

## **LB 201 – Galatians**



Certificate and Diploma Levels

**Leader Handbook  
Nazarene Theological Institute  
Church of the Nazarene  
Africa Region**

Nazarene Theological Institute  
Church of the Nazarene – Africa Region

## **LB 201 -- Galatians**

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Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are from the *Today's New International Version*, accessed from:

<http://www.biblegateway.com>

# Syllabus

## ***Description***

This course will present the student with a deeper study of the Epistle of Paul to the Galatians with a concentration on its passages which deal with the plan of God regarding salvation and personal sanctification.

## **Course Rationale**

### *Introduction*

The Christian life is based on the work of Jesus Christ on the cross applied to the believer's life by the grace of God and the believer's personal faith. The apostle Paul also tells us as Christians to have a response ready when others ask us for the reason for our hope. For the 21<sup>st</sup> century Christian, that response is still needed. The Epistle to the Galatians treats the subject of those who try to transform the Christian faith into the rites and customs of a single culture instead of offering the grace of God to all. For Paul, that approach to the gospel reflects a pagan idea.

New believers, who have not studied the Gospel in-depth, have the tendency to incorporate their past religious experiences into the new faith which creates an unhealthy mix (syncretism). This demonstrates an earthly pride that impedes the deeper development of the believer and the church and that stops the joy of witnessing about one's faith.

The false preachers in Galatia viewed the Christian faith only through their religious background of Judaism. Pastors and other leaders in the Church of the Nazarene will find other religious backgrounds which will present dangerous mixtures that the Epistle to the Galatians never foresaw. But, by studying how Paul addresses the question in his circumstance, the spiritual leader can find a means of addressing the ideas or practices that new believers introduce from their non-Christian religious backgrounds.

The study of the Epistle to the Galatians can help one better share the Christian faith based on the grace of God to that saves all people, resulting in a justified and sanctified life. In faithfully sharing the contents of this Epistle with members of the church, the pastor can produce in the spirit of each one not only a more vibrant hope, but also the courage to witness to his or her own faith.

*Program goals*

The following program goals assigned to this module identify the competencies that the student must achieve through it.

- CON 2      knowledge of the history and content of the New Testament
- CON 3      use of the principles of Biblical interpretation
- CON 4      appreciation of the logical foundations of the Christian faith from the Biblical point of view when read from a Wesleyan perspective
- CON 12     application of Christian morality in daily life
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- COM 4      ability to teach the Word of God and make disciples who can make other disciples
- COM 10     ability to interpret and apply the Bible according to the best principles of Biblical interpretation
- 
- CAR 1      ability to give value to a Christian morality and how to apply this ethic to life
- CAR 4      ability to allow Christ's character to form the attitudes and actions of one's daily life
- CAR 11     the ability to love God with all one's heart, soul, mind and strength
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- CXT 2      ability to understand the context in which he or she lives with objectivity

### *Objectives specific to this class*

In order to reach the competencies listed above, the activities and requirements of this class are organized around some specific objectives. Through the presentations, readings, and exercises of this class, the student will know/ be able to:

1. analyze an Epistle according to the normal and abnormal signs and components in the letter (CON 3, COM 10);
2. present the history behind the letter and how Paul addresses the situation (CON 2);
3. determine how to address the religious backgrounds of new believers with the truth of the Gospel (CON 3; COM 10; CAR 1; CXT 2);
4. develop a series of lessons on a Epistle of the New Testament (CON 4,12; COM 4; CXT 12);
5. explain the doctrine of holiness as it is presented in the Epistle to the Galatians (CON 4; COM 10; CAR 11);
6. preach the practice of the holy life according to the teaching of this letter (CON 12; CAR 1,4; CXT 2).

The lessons and activities of this course are weighted with the following percentages of the 4 C's:

Content	50%
Competence	20%
Character	15%
Context	15%

### **Sources used**

The presentations of this course are taken from many commentaries and introductions with the base of "The Metaphorical Character of Justification by Faith in Galatians and Romans", the doctoral thesis of the co-author of the course, Dr. Lovett. From time to time, Guthrie, et al. *Nouveau Commentaire Biblique*, Emmaus is also referenced. The students will not have a principal textbook apart from their study Bible, from which they will be responsible to read and understand the introduction of the letter being presented. The NTI will make a student handbook available to accompany the class presentations.

The second half of the course depends particularly upon:

Hawthorne, Gerald F., and Martin, Ralph P., eds. *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*. Downer's Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1993.

Hansen, G. Walter. *Galatians*. Downer's Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1994.

Witherington, Ben. *Grace in Galatia: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Galatians*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1998.

### **Course requirements and calculation of grade**

1. *Attendance* – Regular attendance at all the class sessions during the course is required. Students should be ready to participate, take notes and reflect on discussion questions. A reduction of 25% will be assessed for each absence, not including the first.
2. *Outline* – The student will create an outline of the letter to the Galatians which reflects the argument Paul presents. **15%**
3. *Group discussions* – In groups, the students will discuss the religious backgrounds of the church members and new converts in their ministerial context. **15%**
4. *Group project* – Divide the class into groups of two to four. Each group will prepare a series of three Sunday School lessons based on the book of Galatians. Groups should have a least one diploma level student, who will write down the lessons. Certificate level students will contribute orally to the process. The three lessons are due before session 8, but no earlier than session 6. See the Appendices of teacher and student handbook for a sample lesson to follow as you prepare your lesson series. **20%**
5. *Answers in student handbook* – The student will answer the questions in the student handbook. This should be turned in to the class leader after the last session. **10%**
6. *Meditation* – This meditation must be based on a paragraph taken from Galatians chapter 5 or 6 and must not exceed 10 minutes in length. Diploma level will write out the meditation

and present it orally; certificate level can present it orally, without a written paper. On the first day, the leader should assign the meditation time to each student. If the class is large, there may be more than one meditation per session.

**10%**

7. Final exam: **30%**

This written exam will cover the general themes touched upon in the course. *Diploma level* students will be required to write short essays. *Certificate level* students will be called in one-by-one by the leader, and will respond to the essay questions orally.

**Class schedule** (nine sessions and the final exam)

1<sup>st</sup> session: Introduction to the circumstances surrounding the Epistle to the Galatians

2<sup>nd</sup> session: Introduction to the text

3<sup>rd</sup> session: Gal. 1.1-2.14 History of the question

4<sup>th</sup> session: Gal. 2.15-21 The Proposition

5<sup>th</sup> session: Gal 3.1-3:25 First scriptural exposition

6<sup>th</sup> session: Gal 3.26-4.20 First scriptural exposition (cont.)

7<sup>th</sup> session: Gal 4.21-5.6 Second scriptural exposition

8<sup>th</sup> session: Gal. 5.7-5:26 Practice of Christian ethics, part 1

9<sup>th</sup> session: Gal. 6:1-18 Practice of Christian ethics, part 2

10<sup>th</sup> session: Final Exam

**Lesson 1: Introduction to the Circumstances behind the Epistle to the Galatians**

Meditation: Galatians 1:1-5 (the leader should prepare this as a model of what the other students are to do)

Have the students choose a couple of choruses to sing.

Administrative work (leader)

1. Take attendance, receive tuition payments, and distribute materials.

2. Go over the course assignments, as follows:

**Outline:** For the last fifty years, new systems of analysis have been applied to the Epistle to the Galatians which have, in one manner or another, inspired a older vision of how Paul communicated his message to the Galatians. It consists of an analysis which is called literary criticism. Literary criticism analyzes this letter by studying other texts of the same period including writing and argumentation manuals. Several of the study Bibles and older commentaries did not have these new methods available when they created their outline of this letter. The more recent resources present, in contrast, many different outline models.

This course requires the student to read the letter several times. Then, using whatever resources you have available, even if only the class lectures, the student must devise an outline of this letter which indicates all the paragraphs and the structure the apostle used for tying all his ideas together. This assignment will be due the Wednesday morning of an intensive course or at the opening of the third session of a less intensive class.

**Group discussion:** Several times throughout the course, the class will divide onto discussion groups. In most cases the discussion will focus on the application and adaptations of Paul's arguments according to the religious backgrounds that the majority of our church members leave when they convert. Each time that the groups meet there will be a specific question to discuss. The students will be graded on the participation of all the members of the group.

**Sunday School lessons:** The Church of the Nazarene accepts the mandate to make disciples of all ages (children, adolescents, adults) by providing, among other possibilities, Sunday School. The lessons taught follow a theme or book of the Bible. Theological Institute students will have responsibilities for the rest of their lives to teach or organize education in Sunday School. Several of our churches have difficulty in buying teaching materials for Sunday School. Often the teacher must personally prepare the materials. Therefore, the course leader will direct how this must be done – see appendix which contains a template for the lessons. This assignment is due no sooner than the sixth session and no later than the start of the eighth session.

Here are some specific instructions for the Sunday School lessons:

- a. The series must have three lessons.
- b. For each lesson, choose a paragraph in Galatians as the lesson text. It is necessary to state in the presentation how the different lessons are tied together.
- c. Prepare a lesson outline with the main points underlined and including sub-points and discussion questions to ask for each point in the lesson. Write a paragraph of text for each point of the lesson in order to indicate what you are thinking.
- d. Be sure that the lesson includes a way to apply the material in the student's daily life for the week following the lesson.

***Student handbook:*** The student handbook follows the leader's presentation and allows the student to fill in the blanks with missing key words from the lecture. The student who does this work well should have no problem with the final exam. The first letter of each missing word has been provided. At the end of the session, compare your notes with your classmates. There will be time after the leader's presentation for the student to ask questions about what they did not understand. The leader will collect the student's handbook to check the students' work during the group discussions.

***Meditations:*** The student preacher will usually preach for more than half an hour. As an exercise to learn how to better focus what is to be said, the student must present a message that lasts no longer than ten minutes. Choose a text from either chapter five or six where Paul applies his teaching to daily life. The student must in 10 minutes indicate the doctrinal point and the application he or she wishes to make. This assignment requires the *Diploma student* to write down word-for-word the content of the meditation to be sure of its exact length. (*Certificate students* are not required to write it down, but should practice before what they will say). For all students, it would be a good idea to speak the message aloud before presenting it to be sure that the correct length of time is kept. This assignment is due the Thursday morning of an intensive class or before the sixth session of a less intensive class.

## **Leader Presentation and Discussion: Introduction to the circumstances behind the Epistle to the Galatians**

[In the Appendices at the back of the student handbook, see the map of Asia Minor and read the Introduction to Galatians from the *NIV Classic Reference Bible* (Zondervan, 1988).]

### *Circumstances*

For our study of this letter, we are going to begin with what we know to be the circumstances which inspired the letter. You realize first that to send a letter in the 1<sup>st</sup> century was very expensive. The parchment was expensive. In order to not waste the money, people had to pay a professional secretary to write the letter. It was normally necessary to make several copies: one to send by a specific route, another sent by a different route and one which stayed in the hands of the author. These letters were sent by private couriers and the sender paid for their transportation, lodging, food, and a salary. Often it was someone known quite well, either by the sender or by the addressee. We have said all that to underline the fact that Paul was engaged in ministry such that it seemed to him that it was too difficult to leave in order to go to Galatia to resolve the problem personally. He could not go; therefore, he probably sent a companion from his missionary group with the letter to represent him.

*Question: For the other letters, why did Paul write rather than going personally?*

*Romans – a request to go there; 2 Corinthians – quick reaction to Titus' arrival; Philippians – in prison; 1& 2 Thessalonians – forbidden to return; Philemon – in prison..*

*The situation:* In some churches in Galatia, the preachers started to preach a message that new Gentile converts must – in order to continue their progress as Christians – become members of the Jewish people, including submitting to being circumcised and following other Jewish regulations. It is unclear whether these preachers came from the outside as itinerant evangelists or if they were members of the local churches in Galatia. That is hardly important. At that time, Judaism was recognized as an official

religion by the Romans while Christianity was only recognized as a sect of Judaism. That would change soon. The new believers felt alone in the pagan cultural context which did not understand the transformation of thoughts, attitudes, and life that the believers had experienced. For these believers, some had already attended the synagogue and deepened their friendly, social relationships with the Jews. This, then, presented a great temptation by giving them a larger and deeper social context. Do not forget, many of the believers were Jewish before.

When Paul received news of the situation, the Gentiles had not yet been circumcised, but they were thinking about doing it. Paul wanted to respond quickly to the news, before the believers made a horrible error and while the preachers were still there. The letter must address therefore three things:

- 1) the situation;
- 2) the Galatian Gentile believers, and
- 3) the preachers of the false message.

From some of the phrases that Paul used, it seems that the preachers had added to their message particular criticisms against Paul. They said that Paul knew that the converts would have to become Jewish eventually in order to deepen their faith, but he kept that portion of the message back which left them with a weaker Christian faith. According to the opposing preachers, this was the means Paul used to please men without preaching all the law of the Christian life.

Paul was put in the position of having to defend himself. But to him, the most important thing was to defend the true gospel of freedom in Christ which is the truth that growing in the faith was not a matter of rites or race, but in following the Holy Spirit of God who sanctifies them.

*Which Galatians?*

Note to leader: This section depends upon the "Introduction" in the volume on the Epistle to the Galatians, from the *New Bible Commentary*. Students should look at the map of Asia Minor (Appendix 1).

The article indicates that when Paul was writing this letter, the Roman province of Galatia was composed of three regions – the ancient kingdom of Galatia (northern area of the province), the region of Pisidia with its capital Antioch, and Lycaonia with cities mentioned many times in the Book of Acts.

*Look at the map in Appendix 1 of the student handbook.*

For at least a century, there has been a debate concerning to whom this letter is addressed, whether to the northern area –that is the former Galatia- or the inhabitants of the cities of the south where Paul had established local churches during his first and second missionary journeys.

The article indicates that tradition favors the northern part, even though the Bible nowhere indicates that Paul established churches there. To hold this position, one adds a hypothesis that Paul, instead of going from Antioch in Pisidian towards the west, directly to Ephesus, he went instead to the north of Galatia while waiting for the Holy Spirit to permit him to go west and eventually to Europe. (Certain scholars propose that Paul visited Spain as the end of his work. In that way, the gospel would be preached to the western end of the earth.)

What this article does not say is that the Roman province of Galatia, as it was in the time of Paul, did not last for a long time. In the year A.D. 74, close to twenty years after this letter, a new province of Lycia- Phamphyilia was established which included the cities of the south and the word "Galatia" once again included only the cities of the north. When the early commentaries on this letter were written, this new situation was yet unknown. The commentaries presumed therefore that Paul addressed his letter to that province without knowing that in Paul's time the word "Galatia" was a larger region. When a tradition is rooted, it is very difficult to overcome.

Since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it has been known that the province of Galatia was larger than tradition believed. But a traditional position is very comfortable and it is preferred not to deny it. Therefore, a debate continues which will not be settled in the near future.

It is therefore uncertain to whom this letter is addressed. The choice is between the cities mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles that Paul planted and visited at least two times after or the other churches of whose existence there is no biblical indication. The defenders of the traditional view have tried to show the possibility of their implantation during Paul's second missionary journey. The problem is that possible is not the same as probable. The argument in favor of the traditional position is weak, but it is necessary to keep an open mind about this question. The primary author of these lessons prefers to think therefore that this letter was addressed to the churches in the cities of Derbe, Lystra, Iconium and Antioch. There would have been no other way to refer to them in Paul's time except to say the churches in Galatia.

### *Date and relation to the Acts of the Apostles*

Bible students have noticed for centuries that the chronology of Paul's life according to the Acts for the Apostles is not in agreement with the few passages where Paul describes the events of his own life. This phenomenon is normal because the two authors incorporate in their narratives the events that seem useful to their purpose. In the Dictionary of Paul and his Letters, the article on the chronology of Paul's life covers sixteen columns. Here are the dates of the events of which we are absolutely sure:

- a. AD 34/35, Paul escaped from King Aretas by being lowered in a basket from a window in a wall in Damascus (2 Cor. 11:32, Acts 9:25).
- b. According to the chronology in Galatians 2:1, the first missionary journey took place no earlier than AD 48.
- c. AD 49/50, Claudius drove all the Jews from Rome. Priscilla and Aquila arrived in Corinth where Paul met them later.
- d. AD 51/52, Gallio was the proconsul of Corinth for one year only. Paul was there during that time and appeared before him to defend himself (Acts 18:12-17). This event happened sometime during the eighteen months of ministry in Corinth during the second missionary journey.
- e. AD 57-62, the arrest of Paul, two years in prison in Caesarea, voyage to Rome and again, two years in prison there.

The problem which concerns the letter to the Galatians revolves around the conference in Jerusalem (Acts 15) which treated the question of Gentiles and their total participation in the Christian faith as non-Jews. The text of Galatians presumes that the recipients know the result of that conference. Or the letter was written after that conference or another earlier meeting which resulted in the same ideas. There is no biblical support for the second case and it is not necessary to invent one as there are those who hold to the earlier date. Luke places the conference between the first and second missionary journeys. But that date causes problems determining Paul's movements between the conference and his meeting with Gallio. He must have spent time in Antioch, visited the churches in Galatia, (according to the traditional theory) started the churches in northern Galatia, and lead his ministry in Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, and Athens before arriving in Corinth. This itinerary is possible if Paul did not spend time in northern Galatia. We do not want to too quickly contradict Luke's chronology. But to keep it, it is probably necessary to abandon the tradition of the churches in northern Galatia.

The article underlines the problem by presenting the two major positions: the southern churches with an earlier date or the northern churches with a later date. What the article does not underline is that it is very possible that the letter addresses the southern churches and that the date is later, after the second missionary journey when Paul went there. In fact, it would have been during the second missionary journey that Paul would have announced the results of the Jerusalem Conference. A letter written several months after that time would reflect the words of Galatians 1:6, "so quickly". This theory can keep the tradition which teaches that the letters to the Thessalonians were the first that Paul had written.

### *Theme*

The gospel is a message of grace by means of faith in Jesus Christ and it is that grace alone which accomplishes our salvation. Believers, Jewish and Gentile, rejoice in a complete salvation: justified, adopted in the family of God, made new creatures, made heirs according to the promise of Abraham, and living according to

the resources of the Holy Spirit. Believers must never retrace their steps toward the old principles of rites and rules as the basis of their hope. The theme of this letter is therefore “keep the freedom of the Spirit at all costs.”

*The incident at Antioch (2:11-14)*

The other subject that one must mention in an introduction to Galatians is the critique that Paul made against Peter at Antioch. Luke (in the Acts of the Apostles) does not mention this event. It is possible that he did not know about it. It is impossible to know when it occurred. It is not necessary that it happened after the Jerusalem Conference (Acts 15). Peter had already received a specific revelation from God concerning the Gentiles and he had already visited a non-Jewish household and eaten with them (Acts 10:14-15, 34-35, 48). Peter was strongly criticized by the Jews in Jerusalem where he defended himself well. Luke presents the situation at the church in Antioch immediately after the story of the conversion of Cornelius. If Peter went there at that time or later is unknown. All that is known is that Paul’s ministry in Antioch had already begun. It is unknown, however, if it was before the first missionary journey or after. If one accepts Paul’s narration of his second visit to Jerusalem (Gal. 2:1) as being the same as the conference in Acts 15, the incident in Antioch happened afterward which makes Peter’s actions even more important.

*What happened in Antioch?* Peter visited Antioch at some time and he saw for the first time a church where Jews and Gentiles both participated fully in the community of faith: worshipping together, eating together, etc. without distinctions of race or religious background. Peter accepted this lifestyle and participated in it until some people came from Jerusalem with a written message. The contents of the message are unknown. Whether the contents represented an official position, an opposing position or expressed a practical problem instead of a doctrinal position is also unknown. There are several hypotheses about that, and whichever one is accepted will form the basis for understanding why Peter withdrew from the Gentiles and would no longer eat with them.

For Paul, the content of the message changed absolutely nothing. Peter’s change of behavior was reprehensible and Paul felt it

necessary to correct Peter publicly. One cannot keep a Christian witness and create a system where there is not true communion between all believers. Christianity produces an alternative society where the members are the best citizens possible in their geographic context, but where they show the world outside the church what true communion is.

*Discussion questions*

1. What could have been the contents of the message Peter received?
2. How can our pastors better show a true communion among all members?
3. What are the cultural backgrounds which tend to keep divisions in our churches?

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**Lesson 2: Introduction to the text of the letter**

Choruses

Meditation

Memorization: Galatians 2.20

Review of Lesson 1:

During the last session the critical circumstances surrounding the letter to the Galatians were treated in order to better understand it. What were the points we looked at?

*Allow time for the students to respond with things they learned or understood.*

## Leader presentation: Introduction to the text of the letter

Many of you have already taken the course Introduction to the New Testament. As a part of that course, you studied the New Testament letters.

- *What do you know about this subject?*
- *What are the two types of letters in the New Testament?*
- *Paul's letters are which type?*
- *What is the normal form for such letters?*
- *In your preparation for this course, what did you discover concerning the Epistle to the Galatians?*

### *Form (style) of the letter*

- A true letter which addresses a particular situation and known people
- It does not follow the normal format for Paul
- It lacks: thanks, prayer (6:16), travel plans, other news and greetings

In the first century, a letter was a form of oral communication, even if it had been written. The person delivering the letter did not just drop it off. He read it aloud focusing on points according to the desires of the author. It is possible that he or she – it was a woman who delivered the letter to the Romans, for example – should have even practiced reading the letter in front of the author before leaving with it. What is important then is what the audience hears. They do not read the letter; they hear it. The person who reads aloud does it with the authority of the author. This is why Paul does not use just anyone to deliver his letters. Neither does he allow someone in the community that the letter is addressed to read the letter and run the risk of a different interpretation that what he intended.

The culture in Paul's time and in the region where he worked placed great importance on speeches. Everyone needed to know how to defend oneself in court. All must be ready to talk about questions of public morality in town meetings. Everyone knew therefore how to listen and discern what the speaker wanted to

say. They knew all the methods that speakers used to persuade the listener to respond in a precise manner.

The science of persuasion is called ***rhetoric***. The dictionary defines it as: to speak or write effectively (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/rhetoric>), but it is more than that. To speak well, in Paul's time, meant to persuade the audience to act in a certain manner. The science of rhetoric includes two elements:

1. The reason or goal of the speech
2. The process used to achieve the goal.

**1. *The reason or goal*** – Rhetoric manuals recognize three major goals, each with a different mode of communication:

a. ***Judicial rhetoric (forensics)*** – The goal was to defend oneself before a judge by presenting the justice of what was done and by accusing the opposing person of having been wrong in the incident. This type of rhetoric looks at the past with the objective to justify or to show error in an action that was taken.

b. ***Deliberative rhetoric*** – The goal was to persuade the audience to act in a certain manner in the current situation and it contains reasons why this action must be taken. The type of rhetoric looks to the future and how to act correctly according to the circumstances or truth of the situation.

c. ***Ceremonial rhetoric (epideictic)*** – The goal was to praise some one for acting according to the values of the community or to blame someone for acting against those values and against the good witness of the community. Each of these types of rhetoric has particular forms and the listeners were used to hearing them.

*Summary:* In the Epistle to the Galatians all three goals are represented. At the beginning of the letter, for example, Paul begins to reprimand the Galatians for listening to the false teaching of a gospel "which is really no gospel at all" and for having considered following it and leaving the true gospel. In Galatians 1:6, the listener waits for a prayer of thanks, but it is not there. In its place, Paul said, "I am astonished." These words were

an idiomatic expression which meant “to your shame.” This is an element of the third type of rhetoric. The idea of shame is revisited in this letter, but it is not the principal goal.

Concerning judicial rhetoric, Paul defends himself from time to time and he also shows how his opponents were wrong in what they were proposing as a practice. Even the story of his life before his conversion could be seen as a part of that defense. Moreover, the language of justification and the court seems essential in this letter. Yet, the principal goal of the letter is neither self-defense nor accusing his opponents, even if Paul did those things.

*N.B. – The main goal of this letter is to persuade the Galatians to not follow false teaching, but to safeguard their liberty in Christ by following the direction of the Holy Spirit. While reading this letter, we will see the different elements of rhetoric, but the most important element is how Paul achieved his goal.*

**2. The process** – Good preachers know how to use literary practices or rhetorical forms to enrich their messages. Paul uses them all, especially in 1 Corinthians where he boasts of not basing his message on these forms. In our study of Galatians, we will note from time to time the forms Paul uses here. For the moment, here is a small list:

- Simple comparison (4:14) “You did not treat me with contempt...welcomed me as if I were an angel.”
- Metaphor (5:1) “yoke of slavery”
- Allegory (4:21-31) Hagar and Sarah
- Synecdoche – a part represents the whole or the whole represents the part (1:16) “I conferred not with flesh and blood” (KJV)
- Hyperbole – exaggeration (1:8) “even if an angel from heaven”
- Litotes – understatement (for intensification) (5:23) “Against such things there is no law.”
- Euphemism – a pleasant expression substituted for an unpleasant or inappropriate one (5:12) “As for those agitators, I wish they would go the whole way and emasculate themselves!”

### *Dramatic scenes through which Paul presents his argument*

The most important form that the apostle uses in this letter is that of creating dramatic scenes in which the action of the argument takes place. Listening to the words of the letter, the audience imagines a play with three completely different scenes. The gospel message is the principal player in the drama, who plays a role in each of the three scenes.

***Scene 1 – New Creation*** – In the salutation of the letter, specifically in 1:4, Paul introduces Christ as he “who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age.” The word “age” has a sense of being large and in line with the epochs of creation both before and after the creation of the world. At the end of the letter, Paul states that “what counts is a new creation” (6:15).

From the beginning to the end the listeners are in front of a scene not less important than the entire universe. The gospel plays a particular role in this scene. The word means “announce a victory” which will be accompanied by civil and religious rites. But this victory created changes, and more precisely changes not only in the story of Judaism or humanity, but also in the redemption story of God himself. By the gospel proclamation, God applied to the world his victory accomplished by Christ not only on the cross but even more so by his resurrection and by the creation of the church. Death no longer has the last word. No other existing creation can compare to the church as community. The universe was changed to a new spiritual and social level. Paul’s opponents had not understood this and they preached Christianity as a new chapter of Judaism and nothing more.

According to the gospel, the world that humans, whether Jew or Gentile, had known, was restructured. Paul treated this subject in two ways: the introduction of the idea of the nature of things and a list of religious practices by which mankind tried to control creation in their favor. In Galatians 2:5, Paul states that by nature humanity is separated into two groups: Jewish and Gentile. Later he speaks of other divisions of things by nature: slave/ free, circumcised/ uncircumcised, those who follow the law/ those who do not, male/ female. These divisions which reflect the world

before the gospel no longer work as distinctions for believers in the new creation.

Concerning religious rites, the gospel announces that the benefits which come from God come only and uniquely by the grace of God. The benefits consider all humanity without distinctions. The ancient rites whether Jewish or pagan no longer have any value in regards to justification before God. The gospel announces a new creation. It is true that the geology of Earth and the astronomy of the skies have not changed. Nevertheless, in Christ, something happened in a cosmic sense and the language used before in religions would no longer be adequate to describe our experience in Christ.

***Scene 2 – In the courtroom*** – A second scene that Paul created to visualize his message is that of a court. The language and manner of presenting his argument resemble closely the types of speeches used during a court case. A very well known commentary even tried to prove that the letter to the Galatians was one of these orations. Other scholars have shown that that commentary went too far in its assertions and the proposition does not hold.

The trial was part of what Paul created as a scene to help others understand his message. The trial implies three parties in the court:

- 1) Paul;
- 2) the Galatian believers, and
- 3) the opposing preachers.

Throughout the letter, Paul shows the relationship between the three parties by underscoring, for all three, who was right and who was wrong. Even the word “justification”, which gives the idea of a cosmic court eternally before God, is a word that comes from the scene of a Roman trial where it was determined who was in the right – the justified—and who was in the wrong. The gospel in this scene announces not only a justification from these sins before God, but also justification of the doctrine and the practices Paul preached before his opponents.

***Scene 3 – The Pedagogue*** – The third scene that Paul created comes from the daily life of the richest families, but everyone understood the situation. It deals with an educational system and the role of the pedagogue in the education of children in the largest sense of the word. The pedagogue was not a teacher to whom the students came to take lessons. The pedagogue was an employee or a slave of the family itself who worked in the house to guarantee the good moral development of the children which included making sure they completed their scholarly work. The pedagogue went with the children to school. He supervised their homework. But he also ensured their social, personal and cultural development by disciplinary exercises. Some were very strict, but in most cases the pedagogues showed a deep love for the children under their charge. The father determined in each case when the child could be presented to the society as an adult. The pedagogue's work was therefore to prepare the child for that moment at which point his work ended. Certain European families still use a similar system with a children's governess. However, the governess does not have the primary responsibility for the moral development as the pedagogue did in Paul's day.

In Galatians, Paul does not use this scene as often as he does the other two. Even so, it is important. It begins in verse 1:4 with the expression "I am astonished", because that was something a pedagogue would say. The discussion at the beginning of chapter three is also a part of the scene where the Holy Spirit is introduced. In this scene there are three "players": the law, the Holy Spirit, and the gospel. The law plays the role of the pedagogue who has an important work in the life of the believer, but nevertheless a temporary work. It is the law who leads the person to the true teacher.

The Holy Spirit plays two roles in this scene – that of teacher and the continuing disciplinarian after the pedagogue ends his work. The gospel plays the role of the father's announcement which allows the believer to go from the yoke of the law to a life of freedom in the Spirit. This does not mean that the believer no longer needs to exercise discipline. On the contrary, the believer must demonstrate a more solid and actual discipline, but it is the Holy Spirit within who directs in all circumstances of life. Turning

away from the Spirit to return to the law would be the same thing as abandoning the life of an adult to become a child.

### *Outline of the contents of the Epistle to the Galatians*

Paul's language jumps from one scene to another throughout the letter, from beginning to end exercising the imagination of the listener. In contrast, when developing his argument he adopts a linear movement. It is possible therefore to create an outline of his argument, step by step or paragraph by paragraph. Nevertheless, there is not agreement between commentaries as to the result of this work. This is the reason you were required to develop your own outline before the beginning of the course. Yet, there is almost universal agreement on the fact that Paul addressed three main subjects in his argument:

- 1) history of the question (chapters 1 & 2)
- 2) exposition of important Old Testament texts (chapters 3 & 4) and 3) Christian practice which leads to maturity (chapters 5 & 6).

One problem at this point is that each of these themes appears in all sections of the letter because they are linked one with the other. Several recent commentaries which concentrate on the ancient rules of logic have helped in developing the following outline which follows the oral indicators Paul used to alert his listener to the passage from one idea to another. The outline offered here is the result of these studies. It reflects the three main subjects, the transition questions and key words.

[Present the outline which is found at the end of this lesson].

*Allow time to ask and respond to the questions*

### *Group discussion questions:*

1. When you preach, what scenes from real life do you use to describe one or many aspects of the gospel?
2. Now look at the outlines that you prepared and discuss the indicators within the text that seem to you to mark a transition from one idea to another.
3. Why is using an outline important in preparing a sermon?

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## **Epistle to the Galatians: Outline of the Argument**

- 1:1-5 Opening elements of a letter
- 1:6-9 Question addressed by the letter
- 1:10-2:21 Presentation of the history behind the question
  - 1:10-12 First transition question - "Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God?"
  - 1:13-2:14 The account itself (1:13-17, 18-24; 2:1-10, 11-14)
  - 2:15-21 Making the argument
- 3:1-4:40 First Scriptural exposition; second transition question « Who has bewitched you? »
  - 3:1-4:11 Judicial rhetoric based on key words
    - 3:1-5 A series of questions, ends with faith (πιστις)
    - 3:6-15 Abraham, justified by faith, ends with promise (επαγγελια)
    - 3:15-18 Discussion of promise, ends with law (νομος)
    - 3:19-22 Role of the law, ends with Christ (Χριστος)
    - 3:23-29 Freedom in Christ, ends with heir (κληρονομος)
    - 4:1-7 Heir as a son, ends with God (θεος)
    - 4:8-11 Knowing God, how can you turn back?
  - 4:12-20 retransfer of loyalty from the others to Paul
- 4:21-5:6 Second Scriptural exposition; third transition question "Are you not aware of what the law says?"

- 4:21-5:1 The difference between slave and free
- 5:2-6 The Holy Spirit, not the law, accomplishes what they seek
- 5:7-6:10 Fourth transition question  
 "Who cut in on you and kept you from obeying the truth?" (Christian life in practice)
- 5:7-12 What cuts and what counts
- 5:13-15 Service in freedom, the law of love
- 5:16-21 The Holy Spirit versus the flesh\*
- 5:22-26 The fruit of the Spirit
- 6:1-5 The law of Christ
- 6:6-10 Sowing and reaping, a practice to develop
- 6:11-18 Conclusion and closing of the letter

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\* Galatians 5:16-26 is what is called a list of virtues and vices. Such lists are not found in the Old Testament, but they seem to appear often in Greek literature where they serve to underline a common morality. Paul forms these lists according to the situations in the churches he addresses.

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## Lesson Three: Galatians 1:1-2:14, History behind the Question

Meditation: Galatians 1:10

Choruses

Memory verse: Repeat - Galatians 2:20  
(For the next lesson, Gal. 5:22)

### Leader presentation # 1: No compromise with the Gospel

In the last lesson, it was mentioned that this letter lacks certain elements which are found in Paul's other letters. This lesson begins the study of the text of the letter and this lack will be noticed immediately. We will begin by reading the first five (5) verses and we will discover what is found there.

#### I. The opening. Gal. 1:1-5

*Read the text; ask if there are different versions available.*

*Compare these verses with I Thessalonians 1:1 (I Thess. 1:1)*

*What are the similarities?*

- Author of the letter
- Addresses
- References to God and Christ
- Initial salutations

*What are the differences?*

- Description of who sent Paul (apostle means "sent")
- An agreement between a number of authors (Paul was not alone)
- Theological explanation of Christ and His death
  - "...rescue us from the present evil age"
  - "...will of our God and Father" (Ties the gospel to the God of the Old Testament)

A. *Meaning of the word "apostle", and the importance of who sends*

Paul presents himself as an apostle. He did that often, but one time he called himself a prisoner (in Philemon), and one time a servant and an apostle (in Romans). "Apostle" means "one who is sent." The term was not adopted in the culture at the time outside of the New Testament. The culture understood that people who were sent in the place of someone as an agent or ambassador went with the presence and authority of the person who sent them. However, the term "apostle" seems tied directly to the affairs of the church and it is a word that comes from Jesus himself. His disciples were sent on evangelistic missions in Galilee twice. After the Great Commission at the end of the gospels, the disciples were seen as sent into the world by Jesus with his authority and literally with his presence, thanks to the Holy Spirit.

Paul adds two things to this introduction. Of course the Galatians had known Paul was an apostle. Paul must remind them that even if the church in Antioch had sent him to accompany Barnabas as a missionary, his apostleship was not based on that event at Antioch and the men in the community who had prayed for him and laid hands on him. His commission as an apostle came well before that. *Who called Paul to be an apostle and in what circumstances? (See Acts 9:15).* Note: this letter is not a defense of his position as an apostle. It is a reminder of the gospel that he had preached when he was there twice before. *(That last sentence is debatable.)* Nevertheless, that manner of presenting himself was a challenge to the false preachers to show their claim to apostleship. Who sent them with their message?

B. *The meaning of the death and resurrection of Jesus:  $\text{unep}$  is the same as "because of", "in stead of", "in the place of."*

In verse 4, Paul describes Jesus Christ as he "who gave himself for our sins". That expression is first an important

theological thought, but it also has two meanings on the practical level:

- 1) "gave himself", it is the proof of who is truly an apostle. He who does not give himself is not an apostle because he is neither following the example nor the character of Christ.
- 2) in the end, according to the other gospel, there is another system other than the death of Christ that answers the problem of sin. But this system never worked and it still does not work.

*C. The will of the Father, and the idea of the Father that Paul presents*

By presenting the gospel as connected to the death of Christ, that death was the will of God. According to Paul, the suffering and even the death were not outside the will of God. But that phrase also considers the gospel itself as the will of God. As such, it is the truth of God.

D. Literary form: "present evil age"

As noted in the last lesson, verse 4 introduces a cosmic scene with the expression "rescue us from the present evil age". Our daily life, nevertheless, makes us ask a question at this point. We always live in "the present evil age", and we suffer the consequences, sometimes even the people within the church. So what is this passage saying? The Greek construction could be read in another way that better reflects the situation: "Who saved or tore us away from the evil of the present age." The difference is that we still live in this age, but the Christian does not live according to the evil of the age. Paul speaks of our freedom even in this age. For him, and he stresses this often in his letters, the new creation has already begun. The point for him is that the two co-exist at the same time. Believers therefore inhabit this evil time with all its circumstances, but at the same time they live in the new creation which has entered into the middle of the old. By his death and resurrection, the life of Christ has overrun

the current world with the new creation. The age (that is to say "the time") to come has already started. The Jews have another idea about the end time, and they do not see what Paul was trying to present. (*See the Appendix for a chart of the difference between the Jewish eschatology and that of Paul.*)

*Allow time at this point for questions before going further.*

## **II. Reprimand. Gal. 1:5-10**

Normally in the letters of this era, one would expect at this point some expression of gratitude followed by a prayer for health or other benediction.

*Ask the students to put themselves in the place of the listeners and react to this portion of the letter. Ask what they hear.*

*Read the text*

These verses serve as a preface or an introduction to the contents of the letter. Those who read it understand that Paul sums up the subject of the entire letter in this paragraph. He does the same thing when he begins with the expressions of gratitude which include the subject of the letter. A short study of the other letters could emphasize this usage.

A. "I am astonished" = "to your shame"

With that exclamation, Paul introduces the second theatrical scene to the Galatians, that of the pedagogue, who reproveth the children under his care. The problem, unhappily, is that the Galatians as believers should not have needed such a reprimand. As believers they should have already understood what the other preachers were doing and refused to listen to them. The words "so quickly" or "so rapidly" accentuate Paul's surprise. These phrases can mean one of two things, namely, either so soon after our departure or possibly the quickness with which they were persuaded by the false preachers. No matter which one, Paul uses a reprimand, a standard action in such a situation, to draw them back again

to the truth of the gospel. This paragraph points out that the letter deals with the truth of the gospel.

For the moment, the Galatians had not yet made a decision. They hesitated. By the style of rhetoric used here, Paul was trying to influence them in a specific direction as to the right decision they should make. We will return to this during the discussion of the passage that speaks of the pedagogue.

B. They turn their backs on Christ himself, not Paul, by following another message

The false apostles have presented their message in terms of a difference of opinion between themselves and Paul. Then, they tried to turn the believers' faithfulness towards Paul to themselves, for one reason or another. Later in the letter Paul says it is to boast of themselves before some unknown person. But, Paul underscored that the situation is much more serious than loyalty towards one or other preachers. If they make the decision to follow the new message, they would have turned their backs on Jesus himself and in doing so they lose not only their freedom, but also their salvation. As a good pedagogue, Paul pushes them in the right direction for their own well-being.

C. There is not another gospel. Emphasized three times.

*"Turning from Christ to another gospel"* – What thoughts go through your head when you hear that phrase? Can you cite other gospels that preachers are proclaiming today?

The expression at the beginning of verse 7 can be translated in several ways, but in every case, the meaning is the same – that which the preachers teach is not the gospel, which means it is not good news. Look again at the meaning of the word "gospel" -- the announcement of a victory with enough significance that the daily circumstances of life are improved in one way or another. What the others announce is not good news and the changes in life they suggest are changes from bad to worse.

At this point, Paul throws in the literary form of a hyperbole based on the announcement of a gospel. Normally, such an announcement was made by an important officer with an entourage of soldiers. Paul and Barnabas had a small evangelistic team when they arrived in Galatians the first time. The team was larger the second time. Here he offers two images- one absurd and the other difficult to imagine: that he preaches another gospel or that an angel comes with a different gospel. In both cases, the Galatians must recognize that whoever preaches a false message, no matter who it is, is condemned by God. If the false preachers were among the Galatians, and I imagine that they were, they would have heard that curse against them.

D. People have their own agendas (an idea underlying verses 7 & 10)

In this verse, Paul introduces the fact that the other people came and they had stirred up the churches. Nowhere in the letter does it say who they are. It does not matter. Very rarely is the name of an opponent cited. What he will say later, even so, is that those people have a personal interest that they are following in saying and in doing what they are. Some have thought that their interests were just, but Paul seems to indicate in the narration that the only way of thinking that those interests are just is to disobey the truth. When one is disobeying the truth, one is against the will of God, despite the fact of what one thinks is just. The interest of the false teachers is none other than to present themselves before people as those with power, authority and importance. This type of person has been a scourge (pest) in the church since the beginning and will be until Christ's return. In a parable, Jesus speaks of an enemy who sowed bad seed in a newly planted field. The surprise of this parable is that the owner said to let them grow until the harvest (Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43).

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## **Leader Presentation # 2: An account of service to the gospel**

Paul began to recount the events of his personal history which show first the truth of the gospel that he preaches and the fact that his daily life reflects the gospel. Verses 11-12 serve as a transition to this section and, at the same time, as an introduction to what is important in his story. He begins to speak in the first person, which means that the letter comes from him in person and that the others around him are not supporting witnesses. Once more he insists that the gospel he preaches was not taught to him by others, neither apostles nor other believers before him. He had an apocalyptic event, a direct revelation, which was given to him by Jesus himself. Where or when that event took place in his life is uncertain. Probably he speaks of the event that Luke records which happened in his trip to Damascus. Or possibly slightly later during his stay in Damascus before entering Arabia. We will soon see what he did there.

### **The narrative -- Gal. 1:13 – 2:14**

*Read the text from 1:13 – 2:2 just until his second voyage to Jerusalem. With your Bible open, answer these questions on the reading. Pay attention to what you read.*

- 1) Q. How would you describe Paul's personality according to this passage? What words did he use to describe himself?  
A. *"extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers"*
- 2) Q. How does this personality trait contribute to the argument that he will make next? A. *the other preachers did not have the same zeal.*
- 3) Q. At the moment he received the revelation did this trait change? How? A. *No*
- 4) Q. How did Paul describe the event of meeting Jesus on the road to Damascus? A. *A revelation of Jesus and the gospel and a call to ministry.*

- 5) Q. What did Paul do on Arabia and what in the text leads you to that conclusion?
- 6) Q. Regarding the first time Paul goes up to Jerusalem after his call, when did he go and why? Think about why he waited so long.
- 7) Q. According to verse 23, what did Paul preach as his message? *A. The same message as the other apostles.*
- 8) Q. What was the reason for the second visit to Jerusalem?
- 9) Q. Where was he in between trips? Why was he there and not in Jerusalem?
- 10) Q. Where there changes in his message during these years?

### **Commentary**

**V. 13.** Here Paul creates a clear contrast between Judaism and Christianity. For a Jew among Jewish believers such a contrast is not necessary. But Paul recognizes that faith in Christ is not reserved only for the Jews, neither before nor after conversion. Therefore a Gentile believer neither has to become a Jew nor follow the Judaic laws. The other preachers insisted that all believers must convert to Judaism.

Paul knows, by contrast, to keep his ethnicity without seeing the need to maintain all the points of Jewish law. Paul can admit the observation of Judaic law on the part of Jewish Christians as long as they do not create divisions between believers, Jews and Gentiles. It was not necessary to force non-Jewish believers to observe the Jewish rules because they were not Jews neither by race or religion.

Paul saw himself as a member of a group of believers, including Jews, who based their faith on the Jewish Scriptures by interpreting them in a manner which did not require observing all the points of Judaism because of the teaching and the work of Jesus Christ. For him, the true Jew was the one who followed the

Christian way. Most Jewish believers had a lot of difficulty at this point. By contrast, Barnabas went in search of Paul precisely because of his belief which he wanted to help develop a mixed church in Antioch – a church based on the Scriptures, but which would celebrate the unity between the Jewish believers and non-Jewish believers.

**V. 18-20.** Paul wanted to underscore that his message was not taught by the other apostles. He had only met Peter and James. He even pronounces an oath as proof of the truthfulness of the narration. He didn't want the preachers of the false gospel to say that he was not willing to be put in a position where he would need to defend himself. He therefore presents this oath well in advance to avoid such a situation.

**V. 23.** Here Paul uses the word πιστις (faith) as a substantive (Greek verb form) which describes the contents of what the Christians believe and not only the act of belief. Therefore, from the start, it is necessary to look carefully at the context to see if "faith" means a personal condition of the believer or the contents of what the church teaches. "My faith" and "the faith" can indicate two completely different things.

*Question: Just to this point in the narration, what seems to be the goal of what Paul has said?*

**Now read the text from Galatians 2:3-14.**

This passage cites two events in the history of the church, namely, the one at Jerusalem in a fairly large meeting (it seems) and the other at Antioch some time later. We are going to study these two events according to the truth of the gospel and according to the circumstances which can reflect upon what was happening in Galatia at the time.

***The Conference at Jerusalem*** – In verse 3, Paul begins to relate the circumstances of Titus' visit with the leaders in Jerusalem, all the Jews, several probably with deep-rooted hard feelings toward non-Jews. It is necessary to recognize the courage of this young Titus in accompanying Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem in order to meet with those men. Evidently, there were

those who wanted Titus to be circumcised (v. 4-5), but Paul called them false brothers who had infiltrated among the Christians as spies.

For the moment, we do not know the contents of the false doctrine that the preachers in Galatia proposed. But, we now know that forcing non-Jews (Gentiles) to be circumcised was the message of the false brothers in Jerusalem. According to verse 5, that practice was against the truth of the gospel. Paul stresses that the most well known in Jerusalem are in agreement with him, that they added nothing to what he preached and that God had given him grace to announce the gospel to the Gentiles.

The translation "Gentiles" (v. 8) is a translation of style equivalence. The Greek work is the word which literally means "the nations" or "the peoples". For a Jew, moreover, this word meant "the other people not like us". The Jews were the people of God, the other people were only pagans (Gentiles). It is a racist word in this context, even if Paul's thoughts were not. In Christ, the barriers no longer exist. In Ephesians 2:14, Paul says that Christ is our peace, "who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility..." In the temple court in Jerusalem, between the Court of Nations and the Court of Women, there was a dividing wall to which was attached a threat against non-Jews who passed that point. The warning said, "The temple authorities can not guarantee the physical safety of non-Jews who go beyond this barrier." Christ changed all that. The true leaders of the church in Jerusalem recognized the validity of the message preached by Paul and Barnabas to the Gentiles and they extended the hand of fellowship to them – a ceremony which includes shaking hands in agreement before witnesses. Other people were not in agreement. The meeting here, probably the same one recounted in Acts 15, determined the official position of the church, but there were those who remained opposed. This was not the end of the question.

***A rivalry-based society (v. 6-9)*** – The Greco-Roman society in the first century was characterized by levels of society that divided the people and placed them in categories of human worth, each with rights, responsibilities and limits. Within each level, families fought between themselves to show their honor compared with

the larger society. The men all learned the art of rhetoric in order to defend themselves not only in court, but also before the general public. The worth of a family was found not in the amount of money it had, but in the level of honor that society accorded it, especially the families in the same social class. Often the public contact between fathers of the families in the same class became a contest between the two to earn honor for one of the families at the expense of the other. This happened by the actions which society judged to be sources of honor and by the dialogues of accusation and defense. The lines between the different levels of society were therefore not horizontal, but rather diagonal. The role of the father was to earn as much honor as possible. The role of the wife and children was to protect it by their behavior in public and private. This happened all the time, except between friends. Friends kept their debts between themselves and they supported each other in public instead of confronting each other.

Matthew 22:15-46 is a story which shows how the system works. The crowd in Jerusalem gave Jesus, step by step, the honor that they had given before to the Pharisees, the Sadducees and the teachers of the law. To regain their lost honor from that confrontation, the Sadducees had to have him killed, but more precisely, killed by crucifixion. Crucifixion was the most dishonorable death because "anyone who is hung on a tree is under God's curse" (Deuteronomy 21:23).

In the context of Galatians 2 and the assembly in Jerusalem, Paul indicates that the level of honor accorded to people before they became Christians was not important. There were members of the Sanhedrin who had become Christians but they were not the most respected among the Christians. James, the brother of Jesus, the son of Joseph and Mary, came from the lowest rank of society, like Jesus himself. Even so, possibly he was considered the most important of the leaders in Jerusalem even over the apostles Peter and John. He was respected not because he was the brother of Jesus, but because his life showed more than any other the grace of God in a human being, his love for all and his daily behavior which was seen as the Jewish ideal on the part of everyone, believer or not. In this setting where society searched for honor by public debate and shaming others, Paul told Christians to give honor to others.

Among Christians, honor was eventually calculated according to what one had suffered for the Lord by staying faithful to him and continually showing God's grace in all circumstances. This will be repeated later in the letter.

***The incident in Antioch*** – This incident was mentioned in Lesson 1. Here, we will see what the text itself can tell us.

V. 11 is an example of a confrontation of honor. But, Paul's goal is not to take Peter's honor and add it to his own. He was defending the truth of the gospel, especially the level of honor for Gentile believers. The decision of the conference in Acts 15 said nothing about Jews and Gentiles sharing meals. Therefore the interpretation of Peter's behavior remained questionable in the minds of many in Jerusalem. This point was resolved a long time ago for those living outside Palestine. In Antioch, far from Jerusalem, the Jews even non-believers shared meals with Gentiles in certain circumstances already. Between believers that practice had become a way to celebrate their common faith. But, Antioch was a capital city in another province outside Jewish territory.

Peter, according to v. 8, was the apostle of the circumcised (Jews) and Paul the apostle of the pagans (Gentiles). It was therefore for Paul to live like a non-Jew. It was his role in the church. He could adopt the Jewish rules when he wanted, being a given that he would not bring anyone into the temple. Peter, by contrast, would have difficulty preaching the truth of the gospel to non-believing Jews if he lived like a Gentile and rumors to that effect were circulated. One scholar (D.A. Carson) suggests that the men sent by James told him that Peter's behavior in Antioch contributed to the persecution of the Christians in Jerusalem because he exercised too much familiarity with the Gentiles.

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## Lesson Four: The Proposition (Galatians 2:15-21)

Chorus

Meditation

### Translation of the passage (NIV)

<sup>15</sup>"We who are Jews by birth and not 'Gentile sinners'\*

<sup>16</sup>know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but\* by faith in\* Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified.

<sup>17</sup>"If, while we seek to be justified in Christ, it becomes evident that we ourselves are sinners, does that mean that Christ promotes sin? Absolutely not!

<sup>18</sup>If I rebuild what I destroyed, I prove that I am a lawbreaker.

<sup>19</sup>For through the law I died to the law so that I might live for God.

<sup>20</sup>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.

<sup>21</sup>I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness\* could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!"

### Notes on the translation

15. The expression « Gentile –sinners » repeats and underlines the racism of the Jews. The people "not like us" are by nature sinners while the Jews are not by nature according to this form of racism.

16. a. The translation of "but" is good. This will be discussed later.

16. b. The grammatical construction of this verse permits four different readings:

- By faith in Christ

- By the doctrine of Jesus Christ
- By the faith of Jesus Christ
- By the faithfulness of Jesus Christ

21. The word "righteousness" represents centuries of theological debate in relation to personal Christian experience. On the one hand, there are those who say that this word means that a believer is *declared* righteous, while the reality of his/her condition remains that of a sinner. On the other hand, there are others who say that God *makes* believers righteous, and the word "sinner" no longer accurately describes who they are.

*Allow time at this point for other questions concerning the translation or the text.*

### **Leader Presentation: Analysis of the passage**

The language of this passage places the argument on the scene of a Roman tribunal. It is not Paul who appears to defend himself, but the gospel itself and all those who had believed it. In fact, this trial seems to be between the gospel of faith in Christ and a type of righteousness that arose as the result of living according to a certain regimen of rules: the works of the law.

The immediate context: This paragraph serves as a bridge between the narrative and the statements that follow it. The break between 2:21 and 3:1 is very clear. The difficulty with this passage is found at the level of the relationship between v. 14 and v. 15, because it seems that one continues on to the next without a break in thought. Some commentaries which were written before the recent studies of first century rhetoric analyzed this passage according to the rules of modern literature, especially European. This letter is not modern, even if it is in one way or another European. It was the Europe of its own time. We will see two possibilities for the connection between verses 14 and 15.

Some see that verses 15-21 present a conclusion to the narrative by trying to apply the situation in Antioch to that of Galatia. Those who hold this position see the application to the social situation between Jew and Gentile, a situation which had caused harm in Antioch and must therefore be avoided in Galatia. The problem

with that position is that in this letter, and even here, the point that Paul underlines is not a simple social situation to rectify, but the truth of the gospel which he is trying to safeguard. In Christ "the nature" of things is changed. Creation is different now. It is the false message which tries to create unity between Christians by the resolution of a social and racial problem. It is not the gospel.

The other position, following the writing manuals of the first century, indicates that the narration must end when the main point is presented. In this case the main point would be the question in v. 14 that Paul asked of Peter: If a Christian Jewish apostle can live like a Gentile, why must a Gentile Christian become a Jew? (The word which is translated "live like a Jew" appears only here in the New Testament, and the translation that is used is the minimum of what could be said.) After that the narrative arrives at the crucial point; the proposition must follow. The role of the proposition has three parts:

- To summarize briefly the questions that the exposition will later treat;
- To clarify the points of agreement between the two parties;
- To clarify the differences by precisely delineating the positions points of disagreement.

That is what we find in this passage.

The points of the proposition: First, the "we" of verse 15 does not refer to Paul and Peter, but Paul and the preachers of the false gospel. Verses 15 and 16 present the point of agreement: "We ... know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ." This idea is presented in a literary form that we will study a little later. Verse 17 presents a point of disagreement from the point of view of the other preachers: "... we ourselves are sinners." It is an accusation that Paul is a sinner because of what he does. The listener is therefore ready to hear the counter-accusation that Paul will make against the other preachers. This is the function of verse 18. « If I rebuild what I destroyed, I prove that I am a lawbreaker." Here the Greek "I" takes the place of "one". The others accuse Paul of being a sinner by following what he understands to be the faith in Christ. Paul accuses the others of

being sinners because they rebuild what has been destroyed. The two positions leave many questions. It is necessary to see if the letter is going to answer them. Verses 19-20 introduce an answer, exactly as the writing manuals say. But this response abandons the court image that Paul has used until here.

*Pause for questions about what the proposition is.*

### **Commentary**

The structure of this passage presents a conflict between two sides in a hypothetical trial. Paul frames the dispute by contrasting two ways of defining the religious experience of a believer. The one is in verses 15-17, where the focus is around the word "justify". The other is in verses 19-21, where the focus concentrates on the experience of the living Christ, and where the believer participates in that life by the grace and love of God. For Paul, the language of justification explains the participation in the life of the resurrected Jesus Christ, rather than explaining a lifestyle guided by a system of specific behaviors which is what the other preachers seem to propose.

***Gentile-sinners*** – It is not clear who is or who are Paul's opponents in this imaginary trial. Verse 15 seems to present a view of the interior thoughts of the opponents. If that is the case, this verse could help us define who they are. If it were Peter who said this then we see these verses as a continuation of the narration. It is necessary to ask if the expression "Gentile-sinner" reflects Peter's thoughts or not. Peter in Acts 11 relates the conversion and the receiving of the Holy Spirit by the members of Cornelius' family. He also recognized the truth of the faith of the Gentiles in Antioch. These two events indicate that this thought is probably not that of Peter. For him, the Gentile believers are not sinners.

So, whose thought is it? The Gentile believers are not Paul's opponents either: they are the ones to whom the letter was addressed. Their role in the trial is to listen to the arguments and make the right decision. They take the role of the jurors. The opponents in this trial are the believers (according to verse 16, they had believed in Christ), but those who are characterized by a

traditional attitude towards the Gentiles. That is to say that for the opponents, the justification by faith in Christ had not changed their vision of the world which sees a distinction "of nature" between the Jew and the Gentile, despite their common faith in Jesus Christ. The only people in the situation in Galatia that fit that description are the preachers of the false gospel. For Paul, the faith in Christ eliminates the word "sinners" in that expression. For the opposing preachers, the expression must remain intact – the Gentile believers do not participate fully in the covenant between God and His people. They must therefore become Jews. Here is the question that must be answered in the thoughts of Paul. What does "justified by Jesus Christ" mean if we always say that Gentile believers are still sinners? How can they be justified and a sinner at the same time?

***The point of agreement*** – Paul begins this section of the letter with language that his opponents could understand. He uses a Jewish vocabulary, a style of Jewish repetition and Jewish Scriptures to persuade his opponents of the justice of the gospel he preaches. Everyone agrees that justification comes by the means of faith in Jesus Christ and they all have believed it. At this point in the letter he neither defined justification or faith. The fact that Paul paraphrases Psalm 143:2 at the end of verse 16 suggests to his Jewish audience that he holds the traditional position concerning justification. The fact he created a trial scene can suggest the same thing to a Gentile audience.

Verse 16 has a complicated structure, but an analysis will help us to see the agreement between Paul and his opponents:

16 (We) know that a man is not justified  
by observing the law,  
but by faith in Jesus Christ.

So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified

by faith in Christ and not  
by observing the law,  
because by observing the law no one will be justified.

This structure indicates several important things:

- 1) The experience of the Jewish believer has three phases – motivation (we know), action (we believed), and a Scriptural base (Ps. 143:2);
- 2) For the Jew, Paul uses the traditional terminology of justification in the passive voice of the verb;
- 3) The repetition –“a man is not” and “no one” – denies the distinction between Jew and Gentile with Scriptural support;
- 4) The wordy repetition of the antithesis “observing the law/faith in Jesus Christ” puts a focus on an argument which will come later;
- 5) Although he leaves the word “justified” indefinite, he underlines his meaning as actual experience by adopting three different verb tenses – present, subjunctive aorist, future – and he indicates a new way to participate. Justification is not something reserved for the future.

What happened in this verse? The Jewish faith, pre-Christian, said “We know that no man is justified by the works of the law unless he is a full member of the community of the covenant”, a Jew, therefore. Their faithfulness to the covenant and the observation of the law were not direct opposites. They did the two together. Paul transformed that phrase in order to create a Christian declaration by substituting the section, “except by faith in Jesus Christ.” What he does by that transformation and by destroying the contrast of “Jew/Gentile” is create another contrast “works of the law/faith in Christ”. For the Christian, participation on the covenant community is no longer a question of race, but a question of participation in the crucifixion of Christ (v. 20). As Such, both the Jew and the Gentile must go through a conversion.

***The points of disagreement*** – According to the rhetoric handbooks of the period, one expects at this point in the speech the arguments of the opponents which demonstrate the differences. Verse 17 seems to represent the opponent's accusation towards the gospel that Paul preaches. Their argument takes the following form:

|         |                                                                   |
|---------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Point 1 | You look for justification by faith in Jesus Christ.              |
| Point 2 | You find that you are a sinner (αμαρτολος -- <i>hamartolos</i> ). |
| Conc.   | Christ is a minister of sin.                                      |

The conclusion does not work without an explanation of the two points. The first point is the point of agreement between the two sides. Therefore, there is no disagreement. The second point is not clear. It seems to lack something. If the word "find" means "find that instead of being justified"; the argument holds. But the conclusion is not at all correct. Therefore something does not work in the second phrase. The key to the problem is the word "sinner" (αμαρτολος). For the Jew a αμαρτολος is someone who lives outside the customs of the people of God and who cannot be justified and αμαρτολος at the same time. Why would his opponents call Paul a αμαρτολος? What does he do against the customs of God's people? He teaches that Jewish believers and Gentile believers must share a meal together as a celebration of their unity in Christ. The Jews had prescribed rules of how Jews and Gentiles could do that, but Paul did not follow them. Paul is therefore not a member of the people of God; he is αμαρτολος. The word indicates someone from the outside.

Paul does not agree, because one cannot have two definitions of the people of God. Either the works of the law define the people of God, or faith in Christ does. If one is a sinner because of failing to meet all points of the law, then one is justified by the works of the law. No Christian believes that. If one is justified by faith in Christ, one is a sinner because of lack of faith in Christ and not because of certain actions against a cultural rule. If it means anything, justified must mean "no longer αμαρτολος".

Now we read Paul's accusation against the false gospel. For this accusation, Paul created a play on words around the idea of sinner. In place of the word αμαρτολος, a word reserved for those from the outside, he uses the word "transgressor", a word reserved for the members of the people of God – those who know the law, and had disobeyed it while still retaining their membership. The opponents and their gospel tried to rebuild things which had been destroyed. What was it then that had been destroyed? To answer that it is necessary to look again at the

point of agreement between them. Justification is by faith in Christ, and not by the fact of being Jewish – the people of the covenant. The necessity of following all points of the covenant had been destroyed. To rebuild that necessity is a sin against faith in Christ, because faith in Christ is sufficient to become a member of the people of God. Therefore, forcing new Gentile believers to submit to the rules and purification rituals is a transgression against the new covenant.

In principle, verses 19-20 must present arguments to come later. He does two things in these verses. First of all, he presents a paradox "by the law I am dead to the law". In the statement later he uses several passages of the Old Testament, including some passages that come from the Torah in order to show that the justification was declared well before God had chosen a specific race of people and that the benediction was for all the nations (the word that the Jews use for "Gentiles" or worse "Gentile-sinners"). The second thing that he does is show that the Christian experience is much larger than the image of justification before a tribunal can present. The Christian life is a particular life, a new life which results from a resurrection after a death. Even if these ideas are rather metaphoric, he finds these expressions necessary to his argument. With them he can move quickly to a scene of the new creation. The opponents do not see a new creation with new rules. They are content enough with the old rules. We are going to look at the ways Paul introduces ideas into his arguments.

The conclusion of the proposition in verse 21 returns to the language of the court, this time, it is the language of wills and covenants. For Paul, by the death and resurrection of Jesus, God had created a new situation of inheritance, a new covenant, if one wants – a covenant based on the work of God's grace through Christ, or a testament which redefines heirs. No matter what or no matter who compromises or restrains the effectiveness or the character of that work of grace, according to Paul, rejects the grace of God spilled out for all humankind and every race of people. Insisting on the observation of the Jewish laws completely cancels out the value of Christ's death. This is why he used the idea of cursed earlier in the letter.

*Group discussion question:*

*In this passage, Paul uses language of the court and of life to speak of the experience one can have in Christ. What other images could be used and in what manner?*

Homework for the next lesson

Begin to memorize Galatians 5:22  
Prepare to present an answer to the group discussion question.

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### **Lesson 5: First Scriptural exposition, part 1**

Meditation

Ask the students about their answers to the group discussion questions.  
Chorus

Verse to memorize: Galatians 5:22

#### **Lesson plan**

- 1. Reports from the groups about images that could be used for evangelism*
- 2. Teacher's presentation*
- 3. Group discussion about assignment #4 (Sunday school lessons)*
- 4. Teacher's presentation*

#### **Leader Presentation # 1: The testimony of Abraham, Galatians 3:1-14**

In the fourth lesson a fairly complicated literary form was presented as a part of the trial scene. In this lesson, the image of the trial continues with not only the legal arguments, but also with the appeal to witnesses. Paul's goal is for the Galatians not to follow the strong suggestions to observe the Judaic road (laws, customs, and rites) as the fulfillment of their Christian life, but that

they maintain a life characterized by faithfulness to the daily direction of the Holy Spirit. This decision is very serious, because if some of the Galatians follow the false message, they would create a division in the church. At that time in history, a division in the church was the worst thing that could happen. We are so used to dozens of different churches that we find it difficult to believe that a division in the church would be so terrible, except for a local church split. But Jesus had prayed that we would be one as He and the Father are one. Paul tried at all costs to keep the church intact without having a division between the Jews and their sympathizers and the Gentiles. His letter to the Ephesians underscored in a very strong way his idea on the unity of the church, but that letter appeared years after this one. Paul had put the Galatians on the right path when he was with them. Now, after leaving them, they are in the process of considering another direction to follow. He must cause a course correction before they fully decide. In order to do this, he calls two witnesses.

The first witness is themselves – the Galatian Gentile Christians. Up to this point, the Galatians listened to the trial and understood the narration and the proposition. During the first five verses of the third chapter, Paul calls them (so to speak) to respond to some questions themselves as the beginning of his argument. These verses can be analyzed from the perspective of the pedagogue and also be seen as the same types of questions that a pedagogue would ask the children in his charge.

That sentence repeats a little what we first saw in Galatians 1:6, "I'm astonished." In using the word "foolish", it is very clear that Paul has no doubt concerning his position in these churches. He could say these things without breaking his relationship of love with the believers. The word "foolish" indicates a lack of judgment, and not a lack of understanding. The Galatians knew all the information that they needed to know. They lacked the wisdom to know what they must do with the information they had. In all ways these questions point the discussion in a particular direction and direct the thoughts of the Galatians and the entire letter. They must listen to the rest of the letter in the context of these questions to which they must respond. Their correct response to these questions is the purpose of this letter. Two times, Paul accuses them of being foolish (verses 1 and 3).

The first verse acts again as a bridge. Such bridges were necessary on a speech because the people could not see the paragraphing of the text. It's true that Paul changes the subject and the roles of the personages in the scene he depicts. But the fact that the first question addresses their understanding of the death of Jesus ties this passage with the end of the paragraph before. We do not know exactly what Paul meant by his expression that Jesus was clearly portrayed as crucified before their very eyes. It could mean that Paul, in presenting the gospel, showed them his own scars in the place of those of Jesus, as a demonstration of the suffering of Jesus and Paul's own participation in that suffering. Later in the letter, he will underline that fact and as a critique of the other preachers, he will say that they want nothing to do with suffering for their faith. A true disciple, sooner or later, will suffer for the master. In the case of Paul, it was during the whole time of his ministry. Still, the Galatians knew that the death of Jesus was not for nothing.

So, they are in the witness box. Paul starts his work as a lawyer with serious questions which touch the depth of their Christian experience. In that time, such witnesses were considered as important as the facts that were given. Paul recalls their in three phases, each with a pair of contradictions – contrasts. The three phases of their experience are: v.2, the presence of the Holy Spirit; v. 3, a beginning and continuation; v. 4-5, experiences including miracles and suffering. For the first and the third, the contrast is the obeying the law or believing what they heard; for the second the contrast is between the Spirit and the flesh (human effort). In his argument, he will underline the two contrasts and distinguish the true gospel from the false. In the Epistle to the Romans, we will more deeply develop the contrast between the Spirit and the flesh.

The second witness is Abraham. Here, Paul introduces a written proof, a legal precedent which for him treats the same situation as that of the Galatians. Moreover, the text is indisputable because everyone acknowledges it as inspired by God. We will read the passage: 3:6-14.

*Read it and ask: What are the similarities between Abraham's experience and that of the Galatians?*

According to the Jews of that era, Abraham had been justified by God, because he had perfectly practiced all the law, even before it had been given to Moses. For them, the law had been established at the moment of creation itself. For them, the faith of Abraham equaled a perfect faithfulness to God during his whole life. By retelling Abraham's story, Paul wanted to emphasize that Abraham had received a message from God which he had believed. For him therefore, the faith of Abraham (especially that shown in Gen. 15:6) was more than general obedience. He believed the promise of God. Through his faith, God declared him righteous before initiating the covenant with him. Abraham was not yet circumcised; therefore, he was still a "pagan" in the Jewish sense of the word. Moreover, the promise that Abraham received announced the blessings of God towards Gentiles. For Paul, it is absolutely necessary that Gentiles stay as they are, as non-Jews. If not, God's promise is worthless – they will be Jews, themselves.

This passage presents another complicated structure, but the Galatians having been well trained in how to listen to speeches heard and understood. It is called a construction of concentric circles or an X-construction:

- A. (v. 6-7) The Spirit made them children of Abraham by faith
- B. (v. 8-9) The blessing of Abraham on the Gentiles
- C. (v. 10) Under the law, a curse (cited Deut. 27:26)
- D. (v. 11) The life of faith, not the law (cited Hab. 2:4)
- D. (v. 12) The life of the law, not faith (cited Lev. 18:5)
- C. (v. 13) Christ redeemed us from the curse (cited Deut. 21:23)
- B. (v. 14a) The blessing of Abraham on the Gentiles
- A. (v. 14b) The gift of the Spirit by faith

In such a construction, the middle link often carries the core of the message, while the others tie it into the context such that the argument continues on a linear manner from beginning to the end. This seems to be the situation here. The question asked by the false gospel was the same as that in verse 3. The Christian life

comes from which source, the Spirit or the flesh? Abraham's witness touches the context of Gentiles who believe in the promise of God, and the blessings which follow.

This structure begins with an argument of a single premise and then a then a conclusion. The premise that Abraham was justified by faith is recognized as true without discussion. It is the word of God. The conclusion, by contrast, "those who believe are children of Abraham" raises many questions. There is not a second premise in his argument, and it is necessary to create an adequate basis for reaching that conclusion. There needs to be a declaration which describes the faith of Abraham as a paradigm instead of a unique experience. Jewish tradition considered Abraham as totally unique in human history. But this argument requires that his experience of faith be the same thing as all those who believe in Jesus, Jews or Gentiles. This is exactly what he does in verses 8 and 9. He says that the faith of Abraham, the fact that he responded positively to a promise or a revelation of God, exactly mirrors the experience of the "pagans" in Galatia – the word that he heard was the gospel (good news) for the Gentiles, of which he was one.

The conclusion from verse 7 requires the recognition that "justified by faith" equals "child of Abraham" and not something else. This argument presents a word of encouragement to the Galatians by naming them children of Abraham, heirs of the blessing. All the Jewish tradition includes Abraham and his descendents in the promises. The difference here is that Paul redefines who is a child of Abraham and who therefore can benefit from the promises. This same conclusion utters a sad word to a greater number of Jews.

*What then is the curse?*

**Verses 10-14** – Those who oppose Paul do not accept his argument here, because Abraham, at the end of the story accepted the rite of circumcision for himself and his people of the covenant. Even if Paul can show that the Galatians are children of Abraham, he must now show that it is not necessary or that it is even valueless if they accept circumcision. This is what the rest of the passage tries to present. The opponents have put together the ideas of Abraham, the law, faith and Christ such that for them

Christ is only a renewing of the covenant with Moses. For his work, Paul decided to use a collection of biblical passages which reference the words "faith", "law" and "life".

What Paul does in these verses is to create a contrast between those who live by the works of the law and those who live by faith such that there is nothing in common between them. Only those who live by faith receive the blessing. In verse 10, Paul cites Deut. 27:26 where those who live by the works of the law find themselves under a curse. Paul seems to generalize the laws in place of speaking of only certain rites. He does not explain too much what the curse is, except for the fact that is one decided to be justified by following the law, it is necessary to follow all of them without ever wandering away.

In verses 11-12 Paul creates another complicated argument, with four phrases, two of which are citations from Scripture and as such their truth is undisputed. This is an argument where Paul compares faith and the law as contradictory sources of life. The text of Habakkuk 2:4, "the righteous will live by his faith" is tied in well to Gal. 2:16, the point that all hold in common. The placement of this text in the argument after "no one will be justified by the law" forces a reading of Hab. 2:4 to mean, "The just live by faith and not by the law." To that reading Paul contrasts another test of Leviticus where those who chose to practice the law live by it. In order for that argument to make sense, it is necessary to understand that Paul speaks of two types of life: the new life (the new creation) announced in the gospel, or the old life attached to the exclusivity of the old system. Here, therefore, we have the scene of the new creation before us. The death of Christ finished something eschatological, one time for all. It is his death, which is the grace of God, which saves us and by faith in which we are justified and we rejoice in the new life in Christ. Those who depend on an exemplary obedience to all the laws of God cannot benefit from that life. His argument shows that one must depend on one or the other but can not depend on both. The Jews can, if they want, maintain their cultural distinctions to a certain point, but they cannot force other believers to follow them as a means of salvation.

The faithfulness of God towards His people was never based on their obedience, but on His grace. Even the law was a part of that grace. The law was holy and good, but it functioned to describe the sin and never the freedom from sin of those who observed it. What Paul does in this argument is contrast the life by faith and life by the law by saying effectively that justification only comes from the first, where justification means that one is accepted before God by one's faith. His conclusion is found at the beginning of verse 12, "the law is not based on faith," or else the law produces one type of life while faith promotes another. It is out of the question therefore to add the legal obligations to people who are already justified by faith, because the two are opposites rather than collaborators in spiritual formation.

In verses 13-14 Paul ends the argument with a word of encouragement for all, by repeating that Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law and in its place gave us Abraham's blessing and the promise of the God's Holy Spirit. If Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, why force others to follow it? Once more, he must work to convince his opponents of that last thought. This is saved for the second Scriptural exposition.

*Allow time for the students to ask questions and review the answers that they have written in their workbooks.*

*The groups will get together and discuss the plans for a series of Sunday school lessons. It is not necessary for them all to develop the same series, but they need to present their ideas from which themes can be chosen.*

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## **Leader Presentation # 2 : Gal. 3:15-18, the Logic of Humankind**

### **Introduction**

To this point, Paul called the Galatians to the witness stand for a testimony of their experience of God in their lives – a very strong argument. One cannot contradict such an experience or such a witness. Next, he introduced the experience of Abraham,

underlined by Biblical texts, again a strong argument. Here he presents an argument which comes from the world of humans, a cultural element. Such an argument does not carry the same force as the others, but even so it is important.

### **Process**

Paul presents an argument that could be called “from the lesser to the greater”. In this case, the lesser is the covenant of a will and the greater is the covenant that God made with His people. The two use the same word and the two have the same meaning – a unilateral decision, meaning a decision made by one person, which affects others and is unalterable on the part of the third person.

The word in Greek only means will, but the Septuagint used the word to translate the Hebrew word for covenant. If the Galatians had copies of the Old Testament texts, they would have taken from the Septuagint therefore the usage of this word.

### ***“Posterity” in the singular***

The word in Greek is *sperma* which is similar to the word we use in the science of biology to describe the animal seed which passes from the male to the female. Here, in effect, “seed” is maybe a better translation than “posterity”, because it is simpler to think of seed as a singular than it is to think of posterity in that way. Moreover, the promise of Abraham indicates the birth of one promised son before the birth of a multitude of seed after him. Paul plays fairly therefore with the two senses – singular and plural—in referring to Christ on one side and all the believers on the other. The seed of Abraham in the biological sense (flesh) was Isaac and all those who were born of him. The seed in the sense of faith is Christ and all those who are born of him.

### ***V. 17 – The promise and faith***

This idea that the law, or the covenant with Moses and the Hebrews in no way cancels out the covenant with Abraham and all nations – that is only found here in Jewish literature.

***V. 18 – The conclusion of this paragraph and of this witness***

Law and promise here become two principles – two covenants in opposition to one another. The conclusion is that God, by grace, gives and completes His promise to Abraham. The point here is the grace of God and not the reward due to the dignity of Abraham. Philo, a Jewish scholar from the same era as Paul, commenting on the same verses in Genesis said that the heritage is given to those who are worthy. For Paul, all is by grace – beginning with Abraham all the way to the Galatians.

*Have students read aloud 3:19-29. As they listen to the passage, have students think about these questions:*

- 1. Who is the "Seed" referred to in v. 19?*
- 2. What was the purpose of the law?*

After the reading, return to these questions and discuss them together. Ask the students to point back to specific phrases in the passage to support their answers.

***V.19 – 22 – Role of the law, ends with Christ (Χριστος, Christos)***

To review, ask the students what the term "pedagogue" means. Walter Hansen (*Galatians* 100-103) outlines three characteristics of the law, as contained in this passage:

- 1) It was "added because of transgressions" – The law is the "objective standard by which violations are measured" (Hansen 101). Though the law can point out the problem, it cannot provide the solution.*
- 2) The law was temporal, and pointed beyond itself to something more permanent, namely, the promise in Christ.*
- 3) The law was mediated, i.e. came indirectly through angels and Moses, whereas the promise came directly from God in Christ.*

**3:23-29 – Freedom in Christ, ends with heir (κληρονομος - kleyronomos)**

In verse 29, the promise is that all who “belong to Christ” are “heirs according to the promise.” Hansen (113) remarks: “Since the Galatian Christians belong to Christ, they are directly related to Abraham and recipients of the blessings promised to Abraham.” In other words, observance of the Mosaic law is no longer necessary “to secure or maintain that status” (Ibid., 113-114).

The whole point of Paul’s argument is that the law of Moses was not designed as an end in itself. We cannot be justified by observance of the law. Rather – and this appears in v. 24 – the law brings us to Christ, so that we might be “justified by faith.”

This argument is repeated by the Apostle Paul in Romans 1:17, which itself is a quote from Habakkuk 2:4. Both Martin Luther and John Wesley struggled for years in their faith journey before the light of this concept shone in their spiritual darkness. The truth of the matter may be summarized in this dictum:

**“I am not saved *because* I do good works, but *because* I am saved, I do good works.”**

The simplest definition of justification is pardon, or forgiveness. Once we have been reconciled to God, then the presence of the Holy Spirit begins to work in us (sanctification), making us truly holy.

In Christ, there are both new *spiritual* and *social* relationships (Hansen, 111-114):

**1. *Spiritual relationships*** – The new spiritual relationship is described in verses 26-27:

*“So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ” (TNIV).<sup>1</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> NIV: “sons of God”

Ben Witherington III sees in this passage a baptismal rite that was intended to distinguish followers of Christ from adherents of other religions, including Judaism but also “Gentile and religious social notions” (*Grace in Galatia* 270).

Discussion: What rites or ceremonies exist in your people group that are designed to set the group off from other groups?

(ex) Some Ghanians receive a slit in their cheek.

Theologian Rob Staples has argued that baptism is the NT equivalent of OT circumcision – see his book, *Outward Sign and Inward Grace*. Also, read Colossians 2:11-12. What do you think of this idea? Since infants were circumcised in the OT, does the parallelism of thought here seem to support the baptism of infants born to Christian parents?

**2. Social relationships** – Read v. 28 together. Hansen (112) remarks:

“Equality in Christ is the starting point for all truly biblical social ethics.” *What do you think this means? (discussion)*

We know that Paul in the book of Philemon sent the runaway slave, Onesimus, back to Philemon, his owner. Was Paul being inconsistent when he said that in Christ there was neither “slave nor free”?

Obviously, there are (thankfully) many differences between the male and female sexes. The most obvious one is that only men can father children, and only women can give birth. So what can Paul mean when he says that there is “neither male nor female”?

Regarding the question of women in ministry, F.F. Bruce asks:

“If in ordinary life existence in Christ is manifested openly in church fellowship, then, if a Gentile may exercise spiritual leadership in church as freely as a Jew, or a slave as freely as a citizen, why not a woman as freely as a man?” (Bruce, cited by Hansen, 113).

**Discussion:**

1. What are some of the barriers in your own culture to women succeeding in private business or government?
2. Do you think some of the same barriers exist in the church? If so, what are some positive steps that can be taken to make Paul's vision a reality, namely, equality in Christ as evidenced by full participation in all ministry roles by women?

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**Lesson Six: First Scriptural Exposition, cont.**

Meditation

Choruses

Verse to memorize: Gal. 3:28

**4:1-7 – Heir as a son, ends with God (θεος)**

*Have a student read aloud these seven verses.*

On the chalk board, the leader should make two columns. The first column will be labeled: "Characteristics of a slave." The second column will read: "Characteristics of a son." Then, the students will examine these verses in order to fill up the two columns, noting the verse where the characteristic was found.

The board might end up looking something like this:

<i>Characteristics – slave</i>	<i>Characteristics – son</i>
subject to guardians/trustees (v. 2)	have “full rights” (v. 5) “redeemed” (v. 5)
as slave/children, subject to the “basic principles of the world” (v.3)	have the “Spirit of (God’s) son” in their hearts (v. 6)
are “under the law” (v. 5)	cry out “Abba, Father” (v. 6) an “heir” (v.7)

### **Commentary**

Walter Hansen (*Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, 332) comments on this section:

*Paul closes the rebuke section of his letter with a dramatic before-and-after picture (Gal. 4:1-11) to contrast the slavery before and the freedom after Christ was sent by the Father and accepted by the Galatian believers. Now that they have experienced the Spirit who gives them assurance that they are children of God, it is absurd for them to turn back to live as slaves under the Law. Formerly, they were slaves to the gods of this world, now they are children of God.*

### **Discussion:**

Have you known some who – after coming to Christ – have “turned back”? As pastors, what can be done to “conserve the converts”?

### **v. 4 – “When the *time* had fully come” (Greek *kairos*)**

Kenneth Latourette (in vol. 1 of his 2 volume history of Christianity) has noted a number of conditions that were ideal for the spread of Christianity:

### *1. Pax Romana – the "Peace of Rome"*

"The internal peace and order which Augustus achieved endured, with occasional interruptions, for about two centuries. Never before had all the shores of the Mediterranean been under one rule and never had they enjoyed such prosperity."

– p. 21

### *2. Growth of roads and commerce*

"Highways of solid construction traversed the Empire and made possible more extensive travel and trade than the region had ever known. The pirates had been curbed who had imperiled shipping in the Mediterranean. Roads, travel, and commerce facilitated cultural and religious as well as political unity."

– p. 21

### *3. Greek and Latin spread*

"Greek was spoken among one or more groups in most of the cities of the Empire where commerce was to be found...Latin was more prevalent in the West...A religion which employed Greek and Latin, and especially Greek, had advantages over rivals which did not and might gain an Empire-wide hearing."

– pp. 21-22

### *4. Religious and moral hunger*

"The gods were not as good as the best men of the period and could command respect only if the stories about them were treated as myths and allegorized. The age had much in it of moral corruption. Yet it also had consciences which revolted against the excesses of the day. A religion which offered high moral standards and the power to attain them would be welcomed by the more serious." – p. 22

## **Discussion**

In what sense has the time “fully come” for the spread of the Gospel in your community? What are the tools at our disposal that will help us reach people for Jesus?

### **v. 6-7 – How are we adopted?**

In Christian theology, we believe that three things happen simultaneously when we decide to follow Jesus:

1. Justification – We receive God’s pardon for our sins;
2. Regeneration – This is what John Wesley called “initial sanctification,” i.e. the beginning of our moral transformation;
- \* 3. Adoption – We become part of God’s family.

The third of these elements is what Paul is talking about in Gal. 4:6-7.

But how are we adopted? It is not something we earn. Walter Hansen (*Galatians* 12) makes this clear:

*We could do nothing to attain the position of sons and daughters; we can only receive the gift of adoption by faith. We could do nothing to produce an experience as sons and daughters; the action of God in sending the Spirit of his Son into our hearts enables us to enjoy our new relationship with God our Father.*

The phrase “Spirit of His Son” only appears here in the New Testament. We believe in the double procession of the Holy Spirit, meaning that the Spirit comes both from the Father (Gen. 1:2, Acts 2:33) and the Son (Acts 16:7, Phil. 1:19). It’s a tremendous comfort for the Christian to know that we are the temple of the Holy Spirit! – see 1 Cor. 6:19.

### **4:8-11 – Knowing God, how can you turn back?**

*Have a different student read aloud these verses to the group.*

Ben Witherington III calls this section “d  j   vu” (*Grace in Galatia* 295). It takes up again the central concern of the letter that we’ve already addressed in Gal. 1:6ff. Let’s look at a couple of key phrases that appear in the paragraph:

**v. 8 – “those who by nature are not gods”** – There are three possibilities regarding the identity of these “gods”:

1. stone or wooden idols;
2. mythical beings, like Zeus or Aphrodite, or
3. demons

(Hansen, *Galatians* 125).

*Have a student read Romans 1:25.*

Discussion: What are the essential differences between the one true God and the gods that the Galatians were tempted to worship?

**v. 9 – “weak and miserable principles”** – Hansen comments:

*Pagan religions are weak and miserable principles. They are weak because they do not have the power to overcome the guilt and power of sin; they are miserable, poor and impotent because they cannot impart new life.*

- Hansen, *Galatians*, 127

**v. 10 – “special days and months and seasons and years”**

These came from the Jewish calendar. Paul was concerned that the Galatians not substitute *legalistic observance* for a vital relationship with God through Christ, a subtle shift from dependence upon the Lord to dependence upon religious rites to curry God’s favor. For Gentile believers to be required to observe the Law of Moses would be accepting a “yoke of slavery” (Gal. 5:1).

## **Discussion**

In the Christian faith, there are special days and seasons, such as the Advent season (preparing for Christmas) and the Lenten season (preparing for Easter). What are the advantages to the Christian community in celebrating these special times together? Are there any dangers in doing so?

### **4:12-20 – Retransfer of loyalty from the others to Paul**

*Choose a student to read the entire passage.*

If one were to choose a single phrase from this reading that sums up the rest, it would have to be the first part of verse 15:

*"What has happened to all your joy?"*

Later in the book (5:22), "joy" is listed a part of the fruit of the Holy Spirit. Yet something has happened to the Galatians that has made them unduly sober. Their "zeal" (4:18) is devoid of any joy, and they seem to have picked this up from "those people" (v. 17) who no doubt are the Judaizers, i.e. those who want to require the Gentiles to obey the Law of Moses. This lack of joy is also evidenced by their coldness toward Paul.

Paul is "perplexed" (v. 20) and is so pained that it feels like the "pains of childbirth" (v. 19). They have abandoned their loyalty to Paul's teaching (which is Christ's) and have gone after other teachers. Paul wants them back.

*What caused the breach in their relationship?* Hansen (*Galatians* 135) underscores v. 16 – "Have I become your enemy by telling you the truth?" This "truth" was no doubt his warning them about the false teachers, and urging them to not abandon the simplicity of the Gospel. Hansen observes:

*The dramatic shift from the Galatians' warm welcome to their cold rejection of Paul serves as a sober warning to both pastors and their churches. Pastors should not be so naïve as to think they will always receive a warm welcome if they consistently teach the truth. In fact, teaching the truth will*

*always run the risk of alienating some people. And people in the church need to be aware that their initial positive response to pastors who teach the truth will be severely tested when the truth cuts like a two-edged sword. During such a time of conviction, people need to maintain their loyalty to their pastors precisely because they have courage to preach the truth even when it hurts.*

- Hansen, *Galatians* 135

**Discussion**

1. What topics do you find most difficult to preach? Why?
2. Have you ever known of a situation where a pastor claims his or her problems are because they “preach the truth” but in fact the problem lies elsewhere? (*Share discreetly, not using names or too many details*).
3. How can the pastor discern when the congregation’s negative reaction is to biblical truth and when it is simply a legitimate reaction to something wrong that the pastor has done?

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**Lesson 7 – Second Scriptural Exposition: Third Transition  
Question – 4:21-5:6**

Meditation

Choruses

*Memory verse: Galatians 5:1*

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***Commentary***

**4:21-5:1 – The difference between slave and free**

*Have a student read aloud this passage.*

The Old Testament background to Paul's argument here is found in Genesis 21:8-21, the story of Hagar and Ishmael being sent away.

*Ask a student to summarize in his or her own words the content of this story. Why did Abraham send his concubine and son away?*  
Ben Witherington (*Grace in Galatia* 326) gives the following chart:

| HAGAR                                          | SARAH                                       |
|------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| The covenant from Mt. Sinai in Arabia          | The covenant of the promise                 |
| The current Jerusalem                          | The Jerusalem that is above                 |
| The children of the slave woman (like Ishmael) | The children of the free woman (like Isaac) |
| Not sharing the inheritance                    | Sharing the inheritance                     |

Hansen (*Dictionary* 333) notes:

*The Hagar-Sarah allegory serves primarily as the basis for Paul's biblical appeal to resist the influence of the intruders of the rest of the letter. The freedom-slaver and spirit-flesh antitheses presented in the allegory set the stage for the ethical appeal to stand for freedom against slavery under the Law and walk by the Spirit and so overcome the desires of the flesh.*

But what is an "allegory"?

Hansen (*Galatians* 141) notes that allegory is "the interpretation of an object or person or number of objects or persons as in reality meaning some object or person of a later time, with no attempt made to trace a 'similar situation' between them."

In allegory, symbolism is important. Paul uses Hagar to represent the slavery of the Mosaic Law, while Sarah represents the freedom of the Holy Spirit. His conclusion appears in verse 30: "Get rid of the slave woman and her son." In other words, do not give in to the temptation to base your relationship with God on the strict observance of a series of rites and laws.

## **Discussion**

One of the biggest dangers historically in the church has been the danger of legalism. God has given us two major commandments: *Love God, and love your neighbor* – see Mark 12:28-34. Those who obey these commandments will automatically obey the Decalogue (10 Commandments). Yet we as humans have always wanted to add on other rules and regulations. For example, a sect active in Côte d'Ivoire requires all worshipers to remove their sandals at the door of the church. Often, strict rules about dress fall more heavily on women than they do on men.

Do you think our Nazarene churches are sometimes in danger of legalism, or is the danger in the other direction, where we refuse to be subject to any rules? What role does the Holy Spirit play in guiding the church? What role does the Bible play?

### **5:2-6 – The Holy Spirit, not the law, accomplishes what they seek**

*Have a student read aloud these verses.*

Walter Hansen (*Galatians* 155) explains the meaning of circumcision. It was more than having the foreskin of the penis removed. What was important was what this procedure symbolized, which was inclusion in the Jewish nation:

*But why would inclusion in the Jewish nation become so extremely important to Gentiles? Paul understood their motive as trying to be justified by law. In other words, they thought they could gain God's approval only by belonging to the Jewish nation. This meant they did not consider faith in Christ as a satisfactory basis for God's approval. They were being convinced that faith in Christ had to be supplemented with identification with the Jewish people through circumcision and law observance.*

Put differently, the Galatians seemed to believe that faith in Christ was necessary, but not sufficient. They were moving away from the simplicity of the Gospel!

If “righteousness” (v. 5) could not be accomplished through *outward* deeds, then how could it be accomplished? Paul answers in v. 5 –

“But by faith we eagerly await *through the Spirit* the righteousness for which we hope.”

God’s work in our lives always begins not on the outside, but on the inside. His work is accomplished through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, who takes up residence in the heart of the believer at the moment that he or she is born again (Titus 3:5-7). The Spirit’s activity continues through the ongoing work of sanctification, including but not limited to entire sanctification (1 Thess. 5:23-24). That is why the classic formula of Wesleyan theology – “holiness of heart and life” – begins with “holiness of heart.” There is nothing we can do as an outward ritual that can change our heart. Only God can do the *inside of us* work, the change of heart that alters our attitudes and allows us to see things as God sees them.

However, note that we believe not only in holiness of heart, but holiness of life. Once God has done something on the inside, people can’t help but notice the change on the outside:

“For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.” – Gal. 5:6

This passage became a key text that John Wesley preached again and again. “Holiness of life” boils down to one word: LOVE. To be sanctified wholly is to love God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and to love our neighbor as ourselves (Matt. 22:34-40). To use the words of James:

“Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do” (James 2:18).

In other words, faith expresses itself through love. Holiness of *heart* is demonstrated by holiness of *life*.

**Discussion**

1. If faith in Christ is the only thing that is both necessary and sufficient for our salvation, of what value are good works for the Christian?
2. What should our motivation be when we visit prisoners, the sick, the poor, or do other works of mercy?

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**Lesson 8: The Practice of Christian Ethics, Part 1**

**Galatians 5:7-26**

(Fourth transition question: "Who cut in on you and kept you from obeying the truth?" – Christian life in practice)

Meditation

Choruses

*Memory verse:* Gal. 5:14

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***Commentary***

**5:7-12 – What cuts and what counts**

v. 7 – "You were running a good race"

Paul likes to use sports metaphors. In 2 Tim. 4:7, near the close of his life, he writes:

*"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith."*

A race can be lost, though, if someone cuts in front of you. The Galatians were in danger of losing the Christian race because false teachers had gotten in their way.

v. 9 – “A little yeast works through the whole batch of dough.”

Here, the expression is used negatively as a reference to the false teaching about the necessity of circumcision for Gentile believers, a teaching that is spreading and will soon affect the whole church (Hansen, *Galatians*, 159). Interestingly, the image of the yeast that “worked all through the dough” appears in Matt. 13:33. There, it is a parable of the Kingdom of God. As such, it is a positive view of the effect that Christians can have on the society around them.

### **Discussion**

Can you think of an instance where a group of good people were negatively influenced by one corrupt person? On the other hand, can you think of an instance where the wrong direction of an organization was positively changed by the influence of one person on the inside? Which outcome, in your experience, is more frequent?

### **vv. 11-12 – the “offense of the Cross”**

*What do you think Paul means by this expression? Why would the cross be offensive?*

The Greek word for “offense” is *scandalon* (Witherington 374). The word originally meant a “trap,” but came to mean something that “grossly offends, causes revulsion, or even incites opposition” (Ibid.). Witherington (Ibid.) notes:

*In Paul’s view preaching circumcision nullifies the scandal of the cross...It suggests that Christ’s death was not sufficient to reconcile persons to God or keep them reconciled to God, or to prepare them to face the judgment of God on the last day.*

Hansen (*Galatians* 161) agrees with Witherington, noting: “The message of Christ crucified is offensive not only to Jews but also to the pride of all who want to claim some personal merit as the basis of God’s approval.”

Paul wants the Galatians to come to their senses and turn back to the simplicity of the Gospel. For this reason, he says that the circumcision teachers might as well go all the way and castrate themselves (v.12).

Probably, Paul just wanted to set up disgust in the eyes of the Galatians toward these teachers by showing them where their logic led.

### **Discussion**

What are some of the false teachings popular among churches in the city where you minister? What can we do as pastors to prevent the spread of these false teachings among our own people?

### **5:13-15 – Service in freedom, the law of love**

This section is an extended commentary on 5:6, particularly the phrase “faith expressing itself through love.”

In most of the epistle, Paul is combating the danger of *legalism*. Now in v. 13, he warns them of the opposite extreme, which is license.

*What is license?* This is an “anything goes” attitude. John Wesley called this antinomianism. It comes from Greek words meaning “without law.” We are not to seek to be justified by obeying the law, yet we do not throw off all moral boundaries as if they don’t matter. So Paul warns (v. 13):

“But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love.” Freedom does not mean freedom to satisfy my own needs, but freedom to meet the needs of others. This is the essence of the second commandment, cited by Paul in v. 14 -- “Love your neighbor as yourself.”

*Illustration:* The story is told of a family who developed a very strange condition. They could no longer bend their elbows. For days, they puzzled over the solution. They were people, not animals, so they refused to be like dogs plunging their faces into the bowl, but neither could they figure out how to get the food to

their mouth when their elbows would not bend. Finally, the youngest girl in the family, only five years old, picked up a piece of bread and brought it to her sister, placing it gently in her mouth. She had found the solution! They couldn't feed themselves, but even with stiff elbows, they could feed each other. The family that would have starved was now well-fed.

In v. 15, Paul warns them not to (like dogs) bite and devour each other. Instead, they are to love each other. To fulfill all laws, we must obey the supreme law, the law of love.

### **5:16-21 – The Holy Spirit vs. the flesh**

*Have two students read this passage: vv. 16-18, 19-21*

Paul gives a catalogue of the "acts of the sinful nature" (v. 19). Like any list, it is not exhaustive; rather, it underscores some of the major manifestations of evil in our world.

v. 20 – "idolatry and witchcraft"

These ancient sins can be found throughout the Old Testament. *Idolatry* was what Israel repeatedly practiced, and most of the prophets railed against it (For example, see Isaiah 44:16-17).

### **Discussion**

*Take a few minutes to read the Isaiah passage.* What should the Christian do if asked to make a libation to an ancestor, in order to keep the ancestor happy? How is ancestor worship a type of idolatry? Is it possible to respect our ancestors (and their moral example) without crossing the line into addressing ourselves to them in the same way that we address ourselves to God?

The sin of *witchcraft* is addressed in the story of King Saul, who consulted the witch of Endor (1 Samuel 28). Walter Hansen (*Galatians* 175) notes that Greek word in 5:20 for "witchcraft" is the same one from which our English word "pharmacy" is derived. Here, it forbids "the use of drugs in sorcery and witchcraft and to poison people."

## ***What is meant by "sinful nature" or "flesh"?***

The *New American Standard Bible* does not speak of the "sinful nature," but rather of the "flesh." In Greek, this word is *sarx*, and it appears more than 150 times in the New Testament (see Alexander Snyman, "On the Use and Meaning of the Word 'Flesh' in the New Testament," online: <http://www.gospel-herald.com/sarx.htm>).

Snyman notes that in almost every instance, *sarx* refers to humanity in its fallen state. Here, it appears in vv. 16, 17, and 19. Other New Testament examples include 2 Peter 1:21 and 2:10.

If Galatians 5:16-21 appears to emphasize the ongoing battle between the flesh and the Spirit in the life of the Christian, it points ahead to the solution in v. 24 – but more on that later.

The triumph of the Christian over the *sarx* is clearer in another letter of Paul's. Ephesians 2:3-7 speaks of the gratification of the flesh in the past tense, as something that we used to do, but do no longer. Instead, we are now triumphing over sin, as symbolized by our having been "seated" with Christ in "heavenly places":

<sup>3</sup>Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our ***flesh***, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. <sup>4</sup>But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, <sup>5</sup>even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), <sup>6</sup>and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup>so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

The degree to which the Christian may be delivered in this life from the daily struggle with sin is a point of contention among theologians of different traditions. Some – pointing to Gal. 5:17 and Romans 7– believe that a daily, ongoing struggle with sin's power is all we can expect as Christians in this life (Hansen, *Galatians* 169). John Wesley, however, and many Wesleyan theologians since his time, taught a more optimistic view, what is

sometimes called the "optimism of grace." Christ triumphed over sin at the Cross – *Christus Victor*. As those who are Christians – "little Christs" – we, too, can triumph over sin's power in our lives. This is because Jesus came to earth "to destroy the devil's work" (1 John 3:8), a passage that Wesley never grew tired of preaching. The blood of Jesus can cleanse us from *all* sin (1 John 1:7).

### **Discussion**

1. Does this teaching mean that Christians who are living by the power of the Holy Spirit *cannot* sin? (Read 1 John 2:1-2).
2. Discuss this phrase:

"Wesleyans believe that living a sanctified life means that sin becomes the exception rather than the rule."

Do you agree with this statement? How does temptation fit in?

### **5:22-26 – The fruit of the Spirit**

*Have a student read aloud this passage.*

Hansen (*Galatians* 178) defines the fruit of the Spirit as "the moral character developed by the power of the Spirit." He calls them a "unity." In other words, it is not a question of evidencing some but not others. The Christian who is living by the Spirit and keeping in-step with the Spirit (v. 25) will increasingly manifest the full range of the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

Ben Witherington (*Grace in Galatia* 408) notes that these "character traits" are "qualities produced in the life of the community by the Spirit." We cannot fully develop Christlikeness if we are separated from the Body of Christ. The church provides both encouragement and accountability in our walk with Christ. As Proverbs 27:17 affirms, "As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another."

In Romans 12:3-8 and 1 Cor. 12-14, Paul speaks of the ***gifts of the Spirit***. Unlike the fruit of the Spirit – which characterize the lives of all believers – the gifts of the Spirit are distributed

selectively by God's choice (1 Cor. 12:11). As preachers of the Word, we can encourage our listeners to keep in-step with the Spirit, in order to more clearly show forth His fruit. However, we cannot insist that the Christian demonstrate any particular gift, whether mundane or spectacular.

### ***v. 24 – What does it mean to "crucify" the flesh?***

Every year on Good Friday in the Philippines, a handful of Roman Catholic men are crucified in order to follow in Jesus' footsteps. They are removed just minutes later, so do not die. Some women will also be crucified.

*Read an account online at:* <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/1901095.stm>

Most Christians – including Roman Catholic leaders – believe that such a literal crucifixion is extreme and unnecessary, but there is a kind of crucifixion that we must undergo. Paul says that the "flesh" (***sarx***) must be crucified.

*Who does the crucifying?*

Ben Witherington (*Grace in Galatians* 412) notes the use of a Greek tense in 5:24 that implies ongoing crucifixion: "Those in Christ must continue to crucify the flesh whenever it comes to life again, for the Christian in this life stands in the battle zone between flesh and Spirit and has a decisive role to play in his or her moral progress."

On the other hand, in 2:20 and 6:14, it is passive: "I am crucified with Christ" and "the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world." However, in 5:24, we ourselves are the ones who do the crucifying of the "passions" and "desires" of the flesh and – in the context of the larger chapter – we cannot do this in our own weakness, but only through the power of the Holy Spirit living within us (v.16, 25).

*For private thought:* Are there any hidden sins in my life that need to be confessed, forgiven, and nailed to the cross?

Remember: Because our sin nature can be crucified, we are able to live for Christ in the power of His resurrection!

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## **Lesson 9: The Practice of Christian Ethics, Part 2**

### **Galatians 6:1-18**

Meditation

Choruses

*Memory verse*: Gal. 6:7

### **Commentary**

#### ***6.1-5 – The law of Christ***

*Have someone read verses 1-5.*

Crucifixion of the sinful nature is the key to a victorious Christian life. Unfortunately, sin too often weakens the church. Walter Hansen (*Galatians* 184) observes:

*Moral failure in the church should not be a surprise, nor should it be considered fatal to the life of the church. What is important is the church's response when such failure occurs. The church may respond with sharp condemnation under the law. That response will crush the sinner and divide the church. That seems to be what was happening in the churches in Galatia. The zealots for the law were merciless to sinners. But Paul wants to show that the occasion of sin is the opportunity for Spirit-led people to display the fruit of the Spirit in order to bring healing to the sinner and unity in the church.*

Jesus noted in John 8:34 that everyone who sins is a slave to sin. If the person who sins shows a willingness to repent, then our duty is to "restore him gently" (6:1). Yet even the one who

restores must be on his or her spiritual guard, to avoid falling (perhaps) into the same sin.

### **v. 2 – carry each other’s burdens**

Witherington (*Grace in Galatia* 422) sees no necessary connection between verse 1 and what follows. The “burdens” here may be financial (see 2 Cor. 12:16) but could easily be a broader reference to any kind of burden. Hansen (*Galatians* 186) observes: “The term burdens may refer to all kinds of physical, emotional, mental, oral or spiritual burdens: for example, financial burdens, the consequences of cancer or the results of divorce. The list of burdens crushing fellow Christians could be extended indefinitely.”

### **vv. 3-4 – have an accurate view of yourself**

Hansen (190) points back to 5:6 and the faith that works through love. Is love the motivation of my actions? Hansen (191) observes: “But when the self-sacrificing love of Christ is seen in the actions of Christians, there is reason for boasting. Christians should celebrate that they can love because of their experience of the cross of Christ and the power of the Spirit.”

### **v. 5 – for each should carry his or her own load**

At first, this seems to contradict what had been said in v. 2. Dunn suggests that the “mature spiritual community” is able to discern between “those loads which individuals must bear for themselves, and those burdens where help is needed” (Witherington 429).

### **Discussion**

- 1) In the Greek, there are two different words for “burden” and “load.” What is the difference between the two?
- 2) In your pastoral experience, have you known situations where helping out others seemed to encourage laziness on the part of the one receiving the help? When is “help” really not a help?

### **vv. 6-10 – on sowing and reaping**

*Have a student read these verses aloud for the class.*

It has been said: "Too many Christians sow to their sinful nature, then pray for crop failure." *What do you think this means?*

"God cannot be mocked." The Greek verb here is *muktarizo*, which means to turn up the nose in mocking contempt (Witherington 431). This is a sign of great disrespect. However, God will ultimately hold us accountable for our actions, and there are two possibilities:

- ***a negative harvest*** – This appears in v. 8, as the result of sowing to the flesh. Such a person will reap "destruction," or as the NASB translates it, "corruption." The old proverb (cited by Hansen 194) is true:

"Sow a thought, reap an act; sow an act, reap a habit; sow a habit, reap a character; sow a character, reap a destiny."

- ***a positive harvest*** – The positive harvest is "eternal life" (v. 8b) and we receive this from the Spirit. But there is a condition: We must not "grow weary in well-doing." There is much more work to be done besides sowing and reaping. We must pull out the "weeds" of sin that can easily grow up in our lives (Hebrews 12:1-2) and choke out God's good fruit.

## **v. 10 – do good to all, but especially to fellow believers**

Hansen (*Galatians* 197) provides an excellent summary:

*Here Paul picks up a central theme of his letter. All believers are children of Abraham by faith in Christ, the seed of Abraham (3:6-29). All believers enjoy the full rights of the children of God (4:4-7). All believers are the true children of the free woman; the heavenly Jerusalem is our mother (4:21-31). These great truths about the family of believers should motivate us to keep on doing good to our brothers and sisters in Christ. We belong to one another in one family, since we belong to Christ.*

## **Discussion**

Why do you think that Paul emphasizes that the “good” we do should be especially directed toward fellow believers? Does God love the Christian more than He loves the unbeliever?

### **vv. 11-18 – a new creation**

v. 11 – the large letters

Paul wanted to emphasize the importance of what he had written (Hansen 198). Today we would do it *by using italics* or perhaps even **bold letters**, or maybe even *change the font*.

vv. 12 – 16 – final warnings about circumcision

Paul returns to the major theme of his letter, i.e. a warning to not give-in to those who were insisting that they be circumcised.

What were the motivations of these false teachers? Hansen (*Galatians* 198-99) detects three primary motives:

1. *They wanted to make a good impression (v. 12)*

Hansen sees this concern as closely related to wanting to make everyone uniform on the outside. But outward conformity may “conceal proud, unrepentant hearts” (Hansen 199). This was the nature of Jesus’ criticism of the Pharisees who were like tombs, painted a nice white on the outside, but inside were full of dead men’s bones (Matt. 23:27).

2. *They wanted to avoid being persecuted for the Cross of Christ (v. 12).*

3. *They wanted to boast to fellow Jews that they were good Jews (v. 13).*

They themselves didn't "obey the law" yet they were interested in seeing Gentiles circumcised! Likely their motivation was so that they could look good in front of their strict fellow Jews.

### **Discussion**

1. Are there areas in which we as pastors might be tempted to boast?
2. Are there ways in which we as pastors try to look good in front of other pastors or church leaders?

### **v. 14 – boasting only in the Cross**

Read v. 14. Paul says that he will only "boast" in the Cross of Christ. Our ministry must always point beyond ourselves to Jesus. Often, when a preacher prays prior to a sermon, he or she will say:

"Oh Lord, hide me behind the Cross."

### **vv. 15 – 18 – Life in the new creation**

Ben Witherington (450) comments:

*In Paul's view, the present evil age exists, but it has been dealt a death blow by the crucifixion of Jesus. All of the world's basic values and assumptions and operating procedures have been put on notice that they are passing away (cf. 1 Cor. 7:31). What really matters are the new eschatological realities brought about by the death of Christ. In Paul's view, even the Law, as well as other good things about the material world, are part of the things that are passing away or are fading in glory (cf. 2 Cor. 3). Having lost their controlling grip on a human life when Christ came and died, one must not submit to such forces again, but rather live on the basis of the new eschatological realities. The new age has dawned and Christians should live by its light and follow the path it illuminates.*

On "new creation," read together 2 Cor. 5:17.

## **Discussion**

1. What does Witherington mean by “new eschatological realities”? How should life in the Kingdom of God differ from society as we now know it? What would it take for your society to more closely resemble the Kingdom of God?
2. Have two or three students briefly talk about their lives before they came to Christ and what they were like afterward. How did things change?

### **v. 17 – bearing the marks of Christ**

In Greek, the term is *stigmata*. Roman Catholic belief is that St. Francis of Assisi literally had bleeding wounds on his wrists that resembled those of Christ. *For private reflection:* Figuratively speaking, what are the marks of Christ-like character that God wants to develop in your life?

## ***Appendix 1***

The following "Introduction" to the book of Galatians is taken from the *NIV Classic Reference Bible* (Zondervan, 1988) and is used by permission of the publisher.

### ***Galatians***

#### *Title and Background*

Judaizers were Jewish Christians who believed, among other things, that a number of the ceremonial practices of the Old Testament were still binding on the New Testament church. Following Paul's successful campaign in Galatia, they insisted that Gentile converts to Christianity abide by certain Old Testament rites, especially circumcision. The Judaizers argued that Paul was not an authentic apostle and that out of a desire to make the message more appealing to Gentiles he had removed from the gospel certain legal requirements. Paul responds by writing this letter.

#### *Author and Date of Writing*

The opening verse identifies the author as the apostle Paul. Various dates have been given for the writing of this letter, but it was probably written around a.d. 50.

#### *Theme and Message*

Galatians stands as an eloquent and vigorous defense for the essential New Testament truth that we are justified by faith in Jesus Christ – by nothing less and nothing more – and that we are sanctified by the obedience that comes from faith in God's work for us, in us and through us by the grace and power of Christ and the Holy Spirit. Some have called the letter the *Magna Carta* of Christian liberty.

#### *Outline*

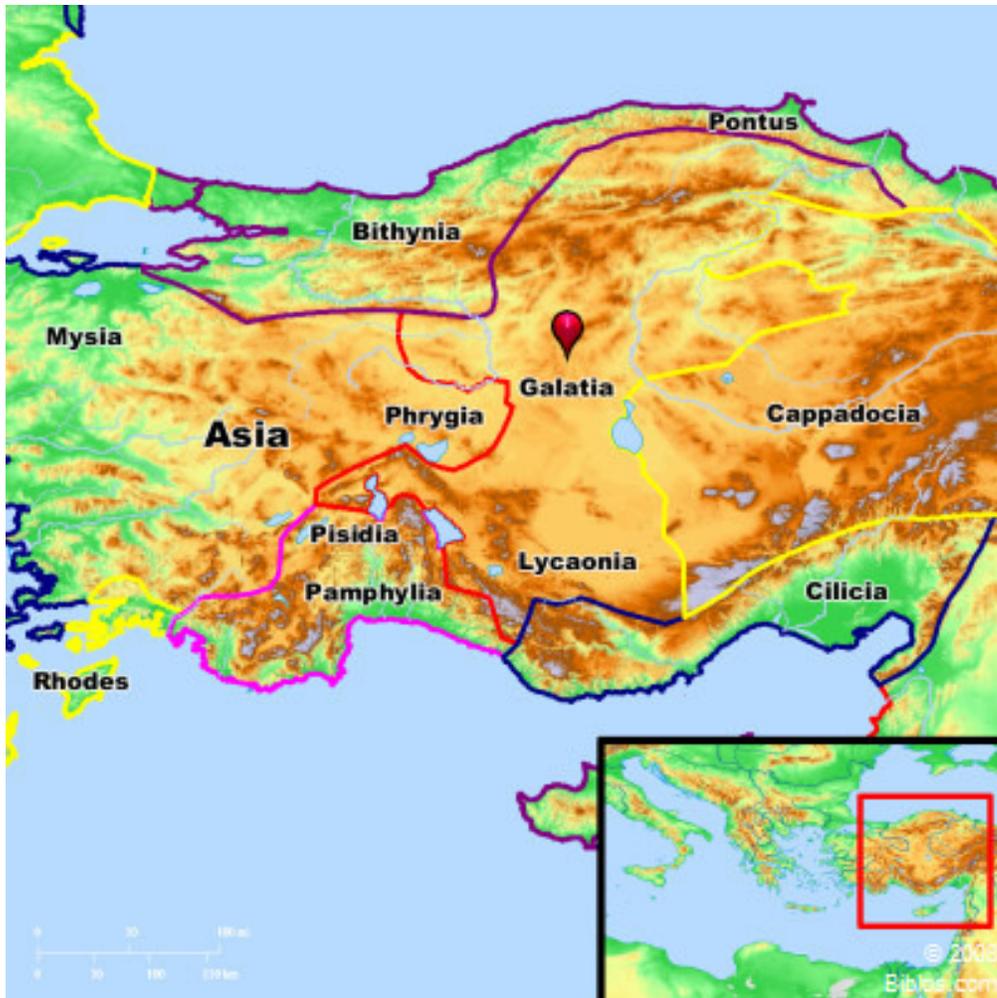
- I. Introduction: Greetings and Denunciation (1:1-9)
- II. Authentication of the Apostle of Liberty & Faith (1:10-2:21)

- III. Justification of the Doctrine of Liberty and Faith (3:1-4:31)
- IV. Practice of the Life of Liberty and Faith (5:1-6:10)
- V. Conclusion (6:11-18)

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***Appendix 2:***  
***Map of Galatia***

From: <http://bibleatlas.org/regional/Galatia.htm>



***Appendix 3:***

**Sample Sunday School Lesson**

This lesson outline – taken from John 6 – is designed to give the student a template for how to develop a lesson based on a passage from the book of Galatians. Only the first lesson is developed in detail. The other two would be developed in similar fashion.

*From pp. 8-9 of the leader's manual:*

Here are some specific instructions for the Sunday School lessons:

- a. The series must have three lessons.
- b. For each lesson, choose a paragraph in Galatians as the lesson text. It is necessary to state in the presentation how the different lessons are tied together.
- c. Prepare a lesson outline with the main points underlined and including sub-points and discussion questions to ask for each point in the lesson. Write a paragraph of text for each point of the lesson in order to indicate what you are thinking.
- d. Be sure that the lesson includes a way to apply the material in the student's daily life for the week following the lesson.

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**Overall lesson theme: "Where He leads me, I will follow"**

*Lesson 1:* John 6:1-15

Jesus leads us in green pastures: Feeding of the 5,000

*Lesson 2:* John 6:16-24

Jesus leads us through troubled waters: Walking on the water

*Lesson 3:* John 6:25-70 – Jesus leads us to Calvary: Will we follow?

## ***Sample Sunday School Lesson***

*Lesson 1:* John 6:1-15 – Jesus leads us in green pastures: Feeding of the 5,000

*Have a student read the passage aloud to the class.*

- Opening question to students:

The story of the feeding of the 5,000 appears in all four of the Gospels (Matt. 14:13-21; Mark 6:30-44; Luke 9:10-17). Why do you think that the Gospel writers all thought it was important to include this story?

*1. The Lord cares about our physical needs as much as our spiritual needs.*

*Read v. 5* – “Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?”

The founder of World Vision tells a story of a missionary who went out to a remote village to preach. The village had been experiencing drought, and the people in the village were hungry. The missionary preacher gave a rousing sermon, and invited his listeners to accept Christ. However, no one came forward to pray. Frustrated, he asked a man in the front row why no one seemed to be listening. “We’re sorry, preacher,” he said, “but we can’t hear your words over the growl of our stomachs.”

Sometimes we speak about “saving souls” as if salvation is only about the next life. While that is important, the ministry of Jesus gives us a model for how to reach others. He healed their diseases, he preached, he taught, and in a couple of instances, he even provided food for the hungry.

Discussion: What are the ways in which our local church reaches out to our community with compassion, like Jesus? How can we do better?

## *2. Big things begin small.*

*Read v. 9* – “Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?”

Sometimes we are discouraged from starting a ministry because we don't feel like the resources we have are adequate to meet such a big need. The feeding of the five thousands seems to be a lesson that we should begin with what we have. We must focus on what we can do with what we have, and trust that God will multiply our efforts over time.

There is a proverb that says: “It is better to light one candle than to curse the darkness.”

Two friends were walking down the beach and saw an amazing and sad sight: Thousands of star fish had washed up on the beach and were slowly dying as they dried in the hot sun. So, the first man began picking up the star fish. One by one, he threw them back into the water. His friend started ridiculing him. “Why do you even bother?” he asked. “There are thousands of star fish. You'll never make a difference for all of them.” Without saying a word, the first man picked up another star fish, and threw it into the water. “I made a difference for *that one*,” he said.

In the story of the feeding of the five thousand, Andrew asked of the five loaves and two fish: “But how far will they go among so many?” Yet big things begin small. We must touch the lives of those we can, and trust God to multiply our efforts. Over time, working together and with God's help, we can touch many more.

### **Discussion**

Have you ever seen a pressing human need and wanted to meet it, but were afraid because the job seemed too big?

## *3. Never waste what God has provided.*

*Read v. 12* – “Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted.”

When the people were done eating, there was much left over. Yet the Lord would not let them just leave the scraps on the ground. They were useful, and should be put to good use.

In West Africa, young boys will dig through the trash looking for scraps of metal. They turn these into toys, little cars or motorcycles, and sell them to tourists. Trash can be turned to treasure.

God values not just things, but also people. As the old saying has it, "God does not make junk." Every one of us has something to contribute to society.

### **Discussion**

Who are the "throw away" people in our society? What can we do to gather them up, like the leftover bread and fish? God does not want any of his creatures to be wasted!

### **Applying today's lesson to life – break into small groups, and take five minutes to answer these questions and pray:**

1. What are the physical needs that you have in your life? Share these with the others in the group, and pray for each other's needs. Remember that Jesus cares about our physical needs.
2. Is there a specific task that God has been asking you to do? Are you willing to do what you can, and let God multiply your efforts?
3. Who are some the marginalized people in your neighborhood? What is one practical way that you can show them the love of Jesus this week?

**Final Exam  
Galatians**

**Student** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Grade:** \_\_\_\_\_/30

Note: This written exam is for the *diploma level* students in the class.

*Certificate students* will be called in by the leader one-by-one, to answer the questions orally.

**Instructions**

1. This exam lasts **90 minutes (18 min. per question)**
  2. The course leader will give you separate paper on which to write your responses. Make sure to write your name on each paper and note the *number of the essay* to which you are replying!
  3. During the exam, use of your Bible is permitted, but *not* use of your student handbook or other notes.
  4. The questions are thematic. Try to provide as much detail from the notes as you can remember, and write as much as necessary to thoroughly respond to the questions, *but no less than one long paragraph*. Each essay is worth 6 points.
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**Essay # 1 – Central problem addressed in the book of Galatians**

In Galatians 1:6-7a, Paul writes: "I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel – which is really no gospel at all." What is the "different gospel" that Paul mentions? Who were causing trouble among the Galatians? How does this relate to the question of "justification by faith" (3:16)?

**Essay # 2 – The *pedagogue***

What was a *pedagogue*? Where in Galatians does Paul talk about this? Explain how he uses this concept to explain the relationship between the Mosaic Law and Christ.

### **Essay # 3 – “You are all one in Christ Jesus”**

In Galatians 3:28, Paul writes: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” In this verse, there are three comparisons. Explain how the Gospel impacted the relationship between Jew/Greek, slave/free, and male/female. How does the male/female question in this verse influence the view of the Church of the Nazarene regarding ordination?

### **Essay # 4 – Galatians 5: *sarx* vs. Spirit**

What is the meaning of the Greek word *sarx*? Explain the tension between *sarx* and the Holy Spirit as presented in chapter 5. According to Galatians 5, what is the evidence of the Holy Spirit’s work in the life of the Christian? On the other hand, what is the evidence of the domination of *sarx*? Finally, what is the solution to this combat in the life of the Christian? **Cite relevant Bible verses.**

### **Essay # 5 – Bearing burdens, carrying loads**

In Galatians 6:2, Paul advises his readers to “carry each other’s burdens.” Just a few verses later, he says that “each one should carry his own load” (6:5). Is Paul contradicting himself? In the church, how should Paul’s teaching on this matter be put into practice? What would a church that really practices this look like?

### Jewish and Christian Eschatology

