

Place: Lurgan Baptist 9:2:2016

## A JOURNEY THROUGH THE BIBLE

Reading: Galatians 1:1-10

### 49. THE BOOK OF GALATIANS

In 1833 the British Parliament voted to abolish the institution of slavery in the Crown Colony of Jamaica. The date set for the emancipation proclamation to go into effect was awaited with growing anticipation by the people. On the night before the glorious day, the slaves did not sleep. Instead they dressed in their most beautiful clothes and began streaming up the mountainsides to catch the first glimpse of the dawning of their day of freedom. As the first rays of the sun streaked across the horizon, the slaves erupted in irrepressible ecstasy. On that day a Negro spiritual was born which became the theme song for the Civil Rights Movement in our day.

**Free at last**  
**Free at last**  
**Thank God Almighty**  
**Free at last**

Freedom is the watchword of Paul's letter to the Galatians. Many commentators call this book "*The Magna Carter of Christian Liberty*." It was Martin Luther's favourite book. He said of it, "*The epistle to the Galatians is my epistle, I have betrothed myself to it. It is my wife.*" Galatians was the battle axe which Luther

brought down with terrific and telling force upon the helmets of his foes. John Bunyan was also greatly influenced by this epistle. Paul's letter to the Galatians has been likened to "*the sketch for the finished picture of Romans*," and certainly the two books have much in common. Both deal with justification without the deeds of the law. *Galatians deals with the teaching of justification controversially, where Romans deals with it systematically.* Romans emphasis's the Christian's standing, Galatians insists that he stands. The difference between them is that Galatians was written in deep emotion and Romans with calm mature reflection. We need to read Romans to be ***Grounded*** in Christian doctrine, we need to read Corinthians to be ***Guided*** in Christian practice and we need to read Galatians to be ***Guarded*** against deceptive error. Galatians also forms a link with the Book of Hebrews.

Romans, Galatians and Hebrews all quote from one verse in Habakkuk each offering a different aspect of truth. Do you know that verse is ? "*The just shall live by faith.*" ( 3:11 ) In Romans Paul places the emphasis on the words "*the just*," or "*the righteous*," in Hebrews the emphasis is on the last words "*by faith*," as Hebrews is the great New Testament book on faith. In Galatians Paul places the emphasis on the words "*shall live*," as he comes to grips with the question of what it means to truly live the Christian life. The answer is one word, liberty. Is this not what the book of Galatians is all about ? ***Liberty***. The subject of liberty occurs in this letter 11 times. "*Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law being made a curse for us.*" ( 3:3-14 ) Now what does liberty mean ?

Nowadays the phrase “ *Christian liberty*,” usually means the freedom some Christians assert to smoke, or drink alcohol, or whatever, the freedom to cut loose from the restraints of godliness. But that is not what Paul meant by Christian liberty. He means the liberty of not having to establish our own righteousness by our own works, the liberty of not having to merit acceptance with God. Is this not true liberty ? To be counted righteous by God because of the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ. My .... every single religion known to humanity is a religion of works except the gospel of Jesus Christ. And what is the gospel ? “ *Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures. And that he was buried and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.*”

( 1 Cor 15:3-4 ) The gospel is the good news that sinners can be forgiven and go to heaven because of what the Lord Jesus did on the cross. Now it was this very gospel that was being “ *pervverted*,” in Galatia. Now in order to get a handle on our study this .... we need to take note of,

### 1. THE PLACE:

For in ( 1:2 ) Paul takes about “ *the churches of Galatia*,” ( 1:2 ) Now that raises a problem. You see, several hundred years before the birth of Christ some fierce tribes migrated from Gaul ( modern France ) into Asia minor and founded Galatia which simply means “ *the country of the Gauls*.” Then when the Romans reorganized the ancient world they made Galatia a part of a larger province that included several other provinces and they called the entire province Galatia. So, in Paul’s day when a person talked about Galatia, you could not be sure

whether he meant the smaller country of Galatia or the larger Roman province. So did Paul write to the country of Galatia or to the province of Galatia ? In other words did he write to the northern Galatian region or to the southern Galatian region ? It seems that Paul wrote to the churches in the southern part of the province of Galatia, Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe ( Turkey ) churches that he had founded on his first missionary journey. ( Acts 13-14 ) Do you recall the soul stirring experiences of Paul as he passed through this region ? At the hand of its natives he received both beatings and blessings. (1)

### (2) THE PEOPLE:

Galatia was named for the Gaul’s who had originally come from the area we know today as France. So the Galatians were not Arabs or Turks or Asians. They were a Celtic race of ancestry similar to that of ourselves. Julius Caesar wrote of them like this, “ *The infirmity of the Gaul’s is that they are fickle in their resolves and fond of change and not to be trusted.*” They lacked two essential attributes of Christian character, *spiritual discernment and steadfast determination*. No wonder Paul writes “ *I marvel that ye are soon removed from him that called into the grace of Christ unto another gospel.*” ( 1:6 ) He says in ( Ch 4 ) “ *But now after that ye have known God or rather are known of God how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage ?*” ( 4:9 ) Galatia had been infiltrated by “ *Judaizers*,” hardened legalists who had come from Jerusalem whose aim was to entice Gentile believers into the Jewish system. These Gentile believers had received

from Paul the fresh, liberating gospel of Jesus Christ. Now these wolves declared a gospel of bondage, of rules and rituals. In order to become genuine Christians, they claimed the Gentiles would have to become circumcised, keep the law of Moses and obey all of the Old Testament regulations. Now do you see,

### 3. **THE PURPOSE:**

Of this letter ? C.H. Spurgeon once said, “ *No man can be a Christian without being a controversialist.*” If that was true in Spurgeon’s day, it is even truer now. But it was also true in the beginning in Paul’s day as this Galatian letter shows us. One of the mighty ways in which Paul fought “ *the good fight of faith,*” was in writing his epistles. Here is Paul contending for the faith. You say, “ *what is at stake ?*” The very gospel of Jesus Christ, and on this issue Paul would not compromise one iota. So why does Paul write this letter ?

To **Extol** the true Gospel: ( 1:9 ) To set forth the truth that a man is justified by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone plus nothing.

To **Expose** and to contradict the false Judaizers and their teaching. ( 5:10-13 )

To **Establish** Paul’s apostolic authority which had been confirmed by the other apostles in Jerusalem. ( 1:15-20 2:8-9 )

To **Emphasize** the value of Christian freedom and liberty, and at the same time show that it is not a license to sin. Faith is revealed by spiritual fruit in the lives of Christians. ( 5:13-14 22-23 )

To **Explain** that the Believer is perfected in the Christian life, not by the works of the law by walking in the Spirit. ( 5:16, 24-26 )

Now the book of Galatians falls into three sections. Personal: ( Ch’s 1-2 ) Doctrinal ( Ch’s 3-4 ) and Practical ( Ch’s 5-6 ) The first deals with Revelation, the second deals with Justification, and the third deals with Sanctification.

#### (1) **PERSONAL CH’S 1-2**

The first two chapters are personal and the keyword in them is “ *gospel,*” found ten times in these forty five verses. Now it’s interesting how Paul begins this letter. For as you read this letter you immediately notice that there is a different tone that is struck. For he does not open this epistle with his usual praise to God and prayer for the saints. His introduction is brief, almost blunt and certainly bristling with apostolic authority. By going straight for the juggler Paul shows how serious he takes this error that had crept into the churches of Galatia. Paul’s aim was to show that his message and ministry came directly from Christ and not from men. Now as I have said the key word in these opening chapters is the word “ *gospel.*” Notice,

### ***(a) THE GOSPEL IS DECLARED: 1:1-5***

Paul begins this letter by asserting his apostolic authority. Do you know why he does this ? Because his enemies said that he was not a true apostle. They were saying that Paul's apostleship and message were not trustworthy because he lacked official endorsement from Jerusalem.

“ *We have got our credentials from Peter,*” they would say as though the approval of man is proof that a preacher is sent from God. So Paul begins this letter by declaring his authority. “ *Paul an apostle not of men neither by man but by Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised him from the dead.*” ( 1:1 ) He was just as much an apostle as the Twelve. His apostleship was not from human selection but by divine appointment, therefore he had the authority to deal with the problems in the Galatian churches. He immediately spells out the gospel that he preached. Do you see that Paul's gospel,

#### **1. Reveals a PERSON:**

“ *Our Lord Jesus Christ,*” ( 1:3 ) Paul's gospel was centred in Christ, his death, burial and resurrection. Everywhere Paul went he preached. He cries, “ *We preach Christ crucified.*” Christ crucified was his only message. He uplifted the Saviour. Is this our message ? In a small village stood a church upon whose arch were inscribed the words, “ *We preach Christ crucified.*” All who entered the church or stood outside knew the purpose for which the building was erected. For years godly men preached there and presented a crucified Christ as the only means of salvation. But as the generation passed, there

arose a generation that considered the message of the cross “ *the gospel of the shambles,*” and they began to preach salvation through Christ's example and teaching without the necessity of His sacrificial death on the cross. And a little creeper made its way up the side of the archway and covered the final word of the inscription so that it now read “ *We preach Christ,*” and so they did but not Christ crucified. After some time some asked why the sermons should be confined to Christ and the teachings of the Bible so the speakers began to give discourses on the social gospel, politics etc; and the little creeper crept a little further and wiped out the third word so that it simply read “ *We preach.*” Man's philosophies had taken the place of Christ's gospel. But the true gospel centres in Christ. Are you making much of Him ? Are you uplifting the Cross as the only means of salvation ?

#### **2. Reveals a PRICE:**

“ *Who gave himself for our sins,*” ( 1:4 ) When Christ died God laid on Him the iniquity of us all ( Is 53:6 ) and in view of such a divine act of grace no system of law or works could stand.

#### **3. Reveals a PURPOSE:**

“ *That he might deliver us,*” the Judaizers were bringing the churches into bondage through the Law ( 2:4 3:13 4:9 ) But the purpose of Christ's death was to deliver us from this evil age and give us a new standing in liberty. ( 5:1 ) No wonder Paul says “ *To whom be glory for ever and ever Amen.*” (a)

**(b) THE GOSPEL IS DISTORTED: 1:6-10**

Do you see how Paul demolishes the false gospel of the Judaizers ? He says that this so called gospel is “ *another gospel which is not another.* ” ( 1:6-7 ) Now there are a few words here we need to consider. Look at the word “ *removed,* ” in ( 1:6 ) Its used here in the present progressive tense which suggest that the Galatians were only in the act of turning. Paul was striking when the iron was hot. Look at the word “ *another,* ” for Paul uses two Greek words here which are translated “ *another,* ” but have different meanings in the original. The first is heteros which means “ *another of a different kind or quality,* ” the other is allos which means “ *another of the same kind or quality.* ” So another gospel of the Jewish legalist was another of a different kind and not another of the same kind. You see, the Judaizers had come along and substituted their false gospel for the true gospel and this sin Paul pronounced them accursed.

The word he uses is “ *anathema,* ” which means “ *dedicated to destruction.* ” To put it bluntly Paul says that anyone who preaches a gospel different from the one he preached should be damned to hell. My .... in this ecumenical age such a statement like that sounds extreme. We are told to be “ *politically correct,* ” and if you are doctrinally moderate then you are good. But Paul wasn't. He was not afraid to fight for the gospel. This is his fighting epistle. He has on his war paint. My .... are you prepared to contend for the faith ? Are you ready to take a stand for Christ's Virgin Birth, Virtuous Life: Vicarious Death: Victorious Resurrection and His Visible Return ?

Do you realize that sometimes we have to fight ? *I mean has God not given us the responsibility of protecting the gospel ?* In an age in which there are spurious gospels which add to, take from, or substitute for the true gospel are we not to stand firm ? Dr. Sidlow Baxter talks about the Galatianism of the Roman Catholic Church. *The Council of Trent was the 19<sup>th</sup> general Council of the Roman Catholic Church and was in session from 1545-1563.* This council was convened for the purpose of both reforming the Catholic Church and combating the Protestant Reformation. People throughout Europe were reading the Bible in their own language.

They were quickly discovering that what they had been taught by the Roman Church was vastly different than what was taught in the Bible. People were getting saved by the thousands and leaving the Catholic Church. After seventeen of the twenty-five sessions, a series of Canons totaling 128 are listed. Everything that we as Bible believing Christians believe is specifically condemned by the Catholic Church. For instance in Session 6 on justification, Canon 12 states, “ *If anyone says that justifying faith is nothing else than confidence in divine mercy, which remits sins for Christ's sake, or that it is this confidence alone that justifies us, let him be anathema.* ” Canon 9 of the same Session 6 proclaims, “ *If anyone says that the sinner is justified by faith alone, meaning that nothing else is required to cooperate in order to obtain the grace of justification, let him be anathema.* ” On one hand the Catholic Church boldly pronounces a curse on anyone who believes in salvation by grace through faith alone. This curse is a blatant denial

of the true Apostolic Gospel. Then on the other hand they are in fact cursed by God for proclaiming another Gospel.

**(c) THE GOSPEL IS DEMONSTRATED: 1:11-2:4**

Its revealed in Paul's life. Now keep in mind that the Judaizers were questioning Paul's apostleship. They apparently were accusing him of being under the thumb of the other apostles. They were saying that he was not one of the original twelve but a Johnny come lately. So Paul gives us some background on his own experiences in connection with the gospel. He tells us that he received his Gospel directly from Christ. ( 1:11-14 ) This experience qualified him to be an apostle. He tells us that he received his Gospel apart from the other apostles. ( 1:15-17 ) Paul did not confer with men after his conversion and call. He tells us that he received acknowledgment for his Gospel from the churches. ( 1:18-24 ) Do you see what Paul is doing ? To people who were seeking to discredit him as an apostle Paul is establishing his authority as an apostle of God. And so the (a) (b) (c) and in ( Ch 2 ) we see,

**(d) THE GOSPEL IS DEFENDED: 2:1-21**

In the first part of the chapter ( 2:1-10 ) we are at *Jerusalem the centre of Jewish Christianity*, in the second part of the chapter ( 2:11-20 ) we are at *Antioch the centre of Gentile Christianity*. In the first part we see the courage of Paul, in the second part we see the cowardice of Peter. At this point in the record the Judaizers begin putting pressure on Paul to mix their devilish legalism with God's pure grace but they would run into a brick wall in this.

James, Peter and John gave Paul the right hand of fellowship recognize his message and ministry and encourage Paul to keep preaching God's grace to the Gentiles. Paul had preserved "*the truth of the gospel*," ( 2:5 ) from the lies of the enemy. But what about Peter ? Peter had come from Jerusalem to Antioch and the first thing we note is **Peter's Freedom**: he enjoyed fellowship with all the believers Jews and Gentiles alike. He accepted them on the same level as one family in Christ. But his freedom was threatened by **Peter's Fear**: for while he was at Antioch he was visited by some of the "*circumcision party*," ( Acts 15:1, 5 ) and they wanted to lead the Antioch church into religious legalism.

And Peter lost his courage. Do you know what the Bible says ? "*The fear of man bringeth a snare.*" ( Prov 29:25 ) Peter's fear led to **Peter's Fall**: for he ceased to enjoy the "*love feast*," with the Gentile believers and separated himself from them. Then Paul stepped in. "*Peter you are a Jew, yet you have been living like a Gentile. Now you want the Gentiles to live like Jews. What kind of inconsistency is that ?*" ( 2:14 ) Here is Paul again defending the gospel. My .... are you willing to defend "*the truth of the gospel ?*" ( 2:5 ) Are you "*walking uprightly according to the truth of the gospel ?*" ( 2:14 ) You see, the best way to defend the truth is to live the truth. My verbal defense of the gospel will accomplish very little if my life contradicts what I say. (1)

**(2) DOCTRINAL CH'S 3-4**

These verses that make up these chapters are some of the strongest that Paul ever penned. But after all he was in a battle. Paul is out to prove that salvation is by grace alone and not by the works of the law. So he uses different arguments seeking to prove that salvation is by grace, through faith apart from the works of the law. There is,

***(a) The Argument from EXPERIENCE: 3:1-5***

Do you see ( 3:4 ) ? The word “ *suffered*,” can be translated “ *experienced*.” Paul asks “ *Have you experienced so many things in vain ?*” I mean these believers at Galatia believed the message of the cross ( 3:1 ) they received the Holy Spirit ( 3:2-5 ) Everything in their personal experience pointed to one thing. Salvation is by grace not by law. Could it be that you believe that the same Holy Spirit who saved you is not able to keep you ? Do you have the idea that salvation is by grace but that living the Christian life depends on your own strength ? Do you think that you are saved by trusting and sanctified by trying ? How wrong this is. The Holy Spirit who saves is the One who sustains.

***(b) The Argument from ABRAHAM: 3:6-9***

The Judaizers pointed to Abraham “ *the father of the Jews*,” as their example and Paul does the same. How was Abraham saved ? By faith. Paul’s whole point here that is Abraham was converted 430 years before the giving of the law. ( 3:17 ) The word “ *accounted*,” means “ *to put to one’s account*.” You see, when you trust Christ, God’s

righteousness is put to your account. But there’s more. The believer’s sins are no longer put to his account. ( Rom 4:1 ) So Paul is proving that salvation is by grace through faith and not by the works of the law. He uses the argument (a) (b)

***(c) The Argument from LAW: 3:10-4:11***

Paul says “ *You want to be saved by the works of the law ?*” But the law does not save it curses. If there were a law that saved sinners then God would have spared His Son and used that law instead of the cross. The purpose of the law was to convict not to convert. ***It was to probe the soul for sin*** ( 3:19-22 ) and ***prepare the soul for Christ***. ( 3:22-29 ) “ *The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ*.” ( 3:24 ) The Law restrains sin: the law reveals sin. The Law was introduced to prepare us for Christ by showing us that we could not keep that law.

***(d) The Argument from SEMTIMENT: 4:12-20***

Here is the appeal of a concerned father addressing his children. He reminds them that when he first came to them they treated him like an angel, now they treated him like an enemy because he was telling them the truth. Paul asks, “ *What has happened to that love ? What has happened to the blessedness, the joy you experienced when you heard the gospel and trusted Christ*.” ( 4:15 ) Oh, they had not lost the experience of salvation but they were losing the enjoyment of salvation and finding satisfaction in their works instead. I wonder is your

Christian life moving forward into liberty instead of backward into bondage ?

***(e) The Argument from ALLEGORY: 4:21-31***

*An allegory is an event or story that has a hidden meaning.* You see, Paul uses the story of Abraham's two sons ( Gen Ch's 16, 21 ) to show that the new covenant of grace has superseded the old covenant of law. The son born of Hagar was of the flesh, the child born of Sarah was according to promise. God's commandment to Abraham was to cast out Ishmael and Hagar. But the Judaizers in Galatia wanted to invite Hagar and Ishmael back into the family again. But how can any Christian ever go back to the law ? How can we give up grace for bondage ? How can we substitute our work for the work of Christ ? (1) (2)

**(3) PRACTICAL CH'S 5-6**

You see, Christianity is not only about going to heaven when you die ( justification ) it's also about living now in this present life ( sanctification ) As Warren Wiersbe reminds us in these closing chapters Paul draws some contrasts. He talks about,

***(a) LIBERTY NOT BONDAGE: 5:1-12***

*“ Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.”* ( 5:1 ) You see, the problem is not just getting freedom its keeping freedom. Liberty can be lost. As J. P.

Curran put it “ *the condition upon which God has given liberty is eternal vigilance.*” The word “ *fallen,*” in ( 5:4 ) does not mean that they had lost their salvation rather it refers to a ship not under control. ( Acts 27:17, 26 29, 32 ) You see to put oneself back under the law means to deny the sweet and sure control of God's grace. During the day of World War 2 Winston Churchill was invited to return to Harrow the preparatory school he attended as a boy. The headmaster told the students to listen closely to the words of the world famous statesman. When Churchill stood before the students this was his speech. “ **Never give in. Never give in. Never. Never. Never.**” Then he sat down. Do you work at maintaining your freedom ?

***(b) SPIRIT NOT FLESH: 5:13-26***

The words “ *flesh,*” and “ *Spirit,*” are found ten times in these closing chapters. The “ *flesh,*” refers to the fallen nature still with the believer. You see, the human body is not sinful. If the Holy Spirit controls the body, then we walk in the Spirit but if the flesh controls the body then we walk in the lusts ( desires of the flesh ) Here Paul is talking about the conflict between the two natures. Do you recall when you got saved ? For a few days or weeks you had wonderful victory then temptation and defeat came. You see, someone should have told you that the old nature would rise up again. The old nature does not vacate the premises when the new tenant takes up His residence. You see, God wants us to “ *walk in the Spirit,*” having our daily lives under His control then the “ *fruit of the Spirit,*” will be seen. And what is the fruit of the Spirit ? Can I give it to you in one word. Christlikeness. Is this not what



Christian liberty is all about ? Becoming more and more like Christ ? (a) (b)

**(c) OTHERS NOT SELF: 6:1-10**

Do you remember what they said about the Lord when He was on the cross ? “ *He saved others.* ” ( Lk 23:35 ) Jesus Christ lived and died for others and we must His example. That means we must help others Spiritually: ( 6:1-5 ) and Materially: ( 7-10 ) The story has often been told about the message the founder of the Salvation Army sent to their international convention. General William Booth was unable to attend personally because of ill health, so he cabled the delegates a message containing one word, “ *Others.* ” Is this not the mark of a Spirit filled Christian ? He thinks of others and how he can minister to others.

**(d) GOD NOT MAN: 6:11-18**

Painfully scrawling each letter hampered by poor eyesight ( 4:15 ) Paul says “ *I do not glory in my flesh like these Judaizers do. They love to compel people to be circumcised. To them each circumcision is another scalp they can hang on their belts as a sign that they have done something for God. But I don't glory in works of the flesh. I glory only in the cross of Christ ‘ by whom the world is crucified unto me and I am crucified unto the world.’* ” Salvation means Christ died for me, that is substitution, sanctification means I died with Christ, that is identification. “ *These false teachers belong to the world, and are living for the world,* ” says Paul “ *But the world*

*has no attraction for me I have been crucified to the world and the world has been crucified to me.* ” Indeed “ *I bear in my body the marks ( brands, scars ) of Jesus Christ.* ”

“ You false teachers are marked with circumcision, but I bear in my body the scars of serving the Lord Jesus.” In Paul's day men branded slaves as a mark of ownership, soldiers as a mark of allegiance devotees as a mark of consecration, criminals as a mark of exposure and the abhorred as a mark of reproach. Paul says “ *I am scarred and battered and beaten but wherever liberty is not, and wherever people are held in bondage and oppression that's where I'll go and I'll point the way to liberty in Christ.* ” And what do these brand-marks of Paul say to us ?

They say let us never be ashamed of bearing suffering or reproach for Christ's sake, they say let it be our daily prayer that we may bear the marks of the Lord Jesus on our character, they say let us not be hesitant in our witness for our Master. Let us seek to bring souls to the place where they also will glory in the cross. For Paul's ground of boasting and the central fact of his gospel, was the cross of Christ. He embraced the Person of the Cross and made Him Lord of his life. He experienced the Power of the Cross which revolutionized his life. He enjoyed the Preaching of the Cross which brought sinners to God.

Is the cross your glory ? “ *In the Cross, in the Cross be my glory ever, till my raptured soul shall find rest beyond the river.* ”