

# Galatians: A Study Guide

## (Part 2)

*by Bryan Gibson*

Galatians is a six chapter epistle, in which Paul address three major issues, with two chapters devoted to each one. In some form or another, the issues addressed are still very much alive today.

Issue #1, chapters 1-2: Was Paul a true apostle? Can we trust what he preaches and writes—did he really receive it from Christ, or learn it from men?

Issue #2, chapters 3-4 (and first part of chapter 5): The gospel—it is really sufficient for salvation, or does one have to be circumcised and keep the law of Moses?

Issue #3, chapters 5-6: Does freedom from the law of Moses mean we are now lawless, or to put it another way, does liberty mean license?

Paul also makes three major points, each designed to address the three issues we've already identified.

Major point #1: **“But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1:11-12).** That's Paul's answer to the questions about the source of his gospel. Anyone, of course, could make that claim, but what Paul does in the following verses is offer proof. Read the rest of chapter 1 and then continue reading in chapter 2, and you'll be more convinced than ever that what Paul preached and wrote came from Jesus Christ.

Major point #2: **“Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified” (2:16).** This is obviously directed to those for whom the gospel was not sufficient, those who taught (or believed) salvation by the works of the law. Once again, Paul follows his statement with a series of proofs. Read the arguments offered in chapters three and four, and then the conclusions reached in the first part of chapter five. You are not under the law of Moses; circumcision means nothing; Christ and the gospel are all you need—each and every argument is designed to lead to these and other similar conclusions. Bottom line, the gospel plus anything else is not the gospel, and anyone who makes these additions is accursed (see 1:6-9).

Major point #3: **“For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another” (5:13).** That's how you put to rest any false notions about freedom in Christ. Free to serve Christ without fear of condemnation, because of the forgiveness found in Him (see 3:10-14), but not free to do as we please. As previously noted, a man is justified by faith in Christ, but this is a working

faith (5:6); a faith that walks in the Spirit (5:16, 25), and therefore bears the fruit of the Spirit (5:22-23); a faith that obeys the truth (5:7) and fulfills the law of Christ (6:2); a faith that crucifies everything opposed to Christ and lives for Him (2:20; 5:24; 6:14).

Three issues, three major points to counter those issues. There's much more to this inspired epistle, but hopefully this provides a good foundation for future study.

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