

Today we continue with our series in the Book of Galatians. Galatians is a call for freedom from the dependence on the Law for salvation. Galatians has been called the “Declaration of Independence of Christian liberty.” (enduringword) The Law serves a vital and important role as a tutor, a guide to lead us to Jesus Christ who is the true source of salvation.

**Paul’s letter to the Galatians tells us two things:**

- Our faith in Jesus saves us,
- Our works do not.

Consider the following verses:

*“A man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus.”* – Galatians 2:16 (a),

*“So that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law.”* – Galatians 2:16 (b).

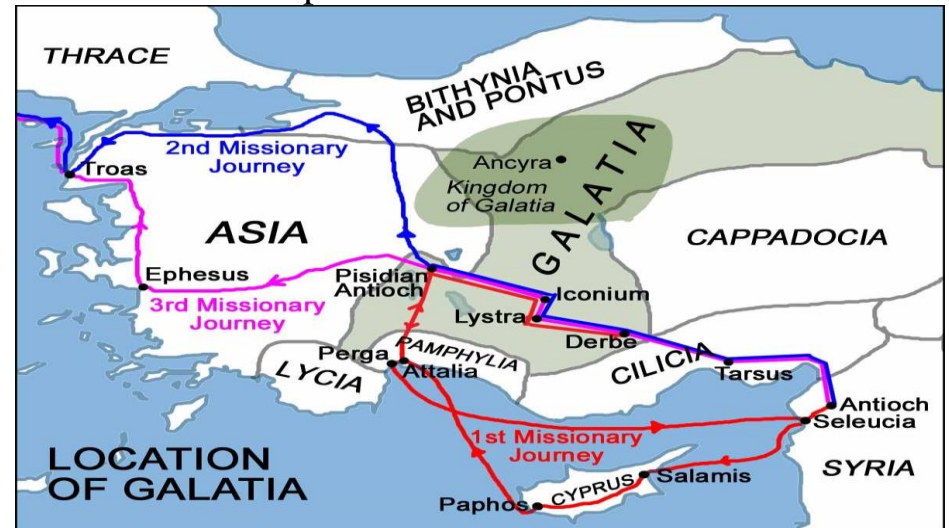
**As you read Galatians, look for two central themes:**

- The Law was insufficient to take away our sins,
- It is only through faith in Jesus that we can be reconciled with God.

<https://virtualbiblestudy.com/lessons/galatians/2/>

Last week we investigated Chapter 1 and felt Paul’s Anguished Heart over the failures of his ‘spiritual children’ in the churches of Galatia. **As you can see from the map here the region** of Galatia is highlighted in a grayish-green. The area is not that far from Paul’s hometown of Tarsus. On his Missionary Journeys he, along with Barnabas had helped bring these people to faith in Jesus and become Christians. He probably had

baptized a lot of them; he had helped establish their churches and set up elders or leaders in each church.



Sadly, after Paul’s departure a group of supposedly Christian Jews (Judaizers), also known as the “Party of Circumcision” came in and captured their immature faith and polluted them a legalistic focus. I mentioned that it was a “Jesus +” gospel. They still seemed to put forth faith in Christ as the Messiah, but they insisted that in addition to that faith you had to be circumcised (males) and all had to follow the law of Moses. So, in a sense it was a “Jesus + Moses” gospel. It appears that this type of addition and pollution of the true gospel that Jesus warned against in both Matthew 9:17 & Luke 5:37-39 about pouring new wine into old wineskins. This “Jesus +” belief was dangerous then and (and new forms of this) day) it is still dangerous in our own day and age.

Paul gives us an example of a true Spiritual Freedom Fighter, one who is willing to “Stand for the Truth”. I think you would agree that we too are called to be Freedom Fighters in our own day & age. We can also learn the proper way to Fight for Truth from Paul.

### **Brief Timeline of Paul's Life to this Point:** (approx.)

- c.5AD – Born in Tarsus of Cilicia
- c.15-20AD – Trained in the Gamaliel School
- c.32AD – Present at stoning of Stephen
- c.32-33AD – Active persecutor of Christians
- c. 33AD – Conversion on Road to Damascus (goes to Jerusalem for a brief, limited exposure meeting)
- c.33-34AD – goes to Arabia (spends around 3 years there)
- c.37-AD – Returns briefly to Damascus, then to Jerusalem for another brief visit, then escapes pressure and returns to his homeland of Tarsus for about 10-13 years)
- c.46AD – Barnabas goes to Saul/Paul and urges him to come to Antioch and disciple the new church there.
- c. 47AD – Paul & Barnabas take a Relief Offering to Jerusalem then return to Antioch and then Paul & Barnabas are sent off on their 1<sup>st</sup> Missionary Journey
- c48AD – Paul and Barnabas go to Jerusalem to debate the Judaizers interfering with the Gentile churches.
- c.49-53AD – Paul writes the letter to the Galatians.

Let's jump into today's passage in Chapter 2 where we find Two Enemies that Paul fought and then the weapon that Paul used to Fight For Truth. (Platt. 39...)

### **Enemy No. 1. - Legalism: Right Behavior, Wrong Belief.**

Let's Read...

**Galatians 2:1-10...** *<sup>1</sup>Then after an interval of fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along also. <sup>2</sup>It was because of a revelation that I went up; and I submitted to them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but I did so in private to those who were of reputation, for fear that I might be running, or had run, in vain. <sup>3</sup>But not even Titus,*

*who was with me, though he was a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised. <sup>4</sup>But it was because of the false brethren secretly brought in, who had sneaked in to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, in order to bring us into bondage. <sup>5</sup>But we did not yield in subjection to them for even an hour, so that the truth of the gospel would remain with you. <sup>6</sup>But from those who were of high reputation (what they were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality)—well, those who were of reputation contributed nothing to me. <sup>7</sup>But on the contrary, seeing that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been to the circumcised <sup>8</sup>(for He who effectually worked for Peter in his apostleship to the circumcised effectually worked for me also to the Gentiles), <sup>9</sup>and recognizing the grace that had been given to me, James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, so that we might go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. <sup>10</sup>They only asked us to remember the poor—the very thing I also was eager to do.*

Paul is standing his ground and fighting for freedom in Christ against the enemy we can call 'legalism'. Platt defined legalism (p. 40) as "working in our own power according to our own rules with the goal of earning God's favor".

Pastor and Writer Max Lucado in his book *He Still Moves Stones* (pp. 128-129) gives this assessment of legalism... (with some adaption)

"A legalist believes the supreme force behind salvation is yourself. If you look right, speak right, and belong to the right segment of the right group, you will be saved....

The burden of the responsibility lies within you, rather than God. The result? The outside sparkles. The talk is good, and the actions seem proper, but look closely and listen carefully. Something is missing. What is it? It is joy. What is there in its place...Fear. (That you won't do enough). Arrogance (That you have already done enough). Failure. (That you have made a mistake). Legalism is a slow torture that robs you joy and spiritual power and influence. Legalism is enough religion to keep you going, but not enough to nourish you to spiritual maturity. Your diet is rules, regulations and mans expectations. All that's left is a bland, powerless religion."

Paul boldly comes before the Jerusalem leaders to address these Judaizer circumcision party "Jesus+" troublemakers. He even brings Titus, a Greek/Gentile (uncircumcised) Christian as a test case to see if the church leaders would stand for freedom and truth with Paul or succumb to the pressure of the legalist. Thankfully, at this point anyway, the leaders (Cephas/Peter, John & James and others) agreed with the Jesus Only Faith Foundation and supported Paul and the Freedom we have in Christ.

However, there seems to be a fly in the ointment. This next passage shows just how insidious and seductive is the tendency to legalism and self-effort.

## **Enemy No. 2 - Hypocrisy: Right Belief, Wrong Behavior**

**Galatians 2:11-14...**<sup>11</sup> *But when Cephas (Peter) came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned.* <sup>12</sup> *For prior to the coming of certain men from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he began to withdraw and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision.* <sup>13</sup> *The rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy, with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy.* <sup>14</sup> *But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in the presence of all, "If you, being a Jew, live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, how is it that you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?"*

Whereas legalism was the main enemy in the first section, we are introduced to a product or result of legalism in this passage... Hypocrisy.

None other than the great 'pillar' and elder of the church Cephas/Peter and sadly also Barnabas fell victim to this enemy. They were on the winning side of Truth in the previous passage, but they let their guard down and fell to hypocrisy.

Sometime after Paul had successfully defended and fought for Freedom & Truth in Jerusalem, Cephas/Peter, Barnabas traveled north to the new powerful church of Antioch, which was a Greek/Gentile multicultural fellowship. At first, they were very accepting and supportive of the new gentile Christians. But sadly, when a group of the Judaizer Circumcision Party leaders came to "inspect the church" Cephas/Peter and even Barnabas



hypocritically and weekly turned their backs on the gentiles and fell sway to the political pressure of the Judaizers. But, Freedom Fighter Paul, took them on and confronted Cephas/Peter and Barnabas “*to their faces*” and publicly exposed their hypocrisy. Now we don’t have written for us Peter’s response, but we can deduce that he repented of his error and stood for the Freedom & Truth.

A lesson we can deduce from this is that sadly, even strong Christians and Spiritual Leaders can be lead astray. We must stay alert and always be ready to address error (in love of course) and proclaim truth and freedom in Christ. We must be careful not to let our personal, philosophical or political opinions influence us away from the true Biblical teachings.

The last verses of this chapter give us the weapon to fight these enemies and live a life of true faith.

#### **Weapon of Victory – Faith: Right Belief, Right Behavior**

**Galatians 2:15-21...**<sup>15</sup> *“We are Jews by nature and not sinners from among the Gentiles; <sup>16</sup> nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified. <sup>17</sup> But if, while seeking to be justified in Christ, we ourselves have also been found sinners, is Christ then a minister of sin? May it never be! <sup>18</sup> For if I rebuild what I have once destroyed, I prove myself to be a transgressor. <sup>19</sup> For through the Law I died to the Law, so that I might live to God. <sup>20</sup> I have been crucified with*

*Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me. <sup>21</sup> I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly.”*

The spiritual weapon to fight legalism and hypocrisy is true faith...which leads us to Right Belief and Right Behavior. This type of faith is what saves us and keeps us in right relationship with God through Christ. Paul uses the word “Justification”, which we have discussed before. One way to describe justification is “the gracious act of God by which He declares a sinner righteous solely through faith in Jesus Christ”. (Platt, 45)

Paul reinforces that we are saved, justified and sanctified through our faith in the completed work of Jesus Christ and His sacrificial death and glorious resurrection. Our righteousness or our goodness or our relationship with God is totally dependent and secure in Jesus Christ. Not our works, not our human effort.

**Galatians 2:20** is the key... *I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.*

The core point is that we are not able to enter into or sustain our relationship with God outside of Christ. It is through Christ living in us that we are saved and justified.

When we surrender to Christ in faith and accept Him as Lord and Savior He comes into our hearts/minds/life and brings new life. That means we must die to our old nature and let Christ create a new nature in us.

Listen to what Paul says in two of his other letters on this subject...

**2 Corinthians 5:17... *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.***

**Romans 6:11... *So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.***

When we truly surrender and place our faith in Jesus, our old sin nature dies and is replaced with Christ's new nature for us. It is only through Christ living in us that we can live lives that are honorable and pleasing to God.

We are new creatures, indwelt by the Holy Spirit that, if we obey the Spirit, we can live a life pleasing to God and be... say it with me ...

**Powerful Witnesses of God's Good News Story,  
Motivated by Love, & Empowered by the Holy Spirit.**

**Take Away:** Evaluate carefully your spiritual walk. Is it contaminated with legalism or hypocrisy? Let Christ live in you and transform you into His new creation. Then go and Share the Good News Story to Everyone. Be A Freedom Faith Fighter and Stand For the Truth!

**The following references were utilized in preparation of this message:**

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