

# THROUGH THE BIBLE

## GALATIANS 1-2

The book of Galatians is explosive. Label it, "[extremely flammable.](#)" I call Galatians, "[The Mail Bomb of the Bible](#)" - sent not by a destructive lunatic, but by a loving, caring pastor concerned for his flock.

This short letter was written to explode dangerous doctrines that were threatening the faith of a group of new believers. It blasts away spiritual bondage, and leaves behind the fall-out of love and liberty.

Paul's short letter to the Galatians is a powerhouse.

It gripped the heart of a man named Martin Luther, and transformed his way of relating to God. Galatians became the catalyst for the chain reaction of revival, history now calls, "[The Protestant Reformation.](#)"

Luther wrote of this book as he would his wife. "[This Epistle is my epistle. To it I am, as it were, in wedlock. Galatians is my Katherine.](#)" Proving that all great preachers are married to ladies named, "[Katherine.](#)"

One thing is for sure, I believe all Christians should be married to the message of this book... We begin...

[“Paul, an apostle \(not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead\), and all the brethren who are with me, To the churches of Galatia...”](#)

Galatia is the region of what is today, central Turkey.

Julius Caesar described the people who lived there, "They are fickle. They are fond of change. They are not to be trusted." That's the type of folk we find in Acts 13-14 when Paul first ventured into the area of Galatia.

When the sun came up over the gate of Lystra, Paul healed a lame man. The superstitious Galatians reacted by assuming he was a Greek god. Paul preached the Gospel to them to clear up the confusion.

But as the sun went down, these same *fickle folk* have been swayed by grace-rejecting Jews. They took rocks to stone Paul. He barely escaped with his life.

In a sense, they were still throwing rocks when Paul wrote this letter. The Jews who couldn't kill him tried to assassinate his character - question his apostleship.

*Where were his credentials? Who appointed him?*

This is why Paul introduces himself as "*an apostle (not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ)*" Ultimately, Paul's commission came not from a church, or a denomination, but from Jesus Himself!

Shortly after our church started I went to the local Baptist church to ask if we could use their baptistry. People had come to Christ, and needed to be baptized.

But when I went to pick up the key the pastor asked, "The deacons want to know, have you been ordained?"

I replied, "*I guess. God seems to be blessing our ministry.*" "No, have you been officially ordained?"

It wasn't enough that God had ordained me, they wanted to see it in writing. The

irony is that you can have a wall full of ordination certificates, and it only amount to wallpaper unless God sanctions you.

*God's ordination* is the only one that really counts, and the one Paul appeals to here. He greets them...

**“Grace to you and peace...”** Here’s Paul's familiar greeting - the Sugarland of the Bible - *these two make beautiful music together*. Grace and peace have been called **“the Siamese twins of the New Testament.”**

The term **“Siamese twin”** refers to siblings that are joined together at birth. If they share a vital organ some stay connected for life. The first twins referred to as **“Siamese”** were named **“Chang”** and **“Eng.”** They remained joined for life, and eventually married. They fathered several children. *Don't ask me for details...*

But likewise, grace and peace stay joined together.

You can't have one without the other. You can't enjoy *peace with God* without first knowing the *grace of God*. And grace, rightly understood, always produces peace. The two work together to bear fruit in believing hearts.

Verse 3, **“Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.”**

In most of his letters, this is where Paul would insert the prayer he'd been praying for the church. But his heart is too heavy for that in regards to the Galatians.

There's a burning issue he needs to address!

“I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ to a different gospel...” As I mentioned, the Galatians were gullible and fickle. Thus, they were prone to false doctrine.

Paul says they were *“turning away”* from the Gospel of grace. The phrase in the greek means *“to defect to the other side.”* The verb tense implies they were not there yet, but were getting close. Their faith was vacillating. They were losing their grip on God’s grace.

They were being lured away by a *“different gospel.”*

If you've studied world religions you can identify hundreds, if not thousands, of false gospels.

But I suggest there're really only two types of religion. **There’s the hand of man reaching upwards, and the hand of God reaching downwards.**

All religions except one, can be summarized as man's attempts to please God. They emphasize *keeping rules, or performing rituals - a self-reliance.*

But Christianity is God's hand to man! God is reaching down through Christ - doing for us, what we could never do for ourselves. This is the true Gospel!

In fact, Paul says this *“different gospel”* is really not good news at all... verse 7, *“which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert (or literally, “distort”) the gospel of Christ.”* The Galatians were buying into a distorted version of truth.

I believe Satan distorts God's truth in one of three ways: he either **twists it,**

subtracts from it, or adds to it.

And sometimes he does all three...

Satan can **twist** the interpretation of a verse. He makes it say what it was never *intended to say*. Thus, the old adage, "*A text out of context becomes a pretext.*" Satan loves to take the Bible out of context.

Satan also **subtracts** from the truth. He dilutes its meaning. AW Tozer once said, "*Some have so watered down the Gospel that if it were a medicine it could not cure us, and if it were a poison it would not harm us.*" A Gospel without repentance of sin is no Gospel at all!

And at times Satan **adds** to the truth. This was the strategy that infiltrated the Galatian church. False teachers, called "*Judaizers,*" agreed that salvation was by grace through faith, *but...* (and be careful of the buts... *Read the fine print!*) They added to the cross.

Here was their rap... Yes, Jesus died to forgive us, *but* if you really want to please God you have *add to His work*. And like every deceiver they had a long list of mandatory dos and don'ts that needed to be added.

The bottom line of their message was that faith is not really enough - its up to us to augment Christ's work.

This is what Paul calls a "*different gospel*" - it was not a Gospel at all. A wise, old pastor once advised a young apprentice, "*Preach a full Gospel - Christ and nothing less. A plain Gospel - Christ and nothing more. And a pure Gospel - Christ and nothing else.*"

Paul continues in verse 8, “But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.” This is strong language. The Greek word translated “*accursed*” is “*anathema*,” or “*damned to hell*.” Paul couldn’t have refuted this with more force!

And he repeats his words to make the message more emphatic... “As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.”

Even if an angel dressed in white robes and with shining lights, comes and sits on the foot of your bed, and preaches to you a Gospel different from the grace Paul had delivered to them - “let the angel be damned!”

If Joseph Smith had listened to Paul, when he heard *the baloney from Maroni*, millions of people wouldn’t be headed to hell under the sway of Mormonism.

If Muhammed hadn’t listened to a supposed angel there’d be no Islam... Paul knew “*angels*” come in two varieties - *faithful* and *fallen*. And “*fallen angels*” or “*demons*” specialize in inspiring different gospels.

This is why we need to be firmly grounded in the truth of God's grace. *To recognize another Gospel you have to know the true Gospel*. Thus, a pastor's most vital task to feed God's people with God's Word.

Did you hear about the woman who bought a parrot to keep her company, but she couldn't get it to talk.

She went back to the pet store, and complained to the owner. He said, “Does he

have a mirror in his cage? Parrots love mirrors." So she bought a mirror, took it home, put it in his cage, but he still wouldn't talk.

She returned to the pet store, and complained again. This time the owner said, "Does your parrot have a ladder. Parrots love ladders. And a happy parrot is a talkative parrot." So she purchased a ladder, took it home, put it in the cage, but not a peep from the parrot.

She went back a third time. This time the owner told her, "Try a swing. Parrots love swings. Get'm swinging, and he'll talk up a storm." So she bought a swing...

Two days later she returned to the pet store. When the owner inquired about the parrot the woman announced he was dead. The man was shocked!

He asked the woman, "*Did your parrot ever say anything?*" The woman replied, "Yes, just before he died, in a very soft, faint, weak whisper, he asked me, '*Don't they sell any food at that pet store?*'"

So often churches think they need **mirrors** - pop psychology and introspection... Or **ladders** - step by step rules and self-help... Or **swings** - experiential, feelings-based religion... They try to entertain God's people with mirrors, ladders, and swings - but what God's people really can't live without is God's Word!

Verse 10, "For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men?" Paul's stoning in Lystra was proof his goal was to obey God, not please men.

"For if I still pleased men, I would not be a servant of Christ." Living the Christian life requires making choices that are not always popular. If my goal is to be well-liked, and fashionable, and accepted-at-all-costs it's only a matter of time before I'll

compromise.

I need to settle the issue *in my heart* before it comes up *in my life*. **Obey** regardless of the consequences.

One author puts it this way, "It is a great freedom to know who owns you. If you do not know to whom you belong, you are apt to be the pawn of anyone whose identity is strong enough to overwhelm your own sense of inadequacy." This is so true! *Who owns you?*

Is it a particular group at school?

Is a set of snotty friends?

Is it the management of the company?

Or the girls in the office?... *Or is it clear to everyone around you that God calls the shots in your life?*

Verse 11, "But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ." The Gospel of grace Paul preached was not his idea. It was not the result of his own vivid **imagination** - it was revealed to Paul directly by God.

"For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it. And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation..." Paul's gospel wasn't produced by his *imagination*, but neither was it the result of **education**.

Paul sure wasn't taught the gospel of grace in the Jewish Yeshivas he attended.

Paul's former teachers were upholders of law, not dispensers of grace.

He adds in verse 14, “being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers. The gospel didn't come to Paul through *imagination, education, or perspiration*. He was “*exceedingly zealous.*” He worked hard to climb the ladder of legalism and Judaism. But that's not where he discovered God's amazing grace.

Verse 15, “But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace to reveal His Son in me...” The gospel came to Paul not through *imagination, education, perspiration*, but through *revelation*. God revealed His Son in Paul!

God's plan for Paul's life started long before he came to Christ - actually from the day he was born.

I'm sure we all can look back on our lives before we knew Jesus, and see where God was working providentially for our protection and our direction.

On the Road to Damascus Jesus revealed Himself *to Paul*, but this verse mentions a different experience.

There came a time when Jesus was revealed *in Paul*. This may've happened while he was blinded by the light. Or even later, during his days in Arabia.

But truly the wonder of Christianity is that it's more than a truth to be learned, it's a living Lord we experience in our hearts! *Christ was revealed in Paul...*

So “that I might preach Him among the Gentiles...”

Paul always loved the Jews, but taking the Gospel to the Gentiles was God's calling

on Paul from the start.

After Paul was called, here's what happened. "I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus." This is interesting. When Paul was saved he didn't rush out to teach or even join a Bible Study.

Paul wanted to seek the Lord personally and privately. He went into the wilderness of Arabia and got his D.D. - his *doctorate of the desert*. He wanted to seek the Lord before he consulted with anyone else.

It goes to prove, **God home schools His kids!**

Obviously, I'm not against churches and teachers, but often people spend so much time listening to men, that they never slow down and really listen to God.

It's not healthy when people can tell you what the pastor said on Sunday, but not what God said to them during the week. We look for direction in all the wrong places. Books, CDs, the internet - we end up with what everyone else told us - but what has God said to us?

And the result is **duplication**, not *inspiration*. What we need is not *imagination*, *education*, *perspiration*, or *duplication* - but a personal **revelation** from God!

Years ago a sheep named "Dolly" was cloned by a British geneticist. The experiment in cloning was hailed as a scientific breakthrough, and raised all kinds of ethical dilemmas. But I thought, "*Hey this is no big deal, the church has been cloning sheep for centuries.*"

Rather than producing authentic, thinking, Spirit-led believers, so often churches are full of cookie-cutter Christians. We're stamped from the same mold, rather than shaped personally, and individually by the Spirit.

Years ago Christian musician, Steve Taylor, wrote a song, *"I Want To Be A Clone."* Here's a short snippet...

"I'd gone through so much other stuff that walking down the aisle was tough, but now I know it's not enough. I want to be a clone... I asked the Lord into my heart. They said that was the way to start, but now you've got to play the part. I want to be a clone..."

They told me that I'd fall away unless I followed what they say. Who needs the Bible anyway. I want to be a clone... So now I see the whole design. The church is an assembly line. The parts are there. I'm feeling fine. I want to be a clone... I've learned enough to stay afloat, but not so much I rock the boat. I'm glad they shoved it down my throat. I want to be a clone..."

And the bridge ties it all together, "Cause if you want to be one of His, you've got to act like one of us."

Paul was nobody's clone - and he would never expect us to be either! The goal is to be conformed into the image of Jesus. It's Him that we should seek!

Verse 18, "Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and remained with him fifteen days." O, to have been a fly on the wall in that meeting.

"But I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother. (Now concerning the things which I write to you, indeed, before God, I do not lie.) The false

teachers were accusing Paul of lying. *He doesn't lie!*

He continues piecing together his life after his conversion, “**Afterward I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia...**” He spent time in Antioch where he was sent to preach to the Gentiles. “**And I was unknown by face to the churches of Judea which were in Christ.**”

**But they were hearing only, 'He who formerly persecuted us now preaches the faith which he once tried to destroy.' And they glorified God in me.”**

The greatest proof of the Gospel of grace is the trail of changed lives found in its wake - and the Apostle Paul himself was first in God's line of many miracles.

Chapter 2, “**Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and also took Titus with me.**” This was after Paul's first missionary journey.

Barnabas was Paul's Jewish sidekick from Jerusalem, and Titus was one of his Gentile converts.

**“And I went up by revelation, and communicated to them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to those who were of reputation, lest by any means I might run, or had run, in vain.”** Here's a good qualification to all Paul says in this chapter.

Paul will be unbudging in his stand for grace - but his *staunch, strong conviction* was forged through *honest, humble reflection*. Paul didn't serve in a ministerial vacuum. He went to Jerusalem lest he had run in vain.

Sometimes Christians in ministry get isolated. We start to think our way is the only

way. *Not Paul!*

He wasn't afraid to concede he could be wrong! He knew his Gospel was true, but was open to the possibility there was something he'd missed. Thus, he went to Jerusalem to *bounce his ideas off the brethren*.

"Yet not even Titus who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised." In Jerusalem, there were Jews who tried to force Titus, a Gentile, to conform to OT rituals. They wanted him to surrender his freedom in Christ and embrace their tradition.

This was not what Paul expected to find among the Jerusalem believers. It was obvious to him, the church had been infiltrated - and Paul tells us by whom...

"And this occurred because of false brethren secretly brought in (who came in by stealth to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage)..." The phrase "*false brethren*" is the Greek word, "*pseudodelphos*." It's a compound word, "*pseudo*" or "*bogus*" and "*delphos*" or "*brother*."

*Bogus brethren* had infiltrated the church. The New English Bible translates the phrase, "*sham Christians*."

Paul was a *defender of the faith*. These guys were *pretenders of the faith*. They were probably Pharisees who sneaked into the circle. They may even have professed Christ and thought they were Christians, but were spewing a dangerous mixture of **faith plus law**.

We know this bunch as the infamous "*Judaizers*."

In Acts 13-14 they followed Paul while he was in Galatia, now they've followed him

to Jerusalem as he stands up for the Galatians and defends His Gospel.

Always remember the people most dangerous to the Body of Christ are not the *blatant blasphemers* or the *ardent atheists*. No, our worst enemy is the *bogus brother*. The fellow with a mixture of *grace and grunt*.

Lethal is the guy who teaches you can *obtain* God's favor by grace - but then, you have to *maintain* God's favor through this or that. Turn this guy loose in your church and one day you'll wake up to a divided church.

Playground have bullies, and sadly, so do churches.

His version of righteousness becomes the dividing line between the spiritual haves and have nots. He defines those who love God and those who're carnal.

The rules he deems are important, and the rituals he decides must be kept suddenly become the badge everyone thinks they need to wear if they're going to be labeled spiritual. Everyone else is second-class.

Needless to say, a bully is the kind of person who puts off airs that can kill the life and growth of a church.

**It's grace** that creates a mood of acceptance... **It's grace** that allows people to grow at their own pace...

**It's grace** that keeps people open to God, rather than stifled by their own failures... Don't budge an inch when it comes to God's grace. We need to make it the *modus operandi* of every area of our church.

Paul refused to budge an inch in his stand against the Judaizers. He tells us in verse 5, "to whom we did not yield submission even for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you."

And don't underestimate the pressure Paul was under to capitulate. To a Jew under the Law insisting on Titus' circumcision was a minor concession.

And besides the church was facing a major rift. I can hear the peace-mongers squawking, "*Paul, stop being so divisive. You're threatening the unity of the body.*"

Yet Paul understood *the one thing more important than our unity is the truth!* He discerned at this critical moment that *truth* was more important than *truce!*

The legalist appears sincere, disciplined, outwardly righteous - you think, "*how can I oppose him?*"

The ritualist has the weight of hundreds of years of tradition on his side - "*who am I to argue with him?*"

Yet if the people who know better don't stand up for the grace of God these folks will take control, and create a spiritual bondage, and wreck the church.

As news analyst, Elmer Davis, once said of America, "*This will remain the land of the free only so long as it is the home of the brave.*" So it is in the church.

Verse 6, "But from those who seemed to be something whatever they were, it makes no difference to me..." Paul expected some help from the elders of the church, but apparently they took a backseat in this conflict. They only stepped up with support for Paul when the smoke had cleared and a winner declared.

These men were the apostles - they had a name, a reputation, stature - but they left

Paul unimpressed.

Notice what he concludes, "God shows personal favoritism to no man for those who seemed to be something added nothing to me." Paul was on his own.

Early in my Christian life I had a mentor named Dan Dehaan. He was chaplain for the Falcons, and had a popular Bible Study in Marietta. When the Lord laid it on my heart to start a church, Dan was the first person I went to for confirmation. I never forget what he said.

He started out by telling me the dangers, and pitfalls, and cautions - he was discouraging me from doing it.

But then he said, "Sandy, there comes a time when you've got to start listening to God on your own. Only God can call this shot." As usual Dan was very wise.

I've discovered you don't really begin to trust the Lord until you turn loose of everybody else's hand.

Kathryn Jensen puts it this way, "Life is like being on a mule team. Unless you're the lead mule, all the scenery looks about the same." And it's true...

Verse 7, "But on the contrary, when they saw that the gospel for the uncircumcised had been committed to me, as the gospel for the circumcised was to Peter (for He who worked effectively in Peter for the apostleship to the circumcised also worked effectively in me toward the Gentiles)," *Here's the realization that saved Christianity.* God gives to different people different callings and different gifts to reach different groups.

God used Peter's Jewish heritage to reach the Jews.

He used Paul's familiarity with Gentile custom to reach the Gentiles. But one approach was no better than the other - both were used of God to reach folks.

Some churches adopt a style that reaches the *family crowd*. Other churches seek to relate to the *biker crowd*. God calls each of us to our own niche.

Verse 9, "And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars... They were the big dogs. They'd constituted Jesus' inner circle. Peter, James, and John were there on the Mount of Transfiguration and in the Garden of Gethsemane when no one else was invited.

But when those who "*seemed to be pillars perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.*"

*They desired only that we should remember the poor, the very thing which I also was eager to do."*

After this showdown with the Judiazers, the people Paul came to Jerusalem respecting, ended up respecting him. In the final analysis - labels, titles, tags really didn't mean much - and they still don't. They're certainly no substitute for courage, calling, conviction!

Over the years I've seen folks sasha' into our church thinking they were somebody. They wanted to impose their brand of spirituality on the life of this church.

They thought they would straighten us out. They came in wanting to *body slam* the *body* with legalism.

But every time we've resisted, and we'll continue to resist. This is the house that grace built. This is the real *Graceland* - and with God's help we'll keep it that way.

And as Paul discovers, the battle for God's grace is never over. It requires vigilance... Verse 11, "Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed; for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision."

Peter was dissing the Gentile believers. Jews sat in first class. Gentiles flew couch. Peter was behaving as if God preferred Jews over Gentiles - as if they're more righteous - as if Christianity had first and second string.

Once, two hunters went to Alaska to bag elk.

They shot six. But when it came time to fly out of the valley the pilot told them, "Sorry, but my plane can only safely carry four elk. You'll have to leave two behind."

The hunters protested, "*Last year we shot six elk and the pilot let us load all six on the plane. It was the same type plane, same weather, and same size elk.*"

The pilot thought for minute, then he said, "Okay, load them up." But sure enough the plane was too heavy and on lift off it crashed into a mountain side.

As the hunters staggered from the wreckage, one of them asked, "*where are we?*" His friend replied, "*Looks to me like the same place we crashed last year!*"

The moral of the story is some people never learn.

And such was the case with Peter. It's now just a few months later, and he's already

forgotten the lessons learned and the decisions reached back in Jerusalem.

Verse 13, "And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy." Guys, this is why we cannot be soft on legalism. It spreads like wildfire.

"*Even Barnabas*" was influenced by Peter's legalism. Barnabas was Paul's sidekick. He should've known better, yet the deception of legalism was so subtle even Paul's most trusted ally lost his grip on grace.

Realize, **legalism has an appeal**. The NT ideal of just loving God, serving others, walking in the Spirit is so subjective. Faith is hard to measure. It causes you to lean on someone else. It's an insult to your pride.

That's why folks gravitate toward standards they can use to monitor their progress, and compare themselves to others. But the result is self-righteousness, and a judgmental spirit - and ultimately a divided church.

Paul continues in verse 14, "But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before them all, "If you, being a Jew, live in the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews? We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles..."

Peter was a Jew, and he wasn't a strict adherent to his own Law. Why expect Gentiles to do more than Jews? Paul calls him on the carpet for his hypocrisy.

And this took guts! Paul goes toe-to-toe with Pentecost Pete. Recall, the Lord Jesus gave to Simon the nickname "*Peter*" or "*the rock*." Imagine strapping on the gloves

and going a few rounds with Rocky.

There's an old saying, "A famous name can never justify an infamous act." Paul was not intimidated by even a pillar of the church like Peter. When a person's wrong he's wrong - no matter who he is! Paul confronted him. Got in his *face* for the sake of *grace!*

"Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified."

I love this word "*justified*" - it means "*just as if I'd never sinned.*" Because I put my trust in His Son, God chooses to treat me as if I'd never sinned, even though I have and do. This is love we could never deserve.

It's raging, bountiful, extravagant grace!

And it's how God chooses to treat the person who trusts in His Son Jesus. You can try to force open the door to God's blessing with your good works or strenuous effort - but trust me, the door won't budge.

Yet just put your faith in Jesus, and you'll hear the tumblers click - instantly, the door will swing open, blessings will fall out, love will pour down - and it's all because of your faith and God's amazing grace.

Verse 17, "But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is Christ therefore a minister of sin? Certainly not!"

**For if I build again those things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor."**

Paul is saying that it's possible for a Christian to shoot himself in the foot.

We can undermine the grace God lavishes on you.

While God is treating you as if you've never sinned, you can treat yourself as if you have. God is loving you, drawing you, forgiving you, even blessing you - and you're still beating yourself up with guilt!

Its self-condemnation. You're still mourning over your sin, while God is wanting to start you on a new track.

God set us free from the rules - and the never-ending guilt that comes when we inevitably fail to keep them. He wants us to live continually in His grace!

Paul says, **"don't return to prison once you're free."**

Verse 19, **"For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God."** Paul is a widower to the rules. Their relationship is over. He died to the law. It's behind him now. All he sees going forward is God and His grace.

Paul is telling us that some things don't mix: *water and electricity, honey and vinegar, hot summer days and chocolate candy bars* - and - the law and grace!

Paul tells us, **"I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."**

Paul was crucified with Christ. Jesus took the old Paul - his selfish, sinful nature - and crucified him.

The same part of you and me was also nailed to the cross. Jesus put an *emphatic end* to our *inherent sin*.

Now to live under the Law puts the focus in the wrong spot. Don't dwell on the *standard*. Have faith in the *Savior*. The life and love of Jesus dwells within you.

He alone can empower you to a victorious life.

Paul concludes chapter 2, "I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain." If we could be good enough for God on our own - if salvation could've come any other way - don't you think God would have spared Himself the heartache, and His Son a painful death?

To say - or let someone else imply - that we can be saved any other way than through the blood of Jesus and the grace of God is to degrade the value of both.

There are many issues on which we as Christians are called on to take a stand, but none - and I mean none - are as important as God's matchless grace!