

2. Christ Alone and Faith Alone! Galatians Chapter 2

Recap: How is the gospel that Paul preached to the Galatians described in chapter 1?

Jesus Christ gave himself for our sins to rescue us (v4) and was raised from the dead. (v1)

What is happening that is troubling Paul and the Galatian churches?

False teachers are trying to distort the gospel by preaching a contrary gospel!

Why is Paul so sure that he has conveyed the gospel correctly?

Paul was commissioned to declare the true gospel by Jesus (1:1) and the Father (1:1, 1:15).

Understanding the Text

Read Ch.2:1-3 Why did Paul privately talk with the Apostles in Jerusalem?

Paul wanted to submit his gospel to them, to check that they agreed with it, and that the Apostles might not be at cross purposes to the work with the Gentiles.

Read verses 3-10. Who are Paul's opponents and what are they doing?

They are those who would compel circumcision (3), 'false brethren secretly brought in', spies of the liberty which we have in Christ Jesus..to bring us into bondage' (v4). (Judaisers)

Who endorsed Paul's gospel to the Gentiles, and why was this significant?

James, Cephas and John – the apostolic leaders of the Jerusalem Church. This showed that the church as a whole saw that Paul's ministry and gospel to the Gentiles were legitimate.

What did the Apostles observe that convinced them that Gentiles too can be saved?

They saw that Paul was entrusted with the gospel for the Gentiles (v7), this was God's work (v8), and that Paul's salvation and commissioning by Jesus were part of this, God's plan (v9).

Read verses 11-20. Paul and Peter disagree in verses 11-12, and Peter is in the wrong. Why is Peter's behaviour so very disgraceful?

Peter knew that we are saved by grace (v1) through Christ, not by circumcision & trying to obey the law. (vv.15-16) He stopped eating with Gentile believers only because of fear (v12) of what the Judaisers might think. This amounted to shameful hypocrisy.

Read verses 15-16. How much of our salvation is brought about by 'faith in Christ', and how much is brought about by 'works of the law'?

100% by Faith in Christ; 0% through works of the law. Salvation is by *Faith in Christ Alone*.

Read verses 17-21. Why is it a dead end to try to be justified by the Law?

The law just proves that I am a law breaker (v18) and declares me dead. (v19). It can't earn righteousness – if it could, then Christ would have died for nothing! (v21)

Discuss: How should we respond if anyone says that good works or church traditions are obligatory or necessary for salvation?

Consider verses 17-20. If we don't have to perform the works of the Law to be saved, then is Paul saying that we have a licence to sin?

No, we are justified, but not to sin (v17), we live for God now (v19), our old self is crucified and Christ lives in us (v20), also we love and obey him because he loved us first (v.20).

Summary: If righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly. We are saved through *Faith in Christ, Alone*.

3. Galatians Chapter 3, vv. 1-18 Righteousness by Faith Alone

Recap: *What issue has been troubling Paul and the Galatian churches?*

False teachers are trying to distort the gospel by preaching a contrary gospel!

The false teachers have not been denying the death and resurrection of Jesus. How then have they been effectively denying the gospel?

They have tried to add works of the law as preconditions to salvation.

Understanding the Text:

Read verses 1-5. What Either/Or Alternatives (antitheses) are contrasted (juxtaposed) by Paul here?

- Reception of the Spirit: by works-of-the-Law, VS faith by hearing. (v2)
- God's work amongst them: by works of the Law, VS hearing with faith. (v5)

Read verses 6-8. How does Paul turn the tables on those false teachers who would try to judaize Christian believers?

Paul makes it clear that believers by faith are the true spiritual descendants of Abraham, whether Jew or Gentile, by the faith that justified Abraham himself, rather than by Law.

Note: the Greek word for 'Justify' is the same one as to 'righteous-ify' or make righteous.

Abraham believed God and it was reckoned or credited to him as righteousness. Does this mean that the righteousness status was generated by Abraham, or received by him as a gift?

Crediting or reckoning implies that the status of righteousness in God's eyes was NOT earned or generated by Abraham, but was RECEIVED by him as a gift, from outside of him. This is the doctrine of 'Alien' (foreign, or from outside) Righteousness, received by Faith Alone.

How then are all nations being blessed in Abraham? How are we?

We and other nations are blessed by the gospel and faith of Abraham through Jesus.

Read verses 10-14. This is a rich section on the gospel.

- *What does the Law do to anyone who does not obey it perfectly?*
The law places such a person under a curse. (v10)
- *How many are under the curse of the Law?* (as many as are of the Law; ie trying to keep it – v10)
- *How many are justified by the Law before God?* 'No-one'. (v11)
- *How does Jesus redeem us from the curse of the Law?* He takes it's penalty on our behalf by hanging on the cross. (v13)
- *So what benefits does faith in Christ lead to?* The blessing of Abraham, and the promise of the Spirit. (v14)

Read vv.15-18. Were the promises to us via Christ, given before or after the Law of Moses?

Before. *So was the promise by faith independent of obeying the Law?* Yes, totally.

Summary: We are saved through Faith Alone apart from works of the Law. **Memory verse:** Galatians 3:6 “..Abraham believed God, and it was credited (or reckoned) to him as righteousness.” (= a status gifted from outside or 'ALIEN RIGHTEOUSNESS')

4. Galatians Chapter 3:19-4:7 “Why the Law, then?”

Recap: *What issue has Paul been struggling against for the Galatian churches?*

False teachers (Judaizers) have been saying that people must ADD obedience to the Jewish Law or ‘Torah’, to what Jesus has done, in order for us to be saved.

How has Paul been arguing that we are saved?

- By Christ Alone, By Grace Alone, Justified Through Faith Alone!
- Alien Righteousness, rather than by earning through the works of the Law.
- The ‘Do’ versus ‘Done!’ Distinction – We don’t need to ‘Do’ to save ourselves, because Jesus has ‘Done!’ to save us.

How had Abraham been saved even long before the Law came along? By Faith in God’s Promises, which looked forward to Jesus. (Galatians 3:18, cf. Genesis 15:1-6)

Why did Paul need to say that the Law is valuable if viewed rightly? (cf. Gal. 2:17)

Paul needs to show that Christianity is legitimate: that grace does not promote sin. He also wants to show that the New Testament is not in opposition to the Old, but rather builds on it.

Pre-discussion: *If we are saved by Christ Jesus alone, by Grace alone, through Faith alone, then why did God give the Law through Moses in the first place?* (Just explore what the group thinks. They may suggest anything from dispensations, to tutoring, to revelation of God’s character, to the needs of the Israelite Theocracy, to pointing forward to Jesus etc.)

“Let’s see what explanations Paul gives, next.”

Read Gal. 3:19-3:23 *This section is hard to understand! But we will break it down.*

What did the Law reveal about humans before Christ’s coming?

It revealed what sin is, and that we are sinners – ‘because of transgressions’ (v19)

What was the time that it was ordained for to do this?

Until the seed would come to whom the promise had been made (Jesus).

If God himself mediated the promises to Abraham, but also mediated his Law to Moses, are these two things opposed? Do they contradict one another?

May it never be! (v21) They are both part of God’s plan, and both mediated by Him. God doesn’t contradict himself. The promise was always meant to supersede the Law.

Read Gal. 3:21-25 *What things could and couldn’t the Law do before Christ? (v21)*

It couldn’t give life or righteousness. (v21) But it could tutor us and lead us to Christ. (v24)

Read Gal. 3:26-29 *How is our new situation in Christ described?*

We are sons of (v26), clothed with Christ, baptised into Christ (v27), all one in Christ (v28), we belong to Christ, and are Abraham’s descendants and heirs to the promise. (v29)

Read Galatians 4:1-7 *How are children managed while they wait to become heirs?*

How was this like us before we came into our inheritance in Christ?

The law guarded, managed, and enslaved us (v1-3) while we awaited full adoption in Christ (v4). Once we got that, we are truly Sons and heirs of God, with the Son’s Spirit also (vv5-7). **How great that is!**

Memory Verse: Gal 3:24-25:

‘Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.’

5. Galatians Chapter 4:8 – 4:31 Slavery to Freedom!

Recap: What couldn't the Law help us with?

Life and Righteousness.

But why was the law still valuable?

A tutor to Christ. Tells us about sin and God's Character. Drives us to Christ.

What was the decisive turning point in our use of the Law?

Faith in Christ Alone for Salvation.

Read Galatians 4:8-11.

To what and to whom were we slaves before we turned to Christ? (Hint: v3)

The Law and the other elemental things (v3). Other (small "g") "gods" (v8).

Think back to before you became a Christian. Was this true for you also?

Yes; legalism, morality, desires of sin, etc. - controlled and oppressed us.

Why would observing various days and months and seasons and years be a problem for the New Testament Christians in Galatia?

Because it could become a new legalism and displace Christ's 'Done' work.

Read Galatians 4:12-20.

What do you sense about Paul's relationship with the Galatians from this passage?

Paul loves them and is concerned for them. That's why he is stern with them! (v20)

What does Paul want for them?

Paul wants them to become like Paul (accept the true gospel; v12) and like Christ! (v19).

An Allegory is when the surface facts of a story equate to and reveal a deeper truth. Eg. Pilgrim's Progress.

Read Genesis 16:1-6, 16:15-16, & 17:18-22, 21:1-14. Then read Galatians 4:21-31.

V21: Who is Paul addressing this section to? What will he base his argument on?

Those who want to be under the Law; so Paul will quote the Law to them! 'it is written' (v22)

How does Paul contrast the covenant of the Law (Hagar) versus the covenant of grace according to Promise (Sarah)?

Hagar	Sarah
Bond (slave) woman (v22)	Free woman (v22)
Son born according to flesh (v23)	Son born through the promise (v23)
Covenant from Mount Sinai (v24-26) = slaves in earthly Jerusalem	Children of Promise (v28) = free children of Heavenly Jerusalem

Read v29. How are things just the same?

Enslaving legalists still persecute the free saints! (For a time, Hagar persecuted Sarah)

Read v30. Will legalists inherit the promises? No: they are cast out, like Ishmael.

How could we summarise verse 31?

We are free, not under law, we receive the promises by faith alone, we are heavenly children.

Memory Verse: Galatians 4:30b: "Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be an heir with the son of the free woman."

6. Galatians Chapter 5:1 –5:26 Liberty in the Spirit

Recap: *The Law just condemns and enslaves us. But how do we actually take hold of the promises made to Abraham?*

We take hold of them through faith in Jesus and what He has done for us.

But why was the Law still valuable?

A tutor to Christ. Tells us about sin and God's Character. Drives us to Christ.

And how are we Sarah's children, not Hagar's children?

We are not under the slavery of the Law but are free children of the promise; we belong not to Sinai and the earthly Jerusalem but to the Heavenly Jerusalem, by faith.

Read Galatians 5:1-6. (Faith versus the Law)

What reason is given here for why Christ set us free from the Law?

For freedom's sake. Christ actually wants us to be free, because freedom is good in itself.

Examine verses 2-6. Circumcision implies a commitment to obey the Jewish Law (Torah). If a Christian did choose to go and get circumcised, what would they be saying about the finished work of Christ?

They would be implying that it is being a Jew and obeying the Law that saves, not Christ's work on the cross, received by faith. (v4 'seeking to be justified by law')

How seriously does Paul rate that decision?

Very seriously indeed. It would be severing the believer from Christ, falling from grace. (v4)

Can Jews and Gentiles alike be saved by faith (working itself through love)?

Yes. The surgical background makes no difference; faith working itself through love (in Christ) is what saves. (v6)

Read Galatians 5:7-12. (Against Legalism)

What indications do you see in this section that choosing circumcision and obeying the truth (about Jesus) are incompatible?

The Judaizers' message is not from God (v6). It's a false teaching (vv.9-10). If it were true, Jews wouldn't persecute Paul/Christians, Christianity would be little different to Judaism. (vv.11-12).

Read Galatians 5:16-18. (For Freedom)

How then are we to use our freedom in Christ? Why?

Not in sin but in Love, because this fulfils the law anyway, and is helpful for us.

What controls us when we try to live under the Law?

The desire of the flesh (sin).

What alternative do we have that guides us even better than the Law did? The Spirit.

Read Galatians 5:19-26 (Freedom in the Spirit)

What results from living by the flesh (sinful nature), are mentioned here?

The list of vices: v.19. Then, not inheriting the kingdom. (v.21)

In Christ, has the flesh already been decisively defeated?

Yes, our attitude and longings are deeply changed. (v.24) Sin's power is broken.

In Gal. 5:16-25, what motivates us to produce the fruit of the Holy Spirit? Discuss.

We have the Spirit, who changes our desires and strengthens us to obey God truly: vv16-17.

The fruit of the Spirit naturally arises as it is His *fruit!* (v22).

We are FREE in the Spirit to do good (v22), so who wouldn't want to?

The fruit is inherently good and beneficial: (v22). Keeping in step with the Spirit fits living in the Spirit (v25).

Memory Verse: Gal. 5:22. Supplementary Memory Verse(!): Gal. 5:25.

7. Galatians Chapter 6:1 –6:18 Obligations and Freedoms

Recap: *How are we Sarah's children, not Hagar's children?*

We are not under the slavery of the Law but are free children of the promise; we belong not to Sinai and the earthly Jerusalem but to the Heavenly Jerusalem, by faith.

Read Galatians 6:1-5. (Responsibilities)

Paul has told the Galatians that they are free from the burden of the Law (demands of the Jewish Torah). What law are we not to be free from?

The law of Christ: to love one another. (v2. Note: cf. 5:14)

Under this freedom from the written law, what key concerns does Paul guard against in verses 1-5?

- Sin leading to more sin, as well as to others sinning. (v1)
- Someone not being supported without help. (v2)
- Pride. (v3)
- Comparisons. (v4)
- Avoidance of personal responsibility. (v5)

Read Galatians 6:6-10

What two lifestyles are spoken of here? What are the features & results of each?

One is the lifestyle that mocks grace, sows to one's own flesh, and reaps corruption. (vv. 7-8)

The other is the lifestyle that sows to please the Spirit, and from the Spirit will reap eternal life. (v8)

How are verses 9 and 10 linked?

Doing good to all, and especially to Christians, leads to reaping, perhaps of even more souls. This is because doing good is also a good witness.

Why did Paul hand-write verse 11? Why should this verse direct the Galatians to take his letter seriously?

Probably because the false teachers would have tried to pass their own false teachings off as having been written by Paul. Since this letter is written by Paul the Apostle, this letter is to be taken very seriously.

Let's read the great summary of the whole letter in verses 12-16. In verses 12-13, what are the false teachers trying to do, and why?

(v12) They compel circumcision on gentile believers, to make a good impression on the Jews, only in order to avoid persecution for the cross of Christ.

Why is this a hypocritical action to compel on the Galatians?

Not even the Jews have ever been able to keep the law, which circumcision obliges. (v13)

Why does Paul bring the issue of boasting into it, in verses 13 through 16?

Judaizers want to boast about extending Judaism and about being hard-core Jews. Paul was the hardest of hard-core Jews, but now he boasts only in what is worth boasting about: the cross of Christ.

Why would it be foolish to boast now in circumcision or in trying to be a Jew?

Because circumcision or un-circumcision means nothing – we are no longer worldly, but are part of the new creation. (vv 14-15) We are in fact, part of God's Israel (by faith)! (v16)

Memory Verse - Galatians 6:15: "Neither circumcision nor un-circumcision means anything; what counts is a new creation."