

3. The Book of Galatians 1:11-24

Liberty From Law-Part 2

a message by Pastor Phil Ballmaier
(11-26-23)

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We have recently started a new series through the Book of Galatians—but instead of going through the book verse by verse we decided to study it topically based on its main theme.

The main theme of Galatians is **liberty**—the liberty (or freedom) that is ours in Christ.

The Key Verse of the Book is Galatians Chapter 5 verse 1—

Galatians 5:1 (NKJV)

¹ Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.

As I said when we began this series—we are going to focus our attention on 3 main areas (topics) of liberty that Paul brings up in this epistle—

I. Liberty from **Lies**

II. Liberty from **Law**

III. Liberty for **Life**

Last time, we finished looking at—“**Liberty from Lies**” which in some ways is an introduction to the second main point—“**Liberty from Law**” but I decided to include it as a main point because of the day in which we are living. By that I mean—we are living in a world full of lies—and it seems to be getting worse by the day.

Some of these lies are small and have a minimal impact on our lives—while others are very serious, profoundly hurtful and life altering—like the lies that are told within the context of adultery. Most people understand that all lies, whether serious or small, can only affect us while we live on this earth—in other words, they can only hurt us *temporarily* in this life and can do us no more harm after we're dead.

But then there are some lies that will not only affect us in the temporal—but will keep on affecting us in the eternal as well. These lies tell us how to get to heaven—when in reality they will damn us to hell.

One of the lies that Paul dealt with in his missionary endeavors, and in fact, the one he is dealing with in his letter to the Galatians—**was the lie of the Judaizers, which is legalism.**

After Paul visited the region of Galatia, he later learned that the Judaizers had come into the area after him trying to pervert the gospel that Paul had given to them—and the churches were listening to them! **These were Jews that tried to put the Church back under the Law by telling people it was necessary for them to keep the Law of Moses before exercising faith in Jesus for salvation.**

Paul wrote this letter to counteract *their* message by presenting (actually defending) **the one and only true gospel—the gospel of Jesus Christ—the gospel of grace!** That brought us last time to the second major section in our series, “A Journey in Liberty through Galatians”—“**Liberty from Law**” which is really liberty from religion.

REFLECTION: What is the great lie the “Judaizers” continued to perpetuate among the Jewish believers?

II. Liberty from Law

As we studied a few months ago in our series, “The Top 10 Lies of the Devil”—without a doubt the biggest lie the devil has ever fed the human race—is the lie that you get to heaven by being good and doing good.

**In other words, that heaven is a *reward* for deserving people—
Folks, **that is the lie of religion!****

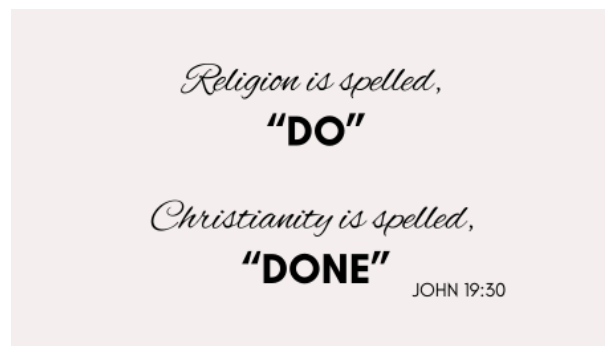
Every religion and religious system in the world apart from Christianity falls under the category of **human achievement**—in other words, what we do for God to earn His favor (and if they believe in the God of the Bible)—**to earn a place in heaven.**

Whereas, only Christianity (**which is not a religion but a relationship**) falls under the category of **divine accomplishment**—in other words, what God has done for us through His Son, Jesus Christ to offer us a place in heaven as a gift.

Religion is spelled “DO” (as in ‘do’, ‘do’, ‘do’ and maybe someday you’ll do enough to earn heaven)—whereas **Christianity is spelled “DONE”** (as in Jesus’ declaration from the cross, “*It is finished*”—John 19:30).

I grew up in the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) where we were taught that religious practices and observances like—going to mass, lighting candles, keeping holy days, praying the rosary, abstaining from certain foods during lent and other acts of ‘piety’—would earn us a place in heaven.

**This is absolute blasphemy against the completed work of Jesus Christ
Who said from the cross - “*It is finished!*”**



REFLECTION: What is the difference between “Human Achievement” and “Divine Accomplishment”?

Galatians 2:21 (NLT)

²¹ I do not treat the grace of God as meaningless. For if keeping the law could make us right with God, then there was no need for Christ to die.

So, Paul wrote his epistle to the Galatians to refute legalism as a basis for salvation and to reaffirm the message he had already given to them concerning the true gospel—the gospel of grace.

Galatians 1:6–7 (NKJV)

⁶ I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, ⁷ which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ.

➤ Why, if Paul himself had given them the true gospel and had disciplined them personally the whole time he was with them—why were the Judaizers able to turn their hearts away from the truth so quickly?

The answer to that question is that they came against Paul personally and attacked his apostleship—“He’s not a true apostle chosen by Jesus—he wasn’t one of the original apostles.” Once they were able to undermine the *man*—it was easy then to attack and undermine his *message* as being untrustworthy as well.

So, we can see Paul defending his call as a true apostle right from the opening statement of this epistle:

Galatians 1:1 (NKJV)

¹ Paul, an apostle (not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead).

Paul now presents six arguments in defense of his message and ministry.

1. **The Gospel he preached was not from man but of divine revelation from God**

Galatians 1:11–12 (NKJV)

¹¹ But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. ¹² For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it [by man], but *it came* through the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Any religious system that originates with man is going to make man responsible for his or her own salvation—it will always seek to exalt human effort as a basis for righteousness. All you have to do is look at every other religion and religious system in the world apart from Christianity to see that.

Religion comes from man and is an expression of his pride (to show he’s good enough to work for and earn a place in heaven)—it is man-centered and works oriented. Christianity comes from God and is

Christ-centered and grace oriented (i.e., *'salvation isn't something we earn by works it is free gift we receive by faith'*—Ephesians 2:8-9).

The word "**religion**" comes from the Latin word "religio" which has a meaning influenced by the verb "religare" which means *'to bind'*—in the sense of *"placing an obligation upon"*.

The Dictionary defines "**obligation**" as duty which, in turn, is defined as *"a thing which a person ought to do; a thing which is right to do."*

Therefore, religion is an obligation or duty to do certain *"right things"* (it depends on each religious group to define what those right things are)—and if a person is faithful to do what their religion says constitutes good works, then they will earn a place in heaven when they die.

This is legalism and this was what the Galatians were buying into which led Paul to say—

"The Gospel I presented to you didn't come from man, it was not given or taught to me by any man—but was given to me through direct revelation from Jesus Himself."

Jesus had taught the gospel to the other apostles when He was with them during His earthly ministry—and then later the Lord gave it to Paul as a divine revelation—as something that came directly from God Himself.

William MacDonald—

"A moment's reflection will confirm this. Paul's gospel makes everything of God and nothing of man. This is not the kind of salvation that men would devise! Paul neither received it from some other person, nor was he taught it through books. It came to him by direct revelation from Jesus Christ Himself."

The second argument Paul presents in defense of his message and ministry—

2. He originally **was zealous for Judaism** and **sought to destroy the Church**

Galatians 1:13–14 (NKJV)

¹³ For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and *tried to destroy it*. ¹⁴ And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers.

Saul of Tarsus grew up the son of a Pharisee, and then when he became a teenager his father sent him to Jerusalem to live and be taught as a disciple of one of the 7 greatest teachers in Israel's history—Gamaliel.

At one time young Saul was a rising star in Judaism because he was so zealous for the Law of Moses (believing it to be the way to God) and so determined to destroy Christianity which he believed was a cult (perversion of the truth).

Acts 8 tells us that after Saul (Paul's 'B.C.' name) voted for the death of Stephen (see Acts 7) a great wave of persecution was unleashed against the church—with Saul leading the charge—

Acts 8:1, 3 (NKJV)

¹ Now Saul was consenting to his death. At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles...³ As

for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing *them* to prison.

Paul wants to remind his readers that he didn't start off preaching the gospel—he initially started off persecuting those who had put their faith in it. Paul gives his testimony in several places in the New Testament—

Philippians 3:3–6 (NKJV)

³ For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh, ⁴ though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: ⁵ circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; ⁶ concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.

- So, what happened to turn this zealous Pharisee and number one persecutor of the Christian faith—into the champion of the Church who came to be known as Paul the Apostle?

I'll let Paul tell you in his own words—

Acts 22:3–16 (NLT)

³ Then Paul said, "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, and I was brought up and educated here in Jerusalem under Gamaliel. As his student, I was carefully trained in our Jewish laws and customs. I became very zealous to honor God in everything I did, just like all of you today. ⁴ And I persecuted the followers of the Way, hounding some to death, arresting both men and women and throwing them in prison. ⁵ The high priest and the whole council of elders can testify that this is so. For I received letters from them to our Jewish brothers in Damascus, authorizing me to bring the followers of the Way from there to Jerusalem, in chains, to be punished. ⁶ "As I was on the road, approaching Damascus about noon, a very bright light from heaven suddenly shone down around me. ⁷ I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?' ⁸ " 'Who are you, lord?' I asked. "And the voice replied, 'I am Jesus the Nazarene, the one you are persecuting.' ⁹ The people with me saw the light but didn't understand the voice speaking to me. ¹⁰ "I asked, 'What should I do, Lord?' "And the Lord told me, 'Get up and go into Damascus, and there you will be told everything you are to do.' ¹¹ "I was blinded by the intense light and had to be led by the hand to Damascus by my companions. ¹² A man named Ananias lived there. He was a godly man, deeply devoted to the law, and well regarded by all the Jews of Damascus. ¹³ He came and stood beside me and said, 'Brother Saul, regain your sight.' And that very moment I could see him! ¹⁴ "Then he told me, 'The God of our ancestors has chosen you to know his will and to see the Righteous One and hear him speak. ¹⁵ For you are to be his witness, telling everyone what you have seen and heard. ¹⁶ What are you waiting for? Get up and be baptized. Have your sins washed away by calling on the name of the Lord.'

REFLECTION: How might you summarize Paul's faith journey with Christ noted above (Acts 22:3 – 16)?

The third argument Paul presents in defense of his message and ministry—

3. He was **called** to be an apostle **directly by the Lord Jesus**

Galatians 1:15 (NKJV)

¹⁵ But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and **called me through His grace...**

Paul was chosen by God for the ministry He would eventually call him into even before he was born.

Everything about Paul—his nationality, his mental ability (he was a genius), the fact that his father was a Pharisee who would bring him up in that tradition even including where Paul was born and raised (in Tarsus of Cilicia—i.e., southeastern Turkey) **was all ordained by God.**

All of this served to prepare and equip Paul for the ministry. Of course, the moment of Paul's conversion came on the road to Damascus which was when the Lord officially called him into the ministry—

Acts 26:15–18 (NKJV)

¹⁵ So I said, 'Who are You, Lord?' And He said, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. ¹⁶ But rise and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you. ¹⁷ I will deliver you from the *Jewish* people, as well as *from* the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, ¹⁸ to open their eyes, *in order* to turn *them* from darkness to light, and *from* the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.'

Galatians 1:15-17 (NKJV)

¹⁵ But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called *me* through His grace, ¹⁶ to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood, ¹⁷ nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those *who were* apostles before me; but I went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus.

Now scholars are divided on the exact chronology of Paul's life—not that it's all that critical for us to know. It seems that right after Paul was converted on the road to Damascus and was led into the city being blind—he stayed in Damascus for three days in darkness where he fasted and prayed while he pondered his life.

Remember Paul's whole life had been devoted to Judaism and now he realized it was all wrong as a way to get gain favor with God and earn a place in heaven. (Explain)

After three days God sent a believer named Ananias to Paul—

Acts 9:17-22 (NKJV)

¹⁷ And Ananias went his way and entered the house; and laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." ¹⁸ Immediately there fell from his eyes *something* like scales, and he received his sight at once; and he arose and was baptized. ¹⁹ So when he had received food, he was strengthened. Then Saul spent some days with the disciples at Damascus. ²⁰ Immediately he preached the Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God. ²¹ Then all who heard were amazed, and said, "Is this not he who destroyed those who called on this

name in Jerusalem, and has come here for that purpose, so that he might bring them bound to the chief priests?" ²² But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who dwelt in Damascus, proving that this *Jesus* is the Christ.

It seems that there is a gap of time between verses 22 and 23 of Acts 9—a gap of about three years. After Paul's initial ministry in Damascus, which could have lasted several weeks to several months—instead of going right up to Jerusalem to introduce himself to the other apostles the Lord led Paul into the desert of Arabia where he spent the better part of three years.

During this time Jesus Himself taught Paul, not only the gospel, but also how all of the Jewish Scriptures pointed to Him—even as the Lord told the Pharisees in John 5:39 –

“You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me.”

This time in Arabia was going to be invaluable to Paul's ministry; in fact, it became his *“backside of the desert”* training just as Moses had received before starting his ministry. (Comment)

The Apostles had received three years of teaching from the Lord Jesus—and now Paul was going to have his own opportunity to be taught by the Lord for three years.

Galatians 1:17 (NKJV)

¹⁷ nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those *who were* apostles before me; but I went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus.

This seems to be where the chronology of Paul's life is picked up again in Acts 9 starting with v.23—

Acts 9:23-30 (NKJV)

²³ Now after many days were past, the Jews plotted to kill him. ²⁴ But their plot became known to Saul. And they watched the gates day and night, to kill him. ²⁵ Then the disciples took him by night and let *him* down through the wall in a large basket. (2Cor.11:32-33) ²⁶ And when Saul had come to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, and did not believe that he was a disciple. ²⁷ But Barnabas took him and brought *him* to the apostles. And he declared to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had spoken to

him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus. ²⁸ So he was with them at Jerusalem, coming in and going out. ²⁹ And he spoke boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus and disputed against the Hellenists, but they attempted to kill him. ³⁰ When the brethren found out, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him out to Tarsus.

This coincides with what Paul says here in Galatians 1:18-24:

Galatians 1:18-20 (NKJV)

¹⁸ Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter and remained with him fifteen days. ¹⁹ But I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother. ²⁰ (Now *concerning* the things which I write to you, indeed, before God, I do not lie.)

After his short stay in Jerusalem Paul began making his way back to his hometown of Tarsus.

Galatians 1:21-24 (NKJV)

²¹ Afterward I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. ²² And I was unknown by face to the churches of Judea which *were* in Christ. ²³ But they were hearing only, "He who formerly persecuted us now preaches the faith which he once *tried to destroy.*" ²⁴ And they glorified God in me.

As Paul went through Syria, he preached the Word, and when he arrived in Cilicia, his home province (Acts 21:39; 22:3), he began to evangelize (see Acts 15:23).

Historians have concluded that he remained there perhaps seven years ministering in relative obscurity until Barnabas recruited him for the work in Antioch of Syria—

Acts 11:25-26 (NKJV)

²⁵ Then Barnabas departed for Tarsus to seek Saul. ²⁶ And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people. And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.

Antioch in Syria became Paul's home church and the headquarters for the gentile churches even as Jerusalem was the headquarters for Jewish believers.

What lessons can we learn from Paul's life that could apply to our own?

1. ***You can be zealous for a religion thinking it to be absolutely true—only to find out you're wrong.***

Romans 10:1–4 (NKJV)

¹ Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved. ² For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. ³ For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God. ⁴ For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

2. ***God has a plan for your life and has had it long before you were ever born—seek Him for that plan.***

Ephesians 2:8–10 (NLT)

⁸ God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. ⁹ Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it. ¹⁰ For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.

3. ***God can change the direction of your life suddenly, dramatically, and totally—so be open and flexible.***

Someone has said that 'very large doors swing on small hinges'—even so dramatic changes in your life can happen through relatively small incidents.

Think of Joseph's life in Genesis 39-41

4. ***Don't rush God when it comes to His plan for your life—Moses did and it was a disaster.***

REFLECTION: Review the 4 lessons we can learn from Paul's life – Have you experienced any of these lessons? Which one(s) apply to you?

**You have been uniquely prepared for the ministry God has for you—
like Paul, you have been called from your mother's womb...**

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