

The Gospel in

Galatians

Living like God is for sale?



Field  Notes

Survey the Land

Galatians

Corrupting the gospel is an age-old tendency

Field Study 1

Previewing Galatians

1–2 Defending the true Gospel

3–4 The Gospel:

How one becomes a Christian

5–6 The Gospel:

How one lives as a Christian

Introduction

FIELD STUDY 1

Why should we study Galatians?

The human heart longs for salvation. Though we are good at numbing this desire with comfortable housing, prestigious jobs, and pleasurable distractions, in our most honest moments we are certain that things are not right. Life is not as it should be. This has always been mankind's dilemma. The history of humanity is one on bended knees and outstretched arms; we've been busy trying to invoke, appease, and satisfy whoever and whatever we deem as god.

The Christian message offers truth and hope to the human despair. The gospel of Jesus Christ is the good news that eternal life with the only true God is available. God's good news is an offer of eternal life with him. It comes by his grace through faith in Jesus Christ as a gift to be received. However, it's only available on his terms. God alone determines how he will be pleased. Only then is his holiness upheld.

Yet, another dilemma remains and plagues Christianity across the globe. Why are Christians prone to live as if God's gift of salvation is insufficient? Why do we act as if we must purchase his ongoing love? Why do we drift into living the Christian life as though acceptance before God can be earned? We affirm that salvation comes from him alone, but our daily walk suggests his gift is incomplete until we step in. We think he needs us to finish the job. Sadly, too many Christians live as though God can be bought with actions—it's as though he is



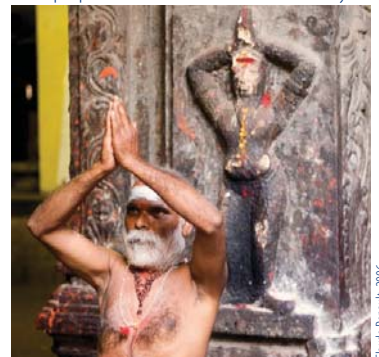
Jean-Léon Gérôme, 1865

Mankind Calling Out

There have been many religions that have promoted various ways to various gods.

Mankind Longing for Salvation

All people from all civilizations desire eternity.



Claude Renault, 2006



Notes, Observations & Questions

Observation journaling

This section will prepare you for *Field Study 4* by reading through the next section of Galatians. We have included three types of exercises: some for before you read, some for while you are reading, and some for after you have completed the reading.

Before you read

In Galatians 2, Paul will continue his travel itinerary after encountering Christ on the road to Damascus. Review Galatians 1:11–24 listing in order the places Paul traveled. Beside each place, list the amount of time Paul spent there if the time is given. This will prepare you for Galatians 2:1–10 where Paul continues to describe the events in his life before traveling to Galatia.

Galatians 1:11–24

Places Paul Traveled
(in chronological order)

Time Spent
(if recorded in the text)

While you are reading

On the following page, we have laid out the biblical text with wide margins so you can mark the text with questions, key terms, notes, and structures. We have removed all of the verse markings so you can read it without distractions and have laid out the text with spacing to help you see how the lines are related. Review the guidelines on *The art of active learning* section, page xi at the beginning of your *Field Notes* for some suggestions on reading, learning, and marking the text effectively.



Galatians 2:1–10

Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along too. I went up because of a revelation and set before them the gospel that I preach among the Gentiles. But I did this in private to those who seemed influential, for fear that I was running or had run in vain.

But not even Titus, who was with me, was forced to be circumcised, even though he was a Greek. Now this matter arose because of the false brothers secretly brought in had infiltrated our ranks to spy on our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus and to bring us into slavery. But we did not surrender to them even for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel would remain with you.

As for those who seemed influential—whatever they were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality—those who seemed influential added nothing to my message. But on the contrary, they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been to the circumcised. For God, who was at work through Peter as an apostle to the circumcised, was also at work in my ministry as an apostle to the Gentiles, and James, Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave Barnabas and me the right hand of fellowship when they recognized the grace given to me. They agreed that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcised. All they asked was to continue to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do.

Notes, Observations & Questions

Summarize the text here



Notes, Observations & Questions

After you have read

1. Journaling is another way to help us learn. Write out Galatians 2:1–10 from the previous page or your own Bible into a journal word for word. This practice will help you to remember and understand what you have just read. This week, journal your thoughts as you consider the freedom that we have in Jesus Christ and how it affects you, your family, your community, your nation, and your church. Write down what God wants you to do with that freedom and then act accordingly.
2. Now read Galatians 2:1–10 in your own Bible. Continue to reread it each day until you get to *Field Study* 4. This will reinforce the learning of Scripture and help you in retention.

Pray

As we learn the Word of God, it is essential that we communicate with him through prayer. Consider writing a prayer or psalm or poem to God. Writing it out will help you reflect on God's power to transform lives. How has God changed your life? Commit to praying through the week asking God that you, your family, your church, and your nation may be transformed. Try to pray with a friend or family member. Consider this as a sample prayer:

Dear God,

Thank you for faithful servants like Paul whom you used greatly in your service. Help me, and those around me, respect, encourage, and support those whom you have placed over us at home, in church, and our nation. It is so easy to criticize and discredit even good leaders when our personal agendas are not advanced. Lord, I also thank you for personally revealing the message of the gospel. I can stand with confidence in what it declares because it is backed directly by you. I know you will do what you committed to do for your Name's sake. As I meditate on what you teach, it makes so much sense, God, that only you have the power to change a life like mine since you created me. How silly of me to live as if impersonal, even Christian, traditions could change me. What a great joy it is too, Lord, to know that your plan included me long before my birth. You truly are a personal God! Thank you for saving me because of faith in Christ, and not my past performance. I would be doomed otherwise! Help me, Holy Spirit, to figure out how I can serve you today. Grant me a creative mind to look for ways to serve. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ I pray, Amen.

Excavate the Site

Galatians 2:1–10

The truth of the gospel must never be compromised

Field Study 4

Galatians 1–2:

Defending the true Gospel

1:1–10 Corrupting the gospel

1:11–24 The power of the true gospel

2:1–10 Unity in the true gospel

2:11–21 Defense of the true gospel

Galatians 2:1–10

FIELD STUDY 4

How is the text arranged?

In the previous section of Galatians, Paul made a very clear statement: his gospel is God's gospel.¹ He defended it using his personal encounter with Christ as a starting point, which is Paul's first of three evidences. He was called and set apart by God's grace to know Jesus and proclaim him among the Gentiles. Only God's power could release Paul from slavery to a religious lifestyle so that he could embrace God through faith in Jesus. Therefore, discrediting Paul in order to attack his gospel was a direct challenge to God. While Paul was autonomous from all men, his second proof shows that even the other apostles supported him. They believed Paul's gospel was their gospel, the true gospel from God. Read the biblical text several times and see if you can identify the structure before looking at the one provided:

Galatians 2:1–10

Section	Bible Text
Evidence Two: The Apostles agree with Paul	
A God-initiated situation	¹ Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along too. ² I went up because of a revelation and set before them the gospel that I preach among the Gentiles. But I did this in private to those who seemed influential, for fear that I was running or had run in vain.

1. Galatians 1:11–12



Galatians 2:1–10

Section	Bible Text
An example proving harmony	³ But not even Titus, who was with me, was forced to be circumcised, even though he was a Greek. ⁴ Now this matter arose because of the false brothers secretly brought in had infiltrated our ranks to spy on our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus and to bring us into slavery. ⁵ But we did not surrender to them even for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel would remain with you.
Official harmony between Paul and other apostles expressed	⁶ As for those who seemed influential— whatever they were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality— those who seemed influential added nothing to my message. ⁷ But on the contrary, they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been to the circumcised. ⁸ For God, who was at work through Peter as an apostle to the circumcised, was also at work in my ministry as an apostle to the Gentiles, ⁹ and James, Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave Barnabas and me the right hand of fellowship when they recognized the grace given to me. They agreed that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcised. ¹⁰ All they asked was to continue to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do.

Let's now briefly analyze the logical structure of the text. There are three major aspects to Paul's evidence to show that the gospel he presented to the Galatian churches originated with God. First he clarifies that his visit to Jerusalem was God's idea. Then he proceeds to show that during his visit, Titus was not forced to be circumcised. Finally the apostle shows that the meeting with the earlier apostles resulted in clear harmony with respect to their gospel proclamation.

B.C. 2000

1850

1700

1550

1400

1250

2091 God calls Abraham?

Receiving the Law on Mount Sinai? 1446

1925 God calls Abraham?

Receiving the Law on Mount Sinai? 1260



What is this passage saying?

What are some key terms and phrases?

In the following table, we present some key terms, phrases, and concepts useful to understanding this passage. They prepare you for grasping the “explanation” section that follows. Take some time to study and understand them.

Meaning of Key Terms

Key word or phrase	Meaning and significance
Was not running or had not run in vain (2:2)	The apostle Paul enjoyed sports, or at least using the sporting imagery of his day (1 Corinthians 9:24–27; 2 Timothy 2:5; 4:7). At first glance, this may read as though Paul had doubts about the accuracy of the gospel he preached; as though he needed the approval of the Jerusalem leadership. The private nature of the meeting added to this impression, but this was not the case. To understand the text this way would undermine the very point Paul has been making in Galatians so far. Paul did not doubt the validity and accuracy of the gospel message he preached. Nevertheless, he did recognize that its advancement was hindered if the Jerusalem leaders did not agree with him. It was not the Jerusalem leadership who had to approve Paul's gospel. God had done that. However, Paul recognized his work for God could not be sabotaged by others—like the false teachers in Galatia—if there was explicit agreement between Paul and the leaders of the Jerusalem church on this very matter.
Reputed influential leaders (2:2–9)	In verse 2, Paul says he presented his gospel message before the <i>influential leaders</i> in Jerusalem. In verse 9, these leaders are identified as James, Peter, and John. The way he refers to them could appear at first glance to be belittling—as though they were <i>reputed</i> to be influential but really were not (see verses 2, 6, 9). Was Paul actually derogatory toward the other apostles? His contention in this passage was to declare that these men agreed with him, so it does not make sense that he would belittle those he is enlisting as support. Moreover, the fact that he went to them was indicative of his recognition of their God-granted status. For these reasons, it is best to understand what Paul says about them as simply voicing what his opponents were arguing. They seemed to argue that the <i>real reputable</i> apostles—not Paul—were to be heard. Paul shows that those <i>truly reputable</i> leaders agreed with him. He was not demeaning them. Rather, Paul was using his opponents' argument against them.

Formulating beliefs

There is a process by which Christian beliefs are defined. It is not a practice that invents *new* doctrines, but rather articulates them carefully, precisely, and in a manner consistent with Scripture:

1. The church proclaims the recognized Christian faith through teaching and practice.
2. There is a contemporary challenge to the faith through false or innovative teaching.
3. The church responds with a process of confirmation, clarification, and redefinition of the content of the Christian faith.

This cycle is what has caused church councils like Nicaea to describe carefully what Christians have always believed (Jude 3). Even though Galatians 2 is not an official church council, it is a private precursor to it.

1250

1100

950

800

650

500 B.C.

Saul becomes king 1050

David becomes king 1010

Solomon becomes king 971

930 The kingdom divides

722 Northern kingdom falls to Assyria

Southern kingdom falls to
Babylon and the temple is destroyed 586



Modern Christian Cults

To this day, the Christian church has always experienced the threat of false teachers who seek to corrupt the sound doctrine of the gospel. How can we identify a cult or a sect? The following list includes common characteristics of cultic groups:

1. **Denial of the Trinity.** Most cultic groups begin their slippery slope towards heresy by modifying the doctrine of God.
2. **Exclusivism.** Most sects consider themselves to be the only preservers of the true faith. All other groups are marked as false.
3. **Distortion of the Bible.** They affirm to believe in the Bible but in reality they twist the meaning of Scripture to fit their purposes and man-made beliefs.
4. **Redefinition of Christian terms.** Sects tend to use Christian words but change their meanings creating doctrines diametrically opposed to orthodox Christian beliefs.
5. **Denial of the true gospel.** Most sects deny that man can be saved simply by believing in the gospel and trusting in the work of Christ.
6. **Additional sources of authority.** Most cultic groups also have other documents or figures that serve as authoritative in proclaiming the content of their faith. Scripture is only one of their sacred sources of faith and practice.

Meaning of Key Terms

Key word or phrase	Meaning and significance
False brothers "secretly brought in" and "slipped in to spy" (2:4)	Note how the Jerusalem attack on both Paul and his gospel message occurred. It was introduced <i>secretly</i> through individuals who perpetuated it. While they looked like believers, they were in fact <i>false brothers</i> . The phrase means <i>to sneak in, enter by stealth, or creep in</i> . It was a subtle infiltration without much notice. Therein was the danger. Add to this the mention of the intent <i>to spy</i> . As you can see, there was a period during this time when danger lurked unnoticed, unvoiced, and yet was still active. Evidence was gathered to use against people while they were not aware. Falsehood is not always instantly recognized. Whether Paul wanted the Galatians to see a parallel between his situation in Jerusalem and their own is impossible to know for sure, though it seems likely. Then, and now, that type of individual is a <i>false brother</i> . The subtle manner in which false teaching slips in among us should be enough to warn us to be on the alert.
Truth of the Gospel (2:5)	Up to this point, the apostle Paul has referred to his gospel message in several ways. He has called it <i>the gospel of Christ</i> in verse 7, <i>not man's gospel</i> in verse 11, <i>the faith he once tried to destroy</i> in Galatians 1:23, and <i>the gospel I proclaim among the Gentiles</i> in Galatians 2:2. Here in Galatians 2:5 he finally describes it as <i>the truth of the gospel</i> . As the letter unfolds, Paul clearly presents what his gospel is. For now, it is important to remember two things. First, Paul's gospel is the true gospel. Second, Paul's gospel is God's gospel; it is the gospel according to what God proclaimed through Paul. Keep reading the epistle with these phrases in mind and see if you can discover the essential elements of the <i>truth of the gospel</i> as the apostle Paul presents it.
A gospel to the uncircumcised and to the circumcised? (2:7)	It is important to understand the distinction made here concerning the two ways in which Jews classified all of humanity. From their perspective, the <i>uncircumcised</i> were the Gentiles, that is, all who were not Jews. The <i>circumcised</i> were the Jews. God did not approve of two different gospels among the apostles. Peter's call to take the gospel to the Jews and Paul's call to take it to the Gentiles involved proclaiming the same gospel. The Spirit of God worked through both men as shown in verse 8. To explore this issue further, take time to read 1 Corinthians 15:1–11.

What about the culture?

A key component of the corrupt gospel spreading among the Galatians was the practice of circumcision. Given this, it's hard to understand why the Galatian desertion was so rapid! It is important

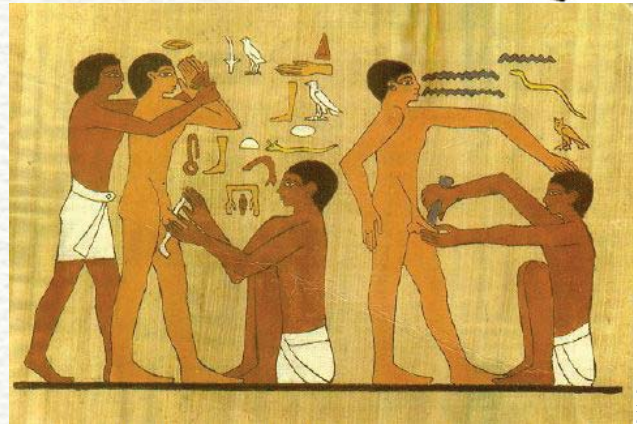


to pause and explore this issue since it was such a big problem in the early church. Even though circumcision is not a problem today, the underlying reason behind it still plagues the church although expressed in different ways.

Male circumcision in Israel was the act of cutting off a male's foreskin as an external sign of inclusion in the community of God's people in accordance with the Abrahamic Covenant.¹ God gave circumcision to Abraham and his descendants. A God-honoring Jew was circumcised while an uncircumcised Jew was spiritually and physically cut off from God's people. Any non-Jew desiring to entrust himself to Israel's God was able to do so, but needed to be circumcised. Therefore, circumcision was a key component for covenantal fellowship in Israel in the Old Testament. Those that sought to enforce it in the church in the first century pointed to such passages. The underlying reason they embraced it however was a misunderstanding of the role of this rite in the Old Testament. It was also the result of ignorance regarding the implications of what God had done through the advent, death, and resurrection of Jesus. A new community—the church—was now born. Christianity is not ethnically defined as Israel was. Membership in the church is not membership in Israel. Therefore, a Gentile did not need to become a Jew to become a Christian. To do so would be to act as if Jesus had not yet come. Paul was not against circumcision as a matter of principle² since he circumcised Timothy after the Jerusalem Council.³ However, he was adamantly opposed to it as an essential component of the gospel.

What is the explanation?

(1–2) **A God-initiated Situation:** Fourteen years passed before Paul returned to Jerusalem. This gave church officials more than enough time to oppose Paul if they had disagreed with him. The Galatians' rapid abandonment of Paul's gospel is clearly contrasted to the ongoing acceptance of it by the Jerusalem leaders. Paul had brought two companions with him to the meeting, Barnabas and Titus. This was



Public Domain

Male Circumcision

This is an Egyptian drawing of a tomb or wall painting from the necropolis or burial ground at Saqqara in Egypt. There is an accompanying inscription that reads, "the ointment is to make it acceptable," and "hold him so that he does not fall." It is the oldest known illustration of circumcision.

Ancient circumcision

The Egyptians practiced circumcision as far back as the Sixth Dynasty (2345–2181 B.C.). In the fifth century B.C. the Greek writer Herodotus, known as the *father of history*, stated that the Egyptians practiced circumcision for cleanliness and passed on the practice to other nations. Some have speculated that the Egyptians may have used circumcision as a rite of passage from childhood to adulthood.

1. Genesis 17
2. Galatians 5:6; 6:15
3. Acts 16



**Timothy's circumcision**

Timothy was half-Jewish and accompanied Paul to the Jewish synagogues. Paul thought that it was just easier to have Timothy circumcised than to lose a hearing in front of Jews. He needed to proclaim the gospel and circumcision was not essential to it.

Paul's return to Jerusalem

Acts records five visits by Paul to Jerusalem. Which visit in Acts corresponds to this reference in Galatians 2:1? The most likely options are either the visit recorded in Acts 11:27–30 or the Jerusalem Council visit of Acts 15. The purpose of the Jerusalem Council was to publicly and officially settle how a Gentile was saved. If it had already convened, Paul would have appealed to it in this letter to the Galatians to settle these matters. However, he didn't refer to the Council because most likely, it hadn't occurred yet. This means that Paul wrote Galatians before his visit to Jerusalem in Acts 15. It seems that Galatians 2:1 corresponds to Acts 11:27–30.

important and strategic. It shows that Paul's visit was not summoned by the Jerusalem leaders. It's not as if Paul was in trouble! God initiated the encounter through a revelation. God ensured that Paul and the other apostles discussed this very matter privately foreseeing it as a growing problem in the church. Jerusalem remained a hostile city to Judaism's most prominent deserter. It was also sensible to discuss important matters freely in the company of mature believers.

It is crucial to understand that Paul is not low on confidence concerning the gospel he preached. He did not look for the apostles' approval. God knew the proclamation of his gospel would meet obstacles from within the church if there was no explicit agreement by the church leadership on the issue. Paul also felt the weight of the practical hurdles he faced if the view of the apostles in Jerusalem did not agree with his; it could render his ministry fruitless. This private meeting was a great opportunity for him to discuss a matter that later became public in the Jerusalem Council. At this point, Paul wanted to let the Galatians know that God had called this meeting. He set the agenda.

Paul shows the harmony between the gospel he preached and that which the apostles advanced in two ways. The first is implicit. He provides the example of Titus and the absence of a corrective reaction by the apostles.¹ The second is explicit. The apostles outwardly express their solidarity with Paul in verses 6–10. Notice how thorough Paul is in his argument. He was a trained debater!

The Example of Titus: Since the gospel concerns all people, Titus was the perfect test case regarding the inclusion of circumcision as a necessary element of the gospel. Titus was not a Jew but rather a Greek believer who was present at this meeting. This provided a clear opportunity for the Jerusalem leaders to enforce circumcision on Titus if they believed it to be an essential part of the gospel. Paul implies the apostles were aware that Titus was uncircumcised.

1. Galatians 2:3–5



(3–5)

Kyiv Gates Monastery, Kyiv, Ukraine, 12th century unknown mark

Titus

Titus was a uncircumcised Gentile coworker with Paul. He eventually pastored the church on the island of Crete after Paul helped to establish it.

B.C. 1 A.D.

10

20

30

40

50

5? Birth of Jesus

Paul encounters Christ on Damascus road 33–34?

First Missionary Journey 46–47?

Paul writes Galatians 48?

4–6? Birth of Paul

Paul's private meeting in Jerusalem 45–46?



He made it clear that this issue came up through false brothers with foul motives similar to the ones the Galatians were embracing. These people spied on believers' legitimate freedom in Christ. This is the implication Paul makes by mentioning Titus. But clearly, James, Peter, and John did not believe that circumcision was essential to the gospel. The apostles stood firm with Paul because they also believed that deserting one's freedom in light of Christ's deliverance, was to return to a state of slavery.

(6–10) **Clear Harmony:** Paul seeks to leave no doubt in the minds of the Galatians regarding the agreement that the apostles in Jerusalem had with him. If the example of Titus was not enough, Paul also explicitly declares that the Jerusalem leadership was in harmony with him concerning the gospel. This is so crucial to his counter-argument, that he explicitly affirms their equality before God. Even though the other apostles knew Jesus while he was on earth, there was no reason to appeal to them and dismiss Paul's authority. Moreover, in expressing their agreement with Paul and Barnabas by shaking hands with them, the apostles affirmed their unity with both the message and the messenger—the very thing under attack in Galatia! There were no additions, alterations, or corrections. Quite the opposite, Paul's calling by God was the same as Peter's. This alone should have undermined the belittling of Paul and his message. God was at work through both men. Different target audiences did not mean different gospels. The

other apostles added nothing to Paul's authority. Their only request for Paul was to remember the poor, which was exactly what he was doing. The recipients of the true gospel reached out to others with practical compassion. Paul was both in agreement with them, and independent from them.



Barnabas Caring for the Poor

Barnabas was a Jew from Cyprus who accompanied Paul on his first missionary journey recorded in Acts 13–14. He is known for his gifts of service and encouragement.

What is God saying?

Galatians 2:1–10 adds new evidence to Paul's basic contention: His gospel is God's gospel. Moreover, his gospel was actually the official teaching of the Church. No external religious act—no matter how prevalent and divinely endorsed in the Old Testament, can

Barnabas & Titus

Paul's companions on this trip included Barnabas, a Jew, and Titus, an uncircumcised Greek. Taking Titus into Jerusalem was both a risk and an immediate invitation to dissension. This however, was by divine design and had the purpose of establishing the unity of faith and message between the apostles in Jerusalem, and Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles. Thus, in the meeting with the apostles, there were representatives of both the Gentile and the Jewish parties. The response of the leaders of Jerusalem served as evidence of the *quality* and *purity* of Paul's gospel.

Pillars

It appears the early church and even Paul viewed the apostles as pillars. Paul, for example, understood God's people to be God's temple with the main supporting columns being God's appointed leaders:

- 1 Corinthians 3:16–17
- 2 Corinthians 6:16
- Ephesians 2:21
- Revelation 3:12

There are also Jewish writings written after the New Testament that use *pillar* language to refer to Abraham and Moses as supporting the world such as *Exodus Rabbah*, the Midrash to Exodus 2:13 and 3:4. Paul is giving these apostles the honor due them.

Paolo Veronese, 1566

50 60 70 80 90 100 A.D.

49? Jerusalem Council
50–52? Second Missionary Journey by Paul

60–62? Paul arrives in Rome under house arrest
64 Fire in Rome

70 Temple is destroyed

79 Pompeii and Herculaneum are destroyed by Vesuvius eruption

John writes Revelation 95–96?



Gospel and Compassion

The ministry of Paul demonstrates that an inevitable outcome of the gospel is compassion. Consider the following passages:

- 1 Corinthians 16:1–4
- 2 Corinthians 8:1–9:15
- Romans 15:25–28

The apostle constantly modeled for us the practical aspects of his ministry of proclamation. The visit to Jerusalem recorded in Galatians 2 was partly for the purpose of famine relief. See Acts 11:27–30.

or should be imposed as a requirement for one seeking to please God. The Old Testament teachings recognized this with the issue of circumcision itself. Jeremiah affirmed that circumcision of the flesh was to be an expression of God's work in the heart.¹ The external act was meaningless without the internal change. This is the same as with the practice of giving. Jesus points out how ridiculous it is to tithe and yet ignore what God wants from within you.² He is only satisfied in Christ and those that seek God must approach him by faith in Christ.

The Galatians had to realize that this problem was not new. It had already popped up through sneaky false teachers in Jerusalem itself long before the Galatians came to know Christ.³ Paul fought them then and he would fight them again. God blessed the Jews with his Son. This meant that to enjoy God, one does not have to become a Jew; rather, he or she has to become a Christian.

Where else is this taught in Scripture?



The Apostle Paul

Paul sought to be all things to all people so that some might be saved.

In the book of Acts, chapter 21, we find the record of Paul's return to Jerusalem several years after the letter of Galatians was written. He met with the leadership of the church there and reported on God's work among the Gentiles. Those present rejoiced at the news but also feared how some Jewish Christians would react. This suggests that the agreement between Paul and the leaders as recorded in Galatians 2:1–10, or even Acts 15, did not remove the desire of some in the church to compel Gentiles toward circumcision. Such compulsion to force others to live the Christian life according to man-made standards is hard to remove. In Acts 21, Paul accepted the request of the Jerusalem leaders and sought to pacify Jewish believers. He attended the Jewish purification rites of four men. This was not a battle to fight. At times, we must be patient with the weaker believers and pray they grow in Christ as Paul declares it in 1 Corinthians 9:20–21.

When they heard this, they praised God. Then they said to him, "You see, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are who have believed, and they are all zealous for the law, and they have been told about you, that you are teaching all the Jews that are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or follow other Jewish customs. What should we do? They will no doubt hear that you have come. Therefore, do what we tell you: We have four men who have taken a vow, take them and purify yourself along with them and pay their expenses..."

Acts 21:20–24a

1. Jeremiah 4:4
2. Matthew 23:23
3. Galatians 2:4–5



Where else does this happen in history?

Baptism, like circumcision, has been one of many doctrines that believers have mistakenly added to the essential content of the gospel throughout the ages. As early as the second century A.D., the church began to consider water baptism as a necessary exercise for salvation and the forgiveness of sins. The historical and theological reasons for this misconception are very interesting. Both circumcision and baptism are considered by many as a sacrament or *a sign of an invisible grace*. All people as physical beings are *sacramental*, in that we try to express invisible realities by participating in special rituals that include the use of signs or symbols. For example, the promises of marriage are sealed or *signified* by the wedding ring. The ring is a physical, visible sign that serves as a constant reminder of the invisible promises of marriage. Similarly, in Scripture, the people of God also expressed their belief on the benefits of God's promises by participating in a visible ritual. The external act, be it circumcision or baptism, becomes the visible sign of a blessing that is otherwise invisibly received by faith. In the case of baptism, the early church often practiced the ceremony immediately after the profession of faith of the new believer. Consider Acts 2:37–41 and 7:26–40. In time, the non-baptized Christian was a rarity. Water baptism was soon believed to be the sacrament that removed the guilt and condemnation of original sin. For this reason, the church instituted the practice of infant baptism. The idea was and is to protect the baby from damnation by baptizing him or her only a few days after being born. This idea eventually led to controversy. Pelagius thought that infant baptism was unnecessary since the idea of original sin was false and there was no need for a rite that removed an imaginary guilt. Augustine countered with the clear Biblical teaching of original sin. To this day, some church traditions include baptism as a necessary element for salvation. But just as with circumcision, even though baptism is a Christian ordinance instituted by the Lord himself, when it is added as a necessary element of the gospel, it becomes an ungodly practice.



Augustine of Hippo

Augustine (A.D. 354–A.D. 430) demonstrated that the Bible taught that all people inherit guilt from Adam's original sin.



Pelagius

Pelagius (A.D. 354–A.D. 420/440) denied that people inherit any sin from Adam.

What does God want?

Now that we have explored this portion of Scripture, we are ready to think through how we can live out the implications of God's Word. Remember that Paul continues to argue the same points. They are so important that two of the six chapters of Galatians are devoted to them. Here are a few important ideas that emerge from our study. Please consider them and be intentional about customizing their application to your own situation.

**We are united in what we believe yet diverse in how we proclaim it.**

Paul and the Jerusalem leadership believed the same gospel. They stood firm and united against any corruption of God's truth. They also embraced the different roles they had in advancing the good news. Their message was the same, but the method and context was different. Unity and diversity are not necessarily opposed. God unites very different people in Christ and empowers them to represent him in many ways. We will do well to learn this lesson. The church today, just like then, has problems. More often than not, the problems we face are of our own making. They do not concern points of truth but preferences in practice. Paul teaches us to be bold in the defense of the truth of the gospel but to respect the role of others in Christ's service. The one truth can also be proclaimed in different manners today. Like Paul, James, Peter, and John, we proclaim the one gospel but embrace the varying roles, gifts, and ministries of others in its proclamation.

Watch out for false teaching creeps in subtly.

The Galatians were not the first or last to flirt with a distortion of God's message. Paul clearly opposed the Galatian problem before them and after. Approaching God with a legalistic attitude or trying to appease him with our efforts is still rampant today. The danger is often subtle. If false teaching came in the front door—say as Hinduism or Buddhism—most would object immediately. However, this type of false teaching sneaks in the back door. It enters clothed in biblical language since it is practiced in other parts of Scripture. For example, practices which in and of themselves are good—like church attendance and prayer—can be a sugar-coating for a self-righteous heart. Legalism looks spiritual yet is slightly off. But slightly off is fully off! There were no problems with the Jewish practices in themselves; there was no problem with circumcision. The problem was to believe that this was the way to earn or satisfy God. Ignoring the changes brought about by Christ is a dangerous yet easy thing to do. Therefore, a warning flows out of this passage. False teaching creeps in subtly. It calls for another heart check. So ask yourself again, why do you practice your faith the way that you do?



Discoveries

Now you have completed your third excavation into the text of Galatians. It is again time to stop digging and carefully examine what we have learned and what difference it can make in our lives. Pick the questions that will be most helpful for you or your community.

Connecting with the community

Here are some discussion questions to help you better understand the main purpose of the text. Do not merely reflect on them as an individual but rather think of each question, when applicable, in terms of your family, your community, your nation, and your church.

1. According to Galatians 2:1–2, why did Paul finally decide to visit the apostles in Jerusalem?
2. Paul knew that there were false brothers infiltrated in the congregation when he visited Jerusalem. Why was circumcision so important to these false brothers? What was the real issue behind the practice of the rite?
3. Was the gospel of Paul the same as the gospel of Peter, James, and John? Why or why not?
4. According to Galatians 2:10, Paul was eager to “remember the poor.” How is compassion related to the work of the gospel in the heart of the believer? How compassionate toward the poor are believers in your community?
5. Why was it important to meet with the leaders of Jerusalem in private? What can we learn from the God-revealed way of dealing with this issue? Are you willing to submit to the private decisions of God-appointed leaders? Why or why not?
6. Was Paul against circumcision? What was the function of this rite in Judaism? Did Paul forbid the circumcision of believers? Would it have been tragic to enforce Titus to be circumcised? Why or why not?

Notes, Observations & Questions



Notes, Observations & Questions

7. Is the fear Paul expresses in Galatians 2:2 an indication of uncertainty about the truthfulness of his gospel? Defend your answer from the content of the letter we have studied so far.
8. In what way was the inclusion of Titus in the trip to Jerusalem another confirmation of the truthfulness of Paul's gospel?
9. Is it important to consider the cultural context in which the gospel is proclaimed, or should we ignore any cultural nuances when fulfilling the great commission? How does acknowledging cultural differences help promote the gospel?
10. False teaching enters the church subtly. Many times, it even includes biblical language and principles. How can you safeguard your faith and that of your congregation from falling prey to false teachers as the Galatians did?
11. Are there any teachings in your Christian community that appear to contradict the gospel? Is the gospel being tweaked in any way? Are there any works or rituals being added as a necessary part of the gospel in your community?

Probing deeper

These exercises take you deeper into some of the secondary issues of our passage. They require additional reading from other key passages that will supplement your understanding from Galatians. Consider how each question relates to yourself, your family, your community, your nation, and your church.

1. Read Romans 9:1–5. How does this text also testify to Paul's compassion? How does it show the inadequacy of Judaism as a way to attain righteousness?
2. We observe in Galatians 2:1–10 that Paul and Peter proclaimed the same gospel. Their audience however was vastly different in their culture and traditions. Consider Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 9:19–23. Can you identify different cultures present in your community? How would the proclamation of the gospel be different in each of these cultures?



3. How can you communicate the gospel in different cultural contexts without compromising the purity of the gospel? Read Acts 17:16–34. What can we learn about how Paul presented the gospel on Mars Hill in a culturally relevant way?

Bringing the story to life

Paul reminds us in Galatians 2:1–10 that there is only one gospel but that it needs to be communicated in a way that resonates with our audience. Come up with a way to present the gospel message to a specific cultural group within your community. This will work best with a small group. Begin by identifying a cultural group that you can engage. Consider some of the following questions as you prepare to present the gospel to them:

- Do they speak another language?
- What are some of their cultural traditions that affect how they would receive the gospel?
- What religion does that culture practice or has practiced in the past?

Once you have gained an understanding of the cultural group, come up with a way of presenting the gospel in a way that engages their mindset. Remember that the gospel message does not change but the method or context may be unique to the cultural group you are working with. Your presentation may be written, oral or any other way you come up with to communicate the gospel clearly.

Pray for an opportunity to engage a person or group from that culture. Learn all you can about their culture. Commit to loving them and praying for them. Ask the Lord to bless your efforts and present the gospel message. Were they receptive? Did it make sense to them? Is there something you can do differently? Continue to love and pray for those you had opportunity to share with.

Memorizing the key

Commit to memory the key phrase for this *Field Study*. The key phrase for Galatians 2:1–10 is:

The truth of the gospel must never be compromised

Part of learning the Bible is remembering what the Bible is about and where to find things. Memorizing the key phrases will help you to better understand and apply the key points of Galatians and remember each topic in the book.

Notes, Observations & Questions



Observation journaling

This section will prepare you for *Field Study 5* by reading through the next section of Galatians. We have included three types of exercises: some for before you read, some for while you are reading and some for after you have completed the reading.

Before you read

Review the key terms from *Field Studies 2* through 4 to insure you remember all of them. This will help you to follow the message that God is communicating through Paul's letter to the Galatian churches.

The key terms:

- From *Field Study 2* are on page 19–20.
- From *Field Study 3* are on page 35.
- From *Field Study 4* are on page 51–52.

Which key terms and definitions have been particularly helpful in understanding the message of Galatians? Why?

While you are reading

On the following page, we have laid out the biblical text with wide margins so you can mark the text with questions, key terms, notes, and structures. We have removed all of the verse markings so you can read it without distractions and have laid out the text with spacing to help you see how the lines are related. Review the guidelines on *The art of active learning* section, page xi at the beginning of your *Field Notes* for some suggestions on reading, learning, and marking the text effectively.



Galatians 2:11–21

But when Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. For before certain men came from James, he was eating with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he drew back and separated himself from the Gentiles, fearing those who belonged to the circumcision group. The rest of the Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. But when I saw that their conduct was not in line with the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter in front of them all, “If you being a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force Gentiles to live like Jews?”

We are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; yet we know that no one is justified by works of the law, but through faith in Jesus Christ. So we also have believed in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified. But if, while seeking to be justified in Christ, we too were found to be sinners, does that mean that Christ promotes sin? Absolutely not! For if I rebuild what I destroyed, I prove myself to be a lawbreaker. For through the law I died to the law so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ and it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness comes through the law, Christ died for nothing!

Notes, Observations & Questions

Summarize the text here



Galatians 3:1–14

Section	Bible Text
Proof Two: The personal experience of Abraham the father of all Jews	⁶ Just as Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness, ⁷ understand then that those who believe are sons of Abraham. ⁸ The Scripture foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham saying, “All nations will be blessed in you.”
Proof Three: The testimony of the Scriptural record	⁹ So then, those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith. ¹⁰ All who rely on works of the law are under a curse, for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who does not keep on doing everything written in the Book of the Law.” ¹¹ Now it is clear that no one is justified before God by the law because, “The righteous will live by faith.” ¹² But the law is not of faith, rather “The man who does these things will live by them.” ¹³ Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree” ¹⁴ in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.

As you can see from the outline, Paul offers in this text three pieces of evidence that should convince the Galatians that justification before God is possible only by faith in Jesus Christ. First, he reminds the Galatian believers of their own experience of coming to Christ. Then he proceeds to show that Abraham’s experience was similar. He was justified by faith as well. In the final proof we examine in this study, Paul shows us that the Old Testament Scriptures teach an approach to God by faith rather than works of the law. Enjoy exploring and discovering how God, through Paul, verifies the truth of the gospel that justification is by faith alone in Jesus Christ.

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1550

1400

1250

2091 God calls Abraham?

Receiving the Law on Mount Sinai? 1446

1925 God calls Abraham?

Receiving the Law on Mount Sinai? 1260



What is this passage saying?

What are some key terms and phrases?

We must examine a few terms, phrases, and concepts in the text more closely. This will enhance our understanding of the passage. It would be good for you to read the passage again after examining these issues. Some of these concepts are key truths that permeate other letters of Paul. Investing time now to grasp their significance will help you even beyond this text of Galatians.

Letter of Commendation

...ABOVE ALL I PRAY THAT YOU
MAY BE IN HEALTH UNHARMED
BY THE EVIL EYE AND FAIRING
PROSPEROUSLY

(Milligan, *Selections from the Greek Papyri*,
A Letter of Commendation, No. 14,
Cambridge University Press.)

Meaning of Key Terms

Key word or phrase	Meaning and significance
Bewitched (3:1)	The Galatians were acting as though they were "bewitched." This is a word meaning <i>deceived</i> , <i>deluded</i> , or <i>to have become the object of black magic</i> . It is this last meaning that creates the idea of <i>coming under a spell</i> , or <i>bewitched</i> . In this part of the ancient world, it was believed that a person could fall under some kind of evil influence simply by being looked at with an <i>evil eye</i> . Paul invokes this perception here in describing the Galatians' attitude in this manner. He labels their dissent as so irrational that it is as though they are under an evil influence. Calling them <i>bewitched</i> is also a direct attack on the troublemakers preaching falsehood.
The reception/giving of the Spirit (3:2, 3, 5, 14)	The reception or giving of the Holy Spirit in this passage is equated with believing or hearing by faith. Though the Holy Spirit has many ministries, he is clearly involved in justification since his presence in a person's life <i>in this sense</i> is proof that the individual is "declared righteous" before God. So Paul uses the language of <i>receive</i> , <i>began</i> , or <i>give</i> the Spirit interchangeably with believing or hearing by faith. They are two sides of the same coin. Salvation as a whole is a work of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit with each person of the Godhead having distinct roles in accomplishing it.
Two opposing ways of approaching God	As you read our passage, note how Paul sets up two contrasting categories for everyone who approaches God. On the one hand, <i>Spirit, faith, justification, righteousness, gospel, blessing</i> , and <i>sonship of Abraham</i> are related. On the other, <i>works of the law, law, flesh</i> , and <i>curse</i> are related. Therefore, Paul presents two opposing, non-overlapping options to satisfy God. The first results in the blessing of a right standing before God. The second brings a curse.

The Evil Eye

In some societies today, fear of the *evil eye* is still common. For example, in Spain and México, to give someone the *evil eye* or *mal de ojo* is to give a dirty look with the intention of casting evil out toward someone. In some Turkish regions (formerly Galatia), those with green eyes are believed to possess the power to cast an evil spell with a look.

Two Approaches to God

<i>Justification before God</i>	<i>Cursed by God</i>
Spirit, faith, gospel, justification, blessing, righteousness, sonship of Abraham	Law, works of the law, flesh

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500 B.C.

Saul becomes king 1050

David becomes king 1010

Solomon becomes king 971

930 The kingdom divides

722 Northern kingdom falls to Assyria

Southern kingdom falls to
Babylon and the temple is destroyed 586



Galatians 5:16–26

Section	Bible Text
The result of living by the flesh	¹⁹ Now the works of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and sensuality, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, ²¹ envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.
The result of living by the Spirit	²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law.
Concluding exhortation	²⁴ Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵ If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. ²⁶ Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying one another.

Our outline of the passage presents four sections. Paul begins this third clarification of the Christian life of freedom by exhorting the Galatian believers to live under the control and direction of the Spirit. The second section shows how walking in the flesh leads to slavery rather than freedom. The third section then demonstrates that the freedom of the Spirit produces the godly character and behavior that God desires in believers. Finally, Paul concludes the chapter with a renewed exhortation to the Galatians to walk by the Spirit.

What is this passage saying?

What are some key terms and phrases?

Take some time now to study and meditate on the following terms and concepts. Remember that understanding the meaning of the text begins with understanding these expressions. Paul has carefully chosen his words; therefore, we must understand them in their context in order to grasp the meaning of this passage.

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2091 God calls Abraham?

Receiving the Law on Mount Sinai? 1446

1925 God calls Abraham?

Receiving the Law on Mount Sinai? 1260



Meaning of Key Terms

Key word or phrase	Meaning and significance
Walk (5:16)	The word walk is used here as an idiom for <i>how a person lives or behaves in life</i> . The apostle uses three more verbs in this section that describe this same idea— <i>led</i> in verse 18, <i>live</i> in verse 25, and <i>keep in step or march</i> in verse 25. It is crucial to keep in mind that our passage is dealing with Christian living, or with the way a Christian should behave. This was the problem at the very core of the Galatians' error, and it is still a problem for Christians today.
Walking by the Spirit as opposed to the flesh (16–18, 26)	The believer can potentially choose two different walks for his or her life. Only one of them is according to God's will. Each walk results from the underlying influence controlling the believer. If the Holy Spirit is influencing and directing the Christian, the result is a walk pleasing to God. If, on the other hand, the flesh influences and directs the believer, then he or she will live in a manner not in keeping with God's desires. This struggle for control exists only in those in whom the Holy Spirit is present. Unbelievers are entirely under the control of the flesh. The flesh is that capacity in every person—corrupted by sin—to live life independent of God. Until believers receive a resurrected body, that sinful capacity remains in their lives. It was defeated but not destroyed at the moment of salvation. The flesh has no right to exercise control over the life of a Christian. Believers choose to submit themselves to it. The flesh is not something external to the believer—like a demon. It is the believer's own capacity to live life in disobedience to God. It is important to realize that living self-righteously under the law, or living licentiously and immorally are both expressions of walking according to the flesh. Legalists live the same <i>carnal</i> lives as those living licentiously.
Will not inherit the kingdom of God (5:21)	Paul ends the list of works of the flesh with words of caution. He declares that "those who do these things will not inherit the kingdom of God." This is a concept often used in reference to eternal life with God. However, this statement does not mean that a believer who sins by living according to the flesh will lose his or her salvation. Paul himself argues in Galatians that behavior does not determine justification, only faith does. Rather, Paul's intention is to contrast two lifestyles. The first one is not fitting of a Christian since it resembles the life of an unbeliever who has no fellowship or inheritance with God. It is the vices of pagans. The second lifestyle is God's desire for the believer. Since unbelievers will not inherit the kingdom of God, it is not right that those <i>who will do so</i> , should choose such an ungodly lifestyle.

Acts 24:24

But this I admit to you, that I worship the God of our ancestors as a follower of the Way (which they call a sect), believing everything that is according to the Law and that is written in the Prophets.

A Believer's Walk

The command to *walk* is used in several places in the New Testament including the following passages:

- Ephesians 4:1, 17
- Ephesians 5:8, 15
- 1 John 1:6, 7
- 1 John 2:6, 11

Each of these verses speak of a believer's *walk*. It is a common way of referring to one's lifestyle.

The Christian Life

The act of walking is an idiom for the Christian life. In the early church, Christianity was described as the *way* or the *path* upon which the walking occurs. Look at Acts 9:2 and 19:9. You walk the Christian life on the Christian path or way.



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Saul becomes king 1050

David becomes king 1010

Solomon becomes king 971

930 The kingdom divides

722 Northern kingdom falls to Assyria

Southern kingdom falls to
Babylon and the temple is destroyed 586



The Effects of Life in the Flesh

Sexual Vices

Sexual immorality	Physical sexual sins. It refers to any and all forms of illicit sexual practices.
Impurity	Sexual moral failure in general—in thought, word or deed—and so, broader in scope than sexual immorality.
Sensuality	Flagrant flaunting of any type of sexual perversion, that is, open and shameless display of sexual evils.

Religious Vices

Idolatry	Living for, and serving, anything other than God. Seeking security, identity, and blessing in something or someone before God.
Sorcery	Ancient worship practices involving the use of drugs to enter trance-like experiences and see things while high.

Social Vices

Enmity	Bad sentiments, attitudes or actions toward others.
Strife	The atmosphere of discord that results because of enmity.
Jealousy	Attitude of resentment toward the success, situation in life, or position of another—self-centered zeal.
Fits of anger	Temper or fury expressed toward a person or situation.
Rivalries	Selfish ambition and self-aggrandizing attitude resulting in trying to get ahead even at another's harm or expense.
Dissensions	Illegitimate and intense disagreements resulting from quarrels over issues or personalities.
Divisions	Factions or groups formed on false grounds or due to dissensions.
Envy	Feeling of displeasure or annoyance at another's good fortune, be it success or praise.
Drunkenness	Overindulgence in alcoholic beverages so that rational and moral control over self is weakened.
Orgies	Drunken celebrations and partying in groups, which often resulted in other sins such as fighting, vandalism, or sexual immorality.



Life in the Flesh



(22–23) *The fruit of life in the Spirit:* In sharp contrast to the works of the flesh, Paul presents a description of the type of life the Spirit produces in the believer who walks under his influence and control. The list is a portrait of the Christian life of freedom God desires for his children. It is a life of faith that expresses itself through love. It is important we note that this fruit is produced by the Spirit in those believers that submit their lives to him. The law served many purposes but one aspect that is often overlooked is that it reveals the will and heart of God. If the Galatian believers walked continually by the Spirit there would be no need for them to seek life under the legislations of law anyway. God himself would produce a lifestyle in conformity with his desires in those leaning on him by faith. Here is the list the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write.

The Fruit of Love

Grammatically it is valid to render the fruit of the Spirit simply as *love*. If love is the fruit of the Spirit, the other eight virtues are expressions of this love. This fits Paul's previous description of the Christian life as a life of faith expressing itself through love. It is also consistent with Paul's emphasis on a life of love as a fulfillment of God's law (5:14) as well as with the pre-eminence of love in 1 Corinthians 13.

The Fruit of Life in the Spirit

Love	Unconditional and costly affection toward God and people despite merit in that person or current circumstances.
Joy	Deep-seated gladness or attitude of delight irrespective of circumstances.
Peace	Tranquillity of mind and heart despite the surrounding situation.
Patience	Long-suffering or forbearing, usually with people.
Kindness	Graciousness, benevolence, and compassion toward others irrespective of their merit.
Goodness	Inner and outer moral excellence.
Faithfulness	The trait of being loyal, dependable, reliable, and trustworthy.
Gentleness	Considerate of, and toward, others.
Self-control	The ability to exercise mastery or discipline over self in all areas of life.



Life in the Spirit



Christ, and that lifestyle can only be called Christian if it is dependent on the Spirit by faith. God wants you to live an upright, responsible, and moral life because you love him, not because you think it will earn his favor. He cannot be bought because he's not for sale. In *Field Study 1*, we also asked you to consider the role that good, Christian works—lists of do's and don'ts—played in your life. We ask you now to consider this again. Church attendance, Christian service, tithing, Bible reading, baptism, and taking communion cannot sanctify you, only God can. However, engaging in these activities and many more in submission to his Spirit can express your devotion to God if motivated by faith. The slide toward legalism is all too common and subtle. Stand firm against it. God is not present in such a lifestyle. It is a life of bondage and sadness rather than freedom and joy. Live the Christian life of freedom God's way.

Acts 1:8

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.

Jesus is not asking you to collaborate with him in salvation, but he wants you involved in its proclamation. Only Jesus saves. You receive and enjoy his salvation by faith. Aside from your responsibility to live well out of love for God, you are called to proclaim God's love in Christ to others by living a life of loving service.

Then Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you. And behold I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Matthew 28:18-20

This is the great privilege of every Christian. The gospel of Jesus Christ as defended and clarified by Paul in Galatians is now yours to proclaim.



Discoveries

Now that we have completed the analysis of the book of Galatians, it is time to examine carefully what we have learned and the difference it can make in our lives.

Connecting with the community

Here are some discussion questions to help you better understand the text. Do not merely reflect on them as an individual, but rather think each of each question, when applicable, in terms of your family, your community, your nation, and your church.

1. What is the contribution of Galatians to the story of the Bible?
2. What was the most critical issue that was disrupting the faith of the churches of Galatia? Could you identify the issue that is most disruptive to the faith of the members of your group or church? Is there something you can learn from this book regarding that issue?
3. Who were the Judaizers? How did their interpretation of the Old Testament and the law corrupt the message of the gospel? Are there any "Judaizers" in your community? What is it that they are seeking to add to the gospel?
4. Read the entire letter of Galatians one more time and look for the following concepts: law, grace, promise, justification, freedom, slavery, and salvation. What is the relationship that exists between these concepts?
5. On the basis of your study and analysis of the main concepts taught in this epistle, how would you summarize the true gospel? What are its essential components? Use several verses from the letter to the Galatians as the basis of your summary.
6. What does the book of Galatians teach us about the character of God? Think about this issue in the context of the importance that Galatians gives to the Word of God and to the content of the gospel.

Notes, Observations & Questions

A thirteen lesson study through the letter to the Galatians

God is not up for sale. He cannot be bought, bribed, nor earned. Christians know this is the case, and yet, we often live like we must purchase his love—as though you get to earn God and deserve life with him. It is a Christian truth to accept that salvation comes from God and yet an all too common Christian tendency to live like it's not complete on his terms alone.

Galatians declares the gospel on God's terms. Within its pages, God makes very clear he will not allow his offer of life to be tweaked by good deeds. Your good works are welcomed by him but not as co-partners with Christ in salvation. To live like they are is offensive to God. Galatians is a work for today. It is God's word for your life.

*Digging through Scripture
revealing God's truth
pointing us to Christ*



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