

**\* Galatians 1:1-5**

<sup>1</sup> Paul, an apostle--not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead-- <sup>2</sup> and all the brothers who are with me, To the churches of Galatia: <sup>3</sup> Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>4</sup> who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, <sup>5</sup> to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

● Any Attack On The Gospel, One Should Go To The Letter To The Galatians For A Grand DEFENSE.

- Galatians has been called the Magna Charta of Christian Liberty.
- Galatians has been called the Christian's Declaration of Independence.
- Galatians has been branded as the battle cry of the Reformation.

**Martin Luther really began the Reformation with the writing of a COMMENTARY on Galatians. And it was out of the writing of that commentary that he was moved to the concept of grace and faith as opposed to works, and that really resulted in him blasting out of the Roman Catholic church and establishing the protest that became Protestantism. Luther's commentary really became the manifesto of**

**the Reformation.** And the preaching of Luther around the Reformation was preaching from Galatians.

- Lovers of the truth still turn to it as an arsenal of proof texts for the refutation of all man-made theories of salvation by works.

**In this day of loose thinking on the fundamentals of the faith, we who seek to advance the cause of CHRIST do well to recharge our batteries of doctrinal conviction by a mastery of the teachings in Galatians.**

### When And Why Written

The Apostle Paul on his first missionary journey had progressed west to the area called Galatia, which is a large area, about 100 to 175 miles wide, and about 250 miles from north to south. (North and South Galatian) And in that area of South Galatia, Paul had gone with Barnabas, and he had evangelized four primary cities, Derby, Lystra, Iconium and Antioch of Pisidia. **And in those four cities, he had established churches.** He went all through those cities establishing churches, came to the end of it, turned back around and went back to those churches and strengthened the saints.

Then he went back to the church in Antioch of Syria, a different Antioch, and on the second missionary journey he took Silas. With Silas he went back to those same churches again right back to Derby, Iconium, Lystra and Antioch of Pisidia, and he strengthened those

believers more. **And so in his heart Paul had a tremendous personal love for them.**

And if you read Acts 13 and 14, you'll see that Paul made tremendous sacrifices on their behalf. **It almost cost Paul his life.** He was thrown out on the city dump heap, having been stoned, they thought, to death. It was a tremendous price that he paid, and his blood was shed in behalf of that little area and those churches there. **And so Paul loved them, and they belonged to him, and they were his children in the faith. AND THE REASON PAUL WROTE THIS LETTER WAS THAT HIS CHILDREN WERE BEING ATTACKED. THEIR FAITH WAS BEING ATTACKED. THEIR SPIRITUAL LIFE WAS BEING ATTACKED. HOW?**

It is worth examining a relationship between the Book of Galatians and the 15th chapter of the Book of Acts. **Why?** Because **Acts 15 provides us with the origin of the issue with which Paul deals in Galatians.** Acts 15 gives us the historical context by which we may better understand both the issue and its implications. What we have in Acts 15 is the Council of Jerusalem an event that Luke (*the author of Acts*) attaches the highest importance. Acts 15 is as epic making to the book of Acts as Paul's conversion.

Now, the early church had progressed well by the time the Jerusalem Council was convened. The Church had grown in Jerusalem and up until the first missionary journey of Paul, the Christian churches

had been predominately made of up Jewish people. The teachers were Jewish with rich Old Testament background. But what happened quickly with the missionary journeys of Paul, the newly formed churches were predominately Gentiles. **How were the Jewish people going to react to this? We know how the unsaved Jewish people reacted.**

**Unregenerate Judaism had vigorously resisted the proclamation of the gospel to the extent that Stephen was killed, later James was killed and Paul was nearly killed for telling his fellow countrymen that God had commanded him to preach the gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 22:21-22). Such reaction would not be surprising from those who rejected Christ and the preaching of the gospel. But how would the Jewish people within the church react? Even in the church there was resistance to the gospel being preached to the Gentiles. So the Lord gave Peter a vision and Cornelius and his household was saved . . . . . Acts Chapter 10 . . . .**

Because of Peter's preaching to the Gentiles, Peter was confronted by the Jerusalem church (11:1-3).

**\* Acts 11:1-3**

*<sup>1</sup> Now the apostles and the brothers who were throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God. <sup>2</sup> So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcision party criticized him, saying, <sup>3</sup> "You went to uncircumcised men and ate with them."*

Peter's actions caused alarm in Jerusalem. "*The circumcision party*" by this we understand the Jewish Christians who were particularly zealous over the law, which included the ban on social intercourse between circumcised and uncircumcised. Peter's best defense was a straightforward telling of his experience.

When he related his experience, no one could deny that God had chosen to save the Gentiles. **Nevertheless, the Jerusalem church at large still did not preach to the Gentiles.** (Those that were scattered preached only to the Jews) It was just a handful of Christians from Cyprus dared (before Paul) to take the gospel to the Gentiles, which resulted in the first Gentile church in Antioch (11: 20-26). It was from this Gentile church at Antioch that Silas and Paul were sent as the first missionaries to the Gentiles (13:1-3). **Many Gentiles were converted to faith in Christ and a number of predominantly Gentile churches were established. The Jewish church which had once dominated the spiritual scene was quickly being outnumbered. Antioch, a largely Gentile congregation (cf. Acts 11:19-22), had become the launching pad for missionary outreach.**

Jewish believers, including Paul, still continued to practice much of the Old Testament Law, not so much as an essential aspect of Christianity but as a part of their Jewish culture. **When Barnabas and Paul preached the gospel, they did not compel the Gentiles to imitate their Jewish brethren by insisting that they keep the Ceremonial,**

**Dietary or Nationalistic Laws.** This was a matter of great concern for many Jewish Christians, especially from the “*circumcision party*”, of “*The Pharisees sect*” who were adding Jesus to their system of beliefs . .

The whole matter came to a head at Antioch upon the arrival of a group of Jewish Christians who began to teach the Gentile brethren that they had to be circumcised and keep the Law in order to be saved.

**\* Acts 15:1**

*<sup>1</sup> But some men came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved."*

Paul and Barnabas vigorously opposed this teaching, which resulted in great dissension and debate

**\* Acts 15:2**

*<sup>2</sup> And after Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with them, . . . .*

Here was the confrontation between the circumcision party, the Pharisee sect, what could have been a majority of the Jerusalem church and the first largely Gentile Church in Antioch of Syria. **THEIR MESSAGE**

**TO THE GENTILES, THEIR DEMANDS, AND THEIR TAKE ON THE GOSPEL HAS LED TO THE TERM JUDAIZERS.**

**The Judaizers who had invaded the Galatian churches were of the same kind that came to Antioch and caused trouble there. They representatives this larger group, and as we can see this group brought a**

huge doctrinal problem and societal problem to the early church . . . it needed to be dealt with . . . . and the church decided . . . The Apostles and the elders at the Council of Jerusalem here in Acts 15 made a decision . . . . the issue was settled, (Ecclesiastically.) **Too bad people disagreed with the Apostles, and thought they knew more that the Apostles, and God Himself in His Word.** *(Members of this sect, cult continued to plague the Gentile churches even after the Council made their decision.) (The problem still persists today, by the way.)*

Our information about Judaizers comes a variety of places in the New Testament . . . . . from Acts 15, the letter to the Galatians and 2 Corinthians 12 and Philippian 3 . . . .

● Judaizers Were Jews Who Accepted The Gospel But COMBINED It With Jewish Legalism.

They claimed to have the real, the original, the full gospel and it appealed to many, as the Judaizers represented Paul's gospel as a different, false liberal gospel.

Their argument perhaps was . . . . .

- **Did Jesus not observe the whole Jewish law? Ceremonial? Dietary? Oral?**
- **Did not the 12 Apostles continue to live in the Jewish fashion like all the members of the mother church in Jerusalem?**

It is important to note that . . .

*The Judaizers Were Undermining The Faith Of The Gentile Converts By Insisting That They Could Not Enter Into The Fullness Of Salvation Unless In Addition To Their Belief In CHRIST They Submitted To The Rite Of Circumcision And Other Requirements Of The Jewish Religion.*

As to whether these Judaizers were sincerely but sadly mistaken Hebrew Christians, or were non-Christians trusting completely in works and not saved, we can leave to the judgment of the LORD.

Paul, who was in a much better position than present-day thinkers and commentators to know the facts in the case, was rather thoroughly convinced that they were false teachers, wolves in sheep's clothing:

**\* Philippians 3:2-3**

<sup>2</sup> *Look out for the dogs,* (This Greek word for dogs was a word of reproach among the Jews and the Greeks) *look out for the evildoers, look out for those who mutilate the flesh.* (Paul was saying “the circumcision of the Judaizers is mere mutilation. Then Paul describes what true circumcision is. Look at verse 3 . . .) <sup>3</sup> *For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh--*

THE JUDAIZERS WERE MUTILATING THE MESSAGE OF THE GOSPEL BY SUBSTITUING WORKS FOR GRACE.

The objective of the Judaizers was twofold:

(1) The Judaizers Sought To Undermine Confidence In Paul As A DIVINELY Commissioned Apostle On A Level With The Twelve.

. . . We are going to see that in verse one . . . . .

(2) The Judaizers Wanted To Subvert Paul’s Teaching That Men Were Saved By Faith ALONE.

Judaizing today, if you want to use that term, IS NOT NECESSARILY TRYING TO GET PEOPLE CIRCUMCISED, AND FOLLOWING THE WHOLE MOSAIC LAW. One of the ways we see modern day Judaizers is in the area of Legalism, legalistic religion, legalistic Christianity.

● One Of The Things We Can Learn From Galatians Is A Defense Against LEGALISM.

Strictly speaking, legalism refers to a system of law-keeping.

● Legalism Can Be Defined As Any Attempt To Stand Before God On The Basis Of My Own Good Works.

As such, there are two kinds of legalism.

1. Legalism for Salvation:

- This Is The Attempt To Try To Be Saved On The Basis Of Something That I Do As Opposed To Something That God Has Done On My Behalf.

2. Legalism for Spirituality:

- This Is The Attempt To Try To Be Spiritual Merely On The Basis Of My Own Self-Efforts And Keeping Of Certain Rules Rather Than By Trusting In The Lord And Depending Upon His Spirit.

If we really want to get to the basis of Legalism, the basis of the Judaizers and the need for the letter to the Galatians . . . we can go back to the account of Cain and Abel.

● CAIN Is The First One To Exhibit The Heart And Character Of The Judaizers.

Adam and Eve would have instructed their kids in how a sinner is to approach a holy God. By the means of a blood sacrifice . . . . . An animal sacrifice, a blood sacrifice like God demonstrated when He killed an animal to clothe them when they were naked. That blood sacrifice pointed to and symbolized the actual sacrifice for sin that God would accomplish in Jesus on Calvary's Cross. (*The seed of the woman bruising the serpent's head.*) (That is why Hebrews 11:4 states that Abel offered a more acceptable sacrifice and was declared righteous) The offering of the animal sacrifice was an outward symbol of a heart of faith, that believed in God's promise of victory through the seed of a woman. Cain's reaction was to reject coming to God on the basis of faith in God's substitutionary, sacrificial system. **And Cain substituted a sacrifice of his own personal merit and good works.**

- ABEL FOLLOWED THE INSTRUCTIONS OF HIS FATHER, HIS SACRIFICE OF FAITH POINTED TO THE CROSS AND HE WAS DECLARED RIGHTEOUS.
- CAIN DEPENDED ON PERSONAL MERIT AND WORKS FOR HIS SACRIFICE AND HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS.

From this early example we see a problem that has plagued mankind since the beginning of redemptive history and was the classic error of the Judaizers and many today . . . . .

● The Judaizers Attempted To Substitute Good Works For Faith In Christ.

So back to Acts Chapter 15 . . . . .

● The Root Of The Conflict Between Paul And Barnabas And The Judaizers In Antioch Was A Difference Over The DEFINITION Of The Gospel.

- Paul and Barnabas preached that faith in the shed blood of Christ alone was sufficient to save.
- The Judaizers adamantly protested that this was not enough.

**The Gentiles, they insisted, could only be saved by converting to Judaism, in addition to confessing Christ as their Savior.**

**The consequences of this error brought division and dissension to the church. Dissension and debate had forced every Christian in the**

early church to take sides, and rightly so, for one doctrine was truth and the other was falsehood; one led to life and the other to death.

- The problem created by the Judaizers was taken seriously for two principle reasons: they distorted the gospel and they divided the church.

Look at how the church at Antioch of Syria handled it . . .

**\* Acts 15:2**

*<sup>2</sup>And after Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with them, Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and the elders about this question.*

**The decision reached by the church at Antioch revealed both humility and wisdom. Humility was evidenced by the fact that this growing Gentile congregation was eager to have the Jewish leaders of the Jerusalem church decide this matter, which was highly charged with racial overtones. **Wisdom also prevailed, for once the Jerusalem church had spoken, the issue would be laid to rest.****

● The Issue Was No Longer To Whom The Gospel Should Be Preached, (Jew Or Gentile) Instead The Issue Centered Around The CONTENT Of The Gospel.

The Jewish church had truly progressed since its inception. Instead of excluding Gentiles from the gospel . . . Now the Jewish brethren were

asking, “**what are all the requirements for the salvation of the Gentiles?**”

When the contingent got to Jerusalem, the formalities had hardly been completed when the fireworks began.

**\* Acts 15:4-5**

*<sup>4</sup> When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they declared all that God had done with them. <sup>5</sup> But some believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees rose up (Literally, stood up) and said, "It is necessary to circumcise them and to order them to keep the law of Moses."*

**Just who were these people so adamant about the Old Testament Law?**

Notice here is a group identified as “believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees” . . . Paul himself had been a member of the strictest party of Pharisees before his conversion but his testimony reveals that the kind of righteousness which his Pharisaism produced was not the best . . . . . look at what he wrote . . . . .

**\* Philippians 3:6-7**

*<sup>6</sup> as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless. <sup>7</sup> But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ.*

Paul would really make it plain and clear in verse 9 of Philippians 3 talking about his desire . . . .

**\* Philippians 3:9**

*<sup>9</sup> and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith--*

APPARENTLY SOME OF HIS FELLOW PHARISEES HAD NOT HAD THIS REVELATION . . . It appears from the Word here in Acts 15 that while a number of Pharisees had come to faith in Christ, some of these had failed to fully renounce the legalism of their former sect, and were striving to keep Christianity within the narrow boundaries of Pharisaism.

The issue before the Council was clear: **Do Gentiles have to convert to Judaism in addition to converting to Christ?** The deeper and more fundamental issue was: Are men saved by faith alone, or by faith plus the keeping of the Old Testament Law? **A formal hearing was convened and the matter was thoroughly debated before a decision was reached.**

After much debate, Peter stood (v. 7). His testimony was particularly pertinent because of the events already described in Acts chapters 10 and 11. (With Cornelius and his household)

**\* Acts 15:7-11**

*<sup>7</sup> And after there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, "Brothers, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel*

*and believe. <sup>8</sup> And God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, by giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us, <sup>9</sup> and he made no distinction between us and them, having cleansed their hearts by faith. <sup>10</sup> Now, therefore, why are you putting God to the test by placing a yoke on the neck of the disciples that neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? <sup>11</sup> But we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will."*

**What was true in Acts 10-11 with Peter and Cornelius and the inclusion of the Gentiles was the precedent for the decision of the Jerusalem Council in chapter 15.**

Peter reminds everyone that the fundamental issue they were discussing had already been decided, when nearly ten years before he had been led by God to the house of Cornelius and that the Gentiles had heard the gospel for the first time from his lips. God confirmed His acceptance of the Gentiles by giving them the Holy Spirit. AND IF GOD ACCEPTED THESE GENTILES AND CLEANSSED THEIR HEARTS BY HIS HOLY SPIRIT AS SOON AS THEY BELIEVED THE GOSPEL, WHY SHOULD FURTHER CONDITIONS NOW BE IMPOSED ON THEM WHICH GOD HIMSELF PLAINLY DID NOT REQUIRE?

**Peter's first argument was based on the lesson he and the church had learned concerning Cornelius and those gathered in his house.**

*(God made no distinction between us and them – inclusion)*

**Peter's second argument went even further, pressing for the basis of salvation for both Jew or Gentile.** *(The cleansing of the heart by faith.)*

**Finally Peter turned to the lesson which should have been learned from the history of Israel and from the teaching of our Lord.**

*Gentiles Need Not Become Jewish To Be Saved Because Judaism Has Never Saved Anyone.*

In his first argument, Peter concluded that once saved, God did not distinguish between Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians. **Peter continued the debate by showing that Judaism was not essential to salvation. Peter rightly perceived that the Judaizers were teaching that salvation was not a matter of grace but of works.**

The gospel was being redefined, just as Paul forcefully stated in Galatians (1:6-10).

#### **\* Galatians 1:6-9**

*<sup>6</sup> I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel-- <sup>7</sup> not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. <sup>8</sup> But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. <sup>9</sup> As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.*

**Paul writes how this gospel of the Judaizers was another Gospel, a different gospel, a contrary gospel . . . . A GOSPEL THAT FURTHER IMPLIED THAT JEWS WERE SAVED BY THE KEEPING OF THE LAW.**

The fact was, as Peter states, the Jews had never been saved by the Law; it was an unbearable yoke that only condemned; and that God used to bring people to Christ.

**\* Acts 15:10**

*<sup>10</sup> Now, therefore, why are you putting God to the test by placing a yoke on the neck of the disciples that neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear?*

The term “yoke” was particularly appropriate in this connection; a proselyte, when he undertook to fulfill the law, was said to take up the yoke of the kingdom of heaven.” THE TRADITIONAL LAW AT THIS TIME (*especially expounded by the severe school of Shammai which was dominant at this time, was a heavy burden under which they groaned.*) Peter and his companions had learned to rejoice in the easy yoke of Christ . . . . Matthew 11:29. They recognized that their own salvation was due to the free grace of Jesus.

Peter powerfully concluded:

**\* Acts 15:11**

*<sup>11</sup> But we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will."*

The true underlying issue was: **How are men saved? Both Jews and Gentiles are saved alike, by the grace of God through faith alone, and not by law-keeping.** The Law can only condemn; it cannot save. Which we will see in Galatians. (Gal. 3:1-14).

- The error which was taught by the Judaizers was not only serious, **IT WAS SIN.** It was, to use Peter’s very words, to “*put God to the test*” (Acts 15:10).

The demand of the Judaizers that the Gentiles give outward, visible proof of their salvation by keeping the Law was sinful for several reasons.

- **First,** The Gospel Of The Judaizers Was Sin Because It Demeaned The Person Of Christ.

It said . . . .What Jesus did wasn’t enough . . . . . Made “Another Jesus.” What Christians are is solely dependent upon who Christ is. He is our righteousness . . . .Our salvation, our security, our sanctification, are all “in Him” .

- **Secondly,** The Gospel Of The Judaizers Was Sin Because In The Need To Adhere To A Code It Denied The Principle Of Grace.

**WHEN PETER FINISHED SPEAKING THERE WAS THE HUSH OF SILENCE.**

Perhaps no further argument was needed, but Barnabas and Paul now shared their testimony of the “signs and wonders” which had accompanied the salvation of the Gentiles. Then James, the leader of the Jerusalem church would give Old Testament verification from the book of Amos that what Peter had said was true.