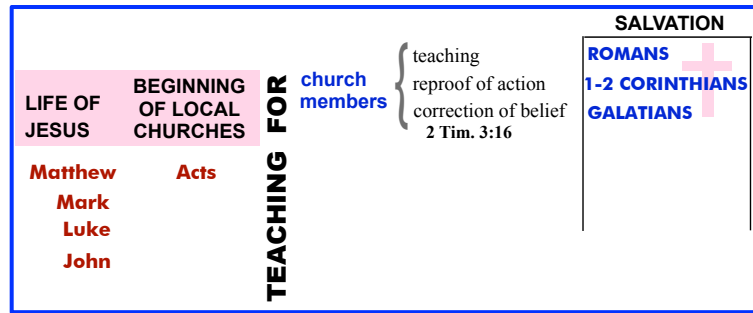


Lesson #9 - Galatians

Before starting this lesson, read **the entire book, chapters 1-6.**

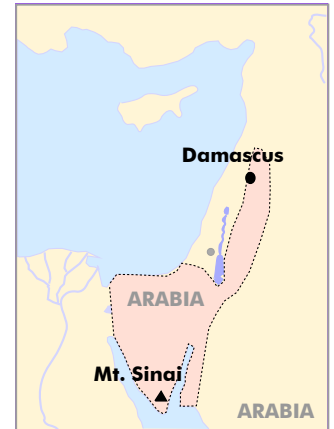
After the book of Acts, the rest of the New Testament is teaching - first of all for members of local churches. The first topic is salvation. Romans is the teaching about salvation. Corinthians is reproof of wrong action - they were not practicing their salvation. Galatians is now correction of **wrong** belief about salvation.



To help us understand the book, I want to start with some miscellaneous background.

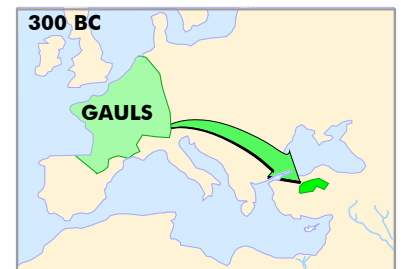
In the 200's BC, Nabatean Arabs from Arabia took control from Damascus to the border of Egypt. In addition to the country of Arabia, this area then, was also called Arabia. In the late 30's AD, within the Roman empire, Damascus was under the control of an Arab king. 2 Cor. 11:32.

When Paul wants to talk about Mt. Sinai, he wants to be sure both the Jews and the Greeks in Galatia, know where he is talking about. For the Jews, there was no problem. All Jews knew the location of Mt. Sinai. But for the **Greeks**, they still used the old name **Arabia** for the Sinai Peninsula. So in Galatians 4 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 those false teachers who caused trouble in the Corinthian church. Paul had said they were not true believers. Others from this group had gone to the churches in Galatia. So Paul writes them - the Galatians - to explain why the teaching of this group is wrong.

The history of Galatia takes us back to 300 years before Christ. A people known as the Gauls, from France, had invaded central Asia Minor. The area they controlled became known as **Gaulatia**.



In 25 BC, the Romans were extending their empire to this area. They took a large area in the south, combined it with **Gaulatia** and formed a large new province called **Galatia**. The northern area was always rural, with few roads and little commerce. The south had a main highway running east and west thru it. With the highway came cities and commerce. Many Jews and Greeks moved to the area.

From the book of Acts, we know that Paul and Barnabas went to southern Galatia on their first missionary journey. They started local churches in **Iconium**, **Lystra** and **Derbe**. Our book of Galatians was written to these churches.

From history we know that people traveling thru the lowlands from the coast north to Antioch often got an eye disease known as ophthalmia. The symptoms were swollen eyes and a running infection from the eyes, which gave the person a repulsive appearance. Over time, it impaired their vision.

It appears that during Paul's first trip, after leaving Cyprus and going thru these lowlands, he got this eye disease. Logic says he would want to head east towards his home town of **Tarsus** in case he got worse. Tarsus was known for its large hospital and medical center. Help would be available. Following the highway Paul and Barnabas went thru the cities of **ICONIUM**, **LYSTRA** and **DERBE**.

In each city they used the opportunity to give the message of salvation thru Jesus. In spite of persecution, both Jews and Gentiles believed. By the time Paul was in **DERBE**, his eye condition had stabilized. So instead of continuing east, he and Barnabas turned around to give more teaching to these new believers. They began a local church in each city.

All the facts about this ministry come from the book of Acts. But the evidence of his illness comes from Paul's letter to these believers - the book of Galatians..

*As you know, it was **because** of an illness that I first preached the gospel to you. Galatians 4:13*

Paul had not planned to be in their cities. It was only because of an illness he had gone in that direction.

He gives further information about his illness in verses 14-15.

*Even tho my illness was a trial to you, you did not treat me with contempt or scorn. Instead you welcomed me as if I were an angel of God, as if I were Christ Jesus Himself. What has happened to all your joy? I can testify that, if you could have done so, you would have torn out your **eyes** and given them to me.*

There is no reason they would want to give Paul their eyes unless he was having serious problems with his.

In 6:11, Paul writes, See *what large letters I use as I write to you with my own hand.*

Paul always dictated his letters. Then at the end of each one, he would take the pen and write a sentence or two so people could look at the handwriting and be sure the letter was from him. In Galatians however, he says the size of his handwriting will prove it is from him. Because his readers know he has a problem with his eyes, they know he has to write big. It is from these verses many Bible scholars believe Paul's thorn in the flesh was severe eye problems. For a teacher and scholar, this would be a heavy burden to bear.

(Some people have said Paul means he was using all capital letters. But this does not fit because in the 1st century all Greek was written in capital letters)

Paul had started these local churches in 47 AD on his first missionary trip.

He returned two years later in 49 AD, to give them more teaching.

He returned five years later in 53 AD, for additional teaching.

As a result, church members developed in their faith and the churches grew.

While the majority were Gentiles, there were also large numbers of Jews.

Sometime the following year - 54 AD, some of those false teachers from Jerusalem came to these churches and said,

Paul started your churches, but did you know - he is not a real apostle. His message is not from God. He said you could have salvation just thru faith in Jesus. But that is not true. All of you - Jews and Gentiles - need more. You need to keep Jewish laws, both to have salvation and to practice your salvation. You Gentile men need to be circumcised.

At first no one took this seriously. They remembered what Paul had taught them. But the teachers stayed around and continued talking.

After a year, around 55 AD, both Jewish and Gentile believers began to have doubts.

Maybe they did need more than faith in Jesus to **have** salvation.

Maybe they needed more than the power of the Holy Spirit to **practice** their salvation.

So Gentile men were circumcised.

Everyone tried to keep all the Jewish laws - the ones of Moses and the Mishnah - the man-made laws.

Paul hears about this in 56 AD, either just before he leaves Ephesus or while he is in northern Greece. When he gets to Corinth and knows that everything is OK there, he sits down and writes the Galatians, to correct their wrong belief. It is still 56 AD.



OUTLINE

Correction of wrong belief about Paul	1-2
Correction of wrong belief about salvation	3-6
The penalty of sin	
The power of sin	

PAUL WAS NOT AN APOSTLE LIKE THE ORIGINAL ELEVEN

Since he was not taught by Jesus, then what he said about salvation was not true.

Paul corrects this accusation with the first words of his letter. *Paul, an apostle....* Galatians 1:1

He uses this word to tell the Galatians he is equal to the original Eleven. The Eleven were considered unique...

...Because they had been taught by Jesus

...They saw Him after the resurrection

...They were sent by Him to give the salvation message

Paul tells them these things are true in his life as well.

One day on his way to Damascus, Jesus appeared to him. He saw the resurrected Jesus and believed in Him.

Jesus commissioned him to give the salvation message to the Gentiles. Then Paul went to Mt. Sinai and for over 2 years Jesus taught him

I want you to know, church members, that the gospel I preached is not something that man made up. I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it by other men; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ.

Gal. 1:11-12. Read also 1 Cor. 11:23; 15:3

Paul has corrected their thinking. He is equal to the Eleven.

In reality, he was God's replacement for Judas Iscariot.

**PAUL'S MESSAGE WAS NOT FROM GOD**

To correct this accusation, Paul gives a summary of his preparation and ministry.

He did not meet any of the apostles until 3 years after his conversion.

When he finally did meet Peter, it was just for two weeks.

He did not get his message from any of the apostles.

He was taught by Jesus. This is why God then put him into ministry.

For the next 14 years he worked in Tarsus and Antioch

He started the Galatian churches and then returned to his home church in Antioch.

In Jerusalem, there were believing Jewish leaders who had questions about Paul's ministry with the Galatians.

So in 49 AD, there was the first Church council with the apostles and church leaders.

Peter said God had showed him that Gentiles no longer needed to convert to Judaism.

Paul then explained what Jesus had taught him the same thing.

Gentiles did not need to convert to Judaism for salvation. Faith in Jesus was the only requirement.

Paul now assures the Galatians in this letter - the apostles had agreed that he was an apostle equal to them.

His message of salvation was from God and exactly the same as theirs.

As God had given Peter a ministry with the **Jews**, God had given Paul a ministry to the **Gentiles**.

**PAUL CHANGED HIS SALVATION MESSAGE TO FIT THE AUDIENCE**

When teaching the Jews he talked about circumcision.

But when he taught the Gentiles he left that out to make the salvation message more appealing.

Paul corrects this accusation by telling the Galatians what happened in Antioch, some 8 years earlier. (49 AD)

Paul was the co-pastor. Peter had come north, from Jerusalem to visit the church. He joined with the Gentiles in the potluck meal and received communion with them.

The next week, strict Jewish believers from Jerusalem came to visit the Antioch church. When it came time for the meal, they did not believe they should eat with the Gentiles or have communion with them. So they sat at a table by themselves on the other side of the room. They were believers but they were still following Mishnah laws.

Peter did not think that way, but he did not want to offend these Jews. Rather than explaining why **they** should eat together as equal before God, he left the Gentile table and sat with the visiting Jews. He was only thinking about the moment. He was being sensitive to their thinking because his ministry was with the Jews. But when he moved, then all the local Jews left their tables with the Gentiles and sat only with the other Jews. Even Barnabas, the other pastor, joined them.

Paul realized if he did not say something, this would set a precedent. From then on, instead of eating together to show the Church as the one Body of Christ, there would be the Jewish body of Christ and the Gentile body of Christ. That was not as God intended.

So Paul had spoken up and said, *even tho we Jews were born with special privileges in our relationship with God, we now understand that keeping Jewish laws does not make us right with God. We Jews are no better than Gentile sinners. We all have salvation just thru faith in Jesus.*

2:15-16 *We who are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners, know that a person is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ.*

In this letter to the Galatian believers, Paul is not telling them about Peter to make Peter look bad or inferior. He is proving his message of salvation was the same everywhere - salvation is thru faith in Jesus and not thru keeping Jewish laws. Even in front of Peter and the strictest of the strict Jewish believers he had declared this.

Paul ends these corrections about himself by emphasizing what the salvation message means to him personally.

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. I do not set aside the grace of God, for if rightness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing! 2:20-21

Paul's writing style is not always easy to understand so let me paraphrase his statement. Paul says, *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.*

In **CHAPTERS 1-2**, Paul has corrected their belief about him.

He is an apostle. His salvation message is from God. His salvation message is accurate.

In **CHAPTERS 3-6**, he corrects their belief about salvation. He is shocked they are believing a different message.

Wrong Belief about Salvation

CHAPTER 3 – The Galatians believed: Freedom from the PENALTY OF SIN comes thru obeying a list of rules or laws

Note: Paul's use of the word *law* in this book means...

Any system of rules or do's and don'ts that people use either to get right with God, or to stay right with God.

Paul knows they have salvation. But as believers, they have gotten confused over the requirements. He says, *You know you are free from the **penalty** of sin. But is it based on keeping a list of rules or on faith in Jesus? 3:2*

Did you receive the Spirit - receive salvation - by observing the law or by believing what you heard?

He repeats the question in 3:5. *Does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you - salvation - because you observe the law or because you believe what you heard?*

The false teachers told them it was because they obeyed a list of rules - the law. The Galatians believe this.

Paul shows them this is wrong thru a **series of examples**.

Abraham

Paul asks, *How did Abraham become right with God?*

*Consider Abraham. He **believed** God and it was credited to him as righteousness. Gal. 3:6*

Abraham was right on the basis of faith.

Quotation from the Old Testament

Note: in the Bible - Old or New Testament - the word **curse** means "**under God's judgment**". Paul says,

*All who rely on observing the law are under God's judgment for it is written, 'under God's judgment is everyone who does not continue to do **everything** written in the book of the law'". 3:10*

No one can **continually** keep **all** the rules God gave in the Old Testament. Therefore no one can meet His standards. All are under His judgment. The judgment for disobedience is separation from God. That is why Jesus came.

Paul continues,

Christ redeemed - He freed us from the judgment of the law by being judged for us, for it is written, under God's judgment is everyone who is hung on a tree. 3:13.

Our sin was put on Jesus. He was separated from the Father in our place. If by faith, we accept His payment - we do not have to be separated. **FAITH** has always been the way to be right with God, whether now or in the days of Abraham.

Paul knows the false teachers will tell the Galatians,

True, Abraham was right with God on the basis of faith. But everything changed when God gave Moses the Ten Commandments. Since then, we are right with God by keeping the Ten Commandments.

Illustration of a will - Paul explains with an everyday example

When people make a will, they state what they want to happen in the future.

If a **temporary** will is made later on, the intent of the **first** will is still in effect.

When the temporary will expires, everything goes back to the conditions of the first will.

God's will or covenant with **Abraham** said he was right with God on the basis of faith.

That covenant was in effect for a period of 430 years. It was an **unconditional covenant**.

When the **Ten Commandments** were given to **Moses**, they were like a **temporary will**.

But they did not change what God said to Abraham.

That raises the question. If the law was temporary and **not** a new way to be right with God...

Why did God give the Ten Commandments? Why did He make a 2nd, temporary will?

Paul answers, *God made it to show the value and importance of the first will.*

In the first will - in His promise to Abraham, God said,

I will declare people good enough to live with Me, if by faith they will believe and accept what I offer them. I will give them My rightness - My holiness.

Abraham said, *wonderful. I accept.* Isaac, Jacob, Joseph and a host of others said, *we accept Your rightness. It is so much better than ours.*



God's Promise to Abraham

But over the next 430 years, as the Jewish nation developed, some of the Jews questioned, *why do we need God's rightness? We can be good enough on our own. If God would just give us a list of rules, we will keep them.*

So God made a 2nd **will** - not to change the first, but **to answer the people's challenge**. He temporarily gave the Ten Commandments to let them know His requirements and to show them they could never be good enough. They could not meet His requirements.

Over the next 1000 years the Jews gradually realized the truth - they could **not** keep God's rules. But instead of turning to God, they came up with their solution. They wrote thousands upon thousands of man-made rules to help them obey God's rules. But, the more rules they wrote, the more rules they broke. After 1400 years of failure, Jesus came and offered His rightness - His goodness. As people heard the message, once again there were those who said, *wonderful, we accept Your rightness.*



Chapter 3 - the Galatians are **free from the penalty of sin**, not by keeping a list of rules but by faith in Jesus.

This is not a new message - it has been God's way since the days of Abraham.

CHAPTERS 4-6 – The Galatians believed: Freedom from the POWER OF SIN comes thru obeying a list of rules or laws

The Galatians are **free from the power of sin**. But on what basis - keeping rules or faith in Jesus?

The **false teachers** said it was based on how many rules they kept and how many times they kept them.

So if they fast 2 days a week like all good Jews, they will have some control over the power of sin. But if they decide to fast 5 days a week, they would have even more control over sin.

The **Galatian church members** believe this. They are trying so hard to learn and keep all the thousands of Jewish Mishnah laws - man-made laws. Their whole spiritual life is focused just on keeping this list of rules over here and that list of rules over there. But this is not freedom.

Paul shows them this is wrong thru one example from **Roman** culture and another from **Jewish** history.

This way both Gentiles and Jews can understand their lack of freedom.

In **Jewish** history, Abraham's son Ishmael was born a slave. He had no freedom to choose for himself.

In **Roman** life, a child who had Roman citizenship was born free. Yet during his childhood, his condition was the same as a slave -- neither of them had freedom to choose for themselves. The parent or guardian made the rules and the child had to obey. *Wash your hands before you eat; never leave without permission.*

The Roman boy grows up to be a Roman soldier. When he goes home to have a meal with his parents, they are not going to ask, *did you wash your hands?* He is no longer under a list of rules. He is now an adult. And yet he washes his hands. Instead of doing it because there is a list of rules, he now does it because the things his parents taught him are **inside** of him. He does it because he wants to - because it is the appropriate thing to do.

To put it another way, **his actions are based on promptings from within, not on rules from without.**

In **chapter 4**, Paul has told the Galatians,

If you try to have power over sin thru laws and external rules, you are living like a child or slave. You do not have any freedom.

*Faith in Jesus gave you a new nature, empowered by the Holy Spirit so you can live like an adult with freedom of choice. **Respond to the promptings of the Holy Spirit within, not on a set of rules from without.***



Paul continues in **chapter 5:1** *It is for **FREEDOM** that Christ has set us free..*

The Galatians are free from the **penalty of sin**. They do not have to keep laws to make any further payment.

They are free from the **power of being controlled by their sin nature**.

He then reminds them what happens when the sin nature is in control.

The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies and the like. 5:19-21

Because the sin nature is empowered by Satan, these are the things that come naturally when a person is tempted, under stress or pushed to their limits. There is no ability to control that nature, so it must be controlled by external laws.

It is why God gave the Ten commandments.

It is why governments make laws for society, based on the Ten commandments.

When a person receives a new nature empowered by the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit is in control, these are the things that will come naturally to their life.

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self control. Against such things there is no law 5:22-23

We do not need to be controlled by external rules when the Holy Spirit is in control.

Paul closes with **PRACTICAL INSTRUCTION**. He tells the Galatians and us, how this freedom is seen in our lives.

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

Paul summarized his teaching in the statement, *If you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law* Gal. 5:18

He 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. 5:1

IT IS FOR THIS FREEDOM THAT CHRIST HAS SET US FREE.