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(Peter Lok) 駱沅祺
lokpeter@outlook.com

Galatians

The book of Galatians is one of the letters written by the apostle Paul to the churches in Galatia, a region in modern-day Turkey. It is believed to have been written around 49-50 AD, making it one of the earliest books in the New Testament.

The main theme of the book is justification by faith, which means that salvation comes through faith in Jesus Christ and not by following the Jewish law. Paul was writing to the Galatians because he had heard that some Jewish Christians were teaching that the Gentile Christians needed to follow Jewish customs and laws in order to be saved. Paul strongly opposed this teaching and argued that Christ had set believers free from the law. The book of Galatians is divided into six chapters, and Paul begins by defending his apostleship and the message he preached to the Galatians. He then goes on to explain that the law cannot save anyone, and that righteousness comes only through faith in Jesus Christ. Paul also addresses some specific issues in the Galatian church, such as the role of circumcision and the importance of living by the Spirit.

In the later chapters, Paul encourages the Galatians to live according to the Spirit and not give in to the desires of the flesh. He also emphasizes the importance of loving one another and serving one another, rather than living selfishly. Finally, he concludes the letter with a reminder of the importance of the cross of Christ and the new life that believers have in him.

Overall, the book of Galatians is a powerful message of salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ alone. It affirms the centrality of the cross and the importance of living by the Spirit, rather than by the law.

Here is a brief summary of each chapter in the book of Galatians:

Chapter 1: Paul introduces himself and defends his apostleship. He emphasizes that his message came from Jesus Christ and not from any human authority.

Chapter 2: Paul continues to defend his apostleship and describes his confrontation with Peter over the issue of Gentiles and Jewish law. He emphasizes that salvation comes through faith in Christ, not by following the law.

Chapter 3: Paul argues that righteousness comes through faith in Jesus Christ and not by following the law. He uses Abraham as an example to show that he was justified by faith, not by his works.

Chapter 4: Paul explains that believers are no longer slaves to the law, but are adopted as children of God through faith in Christ. He urges the Galatians to reject the false teachers who are trying to bring them back under the law.

Chapter 5: Paul emphasizes that believers are set free from the law and are called to live by the Spirit. He lists the fruit of the Spirit and urges the Galatians to walk by the Spirit and not give in to the desires of the flesh.

Chapter 6: Paul encourages the Galatians to bear one another's burdens and to do good to all, especially to fellow believers. He emphasizes the importance of sowing to the Spirit and not giving up, and concludes with a reminder of the importance of the cross of Christ.

Chapter 1 of the book of Galatians starts with an introduction from the author, the Apostle Paul, who identifies himself and his apostolic authority. He greets the Galatians and expresses his concern over the fact that they have turned away from the gospel that he preached to them, and have been following a different, false gospel.

Paul then proceeds to explain that the gospel he preached was not of human origin, but was revealed to him by Jesus Christ himself. He also recounts his own conversion story, and how he received his apostolic commission directly from Jesus.

The chapter then takes a harsh turn, as Paul begins to criticize and condemn those who are promoting the false gospel among the Galatians. He accuses them of perverting the true gospel of Christ, and declares that anyone who preaches a different gospel is accursed.

Finally, Paul concludes the chapter by asserting that he is not seeking the approval or validation of anyone, but rather is only concerned with preaching the true gospel of Christ. He urges the Galatians to turn away from the false gospel and return to the true faith that he has preached to them.

Overall, Chapter 1 of Galatians is a forceful defense of Paul's apostolic authority, a proclamation of the true gospel, and a condemnation of those who would seek to pervert it.

Here are some important verses from the book of Galatians, along with a brief explanation and their location in chapter 1:

Verse 6: "I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you to live in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel."

Explanation: Paul is expressing surprise and concern that the Galatians are abandoning the gospel of Christ so quickly after having received it.

Location: Galatians 1:6

Verse 10: "Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ."

Explanation: Paul is emphasizing that his primary allegiance is to God, not to human approval or social status. He is not trying to please people but to serve Christ.

Location: Galatians 1:10

Verse 15-16: "But when God, who set me apart from my mother's womb and called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles, my immediate response was not to consult any human being."

Explanation: Paul is testifying to the fact that his call to preach the gospel was a direct revelation from God, and that he did not consult with anyone before embarking on his mission.

Location: Galatians 1:15-16

Verse 23-24: "They only heard the report: 'The man who formerly persecuted us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy.' And they praised God because of me."

Explanation: Paul's conversion and subsequent preaching of the gospel had a powerful impact on the early Christian community, and even those who had formerly been his enemies were moved to praise God.

Location: Galatians 1:23-24

Chapter 2 of the book of Galatians continues Paul's defense of his apostolic authority and the gospel he preaches. He recounts a trip he took to Jerusalem, during which he met with the apostles and other Christian leaders to discuss the gospel message. He asserts that the gospel he preaches is the same gospel that they preach, and that he received his apostolic authority directly from Jesus Christ.

Paul also recounts a confrontation he had with Peter in Antioch. Peter had been eating with Gentile believers, but when some Jewish Christians arrived, he withdrew and separated himself from the Gentiles. Paul confronted Peter about this behavior, arguing that it was contrary to the gospel message of unity and equality among believers, regardless of their ethnic or cultural background.

The chapter also emphasizes the importance of faith in Jesus Christ as the means of salvation, rather than observing the Jewish law or engaging in Jewish rituals. Paul argues that if righteousness could be obtained through the law, then Christ died for nothing. Finally, Paul concludes the chapter by affirming that he has been crucified with Christ, and that it is no longer he who lives, but Christ who lives in him. He declares that he will not nullify the grace of God by seeking to be justified by the law, but rather will live by faith in Christ.

Overall, Chapter 2 of Galatians continues to emphasize the centrality of faith in Jesus Christ for salvation, and the importance of unity and equality among believers, regardless of their ethnic or cultural background. It also provides further evidence of Paul's apostolic authority and his commitment to the true gospel message.

Here are some important verses from the book of Galatians, along with a brief explanation and their location in chapter 2:

Verse 3: "Yet not even Titus, who was with me, was compelled to be circumcised, even though he was a Greek."

Explanation: Paul is emphasizing that even though Titus was not circumcised, he was still accepted as a fellow believer and not required to conform to Jewish customs in order to be part of the community.

Location: Galatians 2:3

Verse 9: "James, Cephas and John, those esteemed as 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 circumcised."

Explanation: Paul is recounting a meeting with the leaders of the Jerusalem church, where they acknowledged his apostolic authority and affirmed his mission to the Gentiles.

Location: Galatians 2:9

Verse 16: "know that a person is not justified by the works of 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 the works of the law, because by the works of the law no one will be justified."

Explanation: Paul is emphasizing that salvation comes not through adherence to the Jewish law, but through faith in Christ. This means that Gentiles, who were not part of the Jewish tradition, can be saved on the same basis as Jewish believers.

Location: Galatians 2:16

Verse 20: "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

Explanation: Paul is expressing his profound identification with Christ, and his conviction that Christ now lives in him and empowers him to live a new life of faith.

Location: Galatians 2:20

Chapter 3 of the book of Galatians continues Paul's defense of the gospel of faith in Jesus Christ and argues against the idea that salvation can be obtained through adherence to the Jewish law.

Paul begins by asking the Galatians who has bewitched them, suggesting that they have been deceived by false teachers who are promoting a different gospel. He reminds them that they received the Holy Spirit through faith in Jesus Christ, not through obedience to the law.

Paul then appeals to the example of Abraham, who was justified by faith, not by obedience to the law. He argues that those who rely on the law are under a curse, because no one can perfectly obey the law. However, Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us on the cross.

Paul also argues that the law served as a tutor to lead us to Christ, but now that faith in Christ has come, we are no longer under the tutor of the law. He emphasizes that through faith in Christ, we become children of God and heirs to the promises made to Abraham. Finally, Paul concludes the chapter by emphasizing the importance of faith in Christ, rather than obedience to the law, for salvation. He argues that in Christ, there is no distinction between Jews and Gentiles, slaves and free, male and female, for we are all one in Christ.

Overall, Chapter 3 of Galatians emphasizes the central importance of faith in Jesus Christ for salvation, and argues against the idea that adherence to the Jewish law is necessary for salvation. It appeals to the example of Abraham to show that justification comes through faith, not works, and emphasizes the unity of believers in Christ.

Here are some important verses from the book of Galatians, along with a brief explanation and their location in chapter 3:

Verse 2-3: "I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by believing what you heard? Are you so foolish? After beginning by means of the Spirit, are you now trying to finish by means of the flesh?"

Explanation: Paul is challenging the Galatians to reflect on their own experience of receiving the Holy Spirit, and to recognize that it came through faith rather than adherence to the law. He is warning them not to abandon their reliance on faith and try to achieve salvation through their own efforts.

Location: Galatians 3:2-3

Verse 11: "Clearly no one who relies on the law is justified before God, because 'the righteous will live by faith.'"

Explanation: Paul is quoting from the Old Testament prophet Habakkuk to support his argument that justification comes through faith, not through the law. The righteous are those who live by faith in God's promises.

Location: Galatians 3:11

Verse 13-14: "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 pole.' 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."

Explanation: Paul is emphasizing that Christ's death on the cross was a substitutionary atonement for our sins, and that through faith in him we can receive the blessing promised to Abraham and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Location: Galatians 3:13-14

Verse 28: "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

Explanation: Paul is expressing the radical inclusiveness of the gospel, which transcends social and cultural divisions and unites believers in Christ as members of one body.

Location: Galatians 3:28

Chapter 4 of the book of Galatians continues Paul's argument against the false teachers who are promoting adherence to the Jewish law as a means of salvation. He begins by using the analogy of a child who is under the authority of guardians until the appointed time when he or she inherits the family estate. In the same way, believers were under the authority of the law until the appointed time when Christ came.

Paul then emphasizes the freedom that believers have in Christ, contrasting it with the bondage of the law. He reminds the Galatians that they were once slaves to the elemental forces of the world, but have now been adopted as children of God through faith in Christ.

Paul also appeals to their personal experience, reminding them of the joy they felt when they first received the gospel message. He urges them not to turn back to the weak and worthless elemental forces of the world, which is a reference to the Jewish law.

The chapter also includes a personal appeal from Paul to the Galatians, in which he expresses his concern for their spiritual well-being and urges them to imitate his own

faith in Christ. He also describes his own struggle with a physical ailment, which may have been an eye condition, and how the Galatians did not reject him because of it. Finally, Paul concludes the chapter by using the story of Abraham to further emphasize the importance of faith in Christ for salvation. He argues that just as Abraham's faith was credited to him as righteousness, so too our faith in Christ is credited to us as righteousness.

Overall, Chapter 4 of Galatians emphasizes the freedom that believers have in Christ and argues against the idea that adherence to the Jewish law is necessary for salvation. It also includes a personal appeal from Paul to the Galatians and uses the example of Abraham to further emphasize the importance of faith in Christ.

Here are some important verses from the book of Galatians, along with a brief explanation and their location in chapter 4:

Verse 4-5: "But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship."

Explanation: Paul is explaining that Jesus was born at just the right time, according to God's plan, in order to redeem those who were under the law and bring them into a new relationship as adopted children of God.

Location: Galatians 4:4-5

Verse 6: "Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, 'Abba, Father.'"

Explanation: Paul is highlighting the intimate relationship that believers have with God as their Father, made possible through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Location: Galatians 4:6

Verse 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 forces? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again?"

Explanation: Paul is rebuking the Galatians for turning back to the old ways of the law and legalism, which he characterizes as weak and miserable. He is urging them to remain steadfast in their faith and not be enslaved by these forces again.

Location: Galatians 4:9

Verse 16: "Have I now become your enemy by telling you the truth?"

Explanation: Paul is acknowledging the tension that has arisen between himself and the Galatians because of his teaching on faith and the law. He is emphasizing that his priority is to speak the truth in love, even if it causes conflict.

Location: Galatians 4:16

Chapter 5 of Galatians begins with Paul emphasizing the freedom that believers have in Christ, and warning against the danger of falling back into the bondage of legalism. He reminds the Galatians that Christ has set them free from the yoke of slavery and that they should stand firm in this freedom, refusing to submit again to the yoke of legalism. Paul then warns the Galatians about the consequences of following the false teachers who are promoting circumcision and adherence to the Jewish law. He states that those who

rely on the law for their salvation have been cut off from Christ and have fallen away from grace.

Paul then highlights the central importance of faith expressing itself through love. He argues that the entire law is fulfilled in one commandment, which is to love your neighbor as yourself. He contrasts the works of the flesh with the fruit of the Spirit, arguing that those who live by the Spirit will produce love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Paul concludes the chapter by emphasizing the need to walk in step with the Spirit and not give in to the desires of the flesh. He urges the Galatians to live by the Spirit, which is the key to overcoming the desires of the flesh and producing the fruit of the Spirit.

Overall, Chapter 5 of Galatians emphasizes the freedom that believers have in Christ and warns against the danger of falling back into the bondage of legalism. It highlights the importance of faith expressing itself through love and contrasts the works of the flesh with the fruit of the Spirit. It concludes with an exhortation to live by the Spirit and not give in to the desires of the flesh.

Here are some important verses from the book of Galatians, along with a brief explanation and their location in chapter 5:

Verse 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."

Explanation: Paul is emphasizing that Christ's death and resurrection has set believers free from the burden of the law and legalism. He urges them to stand firm in their freedom and not be enslaved by these things again.

Location: Galatians 5:1

Verse 13: "You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love."

Explanation: Paul is reminding the Galatians that their freedom in Christ should not be used as an excuse for selfishness or sin. Instead, he encourages them to use their freedom to serve one another in love.

Location: Galatians 5:13

Verse 16-17: "So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want."

Explanation: Paul is explaining that the desires of the flesh and the Spirit are opposed to each other, and that believers must choose to walk in the Spirit in order to overcome the desires of the flesh and live in obedience to God.

Location: Galatians 5:16-17

Verse 22-23: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law."

Explanation: Paul is describing the fruit of the Holy Spirit, which is the result of living in obedience to God and walking in the Spirit. These qualities are the opposite of the works of the flesh and represent the character of Christ.

Location: Galatians 5:22-23

Chapter 6 of Galatians begins with Paul exhorting the Galatians to bear one another's burdens and to share in both the spiritual and material blessings that they have received.

He then emphasizes the importance of humility, warning against self-deception and the temptation to think too highly of oneself.

Paul then returns to the theme of circumcision, stating that neither circumcision nor uncircumcision matters, but only a new creation. He urges the Galatians to live by this principle, which means putting aside all external religious practices and focusing on the inward transformation that comes through faith in Christ.

Paul then addresses the false teachers who are promoting circumcision and boasting about their own adherence to the law. He states that he himself will only boast in the cross of Christ, through which he has been crucified to the world and the world to him. He urges the Galatians to follow his example and to reject the false teachers who are trying to put on a good show in the flesh.

Finally, Paul concludes the letter with some personal greetings and a benediction. He emphasizes once again the importance of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, which is the only true source of salvation and peace.

Overall, Chapter 6 of Galatians emphasizes the importance of bearing one another's burdens, humility, and focusing on the inward transformation that comes through faith in Christ. It also warns against the danger of external religious practices and the temptation to think too highly of oneself. The chapter concludes with personal greetings and an emphasis on the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ as the only true source of salvation and peace.

Here are some important verses from the book of Galatians, along with a brief explanation and their location in chapter 6:

Verse 2: "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ."

Explanation: Paul is urging believers to support one another and help carry each other's burdens, which is a practical expression of fulfilling the commandment to love one another as Christ loved us.

Location: Galatians 6:2

Verse 7: "Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows."

Explanation: Paul is warning the Galatians against deceiving themselves or thinking that they can get away with sin without consequences. He emphasizes that there are natural consequences to our actions and that God cannot be mocked.

Location: Galatians 6:7

Verse 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."

Explanation: Paul is encouraging believers to persevere in doing good, even when it is difficult or discouraging, because there will be a reward in the end.

Location: Galatians 6:9

Verse 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."

Explanation: Paul is expressing his commitment to boasting only in the cross of Christ, which represents the central message of the gospel and the means by which believers are saved and transformed.

Location: Galatians 6:14

Notes:

There are several difficult questions in the book of Galatians that scholars and theologians have debated for centuries. While there may not be a clear or definitive answer to these questions, they provide opportunities for deeper study and reflection on the meaning and implications of the text. Here are a few examples:

1. Who were the opponents of Paul in Galatia, and what was their teaching?

Throughout the letter, Paul refers to opponents who were teaching a different gospel than the one he had preached to the Galatians. While some scholars believe these opponents were Jewish Christians who were promoting a legalistic view of salvation, others argue that they were pagan teachers who were emphasizing the need for ritual and moral purity. The exact identity and teachings of these opponents remain a matter of debate.

2. What is the "law" that Paul is referring to in his letter?

The term "law" appears frequently in Galatians, and it is not always clear what Paul means by it. Some scholars believe he is referring to the Jewish law, particularly the ceremonial and dietary regulations found in the Torah. Others argue that he is using the term more broadly to refer to any attempt to earn salvation through good works or obedience to a set of rules.

3. How do we reconcile Paul's emphasis on faith with his emphasis on good works?

In Galatians, Paul emphasizes that salvation comes through faith in Jesus Christ, not through obedience to the law or any other works of righteousness. However, he also urges his readers to "do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers" (Galatians 6:10). Some scholars have debated how to reconcile these apparently contradictory teachings, with some emphasizing the priority of faith and others arguing for the importance of good works as evidence of genuine faith.

These are just a few examples of the difficult questions raised by the book of Galatians. While there may not be easy answers, they provide opportunities for deeper study and reflection on the text and its meaning for our lives today.