

GALATIANS

Main Theme: Justification by Faith

Primary Reference Source: The McArthur Study Bible

Background: Paul's letter to the Galatians was written shortly after the Jerusalem Council. Most scholars believe that this council took place in 49 A.D. Paul's letter to the Galatians did not address one church, but a number of churches in the southern Galatian cities of Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe. These cities although within the Roman province of Galatia (southern region), were not in the ethnic Galatian region (northern region). It is not recorded in Acts that Paul founded any churches in the northern Galatian region.

Paul was born in Tarsus, a city in the province of Cilicia, not far from southern Galatia, making an interesting point of reference, since this was Paul's first epistle. "Under the famous rabbi, Gamaliel, Paul received thorough training in the Old Testament Scriptures and the rabbinic traditions at Jerusalem (Acts 22:3)." As a member of the ultra-orthodox sect of Pharisees (Acts 22:6), Paul was one of first-century Judaism's principle teachers (Galatians 1:14 & Philippians 3:5-6).

"Paul wrote Galatians to counter the false teachers (Judaizers) who were undermining the central New Testament doctrine of justification by faith." In opposition to the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:23-29), the Judaizers spread their dangerous teaching that Gentiles must first become Jewish proselytes and submit to all the Mosaic law before they could become Christians. Paul was shocked that the Galatian churches were defecting from the essential doctrine of justification by faith (Galatians 1:6), and embracing the false teachings of the Judaizers. Paul urgently confronted the defection and defended the essential Christian doctrine of justification by faith alone.

Overview of the Text: The six chapter book of Galatians is broken up into three parts. In the first part (Chapters 1 & 2) Paul defends and establishes his position as an apostle. In the second part (Chapters 3 & 4) Paul defends his doctrinal position of justification by faith and confronts the false teaching of the Judaizers. In the third part (Chapters 5 & 6) Paul provides practical application of his doctrinal teaching.

SCRIPTURE VERSES AND SCRIPTURE TEXT FROM THE NEW KING JAMES VERSION BIBLE IN BOLD

Galatians Chapter 1

1. Paul, an apostle (not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead),

Galatians 1:1 Paul begins his epistle by stating that he is an apostle (one who is sent). This apostleship is not from man but from God. In general the term apostle means one who is sent with a commission. “The apostles of Jesus Christ – the 12 and Paul – were special ambassadors or messengers chosen and trained by Christ to lay the foundation of the early church and be the channels of God’s completed revelation.” Paul clearly states that his apostleship is from God not from man. This alludes to Galatians 1:12 in which Paul clearly states that the resurrected and ascended Lord Jesus Christ Himself appointed him to be an apostle. Since Jesus Christ, the author and finisher of our faith, appointed Paul, Paul was a qualified witness of the gospel and the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ.

2. and all the brethren who are with me,

To the churches of Galatia:

Galatians 1:2 The churches of Galatia are the churches which Paul founded during his first missionary journey. These are the churches of Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe.

3. Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ,

Galatians 1:3 It is interesting to note that Paul’s salutation puts grace and peace together. The grace of God always results in peace. “If salvation is by works as they (the false teachers) claimed, it is not of grace and cannot result in peace, since no one can be sure he has enough good works to be eternally secure.”

4. who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father,

5. to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

Galatians 1:4-5 Christ gave Himself to be punished for our sins and satisfy the wrath of God. God is just and He must punish sin. Christ’s atoning death on the cross was the perfect sacrifice for sin performed once and for all time. For the believer, God will not punish sin twice, since He already punished sin once in the person of Jesus Christ. Through the sacrifice of Christ we who believe, are delivered from this present evil age (the current world system ruled by Satan). This is in accordance with the will of God. All glory belongs to God alone.

- 6. I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel,**
- 7. which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ.**
- 8. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.**
- 9. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.**

Galatians 1:6-9 Once Paul establishes his authority as one sent by God, he immediately addresses the issue at hand. The Galatians were being deceived by the Judaizers who were infiltrating the Galatian churches. The Judaizers opposed Paul and his gospel. The false teachers added confusion to the gospel by changing the gospel of Christ into a different message, which Paul says is not another gospel but a perversion. The gospel of Jesus Christ is the good news of salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. "By adding law to the gospel of Christ, the false teachers were effectively destroying grace, turning the message of God's undeserved favor toward sinners into a message of earned or merited favor." The gospel message that Paul and the other apostles taught was God's revelation. Paul, therefore, said that even if an angel from heaven were to preach a different gospel than what he and the other apostles have taught, that angel should be accursed (given over to eternal destruction in hell). Accursed is a translation from the Greek word anathema.

10. For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ.

Galatians 1:10 Paul states clearly that he is in the business of pleasing Christ not men. If he sought to endear himself to sinful men, he could never please Christ. Because God's ways are very different from the ways of sinful man and Paul follows in God's ways, Paul endured much persecution.

11. But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man.

12. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Galatians 1:11-12 Not only did Paul receive his apostleship from God, but he also received the gospel from God. Paul states that he received the gospel through the divine revelation of Jesus Christ. When God called him to the faith, he did not go to Jerusalem to make contact with the apostles, but he went to Arabia where he was instructed in the faith by divine revelation, and returned again to Damascus. This began when Paul encountered the full glory of the resurrected Christ on the Damascus road and received the truth of the gospel from Him (Acts 9:1-16). No other Jew could claim the same experience that Paul had. Divine revelation is contained in the Scriptures; therefore, study of Scripture is of paramount importance. Most Jews did not study the actual Scriptures; instead they used human interpretations of Scripture as their authority and guide. This led to the development of their many traditions not taught in Scripture, which even went so far as to contradict Scripture.

13. For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it.

14. And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers.

Galatians 1:13-14 Before his conversion, Paul's ultimate goal was to advance in his Jewish religion (Judaism). Paul demonstrated his zeal for the Jewish faith to the extreme degree that he pursued and persecuted Christians. Paul was also zealous for the traditions of the fathers of the Jewish faith. These traditions include the oral teachings about Old Testament law commonly known as "Halakah." Halakah is the collection of interpretations of the law, which came to carry the same or greater authority than the law (Torah) itself. "Its regulations were so hopelessly complex and burdensome that even the most astute rabbinical scholars could not master it by either interpretation or conduct."

15. But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace,

Galatians 1:15 From the time of his birth, Paul had been chosen by God (separated or set apart) for His service. This phrase, "separated me from my mother's womb," refers to God's election of Paul without regard for his personal merit or effort (Isaiah 49:1, Jeremiah 1:5, Romans 9:10-240). Paul further states that God called him through His grace. On the Damascus Road God actually called Paul, whom He had already chosen to salvation.

16. to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood,

Galatians 1:16 Not only was Christ revealed to Paul through an external revelation on the Damascus Road, but also in him (Paul himself) as God gave him the life, light, and faith to believe in Jesus Christ (God Himself). Paul was specifically called to preach the gospel to non-Jews (Gentiles). Paul did not require the input from any of the twelve apostles to add to the revelation he received from Christ on the Damascus Road.

17. nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus.

Galatians 1:17 Paul went to Nabatean Arabia, which is a wilderness desert that stretched east of Damascus down to the Sinai peninsula. "After being prepared for ministry by the Lord, he returned to minister in nearby Damascus."

18. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter and remained with him fifteen days.

19. But I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother.

20. (Now concerning the things which I write to you, indeed, before God, I do not lie.)

Galatians 1:18-20 There was a three year period between the time of Paul's conversion on the Damascus Road to his first visit to Jerusalem. During this three year period Paul resided in

Arabia where he was under the instruction of the Lord, and he made a visit to Damascus. After the three year period, Paul went to Jerusalem to see Peter and James (the Lord's half brother) in Jerusalem. The trips to Damascus and Jerusalem are recorded in Acts 9:26-30.

21. Afterward I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia.

Galatians 1:21 Syria and Cilicia included Paul's hometown of Tarsus. Paul preached in that region for several years. When word of revival in that area reached Jerusalem, they sent Barnabus to assist Paul (Acts 11:20-26). Paul stayed on in that region as pastor in the church at Antioch. Paul went with Barnabus on their first missionary journey (Acts 13:1-3) and then returned to Antioch. From there they were sent to the Jerusalem Council.

22. And I was unknown by face to the churches of Judea which were in Christ.

23. But they were hearing only, "He who formerly persecuted us now preaches the faith which he once tried to destroy."

24. And they glorified God in me.

Galatians 1:22-24 Paul had come only twice to Jerusalem (Acts 9:26-30, 11:30) so the Christians only knew him by reputation. During the 17 year time period represented in Galatians 1:8 and Galatians 2:1, Paul visited Jerusalem twice. When the other apostle's glorified God through Paul's teaching; this was the proof that the gospel which Paul preached was the same one they (the apostles) taught the Judean believers.

Galatians Chapter 2

1. Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and also took Titus with me.

Galatians 2:1 Fourteen years represents the period of time between Paul's first visit (Galatians 1:18) and this visit which was for the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:1-22). Paul did visit the church at Jerusalem between these two visits to bring famine relief to the church there (Acts 11:27-30 & Acts 12:24-25), Paul's first visit to Jerusalem and his visit for the Jerusalem Council are highlighted to disclose Paul's dealings with the other apostles. This he does to show that his apostleship does not come from the other apostles but from Christ Himself. Barnabus vouched for Paul before the apostles at Jerusalem (Acts 9:27), and became his traveling companion on his first missionary journey (Acts 13:2-3). Titus was one of Paul's converts, an uncircumcised Gentile.

2. And I went up by revelation, and communicated to them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to those who were of reputation, lest by any means I might run, or had run, in vain.

Galatians 2:2 Paul was given the gospel by Jesus Christ Himself and sent by Jesus Christ Himself to the apostles at Jerusalem. Paul purposely states that God sent him to Jerusalem to refute any suggestions from the Judaizers that they (the Judaizers) sent him (Paul) to Jerusalem

to get his doctrine corrected. The three main leaders of the Jerusalem church were Peter, James (the Lord's brother), and John. "Paul hoped the Jerusalem leaders would support his ministry to the Gentiles and not soften their opposition to legalism. He did not want to see his ministry efforts wasted (run in vain) because of conflict with the other apostles." Paul referred to the Judaizers who promoted legalism as those who were of reputation. This Paul did sarcastically when referring to the Judaizers who claimed to have apostolic authority for their doctrines.

3. Yet not even Titus who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised.

Galatians 2:3 The core of the Judaizer's works based system was the Mosaic prescription of circumcision. The Judaizer's taught that there could be no salvation without circumcision. The apostle's refusal to require Titus to be circumcised verified the church's rejection of the Judaizer's doctrine. The church's stand on this issue was formally settled at the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:1-22).

4. And this occurred because of false brethren secretly brought in (who came in by stealth to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage),

Galatians 2:4 Finally, what was implied in the first three verses is brought specifically to light in verse 4. The doctrine of the Judaizers claimed allegiance to Christ, but it demanded circumcision and obedience to the Mosaic Law as prerequisites for salvation. These prerequisites were in direct opposition to the Christian faith taught by the apostles. The Judaizers were Satan's undercover agents sent into the midst of the church to sabotage the true gospel. The Judaizers were attempting to set up a works based system for attaining righteousness which brings bondage. The true Christian faith teaches that believers are free from the law as a means of salvation, from its external ceremonial regulations as a way of living, and from its curse for disobedience to the law. Christ fulfilled the law through His perfect life and sacrificial death, and He also bore the curse of the law for all believers.

5. to whom we did not yield submission even for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.

Galatians 2:5 Paul and Titus held firm to the orthodox Christian teaching of salvation by grace alone through faith alone. This is the true gospel. Any other gospel that purports works based righteousness is a false gospel.

6. But from those who seemed to be something – whatever they were, it makes no difference to me; God shows personal favoritism to no man – for those who seemed to be something added nothing to me.

Galatians 2:6 Those who seemed to be something is a reference to Peter, James (The Lord's half brother), and John. Whether or not a person is an apostle, this does not warrant personal favoritism from God. Paul makes it clear at the end of verse 6 (those who seemed to be

something, added nothing to me) that his faith and apostleship comes totally from Christ not from the other 12 apostles.

- 7. But on the contrary, when they saw that the gospel for the uncircumcised had been committed to me, as the gospel for the circumcised was to Peter**
- 8. (for He who worked effectively in Peter for the apostleship to the circumcised also worked effectively in me toward the Gentiles),**

Galatians 2:7-8 Paul preached the gospel primarily to the Gentiles. Paul's pattern was to start his outreach to the synagogue first and then go to the non-Jews. Both Peter and Paul were empowered by the Holy Spirit with the truth of the one gospel.

- 9. and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.**

Galatians 2:9 The only conclusion that Peter, James, and John could make was that the Holy Spirit was responsible for the powerful preaching of the gospel and the building of the church through Paul's efforts. In the Near East, the right hand of fellowship represented a solemn vow of friendship and a mark of partnership. "This act signified the apostle's recognition of Paul as a teacher of the true gospel and a partner in the ministry." This directed a serious blow to the Judaizers who opposed Paul's teaching and wanted to promote the illusion that the apostles believed and held to their (the Judaizer's) teaching.

- 10. They desired only that we should remember the poor, the very thing which I also was eager to do.**

Galatians 2:10 The number of Christians in Jerusalem grew rapidly at first. This began at Pentecost recorded in Acts 2:1-47. For years the church of Jerusalem was economically pressed. Believers there shared their resources (Acts 2:45, 4:32-37). The apostles at Jerusalem desired that Paul and the growing ranks of the Gentile churches remember the needs of the church at Jerusalem.

- 11. Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed;**

Galatians 2:11 Antioch was the location of the first Gentile church.

- 12. for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision.**

Galatians 2:12 Peter was condemned by Paul because Peter withdrew himself from the Gentiles to save face with the Judaizers. By doing this Peter was affirming the very dietary restrictions he knew God had abolished, reinforcing the Judaizer's position that keeping the Mosaic Law was a

prerequisite to salvation. Peter was afraid of losing popularity with the legalistic Judaizers, even though they were self-righteous hypocrites promoting a heretical doctrine.

13. And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy.

Galatians 2:13 Since Peter was in a leadership position, he had influence for leading others astray, including Barnabas, in the hypocrisy of giving allegiance to the Judaizers and their false doctrines.

14. But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before them all, “If you being a Jew, live in a the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews?”

Galatians 2:14 Paul asks Peter a rhetorical question meant to confront him with his hypocrisy. Why do you Peter a Jew, who is not living as a Jew command Gentiles, through your giving allegiance to Judaizers, to live as Jews. Peter this is pretty inconsistent and hypocritical, don't you think.

15. We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles,

Galatians 2:15 The Jews regarded Gentiles as sinners by nature because they had no revealed divine written law to guide them toward salvation or living righteously.

16. knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.

Galatians 2:16 Paul continues from verse 15 by saying we who are believing Jews now know that salvation is only through faith in Jesus Christ and not by law. Paul states that we are justified by faith in Jesus Christ and not by the works of the law. The Greek word for justified describes a judge declaring an innocent person not guilty and therefore innocent before the law. In the great New Covenant transaction man's sins are imputed to His sinless Savior for punishment, and the righteousness of the sinless Savior is imputed to sinful man. This is the core doctrine of saving faith in Jesus Christ. The root of man's sinfulness is his heart not his actions. Since it is impossible for man to keep the law from his heart, the law cannot save him.

17. “But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is Christ therefore a minister of sin? Certainly not!”

Galatians 2:17 Even the apostles are justified by Christ alone because they are sinners. Everyone in the faith is a sinner justified by the finished work of Jesus Christ. Paul then asks whether this means that Christ is the minister of sin, and he responds to his own question, certainly not.

18. For if I build again those things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor.

Galatians 2:18 Paul preaches salvation by grace alone through faith alone. This teaching destroys the false system of salvation through legalism promoted by the Judaizers. Paul says, continuing from verse 17, that he will not build up this false system which he has already destroyed.

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

Galatians 2:19 “When a person is convicted of a capital crime and executed, the law has no further claim on him. So it is with the Christian who has died in Christ (who paid the penalty for his sins in full) and rises to new life in Him – justice has been satisfied and he is forever free from any further penalty.”

20. I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

Galatians 2:20 When a person trusts in Christ for salvation, he spiritually participates with the Lord in His crucifixion and His victory over sin and death. The old inner man of the believer has been crucified with Christ. The new inner man of the believer has the privilege of Christ’s indwelling presence empowering him and living through him.

21. I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain.”

Galatians 2:21 “Those who insist they can earn salvation by their own efforts undermine the foundation of Christianity and render unnecessary the death of Christ.”

Galatians Chapter 3

1. O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified?

Galatians 3:1 The Judaizers of the Galatians refers not to lack of intelligence but lack of obedience. The Judaizers were very present in the Galatian churches leading many to defect from the gospel with flattery and false promises. The Galatians were defecting to a false gospel after Paul had clearly and publicly displayed the true gospel. Central to Paul’s gospel was the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, which Paul taught was a one time historical event with continuing results into eternity. This sacrificial death of Jesus Christ provides eternal payment once and for all for the believer’s sins, and does not need to be supplemented by any human works.

2. This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the of works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

Galatians 3:2 The answer to Paul's rhetorical question is found in the next verse (Galatians 3:3), the Galatians had the Holy Spirit through the hearing of faith. The hearing of faith is actually hearing with faith. Paul appealed to the Galatians concerning the reality of their own salvation to refute the Judaizer's false teaching that keeping the law is necessary for salvation.

3. Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?

Galatians 3:3 Verse 3 contains Paul's rhetorical question. He asks the Galatians whether following the law in our own sinful, weak, fallen human nature could improve on the saving work of the Holy Spirit.

4. Have you suffered so many things in vain – if indeed it was in vain?

Galatians 3:4 After suffering so long through the trials of this life and having obtained by grace the highest prize, salvation and eternal life, do you now forfeit that prize. Without the prize of salvation, all trials and sufferings of this life are in vain.

5. Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, does He do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? --

6. just as Abraham "believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness."

Galatians 3:5-6 Similar to his statement in Romans 4:3, Paul uses Abraham as proof that there has never been any other way of salvation than by grace through faith.

7. Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham.

Galatians 3:7 All people (Jews or Gentiles) who believe God are true spiritual children of Abraham.

8. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, "In you all the nations shall be blessed." So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham.

Galatians 3:8 Those who are the spiritual children of Abraham are those who are blessed. Those nations of peoples who follow the example of Abraham are blessed. Believing in God and by that faith being accounted righteous is the heart of the gospel.

9. So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham.

Galatians 3:9 Whether Jew or Gentile, the Old Testament predicted in Genesis 12:3 and 18:18 the blessings of justification by faith regardless of national heritage.

10. For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.”

11. But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for “the just shall live by faith.”

Galatians 3:10-11 One violation of the law deserves the curse of God (James 2:10) in the form of total condemnation and judgment. It is impossible to keep all the commands of the law.

12. Yet the law is not of faith, but “the man who does them shall live by them.”

Galatians 3:12 Justification by faith and justification by the law are mutually exclusive. Paul quotes Leviticus 18:5. This verse notes that obedience to God’s law always insures temporal blessings. Obedience does not save from sin and hell, but it does mark those who are saved.

“but the man who does them shall live by them” – in this sense the law gives life, but only in a temporal sense.

13. Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”),

Galatians 3:13 “The Greek word translated ‘redeemed’ was often used to speak of buying a slaves or debtor’s freedom. Christ’s death, because it was a death of substitution for sin, satisfied God’s justice and exhausted His wrath toward His elect, so that Christ actually purchased believers from slavery to sin and from the sentence of eternal death.” “By bearing God’s wrath for believers’ sins on the cross (2 Corinthians 5:21, Hebrews 9:28, 1 Peter 2:24, 1 Peter 3:18), Christ took upon Himself the curse pronounced on those who violated the law.”

14. that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

Galatians 3:14 This sacrifice of Christ allows the blessing of Abraham to become a reality. Abraham obeyed God and did not withhold his son, his only son, when God asked him to sacrifice him on the altar at Mount Moriah. Of course God did not allow him to go through with this, but this Old Testament picture of the sacrifice of Isaac pointed to the future sacrifice of God’s Son, His only begotten Son, for the sins of the world. (Genesis 22:1-19)

15. Brethren, I speak in the manner of men: Though it is only a man’s covenant, yet if it is confirmed, no one annuls or adds to it.

Galatians 3:15 Paul points out that even human covenants, once agreement is made, are unchangeable or irrevocable, how much more the covenant of grace established by God Himself.

16. Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, “And to seeds,” as of many, but as of one, “And to you Seed,” who is Christ.

Galatians 3:16 Isaac was the son of promise given to Abraham by God. From the descendants of Isaac came the ultimate Son of Promise who is Jesus Christ. This Jesus Christ is the seed of Abraham in whom all the nations would be blessed.

17. And this I say, that the law, which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ, that it should make the promise of no effect.

Galatians 3:17 The initial promise made to Abraham (Genesis 12:4, 21:5, 25:26, 47:9) was in approximately 2090 B.C. This promise was given 645 years prior to the giving of the law at Sinai in 1445 B.C. The Abrahamic covenant was repeated to Isaac and later to Jacob. The last known reaffirmation of the Abrahamic Covenant to Jacob occurred in Genesis 46:2-4 just before going to Egypt. This was 430 years before the Mosaic Law was given. “The Abrahamic Covenant was unilateral (God made the promise to Himself), eternal (it provided for everlasting blessing), irrevocable (it will never cease), unconditional (in that it depended on God, not man), but its complete fulfillment awaits the salvation of Israel and the millennial kingdom of Jesus Christ.”

18. For if the inheritance is of the law, it is no longer of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise.

Genesis 3:18 “Paul again emphasized that there is no middle ground between law (works) and promise (grace); the two principles are mutually exclusive ways of salvation (Romans 4:14).” “An inheritance by definition is something granted, not worked for, as proven in the case of Abraham.”

19. What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator.

Galatians 3:19 Paul sets forth the purpose of the law. Until the Seed (Christ) should come, sinful man needed a standard to keep his life from deteriorating into an abyss of corruption and sin. This standard was the law. The law was never intended to be the way of salvation, but it does reveal man’s utter sinfulness and man’s need for a Savior to save him from his sins.

20. Now a mediator does not mediate for one only, but God is one.

Galatians 3:19-20 Angels were involved in the giving of the law (Acts 7:53, Hebrews 2:2), but Scripture does not explain how they specifically carried out this task. The covenant of the promise (Grace) made with Abraham, which finds its fulfillment in the person of Jesus Christ, was contracted and ratified by God alone.

21. Is the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not! For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law.

Galatians 3:21 The law reveals man's sinfulness and the need for salvation freely offered in the promise. The law cannot provide righteousness and life because the law cannot be a sin substitute. Only one who is truly man can be a sin substitute. To be a true substitute this man must be sinless and eternal; therefore, this sin substitute must also be truly God. Eternity is essential because punishment for sin is eternal punishment.

22. But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

Galatians 3:22 The express teaching of scripture declares that all mankind is hopelessly trapped in sin, therefore, all people are sinners. (Romans 3:23, Isaiah 53:6, Ecclesiastes 7:20, Psalm 143:2)

23. But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed.

Galatians 3:23 Before Christ came to fulfill the requirements of the law, man was faced with the impossible task of keeping the law perfectly. No one could do this so the law condemned us while awaiting the final judgment which comes from God. Faith in Jesus Christ alone, however, releases people from the bondage to the law.

24. Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

Galatians 3:24 A tutor is one who administrates the care of children. This includes transporting them where they need to go such as school and watching over their behavior at home. The law was our tutor showing us our sins and pointing us to Christ. Christ fulfilled perfectly all the requirements of the law through His perfect life and sacrificial death on the cross. The perfect righteousness of Christ and His substitutionary death is imputed to the believer by faith.

25. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.

Galatians 3:25 Because of Christ the law no longer condemns us. This is because we have been justified by Jesus Christ; however, we are still obligated to obey God's holy and unchanging righteous standards expounded in New Covenant teaching (Matthew 5:21-48).

26. For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

Galatians 3:26 Only those who have put their faith in Jesus Christ are God's true spiritual children. Unbelievers are the children of Satan.

27. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

Galatians 3:27 Being baptized into Christ does not refer to water baptism. Baptism in this sense means being baptized by the Holy Spirit (Luke 3:16), this results in the miracle of spiritual union with Christ in His death and resurrection. This baptism and union with Christ occurs at the time a person truly believes. “Positionally before God, we have put on Christ, His death, resurrection, and righteousness.” “Practically, we need to put on Christ before men in our conduct (Romans 13:14).

28. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Galatians 3:28 All those who are one with Jesus Christ are one with each other. No sexual, racial, or social distinctions create inequity before God.

29. And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Galatians 3:29 The physical descendants of Abraham (the nation of Israel) are not the true children of Abraham. The true children of Abraham are the spiritual children of Abraham who follow his pattern of faith. “All believers are heirs of the spiritual blessing that accompanied the Abrahamic Covenant – justification by faith (Genesis 15:6, Romans 4:3-11).” The covenant with Abraham was sealed when he did not withhold his only son from God. This act pointed forward to the substitutionary death of Jesus Christ who would die on the cross for our sins.

Galatians Chapter 4

1. Now I say that the heir, as long as he is a child, does not differ at all from a slave, though he is master of all,

Galatians 4:1 A person who has been predestined for salvation, but not yet come to the knowledge of the truth, is only a child. Yet this individual is an heir to the eternal promises of God.

2. but is under guardians and stewards until the time appointed by the father.

Galatians 4:2 Guardians were slaves entrusted with the care of underage boys. Stewards managed the property of underage boys.

3. Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world.

Galatians 4:3 Verse 9 refers to elements as the realm of human religion. Both Jewish and Gentile religion centered on a manmade system of works such as laws and ceremonies which are performed to achieve divine acceptance. All such rudimentary elements are immature, like little children.

4. But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law,

Galatians 4:4 “In God’s timetable, when the exact religious, cultural, and political conditions demanded by His perfect plan were in place, Jesus came into the world. As a father set the time for the ceremony of his son becoming of age and being released from the guardians, stewards, and tutors, so God sent His Son at the precise moment to bring all who believe out from under bondage to the law – a truth Jesus repeatedly affirmed.”

5. to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.

Galatians 4:5 All people require redemption because they are unregenerate sinners who fail to meet the demands of the law and are therefore under the curses of the law. “Adoption is the act of bringing someone who is the offspring of another into one’s own family. Since unregenerate people are by nature children of the devil, the only way they can become God’s children is by spiritual adoption.”

6. And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, “Abba, Father!”

Galatians 4:6 The Holy Spirit confirms our adoption as God’s children. It is this Spirit that intercedes for us with the Father. Through the Holy Spirit we can love God and cry out Abba, the equivalent of Daddy.

7. Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

Galatians 4:7 Since we have the Holy Spirit or the Spirit of God’s Son, we also are sons. Since the Holy Spirit is God (the third person of the Trinity), we are heirs.

8. But then, indeed, when you did not know God, you served those which by nature are not gods.

Galatians 4:8 Before coming to saving faith in Jesus Christ, no unsaved person knows God.

9. But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage?

Galatians 4:9 After having come to know and love God because He first loved them, how is it, Paul asks, that you Galatians are turning back to be enslaved by the ceremonies and rituals of the Jewish religion. All the ceremonies and rituals were shadows that pointed to Jesus Christ who is the real substance. The Galatians were turning away from the real substance (Christ) to pursue the shadows.

10. You observe days and months and seasons and years.

Galatians 4:10 The rituals, ceremonies, and festivals of the Jewish religious calendar, which God had given to the Old Testament Jewish nation, were never required for the church. “Paul warns the Galatians, as he did the Colossians, against legalistically observing them as if they were required by God or could earn favor with Him.”

11. I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain.

Galatians 4:11 If the Galatian believers follow the Judaizers in legalism, then they are pursuing and believing in a false gospel. Thus Paul’s work to establish them in the true gospel would be futile.

12. Brethren, I urge you to become like me, for I became like you. You have not injured me at all.

Galatians 4:12 Just as Paul had abandoned all efforts to save himself based on his own self righteousness, he urged the Galatians to do the same. The Galatian people enthusiastically accepted the gospel and did not persecute Paul.

13. You know that because of physical infirmity I preached the gospel to you at the first.

Galatians 4:13 It is speculated that Paul contracted malaria in the coastal lowlands of Pamphylia. The cooler and healthier weather of Galatia, especially Pisidian, Antioch (3600 feet above sea level) would have brought some relief to the fever caused by the malaria.

14. And my trial which was in my flesh you did not despise or reject, but you received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus.

Galatians 4:14 The Galatians welcomed Paul in spite of his infirmity.

15. What then was the blessing you enjoyed? For I bear you witness that, if possible, you would have plucked out your own eyes and given them to me.

Galatians 4:15 This verse shows the depth of love and acceptance the Galatians had for Paul and his gospel message. It is possible to infer from the context that the disease may have affected Paul’s eyes.

16. Have I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth?

Galatians 4:16 “The Galatians had become so confused that, in spite of their previous affection for Paul, some had come to regard him as their enemy. The apostle reminds them that he had not harmed them, but merely told them the truth – a truth that had once brought them great joy.”

17. They zealously court you, but for no good; yes, they want to exclude you, that you may be zealous for them.

Galatians 4:17 “The Judaizer’s appeared to have a genuine interest in the Galatians, but their true motive was to exclude the Galatians from God’s gracious salvation and win recognition for themselves.”

18. But it is good to be zealous in a good thing always, and not only when I am present with you.

Galatians 4:18 Paul wanted the Galatians to be firmly established in the gospel even when he was not present.

19. My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you,

Galatians 4:19 The Judaizers caused much spiritual damage through their false teaching, and Paul had to go through the basics of salvation so that they could be born again spiritually by believing the truth.

20. I would like to be present with you now and to change my tone; for I have doubts about you.

Galatians 4:20 Because the Galatians had slipped away from the true faith to legalism, Paul does not have confidence in their maturity or steadfastness, but he desires to remain with them to bring them to maturity and steadfastness.

21. Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not hear the law?

22. For it is written that Abraham had two sons: the one by a bondwoman, the other by a freewoman.

23. But he who was of the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and he of the freewoman through promise,

24. which things are symbolic. For these are the two covenants: the one from Mount Sinai which gives birth to bondage, which is Hagar –

25. for this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children --

26. but the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all.

27. For it is written:

**“Rejoice, O barren,
You who do not bear!
Break forth and shout,
You who are not in labor!
For the desolate has many more
children
Than she who has a husband.”**

Galatians 4:21-27 Paul uses Abraham's wife Sarah and Sarah's slave Hagar to illustrate his points concerning God's promise and law. Paul uses Sarah to represent God's promise (Grace). Paul uses Hagar to represent God's law. In this picture God's law is subservient to God's promise (Grace). Hagar had a son named Ishmael whose descendants settled in Arabia near Mount Sinai, and they are controlled by works based religious systems. Likewise, Jerusalem, controlled by Old Testament Judaism, is controlled by a works based religious system. Christianity is not based on salvation by works but on promise (Grace). The works based religious systems are in conflict with the promise (Grace) based gospel revelation, just like Hagar (representing the Jewish law) and Sarah (representing the promise) were in conflict.

28. Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise.

Galatians 4:28 Just as Isaac, the physical heir of Abraham, inherited the promises made to Abraham, we who are believers, the spiritual heirs of Abraham, will receive God's redemptive promises which come through Abraham.

29. But, as he who was born according to the flesh then persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, even so it is now.

Galatians 4:29 Ishmael mocked Isaac at the feast celebrating Isaac's weaning. Ishmael's descendants (Arabs) have always persecuted Isaac's descendants (Jews). Also the spiritual children of Satan (unbelievers) have always persecuted the spiritual children of Abraham (believers).

30. Nevertheless what does the Scripture say? "Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman."

31. So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman but of the free.

Galatians 4:30-31 Paul quotes from Genesis 21:40 to illustrate that those who are attempting to be justified on the basis of keeping the law will be cast out of God's presence forever.

Galatians Chapter 5

1. Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.

Galatians 5:1 Paul commands the Galatian believers to be grounded or established on God's free gift of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. Paul cautions against getting entangled in the yoke of bondage, which is the fallen, human effort of attaining to salvation through supposedly keeping the law of God.

2. Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing.

Galatians 5:2 Paul objected to the idea that circumcision was a spiritual benefit or merit with God, and a prerequisite for salvation. Circumcision was a part of the Jewish law and religious

ceremony. The atoning sacrifice of Christ cannot benefit anyone who trusts in law and ceremony for salvation.

3. And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law.

Galatians 5:3 God's standard is perfect righteousness. To attain perfect righteousness one must never violate the law of God at all. If an individual violates the law of God one time, he has completely failed to live according to the law of God, and he has broken the entire law.

4. You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.

Galatians 5:4 "Paul's clear meaning is that any attempt to be justified by the law is to reject salvation by grace alone through faith alone. Those once exposed to the gracious truth of the gospel, who then turn their backs on Christ (Hebrews 6:4-6) and seek to be justified by the law are separated from Christ and lose all prospects of God's gracious salvation. Their desertion of Christ and the gospel only proves that their faith was never genuine (Luke 8:13-14, 1 John 2:19)."

5. For we through the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.

Galatians 5:5 Christians already possess the righteousness of Jesus Christ, which is imputed to all believers through saving faith. In the future, upon entering the presence of the Lord, the believer is glorified and completely conformed into the image of the Lord.

6. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love.

Galatians 5:6 External religious ceremony is worthless unless it reflects genuine internal saving faith. "Saving faith proves its genuine character by works of love. The one who lives by faith is internally motivated by love for God and Christ (Matthew 23:37-40), which supernaturally issues forth in reverent worship, genuine obedience, and self-sacrificing love for others."

7. You ran well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth?

Galatians 5:7 Paul states that the Galatians had a good beginning in that they received the gospel from him, and had begun to live their lives in obedience to the faith. But now, due to the legalistic influence of the Judaizers, Paul asks who hindered you from continuing in the gospel doctrine which they had received from Paul.

8. This persuasion does not come from Him who calls you.

Galatians 5:8 The persuasion Paul is talking about is salvation by works. Any doctrine that says the finished saving work of Jesus Christ is not 100% sufficient in and of itself to save is false.

9. A little leaven leavens the whole lump.

Galatians 5:9 Just as leaven (yeast) tends to affect the whole loaf, so also sin tends to permeate through the believing community.

10. I have confidence in you, in the Lord, that you will have no other mind; but he who troubles you shall bear his judgment, whoever he is.

Galatians 5:10 Paul encourages the Galatians that the Lord is faithful to enable them to keep their understanding pure and right concerning the truth of the gospel. Those who trouble believers concerning the true gospel will receive eternal condemnation.

11. And I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why do I still suffer persecution? Then the offense of the cross has ceased.

Galatians 5:11 The Judaizers had falsely claimed that Paul agreed with their teaching that circumcision was necessary for salvation. But Paul states that if this were true, why were the Judaizers persecuting him rather than supporting him. If Paul was in agreement with the Judaizers, Paul would be admitting that salvation could be earned. This, of course, was not true. Paul preached a gospel that strips man of any opportunity to earn it by his own merit. As it was in Paul's day, so it is today, salvation through faith in Jesus Christ alone breeds opposition.

12. I could wish that those who trouble you would even cut themselves off!

Galatians 5:12 A better translation for cut themselves off is mutilate themselves. "Paul's ironic point is that since the Judaizers were so insistent on circumcision as a means of pleasing God, they should go to the extreme of religious devotion and mutilate themselves."

13. For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

Galatians 5:13 Christian freedom is not for selfish fulfillment or engaging in sinful inclinations, but for serving others.

14. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

Galatians 5:14 In New Testament times as in Old Testament times fulfillment of the Mosaic law (Ten Commandments) is based on love for neighbor (Leviticus 19:18). When a Christian loves his neighbor, he fulfills the moral requirements of the Ten Commandments (Matthew 22:36-40, Deuteronomy 6:5).

15. But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!

Galatians 5:15 When there is the absence of love for neighbor, there is nothing to restrain one from attacking and assaulting one's neighbor. "But if you bite and devour one another, beware

lest you be consumed by one another.” The natural tendency of fallen humanity is to be driven by their base nature. Instruction in the full council of God’s word teaches us to love our neighbor.

16. I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.

Galatians 5:16 All believers have the presence of the indwelling Holy Spirit from the time they exercised saving faith in Jesus Christ. When a believer follows the commands of scripture, he or she is submitting to the control of the Holy Spirit and is walking in the Spirit. By keeping one’s mind and heart focused on scripture, one will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh.

17. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.

Galatians 5:17 The flesh does not by nature want the things which are of the Spirit. Likewise, the Spirit of God does not want anything to do with the sinful desires of the flesh. The Holy Spirit and the flesh are complete opposites in their purpose and focus.

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

Galatians 5:18 Jesus Christ fulfilled the law through His perfect life in the power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit, given freely to all believers, has already perfectly fulfilled the law in Christ, and places each believer in Christ resulting in the believer perfectly fulfilling the law due to the perfect life of Christ and His perfect substitutionary death for all sin. Since the Holy Spirit, given to us at salvation, has already fulfilled the law, believers are not subject to the law.

19. Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness,

20. idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies,

21. envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Galatians 5:19-21 The flesh manifests itself in obvious and definite ways. The list given is not all inclusive. (See Romans 1:24-32 and 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 for other lists)

1. Adultery, Fornication – Comes from the Greek word porneia from which we get the English word pornography. This word refers to all illicit sexual activity.
2. Sorcery – Comes from the Greek word pharmakeia from which we get the English word pharmacy. This word originally referred to medicines in general, but eventually only to word and mind altering drugs, the occult, witchcraft, and magic. Pagan religious practices often used drugs to aid in the communication with deities.
3. Drunkenness, Revelries – Refers to all rowdy, boisterous, and crude behavior. It could also refer to the orgies that characterized pagan, idolatrous worship.

4. Hatred, Contentions, Jealousies, Outbursts of Wrath, Selfish Ambitions, Dissensions, Heresies – All of these words describe some form of ungodly anger.

Paul states that those who make these things a continual habitual action (those who practice these things) will not inherit the Kingdom of God. Although believers can commit these sins, those people whose basic character is summed up in the uninterrupted and unrepentant practice of them cannot belong to God.

22. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

23. gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.

Galatians 5:22-23 The fruit of the Spirit are the characteristics of those who belong to God through faith in Jesus Christ and possess the Spirit of God. Paul lists ten characteristics that should be a part of the attitude of all believers:

1. Love – Respect, devotion, affection, generating self-sacrificial service.
2. Joy – The inner happiness based on knowing the Lord and having received eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ. The presence of joy can even be present when outward circumstances are the most painful and severe.
3. Peace – The inner calm that results from confidence in one's saving relationship with Christ. Like joy, peace is not related to one's outer circumstances.
4. Longsuffering – Patience refers to the ability to endure painful interrelationships and the ability to cope with painful situations in a Christ honoring manner.
5. Kindness – Tender concern for others, reflected in a desire to treat others gently, just as the Lord treats all believers.
6. Goodness – Moral and spiritual excellence manifested in active kindness.
7. Faithfulness – Loyalty and trustworthiness.
8. Gentleness – A humble and meek attitude that is patient and submissive in every offense, having no desire for revenge or retribution. In the New Testament this attitude includes submission to the will of God (Colossians 3:12), teachability (James 1:21), and consideration of others (Ephesians 4:2).
9. Self-control – Restraining passions and appetites.
10. No Law – There is no law that can command or enforce these spiritual characteristics. These are the fruits of the Spirit incorporated into all true believers because the Spirit Himself indwells all believers.

24. And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

Galatians 5:24 Through true saving faith, God applies to the believer the once and for all saving sacrificial work of Jesus Christ. This sacrifice, on a Roman cross, justifies the believer through the substitutionary death of Christ, who was nailed to the cross for the world's transgressions and sins. Once a person comes to faith in Christ, he is to be a follower of Christ through prayer, bible study, Christian service, witnessing, church worship, etc. This tends to go against our sinful and fleshly nature which must be crucified or cut off.

25. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

Galatians 5:25 All believers have the presence of the indwelling Holy Spirit from the time they exercised saving faith in Jesus Christ. When a believer follows the commands of scripture, he or she is submitting to the control of the Holy Spirit and is walking in the Spirit. By keeping one's mind and heart focused on scripture, one will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh.

26. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

Galatians 5:26 Through walking in the Spirit and living a life of love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control; competition, jealousies, envies, and high mindedness concerning oneself is done away with.

Galatians Chapter 6

1. Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.

Galatians 6:1 If a brother or sister is caught or seen committing sin, those who are walking in the Spirit should restore or instruct the individual in the correct faith in all gentleness and kindness. Paul reminds his listeners at the end of the verse that we are all sinners and capable of being seduced by temptation. Every person who ever lived, except one, is a sinner and is therefore capable of being overtaken by the same temptation as the transgressing brother or sister. Because we are all sinners we are nothing compared to God, and we need to constantly examine our own lives to make sure we are right with God.

2. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

Galatians 6:2 Through loving-kindness believers can help each other through the difficult circumstances of life and mature spiritually in the faith. This fulfills the law of Christ which is the law of love (Romans 13:8-10).

3. For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself.

Galatians 6:3 The only difference between a believer and an unbeliever is the saving work of Jesus Christ. The believer has received the free gift of eternal life through trusting in Jesus Christ alone for salvation. The perfect life of Jesus Christ and His sacrificial death is credited to the believer's account. Without Jesus Christ there would be no hope and the whole world would go to hell for all eternity.

4. But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.

Galatians 6:4 Each believer should examine his own life and work to determine its worthiness or unworthiness. Believers are not to judge one another for the purpose of elevating pride or sense

of superiority. Paul admonishes believers to concentrate on being faithful in their own work which brings its own inner reward from the Holy Spirit.

5. For each one shall bear his own load.

Galatians 6:5 Paul emphasizes that each believer should be faithful in doing his own work.

6. Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches.

Galatians 6:6 The principle work of the believer is learning and teaching the word of God. Each believer should actively learn more about the scripture through talking with his teacher, and teachers should attempt to teach the Scripture with all clarity to bring the learners up to their level.

7. Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.

8. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.

Galatians 6:7-8 Paul metaphorically applies the agricultural principle of sowing and reaping to the spiritual Christian work of preaching and teaching the word of God (scripture) as opposed to sinful activities. Sowing sinful activities brings corruption, but sowing to the Spirit (living the Christian life, prayer, preaching/teaching the word of God) reaps everlasting life.

9. And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.

Galatians 6:9 Paul encourages believers to not be short sighted in doing their work for the Lord. People often expect to see immediate results but this is not always the case. Believers are to trust in the Lord of the harvest who will bring the reward in His own time.

10. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.

Galatians 6:10 The Greek word for opportunity refers to a fixed period of time. "Paul's point is that the believer's entire life provides the unique privilege by which he can serve others in Christ's name. Our love for fellow Christians is the primary test of our love for God."

11. See with what large letters I have written to you with my own hand!

Galatians 6:11 Paul wrote the entire letter by his own hand. Translation of the Greek verb "written" indicates that Paul wrote the entire letter by his own hand, not merely penning a brief statement at the end of dictation to a secretary as he did at other times. He wrote the Galatian letter in large block letters either due to his failing eyesight or he used large block letters to emphasize the letter's content rather than its form. "Paul wrote this letter himself to make sure the Galatians knew he – not some forger – was writing it, and to personalize the document, given the importance and severity of its contents."

12. As many as desire to make a good showing in the flesh, these would compel you to be circumcised, only that they may not suffer persecution for the cross of Christ.

Galatians 6:12 By adhering to external religious practices like circumcision, the Judaizers were more likely to be accepted since their religious practices fit more of a predictable pattern common to all religions. By adhering to a part of the Mosaic Law, the Judaizers could maintain their protected status as Jews, and not suffer persecution regarding the cross of Christ.

13. For not even those who are circumcised keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh.

Galatians 6:13 The Judaizers zealously worked to win converts to their religious system of requiring circumcision as a prerequisite to salvation. If they could win converts they could boast about their effective proselytizing.

14. But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

Galatians 6:14 The Greek word for boast is a basic expression of praise. Paul praises God and preaches salvation through the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ. This makes the world spiritually dead to Paul and Paul spiritually dead to the world. This is true of all believers.

15. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation.

Galatians 6:15 Circumcision or uncircumcision does not result in salvation, but saving faith in Jesus Christ results in salvation, which is the new birth and becoming a new creation in Christ.

16. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.

Galatians 6:16 Peace and mercy result from salvation. Because God has mercy there is forgiveness of sins and the setting aside of His judgment through the substitutionary sacrificial death of Jesus Christ. The one who believes in Jesus Christ and accepts God's offer of salvation through the substitutionary sacrificial death of Jesus Christ has peace with God. Paul's statement "Israel of God" refers to all Jewish believers in Christ who are both physical and spiritual descendants of Abraham.

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

Galatians 6:17 Paul bore the physical marks of persecution (scars, wounds, etc.). This persecution resulted from Paul's serving the Lord.

18. Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

Galatians 6:18 In Paul's final benediction he commends the Galatians to an intimate saving relationship with Jesus Christ who is the embodiment of eternal life.

Summary:

Galatians 6:11-18 Paul wrote this epistle himself with large letters. By writing the letter himself, the Galatian churches would know that it was from him. Paul probably used large block letters to make sure that the foundational Christian truths of this epistle were communicated. Paul states that his boast is in the cross of Jesus Christ. Paul understood that Christ's substitutionary death on the cross was his justification. Paul also stated that through Christ the world has been crucified to him and he to the world. In other words, through faith in Jesus Christ, believers are alive to God and dead to the world.