

Bible Study # 60
November 27, 1990
Mr. John Ogwyn

Life and Letters of Paul Series—Galatians

We are getting into the book of Galatians this evening. It is an important book to understand. It is one that the world frequently misunderstands. There's probably no book that the Apostle Paul wrote that has been more misunderstood, distorted and taken out of context than has been the book of Galatians. As we get into the book itself, let's **understand a little bit of the background of Galatians.**

The commentators are not even sure where Galatia was. What they're not sure about, really, is what they understand best, and it kind of goes downhill from there. They are not sure where it was located and everything becomes less clear as they go along. Why do I say that they were not sure where it was?

The term "Galatia" was used in several different ways in the New Testament period. In some cases, it was used as a broad geographical term. It referred to a specific Roman province, but even the borders of the province changed a couple of times as Roman administration (in terms of the way they administered the Roman Empire) made some alterations. The result was that there's about two or three different areas that can be labeled Galatia. All of them are in the same general area.

If you were looking on a modern-day map, it would be the central area of modern-day Turkey, and what was anciently Asia Minor. Specifically, there is what the commentators call the "Northern Galatian theory" and "Southern Galatian theory" in terms of where Paul was writing. If we simply let the New Testament be our guide, then it is pretty apparent the Churches Paul was addressing were the Churches of Southern Galatia. The only areas we have any record of Paul going, in the book of Acts, are the Churches of Southern Galatia—the area of Derbe, Iconium, Lystra and Antioch of Pisidia. Those cities are in the area of Southern Galatia. That was the area where Paul went on his first evangelistic journey and again on the second evangelistic journey. This was one of the first areas Paul preached in and one of the first areas that he raised up Churches. It's an area where he spent a lot of time. Because it's from where Timothy came, this is an area where he had close connections.

There's no record of Paul going to the area of what is termed "Northern Galatia." There's specific reference in Acts 16:6-7 to the fact that God did not allow Paul to go there. Paul was on his way up into one of those areas on the southern shore of the Black Sea, and it says the Spirit did not allow him to do that. What we find is that the area of Northern Galatia was distinctly different from the area of Southern Galatia. Southern Galatia was Gentile. Northern Galatia, up in the area of the Black Sea, was the ancient habitation of the Gauls—the tribes that moved from that area across the Black Sea up into France and gave their name to ancient Gaul. Those up in that area were Israelites. Paul's ministry was to the Gentiles, not to the Israelites. Galatia, the area where he went, was a geographical term in the New Testament. It stretched across the central portion of Asia Minor to the Mediterranean Sea on the south. The northern part was heavily Israelite—the Gauls who later migrated to France. Paul never went there.

There is a reference in Acts 16:6-7 to some of the specific geographic locations of that area in Northern Galatia, and the fact the Spirit did not lead Paul to go there.

Acts 16:6-7, "Now when they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia. After they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them."

In reality, Peter went to that area.

1 Peter 1:1, "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia..." Peter is addressing the area of Northern Galatia—the ancestors of some of you sitting right here because the ancestors of the French (the Gauls) were the primary group to whom Peter addressed the book of 1 Peter.

Southern Galatia, which includes the cities of Lystra, Iconium and Derbe, was almost entirely Gentile. It was primarily Greek with a few Jews who settled in there. The Greeks moved into the area of what is now modern-day Turkey after Alexander the Great's conquest. They were major settlers in that area and were the predominant population until centuries later when the Turks invaded from Asia and gradually dispossessed them.

One thing that is very important to understand, in terms of the background of Galatia, is the background of the people in that area. In addition to the pagan mythology that was taught, there

were the Hellenistic philosophies that were extant at the time. There were Greek philosophers who had gained great prominence throughout the Greek-speaking world. One of these philosophies was Stoicism. Stoicism was a very popular philosophy in that area. Stoicism places a great deal of emphasis on astrology. It emphasized what is termed “pagan dualism”—the concept that the flesh is evil and the spirit is good.

In *Lamphear’s Classical Dictionary*, the Stoics maintained that, “man alone in the present state of his existence could attain perfection.” This was the concept of the Stoics. It was a concept of penance, a matter of enough good deeds to outweigh the bad deeds. This was the background of the people who were in the Church in Galatia.

The book of Galatians itself was written by the Apostle Paul to the Churches in the Southern Galatian area in the winter of 52-53 A.D.—December of 52 to January/February 53 A.D.—from his headquarters in Antioch, Syria. Paul had visited this area on his first evangelistic journey back in 46 A.D. He went through that area on his first evangelistic journey and spent considerable time there. Then he finally went back to Antioch. It was in the aftermath of going back to Antioch that the issue of circumcision “came to a head” and he went to Jerusalem for the ministerial conference of 49 A.D. We have that recorded in Acts 15.

Subsequent to the conference in the later winter/early spring of 50 A.D., Paul visited Galatia once more on his second evangelistic journey. He came through Galatia traveling through in the spring of 50 A.D., crossing from Asia Minor into Greece (into Europe) around Pentecost of 50 A.D. He spent quite a number of months in Greece. He was originally in Philippi, then went down through Thessalonica, Berea, Athens and came down to Corinth. He stayed 18 months in Corinth. We read that last time and saw that it was from Corinth that he wrote his letters back to the Thessalonians.

After 18 months in Corinth, he left and sailed back over to Ephesus and went back to Jerusalem for the Feast of 52 A.D.

Acts 18:21, he needed to go back for the Feast that was in Jerusalem.

Verse 22, he wintered in Antioch, which was his headquarters for the Gentile work when he wasn’t on the road. He was in Antioch the winter of 52-53 A.D. It was from there that he wrote to the Galatians. He had heard some things that concerned him. **Because he had received**

some disquieting news of events that had transpired, he dispatched this letter to answer the questions that had arisen. As we get into the book itself, we will see a little bit about what is addressed.

Galatians 1:2, “and all the brethren who are with me, to the churches of Galatia...” The Churches that are specifically in the area of Galatia are Derbe, Iconium and Lystra. They are the main areas there. I have already made comment of the population of the area of the Galatian Churches.

Galatians 4:8, let me call your attention to, “But then, indeed, when you did not know God, you served those which by nature are not gods.” Clearly, he is addressing people who were of a Gentile background—people who at one time had not known God and had served idols who “are not gods.” This is not a reference to Jews because they had known the true God and they had not served idols. The people Paul is addressing are people who came out of idolatry, people who had a pagan background. There were a few Jews there, but the whole came out of a pagan background. We’re all a product of our background; we are shaped and molded by certain thoughts and concepts which we have grown up with.

Galatians 1:1, “Paul, an apostle (not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ, and God the Father who raised Him from the dead)...” Paul lays emphasis on the fact of his apostleship, the work that God had done through him and the Scriptural authority he had that originated from God.

Clearly, one of the major problems in Galatia was that somebody had been in Galatia and problems had been stirred up. What was the subject of things being stirred up? One issue is that somebody had been challenging Paul’s authority. They were saying, ‘Paul is really a second-rate apostle, if you can even call him an apostle. You don’t need to pay any attention to what he says. He really doesn’t have very much authority. In fact, I have more authority because I have come from Jerusalem.’ These were self-appointed individuals who had come down from Jerusalem and had not been officially dispatched by James.

The issue of the book of Galatians has to do with access to God. What all the peripherals in Galatians get back to is how you gain access to God. What is necessary to establish and maintain a relationship with God that will ultimately result in salvation? This is why circumcision was such an issue. The reason circumcision was such an

issue in the New Testament period was because it concerned access to God. Understand what we mean.

Remember when God made the covenant with Abraham (Genesis 17). The physical sign of the covenant that God gave to Abraham was the physical outward sign of circumcision for Abraham and his male descendants (vv. 10-11). At the time of the Exodus when Moses gave instructions from God to the Israelites concerning the Passover, one of the things he said was that no uncircumcised person was to partake of the Passover (Exodus 12:44-49). You had to have entered into that covenant relationship.

Paul was writing at the time that is termed the "second temple," the period of Herod's temple. There was much more courtyard to the temple than there was anything else. The temple itself consisted of the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. Only the priests went into the Holy of Holies. Out in front of the Holy Place was the altar of sacrifice. This was inside a courtyard that was the court of the Israelites. There was a gate that led out to the court of the Gentiles.

Remember the issue in Acts 21:26-39 that came up where Paul got arrested and it resulted in Roman imprisonment? Somebody nearly started a riot in the temple with an accusation against Paul. They accused him of bringing a couple of uncircumcised Gentiles into the temple compound, into the inner court. This provoked a near riot.

When emotions got all charged up, pretty soon the people didn't even know what the charge was, but they were mad and had a "lynch-mob" mentality. When one of the soldiers finally got him, he thought that Paul was the Egyptian robber. But he said, 'That's not me at all; they are accusing me of something else.' He didn't even know what the charge was. He thought they must have a terrible "desperado" in there that the people had cornered. Paul wasn't bringing anyone who was uncircumcised into the temple. That wasn't even true, but he was accused of it.

The point I am making is it was an issue of access. If you couldn't enter into the court of the Israelites, you couldn't offer a sacrifice because that's where the altar of sacrifice was. When the sacrifices were made, the animal was slain and the fat and some of the entrails were burned on the altar. Then the carcass was divided. The priest took some and the worshiper took some. The symbolism involved was one of communion or fellowship with God.

1 Corinthians 10:16-20, that's made reference to, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we, being many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread. Observe Israel after the flesh: Are not those who eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar? What am I saying then? That an idol is anything, or what is offered to idols is anything? But I say that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons."

I would like to call your attention to what is not obvious from the English translation. The words "communion" in verse 16, "partakers" in verse 18 and "fellowship" in verse 20 are all the same words in the Greek language. The concept of "fellowship" or "communion" is the same root word as to "communicate with." "Community" is another word that is derived from that. The point he is making is that when we all partake of the Passover symbols, there is a fellowship that we have with one another and with Christ.

"Israel after the flesh: Are not those who eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?" They were in fellowship with the altar.

Verse 20, the Gentiles sacrificed to demons, and if you partook of that, then you were having fellowship with demons. The concept was that God's part was burned on the altar, the priest took his part to eat and the worshiper took his part. Symbolically, what you had was fellowship between the worshiper, God and the priest.

It was the picture of sitting down at a table and enjoying a meal of intimate fellowship. It was the concept of entering into a close, intimate relationship. When you have somebody at your table and you sit down and share your food with them, a particular fellowship is involved. This was the concept. That's why some of it was burned on the altar. That was in a sense what God partook of. What the individual took, he partook of and the priest partook of. There was a fellowship, a communion, a community that included God, the priest and the worshiper.

Circumcision was crucial to entering into that relationship (fellowship) because the uncircumcised couldn't come past the court of the Gentiles. You didn't have access to the altar of burnt sacrifice. The issue at stake was: What is necessary in order to have access, communion and fellowship with God? This is where things have gone astray.

We recognize that access to God is through Jesus Christ. In fact, no one had direct access to the Father. Jesus said, 'I have come to declare the Father' (John 1:18; John 5:37; John 14:7).

In the temple itself, you had the Holy Place then the Holy of Holies. There was a big thick curtain that separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies. The high priest was the only one who could enter into the Holy of Holies and he went in once a year on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16:34; Hebrew 9:7).

Matthew 27:51, when Jesus was crucified, there was a great earthquake, the veil of the temple was torn in two, and now the way was opened into the Holy of Holies. This symbolized the fact that Jesus Christ's sacrifice (His death) made possible our direct access to God. Access is through Jesus Christ. It still comes through a sacrifice, not through a lamb or a goat or ox, but through Jesus Christ who offered Himself as a sacrifice, one sacrifice for sin forever (John 1:29; Romans 6:10; Hebrew 9:12). We have access through Him; He is the source and means of our access to God.

The issue that came up in Galatia was that it was difficult for some to accept that access to God was that simple. You had various concepts that blended pagan ideas and philosophies with certain Jewish attitudes and ideas, and then they threw in an overlay of Christianity. People tended to accept a mixture of truth and error. There were those who were telling the Galatians that if they really wanted to guarantee and ensure access to God, they needed to be concerned about other things.

The issue that they had specifically regarded circumcision. Their approach to circumcision was as though it were a matter of penance. This is why Paul made such a major issue of circumcision and the fact that they should not do it. It got to the very heart and core of the Gospel. Paul was not opposed to circumcision from a physical standpoint. He himself had been circumcised and he had circumcised Timothy, who had a Jewish mother and Gentile father, when he took him with him in the ministry. Because Timothy had a Jewish mother, he felt that it would make a difference in terms of the way Timothy was regarded and accepted by the Jews.

But the issue was that there were those who were seeking to make circumcision a test of access and fellowship with God. They said that if you weren't circumcised, you weren't guaranteed access to God; therefore, there was no guarantee of salvation unless you were circumcised. That

was why Paul chose to make such a crucial issue of it and not to give in one inch or quarter inch. It got back to the very heart and core of whether or not the sacrifice of Jesus Christ was sufficient to gain access to God as a means of salvation, or whether there were physical things you had to do.

We need to understand that because some think you have to do "this or that" to be saved. How many Sabbaths do you have to keep in order to be guaranteed salvation? How many Passovers? How many Feast of Tabernacles? Think about it a little bit. What if somebody was baptized between Passover and Pentecost and the next year were killed in a car wreck on their way to Passover services and never kept the Passover. Is it necessary to keep the Passover to be saved? How many Sabbaths did the thief on the cross keep? He died the very day that he repented. It is not how many you have kept. The real issue gets back to the heart and the mind. If he had lived, would he have done it? Yes, he would. It's not the physical things you do that save you. It's not how many Sabbaths, Feasts, etc. that you have kept.

But if you're not willing to obey God, if you're unwilling to keep the Sabbath or Feast or do the things God says to do, then you have never repented and have never accepted Christ as your Savior. You're not on the way to salvation. It is an issue of the heart and mind. No amount of Sabbath keeping earns salvation. *Jesus Christ paid the penalty for sin and through Him we have access to God and salvation.* When we accept and avail ourselves of that access, we will act on the things that God tells us to do. Acting on that access means we repent and turn away from sin and accept the Lordship and rulership of Jesus Christ in our lives. We want Him to live His life in us.

Galatians 2:20, Paul says, "I have been crucified with Christ; 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 for me." The issue is not that we can live a life of rebellion and disobedience. No. If we are Christ's, then symbolically we are crucified with Christ and it is Christ who lives in us. He is living His life in us, so there is a yielded life, a surrendered life.

Access to God (and, ultimately, salvation) is not achieved by what you do. Your actions don't gain you access to God. Christ's action made possible your access to God. You could do everything perfectly and that would never earn you access to God. If it would, then why did

Christ have to die? If access to God can be accomplished and achieved by simply going out and becoming circumcised or by doing “this” or “that,” then why did Christ die? He died in vain. It would have been far simpler to have just said, ‘Go and do this and you will have gained access.’ That is why it is such a fundamental issue because the issue goes back to: How do you gain access to God? If there is another way, then Christ didn’t have to die. We are saying Christ’s sacrifice really was in vain. Protestants want to twist the book of Galatians and say that Galatians means that you shouldn’t keep the law. That is not what Galatians is about.

It makes plain, in the latter part of Galatians (Galatians 5:16-26), the contrast between the works of the flesh and the fruits of the Spirit. There are tangible fruits that God’s Spirit will bear in our lives.

But how do you gain access?

Galatians 1:1, “Paul, an apostle (not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead)...”

Verses 11-17, Paul addresses the issue of his apostolic authority. The message he preached was not something that he figured out for himself nor was it something other people told him, but it was revealed directly by God. He gave a little of his background and how Christ worked with him and taught him even after His resurrection. The resurrected Christ dealt with and taught Paul.

Galatians 2:1, “Then after fourteen years [after his conversion] I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and also took Titus with me.”

Verse 2, “And I went up by revelation, and communicated to them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to those who were of reputation, lest by any means I might run, or had run, in vain.” This is reference to the ministerial conference (Acts 15) in 49 A.D. Fourteen years previously would date Paul’s conversion in 35 A.D. He went up to Jerusalem. Notice how he went. He went up and talked to those who were the leaders, but privately to them who were of reputation.

Verse 9, “and when James, Cephas [Cephas is the Aramaic equivalent of the Greek word “*Petros*” for Peter; Cephas was the name he was commonly known by his contemporaries because it was the Aramaic form of his name. It was the name that Jesus Himself would normally have used.], and John, who seemed to be pillars,” “Seemed” is the same word that is rendered “reputation” in verse 2. Those who were acknowledged and recognized to be pillars of the

Church were James, who was the brother of Jesus and the presiding minister in the Jerusalem Church, Peter, who was the chief of the twelve apostles, and John, who was a part of the inner circle of the twelve. These were the ones who were acknowledged or recognized by others to be the pillars of the Church—to be the leading ministers. When Paul went up, he went up to those in authority; he privately conferred with them.

Verse 2, he said, “...privately to those who were of reputation, lest by any means I might run, or had run, in vain.” He knew that if he was not working in harmony with the government God had set in His Church, his best efforts would be in vain. You can’t work contrary and be off in some rebellious way, doing your own thing, and think that’s acceptable. Paul recognized that and went up privately. Before he said anything to anybody else, he went to the ones who were the leading ministers. He sat down and talked it out with them because he didn’t want his efforts to be futile.

Verse 3, Titus was not compelled to be circumcised.

Verse 4, there were false brethren who came in secretly seeking to bring them into bondage. The issue was not so much that physical circumcision was such a harsh or terrible thing; the bondage was that you had to earn access to God through some form of penance. The bondage was the whole concept that the Stoics, Gnostics and various philosophers of the day had of how you went about gaining access to God. There were all sorts of concepts that the pagan world had. These pagan concepts ultimately came into what became the professing Christian church, and those were not acceptable.

Verses 7-8, the decision was made at the conference that Paul was to be placed in charge of the work for the Gentiles. He would go to the Gentiles and Peter would head up the work among the Israelites. Christ sent Peter and the twelve apostles primarily to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matthew 10:5-6).

Verses 11-15, at a later time Peter came to Antioch; Antioch was Paul’s headquarters. Peter visited there for a period of time. Some have speculated this may have been a Feast of Tabernacles. The implication is that this was something that took place over a period of several days.

Certain ones came down from Jerusalem and an issue of fellowship arose. Many of the Palestinian Jews had very little occasion to have fellowship with the Gentiles one way or the other

because there really weren't any to speak of. There certainly weren't any in the Church there in Jerusalem and the Judean area. About the only ones would have been Roman soldiers and Roman administrators. It had not really been an issue there because the only ones in the Church were Jews.

Antioch had a sizable Gentile community. By this time, the Church there was primarily Gentile. Peter made an error in judgment and Paul saw that it was going to create a problem and division. He met the issue head on. Peter acknowledged that he had made a mistake and the matter was resolved. He needed to make clear that the Gentiles who were uncircumcised did not have some lesser relationship with God. Their contact and relationship with God was not on a lower "rung of the ladder." There was nothing about these matters that regulated spiritual access to God.

Verses 16-18, "knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law [You are not going to accomplish justification, which is what makes possible access to God, by doing physical things.] but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified. But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is Christ therefore a minister of sin? Certainly not! For if I build again those things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor."

It is not that we don't have to obey God and just live in sin because we're not justified by the works of the law. That's not what He said. He goes on to reiterate that because he knew people would want to take it out of context and say, 'We're not justified by the works of the law, so we can just do anything we want to.' That's not what Paul said. But the issue still is that the works of the law do not justify us.

Verse 21, "...if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain." Why did He go through what He went through if His sacrifice wasn't necessary? If you can do it yourself, then why did Christ die? This is the issue Paul keeps coming back to. That's the crucial point. There was a reason why Christ had to die. If access is not through Jesus Christ, then why do you need a Savior? Jesus Christ is the means by which we have access to the Father.

Galatians 3:2, "This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" How did you

receive God's Spirit? You received God's Holy Spirit when you were baptized. How did you gain that access to God? You wouldn't have the Spirit if you didn't have access to God. How did you gain that access? Was it because you circumcised yourself and you did these physical things? Did that gain you access to God? Was it because you believed the gospel, repented and were baptized? Where did you gain the Spirit? If you have the Spirit of God, then you have access and contact with God and you don't need something else in order to gain it. How did you get what you have? Where did that come from? He brings them back to the fact that they believed Paul's message, "by the hearing of faith?" They believed the gospel, repented and had been baptized.

Verses 3-5, all right, you already have the Spirit, why do you need to do this?

Verses 6-9, then he goes through and begins to explain using the example of Abraham. What gained Abraham access to God? Did circumcision gain access to God? No, Abraham had a relationship with God before he was ever circumcised. Circumcision was something that was added as a physical outward sign of the covenant God made with Abraham. It was predicated upon the relationship that Abraham already had with God through faith. Abraham's relationship with God was through faith, not through something physical. God gave him circumcision as a sign when he was 99 years old. God had been working with him for at least 24 years prior to that. God called him when he was 75 to come out of Ur of the Chaldeans and go to a land that he would show him (Genesis 12:1-4). Our access to God is ultimately predicated upon faith, and that is directed toward Jesus Christ. He makes that access possible.

Verses 10-11, "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.' But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for 'The just shall live by faith.'"

Verse 13, "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law [What is the curse of the law? The curse of the law is the death penalty. What's the curse?], having become a curse for us (for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree')..."

Deuteronomy 21:22-23, "If a man has committed a sin worthy of death, and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, his body shall not remain overnight on the tree, but you shall

surely bury him that day, so that you do not defile the land which the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance; for he who is hanged is accursed of God.”

The curse is they will take you out and hang you; they will execute you.

Romans 6:23, “For the wages of sin is death,” The curse of the law is the death penalty. That is the curse that the law imposes. Upon whom is that curse imposed? Upon those who obey? No.

Galatians 3:10, “...‘Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.’” The curse is upon anyone who disobeys. And since all have disobeyed at one time or another (Romans 3:23), then everybody is under the curse. How do you get out from under it?

The works of the law, the labors imposed by the law, are labors that had to do with gaining access to God through the sacrificial system. The rituals, washings and all of these labors that were carried out were predicated on the fact that you had sinned and needed to regain access to God. When you performed any of those things, you were in effect acknowledging that you had sinned. If you sinned, then you are under the curse. The way you get out from under the curse is not the performance of certain ritual acts. It is through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, through our faith in that sacrifice and our acceptance of it. The works of the law make reference to the ritualistic labors that were imposed by the law as a schoolmaster.

Verse 19, “What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions,” Is this talking about the Ten Commandments? Remember the Sabbath is part of the Ten Commandments. Were the Ten Commandments added because of transgression? No. The Ten Commandments defined what transgression was to begin with (1 John 3:4, KJV).

Romans 5:13, if there were no law, there would be no sin.

Before Israel ever came to Mount Sinai (Exodus 19 and 20), remember the miracle of the manna (Exodus 16)? If they gathered extra manna on any day, it stunk and bred worms—except on Friday. On Friday, they were told to gather an extra portion. It lasted over the Sabbath and they didn’t have to go out and gather on the Sabbath. There was somebody that went out on the Sabbath because he figured it had been there the last six days; therefore, it should be there that day, too. He didn’t see why it wouldn’t be. And

sure enough, it wasn’t. The Sabbath was known. It was revealed miraculously to Israel and was being enforced by God before they ever got to Mount Sinai. The Sabbath was in effect. It wasn’t introduced at Mount Sinai.

At Mount Sinai, Israel said, ‘All that the Lord has said we will do’ (Exodus 19:8; Exodus 24:3, 7).

Galatians 3:19, “What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator.” The Ten Commandments were not ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator; they were spoken by the mouth of God Himself (Exodus 20:1, 19; Deuteronomy 5:22). After they were spoken, Moses went up into the mountain.

While he was gone for six weeks, they built the golden calf (Exodus 32). They transgressed the commandments they had accepted as part of the covenant. Clearly, idolatry and adultery stand out and everything else connected with it. What happened when Moses came back down? Remember what came next? Instructions for the tabernacle and the Levitical sacrificial system were given next (Exodus 36-40; Leviticus 1-7). What was added because of transgression (Galatians 3:19)? The ritual laws are the basis of what Israel went through and how they enacted regaining of access to God. There were things that were added as a schoolmaster.

Galatians 3:24, “Therefore the law was our tutor [KJV, “schoolmaster”] to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.” The schoolmaster is there to teach a lesson. What was added? The law was added because of transgression, until Christ would come.

Hebrews 9:8-10, “the Holy Spirit indicating this, that the way into the Holiest of All was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was still standing. It was symbolic for the present time in which both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make him who performed the service perfect in regard to the conscience—concerned only with foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation.”

Here was something that was added because of transgressions, until Christ, that was symbolic of how we gained access. Four things symbolized how you gained access: 1) meat offerings (the oblations), 2) drink offerings (the libations), 3) the washings (the ablutions) and 4) the physical ceremony. The sacrifice of Christ was pictured by the sacrificial offerings burned on the altar,

the pouring out of the blood and the water that was ceremonially poured out at the altar, and the drink offerings. In order for the priest to go into the presence of God, first there was the sacrifice (meat offerings, drink offerings). Then he approached closer to the tabernacle and he went through the ceremonial washing. Then following specific ritual, he took the golden censer into the tabernacle or temple.

How do we gain access? Christ made it possible by paying the penalty. He offered Himself as a sacrifice. The meat and drink offering pointed to what Christ did.

Christ took the first step. What do we do in response? If we accept that, we then must clean up—we must be washed. Repentance is what the different washings pictured, a symbolic washing or cleansing. You can't come into God's presence dirty and unclean. Then we have to follow God's instructions to the letter and beyond the letter; we have to follow them in the spirit. The various physical ceremonies and rituals pointed to the fact that God has a specific way He wants things done.

Galatians 3:19, "...It [the law] was added because of transgression, ..." They were not the means to access. They were merely things that illustrated God's plan for how access would be given. The access comes through Jesus Christ. "It [the law] was added...till the Seed should come." It was to last until the time of Christ. It was to teach a lesson and to point out what the Messiah would do. Paul lays great emphasis on it.

Romans 6:23, "The wages of sin is death, ..." Death is the result of lawbreaking. If you had a need to engage in these ritualistic activities to gain access to God, then you were acknowledging that you had sinned and were cut off. The curse is on everyone who hasn't perfectly obeyed. If you ever sinned, you were in trouble, which includes all of us. We don't gain justification from sin by doing it right from now on. We gain justification by the fact that Christ paid the penalty.

Galatians 3:13, "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us..." He paid the penalty in our stead.

"It [the law] was added because of transgressions."

Jeremiah 7:22-23, "'For I did not speak to your fathers, or command them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices. But this is what I commanded them, saying, 'Obey My voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be

My people. And walk in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well with you.'"

God did not originally speak to them about burnt offerings and sacrifices (Exodus 19, 20). When they disobeyed, there were rituals added because of transgressions. This makes reference to the whole book of Leviticus.

Galatians 3:27-28, "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." This clearly refers to spiritual relationships, not physical relationships.

It is incredible how people will misuse and distort scriptures. I read the other day a couple of homosexuals who wanted to get married in some church—if you can even call it a church. The scripture they used to justify that was that there is neither male nor female in Christ. That is not what it's talking about. I think we all understand that. Hopefully we do.

What is obliterated is not the physical distinctions of our ethnic background, our economic status or our sex. The issue that Paul is addressing is access to God. You don't have a "leg up" in terms of how much money or how little money you have. That has no bearing on your access to God. Money will gain you access to the rulers of this world, but it won't gain you access to God one iota. You don't have a "leg up" because of your ethnic background, economic status or sex. When it comes to access to God, none of those things count for anything. That is what Paul is emphasizing.

Verse 29, "And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

Galatians 4:10 is often greatly misunderstood and taken out of context, "You observe days and months and seasons and years." At that point they like to close the book and say you're not supposed to observe the Sabbath. If that proves you are not supposed to observe the Sabbath, does it prove that you are also not supposed to observe Sunday? It just says, "observe days," not which days. The ones who are making an issue of this are observing Sunday, Christmas, Easter—all kinds of things. That is a selective use of the Bible. You have to get the context of which days and months and times and years are being referred to. It doesn't mention the Sabbath or the Feast days.

Verse 8, "But then, indeed, when you did not know God, you served those which by nature are

not gods.” You could make a better case for Christmas, etc. These were people who came out of a pagan background, not Jewish. These were people who were idolaters.

I was just recently going through a Bible Handbook. It’s a new one and they had a quote in there in reference to Sunday. They referred to the original decree that the Emperor Constantine issued to make Sunday a day of rest. They even acknowledge that Sunday was not a day of rest until Constantine’s decree about 315 A.D. In his decree, he referred to it as the venerable day of the Sun (capital “S”). Constantine was, by background, a sun worshiper—a worshiper of the sun god, so he made this day of the sun god a day of rest throughout the Roman Empire. ‘When you didn’t know God, you served idols.’

Verse 9, “But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage?” Here are people who came out of idolatry who are turning back to the very same thing they came out of, “to the weak and beggarly elements whereunto you desire again to be in bondage.” People who came out of idolatry were turning back to some of the very things they had turned loose of.

Verses 10-12, “You observe days and months and seasons and years. I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain. Brethren, I urge you to become as I am,” Now, how was Paul?

1 Corinthians 11:1, he said, “Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.”

1 Peter 2:21-22, “...Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: ‘Who committed no sin, nor was guile found in His mouth’...”

1 John 3:4 KJV, “...sin is the transgression of the law.”

Luke 4:16, “...And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read.”

Hebrew 13:8, “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.”

Acts 18:4 shows that Paul went into the synagogue on the Sabbath, “And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded both Jews and Greeks.”

Galatians 2:20, the life Paul lived—it was Christ living in him.

Galatians 4:12, “Brethren, I urge you to become as I am,” How was he? Christ lived in him; Christ set an example. ‘Follow me as I follow

Christ.’ Christ hasn’t changed. Christ kept the Sabbath. Paul kept the Sabbath.

Is Paul condemning Sabbath keeping? No. Really, the primary emphasis in this section has to do with astrology. Astrology was a very major thing in the pagan and Hellenistic world. Clearly, it involves people who were turning back to Gentile customs.

Verse 10 mentions, “days and months.”

Leviticus 19:26 shows that the Jews were forbidden to practice divination or soothsaying (KJV, “observe times”). This is a reference to astrology.

“Elements” in Galatians 4:9 is explained in *The Art Gingrich Greek English Lexicon* as coming from “*stoicon*” and refers to the elemental spirits and to the heavenly bodies that were also regarded as personal beings and given divine honor. –Heavenly bodies, the signs of the Zodiac, astrology.

“You turn again to the weak and beggarly elements.” It was a reference to the things that controlled the elemental spirits of the universe, as one version renders it. It was a term that was used to refer to the pagan deities that controlled astrology. Here, they were getting encumbered and observing days and months and times (seasons) and years. What we have in Galatia is clearly what’s termed a “Gnostic” influence.

“*Gnostic*” was a Greek term that meant “we know.” It was a philosophy and a reference to an approach that mixed elements of the Stoic. They mixed together several different things of how you gain access to God. It placed a lot of emphasis on astrology and lucky and unlucky times, lucky and unlucky days—things that you did or didn’t do on certain times. It had to do with a lot of physical things you had to do to somehow gain favor.

What we have in Galatia are people who are getting caught up in a total misunderstanding of what circumcision is all about, people who were being caught up in these ideas of what was necessary for them to gain access to God. They were beginning to slip back into some of the paganism that they came out of. They were bringing some of that in to “cover all the bases.” Paul speaks very clearly in regards to this.

Galatians 4:21, we have already made reference to what “under the law” means.

Paul goes through an analogy in the latter part of chapter 4, speaking of the contrast between Hagar and Sarah, and what came naturally and what came by promise from God. In other words, what you can engender, what you can do on your own, is not where the solution lies. It lies in what

God can and will do if you trust Him and you believe Him.

Galatians 5:1, “Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.” The “yoke of bondage” was this concept that you have to earn it by the things that you physically do.

Verse 14, “For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’”

Verses 15-16, “But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another! I say then: Walk in the spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.” There are two contrary natures: the desires generated by the flesh and those generated by the spirit.

Verses 19-21, there are consequences: the works of the flesh are the sins that are enumerated, “Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like;”

Verses 22-23, the fruits of the Spirit are enumerated, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.” We need to be oriented toward serving God.

Galatians 6:7-8, “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.” Showing that we are ultimately going to reap what we sow.

Throughout the book of Galatians, Paul emphasizes that you can’t earn access to God through what you do. You can’t earn salvation through penance. You don’t gain access to God by the carrying out of certain works or rituals.

We have a book that is written to explain God’s law to Gentiles and to explain the relationship of law and grace to those who were filled with the Hellenistic philosophy. It is a book that has been very commonly and frequently misunderstood, distorted and twisted because of the attitudes that the world has had.

We will get into 1 Corinthians next time.