

Galatians
Law or Grace
Faith or Works

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INTRODUCTION

GALATIANS

Law or Grace

Faith or Works

This is not a commentary on the book of Galatians. It is however, a commentary on incurable religious humanity.

As a young student of the Bible, I attended Baptist Bible Institute in Cleveland, Ohio.

In the class on Galatians, the teacher read chapter one verses 6 through 9, and asked the students to name the cult churches these verses represented.

They named every church that disagreed with the Baptist teaching, and they were applauded by the teacher.

Personally, I was a little disillusioned.

The Churches in Galatia were not cult churches. They were part of the New Testament body of Christ, founded on the simple gospel. (the gospel = Christ died, was buried, and rose again, for the forgiveness of sins. All we must do is believe in Christ.)

Faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ the Lord is what saves us from our sins. (John 3:15,16 6:47 Acts 10:38-43 13:27-39)

The apostle Paul preached the gospel to the Churches in Galatia on his first and third missionary Journeys. (Galatians 4:13,14)

Then, Paul heard they had fallen into a works righteousness, and wrote the letter (epistle, or book) to the Churches in Galatia.

NOTE: We suggest the reader use a Scofield King James study Bible along with this short book. (preferably the 1967 edition)

The book of Acts is the record of the beginning of the Church age. Also called the dispensation of grace.

Four errors were present from the very beginning. They were, and are

Legalism: Saved by keeping the law.
Refuted in Romans.

Antinomianism: Now saved, it doesn't matter how I live. Refuted in Hebrews and James

Galatianism: Saved by grace, kept saved by keeping the law. Refuted in Galatians

Gnosticism: Puffed up by human wisdom. Refuted in Colossians.

These four errors are still present today and are the result of self righteousness and Bible ignorance and the many man made denominations.

NOTE: We recommend the student of the Bible acquire the book LAW OR GRACE by Dr. M. R. DeHaan

This is not a commentary on Paul's letter to the churches of Galatia. Rather, we would like to compare the churches at Galatia to modern day church denominations.

We know it will make many people angry, but at least they might pay attention.

We hear things like, "I'm a Baptist. My family's been Baptists all my life." Or, we might hear the same thing concerning the Catholic, or any other denomination.

That is similar to voting Republican or Democrat because our family has always been Republican or Democrat.

The fact is, both positions are narrow minded, and quite frankly, ignorant.

Voting for a politician or belonging to a church should take some thought.

What is their position? What do they stand for? Is it moral? What is their foundation?

Does this church defend the Bible, or is it full of man made rules and doctrine.

Galatians 1:1 Paul, an apostle (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead.)

In the very first verse of Paul's letter to the churches of Galatia he makes two very interesting points.

First of all Paul states he is not an apostle appointed by any man made religious organization; but by God the Father and God the Son.

Secondly he states that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead by God the Father. The resurrection is one of the most important doctrines in the Bible.

Galatians 1:4 Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father,

In the first four verses of Galatians Paul gives us the simple gospel. Christ died for our sins and rose again, to deliver us from this present evil world.

The simple gospel is presented throughout the New Testament. (John 3:14-16 6:47 By Peter in Acts 10:34-43 By Paul in Acts 13:26-39)

Paul gave the gospel in Galatia on his first and third missionary journeys. Many of those in Galatia heard and believed the gospel and churches were established. These were literal churches founded on the gospel. They were not man made denominations. (*unto the churches of Galatia Gal. 1:2*)

It did not take long however, for Satan to move his people into Galatia with a false gospel.

In verses 6 through 12 the apostle gets to the reason why he wrote the letter to these churches.

Galatians 1:6,7 I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him at called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel,

Which is not another; but there are some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.

There are some words in these verses that need to be defined. It must be noted that often in the Greek language a word may have a noun, or a verb, or an adjective meaning, and it would have different endings.

Example: Metanoeo (verb) = change the mind

Metanoia (noun) = change the mind

Galatians 1:6

Marvel = thaumastos = (adjective) to wonder, or marvel at

Removed = metatithemi = (verb) signifies to change oneself; the act of removing

Grace = charis = to bestow; to take pleasure in; favorable regard;

Another = heteros = different; altered;
(another of a different source)

When we hear the gospel, (Christ died, was buried, and rose again, for the forgiveness of sins) and believe Christ paid for our sins, we are forgiven. That is grace!! Something we do not deserve.

Someone in Galatia had entered into their midst and altered the gospel with ‘another’ gospel. It was the same gospel but added to with man’s works, which made it, ‘another of the same source.

Galatians 1:7

Another = allos = different; more;

(another of the same source)

Trouble = tarasso = to stir; agitate

(as rolling water)

Pervert = metastrepho = to turn across;
transmute; fig. corrupt

There is only one gospel of Christ. He died, was buried, and rose again, for the forgiveness of sins. Whosoever believes in Him has forgiveness of sin and eternal life.
(ref. John 3:15,16 6: 47)

If anyone alters that message by adding or subtracting from the simplicity of the gospel it is perverting the gospel of Christ.

In verse 6 Paul says another gospel, (another of a different source) and verse 7 He uses the word meaning ‘another of the same source.’

In other words, Paul states that the gospel is ‘not of the same source.’

Galatians 1:8,9 But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.

As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed

The word accursed used by Paul in these two verses is from the Greek word *αναθεμα*, in the English it would be anathema. It means “a thing devoted to God for destruction.”

Therefore, anyone who perverts or distorts the simple gospel is directing a woe to God for destruction of himself.

Often times, when a Christian attends a church that has altered the gospel, they will say, “They believe almost like we do.”

Or, “ Their gospel is almost like ours.”

No! It either is or it isn’t.

RELIGIOUS LAWS

Humanity will never change. He seems to think he must do something to please God.

We don't realize that the only thing that pleases God is faith. (read Hebrews chapter eleven)

Galatians 2:16 Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

This is one of the most powerful verses in the Bible.

There are basically three types of laws used by religious humanity in order to please God.

1. The Old Testament written law given to Moses by God. The first five books of the Bible.
2. The so called oral law of Moses given to Israel.

3. The New Testament man made rules and regulations that accompany the gospel.

None of the above will justify anyone before God.

Notice in the verse just quoted that it is Jesus Christ who is faithful. It is His faith that justifies the believer.(see also 2 Timothy 2:11-13)

THE LAW OF MOSES The law given to Moses on Sinai was never designed to save anyone.

If obeyed, the law promised to give long life and prosperity. (Deuteronomy 4:1 5:32,33 6:1-25 and many more)

The law was given in three parts. The moral law; the ceremonial law; and the civil law.

The law of Moses pointed to the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. Faith in their coming Savior is what would forgive their sins, not obeying the law.

Jesus told Israel, “repent and believe the gospel.” (Mark 1:15) Paul explains that in Romans 10:1-4)

THE ORAL LAW The Hebrew Bible, what we call the Old Testament, (the Tanakh) was not good enough for Israel. The Law of Moses was called the Torah Misheh. (law of Moses)

Soon their religious leaders began to compile notes they called the oral law. Or, a law given by Moses separate from the written law. This oral law was designed to ‘explain the written law.’

It began with the ‘Mishna.’ A collection of precepts which form the basis for the Talmud. The Talmud is a body of Jewish ceremonial, civil, and traditional laws.

(referred to by Isaiah. (Isaiah 1:10-15 By Jesus in Matthew 15:1-9 By Paul in Galatians 1:14 and Colossians 2:8 and Peter in 1 Peter 1:18)

NEW TESTAMENT MAN MADE LAWS
Fifty days after Christ rose from the grave He ascended into heaven and the Church age began. (Luke 24:49-53 Acts 1 and 2)

The church was founded on the simple gospel. First by Christ Himself, then the apostles, and men like Philip and Steven.
(Acts 6:5)

John 3:14-16 And, as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up,

That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

John 6:47 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.

This is the message. Christ died, was buried, and rose again, for the forgiveness of sins.

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be forgiven; have eternal life.

That was the message of Peter. (Acts 10:34-43) That was the message of Paul. (Acts 13:26-39)

Yet, religious humanity says that is not enough. You must do something. Obey the Old Testament law, or some new man made law.

In Acts chapter fifteen we have the first real account of religious hypocrites trying to undermine the Church and the gospel.

In Acts 15:1-5 the Jews came from Judea and said you must be circumcised and obey the law of Moses. (Galatians 2:1-14 note 2:4,5)

There was a large meeting in Jerusalem with the apostles and the Jews concerning faith and works.

At first, Paul is the one person who defended the faith. (Acts 15:2-4 Galatians 2:1-14)

Then, Paul writes the verse we have already quoted; Galatians 2:16.

Then he writes.....

Galatians 2:21 I do not frustrate the grace of God; for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.

That should be simple enough for our religious leaders. If we can justify ourselves by obeying the law, then Christ died for nothing. (the word vain means without a cause; no purpose)

Galatians 3:1-3 O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?

This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

Are ye so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?

Paul makes it very clear that the law, whether it's the Old Testament law of Moses, or the Jewish tradition, or New Testament man made laws, the law does not save anyone.

He also makes it very clear that the Holy Spirit is obtained by faith and not works.

In the rest of chapter three Paul explains the difference between faith and works, grace and the law, so even the simple minded can understand it.

Remember, Paul said anyone with "another gospel" is "accursed."

He also asked the Galatians, "who hath bewitched you?" And, "Are ye so foolish?"

In Galatians chapter three Paul gives Abraham as an example.

Galatians 3:6-9 Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.

Know ye, therefore, that they who are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.

And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen (Gentiles) through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.

So, then, they who are of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham. (ref. Genesis 15:1-6 Romans 4:1-5)

It was Jesus Christ Himself who preached the gospel to Abraham.

The word gospel in verse 8 is the Greek word *proeuangelizomai*. It is the only time the word is used in the Bible, and it means, *to announce glad tidings beforehand*

Remember, Abraham was a Gentile, born in Ur of the Chaldea's (Genesis 11:27-32 Acts 7:2-5)

The Nation of Israel was begotten of the seed of Abraham. Abraham was justified by faith, not works.

Everyone who hears and believes the simple gospel is justified and blessed with faithful Abraham.

Remember also, there was no law when God called Abraham to be the Father of the nation of Israel.

THE PROMISE

Galatians 3:14 That the blessings of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

Galatians 3:16 Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made, He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.

What is the promise of the Spirit in verse 14? What are the promises made to the seed, which is Christ?

Simply put, the promise of the Spirit is that when a person puts their faith in Christ as payment for their sins they are instantly sealed by the Holy Spirit. It is called “born again.” (John 3:3,5,7)

It is indwelling of the Spirit and a guarantee of eternal life. (John 14:16,17 Ephesians 1:13,14 4:30)

The Holy Spirit is the promise of the Father sent on the day of Pentecost in Acts. (Luke 24:49 Acts 1:4,5)

The Holy Spirit is the believers guarantee of eternal life with the Father and the Son.

The promise also guarantees an eternal inheritance. In other words, everything God has to offer belongs to His children.

Everyone who trusts Christ by faith, becomes a child of God, and is blessed with an eternal inheritance. (read Galatians 3:17,18,26-29)

That is something the law could never do.

Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness, and he received the promises, at least 400 years before the law.

Galatians 3:19a Wherefore, then, serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made;

Galatians 3:22 But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.

Since we are all sinners, (Romans 3:19-25 with Psalm 14:1-3 53:1-3 Isaiah 53:6) the law was added to ..,.....

1. Reveal the fact we are all sinners and cannot attain to the righteousness of God.
2. The law pointed to the seed, Jesus Christ. The ceremonial laws pointed to the Jewish Messiah.
3. Make an atonement for sin, or cover sin, until Christ the Savior came.

The law did not forgive sin. Only faith in Christ could do that; the Old Testament saints looked forward to their Savior, as the New Testament saints look back.

It was always by faith. "Abraham believed God....."

In Galatians 3:10-13 Paul states the law is a curse to those who think they must obey the law in order to be justified.

Verses 13 and 14 states that Christ became a curse for us when He was crucified.

BONDAGE

Galatians 4:9 But now, after ye have known God, or rather are known by God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, unto which ye desire again to be in bondage.

Attempting to obey the law in order be saved or to keep saved is bondage. Notice the words of Christ.

Matthew 11:28-30 Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

The word labor is from the Greek word *kopaio*, and it means, *grow weary; toil*

The words heavy laden are from the Greek word *phortizo* and it means, *to be burdened with a heavy load*

In verse 28 Jesus states, give up your self righteous works, which are weariness and toil, and a heavy burden to bear, and come to Christ for salvation and rest.

In verse 29 He says to take His yoke upon us, and find rest.

The first rest of verse 28 is salvation which is free by grace through faith. The second rest is our service after we are saved. But notice it states, “learn of me!” It does not say try to copy me.

Remember, the law was added because of transgressions, (sins) until the seed, Jesus Christ the Lord, the Messiah, should come. (Galatians 3:19)

Any kind of works that is added to the simple gospel in order to be saved, or to keep oneself saved, is bondage.

Galatians 3:26-29 For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

FREEDOM

John 8:32 And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

John 8:36 If the Son, therefore, shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

Faith in the finished work of Christ is freedom. Serving Christ after we are saved is not bondage. It is not something we do to keep saved, it is something we do voluntarily because we are eternally saved.

Working to be saved, or to keep saved is bondage.

In Galatians chapter four Paul uses Hagar as an example. (read Genesis chapters sixteen and seventeen)

Then read Galatians 4:22,23 and you will find a perfect example of a works righteousness verses grace. Freedom by faith in Christ, and bondage by works.

Galatians 4:28,29 Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise.

But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now.

THE PROMISE

The promise made to Abraham was that a Savior would be born in his genealogical line. (Genesis 12:1-3 and Genesis 15:1-6)

Jesus Christ preached the gospel to Abraham, and Abraham believed the gospel, and it was counted to Abraham for righteousness. (Genesis 15:6 Romans 4:1-5 Galatians 3:6-9)

Jesus Christ was the 'seed' promised to Abraham through his son Isaac.

Galatians 3:16 Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made, He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.

The Holy Spirit is part of the promise, and our guarantee of eternal life by faith in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. (Galatians 4:29 with John 14:16,17 Ephesians 1:13,14 4:30)

Galatians 5:1 Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty with which Christ made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.

There are two yokes to be noticed. The yoke of being coupled with Christ, which is serving Him by faith, and the yoke of bondage to a works righteousness.

Galatians 5:4 Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.

The yoke of bondage is toil, fatigue, and a burden.

The yoke of Christ is easy and light, and has nothing to do with forgiveness of sin, and is simply serving by faith.

In 5:4 the word fallen is from the Greek word *εκπιπτο* (English / *ekpipto*) and it means to sail off course as a ship out of control.

And refers to a person who is trusting in the law to be saved. In other words, the lost.

THE ATTITUDE OF FAITH

The Old Testament prophets warned Israel of their self righteous attitude. Consider their attitude in Isaiah.

Isaiah 65:2 I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, that walketh in a way that was not good, after their own thoughts.

65:5 That say, stand by thyself, come not near me; for I am holier than thou. These are a smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day.

A works righteousness produces a holier than thou attitude.

Because they relied on the law of Moses and their tribal traditions to save them, they developed a holier than thou attitude.

The so-called New Testament Christian has developed the same attitude. It is an attitude of judging others by comparing others with themselves.

Galatians 5:13-15 For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.

For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.

But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.

The law was not designed to save anyone. “It was added because of transgressions” (Gal. 3:19)

The promise made to Abraham was founded on faith. (read Hebrews chapter eleven.)

“Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness.”

Matthew 7:1 Judge not, that ye be not judged.

John 7:24 Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.

Self righteousness produces a judgmental attitude. It produces a holier than thou attitude that judges others.

Jesus said “judge according to righteous judgment.”

That means judge according to the truth, the word of God is the truth.

SUMMARY

Paul the Apostle judged the churches at Galatia according to the Bible. He judged their gospel. (Galatians 1:6-9)

He said they were bewitched. (Gal. 3:1-5)

He told them they were obeying the flesh by going back to the law, and bondage. (Gal. 4:8-12)

He said he was afraid of them and that he bestowed labor in vain. (Gal. 4:11)

There were many in Galatia who were not saved because they had fallen from grace by taking another route to salvation. They thought they were justified by the law. (Gal. 5:1-5)

Galatians 5:12 I would they were even cut off who trouble you.

Paul hated a false gospel so much, that he wished the messenger of a lie would die. (cut off)

Galatians 5:14 For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.

Simple faith in the gospel of Christ produces a loving, non judgmental attitude.

We are saved by grace through faith, not by any works of any law.

NOTE: For a brilliant commentary on Galatians read Galatians Law Or Grace By Dr. M. R. DeHaan