

About this book...

Letters to Brian and Daniel are 24 studies in Paul's Epistle to the Galatians. They have been designed for teenagers who want to understand some of the great truths of the Bible and who want to know how to apply them in every-day life. They have been written in a simple style, but with the deliberate intention of avoiding a sentimental, moralistic approach which would cloud the real issues that the Epistle is teaching. The author's desire is that these studies will help young Christians get serious about studying their Bible, and not be put off when the going gets tough!

For more than 30 years John Dunn has been designing and selling trains for a living. He has also had a consistent ministry over that same length of time in teaching and preaching the Gospel in churches and conferences, as well as in private homes. This has been predominantly in the context of his local congregation, and has centred very much on teenagers and young adults. He is the author of several engineering publications, as well as numerous study notes and commentaries on the Scriptures. He is a member of St Paul's Anglican Church at Chatswood in Sydney.



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Letters to Brian & Daniel



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TWENTY-FOUR STUDIES IN GALATIANS

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PREFACE

GALATIANS is a fabulous New Testament book to study, and really relevant for today. I first read it when I was a kid at school (although it didn't mean much to me then). But now I'm referring to it constantly, and I keep re-reading its message so that I can be regularly reminded of its great teaching.

These twenty-four studies were originally written as letters to two young teenage friends of mine, as an encouragement to them in their daily study of the Scriptures. The reason I did it was because I'd been pretty disappointed by the Bible study notes currently available for their age group, and so decided to have a go at writing some myself.

If you are serious about wanting to study this part of God's Word, then I would encourage you to set aside a regular time to use these notes (preferably each day), and try to get hold of what the great Apostle Paul was saying in his Letter to the Christians at Galatia. I'm sure, if you really get stuck into it, you'll discover that it could have been written yesterday—just for you! Anyway, don't give up if the going gets a bit tough. Keep at it! You'll be richly

rewarded as your understanding grows of God's great grace and love for you, as seen through this letter.

Don't miss the value of memorising the verses I've listed in some of the studies. Make the effort to learn them off by heart. You can do it if you really try!

If you want to get the maximum benefit from the notes, then you should look up the references as they are listed in each study. (For those who are not familiar with Bible references, these notes use the following abbreviations. **John 3:16 means:** The Gospel of John, chapter three, verse sixteen. **1 Peter 2:24-25 means:** The first of Peter's two letters, chapter two, verses twenty-four and twenty-five.) It's also a good idea to read the basic section of Galatians in the *Revised Standard Version* of the Bible (*RSV*), and then in one of the modern versions, such as *Good News for Modern Man*.

Because ideas and questions will come into your mind as you study, keep a little notebook handy so that you can write these down. I know it sounds a bit like school, but do it anyway!

Hey, don't forget to answer the questions!

John Dunn
Chatswood, 1988

1

READ GALATIANS 1:1-5

This book was written by a man named Paul, who (at one time) hated anyone who believed in Jesus Christ. He had been in a very influential position with the Jewish religious authorities, and spent all his time trying to wipe out the Christians.

Then one day, when he was on his way to a city named Damascus to round up the Christians there, he came face to face with the resurrected Jesus Christ. What a shock it was! He discovered that this 'dead' man, whom he hated so much, was actually the Son of God! He was instantly converted. His whole life changed dramatically.

When Paul became a Christian after being confronted by Jesus on the road to Damascus, he knew immediately that he had been chosen to preach the Gospel. It was not because some *man* chose him for the job, but because God Himself had sent him. The key message which he knew he had to preach was that **Jesus is Lord**.

He knew He was Lord, because when he was met by Jesus that day, he discovered that He had come back from

the dead! *He had defeated death*. And if He had defeated death, then He must have defeated Satan and sin and everything else that is evil.

He was so overwhelmed about discovering that Jesus was really God's Son and was Lord over everything that he couldn't stop telling everyone the good news! One of the places he preached was a region called GALATIA (now modern Turkey.)

In Galatia Paul spoke about Jesus THE LORD to everyone who would listen. Many did listen. Many didn't. However, a lot of people became Christians, and many little churches began to meet in the various villages and towns. (Of course, there weren't any Christian churches before Paul came along.) It was some years later that he wrote this letter to all these 'Churches of Galatia', and we will see later just why he had to write. Things were not going smoothly (just like many churches today!).

Just imagine there were no Christian churches in our country and that you had never heard of Jesus Christ, nor did you know anything about the true and living God. Then one day this man comes and visits your street, telling you this amazing story about the Son of God dying for the sin of all men, and how God raised Him up from the grave to prove that He is really Lord of Heaven and Earth.

As he is speaking to you, you suddenly realise that all that he is saying to you is actually true! Even though you can't quite explain it, you just *know* that what he is saying is real, and that somehow God has done something about your own sin through this man Jesus. As he speaks, you see that all of your sin and guilt is on that cross on which Jesus died. *You just know that it is all gone!* What an incredible discovery! Imagine having no sinful past to bug

you! Well, something a bit like that happened to those people in Galatia as they listened to Paul preach. Look now at **verses 3, 4 and 5**.

Firstly, Paul talks **about 'grace'**. What does he mean? Well, *all* genuine blessings in life come to us from God. They are His **gift** to us. They are always unmerited—unearned. He **favours** us with these unasked-for benefits. So here, in this verse, Paul is asking that the Galatian Christians might know more of God's *grace*—*more* of His unmerited favour and blessing.

Secondly, Paul talks about **'peace'**. Once again, all *genuine peace* comes from God. We are only ever at peace when we have **a conscience that is at rest**. A conscience that is tranquil. Such a peace as this can only come from a sure knowledge that our sins are forgiven and that God is no longer angry with us. The Gospel had brought this certainty to the Galatian Christians, and Paul is here wanting them to know it and to be living in it.

Notice that both 'grace' and 'peace' come from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. These twin blessings come *only* from God, through Jesus. That's why it's a fruitless waste of time to be trying to get satisfaction in life from any other source than God Himself.

Thirdly, in **verse 4** we are told that Jesus Christ gave Himself up (on the cross) in order to salvage us from our sins. Paul knew that Jesus was Lord, because He had died and risen again. He knew that sin and death and evil had been defeated! This means *your* sin and guilt has been taken by Jesus Christ and has been wiped out for ever.

Verse 4 adds: Jesus died so as to deliver us from the stranglehold that this present world system has over us. It is an *evil* influence, whether we recognise it or not. It is

headed up and master-minded by none other than Satan himself. He doesn't care what we do or how we live, so long as God is not in the picture. But to succeed, he must blind us to our true state, and keep us constantly 'under his thumb'. Only the Son of God can rescue us from that terrible servitude.

Verse 4 tells us that all of this has happened because it was the Father's desire and intention. He *planned* it all. He has sent His Son so that you might be forgiven and that you might be freed from the power and influence of this godless world in which we live.

What a fabulous thing to be forgiven our sins by God the Father! No wonder Paul thanks and praises God in **verse 5**. Glory to God! Praise to the Father! Thanks to the Lord Jesus Himself for what He has done!

QUESTIONS

1. What can you learn about Paul, before and after his conversion, from the following accounts? See Acts 9:1-22, and also Acts 22:4-16 and Acts 26:9-18.
2. What do you think it means to say 'Jesus is Lord'? Do you know that He is your Lord?
3. Try listing the ways in which God has favoured *you!* If you can't think of any, look up Matthew 5:45, and begin there. Then look up Acts 17:26-28, and work through implications of those statements!
4. What are some of the ways in which we try to get satisfaction in life apart from God?

5. Does the world have a stranglehold on you? Do you see the world as an *evil* influence on your life? What do the following verses tell you? John 8:31-47; 2 Corinthians 4:4; I John 5:19; 2:15-17.

PRAYER

Finish the study by thanking God personally for what He has done in bringing salvation to us through Jesus Christ. You might use verse 4 by substituting your own name and praying: '... who gave Himself for my sins to deliver *me* from the present evil age'. When you pray, address Him as FATHER. You are His son, His daughter. He loves you.

2

READ GALATIANS 1:6-17

Verses 6-9. There's trouble in the churches in Galatia. Some 'Christian' Jews have come along preaching a different message to that which the Galatians had first heard and believed from Paul. Basically, these people are saying that just to believe in Christ is not enough. You also have to do something. You have to observe certain regulations for God to be able to accept you as His. Faith in Christ alone is not enough! In other words, it is Christ *and* something else. (We will see in another study that the moment you add the 'and' after Christ, you are creating a 'law', a 'rule', a 'regulation', which completely contradicts and destroys that which Christ came to do for us.)

Paul says that this is *another gospel*. It is not the real thing. It's a perversion of the true Gospel. It's a counterfeit gospel and it's terribly dangerous. It's so dangerous that he says that if anyone comes preaching it, they deserve to be damned. They deserve to be cursed. These are very strong words, and we should not take lightly how serious a thing it is to listen to those who do not teach the truth of the Gospel.

Verses 10-17. Someone seems to have been telling the Galatian Christians that this Paul fellow wasn't so hot after all. In fact, they said that *their* message was better than *his!* Such a claim could easily start a fight, and often does these days. But Paul didn't write this letter to the Galatians just to prove that he was right. He wrote because he knew two very important things:

- (1) He had received his message directly from the Lord. God **revealed** this great Gospel to him. He certainly didn't think it up himself! He had the *authority* to speak as he did.
- (2) Any alternative message would destroy the Christians at Galatia. It would undermine the truth, and the churches there would end up in disastrous chaos. He had to warn them before it was too late.

Look at some of the amazing things Paul says about how he came to know and experience this Gospel concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. He says in **verse 11** that it is not man's gospel. In other words, it is not a message that has a human origin.

Then he says in **verse 12** that no other person told it to him, or taught it to him. To the contrary, he came by this message as a result of a direct **revelation** from (or of) Jesus Himself.

Something comes as a revelation to us when we see clearly that which we have never seen before, or that which perhaps we never even thought existed. It may come as a great surprise or as a great shock, depending on what it is. Certainly Paul got a terrible shock when he was confronted by Jesus on the road that day. It was a *revelation*

to him because he didn't believe that the man Jesus was the Son of God. In fact he had been murdering the Christians for believing and teaching that very thing, and he had thought he was doing God a favour! What a horrible shock to discover that Jesus really *was* the Messiah, the promised Saviour of the world. The point is: no-one could ever have convinced Paul by trying *to persuade* him that this was true. He probably would have had them killed for trying! But he came to see that it *was* true, only because God **revealed** it to him—in his case, by means of a powerful vision.

There is an important lesson here for us to learn. No man or woman, boy or girl, can ever come to know the Lord Jesus Christ unless God *reveals* Him to them. I guess very few people have a vision like Paul did, but everyone must have the truth come to them as a direct revelation from God. *It is impossible to know God otherwise.* Look up 1 Corinthians 2:14, and read it in several versions to get the meaning.

Before anyone becomes a Christian, God's truth is stupid to them. It makes no sense at all. But the moment God reveals to them the reality of His truth, they see it! 'Of course! Why couldn't I see it before?' They could not see it, because God had not opened their eyes to see.

Make it a habit in your life to ask God to reveal His truth to you every time you come to read the Scriptures or listen to a Bible study or a sermon. Never think that you have an inbuilt ability to understand spiritual things, or things concerning the Living God. You do not. No human being has. We will always need to have the Lord show us the meaning of His Word—to show us the truth as it really is. What a disastrous mistake Paul made when he thought

he could work out for himself what was right concerning those stupid Christians. God had to reveal to him the truth, and the same must happen to each of us. Not just once, but day after day, right through our life.

QUESTIONS

1. What are some of the things that people want to add on to simple faith in Jesus Christ? What is wrong with saying, 'You must believe in Jesus *and...*'?
2. How do you know that what you believe is the truth? How can you be sure that your faith is correct and that you have not fallen into the trap of believing in Christ and something extra? Look up the following verses, and try to work out what they tell you about being sure of what you believe. Write down your answers, and see if you can think of any other parts of the Bible that confirm your discoveries. John 7:17; 8:31-32; 16:13; I John 2:26-27.
3. What does it mean when it says that Paul had a revelation? Can you think of some experience in your life on which you can look back and say, 'That was a revelation to me when I saw that; or when I discovered that; or when that thing happened'?
4. How important do you think it is that God reveal Himself to you? Has God revealed Himself to you in some way? If not, then ask Him to make Christ real to you as your Lord and Saviour.

PRAYER

Thank the Lord for what He has revealed to you from His Word in this study. Ask Him to go on revealing His truth to you as you continue to read the Scriptures.

3.

READ GALATIANS 1:11-24

In verses 13 and 14, Paul talks about his great zeal in religious matters prior to his coming to faith in Christ. He was very well known. Everyone had heard about him—*especially the Christians!* His one ambition in life was to persecute the church of God and try to destroy it.

It must be understood that Paul was a very religious man. He was very sincere. He was highly educated. He outshone many of his Jewish friends in his zeal for God. The Jewish leaders greatly respected him. The trouble was: he was *wrong!* He did not know the truth. He did not **know** God. He only knew **about** Him. He made the fatal mistake of thinking the two were one and the same. He thought that knowing about God was the same as knowing Him.

You might stop and ask yourself if you really *know* God, or do you only know *about* Him? Lots of people in the world today, especially religious people, have made the same blunder as Paul. Their belief in God is an intellectual one. It is a theoretical faith, not a living, personal one.

Such a belief in God is utterly useless, as Paul-discovered. (Many years later, Paul wrote about his zealous fellow Jews who had still not come to faith in Christ. Read about it in Romans 10:1-4.)

Verses 15 and 16 go on to tell us what happened. On the road to Damascus (Acts 9) Paul came face to face with Jesus Christ. That encounter had much more to it than meets the eye! It immediately involved Paul in having to face the fact that he was wrong! (Probably he had known for a long time that he was wrong, but was too proud to admit it. See Acts 26: 14.)

Suddenly the reality of Christ burst in upon him. The Son of God was revealed to him, and at the same time in him. Within the next few days he had become a new person. He knew that his sins were forgiven and he had received the gift of the Holy Spirit (see Acts 22:15 and Acts 9:17).

From these two verses, note again that it was God who revealed Himself to Paul. But also notice another important truth. God *chose* Paul before he was even born! Look at the way he puts it in **verse 15**:

God ‘set me apart before I was born’;

God ‘called me through his grace’;

God ‘was pleased to reveal his Son in me’.

This is true for every believer. Every Christian has been set apart by God before birth, was called by Him at the time, and has had Christ revealed to him or her. This should be a fantastic encouragement to us! God does it all! The truth is, if He didn’t do it all, we’d never come to faith in Christ. If it were not for the fact that God chooses us, then we would never come to know Him. Left to

ourselves *we* would never choose *Him*. Look at John 15: 16. Compare that with John 6:44.

In the last part of this section of Galatians chapter 1, **verses 16 to 24**, Paul tells us that he didn’t just sit around when he discovered what the truth was. He began to preach it immediately.

Some people think that Paul went off into Arabia to sort it all out! I don’t think so. (Look at **verses 17 and 18**. It certainly says he went to Arabia, but was soon back in Damascus. Then, three years later, he went to Jerusalem for fifteen days to see Peter and James. See **verses 18 and 19**.)

He knew only too well what had happened to him, and he began to tell everyone. He couldn’t *but* tell the good news! So much so, that people were baffled by the fact that this one who had once tried to destroy every Christian he came upon, was now preaching *their* Gospel—the Gospel of faith in Jesus Christ (see **verse 23**). People who knew Paul personally must have been staggered by the change in his life.

We’ve already seen that Paul knew he had been called to preach the Gospel to the non-Jews. He set about doing that immediately. This work was in Asia Minor, and it was not until fourteen years later that he returned to Jerusalem once again (see Galatians 2:1).

QUESTIONS

1. Look up Acts 8:3, 9:1-2, 9:21 and 22:3-5, to see how anxious Paul was to persecute the Christians. (Paul is the Greek name for Saul.)

2. Do you think it is possible for someone today to be very zealous and very religious and very sincere about God—and yet be wrong? What great mistake might they have made?
3. Read Jeremiah 1:4-5, and work out what the writer is saying and how it relates to this passage. (If you have time, read Psalm 139:13-16 .)
4. If you really believe in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour, are you anxious to tell others about Him? Look at Romans 1:16, 2 Timothy 1:8, 12, and Luke 9:26.

PRAYER

If you are a Christian, then thank your Heavenly Father that He has chosen you and revealed Himself to you. Thank Him for the testimony of Paul, and ask that you might be obedient, just as he was.

Ask that He might go on revealing Himself to you through the Scriptures, and that He will give you ears to hear and eyes to see the truth. Thank Him for the assurance that He has chosen you to come to know Him, and that He will go on revealing the truth to you as you are obedient to what He has already shown you.

Thank Him that He will safeguard you from straying from the true Gospel, and that He will give you wisdom to work out what is right and wrong when other people tell you things about Him, and about how to live as a Christian, *which may not be the real truth*. Look to your

Heavenly Father every moment of every day for His Spirit to lead and guide you along the right path. Ask Him to help you understand that you don't have the ability to walk that path without His wisdom to lead you.

4.

READ GALATIANS 2:1-10

Paul had been preaching the Gospel for many years by the time he wrote this letter to the Galatians. (See if you can work out approximately how long.) He tells us in this passage that at one stage he went back to Jerusalem to meet up with all the great Christian leaders there—Peter and James and John. He had received a great welcome from them as he recounted all his experiences in the preaching of the Gospel to the non-Jews in Asia Minor. He even brought a non-Jew with him—Titus—and they welcomed him also. However, there were others who gave him a very cool reception. In fact they did all they could to oppose his teaching and his authority.

To us today all this seems a bit remote. It doesn't seem to have any relevance to us in the twentieth century. Suppose Paul came back to your town, and told you he had been very excited about the results of his preaching to the people in another country, in a culture quite different from your own. In fact he had brought a convert with him so that you could meet him and share with him, and he

with you. Well, you had to admit that his *green* hair took time to get used to, but basically he was quite a fine fellow. However, he had some very strange habits. There were things that he did which you found very hard to accept. And there were lots of things that were 'normal' to you which he never did!

This is a bit like the problem some of the Christian Jews had in accepting non-Jews as believers. The Jews were used to rules and regulations, whereas these converts of Paul's were ignorant of such things. They just believed in Jesus. They understood that He was all that was necessary for their salvation. They had a beautiful freedom in just knowing that God accepted them as they were, because of what Jesus had done for them, and they loved Him deeply as a result. And what's more, they were concerned to obey Him and live clean lives.

In verse 4, Paul talks about these troublesome Jews as 'false brethren'. He says they came along to 'spy out our freedom', in order to find a way to bring Paul and his friends into line. They wanted Paul and Titus to conform. They wanted them to be *like them*, and do things *their way*. They wanted the non-Jewish Christians to observe certain distinctly 'Jewish' rules and regulations.

At the end of verse 4, Paul says this action would be like bringing them into bondage. It would rob them of their freedom in Christ. Paul says in the following verses that he didn't give in to them for one moment! He refused to allow anything to be added to faith in Christ. He would not tolerate any teaching which required a person to believe in Jesus *and* have to do certain other things as well, in order to be classed as a genuine Christian.

Stop and think for a moment about the sorts of things

people say to us today which are similar to the problem Paul faced in Galatia. What are some of the ‘rules’ that some churches have for Christians? What are some of the things that certain denominations teach as being *necessary* for a person to do or believe, if they are to be ‘real’ Christians? Are these modern-day ‘laws’ really any different to those ‘laws’ which Paul refers to here?

Can you see that the same serious error which had crept into the churches in Galatia is very much in the Christian Church today? It might be dressed up in a different way, but it is the same subtle teaching. It says: *‘Christ alone is not enough.’*

If a church, or a person, or a group teaches that you have to live in a certain way, or believe certain things, or observe certain rules *in order to be a real Christian—how* can you decide whether this is good advice, or is in fact something that may undermine your faith and ‘rob you of your freedom’?

If you think these questions are too hard to understand, or are too difficult for you to find the answers, don’t panic! Gradually it will become clear. Just remember, faith in the Lord Jesus is a very simple thing. It is trusting God to solve the problem of your sin. It is refusing to rely on yourself for a solution. It is living each day with an awareness that although we do not deserve anything but God’s judgement because of our guilt and sin and failure, HE HAS DONE SOMETHING ABOUT IT THROUGH THE LORD JESUS CHRIST! *That is our freedom* just knowing this and trusting Him day by day.

It is this very freedom which Paul was so anxious to defend lest it be polluted and tainted with error. That’s why in verse 5 he says that he did not give in to these

people for one second, *‘that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you’*;

QUESTIONS

1. What do you think is wrong with someone saying that faith in Christ alone is not enough? Can you work out what the real issue is? Can you find other verses of Scripture which help to show why it is so serious and dangerous? When someone says such a thing, what does it tell you about their understanding of God and of His Son Jesus? Do you think they understand what God’s grace is all about? (What do you understand God’s grace to mean?)
2. What do you think Paul means when he says that wrong teaching could ‘rob you of your freedom in Christ’?
3. Is it important for Christians to have rules and regulations to govern their lives? How could these same rules and regulations become dangerous?
4. How should you relate to Christians who are different to yourself, but who clearly love the Lord just as you do?

PRAYER

Ask the Father to help you to be sure that your faith is in Jesus Christ *alone* for your salvation, and that you have

not added anything else to it. Ask Him to give you a love and acceptance of other believers who are different to you, but who, like you, are accepted by God only on the basis of what Jesus Christ has done for you on that cross. Thank the Lord for Paul's determination that the Gospel should not become tainted with error, and ask Him to enable you to so know it and share it that others will receive it from you as the 'truth of the gospel'.

5.

READ GALATIANS 2:1-10

In the last study we saw that Paul had returned to Jerusalem after being away for fourteen years. There had been controversy over his return because he had brought one of his non-Jewish converts with him. Paul now goes on to tell about his meeting with the Christian leaders in Jerusalem.

In verses 6 to 10, Paul says that in his discussions with Peter and the other leaders they came to recognise the wonderful way in which God had used him in preaching to the non-Jews in Asia Minor. In fact, they all agreed that God had clearly called Paul to 'go to the Gentiles' (to the non-Jews), just as God had clearly given Peter and the others the task of preaching to the Jews (the 'circumcised', verse 9).

This was an important recognition of Paul's ministry on the part of Peter, James and John, the senior disciples who had been with Jesus. They could easily have dismissed Paul, since he had not been one of those who had travelled around Palestine with Jesus when He was alive.

As Jews, they could easily have been suspicious of Paul's claim to have had a vision of the risen Christ, and to have been commissioned *personally* by Him to preach the Gospel to the non-Jews. If they had rejected his claim, it would not have changed Paul's determination one bit! He would have gone on preaching, whatever. Their 'stamp of approval' (verse 6) did not 'add' anything to the authority that he had *already* received from the Lord Himself (see Acts 26: 16-18).

It's just possible, however, that had they *not* accepted his authority as being of God, then we might not have about half of the New Testament (Paul wrote 13 of the 27 books)!

In verse 10, they all agreed that they should remember, and support, those who were not as well off as they were. They were to help 'the poor'. This tiny statement about helping the poor is an indicator of the way the early Christians saw things. They knew that they had experienced God's wonderful blessing in their lives, and not only were they anxious to speak about it to others, but they were also keen to show something of God's love by helping, in practical ways, those who needed their help.

In an earlier study we talked about grace. Grace really means God's loving-kindness. It means that God is always setting out to do us good.

There is never a moment when He is not showering us with His blessings. He does it with no strings attached. In other words: He doesn't just bless us when we are doing good. He is gracious to us all the time. He is *always* doing *us* good.

Once we really begin to see this, then we will begin to shower others with love too. We will begin to be gracious

to others. It will be the overflow of His love to us. We will be demonstrating His love to others as a reflection of His love to us. In fact it will be His love *in* us.

Can you see that we will never really care for the needs of others if we do not first see how much God has cared for us? We will never want to share His truth with those who have not heard, if we are not sure of the truth ourselves. If we think that it finally depends on us 'performing' or 'doing' certain things before God is satisfied with us and can accept us, then we will never know if we have done enough! It will always depend on us. Such a belief is a contradiction of grace. It denies the fact that God does it all out of His unmerited love for us.

Down through the centuries, the purity of the Gospel has constantly been under threat. We're such proud creatures that we will always want to have a hand in our salvation somewhere. Our ego demands it. The moment we yield to that temptation, we have, in fact, polluted the Gospel. *We have denied grace.* That's what was happening in Galatia, and Paul knew that he had to do something about it very quickly. **THIS IS WHAT HE WAS FIGHTING FOR IN THE GALATIAN CHURCH.**

And it is the same great principle of grace that we must fight for today. You and I will constantly be tempted in a hundred different ways to think that we have to do something in order to be in God's favour, or at least to stay in His favour. Not so. We need only come back each day to the cross, and know that there He made an end of all our sin. We don't have to prove ourselves to God or to anyone else. He has done it all. He accepts us just as we are. Our salvation and our ongoing acceptance by Him is all of grace.

QUESTIONS

1. What is one practical way by which you can demonstrate to others that God has loved them through Jesus Christ?
2. What is God's grace? What does it mean to you personally? How can you know that you have experienced God's grace in your life?
3. What are some of the ways by which we deny God's grace? Why is this serious? What should we do when we discover this is happening?

PRAYER

Thank your Heavenly Father that your salvation is entirely of His grace, and that you did not have any part in it. It was not up to you to do anything or to achieve some great goal, or to have to 'perform' in some way in order for Him to accept you. Nor was it because you made some 'decision' or 'commitment'.

Ask Him for wisdom to understand the passages we are studying, and that He will help you to see the dangers that are around us today, when certain people want us to fit in with the way they do things, as if that were necessary in order to be a real Christian.

Praise Him that He gives us the Holy Spirit to guide us in all these things. Ask Him to lead you more and more into His ways of love, so that you may all the more be able to show that love to others, especially those you know best (family, friends, and relatives).

6.

READ GALATIANS 2:11-14

In verses 11 to 14, Paul describes a particular incident that occurred between himself and Peter (or Cephas). Peter was, of course, one of the chief followers of Jesus, and was virtually head of the Church in Jerusalem in Paul's day. Well, the incident was an unpleasant affair. They had a very strong difference of opinion. Some might call it an argument, but it was more like a confrontation.

Paul saw that something which Peter had done was very wrong, and was threatening to deeply divide the young Church. Peter, for his part, did not seem to have realised the seriousness of his action. It was absolutely necessary therefore that Paul confront him publicly on the issue. Paul, as we saw in our previous studies, was very anxious to ensure that the truth of the Gospel not be undermined, or in any way compromised. If, in this instance, it meant taking on the great Peter, then that's what he would do!

Remember, we are talking about Paul and Peter, two of the foremost of Jesus' followers, *disagreeing* about a fundamental issue. Paul knew that if this was not Cleared

up immediately, the error would flood into the Church and go right down through history.

Well, the events went something like this. Peter was a Jew. Most of Paul's converts were Gentiles (non-Jews). Peter knew only too well that God accepted non-Jews just as freely as He accepted His own race. We know this from the record of Peter's experience (recorded in Acts 10 and 11), when God showed him that he was to preach the Gospel to a Gentile by the name of Cornelius. If you read the story, you will see that Peter had a lot of trouble getting used to the idea! After this experience, Peter's conclusion was: 'Truly I perceive that God shows no partiality...' God doesn't have favourites. In other words, God does not make the distinction between races and cultures as we

On this occasion, which Paul speaks of, Peter had been associating with a group of Gentile Christians and had been enjoying fellowship with them, when suddenly he withdrew from them. Apparently he did this because a group of men had come who belonged to the 'circumcision party'—that group of Jews who taught that faith in Jesus was not enough, and that anyone who wanted to be a Christian had to go through a Jewish ritual in order to be classed as a true believer.

Now of course the Gentiles Peter was with at the time had not been through this ritual. So, rather than being embarrassed by being seen with these non-Jews, Peter withdrew from them—he stopped associating with them.

In verse 12, Paul says that Peter 'feared the circumcision party'. In other words, Peter had come to place more importance on his relationship to a group than on standing firm for the truth of the Gospel.

In **verse 13**, Paul says that in this attitude Peter 'acted insincerely'. And, if that were not enough, his stand influenced many of the other Jewish Christians, so that they followed his example and withdrew from the Gentile Christians also.

Stop for a moment and think about this. This same attitude exists today in our churches. Some say you have to be baptised in a particular way, otherwise you haven't been 'done' properly, Others insist that you worship in a particular way, or dress according to a certain style or code. Others say you must go through their particular ritual if you are to be counted as part of their fellowship.

The principle is the same as that which Paul denounced in Peter and his friends. See verse 14. 'They were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel.' The same terrible error that Peter made, we make today when we insist that other believers conform to our group's way of going about things. In so doing, we have lost sight of the fundamental issue: **we belong first and foremost to Christ**. Our salvation depends entirely upon Him and His grace. and not on the observance of any rituals, or in conforming to someone's set of standards or rules or laws.

Read what Paul says to Peter in the last part of **verse 14**. Peter was guilty of hypocrisy and of having a double standard.

Take great care that you do not fall into the same fatal trap! It is so subtle and can happen so easily. Perhaps you might stop right now and think of the ways in which this could happen to you—at home, at school. or in your church and what your attitude and belief should be in order to avoid it.

QUESTIONS

1. Is the truth of the Gospel more important to you than your relationship to your friends or your group? Are you sometimes embarrassed by what you believe to be the truth? How do you resolve this?
2. What does it mean to be 'straightforward about the truth of the Gospel'? How can you avoid 'acting insincerely' in your relationship with other Christians, as Peter did?
3. Can you think of any way in which your life displays double standards? What should you do about it?
4. If you were to live out each day the principle 'I belong first and foremost to Christ', would this alter any of your present activities and relationships? In what way would they change?

PRAYER

'Father, forgive us when we have been hypocrites and have had a double standard. Help us to see that our foremost responsibility is to be faithful to Christ. Enable us to see that our salvation is entirely of Your grace, and that all other believers have been accepted by You in exactly the same way—no matter what *we* may think of them. 'Help us to see, too, that Christians sometimes disagree. May we have wisdom to discern when a disagree-

ment is due to lack of love and acceptance, and when it is *necessary* in order to remain faithful to the truth.'

7.

READ GALATIANS 2:15-21

In this section Paul tells us what the basis is for God's acceptance of us as sinners. He talks a lot about law. He talks about 'works of the law'. He talks about being 'justified', and he talks about having 'died to the law'. He talks about having been 'crucified with Christ'.

These expressions may seem hard to understand, but I want you to think and pray through these verses very carefully, because they are saying something that is important for you to grasp. In this, and the next study, we will look at each of these truths, one at a time.

Firstly, what is law? A law is a rule or a code by which we can measure whether or not something else conforms. Recently I visited Greenwich (in London) and saw the zero meridian from which all the world's time is measured. That's a law. You have probably used a ruler many times to draw a straight line or to measure something. That's a law. On the road, drivers are expected to keep their car between the marked lines. That's a law. Without those lines it would be very difficult to drive in a straight line on

a very wide road. Cars would be all over the place! Just imagine the chaos! Well, those lines are a law, and a very helpful one at that.

Now, when it comes to moral issues, there are laws. All of us have laws about what is right and what is wrong. You had them in your games when you were young. The trouble was, your playmates had laws too, and they were not always the same as yours!

The only real moral laws are those which God has given us. Think about the Ten Commandments. If we were to keep these perfectly, all the time, every day, in every circumstance, right throughout our life, then we would be perfect. We would not have sinned, ever! Unfortunately, none of us can keep God's moral laws *in that way*. We are constantly breaking them, no matter how hard we try not to. And every time we do not perfectly obey His laws something happens to us. We come under guilt. Somehow we just know that we're in trouble!—in trouble with God. When this happens, we always try to justify ourselves. In other words, we make excuses for why we should be let off, or why it was someone else's fault! Of course, we may not consciously try to do it directly to God. More often it is to ourselves or to other people.

Let me give you some examples, and then you can think up some of your own. Can you remember being asked by Mum to do something, and you didn't do it? Even if you didn't feel it, you were instantly guilty. Inside, some little process began by which you tried to justify—first to yourself, and then to Mum—why you didn't do it: 'I was tired'; 'It wasn't my turn'; 'The cricket hadn't finished yet'; 'I did it the day before'; 'I will do it tomorrow':

'I'm not feeling well'; 'It's Mary's turn'; 'It's John's turn'—and so on, and so on. This is nothing but straight-out disobedience.

However, in spite of our self-justification efforts, the guilt remains. And the more we disobey, the more the guilt builds up. We become cranky and irritable as a result. We begin to blame others in an effort to get rid of the guilt on our conscience. But we can't. It just keeps on building up. We get caught deeper and deeper in the problem.

Now, if this happens at the level of our relationships with other human beings, can you see what happens when we disobey **God**? The guilt is constantly building up and we have to spend our time trying to work out how we can justify our disobedience. And this can all be going on without our consciously thinking about it.

Remember what I said about law? If it were possible for us to perfectly obey God's moral law, then we would not have to try to justify ourselves. There would be no wrong to have to justify! The word 'justify' comes, in fact, from the word 'just'. It means to be 'right' with respect to a law. So then, if a person could perfectly keep God's law, that person would be called a **just** person.

Now, think carefully about what I am going to say. Can you ever be a *just* person in God's eyes? If you can't perfectly obey His moral law, how can you ever be 'right' from God's point of view? If you can't *be just* by obeying His law, then you must still be a guilty person. How then can you get rid of that guilt? How can you stop having to justify yourself, when I have already shown that it doesn't do a thing. Rather, it makes matters worse! This is the dreadful problem all human beings are faced with. And

there is no *human* solution to it, though we all try to manufacture one!

In verse 16, Paul tells us that 'a man is not justified by works of the law [obeying the law] *but through faith in Christ Jesus*'. He goes on to say that it is impossible for anyone to be justified by obeying the law, but rather, we are justified by faith in Christ Jesus. Paul highlights the real issue: we are accepted by God as being 'just' only by virtue of faith in Christ. No law can aid us in being accepted by God. No rule or regulation or ritual or rite or observance is of any value in obtaining release from our guilt. Somehow God Himself must justify us. *He* must do it. because we can't. The way in which God has done it is through His Son Jesus on the cross. As we come, by faith, to accept that fact, God counts us as being 'just' in His sight. It all comes back to His grace.

QUESTIONS

1. Why are laws important to the way we live? What are some of the most important laws in your life?
2. What happens to us every time we break one of God's moral laws?
3. What is guilt? What do we all try to do about our feelings of guilt? Why is it impossible to ever get rid of our guilt so far as God is concerned?
4. How can a person be 'just' or 'right' or 'guiltless' in their relationship with God?

PRAYER

Even though you may not see all this clearly just yet, finish off the study by thanking your Heavenly Father. Thank Him for providing a way by which we can be justified before Him. Thank Him for doing something that takes away our guilt and saves us from the terrible grind of having to try to pretend to justify ourselves. Ask Him to help you to begin to live in this wonderful freedom.

8.**READ GALATIANS 2:15-21**

In the last study we looked at what ‘law’ means, and began to think about the idea of being ‘justified’ (or ‘just’ or ‘right’) with respect to a law. In **verse 16** we read that ‘a man is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ’. It’s really important that you try to understand what it means to be ‘justified’ in your relationship with God. You need to know that it’s a legal word— it’s a word that belongs to the law courts.

I said in the last study that we are ‘just’ if we have completely observed a law. So then, with respect to any given law, we are regarded as ‘justified’ if we have fully obeyed, or if *someone else* has obeyed or fulfilled the requirements for us. All the law is interested in is this: Has its demands been met with respect to a particular individual? If they have, then that person is a **justified** person. Or, to put it another way, he is not a guilty person. He is guiltless.

Let me illustrate the use of the word in this way: On the left side of this page, all the lines start at the same position and are *in line* vertically. But on the right side, *in this paragraph*, they are all over the place. Some stop sooner than others, and they are not in line vertically, one above the other. If you put your ruler along the left side, the lines all conform to the straight edge of your ruler. But put your ruler on the right side of the page, and the lines in this paragraph don't conform to the straight edge of your ruler at all! This paragraph does not have *justified* text. The right side of the lines does not agree with the **law** of your ruler! For all the other paragraphs, I have instructed the computer to 'justify the text', and you will see that all the lines start and finish in neat rows.

Our lives are intended by God to line up with His law. We have been designed by Him to live in such a way as to always be 'just' with respect to His Word and His will for us. Sadly, we don't comply. We are very much 'out of line' or 'out of step' with Him and His laws. What is more, we can't do anything about it ourselves. As hard as we try to obey Him (to obey His laws), we fail. That's why it's impossible to ever *be justified law-way*. It's impossible for God to ever look at any of us as one who has perfectly obeyed. We never have, and we never will. The fact is, if ever we are to be treated as justified persons, *God has got to do it*.

The Bible teaches us here, and in many other places, that *God* justifies us when we have faith in Jesus. It is because we can't justify ourselves that God has provided this fantastic way by which we can be justified *by Him*. *God justifies us!*

When you came to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and believed in Him, God justified you. He declared you to be a person who is no longer guilty with respect to His law. Assuming that this has been a genuine experience in your life, then you can say, of yourself, that 'God looks on me just-as-if-I'd never sinned!'. When God justifies you, He counts you as having obeyed all His laws. He counts you as never having sinned! He looks on you as someone who has no past—that is, no *sinful* past.

It's hard to imagine a more wonderful blessing for a sinful human being than to know we have no past which can condemn us! No matter what we have done, or have been, God deals with all of that on the cross by placing our sin upon Christ. However, our experience of the benefits and blessings of that great transaction is made real to us only as we have faith in Christ. It means nothing to the person who refuses to believe in God's promise. It is of no value at all if we do not have faith in God's appointed solution and God's appointed way of salvaging us.

Understand that we do not have to **do** anything in order to be justified. It is not **law-way**, it is **faith-way**. We are justified *by faith*. We are not justified by keeping some rules or regulations or rituals, but by simple faith in what Jesus did on the cross for us, and in what happened when He died and rose again. He fulfilled the law's requirements for us, by taking our place. God counts *His* obedience as *our* obedience.

Paul says in **verse 20** that when Jesus died on the cross, *you died too*. And he also says (not here, but in Romans 6:5) that when Jesus rose again, *you rose again*. Somehow God identifies us with Jesus in His death and resurrection. Somehow, God places **us** on the cross with Jesus.

His death there is counted by God as being our death.

You will never fully understand how He has done it. but you can be sure it's true. By faith, you can trust that God has not lied about what He has done. He has taken your sin (about which you can do nothing, and for which you deserve His anger), and He has placed it all on Christ. Whereas you should have died, Christ died. *He died your death for you.* Although you were not there, God looks on Christ on the cross *as if He were you!* In that very real sense, then, God counts *you* as having died on that cross. Look up the following verses to see this put in other words: Romans 6: 10-11; Colossians 3:3; 1 Peter 2:24; 2 Corinthians **5:15, 21.**

QUESTIONS

1. How is it possible for God to justify, sinful men, women, boys and girls like us?
2. Why is it impossible for any of us to be justified law-way?
3. Why is faith so important in our relationship to God?
4. What happened to you when Jesus died on that cross?

PRAYER

Praise God for what He has done on that cross through His Son, Jesus Christ, in taking our sin and guilt and failure upon Himself, and judging it and destroying it

entirely, *for ever!* Thank the Lord that we do not have to try to justify ourselves to Him, to ourselves, or to any one else. He has done it all on the cross. Praise Him for this fabulous freedom which we have in Jesus Christ!

9.

READ GALATIANS 2:19-21

Verse 20 is so important that we need to look at it a bit further before going on to Galatians chapter 3.

I know that what I am about to say may be hard to grasp, but try to work through it. Jesus died on that cross for you because He was God's **substitute** for you. He took your place by dying the sort of death you would have had to die if you had been left with the guilt of your sin. God set Him up as a substitute for you. He took the rap for you.

He died so that you would never have to die *in that way* (as someone who was being judged). But since Jesus has in fact died for you in that way, then you can say that *you have died* for your sin. You have died IN HIM.

In Christ you have died for your sin.

In Christ you have had your sin judged.

In Christ you have perfectly kept the law.

In Christ you have been justified.

In Christ you now are able to obey Him (if you really *want* to).

In Christ you now have a new life—His life in you.

God accepts you because He has placed you in **Christ**. He accepts His Son—so He accepts you! He loves His Son—so He loves you. He does not see His Son as being guilty—so He does not see you as being guilty. If you are a genuine Christian, **then you are in Him**.

Can you see that God's acceptance of you really has nothing to do with you at all? It has nothing to do with what you are, or have done, or what you do or don't do now. **It is all to do with who Christ is, and what He has done.** *In other words, God deals with us only by dealing with Christ.*

So then, God has done what you could never have done, of yourself. He has once and for all dealt with your sin and your guilt and your disobedience and your failures and your angers and your resentments and your pride and your lusts, and everything else that makes you dirty to Him. He has taken it all away through His wonderful Son, Jesus Christ, and He accepts you totally as you are, *only because of who and what you are in Christ*.

God has done all this only because He loves you. He has not done it because you were worthy of it or merited it. God the Father loved you enough to give up His Son to die on the cross for you. And Jesus loved you enough to voluntarily give Himself up to death for you. **Read carefully John 3:16-18.**

His love was such that He laid down His life on your behalf so that you would never have to bear the guilt and penalty of your sin or have to come under the wrath and condemnation of God due to your terrible disobedience. His love was such that He took onto His own shoulders all of your sin and guilt and penalty, and He suffered what you would have suffered of God's wrath and judgement.

There is therefore now nothing of your past failure, present failure or future failure, which He did not carry away on that cross. He really *has* set you free!

Another terrific thing that Paul tells us in this **verse 20** is that if we are believers, our life now has Christ's life operating in us. The Bible tells us that when we become Christians, God gives us the gift of His Spirit. *He comes to dwell in us.* But that Spirit is the Spirit of Christ. It is He who comes and dwells in us. And He does this so that His life may be lived out through us.

Paul says in this verse, 'the life I now live... I live by faith in the Son of God'. In other words, he trusts moment by moment that Christ will be working out *His* life in him. Paul knows that he has no ability of his own to live as a Christian in obedience to God. He will always fail if it's left to him! The same is true of you. **You, of yourself, cannot live as a Christian.** You will only ever live as God intended when by faith you trust Christ to live out His life in you and through you.

Actually, it is *His* faith not yours. You must learn to live by His faith, not your own. You must totally depend on Him or you will fall flat on your face! (I suspect that you must have already discovered that by now!)

Finally, Paul says in **verse 21** that if justification can be achieved law-way, then Christ's death was a waste of time. If you can be accepted by God through your observance of some law or rule or regulation, then there was no need for Christ to have died in the first place. He died to no purpose. As it is, you *can't* be justified law-way, and so it can only happen as a result of God's **grace**.

Paul's strong stand on this great truth, and his insistence that nothing be added to what Christ has done, only

enhances the wonderful fact that salvation is all of God's grace. It is all of God's goodness and free mercy and love. We contribute nothing to our salvation.

TO MEMORIZE

I want you to memorize Galatians 2:20 from the *RSV*.

QUESTIONS

1. In what way can it be said that Jesus is your 'substitute'?
2. What does it mean to be 'in Christ'? What are some of the things that have happened to us because we are 'in Christ'?
3. What do we have to **do** for God to be able to accept us?
4. If you have come to put your trust in Christ. what has happened to all your past failure and guilt?
5. Why can't you live the Christian life by your own effort? How can it be done?
6. Look up the following verses and compare them with what you have learnt from Galatians 2:20: Romans 6:5-6; Galatians 5:24 and 6:14; Romans 8:9 and 8:31-34; John 17:23; I John 3:16; Galatians 1:4; John 10:17-18.

PRAYER

Take these verses, together with Galatians 2:20, and find at least one great truth from each of them for which you can thank your Heavenly Father.

10.

READ GALATIANS 3:1-9

Paul now turns to the Galatians and brings home to them the real implication of what he has been saying, as it applies to them. He says something like this:

‘You idiots! Who on earth has been hypnotising you? When I came and preached the Gospel to you, you vividly saw Jesus Christ as the crucified Son of God, and you knew then that there was no other way of being saved. By *faith* you came to believe that salvation was entirely through His cross, and that you didn’t have to ‘perform’ or ‘do’ anything to be accepted by God. *But what has happened to you now ? I can’t believe you are being so stupid!*

‘You commenced the Christian life **by faith**—by simple belief in what God had done on the cross. And you received God’s gift of the Holy Spirit in the same way— **by faith** — by just believing. You certainly didn’t receive it by *doing* anything! (that is, by keeping some law or observing some set of rules). No, it all became real to you through faith, and faith alone.

*‘But now you are saying that in order to go on living the Christian life, you have to **do** something—you have to*

observe a few laws here and there—you have to "perform" in order for God to still accept you! How pathetic! How stupid! He accepted you at the beginning, just as you were. He accepted you because of what Christ did for you. So what makes you think you now have to *maintain* your relationship with Him by something that you **do**? I'm really very disappointed. I can't believe that you experienced all that you did back there, *by faith*, just for nothing.'

In **verse 5** Paul continues his argument. He questions the Galatian Christians, and says, 'The ongoing experience of the Spirit you are enjoying, and all those miracles which are happening in your Church—is this because you're all pretty good at obeying God's law, or is it happening as a result of simple faith and trust in the Lord? Which is it?'

Well, what do you think? When God goes on doing wonderful things in our lives—someone is healed; there is an answer to prayer; or we see how He has guided us in some situation—does this happen because we've been *good*. or does it happen because God is a gracious God who loves us and who acts in our lives as we continue to 'hear with faith'? Is it a matter of works and deeds on our part. or is it *a faith* thing? Which is it? (read Ephesians 2:8-9).

You must remember that it was a group of *Jews* who were trying to distort the belief of these non-Jewish Galatians. Now, it's a fact that every Jew was proud of his ancestors, and especially the greatest of them all, Abraham! (You can read about him in Genesis 12 and the following chapters.)

Here, in **verses 6 to 9**, Paul reminds these Jews that Abraham was first and foremost *a man of faith*. In other

words, God accepted him on the basis *of faith*, not on the basis of anything he *did*.

So then, if these Jews were so keen to pervert the belief of the Galatians, then they had better think again! The great father of their race, Abraham, was accounted by God to be righteous, **faith-way**, not **law-way**! Abraham simply believed what God had said to him. He trusted in God. He did not trust in himself.

God made a promise to Abraham, and although, humanly speaking, it was impossible that it should ever be fulfilled, Abraham nevertheless believed God's word, *and saw it happen!* (Read about this in Genesis 12:2-3; 15:4-6; 18:9-12; 21:1-2; Romans 4:18-22; Hebrews 11:8-12. Work out what the promise was, and why it was so hard for Abraham to believe.)

What's all this got to do with us? Can you see any connection? Can you see the point of what Paul is saying to the Galatians—and to us? *Stop and think about it*. Try to work it out for yourself. Use the passages listed above, as well as the section you are studying in Galatians.

You and I are no different to Abraham or the Galatian Christians, or any other believers, for that matter! We have all come to know God *by faith*. We heard the Gospel (God's Word to us) and we believed it. Some people first heard it when they were very young children and gradually grew up believing it. Others heard it when they were older, and suddenly knew that it was true. In both cases, it was by belief in the truth that they were accepted by God as His own sons and daughters. God said it, and they believed it! They had faith in His Word.

So, Paul says here in these verses that the *real* descendants of Abraham are those who believe God, *just as*

Abraham did! 'If you Jews claim to have Abraham as your great father, then you are only really his sons if you have faith like his.'

If you look up Romans 4, verses 23 to 25, you will see that God gave us Abraham as an example. One of the reasons that God has had this story of Abraham recorded in the Bible is so that we can understand what faith is like. Just like Abraham, we will go through experiences in life where we think there is no way out, no answer, no escape, no solution. But like Abraham, we are to trust the Lord. He has given us certain promises, and we are simply to believe them.

QUESTIONS

1. Is it all up to us to maintain our relationship with God now that we have come to faith in Jesus for salvation? Now that we are Christians, what is the basis for our ongoing experience of God?
2. In what way is Abraham a good example to us of the sort of faith that we should have in God?
3. Is faith something we've got or something that we get? See Romans 10:17 and Ephesians 2:8-9.

PRAYER

Ask the Lord to give you faith, like Abraham, so that you will learn to trust Him each day as you grow as a Chris-

Christian. Thank Him that you don't have to 'perform' in order to maintain your relationship with Him.

11.

READ GALATIANS 3:1-9

In the last study I talked about the importance of faith, and of the need to live each day with the same sort of faith that we exercised when we first came to believe in Christ. We saw that this kind of faith is an Abraham-type faith. It's the kind of faith that goes on trusting God, even when we don't really think our behaviour has been very good! It's the kind of faith that sees that the cross goes on being effective for the forgiveness of our sin, day after day after day. It's the kind of faith that doesn't give up when faced with difficulty, turmoil or hardship. Nor does it give up when faced by our own awful sinfulness.

The point is this: every day you will face problems of sin. If you're in your teens, you may disobey your parents or your teacher. You may have very ungodly thoughts come into your mind. You may be tempted to cheat or lie. You may really hurt someone by what you do or say. You may have resentment or anger in your heart. You may do or say or think something that you know is really very evil.

Whether you realise it or not, all of these experiences bring a load of guilt onto your conscience. Even though the sin or the failure may be in relation to another person, *it is ultimately towards God Himself*. God has made us in such a way that we will always react when we sin. We will try to 'justify' ourselves! We will blame others! We may get angry with ourselves for doing it in the first place (especially if we've got caught!), and we will try to 'make up for it'.

Just think for a moment. Remember those times Mum or Dad asked you to do something, but instead of doing it, you've gone and done something else? That 'something else' was a reaction to your disobedience and an attempt to 'make up for it!' We all do it one way or another (adults are probably more sneaky!).

Now, the whole point of these studies in Galatians is to help you understand that God has done all that needs to be done to 'make up' for your guilt. It was all taken up on the cross when Jesus died. You don't have to make up for anything. He has said it, and you are to believe it.

We are to go on having the same sort of faith we had right at the beginning when we first came to Christ.

We do not have to add anything to Christ's finished work on the cross. We do not have to 'make up' for our day-to-day failures. We do not have to obey a set of laws or rules or regulations (as these Jews were saying) *in order to go on being accepted by God*. We are to have an Abraham-type faith. A faith that just goes on trusting, whatever. A faith that goes on believing God even in the midst of our sin and our failure and our disobedience, and in the midst of our hardship or our suffering.

If we do not have this sort of faith, we will always start *adding* to what God has done for us on the cross. We will be saying, in effect, 'God has not done enough to deal with

my sin—His cross is inadequate.'

At that point you will have become like the Galatians—bewitched! -hypnotised—deluded—deceived *faithless!* And, of course, very foolish!

I hope this helps you begin to understand the tremendous importance of what we are studying. If you begin to see how this teaching affects your everyday life, then it will come alive to you.

When you are tempted to get mad at your brother, for example, or to be rude or hurtful to your sister, or to sound off' at your parents, then just stop and think about what is happening. Somewhere, somehow, there's been some sin, and guilt has risen to the surface and you are trying to make up for it. You are trying to deal with the matter yourself. Unfortunately, it won't work!

What's needed at that moment is a conscious decision not to act that way, and to know that you are forgiven by God totally. The cross still stands there as God's pledge that all guilt has been dealt with. You do not need to try to deal with it yourself by off-loading it onto others!

If you do, then at that point you are being like the 'foolish Galatians'. You are not at that point being like Abraham, 'who had faith'. You are saying that God's cross is not enough to satisfy your conscience!

If you are getting mad at your brother, *then it's because you are mad at God!*

Of course, adults get mad too! They get mad at their boss, or the Prime Minister, or the Government, or the 'System'. Husbands get mad at their wives, and wives get mad at their husbands. But in fact they are all mad at God. They are angry with Him. They have their fist in His face. It is only a day-to-day faith in the Lord Jesus Christ,

and what He did on that cross, that keeps us at peace and enables us to live each day in harmony with one another—and with ourselves!

REVIEW

Review the memory verse from Study 9—Galatians 2:20.

QUESTIONS

1. What is wrong with trying to 'make up' for our sin to God? Why is this different from trying to make amends when we've done something wrong to some other person?
2. What are the occasions in life when you find it difficult just to go on trusting God in simple faith? What happens when you don't trust Him at these times?
3. What are some of the ways in which we try to off-load our guilt onto others?
4. What is the only way to avoid getting mad at God and at other people?

PRAYER

Finish off the study by asking God's forgiveness for all those times that you have not acted in faith and have not

trusted in His cross as the entire solution for your sin and guilt. Ask Him to help you to live each day like Abraham, with the sort of faith Abraham had. Make up your mind to stop trying to 'make up' for your failures, and to begin to trust that God really does go on forgiving you each day, just as He promised He would.

12.

READ GALATIANS 3:10-14 (IN THE GOOD NEWS BIBLE)

There are only two ways by which we can ever be accepted by God and be considered by Him to be righteous:

- (1) perfectly obey His laws and so never sin. (We would then be a 'righteous' person. We would be a *perfect* person);
- (2) by faith trust that God has provided a way by which *He* can make us righteous.

Can you work out from this passage what is wrong with trying to be accepted by God the first way? What happens to a person who tries to be accepted the first way?

Look at the text. Paul says that anyone who depends on obeying the law as the way of being accepted by God is actually under a curse if he does not *perfectly* obey it. (You'll find that in Deuteronomy 27:26.) The trouble is, none of us can perfectly obey! We're all sinners. We're all failures. And that can mean only one thing. No person will ever be able to be accepted by God by the first

way—by *keeping the law*. Acceptance by God **law-way** is impossible for a sinner.

Can you see that there can only be one conclusion to this: Every one of us is under God's curse. Therefore we can only ever be accepted by Him **faith-way**.

Verse 13 tells us that when Jesus died on that cross, He became what we are—someone who is cursed. He became a curse for us. The curse of God which was on us fell on Him. By dying in our place, He took God's curse on Himself. It was the terrible curse of God against sin.

Just stop for a moment and think about this. Have you ever considered that you are under God's curse so long as you are a sinner trying to live your life your way, doing your own thing, and ignoring His solution of the cross? Can you begin to understand what a dreadful thing it was for God to have had to make His own Son a curse for you? Can you see how terribly serious sin is? Can you see that God had to do something unbelievably drastic in order to deal with your sin? He had to put your sin on His Son, so that He would suffer the curse for you.

If you look up Deuteronomy 21:23, you will also discover that under Jewish law God's curse was on anyone who was hanged. Paul quotes that verse here, and shows that it applied to Jesus when He was on the cross. When Jesus hung on that cross, it was a sign that He was a cursed man. This tells us that we should never, ever treat sin lightly. It's very dangerous to joke about sin. It's a very serious error to make fun of what happened to Jesus on the cross. It's even more serious to ignore it, or pretend it doesn't matter and not respond to it.

Do you remember that in the last study we talked about

Abraham? I said that the real descendants of Abraham are those who have faith, as he did. Well, Paul comes back to that in **verse 14** (read the verse again).

God promised Abraham a great blessing. Though we are not Jews, that blessing comes upon us when we have faith in God, as Abraham had. We receive it by faith in Jesus Christ.

What do you think that blessing is? What does it mean to be 'blessed'?

Whatever this blessing is, we have seen enough in our studies to know by now that we cannot earn it, or work for it, or bribe God for it, or receive it by being 'good'. *We receive it by faith*. It comes to us **faith-way**, not **law-way**!

In fact you have already been told what the blessing is! The clue lies in Galatians 2:20 (which you were supposed to memorize!). The *blessing is Christ Himself*. He comes to us as God's gift of true life. He not only does something about our sin and guilt, but He comes by His Spirit and enters into us to dwell within us. He comes to us through faith, and begins to live His life in us. By faith we receive the promise of the Spirit, and we begin to know the life of God working in us and through us. *That's* the great blessing God has showered upon us! (read again Galatians 2:20).

QUESTIONS

1. Why did Jesus become a curse for us?
2. Why is it dangerous to joke about sin?

3. In what ways is Jesus Christ the blessing that God promised to give to us?

PRAYER

'Father, forgive us that we so often think we can do something to make up for our sin. Forgive us when we deliberately turn away from accepting Your solution of the cross. Thank You for sending Jesus to be a curse for us, and that He took on Himself all the sin that made us cursed in Your sight. Thank You that Jesus Christ has set us free so that we are now able to serve You and love You.

Thank You that You have given us the promise of the Holy Spirit, and that He gives us the strength and the desire to obey You. Amen.'

13.

READ GALATIANS 3:15-20

Verses 15 to 18. Just recently I went to my solicitor to have my will brought up to date. As soon as that will was signed, it was fixed for good. No one can now change it. I'm the only person who can alter it. Nor can anyone fiddle with it after I have died. At the same time, my solicitor drew up an agreement between me and some special friends of mine. When we signed that agreement, it was fixed.

These two examples illustrate an important biblical principle called a *covenant*. A covenant is an agreement. The most famous covenant is the one that God made with Abraham when He promised to bless him. (You should have read about that several studies ago, in Genesis 12.) It's not the only covenant (or agreement, or promise) that is found in the Bible, but it's one of the most important. (If you read Genesis 9, verses 8 to 17, you will find another very important covenant that God made.)

In Genesis 12 God said to Abraham, 'I am going to bless you and I am going to bless your offspring. This is

my promise. This is the *covenant* that I make with you this day. This is the *agreement* that I have with you.'

*Did you notice that Abraham didn't have to **do** anything?* He simply believed what God said. Or to put it another way, he had **faith** in God's word. He believed God's promise.

Now, just like my illustrations above, concerning my will and my agreement, the agreement or covenant which God made with Abraham *could not be changed*. **Once God said it, that was that!** No one could come along later and cancel it, or try to change it. It was fixed for good.

Just think for a moment. Who came first, Abraham or Moses? Try to work it out before you go any further. (In fact there were many hundreds of years between them.)

Try to get this. God gave Abraham a promise (He made a covenant or an agreement with him). Then four hundred and thirty years *later*, God gave a set of laws to Moses to give to the people (the Ten Commandments). **Did those laws cancel out the agreement which God had previously made with Abraham?** Can you see that nothing could ever alter that agreement—not even the law that He gave through Moses?

If this all sounds a bit complicated or rather dull, it would not be that way if you were a Jew listening to Paul preach. The law was terribly important to the Jew. No other nation on earth has ever been given a set of laws directly from the living God. The Jews were, and still are, very proud of their law given through Moses.

So when Paul came *preaching faith*, the Jews were very suspicious. They thought he was saying that the law was not important. What he was trying to get across to them was the great fact that the law came *after* God's agreement

with Abraham. That agreement was based on **faith**. Abraham was accepted by God simply by believing, not because he kept some law (because the law was still four hundred and thirty years away!).

At this point re-read the verses **15 to 18** in the *Good News Bible*.

Notice that I have not talked about **verse 16**, which refers to Abraham's descendant. This is an amazing verse. When God made the promise to Abraham (that is, to bless him—to give him an inheritance—to give him a great gift), Abraham thought only of how he could have a son so that all this could come to pass. What Abraham never realised was that when God made the promise He was referring to just *one* person. *One person in all history!* Yes, of course God was going to bless Abraham. Yes, of course God was going to bless all the nations of the earth through Abraham. Yes, of course God was going to keep His word. But it was all going to happen through just one person—a son of a son of a son of a son of a son of a son of a son of a son of a son—of a son of Abraham's...

JESUS CHRIST!

So Paul is telling these Jews, *and us too*, a fantastic truth. All God's blessings to a human being, no matter who he or she is, come through Jesus. And they come to us in exactly the same way in which they came to Abraham—by faith. By believing. Not by doing. Not by obeying law. But by faith. God has made a covenant with *us* through Jesus but, like Abraham, we only know it, and receive its blessings, through faith.

If I were a Jew, the first question I would want to ask

Paul would be: 'If the blessing from God is received by faith, then *what's the law for?—why did God give the law?*'. Well, that's a good question. Why did He give the law?

Read verses 19 and 20. Also read now Romans 3:19-20 (in *Good News*). Try to work out your answer, using these verses and the verses here in Galatians.

It's really very simple. If there were no law, we would not know what sin was. If we did not know what sin was, we would never know that we needed to be saved! The law forces us to see that we cannot obey its demands. It shows up how sinful we are and how much we need God to do something to salvage us. The law leads us to have faith in Jesus Christ. (We'll come back to this in another study.)

REVIEW

Review the memory verse, Galatians 2:20.

QUESTIONS

1. What is a covenant?
2. What is the important principle behind the covenants that God makes with us?
3. How do all God's blessings ultimately come to us? By whom?
4. What is the function of God's law?

PRAYER

Thank the Lord that He has made a covenant—an agreement—with you through His Son Jesus. Thank Him that you can be secure in that covenant. And thank Him that nothing can change or alter the agreement that He has made.

14.

READ GALATIANS 3:21-29

What is the purpose of the law? Firstly, the law is not in competition with faith. In other words, the law is not *another way* for a person to come to God and be accepted by Him. The only way is by faith. If it had been possible for God to accept us as a result of our obedience to some law, then that's how it would have been.

But that's *not* how it is! We *can't* obey. We can't because we *won't*. The real problem is our sin. We are all sinners. If you look up Romans 3:23, you will see that we have all fallen short of the glory of God. I'll explain.

Have you ever tried archery? How many times have you shot the arrow and missed the target completely? Well, that's exactly what Romans 3:23 means. We have all 'missed the mark' as far as God is concerned. We've completely missed the target, let alone the bull's-eye! We are so far short of being the human beings God designed us to be, that we are under His judgement. That's the real problem. We, and the whole world, are under the power

(or the guilt) of sin. We're all guilty of missing God's bull's-eye of a righteous life.

So then, God's gift of life to us is promised on the basis of faith, not on the basis of trying to obey law. As we have faith in Jesus Christ, so we receive God's promised blessing. It is given to those who *believe* (**verse 22**).

In **verses 23 to 25** we see the second thing about law. It has a very important function in that it pushes us into a corner and shows us that we really *are* sinners. It shows us that we need to be saved. It shows us that we are in need of being salvaged—rescued !

Take a very simple example. When you are asked by someone in authority to do something (and that's a law to be obeyed) and you deliberately don't do it, how do you feel? Why do you feel that way? Where does your guilt come from? Can you see that any law which we don't obey produces guilt in us? It shows up the fact that we're rebellious and disobedient! *We would not know that if there were no laws in the world* Of course, if we were not sinners, then we'd always obey without question. But because we *are* sinners, law always stirs up our rebellious nature.

Pilgrim's Progress has a wonderful illustration of this. INTERPRETER takes CHRISTIAN into a room that has thick dust all over the floor. Another person enters and begins sweeping the floor with a broom. Immediately the room is so full of dust that they can hardly breathe. INTERPRETER explains to CHRISTIAN that the dust is our sin. The broom is the law. Until the broom came along, the dust was settled on the floor and not obvious. But the moment the broom starts sweeping, the dust is shown up for what it is! And so, as soon as law comes along, our sin is shown up for what *it*

is! As they watch, a second person brings some water and sprinkles the room. This water, says INTERPRETER, is the Gospel, which overcomes our sin, cleansing us from its pollution.

Can you see from this example that until such time as we receive the Gospel by faith, the law will always have the power to stir up our sins and keep us in guilt? We are *trapped* by the law, until such time as we have faith in Jesus Christ. (The *Good News Bible* says, ‘... before the time for faith came, the Law kept us all locked up *as prisoners...*’).

This brings us to the important subject of faith: **Faith is not something we’ve got, it’s something we get.**

FAITH IS A GIFT FROM GOD!

Verse 25 talks about the ‘time for faith’ or ‘now that faith has come’. This refers to the fact that God is the One who gives us faith to believe in Him, and in Christ, and in the Gospel. Look up Ephesians 2:8-9 in the *RSV*. It says that faith is a gift from God. That’s why we need to be asking God for faith. If you find it hard to believe, then ask for faith. If you are having a struggle to accept all that God has done for you, then ask for faith. **THE TIME FOR FAITH HAS COME.** It is no longer law-way, it is now faith-way. We are accepted by God (justified and made right with Him) through faith in Jesus Christ (**verse 24**).

Do you remember that in a previous study I talked about Abraham? I said that all those who truly believe are

the real descendants of Abraham. Then we saw that Abraham really only had one descendant as far as God is concerned—Jesus. Jesus was the Son of God. Jesus was the true descendant of Abraham. Jesus was the true man of faith. Now in **verse 26** Paul says an amazing thing. He says that every one of us who truly has faith in Jesus *is a son of God !* We are sons and daughters because we are *in the Son*.

You memorised Galatians 2:20. That verse says you have been crucified with Christ and He now lives in you. We have been united to Christ. We have been baptised into Christ. We have been made a part of Him. Or, to say it yet another way, we have *put on* Christ. He became what we are, so that we can become what He is. He became our sin so that we might receive His righteousness. He became our curse so that we might enjoy His blessing.

This applies to every single person in the world who has faith in Jesus. That means there are no longer any distinctions between persons, races, colour, nationality or anything. We are all *in Christ*. We are all *one* in Him. All Christians are accepted by God in exactly the same way. By faith in Jesus Christ. All Christians are the true off spring of Abraham. All Christians share in the same promise of blessing that Abraham was given, because’ all Christians have to come to God in the same way that Abraham did—by faith (**verses 28-29**).

TO MEMORIZE

Ephesians 2:8-9 in the *RSV*.

QUESTIONS

1. Why can't we obey God's laws?
2. What causes us to feel guilty when we're disobedient?
3. Why is it impossible to know God except through faith in Jesus Christ?
4. The Bible says that as far as God is concerned, amongst Christians there are no distinctions between persons, race, colour or nationality. How can this be? What's wrong when this is not demonstrated in real life?

PRAYER

Thank the Lord for His wonderful gift of faith. Thank Him that He has provided a way by which we can escape the 'prison of the law'. (Try to work out how to put that in your own words.) If you think you lack faith, then ask Him for that gift of faith now. Thank Him that you are IN CHRIST, and that you are ONE with all other Christians in every part of the world, and right down through the ages.

15.

READ GALATIANS 4:1-7

There was a time when it was common for a father to make his son the heir of his property, or say, the partner in his business. Even though this was promised when he was young, it could not happen until the son 'came of age', or until a date arrived (set by the father) when the son was a mature man. Only then would the grocery store, for example, become 'John Brown and *Son*'.

Paul is using this illustration to show us another great truth. Until you become a Christian, *you are like the child who has not yet grown up*. You are immature. You cannot know or understand the value and importance of all the blessings that God has designed for you. You have not yet 'come of age'. So long as you are not converted, you are no better off than a child being looked after by a nanny. As far as enjoying the things that have been promised to you, being a child is a real bind—it's a real bondage! Nanny is better off than you are!

Now Paul says that God has *His* time. He has long ago promised certain blessings to us. But they come to us

when His set time is right. Read verses 4-5. God had a set time for Christ to come. He had a set time in history for the cross. God also has a set time for each person to come to know Him. In our case, that set time involves us in becoming members of His family. He accepts us as His *mature* sons and daughters. We are incorporated into His family.

Verses 6-7 tell us three important things about this new relationship.

1. The Holy Spirit Dwells in Us

Because God adopts us, He gives us the gift of His Holy Spirit to dwell within us. We have already seen in a previous study that every person who becomes a Christian receives the gift of the Holy Spirit. A person is *not a* Christian if he does not have this gift from God (see Acts 5:32; Romans 8:9). The Holy Spirit is called 'the Spirit of the Son'. It is the Spirit of Jesus Himself who has come to live in us. Jesus promised this before He left His disciples to return to the Father (see John 14:16-20, 21-23; 16:7, 13-15. Try to work out from these verses all the different names or titles that are given to the Holy Spirit).

2. God Is Father

The Holy Spirit enables us to know God as our Father. He works in us in such a way as to cause us to call out to God in prayer, addressing Him as 'Father'—'Dear Father'. This is an amazing thing! It would never occur to us to call God 'Father', if it were not for the Holy Spirit within us. It's further proof of the fact that we are now His sons (or

daughters, as the case may be!). The Holy Spirit opens our eyes to see that God is our Father and that we can now come to Him in that way. We now have a Father-son relationship. That's why Jesus taught His disciples to pray, and say, 'Our Father...' (Matthew 6:9; see also Romans 8:14-17).

Question: If every Christian is a son/daughter of the Father, what is our relationship to one another? If your Mum and Dad are Christians, what can you say is their relationship to you? What is your relationship to them? Does that relationship come *before* your relationship to them as a son/daughter? Does that new relationship of theirs to you come *before* their relationship to you as parents? What is their relationship to one another? What could we call Jesus? (See Hebrews 2:11 in the *Good News Bible*.)

3. We Are Heirs

Because we are now mature sons, we are heirs. An heir is someone who inherits something at a pre-set time, or on a given date. Prince Charles is heir to the throne. He has inherited it as the eldest son of the Queen. He will become King when his mother dies or when she decides to hand over to him.

I inherited some of my father's belongings when he died. Some of those belongings *he* had inherited from *his* father! His belongings were shared by the family. We were joint-heirs.

The Bible has a lot to say about Christians being heirs. It also talks about Christians being joint-heirs with Christ. He is the heir. We are heirs because we are in Him.

God has promised that we will receive an inheritance. But what is it? When do we receive it? Look up the following verses, and write down all the things that you see we will inherit, and what would *prevent* someone from receiving the inheritance. Work out *when* we will receive these blessings: Matthew 25:34; I Corinthians 6:9-10; 15:50; Galatians 5:21; Ephesians 5:5; James 2:5; Matthew 5:5; Hebrews 1:14; Romans 8:18; I Peter 1:3-5; Revelation 21:7

It's important to understand that Jesus Christ has a *right* to be God's heir and to receive the inheritance. *We do not*. We enjoy this wonderful prospect and promise only by God's grace. It is only because He has brought us into His family that we are joint-heirs with Christ. But we are heirs only *because of Christ, and through Him*.

If you look at Ephesians 1:13-14, you will see that it is the Spirit who is the guarantee that we will finally receive this inheritance. If you like, He is the 'down-payment' that we will eventually possess this blessing. Once we have come to faith, and are born anew into God's family, we are certain that we will receive His promised blessings.

REVIEW

Review memory verses, Ephesians 2:8-9.

QUESTIONS

1. In what sense are non-Christians 'immature'?

2. Look up the following verses to see how Jesus knew that God had a set time for the cross: John 7:6, 8, 30; 8:20; 12:23, 27; 13:1; 17:1.
3. Do all Christians have the Holy Spirit dwelling in them? When does He come to us?
4. Why is it important to know that God is our Father? How might an understanding of this great fact change the way we think of God?

PRAYER

Thank the Lord that He has given you the gift of the Holy Spirit. Thank Him that He is your Father, and that you are His son or daughter. Thank Him that He has reserved an inheritance for you because you are in Christ.

16.

READ GALATIANS 4:8-11

Did you know that before you became a Christian you were the devil's prisoner? He didn't own you, but he had captured you so as to make you do what he wanted! That's the position of every person who has not come to know Jesus as Lord, and who has not been rescued by Him. We are all born into Satan's kingdom. Christians are those who have been *re-born* into God's kingdom. Look at what Jesus says in the following verses: John 8:39-47 and Luke 11:21-23. (Who is the strong man? Who is the *stronger* man?) Compare these with 2 Timothy 2:26 and 2 Corinthians 4:4.

One of the sad things that sometimes seems to happen to Christians is that, after having being rescued by God from the terrible slavery and bondage under which they once lived in the devil's service, *they get hooked on the desire to go back!* It's as if they haven't really understood the incredible thing that's happened to them in coming to know the Lord in the first place.

That's what Paul is saying here about the Galatians. There was a time when *they did not know God*. They were ignorant of Him (see also Ephesians 2:12). They were in Satan's kingdom, slaves of his, doing what he wanted. There were things in their lives that *took the place of God*, but were not, of course, God at all. Then, as they heard the Gospel, they came to really know the true and living God. Or, to put it more accurately, they came to be known *by God*. At the same time, they were released from their previous slavery to the evil one, Satan (that's when the Stronger Man delivered them from the strong man!).

One of Satan's favourite lies is to try to make people think that they can get on in life only if they do their own thing. When we come to know the Lord, Satan doesn't give up on us! He still keeps lying to us.

In the earlier studies, we saw that there were Jews who wanted the non-Jewish Christians to observe a whole list of rules and regulations *in addition* to believing in Christ. That's Satan's lie. He says: 'God's GRACE is not enough...'; 'The CROSS is not enough...'; 'FAITH ALONE is not enough...'. Satan tries to get us back into his slavery by hoodwinking us into thinking that we still have to be *doing* certain things in order to please God. In this way, he undermines GRACE, the CROSS, and FAITH ALONE.

In the case of the Galatians, they had reverted to the observance of certain days as being of special religious importance. *The), had gone back to trusting in that observance*, rather than simply trusting in God's grace and the cross, through faith alone.

When I was a young believer, I was taught that I should be doing a number of things if I was to be a real Christian.

I should be praying regularly, I should be reading my Bible each day, I should be going to church, and I should be witnessing to others about Christ. After a while I found that I was not very good at having a regular Bible study. And sometimes I would forget to pray. I went to church regularly, but I had terrible problems in trying to speak to people about Christ. So much so, that I became very discouraged. I decided that I wasn't a very good Christian after all. What could I do? How could I solve the problem? I came to the conclusion that I would have to make a big effort to be more disciplined. Perhaps I could pray more if I got up earlier. I could try reading the Bible on the train going to work. And if I really summoned up the courage, I suppose I could speak to someone each day about Christ! Can you see the trap I fell into?

Think about this: Is it a good thing for a Christian to be disciplined, and to read the Bible each day and to spend time in prayer to the Lord? And is it a good thing for a Christian to try to share the Good News about Jesus with others? Of course it is! Can you see that all of these things are right? They are good. They are appropriate. *But they are a terrible 'law' if we think they are the measure by which God accepts us.* That's the lie that Satan whispers to us, and so we become focused on what we can do, not on what Christ has done. (Just count up all the times 'I' is used in that paragraph above, and you will see what I mean!)

I want you to stop now and really ask yourself if you are doing certain things—perhaps out of habit, or because someone told you to do so—which have become a *substitute* for trusting totally in the Lord. These may include Bible reading, prayer, going to church, 'being good',

going to fellowship, or playing or singing in a Church music group. (Of course all these are right things to do.) It may also include *not* doing certain things, such as not using bad language, not looking at crude movies, not getting into drugs or playing around with sex. (Again, all of these are right things to avoid.)

The whole point is this: being a Christian is not a matter of 'do's' and 'don'ts'. It is not a matter of laws and rules and regulations. It concerns faith in Jesus Christ, and a trust in Him. It is He who makes us acceptable to God our Father. When we really know that God loves us and has accepted us through Christ, then we will automatically *want* to do what is right and what pleases Him, and we will *want* to avoid the things that are not right and which would displease Him. When we know that we are *already accepted by God*, then we will no longer do such things *in order to be accepted*, but because we want to please Him and obey Him. Can you see that?

QUESTIONS

1. How did it come about that all men and women are born slaves of Satan?
2. What are some of Satan's favourite lies to us?
3. Is being a Christian a matter of 'dos' and 'don'ts'? What is the great trap we fall into here?
4. Why is it vital that we just keep on trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ?

PRAYER

‘Father, help us to genuinely trust You, and not to think that we have to do all sorts of things, or avoid doing all sorts of other things, in order to be in Your good books. Help us to recognise the lies of Satan when he tries to get us back into his slavery. Forgive us for failing so often, but thank You that You go on forgiving us through Jesus Your Son. Help us to be disciplined in doing the things that we know are right, and in avoiding the things that we know are wrong. In the midst of our times of failure, help us to simply trust in Your grace, and in the fact that Your Son’s death for us on the cross did all that was needed to set us free.’

17.**READ GALATIANS 4:12-20**

I always feel very discouraged when I’ve worked hard to lead someone into the truth, and then, some time later, discover that that person has gone off at a tangent, or has taken on some weird belief and mixed it in with what he knew of the truth. *I can’t describe how sad I feel.* I’m tempted to feel that it was all a wasted effort (**verse 11**).

So far in this letter, Paul has been pretty hard on the Galatians. He’s told them off well and truly for being so stupid as to listen to these Jewish ‘trouble-makers’. But he really does love them, and now he speaks very personally to them.

Verse 12 is a hard one! It seems to mean this: ‘When you first became Christians, you didn’t observe a whole list of rules *as being necessary for salvation*, and neither did I! *I was just like you.* Well, I’m still free from those laws, so I beg you, please be like me—don’t be under law! You didn’t do any wrong to me back then, so don’t do so now.’

Paul goes on in **verses 13 and 14** to remind them that he was quite ill when he first preached to them, and even though this ailment (whatever it was) could have been offensive to them, they not only accepted him warmly, but treated him as an angel of God—as Christ Himself.

There's no doubt that they were thrilled by the message that Paul brought to them, and counted themselves blessed indeed to have his ministry among them. They really loved him, and he them. In fact, their love for him was so deep that, if it had been possible, they would have gladly given him their own eyes—**verse 15**. (Although we don't know, this could mean that Paul's sickness was some sort of eye disease. Otherwise, it may just mean that they would have made, out of love, any sacrifice for him.)

But what a change has now taken place! Not only have they accepted this crazy false teaching about 'law', but they resent Paul's opposition to it! How can such a thing happen? How can this one they loved so much now seem like their enemy, just because he faces them with the truth about themselves?

Before continuing, I want you to think very carefully about your own relationship with those who are your spiritual guides and teachers. Ask yourself if you don't perhaps resent *them* if they rebuke you. What should your response be?

In **verses 17 and 18**, Paul faces the Galatians with the truth concerning these false teachers. He says that these people, though zealous, do not have a pure motive. They want the Galatians to follow their *teaching*, and in so doing to follow *them*. *They want an exclusive loyalty*. They certainly don't want them following that fellow Paul!

You must learn from this. Every false teaching, like this one, is somewhere based on some sort of legalism. That is, they all insist on the observance of some 'law'. It is this very *exclusivism* that marks off a sect from true Christianity. **The final result is to shut the followers out of the Kingdom of God.** That's why teaching salvation 'law-way' is so dangerous to the hearers. And when it's mixed in with the Gospel it's doubly dangerous, because *it seems so like the real thing*. So watch out!

In **verse 18**, Paul says that it's not wrong to be zealous, nor is it wrong for others to have a deep interest in you, *so long as the motive is good*. This principle applies all the time, 'not just when I am with you!'. In other words, 'don't be taken in by others when I'm not there!'

Finally, in **verses 19 and 20**, Paul pours his heart out to these much loved converts of his, and tells them of his anguish for them. He feels like a mother going through the pain of child-birth. In this case, it is the pain suffered by him in bringing his young believers to full 'birth' in the Faith. What should have been a straight-forward 'delivery' has been hampered by these false teachers, and it's as if Paul has to give 'birth' to them a second time. Oh, how he wishes he was there with them! How quickly he would be able to deal with the issues and nurture them in the truth. Sad to say, these days not too many people seem to care this much about their converts. We take our faith in Christ so much for granted, and don't worry about the 'fine details of doctrinal differences'. In fact, those 'small details' may be the difference between a rich and full life as a Christian, and a half-baked, pathetic, gutless 'Christianity' that's not worth having.

Paul's longing for these believers was that Christ would be 'formed in them'. That their lives be like that of Christ. That His life be fully developed in them. He wanted them to grow from birth to full maturity. *He didn't want them to be spiritual spastics!*

QUESTIONS

1. Would Paul's love for the Galatians have been genuine if he had just 'gone along' with their error? Would he have been a true brother to them if he had not told them the truth?
2. Do you think Paul would have found it easy to confront the Galatians on this important issue? Why do you think they resented him for saying what he did to them? Do you think their resentment of him would have been hurtful to Paul? How do you think he felt?
3. How important do you think Paul's love for the Galatians was in this whole affair? Could he have said what he did, in the way he did, *without love*? What would have happened if he had done so?
4. What is legalism? What does this lead to in the life of a Christian or in the life of a congregation?

PRAYER

'Father, please safeguard me from following certain individuals, rather than following the truth of Your Gospel.

Keep me alert and strong in trusting You, *and You alone*, for my salvation. May I know that I am accepted by You only through Your gracious gift of Christ, and not because of any rules or laws or regulations that someone might try to talk me into observing. Thank You that You love me so much.'

18.

READ GALATIANS 4:21-31

This is a difficult passage to understand, so we'll have to work hard at it!

All through this letter, Paul has been **contrasting law-way** with **faith-way** with respect to how we are saved. In other words, does God accept us as a result of our obeying a set of laws, or does He accept us as an outcome of faith only? The contrast could just as easily be between **law-way** and **grace-way** because faith comes as God's gift of grace. (Remember Ephesians 2:8-9, which you memorised?)

There's a third way by which the contrast could be expressed. We could refer to the *result* of the two ways. In that case we would say it like this: **bondage** is contrasted with **freedom**. Trying to obey law so as to get God's favour always ties us up in knots! It's a real bind. It leads to an awful bondage. We're like slaves. We have to be constantly at it, making sure that we're always perfectly obeying! We're always tensed up, never quite sure if we've done it right, or worked hard enough at it. On the other

hand, coming to God in faith, as a response to His wonderful grace, *sets us free*. We can be relaxed and at peace. It's the way of liberty.

In the passage we're looking at now, Paul uses an example that would have been very well known to any Jew. He goes back to Abraham, and talks about his two sons, Ishmael and Isaac. Although Paul's way of reasoning may seem a little strange to us, it would have been very telling to those who read this letter. What he does is give them an **allegory**. We call something an allegory when the characters and events in a story are used to symbolise a deeper moral or spiritual meaning.

You will remember that God promised to give the childless Abraham a son through his wife Sarah. What's more, God promised that this son would be a blessing to the whole earth. Abraham and Sarah got older and older until it seemed impossible that they should ever be able to have a child. In desperation (and lack of faith!), Abraham took a second wife, Hagar—a slave—and had a son, Ishmael, through her. Then, some years later, *the promised son*, Isaac, was born to Sarah, just as God had said.

Now for Paul's allegory! In this story there are two sons and there are two mothers. One son is conceived by natural means, Abraham taking the initiative. The second son is conceived as a result of God's explicit promise. One of the mothers was a slave. The other mother was a free woman (**verses 22 and 23**). The two mothers are *representative* of two covenants or agreements (**verse 24**).

The first mother is a slave. She is in bondage. She represents those who are tied to the law (or covenant) that God gave at Mount Sinai through Moses. In other words, just like this mother who could never be anything other

than a slave, so too are those who try to get salvation law-way. They will never be anything other than slaves—slaves to rules and regulations and rituals; slaves to their own sin and guilt. This mother's son, Ishmael, could never receive the inheritance from Abraham, because he was the son of a *slave*. In the same way, those who want to do things law-way are slaves. They can never receive God's inheritance.

The second mother is a free woman (that is, she is not a slave). She represents God's covenant of grace in Jesus Christ. She represents those who through faith trust God for salvation. They come to know Him as a result of His *promise*. And just as Isaac was the true son and inherited the promises, so too are those who are men and women of faith. They are God's true sons. They will receive the promised blessing.

The allegory keeps going! Paul refers to two cities (**verses 25 and 26**)—Jerusalem and the *heavenly* Jerusalem. The first is symbolic of those who are law-way types and are therefore slaves. Jerusalem (as it was in Paul's day) was the 'mother' of those who represented salvation by works. The second city is symbolic of those who are free because they have come to the Lord faith-way. Just as Sarah was the mother of the true son who inherited the promise, so too is the heavenly Jerusalem *our* 'mother'. The heavenly Jerusalem is symbolic of true freedom!

The next thing we see in this allegory is that the law-way types will always persecute and abuse and try to destroy the faith-way Christians. This is illustrated by the fact that Ishmael taunted and teased Isaac. In other words, the *slave son* mocked and derided the *free son*—**verse 29**. (This principle is the same today. Any who are trusting in

their *works* to buy them God's favour will hate and despise those who trust Him *by faith*).

Verse 29 also tells us that there is a contrast between the son (Ishmael) who was born 'naturally' (or 'of the flesh'), and the son (Isaac) who was born 'of the Spirit'. This refers to the fact that Christians are those who have been born again, *by the Holy Spirit*. Law-way types have nothing to do with the Spirit. They are operating purely on a natural level. They are 'in the flesh'. There is nothing *supernatural* in their belief.

Verse 30 reminds us that the slave son and the free-born son cannot both receive the inheritance. **It's for the true son only**. That's why, back in **verse 28**. Paul says, 'we, brethren, like Isaac, are the children of the promise'. Those who are born of the Spirit, who have come into God's family grace-way (or faith-way), are the inheritors. It is not for the law-way types. *They will be excluded just as Ishmael was*.

Finally, Paul concludes in **verse 31** by reminding his Galatian brothers that they really are true sons, not of the slave woman, *but of the free woman*. In other words, they have come to know the Lord *by faith*, not by *law*'. They are inheritors of God's blessings, not because of *works*, but because of His *promise*.

QUESTIONS

1. When we try to be accepted by God law-way, why does this always land us in a mess? What do you actually experience in your conscience every time you try to buy God off?

2. What is an allegory? Can you think of other examples that are used in the Bible?
3. Why do you think Ishmael taunted and teased Isaac? Are there similar circumstances where that same thing might happen today? What is the Christian principle behind what Paul is saying here?
- 4 Why are we Christians called (as was Isaac) 'children of the promise'?

PRAYER

Praise the Lord that you are His son/daughter as the result of His promise, and not because of anything that you have been able to do on a natural, human level. Ask Him to help you understand this rather difficult allegory. and to learn how to apply its message to yourself.

19.

READ GALATIANS 5:1-6

Verse 1. There is only one reason why Jesus came, died, and rose again, and that was to set us free—to set us free from sin's pollution, sin's penalty and sin's power. How stupid it would be, *having been set free*, to go back to being slaves again! But that's what we do, every time we give in to the idea that we have to 'do' something in order to be in God's favour. We become slaves of the law once again. We must resist that temptation and stand our ground! We must not give away the liberty that Christ has won for us on that cross. If we do, then *He will have died for nothing*.

So then, the quickest way to lose our liberty is to begin to think that we have to observe some ritual or law or regulation in order to please God. (I talked about some of these ways in a previous study.) That's exactly what the Galatians had done. They had begun to listen to these Jewish 'trouble-makers' who said that they should observe the Jewish rite of circumcision if they were to be true Christians.

Let's suppose someone told you that you could not really be sure of being a real Christian unless you washed your hands ten times a day! Suppose you became convinced of this, and began to observe this 'law' very carefully. What do you think would happen? What would be your relationship with Christ? What would be your relationship with others? Stop and think about it.

Paul says in **verse 2**, 'Christ will be of no advantage to you'. Your relationship with Him will no longer be one of faith and trust, but one of relying on *your* attempts to keep this 'law'. You will be looking to your own efforts to obey, rather than to Him, and what He has done. In fact, what He has done on the cross has not changed, *but you will get nothing out of it. You will not benefit by it.* In other words, you are saying: 'Christ is not enough. I also have to do this thing as well.' In other words, **your relationship with Him is no longer one of faith and trust alone.** Since faith and trust alone is the basis upon which God accepts us, then Christ's death is of no value to us when we add *our* works to *His*.

Then in **verse 3** Paul tells us that it is no use trying to keep *one* law in order to be accepted by God: **we have to keep them all!** If I decide that it's going to be law-way by which I am to gain salvation, then I have to go all the way, and *observe perfectly every one of them!* What an impossible task!

In **verse 4** he tells us two awful things that result from us trying to justify ourselves. We are 'cut off from Christ' and we are 'fallen from grace'. Here you are, slavishly washing your hands ten times a day, fully convinced that this is what God wants of you, and that it will win you His favour and you will be saved at last. So where does Christ

come into it? He may as well not exist. *You have excluded Him from being of any value to you.* And what has grace got to do with your relationship with God? So long as you keep washing your hands ten times a day, you don't need God's favour (His grace)— you are *buying* His favour by *your works!*

Can you see that if acceptance by God is the result of Him taking the initiative and **doing it all through Christ.** then anything we try to do only cancels out God's grace? It nullifies grace. It reduces it to zero in effect. There is no such thing as salvation through Christ **and** something else. It is entirely through Christ, *or it is not at all.*

By contrast to this law-way. the true Christian is the one who simply trusts, through the Spirit, in Christ (**verse 5**). He knows that Jesus has done everything that is needed on the cross to ensure that one day he will be able to fully enjoy a justification that *God* has worked out for him. He knows that he will one day stand before God as a righteous person, with no guilt or sin or wrong—

AND GOD WILL HAVE DONE IT ALL!

So then, for those who are 'in Christ' there is no such thing as this law or that law, this regulation or that regulation. Nor is there any value in saying 'I don't observe an.,' laws. so there!'. It's not a question of laws or no laws.

The real issue is FAITH. It is a trust in God that shows (or is evidenced) **by love.** In other words. we show our real faith in Christ by the way in which we love (**verse 6**).

Just come back to the 'law' of washing your hands. Do you think you would have much time to be loving God, or

others, while you were so busy worrying about your hands being washed'? Just use your imagination for a moment, and think about what would happen if you were in the middle of helping someone when you remembered you'd forgotten to wash your hands that day. What a panic you'd be in! 'Sorry, got to go... no time to love!' And wouldn't there be times when you'd really resent God for holding you to this law in order to be accepted by Him'? In fact, could it be possible that you might really hate Him at such times? Would you feel much like *loving* Him then?

Can you see the colossal contrast between law-way and faith-way? The first gets us to the point where we actually hate God. The second leads us to being so profoundly thankful that we really do want to love Him. That's why Paul says in verse 6, 'faith works through love'. We come to have faith in Christ when we see what He has done. Love flows out of that, and as love grows, so too does faith.

TO MEMORIZE

Memorize Galatians 5:1 in the RSV

QUESTIONS

1. What important lessons can you learn from verse 17
2. What does it mean to you personally that you should live each day in God's grace'? What sort of things might

happen which would rob you of that enjoyment?

3. What does verse 4 mean when it says that a person has 'fallen from grace'? What has caused it? Has it got anything to do with salvation? Can a believer ever be 'out of' God's grace?
4. How is the genuineness of your faith in Christ demonstrated?

PRAYER

Thank the Lord that you have been set free from sin's power and guilt. Ask Him to enable you to stand your ground and not be enticed back into law-way living. Praise Him that His grace to you in Christ has led you to faith, and that faith has led you to respond to Him in love.

20.

READ GALATIANS 5:7-15

Paul is still on the tail of these ‘trouble-makers’. and he’s still anxious to show the Galatians how foolish it is to follow their teaching. He reminds them that they started off OK. How come they are now off on the wrong track? Who is it that has *diverted them from the truth* ? Who is it that has put road-blocks in the way *to prevent* them from obeying the Gospel (**verse 7**)’?

This sinister obstruction certainly hasn’t come from Christ—the One who called them into the Faith in the first place (**verse 8**). The trouble is, only a tiny little speck of ‘yeast’ can influence a whole church! And that’s what’s happened in Galatia. A little drop of corrupt law-way teaching has undermined the whole congregation (**verse 9**).

The same can be true of each of us as individuals. Just one small speck of wrong doctrine or practice can ruin our lives as believers. Once we get into the rut of some law-way habit, not only does it wreck our experience of the Lord, but it’s very hard to see the way out. We can

become enslaved for years, and not realise it. If we are not living constantly in grace, then we can be sure we’re back under law in some form or other. That’s why we could need the message of this letter of Paul’s. just as much as the Galatians did back then.

In spite of all that’s happened, Paul is still confident that the Galatians will respond to the truth. He has gone to a lot of trouble to remind them, in this letter, of the great certainties of grace and faith and justification, and of their union with Christ. through the cross. As for the person who has been leading them astray, *God will deal with him! He is doomed to judgement* (**verse 10**).

One thing is quite clear: Paul could not be accused of preaching this Jewish ritual of circumcision! If he had been, then he would not have been persecuted. It had to be one thing or the other—the **cross, or circumcision**. Because circumcision was fundamental to the Jew, anyone who did not teach it would be fiercely opposed. That’s why they hated Paul so much, and tried to kill him time and time again. And that’s why many of those early believers, who were Jews converted to Christianity, did not have the courage to confess the cross only. They feared the persecution which would come from the orthodox Jews. It might cost them their lives.

Today we fail to see quite so bluntly the offence of the cross. But to believe in the cross of Christ, *and nothing else*, for salvation is, to many people, ludicrous... absurd ... ridiculous. How much easier to say I’m a Baptist, or I’m an Anglican, than to say I’m ‘**Christ’s Man**’ (a Christian). As soon as we say we’re a Christian, we’re identifying with His cross. Whether we like it or not, it’s a scandal. It’s an offence. It’s a stumbling block (**verse 11**).

In **verse 12**, Paul is so concerned about this ritual of circumcision *versus* faith that he recommends (very strongly!) that the person who is trying to upset the Galatians should go the whole way and castrate himself! *Instead of mutilating the Gospel, let him mutilate himself.*

Back in **verse 1**, Paul reminded us that we have been set free by Christ. Now, in **verse 13**, he says the same thing again. But he adds a very important warning. Liberty is not the same as *licence*. In other words, we are not free to just do as we like. **We have been set free in order to serve.**

It's not easy to learn to live in freedom. We find it hard to believe. It seems too good to be true. 'What! No guilt?' Our old corrupt nature thinks this is great! 'I can do what I like and it doesn't matter. I'm free. I'm forgiven already!' But that's not Christian liberty, that's licence. True freedom for the Christian is being free now to do the things that God wants us to do. Primarily, that means **loving others as He loves**. It means being servants of one another, just as Christ was to us (read John 13:3-17).

We are now in a position to fulfil God's law—the Ten Commandments—by *loving others*. When we love others, we are loving God. When we love others, we are expressing our faith. When we love others, we are communicating the truth to them. When we love others, we are showing them what God is like. When we love others, they can see what true freedom really is.

WE HAVE BEEN SET FREE TO LOVE!

Lots of Christians have their heads full of doctrines and ideas about God, many of which may be quite true. But if

they don't love as He loves, then it's all pointless. Reading the Bible. praying, going to church, singing in the choir. being very religious—all of these things have no point to them if we are not serving one another in love. To set out to love takes an act of the will. We have to learn to say, 'I *will* love that person', or, 'I *will* serve that person' -no matter what it costs. That's hard, and the sin which still dwells in us doesn't take too kindly to it! However, to love one another is not a hint. It is not a suggestion. It is a command.

Not to love one another as we should will inevitably lead to strife in our relationships. If we don't love, we will do the opposite. We will just go the way the flesh dictates. We will begin to snap at each other. We will get cranky With others. and there will be a tension between us and those we ought to be loving. In the end, it destroys us. Our Christian fellowship collapses, or, at the best, is just a front.

Don't let this happen to you. Take care that you guard against this danger. All of us are prone to allowing the flesh get the better of us, when we should, in fact, be genuinely loving and serving each other.

REVIEW

Review memory verse. Galatians 5:1.

QUESTIONS

1. What sort of law-way habits could you fall into that would wreck your experience of Christ? How should you guard against this happening'?

2. Is the cross an offence to you? Why do you think it is offensive and stupid to many people today?
3. According to verse 13, what is the purpose of God setting us free from guilt? Are you fulfilling that purpose?
4. What is the difference between liberty and licence? Can you illustrate the difference from your own experience?
5. Look up I John 3:23 and compare with John 14:15, I John 5:3 and 2 John 6. What do these verses tell you about love?

PRAYER

‘Father, we need Your Spirit so much. to strengthen us to obey You and to love others, as Christ has loved us. Keep us from abusing our freedom and using it for ourselves instead of for others.’

21.

READ GALATIANS 5:16-26

Back in Galatians chapter 3 we read about the Holy Spirit. Now we come to take up that theme and to think in much more detail about **living in the Spirit**.

Have you ever thought about what it would be like for a fish to try to live out of water? It couldn't do it. It would soon die. It has been *designed* to live in the environment of water. That's its *natural* home or habitat.

The natural habitat for human beings is the Holy Spirit. God has *designed* us to live our lives in and through the Holy Spirit. Just as a fish is truly a fish only when it lives in the water, so too we are only truly human when we are living in the Holy Spirit. Outside the Spirit, *we're spiritually dead*. We're less than human—we're less than that which God created us to be.

Paul tells us in **verse 16** that we should be in the habit of deliberately allowing the Holy Spirit to direct and rule our lives. As He does, we will not go the way of sin. We will not be caught up in the 'flesh'—that is, we will not be

going the way our former fallen human nature *as it's manipulated by sin*.

The person who is not a Christian automatically goes along the path dictated by the flesh. He thinks he does exactly what *he* wants to do. He doesn't realise that his fallen nature manipulates him every moment of the day. It can't be any other way, because he's living *outside* the habitat of the Spirit.

Not so the Christian. God has transferred us into the realm of the Spirit. and we have come into true life through Him. *Our conduct is now dictated and directed by Him.* This causes a great conflict within us, because our old Adamic nature has desires which are completely the opposite to the Holy Spirit. *The flesh and the Spirit are for ever enemies!* They are always opposed to each other.

We now have to exercise our will as to which way we will go: Spirit-way, or flesh-way. Spirit-way or law-way.

Every day we have to make moral decisions as to how we are going to live, what we are going to do or not do, and what we will or won't say. The Holy Spirit is constantly there to lead us on in the truth. He dwells within us to do just that. But that rotten old sinful nature once ours (the flesh) is, at the same time, trying to get us to go *its* way. That's why we can't just do what we want. Our will is not strong enough (see Romans 7:15-20). We need all of God's strength to live as He has designed us to live. *That's why we now have a responsibility, and a necessity to obey the Holy Spirit* (see Romans 8:13).

As we obey Him and are led by Him, we're enabled to live in a beautiful freedom. It's the freedom of not having to grind along, trying to obey rules and regulations so as to be accepted by God. No, the Spirit operates within us,

giving us new strength by which we can do what God wants each day, *and enjoy doing so!* (see 2 Corinthians 3:17).

In **verses 19, 20 and 21**, Paul lists some of the main ways by which the flesh shows itself in our conduct when we are living law-way. Every one of these is a manifestation of our self-centred fallen nature. These are attitudes and actions that are always promoting '**self**', and '**me**', and '**I**', and '**mine**'. (Take the time to look at each of the things Paul lists in these three verses, and work out how they fit in with what I have just said.)

Take heed of the terrible warning in verse 21. We can easily kid ourselves that we're OK, even though we may do some of these things. But these are activities which will end up leading people straight to hell. No person who does these things will ever get inside the front gate of God's kingdom of glory. Think seriously about that.

Ever seen a tree blossom and then come out with beautiful fruit? The natural flowing of the sap in the tree produces the fruit at the right time. *That's what the Spirit does in us.* The fruit He produces is **listed in verses 22 and 23. He is always seeking to produce all of these in us.** They are *His* product, not ours. When we are walking in the Spirit and being led by Him, this fruit will be seen in us. Our lives will be reflecting the character of God. There will be no question of any laws having to be observed or any rituals carried out. Nor are there any laws *against* these fruit. Our lives will just naturally blossom with this produce of the Spirit. It is the outcome of obedience and faith. It is **Spirit-way** as opposed to **law-way**.

Again take time to think through each of the fruit Paul lists here in these verses, and relate them to what I said

about **verse 13**, ‘through love be servants of one another’. Ask yourself the question as to whether or not each of the fruit is evident in your life. If not, why not’?

When we looked at Galatians 2:20, we saw that we have been identified with the death of Jesus on the cross. His death is our death. We died when He died. Our guilt was taken away, and our sin and failure were cleansed from us. Here in **verse 24** Paul reminds us of that fact. In our union with Christ, we died to the old system of law and flesh and sin. Their hold over us was broken for ever. *In Christ, we parted company with **them***. Our responsibility now is to live out our lives as those who no longer have anything to do with sin. We are no longer in that habitat!

Look up Colossians 1:13-14. We have been transferred out of the old environment of sin and death—the kingdom of darkness—and are now in the kingdom of God’s Son. Also look up Ephesians 2:1. In that old habitat, we were spiritually dead. Now we have been brought to life! All this has happened through the Holy Spirit. **WE HAVE BEEN BROUGHT TO LIFE THROUGH HIS POWER (verse 25)**. *So now we should live out our new lives b) His same power*. And that’s why there should be no pride in us, nor should we be irritating one another or having any jealous thoughts of others. These things are a terrible contradiction. We should quit them immediately **(verse 26)**.

TO MEMORISE

Memorize Galatians 5:22-23 in the *RSV*.

REVIEW

Review memory verses: Galatians 2:20, Ephesians 2:8-9 and Galatians 5:1.

QUESTIONS

1. What is the condition of people who do not yet live in the habitat of the Spirit? List five or six things that you could say about such persons.
2. Why are the flesh and the Spirit enemies?
3. Now that you are a Christian, why do you have a responsibility to obey the Holy Spirit? What happens in your daily experience when you don’t? What happens when you do?
4. Are the fruit of the Spirit evident in your life? If not, why not? What should you do about it?—and when?

PRAYER

Praise the Lord for bringing new life through the Spirit. Ask that He will help you to be obedient to Him, and so show the beautiful fruit of the Spirit in your life daily.

22.

READ GALATIANS 5:16-26

This passage is so important that we need to look at it a bit further before going on to chapter 6. As we saw in the last study, Paul is telling us that there is an enormous difference between flesh-way living and Spirit-way living. Our fallen human nature (the flesh) is always stirred up when we attempt to go along the law-way path. Let me give you an example. Suppose you sometimes lose your temper. You wish you didn't. So you make a 'law' for yourself, and say, 'Thou shalt not lose thy temper today!'. The more this 'law' is in the front of your mind, the harder it is for you *not* to lose your temper! You grit your teeth and say:

'I will not lose my temper.'

'I WILL NOT LOSE MY TEMPER.'

'I WILL NOT LOSE MY TEMPER.'

'I WILL NOT LOSE MY TEMPER.'

'I WILL NOT LOSE MY TEMPER.'

Guess what happens? *You lose your temper!* You lose your temper because the flesh hates *law*, and wants to disobey it!

That's why law brings the worst out in us. It takes us a long time to begin to learn that we don't have any ability within us to resist these terrible urges to sin.

This same principle can be applied to any other sinful desire we try to lick on our own. I could just as easily have said: 'I will not lust'; 'I will not get angry'; 'I will not envy others'; 'I will not be jealous'; 'I will not be ambitious'; 'I will not be proud'; 'I will not be selfish': etc. etc.

Because you're a sinner, all these terrible things that Paul lists in **verses 19, 20 and 21** are lurking in you, ready to rise to the surface at a moment's notice! (read Mark 7:20-23 and Jeremiah 17:9). It's an unpleasant thought, but of yourself that's what you're like. These very things will manifest themselves in your life so long as you are not living Spirit-way. The harder you try to live your life by your own efforts, the more they will take over. It's impossible to lick them *unaided*. You'll only get deeper and deeper into the very sins you try to avoid. It's like getting sucked into a whirlpool.

In contrast to this, God has given the Christian the incredible gift of the Holy Spirit. He dwells in us. His desire is to enable us to live like Christ. He is at work in us every day, changing us step by step to be more and more the person God intended us to be in the first place. He wants us to be gloriously beautiful creatures (read 2 Corinthians 3:18, and compare this with I John 3:2).

When we deliberately and consciously go the way of the Spirit, the old flesh doesn't get a look-in! Instead, the Holy Spirit brings to the surface **His fruit**. Remember, it is God doing this, not us. Yet we *are* in it as we co-operate in obedience with what the Spirit wants to do (look up Philippians 2:12-13).

Come back to the example of losing your temper. The Spirit-way is to recognise that you can't lick it yourself, and to step out in faith, trusting that He will give you *self control*. Self-control is one of the fruits of the Spirit. You'll see it in the list **in verses 22-23**. The same principle is true of all the other fruit listed there.

We have to know deep down in our hearts that we can't produce these of ourselves. It has to be the work of the Holy Spirit in us. This means that each day we need to have a definite desire that it happen in this way. It means a conscious trust in the Spirit to work in us. It means that we will set out deliberately to love, to be joyful, to be at peace, to be patient, to be kind, to be good, to be faithful, to be gentle, and to have **self-control—in dependence upon the Holy Spirit**. It means that when I have to face some situation where I ought to love, *then I go ahead and love*. If I am involved in a difficult and aggravating situation, *then I just show patience*. The same is true for all the other fruit listed.

Often it is in the *little* things in life that these manifestations of the Spirit are to be seen in us. Some little kindness to another person. Some thoughtful and loving action which conveys to another that we care for them. It may mean taking time to talk with someone who is lonely and in need. The Spirit's fruit is seen in us when we attend to the *little* things in life that are necessary and part of our responsibility as human beings to other human beings—like the little duties at home, or at school, or at our jobs. It's in those little words and looks and attitudes towards others. It's in little acts of self-denial and self-restraint. It's in little deeds of kindness and tenderness and thoughtfulness and consideration for others.

It's also in the **avoidance** of *little* sins and evils. It's when we're consistent in not indulging ourselves in little habits—like eating too much, or trying to be smart, or showing off to others, or being mean, or being indifferent to the feelings and wishes of others, or in being just plain selfish and disobedient.

Living in the Spirit is a whole way of life that shows itself in a day-to-day consistency through which others see Jesus Christ in us. Our lives become more and more like His. *This is God's intention for every Christian*. **THIS IS HIS INTENTION AND PLAN FOR YOU**.

Remember Galatians 2:20? 'It is no longer I who live, *but Christ who lives in me*; and the life I now live in the flesh I live *by the faith of the Son of God*, who loved me and gave Himself for me.' *Christ in us* is the same as *the Spirit in us*. He dwells in us to live out that Christ-life in us and through us. Our part is to see that this is what He is doing, and to obey Him as He does it in us. When we refuse, and decide to go our own way and do our own thing, then we deeply grieve Him. He loves us very much, and we cause Him great sorrow when we disobey (read Ephesians 4:30).

REVIEW

Review memory verses Galatians 5:22-23.

QUESTIONS

1. Do you think people see Jesus in you? How? When?

When don't they? Why? What specifically do you think you should do to be more consistent?

2. Can you, on your own, produce the fruit of the Spirit? How would you guide someone else who asked you to help them to be more like Christ? How could you use this part of Galatians to help them?
3. How does Galatians 2:20 relate to Galatians 5:22-23?
4. What steps do you think you should take from today onwards to be living more in the Spirit?

PRAYER

Do you grieve the Lord by how you live? Ask Him to show you, and ask His forgiveness. Seek His strength to go on in a life of obedience, demonstrating the fruit of the Spirit in all you do and say and think. Remember how much He has loved you and what an incredible gift He has given you: **'Christ in you... the Spirit in you'**.

23.

READ GALATIANS 6:1-10

How many times have you been caught in some sin without realising it? You didn't *deliberately* go into it, it just seemed to creep up on you from behind, and you were suddenly 'overtaken' by it. As a result, you felt crushed by your failure and the consequent sense of guilt.

When you see this happen to someone else, what should you do? Do you ignore it and say that it's none of your business? Do you feel unable to say anything to them because the same thing has happened to you? In **verse 1** we're told to 'restore' such a person. But what does that mean?

In the last study we talked about **life in the Spirit**. We saw that God intends us to be living 'in the Spirit'. We are to be Spirit-filled people. He desires that the fruit of the Spirit be evidenced in our lives every day. So then, out of genuine love we will go to this person who has sinned, and seek to help them to know afresh that they are forgiven and that their guilt has been taken away on the cross. We will try to 'restore' them to a place of peace and trust and

joy once again. We will do this very gently, because we will know we are failures just as they are. There can be no pride in it, nor any harshness, nor any note of condemnation, for we know only too well that we too could be tempted, and so fall in the same way as they have (read I Corinthians 10:12).

Back in chapter 5, verse 13, we saw that ‘through love [we are to] be servants of one another’. In so doing, we fulfil the law ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself’. This is the ‘law of Christ’—going out to love totally for the other person’s good. By bearing one another’s burdens, we are loving in this way. We are acting toward them as Christ would (**verse 2**. Read Romans 15:1-3).

In 5:26 Paul said that living in the Spirit does not allow any self-conceit, or provoking of one another, nor any envious attitudes. These all come from **pride**. They come from thinking we’re pretty good, when compared with others. Such a person will never help others, and will never bear the burdens of others. Unfortunately, there are Christians like this today. They think they are ‘above’ such menial tasks. They would never bring themselves to such servile (servant-like) actions. That would only demean them in the eyes of others! They would feel put down.]hey would not feel so important!

Can you see that a Christian who thinks this way is having himself on? He is *deceiving* himself (**verse 3**). He thinks he’s pretty crash-hot, but in fact he’s **nothing**. He is self-inflated! He’s a contradiction of all that a Spirit-filled Christian should be (compare this with James 1:26-27). This danger of pride lurks in us all. That’s why we should judge our own good deeds in the light of God’s

Word, and not go about comparing ourselves with others. If what we do is right, and is according to the truth, then that’s great. It’s not wrong to be ‘proud’ of doing what’s right. You can be thankful and very grateful to the Lord. But don’t boast, and don’t show off. Don’t even *think* boastful thoughts about yourself (**verse 4**).

Verse 5. We will all have to give an account to the Lord for our conduct in this life. Our deeds will be judged. That’s why no one else can do our appointed tasks for us. We must all bear our own ‘burdens’—our own responsibilities, our own load. We must be strong and learn to carry these loads on our own shoulders. *We must not expect others to carry them for us*. Out of love, we will seek to help others with *their* loads (**verse 2**), but we must not be demanding that others help us with those burdens which are *our* duty to bear.

In Paul’s day, ordinary teachers did not have any time to earn money, and they were supported by their pupils. ‘Why not support your teachers of the Gospel in the same way?’ Paul says (**verse 6**). This would be an act of love, and would be a sharing of their ‘burden’. Paul himself never asked for money from any of his converts, and in fact worked as a tent-maker to support himself (see Acts 18:3; I Corinthians 4:12; 9:14-15; 2 Corinthians 11:7). But he wrote this, no doubt, with other Christian preachers and teachers in mind, who needed this kind of financial and material help.

Verses 7 and 8 return to the whole subject of Spirit-way living as opposed to flesh-way living. Paul says that all that we do in life is a **sowing**. All our actions and words are like sowing a seed that will one day grow into some kind of fruit. The big question is: ‘*What kind of fruit?*’. If we

‘sow’ to the flesh by living along the lines that it dictates, then the ‘fruit’ at the end will be corruption and death, It is the way of disobedience. It is the way of self. It is the way of pride and self-conceit. On the other hand, if we ‘sow’ to the Spirit, by living in obedience to His will, and by moving out in love to do others good, then the ‘fruit’ at the end will be eternal life.

We are warned to be terribly careful here. *God can't be fooled.* If we take this matter lightly, then the only persons being fooled are ourselves. We are *deceiving* ourselves. We may think we are getting away with it, but the *end result* will prove otherwise, That's why the Scripture is constantly telling us to have the end result in mind in all that we do in this life. **IT IS THE END THAT COUNTS** (see I Corinthians 3:11-15; 2 John 8; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Romans 6:20-23).

So then, don't give up! Keep on doing good! Don't get slack in doing what you know is right, because in the end you will receive the reward—you'll reap the harvest! God has His right time, and we must not lose heart because it seems far off(verse 9). Take every opportunity to be doing good to everyone you meet, but especially to your Christian brothers and sisters! (verse 10).

QUESTIONS

1. What does it mean, in verse 1, when we are told to restore someone else who has fallen'? Do you ever do this'? Do you intend to? How? With what attitude?
2. What are some of the dangers associated with pride?

Can you think of examples from your own life that illustrate what Paul says in verses 1 to 37

3. What is the terrible warning given in verses 7 and 8? Can you think of anything you do or say that might be an attempt on your part to deceive God? Will you get away with it? What should you do?
4. How often should you be thinking about the end of your life? In what ways might that change your present attitudes?

PRAYER

Seek from the Lord a genuine humility by which you may serve others out of a pure love and care for them. Ask Him to help you to sow to the Spirit in all you do.

24.

READ GALATIANS 6:11-18

Verse 11. Usually Paul dictated his letters to a scribe, but in this case he wrote to the Galatians in his own handwriting. We have no idea why, nor can we be sure as to what he means by his comment, ‘see with what large letters I am writing...’ It could be that he had some eye ailment and couldn’t see very well, or he may have been injured and found writing difficult. On the other hand, he may have deliberately written the letter himself in especially large letters, so that the Galatians would know that it really was an authoritative letter from Paul the Apostle himself.

In his final comments Paul attacks, yet again, these enemies of the Gospel —these ‘trouble-makers’. He highlights the fact that their motives were selfish. They wanted the Galatians to submit to this Jewish ritual of circumcision only because it would save *them* from persecution (verse 12). They knew that the preaching of the cross, and the cross only, invited bitter persecution from the traditional Jews. They certainly didn’t want to get caught up

in that! So then, if only these non-Jewish Galatians would be circumcised, then the Jews could no longer object to their Christian beliefs! It would be clear to everyone, then, that the Galatians observed the Jewish rituals associated with their law.

As we have already seen, Paul was not going to give an inch on this matter! He points out that these ‘troublemakers’ were not sincere, because they didn’t even keep the law themselves! (**verse 13**). They were only trying to get the Galatians to do this so that they would have some hold over them which they could then boast about.

As for Paul, he will not boast in anything except the cross of Christ (**verse 14**). Even though he knows that this cross is foolish and stupid to people—he will rejoice in it. He knows that God has placed this cross in the centre of history, and that it is the key to man’s salvation. It is *God’s way* of salvaging lost men and women. He is not ashamed of it. Nor is he afraid of the persecution which will inevitably come from preaching and believing in the cross. On the contrary, *he glories in the cross!*

Has it ever occurred to you that you will glory (boast) in something? It may be your superior ability at school, or your sporting skill, or your achievements in music, or your good looks, or your quick and clever way with words! It could be any one of a number of things. You may even glory in it *secretly*. Well, Paul made up his mind that he dared not glory in anything except the cross. Since the cross was the most significant event in all history, then that’s what he should count as more important than anything else. The *cross is the centre of his life*.

For us to glory in anything other than the cross means that we have never really understood it as being of great

importance. Think very long and hard about that! Also, in the light of my comments above, look up Romans 1:16 and I Corinthians 1:17-31, and work out what these verses are saying.

Others boast in circumcision, Paul boasts in the cross. By it the evil world system (Galatians 1:4) has been destroyed in its power to enslave him, and his own guilt and sin has been judged. He is free from both! He can now be the true person God created him to be! As for obeying laws or not obeying laws, neither position will save anyone. The real issue is that God, through the cross, makes us **new creations!** (**verse 15**). It is grace that counts—it is God taking the initiative in salvaging us when we could do nothing of ourselves, and bringing us to **new birth**, so making us **new persons** (see John 3:3; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Titus 3:5-6). And He does it through the cross—through the death and resurrection of Jesus. That's why Paul glories in the cross, and nothing else. *His whole new life in the Spirit hinges on the event of that cross.*

In **verse 16** Paul calls down from God a blessing of peace and mercy on all those who hold to this 'rule' of the centrality and sufficiency of the cross. All who believe the cross to be the only way of salvation are the true people of God, the true Israel of God.

This is a good way of testing not only our own position, but also the belief of others. Is the cross the most important teaching of your church or group? Is it central in all that they believe? Do they glory in the cross? Or do they glory in their denomination, or their worship, or their music, or their wonderful organising ability, or their social events, or their BIG congregation, or their BIG income

each week, or their eloquent pastor, or... or... or... ? Test it out. You may find that there are very few today who would stand with Paul. The question is, where are you?

Verse 17. Paul has finished his argument. The matter has been dealt with, and there is nothing more to say. From now on, let the 'trouble-makers' keep their mouths shut! Paul has *suffered for* the Gospel, which is more than they have! Just read 2 Corinthians 11:23-28, and you will see what he means by the words 'I bear in my body the marks of Jesus'.

Earlier I said that believing in the cross, and the cross only, will invite persecution. It will invite suffering. If you don't want to suffer, then don't believe in the cross! But if you intend to be 'Christ's man', and if you intend to live Spirit-way, then know of a certainty—you will cop it sooner or later! The world will hate you. But unless the cross is a reality to you, you will not survive. You will back off, and you will settle for a half-baked, wishy-washy brand of Christianity that isn't the real thing. (Read the following: John 15:18-21; 2 Corinthians 4:7-10; Philippians 1:29; 2 Timothy 3:12.)

Finally, in verse 18 Paul pronounces a benediction on his dear friends. The whole of this letter has been about God's grace, and so he asks that the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ may be upon them all, and that they may know it in the depths of their being.

REVIEW

Review memory verses: Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 2:8-9; Galatians 5:1, 22-23.

QUESTIONS

1. What is the significance of the cross to you? is it just a vague idea or theory or belief, or is the impact of the cross real to you each day? Compare your perspective with verse 14.
2. What do you 'glory' in? What things are you openly (or secretly) proud of about yourself, and about which you boast? Is this good or bad? Compare again with verse 14.
3. Make a list of the important truths that you have learned from Galatians. Ask yourself: Have these truths changed my life in any way? What specific things have I begun to do (or now refrain from doing) as a result of studying Galatians?
4. How can you best go on benefiting from the message of Galatians?

PRAYER

Thank your heavenly Father that He has put the cross in the centre of history. Thank Him afresh for the death and resurrection of Jesus for you. Ask Him to go on teaching you from this letter of Paul's, and that you may grow more and more each day to live Spirit-way... grace-way .. faith-way.