

The Israel of God

[Galatians 6:16-18](#)



We come this morning to the final three verses of Galatians. We could have finished these last week except for the fact that I want us to focus on the phrase "the Israel of God" so we will be clear on what it means. So this morning we are going to quickly look at these last verses and then spend the rest of our time looking at who is "the Israel of God."

Galatians 6:16-18 (NASB) *And those who will walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.* ¹⁷ *From now on let no one cause trouble for me, for I bear on my body the brand-marks of Jesus.* ¹⁸ *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brethren. Amen.*



Let's break these verses down so we can understand what Paul is saying:

Galatians 6:16 (NASB) *And those who will walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.*

What is the "rule" that we are to walk by? The "rule" ties directly to the previous verses. Paul has no boast except in the cross. That is the "rule" of his life. There is only one walk that we are to walk, and that is the way of the cross - which, as we said last week, is metonymy for justification by faith alone. We are to walk by that **rule**. It is a very narrow path and very few find it. Those who find it are the remnant chosen by grace whom God has drawn.

Salvation does not come in all colors and descriptions and paths and highways. It only comes through faith in Christ:

John 14:6 (NASB) *Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me.*

Those who walk by this rule, the rule of salvation by grace alone, have obtained mercy. They are "the Israel of God."

Peace and Mercy - This is the first time the word "mercy" appears in the Book of Galatians. What does that word mean? In the Bible it is used to describe the forgiveness of God to those who are in a pitiable, helpless condition.

There is no peace in trying to earn your way to heaven, which is what adding the law to Christ's work does. Working your way to heaven could never bring peace. It only brings doubt and confusion, because it always raises the question: How many good works are enough to get me into heaven, and have I done enough?

When God's standard is perfection, the answer is always: I could never do enough. And that's the point of God's mercy. He knows we can't do enough, which is why He sent His Son into the world to do what we couldn't; keep the law perfectly and then die for the penalty of sin we deserved as He then overcame the grave by rising bodily three days later.

Peace and mercy be upon them - Just as Paul was willing to pronounce a curse on those who taught false doctrines ([Galatians 1:8-9](#)), he is also willing to give a blessing to those who walk according to this rule.

Galatians 6:17 (NASB) *From now on let no one cause trouble for me, for I bear on my body the brand-marks of Jesus.*

Some think "*let no one cause trouble for me*" is Paul's way to say to the Christians of Galatia: Don't be a trouble to me by continuing to play around with these false doctrines - I've suffered enough already.

Brand-marks - Circumcision was a ritual scarring of the body. It had become a badge of self-importance, a religious way of promoting pride. But Paul shares that he underwent a different kind of scarring in the service of Christ: scars from the stones that had been thrown at him; scars from the manacles that had been placed on his hands; scars from the whippings and beatings he had received; calluses on his feet from the miles he had walked to preach Christ.

"Brand-marks" is from the Greek word "[stigma](#)". This is a word that was used of the marking of slaves' bodies in the first century. In the ancient world, slaves were branded with the name of their master. Most likely what Paul means is that the scars of the things he had suffered for Christ are the brands which show him to be Christ's slave.

Paul uses this term to make the statement: I belong to Jesus. I got my scars legitimately, not because I wanted to impress anybody, not to promote my own religious beauty, but because my commitment to the Lord I love cost me something. My scars are the evidence of my service in his cause.

This verse challenges me to ask myself about the evidence of my Christianity. I have never suffered a beating for the cause of Christ; I don't have a physical mark on my body as a result of my commitment to him. What other kinds of physical evidence should I look for to indicate the strength of my faith? Some Christians I know have calluses on their hands, because they have helped the needy. Some can point to the ashes of paraphernalia they have deliberately abandoned -

pornography, drugs, alcohol, etc. - to follow Christ. Some have homes, cars and other things that have been damaged, because they have been hospitable to strangers. Our bank accounts might show evidence of depletion for the sake of the gospel. James, the Lord's brother, was nicknamed "[Camel-knees](#)," because his knees were disfigured from the hours he had spent in prayer.

When others look at you, do they see marks that tell them you belong to the Lord Jesus Christ?

Galatians 6:18 (NASB) *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brethren. Amen.*

This is how Paul started this letter to the Galatians as he said in:

Galatians 1:3 (NASB) *Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ,*

Paul wants to end on a positive note and grace is as positive as it gets, because grace from God is undeserved, but is given none the less, because He loves us. It is grace from God from beginning to end. And it is by His grace, not by works, that we are saved; be it circumcision, water baptism, or good deeds in and of themselves, which tries to place us as a friend of God and a child of God.

The closing word "Amen" means: "truly" or "So let it be." Everything that Paul has written in this letter, as well as his loving concern for the Galatians, is absolutely true and totally trustworthy.

Now for the rest of our time this morning, I want to focus on the phrase at the end of verse 16: "**Israel of God.**"

There is a great disagreement within Christendom as to who the "[Israel of God](#)" is. Does this refer to the nation Israel or to the Church of Jesus Christ? How you answer this question is **very** important. If you are going to understand the Bible and its promises, you must understand who "Israel" is. What we believe influences how we behave. What Christian leaders teach about the Jews and Arabs influences how Christians view the events unfolding in the Middle East. I also believe that there is a direct connection between the church's view of Israel and terrorism. I say this because I believe that our view of Israel has affected our foreign policy. This morning I'd like to attempt to prove that statement.

It is my belief that a wrong view of who Israel is affected all Americans on September 11, 2001. I believe that the attack on the twin towers in New York City and all the lives that were lost that day were a result of a faulty view of Israel.

It seems that Osama Bin Laden agrees with me that our view of Israel is connected to terrorism. Listen to what he said: *"Our terrorism is a good accepted terrorism, because it's against America, it's for the purpose of defeating oppression so America would stop supporting Israel, who is killing our children."*

So Bin Laden says that terrorism is connected to America's support of Israel. And I say that America's support of Israel is tied to a faulty theology. Because of Dispensationalism and Christian Zionism, most American Christians believe that we have a biblical mandate to stand with and protect Israel.

The Dispensationalist, as well as the Zionist, believes that the nation of Israel is [God's chosen people](#), the sole inheritors of God's promises, and that to be a part of Israel; one must be of the proper lineage and nationality.

Zionism is a political movement built on the belief that the Jewish people deserve by right to possess the land of Palestine as their own. [Christian Zionism](#) is essentially a Christian prophetic support for Zionism; seeing the modern state of Israel, and the equivalent of the biblical Israel.

Christian Identity teaches a similar idea that Israel is actually composed of the descendants of the ten "lost tribes" that became the Anglo-Saxon and Germanic peoples. According to this view, to be a part of "Israel," one must be of this fleshly lineage. This is unbiblical as well, for, just as with Dispensationalism, the emphasis is placed upon the *flesh* and *temporal*, instead of upon the *Spirit* and the *eternal*. Put another way, according to these systems of doctrine, the focus is taken from the cross of Jesus Christ, and is instead placed upon the merits of man.

Let me give you a couple illustrations of the Zionist mindset. An advertisement appeared in the New York Times entitled "[Open Letter to Evangelical Christians from Jews for Jesus](#)." In it they called upon evangelicals to show solidarity with the State of Israel: *"Now is the time to stand with Israel. Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, our hearts are heavy as we watch the images of violence and bloodshed in the Middle East... Christian friends, "The gifts and calling of God are irrevocable" (Romans 11:29). So must our support for the survival of Israel in this dark hour be irrevocable. Now is the time for Christians to stand by Israel."*

At the [Third International Christian Zionist Congress held in Jerusalem in February, 1996](#) under the auspices of International Christian Embassy Jerusalem, some 1,500 delegates from over 40 countries unanimously affirmed a proclamation and affirmation of [Christian Zionism](#) including the following beliefs:

The Lord in His zealous love for Israel and the Jewish People blesses and curses peoples and judges nations based upon their treatment of the Chosen People of Israel.... According to God's distribution of nations, the Land of Israel has been given to the Jewish People by God as an everlasting possession by an eternal covenant. The Jewish People have the absolute right to possess and dwell in the Land, including Judea, Samaria, Gaza and the Golan.

In 1997 the [ICEJ](#) gave support to a full page advert placed in the New York Times entitled "[Christians Call for a United Jerusalem](#)" signed by 10 evangelical leaders including **Pat Robertson**, chairman of Christian Broadcasting Network and president of the Christian Coalition; **Oral Roberts**, founder and chancellor of Oral Roberts University; **Jerry Falwell**, founder of Moral Majority; **Ed McAteer**, President of the Religious Roundtable; and **David Allen Lewis**, President of Christians United for Israel:

We, the undersigned Christian spiritual leaders, communicating weekly to more than 100 million Christian Americans, are proud to join together in supporting the continued sovereignty of the State of Israel over the holy city of Jerusalem. We support Israel's efforts to reach reconciliation with its Arab neighbors, but we believe that Jerusalem or any portion of it shall not be negotiable in the peace process. Jerusalem must remain undivided as the eternal capital of the Jewish people.

Readers were invited to:

Join us in our holy mission to ensure that Jerusalem will remain the undivided, eternal capital of Israel. The battle for Jerusalem has begun, and it is time for believers in Christ to support our Jewish brethren and the State of Israel. The time for unity with the Jewish people is now.

Given so much teaching like this, you can understand why so many Christians believe that we are to be supportive of Israel. Where do these Christian leaders get the idea that Christians are to stand with and protect Israel? Well, the whole Old Testament is filled with promises that God made to Israel. The nation was uniquely chosen by God to be blessed and to be a source of blessing to the whole world:

Deuteronomy 7:6-8 (NASB) *"For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. ⁷ "The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, ⁸ but because the LORD loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, the LORD brought you out by a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.*

It was to Israel that God revealed himself; it was Israel that received the Messianic promises. To mess with Israel is to mess with God himself according to:

Zechariah 2:8 (NASB) *For thus says the LORD of hosts, "After glory He has sent me against the nations which plunder you, for he who touches you, touches the apple of His eye."*

They were God's chosen people:

Amos 3:1-2 (NASB) *Hear this word which the LORD has spoken against you, sons of Israel, against the entire family which He brought up from the land of Egypt, ² "You only have I chosen among all the families of the earth; Therefore, I will punish you for all your iniquities."*

The word "chosen" indicates an intimate relationship. Out of all the families of the earth, God chose Israel. They had a very privileged position.

On [August 5, 2005](#) "CWNews" ran this Q&A between Middle East Correspondent Chris Mitchell (who lives in Israel) and Wendy Griffith about the settler's reaction to the pullout of the Gaza Strip:

WENDY GRIFFITH: *Why do they feel so strongly about staying there?*

CHRIS MITCHELL: *A lot of it is both spiritual and political. Politically, when Israel took over the Gaza Strip after the 1967 war, the Israel government settled many of these people there to settle the land. So it's a political decision that they would inhabit that part of Israel. The spiritual part is backed by the Scriptures, for example in Amos, where it talks about Jews will resettle the land and never be uprooted.*

Mitchell says that Amos promises the Jews will never be uprooted from the land. Now, with privilege comes responsibility. Look at the last part of the verse in Amos 3:2. This seems to be something many Christians miss: *"Therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities."* With great

privilege comes great responsibility. Israel became proud and missed the true end of all they had; the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ to atone for their sins.

After ministering among the Judahites for over three years, Christ declared to the nation:

Matthew 21:43 (NASB) *"Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you, and be given to a nation producing the fruit of it.*

What did He mean? Did Christ really take away from the "Jews" the national blessings of a Messianic kingdom? And to whom was the kingdom of God given? First of all, we can confirm that the inheritance was taken away from the nation of Israel after the flesh:

Romans 9:6-8 (NASB) *But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel; ⁷ neither are they all children because they are Abraham's descendants, but: "THROUGH ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS WILL BE NAMED." ⁸ That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants.*

These verses confirm that something has been taken away... and that not everyone that is a racial part of national Israel are the true eternal Israel, nor are they the children of God. What we are discovering when we try to relate the Old Testament nation of Israel to the New Covenant is that the fleshly nation was but a **shadow** of the heavenly nation of the spiritual Israel, which can only be entered into by Spirit, not by the flesh. Therefore, physical Israelites, could, from then on, have no place in the nation of Israel (which is after the Spirit) except on the basis of personal salvation, through their faith in Christ Jesus.

Most Christians don't seem to realize that because of Israel's disobedience, God is finished with national Israel. Let's look at what Jesus had to say to the nation of Israel:

Matthew 21:18-19 (NASB) *Now in the morning, when He returned to the city, He became hungry. ¹⁹ And seeing a lone fig tree by the road, He came to it, and found nothing on it except leaves only; and He said to it, "No longer shall there ever be any fruit from you." And at once the fig tree withered.*

I believe that the fig tree is used here as a figure for the nation Israel. Throughout Israel's history, God constantly hungered for His people to bring forth fruit. The gospel writers spoke of the physical hunger of Jesus Christ as symbolic of God's hunger for fruit from His people. Jesus pronounces a curse on Israel because of their failure to bear fruit and their ultimate rejection of Him. Many of Jesus' parables referred to Israel's rejection and thus their destruction:

Matthew 21:33 (NASB) *"Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who PLANTED A VINEYARD AND PUT A WALL AROUND IT AND DUG A WINE PRESS IN IT, AND BUILT A TOWER, and rented it out to vine-growers, and went on a journey.*

Who is the vineyard? According to [Isaiah 5](#), it is Israel. Now keep this in mind as we continue in Matthew 21:

Matthew 21:34-39 (NASB) *"And when the harvest time approached, he sent his slaves to the vine-growers to receive his produce. ³⁵ "And the vine-growers took his slaves and beat one, and killed another, and stoned a third. ³⁶ "Again he sent another group of slaves larger than the first; and they did the same thing to them. ³⁷ "But afterward he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' ³⁸ "But when the vine-growers saw the son, they said among themselves, 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and seize his inheritance.' ³⁹ "And they took him, and threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him.*

Jesus is prophesying what the Jews will do to Him:

Matthew 21:40-43 (NASB) *"Therefore when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vine-growers?" ⁴¹ They said to Him, "He will bring those wretches to a wretched end, and will rent out the vineyard to other vine-growers, who will pay him the proceeds at the proper seasons." ⁴² Jesus said to them, "Did you never read in the Scriptures, 'THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE CHIEF CORNER stone; THIS CAME ABOUT FROM THE LORD, AND IT IS MARVELOUS IN OUR EYES'? ⁴³ "Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you, and be given to a nation producing the fruit of it.*

Jesus tells them very clearly that because of their rejection of Him, the kingdom of God will be taken from them. Let's look at another parable:

Matthew 22:1-3 (NASB) *And Jesus answered and spoke to them again in parables, saying, ² "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king, who gave a wedding feast for his son. ³ "And he sent out his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding feast, and they were unwilling to come.*

The King is God, the son is Christ, and those invited are the nation Israel:

Matthew 22:4-7 (NASB) *"Again he sent out other slaves saying, 'Tell those who have been invited, "Behold, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and my fattened livestock are all butchered and everything is ready; come to the wedding feast."' ⁵ "But they paid no attention and went their way, one to his own farm, another to his business, ⁶ and the rest seized his slaves and mistreated them and killed them. ⁷ "But the king was enraged and sent his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and set their city on fire.*

Verse 7 is a very clear prediction of the [A.D. 70 judgment of Jerusalem](#). National Israel lost its privilege.

The Bible clearly speaks of Israel's total destruction as a judgment of God. Yet most Christians still believe they are God's chosen people. Listen to what God says to Israel:

Deuteronomy 28:20-21 (NASB) *"The LORD will send upon you curses, confusion, and rebuke, in all you undertake to do, until you are destroyed and until you perish quickly, on account of the evil of your deeds, because you have forsaken Me. ²¹ "The LORD will make the pestilence cling to you until He has consumed you from the land, where you are entering to possess it.*

The assertion, therefore, that the modern State of Israel has God's blessing is totally without foundation in Scripture.

Jesus predicted that the Temple would be destroyed and the Jews exiled from the land as God's judgment for their failure to recognize Him as the Messiah:

Luke 19:41-44 (NASB) *And when He approached, He saw the city and wept over it, ⁴² saying, "If you had known in this day, even you, the things which make for peace! But now they have been hidden from your eyes. ⁴³ "For the days shall come upon you when your enemies will throw up a bank before you, and surround you, and hem you in on every side, ⁴⁴ and will level you to the ground and your children within you, and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not recognize the time of your visitation."*

In A.D. 70 the lights went out in Israel for good. When the tribulation was over, physical Israel ceased to exist. The Old Covenant was over and the New fully instituted.

What about all the promises that God made to Israel? The whole Old Testament was simply packed with promises that God made to Israel. Promises of a land, and a temple, and peace and victory. Now, if the nation Israel was to be destroyed then what happens to all the promises God made to Israel? Has God's word failed? No! We know that God is faithful, and that He always keeps His word.

In Romans 9 Paul shows his readers, first century Romans, and us today, that Israel's rejection is not inconsistent with the promises of God. To say that the nation is accursed is not to say that God's promises have failed:

Romans 9:6 (NASB) *But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel;*

"For they are not all Israel who are of Israel" - What does that mean? God never promised unconditionally covenantal blessings to each offspring of Abraham. God never intended that all of the nation Israel would be redeemed. Within national Israel is "true Israel," or "spiritual Israel." He is telling them not to count on their physical descent. The true Israel is the Israel of faith, not birth. The promises God made to Old Testament Israel are fulfilled in the church of Jesus Christ:

Galatians 3:16 (NASB) *Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, "And to seeds," as referring to many, but rather to one, "And to your seed," that is, Christ.*

Paul is saying that the primary recipients of the Abrahamic covenant were Abraham and Christ. This, of course, would include all who are in Christ - believers. So ALL BELIEVERS are recipients of the Abrahamic covenant!

This promise is not realized in the Jews, but Christians. Apart from Paul's divinely inspired commentary, how many of us would have understood that Abraham's seed was Christ? Please listen: When the New Testament authors comment on an Old Testament passage, they do not give an interpretation, but THE interpretation. The New Testament interprets the Old. The Old Covenant was a veiled representation of the New Covenant.

It is in the New Testament that we learn that the material things of the Old Covenant were types and shadows of spiritual counterparts found in the [New Covenant](#). We are to interpret the Old Testament through the lens of the New Testament. We must understand that the last 27 books are a divinely inspired commentary on the first 39 books.

When Paul says in Galatians 3:16: "*The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed, that is, Christ,*" he is giving us the divinely inspired commentary of the Abrahamic covenant. The importance of this verse cannot be over stressed.

We read some of these promises in [Genesis 12:3](#). The promises were made to Abraham and Christ, and the only way any others can become a part of this covenant is through Jesus Christ. This is because Christ is the fulfillment of the Old Covenant by the shedding of His blood, which is the giving of the New Covenant. No one was ever saved by the law, and no one ever inherited the eternal promises of inheritance by the flesh.

Galatians 3:7 (NASB) *Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham.*

Abraham's sons are not his physical biological descendants; his sons are those who have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ:

Galatians 3:26-29 (NASB) *For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁷ For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.*

When Galatians 3:29 teaches, "*And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise,*" it is referring not only to who "God's Chosen People" are, but also to whom the inheritance belongs.

Galatians 4:21-26 (NASB) *Tell me, you who want to be under law, do you not listen to the law? ²² For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the bondwoman and one by the free woman. ²³ But the son by the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and the son by the free woman through the promise. ²⁴ This is allegorically speaking: for these women are two covenants, one proceeding from Mount Sinai bearing children who are to be slaves; she is Hagar. ²⁵ Now this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. ²⁶ But the Jerusalem above is free; she is our mother.*

The allegory thus declares that **earthly Israel** (the twelve tribes) is to be regarded as Ishmael, because they are in bondage to the law and not free. The true Church of Gentile and Jew (in which all distinctions of race, degree, and privilege are abolished) is the **true Israel** to whom the promises made to Abraham apply.

Any Jew would have been offended by the suggestion that he was a son of Hagar. Yet, that is exactly what Paul stated. Yes, physically they descended from Sarah, but **spiritually**, apart from

faith in Christ, they descended from Hagar. The true sons of Sarah, "like Isaac, are children of promise."

If you by faith belong to Christ, you are Abraham's seed and an heir according to the promise. It doesn't matter whose blood you have in your veins, but whose faith you have in your heart. It is covenant, not race, that makes one a child of God.

We inherit all the promises made to Abraham through Christ. Everything we are and have is by virtue of our union with Christ, which only comes by faith. Listen carefully: the Abrahamic Covenant was a promise made to Abraham and to Jesus Christ, the seed of Abraham:

1. He would be made great
2. He would be the father of many nations;
3. In him would all the nations of the earth be blessed.

This promise was fulfilled physically in Abraham, and spiritually and ultimately in Christ.

The promise was always to the spiritual descendants of Abraham, the Church. The Church is not a temporary interruption in God's prophetic program for Israel as the dispensationalists teach. The Church is the prophetic fulfillment of that program, because the Church is true Israel. Covenant, not race, has always been the defining mark of the true Israel of God.

The inheritance clearly does not apply to the nation of Israel, as pertaining to the flesh. [Galatians 4:21-31](#) ends all discussion as to this question, as it teaches that inheritance is according to promise, which is in Jesus Christ.

The kingdom of God was taken from them by Christ, and given to those in Christ, of Old Testament times and New. Knowing that the seed of Abraham is Christ, He has the authority to do so. Any claims of national blessings outside of Jesus Christ are unbiblical.

Millions of 21st century Christians have allowed themselves to be robbed of one of the most precious and vital beliefs of historical Christian teaching, namely, that the church is "the true Israel of God" and the ONLY Israel through which God's eternal purpose is to be consummated.

"Israel of God" is a title for the Galatian believers. By giving this title to the Galatian Christians, he is able to summarize his major arguments that they are indeed the true children of Abraham ([3:6-29](#)), the children of the free woman, just as Isaac was ([4:21-31](#)). The false teachers were claiming that only those who followed the law belonged to Israel. Now Paul proclaims that all those who follow the gospel are "the true *Israel of God*".

If we are to ever have peace in the middle-east, if we are ever to see an end of terrorism, we must have an impact on American foreign policy. If we are to have an impact on American foreign policy, we must have an impact on American politicians. If we are to have an impact on American politicians, we must have an impact on Christians. We must proclaim the truth that the Church is "***the Israel of God***".

And so we come to the end of Galatians. Paul has said all he can say. What will they do? As he writes his final words, not even Paul knows the answer. Having made his argument, the issue now

rests with his readers. Will they choose slavery or freedom? It is fitting that the book ends this way, with an unanswered question, because in every generation the church of Jesus Christ faces the same issues in one form or another. Will we choose liberty in Christ or will we succumb to the temptation to return to the slavery of self-effort and law-keeping as a means of pleasing God? Will we decide that God's grace is not enough, and that we need to add something else to what God has already done for us? Today our argument isn't about circumcision, but we quickly substitute other equally good things in place of the simple gospel--church membership, baptism, good works, charitable giving, strict accountability to the rules of the church, and anything else that exalts the flesh and gives us a sense that we have contributed to our own salvation. Because the Galatian heresy is with us today--and because the Galatian heretics are alive and well--we need this passionate little book. No wonder Luther loved it. No wonder legalists have always hated it. Thank God, Paul had the courage to write it. May we never forget the things we have learned.

This message preached by [David B. Curtis](#) on August 21, 2005. [Media Order #325a](#).



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