

LESSON 5

LAW AND GRACE

Galatians 3:1-4:31

Introduction

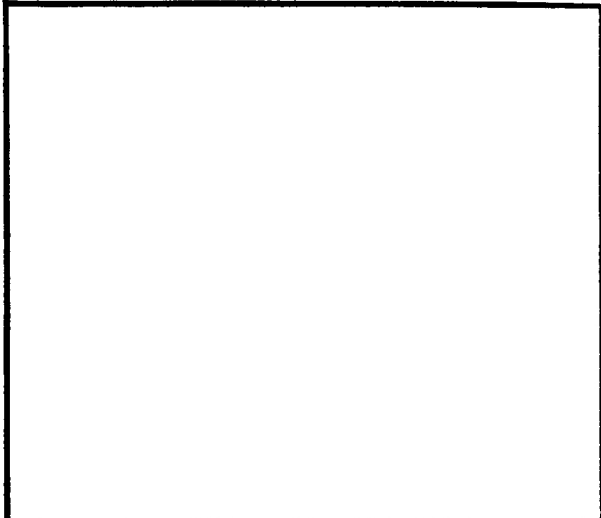
The fact that Paul used the term 'law' in a number of ways has been mentioned previously. Since his fullest discussion of law is contained in Galatians 3 and 4, it is practical to list the varied uses of the term at the outset of this lesson.

Paul usually used the expression 'Law of God' to refer to some part or all of the Old Testament. On occasions, the term includes the rabbinic interpretation of the Old Testament. The Rabbis deducted from each law numerous rules for its application; thus, they legalized the observance of the Law in terms of multiple specific rules. The term often includes the pharisaical application of it in addition to Old Testament Scriptures.

The various meanings of law in Romans and Galatians are:

1. The entire Old Testament—"law" (Rom. 3:19);
2. The entire Old Testament—"the law and the prophets" (Rom. 3:21);
3. Law as equivalent to the Jewish religion (Rom. 2:15; Gal. 3:12f., 17, 19, 21, etc.);
4. A principle of action that obligates man to keep the moral law (Rom. 7:21, 23);
5. "Another law in my members" which is contrasted to the law (principle) of the mind—the law or principle of sin which controls man's physical members (Rom. 7:23; 8:2);
6. "The law of Christ"—Christianity as a new law (Gal. 6:2);
7. "The law of the Spirit of life"—the principle which controls and characterizes the new life of Kingdom citizens (Rom. 8:2).

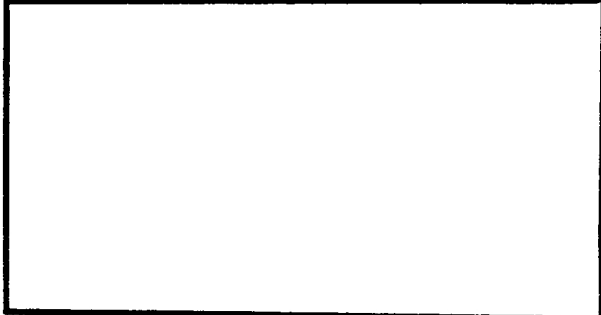
Paul did not distinguish between the Scripture and its interpretation in his use of the term 'law'.



Read again carefully the various meanings of 'law' in Romans and Galatians. Five ways Paul used the term 'law' are:

1. _____ Testament.
2. _____ religion
3. _____ of moral action
4. _____ of sin which controls man
5. _____ as a new law

(Old, Jewish, principle, principle, Christianity)



Frequently, his use of law has been confused and has led to antinomianism (disregard of the moral law). Paul rejected the legalistic religion of the Pharisees as a valid way of gaining acceptance with God. He did not reject the precepts or commandments of the Old Testament which are God's revelation to His people. Keeping the commandments, however, is ineffective in bringing about righteousness because of man's sinful condition. When Paul used law to refer to the Old Testament Scripture, he certainly did not degrade its authority or value since he used Scripture to give authority to his doctrine.

His own experience as a Pharisee and his conversion taught him that legalistic religion depends on one's own performance which is destined to failure. When Paul was converted, he found in Christ a power which abode within and brought his sinful desires under control. He recognized that man's sinful desires cause the Law to be an ineffective means of achieving righteousness. The Law in itself is not bad, but it has no power within itself to change sinful man. Man in sin cannot control his evil desires and avoid that which is wrong even though he is threatened by punishment. Paul found God's grace expressed through Christ to be superior to righteousness by the Law because God's grace appropriated through faith provided a power to change the sinful life.

The Mistake of the Galatians

Galatians 3:1-5

Paul did not include in Galatians a discussion of regeneration which takes place through faith. He did mention that as a result of faith, Christ lives within (2:20). Faith as submission to and trust in the Son of God permits the indwelling Christ to control the life of the believer. Since the Galatians had experienced regeneration, Paul assumed that they understood the role of the Spirit and the indwelling Christ in the life of the believer. This important doctrine is not understood by many contemporary church members.

Paul had proclaimed Jesus Christ as crucified to the Galatians (v.1); therefore, he apparently had instructed them to crucify the flesh in order that the resurrected Christ or indwelling Spirit could be in control. Paul asked whether they received the indwelling Spirit by their own efforts of keeping the Law or by faith (v.2). He reminded them that they had begun their Christian lives by faith in which they depended on God's power to indwell them and guide them, but they had returned in pride to a dependence on their own flesh or resources (v.3). Paul chided them for having returned to a dependence

Disregard of the moral law is called

_____.

(antinomianism)

The weakness of the Law is that it has no power within itself to change _____

_____.

(sinful man)

The Galatians' mistake was turning away from God's power to indwell them and depending on their own _____ or _____.

(flesh, resources)

on self to keep the Law perfectly after having experienced victory through the power of the Spirit (vv. 1, 3).

The Galatians had begun their new life by a spiritual birth but they later reverted to the old life of the flesh (v. 3). Flesh does not refer basically to the material elements of man's body but to his life in its fallen state. Sin has invaded his life and controls it. Life in the flesh is a life of lust, covetousness, weakness and defeat. Life in the Spirit is life lived in the power and under the control of God's indwelling Spirit, resulting in victory and righteousness. After having begun the Christian life with the experience of victory, the Galatians had returned to dependence on the flesh (on their own strength) to live righteously and to serve God. Their experience of victory in the Spirit appeared to have been in vain (v. 4).

Paul introduced another aspect of salvation by faith without explaining it. Apparently justification by faith includes not only the forgiveness of sins which have been committed but also the power to master the sinful life. By faith man is made righteous by having his own unrighteousness removed through forgiveness and by being enabled to live righteously through the indwelling power of God. The power of the indwelling Spirit was evidenced by the miracles which were worked among them. The miracles were not the result of the Galatians' attempt to keep the Law in their own strength but of the experience of regeneration through faith (v. 5).

The Superiority of Faith

Galatians 3:6-14

As in Romans 4, Paul interpreted and applied teachings concerning Abraham set forth in Genesis 12 and 17. Abraham had been called by Yahweh to separate from his relatives and their idolatry. Yahweh promised to make Abraham's name great and to make him a blessing to other nations if he turned away from idolatry: "Walk before me, and be thou perfect" (Gen. 17:1). Abraham believed the promises of the Lord, "and he counted it to him for righteousness" (Gen. 15:6). Paul used the example of Abraham to argue that the seed of Abraham through whom the promises were perpetuated must be men of faith also (v. 7). The Judaizers interpreted Abraham's seed to be blood descendants instead of faith descendants.

In Genesis 17, God commanded Abram to walk blamelessly before Him (v. 1). His name was changed from Abram (exalted father) to Abraham

Choose characteristics from the following list and place them in the correct category:

(covetous, Spirit-controlled, victorious, weak, lustful, righteous, defeated, power-filled)

Life in the flesh

Life in the Spirit

(Compare your answer with the text.)

Another aspect of justification by faith besides forgiveness of sins is the _____ to master the sinful _____.

(power, life)

(father of a multitude—v. 5). The Covenant was repeated to him and his descendants and he and his household were circumcised as a sign of the Covenant (vv. 10-11). The Covenant included "he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed" (v. 12).

The Jews interpreted the perfection required of Abraham in Genesis 17:1 to have been accomplished by keeping the Law; however, it had not been given at that time. The perfection required was probably perfect loyalty to Yahweh. The Jews admitted that all of the nations of the earth would be blessed in Abraham (Gen. 12:3), but Gentiles must submit to circumcision as the seal of the Covenant (Gen. 17:10-14). Perhaps the Jews told the Galatians that they needed circumcision in order to make their faith perfect. In refuting the teachings of the Judaizers, Paul pointed out that Abraham was reckoned righteous before he and his household were circumcised (Gen. 15:6). That the true sons of Abraham were not his physical descendants, the Jews, but men of faith, the Gentiles, is shown by God's commission to Abraham to be a blessing to the nations in Genesis 12:3 (cf. Gal. 3:8).

Paul pointed out that a curse rests upon all who rely upon obedience of a law. The Jews based their claims to the blessings of Abraham on keeping the Law and on being his descendants (seed). In referring to Deuteronomy 27:26, Paul reminded them that the law pronounces a curse upon everyone who does not perform all that it requires. In Romans 2 and 3, Paul showed that there are none who perfectly obey it. These facts lead to the obvious conclusion that no one is justified by the Law before God (v. 11). If righteousness is not by faith, there is no hope for sinful man.

Paul said that the Law is not based on faith. Faith is the expression of man's need and trust in God. Justification by the Law is based on man's performance—dependence on himself (v. 12).

Although the Law justly condemns (places a curse upon) those who sin (transgress it), Christ redeems from its curse (v. 13). Paul quoted Habakkuk 2:4 to support his teaching that "no man is justified by the law in the sight of God" (v. 11). Through the redemption that is in Christ, "the just shall live by faith" (vv. 13 and 11). Israel faced the threat of the Babylonian invasion, and the prophet Habakkuk sought the reason why a wicked nation was permitted to defeat God's people. Yahweh responded that "the righteous shall live by his faith" (by his fidelity or faithfulness). To live by faith means to trust in the faithfulness of Yahweh. Sinful man can depend on Christ's redemption from the curse of the Law since He was made a curse in our place (v. 13).

The Jews interpreted the perfection required of Abraham to have been accomplished by keeping the _____.

(Law)

Paul showed that no one perfectly obeys the Law; therefore, justification is by _____.

(faith)

What words can you substitute for the underlined words in the following sentence?

The Law justly places a curse upon (_____) those who transgress it (____). Christ has redeemed sinful man from the curse of the Law (_____) by becoming a curse for us (_____).

(condemns, sin, condemnation, taking our penalty of sin)

The word 'redeem' means "bought us out". The metaphor of payment becomes merged in that of deliverance. Christ has emancipated us from some form of enslavement described as the curse of the Law. He has secured our release at a high cost to Himself by becoming a curse for us (v.13).

Deuteronomy 21:22f. states that if a man commits a crime worthy of death "and thou hang him on a tree: His body shall not remain all night upon the tree... (for he that is hanged is accursed of God; that thy land be not defiled...." Since Christ was placed on a tree (wood) constructed into a cross, Paul found support in this Scripture for the teaching that Christ became "a curse" in the sense that He allowed Himself to come under a curse. The same concept is expressed in 2 Corinthians 5:21: "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf..." (NASB). Christ was not sinful nor was He actually cursed, but He was made to be sin and He became a curse for us. The curse or punishment for sin fell on Him instead of on us. Thus He brought us out from under the curse and we are free from it. In taking the punishment which sinners deserved under the Law, Christ Jesus made available to Gentiles the blessings of Abraham (v.14).

"In Christ Jesus" is an important expression in Paul's writings. The promises of God to Abraham are incorporated in Christ and His work. When a person receives Christ and His atonement through faith, he receives the promises or blessings of Abraham. In the experience of redemption through faith, Christ comes to abide spiritually within the believer, "that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith" (v.14). Previously, Paul had asked the Galatians if they had received the Spirit by faith or through the works of the Law. He had shown that God's promise to Abraham was received through faith. Likewise, the promise to the Christian of the Spirit as a gift is received through faith.

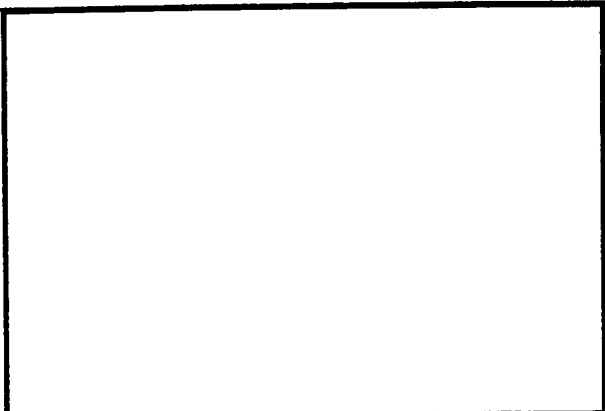
The Purpose of the Law

Galatians 3:15-29

Why the Law is important

Two important commandments of the Decalogue (Ten Commandments) are:

1. "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (Exod. 20:3);
2. "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy" (Exod. 20:8).

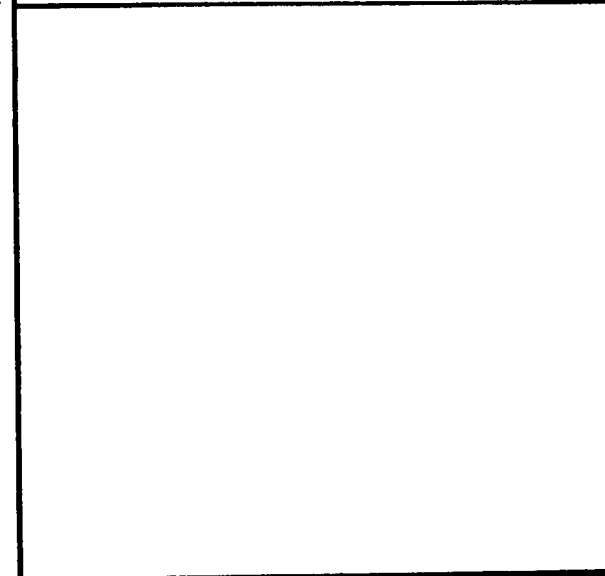


In taking the punishment which sinners deserved under the Law, Jesus made available to _____ the blessings of _____.

(Gentiles, Abraham)

Paul showed that God's promise to Abraham was received through _____; in the same way, the promise to the Christian of the Spirit as a gift is received through _____.

(faith, faith)



The Ten Commandments set forth the essence of man's responsibility to live righteously in his covenant relationship to Yahweh. According to the Prophets, the Jews had broken the Covenant and had forfeited the right to God's blessings. First Israel and then Judah became guilty of idolatry and of neglecting to worship Yahweh on the Sabbath. They were carried into captivity. Upon the return of the Jews from Babylonian captivity, Ezra led them to an emphasis on keeping these commandments to insure the nation's avoiding another captivity. Keeping the Law became the Jewish way of becoming righteous and being acceptable to God. Paul discovered that righteousness is not possible through the Law because no man keeps it perfectly. There must be another way of being accepted by God. He turned to God's promise to Abraham which was made before the Law was given. His task was to show the superiority of the promise to the Law, yet explain the purpose of the Law.

The Law does not nullify the promise (3:15-18)

Paul chose a human example to illustrate the permanence of Yahweh's promises to Abraham (v. 15). He pointed out that after a human agreement was duly ratified, no one could annul it or change it. God's promise is much more dependable than man's. Since God had given His promise to Abraham and to his seed on the basis of faith, receiving God's blessings and the fulfillment of His promise continue to be by faith. Paul pointed out that according to the wording of the Scripture, the promise was given to a single person, not to many—to Abraham's offspring (singular), not to his offsprings (plural). It was not really fulfilled until the coming of Christ.

The promise to Abraham had been to make of him a great nation and to make his name great. He was to be a blessing to all the families of the earth. The Covenant, incorporating God's promise, was established with Abraham's seed after him (Gen. 17:7). The promise had been fulfilled only partially before the coming of Christ. Paul interpreted the promise of a great nation to refer to the Kingdom which God established. The promise that Abraham and his seed would be a blessing to all nations was interpreted by Paul to mean the Gospel of Christ was to be taken to the Gentiles. The promise was not annulled nor changed by the Law which came 430 years later (v. 17). Israel's inheritance was not based on keeping the Law but on God's faithfulness to keep His promise (v. 18).

The Law defines wrongs (3:19-20)

Paul had explained previously what the Law is not intended to do. It was never intended to be a

Keeping the Law became the Jewish way of becoming _____ and being _____ to God.

(righteous, acceptable)

Show the difference in the 'Covenant' and the 'promise' by drawing a line from the words to the related significance of the words.

<i>Covenant</i>	<i>Does not depend upon man's performance</i>
<i>Promise</i>	<i>Can be annulled if man fails to fulfil his responsibilities.</i>

(Line from 'Covenant' to "can be annulled..."; line from 'Promise' to "does not depend...")

means to attain righteousness by which God's promise would be received. The scribes and Pharisees taught that the establishing of the Kingdom of God depended on perfect obedience to it. If God's promise is bestowed by grace rather than by merit achieved by keeping the Law, what is the purpose of it? Instead of being the ultimate expression of God's will for His people, Paul stated that it is a mere addition to God's ultimate plan (v. 19).

Paul's varied use of the term 'law' suggests several possible meanings of the statement that the Law was added because of transgressions:

1. The moral law provided a recognized standard whereby sin committed in ignorance became specific transgression when God's commandments were known. Until a person knows an action or attitude is wrong, he sins in ignorance, but the sin does not become transgression with guilt until a recognized standard of what is right or a specific commandment is rejected. After Christ had come (the seed), He became the standard of righteousness.
2. The ceremonial law was given for the benefit of those who recognized their transgressions. The guilty conscience resulting from responsible sin needed to be cleansed through a blood sacrifice. The sacrifices were only shadows of Christ who offered up His life to make men righteous for the Kingdom of God.

The moral law cannot make men righteous because sinful men fail to keep it. The ceremonial law depended on inferior sacrifices which needed to be offered repeatedly. The Law which was given through a mediator was inferior to the promise of God to Abraham which was given directly. The Law could not produce life like the promise. It merely transmitted God's commands and regulations but not God's living promise and power which were expressed in His Son.

The Septuagint preserves the tradition that angels were present at the giving of the Law (Deut. 33:2; Heb. 2:2; Acts 7:38, 53). The Jews believed that the attendant angels, like the thunder and the lightning, showed forth the glory of the Divine Presence. Paul interpreted their presence to be a substitute for God who was not present in person.¹ The Law was given through a mediator

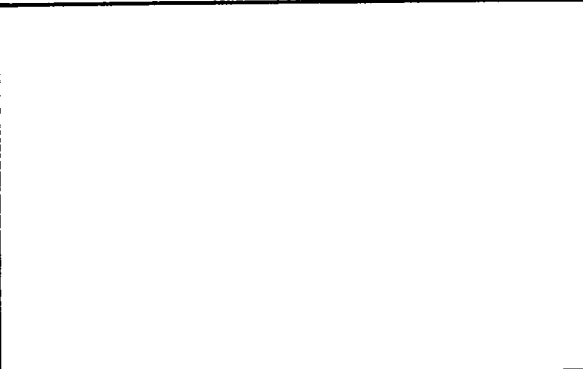
¹George S. Duncan, The Epistle of Paul to the Galatians, Vol. IX of The Moffatt New Testament Commentary (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1934), p. 114.



The moral law cannot make men righteous because _____.

The ceremonial law was ineffective because _____.

(sinful men fail to keep it, it was only a shadow of the reality to come in Christ)



because it involved two contracting parties: God and the Jewish nation. The contract could be annulled by the failure of one of the involved parties. A promise is not conditioned upon the actions of a second party (v.20). When God made a promise to Abraham and his seed, the promise would not be annulled by the failure of man.

The Law is not contradictory or opposed to the promises of God (v.21). Paul stated a false premise—"if a law had been given which was able to impart life"—which leads to a wrong conclusion—"then righteousness would indeed have been based on law". According to the Scripture, the premise is false because no man has kept the Law and attained righteousness, but all have sinned (v.22). The promise remains, however, since God gives it to those who believe even though they have not obeyed perfectly the Law.

The Law is like a custodian (3:23-29)

Paul stated that before the faith came (the faith made possible by the historic coming of Christ the Redeemer), the Law was a guard which kept us confined (v.23). Men had faith in God before the coming of Christ, but faith was expanded to include more than confidence in God's faithfulness. "The faith" includes all which is proclaimed as Gospel and sharply distinguishes the new hope in Christ from the old religion of the Law.

The Law had been set over man as a guard for moral restraint. It served the two-fold purpose of instructing man concerning wrong and of disciplining him for doing wrong. The Law is compared to a custodian (strict governness, school-master, tutor). It is not so much a teacher as a moral supervisor of man's life. The word translated 'custodian' describes a person entrusted with the moral supervision of a child. He possessed the right of exercising discipline and was generally depicted on ancient vases with a stick in his hand.² The responsibility of the Law as moral custodian over the spiritually immature ended when Christ came.

The Law operated primarily to make men realize their bondage to sin. It was a stage in the redemptive process, but it has been surpassed by Christ who gives freedom. Paul stated that the Law leads to Christ not by educating a man but by disciplining him and showing him his need of redemption.

²John W. MacGorman, Galatians, p. 103.

The Law is compared to a custodian because it is not so much a _____ as a _____ of man's life.

(teacher, moral supervisor)

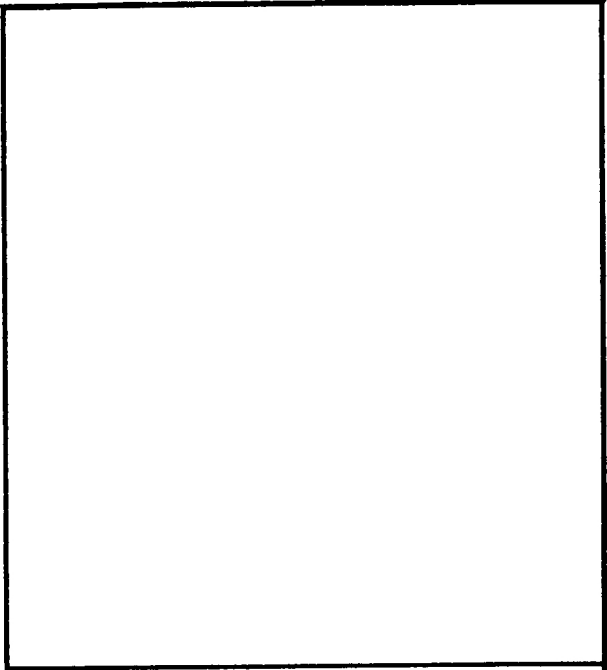
Paul stated that the Law made men realize their bondage to _____ and their need for _____.

(sin, redemption)

Verse 24 apparently grew out of Paul's background. As a Pharisee, he desired to achieve righteousness through the Law. Although his efforts were sincere, he recognized that his failures brought him under just condemnation. His zeal in keeping the Law caused him to sin. He had believed that Christians transgressed the precepts of Moses because they spoke against the need of temple ceremonies for cleansing and offered the Christian faith to people other than Jews. To stop the Christian heresy and to protect the religion of the Law, Paul transgressed God's commandments by participating in the murder of Stephen. Condemnation by the Law for murder left him no alternative but to accept God's gracious gift of redemption in Christ by faith. Justification by faith brought cleansing, forgiveness, and a sense of freedom from condemnation for his failures. All the Law had been able to do was to tell him when he had committed wrong and to pronounce condemnation upon him. Faith in Christ had brought deliverance from sin and release from repressive discipline.

Through faith in Christ, Paul experienced a positive life as a son of God and was able to lay aside the life under a repressive disciplinarian (vv. 25-26). The climax to his argument comes in verse 26. Through faith in Christ, Jews and Gentiles become sons of God. It is a regenerative experience which revolutionizes the life of the believer. By faith, the believer comes into the possession of Christ. This inward experience needs to be expressed outwardly. Baptism is the outward expression of the believer's new and intimate relationship to Christ. Baptism does not constitute one a son of God; that transaction is perfected through faith (v. 26). Baptism is described as putting on Christ (v. 27). This metaphor depicts the putting on of a uniform to identify one in Christ's service. Baptism is the public profession and identification of one with Christ.

Through faith in Christ, all believers are sons of God without distinction between Jew and Gentile, slave and free, or male and female. Judaizers maintained distinctions between races, social classes, and sexes. Segregation and discrimination have no place in the Church. Man's race, social status, and gender neither commend nor discredit him before God. If he belongs to Christ, he is counted as Abraham's descendant who is heir to the promise (v. 29).



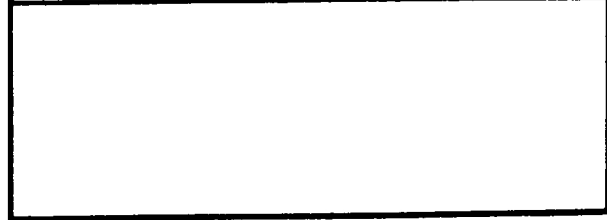
The outward expression of the believer's new and intimate relationship to Christ is _____.

Another way of saying "putting on Christ" or "baptism" is _____

(baptism, putting on a uniform to identify one in Christ's service)

Because all believers are sons of God without distinction, _____ and _____ have no place in the Church.

(segregation, discrimination)



Freedom as Sons

Galatians 4:1-7

Paul alluded to his belief in an eschatology (last things) which may seem strange to contemporary Christians. He believed that the world is divided into two spiritual spheres, ages, or dominions. The present age is evil and is under the "prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience" (Eph. 2:2). The Kingdom of God being established under His Messiah will defeat the evil powers which will be destroyed forever. Satan will no longer be able to hold the present evil age in his power. God's intervention in history in His chosen Messiah will overcome the armies of Satan. The "sons of darkness" will give one last desperate effort to subdue the "sons of light", but God and His forces will triumph. Paul believed that the new age had arrived in the coming of Christ.

In the old age, the heirs of the Kingdom are as children who must be guarded by the Law. They do not have the maturity, intelligence, and power of the Spirit of God to withstand the forces of evil. Before the coming of Christ, the time had not arrived for God to bring to fullness the plan for His Kingdom. Although the elect were heirs and would eventually become owners of everything during the time of immaturity even the heirs were confined under guardians and managers—the Law.

According to God's own time, the Kingdom would come in maturity and fullness (v. 2). Until that time, the heirs of the Kingdom were required to live according to fundamental principles of this world (v. 3). Paul compared them to children who were under guardians and managers appointed by the Father until the time of their maturity when they would be given freedom. Until Christ came and initiated the new age, Paul stated that man was under the guardianship of the Law but controlled by the powers of this world. With the coming of Christ, the heir entered into his full inheritance in the Kingdom of God.

Christ was born of a woman, that is, he assumed humanity with all its limitations and weaknesses (v. 4). Christ was born in the old age in which the Law as guardian confined and restricted man. Even though Christ was born under the Law (a restricted guardian), as God's Son He was not controlled (held in bondage under the elemental things of the world) by the evil spiritual rulers of this world. Although the Law told man in the old age what to do, the evil rulers of this world led man to break it which resulted in his condemnation.

Paul believed the world is divided into two spiritual _____ or ages. The present evil age is under the power of _____ and the coming Kingdom of God is under the _____.

The coming of Christ had brought in the new _____.

(spheres, Satan, Messiah, age)

The implication in "Christ was born of a woman" is that He assumed humanity with all its _____ and _____.
"Christ was born under the Law" means He was born into the old age in which the Law as guardian _____ and _____ man.

(limitations, weaknesses, confined, restricted)

The evil powers of the old age were able to use the Law as an instrument of condemnation. When Christ as Messiah initiated the new age, as Suffering Servant He redeemed man from the condemnation of the Law and as resurrected and indwelling Lord He brought the heirs into a new relationship with God. No longer can the spirit of evil control man's life and cause him to come under the condemnation of the Law because "God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts" (v.6). The transaction has established a mature relationship to God in which the heir is adopted as a son and calls God "my Father." Man is no longer left to the guardianship of the Law which disciplines and represses—making him a slave; he is a son who lives by the power of God and in the freedom of the son of a king (v.7).

The rulers of this world used the Law as an instrument of _____.

(condemnation)

The Advantage of New Life Through Faith

Galatians 4:8-31

Warning against relapse (4:8-11)

The Law was given of God and is good. Its purpose was to show man what is right, but the rulers of this age (cf. 1 Cor. 2:6) used it as an instrument by which to bring men under bondage. These evil rulers, "which by nature are no gods" (v.8), were able to enslave men who followed the Law. God had placed men under guardians as children until they became of age to be treated as sons and companions. Now that the Galatians had come to know God, "or rather to be known by God" through faith in Christ, why would they want to leave the intimate relation with the Father and return to the life under a guardian as slaves (v.9)?

Until the Redeemer came, the whole world, Jewish and Gentile alike, was under the dominion of "powers of the present age". Which way of life did the Galatians desire? Rather than advance in their new faith, did they desire to turn back and serve the elemental spirits from which Christ had delivered them? The worship and service of these earthly spirits which are no gods is represented by the observance of days and months and seasons and years (v.10). The return of the Galatians to the enslavement of living by the Law is compared to the return of heathen to subjection to the starry hosts (cf. Acts 7:42). Paul feared that his labour had been spent in vain among them (v.11).

Is this statement true or false?

Paul was fearful that his work with the Galatians had been in vain. _____

(true)

Paul's personal appeal (4:12-20)

Paul's reference to his labours among the Galatians in verse 11 prompted his turning aside from

the argument setting forth the superiority of faith to the Law. In an intensely personal passage, he appealed to them to resume their old relationship with him. Paul was deeply moved by their estrangement from himself and even more by their estrangement from God. At the beginning of Chapter 3, he spoke harsh words to them not to further alienate them but to win them back to the Gospel.

Paul exhorted the Galatians to keep on becoming as he was (v. 12). Perhaps he was suggesting that they adopt his attitudes towards the demands of the Jewish Law. Paul appealed to them on the basis of his having identified himself with the Gentiles. Even though the Galatians had been influenced to reject Paul's doctrine and accept that of the Judaizers, Paul assured them that he carried no sense of injustice concerning their actions (v. 12).

Paul's reference to a bodily illness which caused him to go to Galatia instead of some other land has been the source of much speculation. Some scholars connect this illness with the chronic affliction referred to in 2 Corinthians 12:7 as "a thorn in the flesh". Suggestions concerning the nature of the illness have included malaria, epilepsy, and a disease of the eyes. Some have suggested that he went to the mountainous regions of Galatia because of the necessity of his getting to higher altitudes. Paul's reference to the Galatians' willingness to "have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me" (v. 15) has caused frequent identification of his illness as eye disease.

Paul implied that the illness was one which might have evoked among the Galatians contempt and even revulsion. Although his illness was a "temptation which was in my flesh" (v. 14), they did not "spurn" (to spit out or to loathe) him. A. T. Robertson mentions the custom of "spitting out" as a prophylactic custom at the sight of invalids, especially epileptics; but Plutarch used the word to refer to mere rejection.³ In spite of his repulsive appearance, Paul was received as a special messenger, a very angel, even as Christ Jesus (v. 14). Their joy in having him in their midst was expressed in a willingness to make a great sacrifice to care for his physical needs (v. 15). Paul inquired why their attitudes had changed. Were they unwilling to hear the truth which he shared concerning Judaizers? (v. 16). Paul may have been afraid that his strong language in his Epistle would be used to turn the Galatians against him.

³A. T. Robertson, The Epistles of Paul, Vol. 4 of Word Pictures in the New Testament (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1931), p. 304.

Paul wrote a moving personal passage with the hope that his former relationship with the _____ would be renewed.

(Galatians)

What verse is used as a basis for identifying Paul's illness as eye disease?

The Galatians' willingness to " _____ "

(Compare your answer with the text.)

The Judaizers zealously sought to win the Galatians to their side (v.17). Paul warned that their motives were dishonest. They desired to debar the Galatians from Paul in order that the Galatians would be dependent on them. If the Judaizers could sever Paul's relationship to the Galatians, they would get more honour and attention for themselves. Paul stated that true friendship should be both honourable and unchanging (v.18). His presence or absence should not have changed their friendship.

Verse 19 expresses Paul's tenderest affection for the Galatians. He likened himself to a mother in childbirth who must suffer first in order to have joy. His experience at the time of writing was that of deep distress and suffering, but he looked forward to the time of joy when Christ was formed in them (vv.19-20).

The allegorical interpretation of Abraham's wives (4:21-31)

Paul returned to his argument concerning the superiority of life through faith in Christ to that of being under the Law. He raised once again the question, Who are the true sons of Abraham? He used the allegorical method of interpretation to apply the Law (the five books of Moses) to his argument.

Allegorical interpretation deduces spiritual applications from Biblical characters and events. They become essentially types of spiritual realities. The method has fallen into disrepute today because of its unrestrained use. Paul's learned contemporaries, however, respected this method of securing religious truth from Scripture.

Paul's desire was to show to the Galatians what they would forfeit if they returned to a religious life controlled by the Law. To confound the enthusiasts for the Law, he used the Law itself (v.21).

Paul assumed that his Gentile readers were familiar with the Old Testament story of Abraham, Hagar, and Sarah. Hagar was the Egyptian maid-servant of Sarah (Gen. 16). Since Sarah was childless, the customs of the day provided for her maid-servant to bear a son for her. Abraham fathered a son by Hagar "in the ordinary course of nature" (v.23-NEB). Eventually Sarah bore a son for Abraham whose name was Isaac. Because of Sarah's age, the birth of Isaac was not according to the "ordinary course of nature". Isaac's birth was by a special act of divine grace in order to fulfil the promise which God had made to Abraham.

Paul noted that the application of the story to his argument was not by the usual interpretation of

The method which deduces spiritual applications from Biblical characters and events is called _____.

(allegorical interpretation)

Scripture but by use of allegory (v.24). He put a secondary meaning on the narrative. He did not deny the historical meaning of the event, but he used the historical as a type of spiritual truth. Hagar, the slave-woman, represented Mount Sinai where the Law was given and Jerusalem where it was observed, especially the ceremonial law. Hagar's son, Ishmael, represented the Jews who were under the bondage of the Law. Isaac, the son of the free-woman (the heavenly Jerusalem), was a type of Christians who had been freed from the custodianship of the Law.

The Jews prided themselves on their natural descent from Abraham, but their natural descent enslaved them under the Law. Sarah, as a type of the spiritual Jerusalem, is the mother of the children of promise. The allegorical interpretation permitted Paul to go beyond the historical meaning in his spiritual application of identifying the proud Jews as descendants of Ishmael. They were born under the Covenant of the Law and were destined to servitude instead of freedom. Their spiritual attitudes identified them as descendants of Ishmael. On the other hand, the faith-response of the Galatian converts identified them with the children of the Covenant of promise. Their spiritual attitude of faith made them the true descendants of Sarah, the children of promise (v.28). The promise was related to Abraham's faith.

The spiritual application is carried further by reference to Ishmael's scorn of Isaac (v.29—cf. Gen. 21:9). This persecution was a type of the persecution of Christians by Jews. The story, however, did not end with the persecution of the child of promise by the slave. At the demands of Sarah, Abraham cast out Hagar and her son. The Jews will be judged and disinherited by God. They will not inherit the Covenant of promise along with Christians (vv. 30-31).

In Paul's allegorical interpretation of Sarah and Hagar, what do Ishmael and Isaac, the two sons, represent?

1. *Ishmael*— _____

2. *Isaac*— _____

(Compare your answer with the text.)

Home Study Exercise

Basic activity (Levels 1, 2, and 3). After reading the study guide text, answer the following questions.

1. List five ways Paul used the term 'law'. _____

2. What is antinomianism? _____

3. What is the weakness of the Law? _____

4. What was the mistake of the Galatians? _____

5. How did Paul and the Jews differ in the interpretation of how Abraham acquired righteousness?

6. Explain: "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us"(3:13).

7. Why did the Pharisees emphasize keeping the Sabbath? _____

8. How does the Covenant requiring man's keeping of the Law differ from the promise? _____

9. Why were the moral and ceremonial laws inadequate? _____

10. Why did Paul compare the Law to a schoolmaster or custodian? _____

11. What is the primary function of the Law? _____

12. Explain: "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (3:27).

13. Explain Paul's world view.

14. Explain: "made of a woman, made under the law" (4:4).

15. How did the rulers of this world use the Law?

16. What caused Paul's personal appeal in 4:12-20?

17. Why do some scholars believe Paul's illness was an eye disease?

18. What is allegorical interpretation?

19. Briefly explain the allegory of Sarah and Hagar.

Supplementary activity (Level 2):

1. Read pages 25-36 in Galatians to Colossians by Hunter.
2. List in modern English Paul's questions in Galatians 3:1-5. (Paraphrase the questions if you desire to do so.)
3. What is meant in 3:13 that Christ's death is both representative and penal.
4. What are the negative and positive purposes of the Law?
5. Explain 3:20.
6. What does Hunter believe Paul's illness to have been?

Advanced activity (Level 3):

1. Read pages 25-36 in Galatians to Colossians by Hunter.
2. Answer the questions for Level 2.
3. What are the possible interpretations of "the elements of the world" in 4:3?
4. Write a brief essay on the meaning and proper use of the allegorical interpretation of Scripture. You should consult a Bible dictionary or a book on interpretation.

Seminar Discussion

1. What applications did Paul draw from Abraham to support his position.
2. What is the meaning of Christ was "made a curse for us"?
3. What are the advantages of salvation by grace over salvation by works of the Law?
4. What is the role of "law" in Christianity?
5. Is Paul's use of allegory a valid method for interpreting Scripture?