



Learning to walk in freedom

A study of Galatians

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This is a work of biblical opinion sharing the experiences of over thirty-five years of serving Jesus of Nazareth, teaching the scriptures, and walking in the spirit. All opinions should be examined and prayerfully considered before they are blindly acted upon.

Translations used:

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No Notation: This is my own paraphrase

The lexicons used

New Testament Greek Lexicon: this is based on Thayer's and Smith's Bible Dictionary plus others; this is keyed to the large Kittel and the "Theological Dictionary of the New Testament." These files are public domain.

*This book is dedicated to my wife
& our relationship as we grew
into the image of Jesus.
Without Pat, I would be
as bad as I was—
the hippie, Jesus-freak
she met at that Bible study
so many year ago.
Her copyediting & wisdom
greatly improved this book
and the entire series.*

*She went home last year,
& I miss her greatly.*

David

As we begin

This is the second book in the Easily Understanding Scripture series. This is a Bible study. However, it is not a type of bible study that you are familiar with unless you have sat under my teaching before, or read Book 1. My purpose is different than most.

First of all, I am not assuming that you are a Christian—though I do assume that you are a seeker of Truth and quite possibly a church-goer. This will be a simple sharing of what the Lord gives me as I pray for you while writing this book.

Second, my goal is not to give you a set of doctrines or to direct your path. My hope is to make the scriptures open and available to you, by the grace of God, so that you can allow God to freely do His work in you.

Third, my prayer is for an anointed guide through the scriptures, in this case the epistle of Paul to the Galatians, that will enable you to hear what the Holy Spirit is telling you to do with your life.

Anointing?

What does this mean to us as believers? Start your search by looking at 1 John 2:20 & 27. We need to get in touch with this, and learn to rely on it.

The word, *chrisma*, means the special endowment (“chrism”) of the Holy Spirit: This is what we rely on as believers, for the Holy Spirit to make this teaching real in your life—where it can be transformational to you and truly help you grow in the Lord.

Read the example under verse 3:14 for a further explanation of anointing.

My credentials

As far as the world is concerned—I don't have any. All I have is experience—both the experience of reading many versions of scripture cover to cover many times and the experience of teaching and leading Bible studies since late 1974. In addition I have aggressively sought to put what I read into practice.

I was born again out of a life of fine art, drugs and occult practices on January 15, 1974. I was so stoned, it took several days before I even noticed anything. But the transformation by the summer of 1974 was truly astounding. I am not the same man I was—thank God!

You really can't say I was a hippie, because I dropped out before that term was coined. Though I considered myself a fine artist, I had no real talent except for the necessary ego. For the first couple years I was trained in the Lord by my father, who was one of the first charismatic Episcopalians—beginning in the 1960s. Throughout 1974 (and much of 1975), I went with him daily as we were deeply involved in seven bible studies a week, a couple were led by my father and several led by others. At that point I was Episcopalian. I was taught through immersion into the spirit-filled life in a restored relationship with my father, a well-trained mentor, to guide me.

In 1976 I married the woman who would transform my life, Patricia Harper. Here was a woman with a very clear call to ministry—both in gifts and in a desire to serve. Her wisdom and common sense approach to following Jesus has enabled me to open up more to the Lord and begin to become what He designed me to be. Her gifting as a pastor is a real inspiration to me

Scripture versions & usage

Will you need a study Bible?

Maybe: Many people, like myself use the excellent websites to study with. But then I've used a dozen study bibles or more over the years.

So, the standard answer is: Yes, several of them. One good one to start with. You need to get one that is in a version you are comfortable with, that has good cross references, and that has room in the layout for many notes. You need a way to keep track of what the Holy Spirit has taught you over the years.

I am a firm believer in using many translations and a few paraphrases to build a consensus of accuracy. I have discovered that the King James has a unique anointing. So, I give it added weight. My usual choices are (in no particular order): Modern English Version [MEV], New King James [NKJV], (which are modern translations built off the KJV source materials), New American Standard Bible [NASB], Revised Standard [RSV], God's Word [GW], New Living Translation [NLT], and many more. For study purposes, I normally use biblegateway.com—which I highly recommend. You can have as many versions as will fit on your screen side-by-side.

I will be teaching from the Modern Viking Paraphrase [MVP], which is my personal understanding of what is right and true. I will put in relevant version copies, as necessary. This not only allows me to keep the copyright police calm, but I can also combine appropriate versions into a composite reading that my experience suggests will be more meaningful to you. I will give you references so you can look them up in your Bible.

You'll want to follow in your favorite version(s) to make sure that you can see why I slant my paraphrase toward the core meanings I see in the text. You don't have to agree. You do need to pray for wisdom.

Your responsibility

Read this with your mind and Bible open.

I am convinced that your active participation in the study and analysis of these verses is the only way the Holy Spirit will be able to actually change your life for the better through these teachings. Pray that the Holy Spirit will guide you and teach you. This is his primary job given by Jesus.

This is my prayer: That you will be brought closer to the Lord, that you will end up knowing Him better, and that the power available to all believers is more active in your life.

The Word of God

Bible worship?

One of my concerns is Bible worship—people who follow the Bible instead of serving the Lord. I am not led by the bible, but by the Lord through His Holy Spirit. We are taught by the Spirit. Yes, He uses the scriptures a lot. Yes, the scriptures will lead us to the Lord—if we let them and we are true seekers of Truth. Do you see this as a real problem?

The Word of God is a person: Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah. We are told this in Revelation 19.13. Here the rider of the white horse (who is clearly the Messiah) is described as the one with the robe dipped in blood whose name is the Word of God.

Many people call the Bible the Word. I don't call the Bible the Word because people are too easily confused as it is. Jesus is the *logos*, the living Word of God. The Bible is the inspired writings of men and women of God as led by the Holy Spirit. The purpose of scripture is to show us how God thinks, what kinds of things He does in the world, how we are to live, and so much more.

You cannot understand scripture without the Holy Spirit to guide you into the truth. You need to pray before you start reading—every time—that He will show you what He wants you to learn today. He wrote it all and He has things you need to know now.

The world, the flesh, and the devil

For those of you new to belief or those still pursuing truth, you need to understand some terminology that I will be assuming throughout this book. I believe that there is a real, literal Satan who hates Christians and is out to destroy each of us individually. He is the devil referred to in the subhead above.

The flesh is the conscious side of us as human beings. This includes our senses, genetics, emotions, thoughts, and will power. The Biblical belief that our flesh is always self-serving and focused on selfish needs. We can look outside ourselves, but it is always an effort of our will. Though our will might be strong, it is of no use in earning us favor with God Almighty.

The world in the New Testament is described by the Greek word, *kosmos*. This is the global system of things that are controlled by Satan and used as his primary weapon to attract and distract our flesh to keep us from serving the Lord. It is a spiritual organization that cannot be seen by the flesh. It is very legalistic and evil. It offers excitement

instead of joy, fashion instead of beauty, politics instead of leadership, and temptation instead of satisfaction.

Becoming a believer

Are you a citizen of the Kingdom of God?

Only if you have specifically asked to be a part of it. You cannot get in because your parents are, or were, believers. You must ask for yourself. Have you done that?

If at any time throughout this short study of Paul's letter to the Philippians you come to realize that you might not truly be a believer in the Lord Jesus or a citizen of the Kingdom of God—there is a simple solution.

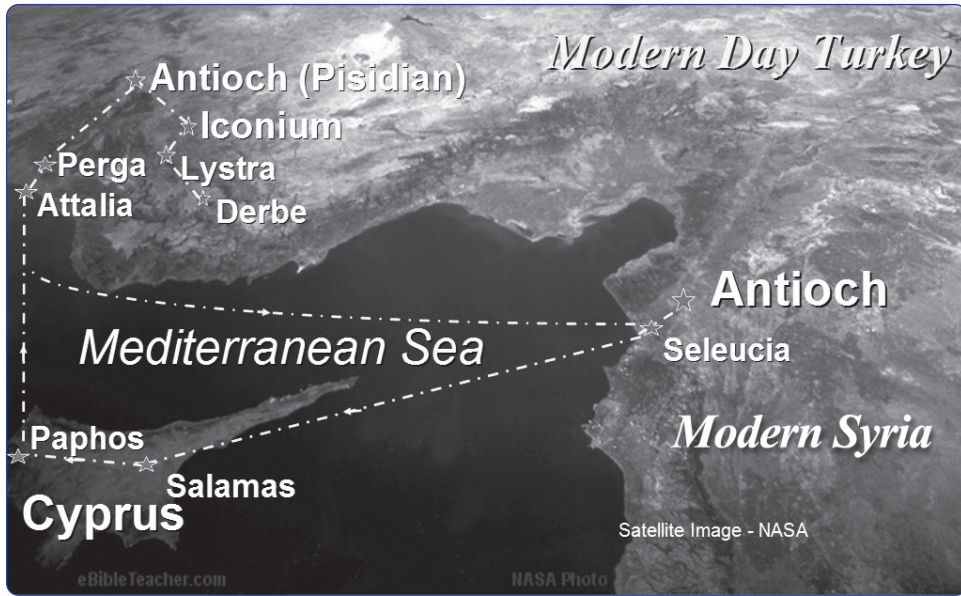
We are all sinners. Ask the Lord to show you your sin. Then, recognize that Jesus died on the Cross to pay the price of your sin [the wages of sin is death]. All you need to do is renounce the world, the flesh, and the devil. You then repent of your selfish, sinful ways and turn to Jesus for forgiveness. Then you ask Jesus to come live within you, and fill you with His Holy Spirit. Acknowledge Him as the Lord and King of your life. That's all there is to it. You can do this at any time. If you are in doubt, please do it now. Just talk to Jesus like He is your best friend. He doesn't want or need fancy words. He truly loves you, and you will come to know that.

[A list of study tools](#)

Recommended books and Websites to help you study scripture are listed in the back of the book. The link will take you there.

If you need help, are confused, or have no one to help, you can always email me at david@bergsland.org—I will be overjoyed to answer any question you might have.

The Galatians



Galatia is not a town, but a region of Asia Minor just north of Cyprus. What follows is info from Easton's Bible dictionary plus UNRV, a site on the Roman empire:

Galatia has been called the "Gallia" of the East... Gallia, as the Romans called it, was the region of France, Belgium, and the areas of the west bank of the Rhine river in Holland and Germany.

The people in Galatia were a mixture of Gauls and Greeks, and were a result of a great Celtic migration which invaded Macedonia about B.C. 280. They were invited by a king as mercenaries to cross over into Asia Minor to assist in local wars.

These people ultimately settled here, strengthened by fresh groups of people of the same clan from Europe. They overran the central area of what we now know as Turkey. They were great warriors, and hired themselves out as mercenary soldiers, sometimes fighting on both sides in the great battles of the times. They were at length brought

under the power of Rome in B.C. 189, and Galatia became a Roman province B.C. 25.

An edited quote from UNRV: The culture was basically Greek, The Galatians remained loyal to the empire throughout its history. Contributing to this loyalty, the Celts were inundated with Hellenistic culture... Celtic culture continued to flourish as well. The people were still known to speak a Celtic tongue... as late as the 5th century AD.

Paul arrived there on his first missionary journey. We read about it in Acts 13:

Paul, (Barnabas) and those with him left Cyprus, north to Perga where John Mark left them to return to Jerusalem. They continued their trip from Perga and went to Antioch, a city in Pisidia. On the Sabbath day they went into the synagogue and sat down. After the law of Moses and the writings of the prophets were read, the leaders of the synagogue sent a message to Paul and Barnabas: "Brothers, if you have any message that will encourage the people, please speak."

Paul then preached a sermon much like the one given by Stephen in Acts 7, giving the history of the Jews, finishing up with Jesus. Unlike the reaction to Stephen's sermon (which got him stoned), Paul's speech received a different reaction. The Jews were impressed. Resuming in verse 42:

While Paul and Barnabas were leaving the synagogue, many of the Jews and Jewish converts asked them to tell more about these things on the next Sabbath...

Continuing in verse 44:

On the next Sabbath day, almost everyone in the city came to hear the word of the Lord. Seeing the crowd, the Jewish people became very jealous, contradicted Paul and slandered him. But Paul and Barnabas spoke very boldly, saying, "We must give you the first chance to hear the gospel. But you refuse to listen therefore

judging yourselves unworthy of having eternal life!

So we will now go to the heathen (non-Jews).

Here Paul strongly affirms what his apostolic call was—to minister to the Gentiles. Continuing in verse 48:

When the Gentiles heard Paul say this, they were happy and glorified the message of the Lord. And all the people who were chosen to have life forever believed the message.

So the message of the Lord was spread through the whole area. But the Jewish people stirred up some of the devout women of high standing and the leaders of the city, stirring up persecution of Paul and Barnabas and drove them out of the area.

So, Paul's ministry in Galatia started with a major conversion event and ended with his first major persecution. He continued on through lower Galatia with the rabble-rousing Jews following and causing trouble. The Lord worked powerfully throughout this time, with miracles, and graciously saving many.

These Pisidian Jews continued to cause trouble and finished off Paul's trip through Galatia in Lystra, by stoning him to death and dragging him outside the city. However, Paul got back up (it doesn't say whether God raised him from the dead or simply that Paul really wasn't dead).

Regardless, It didn't slow Paul down at all. He went back into town, ministered to the believers there and then headed back through the cities where he had been persecuted so severely: Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, and Pisidian Antioch. They finally went back to preach in Perga, on the shore of the Mediterranean. From there they sailed back to Antioch in Syria to the believers who had sent them out on the trip

So, when Paul writes back with his severe concerns about legalistic Judaizers (who were trying to bring Gentile believers back under the law) he is writing the people God used to bless the beginnings of his apostolic ministry. To say he was concerned is probably an understatement.

Chapter One

Verse 1:1-5

Paul, an apostle (not from men nor by man, but sent by Jesus the Messiah and God the Father, who raised him from the dead) and all the brothers and sisters with me, to the churches in Galatia: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus our Messiah, who offered himself for our sins to deliver us from these evil times, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Evil times?

The word used here is *poneros*: full of labours, annoyances, hardships; bringing toils, annoyances, perils; of a time full of peril to Christian faith and steadfastness; causing pain and trouble; in an ethical sense: evil wicked, bad

And *aion* which has come to us as eon.

Aren't all times before Jesus returns evil?

At this point in time, 2020, We re well into the birth pangs leading up to Jesus' return. It's amazing how evil the time have gotten, and we haven't seen anything yet. I'm writing while confined to my home as the COVID-19 is being used by the media to terrify everyone.

Here we have a quick and brief statement of who Paul Is. This is coupled with a standard religious greeting among the believers.

I used the words brothers and sisters, or siblings instead of brethren or brothers, because the term in the Greek, according to the footnote in the NIV means: "The plural Greek word *adelphoi* (translated "brothers" in the NIV) refers to siblings in a family. In New Testament usage, depending on the context, *adelphoi* may refer either to men

or to both men and women who are siblings (brothers and sisters) in God's family, the church."

We must be very careful to recognize the strong male slant provided by most of the translations. It isn't there in the original Greek—but is common in the translations we use. We need to pray for wisdom and check to be sure.

Verse 1:6

God, by his grace through his Messiah, called you to become His people. So I am appalled that you are turning away so quickly and believing something different than the gospel.

Short intro, strong punch! Paul's greeting seems almost terse. He has no time for chit-chat. Paul is really upset and lets them have it right up front. This is a major problem as far as Paul is concerned. He sees heresy and is determined to stop it before it spreads and becomes a real problem.

Verse 1:7

There really is no other gospel, you're just dealing people who are deliberately twisting the truth

Again, Paul just lays it out there. As far as he is concerned, the Galatians are being attacked by preachers and teachers who are evilly twisting the truth to promote their personal perversion of the Good News.

Is bad teaching evil?

How much of it is ignorance? How much is a conscious perversion of the truth?

Remember James 3:1

"Brothers and sisters: not many of you should become teachers, for we who teach will be judged more strictly."

Today, we still must be very careful of this. This is the reason I am so adamant that you need to be praying for the

guidance of the Holy Spirit and searching the scriptures for yourself so that you are not deceived while studying.

This is why you must read the entire New Testament (and the Old Testament) without studying it so that your mind and spirit are immersed in the inspired words of scripture. Then you start studying. If you are familiar with the Bible, false prophets and teachers will not be able to pull the wool over your eyes and fool you into false beliefs.

But we must always be on guard. Paul says this to us over and over again—as do Peter, James, and John. Be wary of any preacher who does not tell you to check out the scriptures for yourselves. Look at the doctrinal trouble some denominations have gotten into by strongly discouraging reading and studying of the Bible by the laity. That and the belief in infallible human leaders will get you into serious trouble very quickly.

All denominations have problems resulting from the organization itself. In the years I have been a believer, I have been a member of several denominations. I find that the original inspiration and leadership normally had a clear vision of the truth. It is just the modern interpretations that get so far off base.

The problem with the denominations is simple and most eloquently covered in a great book, *Love Not the World*, by Watchman Nee. He was convinced (as am I) that as soon as the original anointed leadership is gone, the church becomes an institution. An institution is an organization that is self-perpetuating. It has lost its physical connection to the original anointed vision. It is possible for an institution to have good leadership on down the road of its life, but those times tend to be rare. Look at the time of the Kings in the Old Testament. There were a

few good kings, but none of them had the vision of David or Solomon.

But it is even more serious than that. How many Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons really believe they are using accurate scriptures and are completely swept up in the delusions of those denominations—while remaining convinced that they are Christians?

Verse 1:8–9

But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed. [NKJV]

I used the New King James here for a little historical oomph. There are a couple items of interest. First of all, Paul is absolutely convinced of the inspiration and anointing that attended the original presentation of the Gospel to the Galatians by Barnabus and himself. We do not know why he feels so strongly about this, but it is probably tied to the results of those original presentations, the persecutions that followed, an inner witness in his spirit from the Holy Spirit, and other confirmations.

However, it is absolutely clear that Paul believes he accurately and fully shared what the Lord was doing in those congregations of believers. His apostleship required this clarity of vision. God made him responsible for the doctrinal direction of the entire church—up to this day.

Jesus knew what He was doing by calling Paul. The Lord knew what was coming in the next couple of millennia. He is not surprised at where we are today. And it is all based on what He gave Paul to share nearly 2000 years ago. This is not paranoid egotism on Paul's part—but conscientious

stewardship of a valuable and important vision. Anyone trying that today has all kinds of problems.

Please notice the humility: Paul does not see himself as impervious to error. He does not discount the possibility that he could fall into error. Note how he says that even if he should come back to them and preach something different than what he taught them in the beginning, that he must be ignored. What he taught originally was true and accurate. They can rely on that. We continue to rely on the accuracy and truth of his revelation today.

Verse 1:10

Obviously, I'm not trying to convince or please humans, but God. If pleasing or being acceptable to people were my goal, I would not be Jesus' slave.

This is the biggest danger of the modern American megachurch—this necessity of being relevant, hip, and attractive to the heathen. Churches are expected to preach Jesus and him crucified. Believers and preachers are supposed to call the world to repentance and deliverance from sin. Our goal is to please God—nothing else matters.

Marketing Christianity?

Is this possible? Is this what God wants from us? Does our modern marketing build the Kingdom or the church?

Can we safely promote the entertainment value of events?

Can we eliminate the mention of the cross, sin, and repentance?

No one is saved except by the Holy Spirit. No one's life changes except by the power of the Spirit. I have listened to immensely well-put-together and direct expositions of the Gospel, what Jesus did, and who He is. When all was

said, it did not appear to have any affect at all. Paul explains how this works in I Corinthians 2:1-5

And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God. For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling, and my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God. [NASB]

Paul clearly understands the foolishness of expecting effective ministry by pleasing the audience. He knows that what is necessary is the direct, anointed speaking of the truth as given by God without awareness or concern for the consequences. It is the anointing that matters!

We do not want our listeners and readers to respond with “good teaching!” It really doesn’t matter if they are impressed. We want to be able to see changed lives that continue to grow and mature. That only comes as a result of the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

Verse 1:11

Because I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the Gospel I preached was not man’s gospel. I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it. I received it directly from Jesus our Messiah as a revelation.

Revelation

Something revealed or disclosed, a striking disclosure, as of something not before realized.

Here we see the uniqueness of Paul’s teaching. It is not the result of study. He didn’t learn it in seminary or at the feet of an amazingly wise Rabbi. It did not come from the intellectual effort or knowledge of man at all. It

was inspired, breathed into him by the Holy Spirit directly from the Messiah.

No wonder the epistles speak so powerfully to us. This is why we made them part of scripture. This is God speaking to us through a specific man chosen by Himself. What a wonderful thing that is. What a wise God we serve!

Verse 1:12-24

You know what I was like when I was a Pharisee—how I violently persecuted God’s church. I did my best to destroy it—going far beyond my fellow Jews in my zealotry for the traditions.

But even before I was born, God had chosen me and called me by his marvelous grace. Then it pleased him to reveal his Son to me so that I would proclaim the Gospel about Jesus to the heathen.

When this happened, I didn’t rush out to consult with any person. Nor did I go up to Jerusalem to consult with the apostles called before me. Instead, I went away into the Arabian desert. Later I returned to Damascus.

Three years later I went to Jerusalem to meet and know Peter, staying with him for fifteen days. The only other apostle I met then was James, Jesus’ brother. I declare before God that this short history is not a lie.

After that visit I went north through Syria and home to Cilicia. And still the believers in the churches of Judea didn’t know me personally. All they knew was that they heard, “The one who used to persecute us is now preaching the very faith he tried to destroy!”

And they praised God because of my conversion.

Here’s a short, very revealing, marvelously interesting history lesson and biographical insight. It has wonderful insights like “before I was born, God had chosen me”. Obviously the clarity and truth of the revelation was enough for Paul. I find it interesting that after the powerful revelation

and several years preaching and teaching in Damascus, Paul finally goes to headquarters to meet Peter and James. After that he goes home.

biblestudy.org timeline

Saul stays in Damascus... Jews in the city... conspire to kill him (Acts 9:20-23). After learning of the plot against his life, Paul flees the city at night...he travels to Arabia, where for three years he is personally taught by Jesus (Galatians 1:11-18). After three years in Arabia, Paul journeys back to Damascus in the Spring of the year (Galatians 1:17). He then travels to Jerusalem and stays fifteen days (Acts 9:26, Galatians 1:18-19). Barnabas... takes Paul to the apostles and personally vouches for his converted character (Acts 9:27). Paul's preaching ...infuriates some Jews ...seek to kill him (Acts 9:29). the brethren learn about the threat (&) escort him to Caesarea and send him to his hometown of Tarsus (Acts 9:30).

At this point, it is not clear how much he knew about his upcoming apostleship. Barnabas was the one who went to his home in Tarsus, in the Roman province of Cilicia to bring him to Antioch, the major city of Syria at the time. You can read about this in Acts 11:22-26

The church in Jerusalem sent Barnabas to Antioch. When Barnabas got there, he was very glad to see what God was doing among them by grace. He begged them to remain faithful to the Lord with all their hearts. Barnabas was a good man of great faith and filled with the Holy Spirit. Many more people turned to the Lord. Eventually, Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul. Finding Saul, he brought him to Antioch, where they met with the church there for an entire year—teaching many.

It seems that Paul didn't know the timing of his calling until he and Barnabas were sent out on the first missionary

journey that brought him to Galatia. In Acts 13:2 all it says is that the Holy Spirit told them to set Paul and Barnabus apart to do the work He had called them to. This is the actual event of apostleship—the sending out.

Apostle

The word means one who is sent: This can be for a work as large as Paul's call to the Gentiles or as small as a Bible study. It can be for a small on-demand publisher or a hospital or a building contractor or whatever the Lord has need of. The apostle is responsible for the spiritual leadership of the work he or she is sent to accomplish.

As is usual, Paul had to wait for the fulfillment of the prophecy Ananias received when he was sent by God to pray for Saul immediately after his conversion. We see in Acts 9:15–16 what Ananias heard:

But the Lord said, "Go, for Saul is the one I have chosen to take my message to the heathen and to kings, as well as to the people of Israel. I will show him how much he must suffer for my name's sake."

So Paul had heard about the calling, but the sending happened much later. The history in Acts 9 is much more compressed than what Paul shares here to the Galatians. Here it seems as if he spent several years waiting for the fulfillment of the prophecy given to Ananias.

Waiting for your calling

It is normal and common to wait for a long time as the Lord prepares you to work out the calling on your life. Joyce Meyer talks about a couple of decades before she was ready for the explosion of ministry that occurred for her in the mid-1990s. Charisma magazine's 35-year anniversary timeline of the church says that Joyce's ministry exploded

to a worldwide ministry in 1998. She received the call in 1975 or so?

If that was the realization of her original calling (and that seems likely) she waited over 20 years. One of my favorite stories of Watchman Nee was something he told a follower after a sermon he preached. The person was gushing over how good the sermon was and asked Watchman how long it took him to write the sermon. His response was “about twenty years”.

He went on to write that he didn't think it was possible for a man or woman to become mature enough to be trusted with a calling without spending a long time under the Lord's tutelage. This all goes back to what I have written about the need for elders instead of the plague of youngers we have ministering in many of our churches.

God may indeed call you today, but take years to prepare you to minister and walk in the area of your calling in ministry. Success in doing what God desires for you will not come if you run ahead of God's time and schedule. It is possible to achieve popularity without producing the fruit of the spirit in your life or in the lives of those you are ministering to.

It actually seems like God was in a bit of a hurry (for Him) to get Paul out and working. But He still spent the time necessary preparing Paul for the work. As I mentioned, that time seems to be somewhere between four and seven years from the time he was knocked off his horse until the elders at Antioch sent him and Barnabas out.

Chapter Two

Verses 2:1-3

Fourteen years later I went up to Jerusalem again with Barnabas and Titus. I had a revelation and went up to set before them the gospel that I preach to the heathen (privately before the seemingly influential) in order to make sure I was not in error or out of line. Titus was not forced to be circumcised even though he was a Greek.

This is a radical jump forward in time. Paul doesn't tell us where the 14 years are measured from. The important thing for this narrative is that the leaders of the Jerusalem church had not required Titus to become circumcised though he was an uncircumcised Gentile believer.

Verses 2:4-6

We talked about this problem because some false believers had infiltrated our group. Like spies they came to thwart the freedom we have in Jesus the Messiah. They wanted to enslave us. But we did not give in to those troublemakers at all. We wanted the truth of the gospel to continue for you. Those seemingly important leaders didn't change what I preach even a little bit (their importance is a matter for God to determine).

This is radically paraphrased to give you understanding of what Paul saw happening in the church. He saw it as a secretive, evil attack on the Gospel. It seems to irk Paul that he feels compelled to check things out with people who he doesn't seem to feel have any real authority over him. But that is just my opinion.

Verses 2:7-10

But these leaders saw that I had been given the work of telling the gospel to non-Jews, just as Peter had the work of telling the Jews. God gave Peter the apostleship for the Jews, backing it with power. But he gave me the

same power and apostleship for non-Jews. James, Peter, and John, who seemed to be the leaders, understood that God had given me this special grace, so they accepted Barnabas and me. They agreed that they would go to the Jews and that we should go to the non-Jews. The only thing they asked of us was to remember to help the poor—something I really wanted to do.

Paul wants us to be sure that we realize that the church leadership approved of his ministry and agreed with his calling. He's being very careful.

Verses 2:11–14

When Peter came to Antioch, I called him out. He was wrong. Peter ate with the Gentiles until some Jews sent from James came to Antioch. When they arrived, Peter stopped eating with those who weren't Jewish. He separated himself from the Gentile believers and held himself aloof being afraid of the circumcision group. So Peter and the other Jewish believers who joined with him were hypocrites. Even Barnabas got caught up in what these Jewish believers did. When I saw they were not following the truth of the gospel, I spoke to Peter in front of them all. I said, "Peter, you are a Jew, but you are not living like a Jew. You are living like a Gentile. So why do you now try to force those who are Gentiles to live like Jews?"

Judaizers

This was more than simply requiring circumcision. It appears that these Jews were keeping kosher. It is likely they required most of the Jewish lifestyle.

Paul is irate—with good reason. Peter's behavior was really bad. Talk about a bad witness! Yet, it is very easy to get caught up in what the church tells us we should be doing.

You will notice, as you grow in the Lord, that most Christian organizations have strong cultural positions. In most churches, the core people all look the same. Men, women, and children commonly dress that same, use the same lingo, come from the same background, and worship the same.

Unity or conformity?

Ephesians 4:1-6 talks a lot about unity.

oneness of mind, feeling, etc., as among a number of persons; concord, harmony, or agreement.

How is that different from conformity (defined below)?

action in accord with prevailing social standards, attitudes, practices; compliance or acquiescence; obedience.

There is very strong pressure to conform—even if it does not fit your personality or culture. Often, it no longer fits your current beliefs—yet the pressure is there. In this case, Peter seems to have been intellectually convinced that Gentile believers were fine and he fellowshiped with them freely.

However, when his cultural roots showed up in the group sent from Jerusalem, he could not resist slipping back into the old ways of living. We need to watch that in our lives.

This is also the danger of hanging with bad company, old friends from before you believed, office buddies, ammd all those possibilities. It takes moral character to resist the pressures of the group. You need to make your behavioral actions a decision based on scripture and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

A good guiding principle is found in Ephesians 5: 15&16
Look carefully how you walk, not as fools
but wise, making the most of the time...

Our behavior is important. We can get ourselves into messes and actual serious spiritual trouble very easily by simply not paying attention.

Verses 2:15–16

We are Jews by birth and not sinners come out of the Gentiles. However, knowing that a person is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Jesus our Messiah, even we have believed in Jesus—that we may be justified by faith in Jesus and not by the works of the Law; since by the Law no flesh will be justified.

Here is the quick two verse summation of Romans 1–5. This is the core of Paul's message. In this, his first letter preserved, the theological development is clean and simple. God has provided a solution to the real problem—which is that none of us can keep the law and justify ourselves in the eyes of God. Being made right with God by faith in Jesus gives us a wonderful way out.

Verse 2:17–18

If we seek justification in the Kingdom of God and then are found guilty because we have abandoned the law, does that mean the Messiah has led us into sin? Absolutely not! Rather, I am a sinner if I rebuild the old system of law I already tore down.

How does the Law of Moses affect us now?

The purpose of the Law is to prove guilt. It does not save us. It brings no hope.

Paul's basic argument is this: if we believe our faith is what matters, then the legal requirements of the Law really cause problems. We step outside the Law to base our sal-

vation on faith. Resurrecting the Law only proves we are sinners (very quickly, by the way).

Verse 2:19

It was the Law itself that killed me and freed me from its power, so that I could live for God. [CEV]

For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God. [NASB]

For when I tried to keep the law, it condemned me.

So I died to the law—I stopped trying to meet all its requirements—so that I might live for God. [NLT]

In the Spirit, this concept is very clear. Putting it into language is very difficult. The Law made it clear to me that I deserved death, because I was a sinner. So, the only real hope I have of serving God and pleasing Him is by dying. I cannot please God as a sinner. I only cease sinning when I die. That seems plain and simple—right? What a conundrum!

Verse 2:20

I have been crucified with the Messiah. I no longer live, but He lives in me. The life I now live in the flesh is lived by the faith of Jesus who loved me and delivered himself up for me.

I have died. This is what baptism symbolizes—but it goes far beyond symbolism. Romans 6: 3–11 gives us Paul’s full argument. Our faith places us in the body of Christ. This body died when the head was killed and rose again when Jesus burst out of the grave.

Faith in or of?

In this passage the translation is normally “the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in Christ”. But we need to remember something. One of the major things my father taught me was what he saw in the Greek grammar of Galatians 2:20

...the life I now live in the flesh I live
by the faith of the Son of God...

I don't live by my faith in Jesus, I live by His faith
and what He did. Yes, I need faith, but even
that is a gift. I can't produce this powerful faith.
All I can do is receive it as it is given to me.

It's a small quibble, but the attitude
behind it is important. All we have is
given. By grace we are saved by God.

Our faith accepts the righteous penalty for sin—death. Giving Jesus control of our lives legally allows us to gain the benefits of his death on the Cross. We become part of a spiritual super-being that fulfilled all the requirements of the law, paid the penalty of death for us all, and brought us through to the other side alive in the spirit. All believers are included in this new organism of the Messiah—the head, mind, and character of which are Jesus himself.

Paul talks about this when he is mentoring Timothy. He clearly understands that the faith and love belong to Jesus and come from within because of his presence. Look what is found there.

He has blessed my life with the faith and love that
are his and found in him. [1 Timothy 1:13&14]

Verse 2:21

I don't set the grace of God aside; for if righteousness is possible through the law, then Jesus died for no reason.

Paul wants to be sure we remember that Jesus' death was absolutely necessary. There was no other way for us to be saved or delivered from ourselves except through the Cross. We were depraved sinners without hope—so out of it and ignorant we weren't even aware of the problem until He called us. In God's plan it is necessary for us to learn how bad sin really is.

Of course it is embarrassing that we are so helpless and weak. We have to get over it. Thankfully, God sent us a savior who is wonderful, kind, funny, powerful, and worthy of our trust. We must remember our lives before we were reborn from above. We would have been stuck there if He had not been willing to die for us.

As it says somewhere, "We are a peculiar people."

Chapter Three

Verse 3:1

You stupid Galatians! I told you exactly how Jesus was nailed to a cross as our Messiah. Who put an evil spell on you?

Foolish or stupid?

The word stupid is *anoetos* which means the following in Noah Webster's Dictionary:

1: Marked with, or exhibiting, folly; void of understanding; weak in intellect; without judgment or discretion; silly; unwise.

2: Such as a fool would do; proceeding from weakness of mind or silliness; exhibiting a want of judgment or discretion; as, a foolish act.

3: Absurd; ridiculous; despicable; contemptible.

The "circumcision" are being displayed as evil wizards preying on a stupid people. I was taught that the exclamation foolish or stupid is strong, nasty slang. Paul was really upset. How could these people who have the Holy Spirit be so dumb as to allow people to talk them out of their blessings.

Verse 3:2

The only thing I need answered is: did you receive the Holy Spirit by keeping the Law or by hearing with faith?

This is the experiential key. Our rebirth from above and the filling with the Holy Spirit are a direct result of an act of faith. We state our belief verbally to God and in front of Man, ask by faith and it is done. No good change ever happened by keeping the Law.

We avoid police by keeping the Law. We can reap blessings from following the principles shown by the Law. But the Law can never give us salvation, justification, wisdom, or redemption.

Hearing with faith: this can be very unique depending on the person and situation. When I accepted the Lord in 1974, my basic internal attitude was, “I have no idea if you are real or not, Jesus. I’ll give you six months to prove yourself. I need something and I’m desperate.” The Lord honored that, by His mercy. I had the normal prayers prayed over me by my father and others. But I had no idea what they were really doing.

Verse 3: 3-5

How idiotic! You began your life in the Kingdom in the Spirit. Why are you now trying to complete your conversion by your own human effort? Have you experienced so much for no purpose? Surely you didn’t waste your time? I ask you again, does God give you the Holy Spirit and work miracles among you because you obey the law? Of course not! It is because you believe what you heard about the Messiah —accepting Jesus to be God’s son..

Paul is pounding on them to get their attention, using ridicule, sarcasm, and blatant statements. The sad thing is that it probably had no affect on the Galatians unless the Lord anointed the words as they were read. You will never talk anyone into belief. Without the anointing, whatever you say or do will fall on deaf ears or have no affect.

In the case of this letter, the anointing seems obvious as the letter has become part of scripture and still works in power today.

The message here is a repeat of what he has already said. You cannot complete the work of the Spirit by your own efforts in the flesh. Quitting smoking will not make you a better Christian. It may be an act of obedience to the Lord in an individual case, but it has no power to make your Christian walk more holy or fruitful. When God

told us to quit nearly 30 years ago, our obedience carried a blessing but that blessing was not quitting smoking. It may be argued that our flesh is now healthier, but is that because of quitting smoking or because God blessed our obedience? Paul talked about this exact issue in Colossians 2: 20-23.

Why do you keep on following the rules of the world, such as, “Don’t handle! Don’t taste! Don’t touch!” about things that are destroyed by use? Such rules are only human teachings that may seem wise in promoting religion, self-denial, and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping fleshly indulgence.

Is beating up your body for health reasons Godly?

Sometimes yes, and sometimes no. It all depends on your reason and attitude.

Narcissism is sin. Worrying about health to the detriment of fruit development is sin. How do you react to health issues and cultural norms?

There is no power in these cultural and traditional rules. It’s all about faith and following the lead of the Holy Spirit. Paul’s point here is that they were not following the Spirit at all when they required circumcision to be acceptable. We cannot make ourselves acceptable in the flesh.

Verse 3:6-9

Abraham “believed God, and it was put on his account as righteousness”. Therefore it is those of faith who are the children of Abraham. And the scriptures, knowing beforehand that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the good news to Abraham, saying, “In you shall all the nations be blessed.” This means that those having faith will share in the blessings that were given to Abraham because of his faith.

This seems like a strange argument to we modern Americans, but it is rooted in the idea that the descendants share in the inheritance of their forefathers and mothers.

Here we get to the root of Bible study. If the scriptures are inspired by the Holy spirit, then everything from Adam and Eve to the New Jerusalem is talking about a single conceptual creative project of God. It all ties together, and still applies to us today.

Inerrancy?

This is the belief that scripture is absolutely literally true. This belief approaches the occultic view of books of power where precise word-by-word spells are required and necessary.

You need to understand how inspiration works. The Holy Spirit inspires—BUT: God does not use automatic writing like demon-inspired works do. He uses people to write down what they hear from Him as accurately as possible.

Does error creep in? No, that's not true—but we are reading translations of translations.

Does everything literally apply today? No, much of what was written only applies to the time in which it was written. Only the Holy Spirit, the original author, can sort it all out for us. Then we get anointed teaching like Paul shows us here.

Abraham “believed God, and it was put on his account as righteousness”. This little sentence in Deuteronomy 15:6 does not seem like much. But the Holy Spirit showed Paul that it is key to our understanding of what the Messiah did and what God's plan was from the beginning. The basic concept is that everything that happened to Abraham happened before the law was given.

Verse 3:10

Trying to please God by obeying the Law puts you under a curse. The Scriptures say, “Everyone who doesn’t obey everything in the Law is under a curse.”

This is another little Old Testament nugget from Deuteronomy 27:26. Remember that the Law includes the first five books of the Bible: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. The arguments that many of the things in the Mosaic law are no longer relevant to modern society is bogus, but even assuming that much of the stuff no longer applies—like mixed fibers in fabric, or hybrid plants, or eating kosher—then the Big Ten are enough to convict us. None of us has kept the ten commandments. So we are all guilty of not obeying everything. Therefore we are under the curse.

But what about the rest of the Law?

There is much there that we ignore at our peril. The idea of eating corn that is not affected by Roundup—a herbicide that kills everything and causes cancer—is a little scary, coupled with the fact that this hybrid corn is sterile. Maybe this is why God warned us in the Law that we should not mix seed? Many believe that things like this are the reason for all of our allergies and things like that.

My personal peeve would be cotton-poly blends. Like hybrids, this seems to break Leviticus 19:19. So, are cotton-poly socks sin? That’s between you and the Lord. Personally, my feet are much healthier when I can find 100% cotton socks.

What about mules? That clearly breaks Lev. 19:19—right?

What other ways do you and we break the law?

Verse 3:11

We have evidence that no one is justified before God by the law “The righteous shall live by faith.”

Here Paul seems to pull another quote out of the blue—this time from Habakkuk 2:4. I find it fascinating how the Holy spirit can put teachings together. But this was well-known teaching. Hayford’s spirit-filled bible gives us this quote from the Talmud: Moses gave Israel 613 commandments. David reduced them to ten. Isaiah to two, but Habakkuk to one. Paul’s revelation put this quote at the core of Christian faith.

Verse 3:12

The law is not based on faith. It says, “Obey my laws and rules; a person who obeys them will live because of them. I am the Lord.”

It seems strange to me that people love this idea. Churches who promote the law by focusing on the principles of the law have huge followings. The law is easy to understand and you can always look for loopholes. Pastors who tell their sheep how to live and what to do in any situation have large followings because people do not want to have to think or to be dependent on hearing God.

That sounds too much like work. It must be too difficult. It takes effort. The walk of faith requires us to develop a personal relationship with God that dominates our life. Our relationship with the Lord must have prime place in our lives, thoughts, and actions.

Verse 3:13

Our Messiah took away the curse the law put on us. He took our place and volunteered for the curse. It is written, “Anyone whose body is displayed on a tree is cursed.”

Here the Spirit inspires Paul to connect the curse of Deuteronomy with the cross.

If a man has committed a sin worthy of death and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, his corpse shall not hang all night on the tree, but you shall surely bury him on the same day (for he who is hanged is accursed of God) [DEUTERONOMY 21:22-23 NASB]

Jesus had not committed a sin worthy of death, but basically volunteered to be hung on a tree. This was probably idiomatic usage of the time to call the cross a tree.

Verse 3:14

And now, because of what Jesus did, Abraham's blessing is available for heathens also so that we all might receive his Spirit in the way Abraham did.

As is common in anointed teaching, Paul's reasoning makes leaps that go beyond logic to simply expose truth. Again we can tell by the huge variations in the translations of these verses that the concepts were clear though difficult to express logically.

I remember that best preacher I ever heard. He was the overseer when Pat and I were called to plant a mission church in the New Age section of a city a couple decades ago. His preaching was amazingly anointed.

Here's what I mean by anointed preaching. Everyone in the audience heard an individualized, targeted message that directly applied to them personally. His preaching had real power to change lives. When you heard him preach, it was obviously God using him to speak to us individually.

His style was unique. He rarely spoke in full sentences. The words were brief, prayerfully considered, and often seemed to wander about the topic. What each of us received was rarely about the planned subject matter. He

was enabled to put forth words in such a way that the Spirit could freely use them to put together individual messages for each listener. It was a marvelous thing. I loved to sit under his teaching.

I suspect Paul was a bit like that. Peter said he was difficult to understand. The only people who didn't like our overseer's sermons were those who tore them apart, looking for logical structure. They had no logical structure, but a supernatural coherency. He spoke truths that the Spirit assembled into a *rhema* for each of us.

Rhema?

There are two words used in the New Testament that are translated word. One is *logos* which is the overall word of the Lord. The Logos became flesh and dwelt among us. [JOHN 1:14]

The other is *rhema* which is the specific utterance from the Lord for a specific purpose. ...the sword of the spirit, which is the Rhema of God. [EPHESIANS 6:17]

Rhema are personal and when shared with others often mean nothing to anyone else other than yourself. They are given in a specific place for a specific time.

Verse 3:15

Dear brothers and sisters, here's an example in human terms. Just as no one can set aside or amend an accepted contract, so it is in this case.

It is always good to get these truths into everyday experience. Paul is saying that if our agreements under the law are binding, how much more are spiritual covenants with God irrevocable?

Verse 3:16

God made promises both to Abraham and to his seed. God did not say, “and to your seeds.” That would mean many people. But God said, “and to your seed.” That means only one person; that person is Jesus, our Messiah.

The singular/plural thing is not in commentaries. We have to take Paul’s word for it that this is in the Law. The reference is to Genesis 22:18—maybe. But all the modern translations use descendants, plural, for that verse. KJV and the older translations use seed which can be either. The lexicons say the word can be either singular or plural. That this is an unspoken area of confusion is shown in the fact that none of my study bibles have a Genesis cross-reference. We have faith that Paul’s writings are scripture, so we accept his statement as truth.

Verse 3:17

This is what I mean: God had a covenant with Abraham and promised to keep it. Four hundred thirty years later, the law could not change that agreement and make God’s promise to Abraham null and void.

What is a covenant?

How are we supposed to relate to these agreements between man and God? Does God take them seriously? How does James 5:12 relate to this?

In that day covenants were sacred and could not be changed. The same is true legally today. You are not allowed to change your responsibilities in a contract—even if you made a mistake and what you promised will hurt you. External circumstances do not ever change a contract—unless provision for that was written in when the contract was made. God’s promises were not conditional. He made promises and His holy character means He will keep them completely.

Verse 3:18

For if the inheritance could be received by keeping the law, then it would not be the result of God's promise. But God graciously promised it to Abraham.

You cannot and do not need to earn a promise once it is made. God promised so we can rely on it. It will be done.

Verse 3:19a

Why was the law given? It was in addition to the promise so people could see their sin. But the law was designed to last only until the coming of the promised seed.

This idea that the Law is an add-on to show us our sin is a major revelation. The Law is not seen as the way to live a good life. It is to show us that we cannot live a sin-free life through our own efforts or strength.

Can morality be legislated?

This is the modern version of this dilemma. Passing a law never stopped drug use, speeding, or anything like that. Is there error in this statement: God gave up on the law 2000 years ago?

Verse 3:19b-20

The law was given through angels who used Moses for a mediator to give the law to people. But a mediator is not needed when there is only one side, and God is only one. [NEW CENTURY VERSION]

This seems to be another little argument Paul tossed in there that has little to do with us today. But then, that may just be my ignorance. What do you think?

Verse 3:21-22

Does this mean that the law is contrary to God's promises? Certainly not! If God had given a law that could bring life, then being right with God would be

possible legally. Instead, the Scriptures used the Law to show that the whole world is bound by sin. This was done in order that the promise would be given through faith to people who believe in Jesus Christ.

This is a pretty stunning view of the law. It puts its purpose as decidedly secondary. Christians are not to live by the rule of law, but by faith walking in obedience to the Spirit of God. The truly radical nature of what Jesus did becomes apparent. The law has nothing to do with our righteousness—other than to show us convincingly that we have none of our own.

Verse 3:23–26

Before faith came, we were all held confined under the law—imprisoned until faith was revealed. In other words, the law was our guardian until the Messiah was revealed so that we could be made right with God through faith. Now that faith has come, we no longer live under a guardian—for in the Messiah we are all children of God through faith.

Now that faith has come...

What does this mean to you personally?
How are you supposed to relate to our old guardian—the Law?

This is the greatest statement of freedom and liberty in the history of the world! We are free from legalistic bondage—free to walk by faith, responding to the leading of the Holy Spirit. We no longer need a guardian because the King lives within us.

Verse 3:27–29

And all who have been united with Jesus in baptism have put on the Messiah, like putting on new clothes. There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male or female. For you are all one in Jesus the Messiah. And now that

you are within the body of the Messiah, you are the true seed of Abraham—heirs according to the promise of God.

It's a truly radical thing we are involved with. Stature, culture, and position, as well as gender, have no meaning to us in the body of Christ. Of course, this is a statement of faith that rarely works the way it was designed by the Lord. But that is because of our fallen nature, our flesh, our habits, and our training which continue to guide us in the old ways of the world.

One of the ways we can tell if a movement is really of God is the people involved. True moves of God are populated by all walks of life, all races, both sexes, all ages, all abilities. Everyone works together for the common good—taking their place naturally according to the gifts and callings bestowed on each individual by the Holy Spirit.

What limits your ministry?

God has no limits—we do! If He calls you to a work, you can do it. What do you do if the Christian group or organization will not allow what you think God has called you to do?

You are not limited by your flesh. It doesn't matter if you are rich or poor, smart or a little slower than that, beautiful or not, athletic or not. Your sex doesn't matter. Your position in society, your education, none of that limits your ministry. All that matters is God's call on your life.

Chapter 4

Verse 4:1–7

Children who are under age are no better off than slaves, even though they are heirs of everything their parents own. They have to obey their guardians and teachers until the time their parents have set. That is how it was with us before Jesus came. We were like children—slaves to the basic spiritual principles of this world. But when the time was right, God sent his Son—born of a woman, under the Law, so he could set us, who are under the Law, free to be adopted as God’s children. Now that we are his children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying Daddy! Daddy! Doesn’t that privilege of intimacy with God make it plain that you are not a slave, but a child? And if you are His child, you’re also an heir, with complete access to the inheritance.

Adoption

It is helpful to remember what happens with an adoption in a worldly sense. The child, though not “born” into the family, receives all the rights and privileges of that family: a new name, inheritance, and all the rest. An adopted child does not enter the family as a slave, but with the full rights of any blood-related birth child.

I took this as a whole so we could talk about the basic concept. My father told me over and over that before I accepted Jesus I had no freedom of choice. I was completely controlled by my flesh, the world, and spiritual forces that I was not aware of at all.

It took a radical transformation to set me free from all of that so I could experience the freedom of choice. That transference was my adoption as His child. This is what Jesus did in fulfilling the Law on the Cross. He paid the penalty so that I could be adopted, born from above, regen-

erated as a son or daughter of God. I know that because I now have intimate, personal conversations with the God of the universe. I talk to Him and He talks to me—conversationally and personally, about the events of my life, what I want to do, and the things He wants me to do. More than that, I have the same inheritance as Jesus because I am now part of Him.

Verse 4:8–9

Before you Gentiles knew God, you were slaves to so-called gods that do not even exist. So now that you know God (or should I say, now that God knows you), why do you want to go back again and become slaves once more to the weak and useless spirits of this world? [NLT]

How free are you before you're reborn?

Most people are completely unaware of the spiritual world before they are born again from above. Did you know anything about this before Jesus?

This phrase is similar to the one found in Colossians 2: “the elemental spirits of the universe” in the RSV. It is easy for us to dismiss these things as ancient superstitions, but that is really not the case. What has happened is that these spirits have gone underground and we do not talk about them anymore—but they have not gone away.

Paul calls them weak and useless, or worthless, and this is certainly true. However, many of these so-called gods, like Buddhas, kokopellis, kachinas, totems, and the like have demon spirits attached to them. They are only a harassment to believers, but cleaning them up is a good idea.

Many of the things we can purchase today are made in other countries. Many of these items, while they are being made, are often prayed over during their construction. All

we have to do is clean them up with a simple prayer (see below). They are nothing to be afraid of as Jesus' power and position makes them into a bad (but still evil) joke. But you should be aware that these things are real.

Where do we run across these spirits?

Is there a demon under every bush?

One of the problems you will have as you begin to have victory in spiritual warfare is the tendency to blame everything on demons.

Most of the time the trouble will be the fallen state of the world or your own sinful nature. However, there is reality here and many times you will see quick and powerful deliverance with a simple quiet prayer

No! You do not need to shout. The power comes from Jesus, not your vocalizations.

Don't give the evil one more glory and attention than you give God.

We have found that we drag them home with purchases we make—especially purchases of products made in countries where these spirits are worshiped like India, Bali, Sri Lanka, and so on. You should check out the country of origin when you buy. If you start having strange dreams, irrational anger, and things like that—you dragged something home. It's no big deal, but we find that we have to spiritually clean everything we buy and bring into the house any more.

Of course, nonbelievers in our spaces can drag things in also. I used to pray for my classroom every morning before I started teaching. I found I had authority over my lab, but no where else at that school. But the lab I used full-time, where I taught all my classes, was given to me as my spiritual responsibility. Praying made a great difference to my students—though they had no idea that this was

even going on. There were some students who were into wicca and the like who were obviously frustrated by the cleansed and protected spiritual environment of that lab.

It just takes a simple prayer

You can pray something like this: “Any demons attached to these things we just bought (or any demons brought in here by non-believers), we bind you and cast you into the outer darkness. Father, in Jesus’ name, clean up these things (or this place) and bless it for our use. Protect our loved ones and pets. Keep us safe and make our home a sanctuary for your Holy Spirit.”

Just the normal spiritual house cleaning that you should be doing on a regular basis as the head of your household. As head of the household, master of your personal space, you are responsible to keep that space spiritually clean. Of course it gets more complicated if you are living with others who may not be believers. Then you can only cover what you have authority over.

For example, if you are living with your parents and they do not believe, your authority will be limited to your areas of the property (if your parents allow that). You will be able to protect yourself, but cleaning the whole house may be beyond your authority.

The Lord is not going to override the will of the owners of the property. He’s a gentleman and only goes where He is invited. It is interesting to see what works and what does not work.

For example, we lost much of our authority to pray for our daughter when she grew up—especially when she got married. We got a lot of it back when she asked us to pray for her and the children. But this is why some prayers never seem to be answered. You do not have the authority.

For example, when praying for the United States, your authority is on a completely different level than the person who has the responsibility, the president. Governors, mayors, CEOs, sole proprietors, and people like this with responsibility need to be praying. If you are the head of your department, teacher in a specific classroom, leader of a Bible study, and so on, you need to be praying to keep your ministry clean and holy. Husbands, single mothers or fathers, pastors, and so on all have areas of responsibility and the authority to back it up. You need to be constantly aware of your responsibilities. God will give you the authority to protect those areas of responsibility.

Verse 4:10–11

You still observe special days, months, seasons, and years! I am afraid for you, that I may have wasted my time.

There are spiritual days and celebrations that believers should not be involved in. Paul's world was full of them with all the Roman and Greek gods (among others). We would like to believe that we are beyond all of these superstitions, but the spiritual forces behind many of these events still exist though the world might ridicule you for this belief.

What about Mardi Gras?

For us today, for example, there is a real question about how we handle Halloween. This is clearly a Wiccan (a Neopagan religion and a form of modern witchcraft) holiday with many evil overtones. There is a lot of enemy activity on this day that we need to be aware of and pray against—asking for protection for those we are responsible for.

However, the children do not have a clue about this day and legalistic bans may just make the day more attractive to them. You need to pray for wisdom in these matters and follow the leading of the Holy Spirit for you and yours.

Verse 4:12a

Brothers and sisters, I became like you,
so I beg you to become like me.

Paul had taken on Gentile cultural practices in order to minister to them effectively. Here he is asking those to whom he ministered to become like him spiritually. This entire little section seems to be about reminding the Galatians about the ties they have of friendship and love.

Verse 4:12b–15

You were very good to me before. Remember that it was because of an fleshly ailment that I came to you the first time, preaching the Gospel. Though a trial for you, my sickness did not cause you to scorn or despise me or make me leave. But you welcomed me as an angel from God, as if I were Jesus our Messiah himself! You were satisfied then, but where is that joy now? I can testify that you would have taken out your eyes and given them to me if that were possible.

Do you have ailments that God has no intention of healing??

Probably not—but it is certainly possible. God seems to allow some thorns in the flesh to help us remember that the power is His not ours.

How do you pray for situations like this? You ask Him to heal you. You have no idea whether He will or not.

This is the only indication we have in the epistles of Paul's "thorn in the flesh". Evidently, it was a fairly severe condition. Paul is reminding them of their personal history with shared joys and the love they have for each other.

Verse 4:16

Am I now your enemy because I tell you the truth?

We do not know where this is coming from. It seems to imply that the Galatians were upset that Paul was upset with them. But it is probably just a rhetorical comment designed to bring empathetic power to what he has to say to them next.

Verse 4:17–20

Those false teachers are working hard to persuade you, but their intentions are not good. They are trying to shut you off from me so that you will pay attention only to them. It is always good to be made much of for a good purpose; but not just when I'm with you. Oh, my dear children! I feel as if I'm going through labor pains for you again, and they will continue until the life of the Messiah is fully developed in your lives. I wish I were with you right now so I could change my tone. But at this distance I don't know how else to help you.

You can clearly sense Paul's agony. He sees his beloved sheep is deep trouble and he can do little from such a distance. He knows that it will be a long time before they even receive this letter he is writing and that things have been getting worse for a long time. His iPhone wasn't working that day.

Verse 4:21–31

Tell me now, you who have become so enamored with the law: Have you paid close attention to that law? Abraham, remember, had two sons: one by the slave woman and one by the free woman. The son of the slave woman was born by human scheming; the son of the free woman was born by God's promise.

The stories of these two boys
is found in Genesis

Ishmael's birth is in Genesis 16. Isaac's birth is in Genesis 21. You should read the stories now as a reminder of what Paul is talking about here.

This illustrates the very thing we are dealing with now. The two births represent two ways of being in relationship with God. One is from Mount Sinai in Arabia. It corresponds with what is now going on in Jerusalem—a slave life, producing slaves as offspring. This is the way of Hagar. In contrast to that, there is an invisible Jerusalem, a free Jerusalem, and she is our mother—this is the way of Sarah. Remember what Isaiah wrote: Rejoice, barren woman who bears no children, shout and cry out, woman who has no birth pangs, Because the children of the barren woman now surpass the children of the chosen woman. Isn't it clear, friends, that you, like Isaac, are children of promise? In the days of Hagar and Sarah, the child who came from faithless scheming (Ishmael) harassed the child who came—empowered by the Spirit—from the faithful promise (Isaac). Isn't it clear that the harassment you are now experiencing from the Jerusalem heretics follows that old pattern? There is a Scripture that tells us what to do: "Expel the slave mother with her son, for the slave son will not inherit with the free son." Isn't that conclusive? We are not children of the slave woman, but of the free woman.

Ishmael became the Arabs
Isaac became the Jews

All of our present problems in the Middle East were foretold in Genesis. Israel is the Chosen one—by God. You need to be clear about that. God's blessing is still attached to Israel and that will never change.

This is one of those convoluted Jewish theological reasonings that they are so fond of. Paul makes an analogy that seems very strange to us, but there are some things here we need to talk about.

The idea is that Ishmael represents the Law because he was the result of trying to get spiritual blessings through works. Sarah and Abraham attempted to take God's promise into their own hands. This is what legalism always does.

Isaac represents salvation by grace and promise. He came by the work of God as a gift. Here we are not limited to our own efforts. We can never say "we did it!"

Legalism hates the Holy Spirit

You need to get it straight in your mind that people who base their life on rules, behaviors, and the like hate and oppress those of us who take our lead from the moment by moment direction of the Spirit of God.

Does your church give the Holy Spirit control?

This is the key. It is Jesus' church. If the leadership refuses to do that, it is not your job to rise up against them. Ask the Lord if this is your area of ministry. He may well be calling you to minister to those that ask you for help. If this is the case, be fruitful. If it is not, go find the church the Lord has for you to work from.

We see this very strongly in the Gospels. Who did Jesus come against so strongly? Legalists! We know them as Pharisees. The church today is full of Pharisees. How can you identify them in your daily life so you can be prepared?

- ✚ They usually teach almost entirely out of the Old Testament—but not the Psalms and the Prophets. They are looking for rules of living
- ✚ They talk a lot about acceptable behavior
- ✚ They talk about using spiritual laws to get what you want from God because He has to honor his own laws
- ✚ They base their victories on the application of spiritual principles they have discovered in the Bible

✠ They like to have set rules and regulations: These are often over and above the Ten Commandments. Some churches, for example, do not allow musical instruments, forbid dancing, or watch movies. Some do not allow their women to wear makeup or jewelry, Are these people evil? NO! They are simply misguided.

In most cases, they are not even heretics. You may or may not be given an opportunity to help them through it. This takes real wisdom and maturity on your part. The Holy Spirit is the only one with the wisdom to pierce that darkness.

It is not your job to crusade against them. Pray for them and their blindness. But do not talk against them. They are still God's children—not yours. Your goal remains the same—be a light in the darkness, a source of love, joy, and peace.

Chapter 5

Verse 5:1

The Messiah has truly set us free. Stand fast and stay free, and do not get bound up in slavery again

What is freedom?

Dictionary.com says philosophically that freedom is:

the power to exercise choice and make decisions without constraint from within or without; autonomy; self-determination

It's number 2&3 definitions are:

exemption from external control, interference, regulation, etc. & the power to determine action without restraint.

From what are you free?

This is a glorious statement to we Americans who have made freedom the center of our culture. But it is always a struggle because freedom assumes responsibility. Yes, we are free, but we are responsible for our actions.

It is much easier to slip back into legalism—a set of rules to follow where we do not have to think. Listen to politicians and see how often they use phrases like, “We are governed by the rule of law.” Followers are much more common than leaders for this reason. If you simply do what you are told, the pressure is off.

But all of this is just a screen for what is really happening. Yes, we are free—to choose who we wish to follow. As for me, I choose to follow the Holy Spirit sent by Jesus, my Messiah. What about you?

Verse 5:2-4

Look: I, Paul, say to you that if you accept circumcision, Christ will be of no advantage to you. I testify again

to every man who accepts circumcision that he is obligated to keep the whole law. You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace. [ESV]

This is outside most of our experience. It's hard for us to fathom that becoming a Jew meant having the foreskin of your penis cut off—as an adult if you converted. It was a religious event that stated in ritual that you were tied to the Jewish view of life—that the rule of Law is the supreme good given by God to live your life.

But what about this?

“Don't suppose that I came to do away with the Law and the Prophets. I came not to destroy them, but to fulfill them... I promise that not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished. If you reject even the least important command in the Law and teach others to do the same, you will be the least important person in the kingdom of heaven. But if you obey and teach others its commands, you will have an important place in the kingdom. You must obey God's commands better than the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law obey them. If you don't, I promise you that you will never get into the kingdom of heaven.” [Matthew 5:17]
Jesus said that.

No wonder they were so upset that Paul had completely stepped outside of that by saying that it was no longer required. In fact, that this legalism was actually bondage. Once you accept the Law as the rule of your life you have left the possibility of grace behind you forever. You are tied to the Law.

You break any law and you are a sinner. If you are a sinner you must pay the penalty. The penalty is death.

There is no probation or parole—no way to skirt the penalty. You break the law and you die period

“You who are trying to be justified by the law are alienated from Christ...”

This is a radical statement. Not only are we free from the law, but by looking there to make our relationship right with God we are cutting ourselves off from Jesus the Messiah—fallen from grace.

Verse 5:5

But we who live by the Spirit eagerly await the righteousness received by faith which God has promised to us.

The question is not that we are looking for righteousness. Both legalists and we walking in the Spirit are seeking the same goal. As Christians, however, we know that the only hope for righteousness comes from a free gift from God.

We begin to see why the Jews were so upset by all of this. Seemingly, righteousness comes from faith instead of obedience. But as you see in the sidebar on the previous page, it's really not that clear cut.

Verse 5:6

For in the Messiah it doesn't matter whether you are circumcised or not. The one thing that counts is faith working through love.

Outward signs do not matter any more. This seems to be the message. However, we need to be careful not to toss the baby with the bath water. Symbolic actions still have great benefit to humans. It's just the way we are made.

It is also one of the ways we are made in the image of God. He is constantly doing symbolic acts. Jesus hanging on the cross is a fulfillment of the symbolic act of raising

the serpent on a pole in the exodus. Baptism is symbolic of the death and cleansing we undergo when we believe.

However, we cannot slip into the heresy of many main-line churches by saying that baptism saves us—like magic. Baptism is well described as a sacramental act, but it brings no righteousness in itself. The same is true of communion. I have seen strong blessings in the obedience of communion. I do think we ought to do it every Sunday service. However, it is not an occultic operation of power.

What matters is our faith. Here we can go by the New Testament itself. Nowhere is it spelled out in scripture the ceremony we are to use for baptism, holy communion, the laying on of hands, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, or any religious service. The closest scripture comes to anything like this is James' injunction to go to the elders when you are sick "and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord". (Found in James 5:14-15)

Obviously, religious liturgy and ceremonial style do not matter much to the Lord. This is one of the differences between Christianity and other religions—especially the occult. In the occult, power is found by saying specific words in order in a specific ceremony that must be followed exactly. We have been set free from all of that.

So, symbology and ceremony can be great teaching tools and significant aids to memory. However, they have no power to save or heal or change a person. That is reserved for the Holy Spirit. And we must remember that we are commanded by Jesus to have some sort of regular communion. It's an act of obedience—as is baptism. The laying on of hands is also important as are prayers for the sick. You just need to be sure that you remember where the power lies and in whom we place our faith.

Verse 5:7-8

You were doing so well until someone talked you out of obeying the truth. This persuasion did not come from Him who calls you.

We must always be careful who we listen to. Over the years my wife and I have spent countless hours correcting strange beliefs held by immature Christians.

Note carefully, I do not see any hint here that Paul is calling these people heathens. What he is saying is that the result of their teaching has had a drastic affect on the lives of the Galatians.

What is a heretic?

Dictionary.com says that a heretic is: a professed believer who maintains religious opinions contrary to those accepted by his or her church or rejects doctrines prescribed by that church.

anyone who does not conform to an established attitude, doctrine, or principle.

Is Paul saying these Jews are heretics?

We were watching a man on the TV last night. He has a huge reputation in the worldwide church at the moment—and a huge church. This is the second time I've heard him preach. He never talks about Jesus, but warm fuzzy social and psychological things. He doesn't work for me, but I'd never recommend him to a hurting person.

Another preacher we've seen a lot of lately really only talks about money and prosperity. He also never talks about Jesus or walking in the Spirit. His focus is in following spiritual principles to get money for the kingdom (and yourself). Are these two men heretics? Probably not, but I certainly am careful and usually turn them off. They are not edifying to me.

Verse 5:9

This false teaching is like a little yeast that spreads through the whole batch of dough! I am trusting the Lord to keep you from believing false teachings. God will judge that person, whoever he is, who has been confusing you. [NLT]

We need to be careful about allowing little things to enter and take over our faith. In the years I have been walking with the Lord there have been many of these little things that grew out of all proportion. The headship/submission group in the late 1970s turned some church leadership into dictatorial overlords. The name it and claim it group slipped into blab it and grab it methods of self aggrandizement. The healing power of laughter became a rigid worship style.

All of these things have truth in them, but were taken too far. It will do you good to remember Paul's little definition of Christian maturity in Ephesians.

Then we will no longer be immature like children. We won't be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching. We will not be influenced when people try to trick us with lies so clever they sound like the truth. [EPHESIANS 4:14 NLT]

The key is bible study and filling your mind with scripture. You also need to find mature leaders and trusted Christian friends who are more mature than you are.

Verse 5:10-12

I have confidence in you in the Lord that mine is the view you will take, and the one who is troubling you will bear judgment, whoever he is. But, brothers & sisters, if I still preach circumcision, why am I being persecuted by the Judaizers? The offense of the cross has been removed. I wish those who unsettle you would emasculate themselves!

Think Paul is upset? He sees that making circumcision a necessary part of salvation removes the necessity of the cross to pay the price for our sin. I suspect the last line is nasty slang.

Verse 5:13

My dear family, you were called to freedom; however, do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

Here we start getting into the area that has caused so much confusion in the church for the past decades, centuries, and millennia. If we are free from the law, why do we bother to obey its precepts at all? Paul acknowledges that we are free, but we must be careful to keep the flesh under control. Freedom from the law gives the flesh license, right?

Verse 5:14

The entire law is fulfilled in one line, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself”.

Paul starts the argument by making a simple statement. Knowing that Jesus said he came to fulfill the law, not abolish it, Paul summarizes it here.

This is what the Lord means to produce in us—the ability to love others as He loves us. The more you walk with the Lord and the better you know Him, the more certain you are of the importance of agape.

Agape love

The term used here for love is *agape*. This is a particular kind of love used in the New Testament. Vine is convinced that this noun and the accompanying verb *agapeo* are used uniquely in the New Testament. Here is the consensus used by the church.

It is God love—love by decision. It is a love given by grace because of the basic character of God. We do not deserve, nor can we earn it. It just is. It is only possible by the power of the Holy Spirit. Humans are not capable of it otherwise.

Verse 5:15

If you fight and squabble, be careful that you do not end up consuming one another.

This love thing is key. If you let the flesh get involved and you start biting and devouring each other [the terms used in the NASB], you can end up destroying each other.

Verse 5:16–17

My instruction is: walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh oppose the Spirit. The Spirit enables us to want to do the opposite of our lust and cravings. These two entities are constantly battling each other, so you are not free to carry out your intentions.

We must understand that our spirit, coupled with the Holy Spirit, have completely different goals, ideals, and attitudes than our old selves [from before our rebirth]. The winner of this battle is now our choice.

Before we knew the Lord, we had no control over this at all. Our life was governed by the fulfillment of our desires. What we had no idea of was the simple fact that our flesh is entirely self-serving. It's only goal is to please itself—to feel good.

This does not change when we are born again. What changes is that we now have options.

But if you refuse to serve the Lord, then choose today whom you will serve... But as for me and my family, we will serve the Lord.” [JOSHUA 24:14–16 NLT]

Joshua could choose, but he had no power to be good. We have the option to be good. We are not capable of that, but the Holy Spirit can make that a reality in our lives.

Our only hope for that goodness and righteousness is to follow the leadings of the Spirit and give Him control of our lives. The battle between flesh and spirit will be a constant concern throughout our life here on the planet. All we can do is ask the Spirit to guide us and give us wisdom.

It is His power that makes it possible. All we can do is seek Him. The hope is that we will be wise and loving in heaven once we realize the perfection of the Father's design. For now, it is a spiritual battle. This battle is what determines our rewards in heaven. Walking in the Spirit is the source of our power to do that.

Verse 5:18

If you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law.

Here is the key to the whole thing. Being led by the Holy Spirit sets us outside the law. As soon as we try to make our lives better by following the law, we ruin that freedom to be and do good.

This is the statement and reality that scares church leaders half to death. They can tell if you are following the law. They have no real idea whether or not you are truly walking in the Spirit. They only have two options: take your word for it or get direct knowledge from the Spirit themselves.

My wife was blessed to have the second type of communication. The Lord would tell her what was going on with her sheep. But operating in the gifts like this is extremely rare in the church today.

The point of all this is that walking in the Spirit is risky. Once we start on that path we are completely dependent on the Lord and the leadings of His Holy spirit.

✚ We must be in constant communication

✚ It takes effort

✚ It takes walking in obedience

✚ It takes dedication

✚ It takes perseverance

✚ It takes self-control

Thankfully, the Lord has that covered also.

Verse 5:19–21

Now the deeds resulting from the flesh pursuing its desires are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, lustful pleasures, idolatry, sorcery [drug use], enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, party spirit, envy, drunkenness, orgies [unrestrained parties], 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.

A couple of word definitions first:

Sexual immortality: In many of the translations both adultery and fornication are listed. Fornication seems to be the modern forgotten sin—written off as an archaic rule that no longer applies to our modern, sophisticated culture. Sex outside the bonds of marriage is always wrong. This is the basic sin of homosexuality also. God designed sex to be confined within the marriage covenant. This covenant is between a man, a woman, and God.

Pornography: the word used and translated as fornication is *porneia*. Vine's defines this as "harlotry (including adultery and incest); figuratively, idolatry, translated: fornication." It is the root word of pornography, which I

usually call lusting after other men's women. Then there is the modern psychobabble term: sexual addiction.

Sorcery: From Vine's we see this is not what we expect. The word used is *pharmakeia*] (English: "pharmacy," etc.) It primarily signified "the use of medicine, drugs, spells. In that day, the drugs were administered with incantations and pleadings to occult powers. In fact, much of sorcery is about protection from demons.

The basic meaning is the use of drugs to obtain power. For us, this is the modern practice of medicine. No, I am not saying that you should quit taking your medicine. I'm saying that you need to be careful.

Where are you looking for your healing? If it is not to God, you are missing the boat. We take medicine in obedience to our doctor—after we discern that the Lord wants us to go to the doctor.

But there are lines that should not be crossed lightly. Acupuncture, yoga, meditation, biofeedback, and the whole host of fleshly and occultic practices that are masquerading themselves as modern medicine or eastern medicine are fraught with danger spiritually.

Seditions/divisions: *dichostasia* strife and division are among Paul's most common warnings—they also make the list of the seven things the Lord hates in Proverbs 6:19.

Party spirit: Let's quote Vine's here "*hairesis*... properly, a choice, i.e. (specially) a party ...: heresy (which is the Greek word itself), sect." This one is not commonly taught. Obviously this is not about wild parties, but something much worse.

In our modern culture, we see this in politics, brand marketing, being hip or cool, plus many denominations are the result of this work of the flesh.

Some heresies are obvious. Paul is dealing with one of the biggies here in Galatians—the circumcision party. Others are more subtle like the cult of the thin infecting our culture today.

Some of these things cannot be avoided. It is important to know which churches actually believe that Jesus is both man and God, for example. It is crucial to accept the death on the cross and the resurrection.

But a lot of the divisions we see today involve personal style. This is not good. Making divisions based on the type of music, style of preaching, and the like are works of the flesh in almost all cases.

The basic focus of fleshy works is separation, anger, hostility, and selfishness. The most common tools brought out by Satan and his cohorts in the twentieth century, that we are dealing with today, are cars, radio, television, movies, Internet, cell phones, and all the rest of our modern benefits that limit personal contact and responsibility.

The enemy's focus has been on the destruction of community, family, and relationships in general. Leadership is mocked. Niches are glorified. How close is a Facebook friend, anyway?

Verse 5:22–23

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

The tendency here is to dissect these fruits one by one like we did with the works of the flesh. I could do that [& I might a little], but it misses the point.

The works of the flesh are plural, They are all about division, separation and the like. The fruit of the spirit is singular. It is not fruits of the spirit—it is the *fruit* of the

spirit. It is one thing—all of these attributes as a synergistic whole. This whole has another name and that is the character of Jesus.

This list is a description of His personality. This is who He is. This is what God is. This is what He wishes to produce in us—the very nature of God, The Holy Spirit's job is to bring us back to where we were in the Garden—in the image of God.

Counterfeits: the enemy has counterfeits for all of these attributes. We need to make sure we understand this and what the temptations are.

- ⊕ Lust instead of love
- ⊕ Excitement instead of joy
- ⊕ Allegiance instead of faithfulness
- ⊕ Image & appearances instead of self-control
- ⊕ Romance & carefulness instead of gentleness

This one is tough because the greek *chrestotes* actually means excellence of character as well as gentleness and tenderness.

- ⊕ Philanthropy & good works instead of kindness
- ⊕ Determination & drive instead of patience
- ⊕ Comfort instead of peace

You may disagree with some of these. I admit that they are all not as clear as the comparison between lust & love or excitement & joy.

However, allowing the Holy spirit to develop this fruit in our lives must be the focus of our lives. Read John 15 to see how Jesus regarded the importance of fruit and fruit-bearing in our lives.

Remember, just like apples come from an apple tree, and oranges from an orange tree, the character of Jesus is

birthed in us when we make Him Lord of our life. I use the word “birthed” because, just as we are born as a baby physically, so to are we born as a spiritual baby. In following Jesus we are to grow more and more like Him as we walk with Him.

We can see this clearly in John’s first letter. Here he talks about the character and life of believers as they grow up. We all pass through these stages.

I am writing to you who are God’s children because your sins have been forgiven through Jesus.

I am writing to you who are mature in the faith because you know Christ, who existed from the beginning.

I am writing to you who are young in the faith because you have won your battle with the evil one.

I have written to you who are God’s children because you know the Father.

I have written to you who are mature in the faith because you know Christ, who existed from the beginning.

I have written to you who are young in the faith because you are strong. God’s word lives in your hearts, and you have won your battle with the evil one. [1 JOHN 2:12–14]

Here we see three levels of spiritual maturity. Children: whose sins are forgiven and they know Abba, Daddy. Young people: who fight the spiritual warfare battles until they overcome the evil one. Mature believers who know God as a wife knows her husband, The mature fruit only shows up in the third stage, in my experience.

The centrality of this is shown by Jesus’ admonition in Matthew 7:15–20. We are to be fruit inspectors. We will know true believers by their fruit, and it will look like Jesus. It’s a wonderful thing.

Verse 5:24

Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to his cross and crucified them there. [NLT]

The works of the flesh must be killed. This is what Jesus did on the cross. This is why Romans 6:3-10 is so crucial to our understanding of what living as a believer means in reality. Jesus already crucified our sinful lusts. All we have to do is accept what He did for us. Of course, we might have to do a few times until it “takes” and becomes reality in our lives.

Verse 5:25

If we live by the Spirit, let's walk by the Spirit.

Part of the message of Romans 6 is that we died and we only live by the power of the Holy Spirit. Because that is true, we also need to consciously follow the leading of the same Holy Spirit.

How many Christians actually do this? Not many. You must decide and give permission for the Spirit to lead you. He is a gentleman and will not force himself upon you. You must ask for his lead and guidance. Without that, walking in the Spirit is impossible.

Verse 5:26

Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, or jealous.

Obviously, there is a lot of arguing and squabbling goin' on in Galatia [see verse 15]. We'll not know what until we meet, but Paul's trying to calm them down.

Chapter 6

Verse 6:1

Dear brothers and sisters, if one of you is caught in sin, you who are godly should gently and humbly help restore that person. And watch yourself, that you don't fall.

Here's the practical instruction alluding to the troubles I'm guessing at. Love and restoration are the solution to bad incidents. This is what we should try to do. The perp's response is not your problem. All you can do is try gently to help in love.

Your attitude: "There, but by the grace of God, go I."

Verse 6:2-5

Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. But let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor. For each will have to bear his own load.

There is a lot in these four verses. First let us consider verses 2 & 5. You need to understand the difference between burden and load.

YOUR LOAD: This is the lot you've been assigned. Your health, wealth, position, and so on. This is yours to deal with. It cannot be taken from you. It is your responsibility to carry it.

One of the problems we have as ministers is to determine loads. For example, several times over the years we have dealt with young men or women who have gotten themselves in trouble. The trouble keeps getting worse because their mother or father always bails them out—literally, emotionally, or physically.

Many times we have counseled the mother to leave her child in jail. We believed that the child had to pay the penalty for their behavior. They had earned it and delivering them from it really hurt their character development. However, the parent would almost never listen. This lifting of the load was the reason why the child had gotten so deeply in trouble in the first place. They never paid any penalty for bad behavior.

YOUR BURDEN: This is temporary situations that come into your life. A car accident, a tornado, a fire, an illness, and so on. We are expected to bear one another's burdens. We are expected to help those in need. It is the loving thing to do.

Burden & Load Comparisons

Burden: Mother who is lazy and refuses to clean her house.

Load: Mother with an extremely sick child in the hospital with children at home.

You should definitely help the mother with the sick child.

Self examination: Verses 3 & 4 seem to be talking about something entirely different. One of the things we all need to be doing constantly is checking ourselves out to make sure we are not running in vain. Of course, we have to be careful to avoid navel gazing and narcissistic obsession. But we need to pray something like this:

“Lord, by your spirit, show me any ways I am lying to myself.” Simple prayers like that go a long way toward helping our growth in the Lord. Of course, you must be willing to hear what the Lord tells you—and it will probably not be pleasant. But Hey! Ya gotta do what ya gotta do to get clean—right?

Verse 6:6

Those who are taught the word of God should provide for their teachers, sharing all good things with them.

This is why I usually charge for my books—what can I say? But to speak for other teachers, it's hard work and dangerous. Teachers are more highly judged. They are responsible for what they teach. It's a fearsome task. Here's James 3:1 from the ESV:

Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.

Teaching takes a lot of time and effort. It takes a lifetime of experience. More than anything, it takes an anointing of the Holy Spirit to be relevant and help others in their walk. There is a cost for that anointing of which you do not know. Just help your teachers as the verse suggests.

Verse 6:7–8

Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who focuses on his own flesh will reap corruption from the flesh, but the one who works on walking in the Spirit will reap eternal life from the Spirit.

There is a lot of teaching on what you sow you'll reap. It's obvious. If you sow wheat, you get wheat. If you sow pumpkins, you get large orange fruit.

You need to be careful here. Some teachers use this verse as a way to attempt to control God. I don't know if God laughs or cries about this.

They (you be the discerners of whom this applies to) teach that sowing and reaping is an irrevocable law that God must honor—always in the context of money. If you sow into their ministry, God will be forced to give you a harvest of money.

As a manipulative principle it is ludicrous. However, as a personal act of obedience to the Spirit it may be something the Lord would have you do. Don't be talked into it by the emotional manipulations of TV entertainment or direct mail. As always, this is a personal thing between you and God by His Holy spirit. We are not lemmings, but sons & daughters.

On the other hand, it is also how we are supposed to live. We are to be givers—following the lead of the Holy Spirit. We are to give of ourselves, our time, our money, our effort. The Spirit will show you what He wants you to do.

Focus on what matters

Paul is using the sowing/reaping concept to talk a little about the focus of your life. If your life is filled with improving your health (as if that were really possible) and growing your wealth, you are in trouble. The same is true of entertainment, pursuit of pleasure, and dedication to amassing stuff. The harvest of that is not good.

Your health and wealth are part of your load. You can make yourself feel better. You are certainly charged with being a good steward of the assets God gives you. But give me chapter and verse showing me where this is ever supposed to be your goal. They are merely what you have been given to work with.

Can you change your health?

This is an interesting question. Are there certain diseases and physical conditions that are part of your load and which cannot be avoided? Probably.

Does God heal? Of course.

How are we to deal with these issues?

On an individual basis by talking it over with the Lord and Godly friends.

The operative scripture is plain. It comes from Jesus and is radical as usual.

Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. [Matthew 6:31–32 esv]

The same is true about your daily bread, your ministry, your status, your health, your wealth, and so on. We must seek the kingdom of God first.

Can you change your wealth?

Probably not! You can squander it or be a good steward of the assets He gives. But your portion is probably determined before you are born.

How are we to deal with these issues?

Our life in that kingdom is empowered by the Holy Spirit. We must focus on that. The Holy Spirit will only do in our lives what we ask him to do. He never forces himself upon us. God is not into spiritual rape or forced servitude.

We must focus on hearing God and responding to His lead. We must ask Him to reveal to us our sin. We must ask Him to reveal where we are to go in following Him. We must ask Him to fill us to overflowing. We must ask Him to use us. We must ask Him to work through us.

Of course, he is not limited by our prayers. But he loves us and only works in us and through us as we allow Him to. The focus of our life has to be allowing Him to work on us and through us to minister to those around us. How many times did Jesus talk about us asking? The key is what we are asking about. James gives us a little guidance here: What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within

you? You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. [JAMES 4:1–4 ESV]

You'll be surprised at how much your focus affects your life and your lifestyle.

Verse 6:9–10

So we should not allow ourselves to get tired of doing good. At the right time (determined by God) we will harvest His blessing if we don't give up. Because of this, whenever we are given the opportunity, we should do good to everyone—especially to those in the family of faith.

This is part of the lifestyle choice we have been talking about. You are reading the writings of one tired man. But I refuse to give up. God will bring good out of my life if I persevere. The good comes from Him. The blessing comes from Him. All I can do is the best I can to make myself presentable and available to Him.

Verse 6:11

Notice what large letters I am using while writing these closing words myself.

The normal practice was for teachers to dictate letters to a scribe. With Paul's eye trouble, that may have been especially necessary for him. What this signifies is that what follows is a personal postscript to the letter—Paul's personal note to his friends.

Verses 6:12–13

Those who are trying to force you to be circumcised are concerned about the opinion of others. They're seeking to avoid persecution for teaching that only the cross of Jesus our Messiah can save. Plus, those who advocate circumcision don't keep the whole law themselves. They only want you to be circumcised so they can boast about it and claim you as their disciples.

You can hear the friendly tone of a father to his beloved children—of a teacher to his cherished students. He has explained the concepts already. This is personal advice on the order of Jesus' explanations of the parables to his disciples. Paul reveals some of himself here.

Verses 6:14–15

I will never brag about anything except the cross of our Lord & Messiah, Jesus. Because of his cross, the world been killed to me, and as far as the world is concerned I am dead. It doesn't matter if you are circumcised or not. All that matters is that you are reborn.

We can never forget the centrality of the cross. This is the source of power to the church. This is the act of obedience performed by our Lord. This is the legal device God used to set us free.

We access this by being born of God. Our rebirth is made possible by the cross, and this is where the possibility of our life in Him comes from. Nothing else matters.

Verse 6:16

All who walk by this standard are the true Israel of God—his chosen people. Peace and mercy on them! [THE MESSAGE]

Paul makes a radical shift here by stating that reborn believers are the true Israel. I do not believe this releases us from our support of the Jews. Historically, those who quit supporting the Jews are soon in trouble. But it certainly

puts the Jews in a bad position with the Lord. Rejecting the Messiah is a serious matter. But that is between them and the Lord.

Verse 6:17

From now on let no one trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.

No one knows for sure what this means. The assumption by some translators is that he is referring to the scars from his beatings, imprisonments, and soon. That might be it, but there is no way to be sure as the witnesses are all long gone. It doesn't matter.

Verse 6:18

The grace of our Lord Jesus the Messiah be with your spirit, brothers & sisters. Amen.

A formalized blessing of goodbye. The interesting turn of phrase is that the grace be with our spirit. I'm not sure, but this seems to hint that the modern American obsession with physical, material blessing was not part of Paul's paradigm. What do you think?

Let me add my blessing

May the Lord bless you forever. May He fill your lives with the knowledge of Him and the freedom to become yourself as He made you.

A handwritten signature in a cursive style. The word 'David' is written in blue ink, with a green flourish at the end of the 'd'.

December 5, 2010 • Mankato, Minnesota &
March 27, 2020 • Rochester, New York

Study tools

Recommended Books

✚ Several good study Bibles

What is a good study bible?

There are several attributes to consider when you buy a study bible. The main thing is to get a book that is comfortable at your normal studying location and comfortable to read.

A lot of this is personal. For example, I find that single-column Bibles are much easier to use and especially easy to teach from:

Leather-bound: nothing else will last long enough

Many cross references

Good maps

Word definitions either in the footnotes or built into the cross references

Wide margins for taking notes

A translation you trust: You'll need to pick up many translations and paraphrases, but unless you are certain you will use them for serious study, they can be paperbacks or hard-bound covers

No denominational slant in the footnotes and commentary: you want clear explanations of the scriptures. You do not want doctrinal slants

✚ Vine's Expository Dictionary

✚ Strong's Concordance

✚ Manners & Customs of the Bible

✚ Bible Dictionaries

✚ Dictionary & Thesaurus

Useful Websites

✚ Bible versions: biblegateway.com

⌘ Strong's Concordance and lexicons:

<https://www.blueletterbible.org/>

⌘ Vine's Expository Dictionary:

<https://www.blueletterbible.org/>

⌘ Maps and much more:

<http://www.ebibleteacher.com/imagehtml/ntmaps.html>

⌘ Roman history:

<https://www.unrv.com>

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