



When men and women get their hands on religion one of the first things they often do is turn it into an instrument for controlling others, either putting or keeping them 'in their place.'



The history of such religious intimidation and manipulation is long and tedious. It is little wonder that people who have only known religion on such terms experience release or escape from it as freedom. The problem is that such 'freedom' turns out to be short-lived.



Paul of Tarsus was doing his diligent best to add yet another chapter to this grim history when he was converted by Jesus to something radically and entirely different – a truly free life in God. Paul learned that God was not an impersonal force to be used to make people behave in certain prescribed ways, but a personal Savior who set us free to live a fruitful live.



God did not force us from without but set us free from within. It was a glorious experience, and Paul set off telling others, introducing and inviting everyone he met into this free life. In his early travels he founded a series of churches in the Roman province of Galatia.



A few years later Paul got news that vicious false teachers ripped into the flock dragging those freedom-loving Christians back into the old system of religious rules and regulations that was only supposed to show them to Christ.



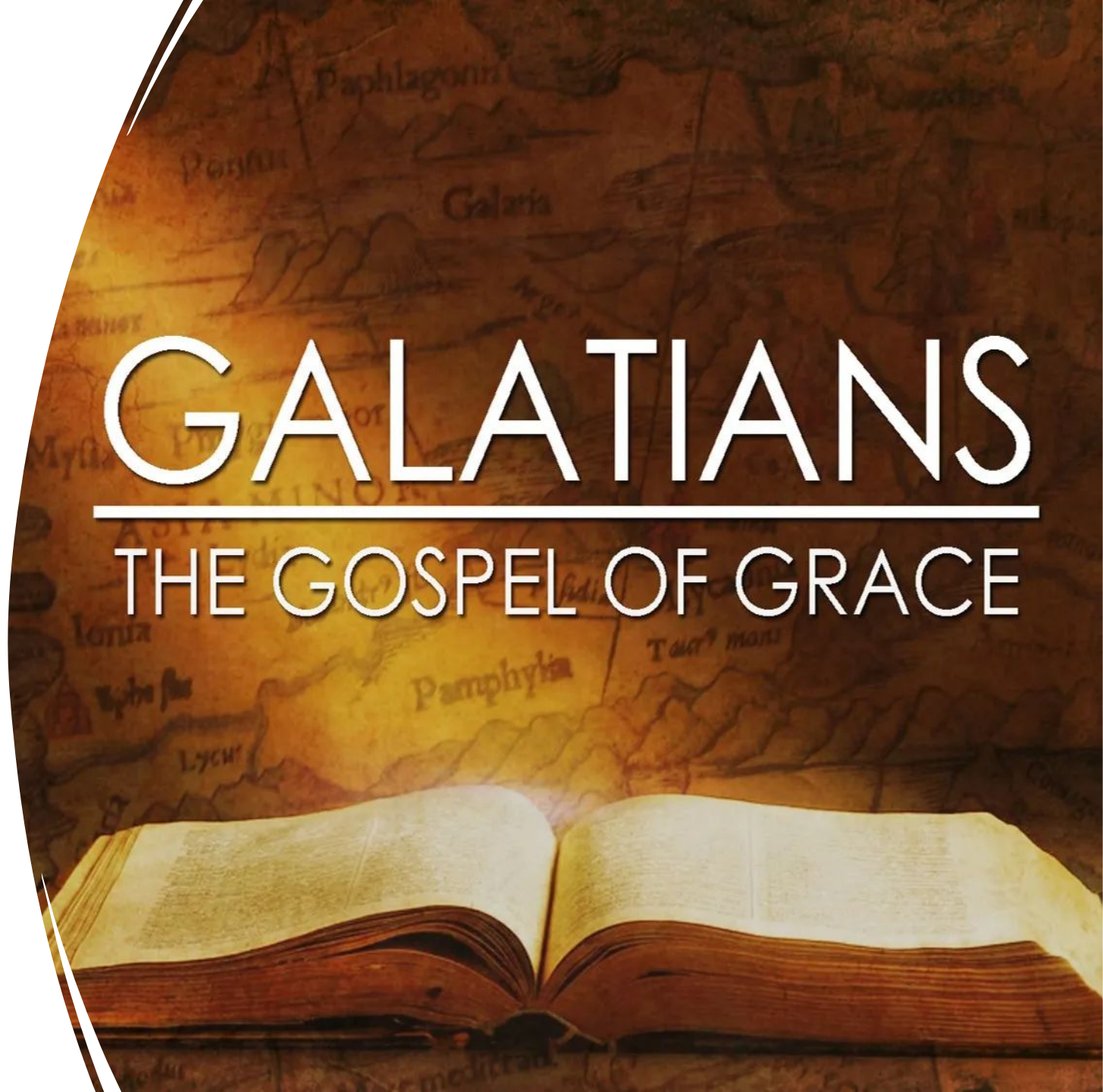
His letter to this precious Galatian churches helped them, and us now, to recover their original freedom. It also gives instruction and direction in the nature of God's gift of freedom – most necessary guidance, for freedom is a delicate gift, easily perverted and often squandered.

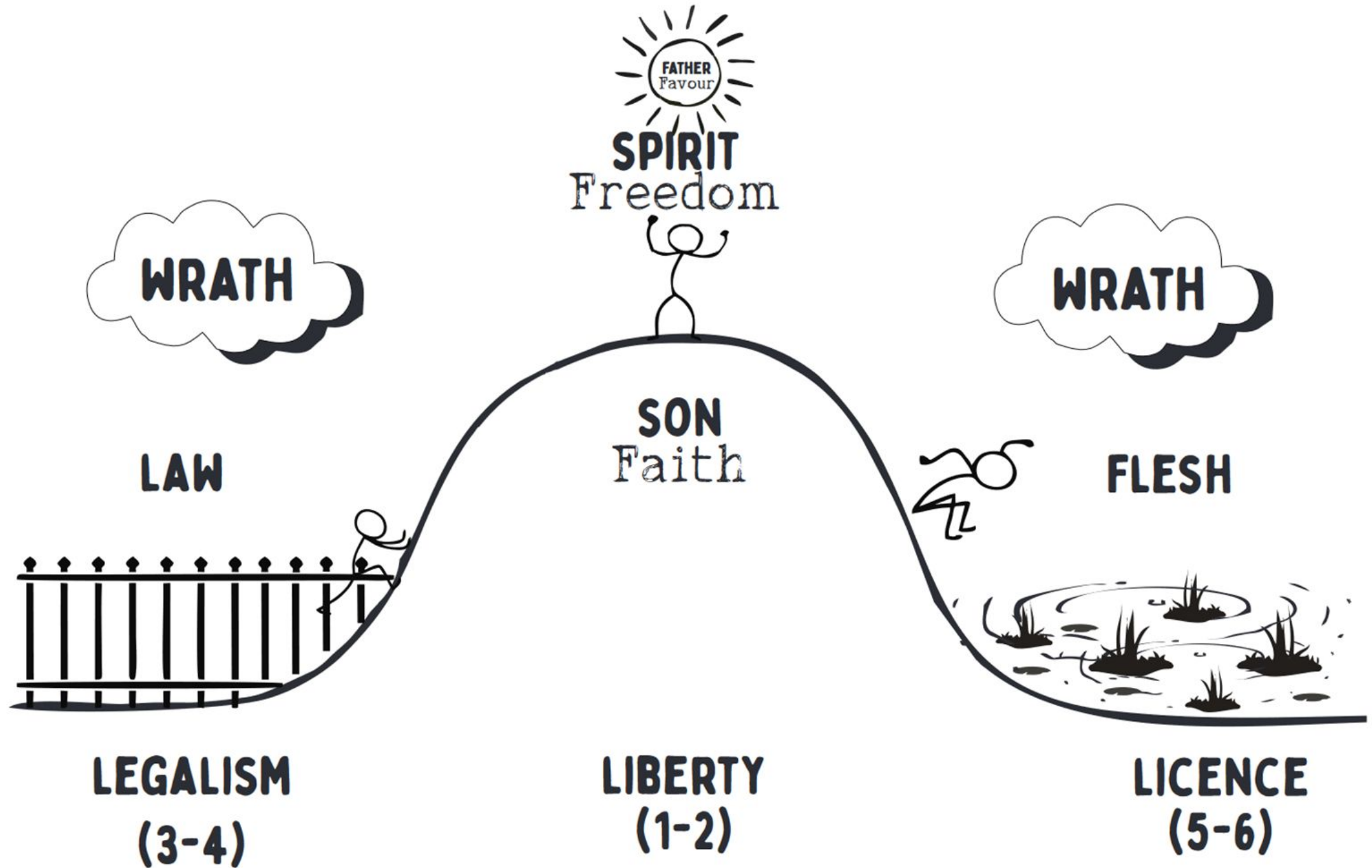


***LICENCE,
LEGALISM
OR LIBERTY
III.***

GALATIANS

THE GOSPEL OF GRACE







'You stupid Galatians! Are you insane? Who has bewitched you so that you no longer act on what is true? Something crazy has happened to you, for it is obvious that you no longer have the crucified Jesus in clear focus in your lives! His sacrifice on the Cross was certainly set before you clearly enough.'

A large, light purple circle serves as a background for the text. Inside this circle, there are three golden trumpets pointing outwards, one at the top, one on the left, and one at the bottom.

Let me ask you this simple question: When you first experienced God's Spirit, was that because you had done what the law demands or because you believed what you heard? You're right!

The background features a large, light purple circle. Inside this circle are three golden trumpets, each pointing towards the right. The trumpets are arranged vertically, with the middle one being the largest and the two on the sides being smaller.

Then have you gone out of your minds? Having got started by the supernatural power of God's Spirit, do you think you can continue and finish by your own human efforts?



Have you learned nothing from all you've been through? Surely you won't throw it all away now. Tell me, when God went on giving you a liberal supply of His Spirit, and caused real miracles to happen among you, was this while you were trying to obey His laws or while you listened to what He said with complete trust?



Your experience is identical with Abraham's, for he 'believed that God could do what He promised, and because of his trust he was listed in God's records as a good man.' You realize, then, that the true descendants of Abraham are those who have this same trust in God.



And the Scripture, looking forward to the days when God would accept other races on exactly the same basis of faith, includes the announcement of this good news to Abraham himself saying that through him all the peoples of the world will enjoy God's blessing with Abraham, who was so full of faith.



But those who rely on keeping the commandments are actually under God's curse, not His blessing. For the law of Moses states quite clearly that anyone who fails to keep all the rules of this book all the time will be cursed. The obvious impossibility of carrying out such a moral program should make it plain that no one can sustain a relationship with God that way.



So even the Old Testament points to another way to get right with God. The good man will live by trusting. The law never mentions this matter of believing, its emphasis is all on achieving saying that the man who obeys these rules will live well.



Christ has redeemed us from this binding curse of the law and the price was to be cursed in our place. Quite literally, He paid the supreme penalty of the law, the law that said that the body of a man under God's curse is to be hanged on a tree.



By removing the curse in that way, Jesus released the blessing of Abraham to us! So we could now receive the promised power of the Spirit, simply by believing.



Brothers, let me give you an example from everyday affairs of the free life I am talking about. Once a man's will has been sealed, it cannot be cancelled, nor can any other provisions be added. Now God made His promises in favour of Abraham and his Seed.



Just note that the word is singular rather than plural, indicating one surviving descendant rather than many; it actually referred to Christ! But my main point is this – a covenant already ratified by God cannot be cancelled by a legal code introduced four hundred and thirty years later, or else the promise was worthless.



The two are incompatible. If the blessing is now inherited by keeping the law, it is no longer available on the original terms. But God generously gave that first promise to Abraham and He will always stand by it. Then what was the point of the law? It was a temporary addition to deal with human sin.



The purpose of the law was to keep sinful people in the way of salvation until Christ (the Descendant) came, inheriting the promises and distributing them to us.



Obviously, this law was not a first-hand encounter with God. It was arranged by angelic messengers through a middleman, Moses. But if there is a middleman as there was at Sinai, then the people are not dealing directly with God, are they?



But the original promise is the direct blessing of God, received by faith. Do these differences mean that God introduced two rival religious systems, the law as an alternative to the promise? No way! If passing a law could make people live good lives, then legislation would be the answer.



But the laws of the Scripture simply shut down this possibility by proving that everybody does wrong, leaving the only way out that of believing God's promise by trusting in Jesus Christ.



Until the time when we were mature enough to respond freely in faith to the living God, we were carefully surrounded and protected by the law of Moses. The law was like those Greek guardians and tutors, with which you are familiar, who escort children to school and protect them from danger or distraction, making sure the children will really get to the place set out for.

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*But now you have arrived at your destination:
by faith in Christ, you are in direct relationship
with God and that is supposed to bring the full
status and freedom which belongs to grown-up
sons of God.*



All of you who were baptized and so initiated into the Christian life by immersion in water are now wrapped up in Christ.



So you are no longer separate individuals – one a Jew and another a Greek, one a slave and another free, one male and another female. All of you make up one body in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.' **(Gal 3:1-29)**



2 Kor 3:5-18.

‘Nie dat ons uit onself bekwaam is om iets as uit onself te bedink nie, maar ons bekwaamheid is uit God, wat ons ook bekwaam maak het as dienaars van ‘n nuwe testament, nie van die letter nie, maar van die gees; want die letter maak dood, maar die gees maak lewend.



2 Kor 3:5-18.

En as die bediening van die dood, met letters op klippe gegraveer, in heerlijkheid was, sodat die kinders van Israel nie die oë kon vestig op die aangesig van Moses nie...



2 Kor 3:5-18.

...vanweë die heerlijkheid van sy aangesig, wat tog moes vergaan, hoeveel te meer sal die bediening van die Gees dan nie in heerlijkheid wees nie?



2 Kor 3:5-18.

*Want as die bediening wat veroordeel,
heerlikheid was, veel meer is die bediening wat
regverdig maak, oorvloedig in heerlikheid.*



2 Kor 3:5-18.

*Want wat verheerlik was, is ook in hierdie geval
nie verheerlik nie, vanweë die alles
oortreffende heerlikheid.*



2 Kor 3:5-18.

‘Ons kan sê dat die heerlijkheid van vroeër nie te vergelyk is met die alles oortreffende heerlijkheid van nou nie.’

The background of the slide features a large, light purple circle. Inside this circle are three golden trumpets, each pointing towards the right. The trumpets are arranged vertically, with the middle one being the largest and the two flanking it being smaller. The text is centered over the middle trumpet.

‘For what was glorious has no glory now in comparison with the surpassing glory.’



2 Kor 3:5-18.

*Want as wat moes vergaan, met heerlijkheid
was, veel meer is wat moet bly, in heerlijkheid.*



2 Kor 3:5-18.

Terwyl ons dan sodanige hoop het, gebruik ons baie vrymoedigheid; nie soos Moses nie, wat 'n bedekking oor sy aangesig gesit het, sodat die kinders van Israel nie die oë kon vestig op die einde van wat moes vergaan nie. Maar hulle sinne is verhard...



OU VERBOND	NUWE VERBOND
Letter	Gees
Klippe	Harte
Dood	Lewend
Heerlikheid Vergaan	Heerlikheid Blywend
Veroordeling	Regverdigmaking
Veroorsaak Verharding	Veroorsaak Versagting



2 Kor 3:5-18.

Want tot vandag toe bly by die lesing van die Ou Testament dieselfde bedekking sonder dat dit opgelig word, die bedekking wat in Christus vernietig word.



2 Kor 3:5-18.

Ja, tot vandag toe, wanneer Moses geleees word, lê daar 'n bedekking oor hulle hart; maar wanneer hulle tot die Here bekeer is, word die bedekking weggeneem.



2 Kor 3:5-18.

*‘...maar wanneer hulle tot die Here bekeer is,
word die bedekking weggeneem.’*



2 Kor 3:5-18.

Die Here is die Gees, en waar die Gees van die Here is, daar is vryheid.



2 Kor 3:5-18.

En terwyl ons almal met onbedekte gesig soos in 'n spieël die heerlijkheid van die Here aanskou, word ons van gedaante verander na dieselfde beeld, van heerlijkheid tot heerlijkheid, as deur die Here wat die Gees is.'



‘And all of us, as with unveiled face, because we continued to behold in the Word of God as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are constantly being transfigured into His very own image in ever increasing splendour and from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord Who is the Spirit.’



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