

I. Introduction (1:1-10)

a. The Salutation (1:1-5)

1 - Paul identifies himself as an **apostle**. He was personally sent by Jesus with the gospel of grace to the Gentile world. He was not sent **from men**. Paul was a witness of the resurrected Christ (Acts 9). He met Jesus personally on the road to Damascus. He had been saved by God's grace. His life had been completely changed by Jesus. He went from persecuting Christians to preaching that Jesus was the Son of God (Acts 9:20). He was sent by **Jesus Christ** the one who **God raised from the dead**. To Paul, the resurrection of Jesus Christ was the essential truth of the Christian faith (1 Corinthians 15: 12-20). Paul was certain of his call. When times were tough, he could always rest in the fact that he was doing what God called him to do (Philippians 4:13).

Dear Brothers, each believer can also be certain of God's call on their lives (Ephesians 4:1). God has a plan and purpose for each of us. The greatest thing we can do with our life is surrender totally to him.

2 - Paul wrote with the approval of some of his Christian **brothers**. We do not know who these men were but apparently these were people the Galatians knew and could trust. The **churches of Galatia** were most likely the churches of Southern Galatia (Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derby) established by Paul and Barnabas on their missionary journey together (Acts 13-14).

3 – Paul uses his typical greeting: **grace and peace**. These two words describe the gospel of Jesus Christ. Grace is the source of the gospel. **Grace** is God loving us even though we do not deserve it. Grace is God showing us favor and kindness which we do not deserve and could never earn. Grace is the reason God sent Jesus to die for us. Grace is the only way sinful people could ever enter into a relationship with a holy God. **Peace** is the effect of our salvation. Saved people are at peace with God through faith in Jesus. The believer no longer fears to face God's wrath and eternal judgment. Both grace and peace are available only **from our Lord Jesus Christ**. Paul reminds the Galatians of the heart of the gospel with this greeting.

4 – Paul describes Jesus as the one who **gave Himself for our sins**. Jesus willingly gave his life. He is the 'lamb slain from the foundation of the world' (Revelation 13:8). No one made Jesus die on the cross, He gave himself because he loved us (John 10:18). Jesus gave himself **for our sins**. Jesus died in our place. Jesus, who never sinned, received the punishment we deserved for our sin. Jesus died to satisfy the righteousness of God. God, because he is holy and just must punish sin. Sin separates men from God (Isaiah 59:2, Romans 6:23). Jesus knew the only way sinful people like you and me could ever have a relationship with a holy God was if he took the punishment for our sins (2 Corinthians 5:21). Jesus died to **rescue us**. He delivered us from eternal suffering. He rescued us from the grip of Satan. He freed us from the punishment of sin. The good news of the gospel is that people do not have to go to hell when they die. Believers are forgiven and promised a place in heaven. Jesus also rescued us from the grip of this **present evil age**. Though believers still live in an evil world they are not controlled by it. Jesus died according to the will of **God the Father**. God loved the world so much that he willfully gave his one and only son (John 3:16). God desires men, women, boy and girls to be saved and this we know because he gave his son (2 Peter 3:9).

Dear Brothers, when we faithfully preach, teach, and share the gospel, we can be sure God will work in the lives of others. We can share the gospel and expect God to save people (Romans 10:17). God desires to save sinners. This is why he sent Jesus (Luke 19:10). We can be sure we are most in line with

God's will when we share the gospel with our neighbors. We plead for God to help us to be faithful to share his word and invite others to trust our wonderful Savior.

5 – Paul declares the gospel of grace brings **glory** to God. As we understand our hopeless condition and see all that Jesus has done for us through His death and resurrection, we will praise and glorify the Father. Let us praise him continually for his grace. He is worthy of all glory.

b. The Rebuke – Addressing a corrupted gospel (1:6-10)

6 – Paul quickly moves to the reason he is writing. The Galatians were turning away from the true gospel they had received from Paul and Barnabas. Paul was **amazed** by the Galatians behavior. They were **quickly deserting** their faith in the gospel of grace. They were turning away from the gracious God who had **called** them. Paul again states it was by the **grace of Christ**, that they were saved. They could not work for it, nor could they work to keep it. Salvation was offered by God's grace alone. The Galatians were being deceived by false teachers (Judaizers) to believe a **different** gospel. The Judaizers were teaching a gospel which contradicted the gospel Paul had preached; the gospel he received from Jesus. They taught that in order for a person to be saved they had to believe in Jesus and obey the Jewish law (particularly circumcision). They were teaching that salvation came from God but was dependent on human works. The Judaizers were mixing grace and good works. Paul exposed their teaching as a false gospel: grace plus works is not grace!

7 – Paul declares that the gospel of the Judaizers was not gospel at all. The word *gospel* means 'good news.' The message of the Judaizers was not good news. They were **disturbing** or shaking the Galatians faith by teaching a **distorted** gospel.

8, 9 – Paul uses very strong language in these verses. He boldly states that anyone teaching a different gospel than what he preached should be **accursed**. Paul uses the term twice. He is clearly saying that the gospel which the Judaizers were teaching was opposed to the true gospel. The teachers of the false gospel were in spiritual darkness, lost, and on their way to hell. His passion for the gospel truth is evident.

Dear brothers, we must recognize false teachers as all those who do not teach the gospel of grace. Only one way of salvation is taught in the Holy Scriptures: people are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. Teachers that add or change the gospel of grace stand condemned before God and await an eternity in Hell if they continue to deny the gospel of grace.

10 - Paul's words no doubt upset many people. The truth of the gospel always divides. Many people do not want to hear that Jesus Christ is the only way to salvation (John 14:6). Paul had many enemies. Many people hated him for the stand he made for the gospel of grace. Paul answers his enemies by declaring he was not trying to **please** men. He was not worried about pleasing people. He only wanted to please God even if others hated him for it. Paul states he is a **bondservant** of Christ. A bondservant has only one priority: please his master. Paul's only priority was to please his Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Dear Brothers in Christ, we must serve Jesus at all costs. We must seek to please him above all others. When we stand for the truth of the gospel others will oppose us. Some will curse us. Some may try to harm us. But we must stand for the gospel of grace. We must tell others the truth about Jesus. The gospel is the only hope for a lost and dying world. Jesus gave his all for us because he loved us. We

must give our all to him because we love him. We must preach and teach the gospel of grace every opportunity God gives us (Romans 1:16).

II. **A Personal Defense (of Paul's Apostleship)(1:11-2:21)**

The book of Galatians is a complete defense of the gospel of grace. Paul begins by defending his own apostleship. He shares how the gospel he preached came from Jesus himself, he did not make it up or get it from someone else. He testifies to how the gospel had personally changed his life. We too as believers can always share how Jesus has changed our life. The best proof that our preaching is true is that our lives have been changed by the gospel of grace. Can others see the change Jesus has made in your life?

a. **Paul's independence of the Twelve (1:11-24)**

The Judaizers tried to discredit Paul and the gospel he preached. They said he had no authority to preach. They told the Galatians that he was not one of the twelve disciples and had not gotten his gospel from the true church. The Judaizers claimed that they, and not Paul, had the approval of the church at Jerusalem. Paul knew the truth of the gospel was under attack. He responds with his personal testimony and reveals the source of his gospel.

i. **A revealed gospel (1:11-12)**

11, 12 - The Apostle is clear. He received the gospel of grace by **revelation** from the **Jesus** himself. The gospel Paul preached was not of human origin but divine revelation. He did not hear the gospel from another man but from his personal Lord and Savior.

Dear Brothers, we do not preach a message from men; we preach a message from God. You can be sure every time you stand and open your Bible and speak, you do so with the authority and power of God's Word not man's word. The gospel is the power of God for the salvation of all people (Romans 1:16). The God, who has spoken in the past by his prophets, apostles, and his own Son, speaks today through his Word.

ii. **A personal gospel (1:13-17)**

13, 14 – Paul now appeals to the powerful change the gospel of grace had worked in his life. Before he met Christ he **persecuted** and tried **to destroy** the Christian church (Acts 7:58, 8:3, 9:1). Paul was fully devoted to Judaism and the traditions of his fathers. These traditions refer to the traditions of the Pharisees, which often did not represent the heart of the law that God gave to Moses (Matthew 15:1-6).

15, 16a – God, from eternity, had a plan for Paul's life. He was to be an example to the world to the power of the gospel of grace (1 Timothy 1:16) and God's **preacher** to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15). God called Paul **through His Grace**. Only the grace of God could change Paul from murderer of Christians to messenger of Christ. Paul preached a personal gospel. The Judaizers could attack Paul in many ways but they could not deny the personal change God had worked in his life. He was a new man, born again by the gospel of grace.

Dear brothers we preach and teach a personal gospel. God has called us by His grace, saved us by His grace, changed us by His grace, and empowered us by His grace. Our enemies may accuse us, attack us, and hurt us, but they cannot deny the personal change the gospel of grace has made in us.

16b, 17 – Paul did not go and talk to the **apostles** in Jerusalem at first. He preached Jesus in the synagogues in Damascus (Acts 9:20). He then went into Arabia for **three** years (3:18). Paul was showing his independence from the twelve disciples. The time he spent in Arabia was spent with the Lord probably studying the Old Testament Scriptures and strengthening his understanding of the gospel of grace. Paul's powerful preaching grew from his personal time with the Lord Jesus.

Dear Brothers, there is no substitute for our personal time with the Lord Jesus. If we are to preach and teach with power, we must daily spend time alone with Jesus in prayer and personal Bible study. If we are to feed others with the word, we must first be well fed by the hand of our master.

iii. A powerful gospel (1:18-24)

18, 19, 20 – After three years in Arabia Paul went **up to Jerusalem**. There he met with **Cephas** (Peter), and **James the Lord's Brother**. Peter was the leader of the apostles and had been with Jesus from the beginning of his ministry. He is often remembered for his denial of Jesus but should be remembered for his faithfulness to Jesus after the resurrection. James was not one of the original twelve disciples. In fact, he did not believe Jesus was the Messiah until after the resurrection (John 7:5, 1 Corinthians 15:7). The power of the resurrection caused Peter to preach faithfully and convinced James that Jesus was the son of God.

Paul met with Peter and James but only for **15 days**. Paul is going to great lengths to show his independence as an apostle. He assures the Galatians he is **not lying**. Apparently, the Judaizers had gone to great lengths to discredit Paul apostleship to the Galatian churches.

21 - Following Paul's time in Jerusalem we went into **Syria and Cilicia**. Paul's hometown of Tarsus was located in Cilicia. Paul went home and shared the gospel of grace with the people who knew him best. No evidence exists in Paul's writings, which shows any of Paul's family became Christians. Paul's father was no doubt a devout Jew, this we know by Paul's upbringing (Philippians 3:4-5). Devout Jews who became Christians were usually shunned by their family. Paul gave up family and friends to follow Jesus (Luke 14:26). Only a gospel of grace and power could strengthen the apostle to face such rejection from the people he loved.

Dear friends, at times we too may be rejected and despised by people we love for the sake of the gospel. But the God's grace is sufficient to carry us through. We can rest assured that His cause is worthy and His reward is waiting (Mark 10:29).

22, 23, 24 – The news of Paul's conversion had spread like a fire pushed by strong winds. The **churches of Judea kept hearing** about the powerful work of God's grace in Paul's life. They could hardly believe the greatest persecutor of the church was becoming its greatest preacher. Paul states that Judean believers kept on **glorifying God** because of the powerful change the gospel brought to him.

Dear friends, there is power in the gospel of grace, power to save the greatest sinner (1 Timothy 1:15). We preach a message of grace and power. Has your life been changed by the power of the gospel? Do

you know others who are slaves to sin? There is hope in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Tell others the good news of Jesus. Tell others about the saving power of the gospel in your life. If the gospel of grace has the power to save Saul of Tarsus, it has the power to save you and me. If the gospel of grace has the power to save you and me, it has the power to save anyone we know. Rejoice today, brothers, in the power of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

b. Paul's approval from the Three (2:1-10)

Paul has defended his independence from the twelve disciples. He now moves to show the Galatians his approval by the Three. The three are the three most prominent and influential disciples: Peter, James, and John. While Paul is defending his apostleship, he is also defending the gospel of grace which he preaches. Here, the gospel of grace is clearly displayed.

i. An illustration of the gospel (2:1-3)

1 - Paul returns to Jerusalem **14** years later with **Barnabas** and **Titus**. Who were these two men and how did their lives illustrate the gospel of grace?

Barnabas was a Jew from Cyprus (Acts 4:36). His name meant 'son of encouragement.' He was a generous giver to the earlier church (Acts 4:36-37). The Jerusalem church accepted Paul based on the endorsement of Barnabas (Acts 9:27). He was a man 'full of faith and the Holy Spirit' (Acts 11:24). He partnered with Paul on his first missionary journey and was known by the churches in Galatia (Acts 13-15). He later parted company with Paul over the issue of John Mark (Acts 15: 36-41). Barnabas, unlike Paul, was willing to give John Mark a second chance at missionary service. Barnabas was a faithful servant of Christ and preached the gospel to both the Jews and the Gentiles.

Titus was converted under Paul's ministry (Titus 1:4). He was a Greek and refused to be circumcised (2:3). Titus was a vivid illustration of the gospel to the Gentile believers in Galatia. They did not have to be circumcised to be saved. Titus was later sent by Paul to the church at Corinth to deal with morality issues within the church (2 Corinthians 7:5-9, 12:18). He would also later organize a collection for the Jerusalem church (2 Corinthians 8:6). Paul would later leave Titus at Crete to bring order to the churches there (Titus 1:5). He was a man Paul could trust with difficult situations in the early churches. Titus, though very different from Barnabas, was a faithful servant of Christ. These two men were illustrations that the gospel of grace was for both Jew and Gentile alike.

Dear brothers, God calls and uses different people from all types of backgrounds. Believers from all nations and languages are united in Christ and can work together for the sake of the gospel of grace.

2 – Paul did not go to Jerusalem because the disciples demanded he come. He went because the Spirit of God led him to go. In Jerusalem Paul met with the church leaders in **private**. Paul told them of the gospel of grace which he received from the Lord and was preaching to the Jews and Gentiles.

ii. An attack on the gospel (2:4-5)

4 - The gospel of grace came under attack. The attackers were wolves in sheep's clothing (Matthew 7:15). They appeared to be part of the true church but they taught a false gospel. Paul identifies them as

false brethren. They were affecting the **liberty** or freedom the believers had in Christ. The gospel taught that believers were saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. Believers did not have to obey the Law of Moses. They did not have to be circumcised or observe the Jewish customs in order to be saved. Paul said the false teaching kept men in **bondage** or in slavery. No one can be saved by doing good works but only by trusting in the work of Jesus Christ. Saved men will do good works because they love God and want to serve the one who made them free from sin.

5 – Paul and his friends did not **yield** or give in to the false teachers. They knew the truth of the gospel of grace was at risk of being defiled. Paul understood the future of the Gentile church depended on a pure salvation message: sinners are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

Dear brothers in Christ, we must always stand up and defend the gospel of grace. We can never compromise the truths of Salvation. Jesus gave his life so sinners could be saved by His grace. We must give our lives in sharing the message of grace salvation with our neighbors.

iii. An agreement about the gospel (2:6-10)

6,7,8 – Paul declares that the leaders of the Jerusalem church did not add anything to his gospel message. The leaders recognized Paul preached the same gospel as they did. They understood God had called Paul to preach to the Gentiles, just as he called Peter to preach to the Jews. Gospel preachers today have the joy of preaching the same life-changing message that Paul and Peter preached many years ago.

9,10 – Peter, James, and John were the **pillars** of the Jerusalem church. These men were recognized by the believers as the respected leaders in Jerusalem. They had all known Jesus during his earthly ministry and were used of God in establishing the early church. Peter, James, and John shook hands with Paul and Barnabas and agreed they should go and preach the gospel to the Gentiles. The pillars of the Jerusalem church saw that they had partners in the gospel ministry. They supported Paul and Barnabas as they left to take the gospel of grace to all the nations. However, they did not want Paul and his friends to neglect the **poor**. But Paul was clear that they were **eager** to minister to the poor wherever they went.

Dear brothers, we are partners in the gospel ministry. Each of you can be used of God to take the gospel of grace to people that the others of us cannot reach. We must partner together to carry the gospel to as many people as possible. We must work together in every way to ensure that our neighbors hear the good news of Jesus Christ. We are on the same team. We have the same enemy. We have the same Savior. Let us not grow weary in doing good (Galatians 6:9).

c. Paul's rebuke of the One (2:11-21)

Paul has clearly stated his independence from the twelve disciples. He has also shown his endorsement by the three leading disciples at Jerusalem. Now he will show God has given him authority to confront and rebuke Peter, the leading disciple. Peter's actions denied the truth of the gospel of grace and Paul had every right to bring the charge against him.

i. A stain on the gospel (2:11-14)

11 – The scene now described must have been one of the most intense in the New Testament church. Paul the leading missionary of the church confronts Peter the leading disciple of the church face-to-face in public opposition. Paul writes that Peter **stood condemned**. Peter was guilty before God. What had Peter done that caused Paul to rebuke him openly?

12 – Acts 11:19-21 tells us that Antioch was a church made up of Jews and Greeks. We must understand that Jews did not fellowship with Gentiles very often. They had strict food laws which kept them from eating with Gentiles. The Jews saw the Gentiles as unclean people. But God had shown Peter that he could eat with the Gentiles and share the gospel with them (Acts 10:15, 28). When Peter came to Antioch he did eat with the Gentiles. Peter's actions showed the gospel of grace was for all people. But when some '**men from James**' came to Antioch, Peter stopped eating with the Gentiles. These men were Jews from the Jerusalem church and did not believe Peter, a Jew, should be eating with the Gentiles. They told him his actions were not acceptable for a good Jew. Peter listened to the 'men from James' and stopped eating with his Gentile friends. Peter was afraid that these men would go back to Jerusalem and ruin his reputation among the other Jews.

13 – Peter was a very important leader in the church. Other believers watched him closely and followed his lead. When he stopped eating with the Gentiles **Barnabas** and the other Jews in Antioch withdrew from the Gentile fellowship as well. Paul says Peter and the other Jews were guilty of **hypocrisy**. Hypocrisy means to have right belief with wrong actions. Peter and the other Jews believed that the Gentiles were saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, but their actions went against their belief. By withdrawing from the Gentiles, the actions of Peter and the Jews told the Gentiles that they were not as good as the Jews. Their actions denied the gospel of grace which they preached. The gospel of grace says that all people of all nations and all races can be saved through faith in Jesus Christ. No one group is any better than another. No one race is more important to God than another. Peter and the other Jews were guilty of showing prejudice toward the Gentiles.

Dear brothers we must not show prejudice to any person. Their race, color, tribe, or nation does not matter to God and it must not matter to us. All people are sinners in need of a Savior. No man is more or less important to God than another. The gospel of grace is not prejudice towards any person. We must be willing to fellowship and work together with any Christian no matter their differences from us.

14 – Paul says Peter's actions were not **straightforward about the truth of the gospel**. Peter's actions denied the truth of the gospel of grace. Peter believed the gospel but his actions preached louder than his words. The reason Paul confronted Peter to his face is because Peter's actions did not agree with the truth of the gospel of grace.

ii. A stand for the gospel (2:15-21)

15, 16 – In the remaining verses of chapter two Paul explains his rebuke of Peter. He clearly explains that believers are **justified by faith in Christ Jesus**. To be justified means to be declared innocent before God. We as sinners are all guilty before God. We all deserve to die and go to hell. But the good news of the gospel of grace is that when a person places his faith in Christ he is justified or declared innocent of his sins before the holy God of all creation. Jesus Christ took the punishment for our sins on the cross.

He died so that we could live. He satisfied the wrath of God against sin. When a person places his faith in Jesus God sees the believer's sin as covered by the blood of Jesus. No man can be justified by doing good works. No man is able to do enough good things to please God. No man can ever get to heaven on his own effort. No man is able to obey every law of God. All men are guilty of breaking God's law. Jesus is the only man who never broke God's law. Trusting Jesus is the only way sinful people can stand before a holy God (John 14:6). Peter's actions in Antioch told the Gentiles that they needed to act like Jews to be saved. Paul reminds Peter that the only way for any man to be saved or justified is to place his faith in Jesus.

Dear friends, this is the most important truth of our faith. We are justified before God by faith in the person of Jesus Christ. We trust in Christ's work for our salvation, not our works. Do you trust in Christ alone for your salvation? If we add any requirements to salvation besides faith alone in Christ alone, then we change the good news of the gospel of grace and it ceases to be good news to a lost and dying world.

17, 18, 19 – Believers are not perfect once they are justified or saved. Christians still are not perfect. They still struggle with sin but the more they grow in God's grace the more like Jesus they become. Paul says he **died to the law**, that is, he gave up trying to be good **enough** to earn God's love. He now knows that God saves people by his grace. Paul knows that he is right with God because of what Jesus did through the cross and the resurrection. Paul is saved by grace and lives by grace. He serves God because he loves him and is thankful for all God has done for him.

20, 21 – Paul states that he has been **crucified with Christ**. He is saying that the old man is dead. Saul the persecutor of the church is a dead man. When Paul got saved he became a new person on the inside (2 Corinthians 5:17). He states that **Christ lives in me**. When Paul got saved God sent his Holy Spirit to live inside of Paul (1 Corinthians 6:19). He is no longer in control of his life. Paul lives by the power of the Holy Spirit living inside of him (Ephesians 5:18). Paul's new life is a life of **faith** in Christ. Paul lives for the one who **loved** him and **gave himself** for him. Paul lived the crucified life. He strived everyday to deny himself and follow Jesus more closely (Luke 9:23). Paul did not trust in his own effort to save him but he gave all his effort to serve the One who saved him and changed his life. He knew that if he could have saved himself then Christ died needlessly. Paul understood that he was justified by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

Dear friends, God had called us to the crucified life. The crucified Christian surrenders daily to Jesus Christ. He asks God to live through him. He gives up his right to be in charge of his life and lets Jesus be in charge. Our world is in desperate need of crucified Christians. Will you commit the rest of your life to Jesus Christ? He has given all for you. Will you give all you have to him? The greatest thing we can do with our lives is give all we are to Jesus. Please do not waste your lives by doing something other than serving Jesus.

III. A Doctrinal Defense (of Justification by Faith) (3:1-4:31)

In chapters three and four Paul moves away from his personal defense of the gospel of grace and seeks to explain the doctrines or truths of salvation. He seeks to convince the Galatians of justification by faith alone. He takes time to explain the purpose of the Law of Moses and the role it has played in pointing to Jesus Christ. Paul explains to the Galatian believers that they are adopted sons of God. He pleads with the Galatians to see the error of the Judaizers' teaching of works righteousness. We see in these verses that God's pleasure in us as Christians is not based on our performance for Him, but on our position in Jesus Christ.

a. Righteousness received through faith (3:1-14)

How does a holy God accept sinful people? The Judaizers were teaching that God accepts those who obey the Jewish law. Paul reminds the Galatians that they were saved by God's grace alone through faith alone and not by obeying a set of rules. Righteousness before God comes only through faith in Jesus Christ.

i. The foolishness of works righteousness (3:1-5)

1 – Paul calls the Galatians **foolish**. Why? Their foolishness was seen in their turning away from grace righteousness to works righteousness. Paul states that the Galatian believers had been **bewitched**, or put under a deceiving spell. Their embrace of the Judaizers teaching proclaimed that Christ died for no reason (Gal. 2:21). Christ was **crucified**, an action in the past which continued to affect the believers' everyday life. They were not living in the light of the gospel of grace. Paul had boldly and clearly proclaimed the crucified Christ to the Galatians; yet their focus had shifted from the Cross to the Law.

2-5 – Paul proceeds to ask four questions to which the Galatians obviously knew the answers. Paul appeals to their past personal experience with the gospel of grace and seeks to expose the Galatians' wayward path. The first question he asks is: "Did you receive the Holy **Spirit** by your own good works or by hearing the gospel and having **faith**?" They obviously had received the Spirit by faith and not by good works or self effort. The second question is "You began your Christian life with faith in Christ and receiving the gift of His **Spirit** by grace are you now being **perfected** (made more like Jesus) by your **flesh**, or good works?" Again, Paul was clearly teaching they were saved by grace and they were being sanctified by grace as well. The Galatians were living as if their salvation and spiritual growth all depending on their obedience to the law and not on God's grace. The third question appeals to the past experience of persecution the Galatians had endured. "Did you **suffer in vain** or for no reason?" In Acts 14:22 Paul warned the Galatians Christians that they would face persecution. This evidently happened soon after Paul and Barnabas left Galatia. Paul was telling the Galatians that if they turned away from the gospel of grace all of their suffering would have been for no reason. Paul with his fourth question appeals to the miraculous works God had done among the Galatian churches. "How does God work **miracles** among you, by you keeping the **law** or your **hearing** His word and having **faith** in Him? Surely this question penetrated the hearts of the Galatian believers, for they had seen God work miracles (Acts 14:3, 8-11) and knew these were accomplished only through faith. All of Paul's questions described the

foolishness of works righteousness. He was clearly reminding the Galatians that their righteousness before God was based only in their faith in Christ.

Dear brothers, we are saved today because God has offered salvation to us a gift. We have received this wonderful gift by placing our faith in Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:8-9). By God's grace we daily yield our lives through the power of the Holy Spirit to Jesus Christ. God by His grace makes us more like Jesus. We could not save ourselves by our good works. We do not keep our salvation by doing good works. All of our salvation rests in God's gracious work on our behalf. We serve God and obey His word because we love Him and have faith in Him and want to thank Him every day for His grace.

ii. The father of faith righteousness (3:6-9)

6,7 - Paul now delivers a crucial blow to the Judaizers. He uses Abraham, the father of the Jewish people, as an example of faith righteousness. Paul quotes Genesis 15:6, Abraham "**believed God and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.**" Abraham had faith in God's ability to accomplish what He promised (Genesis 15:5) and was accepted by God as righteous. He was justified by faith even before he was circumcised (Genesis 17:24). If circumcision was not a requirement for Abraham's salvation how could the Judaizers expect circumcision from the Galatians? They could not. The true **sons** of Abraham were those from all nations who came to God in **faith**, trusting only in Christ for salvation.

8 - The Holy **Scripture** proclaimed faith righteousness for all nations many years earlier when God promised Abraham "**All the nations will be blessed in you**" (Genesis 12:3). Matthew 1:1 tells us this promise was fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ, "**the son of Abraham.**" God has always had a heart of grace for the nations not only Israel. The good news of God's grace is for all nations.

Dear brothers, it is very important to note that Paul identifies the words which God spoke to Abraham in Genesis as Scripture. We can be confident that every word of Scripture is the word of God. "All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17). The God of all creation, who has spoken in the past, speaks today through the words of Scripture.

9 – Christians come to God by faith alone and are blessed along with Abraham, the father of faith.

Dear friends, God's purpose in blessing us with grace is to bring glory to Him. Abraham was blessed so that God would get glory by saving men and women from all the nations of the world through the seed of Abraham, Jesus Christ. God saves us for His own glory and uses us to take the gospel to others which brings glory to Him.

iii. The price of faith righteousness (3:10-14)

Paul now explains how faith righteousness came with a price. Law breakers are cursed and deserve punishment from the Holy God of the universe. When Jesus went to the cross he bore the curse of law breakers. Jesus paid the price, or satisfied the debt, which the law demanded from law breakers.

Righteousness was purchased by Jesus Christ dying of the cross for the sins of the world. Law breakers can now receive the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus.

10, 11, 12 – Paul quotes Deuteronomy 27:26, he reminds to Galatian believers that every person who has not obeyed every command of God is **cursed** by the **law** (James 2:10). Since the Galatians, and the Judaizers, had not always perfectly obeyed the law, they were already cursed. Keeping the law now, would not undo the curse. Paul again quotes from the Old Testament. He uses Habakkuk 2:4: “The righteous man shall live by faith.” God had never accepted anyone of the basis of good works. God has always accepted people of the basis of faith. Although the Judaizers were teaching the Galatians they could be saved by a strict obedience to the Old Testament law, Paul explains that no one in the Old Testament was saved by strict obedience to the law. Paul quotes the Old Testament again in verse 12 and warns that a man can only please God if he keeps all of the Lord’s commands (Leviticus 18:5).

13 – Paul has painted a dark picture: all men have disobeyed the law, are cursed, and deserve eternal punishment. He now, however, explains the good news. Christ has satisfied the debt that law breakers could not pay. Christ **redeemed** sinners from the **curse of the law**. The word **redeemed** carries the idea a person being bought out of slavery. All sinners are slaves to the law. All sinners are held in bondage by the law. All sinners are cursed by the law. Even if a slave obeys all the law he has only done that which is required of him, he has done nothing to earn his master’s favor (Luke 18:10). Jesus, however, was perfect in every way. He kept the law. He never sinned. Yet, He willingly **became a curse for us** by hanging on the cross (Deuteronomy 21:23). Jesus paid the price for sin. He took upon himself the curse of sin. He satisfied God’s wrath against sin.

Dear brothers, when Jesus saves us he delivers us from slavery to sin. He delivers us from the curse of the law. He grants us favor with the Master. He brings us freedom from the bondage of sin and death. Praise be to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who alone is our blessed Redeemer.

14 – Paul declares that through the finished work of Jesus Christ, His cross and His resurrection, the **blessing of Abraham has come to the Gentiles**. God’s promise to Abraham is fulfilled in Jesus Christ (Genesis 12:3). All nations of the earth may know true salvation by grace, through faith, in Christ. All believers receive the **promise of the Holy Spirit through faith** in Jesus.

b. Purpose of the Law (3:15-29)

If the law could not save anyone, why did God give it to Moses? Paul now explains the purpose of the Law. He helps us to see the role of the law in God’s sovereign plan of salvation.

i. It explains God’s promise (3:15-18)

15, 16 – Paul explains the nature of a **covenant**. A covenant is a binding agreement between two parties. Once the agreement has been **ratified** or agreed upon, it cannot be changed. If this is true of a covenant between men, how true is it concerning God’s covenant with Abraham (Genesis 15). The Law which God gave to Moses in no way changed the covenant He made with Abraham. God always keeps his

promises (Romans 4:13, 16). God made many promises to Abraham. These promises were not fulfilled before the giving of the law. They were fulfilled in Jesus Christ the son of Abraham (Matthew 1:1).

17, 18 – Paul states that the law, which God gave to Moses at Sinai, came 430 years after God’s covenant with Abraham. God repeated the Abrahamic covenant to Jacob, Abraham’s grandson in Genesis 28:15. It was exactly 430 after this when God gave the law to Moses. Paul explains that the Law given after the promise does not change or alter the promise. He uses two words to describe the lasting character of God’s promise: **ratified** and **granted**. Both of these words are in the perfect tense and describe an action which took place at a specific time in the past but has continuous effects into the present. God’s promise to Abraham occurred in the past, was fulfilled in Jesus, but still affects every believer today.

Dear brothers, God’s promise was good in Abraham’s day and it is still good today. People in the Old Testament were saved by grace through faith as they looked forward to the promised messiah. People in the New Testament were saved by grace through faith as they trusted in Jesus. Believers today are saved by grace through faith as they look back at the cross and trust in Jesus. We can be confident that there is only one way of salvation (John 14:6).

ii. It exposes man’s need (3:19-22)

19, 20 - The law was given to expose man’s need for a Savior. The law exposed man’s sin as violation of God’s will. Paul says that the law was given because of man’s **transgressions**. By transgressing God’s law people offend the holiness of God. The law was given to show sinners the real nature of their sin. The law exposes man’s lost condition. The Ten Commandments (Exodus 20) show man he has sinned against God and his neighbor. The law shows a man how desperate he needs the forgiveness of God.

The law was given to Moses who was **a mediator** between God and the people of Israel. In the Mosaic covenant God and Israel had responsibilities to fulfill. God kept His responsibilities, but Israel did not keep theirs. They did not perfectly obey the law. Paul shows us that the promise made to Abraham is superior to the law because it did not depend on Abraham. It only depended on God keeping His promise, which He did perfectly. An inheritance based on law depends on man’s performance but the inheritance based on promise depends on God’s power.

Dear brothers today we do not trust in our own ability to please God, we trust in God’s power and faithfulness to keep His word.

21, 22 – The law is not **contrary to the promises of God**. The law prepared the way for the Gospel. The law shows men their hopeless condition. The law shows every man he is **shut up under sin**. The law revealed the prison walls of sin which surround every human being. When people recognize this, they give up their hopes of pleasing God by good works. They then are ready to become children of **promise by faith in Jesus Christ**.

Dear brothers, use the law of God to expose the sinful heart of people. Men have a way of thinking themselves to be better than they are. They need to see God’s standard of perfection. Take people to

the Ten Commandments and show them how they have sinned against God. When people see their own sinfulness compared to the holy demands of God they will see their need for the gospel of grace. Unless people see the dreadfulness of their sin, they will not see the wonderful grace of the gospel.

iii. It exalts God's Son (3:23-29)

23, 24, 25 – The Jewish people were kept in **custody** by the law, until Jesus Christ came. They were protected by the law. The law kept the Jews conscious of their sin and their need for an atoning sacrifice. The sacrificial system of worship reminded the Jews that an innocent animal must be sacrificed for the guilt of the people (Hebrews 9:22). The law kept the Jews looking for the Messiah of prophecy, but when Jesus Christ the Messiah came, the purpose of the law was complete.

Paul calls the law a **tutor** which pointed to Christ. The word **tutor** is **paidagōgos**. It describes a slave who was given charge over a boy of age six or seven. The job of the slave (paidagōgos) was to protect, discipline, and train the child until he was of a mature age. The law served a similar function. It protected, disciplined, and trained God's people until Christ came. The rule of the law has ended because Jesus Christ has come. The law prepared the way for the gospel of grace.

26 – All of chapter three flows into this verse and all of chapter four flows from this verse. Paul now declares to believers that they are **sons of God through faith in Jesus Christ**. Paul was reminding the Galatian believers that they were no longer under the harsh discipline of the law. They were in a personal relationship with God the Father through faith in God the Son. Why would they want to go back to trying to live under the law when they could enjoy the grace of God as His sons?

Dear Brothers, as Christians we are sons of God (John 1:12). We are brought into the eternal family of God through faith in Jesus. Faith in Jesus is more than just believing he once lived. Faith in Jesus means trusting him as Lord of our lives. Faith in Jesus means we surrender control of our lives to Him. God is our perfect heavenly father and He always deals with us according to His perfect love. We love our children with a great love. We will do everything to protect and provide for our own children and yet, we are imperfect Fathers. How much more does God, our perfect Father, care for us (Matthew 7:11)?

27 – Paul explains that the believers' sonship came when they were **baptized into Christ**. He is referring to the baptism of the Holy Spirit which happens in the life of all believers at the moment of salvation when they place their faith in Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13). When people are saved God puts his Spirit inside of them. This is the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit (John 14:17, 1 Corinthians 6:19, Galatians 4:6). This baptism means believers are **clothed with Christ**. This pictures a change of garments. By faith, believers have put on or received the righteousness garments or covering of Christ. When a Roman boy came of age he put off his childhood garment and put on the toga. The toga meant that he now was seen as an adult with the full rights of an adult citizen. Paul paints a picture. The Galatian believers were spiritual children under the discipline of the law (paidagōgos) but now they were adult sons through faith in Jesus Christ. Why would they want to give up their adult status and return to that of a child?

28 - Paul boldly declares that the Galatians' standing before God did not depend on whether they were: **Jew, Greek, slave, free, male, or female** (Romans 11:32). God accepts all people, no matter their race, gender, or social status, by His grace alone, through their faith alone, in His Son alone. This does not mean that there are not distinctions between these different types of people. Paul clearly defines the different roles of men and women in the church in other verses. (1 Corinthians 11:3, 1 Timothy 2:12, 3:1)

29 – Some of the Galatians were trying to earn God's favor by keeping the law. The Judaizers were teaching them they must be circumcised in order to be **Abraham's** spiritual **descendants**. Paul declared that Abrahams' descendants are those who have trusted in Christ alone for salvation. They are **heirs according to promise**, which Paul has clearly defined as justification by faith (Galatians 3:6-7).

c. Sonship in Christ (4:1-31)

Paul now explains what it means to be sons of God. Christians are no longer slaves to sin but sons of the living God. They are adopted into the family of God and receive the full benefits of being children of the King. He pleads with the Galatian believers to turn back to the true gospel and enjoy God's grace which He gives to his sons. Paul uses the Old Testament illustration of the sons of Sarah and Hagar to explain to the Galatian believers that they are privileged sons of promise. Paul is clear that all people are either saved (sons of promise) or lost (sons of bondage).

i. Sons of inheritance (4:1-7)

1, 2, 3 - Paul uses the illustration of a **child** who is an **heir** to his father's inheritance to explain the spiritual immaturity of those who were being deceived by the Judaizers. An heir is one who is entitled to receive an inheritance. An inheritance is a portion or heritage which one receives by virtue of birth or special gift. As long as the heir is a child or minor he cannot receive his inheritance. The child is the owner of his inheritance but he is not mature enough to be trusted with it. His childhood is no different from the **slave** who has no inheritance. Paul applies the illustration to the Galatian believers, **so also we as children were held in bondage**. Paul is saying that the Christians used to be enslaved by their immature understanding of spiritual things. But now that they had trusted Jesus they were mature adult sons. They were not spiritual children anymore. They could enjoy their inheritance, the gospel of grace.

4, 5 – God is the sovereign creator of the universe. He has always had a plan to redeem mankind from sin. **In the fullness of time God sent His Son**. God sent Jesus at the perfect time in human History. Consider a few examples: Many people could speak Greek because of the earlier exploits of Alexander the Great and his Greek army. God gave the New Testament in the Greek language. The Roman Empire had constructed roads and ensured peace so that people could travel easily from one end of the empire to the other. News could travel quickly from one city to another. Many of the Jews had been preaching that the long awaited Messiah would soon come. These and many other factors all worked together as the gospel of grace spread like wild fire after Jesus told His disciples to take the good news to all people (Acts 1:8).

God sent His Son. God's endless love compelled him to send his one and only son (John 3:16). Jesus is God's Son. Jesus is fully God in every way. He is the preexistent creator of the universe (Colossians 1:15-17). Jesus came **born of a woman**. He was born of the virgin Mary. He was fully human in every way (Matthew 1:18). He was **born under the law**. He obeyed the law perfectly (Matthew 5:18). He never sinned. These truths are extremely important. Only the sinless Jesus, fully God and fully Man, could, by his sacrificial death, satisfy the holy wrath of God and redeem sinful humanity. Jesus is the only way of salvation (John 14:6).

God's purpose in sending Jesus was to **redeem** sinners and **adopt** them as sons. *Redeem* means to set one free by paying a price. Slavery was everywhere in the time of Jesus. Men could buy slaves in any city in the Roman Empire. A man who purchased a slave could choose to set him free. Jesus purchased us with his own blood and set us free from the slavery of sin (1 Peter 1:18-19). *Adoption* means believers can enjoy all the benefits of a mature son in the family. Paul uses the word son to describe the rights of both men and women believers. In New Testament times a daughter did not receive the same inheritance as a son. But all believers in Christ, male and female, receive the full benefits of the Father's inheritance.

6, 7 – As sons of God we have received the gift of His indwelling **Spirit** (Romans 8:15). The Spirit of Christ leads us, guides us, and intercedes for us in our prayers. Paul says the Spirit within us cries **Abba! Father!** *Abba* is Aramaic for father. It was used by small children when addressing their Daddy. It expresses intimacy and affection. Christians have an intimate, close, and personal relationship with the God of the universe. No slave has this kind of closeness to his master. Only a **son** who is an **heir** to His Father enjoys this special relationship (Romans 8:16-17). The slave serves his master out of fear but the son serves his Father out of love.

Dear brothers in Christ, let us rejoice that we are sons of God through faith in Jesus Christ. Christ has redeemed us. The God of the universe has adopted us into his family. We are no longer slaves to sin. We have an eternal inheritance. We will go to heaven when we die. We will spend eternity in the presence of our Lord. We have a perfect Father who always deals with us according to His love for us as His children. Let us thank God for his grace, serve Jesus because we love Him, and spend the rest of our lives sharing the good news of God's grace with the world around us.

ii. Sons of waywardness (4:8-20)

8, 9, 10, 11 – Paul rebukes the Galatian believers for straying from the true gospel. He reminds them of their past condition before they trusted Christ. They were **slaves** to their old beliefs. But now as Christians they were **known by God**. But by following the Judaizers teachings they were following a works based system of salvation. They were turning away from the gospel of grace which set them free. Paul pleads with them: why do you want to return to your **weak and worthless** religion and be **enslaved again** to your sin? They Galatians were following some of the traditional customs of the Jews in order to earn good standing with God. The Judaizers had convinced some of the Galatians to follow the Mosaic calendar. They kept **special days** (weekly sabbaths), **and months** (new moons), **and seasons** (seasonal festivals such as Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles), **and years** (sabbatical and jubilee years). The

Galatians were being convinced that their salvation depended on their own good effort instead of the grace of God. Paul feared that all of his labor in teaching and preaching the gospel of grace to the Galatians had been in **vain**.

12, 13, 14, 15, 16 – Paul **begs** the Galatians to follow His example and turn away from the false teaching Judaizers. Paul was a Jew who had been delivered from a works based religion by the gospel of grace (Philippians 3:4-8). He now pleaded with the Galatians not to forsake the gospel of grace for a works based religion.

Paul now appeals to the time he spent with Galatians. Paul had been affected by a **bodily illness**. The Galatians had cared for him and received his preaching as if he were an **angel of God** and as **Christ Jesus** himself. They would have given him their **eyes**. This is probably a figure of speech to show that the Galatians would have given Paul their most valuable possession. Paul was trying to convince them that he was the same guy they once trusted. He could still be trusted. He had their best interest at heart. He was not their **enemy**. He was speaking the **truth**.

17, 18 – Paul reveals the selfish motivation of the Judaizers. They, unlike Paul, did not really love the Galatians. They were selfish. They wanted the Galatians to depend on them and look to them, and not Paul, for religious guidance.

Dear brothers, always guard against preachers who want to draw attention to them more than Jesus. A true servant of Christ is not concerned about drawing attention to himself but to Jesus. Our call is to preach Jesus, to lift up Jesus, and to exalt Jesus. If we do, Jesus will draw others to himself (John 12:32).

19, 20 – Paul addresses the Galatians as his dear **children**. He compares the pain in his heart for the Galatians to the pain a mother has in delivering her baby. The mother longs for the child to be born. She longs to hold her child. She longs for the birthing process to be over. Paul feels this way towards the Galatians. He longs for them to turn to the gospel of grace. He wants them to be formed in the likeness of Jesus Christ. Paul had a genuine and passionate desire for the Galatians to be free from the influences of the false teachers. He longed to be **present** with them. So he could speak to them in person and convey his deep concern.

Dear Brothers, do we love the people God has trusted to us like Paul loved the Galatians? If so, we will preach and teach the truths of God's word with passion and conviction.

iii. Sons of promise (4:21-31)

21 – Paul pulls an illustration from the Old Testament to refute the Judaizers arguments. He uses the story of Abraham, his two sons, Ishmael and Isaac, and their mothers, Sarah and Hagar (Genesis 16, 21:9-14). Their story illustrates the differences between the Judaizers and true Christians. Paul uses the event to teach the Galatians that they must either trust in God's grace or in their good works for salvation. They could not do both. They must decide if righteousness came by obeying the law or if righteousness came by God's grace through faith in Jesus. They were either children of promise, born by God's Spirit or children of bondage, trusting in their own flesh. Paul admonishes the Galatians to **listen to the law** as he explains. (A reading of Genesis 12-21 would be helpful in understanding this passage)

22 - 31 - A comparison of the two mothers (Adapted from: The Outline Bible)

1. **Hagar (an illustration of the law)**
 - a. She was a slave (4:22).
 - b. Her marriage to Abraham was directed by the flesh (4:23)
 - c. Her son, Ishmael, was naturally born (4:24)
 - d. Her son persecuted Abraham's second son, Isaac (4:29)
 - e. Her child was not considered Abraham's rightful heir (4:30-31)
 - f. She corresponds to earthly Jerusalem (4:25)
 - g. She pictures the old covenant (4:24)

2. **Sarah (an illustration of grace)**
 - a. She was a free woman (4:22)
 - b. Her marriage to Abraham was directed by the spirit (4:23)
 - c. Her son, Isaac, was supernaturally born (4:27)
 - d. Her son was persecuted by Ishmael (4:29)
 - e. Her child was considered Abraham's rightful heir (4:28)
 - f. She corresponds to the heavenly Jerusalem (4:26)
 - g. She pictures the new covenant (4:24)

28 - Paul declares that the Galatian believers, **like Isaac** were **children of promise**. Isaac's birth was a supernatural work of God. Abraham was 100 years old and Sarah was 90. Believers' spiritual birth is also a supernatural work of God (John 3:3-5). Isaac's birth was a result of God's promise to Abraham (Genesis 15:5, 18:10). Believers' new birth is the result of God's promise of salvation (Galatians 3:9, 22, 29). Isaac's birth was a result of God's grace. Abraham and Sarah were recipients of God's grace through faith in His promise. Christians' spiritual birth is the result of God's grace through faith in His Son.

30 – The Judaizers and their false teaching were to be cast out like Hagar and Ishmael.

31 – Paul declared that believers in Jesus Christ were children of the **free woman** and not the **bondwoman**. The Galatians had to examine their hearts and decide which one was their spiritual mother.

Dear Brothers, people in this world are either lost or saved. They are either sons of bondage or sons of promise. They either are trying to be good enough to earn God's favor or recognize they good never be good enough and cry out for God's grace. People are either trusting in themselves or trusting in Jesus. When we minister we must always remember there is only one way of salvation. People are saved by God's grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. Dear friends, every day we are dealing with people who will spend eternity in heaven or hell. Let us be urgent in sharing the hope of gospel of grace with the lost and dying around us.

IV. **A Practical Defense (of Christian Liberty) (5:1-6:10)**

Paul now explains the practical applications of living under the gospel of grace. The Judaizers believed that a gospel of total grace would lead to lawless living. Paul declares the opposite. The gospel of pure grace produces deeply moral Christians who serve God faithfully because they love Him and are grateful for all He has done. These same Christians serve others with the love which Christ produces in their hearts. Jesus Christ frees believers from the bondage of Sin and indwells them with His Spirit. Believers live in liberty by daily yielding to the leadership and empowerment of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit produces victory over sin and the power to live as Christ desires.

a. Stand in Freedom (5:1-15)

Christ's death and resurrection has purchased our freedom from the law. We now can stand before God on the finished work of Calvary. We do not trust in our ability to keep the law; we trust in Jesus for our justification. True freedom is found in trusting Jesus alone for our salvation. Paul pleads with the Galatian believers to keep standing on the gospel of grace. He knew if they received the Judaizers' teaching they would be giving up the freedom they enjoyed in Christ.

i. The Foundation of Freedom (5:1-6)

1 - The foundation of Christian freedom is the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The believer simply trusts in Christ because Christ satisfied the perfect requirements of the law. Therefore, the believer does not live under the **slavery** of the law; he lives under grace. He does not try to keep all the rules and regulations of the law. He seeks only to love and please Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit. The Christian lives out of the wonderful freedom given to him by the finished work of Jesus Christ. Paul knew the Galatians were in danger of forsaking their Christian freedom by following the Judaizers' teachings. He commands them to **keep standing firm** on the foundation Christ had laid.

2-4 – Some of the Galatians were considering being circumcised as means of securing their own salvation. Paul warns the Galatians with three affects of trusting in circumcision as a work necessary for salvation: they would deny the benefits of Christ's work, they would have to keep the whole law, and they would forfeit the blessings of grace. Paul declared by trusting in circumcision as a means of salvation the Galatians would **fall from grace**. Paul is not speaking of loosing ones salvation. He is saying that the Galatians by trusting in circumcision for salvation had lost their understanding of grace and were denying the privileges grace provided them.

5 – True believers **by faith**, not works, eagerly anticipate the day when their salvation will be complete. Paul speaks of the day when believers will be glorified in the presence of Jesus. This is the believers **hoped for righteousness** (Hebrews 9:28, 1 Peter 1:3-4).

6 – Circumcision is an outward work and has nothing to do with salvation. Salvation is a heart issue. What matters is faith in Jesus which **works** itself out through genuine **love** (Ephesians 2:10, James 2:18).

Dear Brothers, we trust in Jesus alone for our salvation. We do not trust in our good works. Jesus has freed us from the bondage of sin. We are free to live under grace. We are free to live with hope. We are free to live by love. Christian freedom means we are free from sin's slavery to serve Jesus as Lord and others as ourselves.

ii. The Foes of Freedom (5:7-12)

7 - Paul turns his attention to the enemies of Christian freedom. He declares the Judaizers were false teachers who hindered the Galatians from obeying the word of God. They were enemies of the gospel of grace. He describes the character of all false teachers:

8 – They are not **from God** and they do not serve God.

9 – They contaminate the church like a contagious disease. Their teaching spreads like **leaven** spreads throughout a **lump of dough**.

10 – They will be **judged** for their sinful teaching.

11 – They **persecute** true teachers of God's word.

12 – Paul uses strong language here. He desires for the Judaizers to **mutilate themselves**. He is speaking of castration. Perhaps this carries the idea that the resulting physical impotence pictured his desire that the Judaizers be unable to produce new converts (Adapted from The Bible Knowledge Commentary).

iii. The Limits of Freedom (5:13-15)

13–The Christian is a free man. He is free from the guilt of sin because he has experienced God's forgiveness. He is free from the penalty of sin because Christ died for him on the cross. And he is, through the Holy Spirit, free from the power of sin in his daily life. He is also free from the Law with its demands and threats. Paul, however, warns believers against using their freedom as an excuse for sin. Christian freedom is not freedom to sin but freedom to love and serve others (John 8:31-36) (Adapted from the Bible Exposition Commentary).

14 - Paul gives one command that sums up Christian freedom and fulfills the Old Testament law: **Love your neighbor as yourself** (Matthew 22:37-40). A believer does not have to worry about keeping all of the Old Testament laws. He must simply by God's strength love his neighbor as himself. And by loving his neighbor he will **fulfill** the Old Testament law. To love one's neighbor as one loves himself means that the whole legal code can be abolished.

Dear brothers, when we love our neighbor as ourselves we will not steal from him. We will not lie about him. We will not mistreat his family. We will share the good news of Jesus Christ with him because we love him and would want someone to share Jesus with us. We will go out of our way to treat him with kindness. The basic answer to what God wants us to do every day is: love your neighbor as yourself.

15 – Paul warns that believers do not have liberty to mistreat others. He uses strong words, **bite** and **devour**, which both picture wild animals engaged in a fight. They speak of causing harm and creating dissension in the church.

b. Walk by the Spirit (5:16-26)

Paul now reveals how the believer lives in daily victory over sin. The Christian cannot gain victory over sin in his own effort any more than he can save himself by his own effort. The power to overcome sin is found in the person of the Holy Spirit. Every believer has the Holy Spirit living inside of him (1Corinthians 6:19). As the believer yields and submits his daily life to the leadership of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit empowers and enables the believer to live the victorious Christian life. Paul now explains the believers struggle by contrasting the desires of the sinful flesh and the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

i. The Desires of the Flesh (5:16-21)

16, 17, 18 – Paul describes the battle within every Christian. Every Christian desires to please Christ and live by the power of the Holy Spirit. Yet, Every Christian has a sinful **flesh** that is selfish, prideful, and wars against the indwelling Spirit (Romans 7:18 -25). The **Spirit** and **flesh** are in continuous conflict within the believer. So, how does the Christian experience victory of the flesh . . . By **walking in the Spirit**. This meant that the Galatian believers should continually obey the leading of the Spirit and depend on His power as they served Christ.

Dear brothers, when we sin, we feed our flesh. It gets stronger and stronger. But we feed the Spirit when we repent of sin, read the Bible, fellowship with other believers, and obey God’s commands. The Spirit’s control of our lives gets stronger and stronger as we seek God and pray for his strength (Romans 13:14).

19, 20, 21 – Paul lists some of the works of the flesh:

immorality – all forms of illicit or sinful sexual activity
impurity – moral uncleanness in word, thought, or deed
sensuality - open, shameless display of evils, unrestrained sexual indulgence
idolatry – the worship of anyone or anything other than Jesus Christ
sorcery – the worship of evil powers
enmities – the opposite of love
strife – fighting, discord, quarreling
jealousy – envy of others
outbursts of anger -
disputes – self seeking, selfish attitudes and actions
dissensions – divisions within a community
factions – separatist groups with false teaching
envying – wrongful desire to possess what others have
drunkenness – excessive use of intoxicating drink
carousings – drunken gatherings or parties

This list of sins does not include every sin but gives a vivid example of the nature of the **flesh**. Paul states that those who continue to practice these sins are lost and **will not enter the kingdom of God**. He is not saying that any person who has ever committed a work of the flesh is lost. But, if a person continually commits these sins without remorse or repentance, Paul says that person is lost and needs to be saved by Jesus. Christians still struggle with sin. But, when a Christian sins the Holy Spirit brings conviction in his heart. A Christian will confess and repent of his sin as the Holy Spirit leads. A Christian does not lose his salvation when he sins but his fellowship with God is hindered until that sin is confessed. Christians gain victory over sin as they obey the Spirit's leading and depend on the Spirit's power.

Dear brothers, sin should not cause us to doubt our salvation, but lack of conviction and brokenness over sin should. The Holy Spirit teaches us how to handle the freedom we have in Jesus. Walking in the Spirit means we continually look to the truth, love and glory of Jesus and desire to be like him in every way.

ii. The Fruit of the Spirit (5:22-26)

22, 23 – The work of the Holy Spirit is to exalt and glorify Jesus (John 15:26, 16:14). Every genuine work of the Holy Spirit in the Christian's life will exalt and glorify Jesus. The fruit of the Spirit always points to Jesus. Spiritual fruit does not promote the believer but makes much of Jesus. The fruit of the Spirit produced by the Holy Spirit in the believer's life is simply the character traits of Jesus becoming a part of the believer's character. Fruit is the outward evidence of one's inward character, it is grown not manufactured. As Christians walk in a daily relationship with Jesus the Holy Spirit produces His fruit in their lives. Jesus says in John 15:5: *"I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing."* Believers must abide in Jesus.

Dear brothers, just as the farmer cultivates his crops to prepare for his harvest, we must abide in Jesus and let the Holy Spirit rule in our daily lives if we desire the fruit of the Spirit. We do this by Bible study, prayer, worship, and fellowship with Jesus. We cannot produce the fruit of the Spirit but we can surrender our lives to Him so that He produces fruit in us.

Paul lists the fruit of the Spirit:

Love – divine love, self sacrificing love (John 3:16)

Joy – Abiding inward rejoicing not affected by outward circumstance

- John 15:11 *"These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full."*

Peace – Inner calm, quietness, confidence, assurance, and contentment in Christ

- John 14:27 – *"Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."*

Longsuffering – courageous endurance through adversity, patience during difficulty and uncertainty (James 1:2-4)

Gentleness – kindness toward others

Goodness – love in action, reaching out to do good to others even when it is not deserved

Faithfulness – trustworthy, reliable.

Meekness – power under control, submissive to the Word, considerate of others when discipline is needed.

Temperance (Self Control) – curbing of fleshly impulses, self discipline or restraint to resist temptation (particularly passions involving food and sex)

Dear brothers, as we walk in relationship with Jesus and let the Holy Spirit rule our lives, the Holy Spirit produces his fruit in us. Our goal is not to just be like Jesus, but to be with Jesus. Jesus produces his fruit in us as we walk in fellowship with him.

24 – Paul speaks of Christians having **crucified the flesh**. He speaks of the believer's involvement in the historical crucifixion of Jesus. In a way all believers were with Jesus on the cross (2 Corinthians 5:21). Jesus paid the sin debt of all Christians on the cross. Paul desires for believers to daily look back to the cross in faith and enjoy the victory Jesus has won for them. This does not mean that the believer will not sin but that his victory over the **passions and desires** of the **flesh** are found in the truth of Jesus' crucifixion (Romans 6:6, 11-14; Galatians 2:20, Colossians 3:5).

25, 26 – All believers have the Holy Spirit living within them. But not all believers **walk** or keep in step with the leading of the Holy Spirit. The word **walk** here is a military term which describes a soldier who stays in formation and step with other soldiers as they follow their commanders orders. Paul is urging the Galatians to be attentive and obedient to the Holy Spirit's leadership. This is done primarily by studying and obeying the Bible which is inspired by the Holy Spirit (2 Timothy 3:16).

Paul warns the believers against becoming prideful, conceited, or jealous of one another which would create conflict and divisions among the church (Philippians 2:3-5). Paul may be alluding to the situation in Galatia provoked by the Judaizer's false teaching.

Dear brothers, as we yield our lives to the Holy Spirit, he produces his fruit and Jesus' character in us. He gives us victory over sin and the boldness to live and witness for Jesus (Acts 4:8, 31).

c. Bear Each Other's Burdens (6:1-10)

Paul now reminds the Galatians that Spirit-led believers have the responsibility to care for other believers within their church. They are a living part of a local body of Christ. They must love each other enough to restore one another in sin, shoulder one another's heavy burdens and be willing to carry their own load.

i. Caring and Sharing (6:1-5)

1 – Paul addresses the Galatians as **brothers**. He reminds them that they have a responsibility to **restore** a brother who is living in sin. The word, **restore**, means to repair to a former condition. The word was used to describe a doctor who reset a broken bone and a fisherman who repaired his broken fishing net. Paul is speaking to the Spirit-led believer. When the Holy Spirit brings to his attention a fellow believer's

sin, he must act out of love and seek to urge his brother to repentance. He must act with **gentleness** and compassion. The Spirit-led believer must be aware that he is not immune from sin (Matthew 18:15-17).

2 – Paul commands the believer to **bear one another's burdens**. The word, **burden**, speaks of a heavy and crushing load. It speaks of any kind of hardship or difficulty which a believer cannot overcome alone. The word, bear, means to carry or shoulder a heavy load. Paul is telling believers they have a responsibility for the welfare of others.

Dear brothers, we must always be aware of the needs of our brothers and sisters in Christ. We must always seek to help them in their hardship and difficulty in every way possible. They are our spiritual family. A church is a body of believers. Each part works to care for the other parts so that the gospel of Christ may go forth from the body. A church is a faith family and members of a family take care of one another.

3, 4, 5 – Believers who fail to help others are conceited believing themselves better than others because they do not have a specific need or caught in a particular sin. Paul commands believers to **examine** themselves. Believers must look inward and compare themselves to Jesus instead of others. This will produce humility instead of pride. Each Christian is to **bear his own load**. The word, **load**, was used to describe the individual pack of a marching soldier. The soldier had a responsibility to assist his fellow soldiers with large loads, but he also had a duty to carry his own pack or load. This describes a believer's role in the church. Every believer has a responsibility for doing his own share of the work in the church.

ii. Receiving and Giving (6:6)

6 – Paul reminds believers of their responsibility to care for the pastors and teachers of their churches. The ones who are **taught** must share their resources with the one who **teaches** them. Every church must care for the physical needs of their pastor. The pastor bears the heavy burden of the spiritual welfare of his people. A faithful pastor labors to preach, teach, and minister to his people out of love. His congregation should show their gratitude for his love and devotion by providing for his physical and financial needs. Those who receive the Word of God must be generous to him who shares the Word of God (1 Corinthians 9:7-14).

iii. Sowing and Reaping (6:7-10)

7, 8 – Believers who care for their pastor will be blessed for their faithfulness. Believers that neglect their pastor will not be blessed. Believers **reap** what they **sow**. If a farmer plants corn, he will harvest corn. If he plants wheat, he will harvest wheat. If a man sows to his flesh we will reap destruction. If a man sows to the Spirit he will reap the blessings of the Spirit. God cannot be **mocked**. God sees all and knows all. He rewards those who serve him out of love and judges those who scorn his authority.

9, 10 – Sometimes believers get tired and discouraged because they do not see the harvest of their labors. Paul encourages them not to **grow weary in doing good** because they will reap a harvest very soon. The reaping may come only in part in this life but will be full when the believer enters eternity

with his Lord. Paul encourages the believers to take advantage of every **opportunity** God gives them to do good to their neighbors.

Dear brothers, we do not have long to serve Jesus. We must use every opportunity he gives us to share the gospel of grace. We must use every opportunity he gives us to do good to our neighbor. We must live every day in light of the day we will see Jesus face to face. We only have one life. We must serve Jesus with every breath and heart- beat given to us. Be encouraged, a harvest time is coming soon. Our faithfulness to Christ in this life will produce an eternal harvest.

V. Conclusion (6:11-18)

a. The Selfish Judaizers (6:11-13)

11 – Paul now writes to the Galatians with **large letters**. Paul probably had written in small lower-case letters up until this point. But he now writes in large upper-case letters. He does so to emphasize the importance of his final words. One can imagine the effect this change of style had on the original readers. They knew the apostle was pleading for their attention to his concluding remarks.

12, 13 – The Judaizers who insisted that circumcision was necessary for salvation (Acts 15:1), in summary, (1) were only men-pleasers (Gal. 1:10) seeking to **make a good impression outwardly**; (2) were afraid of persecution (6:12); (3) wanted to **boast** about the number of Galatians they hoped to win over to circumcision as a religious and merit-earning rite (v. 13). They did not really care about the well being of the Galatians. Their motivation was pride and self-preservation (Adapted from the Bible Knowledge Commentary).

b. The Humble Apostle (6:14-17)

14 – Paul’s motivation was completely different from the Judaizers. He loved the Galatians. He had suffered persecution in order for them to hear the gospel of grace. The cross of Jesus was the only thing he would **boast** in. If any man could **boast** in his religious accomplishment, it was the apostle Paul. He was a devout Pharisee before his conversion (Philippians 3:4-7). Following his conversion, God had used him in mighty ways to carry the gospel to multitudes of people. Yet, he would boast, brag, and glory only in the finished work of Jesus Christ. Paul boasted only in the cross of Jesus. He was crucified to the **world**. The word, **world**, speaks of the values of the world-system which opposes Christ. Paul is saying that he is dead to everything that opposes the kingdom of Jesus Christ (Galatians 2:20). Paul felt he owed his whole life to Jesus and owed the gospel to the whole world.

Dear brothers, all we have to boast in is the cross of Jesus. No amount of self effort could atone for our sins. No amount of work could secure our place in heaven. Only by the cross of Jesus are we saved. In ministry we must never boast in our ability or accomplishment but only in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. By His grace we are saved. By His grace we are kept. By His grace we accomplish His will. Let us only boast in the person of Jesus. To Him be glory and honor though out all ages, amen.

15, 16 – Paul declares that salvation has nothing to do with race. **Circumcision** was a characteristic of the Jews. **Uncircumcision** was a characteristic of the Gentiles. Neither matters when it comes to salvation. All that matters is a **new creation** (2 Corinthians 5:17). Paul speaks of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Salvation is not found in a religious system but in a relationship with Jesus. Paul extends the blessings of peace and mercy to the **Israel of God**. This phrase probably refers to all the redeemed Jews and Gentiles that will enjoy the inheritance of heaven together with Jesus.

Dear brothers, it does not matter your skin color, gender, or nationality. All that matters is your faith relationship with Jesus. The gospel knows no racial, cultural, or national prejudice. For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son (John 3:16).

17 – Paul concludes this very personal letter with a vivid description of his own suffering for Christ. He bore in his body the **brand-marks** of Jesus. **Brand-marks** refer to the physical scars Paul had suffered for the sake of the gospel of grace (2 Corinthians 11:23-28). The word for **brand-marks** was used in New Testament times to describe a brand placed on slaves showing ownership by their master and on soldiers showing allegiance to their commander. Paul probably has both meanings in mind here. He was a bond-slave to his master Jesus Christ and pledged complete allegiance and devotion to his commander king Jesus.

c. The Gracious Plea (6:18)

18 – Paul ends the same way he begins (1:3). He expresses his deep desire for God's **grace** to reside in the lives of his spiritual **brothers**. Paul had opened the passions of his heart in his letter. He had pleaded with the Galatians to stand firm on the true gospel. His last words are simply a summary of his work. He prays the Galatians will turn away from the false gospel of works and hold tight to the gospel of grace.

Dear brothers, salvation comes to all people by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. The Bible is clear: Jesus Christ is the only way of salvation for He is the only one who has died for our sin, been raised for our justification, and extends salvation to His people as a free gift of grace. By God's grace let us surrender our lives completely to Him and share His gospel of grace with the entire world.