

## Books of the Bible Series Galatians

7-9-23

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Who were the Galatians? They are unique in that other Pauline epistles et al. are written to an individual or a church: Galatia, instead, is written to an entire state or province. There is disagreement about where boundaries of Galatia are; notice the differences in the maps below:



### **Outline of the Book of Galatians:**

#### **Salutation (1:1-10)**

#### **Paul's Defense of Apostleship (1:11-2:21)**

(There were people who were teaching about traditions that seemed biblical but were different from what Paul was teaching. Paul feels like he should prove he is qualified to teach.)

#### **Justification by Faith (3:1-4:31)**

#### **Stand Fast in the Liberty of the Gospel (5:1-6:10)**

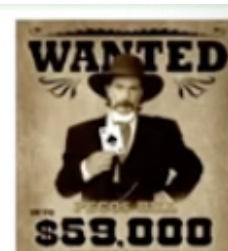
#### **Conclusion (6:11-18)**

Some were teaching that all Christians must observe the Jewish law. Paul touches on areas that people have disagreed with over the centuries. Today, I'm going to use some strong statements: however, I'm not trying to come down on one side or the other of these disagreements. Please don't misinterpret me: I'm trying to talk about the core and underlying meaning of these messages.

**Galatians: Living Outside the Law** *Should Christians, therefore, be outlaws?*

Galatians

Living outside the Law



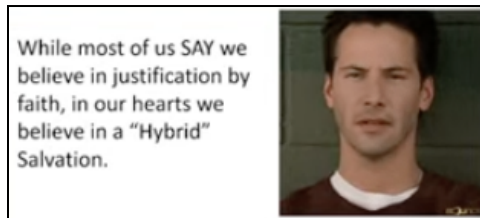
For 1300 years, devout Jewish people had been taught that *right relationship with God was achieved by two things*:

1. **Obedience to the Mosaic Law** (Holy Days, Sabbath, Food, Circumcision, Commandments, etc.)
2. **Blood Sacrifice of Animals** for remission of sins as prescribed in the law of Moses.

Jews believed that righteousness comes from the Law and this was deeply ingrained into their culture. But if you read carefully, you will find God had something bigger in mind!

In fact, **most Christians today believe one of these**:

1. Pray a prayer of salvation and believe Jesus died for you sins and you get to Heaven. (“Once saved, always saved/Persistence of the Saints)
2. Sin (break any law) and you are in danger of Hell if you die until you
  - a. Take Communion (or some other Sacrament)
  - b. Repent
  - c. Rededicate yourself to Christ
3. Hybrid: Believe in Jesus AND keep both OT and NT law or God will be unhappy with you (consequences not specific)



*It turns out that in my opinion, most Christians believe in the hybrid salvation while saying that we believe in once saved, always saved.*

However, the law doesn't justify a person. By the works of the Law, no one will be justified.

**Gal 2:15b-16** So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no one will be justified.

In my early Christian life, I thought people who were hyper legalistic were good followers of God. But if you read Galatians and Romans, you will see that Paul says if you take this approach, you are actually alienated and in danger.

Paul goes beyond “It just doesn't work”

**Gal 3:1-5** You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you?

**Gal 5:2** Mark my words! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all.

**Gal 5:4** You who are trying to be justified by the law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.

Is there a contradiction? No, language is not mathematics. If you have a variable in math, it always means the same thing. But this is not so in language. These words help us know if we are in relationship with God or not. There are two different meanings!

Doing the law doesn't get you anywhere! Consider:

### **I Corinthians 13**

If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

Jesus also says it differently:

You can obey the law yet not be in relationship with Christ!

It is the same with salvation: you can believe who Jesus said he was yet not be in relationship with him. Recall that the demons believe and tremble. Are you uncomfortable with this?

### **Gal 3:23-25**

Before the coming of this faith, we were held in custody under the law, locked up until the faith that was to come would be revealed. So the law was our guardian until Christ came that I might be justified by faith. Now that this faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian.

Consider this: Children need rules because they don't have the capacity to understand WHY. They cannot cross the street by themselves or play in traffic, for example. A child needs protection because they don't understand the danger. They don't have the experience to judge the speed and complexities of traffic.

Now If I taught you adults "Don't talk to strangers," I would be kicked out of the church! We're supposed to do this! But children don't have the capacity to tell the difference between strangers and safe people. (I actually didn't teach my kids this because I thought the psychological underpinning of this was more dangerous than the rule. But if I lived in different neighborhoods, I may have had to.)

We tell children to “share your toys” because we believe in being generous with those around us. But we are also *responsible* for our families. What if I had decided to give my whole paycheck away to some stranger on the street? This would not have been wise.

So how do we live? Jesus talks about all kinds of truths: He gave us plenty of direction. But it’s in the USING of the rules to prove we have a relationship with God is **not** what God intended. Paul gives more details of this: There are all kinds of things in the Pauline epistles that require context. But they are not the basis for our relationship with the Lord. Don’t commit adultery, don’t covet are superseded by our life in Christ. Life in the flesh (as children) living by the Spirit.

#### **Gal 5:16-18**

**16** So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. **17** For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. **18** But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

The flesh and spirit are in conflict: but if you are led by the spirit, you aren’t under the law.

#### **Gal 5:19-21**

**19** The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; **20** idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions **21** and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Paul is not making the LAW here. My wife pointed out to me the word “RULE” in English has its roots in the word RULER, a measurement of how you are doing. It’s a guideline to help you understand how you’re doing.

**Homework this week:** I want you to read these two passages every day and ask yourself “how am I doing?” Am I living in the flesh or the spirit? It will probably be a combination of both. But there are good ways at the beginning of the day to tell how I’m living, in the flesh or spirit.

#### **Gal 5:22-25**

**22** But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, **23** gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. **24** Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. **25** Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

While we have the Holy Spirit in us, we have it in earthen vessels. We are to guard this:

**2 Tim 1:14** Guard, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the treasure which has been entrusted to *you*.

**II Cor 4:7** But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.

Earthen vessels can be cracked so the light can shine through. But they are cheap, hard to clean and disposable, almost like styrofoam in the earlier days. Our bodies also are like this: when we are living in the Spirit, it is the work of God in us and not that of ourselves.

I believe that the core is this: If you really trust in the Lord, he will put his spirit in you so you can live like he wants you to live. This is righteousness from our own strength.

**Prov 3:5-5**

**5** Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding;  
**6** in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.

If you really trust in the Lord, He will put His Spirit in you to live like He wants you to live. That makes you His righteousness, not righteous from your own strength.

However, as soon as you say you don't have to follow the law, new questions arise:

- If people don't follow the Law, won't they be unrestrained?
- Can I please God if I don't follow the commandments?
- Isn't there a conflict between Law and Grace?
- How do I know which commandment to obey?
- Isn't this teaching "Cheap Grace?"

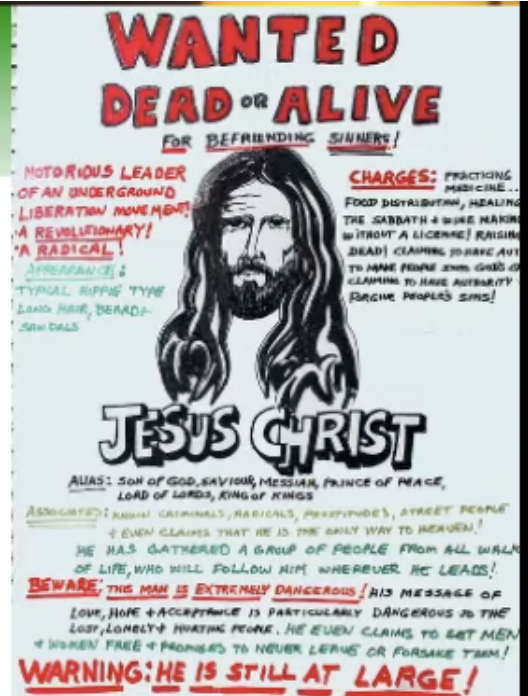
The short answer to all of these is that we are living in relationship with him. We have the Holy Spirit in us and we live in earthen vessels (which require us to keep asking how we are doing). But it's also a connection to God who created the universe and IS LOVE, who sent Jesus who gave up all power and humbled himself to death on the cross. If you are in relationship and you understand the works of the flesh and the Spirit, you will be in a better position to live like he wants you to live, to be in relationship with him, rather than follow a bunch of rules. In fact, living according to rules is an abomination that denies the cross. We are all law breakers: we have all disobeyed the law and are tempted daily to do it again. But what Jesus did is the basis of our relationship with him, not whether we obey the rules.

Back to living outside the law: a new WANTED poster. This might be hard to read; it was created back in the hippy days (my days).

## Living outside the Law

1 John 2:6 (NASB)

*The one who says that he remains in Him ought, himself also, to walk just as He walked.*



Do you remember the “What Would Jesus Do (WWJD)?” movement? That is how we know ultimately if we are in a relationship with him: if we are holding him up as an example.

## Galatians

Living outside the Law



Jesus was NOT executed for disobeying the law of the state, but the Law of Moses. It turns out he was innocent but if we follow him, as Paul did, we can find ourselves at odds with people who want to define our faith as that of obeying laws. Living outside the law = living in the spirit: it's more difficult and a higher standard. It's not for children: it is for adults with discernment who can postpone until later for a good

outcome today.

## Questions:

1. Like parents' rules, reveal what they care about, the Law reveals what God cares about. It would have been too hard to explain his love because there was no concept for it. I think

that even the apostles couldn't understand the concept of that. With the help of the Holy Spirit, it's a little easier.

-Paul's laws about circumcision, etc. show that God wanted to set aside a separate people for himself. When God extended the cross to the Gentiles (Peter's vision on the roof of the forbidden animals) we have to understand the reason for those laws.

It seems clear there are outward signs of the law but they all go back to the heart. God wants to know if our hearts are right by what we do: are we taking care of the poor and widows?

2. My children want the toy the other child is holding: They look to me for judgment and I find that I really don't care about their arguments about why they should have a certain toy. I find that it's not an A or B question, I desire their hearts to be right.
3. The law is also a tutor: If I don't see how far short I am, I won't see the need for a savior.
4. The law is also useful as an objective, easy to understand guidelines to tell us if we're messing up, how would we approach sin in ourselves and others? They don't have the same experience as I do.

Great observation! That's why I read the Psalm 19 scripture: the law teaches us the heart of God but **we need to be careful to apply this to others**. Obviously, if we see a married person in adultery, it violates a commandment. Moreover, it's wrong because it's an affront and betrayal of your vows to your spouse. We need to be careful to speak into other's lives to address the heart issues: We would rather break out Gal 5 and the words of the Spirit and flesh. We need to be extremely careful about pointing these out to others. We need to live in ambiguity. The Pharisees did this: to them, it looked like Jesus was clearly disobeying the law but Jesus said don't look at specks in other's eyes but rather the plank in your own life. We speak into others' lives when they are on destructive paths but it should not be a regular thing.