

A dynamic splash of blue water, rendered in various shades from light to deep blue, with white highlights and droplets, creating a sense of movement and freshness. The splash is centered horizontally and occupies the upper half of the page.

GALATIANS

FOURTH
STREAM
FINDING HOPE

Welcome to the Book of Galatians!

To begin your study of Galatians, investigate the references listed in the overview chart below. Use these verses as guideposts to unlock the message of the book. The key verse that we have chosen is 5:25. It reflects the central theme of the book: following the True Gospel.

Paul discusses giving his life to the Good News by living out spiritual consistency with the truth he embraced. He then explains a spiritual understanding of the true Gospel is in relationship to a distorted gospel; a gospel that confuses the relationship between faith and law keeping. He ends this early letter with an explanation of the necessity of following the Spirit if we are to please the One who has called us as soldiers.

GALATIANS	True Gospel	
A True Spiritual Example	A True Spiritual Understanding	A True Spiritual Walk
2:20,21	3:1-3,24; 4:4-7	5:1,16,25; 6:2-5
1-2	3-4	5-6

"If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit." 5:25

Open Your Heart as You Read!

The book of Galatians explains that external works cannot perfect us before God. Though works of faith will be evident (James 2:14-26), these works originate from the Father and give us no claim to a goodness of our own (Ephesians 2:8-10).

Are your senses trained to discern the good and evil that result from works-oriented approaches to faith? What relationship does the Law have to living by faith? Do you know how to discern the difference between walking in the Spirit and walking in the flesh? Why are "works of faith" incredibly important within the purposes of God?

AUTHOR OF GALATIANS

It is clear from the evidence within this letter that the Apostle Paul was the writer. (1:1, 11-18, 23).

DATE

From 1:1-10 it is apparent that Galatians was written after the Jerusalem Council met in Acts 15 to deal with the problem of circumcision being a requirement for salvation (Acts 15:1) in A.D. 49. The probable date for writing was A.D. 53.

OTHER HISTORY

In order to understand the book of Galatians, it is necessary for us to realize that the book of Acts implies the existence of three types of "Judaizers" during the years Paul was planting kingdom assemblies or "churches." In Acts 10 and following, some of the early Jewish Christians doubted the possibility of Gentile salvation without circumcision (the Cornelius affair). This was the first emerging of Judaizers.

In Acts 13 and following, Paul was almost killed by Jews who both rejected Christ as the Messiah and who opposed Gentiles as heirs of the promises of Abraham (the Lystra affair). This was the second class of Judaizers. Finally, in Acts 15 through Acts 21, a third class of Judaizers developed which tried to impose legalism upon the Christian life. In essence this class taught that to be a good Christian, you had to be a good Jew. These Judaizers increased most rapidly due to the finality of the decrees sent out to the churches by the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15 (the circumcision affair). And, more than likely, all three classes of Judaizers could be found in Galatia.

If these classes of Judaizers are kept firmly in mind as one reads through the letter to the Galatians, it should clarify Paul's purpose for writing the book. We believe that each of the three classes are refuted in Galatians, with special emphasis on the third class which taught the necessity of the law for spiritual attainment in the Christ-followers life. This refutation was made from two vantage points: historical and doctrinal. In the historical section, Paul used three apostolic encounters to answer the Judaizing error involved in each respective encounter. In the doctrinal portion (the final four chapters), he follows the same line by refuting the first, second, and third class of Judaizers respectively.

Why Study the book of Galatians?

To show us that once salvation arrives as a gift from God, blessing comes from God on the basis of faith, not the law, just as it did when our hearts came alive. As followers we need to repeatedly remind ourselves that God is not primarily concerned with our works on His behalf but rather with our faith in Him (Galatians 3:3). This is a tremendously freeing concept - which is why Paul uses the term "liberty" 11 times in this book. Can you state in a sentence what a Christian enjoys freedom from - and freedom for?



Galatians Chapter Chart

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Questions	Chapter	Title	Verse
<p>What reason does Paul give to indicate why his Gospel should be held as the standard? Do you see any indications as to how Paul perceived that the Gospel was being distorted? Where had Paul received his authority?</p>	1		
<p>Is Paul indicating that there are two separate Gospels? What is Paul referring to when he speaks of the truth of the Gospel (note vs... 5,14)? What was Paul's conflict with Peter, and why was it significant?</p>	2		
<p>What is the relationship between the Law and the promise? What is the purpose of the Law? What was the Law never meant to accomplish?</p>	3		
<p>In what ways were others trying to shut out the Galatians, and what did this mean? How has Paul become like the Galatians? In what ways did he want them to become like him?</p>	4		
<p>Why does Paul continue to focus on who was hindering the Galatians? How can someone know whether or not he or she is walking by the Spirit? Why is Christian freedom not to be limited?</p>	5		
<p>What is the "load" referred to in verse five? What do you think that it means to sow "in the Spirit?" How do we bear another's burdens?</p>	6		

WHAT ABOUT TODAY?

We have been challenged to walk in the Spirit. Man-centered religion will always push us in the direction of being perfected by self-effort. There are many who want to restrict others from living by the Spirit. Don't fall into this spiritual stranglehold!

PLAYING WORK-UP

When I was a young boy, one of my favorite school recess games was Work-up. As each batter was retired, it advanced your position; and the end result was that you could "work-up" to a chance at bat. I would sit and dream all morning about two or even three chances to come to the plate (and usually I would sit and brood all afternoon about a strikeout and two ground-outs!).

The Galatian church functioned in much the same way. The "older kids" were the Judaizers. They needed the younger kids to make the game work. The whole contest was played for the goal of standing at the plate, that one glistening, beckoning opportunity to find your place in the sun. To be a hero. To be recognized as someone who could do it. Someone who could knock it out of the park, and get slapped on the back by fellow work-up batters. Games like this made life worth living, and the humdrum of classes bearable. They did little to give solid perspective or develop character.

Every Christian must determine whether or not he or she is playing work-up. Here are some attributes of those who do, excerpted from Galatians and elsewhere in the Scriptures. Recognition finds it's worth in external, visible manifestations. We must grow in a faith that is built upon a clear conscience and obedient lifestyle. Pursuit of God based upon recognition receives the judgment of Christ in Matthew 6:1-34. As you read this passage, answer the following questions:

- 1...What was the motivation in each instance for those who were playing work-up?
- 2...What is the main point that Christ is making in this discourse?
- 3...What causes people to play work up?
- 4...Based upon this passage, what can we do to help ourselves follow proper motivations and pursue a clear conscience?

Galatians 2:1-14...Those who play work-up fear men and not God. The desire to "fit in" and be "looked up" to can be so strong they cloud sound judgment. In what ways are you tempted to fear men above God in your own life? In the life of your church? In what ways do you feel that you could be tempted to be religiously "partial" as Peter was in this instance?

Galatians 3,4...Those who play work-up teach others to be recognized and justified by works. It is often popular to cite Paul's statement in Romans 6:14,15 that we are no longer under Law but under Grace. From the explanation found in chapters three and four, what do you believe is the relationship between Law and Grace? What does it mean to be "under" law and "under" grace? What are some correlations of being under circumcision as we apply this principle in our day? Where does faith's responsibility begin and law-keeping end?

Galatians 6:15...Paul makes it clear that we are to live as New Creations. Examine chapters five and six and record principles that will help you evaluate your life by the standard of a "New Creation." Add any other passages from the rest of Scripture that shed light on this kind of living.

A "bewitched" Galatian lived on the basis of brownie points, recognition, and external standards. For him the law and circumcision allowed evaluation by performance and provided a Gospel that had been distorted to look good in the flesh. A Carnal Corinthian lived strictly by conscience and consequently was a loose cannon who practiced sliding ethics. He was very self-centered and distorted the Gospel so it looked good to himself - without the concern for the evaluation of others that the Galatian carried.

A Noble Berean (Acts 17:11) strikes a balance between conscience and responsibility. He in no way seeks to be justified by works of the Law like the Galatian, but is reliant and confident in the Word of the Lord. His conscience is subjected to God's Word and he is noble-minded - representing an accurate Gospel that "looks good" to God!

FRUIT-FILLED CHRISTIAN

Here are some additional passages to help discover a more in-depth understanding of each of the fruits of the Spirit. As you consider each fruit and the appropriate references, ask yourself the question, "How can I be filled with this fruit?"

Love...

Matthew 5:44,46; 22:37,39; John 14:15; 15:9-19; 21:15-17; Romans 12:9,10; 1 Corinthians 13; 2 Corinthians 5:14; Galatians 5:13; Ephesians 4:16; 1 Timothy 1:14; 2 Timothy 1:7; 1 John 3:18.

Joy...

Nehemiah 8:10; Psalm 30:5; 63:7; 119:111; John 15:11; 16:24; 17:13; Philippians 2:2; 1 Thessalonians 2:20; Hebrews 12:2; James 1:2; Jude 1:24

Peace...

Proverbs 12:20; 16:7; Mark 9:50; Luke 8:48; John 14:27; 16:33; Acts 10:36; Romans 5:1; 8:6; 12:18; 14:19; Philippians 4:7,9; Colossians 3:15; Hebrews 12:14; James 13:18

Patience...

Ecclesiastes 7:8; Romans 2:4; Ephesians 4:2; Colossians 3:12; Hebrews 6:12; James 5:10; 1 Peter 2:20; 1 Corinthians 13:4; 1 Thessalonians 5:14; 2 Timothy 2:24; James 5:7,8; Psalm 37:7

Kindness...

Proverbs 3:3; 19:22; 31:26; Micah 6:8; Romans 11:22; Ephesians 2:7; Colossians 3:12; 1 Peter 2:3; 2 Peter 1:7

Goodness...

Exodus 33:19; 2 Samuel 2:6; Nehemiah 9:25,35; Psalm 68:10; Romans 15:14; Ephesians 5:9; 2 Thessalonians 1:11; Philemon 1:14

Faithfulness...

Psalm 36:5; 37:3; Lamentations 3:23; Matthew 23:23; Proverbs 28:20; Matthew 25:21,23; Luke 16:10-12; Colossians 4:7; 1 Timothy 3:11; 2 Timothy 2:2

Gentleness...

Proverbs 15:1; Matthew 5:5; 11:29; 1 Thessalonians 2:7; James 3:17; 1 Peter 3:4; 2 Corinthians 10:1; Galatians 6:1; 2 Timothy 2:25; James 3:13; 1 Peter 3:15

Self-Control...

Acts 24:25; 1 Corinthians 7:5,9; 9:25; 2 Timothy 3:3; 2 Peter 1:6

How do each of these qualities relate to the apparent internal problems the Galatians were experiencing (5:15, 26)?



THE PRISON LETTERS

Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians are called the prison letters because they apparently originated from Paul while he was incarcerated in Rome (Ephesians 3:1, 13). Like all of the apostolic writings, these letters were apparently circulated in regions that bordered the homes of the original recipients.

God often used less than stellar conditions to bring about His perfect will in and through His followers. Sometimes years would pass before God would see fit to terminate a particular circumstance of one of His servants. It is often through adversity and suffering that men and women of God are shaped and forged.

Consider some famous prisoners, most incarcerated unjustly, because of the jealousy of spiritually unprincipled men. **Joseph** was cast into a pit and sold into slavery by his own brothers, only to achieve short success before once again being imprisoned by his boss on the basis of totally false charges (Genesis 37). **Samson** was put to hard labor in the camp of the Philistines (Judges 16:21). **Jeremiah** was thrown into stocks, dungeons, and cells; even into a well.

Jesus spoke often of prisoners and imprisonment in His teachings (Matthew 5:25; 18:30; 25:36-44; Luke 12:58). He also indicated that His followers would suffer imprisonment (Luke 21:12), something that certainly befell many of them (Acts 4:3; 5:18; 12:3). John the Baptist was jailed by Herod (Matthew 4:12; and other Gospels.).

Paul was no stranger to the dungeon and often lost personal freedom for the sake of the Gospel. He had even imprisoned the followers of Christ before he himself was converted (Acts 8:3). He was beaten and detained often (Acts 16:22-29; 22:23; 2 Corinthians 6:5; 11:23). The book of Acts closes with Paul under house arrest for two years in Rome (Acts 28:16).

One incredible thing about God's people is that prison often became a place of spiritual growth despite the personal suffering it exacted. Paul truly believed that the sufferings of this world were not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed. He also had deep assurance that the Word of God could not be imprisoned.

Even when imprisoned, servants of God continue to recognize the effectiveness of the truth cutting through prison bars!