



Galatians

a systematic study

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PREFACE

THIS BIBLE STUDY OF PAUL’S EPISTLE TO THE CHURCHES OF GALATIA originated as my prepared notes for teaching our local ABF (Adult Bible Fellowship) class on Sunday mornings. As with the other resources at our web site, we make it available to others simply because it already exists. I make no claim to scholarship, special insight, or extraordinary understanding of God’s holy word. I have been called in the local assembly to teach (predominantly) senior adults from God’s word. Following the example of the early churches, those of us in the kingdom are encouraged to “[share our possessions] with all, as anyone might have need.” (Acts 2:45) If others can benefit from this study, then all the better.

The notes have been formatted to:

- make them easy to use on-screen—including on newer media platforms; and
- include complete Scripture passages on the same page, so the user not be required to have his or her Bible alongside.

This is not to say that we *discourage* the accompaniment of God’s printed word, but that we wanted to make the notes as accessible and portable as possible.

As with all of our resources, we offer this free of charge, to the glory of God the Father, and the praise of Jesus Christ our Lord.

David S. Lampel
Winterset, Iowa
January 2012

EXPLANATIONS

SCRIPTURE VERSIONS

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Greek and Hebrew citations are from *Strong’s Talking Greek & Hebrew Dictionary*, and the *NASB Greek-Hebrew Dictionary*.

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ABBREVIATIONS

NASB: *New American Standard Bible*

NKJV: *New King James Version*

KJV: *King James Version*

KJVS: Both *King James Version* and *New King James Version*

NIV: *New International Version*

RSV: *Revised Standard Version*

YLT: *Young’s Literal Translation*

ESV: *English Standard Version*

OT, NT: *Old Testament, New Testament*

CITATIONS

Barnes: Albert Barnes, *Notes on the Bible*.

Boice: James Montgomery Boice, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, Frank E. Gæbelein, General Editor. Copyright © 1976, Zondervan Corporation, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Brown: Brown’s *Dictionary of New Testament Theology*; Colin Brown, General Editor; English Language edition copyright © 1975, 1986, The Zondervan Corporation, Grand Rapids, Michigan, and The Paternoster Press, Ltd. Exeter, Devon, U.K.

Clarke: *Adam Clarke’s Commentary on the Bible*.

Darby: John Nelson Darby, *Synopsis of the Old and New Testaments*.

Gill: *John Gill’s Exposition of the Entire Bible*.

Goodwin: Frank J. Goodwin’s *A Harmony of the Life of St. Paul*.

Grudem: Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*.

Henry: *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible*.

JFB: *Commentary on the Old and New Testaments* by Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown.

Vincent: Marvin R. Vincent, *Vincent’s Word Studies*.

Instead of beginning our study of the epistle to the Galatians with an overview of the book itself, as I typically do, I would like this time to take us on a journey of the events that led up to the epistle being penned—that is,

What is it that necessitated Paul's writing of this letter to the churches in Galatia?

WHO WERE THE GALATIANS?

Short answer: We don't know. "Galatia" was not a city, but a region (Note v1:1—"...to the churches of Galatia").

Find a map in the back of your Bible of Paul's missionary journeys.

In the first century, what we know today as modern Turkey was subdivided into what they referred to as

"Asia", on the left;

Bithynia and **Pontus** were NW of that;

Cappadocia [kap-pad-ok-ee'-ah] was east,

with **Cilicia** [kil-ik-ee'-ah] below that.

Pamphylia [pam-fool-ee'-ah] and **Lycia** [loo-kee'-ah] were down at the bottom, west of Cilicia.

[Note: Don't get sidetracked by the original pronunciations for these place-names. It is not necessarily that we *mispronounce* them now—it is just an example of the timeless fluidity of language. The word "Galatia," for example, is of foreign origin—i.e., not Greek; probably Celtic (by the way, pronounced not like the basketball team, but KEL-tic). So it could be that the original pronunciation (as spoken by my Bible software) stems originally from this foreign source. But perhaps even Paul, writing in Greek, would have by then pronounced it as we do today.]

In the middle of it all was **Galatia** [gal-at-ee'-ah]. In the third century B.C., a branch of the ancient Celts, the Gauls, entered and settled in what became known as "Galatia"—after the popular term for these Gauls: *Gallo-Graecians*, which distinguished them from the West-European Gauls. The principle city of the region was Ancyra (modern: Ankara)—capital of the Hittites 3,500 years ago, and of Turkey today.

In 64 B.C. Galatia became a client state of Rome, and in 25 B.C., after the death of its king, Galatia became a Roman province. Included in this extended province were the towns Paul evangelized on his first missionary journey.

Scholars are evenly divided on whether Paul was writing to ethnic Galatians in the north, or the churches in the Roman province of Galatia in the south. Both theories have their merits, but because it is more easily proven, and follows a more amenable route of logic, and since there is no hard evidence that Paul ever visited the northern region, we will assume the southern theory—that is, that the apostle Paul was writing to the churches listed in the NT.

PAUL'S JOURNEY

In A.D. 35 or 36, Saul of Tarsus was confronted on the road to Damascus by the risen Christ (see Acts 9). And after a period of finding his footing in the faith, and being established by the other apostles, in early 46 Saul and Barnabas set out on the first missionary journey. During this journey, in Paphos, Luke, the chronicler of these events, begins using Saul's *Roman* name: Paul.

Read Acts 13:9.

During this first missionary trip they visited towns in the southern Galatian region: Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe.

Read Acts 14:1,5-7.

Acts 13:9

But Saul, who was also known as Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, fixed his gaze on him,

Acts 14:1

In Iconium they entered the synagogue of the Jews together, and spoke in such a manner that a large number of people believed, both of Jews and of Greeks.

Acts 14:5-7

And when an attempt was made by both the Gentiles and the Jews with their rulers, to mistreat and to stone them, they became aware of it and fled to the cities of Lycaonia, Lystra and Derbe, and the surrounding region; and there they continued to preach the gospel.

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Acts 15:40-16:2

But Paul chose Silas and left, being committed by the brethren to the grace of the Lord. And he was traveling through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches. Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra. And a disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek, and he was well spoken of by the brethren who were in Lystra and Iconium.

Acts 18:22-23

When he had landed at Caesarea, he went up and greeted the church, and went down to Antioch. And having spent some time there, he left and passed successively through the Galatian region and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples.

Acts 11:1-3

Now the apostles and the brethren who were throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God. And when Peter came up to Jerusalem, those who were circumcised took issue with him, saying, "You went to uncircumcised men and ate with them."

Acts 15:1

Some men came down from Judea and began teaching the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved."

On Paul's second missionary journey, with Silas this time, he revisited at least some of the same towns in Galatia.

Read Acts 15:40-16:2.

During his third missionary journey, the apostle Paul probably visited these same towns again.

Read Acts 18:22-23.

No one knows positively when and where Paul wrote this letter to the churches in Galatia, but here is the most likely scenario: Sometime after his last visit to the Galatian region, perhaps during his third missionary journey, Paul received word that something was terribly amiss in the Galatian churches. So during his long stay in Ephesus, around A.D. 52, the apostle penned this letter to those churches.

Just what was it that troubled Paul so?

CONTROVERSY

During this time—roughly A.D. 45-55—the infant church was approaching its first great doctrinal crisis, when the gospel began making inroads into Gentile communities. Before that, when The Way was being preached *by Jews to Jews*, it was not an issue. But once non-Jews began hearing and responding to the gospel of Christ, questions arose in the leadership of the church regarding what should be a Christian's relationship (if any) to Moses and Judaism.

James Montgomery Boice puts the situation this way:

Was the church to open her doors wide to all comers, regardless their relationship to the particularized traditions of Judaism? Were her boundaries to be as wide as the human race? Or was she to be only an extension of Judaism to the Gentiles? In more particular terms, was it necessary for a Gentile believer to observe the law of Moses in order to become a Christian? Should a Gentile be circumcised?

The first real step in this new direction took place with Simon Peter, as he relates the event to his fellow Jews in Jerusalem.

Read Acts 11:1-18 in your Bible.

(The Ethiopian eunuch who accepted Christ through Philip, earlier, was probably a proselyte Jew. A step forward, but not the dramatic step taken with the centurion Cornelius, who was utterly a non-Jew.)

The point of Jewish law God used to make His point to Peter was that of dietary requirements (see Leviticus 11). But the lesson was less about food than of *prejudice*. The animals on the sheet were a mix of clean and unclean (according to the Mosaic law); the Lord was telling Peter that he should not discriminate between them—that he should not be reluctant to minister to Gentiles, as well as Jews. To an observant Jew, Gentiles were dogs, and they were not to associate with them, much less enter a Gentile home. But the Lord was telling Peter that when requested, he was to go to Cornelius, enter his home, preach the gospel, baptize them, and even stay there for a few days (see Acts 10:34-48).

GALATIA

Back to the situation in Galatia. What was it that got Paul's dander up?

While we're still in Acts... we have further clues here.

Read again Acts 11:1-3.

Read Acts 15:1.

Now turn to Galatians.

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Galatians 1:6-7

I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.

Galatians 3:1-3

You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified? This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?

Galatians 4:9-11

But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how is it that you turn back again to the weak and worthless elemental things, to which you desire to be enslaved all over again? You observe days and months and seasons and years. I fear for you, that perhaps I have labored over you in vain.

Galatians 5:7

You were running well; who hindered you from obeying the truth?

Boice: Some time [after his last visit with them], Paul received word that the Galatian believers were on the point of departing from the faith they had previously received so openly. Conservative Jewish teachers who were legalizers had arrived from Jerusalem claiming to be from James, the Lord's brother, and had begun to teach that Paul was wrong in his doctrine. They contended that Gentiles had to come under the Law of Moses to be saved. It was not enough for them to have Christ; they must have Moses too. To grace must be added circumcision.

The Judaizers that had recently undermined Paul's gospel message had also made an effort to undermine his reputation and calling. It was personal. Specifically, they claimed that since his gospel had not been revealed by God, he had no right to the apostolic office.

We can infer from the text of this letter to the Galatians that there were, in fact, *three* charges leveled against him—three charges he refutes in this letter:

1. He was not a true apostle; his gospel message had not been revealed to him by God.
2. Since he was a false apostle, his gospel, as well, was false.
3. His gospel message of grace instead of law led to lawlessness and immorality—loose living, license.

THIS WAS PERSONAL

Upon hearing that this was occurring in Galatia, "Paul was immediately filled with righteous indignation."

Read Galatians 1:6-7; 3:1-3; 4:9-11; 5:7.

I suppose Paul's reaction to this situation was not unlike that of a parent upon discovering that a child has suddenly veered off-track.

- you raised him up in the fear of the Lord
- Sunday School every week
- a solid, loving home and supportive church family
- he accepts Christ as Lord
- then he heads off to college, and within months is part of a new-age cult that blends Christianity with hero worship of a charismatic leader

Paul was not just displeased; as the "parent" of the churches he felt betrayed. Yes, he was first and foremost jealous for the Lord, but he was also a man. Who among us would not feel personally betrayed in this situation. He had introduced the gospel to them, formed the churches, established for them a firm foothold in the truth, in "The Way" of Christ Jesus. Then he turns his back and suddenly they are being beguiled by a stranger! (**Re-read 3:1**) Listen to how *The Message* paraphrases this:

You crazy Galatians! Did someone put a hex on you? Have you taken leave of your senses?

Let us never forget the humanity of the apostle Paul. He was a true and selfless bondservant of the Lord, with the highest motives behind his service. But he was also a man who invested his own blood, sweat, and tears into the lives of the people in all these churches.

So his language in this Galatian letter is intense, strident. And he takes very little time with the usual pleasantries, but immediately launches into his rebuttal against those who have sullied not just his own name and reputation, but the name and reputation of the Lord Jesus—the one who gave His very life to free people from the burden of the law.

The epistle to the Galatian churches is an eloquent, yet detailed argument for grace over legalism, for liberty over the burdens of the law, and for true righteousness by *faith* over the false righteousness of ritual and acceptable deeds.

Eugene H. Peterson, in his introduction to Galatians: 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 manipulation and coercion 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 the freedom turns out to be short-lived.

Paul of Tarsus was doing his diligent best to add yet another chapter to this dreary history when he was converted by Jesus to something radically and entirely different—a free life in God. Through Jesus, 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 free life. God did not coerce 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 learned that religious leaders of the old school had come into those churches, called his views and authority into question, and were reintroducing the old ways, herding all these freedom-loving Christians back into the corral of religious rules and regulations.

Paul was, of course, furious. He was furious with the old guard for coming in with their strong-arm religious tactics and intimidating the Christians into giving up their free life in Jesus. But he was also furious with the Christians for caving in to the intimidation.

His letter to the Galatian churches helps them, and us, recover the original freedom. It also gives direction in the nature of God’s gift of freedom—most necessary guidance, for freedom is a delicate and subtle gift, easily perverted and often squandered.

YOUR NOTES

Genesis 17:1-8

Now when Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am God Almighty; Walk before Me, and be blameless. I will establish My covenant between Me and you, and I will multiply you exceedingly." Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying, "As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, And you will be the father of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be called Abram, But your name shall be Abraham; For I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make nations of you, and kings will come forth from you. I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you. I will give to you and to your descendants after you, the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God."

Genesis 17:9-14

God said further to Abraham, "Now as for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations. This is My covenant, which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: every male among you shall be circumcised. And you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin, and it shall be the sign of the covenant between Me and you. And every male among you who is eight days old shall be circumcised throughout your generations, a servant who is born in the house or who is bought with money from any foreigner, who is not of your descendants. A servant who is born in your house or who is bought with your money shall surely be circumcised; thus shall My covenant be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. But an uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant."

ON CIRCUMCISION

Before we dig into the text itself, let us examine more closely the Abrahamic rite of circumcision, that plays such an important part in Paul's letter to the Galatians. One question that might arise is, "*What about women?*"—a perfectly understandable question in *our* culture, but one that would have been laughed at during the time that the rite was established.

First we must understand that the rite of Jewish circumcision had nothing to do with *salvation*, but was man's side of the covenant established between God and Abraham. It was established at the same time Jehovah changed his name from "Abram" to "Abraham." It was man's (that is, mankind's—later, the nation of Israel's) sign of obedience and association with Jehovah, as it's part in the agreement.

In Genesis 17, God promised Abraham:

Read Genesis 17:1-8.

Then Jehovah told Abraham what he and his descendants would do in return—that is, the sign of their obedience, or participation, in this new covenant:

Read vs9-14.

Note that none of this is based on anything internal; there is no mention of belief or faith, the condition of the heart, or that one had to be circumcised to gain eternal life. It was purely an external sign of association with the one God, Jehovah.

Now, pertinent to the question raised about women, I found a helpful passage in the *New Bible Dictionary*:

The covenant of circumcision operates on the principle of the spiritual union of the household in its head. The covenant is "between me and you and your descendants after you" (Gen. 17:7), and vs26-27 notably express the same truth: "Abraham... Ishmael... and all the men of his house... were circumcised with him".

Also this from Albert Barnes:

It is worthy of remark that in circumcision, after Abraham himself, the parent is the voluntary imponent [i.e., the one who imposes the circumcision, or decides that it will be performed], and the child merely the passive recipient of the sign of the covenant. Hereby is taught the lesson of parental responsibility and parental hope. This is the first formal step in a godly education, in which the parent acknowledges his obligation to perform all the rest. It is also, on the command of God, the formal admission of the believing parents' offspring into the privileges of the covenant, and therefore cheers the heart of the parent in entering upon the parental task.

Still further, the sign of the covenant is to be applied to every male in the household of Abraham. This indicates that the servant or serf stands in the relation of a child to his master or owner, who is therefore accountable for the soul of his serf, as for that of his son. It points out the applicability of the covenant to others, as well as the children of Abraham, and therefore its capability of universal extension when the fullness of time should come.

And this, more directly to our question, from Matthew Henry:

It was peculiar to the males, *though the women were also included in the covenant, for the man is the head of the woman.* (italics mine)

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Galatians 5:6

For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love.

Galatians 3:25-29

But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise.

Galatians 1:1

Paul, an apostle (not sent from men nor through the agency of man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead),

Under the *new* covenant, in Christ, the external becomes internal, as Paul writes in chapter 5 of Galatians:

Read Galatians 5:6.

And while it is true that *spiritually* man is still the one responsible to God as the head of the household (cf. Ephesians 6:22-33), note what Paul writes in chapter 3:

Read Galatians 3:25-29.

tutor = a boy-leader, i.e. a servant whose office it was to take the children to school

We will, of course, examine these two passages in greater depth later, but now to our text.

Not just immediately after his formal greeting, but by the *fourth word* of Paul's greeting he is already launched into his argument—and the purpose of his writing.

v1

Read Galatians 1:1.

Why does he begin this way? Why does Paul so immediately mount a defense for himself?

As we mentioned in our previous session, the Judaizers that had recently undermined Paul's gospel message were also set on undermining his reputation and calling. It was not just doctrinal, but *personal*. Specifically, they claimed that since his gospel had not been revealed by God, he had no right to the apostolic office.

Also, as mentioned last week, we can infer from the text of this letter to the Galatians that there were three charges leveled against him—three charges he rebuts in this letter:

1. He was not a true apostle; his gospel message had not been revealed to him by God.
2. Since he was a false apostle, his gospel, as well, was false.
3. His gospel message of grace instead of law led to lawlessness and immorality—loose living, license.

But back to the first—which he begins defending with his first breath (as he dictates the letter to his amanuensis), and continues through to the end of the second chapter.

[Why should we care? Why should we spend time studying what Paul writes in defense of his calling? Because so much of our doctrine comes from what he wrote. Have you ever entertained the thought, even fleetingly, that Paul's teaching carries less weight because it is not printed in red in your bible? It is important that we, along with those Galatians, understand the basis for the apostle's authority.]

Paul will expand on this later, but right now he takes the opportunity to set the tone of this letter—and lay the groundwork for his rebuttal of the charges against him. Were he an attorney in a court of law, this would be his opening statement to the jury.

As he has in other letters, he begins by stating his credentials. He is an...

apostle = *apostolos* (ap-os'-tol-os) = from <G649> (apostello ↓); a delegate; specially an ambassador of the Gospel; officially a commissioner of Christ ["apostle"] (with miraculous powers) :- apostle, messenger, he that is sent.

apostello = set apart, i.e. (by implication) to send out (properly on a mission) literal or figurative :- put in, send (away, forth, out), set [at liberty].

In this case, however, he follows that up with a clarification important for those in Galatia:

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

2 Peter 1:20-21

But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

Acts 9:3-9

As he was traveling, it happened that he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him; and he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" And He said, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting, but get up and enter the city, and it will be told you what you must do."

The men who traveled with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one. Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; and leading him by the hand, they brought him into Damascus. And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

Galatians 1:2

and all the brethren who are with me, To the churches of Galatia:

Galatians 1:3

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ,

Galatians 1:4

who gave Himself for our sins so that He might rescue us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father,

An apostle—a messenger—is sent *by* someone. In the case of the original disciples, they were commissioned by the living, corporeal Christ. Paul wants the Galatians to understand right out of the chute that he, too, was sent—by the same Christ and Father God, *not* (as some were rumoring) by mere men. The only difference (we know from having read the account in Acts) is that he was called not by the corporeal but by the *ascended* Christ.

men, man = *anthropos* = human being

through the agency = (more often translated “by” or “through”) = a primary preposition denoting **the channel of an act**; through (in very wide applications, local, causal or occasional) :- after, always, among, at, to avoid, because of (that), briefly, by, for (cause)...fore, from, in, by occasion of, of, by reason of, for sake, that, thereby, therefore, × though, through (-out), to, wherefore, with (-in).

The NASB fleshes this out for us by inserting “sent” and “the agency of,” whereas, the KJVs keep it more literal:

(not from/of men nor through/by man...)

...but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead.

The importance of this distinction of a supernatural calling is reinforced by Peter, in his second epistle.

Read 2 Peter 1:20-21.

It was this risen Christ who called Paul—not by way of one of the other disciples acting on His behalf, but directly, personally.

Read Acts 9:3-9.

And later in the first chapter of Galatians Paul goes into greater detail about how this calling took place.

v2

This point is so central to the purpose of this letter that Paul interrupts himself and leaves an awkwardly structured sentence in his wake. The second verse continues with what should have been the fourth and following words of v1. It would have read...

Paul, an apostle, and all the brethren who are with me, to the churches in Galatia...

But he could not wait, and had to insert this critical rebuttal even at the very beginning.

v3

Paul's greeting is his standard one used in virtually every one of his letters—word-for-word in most. But here it takes on a special significance.

- He greets the Galatians with “grace” (*charis*), when they have set aside the grace of God for a return to the regulations and chains of the law.
- He greets them with “peace” (*eirēnē*—the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew *shalom*), when they had lost the peace that comes into a life by way of the grace of God through Christ's atoning sacrifice on the cross.

And he expands on this in v4.

v4

who gave Himself for our sins...

Even this simple three-letter word takes on a special significance in his addressing the Galatians. As Boice notes:

The Greek word *hyper* (translated “for”) typically denotes substitution. So, for example, professional letter writers would close their document with their name, adding, “I wrote on behalf of [*hyper*] him who does not

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Galatians 1:4

who gave Himself for our sins so that He might rescue us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father,

know letters.” This phrase had the effect of legalizing the document. In the NT the substitutionary idea is clear in the use of the word *hyper* by Caiaphas to argue that it was necessary “that one man die *for* the people” (John 11:50) and in Paul’s statement that “one died *for* all, and therefore all died” (2 Corinthians 5:14).

...so that He might rescue us from this present evil age...

This phrase in v4 is *not* typical for a Pauline greeting, but was added here for emphasis to these Galatians who were in the process of forgetting all that Christ did for them on the cross.

rescue^{NASB,NIV}, **deliver**^{KJVS} = from <G1537> (ek) and <G138> (haireomai); active to tear out; middle to select; figurative to release :- deliver, pluck out, rescue.

evil = from a derivative of <G4192> (ponos); **hurtful**, i.e. evil (properly in effect or influence, and thus differing from <G2556> (kakos), which refers rather to essential character, as well as from <G4550> (sapos), which indicates degeneracy from original virtue); figurative **calamitous**; also (passive) ill, i.e. **diseased**; but especially (morally) culpable, i.e. derelict, vicious, facinorous; neuter (singular) mischief, malice, or (plural) guilt; masculine (singular) the devil, or (plural) sinners :- bad, evil, grievous, harm, lewd, malicious, wicked (-ness). See also <G4191> (poneroterous).

age = from the same as <G104> (aei); properly **an age**; by extension perpetuity (also past); **by implication the world**; specially (Jewish) a Messianic period (present or future) :- age, course, eternal, (for) ever (-more), [n-]ever, (beginning of the, while the) world (began, without end). Compare <G5550> (chronos).

Boice: ...not a “deliverance from” but a “rescue from the power of.” The deliverance is conceived of here, not as a deliverance out of the present evil world, but as a deliverance from the power of evil and the values of the present world-system through the power of the risen Christ within the Christian.

...according to the will of our God and Father,

Here again Paul pointedly reminds his readers—even while still greeting them—that all of this is of God—not man. Calling, conversion, discipleship, ministry—all are orchestrated from above. And though this seems at first to have been tacked on as almost “boilerplate” theology, included in much the same way as we today might pray, “bless the gift and the giver,” or “lead, guide, and direct,” its inclusion here is anything but casual.

With this Paul reminds his readers that the sovereignty of “God,” and our relationship to Him as “our Father,” preclude their adding into His sovereign plan these legal notions with which Paul’s gospel—the gospel of Christ—has been corrupted. What they have accepted from others, and are now practicing, is *not* part of “the will of our God and Father.”

v5

Paul concludes his greeting with a doxology—something else he does not normally do.

Here he draws a contrast between “this present evil age” and the eternity of God’s glory.

forevermore^{NASB}, **for ever and ever**^{KJVS,NIV} = lit., “unto the ages of ages”

The foolishness of false teachers—those preaching a “different gospel” (v6)—will pass away. Only the *true* gospel of Jesus Christ, and the glory due Him and His Father because of it, will continue “unto the ages.”

Galatians 1:5

to whom be the glory forevermore. Amen.

What is the attraction of “mechanics” over “faith”?

We have gotten into the habit—as does the apostle Paul, here in v6 (“I am amazed...!”)—of shaking our heads in disbelief over those who would substitute insurmountable works over simple faith and trust. But isn’t it often easier to perform the purely mechanical than to engage with the mysteries of the spiritual?

The mechanical often requires less thought, less involvement. Just do it and be done with it. *There, I’ve accomplished something. Now I feel good about myself.*

I imagine that for the Galatians, too, there might have been some of this natural bent toward the mechanical over the spiritual. The mechanical can be held in the *hand*; it is real, substantial. The spiritual, however, must be held in the *mind*, while all around the mechanical is taking place! We live in a world of the mechanical, not the spiritual.

It isn’t that we dislike God and His ways. It doesn’t necessarily mean that we don’t want to spend time with Him. Just that *doing* is easier than *thinking*. For flesh, the mechanical is easier than the spiritual. I see this in the guy who has been doing the bulk of the re-siding of our house: He works Saturdays, Sundays, holidays. Even if it is a raging blizzard outside, he’d rather be out working—“accomplishing something” than sitting at home with his own thoughts.

So the apostle visits the Galatians and introduces them to Christ, and the doctrine of faith, and grace. The people respond, they form churches and begin to grow in the Lord. But the concepts of “faith” and “grace” are intangible, ephemeral. One cannot hold them in the hand. They are thought. They are spiritual.

Then someone else comes along after Paul and tells them that their doctrine is skewed, incomplete. It must also include the rite of circumcision, and the observance of the ancient Jewish feasts and holy days. Well now, here’s something tangible. Faith and grace are difficult to quantify, but getting circumcised (though unpleasant) is something done once and set aside; attending feasts and holy days is something that can be checked off the calendar as done. Finished. *I am a good person. I did what I had to. I’m a good Christian. I go to church every Sunday, sometimes go to Sunday School, attend business meetings, show up on work days... I’m a good Christian. I’m nice to my neighbor, don’t cheat on my taxes, listen to preachers on the radio... I’m a good Christian.*

We are much more comfortable with things we can quantify, measure—which is why it was so easy for the Galatians to head down the path they did. Which left the apostle Paul “amazed.”

v6

After his greeting—which, as we saw in our previous session, includes plenty of meat in itself—Paul immediately launches into his reason for writing.

amazed = *thaumazō* = from <G2295> (thauma); to wonder; by implication to admire :- admire, have in admiration, marvel, wonder.

KJVS: marvel

NIV & ESV: astonished

There a couple of extra colors to this word. On the surface it expresses surprise, even shock. But in many uses this Greek word often includes, or is often associated with, the idea of *fear*—as we see in the episode with Jesus and the disciples caught out on the lake in a storm.

Read Luke 8:25.

And here it is easy to imagine Paul struck with fear for these people he had led to the Lord. We can see this measure of fear or apprehension in the words he chooses in this passage.

Galatians 1:6

I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel;

Luke 8:25

And He said to them, “Where is your faith?” They were fearful and amazed, saying to one another, “Who then is this, that He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey Him?”

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Paul is amazed that they are “so quickly deserting” Christ: *houtos* (hoo’ taus) *tacheos* (takh-eh’-oce) *metatithēmi* (met-at-ith’-ay-mee).

so = or (before a vowel) *houtos*, hoo’-toce; adverb from <G3778> (*houtos*); in this way (referring to what precedes or follows) :- after that, after (in) this manner, as, even (so), for all that, like (-wise), no more, on this fashion (-wise), so (in like manner), thus, what.

quickly^{NASB,NIV}, **soon**^{KJV} = adverb from <G5036> (*tachos*); briefly, i.e. (in time) **speedily**, or (in manner) **rapidly** :- hastily, quickly, shortly, **soon**, suddenly.

deserting^{NASB,NIV}, **turning away**^{NKJV} = from <G3326> (*meta*) and <G5087> (*tithemi*); to transfer, i.e. (literal) transport, (by implication) **exchange** [one thing for another], (reflexive) change sides, or (figurative) pervert :- carry over, change, remove, translate, turn; to transfer, change;
Vincent: “The verb is used...of altering a treaty, changing an opinion, desertion from an army.”

I won’t wade into all the verb tenses used here, but let me quote Boice to summarize this business of “deserting”:

Since the verb is probably in the middle voice, rather than the passive, it is not even possible for the Galatians to claim that their conduct was the result of outside influences. This is something they were doing to themselves and were responsible for. The only ray of hope is that they were still only in the *process* of deserting and could possibly be reclaimed.

(The *KJV* implies an accomplished fact, which to modern ears does not accurately express the verb.)

And what is truly “amazing” for Paul is that they were doing this “so quickly”—so soon after becoming believers in Christ. They were being fickle, short-sighted, too easily manipulated by others, and double-minded.

James 1:5-8

But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

2 Corinthians 11:4

For if one comes and preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted, you bear this beautifully.

Read James 1:5-8.

One can easily imagine that if Paul returned to these churches and laid out his gospel again, that they would then choose it, again, over the one presented by the Judaizers. In other words, *they were people who habitually believed the last thing heard*.

Matthew Henry: Their sin and folly were that they did not hold fast the doctrine of Christianity as it had been preached to them, but **suffered themselves to be removed from the purity and simplicity of it**. (emphasis added)

But note what Paul is really saying here: By believing this spurious doctrine, they were not deserting him, Paul, nor were they deserting the gospel itself. They were deserting “Him who called you”—God Himself.

...for a different gospel...

different = *heteros* = of uncertain affinity; (an-, the) other or different :- altered, else, next (day), one, (an-) other, some, strange.

The church in *Corinth* was not guilty of actually deserting the true gospel, but of something else.

Read 2 Corinthians 11:4.

Strangers were coming into their church preaching spurious gospels—and the Corinthians were receiving them politely and giving them the pulpit to have their say!

Peter wrote in his second epistle:

You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness... (2 Peter 3:17)

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Galatians 1:7

which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.

Galatians 1:8-9

But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!

Luke 21:5-6

And while some were talking about the temple, that it was adorned with beautiful stones and votive gifts, He said, "As for these things which you are looking at, the days will come in which there will not be left one stone upon another which will not be torn down."

Why do we study God's word today? Why is it so important? So that when someone preaches a "different gospel" in our hearing we will not believe what they say (as the Galatians). We won't even be polite and let them have their say (as the Corinthians), but will reject them and their teaching. The only way to be able to do this is to know what God really says in His word—the true "good message."

v7

another = *allos* = a primary word; "else," i.e. different (in many applications) :- more, one (another), (an-, some an-) other (-s, -wise).

These are different words. From *Vine's*:

Allos (v7) expresses a numerical difference and denotes another of the same sort [e.g., flesh of beasts and flesh of men: different, but both flesh (1 Corinthians 15:39)]; *heteros* (v6) expresses a qualitative difference and denotes another of a different sort [e.g., the glory of heaven compared to the glory of the earth (1 Corinthians 15:40)].

This is not without controversy. Some scholars reverse these. Take, for example, *The Message* paraphrase:

I can't believe your fickleness—how easily you have turned traitor to him who called you by the grace of Christ by embracing a variant message! [v7] It is not a minor variation, you know; it is completely other, an alien message, a no-message, a lie about God. Those who are provoking this agitation among you are turning the Message of Christ on its head.

disturbing = to *stir* or *agitate* (*roil* water) :- trouble.

distort^{NASB}, **pervert**^{KJVS,NIV} = corrupt, turn

v8-9

Albert Barnes: The great system of salvation had been taught; and no other was to be admitted, no matter who preached it; no matter what the character or rank of the preacher [or angelic being! (Satan)]: and no matter with what imposing claims he came. It follows from this, that the mere rank, character, talent, eloquence, or piety of a preacher does not of necessity give his doctrine a claim to our belief, or prove that his gospel is true. Great talents may be prostituted; and great sanctity of manner, and even holiness of character, may be in error; and no matter what may be the rank, and talents, and eloquence, and piety of the preacher, if he does not accord with the gospel which was first preached, he is to be held accursed.

accursed^{NASB,KJVS}, **eternally condemned**^{NIV} = anathema = from <G394> (anathemai); that which is laid up, i.e. a votive offering; a (religious) ban or (concrete) **excommunicated** (thing or person) :- accused, anathema, curse, × great.

from Brown's *Dictionary of New Testament Theology*...

Secular Greek: "that which is set up", which evolved into the consecrated gift, the offering (set up in the temple of the deity); what is handed over (to the wrath of the gods); what is dedicated (to destruction), and what has fallen under the power of a curse or ban.

OT: What is banned (persons or things) is directly given up to God and so cannot be redeemed.

NT: The old form of *anathema* is found only in Luke 21:5, translated in the NASB, "votive gifts."

Read Luke 21:5-6.

The formula *eto anathema* ("let him be anathema" or "accursed") is not a "disciplinary order" of some human court to prosecute an unworthy person.

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Matthew 18:5-6

“And whoever receives one such child in My name receives Me; but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him to have a heavy millstone hung around his neck, and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.”

Rather, it pronounces for a specific case the sentence that comes from God and delivers the offender to the punishment of God. Thereby responsibility rests entirely upon the person addressed...

Paul uses the *anathema* in the same sense in Galatians 1:8,9. He who preaches a false gospel is delivered to destruction by God. Again it is not a matter of an act of church discipline in the sense of excommunication. The curse exposes the culprits to the judicial wrath of God. In this act of being handed over to God lies the theological meaning of the consecrated gift and the ban curse. As the consecrated gift is a sign of acknowledgement and submission..., so, like a consecrated gift, the person sentenced by the *anathema* is immediately delivered up to the judgment of God.

Paul tells the Galatians and us today: “I don’t care *who* it is standing before you, no matter their reputation or schooling, no matter their eloquence, no matter how high they are in the church hierarchy—even if an angel from heaven comes down and stands behind your pulpit, if his teaching does not square with Scripture, then he is accursed, and you are to turn him out.”

Boice makes the point that in spiritual terms this word *anathema* means damnation—and that the strength of this has bothered some commentators and other readers of the letter. But look at what Jesus had to say in a similar vein:

Read Matthew 18:5-6.

It is clear that Jesus has little patience with someone who purposely causes a believer to stumble in their faith—in Paul’s context, by preaching a contrary gospel. But I want to conclude with this thought: God’s word makes it clear that there is a heavy burden on the teacher to remain true to Scripture, and not to teach an errant gospel or doctrine. But the burden does not end with the teacher. Here and elsewhere God’s word makes it clear as well that every individual believer is responsible to ferret out those whose teaching is in error. John writes in his first epistle that we are not to

...believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.
(1 John 4:1)

The only way for a believer to make this determination is to be well-schooled in Scripture for him or her self. The burden is on *every one of us* to read and know and understand the *true* gospel. Only then are we able to “test the spirits” and consign a teacher of a false gospel up to the judgment of holy God.

YOUR NOTES

Galatians 1:10

For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ.

Galatians 1:24

And they were glorifying God because of me.

Galatians 1:11-12

For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

v10

V10 and v24 serve as bookends to this next passage.

Read v10 & v24.

I think we could easily spend our time today on v10 alone, for it is so easy to see ourselves in it. Even when we are serving our Lord, what is our foundational motive?

- to please others?
- to impress others?
- to move ourselves higher in the church hierarchy?

seeking the favor of... persuade

The kjvs have it more *literally* correct, but the later versions capture the purpose behind the phrase in this context.

Vines: ...signifies to apply persuasion, to prevail upon or win over, to persuade, bringing about a change of mind by the influence of reason or moral considerations.

Barnes: to bring over to kind feelings, to conciliate, to pacify, to quiet.

Brown: [Paul] is stressing the fact that he strives to convince men by argument, not because it was necessary for his personal authority, but for the sake of the gospel that he proclaimed.

to **please** men = probably from <G142> (airo) (through the idea of **exciting emotion**); **to be agreeable** (or by implication to seek to be so) :- please.

One cannot be a true bond-servant of Christ if one's first motive and purpose is to please men.

Note something I had not seen before: Paul here includes a clever reference to his old life as one who had persecuted Christians—"If I were *still* trying to please men..." He claimed, in his old life as a persecutor of The Way, that he was serving God, but in his heart he was serving his own advancement by pleasing those over him.

John Gill: formerly he had studied to please men, when he held the clothes of those that stoned Stephen, made havoc of the church, hating men and women to prison; and went to the high priest, and asked letters of him to go to Damascus, and persecute the followers of Christ, thereby carrying favour with him.

It is important to the apostle that the Galatians understand he does not serve man, but *man is the beneficiary of his service to Christ*. That's how it works: When we try to please man, we fail every time. But when our purpose is to serve *God*, man benefits.

v11 & 12

Likewise they must understand, in v11, that the message with which he served the Lord did not come from man, but from Christ Himself.

Read vs11-12.

have you know = *gnorizo* = from a derivative of <G1097> (ginosko); to make known; subject to know :- certify, declare, make known, give to understand, do to wit, wot.

Boice: ...means "to make clear," "certify," and has the effect of suggesting a somewhat formal statement to follow.

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Galatians 1:11-12

For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

Romans 11:34-36

For Who has known the mind of the Lord, or who became His counselor?

Or Who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to Him again? For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.

Galatians 1:13

For you have heard of my former manner of life in Judaism, how I used to persecute the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it;

Acts 7:57-8:3

But they cried out with a loud voice, and covered their ears and rushed at him with one impulse. When they had driven him out of the city, they began stoning him; and the witnesses laid aside their robes at the feet of a young man named Saul.

They went on stoning Stephen as he called on the Lord and said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!" Then falling on his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them!" Having said this, he fell asleep. Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death. And on that day a great persecution began against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. Some devout men buried Stephen, and made loud lamentation over him. But Saul began ravaging the church, entering house after house, and dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison.

PAUL'S MESSAGE

~~Man → Paul → Man~~

Christ → Paul → Christ

Even though the translation is rather loose, the NIV captures the essence of what Paul is saying here in v11: ...**the gospel I preached is not something that man made up.**

As Paul writes at the end of Romans 11:

Read Romans 11:34-36.

Verses 11 & 12 serve as a preface for Paul's biographical sketch which begins with verse 13 and continues through to the end of chapter two—his first important thesis: a rebuttal of the charge that he was not a true apostle because his gospel message had not been revealed to him by God. And in v12 he makes his opening, declarative statement, consisting of three parts:

1. I neither received it from man,
2. nor was I taught it,
3. but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ

received = *paralambano* = from <G3844> (para) and <G2983> (lambano); **to receive near, i.e. associate with oneself** (in any familiar or intimate act or relation); by analogy to assume an office; figurative to learn :- receive, take (unto, with).

revelation = *apokalypsis* (ap-ok-al'-oop-sis) = from <G601> (apokalupto); **disclosure** :- **appearing**, coming, lighten, **manifestation**, be revealed, revelation; **an uncovering**.

Notice how personal this is. Paul does not say "a revelation *about* Jesus Christ", but "*of* Jesus Christ." The person Himself. Note v15-16:

But when God... was pleased to reveal *His Son in me* so that I might preach *Him*...

v13

What we're going to do now is use this passage to go back and fill in the details of Paul's life.

For you have heard of my former manner of life in Judaism, how I used to persecute the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it;

Read Acts 7:57-8:3. stoning of Stephen

- The term used to describe Saul as a "young man" did not mean what we would understand as a youth, but in the day meant someone between the ages of 24 and 45.
- "witnesses": those who had brought evidence against Stephen, and would be those who pushed him to the ground and threw the first stones (Deuteronomy 17:7).
- Saul had some official part in the execution—either as instigator or exercising delegated authority.
- **ravage, made havoc** (_(KJVS)) = middle from a probable derivative of <G3089> ↓ (luo) (meaning filth); properly **to soil**, i.e. (figurative) **insult** (maltreat) :- **make havoc of**.
luo = a primary verb; **to "loosen"** (literal or figurative) :- **break (up), destroy**, dissolve, (un-) loose, melt, put off. Compare <G4486> (rhegunimi).

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Acts 26:9-11

"So then, I thought to myself that I had to do many things hostile to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. And this is just what I did in Jerusalem; not only did I lock up many of the saints in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests, but also when they were being put to death I cast my vote against them. And as I punished them often in all the synagogues, I tried to force them to blaspheme; and being furiously enraged at them, I kept pursuing them even to foreign cities."

Galatians 1:14

and I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my countrymen, being more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions.

Acts 22:3-5

"I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated under Gamaliel, strictly according to the law of our fathers, being zealous for God just as you all are today. I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and putting both men and women into prisons, as also the high priest and all the Council of the elders can testify. From them I also received letters to the brethren, and started off for Damascus in order to bring even those who were there to Jerusalem as prisoners to be punished."

Acts 26:4-5

"So then, all Jews know my manner of life from my youth up, which from the beginning was spent among my own nation and at Jerusalem; since they have known about me for a long time, if they are willing to testify, that I lived as a Pharisee according to the strictest sect of our religion."

Read Acts 26:9-11.

- **hostile**^{NASB}, **contrary**^{KJVS} = from <G1725> (enanti); **opposite**; figurative **antagonistic** :- (over) against, contrary.
- **punished** = from a compound of <G5092> (time) and ouros (a guard); properly **to protect one's honor**, i.e. to avenge (inflict a penalty) :- punish.

v14

Read Acts 22:3-5.

- This is Paul's defense before an angry mob of Jews from Asia Minor.
- Either he worked under the direct orders of, or at least had the backing of, the Jewish religious leaders.

Read Acts 26:4-5.

- This is the opening portion of Paul's defense, in Jerusalem, before King Agrippa, with the governor, Porcius Festus, also present.
- He was a Pharisee, which as he points out was the strictest sect of the Jewish religion.

YOUR NOTES

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Galatians 1:15-16a

But when God, who had set me apart even from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, was pleased to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles...

Acts 26:12-18

"While so engaged as I was journeying to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests, at midday, O King, I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining all around me and those who were journeying with me. And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew dialect, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.' And I said, 'Who are You, Lord?' And the Lord said, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. But get up and stand on your feet; for this purpose I have appeared to you, to appoint you a minister and a witness not only to the things which you have seen, but also to the things in which I will appear to you; rescuing you from the Jewish people and from the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you, to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me."

Acts 9:13-16

But Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he did to Your saints at Jerusalem; and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name." But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake."

v15-16A

Acts 26:12-18 is a fleshing out of the scene on the road to Damascus.

Read Acts 26:12-18.

Here we have some details not found in the Acts 9 passage:

- the light was brighter than the sun
- everyone with him fell to the ground when they saw the light and heard the voice (but 9:7 tells us they saw no one—which implies Saul *did*).
- **"It is hard for you to kick against the goads."** This was a common expression in the Greek world for opposition to deity.
Vincent's Word Studies: The sharp goad carried in the ploughman's hand, against which the oxen kick on being pricked. The metaphor, though not found in Jewish writings, was common in Greek and Roman writings. Thus, Euripides ("Bacchae," 791): "Being enraged, I would kick against the goads, a mortal against a god." Plautus ("Truculentus, 4, 2, 55): "If you strike the goads with your fists, you hurt your hands more than the goads."
- Here is a more detailed account of what the Lord Jesus said to Paul—his "calling".
- **appoint** = to choose one in advance
- **minister** = from <G5259> (hupo) and a derivative of *eresso* (to row); an under-oarsman, i.e. (general) **subordinate** (assistant, sexton, constable) :- minister, officer, **servant**.
- **witness** = or figurative [genitive]); **by analogy a "martyr"** :- martyr, record, witness.

Read Acts 9:13-16.

- Jesus Himself informed Paul that he would
 - be a witness and minister to the Gentiles (v17);
 - that those who believed his message would receive forgiveness of their sins and become part of God's kingdom, His family (v18);
 - and that this would all come about through "faith in Me" alone (v18).

...to reveal His Son in me...

Oh, that we had the time to develop this profound phrase. Please, on your own time, in your own prayer closet, spend time with this. Meditate on how in your own life God "was pleased to reveal His Son *in*" you.

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Galatians 1:16b-17

...I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went away to Arabia, and returned once more to Damascus.

Acts 9:17-20

So Ananias departed and entered the house, and after laying his hands on him said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road by which you were coming, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." And immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he regained his sight, and he got up and was baptized; and he took food and was strengthened. Saul Begins to Preach Christ Now for several days he was with the disciples who were at Damascus, and immediately he began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "He is the Son of God."

Galatians 1:18-19

Then three years later I went up to Jerusalem to become acquainted with Cephas, and stayed with him fifteen days. But I did not see any other of the apostles except James, the Lord's brother.

Galatians 1:20

(Now in what I am writing to you, I assure you before God that I am not lying.)

Galatians 1:21

Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia.

Acts 9:28-30

And he was with them, moving about freely in Jerusalem, speaking out boldly in the name of the Lord. And he was talking and arguing with the Hellenistic Jews; but they were attempting to put him to death. But when the brethren learned of it, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him away to Tarsus.

v16B-17

flesh and blood = human beings

Read Acts 9:17-20.

After a few days recuperation (and further revelation?), Paul immediately begins preaching. He didn't wait to compare notes with church leaders, nor did he have a gradual transition period to rehabilitate his reputation as one imprisoning and killing followers of The Way, but immediately and cleanly switched to proclaiming that which he had just a few days earlier denigrated and persecuted.

Luke's omission of any mention of Arabia in Acts 9, along with its association here with Paul's not consulting with flesh and blood, suggests that he went into Arabia (probably not far from Damascus) to think and study, rather than to preach and establish churches.

v18-19

As with the Jewish mode of reckoning days, we can't say with certainty that Paul spent three literal years—3 x 365 days—in Arabia and Damascus. Remember that the Jews referred to one whole day, plus just tiny portions of the preceding and proceeding days, as "three days." "Three years" here may have been reckoned much the same, totaling just over one year. We can't say for sure.

But these two verses continue the evidence that the gospel Paul preached was not imparted to him by others.

become acquainted with = *historeo* (his-tor-eh'-o) = from a derivative of <G1492> (eido); **to be knowing (learned)**, i.e. (by implication) **to visit for information** (interview) :- see.

This word, from which we get our word "history", suggests the telling of a story: Peter would tell his to Paul, and Paul would tell his to Peter.

v20

It's kind of pathetic, isn't it, that Paul feels he must include a line like this.

v21

Read Acts 9:28-30.

While in Jerusalem, the Hellenistic Jews took after him, so the brethren conducted him to Caesarea, where he embarked by sea, or by caravan cross-country, to Damascus.

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Acts 11:25-26

And he left for Tarsus to look for Saul; and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. And for an entire year they met with the church and taught considerable numbers; and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.

Galatians 1:22-24

I was still unknown by sight to the churches of Judea which were in Christ; but only, they kept hearing, "He who once persecuted us is now preaching the faith which he once tried to destroy." And they were glorifying God because of me.

Meanwhile, Barnabas was in Antioch when he left for Tarsus to find Saul.

Read Acts 11:25-26.

Harmonizing Galatians 1 with these passages, Tarsus (Paul's hometown) was in Cilicia, and Antioch was the capital of Syria.

v22-24

I was still unknown by sight to the churches of Judea which were in Christ;

Because his early years of ministry were spent outside of the nucleus of the new Christian church, his face wouldn't be recognized by many in Judea. It would be a long time before he began his famous "missionary journeys".

...but only, they kept hearing, "He who once persecuted us is now preaching the faith which he once tried to destroy."

There is an air of melancholy in this verse. The Christians had heard of Paul's conversion—at the time it happened. But after that he apparently dropped so completely from sight that he was almost forgotten. The only report heard was that the one who long ago was persecuting the church is now preaching the gospel. (Boice) This stresses his isolation from everything happening in Jerusalem.

Then Boice adds this:

Would that there were more such contentment among Christians today—the contentment to be unknown!

And this chapter ends with the second phrase that we could spend the entirety of a session on. In lieu of that, spend time with it on your own.

And they were glorifying God because of me.

Oh my. What better epitaph could we have on our grave than this: *Because of God working through me, He was glorified.*

YOUR NOTES

Galatians 2:1-3

Then after an interval of fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along also. It was because of a revelation that I went up; and I submitted to them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but I did so in private to those who were of reputation, for fear that I might be running, or had run, in vain. But not even Titus, who was with me, though he was a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised.

Acts 15:2

And when Paul and Barnabas had great dissension and debate with them, the brethren determined that Paul and Barnabas and some others of them should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders concerning this issue.

Paul’s purpose in chapter one of Galatians was to emphasize his independence—that his gospel message had not come from others. His revelation had come directly from Christ Jesus.

His purpose in the first ten verses of chapter two is to emphasize how his gospel message is nonetheless agreeable to the other apostles. Any time human beings are involved, error can creep into even divine revelation.

Read Galatians 2:1-3.

v1

The time period for this Jerusalem council was approximately A.D. 49 or 50—between Paul’s first and second missionary journeys. By now, Barnabas was working and traveling with Paul, and went along with him to this important council. They also took along Titus, probably as a test case; he was their “show & tell.”

We will not dig into it here, but for background on this council, read Acts 15.

v2

It was because of a revelation...

KJVS: And I went up by revelation...

NIV: I went in response to a revelation...

This could refer to Paul’s initial revelation of Christ—especially as it is phrased in the NASB and ESV. But the consensus seems to be that this “revelation” refers to God leading him to go to Jerusalem to compare notes with the other apostles.

Read Acts 15:2.

Just because “the brethren determined” does not mean it was not a revelation from God. Their determination was probably the result of prayer, and Paul’s revelation and determination to go was probably the result of the same. Believers united by the Spirit very often reinforce and confirm one another’s personal revelation—what we today might call “leading.”

submitted to them = from <G303> (ana) and the middle of <G5087> (tithemi); **to set forth** (for oneself), i.e. propound :- communicate, **declare**.

of reputation = to *think*; by implication to *seem* (truthfully or uncertainly) :- **be accounted**, (of own) please (-ure), be of reputation, **seem** (good), **suppose**, think, trow; **those who matter, the recognized authorities**.

Parenthetically, one does not need to leave this verse to know the conclusion of that Jerusalem council. Paul says here that “I submitted to them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles...” As he wrote this, years later, he was still preaching the same gospel Christ gave him in Damascus. His message and his work was affirmed by those “of reputation.”

He submitted this gospel to them “in private...for fear that I might be running, or had run, in vain.”

I like the way *Vincent* explains this:

This is sometimes explained as implying a misgiving on Paul’s part as to the soundness of his own teaching, which he desired to have set at rest by the decision of the principal apostles. But such a misgiving is contrary to Paul’s habitual attitude of settled conviction respecting that gospel which he had received by revelation, and in the preaching of which he had been confirmed by experience. In consulting the Christians at Jerusalem Paul had principally in view the formal endorsement of his work by the church and its leaders. Their formal declaration that he had not been running in vain would

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Galatians 2:3-5

But not even Titus, who was with me, though he was a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised. But it was because of the false brethren secretly brought in, who had sneaked in to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, in order to bring us into bondage. But we did not yield in subjection to them for even an hour, so that the truth of the gospel would remain with you.

Acts 15:1

Some men came down from Judea and began teaching the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved."

Acts 16:1-3

Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra. And a disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek, and he was well spoken of by the brethren who were in Lystra and Iconium. Paul wanted this man to go with him; and he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those parts, for they all knew that his father was a Greek.

materially aid him in his mission. [This] is therefore to be taken as marking an indirect question, "whether" - not "possibly"; and the sense of the whole passage is as follows: "I laid before them that gospel which I preach to the Gentiles, *that they might examine and settle for themselves* the question whether I am not possibly running or had run in vain." The investigation was to be for their satisfaction, not for Paul's.

v3-5

Read vs3-5.

This passage is one that scholars have labored over. I will spare you all the messy details, but it comes down to this: Some Greek manuscripts have removed the negative in v5, making it read as if Paul *did* give in, for a while, to the Judaizers, in having Titus circumcised. One of the reasons for translating it that way—without the negative—is that *with* it the passage is grammatically awkward. But ironically, this actually helps support the authenticity of the rendering we have in our translations. Some scribe wanted to clean up the grammar and make it read more smoothly. The problem is, that in doing this the meaning was reversed! So who are we going to go with, the grammatically astute scribe—or the Spirit of God?

Notice how this controversy is a mirror image of the situation in Jerusalem with Paul. How utterly brilliant God is in how He teaches us down through the centuries.

- There were those at the council in Jerusalem who wanted Paul to bend, to compromise, to just get along for the sake of smoothing the transition from strict Jewish law to the grace of Christ's gospel.
- Then there was a scribe who thought, "Yeah I know this is what the text says, but it is really hard to translate and put into our tongue. If I just change this little thing here, and that little thing here, it will read much more smoothly."
- And today there are those who want Christians to just get along, to bend, to compromise, to not be so literal and strict about what God's word teaches.

Listen to what Albert Barnes has to say about this passage. Here is how he describes Paul's response:

We did not submit to this at all. We did not yield even for the shortest time. We did not waver in our opposition to their demands, or in the slightest degree become subject to their wishes. We steadily opposed their claims, in order that the great principle might be forever settled, that the laws of Moses were not to be imposed as obligatory on the Gentile converts.

TITUS

Read Acts 15:1.

Read Galatians 2:3. (above left)

Paul offers this as proof that the council in Jerusalem was in agreement that the Jewish rite of circumcision was not a requirement for The Way—indeed, it was a stumbling block for faith in Christ Jesus. Here is how *The Message* paraphrases this passage:

Significantly, Titus, non-Jewish though he was, was not required to be circumcised. While we were in conference we were infiltrated by spies pretending to be Christians, who slipped in to find out just how free true Christians are. Their ulterior motive was to reduce us to their brand of servitude. We didn't give them the time of day. We were determined to preserve the truth of the Message for you. (2:3-5)

WHAT ABOUT TIMOTHY?

You may be asking: *But what about Timothy? Paul himself circumcised him?* (Acts 16:1-3) The difference between these two situations is important. In the case of Timothy—who was the son of a mixed marriage (mother was a Jew; father was Greek)—this was a voluntary act so that the issue would not become an issue for those for those they

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

1 Corinthians 9:19-20

For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I may win more. To the Jews I became as a Jew, so that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law though not being myself under the Law, so that I might win those who are under the Law;

Colossians 2:8

See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.

Galatians 2:6

But from those who were of high reputation (what they were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality)—well, those who were of reputation contributed nothing to me.

Galatians 6:3

For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself.

would be ministering to: Jews. In Timothy's case the issue was further clouded because he was half Jewish.

Titus was completely Gentile, and in his case the Judaizers were claiming that circumcision was *necessary* for salvation. If Paul (and the other apostles) had agreed to this, soon Christianity would be as impossibly burdened by the Law as Judaism, nullifying the grace of Christ.

The situation with Timothy was a demonstration of what Paul writes in 1 Corinthians.

Read 1 Corinthians 9:19-20.

The situation with Titus was a demonstration of what he wrote in Colossians.

Read Colossians 2:8.

v6

This second chapter of Galatians is an example of how we are wrong to think of the leaders in the early church as plastic saints. They were all flesh and blood men who, just like us, could be narrow-minded, stubborn, and disagreeable.

It is not as obvious in the NASB, but—oddly enough—the NIV does a good job of capturing Paul's tone here. Go back up to v2. In the NIV it reads:

I went in response to a revelation and set before them the gospel that I preach among the Gentiles. But I did this privately *to those who seemed to be leaders*, for fear that I was running or had run my race in vain. (*emphasis added*)

Now v6 in the NIV:

As for those who seemed to be important—whatever they were makes no difference to me; God does not judge by external appearance—those men added nothing to my message. (*emphasis added*)

The NIV doesn't show it, but the word is repeated after the parentheses; in the NASB—

well, those who were *of reputation* contributed nothing to me. (*emphasis added*)

—and the margin notes say “Literally, seemed to be something.”

And down in v9 in the NIV:

James, Peter and John, *those reputed to be pillars*, gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship... (*emphasis added*)

Got it? Everything was not sweetness and light between these men. Paul is choosing his words carefully, showing deference to the original disciples of Jesus—but not too much. He is declaring they were leaders, pillars in the church—but weren't always right.

The word so translated here Paul also used in chapter 6.

Read Galatians 6:3.

...if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing...

(*what they were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality*)

Paul uses “were” to acknowledge their positions as disciples to Jesus while He was in flesh, but adds that this doesn't pull any weight with either him or God. The phrase “God shows no partiality” could be rendered literally as “God does not receive a face”—which means that God cares little for what is on the outside; what is important to Him is what is going on inside.

But between the parentheses we also hear the same Paul who referred to the other apostles as “*seemed to be leaders*.” He was not personally cowed in their presence, nor would he permit his gospel message to be pushed aside in favor of that proposed by the legalizers, either.

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Galatians 2:7-9

But on the contrary, seeing that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been to the circumcised (for He who effectually worked for Peter in his apostleship to the circumcised effectually worked for me also to the Gentiles), and recognizing the grace that had been given to me, James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, so that we might go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.

1 Corinthians 12:6

There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons.

1 Corinthians 12:11

But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.

Galatians 2:10

They only asked us to remember the poor—the very thing I also was eager to do.

v7-9

Read vs7-9.

v7 has an unfortunate rendering in the KJVs.

KJV: when they saw that *the gospel of the uncircumcision* was committed unto me, as *the gospel of the circumcision* was unto Peter... (*emphasis added*)

The NKJV cleans it up somewhat:

NKJV: when they saw that *the gospel for the uncircumcised* had been committed to me, as *the gospel for the circumcised* was to Peter... (*emphasis added*)

But both leave an impression that there were *two* gospels: one for the Jews and one for the Gentiles. The NASB has it

NASB: seeing that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been to the circumcised...

The Message paraphrase clarifies it further:

It was soon evident that God had entrusted me with the same message to the non-Jews as Peter had been preaching to the Jews.

As Paul has been making clear, there is only one, true gospel.

And v8 emphasizes that this one gospel did not just come from, but is enabled by God.

effectually^{NASB,KJV}, **effectively**^{NKJV} = from <G1756> (energes); to be active, efficient :- do, (be) effectual (fervent), be mighty in, shew forth self, work (effectually in); to be at work, to work, to do.

Read 1 Corinthians 12:6,11.

The Lord cares about both His chosen people, the Jews, and Gentiles. To that end, He selected apostles for each, and made sure that there work was effective.

In v9 Paul tells the Galatians that the result of his going to the Jerusalem conference was that his gospel message was affirmed by the three leaders—James, Peter and John—and sanctioned his ministry to the Gentiles. (*This was James, the brother of the Lord. By the time of this Jerusalem council, James the son of Zebedee had been put to death by Herod.*)

...*the right hand of fellowship*...

The church in which I was raised used this. When someone became a member of the church through their profession of faith in Christ Jesus, they came down to the front of the congregation and received from the pastor the “right hand of fellowship.”

And in the church this is not so much “we welcome you into our domain,” but “we now stand with you, support you; we will pray for you, because you are now our brother or sister in the Lord.”

And Paul closes this passage in v10 by stating that he already had every intention of performing the one request the elders made of him: to remember the poor—to collect and deliver funds and help to those in need.

CONCLUSION

We spend quite a bit of time discussing and learning about the fellowship and sense of community we all have in Christ. This first passage of chapter two has given us a pretty good picture of what that looked like in the *leadership* of the early church—how supernatural revelation in an individual leads not necessarily to radical independence or rebellion, but in submission, accountability, and the building up of the church. But also how accountability does not need to mean a dilution of truth—of a compromise of essentials. Even in his accountability, Paul refused to corrupt the gospel given him by Christ Himself. All of us can take a cue from that, and the behavior of these men.

Mark 14:37-38

And He came and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, “Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour? Keep watching and praying that you may not come into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

Galatians 2:11

But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned.

Acts 15:30-35

So when they were sent away, they went down to Antioch; and having gathered the congregation together, they delivered the letter. When they had read it, they rejoiced because of its encouragement. Judas and Silas, also being prophets themselves, encouraged and strengthened the brethren with a lengthy message. After they had spent time there, they were sent away from the brethren in peace to those who had sent them out. [But it seemed good to Silas to remain there.] But Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch, teaching and preaching with many others also, the word of the Lord.

Luke 22:59-62

After about an hour had passed, another man began to insist, saying, “Certainly this man also was with Him, for he is a Galilean too.” But Peter said, “Man, I do not know what you are talking about.” Immediately, while he was still speaking, a rooster crowed. The Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had told him, “Before a rooster crows today, you will deny Me three times.” And he went out and wept bitterly.

I would like to preface this session with something Jesus said to his sleepy disciples—Peter among them—in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Read Mark 14:37-38.

Every day we are reminded, in ourselves and others, that the flesh is indeed weak and unreliable. And now in Galatians we turn to more evidence of this—and again in Peter.

When we last left Paul and the apostles in Jerusalem, in v10, relations among them were pretty amicable. However, in the NASB and KJV v11 begins with an ominous “but”.

Last week we learned that the apostle Paul, though willing to be accountable and submit to the “elder” apostles in Jerusalem, was *unwilling* to compromise the gospel message given him by Christ.

I sometimes wonder if Paul wasn’t very much like a guy I served with in the navy. When we were on ship in Vietnam, in the evenings we would play cards or board games on the mess deck. And this guy always insisted—most vehemently—that the rules be followed at all times. He was rather obnoxious about it—it was almost a fetish with him that there be absolutely no compromise on the rules of whatever game we were playing. He was in every other respect a pleasant, agreeable chap, but once in the game he became relentless and absolutely unyielding.

On matters of the integrity of the gospel, the apostle Paul didn’t seem to be much of a diplomat. First Corinthians 9:19-20 shows that Paul was more than willing to be a chameleon when it came to obtaining an audience with different segments of society, to let them see him as one of their own, but, as Colossians 2:8 and many other passages illustrate, he was not willing at all to alter the foundational truth of the gospel.

v11

But when Cephas came to Antioch...

We don’t know for certain *when* this took place, but most scholars agree that it was after the Jerusalem council that we discussed in the previous session. The product of that council was a letter of encouragement and instruction to the churches in Antioch and the rest of Syria, as well as those in Cilicia. Paul and Barnabas with others were selected to carry this letter, and we pick up the story in Acts 15.

Read Acts 15:30-35.

Presumably Peter visited Antioch during this period, and that is when he and Paul mixed it up.

opposed him = from <G473> (anti) and <G2476> (histemi); **to stand against**, i.e. oppose :- resist, withstand.

stood condemned = from <G2596> (kata) and <G1097> (ginosko); to note against, i.e. find fault with :- blame, condemn; **“to be recognized as guilty and condemned by one’s own heart or conduct”** (Brown).

Peter was no stranger to this condition.

Read Luke 22:59-62. (In the courtyard of Caiaphas.)

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Acts 10:9-16

On the next day, as they were on their way and approaching the city, Peter went up on the housetop about the sixth hour to pray. But he became hungry and was desiring to eat; but while they were making preparations, he fell into a trance; and he saw* the sky opened up, and an object like a great sheet coming down, lowered by four corners to the ground, and there were in it all kinds of four-footed animals and crawling creatures of the earth and birds of the air. A voice came to him, "Get up, Peter, kill and eat!" But Peter said, "By no means, Lord, for I have never eaten anything unholy and unclean." Again a voice came to him a second time, "What God has cleansed, no longer consider unholy." This happened three times, and immediately the object was taken up into the sky.

Galatians 2:12

For prior to the coming of certain men from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he began to withdraw and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision.

v12

Before we dig into v12 we need to go back to the passage where God first addressed this issue with Peter.

Read Acts 10:9-16.

The Lord used that vision about food to tell Peter it was OK for him to minister to Gentiles, and v48 of this chapter tells us that Cornelius asked Peter to "stay on for a few days" with them—which the apostle did. So Peter not only came into the Gentile house to speak with them about Christ Jesus, but slept and ate with them for several days.

Now back to Galatians.

Read v12a:

For prior to the coming of certain men from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles...

(the following taken liberally from James Montgomery Boice...)

When Peter came to Antioch he discovered a community of Jewish and Gentile Christians living together and, in particular, eating together in apparent disregard of Jewish dietary customs. God had already shown Peter what he was to do in such situations. So Peter...joined with the other Jews in eating with his Gentile brothers. And the imperfect tense of the verb Paul uses—"used to eat with the Gentiles"—implies that he ate with the Gentiles not once, on a single occasion, but on a regular basis, habitually. In this, Peter went beyond the letter of the decrees of the Jerusalem council, for it had acknowledged the right of freedom from the law for Gentiles, but had retained it for Jews. Now Peter was declaring that the Jew as well as the Gentile was free from Mosaic legislation.

Read v12b.

...but when they came, he began to withdraw and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision.

By and by some legalistic Jews, claiming to be representatives from James, the brother of Christ, arrived in Antioch and were shocked by this practice of Jews and Gentiles eating together. They put pressure on Peter and he began detaching himself from the Gentile fellowship, eating now with Jews only.

withdraw = from <G5259> (hupo) and <G4724> (stello); **to withhold under** (out of sight), i.e. (reflexive) **to cower or shrink**, (figurative) to conceal (reserve) :- draw (keep) back, shun, withdraw.

hold himself aloof = from <G575> (apo) and <G3724> (horizo); **to set off by boundary**, i.e. (figurative) limit, **exclude**, appoint, etc. :- **divide, separate, sever**.

fearing = from <G5401> (phobos); **to frighten**, i.e. (passive) **to be alarmed; by analogy to be in awe of**, i.e. revere :- be (+ sore) afraid, fear (exceedingly), reverence.

the **circumcision** = Jewish converts to Christianity

Goodwin: [Some have objected—if not to the account itself, at least to the timing], that it fails to account for Peter's sudden change of [position] on the question of Gentile liberty which he had but recently defended at the Jerusalem council. But suddenness is a word that goes with Peter's character. This is the same Peter who could vow undying loyalty to his Lord, deny Him, and repent, all in a few hours, who here forgets his boasted liberality and under the influence of the bigoted followers of James becomes a narrow Jew again for fear of "them which were of the circumcision." The impetuous, vacillating, blundering, cowardly Peter is rebuked faced to face by the righteously indignant Paul.

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Galatians 2:13

The rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy, with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy.

Galatians 2:14

But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in the presence of all, "If you, being a Jew, live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, how is it that you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?"

v13

Worse than Peter's own cowardice, his behavior influenced others—even Barnabas!

Read v13.

Matthew Henry: Would you think it? Barnabas himself!

hypocrisy = *synypokrinomai* = from <G4862> (sun) and <G5271> (hupokrinomai)
 ↓; **to act hypocritically in concert with** :- dissemble with.

hypokrinomai = middle from <G5259> (hupo) and <G2919> (krino); to decide (**speak or act**) **under a false part**, i.e. (figurative) dissemble (pretend) :- **feign**.

The root of this word has its basis in the theatre—role-playing—and was used in the Septuagint to describe someone with a double heart and false lips.

Darby writes of this sad event, "*What a poor thing is man!*"

Before we pick up stones for Peter, we must first examine our *own* hearts. How easy it is for any one of us to say one thing but mean another, to hide duplicity, to—as Peter—go along with one crowd until it becomes the topic of gossip, then switch to going along with the opposing crowd.

But how much worse it is to be in a position where our hypocrisy snags others and brings them along for the ride. Even Barnabas!—whose real name was Joseph, but the apostles called him *Bar-nabas*: "Son of Encouragement", who is described in Acts 11:24 as "a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith." Even Barnabas!

v14

Read v14.

not **straightforward**^{NASB,NKJV}, **walked not uprightly**^{KJV} = *orthopodeō* = from a compound of <G3717> (orthos) and <G4228> (pous); **to be straight-footed**, i.e. (figurative) **to go directly forward** :- walk uprightly.

...about the truth of the gospel...

This was not a personal issue with Paul. It wasn't that he got his feelings hurt, or that he resented Peter's intrusion into his domain. No, Paul was defending the integrity of the gospel given him by Jesus Himself.

...in the presence of all...

Literally, in front of everyone.

v12 implies superiority; the NASB captures it:

For prior to the coming of certain men from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he began to withdraw and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision.

This air of superiority—that the Jewish dietary laws were more God-pleasing—is what Paul addresses in his public reprimand of Peter.

Regarding Paul's doing this in public...

Albert Barnes: Had this been a private affair, Paul would doubtless have sought a private interview with Peter, and would have remonstrated with him in private on the subject. But it was public. It was a case where many were involved, and where the interests of the church were at stake. It was a case where it was very important to establish some fixed and just principles, and he therefore took occasion to remonstrate with him in public on the subject.

Peter was not just guilty of being two-faced and spineless. His switch in allegiance sent the unmistakable signal to the Gentiles that *they* were inferior Christians—that being a Jew placed one in a better position to be a good Christian.

Just as in his vision of the sheet coming down from heaven, God (this time through Paul) was using the less-important example of food for a larger point.

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

2 Peter 3:14-16

Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless, and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.

The Message: "If you, a Jew, live like a non-Jew when you're not being observed by the watchdogs from Jerusalem, what right do you have to require non-Jews to conform to Jewish customs just to make a favorable impression on your old Jerusalem cronies?"

Doddridge: "Is it not at least as lawful for them to neglect the Jewish observances, as it was for thee to do it but a few days ago?"

Did this dispute cause an irreparable rift between the two apostles?

Read 2 Peter 3:14-16.

This was written perhaps 10 to 15 years after the episode in Antioch.

YOUR NOTES

Ezekiel 36:26-27

“Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.”

Galatians 2:15

“We are Jews by nature and not sinners from among the Gentiles...”

In this passage, the words “justify” and “justification” occur for the first time. (*Galatians* was written before *Romans*; those reading through the Bible chronologically will note that they will be reading *Galatians* before *Romans*.)

Wayne Grudem breaks down for us the specific and orderly steps we take from unregenerate sinner to child of God in Christ, that is, as he puts it, “The Order of Salvation”.

- It begins with **election**—the fact that God has predestined some to be saved.
- Then comes **the gospel call**—the elected one hears the Scriptural basis for salvation
- Before actual conversion comes **regeneration**—“a secret act of God in which He imparts new spiritual life to us...sometimes called “being born again.” To describe this he cites Ezekiel 36. [Read Ezekiel 36:26-27.](#)
- This regeneration makes possible our **conversion**—our act of faith and repentance.
- **Justification** is God’s righteous response to our conversion—granting us “right legal standing” in His eyes.

There are further steps in Grudem’s systematic outline, but they are not germane to our discussion today.

Justification, then, is God keeping His promise to declare our sins forgiven: “*completely* forgiven and no longer liable to punishment.” The opposite of justification is condemnation, or to be pronounced “guilty.”

Boice: Justification does not express an ethical change or influence (though ethical changes [will surely] follow); rather it expresses the judicial action of God apart from human merit according to which the guilty are pardoned, acquitted, and then reinstated [since Eden] as God’s children and as fellow heirs with Christ.

v15

At some point in this passage, Paul moves from addressing Peter specifically, to the group present at the time and, beyond that, to all people of any time. All modern translations, including the NKJV, bracket this passage to the end of the chapter in quotation marks. The KJV does not—but then you will look long and hard before you find *any* quotation marks in the KJV.

Here is food for thought:

- The Jews, on one level, *did* have an advantage over Gentiles regarding Christianity. Their very culture was centered around Jehovah. They were accustomed, from birth, to living with God, thinking about God, obeying (or at least trying to obey) God, being taught about God. Everything about their lives was God-centric, as opposed to Gentiles being either pagan idol-centric or man-centric.
- Thus, in some respects, the move to a Christ-centric faith was an easier transition for them—especially after a Jew was willing to accept that Jesus was, indeed, the Christ—the anointed Son of God.
- However, in other respects, the Jews were at a disadvantage in that they brought along with them all the baggage of a law-structured faith. In fact, that very phrase seems to be a misnomer: just how much “faith” is involved in a law-based religion?
- The Jews *were* special, but when it came to accepting Christ Jesus as Lord, through *faith* rather than works, their heritage could be both a blessing and a curse.

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Galatians 2:16

...nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified."

Romans 3:19-20

Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God; because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.

Romans 7:6-7

But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter. What shall we say then? Is the Law sin? May it never be! On the contrary, I would not have come to know sin except through the Law; for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, "You shall not covet."

Galatians 2:17-18

"But if, while seeking to be justified in Christ, we ourselves have also been found sinners, is Christ then a minister of sin? May it never be! For if I rebuild what I have once destroyed, I prove myself to be a transgressor."

v16

v16 is one of the most important verses in this letter to the Galatians, as well as a foundational declaration of Christianity's central tenet.

Read v16.

Boice points out that "the article is not present in the phrases 'observing law' or 'works of law'—i.e. "Paul's emphasis is not on the Jewish law, the law of Moses, at all, though it includes it, but rather on any system of attempting to please God by good deeds." In fact he goes on to say that "the introduction of the article into KJVS, RSV, NIV [and NASB, though the NASB does include the variation "of law" in the margin notes] is a defect in these versions." (It is true that the evidence of the original manuscripts seems to bear this out; however, every translation but the YLT includes it.)

What this means is that the apostle Paul is here broadening the scope of his argument. Not only is the Mosaic law worthless for justification, but so is *any* system that is based on human performance, human legalism, human effort and works.

we = Jews, Jewish converts to Christianity, those of us in this room (from Paul's perspective)

...*even we have believed in Christ Jesus...* = literally, "into" Christ—an act of personal, intimate, *invasive* commitment, and not just an agreement that the facts are correct.

Consider this comparison:

Since the birth of Cain to Adam and Eve, flesh has been born judicially condemned—guilty of offense against God. That condition has nothing whatever to do with deeds; we have *done* nothing in the womb one could call sin. As a newborn we have *done* nothing to deserve condemnation. It is just the result of our familial heritage.

We are Adam's children in flesh: we are sin.

In the same way, since our rebirth in Christ we are now judicially declared justified—*not* guilty of any offense against God. That condition has nothing whatever to do with deeds; we have done and cannot do anything that could possibly merit that verdict. It is just the result of our familial heritage.

We are God's children in Christ: we are righteous because of the righteousness of God's Son.

...*by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified.*

It is perfectly understandable that someone reading this verse, especially the way it ends, would ask, "Well, then what was the purpose of the Law?" I'm glad you asked.

Read Romans 3:19-20.

Read Romans 7:6-7.

v17-18

The most prevalent argument against the gospel of salvation by faith alone was that it led to license—that grace encourages sin, and leads to an attitude of "Hey, I can do anything I want. I'm forgiven!" Here Paul addresses that argument.

Read v17-18.

We see this played out all the time. A non-believer will catch a believer doing something they shouldn't and accuse them of hypocrisy. Here the accusation is taken further, with the third party concluding that if a Christian can still sin in the flesh, Christ must then be a "minister" of sin.

minister = *diakonos* = probably from an obsolete *diako* (to run on errands; compare <G1377> (*dioko*)); an attendant, i.e. (genitive) a waiter (at table or in other menial duties); specially a Christian teacher and pastor (technically a deacon or deaconess) :- **deacon, minister, servant.**

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Galatians 2:18

"For if I rebuild what I have once destroyed, I prove myself to be a transgressor."

Galatians 2:19

"For through the Law I died to the Law, so that I might live to God."

Galatians 2:20

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

In v18 Paul answers this indirectly with an illustration.

rebuild^{NASB,NIV}, **build again**^{KJVS} = from the same as <G3619> (oikodome); to **be a house-builder**, i.e. **construct** or (figurative) **confirm** :- (be in) build (-er, -ing, up), **edify**, embolden.

destroyed = from <G2596> (kata) and <G3089> (luo); to **loosen down (disintegrate)**, i.e. (by implication) to **demolish** (literal or figurative); specially [compare <G2646> (kataluma)] to halt for the night :- destroy, dissolve, be guest, lodge, come to nought, **overthrow, throw down**.

transgressor = from <G3845> (parabaino); **a violator** :- **breaker**, transgress (-or).

If I demolish my allegiance to the law and good deeds for my salvation, but then sin, as if I were listening once again to that law, then I am the one doing it—not Christ. Or as Boice puts it:

If there is sin, man himself is responsible.

Christ is not the author of our sin.

The Message: If I was "trying to be good," I would be rebuilding the same old barn that I tore down. I would be acting as a charlatan.

v19

Read v19.

Earlier I mentioned Wayne Grudem's systematic outline of salvation in Christ. The third step in that progressive path is "regeneration," in which the Holy Spirit comes in to remake us and give us the capacity to confess our need for Christ. The preface to that confession is the realization (through the power of the Spirit) that there is no other way to God—that our obedience to any systematic doctrine or list of laws will never get us to that goal. That is the first work of the Spirit within us: to spark the realization that *that* won't work, but *this* will.

In this the law served its purpose. The law *itself* extinguished any hope I may have once had to attain a righteousness sufficient to attain God. The law itself showed me how impossible that would be. So, by means of the Holy Spirit, I rejected that path. And through my dying to the law, I found true life in Christ. I *did* attain God—through the grace of Christ!

v20: THE DEATH OF "I"

And just what does this true life look like? One can almost hear the emotion in Paul's voice as he says...

Read v20.

This profound verse is a more detailed expansion of the previous. Just think about it a minute: Isn't a life lived trying to merit God through right behavior a life preoccupied with self? Every day that I ask, "How am I doing, God?" is a day when I am thinking more about myself—*my* goodness, *my* worthiness—than about God, *His* goodness, *His* worthiness. In that sense, the law—or any system in which one strives to prove oneself worthy and righteous—actually pulls us further *away* from God, as we spend more and more time focused on ourselves.

I think v20 so impresses me because it defines true servanthood. Far more than just a ticket into heaven, the Christ-ian life is one spent living outside of our self. When Christ died on the cross, the "I" died for every believer. In its place—the place of self—Christ Himself now dwells.

This is the concept so alien to modern society (perhaps that is one reason it is so attractive to me). Where the unbeliever sees debasement, the believer sees exaltation; where the unbeliever sees slavery, the believer sees honor. I think of this verse as the navel of the Christian life. Is someone a marginal, ineffective Christian? It is because

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Galatians 2:21

"I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly."

they have not embraced the concept of Galatians 2:20. Is someone an active, dynamic Christian? It is because they *have* embraced the concept of Galatians 2:20. *"It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me!"*

I can't think of a better verse in the whole Bible for you to take into your prayer closet and make the focus of extended meditation. Let these words simmer inside you; let them percolate up into every recess of your soul.

v21

Paul closes his address before the congregation in Antioch—which he quotes here in his letter to the Galatians—by pointing out the obvious fallacy in the doctrine of those who try to cling to the demands of the law even while they (seem to) accept Christ as Messiah: *If I can earn my righteousness by keeping the law, then Christ's sacrifice on the cross was utterly meaningless.*

YOUR NOTES

Galatians 3:1 NKJV

O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified?

Luke 24:18-27

One of them, named Cleopas, answered and said to Him, "Are You the only one visiting Jerusalem and unaware of the things which have happened here in these days?" And He said to them, "What things?" And they said to Him, "The things about Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word in the sight of God and all the people, and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to the sentence of death, and crucified Him. But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, it is the third day since these things happened. But also some women among us amazed us. When they were at the tomb early in the morning, and did not find His body, they came, saying that they had also seen a vision of angels who said that He was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just exactly as the women also had said; but Him they did not see." And He said to them, "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?" Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.

v1

The kjvs have it literally correct: this verse begins with more an exclamation (or an exasperated sigh) than a word. "O foolish Galatians!"

foolish = *anoetos* (an-o'-ay-tos) = from <G1> (a) (as a negative particle) and a derivative of <G3539> (noieo); unintelligent; by implication sensual :- fool (-ish), unwise.

secular Greek = unintelligible; unthinkable thoughts; senseless, indicating a lack of understanding and judgment

Read Luke 24:18-27. (on the Road to Emmaus)

NT = "...as are the disciples, who do not understand God's plan of salvation, embracing as it does the death of Jesus. Foolishness here consists in deficient spiritual understanding of the good will of God." (Brown)

Moros refers to one who is mentally deficient or who plays the fool. *Anoetos*, which Paul uses, suggests the actions of one who can think but fails to use his powers of perception.

We would say, "C'mon—you're smarter than this!"

Paul uses this word based on their response to the nonsense of a doctrine of salvation by works—one that denies the necessity of grace and declares the death of the Lord Jesus unnecessary. Any doctrine leading to such a conclusion is irrational. The Galatians' embrace of such a doctrine was intellectually inconsistent, self-contradictory. What could explain their consideration of such foolishness?

Paul suggests facetiously that perhaps they have been placed under a spell by a magician.

bewitched = akin to <G5335> (phasko); **to malign, i.e. (by extension) to fascinate (by false representations)** :- bewitch.

publicly^{NASB}, **clearly portrayed**^{NKJV,NIV} = *prographo* = from <G4253> (pro) and <G1125> (grapho); **to write previously**; figurative to announce, prescribe :- before ordain, **evidently set forth**, write (afore, aforeside).

Here is reference to the word pictures Paul employed in his preaching ministry to the Galatians—as *JFB* puts it: "...Christ crucified 'graphically set forth' in my preaching".

Those of you with the kjvs will note a variation in the text. First, the phrase "that you should not obey the truth" is not in the oldest manuscripts; and second, the phrase "among you" is omitted in the best texts. In fact, based on my study of pretty old commentaries that point this out, it's rather odd that the NKJV includes these two phrases.

I find this verse convicting. It could be directed at any one of us, anyone who is a believer—especially anyone born and raised in the church. If not now, perhaps when we were younger, full of ourselves and full of rebellion. I can imagine God—through any member of the Trinity—shaking us by the shoulders, saying, "What is *wrong* with you? You *know* better." As our parents might have said: "You weren't raised this way!"

Dare I say that for every one of us there have been moments in our lives when, if we did not wholeheartedly subscribe to a corruption of the true way, we at least dallied there, we flirted with some dangerous variant of the gospel. And after those episodes we thanked God that He *did* shake us by the shoulders, and knock some sense into us.

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Galatians 3:2

This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?

Ephesians 1:13-14

In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory.

Galatians 3:3

Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?

2 Corinthians 8:6

So we urged Titus that as he had previously made a beginning, so he would also complete in you this gracious work as well.

2 Corinthians 8:11

But now finish doing it also, so that just as there was the readiness to desire it, so there may be also the completion of it by your ability.

v2

Read v2.

No wonder Paul was so exercised over the behavior of the Galatians. Look at how he later described this process to the Ephesians:

Read Ephesians 1:13-14.

...*you are sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise...*

The person who would write that could only shake his head at the Galatians, who were so easily being led astray.

“Did you have to *work* for the Spirit?” Paul is asking them rhetorically. “Was the Spirit some gift granted you as a reward for keeping the Law? Or did He just come in when you believed?”

This verse echoes the process of salvation we referenced last week:

did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?

- We hear the gospel message;
- The Spirit enters in to enable
- Our response of repentance and faith.

Although here it places it more in the order of our human perception—that is, we are unaware of the Spirit's presence until we respond in faith, but He actually showed up earlier to facilitate the whole process.

I like how the kjvs translate this more literally: *...or by the hearing of faith*—which makes it more intrinsic: our hearing is a Spirit-enabled hearing that is *part of* our faith, rather than an extrinsic tool brought in from another source (“...*with* faith”).

v3

v3 is like a dagger in the belly—or at least a 2x4 up-side the head.

Read v3.

Are you so foolish? = *What is wrong with you people?!*

being perfected = from <G1909> (epi) and <G5055> (teleo); **to fulfill further (or completely)**, i.e. execute; by implication to **terminate**, undergo :- accomplish, do, **finish**, (make) (perfect), perform (× -ance); **to complete, accomplish**.

JFB, citing Neander: Having begun your Christianity in the Spirit, that is, in the divine life that proceeds from faith, are ye seeking after something higher still (the perfecting of your Christianity) in the sensuous and the earthly, which cannot possibly elevate the inner life of the Spirit, namely, outward ceremonies?

This word, of course, has nothing to do with “perfection” as we think of it, but of *completion*—of finishing something that has been started.

Read 2 Corinthians 8:6 and 8:11.

This is what Paul is shaking his head over: the irrational paradox in the brains of the Galatians—as well as many today—that is, *Do you really think that you can complete, improve on what the Holy Spirit of God started, by works of the flesh? How stupid can you be?!*

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Galatians 3:4

Did you suffer so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain?

Luke 9:20-22

And He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” And Peter answered and said, “The Christ of God.” But He warned them and instructed them not to tell this to anyone, saying, “The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed and be raised up on the third day.”

Luke 24:25-26

And He said to them, “O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?”

Acts 14:2

But the Jews who disbelieved stirred up the minds of the Gentiles and embittered them against the brethren.

Acts 14:5

And when an attempt was made by both the Gentiles and the Jews with their rulers, to mistreat and to stone them,

Acts 14:19

But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having won over the crowds, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead.

Acts 14:21-22

After they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, “Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.”

v4

Read v4.

Read Luke 9:20-22.

Read Luke 24:25-26.

suffer = *pas'-cho* = including the forms (*patho*, *path'-o*) and (*pentho*, *pen'-tho*), used only in certain tenses for it; apparently a primary verb; **to experience a sensation or impression (usually painful)** :- feel, **passion**, suffer, vex.

pascha = of Chaldee origin [compare <H6453> (*pecach*)]; the Passover (the meal, the day, the festival or the special sacrifices connected with it) :- Easter, Passover.

We have all heard the events leading up to Christ's crucifixion as the “passion” of Christ, or the term, “Christ, the paschal lamb”.

The original, Passover, or *paschal*, lamb was a type of Christ Jesus and His sacrificial death on the cross. Similarly, Jesus hearkened back to that first Passover in describing what He was about to go through as *pascho*, painful suffering.

It seems clear that the imagery of Christ's suffering is in the mind of Paul as he writes this. But how could this apply to the Galatians? Some translate this word *pascho* to mean, as it does elsewhere, in a more neutral sense—that is, to just *experience* something. In this case it would refer to the whole of their experiences in coming to Christ.

But we do have hints of real suffering in the lives of some of the Galatians, and these may be to which Paul refers.

Remember way back in our first session I raised the controversy over whether this letter was addressed to the northern or southern Galatians. At that time, for various reasons, I sided with the southern theory. If we conclude that Paul here refers to real suffering on the part of the readers of this letter, this, too, would bolster the southern theory. In Acts 14 we have evidence of strife and persecutions in the area—not just for Paul and Barnabas, but perhaps for other believers.

Read Acts 14:2,5,19,21-22.

in vain = probably from <G1502> (*eiko*) (through the idea of failure); idly, i.e. **without reason (or effect)** :- without a cause, (in) vain (-ly).

The idea here in Galatians 3:4 seems to be, “Have you gone through all this for nothing?”

YOUR NOTES

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Galatians 3:5

So then, does He who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?

Galatians 3:6

Even so Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.

Genesis 15:1-6

After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, saying, "Do not fear, Abram, I am a shield to you; Your reward shall be very great." Abram said, "O Lord God, what will You give me, since I am childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" And Abram said, "Since You have given no offspring to me, one born in my house is my heir." Then behold, the word of the Lord came to him, saying, "This man will not be your heir; but one who will come forth from your own body, he shall be your heir." And He took him outside and said, "Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be." Then he believed in the Lord; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.

v5

This verse is similar to v2.

Read v5.

In v2 the emphasis was on the indwelling Spirit: Did you, Galatians *receive* the Spirit because of your (good) works, or by simple faith?

Here the emphasis is on the acts of God Himself.

provides^{NASB}, **supplies**^{NKJV} = from <G1909> (epi) and <G5524> (choregeo); **to furnish besides, i.e. fully supply**, (figurative) aid or contribute :- add, minister (nourishment, unto).

works miracles = *energeo* = from <G1756> (energes); **to be active**, efficient :- do, (be) effectual (fervent), **be mighty in**, shew forth self, work (effectually in).

hearing with faith = same as in v2 (lit., "the hearing of faith")

This, too, is rhetorical. The answer is obviously, *By faith, you dimwits!* (Lampel paraphrase)

v6

There is no convenient place to subdivide this chapter for our purposes and time restraints, so I'd like to push on just a bit into a passage we will continue with next week.

Read v6.

Paul then brings in the evidence of Abraham's faith.

Even so (NASB) = **Even as** (KJV) = **just as** (NKJV, ESV) = **according as** (YLT)

Just what did Abraham believe? Let's look at the context for this oft-quoted declaration (Romans 4:3; James 2:23).

Read Genesis 15:1-6.

Abraham—actually, Abram—believed the promise of God that He would not be left childless. In fact, the Lord showed him, his offspring would number beyond counting. Abraham took God at His word. He believed—beyond any flesh-based logic—that he (Abram) would be the father of something great.

So what should the Galatians—indeed, all of Israel—have believed about God? What did He tell them, that they could take Him at His word? We could look at Psalm 51:14-17, or Psalm 40:4-8. But that would be too easy. What evidence—in writing—did Jewish and Gentile Christians alike have to show the foolishness of finding righteousness in the keeping of laws, in behavior and deeds, in blood sacrifices and rites such as circumcision? Let's start with Isaiah—the oracle God gave to the prophet regarding Jerusalem and Judah.

YOUR NOTES

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Isaiah 1:10-17

Hear the word of the Lord, You rulers of Sodom; Give ear to the instruction of our God, You people of Gomorrah. "What are your multiplied sacrifices to Me?" Says the Lord. "I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams And the fat of fed cattle; And I take no pleasure in the blood of bulls, lambs or goats. When you come to appear before Me, Who requires of you this trampling of My courts? Bring your worthless offerings no longer, Incense is an abomination to Me. New moon and sabbath, the calling of assemblies—I cannot endure iniquity and the solemn assembly. I hate your new moon festivals and your appointed feasts, They have become a burden to Me; I am weary of bearing them. So when you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide My eyes from you; Yes, even though you multiply prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are covered with blood. Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; Remove the evil of your deeds from My sight. Cease to do evil, Learn to do good; Seek justice, Reprove the ruthless, Defend the orphan, Plead for the widow.

Psalms 51:10

Create in me a clean heart, O God,
And renew a steadfast spirit within me.

Psalms 51:14-17

Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, the God of my salvation; Then my tongue will joyfully sing of Your righteousness. O Lord, open my lips, That my mouth may declare Your praise. For You do not delight in sacrifice, otherwise I would give it; You are not pleased with burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.

Read Isaiah 1:10-17.

This ends not with a call to obey the law, or to prove themselves by their good deeds, but to have a *change of heart* that will *result* in such behavior.

And this is what King David expresses near the end of his emotional 51st Psalm.

Read Psalm 51:10,14-17.

David does not pray that God would give him the ability to keep the letter of the law. Here he declares that righteousness comes from only one place—as a gift from God Himself. God is not pleased by the rivers of blood pouring from the temple mount, nor is He satisfied by the stench of burning flesh. What truly delights Him is a heart that comes to Him in brokenness, confessing our inability to please Him by action alone. Our actions must flow out of a changed heart—then and only then does He accept our sacrifices of actions, obedience, and deeds.

YOUR NOTES

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Psalms 51:18-19

By Your favor do good to Zion;
Build the walls of Jerusalem.
Then You will delight in righteous
sacrifices, In burnt offering and
whole burnt offering; Then young
bulls will be offered on Your altar.

Galatians 3:7

Therefore, be sure that it is those
who are of faith who are sons of
Abraham.

Read Psalm 51:18-19.

v7

And v7 underlines this by stating... **Read v7.** (I prefer the more literal kjvs: Therefore *know...*)

Paul is saying here to the Galatians and to us as well, "Do you want to know who all those stars are that God said would be Abraham's offspring? They are all those who have come to God, through Christ, by faith."

YOUR NOTES

Galatians 3:8-9

The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "All the nations will be blessed in you." So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer.

Genesis 12:2-3

"And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing; And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed."

Romans 9:17

For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I raised you up, to demonstrate My power in you, and that My name might be proclaimed throughout the whole earth."

Galatians 3:10

For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, to perform them."

Deuteronomy 26:16-18

"This day the Lord your God commands you to do these statutes and ordinances. You shall therefore be careful to do them with all your heart and with all your soul. You have today declared the Lord to be your God, and that you would walk in His ways and keep His statutes, His commandments and His ordinances, and listen to His voice. The Lord has today declared you to be His people, a treasured possession, as He promised you, and that you should keep all His commandments."

v8-9: HE STILL SPEAKS

Read vs8-9.

This passage makes two remarkable points:

1. The apostle Paul cites the OT to show that from the very beginning—before even the Law was handed down to Moses—Gentiles were to be included in God's kingdom. This was God's word to Abram—something like 750 years before Mt. Sinai.

Read Genesis 12:2-3.

families = from <H8192> (shaphah) [compare <H8198> (shiphchah)]; a family, i.e. circle of relatives; figurative a class (of persons), a species (of animals) or sort (of things); by extens. **a tribe or people** :- family, kind (-red).

nations = probably from <G1486> (etho); **a race** (as of the same habit), i.e. **a tribe**; specially a foreign (non-Jewish) one (usually by implication pagan) :- Gentile, heathen, nation, people.

preached the gospel beforehand = one word: *proeuangelizomai*

2. Here Paul emphasizes the authority of the written word through its association with God Himself by personalizing "Scripture."

The Scripture, foreseeing... preached the gospel... to Abraham.

Read Romans 9:17.

Historically, God *spoke* to Abram, and God communicated to the king of Egypt via His prophet Moses (in Exodus 9, which Paul quotes in Romans 9). But by associating the written word with God's audible voice in both instances, Paul makes clear the holy authority of Scripture. When we read God's word today, it is as if He were audibly speaking into our ear.

v10-14: THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF THE LAW

v10

Read v10.

The NIV comes to our aid here, as the other translations, though accurate, are a bit clumsily worded.

All who rely on observing the law are under a curse...

Then Paul quotes his reference for this statement: Deuteronomy 27:26.

Israel is just emerged from the wilderness. They are encamped on the eastern shore of the Jordan, ready to take the promised land. But Moses, knowing the spiritual weakness of Israel, does not want them to cross over without reiterated the fullness of the Law God has given them. So he reprises and fleshes out all the laws and regulations that set them apart as a nation unto the Lord.

As this "Second Law" (which is what "deuteronomy" means) draws to a close, Moses and the elders include what are called the "Curses of Mt. Ebal," in chapter 27.

But let's preface this by starting with the end of chapter 26.

Read Deuteronomy 26:16-18.

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Deuteronomy 27:1

Then Moses and the elders of Israel charged the people, saying, "Keep all the commandments which I command you today."

Deuteronomy 27:9-10

Then Moses and the Levitical priests spoke to all Israel, saying, "Be silent and listen, O Israel! This day you have become a people for the Lord your God. You shall therefore obey the Lord your God, and do His commandments and His statutes which I command you today."

Deuteronomy 27:26

"Cursed is he who does not confirm the words of this law by doing them.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.'"

Deuteronomy 28:15

"But it shall come about, if you do not obey the Lord your God, to observe to do all His commandments and His statutes with which I charge you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you:"

Deuteronomy 28:58-59

"If you are not careful to observe all the words of this law which are written in this book, to fear this honored and awesome name, the Lord your God, then the Lord will bring extraordinary plagues on you and your descendants, even severe and lasting plagues, and miserable and chronic sicknesses."

Galatians 3:11

Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, "The righteous man shall live by faith."

Now read Deuteronomy 27:1,9-10.

Then follows a list of specific curses, concluding with this:

Read Deuteronomy 27:26.

The KJVS insert "all", which is only implied in the original text and left out in the other modern translations.

And again, while the NASB and KJVS are more literally accurate, the NIV arranges the words of this verse in a more understandable way:

"Cursed is the man who does not uphold the words of this law by carrying them out."

confirm^{NASB,NKJV}, **uphold**^{NIV} = a primitive root; to rise (in various applications, literal, figurative, intensive and causative) :- abide, accomplish, × be clearer, confirm, continue, decree, × be dim, endure, × enemy, enjoin, get up, make good, help, hold, (help to) lift up (again), make, × but newly, ordain, perform, pitch, raise (up), rear (up), remain, (a-) rise (up) (again, against), rouse up, set (up), establish, (make to) stand (up), stir up, strengthen, succeed, (as-, make) sure (-ly), (be) up (-hold, -rising).

But chapter 28, after listing the "blessings at Gerizim," is really the strongest evidence to back up what Paul writes in Galatians.

Read Deuteronomy 28:15.

Here the "all" is explicit:

all = *kōl* = from <H3634> (kalal); properly the whole; hence all, any or every (in the singular only, but often in a plural sense) :- (in) all (manner, [ye]), altogether, any (manner), enough, every (one, place, thing), howsoever, as many as, [no-] thing, ought, whatsoever, (the) whole, whoso (-ever).

Read Deuteronomy 28:58-59.

Boice: The law is not a collection of stray and miscellaneous parts, some of which may be conveniently disregarded. It is a whole, and must be kept in all its parts if it is to be considered kept at all. The point is not that justification cannot come by keeping the law, at least theoretically, but that a curse is attached to any failure to keep it, no matter how small. Since all fail, all are under the curse.

And all the people shall say, 'Amen.'

Matthew Henry: ...to this we must *all* say Amen, owning ourselves under the curse, justly to have deserved it, and that we must certainly have perished for ever under it, if Christ had not redeemed us from the curse of the law, by being made a curse for us.

v11

And once again Paul hearkens back to ancient Scripture to give evidence that it is foolish to place one's hope in the keeping of the law.

Read v11. (Habakkuk 2:4)

There are two ways this can be read—both of which are true:

- *One is only truly righteous when living by faith in God.* That is, justification—by extension, salvation; eternal life with God—is accomplished not by works, or adherence to statutes, but through faith alone;
- *He who is righteous by faith shall live.* That is, only the one who has found his righteousness in God by faith will truly live—will have a life of fullness, purpose, joy, etc.

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Galatians 3:12

However, the Law is not of faith; on the contrary, "He who practices them shall live by them."

Leviticus 18:4-5

"You are to perform My judgments and keep My statutes, to live in accord with them; I am the Lord your God. So you shall keep My statutes and My judgments, by which a man may live if he does them; I am the Lord."

Galatians 3:13

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree"—

Deuteronomy 21:22-23

"If a man has committed a sin worthy of death and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, his corpse shall not hang all night on the tree, but you shall surely bury him on the same day (for he who is hanged is accursed of God), so that you do not defile your land which the Lord your God gives you as an inheritance."

Galatians 3:14

—in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

v12

To those who might try to combine the two—Christian legalizers requiring faith to be supplemented by adherence to the Mosaic Law—Paul again cites ancient Scripture, pointing out that the two are mutually exclusive:

Read v12.

Read Leviticus 18:4-5.

The point being made here is, essentially, "You live by the sword, you die by the sword." If you choose to live by faith, that is how your righteousness will be reckoned. If you choose to live by the law, then *that* is how your righteousness will be reckoned—and you will be found wanting. And since, as Paul points out in v10, therein lies only an accursed life, true righteousness is found only by faith.

v13

Without preamble or connecting article Paul states his position.

Read v13.

redeemed = *exagorazō* = from <G1537> (ek) and <G59> (agorazo); **to buy up, i.e. ransom**; figurative **to rescue from loss** (improve opportunity); **"to buy out of slavery."**

And Paul quotes Deuteronomy 21 when he writes, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree."

Read Deuteronomy 21:22-23.

tree = from <H6095> (‘atsah); a tree (from its firmness); hence wood (plural sticks) :- + carpenter, gallows, helve, + pine, plank, staff, stalk, stick, stock, timber, tree, wood; **literally, the wood of the tree.**

tree (Galatians) = from another form of the base of <G3582> (xestes); **timber (as fuel or material)**; by implication a stick, club or tree or other wooden article or substance :- staff, stocks, tree, wood.

The margin note in the NASB tells us that the text is literally "the curse of God." That is how Paul can write in Galatians 3 that Christ "[became] a curse for us". It's hard to grasp this, but somehow what Christ suffered on the cross was worse than just bearing our sin, worse even than just being cursed. Somehow He *became* a curse.

I think one way to think of this is that Jesus on the cross became something so vile, so *execrable* (which is what the word "cursed" means), so repulsive to Father God, that the only possible response was to declare Him accursed.

v14

Paul concludes this passage with two purposes for which Jesus "redeemed us from the curse of the Law" (v13).

—in order that in Christ Jesus

1. the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles,
2. so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

John 14:16-17

"I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you."

Marvin R. Vincent, in his *Word Studies*, makes an interesting point:

The deliverance from the curse results not only in extending to the Gentiles the blessing promised to Abraham (i.e., justification), but in the impartation of the Spirit to both Jews and Gentiles through faith. The blessing is not God's gift of justification as the opposite of the curse; for in Gal. 3:10-11 justification is not represented as the opposite of the curse, but as that by which the curse is removed and the blessing realized. The content of the curse is death, Gal. 3:13. The opposite of the curse is *life*. The subject of the promise is the life which comes through the Spirit.

Read John 14:16-17.

YOUR NOTES

Matthew 5:17-19

“Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”

Galatians 3:2

This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?

Galatians 3:15

Brethren, I speak in terms of human relations: even though it is only a man’s covenant, yet when it has been ratified, no one sets it aside or adds conditions to it.

We here in the “civilized” world like to boast that we are a society that lives by the “rule of law.” This nation prides itself on being

- not a monarchy, in which allegiance is sworn to a sovereign;
- not a theocracy, in which allegiance is sworn to a mother church;
- not a pure democracy, in which allegiance is sworn by and to only the individual, and which can easily degenerate into mob rule;
- but a representative republic, in which allegiance is sworn to the flag that represents the unity of the republic, and to the written constitution that is the basis and foundation for the republic.

Every national leader in this republic takes an oath—not to a king, not to a church, not to a lord, not to a president, but to the Constitution of the United States—the foundational document for all our laws. And we consider that a good thing, a noble thing, and in human terms it certainly is. It’s a pretty good system.

In the passage we are looking at today in the third chapter of Galatians, Paul makes the case for a foundation and system that is even better: the promise of God.

The covenants of the OT were additive. That is, for example, the Mosaic covenant did not *replace* the Abrahamic covenant; it was a promise and agreement *added to it*. The Abrahamic covenant remained in effect. That is why Jesus said what He did in his Sermon on the Mount.

Read Matthew 5:17-19.

Here Paul is still answering the question he posed in v2:

Read Galatians 3:2.

In this passage he anticipates the counter-argument that “the giving of the law at a later time changed the basis for man’s entrance into salvation.” (Boice) Even if they conceded the point that Abraham was declared righteous by faith alone—not a foregone conclusion, mind you—they could counter with the argument that this was forever changed by the giving of the law at Horeb.

v15

Read v15.

Note the softer tone of this passage—“brethren”—as opposed to how he began this chapter: “You foolish Galatians!” For me this has the tone of, *Come now, brothers: let us reason together.*

I speak in terms of human relations = *kata anthropos lego* = lit., according to man

As the NIV translates this, Paul is saying something like, *Guys, let’s take a page from something you’ll understand—something from the way we human beings do things here on earth.*

man’s = same as “**human relations**” above = *anthropos* = from <G435> (aner) and ops (the countenance; from <G3700> (optanomai)); **man-faced, i.e. a human being** :- certain, man.

covenant = from <G1303> (diatithemai); properly **a disposition**, i.e. (special) **a contract** (especially a devisory **will**) :- covenant, **testament**.

ratified = from the same as <G2962> (kurios) ↓; **to make authoritative**, i.e. ratify :- **confirm**.

from the same root as...

kyrios = koo’-re-os = from kuros (supremacy); **supreme in authority**, i.e. (as noun); by implication Mr. (a respectful title); God, **Lord**, master, Sir.

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

sets it aside^{NASB}, **annuls**^{NKJV} = from a compound of <G1> (a) (as a negative particle) and a derivative of <G5087> (tithe); **to set aside, i.e. (by implication) to disesteem, neutralize or violate** :- cast off, despise, disannul, frustrate, bring to nought, reject; **to do away with what has been laid down.**

adds conditions^{NASB}, **adds**^{NKJV} = middle from <G1909> (epi) and <G1299> (diatasso); to appoint besides, i.e. supplement (as a codicil) :- add to; **that is, to append a codicil.**

In the Greek of Paul's day, the word translated "covenant" meant "a will" and nothing more, though in earlier times it also was used for a covenant. The idea here is not a mutually binding agreement between two parties of equal rank—one in which "if you do this, I'll do this, but if you don't do this, I won't do this. Then all bets are off."

Here it is unilateral, as in a will, where one person (in this case Jehovah God) makes a solemn vow or promise. If I state in my will that upon my death one of my possessions goes to a specific person, after I die that cannot be changed. No third party can come in and append a codicil to my will that changes the deal.

This is why Paul uses the word "promises" in the next verse. These were unconditional promises guaranteed to Abraham by God. And on top of that, *this* testator is still alive!

v16

Read v16.

Frankly, I had just about despaired of understanding Paul's remark here that...

He does not say, "And to seeds," as referring to many, but rather to one, "And to your seed," that is, Christ.

This verse has always troubled me, and the various commentators were of little help. They, too, were troubled, but since they are supposed to know what they are talking about, they have to come up with some plausible explanation for what Paul writes. And in almost every case they expended many paragraphs of circuitous conjecture to substantiate their position.

This verse refers to God's promise in Genesis 22, just after the angel has stopped Abraham from sacrificing Isaac.

Read Genesis 22:15-18.

Clearly, as the margin notes in the NASB state, this refers to Abraham's descendants—not just one person, but to all. So how are we to understand what Paul writes in v16?

Matthew Henry: But, if it should be said that a grant or testament may be defeated for want of persons to claim the benefit of it (Gal_3:16), he shows that there is no danger of that in this case. Abraham is dead, and the prophets are dead, but the covenant is made with Abraham and his seed. And he gives us a very surprising exposition of this. We should have thought it had been meant only of the people of the Jews. "Nay," says the apostle, "it is in the singular number, and points at a single person - that seed is Christ," So that the covenant is still in force; for Christ abideth for ever in his person, and in his spiritual seed, who are his by faith.

JFB: one ... Christ — not in the exclusive sense, the man Christ Jesus, but "Christ" (Jesus is not added, which would limit the meaning), including His people who are part of Himself, the Second Adam, and Head of redeemed humanity. Gal_3:28&29 prove this, "Ye are all ONE in Christ Jesus" (Jesus is added here as the person is indicated). "And if ye be Christ's, ye are Abraham's SEED, heirs according to the promise."

Read Galatians 3:28-29.

And I believe Paul had already substantiated this position in vss13-14, above.

Read Galatians 3:13-14.

Put another way, Jesus is the *one* pipeline through which those who come to God by faith are justified.

Galatians 3:16

Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, "And to seeds," as referring to many, but rather to one, "And to your seed," that is, Christ.

Genesis 22:15-18

Then the angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time from heaven, and said, "By Myself I have sworn, declares the Lord, because you have done this thing and have not withheld your son, your only son, indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies. In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice."

Galatians 3:28-29

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise.

Galatians 3:13-14

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree"—in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Galatians 3:17

What I am saying is this: the Law, which came four hundred and thirty years later, does not invalidate a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to nullify the promise.

Isaiah 14:24-27

The Lord of hosts has sworn saying, "Surely, just as I have intended so it has happened, and just as I have planned so it will stand, to break Assyria in My land, and I will trample him on My mountains. Then his yoke will be removed from them and his burden removed from their shoulder. This is the plan devised against the whole earth; and this is the hand that is stretched out against all the nations. For the Lord of hosts has planned, and who can frustrate it? And as for His stretched-out hand, who can turn it back?"

Galatians 3:18

For if the inheritance is based on law, it is no longer based on a promise; but God has granted it to Abraham by means of a promise.

Hebrews 6:13-20

When God made his promise to Abraham, since there was no one greater for him to swear by, he swore by himself, saying, "I will surely bless you and give you many descendants." And so after waiting patiently, Abraham received what was promised. Men swear by someone greater than themselves, and the oath confirms what is said and puts an end to all argument. Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, he confirmed it with an oath. God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope offered to us may be greatly encouraged. We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.

v17

We have shown that Abraham's righteousness—his justification—was established by faith, as Paul points out in v11 and v14 above. We have also shown that a covenant—especially one established and confirmed by God—is not nullified by one that comes later.

This is what Paul emphasizes in v17.

Read v17.

invalidate = the negative of "ratified" in v15.

nullify = from <G2596> (kata) and <G691> (argeo); **to be (render) entirely idle (useless)**, literal or figurative :- **abolish**, cease, cumber, deliver, destroy, do away, become (make) of no (none, without) effect, fail, loose, bring (come) to nought, put away (down), **vanish away, make void**.

promise = from <G1861> (epaggello); **an announcement** (for information, assent or pledge; **especially a divine assurance of good**) :- message, promise.

Centuries after God credited righteousness to Abraham by faith alone, the Law was instituted at Sinai. But what God gave Moses on the tablets did not in any way invalidate—nullify—that which was instituted centuries earlier.

What God institutes, stands.

Read Isaiah 14:24-27.

v18

Paul closes this passage in v18.

Read v18.

inheritance = from <G2818> (kleronomos); **heirship**, i.e. (concrete) a patrimony or (genitive) a possession :- inheritance.

based on^{NASB}, **of**^{KJVS, NIV} = *ek* or *ex* = a primary preposition denoting **origin (the point whence motion or action proceeds)**, **from**, out (of place, time or cause; literal or figurative; direct or remote)

law = *nomos* = (**to parcel out, especially food or grazing to animals**); *law* (through the idea of **prescriptive usage**), general (*regulation*), special (of Moses [including the volume]; also of the Gospel), or figurative (a *principle*) :- law; **the standard term for The Law of Moses (but also the Law of Christ)**

granted^{NASB}, **gave**^{KJVS, NIV} = *charizomai* = from <G5485> (charis) ↓; **to grant as a favor**, i.e. gratuitously, in kindness, **pardon or rescue** :- deliver, (frankly) forgive, (**freely**) give, grant.

charis = graciousness (as gratifying), of manner or act (abstract or concrete; literal, figurative or spiritual; especially the divine influence upon the heart, and its reflection in the life; including gratitude) :- acceptable, benefit, favour, gift, grace (-ious), joy, liberality, pleasure, thank (-s, -worthy).

We here in the United States boast that we live by the rule of Law—law based on our written Constitution. Compared to other systems of human government, it's not a bad system. But how much better to be governed by the gracious, unmerited *promise of God*—a promise that cannot and will not be changed or added to.

Read Hebrews 6:13-20 NIV.

Galatians 3:19

Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed would come to whom the promise had been made.

Romans 3:19-20

Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God; because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.

Romans 4:14-15

For if those who are of the Law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise is nullified; for the Law brings about wrath, but where there is no law, there also is no violation.

Romans 5:20-21

The Law came in so that the transgression would increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Acts 7:52-53

“Which one of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? They killed those who had previously announced the coming of the Righteous One, whose betrayers and murderers you have now become; you who received the law as ordained by angels, and yet did not keep it.”

Deuteronomy 5:4-5

“The Lord spoke to you face to face at the mountain from the midst of the fire, while I was standing between the Lord and you at that time, to declare to you the word of the Lord; for you were afraid because of the fire and did not go up the mountain.”

I had stated in our original class for this study that when I proposed Galatians as the text for this class, I didn't know what I was getting myself into. Likewise, when I reached this point in my schedule—in which I had assigned verses 19 through 29 of chapter 3 to one session—I didn't know I would be stepping into a quagmire of controversy over some of the verses.

v19

Read v19.

...added because of transgressions...

Does Paul mean here that the Law was added

- to *restrict* transgressions—in the way that I now pay more heed to posted speed limits, and drive slower, because of the tickets I've received; or
- to *reveal* transgressions—even to provoke them for showing the futility of the Law?

Paul's writings elsewhere answer the question for us.

Read Romans 3:19-20.

Read Romans 4:14-15.

Read Romans 5:20-21.

ordained through angels...

ordained = from <G1223> (dia) and <G5021> (tasso); **to arrange thoroughly**, i.e. (special) institute, prescribe, etc. :- appoint, command, give, (set in) order, ordain.

Barnes: The Old Testament makes no mention of the presence of angels at the giving of the Law, but it was a common opinion among the Jews that the Law was given by the instrumentality of angels, and arranged by them; and Paul speaks in accordance with this opinion. The sentiment here is that the Law was prescribed, ordered, or arranged by the instrumentality of the angels.

Notice what the martyr Stephen said just before he died:

Read Acts 7:52-53.

Here is an explicit association of “ordained by angels” with the Law.

by the agency of a mediator...

agency^{NASB}, **hand**^{KJVS} = perhaps from the base of <G5494> (cheimon) in the sense of its congener the base of <G5490> (chasma) (**through the idea of hollowness for grasping**); the hand (literal or figurative [power]; especially [by Hebrew] a means or instrument) :- hand.

a **mediator** = Moses

The word arrangement in the *KJVS* is vague, leaving open the possibility that that which was ordained and mediated may refer either to the “promise” or the “Law,” whereas the *NASB* makes it refer to the Law by word arrangement, and the *NIV* *explicitly* associates it with the Law.

If it refers to the promise, the mediator is Christ Jesus (“seed”); if it refers to the Law, the mediator is Moses.

The interpretation that this refers to Moses is supported, I believe by the context—in the verses just before and following. And a passage in Deuteronomy gives us the picture of Moses as mediator:

Read Deuteronomy 5:4-5.

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Galatians 3:20

Now a mediator is not for one party only; whereas God is only one.

Galatians 3:21–22

Is the Law then contrary to the promises of God? May it never be! For if a law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law. But the Scripture has shut up everyone under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

v20

Read v20.

James Montgomery Boice points out that there have been more than 250–300 different interpretations of this verse. He refers to it as the most obscure verse in Galatians—perhaps the entire NT!

I'm going to cut to the chase on this one.

Boice: The general thought seems to be that the promise must be considered superior to the law [as in v18] because the law is one-sided. The law was mediated, and this means that man was a party to it. The promise, on the other hand, is unilateral; man is not a party to it [i.e., it is of grace]. This thought is intended to reinforce what Paul has said earlier about the unconditional and unilateral nature of the promises.

The Message paraphrase helps us out here as well:

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.

vs21–22

In a sense, the Law is as good and necessary as the promise in Christ.

Read vs21–22.

...if a law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law.

Leviticus 18:5 states

So you shall keep My statutes and My judgments, by which a man may live if he does them; I am the Lord.

But we know from history, from our own personal experience, and in our heart that mankind is incapable of keeping the entirety of the law. Every attempt fails.

But the Scripture has shut up (or confined) everyone under sin...

Here is the result of The Fall that occurred in the Garden of Eden: *synkleio hypo hamartia* [soong-kli-o hoop-o ham-ar-tee'-ah]

shut up^{NASB}, **confined**^{NKJV} = from <G4862> (sun) and <G2808> (kleio); **to shut together**, i.e. include or (figurative) **embrace in a common subject to**
:- conclude, **enclose**, shut up.

Imagine yourself an ignorant native on an isolated South Seas island. You know nothing of anything beyond the white-sand beach that rings your island. You also know nothing of sin—that is, you have no idea that sin even exists.

One day a cargo plane flies over your island and out from it drops a copy of the Torah in your language. You sit on your white-sand beach and begin reading. Suddenly you realize that some of how you have been living is considered wrong—sinful, and punishable—by a great and powerful God who appears to be the author of what you are reading.

From that moment forward you are no longer ignorant of sin. Every time you do what you had before, you are reminded that God considers it to be wrong.

Before the plane dropped the Law, you were lost—irretrievably lost. That hasn't changed—but now you know *why*, because you soon realize you are incapable of keeping all the laws that God wrote in that book.

In this way, Scripture itself has enclosed every one of us in sin—under the burden of sin—because it has *revealed* our condition. By coming to understand our true condition—sinful and unable to do anything about it—we realize that we are in need of a savior: someone more capable than we. And Jesus Christ is His name.

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Galatians 3:23-29

But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed. Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise.

Galatians 3:24

Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith.

Galatians 3:25-26

But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

Now notice the transition that takes place in who and what we are. Under the law we were prisoners; under faith we are *sons*.

Read vs23-29.

v23

Read v23.

kept in custody^{NASB}, **kept under guard**^{NKJV} = from a compound of <G4253> (pro) and <G3708> (horao); **to be a watcher in advance, i.e. to mount guard as a sentinel** (post spies at gates); figurative to hem in, protect :- keep (with a garrison). Compare <G5083> (tereo).

shut up = same as above.

Albert Barnes: The design and tendency of the Law was to shut us up to that as the only method of salvation. All other means failed. The Law condemned every other mode, and the Law condemned all who attempted to be justified in any other way. Man, therefore, was shut up to that as his last hope; and could look only to that for any possible prospect of salvation. The word... rendered "were kept", usually means to guard or watch, as in a castle, or as prisoners are guarded; and though the word should not be pressed too far in the interpretation, yet it implies that there was a rigid scrutiny observed; that the Law guarded them; that there was no way of escape; and that they were shut up as prisoners under sentence of death, to the only hope, which was that of pardons.

Faith was the only hope. The Law condemned them, and offered no hope of escape. Their only hope was in that system which was to be revealed through the Messiah, the system which extended forgiveness on the ground of faith in his atoning blood.

v24

Read v24.

The kjv renders this, unfortunately, as "schoolmaster," which is not correct. The word means, literally, a boy-leader, i.e. a servant whose responsibility it was to take the children to school.

Boice: The word is *paidagogos*, which means a "child-custodian" or "child-attendant." The pedagogue was a slave employed by wealthy Greeks or Romans to have responsibility for one of the children of the family. He had charge of the child from about the years six to sixteen and was responsible for watching over his behavior wherever he went and for conducting him to and from school. The pedagogue did not teach.

This word represents the one who would lead the child *to* the one who would teach.

This is why the words have been added in most translations "to lead us" or "to bring us."

The purpose of the Law was to show us most dramatically that our only hope was faith in Christ Jesus. It took us by the hand, led us through the city streets, through the worst and most dangerous parts of town, so that when we reached Christ we would realize that He—not the prison of the Law—was our one hope for justification.

v25-26

Read v25-26.

As *The Message* puts it, "But now you have arrived at your destination." We no longer have need of someone to lead us to where we are going because we are now there. And what is this destination? v26: we "are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus."

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Galatians 3:27

For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

Galatians 3:28

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Romans 3:21-25a

But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith.

Galatians 3:26-27

For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

v27

Read v27.

The verbs Paul chooses for this verse are not surface words; they do not skim lightly across the surface of an idea, but take a bath in it.

baptized = *baptizo* = from a derivative of <G911> (bapto); **to make whelmed (i.e. fully wet)**; used only (in the NT) of **ceremonial ablution**, especially (technical) of the ordinance of Christian baptism :- baptist, baptize, wash.

clothed = from <G1722> (en) and <G1416> (duno) (**in the sense of sinking into a garment**); to invest with clothing (literal or figurative) :- array, clothe (with), endue, have (put) on.

There are two ways we can look at this *immersion* into Christ:

- We can see it as putting on an obligation to be Christ-like, as Clarke writes:
To put on, or to be clothed with one, is to assume the person and character of that one; and they who do so are bound to act his part, and to sustain the character which they have assumed. The profession of Christianity is an assumption of the character of Christ; he has left us an example that we should follow his steps, and we should, as Christians, have that mind in us which was in him.
- Or we can see it as a high honor as royal adoption, as *JFB* write: Christ is to you the *toga virilis* (the Roman garment of the full-grown man, assumed when ceasing to be a child) [Bengel]. By baptism ye have put on Christ; and therefore, He being the Son of God, ye become sons by adoption, by virtue of His Sonship by generation. This proves that baptism, where it answers to its ideal, is not a mere empty sign, but a means of spiritual transference from the state of legal condemnation to that of living union with Christ, and of sonship through Him in relation to God (Rom_13:14). Christ alone can, by baptizing with His Spirit, make the inward grace correspond to the outward sign.

v28

Read v28.

As to the first “why” of this, let’s read what Paul wrote in Romans 3.

Read Romans 3:21-25a.

What is the first reason there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, slave and free man, man and woman? Because we *all* have sinned. *We all* have failed to keep God’s law. There is not one of us—from the miserable beggar in the streets to the Pope himself—who is without sin against holy God.

No one is better than his brother or sister when both are in Christ Jesus.

The second “why” is stated above.

Read vs26-27.

We do not lose our distinctiveness, our unique personality, our racial heritage, our sexual identity when we are in Christ. But now all of those differences are “clothed” in the same holy garb. No matter who or what we were, no matter who or what we remain, we all have exchanged our prison garb for the righteous clothing of the Son of God!

Here is one more word picture from Boice:

“Baptism” speaks of identification, just as cloth is identified with the color of dye it is dipped into.

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES
Galatians 3:6-7

Even so Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness. Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham.

Galatians 3:9

So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer.

Galatians 3:13-14

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”—in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

Galatians 3:16

Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, “And to seeds,” as referring to many, but rather to one, “And to your seed,” that is, Christ.

Galatians 3:18b

...but God has granted it to Abraham by means of a promise.

Galatians 3:29

And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s descendants, heirs according to promise.

v29

In v29 Paul concludes this passage by returning to his original thesis: the declared righteousness of Abraham passed down to his “seed” by faith in Christ.

Read v6-7, 9, 13-14, 16, 18b.

Now read v29.

descendants = seed

YOUR NOTES

Galatians 4:1-2

Now I say, as long as the heir is a child, he does not differ at all from a slave although he is owner of everything, but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by the father.

We are now at the mid-point of our study of Galatians, beginning chapter 4. I've entitled this session "From Slave to Son."

Read vs1-2.

v1

Let's first take a look at the words Paul uses, then we'll look at the point Paul is making with them.

heir = from <G2819> (kleros) and the base of <G3551> (nomos) (in its original sense of **partitioning, i.e. [reflexive] getting by apportionment**); a sharer by lot, i.e. an inheritor (literal or figurative); by implication a possessor :- heir.

child = from an obsolete particle ne- (implying negation) and <G2031> (epos); **not speaking, i.e. an infant (minor)**; figurative a simple-minded person, an immature Christian :- babe, child (+ -ish); **a minor in the eyes of the law.**

does not differ = no better than

slave = or bond-servant

owner^{NASB}, **master**^{NKJV}, **lord**^{KJV} = *kyrios* = from kuros (supremacy); supreme in authority, i.e. (as noun) controller; by implication Mr. (as a respectful title) :- God, Lord, master, Sir.

v2

Paul's perspective in this passage—his human illustration to demonstrate heavenly truth—is from a *legal* context, so he switches from the word *pedagogue*, used in chapter 3, to terms more appropriate for a discussion about law

guardians = from <G1909> (epi) and <G5158> (tropos) (in the sense of <G2011> (epitrope)); a commissioner, **i.e. domestic manager, guardian** :- **steward, tutor.**

managers^{NASB}, **stewards**^{NKJV}, **trustees**^{NIV} = from <G3624> (oikos) and the base of <G3551> (nomos); **a house-distributor (i.e. manager), or overseer**, i.e. an employee in that capacity; by extension **a fiscal agent (treasurer)**; figurative a preacher (of the Gospel) :- chamberlain, governor, steward.

The date being set by the father was more a Roman than Jewish custom. In fact this entire illustration is taken from Roman society. The following are excerpts from *A History of Private Life, Volume 1: From Pagan Rome to Byzantium* (Harvard University Press, 1987)

The birth of a Roman was not merely a biological fact. Infants came into the world, or at any rate were received into society, only as the head of the family willed. A citizen of Rome did not "have" a child; he "took" a child, "raised" him up (*tollere*). Immediately after the birth it was the father's prerogative to raise the child from the earth where the midwife had placed it, thus indicating that he recognized the infant as his own and declined to expose it. The mother had just given birth (in a seated position, in a special chair, away from male eyes). Had she died in labor, the child would have been cut out of her uterus. but birth alone did not signify that a scion [descendant] had come into the world.

A child whose father did not raise it up was exposed outside the house or in some public place. anyone who wished might claim it. An absent father might order his pregnant wife to expose her baby as soon as it was born.

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Galatians 4:3

So also we, while we were children, were held in bondage under the elemental things of the world.

Hebrews 5:12

For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food.

...some Romans abandoned their legitimate children because they were poor, and others because they wished to bequeath a decent fortune to their surviving heirs.

Even the wealthiest Roman might have reasons not to keep an unwanted child, especially if the birth disrupted plans for division of his estate.

A peculiarity of Roman law that astonished the Greeks was that every male child, past puberty or not, married or not, remained under the authority of his father and did not become a Roman in the full sense of the word, a *paterfamilias*, until the father's death. More than that, the youth's father was his natural judge and could privately sentence him to death.

The father exercised sovereign authority in deciding the fate of his children.

The father's death meant that, barring mishap, his children could enjoy their inheritance. It also signaled the end of a kind of slavery. The sons became adults, and the daughters, if they had not married or had divorced, became heiresses, free to marry whom ever they wished.

v3

Just as Jesus often had to explain His parables to the disciples, Paul himself now explains to his readers what he means with this illustration. He begins this in v3, and it concludes in the passage we will consider next week.

Read v3.

held in bondage = from <G1401> (*doulos*); **to enslave** (literal or figurative) :- bring into (be under) bondage, × given, become (make) servant; **bring under subjection**.

the **world** = *kosmos* = probably from the base of <G2865> (*komizo*); **orderly arrangement, i.e. decoration; by implication the world** (in a wide or narrow sense, including its inhabitant, literal or figurative [moral]) :- adorning, world.

elemental things^{NASB}, **elements**^{NKJV}, **basic principles**^{NIV} = **something orderly in arrangement**, i.e. (by implication) **a serial** (basal, fundamental, initial) constituent (literal), proposition (figurative) :- **element**, principle, rudiment.

This business of “elemental things” is central to Paul’s argument: he repeats it in the next passage. So we need to know what he means by it. There are, traditionally, three ways to interpret this:

1

The word is *stoicheion* (*stoy-kay’-on*), and can be used to represent (as in the NIV) the “basic principles” of something—that is, the ABCs. The word can mean “alphabet,” and is used in this manner in Hebrews 5.

Read Hebrews 5:12.

The meaning is clear in that context. However, here in Galatians, Paul appends the modifier “of the world,” and it’s a stretch to imagine that Paul considers pagan religions to be a rudimentary preparation for the gospel of Christ.

2

The second possibility is that Paul refers again to the law of Israel. On the one hand this would make sense, because earlier (in 3:23) he speaks of the Galatians being under the “bondage of the law.” On the other hand, in this verse Paul is writing to Gentiles who were not under the law when they “were children.” Their problem with the law now is that Jews are trying to force it on them as a part of the gospel. More than that, no Jew would say that the Mosaic Law was “of the world”; it was of divine origin, handed down by God.

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

3

The third and probably correct way to interpret this is not as “elementary” (as in ABCs), but as “elemental”—in the way we today think of the chemical elements of which the world is made. Now you can’t stop there; we need to place this in historical perspective, the way people in Paul’s time would have seen this.

Boice: In ancient times, the elements were not regarded in the abstract way people today regard them. For one thing, they were fewer—earth, fire, air, and water. For another, they had been associated from the dawn of civilization with the gods. In Paul’s time this early and primitive view had been expanded to the point at which the *stoicheia* also referred to the sun, moon, stars and planets—all associated with gods or goddesses and, because they regulated the progression of the calendar, also associated with the great pagan festivals honoring the gods. In Paul’s mind these gods were demons. Hence, he would be thinking of a demonic bondage in which the Galatians had indeed been held prior to the proclamation of the gospel.

And I believe that the rest of this chapter bears out this interpretation. In Colossians Paul states something similar.

Read Colossians 2:8.

There is no way to read that and think Paul refers to the Judaic Law. It refers, instead, to the pagan traditions and beliefs “of the world.”

v4

Read v4.

fullness = from <G4137> (pleroo); **repletion or completion**, i.e. (subject) what fills (as contents, supplement, copiousness, multitude), or (object) what is filled (as container, performance, period) :- **which is put in to fill up**, piece that filled up, fulfilling, full, fulness.

sent forth = *exapostellō* = from <G1537> (ek) and <G649> (apostello); **to send away forth, i.e. (on a mission)** to despatch, or (peremptorily) to dismiss :- send (away, forth, out).

born^{NASB,NKJV,NIV}, **made**^{KJV} = *ginomai* = a prolonged and middle form of a primary verb; **to cause to be (“gen”-erate)**, i.e. (reflexive) **to become (come into being)**, used with great latitude (literal, figurative, intensive, etc.).

Here is the answer to those who claim either that Jesus was just a wise prophet, or, at best, that He was just a man who *became* God. What Jesus really “became” was a man; He was “sent forth” or “sent out” from heaven by God.

And note what it does *not* say: There is no one reading this born *only* of a woman. Everyone else in this world was born of a woman *and man*—for us it took both.

...*born under the Law*...

Jesus was born a Jew, under the Jewish Law, at a time when only it was available as the means of justification before God.

Gill: [Born] **under the civil and judicial law as a Jew**, to which he was subject, paying tribute to the collectors of it; and which was necessary; that it might appear he sprung from that nation, to whom he was promised; and that he came before the civil government of that people was at an end; and to teach us subjection to the civil magistrate: and **as a son of Abraham he was made under the ceremonial law**, was circumcised the eighth day, kept the several feasts of tabernacles, passover, &c. and which was proper, since he was the principal end of it, in whom it centres, and for whose sake it was made; and that he might completely fulfil it, and by so doing put a period to it: and he was made **under the moral law**, both as a man and the surety of his people, and was subject to all the precepts of it, and bore the penalty of it, death, in their room and stead, and thereby fulfilled it, and delivered them from its curse and condemnation.

Colossians 2:8

See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.

Galatians 4:4

But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law,

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Galatians 4:5

so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.

Galatians 4:6

Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"

Deuteronomy 32:6

"Do you thus repay the Lord, O foolish and unwise people? Is not He your Father who has bought you? He has made you and established you."

v5

Read v5.

redeem = *exagorazō* = from <G1537> (ek) and <G59> (agorazo); **to buy up, i.e. ransom**; figurative **to rescue from loss** (improve opportunity) :- redeem.

receive = from <G575> (apo) and <G2983> (lambano); to receive (**especially in full**, or as a host); also to take aside :- receive, take.

adoption as sons = from a presumed compound of <G5207> (huios) and a derivative of <G5087> (tithemi); **the placing as a son, i.e. adoption** (figurative Christian sonship in respect to God) :- adoption (of children, of sons).

The Son of God was sent forth to become Jesus for two reasons:

- to rescue, to buy back for Himself and their eternal salvation, those who (like the baby Jesus) were born under Law; and
- to change the last name, the family name, of those who have been redeemed from child of the world to child of God.

Boice: Men were slaves either to the Law, as Jews, or to the elemental spirits of the universe, as Gentiles. Christ paid the price of their redemption—the price of their freedom.

v6

Read v6.

sent forth = same as above

hearts = *kardia* = prolonged from a primary kar (Latin cor, "heart"); the heart, i.e. (**figurative**) **the thoughts or feelings (mind)**; also (by analogy) the middle :- (+ broken-) heart (-ed).

Abba! = *abba* = the following from Brown:

In Aramaic *abba* is originally, like the feminine equivalent *imma*, a word derived from baby language. When a child is weaned, "it learns to say *abba* (daddy) and *imma* (mummy)." Even in the pre-Christian era [,however,] the word underwent a considerable extension of meaning. It came to replace not only the older form of address common to biblical Hebrew and Aramaic, *abi*, my father, but also the Aramaic descriptive terms for "the father" and "my father." The effect of this widening of meaning was that the word *abba* as a form of address to one's father was no longer restricted to children, but also used by adult sons and daughters. The childish character of the word ("daddy") thus receded, and *abba* acquired the warm, familiar ring which we may feel in such an expression as "dear father."

Father! = *pater* = the patriarch of a family, a title of honor and respect; the progenitor of a family.

Note that God sent the Holy Spirit in the same manner as God the Son: "sent forth." This time, however, not into a Bethlehem manger, but into our hearts.

Every Jew under the Law bore the mark of circumcision as the sign of his family. Everyone who has been born again in Christ bears the mark of the indwelling Holy Spirit as the sign of his or her *new* family.

Father

It is easy to think that reference to Jehovah God as "Father" is a New Testament term initiated by Christ Jesus. But it is also found in the Old Testament (though rarely) and dates back to the final song of Moses before Israel crossed the Jordan into Canaan.

Read Deuteronomy 32:6.

But none of those OT references are *personal*; that is what changed in Christ. In other words, a Jew could refer to God as the "Father" of their nation, but never as "*my* heavenly Father."

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Romans 8:15

For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!"

Galatians 4:6

Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"

Galatians 4:7

Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God.

Let's compare another passage to this one and see if you can point out the difference between the two:

Read Romans 8:15.

Read Galatians 4:6.

The difference?

These two verses together reveal the glorious mystery of the indwelling Spirit. Galatians 4:6 tells us that it is the *Holy Spirit* who cries "Abba! Father!" Romans 8:15 tells us that *by means of* the Holy Spirit, *we* cry out "Abba! Father!" God's Spirit in communion with our spirit brings to our lips the holy cry to an intimate, personally involved heavenly Father.

v7

And in v7 we have the lawyer's summation.

Read v7.

The verse closes, in the Greek, with "through God" in the oldest manuscripts, as translated in the NASB and reworded in the NIV. The KJVs have added what we read between the lines, that it was the sending forth and redemption of Christ Jesus that made possible this new relationship. But the bottom line—as this passage in Galatians makes clear—is that all three members of the Trinity were involved. Thus, "through God" is sufficient, as well as more accurate.

In the original illustration (vs1-2), one remains a child, a minor, until the father decides he is ready for adulthood. It is the father's decision. Just so, it is our *heavenly* Father who has made us sons and heirs (no longer a minor child).

YOUR NOTES

Ephesians 2:11-12

Therefore remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called “Uncircumcision” by the so-called “Circumcision,” which is performed in the flesh by human hands—remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

Romans 1:24-32

Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error. And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper, being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful; and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.

One of the greatest tensions in the believer’s life is that between what we *think* ourselves to be, what we are *in fact*. The DNA of our old, unregenerate state lingers—if not in fact, in our mind. It has been imprinted onto our consciousness, our heart, our spirit since birth. Its tentacles have reached into every part of our being, and as a result it can be hard for us to accept our new condition—who we are *in fact*.

Let’s spend a few moments reminding ourselves, first, what we used to be.

Read Ephesians 2:11-12.

Read Romans 1:24-32.

This last verse brings up an interesting point. Many of us can look at this list and quite honestly claim that we—even in our unregenerate state—never did some of these things. Perhaps true. But as part of a fallen society we winked at those who did, and we at least accepted as normal the depraved behavior of others. In other words, we accepted as normal the behavior of a society described in Romans 1.

YOUR NOTES

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

1 Corinthians 6:9-11

Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.

Romans 6:3-7

Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin.

Galatians 4:7-8

Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God. However at that time, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those which by nature are no gods.

Now let's remind ourselves what we are now, if we are followers of Christ.

Read 1 Corinthians 6:9-11.

Read Romans 6:3-7.

The brief passage in Galatians 4 we are looking at in this session contains one of the most convicting verses in the New Testament. It should be pasted on our mirror so that we see it every morning when shaving or putting on makeup. It should be stuck to the front of our refrigerator, on the dashboard of our car, sitting on our desk, and taped across the bottom of our TV screen. We need to be reminded of this verse every day.

Galatians 4:9

But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how is it that you turn back again to the weak and worthless elemental things, to which you desire to be enslaved all over again?

Every time we read the OT we shake our heads over the repeated times Israel turns back to the worship of worthless pagan gods, even after knowing and experiencing the one true God, Jehovah.

This week I have been reading in the book of Judges, and there is a nauseating pattern taking place. Because they failed to obey God in not expunging thoroughly the land's previous nations when they conquered Canaan, what God predicted is indeed taking place: Israel is being corrupted by the beliefs and practices of their pagan neighbors. As Charles Swindoll has pointed out, when a white glove is sunk into mud, the mud does not become "glovey"; the glove becomes muddy.

So in the book of Judges the pattern is established for Israel:

- Corruption
- Conquered
- Slavery
- Repentance
- Savior (a new judge, or leader)
- Sovereignty of Israel reestablished

And every time we click our tongues and shake our heads over Israel's inexplicable behavior we condemn ourselves—because *we do the very same thing*.

v8

Paul concluded the previous passage by declaring that the Galatians—and, by extension, we—are no longer slaves, but sons, daughters, full heirs of God.

Now, however, the apostle points out that even though they are, their behavior has *not* been that of a dutiful son and heir.

Read v7-8.

...at that time...

What time?

...when you did not know God...

Can you think back? Can you remember that time? Some reading this were born and raised in the church, so it is hard to remember the time when we did not know God—but it's there. There was a time when we did not.

There are some reading this who came to know God later in life, so it is easier for them to remember that time. You probably didn't know it at the time, but

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John 8:31-34

So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." They answered Him, "We are Abraham's descendants and have never yet been enslaved to anyone; how is it that You say, 'You will become free?'" Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin.

Romans 6:16-18

Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.

Galatians 4:9

But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how is it that you turn back again to the weak and worthless elemental things, to which you desire to be enslaved all over again?

...you were slaves to those which by nature are no gods.

by nature = *physis* (foo'-sis) = from <G5453> (phuo); growth (by germination or expansion), i.e. (by implication) **natural production** (lineal descent); by extensive **a genus or sort**; figurative **native disposition**, constitution or usage

They were not gods, but by submitting to them we treated them as if they were. Paul is not denying they exist—only that they were not gods.

Read John 8:31-34.

Read Romans 6:16-18.

v9

With the introduction of Christ into our lives, by grace and faith, this servitude to false gods and the resulting sin is removed.

Read v9.

Paul is shaking the Galatians by their collective shoulders and saying, *You are no longer a slave to that. Why are you still living as if you were?!*

Before Christ, we had no choice; we knew no better.

But now we "know" God—rather, we are *known by Him*.

know = *ginosko* = a prolonged form of a primary verb; to "know" (absolute), in a great variety of applications and with many implication (as follow, with others not thus clearly expressed) :- allow, be aware (of), feel, (have) know (-ledge), perceive, be resolved, can speak, **be sure, understand**.

In secular Greek, the verb means to experience, learn, get to know: what has been experienced becomes known to the one who has experienced it. With *ginosko* there is always the implication of grasping the *full reality* and nature of the object under consideration. The OT regards knowledge as something which continually arises from personal encounter. NT: If there is any human knowledge of God, it is the mediated knowledge of God as He revealed Himself in the life and work of Christ. We can know God only as we know Jesus Christ. But Christ is not to be known through theological speculation, but rather as one is met by Him and as one acknowledges Him as Lord. (Brown)

Put more succinctly, *ginosko* means "to know intimately and on a personal level."

Forty-one years ago, during the waning days of my very young bachelorhood, I was stationed aboard the *U.S.S. Chicago*, just off the coast of Vietnam in the Tonkin Gulf. My even younger betrothed was back in Iowa, being distracted by college while she planned our impending nuptials.

It is true that I yearned for her, but I was nonetheless kept far from my beloved. She may have been constantly in my thoughts and dreams, but our moments together (this being well before the globe-circling inventions of the internet, personal computers, and cell phones) consisted entirely of written correspondence and, during the six-month period of the cruise, one achingly brief phone call placed from the Philippines.

As a result of this and other periods of separation, by the time the ship finally docked in San Diego at the end of its return voyage, the young woman awaiting me on the pier was, in many respects, a stranger. We had dated for about a year prior to my entering the service, but since then had had only periodic visits to replenish the longing we felt for each other. So by the time our wedding date arrived, we had mostly been apart for more than a year.

Memories and photographs and hand-smudged letters written from the depths

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of a lonely heart cannot faithfully stand in for a loved one's physical presence. All that time apart meant that we had a lot of catching up to do. It meant that even though we loved each other deeply, there were still many things about each other that remained a mystery. A teenaged girl is already a profound enigma to a teenaged boy, and that mystery only deepens when distance limits evidence to dreams, and fantasies, and idealized remembrances.

Linda and I have now been married, at this writing, forty-one years. During those years the earlier pattern of separation has been, for the most part, reversed: our almost constant time together has been only rarely interrupted by brief separations.

As husband and wife, Linda and I have seen wondrous sights and have visited far-off lands; we have passed through times of great joy and withering sorrow; we have grown and shared and have faced side-by-side the many surprises that God has thrown our way. As a result, we now have a profound and intimate knowledge of each other. Where once there were mysteries, now there is a deep and abiding understanding. Distant longing has been replaced by the embodiment of God's mystical "oneness."

The God-seeking believer longs for this same level of intimacy with the Lord. But, just as with Linda and me, such intimacy does not take place over great distances; one must draw near to the object of one's desire.

Much as a boy and girl court, then begin building a lifetime relationship through shared experience and abiding love, so intimacy with the Father—and with His Son, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit—is something that must be nurtured and cultivated. It does not happen overnight and it does not happen by accident. It is not naturally in the heart of man to see God in the objects, people and events which surround him.

Just as a man and woman do not necessarily become "one flesh" on their wedding night, the believer does not enjoy this level of intimacy with the Father on the day he or she accepts Christ. It comes into a believer's life through practice, and a deep-seated hunger to know this One who is at once Lord of the universe and keeper of each individual's heart.

elemental things^{NASB}, **elements**^{NKJV}, **basic principles**^{NIV} = **something orderly in arrangement**, i.e. (by implication) **a serial** (basal, fundamental, initial) constituent (literal), proposition (figurative) :- **element**, principle, rudiment.

weak = strengthless (in various applications, literal, figurative and moral) :- more feeble, **impotent**, **sick**, **without strength**, weak (-er, -ness, thing).

worthless^{NASB}, **beggarly**^{NKJV} = (**to crouch**; akin to <G4422> (ptoeo) and the alternate of <G4098> (pipto)); **a beggar (as cringing), i.e. pauper** (strictly denoting absolute or public mendicancy, although also used in a qualified or relative sense; whereas <G3993> (penes) properly means only straitened circumstances in private), literal (often as noun) or figurative (distressed) :- beggar (-ly), poor.

desire to = **to determine** (as an active option from subjective impulse; whereas <G1014> (boulomai) properly denotes rather a passive acquiescence in objective considerations), i.e., **choose or prefer** (literal or figurative); by implication **to wish, i.e. be inclined to** (sometimes adverbially gladly); impersonally for the future tense, to be about to; by Hebrew **to delight in** :- desire, be disposed (forward), intend, list, love, mean, please, have rather, (be) will (have, -ling, -ling [ly]).

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Galatians 4:10

You observe days and months and seasons and years.

Galatians 4:11

I fear for you, that perhaps I have labored over you in vain.

Romans 6:12-14

Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

v10

What is the evidence for Paul's accusation?

Read v10.

In other words, they are still celebrating the seasonal festivals. Admittedly, in chapter 4, Paul seems to be mixing his metaphors—freely associating pagan idolatry with observance of the Jewish law. Because his references here are clearly to the Jewish observances—

- *days* = Sabbaths, and one-day feasts
- *months* = celebrations tied to recurring monthly cycle
- *seasons* = seasonal events and feasts of more than one-day—e.g., Passover, Tabernacles
- *years* = recurring years of Jubilee

—one could be excused for asking, *Well, which is it: pagan idolatry or Judaism?*

Boice: Paul regards them in exactly the same light as the pagan festivals—that is, under the control of and involving interaction with the demonic spirits. This does not, of course, mean that Paul would attribute the origin of the law to Satan. Far from it. Nevertheless, even the law, when distorted into a way of trying to earn salvation, can be used by Satan to increase man's bondage.

v11

One can hear the pain in Paul's voice as he closes this:

Read v11.

fear for you (NASB) = afraid for you (NKJV)

labored over/for = from a derivative of <G2873> (kopos); **to feel fatigue**; by implication to **work hard** :- (bestow) labour, toil, **be wearied**.

in vain = probably from <G1502> (eiko) (**through the idea of failure**); idly, i.e. **without reason (or effect)** :- without a cause, (in) vain (-ly).

CONCLUSION

What is the answer to this? What are we to do about this when the flesh overwhelms, when past demons threaten to drag us away from Christ's righteousness?

Personally, I have no wonderful words of wisdom to offer, for I struggle with this as much as the Galatians. It seems to be a constant struggle. But Paul offers at least one piece of counsel in his letter to the Romans.

Read Romans 6:12-14.

YOUR NOTES

Galatians 1:6

I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel;

Galatians 1:9

As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!

Galatians 3:1-3

You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified? This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?

Galatians 4:9-11

But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how is it that you turn back again to the weak and worthless elemental things, to which you desire to be enslaved all over again? You observe days and months and seasons and years. I fear for you, that perhaps I have labored over you in vain.

Galatians 4:12a

I beg of you, brethren, become as I am, for I also have become as you are.

2 Corinthians 8:3-5

For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability, they gave of their own accord, begging us with much urging for the favor of participation in the support of the saints, and this, not as we had expected, but they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God.

So far we have heard from Paul the voice of the teacher, the preacher, the theologian. He has addressed the Galatians with nothing more personal than the common term, “brethren.” But he has addressed them as a messenger from God, sent to get their minds right.

Read 1:6,9; 3:1-3; 4:9-11.

But now Paul addresses the Galatians with the heart and tone of a *pastor*. These are the words of someone who has been on his knees before the throne on their behalf, who has lost sleep over them and their condition—their errant path. He has rebuked them for their behavior because his heart is broken for them.

v12

We hear this new tone from the beginning.

Read v12a.

We all have heard great speakers. We all have heard eloquent preachers, expositors faithfully teaching God’s word. Speaking, preaching, teaching—these are gifts from God and are to be valued. It is a blessing to sit under the instruction of one who has been called by God to eloquently explain His word.

But it is another thing entirely to be shepherded by a faithful *pastor*. On rare occasions these are combined in one man; more often than not an individual will be better at one than another—which makes perfect sense.

For example, both my father-in-law and I are married and own our own homes. As such, we are called to perform certain homely tasks to maintain our homes. But he is better than I at electrical work, and I am better than he at plumbing. We both do both electrical and plumbing, because we have to, but each of us is gifted differently.

When we want to learn from God’s written word, we prize a gifted expositor. But when we want to learn of God’s *heart*, we prize a gifted pastor. When our heart is breaking, and we need consolation, it is the faithful pastor who ministers to us.

beg^{NASB}, urge^{NKJV}, plead with^{NIV} = middle of <G1210> (deo); **to beg (as binding oneself)**, i.e. petition :- **beseech**, pray (to), make request. Compare <G4441> (punthanomai).

The NKJV “urge” is a little soft. Paul uses the same word in 2 Corinthians when he praises the Macedonians for their generosity.

Read 2 Corinthians 8:3-5.

...become as I am, for I also have become as you are.

You may be noticing some words in italics in your translation—quite a few in the nasb.

Literally, this phrase is “Become as I, for I as you.”

What is Paul saying here? The original text is so thin that it is difficult to pinpoint his meaning.

become as I am

Present middle imperative, “Keep on becoming as I am.”

Probably the best interpretation of this is that Paul is entreating them to place the entirety of their faith in Christ Jesus and His saving grace alone—rather than in an admixture of grace and law and pagan traditions.

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1 Corinthians 9:19-22

For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I may win more. To the Jews I became as a Jew, so that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law though not being myself under the Law, so that I might win those who are under the Law; to those who are without law, as without law, though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ, so that I might win those who are without law. To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some.

Galatians 4:12b-13

You have done me no wrong; but you know that it was because of a bodily illness that I preached the gospel to you the first time;

Galatians 4:14 NASB

and that which was a trial to you in my bodily condition you did not despise or loathe, but you received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus Himself.

Galatians 4:14 NKJV

And my trial which was in my flesh you did not despise or reject, but you received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus.

...for I also have become as you are.

Here Paul is probably—and succinctly—expressing what he has elsewhere.

Read 1 Corinthians 9:19-22.

v12B-15

Sometimes one has the impression that the editors who divvied up the chapters and verses of our Bible—a process *not* inspired, as is the text itself—on occasion closed their eyes and threw a dart at a page, thus determining the divisions.

The second part of v12 really belongs with v13 and following.

Read 12b-13.

You have done me no wrong...

(i.e., You have not been unjust toward me, or behaved wickedly toward me.)

In the verses that follow the apostle waxes nostalgic for the days when he first went to Galatia. There is a warmth to this passage—a sense almost that Paul is not just reminding them, but himself. He has spoken harshly to them in this letter—honestly, righteously, but harshly. Perhaps he is quieting his own righteous anger with these warm recollections of those early days.

v13

bodily = *sarx* = **flesh (as stripped of the skin)**, i.e. (strictly) **the meat of an animal** (as food), or (by extension) **the body (as opposed to the soul [or spirit])**

illness = from <G772> (asthenes); **febleness** (of body or mind); by implication **malady**; moral frailty :- **disease, infirmity, sickness, weakness.**

bodily illness = weakness of the flesh

first time = or previously

it was because of a bodily illness...

Some have concluded from this that Paul was in Galatia for healing—either escaping from an unhealthy climate (coast/malaria) or for rest and recuperation after a beating. The truth is that no one really knows what sort of “illness” he had—much like his “thorn in the flesh” of 2 Corinthians 12:7. It could have been a temporary condition, or something chronic.

Let’s not conjecture beyond what he states here. V13 tells us that it was a physical, not spiritual or emotional problem. Since he says that it was because of this condition he was there, we can conclude he showed up with it—rather than acquiring it after arriving.

But even though it was the illness that brought him, what did he do once he got there? He “preached the gospel.”

v14

Read v14.

There is a difference in translation between the NASB, ESV & NIV and the KJV & NKJV. It’s not a big issue, but should be noted.

The former translations put the “trial” on the Galatians, and the KJVs put it on Paul.

Read v14 in NKJV.

The original Greek text (Marshall) reads “...and the trial of you, in the flesh of me, ye despised not.”

The KJVs, probably working from a different manuscript, have translated it differently. Because of the context I favor the NASB translation, but I think this is one of those instances where we can say with some certainty that both are true. Whatever his illness

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in the flesh, it would have been a trial for Paul. But the context also makes it clear that his condition could have (and normally would have been) a testing for the Galatians.

The word “trial” can be translated either way; again, the context suggests (and the NKJV agrees) that “trial” is favored here over the KJV’s “temptation.”

trial^{NASB}, **temptation**^{KJV} = from <G3985> (peirazo); **a putting to proof** (by experiment [of good], experience [of evil], solicitation, **discipline** or provocation); **by implication adversity** :- temptation, × try.

...you did not despise or loathe

Paul implies that his condition—whatever it was—would have typically elicited loathing from others. But the Galatians graciously received him nonetheless.

despise = a variation of <G1847> (exoudeneō) ↓ and meaning the same :- **contemptible**, despise, **least esteemed**, set at nought.

exoudeneō = from <G1537> (ek) and a derivative of the neuter of <G3762> (oudeis); **to make utterly nothing of, i.e. despise** :- **set at nought**.

loathe^{NASB}, **reject**^{KJVS} = from <G1537> (ek) and <G4429> (ptuo); **to spit out**, i.e. (figurative) spurn :- reject. **anamadapia** (sp?): ek-ptoo'-o

angel = *angelos* = from *aggello* [probably derivative from <G71> (ago); compare <G34> (agele)] (**to bring tidings**); **a messenger**; especially an “angel”; **by implication a pastor** :- angel, messenger.

We need not think Paul was being literal here, suggesting he was an actual angel from heaven, or on a par with the Son of God. What he is saying is that even though his infirmity was loathsome—something that one would normally scorn if passed on the street—the Galatians received him with respect and honor due someone sent by God with an important message.

Boice uses this to make a good application.

Today there are no apostles. But to the degree that ministers and teachers of the Word of God do teach the Word, to that same degree should they be received as the Galatians received the apostle Paul. Ministers should not be received and evaluated on the basis of their personal appearance, intellectual attainments, or winsome manner, but as to whether or not they are indeed God’s messengers bearing the word of Christ. If they are, the message is to be received and acted upon, whether it appeals to a particular congregation or not.

Galatians 4:15-16

Where then is that sense of blessing you had? For I bear you witness that, if possible, you would have plucked out your eyes and given them to me. So have I become your enemy by telling you the truth?

v15-16

Read v15-16.

Where then is that sense of blessing you had?

Vs13-14 describe how the Galatians received Paul originally, when he first came to them. Vs15-16 describe his befuddlement over how they are now treating him different. They had not wronged him before; now they had. They had originally received him with joy; now he had become almost an enemy.

sense of blessing^{NASB}, **blessing**^{NKJV}, **joy**^{NIV} = *makarismos* = from <G3106> (makarizo); beatification, i.e. **attribution of good fortune** :- **blessedness**.

What happened to your blessedness—your joy?

...you would have plucked out your eyes and given them to me.

While this may be a reference to his infirmity, or his chronic bad eyesight (there are clues elsewhere to this), it need not be. It could just be a figure of speech, such as “you would have given me your right arm” or “the shirt off your back.”

In either case, Paul is saying that his presence in their midst, and the message he

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Galatians 1:6–12

I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed! For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ. For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

Galatians 4:17

They eagerly seek you, not commendably, but they wish to shut you out so that you will seek them.

2 Corinthians 11:2

For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, so that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin.

Galatians 4:17 NIV

Those people are zealous to win you over, but for no good. What they want is to alienate you [from us], so that you may be zealous for them.

Galatians 4:18

But it is good always to be eagerly sought in a commendable manner, and not only when I am present with you.

brought, were so cherished by them that they were willing to sacrificially give to him.

So have I become your enemy by telling you the truth? (or by dealing truthfully with you)

Here Paul returns to his opening volley in this letter.

Read Galatians 1:6–12.

v17

This brief verse seems rather cryptic—even confusing or contradictory—on first reading, but contains rich, meaningful imagery within its words. And here is a good example of where the KJV is not necessarily wrong, just hard to understand for modern ears. To wit,

They zealously affect you, but not well; yea, they would exclude you, that ye might affect them.

Someone in the seventeenth century might have understood that, but few do in the twenty-first.

Read v17.

eagerly seek^{NASB}, **zealously court**^{NKJV}, **zealous to win [you] over**^{NIV} = *zēloō* (dzay-lo'-o) = from <G2205> (zelos); **to have warmth of feeling for or against** :- affect, **covet** (earnestly), (have) **desire**, (move with) **envy**, be jealous over, (be) zealous (-ly affect).

This word can have two seemingly different meanings in modern English, but for the Greek the two would blend together. It can mean “to envy”, and it can mean “to be deeply concerned for someone to the point of courting their favor.” We see these come together in Paul’s second letter to the Corinthians.

Read 2 Corinthians 11:2.

Here, using the same word, Paul is “jealous,” but also “deeply concerned for” the Corinthians. And his imagery to the Corinthians is probably in his mind, as well, as he writes to the Galatians. The actions of the legalizers to the Galatians may be compared to those of a seducer who would alienate an engaged woman from her fiancé, or a bride from her husband—i.e., “not commendably” in the NASB.

But then Paul writes that the legalizers—the ones *courting* the Galatians—wish to

shut [you] out^{NASB}, **exclude**^{NKJV}, **alienate**^{NIV} = *ekkleio* = from <G1537> (ek) and <G2808> (kleio); **to shut out** (literal or figurative) :- **exclude**.

The NIV helps us by inserting “[from us]”—in brackets, no less, meaning that it is strictly placed there by the publisher to help the reader; it is not in the text.

So what Paul is saying in v17 is that the Jewish legalizers were actively, passionately pursuing these young Christians so as to woo them away from Paul’s gospel—the true gospel of Christ. More than that, their intention was to lock them up into their own corrupted teaching, thus locking them *out* of Paul’s. The legalizers were after 100% of their affections.

Extra Credit: Compare the words and imagery of this verse (4:17) to what Paul writes in 3:21–23 (where the word is “to shut up” rather than “to shut out”).

v18

Here is another cryptic verse, open to several interpretations. The difference comes because the original text—painfully succinct—does not make clear *who* is doing *what*. And the verse seems to switch objects in midstream. Most of the interpretations *could* be true.

Read v18.

The NASB and KJV and ESV come down on one side, and the NKJV and NIV come down on the other. The question is whether Paul is referring to the legalizer’s pursuit of the Galatians, or the Galatian’s pursuit of the true gospel. Based on the flow of the passage,

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Galatians 4:19-20

My children, with whom I am again in labor until Christ is formed in you—but I could wish to be present with you now and to change my tone, for I am perplexed about you.

I have to favor the former. And Albert Barnes paraphrases the verse as if it were Paul speaking:

“Understand me: I do not speak against zeal. I have not a word to say in its disparagement. In itself, it is good; and their [the legalizers] zeal would be good if it were in a good cause.

“You were exceedingly zealous in a good cause when I was with you. You loved the truth; you loved me. Since I left you, and as soon almost as I was out of your sight, your zeal died away, and your ardent love for me was transferred to others. Allow me to remind you, that it would be well to be zealous of good when I am away, as well as when I am with you. There is not much true affection in that which dies away as soon as a man’s back is turned.”

The doctrine is, that true zeal or love will live alike when the object is near and when it is removed; when our friends are present with us, and when they leave us; when their eye is upon us, and when it is turned away.

v19-20

Read vs19-20.

The NASB, though more accurate, is very awkwardly worded. Here is the passage in the NKJV:

My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you, I would like to be present with you now and to change my tone; for I have doubts about you.

(The ESV makes vs18-19 one sentence.)

Here again we hear the voice and heart of a pastor as Paul calls the Galatians his little or dear children. Listen to *The Message* paraphrase:

Do you know how I feel right now, and will feel until Christ’s life becomes visible in your lives? Like a mother in the pain of childbirth. Oh, I keep wishing that I was with you. Then I wouldn’t be reduced to this blunt, letter-writing language out of sheer frustration.

It seems to me that the sentiments of this passage—vs18-20—are often given voice in the homes of parents who have an erring child away at college.

But we need not limit it to that, for college students do not hold the patent on veering off-course. Permit me to paraphrase further *The Message* paraphrase, and put it into the voice of Christ Himself:

Do you know how I feel right now, and will feel until My life becomes visible in your lives? Like a mother in the pain of childbirth. Oh, if only I could be there beside you! But wait a minute: I am! I am always with you, so develop a deeper zeal for Me and My ways by living by My Spirit—not your own, or the lies spread by those who have no love for Me.

YOUR NOTES

Galatians 4:24

This is allegorically speaking, for these women are two covenants: one proceeding from Mount Sinai bearing children who are to be slaves; she is Hagar.

Galatians 4:21

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

Galatians 4:22-23

For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the bondwoman and one by the free woman. But the son by the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and the son by the free woman through the promise.

Genesis 16:1-4

Now Sarai, Abram’s wife had borne him no children, and she had an Egyptian maid whose name was Hagar. So Sarai said to Abram, “Now behold, the Lord has prevented me from bearing children. Please go in to my maid; perhaps I will obtain children through her.” And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai. After Abram had lived ten years in the land of Canaan, Abram’s wife Sarai took Hagar the Egyptian, her maid, and gave her to her husband Abram as his wife. He went in to Hagar, and she conceived; and when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her sight.

Webster’s defines an allegory as “a story in which people, things, and happenings have a hidden or symbolic meaning... used for teaching or explaining ideas, moral principles, etc.” The word means, literally in the Greek, “description of one thing under the image of another.”

How do we know Paul means this as an allegory? He tells us in v24.

Read v24.

In the last ten verses of chapter 4 the apostle Paul draws from the history of Jehovah working through Abraham to illustrate and emphasize his teaching point to the Galatians about the legalizers who are leading them astray. He does not propose that this was God’s original purpose in Abraham; Paul is just using the events as a symbol for what is going on in the Galatian community now.

v21

Paul prefaces his allegory with a challenge—a challenge not just to the Galatians, but to us today.

Read v21.

listen to^{NASB}, **hear**^{KJVS} = a primary verb; to hear (in various senses) :- give (in the audience (of), come (to the ears), ([shall]) hear (-er, -ken), be noised, be reported, **understand**.

Also translated: hearken, give audience, give heed, understand.

I.e., “You who say you are of The Book—have you actually *read* it?”

v22-23

And now Paul sets up his allegory by citing the historical facts.

Read v22-23.

The Jews—and especially the Jewish leaders—took great pride and solace in the fact that they could trace their lineage back to Abraham (Abram). But before Abram sired Isaac, he sired Ishmael.

Read Genesis 16:1-4.

YOUR NOTES

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Genesis 16:11-12

The angel of the Lord said to her further, "Behold, you are with child, And you will bear a son; And you shall call his name Ishmael, Because the Lord has given heed to your affliction. He will be a wild donkey of a man, His hand will be against everyone, And everyone's hand will be against him; And he will live to the east of all his brothers."

Genesis 15:2-4

Abram said, "O Lord God, what will You give me, since I am childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" And Abram said, "Since You have given no offspring to me, one born in my house is my heir." Then behold, the word of the Lord came to him, saying, "This man will not be your heir; but one who will come forth from your own body, he shall be your heir."

Genesis 18:1

Now the Lord appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre, while he was sitting at the tent door in the heat of the day.

Genesis 18:9-14

Then they said to him, "Where is Sarah your wife?" And he said, "There, in the tent." He said, "I will surely return to you at this time next year; and behold, Sarah your wife will have a son." And Sarah was listening at the tent door, which was behind him. Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age; Sarah was past childbearing. Sarah laughed to herself, saying, "After I have become old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?" And the Lord said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh, saying, 'Shall I indeed bear a child, when I am so old?' Is anything too difficult for the Lord? At the appointed time I will return to you, at this time next year, and Sarah will have a son."

Sarai treated her slave so harshly that while still pregnant Hagar fled. While in the wilderness the "angel of the Lord"—that is, the preincarnate Son of God—found her and told her to return to Sarai and submit to her authority.

Read Genesis 16:11-12.

NASB: he will live to the east of all his brothers.

(NASB margin notes: will dwell "before the face of; or in defiance of")

YLT: before the face of all his brethren he dwelleth.

NKJV: he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren.

NIV: he will live in hostility toward all his brothers.

ESV: he shall dwell over against all his kinsmen.

The Message: Always stirring up trouble, always at odds with his family.

As is apparent, the sense of this last phrase is uncertain. The NET Bible offers this footnote:

"opposite, across from." Ishmael would live on the edge of society (cf. NASB "to the east of"). Some take this as an idiom meaning "be at odds with" (cf. NRSV, NLT) or "live in hostility toward" (cf. NIV).

In any case, the descendants of Ishmael were not of the covenant. They would roam free, live on the fringes of society, and be at odds with everyone. Still true today.

The conception and birth of Ishmael was, from start to finish, of the flesh. The idea was Sarai's, and was a human expression of impatience with God's timing. Abram was old, but not too old to father a child; Hagar was much younger than Sarai, and still comfortably within child-bearing years. Everything perfectly natural, but a rejection of—and a circumlocution of—God's providence.

By comparison, the conception and birth of Isaac was *supernatural*.

Read Genesis 15:2-4.

At the oaks of Mamre, when Abraham was 99 and Sarah past childbearing, the preincarnate Son of God appeared to them.

Read Genesis 18:1,9-14.

YOUR NOTES

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Genesis 21:1-3

Then the Lord took note of Sarah as He had said, and the Lord did for Sarah as He had promised. So Sarah conceived and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the appointed time of which God had spoken to him. Abraham called the name of his son who was born to him, whom Sarah bore to him, Isaac.

Galatians 4:24-25

This is allegorically speaking, for these women are two covenants: one proceeding from Mount Sinai bearing children who are to be slaves; she is Hagar. Now this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children.

Galatians 4:26

But the Jerusalem above is free; she is our mother.

Galatians 4:27

For it is written, "Rejoice, barren woman who does not bear; Break forth and shout, you who are not in labor; For more numerous are the children of the desolate Than of the one who has a husband."

And, just as promised, it happened.

Read Genesis 21:1-3.

Isaac was born precisely by God's timing, to parents too old in the flesh to have children—all according to (or "through", by means of) "the promise" of Genesis 15.

v24-26

Now Paul launches into his allegory, using the two sons of Abraham to contrast the two covenants, using Mount Sinai/earthly Jerusalem to represent slavery through Hagar and Ishmael, and the *new* Jerusalem to represent the covenant of promise through Sarah and Isaac. He first addresses Hagar.

Read v24-25.

The NIV helps us with its translation: "Now Hagar *stands for* Mount Sinai..."

Jerusalem—i.e., Israel, the Jews—was not the capital of a free, sovereign nation at the time, but under the yoke of Rome. By contrast, Paul states, the new Jerusalem is free.

Read v26.

<i>Old</i>	<i>New</i>
Hagar, the bondwoman	Sarah, the free woman
Ishmael, a natural birth	Isaac, a supernatural birth
the Old Covenant	the New Covenant
earthly Jerusalem	heavenly Jerusalem
Judaism (the law)	Christianity (grace)

Paul's use of "the Jerusalem above" is not limited to the promised future "new Jerusalem", described in Revelation 21, but stands as a metaphor for the new relationship available to us in Christ Jesus. No longer bound to the old, corrupt, sinful earthly temple—the one from which Jesus had to drive the money changers—but believers now have, instead, the new, pure heavenly temple that resides in each individual's heart.

And more pertinent to the situation for the Galatians, no longer enslaved to the old Sinai Law, represented by the current Jerusalem, believers are now freed to embrace the grace of Christ, and the *new* Jerusalem.

v27

And now Paul quotes Isaiah 54:1. And here, again, he uses something from Israel's history to substantiate his argument to the Galatians. He allegorizes Isaiah's prophecy about Israel's return to Jerusalem after the Babylonian exile.

Read v27.

Paul's use of this, and his meaning, are a bit slippery, so let's listen to Albert Barnes explain.

Barnes: The object of the apostle in introducing it here seems to be to prove that the Gentiles as well as the Jews would partake of the privileges connected with the heavenly Jerusalem. He had in the previous verse spoken of the Jerusalem from above as the common mother of all, true Christians, whether by birth Jews or Gentiles... Isaiah had spoken of Jerusalem as a female that had been long desolate and childless, now rejoicing by a large accession from the Gentile world, and increased in numbers like a female who should have more children than one who had been long married. To this Paul appropriately refers when he says that the whole church, Jews and Gentiles, were the children of the heavenly Jerusalem, represented here as a rejoicing mother. He has not quoted literally from the Hebrew, but he has used the Septuagint version, and has retained the sense. The sense is, that the accession from the Gentile world would be far more numerous than the Jewish people had ever been; a prophecy that has been already fulfilled.

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Galatians 4:25-26

Now this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. But the Jerusalem above is free; she is our mother.

Galatians 4:28

And you brethren, like Isaac, are children of promise.

1 John 5:1

Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and whoever loves the Father loves the child born of Him.

1 Peter 1:23

for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God.

John 3:3-12

Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?" Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be amazed that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit." Nicodemus said to Him, "How can these things be?" Jesus answered and said to him, "Are you the teacher of Israel and do not understand these things? Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know and testify of what we have seen, and you do not accept our testimony. If I told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things?"

v28

The best way to understand v28 is with v26, but without the intervening v27.

Read vs25-26 & 28.

Brethren—that is, believers in Christ—are like Isaac, not Ishmael: we are not children of flesh, but children of promise—of the Spirit. We were given “birth” not in the natural way of Hagar, but in the supernatural way of Sarah. Let’s look at a few passages that back this up.

Read 1 John 5:1.

Read 1 Peter 1:23.

Read John 3:3-12.

Our birth is something supernatural from heaven, and those not so born cannot even understand it.

YOUR NOTES

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Galatians 4:29-30

But as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, so it is now also. But what does the Scripture say? “Cast out the bondwoman and her son, For the son of the bondwoman shall not be an heir with the son of the free woman.”

Genesis 21:8-10

The child grew and was weaned, and Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned. Now Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, mocking. Therefore she said to Abraham, “Drive out this maid and her son, for the son of this maid shall not be an heir with my son Isaac.”

Galatians 4:31

So then, brethren, we are not children of a bondwoman, but of the free woman.

Galatians 3:1-5

You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified? This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? Did you suffer so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain? So then, does He who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?

Galatians 3:29

And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s descendants, heirs according to promise.

v29-30

In v29, Paul hearkens back to a scene in Genesis 21.

Read vs29-30.

Read Genesis 21:8-10.

mocking = to laugh outright (in merriment or scorn); by implication to sport
:- laugh, mock, play, make sport.

History bears out that often the most persistent criticism—even persecution—of true believers is from their “half-brothers.” Not from atheists or agnostics, but from “unbelieving but religious people in the nominal church.” As Boice points out, it was the Jews, not the Gentiles, that killed the prophets. It was the Pharisees and other religious leaders that opposed Jesus and instigated His execution. And Paul’s fiercest opponents were the fanatically religious Judaizers.

Even today, who hates Christians the most? Not atheists, but a group of people who claim to worship the same God: Muslims. Historically, the enmity between Arab and Jew dates back to Ishmael and Isaac, and Paul here extrapolates that, identifying the Christian with Isaac—both children of promise.

v31

All of which is to serve his thesis that believers in Christ are not slaves (to the law), but free (because of grace), as he states in v31.

Read v31.

Which ties back with what he wrote at the beginning of chapter 3—

Read 3:1-5.

—and how he ends chapter 3:

Read Galatians 3:29.

Followers of Christ have no business being bound to the law. In that way lies futility, and slavery. We are children of the promise; our relationship with God is not based on obedience to the regulations of the law, but based on our faith, by the Spirit, in Christ Jesus.

YOUR NOTES

Galatians 5:1

It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery.

Galatians 5:2

Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you.

In our last session it was necessary for us to understand that the apostle Paul was not speaking literally, but—as he himself stated—allegorically.

Before we launch into *this* study, we need to understand that when Paul speaks of circumcision in the passage before us—Galatians 5:1-6—he is using the specificity of that one act to stand for the *theology* of circumcision. That is, in his argument against legalism he uses this one act of the law to represent a conscious choice of bondage to the law—the theology of salvation by works—over freedom in Christ—the theology of salvation by grace.

v1

Here is the pivotal—some say the most important—verse in the letter to the Galatians.

Read v1.

freedom = liberty

set us free = from <G1658> (eleutheros); **to liberate**, i.e. (figurative) **to exempt (from moral, ceremonial or mortal liability)** :- deliver, make free.

stand firm = *steko* (stay-ko) = from the perfect tense of <G2476> (histemi); **to be stationary**, i.e. (figurative) **to persevere** :- stand (fast).

subject = from <G1722> (en) and <G2192> (echo); **to hold in or upon, i.e. ensnare**; by implication to keep a grudge :- entangle with, have a quarrel against, urge.

yoke = from the root of zeugnumi (to join, especially by a “yoke”); **a coupling, i.e. (figurative) servitude (a law or obligation)**; also (literal) the beam of the balance (as connecting the scales) :- pair of balances, yoke.

slavery = bondage

The Jews of Paul’s time spoke of “taking the yoke of the law upon oneself”—a statement Paul probably references here. To the Jews the taking up of the law’s yoke was considered a good thing—the essence of true religion. But in Paul’s eyes it was the yoke of slavery.

Adam Clarke: The liberty mentioned by the apostle is freedom from Jewish rites and ceremonies, called properly here the yoke of bondage; and also liberty from the power and guilt of sin, which nothing but the grace of Christ can take away.

v2

Read v2.

Note the tense here:

NASB: if you receive circumcision

NKJV: if you become circumcised

NIV: if you let yourselves be circumcised

This makes it clear that the Galatians were still just considering this.

no **benefit** = from the same as <G5622> (opheleia); **to be useful**, i.e. to benefit :- advantage, better, prevail, **profit** (NKJV).

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Galatians 5:3-4

And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law. You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.

James 2:10-11

For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all. For He who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not commit murder." Now if you do not commit adultery, but do commit murder, you have become a transgressor of the law.

Galatians 3:10

For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, to perform them."

Galatians 5:4

You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.

v3-4

Now in vs3-4 we step into dicey territory. At first blush we wonder if maybe Paul's doctrine is changing—or if *our* doctrine has been erroneous all along. But be still my trembling heart. All will be well.

Read vs3-4.

under obligation = from <G3784> (opheilo); **an ower, i.e. person indebted;** figurative a delinquent; morally a transgressor (against God) :- debtor, which owed, sinner.

The first thing Paul points out is that if you are depending on your adherence to the law for your justification before God, then you are either all in or all out. If you agree with the Judaizers that circumcision is required, then you are signing on to the entirety of the law—and must obey it all for your justification.

Read James 2:10-11.

And as Paul himself points out earlier in Galatians.

Read Galatians 3:10. (which quotes Deuteronomy 27:26)

Paul is *not* referring here to one who has just been physically circumcised. Remember, the whole point of the gospel is to take man away from the legalistic minutia of the law and bring him into a relationship of the heart. God is less concerned with our actions than He is the condition of our heart.

He is saying here that you can't just put one toe into the water—you can't just pick and choose portions of the law and mix them into grace. You're either in or you're out.

And, parenthetically, this also applies from the other direction. You can't just pick and choose what you like about the gospel of Christ. You either place your trust in Him or you don't.

This is the problem with the Catholic stance. Catholic doctrine mixes *grace with* works; it is an "and," rather than "either or." Paul's position here—born out not only in Scripture but in practical experience—is that that simply doesn't work. It must be one or the other.

In v4 he presses the point even further.

Read v4.

If you are (or would be) seeking your justification through the law, then you have been severed, or estranged, from Christ.

severed^{NASB}, **estranged**^{NKJV}, **alienated**^{NIV} = from <G2596> (kata) and <G691> (argeo); **to be (render) entirely idle (useless)**, literal or figurative :- abolish, cease, cumber, deliver, destroy, do away, become (make) of no (none, without) effect, fail, loose, bring (come) to nought, put away (down), vanish away, make void.

This is the only place in Scripture where the phrase "fallen from grace" is used. The first thing we need to understand here is that Paul is not saying that we can sin, and as a result of that sin, lose our salvation. <collective sigh>

We haven't time to exhaustively plumb the depths of this issue, but let me just mention a few points. Wayne Grudem refers to this issue—what most evangelicals call "the eternal security of the believer"—as the "perseverance of the saints"—that is,

...that all those who are truly born again will be kept by God's power and will persevere as Christians until the end of their lives, and that only those who persevere until the end have been truly born again.

So if you are truly born again, you will go to heaven (persevere), and you cannot "fall" out of that relationship. If you do not go to heaven (if you do not persevere), you were not truly born again in the first place. You did not "fall from grace"; you were never in it to begin with.

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

John 10:27-29

"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand."

Hebrews 3:14

For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end,

Galatians 2:4

But it was because of the false brethren secretly brought in, who had sneaked in to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, in order to bring us into bondage.

Matthew 7:21-23

"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; Depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'"

1 John 2:18-19

Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have appeared; from this we know that it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us.

Let's look at just one passage that supports this.

Read John 10:27-29.

"No one" includes the individual himself, Grudem points out, which would remove the possibility of sinning our way out of grace. As for the flip side, let's look at a passage in Hebrews.

Read Hebrews 3:14.

Grudem: This verse provides an excellent perspective on the doctrine of perseverance. How do we know if "we have become partakers of Christ"? How do we know if this being joined to Christ has happened to us at some time in the past? One way in which we know that we have come to genuine faith in Christ is if we continue in faith until the end of our lives.

So if we don't, we weren't!

Finally, there is the issue of those who just appear to be born again (those Paul refers to as "false brethren" in Galatians 2:4)—and this brings us closer to our situation in chapter five.

Read Galatians 2:4.

Jesus referred to these "false brethren" in Matthew 7:

Read Matthew 7:21-23.

Note what Jesus does *not* say here: "I once knew you, but now I don't." No, in v23 He says "I *never* knew you." (emphasis added)

The apostle John speaks of such individuals in his first epistle:

Read 1 John 2:18-19.

As Boice points out, Paul's purpose here in Galatians 5 is that to choose legalism (not just commit a sin) is "to relinquish grace as the principle by which one desires to be related to God."

Think of it this way. You're climbing up the sheer face of a cliff. You are only halfway up, but still far above the base of the cliff where you started. You are at a point of decision. Your goal is to reach the top, to safety.

Up till now you have been climbing under your own strength and cunning, finding footholds where you can. But now, from here on up to the top, is a smooth, featureless surface. The only way to finish the climb is to place your faith in the collection of pitons you have in your pack. But then it occurs to you, "No, I think I can fly the rest of the way up. I've done such a good job so far under my own power and wits, I think I can just fly up to the top." So you release your grip, fall away from the safety of the cliff—and plummet to your death.

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Galatians 5:5

For we through the Spirit, by faith, are waiting for the hope of righteousness.

Galatians 4:23

But the son by the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and the son by the free woman through the promise.

Galatians 4:29

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

Galatians 5:6

For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love.

Matthew 7:15-20

“Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they? So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. So then, you will know them by their fruits.”

v5

On the surface v5 is just an obvious, perfunctory statement. But every word in it is important to Paul’s thesis.

Read v5.

- Here the “**we**” is emphasized, as opposed to the “you” Paul has been using up till now. I.e., all of us who are true believers.
- “**through (lit. by) the Spirit**” is a reminder of the electing grace of God—He chose us first.
- “**by (lit. out of) faith**” is the key word, and stands in contrast to the flesh he has spoken of earlier. Turn back to our passage from last week.
Read v4:23 & 29.
Circumcision is of the flesh; grace by faith is of the promise.
- And here’s the best part: those whose relationship with God is based on faith “**wait** for the hope of righteousness”—not “work for.”
- Our “**hope of righteousness**” refers to that future moment in glory when we will possess full righteousness—when we are fully conformed to Christ.

v6

Two points are made in v6.

Read v6.

First, we have the conclusive evidence here that Paul is using circumcision simply to represent the theology of justification by works (adherence to the law). He shrugs his shoulders and states that really, in Christ, physical circumcision is nothing. It is of the flesh and has nothing to do with the condition of the heart. Again, under different circumstances, Paul had Timothy circumcised.

Boice: The second point is that true faith, having an ethical side, works itself out “through love.” This is what matters—this kind of faith! True, we are saved through faith rather than by works; but faith is no mere intellectual conviction, as if a Christian could do as he wishes so long as he believes properly. This is a horrible idea, as Paul writes...in Romans 6. To believe is to place one’s personal confidence in Christ, who loves us and gave Himself for us. Therefore, since Christians have learned love in such measure and at such a source, faith must issue in a genuine and self-denying love for others.

Jesus addresses this from the negative side just before a passage we looked at earlier.

Read Matthew 7:15-20.

Galatians 5:7

You were running well; who hindered you from obeying the truth?

Hebrews 12:1

Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,

Hebrews 12:2

fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Galatians 5:8

This persuasion did not come from Him who calls you.

v7

One can hear the pathos in Paul’s voice as he pleads with the Galatians:

You were running well; who hindered you from obeying the truth?

well = commendably, beautifully, correctly, honorably

hindered you = *enkopto* = from <G1722> (en) and <G2875> (kopto); **to cut into**, i.e. (figurative) **impede, detain** :- hinder, be tedious unto.

Although the word translated “hindered” is a military term, Paul uses it here to describe an opposing runner in a race who illegally cuts in front of another, causing him to trip or fall—or at least be slowed considerably.

Clearly Paul references the legalistic Judaizers that had “cut in” on the Galatians—the “false brethren.” And the application for us is that we can be influenced by people who *seem* to be Christians, but really are not. These individuals can “cut in” on our race—our walk with Christ. They can exert influence over us to lead us down an errant path.

One answer for this is to daily remind ourselves that, just as the Galatians had the apostle Paul and other true believers cheering them on and encouraging them, we, too, have a great “cloud of witnesses” doing the same.

Read Hebrews 12:1.

This verse follows the chapter 11 hall of faith, and refers back to all the saints who have gone on before us, and who our now cheering us on from the grandstand of heaven. We can add to that all the *living* saints that surround us, encouraging us, building up our faith. But the next verse adds the most important “encourager”:

Read Hebrews 12:2.

It is easier for us now than it was for the first century Galatians. To them all this was brand new, and all they had for information was word of mouth. We have had centuries of documentation, commentary, all the written gospels and epistles, preachers, teachers, and traditions. It is easier for us now, but how much better off the Galatians would have been if they had just taken their attention off the Judaizers and set it on Jesus, the “author and perfecter of faith.” He started it and *He* is the one who will help us perfect our walk of faith.

v8

Read v8.

There is a relationship between the word translated “obeying” in v7 and the word translated “persuasion” in v8.

obeying = *peitho* (pay'-tho) = a primary verb; **to convince (by argument)**, true or false); by analogy to pacify or conciliate (by other fair means); reflexive or passive **to assent (to evidence or authority)**, to rely (by inward certainty) :- **agree**, assure, believe, have confidence, be (wax) confident, make friend, obey, persuade, trust, yield. **Translated “persuade” 22 times in the KJV.**

persuasion = *peismone* = (pace-mo-nay') = from a presumed derivative of <G3982> (peitho); **persuadableness, i.e. credulity** :- persuasion. **Only used here in NT.**

And what is this persuasion?

Albert Barnes: This belief that it is necessary to obey the laws of Moses, and to intermingle the observance of Jewish rites with the belief of the Christian doctrines in order to be saved.

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Galatians 5:9

A little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough.

Galatians 3:10

For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, to perform them."

Exodus 12:17-20

"You shall also observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread, for on this very day I brought your hosts out of the land of Egypt; therefore you shall observe this day throughout your generations as a permanent ordinance. In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at evening, you shall eat unleavened bread, until the twenty-first day of the month at evening. Seven days there shall be no leaven found in your houses; for whoever eats what is leavened, that person shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he is an alien or a native of the land. You shall not eat anything leavened; in all your dwellings you shall eat unleavened bread."

1 Corinthians 5:6-8

Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough? Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are in fact unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed. Therefore let us celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

Galatians 5:10

I have confidence in you in the Lord that you will adopt no other view; but the one who is disturbing you will bear his judgment, whoever he is.

...Him who calls you

Paul ties this back to how he began this letter in v6 of chapter 1:

I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel...

God, working through the apostle Paul, had called them to Himself.

v9

Read v9.

lump = from a prolonged form of phuro (**to mix a liquid with a solid**; perhaps akin to <G5453> (phuo) **through the idea of swelling in bulk**), mean to knead; **a mass of dough** :- lump.

Perhaps there were some who claimed that this business of circumcision was a small thing. What's the big deal. After all, in the whole scope of faith, what does it matter?

But small wrongs tend to grow into large wrongs.

Paul has already pointed out (v3:10) that if one signs onto the law in the smallest measure, one must accept the *entire* law as the basis for one's justification. Pick just one requirement of the law, and the rest must follow.

LEAVEN

From the earliest days of the law (Leviticus 2:11), leaven (or yeast) was prohibited in the grain offerings at the altar. This prohibition, as with honey, was possibly made because fermentation implied disintegration and corruption, and to the Hebrew anything in a decayed state suggested uncleanness. Rabbinical writers often used leaven as a symbol for evil and of man's hereditary corruption.

Read Exodus 12:17-20.

From the earliest days through the NT period leaven was God's official metaphor for sin and corruption. Jesus warned His disciples to beware of the "leaven of the Pharisees." Naturally they didn't get it at first, but after he explained further they understood that He meant that the teaching of the Jewish leaders would corrupt the truth He was giving them.

Consider the other letter in which Paul uses this same phrase.

Read 1 Corinthians 5:6-8.

Leaven is a perfect metaphor for sin or wrong teaching, because it, like them, is not static or benign. Wherever it is, it does not remain small and harmless, but it percolates and grows and expands, taking over every nook and cranny it can find. This in a batch of bread can be a good thing, but in a life it every time—every time—results in a spreading, metastasizing corruption.

This is true in an individual, in a church family, in a community. Corruption does not remain dormant, but spreads.

v10

Reading v10, I wonder if Paul is saying this based on some spiritual or heavenly knowledge—or saying it as we might (with false bravado). But then, there is no need to wonder, since he answers the question in the text.

Read v10.

The kjvs and NASB state it more clearly. The NIV and ESV make it sound as if Paul's confidence is *in the Lord*. But what he is saying is that the confidence he has *in the Galatians* comes to Him *via the Lord*. In fact the kjv seems to say it best: "I have confidence **in you** through the Lord..."

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Galatians 5:10

I have confidence in you in the Lord that you will adopt no other view; but the one who is disturbing you will bear his judgment, whoever he is.

Galatians 1:6

I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel;

Galatians 5:11

But I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why am I still persecuted? Then the stumbling block of the cross has been abolished.

...that you will adopt no other view

adopt = from <G5424> (phren); **to exercise the mind**, i.e. entertain or have a sentiment or opinion; **by implication to be (mentally) disposed (more or less earnestly in a certain direction)**; intensive to interest oneself in (with concern or obedience) :- set the affection on, (be) care (-ful), (be like-, + be of one, + be of the same, + let this) mind (-ed), regard, savour, think.

This is left ambiguous in the original text. “No other view” from what? The ESV takes a leap of faith and inserts “than mine”—that is, “I have confidence you will agree with the way I think.” But the original text does not include that specificity.

Obviously Paul wants them to agree with his position: he has just spent four chapters making the case! Perhaps the best way to interpret this verse is to go back to v1:6. Paul is a methodical, lawyerly writer, and it would follow that he has kept his thoughts organized throughout this letter.

Read v1:6.

Paul wants the Galatians not to entertain thoughts of any spurious gospel (e.g., one that includes the requirement of circumcision).

So probably “no other view” = “a different gospel”

...but the one who is disturbing you will bear his judgment, whoever he is.

disturbing = of uncertain affinity; to stir or **agitate** (roil water) :- **stir up trouble**.

This may or may not refer to a specific individual. More than likely it is just a literary device of ambiguity—especially since it closes with “whoever he is.” Paul doesn’t know (and perhaps doesn’t *want* to know). Albert Barnes paraphrases what Paul is saying here:

“I do not know who he is. I mention no names; accuse no one by name; and advise no severe measures against any particular individual. I state only the obvious principle that every man should bear his own burden, and be held responsible for what he has done—no matter who he is.”

v11

On the surface, v11 is hard to understand.

Read v11.

The consensus seems to be that Paul refers here to rumors about himself. Barnes explains it well:

It is evident that the false teachers in Galatia appealed to Paul himself, and alleged that he insisted on the necessity of circumcision, and that they were teaching no more than he taught. On what they founded this is unknown. It may have been mere slander; or it may have arisen from the fact that he had circumcised Timothy Acts 16:3, and, possibly, that he may have encouraged circumcision in some other similar cases. Or it may have been inferred from the fact (which was undoubtedly true) that Paul in general complied with the customs of the Jews when he was with them. But his conduct and example had been greatly perverted. He had never enjoined circumcision as necessary to salvation; and had never complied with Jewish customs where there was danger that it would be understood that he regarded them as at all indispensable, or as furnishing a ground of acceptance with God.

So to the Galatians he says, *If that were the case, why are they persecuting me? Obviously I am not preaching the need for circumcision.*

persecuted = a prolonged (and causative) form of a primary verb *diō* (**to flee**; compare the base of <G1169> (*deilos*) and <G1249> (*diakonos*)); **to pursue** (literal or figurative); by implication to persecute :- ensue, follow (after), given to, (suffer) persecute (-ion), press forward.

We might say, Why are they dogging my steps?

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Then the stumbling block of the cross has been abolished.

This statement is easier to understand now. Personally I love this imagery: “the offense of the cross”—or, in the NASB, the “stumbling block of the cross.”

stumbling block^{NASB}, **offense**^{KJVS,NIV} = *skandalon* = (“scandal”); probably from a derivative of <G2578> (kampto); **a trap-stick (bent sapling), i.e. snare** (figurative cause of displeasure or sin) :- occasion to fall (of stumbling), offence, thing that offends, stumbling block.

James Montgomery Boice explains how this applies:

...the cross proclaims man’s complete ruin in sin, to the degree that nothing he does or can do can save him, and thus also proclaims man’s radical need for God’s grace. The natural man does not understand such teaching and, in fact, hates it, because it strips away any pretense of spiritual achievement.

Paul is saying that the power of the cross means nothing if we must mix into grace the works of the flesh. Either our merit before God is found in Christ or in ourselves. It cannot be both. Here is how *The Message* paraphrases this verse:

As for the rumor that I continue to preach the ways of circumcision (as I did in those pre-Damascus Road days), that is absurd. Why would I still be persecuted, then? If I were preaching that old message, no one would be offended if I mentioned the Cross now and then—it would be so watered-down it wouldn’t matter one way or the other.

v12

Paul finishes this passage with a strong—even, some might say, offensive—remark.

Read v12.

First the word translated “troubling” is not the same as “disturbing” in v10, which meant to stir or agitate. This is a related but stronger word.

troubling = from a derivative of <G450> (anistemi) (**in the sense of removal**); properly **to drive out of home**, i.e. (by implication) to disturb (literal or figurative) :- trouble, **turn upside down, make an uproar**.

With this word Paul is saying these Judaizers are not just causing trouble and placing doubt in your mind, but they are trying to drive you away from Christ!

He then goes on to wish that these legalists would even mutilate themselves.

mutilate^{NASB}, **emasculate**^{NIV} = from <G575> (apo) and <G2875> (kopto); **to amputate**; reflexive (by irony) **to mutilate (the privy parts)** :- **cut off**. Compare <G2699> (katatome).
i.e., castrate—or worse.

This is to be understood in a Jewish context. If Paul were to say this directly to any of these Judaizers, they would realize immediately that he was not just wishing them ill.

Read Deuteronomy 23:1. (emasculated = Lit., wounded by crushing of testicles)

The key here is “cut off.”

- the legalists were attempting to “**cut off**” the Galatians from Christ
- for this, Paul wishes that they would, themselves, be “**cut off**” (castrated)
- if this were to really happen, the legalists themselves would be “**cut off**” from the “assembly of the Lord”—that is, the ability to worship God at His temple.

Today Paul’s remark might seem coarse, vulgar, perhaps even reprehensible. But this wasn’t just pique, bad temper. His sole purpose was to protect the gospel of grace and the truth of God.

John R. W. Stott: If we were as concerned for God’s church and God’s word as Paul was, we too would wish that false teachers might cease from the land.

Galatians 5:12

I wish that those who are troubling you would even mutilate themselves.

Deuteronomy 23:1

“No one who is emasculated or has his male organ cut off shall enter the assembly of the Lord.”

Galatians 1:3-4

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins so that He might rescue us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father,

Galatians 2:4

But it was because of the false brethren secretly brought in, who had sneaked in to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, in order to bring us into bondage.

Galatians 3:23

But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed.

Galatians 4:3

So also we, while we were children, were held in bondage under the elemental things of the world.

Galatians 4:6-8

Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God. However at that time, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those which by nature are no gods.

Galatians 4:31

So then, brethren, we are not children of a bondwoman, but of the free woman.

Galatians 5:1a

It was for freedom that Christ set us free...

Galatians 5:13a

For you were called to freedom, brethren...

Galatians 5:6

For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love.

To prepare our thoughts for this next session, let's go back and trace one of Paul's recurring, principal themes in this letter.

Read...

1:3-4

2:4

3:23

4:3, 6-8, 31

5:1a, 13a

Then from v13b through the end of chapter 5, Paul defines this "freedom" in Christ. Look at v6; this is to be a freedom based on love.

Read v6.

This is a love not for self, but for God as expressed through our love for others—or, to turn it around, a love for each other *based on* our love for God, energized by the indwelling Spirit (which we will look at in future sessions).

Quoting from one of my devotional journals...

From birth each of us is indoctrinated by society to believe that we are "free." Slavery is no more (at least outside the shadows) and individual liberty reigns. In the United States we have the Bill of Rights—the first ten amendments to the U.S. Constitution—which confers upon our citizens essential freedoms: freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of religion, the right to bear arms, the right against unreasonable searches, States' rights.

Like modern Pharisees taking over the interpretation and implementation of not the Ten Commandments but the Ten Rights, our liberalized society has expanded these rights to include personal liberties never imagined by the founding fathers. So now the individual's "rights" include freedom *from* religion, the freedom to kill unborn life, the freedom to prevent any speech one deems objectionable, the freedom to take another man as one's wife, or another woman as one's husband.

Today the exquisite genius of freedom and liberty has devolved into putrid license. Where liberty exalts, license demeans. More than that, it is all a lie.

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Romans 1:21-25

For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures. Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

Ephesians 2:1-2

And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.

Galatians 5:8

This persuasion did not come from Him who calls you.

Galatians 5:13

For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

Read Romans 1:21-25.

The truth is, man is born in slavery and, save for one critical decision, remains in that condition. Man is born in slavery to flesh, slavery to himself, slavery to the god of this world.

Read Ephesians 2:1-2.

Man thinks his freedom is as boundless as his clear, limitless sight. But it is all a lie, for in truth he is locked up, chained to the earth, his feet mired in the soil from which he came.

But over two thousand years ago, in a small village in Judah, God the Father sent His Son to be born of a virgin. Jesus Christ came to offer a way *out of* the prison of fleshly conceit, the padlocked chains of sin and anger and lies. “In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.” The spotless Lamb was born into this world so that His sinless flesh could be sacrificed for flesh locked in depravity.

In this babe of Bethlehem was freedom—true freedom. Not the artificial liberties imagined by man or the father of lies; not the cynical constructions of license masquerading as freedom; not the mere perception of freedom as imagined from within a glass-walled prison. Jesus brought with Him the way—the only way—to real life, the fresh invigorating breath of true liberty.

v13

Another of Paul’s themes in this letter is that we are “called” by God. He states this first in v1:6 and 1:15. He states it again in v8, above.

Read v8.

Then for the last time in v13.

Read v13a.

God bid us, He invited us, He *summoned* us to freedom. But now, in the second part of this verse Paul makes a deep and powerful statement about how this freedom is to be defined and enacted—and what he says would leave an unbeliever just shaking their head not just in disbelief, but scornful mockery.

Read v13b.

freedom^{NASB}, **liberty**^{KJV,NKJV} = *eleutheria* (el-yoo-ther-ee'-ah) = from <G1658> (eleutheros) ↓; freedom (**legitimate or licentious**, chiefly moral or ceremonial) :- liberty.

eleutheros = probably from the alternative of <G2064> (erchomai);

unrestrained (to go at pleasure), i.e. (**as a citizen**) **not a slave** (whether freeborn or manumitted), or (genitive) exempt (from obligation or liability) :- free (man, woman), at liberty.

opportunity = *aphorme* = a starting-point “or base of operations for an expedition [or war].” (Boice)

flesh = *sarx* = ...the body (as opposed to the soul [or spirit]), or as the symbol of what is external, or as the means of kindred), or (by implication) human nature (with its frailties [physical or moral] and passions), or (special) a human being (as such) :- carnal (-ly, + -ly minded), flesh ([-ly]).

love = agape

serve = *douleuō* = **to be a slave to** (literal or figurative, involuntary or voluntary) :- **be in bondage**, (do) serve (-ice).

Imagine! Our freedom in Christ is to be a base of operations not for self-absorbed, perhaps sinful indulgence (the world’s definition), but a base of operations for serving one another in love (Christ’s definition)—not just doing something nice for someone whenever it’s convenient or the impulse comes upon us, but we are to be actually *in bondage* to one another! No wonder the world thinks we’re crazy.

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Galatians 5:14

For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

Matthew 22:37-40

And He said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets."

Romans 13:8

Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law.

John 13:33-35

"Little children, I am with you a little while longer. You will seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, now I also say to you, 'Where I am going, you cannot come.' A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

Matthew 7:12

"In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets."

v14

Read v14.

(Quoting Leviticus 19:18)

fulfilled^{NASB,KJVS}, **summed up**^{NIV} = from <G4134> (pleres); **to make replete, i.e. (literal) to cram (a net)**, level up (a hollow), or (figurative) to furnish (or imbue, diffuse, influence), satisfy, execute (an office), finish (a period or task), verify (or coincide with a prediction), etc. :- accomplish, × after, (be) complete, end, expire, fill (up), fulfil, (be, make) full (come), fully preach, perfect, supply.

The verb in this verse can (accurately) be translated two different ways. The first is used by the NIV: "summed up" or summarized. This is essentially what Jesus said in reply to the lawyer who asked, "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?"

Read Matthew 22:37-40.

The other way this word can be translated is used by the NASB and the KJVS: "fulfilled"—which is how Paul uses it in Romans 13:8.

Read Romans 13:8.

And just what is this summation or fulfillment? That we love our neighbor as our self. This is in keeping not only with the Ten Commandments, but with what Jesus taught.

Read John 13:33-35.

Read Matthew 7:12.

Discussion: This is what it says in the pages of God's word, that our freedom in Christ is to consist in serving one another—literally being a bondservant to each other. How do you think this "bondage" actually plays out in the life of the church?

YOUR NOTES

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Galatians 5:15

But if you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another.

Now, you may be thinking, wait a minute, Paul's trying to have it both ways. He has been speaking against the law, but now cites it in backing up this point about how we are to love and serve each other.

Ridderbos: This fulfillment [of the law] remains a divine requirement. But since the law, as demanding agent, cannot effectuate the fulfillment, it is not the imperative of the law but the *bond of faith in Christ* which forms the ground and origin of the fulfillment of the will of God. (emphasis added)

v15

But there is always a “but”:

Read v15.

devour = *katesthio* = from <G2596> (kata) and <G2068> (esthio) (including its alternate); **to eat down, i.e. devour** (literal or figurative) :- devour.

consumed = *analisko* = from <G303> (ana) and a form of the alternate of <G138> (haireomai); properly **to use up, i.e. destroy** :- consume.

We don't know what, if anything, specific Paul refers to here, but the tense of the verbs shows that it was then present, and his choice of verbs reveals its intensity. Perhaps there was strife because of the invasion of the legalizers. Paul may be saying, “You who are in favor of adding in the requirements of the law, and you who are opposed to it—remember that even now you are brothers and sisters in Christ. Be careful: Little nips can quickly turn into open warfare.”

Albert Barnes: As wild beasts contend sometimes until both are slain. Thus, the idea is, in their contentions they would destroy the spirituality and happiness of each other; their characters would be ruined; and the church be overthrown. The readiest way to destroy the spirituality of a church, and to annihilate the influence of religion, is to excite a spirit of contention.

Matthew Henry: If, instead of acting like men and Christians, they would behave themselves more like brute beasts, in tearing and rending one another, they could expect nothing as the consequence of it, but that they would be consumed one of another; and therefore they had the greatest reason not to indulge themselves in such quarrels and animosities. Note, Mutual strifes among brethren, if persisted in, are likely to prove a common ruin; those that devour one another are in a fair way to be consumed one of another. Christian churches cannot be ruined but by their own hands; but if Christians, who should be helps to one another and a joy one to another, be as brute beasts, biting and devouring each other, what can be expected but that the God of love should deny his grace to them, and the Spirit of love should depart from them, and that the evil spirit, who seeks the destruction of them all, should prevail?

YOUR NOTES

The passage before us is a challenging one—not because it is hard to understand, but because it is too easy to immediately personalize it. We *should* personalize God’s word—we *should* apply its truths and commandments to our lives. But it is important to first understand the over-arching principle before we reduce it down to our own experience.

For example, when we read what Paul writes in Romans 7:15 & 19—

For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I *would* like to *do*, but I am doing the very thing I hate. For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want.

—our minds immediately focus in on that very same struggle in our own lives, thus limiting our perspective to our own, narrowly focused experience. When we too quickly personalize a passage of Scripture we run the risk of missing some of its broader, more profound truths.

So as we look at this passage we need to make a conscious effort—at least to begin with—to consider it from a more universal perspective, rather than personal.

v16

Galatians 5:16

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.

1 Samuel 17:39

David girded his sword over his armor and tried to walk, for he had not tested them. So David said to Saul, “I cannot go with these, for I have not tested them.” And David took them off.

2 Kings 20:3

“Remember now, O Lord, I beseech You, how I have walked before You in truth and with a whole heart and have done what is good in Your sight.” And Hezekiah wept bitterly.

Colossians 4:5-6

Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity. Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person.

Galatians 5:15

But if you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another.

Read v16.

walk = *peripateo* = from <G4012> (peri) [through or around] and <G3961> (pateo) [to trample or tread under foot]; **to tread all around, i.e. walk at large** (especially as proof of ability); **figurative to live, deport oneself, follow** (as a companion or votary) :- go, **be occupied with**, walk (about).

In early secular Greek *peripateo* was used to describe a strolling and stopping, as one would move through a marketplace: browsing here and there, occasionally stopping, then moving on. In the OT (Septuagint), this word was also used, for the most part, to describe simply to go or walk about.

Read 1 Samuel 17:39. (“walk” & “go”)

Occasionally, however, the word will be used more figuratively in the OT for a way of life:

Read 2 Kings 20:3.

In the NT the word is used about evenly both literally and figuratively. As is so often the case, in the Pauline writings especially the term is—for lack of a better word—more “spiritualized.” And in a manner of speaking the two uses are combined: for example (as here in Galatians 5:16), if we “walk” by the Spirit—that is, the nature and manner of a way of life—we will “walk” in righteousness—that is, our daily thoughts and activities will be according to the pure freedom in Christ, rather than the licentious liberty of the world.

(Just to foreshadow an upcoming study, I would point out that the “walk” in v25 is a different word.)

Paul gives us a perfect picture of what this means in Colossians 4.

Read Colossians 4:5-6 (word translated “conduct yourselves”)

One last thought about this word “walk.” The present tense of the verb points to a continuing condition—or need for it. This is an ongoing, daily necessity.

Paul offers v16 as a solution to v15.

Read v15.

The process of biting and devouring one another, and thus consuming one another, is synonymous with “the desire of the flesh” in v16. It is the carnal, natural man that behaves in this way. How do we *avoid* behaving in this way? Paul says by “walk[ing] by the Spirit.”

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Galatians 5:17

For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.

Ephesians 6:10-11

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.

One observation about “desire of the flesh”: In every translation but the NIV this is in the singular: “desire,” rather than “desires.” Now I don’t want to make too much of this, since the same word is translated in the plural elsewhere, but I think it is easy, when reading that phrase, to begin ticking off the items on the list—the various and sundry “desires” of our flesh. But really there is only *one* desire of the flesh: **self**.

v17

Read v17.

sets its desire = from <G1909> (epi) and <G2372> (thumos); **to set the heart upon, i.e. long for** (rightfully or otherwise) :- covet, desire, would fain, **lust** (after).

The flesh lusts against the Spirit and the Spirit responds in kind. They are enemies, diametrically opposed to each other.

that you **please**^{NASB}, **wish**^{NKJV}, **want**^{NIV} = or ethelo, eth-el'-o; in certain tenses theleo, thel-el'-o; and etheleo, eth-el-eh'-o, which are otherwise obsolete; apparently strengthened from the alternate form of <G138> (haireomai); **to determine (as an active option from subjective impulse)**; whereas <G1014> (boulomai) properly denotes rather a passive acquiescence in objective considerations), i.e., choose or prefer (literal or figurative); **by implication to wish, i.e. be inclined to** (sometimes adverbially gladly); impersonally for the future tense, to be about to; by Hebrew to delight in :- desire, be disposed (forward), intend, list, love, mean, please, have rather, (be) will (have, -ling, -ling [ly]).

This is not a passive preference, but a determined desire. I really want to do this.

Vincent's Word Studies: The things which you will to do under the influence of *either* of the two contending principles. There is a *mutual* conflict of two powers. If one wills to do good, he is opposed by the flesh: if to do evil, by the Spirit.

Matthew Henry: As the principle of grace in us will not suffer us to do all the evil which our corrupt nature would prompt us to, so neither can we do all the good that we would, by reason of the oppositions we meet with from that corrupt and carnal principle. Even as in a natural man there is something of this struggle (the convictions of his conscience and the corruption of his own heart strive with one another; his convictions would suppress his corruptions, and his corruptions silence his convictions), so in a renewed man, where there is something of a good principle, there is a struggle between the old nature and the new nature, the remainders of sin and the beginnings of grace; and this Christians must expect will be their exercise as long as they continue in this world.

Discussion: Before we go any further, are you someone who holds the position that there *is* no conflict—that when we come to Christ the old nature is eradicated?

There are many passages that speak to this, but one in particular comes to mind. We won't read all of it, but turn to Ephesians 6, beginning with v10.

Read Ephesians 6:10-11.

And Paul continues, itemizing this “full armor” and describing its various purposes. Why would he have written any of this—addressed to those “in the Lord”—if it were not necessary for believers?

Back to our passage in Galatians. It is easy to read “the desire [or lust] of the flesh” and immediately think of man’s *sexual* desires. But this does not have that narrow focus. The desire of the flesh encompasses *anything* that comes from the natural in contrast to the spiritual. Next week we will look at the passage that itemizes both of these—but even these lists should not be taken as definitive and complete.

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Here are some personal rules I use—ways to determine if something is of the flesh or of the Spirit. And it is important to point out that with the exception of the first, none of these rules are absolutely conclusive, nor universal.

1. Does God's word speak specifically about it? If so, favorably or unfavorably?
2. Does God's word speak *generally* about it? If so, favorably or unfavorably?
3. Doing this, do I feel closer to or more distant from God or Christ Jesus?
4. Is this something I can *thank* God for?
5. Would I be comfortable with my friends, my spouse knowing about this?
6. Would I invite the Lord to be a part of what I am doing, or ask Him to watch?
7. What is the indwelling Spirit saying to me about it?

Discussion: Can you add more to these?

YOUR NOTES

Galatians 5:18

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

v18

But Paul says there is an even better way to deal with this conflict.

Read v18.

Discussion: Can you come up with some synonyms for—a rephrasing of—walking by the Spirit? Not examples of how we accomplish it, not the mechanics of it (praying more, reading our Bible, etc.); in v22 Paul itemizes the *result* of walking by the Spirit—its “fruits.” But put into your own words what it means to “walk by the Spirit.” What does it feel like?

YOUR NOTES

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Matthew 10:16-18

“Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves. But beware of men, for they will hand you over to the courts and scourge you in their synagogues; and you will even be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles.”

Mark 1:38

He said to them, “Let us go somewhere else to the towns nearby, so that I may preach there also; for that is what I came for.”

Luke 4:1

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led around by the Spirit in the wilderness...

Luke 4:9

And he led Him to Jerusalem and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down from here;

Luke 19:30

saying, “Go into the village ahead of you; there, as you enter, you will find a colt tied on which no one yet has ever sat; untie it and bring it here.”

Luke 19:35

They brought it to Jesus, and they threw their coats on the colt and put Jesus on it.

Luke 23:32

Two others also, who were criminals, were being led away to be put to death with Him.

Romans 2:4

Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?

led = a primary verb; properly **to lead**; by implication **to bring, drive**, (reflexive) go, (special) pass (time), or (figurative) induce :- be, bring (forth), **carry**, (let) go, keep, lead away, be open.

This is a very flexible word that illustrates perfectly the thorough absorption of the Holy Spirit into a life—how He participates in, even controls, every manner of our coming and going. Note how the same word is used elsewhere in the NT:

brought: Read Matthew 10:16-18.

Jesus warning His disciple how they will be handled—often against their will.

go: Read Mark 1:38.

Just normal getting up and moving from one place to another.

led: Read Luke 4:1,9.

During His temptation Jesus was led both by the Spirit *and* Satan.

bring, brought: Read Luke 19:30,35.

Jesus told them to bring the colt and they brought it.

led away: Read Luke 23:32.

The two criminals were “led away”—clearly against their will—to their death.

leads you: Read Romans 2:4.

God’s grace *persuades* us, *influences* us to repent

The point of all this is to illustrate how God, through the ministry of the Spirit, permeates a life. His residence—even power and control—does not insure an absence of sin, temptation, the influence of the Father of Lies. But He is *incorporated* into us, working my all these many means: sometimes with a shout, sometimes with a whisper, sometimes forcing, sometimes cajoling.

...*you are not under the Law.*

Boice: Paul reminds the Galatians that, though he is now talking of the need to live a godly life, he is not thereby reverting to legalism. Life by the Spirit is neither legalism nor license—nor a middle way between them. It is a life of faith and love that is above all of these false ways. Being led by the Spirit does not imply passivity but rather the need to allow oneself to be led.

Galatians 5:16-18

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law.

Galatians 5:19-21

Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

In this session we finish chapter five of Galatians, starting at v19, but I'd like to begin with v16.

Read Galatians 5:16-18.

V19-21: DEEDS OF THE FLESH

Read v19-21.

deeds of the flesh^{NASB} = **acts of the sinful nature**^{NIV}

evident^{NASB,NKJV}, **obvious**^{NIV}, **manifest**^{KJV} = from <G5316> (phaino); **shining, i.e. apparent** (literal or figurative); neuter (as adverb) publicly, externally :- abroad, + appear, known, manifest, open [+ -ly], outward ([+ -ly]). **Also translated apparent, well known.**

This does not mean that these acts are all committed in *public*. What this means is “that it is obvious to all that such acts originate with the sinful nature, and not with the nature given believers by God.” (Boice)

Whether the apostle Paul meant to or not, the following “deeds of the flesh” are grouped into four categories.

THREE SEXUAL SINS

(the kjvs add “adultery” which is not in the best manuscripts)

immorality^{NASB}, **fornication**^{KJVS} = *porneia* = from <G4203> (porneuo); harlotry (including adultery and incest); figurative idolatry :- **fornication**. From a word that means to **indulge in unlawful lust (of either sex)**

impurity^{NASB,NIV}, **uncleanness**^{KJVS} = from <G169> (akathartos); impurity (the quality), **physical or moral** :- **uncleanness**. From a word that means impure (ceremonial, moral [lewd] or special [dæmonic]) :- **foul**, unclean.

Clarke: Whatever is opposite to purity.

sensuality^{NASB}, **lewdness**^{NKJV}, **debauchery**^{NIV}, **lasciviousness**^{KJV} = from a compound of <G1> (a) (as a negative particle) and a presumed selges (of uncertain derivative, but apparently meaning continent); **licentiousness (sometimes including other vices) :- filthy, lasciviousness, wantonness.**

TWO RELIGIOUS SINS

idolatry = image worship

sorcery^{NASB,NKJV}, **witchcraft**^{KJV,NIV} = *pharmakeia* = from <G5332> (pharmakeus); medication (“pharmacy”), i.e. (by extension) **magic** (literal or figurative) :- sorcery, witchcraft; **from a root (pharmakon) meaning a drug, i.e. spell-giving potion.**

EIGHT SOCIAL SINS

enmities^{NASB}, **hatred**^{KJVS,NIV} = *echthra* = feminine of <G2190> (echthros); hostility; by implication **a reason for opposition** :- enmity, hatred.

strife^{NASB}, **contentions**^{NKJV}, **discord**^{NIV}, **variance**^{KJV} = of uncertain affinity; **a quarrel, i.e. (by implication) wrangling** :- contention, debate, strife, variance.

jealousy^{NASB}, **emulations**^{KJV} = from <G2204> (zeo); properly **heat, i.e. (figurative) “zeal” (in a favorable sense, ardor; in an unfavorable one, jealousy, as of a husband [figurative of God], or an enemy, malice)** :- emulation, envy (-ing), fervent mind, indignation, jealousy, zeal. [In Websters, under the category “obsolete,” the word “emulation” means “an ambitious rivalry, envious dislike”.]

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Galatians 5:20-21

...idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

outbursts of anger (wrath)^{NASB}, fits of rage^{NIV} = *thymos* (thoo-mos') [**thermal**] = from <G2380> (thuo); **passion (as if breathing hard) :- fierceness, indignation, wrath.** Compare <G5590> (psuche).

disputes^{NASB}, selfish ambition(s)^{NKJV,NIV}, strife^{KJV} = perhaps from the same as <G2042> (erethizo); **properly intrigue, i.e. (by implication) faction :- contention (-ious), strife.**

dissensions^{NASB}, seditions^{KJV} = from a derivative of <G1364> (dis) and <G4714> (stasis); **disunion, i.e. (figurative) dissension :- division, sedition.**

factions^{NASB,NIV}, heresies^{KJVS}, sects^{YLT} = *hair'esis* = from <G138> (haireomai); properly **a choice, i.e. (special) a party or (abstract) disunion :- heresy, sect.**

envying = probably akin to the base of <G5351> (phtheiro); **ill-will** (as detraction), i.e. jealousy (**spite**) :- envy.

(the *KJVS* add “murders” which is not in the best manuscripts)

TWO PAGAN SINS

drunkenness = apparently a primary word; **an intoxicant**, i.e. (by implication) intoxication :- drunkenness.

carousing^{NASB}, revelries^{NKJV}, revellings^{KJV}, orgies^{NIV} = from <G2749> (keimai); a carousal (as if a letting loose) :- revelling, rioting; a village festival.

(“pleasures that have degenerated to debauchery”)

and things like these = i.e., “get the picture?”

I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you...

Paul is warning of this before it occurs—just as he has before—

...that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

—that those who habitually continue in fleshly sins are giving evidence that God’s Spirit does not dwell in them, that they are not children of God.

Galatians 5:22-23

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

V22-23: FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

Read vs22-23

love = *agape* = from <G25> (agapao); love, i.e. **affection or benevolence**; specially (plural) a love-feast :- (feast of) charity ([-ably]), dear, love.

joy = from <G5463> (chairo); **cheerfulness, i.e. calm delight :- gladness**, × greatly, (× be exceeding) joy (-ful, -fully, -fulness, -ous).

peace = *eirene* [the Greek version of “shalom”] = probably from a primary verb *eiro* (**to join**); peace (literal or figurative); by implication **prosperity :- one, peace, quietness, rest, + set at one again.**

patience^{NASB}, longsuffering^{KJVS}, kindness^{NIV} = from the same as <G3116> (makrothumos); **longanimity**, i.e. (objective) **forbearance** or (subjective) fortitude :- longsuffering, patience.

kindness = from <G5543> (chrestos); **usefulness, i.e. moral excellence** (in character or demeanor) :- **gentleness, good (-ness), kindness.**

goodness = from <G18> (agathos); goodness, i.e. **virtue or beneficence :- goodness.**

faithfulness (or faith) = from <G3982> (peitho); persuasion, i.e. **credence; moral conviction** (of religious truth, or the truthfulness of God or a religious teacher), especially reliance upon Christ for salvation; abstract **constancy in such profession**; by extensive the system of religious (Gospel) truth itself :- assurance, belief, believe, faith, **fidelity.**

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Galatians 3:19

Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed would come to whom the promise had been made.

Galatians 3:24-27

Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

Galatians 5:24

Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

Galatians 5:25

If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.

Galatians 5:16

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.

In this context less faith in God than a fidelity and constancy—a reliability—in one's human relationships.

gentleness^{NASB}, **meekness**^{KJV} = from <G4239> (prau`s); **mildness, i.e. (by implication) humility** :-

self-control^{NASB}, **temperance**^{KJV} = *enkrateia* =

Barclay: “*En-krat'-eia* is that great quality which comes to a man when Christ is in his heart, that quality which makes him able to live and to walk in the world, and yet to keep his garments unspotted from the world.”

...against such things there is no law.

Read Galatians 3:19,24-27.

With this last phrase Paul states that since the law was given to clarify and restrain evil, it cannot be against something as pure and righteous as the fruit of the Spirit.

v24

At first glance v24 troubles me like many passages in the epistles of John. It sounds so absolute.

Read v24.

I read that and I wonder, “We have? Then what’s wrong with *me*?”

passions = from a presumed derivative of <G3806> (pathos); **something undergone, i.e. hardship or pain**; subject **an emotion or influence** :- affection, affliction, motion, suffering.

desires = from <G1937> (epithumeo); **a longing (especially for what is forbidden)** :- concupiscence, desire, **lust (after)**.

All of Romans 6 is a more detailed discussion of Paul’s thesis. And I confess that it is one I struggle with. If this is true—if, as he writes in Romans 6:6-7,

...that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin.

—if this is so, and if I know that I *am* a Christian, then why do I still have such a struggle with some areas of sin? James Montgomery Boice helps us out:

Boice: This does not mean that the battle is thereby over forever. As in an actual crucifixion, life lingers even though the criminal has been nailed to the cross. Nevertheless, the believer is to regard the decisive act as having been done. He is not to seek the remove from the cross what has once been nailed there.

v25

Read v25.

If we live by the Spirit (implied: “and we do”)

If we are alive, have life, exist, by the ministry of the Spirit, then

let us walk by the Spirit.

We looked at the word “walk” in some detail last session in v16.

Read v16.

walk = *peripateo* = from <G4012> (peri) [through or around] and <G3961> (pateo) [to trample or tread under foot]; **to tread all around, i.e. walk at large** (especially as proof of ability); **figurative to live, deport oneself**, follow (as a companion or votary) :- go, **be occupied with**, walk (about).

This word in v25 is

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Galatians 5:14-15

For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." But if you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another.

Galatians 5:26

Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another.

walk = *stoicheo* (stoy-kheh'-o) = from a derivative of *steicho* (to range in regular line); **to march in (military) rank (keep step), i.e. (figurative) to conform to virtue and piety** :- walk (orderly); **to be in rows, to walk by rule.**

We are to order our life not according to the old law, but order it according to the indwelling Spirit. We are to "get in line with Him," "keep in step" with Him. And just what does this look like? The fruit of the Spirit: "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control..."

v26

In vs14-15, above, Paul wrote:

Read Galatians 5:14-15.

And in v26 he returns to this thought.

Read Galatians 5:26.

boastful^{NASB}, **conceited**^{NKJV,NIV}, **desirous of vain glory**^{KJV} = *keno-doxos* = from <G2756> (*kenos*) and <G1391> (*doxa*); **vainly glorifying, i.e. self-conceited** :- **desirous of vain-glory.**

Vincent: This compound means having a vain conceit of possessing a rightful claim to honor.

challenging^{NASB}, **provoking**^{KJVS} = middle from <G4253> (*pro*) and <G2564> (*kaleo*); **to call forth to oneself (challenge), i.e. by implication to irritate** :- **provoke.**

envying = a variation on the deed of the flesh mentioned above.

Galatians 5:22-23

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

Galatians 5:25-6:1

If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another. Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted.

If you are like me, when you read passages like Galatians 5:16—

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.

—the image this brings to mind is of a life spent hovering a few inches above the soil, an ethereal existence unsullied by any of the things of this earth. That is the fanciful image, but it is not the reality. In chapter five Paul listed some of the fruit of the Spirit—that is, the outward evidence of a life in the control not of the flesh, but of God’s Holy Spirit.

Read Galatians 5:22-23.

The apostle begins the final chapter of this epistle by describing not the mystical, otherworldly effects of living by the Spirit, but the practical application. Just what does this look like in the kingdom of God?

v1

Before we read v1, let me address one word that is in the NASB, but in none of the other translations.

even = *kai* = apparently a primary particle, having a copulative and sometimes also a cumulative force; **and, also, even, so, then, too, etc.**; often used in connection (or composition) with other particles or small words :- and, also, both, but, even, for, if, or, so, that, then, therefore, when, yet. **In the kjv it is *not* translated (i.e., ignored) 350 times.**

But the word is in the original text, and the NASB has included it—and it seems to fit in the flow from chapter 5 to 6:

Read Galatians 5:25-6:1.

Notice that there are no restrictions, no exclusions: *if anyone is caught in any trespass...*

anyone^{NASB}, **someone**^{NIV}, **a man**^{KJVS} = *anthropos* = from <G435> (aner) and ops (the countenance; from <G3700> (optanomai)); **man-faced, i.e. a human being** :- certain, man; **mankind**.

caught^{NASB,NIV}, **overtaken**^{KJVS} = *prolambano* = from <G4253> (pro) and <G2983> (lambano); **to take in advance, i.e. (literal) eat before others have an opportunity**; (figurative) to anticipate, **surprise** :- come beforehand, **overtake**, take before.

The kjvs are actually preferred here. Our first thought, I think, when we read “if anyone is caught in a trespass” is that they have been discovered, caught red-handed. We think of the adulteress brought before Jesus in John 8 who was “caught...in the very act.” That “caught” is *katalambano*, while the “caught” in Galatians 6 is *prolambano*, and does not mean, as the former, to take eagerly, i.e. seize, possess, but “to be surprised by the fault itself before he is aware.” That is why I prefer “overtaken”; there is the picture of someone traveling innocently down the road and suddenly caught unawares by something from behind—something moving faster, silently.

trespass = from <G3895> (parapipto); **a side-slip (lapse or deviation), i.e. (unintentional) error or (willful) transgression** :- fall, fault, offence, sin, trespass.

To be *prolambano*-ed, in regard to sin, is to slip or stumble into something so quickly that the transgression has occurred perhaps before one even realizes it. It is not premeditated; it is not a manner of life.

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Boice: Paul imagines a hypothetical situation—which, however, is not at all infrequent—in which one believer unexpectedly learns that another believer is trapped in some sin. What is he to do? Is he to overlook the sin? Does love mean that he is to refuse to face the facts? Or should he expose the sin openly and so gain for himself a reputation for superior holiness? Paul shows that a Spirit-led person should not proceed in either of these ways.

spiritual = *pneumatikos* = from <G4151> (pneuma); **non-carnal**, i.e. (humanly) ethereal (as opposed to gross), or (dæmoniacally) a spirit (concretely), or (divinely) supernatural, regenerate, religious :- spiritual. Compare <G5591> (psuchikos).

John Gill: ...meaning not such who had greater spiritual *gifts* than others, their ministers, pastors, and ecclesiastical governors, though these may be so called... but the apostle here addresses the brethren in general, the several members of the church, even all but those that were fallen: nor does he mean such as have more spiritual *knowledge* than others... but such as live and walk in the Spirit, and are strong, and stand by the power and grace of the Spirit of God, as opposed to the weak, and who were fallen through the prevalency of the flesh, and force of temptation.

Just about every church has saints like this. They need not be leaders (though often they are), but just regular folk whose lives are guided by the Spirit. They don't just share a few moments with God on Sunday mornings, but live with Him day in and day out. Their lives vibrate to the pitch of heaven. One hears it in their words, and sees it in their faces. These are ones qualified to "restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness."

restore = *katartizō* = from <G2596> (kata) and a derivative of <G739> (artios); **to complete thoroughly, i.e. repair** (literal or figurative) or adjust :- fit, frame, **mend**, (make) **perfect (-ly join together)**, prepare, restore.

gentleness = from <G4239> (prau` s); mildness, i.e. (by implication) **humility** :- meekness.

Read Matthew 5:5.

Read Matthew 11:28-29.

...each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted.

looking to = *skopeō* = from <G4649> (skopos); **to take aim at** (spy), i.e. (figurative) regard :- **consider**, take heed, look at (on), mark. Compare <G3700> (optanomai).

Vincent: Before you deal severely with the erring brother, consider your own weakness and susceptibility to temptation, and restore him in view of that fact.

v2

Read v2.

What is "the law of Christ"?

Read John 13:34-35.

One expression of this is to "bear one another's burdens."

bear = perhaps remotely derivative from the base of <G939> (basis) (through the idea of removal); **to lift**, literal or figurative (endure, declare, sustain, receive, etc.) :- bear, **carry, take up**. **To pick up and carry the burdens of others.**

burdens = probably from the same as <G939> (basis) (**through the notion of going down**; compare <G899> (bathos)); **weight**; in the N.T. only figurative **a load**, abundance, authority :- burden (-some), weight.

V2 can be a continuation of v1: How much easier it is to wink at the failings of others. We think that it is an expression of love to overlook (and accept?) the sins of our brethren, when in actuality it is just the opposite. The true expression of love—and

Matthew 5:5

"Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth."

Matthew 11:28-29

"Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and You will find rest for your souls."

Galatians 6:2

Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ.

John 13:34-35

"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Galatians 6:3

For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself.

2 Corinthians 4:5-7

For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves;

Galatians 6:4

But each one must examine his own work, and then he will have reason for boasting in regard to himself alone, and not in regard to another.

Luke 18:9-12

And He also told this parable to some people who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt: "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and was praying this to himself: 'God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.'"

the fulfillment of the law of Christ—is when we help a brother or sister with their burden of sin. We help "lift off" the "weight" of that sin by restoring them to a walk of holiness.

v3

Paul offers two faults that could prevent someone from bearing the burdens of another. The first deals with conceit.

Read v3.

In this setting, arrogance and vanity would seem to produce one or both of two results. The one who is puffed up would either think himself too important to stoop to bear the load of his brethren, or would attempt to do so with an air of superiority rather than humility ("gentleness").

Here is the paradox and challenge of the Christian life: Those who are "spiritual"—those who have nurtured a deeper and more profound relationship with God—are to help those who are less so, and thus more easily led astray by temptation. Those who fit this description are indeed "something" (v3) in the economy of the kingdom. They really are. But if they *think* they are—if they, in the words of Chuck Swindoll, "start believing their own stuff," they have disqualified themselves and are, in practice, "nothing."

There are any number of ways we could support this elsewhere in Scripture, any number of different angles to it. But permit me to use my signature passage. The logo I use at my web site and in my publications is based on 2 Corinthians 4:5-7.

Read 2 Corinthians 4:5-7.

How can we become puffed up when we realize that we in ourselves are only ugly clay pots? The "earthen vessels" referred to were the cheapest, most common, most expendable utilitarian jars the ancients had. They were cheap and plentiful; if one became cracked, one did not repair it, but just threw it away and got another. Whatever "greatness" we possess has nothing whatsoever to do with us—it is all of God. As Romans 11:36 declares,

For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.

So as we are used by God to minister to each other and thus fulfill the law of Christ (v2), how can we possibly think that that privilege has anything to do with our abilities or gifts in the flesh? It is all of God, and we are to serve in this capacity with all humility and gentleness so that we, too, are not tempted and fall into sin (v1).

v4

The second fault concerns those who are always comparing themselves to others.

Read v4.

In this setting—bearing one another's burdens—this could play out in one of a couple of ways:

- A brother or sister is ensnared in a trespass (v1). Our response could be to compare ourselves favorably to them—i.e., "Boy, I'm glad I don't have that problem!" This is the response referred to in v3. We compare ourselves to the one with this burden of sin and conclude we are better than them because we don't have that problem. The classic illustration of this is still the best:

Read Luke 18:9-12.



SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Luke 18:13

"But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!'"

Romans 5:1-2

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God.

Romans 12:3

For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith.

Galatians 6:5

For each one will bear his own load.

- Or our comparison to the one caught in a trespass can swing to the other extreme. Our response can be "Oh, I am so much worse than everyone else, I couldn't possibly be of any help."

The answer to both of these is found in v13 of Luke 18. **Read v13.** No one can be puffed up when he compares himself to God. In that comparison we can only conclude, with the tax collector, "God be merciful to me, the sinner!" But with our eyes on Jesus we are also reminded of the grace in which we stand.

Read Romans 5:1-2.

Adam Clarke: The only rule for a Christian is the word of Christ; the only pattern for his imitation is the example of Christ. He should not compare himself with others; they are not his standard.

By God's grace, through Christ Jesus, we *can* help others. Then our response will be what Jesus recommends in Luke 17:

"So you too, when you do all the things which are commanded you, say, 'We are unworthy slaves; we have done only that which we ought to have done.'"

v5

The answer, too, is that we realize that *each* of us is given a role in the kingdom. We each have been given our own "measure of faith" to use in His name.

Read Romans 12:3.

Once we live this way we will not look to others, but bear our own load—the load assigned to us.

Read v5.

The word "load" could also be translated "burden," but it is a different word than in v2. There it meant more a burdensome weight, something bearing down, while the word in v5 means

load = an invoice (as part of freight), i.e. (figurative) a task or service :-
burden; cargo.

This means there is no contradiction between v2 and v5. The former refers to a burden that is more than one man should have to carry on his own, while the latter refers simply to a man's pack—a normal, appropriate weight to carry.

JFB: This verse does not contradict Galatians 6:2. There he tells them to bear with others' "burdens" of infirmity in sympathy; here, that self-examination will make a man to feel he has enough to do with "his own load" of sin, without comparing himself boastfully with his neighbor. Instead of "thinking himself to be something," he shall feel the "load" of his own sin: and this will lead him to bear sympathetically with his neighbor's burden of infirmity.

Aesop says a man carries two bags over his shoulder, the one with his own sins hanging behind, that with his neighbor's sins in front.

Galatians 6:6

The one who is taught the word is to share all good things with the one who teaches him.

Galatians 6:9

Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary.

Galatians 6:10

So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.

INTRO

The passage before us in this session—Galatians 6:6-10—has a common thread that ties together the thoughts of the whole. **Read v6.** Note especially: “...share all **good things...**” **Read 9.** Note especially: “Let us not lose heart in **doing good...**” **Read v10.** Note especially “...let us **do good** to all people...especially those who are of the household of faith.”

I’m going to begin this study by looking at why we pay a salary to the church pastor, and not the Sunday School teacher. But I want us to remember that the overall point of this passage is not so much cash money on the barrel head, but “sharing all good things” with each other in the “household of faith.”

v6

Read v6.

There is no consensus on whether Paul here refers just to financial support or something more general. So we will consider both.

Let’s draw a distinction between the Pastor and the Sunday School teacher. Why do we typically pay one and not the other?

Christ is the true Head of the church (Colossians 1:18); the pastor is His earthly representative in the local church. Since it would be impossible for him to personally see to all the needs of the body, God’s word gives us guidelines for appointing elders, deacons, and teachers. The (local) church has but one teacher, one *human* head, who, along with the elders, appoints and authorizes those who share his responsibility to faithfully and accurately teach the word (Timothy 2:2).

Those who teach Sunday School, in small groups, etc., are, as it were, *lieutenants* of the church’s pastor—who is its primary teacher. While perhaps not every word spoken is cleared with him, the topic and lesson plan are. The pastor and the elders (or deacons, depending on denomination) are responsible to the church family to appoint knowledgeable and doctrinally sound teachers; to ensure that they are not “false teachers” (2 Peter 2:1); to prayerfully appoint those who have that gift. Likewise each teacher is responsible to and must answer to the authority of his overseer—his “boss,” so to speak, the pastor and elders.

So one way to look at this is in terms of *time*—that is, the pastor is full time (thus dependant on his salary), while the teacher is part-time (implied, has another source of income). But this is not always the case: there are part-time pastors, and there are lay teachers of the word who have no other source of income.

I prefer to focus, instead, on two aspects of this:

1. The person’s *calling*, as opposed to the amount of time spent; and
2. Paul’s use of the word “sharing” (i.e., rather than “paying”)

1

More important than the number of hours one spends in ministry is *the role to which one is called.*

Matthew Henry: The office of the ministry is a divine institution, which does not lie open in common to all, but is confined to those only whom God has qualified for it and called to it.

Those called to teach smaller groups are, by and large, what we would call laymen; they are not called to be the pastor, thus they are not called to that level of responsibility and that level of accountability to God—and thus they are not called to be supported financially by the church. The pastor, on the other hand, *is* called to that level of accountability to God. He answers to God for those in the flock, and is due their

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Acts 2:41-47

So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls. They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.

financial support because of this. Of course one cannot ignore the fact that to fulfill this calling properly, one must commit himself to it full time, thus requiring the means to support himself and his family.

2

But I think we, like Paul, should expand this beyond the idea of being paid a salary. He chose to use the word *koinōneō*—translated “share”—and *agathos*—translated “good things”—to represent this relationship between the shepherd and the flock. For what is due the teacher he could have used, for example, the word *teleos*, which means to pay what is owed, often regarding dues or taxes. Or he could have used *misthos*, which is used for pay, wages, or reward. Instead Paul used the word *koinōneō*, which means

share = *koinōneō* = from <G2844> (*koinonos*) ↓; **to share with others** (object or subject) :- communicate, distribute, **be partaker**; to have a share of.

koinonos = from <G2839> (*koinos*) ↓; **a sharer, i.e. associate :- companion**, × fellowship, partaker, partner.

koinos = probably from <G4862> (*sun*); **common, i.e. (litin) shared by all or several**, or (ceremonial) profane :- common, defiled, unclean, unholy.

The form of this word we are most familiar with is the one typically translated “fellowship”:

fellowship = *koinonia* = from <G2844> (*koinonos*); **partnership**, i.e. (literal) **participation**, or (social) intercourse, or (pecuniary) benefaction :- (to) communicate (-ation), **communion**, (contri-) distribution, **fellowship**.

The word Paul chose is simply the verb form of the noun we translate “fellowship.” For a picture of this let’s turn to Acts 2.

Read Acts 2:41-47.

And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common...

in common = *koinos*
sharing (in next verse) = dividing up

The church is not a business, but a *family*. Its pastor is not the CEO, but, after Christ, the head of the family. Perhaps one way to express the position of the pastor in the church is as *primus inter pares*, which is Latin for “first among equals,” or “first among peers”—which indicates that a person is the most senior of a group of people sharing the same rank or office. We are all saints, all adopted sons and daughters of the King. But Christ has set in place the pastor/teacher and other elders to lead and govern the body.

The one who is taught the word...

one who is **taught** = from <G2596> (*kata*) and <G2279> (*echos*); **to sound down into the ears**, i.e. (by implication) to indoctrinate (“catechize”) or (genitive) to apprise of :- inform, instruct, teach; **to teach by word of mouth**.

the **word** = *logos* = from <G3004> (*lego*); **something said** (including the thought); by implication a topic (subject of discourse), also reasoning (the mental faculty or motive; by extension a computation; specially (with the art. in John) the **Divine Expression (i.e. Christ)** :- account, cause, communication, × concerning, doctrine, fame, × have to do, intent, matter, mouth, preaching, question, reason, + reckon, remove, say (-ing), shew, × speaker, speech, talk, thing, + none of these things move me, tidings, treatise, utterance, word, work.

good things = (one word) *agathos*

one who teaches = same as “one who is taught”

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Galatians 6:7

Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap.

2 Corinthians 9:5-11

So I thought it necessary to urge the brethren that they would go on ahead to you and arrange beforehand your previously promised bountiful gift, so that the same would be ready as a bountiful gift and not affected by covetousness. Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed; as it is written, "He scattered abroad, he gave to the poor, His righteousness endures forever." Now He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness; you will be enriched in everything for all liberality, which through us is producing thanksgiving to God.

Galatians 6:8

For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.

So one interpretation of this verse is that the one who has been called to lead the church and be responsible for dispensing the truth of God's word, is to be supported financially by the church. Another interpretation of this verse and passage includes but goes beyond this—that the members of the church, as a family, are to share generously with each other all "good things": resources and gifts of any kind.

v7

Vs7-9 are a sort of parenthetical phrase set between the two bookends of v6 and v10. At a glance they seem to veer off, but in reality support the overall premise.

Read v7.

deceived = from <G4106> (plane); **to** (properly cause to) **roam** (**from** safety, **truth**, or virtue) :- **go astray**, deceive, err, seduce, wander, be out of the way; **to cause to wander**, to wander.

mocked = from a derivative of the base of <G3455> (mukaomai) (**meaning snout**, as that whence lowing proceeds); **to make mouths at, i.e. ridicule** :- mock; **to turn up the nose or sneer at**.

This verse can be taken as a general truth: *Don't kid yourself; God won't be made a fool of: If you sow corruption, you'll reap corruption. If you sow righteousness, you'll reap righteousness.*

But for an expansion of this thought in this context, let's look at a passage in 2 Corinthians where Paul digs deeper. The setting is one in which the apostle is giving the Corinthians an opportunity to follow through on their promise of financial help to the saints.

Read 2 Corinthians 9:5-11.

What he is telling the Corinthians—and the Galatians—is that God Himself is the ultimate source of everything we have and use in His service (v10). But he does this *through* other believers (v8 & v11), and they are not to hoard this supply, as if it were for themselves, but to consider themselves as simply the channel through which the Lord supplies the needs of His people. They are not to do this sparingly, but bountifully (v6), for when they *give* generously, they will *receive* generously (vs10-11).

Now back to Galatians.

v8

Read v8.

Note: to his *own* flesh.

corruption = from <G5351> (phtheiro); **decay, i.e. ruin** (spontaneous or inflicted, **literal or figurative**) :- corruption, destroy, perish; destruction.

When we are self-focused, when we are more interested in keeping what we have, or spending on ourselves, than in sharing with others, we sow the seeds of our own destruction. The things of the Spirit are eternal things. This principle can be applied to things far more broad than just money. But let's keep it in context:

Boice: Thus, as in the case of ministers, if congregations refuse to support them and so forfeit good teaching, preferring to spend their money on themselves, the results will be corruption. But if, on the other hand, they support good teachers, a spiritual harvest will result.

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Galatians 6:9

Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary.

Galatians 6:10

So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.

v9

Read v9.

lose heart, grow weary

There is disagreement on just what Greek word is being translated here and at the end of the verse. It depends on the manuscript(s) from which each translation was working from. But I think this captures the essential thought: “to unloose, as a bow string, to relax, and so to enfeeble, and is used in the Passive Voice with the significance to be faint, grow weary.” (*Vines*)

So often we wait a long time to reap what we have sowed. Sometimes we do not see it at all here on earth, but must wait until The Day. Under these circumstances it is easy to lose heart, to grow weary of doing good (“What’s the point?”), to go slack.

Note: Paul may be preaching to himself here. In vs6-8 he uses impersonal pronouns—“he,” “the one”—but here he switches to the first person plural: “we”. No doubt Paul had his moments when he felt as weak and weary as an unstrung bow. He says, *We’ve got to hang in there, brethren. Keep the faith. Keep up the good work. The reaping will happen—but it will be in God’s time, not ours.*

v10

And speaking of “time”...

Read v10.

while = “as” (KJVS & NIV; preferred) *The Message*: “every time we get the chance”

opportunity = *kairos* = of uncertain affinity; **an occasion, i.e. set or proper time** :-
× always, opportunity, (convenient, due) season, (due, short, while) **time**,
a while.

(Translated “time” in v9. “*Kairos* denotes ‘the right time’ or ‘the proper time’ for anything. (Boice))

The idea here is that we should take every opportunity presented to us to “do good”—to minister to, to share with—all people, especially those in the body of Christ.

Note: *the* faith. Not just any faith system, but Christ’s.

Financially, yes, but it goes far beyond money. Not just our wallet, but our heart, our mind, our very soul is to be open to our brothers and sisters in the Lord.

And that is a perfect description of the church.

Galatians 6:11

See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand.

Galatians 6:12

Those who desire to make a good showing in the flesh try to compel you to be circumcised, simply so that they will not be persecuted for the cross of Christ.

Acts 15:1

Some men came down from Judea and began teaching the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved."

It is always with mixed feelings that I end a study like this. Part of me is eager to move on to the next, but another part of me is convinced there is much more I could get from the text. But since that will always be the case...

Now, as Paul closes this letter in his own hand, he returns to his central theme and the specific reason for his writing the letter in the first place.

v11

Read v11.

Among the several explanations proposed for what Paul means here, two rise to the top:

1. The apostle took the stylus from the hand of his amanuensis (secretary), switching from dictating the letter to writing its closing himself to personalize and emphasize the last few remarks.
2. He wrote with extra large letters for this emphasis—and, perhaps, because of failing eyesight.

The NKJV repairs a poor translation in the KJV, which was influenced by the position of reformers such as Luther and Calvin that Paul refers here to the *length* of the epistle. But the text, the grammar—as well as the relative brevity of the Galatian letter—speak against this and support, instead, the position that he refers to the literal size of the letters he is putting down on the paper with the stylus.

And just as we think Paul is wrapping things up with a few perfunctory closing remarks, he gets right back into the theme of his letter. He just can't let it go.

v12-16: TRUE MOTIVES

v12

Read v12.

We read this verse and in the flesh we can say, "Again with the circumcision! Give us a break, Paul. Let it go!" But anytime we are reading Scripture and we have such a response, our radar should go up. When the Lord keeps driving a point home it is to emphasize its importance. Paul to the Galatians and the Lord to us—this point is of foundational importance:

You will not find your justification before God in the works of the law!

This goes back to the council at Jerusalem. Between Paul's first and second missionary journeys he attended this important council which concerned itself with just how much of the burden of the Law must be laid on the backs of Christians. And this business of circumcision was the opening volley.

Read Acts 15:1.

Paul's closing point in this letter is that not only is the position wrong, but *so are the motives of those proclaiming it.*

vanity: desire to make a good showing in the flesh = desire to make themselves look good

lust for power, control: to compel you to be circumcised

cowardice: so that they will not be persecuted for the cross of Christ

When our justification is by grace, and grace alone, we remove not just our merit, but the false merit of others. Where is the power for the false prophet, for the vain religionist when justification has nothing whatsoever to do with human effort? What good is a lust for control over others when salvation is free to all?

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

With the spread of The Way in Christ, these religionists saw their hold over others on the wane. This was their last gasp to make something of themselves, to bolster their reputation on the backs of others.

good showing = from a compound of <G2095> (eu) and <G4383> (prosopon); **to be of good countenance**, i.e. (figurative) to make a display :- make a fair show; **fair of face**.

But Paul reveals the first reason for clinging to the law. They wanted the benefits of Christ, but didn't want to be publicly associated with Him.

for the cross of Christ = **because of**

Albert Barnes: By attempting to blend together the doctrines of Judaism and Christianity; by maintaining that the observance of the Jewish rites was necessary, and yet that Jesus was the Messiah, they endeavored to keep in with both parties; and thus to escape the opposition of the Jews. It was an unhallowed compromise. It was an attempt to blend things together which could not be united. One must really displace the other. If people depended on the rites of Moses, they had no need of dependence on the Messiah; if they professed to depend on him, then to rely on anything else was in fact to disown and reject him. Embracing the one system was in fact renouncing the other.

Boice points out that it goes deeper even than that. By writing that they were fearful of persecution for the *cross* of Christ, he was making the point that

the cross speaks of the necessity of a divine death as the only solution for the sins of man. To have the cross is to have three disquieting and humiliating doctrines: (1) man is a sinner; (2) his sin brings him under the curse of God, which curse Christ bore; and (3) nothing man can do can earn salvation, for if this were possible, the cross would have been unnecessary. These doctrines humble men. Consequently, men hate the cross and actively persecute those who proclaim it.

Before we pick up any stones to throw, let us pause to consider...

Have we, on occasion or even now, sought to enjoy the benefits of His grace, but at the same time seek to avoid any discomfort that might come from being publicly associated with the cross of Christ?

v13

In v13 Paul gives two more reasons to hold these Judaizers in contempt and pay them no mind.

Read v13.

those who are circumcised do not even keep the Law themselves,

We have discussed how it is physically impossible, no matter how hard one tries, to keep the entirety of the law. Yet Paul pointed out in the fifth chapter that the law is a package—to fail in one component is to fail completely.

Read Galatians 5:3.

We can safely surmise that these legalizers were doing worse than that: they were not even trying to keep the whole law, but were picking and choosing from it—just as they were picking the best of Christianity and rejecting whatever was inconvenient.

...but they desire to have you circumcised so that they may boast in your flesh.

Beyond that, as v12 suggested, they were just trying to make themselves look good. They were just counting “scalps,” so to speak. They were just trophy hunters.

v14

Paul answers this with one of his more profound and eloquent statements:

Read v14a.

Galatians 6:13

For those who are circumcised do not even keep the Law themselves, but they desire to have you circumcised so that they may boast in your flesh.

Galatians 5:3

And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law.

Galatians 6:14a

But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ...

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Galatians 2:20

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

Colossians 3:1-4

Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.

Galatians 6:14b

...through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

Galatians 1:13-14

For you have heard of my former manner of life in Judaism, how I used to persecute the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it; and I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my countrymen, being more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions.

Galatians 5:6

For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love.

Galatians 6:15

For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation.

Galatians 6:16

And those who will walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.

Galatians 6:17

From now on let no one cause trouble for me, for I bear on my body the brand-marks of Jesus.

In contrast to the Judaizers, who ran from association with the cross of Christ, Paul declares that it is the one thing in which he *will* boast. Go back to v2:20.

Read Galatians 2:20.

Paul understands that to claim one's salvation in Christ alone is to consign all boasting, all glory and praise to Him. Our lives are "hidden with Christ in God", as Paul writes in Colossians.

Read Colossians 3:1-4.

Here is the mystery and wonder of life in Christ. Our lives are subsumed in His; He is Master and Lord. Yet there will come a day when we will be partakers in His glory! So Paul can say in himself he has nothing he can boast about—although in human terms he certainly could have: what about all those souls saved for Christ because of his ministry? But he says no, he will only boast in the cross of his Savior.

And here again, lest we pick up stones...

Do we catch ourselves taking pride in the things we have done for Christ?

Read v14b.

...through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

Paul was once like these legalizers. He, too, used to collect scalps.

Read Galatians 1:13-14.

But now he has nailed all that to the cross. The old life is gone, and in its place is Christ.

v15

And now Paul reiterates what he said earlier—but with a twist.

Read Galatians 5:6.

Read v15.

Here is the succinct conclusion. Following the dictates of the Mosaic Law will avail you nothing; for justification, salvation they are meaningless. What matters is this: to be born again, becoming a new creation in Christ.

v16

Read v16.

walk = *stoicheo* = from a derivative of *steicho* (to range in regular line); **to march in (military) rank (keep step)**, i.e. (figurative) to conform to virtue and piety :- **walk (orderly)**.

Do you long for true peace and the mercy of God? You will not find it in the burden of the law. You will find it in the gospel of Christ Jesus—in the grace of *His* justification. Those who do this are the true Israel—the true chosen of God.

v17-18

Paul closes this letter with a very human request.

Read v17.

He is not saying that he doesn't want to hear from them again, nor that he doesn't want to hear about their problems. He is saying, in essence, *It's time you Galatian churches start growing up. Start showing the maturity to test on your own those who come bearing a false gospel. Stop listening to them! Deal with it yourself the next time.*

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Galatians 1:3

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ,

Galatians 6:18

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brethren. Amen.

brand-marks = *stigma* = from a primary stizo (to “stick”, i.e. prick); **a mark incised or punched (for recognition of ownership)**, i.e. (figurative) scar of service :- mark.

Paul is reminding the Galatians that his physical scars, acquired in service to Jesus, are the same as those branded on slaves to mark their ownership. He is a slave, a bond-servant, of Christ Jesus—and he bears the marks to prove it. And, by the way, these are honorable marks in the flesh, in contrast to the meaningless and ritualistic marks the legalizers were wishing to inflict on them. These would be marks of shame, of capitulation, while his are marks of honor.

And he ends this epistle as he began it:

Read Galatians 1:3.

The whole letter had been an exposition of grace over Law, and so he again cites this grace as he closes it.

Read v18.

Boice: Paul’s legacy is, therefore, a wish that the grace of God would be increasingly realized, and that whatever external marks there might be, would be received, not as an effort to impress God ritualistically, but as a natural result of Christian service.

And so the final question:

Do you bear the marks of capitulation to the things of the flesh, or do you bear the marks of obedience and service to Christ Jesus?

YOUR NOTES

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BIOGRAPHY

We are David and Linda Lampel, and we live in a large country house in the rural area outside Winterset, Iowa, in the middle of the United States. Our home is surrounded by fields of corn and soybeans, and by dense woods that are home to deer, raccoons, possums, wild turkeys, woodchucks, coyotes, and myriad birds of all shapes and colors.

The tranquility and beauty of this place contribute to what we do. In fact, we believe that the Lord brought us to this home because He knew that here we would best be equipped to serve Him and others.

Both of us work at home—Dave with his writing, and Linda (now retired) with her baking, needlework, and crocheting projects that are given to charities. Now that she has been unshackled from the business world, Linda has expanded our gardens, and has returned to baking all our bread—and spending more time with our family of seven cats.

The Lord has given us a good life, and we are most grateful to Him—especially for our 41 years together as husband and wife.

