

# GALATIANS BOOK ARGUMENT

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A Paper

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BE106OL - Acts and Pauline Epistles

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by

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## GALATIANS BOOK ARGUMENT

### **Message Statement**

The Book of Galatians<sup>1</sup> is about the true gospel. Paul addresses the false gospel the Galatian believers have embraced as inadequate for salvation and makes a case for why salvation has always been by faith alone. He directs believers from a false gospel back to the one true gospel.

### **Book Synopsis**

The Book of Galatians is a letter from Paul to a group of believers in Galatia, which whom he had personal interaction. The letter begins and ends with greetings appropriate to a letter of this kind. In the body of the letter, Paul addresses the wayward beliefs of the Galatians in three main methods. In the first, he addresses his authenticity as an apostle and the source of the gospel he preached to them. Then he makes a case of salvation by faith not by works of the law using the experience of his audience, the Scriptures and logic to make his defense. He goes on to illustrate his defense with three different examples. Finally, he calls the Galatians back to right behavior that results from right belief.

### **Introduction, Interpretive Issues, and Theological Themes**

The Book of Galatians is a key piece in understanding Christian soteriology, the “study of the grace of God in salvation.”<sup>2</sup> In it Paul addresses his understanding of justification by faith, which is not only a part of the content of the gospel but is painted as “the most fundamental and prominent aspect.”<sup>3</sup> This letter contains a straightforward and concise

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<sup>1</sup> *NET Bible*, (n.p.: Biblical Studies Press, 2001), Galatians; All scripture notes are cited from The NET Bible unless otherwise noted.

<sup>2</sup> Glenn R. Kreider, “Unit 1. Sin and Hope,” in “ST104OL: Soteriology,” (videos), accessed September 1, 2015, <https://online.dts.edu/courses/2640/modules/items/142418>, video 1.

<sup>3</sup> Ronald Y. K. Fung, *The Epistles to the Galatians*, New International Commentary on the New Testament, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988), 316, 320.

presentation of what salvation in Christ is based on, what it means for the believer, and what it looks like to live it out.

The salvific language of Galatians never includes the noun salvation or the verb to save. Paul, instead, uses the verb justify and the concept of being credited with righteousness and declared righteous (2:16-17, 21; 3:6, 8, 11, 21, 24; 5:4-5). Dr. Thomas Constable refers to justification as the “first stage” of salvation, “an act of God alone, in which He starts us on our journey to a different world. Justification happens in a moment of time, when one trusts *in Christ alone* for his or her salvation.”<sup>4</sup> Therefore, in this paper, salvation and justification, and save and justify, will be used interchangeably.

Justification is to pronounce and to declare, and thus accept and treat as just.<sup>5</sup> According to Dr. Glenn Kreider, “As a declaration of righteousness, justification is generally not used in Scripture as a technical term for conversion or salvation or regeneration, but the justification is a specific term for a declaration of and a reality of righteousness. In Paul, Paul’s argument is that God declares us righteous through faith in Christ, which provides forgiveness of sins, and the imputation of Christ’s righteousness.”<sup>6</sup> Justification is based on faith, the faithfulness of Jesus Christ.<sup>7</sup>

The Book of Galatians is considered “the least disputed of any of Paul’s epistles.”<sup>8</sup> The first verse state the author is Paul, an apostle appointed by God, not by man (1:1). What we know of Paul is mostly from combining the data from the Book of Acts and the letters he wrote to various churches and individuals. He was born Saul a Jew of the tribe of Benjamin (Acts 21:39; 22:3; Phil 3:5; 2 Cor 11:22), a Roman citizen (Acts 21:39; 22:25-29; 23:27) from the city

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<sup>4</sup> Thomas L. Constable, “Dr. Constable’s Expository (Bible Study) Note,” Sonic Light, accessed October 26, 2015, <http://soniclight.com/constable/notes.htm>, 6.

<sup>5</sup> Glenn R. Kreider, “Unit 6. Justification By Grace Through Faith,” in “ST104OL: Soteriology.” (videos), accessed October 26, 2015, <https://online.dts.edu/courses/2640/modules/items/142428>, video 5.

<sup>6</sup> Glenn R. Kreider, “Unit 6. Justification By Grace Through Faith,” video 8.

<sup>7</sup> Glenn R. Kreider, “Unit 6. Justification By Grace Through Faith,” video 5.

<sup>8</sup> Thomas L. Constable, “Dr. Constable’s Expository (Bible Study) Note,” 1.

of Tarsus (Acts 9:11; 21:39; 22:3; 23:34), a Pharisee trained under the Rabbi Gamaliel (Acts 22:3; 23:6; Phil 3:6), and a known persecutor of the early church (Acts 7:58-8:1; 8:3-4; 9:1-2, 14, 21; 22:20; Gal 1:13; Phil 3:6; 1 Tim 1:13). After his encounter with the risen Jesus, he lost his vision, was healed, was filled by the Holy Spirit (Acts 9:3-14, 17-19; 22:6-13; 1 Cor 15:8), and became an apostle/servant of Jesus Christ (1 Cor 15:9; 2 Cor 11:23a; Gal 1:1; Phlm 1:1). Paul is the author of thirteen of the New Testament books and is a key contributor to the theological information provided within the New Testament.

The date of the letter is debated primarily because the Book of Galatians only records two of Paul's visits to Jerusalem out of the five recorded in the Book of Acts. Most scholars identify the visit of Galatians 1:18-20 as Acts 9:26-30.<sup>9</sup> So then, the greatest attention is given to the visit referenced in Galatians 2:10 and whether it corresponds to Acts 15:1-30 or Acts 11:30.<sup>10</sup> This means the writing of the letter is as early as A.D. 48/49, which would put it right on the heels of the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15.<sup>11</sup> The believers in the church in Galatia had fallen into believing that Gentile believers must become Jewish in order to become part of the community of God and receive his blessings.<sup>12</sup> This is the very issue the council in Jerusalem had addressed with the churches in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia. In response, the council sent a letter stating nothing based on works was to be added to their salvation, but only advised against ethically destructive activities (Acts 15:23-29).

Paul's intended audience is the churches in Galatia (1:2). However, the question of destination, north Galatia or south Galatia, is another debate of the Book of Galatians. Most scholars land on the recipients as the churches in south Galatia, which included the cities of

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<sup>9</sup> Fung, *The Epistles to the Galatians*, 10.

<sup>10</sup> G. Walter Hansen, "Galatians, Letter to the," in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, edited by Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin and Daniel G. Reid, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 327-29.

<sup>11</sup> Fung, *The Epistles to the Galatians*, 28; Thomas L. Constable, "Unit 4. Galatians," in "BE106OL: Acts and Pauline Epistles," (videos), accessed October 3, 2015, <https://online.dts.edu/courses/2816/modules/items/143372>, video 1.

<sup>12</sup> Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 518; Hansen, "Galatians, Letter to the," in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, 327.

Derbe, Iconium, Lystra and Pisidian Antioch.<sup>13</sup> This fits with the cities visited by Paul and Barnabas on the first missionary journey in Acts chapters thirteen and fourteen. The “North Galatian theory” is least probable based on lack of biblical support, geography, references to people groups in the area, the familiarity of the southerners and absence of known northerners, as well as the influence of “Judaizers” in the south.<sup>14</sup>

The churches in southern Galatia included both Jewish and Gentile believers since Paul preached in the Jewish synagogues first (Acts 13:5, 14-40; 14:1). The synagogues included “Jews and God-fearing proselytes,” Gentiles converted to Judaism (Acts 13:43). Paul also made it clear that the gospel he preached was intended not just for the Jews but also for the Gentiles and preached to those unconverted Gentiles (Acts 13:47-49).

Paul’s history in this area included much opposition from zealous Jews. While in Pisidian Antioch, he and Barnabas ran into opposition from Jews jealous of the crowds they had gathered and were thrown out of the region (Acts 13:45, 50). While in Iconium, as Jews and Gentiles believed, more opposition from Jews came and the leaders of the city attempted to stone Paul and Barnabas (Acts 14:1-6). In Lystra, Paul healed a man who could not walk, and in response, the Gentiles attempted to worship him and Barnabas as Greek gods. This drew the attention of the Jews who opposed them in Pisidian Antioch and Iconium and they stoned Paul, drug him out of town and left him for dead (Acts 14:19-20). Paul persevered, recovered and continued his mission and even returned through those cities to strengthen and encourage the disciples in the midst of persecution.

Considering Paul’s history in the area, it should be expected that the opposition he faced from the Jews would impact and influence the churches he left behind there. Being aware of this, Paul told them, “We must enter the kingdom of God through many persecutions” (Acts 14:22). He also appointed leadership over those churches and “entrusted them to the protection

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<sup>13</sup> Hansen, “Galatians, Letter to the,” in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, 328; Fung, *The Epistles to the Galatians*, 3; Constable, “Unit 4. Galatians,” video 1.

<sup>14</sup> Constable, “Dr. Constable’s Expository (Bible Study) Note,” 1-2.

of the Lord” (Acts 14:23). The possibility that the persecution of the Jewish believers by the unconverted Jews in Galatia would lead to a compromise in their faith that would effect their behavior, particularly to their believing Gentile brothers and sisters, is no surprise.

Paul wrote to the churches in Galatia because they have been given wrong information about salvation. He pointed out that they “are following a different gospel” having “desert[ed]” the one he taught them (1:6). They have compromised their faith. He pointed out the source of their counterfeit gospel as being from a group of people who are disturbing, agitating, and confusing them, and distorting the gospel (1:7; 5:10, 12). Most likely this was the same group who oppressed him and stoned him. The main point of his letter was that there are two competing systems for means of salvation: by the Law and by faith.<sup>15</sup> Or stated another way, “the cross alone is the way of salvation” verses an an attempt to gain salvation by the works of the Law.<sup>16</sup> Paul made his case that “no one is justified by the works of the law, but by the faithfulness of Jesus Christ” (Gal 2:16) by appealing to the experience of his audience, to history that would be familiar to them from the Scriptures and to logic.

Although his main theme is justification by faith alone in Christ alone, Paul also included several other secondary themes. To prove his point, he compared the two competing systems. The fact that the law, or the works of the law, is powerless to save becomes a secondary theme (2:16, 21; 3:10, 11, 13, 21, 23). Another theme is Paul’s use of the biblical history that includes the stories of Abraham, Sarah, Isaac and Hagar to prove his case (3:6-18, 29; 4:22-31). God’s promises to his children of faith is another secondary theme (3:14, 16-19, 21-22, 29; 4:23, 28). And the Spirit of God is secondary theme that Paul included in how believers are to live out their faith (3:2-3, 5, 14; 4:6, 29; 5:5, 16-18, 22, 25; 6:8). Two other themes in the letter are freedom and unity (2:4; 3:26-28; 4:22-31; 5:1, 6, 13).<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Mark Yarbrough, “Unit 4. Galatians,” in “BE106OL: Acts and Pauline Epistles,” (videos), accessed October 3, 2015, <https://online.dts.edu/courses/2816/modules/items/143365>, video 5.

<sup>16</sup> Hansen, “Galatians, Letter to the,” in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, 330.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 323.

## Structure, Outline, and Presentation

### *Structure and Outline*

Within the opening greetings and the closing remarks, the Book of Galatians can be divided into three primary parts: (1) Paul's personal defense of the gospel, (2) the defense of justification by faith alone, and (3) practical application of the gospel.<sup>18</sup>

- I. Introduction 1:1-10
  - A. Salutation 1:1-5
  - B. Reason for Writing 1:6-10
- II. Paul's Personal Defense of The Gospel 1:11-2:21
  - A. An Apostleship from God 1:11-24
  - B. Paul and the Apostles 2:1-14
    - 1. Paul Confirmed by the Apostles 2:1-10
    - 2. Paul Confronts an Apostle 2:11-14
  - C. Justification by the Faithfulness of Christ 2:15-21
- III. Defense of Salvation by Faith Alone 3:1-4:31
  - A. Paul's Evidence 3:1-29
    - 1. The Experience of the Galatians 3:1-5
    - 2. The Example from Scripture 3:6-14
    - 3. The Appeal to Logic 3:15-29
      - a) The Role of the Promise 3:15-18
      - b) The Role of the Law 3:19-25
      - c) The Relationship of the Galatians 3:26-29
  - B. Paul's Examples 4:1- 31
    - 1. Illustration of Heirs 4:1-11
    - 2. Appeal from Personal History 4:12-20
    - 3. Illustration from Scripture 4:21-31
- IV. Practical Applications of the Gospel 5:1-6:10
  - A. Life Without the Law 5:1-12
  - B. Contrasting the Two Systems 5:1-6
  - C. Confronting the Issue 5:7-12
    - 1. Life Without License 5:13-15
    - 2. Life By the Spirit 5:16-26
  - D. Life with Others 6:1-10
- V. Conclusion 6:11-18

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<sup>18</sup> Donald K. Campbell, "Galatians," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 588–589. After drafting my outline, I consulted several sources and the outline by Dr. Campbell was the most helpful in focusing my outline into the three major parts and inspiring the phrases I used for several points.

## *Presentation*

### I. Introduction 1:1-10

#### A. Salutation 1:1-5

Paul began his letter stating his status as an apostle, chosen by Jesus Christ and God the Father -- and the brothers with him. He reminded the Galatian churches that he had the credentials to deliver the true gospel that those who were delivering the counterfeit gospel do not have (1:1-2a). He greeted the churches in Galatia with grace and peace, reminding them that it is Jesus who rescued them and should receive all the glory (1:2b-5).

#### B. Reason for Writing 1:6-10

Paul stated that he is “astonished” that they “are so quickly deserting” God and “following a different gospel” (1:6). This is the beginning of Paul’s case against them. He quickly launched into the fact that there is the true gospel and different one that he said is not really another one because it is a counterfeit one. He pointed the blame on “some who are disturbing” and “distort[ing] the gospel of Christ” (1:7). Paul was so upset over this gospel that is contrary to what he preached to them previously, that he said anyone who preaches it should “be condemned to hell!” (1:8, 9). His word choice made a strong opening case to the Galatians that deviating from the true gospel is severe and no small matter. He closed the introduction with a couple of rhetorical questions that communicate to his audience that he does not care about pleasing people when the truth of God is at stake. This reaffirms that his letter is to address a serious matter.

### II. Paul’s Personal Defense of the Gospel 1:11-2:21

#### A. An Apostleship from God 1:11-24

Paul dove into the defense of the gospel that he previously preached to them by explaining that it “is not of human origin” and that he received it directly from Jesus Christ (1:11-12). Here Paul has set up the beginning of his defense that his gospel is the only true



gospel compared to what the Galatians have come to believe. He continued with his personal testimony, explaining his previous way of life “savagely persecuting the church of God,” aggressively advancing Judaism (1:13-14). This seems to be a seed planted to remind the Galatian churches that Paul would be the first to embrace any Jewish religious practices if they were to essential to the gospel. He continued his personal testimony describing his conversion. He described himself as being “set...apart from birth,” “called” by God’s grace to reveal Christ and “preach him among the Gentiles” (1:15-16a). He added that he did not seek advice from anyone else and went away for three years (1:16b-18a). These statements add to Paul’s case that the gospel entrusted to him came directly from Jesus Christ himself and was not of human origins, as compared to the counterfeit one they have believed. After those three years, he told about his interaction in Jerusalem with only Peter and James, and then going to preach the gospel where people only knew of him as a persecutor of the faith (1:18-23). He shared this information as he concludes his defense that his gospel has brought God glory and was confirmed by two of the apostles closest to Jesus during his earthly ministry.

## B. Paul and the Apostles 2:1-14

### 1. Paul Confirmed by the Apostles 2:1-10

To give his readers context that the argument he is about to make is not new, Paul gave a recount of his interaction with the apostles in Jerusalem after his fourteen years of ministry and a calling to the Gentiles (2:1-2). He intentionally included that Titus, an uncircumcised Greek, was with him and some “false brothers” attempted to make the case that Titus should be circumcised to enter the community of faith, but Titus was not compelled and they “did not surrender to them, in order that the true gospel would remain....” (2:2-5). Paul, then, makes it clear that his ministry of the gospel, adding nothing to it like circumcision, to the Gentiles was confirmed by the apostles (2:6-10). Paul wanted to make sure there was no doubt that his gospel was given by God directly and endorsed by the leadership of the church in Jerusalem.

## 2. Paul Confronts an Apostle 2:11-14

Paul retells the incident with Peter in Antioch to point out that even Peter fell prey to those he calls “pro-circumcision” (2:11-12). Paul made it clear that Gentiles are not to be required to live like Jews in order to be a part of the community of faith and that to teach that is hypocrisy (2:13-14). His inclusion of this reaffirms his point that this is an issue that the church has faced before and has come to a clear consensus, while demonstrating that even those who know the true gospel best can fall into the deception and need to be reminded of the truth.

### C. Justification by the Faithfulness of Christ 2:15-21

Here is where Paul set up the main point that he will spend the majority of the letter defending: “no one is justified by the works of the law but by the faithfulness of Jesus Christ” (2:16). This is where the two competing systems of justification become evident: the works of the law, which include circumcision, and the faithfulness of Christ. He compared the life he had by the law to his new life in Christ, by grace. Paul was not going to just deal with the surface issue of circumcision; he goes to the root of the problem, “if righteousness could come through the law, then Christ died for nothing!” (2:21).

## III. Defense of Salvation by Faith Alone 3:1-4:31

### A. Paul’s Evidence 3:1-29

#### 1. The Experience of the Galatians 3:1-5

Paul began his argument for justification by faith with an admonishment calling them foolish and deceived. He asked them a series of questions to point out the severity of their experience: following the counterfeit gospel that has led them to believe that righteousness could be obtained by them adding something to what Paul had originally taught them, to the faithfulness of Christ. In order to make his case, he first had to make his charge against his audience.

#### 2. The Example of Scripture 3:6-14

From making his charge against the Galatians, Paul gave them an example from Scripture to prove historically that righteousness has always been a gift of God. He first pointed out Abraham “believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness” (Gen 15:6; Gal 3:6). He reminded them that God’s plan has always included justifying the Gentiles by faith through Abraham: “All nations will be blessed in you” (Gen 12:3; 18:18; Gal 3:8). Then he called their attention back to the law by reminding them of the curse that comes from not keeping the entire law and blatantly stating “no one is justified before God by the law” because the law is not based on faith (Deut 27:26; Gal 3:10-13). He landed once again on the fact that only in Christ could they “receive the promise of the Spirit by faith” (3:14).

### 3. The Appeal to Logic 3:15-29

#### a) The Role of the Promise 3:15-18

Paul proceeded from the example of historical Scripture, to logic to demonstrate his case that justification is by faith alone. He called them “brothers and sisters” to remind them of their connection in Christ and that he is not their enemy, but greatly cares for them. He began this section by explaining the covenant promise given to Abraham and his descendent, who Paul stated is Christ (3:16). He states that even a human covenant cannot be added to once it is ratified (3:15b). His point is that the inheritance promised to Abraham was fulfilled four hundred and thirty years later in Christ by God, not because of the law. His appeal to logic is that if humans cannot add to a human-made covenant, then they certainly cannot add to a God-made covenant. The promise of inheritance had to be based on God keeping that promise (3:18).

#### b) The Role of the Law 3:19-25

Paul then addressed the issue of the law in relationship to the promise. He stated that the law did not invalidate or cancel the promise of God (3:17), or even provide the promise (3:18). So then, he asked the most obvious question: “Why then was the law given?” (3:19). First, he stated that the law is not opposed to the promise (3:21). Then, he answered the question saying that the law was added because of sin to guard people until the coming faith in Christ was

revealed (3:19, 22-24). Here, he again reiterates the faith is put in the “faithfulness of Jesus Christ” so that those who believe could “be declared righteous by faith” (3:22, 24). Paul built his case that the law was an insufficient system for salvation and that only by faith in the faithfulness of Christ can one be saved.

#### c) The Relationship of the Galatians 3:26-29

Paul tied the promise of inheritance back to his audience by pointing out their relationship to Christ through faith (3:26) and because they are now in Christ, they are all one in him (3:28). He proclaimed that they are Abraham’s descendants, and therefore, “heirs according to the promise” (3:29). This is where Paul tied the issue right back to his audience reminding them that in Christ through faith, and of nothing else, they are in the community of God.

### B. Paul’s Examples 4:1-31

#### 1. Illustration of Heirs 4:1-11

Paul elaborated on the idea of heirs and guardians by using the example of a son who is a minor inheriting everything but needing guardians to manage everything until he has come of age. He connects Jesus coming “to redeem those who were under the law” to the coming of age (4:4-5). And he connects the inheritance of the son with their adoption “as sons with full rights” (4:5b, 7). Paul explained that a child who had not yet come of age was “enslaved under the basic forces of the world” and equated that with his audience in their former state when they did not know God (4:3, 8). He confronted them on their behavior of relying on religious practices which he paints as going back to “the weak and worthless basic forces” and being “enslaved to them all over again” (4:9-10). Here Paul directly connected the theoretical with the actual behavior of his audience using an illustration that all of them would understand.

#### 2. Appeal from Personal History 4:12-20

Paul then, moved on to a personal plea to become like him, free from the enslavement of gaining justification by self-effort (4:12). He reminded them of his relationship with them

when he was among them and their generous reception of him. Here, Paul is establishing his heart and motivation in writing them to combat the lies of those who are preaching the counterfeit gospel of circumcision and works. Paul reminded them that he is not their enemy and that his heart is pained in concern for them as compared to the zealous flattery of these false teachers (4:16-20).

### 3. Illustration from Scripture 4:21-31

Paul concluded his examples with an allegory using Abraham's two sons and the mothers who birthed them to represent the two covenants of the law and of the promise. He painted a picture of the covenant of the law to include the things associated with Hagar and her son: natural descent, Mount Sinai, slavery. He depicted the covenant of promise that is Sarah and her son as including the promise of God, Jerusalem and freedom. He included these two references because they are familiar stories from Scripture that his audience would know well and because they help to reinforce the stark differences of his case that what they are believing is not what he had taught them. He reminded them that they are children of the promise, the free woman and they are to remove themselves from the other. This was Paul's case all along: they cannot believe two conflicting means of salvation and he calls them to get rid of the one they are not. Once again, Paul included familial language of "our mother" and appeals to them as "brothers and sisters" in order to remind them that he is not opposed to them but on their side (4:26, 28, 31). Paul used a quote from Isaiah to show that else where Scripture backs his claim.

## IV. Practical Applications of the Gospel 5:1-6:10

### A. Life Without the Law 5:1-12

#### 1. Contrasting the Two Systems

Paul moved from his defense of salvation by faith alone to the practical application of what it looks like for a Christian to live out of this correct belief. He began with the reminder that "Christ has set us free" (5:1). He started with this statement to connect this next section back to his argument about the freedom they have from the law in chapter four. He called them to stand

firm and to not be enslaved again by the law, specifically circumcision, because the alternative is that Christ “will be of no benefit” to them and they will then have to obey the entire law (5:2-3). Paul is pointing out again the contrast of the two systems. He continued the contrast of the two systems with the reminder that “trying to be declared righteous” or justified by the law distances them from God’s grace and that the true hope of righteousness comes through the Spirit by faith (5:4-5). He noted that those in Christ are not unified by circumcision or the lack of it as is their issue but is by their faith working through love (5:6).

## 2. Confronting the Issue 5:7-12

Paul reminded them of the issue at hand and the choice before them of believing and the living out the two systems he has been illustrating for them. He began with commending them that they had run well, went on to affirm that he believed they would make the right choice, and referred to them again as “brothers and sisters” to soften his previous harshness in confronting the issue (5:7, 10, 11). He returned their attention to the fact that someone had led them from the true teaching he gave them to a false teaching that can be infectious (5:7-9). Paul again condemned the one who had confused them in their belief (5:10, 12). Just as he had contrasted the two systems, he contrasted the work of “those agitators” with his own work (5:11).

## B. Life Without License 5:13-15

Paul next cautioned them by pointing out that the freedom they have apart from the law is not “an opportunity to indulge [the] flesh,” or live by license (5:13). He pointed this out as there is the possibility of moving to the extreme opposite of living by the law which is to live without regard to others. He drove that point home by quoting Leviticus “You must love your neighbor as yourself” and warning them that their behavior can destroy one another (Lev 19:18; Gal 5:14-15).

## C. Life By the Spirit 5:16-26

In contrasting the practical living out of the two systems, Paul moved from addressing living without the law and living without license to living by the Spirit of God. The contrast is carried into his opening line: “But I say, live by the Spirit and you will not carry out the desires of the flesh” (5:16). Paul stated that the desires of the flesh and the Spirit are in opposition to each other and that those led by the Spirit are not under the law (5:17-18). He gives a list of what it looks like to live by the flesh compared to living by the Spirit and warns those who live by the flesh while encouraging them to live by the Spirit. His case is that what a person lives by in belief is played out in their behavior so one's behavior reflects what they believe (5:25). Paul concluded this section with an appeal that seems to be rooted in a behavior problem within the Galatian church which might connect to the behavior addressed by “if you continually bite and devour one another” (5:15, 26).

#### D. Life with Others 6:1-10

Paul's final section of practical instructions to the Galatian believers includes how to do life with others based on the correct belief that they are free from the law because of Christ. He began this section addressing them again as “brothers and sisters” which reminded them that he is one of them, not an outsider. Then, he gave them a series of commands based on their freedom in Christ and their obligation to one another because they are in Christ:

1. Restore a person found in sin with a spirit of gentleness (6:1)
2. Pay close attention to yourselves (6:1)
3. Carry one another's burdens (6:2)
4. Examine your own work (6:4)
5. Carry your own load (6:5)
6. Share all good things with the one who teaches the word (6:6)
7. Do not be deceived (6:7)
8. Do not grow weary in doing good (6:9)
9. Do good to all people, especially other believers, when you have opportunity (6:10)

Paul was careful to include with these commands explanation of why or context that would give the Galatians motivation for living them out. He interjected this statement, “For a person will reap what he sows, because the person who sows to his own flesh will reap

corruption from the flesh, but the one who sows to the Spirit will reap eternal life from the Spirit” as another opportunity to contrast the two systems and the results of believing one over the other (6:7-8).

#### V. Conclusions 6:11-18

Finally, Paul pointed out that the large letters he wrote proved that he wrote it himself (6:11). He reminded them that those who were trying to force the Galatians to be circumcised were just wanting to make a good show for themselves to avoid persecution probably by other Jews and to boast in them (6:12-13). Paul wanted to remind them that their intentions toward the church in Galatia was self-serving, while Paul’s intentions were always God-honoring. He reaffirmed that by saying “may I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ” and that nothing matters except being a new creation in Christ (6:14-15). He conclude with a benediction to those who “behave in accordance with this rule” to reiterate that behavior matters because it reflects belief. He blessed them with peace and mercy. He pointed out that he has scars because he stood for Christ. Paul closed with a benediction of grace calling them “brothers and sisters” yet again which is appropriate given that the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is what he had called them to trust in.

#### **Canonical Contribution and Summary**

The Book of Galatians probably provides one of the clearest and most concise understandings of soteriology in the New Testament. Among Paul’s writings, the letter to the Galatians has a key place in light of its theological contribution to the universal church. Salvation being justification by faith alone in Christ alone is the major theme of the letter. The theological impact in the history of the church has been profound to the degree that even “Luther called it ‘my own epistle, to which I have plighted by troth; my Katie von Bora.’”<sup>19</sup> In addressing the

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<sup>19</sup> Hansen, “Galatians, Letter to the,” in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, 323.



contradictory gospel, Paul makes his case very clearly from experiential, biblical and logical supports that a salvation that comes from anything we humans can add, is no salvation at all.

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