

## #4 Galatians

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**Galatians 2:3:** ' Yet not even Titus who *was* with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised. And this occurred because of false brethren secretly brought in (who came in by stealth to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage),'

The reason Titus, a Gentile, was not compelled to be circumcised was because, after Paul reported how God was saving the Gentiles, how He had poured out His Spirit upon them, all three of the Apostles from the Jerusalem Church, Peter, James and John, agreed with Paul, agreeing with the Lord Jesus Christ, that there was absolutely no command from God that Gentiles become Jews in any way.

False Christians, Judaizers, messengers of Satan, had crept into the Church in order to deceive true Christians, leading them into the heresy of legalism. Legalism is not just some kind of 'strict, fundamental Christianity; it is heresy that will take its adherents to Hell. There are Judaizers today who would draw believers into their heretical error: Hebrew Roots 'Christians,' Catholics, Seventh Day Adventists and so many others. Every cult or false Christianity which, in any way, teaches that man's efforts are necessary to be acceptable or more pleasing to God, will lead all who hold to it into error and even Hell. Every 'Christian' system which teaches that we **must** do good works, that we **must** love and serve out city, that we **must** feed the poor, that we **must** do this or that; that is a false Christianity.

There is absolutely nothing that we must do besides believing on the Lord Jesus Christ. The only One Who must do anything is God Himself and He has done it.

Now, here, I should add, if we are truly born again children of God, we will do many good works because God has created in us a new, eternal, heart; we will have the desire to love God and love others and to do whatever is needed in living out that love.

We do not 'live out the Gospel; we are not the Gospel; ' we do 'live out the love' that God has placed within us.

Paul says those false 'Christians' had come 'to spy out our liberty.' They came to demand that the Gentiles must first 'do something' in order to be acceptable to God. Either Christians have complete liberty in Christ or they have no liberty in Christ; there is no middle ground in truth. This is one of the things to which Peter referred when he wrote: '...as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, <sup>16</sup> as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, (our liberty in Christ) which untaught and unstable *people* twist to their own destruction, as *they do* also the rest of the Scriptures.' 2 Pet 3:15 This 'liberty' is one of Paul's 'hard sayings.'

This was especially hard for Jews to receive because of their history of rules, regulations, feasts and ceremonies. They couldn't, or wouldn't, see that those all pointed to the Lord Jesus Christ and that He had come to fulfill them all. We, the Body of Christ, the Bride of Christ, the true Church, we have been given absolutely no laws, no rules, no commands to obey in order to become saved or to remain saved. Our only command, to be saved, is to **believe on the Lord Jesus Christ**. That's it! And that is what is impossible for an unsaved person to understand, to believe or to even hear. We are commanded to Love God and to love our neighbors, but neither of those is required for our salvation. Doing those two things is, rather, the result of our salvation, the result of God creating within us a new heart and spirit. We are completely free to do whatever we want to do but the reality is, if we really are born again, we will have a God given desire to love God and to love others, especially all other believers and we will have the Holy Spirit within us to guide, comfort and to convict us when we sin; we will have the God given desire to flee from sin. Our '*liberty in Christ*' also means that we, now, unlike every unsaved person, have **the liberty to not sin**. We are no longer slaves to sin or to our own flesh. We can choose to '*walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which we've been called*.' Eph 4:1 And we can also choose **to not walk** in a manner worthy of the calling with which we've been called, without its having any impact, whatsoever, on our eternal salvation.

That is not an invitation to sin; Paul also wrote: 'What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not!' We can sin without its affecting our salvation, without its affecting our standing

before God in the complete righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, but a Christian who chooses to sin is most unwise because it will have an impact on the eternal rewards that we receive or that we lose.

We, every human, lay before God as a dead body; before Salvation we, also, were dead in sin. Salvation is God's work from beginning all the way through till the end. We were completely incapable of coming to God or even wanting to come to God. We were dead and those, out there, are all dead still.

But God chose us for Himself, every one whom He would '*awaken*' and then draw to Himself. We had no active part in our Salvation except to believe. He did it all and He continues to do it all. He chose us, He called us, He gave us eternal life and now it is all His work in keeping us saved, keeping us safe; it is He Who preserves us and it is He Who will eventually bring us home to Himself when He finally completes our Salvation, when He redeems our sinful Earthly bodies by creating new, glorified, eternal bodies, like His own, in which we will live forever with Him.

While we were still dead in sin, Jesus Christ died in our place so that we would never have to. That is the heart of the Gospel; Salvation is God's work from beginning to end and that is the heart that is ripped out by every false religious system, whether pagan or supposedly '*christian*,' which demands works of any kind that must be done to become saved or to remain saved.

Now... if something rises up within us that screams out... 'No! Not so! There are things that we must do to really be saved... I must feed the poor; I must love and serve my City; I must tithe; I must be good, really good all the time!' If that is in us... beware! We have fallen into the trap of legalism. But hear me! If we are really born again, we will want to do *some* of those things, to love God, to love others, to honor God with our finances, but none of those things are required. If we ever think that anything is required of us, we have been brought into bondage, the bondage of legalism. But, again, if the desire to do some of those things is not within us, we might not really be born again. 'Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,<sup>2</sup> through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.<sup>3</sup> And not only *that*, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance;<sup>4</sup> and perseverance, character; and character, hope.<sup>5</sup> Now hope does not disappoint, because ***the love of God has been poured out in our hearts*** by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.' For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.<sup>7</sup> For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die.<sup>8</sup> But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, (while we were still dead in sin) Christ died for us. Rom 5

Speaking of being dead: Mom didn't die last Sunday morning; it was simply her physical body that finally stopped living; it just ran out of gas; her breathing slowed until it finally stopped and then her heart continued to beat for several minutes until it finally slowed to stop. We were right there with her. At that moment, after that last weak, faint heartbeat, her eternal spirit and soul were whisked into the complete presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. All that was left, on her bed, was an empty shell. I straightened her out, folded her hands and left the room. No one lived there any longer. She is eternally alive because Jesus Christ had died on the Cross, 2000 years ago, in her place, taking all her sin upon Himself; He became sin for her so that she would become the Righteousness of God in Him. And that Righteousness had never depended upon any work that she ever did or ever did not do.

**Verse 5:** 'to whom we did not yield submission even for an hour that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.'

Paul refused to move an inch; he refused to try to 'get along' to preserve unity. That is the battle cry of today's doctrines of demons; 'Unity above all else!' 'Can't we all just get along and focus on Jesus?' No! We cannot! Just because a teacher or a group says that they love Jesus, that they serve Jesus, it means nothing. Many false christs have come into the world and many false 'jesuses' are lifted up by many false 'christians.' Unless they serve the True Jesus Christ, and adhere to the true Gospel, they are, as Paul said, 'false brethren.' We can see many, many false brethren and false sistren on false 'christian' TV. But just like Paul, we must

never yield submission to their false teaching for even an hour, or even a minute, that the truth of the Gospel might continue with us always.

**Verse 6:** ' But from those who seemed to be something—whatever they were, it makes no difference to me; God shows personal favoritism to no man—for those who seemed *to be something* added nothing to me. But on the contrary, when they saw that the gospel for the uncircumcised had been committed to me, as *the gospel* for the circumcised was to Peter <sup>8</sup> (for He who worked effectively in Peter for the apostleship to the circumcised also worked effectively in me toward the Gentiles),'

Remember the scene here: in Antioch, where Paul had taught for many years, Judaizers had been bringing in false teaching. Peter, James and John had sent Barnabas to observe the revival happening among the Gentiles. Paul and Barnabas had returned to Jerusalem to report, and Paul had brought Titus, a Gentile, with him to prove that God was saving Gentiles completely apart from Judaism's rules and regulations; actually, he had come to teach that truth to those in Jerusalem... the mystery of the Heavenly people of God drawn from Jews and Gentiles alike.

Now Paul is saying that they added nothing to his Gospel, which had been taught to him directly from the Lord Jesus Christ Himself; nothing was added to it by Peter, James or John, the pillars of the Jerusalem Church. Paul's Gospel and Apostleship were in no way inferior to the Apostles who had accompanied Jesus for 3 years. In fact, as would later be recognized after the Bible had been compiled, Paul's 'Apostleship' was used in far greater ways than any of the original 12; Paul was used to author most of the New Testament which would ultimately be responsible for the salvation and discipleship of countless Christians over the next 2000 years.

Paul verses those three, Peter, James and John, they taught the Gospel differently but the same Gospel. Peter, James and John taught it to Jews, those who had centuries of having the Law of Moses and the Prophets which all pointed to the coming Messiah. We see this clearly when Peter stands up and preaches on the Day of Pentecost. He explained how everything pointed to the promised Messiah to come, that it was Jesus Christ Who had been promised from long ago. When the Jews from around the World, who had come to Jerusalem for the Feast of Weeks heard this, the Holy Spirit convicted and enlightened their hearts.

Peter preached, on that day, 'Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.'" <sup>37</sup> Now when they heard *this*, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men *and* brethren, what shall we do?" Acts 2

Paul, on the other hand, is preaching the Gospel to Gentiles, who had no knowledge of the Law and the Prophets; he tailored his message to them as we see when he was on Mars Hill; he used their idol to the 'unknown god,' and preached the Gospel from what they did understand.

**Verse 9:** 'and when James, Cephas (Peter), and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we *should go* to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.'

James, Peter and John were pillars in the Jerusalem Church, the 'home' Church, which was built on the foundation of the Lord Jesus Christ. To the Ephesians, he wrote: 'Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, <sup>20</sup> having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief *cornerstone*, <sup>21</sup> in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, <sup>22</sup> in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.' Eph 2:20

Here, in Galatians, Paul is referring to the Council of Jerusalem which we see in Acts 15. Let's look at that which will give us a much better understanding of what we're reading here in Galatians:

'And certain *men (not 'brothers')* came down from Judea and taught the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved." <sup>2</sup> Therefore, when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders, about this question.

<sup>3</sup> So, being sent on their way by the church, they passed through Phoenicia and Samaria, describing the conversion of the Gentiles; and they caused great joy to all the brethren. <sup>4</sup> And when they had come to Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders; and they reported all things that God had done with them. <sup>5</sup> But some of the sect of the Pharisees who believed rose up, saying, "It is necessary to circumcise them, and to command *them* to keep the Law of Moses."

**The Jerusalem Council:** <sup>6</sup> Now the apostles and elders came together to consider this matter. <sup>7</sup> And when there had been much dispute, Peter rose up *and* said to them: "Men *and* brethren, you know that a good while ago God chose among us, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. (when he was sent to the house of Cornelius) <sup>8</sup> So God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as *He did* to us, <sup>9</sup> and made no distinction between us and them, (between Jews and Gentiles) purifying their hearts by faith. <sup>10</sup> Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they." Then all the multitude kept silent and listened to Barnabas and Paul declaring how many miracles and wonders God had worked through them among the Gentiles. <sup>13</sup> And after they had become silent, James answered, saying, "Men *and* brethren, listen to me: <sup>14</sup> Simon has declared how God at the first visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name. <sup>15</sup> And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written: 'After this I will return and will rebuild the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down; I will rebuild its ruins, and I will set it up; <sup>17</sup> So that the rest of mankind may seek the LORD, even all the Gentiles who are called by My name, Says the LORD who does all these things.' (from Amos 9) <sup>18</sup> "Known to God from eternity are all His works. Therefore I judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God, <sup>20</sup> but that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, *from* sexual immorality, *from* things strangled, and *from* blood. <sup>21</sup> For Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath." **The Jerusalem Decree:** <sup>22</sup> Then it pleased the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas, *namely*, Judas who was also named Barsabas, and Silas, leading men among the brethren. <sup>23</sup> They wrote this *letter* by them: 'The apostles, the elders, and the brethren, To the brethren who are of the Gentiles in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia: Greetings. <sup>24</sup> Since we have heard that some who went out from us have troubled you with words, unsettling your souls, saying, "*You must* be circumcised and keep the law"—to whom we gave no such commandment it seemed good to us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, <sup>26</sup> men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>27</sup> We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who will also report the same things by word of mouth. <sup>28</sup> For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: <sup>29</sup> that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell.'

**Verse 10:** '*They desired* only that we should remember the poor, the very thing which I also was eager to do.' On the Day of Pentecost, when the Church was born, Jews had come from around the known World for the Feast of Weeks. 3000 came to faith in Jesus Christ as the result of Peter's 'sermon.' Many of those remained in Jerusalem to join themselves to that Church. They had all things in common and helped each other but eventually, supplies began to run low; it became the Church with the most need. Paul collected money from the Gentile churches to help the Christians in Judea: 'For it pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem. <sup>27</sup> It pleased them indeed, and they are their debtors. For if the Gentiles have been partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister to them in material things.' Rom 15:26

Recognize that the Gentiles were not commanded to help the poor but Paul held it forth as their 'obligation.' The same is true for us Gentiles: we are not commanded to do anything except believe but we, too, have an obligation in that Jesus Christ gave everything for us and we should have the attitude that we owe everything to Him... absolutely, **everything!**