

**PREPARATION FOR LESSON: Read Galatians 1-6****BACKGROUND**

In the 200's BC, Nabatean Arabs from Arabia took control from Damascus to Egypt. The entire area was called Arabia. In the late 30's AD, under Rome, Damascus was under the control of an Arab king. 2 Cor. 11:32. For the Greeks, the old name *Arabia* was still used for the Sinai Peninsula. All Jews knew the location of Mt. Sinai. So that both his Jewish and Greek readers in Galatia knew where he was talking about, Paul says *Mt. Sinai in Arabia*. Gal. 4:25.

After the day of Pentecost in 31 AD and over the following years, a group of Jews developed in Jerusalem. They said belief in Jesus was not enough for salvation. All the Jewish laws of Moses and Mishnah had to also be followed. To be obedient after salvation, everyone had to keep all the Jewish laws. Some from this group were the false teachers who caused trouble in the Corinthian church. Paul had said they were not true believers.

The history of Galatia goes back to 300 BC, when large numbers of Gauls from France invaded central Asia Minor. It became known as Gaulatia. There was little commerce and few roads. In 25 BC, the Romans took this area plus a region in the south in order to form a new province which they called Galatia. The south had a main highway running east to west. This led to the development of cities and commerce. Many Jews and Greeks came to live there.

Paul and Barnabas visited the southern part of Galatia on their first missionary trip and started several churches in 47 AD. As they passed thru the lowlands, going north from the coast to Antioch of Pisidia, Paul got an eye disease, prevalent in the area, called ophthalmia. This disease produced swollen eyes and a running infection that impaired the vision and gave the person a repulsive appearance. Rather than venture to the west or north, they would have turned east to be closer to the medical center in Tarsus, just in case Paul got worse. This would have taken them thru the cities of Iconium, Lystra and Derbe where they started local churches. See Gal. 4:13-15 and 6:11.

In 49 AD and 53 AD, Paul returned to give them more teaching. Church members developed in their faith. The majority were Gentiles, along with a large number of Jews. The following year, 54 AD, the false teachers from Jerusalem came and said, *Paul is not an apostle. His message is not from God. He said you could have salvation just thru faith in Jesus. That is not true. You have to be circumcised and keep Jewish dietary laws and holy days.*

By 55 AD, both Jewish and Gentile believers have believed this. They are trying to keep all the Jewish laws. Paul hears about it in 56 AD, either just before he leaves Ephesus or while in northern Greece. Most likely he waits until he gets to Corinth to write his letter of correction. It is still 56 AD. (1:18; 2:1)

**THEME** Correction of wrong belief about salvation**OUTLINE**

- I. Correction of belief about **him** 1 - 2  
He is an apostle; his salvation message is from God.
- II. Correction of belief about **salvation** 3 - 6  
They are free from the penalty of sin thru faith in Jesus alone.  
They are free from the power of sin thru faith in Jesus alone.

**EXPLANATIONS****Chpt. 2 - Paul questions Peter at the church in Antioch - an event in 49 AD**

Antioch was Paul's home church. Peter came to visit the church. He joined with the Gentile Christians in their meal and received Holy Communion with them. The next week some strict Jewish believers from Jerusalem came to the Antioch church. They still followed the Mishnah law that Jews could not eat with Gentiles or have communion with them. So when it came time for the meal, they went to the other side of the room and sat at their own table. Altho Peter did not agree with them, he was afraid of offending these visiting Jews. Instead of explaining why they should eat together as equal before God, he left the Gentile table and sat with the Jews.

Then all the local Jewish believers left the tables where Gentiles were and sat only with Jewish believers. Peter had not foreseen this reaction. From then on, instead of eating together to show the Church as one Body of Christ, there would be the Jewish Body of Christ and the Gentile Body of Christ. That was never what God intended. So Paul had said, *even tho we Jews were born with special privileges, we now understood, keeping Jewish laws do not make us right with God. Jews and Gentiles alike have salvation only thru faith in Jesus.* Gal. 2:15.

Paul is not telling the Galatians about Peter to make him look bad or inferior. He is proving the message he taught them in Galatia is the message he repeated when he was with Peter and other Jews from Jerusalem. He never has changed his salvation message.



**EXPLANATIONS** *continued*

**Chpt. 2:20-21 paraphrased**

"I have identified myself with Jesus, who not only loved me, but made payment for my sin. Thru faith in Him, the power of my old nature is broken. I have the power of the Holy Spirit to practice my salvation on a daily basis. If I could have been right with God by just keeping laws, then Jesus did not need to die and His payment was a mistake. I have not rejected God's salvation; it is a gift of His grace."

**Chpt. 3 - Free from the penalty of sin, but on what basis; by keeping the law or faith in Jesus?**

- **Faith** was the way for Abraham 3:6 *he believed God and it was credited to Him as righteousness.*
- **Why keeping the law** does not work. 3:10, 13-14
  - Under God's curse* means under His judgment - separated from God because of our unholiness.
  - Because we are not capable of meeting His standards, we must be separated from Him forever.
  - This is why Jesus came; on the cross our sin was put on Him and He was separated from the Father in our place.
  - If we accept His payment (faith in Jesus) we do not have to be separated from the Father.
  - God gave His rules (the 10 Commandments) on a temporary basis, from Moses to Jesus.
    - ...to let people know His standards.
    - ...to show they could never meet His standards; they could never be good enough on their own.
  - After 1400 yrs. they would learn it was impossible and would appreciate that Jesus offered His goodness.
- **Faith** has been God's way both now and since the days of Abraham.

**Chpts. 4-6 Free from the power of sin, but on what basis; by keeping the law or faith in Jesus?**

- **Keeping rules** can never free us from the power of sin.
  - External rules make us live like children or a slave; we do not have freedom to choose.
  - 5:19-21 describes what happens when the sin nature is in control.
  - Because the sinful nature cannot be controlled, God and governments need to make laws to control it.
- **Faith in Jesus** gives us a new nature, empowered by the Holy Spirit. This is what frees us from the power of sin
  - 5:22-23 describes what happens when we live under the control of the Holy Spirit.
  - Our actions will be based on promptings from within, not on rules from without.
  - 5:26 - 6:10 When we live under the control of the Holy Spirit...
    - It changes our attitudes – we are not proud, feeling superior or jealous. 5:26
    - We are concerned about believers who reconnect to the sin nature - we want to help them. 6:1
      - But we will not spend so much time trying to fix them, that we neglect our own spiritual life.
    - We help carry the burden of others. 6:2 (Greek: a weight too heavy for one person to carry)
      - There are times people have situations too heavy to go thru alone. They want help and are willing to help themselves. We care and are concerned for them. We want to support them. The Holy Spirit will guide us in what to do, how to do it and how much to do.
    - But we do not expect others to carry **our** normal load or responsibility in life. 6:5
      - (Greek: a normal workload, which any person could carry)
      - We learn our strengths and weaknesses to help us make wise decisions. 6:3-4
      - We know there are consequences for our actions so we make wise choices. 6:7-8
      - We do not quit doing what is right just because we do not see immediate results. 6:9
    - We are supportive especially of those in need within our local church. 6:10
    - We want to help our spiritual teachers in prayer, encouragement and financial support. 6:6

**APPLICATION** *If you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law Gal. 5:18*

Paul is saying, that for our salvation and Christian life - we are either under a system of law or a system of grace.

The system of **law** says we are right with God and have power over our sin nature by keeping a list of rules or laws - it is based on what **WE** do. But we have to keep trying harder because we never know if we have done enough.

The system of **grace** says we are right with God and have power over our sin nature by accepting the payment of Jesus - it is based on what **HE** did.

Faith in Jesus gives us freedom from the penalty and power of sin and the laws of self-effort - trying to be good enough and do enough. We have *His* goodness. We have a *new* nature, empowered and led by the Holy Spirit. We are now free to respond to His promptings. **It is for freedom that Christ has set us free.** 5:1

