

Galatians

Galatians is a profound letter in that it declares our freedom from manmade laws and traditions and declares our dependence upon God.

When we think of the Galatians, we are not considering one city as we did with Thessalonica. Galatia was a province, and Paul had travelled extensively throughout the province on more than one occasion.

In the book of Acts his first travels throughout the province beginning in Chapter 13.

Acts 13:14 – From Perga they went on to Pisidian Antioch. On the Sabbath they entered the synagogue and sat down.

Acts then records much of his sermon there, and then:

Acts 13:42 – As Paul and Barnabas were leaving the synagogue, the people invited them to speak further about these things on the next Sabbath. ⁴³ When the congregation was dismissed, many of the Jews and *devout converts* to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who talked with them and urged them to continue in the grace of God.

Keep in mind that among these converts to Judaism were Gentiles, Greeks. The KJV has religious proselytes. Proselytes is what the Greek says, but it's a word we don't use much anymore.

Acts 13:45 – V. 45 – When the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy.

They began to contradict what Paul was saying and heaped abuse on him.

⁴⁶ Then Paul and Barnabas answered them boldly: “We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles. ⁴⁷ For this is what the Lord has commanded us:

“I have made you^[f] a light for the Gentiles,
that you^[g] may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.’^[h]”

Paul is quoting Isaiah 49:6.

V. 48 – When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord

V. 49 – The word of the Lord spread through the whole region.⁵⁰ But the Jewish leaders incited the God-fearing women of high standing and the leading men of the city. They stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region.⁵¹ So they shook the dust off their feet as a warning to them and went to Iconium.⁵² And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

In Acts 14 they head to Iconium, still in Galatia.

Acts 14:1 – At Iconium Paul and Barnabas went as usual into the Jewish synagogue. There they spoke so effectively that a great number of Jews and Greeks believed.² But the Jews who refused to believe stirred up the other Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brothers.³ So Paul and Barnabas spent considerable time there, speaking boldly for the Lord, who confirmed the message of his grace by enabling them to perform signs and wonders.⁴ The people of the city were divided; some sided with the Jews, others with the apostles.⁵ There was a plot afoot among both Gentiles and Jews, together with their leaders, to mistreat them and stone them.⁶ But they found out about it and fled to the Lycaonian cities of Lystra and Derbe and to the surrounding country,⁷ where they continued to preach the gospel.

Then they travelled to Lystra and Derbe, all in Galatia.

It was there in Lystra that we have this remarkable scene recorded in **Acts 14:19** – Then some Jews came from Antioch and Iconium and won the crowd over. They stoned Paul and dragged him outside the city, thinking he was dead.²⁰ But after the disciples had gathered around him, he got up and went back into the city. The next day he and Barnabas left for Derbe.

Paul wrote of this experience in 2 Corinthians 11 and in 2 Timothy 3:10.

Following this, Paul travels to Jerusalem for what is known as the Jerusalem Council, and we will revisit that council in our study of Galatians.

Then, Paul returned to the province of Galatia on what we now call his second missionary journey. There he met Timothy.

Acts 16:1 – Paul came to Derbe and then to Lystra, where a disciple named Timothy lived, whose mother was Jewish and a believer but whose father was a Greek.

Acts 16:6 – Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia.

Paul returns yet again to Galatia in Acts 18. Following his lengthy stay in Corinth, he returned to Antioch and then to Galatia.

Acts 18:23 – After spending some time in Antioch, Paul set out from there and traveled from place to place throughout the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples.

So, he had extensive contact with the churches of Galatia. His letter to the Galatians was not written to a church in a city, but was what was called a circular letter, to be shared with the churches throughout the province.

Remember, Paul's letters were written for specific reasons. In the Thessalonian letters it seemed to be questions and controversies about the Day of the Lord, and the issue of the idle ones.

So, what was the issue with the Galatians. While Paul was in Ephesus on what we call his third missionary journey, a problem grew among the churches in Galatia over whether or not Gentile Christians should be required to keep the Jewish laws. They had argued that since Christianity grew out of Judaism, then it was necessary to keep the Jewish laws.

Who were these people who were spreading this teaching? Many call the Judaizers, Jews who had been converted from Christianity.

Other scholars claim – and there seems to be some evidence of this in his letter – that the Judaizers were actually people from the Jerusalem church who claimed to have the support of James, the brother of Jesus and the leader of the Jerusalem church.

When this news reaches Paul, he writes what many scholars have called his angry letter. And the tone of Galatians is vastly different from any of the other Pauline Epistles.

Some have tried to pinpoint which cities these church were located in. It doesn't really matter for our study where they were, what matters is the content.

This letter was written while in Ephesus, in the early 50's, no later than 55.

Galatians

Chapter 1

V. 1 – Paul, an apostle—sent not from men nor by a man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead—

Right from the start Paul's tone is different from what we find in his opening lines of his other letters. He states that he is an apostle. We have our traditional beliefs about what constituted a New Testament apostle. Usually that is someone with firsthand experience of Jesus, which Paul had with the resurrected Jesus.

The Greek word that we translate as apostle, however, means someone who has been sent out on a mission.

So Paul says, I've been sent out on a mission. No man or group of men sent me on this mission. Jesus Christ and God the Father sent me on this mission. In fact, the one who raised Jesus from the dead sent me on this mission.

Paul is making it clear, he is speaking with authority, not like the folks who had been giving the Gentile Christians some other teaching.

V. 2 – and all the brothers and sisters with me,

There is no indication that others were writing / dictating / this letter with Paul, but certainly Paul had spoken with his leaders and certainly their theological leanings were with Paul.

V. 2a – To the churches in Galatia:

As I taught last week, this was a circular letter, meant to be passed from church to church in the Province of Galatian.

Paul will give a short greeting and in it, packs pretty much the whole Gospel of Jesus Christ.

V. 3 – Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, ⁴ who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, ⁵ to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Let's get one thing clear – Paul is big on grace, He uses the word a lot! As we go through his letters we will see this word (khar'-ece) over and over again, with comments and explanations, over and over again.

The word in the Greek meant a kindness. For Paul, it is God's kindness to us through Jesus.

He gave himself to rescue us from our sins. According to Paul, sin was death and grace was life.

Romans 6:23 – For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The present evil age (verse 4) – we are still in this age. The present evil age is fallen humanity. It will exist until Christ returns for all.

Jesus' death for our sins was, as verse four states – according to the will of God our Father.

Paul skips his usual thanksgiving and get right down to it.

V. 6 – I am astonished that you are so quickly **deserting** the one who called you to live in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel/good news—⁷ which is really no gospel/good news at all.

We translate the word as deserting. The word is (met-at-ith'-ay-mee) and actually means to change something. They were, in essence, changing who Jesus was by abandoning the gospel/good news of grace.

Remember, the word we translate as gospel did not mean a book, it meant good news. So, a religion of rules and regulations was not good news at all.

V. 7b – Evidently some people are **throwing you into confusion** and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ.

Throwing you into confusion. Some translations have troubling you. The word can be translated as stir up or agitate, which is a good translation.

V. 8 – But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let them be under God's curse!

Paul would eventually write some great literature about love, but here he's not feeling too much of it! Rightfully so, I believe.

The word we translate as under God's curse is anathema, which today would mean something that someone vehemently dislikes. In Paul's day it usually referred to a curse. Here, God's curse!

Paul felt so strongly that he says it again for emphasis.

V. 9 – As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let them be under God's curse!

In modern translations, verse 10 is printed as a standalone paragraph, but it probably is better understood in the context of the verses that follow. As a pastor, however, it contains one of my favorite lines of Scripture.

V. 10 – Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ.

Before we continue, remember what Paul is writing about. Some Jewish Christians – whether from Jerusalem or from Galatia – were teaching the Gentile converts that they had to adhere to the Jewish customs and laws. These Jewish Christians were claiming that they were the authorities, not Paul.

That didn't set well with Paul, and so we have ...

V. 11 – I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the gospel I preached is not of human origin. ¹²I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ.

Some Jewish Christians knew some Jewish Christians who actually knew Jesus before his crucifixion. Paul had not, but he had met the resurrected Jesus at least once and probably more according to various verses in his letters.

In Greek there was an emphatic tense, and the 'I's' in verse 12 are in the emphatic tense.

I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ.

V. 13 – For you have heard of my previous way of life in Judaism, how intensely I persecuted the church of God and tried to destroy it. ¹⁴I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers. ¹⁵But when God, who set me apart from my mother's womb and called me by his grace, was pleased ¹⁶to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles, my immediate response was not to consult any human being.

Paul is making it clear that his role as an apostle did not come about because he knew Jesus in the flesh, but rather by a divine calling from God. Paul, as an apostle to the Gentiles, had been God's plan all along.

V. 17 – I did not go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before I was, but I went into Arabia. Later I returned to Damascus.

Now this seem to be different from what Luke told us in Acts. Perhaps Luke was not clear with his timeline of events – we just don't know. Paul's point here, however, is his call came from God, and he did not rely of human consultation to confirm it. It was between he and God.

So, where did Paul actually go? Yes, Arabia, but where was that 2,000 years ago? He was not referring to what we would call Saudi Arabia. Arabia often referred to the desert, and often east of the Jordan river.

Most scholars believe that he went into the Nabatean kingdom on the east side of the Jordan. In 2 Corinthians 11 he specifically mentions Aretas IV, the king over the Nabateans.

What did he go there for? Most likely to process this life changing event that had taken place – his conversion. He probably read and re-read over and over the Scriptures, and came to a new understanding of what had been prophesized.

Did he teach and preach there? Perhaps. We don't know because we don't have any correspondence from him to any Christian communities there, nor does Luke mention it in Acts. There is much about Paul from his conversion to what we traditionally call his first missionary journey that we do not know.

V. 18 – Then after three years –

We don't know if this was after three years in Arabia or three years after he returned to Damascus. Probably three years following his conversion.

V. 18 – Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to get acquainted with Cephas/Peter and stayed with him fifteen days. ¹⁹ I saw none of the other apostles—only James, the Lord's brother. ²⁰ I assure you before God that what I am writing you is no lie.

The fact that Paul sought out Peter to visit indicates that, as Acts clearly depicts, Peter was the leader of the Christian movement.

Later, after Peter seems to not be in the picture – perhaps he was in Rome – James is seen as the leader of the church in Jerusalem (according to Acts).

By writing about his visit with Peter, Paul is showing that he was not independent from the Christians in Jerusalem, only that his calling was independent from theirs.

Why did he not see any of the other Apostles? We don't know, perhaps they weren't in Jerusalem at that time. However, to have spent time with Peter and James was more than enough to add human affirmation to his calling – even though he already claimed he did not need such.

V. 21 – Then I went to Syria and Cilicia.

Don't try to reconcile this with Acts 9:28-30. Luke's timeline is different from Paul's. Did Luke not get his timeline from Paul himself? It does not appear so.

Paul doesn't give any detail of the fourteen years between his visit in verse 18 and his visit in 2:1. Acts does mention Paul spending time in Antioch, which was in Syria.

Interestingly – the Antioch Church had been started by Christians who fled Jerusalem after the stoning of Stephen.

V. 22 – I was personally unknown to the churches of Judea that are in Christ.

Remember, Paul is defending his position as an Apostle. Some of the Judaizes were claiming – who is this Paul – he is not an authority. Here, Paul says that those folks didn't even know him. Peter and James did, but they didn't.

V. 23 – They only heard the report: “The man who formerly persecuted us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy.”²⁴ And they praised God because of me.

Chapter 2

2:1 – Then after fourteen years, I went up again to Jerusalem, this time with Barnabas. I took Titus along also.

Most believe that the fourteen years refers to his last visit with Peter and James in Jerusalem, not from his conversion.

His choice of travelling companions was deliberate. Barnabas was well known by the Apostles, and they gave him his nickname son of encouragement. He is called an apostle by Luke in Acts 14:14.

Acts also tells us that it was Barnabas who left Antioch in search of Paul in Tarsus to bring him back to become an evangelist to the Gentiles.

Acts 11:24 says of him – He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord.

By this time, Titus was well known among the Jewish Christian leaders. He was a Gentile, and well respected.

In the Greek, verses 3-5 are one long sentence, and the KJV is not the best translation. So if you have the KJV, it's probably a bit different from what I have.

2:2 – I went in response to a revelation and, meeting privately with those esteemed as leaders, I presented to them the gospel that I preach among the Gentiles. I wanted to be sure I was not running and had not been running my race in vain. ³ Yet not even Titus, who was with me, was compelled to be circumcised, even though he was a Greek. ⁴ This matter arose because some false believers had infiltrated our ranks to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus and to make us slaves. ⁵ We did not give in to them for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you.

Paul calls those who were opposed to his gospel/good news false believers.

Verses 6-9a are also one long sentence in the Greek. So, there will be variations in translation. We don't always have long run on sentences from Paul, but remember, he dictated his letters. Whoever wrote this down for him seemed to go word for word!

V. 6 – As for those who were held in high esteem—whatever they were makes no difference to me; God does not show favoritism—they added nothing to my message.

Most likely he is referring to the Jewish Christians leaders in Jerusalem – James, John and Peter.

V. 7 – On the contrary, they recognized that I had been entrusted with the task of preaching the gospel to the uncircumcised, (*Paul uses a Jewish term for Gentiles*) just as Peter had been to the circumcised. (And here he used a Jewish term for Jews – both colloquial). ⁸ For God, who was at work in Peter as an apostle to the circumcised, was also at work in me as

an apostle to the Gentiles. ⁹ James, Cephas and John, those esteemed as pillars, gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship when they recognized the grace given to me.

So, it seems that they have reached – at that time – some sort of an agreement. James is mentioned first, and by that time was the leader of the church in Jerusalem.

V. 9b – They agreed that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcised/Jews. ¹⁰ All they asked was that we should continue to remember the poor, the very thing I had been eager to do all along.

We read in Acts ...

Acts 15:12 – The whole assembly became silent as they listened to Barnabas and Paul telling about the signs and wonders God had done among the Gentiles through them. ¹³ When they finished, James spoke up. “Brothers,” he said, “listen to me. ¹⁴ Simon/Peter has described to us how God first intervened to choose a people for his name from the Gentiles. ¹⁵ The words of the prophets are in agreement with this, as it is written:

¹⁶ “After this I will return
and rebuild David’s fallen tent.

Its ruins I will rebuild,
and I will restore it,

¹⁷ that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord,
even all the Gentiles who bear my name,

says the Lord, who does these things’^[b]—

¹⁸ things known from long ago.^[c]

¹⁹ “It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God. ²⁰ Instead we should write to them, telling them to abstain from food polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from the meat of strangled animals and from blood. ²¹ For the law of Moses has been preached in every city from the earliest times and is read in the synagogues on every Sabbath.”

So, both accounts read as if an agreement has been reached. But, some inconsistencies came about. We don’t have this account in Acts, but Paul records it here.

2:11 – When Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. ¹² For before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group.

Peter, had indeed, eaten with Gentiles.

Acts 11:1 – The apostles and the believers throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God. ² So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcised believers criticized him ³ and said, “You went into the house of uncircumcised men and ate with them.”

⁴ Starting from the beginning, Peter told them the whole story: ⁵ “I was in the city of Joppa praying, and in a trance I saw a vision. I saw something like a large sheet being let down from heaven by its four corners, and it came down to where I was. ⁶ I looked into it and saw four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, reptiles and birds. ⁷ Then I heard a voice telling me, ‘Get up, Peter. Kill and eat.’

⁸ “I replied, ‘Surely not, Lord! Nothing impure or unclean has ever entered my mouth.’

⁹ “The voice spoke from heaven a second time, ‘Do not call anything impure that God has made clean.’ ¹⁰ This happened three times, and then it was all pulled up to heaven again.

Then, he travelled with the men and did eat with Gentiles. He had even been living in a tanners house.

V. 13 – The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray.

By the rest of the Jews, Paul means the Christian Jews there in Antioch. In Acts, Luke writes as if it was a disagreement over John Mark traveling with them for the reason why Paul and Barnabas parted ways. Many believe that it ran deeper than that, and that this disagreement over the Gentiles contributed heavily to their parting of ways.

There has always been conflict in the church, unfortunately.

V. 14 – When I saw that they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in front of them all, “You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile and not like a Jew. How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs?”

Since in the ancient Greek there are neither quotation marks or paragraph breaks it is difficult to tell if what follows is a continuation of Paul’s address to Peter, or now to his listeners in Galatia. It doesn’t really matter, though.

V. 15 – “We who are Jews by birth and not sinful Gentiles¹⁶ know that a person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no one will be justified.

Here we have the gospel in its briefest form. – justification by faith alone. Obeying religious laws don’t make us right with God. Faith alone in Jesus makes us right with God.

Will faith produce works. Absolutely, and we already saw that Paul wrote that in ...

1 Thessalonians 1:3 – We remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

So, faith produces works, but the faith is what saves us, not the works.

The word that Paul uses for justified does mean righteous, but also means to be acquitted. We are guilty of sin, but thanks to Jesus, we are acquitted of the charges!

Consider for a moment the mindset of a devout Jew of that time. They had spent their entire lives nervously observing the law. Doing their best to keep God happy. They knew they fell short, but tried again and again to keep the law so as not to fall from God’s good graces.

V. 17 – “But if, in seeking to be justified in Christ, we Jews find ourselves also among the sinners, doesn’t that mean that Christ promotes sin? Absolutely not!

Among the sinners – this would mean among and with those who don’t observe our strict laws. After all, for centuries the Jews believed that those who didn’t observe the laws were sinners.

We translate the last two words in various ways. Absolutely not! God forbid! Certainly not! The term – un genuito – was a term of emphatic anger. If something was disgusting you, if it was repugnant, you said un genuito.

V. 18 – If I rebuild what I destroyed, then I really would be a lawbreaker.

This is a powerful verse. What had been torn down was not circumcision or parts of the law – what was torn down was the whole law as a means of grace. Christians should meditate and think about this, because we have our own laws.

Baptism is a big Christian law, and some denominations require it for salvation – some even requiring it to be by a particular method. Un genuito!

Baptism and communion are acts of piety not a means to earn God’s favor. There are things we do to humble ourselves and to draw closer to God, but they don’t make us earn God’s favor.

If we insisted on baptism to earn God’s favor, then as Paul says in verse 18, we really would be a lawbreaker.

V. 19 – “For through the law I died to the law so that I might live for God.

The NLT has – *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.*

This is amazing! Is our relationship with God one in which we do our best to avoid certain behaviors so we don't get God all mad at us – or are we free and now live for God! Love for God – forgive for God – serve for God.

Are we alive?

Dying to the law meant regarding obedience to the law as a way to God's favor. We – like Paul – should not refrain from doing many of the things the law commanded, but like Paul we should an entirely different motive.

What motive? I'll give you a spoiler –

Galatians 5:6 – For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.

V. 20 – I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.

Make no mistake about it, Paul was a spiritual man.

Crucifixion with Christ meant several things for Paul, and should for us, as well.

It means that we participate in the benefits of Christ's death – forgiveness of our sins, freedom from the law, and an inner desire to flee from sin.

It means a spiritual fellowship with Jesus where the 'mind of Christ' replaces the law.

Paul would write about this in **Romans 6:6** – For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin—⁷ because anyone who has died has been set free from sin.

Crucifixion with Christ also meant a partnership with Jesus in denying ourselves (suffering). Paul would write in **Romans 8:17** – Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

The problem Paul would face with Gentile converts, and the problem almost all churches have, is that they would reject this idea of cross bearing / suffering with Jesus.

V. 20 b – The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Please note! – Paul lived by faith **IN** the Son of God. Not through, but in! This is significant. Paul and Jesus were intimately connected.

V. 21 – I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!”

If you go to church to make God happy and earn favor – if you serve others to make God happy and earn God’s favor – if you do anything to make God happy and earn God’s favor, then you are setting aside the Grace of God and Christ died for nothing!

God’s favor is a free gift!

Chapter 3

3:1 – You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified.

If you take the cross out of our faith then our faith is nothing – or our faith is in our self. Christ was crucified – and never forget why! For our sins.

Why were they observing the law – to cover their sins. We can’t have it both ways.

The cross was Paul’s centerpiece for all of his arguments.

1 Corinthians 1:17 – For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel—not with wisdom and eloquence, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.

1 Corinthians 1:23 – but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles

V. 2 – I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by believing what you heard?

By believing what you heard – literally in the Greek it says ‘by hearing with faith.’

According to Paul, and something too many modern American Christians do not hold dear – the Spirit of God lives within us when we hear with faith. Not only will we receive the spirit through faith, we will use the spirit.

1 Corinthians 12:7 – Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.

2 Corinthians 1:21 – Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, ²² set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

Obeying rules and regulations, even traditions, do not fill us with the Spirit.

Rules and traditions may not be wrong or bad, but they don’t

- a) Make us right with God.
- b) Fill us with God’s Spirit.

3:3 – Are you so foolish? After beginning by means of the Spirit, are you now trying to finish by means of the *flesh*?

The word we translate as flesh was a word used often by Paul and it meant more than our body. It referred to sinful human nature.

How, he is asking, do we expect sinful human nature to do anything for us?

V. 4 – Have you experienced so much in vain—if it really was in vain?

Experienced is a better translation than suffer. In 1611, when the KJV was written, suffer was often used to depict an experience.

Suffer the little children = let them experience.

What had they experienced? Verse 5 sheds some light.

V. 5 – So again I ask, does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you by the works of the law, or by your believing what you heard?

The Galatians had experienced signs and wonders. These came from God's spirit.

Ever wonder why we don't experience signs and wonders? Maybe we rely on self and rules and need to rely upon Jesus and the Spirit.

The Judaizers would argue that obedience saves not faith. So Paul quotes from Genesis 15:6 ...

V. 6 – So also Abraham “believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.”

For Abraham, faith was the basis of his obedience to God. The Judaizers might argue that Abraham was circumcised, which was one of the things they were telling the male Galatians to do. In Romans, Paul would write the following ...

Romans 4:9 – We have been saying that Abraham's faith was credited to him as righteousness.¹⁰ Under what circumstances was it credited? Was it after he was circumcised, or before? It was not after, but before!¹¹ And he received circumcision as a sign, a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised.

3:7 – Understand, then, that those who have faith are children of Abraham.

For the devout Jews of Paul's day, obedience to the law was tied to nationalistic customs and traditions. Here, he states that faith as a way of salvation was God's way for all people.

In Romans he would write ...

Romans 3:22 – This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile

Remember Paul spending time in Arabia following his conversion? He went there to study the Scriptures, to look differently at Scripture than he had before. What did he learn?

V. 8 – Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: "All nations will be blessed through you."⁹ So those who rely on faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.

Paul quotes from Genesis 12:3 & 18:18. The word in Genesis was clans or tribes, and here Paul substitutes nations. The word we translate as nations is ethnos. The word meant cultures – all cultures will be blessed through faith.

3:10 – For all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse, as it is written: "Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law."

Paul is quoting from Deuteronomy 27:26. What he says about that verse can be confusing, and partly because of the Greek syntax that is difficult to translate.

Paul is not using anathema. If he did, then it would imply that God curses those who rely on the law. Instead, he uses (ep-ee-kat-ar'-at-os). A good translation of this word would be doomed.

For all who rely on the works of the law are doomed. They are doomed if they rely on the law for salvation.

In Romans, Paul would expand on all of this. Galatians was probably written in a hurry, as he wanted his voice to be heard as soon as possible in the churches of Galatia. In Romans he wrote ...

Romans 7:21 – So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. ²² For in my inner being I delight in God’s law; ²³ but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. ²⁴ What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? ²⁵ Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!

3:11 – Clearly no one who relies on the law is justified before God, because “the righteous will live by faith.”

He is quoting Habakkuk 2:4

V. 12 – The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, it says, “The person who does these things will live by them.” (Leviticus 18:5)

If we could keep all of the law we wouldn’t need faith. The history of human nature proves, however, that we cannot keep the law. That is why so many sacrifices were needed in the Jewish world. The system of sacrifices proved the law was impossible to keep. This is why Paul speaks of the curse/doom of the law.

Now he tells us that Jesus saved us from that doom.

V. 13 – Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who is hung on a pole.” (Deuteronomy 21:23) ¹⁴He

redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.

Paul seems to have settled down somewhat. Now, instead of something like foolish Galatians, he settles for brethren / brothers and sisters.

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

Though it doesn't show in our translation, Paul is speaking of a Jewish will – a legal document.

He continues, quoting from Genesis 22.

V. 16 – The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. Scripture does not say “and to seeds,” meaning many people, but “and to your seed,”^[i] meaning one person, who is Christ.¹⁷ What I mean is this: The law, introduced 430 years later, does not set aside the covenant previously established by God and thus do away with the promise.

¹⁸For if the inheritance depends on the law, then it no longer depends on the promise; but God in his grace gave it to Abraham through a promise.

Some folks like to crunch numbers in an effort of ‘fact checking’ Paul. What Paul means – regardless of the years – is that the law came about centuries after the promise was made to Abraham. During those centuries there was no law. They were under the grace of the promise.

Then why did the law come about? Paul continues ...

V. 19 – Why, then, was the law given at all? It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come.

The law was added because of sin. A way to deal with sin. A way to keep sin in check.

Remember – the seed to whom the promise referred to was – Jesus.

This was a break from the traditional Jewish thought. The traditional Jewish thought was that the law was complete and permanent, needing no completion through a Savior.

Paul goes on to say that it was given by angels – which means messengers.

V. 19b – The law was given through angels and entrusted to a mediator.

Who was the mediator? Moses. The Greek word we translate as mediator was a business term which meant middleman.

Verse 20 is translated in various ways.

V. 20 NIV – A mediator, however, implies more than one party; but God is one.

KJV – Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one.

NRSV – Now a mediator involves more than one party; but God is one.

The thinking is this – When Abraham received the promise there was no mediator. Then, when the law was given it was mediated. Now, through the Spirit, we are back to the need for no mediator.

God is one. Through the Spirit of God we need no mediator. We have direct access to God.

The way Galatians is written it is surmised that Paul is answering questions or objections from the Galatians. Perhaps, he had spoken with someone/s from Galatia who reported to Paul the teachings and how they contradicted Paul. He asks questions as if he knew they were points that had been raised.

3:21 – Is the law, therefore, opposed to the promises of God? Absolutely not! (un genito – a very strong and emphatic no!)

For if a law had been given that could impart life, then righteousness would certainly have come by the law. ²² But Scripture has locked up everything under the control of sin, so that

what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe.

Because of sin, the law could never impart righteousness. The law simply allowed the godly to recognize sin, and even allowed for repentance of sin, but did not destroy sin.

The law was not contrary to faith, but it was not enough.
Paul explains this in verse 24.

3:23 – Before the coming of this faith,^[i] we were held in custody under the law, locked up until the faith that was to come would be revealed.²⁴ So the law was our guardian until Christ came that we might be justified by faith.²⁵ Now that this faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian.

Again, Paul uses one of his favorite terms – justified by faith.
We are acquitted of sin through faith in Jesus.

V. 26 – So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith,²⁷ for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

The NIV has ‘clothe yourselves in Christ’. Older translations have – have put on Christ. The Greek word means to put on a garment. The pagans were aware of symbolic robes of the pagan elite. They would put on robes depicting their pagan gods.

The meaning would be clear to the Gentiles - we put on the character of Christ. Think about that!

V. 28 – There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

The Greeks divided all people into two categories – Greeks and barbarians. The Jews also classified people into two classes – Jews and Goyim, or Gentiles. Even a God-fearer – a Greek who became a Jew – was never considered to be a child of Abraham. Through Christ these divisions were destroyed.

Now, for all of the people who think that Paul was some kind of male chauvinist, look at what he says. In that age, a wife was the property of her husband. Paul says no longer, not in Christ! We are all one in Christ Jesus!

In many ways, the church still struggles with divisions, but our goal should be unity in Christ.

V. 29 – If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Kingdom life – life in Christ – was not dependent upon a blood relationship to Abraham. Grace is for all people.

Chapter 4

Paul has just declared that everyone who was in Christ had become Abraham’s offspring. Now, in chapter 4, Paul begins to use the idea of being an heir to illustrate a different point.

V. 1 – What I am saying is that as long as an heir is underage, he is no different from a slave, although he owns the whole estate.

In the Greek culture of Paul’s time, the child of a wealthy family lived life with little freedom. Sure, one day he would own everything his family had. But, at a young age he did not get to decide when to get up or when to go to bed, or what to eat, and certainly not where to go and who to play with.

His position as heir didn’t entitle him to true freedom until he reached a certain age.

Paul is going to make the case in the following verses that something similar was going on for Israel while they were living under the law of Moses.

V. 2 – The heir is subject to guardians and trustees until the time set by his father. ³ So also, when we were underage, we were in slavery under the elemental spiritual forces^[a] of the world.

Paul says we have lived under a similar condition as that wealthy son in the illustration.

Remember, Paul is making the point that faith in Christ is all they needed to be justified.

The Jewish people have been heirs to the promises of Abraham by birth.

Christians are heirs by faith in Christ.

Yet both (all of us) had been slaves to the elemental spiritual forces of the world. Those forces would include sin and death.

Now for the Good News!

V. 4 – But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, ⁵ to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship.

Verse 4 – when the set time had fully come – when the fullness of time was come – This expresses a Hebrew mindset of ages. There had been ages / eras / before. Jesus ushered in a new age. We are living in that new age.

Remember that child, heir to a wealthy family? The time had now come for that child to receive his inheritance. In fact, the time has now come for all who want to share in that inheritance.

Jesus was born a Jew, and therefore under the law. When Paul writes – that we might receive adoption to sonship – the ‘we’ is Jews and Gentile alike.

The word that Paul uses for redeem was the Greek word used for purchasing the freedom for a slave. We were slaves to sin, Jesus paid that price.

“Receive adoption to sonship.” Jesus didn’t redeem us from slavery just to leave us wandering through life on our own. He redeemed us so that we can be adopted into God’s family. Through Jesus we escape the need for law as an escape from sin and we also find a home in the family of God.

V. 6 – Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “*Abba*,^[e] Father.”

Please consider this verse! The spirit of Jesus – when we have faith in Jesus – lives inside of us! This spirit of Jesus within us gives us the right, along with Jesus, to call out to God in the most intimate ways – *Abba* – which was Aramaic.

In our language, children learn simple words, *dada* for dad. *Abba*, was what the youngest children would call their fathers in Aramaic.

We no longer have our own sinfulness or the law standing between us and God, and we can live as little children dependent upon their father.

Note we have the trinity in verse 6. **God** sent the **Spirit** of the **Son**.

V. 7 – So you are no longer a slave, but God’s child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir.

Paul started with the analogy of an heir being under the control of others until they reached an appointed age. Then their inheritance would take effect and they would truly be free. With that in mind, Paul assures the Galatians that those who have come to God through faith in Jesus are now free.

Free from the law that would control us. We are God’s little children, entitled to share in the inheritance.

V. 8 – Formerly, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those who by nature are not gods.

Paul is talking about the idols and false gods of the pagan Christians. They had been slaves to false gods like Zeus and Hermes. Having to please those gods was slavery. Slavery to a false hope.

V. 9 – But now that you know God—or rather are known by God—how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable forces/principles? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again?

Make no mistake about it, Paul is comparing their former pagan ways to that of being enslaved by Jewish laws. This is extraordinary considering where Paul had once been in his life. Such is the power of Jesus Christ.

V. 10 – You are observing special days and months and seasons and years! ¹¹ I fear for you, that somehow I have wasted my efforts on you.

The Gentile Christians were observing the Jewish holidays. Does this tell us that it is wrong for Christians to observe holy days? Easter? Pentecost? Christmas? Not necessarily, but we should be aware of our motives.

The problem arises when we observe those days not to honor the Lord but to be honored by the Lord for our efforts. This is true even for Sunday worship. Do we come to worship to honor the Lord, or to be honored by the Lord because we took the time to worship?

Paul was worried he had wasted his time, so he now makes a plea to the Galatians.

V. 12 – I plead with you, brothers and sisters, become like me, for I became like you.

Calling them brothers and sisters, he pleads for them to become like him. What does he mean? He means free from the law! They once had. Paul and they were once alike. Paul like they and they like Paul.

The second half of verse 12 is part of the next sentence in the Greek.

V. 12b – You did me no wrong. ¹³ As you know, it was because of an illness that I first preached the gospel to you, ¹⁴ and even though my illness was a trial to you, you did not treat me with contempt or scorn. Instead, you welcomed me as if I were an angel of God, as if I were Christ Jesus himself.

Much has been written about this illness, with all of it being speculation. We just don't know what it was, but we do know that they treated Paul with love and kindness.

V. 15 – Where, then, is your blessing of me now? I can testify that, if you could have done so, you would have torn out your eyes and given them to me.

This is where people get the impression that perhaps this sickness was something of the eyes. However, in the Greek to pluck one's eyes out was simply a metaphor for giving up your most precious possessions. So, Paul is most likely speaking of their kindness and not of eye trouble.

V. 16 – Have I now become your enemy by telling you the truth?

In light of their kindness to Paul, he was very hurt. How had he become their enemy?

V. 17 – Those people are zealous to win you over, but for no good. What they want is to alienate you from us, so that you may have zeal for them. **V. 18** – It is fine to be zealous, provided the purpose is good, and to be so always, not just when I am with you.

A good sign of false teaching is when people are zealous for the preacher and not for the message.

V. 19 – My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you, ²⁰ how I wish I could be with you now and change my tone, because I am perplexed about you!

Perplexed – literally 'at a loss'.

Paul will now turn to the story of Hagar & Sarah from Genesis 16-17 to teach about faith and freedom.

V. 21 – Tell me, you who want to be under the law, are you not aware of what the law says? ²² For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and the other by the free woman.

Paul will use a somewhat complicated illustration to make his point. He will use the difference between Ishmael and Isaac to illustrate the difference between salvation by works and salvation by faith.

V. 23 – His son by the slave woman (Ishmael) was born according to the flesh, but his son by the free woman (Isaac) was born as the result of a divine promise.

God had promised a child to the free woman, Sarah, but they chose to have a child through Sarah's Egyptian slave girl, Hagar. Hagar bore Ishmael, but he was not the child of God's promise to Abraham.

Sarah eventually gives birth to the child of promise. Once the promise came, the status of the child of the flesh became less significant.

Paul explains in the following verses.

V. 24 – These things are being taken figuratively/allegorically: The women represent two covenants. One covenant is from Mount Sinai and bears children who are to be slaves: This is Hagar.

The covenant from Mount Sinai is ... The law. Children of that covenant are slaves. Slaves to the law.

V. 25 – Now Hagar stands for Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present city of Jerusalem, because she is in slavery with her children. ²⁶ But the Jerusalem that is above is free, and she is our mother.

So we have two Jerusalem's. One in Israel, which according to Paul was enslaved – not to Rome but to the law. The other Jerusalem is above – the word was sometimes used to refer to heaven. That Jerusalem was free.

According to Pauline theology, the second Jerusalem was/is a reality. It exists in the presence of Jesus Christ. Yes, in heaven. But Christians are to be citizens of that new Jerusalem even in the here and now.

Now, Paul quotes from Isaiah 54:1. Isaiah had been prophesying about Israel's future after her captivity in Babylon – how she would once again flourish and compares that to a formerly barren woman who would now have many children.

V. 27 – For it is written:

“Be glad, barren woman,
you who never bore a child;
shout for joy and cry aloud,
you who were never in labor;
because more are the children of the desolate woman
than of her who has a husband.”^[e]

Paul uses this to illustrate a life that has transitioned from the law to faith alone.

V. 28 – Now you, brothers and sisters, like Isaac, are children of promise. ²⁹ At that time the son born according to the flesh persecuted the son born by the power of the Spirit. It is the same now.

The law of the Judaizers represent the son of the flesh, and they were in Galatia persecuting the son born of the power of the Spirit.

Completing this illustration, Paul will quote from Genesis 21:10.

V. 30 – But what does Scripture say? “Get rid of the slave woman and her son, for the slave woman’s son will never share in the inheritance with the free woman’s son.”³¹ Therefore, brothers and sisters, we are not children of the slave woman, but of the free woman.

Chapter 5

Now that Paul has given a couple of illustrations that show the difference between the law and the Spirit, he will spend the rest of the letter making a plea for the responsible use of Christian freedom. Freedom from the law does not mean freedom to sin. It is a different kind of freedom. It includes taking up the cross of Jesus.

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

What a powerful verse – yet many Christians are burdened by the yoke of slavery. Slavery to the law. Perhaps, not the 613 Jewish laws, but the modern Christian laws we have created.

Laws like certain ways of baptism or communion, or even laws about the right way to worship. (Which, by the way, the right way according to Jesus is to worship in Spirit).

When a denomination or a church says that one cannot be saved if something other than faith in Jesus happens, then that is the yoke of slavery.

V. 2 – Mark my words! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all.³ Again I declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole law.

Why would Christ be of no value to them? Because if they were relying on the law to make them right with God, then they didn't have faith and confidence in Jesus. We cannot save ourselves and we cannot have it both way – self and Jesus.

So, once saved always saved? Some will argue that the next verse doesn't really mean what it says, that salvation remains. I think we need to seriously consider this verse.

V. 4 – You who are trying to be justified by the law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.

Fallen from grace. I believe it says just how it reads. Salvation comes through believing that Jesus paid for our sins, by trusting in what Jesus done. If we accept the gift and then we reject that gift, we no longer possess the gift.

This is different from back sliding. We can be moving forward in sanctification and then slip back while still having faith in Jesus. That is backsliding. Rejecting the grace of Jesus all together is falling from grace.

V. 5 – For through the Spirit we eagerly await by faith the righteousness for which we hope.

What are we waiting for so eagerly? This speaks to a day of judgment when God will declare us righteous because of our faith in Jesus. Until that day, our hope is not in keeping laws, rules and regulations, but in Jesus Christ alone.

V. 6 – For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.

When we consider verses 5 & 6 together, we have faith, hope and love. These three things run through everything Paul has said to the Galatians, and will run through all of his letters.

According to Paul, hope is the future tense of faith, while love is the present tense of faith. Just as hope in our future is a product of faith, so is love here and now.

Hope for Paul was not wishing, it was a longing, something we anticipate.

V. 7 – You were running a good race. Who cut in on you to keep you from obeying the truth?

Paul speaks of faith as running a race in Romans, 1 Corinthians, Philippians, and 1 Thessalonians.

My NIV reads – who cut in on you. Other translations have – who hindered you? The Greek word suggests someone blocking progress.

Galatians 1:6 reads – I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you to live in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel.

Now we have –

V. 8 – That kind of persuasion does not come from the one who calls you.

The one who called them was not Paul, but God.

V. 9 – “A little yeast works through the whole batch of dough.”

In the religious symbolism of that day, yeast was sometimes good, but more often is was bad. Here, it is bad. Yeast does not remain isolated in a single spot in the dough, it is spread around and becomes part of the entire loaf.

False teachings are never limited to just a few people. It is either rejected and removed, or it works its way through the entire group, influencing their thoughts and practices.

V. 10 – I am confident in the Lord that you will take no other view. The one who is throwing you into confusion, whoever that may be, will have to pay the penalty. ¹¹ Brothers

and sisters, if I am still preaching circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been abolished.

In verse 11 Paul is addressing what might have been yet another rumor. Based on this verse it does appear that someone was saying – hey this is what Paul is preaching.

Those Galatians had no New Testament to fall back upon. We do. Yet, even now, and ever since the New Testament came to be accepted, there have been false teachers who have said things like _ this is not really what it means here, what it means is what I am teaching.

ALWAYS fall back on the Scriptures.

Paul now lays down some serious language. The KJV in verse 12 does not read as the Greek implies.

V. 12 – As for those agitators, I wish they would go the whole way and emasculate themselves!

Make no mistake about what Paul is saying. If circumcision makes God happy, then don't stop there! Some of the pagan priests actually would emasculate themselves, so the Gentile Christians would have made the connection to their culture.

Having touched on the spiritual life a couple of times in this letter, Paul now moves into a section dedicated to the spiritual life.

V. 13 – You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh^[a]; rather, serve one another humbly in love.

Again, Paul uses the Greek word sarx, and we translate it as flesh. Sarx referred to our sinful human nature.

Now that we are free from the law, we shouldn't use that freedom to indulge in sinful behavior, instead we should use our freedom to serve humbly in love.

If the Spirit of Christ dwells within us, then we don't need a law to compel us serve humbly in love, as this section will imply.

V. 14 – For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”

Is Paul discounting what Jesus said in the Gospels?

Mark 12:29 – “The most important one,” answered Jesus, “is this: ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. ³⁰ Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’^[1] ³¹ The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these.”

Paul is not discounting loving the Lord your God. That was a given. In fact, we wouldn't have the Spirit within us if we didn't love God. The Spirit moves us to love our neighbors. Paul will further explain this in verse 16 and 17.

V. 15 – If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.

This is what fighting in the church does – it destroys the church. It's what's happening in the UMC right now.

V. 16 – So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want.

Remember, flesh means sinful human nature. When we live by the spirit we will have different goals than living by the flesh.

The spirit keeps us from doing whatever we want.

If this is true – and I believe it is – than many who claim to be Christian are not spirit led Christians.

V. 18 – But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

Note that in verse 16, Paul says to walk in the Spirit. Walking the spirit speaks to our conduct.

Here in verse 18 he writes about being led by the spirit, this depicts our guidance.

If the Spirit is our guide, we don't need a law for the Spirit will lead us into what is right, and correct us when we are wrong.

V. 19 – The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery;²⁰ idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions²¹ and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like.

Sexual immorality. The Greek word is *Porneia*. The KJV translates this as two words – adultery and fornication. The Greek word was more closely related to prostitution, as the root of the Greek word means to sell. To the Greeks, to whom Paul was writing, it most likely referred back to their pagan temple prostitutes, both male and female.

Impurity. Older translations have uncleanness. The Greek word, *akatharsia*, meant just how we translate it, impure. I think that with the word before it and the word after it, we can gather that in this instance it referred to sexual impurity. Exactly what that was, or is, is a matter of debate and interpretation. Just consider its context here.

Debauchery. The older translation have licentiousness. The Greek word meant something that would shock public decency. Lewd.

Idolatry. All translation that I know of have it translated this way. The Greek word, *eidólolatria*, meant exactly what we think.. Image worship.

Witchcraft. Some translations have sorcery. The Greek word is *pharmakeia*, and of course we get the word pharmacy from this word. In that day this word meant the use of herbs to cast spells.

Hatred. Also translated as enmity. The Greek word meant hostility and alienation.

Discord. Also translated as variance and strife. Strife is a good modern translation. We might also say contention.

Jealousy. The KJV has emulations. The Greek word is *zelos*, and we get zeal from this word. In Paul's day, it meant to have strong feeling (zealous) against or for someone. Why is this word here? To have strong feeling for or against?

It goes with the word prior, discord. When we are zealous for one teaching we sow seeds of discord for another.

Fits of rage. Other translations include anger and wrath. The Greek word actually means passion, but many Greek words can be translated differently depending upon their context. Taken in its context here it would mean outbursts.

Selfish Ambition. Other translations have strife, quarrels. The Greek word is better translated as rivalries. Ambition is not wrong. Selfish ambition is. Rivalries are fine in sports, but not in the church.

Dissensions. The KJV has seditions. The Greek word means divisions. Certainly the Judaizes were making divisions within the church in Galatia.

Factions. The KJV has heresies. We do get the word heresy from the Greek word, and it is a pretty good translation. Certainly Paul has the Judaizes in mind.

V. 21a – and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like.

Envy. The Greek word can mean envy, and also a grudge.

Drunkenness. That's what the Greek says and most translations. Interestingly, the KJV throws in murder between envy and drunkenness. Not sure why they did.

Orgies. Other translations have carousing and reveling. The Greek is an interesting word to translate. The Greek is komos, which referred to a pagan festival. So, while no specific thing is singled out in the word, the pagan festival would include carousing, reveling and orgies.

But Paul was speaking to a Gentile audience, who were recently pagans, and they were familiar with the festival of komos.

Like many lists that Paul gives, of both good and bad things, he ends this list with ‘and the like.’ Literally in the Greek, ‘and similar things.’ We like definitive lists of good and bad, and the Bible doesn’t always give us a definitive list. I think through prayers we can probably decide what ‘and the like’ would refer to.

V. 5:21b – I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

A Christ like life is a life that turns / repents of such behavior.

A Christ like life is a kingdom life. Please note that the list Paul just gave was not just a list of sexual sins. Anger, jealousy, divisions, these and more are things that keep us from a Christ like life, a kingdom life.

5:22 – But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness and self-control.

When Paul was writing about the flesh, he wrote about acts of the flesh, or works of the flesh. It was plural. Sinful nature reveals itself in various ways.

Now, when writing about the life in the spirit, he uses the singular, fruit. This is the power of the Spirit over the power of the flesh. The Spirit will produce all of these things. Will we be perfect in all of them? No, but through the spirit we will increase in all of them.

Love. The Greek word is the familiar agape, which is unconditional. Agapeo in the Greek meant preference. Agape meant to choose to love, prefer to love.

Joy. The root of the Greek word meant to lean towards. Lean towards joy. We might say someone with a joyful disposition.

Peace. The Greek word (i-ray'-nay) meant a peace of mind. An inner peace.

Forbearance. Also translated as longsuffering and patience. I believe patience is the best translation.

Kindness. Also translated as gentleness. Outside of the Bible, the Greek word has often been translated as goodness and uprightness. It certainly speaks of one's moral character.

Goodness. The NRSV translates it as generosity. The Greek word translates as doing good. Being generous is certainly part of doing good. However, doing good can be many things.

Faithfulness. The KJV has simply faith. I like faithfulness, because Paul is describing character traits. The one filled with the spirit can be confided in and trusted.

Gentleness. The KJV translates this as meekness, and was a good translation in 1611. Gentleness and mildness are good translations for today.

Self-control. The KJV has temperance, which today usually has the connotation of refraining from alcohol. . The Greek word meant self-control in all areas.

5:23b – Against such things there is no law.

What Paul is saying is that these things are spirit produced, and there are no religious laws that can produce these, not on a consistent level.

5:24 – Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires

Have crucified the flesh. Remember, Paul is using the words sarx which refers not to skin but to human nature. In our case, sinful human nature. This is the work of the Spirit, to crucify our sinful human nature.

V. 25 – Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

Walk in step – actually this refers to a marching group, a cadence. The point is that each day we move and act and speak as the spirit directs us. When the spirit says to be kind then we are kind. When the spirit says to choose to love, then we choose to love.

It is not – what would Jesus do. It is – what will Jesus do through me?

Verse 26 should read with verse 1 of chapter 6.

Chapter 6

5:26 – Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.

6:1 – Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted.

We are our brothers and sisters keepers, but as Paul warned in 1 Thessalonians, we are not to be busy bodies. We correct with gentleness, as that is part of the Spirit led life.

Remember in 2 Thessalonians Paul warned not to associate with the idle people, but to warn them. By not associating with them he meant not to become idle with them. The same applies here. Correct others, but resist the temptation to be as they, and resist the temptation to be something other than gentle.

V. 2 – Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

The Gentiles were being told to keep the Jewish laws. Paul seems to be saying – if you want to keep laws, keep the laws of Christ. This wasn’t some legal law, but more of a love one another law.

Fulfilling the law of Christ includes humility, and so he continues.

V. 3 – If anyone thinks they are something when they are not, they deceive themselves.⁴ Each one should test their own actions. Then they can take pride in themselves alone, without comparing themselves to someone else.

We shouldn’t do things for others, or serve in any way, to be lifted up by others. It’s ok to take pride in what we accomplish, but when we start comparing what we have done with what others have or have not done, we are no longer humble.

In verse 2 Paul says to carry each other’s burdens. Now we have ...

V. 5 – for each one should carry their own load.

Is Paul contradicting himself? No, and the readers of the original Greek would have seen the difference, but we lose something in translation.

The Greek word we translate as load in verse two is baree, which would imply something unreasonable, something that was obviously too much for one person to carry. In other words, when someone is carrying a burden too great for them, then we step in and help.

The Greek word in verse 5 that we translate as load is phortion. This was often used to describe a soldier’s back pack. This referred to a manageable load.

Verse 5 implies that for those in Christ there are certain responsibilities and obligations that we are meant to shoulder.

V. 6 – Nevertheless, the one who receives instruction in the word should share all good things with their instructor.

This verse has traditionally been used as a basis for compensating church leaders. For many years, pastors were paid in other ways than money. Food, and other materials. Paul does use the phrase all good things.

But Paul is not going to leave what he wrote in verse 6 to stand alone. So he qualifies it in the following verses. But what he writes can be applied to all, not just instructors.

V. 7 – Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. ⁸ Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.

We can't reap the fruit of the Spirit while being boastful, envious, judgmental, refusing to bear others' burdens, etc.

Ever wonder and doubt if you are making a difference, or doing any good?

V. 9 – Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. ¹⁰ Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

Trust in God's time. Some harvests come quickly, others take more time.

Now for Paul's concluding remarks.

V. 11 – See what large letters I use as I write to you with my own hand!

We've seen this before, that Paul adds a few lines in his own handwriting at the end of the letter. Perhaps, this was a way of authenticating his letter, and he certainly would want to do that given the controversy in Galatia.

Again, did Paul have bad eyesight? Maybe. Maybe he had hand writing like John Hancock.

The KJV is not a good translation – Ye see how large a letter I have written unto you with mine own hand.

Paul now sums up the motives of the Judaizes.

V. 12 – Those who want to impress people by means of the flesh are trying to compel you to be circumcised. The only reason they do this is to avoid being persecuted for the cross of Christ. ¹³ Not even those who are circumcised keep the law, yet they want you to be circumcised that they may boast about your circumcision in the flesh.

What is the cross of Christ in verse 12? They didn't want to be persecuted by other Jews and other Jewish leaders.

Sometimes the cross of Christ is other people not approving of what we do and say, or criticizing us for it.

Paul doesn't want to play the same game that the Judaizes play. So, he writes ...

V. 14 – May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

Through the cross the world has been crucified – put to death. A powerful image and something we all struggle with.

But in this instance, it is the approval of the world that Paul has crucified.

In **5:6** Paul wrote: For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.

What he writes in verse 15 does not contradict that, it simply gives the bigger picture.

V. 15 – Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is the new creation.

When we are a new creation we will express our faith through love. This new creation is something that Paul will write about in other letters.

V. 16 – Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule—to the Israel of God.

The Israel of God sounds strange to us. Paul is referring to the Church. We are the new Israel.

Since Paul only uses this term here, others claim it was a prayer for the Jews who had not converted yet.

V. 17 – From now on, let no one cause me trouble, for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus.

The Greek word for marks is stigmata, but that word took on a different meaning in centuries to come. Paul was not talking about nail marks on his hands and feet. He was, however, talking about the harm he had received for preaching the gospel.

V. 18 – The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers and sisters. Amen.