not have full citizenship in the kingdom of God unless you keep all the Jewish rules and regulations.” When Paul heard this news, he was furious. He sat down with a scribe and began to dictate a letter to the churches in Galatia.

In verse 1 of this letter, Paul describes himself as an *apostle*, which means “a sent one.” With this wording Paul likens himself to the original “sent ones,” the twelve disciples Jesus chose, including Judas who betrayed Him and had to be replaced (Acts 1:15–26).

After the original “sent ones” who walked with Jesus, there came another generation which included Paul. It appears that the Judaizers were trying to discredit Paul’s ministry specifically with divisive questions such as, “Who gave him his credentials? Who made him an apostle?” Paul clearly states to the Galatians that he was commissioned to be an apostle by God the Father and His Son Jesus—not by any person or committee. The Galatian believers have every reason to trust him because many had met him when he traveled to their cities and founded churches.

In verse 3, Paul uses the phrase “grace and peace” to address the churches of Galatia—a greeting Paul uses for most of his letters. Greeting people with some form of “peace to you” was common in the ancient world, but Paul has put the word *grace* in front of it, changing up the greeting by drawing attention to the salvation through grace that Christ offers. In contrast, the Judaizers’ message offered neither grace nor peace.

In verse 4, Paul begins discussing Jesus as our Savior and Rescuer. Jesus did not come just as a good teacher or an encourager, but He came as the God-man to rescue mankind. Jesus came to give a new perspective, a new understanding, and a new empowerment to live. Jesus did not go to the cross as a private citizen; He went as a representative for humanity. Paul explains to the believers in Galatia that when Jesus died, they died; when Jesus rose from the dead, they rose. Paul reminds the Galatians that Jesus came to take the death penalty that they deserved. God treated Jesus the way they deserved so that they could be treated the way Jesus deserved.

Usually at the beginning of his letters, Paul gives some type of affirmation. However, in Galatians Paul does not pause after the greeting to affirm the church. Instead he writes with urgency, coming to the heart of the issue by verse 6. Paul is surprised at the Galatians. The word Paul uses for “turning away” in verse 6 could be translated “deserted.” The Galatians did not just desert a proposition, a doctrine, or an idea: they deserted the Person of Jesus for another gospel, which Paul says is no gospel at all.

Paul told the Galatians that the good news of the gospel is not that you must do things to please God. Instead, the Good News is what God has done through Jesus to bring you into deep friendship with Him.

In the ancient world when a new king ascended the throne, messengers were sent out to the various areas of the Roman empire to declare the “good news” that a new emperor had come to the throne and that the people must give him their allegiance. Of course, this was only good news if the emperor was a good ruler.

Paul explains that the gospel of Christ really is good news. Therefore, if anybody preaches a gospel that is *not* good news, they are not preaching the gospel. Paul makes no attempt at religious tolerance when doing so means it doesn’t really matter what people believe so long as they believe.² The gospel proclaimed by the Judaizers was not good news—it was a message of bondage and despair.

Paul tells the church in Galatians that the Judaizers have perverted, or “reverted,” the gospel. In fact, in verse 7, he uses the phrase “*trouble you.*” Keener said this word “has a range of meaning that includes sowing division.”³ The Judaizers were causing divisions by reverting the gospel from the freedom that was in Christ back to the rules and regulations of Judaism. The gospel is that God has come in the person of Jesus, and now through Jesus alone a relationship with God is possible. The opposite of the gospel is that people have to make themselves acceptable to God. All religions in the world can be reduced to two kinds: religions of human accomplishment or religions of divine achievement. Paul defends the latter.

In verse 8, Paul uses the word “accursed,” which means that something is devoted to destruction. It literally meant to be condemned eternally. It could be translated as “damned.” Paul has quickly moved from grace and peace to damnation and judgment. He makes it clear that if any apostle including himself adds to the gospel message, he should be condemned eternally. Paul even goes so far as to say even angels should be ignored if they tell you a “new way” different from the gospel. Even today we hear of cults and false religions based on messages received from angels. Paul reminds the church that the apostles and prophets laid a foundation with Jesus as the chief cornerstone, and that foundation does not change.

In Psalm 23, the Good Shepherd has a staff and a rod. The staff was used to keep the sheep from danger; the rod was used to keep danger from the sheep. A shepherd would use the rod to beat a wolf if it tried to attack the sheep. In

² Keener, 22.

³ Keener, 63.

Galatians 1:8–9, Paul pulls out the rod and goes after the Judaizer “wolves” to say, in essence, “May they be eternally condemned if they preach any gospel other than what was delivered to you.”

In verse 10, we see that the Judaizers tried to convince the Galatian believers that Paul was a compromiser because he allowed Gentile men to avoid circumcision, which was required for Jewish males. They claimed that Paul was simply attempting to incur the people’s favor by declaring that they did not have to keep the Jewish rules, laws, and ordinances.

Three things should be noted about law and grace at this point. First, there is nothing necessarily wrong with rules unless they distort the gospel. Second, while grace is the work of God, it is not opposed to human effort in learning to follow Christ—effort is empowered by the Holy Spirit. Rather, grace is opposed to a mindset of trying to earn salvation and blessing from God. Third, the gospel neither makes holiness optional, nor does it limit our dependence on Jesus. Any gospel that takes you away from holiness or away from God’s grace for your sin is not the true gospel.



My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through studying the biblical explanations and principles in the text and bullet points below, you will better understand what God's Word is saying to you today.

Read these statements and write below or in your journal what these truths say to you:

- Paul builds his argument for the gospel based on his own knowledge of who he was (vv. 1-5).

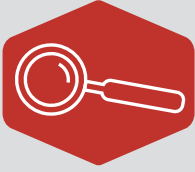
- Paul belongs to Jesus, he was sent out by Jesus, and his power is from Jesus (vv. 1-5).

- God's grace reaches its ultimate expression in Jesus (v. 4).

- God's peace is independent of outward circumstances (v. 5).

- What a person believes does matter (v. 6).

- What you believe determines how you live (v. 8).



The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

How can the Scripture apply to your life? By listening to the Holy Spirit's leading as you answer this series of questions, you can gain useful insights that will help you apply the truth of God's Word to your daily life.

Write down your answers to the following questions here or in your journal:

- Circle and write down any recurring words in this passage. (You may have done so in lesson one.)

- Who appears in this passage (Galatians 1:1-10)?

- Where is this passage taking place?

- When is this passage occurring?

- Why is this passage important?

- What is happening in this passage?

- How does this passage apply to my life?

- On a scale from 1 to 4 with 1 being well and 4 being poor, rate yourself in the following areas and then write out a plan to improve.
 - » Forgiveness over bitterness:
 - » Love over hate:
 - » Obedience over rebellion:
 - » Good over evil:
 - » Hope over despair:How you might improve in these areas:

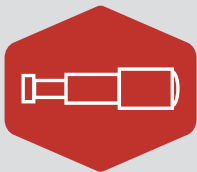
- When you hear that salvation is *all* about grace, what comes to your mind?
- Do you agree with this statement: “Our effort at living the life of discipleship is the result and expression of God’s grace.”? Why or why not?
- Read Galatians 1:4. Have you ever known anyone who was offended by the idea of needing a rescuer? Why do you think some find that idea offensive?
- What do you see as the difference between Jesus rescuing us “*out of* the present evil age” and Jesus rescuing us “*from* the present evil age?” What differences does this understanding make in your life?



Lesson 3: A Clear Testimony

Main Idea: Paul believed the gospel legitimized who he was. He did not identify himself apart from his faith and calling. In this lesson, you will discover Paul's clear testimony and how much we need to allow God's presence to change, confront, and challenge us to answer the call to be His servants.

Scripture: Galatians 1:11-24



The Author's Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.

In this lesson, Paul uses his faith journey to give credence to his message. Paul went to the Roman province called Galatia and shared the good news that having a relationship with Jesus begins simply with believing in Him. Director of Education at First Fruits of Zion, D. Thomas Lancaster, says, "Paul wrote to the God-fearing Gentiles in Galatia, synagogue attendees who were not Jewish."¹ God-fearing Gentiles referred to non-Jews who were attracted to Judaism. They did not enjoy the rights and privileges of the Jewish people, nor did they have responsibilities within Judaism. The God-fearing Gentiles from the Galatian provinces came to Christ and churches were formed. At some point, Paul left the provinces and a group of religious leaders called Judaizers came to discredit Paul and his message.

The Judaizers told these new God-fearing Gentile converts that Paul was

¹ D. Thomas Lancaster, *The Holy Epistle to the Galatians* (Marshfield, MO: First Fruits of Zion, 2011), 32.

preaching an incomplete gospel. Paul’s message was Jesus plus nothing. However, the Judaizers came to Galatia to correct Paul and share what they said was the true message: Jesus plus becoming a Jew and following the rules and regulations of Judaism.

The Judaizers said Paul’s message was different because he was a people pleaser. Paul was furious at this accusation because people-pleasing is a serious offense throughout Scripture. Proverbs 29:25 says, “The fear of man lays a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is safe.” *Fear* in this verse carries a sense of terror at the unexpected, much like we understand fear today. Every time this Hebrew word is used in the Old Testament, it is used negatively—indicating what we should not fear. Proverbs 29:25 reminds us that it is a trap to fear people more than God.

Aaron, the older brother of Moses, is an example of what fear of people can do to a person. While Moses was away on Mount Sinai to receive the commandments from God, Aaron was in charge of God’s people. When Moses did not return for a long while, the people grew restless. They came to Aaron and asked for a god to worship instead of the Lord. Aaron built the people a golden calf which was a violation of the very commandments that God was giving to Moses on Mount Sinai.

When Moses came down from Mount Sinai, he found the people worshipping the calf and involved in all types of sin. Moses was furious with Aaron and asked him, “What did this people do to you that you have brought such a great sin upon them?” (Exodus 32:21). Moses meant Aaron was not an idolater—someone who worships anything other than God—so he must have done this to please people. He feared man more than God, violating his highest convictions. Moses saw this as a serious offense to God. Paul carries this same sense of seriousness when he refutes the Judaizers’ claim.

Paul begins his defense by stating that the message of the good news he preached did not come from the apostles in Jerusalem, but directly from the revelation of Jesus Christ. This fact made Paul’s message unique because gospel revelation typically comes indirectly—through other people representing God. This is often God’s method.

However, Paul’s case was unique because he received a direct gospel revelation from Jesus Christ himself. Paul had an incredible encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus. Paul proves that the message he is preaching came directly from Jesus by simply telling the Galatians his personal story. He divides his story into three sections: What his life was like before he came to Jesus Christ, how Jesus was revealed to him, and what his life was like after meeting Jesus.

Before his conversion, Paul persecuted the Church. He was born with the name Saul, and he lived in Tarsus (a city in present-day Turkey). He was steeped in Judaism, which was not just a religion, but a way of life to Paul. With a father who was a Pharisee (a conservative Jewish leader emphasizing the Law), he would have been given a scroll of the Law (the first five books of the Old Testament) as a child. At a young age, Paul would have had to memorize the first five Old Testament books (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy), and in so doing, he would have become *bar-mitzvah*—a son of the law.

Growing up, Paul had access to some of the finest schools in the world of his time. He had a thorough Greek education and understood Greek culture. Since Paul was also a Roman citizen, he had special opportunities as he traveled that other people did not have. He continued his religious training in Jerusalem under Gamaliel, the preeminent Jewish scholar of the day. Eventually Paul, too, became one of Judaism’s very best.

Paul was a Jew of Jews. In fact, in Philippians, 3 Paul says that when it came to keeping the Law of God, he was blameless. Of course, this is hyperbole because Scripture says no one can fully keep the Law. But as good as anybody could keep it, Paul did. His desire to keep the Law was so strong that he gave all his energy to it. Once Paul encountered Christ, he became zealous for the right things.

Paul encountered Christ in a powerful way that is unparalleled for most of us. In Galatians 1:16, he uses the word “reveal” to describe how his experience came about. In time and space, Jesus revealed himself to Paul as he traveled on the road to Damascus, and the revelation transformed his life. Paul did not come to Christ because he heard many good testimonies or because he witnessed martyrs dying. What brought Paul to Christ was this encounter: God revealed life to Paul so He could reveal life *through* Paul.

When Paul came to Christ, everything in his life radically changed. He describes this change in Philippians 3:8: “Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ.” Virtually nothing is worth less than rubbish discarded in the street. Paul is saying that what brought meaning to his life before his revelation of Christ is now of no value to him: nothing compares to knowing Jesus.

In Galatians 1:17, Paul says he went to Arabia after his encounter with Jesus. Lancaster suggests Jewish communities were spread across the ancient world since the Roman government recognized Judaism as a legal religion, meaning

Jews had state protection to practice their religion.² According to Keener, too, it is likely Paul continued to share Christ among the Gentiles in Arabia.³ We see in Galatians 1:18–24 that Paul traveled extensively, not to simply disseminate information but to live life in community with other believers as they practiced walking by faith together. What Paul discovered was he and the original apostles were preaching the same gospel of grace. And in verse 24, Paul reminds the Galatians that people glorified God because of him. Professor of New Testament Robert Keith Rapa states, “If [Paul] can demonstrate his independence from the Jerusalem church and the original apostles, and if indeed he can show that they accepted the gospel he preached as legitimate, he has won the day for his beloved Galatians.”⁴ Paul indeed does this.

² Lancaster, 11.

³ Craig S. Keener, *Galatians: A Commentary*, New Cambridge Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2019), 91.

⁴ Robert K. Rapa, “Galatians,” *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Romans–Galatians*, rev. ed., vol. 11, ed. Tremper Longman III & David E. Garland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 572.

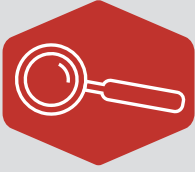


My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through studying the biblical explanations and principles in the text and bullet points below, you will better understand what God's Word is saying to you today.

Read these statements and write below or in your journal what these truths say to you:

- The God who graces us with life also graces us with mission (Galatians 1:15).
- No one comes to faith and trust in Jesus apart from God revealing himself through the Holy Spirit working in their heart (vv. 15-16).
- The only source of truth is the Word of God (1:16-21).
- The greatest way to silence critics in your life is to live with consistency (1:22-24).



The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

How can the Scripture apply to your life? By listening to the Holy Spirit's leading as you answer this series of questions, you can gain useful insights that will help you apply the truth of God's Word to your daily life.

Write down your answer to the following questions here or in your journal:

- Circle and write down any recurring words in this passage.
- Where is this passage taking place?
- When is this passage occurring?
- Why is this passage important?
- What is happening in this passage?
- How does this passage apply to my life?

- Write out your faith story in three sections: 1) What was your life like before Christ? 2) How was Christ revealed in your life? 3) What is your life like now after Christ? Then share your faith story with a friend in two minutes or less.

- Can you remember events where God was at work in your life *before* He was revealed to you?

- Explain how personal experience (subjectivity) and God's unchanging truth (objectivity) work together in our walk with God.

- How can you live your life in a way that will give God more praise, honor, and glory?



Using My *Fire Bible*®

Read the Fire Bible study notes for the following verse and article and then answer the accompanying questions.

- Read Galatians 1:15. Then describe what it means to you to be set apart.

- In your *Fire Bible* index, locate and read the article titled “Spiritual Separation for Believers.” Then answer the following in your own words:
 - » Why in the Old Testament did God want His people to live a separated life?

 - » What are the three types of separation found in the New Testament?

 - » What should the attitude of the believer be toward separation?

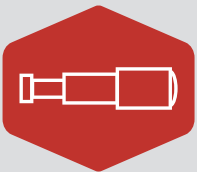
 - » What are some of the results in a believer’s life if they refuse to separate from sin and ungodliness?



Lesson 4: Grace and Freedom

Main Idea: Paul proved that he received his gospel message straight from the Lord, not from other people. In this lesson you will discover that Paul stresses the origins of the gospel because people were adding to the gospel message—making it no gospel at all. Paul's passion to share the gospel was intense, and we, too, should have an intense desire to share the gospel of God's grace and freedom with others.

Scripture: Galatians 2:1-10



The Author's Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.

Paul wrote this letter because the churches in Galatia faced a potential split. Paul understood this importance of this moment and knew that there was a doctrinal problem—a problem of beliefs that changed the way people lived. As we learned in previous lessons, Judaizers had come into the Galatian churches and taught that if people wanted to be true Christians, they had to abide by the law of Moses.

Paul refuted this by teaching that Christianity is faith in Jesus Christ plus nothing else: a person is fully accepted into God's family by faith in Christ alone. The Judaizers tried to invalidate this message by attempting to convince the Galatian believers that Paul was nothing more than a second-rate apostle. They argued that he listened to the apostles in Jerusalem and was trying to copy them. Paul responded by pointing out that he was independent

from the apostles and had instead received his revelation straight from Jesus himself (see Galatians 1:11-12).

In these first ten verses of chapter two, Paul explains that while he was independent from the apostles, not hearing the gospel from them first, he was also in unity with them in terms of the gospel message. He and the apostles were unified in their belief that a Gentile believer did not have to live out the law of Moses to be a follower of Jesus.

Already we see that Paul’s relationship to the Law is different from the Judaizers’ relationship to the law of Moses—also called the Law. Pausing our movement through Galatians 2 now to give background on the Law is helpful for understanding the rest of the book. After God delivered the Israelites from Egyptian slavery, they still thought and acted as if they were. So, God gave them laws that set them apart as His people in how they worshipped, ate, dressed, conducted business, and more—the Law was for all aspects of life.

God’s laws gave the Israelites a higher standard than other nations of the day, yet God knew that no one could perfectly keep all His laws. He made a way for them to be forgiven when they inevitably broke the Law: an animal would be sacrificed, and its blood symbolically covered the sin for a period of time. Though these laws might look severe to us today, they were actually more humane than the law codes of other ancient Near Eastern people groups, and these laws preserved the Israelites as a race. The preservation of this people group was critical to fulfill the promise God made to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3, that all nations of the world would be blessed through Abraham’s line. The Old Testament details numerous times God’s enemies tried to destroy Israel, yet God always preserved a remnant of His people who walked in holiness, keeping these laws with head and heart. The New Testament opens with four books about Jesus, one of Abraham’s descendants, whose death and resurrection made salvation possible. This is the salvation that Paul, also a Jew, preached.

Jesus tells His hearers in Matthew’s Gospel that He did not come to destroy the Law but to fulfill it (Matthew 5:17). But what does this mean for the Old Testament laws we read in our Bibles—especially for those of us who are not Jewish? The moral laws of the Old Testament (the Ten Commandments) are repeated in the New Testament.¹

In contrast, the Judaizers wanted Gentile believers to keep, at a minimum, the command of circumcision, which meant a full, legal conversion to Judaism.²

1 Of the Ten Commandments given in the Old Testament, nine of them are directly repeated. The only one not directly repeated is the Sabbath command, although believers after the resurrection are instructed to live by the principle of the Sabbath.

2 D. Thomas Lancaster, *The Holy Epistle to the Galatians* (Marshfield, MO: First Fruits of Zion, 2011), 66.

Again, Paul stood and wrote strongly: when a Gentile believer accepted Christ, it was not Christ plus Judaism. Faith in Jesus alone was sufficient. And so it is for us today. This is grace.

But grace to Paul did not (and does not) mean rejecting all of the law of Moses. For example, there was nothing wrong with being a circumcised male as long as the one circumcised was not touting it as being necessary for salvation. This has everything to do with Titus, Paul's next focus in his argument for why salvation is Christ plus nothing else.

Titus was a Gentile believer who had come to faith in Christ through Paul's preaching and who then became one of Paul's coworkers. In addition to traveling with Paul, he ministered in Corinth on Paul's behalf, delivering a difficult letter and collecting money for the suffering church in Macedonia (2 Corinthians 7:6-16; 8:16-24). Paul later sent him to Crete to plant churches, and Paul's letter to Titus about pastoral issues in Crete is the Bible book that bears his name. But what made this all possible was the Jerusalem apostles' decision recorded in Galatians 2:3.

Being a Gentile, Titus was not circumcised—what the Judaizers said must be done to become Christian. The Jerusalem apostles knew this, did not require his circumcision, and still considered Titus a full-fledged Christian. A decision like this coming from the Jerusalem apostles was ground-breaking: it “officially” showed that Jesus, and not an outward symbol of Judaism, was the identifier for Christianity. The Judaizers and the Galatians would know it wasn't just Paul who said this: it was the pillars of the faith themselves: James, Peter (also called Cephas), and John.

This section of Galatians shows that Paul held the Jerusalem apostles in very high regard. Paul chose to act as a man under authority, knowing the apostles could discredit his message. However, although Paul sought their validation, he knew he ultimately answered to and was validated by God. Keener writes, “Paul is saying that he needed the pillars' approval for the sake of his gospel's credibility . . . but as far as God was concerned Paul's gospel remains true regardless of anyone's approval.”³

Moving on from verse 3, in verse 4 Paul calls the Judaizers false brothers who showed up “to spy out,” a military phrase he uses here metaphorically. The stakes were high with implications for the entire Church, not just the Galatians. If Peter, James, and John had decided to side with the Judaizers, one of two things would have happened. Either the Church would have become a small sect within Judaism, or a divided Church would have been the result.

³ Craig S. Keener, *Galatians: A Commentary*, New Cambridge Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2019), 112.

Verses 5 through 10 sum up the rest of Paul’s interactions with the Jerusalem apostles James, Peter (Cephas), and John. His respect for their authority is high, but it is clear that it is Jesus to whom Paul bows, and not to earthly figures. In verse 9, Paul uses the interesting phrase “the right hand of fellowship.” This was far more than two people shaking hands; it signified an official agreement. The three pillar apostles—James, Peter (Cephas), and John—agreed with Paul that nothing need be added to the gospel message, and they accepted Paul as one of them.⁴ It both established Paul’s apostolic authority and the fact that the message of the gospel is Jesus plus nothing.

In verse 10, the apostles in Jerusalem ask Paul to remember the poor. Paul is reminding the reader that he came to Jerusalem also to help the church there, which had experienced severe financial issues. Because of this, the body of believers there was the poorest church in that time. God’s Word prioritizes helping the poor, disenfranchised, and marginalized. And in the Jewish context, the verb for *remember* is not only to be mindful of obligations but also to act upon them.⁵ What they were asking of Paul was for him to remain connected to the Jerusalem church, even as he continued to minister among the Gentiles—something Paul was very eager to do.

⁴ This private meeting was a historical moment prior to the public meeting described in Acts 15.

⁵ Lancaster, 45.

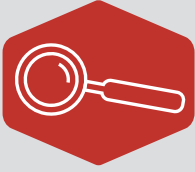


My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through studying the biblical explanations and principles in the text and bullet points below, you will better understand what God's Word is saying to you today.

Read these statements and write below or in your journal what these truths say to you:

- The gospel is about grace.
- The gospel message brings freedom.
- Paul's gospel message was confirmed and embraced by the entire Church (Galatians 2:4-10).
- God's Spirit of unity works through authority structures (v. 2).
- Unity accepts all who are in Christ (v. 6).
- Biblical unity maintains unity without uniformity (vv. 7-8).
- Biblical unity requires boundaries that exclude (v. 9).
- You have a calling—and it's likely different from the callings around you.
- Give God room to work.
- Let God work through people the way He wants.
- Let God use your story.



The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

How can the Scripture apply to your life? By listening to the Holy Spirit's leading as you answer this series of questions, you can gain useful insights that will help you apply the truth of God's Word to your daily life.

Write down your answer to the following questions here or in your journal:

- Circle and write down any recurring words in this passage.

- Who appears in this passage?

- Where is this passage taking place?

- When is this passage occurring?

- Why is this passage important?

- What is happening in this passage?

- How does this passage apply to my life?

Write down your answers to the following questions about unity here or in your journal.

- What is required for a person to be made new in Christ?
 - » Are there things you have to correct before God will save you?

 - » Are there behaviors you have to embrace? Are there practices you need to learn or experiences you need to have to be saved?

- Why is unity in the Church important?

- What are some ways we can demonstrate our acceptance of others?

- What are some ways we can express to other believers that we value them?

- What are some ways we can build each other up in Christ?

- How can we maintain unity despite our differences?



Using My *Fire Bible*®

Read the *Fire Bible* study notes for the following verses and articles and answer the accompanying questions.

- **Galatians 2:4** According to the *Fire Bible* note, what is legalism? Describe your understanding.

- **Galatians 2:5** What happens if we neglect or abandon any part of the Gospel that Paul preached?

- **Galatians 2:6** What does God see and evaluate?

- **Galatians 2:10** What are two things the poor need from a believer?

- Look in your *Fire Bible* article index for “The Heart.” Read it and then answer the following:
 - » What is the definition of *heart*?

 - » What are some emotions and attitudes the Bible says we feel in the heart?

(Continued from *Fire Bible* article “The Heart”)

- » What are the sins Jesus says come from the heart?

- » What happens to anyone who continues to reject God’s Word?

- » What does *regeneration* mean?

- » What happens to those who experience spiritual birth?

- » Why is love from the heart a necessary part of obedience to God?

- » What type of spiritual activities take place from the heart of a spiritually transformed person?

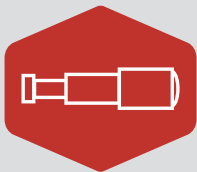
- Look in your *Fire Bible* index for the article “Caring for the Poor and Disadvantaged.” Read it and then answer the following:
 - » How does God reveal himself to the poor and needy?



Lesson 5: Living in the Crosscurrent

Main Idea: In this lesson, you will discover how difficult it is to live in the crosscurrent of gospel and culture—which Peter had to learn the hard way—and you will also discover how Christians can stand firm: by knowing that the gospel justifies us before God.

Scripture: Galatians 2:11–21



The Author's Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.

In the previous lesson, we studied how Paul traveled to Jerusalem where the apostles (Peter, James, and John) confirmed the accuracy of Paul's message: the gospel is faith in Jesus plus nothing else.

This lesson begins in Galatians 2:11 where Peter caused a problem so serious that Paul had to confront him publicly. According to New Testament scholar Craig Keener, "Paul's public confrontation . . . is dramatic and illustrates for his audience how fiercely committed Paul is to his gospel for the Gentiles."¹ Peter understood that God does not differentiate in His acceptance of people based on whether they are Jews or Gentiles, but his actions under pressure revealed hypocrisy.

Ironically, Peter had earlier received direct revelation of God's love for Gentiles. Acts 10:9–48 records Peter having a vision of a sheet filled with foods unclean

¹ Craig S. Keener, *Galatians: A Commentary*, New Cambridge Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2019), 145.

for Jewish people to eat, and a voice telling him to “kill and eat” (Acts 10:13). After the third time this happened, the Holy Spirit told him that Gentiles were looking for him, and Peter was supposed to join them. They came and he accompanied them to the house of a man named Cornelius, a God-fearing Gentile, who had gathered with other Gentiles to hear a message from Peter. While Peter was preaching, all the Gentiles received the gift of the Holy Spirit, praising God in other languages. Peter told the Jerusalem church, “and they glorified God, saying, ‘Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life’” (Acts 11:18). They understood that salvation comes not by ethnicity nor anything people do except place simple faith in Jesus Christ alone.

Because of this, when Peter went to Antioch, he sat down to eat non-kosher food alongside Gentile believers—until a group from the Jerusalem church showed up.

These believers attended church where James was the pastor and spoke as though they had his authority. The Jerusalem church was quite different from the church in Antioch. They kept the Mosaic laws and ate kosher food. Peter saw them, feared their disapproval, and Galatians 2:12 says that, “When they came he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party.”

The table where Jews and Gentiles ate together had become a symbol of tremendous unity, but Peter was about to turn it into a symbol of division. Keener suggests Peter drew back because “it was easier to conform to their expectations than to try to persuade his associates in Jerusalem that his behavior with Gentiles in Antioch was acceptable.”² Whatever Peter’s reason, Paul, in verse 13, says Peter was acting hypocritically.

The word *hypocrite* in Greek comes from acting terminology. In the Greek culture of the day, actors used a mask on a stick rather than makeup. If actors wanted to portray sadness, they held a sad mask over their face. If they wanted to portray happiness, they held a happy mask over their face. The mask covered what the actor actually felt.

Paul confronted Peter’s behavior, not the content of the gospel message. Paul said Peter was not believing falsehood; he was acting contrary to what he believed.³ Paul reminded Peter that he knew Jesus was enough for salvation—and that means people become right with God through their faith in Christ, not through keeping laws. Yet the *mask* of Peter’s behavior was so compelling that it influenced other Jewish believers to behave hypocritically, including leaders. Even Barnabas, minister to the Gentiles, missionary companion to Paul, and pastor of the Antioch church, joined with Peter in hypocrisy.

² Keener, 148.

³ Keener, 158.

In verses 5 and 14, Paul uses the same terminology, “the truth of the gospel.” The conflict between Paul and Peter was all about the truth of the gospel—faith in Jesus plus nothing else—that Peter and Barnabas had treated as untrue.

Unlike the meeting in Jerusalem where Paul sat down privately with Peter, James, and John, this meeting was public. In front of everyone, Paul asks Peter how he could “force the Gentiles to live like Jews” (verse 14). His separation from the Gentile table was forcing Gentiles to come under the law of Moses and live by its rules and regulations. Even if Peter never said this outright, his actions did: Professor of New Testament Robert K. Rapa says, “To acquiesce to Peter’s (hypocritical) actions would signal Paul’s *implicit* agreement to the attitude that was being *explicitly* communicated by the Galatian Judaizers.”⁴

In verse 15, Paul ends his story and speaks directly to the Galatians again. He explains that Jewish followers of Jesus know how people are justified—brought into right standing with God: through faith in Christ. Justification is what Christianity is all about. It does not mean God set aside justice in order to bring justification. Bible commentator Maxie Dunnam states, “To justify is to make right, not to make just or fair or equitable.”⁵ God had punished His Son so the Galatian believers could be part of the family of God. Jesus Christ took the penalty deserved so the Galatians could be justified before God.

A simple way to understand justification is “not guilty.” Paul, in verse 16, explains that when believers accept Christ and what He accomplished for them on the Cross, a legal transaction takes place in their life. D. Thomas Lancaster, Director of Education at First Fruits of Zion, says,

Justification does not make you sinless; it does not impart righteousness into your being and make you suddenly a more godly person. Instead, justification is a legal verdict of “not guilty” in the court of heaven, even though you are guilty. Justified means “not punishable.” The justified person is reckoned righteous even if he is not.⁶

Does justification by faith mean it’s all right if a believer falls into lawless behavior driven by sinful desires? Not at all. Paul did not believe that receiving unearned justification entitles a believer to walk in lawlessness. He says in Romans 6:1-2, “What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?” Paul always refuted the argument that sin is okay since a person doesn’t earn

4 Robert K. Rapa, “Galatians,” *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Romans–Galatians*, rev. ed., vol. 11, ed. Tremper Longman III & David E. Garland (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 580.

5 Maxie D. Dunnam, *Galatians / Ephesians / Philippians / Colossians / Philemon*, The Preacher’s Commentary Series, vol. 31, ed. Lloyd J. Ogilvie (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1982), 43.

6 D. Thomas Lancaster, *The Holy Epistle to the Galatians* (Marshfield, MO: First Fruits of Zion, 2011), 91.

salvation based on religious activities.

In Galatians 2:19, Paul tells the people that trying to be justified by the Law will kill them. Trying to earn right-standing with God through law-keeping makes a corpse. Does a corpse need more laws? No, a corpse needs life. That’s exactly what Jesus gives to those in relationship with Him—those who trust His finished work. Then as God keeps working in a person’s life, they live differently, bearing what Paul calls in Galatians 5:22-23 “the fruit of the Spirit.”

Paul articulates the focus of this letter (that is also the focus of his entire theology) in Galatians 5:20-21—which is so important that it should be viewed here before continuing:

I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose.

Within those two verses, Paul identifies three key concepts for the Galatian church—and, by extension, to us: substitution, expectation, and motivation.

First, *substitution*: Jesus did not go to the Cross as a private citizen but as the substitute for humanity. The idea of a substitute or representative is one that the Jewish people understood and practiced regularly. In the positive sense, when David defeated Goliath (1 Samuel 17), it was counted to all Israel as their victory. In the spiritual sense, the sprinkling of an animal’s blood by Israel’s high priest once each year in the temple’s inner sanctuary (the Most Holy Place) represented the Israelites’ sins. In the ultimate sense, Jesus died for the sins of all people, not just the Israelites, representatively dying for us. It is as if we died with Him. This is why Paul says, “I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.” Paul’s past-tense crucifixion here is symbolic and true: Paul was not physically crucified with Christ on the cross, but the person of Paul died with Christ. Now Christ lives in the person of Paul. Through accepting Christ’s death, the believer’s previous identity is gone; Christ is now their identity.

Second, *expectation*: that is, faith. In Galatians 2:20, Paul explains how he lives now: “by faith in the Son of God.” Think of this faith as looking up and looking ahead. In Numbers 21:4-9, God instructed Moses to form a bronze serpent so that when the Israelites suffered from snakebites, they would look up at it and live. The Gospel writer, John, mentions this: “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that everyone who believes in Him may have eternal life” (John 3:14-15). Paul wants to know what the believers in Galatia are focused on: faith in their religious activities or

faith in their living relationship with Jesus?

Third, *motivation*: what should motivate the Galatians to live for Christ? Once people recognize that they are not justified by what they do but by what Jesus has done, their motivation to live a holy, righteous life comes from outside themselves. In Galatians 2:20, Paul identifies proper motivation as the motivation of Christ: love. Christ loved Paul and gave himself for Paul; Christ loved the Galatians and gave himself for them. Paul wants the Galatians to understand that Jesus willingly took the penalty they deserved. It was not a sterile, calculated business decision; it was unrelenting love. And this love should be the Galatians’ motivation for their new life in Christ.

Paul concludes this section (verse 21) by reminding the Galatians that righteousness does not come through the Law—so they should never try to earn what Jesus lovingly, freely gave. Righteousness is right standing before God with no sense of guilt, shame, or condemnation. It is based on relationship. Rapa comments,

In these verses Paul has expressed the crux of his theology of the Christian life: the believer has died to the law by virtue of incorporation into Christ, with whom the believer has been co-crucified. Life is now lived in union with him in a daily existence of faith outworked.⁷

So we see that faith in Christ is primarily about our relationship with Him. In their commentary on Galatians, pastor-authors David Platt and Tony Merida note the following:

When Paul says he has been crucified with Christ, he’s virtually saying, “It’s not the same ‘me’ anymore. It’s not the ‘I’ that tried to work for God and failed every time, nor the ‘I’ that thought the world revolved around me. The pride of the old ‘I’ directed everything to focus on self-esteem, self-confidence, self-direction, and self-exaltation. And it lived for personal pleasure and position. But my life is no longer about me,” Paul says, “because Christ lives in me.”⁸

Christ living in us: He can propel us past hypocrisy and give us strength to stand in the crosscurrent of the gospel and popular culture. Even when we face the pressure to conform, knowing that God has justified us in Christ—put us in right standing with Him—can help us stand firm. We could never add to the amazing, complete work He has done.

⁷ Rapa, 587.

⁸ David Platt and Tony Merida, *Exalting Jesus in Galatians*, Christ-Centered Exposition, eds. David Platt, Daniel L. Akin, and Tony Merida, (Nashville: B & H Publishing Group, 2014), 49-50.

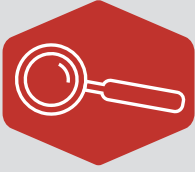


My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through studying the biblical explanations and principles in the text and bullet points below, you will better understand what God's Word is saying to you today.

Read these statements and write below or in your journal what these truths say to you:

- Follow Scripture rather than our personal preferences (Galatians 2:11-14).
- Our walk with Christ should be in step with the Gospel (v. 14).
- Our faith in Christ brings us a legal verdict of “not guilty.” (vv. 15-16).
- Accept believers of other ethnicities as brothers and sisters (vv. 15-18).
- Transformation of your soul and your spirit occurs when you make a full surrender to Jesus Christ as Lord of your life (vv. 19-21).
- Because I was crucified with Him, He lives through me (vv. 20-21).



The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

How can the Scripture apply to your life? By listening to the Holy Spirit's leading as you answer this series of questions, you can gain useful insights that will help you apply the truth of God's Word to your daily life.

Write down your answer to the following question here or in your journal:

- Circle and write down any recurring words in this passage.

- Who appears in this passage?

- Where is this passage taking place?

- When is this passage occurring?

- Why is this passage important?

- What is happening in this passage?

- How does this passage apply to my life?

- What was the primary insight for you from the conflict between Paul and Peter in Galatians 2:11–21?

- How would you explain justification to someone who has never heard of it? What easy-to-understand words and concepts would you use?

- What do you believe it means to live “by faith” (Galatians 2:20)? How is that different than living “by sight” (2 Corinthians 5:7)?

- What differences would characterize someone motivated by guilt and fear versus someone motivated by love? Have you ever seen these two motives at work in your life? Please explain.



Using My *Fire Bible*®

Read the study notes for the following verses and articles in the Fire Bible and answer the accompanying questions.

- **Galatians 2:11** What is a believer’s responsibility toward someone who has gone astray?

- **Galatians 2:12** Why did Peter deny his own principles?

- **Galatians 2:16** What does Paul deal with from this verse? Paul is not against the law. What is Paul against with regard to the law?

- **Galatians 2:20** What have Christians been freed from by accepting Christ? How does a believer live by the Spirit?

- **Galatians 2:21** Describe in your own words your understanding of grace and mercy. What does true righteousness involve?

- Look in your *Fire Bible* article index for the article “Biblical Words for Salvation.” Read it and then answer in your own words:
 - » What does salvation mean?

(Continued from *Fire Bible* article “Biblical Words for Salvation”)

- » What is the one way of salvation?

- » Name the two sides of salvation.

- » Name the three stages of salvation and what happens at each stage.

- » What does redemption mean? What are the results of being redeemed?

- » What happens to those who experience spiritual birth?

- » Which event from the Old Testament best depicts redemption?

- » What does justification mean? Is it something you can earn or deserve? Why or why not?

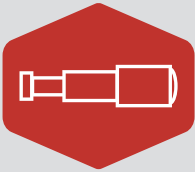
- » List Paul’s seven truths about justification and describe how justification is accomplished.



Lesson 6: Righteous by Faith

Main Idea: After Paul explained to the Galatians that all people, Gentiles and Jews alike, are justified by faith rather than the Law, Paul now reminds the Galatians how they began their journey of faith and urges them to continue living that same way. In this lesson, Paul shares what it meant to walk in right relationship with God.

Scripture: Galatians 3:1-14



The Author's Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.

Remember from reading Galatians 1 and 2 that Paul had started a group of churches in the Roman province of Galatia. Paul had left the province, and during his absence Judaizers had come to the church and tried to persuade the Galatian believers that Paul's message was insufficient, saying that after you received Jesus you must also be circumcised.

Our last lesson (Galatians 2:11-21) summarized the first two chapters of Paul's message to the Galatians: Faith in Jesus is enough. He asked why God would become a man, live among us, and suffer a humiliating death if a person still had to gain a relationship with Him through rules and rituals. Jesus is the rescuer needed for people to enter into relationship with Him.

In this session's verses (3:1-14), Paul makes the case that not only does salvation come by faith, but a believer's continued growth also comes by that same faith.

It is faith that helps a believer be more like Jesus—not effort, striving, or working hard to please Him. Paul communicates to the Galatians that how they started their faith journey is also how they should continue. Bible scholar and professor Robert K. Rapa states that in this section, “Paul will either succeed or fail to make his case for his gospel and the Galatians’ continued adherence to it.”¹ Everything in the letter thus far has led up to this point of asking the Galatians to carry on in the manner they started.

These verses could be summarized in one word: *believe*. To believe in God is, first, to see by the Spirit (Galatians 3:1-5). Second, it is not just to believe *in* God but to believe *on* the Person of Jesus (vv. 6-7). And, third, to believe is to escape the curse of the Law and experience the blessing of the Spirit (vv. 8-14).

In verse 1, Paul essentially asked the Galatians who cast a spell on them and turned their eyes away from the true message he preached about Jesus. Education Director for First Fruits of Zion, D. Thomas Lancaster, says, “The Judaizers have managed to dupe the gullible Galatians into believing this absurdity with the result that some of the Galatians have been backsliding, so to speak, into legalism.”²

To understand the Galatians’ experience with the Judaizers, consider the following vivid illustration of how a weasel captures prey. A weasel will dance mesmerizingly to distract the attention of its intended prey. The unsuspecting prey watches the dance until the weasel has worked its way close enough to make the kill. In like manner, the Judaizers came to Galatia and distracted the believers’ attention away from the Gospel and then went in in for the kill. In this analogy, the kill is the addition of circumcision to the salvation experience.

In verses 2-6, Paul asks a series of rhetorical questions regarding whether the Galatians received the Spirit by works of the Law or by hearing with faith. Of course, the answer is the latter. When Paul uses the phrase “works of the law” (verse 2), he refers to the specific indicators of Jewish identity. New Testament scholar Craig S. Keener comments, “Paul appears appalled here. How could his converts who have already experienced the Spirit revert to seeking by fleshly means something they already received by trusting the gospel?”³

As supernatural as this sounds, the Holy Spirit comes to live inside believers through faith in what Jesus has done. The Holy Spirit moves people toward Jesus. Paul asks rhetorically in verse 2 when the Holy Spirit took up residence in the Galatians: when they kept the Law or when they believed the gospel?

1 Robert K. Rapa, “Galatians,” *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Romans–Galatians*, rev. ed., vol. 11, ed. Tremper Longman III & David E. Garland, vol. 11 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 580.

2 D. Thomas Lancaster, *The Holy Epistle to the Galatians* (Marshfield, MO: First Fruits of Zion, 2011), 110.

3 Craig Keener, *Galatians: A Commentary*, New Cambridge Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2019), 206.

Paul is reminding them that the sign of being a Christ-follower is the Holy Spirit within them.

In verse 3, Paul admonished the Galatians that if their faith journey began in the Spirit, it should also continue in the Spirit. This sheds light on Paul's theology of the Holy Spirit. Keener states, "Paul's theology of the Spirit describes not a one-off experience but rather a continued welcoming of this connection with the living God."⁴

Paul uses the word "perfected" (verse 3), which implies the idea of completeness. Being perfected does not mean attaining sinlessness but is instead a demonstration of growth and maturity in Christ. The way a person receives salvation is the same way maturity happens in a person's life: by the Spirit of God. The work of the Spirit separates the believer from someone who merely engages in personal works toward maturity.

In verse 4, Paul's rhetorical question: "Did you suffer so many things in vain?" reminds the Galatians of the value of faith placed in Jesus. Lancaster suggests that the message of Paul was, "If you're going to go ahead and convert, then what was the point of all that stigmatization that you suffered in the first place?"⁵

Verse 5 emphasizes faith as a lead-in to Paul's teaching on Abraham, the father of the nation of Israel. Paul proceeds throughout these verses to bring up a number of passages from the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Bible), and Keener notes that Paul does this "to establish the foundational character of his claim."⁶ In verse 6, Paul quotes Genesis 15:6 to remind them of the basis on which God considered Abraham righteous: his belief in the words and Person of God. Paul's point is that God's promise to Abraham came before Abraham's circumcision. Keener continues: "Abraham, like the Galatians, was in fact a Gentile when he was justified by faith."⁷ Abraham was a pagan when he chose to believe God but was given perfect righteousness through belief. Therefore, Paul writes in Galatians 3:7, the true sons of Abraham do not need to be circumcised but simply believe like Abraham believed.

Paul opens this next section of text, verses 10-14, by reminding the Galatians that relying on the Law results in death. It's important to note Paul is not saying that Law-keeping was wrong. What is wrong is relying on the Law for salvation. Relying on faith in Jesus, however, results in life. Paul's point is that the blessing of Abraham (who believed by faith) applies to the Galatians because they, too, accepted Jesus by faith. Paul was reminding the Galatians that these Scriptures about God's promise and Abraham's faith point to Jesus.

4 Keener, 218.

5 Lancaster, 115.

6 Keener, 223-224.

7 Keener, 225.

In verse 10, Paul quotes Deuteronomy 27:26 to warn the Galatians that if they revert to Judaism, they will be subject to the curses from Deuteronomy 27–28 unless they live out the Law completely. Galatians 3:11 points out that everyone is subject to these curses because no one is made right through law-keeping. Righteousness comes through faith—a point Paul makes by quoting Habakkuk 2:4.

Paul quotes Leviticus 18:5 in Galatians 3:12, showing that the Judaizers believe their own law-keeping efforts bring them true life. Galatians 3:13 quotes the very specific pronouncement in Deuteronomy 21:23: “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree.” When that Scripture was written, Roman crucifixion had not been invented. Instead, to demonstrate that someone was cursed during the time Deuteronomy was written, the person would be hung up on a pole or tree. This action did not bring the curse upon them but simply showed that they were already accursed. Paul references Deuteronomy 21:23 to explain that Scripture ultimately points to Jesus, who went to a cross as the cursed One of God.

God gave Jesus the curse due to Jewish believers, and in doing so He also opened the Abrahamic blessing to the Gentiles—to people from every tribe and nation. Lancaster says it this way:

Our Master became, so to speak, accursed, in that he took upon himself the accursedness of his people and suffered on behalf of all those under the curse of the law—and not only for the Jewish people, but for all who will believe in him and rely upon his faithfulness.⁸

It was the ultimate exchange: Jesus received the curse, and humanity received the blessing.

⁸ Lancaster, *The Holy Epistle to the Galatians*. 162.



My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through studying the biblical explanations and principles in the text and bullet points below, you will better understand what God's Word is saying to you today.

Read these statements and write below or in your journal what these truths say to you:

- Before we can truly live the Christian life, we need to picture Jesus' death on the Cross (Galatians 3:1-5).
- The key to growth is finding our source of life and strength in the Lord (v. 3).
- God acts in response to faith, not by works of the law (v. 5).
- The Spirit is the source of the miracles (v. 5).
- Because of faith, we are now made righteous in God's sight (vv. 6-14).
- We grow by faith in Christ and not by performance (v. 11).



The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

How can the Scripture apply to your life? By listening to the Holy Spirit's leading as you answer this series of questions, you can gain useful insights that will help you apply the truth of God's Word to your daily life.

Write down your answer to the following question here or in your journal:

- Circle and write down any recurring words in this passage.
- Who appears in this passage?
- Where is this passage taking place?
- When is this passage occurring?
- Why is this passage important?
- What is happening in this passage?
- How does this passage apply to my life?
- What stood out to you most from this lesson?



Using My *Fire Bible*®

Read the study notes for the following verses ,articles, and charts in the Fire Bible and answer the accompanying questions.

- **Galatians 3:2** What happens if a person relies on regulations in order to please God? How many times from this verse forward does Paul refer to the Holy Spirit?

- **Galatians 3:5** What do the references to the Spirit include? For Paul, what else besides individual, inward work did he see as a result of the Holy Spirit’s work?

- **Galatians 3:10** Describe in your own words what “under a curse” means.

- **Galatians 3:11** What did Paul believe justification by faith involved?

- **Galatians 3:13** Describe in your own words Christ’s redemption from the curse.

- Look in your *Fire Bible* index for the article titled “Old Testament Prophecies Fulfilled in Christ” and answer the following:
 - » Read through two prophecies listed in this article each day until complete. In the space below or in your journal, write down your thoughts from your daily readings.

- Look in your *Fire Bible* index for the article titled “Regeneration and Spiritual Birth and Renewal” and answer the following:
 - » Describe in your own words the word *regeneration*.

 - » In your own words, describe what spiritual birth involves.

 - » When does spiritual birth happen and how is spiritual renewal ongoing?

 - » Why is spiritual birth necessary?

 - » How does a believer remain in a right personal relationship with God?

 - » What can you know about a person who claims to be born again but practices the sinful ways of the world?

 - » Describe in your own words how a person who has been born again can lose their relationship with God.

 - » List some results of spiritual birth and regeneration.

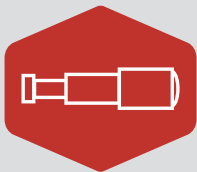
- Look in your *Fire Bible* index for the chart titled “The Work of the Holy Spirit” and answer the following:
 - » Read one section a week for five weeks. After you have read the tasks and corresponding references, write down what you learn from each section.



Lesson 7: The Purpose of the Law

Main Idea: Paul answered the Judaizers using familiar Scriptures to make his case on behalf of the gospel. In this lesson, you will discover that rules cannot fix problems; they are merely designed to guide. The Law could never solve the problem of sin: only Jesus Christ can.

Scripture: Galatians 3:15–25



The Author's Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.

In the last session (Galatians 3:1–14), Paul used Scripture to emphasize how people have always been made righteous because of their faith, not their works. Now in verse 15, Paul refers to a type of agreement called a covenant, which was very significant in ancient contexts. Paul explains that the Law doesn't cancel the covenant God had earlier made with His people.

In verse 16, Paul quotes Genesis 12:7, where God made a promise to Abraham and his offspring (Note that Paul uses *covenant* and *promise* interchangeably.). Paul emphasized that the word *offspring* is singular, not plural. This singularity is important because, although God told Abraham he would be given descendants as numerous as the stars of the sky, Paul contends that it all begins with the offspring called Messiah, Jesus Christ.

Paul stated that after the Abrahamic promise was given, 430 years passed. However, 645 years had elapsed from the first time that God gave the Abrahamic

promise. Why the discrepancy? Remember, God continued to restate the Abrahamic covenant to each generation. God gave the covenant to Abraham and then restated it to his son Isaac and then to Isaac's son Jacob. The last time God stated the terms of this covenant was to a man named Jacob just before he went down with his family into Egypt, which was 430 years before the law came into existence. The point Paul makes is that just because it had been 430 years since the last time God spoke about the promise, God did not forget, annul, or change it. The Mosaic law did not change the covenant because God had made it, and God does not change.

In Galatians 3:17-18, Paul begins his contrast of the Law with God's promise (His covenant) to show that the two are mutually exclusive in that no one can obey the Law to be right with God while embracing the promise to be right with God, too: the Galatians needed to choose. The law of Moses was God saying, "I will remain in relationship with you if you will remain in relationship with me." However, when God gave the covenant to Abraham, God simply said, "I will." He did not set up a performance agreement. He simply made the promise. That promise, according to verse 18, became the inheritance, the good news, that all nations would be blessed, including Gentiles like the Galatians.

The story of God's covenant with Abraham is in Genesis 15:1-21. God came to Abraham and promised that his seed would bless all nations on earth. Abraham wanted to know how he could be assured of God's promise. So, God instructed him to get a heifer, goat, ram, turtle dove, and pigeon, and cut them all in two and spread them out. Abraham knew right away God was making a covenant with him because this was how ancient covenants were established.

Abraham took the pieces of the animals and laid them out. Then, typically, the two parties making the covenant would walk through the cut-up animal pieces, proclaiming the terms of covenant to one another. It may sound gruesome to us, but the cut-up animal pieces were symbolic: If one party did not keep the covenant, they would be cut off from their people.

Then, as the sun was going down, God caused Abraham to fall asleep and dream that a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch were going between the pieces. These images symbolized God himself. Instead of God and Abraham walking through the pieces together, as in a human-made covenant, God alone walked through the pieces to demonstrate His promise to Abraham. In other words, the promise God made was not contingent on Abraham keeping his side of the covenant but relied instead on God's own trustworthiness.

D. Thomas Lancaster, Education Director for First Fruits of Zion, shows the power of this covenant:

The [Jewish festival of] Passover is celebrated on the anniversary of the covenant between God and Abraham. Four hundred and thirty years before the first Passover, Abraham slaughtered the animals for his covenant on the fourteenth of [the Hebrew month of] Nisan. On that same day Abraham sacrificed the animals to make his covenant with the Lord, our Master died as the sacrifice of the new covenant. The day of Passover draws a line of connection from Abraham’s covenant to his singular, promised seed, the Messiah.¹

In verse 19, Paul pointedly asks what purpose the Law serves. Why was the Law given 430 years after the last time the promise was stated? The answer is that there was a need to protect and guide God’s people until the promised offspring—the Messiah—came. Once He came, fulfilling God’s promise to Abraham, things changed for everyone who believed, including the Galatians.

In verse 20, Paul uses the phrase “God is one,” referencing Deuteronomy 6:4, which is part of the Torah, or first five books of the Bible. Lancaster considers why Paul cites Deuteronomy here, noting that

[It is likely] to remind the reader that, despite the fact that the Torah was given to Israel by the agency of angels and through the hands of a mediator, the revelation of the Lord that comes through the Torah is not separable from his being, but is indeed the divine word. The Torah is the revelation of God and godliness.²

In verse 21, Paul tells the Galatians that the Law is not opposed to the promise. In fact, people needed the Law to show that a promise was needed. Whereas the Law was never intended to give life, God’s Spirit does give life. Throughout the letter to the Galatians, Paul reminds them that the mark of following God is not circumcision but the Spirit. In verses 22–23, Paul tells the Galatians that God used the boundaries set by the Law to hem in His people so the offspring could be protected—and so Jesus could give the promise of Abraham to all who believe in Him.

Paul uses an interesting Greek word in verse 24 that the ESV translates “guardian”: *paidagogos*. In Roman households of this time, having slaves was a common practice. Slaves were usually educated, and Roman families would choose one to instruct their children and be the children’s guardian and tutor. Lancaster says,

The *paidagogos* was a type of caretaker entrusted with supervision and directing a child’s conduct and moral behavior. They taught the child social skills and manners. They were responsible for

¹ Lancaster, 172-173.
² Lancaster, 178.

coordination and overseeing the child's education by arranging tutors, lesson schedules, and course of study. They serve as a type of bodyguard, high school principal, and school guidance counselor all rolled into one, with the responsibility of ensuring the student's safety and good behavior on the way to school and back.³

Whereas the parents brought life to the children, the guardians or tutors regulated and instructed the children in an impersonal arrangement driven by rewards and discipline.

Similar to a *paidagogos*, the Mosaic law did not give life, but rather regulated it. It was not possible to have a personal relationship with the Law. The Law would instead drive people to despair of ever being able to keep it. However, the Law was instructive to protect and prepare the way for the seed, Jesus.

Paul tells the Galatians that when people mature spiritually—when they place faith in Christ—they will no longer be under the regulations of the Law. It is important to stop and notice that Paul is *not* teaching that by living in the faith in Christ, we are free to do whatever we want. So, what purpose does the Law serve for those who are followers of Christ? Paul never excuses followers of Christ from obeying the Law. The Law remains, and, when violated, immediately kicks in as that guardian and tutor *to turn us back toward Jesus*. This is why, explains New Testament scholar Craig S. Keener, “Paul is not against the Law but rather against depending on one's obedience for justification or honor.”⁴

³ Lancaster, 180.

⁴ Craig S. Keener, *Galatians: A Commentary*, New Cambridge Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2019): 274.

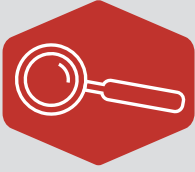


My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through studying the biblical explanations and principles in the text and bullet points below, you will better understand what God's Word is saying to you today.

Read these statements and write below or in your journal what these truths say to you:

- The giving of the Law did not change the promise (vv. 15-18).
- The Law was given to show people their sins (vv. 19-20).
- We must see the Law as a guide, not a means for salvation (v. 24).
- Our confidence should be found in what Jesus has done, not in what we do (v. 25).



The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

How can the Scripture apply to your life? By listening to the Holy Spirit's leading as you answer this series of questions, you can gain useful insights that will help you apply the truth of God's Word to your daily life.

Write down your answer to the following question here or in your journal:

- Circle and write down any recurring words in this passage.

- Who appears in this passage?

- Where is this passage taking place?

- When is this passage occurring?

- Why is this passage important?

- What is happening in this passage?

- How does this passage apply to my life?

- How did this lesson cause you to think differently about God's Law?

- What are some ways people misuse God's Law? Have you ever used God's Law in these ways? Please explain.

- How does understanding God's Law increase your gratitude for God's grace provided through Jesus?

- What was your main takeaway regarding the difference between the law versus the promise (covenant)?

- » In the Old Testament and New Testament, how were people expected to keep God's commands?

- » What are some characteristics of God that the Law revealed?

- » Why did God give the Law?

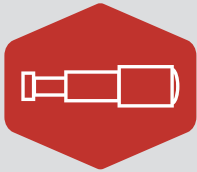
- Look in your *FireBible* index for the chart "Old Testament Sacrifice" and answer the following:
 - » What thoughts come to your mind regarding the sacrifices?



Lesson 8: Put on Christ

Main Idea: Paul addresses the idea of *being* right, not just *doing* right. He uses the metaphor of putting on Christ. In this lesson, you will learn what it means to be immersed in Christ's character.

Scripture: Galatians 3:26–29



The Author's Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.

In the last session (Galatians 3:15–25), Paul contrasted the Law with God's covenant or promise to show that before the Law was given to people, Abraham was declared righteous by his faith. The Galatians needed to remember that they were made right with God through faith in Jesus, not lawkeeping, and this Old Testament lesson illustrated his point.

In verse 26 of Galatians 3, Paul shifts from using the pronoun “we” (verse 25) to using “you”—directing his next statements at those who were not Jewish by birth—that is, the Galatians and, by extension, all other Gentiles, or non-Jews). He tells the Galatians that they became sons of God by faith in Jesus, not by keeping a bunch of rules or adapting to Jewish culture.

He uses the phrase “sons of God” here in a specific sense. God created all humanity in His image and His likeness, so in a general sense all are children of God. But now, through faith in Jesus, the Galatians have become sons of God, born spiritually into His family.

In verse 27, Paul says that the Galatian believers have “put on Christ,” meaning that they are metaphorically clothed in Him. Imagery for this verse comes from the Roman culture of that day: when children were considered to have come into adulthood, they would take off children’s clothing and put on the toga of an adult, officially becoming Roman citizens with all the attendant rights and responsibilities.

Paul also could have had in mind Isaiah 61:10:

I will greatly rejoice in the LORD; my soul shall exult in my God, for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation; he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself like a priest with a beautiful headdress, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

The picture here is of a day when God will take off our old, filthy, unrighteous garments, and give us the very robes of His righteousness.

Paul uses this idea of putting on Christ or being clothed in Christ throughout his letters (Romans 13:12; Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 3:12). Clothing is connected to people’s image and likeness, all the way back to the first instance of clothing in the Bible—Genesis 3:21. Once God found Adam and Eve hiding because of their nakedness, He clothed them with animal skins. When a person sees somebody, they do not just see their face and hands, but they also see the clothing as part of the person’s image. Paul is communicating to the Galatians that their overriding identity factor is now Christ: and Christ overrides other identity markers such as ethnicity, social standing, and gender—a point he communicates vividly in the next verse.

Think about Paul’s own identity transformation. Remember, Paul was originally Saul the Pharisee. Now Paul writes that his number one identity is Jesus: a massive shift for someone who once persecuted Jesus’ followers. Paul begins verse 28 with, “neither Jew nor Greek,” referencing ethnicity and culture as entities that bow before Christ’s finished work on the Cross. No longer does one have to take on Jewish culture to be in right relationship with God. A person can be in right relationship with God and follow Jesus no matter their culture.

Paul then writes, “neither slave nor free.” In the world of Paul’s time, there were clear class distinctions. The lowest class, making up one-third of the population, was the slave class. When someone joined the Body of Christ, everybody was on an equal playing field in Christ, so much so that slaves and masters called each other brother. In the church, someone could actually be a slave and preach the Word of God to their master sitting among the listeners.

Gender barriers, too, have been removed, as Paul notes with “neither male nor female.” He writes this not to erase distinctions between the genders but because,

in that day, women were considered inferior to men. New Testament scholar Craig S. Keener sheds some light on inferior treatment in the arenas of family and property: “Roman law generally allowed women to inherit. Biblical law allowed daughters to inherit only if there were no sons (Numbers 27:8) and if they married endogamously (within their clan).”¹ Women were often treated as property. A Jewish woman could not be greeted by a man out in the marketplace. A Jewish woman was not able to testify in court because her testimony was considered completely unreliable. Yet even if Roman laws look superior in these areas, they could not offer women the finished work of Christ. Both legal systems were incomplete. However, because Christ’s life, death, and resurrection applies to all humans equally, men could no longer hold that women were inferior: they were equal recipients of God’s grace. A believing woman’s identity was Christian first, female second. So too the males: Christian first, male second. Paul was telling his audience that because of the Cross, men and women are equal in worth.

Keener writes, “Paul is thus posing not an elimination of differences but rather a unity that encompasses diversity, as in his treatment of diverse gifts in the body in Romans 12:4–8 and 1 Corinthians 12:4–30.”² Paul’s argument culminates in verse 29 where he articulates that people who belonging to Christ are all Abraham’s offspring—the true Israel of God.

¹ Craig S. Keener, *Galatians: A Commentary*, New Cambridge Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019), 305..

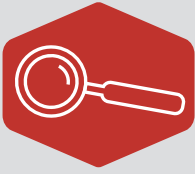
² Keener, 308.



My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through studying the biblical explanations and principles in the text and bullet points below, you will better understand what God's Word is saying to you today.

- Faith is what brings us into God's family (v. 26).
- What we put on identifies who we are, so choose carefully (v. 27).
- The Lord does not relate to us on the basis of our ethnic origin, citizenship, socio-economic position, employment, or whether we are male or female (vv. 26–29).



The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

How can the Scripture apply to your life? By listening to the Holy Spirit's leading as you answer this series of questions, you can gain useful insights that will help you apply the truth of God's Word to your daily life.

Write down your answer to the following question here or in your journal:

- Circle and write down any recurring words in this passage.

- Who appears in this passage?

- Where is this passage taking place?

- When is this passage occurring?

- Why is this passage important?

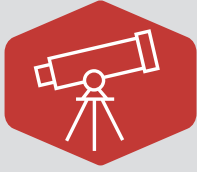
- What is happening in this passage?

- How does this passage apply to my life?

- How does the concept of being an adopted son of God impact you?

- What aspect of being “clothed in Christ” is most significant to you and why?

- How can you be a part of removing the barriers Christ came to tear down?



Upward and Outward Focus (Telescope)

How does the Scripture affect your relationship with God and others? You experience God’s Word in action as you use it to direct your journey with Him and those around you. Answer the following questions and record the answers in your journal.

- Take some time to listen to the Lord about the text you just studied. How did these verses help deepen your love for God?

- As a result of your deepened love for God, how can you practically demonstrate this love to others?



Using My *Fire Bible*

Read the study notes for the following verse in the Fire-Bible and answer the accompanying questions.

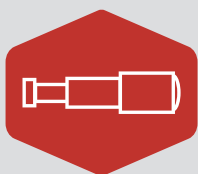
- **Galatians 3:28** Consult the *Fire Bible* notes on verse 28. What are the five barriers Paul removed to a spiritual relationship with Christ? Why does everyone who is “in Christ Jesus” have equal inheritance?



Lesson 9: Adopted for Life

Main Idea: Paul points to adoption as an illustration of how people become part of God's family: Jesus redeems us from slavery and into sonship. In this lesson, you will discover that God's "adopted" children are incredibly privileged and blessed..

Scripture: Galatians 4:1-11



The Author's Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.

This lesson investigates some very important questions about your relationship to God. In lesson 7 (Galatians 3:15-25), we discussed that purpose of the Law was to act a guardian (*paidagogos*) to leads us as children to Jesus. Here in 4:1, Paul continues this analogy. He states that while a child in a family may eventually be an heir, before he comes of age he is no different than a slave as far as obligations and responsibilities. New Testament scholar Craig S. Keener sheds light on this thought when he states, "The minor child was heir and *master of everything*, yet he could not access this owned property until he achieved maturity."¹

Roman households in Paul's time had a coming-of-age ceremony that the Galatians would have known. (Paul also alludes to this in 1 Corinthians 13:11.) Once a father determined his son was ready to become a man, he called for a ceremony in which the son would lay aside the clothes of his childhood

¹ Craig S. Keener, *Galatians: A Commentary*, New Cambridge Bible Dictionary (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2019), 321.

to signify he had reached adulthood.² The father and son would then take the son's childish belongings and offer them to the gods. The high value that Roman culture placed on maturity was a bridge to understanding the transformation that occurs in followers of Jesus when the Law brings them to Jesus.

We can better understand verses 1-2 through three important context points. The first is the dominant religious belief of the Greeks and Romans in the Galatians' time. People believed that all of humanity was in bondage to deity powers. These deities people believed in were far-off, impersonal gods that humanity should try hard to please—far different from the notion of a God who wanted to treat His followers like family.

Another important point is the religious understanding of God's people, Israel. The people of Israel, as we have seen through Paul's writing in Galatians, were under the Law in the same way children were under a guardian in that time. Only a prophet, priest, or king of Israel had the opportunity to personally experience the presence of God. Everyone else connected with God through a priest. This was quite different from God's personal presence offered to everyone through Jesus.

A third point critical to understanding these verses is the tough choice it presented to the Galatians. The Galatian believers were ex-pagans who had worshipped the cultic gods as demanded by the Roman government. To abstain from this worship placed them at risk of persecution, arrest, and possibly death for the crime of atheism, dependent on the whim of each emperor. Roman law exempted only Jews from participation in such worship, and the Galatian believers were not legally recognized converts to Judaism. (The way to become legally Jewish was through following the customs and beliefs of Judaism.) Education Director for First Fruits of Zion, D. Thomas Lancaster, notes that "to be under the law is just Paul's way of saying 'legally Jewish' and obligated to observe the Torah."³ Therefore, the Galatian Gentile believers felt forced to choose between two options: Either legally convert to Judaism or worship Roman gods. Paul presented a third option: Live a life of relationship with God based on what Jesus did on the Cross.

In the next nine verses (verses 3-11), Paul explains the incredible progression that took place in the Galatians' walk with God from slavery to sonship.

In verse 3, Paul uses the phrase "elementary principles of the world." These are principles of thinking, acting, and believing that are opposite of God's ways. Prior to Paul's coming, the Galatians tried to please the cultic gods. They felt

2 <https://www.romansinfoocus.com/sites/www.romansinfoocus.com/files/Coming%20of%20age%20%28boys%29.pdf>

3 Lancaster, Thomas D. *The Holy Epistle to the Galatians*. (Marshfield, MO: First Fruits of Zion, 2011), 203.

their destiny was determined by these gods, and they lived in fear of them. In that day, people believed in all kinds of gods such as nature deities, deities of beauty, and deities of power. The Galatians lived under the control of their passions and idol worship. They spent their lives looking for things other than God to meet their needs. These behaviors lie at the core of idolatry.

In verses 4-7, Paul reminds them that both Jewish and Gentile believers received their adoption through Jesus and are now sons of God. Paul uses the phrase “fullness of time” in verse 4 because God knew just the right time to send His Son. Here are three major ways in which the fullness of time had come for Jesus on earth:

First, the fullness of time had come spiritually, especially for the Jewish people who had spread across the known world and were waiting for the Messiah. They were scattered from their homeland because God sent them into exile (first in 722 BC and then in 597 and 586 BC) for disobeying His commandments. In every place they scattered, they built synagogues—houses of worship and teaching where, after the fullness of time, teaching about Jesus could spread throughout the world.

Second, it was the right time culturally and linguistically. Alexander the Great had conquered the world roughly three centuries before, bringing Greek culture and language into dominance for many cultures and ethnicities. Nearly everyone spoke and understood Greek, which made it possible for the Gospel to spread quickly.

Third, it was the right time politically. The Roman Empire dominated the global landscape within a century of this letter. The economy was somewhat stable, due in part to the stone-paved highways that Rome constructed which provided a way to transport goods and people throughout the Roman Empire—west as far as Hispania (Spain and Portugal), north to Gaul (Western Europe) and Brittania (England), east to Asia (Turkey) and the Middle East, and south along the entire north coast of Africa. This was a great time for the gospel to, quite literally, travel throughout the Empire.

Thinking back to the coming-of-age ceremony in Roman culture, it was even the right time personally for people to have a framework for understanding Jesus: at just the right time, a son would be called a man, and at just the right time the Father sent forth His Son. Unlike earthly sons, Jesus didn't possess only a human nature: He possessed a divine nature as well, the only One who lived as fully God and fully man. Therefore, He was the only One who could bring God and man together through His crucified and resurrected body.

While Jesus was the only person who existed before He was born, like every Jewish man before Him, Jesus still had to fulfill and live under the Law. But

unlike every other man, He lived the Law perfectly and completely fulfilled it. He did this so those who believe in Him would not need to live under the Law. Paul brings this up to ask the Galatians why they are resorting to laws to achieve a status they already possess.

In verse 5, Paul says that God sent Jesus to redeem all those under the Law. The word “redeem” means to pay back in full, and the Galatians would have understood this word from the slave trade market of their time. One-third of the Roman empire was made up of slaves, and you could find a slave market in every major city. The slaves were placed on a stand, and people would bid to purchase them. Paul points out that Jesus bought humanity from the slave stand of this world in order to make us free.

Also in verse 5, Paul uses the phrase “adoption as sons.” In Paul’s day, someone could adopt a person outside of the family to become a child and heir. It was a high honor to become a member of a family through adoption, particularly to an affluent family. Caesar Augustus is one example. Born with the name Gaius Octavius, he was the great-great-nephew of Julius Caesar, famed Roman dictator, who adopted Octavius as his son because he did not have an heir. Julius Caesar changed Octavius’ name to Caesar Augustus. Later, Caesar Augustus became the first emperor of Rome. Thought he died before Paul wrote this letter, the Galatians doubtless knew Caesar Augustus’s adoption story.

In verse 6, Paul explains how believers are given a connection to the Godhead when they are adopted spiritually into God’s family. Even though legally part of a family, adopted children do not have the nature of their new father. However, in God’s family, God sends forth the Spirit of His Son (the Holy Spirit) to give the new believer God’s nature. The Holy Spirit enables believers to participate in the greatest intimacy possible with God.

The Jewish people of Paul’s day referred to God in terms that indicated the highest respect and distance. They saw their powerful God as a distant, unreachable deity. But Paul uses a surprising term in reference to God: *Abba*. This Aramaic term was one not only of great respect and honor but of intimacy. Paul communicates to the Galatians that the work of Jesus gave them not only an inheritance but an intimate relationship with God.

Notice the word “crying” that Paul uses in verse 6 for how we say this name of God. It conveys the idea of a passionate, heartfelt cry. Keener says,

One location in the gospel tradition where *Abba* is specifically preserved for us is Mark 14:36, in Jesus’ prayer at Gethsemane. The *Abba* prayer might therefore recall Gethsemane and Jesus’s

cries of anguish as he prepared to face the world’s hostility.”⁴

Paul might have been encouraging the Galatians to utter the very term of love and intimacy that Jesus expressed to his Father.

Paul reminds the Galatians in verse 7 that living a law-keeping kind of Christianity would take them from being a son back to being a slave. He reminds them that Jesus Christ redeemed them and that they cannot earn or deserve sonship. The Galatians needed to remember that at one time they were pagan idolaters who did not know the true God. Now that they knew Him, if they began following the laws preached by the Judaizers, it would be as if they were slaves again.

Paul closes out this section of his letter by informing the Galatians what it meant to be sons of God. He states in verse 9 that it was not just that they knew God, but that they were *known by* God. The foundation of a relationship with God is not how well a person knows God, but how well God knows them. This type of knowing is not simply a memorization of facts; it is a deep understanding of a person forged through experience. This verse confirms both the technical aspects of adoption by God (redeeming those under the Law) and the relational aspects of that adoption (experiencing personal intimacy with God). Paul wanted the Galatians to know that God was not just a God of doctrine and theology but a God who actually met with people through Jesus.

Finally, in verses 9–11, Paul reminds the Galatians that since they once were in bondage to cultic idols and are now sons of God, they should not return to idolatry by following rules and regulations. Here Paul is actually comparing the Judaizers’ message of circumcision to the bondage of paganism which the Galatians had escaped.

The “days and months and seasons and years” in verse 10 are Paul’s way of indicating that the Galatians had begun celebrating the feasts of Judaism. While there was not inherently anything wrong with this, Paul warns that if they thought such religious activity was what made a person right with God, or helped them mature in God, they were missing the point of their relationship with Christ.

Acts 14 describes Paul’s journey into the Roman province of Galatia. Because he preached the Gospel, he was stoned and left for dead. However, “when the disciples gathered about him, he rose up. and entered the city” (Acts 14:20a). They demonstrated care and faith, and Paul continued to risk his life from them. We see from the rest of the Book of Acts how Paul labored for the Galatians, traveling night and day for them and fasting for them.

⁴ Keener, 347.



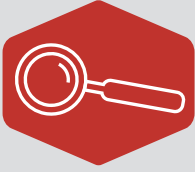
After all of this, Paul says in Galatians 4:11, what a waste it would be to watch the Galatians trade their dynamic relationship with God for the idolatrous bondage of rules.



My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through studying the biblical explanations and principles in the text and bullet points below, you will better understand what God's Word is saying to you today.

- We are God's children with a new sense of intimacy with God that causes us to cry out, "Abba, Father" (vv. 1-7).
- We are servants until we respond by faith to His promise (vv. 1-2).
- God operates in sovereign freedom (v. 3).
- Our adoption means more than status: it means that we share the life of the Father (v. 6).
- The power of God in our life is greater than this present darkness (v. 9).



The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

How can the Scripture apply to your life? By listening to the Holy Spirit's leading as you answer this series of questions, you can gain useful insights that will help you apply the truth of God's Word to your daily life.

Write down your answer to the following question here or in your journal:

- Circle and write down any recurring words in this passage.

- Who appears in this passage?

- Where is this passage taking place?

- When is this passage occurring?

- Why is this passage important?

- What is happening in this passage?

- How does this passage apply to my life?

- What in your life are you most apt to turn into an idol?

- What is the difference between the mentality of a son and the mentality of a slave? Has your Christian life primarily been lived as a son or as a slave? How can you become established in the mindset of a son?

- Do you feel you are growing in your knowledge of God? What most helps you mature in your knowledge of God?

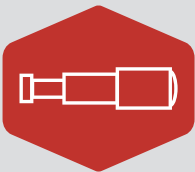
- How have you experienced legalism to be bondage? In what ways do you endeavor to avoid legalism in your walk with God?



Lesson 10: Free in Christ

Main Idea: Paul pulls back the curtain on his own anguish over the Galatians' condition. He desires for them to continue on as they started—relying on Jesus for right relationship with God. In this lesson, you will discover parallels from Israel's history that correspond to a portrait of being in bondage to the Law, as the Galatians are, or living in freedom under the promises of God.

Scripture: Galatians 4:12–31



The Author's Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.

In the previous lesson, Paul explained that the Galatian believers had become God's heirs through Jesus, who redeemed them from the Law. This freed them from trying to keep all of the Law as a way to be in right relationship with God. Now, Paul uses a story about Israel's founding fathers to further illustrate the difference between remaining in bondage or walking in freedom.

Paul indirectly points out the Galatians' folly of reverting to Judaism by reminding them that he has become like them—that he has acted in some ways like Gentiles while remaining in right relationship with God. He remains in right relationship with God, as can they, through the finished work of Jesus on the cross. Paul wants them to also rely on Jesus, not on the taking up of Jewish rites and rules.

Paul first arrived in Galatia with some sort of physical infirmity that actually caused

him to spend quite a bit of time there. Paul’s exact ailment remains unknown to this day, and commentators speculate everything from malaria to some sort of eye condition. Verse 13 is a reference to his first meeting with the Galatians, which we can read about in Acts 14: Iconium (14:1-7, 21), Lystra (14:8-21), and Derbe (14:20-21) were all within the province of Galatia.

As the chapter tells, in Iconium, Paul and Barnabas spoke boldly about the Lord for quite some time until a group of Jews, Gentiles, and rulers plotted against their lives, so they fled to Lystra. There, Paul and Barnabas healed a man who could not use his feet, so the Galatian pagans began worshipping Barnabas as the god Zeus and Paul as the god Hermes. When Paul and Barnabas stopped the worship, the people grew angry, and they stoned him, dragged him outside the city, and left him for dead. “But when the disciples gathered about him, he rose up and entered the city [Lystra], and on the next day he went on with Barnabas to Derbe” (Acts 14:20).

In verse 14, Paul expresses gratitude that even though his condition “was a trial” to the Galatians, they still received him. It stands to reason that if a person was stoned, their body was going to be quite badly injured. New Testament scholar Craig S. Keener concludes that “the suggestion that provides the most fruitful connections with other material in Galatians, although it remains uncertain, is that Paul refers here to wounds from his experiences of persecution.”¹ Paul had been beaten, and the Galatian believers might have run the risk of receiving a similar beating if they helped him.

Paul uses vivid language in verse 15 to convey the self-sacrifice with which the Galatians treated him. They would have “gouged out [their] eyes,” bringing to mind their care, welcome, and affection when first meeting Paul. But now, they treat him like he is an enemy because of what he says—which Paul insists is the truth (verse 16), and is not spoken in hostility. Paul then contrasts the Judaizers who are self-absorbed and who puff up the Galatians will false praise (verse 17) so that the Galatians would make much of them. Whereas the Judaizers want the Galatians dependent upon themselves, Paul wants them dependent upon God.

Verse 18 acknowledges that making much of people for good reasons is permissible, but Paul is writing them out of the anguish of a mother in labor, he says (verse 19), because he longs and labors for Christ to be formed in them, rather than for them to be formed in the image of rule-keepers who do not draw closer to God. Paul continues the parenting theme in verse 20. The tone of a parent’s voice changes when speaking to children who have gone their own way. Paul loves the Galatians like a parent and speaks in firm tones, realizing part of love is discipline.

¹ Craig S. Keener, *Galatians: A Commentary*, New Cambridge Bible Dictionary (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2019), 375.

Paul uses the rest of chapter 4 (vv. 21-31) to discuss the story of Abraham from the Book of Genesis. For context, God appeared to Abraham and made a promise: “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation” (Genesis 12:1-2). Later God said, “I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you” (17:6). Abraham said “yes” to God’s promise.

The problem was that Abraham and his wife Sarah were old. Abraham was 75 and Sarah was 65. They had always had fertility issues. If they were going to have children as numerous “as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore” (Genesis 22:17), they needed to start with one child, which had never happened.

Abraham wondered if the child was actually his nephew, but God said no. Then he wondered if it was going to be his trusted servant, but God said no again. Abraham was trying to help God, but he misunderstood: this was not about what *he* could do but about what *God* would do. The promise to Abraham was that he would have a child through his own body. Abraham told Sarah, and in response, Sarah did something that was very acceptable in their culture: Sarah told Abraham to sleep with her slave girl Hagar—whom Paul references in Galatians. Then, if she had a baby, culturally it was acceptable to claim her child as their own. Nine months later the slave girl had a son, and they named him Ishmael, which meant “God has heard.” Abraham believed that Ishmael was the child of promise.

After some time passed, God said something that stunned Abraham: “About this time next year . . . Sarah your wife shall have a son” (Genesis 18:10). Sarah laughed in response. But a year later, Sarah had a baby and they called him Isaac, meaning “laughter.” He was the true son of promise. But where did that leave Hagar and her son Ishmael?

Abraham threw “a great feast on the day Isaac was weaned,” (Genesis 21:8), but Ishmael stood on the sidelines making fun of Isaac. Sarah noticed and told her husband to cast out Hagar and Ishmael, which he did. This sounds cruel to us today, but Keener helps us understand the ancient law system:

In Mesopotamian law, if the slaveholder ever called his son by a slave woman ‘my son,’ the slave son must receive an inheritance with the children of the first wife. If the slaveholder has not called him ‘my son,’ the slave woman and her son are to be freed on the slaveholder’s death, with no claim to the inheritance. Abraham had undoubtedly called Ishmael his son, and those who had accompanied Abraham from Mesopotamia would expect Mesopotamian custom to be

followed unless Abraham specified otherwise. A way to protect the full inheritance for Isaac was to free Hagar and Ishmael now and to send them away before Abraham’s decease.²

God told Abraham to go ahead, assuring him that even though Isaac was the child of promise, God would “make a nation of the son of the slave woman also, because he is your offspring” (Genesis 21:13).

Paul uses this story to show the Galatians that this was exactly what was going on in the church between the gospel message and the message of the Judaizers: they had people who were true sons of God because of what Jesus had done, and they had people pretending to be true sons of God apart from Jesus—like Ishmael. They immersed themselves in the Law, leaving Jesus out of the picture. The way of the Law was like Hagar, and the way of Jesus was like Sarah. That’s why Paul says, “Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise” (Galatians 4:28).

In verse 27, Paul quotes from Isaiah 54:1, which is about the Jewish exiles in Babylon. God spoke through Isaiah to remind people of His promise to them, that they would still receive His promises in His time and would return to their homeland. Paul uses that reference to show the Galatians that when God makes a promise, they can rely on Him. This promise to God connects to God’s promise to Abraham—and to God’s promise to the Galatians to make them right with Him through Jesus. From Genesis through Galatians (and on through Revelation), the same God makes and keeps His promises.

With verse 29, Paul notes that Ishmael’s persecution of Isaac is similar to the Judaizers’ persecution and manipulation of the Galatian believers. This ought to give them strength to resist the temptation to forsake Jesus for the Law. Keener sums this up: “The central point of Paul’s message is that believers, including Gentile believers, are children of the promise, just like Isaac.”³

By referencing the casting out of Hagar and Ishmael in verse 30, Paul is reminding the Galatians that they should fully reject alternatives to God’s promise. Paul uses this story to help the Galatians understand that just like Hagar and Sarah, Ishmael and Isaac cannot dwell together. Neither can freedom and bondage—those walking in the spirit and those walking according to the Law. They cannot walk side by side. God promised the Galatians liberty and freedom by the power of the Holy Spirit so they could be formed into the image of Christ. In the final verse of chapter 4, Paul ends with freedom. God’s people have always struggled between remaining free and slipping back into slavery; the Galatians were no different. Here Paul reminds them of their identity, and the choice to stay free in Christ is up to them.

² Keener, 438.

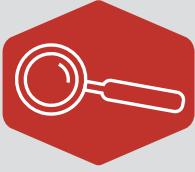
³ Keener, 430.



My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through studying the biblical explanations and principles in the text and bullet points below, you will better understand what God's Word is saying to you today.

- The Gospel sets us free to be right with God through Jesus not our own works (v. 12).
- Satan tests people to see their stumbling, but God desires success in testing (v. 14).
- The depth of a relationship with God will produce a love that is tender but tough (vv. 15-16).
- People of grace are outward-focused, and people of law are inward-focused (vv. 12-20).
- Personal maturity comes as Christ is formed in the believer (v. 19).
- Trying to help God may not help us (vv. 21-31).
- Do not let anyone take your inheritance as a child of God (vv. 30-31).



The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

How can the Scripture apply to your life? By listening to the Holy Spirit's leading as you answer this series of questions, you can gain useful insights that will help you apply the truth of God's Word to your daily life.

Write down your answer to the following question here or in your journal:

- Circle and write down any recurring words in this passage.

- Who appears in this passage?

- Where is this passage taking place?

- When is this passage occurring?

- Why is this passage important?

- What is happening in this passage?

- How does this passage apply to my life?

- Rate yourself with 1 being very well and 4 not so well in the following areas and write out a plan to improve:
 - » Freedom from guilt and condemnation:
 - » Freedom to be what God has created you to be:
 - » Freedom to enter into God's presence with intimacy, not fear:
 - » Freedom from worry about the future:
 - » Freedom from the fear of failure:
 - » Plan to improve:

- Are you involved with others or isolated? Why?

- How are you becoming more generous and faithful?

- Are you competitive or gracious? Why?

- Do you still have the joy of the Lord like when you first came to faith? Why or why not?

- How do you tend to rely on human effort rather than resting in God's promises? Give an example.



- In what ways have you ever been tempted to accomplish God's purpose through alternative means? Please explain.

- Read Philippians 2:13. What do you believe is a proper perspective on the difference between our working *for* God and God working *in and through* us?

- Why do some believers tend to rush ahead in their ability rather than resting in God and operating in His strength? What is the difference?



Using My *Fire Bible*®

Read the study notes for the following verses and the articles in the *Fire Bible* and answer the accompanying questions.

- **Galatians 4:13** How does it surprise you that even Christ’s faithful followers may also suffer times of ill health, bodily pain, or weakness?

- **Galatians 4:19** What does Paul’s analogy of childbirth represent?

- **Galatians 4:22** What do the two children represent?

- **Galatians 4:25** What does Jerusalem represent?

- Look in your *Fire Bible* index for the article titled “God’s Covenant with Israel” and answer the following:
 - » Describe your understanding of a covenant.

 - » What are two basic principles of the covenant God made at Mount Sinai?

 - » What did God promise in this covenant?

- » What did God require from the Israelites before He would fulfill the promises?

- » What importance does obedience play with regard to the covenant?

- » What did God say would happen if the Israelites failed to live up to their covenant responsibilities?

- » What did God expect from His people?

- » What did God intend for the covenant to reveal to other nations?

- » What was required for the Israelites to successfully conquer Canaan?

- » Explain the main focus of Deuteronomy.

- » What is the recurring theme throughout Deuteronomy?

- » How were the children of Israel instructed on refreshing their memory about the covenant?

- » Describe the New Testament covenant.

- Look in your *Fire Bible* index for the article titled “The Old Covenant and the New Covenant” and answer the following:
 - » Describe how the old covenant was established.

 - » What is the provision of the new covenant?

 - » What are the aspects of the old covenant?

 - » What are two purposes for describing the aspects of the old covenant?

 - » How did a person in the Old Testament receive salvation and a right relationship with God?

 - » What were three main purposes of sacrifice in the Old Testament?

 - » What are the four reasons Jeremiah prophesied that the new covenant would be superior to the old covenant?

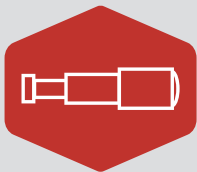
 - » What does *mediator* mean?



Lesson 11: Learning to Stay Free in Christ

Main Idea: Paul makes the case that freedom leaves people with two options: continue to walk in freedom or submit again to slavery. In this lesson, you will learn that Christian liberty is not a license to keep on sinning.

Scripture: Galatians 5:1-13



The Author's Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.

One of the biggest themes in Paul's letter to the Galatians is freedom, which is the focus of this section (5:1-13). Paul opens this section (verse 1) by reminding the Galatians that Jesus is the greatest liberator, setting people free for the sake of staying free. God brought great freedom to the pagan people in Galatia who were shackled by idolatry and living in bondage to evil powers. Christ set them free from the curse of the Law and brought them into redemption.

In verse one, Paul admonishes the Galatians to “stand firm” against the Judaizers. New Testament scholar Craig S. Keener says, “The command *stand firm* is appropriate for a people delivered from slavery; Moses exhorted the Israelites, just delivered by God from slavery in Egypt, to ‘stand firm’ because God would protect them from their pursuers, who wanted to re-enslave them.”¹

¹ Craig S. Keener, *Galatians: A Commentary*, New Cambridge Bible Dictionary (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2019), 440-441.

Paul writes at the end of verse 1, “Do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.” Some Judaizers came to the church in Galatia and said that Jesus was not enough: that if the Galatians really wanted to be connected with Christ, they needed to be yoked to the law. What this really meant is that their whole lives would become controlled by the law of Moses.

The symbolism of a yoke is powerful. A yoke is a beam of wood that connects two oxen that enables them to pull a load for their master. In Leviticus 26:13, God uses breaking a yoke to declare he had freed the children of Israel from slavery in Egypt. Jesus uses the yoke image in Matthew 11:28–29 when he speaks to people who under the burden of religion. He says, “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you . . . and you will find rest for your souls.” In Acts 15:10, Peter refers to the attempt to keep all the rules of the law as an unbearable yoke. Paul now uses this powerful image to remind the Galatians that Jesus had set them free, but they had become entangled again by a yoke of bondage.

In verses 2–4, we find three principles about the Galatians’ spiritual freedom—and by extension, our own. First, the Galatians were free from a works-based salvation (verse 2). Circumcision was the Judaizers’ way for the Galatians to become right with God—a work that made Christ “of no advantage” to the Galatians. Acts 15:1 records the Judaizers’ argument that unless believers were circumcised and kept the Law, they could not be saved. The Judaizers taught that what Jesus did on the Cross was not enough.

As to the second principle, the Galatians were free from trying to meet impossible standards (Galatians 5:3). The Judaizers had no problem with the idea that Jesus brought salvation and redemption, but they taught that since Jesus did all of that, the Galatian God-fearers were obligated to pay Him back by Law-keeping. Jewish historian and professor Mark D. Nanos observes,

Paul’s own comment in Galatians 5:3 bears witness to the concern for full Torah observance that obtains for Jewish people and extends to those who complete ... conversion. Gentiles who become [converts] to Judaism and take on halachic (legal) Jewish identity ‘will then be obliged to observe the whole Law.’²

The third principle of the Galatians’ Christ-won freedom is that they are free from self-sufficiency (vs. 4). Grace and works do not mix in terms of right-standing with God. Paul’s message to the Galatians was that they would either trust in their own work and effort to do good, or they would trust in the work of the Cross on their behalf. The Judaizers wanted the Christians in Galatia to depend on both. Paul argues that their rationale will not work. By faith, believers become the righteousness of God in Christ (see 2 Corinthians 5:21).

² Mark D. Nanos, *The Irony of Galatians* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2002), 142, 253.

In verse 6, Paul again writes about circumcision in the context of religious performance. Paul argues that good religious performance does not make a person more right with God; neither does bad religious performance cast a person away from God. It is neither circumcision nor uncircumcision; neither good works nor bad. What makes a person right with God is faith in Jesus and trusting in the love God demonstrated on the Cross where Jesus died as the substitute for humanity.

In verse 7, Paul focuses on what happens when someone tries to add a ritual to belief in Christ for salvation. If the Galatians tried to add circumcision to their salvation experience, they would be hindered. Paul writes to the Galatians that these Judaizers have hindered them, despite their persuasiveness (verse 8).

In verse 9, Paul uses another analogy: leaven. Leaven is used throughout the Scriptures to represent various things including sin, hypocrisy (as in the leaven of the Pharisees), compromise, and even the Kingdom of God. Whether leaven is good or bad, the idea is that it spreads. Paul writes that legalism is deadly and, like leaven, would spread. He wants the Galatians to realize there is coming a day of accountability and judgment for the Judaizers if they take people away from true grace (verse 10).

The Judaizers told the Galatians that Paul had watered down the gospel for them, because in other places he had preached circumcision (verse 11). Paul denies this. Although Paul had wanted Timothy to be circumcised, it was not for salvation but so Timothy could enter the synagogues to do ministry.

Paul writes something outrageous in verse 12: “I wish those who unsettle you would emasculate themselves!” In addition to its shock factor, this exclamation has significant cultural context. Bible commentator and former seminary president Maxie Dunnam shares some eye-opening insight:

Galatia was near Phrygia where people worshiped [the goddess] Cybele. The priests and sometimes other devout worshipers, in frenzied devotion, mutilated themselves by castration. Cybele priests were eunuchs. The Galatians who knew about these priests could not miss his inference. If salvation depended on the merit of a physical operation, circumcision, why not go all the way and castrate yourselves like the heathen priests?³

In essence, Paul was saying, “If a little cut is good, then just whack the whole thing off because that would be really good.” Perhaps Paul makes this exaggerated statement to first show the Judaizers how ridiculous they are

³ Maxie D. Dunnam, *Galatians / Ephesians / Philippians / Colossians / Philemon*, ed. Lloyd J. Ogilvie, The Preacher’s Commentary Series (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Inc, 1982), 31:102.

and, second, to show that this is an extremely serious matter.

Grace sets free but legalism hinders. When Paul says that grace sets people free *from* certain things, he recognizes that it also sets people free *to* certain things. In verse 13, Paul concludes this section by telling the Galatians that grace set them free to do three things. First, grace set them free to walk in the Spirit. It was the Spirit of God who called the Galatians to walk in true freedom from works-based salvation, from impossible standards, and from self-sufficiency. The way to walk in the Spirit is to focus on Jesus.

Second, grace set them free to walk in love. If freedom is interpreted merely as the removal of restraint, sin will seize the opportunity and use the weakness of human nature to attack the Spirit. Paul emphasizes that Christian freedom accepts a willing servitude. A perfect example of this is the classic story of a young man who gets married. Before he got married, he was free—free to play sports or video games as long as he wanted, spend his money how he liked, and dress however he pleased. But when he met his wife and fell in love with her, he came to share her lifestyle and did not want to be free to do his own thing anymore. Love caused that. Love limits freedom. The Galatians needed to know that when they loved God and the people He loved, their freedom to do whatever they wanted was restricted.

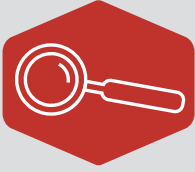
Lastly, Paul tells the Galatians that grace set them free to serve others. When people come to Christ, their motives change. Becoming a Christian means being set on a lifelong trajectory of becoming more like Jesus. For believers, everything, and especially why they do what they do, changes to increasingly reflect the One who gave everything for the world to know Him. Freeing grace means that we no longer serve God and others out of obligation but out of love for and through Him.



My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through studying the biblical explanations and principles in the text and bullet points below, you will better understand what God's Word is saying to you today.

- The freedom we have in Christ Jesus is wonderful and life-altering (v. 1).
- Reconciliation is an aspect of Christian freedom (v. 1).
- Emancipation from one spiritual structure is possible because participation in another spiritual structure is available through Christ (vv. 2-6).
- Be careful not to move out of the realm of participating in His death and resurrection as the source of life and hope (v. 4).
- The hope of righteousness assures us of God's pardon and the full realization of the perfection He promised (v. 5).
- No amount of religious activity counts in the economy of God. God's economy is all grace (v. 6).
- Faith expresses itself in love (v. 6).
- Christ, and He alone, has the power to keep you (vv. 7-10).
- Beware of destroying one another (v. 11).
- Freedom requires discipline (v. 13).



The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

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- What is happening in this passage?

- How does this passage apply to my life?



- Have you ever been caught in the trap of salvation by works, impossible standards, or self-sufficiency? What was your experience?

- Have you ever been part of legalistic faith community? Without naming names, what was your experience?

- How are you tempted to fall into legalism? How can you best resist that temptation?

- How has God's grace changed your perspective about personal holiness and ministry service?



Using My *Fire Bible*®

Read the study notes for the following verses and articles in the *Fire Bible* and answer the accompanying questions.

- **Galatians 5:4** What does “fall away from grace” mean?

- **Galatians 5:6** How did Paul define saving faith? What is not saving faith?

- **Galatians 5:7** What two forms does false teaching take in the church? Describe in your own words the three New Testament thoughts for a complete Christian.

- **Galatians 5:13** See the *Fire Bible* note on 2 Corinthians 3:17. Describe in your own words the two provisions freedom brings a believer.

- Look in your *Fire Bible* index for the article “False Teachers” and answer the following:
 - » How are false teachers described?

 - » What is a reason false teachers could fool godly people?

(Continued from *Fire Bible* article “False Teachers”)

- » What is the private life of a false teacher like?

- » What did God require from the Israelites before He would fulfill the promises?

- » Describe in your own words the two ways false teachers gain influence in the church.

- » According to God’s Word, what should believers do to prove the heart of teachers, leaders, or preachers in the church?

- » What are some ways a believer could discern the character of a teacher, preacher, or leader in the church?

- » What is the “fruit” of false teachers, preachers, or leaders?

- » What is the key issue in revealing a false messenger?

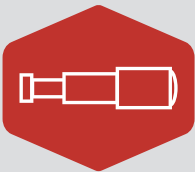
- Look in your *Fire Bible* index for the article “Faith and Grace” and answer the following:
 - » What is involved in true biblical faith?



Lesson 12: The Battle Within

Main Idea: The apostle Paul delves into the lifestyle differences between living according to the Spirit and according to the flesh. He points out that how we live is like a battle waged internally. Warfare and battles are metaphors used throughout the Bible to represent walking with God. In this lesson, you will explore this battle and how it is won.

Scripture: Galatians 5:14–26



The Author's Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.

In this lesson, Paul addresses the spiritual battle the Galatians are fighting in their new relationship in Christ. In fact, most of his letter is taken up by this subject. Bible scholar and professor Robert K. Rapa states, “The Judaizers had brought the message of [religious] law observance to the Galatian churches, and this situation has consumed much of Paul’s energy in the letter to this point.”¹

In Galatians 5:13, Paul tells the Galatian believers not to use their freedom as an “opportunity for the flesh.” Most translations use this English word, but some use the word “excuse” and others use “indulge.” What Paul wanted the Galatians to know was that they should not allow their liberty in God as a license to sin, because in doing so, they would miss the whole point of liberty. Rapa points out that “The idea of ‘freedom in Christ’ was apparently being

¹ Robert K. Rapa, “Galatians,” *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Romans–Galatians*, rev. ed., ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 11:624.

embraced by some in a manner that led them to self-centered excesses in morally questionable behavior.”² Paul reminds the Galatians that the liberties they should be taking are those to love and serve.

Because of Jesus, Galatian believers have the Holy Spirit. Through the Holy Spirit, they could do what they could never do by trying to keep the Law. In the following verses (verses 14–26), Paul outlines how the Spirit loves, overcomes the flesh, and produces fruit.

Paul continues to lead the Galatians in growth by using this section of his letter to tell them that although God’s love was shed abroad in their hearts, they were not acting like it. We do not know for sure, but perhaps the Galatian Christians had infighting between the group who believed Paul was correct and the group who believed the Judaizers (verse 15).

In verses 16–21, Paul begins a significant discussion about the war that goes on inside the believer. He outlines how the Spirit helps the believer overcome the flesh. The reason believers experience an internal war is that they now have a new nature alongside the old. The old nature is the previous pattern of thinking, doing, and living before knowing Christ. In verse 16, Paul calls it the “flesh.” The Greek word for “flesh” refers not only to the physical body but also to the old nature. Some translations use the phrase “sinful nature.”

The idea behind humans having a sinful nature comes from Genesis chapter 3 when the original sin was introduced to mankind. Basically, the original sin was that Adam wanted to be in charge, meet his own needs, and satisfy his own desires. Paul continues referring to these selfish thoughts in verse 17 with the use of the word “desire.” Desire is an extreme longing for what a person deeply wants. The flesh desires independence from God—a desire that goes back to the Garden of Eden. The temptation said that God could not be trusted and that His goodness was not dependable. Paul draws the battle line in his letter to the Galatians (He also addresses it in Romans 7:22–23). To win the battle, Paul tells the Galatians, they need to know who they are in Christ. Self and Christ will always be at war.

Throughout Galatians, we see a battle between Law and Spirit. The Galatians did not need to follow the Law of Moses because the Spirit had come to give a new way of living and obeying God. Paul explains to the Galatians that following the Spirit brought them into right relationship with God.

In verses 19–21, Paul provides a list for the Galatians to know whether they are walking in the flesh or the Spirit. From these verses, the works of the flesh (sin) can be divided into four categories: sexual sins, spiritual sins, social sins, and substance sins.

² Rapa, 11:624.

Paul lists sexual sins in verse 19. God is not against sex, but He wants believers to participate in sex within His boundaries: a covenant marriage between a man and a woman. Any sexual behavior outside of God’s boundaries is a work of the flesh.

In verse 20, Paul lists the spiritual sins of idolatry and sorcery. These had to do with pagan worship. These also involved using means outside of God—outside prayer, obedience to God, and other spiritual disciplines—to change events in people’s favor.

The other seven sins Paul list in verse 20 are social sins that work to destroy communities and lives. These works of the flesh are enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, and envy. We have all seen evidence of the devastating power of these actions.

In verse 21, Paul lists the substance sins: drunkenness and orgies. These involve the abuse of substances that intoxicate. Paul uses the phrase “and things like these,” which means this is not an exhaustive list. There are many works of the flesh, and Paul points out a few. If a Galatian’s predominant sin was not directly listed, it was still implied. In verse 21 Paul point out that “those who do such things” will not inherit the kingdom of God. This was not saying that if they ever committed one of these sins, they were out of God’s kingdom. No, Paul was telling them that if they *regularly* practiced these sins as a way of living, they were obviously not part of God’s kingdom.

In verses 22–23, Paul shows the Galatians that life in the Spirit produces fruit. He uses the word “fruit” in the singular case, yet lists nine fruit. Saying, “the fruit [singular] of the Spirit is love” stays within the context of what Paul teaches throughout Galatians. The antidote to the Law is the Spirit. If the Galatians are led by the Spirit, they will love, which fulfills the Law. In the context of the letter to the Galatians, this was the best picture for Paul to get his meaning across: it was all about love.

The eight words Paul uses after *love* describe what the Holy Spirit’s love is like. It is a very balanced love. This fruit of the Spirit goes beyond natural personality. It is a joyful, peaceful, patient, kind, and so on through the rest of the descriptors. Paul is describing what the fruit of the Spirit looks like in an individual’s life. The Spirit produces His fruit of love within a believer, and when that happens, the believer looks like Jesus.

Paul concludes this portion of his letter (verses 24–26) by describing three things that will happen when the Galatian believers walk in the Spirit. First, they will be crucified with Jesus (verse 24). A person cannot crucify himself. Paul, in Galatians 2:20, informs the Galatians they were crucified at the cross of Jesus. In other words, Jesus died for them and in their place. Then it is up

to them to enforce that crucifixion on the old nature. Their old patterns of thinking and living will still come through their new mind and heart. They must die to those old patterns, realizing they're not who they are anymore. They are no longer independent, living in their old way, but are now submitted to Christ, learning how to live in Him.

The second thing Paul says will happen when they come under the control of the Spirit is that they will walk with Jesus (Galatians 5:25). This is what keeping in step with the Spirit is all about. What a person feeds in their life will live, and what they starve will die. In verse 17, Paul wrote that both the flesh and the Spirit lust. What does the flesh lust after? Independence. To live my own way, call my own shots, and gratify myself. In contrast, the Spirit lusts after Jesus: to glorify, exalt, and demonstrate the beauty, love, power, and grace of Jesus.

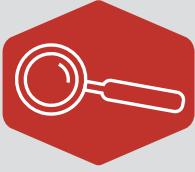
Finally, Paul informs the Galatians that if they walk in the Spirit, they will become like Jesus (verse 26). Paul cautions the Galatian believers away from becoming “conceited,” which can happen through religious activity when believers use it to measure themselves against others. This can lead to feeling superior or envious, but God’s end game is to transform the believer to be like Jesus, not to be better than the next person. Becoming like Jesus happens as believers recognize that their flesh was crucified so they could walk after Jesus in the power of the Spirit, by whom the fruit of love is produced.



My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through studying the biblical explanations and principles in the text and bullet points below, you will better understand what God's Word is saying to you today.

- When you give your life to others in love, you will find it (v. 14).
- We live free when we walk by the Spirit (vv. 16–26).
- Who will win the battle of our wills: the flesh or Spirit (vv. 16–26)?
- The Spirit shapes us into the kind of people who can overcome and rise above the desires of the flesh (v. 17).
- The fight with the flesh is ongoing, and we will always be exposed to the power of the flesh (v. 17).
- The flesh is selfish and will at times be supreme until we yield to the Spirit's domination (v. 17).
- Practicing works of the flesh will result in no spiritual inheritance (v. 21).
- God's fruit is the outward expression of Christ dwelling on the inside (vv. 22–23).
- If our lives are filled with the works of the flesh, there is no room for the Spirit (vv. 24–26).
- If we walk in the fruit of the Spirit, there is no need for legalistic codes to regulate our lives (vv. 24–26).



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- What is happening in this passage?
- How does this passage apply to my life?

(Continued from *Fire Bible* article “The Acts of the Sinful Nature and the Fruit of the Spirit”)

» How can a believer overcome and destroy sin’s power?

» Read through the explanation for each of the nine types of fruit. Rate yourself 1-4, with 1 being very well and 4 being not very well, on how you display each fruit. Then write out a plan to improve the display of God’s fruit in your life.

Love

Joy

Peace

Patience

Kindness

Goodness

Faithfulness

Gentleness

Self-Control

Your plan to improve:

- Look in your *Fire Bible* index for the article titled “Individual Apostasy” and answer the following:

» Describe the Greek term for *apostasy* in your own words.

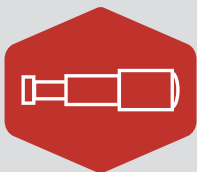
» Describe what it means to apostatize in your own words.



Lesson 13: Responsible Living

Main Idea: In this final portion of his letter to the Galatians, Paul talks about how the Spirit is involved in social relationships, including how to have a proper view of self. In this lesson, you will learn practical ways believers can live out the Christian faith as people of the Spirit in community.

Scripture: Galatians 6:1-18



The Author's Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.

In the previous chapter of Galatians, Paul stressed that the Spirit of God set the Galatian believers free from obligations to the Law and enabled them to walk in the ways of God's Spirit. Paul closed that portion of his letter contrasting what a life led by the flesh, or sinful nature, looks like, and what a life led by the Spirit looks like. Chapter 6, the final eighteen verses of Paul's letter, and the part with the most practical lessons, helps us understand his challenge to the Galatians to live by the power of the Spirit, not the law of Moses.

In the first five verses of this chapter, Paul outlines three responsibilities for believers living in community with others, beginning with the responsibility to love (Galatians 6:1-5). Paul says responsible love does three things.

Responsible love restores fallen believers (verse 1). Paul speaks to those who are spiritual—to every believer living by the Spirit—not some elite group within the

church. Because of God’s grace, they should follow the dictates of the Holy Spirit. Paul tells the Galatians they should restore in a spirit of gentleness. The word “restore” means to mend or repair and is used here specifically in the sense of taking a dislocated bone and putting it back in place. When bones are put back in place, it is naturally very painful. Although Paul talks about grace, he’s also reminding them of the sometimes painful responsibility to gently restore those who are fallen. Education Director for First Fruits of Zion D. Thomas Lancaster notes an Old Testament parallel: “Both Leviticus 19:17 and Galatians 6:1 rely upon a sense of community accountability to an established set of norms. Galatians assumes a community now based upon the broad ethical principles Paul has already laid out.”¹

In Galatians 5, Paul writes about the fruit of the Spirit, one aspect of which is gentleness. Now in chapter six, he offers an opportunity to operate in the fruit of the Spirit, being very gentle in restoring erring believers. Part of this gentleness comes from understanding that everyone has sinned, and those who are fallen are no different than those who are not. Paul reminds them that they could fall into a similar sin.

The second point about responsible love is that it bears others’ burdens (verse 2). If you bear someone else’s burden, you become increasingly empathetic towards that person. This is what Paul calls the Galatians to do. This type of interaction undergirds true fellowship—an idea in the New Testament often rendered with the Greek word *koinonia*. Paul uses this word to describe the shared life of the people of God. Bible commentator and former seminary president Maxie Dunnam writes, “In *koinonia* we are bound to each other, to Christ, and to God. Our life is a shared life; *we bear one another’s burdens*.”²

The third aspect of responsible love is that it carries its own load (verses 3–5). In verse 3, Paul points out that some of the Galatians refuse to be restored and bear burdens because they are prideful and too full of themselves. Paul says each person must engage in self-examination and self-correction. In verse 4, Paul admonishes the Galatians not to get into the comparison trap, but to examine themselves in light of where they were and what God is doing in them with all of their limitations.

In verse 5, Paul tells the Galatians to handle their own load and to help other people carry burdens. They should not focus only on their own needs but actively look to take on the needs of others. The way to do both is to be led by the Spirit.

Back to the overall responsibilities of the Galatian believers who lived in community: the first was responsible love, and the second was proper sowing

1 D. Thomas. Lancaster, *The Holy Epistle to the Galatians* (Marshfield, MO: First Fruits of Zion, 2011), 261.

2 Maxie D. Dunnam, *Galatians / Ephesians / Philippians / Colossians / Philemon*, ed. Lloyd J. Ogilvie, The Preacher’s Commentary Series (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Inc., 1982), 31:120.

and reaping (verses 6-10). Paul gives three instructions regarding the nature of these processes. First, the Galatians needed to understand that people should do both sowing and reaping, not just one or the other (verses 6, 10). It is wrong for some people to do all the ministry and for other people to do nothing yet reap all the benefits. In verse 10, Paul teaches the Galatians that they have a mutual responsibility and accountability to be part of the family, sharing with others. He instructs them to do good. Second, they should sow to the Spirit (verses 7-8). This is based on a principle of nature that never fails. A crop yields back the specific type of seed sown. If wheat was sown, the farmer reaps wheat—and the size of the harvest depends, with ideal conditions, on how much seed is sown. The third instruction regarding sowing and reaping is that sowing should be continual (verses 9). Paul’s admonition to the Galatians is to keep on sowing to the Spirit because eventually a harvest will be reaped.

In the last verses of chapter 6, Paul evidently feels that the third responsibility of Galatian believers living in community is important enough to write in his own hand as opposed to dictating his words to someone else. The third responsibility is boasting in the Cross (verses 12-18). This responsibility involves, as do the others, three elements.

First, because of the Cross, the Galatians needed to anticipate persecution (verses 12, 17). In verse 12, Paul states that the Cross is offensive. The Cross says doing religious and good things is not enough. The Cross tells people their sin is so wrong and bad that Jesus had to die as its punishment. The Cross states that Jesus is the only way into a relationship with God, and this is offensive to people. Paul had been beaten, whipped, stoned, and left for dead, and the scars on his body proved the persecution he faced. In fact, you might recall from earlier lessons that some of Paul’s scars were a result of the first time he came to Galatia, where he was stoned and left for dead after proclaiming the Cross. The Judaizers taught that circumcision was the mark of salvation, but Paul suffered in his body the marks of persecution, true proof of the Cross’s power to both offend and save (verse 17).

Second, the responsibility of the Cross meant that the Galatians should boast only in the Cross and nothing else (verses 13-14). Their relationship with Jesus was based on His death and resurrection. In verse 14, Paul identifies with the death and resurrection of Jesus. When Paul says he is crucified to the world, it does not mean he cannot enjoy the good things of the world but that he finally can enjoy what really matters because he is crucified to the things that would control him.

Third, the responsibility of the Cross meant they Galatians would identify with the new creation (verses 15-16). Before Christ, Paul found his identity in his circumcision, nationalism, and gender. These were what he championed. Now, Paul tells the Galatians his identity is not in what he does or does not do, but

in what Jesus did on the Cross. In Jesus, a believer is a new creation, with a new identity.

According to the Scriptures, the Judaizers said, a person had to become a Jew before they could become a Christian. While it is true that in the Hebrew Scriptures, God's focus is largely on the nation of Israel, in Paul's parting shot to the Judaizers, he says they missed the mark completely.

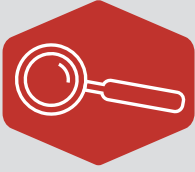
After emphasizing the Galatian believers' responsibility to love, their proper sowing and reaping, and their boast in the Cross of Christ, Paul ends his letter to the Galatians the way he began: with God's grace. Galatians 1:3 states, "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." Galatians 6:18 closes the letter with, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers. Amen." From beginning to end, Galatians is about grace. There is no need to add rules, regulations, or requirements to live in a relationship with Jesus. Nearly fifty times in Galatians Paul mentions the name of Jesus Christ. He wants the Galatians to know that Christianity is all about Jesus plus nothing else. We, too, are challenged to adhere to Paul's warnings to maintain faith in Jesus and regulate our Christian walk according to the Spirit's guidance.



My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through studying the biblical explanations and principles in the text and bullet points below, you will better understand what God's Word is saying to you today.

- The Christian walk is a shared journey with other believers (vs. 1).
- We must examine our own hearts before we ever speak to someone caught in sin (v. 1).
- This shared journey includes spiritual support, guidance, and restoration (vv. 1-2).
- We must help carry each other's burdens (vv. 2-3).
- The integrity of the people of God is marked by their ability to test their own work (vv. 4-5).
- We must support our spiritual leaders (v. 6).
- Sowing and reaping is relevant to our spiritual development and describes our destiny (vv. 7-8).
- Godly spiritual life is marked by growth rather than anxious human endeavor (vv. 9-10).
- There is only one reason to boast: the Cross of Jesus (vv. 11-15).
- The best and worst of this world can lead to trust in self instead of God (v. 15).
- If you belong to Christ, you will likely be the recipient of some form of persecution (vv. 16-18).



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- What is happening in this passage?
- How does this passage apply to my life?

- Have you ever been part of another believer's restoration process? What happened?

- How would you differentiate between a burden to help others bear and a load they need to carry themselves? Please give examples of both.

- What are ways you intentionally sowing to the Spirit? Please be specific.

- What helps you to endure through the times when you are waiting for the harvest?

- For you, what was the most helpful aspect of this study on Galatians and God's grace? What changes have you made as a result?



Using My *Fire Bible*

Read the study notes for the following verses in the Fire-Bible and answer the accompanying questions.

- **Galatians 6:1** What does the word “restore” mean in reference to people?
- **Galatians 6:2** What does it mean to carry one another’s burdens?
- **Galatians 6:6-10** What two types of sowing are contrasted?
- **Galatians 6:7** Describe “God is not mocked” in your own words.
- **Galatians 6:14** Describe the two aspects of the dividing line of the Cross.