

The Book of Galatians (Part 3)

Author: Larry W. Wilson

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Galatians Conclusion

Paul continues his messages to the Jews and Gentiles in Galatia.

Galatians 4:13-16 “[I have been told that some in the church have had a change of heart towards me. I am no longer welcome in Galatia.] **As you know, it was because of an illness that I first preached the gospel to you. Even though my illness was a trial to you** [you were very supportive of my physical needs during my recovery], **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. Have I now become your enemy by telling you the truth?”**

Galatians 4:17- 20 **“Those people** [from Jerusalem belonging to the circumcision group] **are zealous to win you over** [to a gospel of justification through obedience], **but** [it is] **for no good. What they** [really] **want is to alienate you from us** [who know freedom in Christ], **so that you may be zealous for them. It is fine to be zealous, provided the purpose is good, and to be so always and not just when I am with you. My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until** [the ways and joy of] **Christ is** [are] **formed in you, how I wish I could be with you now and change my tone, because I am perplexed about you!”**

Galatians 4:21-26 **“Tell me, you who want to be under the law** [you who want to be justified through obedience], **are you not aware of what the law says? For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman** [Hagar] **and the other by the free woman** [Sarah]. **His son by the slave woman was born in the ordinary way** [through the works of the flesh]; **but his son by the free woman was born as the result of a promise** [Sarah was too old to conceive]. **These things may be taken figuratively, for the** [two] **women represent two covenants. One covenant is from Mount Sinai and** [it produces] **bears children who are to be slaves** [to the law]: **This is Hagar. Now Hagar stands for Mount Sinai in Arabia** [where the law was given] **and corresponds to the present city of Jerusalem, because she** [Hagar] **is in slavery with her children** [Jerusalem]. [The children of Hagar think they can be saved through obedience and they are slaves to the idea that salvation comes through works of the flesh. I know this well, for it was my zealous experience and religion at one time!] **But the** [New] **Jerusalem that is above** [is comprised of those who believe God’s promises. They are truly] **is free, and she** [New Jerusalem] **is our mother.”**

Galatians 4:27- 30 **“For it is written** [in an oracle – Isaiah 54:1]: **“Be glad, O barren woman** [Sarah], **who bears no children; break forth and cry aloud, you who have no labor pains; because more are the children of the desolate woman** [Sarah] **than of her who has a**

husband. [This oracle caricatures Sarah, who was a barren woman for most of her life. But God kept His promise and she miraculously conceived. The idea is that Sarah, the barren woman, would have many times more children than any ordinary woman could possibly have through the works of the flesh.] **Now you, [Gentile and Jewish] brothers [in the Lord are], like Isaac, are children of promise. At that time, the son born in the ordinary way [Ishmael] persecuted the son [Isaac] born by the power of the Spirit. It is the same now. But what does the Scripture say? “[God commanded Abraham] Get rid of the slave woman and her son, for the slave woman's son will never share in the inheritance with the free woman's son.”**

Galatians 4:31 **“Therefore, brothers, we [who are believers in Jesus] are not children of the slave woman [our righteousness does not come from our obedience], but [we are] of the free woman [our righteousness comes from Christ through faith].”**

Although obedience is required of all mankind, we cannot justify ourselves before God through obedience. We are truly free even though the law imposes its obligations on us. Our joy is in knowing that Christ is our Savior. He is our righteousness. We want to please Him for He has provided the righteousness we need. Paul told the brothers in Rome the same thing: **“For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: ‘The righteous will live by faith.’ ”** (Romans 1:17)

Salvation Comes to Those Who Have Faith

Galatians 5:1,2 **“It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery. Mark my words! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all.”**

Paul was writing that if the church from Galatia listened to the men from Jerusalem and submitted to circumcision, their confidence before God would be found in the deeds of the flesh and they would slip deeper and deeper into the slavery that legalism demands. Their religious experience would be reduced to do's and don'ts (the life of a slave) and the joy of knowing the riches of Christ would fade away. Their religious experience would become a ritual and their growth in Christ would become stale because there was no faith. Do we want to deceive ourselves and think that we save ourselves from eternal death by obedience or do we want to know God and walk with Him in Spirit and Truth? Salvation comes to everyone who believes the promises of God. **“For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law.”** (Romans 3:8)

Galatians 5:3-6 **“Again I declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole law. [You are obligated to obey more laws than you can possibly remember!] You who are trying to be justified by [obeying the] law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace [God's favor]. [Your efforts and Christ's sacrifice will have no value.] But by faith we eagerly await through the Spirit the righteousness for [the fulfillment of the promises given to Abraham in] which we hope. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any [salvific] value. The only**

thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.”

Galatians 5:7-10 “[My dear children,] **You were running a good race. Who cut in on you** [pun intended] **and kept you from obeying the truth?** [I know who. I am well acquainted with the circumcision group. They love their slavery and self-righteousness. They foolishly think obedience makes them righteous in God’s sight.] **That kind of persuasion does not come from the one** [the Holy Spirit] **who calls you** [to follow Christ]. [Jesus said,] **‘A little yeast works through the whole batch of dough.’** [This means a little heresy contaminates the whole religion.] **I am confident in the Lord that you will take no other view** [than believing in God’s promises]. **The one who is throwing you into confusion will pay the penalty, whoever he may be.”**

Galatians 5:11 **“Brothers,** [if you submit to circumcision, you will forfeit Christ to become a Jew] **if I am still preaching circumcision** [as some brothers from Jerusalem falsely claim], **why am I still being persecuted** [by the Jews]? [If I was advocating the teachings of Judaism] **In that case the offense of the cross has been abolished.**

The Jews did not accept this truth: Jesus terminated the “everlasting covenant” of circumcision given to Abraham which was a covenant in the flesh. The Lord showed Paul that **“A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a man’s praise is not from men, but from God.”** (Romans 2:28,29)]

Galatians 5:12-15 **“As for those agitators, I wish they would go the whole way and emasculate themselves!** [If they did this, they would have no more offspring!] **You, my brothers, were called to be free** [in Christ]. **But** [be careful,] **do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature** [which is naturally hostile toward the laws of God]; **rather,** [humbly accept God’s justification through the atonement and righteousness provided by Christ and] **serve one another in love. The entire law** [pertaining to man’s duty to man] **is summed up in a single command: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.”**

Live by the Holy Spirit, Not Our Sinful Nature

Galatians 5:16-17 **“So I say, live by the Spirit and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.** [“Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires, but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace. The sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not and cannot submit to God’s law. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.” (Romans 8:5-8)] **For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want.”**

Galatians 5:18-24 **“But if you are led by the Spirit** [to obey God’s laws], **you are not under**

law [as a means for justification]. [Notice how rebellion against God's law works:] **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. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.** [This is a crucial truth. Do not be deceived. You cannot claim that you are led by the Spirit when you rebel against the laws of God! The Holy Spirit's objective is to put God's laws in our hearts and minds so that we might enjoy eternity with God!] **But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and [rebellious and sensual] desires."**

Galatians 5:25-6:5 **"Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit** [who knows our thoughts and mind]. **Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other. Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other's burdens** [concern yourselves with the suffering of those around you], **and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. If anyone thinks he is something** [righteous] **when [actually,] he is nothing, he deceives himself. Each one should test his own actions [by looking into the intent of the law and after noticing his own failures and successes through faith] Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else, for each one should carry his own load** [of responsibilities as far as possible]."

Galatians 6:6-10 **"Anyone who receives instruction in the Word must share all good things with his instructor.** [Be charitable to those who teach the Word and carry its burden.] **Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a [good] harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers."**

Galatians 6:11,12 **"See what large letters I use as I write to you with my own hand!** [Because I am nearly blind and no one around me can take dictation, I have written this letter with my own hand.] **Those who want to make a good impression outwardly are trying to compel you to be circumcised. The only reason they do this is to avoid being persecuted for the cross of Christ.** [They foolishly think that the Jews will approve of us if we consent to circumcision. This is totally false. Any compromise or dilution on the importance of the perfect life and sacrificial death of Jesus on the cross will derail the gospel of Christ and in due time, Christianity will be absorbed within the confusion and darkness of Judaism.]"

Galatians 6:13-18 **"Not even those who are circumcised obey the law, yet they want you to be circumcised that they may boast about your flesh.** [They want to return to Jerusalem and say to the high priest, "Look, here are the 'backsliders' that returned to Judaism!"] **May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means**

anything [now]; **what counts** [in God's sight] **is a new creation.** [Believe God's promises, walk by faith, allow the law to serve its purpose, and the Holy Spirit will make you a new creation! When God's laws are written in our hearts and minds His image is restored in us!] **Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule** ["Stop thinking that obedience will bring salvation." I say this], **even to the Israel of God** [who has been separated from ancient Israel. (James 1:1; 2:1)]. **Finally, let no one cause me trouble** [dispute the things which the Lord has revealed to me], **for I** [am a servant of the Lord Jesus and I] **bear on my body the marks** [and stripes] **of Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers. Amen."**

Larry Wilson