

LESSONS THIS QUARTER

1) 02 Sept	Galatians 1:1-24	True Gospel
2) 09 Sept	Galatians 2:1-21	True Grace
3) 16 Sept	Galatians 3:1-22	True Life
4) 23 Sept	Galatians 3:23-29	True Heirs
5) 30 Sept	Galatians 4:1-31	True Freedom
6) 07 Oct	Galatians 5:1-26	True Fruit
7) 14 Oct	Galatians 6:1-18	True Compassion
8) 21 Oct	James 1:1-18	With Perseverance
9) 28 Oct	James 1:19-27	With Obedience
10) 04 Nov	James 2:1-26	With Works
11) 11 Nov	James 3:1-18	With Control
12) 18 Nov	James 4:1-17	With Submission
13) 25 Nov	James 5:1-20	With Anticipation

INTRODUCTION

- Paul doesn't use political correctness with the Galatians. He is bold & blunt and calls the baby ugly to try to turn things around quickly.
- Legalism had taken hold of these young believers in Galatia. They thought they would be better believers if they had Christ plus Good Works. In this case, circumcision.
- James, in his letter, which we will get to in October, also takes a very stern approach with his audience. Just 108 verses long, but half of his letter (54 verses) is all imperative commands (do's and don'ts). This seems very legalistic, but in actuality, James is not addressing how to get saved, but what we need to focus on after we get saved.
- **The Big Questions** → How do good works play in our sanctification process? Even Paul says what really matters in life is keeping God's commandments – BUT which ones? **1Cor 7:19**

BACKGROUND ON GALATIANS

- Paul founded the Galatian Church(es) about A.D. 45-48
- Paul revisited them as he was setting out on his 2nd Missionary Journey (**Acts 16:1-6**)
- Paul revisited them again as he was setting out on his 3rd Miss. Journey, about A.D. 54 (**Acts 18:23**)
- Most scholars believe Paul wrote this letter about A.D. 57, at the close of his 3rd Missionary Journey while he was in Ephesus or Macedonia, or Corinth, shortly before he wrote the Book of Romans

GOOD & BAD LEGALISM

- What is the difference between good and bad legalism?
 - ♦ **Definition of Bad Legalism:** Attempt to become more spiritual by following a prescribed set of regulations.
In other words, Christ is not enough – Works are needed.
Example 1. Obeying a defined dress code to earn God's favor.
Example 2. Avoiding certain drinks & food to earn God's favor.
Example 3. Others?
 - ♦ **Definition of Good Legalism:** Doing what is morally or biblically right and avoiding what is morally wrong, not to just earn God's favor, but to show our love and respect for Him and for others.
Example 1. Avoiding sexual immorality
Example 2. Obeying the good laws of the land (e.g. speed limit)
Example 3. Others?

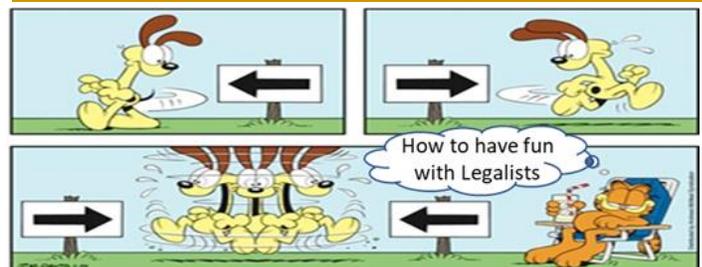
Passage	Comments
Galatians 1:1	Paul begins with his credentials of being an Apostle <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • And there is no mention of any kind of opening praise and thanksgiving as found in some of Paul's other letters. There must be a serious problem here.
1:2-5	Jesus MUST Rescue Us from This Present Evil Age <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Christ gave Himself for OUR sins (v4) • But He also gave Himself for the sins of the whole world 1John 2:2 • How does Jesus rescue us? <input type="checkbox"/> Instantaneously? <input type="checkbox"/> Over time? <input type="checkbox"/> Supernaturally? <input type="checkbox"/> Providentially?

Passage	Comments
1:6-10	Paul calls the 'baby ugly' <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • v6. The Galatians were deserting the Gospel for a false Gospel. We don't find out till 33 verses later (2:16) that it was legalism, and not till 5:6 (105 vss later) are we told it was circumcision. Paul was building a crescendo for impact, presumably, to shake them hard. • v7. 'Some' were disturbing the rest. How should bad apples be challenged? What if they are elders/leaders? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Paul repeats himself in vv8-9 for these troublemakers to be accursed, and to mutilate themselves in 5:12 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How do you curse a fellow believer? - Or were they believers? - What kind of harm would come upon them? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Death? <input type="checkbox"/> Sickness? <input type="checkbox"/> Financial woes? ♦ The Elders should have corrected this problem, but they might have been the problem • v10. Paul could have taken the path of least resistance and not even write this letter. By pushing some hot buttons, Paul was going to lose some friends. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Who should push some hot buttons to fix problems? ♦ Can we grumble and complain till change happens? ♦ Should we leave the church when trouble comes? ♦ Consider this: Pray first; Seek wise counsel; Remain faithful under trying times; Support the leaders/elders; Challenge when severe sin is present and not when disagreeable decisions are made. Or Paul & James could say "Get over it, Buttercup"

Was Paul a Bad Teacher or Were His Disciples Bad Christians?

- Paul spent considerable time with the Galatians and they swayed toward extreme legalism
- Paul also spent more than 3 years all total at Ephesus. Recall that Ephesus was the church noted in **Rev 2:1-7** for leaving their 1st love.
- For 18 months, the Corinthian church had Paul in their midst. Paul was known for bestowing the Holy Spirit (**Acts 19:6**), working countless miracles (**Acts 19:11**), and teaching the whole counsel of God (**Acts 20:27**)
- Yet, the Corinthians, who came behind in no gifts (**1Cor 1:7**), were known for their divisions (**1Cor 1:11**), for their immaturity (**1Cor 3:1**), for their judgmental behavior (**1Cor 4:5**), for immorality (**1Cor 5:1**), for idolatry (**1Cor 10:14**), & even abusing church sacraments – i.e., communion (**1Cor 11:30**)
- What happened? Did Paul fail in some regard? Did he not train his disciples properly? Should he have spent more time with them? Did he pick poor elders or Sunday School teachers?
- We can only surmise the problems were with the Corinthians, Ephesians, & Galatians. **Every Church is only one generation away from apostasy!** We must always take responsibility to be on the alert, be steadfast, and to grow up – IOW, "act like men" and take our faith seriously!..... **1Cor 16:24**

1:11-24	Paul Defends His Apostleship – Chosen by Jesus <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • v15 – Paul, set apart from the womb <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Are we also set apart from the womb? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There are general calls and specific calls - Specific calls from the womb: Jacob, Samson, David, Isaiah, John the Baptist, Jesus, and Paul) • vv18-19. Paul recounts his meeting Peter & James <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Why does Paul spend so much time on his defense? ♦ Sometimes God's leaders need to instill confidence
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A LITTLE EXTRA ON LEGALISM VS LIBERTY
Are Christians Obligated to Obey the Speed Limit?

- Many Christians do not see the need to obey the speed limit as something they should consciously and intentionally do for the sake of the Gospel. It begs the question, should we obey man's laws?
 Yes | No | Maybe | Sometimes | When it is convenient
 When the kids are in the car | When police are nearby | Don't know
- The argument could be made if Christians are not faithful in the small things, can God trust us with more responsibility?[Luke 16:10](#)
- So, how can we impact the world for Christ when we can't even get Christians to obey the speed limit? And if we don't obey good laws of the land, how can we expect unbelievers to do so?

ARGUMENTS FOR SPEEDING

- Some of the arguments Christians use to justify speeding include:
 - ♦ The speed limit sign is the minimum or suggested speed limit
 - ♦ We are not obligated to keep man-made laws
 - ♦ It's safer to keep up with the flow of traffic
 - ♦ We don't need to be legalistic
 - ♦ It is not convenient
 - ♦ Everyone does it
- Do these arguments hold up in man's courts of law? In God's Court?
- Are there higher moral/biblical laws to consider?

<p>Higher Moral Code to Obey the Speed Limit & Other Good Laws of Men Prov 28:9 [Prayers don't get answered] He who turns away his ear from heeding the law, even his prayer is an abomination.</p>
<p>Matt 5:13-18 [We need to preserve society's morals & set the example] You are salt of the earth [preserver]...and the light of the world [example]. So, let your good works be seen by others for them to give glory to God.</p>
<p>Rom 6:15 [We don't have the liberty to sin] What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? God forbid!</p>
<p>Rom 13:1-4 [When we intentionally violate good laws we deliberately do evil and sin against God] Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God. Therefore, whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves. For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same; for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil.</p>
<p>1Cor 7:19 [What is important in life?] Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but what matters is the keeping of the commandments of God.</p>
<p>James 4:17 [To disobey is sin] To one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin.</p>
<p>1Peter 1:15-16 [We are to be holy in all we do] Like the Holy One who called you, be holy [through obedience] in all your behavior; because it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."</p>
<p>1Peter 2:13-14, 17 [Obey the good laws of the land] Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers & the praise of those who do right.</p>
<p>1John 5:3 [Love = obedience] If we love God we will keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome.</p>

DID YOU KNOW... The Govt deems the speed limit so important for the good of the nation that it post signs about 1 mile apart in urban areas – one of the most visible of all commands by the Govt or even by God. So, we have no excuse before God & man for not knowing what the maximum speed limit is.

<p>Good Govt Laws</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pay Taxes • Put Seatbelt On • Stop at Red Lights • Obey Speed Limit 	<p>Biblical Teachings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit yourselves to every human institution • Be in subjection to the governing authorities 	<p>God's Commands</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pay Taxes • Put Seatbelt On • Stop at Red Lights • Obey Speed Limit
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ARE THERE ANY EXCEPTIONS TO EXCEEDING THE SPEED LIMIT WITHOUT IT BEING A SIN? Theoretically, YES

- **Example:** What if a semi-trailer loses its breaks on a steep downhill and the only choice is to run you over if you do not go faster?
 - ♦ Do you get creamed to find favor with the Lord?[1Peter 2:20](#)
 - ♦ Fortunately, [Ecc 7:16](#) offers this: "Do not be excessively righteous and do not be overly wise. Why should you [get yourself killed]?"
 - ♦ BUT, please consider the context of this passage before using it to justify the continuous breaking of a good law...

<p>Exception Clause to Justifying Speeding in Some Cases Ecc 7:15-18. ...There is a righteous man who perishes in his righteousness and there is a wicked man who prolongs his life in his wickedness. Do not be excessively righteous and do not be overly wise. Why should you destroy yourself? Do not be excessively wicked & do not be a fool. Why should you die early? ...Whoever fears God will avoid both extremes</p>
<p>Comments on this passage. Does this mean we can be a little wicked? NO. From Solomon's earthly perspective, we should avoid extreme legalistic behavior, and from a godly perspective we should always avoid known sin. AND don't forget to factor in the conclusion of Solomon's findings on his search for wisdom, "...fear God and keep His commandments, because this applies to everyone"Ecc 12:13</p>
<p>Yes, exceeding the speed limit for a short period of time to prevent a wreck is quite appropriate and appreciated</p>

CONCLUSION / APPLICATIONS

- When we deliberately sin we essentially give God "the finger" and convey to Him, "This is what we think of You & Your Word"
 - ♦ Recall in the OT, there was no sacrifice for intentional sins. Such obstinate sinners were to be "cut off"[Num 15:29-30](#); [Heb 10:26](#)
- So, what is the best way to positively influence an immoral society when many of God's own people are also intentional law-breakers?
ANSWER: If we can get more Christians to see the need to willingly and intentionally obey even seemingly trivial commands, e.g., the speed limit, we restore our saltiness to positively impact society as Christians become more sensitized to taking God's word more seriously.
- **Motivation to Obey the Speed Limit.** Every time we are obedient to even the smallest commands we reap untold rewards[Rev 22:12](#). Considering the number of miles some of us put on the roads, can you imagine the rewards waiting for us every time we obey the speed limit? Plus, every time we obey any of God's commandments, more of our prayers get answered, we become good examples to live by, we have no reason to fear authority (i.e., the police car in our rear-view mirror), we become holy as God is holy, we position ourselves for praise from men and more blessings from God, and we show, not our finger, but our love for God and respect for His institutions and for the lives of others.
- **Final Thought.** If a driver speeds or recklessly drives and gets into an accident, he is on his own since he chose not to obey God's commandment to obey the good laws of the land. **HOWEVER,** if a Christian driver obeys the speed limit and other rules of the road and God allows him to get involved in an accident, God has the responsibility to work things out for his good[Romans 8:28](#)

NEXT WEEK: Galatians 2. Paul opposes Peter



"...what matters [in life] is keeping God's commandments" [1Cor 7:19](#)