



**THE
EPISTLE
OF PAUL
TO THE
GALATIANS**

.....
ARNOLD G. KUNTZ

LIVING WAY
BIBLE STUDY

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LIVING WAY BIBLE STUDY SUGGESTS THIS FOUR-STEP METHOD

- 1. PERSONAL* – The student prays for guidance from the Holy Spirit and answers the Personal Application (P.A.) questions at home using only the Bible (no commentaries).
- 2. SMALL GROUPS* – The class meets for an opening and divides into small groups of 8–10 people. The small group leader guides the group through the P.A. questions, encouraging each to share their answers and discuss further as time allows.
- 3. THE MESSAGE* – The lecture or message is given by a pastor or layperson who has researched the material and presents the study, giving personal insight and augmenting, but not duplicating, the author's comments.
- 4. THE NARRATIVE* – The author's comments or narrative, along with the P.A. questions for the next lesson, are given out at the end of the class. At the next class meeting, before answering the P.A. questions, the small groups may choose to review the author's comments of the last lesson, and share what each has highlighted as meaningful or important.

With this four-step method the student has the opportunity to study the particular section of Scripture covered by the lesson from four different approaches. This emphasizes the Bible text and gives the student an understanding and ownership for each section studied.

Each lesson should be stapled together according to the number of the lesson in the right-hand corner of the page. The P.A. questions for the next week should be attached after the author's narrative for the current week, as they will be the home study for the next class session.

The first meeting of the class is an introduction to the study. Since the members of the small groups have no P.A. questions to discuss at the first meeting, they may use the time to get acquainted or to tell what they hope to receive by studying this course. At the first meeting, the lecturer presents background information about the course, using the Introduction lesson as a guide.

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THE EPISTLE OF PAUL TO THE GALATIANS

ARNOLD G. KUNTZ

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LECTURER WORKSHEET

OUTLINE OF THE EPISTLE OF PAUL TO THE GALATIANS

Begin to construct the outline of Paul's epistle to the Galatians on the basis of what we have learned so far. The outline will be filled in from time to time as the study proceeds.

THIS BOOK DECLARES OUR INDEPENDENCE

DECLARATION OF CHRISTIAN INDEPENDENCE

KEY *THE KEY VERSE RUNS LIKE A RIVER THROUGH THE ENTIRE BOOK*

GALATIANS 5:1

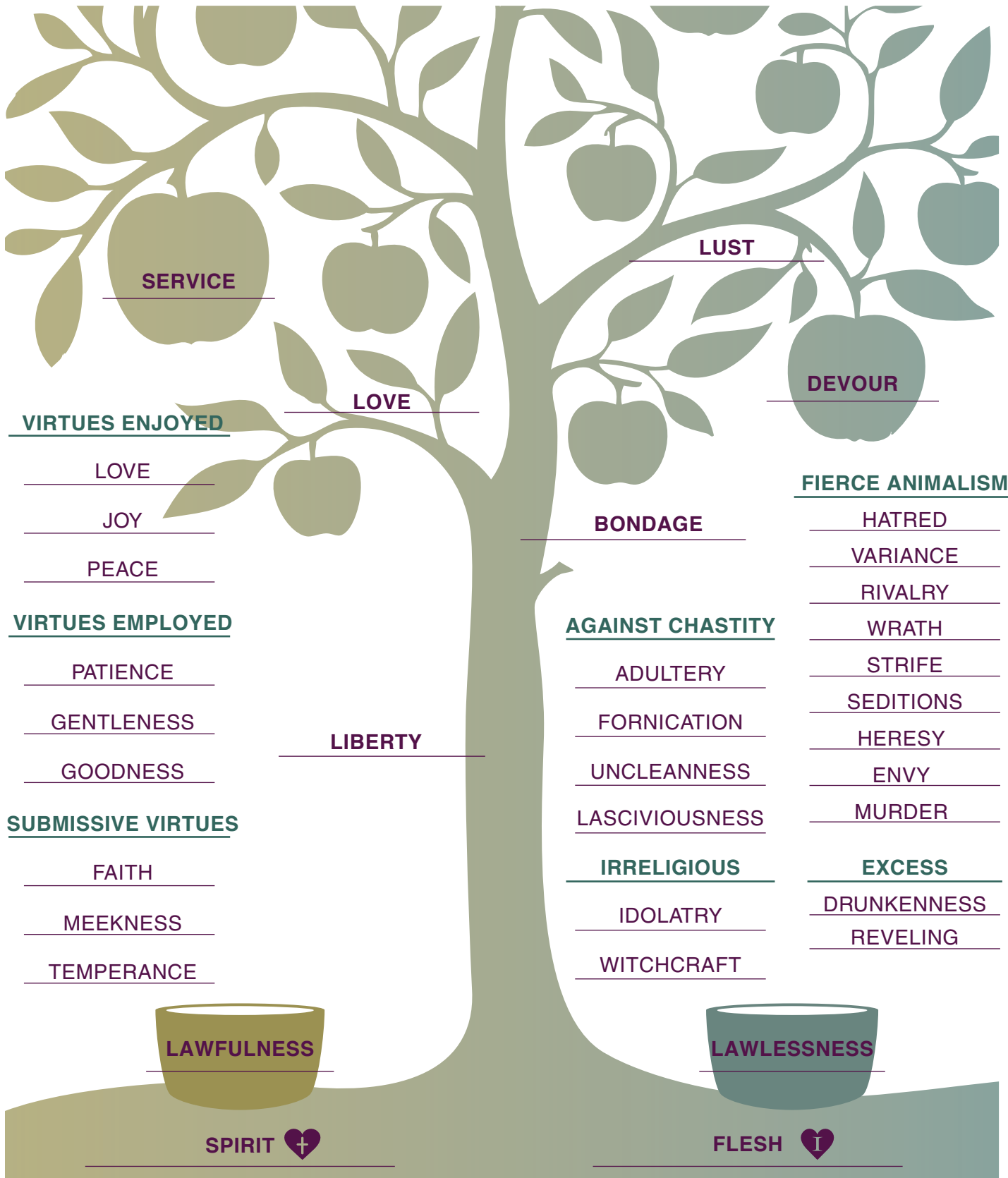
IDENTIFY THREE SECTIONS

PERSONAL		DOCTRINAL		PRACTICAL	
<i>CHAPTERS</i>					
1	2	3	4	5	6
<i>THEME</i>					
AUTHORITY	APOSTLES	FAITH NOT WORKS	SONS NOT SLAVES	FREEDOM NOT LICENSE	RESULTS
<i>THEME</i>					
INDEPENDENT OF MEN DEPENDENT ON CHRIST		SALVATION INDEPENDENT OF WORKS SALVATION DEPENDENT ON FAITH		CHRISTIANS ARE INDEPENDENT OF THE LAW CHRISTIANS ARE DEPENDENT ON THE HOLY SPIRIT	

LECTURER WORKSHEET

FREEDOM (NOT LICENSE)

Won't freedom lead to moral chaos and lawlessness?



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OUTLINE OF THE EPISTLE OF PAUL TO THE GALATIANS	4
PERSONAL APPLICATION – GALATIANS 1:1-5	5



“Here the Holy Spirit talks to us about our day’s subtle temptations to abandon the unique Gospel of grace for the same old, weary religion of works which wants us to give a yank now and again at our bootstraps to bring us safely home.”



The heading says this is the “introduction.” It’s really like a warning, a happy warning to let you know you’re in for an exciting experience. It’s like someone squealing “watch out” just as the roller coaster grinds to the top of the track and the plunge is about to begin. The roller coaster analogy is an apt one, for in this brief letter we are pulled and plummeted from one extreme to another; from anger, rage, and even fury on the part of the apostle-author to the ultimate in compassion and gentle care; from the breathtaking righteous anger of a protective mother to the sternness and soberness of a father setting the offspring straight and pointing them, like a wise, old pedagogue, in the right direction.

It’s a happy experience, the epistle to the churches in Galatia, if you’re one of the “good guys.” The “good guys” are the “little children” of chapter 4:19. It’s not such a happy experience for the “bad guys.” You can recognize them by the excess of upset which Paul evidences with them (2:4; 6:13). When all is said and done, what lies before us is a trip through one of the most outstanding lessons in Christian truth and one of the deepest excursions into Christian doctrine in literature. Only don’t expect a lecture. This is more like Dad at his best behind the woodshed. You’ll get the point by the time it’s over. And even if the experience is reminiscent of a tornado passing through, you’ll be ever so grateful for having gone to school with the volatile apostle.

The letter, the epistle, was written to the few churches scattered through the province called Galatia. Maybe scholars have a good time debating whether the “churches of Galatia” (1:2) are the few in the north or the many in the south. Are the members of these churches relatives, several times removed,

of the settlers of France (Gaul) “fickle, boastful, quarrelsome, immoral, lovable, exasperating,” or content for the moment to keep the peace for Rome in a miserable but strategic outback province which is part of modern Turkey?

It doesn't help much to come down on either side of the debate. What does help to get us started is a grasp of the circumstances which had Paul flinging things off the desk trying to find pen and papyrus so he can dash off a letter to the folks in the churches of Galatia to set both hearts and record straight. Paul was not one to “sleep on it” for a day or two. So what we have here is as much heart and heat as it is mind. In Paul's case, the content, structure and style don't suffer in the least. What a masterpiece tumbles out onto the page! No wonder the letters were so “large” (6:11). Who's concerned with penmanship when there's so much which needs to be said, and so much which needs to be said so emphatically?

For, you see, after all the elementary, the basic, the fundamental doctrine Paul had provided, simple and uncluttered, when he had made his sweep (or was it sweeps?) through the province (Acts 14) and gotten those little “synagogue style” churches underway, (or at the least had firmly fixed the faith in churches which had earlier been planted), some “know-it-alls” from Jerusalem arrived upon the scene to insinuate a little improvement upon Paul's teaching. They said, “Paul says our eternal future is assured because it was won for us by Jesus. You needn't, Paul says, you can't, do anything to contribute to your eternal hope and life. There is an element of truth in that. Yet it does play fast and loose with some rather obvious factors. Take circumcision as an example. Or consider the observation of special days, holy years and sanctified times. You can't say that's all bad. If you can be a good Christian without these, you could certainly be a better one with them. But

don't be too hard on your friend Paul. After all, he isn't a normally trained and properly certified clergyman, not like the others, so you might reasonably expect his points of view would call for a little refining.”

And those lovable oafs there in Galatia were falling for it. Paul responds: “Good grief! Tell the postman I'll be down in a minute. Don't let him leave without this. I've got to get this in the mail for Galatia tonight. Nobody is going to pull legalistic wool over the eyes of my beloved. Take a letter, Miss Bluhm. Get out pen and parchment, Mark. Put this down.”

Basically, Paul had three things to say: 1) The Judaizers are right. I'm not an apostle like the others. My credentials are better, as a matter of fact, than anyone else's. It was a personal defense, but with a purpose. There was no legitimate basis to undermine his ministry. 2) The Gospel, the heart and soul of the true Gospel, is the freedom it provides from any kind of contribution (and any kind of enslaving worry about inadequate contributions) on our part to hope and life and victory. God and God only, is the active agent of our salvation and even in and of our Christian lives. That's the doctrine. 3) All this has practical implications and produces specific results in your life and in mine. One, two, three. A personal section. A doctrinal section. A practical section. And each section handily covers two chapters. That, then, is our outline (*OUTLINE WORKSHEET*, page 4).

It isn't only Paul who is furious about “Judaizers from Jerusalem” fouling the Christian nest. And it isn't simply those folks in Galatia who are naively turned to “another gospel” which is no gospel at all but a people-centered, work-oriented, humanistic substitute for the Gospel. Let's not forget that the Bible, and that includes the six chapters of

.....

*This book is our “Declaration of
Christian Independence.”*

.....

“Galatians,” is the Word of God. Every last word of this remarkable book is even more the product of the Holy Spirit than it is of Paul. The Spirit of God, too, is upset with “another,” a different gospel.

And we are in the picture too. Specifically. The influences all around us and among us today which would have us expand a little on the simple (some say childish) Gospel, inviting us to get our fingers into the pie, are the real target of this Bible book. We, too, are getting sidetracked from the pure Gospel daily. You’ll see as we proceed. This book we are studying is “as up-to-date as Kansas City.” Here the Holy Spirit talks to us about our day’s subtle temptations to abandon the unique Gospel of grace for the same old, weary religion of works which wants us to give a yank now and again at our bootstraps to bring us safely home. Here is a book which sets us free of those temptations and the constraints and frustrations and downright terror which is so much the mark of every faith which makes demands upon man’s efforts as the price, at least in part, for his salvation. This book declares our independence from all of that. This book is our “Declaration of Christian Independence.” That then is our title (*OUTLINE WORKSHEET*, page 4).

It would be best for the students in this exercise to move through this study with a minimum of traffic control from these notes. Allow one exception. When you scan a huge crowd, it helps to know who you are looking for. When you survey a panoramic landscape, it’s likely to reveal the house by the side of the stream if you know it’s the point of the picture. The suggestion here is that you set aside these notes for the moment, take your Bible in hand, locate Galatians 5:1, and underline it. That won’t deface your Bible. If anything, it will enhance its value. Galatians 5:1 is the point. Read it out loud, really, each week before you work at your assignment. It is, all along, what Paul is getting at. Read it aloud right now. It’s the key (*OUTLINE WORKSHEET*, page 4) to our study.

Now turn the page and let the discovery begin.

WORKSHEET

OUTLINE OF THE EPISTLE OF PAUL TO THE GALATIANS

Begin to construct the outline of Paul's epistle to the Galatians on the basis of what we have learned so far. The outline will be filled in from time to time as the study proceeds.

THIS BOOK DECLARES OUR INDEPENDENCE

KEY *THE KEY VERSE RUNS LIKE A RIVER THROUGH THE ENTIRE BOOK*

IDENTIFY THREE SECTIONS

CHAPTERS

THEME

THEME

PERSONAL APPLICATION – GALATIANS 1:1-5

Where my heart is shackled, dear Lord, set me free. Where my spirit is dulled and my life is covered with guilt and a desperate sense of my inadequacy, lift me, teach me and turn me loose. Let me know the Joy of Your salvation. Amen.

-
1. The word “apostle” means “commissioned messenger.” The early church recognized several “ranks” of apostleship. Rank #1. Read Luke 22:14; Matthew 10:2-4, 27:3-5; Acts 1:25-26. List the first rank apostles by name.

 2. Read John 3:11; Acts 1:21-23 and 1 Corinthians 9:1. What was distinctive about the first rank apostles and who was the appointing agent for these apostles?

 3. Read Acts 5:13. The first rank apostles were highly regarded. What word or phrase would you use to describe what you would suppose to be the common attitude of the early church for what the apostles said?

 4. Rank #2 apostles. Read 2 Corinthians 8:23 and Philippians 2:25. By whose appointment did apostles of the second rank serve?

 5. Ministers today receive their commission by the “laying on of hands.” Through whom do they receive their authority to serve?

 6. Compare Acts 9:1-9 with Galatians 1:1. Paul claims a uniqueness with reference to his commission beyond that of the twelve. What is it?

 7. Read Galatians 1:1-12. Why is it so important to Paul to establish his unique commission and rank?

 8. Why is Paul’s commission and rank important to you?

 9. Look up the word “grace” in a dictionary. Of all the meanings listed, which do you think Paul had in mind in Galatians 1:3?

10. Read Ephesians 2:8-9. Would you characterize the Christian religion as a religion based on the action of man or of God? Explain.

11. What, in your perception, is the basic difference between the Christian religion and other religions?

12. Name some religions which make their goals dependent on “works.”

13. Mark True (T) or False (F) in front of each of the following statements and explain the reason for your answer. You may use the reference suggested or one of your own choice.

___ God gives grace to those who deserve it (Romans 3:24).

___ God’s grace and man’s works combine to effect his salvation (Romans 11:6).

___ A person is forgiven in direct proportion to his efforts to do good (Ephesians 1:7).

___ There is comfort in the knowledge that one is not totally bad, better at least than many (Romans 3:23).

___ We know that we are washed clean and renewed by God’s mercy and the Holy Spirit’s action (Titus 3:5).

14. Establish the connection between “grace” and “peace” in verse 3.

15. With what action is the will of God identified in verse 4?

16. Explain how if one works to accomplish his own salvation he robs God of His glory (1:5).

GALATIANS 1:3-5	8
PERSONAL APPLICATION – GALATIANS 1:6-12	10

• • •

“Deep down in Paul’s mind there is a progression of thought which darts by too quickly to identify or develop. But it leaves him with this: God’s plan of salvation is glorious.”

• • •

GALATIANS 1:1-2

The first few sentences in the epistle of Paul to the Galatians look for all the world to the casual reader like just another pleasant salutation and the first verse merely a return address, a warm “Hello, this is Paul here.” But you would not have thought so if you had been one of the Judaizers, the enemy, and had opened the envelope and read while you strolled in casually from the mail box. That first verse would have had your heart beating a little faster, would have put you on the phone straightway to some of the other religious “experts” from Jerusalem. “Looks like we might have a spot of trouble here,” you would have told them. Paul simply can’t wait to get to the point. His initial words constitute a large part of his argument. It isn’t, he reminds them, some sort of naive clergyman, some pseudo-apostle, they’ve grabbed by the tail. “Now hear this. Now hear this. This is your leader speaking.”

There are apostles and there are apostles. They all serve under some sort of commission, those who are sent by the church, “by men,” and those privileged few who are sent by Jesus Christ Himself, and whose credential is that they have been eyewitnesses to the life and ministry, and especially the resurrection of Jesus. But there is only one Paul. He alone can lay claim to having received in person his commission from the ascended Christ, risen and sitting at the right hand of the Father, showing up outside Damascus like an extra-terrestrial on a beam of blazing light.

To be called by Christ at all, through a local congregation or rinsing your nets at the Sea of Gennesaret, is a startling experience and provides one with a certain sense of confidence. To be knocked off your horse by the One “Who lives and reigns to all eternity” is overwhelming. But it leaves you very certain

of your purpose and your ministry. Of one thing you can be sure: Paul is out here preaching and teaching because God Almighty wills it.

Now, that's not the kind of credential one treats lightly. The Judaizers could see the gauntlet at their feet. And the folks in Galatia were reminded mightily who it was who had sent Paul to bring them "the Gospel of peace."

"And all the brothers who are with me" (v.2): Luther says, "That should go far toward shutting the mouths of the false teachers." The Judaizers were calling Paul's teaching erroneous and different. Yet it was they who were out of step with the church. Paul strongly insinuates that his point of view is the point of view of the brothers. It's a neat turn, this mention of the brothers. It's loaded with innuendo. The Judaizers, it strongly implies, are the ones who have gotten themselves all alone out on a limb.

Thus far we have covered two verses. But it's the word "covered" which is suspect; not nearly covered. What a word of introduction! It sets the tone — this is war. It establishes the credential — this is as close to God talking as you get on this earth anymore. It presupposes victory, what with Jesus and His Father on Paul's side. And it ushers in the first major point, the personal section of the epistle, chapters one and two.

Paul will get to that. Just now, reflecting suddenly the fondness he feels for the people of God in those churches, whose faith is being threatened, Paul's mood changes drastically. Remembering them, Paul delivers the remarkably warm greeting which you find in chapter 1:3-5. Let's look at it.

GALATIANS 1:3-5

Chances are the last time you heard the words which comprise Galatians 1:3, they preceded the pastor's Sunday sermon. People, who appreciate the liturgical, call this the "votum." If on Sunday it doesn't come off sounding a little bit wistful, an almost desperate expression of hope and good intentions, it should. If a pastor is going to use these words in a way which is true to their original intent, he will breathe into them warmth of feeling, an eagerness and anticipation. There is a promise here. All these are most appropriate for the pastor who presumes to stand before his people to preach the Word of God. And all these were very much in evidence in verse 3.

In his mind's eye he could see the group picture of his beloved Galatians: Dychus and Myrna, little Pennuel and Temah. The very recollection melted his heart. The eager protagonist, impatient to join the argument, softens for the moment. There is a lot of heart in his next words. But, if the tone has changed, the point has not. He doesn't for a second lose sight of his theme. "I am committed to preserve for you the glorious Gospel of grace, to underscore for your comfort, hope and peace that your salvation is in God's hands. He freely gives you life through Jesus. You don't, you needn't, you can't, make even the slightest contribution on your own. Grace is the opposite of works. Grace is the antithesis of works. It spurns words like 'law' and 'circumcision.' And I say, Grace be unto you."

What a lovely and appropriate way for any Christian preacher to begin a sermon, with the earnest yearning that his preaching will be a conduit for the Gospel of grace, for the free gift of a loving God, who in spite of, not because of, what we are sends His Son to do and be for us

what we don't do and cannot be. It doesn't always work that way. Sometimes a sermon leaves you feeling guilty and hopeless. But there's always the "votum" to save the day. What your pastor really wants, that to which he is actually committed, is to get God's grace across to you for your peace.

For your peace: There is no peace, not inside in the heart and in the conscience, in a religion which stresses works, where you are the designated hitter, the active agent. You know yourself too well to find any real comfort from the things which you have done. All the things left undone, all the dishonest, mean, cruel, unclean, crude, vengeful, impatient, thoughtless (how long does this list go on) things, set themselves down alongside the good you've done and about the best you can manage is to get the stacks to come out somewhat even. How much is enough? God, of course, flatly tells us nothing less than perfection will suffice. There goes the ball game. It's too late. It's always too late. We lose. If Judaizers in Galatia or legalists in Philadelphia insist you try a little harder, you're sunk. At best, you'll fret the whole day through wondering if your motives are up to snuff or your secret thoughts can pass muster. You've got all those past mistakes to undo and may very well become immobilized in the fear of future ones as well.

But, if your hope and your life, now and forever, are in God's hands totally, what a relief. He is able. He alone is able. There is peace of mind and conscience if it all rests with God. Grace leads to peace. It comes from God, our Father, all of it. It comes from Jesus. He is the source of our peace, because He is the source of our salvation. It is His grace by which you are saved. This is the same Jesus who gave Himself for our sins (v.4). That is God's plan for redemption, not what you do; what Jesus does.

Paul's moment of calm as he addresses his Galatians is beginning to slip. Don't miss the point of verse 4. Don't let anyone tell you what you must do to be set free in this evil world. God's plan is to send His Son to rescue you. Deliverance is key to Paul's point. Once delivered, set free from the constraint to do good works, you are liberated from the world and its evil so you can freely do good works. That will be a major consideration in the doctrinal section (see Introduction) but Paul can't wait. His words and thoughts and arguments are piling up. He's got to get it out. He's just about back to full boil.

And that's the way you have to read verse 5, "To whom be the glory." The Judaizers were trying to take the play out of the hands of God and put it in the hands of men. Deep down in Paul's mind there is a progression of thought which darts by too quickly to identify or develop. But it leaves him with this: God's plan of salvation is glorious. What the Judaizers are urging on you would shift the glory to people, with their efforts and their works. That's sheer impudence. "Who," Paul is thinking, "do they think they are? Listen, to God be the glory, not to you or me or anyone. Forever. Amen. That's the way it is. That's the way it's going to be. Forever. And ever." Not exactly fit words for a quiet melody, even though that's the way we usually read them. Rather, they have Paul off and running, right into Section #1, chapter 1, verses 6 to 12.

PERSONAL APPLICATION – GALATIANS 1:6-12

*Bless the moments which I spend with You, dear Savior, and with Your Word.
Your Scripture shines to light my way and dispels the gloom and darkness
of my life. Guide me by my study of Your Word and will. Amen.*

-
1. Read verse 6. Long established convictions are sometimes abandoned overnight. List some circumstances which can be a temptation to a quick surrender of convictions.

 2. List some traditions, customs or convictions in the church which have changed over the years. Explain why you feel the changes are good or bad.

 3. Are there doctrines in the church which have changed over the years? If your answer is “no” explain why you think this is good or bad. If your answer is “yes,” list them and discuss.

 4. Paul equates a change of doctrine in verse 6 with “deserting him who called you.” To whom does Paul refer?

Who called you to the Gospel?

What were the circumstances attending your call to the Gospel?

Read 1 Peter 2:9. By whose action are you a member of the Christian Church?

-
5. Read verse 7. The word Gospel means literally “good news,” “glad tidings.” Why does Paul, why would you, think the word gospel is inappropriate for the work oriented teaching of the Judaizers?

 6. What makes the Gospel of grace good news?

 7. There are two other verses in the Bible that use the same Greek verb, translated in verse 7 as “pervert” (NIV/KJV). How does your Bible translate this verb in:
Acts 2:20?

James 4:9?

Which translation do you think most accurately reflects Paul's meaning?

8. Read verse 8. When Paul refers to "we," to what credential does he point?

Name some respected teachers in our day in the world and in the church.

On what basis must church leaders and teachers be judged?

9. Read verse 1:9; Deuteronomy 21:23; and Joshua 6:17-18. What does Paul invoke upon the false teachers?

10. Identify three ways in which today we are tempted to alter our stated convictions in order to accommodate the feelings and beliefs of others.

11. Read verse 10 in as many translations as you have access to. The ESV says "seeking...approval," the NIV says "win approval" and the KJV employs the word "persuade." Other translations suggest a slightly different meaning. What word would you use, given the context? Why?

12. Suggest reasons why the Gospel of grace might be less than popular.

13. In Acts 9:1-20, we find that obviously Paul was selected for ministry and sent to preach by God. Today's pastors and church workers speak of being "called" into ministry. How might the conviction that one is "called" to serve impact:
- The ministry of a pastor?

b. The role of the church worker?

c. The role of the parishioner?

Discuss misapplications of the concept of the call by pastors, church workers and parishioners.

By what authority does a pastor (church worker) preach, administer Sacraments and serve the spiritual needs of the congregation?

14. What implication does Matthew 20:25-28 have for ministry?

15. Paul is beginning the personal defense of his ministry in verses 11 & 12, and establishing the legitimacy and authoritative nature of his teaching.

Who does Paul claim as the source and authority of his teachings?

What makes a pastor's teaching authoritative, his call or the source of his teaching?

16. Read 2 Timothy 3:15-17 and 1 Thessalonians 2:13.

Whose word is the Scripture?

Whose word is the epistle of Paul to the Galatians?

GALATIANS 1:10-12	14
PERSONAL APPLICATION – GALATIANS 1:13-2:14	16

• • •
“Our religion is the invention of God and is ours through the revelation of His Word.”
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GALATIANS 1:6-9

“It’s a puzzlement,” the King of Siam tells Anna. There is, perhaps, an explanation, but if there is it escapes me; if there is it fails to satisfy me. That’s what Paul, gentler now, tells his Galatian converts. “I am astonished.” I’m hurt, disappointed and, above all, confused. It just doesn’t make sense to tamper with the Gospel of grace, to water it down, to abandon it at last and to turn your back on the God who has chosen you and redeemed you. Logic alone reveals the foolishness of listening to the Judaizers from Jerusalem.

And so quickly (v.6). This is the age old complaint of parents, pastors, educators, mentors. Why is it that convictions and commitments which require the investment of years of patient instruction and example to forge, can be displaced so quickly and so easily at the first challenge from the lips of a veritable stranger? The precious and profound treasure which is ours in the unique understanding we have of the Gospel of free forgiveness, for one thing, and the power of the Sacraments, Baptism and the Lord’s Supper, for another. These convictions which give us a special place in the panorama of Christendom; these we ought to cherish and defend, and maintain for them our deep loyalty, and not sniff every passing aroma which offers itself on the breezes of current church history.

They had said it is another gospel, containing all the elements of the gospel taught by the apostle Paul, and a little bit more (v.6). But there is no other Gospel (v.7). Either it’s Gospel or it’s not. Either it’s grace or it’s law. Either it’s freedom or it’s bondage. Either it’s sonship or it’s slavery. Either it’s faith or it’s works. Don’t make with this “another” talk. Another gospel is patently not another gospel. Another gospel is bad news, miserable tidings. The insinuation of law and works and “by deeds of ours” into a religion of salvation perverts the Good News into announcements about quotas, discussions of inadequacy, pronouncements of judgments and suggestions of uncertainty, even despair.

Before the Holy Spirit burst into the cubbyhole where Martin Luther poured over the book of Romans, and exploded in front of Luther's mind's eye the revelation that God in Jesus is the active agent, he couldn't sleep nights agonizing over his eternal fate. God in Jesus is the sole active agent of our hope, our eternal inheritance and our daily walk with God. The work oriented religion he was exposed to 'til then was hardly good news. Not "another gospel," at all, as far removed from the real Gospel as Beethoven is from punk rock.

While the experience of Luther is still fresh in our minds, it's interesting to note how he translates the words which follow in verse 7: "There are some who trouble your conscience." The Judaizers had been saying one has to keep the requirements of Old Testament and moral laws to be saved, at least to play safe. That was a major disturbance to the consciences of the Galatians. And to ours. Grace equals peace; peace of conscience and heart (1:3). The requirements of the law, rules and regulations, standards and codes of conduct, equal troubled consciences.

Paul is not one to go about taking the glory of the Gospel of grace for granted. There is nothing "ho-hum" about his grasp of the religion of Christ. He recognizes and basks continually in the benefits which attend the unique way of salvation invested by the living God. There is no other religion like the Christian religion. Its genius consists of this that it does for man what man cannot do for himself. And that spells peace. That provides confidence. That produces freedom. That gives one the stature of the sons and daughters of God. It's a source for powerful living. It is strength and confidence in death. It is a "citadel within," "a mighty rock in a weary land."

Paul was conscious of all that, always. No one could take that from him. He is tireless in his defense and promotion of the Gospel of grace. We

want to be too. It starts with continual gratitude for and amazement about the mercy of our God. "While we were still sinners," He gave His Son for us (Romans 5:8). If we are conscious of that, we will not take it lightly or give it up easily, certainly not in exchange for a faith which puts us in the middle, where Christ ought to be.

GALATIANS 1:10-12

"For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel. For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ." That makes a difference, a considerable difference. The carefully devised hypotheses of men are just that, no matter now intelligently crafted or how scholarly researched or how agreeably received they have been, a hypothesis is a hypothesis.

But God KNOWS. He doesn't reckon. He authors. He doesn't reflect. His is the last and final word. All the sublime calculations of an Einstein or the deductions of a Freud or Kant must give way when God speaks. He does not suppose. When His decrees challenge the inclinations of the best guesses of humankind, it is man who must give way. Before all the mysteries still hidden in this universe, man's best guess is still conjecture. But for God there are no mysteries. He is the God of mysteries.

The claim of Paul in 1:10-11 knocks the pins right out from under his opponents. Before their "wouldn't you think" and "isn't it reasonable to suppose" phrases, the apostle here insists, "Thus says the Lord."

This world of ours, particularly in the last 50 years, has impressed itself with its accumulated knowledge. Granted that knowledge has come by way of discovery rather than invention, still it isn't

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But hope and certainty, confidence and power rest in the conviction that ours is a religion not from men, nor through man but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.

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hard to see why people presume themselves to be the last word about almost everything. Given that setting in the realm of religion, and there seems to be a new one or a new twist to the old ones every day, it is crucial to be able to say with assurance: This is the truth of God.

Paul, of course, had that startling experience to hark back to. The noon-time appearance of the ascended Christ on the road to Damascus was a telling point in favor of his teaching. The direct preparatory training for his ministry, with no human involvement, went a long way to establish that his was not just another meticulously studied philosophy evolving out of the mind of some especially gifted rabbi or the school of philosophy at some synagogue.

And it makes sense. No man would ever have dreamt up the Gospel of grace. Send 10 men into the Arabian Desert for three years to develop a new and refreshing religious system, and not one would have come up with the remission of sins by way of the death of God's Son. Not in a million years! It's not a human-type idea at all. Left to our own devices, we would, as many have, devised a process in which we are front and center, and we work out the rescue, and we are the heroes, and we get the credit. It can't work, of course, because of who and what we are – and aren't. Elsewhere, Paul talks about the mysteries of God. The whole idea of free grace is foreign and mysterious to people. No, "not from men, nor through man."

There is a growing temptation for Christians to regard, secretly, their religion as one, albeit a particularly fine one, among many. There is, after all, a lot of good in almost all religions. Who's to say our point of view is an improvement on another? Well, God, that's Who. Our religion is the invention of God and is ours through the revelation of His Word. In Christianity you aren't dealing with another "cunningly devised fable." This is the truth. He (Jesus) is the truth. Because of it we have the assurance that His is the way. And that spells life, now and forever.

There is a dwindling remnant ready to say ours is a religion "not from men, nor through man." The written words of our faith are subjected to the same type of scrutiny as other words. The claims of our faith are suspect if they strain the natural rules by which we are used to living. The great deeds of biblical heroes are questioned if they cannot be duplicated by the likes of us. But hope and certainty, confidence and power rest in the conviction that ours is a religion not from men, nor through man but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. So it is immensely meaningful, not just to the Judaizers pitted against Paul, or the Galatians dependent upon Paul, but to us, in most practical terms, to have the apostle assure us, "For I did not receive it [the Gospel of grace] from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ" (v.12).