

CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST: A STUDY OF GALATIANS

Notes For Week One: Introduction & Themes (Galatians 1:1-10)

In the book of Galatians, the apostle Paul describes at length the difference between salvation by law and salvation by grace. In so doing, Paul also discusses several other topics that are of central importance in our relationship with God. As he proceeds, the apostle continually brings everything back to the cross, showing that a proper understanding and appreciation of the cross enables believers much better to understand many other important topics.

Background & Themes

Before proceeding to the text of the epistle, we shall take note of some useful background information, and we shall also introduce some of the main themes that are important in Galatians. By the nature of the topics that it covers, Galatians ties together several of the most important ideas in Christianity.

In looking at the background to Galatians, we want to take note of a number of things, but the most important is the recurring problem that necessitated the writing of the epistle. In the earliest decades of the church, one of the church's most chronic and most divisive problems was the influence of certain teachers who wanted to take some of the most restrictive of the Mosaic laws and add them to Christianity. These teachers are usually referred to as Judaizers or Judaizing Teachers, because of their desire to see Christianity solely as a modification of Judaism. For the most part, these believers were mistaken but sincere. They understood that Jesus was the promised Messiah, and had been baptized into Christ, but because of their zealous attachment to Judaism, they wanted Christianity to be as much like Judaism as possible.

Besides Galatians, this issue is seen most prominently in Acts 15*. In that chapter, Paul and Barnabas lead a group of Christians from the church in Antioch, who go to Jerusalem to discuss the issues involved with other church leaders. The primary issue was circumcision, which was central to the Jewish identity, but there were also other important issues, such as the Jewish dietary laws. Many of the Jewish Christians wanted to see these laws become part of Christianity. It was not really a problem if they wanted to continue to observe these regulations themselves**, but when they began to seek out Gentile converts to Christianity, and to teach them that they too needed to adopt these laws if they wished to be saved, this produced confusion, discouragement, and conflict. Acts 15 looks at the way that the leaders of the church came together and allowed God to guide them into the proper understanding of these issues. In Galatians, we see a different perspective, as we see the way that an apostle spoke to some of the Gentile believers who had actually been influenced by these Judaizing teachers.

* The conference described in Acts 15 is quite likely the same meeting described by Paul in Galatians 2:1-10. See below, and we shall also discuss this when we come to chapter 2.

** Paul is sometimes unjustly accused of being anti-Jewish. In fact, he himself seems to have retained some Jewish customs after becoming a Christian. In Galatians, he by no means condemns Jewish cultural practices in themselves, or those who teach them to Jews. The problem he confronts is that of teachers who wrongly bind these customs on Gentile converts (or potential converts).

The letter is addressed to "the churches in (literally, of) Galatia". There are two different meanings that "Galatia" could have in Paul's lifetime. The original Galatians were a Celtic people who settled an area of central Asia Minor (today, Turkey) just to the south of Pontus and Bithynia (which were the regions of Asia Minor along the shore of the Black Sea). When the Romans took over this part of the world, they combined the area where the Galatians lived with some additional territory to the south, and called it all "Galatia". The churches addressed by Paul could have been in either of these regions. The churches in the southern part of Roman Galatia would have included Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra, which Paul and Barnabas visited on the First Missionary Journey (Acts 14). The people living in these cities were not actually Galatians by descent. Paul visited the territory of the original Galatians (that is, farther north) on later missionary journeys (Acts 16:6 and Acts 18:23), but few details of his ministry there are given in Acts. The question of which group is addressed in Galatians is connected with the question of the date when Paul wrote the epistle.

The most likely date for the writing of Galatians is AD 56 or 57, on Paul's Third Missionary Journey, during roughly the same period when he wrote Romans and the two letters to the Corinthians. They were most likely addressed to the churches in the northern "Galatia", which had been founded a few years earlier. All of this happened after the conference in Jerusalem that Luke describes in Acts 15, and this conference is probably the same meeting (though described from a different perspective and for a different purpose) mentioned in Galatians 2:1-10. This scenario assumes (as we should) that Acts is correct in its historical and geographical details. We'll point out some of the reasons for these conclusions as we go through the letter.

Many commentaries on Galatians (see Bibliography) discuss these issues at length. It is common to see other proposed chronologies for Galatians, but these are sometimes based on valuing the reliability of other evidence or theories above the reliability of the New Testament. The most common and most likely alternate date suggested is one just before the conference in Jerusalem in Acts 15. Under this theory, the meeting in Galatians 2:1-10 was not the same as the one in Acts 15*, but a separate time that Paul went to Jerusalem, perhaps the trip mentioned in Acts 11:29-30**. Fortunately, the interpretation of the main issues in Galatians does not depend heavily on the exact details, only on the general situation.

* At first glance, there are many differences between Luke's description and Paul's. Some commentators, especially those who do not believe in the infallibility of Scripture, think that they could not be the same. But most of these apparent differences are easily explained when we remember that Luke and Paul had entirely different reasons for mentioning the conference. In a similar way, critics and skeptics often point out "contradictions" in the ways that different gospels describe the same event in Jesus' life with different detail. Most of these objections are also easily explainable. Here, it should be admitted, though, that there is nothing that rules out the possibility that Galatians 2:1-10 describes a separate meeting from that in Acts 15 - it is just not necessary to resort to this conclusion.

** Of course, Luke's description of this trip is even more at odds with the description in Galatians 2, making this seem unlikely.

Of more importance for our study are some of the major themes in Galatians. Most important of all is the recurrent mention of the cross in this epistle. A number of times, the cross is held up as the antidote to the confusion and errors caused by the false teachers who have been troubling the Galatian churches. Paul uses the words "cross" or "crucified" seven times in Galatians, more so

than in any other epistle*. The cross is a unifying theme in the letter, and also in all of Christianity. More than anything else, the Galatians needed to understand the cross if they were to pull out of the errors into which they had fallen. We also need to have a good understanding of the cross, for indeed a great many conflicts and a lot of our confusion can be swept away by a deeper appreciation of the cross.

* 1 Corinthians has the second most with six, and no other epistle uses these words more than three times.

In referring to "the cross", we really mean a number of things at once, and we shall develop some of these ideas as we proceed through Galatians. The physical aspects of Jesus' trial, persecution, and crucifixion can have quite an effect on our appreciation of the sacrifice made for us. Then there are the spiritual and theological aspects of the cross, which are even more important. Finally, there is the symbolic aspect of the cross. While a cross may mean little more than an ornament to many Christians in the 21st century, it meant something much more striking to the early believers.

Galatians is well-known, of course, for being the source of many important points about law, works, grace, and faith. One of Paul's goals was to teach the Galatians exactly how each of these fit into the gospel. This includes both theological (or theoretical) and practical concerns. The implications of these issues range from knowing how one becomes a Christian to how best to avoid sin. The epistle thus discusses these issues from several angles.

These issues also raise another important question: what is the authority of the gospel? In Galatians, we find Paul preaching one gospel, and the Judaizing teachers another "gospel". How could the Galatians know with certainty who was right? Humans use many different standards to determine truth, and many of them are faulty. But Paul must come up with an answer to this, if he is to hope that the Galatians will return to the true gospel.

Questions For Discussion or Study: Given the main topics of the book of Galatians, in what ways might we expect the book to be important to us? Consider all that is meant when we refer to the cross. Which aspects do we tend to understand the best? Which aspects do we most need to appreciate more? How might a study of Galatians help?

Greeting & Introduction (Galatians 1:1-5)

Paul's opening words to the Galatians are somewhat more pointed than usual, in that he brings up some important points right away, even as he gives his standard greeting to his readers. The Galatians' problem (their mentality of being saved through the law) reveals some deeper difficulties. They have allowed human authorities to take precedence over God, and they have forgotten the basis of their salvation through Jesus' death on the cross.

As usual, Paul begins by identifying himself and his audience (1:1-2). Regardless of which meaning of "Galatians" (see above) we assume to be true, in either case Paul had been involved in starting these churches on his missionary journeys, and he probably had also been to see them at least twice before the trouble started. Although the opening is similar to that in his other epistles, Paul also immediately inserts a comment that foreshadows what follows, when he emphasizes that he is not an apostle because of any human authority or decision.

The opening is also somewhat unusual in that it is clearly addressed to a group of churches, rather than to one congregation or individual. The letter was probably intended to serve as a circular to the congregations in the region. Paul's other letters were often used in this fashion anyway, but in this case it was apparently a definite design.

Paul also offers the kind of blessing that we often see in his epistles (1:3-5), asking that God's grace and peace be with the Galatians. Even here, he gives an initial reminder of one of his main themes. While he does not yet refer specifically to the cross, he does mention Jesus' sacrifice of himself for our sins.

Questions For Discussion or Study: Compare these opening verses with those of Paul's other epistles. What is the same? What is different or unusual? Can you think of reasons for these that have to do with the circumstances and purpose of Galatians?

Gospel, Grace, & Truth (Galatians 1:6-10)

Because of the importance of the issues involved, Paul dispenses with his usual thanksgivings, and immediately confronts the mistakes that the Galatians have made. Several times within a few verses, he emphasizes that there is only one gospel, and that no human has the authority to revise it or alter it.

Although Paul would usually offer thanksgiving here for the recipients of his letter, instead he immediately reproaches the Galatians for turning to a different "gospel" (1:6-7). Paul says he is "astonished", not only that they have done this, but that they have turned away from the truth so quickly. This probably refers to the rapidity with which the Judaizing teachers persuaded the Galatians to adopt a new "gospel", rather than to the time span between Paul preaching to them and their wandering from the truth.

He reminds them of the grace in Christ to which they were called, and contrasts this with the entirely different nature* of the new teaching that they have adopted. The fault is not theirs alone, because the false teachers have confused them by teaching a distorted version of the gospel. Still, the Galatians would not have wandered off into error if they had not allowed themselves to be unduly impressed by human opinions and human rhetoric. The eloquence or zeal of humans never alters the truth.

* There are two Greek words for "other", one of which means "another of the same kind", and the second of which means "another of a different kind". Paul uses the latter word here, to emphasize the alien nature of this new "gospel" that the Galatians have heard.

In one of the strongest statements made by Paul in any of his writings, he affirms that there is but one true gospel (1:8-10). To emphasize this, he says not once but twice that no one is authorized to bring a revised or updated gospel to them. Even apostles and angels do not have this authority - and should one do so anyway, that apostle or angel is to be condemned for so doing. No warning could be sterner, and whether or not the Galatians had yet realized their mistake, when they read this statement they would certainly have realized that Paul was deeply concerned about the situation.

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Paul then asks a simple (and probably rhetorical) question. In saying these things, is he trying to please humans, or to please God? Naturally, the way to please humans is to tell them what they want to hear, and Paul is not willing to do this. He had long before learned the lesson that he hopes they will learn now: it is better to please God, even if every human hates you, than to be universally popular but not have an eternal relationship with God.

Questions For Discussion or Study: Were the Galatians at fault in accepting the false teachings, or should all the blame go upon the false teachers themselves? What lessons does this hold for us? When in our own experience might similar issues arise? Why does Paul say so sternly that no one is authorized to preach a different gospel? How might the Galatians have responded initially to the strong statements in verses 8-9? In what kinds of circumstances might we be faced with the decision to please men or to please God?

Bibliography

There are many different commentaries on Galatians, and most of them have some usefulness. The list below includes a selection of books written from different viewpoints. Some of these include flawed analysis in places, but all of them have some strengths. Let me know if you would like suggestions on selecting a reference for your own study of Galatians.

F.F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians* (New International Greek Testament Commentary)
R. Alan Cole, *Galatians - An Introduction & Commentary* (Tyndale)
Charles Cousar, *Galatians* (Interpretation Commentary)
Mark Edwards (editor), *Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians* (Ancient Christian Commentary)
R.Y.K. Fung, *The Epistle to the Galatians* (New International Commentary)
Frank Gaebelein (editor), *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Volume 10
Ann Jervis, *Galatians* (New International Biblical Commentary)
David Lipscomb, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians* (Gospel Advocate)
Martin Luther, *Commentary on Galatians*
J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians* (Anchor Bible)
McGarvey/Pendleton, *Thessalonians, Corinthians, Galatians, & Romans* (Restoration Comm.)
John R.W. Stott, *The Message of Galatians* (Bible Speaks Today)

- Mark Garner, *Northland Church of Christ, Columbus, Ohio, June 2004*

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CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST: A STUDY OF GALATIANS

Notes For Week Two: The Source of the Gospel (Galatians 1:11-24)

In the opening verses of Galatians, the apostle Paul reproached the recipients for turning to a new, false "gospel", and he stated strongly that there is only one genuine gospel. He now begins a series of demonstrations that show how the true gospel differs from the imitations made up by human teachers. He starts with a discussion of the source of the gospel.

Preview: Concise Outline of Galatians

In order to provide a general idea of what Paul plans to do in Galatians, here is a concise outline of the rest of the epistle:

The Source & Authority of the Gospel (Galatians 1:11-2:14)

The Theological Basis of the Gospel (Galatians 2:15-4:31)

Implications & Applications of the Gospel (Galatians 5:1-6:18)

Paul will first demonstrate that the source and authority of the gospel is God, and no one else: no human, no group of humans, no congregation of the church. To do this, he will draw on his own life, ministry, and interactions with other apostles. Then, he will develop the theological basis of the gospel, using Scripture, history, and the ministry of Jesus. Finally, the last two chapters consist primarily of practical applications and implications of the gospel. This section includes a response to the common objection that living by grace could lead to condoned sin.

Paul's Call & Apostleship (Galatians 1:11-17)

As the first step in his discussion of the source and authority of the gospel, Paul recalls his own past life, his call, and his early ministry. In part, this is because the false teachers have called into question Paul's standing as an apostle, but he also has a much more important purpose. His own ministry (with which the Galatians would have been familiar) provides one significant demonstration that the gospel comes from God, not man.

First, Paul once more affirms the gospel's divine origins (1:11-12). As he will soon detail, neither he nor any other person made up the gospel out of human wisdom. Nor, Paul says, was he taught it by a human teacher. Acts 9 does tell us that, at God's command, Ananias came to see Saul of Tarsus, and Ananias did speak to the notorious persecutor before Saul was baptized. Paul does not mean here in Galatians that no human spoke any words to him about the gospel, but rather that it was clear that the message came from God. He had already come to believe in Jesus before Ananias or anyone else spoke to him. As we see in Acts 9, Ananias was a reluctant messenger, who seems to have spoken only briefly to Paul, and then also the message itself was hardly his creation.

While studying Galatians, it is worth remembering what the word "gospel" actually means. The Greek word that is translated as "gospel" is the word εὐαγγέλιον* ("euaggelion"), which was the singular form of a commonly used Greek word that meant "good tidings". As used by the early Christians, it thus literally meant "good tidings" or, as we would say, good news. There was also a verb form εὐαγγελίζω ("euaggelizo"), which meant to bring or proclaim good news, and from

which we get the English word "evangelize". It can be quite helpful to remember that "gospel" really just means "good news", and that "evangelize" really just means "to tell good news". Likewise, the word "evangelist" comes from εὐαγγελιστής ("euaggelistes"), which means one who proclaims (or preaches) good news.

* In the Septuagint (ancient Greek) translation of the Old Testament, which was the version of the Old Testament that most of the early Christians used, this word was used in a number of passages in Isaiah. In passages such as Isaiah 40:9, 60:6, and 61:1, when Isaiah talks about proclaiming good news or good tidings, this verb was the word used when the Hebrew Scriptures were translated into ancient Greek.

** The word "gospel" comes from the Old English word "godspel", which was formed from god+spel. In Old English, "god" (pronounced like 'goad') meant "good", and "spel" or "spell" meant story, report, or discourse. So the word "godspel" simply meant "good report", or, again, "good news".

*** In all of these Greek words, the double-g is pronounced as if it were spelled "ng". English acquired these words through Latin, and when Latin acquired them from Greek, the "u" became a "v", which made the spelling and pronunciation more like those of normal Latin words.

Next, Paul tells how a persecutor (himself) became an apostle (1:13-17), a story with which the Galatians were probably somewhat familiar from his ministry among them. He first reminds them of his former way of life. He had been a violent, heartless persecutor of Christians, and he also seems to have enjoyed comparing himself with other Jews of his age, feeling good that he was advancing or "doing more" than they were. The implication is that such a person would never simply have sat down and written his own "gospel" that went against his former beliefs. He was doing too well under the law, and was too satisfied with his performance, to change for human reasons or motivations.

Paul is therefore justified in claiming that he was called by God, not by man. In particular, he did not consult any expert or apostle, nor did he visit Jerusalem, before beginning his ministry. We also see this in the book of Acts, which tells us that Paul quickly started to proclaim the gospel he had accepted, to the surprise of both the Jews and the Christians in Damascus (Acts 9:19-22). Acts does not specifically mention Paul's time in Arabia (which here refers to the part of the Arabian desert east of Damascus), and it is uncertain whether this indicates a period of ministry there, or a time of meditation and prayer before returning to Damascus.

Questions For Discussion or Study: In what general ways can it help us if we remember the original (and literal) meaning of the word "gospel"? In what ways can it help us better to understand the book of Galatians? What is Paul's purpose in describing his former life, his call, and his early ministry? What do these demonstrate about the source of the gospel? Why is it significant to know that Paul began his ministry without consulting another apostle, or anyone in Jerusalem? What else do we know (from Acts) about this period of Paul's life? Would any other details add to Paul's points here?

Paul, The Gospel, & Jerusalem (Galatians 1:18-24)

Because of Jerusalem's great significance - both practical and symbolic - to the Jews and to the early Christians as well, Paul now describes in some detail his first trip there. As he recounts those with whom he met, and what the churches in the nearby area had heard about him, his intent is to show that neither Jerusalem or the leaders of the Jerusalem church were the source of the gospel and its truths. Likewise, they had no special authority.

Paul thus recounts his first trip to Jerusalem (1:18-24), which is also described, from a different

viewpoint, in Acts 9. He says that he went in order to "get acquainted with"* (NIV) his fellow apostle Peter** (or Cephas). It is important, for Paul's purpose, for his readers to understand that his relationship with Peter was one of fellow servants and apostles, not that of an instructor and a student. There is little doubt that Paul probably enjoyed hearing Peter's first-hand stories about being with Jesus, but in all cases there was no suggestion that Paul needed to be better instructed in the gospel before continuing his ministry. From God's perspective, the need for Peter to get to know Paul was just as important as the need for Paul to get to know Peter.

* The word Paul uses can sometimes mean "inquire of", but not in the sense of asking for information - rather, in the sense of seeking closer personal ties. Either way, the idea is that Paul's visit with Peter was primarily for personal reasons, not for instruction or evaluation.

** Many other versions simply say that Paul went to "see" or "visit" Peter.

Paul indicates that, aside from James (Jesus' brother), he saw no other leaders or apostles. Instead, he mentions that after his time with Peter he simply began a ministry in Syria and Cilicia. (These regions are near Saul's home town of Tarsus - this is also described in Acts.) So Paul made little attempt to establish close working relationships with the congregations in Jerusalem and Judea. And yet, when they heard the report that the former persecutor was now a Christian, they praised God because of it. They did not question either his sincerity or his validity as a teacher. It was because they knew the true source and authority behind the gospel that they rejoiced in hearing about Saul "preaching the faith he once tried to destroy".

The point Paul is making is that the gospel, in its genuine form, comes from God. Neither he nor Peter nor James nor any other human can ever change it, nor does any human have the authority to create a new one. Paul and Peter preached the same gospel, not because one taught the other, nor because they negotiated and came to an agreement about its content, but because they both received it and accepted it from God.

Questions For Discussion or Study: Why would Paul want to discuss his trip to Jerusalem to visit Peter? Would its significance to him be different from its significance to the Galatians, or to the Jerusalem Christians? What points about this trip did he consider important? Why did Paul not spend more time becoming acquainted with the Jerusalem church and its leaders? What can we learn from this stage of Paul's relationship with Peter? How does it fit in with Paul's overall teachings about the gospel?

- *Mark Garner, Northland Church of Christ, Columbus, Ohio, June 2004*

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CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST: A STUDY OF GALATIANS

Week Three: Holding to the Truth (Galatians 2:1-14)

In the first chapter of Galatians, Paul used events from his life and ministry to show that the gospel comes from God, not from humans. His own ministry began with a direct revelation from Jesus. This does not mean, though, that anyone can claim to have a "revelation" - on the contrary, anyone who proclaims the gospel must hold to the truth as God himself taught it. Paul now illustrates this by describing two more events involving him and other apostles.

Good News For the Gentiles (Galatians 2:1-10)

Continuing his discussion of the source and authority of the gospel, Paul looks back at a previous discussion in Jerusalem about the issues involved with taking the gospel to the Gentiles. In particular, he makes it clear that the issues involving circumcision and the Jewish laws had already been settled. God had already made clear, through this meeting between Paul, Barnabas, and Titus with James, Peter, and John, that the Gentiles did not need to follow the old law in order to become Christians.

It is likely that the Galatians had not previously heard about the discussion in Jerusalem about circumcision and the Mosaic laws (2:1-5). This most likely is a reference to the same conference that is described at greater length in Acts 15*, in which the leaders of churches from Jerusalem and Antioch realized and acknowledged that the Gentiles did not have to adopt the old law in order to become Christians. Paul says that he went "in response to a revelation"**, again to emphasize that he raised these issues because God called him to do so, not because he himself wanted to win a debate with the other teachers.

* Though this is the general view of commentators, some have claimed that Galatians 2 instead describes the famine relief mission described in Acts 11:27-30. Their main reason for doing this is that, if Galatians 2:1-10 and Acts 15 refer to the same event, then in Galatians Paul omitted to tell the Galatians about the famine relief trip, which came in between his visit to see Peter and the discussion about circumcision. Obviously, though, there was little reason in Galatians to refer to an unrelated visit that had no connection with the issues in the Galatian churches. Further, the dates given in Galatians say that the trip in Galatians 2:1-10 either was 14 years after Paul's first trip there, or was 14 years after his conversion (the wording can allow for either), and either of these matches easily with the Acts 15 trip, but not with the Acts 11 trip.

** Those who want to match Galatians 2:1-10 with Acts 11 (instead of the more logical association with Acts 15), suppose that this revelation was Agabus's famine prophecy. But the point Paul makes in Galatians 2 is that God guided him to Jerusalem for the purpose of raising these key issues about the gospel. There is no suggestion at all in Acts 11 that the trip described there was for any purpose other than famine relief.

At this important meeting, Paul detailed the gospel as he was preaching it to the Gentiles. In itself, of course, the content of the message was the same good news that the other apostles were teaching to the Jews. The question, then, was not about any disagreement between the two groups of evangelists, but rather was whether Paul needed to add the old law to the gospel when he taught Gentiles. Moreover, there was a "test case" travelling with Paul, in the person of Titus, a Gentile. Titus was exactly the kind of believer who, according to the Judaizers, needed to be circumcised*, yet the outcome of this meeting was that he did not need to be circumcised. Paul implies that the only reason the issue even arose was that the Judaizers were somewhat jealous of the freedom that the Gentiles had found in the gospel (so they thus "spied on" Paul and the

Gentile Christians), since they themselves found it difficult to set aside the old law. Paul states clearly that there was no question of giving in, not merely for Titus's sake, but for the sake of believers in places like Galatia, since they would face the same questions and issues.

* On the other hand, Paul himself circumcised Timothy (Acts 16:1-3) before taking him along on his Second Missionary Journey. The key difference was that Timothy was half-Jewish, whereas Titus was not.

This meeting concluded with a mutual recognition of fellowship and ministry (2:6-10). Paul stresses the insignificance of external appearance, by which here he means prominence and human authority. It was important and appropriate that none of the participants at this discussion viewed themselves or their churches as having special authority over the others, or over the gospel. There was a mutual recognition that, while the circumstances were surely different, both the ministry to the Jews and the ministry to the Gentiles were equally valid and equally pleasing to God. There is just one God and one gospel, which contains truths and good news that apply equally to all nations, all races, all times. If preached correctly, nothing needs to be added to it or taken away from it in order for it to bear fruit.

Paul also mentions the request ("all they asked") from Peter, John, and James that the Antioch and other Gentile Christians remember the needs of the poor in Judea. Because of the bleak economic and political situation in Jerusalem, the believers there were counting on churches elsewhere to ease their material struggles. As Paul says in Romans 15:25-27, both Jews and Gentiles have something to offer the other in Christ, and can share their blessings with each other. Neither needs to feel inferior, and neither has reason to feel superior.

Questions For Discussion or Study: What importance does this meeting in Jerusalem have, in connection with the problems that the Galatian churches are having? What general importance does it have, for the early church and for later generations? According to Paul, what caused the problem in the first place? Are there any parallels that we might experience? What were the most important things that came out of this discussion? According to these verses, what should be the significance of influential leaders such as James, Peter, and John?

A Problem in Antioch (Galatians 2:11-14)

As a final practical illustration that God is the only source and authority of the gospel, Paul now recounts a difficulty that arose in Antioch. When Peter and other influential leaders allowed themselves to become unduly influenced by the partisans of circumcision, Paul was forced to make the difficult decision to confront the problem openly. Only the certainty that the situation involved a fundamental truth of the gospel made it worthwhile for Paul to take such an unpleasant and risky step.

Paul first describes the situation that arose at the large, mixed church in Antioch (2:11-13). The apostle Peter came to visit, and was no doubt received with joy and honor, though the specific reasons for his trip are not given*. He must have enjoyed the fellowship with the Antioch Christians, and he shared in meals with the Gentile converts. Peter had, of course, already learned some difficult but valuable lessons about accepting the Gentiles (Acts 10:1-11:18).

* Peter's trip to Antioch is not confirmed elsewhere in the New Testament, so it is not possible to determine when it occurred. It certainly would have come sometime after the events of Acts 10:1-11:18. In Acts 11, there are two mentions of Jerusalem Christians going to Antioch (v.22 and v.27), but Peter is not mentioned. The events of Galatians 2:11-14 could have occurred either before or after the discussion of the

circumcision issue in 2:1-10. The wording of verse 11 seems to suggest that the Antioch incident came later, but the events in Antioch seem more understandable if the agreement described in verses 1-10 had not yet been reached.

But this harmony was soon disrupted by another group of visitors to Antioch. Paul says only that "certain men came from James"*, and for one reason or another, their influence led Peter to disassociate himself from the Gentiles, not because of any requirement, but simply out of fear of the extreme Judaizers who believed that the Gentiles needed to be circumcised in order to be accepted as brothers. Peter's stature in the church was such that, as soon as he drew back from the Gentile believers, so too did many other Jewish believers, even the popular and caring Barnabas. They were all responsible for their own actions, yet to Paul it was also clear that it would not have spread so far without the unfortunate example set by Peter.

* Again, these events seem to make more sense if they occurred before the conference in Acts 15, in which James was instrumental in promoting the understanding that the Gentiles did not need to be circumcised. Note that Paul does not tell us exactly what these emissaries said to Peter. They may simply have told him that, even if the Gentiles were genuine Christians, the Jerusalem believers would not appreciate Peter eating with them.

It was thus necessary for Paul to reprove Peter in front of the church (2:14). This must have made for some tense moments and anxious feelings, when the other believers saw two great examples of faith temporarily in conflict with each other, but Paul felt it necessary. Peter's ill-advised example had been set in public, and the surest way to reverse the direction of events was to do just as Paul did. Moreover, while Peter was probably hurt by Paul's rebuke, Paul was thinking of all the sincere Gentile Christians who had been mistreated and neglected because Peter and the others wanted to please a group of extremists. Moreover, Peter himself should have known better, since he was the one chosen by God to open the door of ministry to the Gentiles in the first place. All this is a practical illustration of Paul's stern warning (1:8-9) that not even an angel or an apostle has the authority to alter the terms of the gospel.

These events also remind us of the universal need for grace. One reason why circumcision is irrelevant in the New Covenant is that it has no connection with the permanent forgiveness of sins. Despite being circumcised, the Jews still needed Jesus, and the grace that came through his death. As for the Gentiles, their need was not to be conformed to outward regulations, but rather to have direct access to the blood of Christ and the grace that it brings.

Questions For Discussion or Study: What is Paul's point in bringing up this incident in Antioch? What principles does it illustrate? Why did Paul feel the necessity of confronting Peter publicly? What applications are there to all of this?

- *Mark Garner, Northland Church of Christ, Columbus, Ohio, June 2004*

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CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST: A STUDY OF GALATIANS

Notes for Week Four: Grace & Faith, Not Law (Galatians 2:15-21)

Now that Paul has established and emphasized his preliminary point - that the source and authority of the gospel is God, not man - he is able to discuss the main ideas of his letter. In these few verses, he quickly comes to the heart of the matter, telling the Galatians that they are saved not by observing the law, but by putting their faith in Christ. Further, to put their faith in Christ means to realize that they have been crucified with Christ.

Justified By Faith in Christ (Galatians 2:15-16)

Paul now touches directly on a fundamental point, and one which the Galatians have forgotten. Observing the law does not justify anyone, as Paul will explain in more detail in the next chapter. Rather, it is by faith, and the grace that we access through faith, that Jew and Gentile alike are justified before God. Paul also emphasizes that, in order to achieve this justification, we must put our faith in Christ.

The apostle states plainly that we are justified by faith, not by law (2:15-16). His phrasing, in saying "we who are Jews ... know that ...", suggests that this sentence may be a continuation of his statement to Peter in Antioch*, which Paul uses now to transition into his message to the Galatians. Either way, what Paul definitely claims is that he, Peter, or any Jewish Christian should already know that justification comes not through law, but through faith. Jesus demonstrated this in his own ministry, as the fulfillment of the law.

* Indeed, commentators have various opinions as to exactly where the quote of Paul's speech in Antioch does stop, and his statements directly to the Galatians resume. Some even carry the quotation all the way through the end of chapter 2. It does not, however, matter to the interpretation of what Paul is saying, since he means to apply the whole passage to the Galatians, whether or not he originally said part of it to Peter.

Paul goes even farther, stating unequivocally that no one is justified by observing the law. There is no room for ideas like "maybe if someone really tried", or any such scenario that would allow someone to be justified by the law. That this is true is evident to anyone who contemplates either the strict requirements of the law, or the negative nature of the law. Paul will provide additional reasons for this claim in the next chapter. The conclusion, then, is that we ought to put our faith in Christ, not in the law, nor in our ability to observe the law.

It will be helpful to consider at this point what is meant by the words justification, faith, and law. This is not the place for a detailed study of these words, but simply for some general concepts that can help make a study of Galatians even more meaningful. The word "justify", for example, has several connotations in English, and it is helpful to clarify its general meaning as Paul uses it. The verb used in Greek, δικαιοω ("dikaioo"), has the literal meaning of "to deem to be right". In everyday use, it could be used in a number of senses, such as to acquit or set free in a legal sense, or to be shown or proven to be right or correct. It is generally understood that in the New Testament it means approximately something like, "to declare as righteous"*, or perhaps in some contexts "to be made right with God".

* In fact, the word that is translated "righteousness" comes from the same root in Greek.

The idea of faith is easier to understand, yet it is still important to appreciate the emphasis that Paul and the New Testament place on the word. The Scriptures do not emphasize the "degree" or "amount" of faith so much as they emphasize having the proper object of faith. It is more important to have faith in the right place (God) than to have a lot of faith for faith's own sake. It is obviously better to have a small amount of faith in God himself, in his promises, and in his Word, than it is to have a strong faith in our own abilities, in our own understanding, or in human leaders or authorities. For this reason, it should be clear that faith, as the Bible talks about it, is not a work that earns us something by merit. Rather, to have a genuine faith in God means that we recognize our own inability to save ourselves, and thus place all of our faith and hope in God. By this means, we can access his grace, which by definition excludes any question of having earned something.

The concept of law, likewise, is in itself fairly clear. Still, in order to understand Paul's lessons to the Galatians, we want to distinguish between different kinds of law(s). We are all familiar with laws made by other humans or groups of humans. Humans can choose whether to obey or disobey these laws, but only if they are ready to accept the consequences of these decisions. Then, there are the "laws" of nature, or of science. That is, there are many principles such as gravity, time and space, mathematical formulas, and the like. These are unbreakable: whether we "agree with" the law of gravity or not, we cannot jump off of a building without crashing to the ground. When we add $2 + 2$, it will always come out to be 4, whether we like it or not.

Paul, of course, is talking about God's laws. As with man-made laws, we can choose whether or not to obey God's laws. In the short-term, it may seem easier to escape the consequences of breaking God's laws, since God hopes for us all to come to repentance, and thus has much greater patience than do human authorities. As with the laws of science, though, in the long run no one can ever really escape from breaking God's laws. Eventually, the price must be paid, just as surely as a person who jumps off of a building will pay a heavy price for trying to break the law of gravity. For this reason, no one can be justified before God by the law. Only by following God's laws 100% can we be justified by law - and this is a practical impossibility.

Questions For Discussion or Study: Why is it important for the Galatians to understand that no one is justified by the law? Why is it important for us? How does it help to understand Paul's points when we understand the basic idea involved in "justification"? Likewise, consider how it helps to understand Paul's emphasis when he talks about faith and law. Where does grace fit in among these other important concepts?

Living By Faith (Galatians 2:17-21)

Paul now leads up to the key ideas in Galatians. He first disposes of a common objection to the idea of salvation by faith, and then describes what happens to us when we put our faith in Jesus. Through faith in Jesus, we are crucified with him, so that our old selves die, and Jesus begins to live through us. An understanding of this transformation is essential for anyone who wishes to understand what Christianity really means - not just for the Galatians, but for us as well.

There is a common criticism of the idea of salvation by faith and/or grace, which the apostle now addresses (2:17-18). Unbelievers and works-oriented quasi-believers, both in the first century and today, have often suggested that the teaching of salvation by faith and grace, not works,

encourages sin. This may seem like a valid objection from the standpoint of human logic and fleshly reasoning - but only from this perspective. Paul answers that, if someone claims to believe in Christ but then uses this as an excuse to sin, the fault lies with that person and his or her understanding of Christ - not with Jesus himself. Paul describes it as "rebuilding what we destroyed" when someone becomes a Christian without renouncing the filth and shame of past sins. As Paul wrote elsewhere (Titus 2:11-12), "the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say No to ungodliness and worldly passions." No one who understands grace, and who has genuine faith, will use it as a license to sin.

Paul now describes the heart of the gospel, telling us that Christians have truly been crucified with Christ (2:19-21). This has many important consequences, which Paul will describe throughout the rest of the epistle. He begins with the first important consequence: that through the cross, we died to the law. In Colossians 2:13-14, he describes the law as itself having been nailed to the cross and destroyed. But the cross does not in the least contradict the law. The same God who wrote the law also planned the cross. Instead, the cross fulfills the law, because Jesus became the first fully to obey it, and he then accepted the punishment of death that was due each of us because of the law's righteous requirements. Moreover, the cross completes the law, since everything in the Old Covenant looked ahead to the day of Jesus. Because of this, the cross replaces the law, which comes back to Paul's previous point that we are not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Christ.

The image of being crucified with Christ is shocking and powerful, if we permit ourselves to visualize and respect what it means. Our old self was meant to be crucified: not merely punished or restrained or imprisoned or even beheaded, but utterly destroyed and eliminated, never to live again. In Jesus, our lives are not our own, but instead Jesus lives in us. This is a basic but important perspective that we must adopt if we wish to grow further in our relationship with God. It is one important step to accept our responsibility for the necessity of Jesus' sacrifice - it is just as important to offer up our own old selves to be crucified too.

These ideas then provide more evidence that grace is essential. This is what Paul means in saying, "I do not set aside the grace of God." Even if grace is not mentioned explicitly when we discuss faith or the cross, it is implied every time these ideas are invoked. Righteousness is impossible through the law - not difficult, but impossible. Only because of this did God resolve to have his own Son pay the price on the cross.

Questions For Discussion or Study: Explain in your own words why it is not true that the idea of salvation through faith and grace promotes sin. Why is it important to understand this? What does it mean to have one's old self "crucified"? How literally should we take this? What are some of the consequences of this? In what way does the cross tell us that grace is essential?

- *Mark Garner, Northland Church of Christ, Columbus, Ohio, July 2004*

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CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST: A STUDY OF GALATIANS

Notes for Week Five: Faith is Effective, Law is Ineffective (Galatians 3:1-14)

In the previous verses, Paul set forth the main points of his message to the Galatians. He has told them that we can be justified only by faith in Christ, not through observing the law. He has also indicated that Christians have been crucified with Christ, an idea with many implications. Paul now gives three demonstrations to show that justification must come through faith, not law.

Receiving the Spirit - By Faith (Galatians 3:1-5)

Paul's first demonstration of why we must be justified by faith, not by law, is based on God's promise of the Holy Spirit. The gift of the Spirit is given not as a reward for meritorious works, but as a gift to those who believe the gospel. Just before discussing this idea, Paul also reiterates the need for the Galatians to remember the cross and all that it involves.

Now that Paul has patiently explained the basic points of his message, he asks the Galatians a rather abrupt rhetorical question, suggesting that they are acting as if they have been bewitched or put under a spell (3:1). He bluntly addresses them as "you foolish Galatians", hoping that they will realize how unwise it is to discard the lessons of grace and faith for the sake of a law-based relationship with God. They have traded something that meets the deepest needs of their souls for a system that may promise much, but delivers little or nothing of spiritual value.

Paul reminds them again of the cross, and of the description of Jesus' death on the cross that they heard before becoming Christians. Paul's expression "before your very eyes" is meant to suggest how unnecessary it is for them to look for anything new or additional once they have understood in our hearts the message of the cross. The extreme physical and emotional suffering of Jesus ought to convince us that our fleshly efforts are insubstantial by comparison. The sacrifice of a person who was not only sinless, but divine, should persuade us that we have no comparable sacrifice to offer. Finally, the symbolism of a shameful, criminal's death as a mechanism for salvation ought to teach us that the key to justification is not meritorious service that earns us praise, but instead humility, faith, and complete dependence on God.

Paul now makes a fairly simple, but important, point about the basis for receiving the Spirit of God (3:2-5). We see in this passage that the Galatians were blessed not only with the gift of the Holy Spirit in their hearts, but also with at least some measure of his miraculous gifts. Paul simply reminds them that they received these blessings by believing the gospel, before the Judaizing teachers persuaded them to put their hopes in rigorous observance of the law. In adding the law to their faith, the Galatians did not get any extra measure of the Spirit, but instead were simply going astray after a good start. Paul makes this point twice, and to the Galatians, it should have been especially obvious, since they had the visible evidence of spiritual gifts. We too, though, can be confident of the same point. Ever since the church began on the day of Pentecost, the promise of the Spirit has been conditioned only on belief, repentance, and baptism, not on any degree of success in observing the whole of God's laws.

Questions For Discussion or Study: Why does Paul call the Galatians "foolish"? Is he justified in so doing? What does the cross say about the mistake they have made? Of what relevance to their spiritual needs is Paul's point about the grounds for receiving the Spirit? Why should this have been convincing to the Galatians? How should it be convincing to us? What other implications are there to the principle that the Spirit is given as a gift, not earned through works?

Blessed With Abraham - By Faith (Galatians 3:6-9)

This passage furnishes Paul's second demonstration that we must be justified by faith, not by law. He quotes some of the promises made to Abraham in the book of Genesis. These show that God proclaimed many centuries in advance that the Gentiles would be included in his plan of redemption. Moreover, Abraham himself received these promises by faith, and became an important foundation for God's further plans.

Paul now quotes an important Scripture about Abraham: "he believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness" (Galatians 3:6-9; the quote is from Genesis 15:6). Abraham's relationship with God was based on faith from the beginning. When God began to give his promises to Abraham, there was no Mosaic law, and not even the institution of circumcision*. Thus the promises and blessings that Abraham received came by faith, not by law. So, God's covenant with Abraham, of which the Galatians, we ourselves, and all Christians are the heirs, came by faith. As Paul will point out more explicitly below (verse 17), the covenant with Abraham has priority, and was by no means cancelled by the coming of the law much later.

* Paul also discusses this, at greater length, in Romans 4 (see especially verses 9-15). These points about Abraham are of vital importance in showing the consistency of God's plans, and in showing that the New Covenant is not inconsistent with the Old. It demonstrates not only that the true basis of redemption and justification have always been the same, but also that God's own nature has not changed.

Amongst the many promises to Abraham was also God's assurance that the Gentiles would one day be blessed through Abraham. Paul explains that this foretold the justification of the Gentiles through faith. This comes through Abraham both historically and in a spiritual sense. Further, for us to be blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith, it is entirely appropriate that this blessing come by faith, since faith was the basis of Abraham's own relationship with God.

Questions For Discussion or Study: Why is Abraham significant to the general discussion about the Galatians and the Judaizers? Where in the Old Testament would we find the confirmation of what Paul says about the promises to Abraham? How are these promises relevant to Christians? Did they mean the same thing to Gentile Christians as they did to Jewish Christians? In what ways did Abraham reveal his faith, for which "it was credited to him as righteousness"? Are there any applications we can make from this?

Redeemed - By Faith (Galatians 3:10-14)

The third reason focuses on our need for redemption from sin. The law, by its nature, is not redemptive; rather, it can only convict and curse. Jesus' redemptive sacrifice accomplished what the law could not: complete forgiveness for sin. So, by believing in his sacrifice, our faith lets us

share in its blessings, and in the promises that were given to Abraham.

Paul returns to his claim that no one is justified by the law, and he now shows this by examining the nature of the law (3:10-12). Those who rely on the law to save them are destined to fail, and (as Paul says) are under a curse. As Paul shows by quoting from the law itself, the law demands 100% obedience, and guarantees punishment for anything less. That this is true is also obvious by considering human-made laws. A thief is not exempted from punishment just because he has not broken any other laws. A speeder on the highway will get a ticket even if he has never robbed or assaulted anyone. (See also James 2:10-11.) Only the punishments (of human-made laws) may vary for transgressions against different laws. In God's laws, the punishment for breaking any commandment is to be separated from God.

Paul also quotes an important verse from the prophet Habakkuk: "the righteous will live by faith." Living by faith and living by law are opposite choices; we cannot do both. Paul again shows this from the law itself, quoting from Leviticus 18. We must therefore choose the right foundation. Living by law is not a good foundation, because it requires us to attain a standard of perfection that none of us can satisfy. Faith, though, has the potential to do what the law cannot, as Paul will now explain.

What Paul refers to as the "curse" of the law was cancelled out for us by the redemption that came through Jesus (3:13-14). He saved us from a curse by becoming a curse, in that he died a death normally suitable only for the most wretched, sinful persons. The kind of death he died was considered shameful and humiliating by Romans and Jews alike. But only in this way could he open the way for our justification, sanctification, and salvation. He accepted the penalty due to us for our inability to fulfill God's righteous laws, and substituted himself for us on the cross. By faith in Jesus, by believing that he did this and thus satisfied the requirements of the law on our behalf, we may access God's grace and the promises and blessings that come through his grace. By believing in Jesus' redemptive sacrifice, we also acknowledge our own inability to earn salvation on our own merits. This is one of the basic points that the Judaizing teachers could not accept, but it is this very realization that opens the door to a true appreciation of the cross of Christ, and to experiencing the greatest spiritual blessings that it gives us.

Questions For Discussion or Study: In what ways is the law a "curse"? Why can't the law make us righteous or justified? Why then do so many persons feel that they are righteous or justified, according to some standard of law? Why is faith a better foundation for our relationship with God? How did Jesus become a "curse", and why does this help us? How does this help us to see that faith is not itself a work (that is, a meritorious action that deserves to be rewarded)?

- *Mark Garner, Northland Church of Christ, Columbus, Ohio, July 2004*

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CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST: A STUDY OF GALATIANS

Week Six: What Was the Law For? (Galatians 3:15-25)

Paul has now firmly established the principle that justification must come by faith, not by law, and he has also given several demonstrations that prove the validity of this principle. This concept, though, raises a natural question: if the law was powerless to bring justification or redemption, what was it for? Paul thus turns to a discussion of the role of law in God's plan.

The Law & The Promise (Galatians 3:15-18)

To explain the purpose of the law, Paul starts by establishing its historical relation to the promises that were given to Abraham. As he has implied previously (3:6-9), the covenant that God made with Abraham already looked ahead to the redemption of the Gentiles by faith. Since the law came some centuries later, it must therefore be seen as dependent on, and subordinate to, the earlier covenant. Whatever it teaches and whatever purpose it has must be consistent with the covenant God had previously made with Abraham.

The apostle starts with some basic but important observations about Abraham, God's covenant with him, and God's promises to him (3:15-16). He points out that any duly established covenant cannot be set aside lightly, and of course nothing could be more "duly established" than a covenant that was put into place by God himself. Therefore, the covenant with Abraham could never be cancelled unless God himself did the cancelling. Paul also reminds them of the form of the promise to Abraham, suggesting that the phrase "and to your seed", used several times in God's promises to Abraham*, looked ahead to fulfillment in Christ.

* Paul is referring specifically to passages such as Genesis 12:7, 13:15, and 24:7. The word that Paul quotes as "seed" in these passages in Genesis is translated "offspring" in the NIV and some other versions. This is because in those verses the implication is that the promises are for Abraham's offspring. The word in Hebrew literally means "seed".

Paul now can discuss the law in the context of the earlier covenant (3:17-18). His point is that, unless God himself specifically revoked the covenant with Abraham and his descendants, then the law cannot change the covenant. The law is subordinate to the pre-existing covenant, and the law must be interpreted in view of the covenant. God did not, of course, ever revoke the covenant with Abraham - quite the contrary, as Abraham was always understood to be one of the foundations of everything that followed in the history of God's people. The most zealous followers of the law were always eager to recognize Abraham as their father, yet they usually did not understand the spiritual implications of this relationship.

The promise of an inheritance was a crucial part of the covenant with Abraham. Paul again points out that the assurance of an inheritance came through a promise, not by observing laws. Since the same promise of the same inheritance was passed on to Abraham's descendants, for them the foundation of their inheritance must also be the promises, not the law. And the two are mutually exclusive: either one receives the inheritance by faith in the promise (and in the Promisor), or else one earns the inheritance by observing the law. The inheritance can only

depend on one or the other, not both.

One important implication of all of this is that everything from God comes through grace. He gives some gifts and blessings to every human, whether faithful or not, and none of them are earned. Other gifts and blessings from God are conditioned on faith, but these too still come by grace. Faith does not earn us anything, but merely gains us access to God's grace.

Questions For Discussion or Study: Why is the historical sequence involving the covenant and the law significant? Is this just a technicality, or does it have spiritual significance? How do we know that the covenant with Abraham was based on faith, not law? What was the role of grace in God's covenant with Abraham? What lessons are there for us?

The Purpose of the Law (Galatians 3:19-25)

The apostle now comes to the main question, when he asks, "what, then, was the purpose of the law?" He explains the basic purpose of the law, and then discusses the role of law. To be sure, many of God's own people had other beliefs about the law and its purpose, but Paul emphasizes that God's intentions have always been the same.

So Paul now comes to the basic purpose of the law (3:19-20). Several versions quote Paul as saying that the law was enacted "because of transgressions", which is a slightly ambiguous expression. Both the grammar of the original Greek and its context in Paul's exposition suggest that it more likely means "for the sake of transgressions" or, in context, "to produce transgressions"*. Paul does not mean, of course, that God desires more transgressions, but rather that God wants transgressions to be exposed, and to be defined as such.

* In other words, the transgressions are more the purpose of the law than the cause of the law. While it may seem reasonable, by human logic, to guess that the law may have been enacted in the hope of preventing or limiting sins, this does not at all fit in with Paul's exposition. In fact, the Scriptures tell us that law in itself has only a limited effectiveness in preventing sin. Its real purpose is to define and expose sin, making it known, and making sin a recognizable offense against God. Paul is claiming that the law has value only as a preparation for grace, and for the ministry of Jesus that allows us to access God's grace by faith in the cross. Some of the commentaries on the suggested list (in the notes to week one) have further explanations of this.

While law is ineffective in redeeming or justifying us, it does an admirable job of exposing and defining our transgressions. While we do not like this, it is an important part of coming to know God. We must be able to see that we do sin, even if we try hard to remain righteous. We must accept that we cannot be justified by the law, and the only way to see this is if the law convinces us that we cannot keep the law. It is also true, as Paul discusses in a different but related context in Romans 7, that law sometimes provokes transgressions. But this is because of our own flesh and its pride, not because of any deficiencies in the law itself. "The law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous, and good" (Romans 7:12).

Paul also brings up another point, namely, that the law was "put into effect through angels by a mediator." The mediator, of course, was Moses. Commentators have long debated the role of angels in enacting the law, since the Old Testament does not directly address the statement that

Paul makes here regarding angels. Their role, though, is not the issue. The point is that the law was a unilateral arrangement, given by God to the people with no option on their part. So too, Paul's statement about mediation in verse 20 (also long debated by commentators) is simply meant primarily to indicate that, as far as the people were concerned, the law came once (or even twice) removed from God's own hand. The epistle to the Hebrews also emphasizes this fact in Hebrews 8:10-12 and 10:15-17. The arrangement in the New Covenant, of salvation through faith in Jesus' redeeming sacrifice, fulfills both the Old Covenant and the old law.

Paul also expands on the role of the law, beyond his basic statement above (3:21-25). He again anticipates the possible objection that the law and the promises seem to be in conflict. That is only an appearance, arising from the Galatians' own error. Justification by law and justification by faith are indeed mutually exclusive and mutually contradictory. But for anyone who is not trying to be justified by law, the law then serves a useful purpose, and is not opposed to the promises. If it had been possible for God to enact a law that could impart life, he would have done so. But God knows human nature much better than any psychologist or sociologist, and he knew that this was an impossibility. The real purpose of the law is something much different. The world is a prisoner of sin, and anyone who has not been redeemed by Christ is a prisoner of sin. The law served a constructive role in making this abundantly clear to anyone with discernment, and in so doing, it cleared the way for the promises to be fulfilled by faith.

The apostle now tells us that "before faith came, we were held prisoners by the law." The law then was a guide or an instructor* that led us to Jesus, and that also served as our guardian until we came to Jesus (see also Paul's analogy in Galatians 4:2). This is true in a historical sense, which is important to Paul's presentation to the Galatians, but for us it is even more important in an individual sense. We can never truly appreciate the magnitude of the blessing of grace unless the law has proven to us how badly we need grace. We may dislike the law, and may rebel against it, but it nevertheless has a valuable role to play. Now that faith has come, though, we can be free from the law, and this is a blessing that Christians should accept joyfully. For all that law has a valuable role to play, once it has done its work, we can confidently move on to live by faith.

* The Greek word παιδαγωγος ("paidagogos"), which is equivalent to the English word "pedagogue", can also mean a schoolteacher. Some versions reflect this sense in their translation of this passage.

Questions For Discussion or Study: Why is it important for us to have the law expose and define our transgressions? What is the right way for us to respond when it does this? What is the difference between trying to learn from the law and trying to be justified by the law? What does it mean to be a prisoner of sin? What does it mean that the law is a guide or an instructor? Why does it cease to play this role when we come to Jesus? Why do we no longer need the law to keep us from sinning?

- *Mark Garner, Northland Church of Christ, Columbus, Ohio, July 2004*

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CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST: A STUDY OF GALATIANS

Notes For Week Seven: Heirs According to the Promise (Galatians 3:26-4:11)

In the verses that we studied last week, Paul explained the purpose of the law, and he explained its relationship with the promises that God made to Abraham. He now follows that up with a discussion of some of the implications that come from being Abraham's spiritual offspring and spiritual heirs. In understanding how we as Christians fit into plans that God made long ago, we also begin to understand how children of faith should serve and seek God.

Clothed With Christ (Galatians 3:26-29)

The apostle now begins to discuss some of the implications of the principles that he has established. Here, he considers our identity as Christians. When we were baptized into Christ, we were clothed with Christ, and our old identities were thus replaced with his. While we still have the same physical body, we should no longer consider that it defines who we are.

In one of the best-remembered verses from the epistle, Paul tells the Galatians that they have "clothed" themselves with Christ (3:26-27). Through faith, we become sons and daughters of God. That is, we are declared to be his children, the way that Abraham was declared righteous in his sight. Everyone who is baptized into Christ is then clothed with Christ. It is as if we put on a Jesus "costume" or "disguise". That is, when God looks at us, instead of seeing our sins, he sees his own Son, and we are declared righteous in his sight because we believe that Jesus took our place on the cross.

It is therefore appropriate that we should consider ourselves to have a new identity (3:28-29). Whatever we are in the world's eyes - Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female, American or Canadian, Ohio State fan or Michigan fan - these are no longer as important as the fact that we have been adopted into God's own family. The ways we defined ourselves in worldly terms, whether by ancestry, political beliefs, professional status, or any other way, should become of lesser importance to us, because we Christians are now one in Christ Jesus. And Jesus is a much more worthy basis for unity than are worldly characteristics.

Those who belong to Christ are also Abraham's seed or offspring, because God's promises to Abraham are fulfilled spiritually in us. Then, as Paul points out next, sons and daughters are also, by nature, the heirs of their parents. We too are heirs, not by law or by rights, but by the promises that God has made.

Questions for Discussion or Study: What does it mean to be a son or daughter of God? On what is this relationship based? What does it mean to be "clothed" with Christ? How can we adapt our view of ourselves to emphasize our spiritual identities and de-emphasize our fleshly identities? In what sense are we God's heirs? What is our inheritance?

No Longer Slaves, But Heirs (Galatians 4:1-7)

As Christians we are sons and daughters of God, we are Abraham's offspring, and we are heirs according to God's promise. This means that we are no longer slaves to the law - that is, we do

not have to rely on the law for our justification or redemption. Paul details these ideas with some analogies, in order to help the Galatians better understand who they are as Christians.

To appreciate our new state as heirs, it helps to understand our former state as slaves (4:1-3). Paul gives the analogy of an underage heir. He has inherited all of his family's wealth, but because he is too young to use it properly, he is subject to guardians and trustees, as prescribed by his parents in their wills. Even though the money is his, he has to wait until he grows up to be made responsible for it. The analogy is that, even when we were in the world, God had called us to know him and to inherit his kingdom. But we all have to go through the process* of being subjected to the law, of realizing the sins we have committed, and of allowing the law to convince us of our need for redemption.

* Note that there are two different ways in which this analogy is appropriate. It describes any particular individual, in that each of us has to go through the lessons that the law teaches us. But it also applies on a broader, historical level, in that God waited many centuries before sending his son "when the time had fully come" (4:4). The history of ancient Israel is in itself a parallel to the illustration of the young heir. This parallel was, of course, particularly important for the Galatians, and it pointed out an important fallacy in the teachings of the Judaizing teachers. In terms of the analogy, the Judaizers wanted everyone to stay under the authority of trustees, rather than accepting their full inheritance.

This is essentially what Paul means by slavery "under the basic principles of the world". We go through a temporary stage in which we live by law, and are under the instruction of the law. When we have grasped the spiritual lessons of the law, the law itself teaches us to turn to a better way of knowing God, and only then are we ready to receive our inheritance without being subject to guardians or trustees.

God's goal all along is for all believers to receive the full rights as sons (4:4-7). This is why he sent his Son. Without Jesus and his sacrificial ministry, no human who had ever sinned could ever receive the full rights as a son or daughter of God. Moreover, only because of Jesus can God give his Spirit to all believers. Since Paul is emphasizing the relationship aspects of the cross, he points out that (amongst many other features of his ministry) the Spirit pulls us closer to God, and strengthens our relationship with him as our Father*.

* The word "abba" is an Aramaic word, a familiar term for addressing one's father. It was generally used as we would use a term like "papa" or "daddy", that is, to express intimacy and familiarity, not formality.

All of this should strengthen our confidence in our relationship with God. We are no longer slaves, but sons and daughters, and therefore heirs. Even the word "heir" and its connotations give us some insight into where we stand with God. Like a wealthy father who has worked hard in order to provide for his descendants, God has prepared incalculable riches in heaven, and is most eager to pour them out on his adopted children. He is eager to do so not because we have perfectly observed the law, but because we have faith in Jesus' redemptive ministry; not because of our righteousness and perfection, but because of God's own righteousness and perfection.

Questions for Discussion or Study: What is the purpose of Paul's analogy of an underage heir? Who or what would be our "guardians and trustees"? What does it mean to be in slavery under "the basic principles of this world"? Would it mean the same thing for every individual? What are the "full rights as sons" in our relationship with God? When or how do we receive them? How can it help our relationship with God if we consider ourselves to be his heirs?

Why Turn Back? (Galatians 4:8-11)

The Galatians have, unfortunately, shown very little understanding of these ideas, and so they were quick to accept and adopt the law-oriented doctrines of the Judaizing teachers. In this passage, Paul shows them how nonsensical and unnecessary it is to turn back to such an ineffective way of seeking God.

Paul openly tells that Galatians that, "I fear for you" (4:8-11). He sees them going backwards, not growing in Christ. He sees them abandoning a present state of grace and spiritual blessing in order to turn back to a state that is really no different, spiritually, from their condition before they had even heard of Jesus. In turning to the law, they are returning to the same sort of ineffective, joyless principles by which unbelievers live. It makes little difference that they are doing this in the name of Christ, because they have discarded the heart of the gospel by placing law ahead of grace and the cross. They have, in effect, become re-enslaved.

The Galatians may not even have realized how fully they were turning to a law-oriented perspective. The apostle indicates that they were adding further features of the law to their worship, even beyond circumcision and the dietary laws. He points out, for example, that they were adding in ritual observances of special days and the like. Now in itself, this was a harmless practice, at least when done by Jews who understood the meaning behind these days and their ceremonies. But when the Galatians suddenly started practicing them, this almost certainly meant that most of those involved had only a dim, superficial awareness of what they were doing, and consequently they were only observing the days as outward rituals.

By saying that he may have wasted his efforts on the Galatians, Paul strongly implies that they themselves have unnecessarily thrown away the best of what he had taught them. In our own relationship with God, we too ought to take care that we do not return to misguided ways of thinking, which we once had discarded. It can happen more easily than we may think.

Questions for Discussion or Study: What does Paul mean by "weak and miserable principles"? Why does he compare the Galatians' former condition as unbelievers to their new condition as law-oriented believers - that is, why does he describe this as a "return" to similar kinds of principles? In view of Paul's statements in Romans 14:5-6, why does he here reproach the Galatians for observing special days and the like? Why does Paul say that he may have wasted his efforts on the Galatians? What response was he hoping to get when he made this statement?

- *Mark Garner, Northland Church of Christ, Columbus, Ohio, July 2004*

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CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST: A STUDY OF GALATIANS

Notes For Week Eight: A Plea to Stand Firm (Galatians 4:12-5:1)

Having discussed in detail why we must base our justification on faith and grace, not on observing the law, Paul now urges the Galatians to stand firm in the faith, and to hold to the original, genuine gospel that they had accepted. To his personal appeals, he also adds one more analogy from Scripture.

The Apostle's Personal Plea (Galatians 4:12-20)

To the many Scriptural reasons that Paul has given the Galatians in urging them to turn away from law-oriented religion, the apostle now adds a personal plea. He reminds them of the closeness that he once had with them, and he compares his motives with the motives of the Judaizing teachers. This is not merely an attempt to gain personal satisfaction, but rather is a lesson to the Galatians, comparing the fruits of grace with the fruits of law.

Paul begins his plea by asking the Galatian believers to "become like me, for I became like you" (4:12-16), reminding them of his ministry among them, and of the fellowship that they had shared. There is also an implication that, just as Paul always put himself in the place of those to whom he preached, so as to understand their needs, so now they should stop and understand his perspective. He also reminds them of the initial circumstances of his trip to see them. Paul says that some kind of illness* - of which the details are now unknown - had originally led to him travelling to Galatia, where he then preached the gospel. At that time, the Galatians felt not at all inconvenienced by his illness, but were instead joyful to hear his message. He appeals them to restore such a relationship now.

* A great many specific illnesses or ailments have been proposed as the affliction that brought Paul to Galatia. It is not possible to determine which one, if any, is correct, nor is it important to determine the answer. Most commentaries on Galatians mention some of the many theories.

Paul asks them to consider some personal questions. Reminding them of their joyful reception of him, and their joyful acceptance of the gospel, he asks them to consider where their joy has gone. He is by no means trying to build himself up, but rather is pointing out that the spiritual fruit of joy comes from the true gospel of faith and grace. The false "gospel" of law produces no such joy. Likewise, he now asks them whether he has become their enemy because he has told them the truth. Nothing has changed about him, but their attitude towards him may have. Rivalry and an un-Christlike spirit of competition are bad fruits that come from living by law.

Both Paul and the Judaizing teachers encouraged the Galatians to be zealous, but there is a right kind of zeal, and a wrong kind (4:17-20). The circumcising teachers were motivated by the desire to win a following, to be applauded, to prove themselves superior to other teachers such as Paul. This kind of "zeal" is all too common in religious circles, in every era. Paul says that zeal itself is not the problem. Rather, zeal is good if it has the right purpose. Paul is zealous for the Galatians to know Jesus and to know God, not for them to become followers of Paul. Moreover, zeal is only of real value if it remains constant and genuine. A believer who only shows zeal when others can see it is not really zealous for the right reasons.

Paul closes his personal appeal by telling his readers that he is perplexed by them, and he describes himself as if he were a pregnant mother, unnaturally having to give birth to a child that was already born. His implication is that Christians should not have to go back through this rudimentary stage of spiritual growth. Yet he knows that it happens and has happened, and in his compassion for the Galatians, he will go back through everything again until they understand.

Questions For Discussion or Study: Why does Paul remind the Galatians of his original ministry to them? What changes have the Galatians experienced since turning to justification by law? What do these changes mean? How do Paul's motives differ from those of the circumcising teachers? What lessons do Paul's remarks on zeal hold for us? How did Paul now feel about the Galatians personally? What can we learn from this?

Analogy of Hagar & Sarah (Galatians 4:21-27)

Paul now gives another detailed analogy from Abraham's life. He shows once more that, even though the circumcising teachers base their doctrines on Abraham, they have not at all understood the real lessons from Abraham's life. The apostle's example this time is based on Hagar and Sarah, and on the children that Abraham had by these two women.

Paul says, as he has implied previously, that those who rely on the law often do not really know what the law itself actually says (4:21-23; compare, for example, 1 Timothy 1:7). Since those who trust in the law put so much of their hope in Abraham, Paul again teaches them from Abraham's life. Abraham's two sons are illustrative of several aspects of the difference between justification by faith and justification by law. After God had given, but not yet fulfilled, his promise of countless descendants to Abraham, Abraham and Sarah first tried to fulfill it themselves, which led to Ishmael being born to the maidservant Hagar*. (The whole sequence of events is described in Genesis chapters 15, 16, 17, and 21.) It was a natural birth in every way, coming about entirely as a result of human will. Later, Isaac was born to the supposedly barren Sarah, and he was the true child of the promise.

* Note that, in the entire analogy that follows, Paul is by no means criticizing, or even commenting upon, Hagar and Ishmael as individuals. He refers to them solely in terms of the parallels they furnish.

Paul uses the two women to parallel two covenants that God made with his people (4:24-27). Hagar and her natural son are illustrative of the children of law. Paul compares them to Mount Sinai, where the law was given, and to the physical city of Jerusalem. They represent not only Jews, but all persons who live by law and who attempt to justify themselves by law. But, just as Isaac was born to Sarah as a result of God's promise, there is also a "Jerusalem above", attainable only by grace through faith. This Jerusalem is our true mother, if we belong to Christ and rest our faith on him. The apostle drives home this point with a prophecy from Isaiah 54, in which (in a somewhat broader context*) the prophet encourages the woman with no children, promising that she will ultimately have more than the woman who has a child now. We live in a heavenly city, not an earthly one. To receive a reward on earth, it can be appropriate to rely on a form of law. But to reach the heavenly Jerusalem, worldly accomplishments are just as useless as worldly possessions. Just as Sarah could never have had a child in a purely natural way, so also we cannot enter the heavenly Jerusalem by our own fulfillment of the law.

* In Isaiah, the verse that Paul quotes here is a multi-level prophecy, and a complete explanation would of necessity involve a review of the themes of Isaiah, and of the verse's context in the book. Both Paul and

Isaiah use the theme of God's blessings to barren women such as Sarah (other examples would be Hannah and Elizabeth) as a parallel to the ways that God brings spiritual life to the spiritually dead, through faith and grace.

Questions For Discussion or Study: Describe in your own words the original story of Hagar and Ishmael, and then describe the basic analogy that Paul has in mind. Why is Hagar an appropriate parallel to those who live by law? Why is Sarah an appropriate parallel to those who live by faith? What are the implications of Isaiah 54:1 (quoted here in verse 27) in this context?

Set Free For Freedom (Galatians 4:28-5:1)

The apostle finishes this section of the epistle with a description of the choices available to the Galatians. They can choose to be children of the law, and thus remain slaves, or they can choose to be children of the promise, and thus be free. Jesus, of course, called us to be free. Paul thus urges the Galatians to stand firm, and to rest their hopes on faith and grace, not law.

As Christians, we are children of promise (4:28-31). We should embrace this identity, yet we should also realize that it does not exempt us from trials. In particular, Paul reminds them that, in the literal analogy he has given, the child of promise was at times mistreated by the "ordinary" child*. Likewise, those who live by law often persecute those who live by faith and grace. We must expect this, and we should also take note that, if we are truly living by faith and grace, we will never be the persecutors. To live by the true gospel inherently commits us to accepting opposition without responding through hatred and grudges. It ought to be enough for us to remember our inheritance as the true heirs. For, just as Abraham's inheritance (both physical and spiritual) was passed on to the child of promise, so too the inheritance under the New Covenant will be passed on only to those who are children of faith and promise. Just as the inheritance of Ishmael and Isaac was determined by who their mother was, so too our inheritance will be determined by whether our "mother" is law or faith.

* Paul is most probably referring to Genesis 21:9.

Paul therefore admonishes the Galatians to stand firm (5:1). Jesus died to set us free, not to enslave us. He set us free from sin and death, and "the sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law" (1 Corinthians 15:56). There is, therefore, no reason to allow ourselves again to be burdened by a yoke of slavery to the law. In the next portion of the epistle, Paul will build on this, by discussing some practical applications of all of these ideas.

Questions For Discussion or Study: As children of promise, what things can we expect? Are all these things positive? What is the significance, in Paul's analogy, of the sons' inheritances? How is our inheritance determined, in terms of this analogy? Why is Paul using this particular analogy - that is, why would it be particularly appropriate? What kinds of lessons should we ourselves get from Paul's exhortation in Galatians 5:1?

- *Mark Garner, Northland Church of Christ, Columbus, Ohio, August 2004*

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CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST: A STUDY OF GALATIANS

Notes For Week Nine: Called to Be Free (Galatians 5:2-15)

We shall now begin the final portion of the epistle to the Galatians, in which Paul begins making some practical applications of the spiritual principles that he has taught so far. If the Galatians accept Paul's plea to return to the gospel of faith and grace, they will also need to know how this should affect their lives and ministries.

An Important Decision (Galatians 5:2-6)

Paul now directly addresses the issue of circumcision, which was the most pressing question facing the Galatians. In itself, circumcision has no value or importance one way or another. But it is wrong to be circumcised, or to do anything else, in the hopes of being justified through law. Paul therefore sternly warns the Galatians not to give in to the false teachers by allowing themselves to be circumcised.

In giving them this warning not to be circumcised* (5:2-4), Paul spells out the consequences that come with giving in. As he has demonstrated earlier, there is no harmony between justification by faith and justification by law. It is impossible to be justified by "some of both", so to choose one means automatically to reject the other. Further, the consequences in themselves are frightful. Paul says that Christ no longer has any value to those who allow themselves to be circumcised, and that such persons are obligated to obey the whole law. Christ only has value for those who live by faith, as the grace he offers cannot be accessed by observing the law - unless one observes the whole law perfectly, which is an impossibility and a contradiction.

* Paul's comments here apply directly only to those men who have not been circumcised but are considering it. The same principles, though, would also apply to anyone tempted by justification through law. Even for women, for example, the Judaizers' system included restrictions on eating, observation of special days, and the like. There also were almost certainly many Galatian believers who had already been circumcised, and could not "undo it". They could still come back to the true gospel by renouncing the law as a source of justification. It would, of course, be especially difficult for them, since they would need to repent and to humble themselves.

As if all that were not fearful enough, Paul goes on to say that those who are seeking to be justified by law have "been alienated from Christ" and have "fallen away from grace". In essence, Paul uses several different phrases to describe the same desperate spiritual condition that accompanies the rejection of faith in favor of law. Those who choose to live by law usually do not see things in such clear terms, because false teachers, and even our own flesh, often present justification by law as attainable and positive. To be able to reject it, the Galatians - and we ourselves - must understand how starkly it stands in opposition to the cross of Christ.

The Galatians, therefore, have no good choice except to choose faith (5:5-6). Along with faith come righteousness and hope. As the apostle has already shown, only faith can provide genuine hope. Law produces only a false hope, in the form of the unreachable goal of fleshly perfection. Through faith, we can have great hope, because we are relying on God, rather than ourselves. Then too, it is one of the ironies of the gospel that those who pursue righteousness directly, on their own efforts, will not find it, but those who acknowledge their own unrighteousness are able to be declared righteous, because of God's own righteousness and Jesus' righteous sacrifice.

Paul also makes sure to point out that circumcision itself is not the problem. In themselves, circumcision and uncircumcision mean nothing, now that Jesus has fulfilled the law by sacrificing himself. Before that, God did require his people to be circumcised, to show that they accepted the Old Covenant, which included the Levitical sacrifices for the atonement for sin. Under the New Covenant, for someone to be circumcised because it is a family custom, or for hygienic reasons, is perfectly all right, as long as it is understood that it no longer has anything to do with one's relationship with God. It is only a problem to be circumcised when it is done because of the misconception that it is required in order to be justified before God.

As Paul indicates, what counts now is faith expressing itself through love - love for God, and love for others. Paul will also build on this idea below (verses 13-14). We are free in Christ, but this freedom comes only from faith, and faith is inextricably united with love.

Questions For Discussion or Study: Summarize the consequences that will come to any of the Galatians who allows himself to be circumcised. How should we ourselves make use of these warnings? How can circumcision be of no importance in itself, but cause serious problems in the circumstances in Galatia? Are there also things other than circumcision for which this might be the case? What does "faith expressing itself through love" mean, and what does it have to do with Paul's warnings?

Get Back On Track (Galatians 5:7-12)

Paul continues sternly to exhort the Galatians to return to the truth. He implicitly corrects them, but also gives them strong re-assurances that faith is the right way to choose. He uses the analogy of a race, in which the Galatians have gone off course, and need to get back on track. He also asserts firmly that punishment awaits those who have caused so much trouble.

Paul likens the Galatians to runners who stray from the designated course (5:7-10). Not that they have been off-course since the beginning, but rather, they were running a good race, only to be led astray. The false teachers who came to Galatia brought the wrong kind of persuasion and the wrong kind of influence. As Paul's analogy of dough and yeast indicates, bad influences can spread quickly if brought by the persuasive and assertive. This illustrates Paul's principle that it is fine to be zealous, but only if the purpose is good. The Judaizing teachers wanted to affect others, but their zeal caused destruction rather than spiritual growth. Zeal is not a virtue in itself, but only when it is combined with the right message and the right kind of persuasion. Zeal for a bad cause will not bring praise from God, but rather will bring punishment.

Paul then discusses what he calls "the offense (or stumbling-block) of the cross" (5:11-12). He was once one of the most zealous promoters of circumcision and the rest of the law, but he no longer preaches circumcision. There is an inherent clash between circumcision and the law, on the one hand, and the cross, grace, and faith on the other hand. Circumcision and the law are elements of a system that was always meant to be temporary. Now that the Old Covenant has fulfilled its purpose, it is an anachronism to require Christians to follow its laws.

The "offense" or "stumbling block" to which Paul refers is that the cross emphatically teaches our need for grace, and our inability to justify ourselves by law or works. Paul discusses similar ideas in 1 Corinthians 1:20-25. The cross does not allow room for us to be justified by our own actions, our own wisdom, or our own goodness. To the flesh, this is an offense and an insult. It is also a stumbling block even to many persons who call themselves Christians, but who believe

in their hearts that they are "better" than those who do not live up to their standards.

Paul closes this section with a short, but graphic, denunciation of the agitators who have disrupted the Galatian churches. We must not misunderstand this as an expression of personal frustration. Paul does not care about his own reputation or authority, but instead is deeply concerned about the spiritual damage being caused by these agitators. He wishes that their influence could be completely neutralized, so that they do not cause any more trouble.

Questions For Discussion or Study: Why does Paul use the analogy of runners being led astray? Why is the kind of persuasion and influence exerted by the Judaizers wrong? Why is it impossible to preach both circumcision and the cross? What does Paul mean by the offense (or stumbling block) of the cross? Can this be a problem for Christians too? Why does Paul use such a graphic expression in denouncing the circumcisers?

Living Under Freedom (Galatians 5:12-15)

If we are free in Christ, what does this mean in terms of daily living? False teachers have frequently exploited and misused the idea of Christian freedom, making grace an excuse for misbehavior. Paul therefore describes the right way to live under the freedom that Christ brings us. These few verses lead directly into the well-known passages that follow, which contrast the acts of the sinful nature and the fruits of the Spirit.

Paul explains that, to those who are justified by faith, there is a close link between freedom and love (5:12-15). The kind of freedom that comes through faith will not lead to indulgence, because we accept our freedom as a gift, with gratitude and humility. When we understand where our freedom came from, we express our gratitude through love, for God and for one another. It is much easier to serve and give to others once we realize that our own freedom and justification came through grace and faith alone, not because we deserved these blessings.

As for the law itself, it is summed up by the command to love one's neighbor as oneself. It is not possible to obey the law and at the same time deliberately harm someone else. And yet, as is happening in the Galatian churches, internal conflicts and rivalries ("biting and devouring each other") inevitably results whenever a group of believers turns to law for their justification. Those who try to be justified by law feel that they have earned their standing with God, and soon feel superior to others. Justification by law is by nature self-centered and competitive. The only way to avoid personal conflicts and rivalries is to put our confidence in God's grace.

Questions For Discussion or Study: Why do so many persons believe that freedom means being allowed to do anything one pleases? What kind of freedom does the gospel offer? Is it better than the worldly kind? How does it lead to a willingness to love and serve others? Why does justification by law lead to rivalries and conflicts?

- Mark Garner, Northland Church of Christ, Columbus, Ohio, August 2004

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CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST: A STUDY OF GALATIANS

Notes For Week Ten: Live By The Spirit (Galatians 5:16-26)

In one of the best-remembered passages from Galatians, Paul contrasts the acts of the flesh with the fruit of the Spirit. As useful as this passage is by itself, it is even more helpful when studied in the context of the ideas developed earlier in the epistle. The same principles that teach us to live by faith, rather than by law, also teach us to live by the Spirit, not by the flesh.

An Internal Conflict (Galatians 5:16-18)

The apostle now describes the internal battle inside each of us, a battle that takes place because we are spiritual beings who must live in a physical world. God's Spirit within us wants to seek God, to serve God, and to obey God. But our fleshly nature wants to fulfill its own desires. Those who live by law are usually ill-equipped to resist the temptations of the flesh. It is those who live by the Spirit, by faith, and by grace who are best able to live in purity and godliness.

Naturally, believers should resist, not gratify, their fleshly desires (5:16). But in calling us to live by the Spirit, Paul does not so much say that in addition they should resist fleshly cravings, but rather, he suggests that living by the Spirit is what enables us to resist those desires. By ourselves, we have only a limited ability to keep ourselves from sin. We are inherently weak, and our physical and worldly appetites are often stronger and more immediate than our spiritual yearnings. Moreover, we are constantly tempted by Satan, and he is stronger and craftier than any human. Only with the Spirit's power and guidance can we hope to stand firm.

The flesh* (or, as in the NIV, "the sinful nature"), has many kinds of desires. Many are harmless, but even these can become harmful or sinful if we over-indulge in them or put them ahead of our spiritual needs. The flesh also has some desires that are inherently selfish and wrong. We must learn to distinguish between the harmless desires and the sinful ones, and then must learn enough self-discipline not to cater to or coddle any of our worldly desires. We must resist temptation itself, and also the tendency to rationalize or excuse our worldly desires. The Holy Spirit of God is the only source of power and wisdom sufficient to allow us to make real, lasting progress in these areas. Those who live by law are able to make some changes, at least in the short run, but there will always be problems that are too big for them.

* The word in Greek is σαρκῆ ("sarx"), which is used several times in Galatians 5. It is also frequently used in Romans, as well as other New Testament books. The NASB generally translates it as "flesh", while the NIV often uses "sinful nature", but in certain contexts uses other English words. It is a difficult word to translate: in itself, it refers to physical, or human, nature - including the physical body, but not limited to it. It also includes those desires and feelings that are not physical in nature, but that come from our earthly minds and earthly ways of thinking. In its usage, it was literally neutral, but often had a negative connotation, standing opposed to the loftier desires of our souls or spirits. Hence the NIV's frequent use of "sinful nature", a translation that may often be appropriate, but that calls for careful judgment on the part of the translator.

As Christians, we have physical bodies, but we have God's Spirit in our hearts - leading to a conflict inside of us (5:17-18). The Spirit not only opposes the desires of the flesh, but also has its own desires. God's Spirit and our own spirits long for closeness with God, eternal security, purity, and joy. These conflict with the physical, short-term, and often sinful desires of our fleshly natures, which prefer fun to joy, pleasure to purity, and immediate gratification to hope.

So we are often torn between what we wish to do, think, or say, and what we should do or think

or say, as Paul says, "you do not know what you want". We are all familiar with this kind of struggle, and we know how wearying it can be. It is in this context that the apostle tells us that if we are led by the Spirit, we are not under law. Law is, by its nature, fixated on our external actions and speech, rather than our hearts, and law by its nature focuses on self. For that reason, it is less effective in preventing inappropriate actions or speech. But if we rely instead on faith and the Spirit, we can draw on a much greater supply of strength and righteousness.

Questions For Discussion or Study: If someone is living by law, what methods or strategies does he or she use to resist worldly desires? How does someone living by faith and by the Spirit resist temptations? What other Scriptures deal with these principles?

The Acts of the Flesh (or Sinful Nature) (Galatians 5:19-21)

This familiar passage lists a sampling of the many unedifying forms of behavior that characterize those who live by the flesh. It not only lists them, but also sets them in the context that Paul has established. These kinds of transgressions cannot be stamped out solely by making and following laws. In some cases, law even provokes certain kinds of fleshly behavior.

The passage provides us with many examples of sinful acts (5:19-21), or, "the acts of the sinful nature" (or "acts of the flesh" - see above). Many Christians have at one time studied these one at a time, a study that can help us understand in detail the kinds of things that God calls sinful. Rather than going over the same ground in detail here, we shall take note of some general types of sins, and shall show how they fit in with the general principles that the epistle has established.

The most obvious sins are sensual sins, represented in these verses by immorality, impurity, debauchery, drunkenness, and orgies. While many in the world deny that even these acts are sinful, it is a basic teaching of Christianity that we need to abstain from such things. Yet is less obvious, even to believers, that even such crude sins are more easily resisted through faith and the Spirit, rather than by law. If our only motivation to resist sensual sin is a fear of punishment, this is not always sufficient to allow us to resist successfully. But the closer we draw to God, the more that we find this kind of behavior distasteful, rather than tempting. That does not mean that we shall never sin, but it will give us a much better chance of standing firm.

Another type of sin involves false objects of worship. This includes idolatry, witchcraft, and selfish ambition (worship of self). Only God is fit to be worshiped, because only God can give us genuine hope, security, purpose, and much more. Yet, if we try to follow God by law alone, rather than by faith, we do not develop the kind of reverence, awe, and admiration for God that leads to heartfelt, genuine worship. Those who live by law are thus more likely to find other things to worship, especially if they begin to feel that God is not "meeting their needs".

Another group of sins involves conflicts or rivalries with others, or with the world around us: hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, dissensions, factions, and envy. These are obviously sinful. But again, note that these arise much more easily when we live by law. Law by nature produces comparisons, evaluations, and competition. Many Christians have seen firsthand what happens when Christians feel a necessity to prove who is more correct or more righteous.

This is by no means an exhaustive list ("and the like"). Paul concludes it with the warning that anyone who lives in constant sin will not stand approved before God. So we must recognize and resist sin and temptations to sin. If we try to do so by law - by fear of punishment, by our own power or wisdom, or by attempting to prove that we are righteous in ourselves - we may win some battles against sin, but we then never lessen the lasting hold that fleshly desires have

over us. If instead we look to the Spirit, and by faith trust God that we truly can withstand any temptation that he allows us to see, we will then be much better equipped for a life of godliness.

Questions For Discussion or Study: Why does Paul "list" so many sins in this passage? What is the point he is trying to make? How do the types of sins in this list fit in with the major principles taught in the epistle? How can we apply these ideas in practice?

The Fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-26)

The fruit of the Spirit, on the other hand, consists of positive and desirable qualities. Paul points out here that, to have these blessings grow in our lives, we must first allow our old selves to be crucified with Christ, so that we can live by the Spirit. Only in this way can we truly set aside the conflicts, false worship, and sensual sins that plague those who do not live by faith.

These examples of spiritual fruit (5:22-23) show us that life in the Spirit is not merely the avoidance of sin, but rather is filled with good fruit. This is an important contrast between faith and law. Moreover, law does not produce spiritual fruit. Living by the Spirit brings outward benefits such as love and joy, plus inward blessings such as peace and patience. These and the other spiritual qualities listed differ in nature and in value from the acts of the flesh. Even the outward fruits of the Spirit are less "tangible", so there is little difference between outward and inward fruit of the Spirit. These fruits of the Spirit also benefit both ourselves and those around us, while the acts of the sinful nature usually harm others, and offer at best only crude, short-term pleasure to those who indulge in them. In the short term, most persons find the acts of the flesh more desirable, and see little immediate payoff from the fruits of the Spirit. But in the long run, spiritual fruit is priceless, while sin eventually destroys lives and souls.

The apostle again calls us to crucify the sinful nature (5:24). If we belong to Christ, our old selves have been crucified with him and buried with him. Worldly passions and desires should be put behind us when we are raised to live a new life. If we live by the Spirit, we may even need to discard things that were once of great importance to us, and we must watch even those things harmless in themselves, so that we do not attach undue importance to them. But the reward is that, if we do this, the Spirit will naturally produce spiritual fruit in us.

If we live by the Spirit, we should keep in step with him (5:25-26), allowing God and his Spirit to lead us, to set our priorities, and to produce spiritual fruit in our lives. This is also how to bring true unity. If, as individuals, we are in step with the Spirit, we are automatically in step with one another. The unity that results will not be a phony, worldly unity, based on expedience or self-interest, but a genuine spiritual unity. In contrast, those who live by law invariably, at some point, find themselves "provoking and envying each other". More than once, Paul has implied that this is already breaking out in the Galatian churches, now that they have turned to law for their source of justification. Law brings rivalry, but the Spirit brings unity and peace.

Questions For Discussion or Study: Why does Paul "list" these fruits of the Spirit? How should we try to obtain them? How does the Spirit produce these fruits in us?

- Mark Garner, Northland Church of Christ, Columbus, Ohio, August 2004

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CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST: A STUDY OF GALATIANS

Notes For Week Eleven: Further Applications (Galatians 6:1-10)

Paul has previously set forth the main principles of his epistle, and has made the most direct applications of these ideas to the Galatians' present situation. He now goes on to detail some further ways that living by faith affects our daily lives. One theme that ties the epistle together is that spiritual principles have implications both for our faith and for our actions.

Carrying Each Other's Burdens (Galatians 6:1-5)

The principles taught in Galatians can be usefully applied even on a very basic level. The struggle against sin is a day-to-day aspect of our lives in Christ, and none of us is immune to temptation. Nor can we always resist sin without any help. In these verses, the apostle gives us some simple but very useful ideas on how we can help each other.

As believers, we should do what we can to help other Christians to resist temptation (6:1-2), and we should do so in a way that is consistent with the principles of faith and grace. Paul does not tell us to make pests of ourselves in criticizing others' behavior, but he does call us to help our brothers and sisters if they are caught in a sin. This expression refers to someone who has become ensnared in a sin, and is no longer able to resist or avoid the temptation. The apostle tells us, in such cases, to restore the sinning brother gently. When faithful Christians struggle continually with the same sin, most of the time they know that it is wrong, and they want to overcome it. What such persons often need is support, encouragement, and help, so that they know it is possible to overcome the temptations involved, even if they have failed in the past.

Notice that we are also warned against being tempted ourselves as we help to restore someone else. Such temptations could take several forms, from being tempted by the same sin, to becoming self-righteous and making comparisons between oneself and the struggling believer. This simply reinforces the general point that we are all weak and vulnerable to sin. Paul sums up all of these principles in calling us to carry one another's burdens. Naturally, it is easier to carry a burden when we have help. The apostle even says that this perspective fulfills "the law of Christ". This does not refer not to a literal law, but rather contrasts the faith perspective and motivation of Jesus with the rigid written code of the old law.

We are also told to carry our own load (6:3-5), which is not at all a contradiction of verses 1-3, but rather a caution not to abuse those earlier directives. We are to help others with their burdens whenever we can, but we should also not burden others unnecessarily. We all have some burdens that we can carry by ourselves, and we all have other burdens that are too heavy for us. It is part of Christian living to learn to distinguish between the two, since there is no checklist or other easy way to do so. Only by faith can we do this, since law can never teach us more than what to do and what not to do.

The apostle tells us some general ways in which we can put these principles into practice. First, we must avoid self-deceit. It is natural for humans to desire to feel significant, to feel like

"someone". But this can also be a dangerous attitude in our relationship with God. If we do not retain a keen sense of our own fallibility, and of our own need for grace, then not only can we end up in sin, but we also find it much harder to appreciate and treasure the good news of the gospel. Moreover, we must at all costs avoid comparisons with others, which is always a temptation to the flesh. Nor, of course, do we need to allow others to compare us with them. We should instead accept responsibility for our own actions, and should take the right kind of spiritual satisfaction in the things that God does do for us and through us. If we learn to base our self-image on God's love for us, and on his grace to us, we shall find this to be a much more secure foundation.

Questions For Discussion or Study: In what kinds of practical situations could we apply verses 1-2? Are there ways in which we could distinguish when to help someone, versus when it would be best not to intervene? What are the kinds of temptations that we must guard against in following these principles? How might we be able to determine when to carry our own load, and when to ask for help? What is the right way to take pride or satisfaction in our relationship with God?

Sowing & Reaping (Galatians 6:6-10)

The concept of sowing and reaping parallels several significant aspects of Christian living. In these verses, Paul applies the principle to the kinds of decisions we make, whenever we must choose between pleasing the flesh and pleasing the Spirit. He exhorts us to sow to please the Spirit, and also gives us some basic ideas on how we can do this.

In a transition between verses 1-5 and verses 7-10, Paul calls believers to share all good things with those who teach them (6:6). This means something more fundamental than mere financial support. We have just seen above that believers need to provide each other with mutual support and help. Just as we all have different weaknesses, we also have different needs. Those who teach or lead have needs that can be met by other believers, just as they themselves meet a need by teaching or leading. Sharing* "all good things" calls us to avoid the worldly kind of distinction between teacher and student, leader and follower, and instead to see ourselves as fulfilling different needs in each others' lives, "administering God's grace in its various forms" (1 Peter 4:10). In an even simpler way, this verse calls us to share our lives with one another, to make sure that our relationships in Christ are not mechanical or project-oriented.

* The word translated "share" comes from the same root as the word for "fellowship". It thus emphasizes the idea of having things in common.

In all areas of life, we must not deceive ourselves about the general principle of sowing and reaping (6:7-10). A farmer, of course, would never expect a harvest when he did not sow anything. Nor would he expect a harvest of corn when he planted tomatoes. So too, what we sow - by our decisions, our words, our thoughts, and our actions - will of its own accord produce a corresponding harvest, which we shall (in a spiritual sense) reap at harvest time, whether we wish to do so or not. We cannot reap unless we sow, and we should not sow what we do not wish to reap.

Sowing to please the flesh reaps destruction. If we make a priority out of giving the flesh what it

wants, then we shall gradually erode our ability to resist temptation, and shall allow ourselves to drift away from God. If we persist in spending our best time and energy on worldly things, then we should not be surprised if we do not find Christianity to be enjoyable or satisfying. If we deliberately put ourselves into situations where temptations are rampant, we should not be surprised when we fall.

But sowing to please the Spirit leads to life, both genuine life now and eternal life later. Just as a farmer must sow first, and only later may he reap the harvest, so also we have to condition ourselves to value the spiritual seed that we sow. Sowing to please the Spirit will not always have an immediate result. But sowing to please the Spirit is much easier when we seek to be justified by faith, not by law. Those who try to justify themselves by law will always have to force themselves to please the Spirit, because they get no immediate reward, only a fear of punishment if they do wrong. But those who realize how deeply dependent they are on grace will be able to nurture the gratitude and humility in their hearts that will allow them to develop habits that please the Spirit.

The apostle also gives us a very practical principle, in telling us not to become weary in doing good. It is quite common for Christians to make persistent, sincere efforts to do the right things, to avoid sin, to worship God, and to serve others, only to become surprised and disappointed when these things seem very slow to produce tangible results or an emotional high. Remember that, if doing good always earned an immediate reward, everyone would do it, and it would not be so hard. Our harvest will not be immediate, but it will be rich, and it will assuredly come at the proper time.

Therefore, we should simply continue at all times to do what we know to be right and good. Our motivation should never be to get instant recognition or an instant reward, since this would merely be another form of justification by law. We should instead do good for its own sake, concerning ourselves not with quick results but with pleasing the Spirit and pleasing God. The longer we have to wait for the harvest, the richer and more satisfying it will be.

Questions For Discussion or Study: How does verse 6 fit in with the first part of the chapter? How does it connect with the following verses? Give some practical examples of instances when we would have to choose between sowing to please the flesh and sowing to please the Spirit. How does the same principle also apply in a broader sense? Why is it important not to become weary of doing good things? What can we remember that will help us to persevere?

- *Mark Garner, Northland Church of Christ, Columbus, Ohio, August 2004*

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CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST: A STUDY OF GALATIANS

Notes For Week Twelve: Conclusion & Summary (Galatians 6:11-18)

In the previous verses, Paul completed his presentation of the main ideas that the Galatians needed to hear. The apostle now takes the pen from his scribe and writes some concluding remarks in his own hand. These last few verses of Galatians summarize and emphasize the most important ideas of the epistle.

With My Own Hand (Galatians 6:11)

Paul completed the discussion of the main ideas of his message to the Galatians in 6:10, with his exhortation to continue doing good while waiting patiently for the future harvest. In the remaining verses of the epistle, he re-emphasizes the most important ideas of his message, and urges the Galatians to put them into practice. In this verse, he introduces his final remarks by calling special attention to his practice of writing a portion of his epistles in his own hand.

In telling the Galatians to "see what large letters I use" (6:11), Paul calls attention to his distinctive handwriting as a way of implying that the concluding thoughts are especially important to him and to God. His statement and his point will be even clearer if we look briefly at some background and some references from Paul's other epistles.

Since all writing in the first century AD was done by hand, it was a common practice for those who planned to write something of considerable length to employ a professional scribe (often called an amanuensis). This was an important profession both in the ancient world and in the Middle Ages, since scribes not only wrote the originals of many kinds of writings, but also made copies of those works important enough to warrant wider distribution. Many persons who knew how to write would only do so themselves for shorter communications or notes, and would employ the more experienced scribes for lengthier projects*

* For short personal messages or other day-to-day writings, many persons wrote such communications themselves on tablets of wax, which could be erased and re-used many times. For sending such messages to local recipients, slaves could be sent to carry the tablets back and forth. Another common practice was the use of unglazed fragments of pottery for short messages or notes.

Most of Paul's epistles were rather lengthy, and he used a scribe. These scribes were usually anonymous, with the only exception in Paul's writings coming in Romans 16:22, when the scribe Tertius sends a personal greeting (most likely because he knew some of the potential readers of the letter). Paul also followed another common practice of the times, in writing a few words of each of his letters in his own handwriting. This was often done either to verify the identity of the writer, or else to distinguish the original from any copies, with the former being more likely in Paul's case*. The idea was similar to the present-day practice of having formal letters typed and then signed by hand.

* The actual original copies of Paul's epistles no longer exist, of course.

Other mentions of this practice in Paul's letters would include 1 Corinthians 16:21, Colossians 4:18, 2 Thessalonians 3:17, and Philemon 1:19. He does not make direct mention of it in his other epistles, but his remarks in 2 Thessalonians indicate that he always did write some words in his own hand, since he calls this "the distinguishing mark in all my letters". Here he also calls

attention to the large letters that characterize his handwriting. This probably means that he simply used up more space for his writing than someone else might have, though it could mean instead that he wrote in all capital letters (called uncials). In either case, it would not have been unusual for even an educated man like Paul not to have particularly good handwriting.

The concluding verses of Galatians are thus introduced by this comment on the apostle's handwriting. Normally, Paul's letters closed with final applications, personal greetings, or blessings. But in Galatians he is going to return to the heart of his message, to the most important ideas in the letter. Paul therefore stresses his personal involvement, and therefore it is usually understood by commentators that Paul wrote the concluding verses in his own hand.

Questions for Discussion or Study: Look at the concluding verses of some of Paul's other epistles, and see how they compare with Galatians 6:11-18. What are some similarities? What are some differences? What reasons might Paul have here for calling particular attention to the fact that he wrote the last few verses himself?

What Counts Is A New Creation (Galatians 6:12-18)

The apostle returns to the crucial spiritual issues facing the Galatians, urging them to stand firm in the gospel of faith and grace, and reminding them again of the cross of Jesus. He reminds them that in Christ we are new creations. This can only happen through faith, not through the law. The cross changes everything, because at the cross our old selves were crucified to the world, and the world was crucified to us.

Paul first issues a renewed appeal to resist justification by law (6:12-13). In the Galatians' case, this referred specifically to the circumcising teachers, but the principles apply to any version of the "gospel" that relies on justification by law and works, rather than by faith and grace. To emphasize his plea, Paul discusses the motivation and the inconsistency of the false teachers.

Paul first exposes their motives. Their first desire was to make a good impression outwardly, and this was more important to them than what was in the heart. As Paul has often pointed out in Galatians, their beliefs determined their actions. Since they viewed justification in terms of law-keeping, they emphasized outward things, and cared little about the heart. These teachers also wanted to dodge persecution or opposition from former friends who were still zealously devoted to the old law. They did not deny Jesus as Lord, but they hoped to combine their old religious practices with Christianity, instead of giving themselves fully to Christ. In a similar way, many Christians have great difficulty giving up old habits or old beliefs not because of the things themselves, but out of fear of opposition from those they once shared them with.

These false teachers were also inconsistent, since even they were not capable of keeping the law perfectly. By its nature, as the law itself says and as Paul has demonstrated earlier in Galatians, the whole law must be followed in order to achieve justification by the law. In order to draw attention away from this, the Judaizing teachers aggressively imposed their system on others, which Paul describes as boasting about the flesh of others. This should be a caution to us to maintain the right motivation whenever we teach the gospel to others. Our motivation must be the truth and the truth alone, and we must not become motivated by the desire to win arguments or the desire to prove ourselves righteous through the actions of others.

Next, Paul returns to the cross, emphasizing that through it we ourselves have been crucified to

the world (6:14-16). In contrast to the Judaizers, who boast about fleshly accomplishments, Paul will boast only in the cross. That is, he fully accepts his need for God's grace, and accepts it joyfully, without trying to earn it. This will also allow God to work more fully through him. As he says in 2 Corinthians, "I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. . . . For when I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Cor. 12:9-10).

The cross of Jesus has many implications for our daily lives, which Paul sums up in saying that the world has been "crucified" to us, and we have been "crucified" to the world. As believers, we should consider the world to be dead to us, so that the things of this world are no longer our primary concern. Likewise, we should consider ourselves dead to the world, so that we do not recognize its authority over us. We no longer submit to its temptations, its allures, or its passions. As Paul stresses throughout the epistle, such a perspective comes only through faith, not through law. Those who seek to justify themselves through the law find it difficult to take such a leap of faith. But the more we truly live by faith, the more that we do consider ourselves as dead to this world, so that we feel no reluctance in living more and more completely for God.

Paul again reminds the Galatians that circumcision in itself means nothing. He has urged the Galatians not to be circumcised, because they were doing so in an attempt to be justified by the Jewish law, rather than by faith. In itself, it matters little whether one is circumcised or not, but it does matter very much whether or not we have become new creations in Christ. Those who want to justify themselves by law - whether through circumcision and dietary laws, as the Judaizers were teaching, or through some other system of laws - are not new creations. They are simply trying to make their old selves a little better. Those who live by faith in Christ put their old desires and sins behind them, relying entirely on God's grace, and become genuinely new creations. Paul is being ironical when he calls this a "rule", since it is not at all a rule in the law-keeping sense, but rather is in the nature of faith.

In Paul's closing remarks (6:17-18), he adds another personal word. The legalistic teachers have attacked the apostle personally as part of their law campaign, and he simply points out that anyone who does so ought to remember that his very body bears the signs of his service to Christ. Paul lived entirely by grace and faith, and his life is persuasive proof that doing so does not lead to complacency or idleness. Paul's body carried marks of beatings, stonings, imprisonments, and many other hardships. He then closes with a simple, sincere blessing, because even though the Galatians had strayed into some serious errors, Paul loved them, and he extended to them the same grace that, as he knew, he himself greatly needed.

Questions for Discussion or Study: What motivations and inconsistencies characterized the Judaizing (circumcising) teachers? What lessons should we learn from this? What kind of boasting does Paul approve? How should we apply this? What does Paul mean in saying that the world has been crucified to us? If we accept this, how should it affect us? Note that these points illustrate how our beliefs determine our actions. Look back through Galatians, and find other examples. What practical direction does this give us?

- *Mark Garner, Northland Church of Christ, Columbus, Ohio, August 2004*

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