

God's Word for Today

Galatians

The Cost of Freedom

*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as
you teach and admonish one another
with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms,
hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in
your hearts to God.*
Colossians 3:16

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Preface

Robert G. Hoerber

Galatians, the first letter of Paul according to the South Galatian theory, was addressed to churches that he had founded on his first missionary journey (**Acts 13–14**): Antioch in Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, Derbe. Paul composed Galatians apparently prior to the Apostolic Council recorded in **Acts 15:1–29**, since he makes no mention of its decrees, which would have substantiated Paul's position concerning the need for circumcision of Gentiles. The date of Galatians would be A.D. 49.

The background of the question Paul faced in Galatians—whether Gentiles must be circumcised—began when Peter converted a Gentile, Cornelius, in Caesarea (**Acts 10**). Luke emphasized the importance of this event by repeating the description of the entire incident in the following chapter (**Acts 11:1–18**). Soon more Gentiles turned to the Lord at Antioch in Syria (**Acts 11:19–26**). The influx of Gentile believers alarmed the Jewish Christians at Jerusalem. In his first journey Paul converted a large number of Gentiles (**Acts 13–14**). Some Jewish believers in Jerusalem became so concerned that they went to Antioch in Syria after the return of Paul and Barnabas and claimed that unless the Gentiles are “circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses,” they cannot be saved (**Acts 15:1**).

These Jewish Christians, or others of similar conviction, promoted their view in the churches of Galatia, which Paul and Barnabas recently had founded. Their claim was two-fold. One point they tried to make was that Paul did not give the complete message to the Gentiles. What he said about salvation through faith in Jesus, they asserted, is true, but that is not the whole story. In addition to faith, circumcision and the keeping of the ceremonial law are also required. The other point they attempted to make was that Paul did not preach the whole truth because he received his message second-hand from the apostles, who had known Jesus in the flesh, and therefore he had not comprehended the message completely. In Galatians Paul refutes these two charges.

Already in the salutation (**1:1–5**) Paul inserts references to the charges of his opponents. His apostleship comes from God, not from the apostles (**v. 1**); the risen Jesus Christ is the total essence of the Gospel (**v. 4**).

The personal argument—against the charge that he received his message second-hand—Paul discusses first (**1:6–2:21**). He received his call

and authority directly from God, not from the apostles at Jerusalem, where he visited for only two weeks three years after he began preaching (1:6–24). When he visited Jerusalem again, 14 years after his conversion, the leaders of the church at Jerusalem recognized that the message Paul preached was the same message they were proclaiming (2:1–10). On one occasion, at Antioch in Syria, instead of receiving instruction from Peter, Paul was forced to correct Peter's actions publicly (2:11–14). Paul then summarizes the Gospel message (2:15–21).

The doctrinal argument—against the charge that faith alone is insufficient and must be augmented by circumcision and the keeping of the Old Testament ceremonial law—Paul discusses next (3:1–4:31). Paul cites three witnesses to the distinctive and separate function of the Law and the Gospel: (1) the experience of the Galatians themselves (3:1–5); (2) the witness of the Old Testament concerning Abraham (3:6–9); and (3) the witness of the Old Testament Law itself, which brings curses (3:10–14). Paul then expands on the relationship between the Law and God's promise: (1) the Law did not cancel the promise (3:15–18); (2) the purpose of the Law is to convict us of sin (3:19–22); and (3) God's promise leads us to Christ (3:23–29). There are, furthermore, three examples to show that salvation comes from God's grace: (1) Israel under the Law is like a minor heir, a child without liberty, but freedom comes through Christ (4:1–11); (2) the Galatians in their initial reaction to the Gospel (4:12–20); and (3) the sons of Abraham—one born to slavery and the other to freedom as a result of God's promise (4:21–31).

Paul then presents practical applications of Christian freedom under the Gospel (5:1–6:10). The meaning of freedom under the Gospel is liberty, not license (5:1–26). Paul gives some concrete examples of Christian freedom (6:1–10).

Paul's conclusion (6:11–18) emphasizes the importance of the subject matter and the selfish motives of his opponents.

Part I

Paul's Right and Reason to Speak

Lesson 1

Listen to Me! (Galatians 1:1–10)

Theme Verse

“Paul, an apostle—sent not from men nor by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father” (Galatians 1:1).

Goal

In this session we will first study Paul’s greeting to the churches in Galatia. Then, we will discover the purpose for his letter. Finally, with the purpose for the letter in mind, we will explore parallel situations that exist today and apply Paul’s strong words to those situations.

What’s Going On Here

It is immediately clear that **Galatians** is a letter. Addressed from Paul to congregations in Galatia, it carries a heartfelt message. But this is no romantic love letter from a longing suitor, but a passionate/compassionate letter from a pastor to his troubled people.

Though **Galatians** deals with the same theme as **Romans** (the relationship of the Law to the Gospel), this letter seems to be as much from Paul’s heart as **Romans** is from his mind.

As you read the letter you will see Paul as a loving spiritual leader, sick at heart that the people he nurtured in the faith have gone astray, angered at those who torment them with untruths and lie about him, frustrated that his spiritual children cannot seem to cling to the Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ alone.

The Gospel shines brilliantly like a jewel in this letter, often called the

magna carta of the Christian faith. Through it the Holy Spirit calls the **Galatians** and us back to Christ as the center of our faith.

Searching the Scriptures

The Greeting (Galatians 1:1–5)

Read **Galatians 1:1–5**.

1. Who does Paul claim to be?
2. From whom has Paul received his authority? See also **Galatians 1:11–12; Acts 26:15–18; and 1 Corinthians 9:1; 15:8**.
3. Why do you suppose it was important for Paul to establish his authority?
4. What does “to the churches in Galatia” imply about the way in which the letter will be shared?
5. Who are the Galatians? Theologians propose two main theories concerning the people to whom Paul is writing.

The North Galatian Theory. This theory suggests that the letter was addressed to the churches located in north-central Asia Minor (Pessinus, Ancrya, and Tavium), where the Gauls had settled when they invaded the area during the third century B.C. Some scholars believe that Paul visited this area on his second missionary journey, though Acts contains no reference to such a visit.

The South Galatian Theory. According to this theory, Galatians was written to churches in the southern area of the Roman province of Galatia (Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe) that Paul had founded on his first missionary journey. Some believe that Galatians was written from Antioch in A.D. 48–49 after Paul’s first missionary journey and before the Jerusalem council meeting (**Acts 15**). Other scholars believe that Galatians was written in Antioch or Corinth between A.D. 51 and 53.

Why is it important to know about the audience to whom a book of the Bible was written?

6. Paul summarizes clearly the Gospel in **Galatians 1:3–5**. After rereading these verses, write in your own words an answer to the question, “What is the Gospel?” See also **Romans 1:16–17** and **Colossians 1:21–23**.

7. What does Paul’s positioning this Gospel proclamation at the beginning of the letter tell you about its importance to him?

The Purpose of the Letter (Galatians 1:6–10)

Read **Galatians 1:6–10**.

1. Describe in your own words the purpose Paul gives for writing his letter to the Galatians.

2. Paul summarizes the Gospel in **Galatians 1:3–5**. What might be the “different gospel” Paul accuses the people of turning to? See also **1 Timothy 6:3**; **2 Corinthians 11:3–4**; **1 Corinthians 2:1–2**.

3. Judaizers were Jewish Christians, who believed that the ceremonial laws of the Old Testament were still binding on the New Testament church. Following Paul’s successful missionary work in Galatia, the Judaizers insisted that the Gentile converts to Christianity follow certain Old Testament rites, including circumcision. The Judaizers argued that Paul was not an authentic apostle and that out of a desire to make Christianity more appealing to Gentiles, Paul had removed from the Gospel necessary and binding legal requirements.

Of what does Paul accuse the Judaizers in **Galatians 1:7**?

4. How do the “do this” and “don’t do this” teachings of the Judaizers threaten the Gospel proclaimed to the Galatians? Review **Galatians 1:3–5** and read **Romans 2:8–9**.

5. What or who might Paul have had in mind when he refers to an angel from heaven? See also **Acts 23:9** and **2 Corinthians 11:14**.

6. How does Paul defend the Gospel threatened by the Judaizers? What do the strong words and tone in which they are written tell us about Paul’s concern for this problem?

7. What accusation had the Judaizers apparently made against Paul? See **Galatians 1:10**.

The Word for Us

1. Throughout its history the Christian church has struggled to preserve the Gospel. The Gospel has been threatened by false teachings within and outside the church. Today, many people have deserted the Gospel and have turned to a different gospel.

Consider the following statements. What “different gospel” is promoted in each? How could turning to this different gospel throw people into confusion and pervert and threaten the Gospel?

a. “I try hard to be a good Christian, but I am never sure I have done enough to earn God’s love.”

b. "Sure, Jesus died for my sins, but I still have to love Him and others with my whole heart in order to receive His forgiveness and go to heaven."

c. "Jesus only loves me when I'm good."

d. "She was such a good person. I know she went to heaven."

e. "I go to church regularly. I try to go to Bible study. I pray often. I give my fair share in the offering plate. I try to help others in need. God should love me."

f. "Forgiven? I can never be sure all of my sins are forgiven."

2. Many churches struggle to keep high approval ratings. In order to remain attractive, they teach what people want to hear, rather than what God's Word says. Although God's Word speaks against

a. murder; some churches approve of abortion and euthanasia.

b. homosexuality; some churches approve of homosexuality, homosexual marriages, and even welcome homosexuals into the ministry.

c. good works to earn forgiveness; many churches promote the necessity of good works to earn salvation.

d. sin; some churches approve of "alternative lifestyles" and a "person's right to choice."

How might you use Paul's words in **Galatians 1:6-10** to confront these issues?

3. How can or should we respond to teachings that “pervert the Gospel”?

4. By what or whose authority do we speak out against teachings contrary to the Word of God? See **2 Timothy 1:13–14**.

Closing

Pray together the following stanzas of “Lord, Keep Us Steadfast in Your Word”.

Lord, keep us steadfast in Your Word;
Curb those who by deceit or sword
Would wrest the kingdom from Your Son
And bring to nought all He has done.

Lord Jesus Christ, Your pow’r make known,
For You are Lord of lords alone;
Defend Your holy Church that we
May sing Your praise triumphantly.

O Comforter of priceless worth,
Send peace and unity on earth;
Support us in our final strife
And lead us out of death to life.

Lesson 2

How Could This Happen? (Galatians 1:11-2:14)

Theme Verse

“I said to Peter in front of them all, ‘You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile and not like a Jew. How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs?’ ” (Galatians 2:14).

Goal

In this lesson we will gain a better understanding of the conflict with the Judaizers that compelled Paul to write to the Galatians—the background of the conflict, its resolution, and its meaning for us.

What’s Going On Here

In this portion of his letter to the Galatians, Paul recounts events in his life. The purpose of this first portion of **Galatians** is threefold:

1. Paul establishes his authority—“sent not from men nor by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father” (**Galatians 1:1**) and “I received it [the Gospel] by revelation from Jesus Christ” (**Galatians 1:12**).

2. Paul establishes the authenticity of “his” Gospel (**Galatians 2:2, 5, 7**).

3. Paul sets the conflict at Galatia into the context of the ongoing strife with the Judaizers, especially the encounters at Jerusalem and Antioch.

In this section Paul might sound arrogant. He seems to boast. He seems so sure of himself. He even challenges the apostle Peter. Yet here and throughout Paul’s letters, it becomes clear that it is not arrogance that speaks, but conviction (see **2 Corinthians 11–12**). Paul knows his Savior

and the freedom that faith in Jesus has given to him and all who believe. Clearly and boldly he defends the right of converts' freedom in the Gospel. He will not turn away from his purpose.

Searching the Scriptures

Paul's Autobiography (Galatians 1:11-24)

1. Review Paul's biographical sketch by filling in the missing information.

a. In his previous way of life in Judaism, Paul _____ the church and tried to _____ it (1:13).

b. Paul advanced in Judaism beyond many _____ of his own age (1:14).

c. God _____ Paul apart from _____ and called him to reveal Jesus to the _____ (1:15-16).

d. After _____ years, Paul went to _____ to get acquainted with _____ (1:18).

e. Paul went to _____ and _____ (1:21).

f. Paul was _____ to the churches of Judea, who had heard the report: _____

(1:21-24).

2. What is the connection between Paul's birth and call? See also **Jeremiah 1:4-5; Psalm 139:13-16; Isaiah 49:1-3; Romans 1:1**. Compare Jeremiah's birth and call to Paul's.

3. In 1:12 what does Paul mean when he says that he received the Gospel by "revelation"? See also **Acts 9:1-9; 22:17; 2 Corinthians 12:1-5; Ephesians 3:3; Revelation 1:1**.

4. How does Paul's autobiographical sketch (**1:13–24**) demonstrate that he received the Gospel not through men but by a “revelation” of Christ?

Conflict in Jerusalem (Galatians 2:1–10; Acts 11:27–30; 12:25)

1. For what reason did Paul, Barnabas, and Titus go up to Jerusalem? See **Acts 11:27–30**.

2. What does Paul mean when he says he went up to Jerusalem “in response to a revelation”? See **Acts 11:27–28; Acts 21:10–13; Ephesians 1:17**.

3. Read **Galatians 2:3–5**. What conflict seems to have flared during Paul's visit?

4. What is the freedom Paul speaks about in **2:4**? See also **Galatians 5:1; Romans 8:21; 2 Corinthians 3:17; Romans 6:17–18; 1 Peter 2:13–17**.

5. Why is the freedom of which Paul speaks so important to him?

6. How would requiring people to “do this” and “don’t do this”—fulfill certain requirements of the Law—in order to be Christian, rob them of their freedom?

7. How was the conflict resolved?

8. Read **Galatians 2:6–10**. How would you describe the relationship between Paul and the other apostles?

Confrontation at Antioch (Galatians 2:11–14)

1. Read **2:11–14** and reconstruct the events that occurred in Antioch.

2. Why did Peter suddenly stop eating with the Gentiles (**2:12**)?

3. What was the result of Peter “draw[ing] back” (**2:13**)?

4. How does Paul confront Peter? Of what does Paul accuse Peter (**2:14**)?

5. Why was it important for Paul to confront this issue?

6. What did Peter's actions endanger? See **Galatians 1:3–5**; **Philippians 3:1–11**; **Romans 6:5–7**.

The Word for Us

1. What guidance for dealing with conflicts in the church do you find in this section? Do you think the church can exist without conflict? Why or why not? What may be constructive and destructive in conflict?

2. Was Peter right in “draw[ing] back” from eating with the Gentiles? What if he said he was doing it to avoid giving offense? Should we modify our way of living for the sake of other people's feelings? In addition to giving offense, can a person take offense wrongly? How? Read **1 Corinthians 10:23–11:1** for guidance.

3. How can we as individuals boldly speak out against teachings that would rob us of our freedom in Christ?

4. Do we ever place unnecessary requirements upon people who desire to join our fellowship—“be like us, act like us, enjoy what we enjoy and then you can be one of us”? How would Paul respond to this attitude? Read carefully **1 Corinthians 9:19–23** for Paul’s answer. How does Paul’s response address a congregation unwilling to make changes in order that they might reach out better to their community with the Gospel?

Closing

Pray together,

O God, whose infinite love restores to the right way those who err, gathers the scattered, and preserves those whom You have gathered, of Your tender mercy pour out on Your Christian people the grace of unity that, all divisions being healed, Your flock, gathered to the true Shepherd of Your Church, may serve You in all faithfulness; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Lesson 3

The Bad News and the Good News (Galatians 2:15–21)

Theme Verse

“We, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified” (Galatians 2:16b).

Goal

That we might better distinguish and apply the bad news—we are sinful, condemned by the Law of God, and helpless to fix ourselves—and the Good News—Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross restored the broken relationship between us and God.

What’s Going On Here

Every good speech, sermon, or talk has a theme statement—a brief, clear summary of the point and purpose of the presentation. **Galatians 2:15–21** contains the foundation for Paul’s presentation to the Galatians. This portion of the letter could also be described as Paul’s definition of the Gospel. Paul writes that he is alive in Christ because he has died to the Law by the crucifixion of Christ. The restored relationship between God and people is a gift and the very purpose and meaning of the sacrificial death of Christ. Our efforts to keep the Law are hopeless and meaningless. Instead, on account of God’s great love for us, He sent Jesus to receive the punishment on the cross we deserved—death. We receive the righteous-

ness Jesus earned by keeping perfectly the Law on our behalf.

Draw a big cross by these verses in your Bible. They are the focus of the book of Galatians and the heart and core of the Christian faith.

Searching the Scriptures

In order to comprehend this portion of Galatians, the entire letter, and all of Scripture, it is necessary for us to clearly understand what Paul means when he speaks of Law and Gospel. We need to know what the Law is, what it does and does not do, and what the Gospel is and what it does to us and for us.

The Law—the Bad News

1. Skim **Exodus 20:1–21** and **34:14–28**. Summarize the contents of God's Law. What does God demand from His people? See **Exodus 34:11a**.

2. The Old Testament teaches that there were two parts to God's Law: the moral law—Ten Commandments—and the ceremonial law—the rules of life and religious practice of the people of Israel. You might page through the book of Leviticus to get an idea of the scope of the ceremonial law. What happened to the ceremonial law? Read **Ephesians 2:15**; **Colossians 2:20**; **Hebrews 7:18–19**; **8:13**; and **10:1**.

3. According to **Galatians 3:17–19**, what had been the function of the ceremonial law?

4. The moral law remains in effect. What is its purpose? Look at **Galatians 3:19–22** and **Romans 3:20** and **Romans 7:7** for help.

5. In **Galatians 2:16** Paul tells us that the Law cannot produce life. What does it produce? See **Galatians 3:10; Romans 4:15; and 2 Corinthians 3:6–9.**

The Gospel—the Good News

The Law, though it is good and established by God for a purpose, cannot bring salvation.

1. What is Christ's relationship to the Law? See **Galatians 3:13; 4:4–5; Romans 8:3; and Matthew 5:17.**

2. How has Christ changed our relationship to the Law? Read **Galatians 2:19; 3:23–25; and Romans 7:4–6.**

3. In **Galatians 4:4–7**, what does Paul tell us about our new relationship to God because of Christ?

4. What is the “new law” we now serve? See **Galatians 6:2; Romans 8:4; and 1 Corinthians 9:21.**

5. Who and what alone can provide us with salvation?

The Law and the Gospel (Galatians 2:15–21)

Keeping what you have learned about God's Law and Gospel in mind, let's explore in detail **Galatians 2:15–21**.

1. State in your own words the truth Paul provides in **Galatians 2:15–16**. *Hint:* The word “justified” means God declares us “not guilty” of our sins through Jesus’ sacrificial death on the cross.

2. Compare Paul’s definition of the Gospel in **Galatians 2:15–16** to his definition in **Romans 3:21–26**. Note reoccurring words and/or phrases.

3. Does a Christian remain in Christ while committing a sin (**Galatians 2:17–18**)? Why or why not? See also **Romans 7:7–25**; and **1 John 1:8–2:6**.

4. Read **Galatians 2:19**. Why must a person die to the Law in order to live for God?

5. What does “crucified with Christ” mean (**Galatians 2:20**)? Read also **Romans 6:3–14**; **Matthew 27:44**; and **Mark 8:34–38**.

6. How do mixing Law and Gospel make a mockery of the cross (**Galatians 2:21**)?

The Word for Us

1. In **2:20** Paul says we have been “crucified with Christ” and that He now “lives in” us. What kind of relationship does that indicate? How does Christ living in you affect your relationship to God? your attitude toward yourself? your relationship with others?

2. List some statements or behaviors that would indicate that a person is attempting to be justified through the Law?

3. What might you say to someone

a. who feels guilt over past sins?

b. who demonstrates no guilt over sins committed?

c. who is not sure he or she will go to heaven?

d. who believes it's okay to sin because God will forgive him or her?

Closing

Sing or speak together stanza 1 from “Salvation unto Us Has Come.”

Salvation unto us has come
By God's free grace and favor;
Good works cannot avert our doom,
They help and save us never.
Faith looks to Jesus Christ alone,
Who did for all the world atone;
He is our one Redeemer.

Part II

Prove It, Paul!

Lesson 4

The First Proof—The Gospel Works (Galatians 3:1-5)

Theme Verse

“You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified” (Galatians 3:1).

Goal

That we might understand the seriousness of forsaking the Gospel and by that understanding experience the urgency of Paul’s admonition and the intensity of his call to return to the Gospel of salvation in Jesus Christ.

What’s Going On Here

The main part of **Galatians** begins at 3:1 and continues through 4:31. In this section of his letter, Paul sets forth six arguments or proofs in which he supports his main proposition revealed in 2:15–21. Read **Galatians 3:1–5**. About what is Paul’s first proof? State Paul’s first proof in your own words.

As you may have noticed, **Galatians 3:1–5** is a series of five questions. These are not a teacher’s questions seeking facts, nor are they a speaker’s questions designed to raise interest—these are heartfelt questions of utter astonishment. They are followed in each case by a question mark, but they could have just as easily been followed by exclamation points.

Read the verses over again. This time add the kind of feeling you might put into a question to your children if you suddenly came home and discovered that they had finger-painted the front door pink with green stripes.

The questions in these verses are torn from Paul's heart. "What in the world could possibly have led you Galatians astray? How could this have happened?" he seems to ask.

"You started so well, grounded in the crucified Christ, blessed by the presence of the Spirit through the Gospel—that Gospel that worked the miracle of salvation among you. How could this have happened?"

Searching the Scriptures

Who Deceived You? (Galatians 3:1)

1. "Foolish" means without thinking or not using the knowledge given to you. The rebuke is clear. The astonishment is plain. Who is responsible for the false teaching? Read **John 8:44** and **2 Corinthians 11:13–15**. What can often lead the faithful astray according to **1 Corinthians 1:18–20**?

2. What had Paul done that should have enabled the Galatians to remain faithful? Compare to **Romans 5:6–9**.

From Where Did Faith Come? (Galatians 3:2–3)

1. The Law did not bring saving faith to the Galatians. Read **Acts 8:14–17; 19:1–7; and John 7:37–39**. What did "receiv[ing] the Spirit" mean to the believers? Read also **1 Corinthians 6:11**.

2. How and when do we “receive the Spirit”? See also **John 15:26** and **Acts 2:38**.

3. What did Paul mean by “human effort”? See **Galatians 6:12** and **John 8:15**.

4. What are the “human” standards that Paul fears the Galatians are following? Review **Galatians 2:15–21** and look at Paul’s summary in **Galatians 6:11–15**.

Is It All for Nothing? (Galatians 3:4–5)

1. “Have you suffered so much for nothing?” Paul asks. What is the purpose of suffering according to these verses? Compare to **Romans 5:1–5**.

2. According to **Galatians 3:5a**, what had happened among the Galatians that was evidence of the working of the Spirit among them? Compare **1 Corinthians 12:7–11**. See also **2 Corinthians 12:12**.

3. How might **Ephesians 4:14–15** summarize **Galatians 3:1–5**?

The Word for Us

1. Do you think Paul expected too much of the Galatians? He evidently expected them to be true to his teaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, even though he could not be with them to guide them. Was his expectation realistic? Is Paul's disappointment common for those who work in the church? Why or why not? How about church members—do they often express disappointment or disillusionment in their fellow believers? How about parents and teachers—why are they so often disappointed in their children and students? Can you think of ways to overcome our disappointment in others? How can examining ourselves and our own sinful thoughts, words, and deeds enable us to love others who have strayed from the Lord?

2. In Galatia the Judaizers and their insistence on adding the teaching of Old Testament law to the Gospel had led the believers astray. What things in the church and the world today are most likely to lead us away from the Gospel? What can we do to help each other remain strong in our faith in Jesus Christ?

Closing

Pray together,

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, of Your tender love towards us sinners You have given us Your Son that, believing in Him, we might have everlasting life. Continue to grant us Your Holy Spirit that we may remain steadfast in this faith to the end and come to life everlasting; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Lesson 5

The Second Proof—We Are Abraham’s Real Children (Galatians 3:6–14)

Theme Verse

“Understand, then, that those who believe are children of Abraham”
(Galatians 3:7).

Goal

We seek to know the relationship between the Old Testament people of faith and the believers of the New Testament, so that we better understand the truth that we receive salvation by faith and not by works.

What’s Going On Here

If Paul could oppose the false teachings of the Jewish Christians—Judaizers—using the Old Testament Scripture, he could demonstrate that he and the other apostles did not teach a new or different truth, but affirmed the Old Testament promises. To do so, Paul quotes and explains certain Scripture passages about Abraham. If he could show that Abraham, the father of the Jewish people, believed that he and his children were saved by faith in God’s promises and not by the works of the Law, Paul could refute the Judaizers’ false teachings. This is exactly what Paul endeavored to do.

As Paul used the example of Abraham to refute the false teaching of salvation by works, he also encouraged and strengthened the Galatian Christians in their faith in Jesus Christ. He wanted them to understand that such

a faith was all that was necessary for the certainty of God's gracious gift of salvation.

As we study Paul's example of Abraham, we too can be strengthened in the certainty of the sufficiency of our faith in Jesus Christ.

Searching the Scriptures

In studying these verses we seek to answer questions that will help us understand Paul's argument about faith and Abraham. Read **Galatians 3:6–14**. State in your own words Paul's second argument or proof.

Abraham's Faith

1. What did Abraham believe concerning God that justified him—made him righteous before God? Compare **Galatians 3:6** with **Romans 4:1–12**.

2. Abraham believed this promise of God, that is, he received it in faith and trust (**Genesis 15:6**). Why did God justify or declare Abraham righteous by such a faith? Read **Romans 4:1–8** and **4:13–22**; note especially **verses 17–22**.

3. God had made a promise to Abraham. What was it? Read **Romans 4:13–17**. Then turn to the Old Testament and read **Genesis 12:1–9**; **15:1–7**; **18:16–19**; **22:15–18**. See also **Galatians 3:23**. Look again at **Romans 4:6–9** in order to understand the heart of the promise.

4. By believing God's promise Abraham received a righteousness that saved him. What exactly was this righteousness? Read **Romans 4:4–5**; **Galatians 2:16**; **Romans 1:16–17**; **1 Corinthians 1:18**; **Romans 10:4**; and **Philippians 3:9**.

Children of Abraham

1. How are those who believe in Jesus as their Savior the real children of Abraham? Read **Romans 9:6–8**; **9:30–33**; **10:1–4**; **10:12–13**; and **Galatians 4:21–28**.

2. Why would all the nations be blessed through Abraham (**Galatians 3:8**)? God first spoke this blessing in **Genesis 12:1–2**. It is referred to again in **Genesis 18:17–19**. Paul himself refers to this blessing and carefully defines it in **Galatians 3:13–14**. God never changed His mind. He always had planned that all people, Jew and Gentile, would be saved not by works, but by faith.

The Word for Us

1. Is there a conflict between Paul's use of Abraham as a man *of faith* and James' use of Abraham who *by faith* was a man of godly works (**James 2:18–24**)?

2. Good works cannot save us. Faith without good works is dead. Reconcile these two statements using Scripture. Then, if possible, diagram the relationship between saving faith and good works (works of the Law).

3. How can Abraham be an example and encouragement for us today in our faith? See **Hebrews 11:8–19** in addition to what you have learned about Abraham in this lesson.

Closing

Sing or speak together the third stanza of “The God of Abraham Praise.”

The God of Abr’am praise,
Whose all-sufficient grace
Shall guide me all my pilgrim days
In all my ways.
He deigns to call me friend;
He calls Himself my God.
And He shall save me to the end
Through Jesus’ blood.

Lesson 6

The Third Proof—The Law Serves Only the Gospel (Galatians 3:15–25)

Theme Verse

“So the Law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith” (Galatians 3:24).

Goal

It is important that we know the purpose of God’s Law. God gave us the Law to lead us to the cross. If misused the Law gives false hope or leads to despair.

What’s Going On Here

Some Jewish Christians still believed that the Law helped them gain salvation and served as a kind of guarantee of their right relationship to God. This thought, of course, caused people to wonder whether faith in Christ was enough. Were good works done according to the Law also necessary? Does a believer need to supplement the Gospel with works? This was a key issue for Paul. If God justified and declared a Christian righteous not only through faith in Jesus Christ but also by good works, what happens to the salvation promised by God to sinners? Would it be a gift of God’s grace? What would happen to the power of the Gospel to save? What kind of freedom would Christians have if their righteousness before God depended on both faith and good works?

Searching the Scriptures

Read **Galatians 3:15–25**.

1. Summarize in your own words Paul's third argument or proof.

2. In **Galatians 3:16** Paul refers to the promise made by God to Abraham. Paul emphasizes that these promises referred to only one seed. Who is this seed?

3. Skim **Genesis 22:1–19**. Abraham's seed, Isaac, was spared. Instead, God provided another sacrifice for sin—Jesus Christ. What does Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his only son demonstrate about his faith in the promise of God? See **Hebrews 11:17–19**.

4. Isaac prophetically typified Jesus Christ, who would be the seed of the promise. Can you think of any other comparisons between Isaac and Christ? How did Abraham receive Isaac, and how do we receive Christ? Compare **Romans 9:7–9** with **Hebrews 11:11–12**.

5. In **Galatians 3:18** Paul argues that God does not make one person His heir through the promise and another person an heir through the Law. It has to be one way or the other. What does Paul say about the inheritance?

6. If a person seeks salvation from the judgment and punishment of the Law by appealing to works, what is he or she really doing? Review **Galatians 3:11–12** and read **Romans 7:7–13**. Why is it impossible for people to deliver themselves from the judgment of the Law by doing good works? What about a Christian's good works?

7. The Law was given to Moses and to the children of Israel 430 years after God made the promise of salvation to Abraham. Why can the Law neither alter nor break the covenant promise of God? Compare **Galatians 3:17–18** with **Romans 3:19–20, 4:13–16**. Then compare **Galatians 3:19** with **Romans 10:1–4**.

8. Note how Paul describes the role of the Law in **Romans 7:7–11**. How does the Law make sin come alive in us?

9. What is the only hope for deliverance from the judgment of the Law (see **Galatians 3:11, 13–14, 24**)?

The Word for Us

1. Remembering the purpose of the Law and the Gospel, talk about some of the following cases and decide whether the person needs to hear Law or Gospel. Discuss how Law and Gospel might be communicated to each. Why is the Law by itself never enough?

a. Mrs. Wilson is in the hospital. She has been very ill for a long time. When you visit her she says, "God must be punishing me for something I did. I wish I knew what it was so I could make Him love me again."

b. Mr. Jones is on his deathbed. He is talking to you: "I think I'll be all right after I die. After all, I've lived a good life. I'm as good as most Christians."

c. Johnny is disturbing the Sunday school class again. He makes loud

noises and you correct him again and again. Finally, you say that he will have to leave the table. He starts to cry. "Nobody loves me," he says, "not even Jesus."

d. An alcoholic friend becomes violent when drunk and beats his wife and children. He comes to you for help. What will you say?

e. A friend is depressed after the death of a loved one. She really doesn't want to talk, but finally speaks of her grief. "I know I'm supposed to believe in God and in His love for me, but after this I feel so empty—so alone. I don't think God really cares."

f. Mrs. Brown hasn't been to Holy Communion for months. When you ask her about it, she says, "I feel so guilty about something I did. I don't think I'm worthy to go to Communion."

g. Tommy's birthday is coming. He tells you, "If God gives me a bike, then I'll believe in Him for sure."

h. Mr. Simpson is in the hospital. He has had a long battle with cancer and has suffered much pain. He asks, "If God treats me like this now, how do I know He will take care of me when I die?"

2. Why is it so important for people to know the purpose of both Law and Gospel?

3. What happens when the Law is preached and the Gospel is excluded?

Closing

Sing or speak together stanza 1 of "Salvation unto Us Has Come."

Salvation unto us has come
By God's free grace and favor;
Good works cannot avert our doom,
They help and save us never.
Faith looks to Jesus Christ alone,
Who did for all the world atone;
He is our one Redeemer.

Lesson 7

The Fourth Proof— One in Faith (Galatians 3:26–4:11)

Theme Verse

“You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ” (Galatians 3:26–27).

Goal

We seek to understand better the oneness all Christians share through faith in Christ Jesus, so that as God’s children called through Holy Baptism into this faith, we might better serve Him who became a servant for us by His death on the cross.

What’s Going On Here

In his fourth argument or proof Paul emphasizes the oneness all people share through faith in Christ Jesus. In Christ there is no distinction between Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male or female. Paul’s argument strikes at the heart of the Judaizers’ teachings. The Judaizers tried to make distinctions between Jews and Gentiles by insisting that Gentiles must fulfill the requirements of the Law to receive God’s acceptance. The Judaizers also inferred by their teachings that because they had fulfilled certain requirements of the Law they were more acceptable before God than the Gentiles. Paul responds to the Judaizers with an emphatic, “No!” as he states, “You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.” Paul wanted the Galatians—Jews and Gentiles—to live in the certainty of their salva-

tion provided by God's grace alone through faith alone in Jesus.

Searching the Scriptures

Read **Galatians 3:26–29**.

1. Summarize in your own words Paul's fourth argument or proof.

2. The original meaning of the Greek word that we translate *baptize* was "immerse." Reread **Galatians 3:27** substituting the word *baptized* with immersed. How does understanding the original meaning of this word strengthen our understanding of what we received through Holy Baptism?

3. Reread **Galatians 3:28**. How do **1 Corinthians 7:17–24**; **Colossians 3:11**; and **John 17:21** further strengthen Paul's argument?

4. Paul often compares Christ's relationship to the church to a marriage relationship. Read **Ephesians 5:22–6:9**; **1 Peter 3:1–7**; and **Colossians 3:18–4:1**. How does this description strengthen our understanding of Paul's statement in **Galatians 3:28**? How do these verses speak to relationships within the church? within the home?

5. Read **Galatians 4:1–11**. In these verses Paul provides further evidence to strengthen his fourth argument. In **verses 1–3** Paul uses a familiar example to show God's purpose for sending His Law. He compared the Law to a "custodian" (RSV) or "guardian" (NIV). This refers to a personal slave attendant who during Paul's time was responsible for guiding and protecting the master's young son. The guardian's responsibilities included protecting the child from physical danger and from the foolish mistakes of

youth. He had the right to limit the son's activities and to discipline him. The responsibilities of the guardian ended when the child became a man. The difficulty, of course, was in knowing when the child had "come of age." For the readers of Paul's letter there was no uncertainty. Paul expresses clearly how God ended the age of the custodian or guardian. What did Paul mean when he compared God's Law to a guardian? Try to give specific examples of how the following rites of the ceremonial law might have served to "lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith" (**Galatians 3:24**).

- Circumcision
- Purification rites
- Bloody sacrifices

6. What, according to **Galatians 3:25–27** and **Ephesians 4:14–16**, was the sure sign that the guardian, the ceremonial law, was no longer needed? What is the need for the moral law after a person has received the gift of saving faith?

7. What does Paul mean by the phrase "born under Law" (**Galatians 4:4**)? See also **Luke 2:21**; **Galatians 3:13–14**; and **Matthew 3:13–15**.

8. Compare **Galatians 4:6–7** and **Romans 8:14–17**. What is the central truth of both passages?

9. What were some of the characteristics of people before they became sons of God? See **Galatians 4:3, 8**; **Romans 8:5–9, 12–15**.

What were the characteristics after becoming sons of God? See **Galatians 4:5–7, 9–10; Romans 8:1–2, 4–6, 9–11, 13–17, 23–39**.

Compare the two lists. What do the lists say about your life? What feelings of concern, hope, or joy do you have?

10. God has transformed each of us from a slave to a son and an heir through faith in Christ Jesus (**Galatians 4:7**). What do the terms “slave,” “son,” and “heir” suggest about our relationship to God?

11. When we attempt to live by the Law, how do we again assume the role of slave? See **Galatians 4:10**. What did days, months, and years have to do with being a slave? Are we in danger of slavery if we live by rules made by humans? How can we avoid the danger of living by the Law?

The Word for Us

1. Many things can occur within a congregation to cause divisions. Make a list of some of them. Compare your list of divisions to Paul’s list in **Galatians 3:28**. How can the concept of unity in Christ help us to overcome our divisions? What approach might you use to help others appreciate unity through faith in Christ?

2. In **4:6** we are told that “God sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, ‘*Abba, Father.*’ ” **Romans 8:13–14** tells us, “If by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.” In what ways is the Holy Spirit active today? According to the passages, what evidence of the presence of the Spirit in your life can you look for? What might it indicate if you do not feel close to God as Father or if the “misdeeds of the body” continue to plague you? What comfort do you find in the promise of Christ to continue to love us—to call us back and renew us by His Spirit? Why is it so important to approach the gifts of the Spirit in humility and gratitude?

3. Christians live in the world, not apart from it. They face many of the same problems that others do. In addition, they may experience ridicule and other suffering because of their faith. What comfort and strength do the truths of today’s lesson give you when you face suffering? (See especially **Romans 8:18, 28, and 31–39.**)

4. The term “*Abba, Father*” (**Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:6**) suggests a childlike trust in God and obedience to Him. Though we realize that we shall never attain perfection in this lifetime, one of the goals of a Christian is the avoidance of sin. What can we do to more nearly reach this goal?

Closing

Sing or speak together stanza 1 of "My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less."

My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness;
No merit of my own I claim
But wholly lean on Jesus' name.
On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand.

Lesson 8

The Fifth Proof—What Has Happened to All Your Joy? (Galatians 4:12-20)

Theme Verse

“My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you” (**Galatians 4:19**).

Goal

To understand more fully that Law will lead us ultimately to despair and that only the Gospel can give us joy beyond human understanding.

What’s Going On Here

St. Paul speaks affectionately to the Galatian Christians, who because of the restraints imposed upon them by the Judaizers had lost the joy they had experienced when Paul had shared the Gospel with them. Paul challenges any teachings that would rob people of the joy and peace that comes from faith in Jesus Christ.

Paul asserts that the intentions of “those people,” the Judaizers, are dishonorable. Paul warns that the Judaizers want to shut off the Galatians’ fellowship with him and, in effect, from fellowship with Christ. In Paul’s eyes, when the Galatians sought justification by legal works, as the troublemakers urged them to do, they had severed themselves from Christ and the joy they had once experienced.

Paul longs to see Christ visibly living in the Galatians—to see Christ’s likeness manifested in their lives. Paul expresses dramatically his concern

for the Galatian Christians as he uses the childbirth analogy. Paul endures birth pains on his converts' behalf. He is enduring them, in fact, for a second time; the first time when he preached the Gospel to them and they came to faith in Christ Jesus; now as he plays the part of a mother who must endure a child's "finding himself or herself," while continuing to guide the child in the way he or she should go.

Searching the Scriptures

Read **Galatians 4:12–20**.

1. Summarize in your own words Paul's fifth argument or proof.
2. Describe the tone of Paul's message in these verses.
3. Compare Paul's message and tone in **Galatians 4:12–20** to **Galatians 1:6–10**.
4. What do you suppose Paul means by "because of an illness" in **verses 13–14**? Investigate **2 Corinthians 4:7–15; 11:16–33; 12:7–10; Romans 6:19; and Hebrews 4:15**.
5. What changes in the Galatian Christians does **Galatians 4:15** indicate? What has caused this change? Review the purpose of the Law and its accompanying result in **Galatians 3:10–11; 4:8–10; Romans 2:14–15; 3:20; and James 2:10**. What are the characteristics of a person who lives by the Law? What has happened to the Galatian Christians' joy? What kinds of things can rob you of your joy in Christ?

6. What is the desire of the Judaizers according to Paul (**Galatians 4:17**)? How is Paul expressing his “divine jealousy” over his converts? See also **2 Corinthians 11:2ff**. By following the Judaizers and their teachings, the Galatians are abandoning the teachings of Paul (**Galatians 1:7–8**). What danger do the Galatians face?

7. What metaphor does Paul use to describe his concern for the Galatians (**Galatians 4:19**)? The pain of childbirth gives way to joy. Unfortunately, a mother may feel the pain of childbirth throughout her children’s lives. What events might cause a mother to experience pain? Paul experienced the pain of childbirth as he first shared the Gospel with the Galatians. How is he now experiencing pain again?

8. Paul’s written words in his letters were substitutes for his spoken words. Why do you suppose Paul indicated that the written words to the Galatians were inadequate to express his concern for them (**Galatians 4:20**)? Have you ever felt this way? If so, when and why?

The Word for Us

1. If Paul had the opportunity to speak to you today would he ask, “What has happened to all your joy?” Why or why not? People who do not possess saving faith in Jesus are often referred to as “the walking dead”—alive physically, but dead in their sin. Through faith we are able to demonstrate our joy by our words and actions, so that those who are dead to sin might ask, “Where do they receive their joy?” How do you demonstrate your joy in Christ? What might you say to someone who asks, “Why are you so joy-filled?” How can you keep from losing your joy in Christ?

2. Some within the church might attempt to reinstate the Law by making custom, ritual, and even observance of the sacraments into a new ceremonial law. When asked to state the basis for their hope of eternal life, an alarming number of Christians respond by saying that membership in a church, regular attendance at worship and the Lord's Table, and reading the Bible will meet the requirements necessary for salvation. How would this belief rob Christians of their hope and joy? What might you say to people who demonstrate these beliefs? What Bible passages might be helpful to you as you share the hope and joy you have in knowing for certain that you have received forgiveness of sins and eternal life by God's grace alone through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone?

3. A popular bumper sticker says, "If you feel far away from God, guess who moved?" How can relying on trying to keep the Law cause you to feel far away from God? What advice would you give to a person who says, "I feel so far away from God"?

Closing

Sing or speak together stanzas 1 and 2 of "Rejoice, My Heart, Be Glad."

Rejoice, my heart, be glad and sing,
A cheerful trust maintain;
For God, the source of ev'rything,
Your portion shall remain.

He is your treasure, He your joy,
Your life and light and Lord,
Your counselor when doubts annoy,
Your shield and great reward.

Lesson 9

The Sixth Proof—The Law Enslaves (Galatians 4:21–31)

Theme Verse

“Therefore, brothers, we are not children of the slave woman, but of the free woman” (Galatians 4:31).

Goal

To affirm that all who live by the Law are slaves to the Law and all who live by faith in Christ Jesus are free from that slavery.

What’s Going On Here

Paul uses an allegory to emphasize the incompatibility of life under Law and life under the promise. The initial fulfillment of the covenant promise God made to Abraham was the birth of Isaac, who with Sarah is presented by Paul as a demonstration of God keeping His promise. Paul emphasizes that the people who live by the Law are the offspring of the slave woman. The children of the free woman, Sarah, are those who embrace the Gospel—justification by grace through faith alone in Jesus Christ.

Some scholars have suggested that Paul uses the historical event of Sarah and Hagar to refute that which the Judaizers had taught the Gentiles—the promise of God was given to the offspring of Abraham. The Judaizers, who believed their righteousness was something they had inherited, taught the recent Galatian Gentile converts that they could only inherit God’s promise of eternal life by becoming Jewish first. Paul reminds the Judaizers that when Abraham failed to trust God’s promises, he slept with Hagar. Isaac, on the other hand, was the child of faith that in spite of all

odds God provided to Abraham and Sarah. Faith alone provided Abraham with the promise. Through faith alone both Jews and Gentiles receive the promise of God, and not through their obedience to the Law.

Searching the Scriptures

Read **Galatians 4:21–31**.

1. Summarize in your own words Paul's sixth and final argument or proof.

2. What does Paul mean when he says that the child of the free woman was born as a result of a promise (**Galatians 4:23**)? See also **Genesis 17:15–21**; **Hebrews 11:17–19**; and **Romans 4:13–22**. What had Abraham done to deserve his child, Isaac? From what was Abraham acting when he impregnated Hagar? From what are we acting when we do something in order to receive what God has already promised to us?

3. Explain Paul's comparisons—"Hagar stands for Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present city of Jerusalem." Skim **Exodus 19–20**. What occurred on Mount Sinai? The present city of Jerusalem represents the Jewish people who depend upon the Law for salvation.

4. What is and where is "the Jerusalem that is above" (**Galatians 4:26**)? See also **Hebrews 12:22** and **Revelation 21:1–4, 9–14**. How do these words of Paul give comfort to those troubled under the weight of the Law?

5. What is the significance of being called "children of promise"? See

also **Galatians 3:29** and **Romans 9:8**. Who are the children of the promise? Who are the children of the slave woman?

6. Compare **Galatians 4:30** to **Genesis 21:10**. Why do you suppose Paul changed the quote?

7. What is the significance for us of Paul's statement "[Isaac was] born by the power of the Holy Spirit" (**Galatians 4:29**)? See also **Galatians 4:6–7** and **1 Corinthians 12:12–13**.

8. Review **Galatians 4:21–31** and reread **4:31**. Who are the children of the slave woman to whom Paul refers? Who are the children of the free woman? Can a person be both the child of a slave woman and a free woman?

The Word for Us

1. Who are the children of the slave woman today? the children of the free woman? What would you say to a Christian friend who says, "I feel so guilty. I wish I could do something to take away my guilt. I try so hard to be a good Christian"?

2. When Abraham slept with Hagar he took matters into his own hands. What did Abraham demonstrate by his actions? Share times when you have given a burden or concern to God and then quickly taken it back from Him. What feelings, attitudes, and/or behaviors demonstrated that although you said, "God, I give this to You," you really held on to the burden? Did Abraham's lack of faith diminish God's love for Him? How do you know? Does your lack of faith at times diminish God's love for you? How do you know? What does God continue to offer to all repentant sinners?

3. Reread **Revelation 21:1–4, 9–14**. Describe the comfort these words provide you.

Closing

Sing or speak stanza 1 of "Jerusalem the Golden."

Jerusalem the golden,
With milk and honey blest,
Beneath your contemplation
Sink heart and voice oppressed.
I know not, oh, I know not
What joys await us there,
What radiancy of glory,
What bliss beyond compare.

Part III

Now Live in the Gospel

Lesson 10

Free at Last (Galatians 5:1–12)

Theme Verse

“It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery” (Galatians 5:1).

Goal

That we might better know and treasure the true freedom we have in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

What’s Going On Here

Finally, this is the point of it all. Paul announces the payoff. He has shown who he is through faith in Christ Jesus and from whom he receives power. He has made his message clear. Now he calls on hearers for a response. The verses almost shout: *You are free! Treasure that freedom!*

The preceding evidence leads here. If we are no longer slaves to the Law; if the Gospel in Christ saves; if we are sons and heirs; if we are children of God by the free gift of His grace—then we are free indeed. We dare not surrender that freedom to any demand of the Law, because then the Law would again enslave us.

Searching the Scriptures

Read Galatians 5:1–12.

1. In **verse 1** Paul summarizes and applies the lesson of the preceding allegory and the lesson of all of his preceding arguments. Put this verse in

your own words. Is the freedom you seek in your life different from the freedom Paul speaks of here?

2. Paul urges us to stand fast. Why is freedom so elusive? What “masters” still threaten to renew our slavery? Read **Galatians 2:4; 4:3, 9; Romans 6:14, 18–22; and 8:21–23**.

3. **Galatians 5:2–6** repeats the argument of the epistle—slavery to the Law rejects the Gospel. Review what you have learned about the Law from previous sessions and relate its purpose to these verses.

4. According to **Galatians 3:13** and **4:4–5**, what was the price of our freedom? Read **1 Corinthians 6:19–20** and **Romans 8:1**. Was the payment enough?

5. Read **Romans 7:1–6**.

a. In **verses 2–3** what comparison does Paul use to show how we are free?

b. In **verses 4–5**, what happened in us that made us free from the Law and death? When did that happen?

c. What does **verse 6** say we are now free to do? How do we live out our freedom?

6. Read **Galatians 5:5–6**. Our faith in Jesus Christ expresses itself through love. Read **Romans 13:8–10**. In what sense is love the fulfillment of the Law? Can we have faith and not demonstrate it by acts of love? Check **James 2**, especially **verses 14–26**. In what sense are deeds of love necessary?

7. Our freedom is really a slavery to Christ as master in our lives. Read **Galatians 5:13** and **Romans 6:22**. Describe this new freedom.

8. Reread **Galatians 5:7–12**. After summarizing his arguments, Paul interjects a strong exhortation. Summarize in your own words Paul's exhortation. Why do you suppose Paul inserted an exhortation at this place in his letter?

The Word for Us

1. Defend the statement, "We are truly free only when we are slaves to Jesus Christ."

2. Would it ever be possible for a family or a Christian congregation to live entirely by the law of love? Why or why not? What is the function of rules?

3. Is it possible for us to set a standard of loving acts that are necessary to prove faith? Is it possible to observe others' lives and be sure they either have or do not have faith? What is our responsibility toward those who seem to have difficulty living out their faith?

4. As those whom Christ has set free from the Law and are now slaves to Him, how does your faith express itself in love? Can you think of some additional ways your faith might express itself in love?

Closing

Sing or speak together stanza 1 of "You Will I Love, My Strength, My Tower."

You will I love, my Strength, my Tower;
You will I love, my Hope, my Joy:
You will I love will all my power,
With fervor time cannot destroy.
You will I love, O Light Divine,
So long as life is mine.

Lesson 11

Free, But . . . (Galatians 5:13–26)

Theme Verse

“You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love” (**Galatians 5:13**).

Goal

In **John 8:36** Jesus said, “So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.” Through the experience and the words of Paul we seek to gain a greater understanding of what it means to be free in Christ.

What’s Going On Here

The problem in this portion of **Galatians** continues to haunt the Christian community today. Although the context is different, the question is the same: Just how free are we?

You have probably heard both sides of the argument. “If I am free in Christ, I can live my life as I choose. All I have to do is ask for forgiveness, and I will be saved. After all, the Bible says that salvation is by grace alone.” And the other side of the argument—“Although we are saved by Jesus, we still have to do what He tells us to do.” Although both statements contain a certain amount of truth, they are also both wrong.

The term “cheap grace” was coined by Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a 20th-century Christian. In his book *The Cost of Discipleship*, he writes: “Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, Communion without confession, absolu-

tion without personal confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate" (Second edition, New York: The Macmillan Co., 1961, p. 36).

In **Romans 6:1** Paul pinpoints the dilemma for us by posing a rhetorical question: "Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?" And so, we are free in Christ, but . . .

Searching the Scriptures

St. Paul begins this section with a declarative statement: "You . . . were called to be free." He then goes on to define freedom within the context of one's relationship with Jesus Christ and with other people. Read **Galatians 5:13–26**.

Free, but . . . Why is it necessary to qualify the concept of freedom within the Christian community?

Read **Galatians 5:13, 16–18, and Romans 7:14–24**.

1. According to **verse 13** to whom is Paul directing these words? What problem or problems do you suppose Paul is addressing in the lives of those to whom he writes?

2. What reason does Paul give in **verses 16–18** for the problem or problems described? About whom does Paul talk (**Romans 7:14–24**)? Remembering Paul's faith and life, do these words seem appropriate? What does Paul reveal about his faith life? Do his words have any meaning for our lives?

Free, but . . . What is the essential quality of Christian freedom?
Read **Galatians 5:14–15, 19–23, 26; Matthew 5:43–48**.

1. In **verse 14** what does Paul list as an essential quality of freedom? In

verse 15 what does Paul imply about relationships in the Galatian congregations?

2. How does Jesus define love in **John 15:12–13**? How does Jesus' definition compare to some of the popular notions about love? What effect does the kind of love Jesus describes have on human relationships?

3. **Verses 19–21** give a definition of the works of the flesh. What effect do these behaviors have on relationships? Define or describe each quality listed in **Galatians 5:22–23** and explain the effects these qualities have on relationships. What effect does the “love” in **verse 13** have on our relationships? How is love involved in our “free, but . . .” tension?

Free, but . . . How is it possible for human beings to live free in Christ? Do we live under the Law or the Gospel?

Read **Galatians 5:24; Romans 6:3–4; and 7:25a.**

1. How can we overcome the prison of the flesh? How does **Galatians 2:19–20** give us hope as we face daily temptations?

2. Skim **Galatians 5:13–26**. Count the number of times Paul uses the word *Spirit*. What is the function of this Spirit? What does this say about the outcome of the tension between flesh and Spirit in which the child of God lives?

The Word for Us

1. Many in our world believe in the innate goodness of people. Based on this lesson, what expectations are realistic in achieving a world of peace and harmony? What does this lesson tell us about human nature? about the possibility of our building a society in which relationships will be “whole”?

2. Discuss what it means to live under the Gospel in relation to Baptism. The following questions might help to guide your response: Is Baptism a single event in the life of the Christian? What special gift is given at Baptism that makes it possible for us to respond to Paul’s exhortations to Christian living? What might you do to make Baptism more a part of your life? What suggestions do you have to help believers remember their Baptism?

3. How does this lesson speak to the problem of cheap grace? Does it say anything about how the church should deal with people who do not respond? Luther explains the Second Article of the Apostles’ Creed, “that I may be His own and live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him in ever-

lasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness.” What does service have to do with living under the Law or living under the freedom of the Gospel?

Closing

Pray together,

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, of Your tender love towards us sinners You have given us Your Son that, believing in Him, we might have everlasting life. Continue to grant us Your Holy Spirit that we may remain steadfast in this faith to the end and come to live everlasting; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Lesson 12

Let's Be Practical (Galatians 6:1-10)

Theme Verse

"Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2).

Goal

To gain a deeper understanding of what it means to "live by the Spirit" as we deal with each other within the Christian community.

What's Going On Here

Galatians 5:25 serves as an introduction to this section. Paul encourages God's people to live by the Spirit as they deal with one another. As we learned earlier, a constant struggle takes place daily in the life of the Christian. The pull of the flesh is just as real as the power of the Spirit. The Christian is both a sinner and a saint. As we all know and have experienced, there are times when the flesh wins. Our Lord understood this struggle and taught us to pray: "Lead us not into temptation."

Temptation happens; Christians fall. It happens to the most dedicated of God's people: the unexpected pregnancy in the family of a "pillar of the church"; the pastor whose marriage falls apart; the Christian who crosses the line between social drinking and alcoholism; the church treasurer who, trapped by bills, borrows money secretly from the church with the intention of paying it back. These are real things that happen to real people in the Christian family.

Christians demonstrate whether or not they are "in step with the Spirit"

by their attitude and behavior toward a fellow member of the family who falls into sin.

In this section Paul speaks to the problem of relating to those who have fallen.

1. He portrays the Christian life as one that is shared with others.

2. He exposes the attitude of those who handle or deal with the “sinner” by the flesh.

3. He clearly sets forth how those who “live by the Spirit” deal with one who has temporarily lost the battle.

Searching the Scriptures

Read **Galatians 6:1–10**. The Christian life is a life in relationship with other Christians. It is a shared experience.

1. In **6:1–2** how does Paul indicate the Christian life is lived in a family?

2. In **verse 2** what does the phrase “law of Christ” mean? Is it a Law or a Gospel phrase? Give reasons for your answer.

3. Is Paul talking about a Christian or non-Christian in **verse 1**? Give a reason for your answer. Do any words in this verse tell us that the attitude toward one in trouble should be a sympathetic one? If so, what are these words trying to say?

4. Paul states a universal law in **verses 7–9**. Summarize in your own words the law. How do you know the law is true? How does it relate to Jesus’ words in **Matthew 7:1–5**?

5. How do those living in the Spirit relate to someone who has fallen into temptation? Read **1 Corinthians 13:4–7**; **Galatians 6:1**.

6. In **Galatians 6:1** what do the words *brothers*, *spiritual*, *restore*, and *gentle* say about the attitude toward one who has fallen into sin?

7. In **verses 9–10** what limit does Paul place on doing good? Compare these words with the words of Jesus in **Matthew 18:21–22**.

8. Discuss the meaning of “carry each other’s burdens” (**Galatians 6:2**). Do the words mean physical help, verbal support, spiritual support? What burdens did Jesus have to bear? for whom?

The Word for Us

1. Discuss the purpose of Holy Communion in the Christian community. Why do we go? How does the Lord’s Supper strengthen relationships among the members of the church family? What relevance do the words of our Lord which we pray every Sunday, “Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us,” have on our discussion?

2. Make a list of specific things you and your congregation can do to reach out to those who are suffering the effects of sin in their lives. How

can you help them? How can you let them know that the people of God care about them?

3. God has provided us means—His Word and Sacrament—through which the Holy Spirit strengthens our faith and enables us to live by the Spirit. Keeping this in mind, what might you do or say if

a. an elected congregational leader never attends Bible study and rarely attends worship?

b. a family or individual stops receiving the Lord's Supper?

c. the people in your congregation have little time for Bible study because they are required to attend so many committee and/or board meetings.

d. few people in your congregation attend Bible study?

Closing

Sing or speak together stanza 1 of "For Many Years, O God of Grace."

For many years, O God of grace,
This church has been Thy dwelling place
And we Thy congregation.
Upon the precious Cornerstone
Our faith is built, and Christ alone
Is still our one Foundation.
Today We Pray:
"Let us greet Thee, Lord, and meet Thee
Here with singing,
All our praises to Thee bringing."

Lesson 13

A Personal Appeal (Galatians 6:11-18)

Theme Verse

“May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world” (**Galatians 6:14**).

Goal

We seek to reemphasize Paul’s encouragement that we can stand fast in the knowledge that we are made right with God by faith alone in Jesus Christ and not by what we do.

What’s Going On Here

If you have ever taken a speech course, the instructor probably gave you this advice: In the introduction tell your audience what you are going to say. In the body of the text say it. In the conclusion tell the audience what you said.

Paul follows this model. In the conclusion of his letter Paul emphasizes the major points. We have said that letters are personal. They reveal the “heart” of the writer. In his concluding remarks Paul shows his heartfelt thoughts for the people in Galatia in a unique way.

At the beginning of the study we saw how Paul established his authority. So it should not surprise us that in his conclusion he again states his authority, but in a different way.

Finally, Paul restates the problem he has addressed and ends with a beautiful declaration of the Gospel of Jesus Christ as its power is revealed

in the cross. The Gospel alone has the power to bring about a “new creation.”

Searching the Scriptures

Read **Galatians 6:11–18**.

Paul’s Pastoral Heart (Galatians 6:11, 18; 4:12–20)

1. Reread **Galatians 4:12–20**. From these words and from your prior discussion describe the feelings Paul had for the people in the Galatian congregations.

2. Compare **Galatians 6:11** with the closing of his letter to the closing of **Ephesians (6:21)** and the **Philippians (4:21–23)**. What difference do you notice? List some possible reasons for the difference. What does this tell us about Paul’s feelings for these people?

Paul Restates His Authority (Galatians 6:17)

1. List the ways Paul established his authority at the beginning of the letter. Refer to **Galatians 1:11, 13–20**.

2. With what words does Paul establish his authority in **Galatians 6:17**? Compare the way he establishes his authority at the beginning of his letter to the way he does it now? Relate this verse to Paul’s remarks in **2 Corinthians 11:24–29**.

Restating the Issue (Galatians 6:12–16)

1. Reread **Galatians 2:15; 5:7–12; and 1:6–7**. Restate the problem Paul addresses.

2. Compare Paul's words in those verses with **Galatians 6:12–16**. Is he speaking about the same people? the same problem? Use **Galatians 6:12–16** to restate the problem. Compare this statement of the problem with your earlier statement of the problem.

3. Reread the words in **1:3–4** and **2:16**. How do these words compare with **verse 14**? According to these words, what is it that saves? What is it that motivates a Christian to do “good works”? Reread **Galatians 2:20** and read **2 Corinthians 5:14–15**. What does it mean to live “under the Gospel”?

The Word for Us

1. It is not unusual for people to equate Christianity with morality. Discuss the relationship between Christianity and morality. Do people have to be moral to be Christian? Are people who are Christians moral? What's the difference between the morality of a Christian and the morality of one who does not live by the confession that “Jesus is Lord”?

2. Are threats effective in bringing people who have fallen away back to church? in improving their giving to the church? Why or why not? Is it easier to live under the Law or under the Gospel? Which way of life is more demanding?

3. Try to come up with a summary statement by the class for the book of **Galatians**. Include the main point of the book and some of its important features. Keep it brief. What does the statement mean to you now?

Closing

Offer a prayer of thanks to God for the freedom He provides to us through faith in Jesus. Also, pray that the Holy Spirit would empower you to share the freedom you have in Christ with others.

GALATIANS

The Cost of Freedom

Leaders Notes

Preparing to Teach Galatians

In preparation to teach, consult the introduction to the book of Galatians in the *Concordia Self-Study Bible*, and if possible, read the *Concordia Self-Study Commentary* (CPH, 1979).

Also read the text in a modern translation. The NIV is generally referred to in the lesson comments.

In the section “Searching the Scriptures” the leader guides discussion, using the questions given (or others) to help the class discover what the text actually says. This is a major part of teaching, namely, directing the learners to discover for themselves.

Another major portion of each lesson is “The Word for Us.” This section helps participants, through discussion, to see the meaning of the text for our times, for church and world today, and especially for our own lives.

Group Bible Study

Group Bible study means mutual learning from one another under the guidance of a leader or facilitator. The Bible is an inexhaustible resource. No one person can discover all it has to offer. In a class many eyes see many things and can apply them to many life situations. The leader should resist the temptation to “give the answers” and so act as an “authority.” This teaching approach stifles participation by individual members and can actually hamper learning. As a general rule the teacher is not to “give interpretation” but to “develop interpreters.” Of course there are times when the leader should and must share insights and information gained by his or her own deeper research. The ideal class is one in which the leader guides class members through the lesson and engages them in meaningful sharing and discussion at all points, leading them to a summary of the lesson at the close. As a general rule, don’t explain what the learners can discover by themselves.

Have a chalkboard and chalk or newsprint and marker available to emphasize significant points of the lesson. Put your inquiries or the inquiries of participants into questions, problems, or issues. This provokes thought. Keep discussion to the point. List on the chalkboard or newsprint the answers given. Then determine the most vital points made in the discussion. Ask additional questions to fill apparent gaps.

The aim of every Bible study is to help people grow spiritually, not merely in biblical and theological knowledge, but in Christian thinking and living. This means growth in Christian attitudes, insights, and skills for Christian living. The focus of this course must be the church and the world of our day. The guiding question will be, “What does the Lord teach us for life today through the book of Galatians?”

Pace Your Teaching

Do not try to cover every question in each lesson. This will lead to undue haste and frustration. Be selective. Pace your teaching. Spend no more than five to 10 minutes with “Theme Verse,” “Goal,” and “What’s Going On Here.” Take time to go into the text by topic, but not word by word. Get the sweep of meaning. Occasionally stop to help the class gain understanding of a word or concept. Allow approximately 10 to 15 minutes for “The Word for Us.” Spending approximately five minutes for “Closing” and announcements, you will notice, allows you only approximately 30 minutes for “Searching the Scriptures.”

Should your group have more than a one-hour class period, you can take it more leisurely. But do not allow any lesson to “drag” and become tiresome. Keep it moving. Keep it alive. Keep it meaningful. Eliminate some questions and restrict yourself to those questions most meaningful to the members of the class. If most members study the text at home, they can report their findings, and the time gained can be applied to relating the lesson to life.

Good Preparation

Good preparation by the leader usually affects the pleasure and satisfaction the class will experience.

Suggestions to the Leader for Using the Study Guide

The Lesson Pattern

This set of 13 lessons is based on a significant and timely New Testament book—Galatians. The material is designed to aid Bible study, that is, to aid a consideration of the written Word of God, with discussion and personal application growing out of the text at hand.

The typical lesson is divided into five sections:

1. Theme Verse
2. Goal
3. What’s Going On Here
4. Searching the Scriptures
5. The Word for Us
6. Closing

“Theme Verse,” “Goal,” and “What’s Going On Here” give the leader assistance in arousing the interest of the group in the concepts of the chapter. Current events and conditions are cited to “warm up” the class and convince its members that the Word of God spoken through Galatians is relevant to their present situation. Here the leader stimulates minds. Do not linger too long over the introductory remarks. You merely show that

the verses to be studied are meaningful to Christian faith and life today.

“Searching the Scriptures” provides the real “spade work” necessary for Bible study. Here the class digs, uncovers, and discovers; it gets the facts and observes them. Comment from the leader is needed only to the extent that it helps the group understand the text. The same is true of looking up the indicated parallel passages. The questions in the Study Guide, arranged under subheadings and corresponding to sections within the text, are intended to help the participants discover the meaning of the text.

Having determined what the text says, the class is ready to apply the message. Having heard, read, marked, and learned the Word of God, proceed to digest it inwardly through discussion, evaluation, and application. This is done, as the Study Guide suggests, by taking the truths found in Galatians and applying them to the world and Christianity, in general, and then to personal Christian life. Class time may not permit discussion of all questions and topics. In preparation the leader may need to select two or three and focus on them. These questions bring God’s message to the individual Christian. Close the session by reviewing one important truth from the lesson.

Remember, the Word of God is sacred, but the Study Guide is not. The guide offers only suggestions. The leader should not hesitate to alter the guidelines or substitute others to meet his or her needs and the needs of the participants. Adapt your teaching plan to your class and your class period. Good teaching directs the learner to discover for himself or herself. For the teacher this means directing the learner, not giving the learner answers. As you prepare, mark those sections that suggest a class activity. Choose the verses that should be looked up in Scripture. What discussion questions will you ask? at what points? Write them in the margin of your study book. Involve class members, but give them clear directions. What practical actions will you propose for the week following the lesson? A trip to the slums? Interviewing a poor family? Talking about injustice to a county or city administrator? Which of the items do you consider most important for your class?

How will you best use your teaching period? Do you have 45 minutes? an hour? or 1 1/2 hours? If time is short, what should you cut? Learn to become a wise steward of class time.

Be sure to take time to summarize the lesson, or have a class member do it. Plan brief opening and closing devotions using members of the class. Suggestions are provided in this Leaders Guide.

Part I

Paul's Right and Reason to Speak

Lesson 1

Listen to Me! (Galatians 1:1–10)

Before the Session

Be sure you take the time to read through the book of **Galatians** and, if possible, the book of **Romans**. You might complete your preparation by reading a commentary on these books as well. You do not need to “know all the answers,” but the class will look to you as resource person for the discussions.

Getting Started

Be sure the participants know each other. It would be a good idea to give them some time to talk to each other and tell something about themselves. This need not be threatening—keep it informal. You might allow some time for members of the class to talk to each other in pairs, and then ask them to introduce their partner to the class. In any case, you will want to create an atmosphere that allows the participants to feel free to join in the discussions and take the risk of bringing their questions and comments before the group.

The Class Session

After an opening prayer and a brief check to see that everyone has a Bible, ask a member of the class to read aloud the “Goal” and “What’s Going On Here” in the Study Guide. Ask for questions or comments. You might want to supplement the information in the Study Guide with some or all of the following information:

Paul apparently wrote this letter about the year A.D. 48 or early 49, after his first missionary journey and before the letter to the Romans. He wrote to deal with the problem of the Judaizers—those who sought to make the people in these new congregations accept and obey the Old Testament Law, especially circumcision, claiming these were evidence of real faith. The same problem is dealt with in **Ephesians**, but Paul’s argument is

developed most fully in the book of **Romans**. As a result, many of the supplemental references for this study will be from **Romans**.

If time permits locate the province of Galatia on a Bible map and perhaps trace Paul's missionary journey to the cities in Galatia.

Searching the Scriptures

Read aloud or have volunteers read aloud the suggested portions of Scripture before discussing the questions. You may wish to have participants discuss the questions in small groups, if your class is large. Or if time is limited, consider dividing the class into two groups; one group would answer the questions in the Greeting section and the other in the Purpose section. If you divide your class into small groups, allow time for groups to share the answers to the questions with the entire class.

The Greeting (Gal. 1:1–5)

1. Paul claims to be an apostle sent by Jesus Christ and God the Father.
2. Paul received his authority by revelation from Jesus Christ and not from men.

3. Paul needed to establish his authority because the troublemakers in Galatia had questioned and challenged his apostolic authority.

4. The letter is written to the congregations in Galatia. Since there are a number of congregations in Galatia, the letter will probably be passed from one congregation to another. This type of letter is known as a circular letter.

5. Read aloud or have a volunteer read aloud the explanation of both the North and South Galatian theories. It is important to know the audience of a book of the Bible because it gives the reader context clues that are helpful when trying to understand the book. Also, the audience and the issue to which an author writes help us to apply the message to our own lives.

6. Jesus Christ gave Himself unto death on a cross to rescue us from our sins. Because of Jesus' action on our behalf we receive forgiveness of sins and eternal life through faith.

7. Paul defining the Gospel at the beginning of his letter indicates its importance to him and its importance to the message he plans to share.

The Purpose of the Letter (Gal. 1:6–10)

1. Paul writes his letter to the Christians in Galatia because they "are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different Gospel—which is really no Gospel at all" (**Gal. 1:6–7**).

2. Without further information, participants can only speculate the meaning of "different gospel." After reading the additional Scripture refer-

ences, participants may conclude that the “different gospel” is the Law or any teaching that is contrary to Scripture.

3. Paul accuses the Judaizers of throwing the Galatians into confusion and perverting the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

4. Christ alone rescued us from our sin and restored the relationship between God and His created people. The Law condemns. When someone teaches that you must do something or not do something in order to receive God’s forgiveness and earn salvation, they pervert the Gospel—God’s grace alone through faith alone in Christ Jesus saves.

5. Paul insists that if an angel from heaven preaches a Gospel different than the one he preached “let him [the angel] be eternally condemned.” Paul accuses Satan of masquerading as an angel of light (**2 Cor. 11:14**).

6. Paul uses strong language to show his concern for the Galatians and disgust for the Judaizers. Paul fears the Galatian Christians will abandon saving faith.

7. The Judaizers probably accused Paul of teaching an “easy” Gospel that had no rules, in order to win the approval of people.

The Word for Us

Discuss one or more of the questions in this section. If your class is large, more than five members, you may wish to form small groups of three to five participants to discuss the questions.

1. Answer may vary. Some possible responses might be as follows: (a) We can do nothing to earn God’s love. The belief that we must do something in order to earn God’s love can only lead us to despair. We can never be sure that we have done enough. (b) We receive God’s gifts of forgiveness of sins and eternal life through faith alone in Jesus. (c) Jesus always loves us. Jesus loved us so much that while we were still sinners He went to the cross for the evil we do. (d) Our goodness before God does not depend upon our merits, but on Christ’s merit. (e) We go to church, attend Bible study, pray, etc. in response to God’s love for us in Christ Jesus, not to earn God’s love. (f) “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from *all* unrighteousness” (**1 John 1:9** emphasis added). “. . . the blood of Jesus, His Son, purifies us from all sin” (**1 John 1:7b**). All of the statements will ultimately cause a person to feel self righteous, secure in his or her sin, or lead a person to despair because of the hopelessness of trying to earn God’s love and forgiveness.

2. Paul would confront each of these issues strongly because each is contrary to God’s Word. Any teaching contrary to the Word of God has the potential of leading people away from God and ultimately destroying their faith.

3. Motivated by God's love for us in Jesus, we speak out against teachings that are contrary to the Word of God. "But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect . . ." (**1 Peter 3:15**).

4. We speak out against false teachings with the authority of Scripture and the assistance of the Holy Spirit.

Closing

Sing or pray together stanzas 1–3 of "Lord, Keep Us Steadfast in Your Word." Ask participants for prayer concerns or requests. Pray or have a volunteer pray for those things identified by the participants.

Lesson 2

How Could This Happen? (Galatians 1:11–2:14)

Before the Session

Take time to read **Gal. 1:11–2:14**. Then read and summarize the events in **Acts 15:1–31**. **Acts 15** presents a clear account of the resolution to a problem similar to the one Paul confronts in **Galatians**. You might also want to read **2 Corinthians 11–12** for additional background information.

Getting Started

As the participants arrive, ask each to select a partner. Have participants tell their partners (with conviction) one thing at which they are very good, why they are good at it, and how they became better than anyone else. After everyone has shared, discuss the following questions. "Why might it be hard for some of us to tell others our strengths? Is it wrong to talk about our strengths? How does it make you feel to boast about yourself?"

The Class Session

Begin with prayer. Ask someone to read the "Goal" and "What's Going On Here" sections in the Study Guide. Read the passages cited.

Searching the Scriptures

This section of the lesson has three sections—Paul’s autobiography; conflict in Jerusalem; and confrontation at Antioch. Depending on time and the number of participants in the class, you may want to consider one of the following options.

- Divide the class into small groups of three or four participants. Allow each group to work through all sections. Discuss answers with the entire class after most groups have had time to complete the questions.
- Divide the class into small groups of three or four participants. Assign each group a different section. At the end of a designated period of time, have groups report their findings to the entire class.
- Work with the entire class. Select the questions that you believe are most important and meaningful.

The following answers may assist you as you guide participants.

Paul’s Autobiography (Gal. 1:11–24)

1.(a) In his previous way of life in Judaism, Paul *persecuted* the church and tried to *destroy* it. (b) Paul advanced in Judaism beyond many *Jews* of his own age. (c) God *set* Paul apart from *birth* and called him to reveal Jesus to the *Gentiles*. (d) After *three* years, Paul went to *Jerusalem* to get acquainted with *Peter*. (e) Paul went to *Syria* and *Cilicia*. (f) Paul was *unknown* to the churches of Judea, who had heard the report: “*The man who formerly persecuted us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy.*”

2. God set Paul apart from birth, and called him by His grace. Jeremiah was set apart before his birth and appointed by God as a prophet to the nations. Whether at conception or at birth God sets apart people to accomplish His purpose.

3. Paul received the Gospel through divine revelation. God spoke directly to Paul. Paul did not learn the message of the Gospel by listening to apostles. God continues to speak to us today through means—Word and Sacrament.

4. Paul never went to the apostles to learn about Jesus. Paul says, “I did not consult any man, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before I was, but I went immediately into Arabia and later returned to Damascus.”

Conflict in Jerusalem (Gal. 2:1–10; Acts 11:27–30; 12:25)

1. Paul, Barnabas, and Titus went up to Jerusalem to give a gift to the church in Jerusalem from the church in Antioch.

2. Paul and the church in Antioch responded to the revelation spoken by Agabus concerning the severe famine.

3. Some “false brothers” obviously questioned the faith of Titus who was uncircumcised. By questioning the faith of Titus, the Judaizers questioned the faith of all Gentiles.

4. The freedom about which Paul speaks is that which we receive through faith in Christ Jesus.

5.–6. If you question or take away someone’s freedom in Christ, you rob them of their faith. By compelling someone to keep the Law in order to receive God’s favor you have robbed him or her of Christian freedom. “Do this” and “don’t do this” takes away the surety of forgiveness of sins and eternal life—that which Jesus earned for us when He died on the cross. The Law will leave us troubled, guilt-ridden, and ultimately in despair.

7. Paul and his companions did not give in to the “false brothers.”

8. Paul and the other apostles shared the “right hand of fellowship” and agreed to work together. Paul would preach to the Gentiles. The other apostles would continue to share the Gospel with the Jews.

Confrontation at Antioch (Gal. 2:11–14)

1. Paul confronted Peter. Peter who had eaten with the Gentiles, stopped eating with them when “certain men” came from James. The other Jews joined Peter because they feared those who belonged to the circumcision group—the Jews. Even Barnabas was led astray by Peter’s hypocrisy. Paul confronted Peter and said, “You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile and not like a Jew. How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs?”

2. Peter was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group. Peter caved in to peer pressure.

3. The other Jews and even Barnabas followed Peter’s lead.

4. Paul confronted Peter to his face. He accused Peter of forcing Gentiles to follow Jewish customs, although Peter himself didn’t follow the customs any longer.

5. It was important for Paul to confront this issue because forcing people to follow Jewish customs would rob the Gentiles of their freedom in the Gospel.

6. Peter’s actions endangered the Gospel—by God’s grace alone through faith alone in Christ Jesus we receive forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

The Word for Us

Discuss one or more of these questions in-depth. These questions are designed to help participants apply Scripture to their lives.

1. Answers will vary. It is clear that when error arises in the church, it

must be confronted with God's Word. Sin will cause conflicts to continue to arise in the church. Conflict can be healthy when it causes us to search God's Word for answers, and if necessary, make changes (see **1 Cor. 11:19**).

2. From Paul's strong indictment, it is clear that Peter drew back because of peer pressure and the fear of rejection rather than to avoid giving offense. Paul says in **1 Cor. 9:19–23**, "Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings."

3. Answers will vary. Some suggestions might include joining the right to life movement, praying for wrongs in our society, helping the homeless, or collecting food for area food pantries. Sin and evil in this world can rob people of their freedom. Our actions on behalf of those who experience injustice enable us to demonstrate our faith.

4. Refer to **1 Cor. 9:19–23**. Answers will vary.

Closing

Pray together the prayer for unity of faith printed in the Study Guide.

Lesson 3

The Bad News and the Good News (Galatians 2:15–21)

Before the Session

Take time to read the entire letter to the Galatians and **Romans 5–8** again. If you have trouble understanding the concepts of Law and Gospel, check a commentary, or read *Law and Gospel* by C. F. W. Walther (CPH, 1981) or *The Proper Distinction between Law and Gospel* by C.F.W. Walther (CPH, 1986). Either of these translations of 39 evening lectures by C.F.W. Walther would be invaluable tools to help you teach this course.

Getting Started

On the left side of a chalkboard or sheet of newsprint write GOOD NEWS. On the other side write BAD NEWS. Then let your class give examples to fit under the headings. You will discover that many things fit under both headings, depending on how you look at them. Many things are mixed blessings: You get a new car but you have to pay for it; you get a raise but you have to work longer hours; etc. The discussion should be light and fun. Don't spend a lot of time on it.

The Class Session

Ask for a volunteer to lead an opening prayer, and then read the “Theme Verse” and the “Goal” in the Study Guide. Relate these to your Good News and Bad News list. The bad news—we are sinful, condemned by the Law of God, and helpless to fix ourselves—is always bad news. The good news—Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross restored the broken relationship between God and us—is always good news.

Read “What’s Going On Here” and **Gal. 2:15–21** aloud. Allow time for comments or questions. Urge participants to draw a big red cross next to these verses in their Bibles. Then begin your study of Scripture.

Searching the Scriptures

This lesson is divided into three sections—the Law; the Gospel; and the Law and Gospel. You might wish to divide your class into small groups. Assign each group a different section to complete. Bring the class together after most groups have finished and have groups report.

The Law—the Bad News

1. The Law was all of the content of the revelation of the will of God. The passages in **Exodus** deal with the revelation on Mount Sinai. You might read through some of the verses. God demands obedience from His people.

2.–3. The ceremonial law was set aside by Christ—fulfilled and completed in the perfect sacrifice of Christ on the cross for us. The demands of the ceremonial law are no longer binding on us. It had been a “custodian” (**Gal. 3:24–25**) until Christ came.

4. The moral law shows sinners their sin and drives sinners to the cross of Christ.

5. The only thing the Law could produce was awareness of sin, condemnation, curse, and death. This is bad news, indeed, for those trying to earn God’s favor, love, and acceptance by doing the right thing.

The Gospel—the Good News

1. Christ fulfilled the Law, by accomplishing what the Law demanded—perfection (**Matt. 5:48**). Jesus then took our sins upon Himself and suffered physical death and damnation by God. We receive that which Jesus had earned by fulfilling the Law—a restored relationship with God and the promise of eternal life as His children.

2. We are now “dead” to the Law. We are not under its curse and bondage. We are not caught in a dead-end trap by trying to please God by observing the demands of the Law. Christ fulfilled the Law for us.

3. We are now “sons” and “heirs.” We belong to God and receive the gift of life eternal.

4. As God’s redeemed people we now serve the “law of love” or the “law of Christ.” Motivated by Jesus’ love for us, we love others as He loves us—self-sacrificing, keeping no record of sin, and expecting nothing in return.

5. Jesus alone provides us salvation.

The Law and the Gospel (Gal. 2:15–21)

1. Answers will vary. We are declared “not guilty” by God through faith in Jesus. Help participants to affirm that only through faith in Jesus are we justified before God.

2. We are *justified by faith in Jesus Christ* (**Gal. 2:15–16**). *Righteousness* from God comes through *faith in Jesus Christ*. People are *justified* freely by His *grace* through the redemption that came by *Christ Jesus*.

3. A Christian remains in Christ even when, by the old Adam, he or she commits a sin. This does not give a person license to sin. But Jesus’ death on the cross was the once and for all sacrifice for sin. In **Rom. 7:7–25** Paul confesses his struggle with sin, and then emphatically says “Thanks be to

God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!” who rescued Paul from his sin. Unless we reject the Holy Spirit and God’s grace, we remain under God’s grasp at all times.

4. A Christian must die to the Law in order to live for Christ, because no one can serve two masters. A person who lives by the Law will die by the Law as he or she attempts to earn God’s favor through deeds. A person who lives for Christ confesses that Christ alone earned God’s favor and that he or she apprehends the blessings of forgiveness and eternal life through faith alone.

5. Crucified with Christ means believers have died to sin’s ruling power in their lives.

6. Mingling Law and Gospel makes a mockery of the cross by eliminating the need for a cross. If people have to follow the Law in order to earn God’s favor then Christ died in vain. Christ died to restore the relationship between God and all people.

The Word for Us

Discuss these questions or other life-related issues that have been raised as a result of study.

1. Jesus is our friend, who is present with us, sharing our life as we have shared His death. It is the closest relationship possible. He is in us and with us, helping and comforting us. Ask the participants to talk about what it means for them to have Christ in them. Be patient and sensitive to those who do not feel this closeness. Encourage them as you share the Gospel.

2. Answers will vary. Accept any words or actions that indicate a person is trying to earn God’s favor.

3. (a. and c.) Guilt is deadly. It crushes the spirit and makes life hollow. The point here is not to seek detailed information about people’s sins, but to encourage them to share their feelings of guilt as you also apply the sweet salve that eliminates the pain and itching of guilt—the Gospel. The person who feels guilt over past sins and/or is not sure he or she will go to heaven needs to hear a Gospel message—“Jesus Christ took all of your sins to the cross” and/or “as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us” (**Ps. 103:12**). (b. and d.) People who demonstrate no guilt over sins committed and believe it’s okay to sin need to hear God’s Law—“the wages of sin is death” (**Rom. 6:23**) and/or “If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us” (**1 John 1:8**).

Closing

Sing or speak the hymn stanza as printed in the lesson.

Part II

Prove It, Paul!

Lesson 4

The First Proof—The Gospel Works (Galatians 3:1–5)

Before the Session

Read **Gal. 1:1–3:5** to gain a sense of how Paul builds intensity as he addresses the problem in the Galatian congregations. Also read **Rom. 5:1–11** for additional background information.

Getting Started

As the class gathers, discuss disappointment. Ask participants to finish this statement: “My greatest disappointment was . . .” Be ready to share one of your own disappointments in order to get things started. Enjoy the exchange. Then talk about how our disappointments are often tied to other people. Things can fail us and frustrate us, but the disappointments that really hurt are those that involve people. What causes us to expect so much of others that we often find ourselves disappointed by or in them?

The Class Session

Begin with prayer. Then read the “Goal” and “What’s Going On Here.” Ask someone to read **Gal. 3:1–5** aloud with the appropriate tone of voice. It doesn’t matter if it sounds a little forced. The point is the intensity of emotion—the greatness of Paul’s disappointment. Paul develops his first proof through a series of questions. The first argument can best be summarized as a question—“How did you receive the Spirit—through Law or Gospel?” Paul asserts that he clearly portrayed that Christ was crucified for their sins and that through Him alone are they saved.

Searching the Scriptures

This part of the lesson is divided into three sections, each a question—Who deceived you?; From where did faith come?; and Is it all for nothing? Again, choose whether or not you will work with the entire class on the

questions in this section or divide the class into small groups to discuss the questions.

Who Deceived You? (Gal. 3:1)

1. Satan is ultimately responsible for false teaching. Satan works through false teachers, who lead God's people away from Him. **1 Cor. 1:18–20** indicates that a favorite device is our natural desire to trust our own wisdom instead of the “foolishness” of the Gospel. In this scientific age, how often is the Gospel set aside as “childish” and “foolish”?

2. Paul has preached the crucified Christ. **Rom. 5:6–9** provides additional information to that recorded in **Gal. 3:1**.

From Where Did Faith Come? (Gal. 3:2–3)

1.–2. “Receiv[ing] the Spirit” (often connected with visible signs at Pentecost—**Acts 2**) was a sign of living, working faith. Paul directs his readers to that working faith. We received that indwelling of the Spirit through Holy Baptism.

3.–4. The “human” standards were the requirements of the Law, especially the prescriptions of the ceremonial law, including in this case circumcision. Paul fears that the Galatian Christians are attempting to fulfill the requirements of the Law in order to earn God's favor.

Is It All for Nothing? (Gal. 3:4–5)

1. According to **Rom. 5:1–5**, suffering makes our hope stronger. Paul indicates that suffering apart from faith is empty and useless.

2. There were miracles. They may have been the signs of the Spirit or healings. In any case, these miracles provided evidence that faith was alive and that the Spirit was working through the Gospel.

3. In **Eph. 4:14–15** Paul warns the people, and then calls the people back to faith and a life of love and unity. In **Galatians** Paul warns the people of the danger of turning from the Gospel and calls them back to the faith he shared with them.

The Word for Us

1. Pastors, teachers, and parents often experience disappointment as they work with the people for whom they are responsible. We remain weak and often fail.

You might read this quote from Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a pastor, from his *Life Together*:

The serious Christian . . . is likely to bring with him a very definite idea of what Christian life together should be and to try to realize it. But God's grace speedily shatters such dreams. Just as surely as God desires to lead

us to a knowledge of genuine Christian fellowship, so surely must we be overwhelmed by a great disillusionment with others, with Christians in general, and, if we are fortunate, with ourselves (London: SCM Press, Ltd., 1958, pp. 16–17).

Ask for comment. Finally, we need to grow in our faith as the Holy Spirit works through God's Word and Sacrament so that we are better equipped to deal with one another in a spirit of trust, love, and forgiveness.

2. Ask for opinions. Anything that causes us to trust ourselves, removes God from the center of our lives, distracts us from the Gospel, or causes us to seek truth and salvation apart from Jesus Christ endangers our faith. We must help one another avoid those things. Affirm Word and Sacrament as the means through which the Holy Spirit works in our lives today, strengthening our faith in Jesus.

Closing

Pray together the prayer printed in the Study Guide.

Lesson 5

The Second Proof—We Are Abraham's Real Children (Galatians 3:6–14)

Before the Session

After reading **Galatians 3**, read **Rom. 4:9–11** and **Genesis 12–22** for additional background information. Read also **Hebrews 11**. These sections of Scripture will help you to understand Abraham as a man of faith and why Paul used him as an example.

Getting Started

Ask, "Were the people in the Old Testament saved in the same way that we in the New Testament church are?" Let participants discuss the question for a few moments, and then use their interest as an introduction to the lesson. Tell them, "We will answer this question today as we study **Gal. 3:6–14**."

The Class Session

After the class members have read the "Theme Verse", the "Goal," and

“What’s Going On Here” in the Study Guide, review some of the major points of previous lessons and Paul’s purpose in writing the epistle.

Searching the Scriptures

Paul’s second argument or proof is Abraham had the same faith as the Gentiles. Those who reject Christ for works have created a new religion.

Abraham’s Faith

1. Abraham was righteous before God only by faith in God’s promise.

2.–4. The **Genesis** account does not mention salvation, but Abraham’s inheritance and God’s covenant are mentioned. Paul himself interpreted the inheritance and covenant to be the promise of salvation and eternal life in Jesus Christ (**Heb. 11:8–11; Rom. 4:1–9**). Paul identified the blessing of sins forgiven as the heart of the promise that Abraham believed. Abraham was righteous before God through faith in the promise of salvation.

Children of Abraham

1. Since Abraham stood in a relationship to God by faith, Paul declares that only those who have the same faith are the real children of Abraham.

2. All nations would be blessed with God’s saving and righteous action in Jesus Christ through faith just as God blessed Abraham (**Gal. 3:8–9**). To make this even clearer, Paul points to Isaac, the son of promise and faith, as the real son of Abraham rather than Ishmael, who was a son of the works of the flesh (**Gal. 4:21–23; Rom. 4:18–22; Heb. 11:17–19**).

The Word for Us

1. Discuss apparent contradictions between the message of Paul and James. Remember that each of the writers emphasized different points. Paul emphasized “salvation” by faith (justification). James emphasized living out that faith by God’s faithful people (sanctification). Paul uses the Greek word *pistis* which is defined in English as the hand that receives God’s righteousness—faith. James also uses the Greek word *pistis*, but emphasizes the faithfulness that faith produces which shows us and others that we have God’s righteousness.

2. Faith saves us. But this faith is always active and produces a faithful life to God.

3. Abraham trusted God when God told him to leave his land, when God promised to give him a son, and when God told him to sacrifice his son. Working through God’s Word, we pray that the Holy Spirit would give us faith like Abraham’s. Emphasize that Abraham is not the hero in the story. Instead, Abraham was a sinner like you and me. God is the hero, because God provided Abraham with faith and promise.

Closing

Pray together the third stanza of “The God of Abraham Praise.”

Lesson 6

The Third Proof—The Law Serves Only the Gospel (Galatians 3:15–25)

Before the Session

Study carefully **Gal. 3:15–25**. Then read **Rom. 2:1–24; 3:1–20; and 7:7–13**. Consider this guiding question: How does the fact that the Law condemns us prove that we are saved by faith in Christ?

Getting Started

Ask, “What is the purpose of the Ten Commandments? How are they to be used? Do you or did you teach the Ten Commandments to your children? Why?” Record participants’ comments on a chalkboard or sheet of newsprint. Refer to the participants’ comments during the lesson. Pray that the Holy Spirit would give you wisdom as you study God’s Word so that you might understand better the purpose of God’s Law and God’s Gospel.

The Class Session

Read aloud the “Goal” and “What’s Going On Here.” Discuss briefly the questions in “What’s Going on Here.” Review Paul’s first two arguments or proofs studied in Lessons 4 and 5. Paul provided his first argument in a series of questions. The question, “How did you receive the Spirit—by observing the Law or through the Gospel,” summarizes the first proof. The second argument is that Abraham had the same faith as the Galatians. Abraham was saved by faith alone in the promise.

Searching the Scriptures

Read aloud **Gal. 3:15–25**.

1. Allow participants the opportunity to develop a one- or two-sentence summary of Paul’s third argument or proof. Paul emphasizes that the covenant God gave to Abraham served the Law. The title of this lesson,

"The Law Serves Only the Gospel," is a succinct summary of Paul's argument.

2. The seed is Jesus Christ.

3. Answers will vary. Review some of the highlights of Abraham's life—told to leave his homeland, promised a son, received a son, told to sacrifice his son. Personalize Abraham's faith by asking participants, "What would you do if God asked you to leave your home? promised to give you a son when you were old and your wife was barren? told you to sacrifice your only son?" Abraham demonstrated great faith in God's promise. Remind participants of God's great love for them in that He didn't spare His only Son Jesus, but sacrificed Him on the cross for our sins.

4. Abraham received Isaac through faith, we receive Jesus through faith. Isaac was offered by his father as a sacrifice. Jesus was offered as a sacrifice by His Father.

5. God gives the inheritance through the promise apprehended by faith.

6. A person who seeks salvation through works is a prisoner of the Law. In **Gal. 3:11** Paul says, "Clearly no one is justified before God by the Law." God's Law requires a person to "Be perfect" (**Matt. 5:48**). **James 2:10** states, "For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it." Trying to earn God's favor through the Law will either lead a person to despair or cause a person to become secure in his or her own righteousness. Both of these lead to eternal damnation. Christians do good works in response to the Gospel. Because God has loved them so much, Christians desire to demonstrate their love for God in service to Him.

7. God keeps all of His promises. The Law makes us conscious of our sins and leads us to the promise. Paul emphasizes that the Israelites are zealous for God, but their zeal is based on knowledge, not on faith.

8. God makes our sin known to us through the Law. The purpose of the Law is to lead us to the only hope for salvation—Jesus Christ.

9. The only hope for deliverance from the judgment of the Law is faith in Jesus Christ.

The Word for Us

1. The people who are secure in their sin need to hear God's Law, followed by the sweet message of the Gospel. Those who are troubled by their sin need to hear the Gospel. By proclaiming Law to a person who feels guilt under the weight of his or her sin, you lead the person farther into despair. Try to keep the discussion positive. Look for ways to express love and concern for each person. Speaking the Law to sinners is not just condemning—it is leading sinners to the cross by showing them their sin.

How can that be done in these cases?

2. Answers will vary. Emphasize that people must know the purpose of both Law and Gospel so they are able to live by faith in the promise of the Gospel.

3. People are led into despair when the Law is preached and the Gospel is excluded. Only through the Gospel do people receive the assurance of forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

Closing

Sing or speak together stanza 1 of “Salvation unto Us Has Come” printed in the Study Guide.

Lesson 7

The Fourth Proof—One in Faith (Galatians 3:26–4:11)

Before the Session

Read **Gal. 3:26–4:11**. To better prepare yourself to teach the concepts in this lesson, read **Eph. 5:22–6:9** and **Romans 8**.

Getting Started

Write “We are number 1.” and “We are one.” on a chalkboard or sheet of newsprint. Compare and contrast the two phrases. After a few moments of discussion, tell the participants that in Paul’s fourth argument or proof Paul emphasizes, “We are one.” In Christ there is no distinction between Jews and Gentiles, slaves and free men, and men and women.

The Class Session

Invite a volunteer to read aloud the “Goal” and “What’s Going On Here” in the Study Guide. Since this lesson is rather lengthy, you may wish to assign different questions to small groups. If you follow this procedure, allow plenty of time for each group to share their answers to the questions.

Searching the Scriptures

Read aloud **Gal. 3:26–29**.

1. Paul argues that all people who possess saving faith are one in Christ.

2. Through Holy Baptism we were immersed into Christ. Allow participants to share their thoughts on this concept.

3. The passages emphasize the unity all people share in Christ Jesus.

4. Although **Eph. 5:22–6:9** has often been misunderstood, it paints a beautiful and revealing portrait of perfect unity. The Greek language had different words for “one.” Both *heis* and *hen* are used to describe oneness. *Heis* is the oneness we all share as those whom Christ redeemed when He shed His blood on the cross. *Hen* allows for differences in roles, but emphasizes unity in purpose. Husbands are told to love their wives as Christ loved the church. Christ loved His church so much that He willingly suffered and died to pay the punishment people deserved because of their sin. Wives should submit to their husbands, not in the sense that the wife becomes a “door mat”, but instead as Christians submit to Christ who died for us. We submit to Jesus because He first loved us and demonstrated that love to us when He became the sacrifice for our sins. We all share unity—Christ died for each of us. Within that unity is diversity—As we *serve* each other and Christ, we each have different tasks based upon God’s gifts to us and the order of His creation. Wives never need to feel subordinate in the negative sense, when their husbands demonstrate the self-sacrificing and unconditional love that Christ demonstrated for all of us on the cross.

5. Circumcision was a visible sign of God’s promise to His people—“I am your God. You are My people.” Purification rites reminded the people of the purification that God had promised—purification from all their sins through a Savior. Bloody sacrifices reminded people of their sins and need for a Savior. The sacrifices also pointed to the once and for all sacrifice to come—the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross.

6. Since we were immersed in Christ through Holy Baptism, the ceremonial law which pointed the people to Christ was no longer needed. The moral law continues to remind us of our need for a Savior and also serves as a guide for Christians. Christians desire to do what God requires in the moral law, not because it will earn for them God’s favor, but in joyful response to God’s love for them in Christ.

7. When Christ became man, He obediently placed Himself under the Law as all men were under the Law. Jesus then kept the Law perfectly. He took the sins of all people to the cross where He received the punishment people deserved under the Law.

8. We are all heirs of God through faith in Christ Jesus. We receive the inheritance God provided for us through faith in Jesus—eternal life with Him in heaven. *Abba* is the emphatic and endearing term for a father used by Jewish children. In English it would be like saying, “Dearest daddy, I love you.”

9. Before people became sons and daughters of God, they were hostile to God, they lived according to the sinful nature, and were doomed to eternal death. After becoming sons and daughters of God, people were freed from the law of sin and death, lived according to the Spirit, and sought God's will.

10. We who were once estranged and detached from God, are now His sons and daughters through faith.

11. When people turn from the Gospel and back to the Law, they give up the freedom of knowing that all of their sins are forgiven through faith alone in Jesus Christ. People who live by the Law are enslaved by the fear it creates—"How can I ever be sure I've done enough to earn God's favor?"—or by the self-righteous attitude it can cause us to have—"I've been pretty good. At least I'm better than those other people." Rules are necessary. God's Law is necessary to curb people's violent nature and to establish standards by which people should live. God's Law written on the hearts of all people keeps order in this world. When we try to earn God's love and forgiveness by keeping the Law or assume we have done a better job than others at keeping His Law we live by the Law rather than live in God's grace.

The Word for Us

1. Answers will vary. Lead participants to affirm the oneness we share through faith in Jesus.

2. Answers will vary.

3. Answers will vary. Affirming Christ alive within us, gives us hope and comfort when we face suffering and persecution.

4. The Holy Spirit works through Word and Sacrament to create and to strengthen saving faith. God enables us to reach the goal as the Holy Spirit strengthens and sustains our faith through the means of grace.

Closing

Sing or speak together as the closing prayer stanza 1 of "My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less" printed in the Study Guide.

Lesson 8

The Fifth Proof—What Has Happened to All Your Joy? (Galatians 4:12–20)

Before the Session

For your preparation, review Paul's first four proofs and read **Gal. 4:12–20**.

Getting Started

Review the Law/Gospel distinction. Emphasize that the Law serves the Gospel in that it makes us realize our sin, abandon our own attempts to make ourselves right, and drives us to the Good News of salvation in Christ.

Ask, "What gives you joy?" List participants' responses on the chalkboard or a sheet of newsprint. Then ask, "What robs you of joy?" Once again, list participants' responses. Tell participants that in today's lesson Paul asks the Galatian Christians, "What has happened to all your joy?"

The Class Session

After an opening prayer have a volunteer read aloud the "Goal" and "What's Going On Here" sections of today's lesson. Discuss the concept of birth pains. Mothers experience birth pain when they deliver a baby. Usually that pain gives way to great joy. Later a mother will probably experience pain as a child seeks to find himself or herself. This is normal since every young person must establish himself or herself as an independent person, apart from dependence on parents. This is often painful for the young person trying to find and to define himself or herself, and also painful for the parent.

Searching the Scriptures

Use the questions in this section to guide discussion.

1. Paul becomes very personal with the Galatians in this argument. Paul uses the relationship he established with them as proof that what he shared with them was the truth; you are saved by faith alone in Christ Jesus, not by works of the Law.

2. Paul pleads with his beloved people. Paul's love for the people is evident in the tone of this argument.

3. In **Gal. 1:6–10** Paul's message is strong and firm. His words demonstrate disbelief and frustration. In **Gal. 4:12–20** Paul's tone is gentler as a

parent pleading with a child who has erred. Paul reminds the Galatians of the relationship they have shared together in Christ as he questions where the joy they had once exhibited has gone.

4. On the basis of **Gal. 4:15** and **6:11** some suggest that his illness was eye trouble. Others have suggested malaria or epilepsy. Although we can't be certain from what affliction Paul suffered, we can be certain that this illness was painful, difficult, and maybe impossible to cure.

5. The Galatian Christians have lost their joy. A person who lives by the Law suffers from guilt and fear. The Law has once again robbed the Galatians of their joy in Christ. Temptations, guilt, and self righteousness can rob us of our joy. Whenever we live by the Law, we lose the joy we experience in knowing that through Christ we have complete forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

6. The Judaizers are zealous in trying to win the Galatians over to their teachings. Paul indicates his divine jealousy when he warns the Galatians that the Judaizers are up to no good and are attempting to alienate them from him. The Galatians face the danger of losing their faith in Jesus Christ.

7. Emphasize the fact that parents experience pain as their children turn their backs on them or choose to do something contrary to what the parents have taught them.

8. Answers will vary. In written communication you lose the physical dimension experienced in verbal communication. Paul desires to look at those whom he loves in the eye and demonstrate once again his love for them. Words cannot adequately express the feelings Paul has for the Christians in Galatia.

The Word for Us

1. Answers will vary. Accept all responses. List ways in which we demonstrate our joy in Christ. As we stay close to Jesus through Word and Sacrament the Holy Spirit works to strengthen our faith so that we are able to live joy-filled lives. Read aloud **Gal. 5:22–23**.

2. Anything we do or say that might make God's love for us conditional can and will rob us of our joy. Have participants page through their Study Guides to find passages that affirm that we receive forgiveness of sins and eternal life by God's grace alone through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone.

3. Trying to keep the Law will leave you troubled and in despair. God never moves from us. His love remains constant and unchanging. God proclaims His love for us in His Word. A person that feels far away from God probably is experiencing guilt over unconfessed sin and/or guilt over past sins they have confessed. A person who is troubled by sin needs the oppor-

tunity to confess that sin and receive the assurance of God's love and forgiveness in Christ Jesus. Also, people who cut themselves off from the means of grace—Word and Sacrament—will feel far away from God. Remind participants that God desires to be close to them through His Word and Sacrament.

Closing

Close by singing or speaking together stanzas 1 and 2 of “Rejoice, My Heart, Be Glad” printed in the Study Guide.

Lesson 9

The Sixth Proof—The Law Enslaves (Galatians 4:21–31)

Before the Session

Read through the entire lesson in the Study Guide. Familiarize yourself with the Bible references. Read carefully **Gal. 4:21–31**.

Getting Started

Write *allegory* on the chalkboard or a sheet of newsprint. Ask volunteers to define allegory. Share the following definition of allegory from the *Thorndike-Barnhart Dictionary*.

“A story that is told to explain or teach something, especially a long and complicated story with an underlying meaning different from the surface meaning of the story itself.”

Tell participants that Paul uses an historical event as allegory for his sixth and final proof or argument. Others have defined allegory as an extended or expanded metaphor.

The Class Session

Open with prayer. Ask a volunteer to read the “Goal” and “What’s Going On Here” portions in the Study Guide. Discuss them only briefly, since more discussion will occur later. Recall that this is the sixth in a series of arguments that Paul presents to affirm the power of the Gospel. Briefly review the previous lessons and their arguments.

Searching the Scriptures

Read aloud **Gal. 4:21–31**.

1. Paul asserts allegorically in his sixth argument that the Law enslaves, while the Gospel sets us free.

2. Against all odds God kept His promise by providing a son to Abraham and Sarah. Remind participants that Sarah was barren and beyond child-bearing years. Abraham did nothing to deserve his son, Isaac. Through faith alone in the promise of God, Abraham received a son. When Abraham slept with Hagar he demonstrated a lack of faith in the promise of God. Abraham took matters into his own hands. When we try to earn God's favor through our good works we act not from faith in His promises, but instead from the Law.

3. On Mount Sinai God gave His Law to Moses. When Abraham slept with Hagar he was motivated by the Law, rather than trusting in the promise of God.

4. "The Jerusalem that is above" refers to heaven which in turn models the true church on earth. God provides us heaven through faith in Jesus Christ. Eternal life is not dependent upon our actions, but upon Jesus' action on our behalf—His life, death, and resurrection.

5. "Children of promise" are all who have faith in God's promise of salvation. The children of the slave woman are all those who live by the Law, trying to earn God's favor.

6. Paul changes Sarah's words slightly to personalize the message for the Galatians. Paul uses Sarah's words as a Scriptural basis for telling the Galatians to put the Judaizers and their teachings out of the church. Those that live by the Law will never share the inheritance of eternal life with those who are God's children through faith in the Gospel.

7. Against all odds Isaac was born. Against all odds we too through faith have been born again by the power of the Holy Spirit. Through Holy Baptism God has called us to be His children and heirs of heaven.

8. The children of the slave woman are the Judaizers and all those who would rob Christians of their freedom by demanding them to fulfill the Law in order to receive God's acceptance, love, and forgiveness. The children of the free woman are all those who cling in faith to Jesus Christ for forgiveness of sins and eternal life. No one can serve two masters. Read aloud **Gal. 3:10–14**. "All who rely on observing the Law are under a curse . . . Clearly no one is justified before God by the Law, because 'The righteous will live by faith.' The Law is not based on faith; on the contrary, 'The man who does these things will live by them' " (**Gal. 3:10–12**).

The Word for Us

1. Anyone who lives by the Law is a child of the slave woman. Those who live by faith in Jesus Christ are the children of the free woman. Answers will vary. The friend needs to be reminded of God's complete forgiveness through faith in Jesus. Jesus took all sins to the cross.

2. Answers will vary. Allow volunteers to share times when they have failed to trust. Remind participants that the Holy Spirit works through Word and Sacrament to strengthen faith. By participating in worship, attending Bible study, and receiving the Lord's Supper, the Lord enables us to remain close to Him.

3. Answers will vary. No matter what happens to us on earth, we know that through faith in Jesus we can look forward to eternal life with Him in heaven.

Closing

Sing or speak together the first stanza of "Jerusalem the Golden" printed in the Study Guide.

Part III

Now Live in the Gospel

Lesson 10

Free at Last (Galatians 5:1–12)

Before the Session

Read over the arguments leading up to this section in **Galatians**. Read through **Romans 6–7**, where Paul gives a picture of the relationship of slavery and freedom in the Christian life. Remember your class in prayer.

Getting Started

Write “Freedom” on the chalkboard or on a large sheet of newsprint. Ask for definitions. Write as many as possible. Talk about freedom today. Why is freedom so important? What is the reason for all the talk about individual freedom? Is anyone ever really free? Why or why not?

The Class Session

Ask a volunteer to open the class with prayer. Read aloud the “Goal” and “What’s Going On Here.” Discuss briefly questions or comments participants may have.

Searching the Scriptures

Have a volunteer read aloud **Gal. 5:1–12**.

1. Christ has set us free from bondage to the Law. Answers will vary. The freedom Paul speaks of comes about through faith in what Christ accomplished for us that we could never accomplish on our own—a restored relationship between us and God.

2. We can easily be robbed of our freedom. Our sinful nature, false teachings, and temptations from Satan and the world threaten to renew our slavery.

3. If we depend upon the Law to justify us before God, we alienate ourselves from Christ and fall away from God’s grace. In Christ Jesus, none of our works have any value. Instead, faith alone justifies us before God.

4. Christ paid the price for our freedom by His death on the cross. Jesus

“sacrificed for their sins once for all when He offered Himself” (**Heb. 7:27**) on the cross.

5.(a) A married woman is bound to her husband as long as he lives. When a married woman’s husband dies she is released from the law of marriage. Through Christ’s death we have been released from the bondage of the Law. (b) All who have faith in Jesus died to the Law through the body of Christ. Many came to faith in Christ Jesus as infants through Holy Baptism. Others may have come to faith as the Holy Spirit worked in them through the spoken Word. (c) We are free to serve. We live out our freedom as we serve God. Have participants list different ways they can serve God. Possible ways include serving on various board and committees in the church, praying for others, caring for those in need, etc.

6.–7. James indicates that a faith that does not respond in love is dead. In that sense the deeds of loving sacrifice are necessary—they are a witness to the faith that exists in the heart. But our deeds of service are voluntary, coming from a heart full of gratitude to Christ, who saved us, rather than working out of obligation to God. So we are in slavery (servanthood) to Christ, to be sure. He is our Master by faith, and our faith works as it responds in love. Paul says that he is a servant of Christ for the purpose of preaching the Gospel. That is the same purpose of all Christians’ servanthood.

8. Paul exhorts the people to continue to run the race they began with him and cast out those who have tried to persuade them that they also must obey the Law in order to gain God’s favor. Paul urges his brothers and sisters in Christ to grasp hold of the freedom they had once enjoyed through faith in Christ Jesus.

The Word for Us

1. This is a difficult concept, and it would be good to give the class some time to discuss it. We never really achieve freedom until Christ becomes Master in our lives. Until that happens we seek answers and security in all kinds of things and are slaves to our own needs and desires.

2. Use this question to review the function of the Law. We are never perfect, so we cannot live without law. Rules can keep us in line, but the Law finally makes us realize that we are powerless to overcome our inner compulsion to serve ourselves and hurt others.

3. When we set a standard of loving acts, we may be putting a new slavery on people. It is uncomfortable for many Christians to be told that they must seek their own responses to God’s love. They would rather be told what is expected. While it is true that the Law can serve the function of a guide for a life of service, we cannot make obedience to the Law a condi-

tion of salvation and imply that the gift of salvation is incomplete. It *is* complete. We live in grace and respond with deeds of love.

4. Answers will vary. Any opportunities to serve God and others give the Christian a chance to express his or her faith in love.

Closing

Sing or speak together the first stanza of “You Will I Love, My Strength, My Tower” as a closing prayer.

Lesson 11

Free, But . . . (Galatians 5:13–26)

Before the Session

Briefly review the lesson from last week. Study the text **Gal. 5:13–26** and the cross-reference passages. Use a commentary of your choice. You might get an index card and write each of the characteristics of **verses 19–20** in the upper left-hand corner. On the left-hand side write some of the effects of these qualities or characteristics on human relationships. Do the same with the characteristics or qualities listed in **verses 22–23**. Consider giving each participant an index card on which they complete the same activity when you study these verses during the lesson. Remember to pray for the participants in your class.

The Class Session

Make sure that Bibles and pencils are available for the participants. Ask participants, “What are the acts of the sinful nature?” List as many the participants can recall on the chalkboard or on a sheet of newsprint. Then ask, “What is the fruit of the Spirit?” Again, list participants responses on the chalkboard or sheet of newsprint. Read aloud the “Goal” and have a volunteer read aloud “What’s Going On Here.”

This lesson is divided into three sections. Each begins with the statement “Free, but . . .” You may wish to divide your class into small groups and have each group complete the questions in one of the sections. When groups have finished their work, have a spokesperson from each group report to the entire class.

Searching the Scriptures

Read aloud or have a volunteer read aloud **Gal. 5:13–26**.

Free, but . . . Why is it necessary to qualify the concept of freedom within the Christian community?

1. In **verse 13** the implied problem is that some of the people were living worldly lives. They probably felt secure because they followed the prescription of the Law by being circumcised. There must also have been a problem with self-righteousness, as implied in **verse 26**.

2. We are at the same time both flesh and Spirit. Lead the participants to see this conflict in their own lives. The Romans passage points out Paul's great faith and life. If such a saint could reveal his inner struggle, we can certainly be honest about ours. We can stay free, but the temptation to be slaves of ourselves is powerful and very real.

Free, but . . . What is the essential quality of Christian freedom?

1. The essential quality of Christian freedom is love. This was not new to the ears of the Judaizers (**Lev. 19:18**). It also summarized the Law given by Jesus (**Matt. 22:37–40**). Paul is arguing from Jewish tradition. Instead of loving, the Galatians were arguing and fighting with one another.

2. Popular notions of love are generally connected with feelings. Here Jesus describes love as doing in spite of feeling. We usually consider those who disagree with us enemies. It is God's love in us that empowers us to rise above our feelings and minister to those with whom we disagree.

3. Distribute the index cards. Help participants work through the activity you completed in preparing to teach this lesson. Make it clear that the works of the flesh bring separation, estrangement, and isolation, while the fruit of the Spirit serve to restore human relationships. In **verse 13** love makes us slaves of one another. You might point out that we are never free in the popular understanding of freedom meaning "doing your own thing." That is simply another form of slavery. Here we are called to be slaves to each other. The quality of love, then, is service.

Free, but . . . How is it possible for human beings to live free in Christ? Do we live under the Law or the Gospel?

1. In both **Rom. 7:25a** and **Gal. 5:24** the victor is Jesus Christ. Through faith in Christ Jesus we are empowered by the Holy Spirit to overcome the prison of the flesh. Through faith strengthened by the Holy Spirit working through the means of grace, we are empowered to withstand the daily temptations we all experience. **Rom. 6:3–4** clearly points out that Christ's victory becomes ours through Baptism.

2. The Spirit is mentioned seven times in these few verses. Freedom is possible only as the Spirit lives in us and works through us. He empowers us for victory in the constant battle between flesh and Spirit.

The Word for Us

Make sure you save to time to discuss one or more of the questions.

1. The idea that people are innately good is popular. Ask participants for evidence to disprove this idea. You might cite examples from history or present-day situations. Our own goodness is a dream. Original sin always turns up to corrupt the best-laid plans.

2. To make Baptism more a part of our life, Martin Luther suggests that each morning we cross our forehead and speak the words, “In the name of the Father, Son, Holy Spirit.” These words were spoken at our Baptism as the pastor applied water. If time permits read **John 3**.

3. Cheap grace is grace without repentance. You might want to go back to the quote in the “What’s Going On Here” section and discuss it. Cheap grace ignores the price paid by Christ on our behalf. Study **2 Cor. 5:14–15**. When we live under the Gospel, we live within the kingdom of grace. Our life then becomes a response not to the Law, but to Christ who redeemed us with His holy, precious blood.

Closing

Pray together the prayer for steadfast faith printed in the Study Guide.

Lesson 12

Let’s Be Practical (Galatians 6:1–10)

Before the Session

Prior to your study, remember to pray that the Spirit will lead you into a deeper understanding of His truth. Pray also for the other participants. Read **Gal. 6:1–10** and complete the questions in the Study Guide for this lesson.

Getting Started

Make sure the room is in order and Bibles are available. If possible, you might want to arrange the chairs in a circle. Ask each participant to share a solution to a problem that he or she discovered through a relationship with another believer. You might then want to give a personal example of how someone ministered to you during a struggle in your life.

The Class Session

Open with prayer. Then have a volunteer read aloud the “Goal” and another read “What’s Going On Here.”

Searching the Scriptures

Read aloud **Gal. 6:1–10**.

1. The Christian life is a life in relationship with other Christians. Paul urges those in the Christian family to restore gently a brother or sister who is caught in a sin and carry each other’s burdens. Paul uses the word *brothers*, which indicates that he is talking about a fellow believer. “Caught in a sin” refers to one who has slipped, rather than to one who is intentionally living a life apart from Christ.

2. The “law of Christ” is the “law of love” as indicated in **Matt. 22:36–40**. We respond to God’s love for us in Christ as we demonstrate love to others. The law of Christ is a Gospel phrase because it emphasizes that in His love for us Christ came under the condemnation of the Law. Because of His love for us Jesus came to earth to fulfill perfectly God’s Law on our behalf and then went willingly to the cross to suffer and die as a punishment for our sin.

3. Paul speaks of one who has slipped—one who has temporarily lost the battle between flesh and Spirit. But the person is certainly a Christian, for it is not our winning or losing the battles that make us Christian—it is the blood of Jesus Christ. The phrase “watch yourself, or you also may be tempted” warns that we might slip as well. Those humbling words compel us to demonstrate empathy to fallen believers.

4.–5. People must always suffer the consequences of what they sow. If you are hostile to your children, your children will be hostile people. If you abuse your body, you will get sick. **Matt. 7:1–7** points out that the standard we use to judge others is the standard that will be used to judge us. Since we are just as apt to slip as others, we should deal with those who sin the way we would want them to deal with us.

6. These words reflect the attitude and behavior of those who realize that their victories are the result of the power of Christ working in them.

7. “Let us not become weary in doing good.” “As we have opportunity, let us do good to all people.” In the light of Jesus’ words, we must strive to serve others through the Gospel. Our Christian service has no limit.

8. We are bound together by the fact that we are alike. We all find ourselves in the struggle between the Spirit and the flesh. As we are bound together in our sinfulness, we too are bound together by the forgiveness of Jesus Christ. The burdens Jesus bore were, of course, our burdens. The cross He carried was on our behalf. We support physically, verbally, and

spiritually our brothers and sisters in Christ.

The Word for Us

Discuss the questions here in the spirit of love encouraged by the lesson.

1. Point out both the vertical and horizontal dimensions of the Lord's Supper. You give what you receive. If you have received the forgiveness of God in Jesus, then you will dispense that forgiveness. It is only forgiveness and acceptance that cement relationships together so that they become fuller and more complete.

2. Try to keep the discussion positive. Avoid names. Use the chalkboard and brainstorm some plans of action. You might ask the class to follow through on some of their suggestions and report on the results.

3. Answers will vary. Before discussing the questions reread **Gal. 6:1–10**. Emphasize “restore him gently,” “carry each other's burdens,” “share all good things,” and “let us do good to all people” as participants discuss what they might do in each situation.

Closing

Sing or speak together the first stanza of “For Many Years, O God of Grace” as the closing prayer.

Lesson 13

A Personal Appeal (Galatians 6:11–18)

Before the Session

You might want to page through your Study Guide and the Leaders Notes. Write a summary statement for each lesson. Read carefully **Gal. 6:11–18** and complete the questions in the Study Guide for the lesson.

Getting Started

After the class is settled, review each of the lessons using the summary statements you prepared. Ask for them to share the most meaningful things they learned. You might write the things they share on the chalkboard or a sheet of newsprint.

The Class Session

Begin with prayer. Ask for a volunteer to read aloud the “Theme Verse,” “Goal,” and “What’s Going On Here.”

Searching the Scriptures

Paul’s Pastoral Heart (Gal. 6:11, 18; 4:12–20)

1. These words recall that Paul felt very close to the Galatian Christians.
2. Paul completes this last paragraph with his own hand. This action breaks precedent. Paul is forced to write in large letters. We don’t know for sure, but some possible explanations are that he was partially blind or that he was not used to writing. At any rate, the fact that Paul personally closes the letter reveals his desire for a personal touch, probably because of his deep love for the people.

Paul Restates His Authority (Gal. 6:17)

1. Refer to these readings from Lesson 1.
2. Paul uses the phrase “I bear on my body the marks of Jesus.” Paul provides the personal witness of his life in spreading the Gospel to others as the authority for his apostleship. In **2 Cor. 11:24–29** Paul lists the many hardships and sufferings endured on behalf of his ministry of preaching Christ and Him crucified. The unasked question is, “Would anyone go to such great lengths if he were a fraud?”

Restating the Issue (Gal. 6:12–16)

1.–2. Paul here refers specifically to the problem of the Judaizers when he talks about the ones who are compelling the Galatians to be circumcised. Their legalism again brings Paul’s condemnation.

Paul gives two reasons for the Judaizers demanding circumcision: First, they thought it would save them from persecution. The Romans recognized the Jewish religion. Should persecution arise, circumcision would keep them safe from Roman law, as well as from hatred from fellow Jews. Second, by circumcision and by keeping the Law they were trying to win God’s approval. Do we do the same? Ask for examples of ways we try to earn God’s favor.

3. Paul places the cross of Jesus Christ at the center of the Christian life. It is not what we do for Him but what He has done for us that is the center of our Christian faith and life. The motivation for good works comes from God’s love for us in Christ.

The Word for Us

1. Christianity is not equal to morality. It can be easily demonstrated from history that there are many cultures that are moral but not Christian. Many of the world religions are based on a strong sense of morality, but they are certainly not Christian. The morality of a Christian differs from that of the non-Christian at the point of motivation. Christian morality is a response to Jesus, whereas the morality of the non-Christian comes from a desire to earn credit with God or the desire to be admired by others.

2. Although the threats of the Law can make people respond, usually they do so grudgingly and with bitterness. Even when compelling us to do good, the Law shows us our sinfulness, for the good that we do under threat is always empty, joyless, and futile. Only the response of love and service that comes from the heart of a Christian is joyful, complete, and fulfilling.

3. Answers will vary. Refer to previous sessions, if necessary.

Closing

Close with prayer. Consider including the suggestions in the Study Guide in your closing prayer.