

GALATIANS

(Note: most of the following narrative is derived from Bruce Wilkinson's "Talk Through the New Testament"):

The Epistle to the Galatians has been called "the charter of Christian liberty". It is Paul's manifesto of justification by faith and the liberty it produces. Paul directs this great charter of Christian freedom to a people who are willing to give up the priceless liberty they possess in Christ. Certain Jewish legalists are influencing the believers in Galatia to trade their freedom in Christ for bondage to the Law. Paul writes to refute their false gospel of works, and to demonstrate the superiority of justification by faith.

TALK THRU THE BIBLE

Introduction and Title – The Galatians, having launched their Christian experience by faith, seem content to leave their voyage of faith and chart a new course based on works – a course Paul finds disturbing. His letter to the Galatians is a vigorous attack against the gospel of works, and a defense of the gospel of faith.

Paul begins by setting forth his credentials as an apostle with a message from God: blessing comes from God on the basis of *faith*, not *law*. The law declares men guilty and imprisons them; faith sets men free to enjoy liberty in Christ. But liberty is not license. Freedom in Christ means freedom to produce the fruits of the righteousness through a Spirit-led lifestyle.

The book is called *Pros Galatas*, "To the Galatians," and it is the only letter of Paul that is specifically addressed to a number of churches ("To the churches of Galatia" in 1:2). The name *Galatians* was given to this Celtic people because they originally lived in Gaul before their migration to Asia Minor.

Date and Setting – The term *Galatia* was used in ethnographic sense (that is cultural and geographic origin) and in a political sense. The original ethnographic sense refers to the central part of Asia Minor where these Celtic tribes eventually settled after their conflicts with Romans and Macedonians. Later, in 189 B.C. Galatia came under Roman domination, and in 25 B.C. Augustus declared it a Roman province. The political or provincial Galatia included territory to the south that was not originally considered part of Galatia (e.g., the cities of Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe).

Theme and Purpose – Justification by faith apart from works of the Law is the theme of this urgent and corrective book. The three major sections reveal three purposes for which Galatians was written: Chapters 1-2 were written to defend Paul’s apostolic authority, because this establishes his gospel message. Chapters 3-4 were written to give a theological defense of the principle of justification by faith and to refute the false teaching of justification by law. Paul used the Law itself to build his case. Chapters 5-6 were written to show that liberty from the Law does not mean lawlessness, as Paul’s opponents evidently claimed. This epistle shows that the believer is no longer under the Law but is saved by faith alone. It has been said that Judaism was the cradle of Christianity, but also that it was very nearly its grave as well. God raised up Paul as the Moses of the Christian church to deliver them from his bondage. Galatians is the Christian’s Declaration of Independence. The power of the Holy Spirit enables the Christian to enjoy the freedom within the law of love.

Keys to Galatians – **Key Word: Freedom from the Law.**

Key verses (2:20-21; 5:1) – “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain” (2:20-21).

“Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage” (5:1).

Key Chapter (5) – The impact of truth concerning freedom is staggering: freedom must not be used “as an opportunity for the flesh: but “through love serve one another” (5:13). This chapter records the power, “Walk by the Spirit” (5:16) and the results, “The fruit of the Spirit” (5:22), of that freedom.

Survey of Galatians – The Epistle to the Galatians has been called “the Magna Carta of Christian liberty”. It is Paul’s manifesto of justification by faith, and the resulting liberty. Paul directs this great charted of Christian freedom to a people who are willing to give up the priceless liberty they possess in Christ. The oppressive theology of certain Jewish legalizers has been causing the believers in Galatia to trade their freedom in Christ for bondage to the Law. Paul writes this forceful epistle to do away the false gospel of works and demonstrate the superiority of justification by faith. This carefully written polemic approaches the problem from three directions: the gospel of grace defended (1-2); the gospel of grace explained (3-4); and the gospel of grace applied (5-6).

The Gospel of Grace Defended (chapters 1-2): Paul affirms his divinely given apostleship and presents the gospel (1:1-5) because it has been distorted by false teachers among Galatians (1:6-10). Paul launches into his biographical argument for the true gospel of justification by faith in showing that he received his message not from men but directly from God (1:11-24). When he submits his teachings of Christian liberty to the apostles in Jerusalem, they all acknowledge the validity and authority of his message (2:1-10). Paul also must correct Peter on the matter of freedom from the Law (2:11-21)

The Gospel of Grace Explained (chapters 3-4): In this section Paul uses eight lines of reasoning to develop his theological defense of justification by faith. 1) The Galatians began by faith, and their growth in Christ must continue to be by faith (3:1-5). 2) Abraham was justified by faith, and the same principle applies today (3:6-9). 3) Christ has redeemed all that trust in Him from the curse of the Law (3:10-14). 4) The promise made to Abraham was not nullified by the Law (3:15-18). 5) The Law was given to drive men to faith, not to save them (3:19-22). 6) Believers in Christ are adopted sons of God and are no longer bound by the Law (3:23-4:7). 7) The Galatians must recognize their inconsistency and regain their original freedom in Christ (4:8-20). 8) Abraham's two sons allegorically reveal the superiority of the Abrahamic promise to the Mosaic Law (4:21-31).

The Gospel of Grace Applied (5-6) – The Judaizers seek to place the Galatians under bondage to their perverted gospel of justification by law, but Paul warns them that the law and grace are two contrary principles (5:1-12). So far, Paul has been contrasting the liberty of faith with the legalism of law, but at this point he warns the Galatians of the opposite extreme of license or antinomianism (5:13-6:10). The Christian is not only set free from bondage of law, but he is also free of bondage of sin because of the power of the indwelling Spirit. Liberty is not an excuse to indulge in the deeds of the flesh; rather, it provides the privilege of bearing the fruit of the Spirit by walking in dependence upon Him. This letter closes with a contrast between the Judaizers – who are motivated by pride and a desire to avoid persecution – and Paul, who has suffered for the true gospel, but boasts only in Christ (6:11-18).

Outline of Galatians

I.	The Gospel of Grace Defended.....	1:1-2:21
	A. Introduction.....	1:1-9
	1. Salutation: The Ground of Grace.....	1:1-5

- 2. Situation: The Departure from Grace.....1:6-9
- B. Gospel of Grace is Given by Divine Revelation.....1:10-24
- C. Gospel of Grace is Approved by Jerusalem Leadership.....2:1-10
- D. Gospel of Grace is Vindicated by Rebuking Peter.....2:11-21

II. The Gospel of Grace Explained.....3:1-4:31

- A. Holy Spirit is Given by Faith, Not by Works.....3:1-5
- B. Abraham was Justified by Faith, Not by Works.....3:6-9
- C. Justification Is by Faith, Not by the Law.....3:10-4:11
 - 1. Christ Redeems Us from the Curse of the Law.....3:10-14
 - 2. Abrahamic Covenant is Not Voided by the Law.....3:15-18
 - 3. Law Given to Drive Us to Faith.....3:19-22
 - 4. Believers Are Free from the Law.....3:23-4:11
- D. Galatians Receive Blessings by Faith, Not by the Law.....4:12-20
- E. Law and Grace Cannot Co-exist.....4:21-31

III. The Gospel of Grace Applied.....5:1-6:18

- A. Position of Liberty: Stand Fast.....5:1-12
- B. Practice of Liberty: Love One Another.....5:13-15
- C. Power of Liberty: Walk in the Spirit.....5:16-26
 - 1. Conflict between the Spirit and the Flesh.....5:16-18
 - 2. Works of the Flesh.....5:19-21
 - 3. Fruit of the Spirit.....5:22-26
- D. Performance in Liberty: Do Good to All Men.....6:1-10
 - 1. Bear One Another's Burdens.....6:1-5
 - 3. Do Not be Weary while Doing Good.....6:6-10
- E. Conclusion.....6:11-18
 - 1. Motives of the Circumcised.....6:11-13
 - 2. Motives of the Apostle Paul.....6:14-18

Outline of Galatians with Observations & Principles

I. The Gospel of Grace Defended.....1:1-2:21

A. Introduction.....1:1-9

1. Salutation: The Ground of Grace.....1:1-5
2. Situation: The Departure from Grace.....1:6-9

- Jesus gave Himself for our sins
- World was evil 2000 years ago, not just today
- Glory of God is important
- Beware of False Gospel; strong words against False Teachers
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B. Gospel of Grace is Given by Divine Revelation.....1:10-24

- Our focus should be on pleasing God, not men
- True gospel comes from Christ
- Paul went from being the #1 enemy of Christianity to it's #1 advocate
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C. Gospel of Grace is Approved by Jerusalem Leadership.....2:1-10

- Paul endorsed by apostles
- God does not judge by external appearances
- Beware of false brothers who promote legalism
- God sometimes calls people to specific/special ministries
- Birth of “right hand of fellowship”
- Important to remember the poor
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D. Gospel of Grace is Vindicated by Rebuking Peter.....2:11-21

- Racial prejudice needs to be opposed
- Avoid hypocrisy and trying to appease misguided people
- Justified by faith in Jesus, not by observing the law (works)
- Christ lives in us
- We should live by faith in Jesus
- Jesus loves us and gave Himself for us
- Grace of God is basis for our righteousness, not our own works
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II. The Gospel of Grace Explained.....3:1-4:31

A. Holy Spirit is Given by Faith, Not by Works.....3:1-5

- Belief (faith) is crucial
- We receive the Spirit by faith, not works
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B. Abraham was Justified by Faith, Not by Works.....3:6-9

- Abraham was a great example of faith
- We are spiritual children of Abraham
- Faith leads to blessing
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C. Justification Is by Faith, Not by the Law.....3:10-4:11

1. Christ Redeems Us from the Curse of the Law.....3:10-14
2. Abrahamic Covenant is Not Voided by the Law.....3:15-18

3. Law Given to Drive Us to Faith.....3:19-22

4. Believers Are Free from the Law.....3:23-4:11

- Relying on observing the Law is a curse – because no one can keep it completely!
- Righteous should live by faith
- Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law
- We receive the Spirit by faith
- Whole world is a prisoner of sin
- We are no longer slaves, but are God’s children with full rights as children
- Law given to lead us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith
- We are children of God (saved) through faith in Jesus
- We are one in one in Christ despite many differences (racial, gender, social status, etc.)
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D. Galatians Receive Blessings by Faith, Not by the Law.....4:12-20

- “Right purpose” zeal is good
- Beware of zealous deceivers
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E. Law and Grace Cannot Co-exist.....4:21-31

- False teachers should be put out of the church
- Believers are not enslaved to the Law
- We are “free”, not “slaves”
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III. The Gospel of Grace Applied.....5:1-6:18

A. Position of Liberty: Stand Fast.....5:1-12

- Christ set us free, don't let others enslave you!
- Trying to be justified by the law alienates away from Christ and grace
- "The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love"
- A little bit of false teaching can spread widely
- False teachers are strongly condemned!
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B. Practice of Liberty: Love One Another.....5:13-15

- Entire law is summed up by loving our neighbors
- Freedom should be used to serve others, not indulge our sinful nature
- Critical spirits destroy people
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C. Power of Liberty: Walk in the Spirit.....5:16-26

1. Conflict between the Spirit and the Flesh.....5:16-18
2. Works of the Flesh.....5:19-21
3. Fruit of the Spirit.....5:22-26

- Live by the Spirit, not the Flesh; Spirit and Flesh (sinful nature) are in conflict with each other
- Living by the Spirit defeats the fleshly desires
- Sinful nature leads to sinful acts
- Sinful nature should be crucified
- Avoid conceit and envy and other "fruits" of the flesh
- We should live by the Spirit and experience the Fruit of the Spirit
- Avoid conceit
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D. Performance in Liberty: Do Good to All Men.....6:1-10

1. Bear One Another's Burdens.....6:1-5

2. Do Not be Weary while Doing Good6:6-10

- A sinning brother should be gently restored
- Carrying each other's burdens is a fulfillment of loving our neighbor (law of Christ)
- Should test our own actions
- Should carry our own load
- A person reaps what he sows
- Sowing to please our sinful nature results in destruction
- Sowing to please the Spirit results in eternal life
- Never tire of doing good, eventually a harvest will be reaped
- Do good to all people, especially Christians

E. Conclusion.....6:11-18

1. Motives of the Circumcised.....6:11-13

2. Motives of the Apostle Paul.....6:14-18

- Legalists don't follow their own rules!
- Boast only in Christ, not our own works
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OTHER NOTES: