

1. Bewitched—the Galatian Churches (Started by Paul and Barnabas on 1st missionary trip—Acts 13-14—as they travelled to cities in this region. Shortly after this successful trip others followed them into these churches—we call them Judaizers. They were Jewish Christians intent on forcing Gentiles to keep parts of the Torah/Law such as circumcision, the Sabbath codes/holy days and the Jewish dietary laws. As evidenced in Paul’s letter they were highly successful in influencing the Galatian churches—bewitching them as Paul put it in 3:1 with this false gospel. This was the major controversy of the 1st century churches—once that we have still yet to completely shake. It is a gospel of legalism not grace. Paul strongly denounces it in the first chapter –condemning those who promote it. He is also astonished over how quickly the Galatian churches were bewitched. To combat it he had to first defend himself; his apostleship; his credentials while acknowledging this struggle (even the apostle Peter caved into the pressure) of recognizing that God’s promise and blessing was no longer ethnically based and the Law was no longer the way to God. Three points from the letter)
2. It is about Faith not Performance-- 3:1-4:7
 - a. Never going to attain God’s blessings by human effort (our right standing with God is not based upon our performance of a law code. That never worked and was never God’s intent)
 - b. It is the faith of Abraham that matters (before the law Abraham stands as THE example of the kind of faith God seeks from everyone Jew and non-Jew alike and in this way—all are descendants of Abraham, not just the Jews)
 - c. The curse of the code is lifted (Christ has redeemed us from it and its consequences. The gospel is about him and what he has done for us)
 - d. A new community is established (where the boundaries of nationalities, gender, socio-economics are erased; where all have equal access to the blessings and promise of God in Christ Jesus; a new creation where circumcision or uncircumcision mean nothing—6:7)
3. It is about Freedom not Slavery—4:8-5:15
 - a. Legalism enslaves while the gospel sets free (even with our best performance we can never shake our failures & the accompanying guilt—ensuring we will repeat them over again. In Christ we are free indeed. Hagar and Sarah illustrate—Hagar the handmaid being the example of enslavement. No faith evident in her story and any who do not live by faith are her offspring enslaved by legalism. Sarah is the example of faith—believing in the promise of power of God to overcome our weakness)
 - b. Only thing that matters is faith expressing itself in love (don’t allow legalism to steal the joy of freedom in Jesus; don’t feel obligated to follow any kind of oppressive law code that limits freedom and don’t try to impose one. They never ever can bring about redemption, salvation, and hope.)
 - c. However, use freedom to glorify God, not indulge self (Paul was very aware of how his teaching could be received and was being received as a get-out-of-jail-free card, *but the purpose of Christ’s redemption, the goal of faith and the privilege of freedom is to turn us loose to glorify God with all we’ve got—no longer bound by a law written on stone, but on hearts*)
4. It is about the transforming of the Spirit—5:16-6:19
 - a. Enables us to defeat the dehumanizing sinful behaviors (works of the flesh which enslave and destroy)
 - b. Empowers us to embrace life in the Spirit (bear his fruit freely and abundantly **Paul personally framed this transformation this way in 2:20—now see this: It is faith not performance that gets us here—who on their own can overcome the works of the flesh? The freedom we have in Jesus allows us the chance to escape—on his merit not ours—and discover this new life in the Spirit. The Spirit then goes to work within us to transform us. This is the good news of the gospel being overshadowed by the Judaizers and by legalism in any form. It may seem easier to cherry pick a few rules, strive to follow them and then feel justified through it—especially when comparing ourselves to others not keeping those rules, but in fact it works against the very redemptive process of God and is totally useless to create the new community/new creation of God in Christ.****
5. (So Paul concludes his letter this way) Galatians 6:14-16 MSG (Let’s never allow anything to bewitch us and remove us from the grace and truth of Jesus Christ—forever being set free to serve him in his new community as the true Israel of God—and making sure that everyone else has the same opportunity as we to enjoy the transformation of the Spirit through faith in the risen Savior!)