

## Galatians Part 4

Note:

In this teaching, the following terms are used: “new creation”, “new man” or “new self”, “Christ in You”, “holy spirit” and “gift of holy spirit”. All these terms refer to that which is received and born in a person when he or she becomes born again.

Turn to Acts 15

To open this teaching, we will learn from Acts about what these false brethren, teachers and leaders were teaching the Gentile believers and the response of the genuine brethren to this spiritual attack.

Acts 15 is a continuation of the context from Acts 14, where Paul and Barnabas were working among the disciples in Antioch.

Acts 15:1

1 But some men came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers, “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.”

As we know from reading Galatians, circumcision was just the beginning. After surgery, the entire law would have to be followed.

Note that these men taught that the circumcision was according to the custom of Moses. Circumcision started with Abraham, not Moses, but they neglected to mention that. This was a sly, tricky attack. On one side was Paul, with the revelation of the Gospel of Christ. On the other side were these men from Judea with their scrolls of the written word of God. The men from Judea could point to “chapter and verse” in the written word to back up and justify their teachings.

Acts 15:2

2 And after Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with them, Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and the elders about this question.

When Paul and Barnabas heard what was being taught they did not sit around considering what these men said. They did not stay silent and allow the aggressive attack to proceed, but they stood against the twisted false teaching, by speaking the truth of the Gospel of Christ.

The believers in Antioch appointed some of their number to go to Jerusalem to consider this question with the visionaries, administrators, and elders there. Jerusalem is where this controversy was initiated, rooted and spread forth.

Acts 15:3

3 So, being sent on their way by the church, they passed through both Phoenicia and Samaria, describing in detail the conversion of the Gentiles, and brought great joy to all the brothers.

4 When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they declared all that God had done with them.

Paul, Barnabas and the others with them shared how the power of God had worked with Paul and the Gentiles. The Gentiles had their eyes opened and they turned from the power of satan to God

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and His power. This sharing brought great joy to all the believers who heard these accounts as they traveled to Jerusalem.

However, in Jerusalem, not everyone was joyful, happy or satisfied with God's work in the Gentiles.

Acts 15:5

5 But some believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees rose up and said, "It is necessary to circumcise them and to order them to keep the law of Moses."

Those speaking this troubling, distorted legalism were of the elders and leadership in Jerusalem. The leadership, apostles and elders had not effectively dealt with this question which was festering under the surface. So, the legalistic infection began to spread outside of Jerusalem. Now Paul, Barnabas and others had come to confront the legalism.

Notice that those speaking were believers. In Galatians, Paul calls these men "false brethren".

These believers had retained their ties to the Pharisees – they had not severed their connections to the world which were detrimental to their spiritual growth.

Lamsa's Bible translates the second half of verse 5 as follows:

5b ..."You must circumcise them and command them to keep the law of Moses".

This assertion was indeed troubling. These believing Pharisees were speaking as if this is what God was commanding. They boldly and aggressively ordered the leaders of the church to take on new authority which previously had not been given to them. The leaders were to take this authority, force the Gentiles to have surgery and make them keep the law of Moses.

Turn to Matthew 23

This behavior of the Pharisees was in keeping with their practice of seeking and attracting proselytes to their religion. Jesus confronted them on this practice in Matthew.

Matthew 23

13 "But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut the kingdom of heaven in people's faces. For you neither enter yourselves nor allow those who would enter to go in.

14 Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows' houses and for a pretense you make long prayers; therefore you will receive the greater condemnation

15 Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel across sea and land to make a single proselyte, and when he becomes a proselyte, you make him twice as much a child of hell as yourselves.

Turn back to Acts 15.

As we will see, there were those of the leadership of the Church who were in favor of this course of action.

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Acts 15:6

6 The apostles and the elders were gathered together to consider this matter.

7 And after there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, “Brothers, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe.

8 And God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, by giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us, (*the gentiles spoke in tongues*)

9 and he (God) made no distinction between us and them, having cleansed their hearts by faith.

There was much debate. The supporters of religious legalism put up a fight.

Finally, and appropriately, Peter stood up to speak. It was appropriate for him to speak at this point as it was GOD who chose Peter to first hold forth the word of the gospel (of Christ) to the Gentiles who would believe.

Speaking in tongues is GOD bearing witness that the individual speaking is born again. God bears witness that there is no racial, social, religious, gender, or spiritual difference between that individual and the other believers.

By the new birth, the hearts of the Gentiles had been cleansed – no law or ritual was needed or required. This was not the heart of the flesh, but they had a new, spiritual self created within.

Acts 15:10

10 Now, therefore, why are you putting God to the test (or *why are you tempting God*) by placing a yoke on the neck of the disciples that neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear?

Peter spoke a powerful truth here. The act of placing believers under the yoke of religion is to TEMPT GOD. Peter skillfully exposed the spiritual origin of this teaching by asking a simple question. He was an expert in spiritual discernment.

In Acts 5:1 – 9, a married couple had decided together to “...tempt the spirit of the Lord...” (verse 9). The origin and initiation of this plan started with satan filling the heart of the husband to lie to God (verse 3). Peter spoke with spiritual believing which exposed this hidden work of the married couple. He spoke with the same spiritual believing and exposed the hidden works of darkness which were being done by the false brethren.

When Jesus was directly tempted by the devil as recorded in Matthew 4:1 – 11, one of the devil's temptations was to tempt Jesus to tempt God (verse 6 and 7).

The origin and initiation of this movement was effectively exposed by Peter.

The work to put the believers under the law of Moses, to put the believers under a yoke of religion, is a work ultimately inspired of the devil. The effect of this work is to put the believers in bondage, to serve another master, another god who is no god.

Acts 15:11

11 But **we** believe that **we** will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will.”

Peter has skillfully and wisely rejected the demands of the Pharisees, exposing their twisted

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teachings by the inspired word of God.

Peter makes a clear distinction between the teaching of the genuine leaders and brethren, and the twisted teaching of the counterfeit leaders and false brethren. The false, counterfeit brethren demanded obedience to the law. The genuine brethren recognized that all the believers are saved by the grace of the Lord Jesus, without exception. The works of the law could not accomplish any kind of salvation.

Acts 15:12

12 And all the assembly fell silent, and they listened to Barnabas and Paul as they related what signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles.

The false brethren and their supporters had nothing more to say. The teaching they supported does not produce deliverance, nor does it result in the working of the power of God. Barnabas and Paul had much to say because the gospel of Christ, this doctrine that Paul preached and taught, is full of deliverance and the power of God in operation. Again, religion is bereft of any Godly power or deliverance.

Acts 15:13

13 After they finished speaking, James replied, "Brothers, listen to me.

14 Simeon has related how God first visited the Gentiles, to take from them a people for his name.

15 And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written,

16 "After this I (God) will return,

and I will rebuild the tent of David that has fallen;

I will rebuild its ruins,

and I will restore it,

17 that the remnant of mankind may seek the Lord,

and all the Gentiles who are called by my name,

says the Lord, who makes these things

18 known from of old.'

Here in Acts as in other places such as Romans and Galatians, the apostles are demonstrating that the accurate application of old testament scriptures to our times after the day of Pentecost, is done by the operation of holy spirit. No one can accurately apply these old testament scriptures to the body of Christ simply by study. You will not find the Great Mystery in the old testament scriptures, because it was not revealed or made known until it was unveiled to the apostle Paul. These scriptures quoted by James refer to a different period of time than the one we live in.

Acts 15:19

19 Therefore my judgment is that we should not trouble those of the Gentiles who turn to God,

James understood how much trouble was being caused to the Gentile believers. He understood that it was not right to trouble them. Note that even though the law of commandments contained in ordinances is gone, right and wrong still exist. Determining, knowing, understanding and

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applying what is right and what is wrong is accomplished with the operation of holy spirit. This was understood even in old testament times. The judges and kings were to operate holy spirit to obtain God's wisdom to settle disputes and differences.

Those steeped in the religious traditions and teaching will teach that, as Christians, we are “not to judge”. Much of the time this saying comes up when the one speaking desires cover for unrighteous behavior. Whoever uses the statement “it is not right to judge”, in order to reprove, has disobeyed the command. The speaker has judged you for judging.

Well, the apostle James had no problem declaring his judgment regarding the issue before the assembly in Jerusalem. He continues:

Acts 15:20

20 but should write to them to abstain from the things polluted by idols, and from sexual immorality, and from what has been strangled, and from blood.

21 For from ancient generations Moses has had in every city those who proclaim him, for he is read every Sabbath in the synagogues.”

22 Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church (*in Jerusalem*), to choose men from among them and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They sent Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leading men among the brothers,

Not only is the assembly in Jerusalem going to send a letter, but they will send leading men of their number to deliver the letter and correct the trouble which was caused by the false brethren from Jerusalem.

Acts 15:23

23 with the following letter: “The brothers, both the apostles and the elders, to the brothers who are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia, greetings.

24 Since we have heard that some persons have gone out from us and troubled you with words, unsettling your minds, although we gave them no instructions,

Those of the Pharisees had troubled the Gentiles without any instructions or orders from the assembly in Jerusalem. Some may think that this justifies the establishment of a corporate organization to control such events. However, no organization can eliminate such events from happening.

Words were used to communicate twisted false teaching which troubled the minds of the believers. Whenever you are troubled by some teaching, it would be good to check the teaching very closely. It is never good to accept a teaching just because of the reputation or the position of the teacher.

Acts 15:25

25 it has seemed good to us, having come to one accord, to choose men and send them to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul,

26 men who have risked their lives for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The apostles, elders and believers in Jerusalem were of one accord. That does not mean that every last one of those assembled there were in agreement. As the epistle of Galatians shows, some of

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the brethren in Jerusalem ignored the decision of this counsel and continued to move their false teachings.

The men sent from Jerusalem were those who would not back down from their assignment or be intimidated by false brethren or false, counterfeit leaders.

Acts 15:27

27 We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who themselves will tell you the same things by word of mouth.

28 For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay on you no greater burden than these requirements:

29 that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from what has been strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell.”

Notice that the requirements listed in the letter are not requirements for salvation. The salvation of the Gentiles was already recognized. The requirements given were for the purpose of “...doing well”.

Acts 15:30

30 So when they were sent off, they went down to Antioch, and having gathered the congregation together, they delivered the letter.

31 And when they had read it, they rejoiced because of its encouragement.

32 And Judas and Silas, who were themselves prophets, encouraged and strengthened the brothers with many words.

The Pharisees had delivered words which troubled the believers. Now these genuine prophets from Jerusalem spoke words inspired by God which encouraged and strengthened the brothers! This is the effect, the fruit, that genuine, inspired men of God are to produce as they minister within the body of Christ.

Judas and Silas corrected the error which was ministered by the Pharisees. These genuine prophets of God repaired and healed the hurt and confusion which was produced by works inspired by the devil and moved by his spirits and his people. The spiritual attack was repulsed and defeated.

Acts 15:33

33 And after they had spent some time, they were sent off in peace by the brothers to those who had sent them.

35 But Paul and Barnabas remained in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also.

Turn to Galatians 4

Now we have the background to the teaching that was being moved by the Pharisees in Jerusalem.

Earlier we learned that Peter separated himself from the Gentile believers when men from James

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came to Antioch. Apparently the Pharisees were continuing to influence the genuine leaders in Jerusalem, ignoring the decision recorded in Acts 15.

Galatians 4:19

19 my little children, for whom I am again in the anguish of childbirth until Christ is formed in you!

20 I wish I could be present with you now and change my tone, for I am perplexed about you.

Is it possible for someone to have Christ formed in them a second time, to get born-again more than one time? NO! Paul is speaking figuratively here. He is having to retrain and reteach the visionaries, administrators, and the believers in Galatia who have been spiritually abused and attacked by the false brethren. He is reteaching and instructing the believers so they can once again become free from bondage and walk by the spirit.

Galatians 4:21

21 Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not listen to the law?

Just who exactly would want to be under the law? No one! However, this desire was engendered by spiritual deception. Remember, those of the Pharisees in Acts 15:1 had stated to the Gentiles that:

“Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.”

Those people who desired to be born again believers had been tricked into desiring to be under the law.

Galatians 4:22

22 For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by a slave woman and one by a free woman. (*these events are recorded in Genesis, chapters 15 – 21*).

23 But the son of the slave was born according to the flesh, while the son of the free woman was born through promise.

24 Now this may be interpreted allegorically: these women are two covenants. One is from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery (*bondage*); she is Hagar (*the slave woman*).

How did Paul know that this record about Abraham could be interpreted allegorically? He had studied and learned this record before becoming a believer, but he had never been taught this interpretation by man. This allegory was revealed to him by the operation of holy spirit.

Galatians 4:25

25 Now Hagar is (*or represents*) Mount Sinai in Arabia; she corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery (*bondage*) with her children. (*or she serves with her children*).

This is very interesting. That great stronghold of religion which is so revered by the world is dominated and ruled by devil spirits of bondage. Nothing has occurred since Galatians was written to change the condition of Jerusalem which is revealed in this verse. Religious legalism results in bondage, slavery.

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Galatians 4:26

26 But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother.

27 For it is written,

“Rejoice, O barren one who does not bear;

break forth and cry aloud, you who are not in labor!

For the children of the desolate one will be more

than those of the one who has a husband.”

28 Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise.

In the old testament, it was known that the Gentiles would be blessed through Abraham. However it was never envisioned, thought, or dreamed, that the Gentiles would be joint heirs and children of promise. This is part of the great mystery which was hidden until it was revealed to the apostle Paul. No amount of study of the old testament scriptures would reveal the details of the great mystery. The old testament prophets studied the scriptures to find out about this age we live in, the time between the sufferings of Christ and his glory, but they could not find anything about it. Jesus Christ is **the** child of promise. We are joint heirs with him, children of promise, because we are completely united with him. Together with him, we make up the body of Christ.

Galatians 4:29

29 But just as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, so also it is now.

30 But what does the Scripture say? “Cast out the slave woman and her son, for the son of the slave woman shall not inherit with the son of the free woman.”

Remember, this is an allegory about the two covenants. The religion and religious law is to be cast out, we are no longer in bondage! The bondage of religion and the glorious liberty of Christ are in conflict. Those powers that move the bondage of religion fight and persecute those who walk by the spirit of God.

Galatians 4:31

31 So, brothers, we are not children of the slave but of the free woman.

Galatians 5:1

1 For freedom Christ has set **us** free; **stand firm therefore, and do not submit** again to a yoke of slavery.

Exactly who is it that attempts to put believers under a yoke of bondage? Who is it that demands that the believers submit? FALSE LEADERS! Who is it that we stand firm against, refusing to submit? FALSE LEADERS!

The apostle Paul made it very clear at the beginning of this epistle that the attack of the false brethren and false leaders can, at times, deceive anyone. The deception even affected the great apostle Peter, who needed to be reproved and corrected. What is it that helps **us** spot the deception and stand firm? The accurate teaching of the gospel of Christ, and spiritual perception! WE stand firm TOGETHER in the body of Christ, and help each other to stand and withstand against the religious legalism that would enslave us again. Together, we refuse to submit!

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Galatians 5:2

2 Look: I, Paul, say to you that if you accept circumcision, Christ will be of no advantage to you.

3 I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is **obligated** to keep the whole law.

4 You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace.

Accepting religious ritual for the purpose of salvation has the effect of nullifying the impact of the grace of God in our lives right now. It does not mean that we lose our salvation; it hinders us from the benefits and the freedom which we can enjoy right now.

The obligation of religious legalism results in spiritual bondage.

Galatians 5:5

5 For through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness.

6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working (*energized*) through love.

In our union with Christ, our new spiritual selves, our religious or racial background accounts for NOTHING! It has no spiritual significance or effect.

Our love for God through the accomplishments of his son, the Lord Jesus Christ, is our motivation to walk by the spirit. That is what has powerful spiritual significance.

Galatians 5:7

7 You were running well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth?

Well, who is it that hinders anyone from obeying the truth? FALSE LEADERS and those affected by the FALSE LEADERS. Remember that this is a spiritual war. It is the devil spirits which work in and through these FALSE LEADERS that attempt to deceive and exercise **illegitimate authority** over the believers.

Galatians 5:8

8 This persuasion is not from him who calls you.

9 A little leaven leavens the whole lump.

The devil spirit of error which worked its way in by the deceiving spirits does not come from God, who calls the believers! A little spiritual deception, a little spiritual error affects and spoils everything else. What starts out as a seemingly harmless religious ritual ends up in terrible spiritual bondage and blindness.

Galatians 5:10

10 I have confidence in the Lord that you will take no other view than mine, and the one who is troubling you will bear the penalty, whoever he is.

Paul is confident in the Lord that the believers will heed this epistle and turn back to God, rejecting

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the spiritual error that has been moving in their midst. The name of the false leaders is not important – the devil spirits responsible for the attack and the counterfeit teachings have been exposed. Those moving with these spirits will experience the consequences of tempting God.

Galatians 5:11

11 But if I, brothers, still preach circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been removed.

12 I wish those who unsettle you would emasculate themselves!

Paul continues to be persecuted by the false leaders who are propounding the religious legalism. If there is no difference in what Paul teaches and what these false leaders teach, then why is he still being persecuted? Some of these false leaders were spreading a lie that Paul agreed with their teaching!

By revelation, Paul expresses the Godly desire that these false leaders would castrate themselves instead of troubling the believers to get circumcised.

Galatians 5:13

13 For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

14 For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

15 But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another.

Don't use your freedom to move errors among your brethren! Don't use your freedom to tempt God! Don't use your freedom to become religious again! If you desire to do the law, walk in love towards your brothers and sisters in Christ. We love our fellow believers the way God would have them loved. This is an ability we have when we walk spiritually by way of the new creation, the new spiritual self.

Walking by the old self of the flesh, moving error and religious legalism results in biting and devouring one another. That is NOT walking in love!

Galatians 5:16

Instead of biting and devouring one another,

16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

What desires? The desire to bite and devour one another. The biting represents the tearing of the flesh, the circumcision. The devouring one another is illegitimately feeding off one another, gaining one's nourishment from the other believers who are in bondage. Don't imagine for one moment that the circumcision ritual was performed for free. There is money to be made in religious legalism. Those who promote religious legalism want to glory or boast in your flesh. This is NOT walking in love!

Walking by the spirit is how we walk in love. Anyone in bondage is prevented from walking in love. Walking by the spirit is how we defeat any religious legalism that may have been in our backgrounds or may still be lurking in our habit patterns or thinking.

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Galatians 5:17

17 For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.

18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

The desires of the flesh are not going to go away, so don't be surprised or condemn yourself because of the flesh. God knows all about you, and what he sees is the truth, that you are a new creation in Christ. He sees the new spiritual self which is in union with Christ. That is the real you. So we have this fight going on between the desires of the flesh and yes, the desires of the spirit, that new creation, the new spiritual self.

Romans 6 is full of instructions on how to resolve this conflict.

Romans 6 19 says:

For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification.

In the same manner as we once yielded to the desires and promptings of the flesh, now we yield ourselves to the desires and promptings of our new spiritual selves.

As we walk by the spirit, we are led out of religious, legalistic, bondage into the freedom which Christ won for us. We are free to love one another and to worship God in spirit and in truth.

We ARE NOT under religious, legalistic bondage, so lets keep it that way. Refuse to submit to religious legalism ever again!