

Galatians

It's all about Grace...



Get it. Give it. Live it!



Galatians: Background and Context

Introduction

In the realm of human communication, it is very hard to overestimate the importance of context. Take for example, the human bathing suit. If you go to the beach and stroll along the shore, you would probably praise the modesty of the woman wearing a one-piece full bathing suit, or the guy wearing swimming trunks that go down to his knees. Yet, if you saw that same woman in that bathing suit, or that same young man in those “modest” swimming trunks with no shirt on at a five star restaurant, what is “modest” becomes “scandalous” and inappropriate. What is the difference? Context!

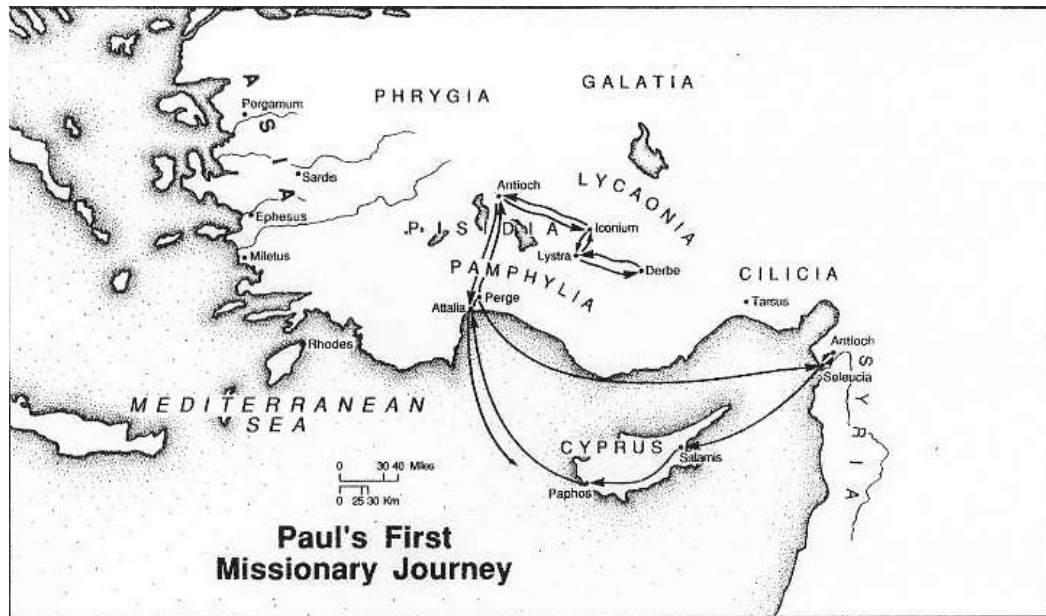
Words are no different. What in the business world means “connecting with clients in order to get the company name out for the purpose of generating revenue” – “networking” – means “connecting computers together” in the hi-tech world. When we say: “Spring has sprung” we are not thinking about metal coils or bubbling waters. What is the difference? Context! The setting in which something is said or written is often more important than the actual words themselves.

When it comes time to take a few weeks to study the Bible in detail, context is just as important as any other form of communication. After all, the Bible is God’s written Word to us, but He used a human author (in our case, Paul) writing to a human audience (in our case, the Galatians) to perfectly communicate to us what He wants us to know about Himself. Part of that communication is the context. And it is *almost* as important as what is being said.

The following few pages are meant to help you understand the context of the book of Galatians just a little bit better. While it is not exhaustive, or perfect, I hope that it will be helpful to you as you study the incredible message of grace found in its pages. There are three basic contexts for the book of Galatians. The first is the *Historical Context* – that deals with things like who the author was, who the audience was, when it was written, where was Galatia, etc. The second is the *Biblical Context* – that is, how the book fits into the message of the Bible as a whole. Finally, there is the book itself – and that includes things like the attitude of the writer, the content of the book, etc. Below are a few notes on each.

Historical Background

The historical details surrounding the book of Galatians are greatly debated by scholars. Galatia was a portion of the Roman Empire located in what is today modern Turkey. However, exactly where in Turkey the book is written is debated.¹ For the purposes of our study, it is most likely that the Apostle Paul² wrote the book of Galatians to the churches of Southern Galatia – probably in the cities of Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe – around AD 48, just prior to the Counsel of Jerusalem described in Acts 15.³



There are two significant historical aspects if this is the correct historical context of the book. First, Galatians would probably be the first letter written by Paul, demonstrating the depth of his theology from the earliest beginnings of his ministry.

¹ Among evangelical scholars, there are traditionally two views about when and to whom the book of Galatians was written. One is that Paul wrote Galatians to the churches of Northern Galatia during the late AD 50s while on his third missionary journey (Acts 18:23-20:38), the second is that he wrote the book to the churches of Southern Galatia around AD 48 prior to the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15 (Acts 14:21-Acts 15:35). It is my opinion that the Southern Galatia view is to be preferred for three primary reasons: 1) nowhere in Acts does it indicate that Paul traveled to Northern Galatia, but Acts does record Paul traveling to the three major cities of Southern Galatia (Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe) on his first missionary journey (Acts 14:1-25). 2) Paul's concern for the Galatians and the debate in the Jerusalem Council of Act 15 have to do with very similar topics – circumcision and the nature of the Old Testament Law within Christianity. Had Paul written the letter after the Jerusalem Council, it would seem logical that he would have referenced their decision (Acts 15:23-29). 3) Finally, Galatians mentions Paul visiting Jerusalem twice (Gal. 1:18; 2:1) before his second missionary journey, while Acts mentions him visiting Jerusalem three times (Acts 9:26-30; 11:29-30; 15:1-35) before this journey. If Galatians is written before the final visit to Jerusalem (Acts 15), then they agree. If it is written after Acts 15, then it is difficult to account for Paul not mentioning the third trip in Galatians 1-2.

² In addition to the mention of Paul's name in verse 1, even liberal scholars agree this book is by Paul – it is perhaps the most agreed upon historical issue in the book.

³ For more on the Jerusalem Council, see below.

Secondly, if Galatians is written before the Jerusalem Counsel in Acts 15, it represents tremendous conviction and boldness by Paul. The Counsel and the content of Galatians deal with very similar topics: the role of circumcision and the Old Testament Law for Christians. While both Acts 15 and Galatians agree in theology, for Paul to write the book before the Counsel means he was giving theological direction before the entire church agreed upon the decision. This is especially bold considering the fact that Paul says “any other gospel” should be “accursed.”

The second key historical aspect of the book of Galatians is the nature of Paul’s opponents. There are few books that Paul wrote with such angst and fervor, and very few where Paul attacks his opponents as viciously as in Galatians (Gal. 1:8; 5:12; 6:11-12).

Most likely these opponents are of the same group of teachers mentioned in Acts 15:1-2; who were teaching that: “unless you be circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved.” (Acts 15:1) Acts 15 reports that Paul and Barnabas, both of whom founded the churches in Galatia, were arguing with these teachers, and it was this dispute that led to the Jerusalem Counsel. This group of teachers, often called Judaizers, was probably a remnant of the converted Pharisees. In the book of Galatians we can deduce that they were attacking the nature of Paul’s apostleship (Gal. 1:1) and the source of his revelation of the Gospel (Gal. 1:11-2:10), they had greatly infiltrated the Galatian church (Gal. 3:1; 4:11), and were experiencing less persecution than those of pure Christianity (Gal. 6:12).

What seems to have happened in the background of this book is that Paul and Barnabas returned from their missionary journey where they founded the churches in southern Galatia and had begun to see Jews and Gentiles come to Christ (Acts 14:8-28). Upon returning to Antioch, they began to debate with the sect of the Judaizers over the exact nature of salvation (Acts 15:1-5). Paul then learned that this sect had followed him to Galatia, and was beginning to lead the churches astray. So he wrote the letter of Galatians to those churches to warn them of the “false gospel” of the Judaizers. In the meantime, the apostles and elders of the Jerusalem church decided it was time to end the debate once and for all and summoned Paul and Barnabas, along with the Judaizers, to appear in Jerusalem to debate the issue (Acts 15:8-35).

Biblical Background

The major issue regarding Biblical context that is key for understanding the book of Galatians is the issue of circumcision and Paul's understanding of the Old Testament.

Circumcision for the Jews was a symbol of their covenant with Yahweh and the mark of being the chosen people of God. It is first seen in Genesis 17 when God instructs Abraham to be circumcised and to circumcise all of his offspring as a "sign" of the covenant between Abraham and Yahweh. This covenant was that the "seed" of Abraham would bring "blessings" to all nations (Gen. 12), and become a "great nation." Circumcision was later instituted by Moses in Exodus 12 and written into the Law of Moses in Leviticus 12. For the Jewish people, to be a "son of Abraham" was to be saved, and this was interpreted in Paul's day to include circumcision. By the time of the New Testament, it seems clear that circumcision had become more than a "sign" of the covenant, and was almost a "means" of salvation. This was the basic teaching of the Judaizers – Christ and circumcision (keeping the Law of Moses) brings salvation.

Paul's argument in Galatians is essentially one of originality – what is first, is original; and what is original takes precedence over all. Paul rightly notes that Abraham was "saved" when he "believed God"⁴ in Genesis 15:6, and that the promise of a great nation was given to a singular seed – not just the entire nation (Genesis 12). For Paul, Abraham's faith takes precedence over all other customs because it came before circumcision or the giving of the Law. Thus Paul sees the gospel of salvation by faith alone in Christ (the promised Seed of Abraham) as a continuation of the original covenant of Abraham. Circumcision is secondary, and has no saving power. Indeed it is interesting that at the end of the Torah (The five books or "Law" of Moses; Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy); Moses says the following:

"And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments and statutes of the LORD... **Circumcise** therefore the foreskin of **your heart**, and be no longer stubborn." – Deuteronomy 10:12-13,16

And later...

"And the LORD your God will **circumcise your heart** and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live." – Deuteronomy 30:6

It is important to note that in both of these passages God is primarily after an inner work of the heart – not an outward symbol. It is faith in God and the fear of the Lord that changes a man's heart; it is not the outward actions he does. This is essentially

⁴ The word "believe" in Hebrew is essentially the same word used by the New Testament writers for "faith."

Paul's argument: unless you have *faith* and your heart is changed by the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ – the promised Seed – you cannot be a son of Abraham and there is no salvation. All outward actions not done in faith are ultimately worthless for salvation.

The sole issue of faith and the work of Christ is Paul's major point. While the Law of Moses is good and necessary (Gal. 3:15-4:7), to say that the Law or circumcision saves is dangerous. For Paul, the degree to which something has to be added to the work of Christ is the degree to which Christ's death and resurrection are insufficient to save us. Thus, to participate in those works as a means of salvation is to insult the work of Christ on the cross. That is why Paul says it is "no gospel," because to say that our works save us in any way is to "nullify the grace of God." (Gal. 2:21)

Galatians – The Book

Finally, the content of the book itself: there are several things that we should note while reading this book.

First, note the tone of the book. Paul is vehement, passionate, and quite honestly, very upset. Watching the church he helped to found turn from the true gospel renders in him a feeling of "working in vain." Paul's emotion is evident from the start of the letter. Typical letters in the New Testament begin with an address (Gal. 1:1-2); they are then followed by a blessing (Gal. 1:3-5), and then are followed by a thanksgiving section.⁵ But Paul skips this and goes right to "I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him..." (Gal. 1:6). This would have sent shockwaves into the ears of the Galatian readers and emphasized the importance of the letter's content to their salvation in Christ.

Secondly, the book almost exactly breaks down with four chapters of theological underpinning, and two chapters of practical application. This is typical of Paul's writings. In his mind, good theology is lived out practically; thus, our life exhibits our theology. That is why he takes so much time to lay the foundation of his argument so that we can indeed practically live in the "freedom of Christ."

⁵ See Philippians 1:1-5, Colossians 1:1-4, 1 Thessalonians 1:1-5, 2 Thessalonians 1:1-4; all include an address, blessing and thanksgiving in their opening clauses.

Conclusion

Finally, let me encourage you to really take the next nine weeks to dig into the details of this book. Read this devotional, answer the questions, and ponder what Paul is discussing. Perhaps, even buy one of the resources from the bookstore and read it along with the study, or go online and listen to sermons on Galatians from other preachers like John Piper in addition to the sermons you will hear at Grace this summer. Two years ago I spent a great deal of time studying this book; it changed my life and deeply impacted my understanding of grace and my walk with God. I pray that it does the same for you.

Sincerely,
Jeremy M. Gwaltney
Youth Pastor
Grace Church in Chapel Hill

Resources available in the Grace Church Bookstore

Galatians – Walking in God's Grace, by Bruce Bickel and Stan Jantz – cost \$6.00

Galatians – Life Lessons, by Max Lucado – cost \$8.00

Galatians – Living the Letters, by The Navigators – cost \$9.00

The Message of Galatians, by John R. W. Stott – cost \$11.00

Galatians – Paul's Character of Christian Freedom, by Leon Morris – cost \$12.50

Galatians, by Martin Luther – cost \$14.00

The information used for this background essay was taken from the following resources:

An Introduction to the New Testament, by D.A. Carson and Douglass Moo, Zondervan

The Expositors Bible Commentary on Galatians, edited by Frank E. Gaebelin, Zondervan

The New International Greek New Testament Commentary on Galatians, F.F. Bruce, Eerdmans Press

New Testament Commentary, William Hendriksen, Baker Books

Lectures by Dr. Scott Kellum, associate professor of New Testament and Greek at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, NC

Week 1 – Kendrick Vinar

Day 1: Galatians 1:1-2

¹Paul, an apostle (not sent from men nor through the agency of man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead), ²and all the brethren who are with me, To the churches of Galatia....

Commentary

Galatians begins with Paul introducing himself and addressing the recipients of his letter. Paul's letter to the Galatians is personal and passionate. He gets so fired up at the end of his letter that he writes: "See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand." (Gal 6:11)

Paul identifies himself as an apostle. He is giving his credentials and the authority by which he will make his passionate plea in the letter. I think it's important to note that Paul was clear on who he was in Christ – his calling from God. He wasn't an evangelist or a pastor or a prophet.

He knew that his calling was from God Himself – not from man or an institution. Paul wasn't rebellious. Paul worked in team (notice: "and all the brethren who are with me"). He submitted to the input of the apostles in Jerusalem. Yet Paul knew that God had called him. He was an apostle ("a sent one") that was ultimately and most importantly called and sent by God.

How about you? Are you clear on your calling? How would you introduce yourself? What are your callings and giftings in Christ? It's not a lack of humility to be clear and confident in what God has called you to be and do.

Are you confident that God has called you and is sending you to make a difference for Him? GOD is with you when you are sent by Him.

To whom has God called you? You are called to impact other lives. Who are those people specifically? Grace is meant to go out – Grace Out Loud!

Take time to pray and consider your calling. Write down your specific callings and gifts. Meditate on and pray about the fact that your calling is not from men but from God. He will back you as you go. Pray for the people to whom God has sent you (maybe family, friends, co-workers, etc).

Week 1 Day 2: Galatians 1:3-5

³Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, ⁴who gave Himself for our sins so that He might rescue us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, ⁵to whom be the glory forevermore. Amen.

Commentary

Paul starts each of his letters with a blessing of “Grace to you”. He ends each of his letters with a blessing of “Grace with you”. I don’t think that this is just a religious habit of Paul’s. He understands that everything we do is by grace. If the readers are going to be changed by his letter, it will be by grace. Paul’s desire is to impart grace. Paul is vehemently opposed to everything that hinders grace. Galatians is all about grace.

Paul also understands the power of our words to bless or curse. “With it (the tongue) we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God; from the same mouth come both blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be this way.” (James 3:9-10) A blessing is a proclamation, not a request. As you go through your day, listen to your words – are you blessing others? Before you get to work today, bless those with whom you will be in contact.

Paul summarizes the gospel in a short sentence: Jesus “gave Himself for our sins so that He might rescue us from this present evil age”. You have been rescued. You are not under the power of the world. You are free. Free from what? Jesus gave Himself for *our sins*. Our sin is actually what enslaves us – nothing in the world can separate us from God’s love and grace. Are you experiencing internal freedom? The purpose of grace is that you might be rescued and free.

“... according to the will of our God and Father” – It was God’s idea and God’s initiative that caused Jesus to give Himself for you. You are simply a recipient of His incredible gracious love. It’s all from Him, through Him, and to Him.

“... to whom be the glory forevermore. Amen.” Grace is all about the issue of glory. Grace comes from God freely. We don’t earn it nor do we deserve it. Grace points back to the greatness of God. God is motivated to give you grace because it magnifies His power and goodness. You get the help, and God gets the credit (glory). You can approach God with confidence, knowing that He delights to lavish His grace upon you, because He is glorified in the end. What an incredible circle of blessing.

Activities and Prayer

1. Write a blessing in your journal over someone you love. Start with "May God give you..."
2. Pray the following verse slowly several times, meditating on the truth of Scripture: "Jesus, You gave Yourself for my sins so that You might rescue me from this present evil age." Confess any sin to God, receiving His forgiveness and acknowledging the freedom you have in Christ. Let it soak into your heart and emotions.
3. Ask God to burn a fresh passion in your heart to do all things for His glory. "Lord, whatever I do, I want to do it all for the glory of God."

Week 1 Day 3: Galatians 1:6-9

⁶I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; ⁷which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. ⁸But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! ⁹As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!

Commentary

Verse 6 starts the body of Paul's letter. Paul comes out of the box hopping mad. He is not a happy camper. He often starts his letters with uplifting, kind, encouraging words – not in his letter to the Galatians. Paul starts off in their faces.

Paul is amazed and shocked that the Galatians are deserting Christ. He gets below the surface to the spiritual reality of their actions. The Galatians started adding requirements to salvation beyond faith (namely circumcision). Requiring someone to be circumcised in order to be saved was spiritually deserting Christ Himself. The work of Jesus Christ on the cross is not sufficient. Something needed to be added to faith in Christ in order for one to be saved or have the favor of God.

Trusting in Christ + something else = another gospel (which is no gospel or “good news” at all). It's back to a human effort model of relating to God. Paul calls it a distortion of the gospel of Christ.

Sounds kind of crazy, but we do the same thing. We think God loves us because of grace and ... our prayer time, our good effort, or because we don't do bad stuff. We feel more confident coming to God when we're doing well. We think that we'll be closer to God if we have faith in Christ plus we'll add our good works. Paul says the opposite: you won't be closer to God; in fact, you're deserting Christ.

You're not just resting in His work. You're not just enjoying and receiving the benefits of His righteousness. What starts out as well-intentioned (trying to impress God with our good deeds) turns out to be a religious, man-centered effort that decreases the glory of Christ. It's in every one of us.

Activities and Prayer

1. Allow the Holy Spirit to search your heart today. What do you tend to add to trusting in Christ?
2. Meditate on the free and liberating gospel of Christ. Allow the gospel of grace and forgiveness to wash over your heart.
3. Lay down all your human effort, and let a supernatural peace and joy fill your heart.

Week 1 Day 4: Galatians 1:10-12

¹⁰For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ.

¹¹For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. ¹²For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

Commentary

One of the accusations that had been laid on Paul was that he was trying to seek the favor of men by having such a freeing gospel. Paul said that circumcision is not necessary and that faith in Christ is sufficient for salvation. Paul is arguing that his gospel is from God, not man. God gave Him the gospel directly. The gospel is a revelation of who Jesus Christ is (more on that tomorrow). If Paul were trying to earn the favor of man, he wouldn't be confronting the Galatians so passionately.

Let's look at the spiritual truth that Paul sneaks into this passage: "If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ." Wow! Read that one again and let it soak in: when I am motivated to please people, then I am not a servant of God.

At the core of a follower of Christ is the desire to please God. Pleasing God becomes the primary motivating factor in all our decisions. Being a people pleaser is a confession of not being a God pleaser. The two are not compatible. We don't live to please people. We don't live to please ourselves. We live to please God.

Be honest with yourself today and consider how you make your decisions. How do you spend your time and money? Is your first consideration: does this please God? What is His will?

In Colossians Paul instructs us to "walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects." (Col 1:10)

Activities and Prayer

1. Talk to God about your desire to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord. Ask Him to refresh and deepen your passion to please Him in all respects.
2. See if God highlights any areas that you've guarded and kept for yourself. Are you more concerned about what others think than what God thinks? At work? In your family or neighborhood?
3. Commit yourself to live each day saying: "Not my will but Yours be done."
"Whatever I do, I want to do it for the glory of God, that I would please You in all respects."

Week 1 Day 5: Galatians 1:13-17

¹³For you have heard of my former manner of life in Judaism, how I used to persecute the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it; ¹³and I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my countrymen, being more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions. ¹⁵But when God, who had set me apart even from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, was pleased ¹⁶to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood, ¹⁷nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went away to Arabia, and returned once more to Damascus.

Commentary

Paul shares his story of coming to know Jesus Christ. Our testimony is a powerful tool to speak to others about the goodness of God. People can argue theology, politics and world views, but a story of a changed life is a non-threatening and mind bypassing arrow of God's love. It sneaks past intellectual arguments and gets into the emotions.

Have you shared your story recently? How has God changed your life? Be proactive in telling others what God has done in your life. It may be a short insert into answering: "how was your weekend?" You may get an opportunity to talk for an hour with a family member about the struggle with your kids and how God has helped you. Pray for and look for open doors to share your story.

What's the essence of our story? Paul describes that God's grace revealed "His son in me so that I might preach Him." John Piper has written a book entitled *God is the Gospel*. The gospel isn't just a story; it's understanding who Jesus Christ is. Paul is going to preach Him! (Side note: That's why telling your story will help people understand who God is.)

Back in verse 12, Paul says that he received the gospel "through a revelation of Jesus Christ." The Christian life can get complicated if we get our eyes off the simplicity of knowing and enjoying God Himself. God is the centerpiece – serving Him, loving Him, talking with Him, giving to Him, pleasing Him, meditating on Him in the Scripture, singing to Him, etc. "This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent." (John 17:3)

Activities and Prayer

1. Take time to re-center your life around God Himself.
2. Are you growing in your knowledge of God? In your friendship with God?
3. Ask God to increase your appetite for knowing Him through meditating on Scripture. Make a plan to do it every day. What a delight and privilege!

Week 2 – Adam Dawson

Day 1: Galatians 1:18 – 24

¹⁸Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to get acquainted with Peter and stayed with him fifteen days. ¹⁹I saw none of the other apostles—only James, the Lord's brother. ²⁰I assure you before God that what I am writing you is no lie. ²¹Later I went to Syria and Cilicia. ²²I was personally unknown to the churches of Judea that are in Christ. ²³They only heard the report: "The man who formerly persecuted us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy." ²⁴And they praised God because of me.

Commentary

Paul is upset. The Galatians are calling Paul a liar and a fraud by accepting a different gospel than the one Paul preached (Gal 1:6). Paul gives this history of his ministry so that the Galatians clearly understand that the gospel he preaches comes directly from Jesus Christ himself and not any from any other source (Gal 1:11-12).

Immediately after his conversion and being filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 9:1 - 19), Paul began to preach that Jesus is the Son of God. Paul implicitly asks the Galatians, "How could I immediately start spreading the gospel since I had no training by the apostles or anyone? I could only by the revelation of Jesus!" (Gal 1:12) Paul was able to preach for 3 years (Acts 9:20-25) without ever communicating with any of the Apostles, the only men who were instructed by Jesus himself. After visiting Jerusalem for only 15 days and having minimal contact with Peter and James, he then travels into Cilicia and Syria (Gal 1:21, Acts 9:30, 11:25-26), out of the reach of any apostle that might influence or teach Paul. The lack of personal contact with the apostles and with any Christian leaders along with the fact that Christians accepted Paul as shown by them praising God for him (Gal 1:24) helps to prove that Paul's teachings are based only on divine revelation. The people in Judea did not even know what Paul looked like (Gal 1:23), so how could they teach him? Galatians Chapter 1 emphasizes the authenticity of Paul's authority in preaching the gospel and that his ministry's origin is independent of any other apostle or believer. Paul is so astonished by the Galatians' abandoning the true gospel that he yells in verse 20, "I assure you before God that what I am writing is no lie!" He is astonished that they are so gullible and will desert the truth so easily.

Reflection Questions

1. Why is Paul focusing on Jesus being the source of the gospel he preaches?
2. What is the difference between God directly revealing Himself and God using humans to reveal who He is?
3. Is Jesus the source of the gospel you know? How?

Application

Is Paul saying that the gospel is of no worth if it is given to us by other men? Certainly not! "And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?" (Romans 10:14) God uses us to share who He is. He chooses to speak to some directly and chooses to use people to speak to others. So why did the Galatians--and us, too--get so confused about who God is and what the gospel really is? How do we discern what God actually says through man and what is from man? "Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God" (1 John 4:1). "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you." (Matthew 7:7) God has given you all you need to know Him and discern His truth. How is God speaking to you today? What is He saying?

Guided Prayer

Heavenly Father, speak to us. Prepare us to receive you. Enlighten our minds. Change our hearts. Give us discernment and wisdom so we can accurately detect where you are and what you are saying. Point out to us where we have gone astray. Point out to us your presence in our life so we may fully praise you and tell others of how you are working. Forgive us for changing the gospel to something that pleases us. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Week 2 Day 2: Galatians 2:1 - 2

¹Fourteen years later I went up again to Jerusalem, this time with Barnabas. I took Titus along also. ²I went in response to a revelation and set before them the gospel that I preach among the Gentiles. But I did this privately to those who seemed to be leaders, for fear that I was running or had run my race in vain.

Commentary

For many Jewish-Christians, there were several factors that made it difficult for them to accept Paul. He wasn't taught by Jesus before Jesus was crucified. He had killed Christians out of religious fervor before his conversion. He claimed that being Jewish was not a requirement for salvation. He didn't spend much time with the Jews in Judea because he left for years at a time to preach to the Gentiles. Who did this guy think he was? Given this, some people questioned whether he ran his race in vain, i.e. was his gospel really the gospel of Jesus.

In today's passage, Paul meets with the Christian leadership and presents to them the gospel he has been preaching so that everyone can be assured that it is the same gospel. The fear that Paul is talking about isn't his. That fear belonged to other believers. In love, Paul was going to attest that such a fear was groundless. He became aware that there actually might be division between the Gentile converts and the Jewish converts, and was moved by the Holy Spirit to go to Jerusalem to address the issue.

Paul seems so independent, preaching for 14 years without church authority directing him and preaching to an entirely different culture. He has a boldness, determination, and courage that still inspire believers to first and foremost rely upon God Himself and follow His lead. But we see in Paul's going to Jerusalem not only an act of submission to God--"I went in response to a revelation"--but submission to apostolic authority. Paul recognized the demand for unity in the gospel. Believers needed to know that the gospel preached to the Jews was the same gospel preached to the Gentiles: "that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15:3-4). And the Church leadership agreed that the gospels were the exact same, even though they were preached to different cultures (Gal 2:7).

Reflection Questions/Activities

1. What authority do you have in your life? What authority should you have?

2. When is independence a bad thing? When is submission a bad thing? When are they good?

3. What is one thing in your life that you have been depending on other people for that you should no longer seek from them? What is one thing in your life that you have been acting alone in that you should involve others in?

Application

Paul had a special calling as an apostle. Jesus Himself sent Paul to go into hostile areas and spread the good news that was unknown to everyone! Paul undauntedly went. He wasn't overwhelmed by the responsibility. He did not give in to feelings of inadequacy. He didn't focus on feeling alone. He knew Jesus was the prize of his faith and ran the race with all he had because he already was given the prize: Jesus. What are you called to? Do you reluctantly accept this calling or do you respond thankfully to this gift? We can tell Paul really was thankful for the salvation and calling that Jesus gave him. When you think of your calling, do you think about what you have been given or what you don't have? Jesus equips those who love Him for every good work, so we do not have to worry about preparing ourselves. When he calls us, he readies us. Keep your mind and heart on Him in everything you do. He is the prize.

Guided Prayer

Lord Jesus, fill us with your Spirit. Change our hearts and minds so that we love you above anything else. Make our calling clear to us. Instill in us boldness and courage to live in the Spirit no matter what the cost. Amen.

Week 2 Day 3: Galatians 2:3 - 5

³Yet not even Titus, who was with me, was compelled to be circumcised, even though he was a Greek. ⁴This matter arose because some false brothers had infiltrated our ranks to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus and to make us slaves. ⁵We did not give in to them for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might remain with you.

Commentary

In this passage, some Jewish Christians believed that people must be Jewish to be Christian; that's why they wanted Titus to have a little "operation". That's ridiculous to us today, but they did not separate the culture from the Truth. They thought that since Jesus was Jewish and He gave His good news to Jews to spread, being a Jew was an essential part of the salvation equation. That's wrong (John 4). The only essential part of the equation is Jesus. It always was and always will be.

Confusing what is essential to salvation and to being a Christian, like these "false brothers" did, is never an innocent act. Paul points out that they sought to turn true believers into slaves. That is no hyperbole. Those who espouse that something besides Jesus Himself provides for the forgiveness of sins and eternal life are ultimately denying the gospel and taking away the "good" part of the "good news". If we think we have to work to receive the salvation of Jesus, e.g. be circumcised, etc., then we are claiming something else is the essential part of the salvation equation. When something else is the essential part, Jesus is not my Lord, and I am a slave to that something else.

Reflection Questions

1. What is the freedom we have in Christ?
2. Are you a slave to anything?
3. What are the truths that you will not compromise for even a moment?

Application

We are inclined to add to the gospel. We even do so using the sacred scriptures (like the Galatians did) and "good intentions". Sometimes we judge others by saying, "Since he does _____, he cannot be a follower of Jesus." What are we actually saying in this statement? Are we claiming that _____ determines whether a person is a Christian, or are we claiming that it only indicates whether or not He has been saved? Either way, we are in danger of changing what the gospel is. Let's look and see if there is anything that we are requiring of others to be saved that God does not. Let's also inspect what we think makes someone a "good" Christian and see if it matches up to what Jesus says.

Guided Prayer

Lord Jesus, rescue us from wrong judgments. Give us wisdom and discernment so that we see things clearly and with Your grace. May Your gospel be the window from which we view others and our self. Thank you for your guidance. Thank you for speaking to us. Thank you, for you. Amen

Week 2 Day 4: Galatians 2:6 - 8

⁶As for those who seemed to be important—whatever they were makes no difference to me; God does not judge by external appearance—those men added nothing to my message. ⁷On the contrary, they saw that I had been entrusted with the task of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, just as Peter had been to the Jews. ⁸For God, who was at work in the ministry of Peter as an apostle to the Jews, was also at work in my ministry as an apostle to the Gentiles.

Commentary

"God does not judge by external appearances." That is why God was in both the ministry to the Jews and to the Gentiles. God's truth transcends culture and is not bound by it. The gospel doesn't make Gentiles into Jewish Christians. The gospel makes Gentiles into Gentile Christians. Therefore, God sent different apostles into the different cultures, both Jew and Gentile. This was a big moment for the early church. When we see differences on the surface, we usually suspect there are fundamental differences, but we should know better. Just because Gentile Christians look different than Jewish Christians does not mean there are any substantial differences. The common factor that transcends how they look is that the power of Jesus has changed their hearts, saved their souls, and given them His Spirit. The regenerates stop using appearances to judge and actually start to discover what the reality is.

Reflection Questions

1. What are some differences between Paul and Peter? Similarities?
2. When do appearances help us judge a situation?
3. When are appearances not helpful in understanding reality?

Application

This issue of how culture and the gospel relate is always relevant to the Christian church, because the Truth is needed in every culture. However, that does not mean the gospel transforms every culture into the same exact thing. The gospel brings unity to the diversity of culture, without rejecting the diversity or compromising the Truth that creates the unity. The gospel does three things in every culture.

The gospel **accepts** some of the culture. When we become Christians we don't have to do everything that other Christians do. We do not have to listen to the same style of music. We don't all have to wear three-piece suits, prom dresses, and bowler hats. We can have our own individual style and still remain in the sub-culture God originally put us. Our standard for what is acceptable in a culture is not what other people do; it is first God's standard and then we subject our preferences and our community's preferences to His standard. He doesn't call us to look like other Christians or talk like other Christians, but He does call us to do all things to His glory. Believe it or not, that gives us a lot of freedom to express our individuality for His glory, and no longer for our own glory.

The gospel **rejects** some of the culture. The parts of our lifestyle that lead us to sin must always be cut off. Some of our culture inevitably leads others and us into denying who God is and who He has called us to be. We must be quick to recognize these things and send them packing.

The gospel **redeems** some of the culture. The gospel doesn't reject the music of a culture; it just redeems why music is made. The gospel doesn't reject technology; it just redeems how it is used. When the gospel redeems a culture, it first redeems its heart, not how it looks.

As you live in the freedom that only Christ gives, being that you are no longer a slave to the sinful desires that once haunted you, share this freedom to others.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank You for Your Son, Jesus, who redeemed us. Thank You for our new desires. Thank You for the individuality you gave each of us. Show us the value of our uniqueness in Christ and direct us to glorify you more. In Jesus' Holy name.

Week 2 Day 5: Galatians 2:9 - 10

⁹James, Peter, and John, those reputed to be pillars, gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship when they recognized the grace given to me. They agreed that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the Jews. ¹⁰All they asked was that we should continue to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do.

Commentary

In Mark 9:38, John told Jesus, "Teacher, we saw a man driving out demons in your name and we told him to stop, because he was not one of us." Jesus responded, "Do not stop him. No one who does a miracle in my name can in the next moment say anything bad about me, for whoever is not against us is for us. I tell you the truth, anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to Christ will certainly not lose his reward." (Mark 9:39-41)

John understood Jesus' teaching. In today's passage, John shows that understanding by giving Paul the right hand of fellowship. When he once was so arrogant to think that Jesus only commissioned the 12 disciples, John now sees God has an awesome plan for the redemption of the universe. John knows that not only does our Heavenly Father want to be in right relation to his chosen people, the Jews; God wants that relationship with all of humanity. Thus, the apostles recognize that God Himself sent Paul to the Gentiles, as they were sent to the Jews. God's plan is much bigger than what we can initially conceive.

Reflection Questions

1. Who is a pillar in your life? Who is someone you go to for Christ-centered counsel?
2. What are some parts of God's plan that you see at work in your life and in the world? Where do you see God's grace?
3. Why did the apostles ask Paul to remember the poor?

Application

Praise God for the work He is doing through others. Think about any testimony you have recently heard that showcases the active work of God that has nothing to do with you. Thank Him for choosing them. In extending their right hand of fellowship to Paul, the apostles humbled themselves. They were admitting that they weren't central to Christianity and that God was using--and wanted to use--others to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ. All of us have ambitions to do great things for the Kingdom of God, but those who truly enjoy God will praise Him the same, regardless of whom He uses to advance His Kingdom.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, clear away the misconceptions we have about You and Your plan. We thank you for choosing to use us to show the world who You are. Continue to sanctify us so we are effective in Your Kingdom, and Your light shines brightly through us. We praise you for what you are doing. Continue to give us eyes to clearly see where You are and what You are doing. Continue to give us hearts to love You and what You are doing, no matter who You choose to use. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Week 3 – Nathan Fancher

Day 1: Galatians 2:14

¹⁴ But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in the presence of all, "If you being a Jew, live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, how is it that you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?"

From Galatians 1:6 up to this point, Paul doesn't hesitate to go into the details of how he received the gospel and how he labored to make sure that it was, in fact, the true gospel that Jesus brought. Paul had originally preached the gospel to the churches in Galatia with bold veracity. He knew better than anyone that they had truly deserted from the gospel he preached.

When this portion in chapter 2 is talked about, we are usually quick to draw attention to Peter's wrongful behavior in Antioch, and can easily overlook Paul's motive for including this incident in his letter to the Galatians. Let's highlight "**the truth of the gospel**" in the passage above. Paul noticed, while in Antioch, that the life-changing truths found in the gospel were not being reflected in the way these men were acting (Gal 2:11-14). So what is the truth of the gospel?

The good news of Jesus Christ is cognitive, simple, easy to articulate, yet profoundly deep and life-changing. In his book, *The Message of The New Testament*, Mark Dever writes, "The gospel message is this: We are saved only by faith in Jesus Christ, who died for us and took our punishment upon himself. Only when we believe and trust in Christ will he apply to our hearts the perfect righteousness and forgiveness he won for us." These are objective, definitive claims and cannot be changed. The Galatians had lost this message immediately when they began trusting in themselves, due to the seductive nature of self-sufficiency. Being straightforward about God's gospel and having an ability to clearly articulate its truths, is the call of every Christian believer.

Reflection Questions and Prayer

- 1) Can you explain the gospel with clarity? Preach it to yourself for a moment and invite the Holy Spirit to come and shine light on its truth. *(10-15 minutes)*

- 2) Take some time and think of all the ways that you contend to be “straightforward about the truth of the gospel”, first in your own life and then in the lives of others. Where can you grow? Ask God for His help as you look into the gospel for yourself. *(10-15 minutes)*

- 3) Ask the Lord for an opportunity to share the true good news of Jesus with someone today.

Week 3 Day 2: Galatians 2:16

¹⁶We know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.

I think it's extremely important at this point to remember that the operative word here in Galatians 2:16 is "justified". God doesn't simply let us off the hook or overlook our sin. He has to justify us somehow. Proverbs 17:15 says, "He who justifies the wicked and he who condemns the righteous are both alike an abomination to the Lord." God is holy. He hates sin. Sin is wicked to God. Sinners are, therefore, wicked. The bible teaches us very clearly in Romans that before we trusted Jesus we were God's enemies and, by nature, children of His wrath. How, then, did God justify us if we were wicked? Is Proverbs 17 a contradiction to Galatians 2? No. Look carefully at the truth of the cross. God justifies the work of Christ (the righteous) in his life and death, and proves it by raising him from the dead. But He also condemns our sin (the wicked) once and for all under the nails in Jesus' hands. Justice took place. Our sin was judged on the cross where Jesus was crushed by an eternal, holy God. This should put the fear of the Lord in us while giving us a deeper amazement of His grace.

Legalism comes in lots of shapes and sizes. We are often very quick to put it in a box: *A legalist doesn't watch certain movies, or doesn't listen to secular music. Who do they think they are? They are so legalistic.* Truthfully we are all guilty of legalism. The minute we have a wrongful view of our sin and its offense, thinking we can cover it up by doing a good work, we have become legalists. Legalism undermines the seriousness of sin and the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross by viewing one's sin as small enough to atone for by good works alone. Look at the ugliness of sin and see it laid on Christ our only hope. Trusting in Jesus' death and resurrection is the only way for a right standing before God, the Holy Judge.

Oh, such love! God the Father joyfully provided a way for us to be right with Him through the Son, who willingly obeyed without even a hint of complaint. And all He requires of us is to repent and believe. That is true love. 1 John 4:10 says: "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation (atonement) for our sins."

Reflection Questions and Prayer

- 1) How much do you hate sin? Ask the Holy Spirit to bring revelation to sin's infinite ugliness. Ask him to give you the very hatred that he has toward evil and wickedness. Doing this will cause you to love the gospel of Grace more than ever. *(10-15 minutes)*

- 2) What are some ways that you personally lean on your own performance to justify yourself? They will show up more often than we'd like to admit. Look to God's grace. Confess your sin of unbelief to God and ask Him for His help to see the gospel with supernatural sight. *(15 minutes)*

- 3) Spend some time looking into the many passages in scripture about God's love in sending His only son to die in our place. Here are just a few for you to pray with:
(1 John 3:1, 4:9, 10 ; Col 1:12-14 ; John 3:16)

Week 3 Day 3: Galatians 2:19

¹⁹For through the law I died to the law, that I might live to God.

Not too many churches these days are wrestling with whether or not to follow Judaic law as a means to be saved. I haven't heard of many evangelical churches that require kosher diets and circumcision in order to join the church membership! How can we apply these words to our lives today when we don't have a problem eating pepperoni pizza or shrimp scampi? We still struggle with the same fundamental problem that the Galatians struggled with. It's much more subtle in our lives than we may realize.

Since Adam's fall, humans have had knowledge of good and evil and right from wrong (Gen 3:22), and therefore have a conscience that bears witness to "the law written in their hearts" (Rom 2:15). The bible tells us that through the law we have the knowledge of our sin (Rom 3:20) and the penalty of that sin is death. (Rom 6:23) We now see our need for the gospel.

Look again at Galatians 2:19 above. Paul is able to complete his statement, "I died to the law.... that I might live to God" because he seeks to be "justified in Christ" (Gal 2:17). How does he seek to be justified in Christ? By believing and trusting that Jesus paid the penalty of sin in his place on the cross.

The subtle danger we have in our lives today is an internal tendency to seek our own justification for ourselves. Yesterday we defined this as true legalism. When your conscience is pricked, do you seek to make yourself feel better by doing something "righteous" and thereby hopefully redeeming yourself? Or do you let your conviction of sin lead you to a confession of your need for the cross? That is where your only hope for forgiveness and justification is found. Praise God that there is no condemnation when we are in Christ! (Rom 8:1) When we are in Him we can fully live a life of confidence in Grace, and a life that is alive to God.

Reflection Questions and Prayer

- 1) Think about the times when your conscience is violated. What do you do in those moments? How does your knowledge of right and wrong help lead you to see Christ crucified in your place?

- 2) In the light of Galatians 2:19, meditate for a moment on Romans 8:1, 2. Ask the Lord to help you have a deeper understanding of the "law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus". Life in Christ Jesus is the only way to "live to God".
(15-20 minutes)

Week 3 Day 4: Galatians 2:20

²⁰I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; the life I live in the body I live by faith in the son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.

Having immediately followed the statement of having died to the law that he might live to God, Paul goes on to unpack what he was already saying in this classic passage. Paul “died to the law” when he was “crucified with Christ”. The penalty for our sin is death, but those of us who are in Christ trust that the death we rightly deserve took place on the cross. So our sinful, hell-deserving lives were, in fact, punished on the cross with Jesus. That’s what Paul means when he says “I have been crucified with Christ....” and when he says, “I might live to God” in verse 19, he is saying that it is Christ in him that lives to God.

Don’t miss the point of what Paul is saying here. He is making his life’s statement of faith. This is the gospel of Jesus lived out in his everyday life. This is extremely powerful and life-changing!

If we are in Christ, that means that we are no longer living for ourselves, but everything we say and do is to reflect the life of Jesus. But this can’t be done apart from faith. We can try as hard as we can in ourselves to justify our lives by “being a good person” in order to bring our own atonement for our sins. But it is clear that we could never repay God or atone for our own sins. So what do we do? We are not without hope! We live by faith in the Son of God, who has loved us and laid down his life for us. And that faith is what justifies us before God every day. Faith is not just used one time when we first get saved. Saving faith is an unseen, daily surrender to the mercy of God that is shown at the cross. This gospel message of salvation by faith alone guards us from legalism and is to be at the very center of our lives at all times.

CJ Mahaney says: “reminding ourselves of the gospel is the most important daily habit we can establish. If the gospel is the most vital news in the world, and if salvation by grace is the defining truth of our existence, we should create ways to immerse ourselves in these truths every day. No days off allowed.”

Reflection Questions and Prayer

1) Write out your definition of faith. Does it line up with how God defines it in His word? Take some time to meditate on these scriptures: Heb 11:1, 6.
(15-20 minutes)

2) Now look at Ephesians 2:8,9 and see the kindness of God in giving us the faith we need to be saved. Recite this verse a few times out loud and let your soul be fed by the word of God. Ask the Holy Spirit to bring a greater revelation of God's loving-kindness as shown in the gospel. *(20 minutes)*

Week 3 Day 5: Galatians 2:21

²¹I do not nullify the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died needlessly.

Only righteous persons can stand before God (Psalm 1:5-6), and there is no way for us to be righteous by faithful religious observance. No amount of good deeds or penance could ever make us right before God. This verse is truly a weapon to be added to your arsenal to defend the Christian faith. Many people scoff when Christians say that there is only one way to heaven. Let us seek to articulate the “one way” reason with clarity and authority.

In Galatians 2:21 we see that the readers have a choice. We can choose to attain righteousness by our works and deny that Jesus died for us, or we can deny our works and trust completely in the power of the cross. The false teachers that “bewitched” the Galatians were trying to mix the two, saying you must first observe the law before you come to Christ. It’s as if they’re saying that we are saved both by our works and by Jesus Christ. This blew Paul’s mind. He is saying in this verse that the minute we try to earn our salvation by our works, we completely nullify God’s grace and love.

Think about how often we compare ourselves to other people. In moments of comparison, there is a great temptation to feel good about ourselves or to feel that we haven’t done enough. The moment we give in to that temptation, we begin to nullify God’s grace and we begin to operate in the “good enough” philosophy, which basically says that Christ died needlessly.

The grace of God is rightly defined and affirmed when connected to the finished work of the cross. Let us say with Paul that our goal is to be found in Christ, not having a righteousness of our own that is derived from the law, but that which is through faith in Jesus... (Phil 3:9)

Reflection Questions and Prayer

- 1) Think about the times you compare yourself with a friend or a family member. Where do those thoughts of comparison lead you? In comparison, you are basically rating yourself against the other person. This leads to a trap of either pride or self-pity. Now meditate on Psalm 1:5, 6 and recognize your need for the grace of God in Christ. *(5-10 minutes)*
- 2) Ask the Holy Spirit to come and fill you with a passion for the gospel today. Look over your to-do list and invite God to show you where His grace is to be lived out practically. *(15-20 minutes)*

Week 4 – DeWayne Watson

Day 1: Galatians 3:1-2

¹Oh, foolish Galatians! What magician has cast an evil spell on you? For you used to see the meaning of Jesus Christ's death as clearly as though I had shown you a signboard with a picture of Christ dying on the cross. ²Let me ask you this one question: Did you receive the Holy Spirit by keeping the law? Of course not, for the Holy Spirit came upon you only after you believed the message you heard about Christ.

Commentary

Wow! Paul was hardcore, wasn't he? He starts this discourse by slamming the Galatian church against the wall -"foolish Galatians!"- and then holds them there completely flabbergasted, demanding to know "what magician has cast an evil spell on you?" It makes me laugh a little and want to cry a bit, too, because we're not just listening to a heart-wrenched Paul. We are actually catching a glimpse of the love of God for His Son, and for us. Christ, having obediently given himself as the perfect and complete payment for our sin, was being overlooked as the relatively new Christians of Galatia leaned back on the law and legalism to justify themselves. They were losing the significance of the cross and elevating their own piety as a reasonable replacement for Christ's sacrifice.

In verse 2 Paul has taken a little breath, and begins his appeal. Nothing they had ever done, or could do, had wooed or would woo the Holy Spirit into their lives. The law could not pave an avenue into their lives, down which the Holy Spirit could travel. Only the cross of Jesus, and their subsequent belief and willing dependency on Him, could provide for them in their need to be united with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

We're not so different from the Galatians. I certainly can confess to reclining on my ability to do the right thing as being worthwhile, and even spiritually significant. Perhaps you find yourself in that same predicament now and then? You and I would both do well to listen to Paul's words here and realize that the best we can muster on a spiritual level, while noble and honorable, cannot compare to the great provision of God through Jesus. Let this be a signboard for you today. The gift of Jesus was and is perfect, and is just as free for us as it was for the hardheaded Galatians. Enjoy that today!

Reflection Questions

1. If Paul wrote me a letter, what would he call foolish in my life?
2. Is there anything that I'm doubting in my faith walk that I used to hold sacred?
3. What is God saying to me today?
4. Where am I spiritually weak?
5. Who is in my life to help me strengthen that area?

Prayer

As you pray today, let me encourage you to pray "heart open". Don't pray out of habit, or duty; and if you're not necessarily accustomed to listening, then really, truly listen. God is not trying to hide from you, and He certainly isn't holding back things from you that make you and your life better. He wants the very best for you. He started with giving you a future and a hope through Jesus, and He keeps bringing more to the table. Ask for that today. Declare your belief from your heart, and then ask for the good stuff. He has it, and He wants you to have it. Cool.

Week 4 Day 2: Galatians 3:3-5

³Have you lost your senses? After starting your Christian lives in the Spirit, why are you now trying to become perfect by your own human effort? ⁴You have suffered so much for the Good News. Surely it was not in vain, was it? Are you now going to just throw it all away? ⁵I ask you again, does God give you the Holy Spirit and work miracles among you because you obey the Law of Moses? Of course not! It is because you believe the message you heard about Christ.

Commentary

Paul just takes off on them again, doesn't he? We can really feel his frustration in verse 3 as he, seemingly at the top of his voice, asks the church if they've lost their senses. How dare they try to perfect themselves using only themselves as tools and measures of what righteousness should look like? It's so preposterous, and yet these Galatians are going for it! I find it interesting that Paul would begin with a comment on senses lost, then follow in verse 4 by asking about their suffering for the gospel in the past.

They have literally lost the sensation of the struggle that was theirs when their faith was new. The treasure that was at one time worth the suffering that they felt as persecuted Christians had become a byline to the new record they were trying to write of their own abilities and accomplishments. They had utterly forgotten their roots, and were ready to toss the past away.

In verse 5 Paul repeats his appeal that they come back to their belief in Christ as the chief motivation for their entire existence. He pleads with the Galatians to recognize the gift of the Holy Spirit and the miracles that come from the Father only because of Christ. Would they be willing to give the miraculous and felt presence of the Holy Spirit away only to massage their filthy pride? Would they trade their passionate connection to God through Jesus for something as repulsive as religious human effort? Surely the law cannot comfort and heal. Only in Christ will they again find a wonderful buffet for their spiritual appetite.

We might find ourselves there in the crowd again, wondering why Paul was being so harsh. I'm sure I would take offense. How dare he suggest that I've forgotten the struggle of my early faith! How dare he not recognize my contribution to this church! Who does Paul think he is by not recognizing all that I've done? I have not lost my senses! My senses are perfect, and I've suffered! Is anyone listening to me!? Okay, that's a little overboard, but not way over. We do forget the struggles that God brought us through as our faith grows, and we do let our human nature overcome our spiritual nature. I'm thankful for the struggles of the past. I sure don't want to repeat them, but I'm thankful for what they taught me, and how they helped me grow.

I didn't just "make it". God rescued me, just like He did you. Enjoy the memory of those victories today, and continue giving God the praise for what He's done for you. That's a faith builder!

Week 4 Day 3: Galatians 3:6-9

⁶*Consider Abraham: "He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."*

⁷*Understand, then, that those who believe are children of Abraham. ⁸The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: "All nations will be blessed through you."⁹So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.*

Commentary

Whew! Abraham. That's a name that creates a little peace in my spirit. I have to assume that this is at least part of the reason Paul introduces him here in verse 6. The father of Israel, and earthly great-grandfather of Jesus, believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness. If total dependence on God was good enough for Abraham, then surely it was good enough for those wavering Galatians.

In verse 7 the call to believe continues with the offering of a position in Abraham's family. The gentile Galatians were being invited into the Jewish family and tradition even as that tradition had been upgraded, shall we say, by the fulfillment of the law in the coming of Christ. God from His sovereign perspective looked through time and planned the coming of the gentiles into the family of the truly faithful. So great was God's pleasure with Abraham that He allowed him a glimpse of the glory to come while He promised him the ultimate paternal position in that plan.

The blessing of Abraham continues in reserve for all those who put their faith in God and not in themselves. Paul adds punctuation to verses 1 through 5 by exclaiming that blessing is permanently and completely tied to faith in God, as it was for Abraham, the blessed man.

Does it strike you as funny how sometimes it's so easy to believe, and at other times it's really difficult? I'm just talking about on the surface. Even when I've been gripped with doubt in my mind, my spirit continues to scream, "BELIEVE! BELIEVE!" It is that spiritual activity in us, the deep belief that finally provides comfort when things are out of control. Abraham simply believed and was credited as being righteous. Wouldn't you like to have that written in the record of your life? The truth is that no matter where in your Christian walk you find yourself, it is being added to your record. You believe, you have faith, and it's growing as you depend more on God and less on your own strength. There is blessing there my friend, lots of blessing.

Reflection Questions

1. Where am I really putting my faith?
2. Am I relying on something or someone to carry me through instead of God?
3. If I am, how did that happen?
4. What steps should I take to refocus my faith?

Prayer

Let your prayer today be faith-driven. I mean to suggest that we not allow our circumstance or situation to determine our approach to God. Come to Him today believing that the trouble will improve, and the good things will become great things. We are, as Christians, children of Abraham after all, and have been credited with righteousness because of our faith. Hold on to that today. Ask and believe that He who started a good work in you will be faithful to complete it. He will!

Week 4 Day 4: Galatians 3:10-12

¹⁰But those who depend on the law to make them right with God are under His curse, for the Scriptures say, "Cursed is everyone who does not observe and obey all these commands that are written in God's Book of the Law." ¹¹Consequently, it is clear that no one can ever be right with God by trying to keep the law. For the Scriptures say, "It is through faith that a righteous person has life." ¹²How different from this way of faith is the way of law, which says, "If you wish to find life by obeying the law, you must obey all of its commands."

Commentary

Here we have the scriptural flipside. In verse 10 Paul takes a hard shot at all who are dependent on the law and, by virtue of that, dependent on their own efforts to make themselves righteous. Not only will they find themselves devoid of justification, which is bad enough; they are actually truly cursed in the meantime! The curse falls on anyone who strives to follow the law perfectly and falls short. I submit to you that no one in the history of the planet, save Christ, has ever been or will ever be capable of such obedience. In verse 11 Paul takes that truth to the Galatians, and follows with the promise that it is through faith alone that a righteous person has life. The curse is broken and life is put in its place as we stop depending on the rules, and wholeheartedly depend on God through Jesus!

Verse 12 brings us to Door #1 and Door #2. Behind Door #1 labeled, "The Law", we have striving, fear, doubt, impossibility, conviction, and ultimate failure. Behind the very different Door #2 two labeled, "Faith in Christ", we have hope, promise, GRACE, acceptance, forgiveness, and a great reward in Heaven.

There really is no choice, is there? Yesterday we reveled in the knowledge that our faith in Christ has made and is making us whole. Today we are offered the option of putting our faith in our own ability to follow the rules as a means to justification, and I think any right-minded person would struggle to find the latter as being the better choice. I choose blessing! I choose grace! I choose the forgiveness and acceptance that began to pour out at Calvary and continue to flow to us today. I can't live up to the law, and was never expected to. It's there to prove just how full of grace God is. He set the bar so high that we could never get over it, and then through Jesus He showed us the way around it. You know someone that needs that truth in his or her life today. I challenge you to take it to them.

Reflection Questions

1. Do I ever give in to the thinking that I can, in my own strength, be good enough?
2. Does my pride ever rise up and attempt to make the law of God look simple?
3. Could I experience God more by letting go of something religious in my life?
4. Do I know someone who chose Door #1, and needs help to get out?

Prayer

Ask for clarity today. We are all guilty of relying on the rules. Sometimes when we do the right thing, it's easy to feel like God is really pleased and has given us a pass. Don't misunderstand. When we honor God with our actions and lives, He is surely pleased. Heaven rejoices with us when we take a stand or action for the kingdom, but it doesn't change our place "in line". God loves us equally, and only second to Himself. You and I aren't going to do enough. We can't. Ask for God to help you do the wonderful things for His glory, and not for your position. He surely will, and you will find that your faith increases, your opportunities will increase, and Door #1 will become a distant memory. Enjoy Him and be blessed today.

Week 4 Day 5: Galatians 3:13-14

¹³But Christ has rescued us from the curse pronounced by the law. When he was hung on the cross, he took upon himself the curse for our wrongdoing. For it is written in the Scriptures, "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree."¹⁴Through the work of Christ Jesus, God has blessed the Gentiles with the same blessing he promised to Abraham, and we Christians receive the promised Holy Spirit through faith.

Commentary

Rescued! What a glorious term! We were lost and drowning, being attacked, buried alive, and being consumed by the curse of the law. We were in such need of rescue before we were even born, and Jesus, so much better than a knight in shining armor, rode in on a burro, and gave Himself over to be despised and rejected and killed in our place. Then, when those who held the law so dear thought it was over and they could get back to imprisoning people in the law, Christ rose, not as a badly wounded accidental winner, but as a mighty triumphant savior and redeemer who in all His glory reached out and rescued each of us individually from the stench of the law! The curse and all its attributes are dead and put aside, and we are free.

Through the work of Christ Jesus! Not through your work, not through my work (what can we do of real value compared to the work of Christ anyway?) but through the work of the only begotten Son of God (Gal 3:14), God the Father has blessed us. We who read these passages thousands of years later live in the blessing that was promised to Abraham, and we are part of that blessing. Glorious! If that isn't enough, we receive the power, the comfort, the loving conviction, the insight, the ample grace and so much more from the Holy Spirit who constantly and tirelessly works in and through us even as He intercedes for us. Is there anything we lack as we depend on Christ? No! There is no question, no conjecture, and no discussion. He is more than enough. He has always been more than enough. He will always be more than enough, and all of His glorious wonder is being shared with you and I, right where we are sitting, standing or kneeling, and will never run dry. Thank God!

What an inspirational delight these verses are for the Christian soul. As we end this brief examination of Galatians 3:1-14 let us really accept the blessing that has been made available to us through Jesus taking our place, justifying us and ultimately making us righteous. Don't strive and struggle and condemn yourself for your humanness. You and I will absolutely mess up, but that won't change our standing with the greatest Advocate, Brother, and Father in - or should I say who - created the universe. If you find yourself reading this and don't know Him, I want to tell you that He's standing right beside you, waiting for the moment you stop and ask Him to take you. He will. It will be the greatest ride of your life, and you get off in Heaven.

Week 5 – Brad Novosad

Day 1: Galatians 3:1-18

¹⁵Brothers, let me take an example from everyday life. Just as no one can set aside or add to a human covenant that has been duly established, so it is in this case.

¹⁶The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say "and to seeds," meaning many people, but "and to your seed," meaning one person, who is Christ. ¹⁷What I mean is this: The law, introduced 430 years later, does not set aside the covenant previously established by God and thus do away with the promise. ¹⁸For if the inheritance depends on the law, then it no longer depends on a promise; but God in his grace gave it to Abraham through a promise.

The Law vs. Grace

Paul here is showing that the way of grace is completely supreme to the way of the law. In fact, the way of grace came first – it is older than the law. It came as a result of Abraham's venture of faith. He received the promises of God's covenant 430 years earlier than Moses, who was given the law.

Paul goes on to argue that once the "way of faith" has been sanctioned, it cannot be altered or added to. It was faith that set Abraham right with God, and faith is still the way.

The Scripture uses the singular for the word "seed", not the plural. God's promise points not to a great crowd of people, but to one single individual, Jesus Christ. The way to peace with God is the way of faith that Abraham took. We must also take this path of faith by looking to Jesus, for we will never be able to achieve a right relationship with God by observing every regulation that the law lays down.

Reflection Questions

- In what areas of my life am I living under the law and not the covenant of Christ?
- Where do I see God's grace and promises imparted in my life?
- Where do I need God's peace in my life today?

Prayer

God help me to receive your grace and your promise. Open my eyes to how I am living under the law and attempting to earn my salvation, my peace, my standing in your eyes. In its place, let me see your covenant, through Jesus, which has purchased me and placed me in your grace.

Week 5 Day 2: Galatians 3:19-22

¹⁹What, then, was the purpose of the law? It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come. The law was put into effect through angels by a mediator. ²⁰A mediator, however, does not represent just one party; but God is one. ²¹Is the law, therefore, opposed to the promises of God? Absolutely not! For if a law had been given that could impart life, then righteousness would certainly have come by the law. ²²But the Scripture declares that the whole world is a prisoner of sin, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe.

Agreement vs. Promise

Paul goes on to define the purpose of the law. It was an agreement given to help define what sin is. This agreement depends on two parties – the one who gives it and the one who receives – and both must keep it. Where there is no law, there is no sin (how could people be condemned if there were no law to be broken?). But while the law helps to define sin, it can do nothing whatsoever to cure it.

The way of grace, however, is a promise that depends only on one person. It depends entirely on God. It is His promise. We can do nothing to alter that. We may sin, but the love and the grace of God stand unchanged.

To Paul, the weakness of the law was that it depended on two people – God and humans. And humans had ruined it. Grace is entirely from God and there is nothing we can do to undo it.

Questions for reflection

1. Where do I feel the weight of my sins and yet do not seek the grace of God through Christ Jesus to bring forgiveness, purity, and life?
2. What are my responsibilities, and what are God's?
3. Are there areas where my actions show that I still believe God's grace depends on what I can do?

Prayer

Jesus, I thank You for Your death, which brought about the promise of God and brought life apart from the law. I know that I can never live up to the law or find any life by following it. Continually impart to me the life you offer through your fulfillment of the promises. Open my eyes to my sins and forgive me.

Week 5 Day 3: Galatians 3:23-25

²³*Before this faith came, we were held prisoners by the law, locked up until faith should be revealed. ²⁴So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith. ²⁵Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law.*

The Tutor

In today's reading, Paul is still thinking about the essential part that the law played in the plan of God. He says, "we are no longer under supervision of the law" or "we are no longer under a tutor" (NASB). In the Greek world there was a household servant called the *paidagogos*. He was usually a trusted slave who had been in the family for a long time and who was well respected. He was in charge of the children's moral welfare, and it was his duty to see that they acquired the qualities essential to mature adulthood. His duty was not to instruct the children, but to take them to and from school, and deliver them to the teacher.

To Paul, the law is like this tutor. The function of the law is to bring men and women to Christ by showing them that they are unable to keep it. Once people come to Christ, they no longer need the law, for they are now dependent upon grace.

Questions for reflection

1. What has the law revealed in your own life that only Jesus and the promises fulfilled through him can change?
2. How does the law hold me prisoner? How has Christ freed me from that?
3. How have you seen faith revealed in your life?

Prayer

Jesus, come free me completely from the law. Break the grip that condemnation, fear, and dead works have over my life. Reveal your life-giving grace and peace in my heart that comes through what Christ has done for me.

Week 5 Day 4: Galatians 3:26-29

²⁶You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, ²⁷for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. ²⁸There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Clothed with Christ

Early Christians looked upon baptism as something that produced a real union with Christ, not merely something that was done to the outside of the person. In verse 27, Paul may be alluding to how they would “clothe themselves” in white robes, symbolic of the pure life they now had in Christ.

The result was that in the Church, there was no difference between any of the members; they had all become children of God. In verse 28, Paul mentions three groups of people who are now all one in Jesus. What he might have been referencing was the Jews’ morning prayer (which Paul would have used his whole Jewish life) where a Jewish man prays and thanks God that he is not “a Gentile, a slave or a woman”. Paul takes that prayer and turns it in the opposite direction. The old distinctions are now gone! It is not human effort but the love of God that alone can unite a disunited world.

Questions for reflection

1. Read also 2 Corinthians 5:16 – 17. Consider the “old” things that Christ has taken out of your life. What has He made “new” in your life?
2. What are some practical ways that I can express enjoyment of cultural differences as well as unity in Christ?
3. What part does humility play in this new understanding that Paul has given us?

Prayer

Lord, thank you for coming and making all things new. It is encouraging to know that in You we are complete and free from the trappings of the world – especially from comparing ourselves with one another. Today I pray that You would remind me of all that I have in You. Bring these things to my attention again and again.

Week 5 Day 5: Galatians 4:1 – 7

¹What I am saying is that as long as the heir is a child, he is no different from a slave, although he owns the whole estate. ²He is subject to guardians and trustees until the time set by his father. ³So also, when we were children, we were in slavery under the basic principles of the world. ⁴But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, ⁵to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. ⁶Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." ⁷So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.

Heirs with God

For a boy in the Jewish, Greek and Roman cultures, there was a distinctly defined process for growing up. When the boy is an infant, he might be the owner of a vast property, but he is not in control of his own life. Everything is done and directed for him. For all practical purposes, he has no more freedom than if he were a slave. But, when he became a man, he entered into his full inheritance. There was a clear dividing line in his life; almost overnight, the boy became a man.

Paul says that when the Galatians – and indeed all men and women – were mere children, they were under the domination of the law. When all was ready, Christ came and released them from this authority. Now they are no longer slaves of the law. They have become heirs and have entered into their inheritance. The childhood that belongs to the law should be past; the freedom of adulthood has come.

Questions for reflection

1. Spend some time thinking about what rights a perfect Father gives you, His child. What is your "full inheritance" as His heir?
2. How have I seen my spirit cry out to the Father recently?
3. What are the areas where I need to "grow up" in Christ?

Prayer

Lord, encourage my heart and spirit today to clearly see that I am your child and that ALL You have is mine. Show me any of those areas of my life where I have a difficult time seeing my full inheritance and free me from my limited, worldly expectations. I praise You and thank You for the Spirit You have imparted to my life, which has freed me from the bondage of the law.

Week 6 – Will MacFarlane

Day 1: Galatians 4:8-11

⁸Formerly, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those who by nature are not gods. ⁹But now that you know God—or rather are known by God—how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable principles? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again? ¹⁰You are observing special days and months and seasons and years! ¹¹I fear for you, that somehow I have wasted my efforts on you.

Commentary

What a remarkable letter. Paul's fatherly concern for his spiritual children is so evident in his adamant arguments against religious bondage. There's so much here for us to glean as he gets right down to the point in these verses. Here we go.

Galatians 4:8-11 - 8 Formerly, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those who by nature are not gods. 9 But now that you know God—or rather are known by God—how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable principles? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again? 10 You are observing special days and months and seasons and years! 11 I fear for you, that somehow I have wasted my efforts on you.

Can you sense Paul's frustration? Once you've tasted of the incredible grace of God, it's so hard to see anyone you love still wallowing around under the weight of the law. We were all under that judgment before we knew forgiveness, but now we should be experiencing the true freedom that comes from this new relationship with Christ. Our tendency is to keep score—the flesh's natural default mode is to put on a fig leaf, invent our own religion and try to earn God's love, or at least prove we're worthy of His sacrifice. I believe Paul's words express God's own heart.

Prayer

Start right now by asking the Spirit to show you who He says you are. Thank Him that you've been accepted by and through the blood of Christ. Ask Him to help you sift through all of the complications you've set up that are really unnecessary for a joyous walk with Him. Express your heart loudly.

Week 6 Day 2: Galatians 4:12-20

¹²I plead with you, brothers, become like me, for I became like you. You have done me no wrong. ¹³As you know, it was because of an illness that I first preached the gospel to you. ¹⁴Even though my illness was a trial to you, you did not treat me with contempt or scorn. Instead, you welcomed me as if I were an angel of God, as if I were Christ Jesus himself. ¹⁵What has happened to all your joy? I can testify that, if you could have done so, you would have torn out your eyes and given them to me. ¹⁶Have I now become your enemy by telling you the truth?

¹⁷Those people are zealous to win you over, but for no good. What they want is to alienate you from us, so that you may be zealous for them. ¹⁸It is fine to be zealous, provided the purpose is good, and to be so always and not just when I am with you. ¹⁹My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you, ²⁰how I wish I could be with you now and change my tone, because I am perplexed about you!

Commentary

Is this not some of the most passionate scripture you've ever read? He appeals to his brothers and sisters on the basis of a relationship that was obviously deep and tested. Others who couldn't possibly love them as much were desiring to put them back in religious bondage by trying to convince them that they had not done enough to be saved. (Ever meet people like that?) Believing salvation could only come through the Jews, they tried to reestablish circumcision to get them in a position to receive God's mercy, and some were falling for it. Pretty tough initiation. Some scholars think Paul's thorn was actually the demonic messenger that inspired those folks and followed him around, trying to undo his grace word. It's easy for us to look back now and see their error, but sometimes hard to see where we've substituted certain legalisms for the grace of God. Perplexing.

Prayer

Let's thank God that salvation is a gift, and that none of us can boast that we did anything to earn it, or deserved it more than someone else. Thank you, Lord, for this passionate plea to trust you and you alone for this wonderful gift of eternal life. May Your grace empower me today to walk in all You have for me to do, and that You'd be glorified in it.

Week 6 Day 3: Galatians 4:21-27

²¹Tell me, you who want to be under the law, are you not aware of what the law says? ²²For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and the other by the free woman. ²³His son by the slave woman was born in the ordinary way; but his son by the free woman was born as the result of a promise.

²⁴These things may be taken figuratively, for the women represent two covenants. One covenant is from Mount Sinai and bears children who are to be slaves: This is Hagar. ²⁵Now Hagar stands for Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present city of Jerusalem, because she is in slavery with her children. ²⁶But the Jerusalem that is above is free, and she is our mother. ²⁷For it is written:

*"Be glad, O barren woman,
who bears no children;
break forth and cry aloud,
you who have no labor pains;
because more are the children of the desolate woman
than of her who has a husband."*

Again, the juxtaposition of slavery and freedom is the dominating point. This marvelous salvation was never meant to be a burdensome religion, but a relationship with God. It was to be the way, and the truth, and the life. We continually agree with the voice of the accuser-- The one who tries to make us feel like an heir of Hagar (slave) instead of Sarah (promise). The quote from Isaiah 54 is to reiterate the sovereign gift of God—a joy when all seemed lost, and praise for something only God could do.

So let's go ahead and praise Him again today for this wonderful salvation. Rejoice that our names are written in the Book of Life. We are no longer slaves, but children of the King, and heirs of His promise. Thank You, Lord.

Week 6 Day 4: Galatians 4:28-31

²⁸Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise. ²⁹At that time the son born in the ordinary way persecuted the son born by the power of the Spirit. It is the same now. ³⁰But what does the Scripture say? "Get rid of the slave woman and her son, for the slave woman's son will never share in the inheritance with the free woman's son." ³¹Therefore, brothers, we are not children of the slave woman, but of the free woman.

Commentary

What a great word, promise. It can become too familiar and clichéd, but it should never lose its wonder. You can see that the child of the slave (flesh) always wars against the child of the promise (spirit). I love the admonition to just get rid of it. Kick it out. There will always be a voice that speaks against the promise, but we are to fight the good fight of faith.

Prayer

So let's do it now. Lord, we hold fast to Your promises. The answer in you is "yes" and "amen". You are good and we can trust you to complete Your work in us. Right now, by faith, we get rid of the slave woman and her son, and we thank You for every good promise You've spoken to us through Your word.

Week 6 Day 5: Galatians 5:1-5

¹*It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.*

²*Mark my words! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all.* ³*Again I declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole law.* ⁴*You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.* ⁵*But by faith we eagerly await through the Spirit the righteousness for which we hope.*

Commentary

Here is one of the boldest declarations in all of scripture—to stand firm in the freedom with which you’ve been set free. Galatians has already let us know that you can’t think you’ll be able to finish in the flesh what was begun in the Spirit. Why do we continually fall back on our own abilities, rather than consistently stay in the flow of God’s grace? When we start trying to do enough to feel justified, the terrible truth is that we feel even less accepted and more alienated. Christ, then, seems less valuable, and we feel less free and more obligated. Let’s look at verse 5 and pray:

Prayer

Father, we come in the name of Jesus, and stand before You only by His blood. Lord, we are needy, and we await the inward witness that only Your Holy Spirit can bring, that we have been made righteous by Your free gift. That is our blessed hope, and we truly thank You with sincere hearts—made clean by the blood of Jesus, no longer bound by the law. Teach us to walk in the freedom You died to give us—a freedom that would make the world jealous, and draw those around us into the kingdom of Your marvelous light. We lift our hands to praise You, and the fruit of our lips to magnify Your name.

Week 7 – Jerry Daley

Day 1: Galatians 5:6-12

Read Galatians 5:6-12 twice: once quickly to get the general idea of what Paul is saying, and then slowly to let Paul's thoughts have time to connect in your mind.

⁶For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love. ⁷You were running well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth? ⁸This persuasion is not from him who calls you. ⁹A little leaven leavens the whole lump. ¹⁰I have confidence in the Lord that you will take no other view than mine, and the one who is troubling you will bear the penalty, whoever he is. ¹¹But if I, brothers, still preach circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been removed. ¹²I wish those who unsettle you would emasculate themselves!

Commentary

Paul is a passionate man. In verse 12 he expresses his desire that the false teachers who have been attempting to reintroduce the law in a way that invalidates the real gospel (by requiring Christians to be circumcised) will mutilate themselves! Paul was not against circumcision itself; but he was vehemently against the idea that one needed to obey the Old Testament ritual laws in order to be a Christian.

Can you feel Paul's anguish of soul as he says, "you were running well", "oh foolish Galatians", and "my little children, with whom I am again in labor until Christ is formed in you"? Then he says, "I have confidence in you in the Lord." Hmmm. If you are a parent, you may be able to understand Paul's conflicting emotions that somehow contain both disappointment and confidence, but taken together make a strong appeal!

Reflection Questions

1. Why do you think Paul can link "faith" (v.6) with "obeying the truth" (v.7) and the cross" (v.11)?
2. What experiences have you had with doing something that was good in and of itself, but resulted in your working with a law principle (a performance mentality)?
3. How does it feel when you are doing something good for the wrong reason? Look at Galatians 4:15a to see if this applied to you.

Week 7 Day 2: Galatians 5:13-15

Read Galatians 5:13-15 twice: once just to grasp Paul's general idea and then slowly so you can more carefully follow his thoughts.

¹³For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. ¹⁴For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." ¹⁵But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another.

Commentary

The word, "called", has special significance to Paul. He identified the way God sovereignly overwhelmed him on the road to Damascus with the way someone in absolute authority "calls" a slave: he comes, no questions asked. (Gal 1:15) In Paul's mind, these Christians were "called" (Gal 5:8, 13) in a similar, if less dramatic, way.

Paul's understanding of grace is rooted in the powerful experience he had when bent upon persecuting the Christians: God came and supernaturally changed him from the inside out!

Grace, properly understood, gives all the credit where the credit is due: to God! Paul is very clear that Jesus seeks and saves; and that He gets His man. This grace is good news that Paul will not allow to be violated!

Reflection Questions

1. What do you think Paul means by "freedom" in verse 13? Freedom from what? Freedom for what?
2. Legalism is to obey God's commands (or other good things) but with the hope that your own actions will make God pleased with you. Once this creeps into a people the atmosphere changes. Why might Paul have had to say what he did in verse 15 if legalism has, in fact, affected these churches?
3. Are there areas in your own life in which you may be trying to earn God's acceptance by something you do rather than by trusting Christ alone for your sense of measuring up?

Week 7 Day 3: Galatians 5:16-18

Read Galatians 5:16-18 twice.

¹⁶But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. ¹⁸But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

The only thing strong enough to set us free from the power and pull of sinful desires is to see yourself as having died with Christ on His cross and seeing yourself as having been raised with Him in His resurrection! (Gal 2:20) When we temporarily forget to actively trust Christ alone for our sense of adequacy, then we are indeed foolish. (Gal 3:1)

However, when we see Christ alone as our righteousness, the Holy Spirit imparts Christ's life to us; and we experience "life in the Spirit"! In other words, the practical reality of Christ is released in us by the Holy Spirit when we exercise the faith God gave us!

Reflection Questions

1. Rewrite Galatians 5:16 in your own words. Insert your own name as if Paul were speaking to you personally.
2. "Not under law" is a technical phrase, which is something that is misunderstood by most Christians. The law is good. In fact, it is perfect. We are to obey God's commandments (which is the law); but we are not to obey in order to earn, deserve, gain His approval, etc. To be "under" the law refers to our trying to earn what Jesus did earn for us.
3. Finish this sentence: "When I am operating by the Spirit, I am free from _____, and I am not under _____."

Week 7 Day 4: Galatians 5:19-21

Read Galatians 5:19-21 twice.

¹⁹*Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality,*
²⁰*idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions,*
divisions, ²¹*envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned*
you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

When you exercise that precious gift of faith that God gave you when He called you (Eph 2:8-9), the ability of Christ is released in you by the Holy Spirit. However, we all know the sad results of operating in the sin of unbelief in which we try to fix ourselves. The results are predictable: worry, anxiety, self-effort; and then other sins easily walk through such an open door. This lack of self-control may lead us into some old habits; and soon we find ourselves mired in guilt, shame, and perhaps in bondage, as well.

Paul knows where legalism will lead: to bondage; and those whose lifestyles are dominated by these works of the flesh reveal that they are not connected to the life of the risen Christ!

Christians do indeed struggle with the flesh; but the renewed nature of Christ that is birthed within is stronger than the flesh! We have the power of God dwelling in us!

Reflection Questions

1. List examples of the flesh which you see sometimes manifested in groups of Christians.

2. Which of Paul's examples of the flesh do you struggle with?

3. As you have read Galatians, how do you think Paul would advise you in terms of winning your battle against the flesh?

Week 7 Day 5: Galatians 5:22-26

Read Galatians 5:22-26 twice.

²²But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. ²⁴And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. ²⁶Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

Only the Spirit of God (the Spirit of Christ) who lives in you is capable of replacing your selfishness with love, or your worry with peace, or your temper with self-control. The Spirit takes the character of Christ (His righteousness) and releases His nature into you, as you trust in Him alone! You can't produce the character of Christ by trying harder, as this would give you the credit. It would not be by grace.

The cross deals a constant blow to our pride and self-reliance. It takes humility to use the faith God has given you so that you identify with your Savior as He was dying to your specific sins.

Reflection Questions

1. Are you satisfied to be entirely dependent upon Christ for your self worth, for your measuring up, for your sense of adequacy?
2. Can you identify with any of the problems these Galatian Christians were experiencing? If so, which ones?
3. According to Paul in Galatians, how might you live in such a way as to be wise instead of foolish?

Week 8 – Jim Reklis

Day 1: Galatians 5:25-6:5

²⁵If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. ²⁶Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

^{6:1}Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. ²Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. ³For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. ⁴But let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor. ⁵For each will have to bear his own load.

As we begin chapter 6 in Galatians, remember that chapter breaks were not part of the original text. So as you read 5:25-26 and then 6:1, get a feel for Paul's continuation of thought. He hasn't really changed subjects as much as he has gone to practical application. Galatians 6:1-5 is where he gets specific about walking in the Spirit with each other. He is applying what he has been saying in Chapter 5: by love serve one another, walk in the spirit, etc.

Paul ends 5:26 with his instruction to not become boastful, challenging and envying. He then uses the word "brethren." I notice this because he is appealing to us to act like family: brothers (and sisters) in Christ. Being spirit-led means we treat each other as family. So he appeals to us who are spiritual, or led by the spirit, to treat each other in life-giving, helpful ways. As you read verses 1-5, think about and answer these questions.

Reflection Questions

1. How are we to treat each other when we sin?
2. How would you like to be treated if someone "discovered" you in sin?
3. Can you think of examples of how Christ treated sinners in the Gospels?
4. Have you ever confronted someone about sin in his or her life?
5. What is the goal of going to someone in sin?

Week 8 Day 2: Galatians 6:1-5

¹Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. ²Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. ³For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. ⁴But let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor. ⁵For each will have to bear his own load.

Commentary

Paul is a firm believer in the transforming power of the Spirit in us. We are new creatures, Christ in us is our hope of glory, and by the Spirit we put to death the misdeeds of the body. So he is speaking to us as spiritual people, spirit-led believers. Spiritual people have died to sin and yet are humble to know they could fall. In verse one he tells us to be helping each other get free from sin. You have to be free of it yourself in order to help others, but not in some cocky way. You could be tempted again, so you watch out for yourself. Notice that he expects us to restore others from their own sin! It's part of being in a spiritual family and part of being a spiritual person.

Verse 2 goes further. We are to also bear one another's burdens. The idea is to help shoulder the weight, not carry it for them. We come alongside to make it lighter and easier for others to carry their load. Then he uses this unique phrase, "and so fulfill the law of Christ." Stop a minute – think about that. What is the law of Christ? We know it at least involves this, bearing each other's burdens. But why is it a law and how does it work?

Reflection Questions

1. What else could Paul mean by the "law of Christ?"
2. Find other Scriptures that speak about this, like John 13:34.
3. Now try writing a definition of what you think the law of Christ is.
4. How can you apply this law in your relationships?

Week 8 Day 3: Galatians 6:1-5

Read Galatians 6:1-5, especially verse 3

¹Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. ²Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. ³For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. ⁴But let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor. ⁵For each will have to bear his own load.

Commentary

Those who are spiritual are susceptible to a subtle deception: spiritual pride. The moment we feel like we have arrived spiritually, we think we are something. Of course we are comparing ourselves to those poor weak brothers whom we are helping to get free from sin and bearing their burdens ☺. We begin thinking, "Yes, if they were spiritual like me they wouldn't have these problems. It's fortunate for them I am spiritual."

Paul is quick to step in and deliver us from our self-deception of spiritual pride. Think on his phrase, "...thinks he is something, when he is nothing..." True spirituality understands our condition: we are bankrupt without God; in ourselves dwells no good thing. Remember chapter 2, "I am crucified with Christ, I no longer live..." Do you see that he can say, "...when he is nothing." It's all about Christ, who He is and what He has done. You died and have nothing to take credit for. We are the happy recipients of His grace, not the boastful producers of it.

Reflection Questions

1. Remember 5:26 – what is the source of spiritual pride?
2. What do you think is a healthy way to handle spiritual pride?
3. Do you recognize spiritual pride in yourself? If so, how will you deal with it? Galatians 2:20 is a key!

Week 8 Day 4: Galatians 6:1-5

Read Galatians 6:1-5 with a focus on 4-5

¹Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. ²Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. ³For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. ⁴But let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor. ⁵For each will have to bear his own load.

Commentary

As I read just this short section of Scripture, I am reminded of the four-fold purpose of Scripture found in 2 Timothy 3:16-17. The Word teaches us what's right, rebukes us about wrong, corrects and sets us right again, and trains us to live right. I see this whole process at work here in Galatians 6:1-5. Verse 4 is the corrective to the rebuke of verse 3, which was coming from the teaching of what is right. And as you will see, verse 5 is the training to live right. I bring this to your attention because it is the divine process of being transformed by the renewing of your mind through the word of God. So let's let it happen with this section on being spirit-led in the way we treat each other in our spiritual family.

In verse 4 Paul brings attention to the call of self-evaluation for believers. Again he is such a firm believer in the Spirit of God in us; he tells us to test or examine ourselves, our lives, our work. Why? Because those who are led by the Spirit can evaluate themselves by the Spirit. (1 Cor 2:10-16)

His point is to take us out of comparison and into healthy self-examination. Why? Because it dismantles spiritual pride. We get proud by comparing ourselves to others' actions and works. "Oh, I could do that so much better", or "I can't believe they slipped and sinned that way; I would never do that." We are called to self-assessment and not critical evaluation of others. That way, when we see something of value, we can take pride in what God has done in us, not pride because we are better than others.

Reflection Questions

1. Do you practice healthy self-examination? Often it is more a sense of failure and guilt, rather than testing to see how you are living by the grace and Spirit of God.
2. Do you see how you compare yourself to others and wind up in spiritual pride? Or in a negative way, condemnation (which is the negative side of spiritual pride: you wish you were good enough to be like others).
3. Do you sense God's approval on your life? This eliminates our need for comparison, so it is important to have.
4. What is God saying to you about areas in your life He wants you to grow in?

Week 8 Day 5: Galatians 6:1-5

⁵For each will have to bear his own load.

Commentary

Paul is finishing his thought from verse 4: “his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor. For each will have to bear his own load.” The thought is this: everyone has a responsibility for their own lives; they themselves are responsible for their actions. You won’t be judged on the basis of how you did in comparison to others. You have responsibility only for what God expects of you. This should be a very freeing thought. Many believers labor under a false responsibility because they are comparing themselves to others. They will fail miserably because they will never accomplish another person’s work, and they will miss taking responsibility for their own. Don’t go there! Carry the weight God has assigned to you!

It is good to note that there is a difference in the words used in verse 2 and 5. In verse 2, burdens is talking of “heavy loads”, ones that are unbearable alone and require others’ help—those that occur through the course of life, such as a child with a disability, sickness, etc. But the “load” in verse 5 is referring to the proper weight of responsibility that God places on each of us to carry. It is like a traveler’s pack: your own stuff is inside it and it is your job to carry it.

Reflection Questions

1. What's in your daypack that God has called you to carry? Think about normal stuff that you will have to answer for when you see Him.
2. Do you find things in there that really are someone else's? Do you know what they are? If so, get rid of them, and only take up what God has assigned to you.
3. Read Matthew 11:28-30 – how do you think this relates to Galatians 6:5? Could God require you to do something but give you the grace to do it and, in fact, does so?
4. Write out a short paragraph about living to help others while you carry your own weight. Be creative and real.

Week 9 – Jeremy Gwaltney

Day 1: Galatians 6:6-10

⁶ The one who is taught the word is to share all good things with the one who teaches. ⁷ Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. ⁸ For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. ⁹ Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary. ¹⁰ So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.

Commentary

Galatians 6:6

This is a basic command of Paul for the people in the church of Galatia to support those who actually teach them the Word of God. The “one who is taught” are the people of the church of Galatia. The “one who teaches” are the elders or leaders of the church who teach the people. Here Paul is setting the standard for sowing and reaping – the people of the church are to sow into those who teach the Word that they may reap the life of the Scriptures.

Galatians 6:7-8

Notice three key connections between these verses and the rest of the book. First, Paul talks about two types of sowing – to the Spirit and to the flesh. While at first this may seem like a simple command (sow to godly things instead of ungodly things), it actually serves to cap off the entire argument of the book – the Gospel is of the Spirit, not of the flesh (see below). Second, notice how reaping is directly tied to the character of God – why can we guarantee reaping when we sow to the Spirit? Because God will not be mocked.

Galatians 6:9-10

Having tied reaping to the character of God, notice that Paul encourages us to continue sowing. Even when there is a long time between when we sow and when we reap, there will be a “due time” if we persevere. Not only should we persevere in what we sow, but also we should take every opportunity we have to do good so that we can reap His reward. Notice that Paul gives priority to those “of the household of faith” (other Christians), over others.

Reflection Questions

1. Why do you think we are supposed to take care of other Christians first, instead of nonbelievers? At first, the thought might seem backward, but why would it be better to serve Christians first?
2. Briefly review the book of Galatians and take a note of everywhere “flesh” and “Spirit” are compared or contrasted. Having looked at this, what do you think Paul means by “sowing to the flesh/Spirit”?

Personal Application

Can you think of anyone or anything that God is asking you to sow into for His Kingdom? What are you going to do about it?

Prayer

Spend time talking to God about some unfulfilled “reapings” – things you’ve sown into, but have yet to see the produce from.

Personal Application

List some things you are sowing into – either by finances, prayer, good deeds, acts of service, etc.

Are you currently seeing the fruit of this work? Are you encouraged or discouraged by the results you see of your labor? How do you feel about this?

Do you need a “due time/proper time” (NASB/NIV) from God? Is there something you have been sowing into by faith and have yet to see the result? Perhaps you are worried that you will never see it; perhaps you have let something go and God wants you to pick it up again. Take this time to “ASK BIG” of God – remember He is not mocked; what we sow into His Kingdom, we will reap for His Kingdom.

Personal Prayer

- Spend time thanking God for His good works toward you.
- Spend time thanking God for the burdens He has given you to sow into.
- Ask God for a “due time” to reap what you have been sowing for Him.
- Ask God if there is anything new He wants you to sow into.

Week 9 Day 3: Galatians 6:11-18

¹¹See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand. ¹²Those who desire to make a good showing in the flesh try to compel you to be circumcised, simply so that they will not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. ¹³For those who are circumcised do not even keep the Law themselves, but they desire to have you circumcised so that they may boast in your flesh. ¹⁴But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. ¹⁵For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. ¹⁶And those who will walk by this rule, peace and mercy {be} upon them, and upon the Israel of God. ¹⁷From now on let no one cause trouble for me, for I bear on my body the brand-marks of Jesus. ¹⁸The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brethren. Amen.

Reflection Questions

- 1) What is Paul's tone or attitude in this section? Why do you think he is so passionate?
- 2) How does he view his opponents – those who push others to be circumcised?
- 3) Why does he say they want others to be circumcised? What do they boast in?
- 4) What does Paul boast in? What does Paul teach that matters most (Gal 6:15)?
- 5) How does this section compare to Galatians 2:20-21?

Personal Application

Let's be honest. Very few of us are worried about circumcision or even keeping the Old Testament Law in order to be good enough to be saved. Sometimes reading these words almost seems out of touch with modern Christianity. So, how do we apply it?

Begin by asking this question – why do I still have that nagging feeling that nothing I ever do is good enough? Or perhaps there is just one area in your life in which you feel like a constant failure. What is it? Why do you feel this way? Why do you have that drive to be perfect? Do you feel like you have let God down when you don't do that one thing correctly all the time? Then that area is the Law or circumcision for you – it is the place where you try to be good in your own strength and fail to let God, by His Spirit, apply grace to you.

Spend some time praying and journaling about the areas of your life in which you need a fresh touch of grace. Is there repentance that needs to happen, confession, etc.? Be honest with God about these weaknesses – that way we can genuinely boast in the cross of Christ.

Historical Excursus

“See what large letters I'm writing... (Galatians 6:11).” Paul probably dictated most of his letters to a secretary, but to make sure readers knew his letters were authentic he would often sign them in this manner with his own hand. So, the obvious question is – why did Paul use large letters? Well, many scholars think Paul was partially blind, and much of the evidence comes from Galatians. Notice, in chapter 4:15, that Paul says the Galatians would have “plucked their eyes out and given them to me.” This, perhaps, describes a physical illness that attacked Paul's eyes while he was staying in Galatia. It is also interesting to note that in Acts 23:1-5, Paul insults the high priest by accident because he did not know the high priest was there. However, Jewish priestly garments were easily identifiable, especially for someone who grew up a Pharisee like Paul. So, again, many speculate that Paul could not actually see the high priest in the court. It is interesting to think that part of the “marks of Christ” Paul bore might have been physical blindness.

Week 9 Day 4: Galatians 6:11-18

¹¹See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand. ¹²Those who desire to make a good showing in the flesh try to compel you to be circumcised, simply so that they will not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. ¹³For those who are circumcised do not even keep the Law themselves, but they desire to have you circumcised so that they may boast in your flesh. ¹⁴But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. ¹⁵For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. ¹⁶And those who will walk by this rule, peace and mercy {be} upon them, and upon the Israel of God. ¹⁷From now on let no one cause trouble for me, for I bear on my body the brand-marks of Jesus. ¹⁸The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brethren. Amen.

Reflection Questions

Take a hard look at the profound statement by Paul in verse 14. To Paul, the cross of Christ is central to all things Christian. It is here that the righteousness of Christ and the sinfulness of the world collide (2 Cor 5:21), and to Paul, there can be no partial mixture. To say that our actions (good deeds, keeping the Law, religious attitudes, etc.) are part of the formula that saves us is to say that Jesus' work on the cross is incomplete – imperfect. And that can't be the Gospel.

Take some time to meditate on verses 14-15.

Reflection Questions

1. What does it mean to boast in the cross of Christ?
2. How is the world crucified to me?
3. How am I crucified to the world?
4. Why is circumcision and uncircumcision nothing? (Note: replace these words with "self-effort", "self-esteem," "good works," "my achievement," "my religion," etc.)
5. Why is being a new creation all that matters?

Personal Application

Stop right now and write Galatians 6:14-15 down on a piece of paper or a 3x5 index card. Stick it in your back pocket. Today, when you are stopped at a traffic light, take a coffee break, sit down to think for a minute, or even during the commercials of your favorite TV show – pull out this verse and spend some time pondering what it means. Ask the Holy Spirit to fill you and to reveal its meaning to you – more than just a mental understanding – and ask Him to make it a life verse for you. Then, before going to bed, write down what He shows you.

Prayer

- Thank God, once again, for the cross of Christ and His grace for you.
- Ask God to reveal new aspects of His grace to you for today.
- Pray that the Holy Spirit will imprint Galatians 6:14-15 on your heart as you meditate on the verses throughout the day.
- Ask God to use you to reveal His grace to one person today – pray for someone by name to receive the Grace of God.

Week 9 Day 5

We have now come to the last day of our study in the book of Galatians. Many experts say that if you don't write things down, it will never really impact your life. So today, we are going to do Galatians in review and have an opportunity to write down some things God has shown us.

Scripture Reading

Sit down quickly and read the **entire book of Galatians** – it's short and you can probably do it inside of 15 minutes. Then answer the following questions.

Reflection Questions

WHO...

- ... does this book reveal as the source of all Grace?
- ... does this book say that I am (get specific, list some verses)?

WHAT...

- ... is the basis for my salvation, self-esteem, completeness, forgiveness?
- ... does this book ask me to do in response to the work of Christ?

WHERE...

- ... is the foundation of my righteousness found?
- ... is the source of all my boasting?
- ... is the true fruit of God found?

WHEN...

- ... were the saving purposes of God revealed?

WHY...

- ... am I now a new creature in Christ?
- ... can I boast in Christ alone?
- ... do I not need to fear condemnation, imperfection, or the mistakes I make?

HOW...

- ... do I now live, knowing the riches of the grace of God?

Prayer Time

- Spend some time talking to God about what He has taught you through this book.
- Ask Him what more He would like you to do in response to His riches and grace.
- Ask God to reveal His grace to one person in your life who does not know Him. Be specific; name the person by name.