

I had to choose between talking to the visitors or talking to the brothers and sisters in Memphis. I finally decided to talk to those of you who have come from out of the city and let Memphis just be your host. I've spoken on this subject one other time in my life; this will be my last time. When you get old, you can make statements like that. You know it's the last...you don't have time to do this again. This will be the last time I'll ever speak on this.

Now, let me tell you where I'm coming from. I want to talk to you about something that is probably a need in all of our lives. Something that has to be taken out, something else put in. I'll get to that in just a moment. But I'm going to ask you to do something with me. I want you to pretend. I'm going to ask you to pretend you're a new Christian. You haven't been a Christian for over three years. Two to three years. The next thing I'm going to ask you to do is I'm going to ask you to pretend you belong to a church that meets in a home in the land of Galatia, and you have just had a very unnerving experience, and you're a little confused, and it's about 48 to 50 AD. We'll say 50 A.D. for round numbers. We're probably off a couple of years. It's around 50 AD. That means we are 20 years past Pentecost.

Now, here's something else I want you to pretend. I want you to pretend you can't read, and you can't write, because most of the people in Galatia could not read and could not write. You are Gauls. Not that you have Gaul; you are Gaul. That means that you belong to a group of people who were very numerous 2,000 years ago. They ended up mainly settling in France, but at this time, there was a little enclave of them. They spoke the Gaelic language. By the way, they were later pushed out across the English Channel and ended up in the hills of what is now called Wales. And they inbred with the Franks, and they became France, and today they live in Wales. They still speak the language that you Gauls speak right now here in the land of Galatia.

Most of you are either slaves or you are sons or daughters of slaves or granddaughters or grandsons of slaves. The people of Galatia have been enslaved on numerous occasions when armies have moved in. Your people, your kind of people, have been traded as slaves all over the Roman Empire. Most of you are called Phrygians, which is another word for slaves. Illiteracy, the inability to read and write, is running among you at about 100%, but in this fellowship of believers that we are, we have four or five Jews who can read. We have four or five Greeks who can read. We have two or three Romans who can read. We got about 10 or 12 people out of 140 who can read. The rest of us cannot read, and you cannot write.

Now that doesn't mean you're ignorant. Nowadays, it means you're ignorant, but in that day and age, it wouldn't necessarily mean you were ignorant because the ability to read was considered a skill, and the ability to write was yet a different skill. You could read and not know how to write. That's inconceivable to us. There were many people who could read who had the foggiest idea how to pick up a pen and write. Writing was like bookkeeping or accounting today. It was something that was very specialized. You went to that person and paid him to write for you, even if you could read. Not many people can read. Alright, are you getting the picture? Are you following me?

Here's the next thing I want you to know: virtually none of you Jews. None of you has ever been to Jerusalem. You hardly even know where Israel is. You've hardly ever met a Jew in your whole life. You're under the heel of the Roman Empire. There's a government somewhere near you, and it's Italians from Rome governing you. That's fine with you; you don't seem to mind. At least things are peaceful. You've been fighting for hundreds of years. You were converted only recently, two or three years ago.

Now, here is the thing that I want you all to get most of all. A piece of literature has come to you. It is 50 A.D., and you do not appreciate this fact in 50 A.D., but for a moment, appreciate it in 1987, would you? Now, listen to what I'm going to say because it is a very remarkable statement that very few Christians are aware of. This little sheet of paper that has come to you, about 150 sentences long, is the first piece of Christian literature ever written. It is the first piece of Christian literature ever written. Now let that soak in for a moment. It's a short letter, 150 sentences long.

You have never heard of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The reason is that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John have not yet been written. You have never heard of the beatitudes because they have never been recorded. You have never heard of this, nor have you ever known that there existed a sermon on the mount, because it has never been recorded. It is now an oral tradition among the Jewish people in Israel, but it's never gotten up as far as you. In fact, you're the first Gentile heathens to ever believe in the Lord, and you have, in fact, only met in your entire lifetime...you have only met two outside Christians other than the ones in your town that got saved. They were both Jews.

Now, the other day, some other people came to visit you. We'll get to them later, but as far as knowing anyone really well, you've only met two Christians in your whole life outside of your town. You have never read a scrap of Christian literature because there is no such thing, and if you had it, you couldn't read it. You have never heard about the good Samaritan. You've never heard of Zacchaeus in the tree. You've never heard about the feeding of the 5000, unless those two Christians who came to visit you happened to be sitting around one night, around dinner, and spun a yarn and told you one of the stories which had been passed on to them.

The first piece of Christian literature ever to be penned is in your hands. You've got it, and you're gentile heathens who've just recently been converted. Now, for just a minute, let's come back to 1987. This gets really exciting. This is our chance in 1987 to find out what the very first crack open to us was of what was happening in the first century among believers. If I may, and I don't even like to use this word, this is the first little opening we've ever possibly received ever, any evidence of what it was Christians in the first century were thinking and what they were taught, what they believed, what they heard, and what they knew. Open this little letter, and it's the first archaeological evidence of what Christians were doing, hearing, believing, thinking, what kind of problems they had, what they were doing in their churches. This is the first peek ever in all of human history. Now, have you followed me up till now? Are you with me? There's somebody in this room whom I have confused. I don't know where you are, but get your hand up. I always do

this. It's not your fault, it's mine. Where are you? Yes, sir, Carl. Can someone bring that sentence up here? I didn't hear it too well. I'm standing right next to a fan.

Okay. Well, we've got the letter. The letter is the book of Galatians. It's the oldest book in the New Testament. That's what I forgot to tell you. You got it right there after the 1st and 2nd Corinthians. And you would think if it were after the first and second Corinthians, it was at least the third-oldest letter, wouldn't you? The letter to the Romans is first in front of the 1st Corinthians, so it must be the fourth-oldest letter. Well, that's something Martin Luther did to you. He wanted to confuse you and keep you in the dark about what church life looked like, so he mixed up all the books.

Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John should all be combined into one book, a synoptic, so you don't have to reread the story over and over with all the verses; not a word left out. That's the first thing we should do. When you get through that, then Acts should be hooked right on to it, right up to the point where the book of Galatians is written. Then we ought to have the book of Galatians, followed by the rest of Acts, up to 1st Thessalonians, 2nd Thessalonians, and so on. I'll come back to that later, but anyway, that's the way we should be able to read our book. We'd get a lot more out of it. Now, if you got a couple of hundred thousand dollars, produce us a New Testament that way, would you? Shouldn't take over 10 or 15 years of hard work.

Why am I doing this? Because their problem is your problem. What they were being told is absolutely astounding. What you're going to hear is absolutely astounding. It's an incredible gospel they were being exposed to. That's one thing. The second one is, I would like for you, because there are a few little peaks, I'd like for you to see church life as it is first revealed to us. There are only two or three verses in Galatians that tell us what the church was like and what it did, but we should look at that.

Alright, now then, I'm going to give you a little background tonight on this book as to what brought it into existence, but at any time you want to ask me a question, please do so. I am very informal, and I would like for you to be very informal. If you need to ask a question, please do so. I want to repeat myself. This is the last time I'm ever going to speak on the book of Galatians. I've done it once. This is my second time, but I want to tell you something else before I start: that Galatians has been a hobby of mine ever since I got converted. It's because it was the oldest or the newest – the first book ever written to Christians, and it's always fascinated me. I guess I've rarely, if ever, gone into a bookstore, but I've gone over to the section on books of the Bible to see if there was a book on Galatians I'd never seen before. I used to collect them; I still have four or five of them. In fact, I've got them with me. I've had a lot more.

Every time I ever read about what's a good book to read on Galatians, somebody always starts with Lightfoot. I want to save you \$20. Lightfoot is an excellent book for somebody who can read Hebrew, Greek, Aramaic, Arabic, Latin, Sanskrit, and hieroglyphics. The entire book is just covered from one end to the other with little foreign letters, and his sentences are about that long. Actually, you'd get a lot more nourishment out of eating sand than reading that book. I have been really disappointed with commentaries. Theologians get taught a certain way in seminary, and they

kind of go that way the rest of their lives, and you get very little from most, if not all, commentaries on books of the Bible. Does anybody want to agree with those who have had some experience with it? You do? Have you purchased the right to...or have you gone to Bible school? You've been a seminary; gee, my deepest sympathy, dear.

We're going to learn about the book of Galatians this week. It's going to be pretty thorough, pretty complete. It'll be the best thing that's ever been done in the book of Galatians. In fact, after this week, there will never be another book published on it, forever. No more sermons preached on it. Everybody, from henceforth and forever more, will say, "Just read what Gene said about it." Except for Lightfoot. I'm a little concerned that more people didn't laugh when I said that. Seriously. That's Edwardian humor, not to be taken seriously.

There was a tragedy that brought forth this book. I'm going to tell you the story, and I'm dead serious. I worked for years on trying to put this story together in such a way that it could clearly and easily be seen and heard. So, what I'm going to tell you in the background here is a story that's very rarely understood. Are you ready? Are you comfortable? Won't you stand up for 10 seconds? I don't want you to get tired, and I don't want you to get sleepy.

They leave Antioch, called by God to go to the gentile heathen. They go across Cyprus; they're there for about a month. This is an island in the Mediterranean, and they're very disappointed. They catch a boat bound due north for what's going to end up for them in Galatia. You'll find out in the book, not in the Bible, but in the book, they have a shipwreck. They're involved in a shipwreck. Now, I can't prove it happened, but I'm sure it did. They get off a rescue ship that rescued them. They get off in Pamphylia in a town called Attalia. They're very ill; Paul, especially, is extremely sick. He's been out in the water for a day and a night. Mark is very sick because he's been out in the water for a day and a night. Barnabas fared much better.

Anyway, they go north. John Mark thinks he's dying. He's spitting up blood. He goes back home to Jerusalem; we won't see him for many years. Barnabas and Paul head north. They come to a town called Antioch. They left the town called Antioch; they go to another town called Antioch, but it's many, many miles away in the land of the Gauls. This is called Antioch of the Pisidians. They preach the gospel there for four months before they're chased out of town. You got converted while he was there. Then they went on up to Lystra, raised up another church, not quite as big as this one, went on up to Derbe, Iconium, and probably even a smaller church. They were about four months in each of these places. Finally, they go to Derbe, which had to be a little church because the town was nothing much more than a village. This has taken them two years. Two years, four churches, approximately four months a piece, the rest of the time is lost in traveling. Okay? You can't raise a church up in four months. Ask any missionary who's ever gone to Africa; it can't be done. Ask any Christian who has been preaching as a minister...who's been preaching in the same pulpit for 30 years, and he's getting nowhere. You can't raise up a church in four months, especially among heathens who have never even heard the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, who can't read, who can't write, and are so immoral. Now, I want you to get really clear. You are a very immoral

people. Are you clear? Your morals are loose; your concepts of good and bad are loose. It would seem that if anyone needed some straightening up on morality, it would be you. You are a pain when it comes to morals.

Then, after four months, Paul and Barnabus leave you. So that means for 18 months, they are gone. You do pretty well for 18 months, considering what a lousy bunch of people you are. This group has no sense of humor, Gene. Let's stop right here, right now. This is never going to work. I want you to say hello to me, will you? Just say hello. Let me hear you say, "Praise the Lord." Let me hear you say, "Amen." Alright, now, can you say hallelujah? A little better. Praise the Lord. That's good. You can talk. Good. I want you to talk to me. If you can't do anything else, say amen. Laugh when I say something ridiculous. It will help me understand that you are not taking me seriously. It will terrify me if otherwise. You're a lousy bunch of people. Alright, good. That's better. No, your moral fiber is very poor. You're illiterate...you have come...you've been a rural people throughout generations and centuries.

Now, at the end of 18 months, Paul and Barnabas sneak back through. They've been outlawed in your particular town, and they ordain some elders. Now, those elders are not going to run your life, and they're not going to be the ones who preach all the time; that was all settled in your early birth. You are a functioning body of people. You don't have pastors; those kinds of concepts don't exist. The meetings are carried on by you. The meetings are totally in your charge. That happened long before the elders came into your meeting, 18 months afterward, and these elders are there to take care of other matters. They're not there to preach you to death. Barnabas and Paul leave. They go home for about a year, and they rest. You, in turn, are hanging on for dear life. Are you with me? You have got this little church, and I don't mean a building. I mean, you're an ekklesia. You're a fellowship. You're a gathering. Paul and Barnabas go home. They've been home for about a year.

It's been 20 years since Pentecost. Simon Peter finally does what the Lord told him to do 20 years ago: get out of Israel and go preach to the ends of the earth. He makes it; he makes it 200 miles up to Antioch. Well, the Antioch church...now this is a big church. This is down in Syria. This is not Antioch Pisidia. This is not you. This is a different part of the world altogether. The other Antioch, where they came from. Big church, several thousand people. They're really excited that Simon Peter's coming. So, Simon Peter comes, and everybody gathers out in the big garden, out on the edge of the city. Peter preaches to them and asks everyone who wants to, who's sick, to come forward to be healed. Well, they're heathen. There are all kinds of people. They're Romans, Jews, everything. Peter, I don't know what Peter's doing, and I don't know if he's doing it the way the Pentecostals do it or what he does, but lots of people are getting healed, and a lot of people are getting saved, and a lot of miracles, all sorts of things. And boy, everybody's revved up about Peter because Peter has power.

I don't know how Paul is taking this. Barnabas and he raised that church up, but I think if there's an ounce of humanity in Paul, he's a little...something...I don't know what...we won't use any derogatory words. Well, later, when Paul writes the letter to the Galatians, his first chapter is spent

straightening out two stories. He's setting the record straight in chapter one. So, I don't want to tell you a whole lot at this point about what happened in Antioch. I'll tell you when we open the book, but something happened in Antioch that the people in Pisidia will hear about later. They're going to get a very twisted view of it. I will tell you this: some Jewish Christians from Jerusalem came in while Peter was there. My strongest impression is that, for some reason, Paul left town or missed some meetings there for about a week. In the book that you're going to read, I have him leaving town for a week. Simon Peter has been preaching. These Jews have come up. Paul and Barnabas have met them. They're all Christians. Everything's going fine. It's some wonderful meetings; it's sort of like a revival...dinner on the grounds, those kinds of things.

Paul leaves town for a few days and comes back. Everything has changed. They're having this big farewell banquet for Simon Peter. Paul walks in and finds out things are not good at all. You'll hear what happened in a minute. It's bad enough that Paul says, "Hey, you're from Jerusalem. You brought a problem up here to us. It's not our problem. It's your problem. We're all going back down to Jerusalem, and we're going to meet with the leaders and get this thing straightened out."

Now, this is very interesting for Paul because he's been trying to get to Jerusalem ever since he was converted. In fact, he has made it to Jerusalem on two other occasions, trying to go down there and testify publicly to those people about his conversion. The church in Jerusalem has never seen his face. The first time he went down, people in Jerusalem were trying to kill him, and he stayed in Simon Peter's home for 15 days. The second time he went down, he went down to deliver grain. About the time he got there, Herod Antipas had James beheaded, and all the other apostles in the entire church ran out of town. The apostles went into hiding. Paul didn't meet anybody; he just delivered the grain. Now, at last, he's going to Jerusalem. Things are at peace. He's going down there and meeting these people, and they're going to meet him.

They get to Jerusalem, and this is a pretty heavy meeting. Those Jews who came up to Antioch caused a lot of problems there. What Paul does not know is that these Judaizers, these Jewish legalists, begin to see that Paul and Barnabas and the gospel of grace are winning. It's tilting this way. They hear Paul and Barnabas recount the story of the birth of these four churches up in Galatia. At that moment, a group of these Jewish Judaizers, legalists, didn't wait for the conference to end in Jerusalem. They leave and head for Galatia. They're coming to you. They're coming up to talk to you.

Now, how many Christians have you ever met outside your town? Do you know a whole lot? Not much. You don't know about Jerusalem. You don't know about Antioch. You know about Paul and Barnabas; that's all you know. You don't know about Peter. You don't know about these men. You don't know anything from nothing. You had a very simple, primitive gospel preached to you. In four months, your church was raised up. Man, that must have been some gospel, saints. You are now four years old in Christ, and you're not doing badly. In fact, you're doing great right on up until these Jews arrive.

Now, when you read volume three and volume four of *The Early Church (Revolution)*, you're going to meet a man over and over again. He's never mentioned in the Bible by name in the New Testament. He's Paul's greatest enemy. I gave him a name in the book so you can keep up with him. He's one of the Jews who went to your town. His name is Drachma Blastinius. I worked on that name for 15 years, trying to come up with the worst possible name I could think of. Drachma Blastinius. You're not supposed to like him; that's the whole point. He is Simon Lagree. He is Ichabod Crane. He is Uriah Heep, Scrooge, and Senator Cranston all rolled into one. Okay, you got him. Do you see what he looks like? That's what I want you to see when you see him. Senator Cranston, I apologize, but you do look really unusual. Can you see this guy? Oh, he is a very unhappy person, but he is one of the most brilliant men of the first century, and he is as dedicated to his gospel as Paul is to his. He will give his life to preach what he preaches with all the zeal that Paul does. In fact, there is no rival in the first century in zeal and dedication, ability and willingness to suffer anything as is Blastinius. He is Paul's rival and will be throughout Paul's entire life, and he has come and visited you. Are you clear? Are you with me? You and I are going to get our first peek, us modern-day Christians, at what this book to the Galatians is one incredible piece of Christian literature, saints.

Now then, they come up here, and I want you to know what they say. This is Blastinius, and he's got two or three people with it. I want to make sure you're clear. Are you clear? What's going on? We're in Galatia. You got visitors. Wow. Some more Christians. Jiminy. Amen. Hallelujah. Yeah. Invite them in for your meals. Oh, they're so warm and outgoing. They preach. Oh, Blastinius can out-preach Paul; he can out-preach Barnabas. Beautiful gospel. Everybody loves it. Oh, this is wonderful. Why don't we have some more visitors from down there? Been there a few weeks. Everybody loves him. He's home. They trust him. And then he (*Blastinius*) says: Oh, by the way, this brother Paul. Yeah. You know, Paul, I've met him. Yes. Yes. Yes. We met. Do you know much about him? Oh. Oh yes, that's true. He had persecuted the church; in fact, that's what we know about him. He persecuted the Christian believers. Did he ever tell you about Simon Peter? Oh, you've heard about Simon Peter. Are you aware that Simon Peter was appointed by Jesus Christ as the chief apostle? He's the one we all look to and respect. We all follow him. He is more or less the Christian leader of this age. You never heard about the conflict between Peter and Paul. You didn't know that one day, in the midst of a gathering, Paul walked in and insulted Simon Peter to his face. Don't you know that?

(Blastinius continues) Well, oh. Oh, you want to hear more of the story. Oh, well, I really don't want to talk about Paul. I mean, you know, he's a good brother. I'm sure he means well. It was horrible. Here is this man whom we hardly know other than the fact that he persecuted God's people. Walks in and rebukes Simon Peter to his face over the gospel. While I'm talking to you about this, I feel you need to be warned. You see, when the Lord ascended, he told the 12 disciples and all of the believers at that time to go to Jerusalem, and since that time, the gospel has always emanated from Jerusalem. All of it. All the work has gone out from there. All the gospel has been preached from there. This has kept the gospel pure, but Paul has come from Antioch. Did you not

know that he has never even come to Jerusalem? Never been there. I mean, the last time he was there, he was killing Christians, and he's never returned. I'm so sorry to tell you this. I am really so sorry to tell you these things about Paul of Tarsus. Paul, you see, is a man pleaser, and he is just preaching to you a gospel that's just the barest of gospel, and he's done that because he wished to have a good standing with you. He's left out some of the main parts of the gospel. You mean you mean? Yes. Yes. They don't know. We don't know all of the gospel. Oh, much more. The best. The best...Cornelius. So, he says, you know I have had a burden since I've been here to tell you the rest of the gospel. Oh, well, yes, we'll have to have a meeting now to tell you the rest of the gospel.

Now, brethren, it was on Mount Sinai that God gave to Moses the law. The law was given to God's people, the Jews, and the symbol of the Jewish faith is circumcision. It is necessary that you obey the commandments given by Moses and be circumcised in order for the gospel to be effective. Yes, Blastinius. What is circumcision? And who is Moses? And so, he begins to tell them about circumcision, and all these dear...you dear Christians, you really want to get circumcised, and you want to find out what the law is and start obeying it so you can truly, truly, truly be a Christian. Isn't that true? Absolutely. No question about it. Say amen.

Alright. So, we have some Galatian heathen getting circumcised. They don't even know what's going on. They start obeying the Ten Commandments. Boy, I mean, they're into them, and they're into all the other laws. Pretty soon, they're figuring out calendar dates. Now, let's see. Saturday, that's the day we rest. What day is Saturday? That's Oh. Oh, that one. Okay. Alright. Sabbath day. Is that what they call it? We called it Sabbath. Let's see now. On the third Saturday of the seventh month after the new moon, that's the Sabbath. That's probably around Julius. Yeah, somewhere around Julius. That's July. Now, after the second day, on the third Sabbath, a season begins, and from that time, for the next six weeks, when we pray, we have to stand on our left foot. Now then, somebody listen, let's get this thing down. There's a new moon, the first new moon; no, the second new moon. The second new moon after the third Sabbath, and four days late...somebody got that out on a chart. Well, I don't understand this. And then what do we do during that time? So, they begin...you begin to observe seasons. You're now meeting on Saturday. You're now...many of you circumcised. You're really getting into the law. Somebody writes Paul a letter. Dear skunk... yeah, really. Maybe he gets two letters. Dear reprobate, you lied to us. You didn't tell us the whole gospel. What's this you did to Simon Peter? You have never even been to Jerusalem. Most people out there don't even know you. You lied to us. Yeah. Another one writes and says, "Well, there are some really weird things going on around here. Could you come back and talk to us?"

Now, Paul receives this letter from Galatia and decides to write to them. So, he sits down. As a man from a well-to-do family, he can read and has been trained to read, but he hires a writer... possibly. We don't really know. There is some evidence that he hired a writer. And so, he's hot. Or is he angry? Is your friend Paul angry? He's blowing steam out of both ears, blowing fire out of his nostrils. The book indicates it. Now, I'm going to stop here and tell you something. I'm going to tell you why I picked this to talk to you. I've already told you one thing. I want you to start with

the most basic look at the gospel that is humanly possible. This is the most primitive, earliest, most ancient possible view we can get of the Christian faith, and to me, it is remarkable how deep it is to people who cannot read and write. How incredible, how powerful, and how liberating it is.

I'm going to explain something to you. You're now living in the first century. It's 50 AD. You have just been Judaized, legalized. You have just been turned into followers of the law. Or *is it the 20th century?* And have you, as a believer, unwittingly fallen into the same problem, just with a different setting and a different age? Alright, the letter by Paul is one of the most radical pieces of Christian literature ever penned. In fact, I can guarantee you something, that whenever it is preached, it frightens everybody, and especially preachers. It is so liberating and so liberal in its view that you can't really believe a man in his right mind would make some of the statements he made. You can't really believe it. Men today will hardly touch this book in its raw, basic meaning. I told you about all these commentaries I've got. It's so much fun to read these guys, and they're trying to keep up with Paul in their commentaries, and they can't. Every one of them will say, "Now, we have to be a little careful here because after all, there is a standard of conduct by which we have to live." Sometimes, some of the most legalistic stuff you could hope to read is in commentaries on the book of Galatians.

Now, brothers and sisters, every once in a while, a radical, a real first-class radical, needs to come along and present the gospel from a really wild radical view. We couldn't find anybody like that. So, I volunteered to substitute, and when I go through the book of Galatians, I can feel it, too. I'm tempted. Gene, don't say this. These people...you don't know what these people are going to do if they hear what Paul had to say. I'm going to say it; last time I'm ever going to speak on this subject, and I'm going to say it without qualification, and I'm not going to try to save you from its radical nature. Now watch me from this day, or this moment, this hour, throughout the rest of the week: the Greek Roman culture itself was so abysmal, derelict in morals. But here's the point.

It is the nature of all men who are part of the fallen race to desperately need to conform to some sort of code. It is almost necessary for your nature to conform to some sort of standard, and not only to conform to it, but deep down in the heart and soul of every Christian breathes a Christian with a soul so dead who does not have Blastinius lurking in his head. Somewhere deep inside you is a guy who not only wants to follow a standard but also wants others to follow it. Yeah. Say amen to that. Don't just sit there. Don't just sit there like that. I am quite certain that Blastinius has visited your gathering, has broken bread in your home, has spent the night in your house, and maybe even lurks in your heart. I have, right now inside of me, something welling up that I cannot articulate. It's so deep, and it trembles so in me that it literally cuts off my ability to communicate. This thing I would drive home to you is that what you need so much is some kind of prop in your life to live by. A man, a woman, naturally put themselves under some sort of law.

Folks, saints, brothers, sisters, we're dealing with something here even more basic than the law. When I went to the seminary, even before I went to seminary as a young Christian, I kept hearing preachers preach about the law, the law, and boy, they were putting down the law, and you know,

I'd say then, and I say now, who cares? It's a dead issue. It was resolved in the first century. I used to preach as an evangelist...law, law, law. It's grace, grace, grace. Invitation. Come get saved, you poor sinner. Let the Lord Jesus save you, and that was it—the law. But there's something deeper here. The law came out of man's basic fallen need to have some standard to live by. If there had been no law for the Jews, they would have created one, and the Gentiles, with all their looseness and all of their tendency toward license, had their standards of good deeds. But still, Gene, we are saved by grace, and we did understand that we were saved by grace. We have not been circumcised, and we are not under the law, but I think we miss a point. I think the theologians miss it. I think we Christians miss it. Hear me.

Dear brothers and sisters, this letter was not written to lost men. I have preached to people: you're not going to get saved by good works; you're saved by grace. That's where we usually discuss the law with lost men, and it's a good place to do so because lost men feel such a strong need to be good. I think somewhere in this room there lurks a human being who feels the need of being good. The problem we're dealing with here, even though it starts off discussing salvation, is not salvation. This happened to believers already redeemed who went back to an awful, killing standard of conduct. They went back to it. Is it conceivable that a Christian in our day might even have fallen prey to this disease unwittingly and unknowingly? Look here, y'all...so good to come back to the South where I can talk English. I live in New England. Those people...they spend all their time talking to me, saying, "Huh?" And I spend all my time talking to them, saying, "Huh?" We do not understand one another. Listen, y'all, it comes down to this. This is so basic, and it's got to be rooted out of you and me, and I'm going to tell you why. Because the Christian life is closed to us if it's not rooted out, it boils down to this. Closed, the adventure of the Christian life means its depth and riches are closed to us if we have the idea that we can earn God's favor.

Forget work and forget law, let's get it down to this. Can you get God's favor? Can you impress Him? Can you impress Him? Well, Gene, that's funny. Just think about it for a minute. Just think for a minute. By certain things you do, you're going to impress him. Certain things you don't do, you're going to impress him. Certain things you do, you're going to be in big trouble, and certain things you don't do, you're going to be in big trouble. Now, you tell me that that concept doesn't lurk around in you somewhere. I believe, dear saint, dear child of God, that that is just as inbred into you as it can be. And for the first century people, that was the law and good deeds, and for you and for me, what on earth could it be? I don't know what it is for you, but I can tell you where you got it. You got it from two places. You got it from your fallen nature and probably got it from Baptist preachers. A Baptist mother, but you got it. Now, I must warn you, from this point on, you might wisely pack your bags, go home, and forget you ever came to Memphis, Tennessee, because dear brother and dear sister, before this week's over, it will be my determined desire to free you from the concept that you can in any way. I'll use the vernacular and get brownie points with God for anything you do. Anything you do.

Now, on the other side of that, if you can ever get clear on this, the other side is the thing Paul is writing about, and it is the door for them, for you, for all of us. It's the first door you open to the

Christian life, and that door is freedom. Freedom. Now, I may get a little extreme. I grant you that could possibly happen. I could get a little extreme, but you've got to start with freedom. You don't start with freedom with this qualification and that qualification. You start with freedom and go from there. You don't start with salvation by grace, then get a few rules, and then hope to branch out from there, from freedom to freedom. It doesn't work. We will discover a passage in Galatians that says, "A little leaven leavens the whole lump." You get a lot of grace to save you, but if there is a little bit of leaven in there of something that is not grace, grace, grace, it will leaven your entire Christian walk. You aren't going to walk into the riches of Christ unless you are liberated from, if you are a Jew, the law, and if you are a Christian, you're going to have to be liberated from those things that we, in this generation, like every past generation, we've got to be liberated in every age from the things that this age puts on us as believers.

I don't know what yours is, but we'll try to find it, we'll try to find an old, forgotten key, stick it in a rusty lock, and let you out of jail, for it was for freedom that Christ has set you free. We will begin with freedom. Utter, total, absolute unconditional freedom. Gene...don't do that. Please don't do that to us. We'll all go out of here and start getting drunk and cussing and chewing, and we'll start committing morality, and we'll start watching stuff we shouldn't watch and saying things we shouldn't say and reading stuff we shouldn't read and doing things we shouldn't do. No, that's what you're going to do if you stay under your law, whatever it is you're put under, brother. I do not know why we ministers feel we are called of God to keep you from sinning. We are terrified that you, laymen, forgive me, I'm being sarcastic. We are terrified that if you laymen don't get the pants scared off of you about sin and the devil and this and that and the other, you're going to go out and do horrible things. So we keep warning you: don't do this, and don't do that, and we build up in the Christian atmosphere...it's much more intangible, but there is something as all-pervasive as the Jewish law ever was.

Brother, you start with freedom. You start with freedom. You begin with freedom, and I'm going to take a radical stand and stay radical to the very end for your sake. But Gene, we'll just all go out here and do terrible things. Well, let's find out. Let's find out. I will read an article in a major paper: There was an experiment in Memphis, Tennessee, in the winter of 1987, in which a group of Christians were liberated to do absolutely anything they wanted to do, and this is what happened. Completely set free from all standards of conduct and concepts of what they should and should not do. Now, I know some of you are scared to death.

That we will become a stumbling block? You are already a stumbling block. (laughter) All those preachers on television are a stumbling block. They're causing the unbeliever to stumble all over the place. You know what the typical view of the world is for a Christian? He's somebody sucking on a pickle. Now, I'm not going to stand up here and tell you to go be happy and all of these things. That's got nothing to do with it. I'm talking to you about a deep internal thing. I'm not speaking of something outward. I'm talking of a deep spiritual release, a freedom that most of us have. I am not speaking of external things, going out here and being hip, hip, hooray, and smiling all the time. That's just as bad as that stuff you see on television. They got these, they got these smiles painted

on, and they won't move. They just sit there. I keep looking at those people. I read an interesting article that said that the average smile lasts four to five seconds, and except under extremely unusual circumstances, a smile will last four to five seconds. If it's longer than that, it is almost certainly pretentious. Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saves a wretched like me. The world can see through that, too. I'm not talking about that. No, this is a deeply spiritual matter.

Brothers and sisters, you're in bondage. If you're half the Christian that I think you are, you're in bondage to something, but Paul was not fighting the law. He was fighting something deep within the nature of men, and so was your Lord. We will meet the freest creature in the universe. Absolutely unbounded and unfettered by anything, and He came to make you a son and a daughter.

The book of Galatians makes seven references to what we would call today the Bible. It says either "it is written" or "the scripture says" seven times. Now there are approximately 150 sentences in this book. Seven references to scripture; *50 references to the Lord Jesus Christ*. I say that to you to let you know where this man is coming from. I want you to know where, as we say...where his head is, where the ruts in his thinking patterns are. It's Christ again and again and again. Seven references to what we would say "the Bible," although, of course, the word did not exist then. 50 references in 150 sentences to the Lord Jesus Christ. Where is this man coming from? What's on his heart?

Tomorrow morning, not tonight, the first piece of Christian literature ever penned makes no reference to prayer; at best, one, but nothing like the prayer you and I have been told to pray. There isn't a single reference in the first piece of Christian literature ever penned to going to church. There isn't a single reference to reading your Bible. There are 50 references to the Lord Jesus Christ. Gene, we have to read our Bibles, and we've got to pray, and we must go to church. Well, I'm going to challenge that first of all. I'll say it a few times later, but I wouldn't spend 10 minutes out of your praying like most Christians pray. That's just terrible. Now, if you want to talk about fellowshiping with the Lord Jesus Christ, that's a different matter. That's a whole other matter, and that's what the one possible reference in Galatians is about. As far as reading the Bible, you're out of luck. It's 50 AD. You're slaves. There are 140 of you, and 10 of you can read. Five of you can read Greek. Five of you can read Hebrew. None of you has got an Old Testament. There's one down in the synagogue, but if you'll remember, you and I, all of us got thrown out of that synagogue, and all they've got down there is five books of the Pentateuch and the Psalms, and with luck maybe the book of Isaiah, and they won't loan it to you. If they were out of some grace to loan it to you, the five dear Christians who could read Hebrew would stand up in front of all you illiterates, and they would begin to say things like this. El Shaddai Elohim. Now, you'd get a lot out of that, wouldn't you?

Saints, I'm not being derogatory. I am holding you to historical, unmovable facts. You are illiterate. There is one fragment of the Bible in the Jewish synagogue. That's all. Those things are as rare as mowers and chickens' mouths. Thank you. They don't exist. You got one piece of literature. You just got it the other day, and five of you could read it in Greek; probably had to translate it into the

Phrygian language, which has never been put into written form. In order for you to be able to hear it, someone had to stand there who could read Greek and who also knew Phrygian and translate it for you. That's how bad off you are. You had four months of help from the outside from the day you got saved, plus the perversion that has come to you from Blastinius, and a man is writing to you who is going to straighten the record out about those two incidents that Blastinius told you about. He is going to take you to the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the only hope and help of your faith. He will start there. He will set you free to Christ, and you will work out from there.

Now, here's what I would like to ask you to do. If you have a Bible, read chapter 1 tonight. We're going to come back here in the morning, and we're going to take chapter 1, and we're going to find out what the first five paragraphs of the Christian faith ever written about said. We're going to find out what was on the heart of a church planter and what kind of things God's people, so primitive, so unlearned, were exposed to in their early Christian life. I want you to become that illiterate, please. Become one of the brothers who got circumcised or who are out obeying the Sabbath. He won't work on Saturday anymore. He won't even get out of his room anymore on Saturday. Has to cook his meals on Friday, sits there, and eats. He and his wife won't come out. I want you to be one of the brothers who are trying to draw up a big calendar so they can follow for seasons and times. I want you to be one of the brothers who run a fever because he got infected from being circumcised. I want you to be one of the brothers...it happens all the time. I want you to be one of the brothers who refused to be circumcised and who are getting looked down upon because you didn't get circumcised. I want you to be one of those brothers, I'm sure a lot of you like this, who are not obeying the Sabbath, and you're really getting fish-eyed stares in the meetings.

In fact, last week, an argument broke out right in the middle of the meeting between the circumcised and the uncircumcised parties. By the way, Blastinius is not there anymore. The roots of this thing have been left there. The church is battling this thing, and the gospel is at stake, but this is not the gospel of salvation that's at stake. It's the gospel of Christian living that is at stake. And the opening to eternal things and things of heaven and rich things and glorious things in Christ. These are the things that are at stake. For if we go back to the standards of moral conduct, or to the standards of group pressure, or to any kind of standard of dos and don'ts, we shut off the wellsprings of Christian growth. We begin with liberty, and by the way, we end with liberty.

Well, you're going to have to trust me a little bit. You're probably going to go home shaking in your boots after this. You're going to have to trust that I know what I'm doing. I really do, but I also want you to know something else. I'm not going to come to the end and say, "Now I want to qualify this." I will take Paul's...Paul qualifies what he says in one sentence, and that's all I'm going to do. One sentence qualification, and the rest of it was all on this side and none on this side. It's downright frightening how much trust he was putting in those Galatians to follow the Lord Jesus Christ with all their hearts. I am going to put that trust in you, modern Galatians, and let us see if we too cannot be set free from the law that we ourselves put ourselves under. Tomorrow morning, Galatians 1. You have a question? Yes, brother.

Well, they are brethren that are false, or they are not brethren because they are false. We have that choice, don't we? We'll never know. That's the answer. We honestly, brother, will never know if they were really saved or not. I'm going to give them the benefit of the doubt; I think they're converted, and I think they are totally false in what they're doing and know it. They have to know in their heart. Paul knew that because he had been a false Jew. That brother knew in his heart before he was converted. He was not fulfilling the law, but he was working hard to get somebody else to. Is it not true that you tend, if you'll listen to your heart, you tend to say, "This is the gospel. It works for everybody but me, but I'm a special case. So, we will ignore me, and I will go out and make sure the rest of you understand because you are not a special case, and I'm going to show you how to live the Christian life even though I cannot live up to it. We're going to explore that concept. It lives and breathes today. In fact, it is hiding well in Memphis, Tennessee. Alright. Question. Yes, sir.

The question is, had Peter already seen his vision of the Gentiles being clean? The answer is absolutely yes. Absolutely yes. And yes, he took up for Paul in Jerusalem to his credit. The old boy had been rebuked by Paul of Tarsus, and he had capitulated just as when the Lord had rebuked him for some of his...he gave in. I don't think he (Peter) preached any kind of legalism in Antioch. I believe that brother was preaching grace. But what was he doing? What was going on in Simon Peter when he got up and sat down with those Jews over in one corner? That is one of the most fascinating questions to me in the whole world. What was going on inside of Simon Peter when he got up and moved over there at that table? And the answer, I think, is very revealing to all our hearts. And it may surprise you. Yes.

All my books on Galatians imply that the Lord enables me to obey the ten commandments and fulfill them. If you start there, you will be leavened. You will be leavened. And I have heard stories about this Jewish movement, several of them of Jews who are going back to the law who are believers. It's an old story. Frankly, that's not my burden. I happen to be a heathen. I am a gentile, uncircumcised heathen, and I'm concerned about you heathen. I'm not concerned about the ten commandments; I'm concerned about the 11th, 12th, 13th, 14th, and 15th commandments that you yourself have invented and put yourself under.

Questions? Anybody? Nine o'clock tomorrow morning; try to read Galatians 1 before then. If you possibly can, get a copy of *The Early Church*, part two, and begin reading it. I think it's important. Dear brothers and sisters, if you will get the book of Galatians into you, the first piece of Christian literature ever penned, the rest will come easily. The rest will come easy. Alright, stand up and tell us what we're going to sing.