

LEGALISM AND LIBERTY

(GALATIANS)

I. INTRODUCTION.

A. Christ's Mission In This World Was To Set Man Free:

1. From the captivity of Satan, the bondage of sin, the penalty of death. (*Rom. 6:6-7, 17-18, 22-23; Heb. 9:12; 1 John 3:5*)
2. To walk in the fellowship with God again. (*2 Cor. 5:18-19; Rom. 5:10*)

B. This Freedom From Sin Was Not Made Possible By The Law Of Moses. (*Acts 13:39*)

1. The law was not given to free man from sin.
2. The law was given to control sin until it was time for Christ to make atonement for sin. (*Gal. 3:19*)
 - a. The law made man aware of sin and its penalty.
 - b. The law made man aware of the necessity of sacrifice for atonement.
3. If the animal sacrifices required by the law could have taken away sin, the death of Christ would not have been necessary. (*Heb. 10:4*)
4. It was only through the sacrifice of Christ that freedom was made possible. (*John 1:29*)

C. The Galatians Were Being Led Astray By Teachers Requiring Rites Of The Law In Addition To Obedience To Christ.

D. Paul Showed In His Letter To The Galatians That To Require A Supplement To Obedience To Christ Is Tamount To Saying That Christ's Atonement Was Insufficient!

E. What An Insult To The Son Of God!

II. AIM.

- A. To See How Serious Paul Considered The Teaching Of This Perverted Gospel.
- B. To See How Paul Corrected This Perversion Of The Gospel.
 - 1. By first carefully establishing the divine source of the gospel which he preached.
 - 2. By carefully explaining that their freedom from sin in Christ would be invalidated by supplementing the sacrifice of Christ with requirements of the law.
 - 3. By carefully explaining the meaning of freedom in Christ.

III. OUTLINE.

- A. THE SERIOUSNESS OF TEACHING A PERVERTED GOSPEL.
 - 1. Even an angel from heaven would be condemned for preaching a perverted gospel. (*Gal. 1:8*)
 - 2. Any who would teach a gospel contrary to the one which Paul had been divinely inspired to preach would be under the condemnation of God. (*Gal. 1:9*)
- B. HOW PAUL CORRECTED THIS PERVERSION OF THE GOSPEL.
 - 1. By establishing the divine source of the gospel which he preached.
 - a. Paul's message was received directly from Jesus Christ, rather than by conferring with the other apostles. (*1:11-14*)
 - b. When Paul did meet with the apostles in Jerusalem, and communicated to them the gospel which he had preached, they gave him the right hand of fellowship, thus giving their endorsement of him and of his message. (*2:1-9*)
 - c. Later at Antioch, Paul publicly rebuked Peter, the highly esteemed apostle, for having been influenced by the Judaizers. (*2:11-14*)
 - 1) If Paul had had no authority in the eyes of the other apostles, his rebuke of the highly respected Peter would have been considered out of place.

- 2) If Paul's application of the gospel had been wrong, the other apostles would have come to Peter's defense.
2. By carefully explaining that their freedom from sin in Christ would be invalidated by supplementing the sacrifice of Christ with requirements of the law.
 - a. Paul made the Galatians aware of the supremacy of the gospel:
 - 1) By calling their attention to the fact that the work of the Holy Spirit among them was the result of obedience to the gospel, not the law. (3:2-5)
 - 2) By showing them that the fulfillment of the promise to Abraham came through Christ, not the law. (3:6-9 cf. Rom. 4:13)
 - a) God promised to bless all nations, but the Gentiles were not given the law of Moses. (ver. 8)
 - b) Even the Jews under the law were not justified by the law but rather were under the curse of the law in that they did not do all that was written in the law. (ver. 10)
 - c) The law did not annul the promise to Abraham. (vs. 17-18)
 - (1) It was added to control sin until the time set for Christ to come. (ver. 19)
 - (2) The law served as a schoolmaster to bring them to Christ. (The schoolmaster was one employed to give constant, close supervision to a child or children in a family. He served as an escort and as a guard against evil and immoral influences.)
 - (3) Since Christ has come, we are no longer under the schoolmaster (law), but rather we are full-grown sons of God by faith in Christ. (ver. 26)

- (4) We are in Christ if we have been baptized into Him. (*ver. 27*)
- (5) If we are in Christ, we are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise of God to Abraham. (*ver. 29*)
- 3) By showing that instead of perfecting their spirituality, submission to requirements of the law would be turning back to spiritual immaturity and bondage. (4:1-11)
- a) Paul used the analogy of a child who is heir to an estate, but is under guardians and trustees until the date set by his father, to show that those under the law until the time set by God to send forth His Son to redeem those under the law, are now brought from childhood and bondage to spiritual manhood and liberty in Christ.
- b) If they go back to observance of the law, they will be regressing to spiritual immaturity and bondage. (*ver. 9*)
- 4) By using the two sons of Abraham to illustrate the bondage of those who go back to the law. (4:21-31)
- b. Paul exhorted the Galatians to take a firm stand for freedom in Christ by refusing to be entangled again with the yoke of bondage. (5:1,3)
- 1) If they were to submit to circumcision as a religious requirement they would forfeit liberty and life in Christ. (*ver. 2*)
- a) One must consider salvation through Christ either all-sufficient or non-sufficient.
- b) Those who were trying to be justified by the law, would be alienated from Christ and could not expect His sacrifice to atone for their sins. (*ver. 4*)

c) Therefore, going back to the law would bring them into a bondage from which there would be no release.

(1) The many sacrifices under the law could not take away sins. (Heb. 10:1, 11)

(2) Christ, by the sacrifice of Himself, offered one sacrifice for sins forever. (Heb. 10:10, 12, 14)

(3) There will be no other sacrifice for sin. (Heb. 9:24-26; 10:26-29)

2) Today, the Galatians would be like prisoners under the sentence of death having been duly and justly convicted by legal process, but pardoned by the governor, deciding to return to prison to agitate for a new trial under the same legal process by which they could only hope for another death sentence.

c. The heart of the message to the Galatians is found in chapter 5:6.

1) In Christ, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any religious significance.

2) In Christ, the important thing is faith working through love.

3. By carefully explaining the meaning of freedom in Christ.

a. After pleading with them to stay free, Paul advocates slavery; after preaching liberty, Paul insists upon law! Why?

1) If man does not fall into the trap of the self-righteousness of legalism, he is in danger of falling into the trap of the self-indulgence of liberty.

2) Paul foresaw the danger of the Galatians confusing liberty with license. (5:13)

a) Liberty in Christ does not mean disregard for law.

b) A life of love and service is still required in Christ. (5:13-14)

- (1) Not to earn salvation, but to delight in doing the will of the Savior.
- (2) Not to qualify for forgiveness of sin, but to please the One who has made forgiveness possible.
- (3) Not to merit God's favor, but to show gratitude for the unmerited favor of God.
- (4) Not to gain acceptance with God through self-righteousness, but to accept the righteousness of God.
- (5) Not to bring glory to self, but to bring glory to God. (Matt. 5:16)
- (6) Not to build faith in one's ability to be good, but to demonstrate faith in Christ's ability to save.
- (7) Not to build up self in the eyes of others, but to unselfishly serve God and others. (Matt. 6:1-2)

b. The Christian is to walk by the Spirit. (5:16-25)

- 1) The Christian who is walking by the Spirit is not dominated by the works of the flesh. (5:16-17)
- 2) The Christian who walks by the spirit is characterized by the fruit of the Spirit. (vs. 22-23)
 - a) There is no law against such a life. (ver. 23)
 - b) Therefore, the Christian is not restrained by law, but led by the Spirit. (ver. 18)

"Those who love a 'better-than' attitude from making a favorable comparison with those who are not spiritually mature."

- (1) A parent who loves a child does, without giving thought to requirements of law, what he could be forced to do by law. Indeed, the parent who loves, does more than the law requires!
- (2) Even so, a Christian who walks by the spirit does, without giving thought to requirements of law, what he would be required to do by law. Indeed, the Christian who loves Christ and his fellow man, does more than the law of Moses required. (Matt. 5:20-48)
- 3) Those who fulfill the lust of the flesh will not inherit the kingdom of God. (5:21)
- 4) Those who have been raised to the new life in Christ crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts. (Gal. 5:24; 6:14-16; Rom. 6:4-6; Col. 3:1-10)
 - a) They will not use liberty in Christ as justification for self-indulgence and sin, but because of justification in Christ, they will exercise self-control and restraint.
 - b) Christian freedom means freedom from sin, not freedom to sin.
- c. In Christ, the spiritually mature do not have to be forced to exercise self-discipline and restraint, but that does not mean that self-indulgence and sin are permitted. (6:1)
 - 1) A child must learn the self-discipline and restraint necessary to live in a civilized society, or be restrained by civil authorities.
 - 2) A Christian who has not matured spiritually, must be restored by the spiritually mature. (6:1)
 - 3) Even the spiritually mature must watch, lest they be tempted to sin. (6:1)

- 4) Those who have a "holier-than-thou" attitude from making a favorable comparison of themselves with those whom they are to restore, are not spiritually mature. (vs. 3-4)
 - a) A person must compare his life with the life of Christ, instead of comparing himself with others.
 - b) Each person is accountable to God for his own conduct. (6:5)
- d. Helping one another to stay free of sin is fulfilling the law of Christ. (6:2)
 - 1) Christ's whole aim and purpose in coming to earth was to free us from sin.
 - 2) All that He lived and taught and did was to that end.
- e. The law of sowing and reaping is still in effect in Christ.
 - 1) By sharing the good things of this life with teachers of the word, a person sows to the spirit. (6:6)
 - 2) If all one's time, effort, and money is expended on self, one is sowing to the flesh.
 - 3) The law of sowing and reaping is as dependable in the spiritual as the physical world.
 - 4) God is not mocked. (6:7)
 - 5) The time of reaping will come, therefore as we have opportunity we are to do good to all, especially our brethren in Christ. (6:9-10)

IV. CONCLUSION.

- A. Lack Of Understanding Of The Fulfillment Of All Of God's Plans And Promises In Christ Caused The Galatian Brethren To Be Susceptible To The Judaizers Who Were Teaching The Necessity Of Circumcision And Requirements Of The Law Of Moses In Addition To Obedience To Christ.

- B. Reconciliation To God Is Possible Only Through Christ,
And Through Christ Alone.
1. Fellowship between God and man was severed when Adam and Eve disobeyed God and were driven from the garden.
 2. Centuries of time and effort and the supreme price of Jesus' life were paid for reconciliation of man to God.
- C. How Could Any Man Mistakenly Suppose That The Freedom Of Man To Walk In Fellowship With God Again Means Freedom To Disregard God's Commands, Violate His Law, And Disobey His Will!