

Contents

Text: Galatians 1:1-5.....	3
Text: Galatians 1:6-10.....	4
Text: Galatians 1:11-24.....	5
Text: Galatians 2:1-5.....	7
Text: Galatians 2:6-10.....	8
Text: Galatians 2:11-14.....	9
Text: Galatians 2:15-18.....	10
Text: Galatians 2:19-21.....	12
Text: Galatians 3:1-5.....	13
Text: Galatians 3:6.....	14
Text: Galatians 3:7-9.....	16
Text: Galatians 3:10-12.....	17
Text: Galatians 3:13-14.....	19
Text: Galatians 3:15-18.....	20
Text: Galatians 3:19-22.....	22
Text: Galatians 3:23-29.....	23
Text: Galatians 4:1-5.....	25
Text: Galatians 4:6-7.....	26
Text: Galatians 4:8-11.....	28
Text: Galatians 4:12-15.....	29
Text: Galatians 4:16-20.....	31
Text: Galatians 4:21-24.....	33
Text: Galatians 4:25-31.....	34
Text: Galatians 5:1-4.....	36
Text: Galatians 5:5-6.....	37
Text: Galatians 5:7-12.....	38
Text: Galatians 5:13-15.....	40
Text: Galatians 5:16-18.....	41
Text: Galatians 5:19-21.....	42
Text: Galatians 5:22-23.....	44
Text: Galatians 5:24-26.....	45

Text: Galatians 6:1-2.....	47
Text: Galatians 6:3-6.....	48
Text: Galatians 6:7-10.....	49
Text: Galatians 6:11-14.....	50
Text: Galatians 6:15-18.....	52

Text: Galatians 1:1-5

Theme: Justification and sanctification are by faith apart from the works of the Law (Gal. 3:3).

Introduction: In order to understand Paul's introductions in his epistles, we need to identify the core elements so that we can see how a specific introduction is unique. Here is Paul's core introduction:

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, to the saints at _____ who are in Christ Jesus: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. We give thanks to God for you, praying always for you.

- I) Stop placing authority on man's words (1-5; cf. 7).
 - A. Paul's authority did not come from man but from God (1-2a; cf. 11-12).
 1. Paul excludes any human source for his Apostleship. He leaves no wiggle room. His authority came *through* Jesus Christ (cf. 12) and God the Father who raised Him from the dead.
 2. Paul likely includes a statement about the risen Lord because an Apostle had to see the risen Lord (Acts 1:22; cf. 1 Cor. 9:1)
 3. Even though Paul's authority came from God, all those who were with him recognized his Apostleship (2; cf. Acts 13:1-3). Typically, Paul includes Timothy (2 Cor. 1:1; Phil. 1:1; Col. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1; Phil. 1:1), Silvanus (1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1), or Sosthenes (1 Cor. 1:1), but for this epistle he includes all those who are with him.
 - B. God should get all the glory in rescuing sinners (3-5).
 1. The Galatians had begun in the Spirit, but were now relying on the works of the flesh (3:3). Any time we rely on the works of the flesh, we get the glory (cf. Eph. 2:8-9). But the Gospel is all about God's glory.
 2. Christ gave Himself for our sins. But how? By bearing our sins on the cross in His own body (1 Pet. 2:24). Christ died to sin (Rom. 6:10). And since we are united with Him in death (Rom. 6:8), we died to sin (Rom. 6:2).
 3. Christ did this so that He might rescue us. The word "rescue" is used to describe God's supernatural act of rescuing His people from various trials (Dan. 3:15; Acts 7:10, 34; Acts 12:11). In this passage we are rescued from this present evil age.
 4. What is this present evil age? It is clearly referring to the age where Satan is the

prince of the power of the air (Eph. 2:2; cf. 2 Cor. 4:4; John 12:31; 1 John 5:19). Paul tells the Galatians that this is a “present” age. The Galatians are currently living in this age. But there is an age to come where God shows His kindness toward us who are in Christ Jesus (cf. Eph. 2:7).

Conclusion: In Paul’s introduction to this letter, he does not include 2 statements that are found in almost every other epistle. First, there is no mention of being “in Christ.” Secondly, Paul does not mention giving thanks or praying for these people. Why does Paul omit these statements? Even though Paul includes the typical “grace to you and peace from God our Father,” there does seem to be a concern that these Galatians are in Christ. In fact, he says that they deserted Christ for a different Gospel. There is a real danger of placing authority on man’s words.

Text: Galatians 1:6-10

Theme: Justification and sanctification are by faith apart from the works of the Law (Gal. 3:3).

I) Stop placing authority on man’s words (6-10).

- A. Why would anyone abandon the Good News that justification is by faith and not by works (6-7a; cf. 3:1-5)?
 1. Paul is genuinely amazed (6). This word is often used in the gospels to refer to a response from a supernatural healing (cf. Matt. 15:31; Mark 5:20).
 2. Specifically, he is amazed at how *quickly* they abandoned the grace of Christ for a different Gospel (6) which is not a Gospel at all (7). Paul is likely referring to the time between his initial visit (47AD) and the writing of this letter (48AD).
 3. This problem of abandoning God for a false god is often repeated throughout scripture (cf. Exod. 32:8; Judges 2:17). Even Peter forsakes Jesus hours after stating that he will die for Him (John 13:37-38; 18:25-27).
 4. In Galatians they seem to be in the process of abandoning Christ (“deserting” is in the present tense). By the end of this book he appeals to them to walk by the rule of faith (Gal. 6:15-16).
- B. If anyone’s gospel does not match the gospel given by the Apostles, then that person is accursed (7b-9).

1. At this point in the epistle, Paul has not explained the difference between his gospel and the distorted gospel—justification by faith apart from works. Yet, in the introduction he has repeatedly warned them about placing authority on man’s words (1, 7-9).
 2. How would you know if someone is altering the gospel? For those in the churches of Galatia, the Gospel was severely distorted. The word for “distort” is often referring to significant changes (cf. Acts 2:20; Ps. 66:6; 105:29; Deut. 23:5).
 3. The author of Hebrews tells us that the only way to have our senses trained to discern between good and evil is to listen carefully to God’s word (cf. Heb. 5:11-14). One of our struggles is that we have become dull hearers. Because we are dull hearers, when we hear a false gospel that seems attractive to us, we quickly accept it.
 4. What if the message preached comes from a trustworthy source? Paul is abundantly clear on this point. Even if he, or an angel, came and preached a gospel that is contrary to the authentic gospel, that person is to be accursed.
 5. Is Paul overstating the case? No! In fact, he restates his point. Anyone who preaches a gospel contrary to what was already preached—let him be accursed.
- C. You either please God or man (10; cf. John 12:42-43).
1. Paul was probably being criticized for having Timothy circumcised while preaching that circumcision is not necessary (Gal. 5:11; cf. Acts 16:3). Paul would simply have to preach circumcision in order to please man.

Text: Galatians 1:11-24

Theme: Justification and sanctification are by faith apart from the works of the Law (Gal. 3:3).

Introduction: Although this section in Galatians (11-24) gives Paul’s biography, the purpose of this section is to prove that this Gospel came from God and not from man (1). Paul’s biography is simply proof that the message came from God and not from man.

- I) Stop placing authority on man’s words (11-17).
 - A. Paul’s message did not come from man (11-12).
 1. What does Paul mean when he says that the message was not according to man (11)? He answers his own question in the next verse (12). He did not receive it from man, nor was he taught it by man.

2. Instead, the message came through a revelation of Jesus Christ. It is possible to interpret this phrase as either “Jesus Christ revealed the Gospel to Paul” or “God revealed Jesus Christ to Paul.” Although, Jesus Christ did reveal Himself to Paul on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-5), the context clarifies that God revealed His Son to Paul (16).
- B. Paul’s sharp contrast in his own life proves that His message was from God (13-16a).
1. Everyone had heard of Paul’s former life. His goal was to destroy the church of God (13). In fact, Paul was “breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord” up to his conversion (Acts 9:1). The only way to explain Paul’s radical transformation is that His message came from God.
 2. Even Paul’s zeal for upholding the traditions of Judaism was unparalleled (14). Paul was not simply an angry man (13), but rather a deeply pious man (14; cf. Phil. 3:4-6).
 3. Even among the disciples, there was significant doubt that Paul was genuine (cf. Acts 9:26-27). It must have felt like a trap. But instead of a trap, Paul was genuinely transformed.
 4. Paul’s former lifestyle radically changed when God revealed His Son to Paul (15-16). In fact, everyone in the churches was talking about this radical transformation (23). Instead of destroying the faith, Paul was preaching the faith.
 5. Paul’s radical transformation caused the believers to glorify God (24). The Gospel truly is the power of God for salvation (cf. Rom. 1:16).
- C. Paul’s lack of interaction with the other Apostles proves that his message was from God (16b-24).
1. It would have been natural for Paul to go up to Jerusalem in order to receive support from the Apostles (17), but instead he went to Arabia for three years (18). Only then did he become briefly acquainted with Peter and James (18-19). Even after this short trip, he was still unknown to the churches of Judea (22).
 2. Those who were distorting the Gospel (7) would likely accuse Paul of lying about his lack of interaction with the other Apostles. Hence, Paul emphatically asserts that he is telling the truth about these events (20).

Text: Galatians 2:1-5

Theme: Justification and sanctification are by faith apart from the works of the Law (Gal. 3:3).

Introduction: Paul's visit to Jerusalem in Galatians 2 either refers to Paul's famine relief visit (Acts 11:27-30; AD 44-46) or the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15; AD 50). It's likely that this visit refers to the famine relief visit for 2 reasons. First, it seems unlikely that Paul would not have mentioned the famine relief visit (1:20). Secondly, the Gal. 2 visit was stirred up by a revelation (cf. Acts 11:28; contra Acts 15:2).

I) Stop placing authority on man's words (1-5).

Explanation: In these first 2 chapters, Paul is addressing a primary problem that the Galatians were having. They were placing authority on man's words (1:7). In finding the main point of a passage, we must ask what the author intended the reader to get. Paul's biography was meant to stir up the Galatians to stop placing authority on man's words.

A. Those who distort the Gospel often add requirements that serve as a yoke of bondage (1-5).

1. Unlike those who were distorting the Gospel, Paul was willing to have his message confirmed by the Apostles (2). In contrast, the false brethren could not give a compelling reason to Titus (3).
2. Even though the false brethren in Jerusalem are not connected to the situation in Galatia, their premise is the same (4-5). These false brethren were attempting to put Titus under a yoke of bondage by requiring him to be circumcised. This seems to be the same topic that those who were distorting the Gospel in Galatia brought up (cf. 5:1-4).
3. Throughout scripture these false teachers slip into the church and stir up issues (4; cf. Acts 15:1, 5; 2 Timothy 3:6-9; 2 Peter 2:1; Jude 1:4). Let us be on the lookout.
4. What liberty is Paul talking about (4)? These false brethren were attempting to bring Titus into bondage by requiring him to be circumcised. Circumcision is clearly a conscience issue. A few years after this incident, Timothy would be circumcised (Acts 16:2). So, why is Titus left uncircumcised? In part, to show that circumcision was a conscience issue.

Explanation: Paul, in Romans 14 lays out the way in which we ought to work with other believers over conscience related issues. We ought to *accept* the one who is weak in faith because God has accepted him (14:1, 3). Within the local church, there

- will be some whose conscience allows them to drink alcohol, so long as they do not get drunk. While others, who are weak in faith, cannot drink any without going against their conscience. Those whose conscience allows them to drink alcohol in moderation should be careful not to cause the weak in faith to stumble (13) and go against their conscience.
- B. Those who distort the Gospel often spy out the liberties of other believers (4).
 1. This passage leaves us wondering how these false brethren sneaked in and spied out that Titus was uncircumcised. Regardless of their method, false brethren look for ways to stir up controversy and cause unnecessary divisions within the church.

Text: Galatians 2:6-10

Theme: Justification and sanctification are by faith apart from the works of the Law (Gal. 3:3).

Introduction: Why does Paul include all this biographical information? He was likely being accused by those who were distorting the Gospel (1:7) that his message was not the same as the other Apostles. Unfortunately, these distorters were causing some of the other Galatian believers to accept a Law based Gospel (1:8; 5:2-4).

- I) Stop placing authority on man's words (6-10).
 - A. Stop placing authority on man's words because God does not make a distinction (6).
 1. Even though Paul was meeting with the "pillars" he didn't view them any differently (6). Was Paul wrong for not making a distinction, even though these pillars were Apostles? No, in fact, God does not make distinctions (6).
 2. The closest parallel in our day is how some people treat the church confessional statements. Like the Apostles in Paul's day, the church confessions are like pillars. But we have gone too far when we place as much weight on the confessions as we do on the Scriptures.
 3. We also make distinctions based on the speaking ability of the preacher. Certainly, it is easier to listen to a dynamic speaker, but we should remember that Paul was not a gifted orator. In fact, his preaching was not with persuasive words, but instead it was a demonstration of the power of the Holy Spirit so that their faith would rest on God and not man (2 Cor. 2:1-5).
 - B. Even though the distorters in Galatia rejected Paul's message, his message was

authentic (7-9).

1. We often place authority on people who end up being completely wrong. In Galatia, these distorters were wrong. Yet, they led many astray.
2. In contrast, Peter, James, and John recognized that God had entrusted Paul with the Gospel (7) and given him grace to preach to the Gentiles (9). In fact, they gave the right hand of fellowship to Paul (9).
3. Specifically, the Apostles recognized that God had granted Paul unique gifting to preach the Gospel to the nations, while God had called them to preach to the Israelites.

II) An authentic message ought to be marked by an authentic life (10).

- A. After the Apostles approved Paul's message, they encouraged him to serve the poor which he was eager to do (10).
1. Why do the Apostles mention helping the poor? It seems almost tacked on to the topic. But remember, it is James who records that true religion is to help the widows and orphans (James 1:27). Not only were the orphans and the widows poor, but they also had no means to help in return.
 2. We ought to be careful to live out the Gospel, as well as preach the Gospel to our neighbors. Let's not let our actions negate the message. This is especially true for us as parents.

Text: Galatians 2:11-14

Theme: Justification and sanctification are by faith apart from the works of the Law (Gal. 3:3).

Introduction: Why does Paul continue giving biographical information? He has already proven that his message is authentic (1:11-2:10). He seems to be using his biography to point out the common problem that the churches in Galatia were facing (1:7; cf. 5:13, 15). They had been taught justification by faith alone, but had quickly deserted that truth (1:6). Their struggle was no different than the struggle that all of us face, including Peter.

- I) Even though you are convinced that justification is by faith alone, you must live out your belief (11-14).
- A. Even though you believe in justification by faith alone, it is easy to fall into hypocrisy (11-14).
1. Although some of the details are hard to work out (i.e. were "the rest of the

Jews” believers or just Jewish; 13), the main point is clear. Peter was eating with the Gentiles, but when there was pressure from certain Jews Peter quickly withdrew from the Gentiles (12). Peter was acting in hypocrisy (13).

2. Hypocrisy is saying or doing one thing outwardly, but inwardly thinking another (14; cf. Mark 7:6).
 3. Peter’s hypocrisy caused Barnabas to be carried away into the same hypocrisy (13). This is exactly what was happening in Galatia. Those who were distorting the Gospel in Galatia were causing others to follow in the same way (cf. circumcision; 5:3).
- B. We often fail to live out justification by faith alone because of the fear of man (12).
1. The fear of man (12) is similar to the phrase “seeking to please men” (1:10). It would have been easy for Paul to preach what the Galatians wanted to hear (1:8). Instead, though, he recognized that he could not please God and man (1:10).
 2. King Saul struggled with the fear of man (1 Sam 15:18-20, 24, 30). In fact, even after Samuel told him that God was going to rip the kingdom from his hand, he still wanted Samuel to come back with him so that the elders would think that everything was ok.
 3. The fear of man causes us to completely disregard God’s Word.
- C. What does it look like to fail to live in the truth of the Gospel(14)?
1. First, we must ask what it was for Peter to not live out the truth of the Gospel. Instead of eating with both Jews and Gentiles, Peter withdrew himself and only ate with Jews. Essentially, Peter was making a distinction between Jews and Gentiles. Peter was viewing the Gentiles as inferior.
 2. Peter was living like a Gentile or like the world. It’s not uncommon for the world to view some people as better than others. But for Christians, we are all on the same footing. We have all been made clean through the blood of Jesus Christ. We were all dead in our sins and needing to be brought to life (Eph. 2). When we view other Christians as inferior, we are failing to live out the truth of the Gospel.

Text: Galatians 2:15-18

Theme: Justification and sanctification are by faith apart from the works of the Law (Gal. 3:3).

Introduction: Justification or righteousness comes up repeatedly throughout the book of Galatians, but what does it mean? Justification is a legal term that means to declare someone to be righteous. Justification is often used in contrast to the works of the Law (2:16). Two arguments for a legal meaning for justification are (1) the Old Testament word for justify often means to declare righteous in a legal sense (cf. Deut. 25:1; Prov. 17:15). (2) Paul often uses this term to refer to the legal sense of declaring someone to be righteous (Rom. 8:33-34).

- I) If your righteousness comes from Christ, then your good works cannot justify you (15-18).
 - A. Even those who obey the Law (Torah) must be justified by faith in Christ (15-16).
 1. Even though Paul and the other Jews were careful to obey the Law (Torah) prior to conversion, yet they were still sinners (15). It would have been natural for these Jewish people (including Peter) to view themselves as less sinful than these Gentiles. Yet, justification has nothing to do with your own righteousness (16; cf. Rom. 1:28-2:1; Rom. 2:17).
 2. No one has ever been justified by the works of the Law. Even Abraham was justified by faith apart from the works of the Law (cf. Rom. 4:2-3, 9-10).
 3. The works of the Law can never justify a person because even our “good works” prior to salvation are tainted with our sin nature (cf. Is. 64:6; Rom. 3:10).
 4. What is faith in Christ (16)? Although the phrase itself could refer to the faithfulness of Christ, the context specifies that it is belief in Christ (16).
 - B. If righteousness comes by faith in Christ, then is Christ a servant of sin (17-18)?
 1. Paul’s conclusion in verse 17 is clear—“is Christ a servant of sin?” But how does Paul assume the reader will get to that conclusion based on the first two phrases. He is likely giving a rebuttal to an accusation that he is being accused of. The distorters in Galatia were probably accusing Paul of making Christ a servant of sin because Christ justifies people who, according to Paul’s Gospel, were recognizing at the time of their own justification that they were sinners.
 2. So what is Paul saying in verse 17? He is saying that when a person seeks to be justified by faith in Christ (and not by the works of the Law), then he will realize that he is a sinner (17). In fact, the only way to come to Christ is to realize that you are a sinner (cf. Rom. 3:23). So, since Christ justifies guilty sinners, then doesn’t that make Christ a servant of sin (i.e. a judge who justifies a guilty person is a bad judge; cf. Rom. 3:26)? No! It only demonstrates that the payment has already been made (cf. 21).

3. Christ is not a servant of sin because He justifies people based on faith and not works. On the contrary, those who go back to the requirements of the Law are the transgressors of the Law because they could never fulfill the requirements of the Law (18).

Conclusion: Even though Peter knew that justification was by faith and not by works, he quickly deserted it. He stopped eating with the Gentiles and only ate with the Jews (12). We are not much different. We tend to view people differently based on how they look outwardly. When we view people with distinctions, we are not living in the reality of justification by faith alone.

Text: Galatians 2:19-21

Theme: Justification and sanctification are by faith apart from the works of the Law (Gal. 3:3).

Introduction: In our text, Paul makes a stunning contrast—"I died to the Law so that I might live to God" (19). Paul is identifying a problem with the Jewish community that came to Antioch and influenced Peter to withdraw from the Gentiles (12) and the distorters in Galatia who were requiring circumcision (1:7; cf. 5:2). Until we correctly understand our relationship to the Law, we will continue to struggle with the same form of legalism that was prevalent in Galatia.

- I) I died to the Law because I am crucified with Christ (19-21; cf. Rom. 7:4).
 - A. I died to the Law so that I might live to God (19-20).
 1. What does Paul mean when he says that he died to the Law? The Law brings a curse to everyone who is under the Law (3:10). But Christ bore the curse of the Law, which is death, by hanging on a pole (3:13).
 2. So, in what sense was our death to the Law "through the Law"? We, like Christ were born "under the Law" (Gal. 4:4-5). Therefore, Christ, who was born "under the Law" was able to free us by taking the curse of the Law on our behalf (Gal. 3:13). Specifically, we died to the Law through the body of Christ because of His death on the cross (Rom. 7:4).
 3. The result of dying to the Law is not lawlessness, but rather, living to God (19-20). So, instead of obeying God out of obligation, we now obey God because He loves us and gave Himself for us (20).
 4. Paul further illustrates our relationship to the Law in Romans 7:1-3 by the marriage relationship. The woman is bound to her husband as long as he lives (7:2). But when the spouse dies, she is released from the marriage covenant

(7:2). In a similar way, we are released from the Law at the death of Christ (7:4-6) because we are united with Him.

- B. When you continue to cling to the Law, you are saying that Christ's death was not necessary (21)
 - 1. Calvin put it this way, "If we do not renounce all other hopes, and embrace Christ alone, we reject the grace of God.
 - 2. Justification by faith alone often leads to one of two ditches. It often leads to lawlessness or legalism. In fact, when Paul explains the doctrine of justification in Romans 4-5, he follows it up with this question, "should we continue in sin" (Rom. 6:1). Then, he follows that chapter up with our relationship to the Law (Rom. 7). If you cannot see both ditches from where you're standing, you're likely in one of those ditches.

Conclusion: Can you say with the Apostle Paul that you died to the Law? Now, for most of us, the Law was not a big part of our life prior to salvation. Our problem is that after salvation, instead of believing in the finished work of Christ for salvation, we cling to our own obedience to God's commands for our salvation. Let us cling to Christ alone.

Text: Galatians 3:1-5

Theme: Justification and sanctification are by faith apart from the works of the Law (Gal. 3:3).

Introduction: How do we reconcile Paul's statements about the Law? On the one hand, Paul says that the Law is good and righteous and holy (Rom. 7:12). On the other hand Paul says that he died to the Law (Rom. 7:4; Gal. 2:19). In addition, Paul says that we are released from the Law (Rom. 7:6). The author of Hebrews says that the Mosaic Covenant has become obsolete (Heb. 8:13). So, what is our relationship to the Law?

Paul argues in Galatians 3 that salvation and sanctification are both the work of the Holy Spirit. The Law is helpful, in that it teaches us about God's view of holiness and our own sinfulness (Gal. 3:24). But we are led by the Spirit, we are not under the Law (Gal. 5:18).

- I) Both salvation *and* sanctification are a work of the Spirit not the flesh (1-5).
 - A. Did you receive the Holy Spirit by the works of the Law or by hearing with faith (1-2)?
 - 1. Paul's language seems harsh. Not only are they foolish, but they must have been

bewitched (1). Since they were relying on their ability to obey the Law, the cross of Christ, then, was no longer necessary.

2. The obvious answer to Paul's rhetorical question is that we receive the Holy Spirit by hearing with faith and not by the works of the Law. In fact, later Paul explains the need for preachers because how will they believe if they have not heard (Rom. 10:14).
 3. "Hearing with faith" refers to hearing that is accompanied by faith (Rom. 10:14; cf. Moo).
- B. If you began your Christian journey by faith, wouldn't it stand to reason that you would continue by faith (3-4)?
1. Salvation to sanctification is a work of the Holy Spirit and not a work of the flesh (3). But certainly, we are to "work out our salvation with fear and trembling (Phil. 2:12). Or, as the author of Hebrews says, "you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin" (Heb. 12:4). But even in these examples, it is "God who is at work in us" (Phil. 2:13).
 2. How do you know if you are living out your sanctification by faith? If you are living by faith you will work diligently at work because you are serving the Lord. If you are overlooked for a promotion, do you become discontent? If you are doing it by faith, you can be content right where God has you, although disappointment is natural. If you find yourself discontent, then you were attempting to work apart from faith.
 3. If you continue in your sanctification apart from the work of the Holy Spirit, you will have run in vain (4).
- C. God gave the Holy Spirit by hearing with faith and not by the works of the Law (5).
1. Paul is summing up his point. Clearly, God gave the Holy Spirit by faith with hearing and not by obedience to the Law. So why would you go back to the works of the Law?

Conclusion: Since sanctification is a work of the Holy Spirit, let us pray diligently. Let us pray that we would put sin to death. Let us pray that we would serve others.

Text: Galatians 3:6

Theme: Justification and sanctification are by faith apart from the works of the Law (Gal. 3:3).

Introduction: Certainly, all of us who live after the resurrection of Christ are declared righteous

because of Christ's righteousness. But what about Old Testament saints? In Paul's primary passages on justification by faith (Rom. 4-5; Gal. 3), he uses both Abraham and David to prove that justification is by faith.

I) Faith was credited to Abraham as righteousness (6).

- A. God credited Abraham's faith as righteousness (6; cf. Rom. 4:3, 5, 9, 16).
 - 1. The word "it" clearly refers to faith. In the parallel passage in Romans 4, Paul substitutes the word "it" for the word "faith" (Rom. 4:3, 5, 9).
 - 2. The phrase "it was credited," is actually "God credited it to him" (cf. Gen. 15:6). The translators of the Hebrew OT (LXX) changed the active voice "God credited" to the passive voice "it was credited" (cf. v. 6). Genesis 15:6 makes it clear that God credits righteousness.
 - 3. In fact, God gave Abraham the faith to believe the promise (cf. Gen. 15:1-6). God promised to give Abraham a "great reward," but Abraham pointed out that he had no heir to pass it along to (2-3). So, God used the stars in the sky to build Abraham's faith (5-6).
 - 4. But even the faith that Abraham had, was a gift from God. In Ephesians 2:8-9, Paul says we are saved by grace through faith which is a gift from God. In Romans 3:24, Paul says we are justified as a gift by His grace.
- B. Since God credited righteousness to Abraham by faith, then it was not by works (6).
 - 1. Notice that Abraham "believed". It does not say that Abraham "obeyed" (cf. v. 3 & 5). If Abraham obeyed in order to receive righteousness, then his righteousness would be based on works.
 - 2. In the parallel passage, Paul points out that if something is done by works, then it is not granted as a favor (cf. Rom. 4:4-5).
- C. Abraham's justification is proof that justification has always been by faith alone (cf. Rom. 4:9-12).
 - 1. What is Paul getting at with this question (Rom. 4:9)? In order to understand Paul's argument, we have to go to the Abrahamic Covenant in Genesis 17. The sign of the Abrahamic Covenant was circumcision (Gen. 17:9-11). Any male who was not circumcised was cut off from the people of God (Gen. 17:13-14).
 - 2. The sign that a person was a participant in the Abrahamic Covenant was circumcision. So, what about those who were not circumcised? Were they a part of the Abrahamic Covenant? More importantly, could uncircumcised people be

justified?

3. “Faith was credited to Abraham as righteousness” in Genesis 15:6 *prior to his circumcision* (Rom. 4:10). Ishmael was not yet born (cf. Gen. 15:2 & 17:18). Abram was 86 years old when Ishmael was born (cf. Gen. 16:4, 16). Abram was 99 years old when Isaac was born (cf. Gen. 17:1). Abraham was circumcised at around 99 years old (cf. Gen. 17:23-24).

Text: Galatians 3:7-9

Theme: Justification and sanctification are by faith apart from the works of the Law (Gal. 3:3).

Introduction: Why does Paul repeatedly refer to Abraham throughout this chapter (6,7,8,9,14,16,18,29)? There was a tradition that John the Baptist addresses (cf. Matt. 3:7-9). The Pharisees thought that they would escape the wrath of God because of their biological relationship to Abraham. John the Baptist points out that God could raise children to Abraham from these stones. Essentially, John the Baptist was saying that being biologically related to Abraham does not mean that they are saved from God’s wrath. Similarly, the distorters in Galatia were likely using the same argument that the Pharisees used, except they likely argued that circumcision enabled you to be connected to Abraham (5:2; cf. Gen. 17:11-12).

I) Those who have faith are blessed with Abraham (7-9).

A. We are sons of Abraham not by birth but by faith (7).

Explanation: Based on the context (1-6; “therefore”), we would expect verse 7 to read “those who are of faith are *justified*.” But instead, it says “those who are of faith are *sons of Abraham*.” Later in this chapter (17), Paul is going to point out that Abraham comes 430 years before the Law. Paul is now contrasting the Abrahamic Covenant with the Mosaic Covenant.

1. Why does Paul say “sons of Abraham” instead of children of Abraham? Christ, in John 8 refers to children of Abraham (cf. John 8:39). Elsewhere, Paul often uses the phrase “children of God” (cf. Rom. 8:16, 21; 9:8; Phil. 2:15). So, Paul is likely not using sons generically. Instead, sons received specific benefits in inheritance rules that daughters did not in the 1st century.

B. The OT Scriptures teach that God would justify the Gentiles by faith (8).

Explanation: The quotation “all the nations will be blessed in you” is a combination of Genesis 12:3; 18:18; 22:18; 26:4; 28:14, but not a direct quote of any of these

passages. Paul is simply using the word “bless” as a reference to the Gospel.

1. Part of the reason the statement, “all the nations will be blessed in you” seems vague to us is because of the way we use the word “bless.” But in Genesis the word bless often refers to tangible benefits that God gives (cf. Gen. 1:22, 28; 2:3; 9:1; 17:16). These blessings included children (17:16) and a covenant relationship with God (9:1). So, when the reader comes to this word in Genesis 12, he would assume a tangible blessing. Peter seems to confirm this interpretation of the word “bless” in his second sermon (Acts 3:25-26).
 2. Paul pulls back the curtain in verse 14 when he identifies Christ Jesus as the One who would bring the blessing to the Gentiles.
- C. Since all the nations will be blessed in Abraham, then this blessing cannot be by birth but by faith (9).
1. The obvious conclusion is that it is by faith and not birth that the blessings of Abraham come. Although we are not dealing with the same problem that the Galatians were, we add our own requirements to the Gospel.

Conclusion: We have a tendency to think that faith is not enough. We like to add all sorts of things to our faith in order for us to have a right standing before God. The men in the churches in Galatia submitted to circumcision as a way to gain favor with God and to receive the blessings of Abraham (5:2; Gen. 17:11-12). Yet, that did not help their standing before God in any way. In fact, it demonstrated that they were not believing that justification is by faith alone.

Text: [Galatians 3:10-12](#)

Theme: Justification and sanctification are by faith apart from the works of the Law (Gal. 3:3).

Introduction: Notice the stark contrast between verse 9 and 10. Those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, but those who are of the works of the Law are cursed. The problem that continues to be prevalent today is that we think that the way to receive blessing is through the Law. But instead, the Law only brings a curse.

- I) The Law brings a curse (10-12).
 - A. Those who do not obey the Law perfectly are under a curse (10).

Explanation: Why are those who are under the Law under a curse? Because no one

obeys the Law perfectly (implied). Although Paul does not explicitly state this point that no one can obey the Law perfectly in this passage, he does state it explicitly in Romans 3:10-19.

Application: The churches in Galatia were not only struggling with justification by faith, but also sanctification by faith apart from the works of the Law (cf. 3:3). When we are anxious, we demonstrate that we are not living by faith, but instead, living by our own work.

1. Paul is primarily quoting Deuteronomy 27:26, but he inserts the word “all” into the verse (probably from Deut. 28:58). Paul is emphasizing complete obedience to all the commands of the Law.

B. No one is justified by obeying the Law (11).

1. The reason no one is justified—declared righteous—by the Law is because the righteous live by faith.

Explanation: There are some who argue that Habakkuk 2:4 refers to a person’s faithfulness and not faith. But the NT repeatedly uses this passage to refer to faith not faithfulness (cf. Rom. 1:17; Heb. 10:38-39). Also, Habakkuk 3:17-18 clearly refers to faith, even though the word faith is not there.

C. No one can be righteous by the Law because the Law is not of faith (12).

1. Even though the Law is not of faith, Paul is not saying that we should disregard the Law. In fact, for Paul the Law is fulfilled when we walk by the Spirit (cf. Gal. 5:13-16).

Explanation: Again, Paul uses the word “live.” In both verses 11 and 12, Paul is referring to eternal life. In verse 11, the term live is connected to justification. Also, in both of these verses Paul uses the future tense. He clearly has eternal life in view. But “live” in Leviticus 18:5 clearly refers to living in the land (cf. Lev. 18:25, 28; 25:18; Deut. 4:40; 5:33; 30:16). So how does Paul move from living in the land to eternal life? The author of Hebrews helps us make this connection. In Hebrews 4:2-3 compares the Israelites missing out on the promised rest (i.e. living in the land) with people today who fail to enter into God’s rest (i.e. eternal life) because of unbelief (cf. Heb. 4:1, 9-11).

Conclusion: Since none of us can obey the Law perfectly, then we are all under the curse of the Law. There is no exceptions. So how can people be declared righteous in spite of the fact that

they are sinners? It is by faith alone. The righteous have eternal life by faith.

Text: Galatians 3:13-14

Theme: Justification and sanctification are by faith apart from the works of the Law (Gal. 3:3).

Introduction: Even though the cross is *the* symbol of Christianity, it has almost completely lost its negative connotation. In fact, you can see the cross worn by many who have little idea of its meaning. In the first century, though, the cross was a stumbling block to Jews and a sign of foolishness to Gentiles (cf. 1 Cor. 1:23). The sign of the cross was foolish to the Gentile because it was intended to cause complete humiliation to the one who was crucified. Why would anyone want to associate with a crucified criminal? Yet, the cross was the very sign that Christians embraced throughout the centuries.

I) Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law so that we can receive the blessings promised to Abraham (13-14).

A. Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law by becoming a curse in our place (13).

Explanation: At first glance, it appears as though Paul is using a passage that does not really fit his argument (Deut. 21:22-23). Although this passage in Deuteronomy focuses on when to take a body down from a pole (i.e. “you must not leave the body hanging on the pole overnight”), it does also state that those who were hung on a pole are under God’s curse. Exposing a body on a pole is used repeatedly throughout the OT to appease God’s anger (Num. 25:4; 2 Sam. 21:3, 6; see also Joshua 8:29; 10:26).

Explanation: You may have noticed that Paul is not quite quoting Deut. 21:23. Paul is combining the beginning of the quotation from Gal. 3:10 (Deut. 27:26) with Deut. 21:23 (“under God’s curse” is changed to “cursed is everyone”). Paul does this to connect the fact that everyone who does not abide by all the things written in the Law are under a curse (Gal. 3:10).

1. The phrase “for us” can mean “in our place” or “for our benefit.” But what does Paul have in mind here? The context makes it clear that Paul is saying the Christ took the curse “in our place” (cf. John 11:50).

Illustration: When Israel was facing a severe famine, David inquired of the Lord as to the reason for the famine (2 Sam. 21:1-3). King Saul had slaughtered Gibeonites, even though Israel had a covenant with them. In order to make atonement, 7 of King Saul’s sons had to be killed and their bodies exposed before the Lord (2 Sam. 21:6). This

sacrifice is a type of Christ's sacrifice.

- B. Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law so that the blessing of Abraham might come to us (14).
 - 1. Our union with Christ (i.e. "in Christ") enables us to participate in the blessings promised to Abraham.

Explanation: Even though Ruth was a Moabite woman, yet she was able to own land in Israel because of her union with Boaz. In the same way, we participate in the blessings of Abraham because of our union with Christ.

- 2. What is the "blessing of Abraham?" Paul appears to be restating it when he says that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. Although we likely think of the blessing of Abraham as a reference to the land, for Paul, the blessing primarily refers to the giving of the Holy Spirit by faith.

Explanation: How can Paul refer to the Holy Spirit as the blessing of Abraham? The Holy Spirit is the pledge or the guarantee for our eternal inheritance (2 Cor. 5:1-5).

Conclusion: Consider for a moment that you deserve the shame and curse of the Law. You deserve to be the one hanging on that pole. Yet, for all those who believe, Christ took your place bearing the shame that you rightly deserved. Christ redeemed you from the curse of the Law.

Text: Galatians 3:15-18

Theme: Justification and sanctification are by faith apart from the works of the Law (Gal. 3:3).

Introduction: Is the Abrahamic Covenant part of the Mosaic Covenant? Even though some argue that the OT Covenants overlap, Paul sees a clear distinction between the Abrahamic Covenant and the Mosaic Covenant. For Paul, the Mosaic Covenant brings a curse because no one is able to obey all the things written in the Law (3:10). In contrast, the Abrahamic Covenant is a Covenant that brings blessings (3:14).

- I) Since earthly covenants cannot be set aside or changed after they have been ratified, it must also be true with God's Covenants (15-18).
 - A. The participants of the Abrahamic Covenant have not been changed—Abraham and his Seed (16).
 - 1. Paul's argument is an argument from the lesser to the greater. If earthly covenants

cannot be altered once they have been formalized, then so much more can God's covenants not be altered once they are formalized (15).

Explanation: Paul's argument, though, seems strange. He points out that the word "seed" is singular and not plural. Paul is quoting Gen. 13:15 and Gen. 17:8, but neither of these passages clearly teach that "seed" is singular. But in a restatement of the Abrahamic Covenant in Gen. 22:17 and Gen. 24:60, "your seed" is followed by a singular pronoun which makes "seed" singular. In addition, Gen. 3:15 uses "seed" to refer to the One who would crush Satan. So, the careful reader should have anticipated a singular idea for the seed.

2. So, if the participants have not been changed, how do people (Jew and Gentile) participate in the Abrahamic Covenant? It is through union with Christ (cf. 14; 29).
- B. The Law found in the Mosaic Covenant does not invalidate the promises given to Abraham and his Seed (17).
1. The reason that the Law does not invalidate the promises is because the Mosaic Covenant came 430 years later. The 430 years probably refers to the time from Joseph to the Mosaic Covenant.
 2. What are these promises that we participate in? Both of the passages that Paul was quoting (Gen. 13:15; 17:8) refer specifically to the land promise. Do we somehow receive part of the land of Canaan? No, Paul clarifies that the land refers to the whole world (Rom. 4:13). The author of Hebrews refers to this land as a heavenly city whose builder is God (cf. Heb. 11:10, 16).
- C. Therefore, the promises of the Abrahamic Covenant are not based on the Law but on grace (18).
1. Under the Mosaic Covenant, in order for Israel to stay in the Land, they needed to obey the Law. Otherwise, God would spew them out of the Land (cf. Lev. 18:26-28).
 2. In contrast, the promises of the Abrahamic Covenant were "granted" to Abraham. This word is the verb form of the word grace or gracious. The Abrahamic Covenant is a gracious gift, therefore, it is not based on obedience to the Law.

Application: You cannot earn the promises, they are a gracious gift from God because of your union with Christ. Yet, we often beat ourselves up when we sin against God as though our standing before God hinges on our perfect obedience. This is not a license to sin, but rather, a reminder that nothing can separate us from the love of God.

Conclusion: Once God formalizes a covenant it cannot be changed. Therefore, the blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant have not been altered by the Mosaic Covenant.

Text: Galatians 3:19-22

Theme: Justification and sanctification are by faith apart from the works of the Law (Gal. 3:3).

Introduction: Even though the Law taught us how to live, it did not produce life in us.

I) The promise is by faith not by Law (19-22).

A. If the Law could not help us obtain the promise, then what is the purpose of the Law (19-20)?

1. The Law condemns us because it declares us as transgressors (19).

Explanation: Although it may be tempting to interpret the phrase “on account of transgression” as saying that the Law restrained sin by teaching what sin is (19). The phrase actually identifies our rebellious heart—we transgress the Law. Notice that Paul uses the word “transgression” which means to break the law instead of the generic word for sin. Also, the Law is unable to impart life (21).

2. The Law anticipated the coming of the promise (19).

Explanation: What is the promise? Certainly, one of the promises is the coming of the Holy Spirit (14), but Paul mentions “promises” given to Abraham (16). In the OT quotations (Gen. 13:15; 17:8), the promise refers to the Land. The author of Hebrews compares the land promise which was a temporary rest (cf. Heb. 4:8), to the eternal rest (cf. Heb. 4:9).

Application: Although the author of Hebrews is primarily concerned with our eternal rest, there is a sense in which we begin to live in reality of our future rest (cf. Heb. 4:10). In fact, Christ said that all who come to Him find rest for their weary souls (Matt. 11:28-30).

3. The Law came by means of a mediator (19).

Explanation: The Mosaic Covenant came from God through the agency of angels (cf. Acts. 7:53; Heb. 2:2; Exod. 33:2) and Moses mediated this covenant between God and man (cf. Exod. 20:18-21).

4. In contrast to the Mosaic Covenant, the Abrahamic Covenant only had one party because God is one (20).

Explanation: Remember that Abraham was in a deep sleep as God made the Covenant with him (Gen. 15:12). In fact, Abraham did not pass through the cut animals. Instead, a smoking oven and a flaming torch passed through the cut animals (Gen. 15:17). The smoking oven and the flaming torch seem to represent God the Father and Jesus Christ (i.e. the Seed). Since God is one (Deut. 6:4), then God made a covenant with Himself. Therefore, the Abrahamic Covenant did not have a mediator.

B. Even though the Law could not help us obtain the promise, it is not contrary to the promise (21-22).

Explanation: The Law is not contrary to the promises of God; instead the Law has a different function. To demonstrate this point, Paul says that the Law could not impart life or righteousness (21). In contrast, the promise does grant life.

Explanation: What does the Law do (22)? The Law traps everyone under sin. But notice that Paul does not use the word “Law” in this verse. Instead, he uses the word “scripture.” He is not only referring to the 10 commandments, but the whole OT.

Application: When we share the Gospel with others, the Law is a great place to start. It points people to their need for the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

Conclusion: Instead of feeling embarrassed by the requirements of the Law, let us point people to the One who fulfilled these righteous requirements.

Text: Galatians 3:23-29

Theme: Justification and sanctification are by faith apart from the works of the Law (Gal. 3:3).

Introduction: Paul divides the history of the world into 2 time periods—the Old Covenant when we were under the Law and the New Covenant when faith came. The distorters in Galatia (1:7) were attempting to keep everyone under the Law even though Christ had already come. Paul concludes his argument (29) by pointing out that those who belong to Christ are Abraham’s descendants.

I) We are sons of Abraham not because we obeyed the Law but because we belong to Christ (23-29; cf. 29).

A. The Law kept us under custody until Christ came (23-25).

Explanation: When Paul says “we” who is he referring to? Although it’s possible that Paul could be referring to both Jew and Gentile, he has previously identified the “we”

as referring to the Jews which included him (cf. 2:15). In this context, the Jews would have felt that they had a better claim to be called sons of Abraham because they had received the Law.

1. The Law was our tutor *until* Christ came (23-25).

Explanation: Although the NASB interprets “guardian” as a tutor that *leads us to* Christ, the context suggests a more negative connotation (i.e. shut up everyone under sin, 22; held captive under the Law, 23; no longer under a tutor, 25).

2. Faith came, or more specifically, the object of our faith came—Christ (23-25).

Explanation: The phrase, “before faith came” does not mean that there was no faith. Paul has already said that Abraham believed God (3:6). The phrase “until the faith which is about to be revealed” (23) is parallel to the phrase “until Christ” (24). Christ, then, is the object of our faith.

Application: How do we live by faith? The author of Hebrews points out that we live by faith by laying aside the things that hinder us and by fixing our eyes on Jesus who authored and perfected our faith (Heb. 12:1-3).

B. Our union with Christ (not the Law) connects us to the promises given to Abraham (26-29).

Explanation: Paul shifts from “we” (23-25) to “you” (26-29). Paul shifted from the Jews (“we”) in Galatia (1:7) to the Gentile believers (“you”). The Gentiles did not need to keep the Law (i.e. be circumcised; 5:2) in order to participate in the blessings of Abraham. Rather, their union with Christ enabled them to enjoy the blessings.

1. Baptism pictures our union with Christ (27).

Explanation: Physical baptism is a picture of a spiritual reality. Baptism pictures our union with Christ in His death (Rom. 6:3-4). Being raised out of the water pictures our resurrection with Christ.

2. At salvation, we are clothed with the new self (27; cf. Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10).

Explanation: Joshua, the High Priest, illustrates this reality as he was clothed with filthy garments before the angel of the Lord and Satan the accuser (Zechariah 3:1-5). God removed his iniquity (filthy garments) and clothed him with a clean garments. In Christ, we have been clothed with clean garments.

3. Therefore, we are all one in Christ (28-29).

Explanation: Regardless of one’s ethnicity or standing in life, we are all one in Christ.

Conclusion: The incarnation of Jesus Christ marked an unparalleled time in history—God unveiled His master plan to regard His fallen creation as Sons and heirs according to the promise.

Text: Galatians 4:1-5

Theme: Justification and sanctification are by faith apart from the works of the Law (Gal. 3:3).

Introduction: Throughout the book of Galatians, Paul contrasts faith with the works of the Law. Not only are we justified by faith apart from the works of the Law (2:16), but we have actually died to the Law (2:19). This is not only true of justification, but also sanctification (3:3). In fact, the Law is not of faith (3:12). But what about Israel during the time of the Mosaic Covenant? Even Israel was held under bondage until the coming of Christ (4:4-5).

I) You are no longer under the Law because Christ has redeemed you (1-5).

A. What does it look like to be under the Law (1-2)?

1. The Law held Israel in bondage (1-2).

Explanation: While the son is waiting for the inheritance, he is just like a slave. He is under household managers until he reaches the age set by the father to receive his inheritance. Israel, God's firstborn son (cf. Exod. 4:22), is waiting until the time appointed by the Father to receive his inheritance. During this time of waiting, Israel was under the Law and was no different than a slave.

Objection: This illustration assumes that the father has died and that the son is waiting for the day when he inherits the estate. Certainly God the Father has not died, so how do we reconcile this discrepancy in the illustration? We must remember that illustrations break down at some point. The main point of Paul's illustration stands—when Israel was under the Law he was like a son awaiting the date set by his deceased father to receive the inheritance.

B. Israel was held in bondage under the Law until God sent His Son (3-5).

Explanation: Paul is primarily referencing Israel (cf. we; 3, 5), but broadens the application to include Gentiles (cf. you; 6-7).

1. Before Christ came, we were held in bondage to the elemental things of the world (3).

Explanation: The “elemental things of the world” is clearly a synonym for the Law (4-5). So why does Paul switch the wording to such a vague phrase? If Paul had used his standard phrase “under the Law” he would have exclusively been referencing Israel. But since he switched to “elemental things” he seems to be referencing all sorts of rules that we are enslaved to (cf. 8-10); therefore, he doesn’t exclude Gentiles from this bondage.

Application: These elemental things bring bondage (3), yet we continue to live under this bondage even though we have been set free in Christ (5:1). Like the Pharisees, we place heavy burdens on people that we are unwilling to carry (Matt. 23:1-4). As parents, do we place heavy burdens on our children that we are unwilling to carry?

2. Christ redeemed those who were under the Law so that we would receive adoption (4-5).

Explanation: In order for Christ to redeem us from the Law—or more specifically the curse of the Law—He had to be born under the Law. He had to perfectly fulfill all of the requirements of the Law, so that He could be our substitute and redeem us from the curse of the Law.

Application: We’re familiar with the Prodigal Son. After he had squandered his father’s wealth and was eating the food from the pigs’ slop, he came to his senses and went back to his father. But instead of being a slave, the father fully embraced him as a son (Luke 15:11-24). We are no different than this prodigal. We have been embraced as sons.

Conclusion: This passage is like a well written story. We were held captive under the Law. But the hero enters the story, at just the right time, and frees us from our bondage.

Text: Galatians 4:6-7

Theme: Justification and sanctification are by faith apart from the works of the Law (Gal. 3:3).

Introduction: “In regeneration God gives us new spiritual life within. In justification God gives us right legal standing before Him. But in adoption God makes us members of his family.

Therefore, the biblical teaching on adoption focuses much more on the personal relationships that salvation gives us with God and with his people.” (Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, pg. 736).

1) You are no longer a slave under the Law, but a son receiving the inheritance (6-7).

A. Because we are sons, the Spirit of Christ dwells within us (6).

1. Before we were sons of God, we were sons of wrath.

Explanation: Paul makes a clear distinction in Ephesians 2. We *were* sons of disobedience (Eph. 2:2) and children of wrath (2:3) before we are made alive in Christ (2:5).

Application: When we pause and consider that we were children of wrath before God adopted us as sons, we can't help but rejoice in His mercy towards us.

2. The Holy Spirit confirms our adoption (6).

Explanation: The Holy Spirit gives assurance of salvation. In a parallel passage, the Holy Spirit testifies with our spirit that we are children of God (Rom. 8:15-16).

Application: Satan would love to cause us to doubt our adoption as sons. When we struggle with assurance of salvation, we lack the confidence that we need in order to walk by faith. When you are tempted to doubt your assurance of salvation, remember that the Holy Spirit dwells within you and testifies with your spirit that you are, in fact, a child of God.

3. The Holy Spirit encourages our spirit to cry out to our Father (6).

Explanation: In the Garden of Gethsemane, Christ called out these same words—Abba! Father!—that we cry out (Mark 14:36). This is both the Aramaic and Greek word for father. Many have pointed out that the Hebrew word—Abba—is often used by children who are calling out to the father.

Application: There is no need for shame or fear when calling out to your Heavenly Father. Let us draw near with boldness to the throne of grace (Heb. 4:16).

B. Since we are sons by adoption, then we are heirs (7).

1. We are no longer slaves, but sons (7).

Explanation: Those who are under the Law are in slavery. Later in this chapter, Paul identifies Hagar, Sarah's handmaid, as a representation of Mount Sinai where the Law was given (24-25). Those, like the Galatians, who desire to go back to the Law for their sanctification are in bondage (3).

Application: Our adoption drastically changed our relationship to the Law. We are no longer bound as slaves, but free. The Law is no longer a burden we carry in order to try to have a right standing before God. Instead, we delight to do the Father's will.

2. We are heirs through God (7).

Explanation: All three persons of the Godhead are at work in our salvation. The atonement is the work of Christ on our behalf. We are drawn by the Holy Spirit. And our adoption is a gracious act of the Father on our behalf.

Conclusion: Our adoption is a demonstration of the Father's love towards us. He has chosen to call us His children even though we were at one time far from Him.

Text: Galatians 4:8-11

Theme: Justification and sanctification are by faith apart from the works of the Law (Gal. 3:3).

Introduction: This paragraph has perhaps the most stunning comparison—devotion to the Mosaic Law is no different than paganism. The Galatians were pagans who worshipped pagan gods prior to their conversion (8). But after salvation, they went from one form of paganism to another—devotion to the Mosaic Law (9-10)! When we idolize the Law, we are reverting back to paganism.

l) Beware that you do not return to idolatry (8-11).

A. Before you knew God, you were slaves (8).

1. Those who do not know God serve idols.

Explanation: Prior to the Gospel coming, these Galatians were serving their man-made idols. Those who only know God through general revelation (i.e. creation) will serve the creature rather than the Creator (cf. Rom. 1:20-25). And because they are slaves to the creation, God gives them over to their sexual appetites (Rom. 1:24, 26, 28).

Application: Those who do not know God are slaves to their gods. They cannot serve the One True God until they come to know God. So, instead of focusing on the cultural war that is going on, let us focus on preaching the Good News of Jesus Christ to a world that is lost (cf. 1 Cor. 5:9-13).

B. Now that you know God, why would you go back to slavery (9-11).

1. Or rather, are known by God (9).

Explanation: Paul is not simply splitting hairs. He is pointing out that God initiated their salvation, not them. This is specifically relevant for these people because they leaned on their obedience to the Law as the reason for their continued right standing with God.

Application: It is not our love for God, but rather, His love for us (1 John 4:10). Devotion to any set of standards is just another way we demonstrate that we believe it is our love

for God that gives us a good standing before Him (cf. Luke 18:18-25).

2. Why would you go back to slavery (9-10)?

Explanation: If these Galatians returned back to the Law, it would be no different than if they had returned back to paganism (9). These “elementary principles” are “weak and worthless.” For Paul, Christ’s death means that “we have been released from the Law” (Rom. 7:6). We are no longer bound or enslaved by the Law, but instead “we serve in newness of the Spirit” (Rom. 7:6).

3. Specifically, the observance of days and months (festivals) and years (sabbatical years) brings us back to slavery (10).

Explanation: Paul is likely referring to the observance of the Sabbath Day here. In a parallel passage, Paul refers to the observance of the Sabbath as a mere shadow of the good things to come (cf. Col. 2:16-17). We know that Colossians 2 is a parallel passage because it is the only other time that Paul uses the phrase “elementary principles” (Col. 2:8, 20; Gal. 4:3, 9).

Application: When we cling to a strict observance of the Sabbath, we have made the shadow to be more important than the substance (cf. Col. 2:17). The Sabbath rest is intended to point us to the greater rest which comes through Christ (cf. Heb. 4:9).

4. Those who go back to a form of idolatry may not even have eternal life (11).

Explanation: The stakes are high. For Paul, when we idolize the Law and its requirements, we have gone back to idolatry. And when we go back to idolatry, we demonstrate that we may not been regenerated.

Conclusion: The Law is intended to point us to Christ who alone could fulfill it. But instead, we have a tendency to cling to the shadow instead of the substance.

Text: Galatians 4:12-15

Theme: Justification and sanctification are by faith apart from the works of the Law (Gal. 3:3).

Introduction: Is it ever right to appeal emotionally to other believers? Although Paul primarily uses logic to stir up believers, yet, he does use emotional appeal on occasion.

1) Become as I am—free from the Law (12-15).

A. An emotional appeal to be free from the Law (12).

1. I beg you!

Explanation: Paul's pastoral concern comes to the forefront. In verse 11, Paul says that he fears for them. He begs them to reconsider the direction that they are taking because a mistake here will have catastrophic consequences (5:4).

Application: Even though we think of Paul as highly logical, he does not neglect the use of an emotional appeal when the situation warrants it (cf. 2 Cor. 11:1-3, 7, 16). As we labor to provoke each other to love and good works, it ought to be motivated out of a genuine concern.

2. Become free from the Law (12).

Explanation: Paul, who was a devout Jew, obeying the Law in every area (cf. Phil. 3:6), had become like the Gentiles—free from the Law. He appealed to them to follow his example.

Application: Words mean little unless they are accompanied by integrity. As parents, we find it easy to instruct our children, but does our life match the instruction we are giving? Can we tell them to become like us?

3. You have done me no wrong (12).

Explanation: When Paul was with the Galatians they treated him well—even when he was suffering from a bodily illness (13). Yet, they have now changed their posture towards him.

B. An emotional appeal based on their love for him (13-15).

1. Even though Paul came in weakness, they received him (13-14)?

Explanation: It would have been expected for these Galatians to treat Paul with contempt—literally to spit on him. But instead, they received him as though Christ Himself had come and preached the Gospel to them (14). Paul could not have asked for a more generous welcome. But something has happened from his first visit (AD 47) to this letter (AD 48). They are now despising him.

Application: It's easy for us to look on the outside. Perhaps you're tempted to look at the preacher's style of clothing or his physical appearance and mentally disregard the message. Remember, God chose John the Baptist, who was dressed in camel's skins and ate locusts, to prepare the way for the Lord.

2. The blessing (i.e. the Gospel) that Paul had brought, had somehow been forgotten

(15).

Explanation: Although the word “blessing” in the NT often has a general sense. In Romans 4, under the topic of justification by faith alone, Paul uses the term “blessing” repeatedly to refer to the Gospel (cf. Rom. 4:6-9).

Explanation: Perhaps Paul’s illness has something to do with sight or perhaps he is using this as an illustration. But either way, these Galatians loved Paul so much that they were willing to pluck out their own eyes for Paul. What extravagant love.

Application: Often, we grow cold and calloused towards those who have labored for the sake of the Gospel on our behalf.

Conclusion: Paul had a responsibility to minister the Gospel which included provoking them to love and good works. Do you prefer a pastor who is willing to stir you up to love the Lord, or a minister who allows you to walk in your sin? May God help us as a church body to stir each other up to love and good works.

Text: Galatians 4:16-20

Theme: Justification and sanctification are by faith apart from the works of the Law (Gal. 3:3).

Introduction: What do you look for in a pastor? Certainly, his character and his ability to preach the word. But would you place an emphasis on motive? In this passage, Paul points out the difference between his motive and the motives of those who came after him.

I) Those who preach the true Gospel to you from right motives are not your enemy (16-20).

A. When we can’t attack the message, we attack the person (16).

Explanation: Perhaps these Galatians are attacking Paul because of his bodily weakness (13-15). They may have thought that this bodily weakness was a sign that God was judging him (cf. John 9:1-3).

Application: When you find yourself at a sharp disagreement with your spiritual leader, how do you discern whether the message is true? If you are like most, you will labor hard to justify your position even if scripture does not support it.

B. It is good when the pastor is zealous for your spiritual well-being out of pure motives (17-18).

1. There are many spiritual leaders who are zealous for wrong motives (17).

Explanation: In Galatia, the spiritual leaders were zealous but with wrong motives. They were specifically trying to shut out these Galatian Gentiles from the blessings of Abraham (3:14). The goal, or motive, in shutting them out was that these Galatians would be zealous to follow them (17).

2. It is good when spiritual leaders are zealous for your spiritual well-being, as long as it is accompanied with good motives (18; 1 Peter 5:1-4).

Explanation: This may seem strange to us, but Paul often refers to being zealous for the those in his care (2 Cor. 11:2). But what does it mean to be zealous? Paul explains to the church at Philippi that he would send Timothy to them because he was like Paul in his care for them (Phil. 2:19-22). Most of the men that Paul knew sought their own interests. But Timothy sought the interests of Christ.

3. When the spiritual leader serves with pure motives, his desire is that you always have zealous spiritual leaders (18b).

Application: Part of the reason online church is not healthy is because you need spiritual leaders who are zealous for your spiritual well-being. If the pastor doesn't know you, how can he be zealous for your spiritual well-being?

- C. True spiritual leaders labor hard until Christ is formed in you (19-20).
 1. True pastoral care is like a woman laboring to give birth (19).

Explanation: The primary difference between a woman giving birth to a child and a pastor caring for his flock is that a woman only goes through the pain of childbirth for that child once.

Application: Don't make it hard for those who labor for your soul (Heb. 13:7, 17).

2. The goal of the pastor is that Christ is formed in you (19).

Explanation: We expect the same rebirth terminology that Christ tells Nicodemus (John 3:3-4, 7). But instead, we are told that Christ is formed in them. Paul is clearly mixing metaphors in order to get their attention.

3. Sometimes the pastor needs to be firm with his tone (20).

Explanation: When the sheep are going in the wrong direction and refuse to listen to the gentle voice of the shepherd, the shepherd must change his tone lest the sheep perish.

Conclusion: The pastor, much like a shepherd, serves the flock by being zealous for their souls

until Christ is formed in them.

Text: Galatians 4:21-24

Theme: Justification and sanctification are by faith apart from the works of the Law (Gal. 3:3).

Introduction: Is Hagar meant to be a type of the Mosaic Covenant or is Paul allegorizing the text? Clearly, Paul uses the word “allegory” but that word can have a broad meaning (24). Later, Paul quotes Sarah’s statement to Abraham—“drive out the slave woman and her son” (30). This bothered Abraham because he loved Ishmael, but God confirmed Sarah’s request (Gen. 21:9-12). Paul’s inclusion of this quote demonstrates that Hagar is meant to be interpreted as a type representing the Mosaic Covenant.

- I) Those who desire to be under the Law are slaves to the Law (21-24).
 - A. The contrast between Hagar and Sarah (22-24).

Explanation: These Jewish distorters in Galatia would have been stunned to hear that they were sons of Hagar and not Sarah which is why Paul uses this stunning example.

- 1. The 2 sons represent the 2 covenants (24).

Explanation: Clearly Hagar refers to the Mosaic Covenant, but what about Sarah? There are 2 options. Sarah could refer to the Abrahamic Covenant or to the New Covenant. Likely, Sarah represents the Abrahamic Covenant because this story (Gen. 16-21) is surrounded by the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 15, 17, 22). Also, Paul references the “promise” which he already used to refer to the Abrahamic Covenant (3:16).

- 2. Sarah was free and Hagar was a slave (22).

Explanation: How can Paul refer to the Mosaic Covenant as slavery? Didn’t God free them from slavery when He took them out of Egypt (Exod. 13:14)? Even though Israel was freed from physical slavery, the Law is binding (cf. Rom. 7:6).

- 3. Ishmael was born through fleshly means, whereas, Isaac was born through means of a promise (23).

Explanation: God had promised Abraham a son (Gen. 15:1-4). Yet, no son had been given. So Sarah had developed a plan to have a son through her slave, Hagar (Gen. 16:1-4). Even though Abraham viewed Ishmael as the fulfillment of God’s promise (Gen. 17:18), God specifically promised a seed through Sarah even though it could only happen by means of a miracle. (Gen 17:19). Paul is drawing a parallel between man’s attempt to access God and the Mosaic Covenant. In contrast, the Abrahamic Covenant

points to God's supernatural plan to have a relationship to man.

Application: Salvation is a gift of God (Eph. 2:8-9). Part of the reason that we have a tendency to cling to the Law is because we think that we got to God through our own actions. We look at those who have rejected God and think that we are somehow better than they are. But, in reality, the only thing that separates the wicked from the righteous is God's grace.

B. If you desire to be under the Law, have you listened to the Law (21)?

1. The Law condemns (cf. Gal. 3:10).

Explanation: Everyone who does not abide by *all* the things written in the Law are under a curse.

2. Obedience to the obligations of the Law can never satisfy God's requirements (cf. Matt. 19:16-22).

Explanation: The rich young ruler recognized that his obedience to the Law was only external. His love for his neighbor was only based on the obligations found in the 10 commandments. There was no genuine love for his neighbor (cf. John 13:34-35).

Conclusion: The antidote to a fixation on the Law as a means for justification or sanctification is a reminder that God rescued us apart from any good work in us.

[Text: Galatians 4:25-31](#)

Theme: Justification and sanctification are by faith apart from the works of the Law (Gal. 3:3).

Introduction: Is Paul's reading of the story of Sarah and Hagar a legitimate reading? Should we have come to the same conclusion when we read this story in the OT? Paul interprets of the story of Sarah and Hagar as a type pointing to the 2 covenants (cf. 29). First, Hagar was a slave woman (22, 23, 24, 25). Secondly, the matriarchs of Israel were barren women who were blessed by God (27). Thirdly, Sarah's command to Abraham to drive out the slave woman demonstrates that this story ought to be interpreted as a type (30).

I) Either you are bound by the Law or you are free in Christ (25-31).

A. The slave and free woman point to the reality that you are either in slavery or you are free (25-26).

1. Hagar, the slave woman, is a type pointing to the slavery that the Mosaic Law brings (25; 5:3).

Explanation: Paul has already identified Hagar as a type pointing to the Mosaic Law (24). So, why does Paul identify Mount Sinai as *in Arabia*? There is a tendency to separate the 10 commandments from the rest of the Mosaic Covenant. Paul wants these Jewish distorters in Galatia to realize that he is referring to the 10 commandments—the ones given on Mount Sinai in Arabia.

Explanation: This Mount Sinai corresponds to what was going on presently in Jerusalem (cf. Gal. 2:1-5). These Judaizers were pressing Titus to be circumcised. In both Galatians 2:4 and Galatians 4:25, Paul refers to this as slavery.

2. Sarah, the free woman, is a type pointing to the freedom that comes through Christ (26; cf. 5:1).

Explanation: Sarah, in contrast, represents the heavenly Jerusalem (cf. Heb. 11:10, 16; 12:22). Instead of slavery, this covenant brings freedom.

Application: Can you say with the Psalmist that you delight in His Law (Ps. 119:16)? If God's Law feels like a burden to you, then you are a child of Hagar—enslaved under the Mosaic Law.

- B. The barren woman rejoices (27-28; Is. 54:1).

1. All 3 matriarchs were barren (cf. Gen. 18:11; 25:21; 30:1), yet God blessed them with children through a promise.

Explanation: Paul quotes Isaiah 54:1 to demonstrate that Sarah is a type. The barren woman ultimately rejoices because she has born a son! This idea of barren women giving birth is a theme throughout the scriptures (cf. Jud. 13:2-3; 1 Sam. 1:2, 19; Luke 1:7, 13). By the time you get to Elizabeth in Luke 1, you assume that her barrenness is going to produce a child of promise.

Application: Sarah was barren and then gave birth. In a similar fashion we were barren until we were rescued by our Redeemer (Is. 54:6-8). Like Sarah, we rejoice because God is faithful to His promises.

- C. The slave woman is cast out (29-31).

1. Ishmael persecuted Isaac just like the Judaizers persecuted the Galatians, therefore he was cast out (29-31).

Explanation: How were the Judaizers persecuting these Gentiles? They were pressing them to obey the Law—specifically circumcision. Since these Judaizers were just like Ishmael, they should be cast out (cf. Gen. 21:9-12).

Application: This form of legalism still continues today! Let us not surrender to their attempts to enslave people to the Law.

Conclusion: Just like Ishmael persecuted Isaac, there will be those who attempt to persecute true believers by enslaving them to the Law. Do not go back to slavery, but instead recognize that Christ has set you free (5:1).

Text: Galatians 5:1-4

Theme: Justification and sanctification are by faith apart from the works of the Law (Gal. 3:3).

Introduction: Although circumcision was the primary topic for these Galatians, Paul identifies the root problem—seeking to be justified by the Law (4). Circumcision does not connect you to Christ, instead, it severs you from Christ (4).

I. Since Christ has set you free, do not go back to slavery (1-4).

J. Christ set us free in order that we would be free (1).

1. Freedom to live for God (1; cf. 13).

Explanation: This freedom is not a license to live according to our fleshly desires (13). But instead, we are free to truly love our neighbor.

Application: Often, we use this passage to give us a license to live how we want to live. For example, I might say that I have freedom to drink alcohol or to do whatever I want on the Lord's Day, but this freedom is not a license to live how I want. Freedom is not an opportunity for the flesh (13).

2. Since you are free, keep standing firm (1).

Explanation: What does it mean to stand firm? Peter stopped eating with the Gentiles because the Judaizers pressured him even though he knew that the Gentiles were not inferior (2:12). To stand firm is not to allow the fear of man to determine what we do.

3. Stop being subject again to a yoke of slavery (1).

Application: How can the Law be considered a yoke of slavery? When we press others to obey the Law in order to be saved, we have made the Law a yoke of slavery (cf. Acts. 15:5, 10).

B. You will either trust in the Law or trust in Christ (2-4).

1. A final warning from a dear friend (2).

Explanation: Paul is either exhorting them based on his apostleship or he is exhorting them based on his relationship with them. Since Paul does not mention his apostleship, it is likely that he is exhorting them based on his relationship with them (cf. 4:12-20; 1:11-12).

Application: Correction can be done with graciousness *and* directness. Do you exhort the way Paul does?

2. If you seek to be justified by obeying the Law, then Christ does not benefit you (2b-4).

Explanation: When you rely on your own works (i.e. circumcision), then you are not believing Christ's righteousness applied to your account. And since God requires perfect obedience, you are under obligation to keep the whole Law (3).

Explanation: Paul uses strong language to refer to the person who seeks to be justified by the Law (4). They are severed from Christ (4). They have fallen from grace (4).

Application: When you share your salvation testimony, do you talk about the things that you have done to assure your salvation? It almost feels natural to talk about our baptism or that we attend church, but none of these things contributes in any way to our salvation. We are justified by faith alone through Christ alone.

Conclusion: Our struggle to embrace the Law as a means of our justification is not just a struggle at salvation. Paul warns these Galatians to *keep standing firm* and *do not go back again* to a yoke of slavery (1). Do you find yourself taking comfort in your own works in order to have a right standing before God?

Text: Galatians 5:5-6

Theme: Justification and sanctification are by faith apart from the works of the Law (Gal. 3:3).

Introduction: Those who attempt to maintain their salvation through the works of the Law will be severed from Christ (4). But instead of identifying these Galatians as those who are severed from Christ, Paul instead identifies them as those who wait for the hope of righteousness (5). There is a tendency in each of us to cling to our own works to maintain our salvation, but this text reminds us that our union with Christ is our only hope.

- I. We live in freedom through the Holy Spirit by faith (5-6).
 - A. Through the Spirit we wait for the hope of righteousness (5).

1. How do we live *through* the Spirit (5)?

Explanation: The opposite of living through the Holy Spirit is living according to the flesh (16-17). The flesh clearly refers to our natural bent towards sin (19-21). In contrast, the Spirit, who dwells within us, changes our fleshly desires so that instead of living for ourselves, we live for Christ (24).

Application: Prior to salvation, we were slaves to sin (Rom. 6:17-19). We had no choice—sin was our master. But after salvation, we can walk by the Spirit (17). Was there a difference in your life after salvation?

- B. By faith we wait for the hope of righteousness (5).

1. Living by faith is believing that Christ's righteousness is credited to my account (5).

Explanation: Righteousness comes up repeatedly throughout the book of Galatians, but what does it mean? It refers to the act of declaring someone to be righteous (Deut. 25:1; Prov. 17:15; Rom. 8:33-34).

Explanation: Although we are declared righteous at the moment of salvation, there is a sense in which we wait. Paul identifies the struggle in Romans 8:23-25. Our bodies groan as we await the redemption of our bodies.

Application: Perhaps your struggle with sin this week has caused you to doubt that Christ's righteousness is credited to your account. When those doubts come this week, take some time to reflect on the faithfulness of the One who promised.

C. Since we are united with Christ, outward acts do not contribute to our justification (6).

1. Neither circumcision or uncircumcision means anything (6).

Explanation: Why does Paul include uncircumcision? Those who were uncircumcised would have tended to think of themselves as better, after receiving this letter, because they did not succumb to the pressure of being circumcised.

Application: Do you compare yourself with other believers? It's easy to think that you are doing better than others because of something that you do or don't do. Paul reminds us that it is not what we do that enables us to be righteous, but rather our union with Christ.

2. Only faith that produces outward acts of love means anything (6).

Explanation: The phrase "working through love" does not refer to a works-based salvation. Rather, it shows that faith does have fruit. As James says, faith without works is dead (James 2:14-17).

Application: Love for your neighbor is a natural outflow of someone who has genuine faith. In fact, if you do not show love, then you likely never had genuine faith.

Conclusion: Showing genuine love to your own family within your home is a mark of genuine faith. It cannot be done by trying harder. It can only be done through the Holy Spirit by faith.

[Text: Galatians 5:7-12](#)

Theme: Justification and sanctification are by faith apart from the works of the Law (Gal. 3:3).

Introduction: We, like the Galatians, are easily persuaded. Perhaps you have been persuaded by a gifted preacher or a crafty book, but when you stop to ponder the arguments you realize that those arguments did not come from the Bible. You *will* hear persuasive people, but will they cause you to veer off course?

I. Those who hinder you from obeying the truth will face severe punishment (7-12; cf. 10).

A. God is not the One who hinders you from running well (7-8).

1. We are hindered by those who persuade us (7-8).

Explanation: Being “persuaded” comes up in verse 7 and 8 (“Obeying” is literally translated as “persuaded”). These Galatians were persuaded to live a certain way—under the Law—because these Judaizers had persuaded them.

Application: None of us live in a vacuum. Each of us is persuaded by the preachers and authors of our day. It’s easy to let our guard down, but we must always evaluate the sermons and authors against God’s authoritative Word.

B. A little error will spread to the whole church (9).

1. Error that is unaddressed will spread (9).

Explanation: In ancient times, they would take dough from the starter dough to make bread. The yeast (leaven) in the starter dough would continue to spread and affect all the dough. In the same way, false teaching can spread in a church and affect many.

Application: False teaching must be addressed. We all should ask the same question—did this truth come from God’s authoritative Word?

C. Genuine believers respond to the truth (10).

1. Genuine believers respond to the truth, whereas false believers receive punishment (10).

Explanation: Paul is confident that these genuine believers will respond to the truth. In a different scenario, Paul addressed sin with the Corinthians which required repentance (2 Cor. 7:8-12). Sorrow over sin for a believer produces repentance (2 Cor. 7:10).

Application: How do you respond when someone confronts you over your sin? Do you respond with repentance? If not, then you are likely not a genuine believer.

D. Those who hinder believers often make false claims (11-12).

1. The Judaizers accused Paul of preaching circumcision (11).

Explanation: Although Paul encouraged Timothy to be circumcised, he certainly was not “preaching” circumcision (Acts 16:3). In fact, Paul’s primary argument against the Judaizers is that they were requiring circumcision. But in order to get these Galatians to follow their viewpoint, they accused Paul of preaching circumcision.

Application: Often, those who are causing issues within the local church fabricate the truth in order to get a following. When you hear something that seems far-fetched, do you take the time to get the facts?

2. The scandal of the cross is that justification is apart from works (11).

Explanation: If justification were by works, then the cross is no longer a scandal (1 Cor. 1:23).

3. Instead of harming others, it would be better for them to harm themselves (12).

Explanation: This sharp sarcasm seems over the top. Yet, Christ said it was better to have a large stone hung around your neck and be cast into the sea than to cause one of God's children to sin (Matt. 18:6).

Text: Galatians 5:13-15

Theme: Justification and sanctification are by faith apart from the works of the Law (Gal. 3:3).

Introduction: Freedom from the Law (5:1) sounds like an opportunity to satisfy our own fleshly desires. But instead, freedom from the Law means that we serve others.

I. Since Christ set you free, live according to freedom (13-15; 1).

Explanation: Paul uses the theologically loaded word "called" (Rom. 8:30). But notice that this verb is in the passive—"were called" (13). God called us to this freedom.

A. Living according to freedom does not mean that you live according to your flesh (13, 15).

1. Living according to freedom is not a license to sin (13).

Explanation: For Paul, the "flesh" has a wide range of meanings. It can refer to the physical body (neutral, Gal. 2:20; & negative, Rom. 8:5; 13:14). But in this chapter, Paul contrasts the fruit of the Spirit with the desire of the flesh (cf. Gal. 5:17). Therefore, Paul is referring to that part of us after salvation that still struggles with sin. Certainly the old man has been crucified (Rom. 6:6) but there is a part of us that continues to struggle with sin (Rom. 7:14).

2. Freedom from the Law should not lead to destroying others (15).

Explanation: It seems odd that devouring others is the opposite of the Law. But the Law actually lays out specific examples of how to show acts of love to your neighbor. For example, the command, don't steal, is a tangible way to show love to your neighbor. Don't murder or commit adultery are more examples of showing love (cf. Matt. 22:36-39).

Explanation: It appears that Paul has the animal world in mind when he refers to biting, devouring, and consuming. It's almost as though he envisions a colosseum where lions are devouring Christians. When freedom leads to harming other Christians, we have not rightly understood the freedom Paul is talking about.

Application: Do you bite and devour with your words? Think back on this last week. Have you shown genuine love to your spouse and children, or would your words and actions be better described as biting and devouring?

B. Living according to freedom means that you serve one another (13-14).

1. You are free to be a slave to others (13).

Explanation: Although the translations use the word “serve,” the Greek word refers to a slave. Since we are in Christ and no longer under the Law, Paul assumes that some would stop serving others. Perhaps some would wrongly say that they are no longer under obligation—they are free.

Application: This genuine service towards others has to come from the Holy Spirit (22). You will quickly run out of steam if you attempt to love others in your own strength.

2. The whole Law is fulfilled when you love others (14).

Explanation: Previously, Paul argues that circumcision requires a person to keep the whole Law (3), but now it seems like Paul is encouraging us to fulfill the whole Law (14). In a parallel passage, James argues that we love our neighbor when we show no partiality, as well as keeping all the other parts of the Law (i.e. murder, adultery; cf. James 2:8-13).

Application: The Law, when done out of obligation is impossible to keep. But when we walk by the Spirit (16) the Holy Spirit produces genuine fruit in our lives enabling us to genuinely serve our brothers and sisters in Christ and even those around us.

Conclusion: Loving your neighbor is a matter of the heart (cf. Lev. 19:17-18).

Text: Galatians 5:16-18

Theme: Justification and sanctification are by faith apart from the works of the Law (Gal. 3:3).

Introduction: The role of the Holy Spirit within the life of the believer cannot be overstated. In Christ’s own words, He said that it is better for me to leave so that the Holy Spirit would come. It is better for us to have the Holy Spirit dwell within us, than it would be to walk and talk with Jesus.

I. When you walk by the Spirit, you do not carry out the desires of the flesh (16-18).

A. Therefore, walk by the Spirit (16).

Explanation: Not carrying out the desires of the flesh is a result of walking by the Spirit (16).

Application: Your actions demonstrate whether you are walking by the Spirit. We all have difficult circumstances, but when we are walking by the Spirit our actions are marked by the fruit that the Spirit produces.

B. There is a battle between the flesh and the Spirit (17).

1. The desire of the flesh and the desire of the Spirit are in opposition to one another (17).

Explanation: Paul is not contrasting our physical body with our inner man. Instead, he is contrasting the fleshly desires with the desires of the Holy Spirit. Notice the context for both the flesh (19-21) and the Spirit (22).

Application: Do you feel a battle raging within? If not, then you are likely not a genuine believer because the Holy Spirit dwells within all believers (cf. Rom. 8:4).

2. Since the Holy Spirit dwells within you, you ultimately will not carry out the desire of the flesh (17).

Explanation: In order to understand this final phrase, we need to look at the parallel passage in Romans 7-8. In both passages there is a struggle. Some have argued that Romans 7 does not refer to the Holy Spirit, but Romans 8 which continues this idea contrasts the Holy Spirit with the flesh (Rom. 8:4-7; 9). In addition, Paul uses the phrase "led by the Spirit" in both passages (Rom. 8:14; Gal. 5:18). One contrast though, is that in Romans 7:15-16 he does those things he doesn't want to do, but in Galatians 5:17 he is kept from doing those things he doesn't want to do. In Romans 7, Paul emphasizes the struggle with sin, but in chapter 8 he emphasizes that we are not walking according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. Therefore, Paul's point is that ultimately, we will not carry out the desire of the flesh.

Application: Stop being pessimistic about your struggle with sin. As you walk by the Spirit you will naturally not carry out the desire of the flesh. You can be confident that you will grow in sanctification (Phil. 1:6)

C. If you are led by the Spirit you are not under the Law (18).

1. What does it mean to be led by the Holy Spirit (18)?

Explanation: Other examples of being led include those who were led away by false idols (1 Cor. 12:2) and women who were led by their various impulses (2 Tim. 3:6). A positive example is when God leads His people to repentance by His kindness (Rom. 2:4). To be led by the Holy Spirit is to be compelled to live a different way.

Application: Just like some were led by false idols, we are all led by something. Paul warns us in Romans 6:12-13 to not live under the dominion of sin.

2. Those who are led by the Spirit are not under the Law (18).

Explanation: Instead of obedience out of obligation, we now obey because our hearts have been changed (Jer. 31:33). The New Covenant has made the Law obsolete (Heb. 8:13).

[Text: Galatians 5:19-21](#)

Theme: Justification and sanctification are by faith apart from the works of the Law (Gal. 3:3).

Introduction: Justification *is* by faith alone. But not all who claim to have faith truly have faith.

Christ warns that not all who say, “Lord, Lord” will enter the kingdom (Matt. 7:21). Perhaps you have been clinging to a prayer you made for your salvation, but you never truly had saving faith.

I. Be warned! If you walk according to the flesh then you do not have the Spirit dwelling within you (19-21; cf. Rom. 8:5).

A. The works of the flesh are obvious (19).

Explanation: This list is not meant to be exhaustive. Instead, the sins of the flesh are obvious because they are in contrast to the fruit that the Spirit produces.

Application: Although the works of the flesh are obvious, we still justify our own sin. What are some sins in your life that you have justified?

1. Immorality is a work of the flesh (19).

Explanation: The first 3 listed refer to all manner of sexual sins. Paul tells us that God gives people over to sexual sins when they suppress the knowledge of God (Rom. 1:24, 26-27).

2. Idolatry is a work of the flesh (20).

Explanation: Idolatry is worshipping the creation rather than the Creator (Rom. 1:21-25). But what about witchcraft (20)? Witchcraft attempts to use sorcery to change the circumstance.

3. Selfishness is a work of the flesh (20-21).

Explanation: Several of these refer specifically to conflict between 2 or more people (i.e. hostilities, strife, outbursts of anger, dissensions, factions). This conflict comes because of selfishness which Paul contrasts with humility (Phil. 2:3). Paul explains humility as looking out for the interests of others (Phil. 2:4) or considering others as more important than yourself (Phil. 2:3). Humility is the opposite of selfishness.

Application: But how do we serve others? This humility, which was modeled by Jesus Christ (Phil. 2:5), does not originate with the flesh.

4. There are many more works of the flesh (21).

Explanation: Anything that is contrary to the fruit that the Spirit produces is a work of the flesh.

Application: Do you find yourself justifying your actions because the Bible doesn't explicitly condemn that action? Just because something is not condemned in Scripture does not mean that it is ok.

B. Those who live according to the flesh will not inherit the Kingdom of God (21; cf. 1 Cor. 6:9-11).

1. Is Paul now describing justification by works (21)?

Explanation: No. Instead, Paul is warning that those who live according to the flesh do not have the Spirit dwelling within them (cf. 13).

2. Living according to the flesh is a mark of someone who has not been justified (1 Cor. 6:9-11).

Explanation: In 1 Cor. 6:9-10, Paul gives a similar list of living according to the flesh. But this time, he reminds the Corinthian believers that they no longer walk according to the flesh. Instead, they have been washed.

Conclusion: When the Holy Spirit dwells within you, the natural result is that your life is now marked by fruit that the Holy Spirit produces.

Text: Galatians 5:22-23

Theme: Justification and sanctification are by faith apart from the works of the Law (Gal. 3:3).

Introduction: When Benjamin Franklin was 20, he laid out a list of 13 virtues to live by. Each week, he would strive to keep 1 virtue in the hopes of being able to master all 13. But instead of mastering them, all he did was mitigate his fleshly desires. Apart from the work of the Holy Spirit, we are incapable of producing genuine fruit.

I. The Holy Spirit produces fruit in the life of the believer (22-23).

- A. Is your life marked by the deeds of the flesh or the fruit that the Spirit produces (22-23)?

Explanation: The Spirit produces fruit, not fruits. Each virtue is connected to the others. When someone is loving, they are also kind and patient.

Explanation: Just like the deeds of the flesh are evident, so the work of the Holy Spirit is also obvious. Paul is not giving us a list so that we can determine if an attribute comes from the Spirit or from the flesh. It should be obvious to all.

1. The Spirit produces love (22).

Explanation: Christ said that you will know my disciples because they have love for one another (John 13:35). But what is love? Love seeks the benefit of others (1 Cor. 13:5).

2. The Spirit produces joy (22).

Explanation: Joy is an inner delight regardless of circumstances. While Paul was in prison, he was able to be filled with joy (Phil. 1:25, 3:1).

3. The Spirit produces peace (22).

Explanation: Peace is the absence of anxiety (Phil. 4:6-7).

4. The Spirit produces patience (22).

Explanation: Patience is waiting on God. When David was surrounded by his enemies he reminded himself to take courage and wait for the Lord (Ps. 27:11-14). In contrast, when

Saul was afraid that everyone would leave, he made a sacrifice to God instead of waiting for the prophet (1 Sam. 13:8-13).

5. The Spirit produces kindness (22).

Explanation: Kindness is giving undeserved favor to someone. The good Samaritan is perhaps the most well-known story on kindness (Luke 10:29-37).

6. The Spirit produces goodness (22).

Explanation: Goodness refers to doing what's right. Apart from the Spirit, we often only do what's right when others will see us.

7. The Spirit produces faithfulness (22).

Explanation: Faithfulness is being dependable, even when it's not convenient.

8. The Spirit produces gentleness (23).

Explanation: Gentleness becomes most evident when someone wrongs you. Moses was being accused by Aaron and Miriam. Yet, Moses responded graciously (Num. 12:1-3).

9. The Spirit produces self-control (23).

Explanation: Self-control is not losing control of our emotions in the midst of a difficult circumstance. When Christ cleared the temple with a whip (John 2:15-17) it was not out of rage. Instead, Christ was acting with righteous zeal for His Father's house.

Application: As parents, we need to ask for the Spirit's help when we discipline our children. We can easily discipline out of frustration instead of being led by the Spirit.

Conclusion: You could set up laws for yourself, like Benjamin Franklin, to live a virtuous life. But apart from the Holy Spirit, you will only frustrate yourself.

Text: Galatians 5:24-26

Theme: Justification and sanctification are by faith apart from the works of the Law (Gal. 3:3).

Introduction: If the flesh, with its passions and desires have been crucified, then why do I still struggle with sin? Although Paul doesn't directly answer this question here, he does tell us that those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh.

I. Those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh (24-26).

A. When did we crucify our fleshly desires (24)?

Explanation: Not everyone has crucified the flesh, only those who belong to Him (24). But when did this event happen? Paul has already told us that *we* have been crucified with Christ (2:20). But in Romans 6:6, Paul clarifies by stating that the *old man* has been crucified with Christ. Therefore, our fleshly passions and desires were crucified with

Christ when *He* was crucified. Even though these fleshly desires were crucified with Christ, it was not realized for us until salvation.

Explanation: Instead of the passive voice (i.e. have been crucified; Gal. 2:20; Rom. 6:6) Paul switches to the active voice (i.e. they have crucified). Clearly, we have been crucified with Christ, but we participate in putting those fleshly desires to death.

Application: One way that we put those fleshly desires to death is by not making provision for the flesh (Rom. 13:14). Stop giving yourself opportunities to satisfy the desires of the flesh.

B. Walk according to the Spirit (25).

1. Do you live by the Spirit?

Explanation: Instead of assuming that these Galatians live by (i.e. made alive by; cf. Rom. 1:18) the Spirit, he poses it as a question—“if you live by the Spirit?”.

Application: Many who attend church weekly assume that they are genuine believers. But instead of assuming, Paul poses it as a question. Have you paused to consider whether you truly have the Holy Spirit dwelling within you? There will be many on the last day who will spend eternity in hell because they did not pause to consider whether they have been born again.

2. If you live by the Spirit then walk according to the Spirit (25).

Explanation: To walk according to the Spirit, must be different than to live by the Spirit. But what does it mean to “walk according to the Spirit”? Paul uses this unique word for “walk” in Romans 4:12 to refer to walking according to the steps of Abraham (i.e. walking by faith). So, to walk according to the Spirit refers to our day-to-day living—walk in step with the Spirit.

3. What does it look like to walk in step with the Spirit (26)?

Explanation: To walk according to the Spirit is to walk in humility. We walk in humility by not challenging others or by being envious. Perhaps Paul is referencing both the strong (the ones challenging) and the weak (the ones who are envious).

Application: You claim to be made alive by the Spirit, but are you walking in step with the Spirit? This is most obvious in the home. To walk according to the Spirit is walking in humility towards your spouse and children. Specifically, we do this by viewing others as more important than ourselves (Phil. 2:3).

Conclusion: Throughout this chapter, Paul has been encouraging us to walk by the Spirit, be led by the Spirit, and to walk in accordance to the Spirit. These all require us to live in dependence on the Holy Spirit. Tomorrow morning, take a moment before your day starts and call out to God and ask for His help (Eph. 6:18).

Text: Galatians 6:1-2

Theme: Justification and sanctification are by faith apart from the works of the Law (Gal. 3:3).

Introduction: Sometimes Christians stumble into sin, while other times Christians sin willfully. Because of this, Paul gives several different types of ways for dealing with those who call themselves believers. For example, we ought to strongly admonish those who are unruly (i.e. 1 Cor. 5:5; 1 Thess. 5:14), but encourage the fainthearted (1 Thess. 5:14). In Galatians 6, Paul is dealing with the believer who stumbles into sin.

I. Being led by the Spirit within the local church (1-2).

A. Restore those stumbling into sin with gentleness (1).

Explanation: Although NASB translates the verb as “caught” which implies that the person was caught in sin, Paul is likely referring to someone who unintentionally stumbles into sin (cf. 1 Thess. 5:14).

Explanation: The “spiritual” is not referring to the mature believer, but rather the believer who is led by the Spirit (5:16, 18, 25).

Application: We *all* have a responsibility to exhort our brothers and sisters in Christ. This is not just the role of the pastor or the spiritually mature, but rather, all who are led by the Spirit.

1. Restore them into fellowship (1).

Application: The goal is restoration. When another believer stumbles into sin, they cannot have genuine fellowship while living in sin. David recognized this and begged God to restore the joy of his salvation (Ps. 51:12).

2. Restore in a spirit of gentleness (1).

Explanation: Ideally, church discipline stops at the first step—go to your brother alone (Matt. 18:15). Although the Matthew 18 doesn’t specify that we ought to go in a spirit of gentleness, Paul makes that abundantly clear.

Application: Confronting sin with a spirit of gentleness is hardest when someone has sinned against you (Matt. 18:15). But if you are genuinely being led by the Spirit, you will respond in gentleness.

3. Remember, you are prone to the same types of sin (1).

Explanation: When confronting others over their sin, it is easy to be pride and think that you would never sin in that way (5:26).

B. Bear the burdens of others (2).

Explanation: bearing the burdens of others is probably not directly connected to verse 1 (i.e. bearing with others in their sin).

1. Bearing the burdens of others fulfills the Law of Christ (2).

Explanation: What is the Law of Christ? The Law of Christ is loving your neighbor as yourself (5:13-14).

Application: It's easy to love someone when it doesn't require anything from us. But love for others is on full display when it requires us to bear their burdens.

Conclusion: Paul is writing from a heart of pastoral care. These Galatian believers have been burdened with the requirements of the Law of Moses. And, no doubt, the church was on the verge of self-destructing. The answer—humility (1, 3-4)

Text: Galatians 6:3-6

Theme: Justification and sanctification are by faith apart from the works of the Law (Gal. 3:3).

Introduction: What does it look like to walk by the Spirit? Not only has Paul already given us the fruit that the Spirit produces, but now, Paul gives us concrete examples of walking by the Spirit.

I. Being led by the Spirit within the local church (3-6).

A. Let us humbly bear the burdens of others (3-6).

1. Stop deceiving yourself into thinking that you are something when you are nothing apart from Christ (3).

Explanation: Verse 3 is intended to be connected to verse 2 (notice “for” at the beginning of verse 3; also notice the idea of burdens in verse 2 and 5). The New Living Translation adds the phrase—“if you think you are too important *to help someone.*” This is likely what Paul had in mind. The proud person, who views himself as important, is unwilling to stoop down and bear the burdens of others—he is too important for that.

Application: Our ability to serve others is directly linked to how well we understand the Gospel. When you come to grips with the reality that you have been rescued from your sins, you will have no problem bearing the burdens of others.

2. Stop looking at others and instead examine yourself (4).

Explanation: Paul is not giving an opportunity to boast. But instead, his goal is that we examine our own selves.

Application: We tend to boast when we look at the failures of others. Gossip is a form of boasting because we look at the failures of others in light of our own perceived strengths.

3. Bear your own burdens (5).

Explanation: At first glance, Paul seems to contradict himself. We are told to bear each other's burdens (2) and now Paul tells us to bear our own burdens (5). First, Paul uses a

different word. The word “load” in verse 5 is used to refer to a backpack (something that can be carried). Secondly, Paul uses the future tense to refer to the future judgment. Paul is saying that we will one day give an account of our works (2 Cor. 5:10).

4. Bear the burdens of those who minister the Word to you (6).

Explanation: Although Paul often waived his right to receiving pay (Acts 20:33-35; 2 Cor. 11:7-9), yet a worker *is* worthy of his higher (1 Cor. 9:11; 2 Tim. 5:17).

Application: As a society, we pay based on what we value. For example, a quarterback in the NFL can make between 40-50 million dollars a year. Yet, a school teacher makes a minimal salary. The church is not much different than society. Often churches begrudgingly pay their pastor. This text calls us to bear the burdens—even the financial burdens—of those who labor in the Word on our behalf.

Conclusion: I confess, a passage like this feels a bit awkward for me. I would much prefer to shoulder the burdens of others than to shine a light on my own burdens. Yet, this passage commands us to bear each others burdens.

Text: Galatians 6:7-10

Theme: Justification and sanctification are by faith apart from the works of the Law (Gal. 3:3).

Introduction: You reap what you sow. This is not just a theological truth, but a universal truth. The farmer who sows corn in the spring will reap corn in the fall. But somehow, we think that this universal truth does not apply spiritually.

I. You will reap what you sow (7-10).

A. When you sow according to the flesh, you will reap corruption (7-8).

1. God will not be mocked (7).

Explanation: The same root word—mock—is used in 1 Chronicles 36:16 to refer to the Israelites under King Zedekiah who mocked the messengers of God. But God will not be mocked. His wrath burned against them.

Explanation: When you continue walking according to the flesh, you deceive yourself into thinking that God will be mocked—that the Law of sowing and reaping does not apply to you.

2. Walking according to the flesh will reap eternal damnation (8).

Explanation: It may be tempting to interpret the sowing and reaping according to the flesh as referring to a Christian who will receive the consequences of his fleshly decisions in this life. But the sowing and reaping here is referring to eternal damnation. This is clear because the contrast is eternal life.

Application: Do you give thought about the day you will stand before God? Many on that day will assume that they were Christians, but will find out that they never were.

B. When you sow according to the Spirit, you will reap eternal life (8b-10).

1. Those who live by the Spirit are genuine believers (8b).

Explanation: There is such a sharp contrast between walking by the Spirit and walking according to the flesh (5:17, 19-23) that Paul assumes that those who have been freed from the flesh would no longer walk according to the flesh (5:1).

2. Don't lose heart (9).

Explanation: In the midst of doing good—walking by the Spirit—we will have a tendency to grow weary (2 Thess. 3:13). Part of the reason we grow weary is because the wicked continue to prosper. David said that the wicked eat up the righteous like bread (Ps. 14:4). Yet, David ultimately looked for the Redeemer who would rescue His people (Ps. 14:7). Another reason we grow weary is because we start thinking we can do it on our own. King Asa, in 2 Chronicles 16:7-10 refused to trust in the Lord, even though the Lord had previously protected him from his enemies.

Application: Are you weary of walking by the Spirit? Don't lose heart. The eyes of the Lord run to and fro to support those who trust in Him (2 Chron. 16:9).

3. You will reap (9b).

Explanation: Again, this reaping occurs on the last day when Christ rewards His faithful servants.

4. Serve everyone, but especially fellow believers (10).

Application: It's most natural to serve ourselves, but when we walk by the Spirit we naturally think of ways to serve others.

Conclusion: Why does Paul use the generic phrase "do good?" Our tendency is to find specific examples of serving others and then do the minimum. Paul leaves it open-ended so that we come up with many ways to serve others.

Text: Galatians 6:11-14

Theme: Justification and sanctification are by faith apart from the works of the Law (Gal. 3:3).

Introduction: Paul's epistles generally have the same endings. For example, Paul generally greets the believers (Rom. 16:3-16; Phil. 4:21; 1 Cor. 16:19), gives a final reminder (Rom. 16:17-18; Phil. 4:8; Eph. 6:10-17), sends travel plans (Rom. 15:22-24; 1 Cor. 16:5), gives a doxology (Rom. 16:27; Phil. 4:20), and asks for prayer (Rom. 15:30; Eph. 6:19). Yet, Galatians lacks these standard endings. Instead, he confirms his authorship (11) and rebukes the distorters of the Gospel (13).

I. Paul himself warns of the danger of legalism (11-14).

A. To remove any doubt of his authorship, Paul writes the closing comments with his own hand (11).

1. Typically, a scribe would write down the words (Rom. 16:22), but Paul didn't want to give these distorters any room to reject the authenticity of this letter. He wrote the closing with his own hand (11).

B. Legalism is done out of a desire for selfish gain (12-13).

Explanation: What is the difference between legalism and conscience related issues? Legalism requires others to adhere to a set of standards like keeping the sabbath (Rom. 14:5; Col. 2:16-17). But for conscience related issues, the person holds themselves to that standard without judging others (Rom. 14:3).

1. These legalists wanted to be seen by men (12).

Explanation: They wanted to "make a good showing" in front of others. They were seeking the favor of men (Gal. 1:10).

Explanation: How can Paul know their motives? Paul has already identified the 2 motives—pleasing men or pleasing God (1:10). Since legalism does not please God, then it must be motivated by pleasing man. When you press people to obey your standards for keeping the sabbath, you are living for the audience of man.

2. Legalists attempt to avoid persecution (12).

Explanation: How does requiring circumcision avoid persecution? Likely, Paul is addressing a similar issue that occurred in John 9 when the Pharisees were persecuting the blind man and his family. His parents were afraid of persecution (John 9:20-23), so they refused to answer. This is probably the same sort of issue going on in Galatia. The Judaizers wanted approval from the Jewish leaders so they pressed everyone to obey the Law of Moses, so that they would not be persecuted (cf. John 9:28-29).

3. Legalism boasts in what it can get others to do (13).

Explanation: Since legalists can't obey the Law perfectly (cf. Gal. 5:3), they can only boast in what they can cause others to do.

C. Let us only boast in the cross of Christ (14).

Explanation: Although boasting in the cross sounds natural to us, it would have been stunning to a first century Roman citizen.

1. The cross changes our relationship to the world (14; 2:20).

Explanation: Not only has my relationship to the world changes, but the world's relationship to me has changed (John 15:18-20). At the cross, we cling to the righteousness of Jesus Christ apart from anything we can produce—this is why we boast in the cross.

Conclusion: Paul concludes this letter where he started—we can either please God or please man (1:10). But if we strive to please man, we cannot be the servant of Christ.

Text: Galatians 6:15-18

Theme: Justification and sanctification are by faith apart from the works of the Law (Gal. 3:3).

Introduction: When Paul refers to justification by faith alone, he references 2 ditches that we can easily fall prey to. The first ditch is lawlessness. Paul addresses the topic of justification by faith alone in Romans 4-5 and then answers the obvious objection—can we continue in sin (Rom. 6:1). The second ditch is legalism. Paul’s primary concern in Galatians is about legalism.

I. Walk according to the new creation (15-18).

A. Circumcision (and uncircumcision) belongs to the old age (15).

Explanation: Paul is contrasting the new creation with the world which he has been crucified to (14). When we place value on the things of this world, like circumcision or keeping the sabbath (cf. Col. 2:15-17), we are no longer walking according to the new creation which was inaugurated by Christ at His death (14).

1. Those who go back to the Mosaic Law (old age) are severing themselves from Christ and putting themselves under a yoke of slavery (Gal. 5:2-6).

Explanation: The reason we do not go back to the old age is because those who are in Christ are a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17). Old things have passed away.

Application: There have always been and will continue to be movements that emphasize a return to the old age which emphasizes the Mosaic Law as a means of justification. If you do not take heed to the warning in Galatians, you will be swept away by these movements.

B. Those who walk according to the new creation enjoy peace and mercy (16).

1. To walk according to the new creation is to walk by the Spirit.

Explanation: Paul uses a unique word for “walk” (only used 4 times in the NT). The only other instance this word is used in Galatians is to refer to walking by the Spirit (5:25).

2. Either you walk by the Spirit and enjoy peace and mercy or you walk according to a different Gospel and receive God’s curse (1:8-9).

Explanation: Since Paul’s primary concern is justification by faith alone, the peace is probably a reference to the peace we receive from being justified before God (Rom. 5:1). Mercy is used because those who believe this Gospel will receive mercy from God. In contrast, those who do not believe this Gospel are cursed.

Explanation: Clearly, the Israel of God refers to believers. Although some argue that this phrase refers to ethnic Israel, it is more likely referring to all who believe. Paul went to great lengths in Galatians 3 to identify all who believed as children of Abraham (cf. 3:9, 26-29).

- C. Let us not cause trouble for those who bear the marks of the new creation (the cross; 17).
 - 1. The word “bear” is sometimes used in the NT to refer to bearing the cross (Luke 14:27; John 19:17). For Paul, the beatings he received were examples of bearing in his body the marks of Christ (2 Cor. 11:23-27).
- D. May the grace of Christ be with you (18).
 - 1. Although this ending is typical for Paul, it is worth noting that these were not just words to end the letter. We know from his other epistles that he regularly prayed for those he ministered to. For example, he prayed regularly for the believers in Rome (1:8-10), Corinthians (1 Cor. 1:4), Ephesians (1:16), Philippians (1:8-11). So, it seems fitting to close this letter with a prayer.