

# Christ has made us free

An EasyEnglish Bible Version and Commentary (2800 word vocabulary) on the Book of Galatians

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This commentary **has been** through Advanced Checking.

Words in boxes are from the Bible.

A word list at the end explains words with a \*star by them.

## About Paul's letter to the Galatians

### The writer

Paul wrote this letter. His name used to be Saul. He was called Saul until Acts 13:9, when he was first called Paul. He was a \*Jewish leader. He used to oppose the Christians. But one day, he met Jesus in a special way. You can read how he became a Christian in Acts 9.

Paul knew about all the \*Jewish laws. He used to obey all the \*Jewish laws and traditions. But when Paul became a Christian, his life changed. Now he understood the real purpose of God's law. God's law shows people their \*sins. So it shows people that they need to trust Jesus. Only Jesus can free us from the punishment for our \*sins.

So Paul \*preached this \*good news first to \*Jewish people. Later he \*preached to the \*Gentiles (Acts 13:42-48). Many people became Christians when they heard him. Especially, many \*Gentiles became Christians.

### The people who received this letter

Galatia was part of the country that we now call Turkey. Most of the people who lived in Galatia were \*Gentiles. Paul had visited the region at least twice. He had \*preached the \*good news about Jesus and many people became Christians. The cities in Acts 14:21 are in Galatia. Paul visited the region again in Acts 18:23. Paul was weak when he first \*preached there. But the people in Galatia were still excited to hear his message. And many people became Christians (4:13-16).

### Why he wrote this letter

The \*Gentile Christians in Galatia had believed the \*good news about Jesus. But some \*Jewish false teachers had visited them. The false teachers may have been ordinary \*Jews. But they may have been \*Jews who seemed to trust Jesus. However, those \*Jews were jealous of Paul and they had spoken against him. They said that Paul was not an \*apostle. And they said that the Christians had to obey the \*Jewish laws. These laws controlled people. Some of the Christians in Galatia believed the false teachers. Paul was very worried about the Christians. So he wrote this letter to teach them the truth again. He reminded them about the true liberty that Jesus gives.

## Chapter 1

### Paul's greeting to the Christians in Galatia

**v1** I, Paul, am writing this letter. I am an \*apostle. People did not make me an \*apostle. A person has not sent me. But Jesus Christ appointed me as an \*apostle. And God the Father, who raised Jesus from death, appointed me. **v2** All the Christians who are here with me send their greetings. We are writing to the \*churches in the region called Galatia.

**v3** I pray that you will receive kindness and \*peace from God our Father and the \*Lord Jesus Christ. **v4** Jesus chose to die because of our \*sins. He did this in order to rescue us from this evil world. That is what God our Father decided to do. **v5** And God always deserves honour and greatness. This is the truth.

Paul started all his letters in a similar way. In Paul's days, it was the custom for a person to write his name at the beginning of a letter. He also mentioned the people to whom he was writing. Then there was a short greeting in the form of a prayer. Paul was not happy about the situation in Galatia. Perhaps these problems explain why Paul's greeting was shorter than usual.

#### Verse 1

Paul knew many of the Christians to whom he was writing. God had sent Paul and Barnabas out to \*preach the \*good news about Jesus. At first, Paul always went to the \*Jews to teach them about Jesus. Some \*Jews believed Paul, but other \*Jews did not believe him. Great crowds listened to Paul. Some \*Jews became jealous about Paul's success. They spoke against Paul and they caused trouble for him. So Paul and Barnabas decided to \*preach to the \*Gentiles. They went to the region called Galatia. Again, many people opposed them. In one city, the \*Jews nearly killed Paul. However, many people trusted Jesus and they became strong Christians. (You can read about these events in Acts 13:42-14:23.) Many \*Jews were not pleased with the Christians. So the \*Jewish false teachers tried to prove that Paul lied. They said that he was not a true \*apostle. They also said that he had not taught the truth. Some Christians began to doubt Paul. And they doubted what he had taught.

At the start of his letter, Paul wanted to emphasise to the Christians that he was a true \*apostle. An \*apostle is someone whom God sends out to teach about Jesus. Paul did not become an \*apostle because of any person's action. God himself appointed Paul to be an \*apostle. Jesus Christ had appeared to Paul. He sent Paul out to tell people the \*good news about Jesus (Acts 26:15-18).

Paul briefly referred to the \*good news in this verse. Jesus came to this world. He died on our behalf to free us from our \*sins. Then God made Jesus alive again. Jesus forgives \*sins. This is the most important part of the Christian message.

Paul showed that the authority of Jesus is the same as the authority of God the Father. Both God the Father and Jesus chose Paul as an \*apostle. Therefore, Paul taught with God's authority.

#### Verse 2

Paul did not say where he was at that time. These Christians were probably helping him with his work. In other letters, he mentions the names of his helpers. Galatia is in the country that we now call Turkey. '\*Church' is the name for a group of Christians. It does not refer to the building where they meet. One of Paul's helpers would have travelled to Galatia with this letter. He went to the groups of Christians who lived in the cities and towns in that region. He read this letter aloud to the people. He helped them to understand what Paul wrote. People in each group probably copied the letter. Then they could study it in the future.

#### Verse 3

Paul prayed for kindness and \*peace at the start of every letter that he wrote. Here he used Jesus' full title. '\*Lord' means that Jesus has complete authority. He is head over everything. 'Jesus' is his human name. The name Jesus means 'It is God who saves'. Jesus saves people from their \*sins (Matthew 1:21). 'Christ' is a \*Greek word. It means the same as the \*Hebrew word Messiah. This means 'the person whom God has anointed'. To 'anoint' means to mark a person in a special way. They often marked the person with oil. It is a sign. It shows that God has chosen that person for some special service. God anointed Jesus with the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:38). In the \*Old Testament, God promised to send the Messiah to save his people, the \*Jews. However, most \*Jews did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah.

'Kindness' is the word 'grace'. It is a gift that God gives. We do not deserve it and we cannot earn it. 'Grace' means that God the Father is kind and generous to his children. God helps and protects people. God's grace (kindness) comes to people by means of Jesus. God gives his people everything that they need for their Christian life.

'Peace'. In the \*Hebrew language this word is 'shalom'. It is a traditional greeting in the \*Old Testament (Numbers 6:24-26) and among \*Jewish people today. 'Peace' is not just the opposite of war or noise. Peace means that God gives a person a calm spirit. This affects every part of a person's life and relationships. Nobody can have God's \*peace without his grace (kindness).

#### Verse 4

This is the second main thing that Paul wanted to emphasise at the start of this letter. Jesus came to this world. He died on our behalf to free us from our \*sins. Jesus did not do this by himself. He obeyed what God the Father wanted him to do. Now we do not have to live as other people live. We can choose to live in the right way. (You can read more about this in Romans 6.) This is the \*good news about Jesus that Paul had taught the people in Galatia. It is the truth, because Paul taught with God's authority.

#### Verse 5

God is wonderful. And God's plan through Jesus is wonderful. Therefore, we should always \*worship God. 'This is the truth' is the word 'Amen'. People say 'Amen' at the end of a prayer. It shows that they agree with the

speaker or writer. Paul expected the Christians in Galatia to agree with his prayer.

## The reason why Paul was writing this letter

**v6** You astonish me. You are leaving God so soon. God chose you and he was kind to you by means of Christ. Now you are listening to a different message. **v7** But what you are agreeing with is not the true \*good news. There are some people who are trying to confuse you. They are trying to change the \*good news about Christ. **v8** We taught you the \*good news about Christ. Let God punish us if we teach you something different. Let God punish even an \*angel from heaven who teaches something different. **v9** I have already said this. I will say this again. You believed the true \*good news about Christ. Let God punish anyone who teaches you something different.

**v10** I am not trying to please people now. Instead, I want to please God. I would not be Christ's servant if I were trying to please people.

### Verse 6

In Paul's other letters, he prayed for the people after his greeting. He usually thanked God for them. He often praised them too. But Paul did not praise the Christians in Galatia in any way. He started to teach them immediately after the greeting. He was sad and angry. He could hardly believe what they had done. It seems that Paul had visited the area only a short time previously. Many people had become Christians. After Paul left, the false teachers arrived. They were skilful at persuading people. The Christians were not yet mature. They probably thought that they had to obey the \*Jewish laws to be proper Christians. The situation was very serious.

God loves people and he is kind to them. He knows that people can never live perfectly. They can never obey all the laws that are in the \*Old Testament. So God sent Jesus Christ to this world. Jesus died on a wooden cross, and then God made him alive again. Jesus died on our behalf. He died to make people free from their \*sins. So God forgives everyone who believes Jesus. God forgives everyone who trusts Jesus. We do not need to obey the rules and traditions of religion. We simply need to trust Jesus. That is the true \*good news.

The false teachers were not genuine Christians. They did not teach that only Jesus Christ could save people. They said that Christians had to obey all the \*Jewish laws too. When people try to obey the laws, they have to use their own effort. They think that this pleases God. They believe that they have to work hard. They think that then God will accept them. They think that they have to earn God's love. That is not true. That false message does not give people freedom.

The Christians in Galatia probably did not realise that they were actually refusing Jesus Christ. They just thought that they were adding something to their Christian life. They had not realised that it was a different message. They had not completely refused Jesus at that time. It was not too late to teach them correctly. So Paul wrote very clearly in this letter about the true \*good news. He explained why the false teachers were wrong. The Christians in Galatia would have realised that Paul was very serious about the situation.

### Verse 7

Paul referred to the false teachers as 'some people'. He did not mention their names. Paul did not want the Christians to concentrate on the false teachers. Instead, he wanted the Christians to concentrate on the truth. Paul wanted to emphasise that the false teachers were not teaching the truth. There is only one true message about Christ. The false teachers were trying to replace the true \*good news with their lies. They were upsetting the Christians. This was opposite to the \*peace that Jesus Christ gives to people in their minds (John 14:27).

### Verse 8

Paul wrote very strongly in these verses. In verse 1, he had proved that he was a genuine \*apostle. So his authority came from God. Therefore, what he had taught the Christians in Galatia was the true \*good news. Nothing and nobody could change that truth. If Paul or other Christians taught something different about Jesus Christ, their message would not be the truth. Paul even referred to an \*angel to emphasise what he was saying. He was very angry with the false teachers. He wanted God to punish them. If people believed the false teachers, those people would not trust Jesus Christ. Instead, they would trust their religion. They would think that their own good behaviour would earn them the right to go to heaven. But this idea is very wrong. Only God can save us from the punishment for our \*sins. We must trust him completely. So, in fact, the false teachers were teaching a very evil message. Such a message could cause people to go to hell because they would trust their own efforts instead of Christ.

### Verse 9

This probably referred to what Paul said to the Christians in the past. He probably warned them about the false teachers when he first visited Galatia. Paul knew that he was teaching the truth when he spoke about Christ. And the people became Christians because they believed the truth.

## Verse 10

Paul taught that Christ made people free from the laws and traditions of religion. The false teachers said that Paul was merely trying to please people. But this was a lie. In fact, many people opposed Paul because he taught about Christ. Paul obeyed God and he always wanted to please God. Because of that, people had accused Paul and they had caused him trouble. No Christian can teach the true \*good news and please everyone. Some people will always oppose Christians. It is not easy to be one of Christ's servants.

## How Paul became an \*apostle

**v11** My Christian brothers and sisters, this is what I want you to know. People did not make up the \*good news that I \*preached about Jesus. **v12** Nobody told me this \*good news. Nobody taught me this \*good news. Jesus Christ himself showed it to me.

**v13** You have heard about my actions when I belonged to the \*Jewish religion. I caused Christians to suffer very much. I tried to destroy the \*church. **v14** I became more important in the \*Jewish religion than other \*Jews who were my age. I was eager to obey all the \*Jewish traditions. **v15** But God was very kind to me. He chose me even before I was born. He had decided **v16** to show me who his son really is. God did this so that I could tell the \*Gentiles about Jesus. So when God showed Jesus to me, I did not immediately discuss this with other people. **v17** And I did not go to Jerusalem to talk to the men who were already \*apostles. Instead, I went immediately to the region called Arabia. Later I returned to the city called Damascus.

**v18** Three years later, I went to Jerusalem. I visited Peter. I stayed with him for 15 days. **v19** I did not see any other \*apostles. I only saw James, who is Jesus' brother. **v20** God knows that I am writing the truth. I am not lying. **v21** Later I visited the regions called Syria and Cilicia. **v22** The people in the \*churches of Christ across the region called Judea still had not seen me. **v23** But they heard what other people said, 'This man used to attack us. He tried to destroy belief in Christ. But now he tells people how they should trust Christ.' **v24** So they praised God because of me.

From 1:11 to 2:21, Paul wanted to show that he was a true \*apostle. This would prove that he taught the true \*good news about Jesus. He wanted them to have confidence in what Jesus did. Then they would realise that the message of the false teachers was wrong.

## Verses 11-12

Christians belong to different physical families. However, all Christians belong to God's family because God is our father. Paul wrote to the Christians in Galatia to teach them the truth. But he called them 'brothers and sisters' because he loved them as his family.

The \*good news about Jesus is the truth. It is not a story that someone made up. Paul did not hear about Jesus from someone else. Paul did not even learn about Jesus from the other \*apostles (verses 16-17). Instead, Jesus himself appeared to Paul (Acts 9:1-20). So Paul was not merely teaching somebody's ideas about God. And when Paul taught the \*good news, he was not merely discussing his own opinions. Paul himself would never have believed in Jesus if Paul had merely listened to people's opinions. But Paul was a Christian because God had showed him these things. So Paul urged the Christians in Galatia also to trust what God had taught them.

This is different from the false teachers. They had learned the \*Jewish religion in the traditional way. They had to remember the words that their own teachers had taught them. They were not teaching the people to obey God. Instead, the false teachers taught that people should obey rules and traditions.

## Verse 13

The Christians in Galatia had heard about Paul. Paul did not believe the \*good news about Jesus before he met Jesus. In fact, Paul hated the people who trusted Jesus. Paul put many Christians into prison. He approved when Stephen died (Acts 7:55-8:3). He wanted to destroy the whole Christian \*church.

## Verse 14

Paul had been a very loyal \*Jew. He loved the \*Jewish law. He was extremely eager about it. He studied it so that he knew it properly. The laws are in the first 5 books of the \*Old Testament (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy). All \*Jewish boys had to learn and remember many parts of these books. They would regularly repeat aloud what they learned. That helped them to remember everything. The \*Jewish teachers had made up many extra laws. These were part of the \*Jewish traditions. \*Jewish boys learned and studied these traditions too. But Paul was better than other students, even when he was young. He had been more loyal than other \*Jews. And he had been more eager. So Paul knew the \*Jewish laws better than the false teachers knew them.

## Verses 15-16

Paul had been very eager that all \*Jews should obey the \*Jewish law and traditions. But he had some very strong opinions. Because of these opinions, Paul had done some terrible things. He did not believe in Jesus. So Paul opposed Christians. But he suddenly became a Christian. Paul realised that Jesus was God's son. Nobody had taught Paul. Only God could make Paul understand the truth. Paul knew that he did not deserve God's kindness. But God had a special job for Paul to do. God had decided about this job even before Paul was born (compare this with Jeremiah 1:5). God sent Paul to tell the \*Gentiles about Jesus. '\*Gentiles' are all the people who are not \*Jews. Paul knew what God had told him to do. So Paul did not have to ask anyone for advice.

#### Verse 17

Paul wanted to emphasise again that nobody had taught him about Jesus (verse 12). '\*Apostles' probably refers to Jesus' 12 \*disciples. Paul considered that he was equal with the other \*apostles. Paul did not meet with them. He did not need them to teach him about Jesus. Instead, Paul went away to Arabia. This region was a desert on the east side of Israel.

Paul knew the \*Old Testament. The \*Old Testament describes many things about Jesus (Luke 24:27). But Paul had not yet understood it properly. However, Jesus had showed Paul the truth. Paul may have gone to Arabia to be alone. He may have needed time to think and pray. But perhaps he also taught the \*good news to people who lived in that region. Paul does not say how long he stayed in Arabia. Paul was going to Damascus when Jesus appeared to him. Later, in Damascus, Paul taught the \*Jews about Jesus. Many people believed what Paul had taught. But some people opposed him. In fact, they nearly killed him (Acts 9:1-6, 19-22).

#### Verses 18-19

Paul was still trying to show that nobody taught him about Jesus Christ. Paul did not go to Jerusalem for three years. By then, he was a mature Christian. The Christians in Jerusalem were afraid of Paul (then called Saul) when he went there (Acts 9:26-30). They did not believe that he was a real Christian. So Paul met only two \*church leaders in Jerusalem. These two men were Peter and James. In Jerusalem, Paul taught the \*good news about Jesus. Peter and Paul probably talked together about Jesus. They also probably spoke about the work that God had given to each of them. And perhaps they also discussed their experiences. James was not one of Jesus' 12 \*disciples. Acts 12:1-2 describes how King Herod killed another man called James, who was a \*disciple. But the James whom Paul mentioned was Jesus' brother. And he became a leader in the \*church at Jerusalem (Acts 12:17; 15:13). Paul's visit to Jerusalem was short. The \*Jews tried to kill him, so he had to leave quickly.

#### Verse 20

Paul wanted to convince the Christians in Galatia that he was not lying. The false teachers did not like what Paul taught about Jesus. So they lied about Paul. But Paul knew that he was innocent. And God also knew that Paul was innocent.

#### Verses 21-22

Many people in Jerusalem had known Paul before he was a Christian. So, Paul went to two large regions where the Christians did not know him. Paul moved away from the \*apostles and he worked by himself. The \*apostles did not send Paul. He did not work with their authority. Paul came from the town called Tarsus, which was in Cilicia. Paul was \*preaching the \*good news to \*Jews in these places. Perhaps Paul even managed to establish new \*churches there. Only a few years earlier, there had been only one Christian \*church. That \*church was in Jerusalem.

#### Verses 23-24

Paul had changed completely. The \*churches in Judea heard reports about Paul. They were pleased to hear what God was doing in Paul's life. So they praised God because God had changed Paul so much. This is different from the \*churches in Galatia. They had heard Paul teach the \*good news about Jesus. But they began to doubt what Paul had taught them (verse 6).

## Chapter 2

### Paul met the leaders in Jerusalem

**v1** Then I returned to Jerusalem 14 years later with Barnabas. Titus came with me too. **v2** God showed me that I should go there. So I went. I had a private meeting with the people who seemed to be leaders. I explained to them the \*good news about Jesus that I \*preach to the \*Gentiles. I did not want my past work or my present work to be a failure. **v3** Titus, who had come with me, was a \*Greek man. But the \*church leaders did not insist that they wanted to \*circumcise him. **v4** We needed to discuss this matter because of some men who pretended to be Christians. But they were not Christians. They had come into our group

secretly. They were watching the freedom that Jesus Christ gives to us. Really, they wanted to control us like slaves. **v5** We did not allow them to persuade us, not even for a moment. Instead, we wanted to protect the true \*good news for your benefit.

### Verse 1

Paul first visited Jerusalem about three years after he became a Christian (1:18). He returned to Jerusalem 14 years later. The Bible does not tell us everything that Paul did during those 14 years. However, Acts 13:1-3 describes how God sent Paul out from the city called Antioch. God chose Barnabas so that he would go with Paul to help him. Barnabas encouraged other Christians (Acts 4:36; 9:27). Acts chapters 13-14 describe the journey of Paul and Barnabas. They went to many towns where they told people the \*good news about Jesus. As a result, many people trusted Jesus. Many of those people were \*Gentiles.

### Verse 2

The \*good news about Jesus is for everyone. God wants \*Jews and \*Gentiles alike to trust Jesus Christ. When the \*apostles first taught about Jesus, mostly \*Jewish people became Christians. Often they continued to obey the \*Jewish laws. The false teachers were trying to force all Christians to obey the \*Jewish laws. They even said that \*Gentile Christians must become \*Jews too. And the false teachers caused trouble when \*Gentiles became Christians. If a \*Gentile man becomes a \*Jew, someone \*circumcises him. And a \*Jewish leader \*circumcises a \*Jewish boy when the boy is 8 days old. This is the mark that he is a true \*Jew (Genesis 17:1-14). But Paul said that they did not need to do this to \*Gentile Christians. We do not become Christians because we obey the \*Jewish law. Instead, we become Christians because Jesus died for us.

God wanted Paul to go to Jerusalem. The leaders of the \*church in Jerusalem did not ask Paul to visit them. The \*apostles were the main leaders in the \*church in Jerusalem. They had great authority among all Christians. The decision that these leaders made affected Paul's work. In fact, their decision affected unity in the \*church. Paul knew that the leaders might agree with him. If so, Paul could be confident that God wanted him to \*preach to the \*Gentiles. However, the leaders might not have agreed with what Paul taught. They might have insisted that the \*Gentile Christians must become \*Jews. That would have divided \*Jewish and \*Gentile Christians.

Paul and the leaders had a private meeting. In a public meeting, people sometimes like to cause trouble. But Paul and the leaders wanted to discuss carefully. They had to make the right decision. Paul \*preached about Jesus. The \*apostles and Christian leaders \*preached about Jesus. They had to know if they were \*preaching the same message.

### Verse 3

Barnabas was a \*Jewish Christian. But Titus was a \*Gentile Christian. '\*Greek man' may mean that Titus came from the country called Greece. But the \*Jews often referred to the \*Gentiles as 'Greek men'. The \*Jewish Christians and leaders in Jerusalem accepted Titus. Nobody \*circumcised Titus. This means that nobody made Titus become a \*Jew. This was very important to Paul. The leaders had accepted a \*Gentile Christian. And it proved that the \*apostles and leaders in Jerusalem did not agree with the false teachers.

### Verses 4-5

Not everyone in Jerusalem was pleased with Paul. There were people who opposed him. Paul spoke very strongly when he spoke about them. He said that they were not Christians at all. They had the wrong purpose. They were not honest when they joined the Christians in Jerusalem. They were false Christians who did not want to learn about the truth. Instead, they said that all Christians should obey all the \*Jewish laws. In fact, they wanted all Christians to become \*Jews. Jesus gives freedom to the people who trust him. But these false Christians wanted people to act like slaves. Really, the false Christians were trying to control people by their rules and traditions.

### Verse 5

Paul refused to agree with what the false teachers taught. It was not the truth. Paul was firm. He would not give in. Paul did not let anyone \*circumcise Titus. \*Gentiles do not have to become \*Jews. The true \*good news about Jesus makes people free from the laws and traditions of religion. God accepts only the people who trust Jesus. Paul wanted everyone, especially the \*Gentiles, to know that fact.

## The leaders accepted Paul

**v6** We spoke to the men who seemed to be the most important leaders. (It does not matter to me who those leaders were. Men cannot impress God.) Those men did not change the \*good news that I \*preached about Jesus. **v7** In fact, they realised that God had sent me to the people who are \*Gentiles. God sent me to \*preach the \*good news about Jesus to the \*Gentiles. God sent Peter to \*preach the \*good news about Jesus to the \*Jews. **v8** God caused Peter to become an \*apostle to the \*Jews. And God caused me to become an \*apostle to the \*Gentiles. **v9** James, Peter and John seemed to be the leaders.

They recognised that God had given this special job to me. So they shook hands with Barnabas and with me. This showed that we were all partners. They agreed that Barnabas and I would work with the \*Gentiles. And they would work with the \*Jews. **v10** They just asked that we should continue to help poor people. And I too was very eager to do this.

### Verse 6

Most Christians considered that the leaders in Jerusalem were the most important \*church leaders. These leaders had known Jesus very well. Jesus had called them \*apostles. But Paul said that a person's rank did not matter to God. God looks at what each person's character is like (1 Samuel 16:7).

Paul did not meet these men because other people believed them to be important. Rather, Paul spoke to them because God had called them. And Paul respected their opinions because they were holy and sincere men.

So Paul spoke to the leaders in Jerusalem. They checked what he was \*preaching. They all were \*preaching the same \*good news about Jesus. So they accepted Paul and they approved of him. There was unity between them. Paul could continue to \*preach what Jesus himself had taught him (1:11-12). The false teachers could no longer say that Paul was teaching something different.

### Verses 7-8

God sent both Peter and Paul to declare the \*good news about Jesus Christ. Paul wanted to emphasise that God sent them. Men did not send them. They did not decide themselves to go. They were both \*apostles because God sent them. In Acts 22:21, Paul described how God sent him. Peter and Paul declared the same \*good news about Jesus. But they worked among different people. However, it does not mean that Paul never \*preached to \*Jews. And it does not mean that Peter never \*preached to \*Gentiles. This verse just describes their main work. The \*Jews and the \*Gentiles lived in very different ways. The \*Jews believed the \*Old Testament, but many \*Jews refused to believe Jesus. Most \*Gentiles did not know God or the \*Old Testament.

### Verse 9

This was the first time that Paul named the leaders. James was Jesus' brother (1:19).

When Jesus returned to heaven, the \*disciples \*preached to the \*Jews. At first, only \*Jews became Christians. But God wanted the \*Gentiles to believe and trust Jesus too. Originally many \*Jewish Christians did not like the \*Gentiles. The \*Jews even separated themselves from the \*Gentiles. So the \*Jewish Christians had to learn that God loves \*Gentiles. Acts 10 describes how God taught Peter to accept \*Gentiles. And Acts 11:1-18 describes how Peter persuaded the other leaders. So James, Peter and John knew that Paul was obeying God. To shake hands means that they promised to be official partners. This was a serious agreement. And it showed that Paul was as important as the other three \*apostles.

### Verse 10

The 'poor people' refers to the poor Christians who lived in Jerusalem. Most of these people were probably \*Jewish Christians. So Paul collected money from the \*Gentile Christians that he visited. Then he took the money when he went to Jerusalem (see Acts 11:28-30 and 2 Corinthians chapter 8). Leviticus 19:10 and Deuteronomy 15:11 show that God cares about poor people. He expects richer people to be generous to poor people. And Paul thought that richer \*Gentile Christians should be generous to poorer \*Jewish Christians (Romans 15:25-27). That would help unite them too.

Acts 15:1-35 describes another meeting in which the leaders of the Jerusalem \*church made important decisions about \*Gentile Christians. Some people think that Acts chapter 15 may describe the same meeting as Galatians chapter 2.

## Paul opposed Peter in Antioch

**v11** When Peter came to the city called Antioch, I opposed him in public. What he did was wrong. **v12** Some men came to Antioch from James's \*church. Before they arrived, Peter used to eat with the \*Gentile Christians. But Peter was afraid of these men, because they were \*Jewish. He did not continue to eat with the \*Gentile Christians. **v13** The other \*Jewish Christians started to behave like cowards too, as Peter did. Even Barnabas copied their behaviour. **v14** I saw that they were not behaving in the right way. They were not obeying the real message of the \*good news. So I spoke to Peter in front of all the other Christians. I said, 'You are a \*Jew. But you follow the customs of the \*Gentiles. You have not been following the customs of the \*Jews. You certainly should not insist that \*Gentile Christians must live as \*Jews.'

The second part of this chapter is completely different from the first part.

### Verse 11

Antioch was an important city in the country called Syria. Acts 11:19-26 tells us that some \*disciples had travelled to Antioch. They taught people the \*good news about Jesus. Both \*Jews and \*Gentiles became

Christians. That had not caused any problems. The leaders in the Jerusalem \*church had sent Barnabas to Antioch. He helped the Christians. Then Barnabas took Paul to Antioch. Paul taught the Christians for a year.

Peter also went to Antioch. We do not know when Peter went. We also do not know why he went. But it seems that he was there for quite a while. But Peter behaved in the wrong way and Paul opposed him. Paul described the event in more detail in verses 12-14. And he explained why Peter was wrong.

Verse 12

Peter knew that God accepted the \*Gentiles (Acts 10). Jesus unites \*Jews and \*Gentiles when they trust him. So Peter was happy to accept \*Gentile Christians. In Antioch, they ate together. This means that they regularly ate meals together. Also, they had the ‘\*Lord’s Supper’ together (see 1 Corinthians 11:17-34). The \*Jewish laws said that a \*Jew must not eat with \*Gentiles. But \*Jewish Christians are free from these \*Jewish laws.

Paul did not name the men who went to Antioch. These men came from James’s \*church, in Jerusalem. It seems that the men knew James. But Paul did not say that James sent them. Perhaps these men were \*Jewish Christians whom Peter wanted to impress. But perhaps these men were false teachers. If so, they did not teach the true \*good news about Jesus. They believed that \*Gentile Christians should become \*Jews. Peter knew the truth, so he should have opposed such a message. Instead, he was afraid of these men. He did not continue to live freely. He began to avoid the \*Gentile Christians. In Acts chapters 2 to 4, you can read how Peter confidently \*preached to the \*Jews about Jesus. But still, he was too afraid to oppose the false teachers at Antioch.

This verse shows that even important leaders may behave in the wrong way. Peter did not just make a mistake. He chose to act against the truth on purpose. He tried to protect himself. Instead, he should have protected God’s truth.

Verse 13

Peter was an important leader, so the \*Jewish Christians at Antioch copied his behaviour. Even Barnabas, who knew Paul well, did not oppose Peter. Paul described them all as cowards. They knew the truth that \*Jewish and \*Gentile Christians are equal. But Peter and the other \*Jewish Christians were not behaving in the right way. They were dividing the \*Jewish and \*Gentile Christians instead of uniting them.

Verse 14

Paul was not afraid of anyone. He cared more about the true \*good news. He wanted everyone to know the truth. This important matter was affecting many Christians. Even the Christians in Galatia heard about this problem. So Paul did not see Peter privately. Instead, he spoke to Peter publicly so that all the Christians heard.

Paul showed Peter that his behaviour was not reasonable. Peter was a \*Jew but he had not behaved like a \*Jew. Instead, he was free from the \*Jewish laws and traditions. So he had freely mixed with the \*Gentile Christians. Then Peter separated from them because they were \*Gentiles. He mixed only with \*Jewish Christians. That suggested that he wanted the \*Gentile Christians to become \*Jews. Peter knew that this was not correct. But he may not have realised what his action meant. It was the opposite of what James, Peter and John had said earlier in this chapter.

## Paul’s conversation with Peter

**v15** ‘We were born as \*Jews. We are not like the \*Gentiles who do not live by God’s standards. **v16** We know whom God accepts. God accepts only the people who trust Christ. We can never please God just because we obey the \*Jewish law. So we have trusted Jesus Christ. And God accepts us only because we have trusted Christ. He will not accept us just because we have obeyed the \*Jewish law. God does not accept anyone who only obeys the law.

**v17** Now, we want God to accept us because of Christ. But suppose that we fail to live by God’s standards. Christ certainly does not cause us to \*sin. **v18** If I destroy something, it is wrong for me to rebuild it. **v19** The law declared that I deserved to die. So my life, when I had to obey the law, ended. Instead, I now live to serve God. **v20** It is as if I died with Christ on his cross. I am not the person who is still living. Instead, Christ is living in me. My body is weak. But the way that I now live is to trust God’s Son. He loved me. And he died for my benefit. **v21** God’s kindness was vital for me. A person cannot please God just because that person obeys the \*Jewish law. Christ’s death was for an essential purpose.’

Verses 15-16

God gave his laws to the \*Jews. You can read them in Exodus chapters 20 to 24 and in the Book of Leviticus. The \*Gentiles did not have these laws, so they could not obey them. So the \*Gentiles did not live by God’s standards, because they did not know God’s law. But the \*Jews also did not live by God’s standards, because they could not obey the law completely. Everyone has \*sinned. Paul reminded Peter and the \*Jewish Christians that everyone has to trust Jesus Christ. That is the only way that God accepts people. When people trust Jesus

Christ, they can have the right relationship with God. God forgives people's \*sins by means of Jesus' death. God declares that they are innocent. Then they become God's friends and part of his family. The \*Jews may try to obey the \*Jewish laws completely. But unless they trust Jesus Christ, God will not accept them. To 'trust' Christ means to believe him. And it means to unite with him.

Verse 17

Christians are free from the laws and traditions of religion. This means that we are free to serve God. But we are not free to do evil things. Jesus Christ never makes people do anything wrong. Paul was certain about that.

Verse 18

Paul started to speak about himself in verses 18-21. He would have been wrong if he had tried to obey the \*Jewish laws and traditions again. However, Paul was probably referring to the way that Peter and the \*Jewish Christians had behaved in Antioch. They were starting to obey the \*Jewish laws again. Instead, they should trust Christ.

Verses 19-20

Paul explained what happened to him when he became a Christian. He used dramatic language. It was as if he died because of the \*Jewish law. Paul could never obey all the laws. He could never behave perfectly. He had \*sinned. Nobody can ever satisfy the law's holy standards. Therefore, the \*Jewish law showed that Paul was guilty. God's punishment for \*sin is death (Romans 3:23). So Paul deserved to die. However, Jesus is perfect. He satisfies the law's holy standards. He never \*sinned. So God does not punish us if we trust Jesus. God punished Jesus instead. Jesus died because of our \*sins. Paul united himself with Jesus Christ. It was as if Paul had died too with Christ.

When someone is dead, the law cannot have any power over him. When a \*Jew unites himself with Christ, the \*Jewish law no longer has power over that person (Romans 7:4-6). The \*Jewish law cannot give God's new \*spiritual life to anyone. Only Jesus Christ gives God's life to people. Paul did not have to die because of his \*sins. God forgave him because of Jesus. So Paul's life seemed like a new life. Now, Christ lived inside Paul by means of the Holy Spirit. Paul was very grateful for all that God had done for him. So Paul spent all his life serving God.

Verse 21

Paul realised that God had been very kind to him. Christ's death had a very important purpose. Only Christ could give people the right relationship with God. Paul would not start to trust in the laws and traditions of religion again. Instead, he would always trust Christ.

This verse ends Paul's account about how he opposed Peter and the other \*Jewish Christians. We do not know what happened as a result. However, it showed that Paul had authority as an \*apostle. It also showed how much Paul wanted Christians to live free from the laws and traditions of religion.

## Chapter 3

### Live by God's Holy Spirit, not by your own efforts

**v1** You Galatians are foolish. You behave as if someone has used magic powers to lead you away from the truth. You heard clearly how Jesus Christ died by means of a cross. **v2** I want you to remember how you received the Holy Spirit. You did not receive the Spirit when you obeyed the law. Instead, you received the Spirit when you believed the \*good news about Christ. **v3** You began your new life by means of God's Spirit. You cannot complete this life by your own power. Surely, you cannot be so foolish. **v4** Many things have happened to you. I am sure that your experiences have not been in vain. **v5** God constantly gives the Holy Spirit to you. God makes \*miracles happen among you. This does not happen because you obey the laws. Instead, it happens because you believed the \*good news about Jesus Christ.

Verse 1

Paul could hardly believe what the Christians in Galatia had done. He had told them the truth about Jesus Christ. They had understood about Jesus' death and what it meant. But then they did not continue to follow the truth. Paul was rather severe with the Galatians. 'Foolish' refers to someone who is not wise. It means that someone is not thinking properly. The \*good news about Jesus makes people free. It shows people how kind God is to them. If the Galatians had been thinking properly, they would not have believed the false teachers. Paul thought that the false teachers must have persuaded the Christians in Galatia in a powerful way. Paul probably did not mean actual magic. But the effect on the Galatians seemed as powerful as magic. So Paul reminded them again about the truth.

Verse 2

Most of the Christians in Galatia were not \*Jews. They did not know the \*Jewish laws. But they had received the Holy Spirit. It happened when they trusted Christ. God gave the Holy Spirit to the Christians because they trusted Christ. They could not earn the Holy Spirit. They did not have to work hard to receive the Holy Spirit. They did not need to obey the laws and traditions of religion. They did not even need to obey the \*Jewish laws. They did not have to become \*Jews. They simply had to trust Christ.

### Verse 3

The actions of the people in Galatia were not reasonable. They could not start their Christian life in one way and then continue it in a different way. They could not have both the Holy Spirit and the \*Jewish laws. The Christians in Galatia wanted to become more mature. But they could not do that by their own efforts. The laws and traditions of religion could not help them. They could make progress in their Christian life only when the Holy Spirit helped them.

### Verse 4

Paul was probably referring to wonderful experiences, like the \*miracles that God did (verse 5). Paul did not believe that the Christians would forget them. Experiences like that affect people deeply.

### Verse 5

This verse is similar to verse 2. But Paul also mentioned \*miracles. \*Miracles are wonderful events that are not usual. A \*miracle does not happen in a natural way. God makes it happen. For example, Jesus made blind people able to see again (Matthew 9:27-31). That was a \*miracle. Paul was emphasising again the time when these things happened. First, the Galatians trusted what Jesus Christ had done for them. Then they received the Holy Spirit. Then God did \*miracles. It all happened before they started to believe the false teachers.

## Abraham trusted God

**v6** Now, think about Abraham. He trusted God. And God accepted him. **v7** You should understand this. The people who trust God are Abraham's real family. **v8** A long time ago, this is what the \*Scriptures recorded. God would accept the \*Gentiles when they trusted him. And the \*Scriptures recorded God's \*good news to Abraham, 'By means of you, God will give good things to people from all the nations in the world.' **v9** God was kind to Abraham because Abraham trusted God. In the same way, God is kind to everyone who trusts him.

### Verse 6

You can read about Abraham in Genesis chapters 12 to 25. Abraham believed and trusted God. Because of that, God accepted Abraham. Abraham did not try to make himself good by his own efforts. God had not given his laws at that time. So God accepted Abraham because Abraham simply trusted God (Genesis 15:6).

### Verse 7

All the \*Jews come from Abraham's physical family. The \*Jews are proud of this. They often say that Abraham is their 'father' (for example John 8:37-39). But Paul said that Abraham's true family behave like him. Now God accepts everyone, \*Jews and \*Gentiles, who trusts Jesus Christ. So Abraham's family is a \*spiritual family.

### Verses 8-9

The '\*Scripture' refers to the part of the Bible that we call the \*Old Testament. In Genesis 12:3; 18:18; 22:18, you can read what God promised to Abraham. Abraham lived about 2000 years before Jesus was born. So, a long time ago, God decided what he would do in the future. And he kept his promise when Jesus came to this world. To 'bless' means to be kind to people. And it means to do good things for them. God did not bless just Abraham's family. God did not bless just the \*Jews. God promised to bless people in every nation. This means that \*Gentiles did not need to become \*Jews. God blesses the \*Gentiles when they behave like Abraham. They simply need to trust God.

## People must trust God in order to have a right relationship with him

**v10** People try to please God. They obey what the \*Jewish laws say. They think that God will accept them because of this. But they will receive God's judgement. 'God is angry with everyone who does not obey all the laws.' You can read this in the \*Scriptures. **v11** The \*Scripture says that people must trust God in order to have a right relationship with him. Clearly, God does not put people in a right relationship with himself as they obey the \*Jewish laws. **v12** The laws do not depend on how much a person trusts God. A person who completely obeys all the laws will live by the laws. **v13** Christ freed us from God's judgement on the laws. Christ received God's judgement instead. The \*Scriptures say that God's judgement will be on anyone who dies on a tree. **v14** Christ did this because of the good things that God promised to Abraham. Those good things came to the \*Gentiles by means of Jesus Christ. God promised to send the Holy Spirit. And as we trust Christ, we receive the Holy Spirit.

## Verse 10

In this verse, Paul was referring to the false teachers. The \*Jewish laws are not bad. God gave his laws to the \*Jewish people for a purpose. The laws teach God's holy standards to people. They show people how to live in the right way. But they cannot make people good. Paul referred to Deuteronomy 27:26. God will accept a person who obeys completely all the \*Jewish laws. However, nobody is perfect. Nobody can obey the \*Jewish laws completely. So nobody can make God accept them by means of their own efforts. God will not accept a person who obeys only some of the laws. If someone does not obey a law, then he \*sins. God is angry about \*sin and he punishes it. The false teachers thought that God accepted them. Instead, God was angry with them.

## Verse 11

There is only one way to have a right relationship with God. Each person has to trust God. Paul referred to Habakkuk 2:4. Habakkuk is a book in the \*Old Testament. Jesus had not been born at the time that Habakkuk wrote this book. But the writer emphasised that people should trust God, not the \*Jewish laws.

## Verse 12

A person has to work hard to obey the laws. He has to concentrate on the laws. The laws affect every part of his life. But he can do it all by his own effort. That person can obey the laws, although he may never trust God. But we do not please God by means of our own efforts. Instead, God wants us to trust him.

## Verse 13

Most Bibles translate the word 'judgement' as 'curse'. To 'curse' is the opposite of to 'bless'. (See my note on verses 8-9 for the meaning of 'bless'.) A curse is a judgement with a suitable punishment. Nobody has obeyed all God's laws. We have all \*sinned. Therefore, we all deserve God's punishment. But Jesus Christ was perfect because he always obeyed God. Jesus received God's judgement and punishment instead of us. Jesus freed us from that punishment. Paul then referred to Deuteronomy 21:23. In the \*Old Testament, the officials killed criminals as punishment. But if someone was a very bad criminal, they put his body on a wooden pole. It brought shame to the person. 'Tree' refers to wooden poles. They made a cross for Jesus from two wooden poles. He died on that cross because of God's judgement.

## Verse 14

You can read God's promise in verse 8. Everyone will receive these good things from God, as they trust Christ. God will forgive them. God will change their lives. And they will receive the Holy Spirit in their lives.

## The laws and God's promise

**v15** Brothers and sisters, let me explain this from ordinary life. Suppose that someone makes and signs a legal agreement. Afterwards, nobody can stop or change that agreement. **v16** God made promises to Abraham and to his \*descendant. The \*Scripture does not say 'to his \*descendants'. That would refer to many people. Instead, \*Scripture says 'to his \*descendant'. That refers to one person, and that person is Christ. **v17** This is what I mean. God made his agreement with Abraham. Then 430 years later God gave his laws to Moses. But the laws did not change or cancel God's promise to Abraham. **v18** We do not get God's gifts because we obey the laws. If that happened, we would not receive God's gifts because of God's promise. But God was kind to Abraham and made a promise to him.

## Verse 15

Paul called the Christians in Galatia 'brothers and sisters'. They all belonged to the same \*spiritual family. And Paul wanted to persuade them that they should believe the truth. So he chose something that they were familiar with. The Galatians understood how people made a legal agreement. When the people signed the agreement, they had to obey it.

## Verse 16

Paul then explained about God's agreement with Abraham. God made his promise with Abraham several times. But that promise was not for all of Abraham's \*descendants. It was for one particular \*descendant, who had not been born at that time. That person was Jesus Christ.

## Verse 17

This verse continues what Paul was saying in verse 15. Nobody and nothing could change God's agreement with Abraham. God did not change what he promised. God gave his laws to Moses. But those laws could not change God's earlier agreement with Abraham.

## Verse 18

The false teachers said that the Christians in Galatia needed to obey the \*Jewish laws. But God's blessing does not come as people obey the laws. ('God's blessing' means the good things that God gives to his people.) Instead, people can have a right relationship with God because of God's promise to Abraham. Abraham did not

earn or deserve God's blessing. God chose Abraham simply because God is kind. And Abraham received God's promise because Abraham trusted God.

## The purpose of God's laws

**v19** But the laws did have a purpose. God gave his laws because people \*sin. And those laws show people what \*sin really is. The laws continued until Abraham's special \*descendant came. \*Angels gave the laws to Moses. And Moses gave the laws to the people. **v20** The laws did not come directly from God. But God acts alone.

**v21** But this certainly does not mean that God's laws are opposite to his promises. The laws would be opposite if they could give us \*spiritual life. In fact, God would have accepted us because we obeyed his laws. **v22** But the \*Scriptures say that everyone in the world has a strong desire to \*sin. And this desire controls people. But this happened so that they would trust Jesus Christ. Then they would receive what God had promised.

**v23** But there was a time before people could trust Jesus Christ. During that time, the law was like a prison guard. And we were like prisoners. We were waiting until God showed us how to trust him. **v24** The law became like a guide who takes boys to school. So the law led us to Christ. Then we could trust Christ and have a right relationship with God. **v25** Now we are able to trust Christ. Therefore, the law is not still like our guide. It does not still control us.

### Verse 19

The Christians in Galatia may have wanted to know why God gave his laws. God's laws show what God's holy standards are. Those laws clearly describe what is right and wrong behaviour. Before God gave his laws, people had \*sinned. But they did not realise how much they \*sinned. They had no standard to compare their behaviour with. As soon as God gave his laws, people were aware of their \*sin. God's laws continued until Jesus Christ came.

### Verse 20

This is a very difficult verse to understand. Nobody is sure what it really means. God's laws went from God to the \*angels. The \*angels gave them to Moses. Then Moses gave the laws to the people. But God made his promise directly to Abraham. So Paul probably meant that God's promise is better than his law.

### Verse 21

God's laws would be opposite to his promises if people could receive \*spiritual life by means of the laws. But people do not receive \*spiritual life when they obey God's laws. The function of God's promises is to give people \*spiritual life. The function of God's laws is to show people what \*sin is (verse 19).

### Verse 22

People in the world are not free. Their strong desire to \*sin controls them. \*Sin is like a prison. People cannot be free from their \*sin even if they try very hard. But Jesus Christ can free people from their \*sins. When people realise this, they trust Jesus. Then they will receive the good things that God has promised.

### Verse 23

People could not trust Jesus until he came to this world. Before that time, people had to obey the \*Jewish law. The law showed people how much they \*sinned. The law was like a judge. It showed people that they were guilty. But the law was also like a prison guard. The law could not free people. People could never escape from their \*sin. God showed people how to trust him when he sent Jesus into the world.

### Verse 24

In those days, rich families had slaves. Some of the slaves would look after the young children in the rich family. The slaves took the children to the children's teachers. And the slaves guarded the children on the way. The slaves also trained and controlled the children. When the child became an adult, he did not need the slave any more. The slave did not control the adult child. Paul said that the \*Jewish law was like the slave. It taught people how to behave. It controlled people's behaviour until Christ came. But the law could not give people a right relationship with God. Only Jesus Christ can do that.

### Verse 25

The law had a purpose in the past that would not last. When people trust Christ, the purpose of the law ends. The Christians in Galatia thought that they also should obey the law. They thought that this would help them to make more progress. But Paul had clearly explained that this was wrong. People are free from the law's power when they trust Christ.

## God's sons

**v26** All of you are God's sons because you trust Jesus Christ. **v27** You received \*baptism so that you were united with Christ. You have put on Christ in the same way that you put on new clothes. **v28** Now there is no difference between \*Jews and \*Gentiles. There is no difference between slaves and free people. There is no difference between men and women. Each of you united yourself with Jesus Christ in the same way. It is as if you all have become one person. **v29** If you belong to Christ then you are Abraham's \*descendant. And you will receive what God has promised.

#### Verse 26

'God's sons' refers to an adult son that is able to receive his father's property. In those days, only sons could receive such a gift. But Paul was not referring only to men. He was contrasting the adult child with the young child in verse 24. An adult does not start to behave like a child again. The adult son does not need a slave to control him. 'All of you' refers to both \*Jewish and \*Gentile Christians. They had become part of God's family when they trusted Jesus Christ. They were like mature adults. Therefore, they did not need the law to control them.

#### Verse 27

\*Baptism shows that a person has become a Christian. It shows that the person has a new relationship with Jesus Christ. The act of \*baptism does not make a person a Christian. It expresses what has already happened to the person. The Christian completely unites himself or herself with Christ. To 'put on' Christ means to become like Christ. A Christian behaves in a new way. His or her character becomes like Christ's character.

#### Verse 28

The only way to become God's son (verse 26) is to trust Jesus Christ. Nobody has an advantage over anyone else. \*Jews and \*Gentiles have different nations and religions. Slaves and free people have a different rank in society. Slaves feel less important than free people. In many societies, men consider that they are superior to women. But everyone becomes a Christian in the same way. Society may consider that some people are more important. But as a Christian, nobody is superior. And nobody is less important. Paul showed in this verse that there were no distinctions among Christians.

#### Verse 29

God had given his laws to the \*Jews. But now everyone can receive the good things that God promised to Abraham. \*Gentiles do not need to obey the \*Jewish laws. And they do not need to become \*Jews. They just need to trust Jesus Christ. And the \*Jews need to trust Jesus Christ too.

## Chapter 4

### You are God's sons, you are not slaves

**v1** I will continue what I was saying to you. A young son will receive the property that his father has promised to give to him. But before the son becomes a man, he is no different from a slave. **v2** People look after the child while he is young. People are responsible for his property. This happens until the particular time that his father has chosen. **v3** In a similar way, we were like young children. We were like slaves to the basic things that people in the world believe. **v4** But when the right time came, God sent his own Son into the world. He had a human mother. He lived in a society that had to obey the \*Jewish law. **v5** God sent his Son to free people. He freed the people who had to obey the law. Then we all could become God's children. **v6** You are God's children. So God sent the Holy Spirit into your lives. The Holy Spirit tells us that God is our father. **v7** Now you are not slaves. You are God's children. So God will give you the good things that he has promised.

#### Verses 1-2

Each society has a time for a young boy to become a man. In Paul's days, it was a very important event. As soon as a boy became a man, he had full legal rights. Until that time, other people had to manage a child's personal and business affairs. Young children could not own property, even if their father gave it to them. Young children had no rights. Slaves could not own property either. Slaves had no rights. So young children and slaves were in the same situation. In \*Jewish society, a boy became a man soon after he was 12 years of age. In \*Greek society, a boy became a man at about 18 years of age. In \*Roman society, the child's father decided when the child was ready to be an adult. So Paul was probably using \*Roman society as a model in this verse.

#### Verse 3

'The basic things that people in the world believe' probably refers to the \*Gentile religions. Paul had already described how the \*Jewish law made the \*Jews like prisoners (3:23). Most Christians in Galatia were \*Gentiles.

And they used to obey the rules in their religions. They did not understand what the truth was. So they were like young children. They could not receive what God their Father had promised to them.

#### Verse 4

God's plan was perfect. He decided how he would free people from their \*sins. And he decided when he would send Jesus into this world. Luke 1:26-38 describes how this happened. Jesus was a real man. He had a physical body. He was born into a \*Jewish family. Even Jesus had to obey the \*Jewish laws.

#### Verse 5

'Children' refers to adult sons (verse 1). Jesus came to free people. He could free the \*Jews who had to obey God's laws. And he could free the \*Gentiles from the religions that controlled them. God could adopt everyone so that they would become his children. Every person who trusts Jesus becomes a member of God's family.

#### Verse 6

In this verse, Paul calls the Holy Spirit 'the Spirit of Jesus'. The Holy Spirit lived in Jesus. He made Jesus alive again after Jesus died. And now the Holy Spirit lives in every Christian (Romans 8:11). The Holy Spirit causes us to say 'Father' when we pray. As we pray to God, we speak to him as 'our Father'. In Matthew 6:9-13, Jesus taught us how to pray to our Father God.

#### Verse 7

This verse ends a long section that Paul started in 3:1. He showed clearly why the false teachers were wrong. The Christians in Galatia were no longer slaves. They were part of God's family. They did not have to obey the rules and traditions of any religion. They were receiving the good things that God promised to Abraham. They received these good things because they trusted Jesus Christ.

## Paul is worried about the Christians in Galatia

**v8** In the past, you did not know God. You were slaves to gods who really are not gods. **v9** But now, you know God. And it is even more important that God knows you. So I do not know why you are turning again to those weak and poor principles. I do not know why you want to become their slaves again. **v10** You have special days and months and seasons and years. **v11** I am worried about you. I do hope that my work among you was not in vain.

**v12** My dear Christian brothers and sisters, I am a man like you. I appeal to you to behave like me. In the past, you did nothing bad to me. **v13** You remember my first visit to you. My body was weak. But I \*preached the \*good news about Jesus Christ to you. **v14** My illness caused great difficulty for you. But you did not refuse me. And you did not think that I was not important. Instead, you welcomed me as you would welcome one of God's \*angels. You received me in the same way that you would receive Jesus Christ himself. **v15** You were so happy. But I do not know what has happened to change this. I know that you would have done anything for me. If possible, you even would have taken out your eyes and you would have given them to me. **v16** I have told you the truth. I hope that I am not your enemy now because of this.

#### Verse 8

The \*Gentiles did not understand anything about God until they became Christians. They were like slaves because they could not trust the real God. Instead, they obeyed their false religions. They used to \*worship false gods. Some of these false gods were really evil \*angels. In 1 Corinthians 10:20, Paul referred to them as 'demons' (in other words, the devil's servants). Some of the false gods were wooden or metal models of people or animals.

#### Verse 9

God knew us before we were born (Psalm 139:13-15). We love God because he loved us first (1 John 4:19). It is very important that we understand this. God chooses us because he loves us. He does not choose us because of our efforts. The Christians in Galatia thought that their efforts would make them into better Christians. That is what the false teachers taught them. The 'weak and poor principles' refers to their old ways. They had left the old laws of their religions. Jesus Christ had freed them. So Paul could not understand why they wanted to leave this freedom. They belonged to God's family. But they were turning away from God because they wanted to obey rules and traditions again.

Now that we are Christians, we have a special relationship with God. We know God as our father. And God knows us as his sons and daughters.

#### Verse 10

This probably refers to the special events in the \*Jewish religion. These events are not wrong. But the Christians in Galatia were wrong to turn away from God. They were obeying these traditions instead of trusting God.

## Verse 11

Paul had told the Christians in Galatia the \*good news about Jesus Christ. He helped them to become free. They were no longer like slaves of their religion. He expected them to become mature Christians. So he was very worried about what had happened to them.

## Verse 12

Paul did not write in a very warm way in this letter. He wrote to teach the Christians correctly rather than to praise them. But in the next few verses, Paul wrote about things that were more personal. Paul and the Christians in Galatia were all part of God's family. Paul was a \*Jew. When he became a Christian, he often lived with \*Gentiles. He did not live like someone whom the law controls. He was free. So he strongly urged the Christians to copy his freedom.

The last sentence links with the next verses. It refers to Paul's first visit to Galatia.

## Verse 13-14

We do not know what weakness or illness Paul had. And we do not know why it caused difficulty for the people in Galatia. But this is not important. However, his illness was the reason why he went there. If he had been healthy, he may not have gone to that area. His illness could have offended the people. They could have thought that he was a nuisance. They could have sent him away. Instead, the people welcomed Paul. God's \*angels bring messages from God. The people in Galatia received Paul's message about Jesus Christ. They respected Paul and they gave him honour.

## Verse 15

The people had been happy when Paul \*preached to them. They were happy that Paul was with them. They wanted to help him in any way that they could. They wanted to help him to become well in his body. Some people think that Paul's illness affected his eyes. But Paul probably used a special form of words that we call an 'idiom'. An idiom is a special phrase. It does not mean what the words say. But it could emphasise what someone means. Paul wrote, 'You even would have taken out your eyes and you would have given them to me.' This may not mean that they wanted to make Paul's eyes better. It just emphasised how much the Christians in Galatia cared about Paul. And it showed how generous they were.

## Verse 16

Paul \*preached the truth when he first went to Galatia. And Paul was writing the truth in this letter. He was telling the Christians that they were wrong. So he probably offended some of them. False teachers often cause Christians to become enemies of the true teachers.

## Paul cares about the Christians

**v17** Those other people really want you to belong only to them. But this is not for your benefit. They want to separate you from us. They want you to give more attention to them. **v18** It is good to have a sincere interest in something. But it must always be for a good purpose. And this is always true, even when I am not with you. **v19** You are like dear children to me. I feel like a mother who will soon have a child. I feel a similar kind of pain as I wait for you to become like Christ. **v20** I really desire to be with you now. Then I could talk to you in a different way. I am so worried about you.

## Verse 17

Those 'other people' were the false teachers. Their intentions were not good because they were jealous. They did not want the Christians to be loyal to Paul. To 'separate you' also means 'to shut you out'. The false teachers did not really care about the Christians. They did not want the Christians to enjoy their freedom.

## Verse 18

The false teachers had an interest in the Christians in Galatia. And they wanted the Christians to have an interest in them. But their reasons were evil. They wanted to control people.

The Christians in Galatia used to have a real interest in Christ. That was good. But they should have continued, even when Paul was not with them.

## Verse 19

Paul really cared about the Christians. His intentions were always good. When a mother has a baby, she feels a lot of pain. She suffers a lot because it is a difficult time for her. But she must wait until her child is born. Paul used this fact as a description of his own emotions. He cared so much about the Christians in Galatia that he felt pain in his emotions. He really wanted the Christians to have Christ's nature in them. He was suffering because it had not yet happened.

## Verse 20

Paul could not understand why the Christians wanted to leave their freedom. It is often very difficult to write what we feel. It is much easier to speak. We can use a loud or soft voice. People understand more when they can hear the tone of our voice. Paul had to write this letter in a rather strict way. He had to explain the truth again. But he wanted to be kind to the Christians too. He could not do this easily in this letter. This is one reason why he was suffering. So he really wanted to go and speak to them.

## The difference between Sarah and Hagar

**v21** Some of you still want the \*Jewish law to control you. But you do not really understand what the law says. **v22** The \*Scripture says that Abraham had two sons. The mother of one son was a slave. The mother of the other son was not a slave. She was a free woman. **v23** The slave had her son as a result of a natural process. The free woman had her son as a result of God's promise to Abraham. **v24** These two situations help us to understand something else. These two women are similar to the two agreements that God made. Hagar is like the agreement that God made on Mount Sinai. Her children were born as slaves. **v25** Hagar is like Mount Sinai, which is in the region called Arabia. And you can compare Mount Sinai to Jerusalem. Jerusalem and all the people there are like slaves. **v26** But the city of Jerusalem that is in heaven is free. This Jerusalem is like our mother.

**v27** The \*Scripture says:

'To the woman who has never had children, be happy.

You never had a child. But you should shout and cry because you are happy.

You will have more children than the woman who has a husband.'

**v28** My Christian brothers and sisters, you are God's children because of what God promised. In the same way, Abraham had a son, Isaac, because of what God promised. **v29** One son (Ishmael) was born as a result of a natural process. He caused trouble for the son (Isaac), who was born because of God's Spirit. The same thing is happening today. **v30** But this is what the \*Scripture says: 'Make the slave woman and her son go away. The son of the slave woman must not receive anything that belongs to his father. The son of the free woman will receive it all.' **v31** Therefore, my Christian brothers and sisters, we are not like the slave woman's children. Instead, we are like the children of the wife who is free.

### Verse 21

Paul became stricter again in the rest of this chapter. He was a \*Jew. He had studied the \*Jewish law. He understood it very well. He knew about the law's strict demands on people who obeyed it. The law did not make people better Christians. Instead, it made them slaves. Not all the Christians believed the false teachers. But Paul wanted to make sure that all the Christians understood the truth.

### Verse 22

You can read about Abraham and his two sons in Genesis chapters 15-21. Abraham's name used to be Abram until God changed it. He had a wife called Sarai. But later God changed her name to Sarah. Sarah had a slave called Hagar. Hagar had a son called Ishmael. Sarah had a son called Isaac. In those days, it was important for a man to have a son. If his wife could not have a son, his wife's slave could have a son for the man. Slaves had no rights. Sarah considered that Hagar was her property. Sometimes a man would marry a second wife. Their society allowed these actions. God had not given his laws at that time. Now we know that God wants a man to have only one wife (Exodus 20:14; Matthew 5:31-32). A man should stay with his wife even if she cannot have children.

### Verse 23

Abraham could make Hagar have a baby. He had sex with Hagar, the slave. Hagar's body worked properly. Ishmael was born 9 months later. This all happened in the normal way. But Hagar and her son were slaves. Abraham and Sarah had sex in the usual way for married couples. Sarah was not a slave but her body did not work properly. They were married for a long time but Sarah never had a baby. One day, God promised Abraham that Sarah would have a son (Genesis 17:15-17). Sarah was 90 years old. It was impossible for her to have a baby at that age. Abraham could not make Sarah have a baby. But God made it happen because of his promise. Sarah and her son were not slaves. They were free people.

### Verses 24-25

Paul wanted to explain again the difference between the law and freedom. He compared it to Hagar and Sarah. He used the principle rather than all the details.

Ishmael's sons and their families lived in the region called Arabia (Genesis 26:18). Mount Sinai is in Arabia. Moses had to climb up Mount Sinai to receive God's laws. But the people who obeyed the law were slaves to the law. Hagar was a slave. When a slave has children, they are slaves too. A slave can never have children that are free. In a similar way, the people who received the law could never be free.

Jerusalem was the capital city of the \*Jewish nation. So in verse 25, Jerusalem refers to all the \*Jews. They are slaves because of the \*Jewish law. They wanted God to approve of them. They always tried to please God by their own effort. So they remained as slaves. They could not become God's true children.

People who try to obey the law may belong to Abraham's natural family. Ishmael too belonged to Abraham's natural family. But Ishmael was not the child that God promised to Abraham. And so, nobody who tries to please God by his own effort is a real child of God.

Verse 26

Revelation 22:2 refers to Jerusalem that is in heaven. This Jerusalem refers to all Christians who have trusted Jesus Christ. This Jerusalem is free. So everyone who belongs to God's family is free. Isaac was a free person because his mother was free. In a similar way, Christians who belong to God's family are free.

Verse 27

This \*Scripture is Isaiah 54:1. Isaiah was referring to the \*Jewish nation when he wrote it. But Sarah is like the woman who had no children. God kept his promise. All the people who trust Jesus Christ are like Sarah's free children. More and more people are trusting Jesus Christ. And so, this family keeps increasing.

Verse 28

Isaac was born because of God's promise. Isaac was not born because of Abraham's effort. The Christians in Galatia were like Isaac. They belonged to God's family. This happened because of God's promise. It did not happen by their own effort.

Verse 29-30

God promised a son to Abraham. But God's Spirit, the Holy Spirit, actually made it happen.

You can read about this event in Genesis 21:8-10. Ishmael did not deal with Isaac in the right way. Ishmael caused trouble for Isaac. Ishmael, the slave, is like the people who were still trying to please God by their own efforts. Isaac, the free son, is like the Christians. The false teachers caused Paul a lot of trouble. They caused trouble in the \*church too. People who do not trust Jesus Christ cannot receive God's blessings. ('Blessings' means the good things that God gives.) Such people will not receive anything that God has promised to Christians. The false teachers would have been very angry with Paul when they heard this. They worked hard to obey the \*Jewish law. They supposed that God would reward them for their effort. And they did not want to trust Jesus.

Verse 31

Paul finished the explanation that he started in verse 21. Ishmael could not receive anything from his father. Real Christians, who trust Jesus, are not like that. They are like Isaac. They will receive all that God has promised.

## Chapter 5

### Christ has made us free

**v1** We have freedom because Christ has made us free. Be certain that you remain free. You must not allow yourselves to become slaves again to the law.

**v2** Listen carefully to what I, Paul, tell you. Do not let anyone \*circumcise you. If they \*circumcise you, then Christ cannot help you in any way. **v3** Once more I warn the man who lets other people \*circumcise him. That man will have to obey all the \*Jewish laws. **v4** Some of you are doing what the law says. In this way, you are trying to make God accept you. But you have separated yourself from Christ. You have turned away from his wonderful kindness. **v5** But we live by means of the Holy Spirit's power. We trust Christ so that we will have a right relationship with God. We look forward to what will happen in the future. And we are sure about what will happen. **v6** We belong to Jesus Christ. It does not matter whether anyone has \*circumcised us or not. However, we should trust Christ and love other people. This is what really matters.

Verse 1

This verse is a brief statement about what Paul had already taught. Christ has already freed people from the law. The false teachers were trying to make the Christians in Galatia slaves to the law. But the Christians had the responsibility to remain free.

Verse 2

Paul wanted to emphasise what he was writing in this section. If a man became a \*Jew, someone \*circumcised him. This was the mark that he was a \*Jew. Most \*Jews did not believe that Jesus Christ was God's son. They did not believe that Jesus could forgive their \*sins. They did not trust him. The Christians in Galatia had listened to the \*Jewish false teachers. They had started to believe what the false teachers were teaching them about the

laws. But the Christians had not yet become \*Jews. So Paul still had time to warn them. And he could remind them about the truth. If the Christians became \*Jews, they would be refusing Jesus Christ. The Christians thought that the laws would make them better Christians. But Paul said that they would not still be Christians.

#### Verse 3

In 3:10, Paul explained why the \*Jews had to obey all the laws.

#### Verse 4

Paul has already explained that the laws themselves are not bad. But God accepts only the people who trust Jesus Christ. This is God's kind gift, which is free. Nobody can earn his or her place in God's family. The people who trust the laws are trying to earn their place in God's family. They think that they need to work hard to please God. Instead, they are refusing God's kind gift.

#### Verse 5

The Holy Spirit lives inside all Christians. And he helps them to look forward to what God will do in the future. These good things come because Christians trust Jesus Christ. Christians already have a right relationship with God. But in the future, in heaven, there will be no \*sin. So a Christian's relationship with God will be perfect.

#### Verse 6

It is not important whether Christians were \*Jews or \*Gentiles. Christians have learned how much God loves them. So they should love other people in the way that God loves them.

## Someone made you stop

**v7** You were doing so well. But someone made you stop. They persuaded you not to obey the true words about God. **v8** God did not do this. God invited you to come to him. **v9** People say, 'You only need a little piece of yeast (substance that makes bread rise) to make a large loaf of bread.' **v10** We are all united in the \*Lord. So I am confident that you will not have a different opinion. God will certainly punish the person who is upsetting you. It does not matter who that person is. **v11** My dear Christian brothers and sisters, I do not teach that someone must \*circumcise men. Perhaps some people say that I teach this. But if I were really teaching this, then nobody would oppose me. And nobody would think that the message about the cross was a hard message. In fact, the cross would not matter to anyone. **v12** Those people have unsettled you. I wish that they would cut off their male parts completely!

#### Verse 7

In this verse, Paul used words that described a race. Sometimes people tried to push a runner onto a different track. This would cause him problems. And he would not be able to win the race. Paul often described the Christian life as a race (1 Corinthians 9:24-27; 2 Timothy 4:7). The Christians in Galatia were like the runners. It seemed as if the false teachers were pushing them off the proper track.

#### Verse 8

Paul had spoken God's words as he taught about Jesus Christ. The false teachers were not speaking God's words when they taught about the law.

#### Verse 9

Everyone knew how people made bread. A baker has a big bowl of flour. He adds a very small piece of yeast. He mixes in a lot of water. Then he leaves the mixture in a warm place before he bakes it. Yeast is a substance that people use in bread. It produces a lot of air when it is warm and wet. Each loaf only has a small piece of yeast in it. But the whole loaf grows to about three times its original size.

This is what Paul meant. The false teachers may not seem very bad. But what they taught would spread. And it would affect the whole \*church. And it would cause great damage.

#### Verse 10

Paul had said many negative things in this letter. But in this verse, he was more confident about the Christians. They had learned the truth from Paul. And he believed that they would continue to believe the truth. The false teachers were not part of God's family. There were probably several false teachers. 'The person' may refer to the leader of the group. When Jesus returns, God will be the judge of everyone's deeds (1 Corinthians 3:10-15).

#### Verse 11

Paul taught that Jesus Christ forgives people's \*sins. Jesus died on a wooden cross. God punished him instead of us. Because of that, \*Gentiles do not need to obey all the \*Jewish laws (Acts 15:1-21). Many \*Jews caused trouble for Paul because he taught about Jesus Christ. But some false teachers said that Paul really agreed with them. Paul said that this could not be true. If it were true, then the \*Jews would not cause him trouble.

#### Verse 12

Paul was very angry with the false teachers. In some \*Gentile religions, the male priests cut off their male sex parts. The \*Jewish law did not allow any such behaviour. Paul was saying that the false teachers were very evil. Perhaps Paul meant that the false teachers were not part of God's family. They should completely leave the \*church. This was a serious judgement. However, the false teachers were spreading serious errors in the \*church.

## The Holy Spirit and our selfish desires

**v13** My dear Christian brothers and sisters, God invited you to be free. You are free now. But do not use your freedom to satisfy your own desires. Rather, serve each other because you love each other. **v14** All the \*Jewish laws together are really equal to only one law; 'You must love other people as you love yourself.' **v15** Be careful that you do not continue to hurt each other. And do not continue to damage each other. Otherwise, you will spoil each other's lives.

**v16** But this is what I say. Live in the way that the Holy Spirit tells you to live. Do not do whatever your selfish desires want you to do. **v17** Our selfish desires are opposite to the Holy Spirit. And the Holy Spirit is opposite to our selfish desires. These two fight each other. And you cannot do what you want to do. **v18** But the Holy Spirit leads you. You are not under the authority of the \*Jewish laws.

### Verse 13

The Christians in Galatia were free. They did not have to obey all the \*Jewish laws. But that was not an excuse for bad behaviour. Christians still have their own desires. We are not perfect yet, so we still \*sin. But Romans 6:1-14 says that \*sin no longer controls us. We can choose not to do wrong things. Our selfish desires tempt us, but we should refuse them. We should be unselfish. We should love other people. When Jesus lived in this world, he served other people (Matthew 20:28). And Christians should be like Jesus.

### Verse 14

This law is in Leviticus 19:18. And Jesus taught about it in Luke 10:25-37. 'Love other people' was the basic purpose of all the \*Jewish laws. If Christians behave in the right way, they will carry out the most important law.

### Verse 15

The false teachers had caused trouble in Galatia. As a result, the Christians were fighting and arguing with each other. The word 'hurt' means to bite. It also means to speak in a way that hurts a person. And 'damage' means to eat. These words describe the way that animals tear apart their food. They tear it apart in order to eat it. The Christians were behaving very badly. Their desires were controlling them. They were behaving like wild animals. So Paul had to warn them that the situation was very serious. In the end, their behaviour would destroy their friendships and their \*church.

### Verse 16-17

When people become Christians, their natural desires do not disappear. These desires can be very strong. It is easy to be selfish. But the Holy Spirit teaches Christians how to live in the right way. The Holy Spirit always pleases God. People want to please themselves. Every day we have to choose how to behave. It is not easy, because it is a \*spiritual struggle. Paul wrote about this in Romans chapter 7. We need to allow the Holy Spirit to guide us. When we live by the Spirit, we are not selfish. Instead, we live to please God.

### Verse 18

Christians are free from the law. They are not free to please themselves (verse 13). But they are free to obey the Holy Spirit.

## What our natural desires produce

**v19** You can clearly see people's natural desires by the way that they behave. They have sex with the wrong people. They do not consider sex in a pure way. They take part in wrong sex acts. **v20** They \*worship \*idols and they do evil magic against each other. They hate people and they quarrel. They are jealous. They become very angry. They have selfish ambitions and they cause groups to divide. **v21** They want what other people have. They drink too much alcohol and they have noisy parties. And they do many other things like these. I have already warned you and I will warn you again. The people who behave in these evil ways will not have a place in heaven.

### Verses 19-21

People \*sin when they live by their own desires. These \*sins are in 4 groups.

(1) Sex \*sins. God created sex. So it is a good thing. But it is right only between a man and his wife. All other sex is wrong.

(2) \*Sins about religion. The \*Gentiles \*worshipped false gods. The \*Gentiles made \*idols and they \*worshipped these \*idols. The \*Gentiles also \*worshipped evil spirits (the devil's \*angels). People tried to gain evil \*spiritual power from the evil spirits. Then those people did magic against other people in order to hurt them.

(3) Social \*sins. These \*sins affect people's relationships in society and in their families. These \*sins also affect people in the \*church.

'They hate' means that they are enemies. This can refer to a single person or to a group of people. When a person hates another person, they usually quarrel. When one nation hates another nation, they usually have a war.

People often want what someone else has. This can be possessions, money, authority or many other things. They want them for selfish reasons. To be 'angry' means to have sudden bad temper. Many people are very proud. Some people want to be leaders. If they cannot be a leader, they will often ruin the group. This happens in \*churches.

(4) \*Sins with alcohol and parties. This referred to ordinary parties where people drank too much alcohol. Also, the \*Gentiles had such parties when they \*worshipped their \*idols.

There were many more \*sins, but Paul did not name them all. Paul had warned the Christians in the past. He probably did that when he first taught them about Jesus Christ. When people become Christians, they learn how to live in the right way. They learn not simply to obey their natural desires. This is often difficult. But the Holy Spirit helps them. Other people may say that they are Christians. But they may always give in when they feel such desires. Those people are not real Christians. Or perhaps they are real Christians, but they are not mature enough yet. God is not the ruler of their life. So they will not receive what God has promised. This refers to what Paul explained in chapter 3.

## What the Holy Spirit produces

**v22-23** But this is what the Holy Spirit produces: He helps us to love people. He causes us to be happy in our spirit. He gives us \*peace in our lives. We can remain patient when we have troubles. The Spirit causes us to be kind and good to other people. He helps us to be loyal to people. And he causes us to be gentle with them. He gives us the power to control our own desires. There are no laws against any of these things. **v24** The people who belong to Christ Jesus have destroyed the power of their old character. It is as if their natural desires died with Jesus on the cross. This includes all that their selfish desires want to do. **v25** The Holy Spirit has made us \*spiritually alive. Therefore, we must let him control our lives. **v26** We must not be proud. We must not annoy each other. And we must not be jealous of each other.

### Verses 22-23

Each of these qualities is part of God's character. These qualities do not grow in our lives because we work hard. Instead, they are like the good fruit that a tree produces. They come, as we trust Jesus and grow in our relationship with him (John 15:1-17). The Holy Spirit brings these qualities in our lives. He replaces our old character with God's character.

These qualities are the opposite of our natural desires. They are opposite to the things that Paul wrote about in verses 19-21. They lead to good relationships with other people. To 'love' means to love in the same way that God loves us. God loves us in an unselfish way. He cares about us. He always wants us to have what is best for us. We may not like some people. But the Holy Spirit helps us to love them in the same way that God loves them.

Sometimes we have troubles and we feel sad. We may feel worried or afraid. But the Holy Spirit can make us happy and calm in our spirit. Other people may cause trouble for us. We do not need always to oppose them. We can remain calm even when we suffer.

God has been kind and good to us. And the Holy Spirit helps us to be like that towards other people. We can do good deeds. We can be generous and helpful.

When a Christian is loyal, other people can trust him. He is honest. He will do what he says. Gentle people are never cruel. And they are not proud.

Our natural desires are very strong. And they are often selfish. We may control some of them. Or we may control them for a short time. But we can never completely control them. But the Holy Spirit gives us the power to control all our wrong desires.

The \*Jewish law cannot produce these qualities. The people who have these qualities already obey the most important law (verse 14).

### Verses 24-25

Paul had already explained how he had 'died' with Christ (2:20). Christians have God's power to refuse their wrong desires. They can choose to obey the Holy Spirit. But this is often difficult (verse 17). Nobody can

change immediately. In Colossians 3:5-10, Paul described how this actually happens.

#### Verse 26

This verse may refer back to the problems in verse 15. But it is important for every Christian and every \*church. The answer is to let the Holy Spirit control us.

## Chapter 6

### Christians should help each other

**v1** My Christian brothers and sisters, a \*sin may overcome someone. Those among you whom the Holy Spirit guides should show the person the right way. But you must be kind and gentle with him or her. And you too must be careful that \*sin does not tempt you. **v2** Help each other when you have troubles. Then you will obey the law that Christ gave. **v3** Someone may not be important. But he may consider that he is important. That person is lying to himself. **v4** Each person should examine his own behaviour. If it is good, then that person can be pleased with himself. But you should not compare yourself with anyone else. **v5** Everyone must be responsible for his or her own life.

**v6** If someone is teaching you about God's words, you should share all good things with your teacher.

**v7** Understand this clearly. You cannot cheat God. A farmer harvests the same crops as he sows. **v8** So a man who lives by his own desires will die, because of his desires. But a man who lives by the Spirit will always live, because of the Spirit. **v9** Do not become tired as you do good deeds for other people. Do not give up. Then, at God's time, you will receive what you deserve, like the harvest. **v10** So, as often as you can, do good things for everyone. But especially do good things for the people who belong to God's family.

#### Verse 1

Christians should not still do what their natural desires want to do. But all Christians find that \*sin tests them. And sometimes the \*sin seems to overcome them. This refers to \*sins that people do not mean to do. Or, this refers to the \*sins that people are ready to confess to God. It is easy to speak against a Christian who \*sins. But God wants Christians to help each other, not to be judges of each other. Mature Christians are kind and gentle (5:22-23). They listen to the Holy Spirit. The Greek word for 'show the person the right way' means to mend something, for example a bone that has broken. It also means to repair something, for example a piece of material that has torn. The repair may take time. The helpers are not perfect. They should not be proud. They must be aware that \*sin could tempt them too.

#### Verse 2

The word for 'troubles' describes a heavy load. It refers to anything that makes life difficult for a person. Paul had already mentioned this law in 5:14, 'You must love other people as you love yourself.' It is difficult for someone physically to carry a heavy load by himself. It feels much lighter when someone else helps him. The same thing is true with difficulties in life. And when you help other people, you show love to them.

#### Verses 3-4

Pride is a very bad thing. A Christian can feel superior when he sees another Christian in trouble or in \*sin. But nobody is better than anybody else. Even the \*apostles in Jerusalem were not more important than other people (2:6). People may feel proud when they act like judges of other people's behaviour. But they may feel very bad when they compare themselves to someone else. That is why Christians should compare themselves only to God's standards. They should be grateful for the ways that God has helped them. And they should be happy with what they have achieved.

#### Verse 5

God has given gifts to everyone (1 Corinthians 12:4-7). He has given to everyone good work to do (Ephesians 2:10). Everyone will give an account to God for what he or she said (Matthew 12:36). So every Christian is responsible for the way that he or she behaves. Other people can help Christians if \*sin overcomes them. Or Christians may need help if they have too many troubles. But in the end, each person is responsible for himself.

#### Verse 6

To 'share all good things' may refer to money. The members of a \*church should pay the person who teaches them. Paul taught more about this in 1 Timothy 5:17-18.

#### Verse 7

Paul wanted to emphasise what he was saying here. Someone can cheat another person. But nobody can cheat God. Paul used a farmer as his example. A farmer plants seeds in his fields. If he plants corn, then he will harvest corn from that field. If he plants potatoes, then he will harvest potatoes from that field. So the farmer

receives what he deserves. Verses 7-10 probably continue what Paul taught about money in verse 6. But they may be about other types of good deeds too.

#### Verse 8

The farmer in verse 7 harvested the same crops as he sowed. He received what he deserved. And, in our lives, we too receive what we deserve. If we live for ourselves, then God will punish us. Instead, we should live to please God. Then we shall do what pleases the Holy Spirit. We shall have God's life. And our spirits will never die.

#### Verse 9

People cannot earn their place in God's family. God will not accept them because they do good deeds. But when someone becomes part of God's family, they should serve other people. This can be hard work. People get tired. Sometimes people may even feel depressed. But every good deed is like a good seed. And the harvest time will come when Jesus returns. Paul does not say what the harvest is. But harvest time is always a good time.

#### Verse 10

So Paul encouraged the Christians to serve other people. Christians can help all kinds of people. But they always should remember to help other Christians too. This verse links with 2:10.

## Paul's final message

**v11** I am writing this myself. You can see what big letters I write.

**v12** Some men insist that someone must \*circumcise you. They want to make a good impression about things that people consider important. They do this because they do not want to suffer. They would suffer if they \*preached about the cross of Christ. **v13** Someone \*circumcised them. But they do not obey the \*Jewish law. Now they want to \*circumcise you. Then they can make a good impression because of what they have done to you. **v14** As for me, I am completely confident about what our \*Lord Jesus Christ has done for me. I only feel pride about his cross. The affairs of this world affect me as they affect a dead man. And my interest in the affairs of this world is dead. **v15** One man may have allowed someone to \*circumcise him. Another man may not have allowed someone to \*circumcise him. But this is not important. What really matters is that God is making you into a new kind of person. **v16** I pray for those people who live in this way. I pray that God will make you \*peaceful. And I pray that God will be kind to you. I pray this for all the Israel of God.

**v17** Finally, nobody should cause me any more trouble. The damage that I have on my body shows that I belong to Jesus.

**v18** My Christian brothers and sisters, I pray that our \*Lord Jesus Christ will show his kindness to you all. Let it be so.

#### Verse 11

In Paul's days, many people did not write their own letters. Instead, they employed skilled writers. These writers knew how to write official letters. They could write neatly. And they could write in the official \*Greek language. When Paul wrote his letter to the Romans, he employed a writer (Romans 16:22). And he probably employed a writer for all his other letters. But he wrote a personal message at the end of his letters (for example, 1 Corinthians 16:21; 2 Thessalonians 3:17). In this letter, Paul wrote his message with big letters. He probably wanted to emphasise what he was writing.

#### Verse 12

Again, Paul opposed the false teachers. They wanted \*Gentile Christians to become \*Jews. The false teachers wanted to be popular among the \*Jews. The false teachers wanted to be the ones whom people accepted. The false teachers did not want to suffer. Paul was not popular among the \*Jews, because he \*preached the \*good news about Christ. So Paul suffered greatly because of his message (2 Corinthians 11:13-33).

#### Verse 13

The false teachers were \*Jews. They wanted the \*Gentile Christians to obey the \*Jewish laws. However, the false teachers did not manage to obey all the \*Jewish laws themselves. But they were proud. And they wanted people to admire their work.

#### Verse 14

At one time, Paul was proud of what he achieved. He always obeyed the \*Jewish laws. He did what pleased other people. But Paul's life changed completely when he met Jesus Christ. He did not care about anything except that he knew Jesus Christ. Paul explained this in more detail in Philippians 3:2-9.

#### Verse 15

It does not matter whether someone is a \*Jew or a \*Gentile. But it does matter whether someone is a genuine Christian. It does matter whether someone trusts Jesus. Everyone needs to invite Jesus into his or her life.

#### Verse 16

Paul started this letter with a similar prayer in 1:3. Paul had just described how Christians in Galatia should live. And if they lived in that way, they would be at \*peace with God. They would be at \*peace with other people. And they would feel \*peaceful in their spirits. God had already been kind to them. So Paul prayed that God would continue to help them. And he prayed that God would help 'all the Israel of God'. Many students believe that 'the Israel of God' means all Christians. Other students believe that it means \*Jews who have become Christians.

#### Verse 17

Paul wrote this letter to teach the truth to the Christians. He had taught the truth to them when he first visited Galatia. But some of them started to believe the false teachers. The Christians were not sure whether Paul was a real \*apostle. In this letter, Paul explained why the false teachers were wrong. He proved that he was a real \*apostle. He clearly explained the truth again. And he showed the Christians that Christ had made them free.

Paul was very upset about the situation in Galatia. He did not want the problems to continue. And he was confident that this letter would solve the problems there. Paul had suffered because he was a Christian. He wanted to please only Jesus Christ.

#### Verse 18

Paul ended this letter with a short prayer. '\*Lord Jesus Christ' is the full title that Paul used in 1:3. All God's kind gifts come to Christians by means of Jesus. All Christians are like brothers and sisters because we all belong to God's family. 'Let it be so' is the word 'Amen'. People say 'Amen' at the end of a prayer. It shows that they agree with the speaker or writer.

## Word List

**angel** ~ a servant of God. He brings messages from God to people on earth. But an 'evil angel' (also called a demon or evil spirit) is a servant of the devil.

**apostle** ~ someone whom God sends to teach about Jesus and to lead his \*church.

**baptism** ~ the way that people show to everyone that they belong to Christ. The person goes under water, or someone puts water on the person.

**church** ~ a group of Christians, or all Christians. It does not refer to the building where they meet.

**circumcise** ~ to cut off the loose skin from the end of the sex part of a man or a boy. For the \*Jews, it was the proof that a man agreed to obey God's laws.

**descendant** ~ a future member of a family or a nation.

**disciple** ~ someone who learns what Jesus taught. A disciple trusts and follows Jesus.

**Gentile** ~ any person who is not a \*Jew.

**good news** ~ the good news for everyone that God forgives everyone who trusts Jesus Christ. God sent Jesus to this world. Jesus died on a wooden cross and then God made him alive again. Jesus died on our behalf. He died to make people free from their \*sins.

**Greek** ~ a person who comes from the country called Greece; or, the language in which the authors wrote the \*New Testament.

**Hebrew** ~ the language that the \*Jews spoke. The authors wrote most of the \*Old Testament in the \*Hebrew language.

**idol** ~ a thing that people make out of wood, stone or metal. People \*worship it instead of God.

**Jew** ~ a person who comes from the family of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; or, a person who follows the \*Jewish religion.

**Jewish** ~ a word that describes a \*Jew or anything about \*Jews.

**Jewish law** ~ the laws that God gave to the \*Jews in the first 5 books of the \*Old Testament.

**Lord** ~ the title for God or Jesus in the Bible. It shows that he has authority as our ruler.

**miracle** ~ a great thing that only God can do; an event that seems to be opposite to natural events.

**New Testament** ~ the last part of the Bible that the writers wrote after the life of Jesus. It is about the things that Jesus taught. It describes the main events during his life. The New Testament is also about what Christians believe. And it explains how Christians should live.

**Old Testament** ~ the first part of the Bible, which writers wrote before Jesus was born.

**peace** ~ in the \*Hebrew language, this word is 'shalom'. It is a traditional greeting in the \*Old Testament (Numbers 6:24-26) and among \*Jewish people today. 'Peace' is not just the opposite of war or noise. Peace means that God gives a person a calm spirit. This affects every part of a person's life and relationships.

**preach** ~ to teach the \*good news about Jesus Christ.

**Roman** ~ people who lived in or who came from the city called Rome. Or, that which belonged to Rome. Rome was a powerful city at that time. It had a strong army. The Romans ruled many countries. Those countries had to obey Roman law and to pay Roman taxes.

**Scripture** ~ another name for the Bible, especially the \*Old Testament.

**sin** ~ when people do not obey God; something bad that a person does against God or against other people.

**spiritual** ~ that which belongs to the spirit rather than physical things; that which belongs to God's Spirit or to heaven.

**worship** ~ to give honour to God; or, to give honour to a false god; to tell someone that they are very great; and to tell them that you love them; to praise and serve God.

## Book List

Archea and Nida ~ A Translator's Handbook on Paul's Letter to the Galatians ~ United Bible Societies

The Bible Knowledge Commentary ~ IVP

The New Bible Commentary ~ IVP

The Expositor's Bible Commentary (on CD ROM)

R. Alan Cole ~ Galatians ~ Tyndale New Testament Commentaries

L. Ann Jervis ~ Galatians ~ New International Biblical Commentary

The New Bible Dictionary ~ IVP

W.E. Vine ~ Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words

Strong's Enhanced Lexicon

Collins Cobuild English Dictionary

Various versions of the Bible

For the computer ~ Logos Bible Software 2.1

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