

# Exploring the Good News of Grace with Tibetans

Studies in Galatians

The companion volume to:

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ཐང་པའི་སློན་མི་ཞེས་བྱ་བ་བཞུགས་སོ།།  
走近神恩

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走近神恩

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## How To Use This Book

This book will help you introduce your Tibetan friends to the gospel as it is explained in the Apostle Paul's letter to the Galatians. The letter's main theme - that salvation comes by grace through faith, and not through rituals, rule-keeping, or other human efforts - is good news for the Tibetan people. This book and its companion Tibetan-Chinese bilingual volume,\* is designed to be used for Bible study with Tibetans, and for language learning.

The English translation of the Tibetan text has been prepared in an easy-to-read style. The chapters and paragraphs in the bilingual Tibetan-Chinese text and English text have been numbered identically (e.g. chapter 2, paragraph 2 in the English text says the same thing as chapter 2, paragraph 2 in the diglot text) so that you can use these books to study with others. Note that there may be occasional small variations in meaning among the Tibetan, Chinese, and English texts. This comes entirely from the need to keep the English text simple and easily readable.

May God bless you as you explore His Word with your Tibetan friends!

\* ཨྱ།། དཀོན་མཆོག་གི་ཐུགས་རྗེའི་ལམ་བཟང་  
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## Introduction to the Apostle Paul's Letter to the Galatians

1. Once upon a time there were two lazy boys named Tashi and Dondrup. They never did any work. Their parents gave them all their food and clothes. Finally their parents got angry. The parents said to the boys, "If you don't go to work, you must go to live somewhere else". So the brothers left home and went to a far-away land, where they wandered through the countryside like beggars. One night the boys sat by a fire talking about their future. "It would be good if there is a place we could get good food and warm clothes without doing any work," said Tashi. "But I don't know if there is such a place".
2. "In the whole world there's no such place," Dondrup replied. "But there is a place like this in heaven." "I know how to get to heaven," said Tashi. "I'm sure the people there will not look down on us if we don't work. It would be good if we could go." "How do we get there?" asked Dondrup. "If we find a really long ladder . . ." said Tashi, who sat quietly thinking for a long time, and then added, "We can go even if we don't have a long ladder." "How can we do that?" asked Dondrup. "A very big vulture lives on the mountaintop," said Tashi. "When I was little, I went there with Grandfather. If we can catch that vulture, we can get to heaven." "That's a good plan. Let's do it," said Dondrup.
3. The next day the two boys climbed the mountain. They found a very large bird's nest and hid waiting beside it. Just before sunset the big vulture came flying down from the sky. When the bird landed in its nest, Tashi grabbed its legs. The frightened vulture quickly flew up into the sky. "Grab my legs!" yelled Tashi to his brother, and Dondrup did so. With Tashi hanging on to the vulture's claws, and Dondrup holding Tashi's legs, the vulture flew up into the sky. With the two boys hanging from its claws, the bird flew higher and higher on its way to heaven.

4. Before long Dondrup said, “Are we there yet? I’m getting tired”. Suddenly Tashi saw a big hole in the clouds and said, “I can see the gate to heaven now.” Dondrup was very happy to hear this, and asked, “How big is the gate? Do you think we can both fit inside it?” “Yes, it’s big enough,” said Tashi. “How big is it?” asked Dondrup. Tashi opened his arms above his head to show his brother the size of the gate. Immediately the boys fell from the sky and perished.

5. Do you know the way to heaven? Can we get to heaven by climbing a tall ladder or by holding on to a vulture? Is there a path that begins in the human world and rises to heaven? Or is there a path that begins in heaven and comes down to our human world?

6. About 2,000 years ago, the Lord Jesus lived in a land called Israel. He told everyone about the path to heaven.<sup>1</sup> This path is called the gospel. A tall ladder or a big vulture is not needed in order to follow it - all we need is faith. At the time of the Lord Jesus, many people heard the gospel and believed it. These people were called Christians. They met together in small gatherings called churches. In obedience to the Lord’s command, “You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth,” the churches sent out teachers who proclaimed the gospel in the countries near Israel.<sup>2</sup>

7. One of these teachers was a man named Paul. Paul grew up very zealous for the Jewish religion. When he heard about the gospel and those who followed it, he was afraid that these teachings would harm his own Jewish religion. So he hated the Christians and tried to destroy them. But while he was doing so, Paul saw the Lord Jesus in a vision, and he himself became a Christian. A few years later, Paul became a famous Christian teacher. He preached the gospel in the lands around the Mediterranean Sea. On one of his journeys he visited Galatia (a province in what is now the nation of Turkey). Many Galatians gladly repented of their sins, believed in the Lord Jesus, and received God’s Holy

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1 John 14:6

2 Acts 1:8

Spirit. Paul established churches in Galatian cities such as Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe.<sup>3</sup> In this way the Apostle Paul became like a father to the Galatians, and the Galatians had great affection for him.

8. Some time later, other teachers came to Galatia. But these men gave the Galatians false teaching. According to this false teaching, people must not rely on faith alone to reach heaven, but also on their own efforts. These teachers wanted the Galatians to be saved by depending on their own works, as well as by following Jewish religious customs. In this way, the teachers of false doctrines wanted the Galatians to act like Tashi and Dondrup in depending on their own efforts to reach heaven. Some of the Galatians believed this false teaching. When the Apostle Paul heard about this, he became very upset. Just as a father warns and corrects his child who misbehaves, the Apostle Paul warned and corrected the Galatians as soon as he heard about the false teachers. The letter he wrote to them became the ninth book of the New Testament.

9. Paul's letter is still important today. Some people say that to reach heaven we must depend on our own efforts, as Tashi and Dondrup did. Others say that Tibetans cannot be Christians because they must stop following Tibetan customs and become like foreigners. But the Apostle Paul completely rejects such false teaching. In his letter to the Galatians, Paul says that people of every nationality may believe in the Lord Jesus without following foreign customs. All they need to do is repent of their sins and believe only in Jesus.

10. In order to understand Paul's letter, we must know a little more about the gospel. The gospel teaches us that there is an all-powerful God who made the world and everything in it. Though God is completely holy, we human beings are not; having a sinful nature, we naturally do what is wrong. Since we do not obey God's commands, our relationship with Him is not right. But if we repent of our sin and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, He will give us a right relationship with God, and

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3 Acts 14

also the gift of God's presence in our lives, the Holy Spirit. After we die, we will live with God forever. This message is what Christians call 'the gospel'. In this book we will call it the Path of Grace.

11. According to the false teachings, people must believe the gospel and also obey Jewish religious laws and customs. These teachers wanted the Galatians to be circumcised as a sign that they wanted to obey the Jewish religious law. They thought that if they did so, they would gain merit with God. Because the Jewish law was very important to them, these teachers were called legalists. The legalists were like Tashi and Dondrup, because they wanted to go to heaven by depending on their own efforts. This false teaching is called the Path of Law. Those who follow the Path of Law cannot enter God's heaven.<sup>4</sup> If we do not believe in the Lord Jesus, but depend on our own good acts to get to heaven, we will become like Tashi and Dondrup.

12. According to the Path of Grace, people must do one thing to get a right relationship with God: believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. According to the Path of Law, people must do two things to get a right relationship with God: believe in the Lord Jesus and gain merit by obeying religious laws. The Apostle Paul taught the Path of Grace. The Path of Grace and the Path of Law are not two different roads to the same place. The Path of Grace gives us a right relationship with God and eternal life with Him.<sup>5</sup> By relying on the grace of the Lord Jesus alone, and not by observing foreign religious laws and customs, anyone can obtain this blessing. We can be Tibetans and also Christians. This is the good news of the Apostle Paul's letter to the Galatians.

13. May God bless you as you read this book.

The Editors

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4 Galatians 1:6-9

5 Ephesians 2:8-9

## What is the Gospel?

- 1. God is completely righteous.**
- 2. Because of man's sinful nature, all people do what is wrong in God's sight.**
- 3. Because we do what is wrong, our relationship with God is broken.**
- 4. The Lord Jesus Christ is our mediator. He restores our relationship with God.**
- 5. Through faith in the Lord Jesus, we can have a right relationship with God and eternal life.**



## Chapter One: The Way to Heaven

**1. Scripture Text** (1) Paul, an apostle—sent not from men nor by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead— (2) and all the brothers with me, To the churches in Galatia: (3) Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, (4) who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, (5) to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

**2. Explanation** (1) The Apostle Paul is the author of this letter. Paul was a famous apostle and teacher who lived 2,000 years ago, during the time of the Han Dynasty. The Lord Jesus and God the Father appointed Paul as an apostle; that is, as someone who has authority to teach God’s Word. So Paul’s teaching did not come from the church or from the other apostles - it came directly from God. (2) Paul talked with certain other believers before writing this letter, but he does not say who they are. He sent the letter to the churches in Galatia, a province of the Roman Empire. (3) “Grace and peace to you” is a common greeting in Paul’s letters. Grace means that God forgives us even though we do not deserve it. God’s grace is one of the main themes of this letter. Peace means having a right relationship with God and with others. (4) The Lord Jesus gave His life for our sins so that we might be rescued from “the present evil age”, which means the time before the Lord Jesus returns to earth to judge all evil. (5) Paul praises God because His Son, the Lord Jesus, has saved us. “Amen” is a Hebrew word meaning “truth”. Here it means that God will be given glory for ever and ever.

**3. Scripture Text** (6) I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel — (7) which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the

gospel of Christ. (8) But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! (9) As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned! (10) Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ.

**4. Explanation** (6) The Apostle Paul was like a father to the Galatian Christians, and in Christ they were like his children. Paul taught the Path of Grace<sup>6</sup> to the Galatians, and they became followers of the Lord Jesus. But later, some teachers of false doctrines came to Galatia. These men said that the Galatians must believe in the Lord Jesus and also gain merit with God by obeying Jewish laws and customs. In this book we shall call this false teaching the Path of Law. Though it is not the good news, some of the Galatians believed it. So like a father correcting his children, Paul writes to correct the Galatians. (7) The Path of Law is not good news. It is false teaching. The teachers of the Path of Law were deceiving the Galatians. (8) Paul rebukes the false teachers sharply. He does so because they were teaching a false path to salvation. They were leading the Galatians away from God, and so they deserved God's punishment.<sup>7</sup> (9) Paul says again that the teachers of false doctrines deserve God's punishment. Bible writers often repeat important points in order to emphasize them. (10) By speaking so directly, Paul showed that he is not trying to get praise from men, but to be obedient to God.<sup>8</sup>

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6 See Introduction.

7 The Lord Jesus also taught this. See Mark 9:42.

8 Paul did try to please men sometimes, but never by changing the gospel message. See 1 Cor. 9:19-23.

The Path of Grace and The Path of Law	
Path of Grace	Path of Law
Believe in the Lord Jesus only	1. Believe in the Lord Jesus and 2. Obey foreign religious customs & laws
True Message from God	False Message from Men
What God does for us	What we try to do for ourselves
Taught by the Apostle Paul	Taught by the Legalists

**5. Scripture Text** (11) I want you to know, brothers, that the gospel I preached is not something that man made up. (12) I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ. (13) For you have heard of my previous way of life in Judaism, how intensely I persecuted the church of God and tried to destroy it. (14) I was advancing in Judaism beyond many Jews of my own age and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers. (15) But when God, who set me apart from birth and called me by his grace, was pleased (16-17) to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not consult any man, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before I was, but I went immediately into Arabia and later returned to Damascus.

**6. Explanation** (11) Paul's gospel of grace did not come from human beings or other religious teachers. (12) He did not receive it from a lama, nor did he learn it in a school or in a monastery. Paul's gospel came directly from the Lord Jesus, so his teaching has God's own authority.<sup>9</sup> (13-14) As a youth, Paul became an expert in the religion of the Jewish people, which is called Judaism. Since he had so much zeal for Judaism, he believed that he had gained much merit with God. He thought he could make even more merit by trying to destroy the

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<sup>9</sup> Ephesians 3:3-4

church.<sup>10</sup> (15) While on a journey to the city of Damascus, Paul saw a vision of the Lord Jesus.<sup>11</sup> The Lord appointed Paul to preach the gospel to the non-Jewish world. (16-17) But Paul did not become the disciple of any human teacher. He did not even go to Jerusalem, where the other apostles lived. Instead, he left Damascus for the kingdom of the Arabs, where he spent some time before returning to Syria.

**7. Scripture Text** (18) Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to get acquainted with Peter and stayed with him fifteen days. (19) I saw none of the other apostles—only James, the Lord’s brother. (20) I assure you before God that what I am writing you is no lie. (21) Later I went to Syria and Cilicia. (22) I was personally unknown to the churches of Judea that are in Christ. (23) They only heard the report: “The man who formerly persecuted us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy.” (24) And they praised God because of me.

**8. Explanation** (18) Paul went to Jerusalem to meet the Apostle Peter, one of the Lord Jesus’ original twelve disciples. (19-20) But Paul did not become a student of the other apostles. He did not need to learn from them because his gospel came directly from the Lord Jesus. Paul did meet James, the Lord’s brother,<sup>12</sup> who was one of several men named James in the early church. (21-22) After visiting Jerusalem, Paul returned to Syria and Cilicia (see map). The churches in other parts of Judea did not meet him. (23-24) But they were glad when they heard that the man who had been persecuting them was now telling others about the Lord Jesus.

**9. Chapter Summary** About the middle of the first century, the Apostle Paul preached the gospel in the Roman province of Galatia.<sup>13</sup> Many Galatians believed in the Lord Jesus, and churches appeared in several cities. Some time later, other teachers came to Galatia with false teach-

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10 Acts 8:1-3; 9:1-2

11 Acts 9: 3-9; 15

12 Matthew 13:55

13 See Acts 13 and 14

ing. These teachers said it was not enough to believe in the Lord Jesus alone. They said the Galatians must also gain merit with God by obeying foreign customs and religious laws. Paul was astonished that the Galatians so quickly turned away from the truth he had taught them. Paul's teaching is true because he received it directly from God.<sup>14</sup> It is not something he learned from the other apostles nor is it something made up by men. Anyone who teaches a message which is not the true gospel leads people away from God; such teachers deserve God's punishment.

**10. Application** According to the Tibetan proverb,

“Every area has its own dialect,  
Every lama his own doctrine.”

The Apostle Paul taught that there is only one true gospel: the Path of Grace. If we repent of our sins and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ alone, we are saved from God's punishment of sin, and we will live with God forever. Paul says that this teaching is true because it does not come from human beings, but from God. God's truth always remains the same, and it cannot change. God gave the gospel to us through the apostles He appointed, and the apostles recorded it in the Scriptures. The teaching of the apostles, as recorded in God's Word, is the standard by which we know whether a teaching proclaimed by others is true.

After the Apostle Paul preached to the Galatians, he went to teach in a Greek city called Berea. The people of Berea studied God's Word to see if Paul's teachings were true. When they saw that it was, many of them believed in the Lord Jesus.<sup>15</sup> If the Galatians had studied God's Word, they would not have been deceived when the teachers of false doctrines came. This is one reason why it is important for us to study God's Word each day. If we fill our minds with God's truth, there

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14 Galatians 1:1, 11-12, 16-17

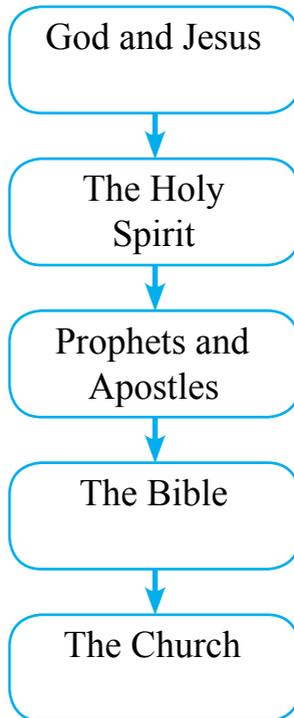
15 Acts 17:10-12

will be no room there for false teaching. In this way, we will be kept safe from the error of the Galatians.

### 11. To Study and Memorize

*I want you to know, brothers, that the gospel I preached is not something that man made up. I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ. (Galatians 1:11-12)*

### How God's Truth Comes to Us



## Chapter Two: What is the Gospel?

**1. Scripture Text** (1) Fourteen years later I went up again to Jerusalem, this time with Barnabas. I took Titus along also. (2) I went in response to a revelation and set before them the gospel that I preach among the Gentiles. But I did this privately to those who seemed to be leaders, for fear that I was running or had run my race in vain. (3) Yet not even Titus, who was with me, was compelled to be circumcised, even though he was a Greek. (4) This matter arose because some false brothers had infiltrated our ranks to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus and to make us slaves. (5) We did not give in to them for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might remain with you.

**2. Explanation** (1) The Apostle Paul returned to Jerusalem to visit the church with his Christian friends Barnabas and Titus.<sup>16</sup> Barnabas was an ethnically Jewish man from the island of Cyprus, and Titus was of the Greek nationality.<sup>17</sup> (2) Paul went to Jerusalem at God's command. When he arrived in the city, he met the leaders of the church. He explained to these leaders that he preached the Path of Grace; that is, the message that people of other nationalities do not have to observe Jewish customs and religious laws in order to be saved. (3) Agreeing with what Paul had said, James and the other church leaders did not force Titus, the Gentile Christian, to be circumcised or to follow any other Jewish customs. (4) But there were other people, called legalists, who said that non-Jews must believe in the Lord Jesus and also be circumcised and obey Jewish religious laws.<sup>18</sup> These legalists taught the Path of Law; that is, non-Jewish Christians must obey man-made rules and depend on their own effort to reach heaven. Paul called the legalists 'false brethren' because their teachings were not true. No one can be saved by gaining merit through obeying religious laws, because God

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16 Paul may be referring here to the church council described in Acts 15.

17 Titus 1:4, 2 Corinthians 2:13, Acts 4:36

18 See Acts 15:1-5

is perfect and we cannot perfectly obey His commandments. (5) Paul opposed the legalists so that the truth of the gospel might be given to the Galatians, the Tibetans, and to people of every other nationality.

**3. Scripture Text** (6) As for those who seemed to be important—whatever they were makes no difference to me; God does not judge by external appearance—those men added nothing to my message. (7) On the contrary, they saw that I had been entrusted with the task of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, just as Peter had been to the Jews. (8) For God, who was at work in the ministry of Peter as an apostle to the Jews, was also at work in my ministry as an apostle to the Gentiles. (9) James, Peter and John, those reputed to be pillars, gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship when they recognized the grace given to me. They agreed that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the Jews. (10) All they asked was that we should continue to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do.

**4. Explanation** (6) The leaders of the Jerusalem church added nothing to Paul's teaching, because they realized that this teaching came from the Lord Jesus Himself. (7-8) The leaders saw that God chose the Apostle Paul to tell the Gentiles about the Lord Jesus, and the Apostle Peter to tell the Jews. Both Apostles taught the Path of Grace to different groups.<sup>19</sup> (9) The Apostles James, Peter and John were the most important and responsible leaders in the Jerusalem church. Realizing that there is only one gospel that is the same for people of every nationality, they shook hands with Paul to show that they agreed with his teaching. (10) Though the leaders urged Paul to help the poor, he was eager to do so even before the leaders said anything about it.

**5. Scripture Text** (11) When Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he was clearly in the wrong. (12) Before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles

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<sup>19</sup> Acts 15:11

because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group. (13) The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray. (14) When I saw that they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter in front of them all, “You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile and not like a Jew. How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs?”

**6. Explanation** (11-12) In the first century, it was the custom of the Jews not to associate with people of other nationalities. One day God sent the Apostle Peter to visit a non-Jewish family. Peter shared the gospel with them, and they believed in the Lord Jesus. Appearing to Peter in a vision, God showed him that he must associate with Christians of any nationality.<sup>20</sup> Some years later, Peter went to the city of Antioch, in Syria. Antioch was the third largest city in the Roman empire, and most of its people were Gentiles. At first, Peter ate with both Jewish and non-Jewish Christians, just as God had told him to do.<sup>21</sup> But then some legalist teachers came from Jerusalem who said they had authority from the Apostle James.<sup>22</sup> Peter was afraid of these men, so he began to eat only with Jewish Christians. (13) Barnabas and the other Jewish Christians saw him do this, so they began to eat by themselves, too. Although they knew what God wanted, they did not do it. For this reason the Apostle Paul said they were acting like hypocrites. (14) The actions of Peter had split the church in two parts. Since everyone already knew about this problem, Paul openly opposed Peter in order to restore the unity of the church. But Paul and Peter continued to love one another as brothers, and Peter did not hold a grudge against Paul.<sup>23</sup>

**7. Scripture Text** (15) “We who are Jews by birth and not ‘Gentile sinners’ (16) know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law,

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20 Acts 10

21 See Acts, 11:1-18

22 See Acts, 15:1 and 13-25

23 2 Peter 3:15

because by observing the law no one will be justified. (17) “If, while we seek to be justified in Christ, it becomes evident that we ourselves are sinners, does that mean that Christ promotes sin? Absolutely not! (18) If I rebuild what I destroyed, I prove that I am a lawbreaker. (19) For through the law I died to the law so that I might live for God. (20) I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. (21) I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!”

**8. Explanation** (15-16) In the first century, most Jewish people thought that people of all other nationalities were sinners because they did not follow Jewish religious laws. But Peter, Paul, and other Jewish Christians knew that no one can “be justified”, or have a right relationship with God, by observing religious laws.<sup>24</sup> Since no one can perfectly obey God’s law, the only way we can have a right relationship with God is by faith in the Lord Jesus.<sup>25</sup> (17) The legalists said that if people follow Christ but do not obey the Jewish religious law, they will do anything they please and become immoral. In this way, Christ would cause them to sin. But Paul denies this.<sup>26</sup> (18) Because he was an expert in the Jewish religion, Paul knew that it is impossible to be saved by keeping the religious law and doing good works. If he returned to the law after depending on Christ alone, he would be a lawbreaker. (19) Paul had already done his best to keep God’s law when he followed Judaism. But he could not keep the law perfectly. He realized that he could never get enough merit to please a perfect God.<sup>27</sup> He could not depend on the law for salvation. In this sense he “died” to the law. Now, in Christ, he has a new freedom to live for God. (20) It is as if Paul died with Christ on the cross, and was made alive again through faith. Because Christ loved Paul and gave His life for him, Paul now lives for Christ, doing as

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24 Romans 3:19-20

25 John 5:24

26 See Romans 6-8

27 Phil. 3:4-9

He commands. (21) God's grace is the most important thing, for if we could have a right relationship with God by obeying the law, then Christ died for nothing.

**9. Chapter Summary** The Apostle Paul visited Jerusalem with his Jewish friend Barnabas and his Gentile associate Titus. Paul met the other apostles, and they agreed that Gentile Christians like Titus did not have to follow Jewish religious laws such as circumcision. The Apostle Paul said that it is not necessary to obey Jewish religious laws, or to follow the customs of other nationalities in order to be saved. He insisted that people are saved only by God's grace through faith in the Lord Jesus. All the apostles agreed that the Path of Grace is the only true gospel for people of every nationality.

When the Apostle Peter came to Antioch, he used to eat with Gentile Christians, as God had told him to do. But then some men came from Jerusalem teaching the Path of Law. Peter was afraid of this group, so he no longer associated with the Gentile Christians. This caused a division in the church. Paul once again insisted that the only way to be saved is by grace through faith in Christ alone. Since all nationalities are made right with God in the same way, Christians of every nationality have fellowship with each other. No one needs to follow the customs of other nationalities in order to be accepted by God. God accepts everyone who follows the Path of Grace.

**10. Application** In old Tibet there were many wealthy landowners. These landowners had servants who had to work very hard. One of these servants was a boy named Tashi. Tashi and his family were very poor. They were servants of a cruel landowner. Each day the landowner would give them orders and beat them. Because they did not have enough food, no matter how hard they worked, they could not please their master. One day when their hope had run out, a wealthy man came to their village. He had heard about Tashi and his family, and came to take them away from the cruel landowner's estate. This master

was kind and good. He paid good wages. The family had enough to eat and was very happy. One day their old master came back and began to beat them and give orders. But their new master said to the old one, “From now on, Tashi and his family are my workers. Go away! They no longer have to follow your orders.” The old landlord went away and never troubled Tashi and his family again.

This story shows us something of what the Apostle Paul meant when he said he ‘died to the law’.<sup>28</sup> Before Paul believed in the Lord Jesus, he was like a slave to the religious law. Whatever he did, he could not perfectly obey it. Then he became the servant of a new master - the Lord Jesus. Just as Tashi and his family were no longer slaves of their evil landlord after the rich man came, so Paul was no longer a slave of the religious law after the Lord Jesus came. From the point of view of his old master, the religious law, he is as good as dead. But from the viewpoint of his new master, the Lord Jesus, he is eternally alive. From now on, Paul lives by faith in the Son of God, who loved him and gave His own life to save him. If we believe the gospel, we too can receive this blessing.

### **11. To Study and Memorize**

*For through the law I died to the law so that I might live for God. I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. (Galatians 2:19-20)*

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28 See Galatians, 2:19-20

## Chapter Three: Children of Abraham

**1. Scripture Text** (1) You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. (2) I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard? (3) Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort? (4) Have you suffered so much for nothing — if it really was for nothing? (5) Does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you because you observe the law, or because you believe what you heard?

**2. Explanation** (1) During his visit, the Apostle Paul clearly explained the way of salvation to the Galatians. They believed in the Lord Jesus, received the Holy Spirit, and saw miracles.<sup>29</sup> How can they now turn away from the truth? Like a father correcting his children, the Apostle Paul explains their errors. (2) Those who trust in Christ for salvation are filled with God’s Holy Spirit.<sup>30</sup> Paul asks if the Galatians received the Spirit by keeping the Jewish religious law, or by believing the gospel. Of course, the Galatians knew from their own experience of God’s miracles among them that they received the Holy Spirit by believing the gospel.<sup>31</sup> (3) They had already received eternal life through God’s Spirit - to depend on human effort now was pointless. (4) Paul asks whether their experience of suffering for God has taught them anything at all. (5) He reminds them that the Holy Spirit and miracles are gifts of God that cannot be earned by human effort.

**3. Scripture Text** (6) Consider Abraham: “He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.” (7) Understand, then, that those who believe are children of Abraham. (8) The Scripture foresaw that

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29 Galatians 3:5

30 Acts 2:38-39

31 Galatians 3:5

God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: “All nations will be blessed through you.” (9) So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.

**4. Explanation** (6) To make his meaning clear, the Apostle Paul gives the example of the Jews’ ancestor Abraham. Abraham lived about 2,000 years before the Lord Jesus. He was the father of the Jewish people and respected and honored by all Jews. The meaning of “He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness” is that by faith, Abraham received a right relationship with God. (7) All who have faith are like Abraham and, figuratively speaking, are Abraham’s children. (8-9) Because Abraham believed God, he was blessed by God. In the same way, people of any nationality who believe God’s promise today through the Lord Jesus will be blessed by God and gain a right relationship with Him. According to Genesis 12:3, this was God’s intention from the time He first called Abraham to faith.

**5. Scripture Text** (10) All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.” (11) Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because, “The righteous will live by faith.” (12) The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, “The man who does these things will live by them.” (13) Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.” (14) He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.

**6. Explanation** (10) Many years after Abraham died, God gave the religious law to the Jewish people. He promised to bless them if they completely obeyed it, and to punish them if they disobeyed it. Although God is perfect, people are not. So no one could perfectly obey God’s law. This being the case, all who depend on keeping the law are liable to God’s punishment for disobedience. (11) If no one can have a right

relationship with God by keeping the religious law, who can be saved? Only those who rely on God's promise alone. This is because the Scripture says, "The righteous will live by faith". (12) No one can gain a right relationship with God by observing the religious law, because it is not based on faith, but on obedience, and no one can perfectly obey God's law. (13) According to the religious law, those who do not keep the law perfectly deserve God's punishment. Since everyone is a sinner, we all deserve God's punishment. But the Lord Jesus Christ took this punishment in our place. He suffered and died on the cross in order to take the punishment for our sins. (14) For this reason, people of every nationality can have a right relationship with God through faith in the Lord Jesus. When we believe in the Lord, we receive God's presence in our lives: the Holy Spirit.

**7. Scripture Text** (15) Brothers, let me take an example from everyday life. Just as no one can set aside or add to a human covenant that has been duly established, so it is in this case. (16) The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say "and to seeds," meaning many people, but "and to your seed," meaning one person, who is Christ. (17) What I mean is this: The law, introduced 430 years later, does not set aside the covenant previously established by God and thus do away with the promise. (18) For if the inheritance depends on the law, then it no longer depends on a promise; but God in his grace gave it to Abraham through a promise.

**8. Explanation** (15) The Apostle Paul gives an example from everyday life. To pass on his wealth to his children, a father writes a document called a "will". A will gives instructions about how to divide the father's wealth among his children. According to ancient Greek law, a will was put into the city records office and no one could change it. That will was a promise to his children. Like the father in this example, God made a promise to Abraham and to his descendant. According to that promise, God will bless all the world's peoples through the One descended from Abraham. Since this promise is unchanging, the law

cannot abolish it.<sup>32</sup> (16) The promise was given to Abraham and his Descendant,<sup>33</sup> who is the Lord Jesus. (17) Even though God gave the religious law to the Jewish people some 430 years after the time of Abraham, it cannot change the promise that was given to him.<sup>34</sup> The promise of salvation by faith does not change. (18) God's promised blessings still depend on faith. They do not come by keeping the religious law, but by believing God's promise. What Paul is saying is that we can trust God's unchanging promise: if we believe in the Lord Jesus, we will be saved.<sup>35</sup>

**9. Scripture Text** (19) What, then, was the purpose of the law? It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come. The law was put into effect through angels by a mediator. (20) A mediator, however, does not represent just one party; but God is one. (21) Is the law, therefore, opposed to the promises of God? Absolutely not! For if a law had been given that could impart life, then righteousness would certainly have come by the law. (22) But the Scripture declares that the whole world is a prisoner of sin, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe.

**10. Explanation** (19) If we receive God's blessing by faith, then why did God give us the religious law? The law shows us what sin is. It shows us that when people lie or steal, they are lawbreakers. But the law was given only until the time of the Lord Jesus. The law was established through angels by a mediator, the prophet Moses. (20) A mediator is only needed when there are two parties involved in situations such as a conflict or peace talks. But God's promise was given directly to Abraham, without a mediator, and Paul says this arrangement is better. (21) The law itself is still good. If anyone could keep it perfectly, that person would have a right relationship with God. (22) But no one can

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32 Romans 11:29

33 Literally, 'seed'. See Genesis, 22:18

34 Exodus 12:40

35 Romans 10:8-10

perfectly keep God's law, so all people are sinners. Apart from God's promise, there is no escape from sin - as Paul says, 'the whole world is a prisoner of sin'. So in summary, the law prepares us to hear the good news and to respond to it in faith.

**11. Scripture Text** (23) Before this faith came, we were held prisoners by the law, locked up until faith should be revealed. (24) So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith. (25) Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law. (26) 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, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. (29) If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

**12. Explanation** (23) Because no one could perfectly obey God's law, the law was like a jail and we were its prisoners. (24) The law was also like a caretaker or guardian. It showed us that we could not gain a good relationship with God by our own efforts. Only through faith in the Lord Jesus can we have a right relationship with God. (25-26) Now we are like children who have grown up; we no longer need the law as our supervisor, because through faith in the Lord Jesus, we are God's adult sons and daughters. (27) Anyone who puts on a person's clothes looks something like that person. Speaking figuratively, Paul says that believing in the Lord Jesus is like putting on His clothes. In God's sight, believers "look like" the Lord. So when God looks at them, He sees His dear Son Jesus. (28) Therefore, a Christian's nationality, wealth, education, or gender do not matter to God, because all believers are one in Christ. (29) Because we believe in Christ, we are Abraham's descendants, and we inherit the blessings God promised to our ancestor Abraham.

**13. Chapter Summary** To show that it is by faith that we gain a right relationship with God, the Apostle Paul writes about the Galatians' own experience. It was not by observing the religious law, but by faith that the Galatians received the Holy Spirit. It was by faith that the Jews' ancestor Abraham was saved. Since no one can perfectly keep the religious law, salvation comes through faith. Since we cannot keep the religious law perfectly, no one can gain merit in God's sight, for God and His law are perfect, but we are sinners. However, the Lord Jesus kept God's law perfectly. He died on the cross to take the punishment for sin, so that by faith we might receive salvation and God's Holy Spirit. God's promise of salvation by grace through faith does not change. People of any nationality who believe in the Lord Jesus are all one in His sight.

**14. Application** One day three friends met on the road. One was from Amdo, one was from Kham, and the third from U-Tsang (Central Tibet). The friend from Amdo said, "In my homeland we grow more than 100,000 different kinds of vegetables. Onions are as big as boulders. All the food tastes good". The friend from Kham said, "In my homeland there are many yaks, and they are very big, with very large horns. When two men each climb up to the tip of a horn, even if they shout they cannot hear each other because the distance is so great". The friend from Central Tibet said, "In Lhasa they make big iron pans. It takes five hundred boys with hammers to make one pan". The other two friends asked, "Why do you need such a big pot?" The girl from Lhasa answered, "To cook the onions from Amdo and the yak meat from Kham".

These three friends each love their homeland, but all of them are of one nationality: Tibetan. Likewise, the Apostle Paul teaches that we are all one in the Lord Jesus. We believe in one God. We believe in God's only Son, the Lord Jesus. We enter His kingdom through one door: by repenting of our sins and believing in the Lord Jesus. We are baptized with one baptism. We receive one Holy Spirit. Even though some are men and some are women, some are educated and some are

not, some are Chinese, some are Tibetan, some are Korean, we are all one in the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **15. To Study and Memorize**

*You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. (Galatians 3:26-28)*



## Chapter Four: The Path of Grace and the Path of Law

**1. Scripture Text** (1) What I am saying is that as long as the heir is a child, he is no different from a slave, although he owns the whole estate. (2) He is subject to guardians and trustees until the time set by his father. (3) So also, when we were children, we were in slavery under the basic principles of the world. (4) But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, (5) to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. (6) Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “Abba, Father.” (7) So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.

**2. Explanation** (1-2) In the Apostle Paul’s time, a large household might include a father, mother, their children, and some slaves. Even though the sons would one day become the heirs of their father’s property and the owners of the entire estate, according to Roman law they were little different than slaves until they became adults. (3) In the same way, until salvation by faith came, we were like slaves to the law and to our own desires. (4-5) But the Lord Jesus released us from this slavery – He perfectly obeyed God’s law, and on the cross He experienced the punishment for sin. He made us to be God’s children and gave us a right relationship with Him. In this way we receive the blessing promised to Abraham, with the full rights of sons.<sup>36</sup> (6) The Aramaic word Abba is the ordinary word a small child would use in talking to his father. Since we are His children, God gives us His Spirit. The Spirit testifies that we belong to God our Father.<sup>37</sup> (7) We are no longer slaves to the law, but we are like sons who will inherit everything their father has promised.

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<sup>36</sup> John 1:12

<sup>37</sup> Romans 8:15

**3. Scripture Text** (8) Formerly, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those who by nature are not gods. (9) But now that you know God—or rather are known by God—how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable principles? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again? (10) You are observing special days and months and seasons and years! (11) I fear for you, that somehow I have wasted my efforts on you.

**4. Explanation** (8) Before the Galatians believed in Jesus, they served demons and pagan gods out of fear.<sup>38</sup> (9) Now they have been set free by Christ, so Paul asks how it is possible that they want to become slaves again. (10) Observing special days and times to gain God's favor is pointless. Only by depending on the Lord Jesus can people have a right relationship with God. (11) The Apostle Paul showed the Galatians the path to freedom. But some of them rejected it and wanted to go back to being slaves of the law! For this reason the apostle begins to wonder whether the work he has done among them has gone for nothing.

**5. Scripture Text** (12) I plead with you, brothers, become like me, for I became like you. You have done me no wrong. (13) As you know, it was because of an illness that I first preached the gospel to you. (14) Even though my illness was a trial to you, you did not treat me with contempt or scorn. Instead, you welcomed me as if I were an angel of God, as if I were Christ Jesus himself. (15) What has happened to all your joy? I can testify that, if you could have done so, you would have torn out your eyes and given them to me. (16) Have I now become your enemy by telling you the truth? (17) Those people are zealous to win you over, but for no good. What they want is to alienate you from us, so that you may be zealous for them. (18) It is fine to be zealous, provided the purpose is good, and to be so always and not just when I am with you. (19) My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of child-

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38 See Acts, 14:11-13

birth until Christ is formed in you, (20) how I wish I could be with you now and change my tone, because I am perplexed about you!

**6. Explanation** (12) The Apostle Paul was upset because some of the Galatians were taking a wrong view of salvation. Paul himself depended on the Lord Jesus alone for salvation, so he appeals to the Galatians to follow his example. (13) Paul was ill when he first went to Galatia. No one knows what illness Paul had, nor how it resulted in preaching the gospel to the Galatians. (14) Even though he was sick, the Galatians welcomed and honored Paul as a messenger of God. (15-16) On his first visit the Galatians received Paul with joy, but now some of the them are listening to false teachers and have lost that joy. (17) The legalists appealed to the Galatians to become their followers. These legalists wanted to alienate the Galatians from Paul, and make them zealous for the Path of Law. (18) Zeal is a good thing, but only when it is zeal for what is good. (19-20) Paul is deeply troubled because the Galatians are following the false teachings of the legalists. Because he will be worried about them until they are mature in the Lord Jesus, he compares his pain to the pains of childbirth.

**7. Scripture Text** (21) Tell me, you who want to be under the law, are you not aware of what the law says? (22) For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and the other by the free woman. (23) His son by the slave woman was born in the ordinary way; but his son by the free woman was born as the result of a promise. (24) These things may be taken figuratively, for the women represent two covenants. One covenant is from Mount Sinai and bears children who are to be slaves: This is Hagar. (25) Now Hagar stands for Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present city of Jerusalem, because she is in slavery with her children. (26) But the Jerusalem that is above is free, and she is our mother. (27) For it is written:

“Be glad, O barren woman,  
who bears no children;

break forth and cry aloud,  
you who have no labor pains;  
because more are the children of the desolate woman  
than of her who has a husband.”

(28) Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise. (29) At that time the son born in the ordinary way persecuted the son born by the power of the Spirit. It is the same now. (30) But what does the Scripture say? “Get rid of the slave woman and her son, for the slave woman’s son will never share in the inheritance with the free woman’s son.” (31) Therefore, brothers, we are not children of the slave woman, but of the free woman.

**8. Explanation** (21) The Apostle Paul used a famous story from the Old Testament to teach the followers of the legalists. (22-23) Abraham and his wife Sarah were the ancestors of the Jewish people. God promised Abraham that he would have a son, and that through this son he would become the father of many nations.<sup>39</sup> His wife Sarah was old and past the age of having children. So she told Abraham to have a child by her slave girl Hagar.<sup>40</sup> Abraham named this son Ishmael. But God promised that Abraham and Sarah would have a son of their own. God fulfilled this promise, and Abraham and Sarah had a son named Isaac. So Ishmael was born in the ordinary way, but Isaac was born as a result of God’s promise. (24-25) Sarah, the free woman, and Hagar, the slave woman, represent two covenants. In the Apostle Paul’s example, Hagar represents the religious law which God gave to the Jewish people at Mount Sinai. Because it was the city most important to the legalists, Jerusalem also represents the religious law, and those who are slaves to it.

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39 Genesis 15:5; 17:16.

40 Genesis 16:1-2

## The Two Covenants (Galatians 4:21-31)

Old Covenant	New Covenant
Based on observing the law v. 21	Based on faith in the Lord Jesus v. 23
Slave woman (Hagar) v. 22	Free woman (Sarah) v. 22
Ishmael (natural birth) v. 23	Isaac (miraculous birth) v. 23, 28
Children are slaves of the law v. 25	Children are free v. 31
Earthly Jerusalem v. 25	Heavenly Jerusalem v. 26
Legalism	Gospel of Grace

(26) “The Jerusalem that is above” is the city in heaven where Christ reigns. Figuratively speaking, all Christians are the ‘children’ of this city.<sup>41</sup> (27) The old covenant was for the Jewish nationality only, but the new covenant is for people of any nationality who believe in the Lord Jesus. So the new covenant, based on faith, has many more ‘children’ than the old covenant, based on obedience to the law. (28) The Galatians who trust in the Lord Jesus are “children of the promise”. Through their faith in Christ, they trust in God’s promise. (29) Just as Abraham’s son Ishmael persecuted his brother Isaac,<sup>42</sup> so the teachers of this false gospel were persecuting the believers. (30) Abraham’s wife Sarah was jealous of Ishmael’s mother Hagar, and she asked her husband Abraham to send them away.<sup>43</sup> In the same way, Paul suggests that the Galatians send the legalists away. (31) Christians are not slaves of the law, but have a right relationship with God through faith in the Lord Jesus.

41 See Revelation, 21-22

42 Genesis 21:9

43 Genesis 21:10

**9. Chapter Summary** Following the Path of Law is like being a child or a slave. But following the Path of Grace is like being a free adult. Some of the Galatians turned away from the Path of Grace to follow the Path of Law. The Apostle Paul compares their behavior to an adult wanting to become a child, or to a free person wanting to become a slave. By telling the story of Hagar and Sarah, he shows that the Path of Grace is better than the Path of Law. At the end of the chapter, he suggests that the Galatians expel the teachers of false doctrines from among them.

### Salvation is by God's Grace

1. The Galatians received the Spirit through faith, not by observing the law.	3:1-5
2. Abraham was saved by his faith.	3:6-9
3. Salvation cannot come from keeping the law.	3:10-14
4. Salvation by faith fulfills God's promise to Abraham.	3:15-25
5. The Galatians became God's children through faith.	3:26-4:11
6. When the Galatians first believed, they were joyful.	4:12-20
7. Salvation comes through God's covenant of grace.	4:21-31

**10. Application** The Apostle Paul wrote, "Formerly, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those who by nature are not gods". He probably meant that before they became Christians, the Galatians used to worship pagan gods. People generally worship such gods out of fear of evil, sickness, accidents, and death. They think that if they do not worship or make offerings, the gods will harm them. For example, they think that if they do not pay attention to the gods, an accident may happen on the road, or a demon will hurt them. Some people think that if they believe in the Lord Jesus, the gods or a curse or an evil mantra will

harm them. Such gods live on fear. The gods do not show us love. If sickness or suffering strikes us, the gods do not care.

How different it is with the Lord Jesus! Because He has all power, He is far more powerful than the pagan gods. The gods and spirits must always do as the Lord Jesus commands them.<sup>44</sup> For this reason, the Lord Jesus can protect us from any god, spirit, curse, or magic. When we suffer, He knows about it. He is always with us and will never leave us. Even when we die He will remain with us. If we trust in Him alone, the Lord Jesus will protect us and we need never fear.

### **11. To Study and Memorize**

*Formerly, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those who by nature are not gods. (Galatians 4:8)*

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44 Matthew 28:18



## Chapter Five: Called to be Free

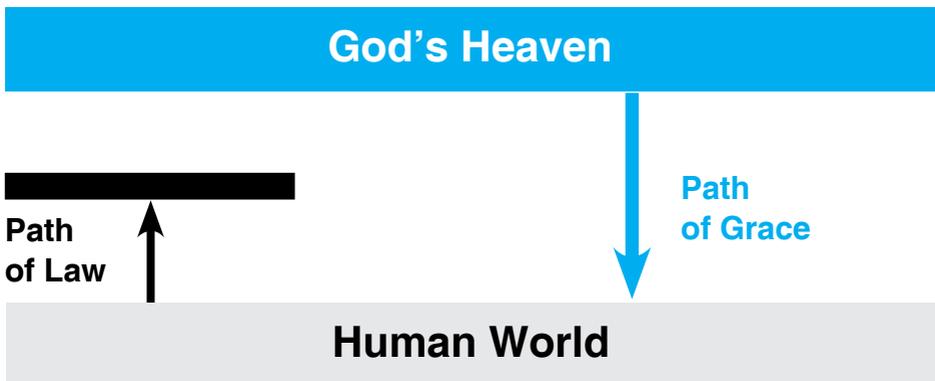
**1. Scripture Text** (1) It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery. (2) Mark my words! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all. (3) Again I declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole law. (4) You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace. (5) But by faith we eagerly await through the Spirit the righteousness for which we hope. (6) For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love. (7) You were running a good race. Who cut in on you and kept you from obeying the truth? (8) That kind of persuasion does not come from the one who calls you. (9) “A little yeast works through the whole batch of dough.” (10) I am confident in the Lord that you will take no other view. The one who is throwing you into confusion will pay the penalty, whoever he may be. (11) Brothers, if I am still preaching circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been abolished. (12) As for those agitators, I wish they would go the whole way and emasculate themselves!

**2. Explanation** (1) The Lord Jesus set us free from having to obey religious laws in order to seek a right relationship with God. The Galatians have been set free, and the Apostle Paul urges them not to become slaves of the religious law all over again. (2-3) To be circumcised was a sign showing that one had to obey the entire Jewish religious law. Those who rely on keeping the religious law must keep it perfectly. But if people could keep the law perfectly, there would have been no need for the Lord Jesus to suffer the punishment for sin. The Lord Jesus’ death is of no value to anyone who depends on their own merit to gain God’s favor, but He saves all who realize their need of God’s grace. (4) The Path of Law leads away from the Lord Jesus. The Path of Grace

leads to the Lord Jesus. Though the Galatians were trying to travel on both paths at the same time, it is impossible for anyone to do so. (5) Those who travel on the Path of Grace receive God's Spirit and a right relationship with God. (6) Whether or not one is circumcised is not the point - those who take the Path of Grace are saved by God's love, so they must always show this love to others. (7) At first the Galatians depended on the Lord Jesus alone. But then the teachers of false doctrines came and stopped the Galatians from obeying the truth of the gospel. (8) These false teachings did not come from God. (9) Paul uses this Jewish proverb about yeast to show that it is the nature of false teachings to spread. (10) But the Apostle Paul is confident that the legalists will experience God's judgment, and that the Galatians will return to the truth. (11) Paul's opponents charged that he still preached that one must be circumcised. In fact this was not so, and Paul suffered many times for proclaiming that circumcision was not necessary.<sup>45</sup> (12) In ancient Galatia there were pagans who practiced castration. Paul suggests that the teachers of false doctrine do likewise, for distorting the gospel is a very serious sin, and if the teachers of false doctrine did not repent of it, they would deserve God's punishment.<sup>46</sup>

## The Path of God's Grace

### The Path of Keeping the Law



<sup>45</sup> See Acts, 13-14

<sup>46</sup> Mark 9:42

**3. Scripture Text** (13) You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love. (14) The entire law is summed up in a single command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” (15) If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other. (16) So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. (17) For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. (18) But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law.

**4. Explanation** (13) Although those who follow the Path of Grace are set free from having to obey human customs and regulations, we cannot do just as we please. All of us must serve one another in love. (14) The Lord Jesus said, “You must love your neighbor as yourselves”, so believers must love one another.<sup>47</sup> (15) If we do not do so, we will destroy one another like fierce wild animals. (16) The Holy Spirit is the presence of God in our hearts. When we repent and believe in the Lord Jesus, we receive the Holy Spirit as a gift.<sup>48</sup> But we also have a sinful nature, which means that we still sometimes do what displeases God. (17) God’s Spirit and our sinful nature are in conflict with each other. (18) The Spirit leads us to do what pleases God. If we follow the Spirit, we no longer need the law to gain God’s favor.

**5. Scripture Text** (19) The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; (20) idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions (21) and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

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<sup>47</sup> Mark 12:31

<sup>48</sup> Acts 2:38

**6. Explanation** (19-21) The Lord Jesus said that good trees bear good fruit, and bad trees bear bad fruit. Each tree is known by the kind of fruit it produces.<sup>49</sup> Our sinful human nature produces bad fruit, of which 15 kinds are listed here: hatred, discord, anger, and so on. Anyone who habitually lives like this will not enter God's kingdom.

**7. Scripture Text** (22) But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, (23) gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. (24) Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. (25) Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. (26) Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.

**8. Explanation** (22-23) The Holy Spirit produces good fruit, and the Apostle Paul lists nine examples. The one who bears these fruits has no need to please God by obeying the religious law. (24) When we repent of our sins and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, we turn away from our sinful nature. This shows that we are traveling on the Path of Grace. (25) We follow the Spirit of God on this path, (26) and if we do as the Spirit tells us, we will love one another.

### The Nine Fruits of the Spirit

1. Love	4. Patience	7. Faithfulness
2. Joy	5. Kindness	8. Gentleness
3. Peace	6. Goodness	9. Self-control

**9. Chapter Summary** Paul warns the Galatians not to rely on the Path of Law. Those who rely on keeping the religious law will be separated from God. It is best if the Galatians follow the Path of Grace. Led by the Holy Spirit, those who follow this path show love to everyone and overcome the sinful nature.

<sup>49</sup> Luke 6:43-44

**10. Application** Once upon a time in a certain village there was a wise farmer and a foolish farmer. The wise farmer planted wheat and barley in his field. Some time later, sprouts appeared, and then the full heads of grain. When the grain was ripe, the farmer harvested the grain and gave it to his family to eat. Because grain is nutritious food, the farmer's family became very strong. They planted more grain and soon became wealthy. They shared their wealth with others and became one of the most important families in that village. The foolish farmer planted weed seeds in his field. Some time later, the sprouts appeared, became larger, and choked out all his other crops. Because people can't eat weeds, the farmer's family went hungry. They became one of the poorest families in their village.

The Apostle Paul teaches that this same principle is true in our lives. The seeds are our thoughts and actions. We can plant them in God's field, or in the field of our sinful nature. If we plant seeds in God's field by studying His Word, praying, and meeting with other believers, then these seeds will grow up, ripen, and produce good fruit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, and so on. Then we will be like the wise farmer who brings benefit to others. If by doing bad things like sexual immorality, impure acts, and loose living we plant seeds in the field of our sinful nature, then these seeds will grow up, ripen, and produce bad fruit that is worthy of God's punishment. Wise Christians plant seeds in God's field. From this we will reap eternal life.

Action	Result
Plant seeds that please God's Spirit	Eternal Life
Plant seeds that please our sinful nature	Destruction

### **11. To Study and Memorize**

*The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. (Galatians 6:8)*

## Chapter Six: A New Creation

**1. Scripture Text** (1) Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. (2) Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. (3) If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. (4) Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else, (5) for each one should carry his own load.

**2. Explanation** (1) Christians sometimes sin, because we still have a sinful nature. When someone sins, we must help them gently, not forgetting that we too may sin. (2) The law of Christ is love;<sup>50</sup> we fulfill it when we help those in need. (3) We must not think we are more important than we really are. If we do so, we deceive ourselves. (4) We should test our own actions by God's Word, not by comparing ourselves with other people. (5) Each one of us has our own responsibility before God.

**3. Scripture Text** (6) Anyone who receives instruction in the word must share all good things with his instructor. (7) Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. (8) The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. (9) Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. (10) Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

**4. Explanation** (6) Students should share good things with their instructors, who teach them God's Word.<sup>51</sup> (7) Since we will receive the

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50 John 13:34

51 1 Corinthians 9:14

consequences of our own actions, we should examine our own behavior carefully. (8) If we act according to our sinful nature, we will be separated from God, but if we act according to the leading of the Holy Spirit, we will certainly receive eternal life. (9) For this reason, as we are led by the Spirit of God, we must not stop doing good. (10) We should continue to do good to everyone, but since believers are like one family, we should especially do good to other Christians.

**5. Scripture Text** (11) See what large letters I use as I write to you with my own hand! (12) Those who want to make a good impression outwardly are trying to compel you to be circumcised. The only reason they do this is to avoid being persecuted for the cross of Christ. (13) Not even those who are circumcised obey the law, yet they want you to be circumcised that they may boast about your flesh. (14) May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. (15) Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a new creation. (16) Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule, even to the Israel of God. (17) Finally, let no one cause me trouble, for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus. (18) The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers. Amen.

**6. Explanation** (11) Paul probably dictated this letter to a secretary, but now he writes with his own hand, in large letters. (12) He warns the Galatians not to be deceived by the legalists, who are trying to please men, and not God. (13) Even the legalists themselves can not perfectly obey God's law, but still they urge the Galatians to be circumcised. This is because they want to boast about how many followers they have. (14) Because he is a new person in Christ, Paul no longer obeys the evil desires of this world. (15) Since we are saved only by faith in the Lord Jesus, whether or not we are circumcised means nothing. (16) Only those who believe the gospel have God's peace and mercy, whether they are Jews or non-Jews. (17) Paul had suffered from stoning, beatings,

and illness because he preached the gospel.<sup>52</sup> His wounds show his relationship to God far better than circumcision. (18) Paul prays that God's grace would remain with the Galatians. This is the end of the Apostle Paul's letter to the Galatians.

### The Work of the Holy Spirit

1. God gives His Holy Spirit to all believers.	3:14
2. We receive God's Spirit through faith.	3:2-5
3. The Spirit testifies that we are God's children.	4:6
4. The Spirit opposes our sinful human nature.	5:16-17
5. The Spirit produces love and other fruits in our lives.	5:22-23
6. The Spirit gives us eternal life.	6:8-9

**7. Chapter Summary** The Apostle Paul encourages the Galatians to love one another and to do good works as they are led by the Holy Spirit. Since salvation comes only through faith, Paul warns them against following the teaching of the legalizers. After reminding the Galatians that salvation by grace is the only true path, he blesses with peace and mercy all who trust in Christ alone.

### 8. Application

The letter which Paul has written  
Shows the perfect way to heaven.  
It is not the Path of Law  
But the Lord's Path of Grace.  
By grace through faith  
This is the perfect path of salvation.

<sup>52</sup> See Acts, 14:19; 16:22

**9. To Study and Memorize**

*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. (Galatians 5:22-23)*

## Summary of the Book of Galatians

Topic	The Apostle Paul's Teaching
1. Truth	1. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the way that leads to God. Error is false teaching that leads away from God.
2. Authority	2. The Apostles have authority from God.
3. The Path of Grace	3. Salvation comes only through the Lord Jesus' Path of Grace.
4. How to Live Life	4. In harmony with the Holy Spirit, we do works that please God.

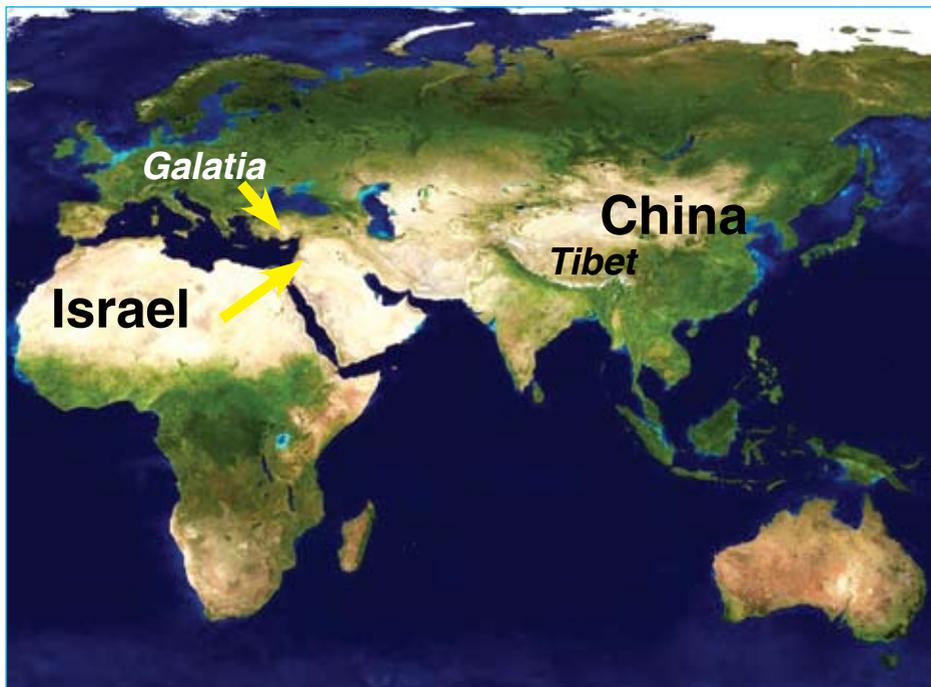


## Tibetan Praise Song: Ahalani

1. *What joy!  
To save one lost in sin's darkness; What joy!  
Leaving heaven; What joy!  
God took human form  
Beloved Tibetans, do not forget  
This boundless mercy.*
  
2. *What joy!  
The sin of the old nature  
Works of merit cannot cleanse; What joy!  
For victory in the battle of sin; What joy!  
A new nature is needed, so;  
In this human body to take new birth  
In Jesus believe.*
  
3. *What joy!  
No matter how great is  
The sin accumulated from our ancestors; What joy!  
If confessed to Jesus; What joy!  
By His precious blood  
Forgiveness of sins and salvation receive;  
Ask Him for salvation!*



## Maps



**Map 1:**  
**Tibet and Israel**



**Map 2:**  
**Galatia and the**  
**Eastern Mediterranean Region**

## Photographs



The site of Derbe, Galatia (Turkey).



The site of Lystra, Galatia (Turkey).



The city of Antioch as it looks today.



The excavation of a Roman-era street in Tarsus.



The site of Iconium.



A street in the city of Damascus.



The old gate to the city of Damascus.



The city of Jerusalem.





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