

## The Covenants, Grace, And Law (Part Twenty-Four)

Galatians (A)

John W. Ritenbaugh

Given 23-Sep-95; Sermon #202

In the last sermon, we began Galatians by examining the difficult scripture there in chapter 4 and verse 10. We will begin today in verse 3:

**Galatians 4:3** Even so we [Paul writes], when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world.

**Galatians 4:8-10** Howbeit then, when you knew not God, you did service unto them which by nature are no gods. But now, after that you have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn you again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto you desire again to be in bondage? You observe days, and months, and times, and years.

So he finishes that thought with:

**Galatians 4:11** I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain.

Just to get us up to speed and all thinking together again, the "days, months, times, and years" do not refer to Jewish holidays but rather to pagan Gentile holidays which they observed before conversion in service to them which are no gods (as it clearly says in verse 8).

That verse, in turn, reinforces our understanding of "the elements of the world" in verse 3. It clearly does not say, "the elements of God" but rather "elements of the world." You can remember from Colossians 2 that they are clearly identified as being demons—personal powers that are capable of being worshiped. Just tie verse 3 with verse 8. We are not dealing with something that came from God. But they were elements, foundations, of the world.

A second important facet here is that verse 3 mentions **bondage**. That is, that we were in bondage under the elements of the world. The word "bondage" gives the impression of something difficult to be borne. That word "bondage" gives the impression of something that is suppressing them, keeping them captive, holding them from liberty. I want you to look with me just quickly at two scriptures.

**James 2:11-12** For He [God] who said, "Do not commit adultery," said also, "Do not kill." Now if you commit no adultery, yet if you kill, you are become a transgressor of the law. So speak you, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty.

Think of this again in relation to the bondage of Galatians 4:3. That puts these two concepts into direct opposition to one another. There is a contrast between bondage and liberty. Liberty and bondage, in this sense, are mutually exclusive. We are **not** talking in Galatians 4 about the law of God being a position of bondage.

**I John 5:3** For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not grievous.

Bondage is grievous. The keeping of God's law is **not** grievous. Again, think back to Galatians 4:3. Bondage is something that gives somebody difficulty. The keeping of the commandments are not seen in this light. It is the law of liberty. It is freeing. It is liberating. It is **not** a burden. Love is never a burden. It always supports. It always frees and liberates.

Feed both of those thoughts back into Galatians 4:3, and it becomes very clear that the "elements of the world" and the "bondage" make it very clear—when compared with other scriptures—that we are **not** talking about the law of God when we get to verse 10.

Judaism, though it was a very poor interpretation of God's Word, did at least have some basis in the Old Testament. The reason I bring this up is because when people read through the book of Galatians—and they see all these references to law, they see all of these references to bondage—they immediately assume that what is being talked about is Judaism. Indeed,

Judaism is part of the picture, but that is not all that is a part of the picture.  
We can reinforce this:

**Galatians 4:9** How turn you again to the weak and beggarly elements...?

I do not know about you, but in my thinking that comes about as close to blasphemy as one can get—if God's apostle were to call something that God gave, and intended for good and to be liberating, "weak and beggarly" and tending to "bondage." It just does not compute.

So—in the face of those three things right within the space of 10 or 11 verses, and comparing it with some other scriptures—it makes it very clear that the "days, and months, and times, and years" are **not** something Paul wrote in reference to the law of God, or even to Judaism. Rather, they are something apart from both of them.

Though Judaism is clearly within the context of Galatians, so also is pagan Gnosticism—which wormed its way into the church primarily through some of these people in the area of Galatia becoming members of the church, and through church members' contacts with friends outside of the church. We can tell from books like I John, II John, and III John that Gnosticism grew to eventually dominate the church of God in these geographical areas. I am talking here about Asia Minor.

With Galatians 4 settled, as far as I am concerned, we are going to go back to the beginning of the book of Galatians and then work our way back through. With that preface, I think you ought to be able to understand that we are not dealing here with the law of God *per se*. The law of God, indeed, is going to become part of the context of quite a number of areas in the book of Galatians. But I want you to understand, as we start here, that Paul is **not** denigrating the law of God in any way! He is **not** doing away with the Sabbath, as we are going to see in just a bit here. He is **not** doing away with the holy days.

And, as we continue through this, I think I am going to give you a new appreciation of—or maybe a clearer appreciation of—**works** and their

relationship to grace and salvation. We are going to shed some light on some of the things that Paul said that I think will clearly help your understanding.

Galatians has given people difficulty, attempting to understand it, for a long time. I think that it is highly likely that this specific epistle might have been at the forefront of Peter's mind when he wrote, in what is now II Peter 3, that some of Paul's writings are very difficult to understand, and those who are weak twist it and pervert it and put their own meaning upon it to their own destruction.

If there is any one area that I personally find fault with in the way that Protestantism deals with Galatians, it is that they do not consider its subject material in a broad enough context. Doing that skews their conclusion, into teaching that the law is done away, when other writings of Paul certainly show very clearly that is **not** what Paul had in mind at all. (And not only Paul, but other writers as well.) And, at the beginning of this sermon, we are going to pay some attention to some things that Luke wrote in the book of Acts.

What the Protestants do is actually create a hypocritical dichotomy. How can the law be done away when the very head of the church—Jesus Christ—said that not one jot or one tittle would pass from the law till all was fulfilled? Their approach produces contradictions, and it defies logic. So they have to give convoluted answers and explanations to virtually every verse, when the truth is so clear and so simple.

Galatians can be very misleading if one does not understand the background, if one does not understand some of the terminology, and at the same time one possesses the carnality of an unconverted mind seeking to express its enmity against law. It is from this epistle (Galatians) that the anti-law people get their fodder for making grace and law mutually exclusive, and it is from this epistle that they trumpet the doing away with the law of God.

Galatia was located in what is today central Turkey. It was not a city. Rather, it was the equivalent of a state or province. It was a region that included such cities as Antioch, Iconium, Derbe, Lystra; and it included, or touched upon, such districts as Phrygia, Pamphylia, Pisidia, and Cilicia (where Paul was from). It plays a very prominent role in Paul's preaching journeys.

As we pick up the story in Acts 13, Paul has already been converted for a number of years and he has been sent out by the church.

**Acts 13:13-16** Now when Paul and his company loosed from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia: and John departing from them returned to Jerusalem. But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and sat down. And after the reading of the law and the prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, "You men and brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say on." Then Paul stood up, and beckoning with his hand said, "Men of Israel, and you that fear God, give audience."

The first thing to notice here is that Paul did this on the Sabbath day. He did it in a synagogue. It was spoken to "brethren." In this context, the word "brethren" does not mean fellow church members. Brethren here means fellow Israelites—Jews, Levites, Benjamites, or whatever they happen to be. But they were "brethren" in terms of their ethnic relationship.

He also spoke to those described as "you who fear God." This was a term that was used for Gentiles who were proselytes of Judaism. They were Gentiles who had converted to Judaism. So we have a congregation, in a synagogue, consisting of Jews and Gentiles already converted to Judaism—already keeping the Sabbath. This took place in the area of Galatia.

**Acts 13:43-47** [After a dispute, you find:] Now when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas; who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God. [Notice that: "Continue in the grace of God."] And the next Sabbath day [Is that continuing in the grace of God?] came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God. But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spoke against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming. Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, "It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing you have put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of

everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. For so has the Lord commanded us, saying, "I have set you to be a light of the Gentiles, that you should be for salvation unto the ends of the earth."

I want you to consider the import of what Paul is saying here. He is to be a light to the Gentiles, showing them the way. What day did he appoint to come together with these people? He had a wonderful opportunity at the end of that first Sabbath, which broke up in a dispute, to tell the people: "Now, wait a minute. Wait a minute. Yes, I want you to all come back; but why not just do it tomorrow?" Instead, in order to continue in the grace of God, they waited a full week. Then, on the Sabbath, they came together again. And this is in the general area of Galatia.

**Acts 13:49** And the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region.

By the time we reach this point, he was basically only teaching Gentiles. So Paul was keeping the Sabbath in Gentile company. Even though it does not directly say it, it certainly implies within the context of the things that occurred there that he was teaching the keeping of the Sabbath to these Gentiles as well.

So the question, then, has to arise: In light of this "no law—law done away—Sabbath done away— holy days done away" teaching, was Paul teaching one thing and doing another? There is no indication of a change from Paul. If the Sabbath was done away, Paul missed an opening to tell them.

**Acts 14:1** And it came to pass in Iconium [another city of Galatia], that they went both together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spoke, that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed.

**Acts 14:6** They were aware of it, and fled unto Lystra and Derbe [other cities in Galatia], cities of Lycaonia [another district within Galatia], and unto the region that lies round about.

In verse 1, it does not say what day it was; but, when Paul went into the synagogue, which day do you think he went in on?

Then, in Acts 15 comes the great counsel that was held in Jerusalem. Did that motivate any kind of change in Paul's method and what he taught? For now, I am just going to skip over chapter 15; but we are eventually going to get back to it. At the same time, you know that circumcision and so forth was a part of what was discussed there.

In Acts 16:1-2 we find that Timothy was from the area of Lystra and Iconium—Galatian cities.

**Acts 16:3** Him [Timothy] would Paul have to go forth with him; and took and circumcised him because of the Jews which were in those quarters; for they knew all that his father was a Greek.

Here Paul is even circumcising Timothy.

**Acts 16:6** Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia.

**Acts 16:9** And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, "Come over into Macedonia, and help us."

Now Paul has a vision. And he goes to Philippi, which was a city of Macedonia.

**Acts 16:13** And on the Sabbath, we went out of the city [of Philippi] by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spoke unto the women which resorted there.

Here again, on the Sabbath—Paul uses it to contact people for evangelistic purposes. This was after the Acts 15 conference. And this continues right on through the chapter. At the end of the chapter, he has the experience with the

Philippian jailer. The jailer and his family are converted there, and we move into chapter 17.

**Acts 17:1** Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica...

If you can visualize Greece in your mind, Philippi is in the upper right hand corner. It is in the northeast quadrant of Greece. So he is moving mostly south and a little bit west. He goes into Thessalonica.

**Acts 17:1-2** ...where was a synagogue of the Jews. And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three Sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scripture.

Then Paul left there.

**Acts 17:10** And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming there went into the synagogue of the Jews.

Again, what day do you think that was? You see, Paul moves from city to city; and always it was his manner to use the Sabbath.

**Acts 18:1** After these things Paul departed from Athens...

He is continuing south. He went from Philippi down to Thessalonica, from Thessalonica to Berea, from Berea to Athens; and now he is going to Corinth.

**Acts 18:1** After theses things Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth.

**Acts 18:4** And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks.

Notice: "Every Sabbath."



**Acts 18:11** And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

There is no indication anywhere in this context, in these chapters, that Paul taught them anything other than that they should keep the Sabbath. If he taught them anything different, here was another wonderful opportunity for Luke to inject it into the context of what is going on; but he did not.

**Acts 18:21** But bade them farewell, saying, "I must by all means keep this feast, that comes in Jerusalem: but I will return again unto you, if God will. And he sailed from Ephesus.

Did you see that? Now we have an injection here of a holy day. To the best of my understanding, this is the Feast of Tabernacles. He says, "I **must** keep the feast."

Do you begin to see the positions that the Protestant interpretation of the book of Galatians primarily, and the book of Romans secondarily, puts the apostle Paul into? That is, being a hypocrite who tells people on the one hand that you do not have to keep the law of God, you do not really have to keep the Sabbath, you do not have to keep the holy days—and yet the book of Acts shows him in every city keeping the Sabbath and telling the people "I must keep this feast." They make Paul out to be a hypocrite who does one thing and says another.

**Acts 20:6** And we sailed away from Philippi [He is making another trip.] after the Days of Unleavened Bread, and came unto them to Troas in five days; where we abode seven days.

Again we have the mention of a holy day. I have read Protestant commentators who openly admit that when this verse is coupled with I Corinthians 5:8, it shows that, even by this late date in the book of Acts, Paul was still keeping the "Jewish" (as they say) holy days; and they say he was

doing it with Gentiles. Clearly, the Protestant conclusions on Galatians do **not** agree with Paul's practice with both Jews and Gentiles, as the book of Acts clearly shows.

Let us go back to Galatians again. Choosing the enemy against whom Paul was writing is perhaps the single most important key, apart from understanding the arguments that he uses. It is almost universally assumed to be Judaism because of frequent references to law. But now, wait a minute. Were the Jews the only people in the world concerned about law? Were the Jews the only people in the world who had a strict approach to religion? Some of the things that Paul writes have absolutely nothing to do with Judaism. Like we just saw in chapter 4, it does not have anything to do with Judaism.

Now, advance your thinking from the first century and fast-forward it up here to the 20<sup>th</sup> century. And let us look very briefly at the religious scene today, because I think there are some things that have not changed very much.

With whom are the most extreme of religious practices in devotion to a god associated? Is it the Israelitish people of northwestern Europe, Canada, the United States, Australia, and South Africa? Or is it the Gentile nations?

If any of you ever get magazines like *National Geographic*, then you see some of the displays they have in that magazine of the practices that take place in terms of religious devotion inside of countries that are purely Gentiles. These are areas where the Israelitish people, with their knowledge and background of the Bible, have in one sense just barely touched upon.

Who is it that you generally read of who climb to the top of mountains on their hands and knees in devotion to their god? Who walk over shards of glass? Who walk upon coals of fire? Who mutilate themselves in honor of their god? Who go through crucifixions, as it were? I have seen pictures of Filipinos for example, which is something that just comes to mind, with spikes actually driven through their hands. You do not very frequently see anything like that associated with the Israelitish people.

It is those kinds of things that are associated with the Gentiles. And that is the very same thing in the Bible. Who burned their children to their gods? It was the Gentiles, and Israel picked up some of those things from them. You know the warnings in the Bible about not marking your face, or cutting your hair and doing all kinds of things in honor of a god. The Gentiles do those things—strange, violent, perverted, and cruel (as we would look at it) ways of devoting themselves to a god.

In Galatians, Judaism is certainly involved; but it does not stand alone. As we clearly saw in chapter 4 [verse 10], those days have no reference at all with God's Word. The culprit in Galatia is not just Judaism and it is not just paganism; but most specifically it is a syncretism of the two in Gnostic-Judaism. That is, Judaism flavored by Gnosticism.

It is also helpful to understand that Judaism, of and by itself, was not a monolithic force opposed to Christianity. It too was split into quite a number of sects. And there were all kinds of sectarian rivalry between the Sadducees, the Pharisees, the Essenes, the Zealots, and other smaller groups. So what Paul wrote did not necessarily even apply to all of Judaism.

In one sense, it really does not matter *who* the enemy was but rather *what*. Paul was writing against a concept people carried into their way of life that involved the relationship between *faith and works*. As in Colossae, what these people were doing was clearly sidetracking faith in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Please remember this as we go through the book of Galatians.

Go back to Galatians 1. I want you to see how quickly Paul gets into this subject. And it is central to everything that follows!

**Galatians 1:4** Who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father.

Paul's opening in the book of Galatians is abrupt. It is very abrupt when compared to some of his other letters. It is almost as if he is in a hurry to get into this subject. I think the reason why is because this really is the main subject of the book of Galatians. Just that quickly he goes for the jugular as to what the central problem was. This is going to be the main point that he is

going to emphasize in all of the illustrations, all of the arguments, throughout the book. Without faith in Jesus Christ's sacrifice, we are not going to be justified!

It will become very clear, as we move deeper into the epistle, that the Galatian Christians were ignoring Christ's sacrifice and attempting to justify themselves through works of law. Perhaps what is most important to the overall subject of Galatians is the substitutionary aspect of this sacrifice. Let me read that again.

**Galatians 1:4** Who gave Himself for our sins [or, for us. That is the substitution. Christ's sacrifice for our life.], that He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father.

Let us consider the Jews for a moment. The Jews knew full well, from the Old Testament sacrifices, that the shedding of blood was absolutely essential for the forgiveness of sin. They knew that! They knew it full well. However, they had great difficulty grasping that the One whose blood would be shed would be the Messiah.

Who did they reject? Even though they knew that without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sin, they did not see Jesus Christ as the substitute. They did not see Jesus Christ as the sacrifice. And they did not accept Him.

On the other hand, the pagan Gnostic philosophy did not allow for forgiveness through this means at all. To them, it was something accomplished by the things that one did. In other words, the person was purged by what he did. So a person purged his mind of defilement through rigorous asceticism. Thus, ignorance of the substitutionary quality of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ existed on both sides of this issue—both on the pagan Gnostic side and on the Jewish side as well.

The Gnostic considered himself able to rise above on the basis of his own qualities. Even as their name implies, they were knowledgeable. They were the enlightened ones. They were the ones who knew. So the context here in Galatians 1:4 already has both the Jew and the Gentile in Paul's sights.

But I will tell you something: When Gnosticism combined with Judaism, it became a tough nut to crack on the issue of justification because these people were going to deliver themselves! Paul confronts that immediately by asserting that we are delivered by Jesus Christ because, as he will teach later in greater detail, this is the only means of **justification**.

He adds one more thing here that is important. That is, "according to the will of God." This takes a jab again at those who claim they will be saved by works. Contrary to their opinion, the Bible shows that salvation is overwhelmingly a work of God. He is the Deliverer. Our part in salvation is extremely insignificant by comparison.

**Romans 9:11** For the children...

The "children" here are Jacob and Esau, being used as an illustration of God's election, of God's choosing, of God's calling.

**Romans 9:11** For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of Him that calls.

**Romans 9:15** For He [God] said to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion."

Who is the Boss here? Who is in charge? Who is the sovereign authority in this creation? Is it God? Or is it a vain man, who thinks his works are so good that God ought to choose him?

**Romans 9:15-16** "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." So then it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy.

What we see here in Romans 9 is a summary statement that catches the essence of the statement in Galatians 1:4. Our works, brethren, are not totally

unimportant. They give evidence of faith. They produce a witness of God working in our lives. They help to produce a stable society and good relationships. They help in producing the image of God and in producing growth in godly character. But they do **not** save us.

They do not save us because "the wages of sin is death." Once we have sinned, we cannot be spared the death penalty unless God elects—unless God shows mercy and He calls, and Christ died in our stead. That is what Galatians 1:4 says.

Also worth considering here is that **the power** to work the works of God, the power to do the right works, is also a gift of God by His Spirit because He has mercy and He gives us the gifts for us to use. This last point is important both in Colossians and Galatians because of the word "deliver."

**Galatians 1:4** Who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us.

"Deliver" here does not mean, "rescue from" in the sense of escaping. We ordinarily think of Israel's deliverance from Egypt, and they left the land. They left the place of their bondage. They escaped it, through the grace of God. That is not the sense of the word "deliver" here. It is not an escape, not a removing of yourself from one area to another. Rather, it means ***rescue from the power of***. There is a very important difference there. [It is talking about] "rescue from the power of."

This later becomes important in the book of Galatians when Paul begins to talk about Christian liberty. At the very beginning of this sermon, we talked about the law of liberty. Now, what is our freedom in Christ? It is freedom to do right—not to escape from one geographical area to another, but to begin living God's way right where we are.

So many times I recall Mr. Armstrong saying that, if you want to glorify God, you begin, he would say, in your bedroom. He just used that as a place to mean you begin right where you are. You do not move to another area of the country. You start right where you are. That is what this deliverance, here in Galatians 1:4, is talking about.

Our freedom—our liberty—is **the freedom to do right!** We have been rescued from the power of evil and the values of this world through a change of the nature that grows within us. That is, from human nature to the divine nature that grows within us.

**Galatians 1:1-3** Paul, an apostle (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead), and all the brethren which are with me, unto the churches of Galatia: Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ.

The bulk of this chapter is occupied with Paul's defense of his apostolic office. He had to do this because these false teachers—the people who had access to the Galatians' ears—the brethren there—were teaching the Galatians that what Paul had previously taught them had no authority from God because Paul did not meet the qualifications of being an apostle. Can you imagine that? Does that sound familiar to you?

These people could come up with all kinds of things. One, they could say, "Well, Paul never met Jesus." That he had not been an eyewitness to Jesus' preaching, that he had received no commission from God to be an apostle, and that he had not even been chosen like Matthias.

Paul's calling, and conversion, and being given a commission was something that was done apart from large numbers of people. Nobody had seen him trailing around after Jesus like they had seen the Twelve. He had not been eyewitness to the miracles that Jesus did. "He had not been taught directly by Jesus," was what they were saying.

So Paul spends more than the first chapter defending his position. Right off the bat, he states that his authority did not come through men.

**Galatians 1:10** For do I now persuade men or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.

I want to hold back on that just a little bit. I want to refer back to Galatians 1:1-3 again. He starts immediately by saying that he was an apostle, but it was not of men. It was neither by man, but by Jesus Christ. So right off he states his authority, and that it did not come through men.

By doing this Paul is putting himself in the same class as the Twelve, because even these people were willing to concede that the Twelve's offices did not come through men either. Everybody knew that they were directly chosen by Christ. So what Paul is asserting here is "So was I."

Now, he also links this to the experience on the Damascus road as his commission; and then he references himself to the resurrection. This further links his commissioning to the risen and glorified Christ. All of that is contained within the wording of those first three verses. He had to establish his authority, and that is the way he chose to do it.

He gets back to his authority a little bit later. But before he gets back to it, he feels that he has to do something else. That is, to assert the authority of his message. This is what he does in Galatians 1:10-13. I already read verse 10. But here his defense is on his message. He has already stated by this time that there is only one gospel. But the question that was being answered here was, "Why should yours be the only one?"

Since there is only one gospel, why should not an entirely different one be the one? Paul's defense is to stress the origin of his message and verse 10 is a transition that leads into this. What he says in verse 10 is that what he preached was not done to please men at the expense of the message.

Now, understand this: When Paul went into an area, he did not just blast them with everything that he knew. We find in I Corinthians 9 that he did all that he could to please people, to cultivate their appreciation of him; but, even though he was doing those things, he never equivocated in terms of what was true.

There is a very good example of this in Acts 17. Remember how he picked upon all the statutes around there in the Areopagus and the fact that there was one TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Paul began by talking to these people



about their gods, and he admitted to them that they were very religious. "I see you have a statute here TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Well, I am here to tell you about the unknown God."

Paul never equivocated the message, but he did approach these people in such a way so as to catch their ear and begin to get them to assent to what he was saying. He is not saying that he was always successful in doing this. He is only saying that he never equivocated on the message. He never did it merely to appeal to people, but always the message he gave was the truth of God. So verse 10 is a transition that leads into that.

**Galatians 1:11** But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man.

"I certify to you" translates very clearly into English, "let me make this clear." Then, just as he had denied their claim that his was an inadequate apostleship, he begins to deny their claim of an inadequate source of his gospel. He says it was "not after men." That is, it was not made up by men.

There is a way that you can tell. And anybody that is reasonably well read can compare Paul's gospel with those gospels that come from men. Do you know how it is? Well, for one thing, Paul's gospel is going to agree with the rest of the Bible. Another thing is about gospels that are "of men"—this is something that cannot be stopped; it is almost as God is making it happen so that we will discern—*gospels that are "of men" always elevate man at the expense of God*.

It elevates the works of men at the expense of God. Sometimes it is so subtle that it is very difficult to tell, but you can see it right here in the book of Galatians once you begin to understand these people were elevating themselves as worthy to be called of God because of their works. They were not empty of their human nature at all. They were filled with human nature! And it came out in their proud boasts of how great their works were.

Paul always denigrated himself in favor of God. God was always the great One, and Jesus Christ; and all the rest of us are lowly servants. That is a major point to understand.

**Galatians 1:12** For I neither received it of man...

That is very interesting. It means something quite different from "after man" in verse 11. "Received from man" is a technical phrase that you and I would not tend to recognize, but it indicates a process of memorization. A Jew of Paul's day would have understood this. This was the method by which rabbis passed along rabbinic traditions to their students.

They would walk along, or be around the campfire, or talking in a circle, or whatever; and the rabbi would be instructing by getting people to recite back to him what he was saying. They did not have books like we do, and the scrolls were awkward things to carry around; and so they memorized things and passed it on through memorization. Everything was learned by rote. You can imagine the rigid personality this would tend to produce.

But Paul said, "My gospel did not come that way at all." He is implying at this point that it came *by revelation*. "Neither was I taught it but by revelation."

But the "neither was I taught it" is different from "neither received it of man" [in verse 12] or "after man" (as it says in verse 11). "Neither was I taught it" indicates the normal type of instruction was not the way he received it either. The normal type of instruction, brethren, is the way you and I received it and the way you are receiving it right now. We are sitting in a classroom situation, your Bibles are open, and somebody is teaching, somebody is lecturing; and that is the way we learned it. In fact, that is the way virtually everybody has learned it.

But Paul is saying, "I did not learn it that way. It came by revelation!" It was miraculously given to him by Jesus Christ in person—just like it was given to the Twelve. He received it by direct revelation. So, in Galatians 1:10-12, he is telling the people that it came to him by a distinctive experience that was paralleled only by the Twelve. And we can understand, really, if you are thinking along, that now what was revealed to Paul is also ours because Paul taught it to us through these words.

**Galatians 1:13-14** For you have heard of my conversation [conduct] in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it: and profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers.

As Paul continues his defense, he considers it necessary to give further background on the origin of the message. In so doing, he mentions "the Jews' religion" and "traditions of my fathers." These two are actually one subject with the second phrase being a clarification of the first. I am going to read this verse to you from the Emphatic Diaglott. You can look this up in a number of modern translations, and you will find that they agree with what the Emphatic Diaglott translates this. They have not made a great deal of change, but they have inserted a word here that I want you to hear.

For you heard of my conduct formerly in **Judaism**, that I exceedingly persecuted the congregation of God and laid it waste; and made a proficiency in **Judaism** beyond many of the same age among my own race, being an excessive zealot for the traditions of my fathers.

Today, what we call "the Jews' religion" is Judaism; and this, along with Gnosticism, is very much part of the historical background of Galatians. Understanding it gives one a major leg-up towards properly understanding the book of Galatians. I can tell you confidently that without understanding at least some essential things from Judaism you are not going to understand the book of Galatians. It is precisely right here that many interpreters go astray.

I have to tell you that the Greek in these verses does not say Judaism. The King James Version is more correct literally. But many modern translations—such as the New International Version, the New American Standard Bible, and the Diaglott—insert that because it is so obvious that is what was intended.

Some of them say "national religion." I find that very interesting because, for a proper understanding, one must know that the religion that was "the national religion" was *not* the religion of the Bible. Judaism was no more the religion of the Bible than the Church of England, which is the national religion of Great Britain, is the true church.

In order to make it very clear, what I am getting at in this is that for some reason people jump the track and assume when they are interpreting this that, as the Jews were living in the 1<sup>st</sup> century, then that was derived from the Bible. Oh no, it was not.

The Church of England has many things that were derived from the Bible but also many things that were not derived from the Bible. It was the same with Judaism. It had some things that were derived from the Bible, but also many things that were not derived from the Bible either. It was a hodgepodge, even as modern Protestantism. Judaism was the national religion of Judea at that time.

So part of what happened in Galatia was that the believers there had come under the influence of teachers teaching that they had to live under the Jewish system in order to obtain salvation. It is essential to understand this in light of Acts 15. So I want you to turn back there.

**Acts 15:10** Now therefore why tempt you God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?

What is the subject here? What is the yoke that they were not able to bear? It was Judaism. Not the religion God gave to Moses. Not the religion that was revived by Ezra. It was Judaism!

There is a principle that is given in I Corinthians 10:13. I will just paraphrase it: God does not lay anything on us that we cannot bear. The Israelites should have been able to meet the demands of God under the Old Covenant. How can a law which God intended to lead people to Christ be considered a yoke unable to be borne? Paul uses those words right in the book of Galatians.

**Galatians 3:24** Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

That law was not a yoke! I hope this begins to clarify Acts 15 for you. The subject of Acts 15 of course included parts of the law of God, but the real culprit—the real subject—was Judaism, a yoke that they could not bear. That is the same subject as the book of Galatians except that Gnosticism is added to it, along with Judaism.

The Bible does **not** contradict itself. God's law is **not** grievous. God's law is a law of love. It is a law of liberty. It was intended by God to lead us to Christ. It is **not** something that we should be unable to bear. What happens is that these interpreters reveal their anti-God, anti-law bias by throwing out the baby with the bath water.

Just because the national religion—Judaism—contains some of God's laws, they throw out God's laws along with what the Jews added as they went through the centuries as Judaism was developing. And at the heart and core of Judaism as Christ was doing His preaching in the 1<sup>st</sup> century were primarily the Pharisees and the Sadducees, with the Essenes thrown in as well, and the Zealots.

We will close this sermon with three thoughts here on Judaism; and, God willing, we will come back to it next week. Turn to Matthew 23, where Jesus excoriates the Pharisees.

**Matthew 23:2** "The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat."

**Matthew 23:4** "For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers."

Out of God's law? Oh, no. Out of Judaism? Yes!

**Matthew 23:13** "But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for you neither go in yourselves, neither suffer [allow] you them that are entering to go in."

A burden grievous to be borne? It was Pharisaism. It was Judaism. Not God's law.

**Matthew 23:14-17** "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows' houses, and for pretence make long prayer: therefore you shall receive the greater damnation. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, you make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves. Woe unto you, you blind guides, which say, 'Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor!' You fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifies the gold?"

You can see that the Pharisees did not know which end was up, but they held power. They were persuasive with the people. They were not using God's law of love. It was something else that they were using.

**Matthew 15:1-2** Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying, "Why do Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders?"

Tie this in with Galatians, where Paul wrote "the traditions of my fathers"—the description of the national religion of Judaism. Jesus' disciples transgressed the tradition of the elders.

**Matthew 15:2** "Why do Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they wash not their hands when they eat bread."

You cannot find a thing like that at all in God's law.

**Matthew 15:3-6** But He answered and said unto them, "Why do you also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? For God commanded, saying, 'Honor your father and mother' and 'He that curses father or mother, let him die the death.' But you say, 'Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, "It is a gift, by whatsoever you might profit me" and honors not his father or his mother, he shall be free.' Thus you have made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition."

Brethren, do you see what happened here? They had pushed the law of God aside! Galatians is not talking about the law of God. It is talking about Judaism.

**Matthew 15:7-9** "You hypocrites [Jesus said], well did Isaiah prophesy of you saying 'This people draws near unto Me with their mouth, and honors Me with their lips; but their heart is far from Me. But in vain they do worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.'"

Judaism was **not** the religion of Moses. Judaism was **not** the religion of Ezra.

**Matthew 16:11-12** "How is it that you do not understand that I spoke it not to you concerning bread, that you should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees?" Then understood they how that He bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.

This will give you, I think, ample evidence from Jesus' ministry that Judaism was not the true religion; and what is involved here in Galatians is not merely a belief in the God of the Jews, or to accept a few Jewish beliefs. Rather, it is to accept and live under the entire system of this Pharisaic-Sadducean lifestyle with demon-driven Gnosticism thrown in for good measure. There is your enemy.

I hope that will begin to clarify things. We do not want to do what the Protestants do and throw out the baby with the bath water. You do not throw out the wonderful, righteous, holy, perfect, and good spiritual law of God

when it is being abused along with lies. You keep what is good. You get rid of what is bad. And what is "bad" is what we are going to go into at the beginning of the sermon next week.