Galatians Bible Study

Living by Law vs Living by the Spirit

Interesting facts about Galatians.

1. Unlike Ephesus, Colossae, Philippi, Corinth, Galatia is not a city but a region of what is now Turkey. In fact, it is not clear what churches were in Galatia at the time. Paul traveled there (Acts 16:6) but we know of no church he started there.

2. Galatia is in the highlands of central Turkey. Its capital was Ancyra, now Ankara, the capital of Turkey.

3. The Gauls were a Celtic people (like the Irish and Galicia in Spain). Other Gauls settled into what is now France. Rome called France Gaul. (*omnia Galia es divise en tres partes*, cisalpine, transalpine and helitican Gaul)

Theme verse in Galatians Gal 5:1 (or Galatians 5:6)

The first potentially fatal crisis has come upon the churches in Galatia. Judaizers have been insisting that Gentiles be circumcised and are even beginning to push a whole range of First Covenant laws and Jewish customs on Gentile converts (for example Gal 4:10,11 special days, months, seasons and years), insisting that salvation depends on such outward works. (Gal 5:2-4 justified by law and 6:12-13 for example).

These evangelists have been going around to churches planted by Paul, Timothy and Epaphroditus, trying to turn people away from Paul’s law-free grace-centered gospel. In this dispute, everything is at stake as far as Paul is concerned.

Today, we will not talk much about living by the Spirit. We will primarily talk about NOT living by the Law. The opposite of Law today will be faith, but later in Galatians he insists that the opposite of living by Law is living by the Holy Spirit.

Galatians 1:1-2 Why does Paul lead off with such a note of authority (Romans 1:1 Paul a servant, Phil 1:1 Paul and Timothy, servants, Colossians 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God)?

Galatians 1:6-9

Q: How would you describe Paul’s frame of mind here?

Q: Why is he so upset and is he coming across so strongly?

Q: Is there any equivalent elsewhere in Paul? (Maybe: Romans 6:1 which is responding to an error in the opposite direction! Or 1 Cor 11:17-22 which is a response to unloving division in the church 1 Cor 3:1-4)

Q: What did Jesus get angry about? (those who do not forgive others Matt 18:32-35, leaders whose religion leads people away from God Matt 23;15)

Q: What did Paul get angry about? (Those who would replace grace with law-keeping see also Gal 3:1 “you foolish Galatians”, Gal 5:12)

Q: What do YOU get righteously angry about? (Hopefully it is something that God gets angry about, not related to selfishness, pride, greed, etc.)

Q: According to this passage, what is at stake and why?

Q: What would be your definition of “falling away?”

Gal 5:2-4 What is Paul’s definition here? This is a church attender who has fallen away.

Q: What does “trying to be justified by the law” mean? Why can’t we be justified by the law?” Because “Those who do these things will live by them.” (Lev 18:5, Romans 10:5)

Q: How could we be tempted to rely on outward works rather than on the blood of Jesus to become righteous before God?

Gal 1:11-2:2 Just read it and explain that Paul is trying to establish his credentials as an apostle with unquestioned authority in this case.

Gal 2:3-5 Paul refused to have Titus circumcised.

Yet, in Acts 16:1-4.

Q: Why, in one case, did Paul have Timothy circumcised, but in another refused to have Titus circumcised?

Paul had Timothy circumcised, but 1. No one was insisting he do—this was not a doctrinal dispute. And

2. Paul felt that in circumcising Timothy, he would be more effective in his evangelism.

Why did Paul refuse to circumcise Titus? Because others were insisting he do so on religious/Christian grounds. This Paul would never do.

Q: How does this apply to us, practically, with regard to our freedom in Christ?

There is a wide amount of grey area in Christianity, but if someone INSISTS that something is required that is not, it might be time to insist that it is not.

My suggestion: Do this to, like Paul, defend someone else’s freedom in Christ, not yours!!!

It is wrong for you to drink \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ It is sinful for you to have your kids read Harry Potter. It is unchristian for you to go to a casino.

More appropriately in context. You cannot work on Sunday as a Christian.

Legalistic dating advice.

1 Cor 10:29-11:1 Being judged by another person’s conscience. The most important concept is 1 Cor 10:33 I am seeking the good of the many.

But: If someone is insisting that something is required for salvation that is not, then, like Paul, you may need to stand up against that.

Gal 2:6-10 Paul completes his resume as an inspired and authoritative apostle. (skip this?)

Gal 2:11-16 Q: What was his confrontation with Peter about? Why was he so insistent?

v. 11 Peter’s salvation was at stake!!! This was a massive crisis!!!

v. 12 the “circumcision group.” These were the Judaizers who insisted that circumcision, and others aspects of the Law of Moses were required to be saved. Those who eat with the unclean cannot eat with us!

Peter took and in-between position. Jewish Christians can live this way, as long as they do not force it on Gentile Christians.

There is no middle ground here!!! The legalists will always have their way.

We cannot let legalists split the church!!!

v. 14 Paul to Peter: Even you do not follow the law!!!! (Gal 6:13 “Not even those who are circumcised keep the law.”)

v. 15 If anyone should know that salvation is not by law, it should be a Jew!!!

That is why we came to Christ, so that we could be justified by faith!!!

Q: What does “justified” mean. (Greek: *dikios*) To be justified means to be aligned with. To be declared “not guilty”.

It means to be made righteous (even though you are not). It is to be “just as if I’d“ never sinned.

v. 16 No one will be justified by the works of the law.

Q: What are “works of the law” They are acts done so that we can be saved.

Judaizers: being circumcised, observing Day of Atonement, Sabbath.

This could be sharing our faith, going on a mission team, giving to the poor, not going to certain movies, not dancing, not doing drugs, not getting a tattoo.

v. 16 Q: How, then, are we justified? By faith! By believing God’s promises.

Gal 2:17-18 Q: What does Paul mean here? (He means that if I go back to trying to be justified by works of the Law, then I am under the curse of the law again)

Gal 2:19 Through the law I died to the law so that I might live for God. What does this mean?

Paul means that what I learned about sin from the law and about the law in Christ taught me to die to it, not to be governed by it.

Romans 5:20-21 The law was brought in so that trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more…

Romans 7:13 …through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful.

[Heb 10:3 The sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins.]

Gal 2:20 What does it mean to be “crucified with Christ?”

When are we crucifed with Christ (Romans 6:1-7)

Q: What does he mean “I no longer live.”

Q: So, how do we “live”, then? V. 20 by faith.

Q: Are you living by faith or by works?

Sum it up so far: Gal 2:21 I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!

This is why the teaching of the Judaizers is damnable doctrine!!!

Gal 3:1-9 Life through the Holy Spirit.

Let us remember the theme of Galatians: Living by Law or living by the Spirit.

The thing that living by the Law is being contrasted with is not grace, so much (although that is in view). It is being contrasted with living by the Holy Spirit.

Notice Gal 3:1, and then Gal 3:2

v. 1 Jesus was crucified!!!

v. 2 receiving the Holy Spirit. How are they connected?

We received the Holy Spirit, not by observing Law, but by believing in the crucifixion (the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus)

The work that saves us is the work of Christ on the cross!

Q: Why is receiving the Holy Spirit the opposite of living by Law? Because the Holy Spirit is a deposit, guaranteeing our inheritance (Eph 1:14)

Share the story about the singles in San Diego when I told them that if you are in Christ you are forgiven. Totally!!! You do not come in and out of the grace of God when you sin.

This is the means of our salvation. Romans 6:1-4 and Gal 3:26-27.

v. After beginning with the (Holy) Spirit, are you now trying to finish by means of the flesh?

Q: Can that happen to us? Can we slip into works Christianity?

Gal 3:6 How are we saved? “Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness.”

Here he is quoting Genesis 15:5-6.

This is also quoted in Romans 4:3, 22. Let’s read Romans 4:18-25 This is the basis of our salvation!!!! We are free of the treadmill of Law!!!

Q: What did Abraham believe? He believed God’s promises. In fact, (v. 20) “he did not waver in unbelief regarding the promise.”

What do you need to work on? Overcoming x sin? Reading the Bible more? Your character?

No!!! What you need to work on is believing God’s promises!!! This is the well-spring of the Christian life.

Gal 3:10-14

Q: Why are those who rely on religion rather than on God under a curse?

a. Because “the righteous will live by faith.” (v. 11) Q: As opposed to what? Ans: as opposed to living by the law.

b. Because the alternative is “The person who does these things will live by them.” (v. 12) (Leviticus 18:5). Q: Has anyone here lived by them? Would Paul’s opponents have claimed to have lived by them? So, why are they imposing these legalistic practices? (Because that is what the flesh wants to do)

Q: Are you relying on the flesh/works of the law.

v. 13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of living by works by being cursed (using Deut 21:23)

Living by Law/works is truly a curse!!!

1. It is not possible.

2. It steals the joy of doing things out of love rather than obligation.

Christ redeemed us from the Law Q: Are you living by Law or by the Holy Spirit?

Q: What does redeemed mean? Purchased back.

Dictionary: 1. compensate for the faults or bad aspects of (something). 2. Gain or regain possession of (something) in exchange for payment.

"Billy redeemed his drums from the pawnbrokers"

This reminds me of Hosea 3:1-5

Q: Who are you in this story? You are Gomer! How does this make you feel?

Gal 3:15-25 An extended metaphor. Some Jews had replaced the promise given to Abraham with the Law. 3:17 But “The law does not set aside the covenant or the promise” (with Abraham that the righteous will live by faith).

v. 19 So the question naturally arises….. Why the Law?

v. 21 The Law does not replace the promise. It makes our need for the promise more obvious. (Romans 7:7 and 7:13).

v. 23 It was a “guardian” (a custodia, a tutor) (v. 24) Q: Who needs a guardian? A child or otherwise incompetent person.

It pushes us toward Christ and toward the promise.

v. 19 until the Seed (Christ), to whom the promise to Abraham referred, came.

Gal 3:26-29 But….. IN CHRIST You are all sons (or daughters) of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

Q: As opposed to through what? (as opposed to through law-keeping)

Q: When did we become a son of God?

Q: What is his point in v. 28-29? The main point is neither Jew nor Greek.

The law no matter makes a difference. Jew and Gentile are in the same boat.

Q: Wait a minute, isn’t the husband the head of the wife, etc….?

Gal 4:1 “As long as the heir is a child”

Q: What is this about? In this case, the “child” is a Jew without Christ.

He owns the whole estate. The Jews had a highly favored position, but they were still slaves.

Q: Why were they slaves? John 8:31-41

Gal 4:2 Who are the “guardians and trustees” in this case? They are the Law and the Bible and the prophets and the sacrifices.

Gal 4:3 This applies to us Gentiles as well, although we did not own the estate!

v. 3 We were enslaved under the *stoicheia*—ABCs (we get stoichiometry in chemistry from this. ABCs, names) (also in Gal 4:9 miserable “forces” are stoicheia—basics, ABCs, the law)

Gal 4:4-7 Q: Are those “born under law” the Jews, the Gentiles or both. (note, normally, with the Law of Moses, the scriptures usually have *the* law)

v. 6-7 When you were baptized into Christ (Gal 3:26) you became a son/daughter. You can say daddy.

Q: What thoughts and feelings does this bring to mind?

v. 8-11 But…. Some of the Galatians have forgotten who (or whose) they are?

The main issue may be circumcision, but apparently the Judaizers are also reintroducing requiring Passover, Day of Atonement, Booths, Sabbaths, etc.

Q: Is it wrong to celebrate special days?Q: What about Easter, Palm Sunday, Lent,…? No. It is wrong to rely on them for righteousness, as the Judaizers were teaching.

v. 11 What is at stake, apparently? Everything! Remember Gal 5:2-4 “You who are trying to be justified by the law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.”

4:12-20 Paul makes an emotional appeal for them to repent.

Q: What does “I became like you” mean? (Parallel verse 1 Cor 9:19-23)

Q: In what sense does he want them to become like him? (the Galatians are treating him very coldly) Receive me with warmth, with love, with tears.

Q: Why might we find ourselves not wanting to hang out with spiritual people (like some of the Galatians with Paul)?

v. 17 These people have zeal, but it is not for you. They want you to have zeal for them. I want you to have zeal for God.

Lesson #3

Review: The problem. The church is in the midst of its first “existential crisis.” In other words, the first crisis which could literally destroy the church that Jesus died for.

Judaizers are trying to infiltrate the church and pull them away from Paul’s influence.

Remember what Paul said in Gal 1:9 If anyone is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let them be under God’s curse!

Wow!

Their salvation is at stake. What is the issue? They were being taught that they had to observe certain Jewish practices, especially circumcision, to be saved—to be a Christian.

The theme: Living by Law vs Living by the Holy Spirit.

In the first three chapters, we saw that it could also be described as Living by Law vs Living by Faith.

For example: Gal 3:1-6 v. 2 Did you receive the Holy Spirit by the works of the Law or by believing what you heard? Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness

And Gal 3:10-12 The problem of the Judaizers: “All who rely on the works of the law are under a curse. The Law says (v. 12) “The person who does these things will live by them.” (Lev. 18:5), but “the righteous will live by faith.

Why would anyone chose to live by the Law? This is what the flesh wants to do. We want to save ourselves. We want to justify ourselves. This is all human-created religions.

Q: What does all this mean for us? Why do you do what you do? Why do you go to church? Why do you not drink, or not look at pornography? Why do you share your faith or give to the poor? Why do you follow the “rules” of Christianity?

Is it so that you can be saved? Then you are under a curse!!! (possibly under a curse, as in will not be saved at all, or under the curse of the treadmill of works and guilt)

Gal 4:21-31 Paul does something really smart. He uses a VERY Jewish thing to illustrate his point about the Judaizers.

Gal 4:21-31 This is clearly an extended metaphor (v. 24)

So, who is Isaac and who is Ishmael? (Isaac is us and Ishmael is Jews who reject Jesus)

Isaac: Gospel, New Testament, Freedom, promise, faith

Ishmael: Slavery, Law, Old Testament, works salvation, obligation

Q: Which son was born as the result of faith and as fulfillment of a promise?

Application: Which covenant does this represent? The New Covenant!

How much faith was required to produce a Jewish baby? (born according to the flesh) None!!!

No! We are Isaac! We are the true Israel!

The shocking truth: Jews outside Christ are Ishmael!

Jewish Christian: Which system do you want to be under?

Gentile Christian: How do you view your relationship with God and your Christian “obligations?”

v. 24 This is all an extended metaphor/allegory

v. 25-31 Shifts from Ishmael/Isaac to Hagar/Sarah Who is Hagar here, and who is Sarah here?

Ishmael/Hagar Mt Sinai/Moses, physical Jerusalem slavery, children are slaves (Jesus:John 8:34 Everyone who sins is a slave to sin.”)

Isaac/Sarah The Jerusalem above. Free. She is our mother!!!

Describe the historical type/antitype of v. 29 Jews (Ishmael) persecuted the Christians (Isaac)

Describe the historical type/antitype of vs. 30 God sent the Jews away from Jerusalem in AD 70.

Not how God literally manipulates history in order to teach us, as Christians, about our relationship with him. Amazing!

Gal 4:31 An important transitional verse. We are Isaac! We are the circumcision. We Christians (whether Jew or Gentile) are children of the free woman

Romans 2:28-29 A person is not a Jew who is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly… not by the written code.

Romans 9:6-7 Not all Israel is Israel. We are the true Israel. Phil 3:3 “For it is we who are the circumcision, we who serve God by his Spirit, who boast in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh. Q: Do you put confidence in the flesh?

Gal 5:1 A very odd statement: The reason we were set free was so that we could be free.

Q: Why is Paul making this rather odd statement?

Because the Judaizers are using their freedom to make slaves of people 5:1b “do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

Q: The key question: Free from what? (not sin—at least not in this context). Freedom for the Law. We have moved from have to. Now it is want to.

In America, freedom is practically a religion. Q: What is so good about freedom?

Q: Why do you pray? Why do you share your faith? Why do you give to the needs of the church? Why do you avoid sin? Is it out of freedom of slavery?

5:2-4. Here Paul gets down to “brass tacks.”

We can lose our salvation over this issue!!!

What is the basis in your heart, for your salvation? Is it by law-keeping.

DO NOT accuse Paul of encouraging people to break the law, but…

5:5 Through the Spirit (capitalized) we eagerly await by faith the righteousness for which we hope.

Remember, that in Christ we are righteous, but this righteousness is already but not yet. (2 Cor 5:21 “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”

5:6 Q: Is it really true that “the only thing that matters is faith expressing itself through love.” (yes, if we are in Christ through baptism and have the Holy Spirit)

As opposed to faith expressing itself through \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Q: Love of whom and by whom?

We have the privilege of expressing our faith in God, not merely through works or obedience, but through these things motivated by love.

What have you done lately that you did simply because you love God?

If you are doing things out of obligation, repent and change your perspective.

Gal 5:7-12 Paul is really getting emotional here. Q: Why?

v. 11 can be confusing. In that case (if I were to be preaching circumcision as the Judaizers are doing) the cross would not even have been necessary!!!

Notice v. 12. Whew!

Gal 5:13-15. The proper use of Christian freedom.

Q: What is an improper use of Christian freedom? Sin and selfishness.

Q: What is a proper use of Christian freedom? Serving others.

Consider the irony: Paul says that we are no longer slaves (Gal 4:21-31). He tells us that, instead we are truly free in Christ (Gal 5:1), yet what does he tell us to do with our freedom? To become slaves. Voluntary slaves.

Q: What is it like to be a voluntary slave?

Q: Why is this so much superior that living in obligation?

Gal 5:16-18 Living by the Spirit versus living by the flesh. (note, this is discussed later in the treatment of Gal 5:25-26)

Q: In the context of Galatians, what does the flesh desire? (to love according to law, rule, obligation, things of this world)

What, then, does the Spirit desire? (to live in freedom and to show faith in love)

Gal 5:19-21 The acts of the flesh.

Gal 5:22-24 The fruit of the Spirit. Q: What is his point in saying that “there is no law against any of these things” There is irony here.

Gal 5:25-26. Q: What do you think it means to “keep in step with the Spirit”?

Actually, here is an outline:

1. Gal 5:16 Walk by the Spirit.

2. Gal 5:18 led by the Spirit.

3. Gal 5:25 live by the Spirit.

4. Gal 5:25 keep in step with the Spirit.

Being \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ by the spirit versus being \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ by what?

Q: What is his point in this rather pointed emphasis on the Holy Spirt?

Perhaps the key is 5:18 (you are not under the law) and v. 16 (you will not gratify the desires of the flesh}.

His point seems to be that listening to the Holy Spirit is far more likely to lead to personal righteousness than living by law/slavery to rules/obligation.

Here is a hard question for us rationalistic CoC’ers: How do we walk, get led, live and keep in step with the Spirit?

Gal 6. As is Paul’s pattern, now that he has finished his theological discussion, he is passing on to practical application of this theology.

Gal 6:1-6 It is not merely a matter of each individual being led by the Spirit. We need to help one another stay on the path of righteousness.

If you see someone stumbling, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently.

Q: What does “living by the Spirit” have to do with us restoring the one who is doing poorly in Christ?

Q: V. 1 … but what should we be careful about? (being infected with bad attitudes, with divisiveness, with hanging out with the wrong characters….)

v. 2 Carry each other’s burdens vs v. 5 Each one should carry his own load.

“burden” = baros burden, weight, “that far outweighs them all.”

“load” = phortion burden, load, cargo (like a backpack)

Q: What is going on there?

Q: How should we put this into practice?

v. 6. What do you think you should do about Gal 6:6 ☺

Gal 6:7-10 Just in case someone would accuse Paul of simply emphasizing grace and belittling the importance of works in the Christian life:

Time to get real!!! Works may not save you, but if you want fruit in your life, you need to sow to the Spirit.

“A man sows what he reaps.” This is a truism. It is not deep theology, but rather simple human wisdom. Duuuhhhhhh.

v. Have you ever become weary in doing good? Can you share?

Q: What is Paul’s advice?

Q: How long will we have to wait for this fruit to come? (ex: Noah preached 100 years)

What is the key to continuing to do good and not giving up? Faith!

Gal 6:10 Q: Why “especially to those who belong to the family of believers?” How should this work?

Gal 6:11-18 Paul’s final greeting (he is no longer using a scribe)

He is recapitulating. Do not listen to the Judaizers/the circumcision group. They are hypocrites—like the Pharisees in Matthew 23:24 “You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel.”

v. 13-14 Their treasure is on earth. Mine (and hopefully yours) is in heaven.

v. 15 the only thing that matters is the new creation. Wait a minute. I thought he said earlier that the only thing that matters is faith, expressing itself in love. What is going on here?

v. 16 They are not being persecuted. I have the “marks of Jesus.” Q: What were those marks?