

THE EPISTLE OF PAUL THE APOSTLE TO THE GALATIANS

WRITER. The Apostle Paul (1:1).

Date. Galatians was probably written A.D. 60, during Paul's third visit to Corinth. The occasion of the Epistle is evident. It had come to Paul's knowledge that the fickle Galatians, who were not Greeks, but Gauls, "a stream from the torrent of barbarians which poured into Greece in the third century before Christ," had become the prey of the legalizers, the Judaizing missionaries from Palestine.

Theme. The theme of Galatians is the vindication of the Gospel of the grace of God from any admixture of law-conditions, which qualify or destroy its character of pure grace.

The Galatian error had two forms, both of which are refuted. The first is the teaching that obedience to the law is mingled with faith as the ground of the sinner's justification; the second, that the justified believer is made perfect by keeping the law. Paul meets the first form of the error by a demonstration that justification is through the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 15:18), and that the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after the confirmation of that covenant, and the true purpose of which was condemnation, not justification, cannot disannul a salvation which rests upon the earlier covenant. Paul meets the second and more subtle form by vindicating the office of the Holy Spirit as Sanctifier.

The book is in seven parts: I. Salutation, 1:1–5. II. Theme, 1:6–9. III. Paul's Gospel is a revelation, 1:10–2:14. IV. Justification is by faith without law, 2:15–3:24. V. The rule of the believer's life is gracious, not legal, 3:25–5:15. VI. Sanctification is through the Spirit, not the law, 5:16–24. VII. Exhortations and conclusion, 5:25–6:18.

Chapter 1

¹ Paul, apostle, not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ, and God *the* Father who raised him from among *the* dead, ² and all the brethren with me, to the assemblies of Galatia. ³ Grace to you, and peace, from God *the* Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, ⁴ who gave himself for our sins, so that he should deliver us out of the present evil world, according to the will of our God and Father; ⁵ to whom *be* glory to the ages of ages. Amen.

⁶ I wonder that ye thus quickly change, from him that called you in Christ's grace, to a different gospel, ⁷ which is not another *one*; but there are some that trouble you, and desire to pervert the glad tidings of the Christ. ⁸ But if even we or an angel out of heaven announce as glad tidings to you *anything* besides what we have announced as glad tidings to you, let him be accursed. ⁹ As we have said before, now also again I say, If any one announce to you as glad tidings *anything* besides what ye have received, let him be accursed.

¹⁰ For do I now seek to satisfy men or God? or do I seek to please men? If I were yet pleasing men, I were not Christ's bondman. ¹¹ But I let you know, brethren, *as to* the glad tidings which were announced by me, that they are not according to man. ¹² For neither did I receive them from man, neither was I taught *them*, but by revelation of Jesus Christ. ¹³ For ye have heard *what was* my conversation formerly in Judaism, that I excessively persecuted the assembly of God, and ravaged it; ¹⁴ and advanced in Judaism beyond many *my* contemporaries in my nation, being exceedingly zealous of the doctrines of my fathers. ¹⁵ But when God, who set me apart *even* from my mother's womb, and called *me* by his grace, ¹⁶ was pleased to reveal his Son in me, that I may announce him as glad tidings among the nations, immediately I took not counsel with flesh and blood, ¹⁷ nor went I up to Jerusalem to those *who were* apostles before me; but I went to Arabia, and again returned to Damascus. ¹⁸ Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to make acquaintance with Peter, and I remained with him fifteen days; ¹⁹ but I saw none other of the apostles, but James the brother of the Lord. ²⁰ Now what I write to you, behold, before God, I do not lie. ²¹ Then I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. ²² But I was unknown personally to the assemblies of Judaea which *are* in Christ; ²³ only they were hearing that he who persecuted us formerly now announces the glad tidings of the faith which formerly he ravaged: ²⁴ and they glorified God in me.

1:6 The test of the Gospel is grace. If the message excludes grace, or mingles law with grace as the means either of justification or sanctification (Gal. 2:21; 3:1–3), or denies the fact or guilt of sin which alone gives grace its occasion and opportunity, it is “another” gospel, and the preacher of it is under the anathema of God (vs. 8, 9).

1:10 The demonstration is as follows: (1) The Galatians know Paul, that he is no seeker after popularity (v. 10). (2) He puts his known character back of the assertion that his Gospel of grace was a revelation from God (vs. 11, 12). (3) As for the Judaizers, Paul himself had been a foremost Jew, and had forsaken Judaism for something better (vs. 13, 14). (4) He had preached grace years before he saw any of the other apostles (vs. 15–24). (5) When he did meet the other apostles they had nothing to add to his revelations (2:1–6). (6) The other apostles fully recognized Paul's apostleship (2:7–10). (7) If the legalizers pleaded Peter's authority, the answer was that he himself had claimed none when rebuked (2:11–14).

1:13 The new dispensation of grace having come in, the Mosaic system, if still persisted in, becomes a mere “Jews' religion.”

1:14 The word “religion,” Gr. *threskeia* = “religious service,” is used but five times in the N.T.: (1) In a bad sense, Acts 26:5; Gal. 1:14; Jas. 1:26; Col. 2:18 (“worshipping”); (2) in the sense of a believer's good works, Jas. 1:27. It is never used as synonymous with salvation or spirituality.

Chapter 2

¹ Then after a lapse of fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus also with *me*; ² and I went up according to revelation, and I laid before them the glad tidings which I preach among the nations, but privately to those conspicuous *among them*, lest

in any way I run or had run in vain; ³ (but neither was Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, compelled to be circumcised;) ⁴ and *it was* on account of the false brethren brought in surreptitiously, who came in surreptitiously to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage; ⁵ to whom we yielded in subjection not even for an hour, that the truth of the glad tidings might remain with you. ⁶ But from those who were conspicuous as being somewhat—whatsoever they were, it makes no difference to me: God does not accept man's person; for to me those who were conspicuous communicated nothing; ⁷ but, on the contrary, seeing that the glad tidings of the uncircumcision were confided to me, even as to Peter that of the circumcision, ⁸ (for he that wrought in Peter for *the* apostleship of the circumcision wrought also in me towards the Gentiles,) ⁹ and recognising the grace given to me, James and Cephas and John, who were conspicuous as being pillars, gave to me and Barnabas *the* right hands of fellowship, that we *should go* to the nations, and they to the circumcision; ¹⁰ only that we should remember the poor, which same thing also I was diligent to do.

¹¹ But when Peter came to Antioch, I withstood him to *the* face, because he was to be condemned: ¹² for before that certain came from James, he ate with *those of* the nations; but when they came, he drew back and separated himself, fearing those of *the* circumcision; ¹³ and the rest of the Jews also played the same dissembling part with him; so that even Barnabas was carried away too by their dissimulation. ¹⁴ But when I saw that they do not walk straightforwardly, according to the truth of the glad tidings, I said to Peter before all, If thou, being a Jew, livest as the nations and not as the Jews, how dost thou compel the nations to Judaize? ¹⁵ We, Jews by nature, and not sinners of *the* nations, ¹⁶ but knowing that a man is not justified on the principle of works of law *nor* but by the faith of Jesus Christ, we also have believed on Christ Jesus, that we might be justified on the principle of *the* faith of Christ; and not of works of law; because on the principle of works of law no flesh shall be justified. ¹⁷ Now if in seeking to be justified in Christ we also have been found sinners, then *is* Christ minister of sin? Far be the thought. ¹⁸ For if the things I have thrown down, these I build again, I constitute myself a transgressor. ¹⁹ For I, through law, have died to law, that I may live to God. ²⁰ I am crucified with Christ, and no longer live, I, but Christ lives in me; but *in* that I now live in flesh, I live by faith, the *faith* of the Son of God, who has loved me and given himself for me. ²¹ I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness *is* by law, then Christ has died for nothing.

2:15 Paul here quotes from his words to Peter when he withstood him at Antioch to show the Galatians that, whatever the legalists may have pretended, Peter and he were in perfect accord doctrinally. Paul appealed to the common *belief* of Peter and himself as a rebuke of Peter's inconsistent *practice*.

2:17 That is, "we" Jews. (See Rom. 3:19–23.) The passage might be thus paraphrased: If we Jews, in seeking to be justified by faith in Christ, take our places as mere sinners, like the Gentiles, is it therefore Christ who makes us sinners? By no means. It is by putting ourselves again under law after seeking justification through Christ, that we act as if we were still unjustified sinners, seeking to become righteous through law-works. (Cf. Gal. 5:1–4.)

Chapter 3

¹ O senseless Galatians, who has bewitched you; to whom, as before your very eyes, Jesus Christ has been portrayed, crucified *among you*? ² This only I wish to learn of you, Have ye received the Spirit on the principle of works of law, or of *the* report of faith? ³ Are ye so senseless? having begun in Spirit, are ye going to be made perfect in flesh? ⁴ Have ye suffered so many things in vain, if indeed also in vain? ⁵ He therefore who ministers to you the Spirit, and works miracles among you, *is it* on the principle of works of law, or of *the* report of faith?

⁶ Even as Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness. ⁷ Know then that they that are on the principle of faith, these are Abraham's sons; ⁸ and the scripture,

foreseeing that God would justify the nations on the principle of faith, announced beforehand the glad tidings to Abraham: In thee all the nations shall be blessed.⁹ So that they who are on the principle of faith are blessed with believing Abraham.¹⁰ For as many as are on the principle of works of law are under curse. For it is written, Cursed is every one who does not continue in all things which *are* written in the book of the law to do them;¹¹ but that by law no one is justified with God *is* evident, because The just shall live on the principle of faith;¹² but the law is not on the principle of faith; but, He that shall have done these things shall live by them.¹³ Christ has redeemed us out of the curse of the law, having become a curse for us, (for it is written, Cursed *is* every one hanged upon a tree,) ¹⁴ that the blessing of Abraham might come to the nations in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.¹⁵ Brethren, (I speak according to man,) even man's confirmed covenant no one sets aside, or adds other dispositions to.¹⁶ But to Abraham were the promises addressed, and to his seed: he does not say, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed; which is Christ.¹⁷ Now I say this, A covenant confirmed beforehand by God, the law, which took place four hundred and thirty years after, does not annul, so as to make the promise of no effect.¹⁸ For if the inheritance *be* on the principle of law, *it is* no longer on the principle of promise; but God gave it in grace to Abraham by promise.

¹⁹ Why then the law? It was added for the sake of transgressions, until the seed came to whom the promise was made, ordained through angels in *the* hand of a mediator.²⁰ But a mediator is not of one, but God is one.²¹ *Is* then the law against the promises of God? Far be the thought. For if a law had been given able to quicken, then indeed righteousness were on the principle of law;²² but the scripture has shut up all things under sin, that the promise, on the principle of faith of Jesus Christ, should be given to those that believe.²³ But before faith came, we were guarded under law, shut up to faith *which was* about to be revealed.²⁴ So that the law has been our tutor up to Christ, that we might be justified on the principle of faith.²⁵ But, faith having come, we are no longer under a tutor;²⁶ for ye are all God's sons by faith in Christ Jesus.²⁷ For ye, as many as have been baptised unto Christ, have put on Christ.²⁸ There is no Jew nor Greek; there is no bondman nor freeman; there is no male and female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus:²⁹ but if ye *are* of Christ, then ye are Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise.

3:19 The answer is sixfold: (1) The law was added because of transgressions, i.e. to give to sin the character of transgression. (a) Men had been sinning before Moses, but in the absence of law their sins were not put to their account (Rom. 5:13); the law gave to sin the character of "transgression," i.e. of personal guilt. (b) Also, since men not only continued to transgress after the law was given, but were provoked to transgress by the very law which forbade it (Rom. 7:8), the law conclusively proved the inveterate sinfulness of man's nature (Rom. 7:11–13). (2) The law, therefore, "concluded all under sin" (cf. Rom. 3:19, 20, 23). (3) The law was an *ad interim* dealing, "till the seed should come" (v. 19). (4) The law shut sinful man up to faith as the only avenue of escape (v. 23). (5) The law was to the Jews what the pedagogue was in a Greek household, a ruler of children in their minority, and it had this character "unto" (i.e. until) Christ (v. 24). (6) Christ having come, the believer is no longer under the pedagogue (v. 25).

3:24 I. The law of Moses, Summary: (1) The Mosaic Covenant was given to Israel in three parts: the commandments, expressing the righteous will of God (Ex. 20:1–26); the "judgments," governing the social life of Israel (Ex. 21:1–24:11), and the "ordinances," governing the religious life of Israel (Ex. 24:12; 31:18). (2) The commandments and ordinances were one complete and inseparable whole. When an Israelite sinned, he was held "blameless" if he brought the required offering (Lk. 1:6; Phil. 3:6). (3) Law, as a method of the divine dealing with man, characterized the dispensation extending from the giving of the law to the death of Jesus Christ (Gal. 3:13, 14, 23, 24). (4) The attempt of legalistic teachers (e.g. Acts 15:1–31; Gal. 2:1–5) to mingle law with grace as the divine method for this present dispensation of grace, brought out the true relation of the law to the Christian, viz.

II. The Christian doctrine of the law: (1) Law is in contrast with grace. Under the latter God bestows the righteousness which, under law, He demanded (Ex. 19:5; John 1:17; Rom. 3:21, *note*; 10:3–10; 1 Cor. 1:30). (2) The law is, in itself, holy, just, good, and spiritual (Rom. 7:12–14). (3) Before the law the whole world is guilty, and the law is therefore of necessity a ministry of condemnation, death, and the divine curse (Rom. 3:19; 2 Cor.

3:7–9; Gal. 3:10). (4) Christ bore the curse of the law, and redeemed the believer both from the curse and from the dominion of the law (Gal. 3:13; 4:5–7). (5) Law neither justifies a sinner nor sanctifies a believer (Gal. 2:16; 3:2, 3, 11, 12). (6) The believer is both dead to the law and redeemed from it, so that he is “not under the law, but under grace” (Rom. 6:14; 7:4; Gal. 2:19; 4:4–7; 1 Tim. 1:8, 9). (7) Under the new covenant of grace the principle of obedience to the divine will is inwrought (Heb. 10:16). So far is the life of the believer from the anarchy of self-will that he is “inlawed to Christ” (1 Cor. 9:21), and the new “law of Christ” (Gal. 6:2; 2 John 5) is his delight; while, through the indwelling Spirit, the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in him (Rom. 8:2–4; Gal. 5:16–18). The commandments are used in the distinctively Christian Scriptures as an instruction in righteousness (2 Tim. 3:16; Rom. 13:8–10; Eph. 6:1–3; 1 Cor. 9:8, 9).

3:25 Gr. *paidagogos*, “child-conductor.” “Among the Greeks and Romans, persons, for the most part slaves, who had it in charge to educate and give constant attendance upon boys till they came of age.”—*H. A. W. Meyer*. The argument does not turn upon the extent or nature of the pedagogue’s authority, but upon the fact that it wholly ceased when the “child” (4:1) became a “son” (4:1–6), when the *minor* became an *adult*. The adult “son” does voluntarily that which formerly he did in fear of the pedagogue. But even if he does not, it is no longer a question between the son and the pedagogue (the law), but between the son and his Father—God. (Cf. Heb. 12:5–10; 1 John 2:1, 2.)

Chapter 4

¹ Now I say, As long as the heir is a child, he differs nothing from a bondman, though he be lord of all; ² but he is under guardians and stewards until the period fixed by the father. ³ So we also, when we were children, were held in bondage under the principles of the world; ⁴ but when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, come of woman, come under law, ⁵ that he might redeem those under law, that we might receive sonship. ⁶ But because ye are sons, God has sent out the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father. ⁷ So thou art no longer bondman, but son; but if son, heir also through God.

⁸ But then indeed, not knowing God, ye were in bondage to those who by nature are not gods; ⁹ but now, knowing God, but rather being known by God, how do ye turn again to the weak and beggarly principles to which ye desire to be again anew in bondage? ¹⁰ Ye observe days and months and times and years. ¹¹ I am afraid of you, lest indeed I have laboured in vain as to you.

¹² Be as I *am*, for I also *am* as ye, brethren, I beseech you: ye have not at all wronged me. ¹³ But ye know that in weakness of the flesh I announced the glad tidings to you at the first; ¹⁴ and my temptation, which *was* in my flesh, ye did not slight nor reject with contempt; but ye received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus. ¹⁵ What then *was* your blessedness? for I bear you witness that, if possible, plucking out your own eyes ye would have given *them* to me. ¹⁶ So I have become your enemy in speaking the truth to you?

¹⁷ They are not rightly zealous after you, but desire to shut you out *from us*, that ye may be zealous after them. ¹⁸ But *it is* right to be zealous at all times in what is right, and not only when I am present with you—

¹⁹ my children, of whom I again travail in birth until Christ shall have been formed in you: ²⁰ and I should wish to be present with you now, and change my voice, for I am perplexed as to you.

²¹ Tell me, ye who are desirous of being under law, do ye not listen to the law? ²² For it is written that Abraham had two sons; one of the maid servant, and one of the free woman. ²³ But he *that was* of the maid servant was born according to flesh, and he *that was* of the free woman through the promise. ²⁴ Which things have an allegorical sense; for these are two covenants: one from mount Sinai, gendering to bondage, which is Hagar. ²⁵ For Hagar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to Jerusalem which *is* now, for she is in bondage with her children; ²⁶ but the Jerusalem above is free, which is our mother. ²⁷ For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break out and cry, thou that travailest not; because the children of the desolate are more numerous than *those* of her that has a husband. ²⁸ But ye, brethren, after the pattern

of Isaac, are children of promise. ²⁹ But as then he that was born according to flesh persecuted him *that was born* according to Spirit, so also *it is* now. ³⁰ But what says the scripture? Cast out the maid servant and her son; for the son of the maid servant shall not inherit with the son of the free woman. ³¹ So then, brethren, we are not maid servant's children, but *children* of the free woman.

4:19 The allegory (vs. 22–31) is addressed to justified but immature believers (cf. 1 Cor. 3:1, 2), who, under the influence of legalistic teachers, “desire to be under the law,” and has, therefore, no application to a sinner seeking justification. It raises and answers, for the fifth time in this Epistle, the question, Is the believer under the law? (Gal. 2:19–21; 3:1–3; 3:25, 26; 4:4–6; 4:9–31).

Chapter 5

¹ Christ has set us free in freedom; stand fast therefore, and be not held again in a yoke of bondage. ² Behold, I, Paul, say to you, that if ye are circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. ³ And I witness again to every man *who is* circumcised, that he is debtor to do the whole law. ⁴ Ye are deprived of all profit from the Christ as separated *from him*, as many as are justified by law; ye have fallen from grace. ⁵ For we, by *the* Spirit, on the principle of faith, await the hope of righteousness. ⁶ For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision has any force, nor uncircumcision; but faith working through love. ⁷ Ye ran well; who has stopped you that ye should not obey the truth? ⁸ The persuasibleness *is* not of him that calls you. ⁹ A little leaven leavens the whole lump. ¹⁰ I have confidence as to you in *the* Lord, that ye will have no other mind; and he that is troubling you shall bear the guilt *of it*, whosoever he may be. ¹¹ But I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why am I yet persecuted? Then the scandal of the cross has been done away. ¹² I would that they would even cut themselves off who throw you into confusion.

¹³ For ye have been called to liberty, brethren; only *do not turn* liberty into an opportunity to the flesh, but by love serve one another. ¹⁴ For the whole law is fulfilled in one word, in Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself; ¹⁵ but if ye bite and devour one another, see that ye are not consumed one of another. ¹⁶ But I say, Walk in *the* Spirit, and ye shall no way fulfil flesh's lust. ¹⁷ For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these things are opposed one to the other, that ye should not do those things which ye desire; ¹⁸ but if ye are led by the Spirit, ye are not under law. ¹⁹ Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are fornication, uncleanness, licentiousness, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, hatred, strifes, jealousies, angers, contentions, disputes, schools of opinion, ²¹ envyings, murders, drunkennesses, revels, and things like these; as to which I tell you beforehand, even as I also have said before, that they who do such things shall not inherit God's kingdom. ²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, fidelity, ²³ meekness, self-control: against such things there is no law. ²⁴ But they that *are* of the Christ have crucified the flesh with the passions and the lusts. ²⁵ If we live by the Spirit, let us walk also by the Spirit. ²⁶ Let us not become vain-glorious, provoking one another, envying one another.

5:22 Christian character is not mere moral or legal correctness, but the possession and manifestation of nine graces: love, joy, peace—character as an inward state; longsuffering, gentleness, goodness—character in expression toward man; faith, meekness, temperance—character in expression toward God. Taken together they present a moral portrait of Christ, and may be taken as the apostle's explanation of Gal. 2:20, “Not I, but Christ,” and as a definition of “fruit” in John 15:1–8. This character is possible because of the believer's vital union to Christ (John 15:5; 1 Cor. 12:12, 13), and is wholly the fruit of the Spirit in those believers who are yielded to Him (Gal. 5:22, 23).

Chapter 6

¹ Brethren, if even a man be taken in some fault, ye who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of meekness, considering thyself lest thou also be tempted. ² Bear one another's burdens, and thus fulfil the law of the Christ. ³ For if any man reputes himself to be something, being nothing, he deceives himself; ⁴ but let each prove his own work, and then he will have his boast in what belongs to himself alone, and not in what belongs to another. ⁵ For each shall bear his own burden. ⁶ Let him that is taught in the word communicate to him that teaches in all good things. ⁷ Be not deceived: God is not mocked; for whatever a man shall sow, that also shall he reap. ⁸ For he that sows to his own flesh, shall reap corruption from the flesh; but he that sows to the Spirit, from the Spirit shall reap eternal life: ⁹ but let us not lose heart in doing good; for in due time, if we do not faint, we shall reap. ¹⁰ So then, as we have occasion, let us do good towards all, and specially towards those of the household of faith.

¹¹ See how long a letter I have written to you with my own hand. ¹² As many as desire to have a fair appearance in *the* flesh, these compel you to be circumcised, only that they may not be persecuted because of the cross of Christ. ¹³ For neither do they that are circumcised themselves keep the law; but they wish you to be circumcised, that they may boast in your flesh. ¹⁴ But far be it from me to boast save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom *the* world is crucified to me, and I to the world. ¹⁵ For *in Christ Jesus* neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision; but new creation. ¹⁶ And as many as shall walk by this rule, peace upon them and mercy, and upon the Israel of God. ¹⁷ For the rest let no one trouble me, for I bear in my body the brands of the Lord Jesus. ¹⁸ The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with your spirit, brethren. Amen.

6:11 Gr. "*with how large letters ... mine own hand.*" The apostle was, it appears from many considerations, afflicted with ophthalmia, a common disease in the East, to the point almost of total blindness (e.g. Gal. 4:13–15). Ordinarily, therefore, he dictated his letters. But now, having no amanuensis at hand, but urged by the spiritual danger of his dear Galatians, he writes, we cannot know with what pain and difficulty, with his own hand, in the "large letters" his darkened vision compelled him to use.