A FOUR-LESSON BIBLE STUDY

GALATIANS

Paul's Letter of Liberty and Grace

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Introduction • Exposition • Review Questions

LESSON ONE

AN INTRODUCTION TO PAUL'S GALATIAN LETTER

In his letter to Timothy, Paul asserted that All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works, 2 Timothy 3:16-17. At every point, this letter to the Galatians is an excellent illustration of that principle.

Error has ever been a great hindrance to the progress of God's work. Men have been inclined to turn aside from His straight and narrow way to the more appealing broad way of human wisdom and expediency. When His people have gone wrong God has, mercifully, called them back to paths of righteousness and divine fellowship.

When, in fleshly wisdom, men have tried to make the way more attractive, He has counseled them to remove not the ancient landmarks. They must not infringe on the divine purpose by moving the stakes that are firmly set in the Scriptures.

Because of widespread misunderstanding and perversion of the Divine Word, it is imperative that we answer certain questions before beginning a direct examination of this letter. 1) Who are the Galatians? 2) What is their specific problem? 3) How does the apostle deal with it? 4) What specific doctrines need to be carefully reviewed and defined before interpreting the letter? This lesson is designed to answer such questions.

I. A SPECIFIC PEOPLE ARE ADDRESSED.

A. Geographically, Paul Addressed **Galatians**. They are a people of Central Asia Minor, Gauls by heritage, who inhabited the Roman Province including the cities of Antioch, Lystra, Derbe and Iconum, among others.
B. as to Spiritual State, They Are A Saved People; They have already entered into ***the way of life***. (Church relationship)

1. This letter does NOT deal, as some suppose, with

"salvation by Grace" as opposed to "salvation by works.

2. The Galatians do NOT need instructions in how to be saved; they are already saved from sin-guiltiness.

3. Nor are they in danger of losing the spiritual life imparted by grace through faith.

C. As to spiritual position, they are ***COVENANT PEOPLE***, members of a New Testament church and a body of Christ.

1. This is a position of PRIVILEGE, not of right, and is ***maintained by a walk of faith in harmony with New Testament principles***.

a. Here men stand in the sphere of God's covenant grace (Romans 5:2).

b. Here God's people have a definite responsibility to ***CONTINUE*** (abide or remain).

2. In this position men are pledged to a walk in newness of life with Christ; fidelity to this pledge ***IS A CONTINUING*** in the grace of God, (Acts13:43).

3. It is a position that may be forfeited, requiring diligence.

4. Unless one continues he will lose his position of special nearness to Christ as a member of His body.

5. Forfeiture of this **POSITION** (not salvation) is described in Galatians as:

a. ***Falling*** from grace (5:4b), or

b. Being ***severed*** from Christ, (5:4a, ASV).

II. A SPECIFIC PROBLEM IS DEALT WITH.

A. It is always proper to inquire of the circumstances under which a thing is considered in the Scriptures. Without such background study one may easily err in his interpretation. Failure to understand the problem faced at Galatia will be tragic.

B. Paul clearly repudiates the philosophy that makes a virtue of mere religious sincerity; it **DOES** make a difference what one believes and practices. The chief problem at Galatia was a tendency to regard **FLESH RIGHTEOUSNESS,** or human morality, based on a

legalistic adherence to some moral code, as finally **QUALIFYING** one for acceptance with God.

C. These saints did not begin their spiritual pilgrimage in the **"flesh"**, but in the **"Spirit".** Human wisdom, zeal and ingenuity was no improvement on the Spirit; it was, in fact, a backward step which violated and repudiated the blessedness in which they had begun their spiritual journey,

D. It appears that there had crept in certain Judaizing deceivers, under the guise of Christianity, who insisted on the necessity of circumcision though not requiring observance of the entire Jewish system,(6:13; 5:3). They taught the observance of days, (4:10). They pretended superiority to Paul asserting that he was subject to their church. They intimated that he was unstable, so adapting his message to prevailing opinion that, in some localities, he actually taught circumcision, (1:1; 5:11; 23; 1:10).

III. A SPECIFIC SOLUTION IS PROPOSED instead of fitting their necks to a yoke of bondage:

A. They must reject the perversion being offered to them as the full gospel, (3:3; 4:21).

B. They must crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts

1. They had Paul's example, (2:20; 6:14).

2. It was necessary if they would truly BE Christ's, (5:24).

C. They must return to the simplicity of their early faith, and walk in the spirit, (5:15, 25—26).

D. They must stand fast in the liberty by which they were set free from the bondage of pagan superstition, now using that liberty, not as a tool for gratifying the flesh, but as an instrument of glory to God, (5:1, 13; comp. I Peter 2:16).

E. Freedom from the law does not free them from responsibility; they still must conform to the Spirit's pattern and bring forth spiritual fruit.

F. They must hear Paul's defense of his independent gospel, as He:

1. Proves its authenticity.
2. Asserts its superiority.

3. Shows its power to practically effect true liberty from bondage either to the law or the flesh.

IV. SPECIFIC DOCTRINES REQUIRE CAREFUL STUDY AND DEFINITIONS IN THE LIGHT OF THIS LETTER.

A. The doctrine of salvation involves:

1. Deliverance from the guilt and penalty of past sin, (Matt.1:21).

2. A continuing (present process) deliverance from the power of sin in our daily lives. This is conditional, necessitating:

a. Remembrance of God's sovereign claim on our lives, (I Cor. 6:19-20; Romans 14:7)

b. A definite despising and resisting of evil, (Rom. 6:12-14).

c. A continuing appropriation, by faith, of the divine grace that is sufficient to keep us from falling, (Acts 13:43).

3. An expected deliverance FROM this present evil world, UNTO an eternal, glorious inheritance in the Kingdom of God, (Acts26:17-18).

a. In this sense, salvation is FUTURE.

b. In this sense, it is looked upon as an INHERITANCE.

c. In this sense, it is considered a REWARD; it may be lost, (Rev.2:25-26; 2 John 8)

1) This aspect of salvation (the receiving of a full reward) is conditioned on a persistent, persevering walk of faith in obedience before God; it is NOT assured to all who once took an initial step of faith into the WAY of life, by trusting in Jesus as a personal Saviour.

2) This does NOT contradict the former statement (at I. B3); that dealt with the IMPARTATION of spiritual life; this with the response of the whole man to the divine will.

3) Some will be granted an abundant entrance into God's kingdom, whereas, others will suffer loss and be saved yet so as by fire, 2 Peter 1:11; I Corinthians 3:15).

B. The doctrine of justification

1. The PROBLEM: Since the days of the apostles, some have found it difficult to explain the doctrine of "justification by faith" in terms that do not tend to undermine moral obligations. The Judaizers of Paul's day placed great emphasis on the necessity of ACHIEVING righteousness before God. They assumed that for God to reckon or account men righteous, on the basis of faith, would cancel out any need of positive effort toward BEING RIGHTEOUS in fact. Since the doctrine of justification was so corrupted and sentimentalized by Luther, few men have arisen to preach it as set forth in the whole context of the New Testament. That Luther never grasped the full significance of the doctrine was evidenced by his inability to harmonize Paul and James, thus, totally rejecting James.

2. Justification and its relatives spring from the root Greek word ***dik*** meaning upright. It is a legal term meaning to DECLARE righteous.

a. A correct definition will make sense, wherever the word is used.

b. Justification is NOT a matter of imparting or bestowing righteousness, but of God's calling those things which be not as THOUGH they were (Romans 4:17).

c. The foolishness of defining justification as being made just AS IF I had never sinned appears when one honestly attempts to deal with those passages which speak of God's being justified, (Psa. 51:4; Rom. 3:4, 26).

3. Justification is NOT merely a synonym for salvation.

a. In the initial experience of salvation man is delivered from the penalty of sin guiltiness through faith in Jesus as his Divine Substitute.

b. In Justification God declares a man to be positively righteous as, by an extension of this same faith-quality, he submits his life-experience under the actual lordship of Jesus Christ - walking according to the divine pattern Justification is not something BESTOWED, but something DECLARED

c. Salvation, as a deliverance from sin's penalty and entrance into the way of life, is a once-for-all-time

experience. In justification God is constantly declaring righteous the person whose heart-attitude and daily walk are characterized by a faith-submission to His will, work and way.

d. To so WALK as to be justified, in our many and varied life-experiences, is necessary to the **SAVING OF OUR LIVES**, (Matt. 12:36-37).

4. **The BASIS** of justification.

a. It is initiated by God's grace, (Romans 3:24).

b. It is made effective through the blood of Christ, (Romans 5:9).

c. Its instrumental cause is faith, (Romans 5:1),

d. Its assurance is based on Christ's resurrection, (Rom. 4:25).

e. Its evidence is good works, (Rom.12-15; Jas. 2: 21-26).

f. Since it is not based on human merit, there is no place for fleshly boasting, (Luke 17:10).

C. The doctrine of faith.

1. Faith necessarily involves believing what God has promised and entrusting one's self, personally, into His loving care.

2. It involves far more than giving passive assent to the truthfulness of what God has spoken; it is an active, loving and loyal obedience to the WAY He has appointed.

a. A dead (inactive and barren) faith involves men in dangerous presumption; to claim God's blessing without meeting His condition is both foolish and immoral.

b. A living faith is **ACTIVE** - walking after the Spirit and working by love; this is the faith that leads to Justification.

3. The man of faith is more than a hearer - nodding approval to the word God has spoken; being a doer of the work, he is blessed in his deed and gives glory to God Who both inspired Him with desire and endued him with power to fulfill the divine will,(James1:22-25; Phil. 2:12-13).

4. Faith, in this Galatian letter, involves far more than an ideal mental attitude; it is A WALK according to

the pattern ordained of God for His glory; while aiding one's progress toward maturity and conformity to the image of His Son. It is the very FAITH OF CHRIST.

5. Though faith certainly includes recognition of the wisdom and righteousness of the divine purpose, it is incomplete unless involved in a committal of the whole self into God's benevolent hands losing one's self in adoring, joyful, loving and faithful service to Him. This is the faith that is commended in the New Testament, (Rom. 4; Heb. 11; Jas. 2).

6. To such a walk we, symbolically, pledged ourselves in the waters of Christian baptism.

a. It was NOT to a mere creed, or system of teachings, that we then pledged our lives.

b. Our sanctification was unto a NEW PATTERN OF LIVING described as newness of life in Christ Jesus.

D. The doctrine of grace.

1. First, grace may be considered the free and unmerited gift of God's loving favor.

2. But the word is also used to designate a very special POSITION which God has exalted those whose lives are committed wholly to His service,(Rom 5:2).

a. It is a position of covenant fellowship and favor to which men are exalted in identity with Jesus Christ.

b. This is experienced today ONLY by such as submit themselves to the lordship of Jesus Christ, requiring baptism and a walk of faith obedience in a New Testament church.

c. This position is maintained as our daily experience is one of faith which worketh by love.

d. Through a walk marked by carelessness, fruitlessness and unbelief, we may be severed from this POSITION, and suffer loss; but, this must NOT be regarded as losing one's salvation. It is, rather, the loss of special privilege and inheritance as firstborn ones.

SUMMARY:

The Galatian letter is addressed to churches. It is a fiery rebuke of apostasy and, at the same time, a powerful

defense of the Gospel of Christ. Its design was NOT to show lost men how to be saved. It was meant to bring erring saints back to the path of uprightness, and a walk in the Spirit for the glory of God.

Nor is this section of God's Word out-dated or irrelevant. Never before has there been such a widespread tendency to forsake the wisdom that is from above, while catering to the fleshly programs by which men think to improve on God's work. But the carnal mind can no more please God in the twentieth first century than it could in the first.

May we all search this letter with diligence. And may its righteous principles be applied to our own hearts and lives.

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

1. Who is the author of the Galatian letter?
2. To whom is it addressed? Who are they?
3. What was the spiritual state and position of those addressed?
4. What is involved in a position of covenant-fellowship?
5. What was the chief problem at Galatia?
6. How had such a problem arisen?
7. Summarize the solution proposed by the apostle.
8. What specific doctrines were defined in this introduction? Summarize each in your own words.
9. Is the appeal of this letter to alien sinners or to erring saints?
10. Is it relevant to our day?

LESSON TWO

A RESTRAINED SALUTATION

Scripture Lesson: Galatians 1:1-5.

INTRODUCTION: It is deeply significant that Paul found no word of praise or commendation for his Galatian brethren. Their instability, their repudiation of his apostolic authority, and their tolerance of a perverted Gospel stirred his heart and filled him with righteous indignation. With a fiery zeal for

God and truth, he wrote a scathing denunciation of their apostasy and a strong defense of the Gospel as he had originally delivered it to them.

I. THE WRITER, (vs. 1- 2a).

A. Characteristic of his writings, this letter opens with Paul's signature.

1. He sends it forth, not as a beloved pioneer missionary who had planted so many churches among them, but as an apostle, (not of men, neither by men, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, Who raised him from the dead).

2. The Galatians had no sentimental attachments to Him, who had labored so faithfully among them, but they must RESPECT his authority as an apostle of Jesus Christ.

B. AN APOSTLE IS ONE SENT FORTH - AN AMBASSADOR.

1. The New Testament usage of the word suggests a person endowed with specific qualities for the express purpose of promoting the unity and maturity of the Lord's church.

2. Apostleship is a gift of Christ, and the Holy Spirit, to the infant church.

3. It was the first of the spiritual gifts to be set in the already – existing church, (I Corinthians 12:28).

C. Apostleship could be bestowed only by divine authority.

1. There is abundant evidence to suggest that Paul considered Peter's action, leading to the selection of Matthias for the office vacated by Judas, as hasty, rash and unjustified, (Acts 1:15-26).

2. After all, the Head of the church had already ascended to heaven having commanded them to wait and the Holy Spirit had not yet come to endue them with power and lead them into all truth.

a. There is no indication that Divine approval was ever placed on the action.

b. Some two years later, God placed His hand on Paul for the office of apostleship; he mightily vindicated the wisdom of this action by a life of Christian leadership with which no other is worthy to be compared.

3. Paul appears to have been appalled at the thought that men would PRESUME to become administrators of the divine will on earth; he constantly emphasized the fact that his apostleship was NOT by the selection, choice or approval of men.

D. In almost every epistle Paul stressed the fact that his apostleship was:

1. By Jesus Christ, (Acts 9:6; 20:24; 22:10, 5, 21; 26:16; Romans 1:5; I Tim.1:1; Titus 1:3).

2. By God the Father', (I Cor. 1:1; 2 Cor. 1:1; Eph. 1:1; Col. 1:1-2 Tim.1:1; Rom.1:10; 2 Cor. 8:5).

3. Based on the authority of Him that raised Jesus Christ from the dead, (Acts13:30, 33-34, 37; 17:31; Rom. 4:24-27; 6:4; 8:11; 09; I Cor. 6:14; 2 Cor. 4:14; Eph. 1:20; Col. 2:12; I Thes.:10; Heb.13:20; I Pet. 1:21).

E. Having pleased the father in all things, jesus was raised from the dead to enter upon a new work (John 5:27).

1. This included direction of the affairs of the church, and headship over all things in her behalf, (Eph. 4:8; 1:22-23).

2. By this same authority He calls, qualifies and establishes men in the Gospel ministry to this very day.

F. Though an apostle of Christ, with outstanding credentials of authority, Paul did not exalt himself above those who labored with him.

1. He included in his greeting all the brethren which are with me, (vs.2; Phil. 4:21-22).

2. He offered no encouragement to such as would usurp authority over their brethren, (Matt. 23:8; 20:20-28).

3. There were even times when he labored with his own hands to provide for his fellow helpers in the truth, not willing to be burdensome or chargeable to any.

4. By word and deed he labored more abundantly than all the other apostles magnifying his office, (I Cor. 15:10; Rom. 11:13).

5. He knew that the grace of apostleship had not been bestowed because of any merit of his own.

6. Throughout life he stood in constant awe that such grace had been bestowed on him, the chief of sinners.

II. The addressees, (vs. 2b).

A. This letter is addressed unto the churches of Galatia.

1. There appears to have been several churches in this province of Asia Minor at the time Paul wrote this letter, (I Cor. 16:1; Acts18:23; I Peter 1:1).

2. All the Galatian churches seem to have been affected by certain seducers who had infiltrated them, turning them away from a walk of spiritual liberty in Christ Jesus, and poisoning the relationship that had existed between them and the faithful apostle.

B. The plurality of churches in Galatia emphasizes the **Insanity** of insisting on a universal, invisible church composed of all the saved.

1. No passage in the New Testament will substantiate such a teaching.

2. But, characteristic of those who revolt against the divine order, its proponents seem to feel little need of Scriptural precedent or authorization for their devilish schemes and philosophies.

III. The greeting, (vs. 3-5).

A. THE CONTENTS OF THE GREETING. Though about to upbraid their instability and departure from the faith, Paul does not withhold an expression of His deep desire for their spiritual welfare. Grace be to you (Romans 1:7; 2 John 3; 2 Peter 2), and peace, experienced only in believing, from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ. Both Father and Son are involved in our peace and guarantee it to such as meet the condition on which it may be bestowed.

B. THE SOURCE OF BLESSINGS THAT HE INVOKES.

1. To provide a basis for peace, Jesus Christ gave himself for our Sins.

2. For our offences the Lamb of God was delivered up to death, (John 1:29; Rom. 4:25); thus, giving Himself a ransom for us all, (I Tim. 2:6).

3. Though endowed with inestimable riches, Jesus Christ became poor that we, through His poverty,

might be enriched, finishing the work that He came to accomplish, (2 Cor. 8:9; Jn. 9:30).

4. According to the will of God and our Father, Christ has made every necessary provision for our deliverance from this present evil world (age).

a. The world-system governing the age in which we live is evil, John 15:18-19; 17:14-16; I John 5:19).

b. Until the return of Christ, it will be characterized by increasing lawlessness, (Matt.24:12; 2 Peter 3:3; 2 Thes. 2:1:14; Dan.4:36-45).

c. God's people must constantly struggle with this evil condition clear on down to the end of the age, (Dan. 7:24-27; Rev.13:1-9; 2 Tim.3:12; Acts 14:22; I Cor. 15:19; I Thes.3:1-4; Romans 8:18).

d. The condition described as existing at the time of Christ's return can only be an outgrowth of a well-conducted and long-sustained program of evil, (Lk. 18:8; 7:26-30; 2 Tim. 3:1-5; Jude17-19).

C. Paul's doxology.

1. Paul ends his greeting to the Galatians by ascribing eternal glory to the Heavenly Father, (compare Eph.1:11-12; Rom. 11:36).

2. In view of Christ's abundant provision we have a weighty responsibility to escape the corruption that is in the world through lust; we ought to consecrate ourselves to a life of VICTORY IN JESUS for the glory of God, (2 Pet. :4; 2:18-20; Romans 12:2).

"To God be the glory, great things He hath done,
So loved He the world that He gave us His Son,
Who yielded His life an atonement for sin,
And opened the life-gate that all may go in.
Praise the Lord, Praise the Lord,
Let the earth hear His voice
Praise the Lord, Praise the Lord,
Let the people rejoice
0 come to the Father, through Jesus the Son,
And give Him the glory, great things He hath done"

Fannie J. Crosby

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

1. With what authority does Paul write this letter?
2. Where did he receive this authority?
3. Who exercises absolute authority over the church?
4. To whom was this letter addressed?
5. What is significant about such an address?
6. What was Paul's attitude toward the Galatians?
7. Of what provision does he remind them?
8. What condition must God's people face throughout this age?
9. What is Paul's greatest desire?
10. Considering our blessings how ought we to live?

LESSON THREE

A REBUKE OF SPIRITUAL INSTABILITY

Scripture Lesson: Galatians l: 6-10.

INTRODUCTION:

The churches of Galatia were among the first-fruits of Paul's missionary labors after being separated there unto by the church at Antioch, (Acts 3; Gal. 3:1-3; 4:13-14). These churches had been disturbed by a common enemy, (Gal. 1:6-7; 5:7-9). They had been an idolatrous people; it may be said of them, as of the saints at Thessalonica, that they turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, (I Thess. 1:9; Gal. 4:8). Throughout this letter Paul assumes the position of one addressing his spiritual children, (Gal. 4:19-20). He clearly affirms that he had first brought the gospel message to them, (Gal, 1:8, 11). By the power of the Holy Spirit he had vividly portrayed Christ as crucified among them, his message being confirmed by signs and wonders, (Gal. 3:1-2, 5).

These people had originally given the apostle a warm welcome. Though he was suffering from a severe physical weakness, they received his message as one sent from heaven. At that time they would have gladly plucked out their own eyes for his benefit, (Gal. 4:12-15). This suggests that he may have had problems with his eyes.

The Galatian saints HAD **"run well",** willingly enduring persecution for the faith, (Gal. 5:7; 3:4; comp. Matt. 13:3-9, 18-23). But they have now been hindered. Having no anchor, they are "tossed to and fro" by the cunning craftiness of deceivers, (Eph. 4:14). They were not rooted deeply enough to be established. Having failed to "grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord", they were immature; unable to "stand in the evil day. Nor did they join the battle as "good soldiers" of the Lord. They did not fight the good fight of faith, but joined the enemy as deserters and traitors to the cause of God and truth.

I. An astonishing fickleness was discovered at Galatia, (vs. 6-7).

A. Their decline was marked by an **amazing swiftness**.

1. "***Marvel",*** is a word that was often used by the Greek orators to express shock, astonishment, or surprise at something they considered worthy of censure; it is used several times in the New Testament

a. Jesus "marveled" at the unbelief of the Jews, (Mk.6:6).

b. The Jews "marveled" because Jesus healed on the Sabbath (Jn. 7:21), and did not wash His hands before eating with the Pharisees, (Luke 11:38).

c. The disciples "marveled" when they found Jesus talking with the woman of Samaria, (John 4:27).

2. Paul was shocked by the ***RAPIDITY*** of their departure from the faith so swiftly, speedily, (comp. Rev. 1:1; 22:6—7, 20, where the same Greek word is used not ***of immanency***, ***but of rapidity***).

3. They were being "carried away", (comp. Acts 7:16; Heb. 7:11-12; 11:5; Jude 4).

4. This ***REMOVAL*** is used in classical Greek of altering a treaty, changing an opinion, or desertion from an army, to turn renegade."

5. When Paul wrote, the action was not yet complete; they were IN THE PROCESS of removing themselves.

a. And Paul places the guilt on the Galatians - not merely on the false teachers.

b, They had been taught better; they knew, and were forsaking the BETTER way.

B. Their departure was away from a position of covenant Grace into which they had been called, (Rom. 5:1-2).

1. It must be obvious that Paul is not dealing with the subject of PERSONAL SALVATION, but of the exalted position of ***COVENANT FELLOWSHIP*** with God - from which they were in the process of severing themselves.

2. Nor is he telling church members HOW TO BE SAVED; he is pointing out the folly of forfeiting the special blessings to which God has called them attempting to please certain vain-glorying characters who were leading them into spiritual bankruptcy.

3. Paul, as God's instrument, had called them into this position of covenant fellowship by an authoritative identity with Jesus Christ.

a. It was God Himself Who Had taken the initiative in preparing them for His kingdom.

b. Note a few of the New Testament passages which speak of Gods call, (Rom. 8:30; 9:22-24; Cor.:9; Gal. 1:15; I Thes 2:12; I Pet. 1:15; 2:9; 2 Pet.:3).

C. They were forsaking the gospel of spiritual liberty, in Christ, for a perversion of truth that was leading them to certain bondage and ruin.

1. To pervert means to change or transform into something of an opposite character, (Acts 2:20; Jas. 4:9).

2. "***IN CHRIST"*** (involving identity with Him as members of His body, the church) men live in the sphere of LIBERTY, where the Spirit of God exercises dominion and brings forth fruit to the glory of God, (2 Cor. 3:17-18; Eph. 2:19-21; Gal. 5:16, 2: 2-24).

3. Apart from this intimate, New Covenant, relationship ALL MEN (lost and saved) are considered in the flesh or in the world, outside the special sphere of the Spirit's dominion; in bondage to the old nature, and unable to please God, (Rom. 8:8, 5, 12-13; Col. 2:20).

4. Unless the Galatians abide in Christ they will be severed from Him Who is the 'true vine; cast forth as branches, they will suffer irrecoverable loss, (John 15:1-10; I Cor. 3:11-15).

a. This is not meant to imply the loss of one's personal salvation from hell.

b. **Rather**, it suggests the loss of INHERITANCE (in the sense of reward) in the coming Kingdom of God, (2 John 8; Rev. 2:25; 3:11; 22:12**). "the reward of the inheritance"**, (Col 3:24)

D. The ones troubling the Galatian churches sought their own glory, not the glory of God, or the welfare of the saints.

1. They were indeed troublers, though the Galatians had not yet recognized them as such, (Acts 15:1, 24; Gal. 5:10; 2 Cor. II: 13).

2. Their glory was in their zeal for the law, as Paul's had been before he met Christ on the Damascus road.

3. Since Christ has fulfilled the law, we glorify God only as we BELIEVE HIM; this includes such SUBMISSION as obeys HIS Word and lays hold on the blessings He has provided for us in His Son.

a. Carnal men (saved men who are governed by the flesh) are much like Israel in the wilderness, entangled and defeated, with no overcoming spiritual power, (I Cor. 3:1- 4; Gal. 3:1-5).

b. Spiritual men, who walk not after the flesh", but after the Spirit are able to exclaim with Paul: "I CAN DO ALL THINGS through Christ which strengthens me (Philippians 4:13).

II. Perverters of the gospel are firmly denounced,(vs. 8-9; Deut. 4:12,12:32; Josh. 1:7; Prov. 30:5-6; Rev. 22:18-19).

A. The gospel, as originally preached by Paul and received by the Galatians as "from heaven", is Absolute truth.

1. Paul has received it by revelation, (1:12).

2. He has faithfully delivered it to them as to others, (I Cor. 15:3).

3. They have gladly received it and rejoiced in it.

4. It has produced some desirable fruit among them.

B. Whoever presumes to depart from the pattern originally laid down for their spiritual development must be accursed; be it:

1. Paul himself ... and he certainly had no intention of repudiating that which he had delivered.

2. An angel from heaven.

a. No, good angel would consider such a thing.

b. Satan, however, sometimes transforms himself into an "angel of light", and his ministers as "ministers of righteousness"; the brethren must be cautious, (2 Cor. 11:13—15).

3. Any man ... without respect of persons, (I Kings 13:11-26).

C. The rebuke that Paul has evidently delivered on a recent visit to Galatia, and his discovery of their

apostasy, he now repeats: let him be accursed (comp. I Cor. 3:17).

This does not mean that we are vindicated in calling down anathamas on all with whom we have minor disagreements. This was a matter of utmost gravity. It placed in jeopardy their very lives as God's servants. Unless, they could be arrested and turned back to the truth they would experience the loss of their covenant standing, and their inheritance in God's coming, glorious kingdom.

III. Christ's servant is uncompromising in his attitude (vs.10). This is no matter for diplomacy of negotiation. Truth diluted by a little error is no longer truth, (2 Cor. 2:17; 2 Pet. 3:16). Liberty cannot tolerate "a little bondage". There can be no convergence without a loss of identity and vitality.

It appears that the advocates of circumcision had accused Paul of being inconsistent in adhering to the law himself, while teaching that it was not NECESSARY for Gentile Christians to practice the rites of Judaism. With great success, they appear to have caricatured him as a wishy - washy, unstable old man granting concessions here and there to gain a few followers. Thus, the apostle of the Gentiles, normally calm and careful in approaching his detractors hurls a fiery verbal bombshell into their midst, and asks:

A. Does this sound like Paul is wishy-washy?

B. Does this sound like one who is trying to please men?

1. He did normally try to please men, in the sense of being void of offence,(Rom. 15:1-3; I Cor. 9:19-23).

2. But he ***would not cater to the whim of any man*** at the **<u>expense of the Gospel</u>**, (I Thess. 2:4 I Cor. 10:31-33; Rom. 2: 29).

C. ***Men pleasers are not true servants*** of Christ; but Paul's life is irrevocably dedicated to His service, (Eph. 6:5-6; Rom.:1; I Cor. 7:22-23; Gal. 6:17; Mk. 10:43-44; 2 Cor. *4:5).*

CONCLUSION:

<u>It is a serious matter to advocate what is either "contrary to" or "other than" what God has ordered.</u>

But, Satan and his emissaries are busy night and day subverting the souls of men, God's people are so unstable as to be easy victims; they are taken captive by Satan at his will, (2 Tim. 2:26). Since Paul's day Satan's strategy has become more refined; his subtleties more cleverly disguised. He who imagines himself too wise to be in danger must "take heed lest he fall ", But, there is refuge and safety in the 'everlasting arms" of our covenant-keeping God. As we draw near to Him, He will draw near to us; resisting Satan in His strength, the adversary and enemy of our souls will flee. By unwavering faith in God, constant abiding in His Son and patient waiting for His Kingdom we may save our lives souls) for the coming age.

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

1. What sort of people had the Galatians been before Paul preached to them?
2. How did they at first receive his message?
3. What one word describes their condition at the time this letter was written?
4. From what had they departed?
5. Is Paul writing to tell them how to be saved?
6. What is the main purpose of this letter?
7. What does it mean to "pervert" the Gospel?
8. How would you describe Paul's attitude toward this situation?
9. What did Paul desire for those who perverted the Gospel?
10. Should we be trying to learn what the Scriptures teach, or trying to vindicate our own belief's and philosophies?
11. Do we face such dangers as that by which the Galatians were overcome?
12. How may we live victoriously?

LESSON FOUR

THE DISCIPLINE OF THE DESERT

Scripture Lesson: Galatians 1:11-24.

INTRODUCTION: With this lesson Paul begins to claim an apostolic authority that is independent of the older apostles who reside in Jerusalem. He set out on the mission to which Christ had called him without their consultation or authorization. His apostleship was of God, bestowed on him before he had met any of the original twelve. When he did go to Jerusalem, the other apostles recognized him as an equal; and he ultimately found it necessary to rebuke Peter who was reputed to be "chief" of the apostles.

Paul will insist that his Gospel is not human in character, content or origin. Though he had heard Stephen's arguments concerning Jesus Christ, and though subdued to Christ on the Damascus Road, he remained in a state of confusion until God began to "reveal His Son" in him. An extended period of concentration, meditation and re-assessment was necessary before Paul could launch out on his new adventure of faith. He did not merely formulate "a new philosophy" by means of a superior intellect. God unfolded before him an eternal plan of blessing and glory for men **"in Christ"**. And Paul never forgot that his Gospel was **received** as a "revelation", and by supernatural means,

I. PAUL recalls his manner of life before meeting Jesus, (vs. 13-14; Acts 26:4-5; Phil. 3:5).

- **A.** He had been a serious student of Judaism advancing far beyond his equals in the nation, (vs. 14; Acts 22:3; Phil. 3:4-6; comp. I Cor. 15:9-19; 2 Cor.11:23).
- **B.** He possessed a burning, consuming zeal to foster the "traditions of the fathers", (Matt. 15:2; Col. 2:B; Jo:. 9:3-5}
- **C.** Knowing that the two systems of thought could not be harmonized, he became a zealous opponent of Christianity.

1. Christianity clearly rejected the Pharisaic system as bankrupt of the righteousness which God required, (Matt. 5:20).

2. Christians charged the Jews with:

a. Being stiff necked and hard hearted,(Acts7:51-53).

b. Crucifying their long expected Messiah, (Acts 3:13-26).

c. Spiritual blindness, (Matt, 13:14).

3. In zeal for what he had been taught, Saul of Tarsus abandoned himself to the task of persecuting and wasting the church of God, (Acts 8:3; 9:21; 21:4; I Cor.15:9; I Tim. 1:13).

II. He recognizes the hand of God's providence in making him a minister of the gospel, (vs. 15-16).

A. From his birth he had been separated unto God.

1. God had purposed to use him from the beginning, and had been preparing him for a great task.

2. Saul did not recognize this until startled by the sudden appearance of Jesus on the Damascus Road.

3. Others are said to have had God's hand upon them from their earliest existence, (Jer .1:4-8; Isa . 49:1, 5; Luke 1:76-80).

B. On the Damascus road Paul had seen Jesus as the true messiah and his lord, receiving a call to the Gospel ministry, (Acts 9:4-6, 5-16; 22:14-16; 26:13-20).

C. In the synagogues of Damascus he had "preached Christ, ***that he is the son of God***", (Acts 9:20-21).

D. Later he would be sent forth as a missionary to the Gentiles, (Acts 13).

III. Paul asserts that the gospel he preaches is of supernatural origin, (vs. 11-12, 17).

A. IT WAS "NOT OF MEN".

1. He did not receive it of men.

2. Man did not teach it to him.

3. This refers especially to that which was uniquely his that Jew and Gentile were to become **"one body"** in Christ.

B. He received it "by revelation of Jesus Christ".

1. With such a background as his, Paul could never have accepted such a message from any mere man.

2. He was "apprehended" by Jesus Christ and, thus, received the "good news", (Phil. 3:12).

C. His full, gospel ministry did not immediately follow his experience on the Damascus road.

1. His Gospel was received during the three years that he spent in the desert of Arabia.

2. This was a much-needed period of re-assessment and re-adjustment; through this "discipline of the desert" he learned to follow Christ.

a. It was necessary that he rethink his entire approach to life.

b. Much time would be required for him to bring everything into clear focus seeing it in proper perspective.

c. Others before him had profited from such a "desert" experience, where they could be alone with God: Moses, Elijah, John the Baptist, and Jesus.

D. It must be understood that Paul's gospel involved ***far more*** than the mere fact of Christ's death, burial and resurrection, this had been the means of opening a door of abundant blessings, and the revealing of Divine secrets long kept.

1. It involved God's provision for men "in Christ".

2. It involved His purpose for the church as Christ's body, where race, sexual and social distinctions were to be erased.

3. It involved a divine secret for triumphant living.

IV. Paul clearly received his apostleship independent of anything bestowed by the Jerusalem Church, but he did not isolate himself from that church.

A. After three years he did make a brief visit to Jerusalem.

1. During this visit he saw only Peter, of the original twelve.

2. He also saw James, the Lord's brother, who appears to have been pastor of the Jerusalem

church. No word is given concerning his appointment to apostleship.

B. It appears that Paul did identify himself with the Jerusalem Church on this occasion, (Acts 9:26-28),

1. His first attempt to do so was rebuffed; this proves that there was no such thing as a "universal church membership" in the first century.

a. The disciples there feared him.

b. They did not think he could be a disciple who had so bitterly opposed them in the past.

2. Paul was not discouraged by their distrust; he pressed his insistence on their acceptance.

3. Through the efforts of Barnabas, Paul was finally accepted, and greatly enriched their fellowship.

a. This suggests that Paul's meeting with Peter came only after he had attempted to join the Jerusalem church.

b. Barnabas first heard Paul's testimony; convinced of its validity, he then presented him to Peter and James.

4. On this visit to Jerusalem Paul "spoke boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians: but they went about to slay him, (Acts 9:29).

C. It was also on this first visit to Jerusalem that he saw a vision in the temple, soon departing for Syria and Cilicia, (Acts 22:17-21; 26:12-18).

1. Luke states the OUTWARD IMPULSE for his departure, fear for his life, (Acts 9: 29-30).

2. But Paul gives the more **INWARD**, personal and spiritual motivation; God had called him too specific work elsewhere, (Acts 22:17-21; Gal. 1:20-21).

D. Though no details are given of Paul's ministry between A.D. 39 - 44, it is strongly inferred that these may have been busy years of zealous missionary activity.

1. During this time he "preached the faith which once he destroyed", (Gal. 1:23).

a. His visit to Jerusalem had made him known to that one church, (comp. Acts 9: 30-31).

b. However, he was known to the other Judean churches during this period only by reputation; they evidently received reports of what he was doing in Syria and Cilicia.

c. By these reports they were able to glorify God in him.

2. The book of Acts gives no account of the planting of churches in Syria and Cilicia.

a. It does mention "brethren" and "churches" there,(15: 23, 41).

b. Paul, in Galatians 1:21, fills out that blank space in history; he leaves little doubt that he planted those churches.

c. Thus, we see one of the many instances in which Paul's epistles, without any design or intention to do so, fills out the blanks in Luke's historical narrative.

3. Conybeare and Howson suggest that many of Paul's sufferings may have taken place during this Cilician and Syrian ministry, (2 Cor. 11:24-26). Luke does not account for five Jewish scourgings, two Roman beatings with rods, three shipwrecks, or the night and day that Paul spent "in the deep".

CONCLUSION:

To quote the words of Reginald E.0. White, Paul ''is no sooner a Christian than He is in the deepest sense a churchman". Though receiving an independent Gospel and call to apostleship; though passing through a tremendous spiritual experience without the aid of churchmen; He was not so foolish as to isolate himself from that channel through which God had purposed, during this age, to bless, enrich and transform the lives of men. By his love, concern, and jealous care for the "body of Christ", Paul set a wonderful pattern that all may safely follow.

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

1. What sort of life did Saul of Tarsus live before his meeting with Jesus?
2. Why was he such a bitter enemy of Christianity?
3. When did God begin to prepare him for this great work?
4. When did he first recognize God's true purpose for his life?
5. How did Paul receive his Gospel?
6. When did his Gospel ministry really begin?
7. What was unique about Paul's Gospel?
8. Why did Paul spend such a long time in the desert of Arabia?
9. Did Paul isolate himself from his brethren?
10. How was he received by the Jerusalem church? Explain.
11. What outstanding experience did Paul have in the temple at Jerusalem?
12. Is there any indication of what affect this experience had on Paul's life?
13. How highly did Paul value the fellowship of his brethren as fellow-members of the body of Christ?
14. What is YOUR attitude toward the church for which Jesus shed His precious blood?

ABOUT THIS STUDY

What was at stake when Paul wrote to the churches of Galatia?

In this four-lesson study, Eugene Garner examines the people, problems, and doctrinal questions addressed in Paul’s Galatian letter. He traces the danger of legalism, the authority of Paul’s gospel and apostleship, the believer’s liberty in Christ, and the responsibility of covenant faithfulness.

The lessons emphasize careful interpretation in light of the historical setting, the distinction between divine grace and fleshly righteousness, and the importance of walking in the Spirit rather than returning to religious bondage.

Each section combines exposition, doctrinal instruction, practical application, and review questions suitable for personal study, classroom teaching, or church discussion.

This preserved edition presents the original lessons without alteration.

EUGENE GARNER