

# Galatians: Liberated For Life

The Alamo stands in San Antonio, Texas, as a monument symbolizing the spirit of resistance of a small group of determined fighters for Texan freedom and independence. In 1836, fewer than 200 Texan volunteers were holed up in a small Franciscan mission fighting an onslaught of over 4 000 Mexican troops. On February 24, twenty-four hours after the battle began, Colonel William B. Travis wrote these words:

*"I am besieged by a thousand or more of the Mexicans under Santa Anna. I have sustained a continual bombardment and cannonade for twenty four hours and have not lost a man. The enemy has demanded a surrender at discretion; otherwise the garrison are to be put to the sword if the fort is taken. I have answered the demand with a cannon shot, and our flag still waves proudly from the walls. I shall never surrender nor retreat. Then, I call on you in the name of liberty, of patriotism, and everything dear to the American character, to come to our aid with all dispatch. The enemy is receiving reinforcements daily and will no doubt increase to three or four thousand in four or five days. I am determined to sustain myself as long as possible and die like a soldier who never forgets what is due to his own honour and that of his country. Victory or death!"*

After a twelve day siege (February 23 - March 6, 1836), every fighting man perished under the onslaught of the Mexican attack. Among the fallen were Colonel Travis, James Bowie and the legendary Davy Crockett. Six weeks later, General Houston secured Texan freedom with the victory of San Jacinto. During the fighting, Colonel Sidney Sherman reportedly rallied his company of volunteers with the cry, "Remember the Alamo!"

The letter to Galatia is essentially Paul's impassioned plea for freedom from the onslaught of legalism and sin. False teachers, eager to win the approval of those around them, were attacking the very foundation of the gospel and Paul was not about to let fundamental commitment to Christ be altered without a fight. These Judaizers had been successful in swaying Peter and other believers and now were trying to persuade the Galatians that they needed -to observe the law, along with their faith, in order to be accepted by God. Paul's defence was based solely on his commitment to the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ (6:14). Like Colonel Travis, Paul saw no other option in the face of this conflict but to resist the onslaught of legalism that enslaves, so that "in the name of liberty," God's grace might be lived out.

Paul's plea is not unfamiliar to our ears. Charles Swindoll says, *"Be warned, there are grace-killers on the loose! To make matters worse, they are a well-organized, intimidating body of people who stop at nothing to keep you and me from enjoying the freedom that is rightfully ours to claim."* (Grace Awakening, p. xiv) One of the most significant attacks on the evangelical church in the last few decades is directed at the grace of God extended through Jesus Christ. Legalism and

libertinism have directed their attack and few stand to defend the grace stronghold. We need to hear Paul's impassioned plea and rally our cry, **"Remember the Cross!"**

The following chart may be helpful in understanding the organization of this letter of liberation.

Chapters 1 & 2	Chapters 3 & 4	Chapters 5 & 6
Vindication	Exposition	Application
Apologetic	Theological	Pragmatic
Personal	Doctrinal	Practical
Source of the Gospel	Defence of the Gospel	Application of the Gospel
Defence of Paul's Authority	Defence of Justification by Faith	Defence of Christian Liberty

<p>As we did with the book of James, we would like to encourage memorization of parts of Galatians. No specific time will be spent on this during the Bible Study; it is strictly a personal matter (although it is always wise to have an accountability partner when memorizing). There are two options, depending upon your own desire:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Memorize one new verse per chapter</li> <li>2. Memorize all of Galatians 5.</li> </ol>	<p>The following notations appear in the study guide,</p> <p>v. - verse (singular)  vv. - verses (plural)  cf. - confer; compare with  f. - the immediately following verse  ff. - the following verses</p>
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# Study #1 Corruption of the Gospel

## Galatians 1

1. What does Paul appeal to in verses one and two that indicates he will be developing an argument throughout Galatians and he is well-supported in his position?
2. In brief terms, what other gospel were these Galatians following? (see Acts 15:1-11) Why is it really no gospel at all (v. 7)?
3. In what way is Paul's use of the word, "*desert*", significant in relation to following a different gospel? How were these judaizers, deserting God?
4. What background did the individuals who were throwing them into confusion come from?
  - How does false teaching arise in the Church? (v. 10 may be a starting point, but look at other scripture references as well- 1 Timothy 6:3-5; Acts 20:28-31).
5. How is their "gospel" perverted (distorted in the NASB)?
6. Mark down all references to the grace of God, the gospel and Christ's work on the cross. Why is it mentioned so significantly in this opening chapter?
7. What is the significance of Paul's twofold emphasis in verses eight and nine? (gospel that was preached and the gospel which was received)
8. What does Paul mean in verses eight and nine when he says regarding the false teachers, "*Let them be eternally condemned!*" (accursed in the NASB & NKJV)?
9. What does Paul say about the source of the gospel he preaches? (vv. 11-12)

10. Why does Paul appeal to his zealous manner of life in Judaism? (vv. 13-15)

11. What do vv. 15-24 say about the source of Paul's gospel? How does this chapter prepare us for the argument Paul will develop in the rest of the book?

12. In what ways have people tried to pervert the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ? What kinds of things are often added to faith as a condition of salvation in our contemporary understanding?

13. In five sentences or less, write out the basic truth of the gospel in the clearest terms you can. Read them to one another and discuss potential ambiguity or error.

## Study #2 Liberty Lived Out

### Galatians 2:1-10

1. According to verse two, what was Paul's threefold motivation for going to Jerusalem?
2. What revelation was Paul responding to? (Agabus' in Acts 11:27-30 or a direct revelation similar to the one in Acts 22:17-21)
3. What do you know about Barnabas and Titus? Why is each man significant in Paul's visit to Jerusalem and the message he is developing here?
4. Why do you suppose Paul took up this matter with the leaders of the Jerusalem church privately?
5. Paul probably did not consider his task of preaching to be in vain. How do we know that?
6. What does Paul mean when he says, *"for fear that I was running or had run my race in vain?"*
7. What do we learn about the character and motivation of the *"false brothers?"*
8. How does the gospel that the Judaizers were preaching lead again to slavery? (v. 4)
9. In verse two, Paul talks about those who seemed to be leaders; in verse 6 he mentions those who seemed to be important; and in verse 9 he named James, Peter and John as those reputed to be pillars. Is Paul being derogatory about the Jerusalem church leaders? How can this be explained in light of Paul's purpose in this passage - to emphasize his unity with the apostles?

10. How do Peter and Paul's commissions differ? How are they similar?

11. What is signified by the "*right hand of fellowship*?" Why is it so important?

12. How does Paul's visit to Jerusalem indicate his eagerness stated in verse ten? (see Acts 11:28-30). Why was concern for the poor deemed to be so important?

13. This passage introduces the understanding that the Judaizers were adding circumcision to grace in order to gain God's acceptance. Titus did not bow down to that pressure and Paul commends his freedom. Suggest some contemporary alternatives similar to circumcision and discuss them.

## Study #3 Yearn to Discern Galatians 2:11-21

1. Read Acts 10:9-47. What was God teaching Peter in this passage? List any allusions to salvation for the Gentiles in the Acts passage? What was their requirement for salvation?
2. In light of the lesson Peter learned, why is it significant that Paul had to correct him? How did Peter respond to the rebuke? (see Acts 15:5-11)
3. What can we learn about confronting false teaching from Paul's example? (Galatians 2:11-14) What can we learn from Peter about being confronted?
4. What led Peter give up his freedom in Christ?
5. What underlying motivation encouraged the Judaizers to promote circumcision? (2:13 cf. 4:17)
6. What is justification? (2:15-17 & Romans 3:20 - 4:25)
7. According to Galatians and Romans, on what grounds are we justified?
8. What is the benefit of the law? What is death to the law? (v. 19)

9. What does it mean to be crucified with Christ? (v. 20)

10. In what way does this passage highlight the importance of the Lord's Supper in our effort to live for Christ?

11. In what way were the Judaizers "*setting aside the grace of God*"? (v. 21 cf. 1:6; 2:11-12, 3:1) Why is this a human tendency?

12. In what way does legalism discredit the grace of God in Jesus Christ? (v. 21)

## Study #4 The Seductive Curse Galatians 3:1-14

1. From your own understanding, define legalism.
2. How was Christ "*portrayed as crucified*" to the Galatians? (Acts 13:38-39; 14:26-28)
3. What is Paul implying in his use of "*bewitched*"? (see also 1:7)
4. What message is Paul trying to convey in his list of rhetorical questions from verses one to five?
5. What do verses three and four say about legalism and its effect?
6. How was the gospel announced to Abraham? What was his reaction? (see Genesis 15:1-6)
7. What two things are opposite of each other in this passage? (especially v.11)
8. What is meant by the quotation in verse twelve, "*The man who does these things will live by them.*" (see also Leviticus 18:5 and Romans 10:5)

9. How has the curse been dealt with?

10. Compare this paragraph (vv. 6-9) with Romans 4:9-12 and James 2:21 -26. How can these passages be reconciled with one another?

11. What is so bewitching about legalism? Based on what Paul has done here, what can we do to avoid its seduction?

## Study #5 The Promised Inheritance Galatians 3:15-29

1. Charles Swindoll titles this portion, "*Three men and a promise.*" What three men are alluded to and what does each stand for?

2. Develop your understanding of these Four words as revealed in Galatians:

Promise

Inheritance

Covenant

Seed

3. What is the relationship between the promise and the law?

4. What is the purpose of the law? (vv. 19-25 cf. Romans 5:20-21)

5. In what way did the law imprison us? (vv. 22-23)

6. Some have understood 3:25 to imply that we no longer have to worry about any Old Testament commandments. Is that what Paul is saying?

7. Why is it significant that Paul uses the word all two times in verses 26-27?

8. How are people baptized into Christ?

9. Some people have used Galatians 3:28 to imply that there are no differences between the sexes and that any role distinctions have been absolved through faith in Christ?

Looking at the context, why is this a misunderstanding of that verse? What is Paul saying in verse 28?

10. What is the inheritance that believers have become heirs to?

## Study #6 From a slave to a son Galatians 4:1-20

1. Emotionally, what images are conjured as we understand moving from slavery to being a son?
2. How is a child like a slave? How is he unlike a slave?
3. What two things propagated slavery in these first three verses?
4. In what way does verse 4 draw us back to the whole understanding of the promise?
5. The NASB and NKJV translate the last phrase of verse five, "*the we might receive the adoption as sons.*" The NIV implies sonship in its statement, "*full rights as sons.*"

What is the difference between adoption as sons and sonship?

What are some of the "*full rights as sons?*" (v. 7)

6. What is so significant about our privilege as a child of God to address Him, as Christ did, "*Abba*"? How much are we aware of this intimate relationship when we talk to God in prayer? How can it be nurtured?
7. What words and phrases in verses 8-20 indicate the depth of Paul's passion about the possible lapse into legalism by the Galatians? Why do you suppose he is so concerned?
8. What is the distinction between knowing God and being known by Him? (v. 8)

9. What special events would Paul be referring to in verse 10? Why is that like being enslaved all over again?
10. How did the Galatians first respond to Paul and his message? What is implied about their attitude now? (vv. 14-16)
11. What implicit rebuke does verse 16 contain about accepting criticism?
12. Why is Paul perplexed? What is his tone that he would like to change?
13. Considering the theme of this study guide, *Liberated for Life*, how does sonship affect our ability to live by the Spirit in God's freedom?



5. Why do Christians allow themselves to be enslaved by the law? What spiritual weakness is evident in the legalistic Christian?

6. Which group is Paul saying the Judaizers belong to?

7. What is the difference between liberty and licence?

Does Paul's teaching on Christian freedom open the door to a "*do-as-you-please*" attitude?

Suggest possible verses to help support your argument?

8. Summarize Paul's argument in chapter three and four in about 2-3 sentences.

## Study #8 Freedom's Temptations Galatians 5:1-15

1. Describe the freedom Paul envisions when he reminds us that Christ has set us free.
2. How can we ensure we stand firm and not be re-burdened by the possibility of slavery?
3. What did Paul say would happen if these Galatians did in fact get circumcised? (vv. 2-4)
4. In Galatians, what does it mean to fall away from grace? (v. 4)
5. What two things are connected to faith in verses five and six?

Why is faith so critical in this context?

6. In 5:7, Paul asks who is responsible for this stumble in their faith. He also alluded to this a number of other times. (1:7; 3:1; 4:17; 5:9-10). Why do you think Paul is mentioning this so often and perhaps reminding them of the influence they are under?
7. How is legalism contagious? (v. 9)
8. What does verse eleven say about those who seek to uphold the truth? What is the offence of the cross?

9. Paul's comment regarding castration in verse twelve seems very harsh. Reconcile it with what Paul says in the following three verses. Is he being hypocritical?

10. Other than the temptation to limit freedom (vv. 1 -12), what other temptations come to those who live in freedom? (v. 13)

What incorrect thinking is involved in succumbing to that temptation that Paul corrects in the last half of verse 13 and verse 14?

11. What was possibly happening among the Galatians that Paul had to address in verse 15?

12. Given everything we've studied so far in Galatians, how critical is that we uphold our Christian freedom? What price might we have to pay?

13. What is the purpose of Christian freedom?

# Study #9 The Liberated Life

## Galatians 5:16-25

1. How is life by the Spirit tied to Christian freedom? (see 5:16 &18)

What is life in the Spirit?

How is it lived?

2. How can Paul make the claim that if we live by the Spirit, we won't gratify our sinful natures? (v. 17)

3. Five times the NIV translates the text to say "*sinful nature*." (vv. 13, 16, 17, 19 and 24) Other translations use the word "*flesh*."  
How is our sinful nature so much a part of our physical (flesh) bodies?

4. Notice four different divisions in the list of sinful acts, (hint: the first three are sexual in nature) Make sure that each act is understood and defined.

5. Is this an exhaustive list or a sampling? (v. 21) \_\_\_\_\_ Suggest others.

6. Is Paul saying that this list is indicative of the world or the carnal Christian? (vv. 16-17)

7. On the surface, Paul's warning in verse 21 seems to say that anyone who commits these sinful acts will not go to heaven. Why is that a theological problem? Suggest a more correct understanding.

8. What is the significance of the fruit of the Spirit as opposed to the acts of the sinful nature?
  
9. How do each of the spiritual fruit affect us in relationships with other people?
  
10. What does Paul mean when he says, "*Against such things there is no law.*" ?
  
11. Practically speaking, how do we act upon the fact that our sinful nature has been crucified?
  
12. How can we maintain our spiritual walk in the context of this passage?
  
13. Read through Paul's comments in Romans 6:1-14 and suggest any further teaching about how our freedom as believers enables us to walk in step with the Spirit.

## Study #10 Strengthening the Family

### Galatians 5:26 - 6:10

1. After Paul's concern with the individual spiritual walk of the believer, he turns his attention to how that spiritual life is nurtured in the body of believers. In 5:26, Paul brings up three things that are characteristic of the sinful nature. How does conceit lead to provocation and envy?

2. What is our responsibility if we see our brother sinning?

How is this to be done? (cf. Matthew 18:15-17)

3. What qualifies us to get involved?

What is Paul's warning to those who seek to restore their brother?

4. If scripture admonishes us to confront our fellow Christians about sin, what does that say about how we should react when we are approached about sin in our lives?

How would a Spiritually fruitful person react?

5. What law of Christ is fulfilled by carrying others' burdens? (it is referenced in chapter five)

6. Why does Paul address the need to appropriately assess oneself in relation to burden-bearing?

7. Explain the tension created between verse two and verse five.

What is Paul meaning in this seeming dichotomy?

8. What is verse six asking us to do?

How does this help in relation to body growth?

9. When we think that we can sow and not reap, how is that indicative of us being deceived?

In what way is that person mocking God?

10. The law of sowing and reaping in agriculture says that we reap what we sow, more than we sow and later than we sow. Apply those three principles to sowing both in the Spirit and in the flesh.

11. The words destruction and eternal life are not synonymous in this passage with hell and heaven. What is Paul referring to in the use of these words?

12. What motivation is given to sow that which is good?

How does this whole passage from verse 7 through 9 relate to burden bearing in the body of Christ?

13. Why is there a greater obligation to believers? (v. 10)

## Study #11 A Marked Man Galatians 6:11-18

1. Why did Paul specifically mention that he was the one writing the letter? (this statement has led many to believe that Paul's thorn in the flesh was poor eyesight)
2. How is legalism related to pride and boasting? (vv. 11-12 cf. 1:10 and 4:17)
3. What other indication throughout the book of Galatians back up Paul's statement that he desired to boast only in the cross of Christ.
4. Practically speaking, how can we nurture this incredible focus on the cross?
5. In what way is the world crucified to Paul and Paul to the world?
6. Paul said that the only thing that counts is a new creation. What does it count for?
7. Who is meant in the phrase, "the Israel of God?" Why do you suppose Paul singled them out in his blessing?
8. In what way was Paul a marked man? Why is this significant to his letter to the Galatians?

9. In Galatians, Paul uniquely ends his salutation with a tender commendation to them as brothers. How would this encourage an appropriate response?

The following questions are general in their review of the book of Galatians:

10. What verse contains the climax of Paul's argument in the book of Galatians?

11. What verse is the key verse in the whole letter?

12. Some have read Galatians (and Romans and 2 Corinthians) and have concluded that Paul is very self-focused in his writing. How can we answer that concern?

13. What part of Paul's teaching did you find to be new or fresh (something you hadn't realized fully before)?

14. What did you find most rebuking or challenging in your own spiritual life?

15. In what ways do you struggle with your freedom as a believer? How free are you?